
One of the most promising recent developments in the Catholic publishing world is the appearance of IHS Press, which says it is "dedicated exclusively to the social teachings of the Catholic Church." It is evident that IHS Press, like the Society of Catholic Social Scientists, means to be faithful to all of the principles of the Church's social teachings, instead of just the ones that conform to some predetermined secular ideological perspective. IHS's early publishing efforts are aimed at bringing back into print some of the classics of Catholic social thought. From there, it hopes to publish new works. One of its first efforts was the re-publication of this book by one of history's greatest Catholic writers in the English language.

*The Outline of Sanity* is Chesterton's main book-length work expounding the economic perspective called distributism. While distributism is dismissed by some as a quixotic, back-to-the-land movement, this book makes very clear that it is a reasonable, profound, and much more encompassing perspective than that. The book fits in well with the major works of other thinkers that comprise a school of thought that might best be labeled "humane economics." (Actually, it is somewhat inapt to call it a "school," which suggests just one opinion among many, because so many of its precepts and conclusions are based closely on the nature of man itself.) In Chesterton's time, there was Fr. Heinrich Pesch, S.J., the developer of the solidarist system of economics and author of *Ethics and the National Economy*, the main short summary of his much more voluminous writing. There was also *The Restoration of Property*, by Chesterton's distributist colleague and intellectual twin, Hillaire Belloc. Later, one thinks of *A Humane Economy*, by Wilhelm Roepke, a Lutheran who acknowledged his debt to the papal social encyclicals, and *Small is Beautiful*, descriptively subtitled *Economics as if People Mattered*, by E.F. Schumacher. Each of these writers, in varying degrees and with different levels of systematization and theoretical analysis, sought to propose economic principles and practices in light of Catholic social teaching and the natural law.

While different ones of the above writers developed their perspective more thoroughly and stressed certain elements more than others, we can identify a common thread that defines "humane economics." Most central is the notion that the economy exists for man, not man for the economy. It must address human needs and satisfy human wants, and must foremost be oriented to the good of the whole man. While the immediate concern of economics, of course, is man's temporal good, it must always uphold his fundamental dignity.
that is based on his spiritual dimension. Beyond this, and in furtherance of this mission of economics, humane economics tends to stress the following: the value of small-scale enterprise, and of smallness in general whenever feasible in human institutions; the necessity of as wide a distribution of private property as possible, both so men can develop the virtue that private property requires and so they can sustain their temporal needs and freedom; the fact that economics can in no way be a utilitarian or instrumentalist undertaking, but must be grounded in sound morality; that economics cannot be abstracted from other fundamental areas of human existence, such as, besides the moral, the religious, social, cultural, and political; that man must be taken as he is, and that economic activity must proceed from the abilities, talents, and resources that individual groups of men have at their disposal, instead of trying to impose some mega-structure which they are ill-equipped to handle and which leaves many dispossessed; the dignity and value of honest labor; the dangers of materialism and consumerism; and, in general, that man himself—his physical abilities, his intellect, and his creativity is the greatest resource.

Some of the particular themes that appear in The Outline of Sanity are: the evils of monopoly; the intrinsic problems of the divergent but related doctrines of liberal economics (which Chesterton simply calls somewhat inadequately, I believe "Capitalism") and socialism; the functional servitude engendered by modern industrial civilization; the necessity of rebuilding a peasantry (in the original sense of the word); the defense of the practicality of distributism against those who claimed that it was a visionary scheme (and an effective retort to the claim that liberal economics is practical); the character of a distributist political society; the legal changes that would be needed to secure and maintain distributist principles; the role of nationalization (about which Chesterton may be too sanguine) and guilds in a distributist political society; the folly of social engineering schemes which claimed to tell the simple poor folk how they really wanted to live; the political virtues that can stem from country life; the folly of the cult of the machine (as opposed to a proper use of technology); the possibilities the development of the automobile had for restoring individuality in a conformist culture (he might not have been satisfied with its long-run effect, however); and the essentiality of tying economic life to man's ultimate spiritual destiny.

Many of Chesterton's observations address and apply to conditions in the England of the first third of the twentieth century when he wrote. (The book was originally published in 1926, although the different chapters had previously been published as essays and articles.) Many nay, most of these observations, however, have a wider application, like those of all the humane economic writers mentioned above. IHS Press provides a helpful preface which gives an overview of Chesterton's points and suggests how they apply in the present day. Obviously, when one reads Chesterton one has to be content with the digressions and winding explanations and discussions which he often
uses to make his points. One also has to have some acquaintance with the historical conditions and personalities he alludes to in order to sufficiently appreciate his arguments. (To this end, the brief explanatory footnotes added by IHS Press are helpful.) Chesterton's wit and rhetorical jousts more than make up for such inconveniences, however. IHS Press is to be congratulated on its founding and its achievement in bringing a masterpiece of Catholic social literature back into print.

Stephen M. Krason
Franciscan University of Steubenville


This book consists of sixteen essays by Princeton Professor Robert P. George, addressing the most pressing public issues of our time, including: marriage, euthanasia, public morality, the nature of the state, abortion, embryo destruction, and the relevance of natural law. It is the author's expressed intent that each essay be able to function alone and also be accessible to the generally educated, non-specialist reader. Scholars will benefit from the forty pages of notes at the end of the book which refer the reader to detailed philosophical defenses of the propositions set forth in the text. The inclusion of an index helps to integrate and interrelate the essays to each other and increases the value of the book as a whole.

Professor George's goal in this volume is to "show that Christians and other believers are right to defend their positions on key moral issues as rationally superior to the alternatives presented by secular liberals." George's criticism of "secular liberal views is not that they are contrary to faith; it is that they fail the test of reason" (xiv). The secular orthodoxy, of course, holds just the opposite in promoting the "myth that there is only one basis for disbelieving its tenets: namely, the claim that God has specifically revealed propositions contrary to these tenets" (6). In subjecting the conclusions of the secularist academy to rational scrutiny on a variety of subjects including same sex marriage, abortion, and human rights George outlines the rationally indefensible assumptions that underlie these propositions and subjects them to devastating critique. Those assumptions include the notion that bodily life is