

UNIVERSITAS

SPRING EDITION

CHESTERTON :
Everlasting Thoughts
Timely Words

Why Evolutionism is
a dead end for science?



FROM THE EDITOR

This is the second Universitas for this year. Hopefully, we can continue to issue at least two a year from here on. The much anticipated visit of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for World Youth Day has come and gone, like a comet that flashed across the continent. It was truly an event, or rather a series of events over almost a week, that demonstrated the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst. For those who were in Sydney it was an unforgettable experience of Faith, Hope and the Love of Christ, abounding in the joyful participation of youth from all parts of the world. For a moment all involved felt what it must be like to live in the joy and peace of the Spirit.

On his return to Rome the Pope retired to a retreat for a much needed rest after his hectic schedule and long journeys across the world. He is thought to be using this time to write. One hopes so; one expects so with great anticipation.

During the time around World Youth Day there were a number of conferences and talks given. One was connected with that event; the other not directly. The first was a talk given by Christoph Cardinal Schoenborn, Archbishop of Vienna, at the Great Hall of Sydney University to an overflowing audience on the subject of Evolution. Those familiar with the good Cardinal's work and writings will know that he has devoted a special catechesis to the subject of creation, in which naturally enough the question of evolution has to be addressed, and that a short piece of his which appeared in the New York Times a year or two back caused somewhat of a stir.

The other matter was a conference held at Campion College on G.K. Chesterton and the continuing relevance of his thought for our own culture today. Those who are familiar with the writings of Chesterton will know that his work on St. Thomas is highly regarded for its insight into the saint's mind. Etienne Gilson, one of the most famous of historians of philosophy of the last century, and himself a disciple of St. Thomas, is reputed to have said that with all his knowledge of St. Thomas he could

not have written such a perceptive book. Apart from the appreciation of the CTS of Chesterton for his natural philosophical genius, which fully accords with that of St. Thomas, we are convinced that he remains for our times, what he was for his own day, the perfect antidote for the mental weariness inexorably induced by modern culture.

It is not our intention to report on these two events; those interested will no doubt be able to obtain such reports more directly. What we wish to do is to say something on the topics dealt with at both. For it is clear that the talk and conference highlighted some of the difficulties that the reception of a Catholic viewpoint, even one based also on reason, comes up against in the cultural and academic climate today in Australia and the western world generally. Accordingly, in this issue there are three articles by Dr. Don Boland who attended the talk and the conference; one is on Evolution and is entitled "The End of Evolution" and two are on Chesterton, and are entitled "Chesterton's Mind and Method" and "Chesterton and Capitalism".

The late Dr. H. G. Pearce, whose "The Common Good" appeared in the previous Universitas, was a great admirer of Chesterton and, being particularly interested in Social and Economic Science, studied all of Chesterton's books on this subject. He extracted from Chesterton's writings on the burning social questions of his (and our) times an amazing "Guide to the Politico-Economic Ideas of G. K. Chesterton" (unpublished), showing an extensive collection of quotations. These quotes were taken from each of the most relevant books (fifteen in all), from "Heretics" in 1905 (the book that first brought GKC into prominence) to "As I was Saying" in 1936 (the last year of Chesterton's life). A few examples of the numerous quotes which Dr. Pearce put together are shown in this issue.

We may think initially that what Chesterton says must be an exaggeration. But what we find on reflexion is that he is only putting in bold relief abnormal things to which we have, unfortunately, become accustomed and accept as "normal". A good instance of this in modern

philosophy is his pointing out that Nietzsche did not have a strong mind, but a weak one; that he not a bold thinker but a timid one, who spoke in metaphors of bodily pre-eminence, such as the super or upper man, and what is beyond morality (suggesting something "higher"), instead of in clear and definite concepts of reason - a weakness of mind which is common enough today.

Dr. Pearce's notations were obviously made simply for his own benefit and were not meant to be taken as the exact quotations but to note, in great detail, the topics mainly relating to economics and politics discussed by Chesterton throughout these books. It is a marvellous resource. We provide here only a sample of the actual quotes of Chesterton to which some of these notations refer us.

The interesting pieces on two of the most famous followers of St. Thomas in early modern times, Francis of Vitoria and Dominic Banez, which also appear in this issue, have been taken from the notes for the lectures which Dr. G. Deegan MA PhD, the honorary President of the CTS, gave on Renaissance Scholasticism, in his full course on Mediaeval Philosophy.

John Young, one of the former lecturers at the Centre, now living in Melbourne, has produced another fine book on Philosophy entitled "The Scope of Philosophy". A review of this book is also included in this issue.

Our readers will notice that this publication contains no advertisements - a clue to the reason for this may be gathered from the very last section of this issue entitled "Advertisement". Accordingly, to cover the costs of the publication of this Journal we are entirely dependent upon the generosity of our readers and supporters. No fee is charged but any payment and/or donation would be greatly appreciated.

The Editor

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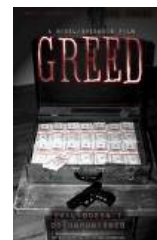
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COMING SOON

IN THE NEXT ISSUE...

Abortion - the Ultimate in Child Abuse Soul-Destroying Euthanasia



St. Thomas on Greed Usury and Debt



The Virtue of Fortitude

History of Scholastic Philosophy

William of Ockham Francisco Suarez

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CTS...WHAT WE DO

The Centre for Thomistic Studies Inc. is dedicated to addressing the perennial questions of faith and reason that belong to every age and also those particularly urgent questions which belong to our own time.

Upon a consideration of the history of ideas it will be found that in regard to the most important questions of life and existence there is really nothing much that is new. Many do not know that answers to the basic and burning questions of our own time have already been provided by the great thinkers of the past, amongst whom St. Thomas Aquinas occupies a privileged place not only as a theologian within the Catholic Church but also as a philosopher in the secular world. As confusion and doubt seem to reign supreme today, it is important to realise that there do exist genuine solutions to what seem to be insoluble intellectual and moral problems concerning the world we live in and how we should relate to it and to each other.

The Centre has been established since 1985, begun by a group of Sydney lay men and women dedicated to continuing the work of the late Dr. Austin Woodbury SM PhD STD., whom many consider to be the foremost Australian Thomistic philosopher and theologian of his time.

Freedom is much prized today and rightly so. But truth and freedom necessarily go together. So if we lose sight of the truths about reality and our human destiny we can expect to lose our freedoms as well. There is also quite obviously a necessary connection between truth and happiness. Such is the importance of keeping alive the treasury of human and revealed wisdom bequeathed to us. We ignore it at our peril; and it is not only a question of being happy in an after-life. It stands to reason that we cannot be happy in this life if our lives are not grounded in truth and realism. Ignorance may be bliss, But it is not a bliss worthy of human beings. Against this we need to put : "The unexamined life is not worth living" (Socrates)

St. Thomas therefore has much to offer all including the youth of our day. "The philosophy of St. Thomas deserves to be attentively studied by the youth of our day by reason of its spirit of openness and universalism: characteristics which are hard to find in many trends of contemporary thought .. As a Catholic you are heir to mankind's supreme intellectual tradition" (Pope John Paul II)

The courses are designed for anyone and everyone who is interested in the truth. Those who come to the Centre will find that it is marked by a spirit of free communication of ideas in the search for truth. As one of our former students put it: "I go to CTS because it is a real community of scholars." Nor should students feel that the study of philosophy and theology is too difficult for them. Though the subject matters treat of profound questions they are presented in a manner adapted to the students' existing knowledge. The experience of one of the students is typical: "What impresses me most is the depth of knowledge of the subject matter, but presented in an easy to understand manner."

As the saying goes: where there is life there is hope. But that hope is for a better life; which cannot be had without living in the Truth. Reason can take us part of the way but Faith shows us a better way, no longer abstract and impersonal but personal and sublime. This way is for all. Why not seek it out?



ADVERTISEMENT

Just to show that Chesterton is not alone in his view of the perversity of the conditions of much of modern social and economic life, when most of us seem to have succumbed to the conditioning influence of advertising and the media, we set out below a few more quotes attributed to well known citizens of the New World, with a final quote from Chesterton.

Abraham Lincoln
“I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country ... Corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power will endeavour to prolong its reign by working on the prejudices of the people until wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed.”

Stephen Leacock
“Advertising may be described as the science of arresting human intelligence long enough to get money from it.”

Ogden Nash
“I think that I shall never see a billboard lovely as a tree. Perhaps, unless the billboards fall I'll never see a tree at all.”
(This quote is from the last century. To bring things up to date we can observe that in 2006 a law was passed in Florida that gave billboards guaranteed views. One Florida legislator is reported to have said: “Those billboards are important, they feed lots of families, This is a tourism corridor. Tourism depends on billboards, not on trees.” One is reminded of Chesterton's comment upon arriving in New York at night: “How beautiful this must be to someone who cannot read.”)



G.K. Chesterton
“[In the pre-capitalist era] a fairly clear line separated advertisement from art... I should say the first effect of the triumph of the capitalist (if we allow him to triumph) will be that that line of demarcation will entirely disappear. There will be no art that might not just as well be advertisement. I do not necessarily mean that there will be no good art; much of it might be, much of it already is, very good art. You may put it, if you please, in the form that there has been a vast improvement in advertisements ... But the improvement of advertisements is the degradation of artists. It is their degradation for this clear and vital reason: that the artist will work, not only to please the rich, but only to increase their riches; which is a considerable step lower ... And no one who knows the small-minded cynicism of our plutocracy, its secrecy, its gambling spirit, its contempt of conscience, can doubt that the artist-advertiser will often be assisting enterprises over which he will have no moral control, and of which he could feel no moral approval. He will be working to spread quack medicines, queer investments ... And to this base ingenuity he will have to bend the proudest and purest of the virtues of the intellect, the power to attract his brethren, and the noble duty of praise.” (Utopia of Usurers c. I. Art and Advertisement)

Chesterton In Focus

CHESTERTON’S MIND AND METHOD

By D. G. Boland

“The reason for writing this article comes from a realisation that there seems to be something in the cultural milieu of our times that is blocking the acceptance of the thought of such as Chesterton. His writings demonstrate still such amazing insights into the problems of our times that it is puzzling why they are not made more use of. One could say that it is only the old prejudice against Catholic writers and thinkers. We all know the charge that commonly was made that such a person could not have the necessary independence of mind to be seriously considered in intellectual debate. But this is a prejudice tha has long since been shown up for what it is - a shallow excuse not to address the arguments being put forward. Thankfully, our own times are not as noticeably affected by such religious prejudice as were times past. One needs, therefore, to look more closely into the reason for the almost unconscious aversion to giving people such as Chesterton their due. The article explores this phenomenon and I believe gets to the intellectual root of the matter.”

There are two characteristics of Chesterton’s thinking that stand out against the background of the thinking of his opponents. They happen to coincide with the two characteristics of St. Thomas’s mind highlighted by the late Pope John Paul II in an address he gave to Catholic youth. “The philosophy of St. Thomas deserves to be attentively studied and accepted with conviction by the youth of our time by reason of its spirit of **openness and universalism**; characteristics which are hard to find in many trends of contemporary thought.” (highlighting mine) Interestingly enough, the present pope has in recent days pointed to the same characteristics of St. Paul’s mind: “The universalistic vision typical of St. Paul’s personality, at least of the Christian Paul after the event on the road to Damascus, certainly owes its basic impetus to faith in Jesus Christ, inasmuch as the figure of the Risen One goes beyond that of any particularistic restriction.” (Benedict XVI Gen. Aud. 02/07/08)

In fact the lack of these characteristics of mind generally and in particular in the academic world go a long way to explaining the lack of acceptance of Chesterton’s due place in the general culture and in the intellectual society of the universities (something incidentally he has in common with St. Paul and St. Thomas). He is admired for his “brilliance” and then ignored because he defends principles and institutions which are, to the modern mind, “indefensible”. His ideas are accepted, and his propositions quoted in

great number, but out of their context in which is being defended some universal truth (unpalatable to the modern mind).

Such principles and institutions, however, are not defensible only to a closed mind imbued as a consequence with “particularism”. It is not the concentration on the particular, however, that is a fault; only the denial or ignoring of the universal. This goes with the fundamental closing of the mind that characterises much of modern thinking.

Ever since the beginning of modern thought, going right back to Descartes, we have been “sold” the sceptic’s presupposition, that we have to begin with doubt, from which we cannot reach objective reality. The modern mind has been closed to the world outside and therefore is no longer open to truth. Descartes’ argument for this has seemed to be unanswerable. We are deceived in some things. Must it not be at least possible that we are deceived in all things? And if this is a possibility how can we be sure that anything is true?

It is not possible to imagine a more totally closed mind. Upon such an abysmal basis it is not possible to defend any principles whether theoretical or practical. This includes, from a social point of view, the impossibility of defending the fundamental integrity of any institution, human or divine (a position that is most convenient when criticising the Catholic Church). Most, of course, do not, since one cannot, operate upon this sceptical presupposition. But, when it comes to the crunch, many have difficulty in defending their “beliefs” in first principles and in justifying social institutions, no matter how basic, such as the family. For the discussions are required to be conducted in a sceptical manner, which, according to the sophisticated mode of deception, is referred to euphemistically as “critical thinking”. As is evident from its long-standing prominence in modern thinking, it is not easy to dislodge this kind of mental blindness. But to a truly open mind the sophistry of the modern position is obvious. The sceptical presupposition is self-refuting and the fallacies in the argument are palpable. But the refutation will be convincing only if one retains a healthy universalism.

It is not the place here to go fully into refuting this mental dead end. We can, however, indicate some of the obvious deficiencies of adopting such a mental stance. If one person is mistaken in some respects does it necessarily follow that he is mistaken in all respects? The illogical transit is patent. The same applies if we translate that into a problematic argument: it is possible to be mistaken sometimes, therefore it is possible to be mistaken always. But in the way the argument is presented there is a transit from an assertion of a fact in the premises to the assertion of a possibility in the conclusion, which gives the



conclusion an air of verisimilitude. The argument as such however has clearly no logical worth.

Moreover, one is arguing from particular evils (falsehoods) to a universal evil (total lack of any awareness of truth). This is self-refuting for one cannot know what falsity means unless one knows what truth is. Therefore it is intrinsically impossible to recognise a falsity if there is no knowledge of truth. The very fact that we are aware of deception in some cases, then, is proof of being able to recognise the truth.

Following upon this, one cannot know the meaning of truth without knowing things other than the mind. For, if it is anything, truth is a matching of thought and things. Apart from being self-refuting, the denial of our knowledge of things in themselves amounts not only to a closing of the mind but also to a closing of one’s eyes (indeed of our senses generally). That is to say it is refusal to accept the evidence of our senses and intellect, the very two kinds of knowledge that we operate by, and this is imposed upon us by those who pride themselves upon being moved only by evidence.

Chesterton had his own method of dealing with this modern refusal to acknowledge the universality of truth and the particularity of error, to which we will advert below. Sufficient for our purposes here is to draw attention to the fact of his having to operate in an intellectual culture characterised to a large extent by a mentality opposed to openness and universalism. Another way of putting this is to say that he was engaging in debate in an intellectual culture that was decidedly anti-catholic. This need not be taken in the religious sense for “catholic” is simply the Greek for “universal”.

My purpose here is to look at the situation with which Chesterton had to deal mainly from the level of reason or philosophy. For it is here that the mental breakdown has occurred. It is no coincidence that it is connected with an anti-Catholicism in the religious sense, which of course he also famously contended with. But we are talking here primarily about openness and universalism in philosophical discussion. Thus it is that Chesterton saw the modern problem in his time more as a mental breakdown (analogous to insanity) than a moral one. Of course, he could see and was thus able to predict the serious consequences for society, of the difficulties of being able to defend and retain its moral principles and safeguard its

fundamental institutions, without a firm grasp on reality and a commitment to the truth. But, at least in his day, it was apparent that the defence of reason was the urgent need.

Those who know Chesterton will be aware of his association of logic and reason with lunacy rather than sanity. But such use of paradox derived from the nature of the intellectual problem with which he had to deal. For, his opponents, like the lunatic, were operating beyond the range of reason in the sense of logic. They were supposing the inexistence of the immediate principles of the human intellect, upon which logic has to depend. Chesterton's primary task, then, was not to argue from premises universally acknowledged as true or agreed upon to necessary conclusions, but somehow to show the idiocy of denying the obvious. This provides the clue to his method. To accuse him therefore of not being logical (or deductive) is rather to miss the point of what he was trying to do. He did not of course eschew the use of logic in the strict sense where called for but he was a master not only of Analytic but of all the rational arts which Aristotle listed as also including Dialectic (and Sophistic, i.e. in detecting it) Rhetoric and Poietic (or the literary arts), come to be known as Liberal Arts.

He brought his natural genius in all these arts to bear upon moving his compatriots away from their self-imposed exile from normal human company, in the form of absolute scepticism. To do this he used all the means of argument persuasion and enticement we have at our disposal, and did so with a brilliancy that could not be denied. Of strict or direct logical proof there was little call for, because he needed to find a way not to conclusions but to principles. Refutation or indirect logical proof was called for, to show the absurdity of the position adopted by his opponents, virtually all his intellectual compatriots of any note. It also meant the use of dialectical reasoning rather than analytical, the approach of Socrates rather than that of Aristotle, if you like. Typically, the academic world would accuse him of being a sophist, as was the accusation against Socrates by his contemporaries.

When it comes to matters of faith beyond reason strict logical proof, direct or indirect, is not appropriate, but Chesterton here used all the other liberal arts to telling effect. In regard to the liberal arts there has probably been no more complete genius than Chesterton. He was equally, if not more so, at home in the literary arts which would be covered by what Aristotle called Rhetoric and Poietic. These too he brought to bear in defence of the whole truth.

Chesterton was just as telling in his defence of the Catholic faith as in his defence of reason. Indeed, at the end of his life Pope Pius XI conferred upon him the title "Defensor Fidei". But as already noted we are not primarily concerned here with his defence of the Faith, though it should be kept in mind that many combine a virulent anti-Catholicism (rationalism) with their anti-catholic (particularist) philosophy.

Many wonder why, if Chesterton was such an intellectual genius, he was not also a professor,

but contented himself with being a mere journalist. One can perhaps see from the above some reason why he would not have been offered an academic post or, if he had, obtained academic honours. But one also has to remember that it is only in relatively recent times that intellectual excellence has been generally associated with a university position. In fact the particularism that dominated and still dominates academic studies (with the closure of the mind adverted to almost a pre-requirement) is inimical to the universalism of people such as Chesterton. He was in this regard a victim of his own catholicity in more senses than one.

But even today literary and poetic productions are more to be found outside academia than within it. So it is not surprising that he found his place in the intellectual culture of the time outside the universities. As it was, journalism was the most accessible way for someone such as Chesterton to communicate his ideas and defend his faith. The universalist issues were such as to affect everyone and of the greatest practical social significance. They were more than matters of "academic interest"; the fate of western civilization (derived as it was from Catholicism) was under threat.

This is relevant to Chesterton's championing of the common man as the last repository of common sense and sanity in a world where the so called sages or men of science had lost touch with reality. For the clever may be able to dupe the leaders of a society, but they cannot fool all the people, especially those closest to the ground (reality). Similarly, he saw the oppressed poor as the last refuge of honesty and justice. In the world of practical politics he exercised his own "option for the poor". Some see Chesterton's thoughts in this regard as overly romanticized – something akin to his belief in the symbolic truth of fairy tales. But they fail to see, as he did, the fund of natural wisdom and prudence that belongs to human nature

despite the effects of original sin. In our day, with the extent of brainwashing carried out through the modern means of communication, one may begin to doubt how any wisdom and goodness could remain. But it is impossible to eradicate entirely the natural goodness and insight of the common people.

This is counter to the conventional wisdom that financial success and social position are the marks of intelligence and enterprise and the fact that the equivalent of particularism in the social order, namely, the politico-economic theory of Capitalism, would want us to believe that the poor are victims of their own ignorance or lack of initiative. It is in defence of the poor that Chesterton's anger almost got the better of him: "Most of the excuses which serve the capitalists as masks are, of course, the excuses of hypocrites." (Utopia of Usurers)

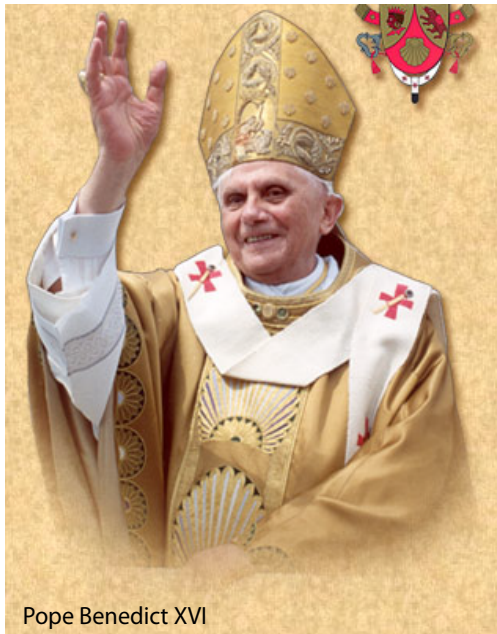
Finally, we might note a difference between the universalist and the particularist in the approach to the discussion of matters. The former is interested, as Aristotle noted, more in the essentials than in the accidentals, and in the substance of things rather than in the details.

Moreover, such a one is more concerned to know the truth about things than the opinions people (no matter how expert) hold on the matter. As St. Thomas remarks in this regard: "Studium philosophiae non est ad hoc quod sciatur quid homines senserint, sed qualiter se habet veritas rerum". (In de caelo, bk. I, l. 22, n. 8) Elsewhere St. Thomas made this clear in other terms: "it does not belong to the perfection of my intellect to know what many have said but how the truth of things has itself."

The particularists, by contrast, are dedicated to detail and citation of opinions on the question. Almost of necessity they are more interested in discussing the opinions of those expert in the subject than in addressing the truth or otherwise of the subject itself. For they exclude, a priori, the possibility of arriving at the truth. Hence, their works are loaded with bibliographies of great length.

This is not to say that learning is unimportant. Aristotle, St. Thomas and Chesterton were prodigious in their knowledge of what had been said on the subjects discussed by them. It is rather a question of the relative importance to be given to learning as opposed to the ascertainment of the truth of the question, i.e. to the acquisition of wisdom with regard to the matter concerned. Chesterton, like St. Thomas, relied on his memory for much of his use of authorities. The modern scholar may be able to point to instances where Chesterton or St. Thomas has misquoted, or cited the wrong author. But this is not an essential defect; it does not necessarily affect the substance of the argument.

Chesterton's conversion to Catholicism simply completed in his mind, and in truth, the openness and universalism which belonged to his philosophy. Nothing seemed more natural to him than the marriage of reason with faith to be found in Catholicism. Yet the anti-Catholicism in both senses of the age in which he lived, and of our own age, refused and will continue to refuse him his rightful claim to greatness.



Pope Benedict XVI

the subjective factor. There are all sorts of objective factors too that cause a variation in price over time and place without any suggestion of injustice

However, whatever the reason, the business of one who engages in this special kind of exchange (well known to Aristotle and St. Thomas) had a name and a nature which distinguished it from ordinary exchange or trade. Moreover, St. Thomas is primarily concerned with the uses of the terms negotiatio and lucrum in the moral context of this special form of business being used badly, and the profit therefrom, i.e. where one seeks profit without limit. The closest we have to it today is "dealing". but even this does not distinguish between the good and the bad. It is most confusing and misleading then when in modern translations of their works the word "trader", in its sense of an ordinary exchanger, is used.

St. Thomas is not saying that this second kind of exchange cannot be engaged in without blame. The profit therefrom can be legitimate if limited to one's natural needs for material things or by one's reasonable desires for things measurable in monetary terms. This makes the moral judgment difficult in regard to any individual person. One would have to know a lot about his or her circumstances.

But St. Thomas and we are concerned with principles not with cases. The activity can be judged in general terms. When the leaders of society, led by the "intelligence" of their advisers, do not see the distinctions, or confuse all trading as of one kind only, all sorts of social and economic problems go unaddressed.

Chesterton was focused upon the more fundamental structural defects in the modern economy, as have been the social encyclicals. The modern economists, however, are concentrating more on the economy's functional aspects, taking their ideas mainly from commerce (and finance – which we do not deal with here as it is material for the treatment of a separate question, that of usury). By virtue of their perspective the economists do not see any moral dimension in economics – it disappears altogether with the disappearance of the notion of the just price. Everything other than the activity of money-making is simply a given, no questions asked, and money has no "colour".

That is what is meant by saying the modern economists and the theologians and moral philosophers, with whom Chesterton may be classified, are at cross purposes. They might as well be studying two different worlds. The moderns tend to think of Capitalism as a sophisticated money-driven system "creating" wealth and even driving progress in technology and production. The fact that the benefits of such wealth-creation and technical progress seem to be disproportionately enjoyed by a relatively small part of the population is something that does not enter into their considerations. It is just the way things are.

Their world is the world of money, commerce and finance. These are the realities that dominate the economic order. Might it not be that the world that the modern economists believe they are investigating is in fact the unnatural exchange economy known to Aristotle and St. Thomas but "realised" in modern times to an extent that

they could not have imagined? Might it not be that the real economy is the natural one that struggles to function under the incubus of such a disordered scramble for wealth (money)?

This would explain why there is such a disconnect between the thought of Chesterton and that of serious students of the modern economy. They are studying two different worlds. It happens that what Chesterton is examining is the fundamental part of the real economic world. The economists are basically studying an aspect of the real economy which has the reality only of a disorder or evil in the exchange system of the body economic; it is a subject matter or economic study only as the study of a disease is a necessary part of the study of health.

These two studies need to be corrected and then re-connected, the first by including once more Aristotle and St. Thomas's fine analysis of commerce in its twofold nature. We need to know about that part of the economy that the economists study; which today is "where the action is". But it cannot be studied simply as a socio-economic pathology which is not recognised as such.

Therefore the philosophy of Distributism needs to be supplemented by an explanation of the modern exchange system and a critique of its disordered state. We need to cure modern economic science of its virtue-blindness, and hence vice-blindness, the relevant virtue being the social one of justice. This abstraction in the name of science, or stance of neutrality, in social studies of itself engenders a distorted perspective – which allows many injustices to pass unacknowledged. There is not much prospect of a rapprochement between the Catholic social moralists and the "scientific" economists whilst ever this warped vision persists.

On the other hand, the Catholic moral critique of modern economic life and thought will continue to be hampered without a clearer vision of St. Thomas's distinctions regarding trade and profit. Without such an addendum to his critique Chesterton's valuable insights in his social philosophy will continue to go unacknowledged and unappreciated, not just in the academic world, but also among most Catholic intellectuals many of whom are working earnestly in this field of socio-economic studies.

“Might it not be that the market that the modern economists believe they are investigating is in fact the unnatural exchange economy known to Aristotle and St. Thomas, but ‘realised’ in modern times to an extent that they could not have envisaged?”

***Appendix:
The question of distributive justice is not always easy to distinguish from that of social charity and indeed a sense of justice by itself will not be enough. Most fundamentally, as the Church has always insisted, there needs to be a change of heart. That is to say it is a matter of will or love, which means working towards what is now called “world solidarity” or “the civilization of love”. But how far we are from that may be gathered by the difficulty of getting the rich nations to cancel the intolerable debts incurred by the poor nations.***

Below is an extract from a pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops of Kenya “On the Burden of International Debt” dated May 17, 2005.

“In our attempt to understand and present in its proper light the issue of debt cancellation we need to turn to the Word of God. We would like to focus the attention of all on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, found in the Gospel of Luke (16:19-31). The rich man can easily be seen as representing the North, while poor Lazarus the underdeveloped South ... The efforts at debt cancellation that were made till now could be compared to the scraps that Lazarus hoped he could feed on at the rich man's table: they are illusory promises without real substances ...”

As to the terrible human consequences of such hardheartedness the bishops point out: “Visible damage has already been done. Together with all the bishops of Africa and Madagascar we see a clear link between the HIV/AIDS pandemic and poverty.”

Chesterton sums up the essential error of Liberal Capitalism in his commentary on Dickens: "... Dickens was a real Liberal demanding the return of real Liberalism. Dickens was there to remind people that England had rubbed out two words of the revolutionary motto, had left only liberty and destroyed Equality and Fraternity. In this book, "Hard Times", he specially champions equality. In all his books he champions fraternity. (from "Appreciations and Criticisms of the works of Charles Dickens" - Chapter on "Hard Times").

The views of the writers of the particular articles are not necessarily the views of the CTS.

BOOK REVIEW

JOHN YOUNG’S SCOPE OF PHILOSOPHY

reviewed by Don G. Boland LLB (Syd)
PhD (Angelicum) 28 July 2008

Can we imagine knowing anything much about the world without the microscope and the telescope? Our knowledge of the world around us has become so much dependent upon such instruments of science, becoming more and more sophisticated and “technical” in their use, that without them we appear to be as children or naifs if we try to explain things without relying upon those who are expert in their use. Yet it is easily forgotten that these are relatively recent inventions in the long course of the history of human knowledge and science.

It is important to appreciate that such artificial aids to our understanding need to be used with discretion. Marvellous as they are we can become overawed by their power. We ought from time to time to put them aside and look at the world with our own natural eyesight. That is to say we should not forgo our common sense and the philosophy of life that we are able to build upon this natural basis of all knowledge.

Almost without our realising it, the possession of these powerful instruments of modern science has changed the “focus” of the eyes of our understanding. We need to be careful that these magnifying glasses do not in fact narrow our focus instead of enlarge it; that they do not direct our attention away from the real world rather than towards it, according to the warning contained in the celebrated French saying: ce que l’on voit se cache ce que l’on ne voit pas; “that which one sees hides that which one does not see”. Such an artificial concentration of attention can mean that we miss seeing much that is nearby, and otherwise obvious, to ordinary eyesight.

The astronomers, for instance, tell us there is no evidence of God in the outer reaches of the Universe; the bio-chemists tell us that there is no evidence of an invisible principle of life in the innermost parts of the human body and endeavour to explain its vitality without recourse to any soul. Yet these intangibles are conclusions of the natural and superior wisdom of the sages of mankind, such as Plato and Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas, and are almost universally recognised, if indistinctly, by people of ordinary common sense. One has only to refer to the common language of all peoples to see this is so.

John Young has done us a great service by reminding us of the real world around us, which we have almost forgotten about because we have come to neglect “old” Philosophy in our admiration for the latest science. For there is much, indeed in a real sense everything, within the Scope of Philosophy. The title is significant. We do not need a telescope to see a distant God; the Supreme Being, as a conclusion of reason, is within the scope of philosophy. We do not need a microscope

to observe the soul; it is within the scope of natural philosophy as known to Aristotle, no mean example of human intelligence (il maestro di color chesanno; “the master of those who know”. Inferno 4, 131).

It is of course an ambitious project, to deal with the scope of philosophy within 340 pages. Indeed, it can only be an introduction, but it is a necessary re-introduction for many of us. The author’s plan is a good one. A brief survey of the history of philosophy is a good way to start, dealt with by a degree of familiarity with the subjects and a clarity of exposition that will satisfy I believe both expert and general reader. Then follows a comparison of philosophy with other kinds of knowledge; beginning with common sense knowledge, the important connection with which is sadly overlooked in many other books on philosophy. He includes here, of course, the much vexed matter of the relation of philosophy to science as understood today. Necessarily, this can only be touched upon in a short overview. Many aspects would need further clarification. Finally, he mentions the relation of philosophy to Sacred Theology. As an evident admirer of St. Thomas he brings out well the intimate connection but clear distinction between these two.

As a concession to the somewhat excessive concentration in modern philosophy upon knowledge as such, rather than starting with the study of reality as obviously known, the author deals next with the nature of knowledge, devoting three chapters to it, treating first of knowledge in general, then of sense knowledge and intellectual knowledge. This I believe is a good strategy. For, unfortunately, the main difficulty today with studying Philosophy is the underlying scepticism that seeks to undermine our confidence in human reason.

Following upon this is a chapter with a critique of various schools of modern and contemporary philosophy. This fits appropriately after the discussion of knowledge. Then there is a chapter on human nature which also appropriately follows the treatment of human knowledge. Within the confines of such a short treatment many issues have to be dealt with rather perfunctorily. Some “technical” terms of Thomistic philosophy may cause some difficulty. But, overall, the author succeeds to maintain a clear and coherent presentation. One of the virtues of this author is his ability to present concepts and principles in an easy to understand manner.

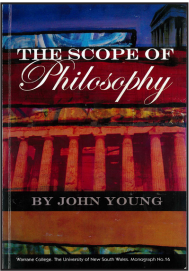
A chapter outlining the classification of the various parts of philosophy follows. This makes use of St. Thomas’s classification of theoretical sciences in his commentary on Boethius’s De Trinitate, of which there is a translation in English under the title The Division and Methods of the Sciences. To this he adds the division of the practical sciences. It is the traditional Aristotelian division. The terminology may prove a bit off-putting to some, but the author generally explains it clearly

and simply. As to the content of the division one might quibble here and there about details but it gives a good overview. I would have liked a bit more to have been said about the rational art of Dialectic as defined by Aristotle and its relation to Logic. Omitting it leaves Logic a bit stark on the philosophical landscape. Aristotle in fact includes Logic in a whole complex of rational arts.

The remaining chapters deal with “some questions in philosophy”. It is a good sample of the more principal parts of philosophy, including Metaphysics, Ethics and “Poetics”. This last one concerns the philosophy of the fine and useful arts (though he treats almost exclusively of the fine arts). It ought not to be confused with “Poietics” as used by Aristotle, which is concerned with the literary arts such as drama and poetry. Finally, there is a chapter on the importance of philosophy, perhaps something that ought to have been placed at the beginning.

But there can be no doubting that John Young has produced a book that is of the utmost importance to our time. There is no more crying need today than a return to reason in the ordinary sense of looking at the world with our own eyes and reasoning things out. The value of the telescope and the microscope is not to be denied. But they have not necessarily extended the scope of our understanding; rather have they helped to fill in the details of what lies beyond the ordinary range of our senses. Philosophy is a universal kind of knowledge, founded on our common knowledge of things, on experience available to all. Science, especially modern science, tends more and more to be a series of specialisms, in many respects the preserve of a few in whom the rest of us must put our trust. An increase in specialised knowledge does not, or should not, change our common sense grasp of things and our basic philosophy of life.

Unfortunately, the modern philosophical fashion of ignoring the obvious and promoting a radical scepticism has encouraged many to endeavour to reconstruct reality upon speculative theories, purportedly based on the findings of highly specialised sciences, that fly in the face of common sense. John Young’s book, hopefully, will show up the spuriousness of this “scientific” vision of the world. It will certainly prove to be a tonic for those wanting to see a restoration of a sane philosophy to its rightful place in the culture and educational institutions of our society.



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adopting Aristotle’s strictures against this kind of profit (lucrum). All such kind of “business” (negotiatio), i.e. buying in order to sell again at a profit, because their immediate object is the possession of (more) money, considered in itself (secundum se consideratum), has a certain turpitude (quamdam turpitudinem) (II-II, q. 77, art. 4. c). But that is because such a way of operating in the exchange system (the market), considered in itself lacks a due end; it is not natural, for a natural end bespeaks a limit. It can, however, be made good by the business person subordinating it voluntarily to natural needs or reasonable ends in relation to our need for material things.

Now it is clear that the modern economists, taking their lead from the practice of modern commerce, see no difference between the two kinds of trade (CMC and MCM), and correspondingly between the two kinds of “profit”, the former of which is morally unquestionable, but the latter questionable. Indeed, as indicated above the modern economists have opted to defend a notion of profit and the profit motive that is morally illegitimate. It cannot possibly be a regulator of a business in any morally acceptable sense. For, it signifies the absence of any rational regulation or moderation in the business of “making money”.

Catholics, then, have a problem here of joining issue on this matter with the modern mind. It is a perfect example of equivocation leading to sophistical reasoning. The two kinds of exchange or trade or commerce and, correspondingly, the two meanings of profit in the discussion are confused as one. Since the notion of profit has become associated with ordinary or natural exchange (CMC) it must be seen as good. When no distinction is made between this and the other more sophisticated exchange process (MCM) it becomes impossible to assert that profit in any sense, and the corresponding profit motive, is not good. The strictures of the “mediaevals” against profit (lucrative profits) is then made to look ridiculous and out of touch with real economic life in the 21st century.

To a certain extent Catholic intellectuals writing in this area have been taken in by this sophism. There are some who are uncomfortable with the Church’s critical attitude to Capitalism and

read the last encyclical as softening its stance. Indeed, without the necessary distinctions being brought into play it can be seen how it is possible to so (mis)read the encyclical.

Chesterton, however, as mentioned above, had a kind of intuition into what was wrong (see his discussion on “trade”, and its perverse nature as a modern phenomenon). But without the necessary distinctions outlined above it was not possible for even him to speak clearly and definitively about modern business and profits.

To summarise (I have discussed this question at length in other articles which can be found on the website www.cts.org.au, and also on the forum site of the Chesterton website of Second Spring), some profits are naturally good obviously, as when applied to what the shoemaker makes over and above his expenses; in this material sense it means simply the shoes (expressed in terms of money value) he can offer for sale. But he is not interested in the shoes for his own use. That is where the social system of exchange or trade comes in. What he is interested in is not even the money he can obtain for them, but what useful things (for himself and his family) he can buy with the money. That is the real end of his “business” of shoemaking, and something eminently natural and rational. His engagement in exchange is the model for all natural exchange (CMC).

Other profits are not from these kinds of business. There is a way of doing business that operates in quite an opposite way. What is this kind of business? One does not produce any new material good or service, but first buys something, not to use it but to sell it on “at a profit” (MCM). As noted above, St. Thomas applies the word “business” (negotiatio) in this context only to this kind of business, not the other. It is a special kind of economic activity (like money itself sui generis), something “artificial” (in a moral sense), non-natural (but not for that necessarily unnatural). But it is unnatural if the profit is something sought for its own sake or without a (natural) limit; if it is reduced to the desire for money as such.

What is this kind of “profit”? Note here again, that in this context this is the only thing that St. Thomas calls

“profit” (lucrum), intending something artificially (or accidentally) produced in the exchange process. It is not something like the equivalent of shoes that one had made and for which in exchange one obtains other things of equal value. The “profits” of the shoemaker’s “business” is not what St. Thomas is referring to. There is no question of its being anything but good, considered in itself.

The kind of exchange with which St. Thomas is concerned is not based upon equivalence of value of two things in the process of selling one’s own products (or services) and buying others, but on the differences in value in the process of buying and selling the same thing. The whole object of this second (and socially secondary) kind of activity is not quite “to buy cheap and sell dear”, but certainly to buy cheaper than one sells, or sell dearer than one has bought. If one focuses exclusively on this kind of exchange (as modern minds, especially economists, tend to do), out the window goes the idea of equivalence of value or natural justice in exchanges (a just price). Some economic theorists then stupidly believe that all exchanges are based upon inequality of values.

The idea of profit here, then, is that of “making money” in the sense of the difference in monetary values resulting from the transactions, the “creation” of wealth (conceived as money). It is a pure money profit. Nothing more in terms of material utilities (such as shoes) has come into existence, but the trader is richer. How can that occur? It can only come about because of the potential for differences in the values, or fluctuations in the prices of things. Prices fluctuate (accidentally) for all sorts of reasons, objective and subjective. From the very nature of how prices are set there is scope for differences in value. For they are practical and based upon a common estimate of the uses of things that are not exactly determined (non punctualiter as St. Thomas says).

A just price rather expresses a range than an exact ratio, even though it must be set at an exact ratio where money is concerned. Hence, there is always scope for “negotiation” about the price. A shrewd negotiator can easily profit from this inherent quality of the pricing process. We might call this



RENAISSANCE SCHOLASTICISM

DOMINIC BANEZ & FRANCIS VITORIA

Dominic Bañez (1528–1604) studied under Melchior Cano at Salamanca and later held for 20 years the “Chair of Prime” at the university.

While at Avila he became spiritual director and confessor of St. Teresa and remained so until her death in 1582. He was the defender of her reform as well as her writings. His influence explains the Thomistic cast of mind underlying her spirituality.

Bañez ‘s commentary on the “Summa Theologica” is perhaps the most profound and exact written in the sixteenth century. No one of his contemporaries grasped better than he the meaning and implications of St. Thomas’ doctrine of being. Provoked by the misunderstandings of his confreres, he complained: “And this is what St. Thomas so often exclaimed, and what Thomists will not hear, that esse is the actuality of every form or nature ...” (Commentary on Prima Pars of the Summa, vol.1).

Both Capreolus and Cajetan come under his criticism for failing to understand this essential point of Thomism. Cajetan, he says, reduced the esse of a substance to the substance itself and failed to see that it is the act whereby a substance is a being; moreover, he identified esse with the actual being acquired by a substance at the end of its production and not with the primary and most perfect actuality within a being.

Although statements like these give the impression that Bañez had a deep understanding of the Thomistic notion of being, other remarks of his give the reader pause. For example, he considers it only probable that St. Thomas taught the real distinction between essence and existence, both of which he describes as “things” (res).

Francis of Vitoria (1483-1546) was one of the first outstanding Dominican scholastics of Spanish birth. He was a student and professor at Paris for 18 years during which time he became acquainted with Erasmus, Juan Luis Vives and other leading humanists of the period.

Then he became professor of theology at the College of San Gregorio in Valladolid until he filled by election the principal chair of theology at the illustrious University of Salamanca (founded by Alfonso IX of Leon c. 1227), considered in mediaeval history as one of the four great universities of Europe, along with Paris, Oxford and Bologna. It became a strong centre of the Catholic Restoration.

For twenty years (1526-46), at the beginning of each formal opening of the university, Vitoria delivered a public address in which he discussed important current world problems. The notes of 12 of these were subsequently published and it was on the basis of “De Indis” and “De Iure Belli Hispanorum in Barbaros” that Vitoria was later acclaimed as the founder of modern international law. These lectures were occasioned by the discovery of the New World and the consequent discussions on the rights of the Spaniards to colonize the new lands and to trade with and Christianize the natives.

According to Vitoria political society (respublica) is a perfect, self-sufficient society, a moral and juridical person. It is a natural, not a conventional, society with its end set by nature. Actual states are the result of positive human acts but human beings are obliged by natural law to live in some form of political society, outside of which no good or full human life is possible.

The end of society is twofold: to promote the common good and virtuous life of its citizens and to protect their rights. Authority is an essential property of the state, for without it the organic unity of the citizens and their activity, necessary for the attainment of the temporal common good, would be impossible. Particular forms of government however depend on the will of the citizens.

Beyond individual states there is a larger society constituted by the whole human family. International society possesses its own authority which is immanent in the whole of human kind. From this universal authority derive the laws that establish the rights and correlative duties of the different states. The sum of these laws forms the “law of nations” (ius gentium) which is partly made up of conclusions drawn from the principles of natural law by natural reason and partly of positive customs and treatises between nations.

Vitoria established the chief rights of every nation whether great or small as the right to existence the right to juridical authority; the right to independence (except where a nation is juridically and politically so immature as to be incapable of self-rule); the right to free communication and trade; and the right – and the duty – of every state to intervene in defense of nations victimized by domestic tyrants or threatened or attacked by stronger nations.

Two of Vitoria’s most illustrious pupils during his professorship at Salamanca were Melchior Cano (1509- 60), the author of “De Locis Theologicis”, a systematic account of the sources of theology, and Dominic Soto (1494-1560), who taught at Salamanca and commented upon Aristotle and Peter Lombard.



Francis Vitoria: Leading Domican Scholar of his period

Moreover, the modern mind is locked into thinking of social matters in materialist terms, and thus conceives money as the driving force or motor of all economic behaviour, which it is metaphorically only in the case of the second kind of exchange (MCM). On top of the perversion of language, therefore, in talking of private property where it has been almost totally misappropriated and of free competition in a situation of virtual monopoly, we have to contend with trade and commerce being practically identified with its unnatural mode.

This has had significant implications for the way people conduct their economic affairs. What in the past was looked upon as an unworthy way to engage in trade, namely, seeking to amass one’s stock of money without limit by the simple process of buying and selling the same things and so making a profit, consumed as it were by the love of money (philargyria), came first to be regarded as a legitimate way to do business and then when fortunes were made by such businessmen or “entrepreneurs” even came to be looked upon as the very way business is done. The modern mind cannot understand why St. Thomas and the theologians and moralists of his time should have condemned this kind of business. For, in modern economics, this pursuit of profit (without any reason to be limited) is made the very thing that drives the economy. Such successful enterprise should be commended not condemned.

It is in this context that the notion of “profit” must be discussed. St. Thomas uses the notion (lucrum) specially in the discussion of the secondary kind of exchange (MCM), as he does also with the notion of business (negotiatio) (cf. II-II, q. 77). Their modern use, however, for reasons that will be clear, has a more general sense, being extended to include the first kind of exchange (CMC). They are used in reference to any kind of commercial activity, naturally enough, since the modern mind, as noted above, makes no distinction between the kinds of exchange. The first kind of exchange according to St. Thomas, however, does not properly pertain

“The economists cannot understand what the theologians are talking about; it all seems quite naive and simplistic. The theologians cannot quite match their ideas with the working of the modern economy; it all seems impossibly complicated and difficult to understand, as it must be if its object is something unnatural.”

This notion of oeconomicos in St. Thomas ought not to be taken in too restricted a sense. It is meant to bring out the fact that the first kind of exchange (CMC) is directly aimed at satisfying the ordinary needs of life. It would include therefore the multifarious trades (such as shoemaking) and activities productive of all kinds of goods and services, whereby people are able to obtain a reasonable living; it would include all activities ordered to

exchange except those “business” activities directly aimed at increasing one’s stock of money by buying and then re-selling the same things (MCM).

All economic activity, however, is seen in modern eyes as directed to the making of a profit in the sense of making money – indeed it is all seen to be motivated in the same way as the person who engages in what Aristotle and St. Thomas call unnatural exchange (MCM in its second sense), needing to start with money (capital – already possessed because one is a capitalist, or has borrowed from same), and engaging in business (whether productive or not) for the purpose of increasing their stock of money (or its equivalent), called economic “growth”, without limit. All kinds of occupations are therefore conceived as if they were all modes of the same kind of “business”.

All businesses, therefore, are the same from the modern economic standpoint, their raison d’être being to make a profit. Does anyone suggest that they aim at making a loss? It is no wonder that there is great difficulty in applying Aristotle’s and St. Thomas’s economic analysis in this regard to modern conditions. One has to say that hardly anyone gets it quite right, even among Catholic theologians and moral philosophers. It is also not surprising when modern economists look with disdain on their efforts to criticise profit-making.

The discussion is inevitably at cross purposes. The economists cannot understand what the theologians are talking about; it all seems quite naive and simplistic. The theologians cannot quite match their ideas with the workings of the modern economy; it all seems impossibly complicated and difficult to understand, as it must be if its object is something unnatural. What the encyclical Centesimus Annus has to say on the matter is: “Profit is a regulator of the life of a business, but it is not the only one; other human and moral factors must also be considered which, in the long term, are at least equally important for the life of a business”. This is all very true. But

it does not make use of the important distinctions with regard to the notion of profit made by St. Thomas.

Just as some exchanges are naturally good (CMC), so their profits are naturally good. For their profits are not money as such but the things produced or provided from the activities engaged in. That does not mean that such profit cannot be badly used from another perspective; whiskey may be used to get drunk; nor that a business making a legitimate profit cannot be behaving badly in another respect, e.g. in relation to

its treatment of employees and its customers. But these are all moral considerations or regulators outside the matter being discussed here.

The intent of the argument about the legitimacy of profit or the profit-motive concerns the



Milton Friedman

nature of such themselves. St. Thomas does not use the word “profit” in the case of exchanges that are naturally good (ironically, there the concept of gain is used to indicate a proof of inequality or injustice in such exchanges). He reserves it for the money profit (lucrum) made from the secondary exchange activity (MCM). For it is only here that the question of its legitimacy or otherwise is raised. The goodness of “profit” in relation to the first kind of exchange is self-evident. It simply means the equivalent received of the product offered in exchange, expressed in terms of its monetary value.

In St. Thomas’s analysis not all money profit obtained by buying and selling the same things is illegitimate. Like money itself it is good or bad depending on whether it is ordered to natural and rational purposes which in this context is the satisfaction of one’s natural needs or reasonable wants, taking into account one’s family and community needs and wants. If it is not so ordered but sought without any such limit, then it is not good.

There is then a sense in which the word “profit” is to be taken as bad or illegitimate. It does not immediately impinge upon anyone except the one who engages in it (for it is a form of the vice of avarice). But it can become socially significant if many engage in it or are encouraged to indulge their desire for money without limit. When the encyclical says that “profit is a regulator of the life of a business”, it is necessarily taking profit in the good sense. So far as the “business” (e.g. shoemaking) is concerned it is the fundamental regulator – not much point in carrying it on at a loss.

It is true that there are other “regulators” (moral factors) involved even if one’s motive for this kind of profit is a good thing. But that does not address the precise question of whether the motive for the other kind of profit (money increase - lucrum) is to be considered good or bad. As indicated, the encyclical is taking profit as something good in itself and it is true that other considerations or circumstances can make the profitable transactions not good.

But without taking into account the distinctions brought out by St. Thomas the argument about the legitimacy or otherwise of profit and the profit motive can still remain at cross purposes. Indeed, St. Thomas begins his analysis by

root of the modern social problem of poverty was man made, that the condition of impoverishment of the worker was not something necessary or natural, but a radical failure of justice, not because of a deficiency in the institution of property but because of a deficiency in the institution of government, which had failed and was failing in its obligations in distributive justice.

The word “Capitalism” as applied to the actual economy is another evil euphemism, for it suggests an economy characterised by people who have capital or property. But in fact in such an economic system the great majority have little or no capital, but depend for their livelihood on the wages of labour. We should be honest enough to call things by their proper names. “The truth is that what we call Capitalism ought to be called Proletarianism.” (from “Outline of Sanity”)

It is reasonably clear, then, that Distributism, as championed by Chesterton, is the social philosophy that best articulates the alternative explanation of the social economy that is necessary for us to have in answer to the false ideologies of Liberal Capitalism and Radical Socialism. It is also the social philosophy that most closely accords with the teachings of the social encyclicals and Catholic moral theology, especially with regard to the right of property and the rights of those dispossessed of property. For the key to these is an understanding of justice, and particularly distributive justice.

A NECESSARY ADDENDUM

But we have yet to understand why academic intellectuals specialising in the study of the social economy (the economists) regard Distributism with such disdain. Part of it can be put down to the anti-catholic culture discussed in the previous article “Chesterton’s Mind and Method” with its underlying materialist and/or atheist philosophy. This would account for the academic intellectuals’ preference for Liberal Capitalism or Radical Socialism as socio-economic philosophies. But the professional economists seem generally to regard both Distributism and the teachings of the Church on economic matters as altogether unrelated to the real world.

In order to explain this and defend the reality of Chesterton’s social philosophy (and the Church’s moral theology) in relation to the subject matter of Economics it is necessary to examine further the condition of the modern economy.

There is another disorder of the exchange economy which if not properly understood inhibits the full understanding of the social problem and of how Capitalism works its injustice. Chesterton seems to have intuited it without clearly making the distinctions necessary. It is a disorder that exists within the sphere of exchange or commerce itself. It has to do with the notions of trade and profit. Its understanding requires a careful distinction of money from wealth and of the twofold meanings of trade and profit.

St. Thomas, following Aristotle, distinguished

between natural and artificial wealth, of which latter money is the prime example (cf. I-II, q. 2, a. 1.) Shoes, for instance, are natural wealth. It is to be carefully noted that “natural” here is not taken in a physical but in a moral sense. For what makes things such as shoes natural wealth is their natural utility for satisfying a human need, in this case the protection of one’s feet. Natural wealth is characterised by the fact that there is a natural limit to our need for them. We do not desire them without limit.

Money, on the other hand, is artificial wealth. Again the term “artificial” does not have its primary meaning (for shoes are works of art) but is also taken in a moral sense, being defined relative to its end (which is the facilitation of the exchange of natural wealth – a purely rational end). It signifies something conventional, whose utility is not something natural in things so used but arises purely from social convention or agreement. The important difference for our purposes here is that there is no natural limit to the desire for money itself.

According to a rational view of things and goods, our natural wealth is sufficient for the satisfaction of our needs. This is subject to a condition: “Seek you first the kingdom of God and his justice”; that is to say even our material welfare depends not only upon our productiveness, but also and more so upon our observation of the social moral order. Our desires for material goods are however not infinite.

However, the desire for money does not have in itself any reason to say “enough”. For it has no character at all of an end. It is a pure (rational) means. One can see the importance of the distinction in this regard when one looks at modern economics. For it imputes to the desire for wealth of any kind an infinite character. Our wants are unlimited. The “economic problem” in fact is seen as one of “choice”, of selecting which of our numberless wants to satisfy in a world of limited resources. Our natural wealth can never be sufficient to satisfy our desires for material goods. The economic condition is inevitably one of “scarcity”. Such a viewpoint makes no distinction between wealth and money; indeed, the concept of wealth is equated with money, and the desire for wealth with the desire for money.

This changes our whole perspective on matters economic. It shifts our attention onto trade or commerce, and most importantly to the use of trade or exchange in which money becomes an end instead of a means. Such an economic world

becomes entirely focused upon its commercial (and financial) aspects. But, in order to follow this, we need to employ a distinction from Aristotle with regard to the notion of trade, or exchange, or commerce (they all here mean the same thing – except in English “trade” is also used in another sense, not relevant here, of a productive occupation).

Aristotle distinguished exchange into two kinds or modes, which he called “natural” and “unnatural” (cf. Politics, 1, 8 1236b 27-39). Following St. Thomas’s commentary it would be better to call them “natural” and “artificial”, which distinction is related to the one above to do with wealth. As we shall see there is a place for using the term “unnatural”. But, the essential distinction between the two kinds of exchange is determined by reference to their ends. The appropriate exchange being considered is one involving the use of money. A natural exchange is simply one in which money is the medium of the exchange of two goods between two parties to the exchange. It is called natural because the end or purpose of the exchange on both sides is natural wealth. Money fulfils its purpose as the rational and conventional instrument or medium of the exchange.

An artificial exchange, on the other hand, is one in which money (artificial wealth) is the immediate end or purpose of the whole process of exchange (selling and buying). We can symbolise each process by CMC in the first case and MCM in the second (using C to signify natural wealth or goods and M to signify money or artificial wealth). As St. Thomas notes, this second kind of exchange (MCM) can again be divided into two, for though it has no natural end it can voluntarily be and ought to be ordered to the natural end of exchange which is the same as that of the first kind of exchange (CMC), namely, the obtaining of a sufficiency of material goods. However, if it is not so ordered, and money is sought for its own sake (i.e. without end or limit) it becomes an irrational activity or unnatural exchange.

Thus, in any exchange involving money (or trade or commerce) we have to be careful to identify if it is natural in the first sense (CMC), or artificial (MCM) but not unnatural and hence natural in a secondary sense, or if it is artificial and unnatural. It is only this last kind which is morally blameworthy and can be (if extensively engaged in) socially harmful. The theory of Capitalism and modern economics do not know any such distinctions and, if anything, conceive trade and commerce in terms of the last kind. For money is thought to be the principal end of economic activity, and the desire for wealth in the sense of money (since they are treated as the same) the supreme motive of homo oeconomicus. Indeed, modern economics inevitably treats the unnatural form of exchange as the paradigm of all trade and commerce.

FEATURE ARTICLE

THE END OF EVOLUTIONISM

Dr. Don Boland, Director of Studies and principal lecturer in philosophy of the Centre for Thomistic Studies Inc., examines in this article the philosophical presuppositions of the theory of Evolution as generally understood today.



These presuppositions are simply taken to be the intellectual underpinnings of the scientific theory. This, however, as the article is designed to show, is but another example of facts being fitted into one’s already chosen world-view. It is argued by those already committed to a materialist philosophy that the scientific facts support such a general materialist philosophy, when what is happening is that a materialist interpretation of Evolution (a philosophical position in this regard which we may call Evolutionism) is gratuitously being imposed upon the facts.

The primary object of this article is not so much Evolution as Evolutionism as it names the modern materialistic theory (as it has evolved), the origin of which is attributed in modern times to Charles Darwin. We will also give some attention to the notion of evolution itself, which in its original signification is a latin-derived name for a “turning out”, something that has been in physical nature since time began, and whose meaning can be applied analogously to all sorts of existing things and groups of things. Thus, it is not a matter of denying the fact of evolution which is ubiquitous in living nature, but of understanding its meaning and scope. There are many theories of Evolution and our concern should be to find what is true and false among them.

One curious thing about the modern Theory of Evolution associated with the name of Darwin is that it appears to apply only to the past. It wishes to account for the diversity of species today by “natural selection” in the past, by which is meant the interaction between things and their surroundings on a random basis. It is as if “nature”, as the sum of a thing’s surroundings or environment, by a random process brings about changes to a thing’s, or to its species, pattern of behaviour, and so constitutes it a new species. The giraffe (as a discernible species of animal) with a peculiarly long neck, it is proposed by some, was evolved by reason of the change in the circumstances of the previous species eating habits. The horse of today developed from its ancestor by a series of changes to its environment. It is assumed that such environment proved to be inimical to the previous species and by adapting it became the new species as a matter of “the survival of the fittest”. But the core of the theory is that “natural selection”

signifies a purely chance concatenation of circumstances. The notion of selection or choice ordinarily applies only to intelligent agents, but not wanting to allow recourse to a factor extrinsic to “nature”, Darwin quite arbitrarily, or “selectively” one must say, applied it to the chance play of circumstances or environmental factors within nature. The unlikelihood of such a random set of circumstances by itself producing any consistently functioning thing is explained by saying that it came about over a great period of time. The lottery of achieving such a rare result, as it were, was eventually won by some one (period of time). We happen to be living in the time when the whole marvellous order of nature that we see about us, which shows surprisingly little randomness in behaviour, has randomly come together.

On this principle, of course, the stability of the present order of things is precarious. There is no reason to believe that the next stage will not be the collapse of this inherently unstable house of cards, for circumstances are always changing (and it is supposed with a pure and total randomness) so that the present species must become one way or the other “unfit” to survive in the new environment. And the probabilities are that this will occur straightaway to any and all present species. What took so long to congregate must most likely disgregate in no time, for such a lucky outcome or “turning out” cannot be more than one-off. It would be most unlikely on such odds that the present order of things would be succeeded immediately by another of any similar stability. How come then that this orderly sequence of natural events has been going on for as long as recorded history? One may believe in the miracle of nature but this is ridiculous.

I believe that by dealing in species (which signify the formal reasons of stability in things) instead of in individuals (which are the existing material things subject to change), the materialists who propose this kind of theory assume the fact of stability when

it is not compatible with the basic principle of the theory. That is to say the very notion of species is contradictory to having individuals governed only by randomness. By such a process two individuals are most likely to be similar one moment and totally unrecognisable as related the next.



It is the stability of things as they are (i.e. as belonging recognisably to a species as a fixed form of reality) that is the occasion of this mental sleight of hand and the problem for the theory. Why should things stay the same for more than a moment? Why should not all the similar individuals (and thus the supposed species) change overnight? That is to say, why should the fundamental evolutionary principle of random change cease for the time being? Why should it only apply to the past leading up to the period of human knowledge, and not to our

experience of the world as we know it? For the length of time that is posited as accounting for present day species to be now what they are only accounts for this combination of characteristics for a moment. If there is no principle of stability inherent in a thing, or in things of co-incidentally similar nature, then the random result can only last for one moment. Heraclitus could see the logic of this reliance on pure flux or evolution that nothing exists for more than a moment, and even that is disappearing as it appears. Even the luckiest gambler does not have a lasting series of lottery wins. How does such a theory of evolution explain the lack of randomness in the present? It does not, because it cannot

Philosophically, then, the theory is untenable. At best it is a half-truth. The fault lies in the inveterate philosophical error of seeking to explain the intrinsic nature of material things by one principle only, of being simple-minded where nature is concerned. Darwin like many an inventor of a new theory was reacting against a too simplistic (scientific) theory, of the invariability of species prevalent in his time. Whether or not he himself went too far and fell completely into the opposite simplistic error, is not something that we need concern ourselves with. For it is the theory that bears his name with which we are primarily concerned, not the man; that is

with the Theory of Evolution as it puts the whole burden of the natural or scientific explanation of the diversity of species today upon “natural selection” as described above. The truth, i.e. the true theory, as always, lies in avoiding two extremes or errors. Evolutionism is the name given to one error in its modern form, the other we might call Fixism.

Even the most ardent champions of evolutionary theory, e.g. Jacques Monod, a highly regarded scientist of recent times, have themselves come to recognise that the modern idea of randomness associated with evolution is unable to account for the stability that is manifest in things around us, and now is made more manifest at the microbiological level of investigation. He even says, as paraphrased by Pope Benedict XVI in his book: “In the Beginning ...” p. 55), “that for modern biology evolution is not the specific property of living beings; their specific property is, rather, precisely that they are unchanging ...” Monod calls this “the platonic side of the world”. Thus, in his view “there is not only becoming, whereby everything is in constant change, but also permanency...” which is the very sign and proof of “enduring and formative principles.” “Every organism is, as Monod asserts, conservatively designed.”

The quotation given by the pope on page 55 (cf. Monod, Zufall und Notwendigkeit. Philosophische Fragen der modernen Biologie, Munich, 1973 at p.132) makes it crystal clear that Monod, like Aristotle, saw that there has to be a principle of stability in the “biosphere”. “It fell to the biologists of my generation to lay bare the quasi-identity of the cellular chemistry throughout the biosphere. This was known since 1950, and every new publication reconfirmed it. The hopes of the most convinced ‘Platonists’ were more than fulfilled.” And at page 139: “The whole system is completely conservative, utterly closed in on itself and absolutely incapable of learning anything from the outside world ... It is at its very foundation Cartesian rather than Hegelian”.

The language of Monod, of course, shows up his dependence upon modern philosophy, which



reflects the irreconcilable duality of the earliest ancient Greek philosophy. Thus, he associates the conservative principle with Plato and Descartes,

and the opposite evolutionary principle with Hegel. This modern antithesis is a repeat of the Heraclitean/Parmenidean impasse; for some strange reason the modern mind generally is completely unaware of this problem's solution by Aristotle. What is clear, however, is that the scientist/biologists ought to be even more convinced today that biological or any other natural activity is not governed by a totally random process; that the Theory of Evolution as enunciated by so-called Darwinians and neo-Darwinians is simply wrong, and, scientifically speaking, belongs to the catalogue of past errors and dead-ends in the history of science.

It is only by positing a quasi-infinite time that such a principle, in treating the world as a colossal co-incidence, can be given the slightest semblance of credibility. But, as seen above, such a co-incidence of random factors must fall apart as soon as it comes into existence. By itself such a principle accounts for nothing of what is actually happening in the world of our experience. The more evident principle is one that is its exact opposite, a principle of conservation, as noted by Monod, not a principle of change and contingency.

But, we have to be careful here not to fall back into the opposite error (discussed more fully below), against which Darwin was reacting, and deny any principle of change altogether. Unfortunately, this error is labelled today by many

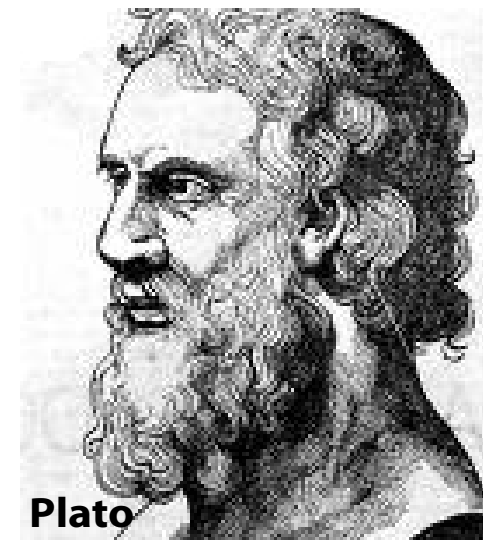
Creationism, no doubt to insinuate that belief in a Creator is equivalent to holding to an extreme scientific position that has long been rejected by scientists. Creation however is not a scientific concept in the modern sense of science, but a philosophical one; as explained below it transcends the accidental or phenomenal order of investigation; it is concerned with bringing new substances into existence (and conserving them once in existence), not with what can be observed about their behaviour at the level of sense knowledge. Just as modern science knows nothing of substance so it is simply not concerned with the question of creation. The Big Bang theory supposes a universe in some way already existing (even if some physicists, such as Hawkings, concept of its original state is no more than that of a mathematical point, a “singularity”).

One does not need to go outside the natural order of secondary causes to find a rational explanation in terms of intrinsic (and even proximate extrinsic) factors. It is a case primarily of accounting for change and permanence in relation to the material things within our experience. As seen below, both from the philosophical and scientific consideration of such things one needs to bring into play two principles, in some way opposed to each other, but having to be kept together. For the facts of nature point not only to change but also to permanency, which opposite features call for principles of opposite character. Only in this way can we have a true theory of evolution, and avoid the extremes of Fixism and Evolutionism.

The modern focus is on the biological. But this is only a contraction of the consideration of a fundamental philosophical or metaphysical problem about explaining the nature of reality

as we know it. Heraclitus and Parmenides are the thinkers who first proposed theories at this fundamental level, but they happened to fall into the two extremes mentioned. It was not till Aristotle that the problem was resolved by saving what was true in both errors. Generally speaking, a theory is wrong not in what it asserts but in what it denies.

There is change and accordingly we need to posit a principle of change. Heraclitus was right in asserting this and Parmenides was wrong not to allow for same in his philosophy. But as Aristotle noted long ago the changing character of natural things or bodies can only be fully explained if we posit two



principles; a principle or reason why things can be called the same despite changing in some respects, which is called “substance”; and a reason why they are not the same or can be said to have changed, which is called “accident”. Thus despite undergoing many accidental changes we remain the same one substance. We are not simply all substance without accidents; nor are we simply an unordered bundle of ever-changing accidental characteristics (as Evolutionism comes down to asserting).

For example, the scientists tell us that our bodies are in a continuous process of change so that all the cells are replaced over a relatively short period of time (some say seven years), which means that materially we are not the same person we were nor have the same body we had over seven years ago. But what does our experience tell us: that despite this fact we are not essentially a different person, nor is our body a different bodily substance from what it was before. Something changes, no doubt; but we remain, body and soul, the same. That also is what has to be accounted for; not merely the changing aspect of things.

But Aristotle noted something more fundamental about bodily change. The changes that first impress us are as it were on the surface of things, accidental, accordingly not affecting “substantially” the material things in which they occur. Plants grow bigger and are the same plants; wild animals become domesticated, change habitats and adapt to new surroundings yet are still the same animals. The playful cub and the savage lion are the same animal.

However, the substances of bodily things do also undergo change, in a different and deeper way. Plants die, or are eaten by animals and what had the form of a plant becomes animal. The individual

(long) established monopolistic structures.

“Working men are now left isolated and helpless betrayed by the inhumanity of employers and the unbridled greed of competitors. A tiny group of extravagantly rich men have been able to lay upon a great multitude of unpropertied workers a yoke little better than slavery itself.” [Rerum Novarum 2]

“The Pope {Leo XIII} attributed to the ‘public authority’ the ‘strict duty of providing properly for the welfare of workers, because a failure to do so violates justice; indeed, he did not hesitate to speak of ‘distributive justice’.”

A significant social good is the society's recognition of an individual's contribution to society (honouring its citizens). This should not be thought of simply as something going to a privileged few. But it gives a good idea of the notion of proportion in distributive justice. Some may be given more on account of their greater ability to use things (such as land) or on account of some other special civic quality. The distributor, however, should be always looking towards the common good and not to the private enrichment of the individuals. And with the distribution comes the obligation to apply it to common use as much as possible (this does not exclude one's own use within reason)

As noted above the notion of distributive justice can be applied in the case of wages. Ordinarily it is a matter only of commutative justice, but a worker reduced to a condition of extreme poverty and consequent economic impotence (lack of bargaining power) may be deprived not only of what he is entitled to according to commutative justice (a fair return to his labour) but even according to distributive justice (when what the underpayment takes from him is his natural right to a livelihood). This latter does not so much apply to the employer as an employer but as a member of the exploiting part of society (as a capitalist).

So it was that, in the extreme conditions applying in his time to the “workers”, Pope Leo XIII used the language of distributive justice in the very context of the just wage. If necessary, as a matter of distributive justice, the State must set a minimum wage which the employer is obliged to pay. “The Pope attributed to the “public authority” the “strict duty” of providing properly for the welfare of the workers, because a failure to do so violates justice; indeed, he did not hesitate to speak of “distributive justice.” (CA8) Because this goes beyond contractual or commutative justice, this aspect of justice came to be given the name simply of “social justice”.

This necessity for fair distribution of common

goods extends into the sphere of exchange. Indeed, generally speaking, the market should not be the property of any one (not even of the State – as public property). There may be occasion, however, in exceptional circumstances, for the setting up of a monopoly (state or otherwise) if required for the common good, but only to the extent that it is necessary for the common good (in the case where a certain kind of necessity would otherwise not be effectively provided for). Apart from this exception free entry of all to a line of production or market is a common good and no one should be given property in such by way of privilege or legal protection.

Any control over the market or the prices of things is in effect a form of privileged property (hence it has a monetary value, and an inordinately high one at that). One cannot exchange goods according to commutative justice if the other party has such a monopoly of the means and materials of production that he is able to dictate the terms. The test of a free exchange or free market is that both parties have no control over the price: they have to take it; they cannot make it. But the very definition of a monopolist is one who is able to make the price.

The capitalist wishes to define monopoly only in terms of state monopoly (socialism); price fixing is seen only in terms of the state regulation of prices. But that is taking the meaning of monopoly at its extreme (sole seller). There need not be total control by one. There need not even be collusion between a few so as to act as one. The very advantage that attaches to being one of a few where there ought to be many (especially in regard to necessities, in which work itself may be included) gives those few a power over the “market” (meaning the consumers).

The very difficulty of obtaining otherwise the goods desired expresses itself in a price elevated above the norm (the true market price). Indeed, up to a point the (oligopolistic) supplier can withhold its goods until it gets the price it wants. For it has control over such a large part of the supply that other suppliers cannot fully meet the “demand”. Other oligopolistic suppliers (its major “competitors”), having a common interest in keeping up prices, will be inclined to keep close to the highest price possible given the overall “demand” even without express agreement or collusion. That is to say they will watch the “competition” and keep prices generally at an artificially elevated level, all the time devising all sorts of ploys (including a temporary drop in “their” prices) to steal some part of the “market” from the “competition”. One may perhaps appreciate how the very language of exchange is perverted.

Without any concept of distributive justice the ownership of goods and their exchange is discussed entirely in the context of contract and an artificially abstract notion of commutative justice, as if all exchanges were necessarily between equals. In such a mind set there is little or no acknowledgement of anything systematically wrong in the social economy. But the encyclicals make no bones about this. “The crisis of Marxism does not rid the world of the situations of injustice and oppression which Marxism itself exploited and on which it fed.” (Centesimus Annus 26)

Moreover, the encyclicals explicitly speak of injustice in the distribution of wealth (cf. Centesimus Annus



12: “To remedy these wrongs [the unjust distribution of wealth and the poverty of the workers] ...”) and the remedy must include a restoration of justice in the distribution of wealth. This is precisely where Chesterton's Distributism is rightly to be regarded as a major part of the answer to “the social question”.

This working for the restoration of distributive justice is an obligation resting on all, i.e. the community as a whole, and primarily upon the government. It is not so much a matter of passing new legislation as dismantling old legal privileges and bad institutions so that they do not continue to support social injustice. “The State, however, has the task of determining the juridical framework within which economic affairs are to be conducted, and thus of safeguarding the prerequisites of a free economy, which presumes a certain equality between the parties, such that one party would not be so powerful as practically to reduce the other to subservience.” (CA 15)

Chesterton's social philosophy, therefore, correctly identifies what is basically wrong with the modern economy, and with modern economics. Outside the encyclicals this social philosophy is practically the only one which gives a proper definition of Capitalism. This in itself is a major achievement, for wrongdoers depend greatly upon ambiguity and euphemism, using names which belong to what is normal for what is abnormal, such as “free exchange”, “competition”, “private property” etc.

The very name which he gives to the social remedy, “Distributism”, is felt to be quaint or strange only because of our complete lack of familiarity with the notion of distributive justice in this context. This is not to be wondered at given that the reality has been missing from almost every society and especially in modern times. Not even the moral theologians have paid much attention to this dimension of justice, practically the whole of the moral theology of justice being focused upon commutative justice. In discussing the notion St. Thomas himself confines himself to the example of the dispensation of honours. Yet it obviously applies to all common goods, material or rational, that can be distributed from the whole (community) to the parts (individuals).

Chesterton's insight in this regard is, as in most things modern, genial. He saw clearly that the

system, what is being proposed as an alternative is not the socialist system, which in fact turns out to be state capitalism, but rather a society of free work of enterprise and of participation. Such a society is not directed against the market, but demands that the market be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the State, so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole of society are satisfied.” (CA 35)



And speaking of the conflict between Capital and Labour in another place the encyclical refers to “a conflict which sets man against man, almost as if they were “wolves,” a conflict between the extremes of mere physical survival on the one side [subsistence-wage labour] and opulence on the other [concentration of capital], the Pope [Leo XIII] did not hesitate to intervene by virtue of his “apostolic office.” (CA 5 Insertions in square brackets mine)

Chesterton’s Distributism comes within the description used by Pope John Paul II: “what is being proposed as an alternative is not the socialist system, which in fact turns out to be state capitalism, but rather a society of free work of enterprise and of participation”. And the Church speaking of socialism and capitalism in the same terms (socialism as “state capitalism”) is fully in line with Chesterton’s point that Socialism is simply the monopolysystem of Capitalism adopted by the State itself. Both are regimes based upon a monopoly over the processes of the production and exchange and an effective denial of property rights to the majority of the population. Their basic affinity can be seen, moreover, in the fact that the advocates of both hypocritically present such a monopolistic take-over of the economy as being the best way of ensuring the prosperity and freedom of all. Both claim to be ardent supporters of “democracy”.

Chesterton was aware of the ambiguity in the use of the word “Capitalism”. So he says “The word... is used by other people to mean quite other things. Some people seem to mean merely private property. Others suppose that capitalism must mean anything involving the use of capital.” These other uses generally denote the exchange economy operating in a just way without the huge disparity in wealth which puts one of the parties at the mercy of the other not just in regard to employment but also in regard to all types of exchange.

Chesterton’s definition of Capitalism then falls fair and square within the second meaning given in the encyclical. “When I say ‘Capitalism,’ I commonly mean something that may be stated thus: ‘That economic condition in which there is a class of capitalists roughly recognizable and relatively small, in whose possession so much of the capital is concentrated as to necessitate a very large majority of the citizens serving those capitalists for a wage.’” (from “Outline of Sanity”)

This in fact is an accurate description of the economic system existing in the nineteenth century (“early capitalism” from the perspective

of the late twentieth century) and has application even today despite the alleviation of the extremity of the condition of workers for various reasons, including initially by the united action of the workers themselves, then by legislative regulations imposed to restrain the more blatant exploitations within capitalism and by a general social welfare program to supplement the income of the poor and “disadvantaged” or “underprivileged”. It is only in the social encyclicals that such re-distribution of wealth is described openly in terms of distributive justice, or treated as a matter of right.

There are many aspects to a normally functioning social economy but the widespread distribution of property is the most fundamental requirement. For it operates at the most basic level of justice, distributive justice, and it is here that social injustice in regard to property begins. For the lands and other common goods (natural resources) of any society belong to no one in particular in the beginning (or as they are discovered) and have to be allocated by the community through its leaders. It is not hard to imagine the temptation of those with the responsibility of dispensing the common goods to favour themselves and their friends in this regard.

It is noteworthy that Leo XIII was prepared to speak of distributive justice in the context of this question of social justice. He even applied it to the question of the just wage, which ordinarily is a matter for commutative justice. But what he noted is that the demands of justice are not to be confined to a contractual or mutual relationship between individuals. They presuppose, as do all relationships of exchange within society, a freedom and equality which it is the society’s duty to ensure for all, to which every individual has a natural right.

In his time the disparity between the bargaining power of employers (capitalists) and employees (workers) had reached such a level that not only did the workers have no property to fall back on (having missed out altogether generally) but their parlous position enabled their employers to drive such a hard “bargain” that the wages they were virtually forced to accept were less than enough to support themselves and their families. The unnatural injustice of this, whether from the point of commutative or distributive justice, was plainly criminal. But not only the direct employer had a responsibility in this regard; it was

a matter of social responsibility, of “social justice”.

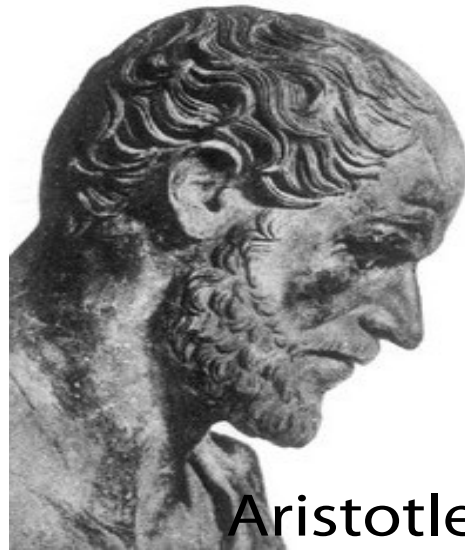
Part of freedom and equality depends upon each individual having his or her just share or proportion of the social wealth or common goods of a particular society. Any disproportion in this regard must affect the equality and freedom of the individual members of such a society in their dealings with one another. It is the duty of those who have the care of the community to ensure that there is no original disproportion and that the necessary laws and institutions are in place to prevent such a disproportion occurring as a society develops. Sadly, these responsibilities have been more honoured in breach than in performance.

As for how this distributive justice or proportionate equality is to be achieved, it is not a matter of mathematics but of practical measures. Such a spirit of distribution is not opposed to the institution of property but in fact is a matter of converting common “property”, or common goods, into private property. The land for instance of any society originally belongs to no one in particular. But it can only be properly utilised by individuals. It is necessary, therefore, even before any form of production from the land, that there be some kind of institution of “property” in land. But all should be able somehow to share in this common property. There should be no favouritism or system of privilege in the distribution, as is sadly too often the case historically (with the blessing of “law”). The object of distributive justice is to ensure that no one misses out in the distribution of such social benefits. It does not mean that everyone gets an equal amount. It is a question of proportion considering the common good of all.

A just distribution of common goods, however, is not to be thought of only in material terms, as is the case with land and natural resources. As pointed out in Centesimus Annus, there is now much social “capital” in things of the mind (such as “know-how”) enjoyed by the members of the community that can be considered community generated, through improved education, systems

of communication and so on. These kinds of common goods can also be monopolised by the already “advantaged”, whether within nations or between nations. They should not be able to be appropriated by the few at the expense of the many.

The proponents of Capitalism, as defined by Chesterton, see nothing wrong with such (mis)appropriation provided the mechanisms of the market are left “free”, in an open exchange process. This is what is called “free competition” and “free trade”. That is to say, in their eyes there should be no control over the prices of things - apart that is from that control which already belongs to the



Aristotle

substances of plants and animals do not remain through the change. Yet it is still only a change, not an annihilation. So Aristotle took his twofold principle of explanation into the very substance of material things, and called them primary matter and substantial form. Form, then, became the fundamentally unchanging reason or determining principle in bodies, matter the determinable principle or the principle to explain the change in substance. This can be made clearer if we think of the two principles in terms of potency and act. Matter is the potential principle which can take this or that actual substantial form.

Here, however, the relationship between the two principles becomes clearer. With accidental change, what changes are the accidental forms and the substance that remains is as it were a (secondary) matter. With substantial change, the substance is changed in form, and what remains unchanged is primary matter. Hence matter itself is not subject to change but is the principle of change, the reason why things can change forms. Change itself is explained in terms of a new form; change is a transformation, from one form in matter to another.

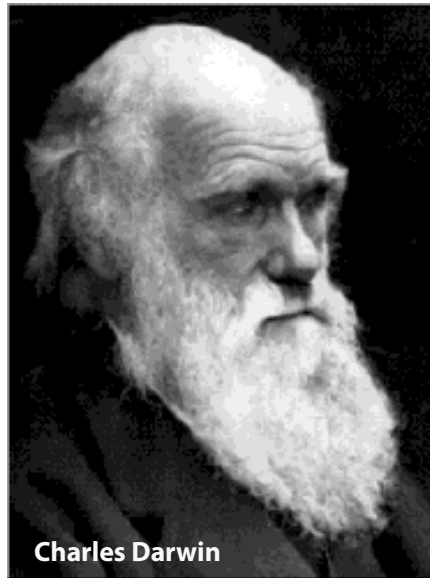
Hence, in accidental change we have a change of accidental forms in the same substance which stands as an unchanging (secondary) matter to them. Likewise, in substantial change we have a change of substantial forms in the same (primary) matter. Thus, the ultimate substrate of all change is the matter in (bodily) substances, called therefore material things. This is the ultimate explanation for the changes that occur also in the accidental order. The changes of an accidental kind in nature (which can too be dispositive to substantial changes) brought about by external circumstances are also to be attributed to the existence of a material principle in things. Their character of randomness is related to the indeterminacy and pure potentiality of primary matter.

But, though it is to be given its due influence it is an error to put all the burden of explanation on randomness, as the modern Theory of Evolution does. To do so is to take the part for the whole, and to be unable to account for the evident stability or “permanence” that is found in nature. Evidently, the excessive determinism that was in the scientific explanations of biological species prior to Darwin, as it was in science generally, led to this over-reaction.

There is therefore to be taken into account when looking for principles to explain our changing material universe not only the distinction of accidents from substances but also the more fundamental distinction within substances of substantial (or primary) form and primary (or substantial) matter.

Unfortunately, the modern scientific mind does not get beyond the first distinction. Moreover, being focused on what is sensible or observable only at that level, it does not penetrate beyond the accidental or phenomenal, and therefore has no great interest in the substances of things as such. In fact,

quantity, which itself has a quasi-material function in relation to the other accidents or phenomena, takes on the nature of a quasi-substance (a la Descartes) and a quasi-matter (mass and its particles are conceived in quantitative terms) performing the double role of the permanent substrate and primary receptacle of scientific phenomena (which are the accidental forms as detected by the senses). In the biological order of things the basic structure of “life”, DNA, is conceived in terms of a quantitative arrangement.



Charles Darwin

This has important consequences when we come to talk about the species of things. For the scientist, so engaged with nature, does not have a concept of species in any substantial sense. His notion of species has to be taken from the accidental order. Things in this order, however, are subject to incessant change, though some accidental features have a certain stability (to be explained from the influence of their nature or substance), e.g. their shape and size. These and other constants discovered are then used to

identify a “species” and to denote a difference of “species” for scientific purposes.

But, from a deeper philosophical point of view, as outlined above, both these constants and variables are still within the accidental order. They say nothing of, or rather are only indicative of, the true species of things within the order of substance. The argument among scientists over evolution, therefore, does not necessarily touch the philosophical issues at the level of substantial changes.

“It is necessary to explain, however, why the modern theory for which Darwin is given the credit, though false in taking randomness or contingency as the whole explanation of natural changes, has been universally received, and enthusiastically so, by the scientific community, and is promoted in modern education generally to such an extent that any one who challenges it is treated as scientifically illiterate.”

It is necessary, however, to explain why the modern theory for which Darwin is given the credit, though false in taking randomness or contingency as the whole scientific explanation of natural changes, has been almost universally received, and enthusiastically so, by the scientific community and is promoted in modern education generally to such an extent that anyone who challenges it is treated as

scientifically illiterate. This may be partly explained by its affinity with the materialist/atheist ideology that is of such influence in the modern world especially at the academic level. Adherents of such a worldview, even though they are not biologists or scientists, see it as a very convenient stick to beat religion with, especially the Catholic religion.

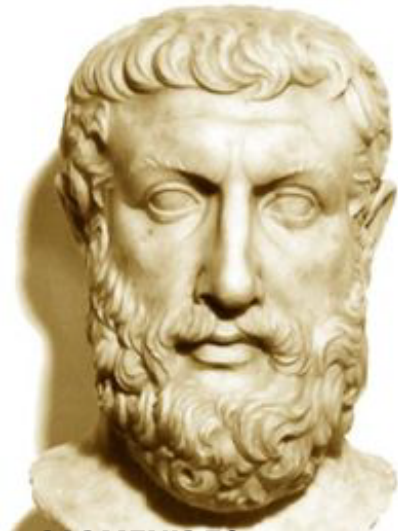
But there is more to it than that. Many who are not anti-religious, and even those who are deeply religious scientists/biologists, see evolution as a sufficiently verified (scientific) fact and are somewhat embarrassed by the resistance of some of their co-religionists to admitting this. They were no doubt heartened to hear the late pontiff speak of evolution as “more than a hypothesis”, which would seem to signify that it can be taken as a fact or at least as a respectable scientific theory. In more recent times, however, a highly placed member of the hierarchy, Cardinal Schoenborn, Archbishop of Vienna, has entered the debate to speak out against the so called (neo)Darwinian theory of evolution in so far as it is based upon the pure randomness of external factors in nature. This, as he rightly sees, is a philosophical position that goes beyond, and indeed runs counter to, the scientific evidence. It amounts to an ideology as described above, which is aptly called Evolutionism.

It is not enough to assign a role to God as standing outside nature, as it were, and letting it run its own course, if one denies any principle of stability within nature. The argument is about the nature of secondary causality, and the modern theory as presented generally is that “natural selection”, conceived as quite random, is sufficient to explain the processes of natural evolution. It is this simplistic character of the theory that the good Cardinal is critical of, as we all must be. The

furor that his participation in the debate has caused, not only among atheist scientists but also highly respected Catholic scientists, shows how courageous one needs to be to take on the deeply entrenched ideology of Evolutionism which, unfortunately, even religious scientists have difficulty in disengaging from the (partial) truth that there is in the scientific theory of Evolution.

It behooves us to keep always in mind the difference between (biological) evolution considered from a philosophical point of view and from a scientific viewpoint. In modern times, in their focus on living bodies (which are more clearly subject to change than non-living bodies), scientists, i.e. biologists, began to notice that such bodies were more subject to variation than previously thought. The argument then developed as to whether “species” could change.

At first, perhaps influenced by Aristotle's philosophical approach to the subject matter, and mistaking the meaning of “species” as applied at the (philosophical) level of substance for that as applied at the (scientific) level of accidents, the scientists stuck to the notion that species do not change. That is to say the known variables might be allowed to change but the long believed constants could not, for they belonged to the unchanging or “specific” constitution of animals and plants. (A confusion of natural genera and species with logical genera and species also no doubt played a part in such thinking).



PARMENIDES

It was, however, a losing argument on the older scientists' part. For as more extensive and intensive research was had it became apparent that there could be change or “evolution” in the “species” of flora and fauna, as species were understood scientifically. Darwin's biological revolution would not have been so successful if the time was not ripe for a rejection of the old biology in this fundamental regard (which we called above Fixism). It is just unfortunate that the scientists' view that was proved to be erroneous in adopting an extreme invariability of scientific or biological species was to be followed by another at the opposite extreme.

Such extreme views are unforgiving when it comes to criticism of the other extreme, as liberalism is of socialism or vice versa. Moreover, they view the truth, or true theory even from the scientific point of view, which in this case is that there is both change

and fixity in nature, if their limits may be difficult to determine exactly, as belonging to the other extreme. So Evolutionism, now in the ascendant, inevitably saw any theory that holds to a belief in species as unchanging in any respect as belonging to an anti-scientific Fixism, for which it has nothing but scorn.

It (Evolutionism) has no conception of species as Aristotle understood them, namely, as the substantial formal or essential principles in bodily things, such as in humanity, which do not change. It is these species that Aristotle compared to numbers. But even the accidental order has its own “specific” stability derived from that of the substance. So it is not wrong to talk of fixed species in scientific terms. But such species do not have the definiteness of numbers. They are stable, but such stability is from the substance; it is not in the substance. Moreover, by scientific observation, it is not always possible to determine exactly the line between constancy and variability.

This principle of stability, however, whether as seen in the material substance of things or in their accidental features, is not the only principle in individuals things, so that individual human beings and all other individual bodily things, can and do undergo change but, whilst they exist, only of an accidental kind. In coming into or going out of existence they can and do involve a substantial change, but only because the matter in them loses one and takes on another substantial form, or the matter in another thing takes on their new substantial form.

It is not impossible, however, for God to so arrange things that one or many substantial species might be at the extinction of individual members (some or all) the prelude or dispositive material cause of an entirely new species, so that the matter of one species is used in the creation of another. Indeed, if the “dust” or “slime” of the Scriptures means some existing material being, this is what happened at the creation of Adam. In a way, too, this happens with the conception of every human being. For the spiritual soul of man can only be put in matter by God; it cannot come out of matter.

But it is not necessary, nor does it seem appropriate, to posit such a continuous divine intervention in relation to material things below man. Darwin was right to endeavour to limit the explanation of natural change of biological species, if there be such, to something within the order of natural or secondary causes. But, as is clear from what is said above, the scientists/biologists are not talking of species and their evolution in the same



Jacques Monod

sense as Aristotle. They do not entertain the consideration of species at the level of material substance. As noted above, and as is clear from the whole modern scientific method, species are defined according to the multiple accidental features of things, in terms of such accidental features that singly do not distinguish one species from another but do so through a combination of same.

The extent to which these accidental features may be affected by time or circumstances or over time by a change in environment is not perfectly evident. Moreover, the lines which distinguish one scientific species from another are often blurred. Thus, what was previously regarded as a constant, even though understood in terms of accidents or phenomena, might very well be later discovered to be variable (and so what was believed to be a “species” may become extinct); or the opposite might “turn out”, namely, what was a variable over some more or less extended period of time (e.g. the incidence of an unusually long necked giraffe) may become through change in environment a constant, thus bringing a new “species” into existence.

Philosophically there is nothing against the boundaries of scientific species shifting through change of circumstances, especially over a long time. There is much scope then for adaptation of a particular species to its environment and its apparent “evolution” into another, without for that affecting its species from a philosophical point of view as a special form of substantial being. It is another matter, however, if it alleged that an obviously higher (philosophical) species evolves out of a lower, without the agency, “intervention”, of a higher form of being.

From the limited perspective of a purely empirical science one cannot say that one “species” is better or more perfect than another. Hence, the picture of Evolution presented for popular consumption as a progressive yet nonetheless “blind” advance from lower forms of being to higher and higher species, from amoeba up to homo sapiens, is science fiction rather than science fact. It is presented as scientific truth by modern educationalists who have their own materialist/atheist agenda. But, as emanating from a materialist interpretation of nature, it is part of the modern Theory of Evolution as it is an ideology, i.e. as it is Evolutionism. Indeed, if such a general picture of evolutionary ascent has any truth it rationally demands the intervention of God at every substantial step (e.g. from plant to animal life); something that Darwin was wanting to exclude.

From the viewpoint of reason adequately

None should forget that his or her superior talents, and consequent greater wealth, are God-given. So they should be used in the way intended by God – that is for the common good. It is of course in the interests of those possessing inordinate wealth to argue for the right of private property as if it justified their absolute claim to the free and exclusive use of what they have (unjustly) obtained. Chesterton tried valiantly to bring home the necessary distinction between the right of private property always supposing a right distribution within society and the spurious right to property ignoring that question of due proportion.

The socialist's mistake is to accept the same spurious definition of property as the capitalist and then argue for an egalitarianism and against the right of property itself. This confusion has been the bane of the whole discussion. Moreover, by reason of original sin there has been, and will continue to be, those of inordinate great wealth, “the rich”, and those undeservedly of little, the “poor” (the poor will always be with us). But what characterised the time which spanned the lives of Leo XIII and G.K. Chesterton was the enormity of the extent to which one relatively small section of society had, and had been allowed by law (since they had usurped the legal power in the process), to dispossess the rest. These dispossessed then became obliged to obtain their living by their labour alone. Hence the divide that was traditionally recognised as that between the rich and poor, came to be identified with that between those who possessed practically all wealth or capital (the propertied or “capitalists”) and those who possessed virtually no wealth (the propertyless or “workers”). This rendered the great mass of citizens virtual slaves (under “a yoke little better than slavery” Leo XIII), a condition that in some ways was much worse than the ancient (pagan) slavery (cf. Chesterton's essay entitled “Sex and Property”).

So we can come to the precise question that Chesterton faced in his day. It is fundamentally the same today but there are many features of it that are different, the most significant being the moderation of the poverty of the poor or the improvement in working conditions because of State intervention (prompted in large part by the Church's speaking out). This intervention brought its own problems. At present we are witnessing a worrying push to return to the earlier conditions of pure liberalism or “unbridled capitalism”. A further complication is the extension of this flawed economic system to the whole world (“globalisation”) making the divide of extreme riches and desperate poverty a feature to be found not only within nations but between nations.

This too it seems has allowed the poor of the more developed nations to enjoy to some extent a higher standard of living at the expense of the poor of the underdeveloped, leading to a general problem of “consumerism within” those “developed” nations. Hence, the sense of injustice in the “rich” nations is not so acute as it otherwise might be. The language employed in this regard is significant. The poorer nations are referred to as “underdeveloped”. No one thinks of referring to the richer nations as “overdeveloped”. For that would identify a defect in them (but in such eyes no one can be too rich).

More poignantly, within nations, the poor are referred to as “underprivileged” as if the normal condition is to be “privileged”. Part of the reason for this may be that Capitalism and the modern economic science that is designed to defend it promote a concept of wealth as money where it is considered normal to desire to be wealthy without limit. This will be examined further below – as it is a distinctive feature of modern capitalism that is not brought out fully even in Chesterton (though it is hinted at) despite being to the forefront in both Aristotle's and St. Thomas's analysis of commerce.

However, as noted above, this economic form of social injustice has been overtaken by much more serious social issues. Nonetheless, that is not to say that the question of economic injustice belongs only to the past. It is very much a live question today. When we turn to examine the question of social justice (or injustice) in the sense of economic justice we will find that Chesterton's insights are as valid as ever.

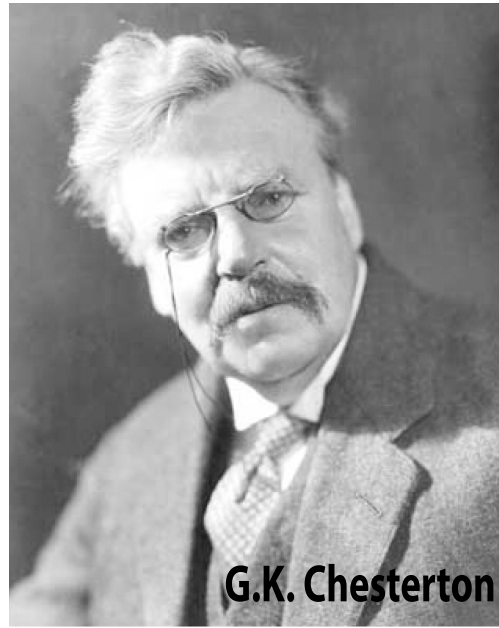
But, the understanding of the issues depends greatly upon keeping in mind Chesterton's definition of Capitalism. It is a good definition and enables what is wrong with Capitalism to be easily identified. But it has the disadvantage of defining what is a condition of something (and a bad condition at that) rather than the thing itself. We might compare it to a medical definition of abnormally high blood pressure. This can only be understood in relation to what is normal blood pressure. So it supposes some knowledge of the norm. For Chesterton, “Distributism” is simply the name for this normal social economy, expressed in terms of the distribution of property.

Confusingly, the word “Capitalism” is used both for an economic system that has an abnormal condition in regard to the distribution of wealth or property, and one where the distribution of wealth is not an issue. Both are systems that are based upon the institution of private property, in the one case in a condition that is normal, in the other abnormal.

The distinction between the two meanings of Capitalism is in fact made in the social encyclical (1991) Centesimus Annus (para. 42). And the difference made there comes down to that between the normal and the abnormal. The encyclical is considering whether we can say that Capitalism is good or bad. “If by “capitalism” is meant an economic system which recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property and the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as free human creativity in the economic sector, then the answer is certainly in the affirmative, even though it would perhaps be more appropriate to speak of a “business economy,” “market economy” or simply “free economy. But if by “capitalism” is meant a system in which freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality and sees it as a particular aspect of that freedom, the core of which is ethical and religious, then the reply is certainly negative.”

The former sense plainly refers to the notion of an economy based upon private property and free exchange of goods and is concerned to oppose these characteristics to their socialist denial. It is thus defending Capitalism in so far as it is opposed to Socialism. But it is to be noted that the word Capitalism is not perhaps the most appropriate name for this economic system. What is evidently intended is simply a social exchange system that is functioning normally which ultimately means justly or morally.

The encyclical itself suggests that the second usage of the word “Capitalism”, which clearly refers to an abnormal condition from the point of view of justice is the one more appropriate. It is in fact the one used in earlier encyclicals where Capitalism is



G.K. Chesterton

severely criticised. This is also clearly brought out in other parts of the 1991 encyclical. “In this sense, it is right to speak of a struggle against an economic system, if the latter is understood as a method of upholding the absolute predominance of capital, the possession of the means of production and of the land, in contrast to the free and personal nature of human work. In the struggle against such a

FEATURE ARTICLE

CHESTERTON AND CAPITALISM

Leading Thomist scholar Dr. D.G. Boland LLB PhD defends G.K. Chesterton's trenchant criticisms of Capitalism and his economic philosophy generally



The dramatic events of recent days have again put into question the truth of the theory and the justice of the practice of Capitalism as we have known it in the West. Not since the Great Depression of the 1930s has this question been raised in any serious way by mainstream economists and social philosophers. The Communist challenge menaced it for a time but this all but evaporated with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and since then Capitalism has seemed to gain new life and vigour and to go from strength to strength – until now.

Only now does it seem that the old tendencies to “boom” and “bust” have come back to haunt us, with a vengeance. Chesterton’s argument was that there were serious imbalances (called in old-fashioned terms “injustices”) in the system, whose practical injustices were covered over by a false economic theory about the relations between Capital and Labor. This more fundamental “imbalance” has come to be of a semi-permanent character but it has to be the cause of the instability or “volatility” that more superficially characterises our economic system.

In this article I attempt to do two things; first, to defend Chesterton’s identification of the fundamental inequities in the practice of Capitalism, and the corresponding fallacies in the economic philosophy (a radical form of Liberalism) which seeks to justify it; and, second, to address the more immediate cause of the volatility of the market (i.e. of modern commerce and finance), which is the prime focus of attention of our economists and policy makers – this is something which I believe no one, including Chesterton, has satisfactorily done to date.

Just as the other article “Chesterton’s Mind and Method” was directed to defending Chesterton’s general philosophy and method against the intellectual culture of his and our day so this is intended as a defence of his social philosophy, which he called Distributism. His social philosophy seems to have been inspired by the Church’s social doctrine and in particular by Leo XIII’s famous encyclical Rerum Novarum. As is the case with this doctrine, Chesterton’s social thought, which owing to the particular condition of modern society focuses upon the politico-economic aspects of social life, is looked upon with disdain by the academic social scientists, and especially by professional economists. The first thing to be noted about this is that such

a focus is already a sign of possible abnormality in the consideration of the subject matter, which the Church has adverted to in more recent times. That is to say the object of investigation, namely social life and behaviour, needs to be looked at as a whole. A consideration of a partial aspect of society, such as the economic, though a legitimate abstraction, cannot be isolated from the consideration of the whole (which is ultimately a moral one, i.e. the consideration of individuals within society as persons). The very attempt to resolve social issues or address social injustices at the economic level alone is in a way to fall into a distorted vision of society. There is more to society than economics and politics, especially as studied in the modern scientific way.

“there are of course other and more serious kinds of social injustice which have come to the fore in our times as, for instance, the slaughter of innocent human life in the ever-increasing practice of abortion - worthy to be classified in modern terminology as crimes against humanity.”

It may be said, then, that the nature of the social problem that had arisen in early modern times gave rise to the kind of ideologies that came to dominate the field of social thinking, namely, individualistic liberalism followed by collectivist socialism. The most visible social effects that ensued after the Reformation, centred in the wholesale expropriation of the Church and people by the already rich and powerful, were and are in regard to the possession and control of the lands and wealth within society, i.e. of a material kind. The modern ideologies which attempted to give an explanation of the new economic order, whether to justify and laud it or to condemn and curse it, are by their basic materialism and utilitarianism locked into such a distorted vision.

It became necessary, however, in order to counter them, to focus on the economic ills of modern times. “Social justice” came to be particularly associated

with the question of property and the injustice of systematic oppression of the propertyless, which in moral terms is specially a matter of theft upon a grand scale. But there are of course other and indeed more serious kinds of social injustice, which have come to the fore in our own times, as for instance the slaughter of innocent human life in the ever-increasing practice of abortion, the most heinous of social injustices, worthy to be classified in modern terminology as crimes against humanity.

Even divorce is a more serious social evil in principle than theft, not just because it attacks the more important natural social institution of marriage, but also because it involves a system of serious injustice against the abandoned spouses. Because the principal promoters of these injustices (consciously or in ignorance) are those in power, or if not directly in government at least in effective control (for the main part by virtue of previous acts of economic injustice) the cries of the victims of these crimes go unheard or unheeded.

All these modern social evils are interrelated forms of immorality and injustice. For the widespread breach of one commandment, when legally condoned, inevitably leads to disrespect for all morality. If this occurred first by reason of the greed of the rich and powerful elements of society, who were able to obtain political control by virtue of their excessive wealth and power (thus constituting the regimes oligarchies, if in more recent times they masquerade under the name of democracies), this disrespect and even contempt has, in the course of time, had a significant effect upon the culture and moral sensibilities of the society as a whole. In Chesterton’s time these flow-on effects of the first modern-style social injustice were just beginning to become overt. But the immediate peril in his day was from the extremity of the economic perversity that divided society into two opposed classes. Not that such a divide is not to some extent inevitable. As Pope Leo pointed out the possession of wealth within society is not meant to be equal. There are all sorts of reasons for such inequality (not necessarily indicative of injustice), including individual differences in intelligence and talents, that mean that some will have more and others less, and that only a few can have much more, whilst a great many will have the least. This disparity of wealth, if well used by its possessors, works to the overall good of all. As St. Thomas puts it, in words adopted by the popes, it is good and natural that the possession of goods (i.e. property) remain private or in the individual, but their use should in some way be made common.

considered, i.e. from a philosophy based in common sense, there is no way that a species, in the sense of individual substances having the same substantial specific form, can by natural means “turn out” to be or evolve into individual substances of another specific form. For created or natural agents can only produce forms like themselves, or of a lesser actuality than themselves, (though the facts upon which the ancients and mediaevals relied to found such a latter possibility have been shown by modern science to be explicable in the former way – e.g. “spontaneous generation” instead of being attributed to the influence of celestial bodies is quite evidently explicable by the presence of already existing life of the same species). The assumption in the modern materialistic theory of evolution that what is evidently of a higher nature might have evolved in a merely material fashion from the lower, such as animal life from plant life, is quite absurd.



It is possible, of course, for the matter of one specific material thing to take on the specific form of another bodily thing, even of a higher species, such as the matter of plants taking on animal form. But it will always be found that it involves an agency on the side of the higher form of being, i.e. the more perfect species. Nothing that is passively potential of itself, as primary matter is, gives rise to anything actual; so matter as such cannot produce any form or species of things. Any such power has to be based in something already actual at the same level of being or higher than what is brought into existence.

The materialist evolutionist is deceived in this regard by a failure to distinguish between passive and active potency. He sees matter as somehow able to generate actively the multiplicity of species existing. But the action of an active potency or power supposes the existence of something actual of a nature equal to the power it commands. If one wants to explain how all creation has evolved from a common potential state then one needs to ultimately refer it to an actual principle capable of producing or creating it, which is the power of God. All material things (below man) may come out of the passive potency of matter, as a first material principle, but only on the condition that they come also from an agency proportionate to the effect and ultimately from the active power of God (who is also needed to account for the presence of matter in the first place), as a first agent or maker.

But the modern argument over evolution is not conducted at the metaphysical or philosophical level of substance. It is concerned only with “species”

changes as the scientist detects them; that is, as they are observed at the level of accidents or phenomena.

On the supposition that we understand species in the scientific (accidental) sense we could allow that all the current (scientific) “species” of plants and animals have evolved by “natural selection” from earlier ones (or even an earlier one or “common ancestor”). For it is possible that by change of circumstances they have over time acquired a new and different “constancy” that makes us classify them as a new species. We do not know the ultimate (philosophical) specific differences within the evidently different genera of plants and animals, and such variety that there is may be accounted for by accidental or environmental factors. This by no means allows any such “evolution” from plants to animals, for it is evident here even to our common sense that we would pass the specific boundaries of bodies in regard to their substances. As already indicated, such a change calls for an agency able to effect the creation of a new and higher form of being (i.e. a new species taken at the level of substance), which by definition is unable to come exclusively from below.

Evolution, therefore, can be said to be established as a fact provided we are clear that we are talking about accidentally based scientific “species”, we do not deny that there is also a principle of stability operative in the accidental or phenomenal aspects of things founded in the unchangeable forms of substances and we avoid the philosophical absurdity of attributing the resultant “species” to pure randomness. Randomness can play a part in the explanation of the result, but it cannot be the whole explanation. Otherwise, as seen above, there could be no stability at all in the new species.

That is to say Darwin deserves credit for breaking down the old biological theory of Fixism in regard to species, considered scientifically, and restoring a role to natural factors in bringing about quite significant changes in the behaviour and even physical characteristics of living things. But, the theory as generally accepted errs by going to the extreme of excluding altogether any intrinsic principle of conservation or fixity in the different kinds of living things, which in philosophical terms falls into the error of Heraclitus of attempting to explain all as “evolution” or pure flux.

From a fully rational standpoint the Theory of Evolution, so conceived as based on a single and simple principle of “natural selection”, or the random co-incidence of external factors, is insufficient to account for the world as we know it, no matter how long it has lasted. Without recourse to a more fundamental principle of stability, the intrinsic “enduring and formative principles” alluded to by Monod, which can be equated with the forms of Aristotle, we cannot explain why things remain beyond the moment the things that they are, nor can we properly understand evolution itself, for it necessarily involves a movement from one determinate accidental form of being to another (or of one determinate substantial form of being to another, provided divine agency is supposed).

It is not therefore a matter of denying that things change or even that “species” evolve in the manner indicated, but of explaining this evolutionary change, avoiding the two errors into



Gregor Mendel

which, without a sound philosophical notion of “species”, we are prone to fall. In modern times, a simplistic approach to theory seems first to have inclined scientists/naturalists to the extreme of Fixism, or Determinism in regard to the species of living nature; and then, by way of reaction, on the appearance of evidence that contradicted this theory, to have moved scientists/biologists to the extreme of Evolutionism, or Indeterminism. Perhaps, without reverting to the former error of the absolute fixity of species, scientifically understood, we can recover the partial truth in it, namely, that there is a principle of stability in all material living things, founded in the substantial forms of things. Similarly, we might be able to retain the partial truth that is in the modern Theory of Evolution, namely, there is also a principle of instability, or “randomness”, in living nature providing occasion for the evolution of “species”, or to changes over time that are greater than previously thought possible.

Hopefully, we will see an end to Evolution as currently equated with Evolutionism, which is simply a materialism and frankly atheistic, and see the development of a true scientific theory of evolution which is not only able to attest to the wondrous beauty of the living and evolving flora and fauna of nature but also to the greatness of their Maker.

If we are looking for a Chesterton quote on the subject of Evolution Theory we need go no further than the following one: “For ancient Calvinism and modern Evolutionism are essentially the same things. They are both ingenious logical blasphemies against the dignity and liberty of the human soul.” (from “Appreciations and Criticisms of the works of Charles Dickens” - Chapter on “Little Dorrit”.

The views of the writers of the particular articles are not necessarily the views of the CTS.

THE DESCENT OF MAN

Three monkeys sat on a coconut tree,
Discussing things as they're said to be;
Said one to the others;" Now listen, you two
There's a certain rumour that can't be true
That man descended from our noble race:
The very idea is a big disgrace.
No monkey ever deserted his wife
Starved her babies and ruined her life;
And you've never known a mother-monk
To leave her babies with others to bunk,
Or pass them on from one to another
Till they scarcely know who was their mother;
And another thing you'll never see
A monk building a fence around a coconut tree
And let the coconuts go to waste
Forbidding all other monks to taste;
Why, if I'd put a fence round the tree
Starvation would force you to steal from me;
Here's another thing a monk won't do
Go out at night and get on the stew
Or use a gun or club or knife
To take some other monkey's life.
Yes, man DESCENDED - with all his fuss,
But, brothers, he didn't descent from US!"

This piece of verse, attributed to OGDEN NASH, brings out, as only a sense of humour can, things that show that man could not possibly have evolved from the animals below him. For as it "turns out" man, made a little less than the angels, generally tends to indulge in behaviour that is a lot lower than the rest of the animals. Human history is not a pretty picture. As the pagan Aristotle is reported to have noted, man can fall to a state much worse than the lowest animal. We need then to look for a different explanation for the Descent of Man.

Chesterton's Famous Words

GUIDE TO THE POLITICO-ECONOMIC IDEAS OF G. K. CHESTERTON



By Dr. H. G. Pearce
MB

From "Heretics" (1905)

"If we ever get the English back on to the English land they will become again a religious people..." (c. 6 Christmas and the Aesthetes)

"... the same frigid and detached spirit that leads to success in the study of astronomy and botany leads to disaster in the study of mythology and human origins... He [the anthropologist] is making himself inhuman in order to study humanity ... If a man desires to find out the origin of religion, let him not go to the Sandwich Islands; let him go to church. If a man wishes to know what society, philosophically speaking, really is, let him not go to the British Museum; let him go into society." (c. 11 Science and the Savages)

from "Orthodoxy" (1908)

"We do not need a censorship of the press. We have a censorship by the press." (c. 7 The Eternal Revolution)
"The secularists have not wrecked divine things, but the secularists have wrecked secular things ..." (c. 8 The Romance of Orthodoxy)
"Man is the only wild animal." (c. 9 Authority and the Adventurer)

from "All Things Considered" (1908)

"Is it not only too probable that the mildness of our political satire, when compared to the political satire of our fathers, arises simply from the profound unreality of our current politics?" (Conceit and Caricature)
"It [the English party system] is founded upon the principle that half a truth is better than no politics." (The Boy)

from "Alarms and Discursions" (1910)

"... wealth in society as now constituted does not tend to get into the hands of the thrifty or the capable, but actually tends to get into the hands of wastrels and imbeciles." (c. 31 The Flat Freak)

from "Miscellany of Men" (1912)

"[The voters] cannot have what they choose, but only which [of two party policies] they choose. The democracy has a right to answer questions, but it has no right to ask them. It is still the political aristocracy [i.e. plutocracy] that asks the question. And we shall not be unreasonably cynical if we suppose that the political aristocracy will always be rather careful what questions it asks." (The Voter and the Two Voices)

from "Cobbett" (1925)

"What he [Cobbett] saw was the perishing of the whole English power of self-support, the growth of cities that drain and dry up the countryside, the growth of dense dependent populations incapable of finding their own food, the toppling triumph of machines over men, the sprawling omnipotence of financiers over patriots, the herding of humanity in nomadic masses whose very homes are homeless, the terrible necessity of peace and the terrible probability of war; the wealth that may mean

famine and the culture that may mean despair; the bread of Midas and the sword of Damocles. In a word, he saw what we see, but he saw it when it was not there. And some cannot see it - even when it is there." (c. 1 The Revival of Cobbett)
"It may be that socialism threatens to destroy domesticity [i.e. the family] But it is capitalism that destroys it. This doubtless is what is meant by saying that capitalism is the more practical of the two." (c. 2 A Self-made Man)

from "Outline of Sanity" (1926)

"The truth is that what we call Capitalism ought to be called Proletarianism." (c. 1, I The Beginning of the Quarrel)
"A Socialist Government is one which in its nature does not tolerate a true and real opposition. For there the Government provides everything; and it is absurd to ask a Government to provide an opposition." (c. 1, I The Beginning of the Quarrel)

from "Generally Speaking" (1928)

"To be merely practical is to be dogmatic without a dogma." "... all futurism must be a sort of fatalism. It cannot foresee the free part of human action; it can foresee the servile part."
(Unfortunately, not having easy access to this book, we have not been able to verify these quotes - we would be grateful to anyone who can)

from "Chaucer" (1932)

"[Why did Shaw say he despised Shakespeare's intellect? Because] he was looking for a system, one of the very little systems that do very truly have their day. The system of Kant; the system of Hegel; the system of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Marx and all the rest. In each of these examples a man sprang up and pretended to have a thought that nobody had ever had. But the great poet only professes to express the thought that everybody had always had... what the world saw [in Shakespeare] was not what G.B.S. was then looking for [a "message"; or "original thought"]." (c. 1 The Greatness of Chaucer)
"I have been mixed up more or less all my life in such mild revolutions as my country could provide; and have been rather more extreme, for instance, in my criticism of Capitalism than many who are accused of Communism. That, I think, is being a good citizen; but it is not being a great poet; and I should never set up to be a great poet on any ground, but least of all on that ground. A great poet, as such, deals with eternal things; and it would indeed be a filthy notion to suppose that the present industrial and economic system is an eternal thing." (c. 1 The Greatness of Chaucer)

from "Avowals and Denials" (1934)

"The real trouble of the Middle Ages lay in their rudimentary and relatively bad communications for the handing on of their good things; not in the least in their not having the good things to communicate. We are in a position to appreciate the distinction at the present moment; when we have very good communications and nothing to communicate... [which] can be best tested by comparing their processes with a practical thing like a large modern newspaper; that loud and regular organ by which our civilisation daily proclaims that it has nothing to say." (c. 9 The Moral of the Story)

from "All I Survey" (1933)

"Educationalists have the task of putting the school in order before anyone has put the State in order. It is arguable that we ought to put the State in order before there can really be such a thing as a State school." (c. XXXI On Education).
"Private powers acting as public powers, monopolies, boycotts, big shops, publishing syndicates and similar things do, in fact, inflict

restrictions which we would not allow the State of Church to inflict". (c. XVI On a New Tax)

from "As I Was Saying" (1936)

"Communism is the child and heir of Capitalism." (Essay XVIII: About the Workers)
"... our politicians do not control our politics. Even the best of them are forced to a continuous compromise by the pressure of private interests, which are also public monopolies; and it is these commercial monopolies that rule the State." (Essay XVII: About Political Creeds)

These are but a few of the things that Chesterton had to say, a hundred years ago, on the state of modern society. It is sobering to note how little things have changed since his day.

The problem with quoting Chesterton is that he wrote so much with such deep insight on so many things that one suffers from an embarrassment of choice.

However, we cannot resist making reference to one or two (or three) more. The relevance of the first will be evident to all who followed the Pope's visit for World Youth Day through certain sections of the Sydney Press and Media. The other two are matters of social morals and manners that were coming into vogue in Chesterton's time but are still with us.

The Everlasting Man. (1925)

"When the world goes wrong, it proves rather that the Church is right. The Church is justified, not because her children do not sin, but because they do." (Introduction)

As I Was Saying. (1936)

"It is especially the educational film that threatens to darken and weaken the human intelligence. . . A false film might be refuted in a hundred books, without much affecting the million dupes who had never read the books but only seen the film." Avowals and Denials. (1934)

"Of all modern phenomena, the most monstrous and ominous, the most manifestly rotting with disease, the most grimly prophetic of destruction, the most clearly and unmistakably inspired by evil spirits, the most instantly and awfully overshadowed by the wrath of heaven, the most near to madness and moral chaos, the most vivid with devilry and despair, is the practice of having to listen to loud music while eating a meal in a restaurant."

"It is especially the educational film that threatens to darken and weaken the human intelligence ... A false film might be refuted in a hundred books, without affecting the million dupes who have never read the books but only seen the film."