JOURNAL ETHICS, ECONOMICS AND COMMON GOODS

N° 21 (1), JANUARY - JUNE 2024.

EE&CG
ETHICS, ECONOMICS & COMMON GOODS

JOURNAL ETHICS, ECONOMICS AND COMMON GOODS

N° 21 (1), JANUARY - JUNE 2024.

EE&CG
ETHICS, ECONOMICS & COMMON GOODS

Journal Ethics, Economics & Common Goods, Vol. 21, No. 1 January-July 2024 biannual publication edited by the Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla A. C, calle 21 sur 1103, Col. Santiago, C.P 72410, Puebla, Puebla. Tel. (222) 2299400, https//ethics-and-economics.com/ jeecg@upaep.mx. Editors: María Teresa Herrera Rendón-Nebel, Shashi Motilal. ISSN 2954 - 4254, both granted by the Instituto Nacional del Derecho de Autor. Technical responsible: Alejandra Isabel Ponce Sabido, Dulce María Vera Medel, Vanessa Zavala Mazón.

ISSN: 2954-4254

ESSENTIAL IDENTIFICATION
Title: Journal Ethics, Economics and Common Goods
Frequency: Bi-annual
Dissemination: International
ISSN online: 2954 - 4254
Place of edition: Mexico
Year founded: 2003

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Journal Ethics, Economics and Common Goods aims to be a space for debate and discussion on issues of social and economic ethics. Topics and issues range from theory to practical ethical questions affecting our contemporary societies. The journal is especially, but not exclusively, concerned with the relationship between ethics, economics and the different aspects of common goods perspective in social ethics.

Social and economic ethics is a rapidly changing field. The systems of thought and ideologies inherited from the 20th century seem to be exhausted and prove incapable of responding to the challenges posed by, among others, artificial intelligence, the transformation of labor and capital, the financialization of the economy, the stagnation of middle-class wages, and the growing ideological polarization of our societies.

The Journal Ethics, Economics and the Common Goods promotes contributions to scientific debates that combine high academic rigor with originality of thought. In the face of the return of ideologies and the rise of moral neopharisaisms in the Anglo-Saxon world, the journal aims to be a space for rational, free, serious and open dialogue. All articles in the journal undergo a process of double anonymous peer review. In addition, it guarantees authors a rapid review of the articles submitted to it. It is an electronic journal that publishes its articles under a creative commons license and is therefore open access.

Research articles, research reports, essays and responses are double-blind refereed. The journal is bi-annual and publishes two issues per year, in July and December. At least one of these two issues is thematic. The journal is pleased to publish articles in French, English and Spanish.

SCIENTIFIC BOARD

INDEX

INTERVIEW

Nebel, M. (2024) 'Interview with Clemens Sedmak on his Book . "Enacting Catholic Social Tradition', *Journal of Ethics, Economics and Common Goods*, 21(1) p 117-121.

Interview with Clemens Sedmak on his book: "Enacting Catholic Social Tradition" Orbis Book, 2022.

Matthias Nebel: Profesor Investigador de Ética social y Pensamiento Social Cristiano (SNI II). Uni-versidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla, IPBC.
ORCID: 0000-0003-1718-2608

Mathias Nebel: Your book is about enacting Catholic Social Thought. Are you insisting on practice because you see CST as stuck in some sort theoretical ivory tower, unable to reach practice? Or is it that practice is so much more complex that you see the need to rewrite at least part of the theory? In both cases, it seems quite a cheeky title.

Clemens Sedmak: Even though I acknowledge the intrinsic value of knowledge, I strongly believe that theology is practical. This has been an important aspect of the so-called Franciscan school of theology. Saint Bonaventure saw theology as a discipline that transcends the boundaries between thought and life, doctrine and practices. We do theology "ut boni fiamus," so that we will become good. William de la Mare has similarly pointed out that theology moves us towards the right spiritual life with the eternal goal in mind. According to John Duns Scotus, to name a third representative of this school, theology is ordered toward act and acting; theology generated knowledge that shapes practices.

The terminology I like to use is the language of "enacting." This language is different from "applying." The latter could suggest an approach where we have a ready-made set of principles or general ideas that we put to use in a particular area. The language of "enacting" is closer to "appropriating" and "inhabiting." One translates deep commitments into concrete aspects of a form of life.

Catholic Social Tradition is a set of lived practices and forms of life; this is where Catholic Social Thought (and also Catholic Intellectual Tradition) may be different from philosophical traditions. You cannot really claim to have understood "integral human development" if it is not made visible in practices and habits, ways of doing and ways of seeing the world.

M.N. : Your write your book on CST to shift the usual attention from principles and anthropology toward the deep practices that should derives from them. You therefore propose to shift to another, unusual, understanding of CST as discipline and spirituality. What kind of spirituality and discipline are these? Are you speaking of something that would be like the soul of social ethics (spirituality) and the requirement to undertake the Christian journey through the social and political circumstances of our time (discipline)?

C.S. : I am interested to read fundamental statements of Catholic Social Tradition like statements of a regula, a rule of life that is not something we follow, but something that we live, "breathe"… again, this is a question of "enactment." Catholic Social Tradition, as I see it, is an invitation into a spirituality that lives out the social dimension of the gospel through ways of seeing the world and the human person. A concept like "solidarity" is not just characterized by intellectual content, but is really an invitation to perceive the world in a certain way. The invitation to love one's neighbor as oneself is a perceptual and practical "default" that is relevant in a conflict situation, but also in the everyday practices of democracy, beautifully described by Nancy Rosenblum in her book "Good Neighbors." If one makes the invitation of Galatians 5:14 (For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself.") one's own, this will shape the thick relations and the thin relations, the chance encounters with strangers and the interactions with people we know. Concepts like subsidiarity or participation have to be translated into habits that effortlessly translated into ways of seeing as well as practices.

Catholic Social Tradition is based on the gospels and the gospels are narratives of encounters with the Savior. That is why CST is an invitation into a 2nd person perspective, rather than an intellectual offer that can be dissected in the 3rd person. It is a framework of a spirituality that is to be translated into a "discipline of life." If you think of CST like this, it will have you speak from a particular perspective. It is this perspective that moved Simone Weil to think about post-war Europe in terms of "the needs of the soul."

M.N. : You choose dignity as the core element on which to focus in your book on CST, trying to uncover the deep practices of dignity. However, you speak very little of institutions and then especially addressing their failure or cracks (entry points of humiliation). Does this entail that every institution is somehow enabling some aspect of dignity? Is dignity a relational concept that must be institutionalized to become real?

C.S. : The relationship between dignity and institutions is delicate, complex, and ambivalent. On the one hand institutions protect and express dignity, institutions like schools, for example, can be major drivers of integration. The institution of the family is a "school of life" that teaches about dignity in so many ways, implicitly and explicitly. On the other hand, institutions with their in-built asymmetry between the person and the institution, and with their tendencies to standardize processes, to exercise control, to allocate roles – create challenges for respecting the dignity of the person. Respect has at least three dimensions: recognizing uniqueness and identity, allocating freedom and agency, and implementing standards of fairness and fundamental equality. Standardization patterns clash with the recognition of uniqueness, control practices are in conflict with freedom and agency, institutional hierarchies and privileges may not be compatible with equality and fairness. As I mention, entry points for humiliation are particularly important indicators of the fragility of dignity-respect in institutional settings.

Nebel, M. (2024) 'Interview with Clemens Sedmak on his Book . "Enacting Catholic Social Tradition', *Journal of Ethics, Economics and Common Goods*, 21(1) p 117-121.

Dignity is definitely a relational concept (as "dignity-with") which has to be protected and promoted by institutions that provide the framework and context within which cultures of dignity-respect can be realized. It is also an important aspect of institutions to serve as reminders of human dignity. We could also think of a division of labor here in the sense that different institutions promote and emphasize different aspects of dignity (the tax system, for example, the fairness aspect, educational institutions the uniqueness aspect). David Miller's ideas about justice could be an inspiration, too. The values of merit, equality, and need are always important, but in a different order (merit is a priority at the work place, equality in the civic sphere, need in the family context).

A very simple exercise in any institution are two questions: who are the least privileged? And where do the least privileged experience (entry points of) humiliation in a specific institutional setting?

M. N: You use the wonderful metaphor of painting principles to explain how they become personal, embedded in a specific life and circumstances; a process through which principles are set under the light of reality, revealing the colors, shapes and shadows of "embedded principles". Could you tell us why this is so important? Why this is a key point toward practices? How does painting principles allows us to leave the ivory tower of theory?

C.S. : My wife is a painter and the idea of "painting principles" is not only a romantic notion in the sense of creativity and colors, but also and especially linked to hard work, persistence, dedication, and correction. There is playfulness, and there is discipline. A well-known risk in reducing Catholic Social Tradition to a skeleton is the tendency to offer a list of principles and for each principle a definition. But in order for a principle to come "to life," we need thick and rich descriptions, narratives, examples. Let me illustrate this by painting a picture of the idea of "integral human development," making use of three stories about fisheries:

Story 1: If one were to tell the story of "integral human development" one could not do it without mentioning fishermen. Louis Joseph Lebret spent the 1929–40 as a priest amongst French fishing communities, his work opened his eyes to the suffering in fishing villages, caused by mechanization within the fishing industry. Lebret realized the importance of questions of the good life, he moved toward a wider view of development, as "being more" rather than "having more." In other words, the question of sustainable fisheries stood at the beginning of integral human development. This is a story about human centered economies.

Story 2: A second story about fisheries has been told by Hans Lucht. Lucht, a Scandinavian anthropologist, has studied the migration dynamics in the Ghanaian fisher village Senya Beraku. He has witnessed and researched the dramatic decline in catches, due to overexploitation of fish stocks, growing pressure on fish stocks by foreign vessels resulting in overcapacity in the fishing fleet. Lucht described the lack of opportunities that await fishermen put out of business by the depletion of marine resources; they turn to high-risk emigration, trying to

make their way to Europe. Integral human development is an invitation to look at the whole person. Why do people migrate and take immense risks? Lucht provides a thick description and offers a rich understanding of the particular situation of this village – in order to understand the moral complexities. People leave their villages, also because of their "dignity needs," their needs to be recognized and their needs to have social status. Young men leave the village not because they are starving, but because they want to have a dignified life, where they are recognized as adults able to sustain a family. Tragically, in search to meet their dignity needs, they often died or end up in much worse situations in Libya or Southern Italy. This is a story about dignity needs.

Story 3: A third story about fisheries is not much more uplifting – it is a story about the destruction of fisheries in Ukraine. In June 2023, Russian forces sabotaged the second-biggest reservoir in Ukraine, the Kakhovka reservoir on the Dnipro River; as they destroyed the Kakhovka dam, thousands of dead fish washed up on the shores on the Kakhovka reservoir; the ecological catastrophe was gigantic, the basis of the local fisheries were destroyed. What we are witnessing in Ukraine after the Russian invasion in February 2022 can be called "integral human destruction" – the destruction of tangible infrastructure, but also the destruction of the intangible infrastructure through the erosion of trust, misinformation, the creation of a climate of terror. This is a story about integral human destruction calling for nothing less than integral human development.

Stories like these offer nuances of a concept, a depth dimension. These three stories about fisheries illustrate commitments to human-centered economies, dignity needs, and resistance to integral human destruction that help us paint a portrait of the idea of "integral human development." Engaging with stories that move us, also move us to action. Standing in solidarity with Ukraine is a response to a narrative, for example.

M.N. : In your book dignity seems driven mainly by the question of justice. However you write from a Christian point of view with a special emphasis on the vulnerable and excluded ones, the people who see their dignity denied. There is little on love and its capacity to heal dignity-wounds; that is to its capacity to restore the denied dignity of a beggar or humiliated person. Could you develop this aspect and especially address the question of its possible institutionalization?

C.S. : I regret that the book, written with much love, is a bit "love-less!" Just a few days ago I was moderating a panel on "Integral Human Development, Ethics and Religion" and one of the panelists, a devout Muslim, talked about the Christian idea of love and made reference to the challenging contexts of Ukraine and Gaza. No doubt: love (either understood as "robust concern" or as "pooling of well-being") is an approach to understanding reality, approaching persons, and developing practices that goes beyond a language of "fairness," "effectiveness/efficiency," or even "justice." It moves us into a dimension beyond the measurably; it allows for a vocabulary that includes "mystery" (the capacity for inexhaustible meaning) and "life

depth." Love with the special obligation and care concerns it recognizes is best reflected in a depth of life, shaped by our commitments, a depth that cannot properly be described with words like "standard of living" or even "quality of life."

Let me exemplify this with a beautiful quotation from Alan Paton's third novel "Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful". A person engaged in the struggle against apartheid says:

"When I go up there, which is my intention, the Big Judge will say to me, Where are your wounds? and if I say I haven't any, he will say, Was there nothing to fight for? I couldn't face that question."

This is a statement about a costly struggle born out of deep concern. The human person is not to be reduced to the role of "rational fool" or isolated advantage-maximizer. We encounter questions such as: Where are your wounds? What got you out of bed in the morning? Who are the wounded and vulnerable? Why engage in the fight against injustices?

The deep practice and the energy for the marathon come from love, not from reason….

Institutions play a particular role in this. I am particularly interested in the role of "mercy" in institutions. An inspirational source for thinking about love in an institutional context can be found in the Christmas addresses of Pope Francis to the Roman Curia where the Pontiff frequently warned against the self-referentiality of the Curia and exhorted the Curia employees to strive for a missionary spirit, for professionalism and to see themselves as servant. He warns against a Curia "closed in on itself", a warning that echoes his Pre-Conclave speech. He insists on the primacy of a diaconal attitude, the importance of listening. The employees of the Curia are called to view matters in the light of the Gospel. One key concern of Pope Francis is the need for renewal and self-renewal. Pope Francis identified obstacles to self-renewal such as "rigidity" and "immobility" ("the secret belief that we have nothing else to learn from the Gospel," as he said in 2022). A memorable Christmas Address to the Roman Curia too place in 2014 when Pope Francis listed "diseases and temptations," such as lack of self-critical attitudes, excessive busy-ness (Martha complex), spiritual petrification, excessive planning, poor coordination, rivalry, the disease of closed circles, the disease of worldly profits. We can see how, in this approach, the personal and the structural, the moral and the spiritual are interconnected. This is one way to think about the institutionalization of love in mercy-filled institutions….

EE & CG
ETHICS, ECONOMICS
COMMON GOODS

JOURNAL ETHICS, ECONOMICS AND COMMON GOODS

N° 21 (1),
JANUARY - JUNE 2024.