

Citation: Pagden, Anthony (2000) 'The Destruction of Trust and its Economic Consequences in the Case of Eighteenth-century Naples', in Gambetta, Diego (ed.) *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, electronic edition, Department of Sociology, University of Oxford, chapter 8, pp. 127-14, <<http://www.sociology.ox.ac.uk/papers/pagden127-141.pdf>>.

<<127>>

8

The Destruction of Trust and its Economic Consequences in the Case of Eighteenth-century Naples

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I

In this essay I wish to consider an example not of how trust might be created or sustained within a society but of how it might be destroyed.¹ For although it may well be the case that no central agency is capable of intentionally creating trust where none previously or independently existed, it clearly does lie within the power of most effectively constituted agencies to destroy it, or, in Thomas Schelling's words, to 'spoil communication, to create distrust and suspicion, to make agreements unenforceable, to undermine transition, to reduce solidarity, to discredit leadership' (1984: 211).

What I shall attempt to explain in this essay is how a group of eighteenth-century Neapolitan political economists interpreted what they saw as an attempt by their Spanish rulers to achieve just such objectives in order to increase their social and political control over the kingdom. I have chosen Naples because it provides, I think, a paradigmatic example of the way trust was thought to operate in pre-industrial Europe, and because an understanding of this, as I shall suggest at the end of this essay, might offer some answers to larger questions about the necessary conditions for economic growth and social development in the early modern world.

Under its Angevin and Aragonese rulers in the Middle Ages the Kingdom of Naples - which included the whole of the peninsula south from the border of the Papal States, that is south from the modern <<128>> province of Lazio - had enjoyed a large measure of political autonomy. It had for long been the seat of the Aragonese kings, and like most parts of the Aragonese empire possessed extensive liberties expressed in a legendary, and probably apocryphal, oath of allegiance to the king which ended with the telling phrase 'and if not, not'. When the kingdom passed to the Habsburgs it became increasingly marginalized and the older representative assemblies, the *Eletti* and the *Università*, became little more than the instruments of a feudal aristocracy which was entirely beholden to the crown. As the Spanish empire steadily declined during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Spanish kings demanded more and more in taxes from their subjects. In Naples and Sicily they purchased these by granting the baronry ever increasing power. In 1647 the people of Naples, by now reduced to living off melons, rose in what was to become the most spectacular and widely discussed revolt of the period. For a few months the *popolo minuto*, the 'common people', and what was called the *popolo civile* (see Galasso 1982: 1, xv-xvi) - comprised, for the most part, of merchants and lawyers - managed to establish an independent republic with the Duc de Guise as its sometimes reluctant doge. The Spaniards returned by force in 1648, but the revolt had shaken the crown's confidence in the barons and compelled it to recognize that its policies were in no one's long-term interests. These policies, as we shall see, consisted largely in the destruction of trust and the cultural networks which sustained it. In 1707, after the War of the Spanish Succession, Naples passed to the Austrians and in 1724 became an independent kingdom under Bourbon rule.

¹ <<127>> I would like to thank John Dunn, Geoffrey Hawthorn, and Diego Gambetta for their comments on an earlier version of this essay.

It is with the political economists of this last period, from the early 1720s until the 1790s, that I shall be concerned. The first of this group, Paolo Mattia Doria, was, paradoxically for such a fierce opponent of the Spanish monarchy, a member of the Genoese family which had provided Philip II with a navy in the Mediterranean and an army in the Netherlands. He was born in the year of the revolution, became a member of the *Accademia del Medinaceli*, whose prime concern was to reform the political and economic structure of the kingdom in the aftermath of the revolt, and lived long enough to discuss the reasons for the collapse of the Spanish empire with Montesquieu. The last are Antonio Genovesi (1713-79), the first man to hold a chair of commerce at the university of Naples, or indeed at any university anywhere (see Bellamy 1987), and Gaetano Filangieri (1753-88), the author of an immensely influential treatise on the science of legislation.² All of these men, the leading figures in their <<129>> different ways of the Neapolitan Enlightenment, were engaged - as were the perhaps better-known figures of Giambattista Vico and Pietro Giannone - in the project of reviving and reinterpreting their humanistic past, a project which was to be taken up again by the liberals of the nineteenth century and which has had a marked influence on more recent Italian social thought.

II

For Doria and Genovesi, the notion of trust as a dimension of social behaviour involved a crucial element of the incalculable, of the non-rational. Trust clearly depends, as several of the essays in this book stress, on the availability of information about the object of one's trust. I will trust my friends, or even my trading partners, because I believe that I can predict how they will behave. But although it may be perfectly rational for me to hold such a belief, I cannot in fact ever be in possession of sufficient information to *know* that they will not act in entirely unforeseen ways. I *trust* them not to do so. What I have will always be a *belief*. Like Pascal's view of faith, trust relies in the end upon a wager; and in Italian as in Latin (and most Romance languages), the term most commonly used for trust, *fede*, is the term English translates as 'faith'. John Dunn refers in this volume to Locke's understanding of the Latin *fides* as 'the duty to observe mutual undertakings and the virtue of consistently discharging this duty'. So defined, it stands, as he has said elsewhere, not only as an antithesis to understanding (*cognitio*), but also in direct contrast to 'untrustworthiness' (Dunn 1985: 41). For Genovesi and for Doria, trusting someone involved the belief that the object of trust would perform just such a duty.

Trust - *fides* - was also, for anyone reared (as all eighteenth-century Italian theorists were) on Machiavelli, the necessary condition of all political association. Trust, wrote Doria in his *Della vita civile* of 1710, 'is the sole sustenance of states and leads to their stable maintenance' (1852: 352).³ *Fede* here is a purely social and a visibly public virtue. It is, in Genovesi's telling phrase, *fede pubblica*. It is this, he says, and this alone, which not only sustains the state but also constitutes its credibility with respect to other states. But *fede pubblica* has to be distinguished from what he calls *fede privata*, which is a purely familial association, where private rather than public interests are involved since the family, the kin group, is merely an extension of the individual. Genovesi is clear, <<130>> however, that *fede privata* is a necessary condition of *fede pubblica*, since trust like charity begins at home. When, as happened in the republics of Rome and Athens, 'first private trust [grows] weak and then the public' (Genovesi 1803: 94), societies degenerate into one or another form of tyranny.⁴ But he is equally certain that a society where *only* private trust was available would - since it would consist solely of small self-interested groups united by kin - be no society, no *societas*, at all. This distinction between public and private, between conditions within the kin group and

² <<128>> Galasso (1982: 1, xi) rightly notes that 'nel periodo fra il Doria e il Genovesi fossero posti i temi principali della discussione su Napoli, che sarebbe proseguita, in termini solo parzialmente mutati, anche dopo che nel 1860 la città aveva cessato di essere la capitale di uno Stato indipendente.' If we allow for certain changes in vocabulary, and a far greater emphasis on the means of production, the debate continues to this day.

³ <<129>> For an account of the theoretical underpinning of Doria's work, which in the psychology and metaphysics it employs is markedly different from that of Genovesi and Filangieri, see Nuzzo (1984).

⁴ <<130>> This also of course distinguishes this use of *fede* from simple faith.

without, was, as we shall see later, central to the accounts provided by Doria, Genovesi, and Filangieri of the necessary conditions for social stability and economic growth.

Trust - *fede pubblica* - depends, of course, upon security of expectation. But a trusting society must also be one in which men are prepared to surrender their instinctive habits of distrust, where they are prepared to 'have faith' in their neighbour's word. And such a society must itself be capable of generating high levels of expectation in its citizens (Genovesi 1803: 80).⁵

Cooperation, as Genovesi conceived it, works through conscience and cultural - or in some cases divine - sanction. Deviation from what is regarded as an acceptable mode of conduct is met with expulsion from the community. A merchant whom no one trusts will not be able to remain in business for very long. Economic transactions are clearly more heavily dependent on the agencies of trust than any other, and in every European language they share a common vocabulary: 'commerce', 'credit', 'honour', and 'trust' itself are all terms which have specific economic applications. Confidence, as Filangieri pointed out, 'is the soul of commerce', and the credit it alone can generate must be regarded as a 'second species of money'. Any individual who betrays his trust by, for instance, issuing false bonds is likely to find himself excommunicate. Fraud, forgery, and bankruptcy, claimed Filangieri, constituted the severest threats to the social and economic order (1804: 290- 1).

For both Genovesi and Doria it was axiomatic that the only kind of society capable of generating and maintaining the high levels of expectation which would render its people prosperous and happy was the virtuous republic, the Ciceronian *bene ordinate respublica* where all laws were directed towards the public good and the sovereign ruled in the interest of his people (Genovesi 1803: 69-71; Doria 1852: 353-4). Citizenship, as Weber observed of the ancient Greek *polis* and the medieval city, cancelled out the power of the kinship group (1925: 1, 201-4). Brutus's *virtù*, claimed Genovesi, lay not in self-sacrifice but in <<131>> preferring the interests of the community to those of even his most immediate family.

As long as *fede pubblica* always dominated *fede privata* the polity itself might take the form of either a monarchy or a republic. Genovesi, like Rousseau, however, believed that true republics were more likely to succeed, for in a republic public instruction is 'more severe'; there is less luxury - there are fewer purely private goods - and as a result it is more 'creditable' ('si puo avere piti credito in una repubblica che in una monarchia') and 'trust [*fede pubblica*] is more rigorously upheld' (1803: 57-8). Doria, on the other hand, shared the view of the Milanese merchant who, offering sage northern advice to disordered southerners, wrote to a Neapolitan friend in November 1647 that Naples had been too long used to monarchical rule to be able to make a republican government work. What the Neapolitans required was not what the Dutch and the Swiss had achieved, for such peoples are 'hard, slow, cold and longsuffering'; but the elective monarchy which the Catalans briefly, and the Portuguese more lastingly, had acquired.⁶ For Doria, too, the enlightened and elective monarchy provided the best guarantee of the well-ordered state. Such a virtuous and well-ordered society had existed in Naples, or so it was popularly believed, under the Aragonese kings, but this happy state of affairs had been systematically undermined by the Habsburgs. The point was to understand how.

III

Shortly after the establishment of the Austrian government, Doria composed a treatise entitled *Massime del governo spagnolo a Napoli* in which he attempted to explain just how the Spanish Habsburgs had governed Naples and reduced a once flourishing state to economic ruin. What his treatise provides is, in fact, a carefully considered list of the necessary macro- and micro-conditions for dissolving trust within a society while still preserving its condition *as a*

⁵ <<130>> Education, Genovesi claimed, was the only effective way to enhance the citizens' awareness of, and corresponding willingness to invest in, the community.

⁶ <<131>> 'Lettera di un Milanese a un Napolitano amico suo' (Milan, 29 November 1647), in Conti (1984: 45-8).

society. He begins with the commonplace observation that all princes who live far from their states have to employ 'some malicious art' if they are to preserve them (Doria 1973: 21-2). As the Spaniards had discovered to their cost in the Netherlands, simple coercion is not enough, if only because at such distances the resources of the state are not up to providing the policing required. The Spanish strategy in Naples was founded on two classical maxims: *divide et impera* and *depauperandum esse regionem*. The Spanish kings had preferred weak dependencies to strong ones, which is <<132>> why, Doria explained, they had deprived their subjects of 'virtue and wealth and introduced instead ignorance, villainy, disunion and unhappiness' (1953: 175). For the Castilian crown, concerned only with securing from its subjects sufficient revenue to fight its foreign wars, there existed a trade-off between *relative* poverty and political compliance. As long as sufficient numbers of the nobility were able, with Castilian assistance, to maintain a properly 'noble' life-style, they could be relied upon to provide - or to compel their subjects to provide - the fiscal support the crown demanded. Excessive wealth, particularly when concentrated in the hands of the *populo civile*, might, as it had done on occasion in Milan, lead to the creation of a powerful political group eager to rise out of the tax-paying class. But, of course, as at least one viceroy recognized, the custom of beggaring the better part of the economy in such relatively short-term interests produced a downward spiral from which ultimately it might prove impossible to recover. For as Giulio Genoino (a man who was to play a major role in the revolt of 1647) pointed out in 1620, since the nobles could not escape the general decline of the economy they became increasingly unable 'to maintain themselves with the necessary decorum, but feeling compelled to do so they [were] obliged to oppress their vassals, which greatly [damaged] the public good'.⁷

Trust, in Doria's view, was a necessary condition of both wealth and virtue. In the interest, then, of reducing the wealth of the citizens of Naples to a politically and fiscally acceptable minimum, and their political virtue to zero, the crown had set out to destroy the pre-existent bonds of trust within the society. At one level this had been achieved by means which the French kings too had found useful in coping with their nobility. They had created large numbers of new nobles whose loyalty flowed, not between the members of the community, but directly from the individual to the king, and in whom the king could have complete 'trust'. The French monarch, or his prime minister, trusted the service nobility he had created, and they him. Similarly, the Castilian crown had created in Naples an inordinately large number of 'new nobles' whose presence, and whose pretensions, helped to generate hostility and unrest among the older aristocracy (Doria 1973: 30-2). The crown had then set out to replace the society's normative values (*ordini e costumi*) - precisely, of course, those values on which *la fede pubblica* depended - by new Hispanic ones. The policy of 'hispanization' which the Spaniards adopted in all their dependencies, spearheaded by such institutions as the Inquisition - which had nearly resulted in the Spaniards being driven out of the kingdom in 1585 - consisted largely in this, for as Doria pointed out, once a 'mutation of customs' had been successfully effected the laws <<133>> which guaranteed the continuation of the *respublica* would collapse of their own accord (1973: 22). Just how Doria thought this had been done I shall come to shortly.

What in effect this translation of cultural values achieved was the replacement of a virtuous society based upon the mutual trust of all its members by an aristocratic tyranny based on suspicion and self-regard, 'arrogance and self-love'. In other terms, it replaced a society based on trust by one based on another, equally slippery concept: honour.

Historically there are two distinct senses in which the term 'honour' may be understood. In the sense Doria used it when describing what he, and indeed most European contemporaries, regarded as the single defining characteristic of Spanish culture, it implied the existence of a self-love vested in, and consequently at risk through, the persons and objects - and most particularly the persons viewed *as* objects, that is, the women - by which a man (for a woman's honour is merely a repository for the man's) is surrounded. If, as I was once told, a gentleman is he who uses a butter-knife when dining alone, a true man of honour is one who, like so many of the protagonists - they cannot be called heroes - of the Spanish theatre of the seventeenth

⁷ <<132>> *Relatione del stato di Napoli*, quoted in Villari (1980: 166).

century, is content to have the wife who has dishonoured him murdered in private by a hired assassin. His dishonour is a private affair, a family matter, and as such cannot find redress in law. As Charles Duclos observed in 1750, the man of honour 'seems to be his own legislator' (1820: 1, 56).⁸ But there is also that other kind of honour which derives from Aristotle's account in the *Nichomachean Ethics* of τιμη´ (book 1, chapter V, 5). This is public, in that it requires a witness, and thus implies a relationship between two or more parties and with persons outside the kin group. This understanding of honour - the sense in which the term is used in such phrases as 'honouring one's bond' - is, of course, a crucial component of trust. As Genovesi said, *onore e virtù* (honour and virtue), in the absence of any effective coercive mechanism, can be the only guarantors of a debtor's reliability. But, as we shall see, no virtue is possible in a society of honour understood in the first sense. Spanish, which has the richest lexicon of terms for relations of honour of any European language, uses the term *honra* to describe honour in the first sense, *honor* to describe it in the second.

The virtuous republic is, of course, a society grounded on a set of shared and stable values. These values - trust in and concern for one's fellow citizens, the triumph of public over private good - depend crucially upon the amount of information each party has. In order, then, to destroy the trusting society, the Spaniards had systematically reduced <<134>> the amount of information available to the citizenry, which is why Genovesi insisted that the new enlightened administrations should hold a census after the Roman model and make its findings public (1803: 109) The viceregal administration, 'in keeping with the best rules of reason of state' (something obnoxious to the virtuous republic, which can have no reason independent of the good of its members), made a secret out of the business of government so that it should be 'reserved to them alone'. It obliged the University to go on teaching Aristotelian logic 'because it never explained anything'. And in religion it decreed 'that everyone should follow the priest in the ritual without examining it' (Doria 1973: 33-4).

This last observation brings us back to the definition of *fede pubblica*. For Doria and for Genovesi, who had read Rousseau on the subject, religion should be, as far as was possible without falling into heresy, a civil affair - what Genovesi, so as to avoid the Machiavellian and atheistical implications of the phrase 'civil religion', called a 'rational religion' (1803: 80); since it is religion, *fides* as 'faith', which provides the ultimate sanction against preferring private interests over public ones. On this point both Doria who was, as far as I know, a good Catholic and Genovesi, who had once hoped to hold a chair in theology, would have been in broad agreement with Locke's claim that once you remove God from the picture, 'neither faith [*fides*], nor agreement, nor oaths, the bonds [*vincula*] of human society, can be stable and sacred' (quoted in Dunn 1985: 43). But although faith in the certainty of divine sanction may indeed constitute the ultimate guarantee for trust, in Genovesi's account of the 'rational religion' there is more than a mere suggestion that faith may be subsumed under trust and, and within the sphere of interpersonal relations, the public good come to replace a private God. What is clear is that whatever religion the society embraces - even if it consists simply in believing in the virtues of that society - it must be comprehensible to all those who participate in it; and it must be available for participation. Lack of information destroys trust. So too, of course, does mystification.

The elaborate religious ceremonies, the obsessive veneration for San Gennaro and the Virgin of the Carmine, which played such a prominent, and in Doria's view lamentable, role in the revolt of 1647 were hardly 'rational' and certainly had not made religion civil. Instead they made civil society religious and, as a consequence, provided the Spaniards with yet another set of devices for distracting the people from the correct understanding of their civic responsibilities.

⁸ <<133>> Duclos also notes that 'today' the term has come to mean nothing more than self-respect (pp. 61-3), a piece of wishful thinking. See Julian Pitt-Rivers (1977: 9), who has some interesting reflections on the relationship between honour and legality.

The Spaniards also sought to undermine the harmonious relationship which had previously existed between the various orders in the kingdom and which was, of course, a necessary condition of the well-ordered <<135>> republic. Thus the barony were given greater powers over their peasantry and encouraged to indulge in absurd and worthless pursuits, until finally, complained Doria, 'there remained no other virtue (if they can be called virtues) than scrupulousness in duelling and skill in arms and horsemanship' (1973: 32-3). The middle order, the *populo civile*, were fobbed off with university doctorates, and the *populo minuto* kept busy with public festivals. These things were emptied of all political significance and each order thus became enslaved to the one above, the whole society being easily subjected to the tyranny of the Spanish crown. The status of nobility, which should have entailed an obligation to the community, conferred only ignorance and *superbia*; the doctorate of law, which should have obliged its holder to maintain justice, became merely a licence for endless and costly litigation; the public festivals, which should (like the Roman games) have encouraged a love of valour and of *patria* in the plebeians, became mere diversion and occasions for licentiousness. As a consequence, 'the superior looked upon his inferior with anger, as one who thought himself to have been cheated of the veneration he believed to be his due, the inferior looked upon his superior as one who only thought himself superior, and in this way there was neither union nor love between the various orders' (Doria 1973: 33-4). Each man became concerned, not with the welfare of his fellow citizens, but only with his own private ends or with those of his immediate kin.

As a means to undermining both the communication, *conversare*, and that other-regarding ethic which are the substance of civic life, the Spaniards also destroyed the traditional and, if we are to believe Doria, relatively free and easy relationship between the sexes which had previously existed in Naples. This relationship, in his view - and he wrote a treatise to demonstrate that women were the equal, or at least the near equal, of men - was one of the most significant in any society, since for Doria sexual relations were in the private domain what civil relations were in the public: opportunities for trust and 'conversation', which can easily collapse into honour and secrecy (1973: 48).⁹

Formerly, the Neapolitans had enjoyed free and respectful relationships with women. Their wives were their friends, the impartial love of friendship being the only true foundation for personal relationships within the virtuous society. The Spanish, however, set their women apart, treating them with a reverence which verged on idolatry but which also excluded respect. Like the Roman attitude towards the vestal virgins, this had the effect of destroying their gaiety, 'the spirit and the soul of their conversation', and of depriving them of all human contact outside the limits of the family, so that 'to foreigners a conversation with <<136>> a woman seems more like worship at a shrine than a discussion' (Doria 1973: 48-53). The Spanish treatment of women made them into objects bound not to the code of love - which is a civil virtue - but merely to the code of honour. By encouraging in the males a corresponding 'excess of gallantry' it turned their attention away from civil life into purely private concerns (Doria 1973: 56). Occupied thus, with paying grotesque compliments to women, duelling, and fighting their neighbours over imagined slights to their honour, the aristocracy of Naples, the political nation, had abandoned its role as the promoter of public welfare.

Thus, concluded Doria, by compelling men to change their customs, by making it easy for them to abandon the hard but virtuous ways of their ancestors, for the easy, unthinking, and ultimately destructive ways of the Spaniards, a society based on trust had been replaced by one based on honour, a rich and just community by an impoverished and unjust one. For the people nothing existed beyond games and ritualized devotion, for the *populo civile* nothing beyond litigation and private gain, while for the nobility there was only the interminable and profitless struggle for status.

⁹ <<135>> On the additional, and crucial, relationship between tyranny and the servitude of women, see Tornaselli (1985: 113-14).

In Doria's account the Spaniards had done to the Neapolitans exactly, and by the same means, what (according to Herodotus) Croesus had advised Cyrus to do to the Lydians: 'Make them wear tunics under their cloaks and high boots, and tell them to teach their sons to play the zither and the harp, and to start shopkeeping. If you do that, my lord, you will soon see them turn into women instead of men, and there will not be any more danger of their rebelling against you.' As Schelling observes with reference to this passage, such cultural strategies, although aimed at habits and motivations, 'at the same time deny the development of expectations and the confidence' which is the basis of trust in one's neighbour and, in the larger sense, trust in society itself (1984: 208).

The erosion of older values, the 'mutation of customs and orders' resulted, as the Spaniards had predicted, in the steady collapse of the legal system. For a society of honour is clearly not one which values or respects the impartial justice that is a necessary condition of trust.

In any well-ordered republic there must be equality before the law. Such a republic could only exist, Doria informed the president of the Magistrature of Commerce in 1740, when the city was once again living 'in the liberty of its constitution and the trust which is sustained by a rigorous and strong justice' (1953: 163). For no one will be prepared to trust another who enjoys a different legal status to himself. The positive laws of the community are also, Genovesi insisted, civil contracts, and contracts, of course, rely more heavily upon trust than they do upon the possibility - always precarious - of enforcing them. In the absence of trust, he pointed out, 'there can be no certainty in contracts and hence no <<137>> force to the laws', and a society in that condition is effectively reduced 'to a state of semi-savagery' (1803: 113-16). The Spaniards had succeeded in destroying the purchase of the laws on the community by subverting the customs which sustained them; they had destroyed the *rule* of law by setting up separate courts both for the barony and for the priesthood and by allowing into the legal system entire categories of exemptions and exceptions so that no one could predict the outcome of a case or know which part of the law applied to him.

The escalation in the number of doctorates in civil law had debased the standing of the title and the social status of those who held it, while the large number of lawyers prepared to sell their services at a low cost had greatly increased the amount of litigation. This in turn, since there were insufficient controls over the grounds on which a case was entered, increased the degree of uncertainty that surrounded all early modern legal procedure and further eroded trust in the judicial apparatus of the state. Only when there were fewer lawyers and when the Dutch custom of obliging the loser to pay costs had been introduced, claimed Doria, would the courts regain some of the trust which had previously been confided in them (1953: 184-5).

IV

The degeneration of the necessary guarantors of the well-ordered community led inevitably to the collapse of the economy. Philip II's purpose, in Doria's view, had been to beggar the kingdom in order to secure its political compliance. 'For commerce', he wrote, 'is an art which unites men in civil society so that they give to each other mutual assistance ... in such a way that neither the distance nor any other consideration can impede this mutual aid.' But trade can only flourish under two conditions, 'and these are liberty and security in contracts, and this can only occur when trust and justice rule' (Doria 1953: 162; see also 1973: 41-2). In order for these conditions to be met it was clearly necessary for the law to ensure that all trading practices - what is generally understood here by contracts - should be stable. All the Neapolitan political economists, from Antonio Serra in the early seventeenth century to Gaetano Filangieri in the late eighteenth, had criticized the laxity of the laws governing the issue of false bonds, counterfeiting (a crime of which even the viceroys were believed, correctly it seems, to have been guilty), the creation of monopolies, sudden changes in the rates of exchange and in rates of interest, and so on. Counterfeiting in particular was, Genovesi pointed out, punished with the utmost severity even among 'barbarous nations' such as the <<138>> Incas, since it threatened the social bonds which held together the entire community (1803: 102-9). In Naples, however, a man might be executed for theft, a crime whose consequences were hardly to be compared

with the loss of life, but let off with a fine for an act which, in Doria's view, 'offends against public trust [*fede pubblica*] and thus against the entire republic' (1953: 180). As a result that republic had become, he claimed, 'like a merchant without trust since the slowness of the justice which is handed out to litigants breaks the trust which exists between persons' (1953: 264).

With the collapse of those conditions on which true commerce depends, trade became a question of mutual deception. Bonds and even money, since so much of it was false, were no longer freely accepted and the Neapolitans were reduced to the condition of the savages described by Genovesi who will only give with the right hand if they simultaneously receive with the left (1803: 70-1). As a consequence of massive degrees of mistrust loans were only made at exorbitant rates of interest, bankrupting all but the richest of merchants and leading to the widespread belief that a predominance of 'idle money' was the source of the kingdom's ills (see Villari 1980: 67-8; and Doria 1953: 170).

V

By destroying the Neapolitans' ability to trust each other, the Spanish crown had ruined the kingdom. The solution to this problem, offered in different forms to different rulers by both Doria and Genovesi, was, of course, to restore the well-ordered *respublica*, where the law was sovereign, where 'honour' - in any sense stronger than simple respect - would give way to public virtue, and *la fede privata* would be once again subordinate to *la fede pubblica*. Doria's and Genovesi's reflections on just what kind of society that might be, interesting though they are, do not concern me here. They inevitably fall far short of the 'non-contradictory and reasonably full description' which Dunn (in this volume) demands of any attempt to generate a structurally just society. But however inadequate as a prescription, as observations on the state of Naples in the eighteenth century, they may yet throw light on what might be regarded as some of the necessary - though by no means sufficient - conditions for social and economic growth in early modern Europe.

For Doria and Genovesi trust is the basis of the well-ordered republic. It is, in short, the motive for a man to behave towards members of the society at large in much the same way he behaves towards members of his own kin group; or, at least, it provides strong reasons why he should not - except in purely private concerns - privilege that group over any other.

<<139>>

The only community for Doria and Genovesi (and more widely for most Catholic political economists) in which trust was dominant, indeed the only society in which it could operate at all, was the virtuous republic exemplified by Rome and Athens and Aragonese Naples. Quentin Skinner has argued forcefully that the kind of humanistic ethics Doria and Genovesi were attempting to revive, which set this idea of the 'well-ordered republic' at the centre of all social relations, employed a similar conceptual vocabulary to Calvinism; that - to put it the other way round - the social ethos of Calvinism can be seen to constitute a special case of classical republicanism (Skinner 1974a; 1974b). If we accept this view then many of the problems historians have had with Weber's famous thesis on the association between Calvinism and the rise of capitalism disappear, since it might be maintained that it was not a specifically Calvinist or Puritan work ethic which encouraged economic take-off in the Protestant cities of the seventeenth century, or Christianity itself in the medieval cities of north and central Italy, but the secular ethic of classical republicanism.

But we still need to know just what it is about classical republicanism that makes it so peculiarly suited to capitalism or, to use the contemporary term, to the commercial society. Doria and Genovesi, in their analyses of the workings of trust, claimed (as we have seen) that the crucial fact about the virtuous and well-ordered republic - what indeed made it both virtuous and well ordered - was that by insisting on public good over private interest it enabled men from different kin groups, and hence from different societies, to trust each other; that in Weberian terms it allowed the 'out-groups' to be treated in ways similar to the 'in-groups'; and that only under

such conditions was it possible to operate a properly ‘commercial society’. This would seem to reinforce an aspect of Weber’s work which, although it is never made much of in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, plays a major role in his analysis of China, namely the claim that if China had never experienced the economic growth of the West this in the end came down to the fact that in China ‘the fetters of the kinship group were never shattered’ and that it had been, as he said elsewhere, precisely ‘the great achievement of the ethical religions, above all the ethical and asceticist sects of Protestantism ... to shatter the fetters of the kin’ (Weber 1951: 237). If we substitute ‘virtuous republic’ for ‘ethical religions’ we have a claim which looks very much like that of Doria and Genovesi. For only in the society where trust as public (in contrast to private) faith is held to be central, indeed the dominant social principle, will the good of the family be made subordinate to the good of society at large, and only in that kind of society will economic take-off be possible. I am not, of course, suggesting that it is *only* within the well-ordered republic, or some <<140>> functional modern analogue, that capital-dependent economic prosperity is possible. The alternatives of Japan and South Korea, as described in this volume by Geoffrey Hawthorn (to give only two examples), evidently preclude any such conclusion. But it may still be the case that the problem Doria and Genovesi identified in the eighteenth century might provide some insight into why certain areas of southern Europe have singularly failed to achieve the economic take-off experienced by the north. It might, that is, lie somewhere very close to the centre of what Diego Gambetta, in the foreword to this volume, describes as ‘the persistent and apparently insoluble political and economic problem Italy has faced over the century since it became a politically united nation: the underdevelopment of most of her southern regions.’

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<<141>>

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