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Cesare Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments*

Luigino Bruni* and Pier Luigi Porta**

Abstract: Cesare Beccaria's pamphlet, *On Crimes and Punishments* (*Dei delitti e delle pene*) of 1764, takes us back to the School of Milan, the core of the Lombard Enlightenment during the latter half of the eighteenth century. This is the only work of the whole School of Milan that almost immediately achieved worldwide fame. Its treatment of the fundamental issues of penal law is one of the main pillars of the age of rights from the Enlightenment down to the present day. To understand the work properly it must be set in context within the utilitarian view of public happiness which was the key element of the whole Italian School at the time.

1 Introduction

The 250th anniversary of Cesare Beccaria's pamphlet, *On Crimes and Punishments* ('*Dei delitti e delle pene*'), published anonymously in 1764, is an event that takes us back to the School of Milan, the core of Lombard Enlightenment during the latter half of the eighteenth century. This is the only work of Beccaria and, indeed, of the whole School of Milan, which almost immediately achieved worldwide fame. A proper understanding of Beccaria's thought must start with the Lombard Enlightenment as the prime movement for promoting and spreading scientific knowledge. It is characteristic of the Lombard Enlightenment that public economics occupies centre stage at a time of social and political reform aimed at public happiness.

Pietro Verri was the founder of the Milanese School and its chief economic writer. Born in Milan in 1728 into a noble family, Verri was convinced that economic science was at the centre of all serious social and political study. At the same time he conceived that economics was part of a more elaborate and multi-level scientific enterprise which had been called *economia civile*, or civil economy, by the leader of the whole Italian School, Antonio Genovesi (1713-1769). Genovesi in fact held the first Chair in Economics, established at the University of Naples, in 1754.

Pietro Verri established the *Accademia dei Pugni* ('The Punching Academy') in Milan in 1761. He also launched the periodical *Il Caffè* ('The Coffee House') that is sometimes aptly described as the Italian *Spectator*. These initiatives served the purpose of gathering together a number of intellectual friends who shared a common scientific interest and engaged in cultural exchange through conversation and the presentation of scientific work, all with a view to political action. Beccaria was one of Verri's younger associates in this intellectual circle. The purpose of this movement was to revolutionise opinion and culture and, thereby, influence public administration by the civil service of the time. The School of Milan advanced reforms and a political philosophy which would put aside much of the traditional legalistic approach to government and aimed at developing the scientific approach inherent in economics. More generally, *Il Caffè* was conceived as the instrument for a great ethical and political project of raising the quality of civil life.

What was at stake was securing a place in the European process of philosophical renovation and scientific progress, while at the same time exerting a practical influence on the improvement of welfare of the population and on the promotion of public happiness and productive efficiency. Policy issues were at the forefront of the School's intellectual enquiry, starting with the reform of the public administration and government to free it from the habitual authoritarian system typical of the aristocratic tradition. Taxation, competition and foreign trade were high on the agenda and at the forefront of thinking by prominent intellectuals of the School, such as Beccaria. Although they developed their doctrines quite independently, the influence of the French Physiocrats is quite discernible.

2 Life and Works of Beccaria

Cesare Beccaria was born in Milan on 15 March 1738, the son of a noble family. With a degree in Jurisprudence he was favourably placed for a most promising career in the civil service. However, being a restless young man, Beccaria had an irresistible attraction to political philosophy. Among several books which he studied closely was Montesquieu's *L'esprit des lois*, published in 1748. Perhaps even more significantly, he became an enthusiast of the ideas of Rousseau in the social contract book, *Du contrat social*, published in 1762. At an early age Beccaria came into conflict with his family, who opposed his marriage to a pretty and lively girl, Teresa Blasco, the daughter of a Sicilian officer. When they married, Cesare was twenty-three and Teresa sixteen years of age. Their first child, a daughter, was born the year after the marriage, in 1762. The daughter was destined from the beginning to bear the name of Giulia, after the female character in Rousseau's novel of that year, *Julie ou la nouvelle Eloïse* (1761).¹

Beccaria's early significant contributions were largely inspired by his mentor, Verri. In 1762 he published a pamphlet on the current monetary disorders in the state of Milan and their remedies (Beccaria 1986 [1762]). A number of his essays were also published in *Il Caffè*. The best known of these, published in the first volume of the magazine in 1764, is a mathematical exercise on the impact of duties on smuggling (Francioni and Romagnoli 1993: 173-6). This essay contributed much to establishing Beccaria as a pioneer of mathematical economics. Besides this essay he acquired a worldwide reputation with the success of his pamphlet *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764). This pamphlet soon became by far the best known publication of the School of Milan and, indeed, arguably of the Italian Enlightenment during the second half of the eighteenth century. Beccaria, a man with an extraordinarily brilliant mind though in some ways a distinctly lazy and ineffective character, was himself shocked by the success of this work. In describing how Beccaria came to write *On Crimes and Punishments*, Verri also reflected on the character and personality of the author in an autobiographical letter dated 1 November 1765:

The book is by Marquis Beccaria: it befell on me to suggest the subject to him and the bulk of the argument is the result of daily conversations involving Beccaria, Alessandro [Verri], Lambertenghi and myself. In our society [that is, the 'Accademia dei Pugni'] we would spend the evening together in the same room, each of us working. Alessandro was busy on his *Storia d'Italia*, I was keen on my works of Political Economy. Beccaria got bored and he annoyed the rest of us. Out of despair he asked me a subject, which I

suggested. I thought it was perfect for an eloquent man such as he was and a man of vivid imagination. (Verri 2003: 138; our translation)

The ideas in Beccaria's pamphlet clearly originated from discussions about social and political issues within the *Accademia* as a result of a new scientific approach to political economy. Indeed, Pietro Verri also developed his own criticisms of the penal laws with his reflections on the subject later presented in the pamphlet, *Osservazioni sulla tortura* ('Observations on Torture', 1776-77; see Verri 2010: 3-144), based on a 'case study' that would later be revisited by Manzoni in his famous *Storia della Colonna Infame* (1840).

The success of Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments* was astounding and its ideas exerted considerable influence in Europe. It represented an enormous theoretical success. In this connection, it can be remarked that had Beccaria been possessed of tougher mettle the history of civil economy (or political economy) would have been very different. Invited to visit Paris, then the intellectual centre of Europe and the source of the *lumières* to be bestowed with great honours, Beccaria completely bungled the statement he was expected to make about the nature and quality of the work being undertaken by the *Accademia* in Milan under the leadership of Verri. Correspondence between the Verri brothers, Pietro and Alessandro, together with Beccaria's own letters, gives us a vivid idea of his time in Paris (see Beccaria 1965 [1764]: 310-424). The correspondence shows that he was especially anguished by the separation from his wife Teresa, who had remained in Milan. He cut his visit short and returned to Milan without successfully promoting his ideas and above all without earning the favour of the *philosophes* in securing the place of honour for the Milanese school in its intellectual contribution to the Enlightenment. This was unfortunate for the School of Milan and for the whole history of the Enlightenment. Indeed, the episode famously caused a serious and enduring rift between Beccaria and the Verri's, and with his own mentor, Pietro Verri, in particular.

To the present day Beccaria's pamphlet is often considered as simply a work of penal law, and it is not perceived for what it really is: the work of an economist and essentially a product of the Milanese *Accademia*, with its underlying political economy that advanced the canon of civil economy established by Genovesi (2013 [1765-67]). Indeed, the contribution of eighteenth century Italian Enlightenment is well acknowledged for having paved the way to Adam Smith's conception of political economy as 'a branch of the science of a statesman or legislator' (see opening page of book IV of the *Wealth of Nations* (1976 [1776]: 428)). Adam Smith possessed in his library copies of Verri's and Beccaria's main works (see Einaudi 1933). Schumpeter (1954: 179) rightly refers to Beccaria as 'the Italian A. Smith', and we should not doubt the sincerity of this praise.

So famous had Beccaria become as author of *On Crimes and Punishments* that he received an invitation from the Russian Empress, Catherine II, to take a Chair in St Petersburg, but he declined the offer. A Chair in *Scienze Camerali* was created for him in Milan in 1769 at the Scuole Palatine.²

Beccaria accepted the Chair so that for the first time in his privileged life, he held a proper job. However, Beccaria's restlessness led him to hold the Chair for only two years, to be succeeded by another member of the *Accademia*, Alfonso Longo. The title of Beccaria's course at the Scuole Palatine became Public Economics (that is, 'Economia pubblica') and, in keeping with it, the collection of his lectures that were published posthumously in the early nineteenth century was

entitled *Elementi di economia pubblica*. His *Inaugural Lecture*, by contrast, was quickly published in 1769 and became famous and was translated into different languages (see Beccaria 1995 [1764]: 129-40). In parallel with the earlier experience of Genovesi, Beccaria thus entered the ranks of the very first scholars to occupy a chair in political economy.³ In addition, Beccaria, like Verri, was also a 'Consultant Administrator' (to use Schumpeter's famous terminology) and became a member of the Lombard Economic Council ('Supremo Consiglio di Economia') in 1771. Both Beccaria and Verri contributed a number of reports, or *Consulte*, to the Council, whose purpose was to give advice to the Government, both at the local Lombard level and at the Italian Department in Vienna. Other research works of Beccaria include his incomplete project on the *Ripulimento delle nazioni* (unpublished) and *Ricerche sulla natura dello stile* (1770).⁴ A full listing of his writings is extant in the *Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Cesare Beccaria*, 15 volumes, now complete with the exception of Volume 3 that is due to appear before the end of 2014, and which contain economic writings, including the much awaited first critical edition of his Lectures, the *Elementi di Economia pubblica*. Beccaria died of apoplexy in Milan on 28 November, 1794, three years before the older Verri.

3 On Crimes and Punishments

Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764) adopts an entirely utilitarian approach to studying the pursuit of public happiness (see Francioni 1990). The work develops an argument in the economics of law:

If we open our history books we shall see that the laws, for all that they are or should be contracts amongst free men, have rarely been anything but tools of the passions of a few men or the offspring of a fleeting and haphazard necessity. They have not been dictated by a cool observer of human nature, who has brought the actions of many men under a single gaze and has evaluated them from the point of view of whether or not they conduce to *the greatest happiness shared among the greater number*' (Beccaria 1995 [1764]: 7; emphasis added).

Punishment is the reparation demanded by society from someone who has harmed society through his/her own misbehaviour: there is also an obvious contradictory element here, and the right to punish crimes rests only on the authority of the legislator 'who represents the whole of society united by the social contract' (*ibid.*: 12). This notion is also the basis of Beccaria's radical critique of the institutions of his own time, described by him as unpredictable and discretionary and, at the same time, almost completely subservient to purely emotional and spectacular factors, especially in the staging of torture and of the death penalty. Penal laws and penal practice did not disdain excesses of cruelty which were precisely designed to make examples of criminals and spread fear and terror as a deterrent. Beccaria believed that those excesses also made for an inefficient system of investigation and could lead to many crimes remaining unpunished. As he pithily argued in regard to torture: 'A strange consequence which necessarily follows from the use of torture is that the innocent are put in a worse position than the guilty. For, if both are tortured, the former has everything against him ... Therefore, the innocent man cannot but lose and the guilty man may gain' (*ibid.*: 39).

The key principle articulated in Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments* is that punishment should be in proportion to the crime committed (1995 [1764]: 19-21). Significantly, the strong opposition he voiced to torture and to the death penalty does not rest on purely humanitarian grounds. He argued they are not useful because they are not a reparation and offer no safeguard to society in the prevention of crimes, which are the proper grounds for punishment.

On Crimes and Punishments opens with an address 'To the Reader', then an 'Introduction', followed by forty-seven sections in which the argument is developed. Beccaria makes it clear that he intends in the pamphlet to expose what he considered to be the excesses of cruelty and severity meted out by the criminal justice system: 'These laws, which are the residue of the most barbarous centuries, are examined in this book insofar as they relate to the system of criminal justice' (Beccaria 1995 [1764]: 3). He further writes: 'human and political justice, being nothing but a relation between an action and the varying state of society, can vary according to how necessary or useful that action is to society' (*ibid.*: 5).

Beccaria argued that justice should focus on a smaller number of criminal acts and refrain from meting out unnecessary violence. To that end Beccaria (1995 [1764]: 4) adopted the contractarian approach – so popular at the time – in which social laws, as distinct from moral laws, are seen to stem from 'convention, that is to say from explicit or tacit compacts among men' (*ibid.*). The leading principle and the foundation of Beccaria's contractarian approach is exactly the same as that adopted by Verri (2005) in his early work on happiness first published in 1763 that the purpose of the social compact is to achieve public happiness, or the greatest possible happiness distributed with the greatest possible equality. According to this approach men are considered by nature to be greedy and selfish. As Beccaria (1995 [1764]: 4) argued 'every man makes himself the centre of the world's affairs'. For this reason 'tangible motives' – that is punishments – are required to protect the laws, which are conceived to manifest the 'sum of those portions of freedom sacrificed to the good of all' (*ibid.*: 9). The guiding principle to Beccaria's position is that the motive for all human actions is utility in the form of securing pleasure and avoiding pain. Hence, civil order by the rule of laws makes sense only as the means to secure public happiness, implying a positive balance of pleasure and pain as the condition which makes liberty useful to the whole of society. Beccaria contended that from the principle of utility some fundamental rules can be made to shape criminal justice. Two basic principles emerge in Beccaria's thesis.

In the first place, penal laws should never trespass beyond utility, for 'the only true measure of criminality is the damage done to the nation' and this is not linked with the intention of the offender in committing a crime (Beccaria 1995 [1764]: 22). Secondly, it is fundamental to strike a balance between crimes and punishments: 'the legislator behaves like the skilled architect, whose task is to counteract the destructive forces of gravity and exploit those forces that contribute to the strengthening of the building' (*ibid.*). This delicate social balance advocated by Beccaria reflects the leading principle of Verri's political philosophy on the role of government which he developed in his *Reflections on Political Economy* (see Verri 1993 [1781]; and also Porta and Scazzieri 2002). On penal laws, Beccaria (1995 [1764]: 19-21) identified a special 'paradox' in which an 'inappropriate distribution of punishments' will produce the result 'that punishments punish the crimes they have caused' whereby if 'an equal punishment is laid down for two crimes which damage society unequally, men will not have a stronger deterrent against committing the greater crime if they find it more advantageous to do so'.

Beccaria (*ibid.*: 48-9) advocated milder punishments, but more certain and predictable as made effective through a mix of utilitarian-cum-contractarian ingredients.

Another important economic-based principle in Beccaria's approach is called 'leniency in punishing' which states that to achieve a social objective punishments should minimise suffering and cost:

If a punishment is to serve its purpose, it is enough that the harm of punishment should outweigh the good which the criminal can derive from the crime, and into the calculation of this balance, we must add the unerringness of the punishment and the loss of the good produced by the crime. Anything more than this is superfluous and, therefore, tyrannous, (Beccaria 1995 [1764]: 64)

The argument leads to the paradoxical conclusion, already anticipated above, that 'the harshness of punishments gives rise to impunity' (*ibid.*). The whole doctrine is aptly summarised in the concluding lines of the final section of the work:

In order that punishment should not be an act of violence perpetrated by one or many upon a private citizen, it is essential that it should be public, speedy, necessary, the minimum possible in the given circumstances, proportionate to the crime, and determined by the law. (ibid: 113; italics in original).

4 Sources and Influence

In recent studies of Beccaria there has been a considerable focus on his links within the Milanese School and the connection between *On Crimes and Punishments* with his posthumous collection of lectures, *Elementi di economia pubblica* ('Elements of Public Economics'). Unfortunately there is next to nothing of these studies published in English. Audegean's (2010) book blazes a trail on both issues but up to now this important work can only be read in French and in Italian. Otherwise, a basic text (in Italian) on Beccaria is the collection of published papers, *Cesare Beccaria tra Milano e l'Europa* (1990), especially the contributions by Massetto (1990), Rao (1990) and Porta (1990). In particular, Massetto (1990), a jurist, has produced an interesting analysis of the links between punishment and the economy in Beccaria (1995 [1764]). The recent volume edited by Porta and Scazzieri (2014) provides a collection of contributions of great significance on Beccaria of which an English edition is likely to be produced soon. Finally, the volume *Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze* edited by Zamagni and Porta (2012) has several articles of interest on the Lombard Enlightenment as well as on Beccaria alone.

The study of Beccaria has suffered for a long time (and it is still suffering) from the fact that the entire attention has been almost exclusively focused on the 1764 pamphlet and all critical analysis has been made from the perspective of penal law and of the philosophy of law. That perspective has almost entirely cut out of sight the real and practical environment in which Beccaria's work was produced, namely, the *Accademia dei Pugni* and the overwhelming influence of Pietro Verri, the dominant intellect of the *Accademia* and of the entire Milanese School (see Porta and Scazzieri 2002). The fact that *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764) was almost the only acclaimed work produced by Beccaria in his whole life has undoubtedly contributed to make the situation worse in the sense of unduly concentrating attention on the jurisprudential perspective. In the public image Beccaria remains a

master of penal law. The main distortion in this case arises, to some considerable extent, from the scarce consideration that has been given to his posthumous *Elementi di economia pubblica*. As recalled above, Schumpeter (1954) gives full weight to the Milanese School and to Beccaria, in particular, as a major economist; but only a limited number of interested scholars have appreciated this (see Hutchison 1988: esp. 298-307).

The principles on penal law closely shared by Montesquieu and by Beccaria certainly is one main source of the peculiar early echo of Beccaria's ideas in France. It is well known that the first translation of *On Crimes and Punishments* in a foreign language was the French translation, published by André Morellet in 1766 (see Beccaria 1965 [1764]: 364). It is probably through the French language that Beccaria's fame spread so rapidly through the whole of Europe. Beccaria's admiration for the French *philosophes* was so great that he accepted without objection the considerable changes made by Morellet in his French edition, and which were also followed for some time in subsequent Italian editions. The Morellet edition paved the way for the invitation for Beccaria to visit Paris mentioned above. During his visit the *philosophes* had obviously in mind to take Beccaria to task and induce him to acknowledge that what was good in his pamphlet was not new, as it had all been anticipated by Montesquieu and other French authors. A pugnacious Beccaria could have responded effectively. Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, he did not even take up the challenge. The extraordinary influence of Beccaria was also the result of the great admiration of *On Crimes and Punishments* by Voltaire so evident in the latter's *Commentaire sur le livre des délits et des peines*, published in 1766. Voltaire strongly endorsed Beccaria, fully accepting the utilitarian foundations of Beccaria's opposition to the death penalty in Chapter 28 of *On Crimes and Punishments*.

In the German-speaking areas of Europe four translations of *On Crimes and Punishments* were published during the eighteenth century: Prague (1765), Hamburg (1766), Ulm (1767) and Breslau (1778). The last one is probably the most significant as it contains a critical appraisal of Beccaria's main ideas in the introduction by Karl Ferdinand Hommel (1722–1781), an important jurist in Leipzig. Hommel's objections concerned the death penalty and Beccaria's denial that the judge had any right to interpret the law. It is interesting to observe that in the German-speaking world the success of Beccaria was significant, but without the French enthusiasm. The best known case concerns the criticisms by Immanuel Kant in his *Metaphysik der Sitten* (1797), later published in English as *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Underlying the criticism is that Kant could not digest the utilitarian perspective.

The first English translation of Beccaria was published in 1767, based on Morellet's French text and edition. It also included Voltaire's commentary. In England Beccaria was taken up by Samuel Romilly (1757–1818), magistrate and Member of Parliament, who strongly pleaded for reform of the penal laws. In Britain Jeremy Bentham is the closest author to Beccaria: 'Oh, my Master' – Bentham is famous for exclaiming of Beccaria – 'first evangelist of Reason, you who have raised Italy so far above England'. Nevertheless, there are important differences in the kind of utilitarian philosophy espoused by Bentham in comparison to that espoused by Verri and Beccaria (see Porta 2009). Verri and Beccaria should be seen more as precursors to John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism rather than that of Bentham's.

Naturally Beccaria's influence in Italy was quite extensive, as well documented by Franco Venturi in his splendid edition of Beccaria (1965 [1764]). An important discovery, made recently, concerns not only the punishment of crimes, but the theoretical issue of the *rewards of virtuous behaviour* that Beccaria mentions, but does not elaborate well. Giacinto Dragonetti (1738–1818) had great success internationally in raising the issue. He was a pupil of Antonio Genovesi. Bruni (2013; 2014) has recently re-focused attention on Dragonetti, whose book *Delle virtù e dei premi* ('Of Virtues and Prizes') (1765), was a remarkable success at the time. Beccaria, himself sensitive to the issue, wrote of it: 'Another means of preventing crimes is to reward virtue. I notice that the laws of all nations today are totally silent on this matter' (Beccaria 1995 [1764]: 109). It was left to Dragonetti to take up the question. In particular, Bruni (2014) illustrates the social implications of Dragonetti's emphasis on prizes rather than on punishments. Bruni argues that for Dragonetti, in the wake of Genovesi, an essential tool to reward virtues is the market itself (see also Rao 1990).

All commentators emphasise that with the excesses of the French Revolution Beccaria's arguments were put aside even by some of the more determined adherents. This indeed is one of the great contradictions of the French Enlightenment. It was however a temporary eclipse, which did not mean a full stop to Beccaria's influence.

5 Conclusion

Beccaria's contribution should be appraised by reference to the rise of the Italian school of economic writers in the second half of the eighteenth century and their focus on how and why a social order is possible and how and why it is viable.⁵ Another way of putting these questions is why do we have order in society rather than chaos? And what are the conditions and the factors behind the construct of a 'civil society'? These were the very questions that Genovesi (2013 [1765–67]), pioneer of the Italian school, was concerned to address in his work on the 'civil economy', as he called it. At the heart of this enquiry was how progress is identified with accumulation of wealth, which was resolved by Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. In the eighteenth century the Italian School developed the idea that social and economic order is a necessary condition for the creation of wealth. This of course is distinct from the French Physiocratic School who identified the creation of wealth with agricultural production and Adam Smith who identified the creation of wealth with production in the emerging British capitalist manufacturing industries. By contrast, the Italian School considered wealth itself as nothing but a peculiar network of social and economic relationships providing the bonds of society.⁶

Underlying Beccaria's argument in *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764) is the notion that public happiness is achieved through social consent, as based on a social contract. A major source for Beccaria's argument is Montesquieu's *L'esprit des lois*, that is repeatedly referred to by Beccaria with the utmost approval. But there are clearly other sources for his ideas which are not referred to in the text. For example, the idea of a sustainable social life draws heavily from Verri's (2005) discussion of public happiness in the first edition of *Meditazioni sulla felicità* published in 1763. Another major influence on Beccaria's pamphlet comes from eighteenth-century French utilitarian philosophy, particularly from such authors as Claude-Adrien Helvétius (1715–71), as well as Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertius

(1698–1759) and Etienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715–80). The emphasis placed on consent by Beccaria characterises the Italian School’s concept of happiness and utility as distinct from the French Jacobin notion of happiness as typified by Louis de Saint-Just’s *Esprit de la révolution* (1791). It can be said that Beccaria and, before him, Verri, were highly significant in the development of utilitarianism which would eventually be characterised by Bentham’s famous formula, ‘the greatest happiness of the greatest number’.⁷

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Notes

1 Giulia would later become an outstanding public figure in Italy. She is indeed the mother of the greatest Italian writer of the nineteenth century, Alessandro Manzoni. Born in 1785 as the product of a love affair between Giulia and Giovanni Verri, Pietro Verri’s youngest brother, Manzoni is in fact a descendant of both the Verri and Beccaria families.

2 The Chair was in *Scienze Camerali* or *Kameralwissenschaften*, meaning ‘Political Economy’ at that time across German-speaking Europe.

3 At the time Milan was not yet the seat of a University in the proper sense of the term, but it was the policy of Empress Maria Theresa’s government to foster the development of the *Scuole Palatine* as a kind of ‘Institute for advanced studies’, designed also to some extent to outperform existing Universities. Beyond that, it should be mentioned that Cameralism was taught in Germany at the University of Halle even earlier, since 1727, though with much more limited scope compared to the plan of both Genovesi’s and Beccaria’s Chairs in Italy. See Reinert (2011).

4 For these works, see Beccaria (2014; also 1995 [1764]: 141–160). For a discussion of the latter, see Audegean (2010).

5 The Italian School is identified with and restricted to four prominent scholars, two of them Neapolitan, Antonio Genovesi (1713–69) and Ferdinando Galiani (1728–87), and the other two Milanese, Pietro Verri and Cesare Beccaria. In our view the intellectual leaders of the School are Genovesi and Verri, although for various reasons the best known authors of the School are in fact Galiani and Beccaria.

6 Aspromourgos (2009: esp. 30–42) has an exhaustive discussion of the concept of wealth used by economists during the modern age. Concerning Smith, he argues ‘the most plausible resolution of this is that Smith’s *ultimate* sense of wealth is as command over commodities’ (*ibid.*: 33). This is in fact implied by Smith’s anthropology when he writes that man ‘stands at all times in need of the cooperation and assistance of great multitudes, while his whole life is scarce sufficient to gain the friendship of a few persons’; that explains, out of natural necessity, the ‘propensity to truck, barter and exchange’ of the human species (1976 [1776]: 25). This propensity is, incidentally, greater the greater the division of labour. The competitive market is conceived as the principal form of mutual assistance, a view in fact heralded by Genovesi (2013 [1765–67]).

7 See Beccaria (1995 [1764]: 7). It is well known that Bentham stressed the importance of Beccaria as a precursor of his own theoretical approach. Bentham’s own words, acknowledging Beccaria’s priority as a utilitarian philosopher, are reported in Venturi’s edition of Beccaria’s (1965 [1764]: 562–3) pamphlet. On Bentham’s use and

source of the 'formula' mentioned here (in the text), see Burns (2005). The 'formula' itself appears in Bentham's (1983: 291 n.4) 'Article on Utilitarianism' in which Beccaria is mentioned. An excellent treatment of the issue is to be found in Cremaschi (2007: 78-81, 190-4). On Beccaria's and Verri's utilitarian philosophy, see Francioni (1990), and Porta and Scazzieri (2002). On Verri's utilitarianism and notion of happiness, see Verri (2005). For a deeper analysis and a comparison between Bentham and the Milanese School on Utilitarianism, see Porta (2009: esp. 59-63).

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