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Female economists and philosophers' role in Amartya Sen's thought: his colleagues and his scholars

Valentina Erasmo¹

The aim of this paper is to offer an insight about women's role in Amartya Sen's thought, privileging economists and philosophers: mainly, I will focus on the figures of Joan Robinson, Eva Colorni, Martha Nussbaum and Emma Rothschild, showing, on the one hand, how they have influenced his thought, on the other, how they have eventually developed their own well-defined ideas about common research themes. Finally, I will provide an overview about contemporary Sen's female scholars who have reached international acknowledgments in this research in order to distinguish the most important schools of thought born around his reflection. The main result of this paper is that, on the one hand, Sen has favoured the enhancement of these female's figures both in economics and philosophy; on the other, these female's figures have undoubtedly and significantly influenced his own thought. Thus, it is better to talk of a mutual and peer influence to each other.

Keywords: capability approach; female; feminist; sentiments.

1. Introduction

Women have always hired a crucial role in Amartya Sen's thought. In the field of development economics, among Sen's most important contribution is that about gender bias in mortality. Indeed, this engagement might be emphasized through three main elements (Klasen and Wink, 2003): between the Seventies and the Eighties, Sen contributed to the earliest literature on gender bias in South Asia about allocation of resources, health outcomes and nutrition with relevant empirical and theoretical contributions (Sen 1990b; Sen and Sengupta 1983; Kynch and Sen 1983); in turn, Sen focused on the abnormally high sex ratios in South Asia, especially India: differently from Visaria (1961) who had highlighted these data showing gender bias in mortality, Sen preferred to analyse the worsening of the sex ratio; finally, considering both gender bias in mortality and the high sex ratios in several developing countries (especially, China, the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia), Sen developed the concept of "missing women". In 1990, on *The New York Review of Books*, he pointed out how more than 100 million of women were missing. Quoting his own words:

it is often said that women make up a majority of the world's population. They do not. This mistaken belief is based on generalizing from the contemporary situation in Europe and North America, where the ratio of women to men is typically around 1.05 or 1.06, or higher. In South Asia, West Asia, and China, the ratio of women to men can be as low as 0.94, or even lower, and it varies widely elsewhere in Asia, in Africa, and in Latin America. How can we understand and explain these differences? (Sen, 1990c, p. 1)

These differences are mainly due to the problem of women's survival. Indeed, <<the numbers of "missing women" in relation to the numbers that could be expected if men and women received similar care in health, medicine, and nutrition, are remarkably large>> (Sen, 1990c, p. 13). Thus, their deaths are a result on inequalities about the allocation of survival-related goods: Sen was surprised that these disadvantages would not have deserved adequate attention. However, his complaint has been bearer of further studies on the theme, some of

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them appeared on the journal "Feminist Economics" (Berik, Dong and Summerfield, 2007; Berik, Rodgers and Seguino, 2009; Rubery 2005). In turn, Sen has always entertained a special relationship with this journal where he published several contribution (Sen, 2004, 2005a).

Considering these elements, I claim how Sen's relationship with women and feminist economics is wider. The aim of this paper is to offer an insight about women's role in Sen's thought from a different perspective, privileging those female colleagues, economists and philosopher, who have established an important intellectual relationship with him: mainly, I will focus on the figures of Joan Robinson, Eva Colorni, Martha Nussbaum and Emma Rothschild, showing, on the one hand, how they have influenced his thought, on the other, how they have eventually developed their own well-defined ideas about common or similar research themes. Finally, I will provide an overview about contemporary Sen's female scholars who have reached international acknowledgments in this research field at the goal of distinguishing the main schools of thought in the available literature. The order through which these female figures will be deepened is simply historical in order to tell a part of Sen's history through them.

This paper will be composed as follow: in Section 2, I will examine the figure of Joan Robinson, Sen's PhD supervisor in Cambridge who (partially) influenced him through her non-conventional "mainstream" framework, while he refused her positivist view of ethics; instead, in Section 3, the main figure will be that of Eva Colorni, Sen's second wife, thanks to the extraordinary perspective of the "Colorni-Hirschman-Spinelli" family; in Section 4, I will explain the mutual influence between Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, probably her most famous colleague, showing analogies and differences about their respective capability/capabilities approach, including her own topics, like relational goods, feminism and compassion; even, Section 5 will be devoted to Emma Rothschild, his third wife, and her analysis of the warmth of economics sentiments as dynamism of economic agents; finally, in Section 6, I will proceed with an overview about the most important female Sen's scholars, discussing the schools of thoughts which were born through their perspectives on his thought. Then, some final remarks.

The main result of this paper is that, on the one hand, Sen has favoured the enhancement of these female's figures both in economics and philosophy; on the other, these female's figures have undoubtedly and significantly influenced his own thought. Thus, it is better to talk of a mutual and peer influence to each other.

2. Joan Robinson: her positivist view of ethics within a non-conventional "mainstream" framework

I would define Sen's intellectual relationship with Joan Robinson a long "love-hate" tale, where the latter would have wanted that the former had studied "serious economics" like capital theory, distribution theory and growth theory. On the flip side, he preferred Maurice Dobb's methodological approach, more engaged in normative questions concerning economics, but he has never forgotten Robinson's significant role, given origins to a slippery slop about his position compared to "mainstream economics".

In 1953, when had arrived at the Trinity College, Sen met the most important economists of those years (Gaertner and Pattanaik, 1988): in particular, neoclassical scholars, like Peter Bauer, Michael Farrel and Harry Johnson, and Keynesians, like Richard Kahn, Nicholas Kaldor and Joan Robinson (Gilardone, 2008). This is the first significant female figure in Sen's intellectual life. In 1922, Joan went to Cambridge for studying economics, while women had been just admitted to degree courses (Marcuzzo, Pasinetti and Roncaglia, 1996). In those years, she became very famous thanks to her deep insight about Alfred Marshall's thought, extending his analysis with imperfect competition. In turn, she had collaborated with John Maynard Keynes for the "Cambridge Circus" (Harcourt, Kerr, 2009), then quarrelling the validity of

neoclassical aggregate production function². After Sen's second year in Cambridge, Robinson became one of his PhD supervisors, together with Amiya Dasgupta who initiated him to economics when he was in India (Klamer, 1989).

At that time, Sen was still really committed about welfare economics and the possibility of dialogue between ethics and economics: this is the reason why, during those Cambridge days, he enforced his friendship with Dobb, Marxist and scholar in political economy. Oddly enough, he was the only one who accepted to compare with him about Arrow (1951) impossibility theorem, although he was mainly interested in their relevance in non-formal terms, instead of their algebra elements (Erasmus, 2020c). On the contrary, Robinson discouraged Sen interests in welfare economics "which she thought was all non-sense" (Klamer 1989, p. 139). In particular, as Sen emphasized, she acquired

<<a naively positivist view of ethics, and was bored by discussion on well-being, social judgments and normative evaluations. She wanted to get me away from all the "ethical rubbish". Maurice Dobb was much more encouraging, and was more open-minded about my interest in ethics and welfare economics. (...) Joan thought that my interest in welfare economics and social choice theory reflected a clear failure to grasp what was really important.>> (Klamer, 1989, p.139).

Recently, Sen has come back on those Cambridge's years in a very recent interview and he availed of even stronger words for remembering his PhD supervisor:

I don't know how to describe a person as other than "vigorously intolerant" when she told me, as my PhD supervisor, that "I have read the first chapter and a part of the second, and it's the kind of thing that will be praised by established economists, and you will have no difficulty in getting your PhD." At Cambridge, your supervisor is not one of your examiners, unlike in America. She said, "I'm not going to read the rest of your thesis." I said, "But you're supposed to say that the thesis is fit to be submitted for the PhD." She said, "I will say it." So I asked her, "On what basis?" "On the basis of what I have read already (...) It's good. Clearly, clearly, it's good. Good in the way that these people understand it. But it's not worthy of you. (Sen, Deaton and Besley, 2020, p. 6)

After the Cambridge's years, Robinson's criticism towards Sen had never stopped for a while, even between the Sixties and the Seventies, when he became a very famous economist, refusing his main research interests and his methodology. I claim that this passage should be mentioned entirely in block quotation, availing of Sen's own words:

while I was doing the *Collective Choice* book, she wrote me a letter asserting that I had told her that when I finished this book, I would come back and do some serious economics. I could not, of course, have said anything like that, and she must have extrapolated some peace-making remark I had made. She did hope that I would get back to what she took to be serious economics. Capital theory, growth theory, distribution theory, those were just about the only central issues to her. (Klamer, 1989, p.139).

I think it is straightforward how Joan Robinson would have been delighted by Sen's conversion to her research themes. Instead, his disagreement with her approach is evident and well represented by his analysis of the Dobb-Robinson's debate about the labour theory of value. According to her, value might not help economists, it is simply a word, defining Marx's use of the labour theory of value as: "metaphysical; it provides a typical example of the way

² The difference between neo-classicals and neo-Keynesians, as Robinson, was highlighted by Sen in one of his earlier paper "Neo-classical and Neo-Keynesian Theories of Distribution" (1963).

metaphysical ideas operate. Logically it is a mere rigmarole of words, but for Marx it was a flood of illumination and for latter-day Marxists, a source of inspiration” (Robinson, 1964, p. 39, cited by Sen, 1978, p. 175). In a nutshell, the sense of this statement is the following: Marx’s use of the labour theory of value is “metaphysical” because it is not capable of being tested, complying to Karl Popper’s criterion for propositions that do not belong to empirical domain. In turn, these propositions are defined as a “rigmarole of words” because they are unscientific. Even, when Robinson was talking about latter-day Marxists’, she referred to Dobb. However, as Sen emphasized, her analysis was in line with other economists “who are sympathetic to Marx but find his labour theory of value to be an albatross round the neck” (Sen, 1978, p. 176). According to Sen, Robinson’s main limit is to avoid a descriptive non-metaphysical interpretation of Marx’s labour theory of value, focusing on predictive and normative interpretations only³, then rejecting both.

On the contrary, Sen appreciated Dobb (1937, 1973) interpretation of Marx’s use of the theory of value where he offered a descriptive perspective about it. In this respect, “describe” involves a selection from the set of factual statements where some of them are chosen, others ignored. Selection is a seminal moment of description, this is not a metaphysical activity, like Robinson claimed. About Dobb’s understanding of Marx’s use of the labour theory of value, the object of description is the activity of production. This allows to describe <<the process of *exchange* (...) in terms of relations between persons through personal participation in the production of commodities that are being exchanged. (...) Exchange of commodities is seen as “a definite social relations between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things”(Marx, 1887, p. 43 quoted in Sen, 1978, p. 177)>>. Through Dobb (1973), labour comes back to be a human productive activity where exploitation is neither “metaphysical” nor an ethical judgment, opposite than the abovementioned Robinson’s perspective (Erasmus, 2020c): rather, this is a factual description of a socio-economic relationship (Sen, 1978). Instead, the aims of this descriptive analysis of Marx’s use of the labour theory of value are, on the one hand, predictive, given the possibility to avail of the “law of value” for predicting prices, profits and wages; on the other, normative, as personal participation could be understood as the basis of entitlement of the production. Close to Dobb’s ideas, Sen concluded how this use is not metaphysical, as Robinson supported.

This conflictual relationship with Robinson is confirmed in his very nice paper, *On some Debates in Capital Theory* (1974), where economics and Hindu mythology met together in an extraordinary narrative plot. In this “economic parable”, Sen sent Subhuti, reborn as an economist specialized in capital theory, to Buddha for finding for his unsolved questions about capital measurement and growth (Ghosh, 2006). After analysing the position acquired by those “Venerables” scholars in this field (like Geoffrey Harcourt, Robert Solow, Paul Samuelson, David Champernowne, Piero Sraffa, Pierangelo Garegnani, Irving Fisher and Maurice Dobb, of course), the last mentioned economist is Joan Robinson. In this regard, Subhuti pointed out two remarks, respectively about positive and normative dimensions concerning the abovementioned topics. About the former which Subhuti called Remark 1, he is wondering :”when there is persistent unemployment in a stagnant economy the redundant workers may take to employing themselves with tiny quantities of capital (say as shoeblacks or pedlars)”, however, having said something like this, he felt: <<a great relief in not finding Venerable Joan Robinson within

³ Following a predictive interpretation, Robinson concentrated on a theory of value understood as a theory of price where “value” became the labour-time needed to produce a commodity reason why commodities are exchanged at prices which are proportional to their value (Sen, 1978). This makes a metaphysical proposition a hypothesis. Instead, according to a normative interpretation, Robinson refused Myrdal (1953) interpretation for which labour has the right to the whole product, considering profit as “an illegitimate exploitation”. On the contrary, she considered Marx’s theory of value what “accounts for exploitation” (Robinson, 1964, p. 36).

earshot. She would have never forgiven me for referring to "tiny quantities of capital">> (Sen, 1974, p. 334) This passage well-represent her uncompromising nature in intellectual debate.

Subhuti relaunched, asking Buddha: "what will I do when I meet Venerable Joan Robinson and feel a compulsion to make a Remark like this ?" (Sen, 1974, p. 334). This back-and-forth ought to be mentioned in full quotation:

"That, first of all, is your problem. Second, be bold. And third, why do you think Venerable Joan Robinson will object to your remark? She will not. Subhuti said: She will of course. She does not like references to "quantities of capital"—tiny or large. I shall surely run into her someday. How will I defend Remark 1, then? Tell me, O Enlightened One. Buddha replied: She will know, of course, that Remark 1 is a quotation from pages 157-158 of her *Accumulation of Capital*. Curious that you should have had the same thought. (Sen, 1974, p. 334)

Although Sen had a critical relationship with Robinson, preferring Dobb, he recognized his (partial) debt compared to her tradition. And this position has been a source of an interesting quarrel between two female economists, namely Emmanuelle Bénéicourt and Ingrid Robeyns. This latter will be deepened in Section 6, being one of the most important Sen's contemporary scholars. At the centre of their debate there is a methodological question, namely considering Sen as a mainstream economist or not. Indeed, Bénéicourt claimed how Sen was awarded with the Nobel Prize for his "very mainstream contributions to standard economics—particularly for his work on Social Choice" (Bénéicourt, 2002). According to her, Sen was not realizing a "de-autistification" of economics: although his capability approach has been understood as a shift compared to this route, she emphasized how this system is only a variation of mainstream perspective, referring to his *Commodities and Capabilities* for supporting this hypothesis. I will not in further details about her analysis, but I would only mention this strong passage where Bénéicourt defined Sen as a very orthodox economist: in his co-authored book with Dréze, *India, economic development and social opportunity* (1995), Sen mentioned Solow's works in a footnote, especially his 1956 model, as well as further explorations of elder neoclassical models, like those of Robert Barro, Paul Krugman, Robert Lucas, Nicholas Mankiw, Paul Romer and David Weil, linking his works with this tradition. Even stronger is this nice passage where Benicourt stated how:

<<Sen is not an opponent of the mainstream approach, and that, on the contrary, he considers these theories as constituting great progress in the understanding of concrete economic and social issues. In fact, Sen himself declared openly last year, in a conference organised by the OFCE (Observatoire Français des Conjonctures Economiques): "I am a mainstream economist">> (Benicourt, 2002)

On the contrary, Robeyns' reply was focused on showing how capability approach is not an example of standard mainstream economics. Indeed, not only this approach is developing a framework which allows to meet different scholars and policy makers ideas, but connecting theoretical and empirical problems, making simultaneously economics a human and social science. All these elements confirm how far is Sen's methodology compared to mainstream economics. Certainly, on the one hand, Robeyns recognized that Sen wrote several contributions with highly mathematical character; but, on the other, she pointed out how he criticized the most important cores of neoclassical theory, for example, self-interested behaviours or optimization in decision-making. Availing of a mathematical approach does not equal with an adhesion to mainstream economics. I think this quotation is enlightening in order to grasp where this misunderstanding about Sen's methodology locates. Although Sen defined himself as "a mainstream economist, he has added that for him that mainstream is economics in the tradition of Joan Robinson, Marx, Kaldor and so forth. Thus, when Sen calls himself a mainstream economist, he is trying to rescue economics from the narrow-minded, imperialist

discipline that it has become” (Robeyns, 2002). I agree with Robeyns’ clarification⁴: Sen availed of the word “mainstream economics” assigning it a different meaning compared to the traditional literature. And this use is a recognition of his (partial) debt with his PhD supervisor, Joan Robinson, although he has always felt closer to Maurice Dobb among those Cambridge’s economists⁵.

3. Eva Colorni: the extraordinary perspective of the “Colorni-Hirschman-Spinelli” family

In 1973, Sen had married Eva Colorni who prematurely died in 1985 because of a stomach cancer. Eva’s figure may apparently seem different from the other female economists and philosophers I am analysing in this paper. At a first sight, she did not write anything decisive for economics. However, she studied Law, Philosophy and Economics (in Delhi and Pavia) and was lecturer at the London Polytechnic. Sen paid a tribute to Eva in his autobiography wrote in occasion of his Nobel Prize (Cot, 2013). Quoting the more significant words towards her:

“In the reorientation of my research, I benefited greatly from discussions with my wife, Eva Colorni (...). She exercised a great influence on the standards and reach that I attempted to achieve in my work (often without adequate success). Eva was very supportive of my attempt to use a broadened framework of social choice theory in a variety of applied problems: to assess poverty; to evaluate inequality; to clarify the nature of relative deprivation; to develop distribution-adjusted national income measures; to clarify the penalty of unemployment; to analyse violations of personal liberties and basic rights; and to characterize gender disparities and women’s relative disadvantage.” (Sen, 1998 in Cot, 2013)

Surely, Eva’s influence on Sen is autobiographical, before than intellectual, as well as her role was not exclusive, considering her important origins which enabled him to know new perspectives, those of the “Hirschman-Colorni-Spinelli” family. As Sen claimed in *Individual Freedom as a Social Commitment* (1990a), he has met Italian politics through Eva’s eyes, in particular, liberal socialism (Erasmus, 2019b). Since her experience, Sen looked at the Italian politics as anti-authoritarian and socially committed, establishing a significant relation with Italian economists too. Certainly, he was lucky to have the uncommon outlook of this extended family with strong political awareness where socialism prevailed.

Eva was the daughter of Eugenio Colorni, cousin of Piero Sraffa and philosopher and Italian partisan martyr, and Ursula Hirschman, sister of Albert Hirschman, as Sen (2014) has recently emphasized in his speech in his honour held in Rome at the “Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei”. All those relationships enlightened and delighted his life (Sen, 1998). In particular, in this Rome’s speech, Sen admitted how he has appreciated Hirschman’s *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (1979). It is not a case, he provided an “Afterword” for its 2013 edition with Emma Rothschild. In line with Sen, as we will see better in Section 5, Hirschman (1979) himself was in debt with Nicolas de Condorcet and found in his thought further and richer motivations for human behaviours compared to those

⁴ In this article, Robeyns (2002) remembered Sen’s engagement with non-traditional economic view, like the “Cambridge Journal of Economics”, his support to the International Association for Feminist Economics and its journal.

⁵ Indeed, always in the abovementioned recent interview, Sen clarified how they had a “odd relationship with her”, but he “liked her very much” (Sen, Deaton and Besley, p.6). Indeed, Robinson asked him to read one chapter of her new book *The Accumulation of Capital* (1956) every week, then discuss those topics with her in his supervision time, instead of his writing essays for her. Finally, Sen told her he did not appreciate so much her book because of it was too much on minor questions in capital theory, while too little about capital and economy in more general terms. Although Sen was totally “unable to make Joan see what I was trying to say, but she was—and I appreciated this fondly—keen on getting me right whenever we disagreed. (...) She was always keen on arguing with me—to remove my follies—and it was, in that sense, a very engaging relationship.” (Sen, Deaton and Besley, p. 7)

considered in mainstream economics⁶. In this way, it is possible to reach a more complex understanding of human nature in economics (Chakraborty, 1998): on the contrary, mainstream economics imperialism impoverished economics, especially, the properness of an economic based on market which was weakened by its own claims.

According to Sen, among many other results, Hirschman's main credit was his deep insight about limits and opportunity concerning the market: about the former, Hirschman pointed out several observations about the seminal role of human relationships and how these might challenge conventional economics about market dynamics; on the other, he understood positive markets results better than its common supporters. In this direction, Sen suggested how Hirschman recovered even Montesquieu (1748) theory, complying to which the market has the advantage to "mitigate" evil impulses. In particular, Hirschman worked on a classical, but underdeveloped theme, namely the existence of passions which may lead people to "bad" actions in the market, although they have interest to not behave like this. Since this assumption, Sen (2014) stressed how he meant the market not in terms of economic efficiency, but as an effort to remove individuals by those violent impulses and divisive force, like nationalism, racism and religious intolerance in their own community. Against that economic impoverishment caused by economic imperialism favoured by mainstream economics, like Sen, Hirschman's peculiar view of the market tried to enrich economics, as social sciences, with cultural, political and social values. This element confirms the will not only of a more complex understanding of individuals in economics, rather major epistemological complexity in economics too. I claim how "complexity" and the will to "enrich economics" are the real common elements which Sen and Hirschman shared.

After Eugenio Colorni's death, Ursula Colorni secondly married Altiero Spinelli, the ideologist of the European Federalist Movement and one of the future godfather of the European Union (Rossi and Spinelli, 1944). Sen (2014) has remembered they had significant comparison about freedom. Instead, Eva Colorni's own ideas, she embodied these rich cultural and human background: she was engaged with how to safeguard freedom of most deprived people and claimed how inequalities makes people closer than slavery (Erasmus, 2019b). Sen has always been very interested in these themes, before and after his encounter with the Hirschman-Colorni-Spinelli family: indeed, since the ending of Sixties, before he met Eva, Sen had been committed with social justice, joining a course about this topic together with excellent scholars like Arrow and Rawls (Gilardone, 2015)

Yet, one of his bigger masterpiece on the theme, *Development as Freedom* (1999) was written after their significant encounter: thus, we might not exclude a debt, although not exclusive, with Eva Colorni comparing the topics faced in this essay (which are the same he emphasized how she influenced him in his autobiography wrote in occasion of his Nobel Prize).

4. Martha Nussbaum: her Aristotelian capabilities approach and her focus on relational goods, feminism and compassion

⁶ We will not enter with further details about their analogies and differences, but one ought to be clarified, being methodological: Sen is mainly interested in creating watershed between ethics and economics, while Hirschman focused mainly on new link between economics and politics. Hence, their respective fields are enough different, but they have in common the will to fight against any kind of "economic imperialism" in favour of multidisciplinary and dialogue beyond traditional disciplinary borders. Although this joint element, Sen has probably had a bigger consensus compared to Hirschman: this latter intentionally avoided to be identified with a specific economic traditions, refusing every kind of label, acquiring a certain nebulosity around his role in academic world. For deepening, see Chakraborty (1998).

In this paper, the analysis of the intellectual relationship and mutual influence between Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum will be shorter than it should be, but a similar comparison would be too much long and the available literature on the theme is rich and varied (Alexander, 2008; Fabre and Miller, 2003; Maboloc, 2008; Magni, 2019). Probably, this is the most important relationship Sen has established with a female scholar, in this case, a philosopher, instead of an economist, like the others colleagues here considered. The most important work they wrote together is the essay *The Quality of Life* (1993), but there are also shorter contribution, like *Internal Criticism and Indian Rationalist Traditions* (1987). Martha Nussbaum has become one of the most famous contemporary female philosopher not only thanks to this co-authored volume, but for her personal development of Sen's capability approach in an extremely original way. Actually, she is the second President of HDCA, after Amartya Sen (Basu, Kanbur and Robeyns, 2019). According to a historical perspective, Sen (1980) has been the pioneer of capability approach⁷ (Chiappero-Martinetti, Osmani and Qizilbash, 2020), but Nussbaum has expanded and made it more applicable both in economics and other fields. Maybe, all the operative studies about capability approach are more indebted with her methodology compared to his. Their respective approach have both analogies and differences, but it is enough complex to define well-defined borders between these two elements.

About the most straightforward analogies, there are, under a methodological profile, their common understanding of capability approach as a realistic framework for studying human life, in particular individual welfare and social states, from a different perspective compared to those prevailing in philosophy and economics; under a socioeconomic profile, they share the idea who human themselves ought to avail of their own strength in order to improve their life. Sen's capability approach's core ideas are those of functioning and capability: the former refers to "an achievement of a person: "what he or she manages to do or to be", as well as <<a part of the "state" of that person>>, but it ought "to be distinguished from the commodities which are used to achieve those functioning" (Sen, 1985a, p. 10)⁸. Instead, the latter are about "those beings and doings that constitute human life and that are central to our understandings of ourselves as human beings⁹", as Robeyns (2017, p. 39) emphasized. In particular, capabilities is the set of alternative functionings who an individual owns, representing his/her concrete freedom to choose between different possible combinations of functionings in order to improve his/her condition.

In this last decade, however, a decisive clarification about capability approach has been made by Sen himself: I claim how this represents an epic breaking point compared to the available literature, as we will deepen in Section 6. In the interview with Baujard, Gilardone and Salles (2010), Sen claimed with a certain strength:

<< 'I have to rescue myself by saying [thumping table] "I'm not a capability theorist! For god's sake, I'm not a capability theorist" (Sen in Baujard, Gilardone & Salles, 2010) The evident disagreement between Amartya Sen and his commentators regarding the status of capability is puzzling, and cries out for a clarification of the role of capability in his theory of justice>> (Baujard and Gilardone, 2017, p. 1)

⁷ Sen elaborated explicitly the capability approach in his Tanner Lecture, "Equality of What?" (1980). However, Erasmo (2019c) showed how he began to develop those topics which will lead to capability approach since the Seventies through his main interlocutors during those years, namely Arrow, Rawls and Harsanyi.

⁸ Functionings are an "a posteriori" compared to commodities, as these latter are used to achieve the former.

⁹ Robeyns (2017) has decided to focus exclusively on human functionings and capabilities in her recent book, remembering how Nussbaum extended capability approach to non-human functionings and capabilities, thus, including non-human animals in her analysis.

Since this interview, Baujard and Gilardone (2017) have concluded how capability approach acquires mainly a heuristic value in Sen's thought¹⁰. This statement sheds a different light either on him and Martha Nussbaum. It is not a case, well before this clarification, she has preferred to talk about "capabilities approach" (Nussbaum, 2000, 2011) using the plural form, instead of "capability approach", like Sen (Gasper, 2007), for differing her approach to his and better explaining how her capabilities are qualitatively plural and quantitatively different. This is a first difference between them.

Another one might be Sen's explicit refusal to offer a well-define and detailed list of capabilities (Sen, 2004) who every individual should have around the world (Guna Saigaran, Karupiah and Gopal, 2013). Indeed, Sen (1988) has supported how his focus on basic capabilities is oriented to specify exclusively a space where evaluations about well-being might be located, rather than proposing a specific formula for them (Déneulin, 2002). In turn, he claimed how the choice of the most relevant capabilities will depend on social concerns and values. This position may be explained through Sen's pluralism, according to which functionings will have different priority and importance in different socioeconomic realities (Sen, 1999). Sen's capability approach does not pretend to provide an exhaustive evaluation of those capabilities should be promoted (Déneulin, 2002), but to offer a framework for evaluating if people have concretely the opportunities to exercise their relevant capabilities (Desai, 1990; Qizilbash, 1996, Sudgen 1993).

On the contrary, Nussbaum (2000) elaborated an objective list of capabilities, confirming her will to use the plural form of this concept, at the aim to offer a more applicable and realistic framework for evaluating individual's well-being. Her central human capabilities are those of life; bodily health; bodily integrity; sense, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play and political and material control over individual own environment (Guna Saigaran, Karupiah and Gopal, 2013). In turn, Nussbaum has enriched her capabilities approach with Aristotelian and Marxian elements about human flourishing and well-being (Gasper, 1997; Déneulin, 2013). Indeed, Sen has highlighted how:

<<at the time of proposing the [capability]approach, I did not manage to seize on its Aristotelian connections>> (Sen, 1993a, p. 30, n.2). He adds, however, that <<the most powerful conceptual connections of the capability approach] would appear to be with the Aristotelian view of the human good>> (Sen, 1993a, p. 46) . He observes, justly, that [t]he Aristotelian perspective and its connections with the recent attempts at constructing a capability-focused approach have been illuminatingly discussed by Martha Nussbaum >>(Sen, 1993a, p. 46) (Walsh, 2003, p. 379)

In this passage, Walsh was quoting an interesting passage of *The Quality of Life* (1993) where he clarified how the Aristotelian reading of capability approach characterized mainly her approach, instead of his. I think how this statement is oriented to reaffirm how original and innovative is his own capability approach, instead being indebted with the Ancient philosophical tradition. Even, Nussbaum (1985, 1987, 1988, 1992, 1993) is totally engaged with Aristotelian philosophical tradition.

And this involvement is fully proved about individuals' "good life"¹¹: Sen and Nussbaum availed respectively of two different concepts, namely "human fulfilment" and "human

¹⁰ I will not deepen more this topic, given that it would be go beyond the aim of this paper and still exists an evaluable development of this analysis about Sen's theory of justice, namely Baujard and Gilardone (2020).

¹¹ The Aristotelian Greek word for explaining good life is eudaimonia. This word acquires a double value in his thought: on the one hand, an ethical value, referring to the realization of a plurality of personal "capabilities" thanks to the exercise of *phronesis*, such as wisdom, able to direct actions towards the goal of happiness, in a certain horizon of sense; on the other, a social value, without ignoring interpersonal relationships and the practice of *philia*, the friendship.

flourishing". But this latter linguistical choice mirrors one more time her debt with Aristotle and Greek tradition. Although the linguistical difference, these two expressions show the same full development of individual capabilities, reaching the highest form of self-realization. According to Giovanola (2005, 2007), the normative criterion for explaining Sen's human fulfilment is embodied by anthropological richness. This latter ought to be understood through the continuous and dynamic building of individual identity where interpersonal relationships, namely those an individual establishes with the others, have a crucial, but not exclusive role. This role assigned to interpersonal relationships is close to that friendship (or "philia") to which Nussbaum refers with her close Aristotelian "human flourishing".

But Martha Nussbaum is not only famous for her "Aristotelian" capabilities approach, indeed, she goes beyond Amartya Sen's thought: she is also one of the godmother of relational goods, an exponent of universalist feminism (Erasmio, 2020b), careful to individual specificities, but focusing on vulnerability and compassion. Nussbaum (1986) has introduced the term "relational goods" almost simultaneously with other authors, like Donati (1986), Gui (1987) and Uhlener (1989). These goods are non-instrumental relationships oriented to satisfy that human need of social interaction¹²: a relational good "is" and "expresses" the relationship itself between individuals¹³. Her understanding of relational goods is complex, but it might be summarized through the categories of reciprocity, persistence, motivation and indispensability¹⁴ (Erasmio, 2019a).

Nussbaum (2002) is also a committed feminist, supporting a universalism which is neither insensitive to differences nor imperialist: rather she has offered an ideal framework for analysing gender differences since her capabilities approach, elements which are not so seminal in Sen. In general, she is engaged in all individual specificities: in particular, Nussbaum is careful to that vulnerability which characterizes children, illnesses and elder. According to her perspective, a theory of social justice might not avoid these categories: in this way, Nussbaum has shown a certain criticism towards those liberal theory of justice, as the Rawlsian one, as they grasp dignity, individual moral capacity and physical world as something different (Erasmio, 2020b). On the contrary, her Kantian universalism makes Nussbaum (1994) theory of justice careful to others, which are morally relevant, while their specificities are morally irrelevant compared to those moral obligations we have compared to them. Since her position, it follows an individual commitment compared to human beings all.

Considering these elements, perhaps the main difference between Sen and Nussbaum is her care about vulnerability which leads her to develop the theme of compassion, absent in his thought. Since her capabilities approach, Nussbaum has tried to rehabilitate the emotions in economic field. On the contrary, Sen's sentiments have exclusively an economic nature, deriving from the dynamism of economic actions, as we will see in Section 5. Nussbaum questioned the rehabilitation of moral sentiments, distancing herself both from the classical problem of emotions' irrationality and the difficulty to convert them into actions. In this space of the rediscovery of sentiments, she considers fundamental compassion (Nussbaum, 1996), given its ethical, moral and political value (Boella, 2006).

¹² For a more exhaustive analysis of relational goods, including their positional value, see Fiorito and Vatiéro (2013).

¹³ This is a new kind of economic good, differing those goods where: on the one hand, the quality of the relationship between individuals is seminal; on the other, economic good and relationship are distinguished to each other, like in personal services (Bruni and Zamagni, 2004).

¹⁴ In a nutshell, these relational goods survive until a relationship exists: thus, "reciprocity" is fundamental for their "persistence". Instead, "motivation" is fundamental in order to distinguish a relational goods from a simple instrumental relationship. Finally, the individuals involved in this relationship are indispensable: whether they change, it will be another different relational good.

In her analysis, Nussbaum has focused both on compassion and empathy: however, I have decided to deepen mainly the former, given that the latter would require a longer analysis compared to that may provide in a section¹⁵. Through compassion, Nussbaum is close to Aristotle and Hellenistic tradition, as individuals are not impartial spectators in front of other pains and sufferings, rather a sympathetic spectator, like in Aristotelian tragedy. Furthermore, compassion has an ethical value which allows to establish a link with others thanks to what may be defined as “concreteness of human condition”. In *Upheavals of Thought* (2001), Nussbaum explained how compassion is an emotion which might create a physiological and natural watershed with others, bringing morality in bodily dimension, with its set of needs and weaknesses. Certainly, compassion does not equal with feeling other pains or sufferings, but we may understand their conditions because of the awareness of our own vulnerability. This partial identification with others is possible thanks to empathy. Since this latter, we can express this insight of others’ condition through our evaluative judgements, given this relationship between cognitive and ethical-moral dimensions.

These are further, significant differences compared to Sen which makes Nussbaum’s thought original and distinct from his: on the one hand, in Sen’s thought, a similar attention to bodily dimension is absent, maybe, due to Nussbaum’s more philosophical perspective; on the other, in turn, in front of human pains and sufferings, Sen’s economic agents perceived them through commitment, as a simple sense of duty to act in order to fight injustice. Indeed, Sen has a strong ethical sense, but his morality does not have any corporeity, opposite to Nussbaum more complete approach to these topics.

5. Emma Rothschild: the warmness of economic sentiments as dynamism of economic agents

In 1991, Amartya Sen married Emma Rothschild, his third wife, a British economic historian, professor of History at Harvard University. Among her main interests, there are figures like those of Nicolas de Condorcet and Adam Smith. Her role was fundamental in order to get Sen closer to the former (Caruso, 2002), after Hirschman’s contribution¹⁶, as seen in Section 3. Simultaneously, Sen influenced Rothschild in her masterpiece *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet and the Enlightenment* (2001). In turn, her reading is seminal for understanding Sen’s debt compared to the theory of moral sentiments. So, they mutually influenced to each other, thanks to their relationship which is not only human, but intellectual.

Significantly devoted to Sen, Rothschild (2001) tries to subtract Smith to that thread who saw him as the prophet of *homo economicus*, like *On Ethics and Economics* (Sen, 1987), but returning his more authentically human essence. Differently from Sen’s reading, she considered an under-developed theme, namely Condorcet’s role in economic Enlightenment. Together with Smith, indeed, Condorcet was an exponent of what she defined ‘warm Enlightenment of economic sentiments’. But we have to proceed gradually. In *Economic Sentiments*, Rothschild explained the reasons why Condorcet and Smith do not have had great fortune since the XIXth century, both subject to a misleading reading, being respectively accused to be a utopian rationalist and a reductionist (Ciocca, Galli, Rothschild and Zamagni, 2004). This unproper reading is probably due to the weaking of institutions during the rise of neoliberalism, opposite to Condorcet and Smith politics which assigned an important role to State. In her essay, Rothschild would preserve these authors from a misleading understanding through a double

¹⁵ For further details, see Carr (1999); Crisp (2008).

¹⁶ It is interesting that Sen and Rothschild wrote the “Afterword” for the 2013 edition of *The Essential Hirschman*. This element shows how these female figures are an important trait d’union of his thought.

reading: on the one hand, based on proximity, where authors are analysed in their own context; on the other, based on distance, locating them in the historical logics of their time, but providing an imagine able to overcome that apparent dichotomy between the cold light of reason and the warmth of economic life. About this latter, Rothschild wanted to distance her reading from that Enlightenment's understanding for which rationality is indifferent and uniform, 'cold', at the goal to make economic life and judgments expressed by individuals in their relationships (including trading) a matter of sentiments.

Before deepening the value of "coldness", I would clarify the meaning of economic sentiments in her thought. When Rothschild talked about these "economic sentiments", she did not refer to a sort of Leopardian romantic sentimentalism, as she pointed out. Rather, this is a contemporary anthropological, economic and moral humanism with radical political consequences. Indeed, through this rich analysis, she would solve the difficulty of dialogue between institutions, especially market and State, not unlike Sen (1985c). According to Rothschild, the 'coldness' of Enlightenment was described by Hegel (1807) like two different kinds of awareness: on the one hand, a discrete, rigid and sought atomism which led to an exasperation of individual interests that mainstream economics erroneously associated to Smith, looking at him as the prophet of *homo economicus*, as abovementioned; on the other, a "cold" universality, simple and inflexible, which led to Terror during the French Revolution, the coldest death in Hegel's reading who his contemporaries associated to the figure of Condorcet, considered by them as the Apocalypse of the thought. On the contrary, Rothschild supported that we need to talk about "warm Enlightenment" for referring to these authors: human actions derives not only by rationality, but "warm" sentiments.

This warmth may be tracked in those motivations beneath decision-making, including those selfish and self-referential. Oddly enough, Rothschild incorporated also indirect taxation as a matter of sentiments (Condorcet, 1847-1849): complying to her perspective, every dynamic economic activity is "sentimental". I claim how this warmth as dynamism which Rothschild found in Smith and Condorcet's works is the same of Sen's 'conception of what people are'¹⁷, availing of Davis (2012) significant definition, in particular his 'anthropological elasticity'. This latter equals with individual opportunity to adapt himself/herself compared to the challenges concerning the reality who surrounds him/her, contrarily to that stillness which characterizes *homo economicus* (Erasmus, 2020a). In particular, we might observe a similar dynamism within the two main relationships an individual is able to establish (Erasmus, 2020a), namely: with his/her self (intrapersonal relationship), modifying his/her motivations compared to decision-making taking into account of others' goal and welfare (Sen, 1977, 1985b), availing of his/her reflexivity (Davis, 2007); with extra-personal reality, especially with others (interpersonal relationship). Hence, what the warm Enlightenment of economic sentiments and Sen's economic anthropology have in common is that individual behaviours derive from changeable motivations, in space and in time, without losing his/her rationality, differently from mainstream *homo economicus*.

After this overview about the meaning of "warmth", I think it is useful to explain better how concretely this Enlightenment realized compared to Rothschild's reading and why this is close to Amartya Sen's works. Firstly, this passage realized in Condorcet and Smith's thought through three different levels (Ciocca, Galli, Rothschild, Zamagni, 2004): the first has a moral and social character where society is understood as a relational plot thanks to what she defined as

¹⁷ This is the way Davis (2012) refers to Sen's understanding of individuals in his later economic thought. This latter has appreciated so much his analysis to reply him with this enthusiastic words "Among the many important clarifications and assessments that John Davis has provided, the one that is most striking...is his diagnosis that the approach presented in *The Idea of Justice* depends on large part on my 'conception of what people are'...I do agree with Davis's diagnosis, and I am very glad that he has helped to bring out sharply something that was too implicit...in my own writing "(Sen, 2012).

'domestic' virtues (like mutual confidence and moderation in order to avoid extreme behaviours towards the others) which are progressively acquired by society through their development itself; the second has an economic value where sentiments equal with interest, acquiring the characteristics to be neither exclusive nor conflictual within a society averagely developed; the third level has a political character, as it looks at the contradiction of this world in the light of the theory of sentiments. Indeed, our world is simultaneously, on the one hand, secure, thanks to the domestic virtues which denote a certain anthropological optimism; on the other, insecure, because without any dogmas, overshadowed by uncertainty. As Rothschild argued, this leads to a double political dynamic: bottom-up, through a discursive and relational activity among men; top-down, through legislative and coercive actions which are fundamental in order to create an equilibrium compared to the realization of subjective preferences.

I would avail of Rothschild's reading in order to show how, in Sen's thought, there are almost the same elements which leads towards a similar "warm Enlightenment" in contemporary age: not differently from Condorcet and Smith, progress is understood by Sen (1993) as 'development', such as the expansion of individual virtues, through behaviours, for example, complying to commitment¹⁸. These actions become opportunity for establishing relationships which are more than instrumental, rather interpersonal: given that every sentiment mirrors individual interests, neither exclusive nor conflictual, cooperative strategies are legitimated, without losing economic agents' rationality, rediscovering social dimension compared to merely economic interests (Davis, 2009); about reality, this is characterized by instability, reason why Sen has always refused to write a complete and total list of capabilities, considering also how economic agents preferences change. From this dynamism and heterogeneity, it follows behavioural unpredictability about Amartya Sen's economic agents¹⁹.

Thanks to Rothschild's reading, it is possible to extend the available literature about the echo of Smith on Sen's thought (Bréban and Gilardone, 2020; Eiffe, 2010; Walsh, 2000, 2003), including also the influence of this warm Enlightenment through this two authors: in a nutshell, since her analysis, it is straightforward the contribution of these authors on Sen's notion of human fulfilment and the sense of duty in front human deprivations. Coming back on Nussbaum, Sen's human fulfilment is a condition of Aristotelian happiness, like her human flourishing, as abovementioned, but I emphasize his debt with Condorcet and Smith's conception of progress like development. Indeed, human fulfilment is composed of two distinguished moments which mutually exercise a feedback to each other: on the one hand, the process which leads to human fulfilment, the progress understood as development; on the other, the condition of achieved human fulfilment, the Aristotelian happiness.

In turn, moral sentiments and economic interests contribute to individual realization in Sen's thought through those social relationships he/she might establish with others which contribute at the flourishing of human existence. In this regard, we might find in Sen the same Smithian three levels of analysis: the first is subjective where an individual scrutinizes himself/herself for a proper building of his/her identity (Davis, 2007), namely in Sen's intrapersonal relationship (Erasmio, 2020a); the second is intersubjective, where the building of individual identity is also produced through the relationships an individual establishes with others, like in Sen's interpersonal relationships (Erasmio, 2020a); the third is objective about

¹⁸ Availing of Sen's own words: "If the knowledge of torture of others (...) does not make you feel personally worse off, but you think it is wrong and you are ready to do something to stop it, it is a case of commitment. (Sen, 1977, p. 326)

¹⁹ I agree with Bobulescu and Laudet (2019) about how this instability was not so different from Keynes (1936) animal spirits in decision-making, but I would like to develop this question in a successive, more specific work, given that their consideration was indeed born since a seminar I held in Caen about Amartya Sen's economic anthropology which is explicitly mentioned in the abovementioned work.

the relationships an individual establishes with institutions, like market and State, as in Sen's extra-personal relationships (Erasmus, 2020a).

About the sense of duty in front of human deprivations, these latter are never understood as pains and sufferings from which it may follow an emotive recognition of this human condition in Condorcet and Smith. They influence only concrete actions in order to stop these inequalities, like in Sen (1977, 1985b, 2005b) commitment: this confirms how economic feelings are not a sort of emotionality, but the product of individual actions²⁰.

Sen's debt with Smith is also emphasized by Walsh (2003), but availing of a different perspective: focusing on Sen's engagement for a virtuous methodological dialogue between positive and normative economics, he defined this approach a "Renaissance or second phase of classical economists" (Walsh, 2003), opposite to "Ricardian minimalism". According to Walsh's definition, Ricardian minimalism equals with Sen (1987) engineering-based approach which avoids normative elements, like Ricardo, Sraffa and von Neumann did. Hence, the Renaissance of classical economics is a rediscovery of normative elements within economics which corroborated Sen closeness to Smith's Enlightenment (Erasmus, 2020c).

6. An overview about the most influential female scholars engaged in Sen's thought: the "capability approach-centered perspective" and the "capability approach-heuristic value"

I think that this Section offers the occasion to enhance the works of the most influential female scholars engaged in Sen's thought and, in turn, to distinguish the main schools of thought among the contemporary female available literature. About this latter, I claim we may distinguish two different perspectives about Sen's thought: on the one hand, a "capability approach-centered perspective", born at the beginning of the XXIth century, mainly focused on the analysis and application of his capability approach; on the other, an enough different perspective focused, on the contrary, on "capability approach-heuristic value", arisen very recently. Thus, in this Section, I will proceed following a simply historical order compared to these two main schools of thought²¹.

At the beginning of the XXIth century, the most important female works concerning Sen's thought were published with a worldwide hit: these successful scholars have been Sabina Alkire, Severine Dénéulin, Wiebke Kuklys and Ingrid Robeyns. In particular, they have in common what I defined a "capability approach-centered perspective", providing a general analysis of its meaning and affording a quantitative application to specific economic questions, like human development, inequalities, poverty, social justice, just to mention a few.

In alphabetic order, Sabina Alkire, University of Oxford, is an economist: her doctoral thesis, *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction* (2002) showed how Sen's capability approach may be coherently and practically employed in order to reduce poverty. Successively, she has continued to work about capability approach and poverty in quantitative terms: indeed, together with James Foster, Alkire developed the so-called "Alkire Foster Method", a method for measuring multidimensional poverty, including the range of deprivations they suffer and aggregating those information about society poverty (Alkire and Foster, 2011; Alkire, S., Foster, J., Seth S., Santos M. E., Roche J. and Ballon, P, 2015). Actually, she is the director of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), established at the University of Oxford in 2007. She is also a fellow of the Human Development and

²⁰ Probably, an interesting criticism might be addressed to Sen for his lack about emotions in the traditional sense of the world.

²¹ I clarify how this is not an exhaustive lists of all the female scholars engaged in Sen's analysis: in this sense, I think it would be evaluable a whole, more comprehensive paper devoted to a similar enquiry in order to highlight all the different, multidisciplinary researches born since Sen's works.

Capability Approach (HDCA). Among her further activities, there are her engagement with the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, the European Commission, the UK's Department for International Development and the United Nations Human Development Programme Human Development Report Office. One of her co-authors is another important Sen's female scholar, Severine Dénéulin, University of Bath: she is an economist, interested in Amartya Sen's capability approach and development issues. Among her most famous works, there are *An introduction to the Human Development and Capability Approach: Freedom and Agency* (2009), written with Lila Shahani, devoted to social sciences scholar and development practitioners, and *Well-being, justice and development ethics* (2014) at the goal of providing a wide overview about human development and capability debates.

Instead, Wiebke Kuklys, Cambridge University, was an economist who prematurely and tragically disappeared in 2005, at the age of 33, few months after having defended her PhD dissertation which was published posthumously, *Amartya Sen's Capability Approach: Theoretical Insights and Empirical Applications*. This essay is still one of the most complete for deepening theoretical and empirical elements concerning Sen's capability approach. In her brief, but significant life, among her credits, Kuklys extended the capability approach through the application of new statistical techniques²². Thanks to her open-minded thinking, she combined new ideas with a special care for the most fragile people (Kuklys, 2004, 2005).

Then, Ingrid Robeyns, Utrecht University, is both an economist and a philosopher : her doctorate thesis was entitled *Gender Inequality: A Capability Perspective*. Her PhD supervisor was Sen himself. In her long career, she has focused mainly on capability approach, as well as in social justice and desirable institutional change. Her most important work is *Well-being, Freedom and Social Justice: the Capability Approach Re-examined* (2017). Among her activities, she is Past President of the HDCA association and she is actually director of the "Fair Limits Project" which analyses distributive rule which ought to be upper limits about those resources it is morally and ethically acceptable to have, following a multidisciplinary approach which spaces from philosophy of distributive justice to non-liberal and/or non-Western approaches.

In this space of female scholars engaged his Sen's capability approach, there is also Enrica Chiappero-Martinetti, University of Pavia, an economist who has applied capability approach, in an extremely original way, to fuzzy logic: her earlier studies about the topic dated back to 1994, with the pioneering paper *A new approach to evaluation of well-being and poverty by fuzzy set theory*. She is the current editor of the "Journal of Human Development and Capabilities". I have decided to analyse this figure apart from the others because her approach differs from the other abovementioned scholars for this different application in fuzzy logic. Recently, together with Osmani and Qizilbash, two of the most influential scholars of Amartya Sen's capability approach, she has published an essay *The Cambridge Handbook of Capability Approach* (2020).

An important and reversal compared to this "capability approach-centered perspective" is represented by Antoinette Baujard and Muriel Gilardone's works. In particular, Baujard, University of Lyon, is an economist and Deputy Director of GATE Lyon Saint-Etienne: her main research fields ranges from voting experiments and social choice theory to philosophy and methodology of normative issues, including history of welfare economics. Among her more recent contribution, there is a co-edited volume with Roger E. Backhouse and Tamotsu Nishisawa entitled *Welfare Theory, Public Action, and Ethical Values. Revisiting the History of Welfare Economics* (2021). Gilardone, University of Caen, is an economist: she is interested in public policies, voting and democracy, social justice and human development, while her approach is oriented to the history of economic thought, philosophy of economics and feminist economics. Since 2020, she is an active member of the "History of Economics Diversity Caucus"

²² I have found these information on the website of the HDCA group. They have devoted a Prize in her honour, see: [Kuklys prize | Human Development and Capability Association \(hd-ca.org\)](https://www.hdca.org/)

in order to promote inclusion, pluralism and opening to the history of economic and philosophical thought. Among her more recent works, there are two interesting historical analysis, namely *Rawls's influence and counter-influence on Sen: Post-welfarism and impartiality* (2015) and a co-authored paper with Bréban, *A missing touch of Adam Smith in Amartya Sen's account of public reasoning: the man within for the man without* (2020).

In the abovementioned interview with Sen (Baujard, Gilardone and Salles, 2010), they shed a very different light on Sen's capability approach in order to avoid certain dangerous absolutizations which can derive from excessive focus on this element only, as Erasmo (2019c) emphasized. In their successive works, these two female scholars are developing a new hermeneutics about Sen's thought where capability approach acquires mainly a "heuristic value" (Baujard and Gilardone, 2017), while their main effort is a shift towards about further, underestimated elements concerning his thought, like positional objectivity, as they show in their very recent contribution (Baujard and Gilardone, 2020, p.3). In a nutshell, Baujard and Gilardone are supporting how positional objectivity refers to persons' view where the guiding principles are those of agency and transpositional acceptability and impartiality. In turn, this allows to create a watershed between positional objectivity and impartiality which are fundamental for a more exhaustive reading of Sen's theory of justice²³.

7. Concluding remarks

The main result of this paper is that, on the one hand, Sen has favoured the enhancement of these female's figures both in economics and philosophy; on the other, these female's figures have undoubtedly and significantly influenced his own thought. Thus, it is better to talk of a mutual and peer influence to each other. About the two contemporaries schools of thought analysed, I claim how one does not exclude the other because they are engaged in two different duties compared to economics: indeed, the exponents of the "capability approach-centered perspective" work on operative applications in concrete fields of economic reality, while the "capability approach-heuristic value perspective" is mainly a hermeneutic and historical approach to Sen's thought in order to offer a more exhaustive reading of his thought. Finally, they have a different, but not conflictual perspective on the same author.

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²³ I prefer to not enter in further details about this work, inviting the readers to follow all the updating provided by the authors. However, the key point has been highlighted, namely their very alternative view compared to Sen's hermeneutics, shifting from capability approach to positional objectivity's role in his theory of justice.

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