

useless. This is precisely why invasive species are problematic – they upset previously established equilibria by introducing a new strategy into the mix. This is not just a problem for biological models – economic models have the same basic methodological weakness. Evolutionary game theory and evolutionary reasoning more generally are often offered as providing more secure foundations for our models of decision making and strategic behaviour. But it is worth considering that while evolution itself might provide such a secure foundation, our models of it are not there yet.

A volume like *Evolution and Rationality* is ideal for getting up to speed on the issues at the overlap of economic rationality and evolutionary theory. As with any edited volume, there is a variation in quality across articles, and at least this reader would have liked to see a bit more direct engagement amongst the authors, particularly where they were writing on more or less the same topic. The different perspectives both enrich the picture offered by the editors, and contribute to a feeling that the book lacks a central vision about how we ought to understand the overlap of evolution and rationality. Combined with the variance in quality between the essays, the differences in methodology and topic across chapters make for a very uneven reading experience. I would have organized the chapters a bit differently, and introduced sections with short introductions by the editors to increase cross-chapter coherence. As it stands, the book feels like it is a particularly high-powered special issue of a journal. By its nature, the book is not looking to stake out much new ground, but rather give a curated sample of what is already there.

**Ryan Muldoon**

*University of Pennsylvania, USA*

doi:10.1017/S0266267113000333

*The Genesis and Ethos of the Market*, Luigino Bruni. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 240 pages.

Both capitalism and modern political economy rest on the separation of economics from ethics, which in turn can be traced to a number of shifts within philosophy and theology – notably the move away from practices of reciprocity and the common good towards the sole pursuit of individual freedom and self-interest. In his latest book, Luigino Bruni provides a compelling critique of capitalist markets and an alternative vision that fuses Aristotelian–Thomist virtue ethics with the Renaissance and Neapolitan Enlightenment tradition of ‘civil economy’.

The book develops three broad yet closely intertwined theses. First, that Greco-Roman Antiquity and the Christian Middle Ages invented models of civil life that transcended tribalism and political absolutism but produced sacral communities wherein the power and privilege of

the 'few' denied freedom and equality to the 'many'. Second, that modernity inaugurated the primacy of free and equal individuals over communities but that it undermined and destroyed the social bonds on which societies ultimately depend. Just as in Antiquity and the Middle Ages we had communities without individuals, so in the modern era we have individuals without communities.

Beyond these two similarly undesirable conditions, Bruni proposes the 'civil economy' model as the most radical alternative – the book's third and most important thesis. Accordingly, the 'civil economy' alternative combines the relationality and sociability of all human beings with the flourishing of each and everyone by fusing self-interest with wider social benefit. Crucially, the ties of public faith (*fides*) and friendship (*philia*) can overcome the false divide between egoism and altruism in the direction of a moral market that is governed not just by the pursuit of profit but also by the practice of virtue.

In some ways, Bruni's book is reminiscent of some of the most seminal work in philosophy and economics, including Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* and Karl Polanyi's account of how capitalism disembedded the economic from the social and then perversely re-embedded the social in the economic. Taken together, MacIntyre and Polanyi's writings help explain how modern thought is wedded to utilitarianism (both economic and philosophical) and why capitalism – based on inexorable technological-financial progress – operates an ever-greater abstraction from the relational bonds of both nature and culture.

However, Bruni's book is no mere synthesis of existing positions. On the contrary, it offers considerable novelty and conceptual innovation, most notably by emphasizing, first, the sheer ambivalence and contingent nature of different market models and, second, the vulnerability involved in interpersonal relationships that underpin the economy, the polity and society.

On the former, he rightly remarks that capitalism has generated hitherto unknown levels of wealth but that the accentuation of individual freedom has come at the expense of reciprocity and mutuality. Over time, capitalist markets have replaced the complex and profoundly ambivalent relationships of pre-modern communities and practices of gift-exchange with the uni-dimensional links of abstract rights and commercial contracts. In this manner, capitalism runs counter to deep anthropological patterns of relationality, which suggests that human beings are social, gift-exchanging animals who seek both economic advancement and mutual recognition.

On the latter, Bruni makes the supremely important point that the modern market promotes human cooperation and interpersonal relationships without the 'wound' of the other – as he already argued in his 2008 book *The Wound and the Blessing*. Therefore, the key notions are

community and immunity. As he writes in the preface, '[...] the history of cultures [...] is a grand tale of the roads followed in the attempt to dissolve the paradoxical tension between the invincible desire that drives us toward others in our search for community and the need to free ourselves from the deep and all-consuming ties that every community and personalized face-to-face relationship inescapably creates' (p. x).

Connected with this is the argument that the modern state and the modern market represent different yet complementary models of making us increasingly immune from the vulnerability involved in social life. But the cure of the modern vaccine ends up leaving the patient emaciated and society sterilized. That is because the system of national states and transnational markets privileges homogeneous standards and abstract ties over relationships of trust, friendship, the virtue of mutual help and the gift of gratuitousness that constitute the 'civil economy' model.

Chapters 1–3 examine the meaning of community in Antiquity, emphasizing the inherent contradictions between the principle of reciprocal gifts (*cum-munus*), on the one hand, and the practice of obligation to the giver rather than free, gratuitous gift exchange, on the other hand. Bruni argues that ancient community with its asymmetry between giver and receiver is fundamentally hierarchical and illiberal, which sows the seeds for the modern market society with its egalitarian emphasis on the symmetrical exchange of equivalents based upon the anonymity of the price system.

This also explains why modern political economists could dismiss the reciprocity of gifts in favour of self-possession (John Locke) and the human disposition to 'truck, barter and exchange one thing for another' (Adam Smith). Thus, 'the decline of the family and the hierarchical community, and the proliferation, in their place, of the culture of freely-negotiated contracts' led to an ambivalent outcome: for some it offered freedom and unprecedented opportunities, 'while for others it would be a prelude to the decay of human relations because – to say it with Thomas Carlyle (1898) – the 'cash nexus' would become the new social bond of the 'dismal science' (pp. 14–15).

Bruni's critique of ancient community avoids the simplistic character of contemporary caricature. He is careful to balance the primacy of gift over contract with the pre-eminence of obligation to the giver. Paradoxically, the absence of freedom and equality produces a form of *immunitas* (immunity) in the sense of absence of *munus* (gift) and a structure of power that leaves the weak exposed to the contamination of the community – whether intra- or inter-communal relations. Crucially, ancient arrangements denied human beings any real sense of individuality and therefore produced communities without individuals. In this light, the ancient community has to be seen as a mechanism providing immunity against the wound of interpersonal relationships.

Neither the biblical vision nor the philosophy of Plato overcame these limitations. After the Fall, the rupture between Creator and creation led to a rupture within humanity, opposing Adam to Eve and Cain to Abel. And where fraternity did prevail, it was separate from equality and freedom. Thus Bruni summarizes his argument as follows: 'life in common does not coincide with the *communitas*: there is no reciprocal gift. A mutual relation of equality (between man and woman and between brothers, both fundamental archetypes of all other communitarian relations in the ancient world), and hence the *communitas*, never materializes; it remains a mere possibility, unaccomplished and denied, marked by death and associated with the expulsion from Eden and with the rupture of a harmonious original design' (p. 22).

The tragic nature of ancient community is also true for the pre- and post-Socratic tradition. In the wake of his teacher, Plato sought to liberate the good life from the fate of fortune but in order to avoid the vulnerability and likely suffering involved in the common life, Platonism and Neo-Platonism – so the argument goes – advocated a flight from reality to the solitary contemplation of the individual in search of truth outside of mutual relations. By contrast, Aristotle viewed the city (*polis*) as the place of friendship (*philia*) and horizontal relations of reciprocity.

It is this Aristotelian conception – coupled with the Jewish notion of covenant and the Roman juridical conception of civic pact – that underpinned the patristic and mediaeval Christian synthesis of biblical with ancient virtues and the wounded community of love (*caritas* in the sense of *agape*). Indeed, beyond the exclusivity of divine election (Jerusalem) and *philia* (Athens), Christian Rome promoted a universal vision of love even towards the enemy and the unity of all in Jesus Christ and the earthly community of the *ecclesia*.

Here the key point is that *agape* is not synonymous with altruism but inscribed within a framework of reciprocity and mutual assistance: 'It is here, within the humanism of *agape*, that *the tragedy of the communitas fully and truly begins*: those who freely embrace the agapic dimension of love realize they have an obligation towards others (the obligation to love them unconditionally and without measure), but also that without reciprocity their life-project may not flourish: it cannot be accomplished in full (precisely because it is based, *by its very nature*, on reciprocity)' (p. 53, original italics).

Chapters 4–7 trace the origins of modernity and the rise of political economy. Bruni's fascinating account begins with the aborted Franciscan revolution of fusing fraternal gift-exchange with a reciprocal economy of *agape*, which was unaccomplished because the quest for wealth increasingly diverged from St. Francis' imperative to care for the poor, the disenfranchised, the uncivil and even the infidels. As such, the community of mediaeval Christendom remained exclusive and immune to the outside world.

The long transition from the imperfect mediaeval gift economy to the modern market economy was accelerated by the onset of the Reformation, in particular crisis of *fides* in the sense of faith and trustworthiness (both personal and public). Without a shared basis for cooperation and exchange, new mechanisms and institutions emerged, above all the circulation of impersonal money and commercial contracts. Luther and Calvin were central to this, as the former re-founded community on the individual without sacramental or other forms of mediation, while the latter accentuated the sense of absolute evil and divine predestination linked to wealth.

Reinforced by the experience of civil strife and the 'wars of religion', it was Hobbes who rejected the Aristotelian sense of man's natural sociability in favour of an artificial arrangement to overcome the violent state of nature. This, coupled with Smith's focus on enlightened self-interest, provided the foundations of the dominant modern model wherein individual freedom and equality are guaranteed by the interplay between the visible hand of the state and the invisible hand of the market. Like Locke and Rousseau, Hobbes and Smith viewed civil society as the product of the social contract and economic exchange, which are the conditions *sine qua none* for civil life.

As a result, 'Western culture was not offered the possibility of a community simultaneously free, equal and fraternal; instead, it experiences either the fraternity, illiberal and unequal, of the sacred community, or the free equal individual without community' (p. 99). In other words, the hierarchy of ancient *communitas* gives way to the freedom and equality of individuals who are self-interested and mutually indifferent to each other's lot. That is why Smith famously argues that we should neither worry about the well-being of our baker, brewer and butcher nor depend upon the benevolence of our fellow citizen (a privilege reserved to the beggar). In short, the new sociality of the modern 'market-state' reduces the relational nature of humanity to individual rights and commercial contracts, 'without the obligation of the *munus*, without the 'poison' hidden in every gift, without the 'wound' that every inter-human 'blessing' carries along' (p. 112).

Chapters 8–11 chart the 'civil economy' tradition which seeks to retrieve the Aristotelian conception of reciprocity and the Christian notion of agape in order to outline an alternative to the social contract and capitalist markets. By contrast with the political economy focus on individuals, interests and incentives, this account accentuates mutual needs and reciprocal help in order to achieve both personal flourishing and the common good. The work of Antonio Genovesi is absolutely central, notably his notion of reciprocal right to be assisted and the reciprocal obligation to assist. In turn, reciprocity – which exceeds mere

relationality or sociability – requires and involves a sense of public trustworthiness (*fede pubblica*).

As Genovesi explains, ‘This word *fides* means rope that ties and unites. Public faith is therefore the bond of families united in companionship [. . .]. Where no trust exists – not in the part that constitutes the reciprocal confidence of citizens in each other, nor in the certainty of contracts, or in the vigour of laws, or in the science and integrity of judges [. . .], there is no certainty of contracts, no power of laws, no trust of man towards man. Because contracts are bonds and civil laws are also themselves *public pacts and contracts*’ (quote on p. 125, original italics).

Far from being nostalgic or reactionary, the emphasis on the reciprocity of mutual assistance fosters fair commerce, just prices and wages as well as a public commitment to the common good and rewards for virtuous behaviour. Accordingly, the ‘civil economy’ tradition is in favour of markets and business precisely because it is opposed to capitalism and the false choice between free trade and protectionism (aided and abetted by the central state). Indeed, this approach repudiates the classical focus on mutual benefit based on self-interest and shifts the emphasis to mutual assistance based on reciprocal rights and obligations. That, in turn, involves a radical move away from an individual rational calculus of utility towards forms of corporate, cooperative rationality (as in each team and most businesses) in search of the common good without which nobody can fully flourish.

By contrast with the morally free zone of the modern market or the immoral consequences of capitalism, the ‘civil economy’ alternative stresses the centrality of fraternal reciprocity and the intentional pursuit of relational goods. Bound up with this is the focus on growth (rather than redistribution) and on institutions that can foster virtuous behaviour, including through a new system which combines monetary rewards with symbolic awards while at the same time discouraging short-term opportunism and abolishing the incentives for selfish, greedy action.

Such a model is not at all restricted to the so-called voluntary ‘third’ sector but applies to the private and the public sector alike – whether production or trade or welfare. As Bruni summarizes, ‘for Genovesi the market is a piece of life in common, whether civil or uncivil, depending on how we imagine and live, according to our intentions, feelings and actions. Reciprocity, in its various forms, is the law of the market, simply because the market is civil society’ (p. 181).

The accomplishments of the book are too numerous to mention. But Bruni makes a number of points that weaken rather than strengthen his overarching argument. First of all, he claims that pre-modern communities lacked a sense of individuality and were therefore illiberal. This ignores not just the ancient Greco-Roman notion of citizenship with its guarantees of freedom from oppression and equality before the law but

also the universal brother- and sisterhood of the early Church as well as the Judaeo-Christian distinction of religious and political authority without divorcing faith from politics – a model that upholds the independence of intermediary institutions and the autonomy of civil society.

Second, Bruni's critique of (Neo-)Platonism as a form of idealist search for truth outside of mutual relations is misguided. In fact, Plato rejected both the Sophists' commodification of truth and the tyranny of illusion over reality. The latter marks the presence of the Good in all forms and all things, as well as the natural human desire to share in goodness, beauty and truth. Against Aristotle's conception of the divine as a First Mover who is utterly indifferent to the sublunary world, Plato's vision of the Good which gives itself 'ecstatically' was later developed by Christian Neo-Platonists such as Augustine, Dionysius the Areopagite and Aquinas. Without a substantive notion of the Good linked to the personal Creator God, an appeal to Aristotelian virtue ethics alone cannot explain why love (romantic, parental and fraternal) is the most primary form of relationality and the fundamental force for mutual assistance.

Third, what is missing from Bruni's account is the crucial contribution of the Dominicans to mediaeval and modern economic thought, in particular the critique of usurious practices and the emphasis on just prices and wages – ideas that are central to Catholic Social Thought and indispensable to more moral markets today.

Fourth, modernity is by no means synonymous with the freedom and equality of the individual. On the contrary, thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, Smith or Rousseau tend to subordinate the free and equal individual to the joint domination of the state and the market, which replace the oppressive ties of communities with the similarly coercive ties of social control. Bruni is right to highlight the benefits of individual opportunities and collective progress connected with liberal thinking but modern liberalism is subject to the same law of diminishing marginal utility that it has elevated into the ultimate economic and philosophical imperative. By simultaneously celebrating individual desire and distrusting human association, the liberal creed bypasses society and erects a third pole that stands over humanity and mediates all relationships, as Karl Polanyi recognized. That pole is the 'market-state', which polices the anarchy of semi-criminal global capitalism that it otherwise imposes on society.

Yet in the long run, if all human association is bypassed, we start to lose the skill for it. We trust only ourselves and no others, and certainly not the state. Nor does the government trust us but instead enacts ever greater and more subtle forms of surveillance and social control. Thus one gets the sole pursuit of self-interest – whether private profit for the 'few' that fails to generate real wealth for the 'many' or power that accrues to ruling elites rather than the citizenry.

In this way liberalism more and more produces the Hobbesian war of all against all that was its own presupposition. But this does not thereby prove that presupposition, because it is only the practice of liberalism that has produced the circumstances which it originally merely assumed. Human culture could never have arisen without practices of trust: gratuitous giving, counter-giving and gratuitous giving again form the main bond of all human societies. In this sense 'society' is indeed more fundamental than either law or contract, either politics or economics.

Bruni's book is a major intervention in both academic research and public debate. It should be required reading for all in positions of power and influence, including politicians, policy-makers, civil society actors and above all economists. The 'civil economy' tradition marks the most visionary and transformative alternative not just to the increasingly sterile debate between Keynesians and monetarists or communitarians and liberals but also to the power of both state and market capitalism that dominate the world.

**Adrian Pabst**  
*University of Kent, UK*