Albino Barrera's Synthetic Ethic for Economics

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The principles of market economics have helped produce a level of wealth previously unknown in the history of the world. They have aided in raising millions of people across the globe out of poverty, but at the same time the market offers little to nothing to those who do not succeed. It has no internal principles to respond to those who bear the sufferings of increased efficiency. Homo oeconomicus, as he is understood by economic thought since at least the mid-nineteenth century, has a single driving concern: to maximize his personal utility, which translates into ever-greater personal consumption. This reductionist moral understanding of the human person, however, results in economic theories that also have little capacity to engage the questions of justice. While free market economics is a powerful machine capable of significantly moving and reshaping an economy, without ethical norms or an acknowledged hierarchy of goods it can be like a train without breaks or a tractor incapable of turning: it can also cause great damage. To converse with the field of modern economics and begin metaphorically to build the ethical brakes for the train and to add moral steering to the tractor, however, requires an ability on the part of the ethicist to engage the discipline in terms that it is able to understand. Likewise, it calls for an adept understanding of the true nature of the sometimes complex economic forces that produce moral ills, in order to classify them correctly and build the moral arguments necessary for their treatment. In short, to build a bridge between ethics and economics requires a capacity to speak both languages, and, since modern economics is unfamiliar with metaphysical philosophical ethical discourse, it requires versatility in the various types of arguments and tools employed. Albino Barrera, O.P. holds a Ph.D. in economics from Yale University and advanced degrees in theology. His written work has consistently demonstrated these capacities. This paper will look at the different types of ethical sources that he has incorporated into his synthetic ethics for economics and how these sources and their respective use are important in building this bridge between the modern discipline of economics and ethical judgments.

Writings

Often academic works are aimed at an audience principally within one's own discipline, and an authority in one field may be little known in another one. In his various works, Barrera has consistently reached out to a multiplicity of audiences, which has both permitted and required the development of his synthetic ethic. His first book in the field of ethics and economics, Modern Catholic Social Documents & Political Economy (2001), presents the development of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church beginning with the 1891 encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, and ending with John Paul II's Centesimus Annus. It traces the development of this line of thought from earlier scholastic thought in the area of economics. Modern Catholic Social Documents & Political Economy sought to better the channels of communication and

understanding between the discipline of economics and Catholic social thought. In the process he reviews the philosophical differences between modern economics and Catholic Social Thought (CST), and then uses various tools to present a synthesized framework of the perennial principles of the Church's social doctrine, thus yielding a synthetic ethic in economic matters.

In Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics (2005), Barrera opens new ground in the study of economic ethics by turning his attention to the side effects of shifts in market prices (pecuniary externalities) and the compulsion that is forced upon the losing side of these price movements. Here his synthetic approach to ethics, which builds upon his work in his first book, presents a framework for addressing these market ills. Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics was written as part of the New Studies in Christian Ethics series published by Cambridge University Press, which seeks to build a bridge of understanding between an ecumenically Christian ethics and the various fields of social science. Thus the audience involves many Christians who might not be not familiar with, or perhaps accepting of, the principles of CST, and this requires him to explain certain ethical principles in terms of more direct Biblical theology.

In God and the Evil of Scarcity (2005), Barrera moves to consider the foundational issue in the study of economics: scarcity. With the aid of Aquinas' metaphysics and the concepts of covenant fidelity and discipleship from Sacred Scripture he shows that the reality of human participation combined with scarcity allows one to partake in the righteousness and goodness of God. All human economic activity, therefore, will have the decision to participate or not in the Divine plan and is penetrated with ethical decision-making. While the audience continues to be theologians, philosophers, and social scientists, the arguments are made from more traditionally Catholic sources.

In Globalization and Economic Ethics: Distributive Justice in the Knowledge Economy (2007), Barrera develops arguments and criteria from the properties of the globalized market, the functioning of the digital economy, and a number of more strictly secular philosophical sources to demonstrate that efficiency and human need both complement one another in acting as principles for distributive justice. The framing of the arguments points to a more strictly philosophical, or at least less theological, audience.

Finally, in Market Complicity and Christian Ethics (2011), Barrera addresses the morally complicated issues of decision-making in the market place by individual consumers that lead to damaging cumulative effects on a larger scale: e.g. over-fishing, pollution, abusive labour practices, etc. Not only does this work open further terrain in the moral consideration of sometime complicated market-driven phenomena, but it employs arguments and concepts from liberal philosophy and jurisprudence to fill in the holes that traditional Catholic moral thought leaves undetermined.

The Sources of Ethics

It is obvious from the various titles of Barrera's books that his audience does not fully share the same understanding of "the good", the good life, or the common good, all of which the field of ethics seeks to preserve and foster. To present an ethical vision that is convincing to more than the proverbial choir — those who share all of one's philosophical commitments — requires versatility, consistency, and an ability to speak the language of more than one academic discipline. Barrera's approach to ethics in economic decision-making combines many different sources, and yet the finished product is not a jumbled collection of inconsistent arguments but a synthetic

approach that consistently puts forward the same conclusions regarding the human community's moral responsibility towards those who do not succeed in the marketplace. The Christian nature of most of his work naturally makes Sacred Scripture a obvious source for upright moral behaviour, as both the New and Old Testaments have much to say on the treatment of the goods of the earth and mankind's responsibility towards those less fortunate in our midst. In addition to a Biblical-based moral theology, Barrera also regularly relies upon the metaphysics and virtue theory of St. Thomas Aquinas, which finds the human person as a creature of God and a member of a human community. The reality of these facts calls forth moral responses on the part of the individual and the human community as a whole. Finally, in terms of Catholic moral thought, Barrera makes wide use of modern CST. These are all standard sources for Catholic social ethics. What makes Barrera's works truly noteworthy, apart from its clarity and organization, is its use of non-traditional sources, particularly its use of contemporary philosophers and the instrumental role of economics.

Biblical Foundations

While Catholic social doctrine and Thomistic metaphysics both incorporate, and are enlivened by, Sacred Scripture, and while both schools of thought affirm the harmony between the Natural Law and the moral precepts in Divine revelation, Sacred Scripture remains an important source for ethics in its own right for all Christian believers. Barrera, with the aid of interpreters as varied as the Fathers of the Church and modern Scripture scholars, harkens to certain central themes of economic justice: economic security and social responsibility towards the more vulnerable in society, with material scarcity as the phenomenon that weaves these two concepts together. Basing his ethical arguments directly on Sacred Scripture opens his vision to non-Catholic Christian circles.

In Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics and God and the Evil of Scarcity, Barrera finds in Sacred Scripture two key components in his argument for ethical intervention in markets to assist those harshly affected by price moves in the marketplace: the gift of economic security and the principle of restoration. Beginning with Genesis and the creation accounts, there is a consistent theme in the Bible regarding God's solicitude for the needs of mankind and the individual's involvement in bringing about a just economic order. "Economic security is a twofold gift because God not only supplies our needs but also uses our mutual responsibility for each other as a channel for bestowing such provisions on us."[1] This is not limited to the creation accounts, however, wherein man and woman are given dominion over the rest of creation in all its abundance. It also extends to the latter formative events in Israel's history: the exodus out of Egypt and the return from Babylonian captivity.

In both of these events in which Israel understood God to be intervening directly on its behalf, the land played a very important role. The Promised Land served as a tangible sign of God's favour and election, but, from the point of view of its function, the land fulfilled an actual need. "In an agrarian culture, landholding is the source of wealth and power. Land guarantees the household's independence because it provides family members with a livelihood that is not contingent on the will or whim or permission of anybody else."[2] The Promised Land was described as "flowing with milk and honey" (Exod. 3:8, 17; 13:5; Lev. 20:24, et al). The imagery describes the blessings. The gift of land was perceived as a gift of economic security and yet also a gift that required their response. Relying on the work of scripture scholars H. Eberhard von Wadlow and Thomas Ogletree, Barrera argues that the

Israelites understood that their habitation of the land was dependent upon their dedication to the Lord and the Law that he had given them, a central feature of which was care for one another.[3] The Covenant Code (Exod. 20:22-23:33), the Deuteronomic Code (Deut. 12-26), and the Holiness Code (Lev. 17-26) all include long lists of directives and ordinances regarding economic life, mutual assistance for other members of Israel, and the care to be provided for the widow, orphan, and the vulnerable in society.

While God's blessing ensures that there will be enough for all, it was also understood that human participation was required and that this participation at times required noticeable sacrifice. These regulations included lending without interest to others in need, periodic rests and the celebration of feasts as equals, a Jubilee year once every fifty years to restore the land to its original owners, the writing off of debts after seven years, etc. Such legislation carried a "heavy opportunity cost when compared to the prevailing practice in surrounding neighbors, and all for the cause of caring for the distressed."[4] In short, the Land and the Law were both signs of God's election of Israel. The Land would be bountiful, but the bounty was to serve the entire community as the Law socialized the chosen People into a united whole. Each person is responsible for the welfare of his neighbours through the use of his freedom.

In the Gospels of the New Testament, these teachings are re-enforced through both the teaching of Jesus (e.g. Matt. 6:25-34 and Luke 12:22-31) and the miracle accounts in which he fulfils human needs to the point of superabundance (e.g. Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:34-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 2:1-11; 6:1-15). "Even if these miracle stories are about much larger theological points (such as the messianic plenitude in the miracle of the wine at Cana and the Eucharist in the feeding of the multitudes), rather than chronicles of actual historical events, we nevertheless still arrive at the same point: The evangelists understand that ours is a God of unbounded beneficence. And this applies to both our spiritual and material welfare."[5] The faith community is to respond to the self-revealing love of God with concern in meeting the needs, both bodily and spiritual, of those in need.

Barrera strengthens these arguments through additional arguments and examples from the life and writings of St. Paul. Relying on the findings of numerous Pauline scholars including Brendan Byrne, Richard Hayes, Ernst Käsemann, and E.P. Sanders, he puts forth a "Pauline" ethic that stresses the believer's participation "in Christ". The baptized believer shares in the new life of Christ and in the new creation brought about by his resurrection from the dead. This sharing extends to all matters of life especially to matters of justice in our relations with others. There is a social dimension to St. Paul's ethics, Barrera insists, that springs from his understanding of the Church as an organic unity, as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12).[6] If Israel was to show special concern for other members of the Chosen People, the ethical demands on the followers of Christ were equally, if not more, demanding.

Barrera shows the continuity with these ethical understandings in the early life of the Church in the works of Clement of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, and Augustine of Hippo. He shows that in the early Church, there was a consistent belief that creation is a gift from God blessed with abundance for the needs of all mankind. "To the patristic mind it is self-evident that God has provided enough, and for the benefit of all. Economic security for everyone is a corollary of divine creation."[7] The teaching on the abundance of creation places the emphasis on human response to ensure that the poor and marginalized are taken care of. In short, if there are lingering effects of poverty and destitution, it is on account of the

failure of individual men and women to respond to the needs of those around them.

Through the revelation of Sacred Scripture, the believer comes to know that God gives life and economic security while inviting and expecting each person to participate in divine providence through his response to these gifts. The various codes of the Law (Exodus, Deuteronomic, and Holiness, as mentioned above) point to the existence of harsh economic side effects in the society of the time and the social obligation of aiding those who had fallen on "hard times". Ultimately their land was to be restored, their debt forgiven, and, if they had been so unfortunate as to be sold off into slavery to cover their debts, they were to be set free within six years time. "God could have easily willed a world of 'sustenance without care' but did not. Rather, God created an order or sustenance that requires much effort, sacrifice, and collaboration, albeit with a concomitant growth in grace, holiness, righteousness, and mutual care."[8] God not only provides sufficient resources, he also asks his followers to imitate his actions and help restore those who have fallen into difficulty. Sacred Scripture continues to instruct its readers on God's providential bounty and our need to come to the need not only of the needy (widows, orphans, and foreigners in our midst) but also to those who have fallen on "hard times" those who suffer the "pecuniary" externalities of shifts in prices. These gleanings from Sacred Scripture demonstrate that Christians have an obligation to work for the alleviation of desperate poverty as well as the means necessary for all to participate in the economy, and restore to those who have suffered greatly within the marketplace the basic necessities required for effective economic participation.

Principles of Catholic Social Thought

In Modern Social Documents & Political Economy, Barrera traces the origin and development of the principles of Catholic Social Thought, principally from the promulgation of Rerum Novarum in 1891 until the turn of the twenty-first century. He draws the reader's attention to the elements of continuity between older magisterial teachings regarding the economy and this modern phase, and describes how economic developments created historic situations that called for a moral response from the Church. In the process, the various principles that constituted CST were articulated: human dignity, subsidiarity, the primacy of labour, solidarity, participation, the preferential option for the poor, socialization, stewardship of the earth's resources, universal access principle, etc. Ultimately, CST regards safeguarding and promoting the common good, but given the ad hoc nature of the history of the encyclicals and the lack of a clearly defined over-arching framework for applying these principles, certain difficulties arise. When should the principle of subsidiarity give way to that of socialization? How should the concepts of a living wage and full employment be balanced? The fact is that many of the principles of CST are capable of being pitted against one another, so that the whole collection of principles seems confused and incoherent. Barrera tackles this need for an over-arching framework by pointing to the central place of human dignity in the common good and in CST. The key to understanding and applying the Church's social teaching then is to understand the protection and promotion of human dignity as a first-order principle.[9] The human person is created and sustained by God with a personal love, is made in the image and likeness of God and endowed with reason and freedom, has been redeemed by Christ, and has his or her end in eternal life with God. These Biblically inspired conclusions underlie the Church's understanding of human development, Barrera argues, and all other principles must be subordinated to the central concern of human dignity and development.

Integral human development has various components, and Barrera uses the Church's understanding of human nature to develop three categories in which he organizes the various principles of Catholic social thought: the gift of self, the gifts of the earth, and the gift of each other.[10] Under the gift of self, he places the principles of primacy of labour, subsidiarity, and, as a sub-category to the latter, participation. Under the gifts of the earth are treated the principles of universal access and stewardship, and finally under the gift of each other we find socialization and solidarity with the latter's subcategories of participation, relative equality, and the option for the poor. The structuring of the Church's social teaching into first and second order principles makes the whole system more intelligible and capable of consistently rendering ethical conclusions and less susceptible to being abused and manipulated to justify any and every position. While this framework helps coherently structure the various principles of Catholic social thought, a consideration of the common good is still necessary.

Disagreement over the limits and conditions necessary for defining the common good is often central to the different forms of application of the principles of Catholic social teaching. In his encyclical Mater et Magister, John XXIII defined the common good as, "the sum total of those conditions of social living, whereby men are enabled more fully and more readily to achieve their own perfection." This definition, Barrera argues, stands in need of greater specification with regard to its content and a clearer elaboration of how the various principles and norms of Catholic social thought flow from the common good.[11] According to St. Thomas Aquinas, "Order always implies a before and after. Hence, wherever there is a principle there must always be some kind of order."[12] Principles, in other words, bespeak an underlying order. Within the common good, various goods have different relative values, and the categories of due order and due proportion may aid us in gauging these relative values.

Under due order, Barrera lists five relationships going from the most to the least important.[13] First is the individual person's relationship to God; under it fall concerns that affect individual growth in the highest of human values such as truth, justice, friendship, and love. Second are the relationships between human persons and the formation of society. The promotion of a caring and self-giving society in which all individuals may contribute to the community are addressed here. Third comes the principle of the fundamental equality of all men and women created in the image of God, and, as a consequence of this principle, follow concerns for the marginalized and the participation of all in society. Fourth is the relationship of the community to the individual, namely, how does the community foster human flourishing. Lastly are addressed how the individual and the community behave as stewards of the earth's resources. God is the supreme good and the common good in the highest sense. As one moves down this order of relationships that Barrera spells out, one can note the decline in the relative importance of the good considered, until one arrives at the case of stewardship of the earth's resources, which are sub-rational and lack transcendent ends. They have an importance but, with respect to the common good, always subservient to that of the human person. Likewise, the good shared by many, society, has a relatively greater value than the good possessed exclusively by just one member of that society.

Due proportion, Barrera argues, is a logical consequence of due order, and it concerns itself with balance within the social order.[14] This balance requires the recognition of four premises. First, and directly related to the universal access principle, is the premise that the goods of the earth are meant for the benefit of all. Second is the premise that legitimate inequalities exist in the order of the

universe. While owners of the goods of the earth have an obligation to those in need, there is also the recognition of an order within society and a certain level of inequality in the distribution of the goods of the earth resulting from the distribution of various talents and abilities among peoples. Third, however, is the recognition that there are legitimate limits to these inequalities. Extremes on this front undermine the common vision of society and mutual cooperation. Finally, there is a need to balance how a person's corporeal and spiritual needs are met. Authentic human development requires goods in both of these areas, even though the spiritual goods are of intrinsically higher value. A neglect of one of these types of goods leads to an imbalance in integral human development.

These two systematic orderings of the principles of Catholic social thought around human dignity and the common good allow this body of thought to be more consistently used as an ethic for economic behaviour. As Barrera himself phrases it, "By articulating a more detailed notion of the common good, we can begin to identify at which points premises can be 'thinned' out, without unduly compromising the fundamentals of the tradition in an intelligible conversation in the public square."[15] His use of CST is central to the ethics he advances, but it is clear that he takes seriously the systematic weaknesses in usual presentation of these principles. His efforts make this source for ethics more useful and intelligible.

Thomistic Metaphysics and Virtue Theory

The arguments made from Sacred Scripture should be convincing to Christians if they are logical and do justice to the Biblical texts, but non-believers might see no reason to follow any argument based solely on passages from the Bible. Likewise the most appropriate moral responses to complex economic phenomena are not always obvious. One need not be a Christian believer, however, to engage the metaphysics and virtue theory of St. Thomas Aquinas and see the truth that they communicate. Yet its vocabulary can make it difficult to grasp for those unfamiliar with it. In making use of this important source for ethics and realism that it captures, Barrera remains ever attentive to his reading audience, presenting these arguments in terms more easily grasped. [16] It is worth noting here that the conclusion of the most extensive argument that Barrera develops using Thomistic metaphysics and virtue theory in Globalization and Economic Ethics is the same conclusion that he derives both from using Biblical theology and modern philosophical sources: mankind is a social animal who has a responsibility for the vulnerable and suffering in society, and who, through the exercise of this responsibility, grows in perfection.

In the first part of God and the Evil of Scarcity, Barrera presents an argument explicitly developed from Thomistic metaphysics and virtue theory for a rationale for human economic activity, and which aids in explaining the justification for various interventions in the marketplace on the part of those with legitimate authority to act on the part of society, i.e. the government. The teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas are clear that there is, and can only be, one necessary being. This being is God, who is infinite in perfection and goodness, and unchangeable. Since he is the source of all perfection and being, he cannot possibly receive perfection or growth from any other source. While God is entirely self-sufficient and perfect in himself, the nature of goodness, Aquinas will argue, is to diffuse or share itself, and it is this that explains God's free decision to create all other beings and hold them in existence. All other beings are contingent and unnecessary by their very nature. Each creature possesses a certain goodness from the very fact that it is created and is held in being; each reflects in its own limited manner a certain dimension of the

infinite perfection of God. The way in which the creature can reflect the goodness and infinite perfection of God can be manifold, yet all have God as their source and final end. The created universe has a twofold order: one external and one internal. The external order derives from the fact that God is the end or final cause of all creatures. All creaturely perfection, since it is a mere participation in goodness of the infinite perfection of God, has its final end in God. The whole universe can only find its perfection in God; there is no other source for this perfection.

There is a vast internal order to the created universe, with each being behaving according to its God-given nature, striving towards the perfection for which it has been created. "There is a large and intrinsic social component to individual creaturely activities because they perform the double function of (1) effecting the complete created goodness of individual creatures even while (2) contributing toward the universe's attainment of its own final end in God."[17] In the midst of acting, the creature works towards its own perfection and that of the universe. This is the internal order.

According to Thomistic metaphysics, effects mirror their causes.[18] By looking at the effects, one is able to know and say something, although not necessarily everything, about the cause. Human beings are able to interact on a rational basis with the beings around them, and assist in helping other things come to their perfection, e.g. giving food to an animal, helping it grow towards adulthood. The human person, while having a certain perfection and goodness in simply existing like any other creature, has as part of his nature the capacity to grow in perfection through the acts that are distinctively human (rational and free). While an irrational animal finds the perfection and goodness that it reflects of God's infinite goodness and perfection by following its instincts, eating, growing to adulthood, and reproducing, the human person participates in this complete work of created goodness through his rational nature and actions of freedom. The perfection of the human person is one in which the person participates through his own will and freedom, and responds in not simply attaining his own perfection (e.g. feeding himself) but in helping others attain their perfection (e.g. providing for the needy). "Human beings find their peak perfection in serving as a catalyst for goodness not merely among lower creatures (the goods of the earth), but most especially among other rational beings (*SCG* III, 21, 6)."[19] He is a real secondary cause in bringing about his perfection and that of others, according to the internal order of the universe. The human person participates in this way in the providence of God.

According to this metaphysical approach to God, creation, and the human person, economics is a means to the higher final end of knowing and loving God in this life and beatitude in the life to come. Economics not only concerns the material provisions necessary for physical growth and human life, but through the actions and decisions that it requires, it is the terrain for growth in a moral interior perfection in the person. This being said, it is fraught with difficulties. For the material sufficiency to be received by all who stand in need of it, it requires the free, intelligent, and wilful participation either directly (an individual act of charity) or indirectly (through societal action via a larger body such as a government). The economic order, Barrera concludes, is the proper effect of human beings as secondary agents of divine governance.

Only when human behaviour conforms to divine providence in providing for those in need is the proper order attained.[20] The fact that much of economic activity involves "rival consumption" (e.g. only one person can consume any given piece of food) and a limited amount of material resources makes human participation in creating just structures of distribution reflective of God's diffusiveness.

Yet the same human freedom can be abused and instead of sharing, the human person can neglect those in need. Dire poverty and the pain of scarcity is thus the result of failing to reflect God's self-giving character. It is ultimately a suffering that the human race brings upon itself through the abuse of freedom and poor moral choices. On the other hand, a society in which men and women individually and collectively concern themselves with the material needs of others — and this would include interventions in the market or "corrective" measures when severe losses arise — is the natural and just way that both the individual person and the universe as a whole may more closely approach its perfection, where the good is more fully realized.

Barrera makes use of these Thomistic metaphysical and virtue theory arguments in a more limited manner in Market Complicity and Christian Ethics. One of the ethical problems that he addresses in this volume is the problem of over determination, i.e. when there is more than one behaviour or action (cause) that is capable of fully explaining a particular outcome. This problem is particularly troublesome when there are millions of consumers, and the actions of each have such a miniscule effect on the overall problem. From the standpoint of tort law someone whose actions have not contributed in substantive manner cannot be held legally liable for the damage. The problem, whether it be over-fishing, pollution, or any other matter, is that the result of the accumulation of actions, however, does not go away. A moral formation that is based on Thomistic virtue ethics, however, is not concerned simply with attributable crimes. It aims towards the good to be achieved, and the virtuous action taken reflects back on the agent and begins to characterize him or her. Growing in virtue is a participated growth in perfection. The measure of one's moral choices is whether or not an action is consistent with the good that one is capable of doing and the up-building of the human community.[21] The teleological nature of a Thomistic virtue ethic, Barrera argues, makes it more robust in cases such as these, in comparison to a rule-based or deontological approach.

Contemporary Philosophical Sources and Civil Jurisprudence

Biblical moral principles, CST, and Thomistic metaphysics and virtue theory can act as rich and wide-ranging sources for ethics in the marketplace, but sometimes they stand in need of refinement or additional support to help determine when exactly someone is complicit in evil action or compelled to take make certain decisions. Throughout his writings, Barrera has turned to contemporary philosophical sources and legal scholarship to assist him in these regards. This has the added benefit of engaging readers who might not otherwise be open to his sources for ethical discourse. The net result is ethical language that synthetically combines many sources and yet remains consistent and robust.

In Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics, Barrera presents Alan Wertheimer's theory of coercion, which is based in part on a collection of courtroom verdicts.[22] According to Wertheimer's theory, certain actions—such as calling an ambulance for someone else involved in a traffic accident—are obligatory based on custom, law, or usage. To demand payment before doing so would be a coercive act because we owe each other as human beings this type of assistance. Coercion results when some right or obligation is being impinged upon and the victim is forced to make a decision.[23] Further arguments by David Zimmerman and Joan McGregor assist Barrera in distinguishing between coercion properly speaking and market-driven compulsion.[24] Market participants can find themselves forced to choose between two undesirable alternatives for lack of a better alternative, yet there is no one blameworthy agent involved, no one with

sinister intentions. The compelled agent simply finds himself bound to choose the lesser of two evils on account of market forces. With the assistance of these contemporary philosophical sources, Barrera is able to define economic compulsion as, "A condition in which market participants unavoidably incur profound opportunity costs. People give up nontrivial interests in order to satisfy, safeguard, or procure their other vital claims that are at even greater risk."[25]

Another example where Barrera uses social and legal philosophy to illustrate his argument more vividly involves the issue of moral complicity in actions with evil consequences. In the Catholic moral tradition, there exist two important principles that direct ethical behaviour in the face of evil: 1) the distinction between formal and material cooperation and 2) the principle of double effect. Barrera explains these principles in Market Complicity and Christian Ethics in the context of discussing the morality of an economic agent (a bank, consumer, distributor, etc.) being involved in the evil of sweatshop manufacturing.[26] These two principles by themselves, however, do not tell us the answers to the questions of when an action is intrinsically evil, how to judge "approximate" from "remote" cooperation, or how to unravel cause from effect in complicated cases where negative effects "accumulate" from a series of interlocking markets. Traditionally these two principles have always been used within a larger moral framework. While the philosophical framework of Aquinas does provide well-developed theories of causation and cooperation[27], Barrera does not make use of these but instead opts for more contemporary accounts of cooperation and complicity. He employs the works of social philosopher Christopher Kutz and legal scholar Sanford Kadish to communicate his ethical vision more effectively to his audience, who are likely to be more familiar with these latter sources, or at least their modes of thought, than that of Aquinas.[28] This allows Barrera to develop practical rules of thumb regarding the presence and degree of complicity and to develop the categories of thought necessary to evaluate actions whose cumulative effects are harmful. Barrera's synthetic ethic is not simply concerned with making one strong argument and moving on but in finding various ways to make an argument and make it more accessible to readers with different perspectives and backgrounds.

Nowhere is this perhaps clearer than in his work Globalization and Economic Ethics published in 2007. While in certain ways the work is a departure from his other efforts in that it avoids any direct mention of Christianity or CST or even Thomistic virtue theory, the central thesis of the book repeats his earlier arguments in God and the Evil of Scarcity and Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics: human society has an obligation in justice to intervene in the marketplace on behalf of those most vulnerable and those who suffer from the negative side effects of market activity. His dialogue partners in this case, however, are entirely social philosophers (mostly from the mid-twentieth century to the present) writing on the basis for distributive justice in society. Using the framework of James Konow[29], who understands distributive justice to be based on a balance between human need, economic efficiency, and the entitlement to keep what one earns, Barrera demonstrates that, given a proper understanding of the functioning and nature of the marketplace, the principles of efficiency, need, and entitlement are NOT mutually exclusive in our increasingly globalized economy. While it may be true that human need as a principle for distributive justice [advocated by the influential John Rawls] was formerly pitted against efficiency and entitlement [advocated by the libertarian philosopher Robert Nozick], the nature of the contemporary information-driven economy put this enmity to rest. Instead, Barrera argues, the investment in human capital and fulfilling basic human needs (formally championed by the needs-based camp) is fundamentally important

for efficiency and greater returns (the libertarian entitlement camp). The net result of this argument and approach is that Barrera casts his earlier theological argument and metaphysical argument in a new and yet still compelling language, and he does so with the indispensible use of economics.

The Moderating Role of Economics

Finally, among the many sources for Barrera's synthetic ethics for economics is the refining or moderating role that the modern study of economics brings to the field of ethics itself. Economic theories and economic realities have been the occasion for certain encyclicals in CST. Understanding these theories and forces helps in understanding the development of CST. Economic theories and the nature of the marketplace, however, can also act as a brighter light to an otherwise dark and obscure debate about ethics. Barrera's works engage both of these moderating roles of economics.

In Modern Catholic Social Documents & Political Economy, Barrera shows that many of the components of the Church's modern social doctrine, beginning with Rerum Novarum in 1891, were the application of older principles to the economic realities of the times. As the complexity of the world economy developed in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, each succeeding encyclical, Barrera argues, was promulgated to address the economic realities of the present day. In short, while integral human development has always been a moral concern the economy at large and the underlying theories governing its growth (e.g. liberal capitalism, socialism, import-substitution industrialization) have set the backdrops for the development of much of the Church's social doctrine. Classical economic thought continues to challenge the Church's teaching in two distinct ways: first, through its formative impact on market participants and, secondly, by the rigour it demands of any respondent.

Since utilitarianism, which is at the heart of economic behaviour according to economic theorists, tends to shape the way people behave in the marketplace, it can lead to an overly narrow focus on the individual and callousness towards other members of society. "The philosophy behind utilitarianism and individualism can imbue an economic order with a tolerance for, if not an acquiescence to, the de facto marginalization of segments of its population and the treatment of the person as a mere consumer or factor of production."[30] It is not surprising that the Church has had to re-echo her concern for the poor and those who do not succeed in the marketplace repeatedly since Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum in 1891. Barrera takes this aspect of the effects of economic practice as a challenge to distinguish more clearly between the philosophical presuppositions of classical economic thought and those of Catholic social teaching.[31] He also uses this dimension of economic behaviour to help him formulate the ethical questions regarding certain types of market activity. Arguably all the issues that he addresses in Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics and in Market Complicity and Christian Ethics may be seen as stemming from this callousness and the valuing of allocative efficiency above all else: the morality of the "pecuniary externalities" (i.e. those who suffer sometimes in very damaging ways from the shifts in prices of goods or factors of production), cumulative harm (e.g. when the effect of the near-insignificant individual consumer is multiplied by tens of millions to produce a devastating effect), and the indifference towards the sufferings of others that this indifference breeds (e.g. attitudes towards participating in the manufacture or purchase of goods made in sweatshops).

Economic thought can raise new questions about traditional principles and

require more precise definitions or considerations of the good at stake. Barrera also employs economics as a refining tool for his ethics in this regard. In Modern Catholic Social Documents and Political Economy, he shows repeatedly how modern economic thought leaves certain issues in CST unresolved. Bringing about a living wage requires higher product prices yet CST does not resolve how this is to be brought about.[32] CST's teaching on superfluous wealth and the basic needs of mankind requires greater precision in a number of areas such as defining the extent of one's obligations, formulating a consistent basket of goods and services necessary for integral human development, and paying more attention to the empirical link between incentives and production.[33]

While both of these factors regard classical economic thought, it is also true that alternative positions within the field of economics also provide a basis for addressing ethical issues. For instance, while classical economics usually assumes that each market participant acts rationally at all times to maximize his utility, the sheer magnitude of information needed for this to be true is overwhelming. Likewise the standard assumptions of frictionless (minimal cost) entry and exit of markets is often violated in practice. Barrera uses these factors to show that markets can be coercive although they are not intrinsically so depending upon the opportunity costs they generate.[34] Ethical responses are determined by the actual facts of a situation. Barrera uses various examples to show that while the free market offers many benefits in terms of growth potential and allocative efficiency, the costs associated with this allocation are not born equally by all. Instead, they fall disproportionately on the poor and those most vulnerable.

Conclusion

Millions of people have been raised out of poverty by the functioning of the marketplace. Free markets have helped produce a material living standard in many places around the world unprecedented in human history. Recognizing these facts, however, does not mean that every outcome the market produces is just or ideal. Likewise there is much more to human flourishing than the scaled-down utility-maximizing self-interested assumptions of classical economic thought. Building the bridges between the discipline of economics and the traditional sources for ethics requires someone well-versed in the language of various fields. The works of Albino Barrera in this field contribute greatly to the building of these bridges. While much of his work has centred around the justification for market intervention in order to ensure a just distribution on the part of the most vulnerable in society and market losers, his synthetic approach to ethics in Market Complicity and Christian Ethics shows that his ethical concerns are wide and far from exhausted.

NOTES:

[1] Albino Barrera, O.P., *Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 77.
[2] Ibid., 79.
[3] Ibid., 82-83. The works cited by Barrera are H. Eberhard von Waldow, "Israel and Her Land: Some Theological Considerations," In *A Light Unto My Path; Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers*, edited by Howard N. Bream, Ralph D. Heim and Carey A. Moore. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974); Thomas Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics: A Constructive Essay* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).
[4] Albino Barrera, O.P., *God and the Evil of Scarcity: Moral Foundations of Economic Agency* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 2005), 81.
[5] *Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics*, 87.

[6] *God and the Evil of Scarcity*, 116-117.
[7] *Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics*, 93. [emphasis in original]
[8] *God and the Evil of Scarcity*, 105.
[9] Albino Barrera, O.P. *Modern Catholic Social Documents and Political Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 251.
[10] Ibid., 263-285.
[11] *Modern Catholic Social Thought*, 288.
[12] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 26, A. 1.
[13] *Modern Catholic Social Thought*, 291-297.
[14] Ibid., 297-300.
[15] *Modern Catholic Social Thought*, 302.
[16] Barrera makes the following comment in this regard: "Metaphysics employs a language of its own that is unfamiliar to most readers. I have written the next two chapters to be as accessible as possible to a wide audience and have relegated any requisite technical discussion to the endnotes and appendices." *God and the Evil of Scarcity*, 240. At the end of this work, Barrera devotes two appendices to a more rigorous explanation of the metaphysical principles at work in his arguments.
[17] Ibid., 23.
[18] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, 20, 5.
[19] *God and the Evil of Scarcity*, 31.
[20] Ibid., 33.
[21] *Market Complicity and Christian Ethics*, 49-51.
[22] Alan Wertheimer, *Coercion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).
[23] *Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics*, 7.
[24] David Zimmerman, "Coercive Wage Offers," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. 10(1981): 121-45; "More on Coercive Wage Offers: A Reply to Alexander." *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. 10(1981): 166-71; Joan McGregor, "Bargaining Advantages and Coercion in the Market," *Philosophy Research Archives*. 14(1988-89):23-50.
[25] *Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics*, 17.
[26] cf. *Market Complicity and Christian Ethics*, 11-18.
[27] Aquinas throughout his work makes use of Aristotle's theory of causation (final, formal, material, and efficient). With respect to his treatment of cooperation, see his treatment of the act of restitution in *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 62, A. 7. Many of these considerations are quite similar to what Kadish [see above] refers to as secondary parties influencing or assisting the principal.
[28] cf. Christopher Kutz, *Complicity: Ethics and Law for a Collective Age* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and Sanford Kadish, "Complicity, Cause and Blame: A Study in the Interpretation of Doctrine," *California Law Review* 73 (1985): 323-410.
[29] James Konow, "Which Is the Fairest One of All? A Positive Analysis of Justice Theories," *Journal of Economic Literature* 41(2003): 1188-1239.
[30] *Modern Social Documents*, 150.
[31] Ibid., 117-161.
[32] *Modern Catholic Social Documents*, 79-80.
[33] Ibid., 240-241.
[34] *Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics*, 42.