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SOMMARIO

CAMPANELLA AND THE ARTS OF WRITING

<i>Tommaso Campanella and the arts of writing. Introduction</i> , by Guido Giglioni	11
PETER MACK, <i>Campanella's Rhetoric</i>	15
GUIDO GIGLIONI, <i>The metaphysical implications of Campanella's notion of fiction</i>	31
SHERRY ROUSH, 'To be or not to be?': <i>On self and being in Tommaso Campanella's Scelta di alcune poesie filosofiche</i>	43
JEAN-PAUL DE LUCCA, <i>The art of history writing as the foundation of the sciences: Campanella's Historiographia</i>	55
GERMANA ERNST, <i>Immagini e figure del pensiero filosofico di Campanella</i>	71

STUDI

FRANC DUCROS, <i>Tommaso Campanella poète</i>	89
AMOS EDELHEIT, <i>A Humanist Contribution to the Intellect/Will Debate in the Fifteenth-Century Florence: Alamanno Donati's De intellectus voluntatisque excellentia (1482-1487)</i>	103
RITA RAMBERTI, <i>Aristotele flagello dei philosophastri nel De providentia Dei di Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola</i>	123

TESTI E DOCUMENTI

GIACOMO ZABARELLA, <i>Liber de inventione aeterni motoris (De rebus naturalibus liber v)</i> , edición de José Manuel García Valverde	141
CHIARA PETROLINI, «Un salvacondotto e un incendio». <i>La morte di Fulgenzio Manfredi in una relazione del 1610</i>	161
<i>Giordano Bruno's Argument of the Heroic Frenzies</i> , translated by Ingrid D. Rowland	187

HIC LABOR

NOTE

MANUEL BERTOLINI, «Se tu sei stato a udire canzoni vane, o soni». <i>Note sull'etica musicale nella prima età moderna</i>	211
GIORGIO CARAVALE, <i>Profezia e censura nell'Italia di fine Cinquecento. La Monarchia di Christo di G. A. Pantera e l'Inquisizione</i>	221
PAOLO CARTA, <i>Il «nostro allievo» Francesco Pucci. Nuove ricerche e testimonianze</i>	233

MARTIN FRANK, GIANLUCA MONTINARO, <i>Ludovico Agostini. Lettere inedite</i>	243
CLAUDIO MORESCHINI, <i>Precisazioni sull'edizione più recente della Vita Senecae di Giannozzo Manetti</i>	253
ALESSIO PANICHI, « <i>Pythia philippisabat</i> ». <i>Campanella lettore di Cicero- ne, De divinatione, II, 57, 117-118</i>	257
FRANCESCO PAOLO RAIMONDI, <i>Andrzej Nowicki lettore di Vanini</i>	267
SALVATORE STATELLO, <i>Cataldo Siculo Parisio. Un umanista alla corte portoghese del Cinquecento</i>	279

RECENSIONI

AGOSTINO NIFO, <i>La filosofia nella corte</i> , a cura di Ennio De Bellis (Riccardo Pozzo)	289
AGOSTINO NIFO, <i>De intellectu</i> , ed. by Leen Spruit (Riccardo Pozzo)	290
TOMMASO CAMPANELLA, <i>Selected Philosophical Poems</i> , edited, translated and annotated by Sherry Roush, Chicago, 2011; <i>Selected Philosophical Poems</i> , edited, translated and annotated by Sherry Roush, Pisa-Roma, 2011 (Maria Pia Ellero)	292
<i>La centralità del dubbio. Un progetto di Antonio Rotondò</i> , a cura di Camilla Hermanin e Luisa Simonutti (Vincenzo Lavenia)	295
<i>Materia. XIII Colloquio internazionale del Lessico Internazionale Europeo</i> , a cura di Delfina Giovannozzi e Marco Veneziani (Fosca Mariani Zini)	299
GIOSTRA	303

CRONACHE

<i>Sud e Magia. La tradizione magico-astrologica nel Rinascimento meridionale</i> . Specchia, 25 settembre 2011 (Donato Verardi)	327
<i>Girolamo Ruscelli: dall'accademia alla corte alla tipografia</i> . Viterbo, 6-8 ottobre 2011 (Adele Bitti)	329
<i>Ethical Perspectives on Animals 1400-1650</i> . Monaco, 6-7 ottobre 2011 (Cecilia Muratori)	333
<i>Utopia, Consensus and Free Will</i> . Tours, Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, 26-27 January 2012 (Helvio Moraes)	337

TOMMASO CAMPANELLA AND THE ARTS OF WRITING

INTRODUCTION

CAMPANELLA belongs to that category of philosophers who are thoroughly convinced that reality is transparent to reason. He envisaged his philosophical oeuvre as divided into the knowledge of reality (*philosophia realis*) and the knowledge of those arts that both facilitate and extend our knowledge of reality (*philosophia rationalis*); a division which confirms the ontological correspondence between reality and reason. With their long vicissitudinous course, the parallel stories that led to the publication of the works included in the domain of *philosophia realis* and those in the domain of *philosophia rationalis* represent a material counterpart to Campanella's formidable intellectual career, a striking example of that uncanny mirroring of things, ideas and words which is the hallmark of his philosophy as a whole. The *Philosophia realis* (first published in 1623, and then in 1637 with important changes and additions), in four parts («on nature, human mores, politics and household management»), represented the coalescing together of a number of earlier projects, at various stages of completion, both in the vernacular and in Latin (*De rerum universitate, Physiologia, Epilogo magno*). The *Philosophia rationalis*, in five parts (*Grammatica, Logica, Rhetorica, Poetica* and *Historiographia*), emerged from original works written at the end of the sixteenth century on poetics, logic and rhetoric, and reworked around 1612-1613, mainly for teaching purposes. *Philosophia rationalis*, finished and approved by the Church authorities in 1628, was printed in Paris in 1638, by the publishers Toussaint and Jean Dubray.¹

At a certain point in Campanella's intellectual career, the *Philosophia rationalis* became invested with the role of being the opening salvo in a planned series of ten volumes constituting his *Opera omnia*. The philosophical scope and the foundational role assigned to the disciplines of 'rational philosophy' are clearly argued in the dedicatory letter to the brothers François and Charles de Noailles, dated 15 March 1635. Here Campanella presents the arts of speaking and writing as recovered, restored and reformed (*instauratae, restitutae, reformatae*) by him so that they can perform their duty as the very instruments of reason:

¹ See FIRPO, *Bibliografia*, pp. 73-97 (for the vicissitudes relating to *Philosophia realis*) and pp. 116-119 (on *Philosophia rationalis*). See also *Philosophia rationalis*, in *Scritti lett.*, pp. 1301-1305, and FIRPO, *Ricerche*, pp. 54-67.

I dedicate to your name the first tome of all the sciences which, following the will of God, I have reformed (*reformatae per me*) when I was in prison. This, and Augustine is my witness, is the rational philosophy, the light of divine reason. In this volume, grammar is not to be understood in the ordinary sense, but as a philosophical discipline, containing the seeds of sciences, the languages of the nations and the manner of constructing grammatical relations according to nature and the art. This grammar, freed from the hands of frivolous sophists, I dedicate to you, deliverer and excellent orator. It is accompanied by logic, which is not the maimed and empty one attacked by Tertullian and Epiphanius, but one I renewed (*instaurata*) so as to direct the cognitive faculty. To this I have added rhetoric and poetics, which I found all covered with makeup in a brothel, and I brought them back to the temple of the chaste Muses. Finally, you will find historiography next to them, once defamed by flatterers, haters and chatterboxes, now restored (*restituta*) to its purity.¹

The one-day conference on *Campanella and the Arts of Writing*, held last year at the Warburg Institute (3 June 2011), concentrated precisely on the ‘great instauration’ of the *scienze parlatrici* by Campanella. *Reformatio*, *instauratio* and *restitutio* are key terms, which, not by accident, recur in the programmatic excerpt that I have just quoted. All the papers presented at the conference, which are being published here, highlighted the philosophical import of Campanella’s own original *trivium* and his innovative views on rhetoric, poetics and historiography, while emphasising the speculative density of his actual writing, both in poetry and prose.

Campanella’s keen interest in reality, in all its aspects and forms, can certainly be seen as the lasting legacy of Bernardino Telesio’s naturalism. The same passion for reality is also apparent in his take on history, rhetoric and poetry. However, Campanella’s notion of reality – *ens reale*, to use the philosophical technical expression – is inherently dynamic and diverse. Since being is constantly in the act of self-production (‘essentiating’ or ‘specifying’ itself, Campanella says, thus updating Aquinas’ view on being according to the results of post-Suarezian metaphysics), all aspects of reality are pervaded by power, knowledge and will. Every thing in nature has the power to be because it knows that it exists and it desires to exist. On an ontological level, the power to know and to love is the same as the power to be, within a circle of never-ending self-activity and self-preservation.² At the level of particular things and individuals, though, the power to know and to love

¹ Dedicatory letter to François and Charles de Noailles, in *Phil. rat.*, pp. 5nn-6nn (Campanella’s works can now be consulted in electronic format in *Archivio Tommaso Campanella*, Istituto per il Lessico Intellettuale Europeo e la Storia delle Idee (ILIESI): <http://www.iliesi.cnr.it/Campanella/index.html>). See also *Lettere 2010*, pp. 384, 620. On Campanella’s decision to place the *Philosophia rationalis* as the first volume in the long-planned project of his *Opera omnia*, see T. CAMPANELLA, *De reformatione scientiarum index*, Venice, Andrea Baba, 1633.

² *Theologia* (II, 1, 5), p. 44: «intelligere et amare abditum idem est quod esse».

results in transformations of their own being that are more or less radical depending on the specific arrangement of the universal attributes of being (its “primalities”), from utter self-destruction (death or suicide) to states of either self-improvement or self-effacement. For Campanella, every thing in nature perceives, and to perceive is to become something different from what the thing was before the very act of perception. In the case of aesthetic experience, the momentary and bearable loss of identity that defines any act of perception becomes a form of pleasant alienation, which fosters a transformation for the better. For this very reason, true art is intrinsically ethical and political.

GUIDO GIGLIONI