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Is Relationality Always Other-Oriented? Adam Smith, Catholic Social Teaching, and Civil Economy

Paolo Santori[1]

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Abstract
Recent studies have investigated connections between Adam Smith's economic and philosophical ideas and Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Scholars argue that their common background lies in their respective anthropologies, both endorsing a relational view of human beings. I raise one main concern regarding these analyses. I suggest that the relationality endorsed by Smith lacks a central element present in CST—the other-oriented perspective which is the intentional concern for promoting the good of others. Some key elements of CST, such as love, gift, gratuitousness, and fraternity, find a very different space in Smith's social view and very little space in his economic view. Moreover, I show how CST relationality is more in accordance with a civil economy view of the market as a place of fraternity and mutual assistance.

Keywords Adam Smith · Catholic Social Doctrine · Fraternity · Market · Civil economy

Returning to the thoughts of authors such as Adam Smith is always a worthwhile endeavor. Libraries have been filled with commentaries on the Scottish philosopher's economic and philosophical ideas, and the stream has not slowed, judging from recent trends (Aßländer 2018; Bee 2020; Hanley 2019; Kennedy 2016; Rasmussen 2017). Inevitably, new analyses of Smith's thoughts look for new patterns of investigation. This includes applying some insights of his philosophical and economic reflections of the eighteenth century to twenty-first-century debates in the economic and managerial fields. Something similar is happening in business ethics (Wells and Graafland 2012; & Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016), where, among other things, Smith's ideas have been compared with those of Catholic Social Teaching (Martins 2019; Melé and Gonzalez Cantón 2014; Sison and Fontrodona 2012, 2013; Sison et al. 2016; Wolcott 2018).

Visiting Scholar at Erasmus University Rotterdam, Faculty of Philosophy

✉ Paolo Santori
p.santori1@lumsa.it; santori@esphil.eur.nl

[1] Department of Law, Economy, Politics and Modern Languages, LUMSA University (CUC), Marcantonio Colonna Street, 19, 00192 Rome, RM, Italy

The very different traditions influencing Catholic Social Teaching (CST)[1] and Smith prevented some authors (Sison and Fontrodona 2012, 2013) from seeking similarities between the two. However, a very recent stream of thought is arguing that this is the result of unfaithful interpretations of Smith's ideas. Melé & Gonzalez Cantón (2014, chap. 1.1), for example, stressed how a partial appraisal of Smith's economic theses impoverishes their contribution to the economic and managerial analysis.

The sense of the narrow reading of Smith's economic teachings, too often interpreted through the lenses of other political economists—Malthus, Ricardo (see Melé and Gonzalez Cantón 2014)—or the Chicago School—Friedman, Stigler (see Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016)—brought some authors in business ethics to offer an alternative picture, which had already been developed among Smith scholars (Bee 2020; Dal Degan 2018; Evensky 2003; Forman & Barzilai, 2010; Otteson 2002; Rothschild and Sen 2006; Sen 2011; Schwarze & Scott, 2019). According to this alternative image, Smith is not the advocate of "economics based on the relentless pursuit of self-interest" (Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016, p. 120). Conversely, other elements of Smith's social theory, such as justice, sympathy, the impartial spectator, and benevolence, show the more complex view of the economic agent advanced by the Scottish philosopher (Bevan and Werhane 2015; Gray and Clarke 2005; Hühn 2015, 2018, 2019; Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016; Newbert 2003; Solomon 1993; James and Rassekh 2000; Werhane 2000). These elements are not just an addition to the notion of self-interest. According to Bevan and Werhane (2015), who eloquently express the key argument of this stream of literature—which I will name 'Alternative Smith' (AS, henceforth)[2]—the core concepts of Smith's economic edifice (self-interest and the invisible hand mechanism), when rightly interpreted within the concept of sympathy, reveal that "we are intrinsically social, rather than selfish or egoistically self-centered" (p. 327).

Hence, AS analyses brought scholars in business ethics to seek similarities with CST. The present paper contrasts this attempt to find common grounds between Smith and CST, stressing irreconcilable discontinuities. The claim is not of a superiority of one tradition above the other. Conversely, the aim is to pluralize the sources for business ethics to furnish what Economics today needs more: biodiversity (Dasgupta 2021). Let me show why this analysis is needed discussing some positions in recent literature. While in the Introduction I focus on the authors who compare Smith and CST, the first section will focus more on AS literature, without pretending to account for all the nuanced positions expressed in this big stream of research.

Wolcott (2018) argued that CST would benefit from Smith's ideas to clarify some of his economic and political principles. While Wolcott admitted the difficulty in reconciling the two anthropological views (p. 65), he believed that as far as government intervention in market mechanisms is concerned, Smith's account offers interesting insights that could be applied to improve CST's reflection on the topic.

Martins (2019) aimed to clarify a source of tension in Wolcott's analysis:

[1] Since I discuss her work, I adopt Martins' definition of CST: "The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, produced by the Pontificial Council Justice and Peace at the request of Pope John Paul II, systematizes the key ideas of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) up to its publication in 2004, and those ideas have been expanded under the successors of Pope John Paul II, namely Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis" (2019, p. 2).

[2] Throughout the paper I will discuss more in detail the works of Martins (2019) and Huhn and Dierksmeier (2016). The former is representative of AS and the attempt to create a bridge between Smith and CST. The latter, thanks to the literature review included by the authors, can be rightly considered the most accurate account of AS in business ethics available.

- If Wolcott argues that CST has to learn from Smith's concerns about government intervention in the market sphere, both for efficiency and for moral reasons[3];
- if Wolcott argues that these concerns are in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity (Wolcott 2018, p. 76)—the idea that "intermediate social entities can properly perform the functions that fall to them without being required to hand them over unjustly to other social entities of a higher level, by which they would end up being absorbed and substituted" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2004, no. 186. Hereafter *CSDC*);
- hence, the contrast emerges between Wolcott's perspective and other core principles of CST—the universal destination of goods and the common good—according to which political authority can legitimately limit private propriety, if necessary, expropriating it from the individual for the sake of the common good (see Martins 2019, pp. 3–4).

Martins' article (Martins 2019) showed that the tension might be reconciled by focusing on another, more basic convergence between the frameworks of Smith and CST:

> The most appropriate route for finding common ground between Smith and CST starts from recognizing that personal good must be defined in relational terms, as noted above. Smith's relational conception of the human person, implied in Smith's analysis of sympathy, can be of help when addressing the principle of solidarity and the key principle of human dignity in CST. To be more specific, one may say that Smith's relational conception of human beings can be seen, from the point of view of CST, as an expression of a relational ontology. (Martins 2019, p. 9).

Relationality is the point of convergence between the perspectives of Smith and CST. According to Martins, in line with AS, in Smith's philosophy and political economy, relational ideas are sympathy, self-interest, and human work. Similarly, other core concepts of CST are relational, such as human dignity and the principle of solidarity. Martins (2019) argues that the focus on the principle of solidarity shows that the conflict between the principles of subsidiarity and the common good is only apparent. The implicit idea is that humans naturally seek to act not only for their own good but also for the good of society, and so could be disposed to accept a notion of private property that is subordinate to the common good.

Solving Wolcott's conundrum, Martins stated that "an analysis of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* seems to show that there is some congruence between the principle of solidarity and Smith's view" and that "Smith's views in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (*TMS*) help in understanding his view on the *Wealth of Nations (WN)* on this matter" (2019, p. 6). Therefore, he concluded that "there is much merit in the project of drawing on these insights developed by Smith to further advance CST" (p. 10).

In this paper, I argue that while the questions raised by the encounter between Smith and CST, based on AS analyses, are interesting ones, the solutions advanced are very problematic. The main problem lies in the belief that relationality always implies an other-oriented perspective— which here I arbitrarily define as *behavior intentionally directed to the gratuitous promotion of the good of the other person*. If the identification between relationality and an other-oriented perspective is valid for CST, where the relational nature of humans is imbued

[3] Wolcott (2018) demonstrated the risk behind an excess of political life: "Smith's concerns are not only that various institutional structures and political processes could do real harm to vulnerable persons, but also that the allure and exercise of political power manages to elicit some terrible psychological tendencies from the persons involved" (p. 73).

in the equally basic dimensions of love and gift, expressed by the principle of fraternity (Baggio 2013; Pabst 2013; Zamagni 2009, 2020), the same cannot be argued for Smith's sympathy, which is indeed a relational concept but is not necessarily intentionally oriented to the good of the other. This will bring me to challenge not only Martins' (2019) and Wolcott's (2018) analyses but also some of those of AS scholars (Hühn 2015, 2018, 2019; Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016; Werhane 1989, 2000; Bevan and Werhane 2015). Its proponents, in my opinion, rightly tried to interpret Smith's economic theses through sympathy, but un-rightly associated sympathy with the other-oriented perspective I have just mentioned.

In the next section, I show that some authors of AS and others seeking the connection between Smith and CST underestimate the role of self-interest in Smith's economic analysis. This is valid for Smith's concept of work but also emerges in their interpretation of Smith's idea of sympathy, which appears instead as a refined form of self-interest. In the subsequent section, I deal with the very different notion of relationality present in CST. I show that the principle of solidarity goes hand in hand with the principle of fraternity; relationality is animated by the dimension of love, intended as intentional concern for promoting the good of others. This is missed in Smith's economic analysis, which is related to a very different notion of relationality. Moreover, I show that the lack of disjunction between relationality and another-oriented perspective prevented Martins (2019) and Wolcott (2018) from noticing that the principle of subsidiarity cannot be placed within Smith's framework. Smith, in fact, was highly critical of the role of associations in society.

I also argue that CST and Smith's teachings cannot be seen as similar because they have very different anthropologies, a consequence of the different "spirits of capitalism" (Bruni 2018a, 2018b; Bruni and Milbank 2019) on which they are grounded. Smith lived in and was influenced by the Protestant spirit of northern Europe, whereas CST comes mostly from the Catholic spirit of southern Europe (Bruni & Santori 2020; Milbank and Pabst 2016). Hence, I show how a fruitful comparison for business ethics could be between CST and the civil economy, a school of economic thought that flourished in Naples in the eighteenth century (Bruni and Zamagni 2016; Milbank and Pabst 2016). Civil economists believed that the social nature of humans, typical of the Catholic spirit of capitalism, is the pilaster of the market sphere and of society in general. Final remarks on the meaning of this analysis conclude the paper.

Smith, Relationality, and Self-Interest

I believe there is a problem annexed to underestimating how self-interest is central to Smith's economic theory. This is not because I am "interpreting Smith using the categories and mode of thinking of modern economics" (Martins 2019, p. 4) or because I am a sustainer of the 'Chicago Smith' (Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016). I do agree that modern economics, starting from the neoclassical revolution, radicalized and somehow changed the idea of self-interest present in Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (WN). But I see a problem in the reaction of some of the AS scholars. Their overemphasis on concepts coming from the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS), such as sympathy, overshadowed and undermined the role of self-interest and invisible hand mechanism in Smith's economic view. I show how self-interest is present in two key parts of Smith's analysis: the concepts of work and sympathy in the economic sphere.[4] As far as economic sympathy is concerned, I show that the very interpretation advanced by AS

[4] In this section I will draw upon Santori (2021).

manifests the presence of self-interest, less of the *other-oriented perspective*. This discussion paves the way for the subsequent section, where I describe CST relationality, stressing the differences with Smith's account.

If I interpret correctly, Martins focuses on the trichotomy wages-salaries-rent, which is typical of classical economists, to emphasize Smith's concern about "the rights of human beings to the fruits of their own labour" (Martins 2019, p. 5). This can create a bridge between Smith and CST. On the one hand, there is the idea that humans should be free from higher (landlords, government) interference in the enjoyment of the products of their labor. On the other hand, government intervention is necessary for the common good, "specifically the material conditions of the common good" (p. 6). For instance, humans' ability to enjoy the fruits of their labor could be supported by legislation against monopolies (Smith and CST) or minimum redistribution (CST more than Smith). Quoting Wolcott (2018), Martins (2019) acknowledges a problem in this reconstruction:

> The difference between Smith and CST, however, lies primarily in the fact that whereas the Church believes that all persons, especially those with social power of some sort (including economic or political), ought to nurture an 'active interest in the common good' (Paul 1967, no. 21), Smith would say that the common good—specifically, the material conditions of the common good—is often best secured by persons who have more interest in their own personal good. (p. 65).

To solve this problem, Martins brings into play—drawing also on AS—the notion of sympathy. Before showing why sympathy cannot overcome the problem that Wolcott (2018) rightly raised, I think it could be worthwhile to show that even the notion of labor, in Smith's economic edifice, is built on self-interest.

In the very first book of the WN, Smith considered the concept of 'work' within three key elements of his economic anthropology: the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange; self-interest; and the division of labor:

> And thus the certainty of being able to exchange all that surplus part of the produce of his own labour […] encourages every man to apply himself to a particular occupation, and to cultivate and bring to perfection whatever talent of genius he may possess for that particular species of business. (Smith 1981, p. 28).

Before being the cause of the division of labor, the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange is the cause of humans' dedication to work. Smith never mentioned that humans are endowed with the propensity to work hard (Santori 2021). They are bestowed with a fundamental propensity that allows their different interests to be communicated and, in so doing, arouses their motivation to work. In other words, self-interest is the main driver of human action, whereas propensity creates the channels through which self-interest finds its fullest expression. To better understand this point, it could be useful to analyze the reverse of Smith's argument. Let us imagine humans without the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange and without self-interest. They would not see any advantage to working or likely any other activities.

Therefore, Smith's 'propensity' creates a common base enabling humans' self-interest to communicate. As far as the butcher, the baker, and the brewer are concerned, "we address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages" (Smith 1981, p. 27). Through the mediation of propensity, humans' self-interest—the possibility of gaining from trade—becomes effective and causes them to dedicate their efforts to their work.

The introduction and first two chapters of WN make this point very clear. First, Smith affirms that "the annual labour of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessaries and conveniences of life" (Smith 1981, p. 10) and that, in this respect, "the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which its labour is generally applied" plays a decisive role. In chapter one, he remarks that "the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgement" (p. 13) of humankind is the effect of the division of labor. Finally, to conclude the argument, he envisages the division of labor as the natural and gradual consequence of propensity interacting with humans' self-interest.

AS scholars would say that my description of self-interest is too narrow, and that WN should be integrated with Smith's account of sympathy proposed in TMS. I find Martins' interpretation of sympathy consistent with Smith's text and representative of some of the scholars of the AS 'position' (Otteson 2002; Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016):

> Smith defines sympathy as the ability to feel the emotion we observe in another person, and also […] the emotion we would feel if we were ourselves in the same situation. However, we always feel this sympathetic emotion in a lesser degree than the person we observe. When the behavior and associated emotions we observe in another person corresponds to what we would ourselves do and feel if in the same situation, we approve the behavior observed. And we disapprove it otherwise. (Martins 2019, p. 6).

I agree with this stream of the AS interpretation that sympathy is fundamental in defining moral behavior and the consequent general rules of conduct. It is certainly faithful to Smith's thinking to affirm that "the truly innovative aspect in Smith's social philosophy is that he is able to connect the individual smoothly with the societal level" (Hühn 2019, p. 7). I can also agree with the application of sympathy to the market sphere:

> "This last point is of crucial importance for Smith's theory of business, as at least a modicum of sympathy-as-empathy is necessary for any market exchange (Otteson 2002). Sellers need to empathise with their customers in order to be able to make them attractive offers. In other words, rational self-interest can achieve its purposes only through an emotionally informed regard for the concerns of others" (Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016, p. 124).

So far, so good. However, some of the AS scholars add another consideration that I find problematic:

> From this emotional representation of another's state, *it is only a small step further to act out of a sense of compassion.* Strategy benefits from empathy; and empathy prepares the grounds *for feelings of solidarity*. Hence, Smith "regards sympathy as the gravitational force of social cohesion and social balance" par excellence (Raphael 1978, p. 88). This need for moral imagination not only holds for economic transactions, but also for all political interactions. (Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016, p. 24).

Similarly, Martins argues:

> In any case, we must also show that Smith does not merely take sympathy as a cognitive tool for understanding the mental states of others. Rather, there *must also be an expression of solidarity and benevolence toward others in such a relational conception*. Here, the notions of beneficence and benevolence, which are important notions in

> Smith's approach, again provide important connections to CST. (2019, p. 7. My emphasis).

Here, my disagreement begins. I do not believe that Smith saw benevolence, beneficence, and even compassion coming automatically from sympathy. Neither do I believe that, according to Smith, sympathy *so conceived*—I will name it 'benevolent sympathy—rules market transactions. There is no evidence in Smith's texts that sympathy always produces benevolence. It is one thing to affirm that sympathy can produce benevolence and beneficence, and another to pretend that this is an automatic outcome or even a small step.

One can argue that I am wrongly relying on few scholars to make a case for the entire AS scholarship. While I acknowledged the validity of this objection in the introduction – my main aim here is to argue with the Smith-CST scholars – something more can be said. In one of the most nuanced and accurate account of Smith's view of sympathy and market, based also on the good works by Werhane (1989) and Bevan and Werhane (2015), we read that in a Smithian framework "change happens because every individual considers society's values when interacting with others […] any market exchange begins with two parties imagining themselves in their counterpart's situation" (Hühn 2018, p. 49). This inference is not misplaced, but it should be qualified when applied to the market transactions.

Again, in my reading of Smith's market account, the butcher enters the market exchange not looking at the buyers in themselves, but only at the buyers' needs as mediated by the prices which are signals. Before and during the market exchange, according to Smith, I do not automatically see the part with whom I am exchanging. I can see his/her interests, and how meeting these interests I can promote my own good, but I am putting myself in other's shoes just to reach my aim. According to Smith, in the motivations of economic actors, self-interest holds a central a role and is directed *unintentionally* towards the public good. As Bruni well-argued: "For the market to work, its participants must respect the principles of justice, whether from a sense of justice, a concern for reputation, or a fear of legal punishment: Smith recognizes the importance of each of these mechanisms. But the impersonal principles of justice are quite different from those governing intimate sociality or our altruistic passions" (Bruni 2021, p. 96). In my view, AS scholarship, this time I am referring to the ones I quoted so far, manifests a tendency to leave the room open for the interpretation of Smith's view of the market in the direction of benevolent sympathy. To sum my point, the problem is the unduly association between sympathy in the market with the intentional promotion of the good of the others (trading parties, societies). I think that the scholars who associated Smith-CST, the ones I am discussing here, made that step.

Coming back to the Smith-CST scholarship, an illegitimate association also emerges in the second point, the idea that benevolent sympathy could be the cornerstone of Smith's account of society together with justice, both "being insufficient for the achievement of perfection in society" (Martins 2019, p. 7). One thing is to argue that for Smith' symphaty is the 'cement of society' (Montes 2008; Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016). Very different is to assume that sympathy can easily become compassion, benevolence, or even beneficence. As I show in the next section, the idea that justice and beneficence are both basic and necessary in society is consistent with CST but very far from Smith's view. In TMS, Smith argues clearly that "beneficence […] is less essential to the existence of society than justice […], it is an ornament which embellishes, not the foundation which supports the building" (Smith 1984, p. 86). Bruni and Sugden (2008, p. 10) interestingly showed that when Smith is called to illustrate the social passions—"generosity, humanity, kindness, compassion, mutual friendship and esteem, all the

social and benevolent affections"—he almost always referred to family or intimate friendship. Hence, an interpretation of TMS with which I agree sees justice and prudence as the pillars of society, whereas the social passions rule other spheres of human life, such as family and friendship (Bruni and Sugden 2008; Nieli 1986; Silver 1990, 1997).[5] Humans can flourish even if beneficence finds little space in a commercial society.[6]

This is the reason why, in WN, Smith refused strongly and irrefutably a market society ruled by beneficence. This, for Smith, is an unrealistic scenario, or even worse, it could coincide with a feudal, illiberal society, where benevolence hides exploitation. A well-known passage of WN made Smith's position very clear:

> But man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and *it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only*. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour, and shew them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of them […] It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages. *Nobody but a beggar chuses to depend chiefly upon the benevolence of his fellow citizens*. Even a beggar does not depend upon it entirely. The charity of well-disposed people, indeed, supplies him with the whole fund of his subsistence. But though this principle ultimately provides him with all the necessaries of life which he has occasion for, it neither does nor can provide him with them as he has occasion for them. (Smith 1981, pp. 26–27. My emphasis).

Moreover, Smith is clear in stating that even the intensity of sympathy is stronger between people who are close, such as family and friends, and that the intensity reduces progressively in the network of relationships that characterizes society. This theoretical passage is well explained by Sugden, who suggested employing the term 'fellow-feeling' to describe Smith's sympathy:

> However, the strength of fellow-feeling is greater the more closely related the individuals are (for example, there tends to be more fellow-feeling between friends than between acquaintances, and more between close relatives than between distant ones) and the more vividly the circumstances of the person directly affected are represented to the observer. (Sugden 2005, p. 56. See also Milbank and Pabst 2016, p. 122).

If there is a "small step" between fellow-feeling and compassion, benevolence can be found in spheres of society like the family or friendship. It could even be admitted that benevolent fellow-feeling is present in society in the form of philanthropy of even charities. This coheres with Smith's view of society. What cannot be inferred by Smith's thought is the idea that the whole society, including the market, is ruled by the benevolent sympathy that leads people to care about the good of others.

[5] In this respect, Silver argues: "the moral quality of friendship is enhanced precisely because it involves matters that do not enter in 'self-interested commerce' […] the Scots celebrate the liberation of friendship from instrumental concerns made possible by the advent of commercial society" (Silver 1990, p. 1480).

[6] Smith also admits the possibility of a society built entirely on self-interest: "Society may subsist among different men, as among different merchants, from a sense of its utility, without any mutual love or affection; and though no man in it should owe any obligation, or be bound in gratitude to any other, it may still be upheld by a mercenary exchange of good offices according to an agreed valuation" (Smith 1984, p. 86).

I do not deny that sympathy, justice, and prudence play a role in a market society as described by Smith. What I do deny is that benevolent sympathy, as depicted, among others, by Wolcott and Hanley—"in Smith's understanding of beneficence, one hears echoes of caritas in his reformulation of "the great law of Christianity"... and the intimations of the virtues of care in his praises of generosity and humanity (Hanley, 2009, 176)" (Wolcott, 2008, p. 11) —is a central element of Smith's conception of society. Again, I am not arguing that self-interest has a more basic role in Smith's view of the market than the virtues of prudence or justice—this would put him too close to Hume's thesis on the primacy of self-interest and spontaneous mechanisms in establishing justice. What I am arguing is that benevolent fellow-feeling plays no role in market transactions, as depicted by Smith, which, in this case, resembles Hume's notion of civil society as a "cooperation without benevolence" (Bruni 2006, p. 37).

Wehrane affirmed that "according to Smith each of us is naturally interested in others" and that, consequently, "it is rational to be cooperative" (2000, p. 195). Similarly, Martins seems to describe how fellow-feeling moderates "those imperfections [that] include the development of an excessive focus on our own self-interest" (Martins 2019, p. 8). Martins quoted a passage from Smith in which he explained that the desire to become the object of proper appreciation from others, to obtain "credit and rank," is what prevents humans from the excesses of self-interest:

> Even Smith's conception of self-interest is ultimately derived from a relational conception of human nature. […] The coordination of human activity in the market sphere must be understood taking into account this relational conception of human nature driven by a plurality of motivations. (Martins 2019, p. 8).

The relationality described here by Werhane (2000) and Martins (2019), very far from any form of beneficence or benevolence gratuitously directed to the good of the other, is grounded in a refined form of self-interest, the one through which we pretend to be justly ranked by others. This is not, as some authors of the AS claim, an "ethical self-interest" (Newbert 2003, p. 252), which "correspond broadly to the interests of society" (Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016, p. 22). This is just a refined form of self-interest[7] that, alongside personal interest to obtain the gains from trade and the desire to better one's own condition, characterizes Smith's view of the market. Paradoxically, the outcome of some analyses that sought to free Smith's view of the market from self-interest is the discovery of many forms of self-interest that are the drivers of human economic activity.

If I have interpreted part of the Smith-CST's ideas correctly, statements that Smith's fellow-feeling "has important connections to the principle of solidarity in CST" (Martins 2019, p. 7) and "is also in line with the relational conception of human beings advanced as the basis of CST" (Martins 2019, p. 7) should be seriously problematized. CST, in fact, supports a very different meaning of relationality, which is the subject of the next section.

CST, Relationality, and Fraternity

The anthropology of CST is built around the concept of human dignity (Martins 2019; Sison et al. 2016). This notion has many implications regarding issues such as the inviolability of

[7] It would be interesting to investigate the connection between this reading of Smith's conception of fellow-feeling and the Jansenist notion of Pierre Nicole of an enlightened self-interest which resembles the effects of charity (see Hengstemengel, 2019; Zamagni 2008).

people and their right to flourish within society. Here, I focus on the relational features of CST anthropology. Again, I do not pretend to be exhaustive in my analysis, due also to the great development between the scope of CST. From a theological perspective, human dignity is grounded in the notion of *imago Dei*, because "it is manifest that in man there is some likeness to God, copied from God as from an exemplar; yet this likeness is not one of equality, for such an exemplar infinitely excels its copy" (*S. Th.*, I, q. 93, corp.).[8] God, for CST, means Trinity: "We must, therefore, say that in man there exists the image of God, both as regards the Divine Nature and as regards the Trinity of Persons; for also in God Himself there is one Nature in Three Persons" (*S. Th.*, I, q. 5, corp.). This corresponds to a Trinitarian ontology (Coda 2019; Maspero 2014; Milbank 2003; Pili 2017), in which the category of relation is not only an *accidens* of humans (as in Aristotle's philosophy), but is also essential of divine persons (Augustine, Aquinas) and, therefore, of humans (Rosmini). As Coda (2019) explained, "every personal being—not only God but also human beings—is in itself a relation" (p. 105). Without going deeper into theological and ontological matters, we can ask about the features of the notion of 'relationality' from a CST perspective.

Among the many encyclicals and documents that are part of CST, we refer to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (*CSDC*), which was published in 2004 to offer a complete overview of CST. There, it is stated that a "human person is essentially a social being" (*CSDC* no. 149) and that humans' social nature is expressed through *relational subjectivity*, "that is, in the manner of a free and responsible being who recognizes the necessity of integrating himself with his fellow human beings, and who is *capable of communion* with them on the level of knowledge and love" (ibid.). I anticipate my conclusion: what Smith described as fellow-feeling could be compared to this definition, as Martins (2019) and Wolcott (2018) believed, except, in my view, for the last word—"love." If I am right, this would not be an insignificant problem, because of the status love has in CST: "Love, often restricted to relationships of physical closeness or limited to merely subjective aspects of action on behalf of others, must be reconsidered in its authentic value as the *highest and universal criterion of the whole of social ethics*" (*CSDC*, p. 204). What does 'love' mean in this context, and how is this related to the relational nature of humans?

To attempt an answer, I have to refer to one of the most authoritative sources of CST, Thomas Aquinas (Santori 2020; Scalzo 2017),[9] who described love (*amor*) together with the concept of gift (*donum*) and gratuity:

> Now, the reason of donation being gratuitous is love; since therefore do we give something to anyone gratuitously forasmuch as we wish him well. So what we first give him is the love whereby we wish him well. Hence it is manifest that love has the nature of a first gift, through which all free gifts are given. (*S. Th.*, I, q. 38, a. 2, resp.)

Aquinas describes love as the principle of movement toward good. All human acts originate from love: "It is evident that every agent, whatever it be, does every action from love of some kind" (*S. Th.,* I-II, q. 28, a. 6, corp). The different nature of love, intended as a passion (*passio*) or as an act of the will (*actus voluntatis*), influences its passive and active role in the process. Regarding the former, somehow, the good—identified by the intellect—prepares our appetite for the motion toward itself (*immutatio appetitus*). Love consists of a moment of pure appreciation of the value of the good (*amor complacentiae*), and this corresponds with

[8] I use the standard quote style for Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* (Aquinas 1947).
[9] In the next sections I will draw upon Santori (2020).

gratuitousness: one can love the good's value in itself, without wanting to possess it immediately out of any self-interested concern. Therefore, love/gift is a form of relation with something or someone perceived as good, before even being an act oriented to a person.

Aquinas divided love into the love of concupiscence (*amor concupiscentiae*) and the love of friendship (*amor amicitiae*). The former is always directed toward a further aim. Conversely, the highest form of love is the love of friendship (*amor amicitiae*), while the subject of love is appreciated for its own value. The consequence of love, its inevitable effect, is the attempt to create a relation with the other, perceived as another "self." In this regard, Aquinas explained that love produces a union of affection (*unio affectuum*) tethering the lover and the beloved. By virtue of this connection, the lover considers the good and interests of the other as their own and tries to reach a real union (*unio realis*) with the beloved. Such union entails standing with them and acting for their good as far as possible. In Aquinas' words:

> Because the act of love includes goodwill whereby a man wishes his friend well […] the result of an act of love is that a man is beneficent to his friend. Therefore beneficence in its general acceptation is an act of friendship. (*S. Th.*, IIa–IIae, q. 31, a. 1, resp.)

Love is also linked to the notions of reciprocity and friendship. According to Aquinas, "Friendship cannot exist except towards rational creatures, who are capable of returning love, and communicating one with another in the various works of life" (Aquinas 1947 [1270] I 20:2). Therefore, friendship presents three main characteristics: benevolence (*benevolentia*), as described above; mutual love (*redamatio*), that is, mutual love of friendship (*amor amicitiae*), which enables lovers to desire the same good things for each other; and communion (*communicatio*), which is the sharing of the same good, and displays itself in humans living together (*consuersatio*).

This brief reference to Aquinas allows us to see what is lacking in Smith's notion of fellow-feeling and, consequently, in his social anthropology compared to CST: the gratuitous concern for the good of other people. In this sense, CST relationality is essentially tied to an other-oriented perspective. This is not just an ethical imperative to follow or a refined form of self-interest; it is part of human nature, which is essentially social. In Smith's view, this affection could be present in some spheres of life (family, friends), but is not the building block of society. For CST, love goes hand in hand with justice in building society:

> In this perspective love takes on the characteristic style of *social and political charity*: 'Social charity makes us love the common good', it makes us effectively seek the good of all people […] *Social and political charity is not exhausted in relationships between individuals but spreads into the network formed by these relationships* […] In so many aspects the neighbour to be loved is found '*in society*', such that to love him concretely, assist him in his needs or in his indigence may mean something different than it means on the mere level of relationships between individuals. (*CSDC*, no. 207–208).

What in Smith's work could not be the most important part of social relations outside relatives and friends, in CST is the social fabric that guarantees peace and unity.

Two further comments are warranted. First, the social nature of humans does not deny personal interest, but ties it intrinsically with the interests of society. In the next section, I clarify this relationship between personal interest and gift through civil economy anthropology. Second, according to CST, a society informed by social and political love is not easy to realize. Due to "pride and selfishness" (*CSDC*, no. 150), which are the consequences of original sin, humans always tend toward "asocial behaviour" (*CSDC*, no. 150). This is why

love alone cannot sustain the social fabric; justice and just institutions are required to mitigate the excesses of bad impulses.

The passage on social and political charity mentioned above continues: "To love him on the social level means, depending on the situations, to make use of social mediations to improve his life or to remove social factors that cause his indigence" (*CSDC*, no. 208). This reference to social mediations is of the utmost importance in the discourse on subsidiarity—the idea of leaving people and intermediate associations space for their own initiative and supporting them in their industry. Wolcott (2018) saw a common ground here between Smith and CST. The idea of subsidiarity is primarily and mostly positive; it encompasses the positive circularity between people, associations, and state in the active promotion of the common good. It is important to stress the positive side over the negative—no interference by a higher-order association (the state)—because it expresses a fundamental trait of CST: a single person, an association, and the state are all capable of gratuitously promoting the common good through their actions. In other words, they are all capable of adopting an other-oriented perspective. In the context of the Scottish Enlightenment that characterizes Smith, this idea is far less evident:

> People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices. It is impossible indeed to prevent such meetings, by any law which either could be executed, or would be consistent with liberty and justice. But though the law cannot hinder people of the same trade from sometimes assembling together, it ought to do nothing to facilitate such assemblies, much less to render them necessary. (Smith 1981, p. 145).

Smith's suspicion of guilds and intermediary institutions is hardly conceivable within CST. As Milbank and Pabst (2016) rightly commented:

> Smith, indeed, embedded his market in networks of social sympathy, but this embedding was limited by a double distrust. First, in the human ability to extend virtue beyond the 'thick ties' of family relations and friendship, and second, in human association, which Smith claims nearly always leads to the vice of corruption. (p. 122).

Smith's distrust of intermediate associations in market societies echoes his distrust of intentional contributions to the common good by economic actors: he commented that such intentions are "not very common among merchants" (Smith 1981, p. 456).

The difference between CST and Smith's relational anthropology can be seen in two principles of CST: solidarity and fraternity. The former, according to Martins (2019), resembles Smith's fellow-feeling. Due to the numerous and diverse definitions of solidarity, it is difficult to understand to what extent this parallel works. Recently, Beyer (2014) furnished a broad reconstruction of the many meanings solidarity assumed in CST. He convincingly identified three features (2014, p. 14):

- recognition of mutual interdependence between individuals;
- immediate aid, when needed, and understanding of the causes of suffering of the least advantaged (social analysis);
- institutionalization of solidarity and promotion of the participation of the oppressed in social life.

Based on this *minimum* definition, solidarity seems to be better suited to an anthropological account that acknowledges relationality understood through the concepts of love, gift,

gratuitousness, and reciprocity. In other words, solidarity seems to require people to naturally adopt an other-oriented perspective, not only for self-interested or ethical reasons.

The publication of the encyclic *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) marked an important moment in terms of a CST attitude toward markets and economic life (Pabst 2011; Waterman 2014; Zamagni 2009, 2010a)[10]. The principle of solidarity was flanked by the principle of fraternity: (Pabst 2013). As Pope Benedict XVI wrote:

> The great challenge before us, accentuated by the problems of development in this global era and made even more urgent by the economic and financial crisis, is to demonstrate, in thinking and behaviour, not only that traditional principles of social ethics like transparency, honesty and responsibility cannot be ignored or attenuated, but also that in commercial relationships the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must find their place within normal economic activity. This is a human demand at the present time, but it is also demanded by economic logic. It is a demand both of charity and of truth. (*CiV*, chap. 36).

Fraternity seeks to look past the exchange of equivalents that characterizes market transactions (Zamagni 2013). Whereas in normal contracts, two self-interested parties agree on exchanging goods, bounded to the price freely established before the market transaction, in fraternal relations, a "person having such disposition will choose to act in a cooperative manner, holding the expectation that the others, in turn, will be reciprocating towards her" (Bruni 2008, p. 42). This could not be motivated just by self-interest; conversely, it is perfectly understandable for humans to have a mix of motivations, such as self-interest and gift, as in CST. Hence, fraternity sees the market as a network that "embed[s] instrumental relations within non-instrumental relations" (Pabst 2013, p. 160). The last encyclical letter by Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, brought this understanding in its very title.

The principle of fraternity resembles the features I described through the four elements of love, gift, gratuity, and reciprocity, but it allows a deeper understanding of how these elements operate concretely in the market sphere. Smith's political economy did not rely on fraternity. On the other hand, civil economy sees market transactions through the categories of reciprocity and mutual assistance. Hence, it seems natural to look at the civil economy's anthropological view to understand if there is a relational economic account close to CST.

Civil Economy, Relationality, Mutual Assistance

Comparing Smith's idea of relationality with CST's one I stressed some differences, especially when it comes to their descriptions of market sphere. Recently, Smith's political economy has been compared to the civil economy tradition, as developed by Italian philosophers in eighteenth century Italian territory. Alongside the similarities, being both modern school of economic thought rooted in different forms of Enlightenment traditions (Scottish and Italian), scholars have stressed the differences. Many studies have been dedicated to the civil economy tradition (Bellamy 1987; Bruni and Porta 2003; Bruni 2018a; Bruni and Zamagni 2016; Dal Degan 2018; Pabst 2018; Pabst and Scazzieri 2019; Porta 2018; Robertson 2005). Here I want to highlight two specific kinds of contribution: the ones which consider the civil economy within the broader discourse of spirits of capitalism (Bruni 2018b; Bruni and Milbank 2019;

[10] This article was completed before Pope Francis' latest Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti.

Milbank and Pabst 2016; Zamagni 2010b); and the ones which investigate civil economy's anthropology (Bruni 2018a; Bruni and Sugden 2008; Santori 2020). It might be worthwhile to inquire if the common background on relationality that some scholars were looking between Smith and CST can rather be found in comparing Civil Economy to CST, being the lasts both rooted in Catholic traditions,

The civil economy flourished in Naples during the eighteenth century. There, in 1754, the abbot and philosopher Antonio Genovesi[11] held the first chair of economics—*latu* sensu—in Europe, the chair of *commercio e meccanica* (commerce and mechanics). Roughly ten years later (1765–1767), he published the *Lezioni di economia civile* (*Lessons of Civil Economy*), a work that, *ex post*, can be rightly considered the manifesto of a southern spirit of capitalism that differs from the one which, in the same years, had been developing in the northern countries of Europe and the United States.

Capitalism is not imbued with only one 'spirit.'[12] More than a century after Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904), it is known that this statement is valid in at least two respects. First, the spirit of capitalism evolved internally according to the mutations of sociopolitical circumstances (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999). Second, the spirit of capitalism analyzed by Weber coexisted 'horizontally' with other spirits, grounded in different ethical and religious traditions. Generally speaking, there is a spirit of capitalism grounded in a Protestant—more precisely, a Puritan and Calvinist—ethic, but there is also a spirit linked to the Jewish religion (Sombart 2017), as well as one related to a Catholic tradition (Bruni 2018a; Fanfani 1934; Gregory 2012).[13] Throughout the history of economic thought, who adopted a relativist-mesological methodology[14] took these different spirits very seriously (Bruni and Milbank 2019; Milbank and Pabst 2016; Pabst and Scazzieri 2019; Zamagni 2010b). The question became how these spirits influenced economists' theories and vice versa. For the purpose of the present section, which aims to stress the similarities between the civil economy and CST, it is important to understand from which spirits the political and civil economy came and how this is reflected in their different views on relationality and economic anthropology.

[11] Antonio Genovesi (Castiglione, Salerno, 1713 – Naples 1769) was an Italian philosopher and economist. He became a Catholic priest in 1738. Then, Genovesi taught metaphysics and ethics in Naples until 1753. Due to accusations of heresy by the Catholic Curia and by his friend in the seminary, motivated by the apparent similarity of his doctrine with the one of Pierre Bayle and John Locke, he was dismissed from his teaching duties. Thanks to the intercession of the archbishop Celestino Galliani, Genovesi was appointed the chair of commerce and mechanics (see main text). Unfortunately, Genovesi's *Lezioni di economia civile* has not yet been translated into English. The fulfilment of this gap would help to enlarge the debate on this important author.

[12] "In the title of this study—Weber explained—is used the somewhat pretentious phrase, the *spirit* of capitalism. […] Such an historical concept, however, since it refers in its content to a phenomenon significant for its unique individuality, cannot be defined according to the formula *genus proximum*, *differentia specifica*, but it must be gradually put together out of the individual parts which are taken from historical reality to make it up. Thus the final and definitive concept cannot stand at the beginning of the investigation, but must come at the end" (Weber 2005, p. 13). This author shares Weber's conviction. Hence, the reader can independently infer what must be understood regarding the formula 'spirit' of capitalism.

[13] This list is not exhaustive in terms of all the different spirits of capitalism, or of the different interpretations within each spirit.

[14] In their manual on the history of economic thought, Secrepanti and Zamagni (2005) summarized well the idea of a mesological approach: "The approach which studies the history of economic ideas in relation to socio-economic contexts in which they have arisen has been defined by Blaug as 'relativist' (pp. 20–21). With a little more *vis polemica*, Pantaleoni called it 'mesological' (p. 491). It is a point of view which is held by a large number of institutionalist, historicist, and Marxist scholars, and, in general, by historians with non-positivist backgrounds" (p. 6).

In arguing that Smith's political economy is imbued by Protestant and Calvinist ethics, it is not to say that this was the only source of his economic reflections, or that Smith was only influenced by what Weber described as Protestant ethic. However, as Bruni and Milbank argued (Bruni and Milbank 2019), "in the north, Protestantism produced the idea of a society of individuals rid of the intermediate institutions, as visible […] in the case of the politically economic 'invisible hand'" (p. 231). I, therefore, maintain that Smith's view of self-interest (Force 2003) and the invisible hand (Harrison 2011) was highly influenced by Calvinist and Jansenist authors (Bruni 2018a, 2018b; Milbank and Pabst 2016). What a Catholic doctrine (Jansenism) and a Protestant one (Calvinism) had in common was their negative account of human nature after the Fall: without (or outside) the help of divine grace, humans are not capable of goodness; they are evil, self-interested, and uncivil agents. From this perspective, there is no space for social virtue or other-regarded behaviors in human worldly conduct—or there is too little to lean on any explanation of social life.

Smith received these ideas, together with different accounts that saw no evil traits in self-interest (think of his master Robert Hutcheson). His view was the outcome of encounters between different accounts, and it cannot be reduced to a Protestant one. Still, echoes of that pessimistic account of self-interest remain in Smith's distrust of the possibility of an other-regarded perspective in social life. This was already present in TMS:

> In the same manner, to the selfish and original passions of human nature, the loss or gain of a very small interest of our own, appears to be of vastly more importance, excites a much more passionate joy or sorrow […] than the greatest concern of another with which we have no particular connection. (Smith 1984, p. 135).

This also explains why self-interest rules market transactions, even in the refined version I described when referring to Werhane (2000) and Martins (2019). Once more, Smith's relationality contains few traces of other-regarding concerns typical of CST, at least in the market sphere, where the public good is secured by the operation of an invisible hand (Harrison 2011).[15]

The civil economy tradition was developed within Catholicism, typical of the southern spirit of capitalism. To be precise, civil economists were also critical of some stream of Counter-Reformation that praises agricultural life and the feudal system. As sources for civil economists, Bruni and Zamagni (2016) listed:

- the Aristotelian and Thomistic tradition linked to the issues of the common good and the ethics of virtue;
- Roman jurisprudence and focus on civic virtues;
- the Franciscan economic innovations;
- Italian civic humanism of the first half of the fifteenth century (Coluccio Salutati, Leonardo Bruni);
- Giambattista Vico and the Italian Enlightenment.

Genovesi, in particular, was influenced by the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions and their emphasis on the social nature of humans (Bruni and Zamagni 2016; Santori 2020). The convergence between the civil economy and CST relational anthropology lies here, with Aquinas' philosophy central to both views. To Hobbes' *homo homini lupus*, Genovesi

[15] Harrison has convincingly shown how the use of the invisible hand can be connected to the Glasgow edition of Calvin's *Institutes*.

counterposed his *homo homini natura amicus*, which he blended, among others, from Aquinas' *naturaliter homo homini amicus est* (Santori 2020). As I argued elsewhere (Santori 2020), Aquinas's formula does not only express "a human inclination to friendliness towards other people; it is also the conscious openness to creating authentic relations of friendship based on various degree of virtue" (p. 8). Genovesi shared this view and believed that the market was one of many spheres in which people can flourish by expressing their relational nature. This is why he believed that the civil economy, rather than being just the science of the wealth of nations, should be the science of public happiness (Bruni and Zamagni 2016). The adjective 'civil,' from the Latin *civitas*, expresses this concern for the good of others and the community, for the material and spiritual part of the common good.

In the first paragraphs of the *Lesson of Civil Economy* (1765–1767), Genovesi elaborates on the meaning of the social nature of humans. The market is not only the realm of self-interest; there is a form of sociality in the market, a 'qualified' sociality, which is a constitutive part of commerce:

> Man is a naturally sociable animal: goes the common saying. But not every man will believe there is no other sociable animal on earth […] How is man more sociable than other animals? […] [it is] in his reciprocal right to be assisted and consequently in his reciprocal obligation to help us in our needs. (*Lezioni*, I, chapter 1, § 1).

Genovesi believed that neither self-interest nor concern for the good of others is negative. According to the Neapolitan philosopher, two basic forces drive human action: *forza concentriva* (self-love) and *forza diffusiva* (love of others). These two drives are both primitive, and disequilibrium between the two corresponds with vice, as equilibrium does with virtue.

In a commercial society, equilibrium can be found and maintained as the two forces converge toward a common end: mutual benefit. The market is a place in which, through the medium of price mechanisms, humans are mutually useful and assist one another with their respective needs. To express this concept, Genovesi employed the term 'mutual assistance,' which Bruni and Sugden (2008) convincingly identify with fraternity, marking a difference with Smith's theory. Not only is the market full of opportunities for mutual advantage, but also:

> Genovesi's approach seems to differ by requiring that the parties to a market transaction have a more internalized sense of its mutually beneficial nature. Somehow, each party's understanding of his own part in the transaction must include the idea of the transaction as mutually beneficial. (Bruni and Sugden 2008, p. 49).

According to Genovesi, the market is the realm of self-interest and contracts and, *at the same time*, the realm of gift, cooperation, and other-regarded perspective. In this framework, the common good is not an unintentional consequence (like the invisible hand), nor is it the byproduct of self-interest. Using Smith's example, but reversing his main thesis, in Genovesi's view, the butcher, the baker, and the brewer can intentionally promote the interests of buyers and society, without renouncing their gains from trade. As Milbank and Pabst rightly interpreted (Milbank and Pabst 2016), in this case, a "contract can be a reciprocal agreement about a shared goal and value, not just the joint meeting of two entirely separate individual interests" (p. 143); for example, "you might lower that price to help your neighbour because you did not want to destroy her and it would never even make economic sense to do so" (ibid.). The competitive and cooperative nature of a market enterprise is not a *naive* interpretation of the market. It is how Genovesi, theoretically and empirically, saw commercial society: as a large-scale effort of cooperation for mutual benefit, whereas other-regarded motivations are equally basic as self-interested ones.

Genovesi's view of the two forces, and the qualified nature of humans, expresses the kind of relationality typical of CST: the one informed by other-regarded perspective. Gift and gratuitousness are the cornerstones of the social nature of humans. As Genovesi stated:

> Even among people that are corrupted by the luxury and bad custom there is no one, a chief of family or whatever person, who does not feel an inner pleasure in doing good things to other people, in making others happy [...] It is a characteristic of man of not being able to enjoy a given good without sharing it with somebody else. Some say that it is self-love or pride [*superbia*] to show our happiness to others. I do not think so: it seems to me that there is in us an inner need to communicate to each other our happiness. (Genovesi in Pabst 2011).

In comparing CST and the civil economy, Milbank and Pabst (2016) found three similarities: 1) the difference between the market economy and capitalism; 2) the intertwining dimensions of contract and gift; and 3) the nature of the firm and the market. In this paper, through Genovesi's theory, I rapidly consider point 2. Points 1 and 3 are paths for future research, which, due to space constraints, I only mention in the final remarks.

Conclusion

This paper is a response to scholars who saw convergence between Smith and CST (Wolcott 2018; Martins 2019) and to some of the Adam Smith scholars (Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016; Hühn 2018; Bevan and Werhane 2015; Werhane 2000) which can be considered the background of their argument. While there can be common grounds on anthropological traits as expressed by Smith in TMS, the views of social sphere, market and politics included, differed in crucial points. My analysis made the case to consider WN alongside TMS, to have a full picture of Smith's thought and to avoid emphasizing one part above the other. I hope this paper shows that the debate is open and far from being concluded and that it will benefit from the inclusion of the civil economy perspective. Aquinas' and Genovesi's theories proposed an economic anthropology different from the one dominant today in Economics. CST and Civil Economy brings into economic debate the social nature of human beings, together with words long forgotten or left behind, such as mutual assistance, virtue, civic friendship, and common good. Biodiversity in today's economic and social theory could be useful to address the contemporary debates from new angles. What will happen if we substitute *homo oeconomicus* with *homo homini natura amicus*?

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Ethical Approval This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

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Paolo Santori holds a Ph.D. in Sciences of Civil Economy at Libera Università Maria Santissima Assunta (LUMSA) University in Rome. Currently, he is a postdoctoral grant research holder for the Centro Universitario Cattolico (CUC) and a visiting scholar at Erasmus University Rotterdam.