

Spontaneous Order Versus Organized Order

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The article shows Frederic Bastiat as one of the main advocates of individual freedom and an ardent opponent of the enforced action of a centralized State. He lived in the epoch of liberal ideas put into practice. As the free market and the *laissez-faire* principle had brought about difficult social conditions, it gave rise to utopian socialism. Then, steadily, the human being was shown to be a helpless creature who, only under a considerable State control, can progress. In his critique, Bastiat points to the natural order of things: to man's natural endowments, by which he can develop both in his technical mastery of the world and moral attainment. By following the natural order of things (the spontaneous order), man can bring about the expected transformations. His innate principle of responsibility (a potential faculty that can further be developed) makes him a conscientious and responsible agent, and his natural inclination to solidarity brings him closer to his fellowmen. By treating man as a whole, intellect and the will being part and parcel of that being, man can eventually arrive safely at his destination.

There is redemption for both the individual man and the human race. For the individual it is his immortal soul. For the human race it is its limitless perfectibility.

—Frederic Bastiat

Introduction

It is never easy to bridge a gap that was once made by a philosophy. Today, as in the past, the modern Cartesian cleavage weighs heavily upon us. Therefore, no one should wonder that new attempts at reuniting will and reason, faith and reason, and faith and science in one person are made ever and ever anew. What has happened with our Christian legacy? The lonely reason seems to have gone its own path, negligent to divine commandments of which it demands nothing but the same exactitude as it can find in exact sciences. It is not enough to furnish our minds—we have to tend our moral nature. We read in Michael Novak's recent book, "Both as a Slavic Catholic and by temperament, I am partial to thinkers who are somewhat sceptical of a merely geometric logic, of rationalism. I am attracted to thinkers who love the unpredictability of fact, who respect the ambiguity of history, and the concreteness of ethical reasoning and ethical perception...."¹ And he goes back to antiquity (to Aristotle) and then to Thomas Aquinas; he seeks to find predecessors in the nineteenth century. And he finds them in John Henry Newman, Lord Acton, and Frederic Bastiat.

The nineteenth century, especially in Britain, can be called an age of classical liberalism. Many countries of continental Europe would look upon the economic successes of Albion with admiration. It is there that the teaching of classical liberals in the field of economics, with Adam Smith at their forefront, found most fertile ground. The economic system of France, for that matter, was still mainly agrarian when the Industrial Revolution in the previous century had paved the way through the country.

Soon afterward, it turned out that economics could not solve all the social problems it had somehow created and we observed a tendency to turn away from the path of progress and individualism toward collectivism and State control. Nineteenth-century socialism took advantage of some ready philosophical solutions, one of them being the rationalistic paradigm with its distrust of what is beyond the mental construction of the human mind. That paradigm, of course, dates back to Cartesian *ego* and the concept of an evil demon always ready to interfere with human-sense knowledge. Now, in our cognition, what was the remedy to outwit the mischievous creature? The remedy was to construct an ideal world from the pure resources of our mental stock. It is there, in the mind, that humankind can find the ideal material for building a better world. Thus, the controlling reason was born, emancipated from man's moral nature, which itself had been shifted to the sphere of emotions. In terms of politics it was the State that was to embody the controlling mind of the one

who knows better. The sphere of economic activity, it was realized, could not be entrusted to individuals who might follow their selfish appetites, thereby causing social unrest and chaos.

This rising socialism, collectivism, and State control in Europe and particularly in France found their ardent opponent in the person of Frederic Bastiat (1801–1850). Taking a firm stand of a believer, Bastiat sought to reconcile the economic and political sphere with religion. He was an indefatigable advocate of economic and religious freedom, one who showed that they should be developed freely in their respective areas and by means of their own methods.

Bastiat set the natural order in opposition to the (enforced) organized one. I have divided my essay into four main parts: (1) A Journey Toward the Human Person, (2) Responsibility As a Means to Improvement, (3) Solidarity, and (4) Two Ethics.

My purpose is to show how the natural order pervades through these three spheres: the human person, responsibility, and solidarity, and how often, given that human nature is not only perfectible but also corruptible, people eagerly sell their birthright, their God-given order for the lentil stew of comfort and uncertain security. They sell their birthright to the all-controlling State, so that it might—argues Bastiat—impose plunder on a mass scale. The State can distribute goods as it wants, and who will dare to complain about it? Offered the choice between freedom and equality, people vote for the latter. Indeed, individual freedom is a hard-won jewel, difficult to find and easy to lose, but it is the only way that we can live a human life.

A Journey Toward the Human Person

According to the rationalistic paradigm, which had set in from Descartes onward, man can find certainty only in the reasoning processes of his mind. The Cartesian man turned his face away from the world of sense data and looked inside, seeking for indubitable knowledge in the recesses of his clear and distinct concepts. In other words, Descartes had brought down the Platonic *pleroma* of ideas and implanted it in the human mind. Now, the question arises: Who can see clearly and distinctly? Is it something natural to all people? No, it turns out that only some can see clearly: Those who can reason clearly and “had always been guided by [their reason] alone.”² Those who cannot (and history provides enough evidence of that), will have to be forced to liberty (as we read in Rousseau). Descartes had thus turned away not only from the world of sense data but also from the experience of others. There is nothing that our reason should trust; in fact, there is no trust in persons at all but only to clear

and distinct constructions of our minds. The Cartesian man refuses to live on trust. Instead, he resolves to look up to reason alone as his model and foundation, thereby turning away from reality and relying exclusively on the intellectual constructions of his immanent self.

Taking this point of view, we can regard Bastiat's resort to the spontaneous order as something that we find and do not create, as an attempt to restore the natural order, to bring man back to his world of sense data and to his fellowmen. Accordingly, let us define first what we can identify in mankind as belonging to it by nature. At this point we find two ways of understanding nature: one that is connected with the ontological order, and the other one with the epistemological order. As regards the first, people are endowed with reason and will power and enjoy freedom to choose; neither reason (theoretical knowledge), nor the will is perfect. The will is often corrupt, insofar as we do what we should rather shun, and we refrain from what should be done. Our intellect often errs, and our will takes a perverse course. Hence, our will and freedom need to be raised by education, not replaced or substituted for by the wills and freedoms of others. Above all, men and women must be shown that their actions really count, since these actions bring about changes both in them and in the world that surrounds them.

Men and women are composite beings endowed with various faculties to help them on the path of progress, which again can be taken in two meanings. Human beings can develop not only by using the natural resources that surround them but also morally; that is to say, they can become better. Therefore, Bastiat defines man as a combination of "life, faculties, production—in other words, individuality, liberty, property."³ We have to make use of ourselves, we have to apply ourselves to various tasks, and—last but not least—we have to learn to know ever more fully who we are. We are not left helpless in this world but are equipped with powers to change the world and ourselves. We can build on the foundation of our being by, first, learning what we are and then using this knowledge.

As long as the knowing subject seeks to adjust himself to the ontological order (things that are), he stands a good chance to follow the spontaneous order. This is what in another context John Henry Newman describes as "righting themselves, finding their level, and running smooth."⁴ How else can man help things right themselves otherwise than by observing carefully and faithfully how things are? And yet Bastiat notices that people are willing, rather, to install the epistemological order of nature; instead of adjusting themselves to what is, they would rather stick to their intellectual concepts. It seems that

relying on what we can mentally construct seems to be the surer way than relying on reality. Hence, the knowing self imposes his mental interior on the surrounding world and runs the risk of creating an artificial sphere. Afterward, he endows his mental constructs with greater trust than in what he can see and touch and smell.

Our analysis so far does not mean that we should not plan our activity (especially economic activity), or that we should entirely abandon rational faculties, but that this task of planning is to be left to those who have not only theoretical knowledge but also experience. It should be borne in mind that Bastiat is not against planning or organization as such; he is against forced organization, therefore unnatural. It is the people who are practically involved in a particular area who are entitled to do this job of planning. Otherwise, the results of planning are reduced to a pure (and futile) set of mental concepts with no correspondence to reality. Such being the case, for instance, it is a farmer's job to plan for his farm (to decide on the amount of land he wants to sow, to be attentive to climate and weather conditions, and so forth). The art of agriculture, in other words, does not depend on how a State officer might define it, or—to take another example—the art of culture is not what a theorist names it to be. Let us trust people who, by their experience, know better instead of trusting our (theoretical) concepts. Everything naturally ensues when people are left to themselves, argues Bastiat. We have to bear in mind, however, that the French thinker is strongly sensitive to the underlying source of the ontological order, which is a God-given order. God himself has endowed humans with appropriate faculties to find their bearing in the surrounding world.

The natural order of things precedes human legislation; that is, it precedes the working of our minds. Whereas in the socialist system, argues Bastiat, the role of the controlling (ruling) reason is played by the legislator who, from his point of view, organizes society, organizes labor, and organizes industry. The controlling eye of the State, the controlling Big State, penetrates every sphere of human life, treating people as an inert mass unable to act; it epitomizes the all-organizing Reason. The only fruit of such organization, claims the French author, is organized injustice and organized plunder. It encourages people to live at the expense of others.

Hence, one can say that there are systems that enable either the natural or the corrupted course of human nature to develop. It is difficult to say whether political systems can help people adjust themselves to the natural order of things. Nevertheless, we can be sure that there are those who can encourage

them to enjoy the corrupted order. “This fatal desire”—writes Bastiat—“has its origin in the very nature of man—in that primitive, universal, and insuppressible instinct that implies him to satisfy his desires with the least possible pain.”⁵

What do we find at the roots of our being? We have been given free will, which is manifested daily by our ability to choose and to bear the consequences of our choices. If we were to be deprived of the consequences of our actions, the gift of free will would be of no account, and the doer would be unable to stamp reality with his or her individual efficiency.

People are not perfect, inasmuch as they can and do make mistakes, and the best way to let them improve is to allow the natural process of reprobation and reward to keep going. This process is going not only in our consciences but also in the political and economic systems (the more so, the more natural they are). It is Bastiat’s strong belief that, once shown all the consequences, people would abstain from bad actions. This is how he understands this kind of natural education. He believes in the appeal to judgment. Describing to man the consequences of abuses is the most efficacious way, says Bastiat, of destroying them.⁶ Therefore, evil is not only necessary (a consequence of bad actions) but also useful. “It has a mission,” says Bastiat. “It enters into the universal harmony. It has the mission of destroying its own cause, of being self-limiting, of helping to achieve the good, of stimulating progress.”⁷ This does not, of course, mean that Bastiat approves of evil, but that man cannot be protected against it at any cost. We can also say that the French thinker attempted to respond to this burning question: God is good, so why there is evil? To which he might have answered: It is to try our free will. Pain is a natural attendant on a bad action and pleasure is a natural attendant on success. Now, the point is to make people aware of the connection between them as doers (agents) and their acts as the result of their decisions. We are enabled to do it by the law of responsibility that we feel within ourselves. On the one hand, mankind is not perfect, but it is perfectible, and responsibility is the principle that can lead an imperfect human being, slowly but surely, on the way to perfection.

On the other hand, as already mentioned, mankind is corruptible—this is another (not less-important trait of human beings). It would be extremely difficult, argues Bastiat, for religious ethics alone to bring about the right order. In other words, it is close to impossible for a corruptible man, once he has been placed within a corrupted political and economic system, to withstand his temptation and not to give in, not to take a sinful advantage of it (if only he can profit from it).

The kind of ethics that is provided by political economy is defined by Bastiat also as a “defensive system of ethics.” We do not live in paradise, the Frenchman seems to be saying, therefore we have to invent good mechanisms in which to promote morality within the economic sphere by means of economic measures. Bastiat does not claim that this defensive system of ethics will provide everything that humankind needs. It is simply “nothing but the acknowledgement that the rightly understood interests of all men are consonant with justice and the general welfare.”⁸ It helps us organize our economic life as a well-functioning mechanism and is not a remedy for all vices of human nature. The suggested two systems of ethics (which we shall be discussing later) should work together to bring about social welfare. Let us consider another apt passage from the *Economic Sophisms*,

These two systems of ethics, instead of engaging in mutual recriminations, should be working together to attack evil at each of its poles. While the economists are doing their work—opening the eyes of the credulous, uprooting prejudices, arousing justifiable and necessary mistrust of every type of fraud, studying and describing the true nature of things and actions—let the religious moralist, on his part, perform his more agreeable but more difficult task. Let him engage in hand-to-hand combat with iniquity; let him pursue it into the most secret recesses of the human heart; let him depict the delight of beneficence, self-denial, and self-sacrifice; let him tap the springs of virtue where we can but dry up the springs of vice—that is his task. It is a noble and glorious one.⁹

In like manner, society, although it is not intrinsically virtuous, can be “well-regulated by the action of the *economic system of ethics*” that is “knowledge of *political economy*.”¹⁰ We would be much worse-off if we said that the sphere of morality is set aside for so-called decent people (those who are governed by religious tenets and morality), and the field of economics and politics is left for the dishonest. We have to admit that there is a fundamental tension between the two areas; nevertheless, no generation can dispense itself from the task of taming this tension, from bringing economics and morality *under one roof*, to use Newman’s phrase.

Let us recapitulate what we have said so far. Man is not only reason or will; *man is a composite of reason and will*. The human being is not perfect but perfectible, has been endowed with respective faculties to follow the route of his or her individual perfection. The human being is also corruptible, therefore should not be taken in isolation from the political and economic system in which he or she lives. Nothing in man is given once and for all. Religion and

economics can be pursued by one integral being—the human person. Now let us look at responsibility, for it is this wonderful faculty (again perfectible and corruptible) that helps people to plan, be wary, and enjoy the fruits of their liberty.

Responsibility As a Means to Improvement

The first thing to be observed here is that by “spontaneous order” one should not understand a chaotic state. It must be grounded on the principles that we have found in our nature, this nature being not chaotic but harmoniously ordered, ingrained with morality. Thus, human freedom can be imagined only with concomitant responsibility; that is to say, that people themselves can guide their freedom and use it for their own ends. Responsibility means that we can control our action, we are masters (imperfect beings though we are) of our actions, and, consequently, we can be brought to account for what we have done. As a principle that directs us, responsibility plays many roles. It is “corrective, progressive, rewarding, and punitive,” says Bastiat, thus making responsibility synonymous with conscience.¹¹ It is an external token of our free will. Were we not free agents, we would not feel responsible for our deeds. By learning the consequences of our actions, we decide to avoid those that are bad and follow those that bring about good results. Therefore, Bastiat concludes, “responsibility [is] the mainspring of social progress.”¹²

As in the case of conscience, our relation to it should be spontaneous; that is to say, that we should spontaneously follow its *dicta*. The same holds for responsibility. We should follow it without deliberation if we want to make use of our persons (and not be subject to force from without), if we want to build on what we have found in our essential nature and would rather avoid a utopian and invented plan that will not work. Responsibility, like conscience, is no partner of our internal dialogue with whom we could exchange our different viewpoints, agree or disagree at our will. We have been shown bad consequences of the action we intend to perform, so abstain from it—the sooner the better—this is what Bastiat seems to be saying.

Freedom is not self-will or a wilful indulgence of one’s appetites. It should be guided by reason. To put it bluntly, if we want to avoid coercion, we need self-restraint, and the best way to avoid constraint is self-restraint. We have to submit and accept the natural sovereignty of responsibility, to recognize it and approve of it.

We can say that by way of nature we are potential beings and everything in us is far from being perfect, yet at the same time everything in us is “perfectible”—that is, it is on the way to perfection. The law of responsibility, so to say, is an internal link between the agent and his efficiency. It is a kind of natural law that we carry on within us. Bastiat lays down three sanctions that enforce the law of responsibility:

1. natural sanction
2. religious sanction
3. legal sanction

Of the three sanctions, the French thinker stresses the first one. When freedom is enjoyed freely, responsibility is very close to man. If people are aware that they are the makers of their own actions, there is nobody else on whom to shift responsibility. In like manner, the *sense of responsibility* can be highly developed like all our faculties. Obviously, in totalitarian systems when all responsibility has been devoured by the State, one can hardly learn how to be responsible. Citizens of such States feel no sense of responsibility. The State is responsible for them, for their lives, for what they should read, or what they should talk about.

Good deeds make us feel satisfaction, and bad deeds lead to remorse. Our free will permits us also to make either bad or good choices. There is nothing in this world that would lead us to absolute good. Bastiat considers the possibility of error and, consequently, our exposure to pain and suffering as the most natural state of affairs, as the best method in the school of responsibility. Now, to change this course of events, we would have to introduce some kind of external planning and meddle with that natural social order. Hence, the best legislation is one that adds legal sanctions to natural sanctions; that is, supports what otherwise nature would exact of human beings.

To sum it up, let us repeat that if the political and economic system in which we live does not blur the clear link between our actions and their consequences, we naturally learn how to be responsible. Bastiat warns against interfering in that process. Such interference can make us crippled men, not free agents. Having learned how to be naturally responsible, let us look now at solidarity. Responsibility has prepared us to live with others and to feel spontaneously responsible not only for our own lives but also for theirs.

Solidarity

People are not complete or self-sufficient entities. As Bastiat says, they are social beings. People's actions have effects on themselves and on others with whom they are interrelated. In opposition to nineteenth-century socialist utopias, designed to coerce communities, to impose—so to say—solidarity on people, Bastiat says that “the law of *solidarity* does exist in Nature.”¹³ We do not have to resort to coercion to unite people into homogenous units (Leibnitzean monads), since they would naturally join one another anyway (for example, by exchanging services that they can render one another). We are linked with others by innumerable ties, since we live in a society that Bastiat calls “a network of various interconnected manifestations of solidarity.”¹⁴ Our intelligence is of a “communicable character.” We learn from the examples set by others. Our life is pervaded with solidarity. “The action starts with the individual,” says Bastiat, “the consequences extend to the community.”¹⁵

Whatever we do is prompted by responsibility and solidarity. Hence, there is no cause for worrying that another spring of our action, that is, self-interest, identified as the “providential force of all human activity”¹⁶ should lead us astray. The only thing to bear in mind, however, is that this drive of self-interest is guided not by a perfect intellect but by a perfectible one. This is our immediate sphere, and the main purpose of morality and religion should be to show us all the consequences of our actions in this domain. Education is to enlighten our will, for—as Bastiat believes—under the influence of truth we will be willing to follow the right path. Public opinion, this “queen of the world and daughter of solidarity,” will also exert its corrective influence, thereby making the law of solidarity oppose, eliminate, and restrain vicious acts.¹⁷ The only thing that we need here is the complete truth about an act. Both public opinion and the doer should know all the effects of his action and understand them. The point here is to “bring public opinion back to the intelligent attitude that condemns bad tendencies and resists the adoption of harmful measures.”¹⁸ It follows from the above passages that Bastiat strongly believed in the healing power of truth in social life.

Blatant lies, half-truths, and ignorance harm not only the agent but also public opinion. Bastiat strongly believes that the most inherent drive in mankind is to pursue good and to avoid evil, but that humanity turns its back on these pursuits when it is misled and fooled either by lack of knowledge or by lies. It is then that “misguided public opinion honors what is despicable and despises what is honorable, punishes virtue and rewards vice.”¹⁹ In such a

case we get no benefit from our solidarity with a misguided helper. Do not be afraid of the whole truth, Bastiat seems to be saying—that it will only help you grow faster.

There is a motive force inside man, inside society as a whole, as the French thinker believes, which moves us toward harmony. The best thing that we can do is to unveil what is hidden in human nature and to make such laws as would support it. The moral foundation of the spontaneous order here is, let us repeat, the intimate connection between doers and their acts. They are to bear the consequences of their acts. The truth may be painful, but it brings life and justifies freedom; the lie may be pleasant, but it brings chaos and disorder.

The underlying principle of this natural reality of things reads: Let things go (which is a good rendition of the French term *laissez-faire*). There is an order in nature, or nature is rationally (and purposefully) ordered. Let us not substitute Smith's invisible hand for the Statist visible hand, "the benign hand of the central planner."²⁰ Let us be frugal, concerned about the well-being of our relatives, and the results will soon be seen on the macroeconomic scale. Now let us examine more closely the two systems of ethics that Bastiat has defined—two ways of bringing harmony into our individual and social life.

Two Ethics

There is a "principle of action in the heart of man—and a principle of discernment in man's intellect"²¹ So, by the use of his conscience (heart) man knows how to act, and by the use of his reason he knows what to do. Will and reason should be, as it is metaphorically and aptly said by Newman, "under one roof."²² Therefore allowing man to follow his route is to allow him to put what he has into action, thereby developing it (by way of trials) into something better. The heart, like nature, can be—as we have said—taken in two meanings by Bastiat: ontological and epistemological. Both orders here seem to overlap and should never be isolated, since they concern the same man in his relation to himself and to the world outside. Nevertheless, the ontological order of the heart would ensue insofar as man obeys his conscience (faces responsibility) unconditionally (without rationalizing its judgments), and does not seek an artificial order, a prop offered by an omnipotent and omniscient State; and the epistemological order of the heart arises when man tends to suppress the voice of his conscience and resorts to evasive rationalizations instead. In this sense, Bastiat's heart can be taken in its theological meaning as the place out of which good and evil might come, as the biblical innermost place of man. The heart is prone to evil, which the author of the *Economic*

Sophisms describes as “fondness for the fruits of toil and repugnance to its pains.”²³

Bastiat’s attitude to man’s nature is somewhat pessimistic. Despite his potential equipment for good acting, for development and progress, man shrinks and slides into living at the cost of others. Hence, he willingly accepts political systems that provide an opportunity to evade labor, to evade responsibility. In effect, we have plunder (and legal plunder as the worst kind of it), war, slavery, theocracy, and monopoly. By “theocracy” here, Bastiat means such dealings in which heavenly bliss is made dependent on material gratification.

Taking this complex position of human beings, Bastiat devises two systems of ethics: religious (philosophical) and utilitarian. The latter ethics Bastiat also calls *economic*. The two systems of ethics correspond to two roles of man: active and passive. Religious ethics is addressed to man in his active role and seeks to bring him back to himself, to bring him back to God. (In a way, it reminds us of the two sources of morality and religion in Bergson). The Bible and the creeds provide respective tools to do it. And this kind of ethics is, in Bastiat’s view, the more beautiful and the more moving.²⁴

Now utilitarian (economic) ethics is addressed to man in his passive role. It encourages him to watch the necessary consequences of his actions. The maleficent actions bear on the doer and on the recipient as well. “But it is easy to understand”—we read—“that this system of ethics, which is more implicit than explicit; which, after all, is only a scientific demonstration; which would even lose some of its efficacy if it changed its character; which addresses itself, not to the heart but to the mind; which seeks, not to persuade but to convince; which gives, not counsel, but proofs; whose mission is, not to arouse but to enlighten; and which wins over evil no other victory than that of denying its sustenance....”²⁵

Bastiat, like Newman, wants to bring the two types of ethics *under one roof*, thereby bridging the modern gap. They are developed in their distinct areas; hence, they are not contradictory but, in fact, complementary to each other. Let us recall what Newman wrote in his remarkable *University Sermons*,

I wish the intellect to range with the utmost freedom, and religion to enjoy an equal freedom, but what I am stipulating for is, that they should be found in one and the same place and exemplified in the same persons. I want to destroy that diversity of centers, which puts everything into confusion by creating a contrariety of influences. I wish the same spots and the same individuals to be at once oracles of philosophy and shrines of devotion. It will not satisfy me if religion is here and science there, and young men con-

verse with science all day and lodge with religion in the evening. It is not touching the evil, to which these remarks have been directed, if young men eat and drink and sleep in one place and think in another: I want the *same roof* to contain both the intellectual and moral discipline.²⁶

And Bastiat argues in the same vein. Therefore he states that political economy (with which economic ethics is connected) “does not include everything, is not the universal science.”²⁷ We should not expect of the economic life to be ordered in the same way as the religious one. It has no dominion over the “entire moral realm,” it would be usurpatory if it claimed to do so, and we would be justified in criticizing it for encroaching upon the areas to which it has no access. Philosophy and religion have their own methods by which to improve mankind; and political economy has its own method. To insinuate that we need only one of them, is to deprive mankind of an extremely important element, one that harmonizes social life. “Let us welcome”—runs Bastiat’s encouraging tone—“the concurrent action of moral philosophy, properly so-called, and political economy—the one stigmatizing the evil deed in our conscience by exposing it in all its hideousness, and the other discrediting it in our judgment by the description.”²⁸ In other words, let us leave faith and reason to work together so that we can see the ripe fruit of our mature and integral persons, and Bastiat writes further in the same book, “Let us even concede that the triumph of the religious moralist, when it occurs, is more noble, more encouraging, and more fundamental. But, at the same time, it is difficult not to acknowledge that the triumph of economics is more easy to secure and more certain.”²⁹

What does it mean? It means that it is easier to provide a proper socioeconomic structure for our society than to transform each man’s heart. And this is too true. Bastiat persuades us that by bringing political economy closer to philosophy and religion we can ensure the proper development to follow its course. Let us reject the erroneous views of the total inertness of mankind, the omnipotence of the law, and the infallibility of the legislator.³⁰ Now, people are accustomed to regard lawfulness as legitimacy. If there is a law, it must be just—such is the belief—concludes Bastiat. To promote the natural process, we have to make appropriate law to maintain it, rather than to act against it. And this is also to make our law respectable. Let it protect the two kinds of ethics, for this is the surest way to allow people to develop what they have otherwise naturally been endowed with. Therefore, “. . . the law should guarantee to every citizen the free and inoffensive use of his faculties for physical, intellectual, and moral self-improvement.”³¹ Bastiat says as little as that, or as much as that.

The two ethics we have just described are nothing but an attempt to bridge the modern gap between religion and science, between faith and reason. Bastiat persuades us that everything in the areas of human commitment is somehow morally ordered, yet this ordering is different in the case of reason from that in faith; economic ordering is not the same as the ordering of religion, yet ordered it must be. Now, to respect the two ethics within their areas is to respect the human being in his or her spontaneous development, in his or her attempts to bring about the natural order, to enjoy his or her God-given freedom.

Conclusion

Bastiat's philosophical and economic writings are interesting examples of nineteenth-century efforts to reunite faith and reason, to tame science and religion, and to reconcile progress with religious tenets. It follows, from Bastiat's penetrating analyses, that neither religious faith or economic order are self-contradictory or hostile to each other. The French author therefore anticipates Weber's belief that his dichotomic classification into ethics of liabilities and ethics of convictions is not necessarily a classification of opposites. The truth of economics, however, is not the same as the truth of religion, but they both can be the truth pursued by the same human person.

Bastiat distinguishes the two kinds of ethics in order to put them not in opposition but, rather, to allow them to develop in their respective areas and provide people with tools for their moral and economic well-being. We are responsible agents, not helpless or inert masses under the rational guidance of the one who knows. We have been enabled to guide ourselves, to naturally plan and organize our lives.

The distinction that we have introduced in the title is somewhat misleading as regards Bastiat. In fact, there is no contradiction between spontaneous and organized orders as long as the latter is not forced but ensues as a natural process. Let the natural process proceed; that is, let us use what we have been given and shun the temptation of an artificial but secure life in the State-given order.

It is at least from the time of Plato onward that, most generally speaking, a negative (or ambivalent) attitude toward so-called worldly affairs has been adopted by many social reformers, including Christians. There were people who vehemently spoke against believers engaged in economics or politics, regarding these two spheres as dirty and unworthy of the human spirit. Others worked hard to turn the whole social order upside down and plunge it into

chaos (hoping that a new order might emerge therefrom). Yet others, although not many of them, sought to reconcile religious faith with the involvement in the world around. Therefore, in the nineteenth century, side by side, we had Marx on the one hand, and his implacable opponent, Frederic Bastiat. The former sought to destroy the natural order and replace it with the new revolutionary one; the latter, less famous and less influential, nevertheless equally (if not more) intellectually inspiring, did not even wish to demolish at all but to harmonize what was novel and progressive with what was traditional. As history has proved, it was Bastiat who was right.

Notes

1. Michael Novak, *On Cultivating Liberty* (Lanham, Md.: 1999), 277.
2. R. Descartes, *A Discourse on Method*, trans. John Veitch (London, 1984), 11.
3. Frederic Bastiat, *The Law*, trans. Dean Russell (New York: Foundation for Economic Education, 1990), 6.
4. J. H. Newman, *The Pope and the Revolution* (London: 1866), 32.
5. Bastiat, *The Law*, 10.
6. See Frederic Bastiat, *Economic Sophisms*, trans. A. Goddard (New York: Foundation for Economic Education, 1975), 152.
7. Frederic Bastiat, *Economic Harmonies*, trans. W. Hayden Boyers (New York: Foundation for Economic Education, 1979), 500.
8. Bastiat, *Economic Sophisms*, 153.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 154.
11. Ibid., 496.
12. Ibid., 498.
13. Bastiat, *Economic Harmonies*, 511.
14. Ibid., 515.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 523.
17. Ibid., 516.
18. Ibid., 517.

19. Ibid.
20. N. Barry, "Frederic Bastiat: The Economics and Philosophy of Freedom," *Journal des Economists et des Etudes Humaines* XI, no. 2/3 (June/September 2001): 258.
21. Bastiat, *The Law*, 35.
22. J. H. Newman, *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions* (London: 1908), 13.
23. Bastiat, *Economic Sophisms*, 149.
24. See *ibid.*, 150.
25. *Ibid.*, 150–51.
26. Newman, *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, 13.
27. Bastiat, *Economic Sophisms*, 151.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. See Bastiat's *The Law*, 58.
31. *Ibid.*, 25.