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A RESPONSE TO BRUNI AND SUGDEN

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An article by Luigino Bruni and Robert Sugden published in this journal argues that market relations contain elements of what they call 'fraternity'. This Response demonstrates that my own views on interpersonal relations and markets – which originated in the feminist analysis of caring labour – are far closer to Bruni and Sugden's than they acknowledge in their article, and goes on to discuss additional important dimensions of sociality that they neglect.

1. INTRODUCTION

Luigino Bruni and Robert Sugden, in an article in this journal entitled 'Fraternity: Why the market need not be a morally free zone' (2008) raise many important points about the role of interpersonal relations within markets. Drawing on the work of Adam Smith's contemporary Antonio Genovesi, they argue that market relationships can be relationships imbued with intentions for mutual assistance, which they call 'fraternity'. They go on to review some of my own research (alone and with Nancy Folbre) which, from a grounding in feminist theory, also explores the role of interpersonal relations in market transactions. The purpose of this note is, first, to correct some errors made in the exposition of my work in regard to issues of sociality and motivation, and second, to raise some concerns about the centrality of 'brotherliness' in their image of interpersonal relations.

2. MARKET AND SOCIETY

In my work with Nancy Folbre, we have examined the relationship of monetary payment to the provision of 'genuine' or 'authentic' care in realms such as childcare and nursing (Folbre and Nelson 2000, 2006). By genuine care, we mean care that is provided, not only with a certain level of cognitive and technical skill, but also, at least in part, out of concern for the

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well-being of the recipient. We contrast this to the case – feared by anyone who has put a child in daycare or an elder in a nursing home – that care providers may be motivated *only* by the reward of a paycheck or the fear of being fired, and thus quite possibly neglect or abuse the recipient when not under direct supervision. Bruni and Sugden significantly distort our work, however, when they assert that we claim that people who provide genuine care 'must not see their relationship as that of seller and buyer' (60). This means, they say, that our argument is just 'another reworking of the market/social opposition' (60).

A more careful reading of the article of ours they cite, however, would have shown that we explicitly contrast the mythical 'idealized hypothetical market[s] of impersonal exchange' (Folbre and Nelson 2000: 138) to '*real* markets with their dimensions of provisioning, relationships, and incomplete commodification' (138, emphasis added). I am, thus, quite in agreement with Bruni and Sugden in rejecting the idea that real markets are sociality-free. Our point – emphasized in our title, 'For Love or Money – or Both?' – was that carers can quite appropriately regard their activity as being *both* a sale of services, *and* a provision of genuine human supportiveness, at the same time. Another work of mine which they cite also makes this point, and generalizes it beyond the specific topic of care work: 'Even in financial markets, for example ... economic sociologists have found evidence of considerable affectively laden interpersonal interaction' (Nelson 2005: 255) and 'Few, if any, real-world economic interactions are characterized by the purely arms-length ... relations assumed in neoclassical theory' (2005: 261). Had they looked beyond those two articles (for example, at Nelson 1998, 2003, 2006a, 2006b; Nelson and England, 2002) they would have seen that overcoming the market/social opposition has been a major theme in my work for a number of years.

3. 'INTRINSIC MOTIVATION'

A second sort of misimpression that might arise from Bruni and Sugden's article has to do with the issue of 'intrinsic motivation'. Citing work in the field of psychology by Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, Bruni and Sugden describe intrinsic motivation as occurring 'when a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed' in an activity (Ryan and Deci 2000: 56, quoted in Bruni and Sugden 2008: 60). Bruni and Sugden imply, then, that Folbre and I, when talking about genuine caring motivations as intrinsic motivations, must therefore be imagining something like the usual individualistic neoclassical economic notion of nonpecuniary reward. That is, that we imagine that the carer simply – 'as a matter of individual self-identity and authenticity' (Bruni and Sugden, 60) – has a taste for this kind of work, and would do it, if they could, even without being paid. They

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therefore (mis-) characterize our approach as individualistic, in contrast to their more relational view.

But the definition of 'intrinsic motivation' we used in our article was not drawn from Deci and Ryan's work, but rather from the work of economist Bruno Frey (1997, 1998). While Frey drew on Deci's work, the term underwent a substantial change in the process of Frey's importation of it into economics. Frey was centrally concerned with distinguishing 'activities which individuals (mainly) do ... because they are induced to do so by monetary payment or by command', which he refers to as 'extrinsically motivated', from activities whose motivations are more 'self-determined' (1997: 14, 9). He suggests, for example, that people may be intrinsically motivated to preserve the environment, give blood, do voluntary or charitable work, or accept the siting of a prison or power plant in their community (1997: 9, 10). Since it is hard to imagine that many people would consent to be stuck with needles or live next to a power plant out of a pure desire for 'fun or challenge', it is clear that Frey is using the term 'intrinsic motivation' in a broader sense. Specifically, in the cases just mentioned, Frey attributes the motivation to an internally generated 'willingness to help' or 'to contribute to the 'common good'' (1997: 9, 10). Frey acknowledges that his definitions are looser than those in the psychological literature: 'The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is not clear-cut ... It may well be that the precise definition is important for psychology' (14), he writes. For Frey's purposes, however, it is generally sufficient to draw a line between reward and command motivations and other motivations.

Folbre and I, in our article, explicitly reject the narrow, nonpecuniary-reward idea of tastes-for-caring that Bruni and Sugden attribute to us (Folbre and Nelson 2000: 132). We, instead, explicitly followed Frey – and parallel Bruni and Sugden – in including notions of rich sociality and connection in our concept of 'intrinsic motivations'. The human need for relatedness and commitments to values of responsiveness, community, and care are central to our use of that term. Our genuine caregiver is not defined as someone who simply (or even necessarily) *likes* to do care work,[1] but rather someone who is able to make the care recipient feel 'nurtured, recognized and valued as an individual, emotionally supported, empathetically connected, or in shorthand, loved' (2000: 129).[2] Our notion of an intention to give care, concern, or love here should not be taken as necessarily connotative of passion, altruism, or self-sacrifice: Bruni and Sugden's notion of 'an intention on the part of the person who assists

[1] In Folbre and Nelson (2006) we also discuss the fallacy of assuming that the fact that one *wants* to provide care makes one *able* to provide good care.

[2] Obviously, we mean 'able to' within reasonable bounds. A care recipient could be resistant to these feelings, even with the most skilled and most sincere care.

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to benefit the person who is assisted' (46) would be, for the most part, a perfectly acceptable substitute.

Further light can be shed on this subject by examining how the notion of 'intrinsic motivation' has developed within the psychological literature. In the same piece where Ryan and Deci (2000) narrowly define intrinsic motivation as only including inherent enjoyment from an activity, they also define a larger set of motivations that have in common an 'internal locus of causality'. These include, in addition to 'intrinsic motivation', cases where an action is taken for its instrumental value, relative to some goal, but the goal itself is created by one's own self-determined values and needs, or values with which one has consciously identified. These needs and values can include, for example, 'needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness' (57). Motivations involving an 'internal locus of causality' are contrasted to motivations involving an 'external locus of causality', where the stimulus is perceived as coming from outside the person. These include desires for approval or ego-enhancement, and reward or punishment. In some recent work in psychology, however, one finds the terms 'intrinsic/extrinsic' used to mean what Ryan and Deci had called 'internal/external'. Vansteenkiste *et al*. (2004) – a work that is co-authored by Deci – for example, defines 'intrinsic content' to include 'relationships, growth, community, and health' including dimensions of 'relatedness' and 'affiliation and prosocial engagement'. They contrast this to 'extrinsic content (e.g. wealth, image, and fame)' (246).

So Frey (1997), in importing a psychological concept into the economics literature, seems to have slipped the term 'intrinsically motivated' in where, if the original psychological literature had been more precisely followed, the term 'internally motivated' might have been more appropriate. It seems, however, that common usage within both psychology and economics is evolving towards a broader definition of 'intrinsic motivations'.

Folbre and I used the term in this broader sense, and particularly, in the case of care, with reference to goals and values of relatedness, connection, and regard for the well-being of others. Bruni and Sugden, on the other hand, not only identify the term with the narrow sense of 'fun or challenge', but also seem to assume that one can be (narrowly) intrinsically motivated for only one sort of activity. They assert that, in my view, a 'carer's authenticity is shown by her hypothetical willingness to do the work for its own sake (if she had a rich partner, she too would accept low wages)' (61). This gives a misimpression of my work. While I accept the point that intrinsic motivations could make a person willing to accept a somewhat lower wage, all else equal, I reject the converse, that a willingness to accept a low wage at a caring job could be a litmus test for caring motivations. For one thing, people may be intrinsically motivated (in the broad sense) for a number of types of work. A person might,

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for example, potentially make quite a fine hands-on caregiver, having an inherent concern for the needs of others, and having the requisite base for learning the appropriate skills. She or he might, however, quite reasonably turn down a care-work job in favour of some other activity that fulfils her or his (in the words of Ryan and Deci 2000: 57) 'needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness' in other ways. I would fear, in fact, that being willing to do care-work at low wages may all too often, for many women, result from an 'external locus of control' – that is, from external pressures that say that these are the sorts of jobs appropriate for women.

4. 'BROTHERLINESS' AND THE SOCIALITY OF MARKETS

Bruni and Sugden are right about the fundamentally social nature of markets. Folbre and I are also concerned, however, that some types of market structures and institutions (and some kinds of economics teaching) may result in important market transactions *becoming* excessively impersonal, or becoming increasingly marked by oppression, distrust, and dehumanization – the opposite of Bruni and Sugden's 'reciprocity, trust, and mutual respect' (63). This is not a claim that markets must inevitably become so, and it is not a claim that by becoming so they become less social. Rather, once we recognize that markets *are* social institutions, we have to pay attention to what *kinds* of social behaviour particular structures encourage or discourage. This concern does not seem to be present in Bruni and Sugden's analysis.

Folbre and I also go beyond the concern with relationships between two people who can jointly contribute to a project, as discussed by Bruni and Sugden. Of central concern in the care literature are situations in which economic services of care are required, but the situation allows no opportunity for the sort of civil reciprocity Bruni and Sugden describe. In their article, they invent the characters of Arthur, an elderly man with a good pension who needs home visits, and Betty, a woman willing to do these visits for pay with an attitude of 'friendliness, goodwill, and mutual respect' (61). So far, so good. But suppose Arthur suffers a stroke, and thereafter is not able to, himself, express friendliness, monitor the quality of the care he receives, or write cheques. Now Arthur is extremely vulnerable, and is unable to reciprocate for what he receives. At this point, I would argue, important additional social dimensions of economic life, not covered by Bruni and Sugden's image of reciprocal 'brotherliness', come into play. Will the guardians of Arthur's person and assets continue to adequately provide for his care? Will his caregivers – he will now need more than Betty – continue to treat him with respect? Will society step in if his personal assets run out? The situation is no longer simply bilateral, between Arthur and Betty, but 'social' in a much wider sense

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including a broad range of social norms and institutions, both market and non-market. Economic analysis, in excessively focusing on transactions between presumably autonomous agents, has long ignored issues of vulnerability and the necessity of providing fundamental financial support to caring activities.

One last issue of vocabulary is prominent in Bruni and Sugden's article: their choice of the term 'fraternity', to describe friendly, group-identified relationships, 'the paradigm case being that of brothers' (48). While they claim this is a 'universalistic and open' (48) term, etymology and feminist theory both point out its limitations. Claims that male experience represent the paradigm case, while women's experience (including experience as providers of care to the vulnerable) is somehow separate, special, non-universal, or covered by the male case (e.g., women being considered as 'honorary brothers') reinforces sexist bias in the intellectual sphere, just as it reinforces sexist oppression in the social sphere. Applying the label 'fraternity' to an article about sociality and interpersonal relations – traditionally stereotyped as feminine realms, when contrasted to economic relations (as they acknowledge on p. 45) – is poignantly ironic. Were I to give a title to this Response, it would be 'Sorority', to temporarily balance this slight. If the study of interpersonal relations and economics develops further – as one should hope it does, given the empirical failure of the alternative to explain human behaviour, and the adverse self-fulfilling prophecy effects of telling people that markets are asocial – one hopes that a more encompassing term will soon be adopted.

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