

MASSIMILIANO TRAVERSINO DI CRISTO (ED.), *GIORDANO BRUNO: LAW, PHILOSOPHY, AND THEOLOGY IN THE EARLY MODERN ERA*, CLASSIQUES GARNIER, PARIS 2021 (WORKS FROM THE CENTRE FOR FURTHER STUDY OF THE RENAISSANCE, 7), 478 PP., ISBN: 9782406104469.

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As stated by the editor Massimiliano Traversino Di Cristo in his *Foreword*, the volume *Giordano Bruno: Law, Philosophy, and Theology in the Early Modern Era* gathers contributions resulting from different installments of the *Festival bruniano*, namely the editions of Geneva 2015 and Tours-Wittenberg 2018. This heterogeneous collection addresses a vast range of issues concerning Bruno's philosophy and expresses a plurality of views, while also following some fundamental outlines. The volume consists of four sections (*Law, Theology, and Politics in Bruno's Philosophy and his Time; Giordano Bruno's Philosophical Reform. His Infinite and the Notion of Vicissitude; Ethics, Law, and Philosophical Discourse on Soul and Immortality; Religious Warfare, European State-Building, and Literary Polemics*) and its chapters are written in English, French, and German. Scholars with different backgrounds and theoretical approaches are brought together, thus offering a variety of insights and research perspectives. The fact that some contributors have authored more than one chapter is balanced out by the variety of topics they cover.

A common thread to various chapters in the volume is the concept of law, which Bruno illustrates in his *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* as divided into human, natural, eternal, and divine. Bruno's conception of law is the subject of Matthias Kaufmann's essay. The author considers the paragraphs devoted to law in Bruno's *Spaccio* to be the actual core of his moral reform. While highlighting the influence of both Dominican education and Machiavelli's views, Kaufmann argues that Bruno introduces some modifications to Aquinas' classification of law since he attributes to eternal law, not divine law, the ability to punish or reward. Thus, Bruno displays a notion of justice that takes place entirely within the realm of nature, with no need for any divine intervention. Kaufmann highlights that for Bruno, human beings have a fundamental awareness of right and wrong, which leads to an expectance of punishment, hence a moral conscience. Nonetheless, in Bruno's perspective, human thoughts are relevant only as long as they translate

into deeds and build strong social bonds, thus fostering peaceful social coexistence.

Raffaele Carbone addresses Bruno's conception of human law by comparing it to that of Montaigne. After showing that the two authors examine and discuss previous definitions of natural and human laws, Carbone observes that Bruno tends to conceive of law as a means to seek social harmony. In Bruno's perspective, good human laws do not contradict natural laws. Albeit stating that natural laws exist and should be restored in social life, Montaigne highlights the arbitrariness of human laws and declares that their foundations are somewhat obscure.

Jean-Paul De Lucca investigates Bruno's and Campanella's views on law and religion by taking into account Bruno's *Spaccio* and Campanella's *Ateismo trionfato*. He points out that Bruno considers human religions as social constructs, whereas Campanella thinks religion is a natural phenomenon. Although Campanella did not mention Bruno directly, the latter seems to be an ideal target for the critiques expressed in *L'ateismo trionfato*. Nonetheless, some similarities between Bruno's and Campanella's perspectives exist. For instance, both authors share the idea that Truth and Good are one and the same and stress the importance of prudence. De Lucca argues that the shared aim to restore religion leads both to criticize the Reformation and condemn atheism.

In her first essay (section 1), Angelika Bönker-Vallon focuses on Bruno's conception of divine providence, and from this angle she addresses his conception of law. To this end, she analyzes the well-known passage of the *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* in which Bruno states that the gods take care of « minuzzarie », i.e., everyday events and details. Bönker-Vallon argues that Bruno's conception of providence revolves around the idea that the divinity, whose infinite *potentia* is mirrored by the infinity of the universe, introduces a kind of cosmic peace among things, whose existences are somehow connected and in tune. Thus, even the smallest changes happen in order to maintain an overall balance. By referring to Bruno's *De minimo*, Bönker-Vallon suggests that the notion of universal providence is developed through mathematical models, which highlight the connection between contrary elements and the divine unity. On a moral and political level, such a conception of providence implies the need to build concord through laws and customs. This is the reason why Bruno's religion is an invitation to accept differences and constitutes a universal humanism. Overall, the contributions that address the topic of religion and human law agree in representing Bruno's moral thought as tolerant and inclusive, focused on tangible social interactions rather than orthodoxy.

The chapters devoted to cosmology and those who address the notion of *vicissitudine* - i.e., the eternal transformation of all natural things - touch upon Bruno's conception of natural law. As regards Bruno's cosmology, Miguel Ángel Granada examines Bruno's notion of space and its relationship with God. In

Bruno's perspective, the notion of infinite space is necessary since both experience and logic exclude the possibility of its end. Granada argues that Bruno comes to identify space with a notion of matter embracing bodily and incorporeal things. Ultimately, such kind of matter appears no different from the divine principle that forms reality from within. This interpretation is carried out through references to the philosophical dialogues published in London and by focusing on the later work *Lampas triginta statuarum*.

In his first essay (section 2), Paul Richard Blum addresses the concept of infinity in both Bruno's and Cusanus' philosophical perspectives. Although it is known that Bruno drew inspiration from Cusanus' views, their conceptions of infinity significantly differ since they have dissimilar theoretical meanings. Through an analysis of some geometrical examples taken from Cusanus and quoted by Bruno in his *De la causa*, Blum points out the main differences between these two authors. He argues that Cusanus' philosophy had a solid theological foundation and attempted to make God as understandable to the human mind as possible. Instead, Bruno focused on the infinity of the universe: his notion of infinity allowed him to give a solid and coherent philosophical explanation of an ever-changing multitude of finite beings.

In other essays, the concept of *vicissitudine* is tackled through references to Bruno's poetic and theatrical works. Ingrid D. Rowland's chapter focuses on *Degli eroici furori*. While exploring passages related to vicissitude, Rowland points out possible literary and pictorial influences. Similarities and differences between Bruno's wheel of metamorphosis and the wheel of vicissitude described in Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* – whose engraving was attributed to Albrecht Dürer – are discussed. Rowland also points out the influence of Dante and compares Bruno's conception of time to that of Titian as portrayed in the painting *Time Governed by Prudence*.

Vicissitudine also constitutes the subject of the first chapter by Sergius Koderá. The author focuses on Bruno's *Candelaio* and argues that this work is not just a reenactment of Bruno's philosophy but contains original theoretical developments as well. Koderá argues that the features and instruments of Renaissance directly inspired Bruno's conception of change and transformation. In addition to analyzing passages where vicissitude is addressed, Koderá interprets some *coups de théâtre* as visual representations of how shifting human lives are, and how plastic they make individual identities and social orders.

In his second essay (section 4), Koderá analyzes *Candelaio*, by focusing on its settings. After pointing out that *Candelaio*'s descriptions of the locations were much more accurate than those of other Renaissance theatrical works, Koderá argues that Bruno wanted his readers to experience the metropolitan space of Early modern Naples in all its complexity. Koderá then suggests that Bruno's

personal experiences in Naples might have inspired his philosophical conception of space and place, which he conceives as productive and ever-changing realities.

Candelaio is also addressed by Elisabetta Tarantino, who highlights some similarities between Bruno's comedy, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, and Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*. After noting that the two English comedies carry out significant critiques against the puritans, Tarantino suggests that polemic references to the Reformation in *Candelaio* might be one of the reasons why English writers took an interest in it. As she retraces the plot of Bruno's comedy, Tarantino highlights possible references to French Huguenots and the St. Bartholomew Massacre.

Two chapters provide original insights on Bruno's conceptions of psychology, namely of both universal and human soul. Dilwyn Knox focuses on *De lumine seu spiritu universorum*, a paragraph of *Lampas triginta statuarum* where Bruno tries to describe how the principle of all things produces the multiplicity of the universe. By referring to *Lampas* as well as to the documents of Bruno's trial, Knox argues that Bruno is concerned with the status of individual souls and appears to think that they are not just parts of the World Soul. Knox suggests that the comparison between the World Soul and a broken mirror (whose fragments have independent reflections while also being linked and part of the same whole) may come from patristic literature on the Eucharist.

In his second essay (section 3), Paul Richard Blum provides an interesting interpretation of Bruno's *Cabala del cavallo pegaseo*. He suggests that this satirical work should be read as a study on human psychology that questions existing theories (e.g., Averroes' and Ficino's) by showing their limits. As a result, Bruno appears to refute the idea that the soul is shaped solely by the body while also rejecting the opposite theory, namely that the soul has absolute preeminence over the body. Moreover, human beings are represented as close to animals, but they also maintain some kind of superiority.

Angelika Bönker-Vallon furtherly addresses the human status within the scale of being in her third essay (section 3), which examines the role of the story of Adam and Eve in 16th century anthropologies. After showing how the story was employed in debates over native Americans and illustrating its role in Protestant self-apologetic discourses, Bönker-Vallon focuses on authors who, like Paracelsus and Montaigne, questioned the role of Adam as well as the superiority of humans over animals. Although she casts some doubt on the fact that some passages of *De monade* and *De immenso* address the existence of pre-adamites, Bönker-Vallon argues that Bruno plays a significant role in this process: his conception of a universal life contributes to suppressing any possible hierarchy between humans and other natural beings.

Angelika Bönker-Vallon also offers an interesting perspective on Bruno's theory of communication as she approaches his philosophical thought from the

point of view of the sociology of knowledge. In her second chapter (section 2), Bönker-Vallon explores Bruno's views on building a convincing theory, one that, in addition to having a solid theoretical foundation, is persuasive and can lead people to change their minds. Bönker-Vallon analyzes Bruno's cosmology as presented in *Cena de le ceneri* and *De immenso*, to suggest that a good theory results from both careful consideration and strong logic. Moreover, an innovative truth becomes convincing when presented as connected to past theories, a correct combination of elements that have already surfaced in the past.

Numerous essays in the volume draw comparisons between Bruno's views and those of other authors. Thomas Leinkauf's chapter addresses a source and a target of Bruno's criticism. He observes that Bruno's and Luther's views on freedom and human action differ significantly since one of them only deems relevant exterior deeds, whereas the other values inner life above all things. This crucial difference leads the two authors to give religion different meanings: Luther's idea of religious zeal appears dangerous to Bruno, who sees religion as a set of social tools that should be employed to build stronger communities. Although both aim to improve social life, the focus of their perspective is different, namely on God and on nature.

Bruno himself was a source for other authors. By considering *Cena de le ceneri* and *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi*, Hilary Gatti suggests that Galileo knew Bruno's work and kept it in mind while writing his own. Gatti argues that Galilei first became acquainted with Bruno's theses during the years spent in Padua as a guest in the house of the polymath Gian Vincenzo Pinelli. Although it cannot be established with certainty how Galileo came across *Cena de le ceneri*, it is likely that Pinelli's entourage, which included learned men from all Europe, played a crucial role to this end. On top of offering a table of textual references, Gatti suggests that the unidentified thinker mentioned in Day 3 of Galileo's *Dialogo* and criticized for depicting a new cosmology without coherently developing it could, in fact, be Bruno himself.

Other chapters address authors contemporary to Bruno, whose thought showed some similarities to his. Among these, Elizabeth Blum's essay juxtaposes Giordano Bruno's and Tommaso Campanella's philosophical perspectives on the individual and universal soul, and remarks that both philosophers developed a conception of the universe that revolves around magic. Blum argues that, although they reject the Aristotelian definition of the soul as the form of the body, both Bruno and Campanella stress the materiality of the soul while also trying to safeguard its immortality. However, they have different theoretical goals: Bruno highlights the relevance of the body in shaping discursive and intellectual abilities. On the contrary, Campanella adopts a Christian perspective and declares that the human mind is individual and immortal, despite stressing the materiality of the soul in his first works.

Other chapters are not devoted to Bruno's philosophy but rather inquire into authors and works that Bruno probably knew or exhibit some similarities to his theories. Albeit not addressing Bruno's texts directly, these essays help paint a bigger picture and could lead the readers to make new, fruitful connections between Bruno's works and those of other relevant thinkers.

In his first essay (section 1), Alberto Bondolfi focuses on an early writing by Francisco de Vitoria, *De potestate civili*. Bondolfi thus shows that in the 1520s and 1530s, Vitoria expresses views that would be later developed in his most known works. Vitoria displays a conception of power different from the traditional *appetitus societatis*, and instead based on human conscious choice to build solid political orders. Bondolfi suggests that Vitoria's views are influenced by his critiques of the *comuneros'* protests against the Spanish monarchy. Instead of recognizing the power of the Papacy, Vitoria believes the monarchy to be the best form of governance and the highest expression of a divine design.

In his second essay (section 4), Bondolfi analyzes different views on the right of resistance within the *Confederatio Helvetica*. Zwingli admits that resistance is allowed against tyranny, whereas Calvin's positions evolve according to historical circumstances. Initially aiming to persuade the French monarchy that Calvinists could be good subjects, Calvin later became more radical as he wished to consolidate the independence of his church. Beza and John Knox – although in different ways and contexts – both recognize resistance as a right of the subjects whenever their sovereign becomes a tyrant, i.e., breaks his contract with them by not performing his political duties.

Alain Wijffels focuses on Alberico Gentili. After describing Gentili's biography, Wijffels highlights the influence of *mos italicus* on Gentili's views – an interest that translates into the idea that legal experts are also political counselors that can prevent decision-makers from making mistakes. Wijffels then focuses on the problematic relationship between law, politics, and religion in Gentili's works. He observes that the priority of the legal and social point of view over the theological one becomes clear in Gentili's remarks about the possibility of stipulating agreements with people of other creeds.

Maria Stefania Montecalvo focuses on Celio Secondo Curione, and explores its activity as editor of classical texts as related to his engagement in the Reform. The edition of Cicero's *Philippics* and its prefatory writings are especially examined. Montecalvo points out that Curione aimed to convey a message of religious tolerance and defense of freedom, which he conceived as a peaceful political option guaranteed by laws, especially by the monarchic (but not tyrannic) government. Montecalvo observes that Curione's activity as a classicist reveals his attempts to create political theories that foster good political decisions in the present. Curione shared these views with his pupils in Basel, and the reading of the classics was a relevant part of their moral and political education.

Raffaele Ruggiero examines François Baudouin's *De Institutione historiae universae et eius cum Iurisprudencia coniunctione* (1561). While highlighting the existing connections between Baudouin's writings and the legal, historical, and prominent political thinkers of his time (such as Cujas and Erasmus), Ruggiero points out that historical accuracy and a strong moral drive inspire Baudouin's conception of law. Baudouin's dissertation on the jurisprudence of Quintus Mucius Scevola (1558), where the importance of *aequitas* is especially stressed, constitutes an excellent example of his aim to achieve justice through erudition.

Overall, this collection of essays that Bruno's philosophy still attracts scholarly interest and curiosity, and it encourages further studies as well as new interpretations.