



by Giovanni Birindelli, 9 September 2015

It is for me a great pleasure to inform that Catallaxy Institute counts four new members: Luca Fusari, Novello Papafava dei Carraresi, Guglielmo Piombini and Francesco Simoncelli. I was honoured by the fact that these scholars accepted my invitation and, by delegation, that of the other members of this small association.

Luca, Novello, Guglielmo and Francesco do not need to be introduced. Thanks to their work, in Italy they are well known within the community of those who, from different angles and in different ways, stand coherently on the side of liberty and therefore also of economic science intended in its entirety as the study of human action.

Well established rules of courtesy and the individualist approach that characterizes the ideas of liberty would oblige me to present each of these scholars separately. However, begging their pardon, not only for reasons of brevity I prefer highlighting one aspect that they have in common and one difference that makes their association to Catallaxy Institute so precious.

One aspect that these authors have in common is the intellectual consistency with which they defend the ideas of liberty, each one in their own way. This intellectual consistency is today an extremely scarce good.

Today liberty is definitely unfashionable. In some respects I believe that perhaps it is possible to say that never has the search of consistency in the defence and in the development of the ideas of liberty found itself in an intellectual environment that was more hostile than the present one. "Old style" totalitarianism used to impose itself on so-called "good and honest individuals". However, modern totalitarianism is based on them (or, rather, on many of them), in the sense that it takes vital nourishment *from them*: from their intellectual laziness; from their lack of opportunity to confront themselves with the ideas of liberty (a lack of opportunity intentionally produced by the state itself, especially via the public school system); from the uncritical way in which they take for granted those theoretical paradigms (both economic and philosophical) that guard and extend the unlimitedness and the arbitrariness of political power; from their unawareness (especially of the fact that they cannot know); from their lack of imagination, which makes a spontaneous order unconceivable to them and thus induces them to make confusion between liberty and chaos; from their stupidity in the field of social sciences.

Today, those who search and defend abstract consistency of the ideas of liberty find themselves intellectually isolated as perhaps they have never been. A measure of such



intellectual isolation is given by the fact that most of the times those who share the same collectivist (i.e. totalitarian) philosophical and economic paradigm do not know that they are sharing it. In supporting different political parties, for example, they think that they are opposed to one another. However, they are so because of details that, from the point of view of those who share the opposite paradigm (the one of liberty), are utterly insignificant even in those rare times when they are perceptible.

The difference of paradigm, united to the collectivists' unawareness that their difference from those who stand on the side of liberty is in fact a difference of paradigm, often makes communication with them impossible. Being unaware that they are sharing a particular philosophical and economic paradigm, these "good and honest individuals" that support contemporary totalitarianism are unable to see that paradigm and therefore to defend it. Thus many of them (not all of them) refuse *a priori* any confrontation with those who ask them to consistently defend *their own* paradigm: i.e. with those who ask them to have a confrontation *on the paradigm*, not on particular details which gain significance only *within a particular paradigm*. Thus they avoid confrontation (first of all with the theoretical base of their own ideas) by leaving the table, insulting, deriding and ridiculing those who stubbornly and coherently defend the paradigm of liberty.

These "good and honest individuals" for example divide themselves between those who defend the euro and those who would like to go back to national currency; however they do not question legal tender: monetary freedom is not even taken into consideration and those who propose it with coherent arguments tend to be seen as "out of their mind", usually without any argument. They divide themselves between those who defend the privileges of the political class and those who want to fight them; however, none of them questions legal positivism, i.e. the abstract idea of "law" that makes the legality of *all* privileges possible, including the privileges of the State, of the central bank and of the commercial banks (and those who question that particular idea of "law" tend to be labelled as "utopian" or "idealist"). They usually agree on the fact that democracy should be the primary objective; however, none of them can explain why a theft or the killing of an innocent man should be legitimate when they are committed by a majority, or even worse by a representative of the majority, against a minority; in other words, they make confusion between democracy and liberty, but none of these individuals would recognize the majority's right to choose which particular brand of pasta they must buy. Pushed hard, they usually make appeal to the "common good", to the "general interest", to that "of the State" or to other similar concepts; however not one of them can define these concepts in a non arbitrary way. They often defend progressive taxation; however, not a single one of them has ever been able to say what is the difference, on the grounds of the abstract principle of equality before the Law, between progressive taxation and the racial "laws" that they abhor.



To go back to the qualities that in my opinion the four scholars that I am honoured to welcome in this small Association have in common, one of these is the fact that they have character: they have the obstinacy to defend a paradigm that is opposite to the one taken for granted by the great majority of people (and that these people can take for granted only because they avoid confronting themselves with it, i.e. because they avoid looking at themselves in the mirror). The character: the capability to hold the helm straight in a sea that, in the sense mentioned, has never been so violent.

This common quality is expressed also in the fact that these four scholars all collaborate, among other journals, with Leonardo Facco's *MiglioVerde* and *Movimento Libertario*. This is not an accident. Leonardo is the quintessence of the character I referred to above: of intellectual coherence and of obstinacy in defending liberty. If today in Italy there are "good and honest individuals" who, notwithstanding the Italian state, are open or are starting to be open to liberty, in many cases this is due to the tenacity, to the coherence, in the end to the character that distinguishes Leonardo in his activity of divulgation of liberty and of defence of its ideas, especially from the attacks of its worst enemies: those who, while unknowingly adopting the collectivist paradigm, claim not to be hostile to it. Leonardo Facco is one of those persons that is unapproachable by those who are hostile to liberty (especially if they, while being hostile to it, declare the opposite). For this reason it is not by accident that these four scholars collaborate also with Leonardo.

Among the differences that make the association of these four scholars so precious for Catallaxy Institute is the angle from which each of them approaches liberty. Like many of those who stand on the side of liberty, they are eclectic intellectuals and unite knowledge and arguments from different fields of the social sciences: philosophic, economic, historical, and others. However, at least in my view, perhaps it is possible to say that each one of them has, so to speak, an angle that somehow prevails on the others: Luca Fusari the goe-political one, Novello Papafava the political-philosophical one, Guglielmo Piombini the historical one, Francesco Simoncelli the economic one. These different but related "prevalent" perspectives cannot but enrich the contents proposed and the activities done by the Association.

Beginning tomorrow, Catallaxy Institute will start promoting the scientific work also of these authors (which in most cases will be or will have been originally published elsewhere). Their books (or those for which they wrote prefaces/postscripts) are already listed in the new "Books" page of the website.

Welcome Luca, Novello, Guglielmo and Francesco. It's an honour to have you among us, to promote your work and to start collaborating together.

Giovanni Birindelli

