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Public Happiness as the Wealth of Nations: The Rise of Political Economy in Naples in a Comparative Perspective

Filippo Sabetti

The professed object of Dr. Adam Smith' inquiry is the nature and causes of the wealth of nations. There is another inquiry, however, perhaps still more interesting, which he occasionally mixes with it, I mean an inquiry into the causes which affect the happiness of nations.

(Malthus 1798: 303, quoted in Bruni and Porta 2005, 1)

The rise of political economy in eighteenth-century Naples was as much a response to the economic conditions of the realm as it was an effort to absorb, modify, and give a hand to the scientific and human progress agitating Transalpine currents of thought. The emerging political economy in Naples stands out in part because its calls for reform and for the creation of a commercial and manufacturing society were not a radical break or rupture with the past. The recognition of the capacity of a commercial society to create wealth was accompanied by the equally important recognition that market transactions between individuals could be perceived both as mutually beneficial exchanges and as genuine social interactions that carried moral value by virtue of the social content. Whereas the Scottish Enlightenment sought to isolate market relationships from other relationships and to separate the concept of a well-governed state from the ideal of the virtuous citizen, the Neapolitan Enlightenment continued to embed the economy in social relations, arguing that good institutions could not function in the absence of good men. Individual happiness was derived from making others happy and not from the accumulation of things.

The Neapolitan project was destined to fail for several reasons: the spirit of reform did not have enough time on its side to generate a sustained cultural renewal to win the heart and mind of people; the transformation of ideas into deeds ran up against the fact that it could not free itself of the barriers that the legislation and practice of the absolutist state had erected for people to overcome the practice of rent-seeking and to exercise their unused capacity in shaping the affairs of the commonweal; and, just as importantly, the context of international trade—dominated as it was by aggressively nationalistic policies and brutal rivalries of stronger nations—did not permit either free trade or secure peace and progress for nations like Naples. The Latin motto of the kingdom—*deliciae regis felicitas populi* (the king's pleasures are the people's happiness)—that the king had stamped on a coin placed under the first stone of the royal palace in Caserta turned out to be difficult to realize. Moreover, some Enlightenment figures from Celestino and Ferdinando Galiani to Gaetano Filangieri could think of free trade and public happiness but not of how to move from the *ancien regime* to a free government. Their “economic liberalism went along with the recognition that political absolutism was necessary” (Imbroglia 2000, 80; see also Ferrone [1989] 2000, 149-150).¹ However, the project remains important for at

¹ Ferrone (2008) has ably sketched Gaetano Filangieri's model of a just and fair society but this model, attractive as it may be on normative grounds, does not pay sufficient attention to how human beings might actually go about

least three reasons. First, it provides an historical illustration of the social dilemmas societies face in moving peacefully from a stable but inefficient state of affairs to one in which people cooperate loyally for the common good—in rational choice theory, moving from a non-cooperative equilibrium to a more cooperative equilibrium bringing welfare gains to all the players. Peaceful transitions take time to develop and take place. Second, it offers a credible alternative to the Hobbesian view of human nature as well as a credible complement to the Scottish model of political economy, both of which have dominated much of the English-language literature. Naples was not a passive receptor but a promoter of new ideas about political economy. Finally, the Neapolitan case has something to offer to current debates among economists and philosophers on the importance of happiness in human life and the so-called “paradox of happiness.” This paper opens an exploration of eighteenth-century Neapolitan political economy as part of a broader research on creative artisanship and organizational innovation in Italian history. It is, therefore, a work in progress.

Social Dilemmas

The situation in the Neapolitan realm in the eighteenth-century was not unlike that which social scientists have in the past forty years come to refer to as “social dilemmas.” While the specific nature of social dilemmas vary considerably, they tend to be characterized by two properties: “(a) the social payoff to each individual for defecting behavior is higher than the payoff for cooperative behavior, regardless of what the other society members do, yet (b) all individuals in the society receive a lower payoff if all defect than if they cooperate” (Dawes 1980, 170). Social dilemmas have also been conveyed through the concepts of “social traps”, “the tragedy of the commons,” “collective-action dilemmas,” and the prisoner’s dilemma. In her presidential address to the American Political Science Association in 1997, the late Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom identified the resolution of these dilemmas as “*the* central subject of political science” (1998, 1). Theoretical predictions on how to get people to cooperate and overcome social dilemmas or traps have challenged social scientists. Theoretical solutions have ranged from imposing a “one-man” rule (be it a Leviathan or the State), or side payments to induce hold-outs to cooperate, to an epistemic revolution among the ruling classes or to a reorientation in shared understanding leading a group of principals organizing themselves voluntarily to retain the residuals of their own efforts.

A chief lesson that can be taken from this rational-choice literature is that it is extraordinarily difficult for one single set of national leaders, or enlightened despots, to affect wholesale positive constitutional changes. Alexander Hamilton was correct when, in considering the reformulation of the American Articles of Confederation in the 1780s, he wondered “whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force” (*The Federalist* no. 1, n.d. 3). The Philadelphia Convention did succeed in reformulating the Articles of Confederation but at the enormous price of not extending the logic of the constitutional formula to all people in the United States, thereby sustaining a “race problem” as a persistent issue in American history (V.Ostrom 1987, 178-81).

creating such a society from the initial condition of an *ancien regime*.

Another lesson that social scientists have learned is that ordinary people across the world can indeed be skilled at resolving collective-action dilemmas, or principal-agent relations in the management of common property resources over extended periods (e.g., Casari and Plott 2003; Ostrom 1990). A survey of such efforts found that effective and long-lasting resolutions of collective-action dilemmas “are frequently negotiated at a micro-level rather than at the macro-level of an entire political system” (Ostrom 1989, 12). This finding lends support to Carlo Cattaneo’s analysis of the successful waterways built by successive generations of patient tillers and engineers and masters of canals while the Po valley was often the theater of war, foreign occupation or misrule by local despots. This led him to observe, more generally, that “the culture and happiness of people do not depend as much on spectacular changes in the political surface as on steady action of certain principles transmitted unobserved through secondary orders of institutions” (Cattaneo [1847] 1956, vol. 3, 115, emphasis in the original; see also, Sabetti 2010, 172).

The rational-choice literature also suggests that when human beings are prevented from cooperating, they necessarily become individualistic (e.g., Sabetti 2000, chap 8). Individualistic action can, thus, become a way of life generated by the pursuit of strategic opportunities available to people as prisoners of the legal order governing public and private activities. These circumstances bear some resemblances to what scholarly studies of the development of African political societies call the two publics: one public sector, founded in indigenous tradition and culture; the other, the civil public sector, is associated with the state administrative structures from which one seeks to gain, if possible, in order to benefit the primordial group (Chabal and Daloz 1999). The same circumstances can in turn become a political instrument which promotes disorder and fosters a logic of corruption and even shadow governments. Analysts making sense of such sets of circumstances face extraordinary normative and empirical challenges.

Historical research on eighteenth century Naples reveals analogous circumstances. Rulers and ruled seemed locked in a many-person analogue characteristics of the prisoner’s dilemma of modern social choice theory. Openness to the prospect for renewal and reform by some was often accompanied by the contrary belief held by others, that since not all the segments of society were open to reform, there seemed no point for any particular segment of society to be open to renewal and reform. We know now that successive political authorities were not averse to improvement, but they experienced difficulties in putting an end to their own practice of taking from, rather than making contributions to, the commonwealth.

For instance, in 1710, the Austrian viceroyalty created the Giunta di Commercio to foster trade; and in 1725, it set the Banco di S. Carlo in order to promote financial transfers. Equally new measures were instituted by the independent kingdom which was established in 1734. In 1739, the government replaced the Giunta di Commercio with the Supreme Magistrate of Commerce to foster and control the development of mercantile activities; in 1740, a new edict was issued to encourage the return of Jews to Naples; in 1742, a new land registry, the *catasto onciario*, was introduced. But, the working of these institutions continued to be hampered by an array of autonomous, uncoordinated and lesser powers, each with its own laws, privileges, and veto powers. In turn, the tangled jurisdictions, laws and privileges promoted the proliferation of the legal profession and ensured the livelihood of many people in Naples with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo (e.g., Woolf 1979, 64). The standard view which assigns to the land owning nobility a propensity to consume rather than invest is slowly being challenged by recent research (Clemente 2011a, 2011b; Frascani 1974; see also Clemente 2004). Many seemingly ostentatious displays of wealth and pomp involving the aristocracy, the monarchy and the church

were also forms of investments and employment. Analysts from Antonio Genovesi ([1765-67] 2005, 35-49) to more recent scholars (e.g., Hoffman 1996) have drawn attention to the fact that it is not easy to draw a sharp line between productive and non-productive activities—between what is useful and what is superfluous or to determine what is growth in a traditional society. But, the preeminence of large land ownership—either in the form of religious organizations and aristocratic families—remained problematic not least because it was often exempt from taxation, thus depriving the government of needed revenues. At the same time, important sources for new ideas and improvement came from the same set of people who tended to derive considerable benefits from the status quo—namely, city-based lawyers, nobles, and churchmen.

Ordinary people faced other dilemmas. The prospects of moving from the countryside to cities like Naples reduced the danger of famine and insured relatively low food prices. But the growing urban population created the necessity to send large quantities of grain to cities which, together with the prohibition to export grain and material utilized by the guilds, kept prices artificially low, continuously hampered trade, and gave inordinate power to merchants (e.g., Chorley 1965; Maiorini 2000; Rao 2000, and 2005; Salvemini 2000). The fiscal system was rigged against the common people and the countryside, but historians have discovered that local populations were far from being “sacks of potatoes” or hapless victims of circumstances. People used multiple strategies to minimize exposure to systems of rule rigged against them. Various forms of resistance emerged which in time became ways of coping with the contingencies of life (Cerere 2011; Musi 2007a, and 2007b, 89). Like the Roman and Venetian countryside (Castiglione 2005; Cozzi 1973; Muir 2000), the Neapolitan countryside was often a site of contestation between, on the one hand, great aristocratic families and expanding administration of the political regimes and, on the other, marginalized villages using local oral tradition as well as ideas and texts exported from outside to defend themselves against outsiders. Often, the same dynamics pitted neighboring villages against one another (e.g., Astarita 1999; Cerere 2011; see also Dandalet and Marino 2007, 3-9; Marino 2007, 407-29; Spagnoletti 1994). John Marino was not using the language of social choice theory, but the conclusion of his work on pastoral economics captures the general case of social dilemma:

The backwardness of the Kingdom did not depend upon resistance to sorely overdue land reform or exploitation by foreign merchants. The backwardness of provincial life did not depend upon who controlled the means of production or even what products were produced. Instead, geography, livelihood, nobility, government, and markets generated a system of overlapping and intertwining patron-client relationships. The irreconcilable contradictions of these antagonistic interest groups generated an internal structure in which each component part reinforced and supported the others, while at the same time undermining and opposing them. This internal, multidimensional dialectic institutionalized reality into an ideology of conflict without change (Marino 1988, 259; see also Chiosi 1986).

We still do not know if and when communities of people in the South overcame social dilemmas; moreover, we know very little about what happened to the long-enduring institutions of self-governance involving the management of common property resources of pasture, land,

forestry, and water that were part of the “ancient constitution” of Naples and Sicily (e.g., Cassandro 1943; Carnevale 1910; Grossi 1981; Pocock [1957] 1967, 16-18; Sabetti 1999, 2004; Trifone 1963; see also Corona 2004). What we know about the past from liberal, Crocean, and Gramscian historiography and from anti-Spanish sources is too one-sided to be reliable. Ferdinando Galiani was “an astute observer” (Reinert 2011, 189) but he was probably exaggerating when he wrote that Naples had not “breathed the air of liberty” for two millennia (quoted in Reinert 2011, 189). Stephan R. Epstein (1992, 163) observed, in his magisterial analysis of economic development and social change in late medieval Sicily, the tendency to project, often unthinkingly, eighteenth-century failings onto previous centuries has not helped understanding of the past while reifying clichés of all sorts. What we know with some certainty about the history of the South is that solutions imposed from above—even when they came from enlightened despots—did not work to resolve social dilemmas. In fact, such attempts often made things worse, such as when Neapolitan officials tried to reform Sicilian institutions.²

By the 1770s, concern for the failings of the Sicilian political economy and the consequences that these were having upon Sicilian life was becoming widespread among members of the Sicilian baronial class. This concern was stimulated by the writings of publicists who, as ecclesiastics, noblemen or jurists, had already special interests in economics, education, and law. The study of Sicilian history, coupled with the discovery of British and French thinkers such as Blackstone, Hume, Adam Smith and Melon, led the great majority of Sicilian publicists to conclude that reforms advantageous to all could be introduced in accordance with the Sicilian political tradition. Conversely, this same concern led Neapolitan Bourbon officials to antithetical conclusions. In order to remedy those failings, they reasoned, it was necessary to bring down the entire edifice of the Sicilian government—in effect, to extend absolutist rule over the island. They equally ignored what many Neapolitan thinkers—from Doria to Genovesi—were suggesting for Naples itself (e.g., Rao 1982).

The marquis Domenico Caracciolo of Villamaina was appointed viceroy of Sicily in 1781. As the Neapolitan envoy in Paris for more than a decade, the sixty-year old former magistrate had developed an admiration for the ability with which successive French monarchs had curtailed seigniorial jurisdiction and centralized the organization of the French state. The study of French political practices and ideas led Caracciolo to conclude that in order to repair Sicilian government and economy, it was necessary “to liquidate the heredity of the past” (quoted in Pontieri 1943: 164). No intermediate power, secondary organizations, or deliberative assemblies should stand between the monarch and the Sicilian people.

As soon as he reached Sicily in 1781, the new viceroy confounded in indiscriminate hatred all things Sicilian—both the worst and what was best in Sicilian political tradition. He attempted to check baronial abuses but also to undermine the political covenant between the monarch and the barons. He sought not only to reduce the gross inequalities in parliamentary taxation and the accumulated immunities of local corporations but also to erase representative and secondary institutions. He tried not just to break down class distinctions but also to suppress the political rights and liberties of both the aristocracy and the lower classes. Like the French he admired and the Neapolitans he served, the marquis of Villamaina could envisage political equality and free trade but not political liberty and free institutions. Even sympathetic observers like a Spanish envoy sent to Sicily (Simon de Las Casas quoted in Ajello 1991, 398; Giarrizzo 1992, 118-19) noted that Caracciolo’s manners and ways of doing things were so “polemical, aggressive, despotic [and] contemptuous” to the point of being counterproductive. By declaring

² The subsequent paragraphs draw heavily on Sabetti [1984] 2002: 29-32, 42-45.

himself the enemy *at once* of Sicilian barons and Sicilian institutions, Caracciolo transformed baronial opposition to tax reforms into a defense of the Sicilian nation (see also Giarrizzo on Caracciolo quoted in Ferrone [1989] 2000, 411, note 56). As a result, baronial pressures on Sicilian officials in Naples to have the Bourbon court recall the viceroy received the support of the very same people Caracciolo thought needed to be delivered from bondage.

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the rise of political economy produced large expectations about the potential for resolving long-standing problems. Gaetano Filangieri's famous exhortation—"philosophy to the aid of government"—implied multiple meanings and courses of action fraught with ambiguity and low probability of success (Galasso 1989; see also Ajello 1976, chap.7; Di Donato 1966), but it conveyed the rising expectations about the cultural renewal implied by the progress of arts and sciences.

The Progress of Arts and Sciences

In the early 1950s, Joseph Schumpeter ([1954] 1959, 177) identified as high-level the Enlightenment contributions of the Neapolitan and Milanese schools to economic analysis. But, in the discussion Schumpeter focused almost exclusively on the Milanese. Since then, a rich literature has emerged, highlighting how Neapolitan scholars engaged in conversations among themselves and with others as far away as Scotland, to build on new scientific developments promoting human betterment. Within the constraints of this paper, it is not possible to do justice to—or cite—the relatively vast historiography that is now available in several modern languages. Institutions like the Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici in Naples and the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi in Turin have taken a leading role in the reprint of eighteenth-century classics. But it is possible to identify two distinct but interrelated streams of thought to emerge in the past fifty years or so. One current has focused on the general lineaments of the Neapolitan Enlightenment; the other on particular thinkers and issues.

Vincenzo Ferrone ([1982] 1995) offers a detailed and panoramic view of the intellectual roots of the Neapolitan Enlightenment within the Italian and European context. He sketches the Galilean heritage and the central role that Newtonianism came to occupy in giving shape to the renewal of natural science and Catholic theology; he draws attention to the humanist synthesis achieved with the help of Celestino Galiani and Antonio Genovesi. In turn, the work of Jonathan Israel (2001, 2006) presents a useful corrective about the predominance of English thought, especially Locke and Newton, in the early Enlightenment until about 1730s, just about when Italy was changing its cultural atmosphere (Israel 2006, 513). Israel cuts across the usual distinction between the *veteres* and the *novatores* and differentiates movements of thought along radical and moderate dimensions. He identifies Pietro Giannone, Paolo Mattia Doria, and Giambattista Vico as belonging to a radical current, much closer to Spinoza and the Radical Enlightenment. A moderate current involved thinkers across generations, like Ludovico Antonio Muratori and Antonio Genovesi, who accepted outside influence (Locke, Newton and the *Locchisti* and even knew of Bayle) and revealed religion and miracles (Israel 2006, 517-36; see also Calaresu 2001).

John Robertson (2005) brings together his extensive grasp of comparative philosophy and history to show the extent to which Neapolitan and Scottish thinkers between 1680 and 1760 shared common preoccupations. He suggests that Hume in Scotland and Vico in Naples built

their inquiries on common Epicurean foundations, thus helping the emergence of political economy by the 1760s (cf. Comparato 1970). Robertson is quick to point out that people like Bartolomeo Intieri and Celestino Galiani did much to promote political economy in Naples, without actually writing on commerce. Their chief contribution was in removing obstacles to the spread of news, ideas, and in passing on what they had learned from, among others, Jean-Francois Melon's book on commerce (Jennings 2007). Drawing on primary and secondary sources, Robertson's analysis of Neapolitan political economy is a veritable tour de force. He shows how it was left to thinkers like Ferdinando Galiani and Antonio Genovesi to argue that it was possible to repair Southern underdevelopment by means of domestic and international trade. Galiani focused on money and its circulation in relation to the Neapolitan state's finance and the wider economy; Genovesi sought to stimulate the spirit of industry by insisting on the importance of useful knowledge (Robertson 2005: 347-60). The work of Sophus Reinert adds nuances to the importance of knowledge diffusion and the opportunities and constraints faced by Neapolitan officials and intellectuals in promoting domestic growth through international trade in the context created by the imperial rivalry of France and Britain (Reinert 2007, and 2011).

A second stream of scholarship has dealt more directly with contributions of particular thinkers to commerce, morality, and political or civil economy. A considerable body of work has been produced on the topic since Enrico Vidal's account of the civil thought of Paolo Mattia Doria (1953; see also Rao 1982). Some recent illustrations suffice. Eluggero Pii (2002, 265) and Chiara Continisio (2006) credit Ludovico Antonio Muratori for identifying trade as the particular character of the age, for helping to overcome what Paolo Mattia Doria—anticipating Hume (Hont 2005)—referred to as “jealousy of trade” (Reinert 2009, 254), and for having made it acceptable among Neapolitan thinkers in the form of public happiness. Luigino Bruni and his economist colleagues have written extensively on the theme of public happiness among Neapolitan thinkers as being part of an Italian tradition of thinking about commerce and entrepreneurship going back to San Bernardino da Siena and the civic humanist tradition of *il ben vivere sociale* (e.g., Bruni 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2008; Bruni and Porta 2003, 2005, Bruni and Sugden 2000; Bruni and Zamagni 2007). Bruni reminds us that in 1710 Paolo Mattia Doria opened his book *Della vita civile* with the statement that “[w]ithout a doubt, the first object of our desire is human happiness” (Doria [1710] 2001, 21). Not surprising, Achille Loria, summing up the history of economic and social thought in Italy, observed in 1893 that “all our economists, from whatever regional background, are dealing not so much, like Adam Smith, with the wealth of nations, but with public happiness (Loria [1893] 1904: 85). More recently, Antonio Trampus (2008) offers a wide-ranging comparative, historical context to the search for happiness in eighteenth-century Italy.

Koen Stapelboek (2005) has written perceptively on the thought of Ferdinando Galiani, the author of *Della Moneta*, by reconstructing the debate on the morality of market societies.³ Stapelboek points out that Ferdinando, building on the work of his uncle Celestino, came to view commercial sociability as the outcome of the historical progress of understanding what human nature is. In a collection of readings on commerce, culture, and liberty before Adam Smith, Henry C. Clark (2003) reprints extracts from Galiani's *On Money* and *Dialogues on the Grain Trade*. Similarly, the life and thought of Antonio Genovesi have been the subject of several monographs, before and after Venturi's work (1972) and the much quoted account of Genovesi's intellectual transformation by Bellamy (1987). Enrico de Mas (1971) has written on Genovesi's

³ John Robertson (2005, 347, note 82) quite rightly characterizes as “pioneering analysis” Koen Stapelboek's discussion of moral philosophy in Galiani's political economy.

reactions to Montesquieu (see also Felice 2005), while Paola Zambelli (1972) has provided a detailed account of his philosophical formation. The late Eluggero Pii (1979, 1984) persuasively sketched Genovesi's life and his keen interest in engaging others beyond the peninsula so as to better understand the prospect of human betterment in Naples (see also Robertson 1987). Niccolo' Guasti (2005) has edited an annotated edition of Genovesi's *Diceosina*, mining its rich context and significance for ways to think about the moral foundations of commercial society (Guasti 2006). Over at least two decades, Maria Luisa Perna (e.g., 2005) has brought out annotated editions of Genovesi's lessons on commerce and civil economy. The two-hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the chair of "commerce and mechanics" in 2005 was celebrated by an international conference on Genovesi as an economist (Jossa et al 2007).

Taken together, the two streams of works point to several important preoccupations and conclusions implying the progress of arts and sciences in eighteenth-century Naples. I briefly note them below, elaborating them in some details in the section on Genovesi. Naples itself may have been at the periphery, both economically and politically, but Neapolitan thinkers participated actively in the Enlightenment. Even when disagreeing among themselves about what weight to give to specific issues or themes like morality, economics, and politics, they saw themselves as part of an international republic of letters. This perception carried with it an openness to outside currents of thought for what Neapolitans could learn, emulate, improve, and avoid, thereby contributing to a common pool of knowledge and to the betterment of their society. Transalpine currents of thought from Locke to Montesquieu, and even Bayle, were worthy of serious consideration, and often acceptable, for the following reason: they neither appeared, for the most part, as a deliberate demolition of the past, nor were they designed on unfamiliar principles, employing strange materials, or intending to serve purposes foreign to Neapolitans. The literature notes that Neapolitans were aware that different foreign authors addressed matters differently but they found universal resonance in the various streams of thought (e.g., Chiosi 2009; Robertson 2005, chap. 7). Notwithstanding all the possible constraints imposed by church regulations, reason, and experience as well as forms of *libertas philosophandi* were accepted as part of the new methods of analysis in arts and sciences brought about by the scientific revolution. As their reception of outside thinkers suggest, Neapolitans had learned how to work around restrictions in the liberty of thought (e.g., De Mas 1971).

In particular, studies by Roberson and Reinert show why the cases of England, France and Holland (the latter to a lesser extent) were eagerly studied by Neapolitan thinkers. Combined scientific advances and economic reforms were effective instruments of progress in arts and sciences for they contained principles or propositions of their own, which when acted upon derived certain practical consequences for economic well-being and the happiness of people. Both Robertson and Reinert sketch how different Neapolitan thinkers—and in particular Doria, Genovesi, and Galiani—nuanced, emulated, and interpreted what they had learned from abroad. In this way, besides teaching lessons of moral philosophy, the cases of England and France also taught practical lessons regarding how one became wealthy and powerful in the world, fixed one's agriculture and developed one's manufactures (see also Stapelbroek 2008, chaps.1 and 3). Thus the examples of those countries offered multiple reasons: 1) to avoid and bolster arguments against Hobbesian explanations of society and Bayle's irreligiosity; 2) to absorb, modify, and extend Locke's understanding of human nature and Montesquieu's reservation about the applicability of "republican" virtues to a monarchy; 3) to take to heart French and British lessons about the importance of agriculture and manufacturing for economic growth (Genovesi assigned pivotal importance to manufacturing); 4) to accept and reconcile the teaching of the British

moralists (Shaftsbury in particular) with the lessons in political economy coming from John Cary in particular; and 5) to improve the understanding of the human condition especially as presented by Hume and in time by Adam Smith.

From the examples of France and England, Neapolitan thinkers developed mixed reactions about commerce. It was true that trade and export of grain, and *not* abundance of product as such, were essential for reducing the prospects of famine and for promoting the well-being of the population. But, commerce in itself was no panacea. France and England used it as an instrument of national aggrandizement and as a means for exploiting the structural precariousness of the market outlets for Neapolitan goods (see statements from the British consul in Naples and from the French consul in Messina, cited in Salvemini 2000, 52). Neapolitans witnessed the brute use of naval power with which Britain maintained its hegemony over maritime commerce and foreign affairs, and this was a lesson hard to forget. Hence, the widespread insistence, by Genovesi and others, on first promoting internal commerce so that, in time, external commerce could take place from a position of strength. Protectionism and free trade were not considered antithetical to one another.

At the same time, the positive reception of the scientific revolution coming from abroad was helped by the Italian tradition of physics, mechanics, and entrepreneurship, already familiar to eighteenth-century Neapolitan thinkers. The reception of outside currents of thought pointed to the need, arguably dating back to Muratori, to reconsider some of the foundations of Christian moral philosophy in order a) to respond to the challenge of the time, b) to understand the received wisdom of revelation and tradition in new ways, and c) to integrate the vital elements of the past with new elements offered by the contemporary world. As we shall see, Newtonian science allowed Genovesi and others to add scientific legitimacy to natural law, which was probably a misreading or a stretching of both Newton and natural law. “The prevailing model of man” emphasized the union of mind and body. A critical difference was that it now drew additional strength from the Newtonian analogy of collision of forces used to explain the origins of human action, though this process of thought may have started with Descartes and Bacon as they provided new explanations regarding the interaction between body and mind. It was understood, especially by the middle of the eighteenth-century, by most Neapolitan thinkers that a “modern” virtuous man was not (*stricto sensu*, Christian or Roman) self-sacrificing, but a practitioner of prudential judgment and wise and intelligent public action (of the kind shown, on one side, by don Bartolomeo Intieri and, on the other, by the practical realism showed by Alfonso dei Liguori in setting out a new priestly order, the Redemptorists). This way of conceptualizing what constituted a modern virtuous human being came from the new ways of thinking produced by the scientific and even irreligious advances of the time (e.g., Wootton 1994).

There was widespread emphasis on finding or establishing a moral basis for commerce and individual interest. But the emphasis on morality was not due primarily to a concern for metaphysical or theoretical abstractions. This was a rethinking of the Catholic position which sought to assert that faith and reason went together. Progress in arts and sciences could be considered complete and sound if accompanied by betterment in human morality. “Economia politica” was nothing but the economy of men, that is, the morality that rules human relationships and bonds in society.⁴

⁴ This draws on my reading of almost all the published work of Doria, Gailiani, Genovesi, and Cardinal Bellarmine, among others. Stapelbroek (2008) insightfully introduces the topic.

The diversity between Doria and Muratori's contributions—the former having detached politics from religion and the latter having aimed for the construction of a Christian society based on evangelical teaching—and the contributions of those like Intieri and Galiani who privileged more secular reformism cannot obscure one important fact: there was just as much continuity as there was rupture in Neapolitan thinking.⁵ The chief concerns that preoccupied analysts like Doria in the early 1700s—whether virtue and freedom could coexist with commerce, comfort and luxury, and the very nature of the international trade system that tended to exploit the weak in favor of the strong nations (see esp. passages cited in Ajello 1976)—were still there by the 1750s, i.e., Genovesi's time. A critical difference was that after 1750 Genovesi seemed to be more positive than earlier analysts. Commerce and market were not neutral mechanisms, but they did not automatically lead to greed (or to use anachronistically a modern expression, “possessive individualism”) and could, as Genovesi noted, be made to work for weaker nations like Naples. If properly understood by participants, such mechanisms could be an expression of reciprocal assistance.

Concern with trade was seldom a mere scientific preoccupation. A common aim among most Neapolitan thinkers was to create a spirit of industry and an art and science of self-government among the population so that people had incentives to change their behaviour (“governare se stesso” in Genovesi's *Ragionamento sul commercio universal*, 1757). Winning over the minds of people to new ways of looking at the world—a new cognitive map or *forma mentis*—would lead to the emergence of self-correcting mechanisms for the resolution of social dilemmas or traps plaguing the Neapolitan society (see also Passetti 2009).

The Paradigmatic Significance of Genovesi

Much of the literature on the Neapolitan Enlightenment tends to regard Genovesi as “the leader of the Neapolitan illuministi” (Ferrone [1982] 1995, 246). Scholars are divided over whether Genovesi's enthusiasm for political economy was already present in his thought when he wrote treatises on moral theology, or whether what he wrote as he assumed the first chair of political economy at least in Italy at the University of Naples marked a truly radical departure (e.g., Robertson 2005, 351). There is little doubt that Genovesi's shift from metaphysics to commerce was in part due to his realization that, by the early 1750s, the study of metaphysics had reached insurmountable impasses. The world of abstract philosophy seemed bankrupt (Israel 2001, 57-58). By contrast, the political and economic world looked much more open to positive changes and Genovesi seized the opportunity to play a part in it. He “accepted Bartolomeo Intieri's scientific rationalism alongside Broggia's and Doria's suggestions of Christian economics, and he achieved an interesting synthesis between the irrepressible call for freedom of thought by the scholars cleaving to the school of Bayle and Locke and the teachings of Catholic tradition” (Ferrone [1982] 1995, 246-47).

The paradigmatic significance of Genovesi's thought is that it was more than a mere synthesis of other people's ideas. He weaved together and gave coherence as well as direction to normative theory and historical and comparative analysis in order to address contemporary problems in ways that were both valuable and significantly different from previous efforts. His writings suggest that he genuinely believed that the advancement of arts and sciences could be

⁵ Galiani spent part of his life in Paris under the influence of Jansenists.

harnessed in the creation of civil economy and the promotion of public happiness. Genovesi wrote prolifically in a relatively short period of time. Reinert sketches Genovesi's frenetic pace of activities in his last years, as shown by his insistence on learning from Cary's history of commerce of Great Britain. "Parochialism was a luxury Neapolitans could ill-afford, and translation became the only means of disclosing enlightenment," thought Genovesi (Reinert 2011, 195). He worked extensively to translate and retranslate Cary's history of commerce in Great Britain so that people could learn from the commercial and manufacturing experience of Britain. It is easy to see why Genovesi's thoughts are as wide-ranging and eclectic, as is his style in Italian.⁶ It takes time to read him in Italian, as ideas pile onto each other and his text is rife with multiple qualifications and clauses⁷. As Robertson (2005) notes, Genovesi preferred a discursive to a systematic mode of presentation, with the result that the analytical connections of the propositions he presents are not always clear. When that is duly taken into account, Genovesi's work is clearly discernible for its emphasis on civil economy, though on some occasion he did also refer to "political economy" (Genovesi [1757] 1962, 288).

Civil Economy

Genovesi used civil economy as a summary term to stand for a variety of things. What he meant can best be found in his *Lezioni di commercio o sia di economia civile* ([1765-67] 2005). Eluggero Pii (1984, 19) sees in Genovesi's inquiry a convergence of many themes. The lessons on commerce focus on economic matters and much more. Naples's problems could not be understood or solved in strictly economic terms but involved social, political, and cultural domains. Pii suggested in effect that Genovesi's "civil economy" was another way for saying "civil polity," bringing together economics and politics that other eighteenth-century figures seemed intent on keeping apart. The conceptualization combined ethical dimensions including justice, human needs and motivation, and the duties of "the legislator" to people.

Furthermore, Genovesi's teaching conveyed a sophisticated blend of institutional interactions cutting across the divide of private and public. It included "civic" bodies like the family, which, in his view, constituted the heart of the city and nation, and the context in which people learned the art of governing themselves, individually and collectively (Genovesi [1757] 1962, 285). Bruni (2004a, 2004b) notes that civil economy stood for both a life in common and "a process assisted also by laws, commerce and trade and the civic bodies in which men exercise their sociality." It becomes easy to see why some have suggested that Genovesi's civil economy bore considerable resemblance to the vision of *la vita civile* of civic humanism (e.g., Bruni 2004a, Bruni and Porta 2003). The notion of civil economy thus included similarities and differences with the political economy of the Anglo-Saxon world and the public or social economy typical of France and Northern Italian Enlightenment writers like Pietro Verri. Genovesi spent many pages discussing which model of government was best suited to *vita civile*, but in the end, and especially in his annotations to the translation of Cary, he saw little problem endorsing the model of effective government associated with Peter the Great.

⁶ What he wrote in Latin seems less florid and more rigorously organized and argued.

⁷ The preprint of his work has greatly facilitated access to his ideas; but the reprint of various drafts of his work on commerce seems unnecessarily repetitive and may be somewhat disorienting to readers who approach Genovesi for the first time.

Genovesi's concept of civil economy included the following features. First, he sought to provide people with the intellectual tools or cognitive map for overcoming sources of disorientation in social dilemmas and learn new ways of conducting themselves in order to overcome those dilemmas. He expected people to internalize these new norms to examine their predicament and use these norms to bring about change in their condition. Secondly, like most Transalpine thinkers of his time, Genovesi treated individuals as the basic constituents of the world. But, his "model of man" contrasts sharply with the human psychology that underpins most Enlightenment contributions. Like Vico and Doria earlier (e.g., Naddeo 2011), Genovesi had a clear metaphysical position concerning the nature of human beings as "cocreators with God" of the world they lived in. The group that came closest to his ideas is the one we have come to know as the British moralists.

Third, the emphasis on the importance of trust or *fede pubblica* in organized existence anticipated many modern concerns about trust in the making and breaking of cooperative relations (Gambetta 1988). Fourth, Genovesi shared with other Enlightenment figures and especially with Adam Smith the civilizing mission of commerce but without disaggregating economic relations from other forms of social interaction as Smith seemed to do. Genovesi can be read to suggest that he showed concern about the prospects of commercial markets detaching people from community and decoupling commerce from conquest. Unlike Adam Smith, he seemed less optimistic about the prospects of commercial society reaching those without work or without property. Fifth, the conceptualization of individual happiness as public happiness gave Genovesi's conceptualization a very modern twist. Taken to its logical conclusion, Genovesi's civil economy—if we put aside his endorsement of a model of government *a la* Peter the Great—would lead to a way of life in which all would benefit—in short, to a democracy that for obvious reasons Genovesi could neither anticipate nor envisage. Finally, the analysis draws attention to the importance of time—the *saeculum*—as a critical variable in creating a public sphere receptive to useful knowledge.

Point of Departure

Much of what Genovesi wrote on the civil economy is based on an important presupposition spelled out in his 1753 *Discourse on the true end of letters and sciences*, though it can also be found throughout his later work. He sought to persuade others about the importance of eliciting cooperative behavior in the resolution of problems (here referred to as social dilemmas). Resolutions would be attained not so much by working within existing parameters but by going beyond them. In the language of modern rational choice theory, he aimed to rewrite the rules of the game rather than overcome the prisoner's dilemma by working within existing rules. Equally important, he sought to decouple change and reform from violence and solutions that imposed solutions from above. This concern was to gain much salience from what we know of subsequent efforts at revolutions in Naples and beyond. At one point, Genovesi expressed his vision in this way:

There is truth demonstrated by experience, that men act more courageously and more virtuously if motivated by love than if moved by fear; if they are flattered

with a just reward of their toil than frightened with inopportune threats; if they see themselves acting freely than compelled to act (or acting under coercion); and if they are persuaded by order and art than being pushed by disorder into darkness. This way they are better disposed and gently motivated to promote generously what pleases them and what they understand as advantages. I am certain that if we do all these things we can see a rebirth among us not of a mythical but a true century of gold. By emulating one another, justice, trust, honesty, toil, beautiful and useful knowledge, all the arts and crafts and, yes, abundance and public happiness will triumph over vice, ignorance, sloth, and misery.

Hence, he urged:

These are some of the means by which we can elicit the courage and industry of our people, without which all other gifts that heaven has bestowed on us can never lead to true greatness and happiness (Genovesi [1753] 1962, 262-63).

His readers needed to understand that in their own time virtuous living was not (Christian) self-sacrifice but the practice of good judgment and intelligent action like the public patronage practiced by his own benefactor, Bartolomeo Intieri.

Building a New Cognitive Map

Genovesi's *Discorso sopra il vero fine delle lettere e delle scienze* of 1753 has often been called the Manifesto of the Neapolitan Enlightenment, and for good reason. More than a simple work on economy, as implied by its title, the Discourse has multiple layers of meanings. Although Genovesi paid tribute to the public beneficence of don Bartolomeo Intieri, his primary goal was to build a new cognitive map. This cognitive map aimed at removing intellectual obstacles which prevented officials and others who held veto powers in the political, social, and economic life of the realm from behaving in a manner conducive to the common good. This could be accomplished through changing their motivations so as to remove social dilemmas. Some analysts have referred to this as Genovesi's "epistemological revolution" (Passetti 2009).

His analysis began by insisting on the importance of reason and the useful sciences for resolving practical issues, as opposed to giving precedence to useless abstractions and speculations. He reminded his interlocutors: "Reason is not useful until it has become practice and reality, nor does it become such until it is so diffused in the customs and arts, that we adopt it as our sovereign rule, almost without realizing it" (Genovesi [1753] 1962, 245). He then turned his gaze towards the contemporary state of affairs: "Have the letters reached this stage yet with us?" (Genovesi 245).

His task was to hasten reaching that stage. He sought to arouse the spirit of industry by playing up past glories and contemporary strengths and by reminding his readers of weaknesses to overcome. He sought to correct behavior by introducing new ways of viewing the world. He

repeatedly called up patriotic and cosmopolitan themes to ensure that readers understood his message, which went something like this.

Earlier philosophers had also been legislators, teachers, and priests, and they had understood that the true philosophy consisted in ethics, economics and politics. That knowledge had somehow been lost for several centuries. Thanks in part to Bacon's restoration of philosophy to its original concerns, Italians were renewing their appreciation for, and appropriating for themselves, the study of nature and experience. In this way Italy, having historically been a bastion of civilization after Greece, was regaining its rightful place in the study of astronomy, geometry, and physics (Genovesi [1753] 1962, 241).

From the general, he then turned to the specifics of his case. He reminded readers that nature had endowed Neapolitans with many positive natural and human attributes. He flattered his audience by recalling that past generations had used those endowments but, he continued, relying on past accomplishments or evoking the importance of Naples as part of an ancient civilization was not enough. His contemporaries needed to contemplate the world around them and act on that world in a constructive way. He recalled that Neapolitans were fortunate in living in "the finest part of Europe," and with a new king ready to help. But people now needed to excel more than they had in the past (Genovesi [1753] 1962, 244). He appealed to the best sentiments in the human heart. After all, Neapolitans already possessed mental and physical strength, and abundant resourceful ingenuity. What they needed to do was to cultivate those unused strengths, redouble their dedication and demonstrate persistence and diligence.

Genovesi referred back to classical times to remind readers, again, that they were heirs of that ancient Greek civilization that erected Parthenope in the shadow of Vesuvius, a city and a bay admired ever since by the Romans for its arts, humanism and beauty. Successive generations of people had worked to transform the bay and its surroundings into hospitable places. In recalling the past, however, he was looking to the future. This is particularly evident in his calling up Xenophon. In Genovesi's time, Xenophon was widely read in European literary circles⁸ and his five conditions⁹ for a nation to acquire wealth and greatness were well known: the form of government; physical conditions; location; population; and the industriousness of people. Genovesi used them to determine whether or not Neapolitans could match those conditions.

First, after noting his disagreement with Polybius who had suggested a mixed government as the best form of government, Genovesi agreed with Xenophon that monarchy was the best form of government. Fortunately, Naples now had its own prince; "the sad days of being a province" were over. Second, the soil and climate of the kingdom were fertile and rich, possessing more advantages than Attica had in Xenophon's time. The kingdom produced not only the necessities of life, but also many luxuries like silk, wines, fruits, and fine foods. Genovesi suggested that envy was the motivating force behind the expression coined by some French historian in the seventeenth century, describing Naples "as a paradise inhabited by devils." "Those who live in paradise must seem like devils to those who are not in it" (Genovesi [1764] 1962, 250).¹⁰ Third, the location of the kingdom was ideal for commerce; it was

⁸ Xenophon on tyranny is still read in political theory.

⁹ For a most recent sketch of Xenophon's life, see John Burrow's *A History of Histories. Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* ([2007] 2009). Burrow appropriately recalls that Xenophon's book *The Persian Expedition* "surely contributed to a Western sense of superiority to the Orient from the Enlightenment onward" (56).

¹⁰ This is in striking contrast to what Benedetto Croce (1927) noted about this cliché. The cliché suited Croce's highly idealistic interpretation of Neapolitan history. He did not stop long enough to consider, among other things, that a paradise cannot, by definition, be inhabited by devils. One wonders why since Croce's time other observers continue to repeat that characterization, often unthinkingly. For some Neapolitan reactions to the cliché, see

surrounded by the sea, had excellent sites for ports, and its neighbors were anxious to obtain the goods in which the realm abounded. He drew attention to the importance of commerce in the history of Venice, Genoa, and Tuscany and, referring to more contemporary matters, its primacy in increasing England's wealth and power. In addition, citing the invention of the compass by Amalfitans as a historical precedent, Genovesi alluded to the creative potential of present-day Neapolitans. The latter could accomplish even greater things if they recognized that institutional artisanship was an art, which like other arts, has "ends, rules, and principles." Artisanship must be learned and practiced (Genovesi, 251). He called up "the great Melon" in support of his argument, against those who thought otherwise.

The fourth condition was also readily met. The kingdom's population was more than sufficient to exploit its advantages. Again he invoked 'the wise Melon' on the importance of population, and praised at some length to praise the creative capacity of human beings and of Neapolitans. Only in the fifth condition, namely the industry of its inhabitants, was the kingdom deficient. It was imperative to revive initiative, dynamism and entrepreneurship, and this could be accomplished by emulating the good example of "don Bartolomeo Intieri" as well as the example of industrial entrepreneurs in other countries (Genovesi [1754] 1962: 259; see also Robertson 2005, 353-54). Both Robertson (2005, 353-54) and Reinert (2011, 2, 5, 80, 238) draw attention to how, in Genovesi's discussion of "industry," the word itself came to signify more than personal qualities; it also referred to specific forms of economic activity related to manufacturing needing both "industrious" workers as well as "industrial" establishments.

Genovesi primarily set to arouse the spirit of industry among three classes of people. The first was the nobility, whom he flattered by referring to them as "our great ones." He urged them to renew their ties with the people below them, and to set an example of justice, trust, honesty, and useful knowledge. The second was the clergy, which of all the learned professions had the most time to devote to the study of agriculture and commerce, and the opportunity to pass on their knowledge to the masses. But he placed his greatest hopes for reforms in the third group, "the studious youth." For this reason, he anticipated the need to establish new centers of applied learning in Naples where "the enlightened youth" of the provinces could receive, test, and contribute knowledge and practical application.

Toward the conclusion of the Discourse, Genovesi added a sixth condition of success: a reform of mores, or the importance of good morals and manners. He argued against Montesquieu's opinion that the practice of virtue was useless in monarchies. Men of letters in the kingdom should instill in others the importance of virtue and responsibility, for the greater glory and utility of the *patria*. But his understanding of virtue and responsibility had, in fact, less to do with inculcating a spirit of self-sacrifice or mortification and more to do with the cultivation of prudential wisdom and wise actions regarding earthly matters. According to Genovesi, education was a fundamental tool for spreading arts and sciences, and forming virtuous Neapolitans. Furthermore, education should be conducted in good Italian and not in Latin to ensure its widespread accessibility. His optimism was closely tied to what he perceived as important defining attributes of human beings: a capacity for learning and for improving their well-being. It was specifically these capacities that needed to be encouraged and fostered in Neapolitans. However, he noted, "it is useless to think of art, commerce, government, if one does not think to reform morals" (Genovesi, [1765] 1962, 264, cited in Reinert 2011, 200).

Calaresu (1999), and for a refreshing introduction to ancient and modern Naples, see Hazzard and Steegmuller (2008).

In keeping with his political economy orientation, Genovesi shared with most Enlightenment figures a microfoundational view of the world—the view of individuals as the ultimate and basic constituents of the world, who are malleable by others but who can also shape themselves. Human capacity for self-modification, he noted, could not be underestimated. He observed, “human nature is elastic. This elasticity . . . shows itself when goaded gently and wisely by love, honor and recognition” ([1753] 1962, 263). Later on, in his lessons on commerce, he marveled at some length at the distinct human capacity of self-modification and self-improvement ([1765-67] 2005, 59-61, 275-840). Indeed, he averred, “our happiness depends on a wise modification (of innate properties) and from the reasoned use, that we make of them: misery from their abuse” (Genovesi cited in Bellamy 1987, 291).

There is some question about whether Genovesi actually rejected the mind-body dualism that prevailed in some Enlightenment circles (Bellamy 1987, 285). I would argue that he did indeed reject this prevalent view, as is evidenced by his statement that “*non possum non ridere*” (“I cannot but laugh”) regarding doctrines that accepted this dualism (Genovesi in his 1761 text *Elementorum Metaphysicae*, quoted in Gisondi 2003, 175). He insisted on a union of mind and body. He sketched a complex psychology of human nature that went beyond individual atomism and self-preservation. He considered misguided the attempt to generalize from isolated human consciousness. The world was not something that an isolated mind could imagine and construct, *ex nihilo*.

He rejected philosophical idealism just as much as he had rejected the extreme forms of abstract thought and rationalism in metaphysics. He was open to British sensism and empiricism, but he saw problems there too. By locating the search for knowledge and even for truth primarily in the individual’s sensory and emotional experience of a world without history (and hence without culture *a la* Hobbes) much of British empiricism stood to replace one source (the mind) of knowledge with another (sensory perception and emotions). In addition, given Genovesi’s insistence on the relational aspects of mind and body, it is hard to accept the view that he somehow sharply differentiated between the naturalist and rationalist models of human action. For him, they went together.

Like Alfonso de Liguori,¹¹ the Neapolitan founder of the Redemptorist Order, proclaimed doctor of the Church in 1871, Genovesi derived from Vico and Catholic thought an awareness of the complex historicity and cognitive evolution of humanity, which allowed him to recognize the importance of self-preservation without detracting from the importance of human sociality, as many Protestant or atheistic thinkers of this time seemed to do. In his philosophical treatise on what is just and what is honest, *Della Diceosina o sia della filosofia del giusto e dell’onesto*, Genovesi noted that “every man is led by his nature to love his existence” ([1766] 2008, 19; see also his *Lezioni* [1765-67] 2005, 282). An exclusive or excessive concern with self-preservation was problematic because it did not do justice either to the complex psychology of human action

¹¹ It is often forgotten that Saint Alfonso de Liguori (1696-1787) and Genovesi shared considerations about human nature, sociality and enlightenment (see Girondi 2003), though they differed on how best to interpret other dimensions of the Enlightenment (see comments by Eluggero Pii in Genovesi 2008, 464-465 note 23, and 603-630). The complex world of Catholic theology of the time is revealed also by the fact that, as bishop, Liguori prohibited manuals by Genovesi to be used in the formation of priests in his diocese.

or to contemporary European scientific discoveries. Human beings were thought of as being dependent from birth.¹²

Just as Newton taught that there were two forces governing the world system—the centripetal and the centrifugal, the laws of attraction and collision—Genovesi thought that human beings were subject to the same laws. Like Liguori, he identified the two forces operating in man also as the self-preserving (or self-regarding) and the social (or other-regarding). Bellamy summarizes Genovesi’s model of human nature this way:

The dialectic of these two forces preserves the natural order. It is therefore the source of all good, but also, because of the imperfect nature of finite beings, of all evil. Political evil derives from man’s living in society and the inevitable clash of individuals seeking to satisfy their private interests (force of collision). On the other hand, the forces of attraction are a source of gain for man, society providing him with the security and company necessary for his existence. Happiness and the good of man are to be found in the equilibrium of these two forces (Bellamy 1987, 285; see also Gisondi, 178-81).

This conceptualization helped Genovesi reject the view that the public good can develop out of the pursuit of selfish ends (Bellamy 1987, 283). This also helps to explain why Genovesi could not quite agree with Bernard Mandeville’s argument in his *The Fable of Bees* that private vices, or vicious greed, when properly channeled, can turn into public benefits (Genovesi [1764] 1962, 416, 492-93, and, 2008, 200).

Genovesi insisted on the “common maxim: that man is by nature a sociable animal” ([1765-67] 2005, 282). He insisted on linking human sociality with reciprocity or reciprocal assistance, which was for him another way to characterize market transactions. He sought to capture the interactive and relational aspects of individual existence also by drawing on his reading of the British moralists:

Every person has the natural and inherent obligation to learn how to procure his happiness, but the political body [does not just consist of one person but] consists of many persons. Hence the entire political body and each of its members are obliged to do their part for their individual and common prosperity, as long as that which is done does not offend the rights of the other civil bodies. These beautiful and divine obligations flowing from the civil body return to each family and each person as the common pacts of society. Each family and every person are under two obligations to do that which they can to procure public happiness: one comes from within nature and the other come from the subsequent pacts of communities. A third obligation can be added, that of one’s own utility. That which Shaftsbury [in *Inquiry of Virtue and Merit*] said will be eternally true: the true utility is the daughter of virtue; because it is eternally true that there is grounded in every man

¹² This may be an important permanent characteristic of Italian thought across centuries, or at least until the nineteenth century (see Sabetti 2010 and 2011).

the love for those with whom he lives. This love is the daughter of virtue
(Genovesi [1765-67] 2005, 295)

Genovesi ([1766] 2008, 29-35, 52-57, 112-45) had a clear metaphysical view about the nature of human beings as moral agents. Special among all other animals, humans alone are free but, by the same token, responsible creatures: sovereign but also accountable for the way they give meaning to their lives.

Genovesi rejected what in modern times has come to be known among economists as “the model of the bifurcated man.” He did not assume, as modern Pigovian welfare economics does, that man shifts his psychological and moral gears when he moves from the realm of organized market activity to, for example, that of organized political activity and vice versa. Putting it somewhat anachronistically in the public choice language of James M. Buchanan (1962, 23-24), Genovesi would probably concur that there is nothing inherent to the market organization that brings out the selfish motives of man, just as there is nothing in the political organization per se which suppresses these motives and brings out the more “noble” ones.

Public Trust

Drawing on the work of Doria in particular, Anthony Pagden (1988) has drawn insightful attention to how mistrust could, and did, develop under Spanish rule, as well as its long-term negative consequences. Conversely, Genovesi’s reflections highlight the importance of public trust or faith (*fede pubblica*). In the lessons on commerce, Genovesi noted: “Nothing is more necessary than public faith in a wide and easy circulation and in the reinvigoration of any kind of productive activity ... Trust is for civil bodies what the law of gravity is for natural bodies (Genovesi [1765-67] 2005: 752). Trust and related features (public confidence, mutual assistance, and friendship) are important “moral canals” of the civil economy (quoted in Bruni and Sugden 2000: 43). Such variables inspired and gave meaning to Genovesi’s understanding of trade and economic growth ([1765-67] 2005: 243-54, 751-85) and his philosophy, which he called *Diocesina*, of what is just and honest. ([1766] 2008: 71, 231, 249, 266-307, 380). In his treatises, reciprocal confidence, public trust, mutual assistance and friendship were essential preconditions for civil and industrial society ([1765-67] 2005: 751-85).

Genovesi’s views on trust take on renewed importance when considered alongside modern rational choice theory, as well as those of Adam Smith and David Hume. This point is forcefully brought out recently by two economists (e.g., Bruni and Sugden 2000).

The modern account of trust is grounded in a theory of individual rationality and reputation for trustworthiness. The mechanisms or institutions for spreading trust from one person to another are not clear, however. This ambiguity applies to efficient markets themselves as they depend on impersonal institutions that reach beyond the range of civic engagement. Generalized trust is often invoked as an explanation, but it is seldom shown how this generalized trust actually emerges and links people. Conversely, Hume, Smith, and Genovesi had much more in common: “Hume, Smith and Genovesi were all concerned with people *in relation to one another* in a way that is foreign to most modern economics. But, although Hume and Smith develop relational theories of moral sentiments, their explanations of the practice of trust assume that people are

primarily motivated by self-interest” (Bruni and Sugden 2000: 43; see also Bruni and Sugden 2008).

But for Genovesi, there is more to human action than self-interest narrowly understood. As noted previously, trust was a precondition for commerce. In contrast, Smith in particular seemed to think that trust was a product of commercial society. This leads Bruni and Sugden to suggest that “it is to Genovesi that we must look to gain a sense of how a theory of trust might be grounded in a relational theory of rationality. ... Genovesi’s concept of reciprocal assistance is best understood in terms of a rationality of ‘we-thinking’—of plural agents (Bruni and Sugden 2000: 43-44). “We thinking” and plural agents suggest a collective agency of citizens grounded in common understanding or shared social capital—which was another way of expressing *fede pubblica* (Bruni and Sugden 2000: 43-44).

The focus on trust helps to explain why Genovesi, unlike Smith, treated the moral foundations of market relations as grounded in relations of mutual assistance that were neither impersonal nor anonymous. Genovesi strongly believed that public trust could be maintained by instilling a sense of collective agency in citizens, and also by cultivating and encouraging human virtues. This may have been his response to the following problematic situation, which Muratori had also unsuccessfully sought to confront: namely, how public officials could be dedicated to the common good when they themselves were only ordinary and fallible human beings, i.e., with the potential for individualistic, self-serving, and opportunistic behavior. He believed the long-term fluctuations of the give-and-take of market relations would over time teach people about the importance of public trust and commercial relations.

Commerce

Genovesi presented commerce as a nation’s chief source of wealth and power. Paraphrasing Melon, he defined commerce as involving an exchange of what is abundant for what is necessary. He considered that there were three kinds of consumption goods: those of prime necessity, those that make life comfortable and those that are luxurious. Like Melon, Hume, and Muratori, Genovesi favoured moderate luxury as a means for people to distinguish themselves from others and to emulate the ranks above them. The substance—he called it “the body”—of commerce was things that are exchangeable; the soul was circulation, while liberty consisted in the ease of circulation. Viewed this way, commerce had the properties of body, soul, and freedom.

Perhaps the clearest and most concise exposition of Genovesi’s conception can be found in his *Ragionamento sul commercio universale* ([1757] 1962, 281-331). Typically, he began with a general discussion of the evolution of knowledge as it applied to the craft of art and artisanship. He reminded his readers that commerce and economy have been around *ab antiquo* to bolster his claims by showing that they were historically grounded. What was different was the reach and scope of trade. He reflected that the nations that seemed ahead of others contemporaneously—the English the French, the Spaniards and the Dutch—had not always been so (Genovesi [1757] 1962, 281). At the same time, he noted that an ancient people with a longer history of civilization and trade like the Italians would surely profit by studying the development path of European nations that had made so much commercial and industrial progress. After all, it was not just

merchants and manufacturers who needed to know about commerce. It also applied to those who were concerned about the well-being of society.

Genovesi ([1757] 1962, 286) drew a clear distinction between ‘the science of commerce’ (*la scienza del commercio*) and ‘the practice of business’ (*la pratica della mercatura*). He was not concerned with the latter: he would not be teaching merchants their own craft. Instead, his subject was the science of commerce. He wanted to demonstrate that there existed a “science of commerce and the economy” (which now also included industrial activities and manufacturing) with distinct principles, from which were derived certain specific, practical consequences (Genovesi [1757] 1962, 287).

He defined the ‘ends’ (*fini*) of political economy as two: to determine how and by what means there could be an increase in population, which he viewed essential to national prosperity; and discover how and by what means it was possible to increase the subsistence, wealth, and power of the nation. He identified the means to increase the population as being fundamentally the same to increase the wealth of a nation. They were agriculture, manufactures, fishery, navigation, and internal and external commerce.

Agriculture was the first source for the prosperity of a realm like Naples. He listed two important factors needed to maximize agricultural production. One was the size and fertility of the land under cultivation, and the scope for adding to and improving it. The other was the distribution of land among cultivators. He recognized that a grossly unequal distribution was a disincentive to both great and small landholders. He drew attention to the presence of other obstacles that had to be overcome, including unequal tax and other fiscal burdens, negative or excessive luxury, a shortage of money in circulation, and high rates of interest (Genovesi [1757] 1962, 296-303).

The role of manufactures was for him critical for what it could contribute to the economic development of society and for what it could do to benefit agriculture. For example, machinery improved cultivation and the production of agricultural products. Rather than cite the technological inventions of Intieri, he referred to the state of manufacturing in England as worthy of emulation, hence the importance of profiting from the work of Cary that he helped to publish in Italian ([1757] 1962, 303- 10; see also Reinert 2011).

On the importance of internal commerce, Genovesi had some insightful things to say about the importance of contributing factors like good roads, and peace and security in the countryside. But, for him, the key was the ready circulation of money and proportionate distribution. Like Doria and Galiani, he clearly believed that the kingdom’s internal commerce would encourage agriculture and manufactures. He equally believed that once internal trade had been set on strong moorings, foreign trade would follow. No nation could aspire to engage in foreign trade without having first worked out the mechanisms for a functioning internal trade—an insight developed by Friedrich List in what he called “the national system of political economy” (List [1843] 1885; cf. Sabetti 2010, 189-201)

Genovesi devoted an entire section to convince his readers that the English provided the best example of foreign trade—worth emulating. Especially following the revolution of 1688, they had treated agriculture as a form of merchandise rather than as the means of subsistence, preferring to export finished goods and import primary materials. Genovesi’s support of the translation of Cary’s book was an explicit recognition of the validity of English practices, though he recognized, from his theory of fairness and justice, that not all English practices were worth emulating. War, conquest, and aggressively nationalistic policies were the dark sides of successful international trade in general and of British trade in particular. English maritime

commerce depended on the exercise of naval power which was revealed by the inability of Italian states to defend themselves against it even in the Mediterranean. He called up French sources, Melon in particular, to qualify the lessons of the English experience, though he recognized and knew first hand that the French were just as insistent as the British in putting military power at the service of diplomacy and commerce. Genovesi hoped that the often brutal rivalries between France and England would leave Naples and other Italian states with some measures of commercial freedom (Genovesi [1757] 1962, 319-25; see also Reinert 2007, 2010, and 2011; Robertson 2005, 350-57).

Genovesi concluded the *Ragionamento* by reiterating the importance of treating economy as a science with its own principles and consequences. He concisely addressed two important questions. First, he wondered whether the proliferation of economic writings throughout Europe would contribute to the rejuvenation of nations. He thought it would, and not just for Naples. After all, he reasoned, that was why certain European nations were turning to the promotion of commerce with renewed vigor. He equally wondered whether it was possible for any one nation to maintain or even acquire ‘the monopoly of commerce’ (*l'imperio del commercio*) at the expense of others over a long time span. He doubted that was possible, specifically because agriculture, manufactures, and navigation were no longer viewed as mysteries or monopolies of any one people. Knowledge of the arts and sciences of industry and commerce was quickly spreading across nations; that knowledge was publicly available, to be learned and put into practice by all the people in Europe and beyond. What a country like Naples had to do was to draw on its own natural and human endowments and press ahead with skills and determination to build on those strengths. The kingdom of Naples might be ‘confined to an angle of the world’, but location had ceased to be an obstacle both for domestic and international trade. Robertson sums up Genovesi’s concerns this way:

much more explicitly than Galiani, Genovesi recognized the need to dispel the prejudice that the situation of the kingdom of Naples was unique, and appreciated the value of political economy in teaching this lesson. Such intellectual cosmopolitanism was characteristic of the Enlightenment as a European intellectual movement: in urging his fellow countrymen to study political economy, Genovesi was making the case for Enlightenment in Naples . . . This is] why the Neapolitan Enlightenment was Genovesi’s not Galiani’s achievement ” (Robertson 2005: 358-59).

Robertson also suggests that the availability of economic writings served another purpose consciously pursued by Genovesi: to build up a public sphere for the progress of civil economy.

The expansion of commerce in eighteenth century Naples produced a climate of public anxiety which Muratori had sought to overcome early in the century by insisting on trade as a source of happiness. Now, Genovesi went further to give commerce a deeper and broader philosophical and moral context by equating it with reciprocal and mutual assistance, as well as with human nature. He thought of market relationships between individuals as mutually beneficial exchanges, in which neither partner made a sacrifice for the other. He also considered that they consisted of genuine social interactions, carrying moral values by virtue of their social content. The difference between Genovesi and Smith has been succinctly expressed by Bruni:

“Smith . . . maintains that the typical trait of human relationality is, even beyond sympathy, the ‘propensity in human nature . . . to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another.’ [By contrast] Genovesi understands economic relations in the market as relations of mutual assistance and social interaction, which by his definition are also important sources of happiness” (Bruni 2008, 18-19; see also Bruni and Porta 2005; Bruni and Sugden 2008).

Genovesi’s insistence on not disassociating or disembedding economic relations from other human relations anticipated a much later discussion by Karl Polanyi in *The Great Transformation* ([1944] 1957), with one important difference. Genovesi did not succumb to Polanyi’s characterization of the market as “satanic mill,” even in the face of England’s aggressively nationalistic foreign trade.¹³ This may be partly due to Genovesi’s belief that his insistence on the importance of virtue and social interaction would, in time, create barriers capable of withstanding the transformation of trade into an enduring “satanic mill.”

Public Happiness

Richard Easterlin’s path-breaking research (1974) and Tibor Scitovsky’s *Joyless Economy* (1976) showed that happiness is not necessarily linked to rising individual incomes or material reward. Easterlin and Scitovsky made two important contributions: they pointed out that there is a wage threshold after which one does not become happier; and, perhaps more importantly, their work launched what has been called “the paradox of happiness” or “the Easterlin paradox.” Since then, many other economists have rediscovered the importance of their work and contributed to a rich and growing economic literature. Handbooks on the economics of happiness and symposia in prestigious academic journals have become routine.

Coming to terms with the Easterlin paradox has involved a widespread acceptance of what were once contentious points: that long-term increases in wealth have been accompanied by constant if not decreasing self-reported individual happiness or life satisfaction; that utilitarianism (from Bentham to Pareto) while shining a powerful light on some important aspects of human life equally concealed others (Nussbaum 2005, 170). Thus quite a few economists have gone beyond the usual hedonistic meaning of happiness (a state of pleasure, contentment, satisfaction, and welfare) to happiness understood as a by-product of something else, like the cultivation of civic virtues, the practice of self-governance, or human flourishing.

Efforts to construct a better theory of well-being (e.g., Easterlin 2005) have led to three developments in particular: 1) a return to the ancient Greek thought about *eudainomia* and its parts represented fully in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*; 2) a renewed appreciation of John Stuart Mill’s discussion of “individuality” as one of the elements of well-being (Mill 1859: chap.3; see also Sugden 2006), as well as a reconsideration of the fragility of goodness among modern philosophers like Martha Nussbaum ([1986] 2001) and the extent to which development and freedom impact on happiness among economists and political scientists alike (e.g., Bavetta 2012; Inglehart et al 2008; Sen 1999, and 2008; Sugden 2008); and 3) a discovery of Genovesi as

¹³ One anonymous reader has drawn my attention to the fact that the expression “Satanic mill” is before Polanyi and comes originally from William Blake; in support of the statement, the reader kindly referred to E.P. Thompson’s *Witness against the Beast. William Blake and the Moral Law* (New York: New Press 1993). At one point, Polanyi does not seem to be aware of the origin of the expression though at another point he makes a passing reference to Blake (Polanyi [1944] 1957, 102).

“a mediator between the classic tradition ... and the modern view of society based on private interests and individual utility” (Bruni 2006, 51).

Genovesi may be seen as a mediator because his vision of civil economy has no “structural contrast between economic growth and happiness, or between civil virtue and private interest: they are two sides of the same coin” (Bruni 2006, 51; see also Bruni and Porta 2005; Bruni and Porta 2007; Bruni, Comin et al 2008). Genovesi readily acknowledged that the transformation of wealth into happiness and the harmony between common good and private interests were never simple or automatic. If such a transformation were possible, it would best work within the dynamics of the civil economy he envisaged. It was his way of reconciling the often contrasting dimensions of human existence, and of arts and science. The originality of what he sought to do in the creation of his new cognitive map for addressing social dilemmas in Naples and beyond lies in this.

Time

The consideration of time permeates much of Genovesi’s work. Though discussion of time does emerge from his correspondence (Genovesi 1962), Genovesi himself did not explicitly address time—the *saeculum*—as a variable perhaps because it seemed too self-evident to require explicit elaboration. The rise and fall of Magna Graecia, Rome, and the Italian republics—just as the work of Polybius and Vico on historical cyclicity—were “recurring themes” in Galiani’s work as in Genovesi’s (Reinert 2011, 213). Historical awareness permeated much of what Genovesi did and wrote, and it could not have been otherwise. “[H]istory unveiled to him that England’s emergence as an economic power coincided closely with Italy’s relative decline” just as in earlier time the English had looked to Italy as a model to emulate and in the process beat it at its own game. In this way the study of English success became the study of Italian history as well: “their reciprocal emulation united them at opposing extremes of a common anacyclosis—at opposite ends of Broggia’s wheel of fortune” (Reinert 2011, 220-21).

From the corpus of Genovesi’s writings, time thus emerges as a critical variable for people to apprehend the temporal unfolding of natural and human events, to internalize new collective and individual identities and to arrive at new ways at looking at the world, and to act to change it. Genovesi was aware that time is another word for season in agriculture and in the Catholic calendar. His preoccupation with time’s transformative uses is apparent in most of his writings and correspondence. In addition, he was aware that adjustments and shifts in individuals’s cognitive map take time: the amount of time varying from one individual to another, sometimes in a complex manner. Though it was unwise for thinkers and public officials alike to rush these adjustments, they needed to know the likelihood of *when* those shifts might occur in order to seize the moment and to act—a point that was, arguably, missed by some of his students who rushed to give a hand to the “1799 revolution” and experienced “heroic defeat” (e.g., Cuoco [1806] 1998; De Francesco 2000). In his 1753 essay, often viewed as the Manifesto of the Neapolitan Enlightenment, Genovesi recalled that often enough ordinary people had a better grasp of human reality and possibilities than some Don Quixotes fighting illusory windmills and metaphysical abstractions. Though, as a priest in good standing, he did not quite use these words, the capacity to correctly assess events of the world and the potential for

reaching intended objectives—the *saeculum*—was as important for a good life on earth as it was for reaching the heavenly city in the next.

Conclusion

What this paper has sought to do, with the help of a growing literature, is to retrieve a way of thinking that was once well-known, to advance the importance of discovering the past and inventing the future in the realm of political economy. Naples was hardly a passive receptor of political economy and Enlightenment ideas. Aside from creating the first chair in political economy in Italy, Naples was a producer of new ideas about the wealth of nations. A discussion of the impact of Genovesi's ideas on future generations in Naples would take us beyond the scope of this essay. The importance of the ideas presented in this paper can be highlighted by the following comparison of Italian and English authors by Giuseppe Pecchio, in his book *History of Public Economy* (1829):

One of the most distinctive features among economists of these two nations is the definition they give of public economy and how they deal with it. For the English it is an isolated science; it is a science of how to make nations wealthy, and that is the exclusive subject of their research. On the other hand, Italians regard it as a complex science, as the administrator's science and they treat it in all its relationships with ethics and public happiness. The English, always favorable to division of labor, seem to have applied this rule to this science, which has been severed from all other sciences (Pecchio quoted in Vitale 2001: 131, and also in Bruni 2004: 30).

The study of the political economy in Naples and Genovesi's own contributions to the subject are topics clearly worth pursuing for what they can tell us about the origins and practice of political economy. This is a highly relevant contemporary preoccupation given the current state of standard economic models. Indeed the 2009 Nobel Prize for Economics given to Elinor Ostrom and Oliver Williamson suggests that a transition has occurred in the social sciences recognizing the validity and importance of Genovesi's preoccupation and concerns. He would have recognized a recent proposition that "people cooperate not only for self-interested reasons but also because they are genuinely concerned about the well-being of others, try to uphold social norms, and value behaving ethically for its own sake" (Bowles and Gintis 2011, 1). Genovesi would probably have added that this is what the wealth of nations is about.

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