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THE ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE KINGDOM OF NAPLES AND THE CIVIL ROLE OF GEOGRAPHY

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Abstract: *International experiences are useful tools used to re-interpret the development of modern and contemporary geography. In this background, the Enlightenment is considered central to the development of modern geography, a sort of starting point for a geography that is not solely descriptive. This scenario has been of an interesting stimulus to the research and discovery of the relationship between geography and the Enlightenment in Italy, in particular in The Kingdom of Naples. It represented a complex reality given its social and economic backwardness, where the spread of the Enlightenment paved the way to geography. This interest, neglected so far, was studied by focusing on the main author: Antonio Genovesi and his school. He developed a multifaceted view of culture that included the study of geography. The paper analyses, thanks to the discovery of some little-known documents, how Genovesi understood the importance of geography devoting a short unknown book to it. Furthermore, the paper highlights how Genovesi realised that the civil role of geography was useful for South Italy development and he gave this mission to his followerss. Indeed, his disciples committed themselves to geographically representing South Italy with the aim of encouraging the political class to take actions. Despite not fulfilling their objective, the merits of Genovesi are several: he considered geography equal to other scientific subjects, he combined it to politics, and identified South Italy as a topic/problem to reflect on.*

Key words: *Enlightenment, Geography, Kingdom of Naples, Antonio Genovesi*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Enlightenment is considered central to the development of modern geography on a different scale, a sort of starting point for a geography that is not solely descriptive (Livingstone, Withers, 1999a; Quaini, 2012; Gambi, 1973). In fact, as the paper is going to clarify, the Enlightenment paved the way to several debates on the analysis of reality and knowledge as well as on the different ways to consider society, politics and economics. However, much as its importance is widely recognised, its effects on the development of geography are not considered uniform, and, in some areas, they are overlooked or not well recognised. In some European countries, the effectiveness of the Enlightenment was undermined by political weakness. However, that does not imply that there are not significant traces that need to be studied. The debate has also involved Italian geography, which has rightly tried to analyse its development/formation, also taking into consideration the role of the Enlightenment (Quaini, 1975; Cerreti, 2009). This scenario has been of an interesting stimulus to the research and discovery of the relationship between geography and the Enlightenment in Italy, bearing in mind that Italy in the 18th century was fragmented into small independent states, politically and culturally autonomous from each other. In particular, this study focused on South Italy, which was an independent kingdom called Kingdom of Naples in XVIII (Kingdom of the Two Sicilies from 1816 due to the annexation of Sicily). The accurate research for this study was carried out by the National Archive and Library of Naples. Some little-known or completely unknown documents devoted to geography in Naples during the Enlightenment were disclosed. Therefore, the paper highlights the results of an ample study on Antonio Genovesi who paved the way to this process. He and his school had a considerable impact on geography in the Kingdom of Naples between the 18th and 19th centuries, with an importance equal to that of other European nations.

2. THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND GEOGRAPHY: SOME IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

In Europe, as above-mentioned, the Enlightenment paved the way to several debates on the analysis of reality and knowledge as well as on different way to consider society, politics and economics (Ferrone 2019; Fleischacher, 2013; Outram 2006). The aim of the Enlightenment is to focus on knowledge, namely on its construction as well as on it as a social weapon. For this reason, philosophy and physics play an important role, because their models were renewed and they become fundamental to extend someone's knowledge on other topics (Withers**,** 2007). Such a shift is well documented by Voltaire who glorifies Newton's physics and understands the close relationship between physics and his idea of philosophy (Voltaire, 1968). By reading Newton's works, Voltaire understands the importance of the experimental method, and he aims at showing the right way to everyone, that is to say reality must be studied according to reason without prejudices or preconceptions **(**Russell, 1945). While Newton aimed at founding Physics on the experimental method, Voltaire and the other philosophers realised that every concept was based on observation/analysis of reality. The experimental method crosses the borders of science and becomes a way to develop culture and organize society. It goes without saying that Voltaire and Newton are not the only ones to be given credit, but English Empiricism and the ability of illuminists to convey ideas played an important role as well. In this way, every subject acquires a new meaning and needs to be reconsidered

according to the experimental method. Such a reconsideration is not an end in itself, but it is socially useful to overcome conformism. If in physics the experimental method leads to specific laws, an empiric vision of reality allows the formulation of concepts/laws which aim at improving society (Thomson, 2008).

Despite some limits and contradictions, these are the innovative elements of the Enlightenment, which had an impact on geography. As Livingstone and Withers, in line with Bowen (1891), pointed out: «the dominance of the Newtonian form of scientific empiricism» makes «geography again the focus of active intellectual concern», which was a starting point before Kant's *Physical Geography* (Livingstone, Withers, 1999b, p. 2). The experimental method sparked a renewed interest in knowing every part of the world and considering travels and discoveries an integral part of field research. Geography can be cosmopolitan because the *idéologues* promote a vision that goes beyond national borders and make areas far away from each other comparable (Robertson, 1997). It is also paramount to take into consideration the influence of the *Encyclopédie,* and in particular, of Diderot for the importance of science to education and to support social life. Geography and cartography had always been considered useful for military reasons and territorial control, but the Enlightenment gave value to the pacific nature of them because geography, thanks to Kant as well, "is civilly or militarily in the middle and in the highest level of the problems and fears of the citizen, that is the citizen of the world» (Quaini, 2008, p. 332).Therefore, some concrete actions were implemented: renovation of agriculture, organization of urban spaces and administrative sectors (Zafirovski, 2011). The light of reason is able to analise territories for several reasons: get to know them, map them and improve their conditions (Edney, 1999). It is obvious that these actions were not uniform in Europe, in actual fact the role of geography was different according to the different places and populations. Despite their being on a local scale, these actions are important for several reasons: they demonstrate how geography was well-rooted, they are a revision of the epistemological statute and they contribute to the understanding of socio-cultural processes. Furthermore, the reorganization of local processes led to a multitude of ideas and, despite their differences, to focus on their implementation. The Enlightenment was, therefore, fundamental to build up the epistemological statute of modern geography (Livingstone, Withers, 1999a; Withers, 2007; Quaini, 2012; Fischer, 2014) and to focus on spatial studies which would pave the way to Kant's Physical Geography as a cognitive basis to understand the world. Bearing these prerequisites in mind, the aim of the next chapters is to analyse the path followed by the geographical school of Naples between the last decades of XVIII and the beginning of XIX.

3. SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN NAPLES IN XVIII

The Kingdom of Naples represented a complex reality given its social and economic backwardness (Galasso, 2006; Galasso, 2007). The beginning of the eighteenth century was characterized by the Austrian dominance which, subsequent to the long Spanish dominance (1502-1707), highlighted the difficulties of South Italy: the excessive power of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and vastly greater role of the capital when compared with the provinces under its control. The Austrian government tried to rationally rule by equally dividing taxes. These years were extremely difficult and unproductive, and when the Austrians left Naples, Charles of Bourbon, who settled down in 1734, was forced to

take into consideration these measures. His government aimed both at lowering the power of noble families and the clergy and at enacting fiscal reforms. However, the reforms of Charles of Bourbon and those of his successor were always so limited that Napoleon's army, who invaded the Kingdom between 1806 and 1815, appeared to be an innovator. In the first half of XVIII century, the Neapolitan philosopher Vico questioned Cartesianism. He developed different interests considering human beings and their history the focus of attention (Caporali, 2006). Along with Vico, between 1744 and 1749, Ludovico Antonio Muratori had his Annali d'Italia printed in order to renew the principles of historical methods (De Martino, 1996). In actual fact, Carteniasim was being questioned by the intellectuals of The Academy of the Investigators, which was the first anti- Aristotelian organization in South Italy. The intellectuals of the Academy (Tommaso Cornelio, Francesco D'Andrea, Leonardo Di Capua) introduced into Neapolitan culture the experimental method to the study of nature. The cultural renovation promoted by Vico and the Academy paved the way to French influences. Indeed, Celestino Galiani founded The Academy of Science in Naples in 1732 modelling it on the French one (Torrini, 1991). However, there was an evident mismatch between a backward society and an open-minded group of intellectuals, who, under the influence of the French revolution, planned the unsuccessful Neapolitan Revolution in 1799.

All things considered, it is extremely difficult to define the role of geography in this context. There was not a specific teaching programme at the University of Naples. Topics related to geography were included in the Maths or Astronomy course. However, some scientific or literary academies, popular in the Kingdom of Naples, were the places where it was possible to talk about the territory. Agriculture was one of the widely-debated topics (Sarno, 2012a). Furthermore, Neapolitan cartographers had acquired considerable expertise especially in nautical maps while land surveyors were representing the areas of the Kingdom for local reasons (Brancaccio, 1991). The interest in geography slowly developed from astronomy in the above-mentioned Academy of Science, but Antonio Genovesi, who spread Illuminist Ideas in Naples, has to be given credit for it.

4. THE EUROPEAN OF NAPLES: ANTONIO GENOVESI

Antonio Genovesi was born in Castiglione near Salerno, town of South Italy, in 1713 and crossed the greater part of the 18th century. He studied theology and philosophy and was a priest in 1738 when he moved to Naples where he met the philosopher Giambattista Vico. He started teaching metaphysics at the University of Naples in 1741. However, the publication of the first part of his *Elementorum artis logico-criticae libri* (1753) was considered heterodox by the ecclesiastical authorities and he was suspended from teaching in 1745. The suspension has little effect on him; if anything, it increased his intellectual curiosity and led him to demolish theories and open up new fields of enquiry thanks to his wide reading of European authors. He was fascinated by the studies of the physicists of his time, notably Newton, Huygens and Mussschenbroek. He thus developed an attraction to theories of a living natural world and an admiration of the cosmos (Venturi, 2006). A study of English philosophy, principally Locke, as well as studies of the physicists open up new scientific horizons to him. This leads him to place a greater emphasis on concrete reality without ever attempting to betray church orthodoxy. An encounter with Bartolomeo Intieri led Genovesi further along this line. Intieri created the first course of Economics in Europe at the University of Naples in 1754 specifically for Genovesi. This experience led Genovesi to leave all thoughts of

intellectual erudition aside and 'become part of the society of mankind'. Genovesi then laid the scientific foundations of Economics as a science in his most important work, *Lessons of Civic Economics* (Original title: *Lezioni di Commercio o sia d'Economia Civile 1788),* and plans the educational development of an entire generation of young Neapolitans (Venturi, 2006b). This led to a concrete change in his interest for the history of scientific thought (Zambelli, 1978). The subject would not be studied solely for theoretical intellectual reasons but for the practical formative contribution to society that it could offer. Genovesi thus develops an open and dynamic vision which combines *Heaven and Earth* because it becomes ever more attentive to the dynamics of the territory as well as to socio-economic factors and the role of politics. Central, to this development however, is the Enlightenment. Genovesi does not neglect to study the major Enlightenment *ideologues* such as Diderot and Voltaire whilst applying himself mainly to British 18th century philosophy (Garin 1999). This leads him to a vision of philosophy whose function is to improve humankind's condition and transform society. We should also consider the influence of the *Encyclopédie* and in particular of Diderot on questions such as the social usefulness of the sciences (Garin, 1999). He focused the difference between culture and the economic situation of South Italy and understands that he cannot overlook such a mismatch, but he has to make the change effective. Sciences should be useful in everyday life and their range should be extended. This background, and particularly an empiricist culture, drew him to Geography.

5. GENOVESI'S BACKGROUND AND HIS INTEREST IN GEOGRAPHY

Genovesi is famous for his *Lessons of Commerce or Civil Economics* (1788) and which earned him the title of The European of Naples, a title given to him by Racioppi (1993). The lessons developed a multifaceted view of economy that included the study of geography. Indeed, he focused on topics such as population, distribution of products, relationship between climate and civilization (Sarno, 2012b). In particular, demographic development was one of the topics of civil Economics (Li Donni, 1980, Zagari 2007). Furthermore, agriculture needed to be modernised to become a source of wealth. However, he developed his interest in geography not only reflecting on socio-economic issues, but thanks to some historical-geographical works which were masterfully reconstructed by De Castro (1956): Buffon's Natural History, Moreri (1718) and La Martinière's (1750) geographical dictionaries, and the descriptions of countries and travels. His geographical readings are much more extensive, he studied the most important geographers of ancient times such as Strabo and Eratosthenes, and the more recent Varenius'works who were a fundamental reference source. He did not neglect Botero's works as well, which he considered the starting point of modern political geography (Descendre, 2010). However, the works that probably led him towards geography were those of Montesquieu since he gave considerable importance to geographical factors, despite his focusing on it from a determinist point of view. Indeed, he analysed Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* which would was published with his annotations posthumously (1777).

Furthermore, the attention of Genovesi towards nature and the history of scientific thought, as has been mentioned, was intensified by a study of Newton and the Dutch physicist Mussenbroek. Genovesi himself is fascinated by Mussenbroek's *Elementa physicae,* printed in Leiden in 1734. He handled the critical edition together with Giuseppe Orlandi in 1745.

For this reason, he reflected directly upon the territory as well as to socio-economic factors and the role of politics. In this way, he identified the epistemological scope of geography.

6. THE CHAPTER ON GEOGRAPHY

In the last part of his life Genovesi decided to write a Latin treatise entitled *Elementa physicae experimentalis usui tironum aptata*, a work that would then be published in two tomes by the Neapolitan editor Terres in 1779 and republished in Italian, intitled *Elementi di fisica sperimentale ad uso de' giovani principianti* (translate title: Elements of experimental physics for use by young beginners) – in Venice in 1783. The first tome focuses on epistemological topics regarding physics, theoretical physics, and physical phenomena. The second tome centres around astronomy, physical geography, geology, zoology, botany and the earth's atmosphere, giving it space between the well-rooted astronomy and the analysis of the structure of the Earth (Bergamasco, Lippiello, 2003). Every subject was covered in one of the two tomes so as to fully inform and educate the young generations. As mentioned, in the second tome, the 5th book, entitled *Of the Earth and the Sea* (original title: Della Terra e del Mare), focuses on geography. This book, which was not known, was brought to light and edited by the writer (Sarno, 2012b).

He realises that an enduring geographical tradition concerning modern travels and explorations. (Sarno, 2012b). Therefore, geography is an integral part of the knowledge of Illuminist intellectuals. For this reason, he aimed at informing his young readers about Physical Geography dividing it into three parts: the Size and Shape of the Earth, Hydrography and Geography. The organization of the paragraphs confirms the epistemological object of geography. the Earth structure, whose discovery was ongoing. After choosing the three topics, he sums up the most important pieces of information, citing the most representative scholars, cited in the previous paragraph. Genovesi performs his formative role: he shows a rough map of the world from the point of view of Europe, he gives his readers the tools to understand the geographical maps and the main characteristics of the Earth morphology. According to his point of view, geography should represent and draw the areas of the earth according to the culture of the Enlightenment (Withers, 1993; Dikshit, 2008). The innovative aspect consists of giving space to an existing culture which was not recognised and deserved to be deepened in order to exhaustively understand the Earth. He also mentions some important topics such as population, economy, social organization. Therefore, much as the book centres around physical geography, Genovesi also analyses the effect of human beings on territories and the transformations humans carry out or may cause. The personality of Genovesi is noticeable throughout this book which based on reliable sources. It is visible every time he describes social and economic situations. All things considered, he realised that geographical knowledge was important not only from a theoretical but also a concrete point of view. This realisation was clearly explained in his *Lessons*.

7. GEOGRAPHY TO STUDY THE PROBLEMS OF THE KINGDOM

In the last chapter of the first part of Economics Lessons, entitled *Of the state and the natural forces of the Kingdom of Naples out of respect for arts and commerce (*original title *Dello stato e delle naturali forze del Regno di Napoli per rispetto all'arti e*

al commercio), Genovesi tries to analyse the territory of the Kingdom of Naples, which is rich of poorly managed resources. In contrast to the other chapters in *Lessons* where the author refers to countries of each continent, in this chapter he directly hits his target: to approach and solve the problems of the his Kingdom. Geography becomes an important subject because it can identify the precise morphology of a country. Genovesi clarifies that the territory is almost unknown and so it must be morphologically studied and represented by adequate maps. Maps become indispensable to administratively divide the Kingdom and promote trades. For this reason, he stimulates a process of understanding and recognition as well as he writes down the physical history of the available resources so that people could better understand what to cultivate and which techniques to use. The history of a territory is necessary to understand the potential of South Italy, and to finally get to grips to what to do and how to do it. Therefore, in line with the Enlightenment which considers geography a theoretical and empirical subject, Genovesi highlights its socio-economic value in relation to the Kingdom of Naples (Israel, 2009). If in his previous book geography is regarded as a cultural experience, in this essay he understands the civil value of it to deal with problems of territorial development. The most interesting aspect is his suggestion: the Kingdom of Naples must be studied and analysed inductively and systematically. The gnosiological process should happen in a direct and detailed way, and should start from real data to attract political attention. His *mission* was accepted and continued by his followers.

8. THE SCHOOL OF GENOVESI

Genovesi was crucial not only to create the first course in geography at the University of Naples but he also helped to set up an actual school. Both the first generation of disciples and the second one were keen to geographically study the Kingdom. Among the former, during the period between The Bourbons and the French decade, there were Ferdinando Galiani, Giuseppe Galanti, Francesco Longano e Vincenzo Cuoco, while, as regards the disciples of the second generation, at the beginning of nineteenth century represented by the return of Bourbon, there were Luigi Galati and Giuseppe De Luca (Sarno, 2012a). Indeed, F.Galiani considered it necessary to create the Royal Topographical Office, under the direction of the cartographer Giovanni Antonio Rizzi Zannoni, for a modern cartographic analysis of the Kingdom (Valerio, 2002; Cilia, 2012). On the other hand, G.Galanti regarded an analysis of the Kingdom fundamental and wrote *Descrizione* (1969), that is an accurate description of the Kingdom. This work, left unfinished by G. Galanti, was rearranged and published by Assante and De Marco in 1969. F.Longano and V.Cuoco committed themselves to systematically studying the territory, the former by means of travel reports while the latter by carrying out a statistical investigation on the conditions of the population of the Kingdom during the Murat government (Sarno, 2009). In line with them, Luigi Galanti highlighted the didactical importance of geography considering it a formative discipline for the ruling class (Sarno, 2014); while De Luca wrote an essay - *Southern Italy or the Ancient Realm of the Two Sicilies* (original title: *L'Italia Meridionale o l'Antico Reame delle Due Sicilie.*1860*)* – with the aim of analytically describing environmental and cultural factors. All things considered, everyone fully drew from Genovesi, choosing a common epistemological object: the Kingdom of Naples. As reported by Manzi (1985), the cartographic production by Rizzi Zannoni, promoted by Galiani, and G. Galanti reports had a common goal: to provide a precise analysis of South Italy. Longano, on the other hand, worked on a

chorographic study of two provinces (Molise and Capitanata), focusing on their rural landscapes, the backward farming techniques, and on the most important source of income- transhumance, showing how it was having a negative impact on the environment and urban development (Sarno, 2009).

With the advent of Italian Unification, De Luca (Sarno, 2019), responsible for the school, felt the need to describe the area of South Italy again. He took charge of presenting to the newly-formed Italian government, a summary concerning the environmental, political and socio-demographical problems of the Kingdom. The reasons for the economic backwardness in the Kingdom and the sharp social differences were clearly explained (Sarno, 2019). Such social differences made these authors overcome the limits of statistics, widespread at that time, because they gave importance to direct observations of the environment and, therefore, their works were not merely a list of data. The investigation itself, carried out by Cuoco, combined statistics with geography since the pieces of information were collected in detail by using precise indicators (Biscardi, 2009). First the geographical and then the human factors were to be studied to understand the conditions of the population. The analyses and descriptions were supported by specific maps, useful to focus on the environmental and urban factors. In this way, they overcome the statistical analysis to promote a geographical vision. The method they used – cartographical representations and descriptive reports - was the most important tool to understand the problems of the Kingdom, since it was the synthesis of different environments and landscapes, resources and potentials, and different socio-economic conditions. By unifying the different studies, we understand that the mission was accomplished. The environmental, economic and socio-demographic problems were, in fact, discovered. Every province in the Kingdom was precisely analysed. Hence, they paved the way to a real analysis of South Italy which was traditionally considered prosperous and peaceful, but which, in actual fact, needed a firm commitment from the ruling political class (Caldora, 1995, p. 12). The last student of Genovesi, G.De Luca, accomplished the mission in a fundamental historic moment: the unification of Italy, so the ending of the Bourbon dominance and the beginning of a new historic period. His hope was that the new ruling class would be able to modernise South Italy in line with the suggestions of Genovesi School.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the followers of Genovesi were only considered the sign of the political commitment of a group of intellectuals, without taking into account their method to analyse the territory. Despite being connected to statistics, their complex and systematic investigations were influenced by Genovesi opening to geography which was evident with the inclusion of a book regarding geography in his scientific treatise. The archival research has brought to light a hitherto ignored work on Geography and Genovesi's contribution to this field (Sarno, 2012a e 2012b), contribution which can be seen as the missing-link that indicates the liveliness of Geographical studies in Naples in the period between the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. The value of his work is clear considering that there was no specific teaching of the subject at the University of Naples at the time. It is thanks to Genovesi that the first course of Geography was opened there. But his greatest contribution was his school of geography. It was represented by a number of disciples each of whom dedicated themselves to the study of geography according to their own personal interests. Some researchers of

Genovesi only focused on the geographical references in the book *Lessons* because they considered the part about the Kingdom as a political exhortation. However, the book about geography makes us reconsider this position. Genovesi regarded Geography as a subject of its own epistemological statute and with an important role in the management of the territory. Genovesi, for this reason, fostered the spread of the Enlightenment in Naples, built the foundations of economics, and paved the way to geography. Furthermore, his followers used different but complementary methods which left some indelible marks: innovative procedures for territorial analysis (Assante and De Marco, 1969), maps for the population (Manzi, 1985), and travel reports as an example of realistic novels.

The conformism of Italian culture after the Unification did not take into consideration the innovative vision of Genovesi whose ideas regarding geography were completely neglected. In fact, Italian geography abandoned its civil role in order to strengthen its formative one. The Enlightenment, however, was fundamental. Despite the poor results because the political classes did not take into account the studies of Genovesi school, the analyses of the territory are excellent elaborations which, concretely, show the importance of geography. For this reason, this paper demonstrated that Neapolitan culture was in line with the European experience between the end of XVIII and the beginning XIX. What is more, it demonstrates some unknown aspects: what Genovesi did to promote geography, his intuition to make use of it to show the problems of the Kingdom to the political class. The merits of Genovesi are several: he considered geography equal to other scientific subjects, he combined it to politics, and identified South Italy as a topic/problem to reflect on.

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