Abstract

Many of the present day scientists think that religion can never come to terms with science. In sharp contrast with this widespread opinion, this paper argues that, historically, scientific reasoning and religious belief joined hands in their effort to investigate and understand reality. In fact, the present-day divorce between science and religion is nothing else than the final outcome of a gradual, long-term, and deliberately assumed process of science secularization. However, especially during the latest two decades, we are all the same confronted with the advance of a new concern that some of the nowadays scientists have, the one of reviewing the sphere of problems specific to the domains of investigation they are involved in, with the face to the themes that are usually addressed by the theological thought. The paper describes this recent development as being captured by an emerging new field of investigation within the modern scientific epistemology: the dialogue between Science and Religion. It is also shown that the dialogue follows two divergent directions of analysis, namely the scholastic approach and the personalist one, respectively.

Keywords: science secularization, modern scientific skepticism, social catholic theology, patristic theology, economic personalism

JEL Classification: A1, Z 12

1. Introduction

The association between scientific reason and religious belief stems its legitimacy from the historic reality that even from the beginning of its origin, the scientific reason has been associated with religious faith in its effort to understand reality.

Such a development was possible as there is a natural power of rational knowledge (positive and negative) of God by means of deduction, being the reason of the world and having features similar to the world. Positive and negative rational knowledge is always linked to the world; both intellectual statements and negations originate in the work of God in the world. Therefore, “by looking at natural proofs, it is obvious to us the One who created all things, moves and preserves them, even if we cannot grasp Him with our natural rational understanding” ([1], pp. 138, 115, 117).

However, at the history scale the association between the reasoning and belief has followed a very devous way. A way that can be pretty well described, we believe, by the terms of a sui-generis parable of “The Return of the Prodigal Daughter”. Thus, born in the bosom of natural philosophy, at the same time with metaphysics (the VIth century B.C), the science grew and developed for a long period of time (till the beginning of the Vth century A.C) in a close relationship with the religious belief. From this moment, the first signs of its emancipation and separation from the theological thought have gradually developed and eventually turned the scientific inquiry - more and more conspicuous alongside the Renascence and the Reformation - into an autonomous and independent enterprise. Along the Enlightenment (XVIIth-XVIIIth century) this development asserted itself as a genuine process of the science secularization, that reaches its climax of negation and conflicting relationship with the religious belief during the XIXth century and the largest part of the XXth one, under the „shape” of the modern scientific skepticism (scientist, materialist and reductionist). The last almost three decades have become, however, the witnesses of „The Return of the Prodigal Daughter” to the primary source. This latest period was the one when „the new sciences” are again concerned with, and got near the theological thought, re-justifying a number of their common issues.

2. On the typology of nowadays dialogue between Science and Religion

The availability of the new sciences to look again towards, and to approach the theological reflection, as well as their interest to re-justify thus a series of common issues, inspired the conception of a new domain of epistemological investigation: the Science - Religion Dialogue.

One can say, i believe, that its main direction of investigation consists in the study of the nature, legitimacy and the opportuneness of reconstitution of the association between scientific reason and religious belief. In other words, i share
the conviction that the study of the science-religion relationship has to have in its center the concern for the identification of the different “dialogue models” proposed at present in the literature. In this sense, it is to be shown that the literature hosts, at present, two main diverging models that are followed in the science-religion dialogue, namely:

- on one hand, it is about the scholastic-type approach of the dialogue, mediated by the interdisciplinary and trans disciplinary methodologies, as interaction of an epistemological nature that operates between different scientific disciplines and the different Heterodox Western theologies, all existing under the strictness of the status of academic disciplines; and

- on the other hand, it is about the personalist-type approach, mediated by the Orthodox patristic gnoseology, as an interpersonal relation of togetherness-work between the orthodox theologian (who brings as his contribution to the dialogue the knowledge acquired through religious belief, based on the non-demonstrable truths received by Divine Revelation), and the scientist (who contributes with the knowledge acquired through scientific reasoning, based on the demonstrable truths obtained by the experimental inquiry).

One can see that the divergence lies in that, while the scholastic approach operates the dialogue at the level of academic disciplines (scientific and theological alike), in exchange the personalist approach employs the dialogue at the level of human persons (theologian and the scientist). In my opinion, the source of this distinction is represented by the different radical way in which, at present, the Western (Heterodox) theology, on one hand, and respectively the Eastern (Orthodox) one, on the other hand, formulate their own gnoseological and existential statutes.

Certainly, theology was regarded along the time from different views. However, beyond the multitude of the proposed alternative views, it emerged - especially in the Western world through Reform and Scholastic -, a distinction between „theology” as experience, meeting the life in Christ, and „the theologic science”; the last one meaning anything that belongs to a scientific research performed inside the field of theology [2]. As an example, in the framework of the theological academic curriculum, there are considered as “theological scientific disciplines” various fields of investigation such as the history of Church, biblical archeology, applied paleography to the Church texts, biblical exegesis by the historical-critical method, philology and others. In all of these cases, it is about the interweaving of the scientific research stance with the vision and needs characteristic of theological thought. Nevertheless, it should not be eventually overlooked that these are, by thier very working method, sciences, and that only by extension, given their proper object of study, we can call them theology [2].

Following the same line of analysis, the Greek theologian Georgios Mantzaridis distinguishes between the „empirical theology” and the “academic theology”. He considers that while the first concerns itself with the experience of the uncreated, revealed by ecclesiastical life (of the Church), the second one uses the scientific method and does not reach, in most instances - not by malevolence, but simply as an effect of the method used -, to be able to report the experience of uncreated, as the last one is not a valid object of knowledge, recognized by sciences [3].

3. The Science-Religion dialogue within Economics

Since more than a hundred years a separation of economics from theology has been accepted by most economists and not quite as many theologians. As a consequence, the importance of religion for economics is seldom recognized by contemporary economics. This state of things is simply an indication of a broad consensus within the field of economics that methods, norms, and even concerns construed to be related to religious belief have no place in the scientific study of economics.

However, economists who have rejected the separation have argued for different forms of religious economics on the assumption that economic theory is not theologicially neutral and has to be evaluated theologically. More recently, an upsurge of interest by some economists in extending the economic approach to religion has stimulated the emergence of a new field of investigation called economics of religion. In my opinion, both religious economics and economics of religion have provided valuable contributions in helping to illuminate religion as well as to enrich economic theory.

Replicating these inquiries, theologians went into more depth with their investigations on relationship between theology and economics as they aimed at achieving a conceptual synthesis of the two disciplines. A first important step in their endeavor was the attempt to combine theology and economics in a normative social theory. The outcome, liberation theology, could hardly be considered a success having in view its major epistemological vulnerability (namely, the isolated, „on his own” mono-disciplinary approach) and its most important theoretical constraint (that is, the lack of sound economic principles as it utilizes Marxist economics). The second important step is represented by a recently initiated epistemological effort to synthesize moral theology and neoclassical free-market economics under the name of economic personalism. In my opinion, this new field of interdisciplinary investigation is a compelling illustration - for the particular case of economics -, of the divergence that exists between the scholastic version of the science-religion dialogue (involving the “academic theology” approach) and the personalist one (which employs the “ecclesiastical theology” approach). It is what i seek to analyze in more detail in the following pages.
More than two decades ago a group of Christian Catholic social thinkers engaged in dialogue with free-market economists concerning the morality of market activity. As a result, this interdisciplinary exchange inspired the conception of a new academic sub discipline that sought to synthesize central aspects of theology and economics, thereby giving rise to a new body of scholarship termed economic personalism. The general idea is to promote a humane economic order that benefits from market activity but does not reduce the human person to just another element in economic phenomena.

The initiators of this interdisciplinary exercise relied on the fact that, regarding the economists, such a dialogue would offer them—through their opening towards a vision given by the Christian social ethics—a more complete image on the human being. In turn, “economic science would have something to offer to moral theologians who were concerned with human interaction in the socioeconomic sphere”[4]. In accordance with its supporters (see, especially, the analyses developed in the works of Gronbacher [4], Zuniga [5], Schmiesing [6] or Woehrling [7]), economic personalism represents "a science of morality of markets, an attempt to analyse the moral ramifications of the economic activities in the light of the Catholic theological vision on the human person".

As one can be noticed, economic personalists define their area of investigation as a science that is an interdisciplinary enterprise of an academic nature. According to them, this implies a detailed exploration of economic theory, history and methodology, as well as of the market practices, all considered from the perspective of the recognition of human person dignity and of the concern for the human justice, derived from such an acknowledgement.

In doing so, economic personalists seek “to provide a holistic account of personal existence and thus supplement genuine economic science with a science of morality for the marketplace” [4]. Taking this course of action – it is sustained – “economic personalism does not attempt to reformulate economics in the image of moral theology. Nor do we desire to reduce moral theology to market analysis. We strive to maintain the rightful autonomy of these disciplines while endeavoring to develop a science that can fully utilize the insights of both”. In other words, they aspire to offer “a nuanced synthesis of free-market economic science and the science of moral theology grounded in a personalist anthropology” [4].

For the supporters of this academic version of economic personalism, the achievement of such a synthesis is possible because of the fact that the economic theory and the moral theology have a common field of investigation, namely the human action: economy is the study of the human action under the market conditions, while the moral theology is the study of the rightness or wrongness of human action in general. In this way, the two disciplines cross each other in the area of the study of the human person and that of the systematic analysis of the human action.

The most important epistemological asset that the academic version of economic personalism brings in is the Catholic-inspired theological vision of the person applied to economic realities. What, actually, do we mean by this? As it is nowadays widely recognized „much policy disagreement among managers, scientists, policy makers, and citizens derives from substantial, though usually implicit, differences in the way we think about human nature – about the strengths, frailties, intelligence, ignorance, honesty, selfishness, generosity, and altruism of individuals” [8]. It comes out that, according to the dominant conventional wisdom, human being is understood and approached as individual. This holds true for every single social science. In this context, the true novelty economic personalism proposes is the understanding and approaching of human being as person. In other words, this new interdisciplinary field of investigation holds an outstanding epistemological potential: the theologically-inspired transfiguration of individual-based economic analysis into a person-based economic analysis. Provided this would be the case, than the outcome would be the achievement of the (long time) badly desired true synthesis of theology and economics. Accordingly, we shall further investigate in the following pages how the current state of economic personalism answers (or not) this unique potential.

In this respect, if it would be to resume the fundamental conceptual assertions of the academic-type economic personalism – as it is nowadays professed ([5], pp.151,165; [6], pp.176-177, 180-182; [4] pp.1-3,10, 29) - we could say the following:

- economic personalism does not call into question the epistemological foundations of economic science (that is, its empirical and mathematical character);
- instead, it tries to assure a more comprehensive image within the economic investigation field, bringing into the economists memory that the economic agents are, after all, human persons;
- in other words, economic personalism wants the economic discipline to enlarge its sphere of investigation so that, alongside the current concern with mathematical models and statistical analyses, it deals also with anthropology and morals.

In addition to all these considerations it should be emphasized that the person’s dignity and value lay in the center and form the basis for the entire analysis developed by the academic-type economic personalist philosophy. In accordance with this perspective, Gronbacher [4] notes that „...the incarnation of Jesus has elevated human nature into a position of utter uniqueness by being raised into the unity of the divine person of the Son of God. Every human person is somebody unique and unrepeatable”[4]. The personalists think that this assertion regarding the huge dignity attributed to the human being has a profound significance, as it shows the greatness God has given to him. Therefore „The value of the person is not derived from an individual’s contributions, talents, or achievements but has to do with
the ineffable ontological significance of their being. Human existence is endowed with dignity, the dignity of a conscious, free, and creative being\[4\]. In this way, centered on the outstanding importance of human dignity, the academic-type of economic personalism has as its climax the idea that each person ought to be affirmed for his or her own sake. Following this line of reasoning, it is further maintained that „. Acknowledging and respecting a person’s dignity entails the following: (1) the obligation to respect another person’s sense of value, (2) positive affirmation for work performed, and (3) what von Hildebrand and Wojtyla have called, ‘value response’, or the possibility for self-transcendence in love insofar as the subject conforms himself to the preciousness and worth of the person for his own sake” \[4\].

Let me note that this centrality attributed to human dignity issues reflects the quasi-absolute attention paid to moral and ethical dimension of the human person. What is surprisingly missing in the analytical discourse of this version of economic personalism is the lack of proper references to God, namely to transcendental (and spiritual) dimension of the human person. In fact, the academic-type of the economic personalism seems to operate in a „half-measure manner”. On the one hand, it is emphasized that the human being was created in the Image of the Person Jesus Christ, and in this way he is called to be a person itself: „Christ not only reveals God’s salvific will for all humanity but (He) is a revelation of man, of what man was intended to be at creation and is, by reason of incarnation of the Son of God and by reason of the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of the God-Man Jesus Christ (...) In this respect, Jesus is the revelation of what humanity now is – a unique refraction of the divine image” \[4\]. On the other hand, however, there is no reference to human being’s response to this lovingly calling of Christ. To say that human person’s dignity relies on „the possibility for self-transcendence in love insofar as the subject conforms himself to the preciousness and worth of the person for his own sake” is equal to implicitly saying that there is no response at all, as „the possibility for self-transcendence in love” refers exclusively to fellow-creatures, not to Christ. In other words, what is actually missing is the crucial dimension of interpersonal communion between man and God, the genuine transcendental and spiritual dimension of human person.

In sum, the essential principles that the academic version of the economic personalism affirms are as follows:
- the dignity and value of the person resides at the very center of philosophical reflection and provides the foundation for all subsequent analysis;
- each person is an original, unique, and unrepeatable expression of human nature;
- both the dignity and uniqueness of human person are fully reflected in the maxim that each person ought to be affirmed for his or her own sake. This means that there is a recognition and response to the value of each and every person. The consequence is the requirement that persons never be treated as means to an end;
- consequently, the economic personalism analysis focuses upon adjudicating economic arrangements which promote or denigrate human dignity.

It seems also useful to point out that, in our opinion, the “academic” personalists go beyond these theoretical considerations. So, having distilled the essence of the idea of economic personalism, they show a particular interest in discovering the thing to which this idea refers:”How do we recognize the thing we can call economic personalism? This question presupposes that economic personalism exists in the world. Is this the case? \[5\].

In brief, the answer is: person-mindedness. In this respect, the same reputed economic personalist notes:”Person-mindedness can be described as a network of relations of persons and things, for example, moral things, aesthetic things, musical things, and every other aspect of human social reality. We know person-mindedness intuitively as an attitude that can be present in our minds or forgotten. It is present when our minds are present in the situation before us and we are able to appreciate the personal character of the world. It is forgotten when our minds are otherwise occupied and thus not grounded in the here and now of the personal character of the world (...) Person-mindedness adds the connectedness of the economic agent or the economic object to the human social reality, that world experienced as personally meaningful” \[5\].

Moreover, academic personalists believe it is justified to speak about the existence of a real world of economic personalism, a world that has shown evidence of systematic person-mindedness at corporate level (e.g. Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard, Nordstrom, or Continental Airlines). In order to facilitate a better understanding of the arguments developed by the academic personalists, I want present the case of Continental Airline Company (as it is shown by Gloria Zuniga \[5\]).

"Consider the case of Continental Airlines in the last years of the '90 that bordered on bankruptcy. Consumer confidence is so low that the only passengers who will fly on this airline are those who received free tickets as compensation for filling out an application for a major credit card. Everything points to major budget cuts, employee layoffs, and fare reductions. A new chief executive officer of this failing company is named (Gordon Bethune), and he does exactly the opposite. He increases the budget for employee bonuses in order to reward any increase in the efficiency of the operations. Accordingly, each employee of an operation center receives a substantial bonus every month for their contribution to sustaining a record of on-time departures and arrivals. Instead of firing those employees at closing operation centers, he attempts to relocate them in needed, but previously ignored, geographical areas. Furthermore, he does not reduce fares because, as a person, he understands that to build a following of loyal customers, he needs to provide them with good service. This means, therefore, on-time arrivals and departures, comfortable and well-maintained seats, quality in-flight attention, and better than average airline food and beverages.
It did not take long before this airline company became one of the top-ranking airlines in the industry. What stands out most of all is his ever-present person-mindedness. He helped displaced employees find a relocation site or alternative employment. He thought about the needs of the ordinary person sitting on the coach section of any one of the airplanes owned by the airline. He included his entire operations staff as part of the solution, and he rewarded each one for their contribution toward this goal. The bottom line was important, since his job was on the line every moment that the airline remained at the border of bankruptcy. But he recognized that the bottom line would not improve if he lost sight of the persons who were employees, the persons who were customers, and the persons who were his potential lenders.

His decisions and his actions exhibited person-mindedness not as a satellite concern, but as part of his firm’s recovery plan. The actions of Gordon Bethune, the chief executive officer, and the effects these had on Continental Airlines, exemplify the existence and success of economic personalism “[5].

3.2. Economic personalism – The “ecclesiastical” version

As we already have mentioned in our paper, the most important epistemological asset that the academic-type economic personalism brings in is its Catholic theological vision of the person applied to economic realities. The culminating insight of this vision is contained in the maxim that each person ought to be affirmed for his or her own sake. This means that there is recognition of the dignity of the human person and a concern for justice that stems from this recognition. Consequently, the current economic personalism focuses upon adjudicating economic arrangements which promote or denigrate human dignity.

At the same time, as i already has also mentioned in this paper, in its attempt to achieve a true synthesis of economics and theology, economic personalism holds an outstanding epistemological potential: the theologically-inspired transfiguration of individual-based economic analysis into a person-based economic analysis. The conclusion we came at is that the theological vision of the person applied by the academic-type economic personalism is not yet properly equipped to successfully fulfill this challenging task.

In any case, there is no doubt that this version of economic personalism is at present a relatively obscure system of thought, untested in many respects, and by no means comprehensive in scope or expertise. On the other hand, however, it is in its nascent stages of development, and so it remains open to enlargement, realignment and refinement. Under such circumstances, the ecclesiastical-type (that is, Christian-Orthodox) contribution to further development of economic personalism could consist in bringing forward the faith-teaching of the Holy Fathers of Eastern Church regarding the human person. In this final section of my paper I will try to formulate some considerations in this respect.

I think of outmost importance to mention from the very beginning that, according to Holy Fathers, „the person” is a mysterious supernatural Revelation, revealed to us in the Person of Our Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of the God. The patristic Orthodox theology shows that The Holy Trinity, from Whom both the order of creation and the order of redemption proceeds, is an infinite communion of self-giving love. And so the Person of Jesus the Savior is the Image of the Father. As being created in Holy Trinity’s Image, the human being is an icon of the Image of the Person Jesus Christ, and in this way he is called to be a person itself. In other words, each human being is called to achieve the perfection of his own personhood by entering into interpersonal communion with Christ. At the same time, Holy Fathers say that Christ is the Head of the Church, while we are members of the Christ’s Church. It comes out from here that each human being is also called to enter into interpersonal communion with his or her fellow-creatures.

This central and critical importance that Orthodox theology attaches to human person’s interpersonal communion with God and with others shows us explicitly the importance it attaches, at the same time, to the distinction between „the individual” and „the person”. In this respect, let us recall that Saint Maximus the Confessor speaks about the distinction between man’s „natural will” and „gnomical will”. Natural will is the expression of human nature (character) created by God, which is oriented, by the act of Creation itself, towards the communion with God. This will is an attribute of human nature created in God’s Image so that natural will (energy) implies natural liberty that is natural inclination towards God, the genuine liberty. At the same time, gnomical will is the expression of the man’s fallen hypostasis; it is the „free will”, that is hypostatical liberty, man’s possibility to choose without any prohibitions [9]. The Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky says:”However, following Saint Maximum the Confessor’s approach, this freedom to choose (that is, gnomical will – our addition) is already in itself a non-perfection, a limitation of the genuine liberty. A perfect (human) nature doesn’t need to choose, as it knows innately „the good”: its liberty is founded on this knowledge. Our free will shows the non-perfection of the fallen human nature, the losing of our resemblance to God” [10].

This pre-eminence of the spiritual dimension of human person could generate significant changes in the way economic personalism is currently conceived as an emerging interdisciplinary domain. These changes are expected to occur in relation to the subject matter of the domain, to its basic conceptual principle and also to its general mission. In
in the field, in an attempt to provide original assumptions according to which the present-day divorce between science and religion, the matter of this article imposed a quasi-exhaustive analysis of the literature together with economic personalism focuses upon

adjudicating the economic arrangements which promote or denigrate human dignity.

With reference to the contribution that the “ecclesiastical” version of economic personalism (based on a Christian-Orthodox perspective) could bring new into the picture, i would like to underline that economic personalism should analyze economic activity in terms of its spiritual significance. In this sense, the Orthodox theology is particularly preoccupied with the humility of the human person (Saint Siluan the Athonite, Saint Ambrose of Optina) and the gentleness that crowns the humble person. Saint Basil the Great says that gentleness is the “unchanged judgment on the things that God is pleased with” and Saint John Chrysostom explains that the gentle person is that who “inherits the Earth”. In accordance with these views of the Holy Fathers of Eastern Tradition, it results that an Orthodox-inspired economic personalism should accordingly focus on the spiritual content of the interpersonal relations in marketplace and, as such, it should be concerned with promoting virtuous economic behavior.

(b) Basic conceptual principle. The basic conceptual principle adopted by Catholic perspective postulates that each person ought to be affirmed for his or her own sake. This means that there is a recognition and response to the value of each and every person. This also means that people should never be treated as means to an end.

In its turn, according to its spiritual stance, the Orthodox-inspired economic personalism would advocate that human person ought to comply with the principle of minimum action. This principle was originally developed by the science of physics [11] and postulates that a physical entity (a body), while moving from one point to another, follows that trajectory – out of a multitude of possible trajectories – which implies a minimum action, that is a minimum energy consumption. Bringing this reasoning to its logical consequences, it follows that the entire Creation of God complies with this principle. For this reason, one can infer that a person obeys the will of God provided his or her actions comply with this principle.

Under these circumstances, it is expected that the Orthodox approach will suggest that the principle of minimum action lies at the basis of any human action (be it economic or spiritual). Therefore, one can further infer that human economic actions (that is production, exchange, distribution, and consumption activities) comply with the minimum action principle provided the consumption of economic (material) resources is minimized (economic efficiency). Likewise, human spiritual actions that accompany interpersonal relations in the marketplace (that is, personal feelings, thoughts, emotions and so on generated during, and due to, a particular business transaction) comply with this principle provided the consumption of useless soul energy (that is sins and passions) is also minimized (spiritual efficiency).

It comes out that the humble and gentle person, the “poor in spirit”, is exactly the person who acts in accordance with the principle of minimum action. And, it is important to make clear that, in this way, the “poor in spirit” reaches spiritual efficiency. And even more than that; reaching spiritual efficiency first will consequently be followed by reaching economic efficiency, too. Says Saint John Chrysostom: “Since it is believed that the gentle one loses all that he has, that is why Christ promises the opposite, saying that the gentle man, the man who is not bold, nor proud, holds in complete security his possessions, while the one lacking the gentleness loses in most cases even the wealth inherited from his parents, and loses also his soul” [12]. Patristic writings teach also that the humble and gentle person has peace (as the Savior says), has true devotion, “sees creation as Eucharist” [13], and he considers himself – as should do any economic agent who opted for acting as a person in his business and personal life alike – a steward of God’s wealth (likewise the priest is the steward of Christ’s Mysteries – according to St. Paul the Apostle). Humble and gentle person considers his fortune as a talent that he has to use as a good servant. He “does not consume more than it is absolutely necessary”[12] and the remainder of his fortune considers to belong to God, the overall goal being that the entire creation (therefore any wealth, too) become Christ’s Church.

(c) General mission. The general mission assumed by Catholic perspective aims at promoting a human economic order that benefits from market activity but does not reduce the economic agent to just another element in economic phenomena.

In terms of general mission likely to be assumed by the Orthodox perspective, we share the opinion that it should aim at preventing the extinction of the religious faith in modern and post-modern societies either due to increased material welfare in times or prosperity or due to increased poverty in times of crises.

4. Methodology

Given the difficulty and sensitivity of the subject consisting in discussions to capture the actual dialogue between science and religion, the matter of this article imposed a quasi-exhaustive analysis of the literature together with profound appreciations of the matter. The methodology of this paper is a critical overview of the most important studies in the field, in an attempt to provide original assumptions according to which the present-day divorce between science
and religion is nothing else than the final outcome of a gradual, long-term, deliberately and assumed process of science secularization. But, in the last time we have seen important evolutions on this scene, from which science is returning at his origins. In that context, the economics it seems to be the most advanced of social sciences to enter into dialogue with religion.

5. Some concluding remarks

The most important contribution of the "academic-type” economic personalism is the application of a personalist (Catholic) theological vision to the study of economic realities. In this way, economic personalism affirms an outstanding epistemological potential: the theologically-inspired transfiguration of the individual-based economic analysis into a person-based economic analysis.

Centered on moral values (dignity, justice, participation), Catholic vision of the person proposes the idea that human beings never be treated as means to an end, that is as a mere economic resource in a production function (along with capital, technology, or information). Its culminating conceptual insight is reflected in the maxim that each person ought to be affirmed for his or her own sake. In accordance with the moral stance adopted, Catholic-inspired economic personalism focuses upon adjudicating which economic arrangements promote or denigrate human dignity.

Taking into consideration the shortcomings of its theorizing performance (the vision and understanding of the human person is limited to moral and ethical considerations only, while the critical distinction individual-person is flowed by the erroneous supposition that „the individual” – and not „the person” - represents the ontological foundation of the social order), it comes out that the current Catholic-inspired economic personalism succeeded only partially in developing the outstanding potential we have mentioned above.

Under these circumstances, an Orthodox-inspired version of economic personalism promises to contribute to further development of this potential. Centered on spiritual values (humbleness, gentleness, compassionateness), Orthodox vision of the person proposes the idea that human being, in order to elevate himself or herself to the condition of person, has to bring into accord his or her gnomical (free) will with his natural will. Its culminating conceptual insight is reflected in the urge that each human being freely and consciously chooses to enter into interpersonal communion with Christ and with others (fellow-creatures). In accordance with its inherently spiritual stance, an Orthodox-inspired economic personalism would focus on the normative imperative that economic activities are to be governed by criteria that take full account of both economic efficiency and spiritual efficiency, as each business transaction implies not only an exchange of tangible and intangible material (earthly) goods, but it simultaneously implies an exchange of spiritual (heavenly and otherworldly) goods: altruism vs. selfishness; moderation vs. greed; cooperation vs. competition; generosity vs. envy; care vs. indifference; forgiveness vs. revenge; love vs. hate. All these appear to indicate that the Orthodox-inspired economic personalism could be better positioned to achieve the desired theologically-inspired transfiguration of the individual-based economic analysis into a person-based one.

6. References


