

ON VIRTUES AND AWARDS: GIACINTO DRAGONETTI AND THE TRADITION OF ECONOMIA CIVILE IN ENLIGHTENMENT ITALY

BY
LUIGINO BRUNI

*The paper discusses the work of Giacinto Dragonetti, a disciple of the Neapolitan Antonio Genovesi, founder of the *Economia Civile* tradition. Dragonetti's short book, *A Treatise on Virtues and Rewards*, appeared in Naples in 1766, shortly after Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764). In the *Treatise*, Dragonetti advances a theory of action based on awards for virtues. The idea of awards relies on the hypothesis that good or virtuous citizens act for intrinsic reasons. Modern economics has followed the path of incentives (and "punishments"), not that of awards. The paper argues that Dragonetti's contributions remain relevant not only for the history of economic thought, but for contemporary economic theory, as well.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Central to the eighteenth century was the rich issue concerning theories of action and its motivations. Hume, Rousseau, and Smith proposed much more complex social and economic motivations than a mere search for self-interest. Italian thinkers such as Pietro Verri and Antonio Genovesi explained the unintended consequences of actions, imitation, emulation, desire for distinction, and so on.

Lumsa University—Rome, Italy

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One stream in this debate is the dialogue (at a distance) between the Neapolitan author Giacinto Dragonetti and his much better-known Milanese contemporary, Cesare Beccaria. This paper aims to demonstrate the relevance of Dragonetti's work for the history of economic thought, as well as for shedding light on the roots of the tradition of law and economics. There are many reasons for renewed interest in Dragonetti. He was one of the representatives of the school of Civil Economy (Economia Civile); for some decades, his *Delle Virtù e de' Premi (On Virtues and Rewards, 1766)*¹ was directly associated with Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments*²; finally, the original topic of his research is being rediscovered today.

Contemporary economic theory of action is based on the idea of individual *incentives*. Dragonetti advanced a theory of action based on *awards*. Such a theory presumes that good (or virtuous) citizens act for intrinsic reasons. Unlike incentives, "awards" are not the *ex-ante* "motivation" for a given action, but an *ex-post* recognition or prize. Contemporary economics has begun to recognize the issue of awards, a further reason for a re-evaluation of Dragonetti's forgotten book. Bruno Frey, in particular, is bringing the notion of awards back to the attention of economists (Neckermann and Frey 2008; Neckermann et al. 2009; Kosfeld and Neckermann 2011), although the economics community has not yet acknowledged this branch of research. This paper aims at contributing to a reconsideration of the forgotten issue of awards in social sciences.

Giacinto Dragonetti (1738–1818), a lawyer and disciple of Antonio Genovesi, was born in L'Aquila. Under Genovesi's supervision, in 1766 the young Dragonetti published *A Treatise on Virtues and Awards (Delle virtù e de' Premi)* in Naples, shortly after Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments (Dei delitti e delle pene, 1764)*.³ By 1769 an edition of Dragonetti's book with the original Italian text and an English translation

¹The English title given to Dragonetti's book was *Treatise on virtues Virtues and Rewards*. In contemporary language (and in economics), and for reasons that will be developed later in the paper, I prefer the term "awards" rather than "rewards."

²In most of its European editions, Dragonetti's *Delle virtù e de' Premi* was published in a single volume with Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene*.

³In the preface to the 1768 Modena edition, the publisher Giovanni Montanari introduces the author with these words: "Author of this treatise, Dear Reader, is Mr. Giacinto Dragonetti." The preface to the 1769 English edition reads: "Jacinto Dragonetti is the author of the following treatise first published in Naples, and received an applause little inferior to that which had celebrated the name of Beccaria" (1769, p. 4). Giacinto Dragonetti was educated first in Rome and after 1760 in Naples, where he read jurisprudence and became a student of Genovesi. In a private letter of 1767, Genovesi referred to *Delle virtù e de' Premi* as having been written by "a friend" (1962, p. 205). In 1947 the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce mentioned Dragonetti's treatise in the literary journal *Biblon*, dismissing it as "rather insipid and adding nothing to the debate" (Croce 1959, p. 235), but providing no explanation for his statement. Even more interesting, the same note by Croce includes the transcription of several extracts from a three-page manuscript he had discovered among the pages of a first-edition copy of the book that appeared anonymously in 1766 (as did many works of that time by reformers, such as Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene*). Croce attributed the manuscript to Domenico Cotugno (celebrated professor of medicine and Genovesi's friend), and, on the basis of its content, disputed Dragonetti's authorship of *On Virtues and Awards*, supposing the true author to be Dragonetti's brother Gianbattista. Recent archival research (Bruni 2010) has revealed a set of unpublished letters by Giacinto Dragonetti that provide evidence that he indeed is the author of the book, although he was influenced in part by his brother Gianbattista.

was already in circulation.⁴ In 1776 Thomas Paine cited the book in his influential *Common Sense*, referring to Dragonetti as “that wise observer on governments” (1923, p. 30).

Interestingly enough, in one of the very few papers dealing with Dragonetti, Wootton (2000) demonstrates the influence of Helvétius’ *De l’esprit* on both Dragonetti’s *Delle virtù e de’ Premi*⁵ and on Paine’s *Agrarian Justice* (1797); in particular, their common call for more egalitarian land reform. In fact, although Dragonetti’s work makes no reference to Helvétius, his private correspondence (published in Bruni 2010, appendix) contains an explicit mention of *De L’Esprit*.⁶

Following his early fame, Dragonetti came to be almost forgotten even in his homeland. Likewise, issues concerning the relationship between awards and virtues were neglected.

II. THE NEAPOLITAN CIVIL ECONOMY

Before exploring Dragonetti’s notion of virtues and awards, it is necessary first to sketch the main features of the Civil Economy tradition, the cultural environment in which Dragonetti developed his book.

⁴Just like Pietro Verri and the *Accademia dei Pugni* are thought to be behind the young Beccaria’s *On Crimes and Punishments*, it is likely that Genovesi and the *Accademia delle scienze* might have been behind the young Dragonetti. Dragonetti’s book is undoubtedly the result of a dialogue with Genovesi and the Neapolitan *Economia Civile* school, and *On Virtues and Rewards* may well have been written under Genovesi’s supervision. This was the opinion of Alfonso Dragonetti, who, in a short biography of his great-uncle Giacinto, writes: “In 1760 he came to Naples to receive an education that would prepare him for a career in the practice of law and he engaged in the study of jurisprudence in the spirit of philosophical inquiry.... The illustrious Genovesi was then a master of reasoning, not just in Naples, but in Italy, and it was under his guidance that the young mind from l’Aquila was educated to mature reflection and exact thinking” (1847, p. 113). Dragonetti did not pursue an academic career, first working as a lawyer in fiscal matters and later (in the 1780s), as *Magistrato* (judge) of the Monarchy of Sicily. In 1788 he published a second book, *Origine dei feudi nei regni di Napoli e Sicilia*, where he continued his intellectual battle against the feudal system and its unjust system of rewards. In fact, in 1799 he participated in the Jacobin party during the Neapolitan revolution and, after the Bourbons’ repression, was exiled to France, where he remained until 1803.

⁵Wootton wrongly describes Dragonetti as “Beccaria’s disciple” (2000, p. 325). Two unpublished letters from Dragonetti to his brother (now in Bruni 2010) suggest that Dragonetti learned about Beccaria’s book only in 1765, when he had already begun to work on his own treatise.

⁶A letter to Dragonetti’s brother Gianbattista (1736–1819), dated 1765, reads: “Always you suggest me to read *L’Esprit* de l’Helvétius, because according to you my work has to be modeled according this author’s thought.” Then Giacinto asks his brother, who was a scholar of philosophy and humanities, to amend his book in order to include some elements of *De l’Esprit*. Wootton notes this about Dragonetti’s chapter “On Agriculture”: “Following in the wake of Helvétius, he argued for a redistribution of land and an increase in wages” (p. 325). In fact, in that same chapter, Dragonetti writes, “The small number of proprietors, and the crowds of simple labourers, are the heaviest [cause of the] misery of the those last” (1769, p. 73). Actually, Dragonetti’s egalitarian thesis comes, most probably, from the Neapolitan reformation program in agriculture in which Genovesi was also actively involved. “If some part of the old constitution will not be reformed and if a better division of the lands will not be implemented, the books of the philosophers and all the sovereigns’ goodwill are just mocking upon the misery of the State” (Genovesi 2013, p. 87). Dragonetti expanded and developed his vision of land distribution in his second book (1788). In a previous work, Wootton defined Dragonetti an “unknown Italian,” whom “not a single Paine scholar has ever read” (1994, p. 37).

Recent authors⁷ have called attention to the negative reputation throughout Europe of pre-modern Neapolitan society because of the erosion of civic virtues there. In particular, individual pursuit of private honor had replaced mutual trust among citizens and in public authorities—a change attributed especially to the Spanish viceroys. At the same time, since the 1730s, Naples had been one of the capitals of the European Enlightenment, an era of reform and civic hope. Also during the mid-eighteenth century, Genovesi began developing the Civil Economy tradition.

Antonio Genovesi (1713–1769) can rightly be considered the founder of the eighteenth-century Civil Economy tradition in Italy. Like Adam Smith, Genovesi began as a philosopher and, in the early 1750s, turned his attention to social and economic matters.⁸ Also like Smith, Genovesi considered civil friendship and reciprocity (not just simple sociality) to be essential components of human nature. In his philosophical and economic works, in line with the classical tradition that runs from Aristotle to Aquinas, he stated repeatedly that “no human condition is to be regarded as more unhappy than that of being alone, segregated from all commerce with our fellows” (2013, p. 348).

Genovesi, and after him the whole of Civil Economy (which can be rightly considered as an attempt to interpret the modern market economy within the Christian classical tradition), sees market economic interactions as relationships of mutual assistance, neither impersonal nor egoistic. Indeed, the market itself and commerce are understood as expressions of reciprocity, which, for him, is the general law of civil society.⁹ This vision of market exchange as mutual assistance is present throughout Genovesi’s works, but it emerges in a particularly effective way in his analysis of trust, or “public trust,” and of commerce. Genovesi reconciles his ambivalent attitude towards the civilizing role of commerce by considering reciprocity to be the true nature of market and trade, as he later makes clear (*Id.*, p. 348).

In fact, “public trust” is a key phrase in Genovesi’s Civil Economy, one that he considered the true precondition of economic development and that was subsequently accepted within the Civil Economy tradition. “Confidence is the soul of commerce ... without it, every part of its edifice collapses on its own” (Filangieri 2003, p. 93).¹⁰ Thus, in the Civil Economy tradition, public trust is the primary resource for economic development. Indeed, Genovesi singled out lack of public trust as the principal reason for underdevelopment in the Kingdom of Naples, which had abundant private trust but,

⁷Among others, see the classical works of Banfield (1958), Venturi (1969), Putnam (1993), Pugden (1987), Bellamy (1987), and, more recently, Robertson (2007), Herreros (2008), and Reinert (2010).

⁸Genovesi was also compelled by theoretical positions he had adopted that were too modern and open to influence from the North (and John Locke in particular), bringing his orthodoxy into question with the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Naples. On the thought and life of Genovesi, see Bruni (2006).

⁹Bruni and Sugden (2000, 2008) present a modern account of Genovesi’s theory of market as “team thinking.” They also discuss the differences between Genovesi’s Civil Economy and Smith’s Political Economy in the role and nature of sociality in market interactions. On the difference between these two schools (Civil and Political Economy), see also Bruni and Zamagni (2007).

¹⁰It is important to note, also in relation to Dragonetti’s discourse, that Genovesi’s vision of “public trust” (and that of other representatives of the Neapolitan school, such as Filangieri) should not be seen as a theory that assigns all or even the principal tasks of creating it to the government. For Genovesi, “public trust” develops primarily in civil society and is, thus, not the result of a top-down process that begins with government action. The civil virtues of citizens, both as individuals and as organizations, play a key role in a country’s economic and social development.

in his view, lacked general public trust. A few years later, Gaetano Filangieri also emphasized this; he considered the primary resources of a nation to be “confidence in the government, confidence in the judges, and confidence in other citizens” (2003, p. 5). As did most eighteenth-century philosophers (e.g., Montesquieu, Kant, Vico, Hume, Smith), *Civil Economy* also stressed that without cultivation of public trust, the market does not develop and the society remains feudal (Genovesi 2013, p. 341). For Genovesi, therefore, public trust is the basis for all the development (or, if lacking, the underdevelopment) of a nation. Without public trust, there is no economic and social development. In chapter X of Book II, which represents a sort of “core” for the entire *Lezioni*, Genovesi shows how public trust is essentially a matter of genuine reciprocity. In Genovesi’s theory, unlike Smith’s *Political Economy*, the market is a place of genuine sociality or, in typical Italian Enlightenment language, of *fraternity*. In fact, public trust is understood as an essential part of both the market and the civil society, hence the typical expression *civil economy*.¹¹

It is within this vision of society based on reciprocity and civic virtues that the work of Giacinto Dragonetti also must be situated.

III. NOT ONLY PUNISHMENTS: DRAGONETTI ON AWARDS

Dragonetti’s Introduction provides a clear point of entry to his vision of virtues and awards: “We have made numberless laws to punish crimes, and not one is established to reward virtue” (1769, p. 13).¹²

Although the title (*On Virtues and Rewards*) may be interpreted as an attempt to counter Beccaria’s argument (*On Crimes and Punishments*),¹³ an accurate reading of the two books reveals the same specific intention: to address an aspect that had been overlooked. Furthermore, Beccaria was not totally oblivious to the positive implications of rewarding virtue, but he does confine this topic to the margins of his inquiry. The theme of rewards arises towards the end of *On Crimes and Punishments*, in a section about crime prevention:

¹¹Genovesi’s explanation of trust focuses on the economy: “Where there is no trust at all, either in the reciprocal confidence of the citizens in each other, or in the certainty of contracts, or in the force of law and in the knowledge and integrity of the judges.... Because where there is no trust, neither is there certainty in contracts, nor the force of law, nor confidence between individuals. Because contracts are bonds, and civil laws as well are pacts and public contracts” (2013, p. 341).

¹²The quotations from Dragonetti’s *Delle virtù e de’ Premi* come from the English 1769 edition. All the other translations of Neapolitan authors (Genovesi, Filangieri, Palmieri) are mine.

¹³Dragonetti’s book was by no means an imitation; rather, it proposed a different approach to matters of law. As Giacinto’s nephew, Alfonso Dragonetti, remarked: “Those who claim that the treatise was written to contradict or confute Beccaria, most likely ventured their judgement on the basis of the only apparent opposition of titles” (1847, pp. 113–114). The title of Dragonetti’s book was hardly the author’s idea. It probably was chosen by the publisher, Gravier, or possibly by Genovesi (De Tiberis 2010), so that Dragonetti might be associated with Beccaria’s success. It can be demonstrated that when Dragonetti was almost finished writing his book, he did not know of Beccaria’s *Dei delitti e delle pene* (see Bruni 2010). And, in the aforementioned note, Croce states, “It ensued some following in Italy and abroad a small book published in Naples in 1766, not in opposition but as a complement to the famous treatise of Beccaria, *On Crimes and Punishments*” (Croce 1959, p. 235).

Another means of preventing crimes is to reward virtue. I notice that the laws of all nations today are totally silent on this matter. If the prizes awarded by academies to the discoverers of useful truths have increased both knowledge and the number of good books, why should not prizes distributed by the beneficent hand of the sovereign likewise increase the number of virtuous actions? In the hands of the wise distributor, the coin of honor will prove a lasting investment. (Beccaria 1995, p. 109)

Beccaria's analysis of "prizes" contains yet another comment on the importance of education: "Finally, the surest but hardest way to prevent crime is to improve education" (Ibid.), an instrument closely linked to the reward of virtue, an issue dear to most Enlightenment thinkers (especially Genovesi). Beccaria and others mention the reward of virtue but do not explore it further,¹⁴ whereas Dragonetti, inspired by a more radical and far-reaching approach, devoted his analysis to this disregarded issue. He envisioned an entire system of laws built around the idea of rewarding virtue (particularly "political virtue"), a *code of virtue* that would parallel the penal code. "The Roman law-givers knew the necessity of recompenses, but contented themselves with hinting at them, without courage to form their code"¹⁵ (1769, p. 13).

It is also clear that Dragonetti was not trying to deny the importance of punishment; like Genovesi, he recognized its crucial role. But Dragonetti was convinced that concentrating principally or exclusively on punishment would not be enough to get the Kingdom of Naples back on a path of civil and economic growth.

More generally, the different positions of Beccaria and Dragonetti can also be explained in terms of their respective philosophical traditions. In fact, while Beccaria's framework is essentially consistent with the first elements of utilitarian doctrine, Dragonetti has to be interpreted within the classical tradition of virtue ethics (in line with Aristotle, Cicero, and Thomas Aquinas). Beccaria echoes Hobbes in his characterization of the state of nature:

Laws are the terms under which independent and isolated men come together in society. Wearing by living in an unending state of war and by a freedom rendered useless by their uncertainty of retaining it, they sacrifice a part of that freedom in order to enjoy what remains in security and calm. (Beccaria 1995, p. 9)

In Dragonetti, however, the vision of sociality and the essence of the social contract that emerge correspond to Genovesi and the Thomistic–Aristotelian view of civic

¹⁴For example, Montaigne, Hobbes, Rousseau, Montesquieu, and, later, Diderot, Bentham, Gioja, and others; or, in ancient times, the Roman philosophers and legal experts whom Dragonetti also recalled. The issue is also present in the Civil Economy tradition in the Kingdom of Naples. In his own theory of crimes and punishments as outlined in *Scienza della Legislazione*, Gaetano Filangieri, a leading figure of the Italian and European Enlightenment, acknowledged the importance of rewarding virtue ("the object of those laws concerning instruction, customs and public education is to mould the hearts and spirits of individuals within society; to exhort them to virtue through passions; to assume next to the fear of punishments for crimes, the aspiration of rewards for virtue" [Italian version, 1780, p. 283]), but made no mention of Dragonetti. Neither did the Apulian Giuseppe Palmieri in his influential *Riflessioni sulla Pubblica Felicità* (1788), even though he dedicated an entire chapter to the subject of virtue, with several passages that closely resemble the writings of Dragonetti. It is also interesting to note that the Neapolitan Constitution, after the revolution of 1799, written by Mario Pagano (a Genovesi disciple), mentions the issues of *premi* together with the punishments (AA.VV. 1852, p. 65).

¹⁵In a note, Dragonetti recalls the famous phrase from the Digest, Lib. I.I.I § I. Tit. I: "Endeavouring to make men good, not by the fear of punishment only, but likewise by the incentives of reward" (*ibid.*).

virtues as natural to humankind. Dragonetti hoped to revive interest in the reward of civic virtue that had characterized the Roman republicanism of Cicero and Plutarch, and that emerges also in certain expressions of the Lockean tradition.¹⁶

In this classical tradition, a virtue (*areté*) is an individual disposition or character trait, defined generally relative to a particular domain, according to the *telos* or, in contemporary terminology, the intrinsic nature of that domain. Furthermore, the logic behind the classical view of virtue diverges from both instrumentalist and consequentialist accounts. A virtuous person pursues *areté* for an intrinsic reason, not for the sake of pleasure or other material rewards. At the same time, a virtuous action may indeed also yield pleasure and material rewards, but they are an indirect result, a sort of by-product of the virtuous conduct (Bruni and Sugden 2013).

Therefore, there is nothing in the classical theory of virtue that prevents applying *virtues* (dispositions or character traits that help to promote excellence—*areté*—and approval in the economic domain) to the market, as Dragonetti does (and as most communitarian literature today does not). And, if that's the case, how can virtue truly be rewarded? More to the point, how does Dragonetti suggest that virtue be rewarded?

First, with more emphasis than the classical theory of virtue, Dragonetti associates virtue with the direct and intentional pursuit of public good (as distinct from, although not in contrast to, one's personal well-being). In Aristotle, for instance, the common good is pursued by performing individual virtuous actions, so there is no contrast between individual and public good. Dragonetti, instead, emphasizes the intentional search for the public good, even when this requires the sacrifice of individual gains. His approach to virtue, very close to the ethics of Republicanism, was surely influenced by the history of Europe and by circumstances in the Kingdom of Naples at his time, where freeriding and the pursuit of individual privileges were jeopardizing public wealth and happiness. "Hence the name of Virtue to every action that respects the interest of others, or the preference of another's well-being to our own" (1769, p. 19).

According to Dragonetti, therefore, the sheer pursuit of personal interest, despite being natural and not to be disparaged as a vice (as Mandeville would), should not be called "virtuous" per se. Virtue requires effort to reach results that go *beyond* one's private interest. In the Italian edition of 1768 (in Modena), Dragonetti suggests that God is *good* rather than *virtuous*, because doing good requires no effort from God. The 1769 English edition states something similar:

Virtue can only be the attribute of a being weak in nature and strong in will; this is the effort of human morals; a generous effort in behalf of another, independent of the laws, is therefore virtue; its points are the sacrifice which the virtuous offers in himself, and the advantages that hence arise to the public. (p. 19)

Serving the common good, therefore, is a *sufficient* condition for virtue, whereas effort and sacrifice are *necessary* attributes (they are also non-spontaneous, unlike the pursuit of pleasure and self-interest). Thus, according to Dragonetti, "Many have ambiguously given the name of Virtue to actions that result from mere natural, religious, or civil laws, and whose proper title is Duties" (*ibid.*).

¹⁶Echoes of this tradition can be found in the notion of "social pacts" in Genovesi (2013 p. 16) and in Filangieri (2003, book III).

His vision of virtue is consistent with his view of rewards:

He, therefore, who measures his actions by the standards of law, deserves (however commendable) no other recompense than the advantages arising from social compact. He, on the contrary, who extends his benevolence beyond what the laws strictly enjoin, merits a particular reward; for if he contributes more than others towards the general welfare, it is just he should enjoy more sensible benefits. Virtue disappointed of its proper recompense must become the prey of drones, the scourge of the virtuous, and its own destruction. (1769, p. 23)

“Recompense,” therefore, is a reward for an action that goes “beyond” what private and social contracts normally assign; it is the prize awarded for a free act deliberately intended for the common good: “It is true, that all the members of a state owe it those services which the laws ordain; but it is as true, that its citizens ought to be distinguished and rewarded in proportion to their *gratuitous services*. *Virtue sufficient for itself* is not the virtue of man” (1769, p. 27, my italics).

Expressions like “gratuitous services,” or “*virtue sufficient for itself* is not the virtue of man,” offer clues about other elements in Dragonetti’s view of civic virtue. Virtue is a matter of freedom, and its recompense cannot be set by ordinary social and private contracts. At the same time, Dragonetti is stating that an ethics of civic virtue in which awards are not publicly acknowledged, or where they are exclusively intrinsic (“*virtue sufficient for itself*”), is not sustainable because “it is not the virtue of man”; otherwise, it would be super-human and, hence, unfit for civic life (this passage contains an echo of Aristotle’s “god or beast”). Unlike most contemporary accounts of civic virtue, which seem to favor an intrinsic notion of rewards,¹⁷ Dragonetti assigns the reward of virtue a civic and “public” nature somehow external to the virtuous agent: “Nor ought it to be objected, that virtue, in proposing its price, loses its dignity and becomes mercenary” (1769, p. 27).

In other words, it is possible to reward civic virtues without the risk of reducing the gratuitousness of virtuous acts to the mere counter-service of an exchange (“mercenary”), which would otherwise compromise the spontaneous, genuine, non-mandatory, essentially free character of virtue. This issue has arisen frequently (and controversially) in the lively debate over the proper reward for “vocational” activities.¹⁸

IV. REWARDS AND AWARDS

This discussion has approached—but has not yet reached—a complete understanding of what Dragonetti has in mind by invoking the importance of rewarding—or awarding—virtue. Contemporary economists will immediately recall the notion of incentives, a tool used in economic theory—mostly in monetary or material form—to induce an effort from agents by aligning their interests with those of the organization (principal) for which they work.

¹⁷Consider, for instance, the various theories of intrinsic motivational crowding-out in economics beginning with Frey (1997).

¹⁸For a review and debate, see Bruni and Sugden (2008).

Actually, the (still preliminary) contemporary research on awards demonstrates that awards are something different from the contemporary idea of incentives or rewards. Bruno Frey and Susanne Neckermann point out the main characteristics of awards (and the principal differences from economics' standard incentives), including, among others, the low "objective" cost of awards and their high subjective value, their relational and symbolic value, and the complementarity between awards and intrinsic motivation (Neckermann and Frey 2009, Kosfeld and Neckermann 2011). These features of awards or prizes (i.e., medals; academic, artistic, civic, or military awards), however, do not help much in illustrating Dragonetti's theory of awards, as this discussion will reveal. Another avenue for exploring what Dragonetti meant lies in the difference between the English terms *rewards* and *awards*.

As mentioned in the Introduction, in the first 1769 English edition, the Italian word *premi* was translated as "rewards." In contemporary English and in economic culture, however, "rewards" does not convey fully what Dragonetti intended. *Premi*, in fact, does contain in part what the contemporary term "rewards" signifies (as will be shown); but the full connotations of *premi* are better captured by the term *awards*. Generally, awards acknowledge intrinsically good activities, and, within a reciprocal or contractual relationship, are not perceived as an expected recompense that has been established *ex-ante* (a *quid pro quo* or synallagmatic structure).

Rewards—as demonstrated by the meaning of its prefix "re" (as in *reciprocity*, *return*, *restitution*, from the Latin *rectus*, "straight," or "right")—are expected and anticipated *ex-ante* for performing a given action. Of course, any human social act is somehow an act of reciprocity. When we do something directed towards others, we pretend, expect, desire, hope for some form of return or reciprocal response. Not only the reward, especially that peculiar form of reward that in economics is called *incentive* (monetary or extrinsic), is calculated and fully foreseen *ex-ante*, but usually the reward becomes the total or principal *motivation* for performing a given action (Grant 2012). On the other hand, awards, such as those for civic, artistic, or scientific accomplishments, generally do not supply the motivation for such activities, even though a given activity may be associated with a possible award. Receiving an award does not supply sufficient motivation because it cannot be foreseen and calculated *ex-ante* in a rational cost–benefit analysis. In other words, rewards-incentives *create* a given action (that without the incentive would not be there), whereas awards-*premi* *recognize* the virtue-excellence present in a person, action, work.¹⁹

For these reasons, *premi*, the eighteenth-century Italian word Dragonetti chose for the title of his book, is better translated as "awards" (the Latin *premi*, in fact, literally means "prizes"), even though Dragonetti's use of the term also conveys certain dimensions of "rewards" as it is currently used (as we see later).²⁰ Actually, the connotation of "awards" in contemporary usage is contained in *premi* as Dragonetti used it, although his emphasis is much more "social" (or civil) than it is in the modern analysis of both rewards (as incentives in economics) and awards.

¹⁹Kosfeld and Neckermann (2001, p. 86, footnote 1) make the error of calling "award" sales "which are based on very precise criteria, the amount of sales achieved" (that are evidently the most typical incentives), for the absence in their theory of this key element.

²⁰"Rewards," instead, is an accurate translation of Melchiorre Gioja's *Sui meriti e sulle ricompense* (1818)—i.e., *Of Merits and Rewards*.

Apart from the nature of motivations, another key difference between the modern economics' "incentives" and Dragonetti's *premi* is the contrast between individual and social elements. Incentives are individuals-based, designed around private self-interest (yielding some benefit for the common good only as an indirect or unintentional effect). An incentive scheme has a purely extrinsic nature, because of its private principal-agent relation. *Premi* awards, instead, have a public or civic nature; they are given for the intentional performance of an action that contributes to the common good. They must be assigned publicly, in presence of an audience, the value of such an award being directly proportional to its publicity and social approval, being the ceremony an important part of the award. The greater part of the value assigned to an award is social approbation and recognition.

Dragonetti's notion of *premi* includes another crucial element. In harmony with the Civil Economy tradition, he claims that actions directed toward the public good do not conflict, at least in principle, with self-interest (despite the two having separate and not necessarily interrelated objectives); nor is the public good in any way incompatible with individual interest or incentives. *Awards go hand in hand with rewards*. Considering the Roman republic or the Greek *polis*, Dragonetti notices that "Public grandeur was not concentrated in a few, but expanded itself with such power, that each private interest was dissolved in the public, and each ray of the public reflected on its members" (1769, p. 29). Hence, his own definition of rewards: "Rewards alone tie the wayward interest of individuals to the public, and keep the eye of man intent on general good" (p. 31).

Therefore, although he acknowledges the distinction between acts motivated by virtue and those motivated by self-interest, Dragonetti never considered these two kinds of actions as opposed or in any way incompatible. It is fair to say that, in his view, a good society ought to be able to reconcile self-interest and virtue, rewards and awards, contracts and gratuitousness.

Consider one further step.

The structure of his book also offers other significant clues to Dragonetti's notion of rewards (not only awards). Its central section presents several specific recommendations for rewarding virtue. He sets them out so that high reward not be attributed to conduct with only marginal virtue or only a minimal benefit to society; and, conversely, so that truly virtuous conduct not receive too modest a reward. As Dragonetti states, "It is more pernicious to reward improperly than not at all" (1769, p. 39).

It is worthwhile to note that the *Treatise* was conceived against the backdrop of animated anti-feudal polemics,²¹ which Dragonetti clearly had in mind and which form the central theme of his later work, *On the Origin of Fiefs in the Kingdoms of Naples and Sicily* (1788). This work formally assesses the juridical controversy over the inheritability and alienability of fiefs in Sicily and Naples, at the same time maintaining the reformist aspirations typical of the Civil Economy tradition.²² This broad cultural perspective provides the backdrop against which can be unfolded the deeper meaning, still relevant today, of the theoretical debate concerning rewards and virtues.

²¹This circumstance had a remarkable impact on the Neapolitan Enlightenment, including authors such as Filangieri and Pagano (but also on the entire era of European Enlightenment culture in the rest of Europe).

²²Franco Venturi (1972, p. 212) remarks that Dragonetti's book "caused the powerful feudal lords ... to cry aloud."

At the heart of Civil Economy lies the conviction that feudal society could not lead to prosperity or civic development. The feudal system promotes the *perverse reward* of acquired privileges and discourages genuinely virtuous behavior. The following passage illustrates this point clearly:

The distinction of ranks has been struck out to reward the good: if it was continued to their descendants it was on the presumption that they would not degenerate. In supposition it is easy to pass from probability to falsehood: Hence an implicit faith in noble virtue distributes often considerable favours to birth only. The experience of every day evinces that the titles, dignities, honours, and other advantages merited by the sires serve merely to shelter the dishonoured escutcheons of the sons. Let Europe scorn the illusion, nor permit the supported virtue to prey on what is due to the real. (Dragonetti 1769, p. 41)²³

A key consequence of the anti-feudal polemics is an attitude of praise towards the arts and commerce, a trait that can be truly appreciated only in the light of the overall project of the Neapolitan and the entire European Enlightenment, whose mission was to build a post-feudal liberal society in which the proper reward of true virtue (and the discouragement and punishment of false virtue) might eventually provide an impetus for a new phase of civic life and economic development. Many remarkable statements by Genovesi, Filangieri, and other authors of the European and Neapolitan Enlightenment reveal this common anti-feudal sentiment.²⁴

In line with most of the European Enlightenment, the Neapolitan tradition considers economic activity to be a genuine expression of civic life. It sees commerce as a *civilizing factor*. Like the fifteenth-century Italian civic humanists, Genovesi and the Neapolitans see commercial activity as an expression of civic virtue, and civic life as the place where virtues could be expressed to their fullest.

The vision of the economy as a sign of civilization runs through Genovesi and all Neapolitan writings. Expressing a thought in a tradition that runs from Montesquieu to Verri, from Vico to Kant (Hirschman 1977), in the *Lezioni*, Genovesi even writes that one of the fruits of commerce “is to bring the trading nations to peace. . . . War and commerce are as opposite as motion and quiet” (2013, p. 201). And, in most of his theory, commerce is considered one of the main tools in creating the civilization and wealth of a nation. But, in the last years of his life, his attitude towards commerce his attitude towards commerce evolved and became more ambivalent in ways that deserve particular attention. His sentence in *Lezioni* on the spirit of commerce is well known: “The *spirit* of commerce is that of the conquests. Barbarous people conquer people and lands; trading people conquer riches” (Ib., p. 179).

This sentence is important for understanding Genovesi’s critique of Montesquieu’s thesis regarding “the *doux commerce*” in his annotations to the Neapolitan edition of the *L’Esprit des lois* (1777). His annotations for books XX and XXI of Montesquieu’s masterpiece note that “commerce is the great source of wars” (Genovesi 1777, II, p. 195),

²³A remark that maintains its revolutionary appeal even two and a half centuries later.

²⁴Genovesi’s vision of commerce (including, I would add, his critique of Montesquieu) was probably influenced also by John Cary. See Reinert (2011).

which seems to contradict many other statements in the *Lezioni*, some of them quoted above. Why? Genovesi composed the annotations to *L'Esprit des lois* towards the end of his life, in the same period during which he wrote the *Lezioni*. Since that is the case, there must be a consistency between his theory of commerce and his vision of the market based on the law of reciprocity. The same annotation that contains his statement on commerce as the “source of wars,” in fact, a few lines later mentions that “If two nations trade together for reciprocal needs, these needs are in opposition to war, not the spirit of commerce” (*Ib*). As De Mas correctly notes in his comment on Genovesi’s edition of Montesquieu, “Trade founded on reciprocal needs strengthens peace because it joins nations; but the conquest of commercial ports and of centers of commerce is source of wars” (De Mas 1971, p. 158). Reflecting on the commercial enterprises of past and present empires, Genovesi writes: “The driving principle of such enterprises is not commerce, but the consciousness of their power, greed. Commerce is a mere instrument” (Genovesi 1777, vol. II, pp. 198–199). Therefore, the later Genovesi distinguishes between the commerce of nations and its *spirit* (which, for him, is intricately connected with military power and strategies for political conquest), and commerce among peoples, in particular domestic commerce (based on reciprocity among equals, expressions of different needs). He maintains that commerce among nations (as it was actually conducted during the mercantilist system) generally was not an expression of reciprocal advantage or assistance, but unilateral exploitation. This interpretation runs through all of chapter XVII in the first book of *Lezioni*. Thanks to the critical edition of the text as well as to M. L. Perna’s editorial annotations, it is possible to trace the evolution of Genovesi’s evaluation of the spirit of commerce from the first draft of his treatise (*Elementi di commercio*, written in 1758) up to the second Neapolitan edition of the *Lezioni* (1769), where his negative judgment of the spirit of commerce is tougher than in the 1765 first edition and endorses commerce theses close to Rousseau.²⁵

At the beginning of his career as an economist, his evaluation was more positive, but became much more elaborated and generally critical toward the end. Particularly in his latest works, Genovesi became more aware of the darker possibilities of international trade, an aspect that became more and more significant within his notion of Civil Economy.²⁶

²⁵It is interesting to compare some passages of the first edition of the *Lezioni* (1765–1767) with the second Neapolitan one (1769). In the second edition, Genovesi added a very telling footnote (b) to the first paragraph of chapter XVII (the one that discusses “the spirit and freedom of commerce”): “Many have considered it odd that I call the *spirit of commerce* the spirit of conquests. They should say: why do we trade if not for conquering?” (p. 523). He develops a similar thesis in paragraph XXIX of chapter 8 (book I), which was added in the second edition. This is to say that the significant shift in Genovesi’s attitude towards the “spirit of commerce” emerged very late in his life, in particular between the first edition of his *Lezioni* (1765) and the last one (1769).

²⁶Nevertheless, except for this and a few other differences (i.e., on the role of geography in explaining the economic and political differences among countries), Genovesi regarded Montesquieu highly, whose ideas were influential in Naples, nourishing the entire Enlightenment movement. This can be seen clearly, for example, in the political and legal thought of Gaetano Filangieri, Genovesi’s disciple: “Every form of government has a different motivating principle: *fear in the despotic states, honor in the monarchies, and virtue in the republics*” (Filangieri 2003, p. 32).

This internal evolution at the very end of Genovesi's life did not affect Dragonetti, who wrote his *Trattato* in 1765. Therefore, Dragonetti's praise for the virtues of commerce has to be read in the spirit of the younger Genovesi. Dragonetti never formulated an actual and complete theory of the relationship between virtues and awards/rewards, nor did he ever lay out the theoretical mechanisms for rewarding virtues, a shortcoming that marks the greatest limit of his work. Nevertheless, several of his insights can be read and appreciated within the general framework of Civil Economy.

V. MARKET AND COMMERCE AS PROPER REWARDS TO VIRTUES

A key point that makes Dragonetti's ideas relevant in the contemporary ethical debate concerning markets is the connection he makes between markets and civic virtues. As he uses the term, *premi* conveys, as seen, a meaning associated with both *award* and *reward*, although in an unusual and original way.

Dragonetti, as well as the tradition of Civil Economy as a whole, regarded commerce as a key opportunity for cultivating and *rewarding* civic virtue. If, in the Civil Economy tradition, the market is construed as a form of "mutual assistance," then commerce itself becomes a virtue because by trading and contributing to developing the market, individuals are ultimately contributing to the common good. Moreover, in eighteenth-century Naples, starting a commercial activity required the ability to take risks, and this gesture too may be interpreted as a token of public virtue, since the entire community benefits from its results. From a Civil Economy perspective, the market is a place where virtues can be encountered and cultivated. Both market and trade are essential to public happiness. As Dragonetti notes, "Commerce is the reciprocal communication of the produce and industry of various countries.... The citizens of earth carry on a war of industry against each other, and where that ceases, there the supports of life decay" (1769, pp. 113, 121).

For this reason, society ought to recognize commercial virtues and publicly reward virtuous merchants, as in ancient Rome where the best merchants were allowed to join the equestrian order. "Commerce influences manners. Its spirit is that of frugality, moderation, prudence, tranquility, order. Whilst these subsist, riches are harmless. Commerce has everywhere propagated the study of social habits.... If these are the advantages of the commerce, *the trader should not want his reward*²⁷ (p. 131, my italics).

Neglecting to reward commercial virtues would discourage market transactions and, therefore, diminish the market as an institution; and without markets, there can be no public happiness. Dragonetti treats the subjects of war and navigation in similar terms (p. 78 ff.). Without adequate naval protection for trade, there can be no safe commerce; therefore, defense should not be left to mercenary troops. Instead, the pure military virtues that keep the state safe and, hence, free and happy should be rewarded. A similar attitude emerges at the conclusion of an unpublished letter from Dragonetti to his

²⁷The verb "want" is used in the archaic sense of "lack" or "be short of."

brother Gianbattista, in response to a question concerning the connection between the first and the second part of his book: “If I did not discuss agriculture, war, navigation and commerce, that are the ... main human virtues, what would my ... little treatise be worth? (Dragonetti, in Bruni 2010).²⁸

Dragonetti considered commerce to be part of the system for the reward of virtue. It is virtuous to satisfy other people’s needs, and, by facilitating mutually advantageous transactions, the market rewards virtue.²⁹

His chapter on commerce states:

A thousand proofs convince us that man was made for society, but above all, the mutual dependence on mutual wants, that basis of all unions....

The barrenness of one place is to be supplied by the fertility of another, and industrious nations provide for the want of slothful ones. Without commerce trade is impossible. Commerce is the reciprocal communication of the produce and industry of various countries....

To make each individual participate in the benefits of nature, and to give to the political body all the strength it is capable of, ought to be the effect of commerce. (1769, pp. 113, 122, 123)

One possible and legitimate reading of such passages on commerce, which corresponds to a fundamental concept in the Civil Economy tradition, is that the market serves as a key mechanism for rewarding virtues.

From that perspective, market and trade are perfectly moral or virtuous; mutual advantage, reciprocity, and morality go hand in hand. Although the Civil Economy tradition emphasizes virtue and its reward, it follows a different cultural path from the one followed by “communitarian” authors such as Anderson (1993), Walzer (1983), or McIntyre (1981). These authors see a contrast between true moral relationship and standard economic or market interactions. For Dragonetti (and Genovesi), however, the market and virtues are fully consistent with one another (Bruni and Sugden 2013).

Only one sentence in Dragonetti’s small book has achieved widespread notoriety: the one Thomas Paine cited in *Common Sense*. Paine seemed to take particular pleasure in the political aspects of the pamphlet, and he quoted (on p. 30 of *Common Sense*) the following passage:

A mode of government that contained the greatest sum of individual happiness, with the fewest wants of contribution [in terms of liberty].... *The science of the politicians consists in fixing the true point of happiness and freedom. Those men would deserve the gratitude of ages, who should discover a mode of government that contained the*

²⁸I was able to visit the Dragonetti–De Torres Archive at the National Archive of L’Aquila, shortly before it was destroyed in the April 6, 2009, earthquake, where I found this and another private letter Giacinto Dragonetti wrote to his brother. The archive has been rebuilt, and the two letters and other material are now available in the new building of the Archivio di Stato de L’Aquila, Bazzano via Galileo Galilei 1, Sez. Amministrativa, serie V, 42/1. Access to this material was made possible through the kind collaboration and support of Dr. Giovanna Lippi, who was in charge of the Dragonetti Archive and who perished in the 2009 quake. To her goes my warmest remembrance.

²⁹On the issue of commerce as civilization in the eighteenth century, see also Bruni and Sugden (2000) and Reinert (2010, 2011).

greatest sum of individual happiness, with the least national expense. (Dragonetti 1769, p. 155; the sentence in italics is the one quoted by Paine)³⁰

Dragonetti's emphasis on civic virtues and their awards/rewards has not generated (as often happens) an illiberal or authoritarian vision of politics and democracy. In his political project of reforming the Kingdom of Naples, virtues, public happiness, and freedom go hand in hand, a vision that may put Dragonetti alongside liberal proponents of freedom, happiness, *and* virtues, such as T. Paine or J. S. Mill.

VI. THE UNDERGROUND RIVER OF CIVIL ECONOMY

What became of Dragonetti and the Civil Economy tradition within contemporary social sciences? That tradition obviously did not enter mainstream thought during the nineteenth or in the twentieth century, not even in Italy, where it was submerged under a strong wave of criticism headed in particular by Francesco Ferrara, the most influential Italian economist of the twentieth century. In the introduction to the third volume of his *Biblioteca dell'Economista* (First Series), Ferrara (recognizing Genovesi as the first among them) claims: "The merit for the foundation of economics goes to the English Smith, or to the French Turgot, not to Genovesi, Verri, or Beccaria" (1852, p. xxxvi). According to him, the proper science of economics was not to be found in the works of the classic Italian authors, but in those from abroad. A later generation of economists, including Pantaleoni and especially Pareto, maintained this outward-looking gaze rather than looking more deeply into the tradition of Civil Economy.³¹

Through the eighteenth century, Dragonetti's book achieved widespread notice all over Europe, thanks also to Gravier, the publisher. Later editions were published in Venice (1767), Modena (1768), and Palermo (1787). It was translated into French (printed in Naples in 1767), English (1769), German (1769), and Russian (1769). In some editions, it was bound together with Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments*. A Spanish edition dated 1836, translated by the famous jurist Ramon Salas of the school of Salamanca, includes Beccaria's text. Other editions may well exist. Not surprisingly, the school of Bentham also mentioned Dragonetti, but in a highly critical tone (he received strong criticism particularly from Dumont; see Dragonetti 1847, p. 116).

³⁰Paine referred to Dragonetti's notions concerning happiness and freedom again in a later work (1792).

³¹The tradition of Civil Economy, however, never truly disappeared. Like an underground river, it kept flowing in the spirit of a few economists both in Italy and elsewhere who, in various ways, have continued to cultivate an idea of economics as a source of civic development, closely linked to civic virtues (not just self-interests) and to public happiness (and not just to the wealth of nations), and mindful of the role of institutions (but without going so far as did Hobbes in *Leviathan*). In Italy, such economists have included Scialoja, Gioja, Romagnosi, Cattaneo, Loria, Lampertico, Minghetti, Einaudi, and, among contemporary authors, Paolo Sylos Labini, Giorgio Fuà, or Giacomo Becattini. The tradition of Civil Economy has been fed mainly by economists who practice a non-theoretical but mostly applied approach, as well as scientists, politicians, jurists, and some exponents of the Italian tradition of social economy. In a way, however, the most genuine heirs to the economic tradition initiated by Genovesi and Dragonetti have been those such as Rabbeno, Cusumano, Luzzati, Valenti, and Wollemborg, who actively promoted the Italian cooperative movement, and those who founded and sustained rural credit unions, as well as consumption and production cooperatives. They have given a truly valuable contribution to the process of civil development invoked by Genovesi and other civil economists.

In the early nineteenth century, Melchiorre Gioja was the first in Italy to take up Dragonetti's issue again openly, in *Dei meriti e delle ricompense* (*Of Merits and Rewards*). His introduction acknowledges Dragonetti's previous work on this subject. Various versions of both books (Dragonetti and Gioja) followed in the first half of the nineteenth century.³² After the many-sided and controversial figure of Gioja linked himself to the topic of virtues and rewards, however, such interest disappeared.

Dragonetti bound the topic of inquiry tightly to Genovesi's school of civic virtues. All of *Lezioni di economia civile* was constructed around this theme.³³ The Apulian Giuseppe Palmieri, who belonged to the same Neapolitan tradition, dedicated an entire chapter of *Riflessioni sulla Felicità Pubblica relativamente al Regno di Napoli* (1788) to virtue.³⁴

When Genovesi passed away in 1769, his system of economic thought was still unfolding (at the time, he was preparing a third edition of the *Lezioni*). Somehow, his death halted Dragonetti's investigation concerning the very same topic. He never carried out the project outlined in the *Treatise*, nor did anyone else. The story might have been different had Genovesi worked a few more years on his *Lessons*, which never achieved a status comparable to that of the *Wealth of Nations* but could, perhaps, be compared to Smith's *Lectures in Jurisprudence*, an intermediate step between moral philosophy and economics (Bruni 2006).

Some handbooks of the history of economic thought still mention the ideas of Genovesi and Filangieri, but, after Ferrara and Luigi Cossa (1875), Dragonetti disappeared altogether. Neither is he included in Franco Venturi's influential *Settecento Riformatore* (1969). The failure of a theory of virtues and rewards to develop within the mainstream tradition of Political Economy is a corollary of the interrupted Civil Economy tradition.

VII. WHAT CAN DRAGONETTI TEACH US TODAY?

There is intrinsic value in bringing to light an author who, although unknown today, had been part of the active debate that has shaped the modern history of social and economic ideas. Rediscovering a protagonist in the European Enlightenment enriches

³²Also in the historical archive in L'Aquila, I found an 1848 edition of *Of Virtues and Rewards* (Naples, Stamperia del Tirreno). The editor of that volume, Lelio Fanelli, included almost in its entirety the previously published biography of Alfonso Dragonetti.

³³See, for instance, volume II, chapter X, on the subject of public trust, which contains the key idea that civic virtues ought to be promoted and cultivated, also by the state.

³⁴He wrote: "It shall be said that the power and fear of Sanction in Society act as a restraint to human instinct and maintain it within the limits assigned by Law; but this one restraint operates only in those Citizens that public opinion has already found to be mean-spirited. If no other restraint is to be had, then all Citizens will become such" (p. 42). He then remarks: "Sanction renders Law perfect, but it does not suffice to ensure observance. With natural Laws its effect, even if certain and inevitable, makes a modest impression, and partly because it arrives slowly and rather late, it does not immediately follow the violation. Indeed with Civil Laws the effect could be more prompt, but it is not and, what's more, it is uncertain because it is intended to elude them. In vain therefore we turn to sanctions hoping to achieve compliance with laws. The only sure guarantors to obtain the observance of laws are the adherence to one's own duties and the fear of shame. The first is generated by the love for virtue, the second from the respect for public opinion, in case this is founded on the very same virtue" (p. 46).

the history of economic thought. There is a second value associated with reconsidering Dragonetti's *Delle virtù e de' i Premi*, however: the important, if yet incipient, new streams of research in economic and social sciences.

In particular, the issues contained in Dragonetti's theory can be useful for two fields of social sciences: the new literature on rewards compared to punishments; and the debate on virtue ethics and market economy.

The issue of rewards, which is becoming more prominent in economic theory, is used effectively in practical experiments. Concerning rewards/awards, Bruno Frey and Susanne Neckermann have focused in particular on awards, albeit in the sense of medals or academic, artistic, military prizes. This meaning of awards reflects only a part of Dragonetti's concept, which is much more general than the strictly symbolic phenomena that Frey and Neckermann explore. Dragonetti's notion of "award" surely includes medals and symbolic prizes, but its fundamental sense has to do with civic virtues.³⁵ On the other hand, in the literature of experimental economics, the issue of rewards or incentives is gaining prominence.³⁶ Neither use of "reward" captures the idea of Dragonetti's *premi* as it has been defined in this paper. A promising line of experimental inquiry could develop by examining the specific idea of *premi* and comparing it to both punishments and incentives.

Finally, Dragonetti's ideas are relevant to the present debate concerning virtue ethics and market interactions. Some would associate virtue ethics closely with a critique of the market and economics. Most virtue ethicists, including communitarian philosophers such as McIntyre (1981) or Sandel (2010), criticize the ethos of the market economy. They claim that since the market depends on instrumental motivations, it must lack virtue and so must undermine it in other domains of life. Although the philosophy itself is confined to academic discussions, many of the attitudes it supports are echoed in the anti-capitalist and anti-globalization ideas common in public debate. An approach to the market from Dragonetti's perspective can respond to such criticism in the same language of virtue ethics. Dragonetti's idea of commerce and market is perfectly coherent with ethics, without renouncing standard market mechanisms such as the search of self-interest. He suggests an idea of economy and possibly economics reconciled with virtue ethics, an approach that can be useful in this age of economic and ethical crisis.

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³⁵In particular, it is misleading to take sport and academic competitions and prizes as a paradigm for economic rewards/awards. In fact, in sport and academic or artistic societies competition is basically positional, missing or making only implicit the idea of mutual benefit that is the basic principle of economic life, particularly (but not only) in the Civil economy tradition.

³⁶For a review, see Andreoni et al. (2003), Delgado et al. (2005), and Sefton et al. (2007).

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