

Ferdinando Galiani (1728 – 1787): what are the roots of his anti-physiocratic attitude?

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The present paper aims at examining some aspects of Galiani's criticism to Physiocracy. In order to do so, I try to demonstrate that the philosophy of history of Giambattista Vico is one of the roots of his scientific procedure. The importance of the thought of Vico in the analysis of Galiani had been recalled by Nicolini and Tagliacozzo and, partly, also by Einaudi and Diaz¹, but it seems quite put aside in recent years.

Vico's historicism is far from the rationalism of Physiocrats, and this is an important basis of the criticism of Galiani. His *Della Moneta*, published anonymously in Naples in 1751, when Galiani was very young, follows a Vichian approach to its basic concepts (namely, the origin of money). Later, in the decade he spent in Paris as secretary of the Kingdom of Naples's Embassy, Galiani would come into contact with the culture of Enlightenment and Physiocracy. Again, his criticism to the free trade propounded by the Physiocrats has one of its roots just in the thought of Vico, as shown in the second part of the paper.

In the first part I briefly describe the historical and cultural context where the *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds* (since now *Dialogues*) was born, and the structure of the argument. Impossibility of directly applying a theory to all countries and necessity of considering which social groups are advantaged or disadvantaged by different rules appear as the basic issues of the proposals of the *Dialogues*. In the second part I recall some themes of the first to clear the vision of history and nature of Galiani. There also references to *Della Moneta* concerning value, *alzamento*² and interest are introduced. The comparison with some points of the third *New Science* of Vico allows us to draw conclusions about the philosophy of history of Galiani and its incompatibility with the Physiocratic theories.

I. The *Dialogues* and their historical and cultural background

¹ See for example NICOLINI F., « Avvertenza », in *La Signora d'Épinay e l'Abate Galiani. Lettere inedite (1769-1772)*, con Introduzione e note di F. NICOLINI, Bari, Laterza, 1929, p. 7-12 ; TAGLIACOZZO G., *Economisti napoletani dei sec. XVII e XVIII*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1937 ; TAGLIACOZZO G., « Il Vichismo economico (Vico, Galiani, Croce – Economia, Liberalismo economico) », *Moneta e Credito*, XXI, 83, 3, 1968, p. 247-272 ; TAGLIACOZZO G., « Economic Vichianism: Vico, Galiani, Croce – Economics, Economic Liberalism », G. TAGLIACOZZO and H. V. WHITE (dir.), *Giambattista Vico : an International Symposium*, Baltimora, Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, p. 349-368. EINAUDI L., *Saggi bibliografici e storici intorno alle dottrine economiche*. Cap. XI « Galiani economista », Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1953, p. 267-305 ; DIAZ F., *Introduzione*, GALIANI F., *Opere*, a cura di F. DIAZ e L. GUERCI, Napoli - Milano, Ricciardi, 1975, p. ix-cvi.

² « Enhaussement » in the Tiran edition of *Della Moneta*, 2005; « raising of coin » as translated by Annalisa Rosselli. See: ROSSELLI A., « The role of the precious metals in *Della Moneta* by Ferdinando Galiani », *History of Economic Ideas*, IX, 3, 2001, p. 43-60.

I.1 Genesis and publication of the *Dialogues*

In January 1759 Tanucci appoints Galiani as Secretary of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Naples in Paris, where he would remain for ten years. The *Dialogues* were written between November 1768 and June 1769. Galiani, called back in Naples, left Paris on 30 June. In the meanwhile he wrote the Eighth Dialogue. The Ninth was never published, perhaps never written³. The manuscript was revised by Diderot and M.e d'Epinay, protected by the lieutenant de police Sartine, who partly modified the text⁴. In December 1769 Terray took the place of Maynon d'Invault as *Contrôleur général* and Sartine gave the permission of publishing the *Dialogues*, printed by Merlin in Paris, even though « Londres » is indicated. The book enjoyed an immediate success and three releases.

The period of preparation of the book, and the debate about it, cover a time span from the Neapolitan famine of 1763-64 to the crowning of Louis XVI (1774) and the coming of Turgot, followed by the *guerre des farines* and the *disgrace de Turgot* (1776).

Interestingly, in the previous years Galiani, in accordance with the more advanced culture, is favourable to the free trade. In a letter to Tanucci of 25 July 1764, a few days after its official enforcement, he comments the *Edit* by de l'Averdy which establishes the international free trade of grain⁵. He writes that in France the truth has been recognized: the only defense against famine is the free trade, which enhances farming. The free export of grain from France will damage the commerce of Naples, if the Kingdom does not try to copy it. Also in the *Memoria* of the end of 1765 *Storia dell'avvenuto sugli editti del libero commercio de' grani in Francia promulgati nel 1763 e 1764*⁶ and in two others letters to Tanucci (21 September 1767; 2 November 1767⁷) he discusses about the persistent good effect in France of freedom in agriculture and bakery. In the *Memoria* he singles out the dispute between the *intendenti*, who were losing their privileges and rents, and the *Parlements*, whose deputies often were *propriétaires* damaged by regulation. In the

³ DIAZ F., *Filosofia e politica nel Settecento francese*, Torino, Einaudi, 1962, p. 413.

⁴ NICOLINI F., « Introduzione », in GALIANI F., *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds. Giusta l'editio princeps del 1770*, con appendici illustrative di F. NICOLINI, Milano-Napoli, Riccardo Ricciardi, 1959, p. ix-xxix ; KLOTZ G., « La question des blés en France au dix-huitième siècle: Galiani, critique des Physiocrates », *Il Pensiero Economico Italiano*, VIII, 2, 2000, p. 157.

⁵ See GALIANI F., *Lettere di Ferdinando Galiani al Marchese Bernardo Tanucci*, pubblicate per cura di Augusto Bazzoni, Firenze, presso Gio. Pietro Vieusseux, 1880, p. 124. The letter is quoted also in DIAZ F., *Introduzione*, GALIANI F., *Opere*, a cura di F. DIAZ e L. GUERCI, Napoli - Milano, Ricciardi, 1975, p. xlix-l, but Diaz cites with the date 25 June 1764, that is a few days before before such an enforcement. The *Edit* was written with the collaboration of Trudaine de Montigny, Turgot and Dupont. It was registered at the Parliament of Paris on 18 July 1764. The previous year, on 25 May 1763, the *Contrôleur général* Bertin had liberalized the domestic trade of grain. In the same years Naples was fiercely affected by the famine. See FACCARELLO G., « Galiani, Necker and Turgot: a debate on economic reform and policy in eighteenth-century France », G. FACCARELLO *Studies in the history of French political economy*, London and New York, Routledge, 1998, p. 122.

⁶ Now in GALIANI F., *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds, Giusta l'editio princeps del 1770*, *op. cit.*, p. 315-322.

⁷ See GALIANI F., *Opere*, *op. cit.*, p. 933-936 and p. 943-946 respectively.

letters he says that the rules in France are the best, just as in Naples are the worst (21 September 1767); and notes that in France the hoarders who buy from farmers to sell to bakers with enormous profit have disappeared (2 November 1767).

His positive vision of the free trade would clash against facts. Indeed the liberalization, begun in 1763-64⁸, failed in 1768-69⁹, just when Galiani was working on the *Dialogues*, and would have been reposed by Turgot, with the known result¹⁰.

Not only was liberalization a strategy of political economy, but also it engendered a paramount process of socioeconomic and intellectual change: subsistence was no longer public matter, and uncertainty and insecurity could begin to spread. The opposition came from the side of « intendenti », and also from many merchants and landlords afraid of novelties. French *Parlements* were divided: several of them were part of the liberal lobby, whereas many others (e. g. Paris and Rouen) were against, since feared riots after the abolition of the « magazzini di abbondanza » (warehouses managed by public authorities, where the grain was stored and sold at administered price). Between 1765 and 1768, due to the bad climate there was a dearth of grain, prices soared, real wages and employment dropped, and popular rage bursted out. The famine plot persuasion, due also to the assistance ensured to Paris (for which a special fund of king's grain had been constituted), undermined the confidence in public authorities until the fall of the ancien régime. On 22 December 1769 the moderate Terray became *Contrôleur général* and, even though he personally was not so far from liberal thesis, in 1770-1 he could not help abandoning liberalization¹¹.

I.2 The debate on the free trade in the period of *Dialogues*

The debate is really complex. Initially, even Diderot defends the free trade. In 1767 he reads *L'Ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques* of Le Mercier de la Rivière and appreciates it very much¹². In two letters to Falconet in 1767-8, Diderot maintains that le Mercier de la Rivière is « apôtre de la propriété, de la liberté et de l'évidence » and will be an invaluable collaborator of the

⁸ The liberal laws of 1763-64 have been considered « among the most daring and revolutionary reforms attempted in France before 1789. [...] The royal government [...] proclaimed [*de facto*] that subsistence was no longer its overriding responsibility » (KAPLAN S. L., *Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV*, The Hague, M. Nijhoff, 2 vols., 1976, p. xxvi).

⁹ However, according to Diaz the *Edits* of 1763-64 had been quite bereaved of effective contents. This would weaken even the political relevance of the controversy between Galiani and the Physiocrats. See DIAZ F., *Introduzione*, *op. cit.*, p. 395-411.

¹⁰ VERSINI L., « Introduction à *Apologie de l'abbé Galiani* », DIDEROT D., *Oeuvres. Tome iii^e : Politique*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1995 p. 119. These facts are mentioned also in *Jacques le fataliste* by Diderot.

¹¹ KAPLAN S. L., *Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV*, *op. cit.*, p. xxvi-xxx. See also: KAPLAN S. L., *Le complot de famine: histoire d'un rumeur au XVII^e siècle*, Paris, Librairie Armand Colin, 1982, p. 39-43; VERSINI L., « Introduction à *Apologie de l'abbé Galiani* », *loc. cit.*.

¹² Indeed, it was the work by Le Mercier that raised Diderot's interest in political economy. See MINERBI M., « Diderot, Galiani e la polemica sulla Fisiocrazia », *Studi Storici*, 14, 1, 1973, p. 147, n. 4, where a letter to Damilaville sent in June or July 1767 is quoted.

tsarine Catherine II in Russia, where he is going¹³, but he criticizes the other Physiocrats, defined « missionnaires enthousiastes à qui le zèle indiscret aura fait dire force inepties¹⁴ ». In this period Diderot is near the *Boutique économiste*, authors not far from Physiocracy, but interested mainly in commerce and manufacture, and favourable to the free circulation of grain (so as of writings and ideas): Turgot, Trudaine de Montigny, Dupont de Nemours, Condorcet, M.lle de Lespinasse and others. This group is influent on the decision of the *Edit* of 1764¹⁵.

On 12 and 22 November 1768 Diderot writes a couple of letters to Sophie Volland where he appreciates the ideas of Galiani, which he has exposed in d'Holbach's *salon* with intelligence and wit¹⁶. Galiani stated that, in principle, the State should not modify any law, even a bad one, if it has no administrative bureaucracy able to enforce a better one. Furthermore he expounded that the export of grain is not giving grain in exchange of gold, but giving grain in exchange of grain¹⁷. Such an idea can also be found in the *Dialogues*, that is the impossibility of growth led by the export of grain. Diderot asked Galiani to publish his ideas, and this gave rise to the *Dialogues*.

Almost two years later, in *Apologie de l'abbé Galiani*, Diderot would show his esteem for the realism of his Italian friend: « L'abbé expose les faits. Il se demande la raison de ces faits, soit pour approuver, soit pour improuver¹⁸ ». Why did Diderot change his mind? Probably, the conversion is due to the observation of reality from his point of view of *propriétaire*, even though not great landlord, and the awareness of the condition of life of labourers, which he describes with few and effective lines, where he sharply criticizes Morellet. The high price of grain, he notes, hardly can trickle down and benefit the *paysan*.

The opinion against the Physiocracy spreaded. In 1767 Forbonnais publishes the two

¹³ DIDEROT D., *Oeuvres. Tome V^e: Correspondance*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1997, p. 746, letter of July 1767.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 817 letter of March 1768. See also DIAZ F., *Filosofia e politica nel Settecento francese*, *op. cit.*, p. 396 and n. 2.

¹⁵ VERSINI L., « Introduction à *Apologie de l'abbé Galiani* », *op. cit.*, p. 119.

¹⁶ DIDEROT D., *Oeuvres. Tome V^e: Correspondance*, *op. cit.*, p. 913 and p. 922.

¹⁷ Paolo Mattia Doria had already noted that the abundance of gold and silver does not decrease nor increase the actual, real wealth, which is the « wealth of commodities » (*ricchezza delle merci*) (P. M. DORIA, *La Vita Civile con un Trattato sulle Educazione del Principe (1709)*, Torino, 1852, p. 289); see BADALONI N., *Introduzione a Vico*, Roma – Bari, Laterza, 1984, p. 64. Significantly, Jonathan Israel sets Vico and Doria in the early Italian radical Enlightenment. See ISRAEL J. I., *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, Chapter 35 « The Radical Impact in Italy », p. 664-683; see also RICUPERATI G., *Frontiere e limiti della ragione*, Torino, UTET, 2006, p. 157. On Vico's Enlightenment, see the classical CORSANO A., *Umanesimo e religione in G. B. Vico*, Bari, Laterza, 1935, p. 21.

¹⁸ DIDEROT D., *Oeuvres. Tome III^e: Politique*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1995, p. 132. The paper of Diderot was published only in 1954 by Yves Benot in *La Pensée*, new series, 55, May – June, p. 3 ff.. Diderot began to write it probably in April 1770, to answer the *Réfutation* of Morellet, addressed against Galiani and prohibited by Terray. The original title was « Notes sur un ouvrage intitulé Réfutation de l'ouvrage qui a pour titre *Dialogues* sur le commerce des bleds ». Here Diderot attacks Morellet, especially in the first version. In the third version he adopted the title *Apologie de l'abbé Galiani*, currently used. See Versini L., « Introduction à *Apologie de l'abbé Galiani* », *op. cit.*, p. 119-21; Venturi F., « Galiani tra Enciclopedisti e Fisiocrati », *art. cit.*, p. 60.

volumes *Principes et observations oeconomiques*, very critical of the abstractions of Physiocrats. The *Journal de l'agriculture, du commerce et des finances* (which previously supported the Physiocracy, and would have taken similar position few years later) in September 1767 reviews the book and underlines that the *économistes* have built up « des systèmes » not fully compatible with facts. In April 1770, become *Journal de l'agriculture, du commerce, des arts et des finances*, and dominated by commercial and industrial lobbies, it welcomes the « moderation » of the *Dialogues*, which allows to reconcile different interests¹⁹. The discussion on the *Journal* shows that the questions under debate were not just theoretical (abstraction and *système* vs. realism and empirism), but they involved also tangible economic and political concerns. Balanced and acute reaction was that of Turgot: the *Dialogues* are not a book that one may label as « mauvais », but its principal weapon is just the dialectical ability, often a little sophistical. It is a book supporting the « politique de Pangloss », that is a short-sighted political strategy of appearing good sense²⁰, and defending the « gens en place »²¹.

I.3 Galiani's and Diderot's proposals on policy

The facts observed brought Galiani to believe that free exchange in several cases was inapplicable: to entrust everything to the market would lead to disaster. One must keep in mind the geographical and geopolitical specificities, as Galiani underlines in the letter to Tanucci of the 18 October 1762: « Any treatise is a little illness (*taccolo*) [...] and reciprocity destroys profit. Treatise with the Ottoman Empire and the Pope, weak and desordered States. With the others, no treatise²² ». Here he remarks that actually treatises do not often get both parties better off, but just one side takes advantage from them. Then, such an agreement can be useful for the Kingdom only if it is stipulated with States that are not really competitive in any sector. Then the disparity benefits the country with the higher bargaining power.

In the Kingdom of Naples a period of high price of grain had followed the famine of 1763-4, and the remedy couldn't possibly be liberalization. Only the enhancement of commerce and industry could have opposed the too high price, but this was impossible because of political and institutional conditions. In Galiani's language, the gist and substance of the country was « drunk » by monks, barons and pettifogging lawyers, « wicked and idle people »; then money circulated with difficulty²³.

In fact, international free trade did not run even in France, where the *Edits* of 1763 and 1764 were unapplied in 1769-70. However, according to Galiani it would be harmful, because of obstacles both natural and due to human behaviour. They would encourage the export of grain even when it lacks in the country. On the contrary, Galiani supports the domestic free trade, because it tends to get uniform standard of living everywhere and, as a consequence, social tensions lessen.

¹⁹ VENTURI F., « Galiani tra Enciclopedisti e Fisiocrati », art. cit., p. 49-56.

²⁰ The reference is to the well known bluntly optimist character in the novel *Candide* by Voltaire, published in 1759.

²¹ See letters to Morellet: 17, 19 and 26 January 1770, in TURGOT A. R. J., *Oeuvres de Turgot*, éditée par G. SCHELLE, Paris, Alcan, 1913, vol. III, p. 419-20.

²² GALIANI F., *Opere*, op. cit., p. 870, our translation.

²³ DIAZ F., *Introduzione*, op. cit., p. li-lii.

Then in the Eighth Dialogue Galiani proposes that in France export be carried by the domestic fleet and customs duties on export be established, to compensate the different costs of transport and risk to get the port, or to send grain in the hinterland. Therefore, much grain would remain in France, its price would lower, so as monetary wages, and French manufactured goods would be cheaper.

Customs duties are better than absolute prohibition, which is the unfairest tax and violates natural liberty; and also than a prohibition decided from time to time, which creates uncertainty and risk. Furthermore, customs duties allow to become friend with a few foreign countries, granting them customs franchise, and can be graded decreasingly for grain, flour and pasta, to support domestic production.

Since somewhere foreign farmers pay lighter taxes, they can spoil French farmers in case of bumper crop; then a customs duty on import is needed. Also this duty should favour French shipping and be higher for flour and pasta. Its revenue must be used to redeem the rights of the French nobility, making easier the domestic trade. Thanks to the import duty, grain would be sold at its « valeur naturelle »²⁴, the « prix en année commune » ensuring the fair reward to producers, like the physiocratic « bon prix ». So foreign trade would become convenient for the merchants only when it is convenient also for the country. The case of internal trade is different; indeed, it is always profitable to citizens.

Since French people do not absorb the whole internal production of grain yet, it is possible that in some years does exist an actual excess of grain, difficult to stock. In this case export is convenient, to avoid its loss, even though the profit will not flow to agriculture, but rather to trade and marine. Then, thanks to the customs duties described above, grain might be exported from France just when it is in excess, because to reckon its real surplus in advance, even only in the short period, is very difficult, as Galiani observes in the Sixth Dialogue.

Galiani looks at manufacture as a source of demand and capital for agriculture. Since the First *Dialogue*, *chevalier* Zanobi, the character who gives voice to the author, says that, if the rich farmer demands more work to the artisan, the artisan will consume more fruits of the land. The enrichment of the craftsman gets agriculture blossoming. In the Fifth *Dialogue* he adds that a manufacture run by the family of the farmer supports the cultivation of land and supplies the necessary capital, avoiding indebtment or selling in loss. The fast and regular circulation of wealth can exist only thanks to manufacture. Farming is limited by the extension of fertile land, whereas manufacture has no such bounds. To increase the domestic product, manufacture, whose income is effectual demand for agriculture, must be privileged. For the same reason, the development of manufacture solely allows the growth without external constraints. Indeed a rising population will consume sometime the whole agricultural production, which will be no more exportable. Only the export of manufacture can increase without limits²⁵.

²⁴ « Valeur naturelle » in the sense that it is the best price for the right functioning of economy. By no way it is « natural » in the sense of established accordingly to a « natural » order juxtaposed to history. Indeed Galiani does not trust in any natural order. For exemple, about the « natural » tendency to the monopole of the grain trade, that must be mended by law, he writes: « l'art corrige la Nature presqu'en tout » (GALIANI F., *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds* (1770), Napoli, Banco di Napoli, 1987, p. 176). We shall return on this point *infra*.

²⁵ Also in this case the statement of *Della Moneta* is valid: « the sole wealth is man » (GALIANI F., *Della Moneta* (1751) e *scritti inediti*, con introduzione di A. CARACCIOLLO e a cura di A. MEROLA, Milano,

Diderot, friend and collaborator of Galiani²⁶, was worried about the growth of both sectors at the same pace, because to produce more foodstuffs does not encourage consumption. Industry, like land, has a net product. When the net product of industry absorbs the whole product of the work of farmers, industry and agriculture balance necessarily. In fact, industry can be born only after the satisfaction of the basic needs; but only the development of industry can boost agriculture, because, widening demand, supply grows. The first push to the circular movement of economy comes from both agriculture and manufacture, but it is fastened by the latter, which transforms the raw materials of agriculture and employs workers who consume foodstuffs. According to Diderot, nor Galiani, too favourable to manufacture, nor Morellet, too favourable to agriculture, were able to grasp this point²⁷.

I.4 Galiani's skepticism and historical facts in the Kingdom of Naples and France: must we trust him?

Galiani declares in the letter to d'Épinay on 27 January 1770 that Zanobi (Galiani's *alter ego* in the *Dialogues*) does not really think nor believe one word he says; he is the greatest skeptical and theorician of the world. My work has been written by the pen of a philosopher, Galiani states, and a lot of time is needed before in Paris people understand that the dispute can never end²⁸. Must we believe Galiani about Zanobi's skepticism²⁹ (Klotz 2000: 155 ff.)? Already in *Della Moneta* the (anonymous) author said that he had never read anything on the subject, but actually he had translated Locke and knew Davanzati, Melon, Serra, Charles-Irenée Castel and maybe others³⁰. The debunking and disenchanted attitude is a fundamental hallmark of Galiani's personality, « biting critic from time to time of everybody »³¹. Turgot, even showing respect for Galiani's intellectual

Feltrinelli, 1963, p. 129 and p. 134). Interestingly, this relevant concept, which was appreciated by Marx (MARX K., *Storia dell'economia politica. Teorie sul plusvalore*, a cura di C. PENNAVAJA, vol. III, trad. it. di S. DE WAAL, Roma, Editori Riuniti, p. 285), had been put forward about twenty years before, when Galiani was twenty-two.

²⁶ Diderot and M.e d'Épinay were the editors of the *Dialogues*. About the role of Diderot and d'Épinay in modifying the original text, see NICOLINI F., « Introduzione », in GALIANI F., *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds. Giusta l'editio princeps del 1770, op. cit.*, p. xv-xxix ; GALIANI F., *Opere, op. cit.*, p. 347-356, where Diaz observes that the work done by them was really important, with few, relevant, additions; not surprisingly, since Diderot already had taken part into the drawing up of essays written by his friends d'Holbach and Raynal (*Ibid.*, p. 355).

²⁷ DIDEROT D., *Oeuvres. Tome III^e : Politique, op. cit.*, p. 133-49.

²⁸ D'ÉPINAY L., GALIANI F., *Epistolario (1769-1772 e 1773-1772)*, a cura di S. RAPISARDA, prefazione di G. GIARRIZZO, 2 tomi, Palermo, Sellerio, 1996, vol. I: letter n. 22.

²⁹ KLOTZ G., « La question des blés en France au dix-huitième siècle: Galiani, critique des Physiocrates », art. cit., p. 155 ff.

³⁰ BIANCHINI M., *Alle origini della scienza economica. Felicità pubblica e matematica sociale negli economisti italiani del Settecento*, Parma, Editrice Studium Parmense, 1982, p. 91 and p. 123, n. 116.

³¹ EINAUDI L., *Saggi bibliografici e storici intorno alle dottrine economiche*. Cap. XI « Galiani economista », art. cit., p. 270. Kaplan maintains that the work of Galiani was not particularly original, and its success and the controversies it raised were mainly due to the personality of the author and his brilliant

qualities, accuses him of letting the world go by as it does³². In fact the skepticism of Galiani derives from his experience, but it is not his actual experience, according to Venturi³³: he observes a reality that induces him to mistrust in the possibility of actual improvement in the political and social scenario. However, in spite of that, not only does he take active part in the intellectual debate, but also he accomplishes important administrative tasks both in Paris and in Naples, after his return in fatherland. Indeed he gains the esteem of an engaged intellectual as Diderot, according to whom Galiani is « homme de génie ... [qui] pense et nous fait penser³⁴ ».

Is it only a rethorical device in a personal letter? Perhaps it isn't: it is likely to be the cue of a real difficulty to face a question that is of paramount importance, beyond the wit talking in the *salons*.

As is known, Galiani loves talking and bantering in the *salons*, but he tells us relevant issues with light tone and knows very well the reality of Naples. His skepticism springs up just from his experience and the attentive observation of different realities, like France and the Kingdom of Naples. He does not find any general principle or law, neither reflecting nor accomplishing his diplomatic and administrative duties. This is the sense of his statement in the quoted letter to d'Épinay: « la clef du mystère ... [est que] tout se réduit à zero³⁵ ». Interestingly, the realism of Galiani, praised by Diderot, was indirectly indicated by Nicolini as the major cause of the modification of his attitude on free trade. Indeed the meeting in 1768 with Domenico Caracciolo, ambassador of the Kingdom in London, and Galiani's aversion to the abstractism of Physiocrats (according to Nicolini, a sort of Jacobinism *ante litteram*) would be the main causes of such a change³⁶.

Actually, his practical activity shows us an active and engaged person. During the period of his diplomatic appointment in Paris, he came back to Naples and remained there for more than one year (May 1765 – October 1766), to work on the scheme of a commercial treatise between the Kingdom and France. About his experience he wrote the *Considerazioni sul trattato di commercio tra il Re ed il Re Cristianissimo*, where he expounds his idea of « natural » forms of commerce between nations, ruled by principles of liberty and partial protection, to proportion according to circumstances. Galiani's attitude is realistic: he looks for the immediate utility for his country, without referring to any general principle³⁷.

Later, after the period in Paris and the *Dialogues*, Galiani is involved in the administration of the Kingdom of Naples, with relevant and ticklish charges. He accomplishes the task with « realistic elasticity³⁸ », in the interest of the Kingdom. For example, he avoids the stipulation of further commercial treaties with France, but claims for a treaty with Russia, far and different

literary style (KAPLAN S. L., *Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV*, *op. cit.*, vol. II: 592-3).

³² Letter to M.lle de l'Éspinasse, 26 January 1770, quoted in DIAZ F., *Introduzione*, *op. cit.*, p. lxix.

³³ VENTURI F., « Galiani tra Enciclopedisti e Fisiocrati », art. cit., p. 53.

³⁴ DIDEROT D., *Oeuvres. Tome III^e : Politique*, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

³⁵ D'ÉPINAY L., GALIANI F., *Epistolario (1769-1772 e 1773-1772)*, *op. cit.*, I: letter n. 22.

³⁶ See NICOLINI F., « Introduzione », in GALIANI F., *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds. Giusta l'editio princeps del 1770*, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

³⁷ GALIANI F., *Opere*, *op. cit.*, p. 717-734, especially p. 717-724.

³⁸ DIAZ F., *Introduzione*, *op. cit.*, p. xciv.

country, because it can be more useful in order to develop commerce. In this case a political agreement is likely to enhance commercial streams that would remain low if created just by the market forces. Furthermore, Russian economy is less developed than the Neapolitan one, so the Kingdom of Naples could easily obtain a large return from its trade with Russia.

The terrible famine that hit Naples in 1763-4, few years before the *Dialogues*, when Galiani was in Paris, did not support the general, absolute principle of the free international trade of grain as an expression of the sacred rights of liberty and property, core of politics, to which Galiani refers in the Seventh Dialogue, where he explains the reasons to justify the external trade of grain in France. We can understand that, looking at such a situation, the *abbé* rejects the rigid application of abstract economic principles and underscores the opportunity of examining the actual reality and interpreting it with good sense and attention to its specificity³⁹.

Then the basic problems of the agriculture emerged: backwardness of productive structures, constraints of international market, unbalances between provinces, technical and bureaucratic hindrances in logistics, huge expansion of the capital, which subordinated the market of grain to its necessities. There was a monopoly of nobility on the management of the public warehouses and bakery. In such a situation, public intervention was absolutely necessary; international free trade would have been completely useless. Bernardo Tanucci⁴⁰ faced the situation by importing grain from the Ottoman Empire and also Charles III helped him, sending grain from Spain.

The crisis showed the ability of government in a difficult task and favoured the limitation of the local claims, despite the ambiguity of Tanucci, who liked French liberalization, but preferred to extend the system of public warehouse to the provinces and implement reforms against the power of barons. His aims were defense of sovereignty of the King and strong absolutism. The barons put up themselves for the defenders of their subjects before the central power. It was an entanglement between old and new, where local authorities wanted to preserve old monopolies and privileges, but also juxtaposed absolutism and liberty⁴¹.

In these historical happenings one can see the contrasts frequently found in the reflection of Galiani, which brings him to pessimism. The weakening of the reformism of Charles III since the Forties, due to the opposition of Neapolitan professionals, bureaucracy, barons, Church, confirms to him the difficulty to improve an administration when powerful lobbies resist against any change. This is evident, for example, if one observes fiscality. Broggia noted that the new land register, begun in 1740, gave negative results: the fiscal burden remained on the income of manufacture and commerce, earned by people poor and hard-working. Thus we arrive to the dark picture drawn by Giuseppe Maria Galanti in 1786-90: abandonment of agriculture and decline of manufacture and

³⁹ We can also recall the indignation with which Diderot rejects the “atroce” statement of Morellet, according to whom, if in the country people cannot pay the same price as foreigners, must starve and dead (DIDEROT D., *Oeuvres. Tome III^e : Politique, op. cit.*, p. 155).

⁴⁰ Bernardo Tanucci (1698-1783), born in Tuscany and educated at the University of Pisa, was adviser and Minister of Charles Borbone from 1734 and Prime Minister from 1754 to 1777, under Charles and, from 1759 (when Charles became King of Spain) under Ferdinand Borbone. He is considered the real promoter of the reforms that, with different results, were implemented in the Kingdom during that period.

⁴¹ RAO A. M., « Il riformismo borbonico a Napoli », *Storia della società italiana*, vol. XII « Il secolo dei lumi e delle riforme », Milano, Teti, 1989, p. 256-68.

trade⁴².

Also the French situation was critical. As shown by Kaplan, authorities applied the rigid and complicated rules of the grain trade with good sense and elasticity, in a situation of conflict between central administration, provinces and various lobbies and groups. The question of grain was a problem of subsistence and, at the same time, of social cohesion and many administrators and scholars demanded the end of regulation⁴³.

The *Déclaration* of 25 May 1763 by the *Contrôleur général* Bertin institutes the free internal trade of grain, even if special rules for Paris remains. Then l'Averdy, successor of Bertin, promulgates the *Edit* of July 1764. It is the result of complicate arrangements, and confirms the *Déclaration* of Bertin, extending it to the external trade, even though under restrictions: exported grain must be shipped on French vessels; export is allowed only if the price of grain is low; a customs duty is imposed on import. Paris, again, maintains its special rules.

Zanobi in the Eighth *Dialogue* praises the *Edit* of 1764, because it expresses the reciprocal trust between sovereign and people. However one should expect much less than that promised by the « lively imagination of Economists » (as Zanobi says): indeed the export of grain raised little in consequence of the *Edit*. Turgot sees the basic difficulty in the incompatibility between free trade of grain and despotism. In a couple of letters to Dupont de Nemours, commenting the *Première introduction à la philosophie économique ou analyse des Etats policés* by Baudeau (1771), he announces his position against the legal despotism, which continues to mark the works of Physiocrats⁴⁴.

About 1773 Galiani writes that the unlimited liberty of the external trade of grain brings to republic and democracy; it would be much better the complete unification of the internal market, because it is absurd that in two provinces they are respectively abundance and scarcity, and, at the same time, their dwellers march together in war, he says in the Eighth Dialogue. Then the unification of the domestic market would have a positive consequence on the social peace and stabilize the political body; the turmoils, which could bring even to democracy, would be avoided.

In September 1774, when Turgot has been appointed as *Contrôleur général* since just one month, Galiani, who personally esteems him very much, foresees his fall due the policy of free external trade of grain⁴⁵.

I.5 No merely abstract and theoretical solution will ever be really effective: the realistic *abbé*

Face to the situation of the Kingdom of Naples and France, the skeptical Galiani thinks that,

⁴² DIAZ F., *Introduzione*, *op. cit.*, p. xxxix.

⁴³ KAPLAN S. L., *Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV*, *op. cit.*, p. 72-86; KLOTZ G., « Le dialogue des *Dialogues*, ou la question du libéralisme en France au XVII^e siècle », J. L. FOURNEL, J. GUILHAUMOU, J. P. POTIER, J. C. ANGAUT, L. BAGGIONI, et A. CLEMENT, (dir.), *Libertés et libéralisme: formation et circulation des concepts*, Paris, ENS, 2012, p. 118 ; KLOTZ G., « La question des blés en France au dix-huitième siècle: Galiani, critique des Physiocrates », *art. cit.*, p. 150-153.

⁴⁴ GALIANI F., *Opere*, *op. cit.*, p. 417, n. 5. The letters are dated 7 and 10 May 1771. See also TURGOT A. R. J., *Oeuvres de Turgot*, *op. cit.*, p. 486-487.

⁴⁵ DIAZ F., *Introduzione*, *op. cit.*, p. lxxxix.

to find out the best solution, one has always to make allowances for the limits of man and institutions. Political economy must aim at the good for men, but every good goes together with some evil. In politics nothing can be pushed to the extreme. Expressing a concept that Einaudi, in the last century, would have called *punto critico*, Zanobi says: « When in a problem there are many unknowns, the equation is undetermined, or it belongs to the category of problems (...) *de maximis et minimis*. There is point until which good is greater than evil; if you trespass, evil prevails over good⁴⁶ ». It is better not to change anything, if one is not sure to change it with something really better. When choosing the scopes of government, enthusiasm is dangerous, especially if applied to a truth, because it induces to go too straight. On the contrary, nothing must be done suddenly, and the straight line must be avoided.

The *Edit* of 1764 is too liberty allowed to people too quickly, Zamboni observes in the Eighth *Dialogue*. It gives the liberty of providing their own subsistence to people not accustomed to do it. It will cause the stop of the internal circulation of grain, the famine in the bad years, the ruin of agriculture in France. The grain of the border provinces will be exported and there the circulation of gold will rise, while the famine will spoil manufacture in the internal regions. Then the equalization of internal and external trade can bring about great damages, because the economic system is not ready for it, and the spontaneous reaction of the agents to such abrupt change leads just to the destruction of agriculture, which authorities intended to develop⁴⁷.

The graduality must relate with the point at which a country is situated along the path of the historical progress. In the Second dialogue, Zanobi says that the first error, which all further errors derive from, is the supposition that man consumes always the same quantity of subsistence. But « [l]e total de la consommation [...] est en raison composée de la population et de leur opulence [...] un peuple riche et heureux, mieux [...] se nourrit, plus il travaille⁴⁸ ». Indeed rich farmers do not spend much, live in the countryside, save, then consume few handicrafts. On the contrary, artisans live in cities, becoming rich they pick up the habits of the upper classes and increase also their demand for foodstuffs. For this reason one thousand rich artisans give rise to more demand than two thousands rich farmers: « les mœurs sont toujours plus forts que les lois⁴⁹ ». The change of uses and consumption over time is part of human societies, and every proposal of economic policy must take it into consideration. This immediately recalls a principle of the philosophy of history of Giambattista Vico: laws cannot help adapting to the nature of men and things.

Some countries structurally produce and export grain, like Poland or Sicily. For other countries, like France, the choice of free export can be disadvantageous. As Galiani underlines in

⁴⁶ GALIANI F., *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds (1770)*, *op. cit.*, p. 191, Eighth *Dialogue*. See also the letter to d'Épinay of 6 November 1773 in D'ÉPINAY L., GALIANI F., *Epistolario (1769-1772 e 1773-1772)*, *op. cit.*, II: letter n. 331. We can recall also the occasional paper *Delle lodi di papa Benedetto XIV* (July 1758), where he praises the Pope because, in case, he is able also to do nothing (GALIANI F., *Opere, op. cit.*, p. 973).

⁴⁷ Commenting the *Edits* of Turgot of January 1776, which abolished the *Jurandes*, Galiani, far from France for seventeen years, writes that they are going to harm French manufacture very hard: « les habiles artistes en partie sortiront, d'autres se négligeront; et au lieu d'établir l'émulation, il aura cassé tous les ressorts vrais du cœur de l'homme » (quoted in DIAZ F., *Introduzione, op. cit.*, p. xc). Competition, introduced suddenly in an economy not prepared yet, is likely to have effects contrary to what is desired.

⁴⁸ GALIANI F., *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds (1770)*, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

the Sixth Dialogue, as long as we ignore whether in the « année moyenne » there is a surplus⁵⁰, we do not know if France can trade grain with constant and valuable rentability. A country could also reach a population so large to be compelled to purchase foodstuffs in less populated countries, in exchange of its handicrafts. Then the art of government would have done his masterpiece, forcing nature to have, on a limited territory, more people than land could feed.

The question of scarcity or abundance of grain and its foreign trade is examined in relation with the target of the art of government in the long run, that is demographic increase. If the sole wealth is man, as Galiani affirms in *Della Moneta*, the social surplus is the outcome of human labour (*fatica*) and scarcity must be seen in relation with man and his activity. The human production of manufactured goods has not the bounds of agriculture, conditioned by the scarcity of land. Thus only manufacture can be source of economic development in the long run.

I.6 Free trade and *alzamento*: expectations, uncertainty, advantages for some sectors or social groups, disadvantages for others

Abundance and scarcity have different effect on social groups, classes and countries. During a famine, affluent classes do not suffer. Sellers even can earn profit. The benefit of the high price of grain hardly goes to the farmer: traders are likely to take advantage of it, while people starve and manufacture is negatively affected, as Galiani argues in the Seventh *Dialogue*. Poor crops are profitable for commercial countries: if some countries in Europe complain about famine, the banker of the Netherlands is happy, the *abbé* writes in the Forth *Dialogue*. Referring to the relation between wage and grain price, in the Second *Dialogue* Zanobi remarks that the activity of manufacture is not conditioned by the good or bad year in agriculture. Manufacture goes on at its own pace. Since one working day is always paid by the same quantity of money, the unique way to preserve the standard of living of labourers is to keep the price of bread constant. This should happen not by taxation, but through a direct public intervention, very important in countries where manufacture is the main activity.

Diderot puts in light that the high price of grain does not favour agriculture, because rent rises and, in the short period, landlords take advantage of it. Then the remuneration of public officials rises as well. Taxes increase, so the augmentation of the purchasing power of proprietors is cancelled. If the upsurge of rent is greater than that of the income of farmers due to export and high price of grain, then farmers are actually impoverished. This is likely to happen, since the landlord decides the lease on the basis of his own needs, without looking at farmer's income.

Finally Diderot observes: « Ce ne sont pas les fermiers aisés qui forment la condition des campagnes, c'est la multitude des salariés; et je demanderai si, les premiers devenus plus aisés, leur richesse refluera sur les derniers et les tirera de leur misère⁵¹ ». The sense of justice of Galiani, quite conservative, emerges in the solicitude the right-minded sovereign ought to have for the welfare of his people; whereas the sense of justice of the progressive Diderot can be found in the

⁵⁰ Diderot notes that the price in “année moyenne” is almost impossible to calculate, because it depends on a too large number of circumstances (DIDEROT D., *Oeuvres. Tome III^e : Politique, op. cit.*, p. 133).

⁵¹ DIDEROT D., *Oeuvres. Tome III^e : Politique, op. cit.*, p. 158.

awareness that the high price of grain hardly is favourable to farmers.

Necker, intellectually indebted with Galiani, keeps a position at half way between paternalism and advanced Enlightenment: not just the various economic policies, but all civil institutions benefit only proprietors, while people, who own nothing, are defended solely by political institutions and administration. Few years after the *Dialogues*, Necker writes in *Sur la législation et le commerce des grains* (1775): « presque toutes les institutions civiles ont été faites pour les Propriétaires [...] les institutions politiques et les loix d'administration, sont presque les seules qui défendent le Peuple⁵² ». People have no property, nor anything to shield; if they do not work today, tomorrow will starve: property, justice, liberty do not concern them. The market of grain reveals the « esclavage de la multitude » under the neutrality of the relation of exchange and throws light on the social conflicts in economy: « la liberté n'est que la permission donnée aux propriétaires de déployer toute leur puissance⁵³ ». The spontaneous cooperation of market forces can run well on the market of superfluites, not of subsistence. The asymmetry of the market of subsistence weakens only in the years of bumper crop, when proprietors are pushed to sell and lose their natural supremacy on buyers.

To better understand the continuity of Galiani's thought, it may be interesting to look at the perception of the conflicts of interest in the first economic work of Galiani. In *Della Moneta* (1751)⁵⁴, Book III, Chapter III he suggests the raising of high-standard coins with intrinsic value (« alzamento della moneta alta ») by law or by reduction of the weight of coins, so that coin's nominal value becomes higher than its real value. The raising has the same effect as a tax, or, if strong and repeated, as even the failure of the state; but, if raising is slow, it spreads gradually over all citizens and has no immediate ruinous consequence. In a period of depression, the state and the indebted poor farmers gain from it. On the other side, the owners of public bonds, usually belonging to the upper class, are the losers. Then the sovereign who decides, if necessary, the raising in such circumstances deserves admiration. Orphans and widows, hit as perceiving fixed income, are few. Government must support other people: skilled farmers, artisans, sailors, merchants, who usually lease and take advantage from the *alzamento*. Galiani was the first and, for long, the only one to argue that a slow continuous decrease of purchasing power encourages entrepreneurs⁵⁵.

In periods of expansion, on the contrary, the rich are debtors of wage, the poor are creditors. Thus the raising of coin reduces the purchasing power of the monetary wage (even though it remains temporary unchanged), harms the poor and is profitable for the rich. Generally speaking, the *alzamento* is a good tax, provided creditors are few and rich, debtors many and poor. However,

⁵² NECKER J., « Sur la législation et le commerce des grains (1775) », in *Collection des Principaux Economistes*, tome 15 « Mélanges d'économie politique », II, Réimpression de l'édition 1848, Osnabrück, Otto Zeller, 1966, p. 357. See on this point PERROT J. C., *Une histoire intellectuelle de l'économie politique. XVII^e-XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Editions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1992, p. 281 and n. 2.

⁵³ NECKER J., *loc. cit.*

⁵⁴ *Della Moneta* is dated 1751, but was published in 1750. About the editorial story of the book and its cultural and historical background see TIRAN A., « Introduction à la vie et à l'œuvre de Ferdinando Galiani », GALIANI F., *De la monnaie / Della Moneta*, édité et traduit sous la direction de A. TIRAN, Paris, Economica, 2005, p. ix-xlvi.

⁵⁵ EINAUDI L., *Saggi bibliografici e storici intorno alle dottrine economiche*. Cap. XI « Galiani economista », art. cit., p. 299.

in the *Dialogues* Galiani would recognize that the damage of people perceiving fixed income might be great and concern a large and various share of people, included both old servants and officers.

The effectiveness of the raising takes place in the time span between the change of value ordered by the prince and the « change done by people », that is the rise of prices, so that the rate between goods and gold is re-established. Since that moment, the *alzamento* is no more effective.

But the human mind naturally tends to take relative magnitudes in absolute sense, the « Vichian » Galiani notes at the beginning of the Book III of *Della Moneta*. It changes his comprehension more slowly than it would be necessary; just for this reason the *alzamento* engenders its results. The first judgment of people is confused, they perceive the injustice received, but cannot arrive to analyse it correctly and can even accept the effect of the *alzamento* as natural. On the other hand, the sovereign can lose the public trust if he uses it too frequently. Habits, tradition, mentality are relevant as to the consequences of raising; and also the behaviour of the prince, who not always can grasp the future evolution of economy.

To understand these actions / reactions and distinguish between what is « fair or unfair » and « correct or erroneous », one should know the immutable human nature and the history and social structure of the country. These aspects, particularly the principles of the human mind and the illusions it builds about reality, are further Vichian elements in Galiani's thought⁵⁶. Already in *Della Moneta* we can remark that the young Galiani is aware of the necessity of choosing the tools of policy according to the circumstances and the kind of country under scrutiny.

In both cases of money and grain trade, information and expectations are crucial. The theory of interest of *Della Moneta* is grounded on expectations and uncertainty and has to be considered as forerunner of the theories of the risk premium⁵⁷. Risk and scarce information are characteristic also in the domestic and international market of grain, which indeed tends to monopoly, as Galiani singles out in the Seventh Dialogue.

In *Della Moneta* Book 5th, Chapter 1 he writes that nothing is less fortuitous than casual events, which have constant order and rules⁵⁸. In the *Dialogues* he changes his position, abandons the faith in the stability of frequency and assumes a more radical vision of casuality and incertitude. Facing Quesnay, who attributes regularity to the natural determinism, now Galiani looks at it as the result of a great number of fortuitous cases⁵⁹. But in the *Dialogues* he regards mainly the horizon of short period, whereas the stability of frequency emerges in the long run. Furthermore, as Diderot notes (but this point is present also in the *Dialogues*), even though good and bad years follow one another, the situation of the farmer remains negative, so as the compensation of gain and loss does

⁵⁶ TAGLIACOZZO G., « Il Vichismo economico (Vico, Galiani, Croce – Economia, Liberalismo economico) », *Moneta e Credito*, XXI, 83, 3, 1968, p. 257-258 ; TAGLIACOZZO G., « Economic Vichianism: Vico, Galiani, Croce – Economics, Economic Liberalism », G. Tagliacozzo and H. V. WHITE (dir.), *Giambattista Vico : an International Symposium*, Baltimora, Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, p. 357. We will return on this point in paragraph 2.2.

⁵⁷ GIOCOLI N., « Value and interest in Ferdinando Galiani's *Della Moneta* », *History of Economic Ideas*, IX, 3, p. 97.

⁵⁸ GALIANI F., *Della Moneta (1751) e scritti inediti*, op. cit., p. 290.

⁵⁹ GIOCOLI N., « Value and interest in Ferdinando Galiani's *Della Moneta* », art. cit., p. 104, n. 14; PERROT J. C., *Une histoire intellectuelle de l'économie politique. XVII^e-XVIII^e siècle*, op. cit., p. 173.

not help the gambler⁶⁰.

II. The method of Galiani and the philosophy of history of Vico

II.1 The two sources of Galiani's method

The methodology of Galiani has two main sources. The first one is an inductive epistemology, arrived to him through the « Investiganti » and the Neapolitan followers of Galileo, that can be found also in the work of Forbonnais, written three years before the *Dialogues*, and in the *Apologie* of Diderot. The second one is the philosophy of history of Giambattista Vico, which expresses the idea of evolution and progress where all aspects of human nature, both rational and emotional, play a constitutive role in the development and decline of institutions⁶¹.

In *Principes et observations oeconomiques* (1767), Forbonnais criticizes the method of Physiocrats. He maintains that, to develop a “science conjecturable” similar to medicine, they are necessary: a large collection of facts, the systematic search for the exceptions, the « vérités locales » and the consideration of time lags. Such a consideration is evident in his treatment of the accounting of firms and state and of the inertia of prices and wages, which react late and in a complex way to bumper and poor crop. In particular, salary can remain behind the subsistence level also for long, engendering poverty, begging, death⁶².

In opposition to Physiocracy, Diderot asserts that one must create in his mind general principles; but, in order to do so, the inverse method is required. Before collecting the phenomena, our mind is empty: facts are the step to raise ourselves. Beginning from many particular cases, one elaborates general notions. Then a rational empirism is needed, starting from particular cases to build up a theory that one must compare continuously with reality. Examining the grain market, Diderot contends that this trade in general is « un conflit tumultueux de crainte, d’avidité, de cupidité », where the quantities demanded and supplied correspond to a great variety of speculative interests. There is a fight between landlords and monopolists, and the people are overwhelmed, enduring « maux infinis ». Then, face to such a conflicting and troubled reality, « il faut laisser là les vues générales et entrer dans tout ce détail si l’on veut calculer juste⁶³ ».

These two methodological sources can be singled out already in *Della Moneta*. The young Galiani states in the *Proemio* that history is the uninterrupted tale of the errors of humanity. If we had astronomical observations since many centuries ago, we could set up a system about the movement of stars; similarly for the art of government. But this is true also for the science of money, because metals have their natural value, deriving from solid, general and constant

⁶⁰ DIDEROT D., *Oeuvres. Tome III^e : Politique, op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁶¹ Badaloni writes that « Vico is connected, even though through a tortuous route, with Galilei » (« Vico si riassocia, pur attraverso una serie di mosse anche tortuose, a Galilei »: BADALONI N., *Introduzione a Vico*, Roma – Bari, Laterza, 1984, p. 3).

⁶² See PERROT J. C., *Une histoire intellectuelle de l’économie politique. XVII^e-XVIII^e siècle, op. cit.*, p. 277-9.

⁶³ DIDEROT D., *Oeuvres. Tome III^e : Politique, op. cit.*, p. 134.

principles. Not even law or prince can violate them. In *Della Moneta* Galiani does not use the « sublime » geometry, but examples and repeated statements (« esempi e dichiarazioni replicate »). Here the legacy of Bartolomeo Intieri, friend of Celestino Galiani, is present⁶⁴.

The influence of Giambattista Vico on *Della Moneta* does exist as well. Vico had been friend of Celestino Galiani, and the young Ferdinando had met him; later, he would define the *Scienza Nuova* as « book written in the dark by a highly enlightened man » in a letter to Tanucci⁶⁵. Galiani writes that nature imposes bounds to everything, such that nothing can trespass them, and the history of natural things always repeat the same evolution⁶⁶. He recalls the Providence, thanks to whom even our wicked passions give rise to collective good⁶⁷. At the beginning of *Scienza Nuova* (edition 1744), Vico contends that men were pushed by their utility to live in society with justice, and celebrate their sociable nature⁶⁸. We find in *Della Moneta* the ideas of nature as an environment where the human action occurs, and of human nature that has fundamental immutable characters, but evolves along the course of history; and also the principle of historical progress involving even money, which stems naturally just to satisfy natural needs felt by different people, rather than thanks to a sort of original contract. This last point is fully consistent with the philosophy of Vico.

II.2 Galiani and history

According to Galiani, history is a process of progress, but not always linear and with periods of decline.

⁶⁴ Celestino Galiani, uncle of Ferdinando, was an open-minded priest and bishop, who tried to reform and modernize the University of Naples and the cultural institutions of the city. Ferdinando had been living with his uncle Celestino since the childhood and was grown up and educated by him. Bartolomeo Intieri, intellectual, philosopher and civil servant, was near to *Investiganti*, in the wake of Galileo, Bacon and Gassendi, deeply interested in the advancement of science. He created and funded the first chair of political economy (« meccanica e commercio »), held by Antonio Genovesi. See BIANCHINI M., *Alle origini della scienza economica. Felicità pubblica e matematica sociale negli economisti italiani del Settecento*, op. cit., p. 88.

⁶⁵ “[F]atto all’oscuro da un uomo che avea gran lumi”; letter to Bernardo Tanucci, December 22nd, 1766 (GALIANI F., *Opere*, op. cit., p. 928). Croce recalls that several parts of Vico’s interpretation of Homer were published in 1765 on the « Gazette littéraire de l’Europe » of Suard and Arnaud, maybe thanks to Galiani (CROCE B., *La filosofia di G. B. Vico (1911)*, Roma – Bari, Laterza, 1973, p. 284).

⁶⁶ “Così la natura alle sue cose pone certi confini, ch’elle non li oltrepassano mai, né all’infinito estendendosi, durano perpetuamente a raggirarsi in sulle stesse vicende” (GALIANI F., *Della Moneta (1751) e scritti inediti*, op. cit., p. 34).

⁶⁷ “[La Provvidenza] per lo suo infinito amore degli uomini, talmente l’ordine del tutto ha congegnato, che le vili passioni nostre spesso, quasi a nostro dispetto, al bene di tutti sono ordinate” (*Ibidem*, p. 55)

⁶⁸ “[Gli uomini] dall’utilità medesima ... [sono] tratti da uomini a vivere con giustizia e conservarsi in società, e si a celebrare la loro natura socievole” (VICO G., « Scienza Nuova », in *Autobiografia, Poesie, Scienza Nuova (giusta l’edizione del 1744: la 3° ed., pubblicata dal figlio Gennaro)*, a cura di P. SOCCIO, Milano, Garzanti, 2000, p. 218).

Schumpeter states that Galiani was the sole economist of the 18th century who took into account the variability of man and the relativity of every policy with respect to time and place, when in the European intellectual life was entering the « paralyzing faith » in universal practical principles⁶⁹. Galiani substitutes to the Providence of Vico the sense of limitation of human action, in front of the immensity of nature, the errors that can be made, the injustice that cannot be eliminated. But all that does not bring to inaction, as demonstrated by his suggestions and his life and activity after the return from Paris. The idea that a new law must be applied only if it is better than the previous one does not mean blockage, but rather attention and keen reflection.

Galiani makes an effort to be neither optimist nor pessimist, but realist. He trusts in the possibility of amelioration, even though he does not believe in the society of the *ordre naturel*, just because man is part of nature, and man is continuous change, an entanglement between altruism and selfishness. According to his early unpublished paper *De l'opinion*, modern society derives from religion, which, on its turn, springs from the socialisation of original human passions. The religious credulity of man allows him to keep under control selfishness and deception and to create useful (also if false) beliefs, which frame and coordinate the human relations⁷⁰.

Galiani deems that money and economic structure are not abstractly devised or merely conventional: they are historical formation. He criticizes the ingenuous, idealised representation of the original state of nature and recalls the struggle of man to dominate nature. Galiani's reflection is historicist, always grasping particular and real, both in *Della Moneta* and in the *Dialogues*⁷¹.

On the other side, since his first great work (*De Antiquissima Italorum sapientia ex linguae latinae originibus eruenda*, 1710) Vico maintains that only history can be really known by man, because it has been done by him⁷². Later he will remark that mathematics are « certain » insofar as

⁶⁹ SCHUMPETER J. A., *Storia dell'analisi economica*, 3 vol., trad. it. di P. SYLOS LABINI e L. OCCHIONERO, Torino, Boringhieri, 2003, ed. orig. 1954, I, p. 356. Schumpeter maintains that the influence of Vico on Galiani was relevant as to his social philosophy, but amounted to little as to his technical theory (*Ibidem*, p. 366, n. 1). See TAGLIACCOZZO G., « Economic Vichianism: Vico, Galiani, Croce – Economics, Economic Liberalism », *op. cit.*, p. 355, who observes that here Schumpeter refers to the technical theory *strictu sensu*, and underlines the influence of Vico also on Galiani's theory of value in broader sense.

⁷⁰ The fragment *De l'opinion* was published by Nicolini in 1959: « Un inedito dell'abate Galiani », a cura di F. NICOLINI, *Biblion*, I, 1959, p. 139-156. It was written in the Forties, but Galiani came back on it also in the Sixties. See STAPELBROEK K., *Love, self-deceit, and money: commerce and morality in the early Neapolitan Enlightenment*, Toronto, Buffalo and New York, University of Toronto Press, 2008, p. 209-11; VENTURI F., « Galiani tra Enciclopedisti e Fisiocrati », *art. cit.*, p. 52-3.

⁷¹ See EINAUDI L., *Saggi bibliografici e storici intorno alle dottrine economiche*, Cap. XI « Galiani economista », *op. cit.*, p. 281.

⁷² In Latin: « verum ipsum factum; verum et factum convertuntur ». The criterion of truth about a thing is doing it. Knowledge is knowing through causes. Only God has *intelligentia*, whereas man has *cogitatio* and must remain on the surface of things. Man can achieve full knowledge of mathematics, because they are created by him. De Ruggiero observes that in 1710 Vico was anti-Cartesian and almost skeptical, but later, in *Scienza Nuova*, he would provide a positive and constructive vision of human knowledge (DE RUGGIERO G., *Storia della Filosofia*, vol. VI « Da Vico a Kant », Roma – Bari, Laterza, 1976, ed. orig. 1940, p. 32-34). See also FASSO' G., *Storia della filosofia del diritto*, vol. II « L'età moderna », edizione aggiornata a cura di C. FARALLI, Roma – Bari, Laterza, 2001, p. 214-216. Geymonat and Tisato refers that Vico already expressed this principle in 1708, in his opening speech at the University of Napoli, where he taught rhetorics,

names are concerned, but powerless to grasp the ultimate nature of things, since the objects of reality, which are works of God, can be known clearly and distinctly only by his infinite mind⁷³.

In *Della Moneta*, before the presentation of the principles of value, Galiani alleges that the value of gold and precious metals derives from the same sentiment in all men, which has been constant for many centuries; that is, from an original disposition of human nature and intrinsic qualities of things⁷⁴.

We can compare this with two « Axioms » (Degnità) of Vico, xiii and xiv: « Uniform ideas originating among entire peoples unknown to each other must have a common ground of truth »; « The nature of things is nothing but their coming into being at certain times and in certain fashions⁷⁵ ». « Fashion » (*guisa*) is the historical, real determination in which nature shows itself as fact, according to the principle that man is a historical being, whose existence unfolds in society⁷⁶. History evolves between two poles. The first is constituted by the disposition of men and the nature of things, which are the immutable basis, accessible to our observation. The second are habits, customs and different level of civilisation of nations. Thus we can investigate the constant human nature only through the infinite variety of circumstances and situations. This is juxtaposed to abstract rationalism and intellectual deduction. The recovery of the past is intended not just as a mere collection of factual beads, or « ideas », arguments, works of art and so on, similarly treated by the antiquaries of the humanities, but rather as a possible world, a society which could have had such characteristics whether it had precisely these or not⁷⁷.

Galiani's already mentioned key statement at the beginning of the Book III, Chapter I of *Della Moneta* titled « On the proportion between the value of the three metals used for money⁷⁸ »,

titled « De nostri temporis studiorum ratione » and published in 1709 (GEYMONAT L., TISATO R., « Il pensiero filosofico – pedagogico italiano », GEYMONAT L., *Storia del pensiero filosofico e scientifico*, vol. III « Il Settecento », Milano, Garzanti, 1975, p. 440).

⁷³ See BELAVAL Y., « Vico and Anti-cartesianism », G. TAGLIACOZZO and H. V. WHITE (dir.), *Giambattista Vico : an International Symposium*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, p. 83.

⁷⁴ GALIANI F., *Della Moneta (1751) e scritti inediti*, *op. cit.*, p. 67-8.

⁷⁵ « Idee uniformi nate appo intieri popoli tra essoloro non conosciuti debbon avere un motivo comune di vero »; « Natura di cose altro non è che nascimento di esse in certi tempi e con certe guise » (VICO G., « Scienza Nuova », *op. cit.*, p. 247-8 ; English translation of *Nuova Scienza* in the text always follows VICO G., *The New Science*, Unabridged Translation of the Third Edition (1744) with the addition of *Practic of the New Science*, Translated by Th. G. BERGIN and M. H. FISCH, Ithaca-New York, Cornell University Press, 1984, in www.archiv.org). On this point see DE MAS E., « Vico and Italian thought », G. TAGLIACOZZO and H. V. WHITE (dir.), *Giambattista Vico : an International Symposium*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, p. 156, according to whom Galiani « paraphrases » the two *Degnità*.

⁷⁶ The idea of historicity of man in Galiani is witnessed also by an aspect of his activity after the return to Naples. He writes the essay *Del dialetto napoletano* (1779) and a dictionary of the dialect, published posthumous. There the dialect is seen as a document of the activity of social and ethnical groups, which grasps, behind the history of words, the history of men, facts and things crystallized in every phrase. See DIAZ F., *Introduzione*, *op. cit.*, p. xci-xcii; RONCHETTI E., « Introduzione », GALIANI F., *Dialoghi sul commercio dei grani*, trad. it. di L. CALABI, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1978, p. 17.

⁷⁷ See BERLIN I., « A Note on Vico's Concept of Knowledge », G. TAGLIACOZZO and H. V. WHITE (dir.), *Giambattista Vico : an International Symposium*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, p. 376. According to him, « the nature of this kind of knowing is Vico's central topic » (BERLIN I., *loc. cit.*).

⁷⁸ « Della proporzione tra il valore de' tre metalli usati per la moneta » (GALIANI F., *Della Moneta*

that « of the many errors by which our mind is surrounded and among which it continuously wanders, very few would be left if it were possible to make people avoid, as it is easy to say, those which derive from relative words taken in an absolute sense⁷⁹ », derives indeed from these Vico's propositions and is the cornerstone of his vision of value as relationship between man and things.

This is true both for the proportion between the value of the metals used for coins of different purchasing power, as just seen, and for the basic theory of value, which he expounds in Book I, Chapter II: « Declaration of the principles from which the value of all things is born⁸⁰ ». Indeed his definition of value here is « the idea of proportion between the possession of one thing and the possession of one other in the mind of a man⁸¹ ». From such a definition Galiani, few lines below, draws the principle of the exchange between equivalent, « because where is equality, there is no loss, nor fraud⁸² », which is the fundamental concept of his theory of the rate of interest and exchange, since they must ensure the equality in time and space respectively, then they are not unfair earnings⁸³.

The seen « idea of proportion » must be, at the same time, both individual and universal, since value should correspond to a sort of equilibrium price. Thus it satisfies the Vichian criterion of truth, i. e. the identity between certum and verum. This principle is relevant and expounded in various topics. Certum is individual, and ascertained by filologia (that really means « history », rather than « philology »); verum is universal, and established by philosophy. This is explained in the Axiom X: « Philosophy contemplates reason, whence comes knowledge of the true; philology observes the authority of human choice, whence comes consciousness of the certain⁸⁴ ». Explaining the Axiom, Vico remarks that philosophers must verify their « reasons » through the authority of the philologists, and philologists, on their turn, must do the same with the reason of philosophers. For him, history is not random and irrational, but nor the realisation of rational plans, as witnessed also in his theory of courses and recurrences⁸⁵: each attempt to apply abstract principles to the very complicated reality is doomed from the beginning.

(1751) e scritti inediti, op. cit., p. 157).

⁷⁹ « Di tanti e tanti errori, onde è circondata la nostra mente e in mezzo a' quali perpetuamente s'aggira, non ne resterebbero se non pochissimi, quando fosse possibile a fare che si evitassero, come è facile a dire, quelli che provengono dalle voci relative prese in senso assoluto » (GALIANI F., *Della Moneta (1751) e scritti inediti, op. cit.*, p. 157). In the subtitle of the chapter, this part is summarized as « Il valore è una relazione » (Value is a relation). As we have seen, in the *Dialogues* the same criticism will be addressed to Physiocrats, who draw practical conclusions from abstract principles; see TAGLIACOZZO G., *Economisti napoletani dei sec. XVII e XVIII*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1937, p. lii.

⁸⁰ « Dichiarazione dei principi onde nasce il valore delle cose tutte » (GALIANI F., *Della Moneta (1751) e scritti inediti, op. cit.*, p. 36).

⁸¹ « [U]na idea di proporzione tra 'l possesso d'una cosa e quello d'un'altra nel concetto d'un uomo » (GALIANI F., *Della Moneta (1751) e scritti inediti, op. cit.*, p. 39).

⁸² « [P]erché nella egualità non v'è perdita né inganno » (GALIANI F., *loc. cit.*).

⁸³ On the influence of Galiani on Turgot, especially with regard to the theory of the interest rate, see PONS A., « Vico and French thought », G. TAGLIACOZZO and H. V. WHITE (dir.), *Giambattista Vico : an International Symposium*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, p. 169 and n. 14.

⁸⁴ « La filosofia contempla la ragione, onde viene la scienza del vero; la filologia osserva l'autorità dell'umano arbitrio, onde viene la coscienza del certo » (VICO G., « Scienza Nuova », *op. cit.*, p. 246).

⁸⁵ See GEYMONAT L., TISATO R., « Il pensiero filosofico – pedagogico italiano », *op. cit.*, p. 451-

Indeed Vico singles out rationality in history: not abstract, mathematical, cartesian, of the Enlightenment, but concrete, immanent rationality, which shows up into the history itself⁸⁶.

II.3 Policy, circumstances, social habits: the Vichianism of Galiani

His cultural attitude leads Galiani to the idea that everybody who acts politically must consider the real circumstances and the stratified social habits. He says: « the human nature cannot be ameliorated beyond a certain point. If one tries more, he spoils the natural order » and « from disorder to order and from order to disorder perpetually the world goes. One cannot repress luxury in prosperity, as one cannot prevent fields to yield crop in summer⁸⁷ ». We can compare these passages with the following Axiom lxvi of Vico: « Men first feel necessity, then look for utility, next attend to comfort, still later amuse themselves with pleasure, thence grow dissolute in luxury, and finally go mad and waste their substance⁸⁸ ».

In the note iv of the second edition of *Della Moneta* (1780), Galiani offers a historical, rather than allegorical, interpretation of the myth, with reference to the history of shipping in Mediterranean sea⁸⁹, that we can set near the Axiom xvi: « Vulgar traditions must have had public grounds of truth, by virtue of which they came into being and were preserved by entire peoples over long periods of time⁹⁰ ».

In Galiani's opinion, we have seen, the best law may not spring even from the intellectual elaboration of an enlightened group, who cannot apprehend all aspects of the pretended *ordre*

452. Berlin writes: « The central idea at the heart of Vico's thought is that, in the individual and society alike, phase follows phase [...] as stages in the pursuit of an intelligible purpose – man's effort to understand himself and his world, and to realize his capacities in it. [...] [M]en acted as they did because their membership of social groups, and their sense of this relationship, was as basic and as decisive as their desire for food, or shelter, or procreation [...]. » (BERLIN I., *Vico and Herder. Two Studies in the History of Ideas*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1980, orig. ed. London, The Hogarth Press, 1976, p. 34-35 and 87). About the possibility of « recurrences » (*ricorsi*) and their characteristics, see DE RUGGIERO G., *Storia della Filosofia*, vol. VI « Da Vico a Kant », *op. cit.*, p. 64-65.

⁸⁶ In 1720 Vico writes *De uno universi iuris principio et fine uno*, where he calls history « natural law of peoples » (*diritto naturale delle genti*) and begins his theory of *verum – certum*. In legal field, *verum* is justice, and *certum* is the positive law (FASSO' G., *Storia della filosofia del diritto*, vol. II « L'età moderna », *op. cit.*, p. 217-220). If we apply this criterion to free trade, we can conclude that justice must be joint with a legislation that takes into account the concrete welfare of people.

⁸⁷ « Il comune degli uomini non si può nelle idee oltre a certi limiti migliorare; e, volendolo a ogni modo fare, l'ordine delle cose si guasta e si corrompe » e « dal disordine all'ordine e dall'ordine al disordine perpetuamente si viene. Tanto è dunque volere impedire il lusso nella prosperità quanto il voler che nella state le biade ... non fruttifichino » (GALIANI F., *Della Moneta (1751) e scritti inediti*, *op. cit.*, p. 46 and 242).

⁸⁸ « Gli uomini prima sentono il necessario, dipoi badano all'utile, appresso avvertiscono il comodo, più innanzi si diletano del piacere, quindi si dissolvono nel lusso, e finalmente impazzano in istrappazzar le sostanze » (VICO G., « Scienza Nuova », *op. cit.*, p. 262).

⁸⁹ GALIANI F., *Della Moneta (1751) e scritti inediti*, *op. cit.*, p. 308-310.

⁹⁰ « Le tradizioni volgari devon avere avuto pubblici motivi di vero, onde nacquero e si conservarono da intieri popoli per lunghi spazi di tempi » (VICO G., « Scienza Nuova », *op. cit.*, p. 248).

naturel, first of all human malice. Indeed, the mission of the prince is to achieve an acceptable level of welfare of his subjects. The initial attitude favourable to the free trade of grain, mentioned in par. I.1, can be explained as due just to his pragmatism⁹¹.

The Axiom vii of Vico is on the same line of reasoning: « Legislation considers man as he is in order to turn him to good uses in human society. Out of ferocity, avarice and ambition [...] it creates the military, merchant and governing classes, and thus the strength, riches and wisdom of commonwealths. Out of these three great vices [...] it makes civil happiness⁹²». Also Vico tries to understand how one can act and within what limits one can regulate the institutions, which the Neapolitan philosopher wants to investigate through his « rigorous » *New Science*. Here « rigorous » means such that takes into account all aspects of man and society, rational and irrational: passions, interests, volunty, historical period, geography, institutions. Vico, in polemical attitude against Descartes and the geometrical method, emphasize that there are as many methods as subjects to deal with. Against a method which sharply distinguishes true and false, he claims that statesman, general, orator, judge, medical practitioner, casuist, are most often in the right when they do not depart from the probable⁹³.

On these points is really interesting, overall for the methodological assertions at the beginning, the short paper on the food administration in Genova, sent by Galiani to Giovanni Battista Grimaldi on 23 April 1773⁹⁴. His ideas are fully developed and he can expound them in a private text with total liberty and without any concern about political correctness. He writes that modern French, due to their great ignorance, called this science « economy », but they should have called it « politics ». Such a science is just the application of general theories very simple to particular cases very complex. Its theoretical truths are really easy, almost trivial, but their application demands a great, profound knowledge of every aspect of the country under scrutiny. This science includes ethics, customs, laws, commerce, agriculture, public finance. All cases are different, so that the application of the theories must be different as well. One can argue only about the countries he knows really well⁹⁵.

These important methodological statements bring the empirism of *Dialogues* to the extreme. One must single out few simple general principles; the actual difficulty lies in their application to

⁹¹ Minerbi underlines that, in that moment, liberalization appeared to Galiani as a reasonable way to get grain cheaply. This must not be intended as a nearness to Physiocracy. See MINERBI M., « Diderot, Galiani e la polemica sulla Fisiocrazia », *Studi Storici*, 14, 1, 1973, p. 151 n. 10, where he marks his distance from the interpretation of Venturi (VENTURI F., « Galiani tra Enciclopedisti e Fisiocrati », art. cit.), who would seem to believe in Galiani's initial support to Physiocracy.

⁹² « La legislazione considera l'uomo qual è, per farne buoni usi nell'umana società: come della ferocia, dell'avarizia e dell'ambizione [...] ne fa la milizia, la mercatanzia e la corte, e sì la fortezza, l'opulenza e la sapienza delle repubbliche; e di questi tre grandi vizi [...] ne fa la civile felicità » (VICO G., « Scienza Nuova », *op. cit.*, p. 245).

⁹³ BELAVAL Y., « Vico and Anti-cartesianism », *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁹⁴ GALIANI F., *Opere*, *op. cit.*, p. 735-741.

⁹⁵ This is a real Vichian approach. We can remember that in the essay « In memoria del Manifesto dei comunisti », 1895 (« Remembering the Communist Manifesto », 1895), Antonio Labriola observes approvingly that Vico looks at history as a process that the mankind engenders, carrying out continuous experiments in the different fields of religion, language, law, habits and so forth (LABRIOLA A., *Scritti filosofici e politici*, Torino, Einaudi, 1973, p. 519).

each specific historical situation.

Near the end of the text, Galiani claims that the political leader must be enemy of « the best », which is just a wishful thinking for idle philosophers, and must be happy with « the good, or the minor evil ». Indeed it does exist in nature a general rule of « mutation » (*mutazione*), so « the best » cannot be established once and for all. Besides, « a particular drawback often goes through a general good: and it is false in politics, even if it is true in geometry, that the whole is stronger than one of its part⁹⁶ ».

The individual choice, which takes place in the social context, creates habits and shapes one's nature, also if the process is uncertain, unpredictable and subject to many different causal forces. Everybody creates the taste that the moral constitution of his spirit allows him. The taste becomes habit, the habit becomes nature. Man seems to desire the condition that he hasn't; but, if he had it, he would be in despair and wouldn't be able to adapt himself to it. Moreover, the change of mentality is slow, and the intellectual must help its evolution⁹⁷. Man is idle and likes following old paths without looking if things are changed, Zanobi says in the Forth Dialogue. The best the « true philosopher » can do is just to hasten corrections.

In order to do so, the « true philosopher » must cope with the human nature, well described at the beginning of the Eighth *Dialogue*: « l'homme [...] est une quantité indéterminable [...] une matière ductile par la filière de l'habitude [...] ce qui est plus singulier, aussi-tôt qu'il s'y est fait, il trouve que cela lui est tout naturel [...] il ignore le bienfaiteur et le bienfait, comme il ignore et le méchant et le mal qu'il lui causé, et qu'il croit honnêtement être de sa nature⁹⁸ ».

Thus in the *Dialogues* political economy is a science concerning the behaviour of man. As Galiani says, again in the Eighth *Dialogue*, « c'est absolument la même science que celle du pilotage et de la conduite d'un vaisseau: l'objet est la route, les moyens sont la manoeuvre qu'il faut faire⁹⁹ ».

Man shapes history, but he is shaped by habits. Only the wise man can reckon the exact measure of the policy to implement, beyond which good becomes evil. Such a limit « le sage seul le calcule. Le peuple le sent par instinct. L'homme en charge l'aperçoit avec le temps¹⁰⁰ ». And Vico, in their long-distance dialogue through time, discusses the same issues in the Axioms xii, lxix and civ: « Common sense is judgment without reflection, shared by an entire class, an entire people, an entire nation, or the whole human race »; « Governments must conform to the nature of the men governed »; « The remark of Dion Cassius [i.e. Chrysostom] is worthy of consideration, that custom is like a king and law like a tyrant; which we must understand as referring to reasonable custom and to law not animated by natural reason¹⁰¹ ». In *Dialogues'* words, quoted above in par. 1.5, « les

⁹⁶ « Il danno d'un particolare attraversa spesso un bene generale: ed è falso in politica, benché sia vero in geometria, che il tutto sia più forte d'una sua parte » (GALIANI F., *Opere, op. cit.*, p. 739).

⁹⁷ Vico's pedagogy, as emerges from *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* (written in 1708, published in 1709), did not go towards specialization, as it was in fashion already in his era, but rather towards « knowledge », intended as global experience of « philosophy » and « philology »; see RICUPERATI G., *Frontiere e limiti della ragione, op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁹⁸ GALIANI F., *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds (1770), op. cit.*, p. 190.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

¹⁰¹ xii : « Il senso comune è un giudizio senz'alcuna riflessione, comunemente sentito da tutto un

mœurs sont toujours plus forts que les lois ».

We can conclude that, according to both Galiani and Vico, in the art of government «wisdom» is needed: a set of qualities which analytical intelligence is part of, mingled with a special, rare sensibility. Such wisdom is collective patrimony of people, who «sent par instinct», whereas the common man mistakes about «natural», «bienfaiteur», «bienfait», «méchant». Only wise men know the bounds, beyond which even the best policy must not go; unwise people remain an indetermined quantity and believe that benefits and drawbacks are «natural»¹⁰².

II.4 Galiani's vision of nature and the influence of Vico.

Also the vision of nature of Galiani owes much to Vico¹⁰³. Auerbach notes that in Vico's thought the word «natura» refers often to the spiritual and social human nature¹⁰⁴. Galiani recalls a

ordine, da tutto un popolo, da tutta una nazione o da tutto il gener umano»; lxi : «I governi devono esser conformi alla natura degli uomini governati»; civ : «E' un detto degno di considerazione [...] che la consuetudine è simile al re e la legge al tiranno; che deesi intendere della consuetudine ragionevole e della legge non animata da ragion naturale» (VICO G., «Scienza Nuova», *op. cit.*, p. 247, p. 263, p. 273). It has been observed that the profound believe of Vico in the unity of the mankind derives from Bodin; see COTRONEO G., «A Renaissance Source of the *Scienza Nuova*: Jean Bodin's Methodus», G. TAGLIACOZZO and H. V. WHITE (dir.), *Giambattista Vico : an International Symposium*, Baltimora, Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, p. 58. The common consensus of all peoples in order to achieve a feeling of certitude about matters pertaining to the natural laws of nations is «the kernel» of Vico's argument against Grotius, who, in Vico's opinion, does not take into account the common consensus of all peoples in regard to human needs and utilitarian interests when discusses the natural law of nations; see FAUCCI D., «Vico and Grotius: Jurisconsults of Mankind», G. TAGLIACOZZO, H. V. WHITE (dir.), *Giambattista Vico : an International Symposium*, Baltimora, Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, p. 71, n. 25. Croce in 1911 recalls Vico's accusation to Grotius of confusion between *ius naturale philosophorum* and *ius naturale gentium* (CROCE B., *La filosofia di G. B. Vico (1911)*, Roma – Bari, Laterza, 1973, p. 101).

¹⁰² In Vico's vision, the feelings of the majority of people are the boundaries of reason (ABBAGNANO N., *Storia della filosofia*, vol. II «La filosofia moderna: dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo», Torino, UTET, 1993, p. 335). Croce in 1911 deems that «Everyone who thinks, as Vico, that customs worth more than law and that customs do not change suddenly, but only gradually and slowly, will not legislate easily and will not fancy to shape a new humanity according to his subjective model» («Chi pensa, come il Vico, che 'i costumi valgono più delle leggi' e, insieme, che 'i costumi non si cangino d'un tratto ma per gradi e in lungo tempo', non sarà incline al facile legislar e non s'illuderà di poter plasmare a nuovo l'umanità sopra un modello soggettivo» CROCE B., *La filosofia di G. B. Vico (1911)*, *op. cit.*, p. 103).

¹⁰³ This is here a subtle, but relevant, difference with Diderot, whose esteem for Le Mercier de la Rivière was just due to the relationship established by Physiocracy between social and natural order: «Au reste, voici sur quoi mon éloge [de Mercier de la Rivière] est fondé: [...] personne ne me paraît avoir vu, comme lui, que l'ordre des sociétés était donné essentiellement par l'ordre de la nature, et que vouloir une bonne société et s'écarter de cet ordre, c'est un vouloir une impossibilité» (DIDEROT D., *Oeuvres. Tome V^e: Correspondance*, *op. cit.*, p. 738. This letter was written in June or July 1767). See also MINERBI M., «Diderot, Galiani e la polemica sulla Fisiocrazia», *art. cit.*, p. 152.

¹⁰⁴ See SOCCIO P., «Nota introduttiva», VICO G., «Scienza Nuova», in *Autobiografia, Poesie, Scienza Nuova (giusta l'edizione del 1744: la 3^o ed., pubblicata dal figlio Gennaro)*, a cura di P. SOCCIO,

sort of natural law in a *Mémoire* on famine in France and the errors of the *Edit* of 1764, sent, through M.e d'Epinaÿ, to Sartine in December 1770¹⁰⁵. In the *Mémoire* he writes that since long there are countries, like Sicily, that export grain freely, and no sovereign ever decided to limit the export. It is a « loi naturelle inhérente au sol », but developed in a specific historical condition, valid in those particular circumstances.

The Physiocrats look at natural liberty as something new, which will renew the entire society, and prompt calls to remove the legal hindrances that prevent the application of natural law¹⁰⁶.

The natural law in Galiani's vision is what has always happened: since history is continuous change, absolute natural laws do not exist, but only phenomena and situations more or less persistent. Now, in Vico's thought, in the childhood of humanity (the epoch of Gods and fantasy) the action and production of man was spontaneous, unconscious, nearly natural, and rationality was latent (*certum* existed, but *verum* not yet); but history urged and prompted even in prehistory and opened the pathway to the adult era, that is the rational epoch of men (*verum* emerges, and it includes not only rationality, but also passions of *certum* of the previous stages)¹⁰⁷. Vico's law theory consists just of the fusion of a formal relationship, the natural law, with a historical object, the people law (*diritto delle genti*); domination and liberty are prefigured in the structure of the human nature, therefore, as in an individual « becoming older, volunty creates liberty », so it happens in the history of peoples¹⁰⁸.

Zanobi says in the Second Dialogue that one must set up the principles drawn from the very nature of things, namely: which is the Kingdom we are going to speak about? Where is? What are its customs and opinions, and the advantages we can get, or the risk we ought to avoid?

The difference between the policies of grain is due to the nature of things: public warehouses can be a nice solution in small countries, in large countries this isn't possible, because of the difficulty of administration: « Approvisionner et nourrir avec règle et économie deux ou même un million d'habitants est au dessus des forces humaines¹⁰⁹ ». Large countries cannot develop only manufacture and commerce, because they wouldn't have sufficient vent for surplus and cannot specialize only in those sectors: « Pouvez-vous réduire vingt millions d'hommes à n'être que Manufacturiés ou Navigateurs? (...) La Nature a mis des bornes en tout, on ne la viole pas jusqu'à ce point¹¹⁰ ». Zanobi expresses lyrically the vision of nature of the *abbé*: « La nature est quelque chose d'immense, d'indéfini, elle est le digne ouvrage de son Créateur. Et nous, qui sommes nous? Des insectes, des atômes, rien. (...) Sans doute elle remet toutes les choses en équilibre, mais nous n'avons que faire d'attendre ce retour et cet équilibre¹¹¹. »

Milano, Garzanti, 2000, p. 179.

¹⁰⁵ See DIAZ F., *Introduzione*, *op. cit.*, p. lxxix.

¹⁰⁶ Perrot comments: « Du reste, comment intégrer les accidents de l'histoire à une démarche qui cherche l'ordre immuable de la Nature sous l'écume du quotidien et veut construire la science de ses lois? » (PERROT J. C., *Une histoire intellectuelle de l'économie politique. XVII^e-XVIII^e siècle*, *op. cit.*, p. 278).

¹⁰⁷ DE RUGGIERO G., *Storia della Filosofia*, vol. VI « Da Vico a Kant », *op. cit.*, p. 42-44.

¹⁰⁸ BADALONI N., *Introduzione a Vico*, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁹ GALIANI F., *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds (1770)*, *op. cit.*, p. 48-49.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹¹¹ GALIANI F., *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds (1770)*, *op. cit.*, p. 195. Charles observes that

Another issue that widens our interpretation of Galiani's concept of nature is his idea of fortuitous event, explained in the treatment of interest and agriculture in *Della Moneta* and in the *Fifth Dialogue*. What is called the fruit of money, when it is legitimate, is the price of palpitation. The interest rewards risk and privation of liquidity. It equalizes current money and money far in the future; just like the exchange rate equalizes current money and money far in the space. Thus the interest exists, is similar to the exchange rate and one must understand rationally its nature in the history, without moralism. Borrowing at interest is changing equivalent, because things that offer the same utility and comfort to the agents are really equivalent.

Galiani goes into uncertainty also with reference to agriculture, compared with gambling. Zanobi says in the *Fifth Dialogue* that nothing is less hazardous than fortune or less fortuitous than chance, that have constant courses and recurrences. The human beings have been able to evaluate the fortuitous damage in the trade of grain and bread thanks time and habits, because only nature and instinct can solve these puzzling problems, impossible even for very skilled mathematicians. Also the farmer is a gambler, against weather and seasons which hold the bank.

The history of an agricultural country is parallel to the story of a gambler. At the beginning people are hard-working, fierce, free and martial, with a bent for war. But war is « the luxury of nations » (indeed, it destroys wealth), therefore it causes the decline of the state and high public debt, so money flows away. In a country without manufacture, compelled to buy grain abroad, external debt soars. As a result, the national independence is jeopardized and inequality rises, because of the growth of finance. As an indebted gambler, the only hope lies in bumper crops, but just one bad year is sufficient to fall down again. At the same time, « industrious foreigners » start their business in the country. The effects of natural facts and human greed sum up: the foreign entrepreneur looks at the natural human cupidity. He gives rise to new needs and corrupts the good habits of the farmer.

This interlacement between selfish, but natural, behaviour (which Galiani looks at without moralism), natural « blind » facts, consequences on institutions, which may not steer the events conveniently, expresses a rich and profound vision of history and nature, realistic, pessimistic, but far from fatalism. Human society can partly avoid these dangers. In particular, the sovereign must have wise collaborators to search for the moderate good that his state can achieve. The promotion of manufacture should be part of the project, because it is essentially human action, not conditioned by weather and seasons: encouragement of manufacture means promotion of liberty.

Nature comes back to its equilibrium, sooner or later, but man cannot wait for it and must fight against nature. In particular, it is true that the price of grain tends naturally to equilibrium, but we may not counterbalance the up and down of price with a theoretical mean. What is true in a simplified model might have an awful impact on people. Grain finally arrives where are money and consumers, but it takes time and in the meanwhile famine and starvation can spread.

Humanity here is seen as an instrument of something powerful and immense,

« Galiani s'inscrit désormais dans la conception traditionnelle du commerce des grains, celle d'un espace 'soumis à des temporalité asynchrones' » (CHARLES L., *La liberté du commerce des grains et l'économie politique française (1750-1770)*, Thèse pour le doctorat en sciences économiques, Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1999, p. 105). See also ORAIN A., « 'Il faut faire la guerre aux fous...' Les physiocrates à l'assaut de l'iconoclaste Linguet », mimeo, 2013, p. 15.

incomprehensible, like the Providence of Vico. Only institutions founded upon the real human nature, which sociability is part of, can endure. At the basis of society may not lie the mere strength, nor the search for utility¹¹².

Also the theory of value of Galiani, as we have partly seen, stems from the natural relation between man and things. Utility is a subjective pre-condition, partly natural, partly social. The relation between rarity, value and consumption is depicted in few words, which single out its great complexity¹¹³. Rarity depends on nature, but can be modified by man. The modification is carried on by *fatica* (labour), which is the fundamental principle, since only *fatica* gives value¹¹⁴. Then rarity can be won by *fatica*¹¹⁵.

III. Concluding remarks

In this paper I try to demonstrate that, at the roots of the opposition of Galiani to the international free trade of grain, both his vision of economy, where the human activity gives value to goods, and his vision of the civil and economic progress as a historical result, which is different in different countries and in different ages, are relevant. In both cases Galiani has been influenced by the philosophy of history of Giambattista Vico. Physiocrats trust in the goodness of the *ordre naturel*; Galiani expresses a sort of naturalism not optimistic. Nature is not benign, nor malicious; the development of history in the natural world must be steered with attention and realism. Galiani

¹¹² On this point we can cite the Axiom viii: « Things do not settle or endure out of their natural order » (« Le cose fuori de loro stato naturale né vi si adagiano, né vi durano » VICO G., « Scienza Nuova », in *Autobiografia, Poesie, Scienza Nuova (giusta l'edizione del 1744: la 3° ed., pubblicata dal figlio Gennaro)*, a cura di P. SOCCIO, Milano, Garzanti, 2000, p. 246).

¹¹³ « We can safely assume that consumption shapes and varies according to value, just like rarity and value, on their turn, depend on consumption. Then, due to such a relation, the problem is undetermined, as it always is, when two unknown related quantities meet » (« [E'] da stabilirsi per certo che, siccome la rarità ed il valore dipendono dal consumo, così il consumo secondo il valore si conforma e si varia. E da questa concatenazione il problema si rende indeterminato, come lo è sempre che due quantità ignote, che hanno qualche relazione fra loro, vi s'incontrano » GALIANI F., *Della Moneta (1751) e scritti inediti, op. cit.*, p. 53).

¹¹⁴ « Now I am going to speak about *fatica*, which is the sole element that gives value to things, not only in artefacts, but also in many natural bodies, such as minerals, stones, wild plants » (« Entro ora a dire della fatica, la quale non solo in tutte le opere che sono intieramente dell'arte, [...] ma anche in molti corpi, come sono i minerali, i sassi, le piante spontanee delle selve, ecc., è l'unica che dà valore alla cosa » *Ibid.*, p. 47).

¹¹⁵ Even though Galiani has been considered a forerunner of the theory of labour value (see SCHUMPETER J. A., *Storia dell'analisi economica, op. cit.*, p. 368), his reference to *fatica* rather expresses it as a real cost: man operates in Nature and on Nature, in order to get, in the well known Smith's words, « the necessaries, conveniences, and amusements of human life ». This approach is totally different from the analytical treatment of labour commanded, or labour embedded, we find in the theories of labour value. Here Galiani considers labour as a useful human activity, which produces use value and has nothing to do with the notions of « abstract labour » or the « socially necessary labour » present in the most developed version of the theory. This appears especially when he deals with basic commodities: providentially, the labourers able to produce foodstuffs are abundant.

is skeptical and aware that the transition towards a hypothetical improvement can be really hard. This is true for the free international trade of grain, that, introduced too fast, would engender bad consequences, and it is also his general political attitude. Transition is part of the result, the historical evolution cannot be the outcome of a set of theoretical projects, but is a continuous, endless process.

Galiani is anti-physiocratic for his methodological approach, influenced by Vico; and also for historical reasons, when he looks at the agriculture of the continental part of the Kingdom of Naples. He does not trust in the efficiency of administration and is worried for social peace.

The fundamental idea that the only wealth is man leads Galiani to claim for accessible prices of basic goods. According to him, the *bon prix* must « naturally » conform to utility, scarcity and labour, and a high price means that grain is too rare or too difficult to obtain. A stable price over time is the best possible achievement. The role of labour (*fatica*) and scarcity (*rarietà*), together with the rigidity of the demand of foodstuffs, gives rise to a theory of value different from the treatment of value of Physiocrats, in whose theory prices must ensure the reproduction of the system and the flow of surplus to agriculture.

In a letter to Tanucci of 6 February 1769, when he lived in Paris, Galiani puts forward what, perhaps, had brought him to reflect upon economy with his couple of great books written with a time gap of twenty years: « Great truth is that politics is not metaphysical genius, but knowledge of the hard difficulties of human life¹¹⁶ ».

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Keywords: Ferdinando Galiani; Giambattista Vico; Physiocracy; Antiphysiocracy; free trade.

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¹¹⁶ « Grande verità è quella che la politica non è ingegno metafisicante, ma conoscenza della scabrosità della vita umana » (GALIANI F., *Lettere di Ferdinando Galiani al Marchese Bernardo Tanucci*, *op. cit.*, p. 212. The letter is quoted also in GALIANI F., *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds*, a cura di F. NICOLINI, Milano-Napoli, Ricciardi, 1959, p. 333).

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