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CICERO ON ECONOMIC SUBJECTS

BY
GLORIA VIVENZA

I. INTRODUCTION

I have been working for some years on the Humanist-Renaissance commentaries on Cicero's *De Officiis*. The present article follows two others on the same subject (Vivenza 2001, 2004); in 2001 another contribution was published, in German, in the volume accompanying the facsimile reprint of the *editio princeps* (Mainz 1465) of *De Officiis* for the "Klassiker der Nationaloekonomie." The previous articles deal with how the commentators treated the justification of private property, the connection of justice-beneficence, and the relationship between trade and human society. All these subjects were only briefly suggested in the *De Officiis*, but were developed by modern commentators who had to deal with an enlarged world faced with new problems, and with the change in thought and morals introduced by Christianity. In the first article (Vivenza 2001), I examined the German humanists and in the second (Vivenza 2004) the Italians. The present article should be read keeping the other two in mind. I understand that this is not always possible; it is in any case a part of an intended whole, which aims at enlightening the role of the *De Officiis* on various aspects of modern education.

The comments were selected according to a peculiarity that I happened to observe when I began this work. Having noticed that nearly all of the more than 200 editions of *De Officiis* published in the sixteenth century were printed outside of Italy (with the exception of Venice) and of Spain, I began to suspect that the divide between Catholic and Protestant religions could have relevance in this case. It is true that there were many editions of the book published in France, but although the country was Catholic, protestantism had a stronger hold in it than in Italy or Spain (Canfora 1991, p. 14). And the relations of Venice with the Pope's domain were often critical: this explains, perhaps, the Venetian choice of a text which was never printed in Rome.[1]

Universitá di Verona, Facoltá di Economia, Department Economie Societá Istitutzioni.

[1]During the sixteenth century, at least. The *De Officiis*, with the comment of Xistus Betuleius (=Sixt Birk, 1501-1544) (Basel: Johann Oporinus, 1544), was even included in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* of Venice 1549 and Venice and Milan 1554; compare De Bujanda (1987, vol. III, p. 322). An edition with Melanchton's comment (Paris: Simon de Colines, 1533) was included in the Spanish Indexes (1551, 54, 59); compare De Bujanda (1987, vol. V, pp. 446–48). Cfr C. Gesner, *Bibliotheca universalis*, fol. 630 r.

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This led me to a selection of the commentators that brought special attention to those most fitting to my argument. I could not deal with all of them, obviously, so I chose the most representative of German protestant thought (one of the "all," Philipp Melanchton) and, on the other side, the most relevant of the Italians, but here the choice was easy: apart from the editions by Aldo and Paolo Manuzio with F. Ursino, the Venice editions were almost all commented on by Pietro Marso, Francesco Maturanzio, and Ascensio, with some dissertations of Celio Calcagnino. These editions enjoyed a certain renown even abroad, especially in France.

For my purpose, the arguments of the commentators are only the first step. In fact, what interests me is how Cicero's thought, modified by the commentators, influenced some of the great minds of the Renaissance and seventeenth century. Till now, the comments have been little studied; to be more precise, the prevailing interest has been directed to "technical" issues—for instance, when and how Cicero uses the word *admodum*. But I want rather to enlighten the philosophical, or political content of the comments: for instance, what did Cicero mean when he wrote that private property does not exist by nature, and above all, was he right? (Vivenza 2001).

It would have been a scholar's pastime to go deeper in the study of the commentaries; but one should never forget the educational role of the *De Officiis*. It contained the seeds of very important concepts that influenced modern political thought and, to a lesser extent, economic thought. The reasons why sixteenth and seventeenth-century scholars of the Protestant confession showed so remarkable a preference for this text in comparison with the Catholics shall be evident, I hope, at the end of my work.

II. THE HUMANISTS AND CICERO

Humanism was an important intellectual movement, whose character went through an evolution that altered its original features. The subject is familiar to humanities scholars, but less so to economists. Because of this, I feel justified in briefly summarizing its intriguing character, although I do not even attempt to give a complete survey, let alone an essential bibliography.

From Italy to Europe, *studia humanitatis* were first transmitted as a method which could be used without adopting the original conceptual system of scholarship by which it was produced: it was a "neutral" technique which could be applied in different contexts. In Italy, however (and in Europe as well, after a certain time), Humanism had a much wider meaning and significance. The most authoritative Renaissance scholars—Hans Baron, Eugenio Garin, Paul O. Kristeller and others—pointed out that *studia humanitatis*, which began with Petrarca and went on through the fifteenth and sixteenth century, were meant to serve as a guide in civic life, not only as a source of antiquarian and philological erudition.

But a subsequent evolution led the Italian humanists to an increasing specialization, privileging minute detailed comment on the most difficult texts. Humanism gradually limited its field of knowledge and application, so that even the historical reconstruction and setting of the ancient texts in their own historical and philological context automatically deprived them of relevance to the modern world. This "relevance to the modern world," however, had been the original program of Humanism, which

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strove to enliven culture as a whole and to offer stimuli and paradigms to any form of knowledge and action—not only to revive the classics.

In the sixteenth century, it was the turn of Northern Europe: Erasmus's battles against sterile imitation, sophisms, and empty erudition in favor of a complete improvement of man won great renown. Rico, a contemporary Spanish scholar[2] parallels two letters written a century apart: the first by Guarino Veronese (1422) and the second by Erasmus (1522), both authors being persuaded that the study of the classics would have made the pupils not only clever in Latin, but better as men. Humanism laid the foundations of an educational system that formed the European *élites* and all the outstanding figures characterizing the modern age. The new scholarship also enjoyed great prestige because it found passionate (and generous) patrons in the upper spheres. A knowledge of the classics was not limited to a narrow group of specialized scholars, but entered schools and universities (and obviously private teaching), thanks to the decisive support of the establishment. Certainly it was not imposed by force, and perhaps it was also a question of fashion (there were bibliophiles, collectors, art lovers), which generally has a multiplying effect. The most important ruling men, whether lay or ecclesiastic, were almost all Maecenas, and were the promoters of the transalpine expansion of Humanism. Teachers with a humanist training were entrusted with the education of the children of the ruling class, and they drew inspiration from classical values. The revival of Greek and Latin treatises on household management helped to define the identity of the modern aristocrat head of the family.[3]

The North-European humanists were cosmopolitan: they began by finding teachers and books from outside their country, and then they addressed an international audience—among them, the British Thomas More and the German Philipp Melanchton. In the sixteenth century, then, European Humanism was not simply an intellectual movement but played an active part in the events which changed the world, bringing an awareness and an understanding of what was happening.

Coming closer to our subject, it probably would be worthwhile to analyze the different schools of Humanists. For instance, Pietro Marso, one of the most important commentators on *De Officiis,* was a pupil of Pomponio Leto, a representative of erudite-antiquarian scholarship (Dionisotti 1968, pp. 29, 100). But other commentators had a different training. A deeper examination of the transition from learned philological commentary to philosophical comment would also be welcome (Grafton 1985, pp. 639-40). In our case this means the difference between the analysis of Cicero's language and style, and that of Cicero's ideas, which could be praised but also criticized in some cases. Part of the criticism stemmed from the difference between the ancient and the modern world, which made it impossible to accept ancient principles and values without changes. I do not allude simply to points of contrast with Christianity, but also to the great development and complexity of modern economic activities and techniques which could not be ignored. Above all,

[2]Rico (1998, p. 85). My very short summary is indebted to Rico's survey. For a different interpretation of Guarino's educational method, compare Grafton-Jardine (1986, pp. 2–3).

[3]The first treatises on political economy (Montchrétien's famous *Traité*, for instance) were modeled upon the household *oikonomia* transferred to the public sphere (namely, the *polis*—hence "political" economy); see Brazzini (1984).

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the moral censure against them had to be at least tuned down, if not removed. All this reflected the previously mentioned Humanist principle that scholarship should serve as a guide in everyday modern life (Dionisotti 1968, pp. 58-59).

It has also been observed that the comment, as a literary genre, so to speak, does not allow for great refinement in formal language: traditional rhetoric was difficult to apply to the explanation or recasting of a text (Dionisotti 1968, p. 60). So style was not so lofty and sublime as we may expect when dealing with Cicero who, as we recall, was the author mostly linked, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with *imitatio* of ancient rhetoric and with pre-eminence of stylistic over philosophical problems. I do not need to mention Erasmus and his *Ciceronianus*, which criticizes the exclusively formal interest that the Latin orator's prose aroused in some Italian humanists. In fact, there was a divide between scholars interested exclusively in Cicero's prose, and others who wanted to emphasize his moral or political teachings. There is a lot to be learned from Cicero, the latter group said, not only perfect language and style and resounding clauses.

We have no time to dwell on these problems, but it is possible to find both positions mentioned in some of the commentaries: technical and rigorously philological exegesis, and what I have called *faute de mieux*, philosophical comment. I will stick to the latter, as I have done in my previous works, and once again I will complete my argument after having examined the various editions and the differences I have found up to now between those printed in Italy (Venice) and in central Europe (Vivenza 2001, 2004).

In this paper, I found my argument on commercial ethics and the merchant's job, as they appear in *De Officiis*, particularly as illustrated in the analysis of the relationship between *utile* and *honestum* in the third book. Cicero does not examine this relation from an economic point of view; nonetheless, it is possible to find something about this aspect, too. Following my previous approach to other passages of *De Officiis* that may be of interest in terms of economic analysis, I have tried to trace discussions of this celebrated topic back to the humanist commentaries on the work. The third book of *De Officiis* shows many instances of what could be included, later on, in economic reasoning. A great deal of the opposition between *utile* and *honestum* is connected, after all, with the conflict between common and individual interest—a very important argument in the relationship between ethics and economics. Some examples of Cicero's treatment of the problem and of its development in the Renaissance commentaries may be useful to illustrate the topic, as may some remarks that emerge from the *Disquisitiones*, published by the humanist Celio Calcagnino[4] in 1543, stirring up a hornets' nest.

To the criticism of the *Disquisitiones*, a couple of scholars, Magioragius and Grifolus, answered with a counter-criticism. They were not first-rate men of letters,

[4]A learned humanist from Ferrara, who won a certain renown and was judged a good scholar by Erasmus, but still influenced by Scholasticism (Erasmus, *Ciceronianus* par. 3295 (pp. 228–29). It is worth noting that, when Italian scholarship protested against Erasmus's devastating criticism in the *Ciceronianus*, Calcagninus, together with few others, maintained his good relations with the great Dutch scholar (Gambaro 1965, p. xci). It has been observed that the Italian controversy on the *imitatio* went through different periods, and the last of them (to which Calcagninus belongs) followed the publication of Erasmus *Ciceronianus*, see D'Ascia (1991, p. 107).

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as Calcagninus was. Their purpose in writing their discussions may be inferred from the dedicatory letters they wrote, as was usual, to their patrons. Magioragius introduced his *Decisiones* (the word he chose as an answer to Calcagninus's *Disquisitiones*) as the hot reaction of all sensible and learned men against an arrogant person who succeeded only in showing his own stupidity by finding mistakes in an author like Cicero. Grifolus's introduction was much more prudent and skillful: he recognized Calcagninus's worth and fame, expressed his own esteem for him, and suggested that Calcagninus may have written a provocative criticism to stimulate learned men to clarify, by means of discussion, the ambiguities in Cicero's text. The debate was widely known throughout Europe, and at least one edition reprinted the whole controversy because it was sought after—the editor had not been able to find it in the best European libraries, which means that the subject was familiar to scholars but not easily available at the various cultural institutions.[5]

I will start with a short summary of Cicero's argument. Then I will highlight the most interesting interpretations in the commentaries and *Disquisitiones* and will conclude by stressing what is new (and what is old) in Renaissance economic thought on this subject.

III. UTILE *AND* HONESTUM *FOR MERCHANTS AND POLITICIANS: A CICERONIAN PERSPECTIVE*

In an article dealing with the influence of *De Officiis* on medieval thought, N. E. Nelson observed that a part of Italian lay culture[6] was able to recognize that a philosophy of man's function in social life underlies the work, a philosophy which paved the way to the Renaissance's elaboration of a realistic morality. ''Where could man find a more skillful blending of private ambition and public good than in the *De Officiis*?'' (Nelson 1933, p. 155).

Public good to Cicero meant *salus populi*, which according to a famous phrase of *De legibus*, III, 8 was to be the *suprema lex*. No dissension should arise between individuals and society because the good (*utilitas*) of the whole is the good of its parts, or—as Cicero puts it in *De Officiis* III, 26: *eadem sit utilitas uniuscuiusque et universorum* (''to make the interest of each individual and of the whole body politic identical''—*sc*. ought to be the chief end of all men).

Cicero's starting point is moral: his treatment of the four parts of *honestum* in *De Officiis* has been considered the basis of the formulation of the four cardinal virtues in Christian ethics since St Ambrose (Draeseke 1876, p. 147; Muckle 1948, p. 116). His purpose, however, is not simply analytical: Cicero also wants to offer practical suggestions on the right behavior in doubtful cases, precisely when virtue (*honestum*) seems to be in conflict with expediency (*utile*).

De Officiis is composed of three books, the first dealing with *honestum*, the second with *utile*, and the third with the relation between *utile* and *honestum.* The third book

[5]Compare the *Praefatio ad Lectorem* in the Amsterdam edition of 1688 (quotations in this article are referred to this edition unless otherwise specified), where Graevius thanks Antonio Magliabechi for the gift of Magioragius's ''elegant disputations'' against Calcagninus. I have briefly hinted at the problem in Vivenza (2001, pp. 215–16).

[6]Brunetto Latini, Albertano da Brescia, Giovanni Nanni, see Nelson (1933, p. 157).

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also seems to be the most original of the three, because Cicero affirms that his source for the first two was the Stoic philosopher Panaetius, whereas in the last book he was obliged to illustrate with his own arguments the various instances in which *utile* and *honestum* are at odds,[7] since Panaetius failed to do so. Besides, Cicero criticizes Panaetius's threefold division. In *De Officiis* 1, 10 he affirms that the problem of deliberation concerns not only the choice between virtue and advantage (interest), but that frequently we must decide between two options, both useful (or honest) to a different degree, so the subdivision should be in five parts, not in three (see also, *De Officiis* II, 9).

As to the exact meaning of the two terms, I should use only the Latin to be accurate; but sometimes I translate them into English, using "virtue" or "honesty" for *honestum*, and "expediency," "advantage" or "utility" for *utile* (please forget the modern meaning of utility as a rational principle). So, *honestum* may roughly correspond to virtuous behavior, namely active life according to a set of four subdivisions of the *honestum* itself which are considered, as we have said, the predecessors of the four cardinal virtues.

The *utile* is whatever turns to the advantage of man, both as an individual and as a member of society. Arguments stressing mutual aid and collaboration are used in *De Officiis* II, 12–15. Cicero is persuaded that man's fondness for society is a spontaneous feeling without utilitarian calculations;[8] but besides this pleasure, man obtains the advantages of social life by using techniques and abilities to provide nourishment, shelter, clothing, and whatever may render human life more comfortable and agreeable, by means of the reciprocal exchange of goods and services. Cicero's words are *utilitas* and *commodum,* explicitly connected sometimes with the concepts of wealth, opulence, advantage for oneself and one's family (*De Officiis* II, 1; 9-10; 86-87), with the verb *utor* (in II, 1) pointing to the material utilization of the goods.

Cicero frankly admits that the family's wealth should be increased, provided that this is done by correct means (*De Officiis* II, 87), but he does not mention these means, because no philosopher can compete with the experience of the *optimi viri* who sit under the vault of Janus's porch[9] dealing with questions of acquiring money, employing or even using it. However, although Cicero does not go into the matter, he maintains that these problems must be known to the philosopher, being related with *utilitas*, the main argument of the second book of *De Officiis*. There is no doubt, therefore, that Cicero's *utile* is a concept which has at least something to do with economics.

[7]Apparently at odds, as Cicero maintains in many places of *De Officiis*.

[8]An Aristotelian persuasion; see Aristotle, *Politics* (1253 a 30–31); Plato's opinion was different (see *Republic* 369 B-C).

[9]Cicero really says "*ad Ianum medium*," and the expression has been differently interpreted until recent assessments (compare M. Testard's comment in the 1970–74 Belles Lettres edition of *De Officiis*, vol. II, p. 165). In many sixteenth century editions, ancient authorities (for example, Porphyry) as well as modern commentators (for example, Christophorus Landinus) are reported in order to explain this expression by Cicero. It has been thought that Cicero here alluded to usurers (*foeneratores*) who congregated in the forum for their business in some place near a temple, or statue of Janus. Erasmus points out that Landinus has misunderstood the *medium* for an allusion to the *media mercatura* (compare Cicero, *De officiis*, Parisiis 1550, p. 116 r.).

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The duties arising from the community of life, says Cicero, are more ''natural'' than those related to pure knowledge (*De Officiis* I, 153). He is also persuaded that man's aptitude to be of use to other men should be fulfilled by using all things and techniques that can protect man's life *(ad vitam hominum tuendam, De Officiis* II, 11). In addition to material goods, laws and good *mores*, along with a discipline of life for the community of citizens, are needed in order to protect human life and make it more comfortable through the exchange of necessary and useful things.

One would expect, at this point, if not a eulogy of commercial activities, at least an admission of the ''usefulness'' of merchants, which we find, in fact, at I, 151. But generally speaking, Cicero repeats the traditional contemptuous description of the merchant as a lying and mean man. The famous passage of *De Officiis* I, 150–51 offers a division of the various jobs in *sordidi* (vulgar) or *liberales* (becoming to a gentleman), and the merchants are included in the first group, unless they are very important and big dealers who, after having earned much money, pay their tribute to the prevailing agrarian ideology by buying land and retiring from commerce to the quiet life of the landowner and *rentier*. There is no mention of *utilitas* in this passage, but Cicero says that the merchant who buys to resell cannot make any profit if he does not lie (*De Officiis* I, 150). This is enough to establish his moral meanness.

Apparently, Cicero did not think that almost every merchant buys to resell,[10] even the famous corn dealer of Alexandria, the protagonist of a notorious debate attributed to Diogenes of Babylon and his pupil Antipater of Tharsus.[11] Perhaps we may assume that, as the merchant dealt with corn supplies, he may have been a representative of the *mercatura magna et copiosa* (I, 151: wholesale trade, and on a large scale), which Cicero appreciates. In any case, his hypothesis is about a good and honest merchant, unwilling to do a wrongful act.

The case is well known: a corn merchant leaving from Alexandria for Rhodes, where a famine was raging, sees other ships loaded with corn on the same route during the journey. What is his duty? Must he reveal the existence of an abundant corn supply arriving soon, or may he keep silent without being dishonest for this? Cicero reports the opposing opinions of Diogenes and Antipater on the silence of the seller—the latter maintaining that the merchant must speak, in contrast with his teacher's opinion. What Cicero wants to underline in his conclusion on the entire debate between the two philosophers is that neither of them suggests that utility may be a reason for justifying a dishonest action; rather, one of them maintains that it is profitable without being fraudulent, and the other that as it *is* fraudulent, it must be avoided.

Cicero's own opinion is that the merchant should inform the Rhodians about the other ships arriving, even if this implied a loss of profit for him. He describes

[10]I do not dwell on specialized topics about ancient economics (we cannot know the extent of certain phenomena, for instance, the number of producers who directly sold their product).

[11]The debate may have been simulated by Cicero himself, *à la manière de* Diogenes and Antipater; see M. Testard's comment (Vol. I, p. 48). In the middle of the sixteenthth century, the already quoted Paris 1550 edition of the work reported, at the beginning of the episode, the observation that Cicero here was describing a discussion *iureconsultorum more* (in the way of jurists) between two Stoics, one of whom referred to Stoic principles, the other to custom and civil law (see Cicero, *De Officius*, Parisiis 1550, p. 135v.).

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a *vir bonus*, an honest man, in real doubt about what to do. But the two philosophers, Diogenes and Antipater, both had their good reasons: the first referred to the civil law which did not oblige merchants to reveal anything other than *vitia* (defects) of the goods; the second referred to the duty to serve human society and follow the principles of nature, stating that the *utilitas* of the individual is one and the same with that of the community.

The debate continues with the difference, stressed by Diogenes, between silence and concealment, and with the observation that one is not obliged to say whatever may be useful to the other party. To Antipater's objection that there is a natural society among men, Diogenes answers that it seems to be a society without property rights, where it would therefore be impossible to sell anything.

Today we would call this problem ''asymmetry of information,'' and in modern theory the fear of losing reputation would induce merchants to a behavior going apparently against their interest. But in Cicero's outlook, and in ancient thought in general, the merchant was not believed to have any reputation to protect. Cicero's merchant had a problem of *conscience*, rather than of reputation and his possible abiding by honest behavior was seen in human, not economic, terms. In other words, his good and solidaristic behavior was seen as implying a real economic loss, not as a calculated strategy that would counterbalance the momentary loss (or lack of profit) with a good reputation intended to support his ''image'' and bring in other future profits.

Apart from this reported episode, where a special case is dealt with, it is evident from the picture outlined above that for Cicero *utilitas* and *commodum* were positive values, factors not only of material welfare but of civilization. He has no attitude of ''philosophical'' contempt whatever for this kind of human purpose. His philosophy is represented by the concept that men are born to help each other and that all things were created for man's use (*De Officiis* I, 22 *ad* usum *hominum omnia creari*, emphasis added). The best way to take advantage of this condition is to assume a non-hostile and collaborative attitude. But on the whole, the argument seems to take on a political perspective: Cicero's phrase *magnas* utilitates *adipiscuntur conspiratione hominum atque consensu (De Officiis* II, 16: ''we secure great advantages through the sympathetic co-operation of our fellow-men,'' emphasis added) may serve as a preamble to his famous concept of the *concordia ordinum*, a political concept grounded on the principle of man's sociability.

In fact, after a few lines Cicero affirms that it is a character of virtue to conciliate men's souls to our own advantages (*ad* usos *suos adiungere*, II, 17, emphasis added), or to stir up the zeal of others to support our interests (II, 20 *hominum studia ad* utilitates *nostras allicere*, emphasis added). Cicero's political purpose is evident in this effort to offer instructions on the best way to gain collaboration, admiration, and glory by acting with justice and beneficence—a dichotomy that returns after being placed, in *De Officiis* I, 20, at the base of social life. From the spontaneous collaboration of men's primitive social bond where everybody's *utilitates* are joined in order to improve the life of all, we are insensibly drawn to the ability of the politician to excite other's sentiments to advantage of himself and his *utilitas*.

The final political result of Cicero's development of the Stoic principle that nothing can be really useful if it is not honest (*De Officiis* II, 9-10) has been recognized in the transfer of this principle to the field of political choice: his position

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has been labeled as ''utilitarian'' because it is evident that whatever he deemed to be expedient to the Roman *respublica* he automatically defined as virtuous, *honestum*. Some scholars spoke of ''reason of state'' (Jossa 1963, Gabba 1979; see also Vivenza 1998, pp. 303–307), while others found it interesting to draws parallels between Cicero's *De Officiis* and Machiavelli's *Prince* (Colish 1978, 1990; Barlow 1999). From a political point of view, whatever considered common utility (*utilitas communis* = *utilitas reipublicae*) is just.

This, however, does not concern the argument of this article. What we must examine now is the commentators' opinion on some of Cicero's positions—for instance, about merchants and commerce.

IV. RENAISSANCE OBJECTIONS TO CICERO'S OUTLOOK

In his twentieth *Disquisitio* Celius Calcagninus denied, going against Cicero, that retail trade could be qualified as mean, but not so its ''important'' counterpart, *mercatura magna et copiosa* of I, 151: small or great, commerce is the same activity, and must be considered entirely virtuous or entirely vicious. It is not the dimension of trade, but its quality that matters, as Aristotle taught. Commerce in necessaries to the life of men is good, whereas commerce in luxuries, monopoly, or brokerage is contemptible (pp. 283–84).

Calcagninus's opponent Magioragius objected that Cicero's distinction had nothing to do with virtue or vice (let us remember that the merchant was qualified as a liar) but rather with what befits a gentleman. Magioragius says that in many countries the merchants are not noble; in Italy they can be so qualified only if they have great business.[12] A little later, Magioragius explains that it is possible, as happens in many places, to consider *liberales* those merchants who trade in wool, jewels, spices, and carpets, but not the dealers in flax, hemp, ropes, or bands (p. 286). Small commerce, therefore, is not dishonest by itself, but does not suit a noble (liberal) man. Vice or virtue are not in commerce itself, but in the way man undertakes it.

The second of Calcagninus's interlocutors, Grifolus, tackles the subject from an Aristotelian point of view, which differs from that of Calcagninus. According to Grifolus, Cicero's intention was to qualify both kinds of commerce, great and small, as non-liberal, but to a different degree. Starting from Aristotle's *Politics*, book 1, where the Greek philosopher says that commerce is good and ''natural'' in so far as it serves household administration (*oikonomia* in Greek, as we all know), Grifolus maintains that Cicero's apparent approval—or rather, minor disapproval—of *magna mercatura* comes from its going back to the land (pp. 288–89). The merchant, tired of trading, returns to landownership and, so to speak, to a ''natural'' activity—he abandons greed and restores himself to virtue. This happens because he goes back to the *usus rei familiaris*—namely, the economy which is connected with the family estate, the natural needs of man, and the concept of true wealth according to Aristotle:

[12]*Plurimis enim in locis Mercatores inter nobiles non habentur: in Italia quamvis suam dignitatem obtineant, non tamen habentur nobiles nisi qui magna atque ampla negotia gerunt*. As I noticed in Vivenza (2001, p. 227 n. 62), the Amsterdam 1688 edition of *De Officiis* has double pagination; the sentence just quoted is at p. 285 of the second part.

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"*qui frumento vino oleo & rebus eiusmodi abundant, divites potius dicuntur* (. . .) *quam bene nummati*" ("Owners of large provisions of corn, wine, oil and such commodities are better defined wealthy than moneyed," p. 289). By returning to land and landed property, the new *rentier* seems to repudiate his past activity and enter the "natural" economy, that of the *oikos* described in the ancient treatises on household management.

To Plato's assertion *(de leg.* 918 B) that merchants are indispensable to the city because they supply it with necessaries and sell the surplus, Grifolus objects (p. 289–90) that many jobs are indispensable to social life without being noble. In this vein, he mentions cleaners of the drainage system, porters, etc. The obvious consequence is that all *sordidi* jobs are reserved for non-liberal men—that is, in our case, to professional merchants.

All this, we may observe, reflects "classical" values and ancient social organization: trades were mainly entrusted to metics in ancient Greece, and to slaves in Rome. But even in modern Europe an aristocrat could not usually trade. The rare exceptions were obviously possible only for very important trading activities. Therefore, Cicero's approval of *magna mercatura*, which actually constitutes approval of its abandonment in favor of landed property and agricultural interests, could suit modern times: the agrarian ideology was still very much alive, and, notwithstanding the improved social status of the merchant in modern age and modern thought, it was still difficult for him to find a place in the "honorable" society if he was not rich enough to imitate the customs of the nobles (as shown by Adam Smith's sentence "merchants are commonly ambitious of becoming country gentlemen" *WN* III.iv.3).

Modern commentators on the one hand tried to separate the idea of commerce from its connection with vice or dishonesty, but on the other hand still considered trade as partially contemptible and unworthy of a noble man. It is significant, however, that in their analysis great and important trades could be appreciated and fill the social gap between nobles and commoners.

The problem was perhaps more deeply felt in modern times because the ancients did not know aristocracy.[13] They also frequently left economic activities in the hands of non-citizens, but social values are sometimes similar throughout the centuries, and Cicero's appreciation of *magna mercatura* tends to find an echo in modern minds.

The debate *between* Diogenes and Antipater, however, is perhaps more significant because it was evaluated differently in modern times: in this case, many commentators[14] do not share Cicero's opinion. For the sake of brevity, I'll only hint at the treatment of the famous debate by the two chief natural-law thinkers, Grotius and Pufendorf, whose works do not have the character of a commentary but which influenced many authors of comments. It is interesting to observe that some editions of the *De Officiis*, for instance that of Samuel Rachelius, Amsterdam 1686, explicitly connect this work and Aristotle's fifth book of *Nicomachean Ethics* (on justice) with Grotius's *De iure belli ac pacis*. At page 20 of Rachelius's *Praefatio* we read

[13]The source of privilege was citizenship, in which there were no differences of status.
[14]I must repeat that I did not see all of them.

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"*Grotius multa debet his libris, etiam ubi non ostendit*" ("Grotius owes much to these books [*sc. De Officiis*], even where he does not show it").

Regarding the problem of the Alexandrine merchant, Grotius's juridical outlook leads him to define the difference between silence and concealment and to stress the principle that one is not obliged to reveal things that are out of the question[15] (a principle which Cicero himself hinted at when he said, "*neque ego nunc te celo si tibi non dico quae natura deorum sit*" - "at this present moment I am not concealing from you, even if I am not revealing to you, the nature of the gods"). It may be against charity to keep silent, says Grotius, but it is not unjust; that is, it is not against the rights of those one is dealing with. The dichotomy justice-charity, a modern social and political argument, is at work in this kind of comment. I have already alluded (Vivenza 2001, p. 217) to Calcagninus's opinion (p. 221) that Cicero's connection of justice with beneficence derived from his persuasion that these were the only virtues devoted to public utility rather than to personal improvement. Now I want to point to Grifolus's objection (p. 224–25) that there is also a personal advantage to be drawn from the correct use of these virtues, as Cicero himself shows with his examples on how to achieve renown, consensus, and admiration by these virtues. In exercising them, one gains the esteem and support of others.[16]

Pufendorf's arguments (Pufendorf, *De iure*, V, 3, 4) won great renown, and one finds them echoed in other commentaries.[17] His first objection is along the lines of Cicero's observation that the law only obliges us to reveal the defects of the goods, and nothing else (therefore, not their quantity or availability). Secondly, there was no previous agreement between the Rhodians and the merchant obliging the latter to reveal what he knew. Thirdly, even appealing to the laws of beneficence and charity, there is an obligation, if anything, to benefit the poor, not everybody.[18] And the Rhodians were rich. Finally, there is no reason to give a benefit when, by giving it, one loses more than the other party gains. This is another kind of asymmetry, so to speak: the merchant would have lost a great deal of his profit while the single purchasers would have divided the whole sum among themselves, and each could afford to pay the requested price.

Cicero's philosophical argument has been arranged in a more practical and economic perspective, and Pufendorf's conclusion sounds realistic: provided that the merchants do not cheat us, we are ready to allow that they give us no benefit. So, the topic has shifted from the moral to the legal field; or, better, a greater precision had been obtained by reasoning on it. On the whole, modern commentators seem to have been much more skilled in discussing commercial enterprises. It was suggested that Diogenes and Antipater spoke in fact of two *different* things: the legal obligation of fair-dealing on the one hand, and the moral obligation of solidarity on the other.

[15]Grotius, *De iure*, II, xii, 9, 1-2. See n. 40 below and relating text.

[16]A. R. Dick (1980, p. 201) stresses Cicero's strategy of focusing "on the means by which a person can move his fellow men to help him to achieve his goals." He also underlined that the second virtue of the couple (*beneficentia*) should not be connected with *pecunia* in order to achieve true glory in Cicero's thought (p. 207).

[17]Duly quoted, together with Plato's eleventh book *de legibus*, in the Amsterdam 1688 edition, pp. 319–20.

[18]This is an interesting difference from Grotius, who admitted that by keeping silent the merchant offended against charity.

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(It is interesting to observe that a recent contribution by Julia Annas (1997, p. 165)[19] envisages the problem exactly in the same terms: Diogenes adopts the legal stance, Antipater the moral one. This opinion had already been expressed in the seventeenth century).

Concerning Cicero's criticism of Panaetius's threefold division in I, 10 (*utile, honestum,* and the choice between the two) the commentators, especially Calcagninus and his Italian colleagues, objected that it was contrary to Stoic principles. In the third *Disquisitio* (pp. 197-204), they observed that Panaetius, being a Stoic, could perceive no difference in degree between virtuous (or vicious) behavior. A definite choice between right and wrong was the only option available to early Stoicism; therefore Cicero had no reason to reproach Panaetius for not having allowed a choice between more or less virtuous (or wrong) behavior. This criticism was correct, on the whole, and Magioragius's objection (p. 199) that the problem of choice is not exclusively Stoic is weak, in the sense that it shifts the focus to a different question.

He deepened his reasoning on the subject, giving rise to other reflections. For instance, uncertainty of choice is more likely to occur between two similar, rather than opposite, options (p. 201). A way of justifying Cicero's criticism to Panaetius was stressed by Grifolus in particular: as the argument was about the medium duty, not the perfect duty, the Stoics themselves would have made the distinction (p. 202). But what is more interesting in the controversy is the attempt to define the *utile* in relation to virtue and to duty. However this calls for some preliminary remarks on Cicero's text.

The passage preceding *De Officiis* I, 10, where Cicero says that Panaetius should have divided the matter in five parts, rather than three, seems to point to some inaccuracies of Panaetius himself, if Cicero accurately summarizes his thought.[20] In I, 9 the Latin orator refers to Panaetius's threefold division by saying that, first, we must decide whether an action is virtuous or vicious (*turpe*),[21] and even here the dissensions begin. After that, there are debates[22] on the future results of deliberation: whether the choice may improve one's own life, whether it may help, or otherwise the wellbeing, richness, and power of the person concerned and of his family. All this, says Cicero, falls within the field of *utilitas*. The third kind of deliberation comes when honesty or virtue seems to be in contrast with what is advantageous (*utile*). In Cicero's description of Panaetius's threefold division, the first and the third elements are divided into two opposites: *honestum/turpe* and *honestum/utile*. But the second, in Cicero's interpretation, describes an inquiry into things which all pertain exclusively to the field of *utilitas*. (It is interesting to observe that in *De Officiis* II, 9, where he repeats his division of deliberations into five parts—rather than the three of Panaetius—Cicero does mention *honestas*, but instead of also mentioning *utilitas*

[19]The thorough discussion of Anna's thesis by Schofield (2006) cannot be summarized here, but is important for the whole subject, stressing as it does the question of private property, which is the real concern of Cicero rather than of the Stoics.

[20]We have no original version of Panaetius's work, as is well known.

[21]The adjective *turpe* is repeated, in an analogous context, in *De Officiis* III, 7.

[22]Cicero uses here a plural person: "they examine and consider," which seems odd, referred only to Panaetius. He may have meant "the Stoics." But this is the reason why we cannot be sure that he was simply summarizing Panaetius's work.

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he speaks directly of wealth: *commoda vitae, copias, opes, facultates*). The second choice is a choice (*deliberatio*) among useful things, and we may be justified if we add more or less useful, since there is nothing else to choose!

I am not in a position to say much more about Cicero's text: he seems to have summarized Panaetius's doctrine, but we cannot be completely sure of this. Certainly he describes three alternatives: the first a choice between virtue and vice (*turpe*), the second between different kinds of advantage (*utilitas*), and the third between virtue and interest (*utile*).

It is difficult to say if it was Panaetius's text that brought Cicero to this formulation—that is, if he derived his debate on the relation between *utile* and *honestum* from an antithesis between virtuous and vicious, perhaps going back to Panaetius. This could have made the idea that advantage could be opposed to virtue easier, contrary to the Stoics' stance. The Stoics had maintained that useful and honest are one and the same; Cicero complains that a corrupted and perverted usage—as he defines it in *De Officiis* II, 9—of this word (*utile*) has caused a separation between the two concepts, so that we usually consider honest what is not useful and vice versa.

But Marcia Colish's fine analysis has highlighted the difference between true Stoic theory and Cicero's point of view, at least when the latter refers to the utility of the Roman republic, as stated above. For the Stoics, *honestum* was the only norm by which the admissibility of *utile* may be judged, whereas Cicero's political outlook elevated *utile* to a moral end, and *honestum* was a kind of *utile*, a means to that end[23]—the other way round, so to speak (Colish 1990, pp. 100–101). For the Stoics, no dishonest behavior could have any utility; for Cicero (the State's) utility was in any case honest. Both maintain that virtue and expediency are one and the same. But what Cicero really did was to order duty and virtue in terms of *utile*—we may add, of social utility because ''even when one makes exceptions to the obligations flowing from duty, the spirit of the rule, that is, social utility, is the criterion Cicero invokes for departing from it'' (Colish 1990, p. 102). Social utility, I recall, is for Cicero *salus populi*, that is, *reipublicae*. Social and political issues were not so sharply separated in ancient thought as they are today. In any case, they were not in Cicero's thought. We cannot expect a clear distinction between the modern (''Smithian'') argument that the pursuit of the useful can sometimes be conducive to good results, and the ''Stoic'' argument that man, being a social animal, should pursue the social good directly, even if it is not useful for himself.

Whether or not the commentators on *De Officiis* grasped this position, we find some objections in Calcagnino's controversy, which seems to have developed certain lines of thought from the *utile/honestum*[24] relationship. A couple of examples are in order, to give an idea of the issues involved.

First, there is an effort to break this duality with the introduction of a third element—namely, pleasure. Cicero did not speak of it, really: his entire argument is

[23]''In book 1, he redefines the cardinal virtues in utilitarian terms. In book 2, using these newly redefined virtues, he argues that virtue is useful. And, in book 3, he turns the argument of book 2 around by arguing that vice is inexpedient'' Colish (1990, p.100).

[24]According to Irwin (2003, p. 348), the antithesis between *utile* and *honestum* would begin with Cicero himself, in *De Officiis* I, 5: ''*idque (sc. summum bonum) suis commodis, non honestate metitur*'' (''he who measures the supreme good not by a moral standard but by his own interests'').

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concentrated on the relationship between virtue and expediency. Only at the end of the work, summarizing Epicurus's philosophy which considered pleasure (*voluptas*) as *summum bonum,* does he conclude: "*Conferamus enim in pauca. Nam ut utilitatem nullam esse docuimus quae honestati esset contraria, sic omnem voluptatem dicimus honestati esse contraria*" - "Let us now recapitulate briefly. As I have shown that such expediency as is opposed to moral rectitude is no expediency, so I maintain that any and all sensual pleasure is opposed to moral rectitude" (*De Officiis* III, 118–19). This final rejection of *voluptas* is opposed by Calcagninus in the 13th (p. 237) and 19th *Disquisitio* (p. 278, on *De Officiis* III, 118–19), where he says that virtue (*honestum*) cannot be separated from advantage (*utile*) any more than it can be separated from pleasure.

But care was necessary in handling Epicurus' terminology. When Calcagninus first tackles the subject (13th *Disquisitio*), he writes that he would like to add *iucundum* to *utile* and *honestum* (p. 237). Maybe it was a scruple of symmetry (*voluptas* is a noun, the others are adjectives used as nouns), but it seems he preferred to leave the use of *voluptas*[25] to the authors whom he quoted in support of his view—namely, Aristoteles and Speusippus. And certainly his observation (p. 237)[26] that Cicero very hastily mentions that concept is true, but he also wanted to signal that in any case Cicero himself had connected, albeit only once, *utilitas*, *honestas* and *voluptas*; otherwise, there would have been no reason for him to widen the argument.

In the 19th *Disquisitio*, Calcagninus confirms his dissent from Cicero: the latter had taught that it is impossible to separate virtue (*honestas*) from expediency, but in exactly the same way it is impossible, according to Calcagninus, to separate it from pleasure.[27] This seems to be a very audacious step, but the connection of virtue with pleasure is not so strange for a philosopher:[28] the problem of connecting duty to pleasure was perhaps greater, but Calcagninus does not hesitate to do just that.[29]

In any case, Calcagninus was contradicted by Grifolus, who formulated a lengthy objection, starting from the Stoic equivalence of virtuous and useful, but also addressing Aristotle in order to analyze the possible connection with pleasure. Grifolus certainly admitted the first connection, giving it a "utilitarian" interpretation ("*nulla potest esse* bona *actio sine utilitate*,"[30] "there is no virtuous action without utility") but seems to be in doubt about the second: pleasure is not always connected with virtuous action. Therefore a good man will never do anything for the sake of pleasure, but for a virtuous utility.[31] In this "virtuous utility" we find not only the Stoic principle of the indissoluble unity of virtue and utility, but also an echo of Cicero's identical-but-different position. In Grifolus's words, it is utility which is virtuous, not *vice-versa*.

[25]Translation of the Greek *hedoné*, I think, which according to Magioragius (p. 238), in the second book *Ethicorum* Aristotle denied can be separated from the other two.

[26]To which Magioragius objects (p. 239), among other things, that Cicero had already mentioned *iucunditas* in *De Officiis.* I, 10.

[27]"*Ac longe illos falli arbitror, qui voluptatem ab honestate diremerunt: quam haec duo sint omnium maxime, animantum generi accommoda. Multoque minus mea sententia voluptas ab honestate, quam utilitas seiungi potest*" (p. 278).

[28]For an ancient philosopher at least: it is well known that for classical philosophy the final goal of a good life was happiness.

[29]"*At ego a jucundo quoque officium exquirendum puto*" (p. 237).

[30]P. 281, emphasis added.

[31]"*Vir bonus nihil quicquam agit causa voluptatis, sed honestae utilitatis potius*" (p. 281).

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The virtuous man acts for utility—a virtuous utility because he is a good man and will decide for the best. It is obvious that this kind of utility is set against pleasure, the Epicurean, rather than Aristotelian, principle that Cicero himself had rejected.

All of this may sound strange, but the whole discussion seems to be an attempt to connect the idea of profit/utility (as an advantageous and pleasurable purpose) with that of virtue. The connection of utility with pleasure was obvious, and it should not have been necessary to stress it. The connection of *virtue* with pleasure was less obvious but could be achieved, perhaps, through the Stoic identity of virtue and utility, by way of a sort of syllogism: If utility is virtuous, but it is also pleasurable, so then pleasure must be virtuous. At least, this apparently seems to have been Calcagninus's approach, to obtain the final result to maintain that profit, despite being a pleasurable thing, was also a virtuous one. Theories about the duty of man to provide for himself and his family, a utilitarian goal, already existed; and fierce discussions had been aroused—since the Middle Ages—on the dimension of these provisions, or the extent to which the "necessaries" for survival could be increased for the rich and powerful, giving rise to luxury consumption, which seemed less justifiable.

Another problem was the right definition of duty, which is too complex to be dealt with here. However, we must not forget that it is the subject of the work, and in his two first *Disquisitiones* Calcagninus discussed Cicero's use of the term. Starting from the definition of *medium officium* in *De Officiis* I, 8 ("*quod cur factum sit, ratio probabilis reddi possit*," "for the performance of which an adequate reason may be rendered"), Magioragius develops a line of reasoning from which a concept of *officium* emerges that does not admit the connection of duty with virtue (*honestum*) to be exclusive. It is possible, says Magioragius, to be a very bad man and at the same time a wonderful architect. Therefore *officium*, the task of the architect (and of other craftsmen), is independent from his virtue[32]: he can *reddere probabilem rationem* of what he does without being virtuous in a moral sense for that. This is even more so when the problem is that of choosing between different degrees of utility, since neither honesty nor virtue are involved in the choice, but nonetheless it is an *officium*.[33] The conclusion is that duty is not always connected with virtue—a conclusion that Grifolus rejects (p. 196).

It seems that the commentators wanted to inquire more deeply than Cicero did whether duty could be related with anything other than virtue—for instance with utility,[34] which Cicero himself had presented as a synonym for wealth, opulence, and power. He had no problem connecting duty with all this, but for modern thinkers it may have been a little more difficult. Stressing the duties related to such advantages may be considered a way to justify these advantages and to counter-balance the privilege they stand for. So, starting from Cicero's own words, these Humanists

[32]See p. 192. It seems however that *officium* is here understood as "job," or a duty related to the job, not as a moral duty in general.

[33]*Hic nulla est honestas, nulla virtus: & tamen est officium. Non igitur erit semper officium cum virtute conjunctum* (p. 192).

[34]The close relationship of duty with interest was an important characteristic of Scottish scholarship in the Enlightenment; see Stewart-Robinson (1983, p. 43).

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deepened the reasoning on the relationship between Cicero's main concepts: duty, virtue, and utility—not only in political life, but also in private choices.

In his 17th *Disquisitio*, Calcagninus deals with an ambiguous subject whose origin is in Cicero's treatment of the relation of *sapientia* with *prudentia* in *De Officiis* I, 153. Calcagninus confirms the classical principle, derived from Greek philosophy, as recalled by Cicero himself: *sapientia* is theoretical, *prudentia* practical wisdom; or, as Calcagninus puts it, the first is knowledge of true and false, the second of *utile* and *inutile*. In fact, Calcagninus opposed a by-then widespread vulgata, which made *sapientia* and *prudentia* a single virtue corresponding to the first cardinal virtue. This "unifying" version was adopted with resolution in the animated responses of Magioragius and Grifolus: both argued that *sapientia* and *prudentia* are the same virtue, endowed with a theoretical and a practical aspect. Magioragius, who looks for other instances in the whole of Cicero's works, insists (p. 264) that *sapientia* cannot be concerned only with divine eternal things, but also with deciding "prudent" behavior through moderation of greed and submission of appetites to reason. Otherwise, prudence would be similar to trade (*mercatura*)—namely, the search for *utile*: it would be the "virtue" of dishonest people. And in fact prudence had, in Italian Renaissance thought, an ambiguous and calculating aspect.

We are not interested in this, however. What I wish to stress is that Cicero's text fostered a very complex discussion. Grifolus, too, maintains (p. 265) that for Cicero *sapientia* and *prudentia* form a single virtue divided into parts and emphasizes that Cicero had created the same subdivision in other virtues. For instance, he had divided justice into two parts, justice proper and beneficence,[35] and fortitude into strength and forbearance. This bifurcation of virtues may have been caused by the identification *tout-court* of the four parts of *honestum* with the cardinal virtues. The commentators did find a justice connected with beneficence in I, 20, and knowledge defined as defective without action (which means that both were needed) in I, 153. But Cicero was not obliged to make *one* virtue of them. They were simply one part of *honestum*, which could include more than one virtue.

V. COMMON GOOD AND PRIVATE GOOD IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

The commentators' analyses naturally take Cicero's text as a starting point; however, we frequently find Aristotle quoted in support (or even in addition), and it is an understandable choice: we have already pointed out an example.[36] Recently, Panaetius's debt to Aristotle, notwithstanding his Stoic "profession," has been emphasized, even concerning such an important principle as *utilitatis communio,* common interest (Ferrary 1988, p. 365; Gaudemet 1951, pp. 465–72; Jossa 1964, pp. 273–74). It has been frequently observed that Stoic philosophy in its most rigid original formulation could not be applied to social life, and for this reason it has been adapted and modified. These adaptations and modifications show traces of Aristotelian positions.

[35]Calcagninus also attacked this; see Vivenza (2001, p. 21).
[36]Rachelius's edition of the *De Officiis*, see *supra*, pp. 394–95.

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We have recalled a certain ''ideological'' similarity between the ancient and modern world, over things like the appraisal of commerce, so that some principles and ''values'' could be understood and shared, at least to a certain extent. But there were also great differences. In the ancient world, Plato's main intuition that economics only concerned the ''private'' sphere (Vegetti 1982, p. 594) and lacked a public dimension diminished its value and importance from the point of view of doctrine. The task of administering it could easily be left to a slave, like other more or less degrading services.

Anyway, some connections with virtue could be found even in Cicero's text:[37] after having concluded the famous passage on jobs (*De Officiis* I, 150–51) with the usual eulogy of agriculture, Cicero states: ''*Sed ab his partibus quae sunt honestatis, quemadmodum officia ducerentur, satis expositum videtur*'' (I, 152: ''I have explained fully enough how moral duties are derived from the four divisions of moral rectitude''). Duties derive from virtue, therefore. The fact that some (if not all) of them included professional activities could be developed by modern commentators, who tried to find whatever could help them in ancient literature. For instance, Calcagninus recalled (p. 284) that the ancient Cato did not condemn trade, rather only he stressed its risks. Modern commentators were certainly more inclined than Cicero to see the merchant not only as a *trait-d'union* between nobility and the rising bourgeoisie, but also between public and private, so to speak. Economics could no longer remain a private affair in modern thought.[38]

The merchant had a new role now: He had to supply great national states, no longer small cities or even greater empires, like Rome: we cannot parallel her *annona* with that of, say, modern Paris. And even the demand for commodities was no longer the same. The character of ancient economy and society differed greatly from the modern. That the merchants were indispensable was evident since Plato at least, but they were considered an unavoidable ''evil,'' so to speak, and not many voices spoke on their behalf. But although the merchants' importance was differently evaluated in modern times, the social and political structure of the *Ancien Régime* still allowed some of Cicero's judgements to be shared. Some of the ancient prejudices still survived, but attitudes towards commerce began to be more nuanced and the merchant's job was no longer seen in a uniform way. Magioragius's explanation is significant: Certain types of trade enjoyed greater consideration than others. Now, Cicero's argument could suit this situation.

Cicero's perspective, as we have said, was mainly political, but perhaps we could better define it as non-economic, both in the private and in the public field. *Utilitas* is an important aspect of human life, but whereas from a private point of view Cicero's position is strictly philosophical or moralistic (true *utilitas* cannot go against virtue for a good man), his political point of view has a ''reason-of-state'' flavor, which may explain why his phrase about the *salus reipublicae* enjoyed so great a renown in the modern age.

The principle is really the same in both cases: *utile* and *honestum* are proclaimed to be one thing. But whereas in politics the *utilitas reipublicae* is by itself a *honestum*,

[37]We have already pointed out his advocacy of a (correct) effort to increase the family's wealth in II, 87.
[38]Obviously, I know that even in ancient literature there are some specimens of ''political economy,'' but certainly they are not sufficient to transform the character of the whole ''economic thought'' itself.

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even if it has the appearance of a crime, in the private sphere Cicero seems ready to admit that generally the opposite happens. Men are (wrongly) persuaded that their advantage is to choose their *utile*, but in reality it is *honestum*, even if disadvantageous, which is their *true* interest. The Alexandrine merchant should choose *honestum*—that is, an apparent disutility for him—but we could also find a political logic in this episode: the interest of the community must take precedence over that of the individual, so the merchant should give up his profit.

This ''monolithic'' logic was no longer acceptable in modern times. The Diogenes-Antipater controversy described by Cicero aroused many doubts in modern times, and dissensions from the Latin author's opinion were expressed and motivated. There is one valuable exception: the Venice editions of Pietro Marso and Francesco Maturanzio do not leave Cicero's version; they keep entirely to the principle of human solidarity, and although they pose the question of ethics and the law they do it only in the terms in which Cicero himself had alluded to the problem with his hint at *ius civilis*.[39] There is no possible comparison with the pugnacious discussion of Pufendorf and others, and Grotius's subtle distinctions.[40]

But more than a century had elapsed between Marsus's commentaries[41] and the natural law treatises which influenced the commentaries on *De Officiis* in the seventeenth century. Many of the sixteenth century commentaries still emphasize the moral aspect of the question: there is a problem of solidarity, the merchant must silence the voice of interest and listen to that of common humanity. Even the concept of *utilitas* was defined in a very ''moral'' way: ''*utilitatem non eam hic accipi, quam vulgo pecuniario lucro metitur, et commoditate undecumque parta: sed eam, quae cum honesto sit coniuncta, et ad vitae societatem pertineat*'' (''utility must not be here understood, as commonly is, what is measured by monetary profit, or by commodities produced everywhere; but utility connected with virtue, and pertaining to the community of life'' Venice 1563, p. 87).[42] But one century later the word-by-word commentary has been in many cases substituted by a very different exegesis. The distinction between ethics and law became inescapable, and the argument of expediency was by now almost entirely on moral grounds.

In politics, the realistic aspect of Cicero's political thought could still persist; but on the private field things were different. Debates, discussions, ''disquisitions'' about virtue, duty, pleasure and utility very much expanded Cicero's arguments. Jobs were examined under the aspect of their suitability, besides their usefulness or necessity. The paradoxical Stoic principle of the equality of wrong actions was opposed (it was tantamount to saying that to steal a cent was the same as subtracting a fortune). Precise calculations were made about by how much the Alexandrine merchant's loss would have overcome the advantage of the Rhodians had he decided to behave like

[39]The comment says simply that Diogenes follows the civil law, Antipater the law of nature (p. 135).
[40]What Grotius had defined ''out of the question,'' Maturantius takes to the letter: if I can keep silent on most useful things (*sc*. the nature of gods!), I certainly can do the same for such less useful informations as the price of corn (p. 135).
[41]The first of them were printed at the end of fifteenth century; see Kraye (1983, p. 97).
[42]The editions of this group quote almost only classical authors and the Roman jurists in the comment, while in the North-European works we find, besides the classics, also the Bible, the Scriptures, and other religious sources.

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a benefactor instead of a merchant, as Cicero wrongfully advised, adopting a moral stance on an economic and juridical issue.

Terence Irwin has shown in a recent article how Cicero's embryonic distinction between *utile* and *honestum* has led in modern times to Pufendorf's view that "actions directed to our natural good rest simply on considerations of advantage (*commodum*, *utile*) that lack the distinctive rational status of moral principles" (Irwin 2003, p. 356). He illustrates the evolution from Cicero's contrast of rightness with concern for one's own advantage[43] to St Thomas persuasion that "*honestum* action is essentially unselfish," to Suarez's assertion that moral good is neither the pleasant nor the useful ("unselfish character of rightness, in contrast to the expedient"), to Grotius' conciliation of right and advantageous (Irwin 2003, pp. 350–52; the sentence quoted is at p. 350).

The great debate was about what Cicero had expressed, only to deny it: the common belief that self-interest and virtue are opposed. Certainly this contrast was very long-lived, and one of the main efforts of economic thought has been to discover arguments to demonstrate that it is not true, and that most of self-interested behavior has a positive return for others, in one way or another, so that it is not right to consider them vicious when they have such helpful results for the "common good." Great discussion was devoted to these problems, but certainly we may suppose that the Diogenes-Antipater controversy was easier to deal with than the slippery ground of duties, virtues, pleasure, and interest. In this paper instances have been given of both approaches: comment on concrete examples, and on the general argument of morals—but the latter, in particular, deserves a deeper examination.

Reflections and reasoning upon these subjects spread widely all over Europe: all learned men of the past considered themselves citizens of the same "republic" of scholars. I have alluded elsewhere to the familiar sound of Adam Smith's phrase about Plato's "divine maxim" (Vivenza 2001, p. 221), but a more pervasive influence of Cicero's work on Smith's thought has been proposed. In a general survey of Cicero's influence on modern thought, Paul McKendrick wrote that Adam Smith derived from the Latin orator the distinction between justice and expediency, recalled by Smith's pupil John Millar as the main feature of the last part of his teacher's course of lectures, and the basis of the subject of *The Wealth of Nations* (D. Stewart, *Account*, I, 20; see also MacKendrick 1989, p. 281). I do not deal here with the question of whether Smith's distinction really derived from Cicero's elaborate analysis of the relationship between *utile* and *honestum* in the third book of *De Officiis*, where he describes the possible conflict between expediency and uprightness in human choices, as MacKendrick seems to believe with certainty. I only wish to point towards certain coincidences between a moral philosopher who happened to become the father of economic science and the Latin author whom he thoroughly studied like all students in his time. And we must not forget that the relationship virtue-duty and virtue-interest was familiar to the Scottish Enlightenment (Stewart-Robinson 1983).

In general, a wider survey on the subject would be desirable, although very difficult "owing to the abundance, not to the scantiness of materials" (Gawlick 1963, p. 657). I am still working on a certain difference between the commentaries of

[43]In *De Officiis* I, 5; see *supra*, n. 24.

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central Europe and the Italian ones, which consist almost exclusively (with few exceptions) of the Venetian printings, which enjoyed great diffusion all over Europe. The new editions of the commentaries frequently reproduced the older comments, with selections, additions, and modifications, so it becomes difficult to check everything. Moreover, in this paper I have focused my attention on a limited number of documents concerning two centuries differing greatly from one another; the seventeenth-century commentators had witnessed, much more than their sixteenth-century colleagues,[44] not only the evolution of Humanism, but also the spread of the Reformation. This may be recognizable in the comments—for instance, with a more frequent use of the Holy Bible, the Fathers of the Church, and other sources among the ''authorities'' quoted in support of (or in opposition to) Cicero's words.

Finally, the Calcagninus-Magioragius-Grifolus controversy developed discussions about the virtue/advantage relationship and its connection with duty, the main argument of the book. This is not a surprise, and it may help us to understand the work's success in the field of education (Freedman 1986, p. 240).

There is an advantage in the practice of virtue: a good renown which induces people to side with the honest man and collaborate with him. But this is still a political, rather than economic, calculus—certainly it was such in ancient thought. Perhaps this began to change just in the modern era when the commentators were writing about the *De officiis*. In ancient politics, the non-virtuous ruler was a tyrant who, sooner or later, would be rightly ousted. Therefore it was his interest, if he wanted to have a long life and a natural death, to be virtuous and honest beyond the moral appreciation of this behavior. There was a supplement of advantage, so to speak, for the politician willing to behave honestly. But the merchant? Could he be really virtuous? He was not qualified for this in the scale of values which shaped the ancient way of thinking: politics was a noble art, but not so commerce. The dishonest politician is likely to be hated, pointed out to everybody's contempt, whereas the dishonest merchant simply does his job. He is expected to lie, as Cicero states, because otherwise he will have no profit. If he is successful and rich (a ''great'' merchant), he will be respected, especially if he imitates the noble's customs by buying land and retiring from trade. But if he is a small retailer, a disparaging attitude will be cast on him forever.

Perhaps this was the point of view of *De Officiis* most deeply appreciated in modern times, when great merchants were quickly becoming connected with political power, whereas for small traders time was not yet ripe for social honorableness.

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[44]Amerbachius, Betuleius, Melanchton, Marso, Maturanzio, and Lambinus belong to the sixteenth century; Graevius, Fabricius, Grotius, Pufendorf to the seventeenth (the two latter, together with Melanchton, cannot be considered commentators, obviously, but I hope that their relevance on my subject in general may be understood, despite the sketchy character of this article).

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