Luigino Bruni, *Civil Happiness: Economics and Human Flourishing in Historical Perspective*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. xvi, 169, $140. ISBN 0-415-32628-1.

In the conclusion to this slim volume on happiness, the author notes: ‘‘In this research we have gone through more than 2,000 years of history of thought: what have we learned?’’ That question says something about his convictions and intentions. Luigino Bruni believes that lessons can be gleaned from reviewing ideas from Aristotle to Wicksteed in relation to the history of happiness in economics. It may indeed be presumed that authors of the past have something to teach us if only because their words and worlds lack the deceiving familiarity of the ones from the present. It might be, as well, that some historians of economics wish that present to be different. From this perspective, past authors appear as many potential supporters for reforming modern economic theory or, alternatively, as the real culprits behind its inadequacies. Go beyond the surface and you will find that the history of economics is often about good and bad guys. And, like in real history, the latter are often the ones who made it to the present while the former need rehabilitation. In striving to revive the civil happiness tradition, Bruni does not escape this customary dilemma.

One should take the author seriously when he writes that ‘‘[t]he main ambition of this book has been to show *why* contemporary economic theory no longer has the *methodological* tools for understanding the civil nature of happiness (and its paradoxes)’’ (p. 121). This is a laudable ambition and it makes sense regardless of one’s tastes in matters of economic theory. It is indeed of notable interest to establish why ideas, tools, and theories have not withstood the test of time (as much as it is to explain why others have). It enables one to show the contingency of the present and accordingly see it with different eyes. Given the time span covered by the book and its conciseness, however, it does not take long for the reader to realize that Bruni is not so much interested in producing a rich historical analysis of the civil happiness tradition, which would probably require a few extra hundred pages, as in following its vicissitudes through well-chosen examples from the past—remote and recent. In other words, *Civil Happiness* belongs to the celebratory interpretation of the past and critical interpretation of the present genre.

It should be made clear at the outset that this genre is not essentially historical, but rather political in purpose (whereby I mean that Bruni explicitly connects his research with the quest for a good/better society) and critical in nature (whereby I mean that Bruni finds the ‘‘maintream’’ economic theory of happiness lacking in that it is ‘‘positional’’ and not ‘‘relational’’).

In view of the above, perhaps the reader will understand better Bruni’s otherwise misleading contention that ‘‘[t]his book . . . is basically an analysis of how economists currently deal with happiness'' (p. 3). As this could be done more economically in a survey-like work, preferably in an article, there is something of a short cut there. Most ''historians'' of economics have gotten to learn the shorts cuts of showing the contingency of the present without at the same time historicizing the past. Accordingly, Bruni starts with the absence of a satisfactory explanation for the ''paradox of happiness'' in modern economics (chapters 1 and 2). Those who possess more are not necessarily happier than those who possess less: here is the paradox. The paradoxical nature of the situation lies in the fact that for economists the satisfaction levels of individuals are positively correlated with their levels of income. It is argued that those economists who tackled the problem found it hard to see sociality as a source of happiness.

Then comes a ''historical'' detour (chapters 3–10), which has been well documented in other reviews of the book. Bruni found the origins of civil happiness in Aristotle's *eudaimonia*. That notion implies that happiness is the ultimate end in life, that it is self-sufficient, that it is the by-product of virtues and that it cannot be reached in an instrumental way. As can easily be seen from that summary, although *eudaimonia* can be taken as synonym for happiness, it has little to do with the notion present-day economists described under the same label. The Aristotelian notion of happiness then gave way to Neo-Platonism only to surface again around 1400 in the form of civic humanism, which Bruni regards as ''the first, and central, important episode of our story in search of Civil Happiness'' (p. 24). Once again, the necessity of civic and political life for happiness was emphasized. Following this civic humanistic interlude, there appeared an ''uncivil animal'' tradition with the works of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Mandeville and Hume, all diminishing the role of civil virtues in their theories of civil society. Bruni locates the reconciliation of the civil and uncivil man in the Italian tradition of public happiness, as exemplified by the Neapolitan School of Antonio Genovesi (1713-1769), who pointed out that the virtues of friendship are essential to happiness at both the individual and societal level. Bruni even suggests that just as Genovesi relied on the ''visible network'' of civil virtues, so Smith trusted the invisible hand of the market. It may be wondered whether such a dichotomous reading of the conditions for social harmony helps us to appreciate the contribution of Genovesi, especially as Smith's market does not necessarily imply impersonality or rule out sociality.

Chapter 7 turns to Smith. In addition to points of similarity, Bruni finds ''key differences'' with the civil happiness tradition. In particular, he notes that ''[f]ar from seeing civil virtues as *a precondition for markets* (as Genovesi does), Smith tends to see commerce as the first stage in the development of civic society, as the 'creator' of civil virtues'' (p. 83). Bruni's narrative might be complicated, however, if the actual nature of Smith's market was further discussed. In referring to the brewer, baker and butcher, indeed, Smith did not have in mind replaceable instances of an abstract economic agent, but rather real exchangists intervening on small-scale markets and knowing one another. It is doubtful that such representation can be so easily associated with the invisible hand mechanism referred to by Bruni.

With eight pages covering both Malthus and Marshall, one can legitimately question the usefulness of chapter 8, especially as it is meant ''to show that the Cambridge tradition, as far as the market-happiness-sociality nexus is concerned, follows Smith's approach'' (p. 89). The next chapter, counting only eleven pages but dealing with John Stuart Mill, Bentham, Jevons, Edgeworth, and Pantaleoni, raised similar doubts and makes this reader wonder whether it should not have been merged with its predecessor. One of the main interests of that chapter is that it identifies the differences in the theories of happiness between Bentham and Stuart Mill. Yet, Bruni's choice to present Mill's theory before Bentham's on the ground that that the former was in the continuity of the civil happiness tradition is rather disturbing. This begs the question of the incapacity of Mill's most significant works—all published after Bentham's death—to put a brake on the permeation of neoclassical economics by Bentham's pleasure-based notion of happiness. Or, to put it differently, the question remains to be answered as to how Jevons, Edgeworth, and Pantaleoni were able to channel "a simplified version of Bentham's Utilitarianism into mainstream Economics" (p. 105) at a time when Mills's influence was not altogether negligible.

Chapter 10 reports on another departure from the civil happiness tradition, namely "the passage from happiness/pleasure to purely instrumental choices without any reference to the psychology of the subject" (p. 108). The two heroes of that story are Pareto and Wicksteed. As Bruni (2002) has already made the case for the role of Pareto in that respect, I shall concentrate on what the author has to say about Wicksteed, an otherwise neglected scholar. Bruni makes a strong claim: "nobody contributed more than Wicksteed to creating an economic theory with no room for non-instrumental interpersonal relations" (p. 113). This is "non-tuism." The main characteristic of the economic relation is that *A* does not care for *B*'s purposes. As Bruni notes, because of its implication in terms of the purely instrumental nature of the economic relation, "non-tuism" suggests parallels with the modern theory of rational choice. Yet, there are significant differences, too. It is not that easy to reconcile "non-tuism" with the customary distinction in modern economic theory between altruism in the family and selfishness in the market place. Bruni says, "Like Wicksteed, Becker had no problem including altruism in his analyses" (p. 119). Yet, for Wicksteed, the characterization of *A*'s behavior as altruistic requires the reference to a third party outside the economic relation, whereas Becker confined his analysis of the latter within two-agent models and derived the altruistic (alternatively, selfish) motive from the personal (alternatively, impersonal) nature of the economic relation itself (see Fontaine 2000, p. 414). One may wonder to what extent Becker's model of family interactions fits in "the definition of Economics as the ideal-type of anonymous and instrumental relationships" (p. 113), though it is clear that "non-instrumentality" is not the main orientation of this model and others of its kind.

In conclusion, should the reader consider the emphasis on instrumental interactions in modern economics as the reason for its difficulty in comprehending happiness and its paradoxes? It might be, but then it is unclear what should be done with that. Does it mean that the assumptions of economists influence their conclusions and that the achievements of economic theory should not therefore be assessed independently of its limits? That is not much of a surprise. Or does it mean instead that modern economics is defective because "genuine" (or non-instrumental) sociality matters more in the economy than is usually assumed? (p. 123). That is a very important question, but it implies more than the simple demonstration that the connection with the civil happiness tradition has been lost in modern economics.

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