



Giuseppe Eusepi (1949–2020)

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The first impression most of us who attended the professional meetings of the Public Choice Society had of Giuseppe Eusepi was of the blind fellow who went from session to session on the arm of his devoted wife. It must have been a major endeavour for him and Maria to attend those meetings but this they did regularly for many years. Those of us who got to know him learned to see past his affliction to recognize the keen mind and prodigious memory and intellectual curiosity that characterised his professional persona. But that he managed to achieve all that he did achieve in spite of his blindness made everything about this scholar just that much more remarkable.

I am reliably informed¹ that we first met personally at the European Public Choice Society meetings in Valencia in 1994. But we had already corresponded as early as 1982 in relation to a possible visit to the Public Choice Center in its Blacksburg incarnation. The visit was finally realised in 1984 when the Center had moved to Fairfax and its new home in George Mason University. Giuseppe had long been a fan of Jim Buchanan's work partly because he saw in it affinities with the work of Italian public finance scholars (and especially of Francesco Ferrara and Antonio De Viti de Marco), affinities that Buchanan had already identified during a period in Italy under a Fulbright scholarship in 1955/6 and which are recorded in Buchanan (1960). Giuseppe was a particular enthusiast for Buchanan's *Cost and Choice* (1978) perhaps the most resolutely subjectivist of Buchanan's books and like Buchanan, [beginning with Buchanan (1958)] carried throughout his life an interest in public debt financing [a topic on which Giuseppe himself wrote extensively. For Giuseppe's views on the Buchanan connection to the Italian tradition, see Eusepi (2020)].

¹ By Giuseppe's wife Maria who is a prodigious archivist along with her other skills.

Harold Geoffrey Brennan had initiated the special issue in honor of Giuseppe Eusepi in 2020 and authored a draft of this Editorial in 2021. To the dismay of the rest of us 'Geoff' passed away in July 2022 (Hartmut Kliemt).

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Giuseppe later also visited the Australian National University for about a month (in July 1999) – where he and I collaborated on a couple of papers. One little anecdote I recall involves an evening during the visit when I had arranged to pick up Maria and Giuseppe to go with them to a chamber music concert. I was a bit late; and our party arrived just as the performing quartet was entering the stage. The effect was that, as we entered, the audience burst into applause which Giuseppe graciously acknowledged by bowing, with a smile and friendly wave to the rest of the hall as we took our seats. Giuseppe was not without a touch of the mischievous!

He was not merely a scholar; he was also an academic entrepreneur. His establishment of the European Center for the Study of Public Choice at the University of Rome 1 (disarmingly entitled “La Sapienza”) was a shrewd move both academically and professionally. It enabled him to pursue funding support, in a more systematic way, both within the university and from outside institutions (something at which he turned out to be highly effective); and as a result, enabled him to bring international public choice scholars of note to Rome to participate in the Center’s conferences and other research programs. Buchanan was the most notable among such international visitors; but the list included other significant American public choice scholars such as Gordon Tullock and Roger Congelton and Richard Wagner. And of course, the visitor program included an impressive array of many eminent public choice scholars from Europe a sample of whom are represented in the pages of this special issue. In the process, the Center also gave Giuseppe himself a certain professional salience and enabled him to develop important research collaborations [including most notably with Richard Wagner]. It needs to be noted that the establishment and management of the Center, like almost everything else in Giuseppe’s life, depended on the dedication and unremitting energy of his wife Maria. She served as the central administrative officer of the Center throughout its life.

One thing that was notable about the Center’s conferences was that everything was managed under a regime of ruthless punctuality. Giuseppe did not hold with the tendency, not entirely unknown in Italian academic circles, to be casual about time. As he used to joke about himself: “I may be an Italian; but I have a Swiss watch!”.

To get a real sense of Giuseppe the person, though, you had to go beyond his academic and professional persona to experience his piano-playing! Exuberant, abandoned to the point of recklessness, totally uninhibited, joyous this was an aspect of Giuseppe that showed, I think, the real man! In objective terms, Giuseppe’s life was one of hardship and challenge beyond the ordinary. Quite apart from the early childhood accident that caused his blindness, he was diagnosed in mid-life with Parkinson’s disease an affliction that temporarily forced him to give up playing the piano – and then in his last years developed a rather painful variant of cancer, the thing that ultimately killed him. But throughout, he never lost his basic joie-de-vivre. He was, remarkably, a happy man!² And he was never happier than when arguing ideas with his friends – except perhaps when trying his hand(s) at some Verdi aria on the piano! Geoffrey Brennan and Hartmut Kliemt.

² This is an aspect of Giuseppe’s spirit that Richard Wagner also emphasises in his tribute to the man in *Public Choice*. See Wagner (2021).

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