

**ECOLOGY AND THE RESURRECTION: A RESPONSE TO HAUGHEY  
AND PARADOX OR POPPYCOCK:  
THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR  
IN A MODERN BUSINESS CONTEXT: A RESPONSE TO O'BRIEN**

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In response to the excellent papers by Father Haughey and Professor O'Brien I would like to make three points or summarize my remarks by looking at three issues. First of all I would like to return to the issue taken up in the first part of Professor O'Brien's paper, the matter of the *inherent* incompatibility of Catholicism and capitalism. What is crucial in seeking understanding together is to be clear about what we are referring to when we use the term capitalism. One of the most penetrating contemporary examinations of the phenomenon is that of Robert Hielbroner who looks at capitalism as a regime or total ruling order. Essentially, he defines capitalism as the society or civilization that arises when money or capital accumulation is taken to be the ultimate end of the dominant [most powerful] institution(s) of that society. To be sure, he is moving the analysis to another level but he is certainly not putting words in anyone's mouth. The arch spokesperson for capitalism Milton Friedman says that business should seek, "to make as much money as possible." In a recent interview in response to the question of whether \$1 billion profit/week was excessive the head of Exxon said simply that this was his organization's "reason for being." Catholicism cannot but be opposed to such an aim because it results in our human dignity, our spiritual well-being, being sacrificed on the altar of material interests. Capitalism is, accurately, a pathology, a basic perversion of means and ends. What we are delivered into is a system that the father of Catholic economics, Heinrich Pesch, rightly described as "rotten to the core," a conclusion consistently repeated in encyclical after encyclical for more than one hundred years. There is no hope that the system can be made ecologically sustainable. It is founded on usury which commits it to an infinite expansion of production, something that cannot fit in the finite world we are in.

The question is what do we do about it? Is it possible to live out our faith faithfully within the structural conditions that envelop us? What can be done to create, in the words of Pope John Paul II, "a society of free work, of enterprise and of participation" (CA, 35)? [In my own work I have adopted the term responsible free enterprise to refer to a morally acceptable political economic system in contradistinction with capitalism.] How can money once again be seen as a means? As Christians we are called to an active love of our neighbour. What might this look like in practice today?

Secondly, then, I would like to go over Professor O'Brien's classification of these efforts.

- i) Commercial Enterprises  
It is possible to manage the business organization on a stewardship basis (Haughey) but those undertaking to do so will likely be presented with some onerous challenges. The concentration (or accumulation) of economic resources confers power and this

power can at all times be turned against the responsible enterprise threatening its viability. Difficult does not mean impossible, however, and there are many firms within the current system that try to make the dignity of the human person paramount. For example, Greyston Bakery in Yonkers, New York has as a policy the employing of the hard to employ. The Credo of Johnson and Johnson has shareholders in a place behind customers and employees, i.e., the order is Products⇒People⇒Profits.

Doing business with those and for those at the bottom of the pyramid is a way of helping those with very few material resources but I would add my voice to the voices of others questioning the sincerity of the ideal. Maybe there is a fortune to be made here but seeking a fortune as an end in itself is what got us into our present state of maldevelopment (so much overdevelopment coexisting with so much underdevelopment). Motives do matter. When push comes to shove won't profit maximization once again shove the poor out of the executive consciousness?

ii) Traditional Non-Profit Organizations

The contribution of this sector should not be overlooked even if there are weaknesses in this form of organization. First of all, given the sheer ruthlessness (brutality) of the capitalist system the charitable services provided by the not for profit sector are absolutely needed. Secondly, not all non-profit organizations act as the equivalent of emergency room surgeons making things tolerable but failing to exact fundamental changes. Some are economic powerhouses on behalf of the poor in their own right. Habitat for Humanity is the largest home builder in the world and because the money they receive is tied up or stewarded for building more homes, their growth is unlikely to wane. Standard economic textbooks make no mention of this extraordinary economic phenomenon because doing so would call into question the veracity of the world view, the religion of positivism, that underlies the theories being propounded in the discipline.

iii) Cooperative Movement

Competition, both interorganizationally and intramurally in the firm, is instantiated in our economy today. This can be traced to Thomas Hobbes' seventeenth century postulating of an original state of nature where human existence was a "war of all against all." This was and is a pure fiction but it has to a large extent been uncritically accepted as the way things are. Anything dislodging this understanding of human relations, anything that brings into being something more fitting to our social nature is to be welcomed. Cooperatives certainly do this. Like Habitat for Humanity their impact can be enormous. For example, the Mondragon Cooperative in Spain has lifted the entire Basque region out of economic depression.

iv) Social Business

In Catholic Social Thought the justification for any social institution is its service to or elevation of the human person. The "social business" movement initiated by Muhammed Yunus endeavours to achieve just this aim by engaging those otherwise excluded in enterprise, either as an entrepreneur or as a service beneficiary. The disorder brought about by capitalism's pursuit of profit as an end in itself is addressed

by making profit a means of “doing good in the world.” This movement is certainly to be welcomed but the model may not be that new. Some decades ago in North America Paul Newman began making salad dressings commercially and using the money generated for good works.

Finally, I would like to provoke the inquiry to go further by asking what the Catholic world view contributes distinctively to this. That is, anyone with sufficient moral sensibility can, irrespective of creed, effectively exercise a preferential option of the poor. What does being Catholic add? What difference *should* the Apostle’s Creed make in the lives of the members of the Body of Christ?

Asking this will allow me to bring in Father Haughey’s thesis more explicitly. We are to manage according to the mind of Christ. We are to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us by God, good stewards of His creation.

The key to actually doing this is to let God fully into our lives, to go in for the whole treatment, to surrender completely to God, to be formed by God’s grace.

The diagnosis of our condition in Catholic Social Thought is that our civilization has turned its back on God and is trying to go it alone. This is what we are caught up in but our situation is not unique in history and the solution now is what it has always been. Our deformed social world will be reformed according to God’s will by people accepting a call to holiness. The primary vocation of the Church is saint making. Management education at Catholic universities is done in this context (as Father Haughey points out, the social teachings of the Church find their grounding in the deepest mysteries of the faith) and ought to be supportive of this mission.