Christian Ethics and the Teaching of Introductory Economics

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Abstract

Nearly one million post-secondary students take an introductory economics course each year in the United States. The current mainstream introductory economics textbooks do a fine job of presenting the technical and conceptual frameworks that underlie the
Christian Economics – Introduction When it comes to Christian Economics, Christians hold different views about which economic system is most in line with biblical teaching. Some believe the Bible encourages a system of private property and individual responsibilities and initiatives (citing Isaiah 65:21–2; Jeremiah 32:43–44; Acts 5:1–4; Ephesians 4:28). Others support a socialist economy (citing Acts 2:44–45). Still others, who are called liberation theologians, believe the Bible teaches a form of Marxism and that some form of socialism will usher in the Kingdom of God. The Bible as a whole supports an economic system that respects private property and the work ethic. (See especially Proverbs 31, Isaiah 65:21–2; Jeremiah 32:43–4; Acts 5:1–4; Ephesians 4:28.)

Economic ethics combines economics and ethics, uniting value judgements from both disciplines in order to predict, analyse and model economic phenomena. It encompasses the theoretical ethical prerequisites and foundations of economic systems. The school of thought dates back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, whose Nicomachean Ethics describes the connection between objective economic principle and the consideration of justice. The academic literature on economic ethics is extensive, citing such academic works as "To practice, employ, or investigate ethical problems by applying Christian ethics (and Christian theology in general), is it necessary to assume or actually accept certain substantial positions about God, the cosmos, human nature, values, and so on? This is a question over which there is some disagreement, but our position is that it is not necessary to actually accept certain substantial positions about God, etc., in order examine normative issues from a Christian point of view." Introduction. Nearly one million introductory economics textbooks are sold annually in the United States alone.

(1) For most students the introductory course represents their primary exposure to economic theory and thinking. All the best-selling texts, using the "positive-normative" disclaimer, purport to be value-free and present an intellectual framework that simply describes how self-interested economic agents act. Students are then left with the impression that economics and ethics are necessarily distinct disciplines (which, of course, would please Lionel Robbins). In fact, the