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7. Simplicity of Lifestyle as a Goal of Business

Practicing the Economy of Communion as a Challenge to Consumer Society

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Abstract

My first task in the paper will be to illuminate why following genuine principles of one's Christianity is so challenging in the contemporary economy, and then I will turn to a specific aspect of the challenge: the importance of *simplicity of lifestyle* and the rejection of luxury and consumerism in all spheres of our lives, including our business practices, an idea often overlooked in thinking about the consistency of lifestyle. Finally, I will suggest two, somewhat daring, ways in which that simplicity might be manifest by EoC businesses. These suggestions are meant to be challenging, but I will close by noting that both actually address really important problems in our current economic situation. Therefore, they are potentially effective business strategies, and not only utopian moral imperatives.

Keywords: simplicity, Economy of Communion, consumerism, lifestyle, luxury

Introduction

In her 1999 address on the Economy of Communion, Chiara Lubich identified several key characteristics of the Economy of Communion (EoC). Her first principle is very important: "The actors within the Economy of Communion businesses seek to live out, in the particular way that their productive organization requires, the *same lifestyle* that they live in the other areas of their life" (18).

In the rest of her address, she notes a number of aspects of this "same lifestyle": the importance of setting aside profits, organizational relations of "openness and trust" even with business competitors, a "culture of giving," an "attention to the least," and a "respect for the environment." This is not meant to be an exhaustive list. The more important point is the umbrella under which all these particular claims gathers: a rejection of the "compartmentalization" of different spheres of life and the divided self characteristic of modern society, and especially modern business culture (see MacIntyre; Alford and Naughton: 7-21). "Greed is good" is not a principle widely applied and admired in family relations! By seeking to live according to the same values and principles in all spheres of life, the Economy of Communion business represents a powerful example of the core call of Pope Benedict's *Caritas in Veritate*: the insistence that principles of what he called "gratuitousness" cannot simply occur outside or after economic activity, but be present within it (§36). He analyzes the market failures of the 2008–2009 Great Recession in terms of a loss of basic trust and fraternity; key to the crisis was the construction of complex investment instruments that obscured and encouraged the increasingly irresponsible lending in the mortgage market. At the time, it looked like everyone was getting great deals, but in fact there were layers of deception that later resulted in much human suffering. What looked for a time to be success in purely economic logic could not ultimately be sustained because that economic logic was not built on its necessary social foundation of genuine human and Christian values.

My first task in the paper will be to illuminate why following genuine principles of one's Christianity is so challenging in the contemporary economy, and then I will turn to a specific aspect of the challenge: the importance of *simplicity of lifestyle* and the rejection of luxury and consumerism in all spheres of our lives, including our business practices. This idea is often overlooked in thinking about the consistency of lifestyle, but it should not be, both because it is an important element of Catholic social teaching (CST) and because of genuine economic reasons for why such simplicity is a necessary component of more abstract goals such as justice, solidarity, and sustainability. Finally, I will suggest two, somewhat daring, ways in which that simplicity might be manifest by EoC businesses. These suggestions are meant to be challenging, but I will close by noting that both actually address really important problems in our current economic situation. Therefore, they are potentially effective business strategies, and not only utopian moral imperatives.

Zamagni on Business and Social Aims

Let me start by addressing the broad challenge of consistency of lifestyle. The Italian economist Stefano Zamagni's work has been very important for the EoC and for CST. Zamagni's overall work develops a vision of what he calls "civil economy," a genuinely alternative way of thinking about how an economy works. The key hallmark of the notion of civil economy is the re-connection of business activity and public, social aims. As it has developed, modern economics tends to assume what Pope Benedict has called "the market-plus-state binary," in which the market represents private individuals and groups pursuing their own self-interested ends, and the state as the representative of public, social ends. Put simply, business is for pursuing private goods, while government is for pursuing common goods. Zamagni's work, as I will outline in a moment, seeks to show that this division of work is rooted in problematic historical processes and is not ultimately sustainable; the civil economy is a model where this compartmentalization is overcome, such that businesses become vehicles for pursuing genuinely social ends. In an article on the EoC, he points out the importance of EoC businesses as a testimony against this market-state binary "since [EoC] demonstrates, through facts, that it is possible to use the market as a means to manage to reach goals which are by their nature public" (2002: 134). In an EoC business, "the market can become an instrument which can reinforce social ties" (2002: 134), rather than undermine them, such that they must be repaired by actions of the state. For example, he notes that EoC businesses act to distribute wealth more fairly in the first place (instead of just RE-distributing it) and to regenerate the social values (such as trust) on which the market depends (instead of just depending on things like churches, schools, and families to teach those values sufficiently such that they will hold up under market pressure).

Zamagni's notion of a civil economy in which businesses pursue and reinforce common, public ends actually makes better sense of the needs of economic reality than do the alternatives. For example, it is widely accepted that markets ultimately depend on social trust, a fact underscored by Partha Dasgupta's *Economics: A Very Short Introduction*, which begins its analysis of wealth creation and markets not by talking about supply and demand, about technological innovation, or even about the motive power of self-interest. Instead, he begins with a chapter on trust – trust that makes possible much wider economic relationships, which then make possible larger-scale enterprises, division of labor, and everything else that actually contributes to more economic production (30-63). This notion that the market cannot stand alone is even found in Adam Smith himself (Kennedy).

However, for all that common sense, the position is not dominant in our ordinary thinking about the economy. Why not? In a more recent article, Zamagni seeks to excavate the division between private markets and public government historically. He points out that the markets of medieval and Renaissance Italy, for example, generated much wealth, but were quite unlike modern markets. He notes that – for all their flaws – these markets existed within an institutional and moral ethos of control and civic solidarity. Nevertheless, they were real markets. He points out that the three basic mechanisms of market economics – the division of labor, the development of innovative organization and new technology, and the freedom of enterprise – are present in both this older civil and the newer capitalist contexts. So what was the difference? Zamagani suggests the differences were not the market mechanisms, but rather *the ends pursued by agents*; thus the *same* mechanisms ended up performing *different* functions. So for example, he notes that in a civil economy context, the division of labor can serve as an inclusive principle that enables the community to find useful work for everyone, given different gifts and abilities; by contrast, in a capitalist economy, the division "is used to discriminate between categories of workers for the purpose of increasing the productivity of the system" (2017: 183). It may well be that, in both instances, one result is that people are able to get jobs despite low skill levels, but in the latter instance, that is not the goal – and therefore, of course, the tendency will be to use up and dispose of such workers, rather than sustain them as productive contributors to the common good.

This insight about the ends intended by agents may seem a modest one – and we may think about ways in which our organizations, EoC or not, continue to practice everyday habits that look more like civil inclusion than like capitalist disposability. The dilemma for contemporary versions of inclusion comes at the moment we can all imagine: when business realities force owners and managers to make a hard choice about such workers. Why is that scenario of the hard choice – and the much more likely outcome of that choice – so depressingly familiar in our context?

Here Zamagni offers some remarkable insight. For him, the root problem lies in what he terms the "pessimistic interpretation of human nature" (2017: 185). This is often represented by dark figures in political philosophy like Machiavelli and Hobbes, who insist that any politics must reckon with the realities of human nature as nasty and self-seeking. But more seemingly-optimistic figures – like Locke and Adam Smith – also shared in this sense that an effective economy and politics depended upon a recognition that individual human beings were not simply occasionally flawed, but were fundamentally self-interested. Figures like Locke and Smith moderated this picture, often by appealing to a separate internal sphere such as Smith's moral sentiments (very telling!), but they agreed that economic and political life needed to be based on a recognition of realistic self-interest. The definitive account of this transition is a fairly short and readable classic by Albert Hirschmann called *The Passions and the Interests*, which explains that the new goal was more or less to curb more violent passions in favor of somewhat more benign interests – especially the interest in acquiring new and interesting things. The way to social peace came to be the pursuit of fancy luxuries, which, as Hume (134-37) above all noted, spurred the lower classes to work, and according to Smith (181-85), more positively, made the folly of rich people trickle down to others through their spending. It seemed preferable to more violent competitions.

I should stress here that ultimately, even the gentler version of this "pessimistic account of human nature" is not compatible with the EoC vision. To the contrary – the EoC vision clearly expects a lot from people. So we should be troubled when Zamagni goes on to explain exactly how this version of human nature has become invisibly entrenched in the whole way we think about society. This "pessimistic account" is not just an idea in intellectual history; it is manifest by conceptual and institutional assumptions. How so?

The original pessimistic account of human nature leads to the twofold error at the heart of our current divided system: that the market sphere "coincides with the sphere of selfishness" and the state sphere "coincides with the sphere of solidarity and the pursuit of collective interests" (Zamagn 2017: 185). This sets up an inevitable and unresolvable clash of concepts between those who view the market as a necessary evil that must be closely monitored by the state and those who (not wrongly) view the state as also potentially corrupt, and so see "the market as an ideal place to resolve also the political problem" by applying market logic "to all spheres of social life" (Zamagni 2017: 186). This clash essentially dominates our public discourse, but beyond that, seems almost a fact of nature to many people. The only question is what side you're on. But Zamagni notes how both sides agree on a "cultural outcome that is antithetical to the civil economy": that whatever we think of market logic, what it means is "the impersonality of exchange relations" and "the exclusive self-interest of participants" (2017: 187). The only debate is whether the sphere of the state can manifest the opposite ideals of solidarity, or whether an appropriate pessimism should also extend to the self-interested ambition of those who run the state. Zamagni trenchantly concludes, "a society in which the principle of fraternity evaporates has no future" (2017: 188).

I have outlined Zamagni's compelling argument for two reasons. One is that Lubich's original principle – a unity of lifestyle in all spheres of life – faces this complicated and difficult overall landscape. The barriers to the problem are not simply a matter of changing individual intentions (although this must be done). It is at least as much a matter of getting people to think differently about how they understand society and economic activity in ways that do not and – if Zamagni is right – *cannot* find an easy fit in the society as it is. But my second reason for citing it is how Zamagni's account makes clear the deep root of the problem, and therefore the place we must target: the underlying pessimistic account of human nature. That is the big root that we must get leverage on. Where do we turn for such leverage?

Economics and the Pessimistic View of Human Nature

I think the obvious place to start is the place where people learn this pessimistic lesson about human nature most directly, quickly, and pervasively: the idea that as consumers, we have insatiable desires that we are right to satisfy (so long as we do not do anything illegal). As I alluded to earlier, the real engine of capitalist success is not the few Gordon Gekkos, but the very many eager consumers who seem never to cease their seeking for more and better goods and services from whomever can provide them. Luxury, long understood in both Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian thought as a vice that undermined both individual flourishing and social solidarity, was reimagined by early economic thinkers such as Bernard Mandeville as a public virtue that actually led to industriousness and social prosperity (Cloutier 2015). Eventually this led to our current presumption that frenzied spending is necessary for all of us to keep the economy strong. This is an everyday (false) lesson in pessimism about human nature: we have unlimited wants, and they just keep growing. Thus, I think it is the place where we need to un-learn this lesson. We need to start thinking and acting like we expect people of human virtue to live simple lives. And we need to do so in ways that link this concern to how businesses make crucial decisions.

Admittedly, some people may be surprised to consider a life of luxury as contrary to Christian faith. But we should recognize that this criticism of luxury is everywhere in our ancient traditions. The great prophets of the Old Testament rail against "those who lie on beds of ivory and lounge upon their couches" (Amos 6:4); Jesus consistently calls for the renouncing of concern for possessions and warns the rich; Plato views the enticements of luxury as the first step in the downfall of his virtuous republic; and Cicero typifies Roman disdain for private luxury (Cloutier 2015: 26-31). But we need not simply look to the ancients; this resistance to what gets renamed "consumerism" is an established and crucial aspect of Catholic social teaching. John Paul II, in his 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, notes that "in singling out new needs and new needs to meet them, one must be guided by a comprehensive picture of [the human person] which . . . subordinates his material and instinctive dimensions to his interior and spiritual ones" (1991: §36). The economic system itself cannot identify these "artificial new needs which hinder the formation of a mature personality," and so larger cultural norms must communicate that "what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed toward 'having' rather than 'being'" (1991: §36). This criticism echoes his earlier critique of "superdevelopment" involving "an excessive availability of every kind of material goods" which "easily makes people slaves of 'possession' and of immediate gratification, with no other horizon than the multiplication or continual replacement of the things already owned with other still better" (1987: §28). The "sad effects" of such superdevelopment are not only a "crass materialism" but "a radical dissatisfaction" in which "the more one possesses, the more one wants, while deeper aspirations remain unsatisfied and perhaps even stifled" (1987: §28). Moreover, in addressing the environmental crisis, Pope Francis adds to this witness by highlighting the importance of the virtue *sobrietas*, a "conviction that less is more" that enables us "to be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be," instead of being a person "dipping here and there, always on the lookout for what they do not have." He sums up: "Even living on little, they live a lot" (2015**:** §222-23).

Some commentators on the Economy of Communion have also commented on the necessity of the intentional choosing of simpler lifestyles. Luca Crivelli distinguished two forms of poverty – one is unchosen, and the poverty that we usually fight to overcome, but the other, chosen poverty, is something that should be sought. He writes that this

> second type of poverty . . . is the poverty which is born from the awareness that all that I am has been given to me; likewise, all that I have must, in turn, be given. This is the foundation of the dynamics of reciprocity. This poverty prompts us to free ourselves of goods as absolute possessions in order to make them gifts, and thus to be free to love, . . . the goods themselves become bridges, occasions of community, paths of reciprocity (7).

Thus, Crivelli notes, "the economy of communion aims at defeating indigence (the poverty that is not chosen but suffered) by inviting everyone to freely choose a moderate and poor style of life" (7).

Pope Francis has reminded EoC leaders forcefully about their obligation to work to overcome the first sort of poverty within a capitalism whose "principal ethical dilemma . . . is the creation of discarded people, then trying to hide them or make sure they are no longer seen. A serious form of poverty in a civilization is when *it is no longer able to see its poor*, who are first discarded and then hidden" (2017). Francis calls on the EoC not simply to find the poor, but to prevent the discarding of anyone in the first place. But importantly, the failure of people to then move toward Crivelli's second chosen form of poverty is the often unspoken root of the whole economic problem faced in advanced economies. It is not merely a matter of private temperance; it is a bug in the whole economic program. Even as far back as Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, CST offers an account of integral human development that assumes the great struggle for impoverished nations is to overcome material poverty. But this is not to say that they simply need to become like the developed nations. Paul sets out a hierarchy of less human conditions that strikingly begins with both "the lack of material necessities" and the "moral deficiencies of those who are mutilated by selfishness." As he progresses toward more human conditions, he highlights both "the passage from misery toward the possession of necessities," but also "the turning toward the spirit of poverty" (§21). The problem here is very often rich

Christians concerned with social justice focus on the problems of others (their basic material deprivation) but do not recognize their own problems in this scale (the lack of a movement toward the spirit of poverty). And we do not notice that precisely because of the splits Zamagni identifies – we tend to think instead that problems like inequality or environmental sustainability can be best solved by the state.

Let me take a little time to explain this. It is no secret that the full turn to what economists call the principle of scarcity happens only, as Charles Clark (43-44) pointed out, as industrial production became widespread; technology was actually making it possible to overcome genuine scarcity for the first time in human history. It is not an accident that the main heterodox economist at that time, Thorstein Veblen, first theorized the *consumer* basis of *advanced* capitalist society, and explained at length how the *artificial* scarcity manufactured by business owners and salesmen would only be fixed, in his view, if we put the engineers in charge. It is also telling that John Maynard Keynes is sometimes wrongly taken to be an apostle of the economic importance of increasing consumption. But Keynes recommends stimulating demand only as a temporary way of combatting economic slumps. In the long term, however, he assumed quite forthrightly that an economic abundance of the future would depend on three things: an end to war, a control of population, and the limiting of personal wants. One recent commentator notes acerbically that the last – limiting personal wants – seems to be the furthest from being realized (Minsky: 155).

Why, if even these economists recognized this problem, does it so often go unnoticed? I think we labor under a certain illusion – the illusion that Mandeville himself created in his Fable of the Bees – that a society devoted to lots of consumption is an economically successful society. People are industrious and produce. And this ends up benefitting everyone, for lots of reasons. Mandeville terms this "private vice, public benefit" – for us, it looks like consumer confidence makes for a big Christmas, which makes for jobs, which makes for a better economy. It is like an equation: free markets + mass consumption = a better economy.

But in fact, there are reasons to think that, even if the environmental challenges of such consumption somehow went away, we would encounter inherent *economic* problems. Chief among these reasons is the extended case made by Robert Gordon, in his magnum opus *The Rise and Fall of American Growth*. In this book, Gordon argues (and extensively documents) that the American economy benefitted from a series of what he calls "one-time-only" transitions from 1870 to 1970. These transitions all resulted in dramatic economic growth by increasing the productivity of the economy exponentially. Gordon points to a whole range of innovations – from water systems and electricity to agricultural mechanization and enormously-improved transportation – all of which represented quantum leaps in productivity. This growth can be most easily represented by recognizing that America needed 40% or so of its population working in agriculture to feed the nation around the turn of the twentieth century, but needs only 1% today – to be a large exporter and to produce so much food that it is cheap and wasted too easily. It is crucial to recognize that increased consumption only helps the economy if it is *linked* to such efficiency gains. If we *cannot* feed everyone, market competition to buy and sell more goods for less cost can drive innovations in production that makes goods cheaper and less labor intensive. Eventually, these innovations – not simply the fact that people are consuming more – is what grows the economy. Put another way, the increased demand from consumers is only a means to economic growth if it spurs innovations in productivity.[1] Simply buying more and more stuff does not by itself overcome scarcity.

Thus, this kind of increasingly-consumption-driven economy only produces its benefits for the whole population *if* it feeds into the productivity growth cycle. What Gordon argues is that, in various ways, we have now reaped all the gains that these innovations produced, and that further innovations – however fancy they might be – are unlikely to produce the kinds of massive gains inherent in going from a society without washing machines and running water to one that has these goods and services cheaply. Rather than thinking about economic growth as a steady, abstract force, he instead insists that such growth depends on productivity improvements. But are not these always happening? Yes, he says, but his "central thesis is that some inventions are more important than others" (2016: 2). The gains in what he calls the "special century" are due to certain leaps in basic food, shelter, transportation, and health care that really revolutionized daily life – in a way that even something like Uber does not "revolutionize" transportation productivity. He writes:

> The speed of transportation was increased from that of the "hoof and sail" to the Boeing 707. The temperature of a room was wildly variable in the 19th century but by now is a uniform 70 degrees year round. The transition from rural to urban in the US could only happen once. Only once could electricity be invented and create rapid transit, machine tools, consumer appliances, and the entire electricity-dependent set of entertainment devices from the radio to the TV to the internet and its multiple spin-offs such as the iPod, iPhone, and iPad (2012).

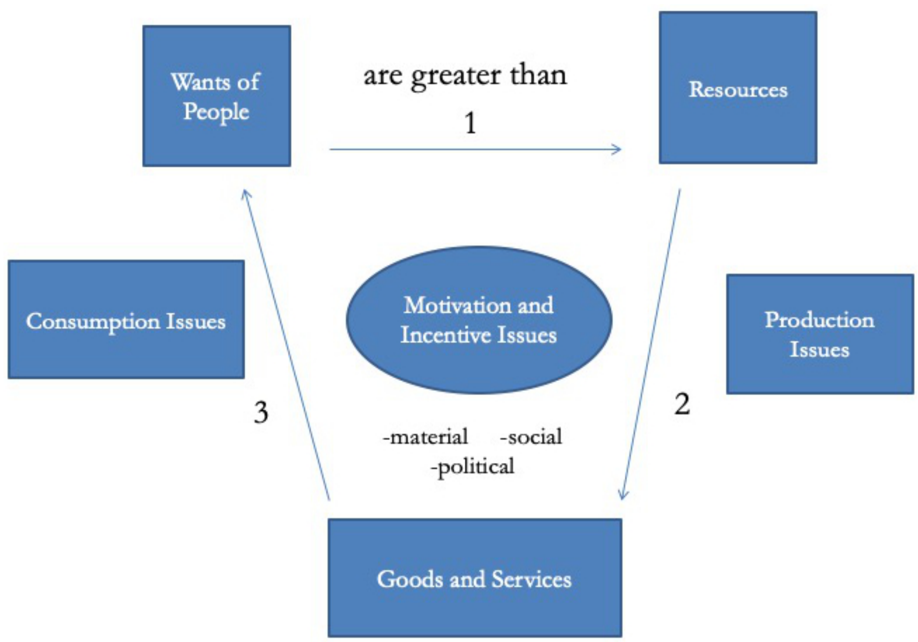
The slowdown in growth in advanced economies after 1970 cannot, he says, be somehow turned around with more markets producing much more efficiencies and innovations – there will be innovations, but they simply cannot conceivably match the leaps that these earlier innovations made, simply because the exponential gains of the past era are limited by certain constraints of reality (e.g., we cannot make a day longer than 24 hours). Thus, dealing with problems like inequality will require a different strategy, an approach that cannot be the one used under the growth conditions of the past.

We can see this vividly if we look at a diagram from Christian economist James Halteman (see Figure 1). Halteman's diagram depicts three aspects of how an economy must deal with scarcity (16). Essentially, a working economy tries to shrink the gaps. Side #2 in the triangle involves improvement in production processes. A good economy improves the efficiency of turning resources into goods and services. Farmers buy equipment that allows higher yields per acre and more acres to be farmed by a single person, or a company develops equipment that it sells to water utilities for processing more water in less time with less energy and fewer workers. Side #3, Halteman says, involves consumption, but what he means is what economists call allocative efficiency – that is, what are the mechanisms for getting the farmer's food or the clean water to the people who actually need them. Insofar as the price system and Walmart/Amazon (i.e. efficient distribution mechanisms) are improved, goods and services

[1] As Keynes and others saw, in such an economy, there is a need for moderate redistribution in periods of economic recession to keep up effective demand.

end up going most easily to people who actually need them. The price system, as Econ 101 teaches, is supposed to balance supply and demand in the most efficient way, so that people compare various prices in trade-offs for what they really want, and companies respond by raising or lowering prices. But Halteman concludes (as most economists do), "if the allocation side of the triangle is putting products to their best use and if the production side is using the best resource mix to produce the right goods, then the economy is doing its job" (18). He leaves out side #1 – or rather, he says in a steady-state economy, the shrinking of side #1 by shrinking people's wants is the only way to go about addressing the economic problem of scarcity, of unmet genuine needs. But now, let us combine Gordon and Halteman: if in fact we have limited possibilities for improvements on sides #2 and #3, maybe the time has come again to solve problems by addressing side #1 – instead of suggesting that its gap (between what we have and what we want) should always expand!

Figure 1. The Context of Economic Systems (adapted from Halteman)



This digression into economics could be continued, but I merely wanted to highlight this takeaway point: there are strong *economic* reasons to believe that a key way our developed economy improves for all is by shrinking the side #1 gap – that is, by identifying criteria for enough, so that goods and services become more available to others who may lack basics. The support for this is strengthened if we recall Zamagni's point that the root problem with our current economy is the pessimistic view of human nature, which suggests that every individual is insatiable and therefore rationally selfish. The root problem is we think side #1 in Halteman's diagram is a hopeless project because people are ever-increasing in their wants. I think as Christians we all recognize personally that this is not a lifestyle compatible with Christianity. But we then compartmentalize this insight, assuming it is merely a personal project of spiritual growth. However, I want to push Lubich's original point as a question for EoC businesses: how can that insight about avoiding luxury and embracing simplicity in personal lifestyle be consistent with our way of doing business?

Economy of Communion Simplicity: Compensation Structures and Marketing Practices

I think there are many ways one could imagine doing this – in part, my paper is an invitation to apply these lessons creatively in different EoC settings. But I want to identify two in particular: one, how compensation structures are designed, and two, how products are marketed. Both involve interesting challenges for thinking differently about business – and in somewhat risky ways, but also in ways that could genuinely be beacons of light for a civil economy way of thinking and acting. And both ultimately hinge on taking seriously the need for simpler lifestyles.

First, compensation structures. It is well-known that Catholic teaching insists on a basic living wage for workers (an ideal that, I would mention, can only be met if we are willing to define "basic"!), but also allows for differentials in compensation based on rewarding specialized skills and extra contributions (Alford and Naughton: 130-49). A just wage is always a living wage, but it is also a wage that makes some differential judgments about contribution and skill.

The question I want to raise is about other factors often key to compensation. For example, the definition above says nothing about the justice of rewarding seniority, nor does it talk about the degree of differentiation that is fair. Yet these factors often play a large role in wage differentials. Moreover, compensation structures may also unjustly reward what Pope Francis calls "the meritocracy invoked by the elder son [in the Prodigal Son parable] and by many who deny mercy in the name of merit." The pope continues: "An entrepreneur of communion is called to do everything possible so that even those who do wrong and leave home can hope for work and for dignified earnings, and not wind up eating with the swine" (2017).

I can speak most easily to the (somewhat unusual) business I am in. In academia, seniority among faculty often plays a very large role in wage differentiation, and there is also considerable angst about the differential in wages between faculty and administration, sometimes because it is not clear that administrators contribute significantly more to the enterprise than faculty. Resolving these problems is not an exact science, to be sure. However, a road I have not seen taken is to ask a new set of questions about needs. In my own situation in Washington, D.C., the presumptions of the seniority system have created some real challenges. On the one hand, junior faculty just out of graduate school, especially ones with young families, are faced with an exorbitantly-priced housing market that is driven by the large population of white-collar professionals in the region who make (to put it mildly) considerably more than our assistant professors. But on the other hand, I have senior colleagues who are full professors, who bought houses decades ago when the D.C. market was actually pretty reasonable, and who have paid them off, and whose kids are grown and on their way. Yet these senior colleagues make considerably more right now than do my junior colleagues.

You can probably see what I am getting at – and why it is pretty challenging! I am not suggesting that anyone should be pushed to live on the margins (although some of the junior faculty I know pretty much qualify!). I am genuinely asking whether a more fair – or at least a more communion oriented – compensation scheme would ask *some* questions about needs, and make *some* adjustments to compensation based on these needs, rather than simply following the typical norms that govern compensation arrangements in the ordinary economy.

What does this have to do with simpler lifestyles? Well, such a proposal requires everyone at an organization to ask hard questions about what they really need. Of course, there are many other related questions: are there other areas of expense that could be targeted to give junior faculty a raise? Could the organization do something unique to address the specific cost crisis (in housing) that could be dealt with separately from compensation structures? But unless the enterprise is truly awash in money, it would seem reasonable to suggest that compensation structures could also be questioned, insofar as the ever-rising pay for seniority implies the inevitable selfishness of the agents and their ever-increasing wants. Of course, many senior employees may in fact use their higher salaries in non-self-interested ways – the point is that by not even asking this question about what is needed, and instead merely presuming that more senior employees will want higher compensation, we may unwittingly reinforce the pessimistic account of human nature of inevitable self-interest.

Secondly, in thinking about consistency of simplicity of lifestyle, EoC businesses can think creatively about marketing. John Gallagher and Jeanne Buckeye have already commented on the importance of thinking about promotion efforts in EoC businesses. Ideally, they suggest that advertising should perform the admirable task of communicating to consumers that are "hungry for information" about a company and its product, while also being "on guard" against "depend[ing] heavily on psychology to turn wants into needs or . . . promot[ing] consumerism" (51). This description is a helpful place to start thinking about how a business can market with simplicity of lifestyle as a moral value. I recently wrote an essay in which I fleshed out the business responsibilities for producing what the Magisterium calls "goods that are *truly good*" (Dicastery: 1) – and in it, I suggested that one of the key areas of interest is the tendency of our society to market "futile goods" – goods that may not be in themselves bad, but which in their marketing suggest that somehow the consuming of this good is genuinely a path toward happiness (Cloutier 2018). But at issue in the marketing is not simply whether a particular good is futile, but whether the promises made in the advertising make the consumer believe in a certain (false) vision of happiness. The promises go far beyond, as one author puts it, the functional. In marketing literature, there is almost no neutral marketing in terms of implying a vision of happiness that is associated with the product or service. As marketing theorist Allan Kimmel puts it, "Choices of goods and services . . . are intimately linked to consumer lifestyles: the distinctive or characteristic ways of living adopted by consumer segments or communities" (101). All marketing implies something about lifestyles, whether it is the reckless adventure that Taco Bell or Mountain Dew associate constantly with their "extreme" food or the care for farmers and land that brands like Whole Foods and Chipotle tie to their products. We are often preoccupied by the question of whether marketers are lying, but perhaps we overlook the further question: what is the value or dis-value of the lifestyle that is being sold?

It is obvious, I think, that in terms of lifestyle, marketing almost always aims aspirationally. That is to say, it presents a lifestyle higher than the one people are actually living. The people at the restaurant are more carefree than we are, the SUV inevitably ends up parked on an incredibly scenic mountain vista or a swanky restaurant, the kitchen in which the dish soap is used looks better than our kitchen. How often, by contrast, do we see marketing for a product where well-off people come off as fools or where a store (rather than suggesting endless selection) advertises how well-selected its simple products are? How about a realtor or a housing developer that, instead of emphasizing everything luxury, says "what we're about is getting you a solid, safe, simple house at the best price"?

Conclusion

As these examples may display, I probably would not have made a good marketing executive! But the point here is to recognize that marketing matters morally. Living a consistent lifestyle is not simply a matter of making products that are actually good for people, but marketing them in a way that pays attention to the lifestyle assumptions embedded in the messaging. The typical aspirational messaging, whether directly or indirectly, reinforces the idea that consumers should cultivate ever-higher lifestyle standards. While risky, I do not think it is far-fetched to imagine marketing that emphatically connects a good or service with a simpler, rather than a more luxurious, life. Indeed, we very much need that counter-message out there, and there are probably ways to do it that would in fact appeal to a portion of many people's value systems. In writing on this, Catholic business ethicist Jim Wishloff notes that marketing should "do even more today" to "encourage people to simplify their lives" and "help people find a place for contemplation and prayer" (129).

These two suggestions for EoC businesses are certainly not meant as exhaustive; there may be many other ways to approach the underlying project of integrating simplicity of life into the workplace, rather than simply viewing it as a private personal commitment (see Reeves; Gay). In this essay, I have pointed out the reasons to pursue this project extending beyond Chiara Lubich's original call for EoC businesses to overcome "split lifestyles." Such an account can be important to challenge inadequate pessimistic accounts of human nature as inherently and inevitably self-interested, as well as to address real economic challenges of inequality faced especially in developed economies. In doing so, EoC businesses can continue to function as important beacons of light and hope for an economy that serves the real ends of human life and the unity of the human race.

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