Chapter 8

Radical or Realist? An Inquiry into the Social Ethics of John of Chrysostom as a Model for Resourcing the Tradition in Reflection on the Common Good

Jeremy Kidwell

Introduction

This conversation about theology and economics can tend to be a strictly contemporary discourse, with scholars often defaulting to a truncated sense of historical context and failing to look backward to pre-modern conceptions of political economy as a tool for contemporary reflection. This is, in my view, a tragedy, as some of the finest theorizing about economics in the ancient world was done, not by a professional class of empirically focused scientists, but by professional philosophers who were often also professional theologians and church leaders. In many cases, patristic reflection on economics and politics offered a tight integration between social ethics, driven by theological reflection, and economic analysis. In seeking to share a small sample of this kind of Christian reflection on economics for this volume, I

undertake a very specific look at one Patristic thinker in order to demonstrate that we might look back toward the ancient world with hope for creative solutions to what seem intractable problems today.

On a charitable reading of this avoidance of patristic literature, one good reason for reticence may be in response to the stress placed by contemporary historians on the thick context behind ancient documents and the pitfalls of reading them superficially. One ought not (patristic scholars often stress) just sit down and read Augustine as if he was writing for the modern context. Aside from the obvious differences in political and cultural structures, as contemporary scholars have insisted, ancient writing had a complex relationship to audience and a similarly complex attitude toward rhetoric. Even though the authors cite the Bible, have a familiar theological substructure, and speak to concepts such as property, charity, and political authority, authors of these ancient texts do not necessarily mean what we may think they are saying.[1] One example, provided by Wendy Mayer, serves to make the point. She notes how, with respect to slavery, John of Chrysostom can display a variety of perspectives depending on his audience:

> John will on one occasion use a Stoic model to argue that slavery is an *adiaphoron* [that is, a matter of indifference], which has no bearing on the inner virtue of the Christian. On another occasion he construes slavery within a Platonic framework to argue that the slave is a model of a properly philosophical life that every Christian should emulate. On yet another occasion he invokes an Aristotelian view of slaves, when he argues that they are passionate, not open to impression, intractable, and not very apt to receive instruction in virtue.[2]

In contrast to this recent caution, theological scholars in the early twentieth century often read early Christian and patristic sources in exactly such a superficial way as they held up the early church as a radical (read proto-communist) contrast to our own modern capitalist societies.[3] Along with the more subtle readings offered, particularly with regard to patristic writing on poverty and charity, another group of scholars has also stressed more generic threads of continuity between ancient and modern economies.[4] In particular, work by scholars such as Morris Silver and Douglas North has challenged the romantic dichotomization of modern and ancient conceptions of the economy.[5] In their analysis, the ancient world was not merely a peasant utopia or an imperial dystopia, but was much more complex. A person would experience entrepreneurialism, markets, and government intervention and regulation (and in other cases a lack of either with "free markets"). Yet this more finely grained distinction has also provided the basis for scholars to note more subtle points of distinction between ancient and modern economies. For example, though early Christians in the Roman Empire may have had experience with money, they conceived of it in a rather different way.[6] Similarly, wealth enabled power as it does today, but ancient conceptions of social class bore a more subtle relationship to wealth.[7]

In this chapter, I want to explore the possibility that early Christian social ethics might offer an unexpected and perhaps provocative context for Christian moral thinkers and economists to reflect on current issues in business and political economy. Given the constraints of space in this essay, I will offer a brief exposition of one Patristic voice—John of Chrysostom—in order to provide the basis for an even briefer example of how this distant context might prove useful for reflections on contemporary issues in business and economics. As I have noted above, there is a legacy of modern scholarly using Patristic thinkers as proxies—whether Augustine, Chrysostom, or the Cappadocians—for various agendas in political economy. To this end, I hope that my own reading here might also unsettle this temptation to label Chrysostom as a "radical." To be fair, Chrysostom was a champion of the poor and prescribed severe forms of almsgiving. As one scholar describes it, "his sermons are conspicuous for their repeated and tireless exhortations against wealth."[8] While it may seem obvious to call such a posture toward wealth radical, I wish to test this stereotype by looking to his reflection in a related area, the theology of work and labor. There is a small but well established literature on poverty and property in early Christian writing, but little work has been done to illuminate the related field of Patristic attitudes toward business. It is my hope that this study will illuminate similar concerns in a different area and highlight some of the core aspects of Chrysostom's attitude toward economic activity.

For those readers who are unfamiliar with Chrysostom, a few comments should serve to set the stage. The name Chrysostom means "golden mouth" and was given for his remarkable skills in oratory. He is said to have quelled a revolt and pacified an emperor through preaching. Chrysostom is of the same generation as some of the other fourth-century greats, including the Cappadocians (his early work on the priesthood comes to us in the form of a conversation with Basil), Ambrose, and Augustine. Most of Chrysostom's writings are preserved in the form of sermons, some of which are transcribed with (apparently) little modification. Given the rhetorical context in which Chrysostom's messages where being delivered, as I will note below, it is important to proceed with an attentiveness to the possibility of rhetorical devices, including hyperbole and polemic.[9] With these preliminary considerations in mind, I turn to an examination of Chrysostom's social ethics on the theme of work.

Affirming the Goodness of Work

I begin by looking for some indications as to Chrysostom's general attitude toward work. To this end, I turn to Chrysostom's exposition of Paul's letters to the Corinthians. This is a fitting place to start, as Corinthians and Thessalonians functioned in classical Christian work ethics as a sort of manifesto for the dignity of manual labor. The first passage for our consideration is from Chrysostom's sermon on 1 Corinthians 1:26–27.[10] Across this sermon,

Chrysostom offers an affirmation of ordinary occupations, and he construes the biblical warrant for this affirmation in a way that is very similar to Augustine's defense of monastic labor in his treatise "On the Work of Monks" (*op. mon*).[11] When read in Chrysostom's context (and likely Paul's as well), Paul's commentary on wisdom thematically intertwines with his statement of intention to do manual work (literally, work "with the hands" in 1 Thessalonians 4:11) for the sake of self-support.[12]

It is important to note that—with some Stoic and Cynic exceptions—the educated classes in Greek and Roman society had a widely held disdain for physically involving occupations. Disdain for non-agricultural work can be found across non-Christian classical thought.[13] An early example of this attitude can be found in Xenophon's (ca. 430–354 BCE) reproduction of a dialogue by Socrates:

> The illiberal arts, as they are called, are spoken against, and are, naturally enough, held in utter disdain in our states. For they spoil the bodies of the workmen and the foremen, forcing them to sit still and live indoors, and in some cases to spend the day at the fire. The softening of the body involves a serious weakening of the mind. Moreover, these so-called illiberal arts leave no spare time for attention to one's friends and city, so that those who follow them are reputed bad at dealing with friends and bad defenders of their country. In fact, in some of the states, and especially in those reputed warlike, it is not even lawful for any of the citizens to work at illiberal arts.[14]

This description highlights several issues of Greek concern regarding manual labor. To begin with, toil exacts a "softening" on the physical body that Socrates suggests (via Xenophon and Plato) carries a corresponding effect on the mind. Further, they take away from leisure time, lessening the opportunity for participation in the political life of the *polis*, and undermine citizen loyalty to the *polis*. Even more moderate classical accounts, such as that of Plato, tend to place various forms of work in a hierarchical order, and this is the crucial point for our reading of Chrysostom. At the top of the work hierarchy, according to Plato, are the forms of work that make one learned or wise, and at the bottom are those that are antithetical to wisdom.[15] Against this classical backdrop, Chrysostom's approach presents a remarkable contrast.[16] Chrysostom (following Paul's lead in 1 Corinthians 1:19, which in turn appropriates the messianic vision in Isaiah 29:14) builds a Christological account of wisdom. Along these lines, he sets a cruciform foundation: "the Cross is a demonstration of ineffable power and wisdom, and . . . the foolishness of God is far mightier than the wisdom of man."[17] For Chrysostom, worldly wisdom may close a person down to new, truer paradigms:

> As in the case of a physician who might wish to teach certain persons the secrets of his art, those who know a few things, having a bad and perverse mode of practicing the art which they make a point of retaining, would not endure

> to learn quietly, but they who knew nothing would most readily embrace what was said . . . The unlearned were more open to conviction, for they were free from the extreme madness of accounting themselves wise.[18]

Chrysostom turns to direct critique of the prejudice against manual work next in his sermon: "For the Greeks feel not so much shame when they are defeated by means of the 'wise,' but are then confounded, when they see the artisan and the sort of person one meets in the market more of a philosopher than themselves."[19] This tradition of wise workers goes all the way back in the Christian tradition, as (while this is not exclusively the case, with the one prominent exception being the tax collector Matthew) several of Jesus's disciples and followers consist of laborers. One of his first callings is to four fishermen, a profession that Cicero ranked among "the lowest of dishonourable professions."[20] Chrysostom drives home the fact that Jesus was enthusiastic to recruit disciples who would have been considered manual laborers and recognized as such throughout his ministry with them, and that Paul's pattern for calling is the same.[21] It is important to note that Chrysostom is not quite offering a "working-man's gospel" here. One might be tempted to relate Chrysostom to those contemporary sociologists who observe that certain "working knowledge" arises exclusively from the embodied practice of physical work.[22] But this is not quite his point here. First, he is concerned to attach this knowledge directly to the experience of Christ's life and resurrection. The tradesmen are not wiser than philosophers by sheer merit of practicing a trade. This is made clear in his recapitulation later in the homily, when he ascribes this accomplishment by fisherman to grace and not their professions: "We were saying that it was not possible according to human cause and effect that fishermen should get the better of philosophers. But nevertheless it became possible: from whence it is clear that by grace it became so."[23] The faithfulness of these ordinary people is vindicated only by the resurrection of Christ.[24]

Yet there is a democratic aspect to Chrysostom's Christological account of Christian wisdom here, as he draws the sermon to a conclusion by suggesting, "do not, because thou art an artisan, suppose that this sort of exercise is out of your province; for even Paul was a tent-maker."[25] The role of grace in enabling the "foolish" disciples to appreciate the wisdom being given to them was not total; rather, it worked in cooperation with their diligence in work. According to Chrysostom, we may use Paul as the paradigmatic example: he was trained "at the feet of" the philosophically astute Gamaliel, showing "a mind worthy of the grace," and then demonstrated that he possessed the humility to grow in wisdom: "after these things he again put his hand to his craft."[26]

Fighting the Sin of Idleness

The good status of work is not simply benign for Chrysostom. In affirming the goodness of work, he also reveals a central economic concern driving his

theological approach to work, idleness. Chrysostom exhorts his listeners to avoid idleness for several reasons. First, he makes a great deal of Paul's suggestion in 2 Thessalonians 3:10.[27] As Chrysostom argues, we are to work because it enables us to make good use of the gifts that we have been given so that we can participate in works of charity. Yet the exhortation to work does not mean that one who has acquired means may judge all the poor indolent and withhold charity on the basis of this judgement.[28] To the contrary, Chrysostom focuses a stinging rebuke on those who enjoy an unmitigated experience of leisure (and who shirk their duty to church service):

> For as thou, for neglecting the right use of the leisure, art justly accused; so the poor man, who having full employment hath spent his remnant of time upon right objects, great will be the crowns which he shall receive. . . . But thou, when thou art keeping holiday with dancers and players, and making entire waste of thy life upon the stage, never thinkest of excusing thyself from such engagements by the necessity of military service or the fear of rulers: but when it is the Church to which we call you, then occur these endless impediments.[29]

In this way, Chrysostom's critique of leisure is linked to his concern for those who provide for subsistence and this functions as a part of his broader critique of idleness.[30]

In addition to this first purpose that is accorded to human work (for the expression of charity), the pursuit of hard work is also commended because it brings an intrinsic benefit to the well-being of the worker. As part of his broader defense of Christian asceticism, Chrysostom suggests that hard work clarifies the mind: "to be supported by continual hard work is a sort of asceticism. The souls of such men are clearer, and their minds better strung."[31] This embedding of labor within ascetic Christian spirituality arises naturally out of Chrysostom's metaphysics. Humans are, in this sense, made for work. It is this clarifying goodness of work that leads Chrysostom to suggest in his Genesis commentary, with Augustine, that work was a feature of the prelapsarian creation and that the ideal original state was meant to represent a balance between work and leisure.[32]

From Whence You Were Called?

Having developed some of Chrysostom's generic comments on work, it is natural to turn next to some analysis of what sort of work he might have in mind here. Across his sermons, Chrysostom regularly turns to a stock cast of vocations for metaphors in his preaching. This includes merchants, soldiers, and farmers. In some contrast to Augustine, whose sermons provide direct instruction regarding specific trades on several occasions, Chrysostom does not provide much in the way of direct commentary on particular trades. Augustine leaves thieving, prostitution, pimping, and sorcery off limits for

Christians, as he does moneylending. Some occupations are ambiguous and best practiced alongside the rigorous cultivation of virtue, such as retail sales and soldiering. If, as J-M Salamito suggests, Augustine's flexibility toward the pursuit of certain trades marks a trajectory away from a rigorist classical tradition, Chrysostom goes even further still in this "realistic" direction.[33] We find hints of this implied in Chrysostom's sermon on Matthew 24:33–34, where he suggests, "for, if in worldly matters no man lives for himself, but artisan, and soldier, and husbandman, and merchant, all of them contribute to the common good, and to their neighbour's advantage; much more ought we to do this in things spiritual."[34]

Returning to Chrysostom's Homily on 2 Corinthians 7:8, one comes to a more specific commentary on occupations. The setting in the sermon is a comment on Paul's paternal affection related in 2 Corinthians 7:8. Here, Paul notes in retrospect that he lamented an instance where he had to provide harsh correction to the congregation but did not regret having taken the action. We should be attuned to the presence of rhetoric here, as Chrysostom, perhaps reacting to a question coming from his audience, seeks to defend Paul's place as a leader among churches, qualified to dispense this sort of correction, against the sort of naysayer that is quoted in Exodus 2:14. In making this justification, Chrysostom turns to a praise of the art of spiritual leadership, with comments on several other trades along the way. Chrysostom argues, "ruling is an art, not merely a dignity, and an art above all arts."[35] Noting the high status often accorded to political rule, Chrysostom suggests that "if the rule of those without is an art and science superior to all other, much more this."[36] In a rare moment, Chrysostom elaborates:

> There is an art of agriculture, of weaving, of building; which are both very necessary and tend greatly to preserve our life. For others surely are but ancillary to these; the coppersmith's, the carpenter's, the shepherd's. But further, of arts themselves the most necessary of all is the agricultural, which was even that which God first introduced when He had formed man. For without shoes and clothes it is possible to live; but without agriculture it is impossible. . . . Blush ye that have need of those arts that be superfluous, cooks, confectioners, embroiderers, and ten thousand other such people, that ye may live; blush ye that introduce vain refinements into life; blush ye who are unbelievers, before those barbarians who have no need of art. For God made nature exceedingly independent, needing only a few things. . . . So also Paul commanded, saying, "And having food and covering let us be therewith content." (1 Timothy 6:8.) First then, comes agriculture; second, weaving; and third after it, building; and shoemaking last of all; for amongst us at any rate there are many both servants and laborers who live without shoes.[37]

There is a precedent for this sort of affirmation of those professions that provide for the subsistence of society—particularly agriculture—as the heart of an economy in Roman Stoic moral thought. This being the case,

it is all the more important to note how Chrysostom's affirmation is construed along slightly different lines than these Roman agrarian traditions that preceded his time by several centuries. Whereas Stoic heroes are praised for their self-sufficiency that preserves independence and in turn preserves their personal economic agency, Chrysostom appreciates the contribution of agricultural work to the wider economy particularly because of political inter-relationships.[38] Thus, Chrysostom offers praise for the farmer (which also implicates the weaver and the shoemaker) because they provide for the subsistence of society. This perspective is related to those I have discussed above regarding asceticism and his rebuke of unfettered luxury and idleness in the midst of poverty. Further emphasizing the relational (aka "political") rationale behind Chrysostom's approach, it is interesting to note that, in his sermon on 2 Corinthians 7, Chrysostom's final praise is reserved for political leaders. After all, as he suggests, "Where then will be the advantage of the many hands of your laborers, if they are at war with one another and plunder one another's goods?"[39] Affirming the importance of well-exercised political rule in safeguarding the productivity of all other trades, Chrysostom brings his analogy back to the ecclesial context with praise for priestly leadership as an even higher art: "this rule is as much better than the political as heaven is than earth."[40] Chrysostom continues in the homily on 2 Corinthians to describe a pattern of reciprocity inasmuch as each of the trades that the ruler protects also deploy the same patterns of rulership in their own art. To this end, he notes how "the tiller of the soil is . . . a ruler over the plants, clipping and keeping back."[41]

Work, Poverty and Charity

As I have shown above, Chrysostom's account of work and labor is socially construed and personally focused. With this focus on one's business as being a relational field, it is important to affirm how, for Chrysostom, the act of giving is not merely an expression of self-interest, that is, a way of securing mutually beneficial client-patron relationships with one's economic inferiors. We see this in a more direct way in looking to Chrysostom's account of charity, wealth, and voluntary poverty. In this context, for Chrysostom, charity provides an avenue for the *expression of* Christian love, where one may take on voluntary poverty to such a degree that jeopardizes social status or may undermines traditional configurations of patron and client. In an extended study of one wealthy widow, Olympias, Wendy Mayer points out how Olympias still keeps much of her wealth, but the crucial difference lies in how "asceticism is associated not with the blanket disposal of wealth [divestment] but with a shift from generosity toward citizens of the *polis*, to giving generously to the church and its clients, contributing via the church and the poor to the spiritual capital in heaven."[42] With this in mind, I return briefly

to Chrysostom's approach to wealth and property mentioned at the outset in order to see whether these economic reflections might provide some contours also for our theology of work.

As is well known among Patristics scholars, Chrysostom presents a sustained argument against personal wealth, which we find in clearest expression in his homilies on 1 Timothy. O'Donovan presents a helpful frame for understanding Chrysostom's objection:

> It would be a misunderstanding to read it as an attack on material goods as such, nor do we ever find in John the suspicion that ownership by communities could be as greedy as ownership by individuals. Separating resources from the common stock and keeping them in private hands is the root offense; anything that perpetuates the result of that offense perpetuates its guilt. The moral worth of charitable giving is to reverse it; in passing to others the resources that they need, the giver reasserts the original community of Goods.[43]

One can bring Chrysostom's approach to the community of goods, which was widely shared with both classical and early Christian thinkers, to contemporary business in a surprising context by observing how Chrysostom deploys this notion toward intellectual property. For Chrysostom, just as personal ownership of material goods is subordinate to divine ownership, so too are skill and knowledge not owned by persons in an absolute way. Chrysostom suggests this in a sermon on spiritual gifts, inspired by 1 Corinthians 14:3. He notes that Paul's underlying point in 1 Corinthians 14 is to "[give] the higher honor to that which tends to the profit of the many."[44] In his homily on 1 Corinthians 3:18–19, Chrysostom lays out his perspective on property. The trouble lies, he suggests, not in the possession of wealth, but in the spending of it:

> The things which are not thine own become thine, if thou spend them upon others: but if thou spend on thyself unsparingly, thine own things become no longer thine. For since thou usest them cruelly, and sayest, "That my own things should be altogether spent on my own enjoyment is fair:" therefore I call them not thine own. For they are common to thee and thy fellow-servants; just as the sun is common, the air, the earth, and all the rest, . . . so also in regard of wealth. If you enjoy it alone, you too have lost it: for you will not reap its reward. But if you possess it jointly with the rest, then will it be more your own, and then will you reap the benefit of it.[45]

It is important to note that Chrysostom maintains that proper charity ought to be proxied through the church so that the glory accrued for such gifts might be God's alone. In this way, the practice for the giver represent an ascetic exercise both materially *and spiritually*. This model of charity by proxy offers an interesting challenge to the contemporary preference for the

establishment of named foundations as non-governmental charitable enterprises that seems to be increasingly common practice.

Though Chrysostom's comments on wealth generally affirm this account of property and charity, his 1 Corinthians Homily 10 is unique in that Chrysostom extends this notion of common property to a form of intellectual property—one's cultivated skill. He suggests, "For the smith also, if he chose to impart of his craft to no one, ruins both himself and all other crafts. Likewise the cordwainer, the husbandman, the baker, and every one of those who pursue any necessary calling; if he chose not to communicate to anyone of the results of his art, will ruin not the others only but himself also with them."[46] The point here is that the ordinary working classes must share their skill by the very nature of those professions. If the gardener chooses to hoard his seeds without planting them, he will bring famine, just as, if the tiller of the soil refuses to share the "labor of his hands," he will starve. It is a unique privilege of "white-collar" workers that they may, by benefit of accumulated (or inherited) income, choose to withhold their skill. But this is, according to Chrysostom, a grave mistake: "For in everything to give and receive is the principle of numerous blessings: in seeds, in scholars, in arts. For if any one desire to keep his art to himself, he subverts both himself and the whole course of things."[47] Here, we find a convergence of Chrysostom's attitude toward property and sloth. What we do not find is an explicit parsing of the logistics of how this might function. Did Chrysostom expect doctors and lawyers to provide free services? And if so, should these services be exclusively free, or only where the client was in need? We aren't given a specific rule, rather the litmus by which such charity should be practiced is an evangelistic principle. That is, charity is meant to provide the basis for a contextually adapted witness so that it cannot be reduced to a specific list of operational instructions, as they may not scale to different political and economic contexts or to audiences with varying economic situations. In this way, the lack of a rule is itself instructive. Thus, in the cases of intellectual property, Chrysostom commends a broad voluntary offering of *pro bono* work and also reveals this evangelistic principle:

> Therefore as teachers, however many scholars they have, impart some of their lore unto each; so let thy possession be, many to whom thou hast done good. And let all say, such a one be freed from poverty, such a one from dangers. Such a one would have perished, had he not, next to the grace of God, enjoyed thy patronage. This man's disease thou didst cure, another thou didst rid of false accusation, another being a stranger you took in, another being naked you clothed. Wealth inexhaustible and many treasures are not so good as such sayings. They draw all men's gaze more powerfully than your golden vestments, and horses, and slaves.[48]

What this discussion of the giving of knowledge and skill also reveals is that no possession is protected from the orbit of charity, according to

Chrysostom. As the legal and ideological battle over patent protection continues to heat up, Chrysostom also offers a strong challenge to forms of protectionism that lacks a properly political context (i.e., a concept of a *common* good that is being protected). Abstract appeals to protecting "innovation" would likely not satisfy Chrysostom in lieu of a more robustly "common" account of what is being protected.

Bringing Chrysostom to Contemporary Business and Economics

I have already offered some suggestive hints along the way in my exposition of Chrysostom's account of work and charity above, but I would like to conclude by offering some more explicit suggestions as to how Chrysostom's account might illuminate themes in and provide insights for the contemporary conversation between Christian economists and theologians.

First, and perhaps most broadly, I have attempted to draw attention to the political context in which Chrysostom offered his reflections on Christian occupations, divestiture, charity, and voluntary poverty. Chrysostom had a concept of political order that served as a backdrop for his pastoral counsel. In this way, his advice was often radical inasmuch as it implied a radical change of perspective, but this did not necessary underwrite a radical program of intended political transformation. This argument will likely come as unremarkable to contemporary patristic scholars, but in the wider discourse on economics by Christians, one tends to find that early Christians are held out as having a radical posture toward the prevailing economy and political structures. Perhaps the message here for theologians seeking to engage with scholars in business and economics is that Chrysostom's role as strident prophet did not prevent him from accounting for political realities on the ground and addressing these in subtle ways in his homilies. I have observed a tendency in this contemporary conversation between theologians and economists to construe the roles of economists and theologians in a bifurcated way as "realists" or "prophets." On a basic level, interrupting this antinomy opens up early Christian thought for closer scrutiny as a source for reflection on our behavior toward modern economies.

Another way in which Chrysostom may be less radical than one expects is in his awareness of the importance of a stable political system and well-functioning economy to the common good. Thus, one may see his radical exhortations regarding neighbor love as a subset of this broader vision. To this end, charity has an (often implicit) prerequisite: the safe and stable functioning of political order. To pursue a singular act of charity that might threaten the political order or imperil one's contribution to the stability that ensures the rule of law and the continued function of basic economic rhythms (such as agriculture and weaving) misses the sort of long-term charity that Chrysostom has in mind here. To give until one can no longer support oneself, or to

give in such a way that one can no longer continue work, is counterproductive, and Chrysostom is clearly aware of this. Though his vision is ascetic, Chrysostom is keen to avoid a piety that leads to societal disengagement and instead sees Christian asceticism (such as that of Olympias, noted briefly above) as enhancing and undergirding a functioning economic system. Thus, Chrysostom's vision is not radical in a way such that Christians are pushed away from economic activity *or analysis* as a way of grasping at a common good. Rather, Christian enterprise and the just use of wealth is assumed to be an intrinsic part of the common good, provided it is held in a way that is consonant both with material *and spiritual* generosity.

On this basis, one may find that Chrysostom's way of tethering of charity to contentment actually resonates with modern economic analysis. Though the idea of happiness may have been a common trope in Stoic and early Christian reflection, it is only now being reintegrated into modern economic considerations with the new swath of happiness studies such as Richard Layard's *Happiness* and Bruno Fey's *Happiness: A Revolution in Economics*.[49] Though I would be quick to note that "happiness" will likely not be the revolutionary development that contemporary prophets of economic psychology claim, the resonance between these two contexts nonetheless underwrites an important affirmation: maximization is not exclusively about unending and rapid growth. Rather, growth is just one part of a wider analysis that is focused on efficiency, balance, and equilibrium.

To round out this brief list of possible points of application, I wish to note two other affirmations that this study of Chrysostom may provoke. As other authors in this volume have noted, economic agents can tend to be understood in an instrumental way by contemporary economists. The Patristic account of the dignity of labor, with the intensely Christological roots I have noted, presents a serious challenge to such reduction. While one may fairly make the point (as Michael Pollitt does above) that "Rational Economic Man" is simply a useful fiction for efficient economic modeling, there may be ways of accounting for worker satisfaction and the dignity of work as an aspect of our modeling.[50] A recent study by Akerlof and Kranton argues persuasively that economists ought to account for "nonpecuniary motives" in working out utility functions, and they suggest further that such a consideration might be taken beyond calls for fairness and satisfaction to include our social identities.[51]

Finally, as I have noted in the previous section, Chrysostom's reflection on property pushes beyond the boundaries as they are traditionally drawn in the discussion of ownership and charity. Excessive litigation over intellectual property has featured in business news quite a lot over the past few years both as tech giants such as Apple, Google, and Samsung spend massive financial resources in preserving an uneasy détente over hardware and software patents, and with the rise of the non-practicing entity (or NPE, described also as "patent trolls"), whose sole purpose is to take advantage of an overburdened

bureaucracy by filing intentionally vague patent requests that then provide the basis for filing suit against companies for supposed infringement. Into this quandary, Chrysostom's reflections may offer some suggestive proposals for the way in which a misconstrual of property or ownership may inhibit the smooth functioning and well-being of an economy. Research on NPEs is still in the early stages, but counter to the suggestion that current approaches to patent protection, Chrysostom demonstrates that a more balanced construal of ownership may help to refocus the discourse and encourage businesses to refocus their efforts.[52] As he demonstrates, "open-source" is hardly a new concept.

This brief engagement of Chrysostom's thought with contemporary concerns in business and economics is only meant to be suggestive. Yet each of these observations—whether over intellectual property protections, happiness, or the complex dynamics of charity—helps to demonstrate how economists and theologians seeking new creative ground upon which to have a fruitful conversation about the common good ought not neglect the tradition. The various ways in which Patristic social ethics may be distant from our own context does provide good reason for careful reading, yet I have sought to demonstrate in a provisional way how these concerns might be mobilized toward a careful approach that can take account of things like audience and rhetoric and account for variations across several works by a writer such as Chrysostom. What I hope has been demonstrated is that caution need not cut one off from the rich and wide range of resources available in the tradition. Similarly, I have attempted to show not merely how the Patristic tradition is relevant to contemporary concerns, but also how we might adopt a posture that does not caricature Patristic thinkers as "radical" but that still accounts for the strength of their exhortations understood in historical and political context. What this exercise also demonstrates is that this kind of trans-disciplinary exercise, when practiced well, draws an ever-wider cast of voices into the conversation. Thus, reflection on the common good may hope to integrate reflection and scholarship not only by theologians, economists, and social scientists, but also historians.

Notes

1. For an extended account of this complexity, see Wendy Mayer, "Poverty and Society in the World of John Chrysostom," in *Social and Political Life in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).
2. Wendy Mayer, "The Audience(s) for Patristic Social Teaching," in *Reading Patristic Texts on Social Ethics: Issues and Challenges for Twenty-First-Century Christian Social Thought*, eds. Johan Leemans, Brian J. Matz, and Johan Verstraeten (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 87. For further, more generic analysis along these lines, see Pauline Allen's essay in the same volume, "Challenges in Approaching Patristic Texts from the Perspective of Contemporary Catholic Social Teaching."

3. See Brian Matz, "The Principle of Detachment From Private Property in Basil of Caesarea's Homily 6 and Its Context," in *Reading Patristic Texts on Social Ethics* for a summary of the literature along these lines.
4. Along these lines, see Wendy Mayer, "Poverty and Generosity Towards the Poor in the Time of John Chrysostom," in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, ed. Susan R. Holman (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), and D. J. MacQueen, "St Augustine's Concept of Property Ownership," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 8 (1972): 187–229.
5. A classic text on the "ancient economy" is Moses I. Finley, T*he Ancient Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999 [1973]). For a summary of ~~the~~ Finley's influence and the development of this discourse, see Jean Andreau, "Twenty Years After Moses I. Finley's the Ancient Economy," in *The Ancient Economy,* eds. Walter Scheidel and Sitta von Reden (New York: Routledge, 2002).
6. For an example, see Leslie Kurke, "Money and Mythic History: The Contestation of Transactional Orders in the Fifth Century BC" in *The Ancient Economy,* eds. Walter Scheidel and Sitta von Reden (New York: Routledge, 2002). This is based on the work of Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch, "Introduction: Money and the Morality of Exchange" in *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, eds. Parry and Bloch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 23–30.
7. One recent study which highlights the complex layers of social stratification and related duties in the ancient world is Steven J. Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26, no. 3 (2004): 323–361.
8. Margaret M. Mitchell, "Silver Chamber Pots and Other Goods Which Are Not Good: John Chrysostom's Discourse Against Wealth and Possessions," in *Having: Property and Possession in Religious and Social Life*, eds. William Schweiker and Charles T. Mathewes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 89.
9. Along these lines, see Jaclyn LaRae Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and His Congregation in Antioch* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
10. *Hom. 1 Cor*. 5. I follow the convention used in Patristic scholarship for abbreviations of Patristic texts used in this chapter, which are drawn from *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Oxford, 1961). English translations used are from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vols. 12–13, edited by Schaff.
11. For a collation of and commentary on Augustine's thought concerning work and labor, see my article "Labour," in Karla Pollmann and Willemien Otten (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3:1268–1273.
12. Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:12, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, 4:11, 2 Thessalonians 3:8–12.
13. Plato, *Republic,* 495e; Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*. 4.2; Aristotle, *Politics*, 8.2.1337b; Plutarch, *Pericles*, 1.4, 2.1–2; Cicero, *Off*. 1.42; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.25; Livy, 8.20.3; Gellius, *hist*. 1.12.5.
14. Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 4.2. C.f. the parallel text in Plato*, Republic* 495e and Xen, *Oec* 6.5. Aristotle also makes almost exactly the same point in *Politics*, 8.2, 1337b.
15. Plato lays out this vision in *Phaedrus*, 248a.
16. If one had any doubt that Chrysostom is thinking of Plato here, he acknowledges this explicitly later in the sermon, "Who then is wiser than we are who have not the wisdom of Plato, but Christ Himself, God having so willed." *Hom. 1 Cor*. 5.4.

17. *Hom. 1 Cor*. 5.1.
18. *Hom. 1 Cor*. 5.2.
19. *Hom. 1 Cor*. 5.2.
20. Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.42. Translated by Geoghegan, *The Attitude Towards Labor*, 96. Cf. Matthew 4:18–22; Mark 1:17. The fact that the Zebedee brothers own their own boat is possibly also evidence of a middle-class economic status.
21. Chrysostom affirms this explicitly, "For 'behold your calling,' saith he: that not only teachers of an untrained sort, but disciples also of the like class, were objects of His choice; that He chose "not many wise men." *Hom. 1 Cor*. 5.1. See also Chrysostom's mention in *Hom. 28 in Gen*. §5 of the triumph of fishermen over philosophers.
22. Cf. Douglas A Harper, *Working Knowledge: Skill and Community in a Small Shop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
23. *Hom. 1 Cor*. 5.5.
24. Chrysostom makes this point in an extended discussion of significance of the resurrection in *Hom.1 Cor*. 5.8–10.
25. *Hom.1 Cor*. 5.11.
26. *Hom.1 Cor*. 5.11. Similarly, in *Hom. Rom.* 30, referencing Romans 16:5, Chrysostom presents fellow tent-makers, Priscilla and Aquilla as exemplars of working charity: "For if they who lived from their labour, and were managers of a workshop, exhibited such profuseness as to be of service to many Churches; what pardon can they expect, who are rich, and yet neglect the poor?"
27. *Hom. Matt.* 35.5.
28. *Hom. Heb*. 11.8.
29. *Hom. 1 Cor*. 5.11.
30. For an illuminating and nuanced account see Mayer, "Poverty and Society in the World of John Chrysostom."
31. *Hom. 1 Cor*. 5.11. Chrysostom makes a similar affirmation of work that follows the 'apostolic pattern,' see *Hom.1 Cor*. 20.12 and 21.3.
32. Cf. *Hom. Gen.*14.8 and 14.10.
33. Jean-Marie Salamito, "Christianisme Antique Et Économie: Raison Et Modalités Dune Rencontre Historique," *Antiquité Tardive* 14 (2006): 27–37.
34. *Hom. Mt.* 77.6.
35. *Hom. 2 Cor*. 15.4.
36. *Hom. 2 Cor*. 15.4.
37. *Hom. 2 Cor*. 15.4.
38. For examples of the Stoic view, see Seneca *Ep Mor* 86.5; *De Brev Vit,* 17.6; Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 3. 26–29. For a compelling reconstruction of Greek agrarianism, see Victor Davis Hanson, *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
39. *Hom. 2 Cor*. 15.4.
40. *Hom. 2 Cor*. 15.4. Space does not permit discussion of this here, but it is worth noting that there is a tension in Chrysostom's thought between political and Episcopal leadership that was the object of much recent discussion in Patristic studies. For a sense of the discussion, it may be best to begin with Peter Brown's *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2002).
41. *Hom. 2 Cor*. 15.4.

42. Mayer, Wendy. "Poverty and Generosity Towards the Poor in the Time of John Chrysostom," 144–145.
43. *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought 100–1625*, eds. Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999), 91.
44. *Hom. 1 Cor*. 35.
45. *Hom. 1 Cor*. 10.7.
46. *Hom. 1 Cor*. 10.7.
47. *Hom. 1 Cor*. 10.8.
48. *Hom. 1 Cor*. 10.8.
49. Layard, *Happiness* (Penguin, 2006) and Fey, *Happiness* (MIT Press, 2010). See also the recent collection of essays *The Practices of Happiness*, edited by John Atherton, Elaine Graham and Ian Steedman (New York: Routledge, 2011).
50. See Pollitt, Henley, and Hay for more reflection on the concept of "Rational Economic Man."
51. Cf. George A. Akerlof and Rachel E. Kranton, *Identity Economics: How Our Identities Shape Our Work, Wages, and Well-Being* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
52. See, for example, Damien Geradin, Anne Layne-Farrar, and A. Jorge Padilla, "Elves or Trolls? The Role of Nonpracticing Patent Owners in the Innovation Economy," *Industrial & Corporate Change* 21, no. 1 (2012): 73–94. Jiaqing Lu, "The Myths and Facts of Patent Troll and Excessive Payment: Have Nonpracticing Entities (NPEs) Been Overcompensated?" *Business Economics* 47, no. 4 (2012): 234–249. James Bessen, Jennifer Ford, and Michael J. Meurer, "The Private and Social Costs of Patent Trolls," *Regulation* 34, no. 4 (2011): 26–35.