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The Economic Personalism of John Paul II: Neither Right Nor Left

Daniel K. Finn

Abstract

This article responds to Gregory Gronbacher's survey on the same by proposing to extend the conversation in four ways. The first will outline a number of elements that helpfully appear in both the work of John Paul II and Gronbacher's survey. The second will

identify three problems in the use of these schools of economics as conversation partners. The third will recount several elements in John Pauls personalism that are largely absent from Gronbachers summary. The fourth will suggest further work to be taken up within economic personalism.

Daniel K. Finn, "The Economic Personalism of John Paul II: Neither Right Nor Left," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 74-87

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Daniel Rush Finn, in an article titled "The Economic Personalism of John Paul II: Neither Right Nor Left," (1) undertakes the following four-part engagement with my previous essay, "The Need for Economic Personalism" (2): This article responds to Gronbacher by proposing to extend the conversation (of economic personalism) in four ways. The first will outline a number of elements that helpfully appear in both the work of John Paul II and Gronbacher's survey. The second will identify three problems in the use of these schools (Austrian, Chicago, and Virginia) of economic... Pope John Paul is claimed by this reading as the great papal defender of capitalism. But I want to propose that this reading is deeply mistaken, and is based upon that classical mistake of reading out of context. One can assume from this that Pope John Paul II prefers an economic system in which economic freedom is circumscribed by strong juridical frameworks at the service of total human freedom (which, interestingly, is both ethical and religious in nature). The principle of the right to the acquisition of private property, though not per se the cause of conflict between capital and labor, becomes the cause of such conflict only once it is absolutized and exalted over the obligation to serve the common good. Thus, referring to the principle of private property, JP II writes in part 14