



Global Faculty Initiative

**The Faculty Initiative
seeks to promote the integration
of Christian faith and academic disciplines
by bringing theologians into conversation with scholars
across the spectrum of faculties
in research universities
worldwide.**

www.globalfacultyinitiative.net

Disciplinary Responses to Theology Brief Preview

TWO QUESTIONS: IS A FLOURISHING LIFE A LOVING LIFE? CAN CHRISTIAN LOVE INFORM A VIRTUE ETHIC FOR ECONOMISTS?

Gordon Menzies

Associate Professor in Economics at the University of Technology Sydney

The topic of love is a dividing line between theology and economics. One might say theology is deeply concerned with love - its manifestations, divine and human; its definitions; its teloi. However, economics does not even have it as an explicit category.

How might this chasm be crossed?

On one account of love - an expansive one (see Col 3 14 where love 'binds' other virtues together) - to be loving is very close to living a flourishing life. And one account of virtue ethics - one which emphasizes a picture of a flourishing life that we see to train ourselves for - has recently become interesting to economists who are dissatisfied with mere consequentialism/utilitarianism (the most common ethical theory used in that profession).

These economists who have departed from the utilitarian mainstay have given some credence to Aristotelian virtue ethics. What the interest in Aristotle shows is that virtue ethics is a place where worldviews and metanarratives can legitimately find a point of entry to economics. [1]

Can we Christian economists, with the help of theologians, have an account of a loving/virtuous life which forms a viable alternative to Aristotle (like the one outlined in *Resurrection and Moral Order*)? Naturally, it would be helpful if this picture involved what are normally thought of as commercial dealings or transactions.

If all this is correct, then one path of integration a theologian could help economists with is: telling a story of love that is compatible with virtue ethics, where love is defined in such a way as living a loving life is (at least highly correlated with) living a virtuous life.

EndNote

[1] This presupposes that virtue is not reducible to a collection of deontological and consequentialist

statements, but rather reflects an integrated vision of life – a worldview.

For more information

www.globalfacultyinitiative.net