

Orthodoxy, Orthopraxis, and Orthopathy: Trajectories for Collaborative Scholarship between Economists and Theologians

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A survey of recent publications suggests that we may be approaching a saturation point in the market for books on Christian theological approaches to economics. Despite this proliferation, it is often difficult to know how to put various theological approaches into dialogue with one another, much less into a form that might be helpful for economists. For example, it is unclear how one might put liberation theology's emphasis on critical reflection on praxis (Gutiérrez, 1988; Segundo, 1996; Boff, 2009) into dialogue with the proposed modifications to the *homo economicus* put forward by personalist economics (Danner, 2002; O'Boyle, 1998; Donohue-White, Grabill, Westley, & Zúñiga, 2002; Bayer, 1999),¹ or how these two approaches may relate to the Radical Orthodox attempt to recover medieval correctives for the metaphysics of the political economy (Milbank, 2006; Long, 2000). If this variety raises concerns over the great divisions between theological approaches, the gap between theological conclusions and the concrete practices of economists seems to suggest that the theological discussion is incommensurable with any economic discussion. Such incommensurability would seemingly render theological conclusions incapable of contributing to real, substantive changes in the economy.

In light of this rather pessimistic preliminary conclusion, it is tempting to simply adopt one of the numerous available theological perspectives to the virtual exclusion of others and to apply this perspective to economic theory in a generalizing manner. While I certainly have sympathy with such a partisan approach given the complexity of the landscape, I am convinced that this need not be the only path forward. Instead, I propose that dividing the existing theological approaches into the three basic trajectories of orthodoxy, orthopraxis, and orthopathy can provide a helpful means of sorting various theological approaches in a way that

allows for three corresponding constructive dialogues with economic theory.

This essay will first explore the distinction between orthodoxy, orthopraxis, and orthopathy as developed by Jon Sobrino. Once the terminology is clear, I will provide a very brief survey of the varieties of theological approaches that fit into these three groupings. Major engagement with these approaches is space-prohibitive, so I will instead simply point to their various significant conclusions without evaluating them. I will conclude by identifying three particular sets of economic questions directly related to these three research trajectories; this may serve to connect economic theory to theological concerns, to the end of creating a more fruitful dialogue between theologians and economists.

1 Toward a Classification of Theological Approaches: Theology for Economists

For economists familiar with liberation theology, it may seem implausible to begin a dialogue between economists and theologians by invoking a liberation theologian like Jon Sobrino. After all, liberation theology is in many respects heavily influenced by dependency theory, an economic model that has fallen out of favor with most economists to the point where even later-generation liberation theologians are beginning to criticize the economic foundations of early liberationist thought (Sung, 2007, pp. 110–112). Granting this problem, liberation theology in its theological complexity – and Sobrino in particular is helpful in this respect – provides three terms that I am convinced can help sort the various existing theological approaches in order to identify three basic trajectories of dialogue and research between economists and theologians. Sobrino’s insight lies in adding the term “orthopathy” to the more traditional terms of orthodoxy (right belief) and orthopraxis (right action). He defines “orthopathy” as “the correct way of letting ourselves be affected by the reality of Christ,” a definition that will be explained in detail momentarily (Sobrino, 2001, p. 210). This third term rounds out the elements of any thorough theological treatment of economics, and I am convinced that its conceptual contribution will be foundational to successful dialogue between economists and theologians. We must therefore turn to these three elements in greater detail.

Sobrino’s threefold distinction emerged in his corpus over time. In

early work, Sobrino clearly articulated the relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxis to the neglect of this third term. On the one hand, Sobrino presents orthopraxis, or right practice, as the concretization of orthodoxy, a means of overcoming “abstract orthodoxy” through concrete praxis. On the other hand, there is a sense in which orthopraxis has “ultimate supremacy” over orthodoxy. Sobrino claims God is revealed “in action,” not as “abstract knowledge” (Sobrino, 1976, p. 390–1). “Only in the *praxis* of following him [Jesus] do we glimpse the mental categories that will enable us to understand the real nature of the kingdom of God and formulate it in a meaningful way” (Sobrino, 1976, p. 60). From an early stage in Sobrino’s work, the distinction between orthodoxy and orthopraxis is clear. Orthodoxy is abstract and refers to conceptual knowledge, while orthopraxis is concrete and refers to actions that allow one to follow Jesus and thus to understand the action through which God’s self-revelation occurs. In his early work, Sobrino already is gesturing toward a third term, orthopathy, when he claims that what is known through orthodoxy “cannot be separated from the historical experiences that allow us to make general formulations that are reasonable” (Sobrino, 1976, p. 390). Knowledge depends in certain ways upon a certain prior set of experiences. Here he points to the example of how the claim that Christ is the way to the Father can only be understood in light of following Jesus, an early and underdeveloped notion of orthopathy.

In later works, Sobrino begins to develop a clearer understanding of experience. The fact that “there is such a thing as a Christian practice of liberation,” leads Sobrino to claim that “there must be a spirituality underlying this practice.” Spirituality entails “doing *what* Jesus did,” but also doing it “*as* Jesus did it.” There is something beyond the praxis itself, a specific orientation of the act that is an awareness of the significance of the act itself. For an action to conform to Christ’s actions, not only must the act itself produce a moral outcome parallel to Christ’s act (which for Sobrino is a liberative act), but the individual agent must experience the act in such a way as to recognize the significance of the outcome and in such a way as to create an outcome that is experienced by the community in a manner similar to how first century viewers would have experienced the acts of Christ. Sobrino therefore ultimately insists that there are three aspects of the gospel of Christ that the Christian must respond to in three different ways. Jesus’s gospel of the kingdom of God requires orthopraxis as believers continue in acts of the sort that Jesus initiated. The

gospel also requires orthodoxy as one trusts in Christ's death and resurrection. Sobrino sees a third aspect of the gospel "which is not adequately brought about by the other two alone." Jesus has a certain "manner of being in his service to the Kingdom of God, and in his relationship to the Father" that requires Christians to respond in orthopathy by acting in the same way with a similar manner. The full good news recognizes Jesus's manner of being, the *how* of his love, and calls Christians to imitation of the same (Sobrino, 1988, pp. 7–13).

With these insights, we can now fully explain Sobrino's term orthopathy. Orthopathy indicates a broad and fundamental orientation toward God and the world. This fundamental orientation is neither consciously cognitional, as toward specific doctrines or historical truth-claims, nor is it dynamic, as fulfilled in the doing of certain actions. It does not consist of propositional ideas or concrete actions. Rather, orthopathy requires one to adopt a pre-reflective or pre-intentional orientation toward the world, an orientation that allows a person to complete acts in a particular manner. This orientation is enabled by an experiential outlook, and these experiences in turn render a certain significance to human actions and beliefs that might otherwise be lacking, a dimension beyond the mere exercise of a right action or trust in a proper belief.

It is important to realize that all theologians do not share Sobrino's technical definitions. The term *praxis* alone can have dozens of meanings (Markey, 1995). Therefore in deploying these terms as a classificatory schema, it is important to realize that various approaches emphasizing orthodoxy, for example, may still be quite distinct in their particulars. Nevertheless, several salient features can be drawn from Sobrino's particular definitions that would generally apply to any usage of the terms orthodoxy, orthopraxis, and orthopathy. As is clear in Sobrino, *orthodoxy* concerns right belief, but we can also deduce from Sobrino's usage that this belief should be categorized as reflective or conscious. In other words, orthodoxy concerns belief, understanding, or knowledge that individuals are explicitly aware of having, and which they may even chose to believe upon careful reflection. *Orthopathy*, on the other hand, as a broad orientation toward the world, may include assumed, unconscious beliefs and tacit knowledge, but such knowledge is pre-reflective or pre-intentional; individuals may not be aware of having these ideas or beliefs, and so they may not be capable of reflecting on them. Analysis surrounding questions of orthopathy can extend to other pre-reflective

mental states such as desires or the social imagination. *Orthopraxis* is distinguished from both orthodoxy and orthopathy by the fact that it does not concern beliefs (conscious or otherwise), but rather action. Such actions can either be intentional and reflective, such as voluntary actions or choices, or pre-intentional and pre-reflective, such as habits or reflexes. To summarize, *orthodoxy* raises concerns regarding our reflective understanding, *orthopathy* our pre-reflective understanding, and *orthopraxis* our reflective or pre-reflective actions.

Sobrino's distinction between the three elements of orthodoxy, orthopraxis, and orthopathy can serve to distinguish the various existing theological perspectives on economics. While many theological perspectives address all three of these elements, some almost exclusively discuss one element, and many emphasize one element more than others. My primary task will now be to correlate each theological element with what I deem are pertinent conversations in economics, though I will briefly survey theological approaches before moving to this task. My hope is that an attentive economist will recognize which of these three elements is shaping the theological writing she encounters, and as a result will know what trajectories of dialog will be most fruitful. Similarly, a theologian intent on engaging economists may gain from these three elements some notion of the pertinent fields of economic enquiry that may pertain to the theological lines of question. To be sure, these three trajectories do not guarantee consensus between theologians and economists, but they would at least help prevent each side talking past the other.

It will be helpful to quickly survey the sorts of theological perspectives that could be examined in each trajectory. From a theological standpoint, orthodoxy concerns both right knowledge about God and about human beings. The easiest dialogue would center on anthropological questions, the largest of which may concern the inadequacy of the *homo economicus*, a point particularly pertinent to economic personalists, but also important in varying degrees to a number of other theological perspectives (Gold, 2010, p. 182; Bell, 2012, pp. 95–110). Many Radical Orthodox scholars instead raise questions of orthodoxy centered more clearly on the doctrine of God. These theologians claim that the basic metaphysical underpinnings of modern ideas of the market economy are inescapably agonistic, due to the inherited ontology of medieval nominalism (especially Milbank, 2006, pp. 7–47). Broadly speaking, from a

theological perspective the orthodoxy research trajectory would need to consider the historical development of economic ideas, the way this historical development explicitly and implicitly shapes contemporary economic theory, and the way that contemporary economic ideas in turn can distort religious doctrine, specifically concerning the nature of God, of human beings, and of society.

The research trajectory of orthopraxis encompasses such projects as liberation theology's concern for liberating praxis and its analysis of the connections between particular economic actions and either oppression of or solidarity with the poor (Gutiérrez, 1988). It would also need to assess claims by such thinkers as Deirdre McCloskey (2006) and Albino Barrera (1995) that the economy can serve as a basis for developing virtue, where virtue is understood to arise from habitually pursuing right actions. In a more general sense, we can say that this trajectory would need to identify which economic actions were appropriate given a commitment to Christian morality, how such actions could be feasibly pursued in our current economy by firms, consumers, and investors, and how the pursuit of these economic actions might influence the religious and social practices of these individuals and groups.

Finally, the research trajectory of orthopathy would span a broad range of theological concerns. Sociologically-influenced approaches like that offered by Vincent Miller (2004) or Bruce Rittenhouse (2013), reflecting on the ways in which consumerism can shape spirituality or commodify religion, are not exploring conscious beliefs or specific economic actions as much as they are focusing on pre-reflective mental states that may be encouraged through particular economic actions or systems. This is a question of orthopathy. When James K. A. Smith (2009) considers how various public spaces like shopping malls or stadiums function as liturgies that shape our desires, he is also considering questions of orthopathy. Similarly, Daniel Bell's (2012; 2001) claims that capitalism is at its root a series of technologies of desire, shaping human desire in ways contrary to historical Christian formulations of desire, would need to be evaluated as part of the orthopathy research trajectory, as would Nimi Wariboko's (2014) emphasis on soul craft as a means of preparing for financial instability. Broadly speaking, the orthopathy research trajectory would need to consider how the economy can shape our desires, imagination, and experiences in a way that may impede or advance religiosity, whether creative restructuring of the economy could resist any negative

influences in this regard, and how all of these concerns may relate to trends like secularization.

At this point, though I have suggested basic theological elements of each of the three trajectories, economist readers may still be tempted to think that these trajectories are largely irrelevant to economic research questions. I want to point out fruitful connections. Time permits only a preliminary introduction to this task, but I do see each trajectory as reaching a terminus in certain important economic discussions. I turn now to outlining these connections.

2 Emerging Conversations in Economic Theory: Economics for Theologians

I have briefly outlined the major theological conversations that pertain to each trajectory. No doubt there is as much diversity among economists as there is among theologians. Like theology, the field of economics has divergent methodologies, including experimentation, appeals to psychology, and emphasis on institutions, though unlike theology there is clearly a dominant methodology. Like theologians, economists using similar methods often reach different conclusions concerning the results of their analysis. Therefore it is reasonable to expect that a number of different economic conversations must be brought into discussions in each trajectory. As a theologian, I make no claim to be able to identify all pertinent areas of economic research, or even a majority of them. However, I am able to identify several areas of research for which I believe there could be fruitful discussion between economists and theologians.

2.1 Orthopathy, Experimental Economics, and Performativity

Let us first consider the research trajectory of orthopathy, a perspective that many theologians believe is absent from economic discussion (especially Smith, 2010a). In point of fact, thorough surveys of economic literature reveal various case studies in which economists consider the effects of economic education or economic structures on our pre-reflective experience of the world. For example, certain varieties of experimental economics have explored how economic agents may act differently if they perceive their interactions according to market norms. Thus Lichtenstein and Slovic (1971) performed an experiment in which subjects were given a choice to play one of several bets. A high proportion of subjects chose a

bet with a higher probability of success over a bet with a higher predicted payout (a .99% chance of winning \$4, as opposed to a .33% chance of winning \$16). Later, the same sets of bets were presented, but subjects were told that they had a ticket for each bet, which could be sold at a set price. In these situations, subjects would bid higher for a bet with a higher predicted payout than for a bet with a higher probability of success. If subjects perceive the options in terms of an exchange, they use “different evaluation techniques” and focus on “the amount to win.” Similar longstanding debates about whether an education in economics leads to increased anti-social behavior equally address orthopathy (Marwell and Ames, 1981; Frank, Gilovich, & Regan, 1993; Carter & Irons, 1991). Such experiments could be a helpful starting point for economists and theologians to discuss the formative effect of market systems on human beings, but a more technical apparatus is likely required to allow for the highest level of dialogue.

If theologies focusing primarily on orthopathy explore the way that the economy may effect our religious beliefs, desires, imagination, or experiences, one obvious question arises: Which aspects of the economy are responsible for such spiritual formation? Here, I believe economists and sociologists can make an invaluable contribution to theological discussions. One important recent area of debate in the sociology of economics concerns the performativity of economics. The basic idea of the performativity thesis as put forward by Michel Callon (1998), Donald MacKenzie (2006a; 2006b), and MacKenzie, Fabian Muniesa, and Lucia Siu (2007) is that the purportedly positive process of describing and modeling particular economic exchanges may, at times, contribute to the construction of whatever is being studied. If this were the case, economic theory, in the final analysis, would not consist of objective, positive descriptions of autonomous economic realities, but instead an inevitably creative process wherein economic models were enmeshed with the economic realities that they constructed. In the case of performativity, economists would uniquely possess the technical apparatus needed to explore the nature and extent of such performativity, while theologians would have special expertise in exploring how such constructions may or may not impede the formation of virtue.

Perhaps an example would clarify the claim: Donald MacKenzie (2006a, p. 19) has argued compellingly that the Black-Scholes-Merton model for options pricing is an example of what he calls Barnesian per-

formativity, which is when “economic processes or their outcomes are altered so that they better correspond to the model.”² Initial tests of the model on *ad hoc* options markets in New York showed only an approximate fit between the model and actual options prices (MacKenzie, 2006b). These markets were not exactly aboveboard, but when the Merc opened legitimate options trading in Chicago in 1972, numerous traders quickly adopted the Black-Scholes-Merton model in a legitimate context and the model became a strong fit to actual prices. During initial days of trading, prices were 30–40% overvalued relative to the model, but statistical sheets were distributed to numerous traders to allow them to quickly apply the model for pricing options and within a decade there was only an average 0.32% deviation from projected prices. Then something surprising happened: After a market crash in 1987, actual prices were permanently shifted along what is known as a “volatility skew.” The model has not been a good fit without adjustment ever since (MacKenzie, 2006a, pp. 142–202). MacKenzie and others interpret this historical progression as an example of performativity: Prices converged on the model because agents accepted and utilized the model, not because the model accurately represented an objective, autonomous reality. A description of the economic world constructed that world, influenced the way that agents acted and how interactions were expected to proceed, and validated a certain awareness of what was happening during options trading.³

My contention is that such performativity raises important questions for a trajectory of dialogue between theologians and economists—a trajectory focused on orthopathy. Our understanding, often pre-reflective, of a particular set of economic activities influences how we interact in the imagined spaces of the market while, at the same time, such economic activities themselves influence how we imagine and pre-reflectively understand the market. Performativity suggests that the descriptive models of the economist may directly influence the basic experiential orientation of the economic agent by providing a symbolic apparatus with which the economy can be understood, and by reifying this apparatus into concrete economic actions that are described by the model. It must be admitted that not all (and probably not even most) economic models are performative in a Barnesian sense, but Barnesian performativity would only be the strongest example of how particular economic theories may influence a broader social “imaginary,” a term growing in importance

among theologians who emphasize orthopathy. By using “imaginary” as a noun, they are naming the way that humans pre-reflectively conceive the world, their roles in it, and the way they relate to one another (Taylor, 2004, p. 23). Combining resources, theologians could explore the ways in which such a social imaginary may be modified by the market, evaluating these experiences from a particular theological set of commitments by exploring the subjectivity of economic agents themselves; at the same time, economists could identify which sorts of economic exchanges are most susceptible to such Barnesian performativity, or to other means of being formed in an orthopathically significant manner. I believe this line of inquiry would produce one trajectory of more fruitful dialogue between theologians and economists.

2.2 Three Problems Facing the Orthopraxis Trajectory

For a theologian most concerned with questions of orthopraxis, any discussion of the way that economic models may influence how one perceives the world will be of secondary importance at most. This may be the case for several reasons. First, certain orthopraxis-oriented theologies treat praxis as logically, ontologically, and/or epistemologically prior to any other form of knowledge and experience. Certain varieties of liberation theology, for example, treat theological reflection as the second moment to a first moment of action, a “critical reflection on praxis” to use Gustavo Gutiérrez’s famous phrase (Gutiérrez, 1988, p. 15), though certain later works by Gutiérrez do seem to emphasize orthopathy in their focus on spirituality (Gutiérrez, 2003). Second, certain orthopraxis-oriented theologies are concerned over concrete economic actions that are viewed as unjust, often so unjust that delaying treatment of these realities to consider more theoretical questions may be viewed as a moral failing in itself. Finally, certain theologies emphasizing orthopraxis may not even have a clearly developed theological or philosophical approach to orthopathy, not for any explicit theological reason but simply as a circumstance of particular expertise. Therefore, economists intent on engaging theological approaches that emphasize orthopraxis must find a different starting point for dialogue.

Orthopraxis is related to any number of human practices or actions, but before a fully fruitful connection between economic theory and theological theory can occur, I believe there is need to explore the issues of individuation, endogenous preferences, and commitments. In theolog-

ical circles, it is becoming increasingly common to look at virtue as the proper means of exploring ethics. This is certainly not uniform across theological approaches emphasizing orthopraxis, but it is a helpful starting point for interdisciplinary dialogue. Pursuing a life of righteousness in ever-increasing conformity to Christ would require a development of particular virtues through repeated beneficent actions. Currently, much of economic theory is unable to even track how such virtues could develop through economic interaction, even if economists wanted to (which they sometimes do not). Three obstacles stand in the way. First, many economic theories face a problem in tracking and distinguishing individual economic agents through the sorts of processes of change theologians find significant. John Davis (2011, p. 5, p. 30) argues that the basic requirements for an adequate theory of the individual are individuation, or a means of distinguishing between individuals, and re-identification, or a means of maintaining individuality across time. Davis has put forward strong arguments that standard preference theories fail to even allow for individuation, much less re-identification, because they only depict the economic agent as a utility function. This function is subject to fragmentation if revealed preferences do not support the existence of a single utility function—in standard models the individual simply is the utility function, so multiple functions would imply multiple selves. Economic models must be capable of individuating and re-identifying agents if they are going to track changes in the virtues of such agents. Without individuation it is impossible to discuss who is developing virtue, and without re-identification it is impossible to determine whether or not virtue is being developed.

The second main problem confronting the orthopraxis trajectory is that many economic models treat preferences as exogenous to models. However, theologians contend that the economy can influence preferences in a manner that alters behavior and thus the development of virtue (Bell, 2012). This concern in certain respects would bring in discussions of orthopathy in dialogue with orthopraxis. As long as models continue to treat preferences as the basis of economic actions and also as exogenous to models—not influenced by economic interaction—the impact of economic interactions on virtue and thereby on right action will not be measurable. The task at hand would require more than treating preference formation as endogenous. The model would have to track how formation of preferences could have a cumulative developmental

effect, through the application of an idea like human capital, in a manner that is both economically rigorous and theologically acceptable. There is much work to be done.

A third problem confronts the orthopraxis trajectory. Many theological accounts of right action consider such action from a teleological perspective; right actions are oriented toward and guided by particular ends. However, common economic theories of human choice, especially rational choice theory, provide no means of exploring a human action as normed by a particular teleological commitment.

Amartya Sen's notion of commitment is an exception here. Sen (1977, p. 326) claims that typical economic models have no place for action that is not utility maximizing. To make his point, Sen distinguishes between sympathy and commitment. Sympathy is "concern for others [that] directly affects one's own welfare." So, for example, if it pains a man greatly to see someone in poverty, his gift of money to a poor beggar actually provides a utility or welfare benefit for him by reducing that pain. On the other hand, commitment addresses a situation in which the injustice "does not make you feel personally worse off, but you think it is wrong and you are ready to do something to stop it." The difference here is one of motivation. In a case of sympathy at least part of the motive is the desire to alleviate one's own discomfort of suffering. In commitment, there is no such self-interested welfare motive.

Sen (2007, p. 80) describes welfare, goal, and choice as the three aspects of economic decision-making. He suggests that *self-interested* behavior invokes these three aspects in the following way: "Self-centered welfare" indicates that a person's utility depends only upon her own consumption, "self-welfare goal" indicates that a self-interested agent has the goal of maximizing utility, and "self-goal choice" indicates that a person's choices are guided by their own goals. A self-interested individual therefore acts in such a way that goals and choices are joined with and subsumed to self-welfare maximization. *Commitment*, on the other hand, as a non-self-interested motivation, drives one "wedge" between welfare and choice and another between goal and choice (Sen, 2009, pp. 188–193; Sen, 1977, p. 329). The wedge between welfare and choice is fairly easy to understand if commitment motivates actions that provide no welfare benefit. The wedge between goal and choice is more controversial and warrants extended consideration.

Sen's argument is that commitment can cause someone to make a

choice contrary to his own goals, therefore driving a wedge between choice and goal. Hans Bernhard Schmid has critiqued this position, claiming that such a thing is impossible. Schmid suggests that this wedge is impossible according to John Searle's notion of "conditions of satisfaction." A condition of satisfaction is the requirement that must be fulfilled for me to have done what I intended to do. Schmid suggests that if a person intends something, then he must have chosen his goal, his own conditions of satisfaction (Schmid, 2007, pp. 214–215). Schmid's criticism of Sen fails if someone can intend to act according to a commitment, setting conditions of satisfaction *upon that intention*, namely, the willingness to do whatever that commitment entails. What the commitment entails may ultimately be determined not by the agent, but by some "other." Thus, to intend to adhere to a particular commitment is to intend to act according to some external standard that will have its own conditions of satisfaction, its own *telos*.

Ultimately, the first step toward a viable orthopraxis trajectory of dialogue between theology and economic theory would lie in developing models of individual action that allow for ethical commitments. This is made possible by a theory like Sen's. It can re-identify the agent through time to enable tracking changes in commitment and virtue; it also has a means of exploring how desires and resulting actions may be influenced by economic interactions, in ways that either shift ethical commitments or build ethical capital. If economists were to develop such an apparatus, or if, unknown to me, one already exists, I think economists and theologians could have the same conversation, even if they still spoke quite different languages. Such a conversation would be far more productive than many that currently happen between economists and theologians.

2.3 Orthodoxy and Identity

The final, orthodox trajectory faces the obvious difficulty that the main object of Christian orthodoxy is God, but economists are typically rightfully silent about the deity. The difficulty is not insurmountable if we recall John Calvin's views that theology explores "the knowledge of God and of ourselves" (Calvin, 1559/2008, I.1.1). Theological knowledge of self allows for a connection with economic theory. There are certainly many ways by which this could unfold, and indeed this trajectory is the most frequent basis of dialogue between theologians and economists. One need only survey the debates surrounding the validity of the *homo eco-*

nomicus to find ample material for a dialogue between economists and theologians, including a broad consensus among theological approaches that the simplistic *homo economicus* is theologically inadequate. Many Christian economists would grant this claim as well. For this reason, I will not linger on this trajectory except to point out one area where I wish further research would unfold.

Identity is one area of particular significance in which theologians and economists could have fruitful dialogue. Theologically, justification entails at least the reception of a new identity by the believer as a son or daughter of God.⁴ Justification leads to the adoption of a Christian to be a son or daughter of God (Romans 8:15; John 1:12); it leads to being clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27), to being born anew into a new life and identity (John 3:3). All of these concepts convey the idea that one receives a new identity in Christ. Many theologians suggest that there are clear economic obligations associated with this new identity (for example, Barrera, 1995). Behavioral economists have explored how identity effects economic interactions (Akerlof & Kranton, 2010), but I am unaware of any constructive dialogue between theologians and economists concerning the impact upon economic interactions of religious identities received through justification. I believe this could be an interesting and fruitful dialogue.

3 Concluding Reflections

I have offered brief remarks regarding the possibilities three theological trajectories hold for dialogue between theologians and economists. And I have briefly outlined three aspects of economic theory that are end points of these theological trajectories. The basic contours of this proposal should be sufficient to suggest potential ways that dialogue can move forward. Such fruitful dialogue is necessary if Christians are to offer the best possible theological analysis of economic concerns, an analysis that is at once robustly theological and economic.

Unfortunately, all too often theologians engage in economic questions without the requisite economic knowledge, and economists are at times just as prone to dismiss particular theological approaches as irrelevant to economic questions. Such misunderstandings are even evident in the pages of *Faith & Economics*, a journal that one would expect to represent—and which probably does represent—the most successful dialogue between economists and theologians.

In her survey of discussions between theologians and economists, Mary Hirschfield argues that theologians are prone to “speak of the system as a whole . . . with little (or no) nuance” (Hirschfield, 2011, p. 25), a suggestion that presents theologians as inadequately prepared for discerning which forms of economy may be orthodox. This may well be true. If so, given the vastness of theological and economic literature that must be considered to treat questions of economic systems, a turn to smaller issues such as identity might serve as a better starting place for dialogue than debates about systems as a whole.

However, it may also be the case that theologians and economists face this problem because they are not typically operating within the same “trajectory,” as I have used that word. I believe this is often the case. For example, in a dialogue between theologian and philosopher James K. A. Smith and economist J. David Richardson, Richardson complains of Smith’s “refusal to envision, much less detail, alternative economic-globalization architectures” (Richardson, 2010, p. 54), while Smith fears that Richardson simply takes “what is contingent as if it were natural” (Smith, 2010b, p. 48). As I interpret their dialogue, Richardson seems to be exploring questions more suited to the orthodoxy trajectory, as he attempts to assess what, empirically, the outcomes of globalization are. Smith is exploring questions more suited to orthopraxis, particularly the tendency Smith sees among some economists to pre-reflectively treat as necessary to how one imagines the world that which theology is attempting to contest. By the end of the dialogue both parties have recognized the problem, but the dialogue itself could have been more productive, at least in terms of Richardson’s desire to see alternative architectures, had the contributors come to a consensus on the proper trajectory that their discussion should pursue.

Let us consider another dialogue from the pages of *Faith & Economics*, this one between economist Victor Claar and theologians D. Stephen Long and Mark Husbands. In this dialogue, *Faith & Economics* only published papers without responses, so differences are less clear. However, even the initial papers reveal distinctive approaches to correlating theology and economics. Though each complete essay could be classified fruitfully in terms of the trajectories outlined above, let us attend to a single example. Claar (2012) emphasizes a number of points that would most easily fit in the orthopraxis trajectory, meaning that his concerns put questions concerning concrete, successful market interactions in the

center. A concern for orthopraxis is evident in Claar's emphasis on the relative effectiveness of the price system in serving others vis-à-vis a gift economy, and in his emphasis on how the market encourages us to act *as if* we are other-regarding. These arguments could be quite effective in dialogue along an orthopraxis trajectory, where the concern would potentially be the injustice that may arise in economic interactions. But consider a theologian who is most concerned with Orthopathy. He therefore sees the main problem with market exchanges not in terms of their outcomes, but in terms of the ways they may depersonalize one's view of the world, or corrupt one's desires. For such a theologian, when Claar delights that markets cause us to act *as if* we care about others, he is conceding the entire theological problem in his argument. One can imagine such a theologian responding along the lines of Daniel Bell (2012, pp. 83–4): The important question is not whether capitalism works—a question of orthopraxis—but rather what sort of work is done—a question of orthopathy, focusing on the formation of desire.

Christian economists and theologians cannot continue to talk past one another or to ignore one another without jeopardizing the Church's responsibilities to take every thought captive to the gospel (2 Corinthians 5:10) and to help the poor (Galatians 2:10). I see many examples of both theologians and economists who are willing to do the difficult work required to bridge the disciplines of theology and economics. Despite this willingness, both disciplines should take note of the important insight raised by recent research in economic subdisciplines like auction theory or game theory: The success of particular interactions may depend in significant ways on the concrete manner in which such interactions are set up. I believe that the success of particular interactions between economists and theologians depends in large part upon our ability to recognize the different perspectives that a theological or economic scholar may emphasize, to identify helpful dialogue partners in the other discipline who start with similar concerns, and to pursue a common trajectory of dialogue that is most appropriate to these concerns. Once some area of consensus is reached in these initial conversations (Lord willing!), we may move to the larger task of outlining the relationship between orthodoxy, orthopraxis, and orthopathy, in order to facilitate a theologically informed and economically robust perspective on economics.⁵

Endnotes

- 1 I classify personalist economists as a theological approach even though it is at least equally an economic approach. In fact, personalist economics stands as a unique example of successful dialogue between certain varieties of theology and economics.
- 2 Mackenzie names this variety of performativity as a tribute to Barnes (1988).
- 3 During interviews, one trader suggested that “Black-Scholes was really what enabled the exchange to thrive” (MacKenzie & Millo, p. 121).
- 4 There are ongoing theological debates concerning whether justification also infuses a form of righteousness in the believer, transforms one’s nature, or only provides a new identity. However, the transmission of identity is widely agreed upon.
- 5 Such a task would require dialogue not only across disciplines between theologians and economists, but within disciplines as well, as theologians and economists with different emphases, methods, and/or conclusions tried to reach some level of consensus within their respective fields to be able to relate theological analysis of concerns centered on orthopraxis with analysis more centered on orthodoxy, for example.

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