

Exploring the Intersection of Bonhoeffer's Responsibility and Genovesi's Economics

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Abstract

Introduction

This presentation seeks to bridge the philosophical and theological insights of Dietrich Bonhoeffer with the economic perspectives of Antonio Genovesi, exploring how their ideas can inform a deeper understanding of community and responsibility in economic relations. Bonhoeffer's concept of responsibility, as outlined in his work "Ethics," emphasizes the individual's duty to act in accordance with moral principles, while Genovesi's economic thought highlights the importance of social responsibility and ethical considerations in economic activity. By examining the intersection of these two thinkers, we can develop a more nuanced understanding of how economic models might incorporate virtues such as responsibility, honesty, and generosity.

Bonhoeffer's notion of responsibility is rooted in his theological anthropology, which posits that human beings are created in the image of God (*imago Dei*) and are thus called to live virtuous lives. For Bonhoeffer, responsibility is not merely a moral obligation but a fundamental aspect of human existence, requiring individuals to act in accordance with their conscience and the demands of the situation. This concept challenges economic models that prioritize individual self-interest over communal well-being, suggesting that economic decisions should be guided by a sense of responsibility towards others and the community at large.

On the other hand, Antonio Genovesi, an 18th-century Italian economist, is known for his emphasis on the ethical dimensions of economic activity. He argued that economic actions should be guided by moral principles and a sense of social responsibility. Genovesi's work highlights the importance of considering the broader social impacts of economic decisions, rather than solely focusing on individual gain.

By integrating Bonhoeffer's notion of responsibility into economic analysis, we can develop models that prioritize communal well-being and ethical decision-making. This approach challenges the methodological individualism prevalent in many economic theories, instead emphasizing the interconnectedness of human beings and the importance of virtuous community life.

Implications for Economic Models

1. **Virtue in Economic Relations:** Incorporating Bonhoeffer's concept of responsibility into economic models could lead to a greater emphasis on virtues such as honesty, generosity, and humility.

2. **Community as a Web of Households:** Viewing society as a web of households rather than isolated individuals aligns with both Bonhoeffer's communal emphasis and Genovesi's social responsibility. This perspective encourages economic models to consider the interdependencies within communities, fostering more holistic economic policies.
3. **Theological Anthropology and Economic Implications:** Theological anthropology, as reflected in Bonhoeffer's work, provides insights into human nature and community. This can inform economic models by highlighting the importance of relationality and ethical considerations in economic activity.

By developing the connection between Genovesi and Bonhoeffer, we can try to develop a multi-disciplinary dialogue that would foster the development of economic models built on assumptions different from the usual individualistic self-interest, instead, we would be examining the factuality and possibility of considering Christian Ethical frameworks as a viable source of fundamental anthropological assumptions for economics.

Bibliographic sources

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