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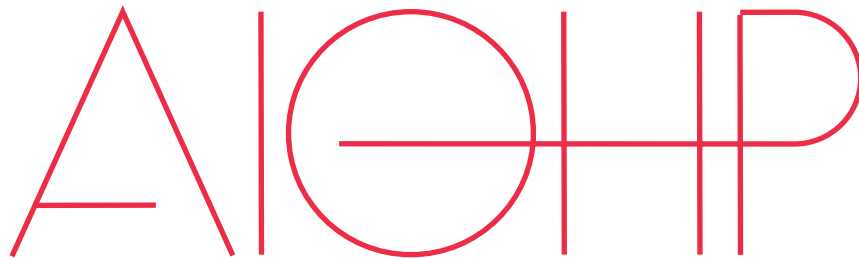
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PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS

JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF GREEK AND LATIN PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS

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EDITORIAL

**Studies in Honour
of Paul Richard
Blum on the
Occasion of his
70th Birthday**



— Two international issues of the journal *Aither* in the year 2020 are of a specific character. Both of these issues only contain articles dealing with Renaissance philosophy, i.e. historically the latest period that the journal *Aither* is oriented to. The reason is simple. All studies are dedicated to Paul Richard Blum, a renowned Renaissance scholar who celebrated his 70th birthday in May 2020. Both issues as a whole, therefore, are in fact a commemorative publication in honour of P. R. Blum. The articles were written by prof. Blum's friends, colleagues, and former students with the aim to thank him for his friendship and with the hope to continue to enjoy his company and new scholarly contributions in the future.

Volume I (*Aither* intr. issue 7) consists of seven articles. It opens with the

general study of Thomas Leinkauf "Nachsicht-Fernsicht. Naturerfahrung in der Frühen Neuzeit mit Blick auf die Malerei" on the issue of perspective from the late Middle Ages to Early modern philosophy. Don Duclow in his study "Charles de Bovelles on God, Nihil and Negative Theology" touches both the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite and the philosophy of Nicolas of Cusa. Jacomien Prins in the article "Heavenly Journeys: Marsilio Ficino and Girolamo Cardano on *Scipio's Dream*" analyses the differences between these two Renaissance thinkers from the given point of view. Jan Makovský examines Cardano's mathematics and in his study "The Renaissance of Numbers: on Continuity, Nature of Complex numbers and the Symbolic Turn" points out the notion of the

imaginary quantity in the period before Gauss. The last three studies of the first volume are dedicated to the philosophy of Giordano Bruno. Sergius Kodera's article "The Mastermind of the Fool. Self-Representation and the Shadowy Worlds of Truth in Giordano Bruno's *Candelaio* (1582)" deals with Bruno's only comedy. Angelika Bönker-Vallon interprets Bruno's understanding of the book *Ecclesiastes* in the study "Quid est quod est? Der Wahlspruch Giordano Brunos im Licht der Rezeption des alttestamentlichen Buches *Ecclesiastes*" and Massimiliano Traversino Di Christo in the article "Anmerkungen zum Christentum von Giordano Bruno auf der Grundlage seines *Processus*" analyses Bruno's relationship to some theological concepts and doctrines.

The second volume (Aither intr. issue 8) opens with a study by Jozef Matula on "Erasmus of Rotterdam and his Approach to Tolerance". Then, three articles focusing on Renaissance philosophy mostly from the Venetian area follow. Teodoro Katinis in the study "Sperone Speroni *Della Pace* and the Problematic Definition of Concord" not only interprets but also edits and translates Speroni's texts. In the article "The Epistemology of Vernacular Aristotelianism in Renaissance Italy: The Case of Alessandro Piccolomini", Marco Sgarbi examines the contribution of this thinker to the transition from the old *scientia* to early modern science, and Tomáš Nejeschleba in the study "Francesco Piccolomini's Platonism and Nicholas of Cusa in the "Peripatetic Exercise" of Johannes Jessenius *On Divine and Human Philosophy*" analyses the context and sources of Jessenius' debate in Padua. In

the following article "The Monstrosity of Vice: Sin and Slavery in Campanella's Political Thought" Brian Garcia shows the bound of two conceptions in the works of the famous Italian 17th century philosopher. Then, the issue of evil in Jacob Böhme's thought is the topic of Martin Žemla's contribution. In the last, but not least, study included in the second volume, "Once Again: Paul Oskar Kristeller and Raymond Klibansky" John Monfasani turns back to the relationship between these two famous Renaissance scholars.

Allow me, as the editor of both volumes, to add some personal notes. I first met Paul Richard Blum in Olomouc. He came to Olomouc to attend the first conferences on the renaissance, which we started to organise at the turn of the 90s (on Renaissance Platonism in Central Europe in the year 1998, on Giordano Bruno in the year 2000 and on Nicholas of Cusa in the year 2001). I have, in my memory, the image of a creative man with long hair, active in discussions and friendly in personal interactions, who was ready to help whenever he was asked. Long years of cooperation followed, we met at various conferences and actions and during this time our friendship could develop. I remember with gratitude, the time that I unexpectedly met him in the Prague metro and complained to him that I could not get publishing rights for the Czech translation of *Eight Philosophers of the Renaissance* by Paul Oskar Kristeller. Thanks to Richard's engagement in this, when he immediately contacted John Monfasani, I received contact information for the inheritor in a few days and it was possible for the book to be published in the Czech Republic.

Then in 2011, when I asked him whether he would like to join our emerging team at the Centre for Renaissance Texts, which was founded in Olomouc as one branch of the continuation of the older Centre for Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance Texts, Paul Richard Blum, to my great joy, accepted my offer. From the year 2012 Richard and his wife Elisabeth Blum would switch between working in Olomouc and working in Baltimore and they became crucial members of our team in Olomouc. Our students greatly appreciated their courses on Renaissance philosophy, as well as their help in receiving stipends in foreign countries. Thanks to Richards contacts we could develop our cooperation with other experts on the Renaissance in the world and organise international conferences: on Georgios Gemistos Plethon in 2013, on Francesco Patrizi in 2014, eventually P. R. Blum was the editor of conference volumes. Thanks to Richard's activities, the centre in Olomouc became known to other centres for Renaissance research around the world. The result of team cooperation led by Richard Blum was e.g. the editing and translation, first into Czech and then into English, of *De immortalitate animae* by Gasparo Contarini.

In 2014 Paul Richard Blum once again became a crucial figure in the project "Between Renaissance and Baroque: Philosophy and Knowledge in the Czech Lands within the Wider European Context", of which I was the principal investigator and for which we received support from the Czech Science Foundation. Thanks to his personality and broad perspective, it was possible to join together,

in the Czech Republic, the separate fields of study of Renaissance philosophy, the second scholasticism and academic networks in the 17th century with a focus on J. A. Comenius. And thanks primarily to his publications within the project, the project was judged as excellent.

I am extremely happy that this story is not over and that our cooperation continues. P. R. Blum has received support from the Czech Science Foundation to conduct research into panpsychism and pantheism in the Renaissance for the years 2021-2023, some members of the Centre for Renaissance Texts will be taking part in this research.

For this and for many other things, for his friendship and for his academic cooperation, I would like to thank Paul Richard Blum with this, with my name, with the names of all of the authors that took part in this and with the names of many others who come together in congratulating him.

Ad multos annos, gloriosque annos vivas, Paule Richarde!

To conclude, I would also like to thank the individual authors for their contributions and their patience during the processing of their contributions, all anonymous reviewers and language correctors for their work and also the leadership of Aither, which allowed me to prepare these two volumes in honour of P. R. Blum. Special thanks also to Mrs. Elizabeth Blum.

Tomáš Nejeschleba

Nahsicht-Fernsicht. Naturerfahrung in der Frühen Neuzeit mit Blick auf die Malerei

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ABSTRACT

This paper tries to analyse basic problems of art-production in renaissance and early modern art (particularly in painting, but implicitly also in sculpture and architecture) from a philosophical point of view. The fundamental questions are: how do distances and directions interact? What role plays, if one turns away from mathematical-geometrical acts of measuring, the position - locally and temporally - of an individual? Is there any influence of the philosophical problem of singularity on art? One possible and most interesting horizon where answers could be given and found, is the horizon of perspectivity.*

- * Die folgenden Überlegungen basieren auf anderen Untersuchungen zu Teilproblemen, die ich in den letzten Jahren an verschiedenen Orten publiziert habe. Ich gebe hierzu jeweils am Orte die bibliographischen Hinweise, in den Aufsätzen finden sich auch jeweils die weiterführenden Angaben zu Primär- und Sekundärquellen. Der Text basiert auf einem Vortrag, den ich auf Einladung von Kathrin Müller und Hans Aurenhammer auf der Tagung ‚Nahsicht, Fernsicht. Kunst und die Erfahrung der Natur‘ im Juli 2014 an der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt gehalten habe.

Die beiden Nomina Nahsicht und Fernsicht beziehen sich eigentlich auf das Nomen Sicht, das sie näher durch die Präfixe Nah- und Fern- bestimmen. Während die Sicht wiederum vom Verb sehen kommt und somit auf einen Modus der Wahrnehmung lebendiger, be-seelter Individuen verweist, sind Nah und Fern auf die Distanz oder einen Abstand bezogen und indizieren in ihrer konträren Gegensätzlichkeit eine Skalierung und Abstufung der durch Abstand angezeigten Relation eines Seienden x zu einem anderen Seienden y . Nah und Fern sind also zunächst einmal Indikatoren von objektivierbaren Abständen, etwa dadurch daß wir Distanzeinheiten festlegen, anhand derer die Abstandsrelation quantifiziert werden kann: das y hat dann in Bezug auf x z.B.

die Entfernung a , b oder c . Y ist genau dann ‚näher‘ zu x , wenn a kleiner als b , c oder eine andere quantitativ größere Entfernungsgröße angegeben ist; es ist ‚ferner‘ zu x , wenn umgekehrt a größer als b , c oder andere solcher Größen ist. In Nah und Fern steckt aber eben auch die Relativität, daß die faktische oder momentane Distanz variieren kann: nämlich von ‚ferner als‘ zu ‚noch ferner als‘ oder ‚weniger fern als‘ etc. Diese Relativität hängt grundsätzlich davon ab, daß zumindest ein Relat der x - y -Relation jeweils für mindestens zwei Meßakte invariant bleibt.

Wenn man jetzt zur Distanz-Relation ‚Nah-Fern‘ *Individuum*-zentrierte Distanzvermögen wie die Sicht oder das Hören hinzu nimmt, dann verkompliziert sich die Grundkonfiguration. Während

zuvor der Meßpunkt in einem der beiden Relate lag, auf den der andere immer zu bestimmten Zeitpunkten bezogen und dann gemessen werden konnte, so ist jetzt die *ganze* Distanzrelation in den individuellen Bezugspunkt eingetragen und damit zugleich auch ihre – von uns unterstellte invariante, ‚objektive‘ Größe von dieser ‚subjektiven‘ oder individuellen Beugung abgetrennt. Das sehende Individuum trägt die Distanzrelation sozusagen unwillkürlich und unbewußt (oder: vorreflexiv) mit sich herum. Bezogen auf epistemische Vermögen wie Sinnesvermögen, also auf Sehen und Hören, aber auch auf das Tasten, können wir hier von Perspektivität sprechen, d. h. davon, daß das unter den Index des Individuums gestellte Prinzip der Distanz-Relation eben zu einer singulären Perspektive dieses Individuums wird, zu seinem Blickpunkt auf der Distanzskala; bezogen auf epistemische Vermögen wie Vorstellen, Einbildungskraft oder Denken behält die Relation ‚Nah-Fern‘ ihre Grundstruktur wie im Falle des Vorstellens – sie wird sozusagen nur noch einmal im Inneren der Seele repräsentiert und damit auch metaphorisiert. Der objektiven quantifizierbaren Distanz-Relation tritt eine innere, individuelle oder subjektive zur Seite. Dabei wird das erstere ‚Nah-Fern‘ aber transformiert in ein zeitliches ‚Nah-Fern‘, wie für alle seelischen Affekte, oder ein metaphorisches ‚Nah-Fern‘, wie für rein mental-intellektuelle Vollzüge – metaphorisch deswegen, weil es im Denken natürlich kein räumliches Nah-Fern geben kann. Wenn sich das Denken ‚in der Nähe‘ eines Gedankens

oder Argumentes befindet, dann meinen wir damit natürlich eine mehr oder weniger genaue *sachliche* Übereinstimmung oder etwa die Länge des Denkweges, also die *zeitliche* Komponente, keinesfalls aber etwas Räumliches.

Wichtig ist hier im Moment und im Rahmen einer Diskussion möglicher Implikationen dieser allgemeinen Sachverhalte für die Kunst und die Kunst-deutende Kunstgeschichte allerdings vor allem die Perspektivität¹. Ist in der objektiven Distanzrelation ein Etwas, z. B. das vorhin genannte *y*, in Bezug auf ein anderes, das *x*, Nah oder Fern ‚an sich‘ oder ‚objektiv‘, eingebunden in ein extrinsisch festgelegtes berechenbares Koordinatensystem, in welchem es aber auch ausgetauscht werden und an die Stelle von *y* treten kann, während die quantifizierbaren Distanzeinheiten gleich bleiben, so ist es unter Bedingungen der Perspektivität *dann* anders, wenn zur Individualität noch die *Ich-Struktur* hinzutritt: ist das Distanzverhältnis zuvor entweder prä-perspektivisch oder, wie unter dem Individuums-Index perspektivisch, aber grundsätzlich austauschbar, weil das individuelle Sein nur *entwerfendes Prinzip* der objektivierbaren Distanzstruktur ist – etwa in einer perspektivischen Konstruktion der Zentralperspektive (dazu weiter unten), so ist hier nun alles zwar auch auf das Individuum, aber auf das epistemisch integrierende oder (mit Kant gesprochen) synthetisierende, selbstreflexive Ich bezogen, das gerade *nicht* als solches *austauschbar* ist und

1 Hierzu die Überlegungen von Boehm 1969.

das sein Koordinatensystem sozusagen *aus sich selbst heraus* generiert. Etwas ist dann ‚für mich‘ nah oder fern und es ist ‚meine‘ Sicht, die eine Nah- oder Fernsicht ist oder es ist das Ich, das diese dann als meine qualifizierte Sicht herstellt. Ich kann hier nicht auf die interessante anthropologische oder psychologische Konsequenz eingehen, daß die allgemeine Tatsache der Perspektivität unseres Weltverhältnisses, ist sie einmal erkannt, sozusagen kaum mehr ausgeräumt werden kann – was sie mit der Einsicht Kants in die Transzendentalität unserer Erkenntnisverfaßtheit oder der Einsicht der Hermeneutik in die unaustilgbare Verwobenheit des Interpretieren in die Interpretation teilt – und daß es dennoch philosophische oder auch künstlerische Grundeinstellungen zur Wirklichkeit gegeben hat, die nicht unter dem Index der Perspektivität gestanden haben, ja diesen Index sogar entschieden bekämpft haben, wie Platon die instrumental-rhetorische Perspektivität der Sophisten aber auch die anthropologische des Protagoras, entschieden bekämpft hat. Das wäre ein anderes Unterfangen.

Mir geht es hier nur um Folgendes: im Kontext der Entwicklung des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts konturiert sich unabweislich als eine der zentralen Grunderfahrungen des Menschen heraus, daß er in seinem Individuum- und Personsein eine singuläre Position in der Wirklichkeit einnimmt. Diese Position unterscheidet sich von derjenigen des antiken und christlichen Denkens dadurch, daß es nicht mehr ausreicht, das Individuum als ein Zugrundeliegendes

(hypokeimenon, substantia, subjectum) oder als eine Wesensform (usia, essentia) zu bestimmen, deren substantielle Vermögen dadurch ausgezeichnet waren, daß sie gerade transindividuelle Grundfunktionen ausübten (selbst die dem griechischen Denken unverständliche christliche agapê gehört im Kern nicht dem Einzelnen an, in dem und durch den sie sich vollzieht²) – zwar ist die Tatsache, daß Ich als Koriskos oder Petrus *diese* bestimmte sinnliche Erfahrung mache und daß Ich Akteur und Träger *dieses* bestimmten Denkaktes und Gedankens bin, als trivial zugestanden, aber dieses Ich geht nicht *als Ich*, als ein *eigener* Faktor, in das Gesehene, Gefühlte, Gedachte ein. Vielmehr

2 In der durch die Zuwendung Gottes bestimmten Annahme des Individuums wird gerade, obgleich es nur als dieses Individuum angenommen und geliebt wird, ein allgemeines, transindividuelles Verhältnis affirmiert, in welchem Gott am Individuum dessen universale, allgemeine, nicht-individuell eingeschränkte, durch es selbst hergestellte Gestalt oder Form annimmt. Auch im mystischen Einigungsakt ist es nicht das Ich als dieses singuläre Ich, das in den status visionis oder unionis eintritt, sondern das von seiner Ichheit befreite Ich, das sich selbst negiert habende Ich als Nicht-Ich. Das „selbe“ oder die „Selbigkeit“, die der Einzelne annehmen soll, ist, etwa aus der Sicht Meister Eckharts, nicht an das reflexive Selbst des Ich-Selbst gebunden, sondern an die Selbigkeit des Einen oder der Einheit, die den Seelengrund des einzelnen Ichs unvorgeflich bestimmt – und ihn daher als das Fremde in ihm selbst oder als ein Bei-Ihm-Sein des inkommensurablen Göttlichen immer schon begleitet. Siehe Haas 1971, S. 20 f, 27 f, 32: „der Seelengrund (...), der von allem Eigensein befreit ist“; Haas 1979; Beierwaltes 1974, S. 7-36, S. 27 f (Plotin VI 9, 10-11); Halfwassen 1997, bes. S. 351 f.

ist an dem Gesehenen, Gefühlten und Gedachten gerade dessen allgemeiner, universaler, überindividueller Gehalt das einzig Interessante und Bedenkenswerte. Im platonischen oder augustiniisch-boethianischen Gespräch der Seele mit sich selbst, mit der Weisheit oder mit Gott ist die intime, innere Struktur des Gesprächs gerade nicht als hinter einem zugezogenen Vorhang sich vollziehend gedacht, sondern als für jedes Ich offene ursprüngliche *communicatio mentalis* oder *fidei*. Genau dieses ändert sich in einem epochalen, einer geistesgeschichtlichen Kontinentalverschiebung vergleichbaren Prozeß im europäischen Denken seit Petrarca – schrittweise tritt eine Dimension der Innerlichkeit hinzu, die opak ist für den äußeren, auch für den denkenden Zugriff. Die Einzelheit, das *esse singulare subjecti* oder *individui* ist nicht mehr als solche partizipierbar, sondern nur noch, wie etwa Cusanus sagen wird, im Modus der Konjektur, der Ungenauigkeit und der Affinität. Dieser Sachverhalt, der eine neue theoretische Konzeption von Individualität als Singularität oder als kontraktives Sein (*esse contractum*) oder letztlich als Komplexion aller Wirklichkeit unter dem Index eines Monas erforderte, ändert – mindestens bis hin zu Leibniz – auch das, was man als Perspektivität bezeichnen kann und damit eben auch deren Implikate wie Nah und Fern oder Nahsicht und Fernsicht. Zudem ist dies der Index, unter dem der Mensch jetzt auch die Natur erfahren wird, sowohl diejenige, die ihn sozusagen extern, physikalisch wie biologisch, astronomisch wie geographisch, sozial

wie politisch umgibt, als auch insbesondere seine eigene Natur, die *natura humana*.

Ich will folgende Thesen, die alle mit dieser Verschiebung von objektiver Distanz zu individueller Perspektive zur Ich-Perspektive zu tun haben, meinen weiteren Ausführungen voranstellen:

(i) es verändert sich der antik-mittelalterliche Grundsatz *operari sequitur esse* – das Handeln folgt aus dem Sein, d. h. aus der Wesensform, der *essentia* oder *natura rei* – in den ganz anderen Satz *esse sequitur operari* – das Sein folgt aus dem Handeln, d. h. aus den Möglichkeiten und dem Potential, das jetzt zur wesentlichen Basis wird. Zumindest der Intention nach wird jetzt das Sein einer Sache, vor allem das Sein eines agierenden Individuums oder einer Person, zu einem Resultat der aus der Wahrnehmung und Umsetzung seines Potentials realisierten Akte und Handlungen (dies heißt jedoch auch, daß der Begriff des Möglichen und des Potentials anders beleuchtet wird);

(ii) in ontologischen systematischen Grundüberlegungen wie denen des Nicolaus Cusanus, des Marsilio Ficino, des Giovanni Pico werden quasi zeitgleich das Können (*posse*) und das Vermögen (*potentia, vis*) an die erste Stelle gesetzt, werden Überlegungen zum Begriff der Kraft (*vis, virtus*) in diejenigen zum Selbstvollzug des Mentalen hineingenommen³;

3 Siehe hierzu am Beispiel des Nicolaus Cusanus in Leinkauf 2012b.

(iii) in logischen und sprachlogischen Theorien wird die problematische Position des Einzelseienden herausgestellt und letztlich zugestanden, daß weder dieses Einzelseiende durch irgendeinen Begriff angemessen gedacht werden könne noch daß der Begriff anders als wiederum durch Begriffe bestimmt werden könne (diejenigen erster Intention durch diejenigen zweiter Intention, etc.)

(iv) es entsteht, auf Basis einer bestimmten und konsequenzenreichen Sprachinnovation im Lateinischen eine Möglichkeit über Natur zu sprechen, die in diese bis hin zu den Texten des 18. Jahrhunderts immer schon die Grunddifferenz von Können und Sein, von Potential und Realisat, von Kraft und Wirkung einträgt: nämlich Natur als *natura naturans* und als *natura naturata*⁴;

(v) durch die großen Irritationen der Zeit, durch Nominalismus und *potentia absoluta* Gottes, durch Pesterfahrung, durch die Entgrenzung der bekannten Welt (Exploration) und durch die

Konfessionsspaltung erfährt das Individuum seinen Seinsstatus und seine Existenz als prekäre, instabil und kontingent – dadurch wird es auch auf seine eigenen Möglichkeiten und auf seine individuelle Position zurückgeworfen, sein Blick auf die Welt ist eine perspektivierende Erschließung;

(vi) in der Kunst, insbesondere in der Malerei und Dichtung, sieht die Zeit vom 14. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert die ursprünglichen Artikulationsräume einer auf sich und ihre Welterfahrung zurückgeworfenen Individualität; dabei durchdringen sich in einem langsamen und durch viele Interferenzen ausgewiesenen Prozeß die ‚traditionellen‘ Vorstellungen einer vor-perspektivischen, nicht Ich-/Individuums-zentrierten Denkform mit denjenigen einer perspektivischen und aufs Artikulationszentrum des Individuums sich immer mehr konzentrierenden Denkform. Es ist alles andere als ein historischer Zufall, daß die *prospettiva pingendi* auf Basis einer schon lange zurückreichenden Diskussion in der Wissenschaft der Optik um 1400 entwickelt und dann nachhaltig entfaltet worden ist, es ist aber signifikant, daß der zeitgleichen Schulphilosophie in ihrer naturtheoretischen Diskussion, d. h. vor allem in der Schule von Padua, der Schritt zu einer hierauf antwortenden neuen Konzeption des Raumes nicht gelungen ist – dies wird erst im letzten Drittel des 16. Jahrhunderts und zwar außerhalb der Schulen geleistet werden⁵.

4 Hierzu Leinkauf 2000. Zum Problem gehört aber auch der Gedanke des ‚*ludus naturae*‘, einer sozusagen experimentell spielerischen Natur, deren Potential, die meine These, eine Artikulation dessen ist, was man seit dem *De caelo*-Kommentar des Averroes als *natura naturans* bezeichnet hatte, vgl. Leinkauf 2011. Insbesondere wäre hier hinzuweisen auf die Bedeutung, die der „Spirit of Nature“ oder die „plastic Nature“ im Denken der Cambridge Platonists erhalten hatten, also bei Henry More, vgl. etwa *The Immortality of the Soul* (1659) oder *Enchiridium metaphysicum* (1671), und bei Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, vgl. More 1679, S. 213 f, 222, 268; Cudworth 1678, I c. 3, S. 132, 151-155.

5 Dies geschieht systematisch präzise durch Francesco Patrizi, es läßt sich aber

Mit diesen Voraussetzungen im philosophischen und kulturgeschichtlichen Handgepäck zum Thema der Perspektivität zurückkommend, das ich als das eigentliche Thema ‚hinter‘ unserem Thema Nahsicht und Fernsicht festhalten möchte, ergeben sich folgende Beobachtungen, Beobachtungen, die ich jetzt vor allem aus philosophischer und nicht aus kunsthistorischer, dichtungstheoretischer oder theologischer ‚Perspektive‘ anstellen möchte, die aber dennoch den hermeneutischen Erfahrungen, die die genannten und andere Disziplinen mit der Übergangsepoche vom späteren Mittelalter zur Frühen Neuzeit machen können, nicht ungleich sein werden:

Wenn wir Nah- und Fernsicht als Ausdruck der Relativität von mindestens zwei Raum- oder Orts-Positionen und vor allem als Möglichkeiten des Perspektivischen verstehen wollen, wie ich das hier tue, dann kann man sich zunächst die Frage nach der Austauschbarkeit, d. h. der möglichen Gleichwertigkeit und der Reziprozität der Distanz-Relate, stellen. Anders formuliert: kann ich eine optische oder eine seelische oder intellektuelle Nahsicht (Nahbetrachtung) durch eine Fernsicht (Distanzbetrachtung) einfach austauschen – kann man das Nahe dem Fernen inokulieren und vice versa? Zunächst erscheint dies als widersinnig: indem ich das Ferne zum Nahen mache, verliert es sein Ferne-Sein – das hatte ich

zeitgleich und unmittelbar anschließend auch bei Autoren wie Bernardino Telesio, Giordano Bruno oder Tommaso Campanella konstatieren, zur Sache Grant 1981; zu den oben genannten Autoren auch: Leinkauf 2012b.

eingangs mit der objektiven Struktur gemeint. Aber: wenn ich das Ferne *als* Fernes ‚nah‘-rücke, wenn ich etwa einen fernen Landschaftshintergrund in einem Gemälde mit Nähe-Indikatoren versähe, einen Hintergrund, der unter normalen Bedingungen in Ungenauigkeiten und Indifferenzen verschwimmen würde – wie das spätestens seit Leonardos meisterlichen Darstellungen dokumentiert ist – , dann erreiche ich einen surrealen Effekt, vergleichbar dem, den die Natur uns bei einem Föhn über den Alpen gewähren kann. Das ganz Ferne liegt dann – immer noch *als* Fernes – greifbar nah vor Augen! Ebenso kann man natürlich auch umgekehrt das Nahe *als* Nahes in die Ferne rücken durch eine gestalterische Inszenierung, die die erwartete Distinktheit des dem Auge sich in und aus der Nähe Zeigenden durch Indistinktheit, Verschwommenheit, Unklarheit optisch, d. h. perspektivisch in die Ferne rückt. Es ist gut möglich, daß diese Operationen, dieses Arbeiten an der Plausibilität unserer Sehleistungen und intuitiven Wahrnehmungsbewertung eine Prärogative der Malerei ist, eventuell auch der Musik, wenn man sich die Mehrchörigkeit Monteverdis mit den synchron aus verschiedenen Richtungen und Distanzen erzeugten akustischen ‚Landschaften‘ imaginiert. Um was es mir hier geht ist aber die Tatsache, daß das geschilderte Austauschen der objektiven Distanzwerte seine Effekte nur erreichen kann, wenn der allgemeine Rahmen, d. h. der perspektivische Grundaufbau des Bildes oder der Realität selbst *nicht* noch einmal unter der Hand verändert worden ist.

Damit die Widersprüchlichkeit eintreten kann, daß das an sich Ferne als nah oder das an sich Nahe als fern dargestellt oder akustisch suggeriert werden kann, muß das Koordinatensystem als übergreifender Rahmen Bestand haben. So ist es ja auch, wenn Tintoretto in seinen manieristischen Verzerrungsräumen, in denen er ein wesentliches Ereignis, dessen Dignität ‚Nähe‘ oder ‚Vordergrund‘ verlangt, in der ‚Ferne‘ oder einem fürs Auge entrückten und eigentlich unwesentlichen Raumabschnitt loziert – ohne das tragende Gerüst der auch von der Licht-Dunkel-Choreographie nicht tangierten perspektivischen Basisstruktur, verlören diese Effekte jede Wirkung. Austauschbar sind also Nah und Fern, so ist die Dialektik, nur dann, wenn eben Nah und Fern nicht ausgetauscht werden, d. h. wenn im Fernen als Fernen, dieses unter den Betrachtungsindex ‚nah‘ gesetzt wird, und wenn im Nahen als Nahen, dieses unter den Index ‚fern‘ gesetzt wird – es ist klar, daß dies kein natürlicher Prozeß ist, der sich aus den gewöhnlichen Gesetzmäßigkeiten des Welterfahrens herleitet, sondern daß dies eine *direkte Konsequenz der Rolle und Funktion des individuellen, in diesem Fall künstlerischen Ichs* ist: dieses ‚setzt‘ in der durch es gestalteten artifiziellen Wirklichkeit diese Umbesetzung ein, um damit bestimmte Effekte zu erzielen – ein Zusammenhang, der uns direkt in das Gebiet von Bild- oder Kunstrhetorik führt, das bekanntlich gerade im 16. Jahrhundert einen dramatischen Schub erhalten hat. In der hellenistisch-spätantiken Rhetorik sind eben solche Experimente mit der

Leistungsdimension unseres Urteils- und Bewertungsvermögens gemacht worden, wie diejenigen, die ich hier auf der Ebene des Optischen herausgestellt habe (und man könnte zumindest akustisch-musikalische hinzufügen), ja diese rhetorische Tradition hat eine zeitliche Priorität vor der Übertragung ihrer Strategien auf die künstlerische Dimension – das dürfte wohl auch schon für die spätere Antike selbst gelten, etwa für die rhetorischen Effekte der ausgefeilten pompeianischen Wandmalerei. Die Nah-Fern-Relation ist, das will ich hiermit aus meiner Sicht vor allem anführen, eine Relation, die offen ist für manipulative Eingriffe – zur gleichen Zeit weist sie jedoch, das sollten die anfänglichen Überlegungen gezeigt haben, in ihrer geometrisch-optischen Konstruktivität eine klare kategoriale Stabilität auf (Bilder vermitteln unausweichlich Differentialquotienten von Distanzen, um so mehr, sobald die Perspektive als formaler Rahmen und dann, seit Leonardo, der Intensitätsraum als materialer Träger als Konstanten eingeführt waren)⁶, gegenüber welcher der rhetorisch-manipulative Zugriff umso deutlicher Wirkung und ‚Effekt‘ erzeugen kann.

In solchen perspektivischen Konstruktionen der Frühen Neuzeit ist es das Ich als produktives Zentrum eines aus ihm entworfenen Blick-, Denk- und Deutungsfeldes, das diese Konstruktion als eine *mögliche* Erscheinung der Wirklichkeit setzt. Es kann jetzt eine und dieselbe Wirklichkeit, eines und

6 Zum Intensitätsraum siehe meine Überlegungen in Leinkauf 2013.

dasselbe Faktum, eine und dieselbe res gesta ganz verschieden vor das äußere und innere Auge gestellt werden – ohne daß dies a limine als ein Defekt menschlicher Endlichkeit oder als zu löschender Eintrag des Kontingenten zu bewerten sei. Es ist jetzt vielmehr so, daß die Vielschichtigkeit der scheinbar nur semantisch planen ‚Oberfläche‘ der Ereignisse und Dinge thematisch werden kann, ihr Entwicklungspotential, ihr temporaler Index und vor allem die schon zuvor erwähnte Einsicht, daß das X-Sein von x eine Summe von verschiedenen x-Instantiierungen ist, die aus dessen Potential oder Vermögen oder Kraft in einer zeitlichen Sequenz entfaltet werden. Sofern das Individuum als Ich das *Agens* dieser perspektivischen Entwürfe ist, insofern ist die Wirklichkeit jetzt das *Expressionsfeld*- oder *Artikulationsfeld* dieses Agens. Die *natura humana* versteht sich hier, so scheint es, analog zur *natura naturans*. Eigentlich jedoch ist es so, daß vielmehr die Natur aus dem Blickwinkel gedeutet wird, den unser Denken synthetisierend-deutend auf die ansonsten in beziehungslose Einzeldatenmengen zerfallende *natura naturata* wirft. In die Grundrelation Blickpunkt-Blickfeld/-horizont, die hinter der Nah-Fern-Relation zu stehen kommt, läßt sich jetzt hermeneutisch diejenige von *natura naturans* und *natura naturata* eintragen – ebenso wie man etwa auch beginnt, die geschichtstheoretische Relation Historiker-Historik genau so zu verstehen, d. h. die jeweilige *historia* oder *narratio* als eine perspektivische Interpretation, die auf der Prärogative des erudierten

Historikers gründet, seine dispositionelle Potenz in einer solchen Darstellung umzusetzen (es ist etwas anderes, ob ich die Darstellung der an sich gleichbleibenden *res gestae*-Sequenz r^1 , r^2 , r^3 , r^4 , etc., etwa der Geschichte des dreißigjährigen Krieges, mit der Schilderung von r^2 und deren spezifischen Ursächlichkeiten, mit derjenigen von r^1 oder von r^n beginne) – ein Beispiel hierfür wären die Überlegungen, die Francesco Patrizi in seinen *Dieci dialoghi della istoria* aus den 60er Jahren des 16. Jahrhunderts angestellt hat.

Wenn man die Relation Individuum-mundus humanus oder diejenige von *natura naturans* und *natura naturata* als ein Expressions-Verhältnis verstehen will, was ich hier vorschlagen möchte, da ich im Faktum der Selbstrealisierung, die auf Selbstexpression basiert, eine Konstante frühneuzeitlicher Anthropologie sehe⁷, dann lohnt sich ein Blick zeitlich etwas voraus, nämlich in die Zeit um 1680–85, als Leibniz mit dem Jansenisten Antoine Arnauld in einem fulminanten Briefwechsel sich befand, in dessen Gefolge auch der *Discours de métaphysique* entstanden ist. In einem dieser Briefe an Arnauld (der deswegen auch hermeneutisch „berüchtigt“ ist), erklärt Leibniz die Struktur der Expression als „ein geordnetes, konstantes Verhältnis zwischen dem, was man von der Seele sagen kann, und dem, was man von dem Anderen (sc. das sie ausdrückt) sagen kann“ - „un rapport constant réglé entre ce qui se peut dire de l'une (sc. ame) et de l'autre (sc. monde, dieu)“.

7 Leinkauf 2005.

Wenn die Seele = x ist und das durch sie Ausgedrückte = x', dann steht das, was ich über x sagen kann, etwa „x ist A“ (die Seele ist eine in sich einheitliche Substanz, die in einem Verhältnis der Kopräsenz zu ihrem körperlichen Substrat steht), in einem festen, proportionalen (reglé) Verhältnis zu dem, was ich über x' sagen kann, etwa „x' ist B“ (das durch die Seele Ausgedrückte ist ein Vieles, das aber dennoch Bild der seelischen Einheit ist, also ein in eine Einheit gebundenes Vieles⁸). Dies heißt aber eben auch, daß das Verhältnis von A und B, von Substanz und Substantiiertem „geregelt“ ist⁹. Wir können zusätzlich sagen: Das aus dem Potential oder der Kraft des Individuums hervorgebrachte (productum) oder durch es ausgedrückte (expressum) Einzelne ist *nicht gleich* dem gesamten Potential, das in dieser Kraft steckt. Dadurch ist das Ausgedrückte, das expressiv Gewordene, immer auch schon nur ein Ausschnitt möglicher anderer Expressionen zum selben Gegenstand, zur selben Sache, zum selben Problem. Wenn also gilt, daß die perspektivische Grundrelation Individuum-mundus humanus eine dynamische Ausdrucksrelation ist, dann ist das Perspektivische und damit auch Nah- oder Fern-Sichtige an ihr nicht nur durch die *Position* des Individuums (geometrisch-räumliche Perspektive), sondern auch durch die *Natur* oder *We-sensform* eines Individuums bestimmt (ontologische Perspektive, zu der auch die individuelle Körpernatur gehört,

die zur gleichen Zeit auch eine geometrisch-räumliche Position einnimmt). Aus der Perspektive P des Individuums x lassen sich unbegrenzt viele Subperspektiven hinsichtlich eines durch es in den ‚Blick‘ genommenen Wirklichkeitsbereichs entwerfen – so etwa, wie es etwas vollständig anderes ist, wenn De Heem oder Chardin oder Cézanne einen Apfel malen und nochmal etwas anderes, wenn De Heem, Chardin oder Cézanne jeweils selbst immer wieder Äpfel in ihren Bildern thematisieren. So entwirft das Individuum nicht nur in der Kunst, sondern sozusagen in *allen* seinen Tätigkeiten permanent neue Perspektiven und Bilder der Wirklichkeit, die es in die allgemeine Grundordnung – sozusagen in den einem festen Koordinatengefüge gleichenden Wirklichkeitsraum – einträgt, den alle Individuen miteinander teilen¹⁰.

Das perspektivische Sich-Entwerfen des Individuums ist, nimmt man die bisher erarbeiteten Faktoren hinzu, also die Permanenz der Distanzrelation, die Substituierbarkeit der individuellen Perspektivrelation und die Expressivität des Ich-Entwurfs, alles andere als beliebig. In dem nicht-greifbaren, dunklen und schlechthin dem Innen zugehörigen singulären Entwurfspunkt des Ich sind samenhaft oder keimhaft nicht-Ich-hafte, objektive Strukturen – Formen, Ideen, Proportionen, Vorstellungen – verborgen, die im Entworfenen oder Ausgedrückten (expressum) je unterschiedlich zur Manifestation kommen können. Das Potential oder die

8 Leinkauf 2006b, bes. S. 75 f.

9 Leibniz an Arnauld, 14.7.1686, = Leibniz 1879 (GP II), S. 58.

10 Leinkauf 2010.

Kraft oder das Vermögen, das jeweils in diesem Punkt oder Entwurfskern eines intelligiblen, seelisch-intellektuellen Wesens vorhanden ist, verhält sich zu allen möglichen Instantiierungen *zum einen* als unvorgreiflich überschüssend – die entwerfende Einheit geht *nicht* restlos in ihrem Entwurf auf (darin hatte man auch immer eine Analogie zum unerschöpflichen Potential des göttlichen Weltarchitekten und der *natura naturans* gesehen)¹¹. *Zum anderen* verhält es sich hierzu aber auch so, daß es selbst mit seiner dynamischen Entfaltungsbewegung, also als Kraft und Potential, *im* Entfalteten ist – die entwerfende Kraft wird als Kraft im Entwurf sichtbar (ebenso wie die *natura naturans* als Dynamik und als scheinbar unerschöpfliche Kraft im einzelnen Natureindruck mit manifest werden kann). So kann also auch der Blick des Ich auf die Landschaft, sei diese aus der Nähe oder Ferne gesehen (besser: ersehen), selbst in die Landschaft mit eingehen – in der Malerei kann man klar eine Landschaft Bellinis, Giorgiones, Leonardos, Tizians etc. als deren respektiven Blick oder als Sicht auf die Dinge

identifizieren; in der Literatur erscheint Landschaft seit Petrarca ebenfalls als durch die Blicknahme des Individuums gefiltert. So wie die *natura naturans* in keinem ihrer Produkte als ganze gegenwärtig wird, wohl aber in der Sequenz ihrer Expressionen, so wird auch der Mensch oder wird auch das Ich, in Analogie hierzu, in keinem seiner Produkte als ganzer Mensch gegenwärtig, wohl aber wird in dem Produkt, und das macht die Differenz zur *natura naturans* aus, die immer *natura universalis* bleibt, die individuelle oder subjektive Signatur der Perspektive uneingeschränkt gegenwärtig. Hierzu wäre ein Blick auf die Philosophie des Nicolaus Cusanus hilfreich, der leider hier nicht realisiert werden kann¹². Das Darstellungsregister Nah-Fern ist eine der wesentlichen Möglichkeiten, in denen sich das Verhältnis des perspektivierenden Individuums zu seinem Entwurfshorizont äußert, d. h. daß Individuum kann gar nicht anders als immer schon unvorgreiflich in diesem Register und seiner Spannung sich zu artikulieren – das hängt von beiden Positionen ab, der geometrisch-räumlichen wie auch der ontologischen.

11 Hier wird das menschliche Vermögen und Potential analog zu dem gedacht, was man *a fortiori* von Gott sagen konnte und mußte: „*Deus potest plus quam factum est*“, zum Problem vgl. Courtenay 1990, S. 87–113.

12 Zu Cusanus und Perspektive siehe, neben in Anm. 1 schon erwähnten Arbeit von Boehm, etwa Herold 1975; Leinkauf 2006a, S. 120–203.

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Charles de Bovelles on God, Nihil and Negative Theology

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ABSTRACT

In *Liber de nihilo* Charles de Bovelles probes the meanings of ‘*nihil* / nothing’ in several registers: semantic, logical, metaphysical/theological, and symbolic. Yet a consistent concern is the relation of ‘*nihil*’ to God and creation, since God reportedly creates “*ex nihilo*.” This essay focuses on the work’s concluding chapters, where Bovelles analyzes the dialectic of affirmation and negation in naming God. Here ‘*nihil*’ ends a descending series of affirmative divine names, “truly proclaiming and mysteriously announcing that nothing is God (*nihil esse deus*).” ‘*Nihil*’ then becomes the first term denied of God in an ascending series of negations, which culminates in denying all divine names and a “learned ignorance” that signals a turn to mystical theology. The essay considers Bovelles’s mathematics and logic, and compares his analysis with its source, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite’s *Mystical Theology*, and its interpretation by Nicholas of Cusa.*

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— In 1495, sixteen-year-old Charles de Bovelles left his native Picardy for Paris, where he studied with Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples at the university's Collège du Cardinal Lemoine.¹ A quick learner and something of a prodigy, he soon became an active member of Lefèvre's circle of humanists and scholars. Here he began a life-long engagement with the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, Nicholas of Cusa, and Raymond Lull. Following Lefèvre, Bovelles's early works focused on mathematics, dialectic, the arts, and metaphysics. But in 1509 Charles turned to theology in his *Liber de nihilo* or *Book on Nothing* – the work we shall explore here. He published *De nihilo* in 1511 in

a volume collecting twelve of his works,² including his best known work, *De sapiente* (1504).³ *De nihilo* focuses on the relation of 'nihil' to God and creation, since God reportedly creates "ex nihilo." Bovelles thus engages an issue deeply embedded in Christian thought, and follows in the footsteps of Augustine and Boethius, the Carolingians Fredigisus and Eriugena, scholastics and Meister Eckhart.⁴ The path was difficult, since

1 Victor 1978, p. 12.

2 Bovelles 1511; *Liber de nihilo*, 63r–74r. Charles dated the treatise 26 November 1509 (Bovelles 1511, p. 74r).

3 See Ferrari, & Albertini 2011. E. Cassirer published R. Klibansky's edition of *De sapiente* as an appendix to his *Individuum und Kosmos in der Renaissance* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1927); see Ferrari, & Albertini 2010, p. 383.

4 On the early sources and the Fredigisus controversy, see Colish 1984; on Eriugena,

Charles's predecessors occasionally provoked conflict and even condemnation: Fredigisus by reifying *nihil*; Eriugena by arguing that creation occurs out of God's own nothingness; and Eckhart by insisting that in themselves creatures are nothing. But Bovelles charged ahead, addressing issues of time and eternity as modes of duration, and probing the meanings of 'nothing /*nihil*' in several registers: semantic, logical, metaphysical / theological, and symbolic.

In his classic study of Bovelles, Joseph Victor speaks of *De nihilo*'s "troubled and unripe theology," and notes that it bears the marks of a first venture into new territory: "it was sketchy, hung together poorly, and was highly derivative." Yet it also "posed more questions than it answered and in doing so set the stage for the next phase of Bovelles' development."⁵ While the work is indeed roughly hewn and at times perplexing, it remains a rare and provocative work, and a major Renaissance exploration of the theme of *nihil*/nothing. As such, it surely merits our attention.

Here I shall focus on the work's final chapters, where Bovelles analyzes the dialectic of affirmation and negation concerning God and *nihil*. We shall examine two facets of this dialectic. First, we shall discuss Charles' account of naming God. Following Dionysius' conception of hierarchy, he traces a circle of affirmative and negative divine names.

'*Nihil*' is the last of a descending series of positive names, "truly proclaiming and mysteriously announcing that nothing is God (*nihil esse deus*)."⁶ '*Nihil*' then becomes the first term denied of God in an ascending series of negations, which culminates in denying all divine names and a "learned ignorance" that signals a turn to mystical theology. Second, we shall discuss Bovelles's related mathematics of zero, and his account of God as "pure affirmation" and *nihil* as sheer negation, and of the logical relations between them. Here too we shall find Charles's conception of hierarchy to be central to his project.

— HIERARCHY AND NAMING GOD

In the concluding chapter of *De nihilo*, Bovelles distinguishes three forms of theology: The first or philosophical form attends to sensible signs, from which the human mind draws forth conjectures about intelligible and divine things. In the second, the mind withdraws into itself where it meditates on ideas not derived from prior sensation or species, but of its own fashioning; Charles calls this "transcendent or metaphysical philosophy." The third and highest theology occurs by angelic or divine illumination, and lifts the soul in ecstasy to receive "the hidden vision of God" (122, 73r).

Bovelles tells us that he will focus on the first, philosophical form of theology. Following Dionysius, he says, "Clothed in

see Duclow 2006; on Eckhart, see Tobin 1986, pp. 45, 63–64. Eckhart also echoes Eriugena, and speaks of God as '*niht* / nothing'; see Tobin 1986, p. 181.

5 Victor 1978, p. 139.

6 Bovelles 1983. This edition will be cited by page number, followed by leaf in Bovelles 1511, as here: 126, 73v. Citations will generally appear between parentheses in the text. English translations are my own.

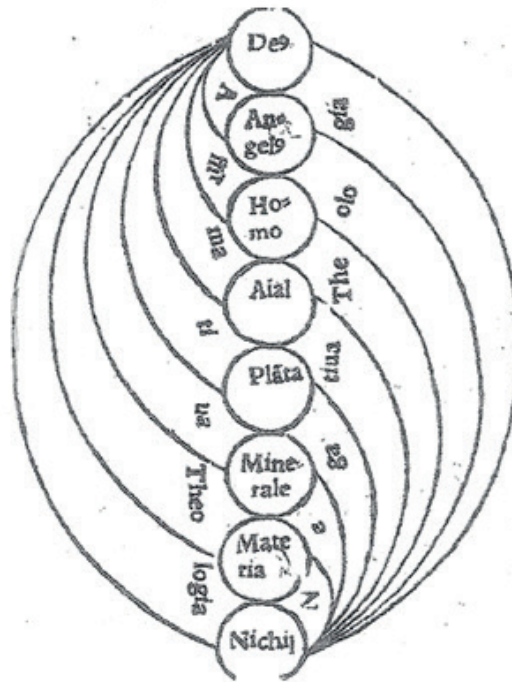


Figure 1. Affirmative and Negative Theologies. Bovelles, *Liber de nihilo*; Bovelles 1511, p. 75v. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

the variety of sensible and fleshly veils, the divine ray of light illumines us,” and adds that the human mind can only “ascend to the spiritual understanding of heavenly things if it is led there by the likenesses and forms of mortal things” (124, 73r). In this *manuductio*, Charles links two Dionysian themes: hierarchy,⁷ and the dialectic of affirmation and negation in naming God. His hierarchy or “substantial order” begins with the standard philosopher’s chain of being – God, angels, human beings, animals, plants, minerals or rocks – and adds matter, “beneath which is nothing [*nihil*]” (128, 73v). Bovelles shared Raymond

Lull’s fascination with diagrams, and **Figure 1** is among his more elegant images.

It illustrates how the affirmative and negative theologies circle through the hierarchy. He writes, “Both theologies have the same extremes or endpoints [God and *nihil*] and the same middle terms. There is a single line which both follow in opposite directions – from God to nothing, and from nothing to God” (126, 73v). *Affirmation* – the diagram’s left, descending swirls – traces the hierarchy from those things highest and closest to God down to the lowest and least like God, while *negation* – the diagram’s right, ascending swirls – first strips away the lowest divine names and proceeds to deny all names up to the very highest. Charles’s preferred terms

7 On hierarchy in Dionysius, see Perl 2007, pp. 65–81.

for affirmation and negation are ‘*positio*’ and ‘*ablatio*’: *Positio* affirms or imposes names for God, while *ablatio* negates or removes them. *Positio* first ascribes to “the one who rules everything and creates all things” the name ‘God/*deus*’, which Charles explains using Eriugena and Cusanus’s derivation of the Greek ‘*theos*’ from ‘*theiotes*’ as ‘seeing all things.’⁸ God is one who sees. Other names follow: “angel or intellect – here is the reason [*ratio*] and cause of all things; next, sense or feeling [*sensum*] wandering through many things”; then life and the very substance [*substantia*] of all things. The series of names continues: potency, privation, the beginning and start [*initium et inchoationem*] of all things – which indicate “the foundation [*subsidentium*] and true basis of all things, supporting... and carrying the whole of things within itself” (128, 73v). This cluster of names suggests matter, which Bovelles describes as “the lowest of beings” which exists only in potency, not in act.⁹ Below matter – and hence below the entire chain of being – lies

‘nothing’, the ‘*nihil*’ from which God creates; it simply is not, “being neither in act nor in potency.” *Positio* then concludes with an extreme paradox, as it “imposes and applies the name of ‘nothing/*nihil*’, finally calling [God] ‘not-being /*non ens*’, and saying of him – who by his exalted essence (appearing in the burning bush) proclaims himself to be the one who exists – that he is nothing.”¹⁰ Since Augustine, commentators had taken the book of Exodus’ proclamation, “I am who am” (Ex 3:14), to mean that God is the fullness of being.¹¹ But Bovelles follows Dionysius in affirming God to be nothing and not to exist – or more precisely, to be beyond both being and not-being.

As the last name affirmed of God, ‘*nihil*’ marks the turning point to negative theology, which reverses the course we have followed, as *ablatio* strips away the names imposed on God. It ascends through the entire hierarchy, declaring that God is neither ‘*nihil*’, nor the potency of things, nor substance, nor life, nor intellect. It finally denies the very name ‘*deus*/God’ (128, 73v). Charles then summarizes the Dionysian dialectic of affirmation and negation. When we speak of God who is “above all affirmation (*positio*),” our positive naming fittingly starts from what is nearer (*propinquier*) the divine. For it is truer to declare that God is life or good than

8 *Liber de nihilo*, 128, 73v. See Eriugena, *Periphyseon (De divisione naturae)*, PL 122, 452B-C; and Cusa, *De quaerendo deum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. IV, pp. 14–15, n. 19: “Theos dicitur a theoro, quod est video et curro.” Since Eriugena and Cusanus derive ‘*theos*’ from ‘*theoro*’, Bovelles’s use of ‘*theiotes*’ – which is not a proper Greek word – is puzzling. Working from ‘*theoreo*’, he may have formed a verbal noun to parallel ‘*videntem*’, with a Greek accusative ending, *-en*. I thank Isabella Reinhardt for this suggestion.

9 Early in the treatise, Bovelles discusses matter as the “*medium*” between being and *nihil* in terms of potency or “*posse esse omnium*” (*De nihilo* 42–44, 63v). Prime matter as potency was a common

theme in scholastic thought; see, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *De principiis naturae* 17.

10 *Liber de nihilo*, 128, 73v. See Miernowski 1998, pp. 81–82.

11 See Augustine, *De Trinitate* V, 11, 3 (PL 42, 912); and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II, Q. 13, a. 13.

air or stone. But when we speak of the divine that “surpasses all negation (*ablationi*),” we properly begin by removing the most “unlike” names, those derived from the lowest ranks in the hierarchy. For it is more accurate to deny that God is drunk or angry than that the divine can be understood.

Yet in this cycle of saying and un-saying, affirmation and negation are not of equal value. For Charles – again following Dionysius and Cusanus – considers theological negations to be more truthful than affirmations.¹² Whereas God is simple unity, *positio* speaks of the divine nature in terms of division, change, composition, and sensible images. It parcels God out, so to speak, by leading our minds to see and name the divine through the ranks of creatures “which are numbered between God and nothing” (130, 74r). However, *ablatio* strips all these veils away, separates us from creatures, and leads us into (*insinuant*) God’s “pure, simple and naked [nature] as it is in highest darkness and most eminent privation and ignorance” (130, 74r). Negative theology thus works as a severe, ascetic discipline, directing our gaze toward God’s transcendent simplicity and unity. Hence, Bovelles writes that “the end or goal (*finis*) of these negations (*ablationum*) is God, so that they bring and restore our mind to God” (130, 74r). Negative theology thus becomes mystical theology, and

follows Dionysius’ path towards union with God.

Charles continues the dialectic with an extended paraphrase of Book I of Cusanus’ *De docta ignorantia*. He notes that we perceive and know the finite and infinity quite differently. We mentally mark out the finite’s limits “with reason, number and measure” (Wis. 11:20). However, the infinite escapes all measure and understanding. Hence,

We only know *that* it is infinite, namely that it is not limited (*finitum*) and cannot be confined or conceived by the mind, since it has no reasoned order (*ratio*), explanation, measure, quiddity or knowledge. Hence, the truest and highest knowledge that we attain of the infinite act – that is, of God – is a certain negation and unknowing (*ignorantia*) by which we know that we cannot know what is always hidden from us, always beyond our mind, and infinitely exceeds our mind’s capacity. (130–132, 74r; my emphasis)

Charles concludes with a hyperbolic but illuminating claim: “The most true, highest and most complete theology is this: to know that God cannot be known, to know that God is unknowable... And many call this ignorance of God ‘learned ignorance’ and the noblest knowledge of all.” (132, 74r) Bovelles’s hyperbole consists in forgetting that he has been discussing the first and lowest of his three forms of theology. He seems to have trespassed into “transcendent or metaphysical” theology, and to the very border of

12 See Pseudo-Dionysius, *Mystical Theology*, ch. 1, PG 3, 1000B; in Pseudo-Dionysius 1987, p. 136; and Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, Bk. I, ch. 26; *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, pp. 54–56, nn. 86–89; Hopkins 2000, vol. 1, pp. 44–46.

inspired, ecstatic theology. Yet the illumination comes in using the Cusan tag of ‘learned ignorance’ to describe the theology that he has presented. Charles gets this exactly right.

In the closing pages of *De nihilo*, Bovelles thus shows himself to be a faithful reader of Dionysius the Areopagite and Nicholas of Cusa. This is not surprising, given his work with Lefèvre d’Etaples, who edited the works of Dionysius and Cusanus.¹³ However, Charles may read these texts differently than Lefèvre.¹⁴ In particular, he is refreshingly direct in tracing Dionysius’s theological program in the treatise on *Mystical Theology*, which consists in cutting away – like a sculptor – “every obstacle to the pure view of the hidden image.” Yet Dionysius cuts more deeply than any sculptor, removing *all* images and names so that – he says – “we may unhiddenly know that unknowing which is itself hidden from all those possessed of knowing amid things, so that we may see above being that darkness concealed from all the light among beings.”¹⁵ The *Mystical Theology* ends in iconoclasm and total *apophasis*, placing the divine beyond all imagination and understanding, outside any predication of being or non-being, and beyond both “assertion

and denial.”¹⁶ Not only does negation remove positive names and images for God, it also reflexively denies its own adequacy and truth in – to use a venerable phrase – the negation of the negation. Here negative theology itself becomes mystical theology. Bovelles accurately restates this Dionysian program, and links it to Cusanus’s learned ignorance.

Here it is important to note what Charles does *not* import into his reading of Dionysius. To his credit, he does not emphasize the affective and experiential turn toward love beyond knowing that had been common since the twelfth century.¹⁷ Nor does he appeal – like Aquinas and others – to a third theological way above affirmation and negation, a way of “eminence” that re-casts positive names in a supposedly higher form.¹⁸ In Dionysius’s *Mystical Theology*, Bovelles rightly sees a rigorous logic of affirming and negating names of God, and in this respect he also echoes Cusanus.

Yet Charles’ account is not without novelty. For Bovelles probes ‘*nihil*’ in extraordinary detail, and accords it a major role within both hierarchy and the dialectic of affirmation and negation vis-à-vis God. With *nihil* at its base, Bovelles’s hierarchy is not simply the “great chain of being.” As “being in potency” or “*posse esse*”, matter becomes

13 The Dionysius edition (1499) published the Latin translation of Ambrogio Traversari. On the Cusanus edition (1514) and Lefèvre’s preface, see Renaudet 1953, pp. 661–664.

14 For a comparison and critique, see Gandillac 1973.

15 Pseudo-Dionysius, *Mystical Theology*, ch. 3, PG 3, 1025B; in Pseudo-Dionysius 1987, p. 138.

16 Pseudo-Dionysius, *Mystical Theology*, ch. 5, PG 3, 1045D–1048B; in Pseudo-Dionysius 1987, p. 141. See Rorem 1993, pp. 193, 210–213.

17 See Rorem 1993, pp. 214–225. On this history and Cusanus’ role in the fifteenth-century debate over mystical theology, see McGinn 2005, pp. 445–456.

18 For example, see Gilson 1955, pp. 82–83.

“the first and last of beings”; above it rise the ranks of beings, blending potency and act; and beneath it lies *nihil*, void of potency and act, and having neither substance nor existence.¹⁹ Yet God creates in this nothing as the “*locus*” or place where being can be received and sustained (p. 84, 68v). Hence, at creation *nihil* does not disappear – being nowhere, where could it go? Rather, it remains created being’s indispensable base and vacuous milieu. Adding ‘nothing’ also highlights the polarity of hierarchy’s extremes, God and *nihil*. While God always exists and is above all created beings, *nihil* is below all beings and “infinite non-being” (102,70v). By ringing endless changes on this contrast, Charles makes the polarity itself inescapable: to think about God, we must think about nothing – and vice versa.²⁰ This leads to Bovelles’s distinctive logic of affirmation and negation. To clarify these considerations, let us turn to Charles’ mathematics and logic.

— ZERO AND A SQUARE OF OPPOSITES

Eugene Ostashevsky has noted parallels between *De nihilo* and Bovelles’s novel analysis of zero. In the *Liber de duodecim numeris*, Charles proposes “that the very nothing (*nichil*) that is before all numbers and after which unity emerges into light be noted down before them by the

sign of privation or nullity. So before all numbers write nothing, that is, the meager little circle of privation 0 (*privationis orbiculum o*). Then write one, then two... all the way to nine”.²¹ Bovelles’s originality here is striking. Ostashevsky says that the *Liber de duodecim numeris* “is the earliest text I have found to put zero at the origin of the number sequence: 0.1.2.3...”²² Charles certainly goes beyond Cusanus who insists that in numbers “the minimum than which there cannot be anything less” is unity,²³ while for Bovelles the minimum is zero, which is clearly less than one.

As Maurice de Gandillac has noted, Charles extends zero’s role to geometry in a remarkable diagram in the *Ars Oppositorum* (Fig. 2). The specific proportions within the diagram are familiar: unity and point, dyad and line, triad and surface, and tetrad and solid or body. But Bovelles adds a new note by linking these proportions to nothing and zero. He writes,

In every series nothing is prior to the first [principle]. Nothing is simpler than the most simple. Just as in number nothing is before unity,

19 *Liber de nihilo*, 42, 63v. See Breton 1992, p. 23; and Aristotle, *Physics* I, 9, 182a.

20 See Breton 1992, p. 32. Ostashevsky similarly sees God and nothing as “mirror images of each other” (Ostashevsky 2000, pp. 178–179).

21 Bovelles, *Liber de duodecim numeris*, as cited in Ostashevsky 2000, p. 183.

22 Ostashevsky 2000, p.181.

23 Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, Bk. I, ch. 53; *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, p. 12, n. 13: “necessarium est in numero ad minimum deveniri, quod minus esse nequit, uti est unitas.” Speaking mathematically and metaphysically, Cusanus says “Monas... est numeri principium” (*De filiatione Dei*, ch. 4; *Opera omnia*, vol. 4, p. 53, n. 72). On Cusanus’ Pythagorean theology and Petrus Bungus’ use of it, see Blum 2010, pp. 21–42.

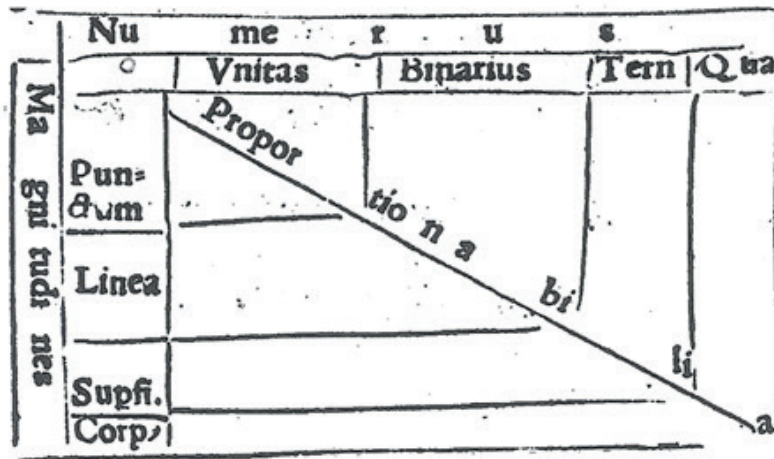


Figure 2. Zero, Number and Magnitude. Bovelles, *Ars oppositorum*; Bovelles 1511, p. 95r. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

and less and simpler than it; so also in magnitudes we find something (*aliquid*) less and simpler than the point. Therefore, numbers are set out along one side of the angle, and magnitudes along the other. Nothing will be inscribed at the apex of the angle, which is either left empty, or indicated with the little mark of privation (*privationis notula designandus*).²⁴

Indeed, in the upper left corner, a diminutive zero anchors the diagram.

While placing zero before one was a major innovation in mathematics, extending it to number theory, geometry and theology causes problems – especially vis-a-vis the Pythagorean monad and its symbolic authority. Ostashevsky sees this conflict in the *Book of Twelve Numbers*, where zero threatens to unseat

the one. Bovelles attempts to honor both by affirming the monad as the origin and source (*fons*) of number, and zero as “the seat (*sedem*) of simple numbers.”²⁵ But zero begins to usurp the monad’s throne when Charles writes, “the seat which is noted by the circle of privation is to these numbers as God is to the immaterial substances of angels. For theologians exempt God from the angelic orders. They define him by privation and negation.... They name him the seat, support, state and position of angelic orders, and the perpetual custodian of being.”²⁶ Here zero provides an analogy for God, an analogy at once apophatic and ontological. For as a sign of negation prior to all numbers, zero represents God as transcendent nothingness and the power sustaining all being. As Ostashevsky argues, this analogy follows

24 Bovelles, *Ars oppositorum*, in Bovelles 1511, p. 95r; Bovelles 1984, p. 171. See Gandillac 1982, pp. 165–166.

25 Bovelles, *Liber de duodecim numeris*, as cited in Ostashevsky 2000, p. 183.

26 Bovelles, *Liber de duodecim numeris*, as cited in Ostashevsky 2000, p. 184.

Bovelles's method throughout the *Liber de duodecim numeris*, a numerological treatise guided by ontological reasoning: "Zero precedes the number sequence because, as nothing, it is like God, and God is the origin of things. And numbers are things."²⁷ In this respect the treatise works differently than the *Liber de nihilo*, which distinguishes between an order of "nature" or ontology, and an order of "reason (*ratio*)."²⁸ To clarify this distinction and its implications, we must look more closely at *De nihilo*'s dialectic.

Bovelles develops a distinctive logic of the extremes or limits of hierarchy – God and *nihil* – and their affirmation and negation. He illustrates this logic in several schemes based on a sharp distinction between the order of nature and that of reasoning or discourse. In each scheme, these two orders oppose each other, as thought-experiments reverse conclusions according to nature (112, 71v). One example will suggest how these schemes work. Charles writes,

According to nature, God is the affirmation and true positing (*positio*) of all things, and *nihil* is the true negation and removal (*ablatio*) of all things. But according to reasoning and understanding, divine affirmation and positing are... sterile and without issue, bearing neither offspring nor consequence. But the affirmation and positing of nothing – of non-being or what does not

exist – is most fertile and extensive, establishing the whole of things. On the other hand, in the understanding, divine negation is most potent, negating and destroying whatever exists. But negation of what does not exist remains sterile, negating only nothing (*nihil*). So the *negation of affirmation* is stronger and more productive than that of negation, and similarly the *affirmation of negation* than that of affirmation. For the negation of affirmation negates all things, and the affirmation of negation posits all things.²⁹

Bovelles illustrates this scheme with **Figure 3**.³⁰ Here the horizontal bars across the top and bottom represent the sterile reduplication of affirmation and negation, while the diagonals represent the paradoxical cross-fertilization between affirmation and negation.

Bovelles's argument and diagram may seem a mere logical game – a playful exercise in the "order or reason" – unless we grasp his view of how hierarchy works. He cites a standard Neoplatonic rule: "By nature, higher and prior beings can exist and subsist without later

27 Ostashevsky 2000, p. 181.

28 On this key distinction, see Miernowski 1998, pp. 79–80; and Ostashevsky 2000, pp. 180–181, 185–186.

29 *Liber de nihilo* 114, 72r; my emphasis. See Breton 1992, pp. 27–28; and Miernowski 1998, pp. 79–81.

30 This figure is typical of Bovelles's adaptations of Aristotelian logic's square of opposition. Instead of opposing propositions ("Every S is P"; "No S is P"), he opposes single terms within the square. A relevant example occurs in the *Ars oppositorum*: a square with *Deus* and *Nihil* in the top corners, and *Esse* and *Non-esse* in the lower corners (Bovelles 1511, f. 82v). See Banks 2008, pp. 393–395, 400–401; and Victor 1978, pp. 79–81.

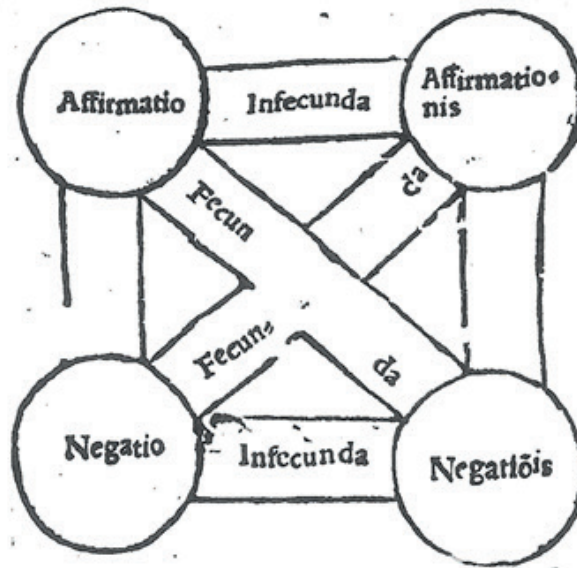


Figure 3. Affirmation and Negation. Bovelles, *Liber de Nihilo*; Bovelles 1511, p. 72r. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

and lower beings” (116, 71v), but succeeding beings cannot exist without the higher beings on which they depend. The lower stages of hierarchy are contingent upon those above them, and the whole structure upon its divine source. But in thought-experiments of reason, we can deduce nothing about the lower stages from the higher. Hence, if we affirm God’s existence, our affirmation is sterile because it tells us *only* that God exists; it implies nothing about the lower ranks of angels, human beings, and minerals – not even that they exist.³¹ The view from below, however, is quite different. If we affirm that minerals and rocks exist, their very contingency requires us to affirm that the higher ranks exist, up to God. Charles’s novel twist was to

extend this hierarchical order and logic beneath beings and matter to nothing or *nihil*, and to highlight its dialectical relation to God at hierarchy’s summit. Hence, to negate nothing or *nihil* is a sterile tautology, stating what we already know by definition: that *nihil* does not exist. But because *nihil* forms the base of Bovelles’s hierarchy, to affirm *nihil* – to suppose or posit that in some paradoxical sense it is or exists – is also to affirm that the entire hierarchy exists above it, all the way to God’s creative being. Hence the productive power of affirming the negation, *nihil* itself.

CONCLUSION

In *De nihilo* Charles de Bovelles gives us an impressive first venture into theology. But it certainly was not his last word. For as Joseph Victor has shown, Charles’s theology developed and

31 Magnard emphasizes Bovelles’s rejection of “*toutes formes d’émanatisme*” and “*nécessitarisme*” (Bovelles 1983, p. 143, n. 84).

changed in later works, including the *Theologicarum conclusionum libri decem* (1515). By 1515 Charles had left Paris for his native Picardy, where he lived on his family's estates and as a canon of Noyon cathedral until his death in 1567. He continued to write and publish, and two works reflect his longstanding contemplative bent and interest in mystical theology: the *Divinae caliginis liber* (1526), and the *De raptu divi Pauli libellus* (1531).³² In the latter Bovelles takes an experiential and ascetic turn as he discusses Paul's experience on the road to Damascus in terms of vision and rapture, and examines biblical narratives of Abraham and the prophets. He thus looks towards theology's third and highest form, where divine illumination leads the soul into ecstasy and "a hidden vision of God" (*De nihilo* 122, 73r). In contrast, *Divinae caliginis liber* revisits familiar terrain with Dionysius and Cusanus, but adds numerous biblical texts and exempla – thus marking a shift from his austere rational works like *De nihilo*.³³ Yet the speculative themes and structures remain intact, as Bovelles surveys Cusanus' geometrical images and learned ignorance vis-à-vis the divine, and expands on the dialectic of affirming and negating names of God in Dionysius' *Mystical Theology*. Whereas *De nihilo* focused mainly on the *nihil privativum* beneath creation and matter, here Charles emphasizes the transcendent *nihil* of excess as naming God above being. For in the end, as Victor comments,

"Nothingness was the most universal negation for it negated all positive attributions concerning the divine, even God's position as Supreme Being. In this way the divine transcendence, unity, infinity, and eternity were stressed and brought into the sharpest possible focus, for only after God was nothing could He transcend all things and... be and not be all things and no things simultaneously."³⁴ This treatise thus continues and clarifies the theological agenda that Bovelles began in *De nihilo*.

Bovelles's *Liber de nihilo* was well timed, since 'nothing' came to flourish as a topic in Renaissance rhetoric, poetry, and academic disputations and texts. This became a mixed, "joco-serious" tradition, with both satiric works on 'nothing' and earnest theoretical analyses – often bound within the same books. Although Stanislas Breton suggests that Bovelles set this trend in motion,³⁵ a more likely candidate is Jean Passerat (1534–1602), a poet and professor of Latin at the College de France. Passerat's poem "*De nihilo*", published in 1583, was widely reprinted and provoked imitations and responses throughout the seventeenth century. Echoing Fredigisus, the poem reifies '*nihil*' as naming an existing reality, only to launch into an extravagant praise of Nothing: "Nothing is more precious than gold.... Nothing is greater than Jove."³⁶ While this poem exemplifies the tradition's comic, absurdist strain, we see its

32 On these developments, see Victor 1978, pp. 145–147, 167–178.

33 Victor 1978, pp. 170–171.

34 Victor 1978, p. 177.

35 Breton 1992, p. 22.

36 Passerat 1583. See Archdeacon 2020, pp. 143–144.

more serious, speculative side in disputations and lectures on *nihil* in Marburg (1608), Wittenberg (1624), Jena (1764), and elsewhere. Venice became the scene for a carnival about nothing in 1634–35, when its presses published five works on the topic. Two of these are of special interest to us, because Bovelles figures in the exchange between Luigi Manzini and the French humanist Jacques Galafel. Responding to Manzini's lecture *Il niente*, Galafel published *Nihil, fere Nihil, minus Nihil, seu De Ente, non ente, et medio inter ente et non ens* – a title clearly

echoing Bovelles's *Liber de Nihilo*. Not surprisingly, Galafel also highlights negative theology, and cites Dionysius and Bovelles.³⁷ And like Charles, Manzini and Galafel link zero to *nihil*. Yet the high point in Bovelles's treatise's *Nachleben* came in 1661, when the Dutch philosopher Martin Schoock published his *Tractatus philosophicus de nihilo*. For Schoock not only commented on the *Liber de Nihilo*, but appended the entire text, along with Jean Passerat's poem *De nihilo*.³⁸ Today we can continue this tradition in our own modest ways.

37 See Archdeacon 2020, pp. 150–151; and Breton 1992, pp. 13–15, 17–18.

38 See Archdeacon 2020, pp. 143, 151–152; and Victor 1978, p.139.

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Heavenly Journeys: Marsilio Ficino and Girolamo Cardano on *Scipio's Dream*

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ABSTRACT

The report of a dream about a disembodied soul in Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (*Dream of Scipio*) is a narration of a heavenly journey that reflects a belief in the existence of a perfect harmonic world beyond the world of the senses. During the Renaissance it was used by many scholars to understand the transitory nature of earthly life and to find peace of mind. By comparing Marsilio Ficino's interpretation of *Scipio's Dream* with the one of Girolamo Cardano I will argue in this article that their fictional reports of heavenly journeys led to entirely different interpretations of the meaning of life. While Ficino, in his interpretation, focused on perfect cosmic harmony that he used as a model for a utopian view of a peaceful society, Cardano took the cacophony of his everyday life as point of departure, using the dream as a model that justifies one's self-interest.* **

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— The report of a dream about a disembodied soul in Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (*Dream of Scipio*), presented in the sixth book of his *Republic* but known in the Renaissance through Macrobius' *Commentariorum in somnium Scipionis* (*Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*), is a narration of a heavenly journey that reflects a belief in the existence of a perfect harmonic world beyond the world of the senses. The influence of this story, and especially of its portrayal of the music of the spheres, was great and long-lasting, despite competing with the Aristotelian concept of a silent cosmos. The *Dream of Scipio* narrates a dream dreamt by the Roman general Scipio Aemilianus. In his dream, Scipio ascends to the sphere of the stars from which he looks down at the earth and, while there, speaks

with his dead grandfather, who foretells his grandson's future victory over Carthage, but also helps him understand the transitory nature of earthly power. The two discuss a number of metaphysical subjects, including the nature of the cosmos as a source of inspiration for the meaning of life.

Macrobius, a Roman scholar, wrote a lengthy commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* in c. 400 AD.¹ Macrobius' commentary contains an exploration of the nature of the music of the spheres as well as an exploration of the nature of dreams. He divided dreams into different types, distinguishing between non-predictive dreams that result from one's waking concerns and

1 Macrobius 1973.

predictive dreams that have a prophetic function.² Non-predictive dreams can take the form of *phantasma* or *visum* (apparition), where the dreamer sees spirits; or they can take the form of *insomnium* (nightmare), where the dream is associated with something that irritates someone during the day. Predictive dreams take the forms of *visio*, a prophetic dream that comes true; *oraculum* where a guide reveals the future and gives advice; or *somnium*, an enigmatic dream requiring interpretation that hides its true meaning in complex concepts such as the music of the spheres. In the *Dream of Scipio* we find a mixture of all these elements.

Macrobius' commentary became the foundation of much of the music theory and dream theory of the medieval era and Renaissance. His explanations of the music of the spheres and of the different kinds of dreams give us a point of departure from which to interpret enigmatic dreams and strange dream-like happenings in Renaissance versions of the *Dream of Scipio*. By comparing Marsilio Ficino's (1433–1499)³ interpretation of *Scipio's Dream* with the one of

Girolamo Cardano (1501–1576)⁴ I will argue in this article that their fictional reports of heavenly journeys led to entirely different interpretations of the meaning of life. Ficino envisioned planetary music as perfect harmony and he used it as a model for a utopian view of a peaceful society. In this view, one has to transcend one's self-interest in order to create harmonic and peaceful relationships between all people on earth. But Cardano focused in his interpretation on the cacophony of his everyday life, using the dream as a model that justifies one's self-interest. In this view, to find peace of mind one must focus on oneself by securing one's property as well as the future of one's offspring.

— MACROBIUS' COMMENTARY ON THE DREAM OF SCIPIO

Upon his arrival in Africa, the Roman general Scipio Aemilianus is visited by his dead grandfather, Scipio Africanus in the *Dream of Scipio*. He finds himself looking down on the earth “from a lofty perch dazzling and glorious, set among the radiant stars.”⁵ His future is foretold by his grandfather, and a great deal of emphasis is placed upon the loyal service of Roman soldiers, who will, as a reward after death, “have a distinct place marked off in the heavens where they may enjoy a blessed existence forever”.⁶

2 Macrobius' dream theory is based on the Greek dream-theory of Artemidorus from the second century AD. Macrobius 1973, pp. 87–92.

3 M. Ficino, „Marsilius Ficinus Reverendissimo in Christo Patri et Domino Suo D. IOanni Cardinali Aragonio Ferdinandi Regis serenissimi filio suppliciter se commendat” („Marsilio Ficino humbly commend himself to his father and lord in Christ, His Eminence Giovanni, Cardinal of Aragon, son of His Serene Highness, King Ferdinand”) Ficino 1962, pp. 816–820; Ficino 1975, pp. 23–30.

4 G. Cardano. „Dialogus Hieronymi Cardani et Facii Cardani ipsius patris” (“Dialogue between Girolamo Cardano and Fazio Cardano, his own father”) (ca. 1574) Cardano 1966, pp. 637–640. English translation of the „Dialogus” Fierz 1983, pp. 158–166.

5 Macrobius 1973, p. 70.

6 Macrobius, 1973, p. 71.

In the dream, Scipio's grandfather makes his grandson aware that Rome is a very small part of the earth, which is in turn dwarfed by the stars.

The workings of the universe including the revolutions of the celestial spheres are described in Pythagorean terms, such as the doctrine of the music of the spheres, which were an accepted part of the cosmological picture of Plato, Cicero and Macrobius (*fig. 1*). This cosmological picture advocates the idea that the cosmos, in particular the speeds of the planetary revolutions, is ordered by the same numerical proportions that produce musical harmonies in earthly music. In his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* Macrobius took Scipio's amazement about the wonderful sound of the spheres as a point of departure for his view of the meaning of life, which is described in the following dialogue between Scipio and his grandfather: "I stood dumbfounded at these sights, and when I recovered my senses I inquired: "What is this great and pleasing sound that fills my ears?" "That," replied my grandfather

is a concord of tones separated by unequal but nevertheless carefully proportioned intervals, caused by the rapid motion of the spheres themselves. The high and low tones blended together produce different harmonies. Of course such swift motions could not be accomplished in silence and, as nature requires, the spheres at one extreme produce the low tones and at the other extreme the high tones. ... The eight spheres,

two of which move at the same speed, produce seven different tones, this number being, one might almost say, the key to the universe.⁷

According to Scipio's grandfather, the concentric-ringed cosmos is filled with a harmonious sound produced by the planets moving in their orbits through space. In Macrobius' *Commentary*, the planets are arranged as follows: Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Cicero differed from Plato in the order in which he arranged the spheres: Plato believed that the Sun was next to the Moon, followed by Venus, Mercury and the three outer planets, whereas Cicero placed Mercury, then Venus, between the Moon and the Sun, followed by the same three outer spheres as in Plato's order. Macrobius called Plato's order "Egyptian", Cicero's "Chaldean".⁸ Given that Cicero's statement about planetary music is not fully consistent, Macrobius had to defend the idea that the eight spheres, including the star-bearing sphere, could be paired with the seven sounds of a musical scale, by arguing that Mercury and Venus produced identical sounds because they move at the same speed.⁹ In his interpretation, the planets produced a single-octave scale: the Moon producing the lowest tone of the cosmic scale.

When Plato, Cicero and Macrobius looked to the heavens, they observed not only the Sun, Moon, stars and planets,

7 Macrobius 1973, pp.73–74.

8 Macrobius 1973, p. 162.

9 Macrobius 1973, p. 198.



Figure 1. An illustration from a 15th-century Italian manuscript of Macrobius’s commentary on Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis* (*Dream of Scipio*). It shows the sleeper, Scipio, and the subject of his cosmological dream: the music of the spheres.¹⁰

10 Macrobius, unknown scribe, *Comentum Macrobbii Ambrosii in somnium Scipionis* (Italy, 1469). MS Typ 7, Houghton Library, Harvard University. The order of the planets in this illustration is the Chaldean order (Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the star-bearing sphere).

but a perfect harmonious cosmos, that they could use to formulate a view of the good life. They all believed that fathoming the workings of the universe had deep implications for the meaning of life; an understanding of cosmology was therefore seen as a point of departure for human ethics, that is, for a view of harmonious life. Moreover, they argued that if one could answer the question of how the world worked, one obtained the key to the universe, that is, the key to the secret meaning of life. According to Plato, Cicero and Macrobius, there were two ways of obtaining this key: “Gifted men imitating this harmony on stringed instruments and in singing, have gained for themselves a return to this region, as have those who have devoted their exceptional abilities to a search for divine truths.”¹¹ By making or listening to music or by practicing philosophy, theology or dream interpretation, a talented human being could transcend the limitations of knowledge acquisition based on sense and reason. Moreover, the *Dream of Scipio* argues that the ears of ordinary mortals are filled with celestial sound, but they are unable to hear it, just as the inhabitants of the zone of the great cataract of the Nile have become deaf to its deafening sound.¹² Yet, one could reactivate the memory of celestial music by imitating it in earthly musical practices and through contemplation. Even though he was not very interested in the precise scholarly description of

the planetary spheres, it became one of the ruling passions of Marsilio Ficino to find the meaning of life by following in the footsteps of Plato, Cicero and Macrobius, and to share it with his fellow human beings.

— FICINO ON THE ART OF LIVING PEACEFULLY WITH OTHER PEOPLE

Marsilio Ficino was an Italian philosopher, translator, and commentator, who started the Renaissance revival of Plato and Platonism.¹³ He owned a copy of Macrobius’ *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* from a very early point in his studies.¹⁴ Macrobius’ *Commentary* was a rich source of inspiration for him on dreams, on numbers and proportions, on cosmology and on the meaning of life. Moreover, the *Commentary* was an important source of inspiration to reflect on the principle of the immortality of the soul, because it had a strong adherence to a Platonic philosophy of life based on the concept of detachment, and to the music of the spheres that cannot be heard by human ears, but is the key to the universe.¹⁵

The way in which Ficino utilized the Platonic thought of the *Dream of Scipio* in his letter to the son of King Ferdinand can best be interpreted in the context of his efforts as a Platonic peacemaker and healer, envisioning his Academy as

11 Macrobius 1973, p. 74. Macrobius is following here Timaeus 47c–d. Plato 1952, p. 158.

12 Macrobius 1973, p. 199.

13 On Ficino, see Celenza 2017 and J.G. Snyder (no date). „Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499)”. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://iep.utm.edu/ficino/> [accessed on 15.09.2020].

14 For Ficino’s reception of Cicero, see Rees 2013.

15 Prins 2014, pp. 25–213.

a breeding place for new ideas about the health and harmony of individuals as well as society.¹⁶ During his life, Ficino sought to combine the pursuit of medicine for the body, music for the spirit, and theology for the soul.¹⁷ As a famous doctor, musician, Platonic theologian, and ordained priest, that is, as a member of the intellectual and religious establishment, Ficino was entitled to prescribe medicines for holistic healing to the world leaders of his time.

The immortality of the soul was, for Ficino, a central organizing principle. This is reflected in the advice that he gives in the letter to the son of King Ferdinand that centred on the nature and destiny of the soul. Ficino's Platonic views on the nature of the soul led to a holistic vision of the physical and spiritual health of individuals as well as societies. In Ficino's Christian-Platonist view, the loving and contemplative mind attempts to return to its eternal state in its true home by making a spiritual ascent through the spheres, that is, through different levels of ultimate reality.¹⁸ The heavenly journey or ascent from the physical to the spiritual, from earthly shadow to divine Form, and from the temporal to the eternal is the keystone of Ficino's philosophy of life. By describing a series of mental stages, which in the letter to the son of King Ferdinand are represented as a journey through the celestial spheres,

the king is confronted with a way to heal and restore his own soul that will also be beneficial for the souls of all his subjects. Hoping to change the king's leadership in a positive way, Ficino uses the letter to remind the king that every soul has an innate desire to return to its divine origin, a longing to transcend the imperfections and distractions of being incarnate in a perishable body and to regain the wonderful bliss in its true home.¹⁹

The encounter between Scipio and his grandfather in the *Dream of Scipio*, as narrated in the sixth book of letters, letter thirteen, is used as a model for an encounter between Ficino and the spirit of the late King Alfonso of Naples, addressing his still living grandson Giovanni, Cardinal of Aragon, with a message for his father King Ferdinand, Alfonso's son.²⁰ To underline the truth of the message in his letter, so that his advice to the king on conduct would be acted upon, Ficino reported that during a journey through the celestial spheres his soul met King Alfonso, who uttered a prophecy from heaven, in the language of angels. When Ficino's soul came back on earth, he translated this message which, in heaven, he had understood with the "eyes and ears of the mind alone" into a language understandable to "the ears and eyes of the body as well."²¹ Having listened to King Alfonso up in the heavenly spheres, Ficino passed on to his son King Ferdinand, who was still on earth, the task of the "restoration of

16 McClure 1991, p. 142.

17 M. Ficino. „Medicina corpus, musica spiritum, theologia animum“, liber 1 (to Francesco Musano). Ficino, *Opera Omnia* 1 (Basel, 1576, rept. Turin 1962), p. 609; Ficino 1975, pp. 39–40.

18 Ficino 1962, p. 820; Ficino, 1975, p. 30.

19 Ficino, 1962, p. 820; Ficino, 1975, p. 30.

20 Ficino 1962, pp. 816–820; Ficino 1975, pp. 23–30.

21 Ficino 1962, p. 816; Ficino 1975, p. 23.

peace which has been disturbed for so long by hostile fate".²² Ficino's rhetorical strategy is to put words into the mouth of the king's dead grandfather Alfonso, since Alfonso's words were more influential than his own. He did this to influence Alfonso's grandson Giovanni in such a way that he would make his father Ferdinand realize that, if he wishes to see peace restored, he has to let go of his earthly ambitions, a part of the insignificant everyday world, and concentrate on what can be perceived with "the ears of the mind alone".

To a modern reader, the instructions given in the letter somehow resemble the ones given during a hypnotherapy session. In order to enter the dream world of *Scipio's dream* Ferdinand is enchanted by the following words: "Now, Ferdinand, leaving behind the senses, turn your mind back onto itself through the full circle of self-examination. Leaving the body and turning your mind to itself, you will at once see that it is an incorporeal sphere."²³ By imagining being transported to the heavenly spheres, the human mind makes contact with the deepest layers of the soul, where "the God of gods pulsates with light" in divine forms.²⁴ By "contemplating and loving rightly", the mind is able to leave the prison of the body, remember its divine origin and put the value of perishable mortal things in the perspective of the eternal immortal soul.²⁵

Ficino's interpretation of *Scipio's dream* is focused on formulating a perspective in which human beings are bound together by cosmic powers, such as love, sympathy, and harmony. For Ficino, cosmic love, sympathy and harmony linked all things in the universe together; they flowed first from God into all existing things, which consequently shared essential properties and powers, even though they might be very different in their earthly manifestations.²⁶ It is for this reason that *spiritus* (spirit), as a mediator between the intelligible realm and the realm of the senses, as well as a mediator between the human soul and body, got a central role in Ficino's philosophy. Ficino defines the concept as follows: "Spirit is defined by doctors as a vapor of blood – pure, subtle, hot, and clear. After being generated by the heat of the heart out of the more subtle blood, it flies to the brain; and there the soul uses it continually for the exercise of the interior as well as the exterior senses."²⁷ This blurring of the interior and the exterior eyes and ears, that is, of the metaphysical and the physical realm, in which the immaterial soul can use "spirit as the bond between mind and body" to influence the physical world is the focus of Ficino's interpretation of the *Dream of Scipio*.²⁸

22 Ficino 1962, p. 817; Ficino 1975, p. 24.

23 Ficino 1962, p. 817; Ficino 1975, p. 25.

24 Ficino 1962, p. 817; Ficino 1975, p. 25.

25 Ficino 1962, p. 817; Ficino 1975, p. 25.

26 Ficino 1962, p. 817-818; Ficino 1975, p. 26.

27 M. Ficino (1989). *Three Books on Life* 1.2, pp. 11-15. Ed. and tr. C.V. Kaske and J.R. Clark. Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, in conjunction with the Renaissance Society of America, p. 110.

28 Ficino 1962, p. 818; Ficino 1975, p. 26.

If someone “contemplates rightly” he leaves the normal one-dimensional sense experience of the world behind and opens his interior ears and eyes that are connected to his imagination. In the imaginary world of the dream, the deepest truths reveal themselves. The imagination is the realm of the imaginative, of the most truthful divine forms. Anamnesis is a special kind of imagining, that is, a recalling to mind of “the wonderful bliss in our true home”, of the place where the immortal soul dwelt before its incarnation and to which it will return after life on earth.²⁹ Rediscovering that innate knowledge from within is an act of will, during which one has to open his spirit for the influx of “particular rays” by which “the universe is open and clear to each individual”.³⁰

In his letter, Ficino addresses King Ferdinand under the pretext of addressing humanity, to warn him that his leadership is based on nothing more than the earthly ambition to get more power and expand his territory:

O blind men! You, who are under the gross air, think that you see heaven and the stars from earth, just as fish think similarly under the swirling waters of the ocean. How your ridiculous opinion deceives you! For fish on the seabed do not see heaven, but water; not the pure light of the heavenly bodies, but faint, dark images of them in the muddy water. The same happens to you, wretched men,

under the gross air; and yet you marvel at the heavenly bodies which you have already turned into earth.³¹

As a remedy, Ficino invites King Ferdinand to think of the earth from the perspective of the heavenly spheres, where human souls “may enjoy a blessed existence forever”. He advises him to be “content with the territories you have”, because, if he does so, fate will give him many more and greater gifts, “far beyond any won by force.”³² He explains that men you pursue with violence will certainly flee from you, but those you treat with kindness will willingly follow and serve you. Moreover, that “it will be easy for you to move everyone wherever you wish if you yourself are never moved.”³³ For Ficino, ruling with supreme intelligence means never entering into a struggle with deceitful fortune. Just like in the *Dream of Scipio*, the perfect harmonious operations of the planetary spheres are presented here by Ficino as a guide to a better life, not only for the King but also for his subjects. Ultimately, a monarchy should imitate the Kingdom of Heaven, in which every part is in its proper place. From his place in heaven, King Alfonso paraphrases this key passage from the dream as follows:

What shall I say of the innumerable host of stars unknown to you. What of the wonderful variety and order

29 Ficino 1962, p. 820; Ficino 1975, p. 30.

30 Ficino 1962, p. 818; Ficino 1975, p. 27.

31 Ficino 1962, p. 818; Ficino 1975, p. 27.

32 Ficino 1962, p. 819; Ficino 1975, p. 29.

33 Ficino 1962, p. 819; Ficino 1975, p. 29.

of their movements unrecognised by you? What of the ineffable sweetness of that harmony reflected by the diverse movement of the spheres and by the harmonious balance of all the celestial bodies?³⁴

Ficino believed that the body of the universe, animated by the world spirit, pulsated just like a “celestial cithara” in harmonious proportion, its low tones produced by the slower motion of certain planets, the higher notes being produced by faster planetary motion.³⁵ From his reading of Macrobius’ *Commentary* Ficino must have known that these higher and lower tones were believed to form a musical scale, but he did not go into the details of the cosmic scale in this letter, nor did he do so in his *Timaeus* commentary, where he defined the music of the spheres as a dynamic multiplicity of celestial sounds, that is, as a kind of polyphony. Accordingly, he saw an ideal society as a polyphonic structure in which each individual voluntarily sang his own tone in the symphony of mankind.

Ficino clearly considered himself as one of the “gifted men imitating this harmony [of the spheres] on stringed instruments and who in singing, have gained for themselves a return to this region [of the true home of the soul]” described by Cicero and Macrobius.³⁶ Having advised Ferdinand to go beyond his private interests and to devote himself

to the restoration of peace and harmony on earth, in the concluding paragraph of the letter, Ficino made a playful musical reference to the King’s reward in the hereafter:

I [Ficino] would most willingly sing to you now, my son [King Ferdinand], with the angelic voice of the Thrones, of the wonderful sweetness with which we are filled in our true home; but I fear that in comparison with such great sweetness here the whole of life on earth would afterwards seem not only most bitter to you, but the very source of bitterness.³⁷

By keeping the secret of the universe unrevealed, Ficino uses the ineffable character of the music of the spheres to convince Ferdinand of the reality of the harmonious metaphysical world he portrayed in his letter, which is inaudible for “the ears of the body” but will be audible in the hereafter. Living a detached life full of faith, hope and love will ultimately guarantee a musical paradise in the hereafter. In sharp contrast with his predecessor, Girolamo Cardano used the *Dream of Scipio* to argue against a philosophy of life based on the concept of detachment and promises for a blessed life in the hereafter. In his variation of *Scipio’s Dream* he focused on coping with his troubled mind in the here and now that was caused by the political and religious establishment of his day.

34 Ficino 1962, p. 818; Ficino 1975, p. 27.

35 Prins 2014, pp. 100–114.

36 Macrobius 1973, p. 74.

37 Ficino 1962, p. 820, Ficino 1975, p. 30.

— CARDANO ON THE ART OF LIVING PEACEFULLY WITH ONESELF

Girolamo Cardano (1501–1576) was an Italian physician, mathematician, music theorist, and astrologer who gave the first clinical description of typhus fever and whose book *Ars magna* (*The Great Art*, 1545) is a cornerstone in the history of algebra.³⁸ Cardano's favourite son, having experienced serious marital problems, poisoned his wife and was executed in 1560. Cardano never recovered from this tragic loss. From 1562 he was a professor in Bologna, but in 1570 he was suddenly arrested on the accusation of heresy. After several months in prison he was released and given a pension to practice medicine, but he lost his position and the right to publish books. Before his death he completed his autobiography, *De propria vita* (*The Book of My Life*, published posthumously in 1643). In Chapter 37 of Cardano's *The Book of My Life* he reported a dream on a journey through the celestial spheres, which is loosely modelled after the *Dream of Scipio*.³⁹ In this dream Cardano experienced his soul being separated from his body and flew to the sphere of the Moon. In the sphere of the Moon, he heard the voice of his father Fazio, who argued that he had been sent by God to protect his son.⁴⁰ His father then added that the soul of his son would stay there for seven thousand years, then go up, sphere by sphere, to the city of God. Fully in line

with the tradition of the harmony of the spheres, Cardano interpreted these celestial spheres as corresponding to different academic disciplines such as grammar and mathematics that he had to master during his life.⁴¹ In his own interpretation, the dream represented his soul's long voyage toward God, but he wrote a far more interesting variation of the *Dream of Scipio*. In order to appreciate the differences between Cardano's second version of the *Dream of Scipio* and Ficino's version, let us first examine his ideas regarding the art of living well.

Earlier in his career, Cardano had written a treatise titled *De consolatione* (*On Consolation*, 1542), in which he dealt with one's own death and grief over the death of one's loved ones, that is, the major concerns of almost all human beings.⁴² Moreover, the book deals with illness, poverty, exile, and imprisonment: misfortune with which Cardano had personal experience. In contrast with Ficino, Cardano underlined the importance of his own subjective experience in the treatise, which continued to be a foundation of his later moral thought. But, as McClure has pointed out, in his early work, Cardano's leading consolation for the fear of death still was the belief in the immortality of the soul.⁴³

In *De utilitate ex adversis capienda* (*On Gaining Advantage from Misfortunes*, 1561), a guide on the art of living and dying well, Cardano critically reacted to the tradition

38 Giglioni 2019.

39 Cardano 1966, pp. 29a–b; Cardano 2002, pp. 158–159.

40 On Cardano's relationship with his father, see Giglioni 2010, pp. 463–472; Maggi 2010.

41 Grafton 1999, p. 156.

42 McClure 1991, pp. 161–164.

43 McClure 1991, p. 162.

to which Ficino belonged that centred on the philosophical and religious concept of detachment, and focused on the reward for a good life on earth in the hereafter. In the treatise he described a way of coping with a troubled mind that was neglected by the religious and intellectual establishment of his time. As an alternative to Ficino's lofty ideals for a better world, Cardano argued for a more down to earth response to human problems. Aware that theologians and philosophers were still seen as the proper authorities on moral thought in his time, he disproved this view in the following way:

Many would object that the Theologians would better be able to teach and persuade in these matters. But that is completely false. For they, like the Philosophers, are engaged only in those things that seem paradoxical: for instance, where they teach that poverty ought to be embraced, we teach that it ought to be fled. They praise sickness, disgrace, and calamities, we, on the other hand, recommend that those things be avoided if possible, or, if not, we teach how they can be borne more easily or how by counterbalancing evils with goods, they may be made lesser and tolerable. Thus, whereas our whole enterprise is built around things and acts, the Theologians only dispute changing or handling things minimally. Whence it happens that their arguments differ more amongst themselves than night from day.⁴⁴

Even though Ficino's theory of detachment, as presented in his version on the *Dream of Scipio*, was also a strategy for handling misfortune and for counterbalancing the evils in the here and now with the goods in the hereafter, it is fundamentally different from Cardano's secular view of how one should respond to adversity and disaster. He argued here that misfortune should not be considered as an opportunity for spiritual growth, that is, as a blessing in disguise, but that it must be remedied as the worldly misery it truly is. Beyond being a harsh critique of oppressive religious and philosophical theories about detachment and asceticism, Cardano's argument is a rebuke of abstract intellectualizing in the field of the philosophy of life.

In the dialogue between Cardano and his father who died long ago, the *Dialogus Hieronymi Cardani et Facii Cardani ipsius patris* (ca. 1574), the question of what you can gain in this life that is lasting and significant, especially if you compare it to that other life in the hereafter, is the driving force behind his interpretation of the *Dream of Scipio*. Rather than calling on the inaudible and elusive music of the spheres to formulate a metaphysical answer to the question, Cardano uses the concept of noise to formulate a secular alternative.⁴⁵ Furthermore, his interpretation of the dream is a mixture of the form of a *somnium*, the form used by his predecessors Cicero, Macrobius and Ficino, and an *insomnium*, a nightmare in which the dreamer sees spirits, and in which the dream is associated with

44 Cardano 1966, p. 16. Tr. McClure 1991, pp. 162–163.

45 On Cardano's musical thought, see Prins 2017a; Prins 2020.

“some condition or circumstance that irritates a man during the day and consequently disturbs him when he falls asleep”.⁴⁶ The true meaning of his complex variation of *The Dream of Scipio* is focused on remedying the deafening mental noise one can experience during one’s life on earth.

Cardano dreamt and recorded the dream at a time when he was still worried that the Inquisition might prosecute him again. These worries tormented him at night as a result of which his tranquility of mind was seriously disturbed. In contrast with Ficino’s letter, which was addressed to someone else, the dream dialogue between Cardano and his father is addressed to himself. In the ‘Dialogue between Girolamo Cardano and Fazio Cardano, his own father, Cardano heard the voice of his father again. Having lamented his precarious situation in Rome and having uttered his disturbed and depressive feelings, his father accuses him of “lamenting loud and foolishly”.⁴⁷ He then explains that Cardano has entered the heaven of the Moon, whose spirit “holds the lowest place among those substances which are completely incorporeal.”⁴⁸ Since the human intellect is still further removed from God than the spirit of the Moon, a human being cannot really know himself, but can only perceive himself by perceiving other things. The human intellect is bound to matter and, as a result of this, “anything that is completely separated from matter

remains inaccessible to him.”⁴⁹ Girolamo’s Father, Fazio, concludes his epistemological digression by pointing out that “Of such [purely intellectual] things we can gain knowledge only by analogy, by interpreting similarities, and this only in a most general way.”⁵⁰ To demonstrate how, he gives Cardano the following message from heaven as a point of departure to come to terms with his own existence:

Fazio: Today is the fourth of April 1574, and you shall regard this day as your first, so to speak, new birthday. You understand now how you will – starting from the spheres of the moon – ascend through sphere after sphere until you reach the highest one. Rejoice that your dream is becoming reality and that the time is now.

Girolamo: What shall I be happy about?

Fazio: About the knowledge that God has endowed you with a special gift. What hardship or acrimony could you have suffered, what might still happen to you that you would not voluntarily, even gladly, take upon yourself. Can you not see how God is taking care of you? This is indicated, among many other things, by that dream which you think so full of forboding, so gloomy and frightening ... Finally, [God’s presence in your life] is also indicated by that clap of thunder which threatened the house for so long, and by that frightful uproar

46 Macrobius 1973, p. 89. On Cardano’s dream theory, see Fierz 1983, pp. 125–155.

47 Cardano 1966, p. 637; Fierz 1983, p. 159.

48 Cardano 1966, p. 637; Fierz 1983, p. 159.

49 Cardano 1966, p. 637; Fierz 1983, p. 159.

50 Cardano 1966, p. 637; Fierz 1983, p. 159.

at the end of the third day when you had been incarcerated. It sounded first at the prison gate, then at the window through which sunlight still fell. The window-bars were so shaken that they clattered⁵¹

Here the voice of the father represents the wisdom Cardano had lost during his depression. Interestingly, the message is also quite similar to the intellectual and religious theories Cardano criticized in his *De utilitate ex adversis capienda* that we discussed above. In sharp contrast with the mild and soothing approach taken by the grandfather in Cicero's, Macrobius', and Ficino's versions of the *Dream of Scipio*, the spirit of Cardano's father gives his son a genuine wake-up call, by confronting him both with his blindness and with his mental stressor. Moreover, the message from heaven presented here in the dialogue is not associated with the ineffable sweet music of the spheres, but with deafening earthly noise. Indeed, the type of audible sound presented in this passage is closer to the images of cosmic noise given in Aristotle's *On the Heavens* 2.9, where he presented his rejection of the Platonic view of a sonorous universe as follows:

Sound has a destructive effect (e.g. stones may be split by thunder), and a noise of the unimaginable loudness which we must attribute to bodies of the size of the sun, moon and stars would long ago have crushed and shattered everything on earth. ... These

results clear up another point, namely that the theory that music is produced by their [i.e., planetary] movements, because the sounds they make are harmonious, although ingeniously and brilliantly formulated by its authors, does not contain the truth.⁵²

The imaginary noise of the cosmos described here by Aristotle is in his view as absurd as the music of the spheres, because both types of cosmic sound are based on the wrong view that sound in the heavens is caused by friction. While Ficino used the planetary symphony as a model for the harmonious motions in the soul, and as a model for a peaceful society, Cardano does not theorize about harmonizing the motions of the soul in terms of bringing them in line with planetary motions.⁵³ Instead, he sees the frightful noises in his dream as a point of departure from which to formulate a philosophy of living peacefully with oneself and with one's demons.

Cardano continues to narrate his dream, in which he also "encountered two single women, tradeswomen most likely, who were creating a mighty uproar with ropes and dogs. ... The blows struck by the second one resounded most disagreeably in my direction" on the day of his arrest.⁵⁴ The auditory memories of his arrest have induced in him a constant fear of being arrested again, a fear that was far more unbearable for him than the loss of his professorship

52 Aristotle 1971, pp. 190–193.

53 Plato 1952, p. 158. Macrobius 1973, p. 74.

54 Cardano 1966, p. 638; Fierz 1983, p. 161.

51 Cardano 1966, p. 637–638; Fierz 1983, p. 160.

and the fact that he could not publish anymore.

But over the course of the dialogue Cardano gains insight into the cause of his depression: behind his grief and fear lies a great anxiety for the future. The fear of death that has taken hold of him is the unconscious stressor of his nightmares manifesting itself in unpleasant noises. In the dialogue, the father then interprets his son's angst and, in bringing it to his awareness, helps his son cope with his troubled mind. Fazio comforts his son Girolamo about his upcoming death by pointing out all his achievements and by exhorting him to liberate himself from all his woes, because death is only a transitional stage in the perspective of the immortality of the soul.

At the end of the dialogue, his father urges Girolamo to let go of his earthly troubles, and to spend the remainder of his life devoting himself to practical tasks, particularly the care of his possessions and, last but not least, his grandchildren: "since the basic requirements for your ascent toward the supreme state have already been fulfilled, you must now first take care of your financial affairs, and then of the education of your grandchildren. From this, everything else will take its due course. You will yet experience great joy."⁵⁵ Thus, fully in line with the *Dream of Scipio*, the dialogue leads away from fear and anxiety, by way of contemplating death and the perspective of the life of the immortal soul in the hereafter, back to life on earth.

55 Cardano 1966, p. 637, transl. Fierz 1983, p. 166.

— CONCLUSION

The two variations presented in this essay complement each other in a meaningful way: Cardano's dialogue illustrates how misuse of power by a member of the political, religious or intellectual establishment can lead to a miserable life for an individual, that is, that Ficino gave sound advice to King Ferdinand. Ficino's letter is clearly written from the perspective of someone belonging to the religious and political establishment himself, while Cardano's dialogue presents the voice of someone who is excluded from it. Taken together, they demonstrate that different positions in life lead to entirely different views on the art of living well. While Ficino envisioned a utopian society on earth that imitated the heavenly kingdom, Cardano realized how distant normal life was from such a view, and how dissonant his life was made by the leaders of his day. Accordingly, he came to the conclusion that you should not "put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save" nor delude oneself with heavenly views of a better world but protect your own interests.⁵⁶

Even though Fazio's advice to his son Girolamo to take care of his financial affairs is very far away from Alfonso's advice to his son Ferdinand to focus on peaceful leadership, both recommendations are based on a similar moment of detachment, in which the dreamer can abandon his earthly perspective on life and is able to put his future life in the perspective of eternity. This moment of

56 Psalm 146:3–7.

detachment is a moment of active imagination, in which alternatives for war, in Ficino's variation, and for depression and anxiety, in Cardano's variation, are presented to the protagonist by influential father figures.

In Ficino's as well as Cardano's variation on *The Dream of Scipio* an important function is attributed to the realms of inaudible heavenly music or of silence, that is, the function of muffling audible earthly noise, that both correspond to the unconscious, symbolized by the figure of the father, in relation to the ego of the son.⁵⁷ In the course of the dream, the mediator, be it Alfonso or Fazio, confronted his son with his own weakness,

but at the same time he offered him a perspective for a better life: in the first case, peace among all people on earth, and in the second, peace of mind.

With his rejection of abstract intellectualizing about the music of the spheres, in his variation of *The Dream of Scipio* Cardano broke with the belief that one could reactivate the memory of celestial music through imitation in earthly musical practices and through contemplation. As an alternative, he introduced the concept of silencing the memory of disturbing earthly sound that worked equally well as an incentive to finding a key to the art of living peacefully with oneself and others.

57 Cardano's dream theory became a source of inspiration for Carl Gustav Jung. Prins 2017b, pp. 391–413.

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The Renaissance of Numbers: on Continuity, Nature of Complex Numbers and the Symbolic Turn

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents an analysis of imaginary quantity before Gauss based on the notion of continuity and symbolic representation. Its aim is to uncover subtle roots of the “impossible”, “sophisticated” or “absurd” entities that, as we claim, stem from the Renaissance notion of nature and from the “symbolic turn” which occurred in that period. In order to grant impossible quantities a reasonable (operational) meaning, it is necessary to establish an equation (formal continuity) between real and imaginary. It is possible only if the real is in a sense subsumed within the symbolic which holds paradigmatically for the notions of number and magnitude. For, once number and magnitude become symbolic representations of the same universal intellectual matter of quantity, an operational analogy and continuity between them may be established. Three “continuities” shall be distinguished on the path to such “universal mathematics” at the end of which the imaginary entities may acquire the citizenship in the Republic of numbers.

...sic tamen operabimur¹

SERIES OF SERIES.

Complex numbers² represent a solution to *any* polynomial equation. Thus, a complex number designates an algebraic

solution in general and illustrates among other things the universal validity of the fundamental theorem of algebra:³ Thanks to complex numbers every equation has a solution, and consequently the number of solutions it has corresponds to the degree of the equation. The universality which eventually turned out to be the enclosure of the complex field⁴ has indeed been

- 1 Cardano 1663, p. 287a; cf. Cardano 1968, p. 219.
- 2 A complex number refers to an entity expressed in the form $a+bi$, where $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$, while i represents a solution to the equation $i^2 = -1$. Given that no real number satisfies such a relation, b is called an “imaginary” component of the complex number, whereas a is a “real” part. Complex numbers establish a field \mathbb{C} which, by definition, contains the field \mathbb{R} inasmuch as b allows the value 0. Consequently, complex numbers constitute an extension, namely algebraic enclosure, of the real numbers, are subject to analogical operations as the real numbers, bear analogical properties (primality, for example) and enjoy the

laws of real addition, multiplication and commutativity.

- 3 See Girard 1629, E4 r-v; AT VI, pp. 444–454; Newton 1707, pp. 252–255; d’Alembert 1746, pp. 182–224; Euler 1751; Gauss 1799. There are countless works on the fundamental theorem, for a brief historical overview see Katz, & Parshall 2014, pp. 247–288.
- 4 No other kind of complex quantities or numbers than that of the form $a+\epsilon bi$ is actually necessary for the solution of

the driving force behind these suspicious and disturbing objects. Impossible, sophisticated, absurd, imaginary as they were called, these “amphibians between being and non-being”⁵ are nonetheless wonderfully well suited to reflect the “treasure of relations between real quantities”,⁶ indicating the subtle continuity, inherent ambiguity and symbolic nature of things characteristic for the Renaissance period.

How can a mere “game with empty symbols”⁷ possess such expressive power? By what right can these enigmatic entities acquire citizenship in the Republic of numbers? One of the remarkable properties of numbers consists in symbolizing an order—and the other way round, a number may be defined as an element of an order. Now one of the simplest kinds of order is the order of succession and this is how numbers can be defined: as the elements of an infinite sequence or “series” (*Reihe*) allowing a “relation or transition” between the elements, defining their rank and relative distance. Thus, for instance, if the relation between A and B is 1, then the opposite relation, between B and A, is -1 . Given an arbitrary starting point, apparently, every integer symbolizes a relation between

the starting point and some element of the infinite sequence.⁸ At the end of the day, it is precisely the system of these relations which constitutes the proper object of the science of arithmetic.

The above reasoning, despite its apparent simplicity, marks an achievement of mathematical abstraction. Not only does it provide us quite a reasonable way of conceiving of the notion of negative quantity (for how could something possibly be lesser than nothing?), but also and foremost—it erects a self-contained structure allowing for a recursive definition of ever more complex, yet ever more general objects. For we are able to conceive of objects of such a nature that they cannot be ordered except by the means of two sequences, or according to “sequences of sequences”. Besides the “original units” (*vorigen Einheiten*) $+1$ and -1 , the list of transitions may be complemented by another pair of transitions, say $+i$ and $-i$. Thus, a two-dimensional manifold (*Mannigfaltigkeit*) is formed, that comprises “transitions from one sequence to the other”, and consequently all the relations holding between the objects defined by them. Now, given that all that concerns a mathematician here is “enumeration and comparison of their relations”,⁹ we are free to represent them in corresponding special relations:

(...) and the simplest case is when there is no reason to arrange the symbols of the objects in any other way than quadratically. That is, one

all algebraical equations. There are no “more imaginary” numbers (contrary to what Leibniz, for instance, maintained): the symbol $a + bi$ is stable. The proposition was stated by Euler, demonstrated by d’Alembert in 1745–1748 and by Euler again in 1751.

5 GM VI, p. 357.

6 Gauss 1876, p. 175.

7 “(...) an sich inhaltleeres Zeichenspiel” (Gauss 1876, p. 175). Among other epithets, we can read “blind”, “opaque” or “denatured”.

8 Gauss 1876, p. 176.

9 Gauss 1876, p. 176.

divides an unbounded plane into squares by means of two systems of parallel lines which cross each other at right angles, and one assigns the points of intersection to the symbols. Every such point A has four neighbours, and if one designates the relation of A to a neighbouring point by $+1$, then the point to be designated by -1 is thereby determined, and one can choose either of the two others for $+i$ or can take the point related to $+i$ to be right or left as one wishes.¹⁰

The purely symbolic, punctual character, emphasized by Gauss himself, of the newly constructed objects is obviously of the utmost importance here—and the same holds for the self-determination of the whole system, once one of the transitions has been specified as a positive number series. The universality of the scheme underlying the realms of both numbers and magnitudes grants us access to the decisive insight:

But that means, in the language of the mathematicians, that $+i$ is a geometric mean (*Proportionalgrösse*) between $+1$ und -1 or corresponds to the sign $\sqrt{-1}$: we intentionally do not say *the* geometric mean, for clearly $-i$ has the same claim. Here, therefore, an intuitive (*anschaulichen*) meaning of $\sqrt{-1}$ is completely established (*gerechtferigt*), and one needs nothing further to admit this quantity

into the domain of the objects of arithmetic.¹¹

Here we finally stand on the firm ground of the Gauss (Argand) plane.¹² One of the most, in Gauss's words, "obscure and mysterious" entities of the world of mathematics, magnitude $\sqrt{-1}$, has all suddenly turned out to be a *number* entirely admissible in arithmetic¹³ and to shine a bright new light, explaining and unifying branches of mathematics as disparate as arithmetic, trigonometry or integral calculus might be.¹⁴ The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone of analysis.¹⁵

The relational symbolic standpoint taken above allowed us to grasp the more intimate, universal and manifold nature of familiar mathematical entities, since it provides a proper perspective in which the intuitive (geometric) and the formal (algebraic) comprehension explain each other. Accordingly, the key notion here, that of the geometric mean, i or $-i$, is

10 Gauss 1876, p. 177; tr. Ewald 2005, p. 311.

11 Gauss 1876, p. 177; tr. Ewald 2005a, p. 312.

12 As the name of the coinventor indicates (see Argand 1806), the geometrical interpretation of imaginary quantities has, in spite of the overwhelming clarity and consistency of the Gaussian account, rather a complex history beginning at the very latest with Wallis's *Algebra* (1673). It includes the names like H. D. Trudel, C. Wessel or A. Q. Bueé. See further, Flament 2003, pp. 97–248 and Granger 1998, pp. 63–73.

13 Gauss 1876, p. 177.

14 Up to present day, complex numbers find their place in the vast field of sciences varying from optics, statistics, computer science to quantum mechanics, including an occasional overlap to the sphere of religion and mysticism (see Florensky 1922).

15 See Psalm 118:22.

by no means simple. It is, rather, two-fold. On the one hand it consists in the aforementioned relation given by the algebraic expression

$$\frac{-i}{1} = \frac{1}{-i}$$

but, on the other hand, it involves the meaning of the unitary geometrical transitions +1, -1, +i, -i representing rotations of an angle while, naturally, the rotation from +1 to *i* is equivalent to the one from *i* to -1.¹⁶ Since the rotation may be easily matched with a division of the angle, complex arithmetic metamorphosed into an essential analytical tool of trigonometry as well.¹⁷

A device, as it were, for transferring relations from one mathematical discipline to another, complex arithmetic granted each of them universal access to the reasoning styles of the others, providing thus not only a common ground for unification of all fields of mathematics back then, but also, and for the same reason, a completely new horizon of conceiving of ever more complex and general objects, spaces and algebras. For, we can finally ask with Gauss himself whether and “why the relations between things that form a manifold of more than two dimensions cannot

supply yet another type of number that is admissible in higher arithmetic”.¹⁸

— IMPOSSIBLE INTERSECTION

Ever since its inception, European mathematics was marked by two consubstantial separations. The first one is the separation on the conceptual level between the continuous and the discrete. It emerged as a result of the discovery of incommensurability and paved the way to the notion of mathematical infinity. The second one, inherently related to the above, emerged on the level of doing, proving and reasoning. Here we may observe two basic mindsets or prevailing attitudes towards the matter of mathematics: demonstrating and calculating. The former, geometric by nature, pertains to the sphere of vision, intuition and intellection—its aim is to demonstrate the truth about the formal proprieties of figures by constructing new ones, inventing a common measure and stating conclusively some sort of equality. The latter is characterized by a combinatorial or algebraic approach. Rather than vision, it concerns tactile (*blind*),¹⁹ sequential manipulation of generalized objects that are usually endowed with different values or dignities. These tend to represent a symbolic value, or precisely a symbol of value—a value as

16 Granger 1998, pp. 74–75. In the same manner we might recall Euler’s “proof” of the equality $\sqrt{-2} \times \sqrt{-3} = \sqrt{6}$ intelligible only on condition that we let $\sqrt{6}$ denote the pair $\pm\sqrt{6}$. See Stillwell 2010, pp. 280–281.

17 The first one to observe the equivalence between the famous problem of trisecting an angle and the solution of a cubic equation was François Viète in 1591; see Viète 1646, pp. 82–162.

18 Gauss 1876, p. 178; tr. Ewald 2005a, p. 313.

19 Cf. note 7. It is well known that the word “calculus” meant originally a pebble (in abacus, in a game or an election), a small smooth piece of limestone, which can actually bear very limited inner meaning (cf. Bovillus’s *piger ut mineral*) and represent in itself any other nature whatsoever. In this sense, the “calculus” is completely blind.

such, given ultimately by the operation it is subject to. Rather than a figure, therefore, it is a configuration as a vehicle of relations that is at stake. The goal of such operational way of mathematics is to invent. Driven by the blind and formal power of rules, it consists in penetrating the horizons of complexity in order to disentangle an underlying meaning, take possession of it and use it—no matter if it is in the art of algebra, divination, medicine or kabbala.²⁰

The tension that arises between these two vital strategies forms the history of European mathematics. Although there might have been intellectual periods where one seemingly dominated the other, both were continually present at each stage of development. They are both inextricably related and folded into each other, because they convey different symbolic expressions of the fundamental continuity of the “intellectual matter”. Both are ultimately based on the notion of analogy,²¹ and both, we

claim, finally intersect in the notion of imaginary quantity, and complex numbers in particular.

Contrary to what the clarity of the Gaussian geometrical interpretation might suggest, a whole labyrinth of symbolic invention is concentrated in this enigmatic entity.²² Here, the “natural”, “intuitive” or “phenomenological” meanings of basic mathematical notions, like number and magnitude, are being constantly blurred within the context of their proper interrelations and reborn afterwards in the form of a *code*, as operational symbols or ciphers providing access to a more universal field of expression.

In this paper, we shall give a version of the history of imaginary quantities before Gauss, based on the notion of continuity and symbolic representation—as we have said, the Gaussian conception is in no way simple or “intuitive”. The goal of the paper is to uncover the most subtle roots of the imaginary quantity we find in the Renaissance notion of nature. We claim that it is on the basis of this notion that a “symbolic turn” could be introduced and an intelligible (operational) meaning conferred to an

20 Cf. Vopěnka 2000.

21 On our view, the core of analogical reasoning lies in the definition of *ratio* (def. 3 and 4 of the Fifth book of *Elements*). For, every analogy presupposes some sort of continuity between the members of the analogy, while the geometrical magnitude represents the most characteristic expression or image of continuity. Ultimately, it is the geometrical continuity which stands analogically for the continuity between analogues of any other kind. But the notion of ratio—and that of the same ratio, i.e. *proportion*, especially—states the major structural property of the continuous geometrical magnitude: the mutual dependence between the measurability and the kind of magnitude. Consequently, the geometrical magnitude arises from the analogy which it finds in turn. Thus, it finds itself, which means the same, arises with-

out foundations, like everything that is truly continuous. See Makovský 2019, pp. 452–456.

22 The paradox of the complex simplicity behind the imaginary units may be illustrated in another sentence by Gauss: “(...) die höhere Arithmetik so oft Gelegenheit gibt, dass nicht so wohl die Schönheit und Einfachheit der Theoreme selbst, als die Schwierigkeit ihrer Begründung sie vorzüglich merkwürdig macht”. (Gauss 1876, p. 167)

equation between real and imaginary. Once it is shown, we are going to focus on the intersection of the two aforementioned vital approaches that enabled the invention of the “impossible” quantity. We intend to indicate the way such an intersection could happen in relation with a general idea usually called universal mathematics.²³ However, the very same conditions that allowed for the

emergence of the “impossible” quantities gave rise to obstacles to any consistent or intuitive interpretation of them, and consequently to their “existence”, or acceptance among mathematical objects. These obstacles, as we shall see, arise from the “intuitive” comprehension of numbers. In order to overcome them, two “paths” of universal mathematics must converge and give rise, as we shall argue, to the symbolic nature of number. Consequently, the “naturalness” of imaginary entities can be established. An algebraic strategy of such an undertaking, an indication of an operational universality,²⁴ will be presented in the conclusion of this paper—before we finally reach the Gaussian starting point.

23 As the well-known Cartesian science “*circa ordinem et mensuram*” (AT X, pp.377–378; cf. pp.156–158), the universal mathematics seems indeed to exclude any notion of “imaginary” entity whatsoever. Although the situation is far more complex even in Descartes’ thought, this is perhaps one of the reasons—besides rather abstract and speculative nature—why universal mathematics and imaginary quantity has not been often put in relation in the secondary literature. To keep our account as transparent as possible we take the idea of universal mathematics in its most general sense: as a science aiming to overcome the separation between continuous and discrete. We draw consequences of this attempt in order to clarify the nature of the second separation, that between geometric and algorithmic mathematics, and thus indicate the conditions of possibility of imaginary quantity. Thus, the ambition of this paper is not to describe the historical phenomenon of *mathesis universalis*. Although it is true that it takes some inspiration from the “symbolic number” thesis exposed for instance by Klein (1968; cf. Rose 1975, p. 143; Giaquinta 2010, pp. 176–177), it also takes into account the influence of practical mathematics as well as the essential diversity and non-linearity of approaches towards universal mathematics (Rabouin 2009). The primary focus of this essay is conceptual; it is the universality and “richly ambivalent nature” (Rose 1975, p. 6) of Renaissance mathematics, insofar they stem from the notion of infinite and give rise to “higher mathematics” (Kästner 1758, p.5).

— A SUBTLE QUANTITY

The history of complex numbers is intertwined with that of negative ones. It begins at the moment, precisely, when a negative quantity appeared under the sign of square root. As a result of the “forbidden” operation an “impossible quantity” turns up.²⁵ The new entity is therefore a purely theoretical product which is incommensurable, or rather utterly alien to a “real” quantity of any nature, but still stems from a real problem. More importantly, there are problems that can be solved *only* by means of the “absurd” operation. The impossible

24 See note 4.

25 Chuquet 1880; see also Flegg, Hay, & Moss 1985, pp. 359–360. Prodromes of the new entity are to be found among ancient and non-European mathematicians (Flament 2003, p. 9–10).

quantity becomes unavoidable in order to obtain the real one.²⁶

The problem in question is the algorithmic extraction of the roots of the cubic equation: “Let the cube of GH and six times the side GH be equal to 20.”²⁷ This means, in our notation, a simple equation $x^3 + 6x = 20$, and generally an equation of the type $x^3 + px = q$ having a real solution. Following a geometrically constructed rule today known as *Cardano’s formula*²⁸

$$x = \sqrt[3]{\sqrt{\frac{q^2}{4} + \frac{p^3}{27}} + \frac{q}{2}} - \sqrt[3]{\sqrt{\frac{q^2}{4} + \frac{p^3}{27}} - \frac{q}{2}}$$

26 The original term *res* (*chose, cosa*) is to be stressed here, for it constitutes the genuine principle of the science of algebra. Compared to numbers, the (unknown) “things” are indeterminate in their own right. Consequently, they form much more general domain of solutions and extend the meaning of arithmetical operations performed on them (cf. Farès 2018). In this way, the algebraical expressions designate a set of relations as well as an object. The thing, accordingly, may by the same token designate a quantity as well as, for example, a lack of quantity, i.e. a negative quantity (cf. AT VI, p. 372).

27 Cardano 1968, p. 96.

28 “Cube one-third the coefficient of x ; add to it the square of one-half the constant of the equation; and take the square root of the whole. You will duplicate this, and to one of the two you add one-half the number you have already squared and from the other you subtract one-half the same (...).” (Cardano 1968, pp. 98–99). The well-known bitter history around the discovery of Ferro-Tartaglia-Ferrari-Cardano’s rule is given in detail for example in Giaquinta 2010, pp. 177–181 or Katz, & Parshall 2014, pp. 215–219. For the algebraic derivation of the formula see d’Alembert’s article “Cas

we arrive at

$$x = \sqrt[3]{\sqrt{108} + 10} - \sqrt[3]{\sqrt{108} - 10}$$

which yields the solution 2 “as is perfectly clear if it is tried out.”²⁹ Indeed, the root 2 can be easily unmasked by a mere inspection of the equation—but only under the assumption that p is positive.

Geometrically speaking, this is always the case. But that is also the reason why the subsequent investigation into cubic equations split up into many subcases according to the disposition of the cubes, squares and lines in question. That’s why, in fact, Cardano’s formula applies uniquely to equations having one real solution. Discussion of the rules for these special cases then occupies the following series of chapters³⁰ of the *Ars magna*. While the positive or “true” solutions do not pose any problem here, since they are justified by relations between geometrical figures, sooner or later it appears inevitable to tackle negative ones. Not only does Cardano admit that, calling them “*debitum*”, “fictitious” or “false”, but he develops even a full-fledged theory of true and false roots and

irréductible” in *Encyclopédie méthodique* II, pp. 736–738; cf. Flament 2003, pp. 15–18; for a recent overview of Cardano’s system of algebra, see Confalonieri 2015.

29 Cardano 1968, p. 100.

30 The titles of the chapters reflect the special cases. “Chapter XII: On the Cube Equal to the first power and number” ($x^3 = px + q$); “Chapter XIII: On the Cube and Number Equal to the First Power” ($x^3 + q = px$); “Chapter XIX: On the Cube and Square Equal to the First Power and Number” ($x^3 + px^2 = rx + q$); etc.

the rules governing their multiplicities, symmetries and transformations.³¹

The first important, if uncertain step *ultra Herculis columnas* is executed. For, these rules lead, almost by formal necessity, to the consideration of the “impossible” case of the equation $x(10 - x) = 40$, where the discriminant is negative—or, in Cardano’s terms, where we are forced to consider the root of a fictitious square:

The second species of negative assumption involves the square root of a negative. I will give an example: If it should be said, Divide 10 into two parts the product of which is 30 or 40, it is clear that this case is impossible. Nevertheless, we will work thus: We divide 10 into two equal parts, making each 5. These we square, making 25. Subtract 40, if you will, from the 25 thus produced (...), leaving a remainder of -15 , the square root of which added to or subtracted from 5 gives parts the product of which is 40. These will be $5 + \sqrt{-15}$ and $5 - \sqrt{-15}$.³²

What is the *nature* of such an enigmatic, ambiguous quantity? The side of a square of an owed land, after all, has to be positive; for, being negative the area would not be owed. Such a quantity

floats on the boundary between positive and negative, real and fictitious and has something “sophisticated” to its nature, “since with it one cannot carry out the operations one can in the case of pure negative (*puro minus*) and other [numbers].”³³ It cannot be explained by a kind of negative assumption. An attempt at a geometric justification fails as well, since “a surface is far from the nature of a number and from that of a line, though somewhat closer to the latter.”³⁴

Despite all the odds, a subtle regularity of which the new entity is a result or manifestation could not pass by Cardano unnoticed. While the result is deemed “as refined (*subtile*) as it is useless”,³⁵ having the *rule* we possess, though, sufficient mathematical liberty to “put aside the mental tortures involved”³⁶ and to proceed to foolish calculations, permitted by nature even less than dimensions higher than that of cube.³⁷ Although, as we have said, the geometric justification by completing the square is impossible, the symbolic operation is surprisingly simple and natural and yields *blindly* the correct results which, most important, cannot be obtained in any other way. The spectre from the fictitious world, the

31 Cardano 1968, pp. 10–11. Cardano’s example of the negatives is indeed illustrative: “The dowry of Francis’ wife is 100 *aurei* more than Francis’ own property (...). We assume that Francis has $-x$; therefore, the dowry of his wife is $100 - x$ ” (Cardano 1968, p. 218).

32 Cardano 1968, p. 219.

33 Cardano 1968, p. 220.

34 Cardano 1968, p. 220; cf. Katz & Parshall 2014, pp. 225–227.

35 “(...) *Arithmetica subtilitas, cuius hoc extremum ut dixi, adeo est subtile, ut sit inutile*” (Cardano 1663, p. 287b; Cardano 1968, p. 220).

36 “*dimissis incrucationibus*”. Another rendering of the (deliberately?) ambiguous expression can be found—more technical “disregarding cross products”. See González-Velasco 2011, p. 148.

37 Cardano 1968, p. 9.

impossible quantity, finally gains a foothold in the realm of intuitive clarity and exactness, even though for a short while, before vanishing during the calculation.

— SYMBOLIC QUANTITY AND UNIVERSAL MATHEMATICS

What might have possibly led Cardano to imagine³⁸ the impossible quantity of *radix minus* and grant it a place within the calculation? And what did prevent him, unlike his successor Rafael Bombelli, to analyse more carefully the rules of their conduct in order to tear down the masks of the real values of the roots? The answer to both questions is the same: the symbolic nature of the negative quantity. Contrary to his coevals,³⁹ who simply—and, in one view, *correctly*—dismissed solutions involving negative numbers as impossible, Cardano acknowledged them. False, fictitious, non-existent as they were, they were present at least *symbolically*, as a result of an operation extended into a new domain of its generality; and we have seen that it was due to the symbolic presence of the negatives that Cardano was able to disentangle

a subtler regularity among the roots of an equation,⁴⁰ and reveal a hidden nature of quantity.

If the formal necessity of the calculation urged Cardano—*sponte sua* and as if against his will—to invite the false and fictitious into the solution of a true problem, the geometrical intuition, on the other hand, chased the symbolic creatures of the negative and imaginary quantity from the fundamental conditions of the problem itself. After all, Cardano himself put his thumb on the ambivalence discussing the question of negative powers, but the limitation holds generally for terms of all equations:

It is always presumed in this case, of course, that the number to which the power is equated is true and not fictitious. To doubt this would be as silly as to doubt the fundamental rule itself for, though opposite reasoning must be observed in opposite cases, the reasoning is still the same.⁴¹

Despite the admitted symmetry of the opposite instances, a formal continuity between them is not allowed: negative quantities cannot figure as terms in an equation.⁴² It is forbidden by the nature of terms to equate *cose* to false numbers, since “what we call *debitum*, cannot be produced by any expansion of a true number.”⁴³ Even if they happen to intersect somehow in boundary situations, the true and false (fictitious and

38 “*ideo imaginaberis R. m̄. 15*” (Cardano 1663, p. 287b).

39 For instance, the most influential one, Luca Pacioli who in “*Notandum utilissimum*” of his *Summa de arithmetica* states clearly the discriminant condition for real solution: “*Sel numero qual si trova i la ditta equatione accompagnato con lo cen. sei no e minore: overamente equale al quadrato de la ½ de le cose el caso essere insolubile*” (Pacioli 1523, p. 147a). This stems from basic assumption of geometric algebra: “(...) *cosa ene ipossibile che piu cose se aguagliano a manco cose. Ne che ancora manco cose se aguagliano a piu cose et sic in aliis.*” (Pacioli 1523, p. 145a)

40 See note 31.

41 Cardano 1968, p. 11.

42 See note 30.

43 Cardano 1968, p. 10.

real, possible and impossible) belong to heterogeneous orders of expression, and cannot therefore be taken into the same account.

And yet, this has to be done, at least for the sake of the universality and simplicity of the rules of algebra. How can such a decisive step be accomplished? Apparently, it is necessary to cross the imaginary borderline and establish a perfect continuity between natural and symbolic beings. In the end, such a perfect continuity guarantees that complex numbers observe the same rules of conduct under the sign of square root as real ones and may be subjected to analogous operations.⁴⁴ But in the same manner as in reality, numbers and magnitudes hold even in the middle of a dream like “engraved on the back of copper plates”.⁴⁵ Since things can be numbered and measured even in an utterly imaginary world, the only mathematical way to proceed is to introduce a *symbolic turn*: to make nature itself

part of a more subtle⁴⁶ and general symbolic reality and open the door to universal mathematics—or, which means the same, to an entire mathematization of the universe. It is a commonplace that this major step was effected in the times of the Renaissance.⁴⁷ But, at the same time, a no less important transformation had to happen within the notion of quantity in order for the “false number” to be promoted on par with the true one, or even with none. It has to become symbolic first.

— MATHESIS UNIVERSALIS

The Aristotelian canon of science separated the concepts of number and

44 This kind of continuity is also the reason that “the complex quantities are not opposed to the real but contain them as a special case”, as Gauss pointed out, and “that theory appears in an entirely new light, and its results acquire a startling simplicity” (tr. Ewald 2005a, p. 309), cf. n. 2. We are about to see why.

45 “(...) *ad scribendum hortatus sum, cuius historiam a tergo aerearum nostrarum imaginum insculpi feci*” (Cardano 2013, p. xxv). It is known, according to Cardano’s own presentation, that his encyclopaedia of Renaissance natural philosophy, *De subtilitate* (see below, note 46), represented in reality (including its central concept—“matter that covers everything”—and its name) a continuous record of a series of the author’s dreams. Within this book of nature, geometry occupies its central part.

46 The term *subtilitas* (see note 35) has a special meaning here. “It is the feature (*ratio*) by which things that can be sensed are grasped with difficulty by the senses and things that can be understood are grasped with difficulty by the intellect” (Cardano 2013, p. 15). Thus, subtlety is a universal concept of natural philosophy pointing out to the boundary character of things which appear especially on the boundary between senses and understanding. The subtlety of things cannot be grasped by either way alone, but still is indispensable to reflect the unity of nature. This imaginary labyrinth in between the contraries constitutes the situation of the man of the Renaissance. As the “knot of the Universe”, the man, ultimately, is the key to the continuity of ambivalent symbolic nature, and consequently the Ariadne’s thread of the labyrinth.

47 The period of Renaissance is defined here precisely with respect to what we called the symbolic turn and delimited by the names of Cusanus and Leibniz. See further Makovský 2019. The role of grammatical and rhetorical approaches towards the nature in the symbolic turn, the Renaissance “linguistic turn”, may only be mentioned here.

magnitude. There is no kind (genus) comprising number and magnitude: numbers are not magnitudes—in the same manner as they are not, for instance, angles or volumes. This is very significant. Since a science demonstrates the attributes of a kind (that is assumed to be real) it is defined by, a scientific demonstration holds only within one kind and may not be used in a science of another kind:

One cannot, therefore, prove anything by crossing from another genus—e.g. something geometrical by arithmetic. For there are three things in demonstrations: one, what is being demonstrated, the conclusion (this is what belongs to some genus in itself); one, the axioms (axioms are the things on which the demonstration depends); third, the underlying genus of which the demonstration makes clear the attributes and what is accidental to it in itself. Now the things on which the demonstration depends may be the same; but of things whose genus is different—as arithmetic and geometry, one cannot apply arithmetical demonstrations to the accidentals of magnitudes, unless magnitudes are numbers.⁴⁸

Magnitudes are *not* numbers, nor correspond perfectly to them—because of the existence of irrational ratios or magnitudes. The continuous and the discrete are heterogenous natures.

48 *An. Post.* 75a38–b6.

Therefore, there can be no mutual predication between them. Transgression of the kind is impossible—a fact that, at the end of the day, rules out from the science of mathematics a notion as fundamental as measure.

No doubt, such a theoretical purity, non-mathematical in essence, would cause a serious harm to mathematical practice of any kind. Even though the fragmentation was ingenuously overcome by Eudoxus’s theory of proportion allowing for the comparison of relations between magnitudes of the same kind, the separation between the continuous and the discrete in geometry remains in existence, as evidenced by the separate treatment of proportions in the *Elements*. The roots of the incommensurability between arithmetic and geometry grow deeper, stemming from nothing less than the basic nature of number, the *monad*: a unit supposed to have a direct correspondence to an intuition of the counted object, “a *unit* is that by virtue of which each of the things that exist is called one”.⁴⁹ As such, the unit as the *principle* of number, “multitude composed of units”,⁵⁰ is by nature indivisible:

The one is indivisible just because the first of each class of things is indivisible. But it is not in the same way

49 *Elem.* def. VII.1. Gardies 1984a, p. 114.

50 *Elem.* def. VII.2. The unit is at the same time the principle of *measure*, “for the one means the measure of some plurality, and number means a measured plurality and a plurality of measures. Thus, it is natural that one is not a number” (*Met.* 1088a3–6). Necessarily, as a measure the unit cannot be divided.

that every ‘one’ is indivisible, e.g. a foot and a unit; the latter is absolutely indivisible, while the former must be placed among things which are undivided in perception (...)—for doubtless every continuous thing is divisible.⁵¹

Numbers are not magnitudes. They do not correspond to magnitudes, nor may be subsumed under Eudoxus’s theory of proportions. For, not only is every continuous thing divisible, but every continuous thing can also be divided in any ratio⁵²—*conditio sine qua non* of the science of geometry. Despite the very many apparent regularities, coincidences and common features, the separation between arithmetic and geometry is radical; according to Aristotle, the “common notions” (*koine ennoia*), “common propositions” holding both for “units and points and lines” are not common but “by analogy, since things are *useful* in so far as they bear on the genus of the science”.⁵³ They break down every time they touch the indivisible unit—almost as if one, following the greatness of magnitude,⁵⁴ crashes into the limit of heavens.

Greek analysis of continuity, for the reasons explained above, followed a different path of thought than that of number. Numbers, due to the correspondence

between the unit and the object, thought to be one, were always *natural numbers*, i.e. positive integers, while the construction of ratios, ultimately ratios between integers, equivalent to today’s set of positive rational numbers,⁵⁵ was, precisely, a means to preserve the indivisibility of the unit and irreducibility of measure. As such, it was principally disconnected from the consideration of the continuous magnitude it was supposed to measure—and this separation marked the history of thought as long as the “intuitive” concept of number remained dominant, i.e. nearly until the theoretical acknowledgement of complex numbers at the end of the 18th century.

Curiously enough, the same thinker who put such a strong emphasis on the separation between the realms of measures offered his successors some enigmatic hints to follow in order to overcome it and conceive of a kind of “universal mathematics” the possibility of which seemed to be excluded.

One might indeed raise the question whether first philosophy is universal, or deals with one genus, i.e. some one kind of being; for not even the mathematical sciences are all alike in this respect—geometry and astronomy deal with a certain particular kind of thing, while universal mathematics applies alike to all.⁵⁶

51 *Met.* 1053a19–23. Cf. *Met.* 1020a10–11.

52 See, for instance, *Elem. Prop.* VI.2; cf. the *Prop.* V.5. See *Elem. Prop.* V.16 and VII.9–10 for distinct treatment of analogous propositions; see further Gardies 1984b, pp.38–39.

53 *An. Post.* 76a39.

54 *Phys.* 207b12.

55 See mainly *Elem. Prop.* VII.11–19.

56 *Met.* 1022a22–26. The universal mathematics is mentioned only twice in Aristotle’s works, with respect to the legislation of the first philosophy and with respect to the subject or content of demonstration (*An. Post.* a17–25).

What is the subject of the universal mathematical theory? The response is rather complex: from Proclus to Russell, it nearly coincides with the conceptual development of mathematics. Still, two observations ought to be made here.

First, universal mathematics, as a theory comprising arithmetic and geometry, is supposed to found, unify and justify both the numerical and the geometrical measure, or, what means the same, to provide their common measure (whatever it may consist in). Thus, universal mathematics is a science of measure as such—the universal common measure sought after by Renaissance thought.⁵⁷ Second, since the subject of universal mathematics, *quantity*, is supposed to consist in a pure relation,⁵⁸ numbers and magnitudes may be construed as different symbolical expressions of the same universal intellectual matter, susceptible of boundless multiplicity of—inde- pendent, yet related—symbolizations, formalizations and articulations. Hence,

several consequences of capital importance follow.

First of all, the “intuitive” concept of number gets rid of its natural pre- dominance. Ultimately, it represents an exceptional significant case of rela- tional structure with since a “conceived relation is a real relation”.⁵⁹ Number and magnitude are nothing more than specific articulations of a more general realm of relation, that might produce symbolic creations of various shapes and properties. Accordingly, negatives, irra- tionals and imaginaries may well be all *numbers* with no less claim to reality as compared to integers. More importantly, nothing prevents us from conceiving of even imaginary numbers of different kinds, insofar as they are based on a rule and follow from real relations. Mathe- matical liberty is a characteristic feature of universal mathematics.⁶⁰

57 See Seidengart 2000, p. 66.

58 In general, there is no (Archimedean) quantity, neither discrete nor continu- ous, without an exact measure. For the case of numbers, see note 50. In the case of continuous magnitude, it is a ratio, ultimately a relation with a proper part of the magnitude (*Elem. Def. V.1*), and thus a comparison given by the possibility of equality (*Def. V.5*), that defines the notion of the kind of quantity (*Def. V.3*): “Magnitudes are said to *have a ratio* to one another which can, when multiplied, exceed one another” (*Def. V.4*). See also *Elem. Def. VII.3–5*. Thus, the operational aspect is inherent to the nature of magnitude, but at the same time relies substantially on that of multiple, i.e. repeated addition of integers. This way, arithmetic is the first mathematical science; see *Met.* 982a20–28.

59 The relation is the only category that finally does not diminish its reality by being thought: “*Sola relatio non habet ex hoc quod est huiusmodi quod aliquid ponat in rerum natura (...) unde quedam inveniuntur relationes quae nihil in rerum natura ponunt, sed in relatione tantum*” (Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate* I, 5, *ad* 15). As the reality of relation is the same in human mind, in nature as well as in divine reason, it is precisely universal mathematics that makes man the “knot of the Universe” (see note 46) and nature, in turn, the “ladder to God”. Since, at the same time, the idea of universal mathematics leads directly to the notion of the (mathematical) infinite, it also grants the man an exclusive relation to God. Hence follows the infinite dignity of the Renaissance man.

60 Cf. the often-quoted sentence from Can- tor’s *Grundlagen* paradoxically putting together seemingly contradictory cate- gories—“for the essence of mathematics

Once number and magnitude share a common symbolic nature, nothing besides the force of habit precludes the unit from being divisible in the same manner as a length—and the other way round, a length from being considered as a unit. The analogy between arithmetic and geometry⁶¹ thus becomes primordial; it allows us to think the continuity instead of separation. The mimesis between the continuous and the discrete gives us, in a strange echo of Aristotle's remark,⁶² a means to conceive the subtlety of their boundary relations, as if magnitudes were numbers and numbers were magnitudes, and to forge amphibian operational concepts like, for instance, the unit length mirroring numbers in the realm of magnitude.

Just as arithmetic consists of only four or five operations, namely addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and the extraction of roots, which may be considered a kind of division, so in geometry, to find required lines it is merely necessary to add or subtract other lines; or else, taking one line which I shall call unity in order to relate it as closely as possible to numbers, and which can in general be chosen arbitrarily (...).⁶³

However, an opposite, in a sense more radical path to overcome the gap is finally open: given that numbers and

liespreciselyinitsfreedom”(tr.Ewald2005b, p. 896)

61 Cf. note 53.

62 See note 48.

63 Descartes 1954, p. 2.

magnitudes are supposed to be made from the same matter, magnitudes may be mirrored in the realm of numbers as well.⁶⁴ This form of expression provides us with an exclusive access to the orders of the infinite divisibility and compossibility of quantity as such: through the medium of number, a *direct* relation between numbers and magnitudes can be analysed. Numbers and magnitudes are no longer separated, they are *infinitely* different. For, they are in the same (dis)proportion now as finite to infinite. A subtle network of boundary concepts arise: minimum, element, horizon, approximation, limit, unity and equality—all of them will find their place in the transcendent analysis.⁶⁵ This path of universal mathematics leads directly to the labyrinth of the continuum and gives us an idea as to the way that the notion of (mathematical) infinity provides the key to the symbolic nature of the Renaissance. Finally, it is no wonder that, before obtaining their citizenship in the realm of numbers, the imaginaries will find the ultimate support for their full-fledged existence in the most advanced formal theory of infinitesimal calculus.⁶⁶

64 This way, as we shall briefly touch later, was famously explored by Simon Stevin.

65 See especially A VI, 3, p. 529–571.

66 We may observe that Cauchy, the author of substantial contributions to complex analysis, underwent an analogical experience as Cardano with respect to the status, dignity and power of “imaginary expressions”. From a certain reticence towards the imaginaries as mere abbreviations reducible in principle to relations between real numbers (Cauchy 1821, p. 173), the utility and universality of complex numbers drove him to their

RENAISSANCE OF NUMBERS AND THREE CONTINUITIES

The “inveterate”⁶⁷ idea of universal mathematics was reborn in the Renaissance era—in the same period as the theory of perspective and geometric algebra appeared.⁶⁸ It is no coincidence, for both perspective and algebra consist in a sort of regular symbolical procedure. In the simplest case, perspective is a sort of equation formed from a certain point of view between the three-dimensional real world and the two-dimensional image on a plane; in algebra, the translation between the level of geometrical diagrams and that of “things” is even more nested.⁶⁹ What is common to them is the continuity of symbolic expression articulated according to the geometric continuity: not only is the representation supposed to be substituted for the reality it depicts, but also different representations admit, as a rule, continuous transformations of one representation to another. This means that the continuity belongs to the underlying notion of the point of view. Similarly, there must be a fundamental continuity between symbolic expressions of known things and

the unknown one, all the more if these symbolic representations are conceived of as variables, in order to be equated and transformed into the result.

Certainly, true subtlety is to be found in natural phenomena and in history in general. Nevertheless, the basic conceptual scheme presented above may help us to pinpoint at least some of important steps on the journey to the final admission of imaginary quantities. This journey, as we have already stated, consists in establishing the continuity between the real and the symbolic. For this purpose, the nature of things had to be enveloped into more complex and general symbolic realm of relation,⁷⁰ in what we called the “symbolic turn”. At the same time, numbers and magnitudes had to be conceived of as symbolic expressions of the universal subject of quantity. For, in order to equate a true number to a fictitious one, the geometrical justification of algebra must be modified as well as the intuitive concept of number based on the indivisible unit. The number must become symbolic, operational, ambivalent, so that the other symbolic entities might spring forth. We shall briefly distinguish three continuities that must be established in order to conceive of the number as symbolic.

What are these symbolic milestones? Beside the aforementioned arts of perspective and algebra, it was the development of commercial activities, especially international ones, banking, calculations of interest or exchange rates and numerical practice in general (including

“naturalization”. First, in the form of a new mathematical object between formalist and intuitive stance, whose reality is based on “algebraic equivalences” (classes given by polynomial divisibility); and finally, in the form of “geometric quantity” (vector) comprising as a special case “algebraic” quantity (real number). See Flament 2003, pp. 273–316; and Gray 2015, pp. 62–66.

67 See AT X, pp. 377–378.

68 See Crapulli 1969; Klein 1968, pp. 138–142; and Rabouin 2009, pp. 190–250. Cf. Granger 1998, pp. 79–85.

69 See note 26. Cf. Wagner 2010b, pp. 5–22.

70 See note 59.

rational and negative numbers),⁷¹ that were constantly eroding the indivisible nature of the unit—after all, perspective and algebra were *arts* in the first place, i.e. disciplines intended to solve problems. We cannot here go into detail. No matter how substantial the concrete mathematical practice might be, in this article we shall take the continuity between theory and practice for granted. More importantly, since every number must be named or symbolized in order to be applied, the question of practice is to some extent reflected in the matter of mathematical symbolism, more accessible to our analysis. This is where the first continuity resides.

The gradual constitution of the decimal positional number system in arithmetic, “the art of tenths”,⁷² represents a major step towards the invention of the symbolic character of number. It relies on what we might call the most fundamental *continuity of reference*, since its expressive power surpasses a direct reference to the numbered thing to such an extent that it includes a boundary reference to nought. Not only does it provide means for manipulating huge numbers, completely dissociated from any evidence based on objects whatsoever,⁷³ but it also establishes a continuity

between symbols and symbolized number. Due to the former, the direct correspondence of the unit with the intuition of an object is increasingly blurred and finally replaced by analogy or by transmission of relations. Instead of individuals, numbers alone are taken into account. According to the latter, the fact that the name stands for numbers as well as for arithmetical operations allows us to reason and establish rules (rhetorical figures in fact) with numerals alone and without any recourse to numbers (let alone individual objects). A number, no matter how large, is always applicable to individuals and it is, for instance, always divisible by 3 if the sum of *digits* is divisible by 3.⁷⁴

The positional system plays the key role in the second continuity we shall treat here. It is the *continuity of inversion* underlying Stevin’s “geometrical” redefinition of number.⁷⁵ This principle opens the path to universal mathematics from numbers towards magnitudes. Two points must be taken into account here. First, as we have just explained, the ambiguity of the symbolism’s reference to objects as results of operations, exempted numbers from the direct correspondence with objects, making them in a sense prior to counted individual things. Second, we already know that the Greeks encompassed the variety of heterogeneous magnitudes in the theory of proportions, and this was also the only

71 Guaquinta 2010, pp. 176–177. See note 31.

72 See mainly Stevin 1608, English translation of 1585 Flemish *De thiende* which presents the Renaissance development of the decimal notation.

73 This is the case of Archimedes’s *Sand Reckoner* which offers both, the construction of a number surpassing the horizon of things and the decimal positional notation system that enables it.

74 These rhetorical manipulations are the heart of the calculating approach to mathematics mentioned above (see note 19).

75 See Klein 1968, pp.147–151 and Gardies 1984, pp. 37–40; cf. Rabouin 2010, pp. 240–244.

means to consider fractions or quantities less than one.⁷⁶ These two ideas represent the elements of the new mathematical unity based on the infinite divisibility of the continuum. This is the “first matter” of quantity articulated by number. Once continuous magnitude is arithmetized, i.e. every length may be expressed by a number, the “geometrical number” emerges: “number is that expresseth the quantitie of each thing.”⁷⁷

Since numbers reside in an algorithmic procedure and do not depend on individuals anymore, no ontological prerogative follows from the correspondence of the unit with an individual thing. Once the indivisibility of the unit has lost its intuitive ground, the unit becomes a *part* of a number—and consequently, “the unit is a number”⁷⁸ and every ratio between numbers is also a number: a fractional number.⁷⁹ If the numeral combinatorial system as a whole, by the continuity of inversion, is mirrored in every single of its units or elements, the richness of the realm of number replicates *ad infinitum*. Thus, the inexhaustible numerical diversity expressed by the decimal positional system may enter the unit itself. Number is expressed by a unique, possibly *infinite* decimal expansion attached to any magnitude, or as Stevin puts it: “as unity is the number by which we say that the quantity of an explained thing is one:

and two, by which it is called two: and half, by which it is called half.”⁸⁰

Instead of the simple and indivisible unit, the principle of measure is simply geometrical number, or geometrical number as such.⁸¹ Number is to magnitude what humidity is to water, number is a *continuous* quantity.

As it penetrates like this into every part of its magnitude; just as a continuous wetness corresponds to a continuous body of water, a continuous magnitude corresponds to a continuous number. Likewise, as the continuous wetness of the entire body of water is subject to the same division and separation as the water, so the continuous number is subject to the same division and separation as its magnitude, in such a way that these two quantities cannot be distinguished by continuity or discontinuity.⁸²

76 See note 55.

77 Stevin 1608, pp. A3.

78 Stevin 1958, pp. 495–496.

79 Stevin 1958, pp. 506–507.

80 Stevin 1958, p. 494.

81 Hence the ultimate question of the Renaissance: is there a universal common measure (see note 57)? What is the common measure to any quantity, the “*possest*” of quantity? As a principle of every possible equality, it has to “enfold” every common measure and express the impossible proportion between finite and infinite. This is possible only in a rhetorical manner, or as Leibniz says: “*fictione quadam possumus concipere, omnes quantitates homogeneas esse velut commensurabiles inter se, fingendo scilicet elementum aliquod infinite parvum*” (GM VII, p. 39).

82 Stevin 1958, p. 494; cf. Klein 1968, p. 150.

What exactly does the “principle” mean? Stevin’s ground-breaking originality is revealed by the fact that he raised this question. With respect to universal mathematics, it may be rephrased as follows: what in the concept of number makes “the community and similarity of magnitude and number so universal that it almost resembles identity”?⁸³ Now, within extension, the “manifest principle” is the point. Does the unit correspond to point?

We are approaching the decisive step where the concept of number is defined in terms of analogy based on more general *mathematical* reasons, i.e. as a symbolic entity resulting from a “community” of operational rules:

Just as a point is an adjunct to a line and not in itself a line, so is 0 an adjunct to number, and not a number itself.

Just as a point cannot be divided into parts, so 0 cannot be divided into parts.

Just as many points, yea an infinity of them, do not make a line, so many 0’s, even an infinity of them, do not form a number.⁸⁴

The analogy taken from universal mathematics obliges us to pose 0 as the principle (i.e. beginning, *commencement*) of number. As a result, the theory of proportions is no longer the foundation of mathematics. It is replaced by much more intricate non-Archimedean

determinations of quantity belonging to the labyrinth of the continuum: the rules of infinity (in particular with regard to the decimal expansion), conditions of equality, continuity between number and the principle of number or between a quantity and its limit, briefly conditions of continuity as such. Nevertheless, much is gained at the end of the day: besides the notational system suitable for extensions and generalisations,⁸⁵ we are reaching the level of quantity, the first matter of universal mathematics and unlimited source of relations to be symbolized and articulated. As an “intensification” of the continuity of reference, the “microcosmic” continuity of inversion guaranteed the symmetrical validity of arithmetical operations. As a result, all quantities become homogeneous. Since the concept of number is now promoted at the level of the measure of *any* quantity, it may be symbolised universally (as unknown as well as indeterminate), and thus give rise to the new formal order of relations—relations between forms, expressed by “blind” formulas continuously substituted for quantities.

Here we set foot on the other path of universal mathematics, the symbolic

83 Stevin 1585, p. 498.

84 Stevin 1585 [1958], p. 498 [43].

85 First of all, (fractional) exponents or differential orders. Stevin himself conceives a more general notion of “algebraic number”, i.e. indeterminate quantity supplied with an exponent or “dignity” (Stevin 1585, pp. 518–519) and even “algebraic multinomials” (Stevin 1585, p. 521), polynomials considered as *mathematical objects* independent of the theory of equations (Rabouin 2009, p. 242).

path of algebra.⁸⁶ It was foreshadowed, as we already know, by the admission of false numbers among true ones; and from the false numbers, it went almost straightforwardly to the “impossible” ones. The algebraic approach to universal mathematics establishes⁸⁷ a formal unity of mathematics. Accordingly, algebra is not subject to justification anymore, but it is subject to the interpretation of the symbolic representation (*species*) within the matter of number or magnitude. This is also the reason why it makes visible and regular heterogeneities between them, most notably the law of dimensional homogeneity,⁸⁸ and brings into existence symbolic operational creations like, for instance, a figure of dimension higher than three. The convergence of both paths is the unity of universal mathematics: while the algebraic path leads to a formal system of abstract magnitudes defined by the operational rules they satisfy,⁸⁹ providing a boundless liberty to create new objects, the labyrinthian path to universal mathematics guarantees the “matter”, ultimate reality or meaningfulness

of its uniform quantitative base. But only both together lead to an intelligible justification of complex numbers. The symbolic continuity between zero and positive quantity is necessary in order to extend the intelligibility to the negatives, while, as we have shown, the $\sqrt{-1}$ is certainly not a part of 1 (or even of -1) made of the same “matter”.⁹⁰

The mirror image of possibility itself which “exhibits cases of Problems that are impossible as if they were possible”,⁹¹ is inconceivable without the universal expressive and analytical power of the formal system. The first example of such a system is found in François Viète’s *Isagoge*, since it was Viète who following Diophantus’s use of unknowns in the *Arithmetics*,⁹² represented the ambiguous nature of a general number or a number as magnitude⁹³ by a letteral sign. Thus, analysis “no longer limits its reasoning to numbers, a shortcoming of the old analysts, but works with a newly discovered symbolic logistic”.⁹⁴

86 From the historical point of view, it is worthwhile to note that until the time of van Roomen and Descartes in particular, the symbolic algebra was *not* identified or even brought together with the idea of universal mathematics, see Rabouin 2009, pp. 237–239.

87 Due to the opacity or under-determination of symbols, external in fact to objects they express. See note 7.

88 The “first and perpetual law of equations or proportions”, the law of homogeneous terms (*homogenea homogeneis comparari*), see Viète 1616, p. 3–5. Cf. Bos 2001, pp. 147–154.

89 For the axiomatics, see Viète 1616, pp. 1–2.

90 Cf. d’Alembert 2007, pp. 295–346; Euler 1747.

91 Newton 1728, p. 195. Here, as well as in Leibniz (GP I, pp. 405–406; GM VII, pp. 73–76), for instance, the square root of negative number indicates a case in which there is *no* intersection, i.e. the “impossible intersection”, between a line and a circle—instead of one or two intersections expressed by real roots. Accordingly, by means of the complex numbers, the universal situation of the two figures in a plane is grasped, corresponding to the totality of solutions of the equation (see note 3).

92 See Bos 2001, p. 146; Klein 1968, pp. 95–143.

93 See note 87.

94 Viète 2006, p. 13. Most notably, Viète introduced letteral notation of coefficients. Consequently, placing them on

The symbolic purity of analysis free of rhetorical elements was “restored” by Thomas Harriot,⁹⁵ Viète’s successor, who generalized the notion of equality by allowing equation of a term or a “thing” to zero or *nothing*.⁹⁶ This step is more serious than it seems from today’s point of view. Equating all terms of equation to zero, on the one hand, pushes the meaning of the equation to the purely symbolic level, allowing the focus to be limited on its “canonical”, i.e. polynomial structure. On the other hand, it lets us consider the sign $-s$, for instance, ambiguously as an operation as well as an object and formally incorporate the “impossible” object (a *case*, in fact) into the order of the “uniform and continuous” application of rules.⁹⁷ Here, the two paths of universal mathematics intersect and provide a starting point from which it is not only possible to move towards the code of the Cartesian algebra—but also, for the reasons exposed above, towards the subtlety of infinitesimal analysis. The “impossible” roots first turn into “inexplicable” (i.e. un-related to coefficients) ones and then into “imaginary” quantities, before they finally become complex numbers as we know them.

the same symbolical level as geometrical magnitudes (roots, in particular), he was able to subordinate them to general algebraic rule and establish the formal unity between equations and constructions.

95 Harriot 1631; for an English translation, see Harriot 2000.

96 Flament 2003, pp. 31–35.

97 Harriot 2000, p. 22.

— ENCLOSURE AND INTUITION

The preceding pages have traced the tortuous ways in which the matters of universal mathematics and symbolic nature were continuously related together—until they finally resulted in the apparent simplicity of the geometric interpretation of complex numbers. Figuratively speaking, we might say that the idea of universal mathematics represents a microcosmic image of the subtle, analogical and harmonic nature of the Renaissance. Naturally, their analogy is founded on continuity as the fundamental determination of both of them, since both manifest the “impossible” proportion between finite and infinite. At the same time, this is why such a manifestation can only be expressed through universal symbols, which are ambiguous by nature as they have to range over all possible terms of relations. Only symbolic realities are subtle enough to bear the universal continuity and analogy since they are able to incorporate a proper boundary: their “body” consists in dynamic relations. As such, symbolic entities are ambivalent and suitable for boundless transformations that finally allow equations between positive and negative quantities, since both are symbolic expressions of the same nature. This is how “we are such stuff as dreams are made on”. Also, it is this feature of Renaissance nature that made Leibniz say on the account of imaginary roots:

In truth, the nature of things, mother of eternal varieties, or rather the Divine Reason, holds fast to its splendid variety. Thus, it does not let

all things be confined within one and only kind. Therefore, an elegant and admirable way out is found in that miracle of Analysis, that portent of the ideal world, almost Amphibian between Being and non-Being, that we call an imaginary root.⁹⁸

Besides “real” quantities, such an infinitely prodigal nature can certainly bear the expense of accommodating all sorts of fictitious, imaginary creations such as infinitesimals, infinitely great numbers, horned angles or osculating circles.⁹⁹ For, they all stem from the same source, while their mutual differences consist, precisely, in the complexity of the relations they express. Since they are all symbolic and continuous, any distinction between fiction and reality based on intuition or some kind of phenomenological evidence is deceptive a priori.

How then, can we tell truth from mere fiction? Is the symbolic interplay enough to provide a mathematical object, a curve for example, with its “true nature”? These are the questions that the mathematics as well as the philosophy and literature of the classical era all dealt with simultaneously, all the more that the mathematical demonstration traditionally represented a standard of

certitude and truth.¹⁰⁰ Be it Hobbes-Wallis controversy or Molyneux’s problem, we must reserve them for some future treatise. What matters to us at this moment is this simple consequence: by the same reasoning, such an infinitely variable nature might admit the imaginary roots of different kinds, as though there are different orders of the infinitely small.¹⁰¹ While algebraic operations, even with purely symbolic numbers such as exponents or coefficients, can be traced back to real quantities, imaginary ones rely entirely on analogy. But isn’t it the same analogy that admits an unlimited number of iterations, combinations and complications, giving birth to an obscure crowd of objects more and more detached from any significance whatsoever? Among other things, such a state of affairs would have disastrous consequences for the (general) validity of the fundamental theorem of algebra.

We have claimed that the nature of complex numbers arises through the convergence of the two main approaches towards the subject of mathematics, demonstration and calculation. Consequently, these are the two

98 *“Verum enim tenacior est varietatis suae pulcherrimae Natura rerum, aeternarum varietatum parens, vel potius Divina Mens, quam ut omnia sub unum genus compingi patiatur. Itaque elegans et mirabile effugium reperit in illo Analyseos miraculo, idealis mundi monstro, pene inter Ens et non-Ens Amphibio, quod radicem idealem appellamus”* (GM V, p. 357).

99 See GM IV, p. 92.

100 See the famous anecdote of the libertine age given by Molière’s *Don Juan*, III.1.

101 This, in fact was the conviction of Leibniz who claimed that there was an infinite hierarchy of ever more complex kinds of imaginary roots, $\sqrt{-1}$ being different kind than $\sqrt[4]{-1}$. This view stems from an error committed in decomposition of the polynomial $x^4 + a^4$ undertaken as a part of a general linearization attempt to find a method of integrating rational fractions. (GM V, pp. 350–361). We can sense the connection of the mistake with Leibniz’s general metaphysical conviction expressed above (note 98).

main strategies of the justification of imaginaries. In the absence of the “intuitive” geometric justification,¹⁰² the decisive question is whether the analogy is *complete*—or, in other words, whether there are no other kinds of imaginary roots (*quantities*), i.e. the symbol $a + b\sqrt{-1}$ is stable in ordinary operations of algebra.¹⁰³

The demonstration of stability is the last of the symbolic milestones mentioned in this brief essay. This is because such a stability is a strong indication, constructed almost entirely on the symbolic base of algebra, that the expressions $a + b\sqrt{-1}$ may be well treated as a kind of *numbers*. It is also, as we have just remarked, a necessary condition for the validity of the fundamental theorem of algebra.¹⁰⁴ The theorem appears in d’Alembert’s *Reflexions sur la cause Générale des vents*.

It is certain that every algebraic quantity, be it composed of any imaginary quantities we wish, can always be reduced on $A + B\sqrt{-1}$, A and B being real quantities. Hence, if given quantity is to be real, it follows that $B = 0$.¹⁰⁵

The proof has four steps, corresponding to the ordinary operations of algebra. First it states for division

$$\frac{a + b\sqrt{-1}}{g + h\sqrt{-1}} = A + B\sqrt{-1}$$

The case is clear. By simple algebraic procedures, we isolate A and B expressed by means of the original real quantities. Second, for raising to power

$$a + b\sqrt{-1}^{m+n\sqrt{-1}} = A + B\sqrt{-1}$$

Since the last case (addition, subtraction, multiplication) is obvious,¹⁰⁶ this is the key point of the whole demonstration. It is worth noting that, instead of sorting out expressions according to their complexity, d’Alembert takes as a starting point the general expression. Since the proof is as sketchy as it is technical, at the same time as it involves several deficiencies,¹⁰⁷ we will not reproduce it as it stands. *In nuce*, it consists of taking the logarithm of the equation and differentiating it. Thus we obtain expressions of A and B having the form of cosines and sines supplied with a module and an argument representing a complex number.¹⁰⁸ Instead, we will limit ourselves here to general remarks in accordance with the main purpose of this paper.

First and foremost, the proof relies on the idea of the differential, i.e. the continuous variation of the symbolic expression, that concentrates and incorporates all the continuities we have treated above. Moreover, only by virtue of all of them does a syntactical

102 See note 12.

103 See note 4.

104 For a nice overview of equivalent formulations of the theorem and the relation to the stability theorem, see the introduction to d’Alembert 2007, pp. lxviii–lxxii.

105 D’Alembert 1746, p. 141.

106 D’Alembert 1746, p. 143.

107 See d’Alembert 2007, p. lxxiii.

108 D’Alembert 1746, p. 141; cf. d’Alembert 2007, p. lxxiii.

demonstration of universality through the stability of signs makes any sense—only on this level of symbolic abstraction does autonomy mean existence. Second, the proof is not purely formal. It is carried out with the help of trigonometric representation of imaginary quantities, manifesting the traces of geometric intuition concealed within the continuity of symbolic expression.

— CONCLUDING REMARKS

We began this paper with the intuitive justification of impossible entities that do not answer neither the question about “how much” nor about “how many”, but symbolically comprise answers to both questions and even more. We are ending it at the same place, having spent all of our time explaining the conditions of that “intuition” or, to say it with Gauss, how a “difference *in itself*” can be fully determinate “although we can communicate our intuition of this difference to others *only* by appeal to really existent material things”.¹⁰⁹ The answer, as we intended to show, lies in the autonomy of symbolism conceivable on the assumption that nature itself has turned symbolic. Only the nature of the symbol is able to reconcile limitations of things with their infinite principle manifested

through the fundamental continuity, an inexhaustible source of every possible proportion. Due to the fundamental continuity, thus, it is relation, analogy, order and harmony that count and that even constitute the ambivalent symbolic “bodies” of things. Once the individuality of a thing may be given by an operation, its nature become universal and will always find a correspondence in other individuals—a correspondence that can be reflected, symbolized and articulated. This holds pre-eminently for the symbols of number and magnitude and the sciences of arithmetic and geometry intersecting in what is called universal mathematics, since the geometrical continuity represents the most significant image of the fundamental continuity accessible only by means of ambiguous symbols. And that is also the reason why it is here, in the symbolic turn of the Renaissance, where we find, among other symbolic creations, the liberty of conceiving of such an enigmatic notion as imaginary quantity. It is in the boundless mathematical liberty reliant on the symbolic nature of the Renaissance and the rich ambivalence of universal mathematics where the history of complex numbers begins. It is a history of subtlety and subtlety is also what it can teach us.

109 Gauss 1876, p. 178; tr. Ewald 2005a, p. 313. Here, Gauss appended an important footnote: “Kant already made both observations, but one cannot understand how this acute philosopher could have believed that the first gives a proof of his opinion that space is *only* the form of our outer intuition, since the second so clearly proves the opposite, namely, that space must have a real significance independent of our mode of intuition”.

ABBREVIATIONS

Aristotle

An. Post. *Analytica posteriora*

Met. *Metaphysica*

Phys. *Physica*

Descartes, R.

AT Descartes, R. (1902). *Œuvres de René Descartes publiés par Charles Adam & Paul Tannery sous les auspices du Ministère de l'instruction publique*. 11 vols. Paris: Léopold Cerf.

Euclid

Elem. *Elementa*

Leibniz, G. W.

A Leibniz, G. W. (1923–). *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe, I–VIII*, Darmstadt / Leipzig / Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

GM Leibniz, G. W. (1849–1863). *Leibnizens mathematische Schriften, C. I.* Gerhardt (Hg.), I–VII, Berlin: A. Asher.

GP Leibniz, G. W. (1875–1890). *Die philosophischen Schriften, C. I.* Gerhardt (Hg.), I–VII, Berlin: Weidmann.

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The Mastermind and the Fool. Self-Representation and the Shadowy Worlds of Truth in Giordano Bruno's Candelaio (1582)

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ABSTRACT

This article traces one of the main lines of argument in Giordano Bruno's only comedy. I will suggest that even though they occupy opposite places in the kaleidoscope of truth and falsehood, the antagonists Gioanbernardo, the mastermind, and Bonifacio, the fool, are embodiments of two aspects of an homogeneous physical reality that is accessible to human beings only through polyvalent images. I will suggest a specific pictorial representation of these two aspects, namely Christ and St. John the Baptist, as children. I shall also suggest that Bruno in the *Candelaio* uses the persona of this saint to point to his *nolana filosofia*. In such ways, the *Candelaio* is not only expressing philosophical concepts in the form of contemporary comedy, Bruno also developed his philosophy by making use of the representational possibilities that only the stage could offer him.

Se vogliamo mutar stato, cambiamo costumi.
Giordano Bruno, Spaccio della bestia trionfante

— INTRODUCTION

Giordano Bruno, arguably one of the most important philosophers of the Renaissance, first published a book in Italian, which purports not to be an erudite treatise on the intricacies of his philosophy of the infinite universe or the primacy of matter over form, but a facetious stage play. The *Candelaio*, the candlebearer (an abusive word for a passive homosexual man) came off a Paris press in 1582, where Bruno had arrived the year before; after his travels through various places in Europe, in which Bruno had been trying to get an appointment as a university tea-

cher.¹ Was Bruno looking for a new opportunity in life? Did he want to become a polygraph, as Pietro Aretino before him? Not quite, although Aretino was certainly a model for Bruno's literary production, and in many ways, the Nolan was trying to launch a new career with the *Candelaio*.

But it would not have been the notoriously impetuous philosopher from Southern Italy, if there was not more

1 See for instance Ciliberto 1990, pp. 7–28 for Bruno's early years. For a summary and analysis of the *Candelaio*, see Moliterno 2000, pp. 9–54; Koderer 2013, pp. xi–cviii.

to all this: though reminiscent of other Renaissance comedies,² the hilarious surface of the *Candelaio* conceals philosophical, political and theological topics. With good reason, Nuccio Ordine has described the *Candelaio* as an Overture to the Nolan's philosophical *Dialoghi italiani* in general,³ and the play also contains a wealth of comment on Bruno's intricate art of memory represented in the Nolan's Latin treatises.⁴ Bruno is playing a game of hide-and-seek with his spectators and readers. Drawing its main intellectual energy from being a (tragi-) comedy,⁵ he creates a wealth of inter-textual references in a work that is full of dramatic irony, amidst an already complex structure of plots.

I will sketch only one the main lines of argument: Even though they occupy opposite places in the kaleidoscope of

truth and falsehood, the antagonists Gioanbernardo, the mastermind, and Bonifacio, the fool, are embodiments of two aspects of an homogeneous physical reality that is accessible to human beings only through polyvalent images. I will suggest a specific pictorial representation of these two aspects, namely Christ and St. John the Baptist, as children.

The *Candelaio* is not only expressing philosophical concepts in the form of contemporary comedy, Bruno developed his philosophy by making use of the representational possibilities that only the stage could offer him. He is teaching his attentive readership that thinking inevitably produces images, which are immune to ultimate truths and falsehoods.⁶ I will focus on one set of interrelated ideas in the *Candelaio* which seem to me to be of primary importance not only for Bruno's philosophy: to think about representing one of the main aspects of Bruno's philosophy on the stage, this aspect being the idea that human beings live in an ever changing physical world; hence, they are merely able to grasp the shadows of embodied and therefore mutable physical entities.⁷ I shall argue

2 Most notably perhaps Pietro Aretino's *Cortigiana*.

3 Ordine 2003, p. 45; cf. also Ciliberto 1990, p. 25.

4 On Bruno's art of memory, see Yates 1969, Sturlese 1990, 1992; Bolzoni 2001; Clucas 2001, 2002. For a brilliant and highly readable introduction to the contexts and contents of both Bruno's *Dialoghi italiani* and his mnemonics, see Blum 2013, pp. 25–65.

5 As the title page announces (*Candelaio* [p. 1]). In the following I will quote passages from the *Candelaio* from the 1999 anastatic reprint of the *editio princeps* of the *Candelaio*, Paris 1582. I leave the original orthography and spelling, following the suggestions made by Ciliberto 2002. The English translations of the *Candelaio* are from Moliterno 2000. For Bruno's other Italian dialogues quoted here, (*Cena*, *Della causa*, *Spaccio*, *Cabala*, *Eroici Furori*) I shall refer to Bruno 1958, the edition of Gentile and Aquilecchia (abbreviated as DI).

6 Bruno thus neglects the rules of Counter Reformation theologians who prohibited ambiguity in all literary production. Cfr. Cox 1992, chapter 1 for a discussion of the different genres of the dialogue and their assessment through Renaissance censors.

7 See also Spaccio DI, p. 651: “[la verità ...] la quale come non è chi alcunamente la possa toccare, cossí non si trova qua basso chi la possa perfettamente comprendere: perché non è compresa, o veramente non viene apparecchiata se non da quello in cui è per essenza; e questo non è altro che lei medesima. E perciò da

that the *Candelaio*'s main plot Brings Bruno's concept of *vicissitudo* to the stage, *vicissitudo* being the concept of constantly changing fortune entailing a cyclical worldview.⁸ In his philosophical dialogues Bruno often says that truth itself is never available to human beings. Truth is reflected in the changing physical shapes, which he conceptualises as "shadows" that are constantly emerging from and vanishing into a divine and creative matter, which is represented with distinctly female traits. To give just one characteristic quote from the *Spaccio*, where Bruno says:

Therefore you can see how one simple divinity that exists in all things, one fertile nature, [and] mother protecting the universe, manifesting itself in different ways, according to the reverberations in different subjects, and [thus] acquires different names.⁹

fuori non si vede se non in ombra, similitudine, specchio ed in superficie e maniera di faccia, [...].

- 8 Cena DI, pp. 131–2: "[...] verso i chiamati poli ed oppositi punti emisferici, per la rinovazione di secoli e cambiamento del suo volto, a fin che, dove era il mare sii l'arida, ove era torrido sii freddo, ove il tropico sii l'equinoziale; e finalmente sii de tutte cose vicissitudine, come in questo, cossì ne gli altri astri, non senza ragione da gli antichi veri filosofi chiamati mondi." See the entire 5th dialogue of the *Cena*. Also *Theses de magia* 48, OM, pp. 358–9. Aristotle, *Meteorology* I, 14, 351a 18 ff. *Physics*, 204b 35– 205a 7.
- 9 *Spaccio* DI, p. 780: "Vedi dunque come una semplice divinità che si trova in tutte le cose, una feconda natura, madre conservatrice de l'universo, secondo che diversamente si comunica, riluce in diversi soggetti, e prende diversi nomi." See also Kodera 2010a.

Such ideas are well known and stated explicitly in Bruno's later works;¹⁰ yet the *Candelaio* is different: here these topics are enacted by living characters, by moving paintings. And indeed, fine art and pictorial representations have a pivotal role in that play. Here, Bruno adapts not only traditional personae from the 16th century Italian stage, (such as the *capitano*, the *ruffiana* or the *pedante*) but he also introduces a hitherto unknown figure,¹¹ the painter Gioanbernardo, whose name is an acronym for Giordano Bruno. It has often been noted that this visual artist is the mastermind in the *Candelaio*: Gioanbernardo plots and stage-directs the comedy's main intrigue in the course of which his antagonist Bonifacio, is being punished for being "insipid, sordid and pompous".¹² For the sake of brevity I will call this malefactor (evildoer)¹³ the fool. In the *Candelaio* we learn that this former gay man at the age of 42 suddenly became straight, married a beautiful young woman, soon got tired of her and

- 10 For a concise discussion of these ideas by Bruno himself, see for instance *Theses de magia* §20–26 in OM, pp. 339–345.
- 11 With the possible exception of Aretino's Cortigiana: Messer Maco, a painter from Venice was a actually friend of Aretino's. Boccaccio's *Decameron* (VII, 3 and 6; IX, 3 and 5) of course recounts delightful stories about the beffe played to Calandrino, a simpleton and painter by a certain Bruno and Buffalmaco, clever Florentine artists, that are mentioned in Vasari's *Vitae*.
- 12 *Candelaio*, *Argumento* [p. 6] "goffo, sordido, insipido" (tr. Moliterno 2000, p. 60).
- 13 *Candelaio*, V, 22, fol. 132v [296] "il malfattore, il Malefacio" (tr. Moliterno 2000, p. 180).

is presently madly in love with the Signora Vittoria, a prostitute (I, 3). In order to avoid paying for her services, the fool hires a charlatan who promises to cast a powerful love spell over the object of Bonifacio's desire. In the course of the play, the fool will be caught in flagrante by his own faithful wife, the dazzling Madonna Karubina who (disguised as the desired Signora), receives her would-be adulterer husband in a dark room in the brothel where she mistreats the fool physically (IV, 12).¹⁴ The turbulent action on stage is part of the ruse arranged by Gioanbernardo, whose own sentimental goal is to seduce the honest and beautiful Madonna Karubina. It is also part of Gioanbernardo's plan that the fool disguises himself as the painter in order to be able to visit the prostitute, allegedly in order not to be recognized by the neighbours. Masked with an artificial beard (*una barba negra posticcia*) and an overcoat (*biscappa*),¹⁵ Bonifacio becomes a look-alike of Gioanbernardo. As the fool leaves the prostitutes' house for the night-time Neapolitan streets, accompanied by his still enraged wife, the painter lies in wait for his double.¹⁶

14 This is a plot of ancient Indian origins, which was well known in Italy at least since Boccaccio's *Decameron*, cfr. Doninger 2000. Kodera 2013, pp. lxiii-lxviii argues that this scene can be read as an enactment of Brunos's doctrine of shadows and a parody of the Platonic myth of the Cave; see also Kodera 2010b. This so-called bedtrick also figures prominently in Italian Renaissance comedies, for instance in Cardinal Bibbiena's (1470–1520) *Calandria* (1513).

15 *Candelaio*, IV, 6, fol. 61r [p. 173].

16 This can be read as a highly ironical allusion to the Platonic allegory of Eros,

Gioanbernardo: Hey there, master Black-Beard, tell me, who of the two of us is me, you or me? You're not answering?

Bonifacio: You're you and I'm me.

Gioanbernardo: What do you mean I'm me. Thief, haven't you robbed me of my person, and in this guise and under my appearance committed all sorts of crimes?¹⁷

The master-mind and the fool have become twins; Corcovizzo, one of the petty criminals that had been lying in wait, disguised as police officers, exclaims in amazement: "Captain, Sir, you see there's not a jot of difference between them."¹⁸ Gioanbernardo accuses the fool of causing a lot of mischief in his own guise; he has Bonifacio arrested by the bogus policemen for the crimes the latter could have committed in this costume. In the following sequences, the fool is punished for just one transgression, namely that he had assumed the

who is described the *Symposium* and in Ficino's commentary on that work as a *liar-in-wait*, a *sophist*, a *magician*. *De amore* 6, 9, p. 213: "[...] *sagaxque venator*, *nova machinamenta sempre contextens* [...] *per omnem vitam incantator, fascinatorque, potens veneficus atque sophista*."

17 *Candelaio*, V, 9 fol 98r [p. 227]: "Gioanbernardo: Olà Messer de la negra barba: dimmi chi di noi dui è io; io ò tu? Non rispondi. Bonifacio: Voi sete voi, et io sono io. Gioanbernardo: Come, io sono io? non hai tu ladro rubbata la mia persona; et sotto questo habito et apparenzia vai commettendo di ribalderie?" (tr. Moliterno 2000, p. 154).

18 *Candelaio*, V, 10, fol 100r [p. 231]: "Signor Capitano, vedete che non mostra differenza l'uno dall' altro." (Moliterno 2000, pp. 155–6).

likeness of someone else, for becoming a look-alike of the mastermind.

The action on stage, the encounter between the doppelgangers enacts an important theorem of Bruno's natural philosophy, namely there is no thing in nature that can be absolutely identical to any other thing.¹⁹ Bruno makes it quite clear that the real offence perpetrated by Bonifacio is not his former sexual orientation,²⁰ or his wantonness.²¹ The fool errs because he tries to become identical with someone else: and this is a real offence, Bruno tells us, this is truly counter-natural. On stage, Bonifacio is punished for his wrong (and therefore unnatural) ideas about the world: bogus policemen arrest the arrogant fool. After his false beard has been removed, the difference between the painter and the fool becomes obvious.²² Bonifacio

is verbally and physically bullied: the threat to be imprisoned in the dungeons of the Neapolitan Viceroy and the fear to be exposed to public shame reduces the fool to the natural form appropriate to him, into a terrified creature, whining for his life.²³ But this is not all; while Bonifacio is going through this ordeal, Gioanbernardo puts the horns on the fool's head by sleeping with Madonna Karubina. In the *Argumento* of the play, Bruno explains the allegorical meaning of this turbulent stage action:

Consider, then, yourselves, how [Bonifacio's] falling in love with Vittoria prepared the way for his being cuckolded (*esser cornuto*) and just when he thought he had reached his prize, he was, in fact, being cuckolded himself, all of which is truly imagined in the figure of Actaeon, who, in hunting was but searching for his own horns and just when he thought he could enjoy his Diana, became himself a stag. Hardly surprising then, that this fellow should be dismembered and ripped to shreds by these thieving hounds.²⁴

19 Bruno, *De umbris*, in *OL II/1*, p. 1–177, p. 75: "Varie sunt in speciebus individuorum figurae: non enim alter olea alteri oleae prorsus est configurata; non alter homo prorsus alteri similis." *Cantus circeus*, in *OL* p. 240: "Sicut enim natura ipsa abolet similitudinem, ipsam (de similitudine numerali loquor) ita & ars. Numquam enim natura duos homines similes constituit, imo nec unum hominem omnino similem perseverare facit, sed quem mane sumpsit ut unum, vespere sumit sensualiter ut alterum."

20 Bruno seems to think that all sexual orientations are natural, see *De vinculis*, §23. in *OL III*, pp. 635–700, pp. 659–61; *Papi* 1968, pp. 252–253.

21 For instance meeting prostitutes is a perfectly acceptable practice for men, as long as none talks about it openly, or so we learn from the *Candelaio* (V, 18).

22 Bruno uses the metaphor that certain forms are "glued" to the body also in the *Spaccio*, where he talks about those gods who are not disguised with artificial horns and beards "aposticci ... ma naturali "

and who are therefore allowed to partake in the divine council. (*Spaccio*, *DI* p. 593, and p. 611 on masks and costumes).

23 *Candelaio*, V, 23, fol. 136v [p. 304]: "Covizzo: Vedete che gentil' Madalena, che gli vada il cancaro a lui: et le quattrocen-to piattole che deve haver nel boscho dell'una et l'altra barba! Vedete che precioso unguento vâ spargendo costui. per mia fé, non gli manch' altro, che la gonna per farlo Madalena."

24 *Candelaio*, *Argumento*, [p. 12]: "Considerate dunque come il suo innamorarsi della S. Vittoria, l'inclinò a posser esser cornuto, et quando si pensò di fruirsi di

Bruno is here referring to the famous Greek myth according to which Actaeon surprised Diana naked, while she was taking a bath. As a punishment for this transgression, the goddess of nature and the Moon changed the hunter into a stag; in this shape, his own dogs devoured Actaeon.²⁵ This myth will be pivotal to Bruno's last Italian dialogue, the *Eroici furori*, this time in connection to his theory of the cognition of the infinite. Just as in this infinite realm oppositions coincide, so the facetious plot in the *Candelaio* hides metaphysical truths about nature: As a consequence of his inferior mental capacities (and like Actaeon), the fool is reduced to the natural form appropriate to him.²⁶ Significantly, the myth of Actaeon also had a theological meaning relating to Bruno's ideas about Christianity. In the

quella, dovenne à fatto cornuto. Figurato veramente per Atteone, il quale andando à caccia, cercava le sue corne. Et all'hor che pensò gioir de sua Diana, dovenne cervo. Però non è meraviglia si è sbrantato e stracciato costui da questi cani marioli." (tr. Moliterno 2000, p. 64)

- 25 On Bruno's detailed interpretation of the myth of Actaeon, see *Eroici Furori DI*, pp. 1007–1008; Fellmann 1989, pp. 29–31, Blum, 2012 pp. 65–68. On horns as a magical symbol of the sign of Capricorn, see *Spaccio DI*, pp. 794–796 and 791–793: "De onde appare aperto che ne le corna consiste il splendo, l'eccellenza e potestade, perché son cose da eroi, bestie e dei." For a eulogy of the corna in Aretino, see his *Cortigiana*, V, 21.
- 26 This reduction is brought about by Circe, who in Bruno has a definitely positive significance, as we learn from a work that appeared in 1582, the *Cantus Circeus*. OL 186. See also *Spaccio*, DI 559, *Eroici Furori DI* 945. On the concept of *explicatio* of a latent form, see *Cantus Circeus*, OL II/1, pp. 179–257, p. 193.

Spaccio, a dialogue published in 1584, a couple of years after the *Candelaio*, Bruno quite openly denounced Christianity as a religion of impostors that had (finally) come to an end in his time.²⁷ Here, the myth of Actaeon appears in a passage that seems to be a highly ironic summary of Bonifacio's relationship to his Diana, and, the stag is a figurative representation of Christ.

But the bad thing is that it often happens that whilst these Actaeons are hunting for the stags of the desert, they are transformed into domestic stags by their Diana; who with that magical rite, blowing into their face, and splash the water of the fountain onto them, while they say thrice:

When you saw the beast you ran with it. / For me, who has been with you all the time/ you will wait in Galilee.²⁸

- 27 I strongly believe that Gatti 1999, p. 222–9 is right in maintaining that Bruno was not only attacking Lutherans and Calvinists, pace Ciliberto who tirelessly argues to the contrary.
- 28 *Spaccio DI*, pp. 812–813: "Ma il male è che sovente accade che, mentre questi Atteoni vanno perseguitando gli cervi del deserto, vengono, dalla lor Diana ad esser convertiti in cervio domestica, con quel rito magico soffiandoli al viso, e gittandoli l'acqua della fonte a dosso, dicendo tre volte. Si videbas feram,/ tu currebas cum ea;/Me, quae iam tecum eram, Spectes in Galilea." See *ibid.* FN 3 for a fuller discussion of the theological implications of this passage; see also Sacerdoti 2002, pp. 43–5 and *passim* for an extensive and magisterial discussion of the political implications of that parallel.

Cervo domestico (domestic[ated] stag) is a perfect (and highly humorous) description of the state of Bonifacio in the *Candelaio*, after he leaves the prostitute's house where he has been mistreated by his wife. It is also interesting to note that the magic formula, is just recapitulating what happened to Bonifacio, that he was after his own wife. The "magic rite" performed by Diana, also includes a procedure akin to baptism (more on this later). And, tellingly, in *Spaccio*, Christ is repeatedly connected to spurious and superficial magic, in a way that is reminiscent of Bonifacio's dabbling in the occult arts in order to seduce the Signora Vittoria.²⁹

So there seems to be some evidence that Bonifacio/Actaeon is a persona of Christ. Adding to this idea is the opening monologue to the *Candelaio*; here a janitor announces the fool in terms which refer to Christian biblical exegesis, namely as *una bestia tropologica*, *un'asino anagogico* (a tropological beast, an anagogical ass).³⁰ Nor was the idea that a poetic text could be read in a fourfold way like the Bible very uncommon: Dante too, seems to imply that his *Divina commedia* may be read in this fourfold exegetic way.³¹ According to Dante's *Epistula* 13, poets are continuing the work of the Holy Scriptures, and his poem is a new instance of prophetic writing. It is interesting to note that Thomas Aquinas had explicitly ruled out the possibility that other texts besides

biblical texts could be read in this way.³² Even though admittedly quite a pretentious attitude for a writer who was as unknown as Bruno when he published the *Candelaio*, such a reading was feasible.³³ Thus the janitor scorns the size of Boinfacio's horns:

Do you want to see him? Here he is! Give way! Make room! Get back there if you do not want to be gored by horns that have frightened better men than you into fleeing across the mountains.³⁴

As it happens often in his oeuvre, Bruno uses traditional images representing ideas that were easily understood by his contemporaries. So if Bonifacio might be a figurative representation of the Saviour, I started wondering if other personae in the *Candelaio* can be related to Christian mythology. Who could be a representative of Gioanbernardo, the persona of Bruno? And what role would be assigned to the two women, the matron and the prostitute? To answer this question, let us look again at the relationship between the painter and the fool: to be sure, in the play they become clearly distinguishable, one emerging as an enchanting adulterer

29 *Spaccio* DI, pp. 804–5.

30 *Candelaio*, *Bidello* [p. 32].

31 On this, see Eco 1994, pp. 16–17.

32 Eco 1994, p. 17, see also Eco 1989, pp. 28–29.

33 On this topic see also Kodera in Bruno 2013: pp. xli–lvii.

34 *Candelaio*, *Bidello* [p. 32] “[...] desiderate vederlo? Eccolo. Fate piazza. Date luoco. Retiratevi dalle bande: si non volete, che quelle corna vi faccian male: che fan fuggir le genti oltre gli monti.” (tr. Moliterno 2000, p. 72)

and the other as a miserable animal, fearing for his life. But we have to acknowledge that the antagonists are also remarkably similar; Bonifacio is easily converted into an image of Gioanbernardo. And the similarities between the two antagonists do not end here: according to their physiognomic resemblance, their sexual inclinations and desires are alike.³⁵ Obviously, Gioanbernardo too, is in love with a woman that at least used to be adored by Bonifacio; both fool and mastermind are driven by one singular universal sexual attraction that is permeating the entire universe – indeed a very Brunian idea.³⁶ This claim is confirmed in the *Antiprologo* where one learns that Madonna Karubina, and Signora Vittoria, the matron and the prostitute, are to be played in a double role. Thus, on closer inspection, Bruno tells his readers that the fool and the mastermind are in love with one and the same woman. The actress who plays both women is called *quella bagassa*³⁷ (that slut) in the *Antiprologo*. What at first seems to be another of the countless sexist testimonies characteristic of the

early modern period, turns out to be a crucial reference to the coincidence of opposites: after all, this *bagassa imperpersonates* divine nature.

Again, it is instructive to look into the *Spaccio* where Bruno lists the many faults committed by Christ (this time alike as Orion, the archetypal passive homosexual). One of these errors of that a false Saviour is that he has made men wrongly believe that divine nature is actually a *puttana bagascia*.³⁸ This was exactly the mistake committed by the fool in the *Candelaio* – that he takes his Diana to be a slut that can be bought, enchanted and manipulated at will. Obviously, the sexual preferences of the two men assume highly metaphysical and religious dimensions, both aspects pertaining to Bruno's natural philosophy. Again, we are amidst an intricate system of references that strongly indicates the parallels between Christ and Bonifacio, the fool and impostor, who in the *Candelaio* falls victim to his misdeeds.³⁹ A radical criticism of Christianity that had to be well-hidden, and that extends to other aspects Renaissance culture. This becomes obvious in the other two main plots in the *Candelaio*, that of Bartolomeo, the luckless alchemist and that of Mamfurio, the pederast pedant.

35 On the reciprocal relationship between the shape of the body and the workings of soul and the mind in Bruno, see *Spaccio DI*, p. 559.

36 It is interesting to think of this idea as Bruno's physical reading, his re-embodiment of Ficino's doctrine of spiritual Platonic love. See for instance, *De amore*, 6, 10.

37 *Candelaio*, *Antiprologo* [p. 18]: "Quella bagassa che è ordinata per rappresentar Vittoria, et Karubina; have non só che mal di madre." ("That slut who was meant to play the parts of Vittoria and Karubina has I don't know what sort of woman's trouble." tr. Moliterno 2000, p. 67).

38 *Spaccio DI*, p. 804: "[...] facendoli credere che il bianco è nero, che l'intelletto umano [...] è una cecità; e ciò che secondo la ragione pare eccellente, buono ed ottimo, è vile, scelerato ed estremamente malo; che la natura e una puttana bagassa, che la legge naturale è una ribaldaria, [...]."

39 *Spaccio DI*, p. 825: "[...] lui medesimo, ed uno servira per sacrificio e sacrificatore, idest per sacerdote e per bestia [...]."

One also has to keep in mind that Gioanbernardo - the person who substitutes Bonifacio in the play- is remarkably similar to the fool. In order to seduce the object of their desires, both men are trying to manipulate reality in analogous ways; like the Sophists, they are trafficking with deceptive images.⁴⁰ To this end, the fool hires a charlatan to cast a powerful spell on the prostitute; through his occult art, the bogus magician promises to manipulate an enchanted wax puppet, an image of Bonifacio's object of desire.⁴¹ The mastermind turns out to be much more effective by not believing the effectiveness of such procedures; yet, he too is using images to achieve his goal, to seduce Madonna Karubina. Gioanbernardo's peculiar art becomes apparent in a moment of dramatic irony, when Bonifacio commissions a portrait, a two dimensional image, from the painter.

Bonifacio: [...] You've reminded me of the portrait. Have you seen the one that I've had done for me?

Gioanbernardo: I've looked at it more than once [...]. It's good; it resembles you more than me.⁴²

40 For such a characteristically negative Renaissance Platonic description of the Sophists, in connexion with erotic attraction, see *De amore* 6, 10, p. 220.

41 This seems to have been a particularly unmanly way to attain the enchantment of a lover, typically used by prostitutes to keep rich clients. See for instance, Aretino's *Cortigiana*, V, 16.

42 *Candelaio*, I, 8, fol 12r [p. 55]: "[...] mi havete fatto sovvenire del ritratto. hai visto quel che mi hó fatto fare? Gioanbernardo: L'ho visto et revisto. [...] È buono, assomiglia assai più à voi che a me." (tr. Moliterno 2000, p. 82) on the idea that ogni pittore

The painter's witticism foreshadows the showdown in the night-time Neapolitan streets, when the doppelgangers will meet. Gioanbernardo is also a master of three-dimensional arts: upon his orders, Bonifacio will transform his outward appearance to become a look-alike of the mastermind. This living image, formed by the mastermind, is much more sophisticated and effective than the portraits and the wax puppet the fool has commissioned.⁴³ The painter/sculptor acts as a demiurge with clear Hermetic undertones; after all, during the Renaissance, the ancient Egyptians were renowned for the magical powers that allegedly allowed them to endow statues with life.⁴⁴

This now leads to another important aspect of the relationship between Bonifacio and Gioanbernardo: as all things are constantly changing, there is no such

dipinge sé (every painter paints himself); an aphorism that appeared in Italian literature between 1477 and 1490 cfr. the discussion in Zwijnenberg 2004, *passim* and p. 192. For a discussion with regard to the *Candelaio*, see Kodera 2010c and Ordine 2003, pp. 173–82, but also Plato's *Sophist* 266B ff. on the art of eido-lopoiesis (image-making) and the imitation of someone else through one's own shape.

43 *Spaccio DI*, p. 777: "Però Marte si trova più efficacemente in natural vestigio e modo di sustanza non solo in una vipera s scorpione, ma ed in una cipolla ed aglio, che in qualisivoglia maniera di pittura o statua inanimate."

44 See *Spaccio DI*, p. 784 for well-known and often discussed passages in the *Corpus Hermeticum*; for a general introduction to the topic and its history see Copenhaver 1992. About Bruno's intentions with the long quote from the Hermetic Asclepius, see Gatti 1999, pp. 221–28 with references to other relevant secondary literature.

thing as a stable and self-identical natural form; there is no permanent truth in things, they constantly take on new shapes, hence they are always deceiving in that they deviate from the eternal.⁴⁵ The malleability and consequent immunity of all things to final truths and falsehoods is the glory of things, and the pedigree of someone who is deliberately attacking the doctrine of static and eternal Platonic forms, unavailable (at least) to human beings.⁴⁶ Therefore, Gioanbernardo's triumph is only momentary; the mastermind was just temporarily more clever than the fool; actually they are on a par. In the *Candelaio*, Gioanbernardo is acutely aware that his victory over Bonifacio was dependent on his individual efforts; he proved to be superior, but his temporal success was not grounded in essential differences between the antagonists.⁴⁷ Truth, Bruno

tells us, is consequent upon time, every one aspect will prevail at a certain historical moment; even so, the individual may fight for his/her share at the auspicious instant: success is achieved by the cunning manipulation of the images that guide all our intellectual life. In such ways, Bruno presents the world on stage as a constant performance of travesty hence, of ever changing costumes on the surface of the underlying, divine matter.⁴⁸ This idea of constant change is confirmed in the dedication of the

Questa fà honorato chi non merita dà buon campo à chi nol semina, buon' horto à chi nol pianta, molti scudi a chi non le sà spendere; molti figli à chi non può allevarli, buon' appetito à chi non ha che mangiare, biscotti à chi non hà denti. Ma che dico io? deve esser iscusata la poverina, perché è cieca, et cercando per donar gli beni ch'have intra le mani, camina a' tastoni; et per il più s'abbatte a sciocchi, insensati et furfanti; de' quali il mondo tutto è pieno. [...] Dumque, si non è colpa sua; è colpa de chi l'ha fatta [...]. Quantumque questo bene, ch'ho posseduto questa sera, non mi sii stato concesso da' dei et la natura. benché mi sii stato negato dalla fortuna: il giuditio mi hà mostrato l'occasione; la diligenza me l'ha fatta apprendere pe' capelli; et la perseveranza ritenirla. In tutti negocij la difficulta consiste che passi la testa: perche à quella facilmente il busto et il corpo tutto succede." For a parallel quote on the role of Fortune, see Spaccio DI 689–92. In Bruno's system, Fortuna secures the unity of all things by treating everyone equally.

- 45 Spaccio DI, p. 592: "Vedi, dunque, cara Sorella, come ne doma il tempo traditore, come tutti siamo soggetti alla mutazione: e quel che piú tra tanto affligge, è che non abbiamo certezza né speranza alcuna di ripigliar quel medesimo essere a fatto, in cui tal volta fummo. Andiamo, e non torniamo medesimi; e come non avemo memoria di quel che eravamo, prima che fussemo in questo essere, cossí non possem aver saggio di quell che saremo da poi."
- 46 Spaccio DI, p. 807: "Basta, figlia mia [dice Giove alla Minerva] la sapienza contra queste ultime cose, che da per sé invecchiano, cascano, son vorate e digerite dal tempo, come cose di fragilissimo fondamento." For interesting parallels in Pomponazzi see *De fato* II, 7, 205 and *Epilogue* 221.
- 47 *Candelaio* V, 19, fol 127v-129r [pp. 286–9]: „Gioan Bernardo [...] tutti gl' errori che accadeno, son per questa fortuna traditora; quella ch'ha dato tanto bene al tuo padrone Malefacio, et me l'hà tolto.

- 48 On this, see also *Cabala* DI, p. 918: "[...] e benché tu sia un uomo, puoi esser stato [...] un grand' asino, secondo che parrà ispediente al dispensor de gli abiti e luoghi e disponitor de l'anime trasmigranti." On that topic, see also Clucas 2001, p. 95, who emphasizes that nature and the mind are forming everything out of a set of a few limited elements and that this forming activity is also an ethical enterprise.

Candelaio, where Bruno reminds us that he is sorrowfully in exile, and certainly not doing as well as the Gioanbernardo pittore in the play. Here we learn that the plot of this comedy is modelled on a true story, as Bruno sends his greetings to a certain Candelaio living in the Nolan's home town:

Greet for me that other candlebearer of flesh and blood of whom it is said *Regnum dei non possidebunt*, and tell him not to rejoice overly at the rumour that my memory has been trampled under pig's feet and battered by the kicks of donkeys because already the donkey's ears have been cropped and the pigs, one of these Decembers, will be paying me their dues. And let him not feel too secure [...] because if the heavens ever allow me effectively to say *Surgam et ibo*, this fattened calf shall undoubtedly be part of our feast. [...] Thus, at whatever point I may be in this night of waiting, if change is real, I who am in the night await the day and those who are in the day await the night: everything that is, is either here or there, either near or far, either now or future, either early or late.⁴⁹

49 Candelaio, Dedication [4–5]: “Salutate da mia parte quell’ altro Candelaio di carne et ossa, delle quali è detto che *Regnum Dei non possidebunt*. Et ditegli che non goda tanto che costì si dica la mia memoria esser stata strapazzata à forza di piè di porci, et calci d’asini: per che à quest’ hora à gl’ asini son mozze l’orecchie, et i porci qualche decembre me la pagharanno. [...] per che si averrà gaimai ch’i cieli mi concedano ch’io effettivamente possi dire *Surgam et ibo*: cotesto vitello saginato senza dubbio

Bruno here tells us about his come-back, when he will enact a truth that is always and inextricably related to the auspicious moment. As times change and as the wheel of fortune is moving on, Bruno will be eating his adversary, the “fatted calf”, the “candelaio in flesh and blood”; like “the pigs in December”; now, if Bonifacio is Christ, this is a rather radical statement. The tone of the above quote is clearly messianic, and indeed if one goes back to the stage-play (away from the drab reality of the Viceregno and exile in France) one finds a whole series of intertextual hints that confirm the idea that Gioanbernardo/Bruno is here the herald of a new philosophy (still to be written in England in the coming years) and that he also hopes to replace Christ. But how would Bruno imagine such a messianic role? Would he want to supplant the old religion entirely? This is not very probable for the philosopher of the infinite: Bruno was

sarrà parte della nostra festa. [...] Però qualumque sij il punto di questa sera ch’ aspetto. Si la mutazione è vera: io che son ne la notte aspetto il giorno, et quei che son nel giorno, aspettano la notte. Tutto quel ch’è; ò è cquà, ò llà, ò vicino, ò lungi, ò adesso, ò poi, ò presto, ò tardi.” (tr. Moliterno 2000, p.60). See also *De rerum principiis*, § 99 in: OM, pp. 711–2 for a passage that comments Luke, 23, 53: “Questa é l’ora vostra e il potere delle tenebre” Christ’s words upon his arrest. The motif of the vicissitudinal change between light and darkness is repeated in the *Spaccio DI*, p. 778: “No ti dia fastidio questo, o Momo, disse Iside, perché il fato ha ordinata la vicissitudine delle tenebre e la luce. – Ma il male è, rispose Momo, che essi tagnono per certo di essere nella luce. – Ed Iside soggiunse, che le tenebre non gli sarrebbono tenebre, se da essi fussero conosciute.”

rather strongly in favour of the conservation of conflicting ideas, as they are part of a constant coincidenza oppositorum.⁵⁰ After, all, there is no truth or falsehood, there are no things that can be absolutely good or bad.⁵¹

Accordingly, there are some hints in the *Candelaio* that a religious reform should not end in yet another sixteenth-century massacre; to start with, Gioanbernardo is certainly not the Anti-Christ - mastermind and fool are too similar. In the following part of this paper I will argue that Gioanbernardo/Bruno is a persona of John the Baptist, a Christian mythological persona who has not only distinct resemblances to the Saviour but also to Bruno. As no one else seems to have noticed so far, there is an important theological clue to the relationship between the fool and the painter, concealed in one of the plays on words that abound in the *Candelaio*. Karubina's name, the object of the painter's desire, leads the way into one of the many textual labyrinths constructed by the Nolan: the gorgeous Lady's name is a diminutive for the Italian word *caruba*, or *mel silvestre*, (*Ceratonia siliqua*, English *carob*). As its common name, St. John's Bread, suggests, this fruit formed the diet of John the Baptist during his life as a hermit in the desert (Mark 1,6; Math. 3, 4). Of course, this may be just another tawdry allusion in the *Candelaio*: Karubina, Gioanbernardo's wild

honey,⁵² or his cherub, his angel, therefore.

Yet, just as with Bonifacio's corna that turn him into a stag, I think there is more to the story of the carob. To start with, the names of John the Baptist, in Italian Giovanni Battista, and Gioanbernardo have a similar sound: moreover, the painter's name is abbreviated as GIO. B. in the play:⁵³ the combination of letters may signify "Giordano Bruno", "Gioanbernardo", and "Giovanni Battista". There are also physiognomic similarities between the saint and the author, for in the *Antiprologo* Bruno describes himself in the following way:

Our author, were you to see him, you'd say looks like a real lost soul; forever in contemplation of the punishments of hell, he looks as though he's already been put through the wringer; a fellow who laughs just to be like everyone else; most of the time you could see him annoyed, restless, out of his wits, never happy of anything, [...] doleful as a dog who's been fed on onions and beaten a thousand times.⁵⁴

50 Gatti 1999, p. 231, *Spaccio DI*, pp. 158–9; *Causa DI*, p. 275.

51 *Spaccio DI*, p. 686: "[...] nessuna cosa è assolutamente mala [...] ma ogni cosa è mala rispetto di qualche'altro."

52 "Esca autem ejus erat locusta et mel silvestre." (Math. 3, 4) The term is ambiguous, as *esca* may mean food, but also bait. On the story of the Baptist, and the tradition of his visual representations, cfr. *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, vol. VI, cols. 617–618.

53 *Candelaio*, fols. 11v-12 r [pp. 54–5]. But also *inbid.*, fols. 82v-83r [pp. 196–7] where on a couple pages three different abbreviations are printed (GIO. B.; GIO. BER.; GIO: BE).

54 *Candelaio*, *Antiprologo* [pp. 19–20]: "L'authore si voi lo conosceste: dirreste ch'have una physionomia smarrita. par

This description is highly evocative of the iconographic tradition that represented John the Baptist as an emaciated hermit in the desert (Math. 3, 4 John 1, 23).⁵⁵

In Bruno's time, it was generally accepted that the Baptist was the most important male Christian saint;⁵⁶ he was at the same time a prophet of the Old Testament, and therefore endowed with exceptional divine powers. Giovanni baptizes Jesus in the river Jordan, (Mathew 3, 13–17 Luke 1,5–26; 57–80) which is named Giordano in Italian, another memento that we are in the midst of an intricate play of references created by the Nolan.⁵⁷

Apart from these exterior characteristics, there are also doctrinal similarities no less radical than the ones in the dedication of the Candelaiio, for St. John prophesizes: „And now also the axe has been laid unto the root of the trees: every

che sempre sii in contemplatione delle pene dell'inferno. par sij stato alla presa come le barrette. un che ride sol per far come fan gli altri. per il piú lo vedrete fastidito, restio, et bizzarro, et non si contenta di nulla, [...] phantastico com'un cane ch'hà ricevute mille spelluciate, pasciuto di cipolla.” (tr. Moliterno 2000, pp. 67–68.

55 I am thinking here for instance of a painting by Andrea del Verrochio e Leonardo, *Il battesimo di Cristo*, Uffizi. According to Aronberg Lavin 1955, p. 92 Donatello's, *St. John the Baptist in the Bargello*, Florence is the prototype of this representation.

56 Mathew 9, 2–11: „inter natos mulierum non surrexit major Johanne Baptistae.” See for instance the Sermon of St. Bernhard on the birthday of Giovanni Battista, PL, Vol. 184, col. 991–1002; especially col. 1000C.

57 On rumours that Bruno believed himself to be a leader of a new sect, called the Giordanisti, cfr. F. A. Yates 1964, pp. 312–313, 345.

tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.” (Luke 3, 9 also Mathew 3,10) It is perhaps no coincidence that (in the context of a violent polemic against the Reformation and Counterreformation churches) Bruno also emphasizes the idea that the value of actions should be assessed by their results, their fruits, in the Spaccio.⁵⁸

There is more evidence that the Baptist could be the most adequate persona from Christian mythology to represent Bruno's new philosophy. The pair of St. John and Christ is traditionally associated with a cyclical concept of time that is expressed in the annual sequence of seasons: John the Baptist celebrates his birthday on the 24th of June; Christmas, at the opposite end of the year, marks the date when the slightly younger Saviour is born (and the time when the pigs are slaughtered). But St. John is also associated with the (heterodox) idea that religions may cyclically change, just as the seasons do; as a prophet of the Old Testament, St. John says *Illum oportet crescere, me autem minui*. “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3, 30). This emphasis on constant change is also a central aspect of Bruno's philosophy. Moreover, the Baptist is connected to the intrinsic, natural virtues of plants and animals: in the night of his

58 Spaccio DI, p. 777 and p. 555: „Del resto, in questo mezzo ognuno prenda gli frutti che può secondo la capacità del proprio vase; perche non è cosa ria che non si converta in profitto ed utile de buoni, ed non è cosa tanto buona e degna che non possa esser caggione e materia di scandalo à ribladi.”

birthday all the medicinal herbs have to be collected. The idea that divine virtues are present in even the humblest natural objects is again congenial to Bruno's philosophy of nature and religion. And of course, St. John was the crier in the desert; he was, like Bruno, in exile; all tentative reasons to adapt the guise of that saint. In his most recent Book, Jon Marino has described the development and practice of the extremely popular feast of the Baptist in Naples from the 13th century to the end of Spanish dominion.⁵⁹ Marino emphasizes the political character of the celebrations. They were involving the concept pointing to "both an individual's and the city's fortuna". The feast centered on "marriage arrangements and amorous games which were part of the order of the day and the disorder of the night" before the saint's birthday.⁶⁰ These celebrations involved frantic dance and naked bathing and happened in the "notable absence" of the clergy (ibid., 208). The idea of re-baptism and *renovatio* was also conveyed by the full immersion into the sea.⁶¹ "St. John was venerated as the regenerative Prophet of a new era, both a new solar and an agricultural year. His ceremonies of purification and passage carried the bivalent meaning of death as rebirth and of commencement as a time of ending and beginning."⁶²

Let me now concede that this is as good as it gets: as far as I can see, Bruno does not explicitly identify himself with

59 Marino 2011, pp. 198–233.

60 Marino 2011, p. 209.

61 Marino 2011, p. 199.

62 Marino 2011, p. 203.

St. John. I therefore cannot positively say that Bruno in the *Candelaio* was referring to the relationship between the Baptist and the Saviour, both standing at opposite ends of the year and of the traditions of an old and a new law. But certainly this quite preposterous messianic mode of self-representation is very much in tune with the outlook Bruno's philosophy in general. This claim is substantiated by what Richard Blum has demonstrated in one of his many magisterial and at the same time highly regarded contributions to Bruno scholarship. In *Brunos Brunianismus* Blum shows how the *Nolanus* considers his own person as the only point of reference to truth in philosophy. Being the only "*subject, producer and guarantor*" of his own thought, Bruno's philosophy requires that all its philosophical ideas are finally referring back to its ingenious inventor.⁶³ And, as Blum has shown, in a similar vein of thought Bruno's philosophy is in need of (negative) default positions, which the *Nolanus* strives to transform from "prejudices into temporary assumptions".⁶⁴ From a philosophical perspective on the *Candelaio*, this means that Bonifacio/Christ impersonates the default position of Gioanbernardo/Baptist.

Moreover, and tantalizingly, there is another aspect of the relationship

63 Blum 1999, p. 206–207. Blum says (ibid., p. 208) "Dass eine Wahrheit ohne [Bruno] Bestand haben könne, das scheint ihm undenkbar. ... Eigentlich interessiert sich Bruno nur für die *filosofia nolana*."

64 Blum 2013, p. 17 and passim and hist classical study Blum 1980, now fortunately also available in Italian and English translations.

between Bruno and the Baptist. It is well known that Bruno held that we think in images and indeed we use these images to organize our minds and memories. In order to convey his new philosophy Bruno sought to use language and sets of images that would be comprehensible to his contemporaries: the anti-pedantic content of the *Candelaio* gives ample evidence of his ways of using the language of the common people to convey a new vision of nature and the universe.⁶⁵ And it could allow the existing religious and political institutions to remain intact. In that light Gioanbernardo's extraordinary and ironic profession of faith in the *Candelaio* becomes meaningful. The painter speaks just after having sinned *contra sextum* [against the sixth commandment] by consuming his wild honey, the sweet Madonna Carubina.

[...] I'm a Christian and I profess to be a good Catholic. I go often to confession and I take communion on all important feast days. My art is that of the painter, to place before the worldly eyes the image of Our Lord, Our Lady, and of other saints in Paradise.⁶⁶

65 On the topic of malleable words which are changing like every other natural being; see Gatti 1999, pp. 203–8; Bärber-Squarotti 1999; Ordine 1996, ch 14. See also, puzzlingly, Bruno's *De rerum principiis*, § 91, OM, p. 702 on the different ways to write the name of Johannes (Giovanni, etc.) and the idea that the consequently different ways to pronounce this name change its magical virtue.

66 *Candelaio*, V, 23, fol 137v [306]: “[...] io son Christiano, et fò professione di buon catholico. Io mi confesso generalmente, et

This topical statement⁶⁷ is especially confusing, as a few scenes earlier (and in one of his most emotionally authentic moments, when he tries to seduce Madonna Karubina) the painter has explained quite a few highly heterodox ideas about the role of fortune, and that he believes that the gods do not care for us. Honour is a wholly conventional concept that depends on outward reputation, the images others have of ourselves. As long as appearances are saved, no harm is done: just as the horns of Bonifacio will discreetly remain invisible, so Christian icons may be charged with new meaning.⁶⁸ The fool,

comunico tutte le feste principali dell'anno. La mia arte è di depengere, et donar à gl'occhij de mundani la imagine di nostro signore, di nostra madonna, et d'altri santi di paradiso.” (tr. Moliterno 2000, p. 185, tr. slightly modified) On the devotional function of these three different classes of religious images and their worship, see Belting 1990, p. 618–619.

67 See for instance, the contemporary and very similar declaration for the tribunal of the Inquisition, made by the miller who was called Menocchio in Ginzburg 1980, p. 87.

68 *Candelaio*, V, 11, fol 104 r-v [p. 240–241]: “Gioan Bernardo: Vita della mia vita, credo ben che sappiate che cosa è honore, et che cosa anco sij dishonore. Honore non è altro che una stima, una riputatione. però sta semper intatto l'honore. quando la stima et riputatione persevera la medesima. Honore è la buona opinione che altri habbiano di noi. mentre persevera questa; persevera l'honore. Et non è quel che noi siamo et quel che noi facciamo, che ne rendi honorati ò dishonorati; ma sì ben quel che altri stimano, et pensano di noi. Carubina: Sij che si vogli de gl'homini, che dirrete in conspetto de gl'angeli, et de' santi, che vedeno il tutto, et ne giudicano? Gioan Bernardo: Questi non voglono esser veduti più di quel che si fan vedere. Non voglono esser temuti più, di quel che si fan temere. Non voglono esser conosciuti più di quel che si fan conoscere.”

Bonfacio/Christ will not even realize that he is being cuckolded by his clever antagonist.

But what kind of picture would Gioanbernardo, *buon cattolico*, paint to represent himself and of his antagonist? We remember that the painter was commissioned to do a portrait of Bonifacio. I have one tentative suggestion: In the sixteenth century the close and yet antagonistic relationship between Christ and St. John the Baptist found its visual representation in a popular iconographic model typical for Italy. The numerous representations of the *Madonna con il Bambino e San Giovanni* (Madonna with the infant Jesus and St. John) of which we have examples by the most famous Renaissance painters amongst them Leonardo, Botticelli or Raphael, Coreggio, Francesco Maria Rondani, Andrea Sabbatini to name but a few.⁶⁹ Let me emphasize that I do not think that Bruno was trying to recall one of these paintings in particular. This would have been unnecessary anyway, as the iconography of these devotional images was highly stereotypical. These paintings show two very young boys, playing on the lap of the Madonna, who sits in blissful peace. In the context of the *Candelaio* I take the two boys to represent Bonifacio (Christ) and Gioanbernardo (Gio. B.); they are fooling around in the lap of the Virgin Mary, who represents the one actress who plays the prostitute Vittoria and the matron Karubina, thus impersonating different creative aspects of Brunian infinite *natura*;

69 For the development of this image, see Aronberg Lavin 1955.

from her womb the ephemeral masculine forms are constantly emerging and transforming in never-ending circles.⁷⁰ Characteristically, and reminiscent of the doppelgangers in the *Candelaio*, the two boys are very often represented as look-alikes:⁷¹ only Giovanni Battista's hair is longer than Christ's because he is 6 months older than the Saviour (I take Bonifacio's false beard to be a reference to this difference in age). Christ is usually represented stark naked: just as Bonifacio, who rented a coat to look like Gioanbernardo, the young Saviour could easily pick up the piece of cloth or the animal skin usually slung around the body of the Baptist. The genitals of the Saviour are visible, as a reference to his sexuality which makes Christ capable of true human suffering.⁷² Accordingly, Madonna Karubina in the *Candelaio* mistreats her husband's sexual organs in the brothel, in order to punish his attempt to betray her.⁷³

70 *Spaccio DI*, p. 797: "[...] tante altre specie d'animali usciti dal materno grembo della natura [...]."

71 For instance Raphael's *Madonna del Cardellino*, Uffzii, Florence.

72 On the topic of the sexuality of Christ, see Steinberg 1983.

73 *Candelaio*, IV, 12, fol 81r-v [pp.193-4] „Fatto questo secondo atto, mostrarro di volergli concedere l'entrata maestra per una volta, prima che ci colchiamo al letto. M'acconciarro in atto da chiavare; et tosto che lui harrà cacciato il suo cotale: farrò bene che venghi all'attolite porta: ma prima che giongha all'introi bi Re gloria. volgo apprendergli i testicoli et la vergha con due mani, et dirgli. O ben mio mio tanto desiderato, ò Speranza di quest'anima infiammata, prima mi sarran le mani tolte, che tu mi sij tolto da le mani, et con questo le vogli premere tanto forte, et torcergli come torcesse

Christian devotional literature gave clear instructions how to contemplate such sacred images. Emphasizing the connection of the visual representations of single scenes to their context in the entire story of Christ, the faithful were advised to identify with the sacred persons, for instance with the Madonna and the sacred child, and at the same time to consider the mother with her son's dead body. In such ways the peaceful image of the two boys with the Madonna could also refer to the agony and the deaths of the Baptist and the Saviour; an idea that is in accordance with the references to the slaughtered *candelaio* in the play's dedication.⁷⁴

If my reading is correct, the two boys, playing with each other on Mary's lap are an embodiment of the Nolan's celebration of the cyclical world view, in which all things constantly change, in order to return to their places again, differently inside infinite nature. In the *Candelaio* this idea is conveyed through the fact that Gioanbernardo is unable to step out of this painting, to escape from the vicissitudes of the physical world. Bruno's thought has always been characterised as plasmatic and elusive — precisely for that reason, that infinite nature is always within ourselves: the truth Bonifacio has to learn.

drappi bagnati di bucata. Son certa che le sue mani in questo caso non gli servono per difendersi."

74 Goffen 1989, p. 34 and pp. 23–64. I wish to thank Bruce Edelstein for this information. On the changing devotional function of Christian images in general, see Belting 1981, pp. 18–23, and Belting 1990, pp. 459–70, 523–33.

Like the fool, he too is in love with the matron and the prostitute, with the great Mother Nature who has produced these two eternal forms in the first place. In Bruno's infinite universe, the meaning of the *Madonna con bambini* would be charged with sexual meaning. When they meet the painter, his look-alike, and Madonna Karubina in the nighttime streets of Naples, Barra and Marca, petty criminals disguised as policemen, sum these sexual implications nicely up:

Barra: These three, with the woman included will be two in one flesh.

Marca: I think they must be trying to decide who to be the husband of the woman.⁷⁵

Just as Giovanni Battista is playing around with Christ on Leonardo's and Raphael's paintings, Gioanbernardo/Bruno is inside the picture, driven by his sexual desire, as is his opponent, the fool, Christ.⁷⁶ Paralleling the Christian

75 *Candelaio* V, 10, 100 r [231]: "Barra: Questi tre insieme con la femina, farranno dui in carne una. Marca: Credo che cercano chi de lor dui è esso; per essere il marito de la femina." (tr. Moliterno 2000, p. 155)

76 On the philosopher as painter who is unable to step back from the canvas to consider his work, see an often commented passage of *Cena DI*, p. 16. In *De vinculis* § 30, OM p. 451 Bruno says that in order to bind something one has to be bound too, because the same emotional disposition is necessary to operate effectively on the world. In a similar way, Plotinus, *Enneads* 4, 4, 40 maintains that the magus has to be inside the universe to be able to manipulate it. "For if anyone put a magician outside the All, he could not draw or bring down by attractive or binding spells. But now, because he does not operate as if he were someone else, he

devotional practice, Bruno portrays himself as part of the picture, because it is impossible to step out of an infinite universe. The *Candelaio* thus emerges as a distinctly Anti-Christian celebration of the mutability and instability of all things: an immanentist Anti-Idealism at its best, performed on stage. Yet, Bruno is keenly aware that the visual paraphernalia of that religion (as good as that of any other one) may be a mnemonic device for organizing the mind, in new and more natural ways. According to Bruno, the automatic appearance of such images is constitutive of the organisation of our minds; we are only thinking in images. Any mental activity is bound to the physical body which inexorably produces malleable images; there is no such thing as an un-metaphorical speech, developing as parthenogenetic products of reason. Accordingly, such *phantasmata* may be employed as *loci* and *imagines* for a natural art of memory. The images do not even necessarily have a direct connection to the contents that are to be remembered.⁷⁷ Let me emphasize that Bruno in the *Candelaio* is referring to a popular devotional image that is *not* represented or mentioned in the text. Even so, the

can work on subjects by what way on thing is drawn to another in the living being." (tr. Armstrong, p. 263).

77 Bruno is promising that the *Candelaio* will cast some light on the *Shadows of ideas*. The *De umbris idearum* were also published in Paris in 1582; see *Candelaio, Dedication*, [p. 4]: "[...] eccovi la candela che vi vien porgiuta per questo candelaio che da me si parte, la qual in questo paese ove mi trovo potrà chiarir alquanto certe ombre dell' Idee le quali in vero spaventano le bestie [...]" (Italics mine)

Madonna con i bambini, a popular devotional image, would be an ideal candidate for a painting by Gioanbernardo pittore, devout catholic, charged with an entirely Brunian meaning; just as the *Candelaio* is a popular comedy that hides the Nolan's new philosophy, and at the same time allows for cultural coherence (as opposed to a radical break with the culture) within the change from light into darkness (which will not even be perceptible for those who are in the dark).⁷⁸ Bruno probably sought precisely that kind of irenic peace – across the petty boundaries created by religious fanaticism in all Christian sects of the time. In the comedy, the revolution brought about by Gioanbernardo is quite discreet; outwardly, he remains a good catholic because he is aware that the preservation of appearances is of great importance: the painter puts the horns on Bonifacio with great discretion. What the mastermind strives for is nothing less than a privileged relationship to the Madonna.⁷⁹

78 *Spaccio DI*, p. 778. Bruno obviously did not think that a cult of images deeply rooted in local traditions could or should be forcibly changed. In the *Cabala*, Bruno for instance recounts the story that after their defeat against the Persian King Ochus the Egyptians had to abolish worshipping the bull Apis. Ochus forced them to worship the ass, an animal which the Egyptians despised and therefore forced onto the Jews, their own slaves, who in their turn passed this beast to the Christians. But such a change of idols would be forced, come from outside and therefore be unfitting for the Egyptians. The Jews, on the other hand, easily accepted the ass because it represented their genuine Saturnine inclinations. (*Cabala*, DI pp. 807–808).

79 *Candelaio V*, 19, fol. 129r [p.289].

In portraying Gioanbernardo as an embodiment of St. John the Baptist I am perhaps creating an image that is more akin to an account of what happens when one is studying Bruno; the worst that could be said then is that my activity would be an archetypically Brunian enterprise. According to the Nolan, the intellectual energy created by the elaboration and exploration of such images is in tune with his philosophy of an infinite universe, in which every action is part of an extended whole, and therefore everything contains the infinite. In describing the intellectual movement triggered by some instances in the *Candelaio*, the doppelgangers, a portrait and iconography, I am merely following Bruno's precepts. I am aware that with this reading that I am pushing the envelope very far, and that I am perhaps simply voicing ideas that contemporaries who were sympathetic to Bruno's philosophy could have easily read into the *Candelaio*.⁸⁰

Yet, I am less interested in pursuing what Umberto Eco has called a "suspicious reading" of texts.⁸¹ Other than some esoteric authors, (like Gabriele Rossetti and his esoteric/masonic reading of Dante's *Divina commedia* with whom Eco takes issue) I am not postulating that Bruno was an adept to a secret tradition. According to Rossetti, Dante was thus a Rosicrucian *ante litteram*. Therefore, Eco concludes, that according to Rossetti, the masonic text of the 18th

century as well as the *Divina commedia* are to be perceived as pointing to a form of "third archetype" of text, which is a secret unknown and imaginary embodiment of an occult tradition.⁸² I am thus not implying that Bruno was referring to a type of secret text that is now unknown to us: my reading of the theological and political implications of the relationship between the two main antagonists in the *Candelaio* seeks instead to situate my hypothesis in contemporary Neapolitan culture and to read Bruno's comedy was often appropriating the thoughts and texts of others to serve his own intellectual and spiritual ends – a fact to which Richard Blum has often alerted his readers.⁸³ For Bruno such references are part of a strategy of evocation and subversion, as M. A. Granada has aptly characterized them.⁸⁴

I hope to have shown in one particular instance how Bruno teaches his attentive readers a lesson that is characteristic for his entire philosophy; namely that we are always thinking in images, that our intellectual activity is articulated in visual phenomena (the so-called *phantasmata*) which are indistinguishable from our mental processes.⁸⁵

82 Eco 1989, pp. 30–31 and *passim*, cfr. also the exposition in Bonadella 1997.

83 See Blum 2015, with regard to Bruno's Aristotelianism.

84 Granada 1998, pp. 179 and 186; See also Bassi 2007, p. 392 in regard to Bruno's theories on magic: "... è mai sufficiente individuare la fonte [che Bruno usa], ma, volta per volta, va piuttosto analizzato il movimento di scavo e di torsione che egli mette in atto nella ripresa della fonte stessa."

85 Borsche 1993 *passim*.

80 I wish to thank to Walter Stephens for this comment and for pointing me to the to the discussion in Eco, see below.

81 Eco 1989, p. 16.

These images are malleable, changing, and thus immune to ultimate truth or falsehood: just as bodies are changing with the different costumes, the living images of the theatre with its false beards and its costumes allow Bruno to express such ideas through performance. In the *Candelaio* we encounter one of the instances where his cyclical worldview⁸⁶ is enacted in the medium of a visual representation on-stage,

moving, ever changing *tableaux vivants* that are exempt to ultimate questions of truth and falsehood. Or, as Gioanbernardo puts it:

In fact, what you did yesterday you will never do again, and I never before painted the portrait I did today, nor will I ever be able to do it again; what I can do, however, is paint another.⁸⁷

86 Such ideas had been condemned by the church ever since Augustine.

87 *Candelaio* I, 8, fols. 11v-12r [pp. 54–5]: “[...] Cossì quel che facesti hieri non lo farai mai più, et io mai feci quel ritratto ch’hò fatto oggi. ne manco è possibile ch’io possa farlo più, questo sì che potrò farne un àltro.” (tr. Moliterno 2000, p. 82).

ABBREVIATIONS

Candelaio = Bruno, G. (1582). *Candelaio*. Paris: Gulgliemo Giuliano. [1999 facsimile ed. by Eugenio Canone. Firenze: Olschki].

De amore = Ficino, M. (1956). *Commentaire sur le Banquet de Platon Marsile Ficin* (ed. R. Marcel) Paris: Belles Lettres.

DI = Bruno, G. (1958). *Dialoghi italiani, nuovamente ristampati con note da Giovanni Gentile*, 3a ed. a cura di G. Aquilecchia. Florence: Sansoni.

OL = Bruno, G. (1879–1891). *Opera latine conscripta* (ed. F. Tocco, H. Vitelli, V. Imbriani, & C. M. Tallarigo). Naples-Florence (3 Vols. in 8 Parts).

OM = Bruno, G. (2000). *Opere magiche* (eds. M. Ciliberto, S. Bassi, E. Scapparone, & N. Tirinnanzi). Milan: Adelphi.

PL = *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina* (ed. J.-P. Migne). (1844–64). 221 vols. Paris: Garnier.

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„Quid est
quod est?“
Der Wahlspruch
Giordano Brunos
im Licht der
Rezeption des
alttestamentlichen
Buches
Ecclesiastes

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ABSTRACT

In his motto, Giordano Bruno places his philosophy in the tradition of the wisdom of Solomon and the philosophy of Pythagoras. But the procedure proves to be problematic. Bruno neither correctly reproduces the wording of the book Ecclesiastes, nor does he explain the identification of biblical and Greek-Pagan teaching. The question arises how Bruno understands his sources. It turns out that the interpretation of the Book of Ecclesiastes takes place early in the intercultural context of the contact between the Bible and philosophy. As a result, the biblical text experiences significant shifts in meaning, which are taken up and continued in the course of the history of the commentary. Bruno's motto can thus be reconsidered in the context of a broad reception history.

— GRUNDFRAGEN ZU GIORDANO BRUNOS VERSTÄNDNIS DER WEISHEITSLITERATUR

„Weisheit“ ist eines der wichtigsten Motive im Denken Giordano Brunos. In geradezu existentieller Weise fühlt sich Bruno der „Liebe zur wahren Weisheit“ (*amor della vera sapienza*) und dem „Eifer der wahren Betrachtung“ (*studio della vera contemplazione*)¹ verpflichtet. In der *oratio valedictoria* an der Universität Wittenberg billigt er der Weisheit die höchsten Würden zu. Ob in der Gestalt der Sapiencia, Sophia oder Minerva, ob in Anspielung auf die Weisheitsliteratur des Alten Testaments oder das Weisheitsverständnis der Kabbala, – immer gebührt der Weisheit die

höchste Autorität.² Die Berufung auf die Weisheit garantiert die Wahrheit der brunianischen Theorie der unendlichen Einheit des Universums in ihrem innersten, nicht weiter reduzierbaren Kern, ist sie doch selbst mit der Wahrheit und der Einheit identisch.³

Vor dem Hintergrund dieser hohen Wertschätzung der Weisheit wundert es nicht, dass Bruno die Berufung auf die Weisheit gleichsam zu seinem Erkennungs- oder Markenzeichen stilisiert. Mehrfach rekurriert er auf die anerkanntesten Weisheitslehrer der Tradition, um nicht nur sein Einverständnis

1 Bruno 2007b, *Infinito*, S. 6.

2 Bruno 1962a, *Oratio valedictoria*, S. 9–15.

3 „Quelli filosofi hanno ritrovata la sua amica Sofia, li quali hanno ritrovata questa unità. Medesima cosa a fatto è la sofia, la verità, la unità.“ Bruno 2007a, *Causa*, S. 236.

mit ihnen zu signalisieren, sondern auch den Fortbestand ihrer Lehre in seiner eigenen Person zu garantieren. Salomon, „der unter den Hebräern als der Weiseste gilt“⁴ und Pythagoras, der „zu den göttlichen und höchst weisen Männern“⁵ zählt, vertreten dieselbe Grundüberzeugung, die auch die Brunos ist und in knappster Form durch seinen Wahlspruch wiedergegeben wird: „Salomon et Pythagoras. Quid est quod est? Ipsum quod fuit. Quid est quod fuit? Ipsum quod est. Nihil sub sole novum.“⁶ Die von Salomon im alttestamentlichen Buch *Ecclesiastes*⁷ formulierte Weisheit bezüglich der Wiederholung des Gewesenen verbindet sich mit dem paganen Wissen des Pythagoras als des „ersten Philosophen“ überhaupt.⁸ Dieser vertritt – folgt man der weithin rezipierten poetischen Darstellung Ovids – ebenfalls eine Theorie des ewig Wiederkehrenden⁹ und bestreitet damit, gleich dem alttestamentlichen Lehrer, den

grundlegenden Neuigkeitswert des Werdenden und Entstehenden.¹⁰

Indes, so prägnant Bruno seinen Wahlspruch formuliert, so sehr wirft die nähere Betrachtung seiner Formulierung Probleme auf. Paul Richard Blum stellt in seiner wichtigen Studie über Giordano Bruno etwa fest, dass dieser biblische und griechisch-pagane Weisheit in einer nicht weiter erklärten Weise identifiziere.¹¹ Die Akten des Prozesses unterstreichen dieses Amalgam, insofern Bruno während seiner Verteidigung vor den Inquisitoren die im Wahlspruch anklingende Mischung der unterschiedlichen kulturellen Strömungen durch den Rekurs auf weitere pagane Gewährsmänner wie den römischen Dichter Vergil noch vertieft.¹² Darüber hinaus aber zeigt ein Textvergleich, dass Brunos Wahlspruch hinsichtlich des darin thematisierten Zeitverständnisses in einer nicht unerheblichen Weise vom Wortlaut des Buches *Ecclesiastes* abweicht.

4 „il sapientissimo stimato tra gli Ebrei“. Bruno 2007a, Causa, S. 116. Vgl. Bassi 2014, S. 1686–1690.

5 „uomini divini e sapientissimi“. Bruno 2019, Cena, S. 166; 168.

6 Spampanato 1921, S. 664. „Salomon und Pythagoras. Was ist das, was ist? Eben dies, was [es] war. Was ist das, was [es] war? Eben das, was [es] ist. Unter der Sonne gibt es nichts Neues.“ Dt. Übs. von der Verfasserin.

7 Vgl. *Ecl* 1,9–10. Das Buch *Ecclesiastes* findet sich auch unter der Bezeichnung *Kohelet* bzw. *Prediger*. Im Beitrag wird die jeweils in der verwendeten Literatur gebrauchte Bezeichnung bzw. Abkürzung verwendet.

8 Vgl. Cicero 1998, Gespräche in Tusculum 5, 8–9.

9 Vgl. Ovid 1988, *Metamorphosen*, lib. XV, V. 165–172. Für die Übermittlung

pythagoreischer Lehren in der Renaissance vgl. Allen 2014, S. 435–446.

10 In der Forschung (vgl. Lévy 1953, S. 326–328) wird auf Porphyrios' *Vita Pythagorae* als Quelle des Wahlspruchs verwiesen: „Toutefois les points le plus généralement admis sont le suivants: [...] qu'à des périodes déterminées ce qui a été renaît, que rien n'est absolument nouveau [...]“. Porphyre (2019), *Vie de Pythagore* 19, S. 44, griechischer Text ebd. In der Brunoforschung wird der Hinweis aufgegriffen (vgl. Canone 2001, S. 195–196; Gatti 1999, S. 24, Anm. 29). Allerdings ist fraglich, ob Porphyrios' Text bekannt sein konnte, da vor dem 17. Jahrhundert weder die lateinische noch die griechische Fassung gedruckt vorlag. Vgl. Grafton 1996, S. 788.

11 Vgl. Blum 1999, S. 113–115.

12 Vgl. unten Anm. 112.

Während die biblische Vorlage der *Vulgata* formuliert „Quid est quod fuit ipsum quod futurum est / quid est quod factum est ipsum quod fiendum est / nihil sub sole novum“¹³ und damit den unvermittelten Umschlag der Vergangenheit in die Zukunft thematisiert, betont die brunianische Fassung mit der Frage „Quid est quod est?“ die Gegenwart.¹⁴

Mit diesen vorläufigen Befunden öffnet sich der Blick für die Notwendigkeit weiterer Überlegungen hinsichtlich Brunos Textverständnisses. Erstens wirft der Zusammenschluss von biblischer und paganer Weisheit Fragen auf. Mit welcher Berechtigung, so gilt es zu klären, bringt Bruno religiöse und philosophische Lehrstücke in einen gemeinsamen Kontext? Zweitens lässt sich fragen, mit welcher Legitimation Bruno sprachliche Änderungen an einem biblischen Text vornehmen bzw. die angemessene Technik des Zitierens aufgeben konnte, galt doch die Bibel seit dem Mittelalter als „zentraler Quellentext“, der im Sinn der Schrifttreue „wörtlich zitiert“¹⁵ werden musste. Drittens schiebt sich neben diesen Überlegungen zur Textauslegung ein inhaltlicher Aspekt in den Vordergrund, der die Aussage von *Ecl 1,9–10* im engeren Sinn betrifft. Aus welchem

Grund, so ist zu überlegen, wählt Bruno zur Illustration seiner positiv gestimmten Einheits- und Unendlichkeitsspekulation einen biblischen Passus, der – vor dem Hintergrund der zuvor in *Ecl 1,2* behaupteten durchgehenden Nichtigkeit allen Seins¹⁶ – in einer eher pessimistischen Weise die Sinn- und Ziellosigkeit eines ewig gleichen Kreislaufs suggeriert? Transformiert Bruno eigenmächtig die Bedeutung der Heiligen Schrift?

Möchte man auf schnelle Antworten verzichten – etwa, Bruno lese die Bibel eben wie ein Philosoph,¹⁷ oder es handle sich um weitere Beispiele für Brunos Synkretismus¹⁸ – dann stellt sich die Frage nach den verwendeten Quellentexten neu. Es scheint wenig wahrscheinlich, dass Bruno – gerade in der Absicht, seine Philosophie in unverwechselbarer Prägnanz zu erklären – bekannte Autoritäten der Tradition wie Salomon oder Pythagoras in eigenmächtiger sprachlicher Abwandlung und kaum bekannter Ausdeutung anführt. Eher legt sich die Vermutung nahe, dass sowohl die sprachliche Form als auch die inhaltliche Aussage des Wahlspruchs wohl kalkuliert und aufeinander abgestimmt sind.

Geht man von dieser These aus, dann könnte sich der Blick auf die Bibel als ursprünglichen Referenztext für Brunos Wahlspruch als unzureichend erweisen. Es wäre vielmehr eine breitere Rezeptionsgeschichte der biblischen Vorlage zu

13 [Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem](#) ¹⁹⁹⁴, *Ecl 1,9–10*. Vgl. dazu die Varianten „faciendum est“, „finiendum est“ im textkritischen Apparat der genannten Ausgabe, S. 986. „Was geschehen ist, wird wieder geschehen, was man getan hat, wird man wieder tun: Es gibt nichts Neues unter der Sonne.“ Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift 1974, S. 1169.

14 Vgl. Badaloni 1997, S. 11–13; Blum 1999, S. 115–116.

15 Benninghoff-Lühl 2009, Sp. 1543.

16 „vanitas vanitatum dixit Ecclesiastes vanitas vanitatum omnia vanitas“. [Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem](#) ¹⁹⁹⁴, *Ecl 1,2*.

17 Vgl. Bordello 2007, S. 409.

18 De León-Jones 1997, S. 149.

erwarten, die – wenn man so will – als „mitgegebenes kulturelles Archiv“¹⁹ bzw. als anknüpfungsfähiger Erinnerungsbe- reich fungiert und für die brunianische Aussage einen entsprechend weiter gefassten Bedeutungsrahmen konstituiert.

Vor diesem Hintergrund beschäftigt sich der Beitrag schwerpunktmäßig mit den folgenden Themenbereichen:

- Wie wird das Buch Ecclesiastes im Horizont biblischer Exegese verstanden?
- Findet ein Zusammenschluss von biblischem und paganem Weisheitsverständnis statt?
- Wie kann Bruno das biblische Buch angesichts dessen Auslegungsgeschichte verstehen?

— 1. BIBELEXEGESE ALS KULTURELLES ARCHIV IN DER CHRISTLICHEN TRADITION

Die Heilige Schrift wird als grundlegendes Buch göttlich inspirierter Lehre immer von Kommentierung und Auslegung begleitet,²⁰ wobei vielfältige Aufgaben wie die Reflexion auf hermeneutische Methoden, die Archivierung von exegetischem Wissen bis hin zur Einordnung des biblischen Textes in das kulturelle Umfeld in den Kommentierungs- und Auslegungsprozess einbezogen sind.

In diesem Sinn sollen etwa Auslegungsprinzipien wie die des vierfachen Schriftsinns eine möglichst genaue Erfassung der unterschiedlichen Sinnebenen des biblischen Textes

ermöglichen.²¹ Aus dem Genre des profanen Kommentars erwächst die literarische Gattung des Bibelkommentars als richtungsweisendes Hilfsmittel für ein adäquates Textverständnis. Glossen und Postillen sammeln als Standardkommentare das reiche Wissen der Tradition,²² um es im Sinn einer Erinnerungskultur zu bewahren und weiterzugeben.

Die Geschichte der Bibel zeigt zudem, dass ihre Auslegung immer auch im interkulturellen Austausch mit paganen Wissensformen geschieht. Paradigmatisch wird dies in den frühen Schriften der Apologetik deutlich, welche die Überlegenheit des Christentums gegenüber den paganen Formen von Religiosität herauszustellen suchen. Obgleich hierbei die Grundintention in der Abwehr der als konkurrierend empfundenen religiösen Inhalte liegen mag, bleibt dennoch die Tatsache der Begegnung mit der vorgefundenen „anderen“ Kultur bestehen, da ja eine erfolgreiche Abwehr Kenntnis der gegnerischen Positionen voraussetzt.²³

So weist auch die spezielle biblische Kommentarliteratur im Zuge ihrer Ausbildung vielfältige Bezüge zur nichtchristlichen Umwelt auf. Die pagane Philosophie wird als gesellschaftlich anerkanntes Mittel der geistigen Auseinandersetzung durchaus wahrgenommen,²⁴ wie auch die pagane Dichtung zu Zwecken der bestätigenden Illustration der eigenen gedanklichen Inhalte mögliche

19 Ich übernehme die Formulierung „kulturelles Archiv“ von Baßler 2013, S. 360.

20 Vgl. Roth 2007, S. 31.

21 Vgl. De Lubac 1959, S. 373–423; Grondin 1996, Sp. 1356.

22 Vgl. Roth 2007, S. 33–34.

23 Vgl. Altaner, Stuiber 1978, S. 58.

24 Vgl. Tornau 2009, S. 421.

Anerkennung findet.²⁵ Das kommentierende Bemühen bezieht sich also nicht nur auf den biblischen Text als solchen, sondern auch auf die Wissensformen der heidnischen Umwelt, die in vielfältiger Weise aufgegriffen und – nicht zuletzt auch zum Nachweis der eigenen Bildung – für die Vermittlung des eigenen Anliegens eingesetzt werden.

Schließlich erfüllt der Bibelkommentar weitere Funktionen, indem er vor allem auch für eine enge Verbindung zwischen Bewahrung und Erneuerung stehen kann. Eindrucksvoll zeigt sich eine solche „Scharnierfunktion“ des Bibelkommentars zwischen „Altem“ und „Neuem“ anhand der von der Forschung gut dokumentierten Rekonstruktion der Kommentierung des Buches *Ecclesiastes* durch Hieronymus. So greift Hieronymus in seinem einflussreichen und „bis in die Frühe Neuzeit hinein“ als „Standardwerk der Koheletauslegung“²⁶ geltenden Kommentar auf bereits vorliegende Textversionen wie beispielsweise die *Vetus Latina (Itala)* zurück, um seine exegetische Tätigkeit hierauf zu stützen.²⁷ Zugleich schärft die Arbeit am Kommentar jedoch auch den Blick für die als unzureichend empfundene Sprachgebung der verwendeten Vorlagen und regt den Kommentator

zu einer verbesserten Übersetzung des biblischen Textes an.²⁸ Hieronymus' Kommentar zu *Ecclesiastes* steht dementsprechend zwischen der *Vetus Latina* und der von ihm erst später geschaffenen, sogenannten *Vulgata*. Die kommentierende Textauseinandersetzung des Hieronymus verbreitert so für spätere Kommentatoren und Zitatoren das Spektrum verfügbarer Versionen des biblischen Textes.²⁹ Neben der als Standardversion akzeptierten *Vulgata* bieten dann auch die in der Kommentartradition mitgeführten älteren Textversionen eine Referenzmöglichkeit.³⁰

25 Ein einschlägiges Beispiel hierfür ist Rezeption Vergils, dessen Werk von Heiden und Christen gleichermaßen geschätzt wird. Vgl. Tarrant 2019, S. 59–60.

26 Birnbaum 2014, S. 39.

27 Für die verschiedenen Versionen vgl. Leanza 1987, S. 87–109, insbesondere S. 99. Für die Bedeutung der *Vetus Latina* vgl. Goodrich, Miller 2012, S. 15. Für den Text der *Vetus Latina* vgl. Sabatier 1743.

28 Für die komplexe Entstehungsgeschichte der *Vulgata* vgl. Schulz-Flügel 1996, S. 652–662.

29 Auch Augustinus rekurriert bei seiner Erwähnung des Buches *Ecclesiastes* in *De civitate Dei* XII,14 auf die Version der *Vetus Latina*. Vgl. Augustinus 1955, S. 368.

30 Für *Ecl* 1,9–10 liefert die *Vetus Latina*: „Quid est quod fuit? Ipsum quod erit; & quid est quod factum est? ipsum quod fiet.“ Sabatier 1743, S. 354. Vgl. dazu die Version der *Vulgata*, oben Anm. 13. Die *Glossa Ordinaria* zu *Ecclesiastes* bietet „fiendum est“. Vgl. Kostoff-Käörd 2015, S. 186. Damit liegt der Akzent der Aussage offensichtlich auf dem Werden, dem Gemachtwerden bzw. dem Geschehen, das zu nichts Neuem führt. In den vorreformatischen Kommentaren nach Hieronymus findet sich häufig die Wendung „faciendum est“ (vgl. z. B. [Alkuin] 1863, *Commentaria*, Sp. 671; [Rupert von Deutz] 1893, *In librum Ecclesiastes*, Sp. 1203; Hugo von St. Victor, *In Salomonis*, Sp. 144; [Bonaventura] 1893, *Commentarii*, S. 16), die mit „wird man wieder tun“ wiedergegeben werden kann (vgl. Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift [1974], S. 1169). Ob sich durch die Wendung „faciendum est“ ein stärkerer Bezug zum menschlichen Handeln bzw. zur menschlichen Geschichte herstellt, müsste eine Untersuchung klären. Für eine Diskussion des gemeinten Sinns

2. FRÜHE LESART UND SINNVERSCHIEBUNG DES BUCHES ECCLESIASTES BEI EUSEBIUS VON CAESAREA

Fragt man vor dem Hintergrund der komplexen Vorgänge biblischer Exegese, wie das Buch *Ecclesiastes* in der Tradition verstanden wird, dann zeichnen sich früh eigentümliche Schwierigkeiten ab.³¹ Obwohl Salomon sowohl für jüdische als auch für christliche Interpreten als Verfasser des Textes feststeht und das Buch Eingang in den jüdischen wie auch christlichen Kanon findet, scheint es dennoch aufgrund seiner inneren Widersprüchlichkeiten in eigentümlicher Weise erklärungsbedürftig. So scheint vor allem die in *Ecl 1,2* behauptete Nichtigkeit des Seins mit dem im alttestamentlichen Schöpfungsbericht formulierten Gedanken der von Gott bejahten, guten Schöpfung³² zu kollidieren.³³ Im Zuge des Bemühens diesen Widerspruch zu überwinden, wird dem biblischen Text ein anderer bzw. neuer Sinn zugeschrieben, der den Verständnishorizont wesentlich transformiert.³⁴

auf der hebräischen Textgrundlage vgl. Köhlmoos 2015, S. 85–86.

- 31 Für einen Überblick über die Auslegung des Buches *Ecclesiastes* vgl. Christianson 2007.
- 32 „viditque Deus cuncta quae fecit et erant valde bona“. *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem* 41994, *Gen 1,31*.
- 33 Vgl. Anm. 16. Dazu Bons 1997, S. 328–332. Fox 2004, S. xiv–xv. Birnbaum 2014, S. 404.
- 34 Vgl. Bons 1997, S. 330–331. Eine häufig rezipierte Lesart bedeutet die des Origenes, der das Buch *Ecclesiastes* im Rahmen seiner Interpretation der salomonischen Weisheitsliteratur der Naturlehre zuordnet. Vgl. Origenes 2016, *Der Kommentar zum Hohelied*, 3,6, S. 92.

Explizit lässt sich dieser Prozess der Bedeutungsverschiebung bereits bei Eusebius von Caesarea beobachten, der sich in seiner *Praeparatio Evangelica* veranlasst sieht,³⁵ eine Erklärung der Sprechweise von „Nichtigkeit“ zu geben, womit ein bezeichnender Richtungswandel des Textverständnisses eingeleitet ist.

Grundsätzlich ist Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* von dem Motiv geprägt, das Christentum gegen Einwände des Judentums und der paganen Philosophie, d. h. vor allem der des Platonismus, zu verteidigen.³⁶ Um dieses weitreichende apologetische Programm durchzuführen, sieht Eusebius einen Teil seiner Aufgabe darin, die Abhängigkeit der platonischen Philosophie von der alttestamentlichen Offenbarung zu behaupten, zugleich aber auch deren sachliche Übereinstimmung mit der biblischen Lehre aufzuzeigen. In einer kunstvollen Konstruktion wird das Alte Testament als die übergeordnete, geoffenbarte Wahrheit schlechthin bestimmt. Die Wahrheit der platonischen Philosophie hingegen gilt als menschliche und zeitlich nachgeordnet,³⁷ wobei die inhaltliche Erkenntnis als solche – im Sinne der Einheit der Wahrheit – letztlich dieselbe wie die der Bibel sein soll.³⁸ In der Folge

- 35 Die *Praeparatio Evangelica* liegt 1448 in der lateinischen Übersetzung des Georgios von Trapezunt vor. Vgl. Monfasani 1984, S. 724. Zur Kritik der Übersetzung vgl. Monfasani 1984, 725–726. Zu Kürzungen in der Übersetzung vgl. Monfasani 1976, S. 78.
- 36 Vgl. Strutwolf 1999, S. 11–18.
- 37 Vgl. Tornau 2009, S. 427–428.
- 38 Vgl. [Eusebius von Caesarea] 1539, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, f. 72r–f. 72v; Eusèbe de Césarée 1982, XI, 9,4. Vgl. hierzu auch Eusebius' Aussage: „quis enim est Plato

stehen Altes Testament und platonische Philosophie in einem eigentümlichen Spannungsverhältnis von Gleichheit und Ungleichheit. Jedoch lässt die Konstruktion dieses Verhältnisses auch zu, dass Platons pagane Erkenntnisse und Interpretationsformen trotz ihrer „Schwächen“ inhaltlich wie methodologisch für das Verständnis der biblischen Offenbarung genutzt werden können,³⁹ ohne dass damit eine unsachgemäße Fehlinterpretation der alttestamentlichen Wahrheit zu befürchten wäre.

Vor dem Hintergrund dieser Durchdringung von Bibel und Platonismus kommt Eusebius im elften Buch seiner Abhandlung nun ausdrücklich auf die als schwierig empfundenen Stellen des Buches *Ecclesiastes* zu sprechen. Die Argumentation setzt mit der These ein, dass, entsprechend der von den göttlich inspirierten Propheten mitgeteilten „Physik“ der Hebräer, die Betrachtung der Dinge in zweifacher Weise zu erfolgen habe. Zum einen soll ein unkörperlicher Gegenstandsbereich existieren, der nur dem Geist zugänglich ist, zum anderen soll es die körperlichen Dinge geben, die durch die Wahrnehmung erfasst werden.⁴⁰ Damit ist ein Deutungsprozess

eingeleitet, der die schwierigen Stellen – erkennbar nach dem Vorbild der platonischen Philosophie – grundsätzlich in den neuen Kontext zweier unterschiedlicher Seinsweisen stellt.

Fragt man, was dies konkret für das Verständnis der salomonischen Weisheitslehre einträgt, dann ist zunächst eine wirksame Strategie für die Eliminierung der im Buch *Ecclesiastes* empfundenen Schwierigkeiten gewonnen. So lässt sich der bereits angedeutete Widerspruch zwischen nichtiger und guter Schöpfung unter der Annahme beseitigen, dass Salomon die Nichtigkeit der Schöpfung nicht in einem absoluten, sondern in einem relativen Sinn anspricht. Entsprechend dem Schema der platonischen Zweiheit von geistiger und körperlicher Seinsverfassung soll „Sein“ nach Eusebius allein den geistigen Entitäten zukommen, wohingegen die Weisheitslehre Salomons über das Werden und Vergehen der „sich auflösenden Substanz der Körper“⁴¹ spreche.

Wenn sich an dieser Stelle ein Prozess der Ontologisierung abzeichnet, der vom ursprünglichen Gedanken einer durchgehenden Nichtigkeit des geschaffenen Seins abrückt und dem biblischen Text durch die einschränkende

quam Moses Attice loquens.“ [Eusebius von Caesarea] 1539, f. 73r; Eusèbe de Césarée 1982, 11,10,14. Vgl. Strutwolf 1999, S. 103–105.

39 Vgl. Favrelle 1982, S. 7–42. Zu Eusebius' Platonkenntnis und seinem Rekurs auf mittel- und neuplatonische Exegeten (insbesondere Numenius) vgl. Tornau 2009, S. 428.

40 „Haec igitur pars [scil. physica] etiam apud eos [scil. Hebraeos] intellectualium inde corporaliumque rerum contemplationem, & sensibilibus physiologiam diuisa recte à prophetis non coniectura, nec mortalium aliquo, sed sancti spiritus

gratia dicente habebatur.“ [Eusebius von Caesarea] 1539, Praeparatio evangelica, f. 72r; Eusèbe de Césarée 1982, XI 7,1.

41 „Idem [scil. Salomo] rursus fluentem corporum substantiam ostendens in Ecclesiaste ait: Vanitas uanitatum, & o[mn]ia uanitas. [...] Et subiicit: Quid est quod fuit? ipsum quod futurum est. Quid est quod factum est? ipsum quod faciendum est. Nihil nouum sub sole [...]“ [Eusebius von Caesarea] 1539, Praeparatio evangelica, f. 72r; Eusèbe de Césarée 1982, XI, 7,6.

Fokussierung auf den körperlichen Aspekt des Seins einen neuen Sinn verleiht, so vertieft sich diese eingeschlagene Richtung der Interpretation durch anschließende Überlegungen zum Gottesbegriff. Eusebius konzentriert sich auf den in *Ex 3,14* formulierten Gottesnamen, den er mit der salomonischen Aussage von *Ecl 1,9* verbindet. Allein das Sein Gottes könne durch die Aussage „ego sum qui sum“ – „ich bin der ich bin“ – ausgedrückt werden, wohingegen Salomons Erklärung „futurum esse quod fuit, & faciundum [sic] quod factum est, nec nouum aliquid esse sub sole“⁴² – „es wird sein, was gewesen ist, und es wird zu tun sein, was getan ist, und es gibt nichts Neues unter der Sonne“ auf einen zweiten, nicht göttlichen Seinsbereich ziele.

Auch die Passage von *Ecl 1,9* wird in den Kontext einer vom platonischen Denken inspirierten ontologischen Differenz gestellt,⁴³ wobei die zeitlichen Aspekte, die die Sprache auszudrücken vermag, mit diesen Seinsbereichen korrespondieren. Dementsprechend steht die als Gottesname formulierte Selbstidentität Gottes für die gänzlich unabhängige Ursprungslosigkeit, Ewigkeit, Unzerstörbarkeit und Unbeweglichkeit des göttlichen Seins, die allein durch die Form des Präsens des Verbs „sein“ ausgedrückt werden kann. Die von Salomon angesprochenen Formen des Seins hingegen, so kann man mit Eusebius schließen, implizieren ständigen Wechsel und

ständiges Fließen,⁴⁴ so dass von ihnen nicht im Präsens, sondern nur in der Form der Vergangenheit und Zukunft gesprochen werden kann.⁴⁵

Ruft man sich von hieraus das zu Beginn des Abschnitts geschilderte Auslegungsproblem des Buches *Ecclesiastes* in Erinnerung, dann zeichnet sich mit Eusebius' Überlegungen eine paradigmataugliche Strategie ab, um der als unstimmig empfundenen Sprechweise von der Nichtigkeit des Seins zu begegnen. Der Prozess der Ontologisierung der alttestamentlichen Passage, die Konstruktion der ontologischen Differenz der Seinsbereiche, die relationale Zuordnung von ewig unwandelbarem und zeitlich wandelbarem Sein sowie die Betonung der Notwendigkeit einer sprachlich angemessenen Darstellung dieser Seinsbedingungen liefern in ihrem Zusammenspiel ein tragfähiges Interpretationsgefüge, das zur Erschließung des Textes im gewünschten Sinn geeignet scheint.

42 [Eusebius von Caesarea] 1539, *Praeparatio evangelica*, f. 72v; Eusèbe de Césarée 1982, XI, 9,5.

43 Vgl. Strutwolf 1999, S. 105–107.

44 „Illud uero Salomonis, quod fuit scilicet, quod[que] futurum est per ortum & occasum expresse, quibus subijcit.“ [Eusebius von Caesarea] 1539, *Praeparatio evangelica*, f. 72v; Eusèbe de Césarée 1982, XI, 9,5–6.

45 „Quid est inquit [scil. Plato] q[uo]d semp[er] est ortu[m] no[n] habe[n]s? & quid q[uo]d semp[er] fit, est aut[em] nunq[am]? Illud certe me[n]te ac r[ati]one p[er]cipitur, eode[m] semp[er] ens modo, hoc uero irrationali sensu co[m]prehenditur [...]“ [Eusebius von Caesarea] 1539, *Praeparatio evangelica*, f. 72v; Eusèbe de Césarée 1982, XI, 9,5–6.“

3. „NICHTS NEUES UNTER DER SONNE“: OFFENE ASPEKTE IN DER KOMMENTARLITERATUR DES BUCHES ECCLESIASTES

Die Entkräftung von Widersprüchen bildet auch ein zentrales Thema der engeren Fachkommentierung des Buches *Ecclesiastes*. Ein wichtiges Beispiel hierfür bildet die Auslegung des Verses von *Ecl 1,10*, demzufolge es – in der Fassung der *Vulgata* – „nichts Neues unter der Sonne“ (*nihil sub sole novum*) geben soll.⁴⁶ Wiederum verbindet sich das Problem mit der in *Ecl 1,2* ausgesprochenen Behauptung der Nichtigkeit der Schöpfung, so dass sich für die Exegese nach wie vor die Aufgabe der Aussöhnung der Nichtigkeit (*vanitas*) der Welt mit der von Gott gewollten Schöpfung stellt.⁴⁷ Zudem entsteht jedoch die Forderung, pessimistischen Implikationen wie etwa der Vorstellung der Wiederholung des „ewig Gleichen“ entgegenzutreten, die mit der Formulierung „nichts Neues unter der Sonne“ gegeben sein könnten.⁴⁸

3.1 „UNTER DER SONNE“ – „ÜBER DER SONNE“: DIE KONSTRUKTION EINER ZWEIFACHEN REALITÄT

Skizziert man die Erklärungen der Exegese zu dieser Problematik, dann

bietet sich aus christlicher Perspektive der wirkungsgeschichtlich wichtige *Ecclesiastes*-Kommentar des Hieronymus als Ausgangspunkt an. Von bereits vorliegenden *Ecclesiastes*-Kommentaren wie etwa dem (verlorenen) des Origenes inspiriert⁴⁹ und aufgeschlossen für hebräische Zitate⁵⁰ sowie für pagane Dichtung⁵¹ stellt das Werk in sich selbst ein Resultat interreligiöser und interkultureller Auseinandersetzung dar.⁵² Im Rahmen dieses weitgespannten Auslegungshorizonts liefert Hieronymus für die Kommentierung von *Ecl 1,10* entscheidende Vorgaben.⁵³

Die Reflexion setzt bei dem Problem an, wie der Unverträglichkeit einer guten und einer nichtigen Schöpfung zu begegnen sei, um sich sodann der Bedeutung der Formulierung von „Nichtigkeit der Nichtigkeiten“⁵⁴ in *Ecl 1,2* zuzuwenden. Ähnlich der Vorgehensweise Eusebius' vor ihm wählt auch Hieronymus die Strategie der Einschränkung des Verständnisses von Nichtigkeit, um eine im Widerspruch zu *Gen 1,31* stehende absolute Entwertung

46 Die Formulierung „*nihil sub sole novum*“ der *Vulgata* findet sich nicht in der *Vetus Latina*, die stattdessen die Formulierung „*et non est omne recens sub sole*“ bietet. Sabatier 1743, S. 345 und oben Anm. 28. Hieronymus bereitet die Formulierung „*nihil novum*“, die sich später in der von ihm übersetzten *Vulgata* findet, in seinem Kommentar zu *Ecl 1,9* vor. Vgl. [Hieronymus] 2014, Koheletkommentar, S. 60.

47 Vgl. oben, Anm. 33.

48 Vgl. Kartschoke 1985, S. 175–177.

49 Vgl. Leanza 1986, S. 173–178. Vgl. Birnbaum 2014, S. 7–9; 17.

50 Vgl. Birnbaum 2014, S. 18–20.

51 Hieronymus beruft sich insbesondere auf Horaz und Vergil, wobei Vergil in Verehrung als „der Dichter“ (*poeta*) schlechthin gilt. Vgl. Birnbaum 2014, 20–21.

52 Zu Hieronymus' Auslegungstechnik und dessen Distanz gegenüber der Allegorese vgl. Kostoff-Käärd 2015, S. 10.

53 Zur Orientierung Hieronymus' am literarischen und spirituellen Schriftsinn vgl. Birnbaum 2014, S. 11–12.

54 So die deutsche Übersetzung von „*vanitas vanitatum*“. [Hieronymus], Koheletkommentar 2014, S. 53.

des geschaffenen Seins zu vermeiden. Systematisch leitend ist hierbei die relationale Zuordnung von Unvergänglichkeit und Vergänglichkeit, die mit einer perspektivischen Sichtweise auf die betreffenden Seinsbereiche einhergeht. In diesem Sinn kann die Schöpfung nach Hieronymus als in sich gut, im Vergleich mit Gott jedoch als „nichts“ betrachtet werden. Der Grund hierfür liegt in der Struktur von Ewigkeit und Zeitlichkeit, die für Hieronymus auch einen Niederschlag in den zeitlichen Aspekten der Sprache findet. Es könne gesagt werden, dass „nur Gott immer das ist, was er war“,⁵⁵ während alles andere „vergeht“ und „die Welt an ihrem Ende hinschwindet.“⁵⁶ Eine überzeitliche Identität im Sinn der Koinzidenz von Vergangenheit und Gegenwart komme allein Gott zu, wohingegen die Sprechweise von „Nichtigkeit“ die Vergänglichkeit und das Hinschwinden der Welt betone.

Mit diesen Überlegungen schafft Hieronymus eine wesentliche Voraussetzung für die Abschwächung des im Buch *Ecclesiastes* anklingenden Pessimismus. Die Einbettung der „Vanitas“ der Welt in ein vom göttlichen Sein dominiertes Bezugssystem verschiebt die Bedeutung von „Nichtigkeit“, die nun nicht mehr an sich selbst, sondern als Relationsbegriff diskutiert wird. Nicht „alles überhaupt“ (*omnia vanitas*) ist somit nichtig.⁵⁷ Gibt

Hieronymus selbst freilich noch in seinen kommentierenden Erläuterungen die Formulierung „*abal abalim*“ des hebräischen Originaltextes und die griechische Übersetzung ἀτμός ἀτμίδων bzw. ἀτμῶν der Septuaginta lateinisch mit „*vapor*“ (Dampf) oder „*aura tenuis*“ (zarter Lufthauch) wieder, um die ursprüngliche Bedeutung von „Nichtigkeit der Nichtigkeiten“ (*vanitas vanitatum*) zu erhellen und die „Vergänglichkeit“ (*caducum*) des geschaffenen Seins oder dessen Verfassung als „Nichts“ (*nihil*) zu betonen,⁵⁸ so nimmt die spätere Kommentarliteratur weitere Veränderungen vor. „*Vanitas*“ wird als „Veränderlichkeit“ (*mutabile*) im Sinn zeitlicher Zustände verstanden, die sprachlich durch eine Abfolge von Präsens und Futur oder auch von Präteritum und Präsens des Verbs „sein“ (*esse*) angezeigt werden.⁵⁹

58 Vgl. [Hieronymus] 2014, *Koheletkommentar*, S. 54.

59 Bereits bei Alkuin heißt es: „*Quidquid enim mutabile est, et non esse poterit quod est, vanitas appellari recte potest: nam Deus solus immutabilis, et semper idem est quod est, et non aliud.*“ [Alkuin] 1863, *Commentaria*, Sp. 671–672. Dazu auch die *Glossa ordinaria* zu *Ecclesiastes*: „*Quidquid enim non esse potest uanitas dici potest, quia mutari potest. Solus Deus semper idem est quod est; quod autem mutatur, quodammodo euanescit, et non est quod erat. Ad comparationem creatoris, omnis creatura uanitas potest dici et quasi nihilum computari.*“ *Glossa Ordinaria*, zitiert nach Larson 2014, S. 127, Anm. 58 (Ausgabe Rusch). Adolph Rusch ediert die *Glossa Ordinaria* erstmalig 1480/81 in Straßburg. Dazu und für die Geschichte der weiteren Ausgaben im sechzehnten Jahrhundert vgl. Froehlich, Gibson 1992, S. XII–XXIV. Bonaventura macht in seinem *Ecclesiastes*-Kommentar explizit auf den „Zusammenhang zwischen ‚vanitas‘ und den Faktoren (...)“ der

55 „*solumque deum id semper esse quod fuerit.*“ [Hieronymus] 2014, *Koheletkommentar*, S. 52; 54.

56 „*omnia pertransire et mundum suo fine senescere.*“ [Hieronymus] 2014, *Koheletkommentar*, S. 52.

57 Vgl. Birnbaum, & Schwienhorst-Schönberger 2012, S. 288.

Im weiteren Verlauf der Kommentierungsgeschichte wird die von Hieronymus vorbereitete Hervorhebung der Relationalität der Seinsbereiche sodann auch für die Kommentierung von *Ecl 1,9–10* herangezogen. Legitimiert wird diese Vorgehensweise durch die These späterer – christlicher wie jüdischer – Kommentatoren, dass dem Sein „unter der Sonne“ (sub sole) ein Sein „über der Sonne“ (supra solem) entsprechen müsse.⁶⁰ Der Wortlaut des Bibelverses selbst liefert den Exegeten ganz offensichtlich das Stichwort für dessen Ergänzung, so dass nicht mehr allein von der einen Realität „unter der Sonne“, sondern vielmehr von einer Realität die Rede ist, die nur einen Teilbereich einer zweifachen Realität bedeutet. Parallel zu der durch äußerste Gegensätzlichkeit gekennzeichneten Beziehung zwischen Gott und der „größte[n] Nichtigkeit, die nur denkbar ist“,⁶¹ wird durch die Konstruktion des Schemas „Unterhalb“ – „Oberhalb“ eine Form von Relationalität in die Kommentierung eingeführt, die sich offensichtlich durch eine abgeschwächte Gegensätzlichkeit auszeichnet. Akzeptiert man diesen Ansatz, dann muss die im biblischen Text verhandelte Nichtigkeit des Seins „unter der Sonne“ nicht in absolutem Kontrast zur Wirklichkeit

Gottes gesehen werden. Die Nichtigkeit ist vielmehr in einer schwächeren, relativen Form auf einen Bereich „über der Sonne“ bezogen, der den unteren Bereich in irgendeiner Weise komplementär vervollständigt. Damit sieht sich die Kommentierung nicht mehr mit der Erhellung des ursprünglichen Textes beschäftigt, sondern mit einem schon im eigenen Verständnishorizont transformierten Text, der in dieser Form zum Ausgangspunkt weiterer Ausdeutung werden kann.

Tatsächlich erweist sich der exegetische Nutzen dieser Reinterpretation im Zusammenhang mit der widersprüchlich anmutenden Behauptung, es gebe trotz der ständig sich verflüchtigenden Nichtigkeit des Seins „unter der Sonne“ in diesem Seinsbereich nichts Neues. Was genau, so ist zu klären, meint „nichts Neues“? Geht es, wie *Ecl 1,4* nahelegt, allein um ein endloses Auf- und Abtreten von Generationen, der einzelnen Lebewesen oder, denkt man an *Ecl 1,5–7*, um ein rastloses Kreisen kosmischer und natürlicher Elemente? Hier erlaubt nun die mit dem Schema von „Unten“ und „Oben“ eingeführte Differenz der Seinsbereiche eine modifizierte Interpretation, die den Widerspruch aufzulösen verspricht. Der Bereich, der „unter der Sonne“ von Vergänglichkeit gezeichnet ist, ohne dass dabei Neues geschehe, besteht nicht in pessimistischer Grundverfassung für sich selbst, sondern „eben nur“ in Bezug auf eine von „oberhalb der Sonne“ gelenkte, ewige Ordnung oder anders formuliert: Unter der Sonne geschieht nichts Neues, weil das zeitlich Vergängliche von einer letztlich in der Weisheit

„Veränderlichkeit“ (transmutatio, natura mutabilis) und der „Zeit“ (tempus) aufmerksam. Vgl. [Bonaventura] 1893, Commentarii, lib. 1, S. 1, S. 11.

60 Für die Formulierung „sub sole“ vgl. bereits *Ecl. 1,3*. Für die jüdische Exegese vgl. Fox 2004, S. 4–5. Aus christlicher Perspektive vgl. [Hugo von St. Victor] 1854, In Salomonis, Sp. 145–146.

61 Birnbaum 2014, S. 259.

Gottes gründenden Ordnung „über der Sonne“ von Ewigkeit her verbürgt ist. In diesem Sinn erklärt beispielsweise Hugo von St. Victor in seiner zweiten Homilie zum Buch *Ecclesiastes*: „Et ideo sub sole nihil novum est; quia ab illo qui est supra solem quod temporaliter transit, ab aeterno ordinatum est.“⁶² Das Vergängliche ist dann immer vom Unvergänglichen überformt, sodass die Vergänglichkeit in Hinblick auf die sie immer in unveränderlicher Weise ordnende Unvergänglichkeit nichts Neues bedeutet, ohne selbst ewig zu sein.⁶³

— 3.2 DIE PHILOSOPHISCHE DEUTUNG DER ZWEIFACHEN REALITÄT

In der Folgezeit wird das Interpretationsmodell der zweifachen Realität in der Kommentarliteratur weiter eingesetzt und variiert. Als Hilfsmittel des Verständnisses kommen dabei insbesondere Relationen der philosophischen Traditionen zum Einsatz, die das Verhältnis von Vergänglichkeit und Unvergänglichkeit in gedanklich erprobter Weise beschreiben und als kulturelle Wissensformen bereits zur Verfügung stehen. So bezieht sich etwa Rupert von Deutz in seinem Kommentar⁶⁴ zu *Ecl 1,9–10* explizit auf das aristotelische Begriffspaar von „Substanz und Akzidenz“, um die aus dem biblischen Text herausgelesene zweifache Realität von „Unten“ und „Oben“ in diesem

Sinn auszulegen.⁶⁵ Im Anschluss hieran kann Rupert von Deutz sodann auch die sprachliche Gestaltung des Bibeltextes mit der aristotelischen Metaphysik in Übereinstimmung bringen, wenn die sprachlich möglichen Teile der Zeitbestimmung „ist gewesen – ist – wird sein“ unter Einschluss der Präsensform „ist“ der Substanz zugewiesen werden, die sprunghaft Vergangenheit und Futur anzeigenden Formulierungen „was geschehen ist“ und „wird wieder geschehen“ hingegen die akzidentielle Verfassung des Seins anzeigen sollen.⁶⁶ Hugo von St. Victor wiederum reflektiert in stärkerer platonischer Orientierung auf die Relation zwischen den Einzeldingen (singula) einerseits und der Ewigkeit ihres Genus bzw. der ihnen zugehörigen allgemeinen Natur (universa) andererseits.⁶⁷ So gibt es nach Hugo unter der Sonne nichts Neues und nichts Ewiges,

62 [Hugo von St. Victor] 1854, In Salomonis, Sp. 145.

63 Vgl. [Hugo von St. Victor] 1854, In Salomonis, Sp. 145.

64 Die Zuschreibung des Kommentars an Rupert von Deutz ist unklar. Vgl. Dahan 2020, S. 432.

65 „*Quid est quod fuit? ipsum quod futurum est. Quid est quod factum est? ipsum quod faciendum est. Nihil subsole novum [...]. Paucis verbis multa comprehendit, et cum Aristotele substantiam dividit et accidens. Omnis enim res aut substantia est, aut accidens, ita ut neque accidens sine substantia, neque sine accidens substantia esse possit. Accidens quippe sine aliquo substantiae fundamento esse non potest: substantia vero sine superjecto accidenti videri nullo modo potest.*“ [Rupert von Deutz] 1893, In librum *Ecclesiastes*, Sp. 1203–1204. Dazu Kartschoke 1985, S. 181–182.

66 „*Sic Ecclesiastes in eo quod ait, fuit, est, et erit, substantiam manifeste demonstrat: in eo vero, quod dicit, quid factum est, et quid faciendum, varios eventus rerum ostendit cum accidentibus suis.*“ [Rupert von Deutz] 1893, In librum *Ecclesiastes*, Sp. 1204.

67 Vgl. [Hugo von St. Victor] 1854, In Salomonis, Sp. 145–146.

da alles, was in diesem unteren Bereich vorüberzieht, „in der Ähnlichkeit der eigenen Gattung stillsteht“. ⁶⁸ Entsprechend meint auch Hugo von St. Cher, dass etwa der Mensch der Spezies (in specie) nach, nicht jedoch an sich sterblich sei und geboren werde. ⁶⁹

Jüdische Kommentare zu *Kohelet* bestätigen ebenfalls die Konstruktion von „Oben“ und „Unten“ sowie die Anwendung philosophischer Denkmuster als exegetisches Hilfsmittel. In Anknüpfung an neuplatonische Vorgaben interpretiert etwa Abraham Ibn Ezra *Koh 1,9* im Sinn einer oberen Welt, welche die Ewigkeit der Schöpfungen sowie die der Universalien im Sinne der Gattungen gegenüber den vergänglichen Gegebenheiten der unteren Welt verbürge. ⁷⁰ Eine weitere Variante bietet Ramban (Nachmanides), der sowohl den Bereich „über der Sonne“ als auch den „unter der Sonne“ durch die Relation von Substanz und Form bestimmt sieht. Während sich in den oberen, himmlischen Sphären weder die Substanz noch die Form verändern, ist im unteren Bereich allein die Substanz unveränderlich,

die Form hingegen ständigem Wechsel ausgesetzt. ⁷¹

Schließlich aber, um dies hier lediglich anzudeuten, erhält die Konstruktion einer zweifachen Realität von „Unten und Oben“ während der Reformation wiederum einen eigenen Sinn, indem nunmehr das Interesse der neuen Theologie zum Tragen kommt, das Buch Ecclesiastes nicht in ontologischem, sondern in anthropologischem Kontext zu verorten. In diesem Sinn verbindet sich etwa für Martin Luther die Sprechweise von „sub sole“ und „supra“ bzw. „ultra solem“ nicht mit der Forderung einer metaphysischen Rehabilitation der Güte der Schöpfung, sondern mit einem im Neuen Testament thematisierten, falschen Weltbezug des Menschen. Die „Vanitas“ wird mit der Gesinnung des Herzens assoziiert, so dass sich der Mensch mit einem unbefriedigenden Leben in der Welt, d. h. „unter der Sonne“, konfrontiert sieht, zugleich aber auch ein Leben in Frömmigkeit und friedvoller Freude „jenseits der Sonne“ als Geschenk Gottes erfahren kann. ⁷²

68 „in similitudinem sui generis subsistit“. [Hugo von St. Victor], In Salomonis, Sp. 146.

69 „[...]in specie non in se, ut homo mortuus, & homo nasciturus.“ [Hugo von St. Cher] 1669, in Libros, S. 73v.

70 „(Das bezieht sich) auf die Universalien (הכללים), die ewig/bleibend (שמורים) sind, etwa (die) Gattung (מין) Mensch, (die) Gattung (sic) Pferd, (die) Gattung jedes Lebewesens und (die) Gattung jeder Pflanze. Die Natur/Entwicklung dieser aber ist von der Bewegung der Oberen (abhängig). Wenn aber die Oberen beständig sind, werden die Universalien (הכללים) bestehen [...]. [Abraham Ibn Ezra] 1999, Kommentar, S. 49. Dazu Rottzoll 1999, S. 17.

71 „The creatures in the celestial spheres are likewise beings of substance and form, but their form is permanent and enduring as their substance; they do not undergo transformation from one form to another. The nature of the substance of those creatures in the lower [or sublunar] world, however, is of such a strong quality that no person can obliterate it from existence or nullify it [completely] although their form continuously changes daily from one state to another.“ Ramban 1978, Discourse, S. 159 und S. 159, Anm. 83–84.

72 „Interpres hic non observant [...] se [scil. Salomo] de rebus sub sole loqui, quod in novo Testamento et vulgatus dicimus ‚in mundo‘. Distinguit enim ille

3.3 DAS AMBIVALENTE BEDEUTUNGSSPEKTRUM VON VERÄNDERUNG UND WANDEL

Die vorausgehende Diskussion zeigt, dass die Formulierung „nichts Neues unter der Sonne“ vielfältigen Spielraum für Interpretation lässt. In ähnlicher Weise betrifft dies die Frage nach der konkreten Bestimmung der Veränderung und des Wandels. Obgleich die Konstruktion einer zweifachen Realität „unter“ und „über der Sonne“ philosophisch abgesicherte Deutungsmodelle für die Entschärfung des „Vanitas“-Gedankens anbietet und im Horizont metaphysischer Reflexion die Verneinung des Neuen durch seine Rückbindung an eine Ewigkeit „über der Sonne“ erklärt wird, bleibt für die Interpretation des Buches *Ecclesiastes* dennoch das Problem des Verständnisses der Veränderlichkeit als solcher. Wiederholen sich die Dinge?, so ist zu fragen. Bedeutet Veränderung Vergehen im Sinn von Untergang oder Übergang in etwas Anderes? Auch in diesem Kontext werden, wie sich zeigen wird, pagane Wissensformen zur Interpretation herangezogen. Jedoch wird gerade anhand der Thematik der Veränderung zugleich sichtbar, dass der Umgang mit paganer Erkenntnis ambivalent ist und in Konkurrenz oder gar im Widerspruch zu eigenen Lehrauffassungen stehen kann.

Für eine Skizze der Problematik lohnt erneut ein Blick auf Hieronymus'

libellus vitam pietatis a vita mundi seu ‚sub sole‘. Habere laetum cor et gaudere de praesentibus cum timore Dei non est res mundi sed donum Dei est de coelo et ultra solem.“ Luther, WA 20, 69, 18, 69. Dazu Wölfel 1958, S. 121–123.

*Ecclesiastes*kommentar. In verdichteter Weise zeigt dieser Kommentar, wie die Vorstellungswelt des alttestamentlichen Buches vor dem Hintergrund paganer Wissensformen durch positive wie auch negative Kontextualisierung in einen vom Kommentator mitbestimmten Deutungshorizont transferiert wird. Zunächst führen die Überlegungen auf die Verse von *Ecl 1, 4–11*, die auch als „Gedicht über den Kosmos“⁷³ bezeichnet werden. Eingebettet in die antike Kosmologie werden kosmische und natürliche Abläufe wie der Lauf der Sonne, das Drehen des Windes oder das Fließen des Wassers thematisiert,⁷⁴ die sich durch ein nicht endendes Kreisen bzw. durch eine periodische Wiederkehr auszeichnen. In diesem Zusammenhang sieht sich der Kommentator offensichtlich mit dem Problem konfrontiert, eine Entscheidung zwischen einer augenscheinlichen Sinnlosigkeit oder einer eventuellen, tiefer verborgenen Sinnhaftigkeit der Abläufe zu treffen. Tatsächlich bereitet Hieronymus eine eher positive Lösung vor, indem etwa die kreisende Sonne in *Ecl 1, 6* als „Lebewesen“ begriffen wird, das „atmet und Lebenskraft hat“⁷⁵ und – explizit mit Blick auf die pagane Dichtung Vergils – als das „Titanengestirn“ gilt, das „im Innern ein Wind“ nährt und durch dessen „Glieder“ sich „der Geist ergießt“.⁷⁶

73 Birnbaum, & Schwienhorst-Schönberger 2012, S. 52.

74 Vgl. *Ecl 1, 5–7*.

75 „[...] ipsum solem spiritum nominavit, quod animal sit et spiret[...]“ [Hieronymus] 2014, *Koheletkommentar*, S. 56.

76 Hieronymus zitiert Vergil, *Aeneis* 3,284: „[...] sive, quod et ‚lunae lucentem globum et

Auf der Basis solcher Überlegungen, die das kreisende Geschehen an eine lebende und geistige Kraft rückbinden, lässt sich sodann den pessimistischen Formulierungen von *Ecl* 1,9–10 eine positive Wendung geben. So gibt es „unter der Sonne“ nichts Neues, weil „die Lenkung der Welt von Anbeginn so vollendet wurde, dass Gott von seinem Wirken am siebenten Tag ausruhte.“⁷⁷ Der Kommentar zur Parallelstelle von *Ecl* 3,14 bestätigt die optimistische Sicht auf die „ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen“ im Sinn der Beständigkeit der Schöpfungsordnung. Schließlich wird im Anschluss in der Deutung der Passage von *Ecl* 3,15, die Hieronymus offensichtlich nach der Fassung der *Vetus Latina* mit „Quid est quod fuit? Ipsum quod est. Et quae futura sunt iam fuerunt. Et Deus quaeret eum qui persecutionem patitur“⁷⁸ wiedergibt, ein lebensbejahender Grundzug aus dem Text herausgelesen. Was immer wahrnehmbar als „Vergangenes“ (*praeterita*), „Gegenwärtiges“ (*praesentia*) oder „Zukünftiges“ (*futura*) existiert und dem Untergang

astra Titania spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus mens agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet' [...].“ [Hieronymus] 2014, Koheletkommentar, S. 58.

77 „Quod si in sermonibus nihil novum dici potest, quanto magis in administratione mundi, quae ab initio sic perfecta est, ut requiesceret deus ab operibus suis in die septima!“ [Hieronymus] 2014, Koheletkommentar, S. 60.

78 [Hieronymus] 2014, Koheletkommentar, S. 102. Ebenso bei [Cassian] 1886, *Collatio* 8, 21, S. 236. Für die *Vetus Latina* vgl. Sabatier 1743, S. 358–359. Die *Vulgata* gibt *Ecl* 3,15 folgendermaßen wieder: „quod factum est ipsum permanet / quae futura sunt iam fuerunt et / Deus instaurat quod abit [...]“

anheimgestellt ist, geht nur scheinbar zugrunde und wird stets neu wiederbelebt. Wie der Lauf der Sonne für einen natürlichen Kreislauf steht, durch den einsichtig werden soll, dass „auch alles Übrige dasselbe bleibt, was es war“,⁷⁹ wird nichts verderben, sondern „wiedergeboren werden“ (*renascitur*) und „wieder lebendig“ (*reviviscit*).⁸⁰

Versucht man von hieraus das Wesen von Veränderung und Wandel zu konkretisieren, dann scheint mit diesen Erklärungen auf den ersten Blick die Befürchtung eines sinnentleerten Welt- und Lebensverlaufs ausgeräumt. Explizit wird auch die Härte von Tod und Vernichtung entschärft, indem Veränderung und Wandel als „Wiedergeburt“ und „Wiederbelebtwerden“ verstanden werden. Gewesenes bzw. aus der Gegenwart in die Vergangenheit Abgeglittenes bleibt nach der vorgelegten Kommentierung gegenwärtig und kann nicht grundsätzlich verdorben oder vernichtet werden. In diesem Sinn, so lässt sich anfügen, gibt es unter der Sonne nichts Neues.

Umgekehrt freilich zeigt ein zweiter Blick auf den Sachverhalt, dass die Gefahr von Fehldeutungen und vor allem auch die Angst vor dem Einfluss falscher paganer Vorstellungen durch diese Überlegungen – so sehr sie zum Verständnis von Veränderung und Wandel auch beitragen mögen – keineswegs gebannt ist. Abgesehen von

79 „intellegamus, et caetera esse eadem, quae fuerunt.“ [Hieronymus] 2014, Koheletkommentar, S. 102.

80 Vgl. [Hieronymus] 2014, Koheletkommentar, S. 102.

dem Umstand, dass auch Hieronymus' eigene, auf *Ecl* 3,15 bezogene Formulierungen letztlich nicht eindeutig sind, indem er sowohl an die „Auferstehung der Toten“ als auch „an eine Art Seelenwanderung“⁸¹ denken könnte, warnt er selbst eindringlich vor falschen Theorien der Philosophie, die ein irriges Verständnis des biblischen Textes bedingen könnten. Insbesondere die der Philosophie Epikurs zugeschriebene Variante der „ewigen Wiederkehr“, derzufolge sich durch die Zeitalter hindurch immer wieder dieselben Ereignisse mit denselben Menschen an denselben Orten vollziehen sollen, wird entschieden zurückgewiesen.⁸² Möglicherweise in Anlehnung an Origenes, der seinerseits das Spektrum möglicher Interpretationen von Veränderung und Wandel durch den Gedanken einer Abfolge mehrerer, jedoch keinesfalls ununterscheidbarer Welten bereichert,⁸³ löst Hieronymus sodann das Problem mit dem Hinweis auf die „Vorsehung und Vorbestimmung Gottes“, nach der „schon das geschaffen ist, was sein wird.“⁸⁴

Die weitere Wirkungsgeschichte bestätigt die angedeutete Ambivalenz im Umgang mit paganen Wissensformen. So wird die von Hieronymus in seinem *Ecclesiastes*kommentar hergestellte kulturelle Verbindung zwischen Bibel und

paganer Dichtung bzw. Philosophie in der sich weiter ausbildenden Kommentarliteratur in fortgesetzter Zustimmung oder Ablehnung weitergegeben und – je nach Kenntnisstand der geistesgeschichtlichen Traditionen – mit neuen Inhalten zu zunehmend komplexen Themenfeldern kombiniert. Paradigmatisch lässt sich ein positiv gestimmter Rezeptionsprozess paganen Gedankenguts einschließlich einer geistesgeschichtlichen Erweiterung anhand der Verknüpfung des biblischen Textes mit der Poesie Vergils beobachten. In diesem Sinn bezieht sich etwa Hugo von St. Victor in seiner zweiten Homilie über *Ecclesiastes* auf die von Hieronymus zitierte Stelle „des Dichters“ (*poeta*), um Vergils „spiritus“ zugleich stärker in den Zusammenhang stoischer Vorstellungen einer allen Dingen innewohnenden „lebenspendenden Bewegung“ (*motus vitalis*) und „feurigen Kraft“ (*ignea vis*) zu rücken.⁸⁵ Hugo von St. Cher wiederum sieht in seinem Kommentar zu *Ecclesiastes* den von Hugo von St. Victor diskutierten Begriff des „spiritus“ im Kontext mit der „Weltseele“ oder dem „Engelsgeist“, den „einige Philosophen“ vertreten haben sollen, um

81 Birnbaum 2014, S. 313.

82 Vgl. [Hieronymus] 2014, S. 62; vgl. Birnbaum 2014, S. 272–273.

83 Vgl. [Hieronymus] 2014, S. 60; Origenes ³1992, Vier Bücher, II, 3, 4, S. 310; 312.

84 „Sed dicendum, quod ex praesentia dei iam ea facta sint, quae futura sunt.“ [Hieronymus] 2014, Koheletkommentar, S. 62.

85 „Vitalis enim motus, et vegetationis sensibilis in cunctis nascentibus ignea vis origo est: quae rebus omnibus incrementum subjicit, et invisibili eas nutrimento alens ac fovens, ad invisibilem tandem producit substantiam. Hanc autem occultam naturae vim cuncta moventem, et alentem poeta quoque spiritum nominavit: et nota sunt ejus verba: ‚Principio caelum ac terras, camposque liquentes, Lucentemque globum lunae, tianaque astra, Spiritus intus alit: totamque infusa per artus, Mens agit molem, et magno se corpore miscet.‘“ Vgl. [Hugo von St. Victor] 1854, In Salomonis, Sp. 136. Vgl. Lapidge 1998, S. 108–110.

dadurch den Verständnishorizont erneut auszuweiten.⁸⁶ Die Interpretation des Hieronymus einer in sich abgeschlossenen Schöpfung findet sich, wie beispielsweise bei Alkuin sichtbar, ebenfalls in der Folgezeit.⁸⁷ Die abgelehnte Philosophie Epikurs hingegen kann im Rahmen der Ecclesiastesauslegung als Negativbeispiel für die Rezeption paganen Wissens gelten. So wird das als inakzeptabel eingestufte epikureische Denken in der Geschichte der Textauslegung nicht einfach als für die Interpretation unbrauchbar vergessen. Eine fortgesetzte Reihe von Denkern wie Augustinus, Rupert von Deutz, Hugo von St. Victor oder auch Bonaventura⁸⁸ erwähnen die als Irrtum betrachteten Lehren in ihren Schriften weiterhin, so dass die betreffenden Inhalte zwar aus der Interpretation ausgeklammert werden, dennoch aber als problematisches Wissen präsent bleiben und bis in die Neuzeit⁸⁹ wenn auch in negativer Weise erinnert werden. Zusätzliche Kritik an der Vorstellung wiederkehrender Großperioden, wie Platon sie gelehrt haben soll⁹⁰ oder an dem so genannten „großen Jahr“⁹¹ zeigt zudem,

dass auch verworfene Denkmodelle inhaltlich weiter angereichert und als verbreiterte Traditionsströme konserviert werden.

4. BEGLEITENDE KONTEXTE DER AUSLEGUNG DES BUCHES ECCLESIASTES

4.1 DAS AMBIVALENTE BILD DES PYTHAGORAS

Eine Berührung zwischen biblischer Exegese und paganem Wissen erfolgt auch im Zusammenhang mit der Rezeption der Philosophie des Pythagoras. So finden sich in der Kommentartradition zu *Ecl 1,9–10* vereinzelte Hinweise auf den griechischen Philosophen, die auf eine direkte Wahrnehmung von dessen Lehre im Zusammenhang mit der Aussage des Bibeltextes schließen lassen. Pythagoras wird in die Nähe Epikurs gerückt, so dass sein Name in der Kommentierung der Aussagen Salomons offensichtlich negativ besetzt ist. Der Auslöser hierfür ist die Pythagoras zugeschriebene Auffassung der Seelenwanderung oder Metempsychose, die den Übergang der Seelen der Toten in andere, menschliche wie tierische, Körper behauptet und damit auf die drängende Frage nach dem Wesen von Wandel und Veränderung eine nicht vernachlässigbare Antwort liefert.⁹²

86 „Hunc Spiritum aliqui Philosophi animam mundi: alij animam angelicam nominaverunt. Magister Hugo de sancto Victore: nomine Solis ignem: nomine venti aërem dicit posse intelligi [...]“ [Hugo von St. Cher] 1669, S. 72v.

87 Vgl. [Alkuin] 1863, *Commentaria*, Sp. 673.

88 Vgl. dazu die Darstellung und das gut dokumentierte Material bei Kartschoke 1985, S. 178–181.

89 Ein Beispiel hierfür findet sich im Kommentar zu *Ecclesiastes* bei Cornelius a Lapide 1875, S. 60.

90 Vgl. Augustinus 1955, *De civitate Dei* 12,14, S. 369.

91 Vgl. [Bonaventura] 1893, *Commentarii*, S. 17.

92 „Pereat ergo haeresis Epicureorum, qui plures mundos esse, vel fuisse mentuntur, dicentes animas mortuorum in alia semper relabi corpora, et iterum vivere. Hinc Pythagoras, ut ipsi fingunt, in pavonem se transanimavit, anima Pythagorae in Ennium, et sexia sorte in Virgilium requievit. Haec omnia dissipat

Tatsächlich bedeutet die Rezeption der pythagoreischen Lehre ein vielschichtiges Themenfeld der Geistesgeschichte, das von unterschiedlicher Wertschätzung begleitet wird.⁹³ Aus christlicher Perspektive beunruhigt vor allem die Unvereinbarkeit mit der eigenen Theorie der Individuation der Seele, die sich in lediglich einem Leben vollziehen soll. Dennoch wird auch die abgelehnte Seelenwanderungslehre – wie schon bei Epikur sichtbar – nicht einfach ignoriert, sondern in einem breiten Strom antiker und patristischer Literatur in das Mittelalter transportiert.⁹⁴

In der Neuzeit freilich eröffnet sich ein eigenes Kapitel der Rezeption Pythagoras', das im Horizont von Bewegungen wie der Reformation, den geistigen Versöhnungsanliegen der „*prisca theologia*“ oder auch der neu entdeckten Wertschätzung der antiken Poesie neue Kategorien der Einordnung entwickelt. Offensichtlich beeinflusst von Ulrich Zwingli bestreitet beispielweise Celio Secondo Curione, dass ein so gelehrter Philosoph wie Pythagoras eine so absurde Theorie wie die Seelenwanderung

vertreten habe, in Wirklichkeit sei die Metamorphose der Materie gemeint.⁹⁵ Philosophen wie Marsilio Ficino bringen den Lehren des Pythagoras unter dem Einfluss neuplatonischer und kabbalistischer Rezeption ein ideengeschichtlich erweitertes Interesse entgegen.⁹⁶ Schließlich erwächst offensichtlich aus dem von Ovid transportierten Bild des Pythagoras eine veränderte Sicht auf das Phänomen von Veränderung und Wandel an sich. So genießt Ovid nicht nur als „Seher“ (*vates*) höchstes Ansehen,⁹⁷ dessen Dichtung gleichsam wie die Bibel als inspiriert gilt.⁹⁸ Über ihn transformiert sich vielmehr die Lehre der Metempsychose zu einer Theorie der allpräsenten Seele, die als unerschöpfliches Wirkprinzip den Formenreichtum allen Lebens hervorbringen und nach dem Untergang wiederbeleben soll.⁹⁹

Ecclesiastes, qui ait: Non est priorum memoria, nec eorum quidem, quae futura sunt, erit recordatio apud eos qui futuri sunt in novissimo tempore. [Rupert von Deutz] 1854, PL 168, Sp. 1204.

93 Die Auseinandersetzung mit der Pythagoras zugeschriebenen Lehre kann selbstverständlich nur stichwortartig angedeutet werden. Für die Anfänge und Fortsetzung der Rezeptionsgeschichte vgl. die Darstellung bei Zander 1999, S. 58–62; 90–94; 216–254 et passim.

94 Vgl. dazu die Darstellung zu Autoren wie Minucius Felix, Tertullian, Laktanz und Augustinus einschließlich reichen Quellennaterials bei Maaz 1998, S. 385–416.

95 „Quantum ad Pythagorae opinionem atinet, nunquam erudissimum philosophum eo absurditatis venisse crediderim, ut species ipsas in species alias putarit, aut hominum mentes in diversa migrare corpora crediderit: sed materiae metamorphosim, quam ille palingenesiam appellavit, intelligebat.“ Celio Secondo Curione 2015, S. 505. Für Zwingli vgl. ebenda, Anmerkung b. Zur Deutung des Materiebegriffs im Sinn eines universellen Substrats vgl. D'Ascia 1999, S. 682–684.

96 Vgl. Ogren 2009, S. 238–263.

97 Ovid 2012, *Fasti*, 6,8.

98 Vgl. Till 2013, S. 442.

99 Vgl. Ovid 1988, *Metamorphosen*, 15, 153–173. Für eine Sicht auf Pythagoras als Vertreter eines Gottes, der sich als „Geist“ (*animus*) und „Leben aller Lebewesen“ (*animalium omnium vita*) auf die gesamte Natur erstreckt vgl. auch Minucius Felix 1931, *Octavius* 19, 6–7, S. 366.“

Im engeren Zusammenhang der Bi-
belexegese freilich erhält sich das pro-
blematische Bild des Pythagoras noch
bis in die Frühe Neuzeit. Ein Beispiel
hierfür ist der Kommentar des Jesuiten
Cornelius a Lapide, der das als irrig ein-
gestufte, an der Nähe Epikurs und der
inakzeptablen Seelenlehre orientierte
Bild des Pythagoras in Erinnerung ruft,
um es abzulehnen.¹⁰⁰

4.2 EWIGKEIT UND ZEIT IN DER SPRACHE

Die Geschichte der Exegese des Buches
Ecclesiastes zeigt ein hohes Interesse an
der Sprache. So gibt die in *Ecl 1,9–10* for-
mulierte Passage über die Flüchtigkeit
der Welt Anlass zur Reflexion auf die
sprachlichen Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten
von Ewigkeit und Zeit bzw. Beständig-
keit und Unbeständigkeit des Seins. Ins-
besondere die im Satzbau des biblischen
Textes angelegte Abfolge der Zeiten, der
Wechsel von Frage und Antwort sowie
die ihren Sinn selbst erklärende Kom-
position der einzelnen Textteile regt zu
Kontrastierungen, Ergänzungen, Inver-
sionen und logischen Überlegungen an,
um auf diese Weise den gemeinten Sinn
von vielfältigen Sprachebenen aus zu
beleuchten.

In diesem Sinn sieht bereits Eusebius
die das Präsens betonende Formel des
Gottesbegriffs (*ego sum qui sum*) im
Gegensatz zu der unvermittelt zwischen
Vergangenheit und Futur springenden

Erklärung Salomons (*futurum esse
quod fuit, & faciundum quod factum
est, nec nouum aliquid esse sub sole*).¹⁰¹
Hieronymus diskutiert die immerwäh-
rende Identität von Vergangenheit und
Präsens im Sein Gottes (*solumque deum
id semper esse quod fuerit*),¹⁰² wobei er
auf der Basis der *Vetus Latina* auch den
Wandel ausgedrückt sieht, wenn alles
Wahrnehmbare – ohne den Zusatz des
Immerwährenden – in Vergangenheit,
Gegenwart und Zukunft eingebunden ist
(*quid est quod fuit? Ipsum quod est. Et
quae futura sunt iam fuerunt*).¹⁰³ Eben-
falls eigene Aufmerksamkeit findet die
sprachliche Form des biblischen Passus
bei Hugo von St. Cher, wenn er über-
legt, warum Salomon anstelle von „*quid
est, quod fuit*“ nicht umgekehrt fragt
„*quid fuit quod est; vel quid erit, quod
est?*“, um hierauf die Antwort zu geben,
dass dem zeitlichen, flüchtigen Sein bei
korrekter Betrachtung eben keine blei-
bende, im Präsens auszudrückende Ge-
genwart zugesprochen werden kann.¹⁰⁴
Die sprachlich vielleicht sensibelste
und zugleich logisch tiefgründigste
Auslegung des alttestamentlichen Pas-
sus findet sich bei Bonaventura, der in
der Abfolge der Textteile von *Ecl 1,9–10*
die Konstruktion einer „*conversio sim-
plex*“ erkennt,¹⁰⁵ durch die der ständige

101 Vgl. oben, Anm. 42.

102 Vgl. oben, Anm. 55.

103 Vgl. oben, Anm. 78.

104 Vgl. [Hugo von St. Cher] 1669, in *Libros*,
S. 73v.

105 „*Quid est quod fuit? Quaerit et ipse re-
spondet: Ipsum quod futurum est: ergo
a simplici conversa: quod futurum est
fuit. Similiter sequitur: Quid est quod fac-
tum est. Respondet: Ipsum quod facien-*

100 „*Sic Epicurus, ait S. Hieronymus, asserit
per innumerales periodos, eadem et
eisdem in locis et per eosdem fieri; et
Pythagoras censuit animas in alia et alia
corpora migrare et remigrare.*“ [Cornelius
a Lapide] 1875, *Commentaria*, S. 60.

Wandel des zeitlichen Seins unmittelbar zum Ausdruck kommt. Prädikat und Subjekt gehen im Sinn der logischen Figur einer „einfachen Umkehrung“ vollständig ineinander über, so dass das, was war, eben auch künftig dasselbe sein wird, und umgekehrt das, was sein wird, in der Vergangenheit dasselbe schon war.

Parallel zu diesen direkt mit Bezug auf *Ecl 1,9–10* gegebenen sprachlichen Erklärungen kennt freilich auch die philosophische Tradition mit der in der lateinischen Literatur verbreiteten Formulierung „quid est quod“¹⁰⁶ ähnliche Überlegungen zu Ewigkeit und Zeit, die ihrerseits auf die Auslegung der alttestamentlichen Passage rückwirken und somit zur Ausweitung ihres Kontextes beitragen können. Ein Beispiel für eine solche vermittelte Ausweitung des Kontextes findet sich in der lateinischen Fassung von Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* mit Blick auf Cicero. So fragt Cicero in seiner Übersetzung von Platons *Timaios* gleich zu Beginn „Quid est, quod semper sit neque ullum habeat ortum, et quod gignatur nec umquam sit?“¹⁰⁷ um den fundamentalen Unterschied zwischen dem immerwährenden Sein und dem niemals seienden Werden zu verdeutlichen. Die lateinische Übersetzung der *Praeparatio Evangelica* nutzt sodann Ciceros Text, um ihn – leicht

abgewandelt – im Rahmen von Eusebius' Erörterung des von Salomon diskutierten Ablaufs der Zeit zu übernehmen.¹⁰⁸ Damit, so könnte man sagen, erörtert die lateinische Fassung der *Praeparatio Evangelica* nicht nur die Worte Salomons im Horizont der Philosophie Platons, sondern erinnert – implizit – auch an Cicero. Augustinus schließlich verhandelt die ähnlich konstruierten Fragen „Quid est ergo ‚idipsum‘, nisi quod est? Quid est quod est?“¹⁰⁹, um sie in ihrem Gegenwartsbezug und der darauf gegebenen Antwort „quod aeternum est“ entschieden allein für die Darlegung des ewigen Seins Gottes zu reservieren.¹⁰⁹

— 5. „QUID EST QUOD EST“? BRUNOS VERSTÄNDNIS DER WEISHEITSLITERATUR IM LICHT DER TRADITION

Im Licht dieser Überlegungen können die anfänglichen, von Paul Richard Blum aufgeworfenen Fragen, etwa wie sich die Identifikation von biblischem und paganem Wissen oder auch die sprachlichen Abwandlungen in Giordano Brunos Verständnis des alttestamentlichen Buches *Ecclesiastes* erklären lassen, neu überdacht werden.

Tatsächlich bewirkt die von Anfang an interkulturell angelegte Kommentierung des alttestamentlichen Buches *Ecclesiastes* sowie die mit ihm in Verbindung gebrachten sachlichen Irritationen früh eine intensive Berührung von biblischer Aussage und paganem Gedankengut. Konkret zeigt sich dies anhand der Abschwächung der

dum est: ergo a simplici conversa: quod faciendum est factum est. – Et ex hoc concludit: *Nihil sub sole novum* [...].“ [Bonaventura] 1893, Commentarii, S. 16. Dazu auch ebd., S. 16, Anm. 1.

106 Vgl. Reitz, & Fuchs 2015, S. 52.

107 Cicero 2006, *Timaeus* 2,3, S.10. Dazu Reitz, & Fuchs 2015, S. 43–56.

108 Vgl. oben, Anm. 45.

109 [Augustinus] 1865, *Enarratio in Psalmum* 121, 5, Sp. 1621.

„Vanitas“-Problematik und der damit einhergehenden Konstruktion zweier Realitätsebenen, die eine erhebliche Sinnverschiebung des biblischen Textes nach sich ziehen. Eusebius' Programm der Ontologisierung sowie die anschließende relationale Verknüpfung eines „unteren“ mit einem „oberen“ Seinsbereich stellen das Buch in den philosophischen Zusammenhang von Vergänglichkeit und Unvergänglichkeit, der in der Kommentierungsgeschichte verschiedentlich wiederholt und variiert wird.¹¹⁰ Pagane Dichtung wie die Vergils wird durch ihre Aufnahme in Standardkommentare wie den des Hieronymus selbst zu Standardwissen und hält – bei fortgesetzter Diskussion – das Bewusstsein für antike kosmologische Theorien wie die eines alles belebenden Geistes oder einer Existenz der Weltseele aufrecht. Konkurrierende philosophische Denkmodelle, etwa in Hinblick auf als falsch markierte Lehrmeinungen über den Wandel der Dinge oder die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen, erweitern den Kontext durch negative Erwähnung. Mitgeführte alternative Textversionen sowie Reflexionen auf grammatikalische und logische Aspekte von Satzbau und Satzgefüge bedingen ein geschärftes Bewusstsein für die Korrelation von Sprachstruktur und ausgedrücktem Inhalt.

Angesichts dieses breit angelegten „kulturellen Archivs“ möglicher

110 Zur weiten Verbreitung von Eusebius' Text in der Frühen Neuzeit vgl. Monfasani 1984, S. 726. Für die Nachwirkung von Eusebius' Reflexion in der neuzeitlichen Kommentarliteratur zu *Ecclesiastes* vgl. [Cornelius a Lapide] 1875, *Commentaria*, S. 59.

Referenz- und Vergleichstexte fallen verschiedene Berührungspunkte mit Brunos Position auf. Die vielleicht grundsätzlichsste Feststellung betrifft den Umstand, dass die im Buch *Ecclesiastes* vorgestellte Weisheit Salomons auf eine lange Tradition philosophischer Auslegung zurückblicken kann. Die von Bruno vertretene Nähe des biblischen Weisheitslehrers zu dem paganen Philosophen Pythagoras¹¹¹ stellt, so betrachtet, nicht mehr als eine mögliche Variante in der Geschichte des Zusammenschlusses von biblischem Text und Philosophie dar. Ebenso kann die konstatierte Berufung Brunos auf Vergil während seines Prozesses¹¹² an lang verankerte Vorbilder wie Hieronymus, Hugo von St. Victor oder auch Hugo von St. Cher denken lassen, die in ihren Kommentaren eine solche Verbindung zwischen der biblischen Weisheitslehre und dem Dichter herstellen.¹¹³ Aus philosophischer Perspektive scheint sich

111 Vgl. oben, Anm. 6. Vgl. Bruno 2007a, *Causa*, S. 116; 234.

112 „Principio coelum et terras camposque liquentes / lucentemque globum lunae Titaniaque astra, spiritus intus alit totamque infusa per artus / mens agit molem [...] Da questo spirito poi, che è detto vita dell'universo, intendo nella mia filosofia provenire la vita et l'anima a ciascuna cosa anche have anima e vita, la qual però intendo essere immortale; come anco alli corpi. Quanto alla loro substantia, tutti sono immortali, non essendo altro morte che divisione et congregazione: la qual dottrina pare espressa nell'*Ecclesiaste*, dove dice: „Nihil sub sole novum: quid est quod est? ipsum quod fuit“. Firpo 1993, S. 169.

113 Vgl. oben, Punkt 3.3. Für einen weiteren Beleg des Vergilzitats im Zusammenhang mit der pythagoreischen Lehre vgl. Bruno 2007a, *Causa*, S. 112.

ein Nachleben der Ontologisierung und Konstruktion einer zweifachen Realität ausmachen zu lassen. Wiederholt bedient sich Bruno in seinen Schriften der vom Buch *Ecclesiastes* bekannten Redewendung „nihil sub sole novum“, wobei die Formulierung in seinem Gedankengebäude einer unendlichen kosmischen Einheit freilich nicht einen realen, sublunaren Bereich meinen kann. Das Interesse Brunos an dieser Ausdrucksweise bezieht sich offensichtlich auf die Eigenschaften, die im Lauf der *Ecclesiastes*-kommentierung den Bereichen „unter“ bzw. „über der Sonne“ beigelegt wurden und – gleichsam als philosophisches Begriffsinventar – auch in seinem Denken eine Rolle spielen. So illustriert die *Ecl 1,10* entnommene Formulierung – in Analogie zu den Varianten der *Ecclesiastes*-auslegung der Tradition – für Bruno die Zusammengehörigkeit und Differenz zwischen der sinnlich nicht wahrnehmbaren, immer beständigen Substanz einerseits und den sinnlich wahrnehmbaren, ständig veränderbaren und in stets Anderes übergehenden Seinsformen andererseits.¹¹⁴

Kommt man von hieraus zu Brunos Wahlspruch zurück, so bleibt freilich das

Problem der sprachlichen Abwandlung gegenüber dem „normierten“ Text der *Vulgata*. Hier könnte geltend gemacht werden, dass es sich eben nicht um ein Zitat, sondern um einen „Wahlspruch“, das heißt um ein „Motto“ oder auch um eine „Sentenz“ handeln soll, also um eine leicht fassliche, spruchförmige Redeweise, die eigenen rhetorischen Regeln folgt. In diesem Sinn würde das Motto nicht notwendig die wortgetreue Wiedergabe eines Zitats verlangen, sondern auch die rezeptionslenkende Simulation eines Zitats erlauben,¹¹⁵ die Sentenz wiederum würde „unter Verweis auf eine ältere literarische, politische oder religiöse Autorität“ als „Gegenstück des Zitats“ eine „individuell geprägte, allgemeingültige (zitierbare) Aussage“¹¹⁶ bedeuten. Gesteht man diese Möglichkeit einer individuellen Sinnggebung und damit verbundenen eher losen Anspielung auf die traditionellen Weisheitslehren zu, dann könnte Bruno ein Mischzitat bieten, das aus dem Fundus der traditionell diskutierten Sprachgebung des Buches *Ecclesiastes* schöpft. Der Beginn des ersten Teils von Brunos Sinnspruchs „quid est quod est“ würde sinngemäß an die bei Eusebius angeführte Formulierung „quid est quod semper sit“, also an die von Cicero verfasste lateinische Übersetzung des *Timaios* erinnern oder auch direkt die von Augustinus diskutierte Frage „quid est quod est?“ aufgreifen. Die Fortsetzung des ersten Teils mit „ipsum quod fuit“ würde einen Zusammenhang zwischen Gegenwart und

114 „In ipsis igitur sensibilibus rerum non consistit veritas; quod enim vere est, semper est, constat, fuit semper et erit (unde optime illud: ‚nihil sub sole novum‘), ipsum est semotum a nostris sensibilibus, quibus non subiecta substantia, sed quaedam eius affectiones, colores, ordines, figurae, continui motus, alterationes et id, quod semper est alterum atque alterum, minime autem autem, quod verum est simpliciter, offertur.“ Bruno 1962b, Sigillus, S. 213. Vgl. auch Bruno 1962c, Libri physicorum, S. 340–341 und Firpo 1993, S. 301.

115 Vgl. Grüttemeier 2005, Sp. 1495

116 Engels 2007, Sp. 848.

Vergangenheit herstellen, der sich am ehesten in Hieronymus' Überlegungen zum Sein Gottes findet. Der zweite Teil „quid est quod fuit? Ipsum quod est“ hingegen könnte klarer die von Hieronymus kommentierte Fassung der *Vetus Latina* von *Ecl* 3,15 anführen. Vor allem aber lässt die kunstvolle Komposition von Brunos Sinnspruch an Bonaventuras „*conversio simplex*“ denken. Auch in Brunos Formulierung gehen Prädikat und Subjekt ineinander über, so dass sich beide Teile gegenseitig auslegen, um in dieser Form die Verschränkung von Sein und Wandel als das Wesen seiner Philosophie unmittelbar auszudrücken. Die unwandelbare Gegenwart des Seins ist das Gewesene, wie umgekehrt das Gewesene immer schon in die Präsenz des Seins übergegangen ist.

Schließlich wäre die Frage der Beurteilung von Brunos Wahlspruch durch die Inquisition ein lohnendes Thema für eigene Nachforschungen. So bedeutet Brunos ontologische, eigentlich an die Fachtradition anknüpfende Ecclesiastesinterpretation für die Inquisitoren offensichtlich eine inakzeptable Schwächung des Seins der Individuen.¹¹⁷ Zudem erscheint Brunos Ankläger Robert Bellarmin – wie dessen eigene Schriften nahelegen – die Verbindung des Buches *Ecclesiastes* mit der epikureischen Philosophie zutiefst suspekt.¹¹⁸ Vor diesem Hintergrund wäre denkbar, dass

sich Brunos Berufung auf Pythagoras im Zusammenhang mit Salomon negativ auf seinen Prozess auswirkte, war doch Pythagoras zumindest in Teilen der Tradition der Ecclesiastesauslegung in die Nähe der als häretisch eingestuftem Epikureer gerückt worden.¹¹⁹ Bruno mochte so Assoziationen an eine abgelehnte Lehre wecken. Möglicherweise kollidierte jedoch auch allein schon die sprachliche Zusammenstellung des Wahlspruchs mit dem durch das Konzil von Trient verfassten Dekret über die *Vulgata*-Ausgabe der Bibel.¹²⁰ In den Augen der Ankläger Brunos würde dieser hier dann – nicht zuletzt durch sein freies Spiel mit den traditionell verfügbaren Referenztexten – einen nunmehr sanktionierten Umgang mit der als authentisch betrachteten Bibelversion pflegen. Dies konnte in einer Zeit des erbitterten Ringens um die Bedeutung der biblischen Texte als äußerst verdächtig erscheinen. In diesem Sinn öffnet sich für die Bruno-Forschung nicht nur ein weites Feld der Rekonstruktion der für die kirchliche Autorität möglicherweise anstößigen theologischen Motivkreise. Die vielschichtige, produktive Aneignung traditional vermittelter Referenztexte durch Bruno kann vielmehr auch den Blick für die tiefe Verwurzelung brunianischen Denkens – gerade in seiner innovativen Potenz – in der Breite der theologischen Tradition weiten.

117 „[...] *negat individua vere esse, quae sunt, sed sunt vanitas, iuxta dictum Salomonis: 'Vidi cuncta quae fiunt sub sole et universa vanitas', sed verae substantiae sunt species primae naturae, quae vere sunt id quod sunt.*“ Firpo 1993, S. 304.

118 Vgl. Bellarmin 1721, *Disputationes* I, V, S. 7.

119 Vgl. oben, Anm. 92 und 100.

120 Vgl. Denzinger ⁴³2010, Nr. 1506–1507, S. 463–464.

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Anmerkungen zum Christentum von Giordano Bruno auf der Grundlage seines Prozesses

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ABSTRACT

In defending the infinity of the universe, Giordano Bruno's philosophy relies fundamentally upon the investigation into God's almightiness. The paper puts specific attention on some of the most authoritative texts of mediaeval Christian theology and their sources. It aims to forestage the interrelation between Bruno's use of these doctrines, his notion of the infinite, and his view on Christ in particular close relation to his trials.*

* Ich bedanke mich bei Elisabeth Blum und Nicoletta Gironi für ihre Hilfe bei der Übersetzung und bei der linguistischen Korrektur dieses Aufsatzes. Sofern nicht anders angegeben, stammt auch die Übersetzung der im Text enthaltenen Zitate von mir.

— Bevor ich näher auf Giordano Brunos Verhältnis zum Christentum eingehe, möchte ich zunächst die Gründe darlegen, warum ich die Prozessakten zur Hauptquelle meiner Betrachtung mache.¹ Zum Ersten stellt der Prozess

als allerletzte Phase seines Lebens gewissermaßen eine *ungeschriebene* Zusammenfassung seiner Philosophie dar. Angesichts der Einschränkungen in der Gefangenschaft und der Unmöglichkeit, weitere Werke zu publizieren, nutzte Bruno seine Aussagen im Verhör zur Weiterentwicklung seines philosophischen Systems. Brunos Verhaftung schien ihn in genau dem Augenblick betroffen zu haben, da seine Untersuchungen zu Ethik und Naturphilosophie mit der Frankfurter Trilogie zu einer umfassenderen Synthese gediehen waren als zuvor in den mehr sporadischen und gelegenschaftsbedingten Darstellungsformen, die ihm die unberechenbaren Umstände seines Exils diktierten. Der zweite Grund folgt unmittelbar aus dem ersten: Während er zur Verteidigung

1 Die wichtigste Untersuchung zu Brunos Prozess mit einer kritischen Edition der erhaltenen Dokumente ist Firpo 1993. Eine französische Übersetzung wurde 2000 veröffentlicht (Bruno 2000 in der Bibliographie). Zu Brunos Prozess s. auch Quaglioni 2000, 2002 und 2003; Spruit 1998 und 2002; Ricci 2000, S. 458–557, 609–17 und Ricci 2014; Beretta 2001; Martinez 2016, insb. S. 359–74. Ich habe früher zu Brunos Prozess einige Studien veröffentlicht (s. Traversino 2013 und 2015a) und arbeite daran zzt. mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Verhältnisses zu Luther sowie des Verdachts, vor allem seitens Clemens VIII., Bruno habe sich vor seiner Rückkehr nach Italien der Reformation angeschlossen.

seiner selbst und seiner Lehre zwischen vollem oder teilweisem Eingeständnis seiner Glaubenszweifel und Verschweigen oder Dissimulation hin und her wechselt, muss Bruno in seinem Prozess die ultimative Bewährungsprobe nicht bloß seiner philosophischen, sondern auch seiner Glaubensüberzeugungen gesehen haben. Der dramatische Epilog des Prozesses war der *unerwartete* Ausgang einer Konfrontation, die der Angeklagte mit seinen Richtern mehr als sieben Jahre lang ausgefochten hatte.² So findet man in dem Prozess vielleicht nicht alle philosophischen Ideen Brunos in ihrer Gesamtheit, aber man findet sie gewiss in ihrer letzten Ausgestaltung. Und zugleich findet man dort auch den Grund für Brunos Erfolg in der heutigen Forschung und für seine bedeutende Rolle in der frühneuzeitlichen Philosophie. Um Brunos Bedeutung gerecht zu werden, muss man nicht unbedingt seine Ansichten teilen, wohl aber anerkennen, dass seine Entscheidung, selbst um den Preis des eigenen Lebens seine Lehren nicht zu widerrufen mit dem in Einklang steht, was er als seine ethisch-philosophische Sendung ansah: die Verteidigung des Rechts eines jeden, gemäß des eigenen Gewissens zu denken und zu glauben, und dabei keinen von außen auferlegten Vorschriften zu gehorchen.

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 Kommen wir nun zu Brunos Ansicht von der Dreifaltigkeit und von der

2 „Unerwarteter Ausgang“ im Sinne von Quagliani 2000, S. 305 („una sentenza non scontata“) und von Ricci 2000, S. 529 („un epilogo non scontato“).

Inkarnation Christi im Lichte der Prozessakten. Es ist bemerkenswert, welche zentrale Stellung diese Fragen bereits in den allerersten Anklagen Mocenigos gegen Bruno einnahmen. Drei von den acht Anklagepunkten (Nr. 2 – 4 auf der von Luigi Firpo erstellten Liste)³ handeln davon. Fragen in dieser Richtung wurden bereits in der allerersten Phase des Prozesses in Venedig eingehend diskutiert, nämlich in der 3. und 4. Anhörung am 2. Juni 1592 und in der 5. am darauffolgenden Tag. Schon zu diesem Zeitpunkt beruft sich Bruno bezeichnenderweise auf biblische und patristische Quellen – auf die Bibel im Allgemeinen und auf eine Stelle aus Augustinus, zur Rechtfertigung seiner Zweifel, ob „diese drei [die Dreifaltigkeit] als Personen definiert werden könnten, denn mir schien, dass der Terminus *Person* nicht richtig auf die Gottheit angewandt werden könne.“⁴ Während er diesen Zweifel zugibt, präzisiert Bruno, er sei „über die unergründliche Weise unsicher gewesen“, auf welche die Inkarnation stattfindet, aber nicht was das Faktum der Inkarnation selbst anbelangt.⁵ Anderenorts erkennt Bruno ausdrücklich die Inkarnation an und bestätigt das in seinem *Confiteor*, nennt sie jedoch *incomprehensibilis* (unbegreiflich) aufgrund der Weise ihres

3 Firpo 1993, S. 16.

4 Firpo 1993, Dok. 14, S. 172–73: „che queste tre possino sortir nome di persone; poiché non mi pareva che questo nome di persona convenisse alla divinità“. Über Brunos Gebrauch der gelehrten Referenzen s. Quagliani 2000, S. 311 ff.

5 Firpo 1993, Dok. 14, S. 173, auch für das Zitat: „haver vacillato nel modo inefabile.“

Zustandekommens.⁶ Es ist nicht leicht zu entscheiden, ob diese Aussagen zur Trinität und zur Inkarnation bloß ein Teil von Brunos Dissimulationsstrategie waren. Einerseits scheinen Mocenigos Denunziationen diesen Eindruck zu bestätigen, aber andererseits sagte sogar Bruder Celestino trotz seiner feindlichen Einstellung gegen Bruno aus, er habe nie den Eindruck gehabt, Bruno „leugne die Unterscheidung der Personen“ der Trinität.⁷ Was Bruno zu seiner Rechtfertigung vorbringt, zeigt deutlich, welch heikler Moment im Gerichtsverfahren seine Vernehmung und die der Zeugen zu diesem Punkt angesichts der divergierenden Aussagen war. Bruno gibt zu, dass er diesbezüglich Zweifel hatte, „weil Gottheit eine unendliche Natur ist, und Menschheit eine endliche, die erstere eine ewige, und die letztere eine zeitliche Natur ist.“⁸ Mit anderen Worten, Bruno rechtfertigt seinen Zweifel mit seiner Unfähigkeit zu verstehen, wie die Vereinigung der menschlichen und der göttlichen Natur „proportional und in Summe“ in ein und demselben Wesen stattfinden könne.⁹

In einem späteren Ausschnitt derselben Anhörung stoßen wir auf eine Aussage, in der Bruno ausdrücklich seine

intellektuelle Verpflichtung gegenüber der katholischen Theologie würdigt, insbesondere gegenüber Thomas von Aquin, „in dessen Lehre er aufgezogen wurde“, wie er es selbst formuliert.¹⁰ Nach Mocenigos Denunziation hatte Bruno aber behauptet, er selbst sei gelehrter als der Aquinate und „den besten Theologen überlegen“, die „im Vergleich zu ihm nichts wissen“.¹¹ Wie soll man diese beiden entgegengesetzten Aussagen bewerten? Bezweckt Bruno mit seiner Behauptung lediglich, das Wohlwollen der Richter zu erlangen und seine polemische Absicht, oder zumindest seine Überzeugung von der Überlegenheit der eigenen Lehre (auf die Mocenigos Worte verweisen), zu dissimulieren? In seinem vierten Verhör verwahrt sich Bruno dagegen, er habe niemals schlecht über katholische Theologen gesprochen, vielmehr bloß „von einigen lutherischen Theologen oder anderen Häretikern etwas über jemanden Bestimmten gesagt und sie verurteilt.“¹² Die Erwähnung lutherischer und calvinistischer Theologen könnte zunächst den Eindruck erwecken, wir hätten hier nichts weiter als eine Reihe von Beteuerungen Brunos zur Abwehr von Mocenigos Anklagen. Dennoch scheint Brunos Grundhaltung während des ganzen Prozesses die zu sein, durch ständige Bezugnahme auf

6 Firpo 1993, Dok. 51, [II, 40,] S. 253-59 (S. 259); zu diesem Punkt s. auch Quagliolini 2000, S. 311 ff.

7 Firpo 1993, S. 253, für Mocenigos genauso wie für Bruder Celestinos Aussage und für das Zitat: „che lui negasse la distinzione delle persone.“

8 Firpo 1993, S. 258: „per essere la divinità natura infinita e la humanità finita, quella eterna e questa temporale.“

9 Firpo 1993: „proportionalmente et in somma.“

10 Für das Zitat s. Firpo 1993, S. 259: „nella dottrina del quale io sono nutrito.“

11 Firpo 1993, Dok. 2, S. 144: „primi theologi del mondo“; „non hanno saputo niente a par di lui.“

12 Firpo 1993, Dok. 14, S. 177: „detto qualcosa di alcuno particolare, et biasmato, come sarebbe a dir, qualche theologo lutherano od altri heretici.“

ihm und seinen Gegnern gemeinsame autoritative Quellen den Konflikt in der Auseinandersetzung zu entschärfen. Nach Firpo entspricht Brunos Verhalten in den letzten Phasen der Debatte seiner Überzeugung, er habe es mit „Gegnern, die ihm an Würde und Autorität vollkommen glichen“ zu tun, und der Hoffnung, dass ein Urteilsspruch Papst Clemens VIII. „als eines unvoreingenommenen Richters“ die Sache letztendlich zu seinen Gunsten wenden konnte.¹³ Dennoch neige ich dazu, in Brunos „Berufung auf Autoritäten und [...] doktrinäre Argumente, zu seiner eigenen Verteidigung vorgebracht“ sowie in seinen wiederholten Huldigungen an Thomas von Aquin und die katholische Theologie mehr zu sehen als bloße Strategie.¹⁴ Bruno lenkte vielmehr die Aufmerksamkeit seiner Gegenspieler auf Quellen, die er als seine eigenen betrachtete, und wollte auf sie gestützt seinen Gegnern offen entgegentreten. Auch stellte sich gegen Ende des Verfahrens heraus, dass die Beurteilung der sachverständigen Berater im Großen und Ganzen nicht gegen Bruno ausfiel, d.h. vor der Entscheidung Clemens VIII., die Führung des Prozesses – auch gegen die Beurteilung der Sachverständigen – selbst zu übernehmen. Die sachverständigen Berater hatten nämlich „weitgehend nicht schuldig“ votiert, mit der Begründung, man könne Bruno schwerlich zu einem

Häretiker erklären auf der Basis von deutlich als unglaubwürdig erkannten Zeugenaussagen.¹⁵ Sie rieten zur Anwendung der Folter, um die noch offenen Anklagepunkte zu klären. Hinsichtlich der anderen Beschuldigungen, die ihnen als nachgewiesen galten, hielten sie ein Urteil *ad resipiscendum* für ausreichend.¹⁶ Zudem sollte Bruno, wie der Hochwürdige Vater Beccaria es formuliert, „nach seinen eigenen Aussagen beurteilt werden.“¹⁷ Und auch der Apostolische Protonotar Anselmo Dandini vertrat die Ansicht, man müsse dem Angeklagten Gelegenheit zum Widerruf der Anklagepunkte geben, die bereits für bewiesen erklärt worden waren. Laut Dandini sollte Bruno auch nur dann dem weltlichen Gericht übergeben und entsprechend bestraft werden (der Schwere der Anklage entsprechend mit dem Tode), falls er nach der Folterung eingestehen sollte, er habe Falsches gegen die Dreifaltigkeit behauptet. So erweist es sich, dass der Schuldspruch, der Bruno zum Tode verdammt, in erster Linie auf den Beschluss von Clemens VIII. zurückgeht, der – entgegen Brunos Hoffnungen – lautete, der Fall müsse aufgrund dessen entschieden werden, was sowohl Bruno selbst als auch die Zeugen bis dato ausgesagt hatten.¹⁸

Dandinis Rat, Brunos Heterodoxie hinsichtlich der Dreifaltigkeit genauer

13 Firpo 1993, S. 111, für beide Zitate: „contendenti, eguali affatto per autorità e dignità“; „giudice imparziale“.

14 Für das Zitat s. Quaglioni 2000, S. 317: „apigli autoritativi e [...] argomenti di dottrina addotti a propria difesa.“

15 Für das Zitat s. Quaglioni 2000, S. 306: „in larga misura di non colpevolezza.“

16 Firpo 1993, Dok. 61, S. 328.

17 Firpo 1993, S. 329: „ex his quae deponet iudicetur.“

18 Firpo 1993: für Dandinis genauso wie für die Positionen von Clemens VIII.

zu prüfen, ist für uns eine Anregung, der Bedeutung dieser Frage für die Prozessführung nachzugehen. Dies erfordert eine nähere Betrachtung sowohl der Quellen, auf die Bruno zu seiner Verteidigung direkt verweist, als auch weiterer Details, die im Verlauf des Prozesses zutage traten. Besonderes Gewicht bekommt hier Brunos Aufenthalt auf protestantischem Territorium, der an sich schon einen hinreichenden Grund für eine Überprüfung der Rechtgläubigkeit Brunos durch die Inquisition bieten konnte. Zunächst wollen wir, der ersten Richtung folgend, einige der mehr oder weniger expliziten Verweise Brunos auf die Schrift, die Kirchenväter und die scholastischen Theologen betrachten, Stellen, die von der Mittlerrolle Christi zwischen Gott und den Menschen handeln.

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Zu Christus als Mittler betrachten wir zunächst 1 Tim. 2, 3–6 und 2 Kor. 9, 13–15. In der ersten Äußerung begründet Paulus die Rolle Christi als Mittler zwischen Gott und Menschen durch die Identität Christi mit der Glaubenswahrheit und durch den Opfertod am Kreuz zur Erlösung der Menschheit. In der zweiten beschreibt er der christlichen Gemeinde von Korinth die guten Werke der Nächstenliebe und ermuntert sie, solche in der Nachfolge Christi zu vollbringen, wobei sie in dieser Mission durch Gottes *unergründliches Geschenk* der Gnade unterstützt würden. Paulus' Begeisterung, die in der Beschreibung dieses *unergründlichen* Geschenks der Gnade aufscheint, versteht man besser, wenn man an seinen

Appell an den Frieden als das höchste Gut des Lebens denkt. Nach der Hl. Schrift gibt sich Christus selbst als Wahrzeichen dieses Friedens hin (Joh. 14, 27), ermöglicht durch sein Opfer die Gnade, und befähigt den erlösten Menschen, die Gnade in vollem Umfang zu erlangen (Is. 48, 22).

Der Hinweis auf die Unergründlichkeit führt uns unmittelbar zurück zu Brunos Berufung auf Augustinus zur Rechtfertigung seines Zweifels. Allerdings liegt hier ein Fehler vor, denn Bruno zitiert tatsächlich einen Abschnitt aus *De fide ad Petrum* (nach Thomas' *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 4, a. 2, *Sed contra*): „Die menschliche Natur hat Gott angenommen, nicht die Person“. Bruno schreibt diesen Satz Augustinus zu, der tatsächliche Autor ist Fulgentius von Ruspe, ein Erläuterer und Verteidiger von Augustinus' Lehre.¹⁹ In diesem Abschnitt bezieht sich Fulgentius auf Augustinus' Überlegungen zur Trinität und Christologie. Einerseits bekennt sich Bruno offen zu seinen Glaubenszweifeln, andererseits versucht er mit diesem Zitat darzustellen, dass auch innerhalb der christlichen Theologie die Anwendung des Terminus *Person* ein schwieriges und ungelöstes Problem sei. Auch findet er, dass Thomas' Interpretation des Abschnittes aus Fulgentius für ein volles Verständnis der Inkarnation Christi nicht ausreicht. Thomas schließt gleich nach dem Zitat aus Pseudo-Augustinus aus, dass es irgendeine Art von

¹⁹ Zu diesem Punkt s. Quaglioni 2000, S. 311; für Thomas' Hinweis auf Fulgentius' Passage, zitiert auch von Quaglioni, s. Thomas von Aquin 1889.

Annahme der menschlichen Person in Christus geben könne. Für Thomas gilt: wenn es wahr ist, dass „annehmen an-sich-nehmen bedeutet“, so wird folglich das, „was [...] an sich genommen wird, Voraussetzung für das Annehmen sein, so wie das Bewegliche der Bewegung selbst vorausgesetzt ist“.²⁰ Im Gegensatz dazu, was mit der menschlichen Natur geschieht, könne von einer Annahme der menschlichen Person in Christus keine Rede sein: „Die Person bildet [...] nicht die Voraussetzung für das Annehmen, sondern vielmehr dessen Abschluß.“²¹ Wenn man in der Tat zuließe, dass die menschliche Person vor dem Akt der Annahme in Christus existiere, dann müsste sie entweder nach ihrer Annahme untergehen und nicht mehr existieren, wäre also „vergebens angenommen“, oder am Leben bleiben, „was aber bedeutet, dass es zwei Personen gäbe, die eine annehmend und die andere angenommen“.²² Aus dieser Überlegung folgt die Konklusion, dass „in keiner Weise hat der Sohn Gottes die menschliche Person angenommen“, sondern bloß die menschliche Natur.²³ Man kann sich leicht denken, dass Bruno sich neben dem Fulgentius-Zitat von Thomas noch an andere scholastische Erklärungen der Inkarnation Christi erinnerte, vor allem an eine in den *Sentenzen* des Petrus Lombardus zitierte Stelle aus Gennadius Massilensis’ *De*

ecclesiasticis dogmatibus, einem weiteren Werk, das fälschlich Augustinus zugeschrieben wurde. Dort heißt es zur Inkarnation Christi, wir müssten als gewiss annehmen, die menschliche Natur sei ohne Veränderung in die göttliche aufgenommen worden, „sodass weder Gott durch die Annahme dieser Form in menschliche Substanz verwandelt, noch der in Gott verherrlichte Mensch zu göttlicher Substanz verwandelt ist“.²⁴ Tatsächlich würde eine solche Umwandlung „zu einer Minderung der Natur und der Aufhebung der Substanz führen“.²⁵ Petrus Lombardus führt aus, man dürfe nicht unterstellen, dass Gott durch die Tatsache der Inkarnation seine Natur verändere, und betont, das Mysterium der Inkarnation erlaube es zu sagen, der Mensch gehe aus Gott hervor, nicht aber umgekehrt, Gott gehe aus dem Menschen hervor. Richtig sagt man also, dass Gott Mensch geworden sei, aber falsch ist es zu sagen, der Mensch sei Gott geworden.²⁶

Aber, um wieder auf Brunos oben erwähnte Berufung auf Augustinus zu kommen, wie bereits angedeutet, beabsichtigte Bruno offenbar mit diesem Verweis, sich mit seinen Gegnern auf

20 Thomas von Aquin 1889. (mit meinen Änderungen).

21 Thomas von Aquin 1889.

22 Thomas von Aquin 1889. (mit meinen Änderungen).

23 Thomas von Aquin 1889.

24 Petrus Lombardus 1981, S. 66, Dist. 7, C. 3: „ut nec Deus mutaretur in humanam substantiam assumendo hominem, nec homo in divinam glorificatus in Deum.“

25 Petrus Lombardus 1981, S. 66, Dist. 7, C. 3: „naturae diminutionem et abolitionem substantiae.“

26 Petrus Lombardus 1981, S. 65, Dist. 7, C. 2-3: „Et quia secundum habitum accipienda est Incarnationis ratio, ideo Deum humanatum, non hominem deificatum dici tradunt. [...] Et licet dicatur *homo Deus*, non tamen congrue dicitur *homo dominicus*.“

der Grundlage gemeinsamer autoritativer Quellen auseinanderzusetzen. Mit den Zitaten wollte er vor allem zeigen, dass seine Zweifel innerhalb der christlichen Tradition alles andere als neu waren. Wiederum bekennt sich Bruno nicht nur zu der Unsicherheit seines Gedächtnisses hinsichtlich der zitierten Stelle, sondern auch zu der Schwierigkeit, aufgrund der besagten *Unergründlichkeit* der Inkarnation am Dogma der Trinität festzuhalten. Aber was war in dieser Frage tatsächlich Augustinus' Standpunkt, auf den sowohl Fulgentius als auch Thomas ihre Argumentation aufbauten? Werfen wir einen Blick auf Ser. 186, 1, die Predigt, in der Augustinus die Inkarnation Christi im Zusammenhang mit der Jungfräulichkeit Mariens erläutert. Hinsichtlich des Begriffs *Person* stellt Augustinus zunächst fest: „dass das Wort Fleisch geworden ist“, die Inkarnation Christi, „[bedeutet nicht,] dass das Wort vernichtet wurde, da es mit Fleisch bekleidet ward, sondern vielmehr dass sich das Fleisch, um der Vernichtung zu entgehen, dem Worte annäherte“.²⁷ Die Weise, auf die die Vereinigung der menschlichen und der göttlichen Natur sich vollzieht, erläutert Augustinus durch einen Vergleich mit dem Menschen: „Wie der Mensch Seele und Leib ist, so kann Christus Gott und Mensch sein. Derselbe, der Mensch ist, ist Gott, und derselbe, der Gott ist, ist Mensch – nicht durch eine Vermischung der Naturen, sondern durch die

Einheit der Person.“²⁸ Mit der Negation der Annahme der menschlichen *Person* in Christus zeigt diese Predigt deutlich, wie sich die Ausführungen von Fulgentius, Petrus Lombardus und Thomas von Aquin auf Augustinus beziehen. Denn eine solche Annahme der Person würde, wenn man sie zuließe, sogar das Dogma der Trinität aufheben: „So wurde die Menschheit zu der Gottheit des Sohnes hinzugefügt, und doch so, dass es zu keiner Vierfältigkeit der Personen führte, sondern die Dreifaltigkeit bleibt bestehen.“²⁹

Sieht man von dem Problem der *Vierfältigkeit* ab, so ähnelt Augustinus' Ser. 186, 1 mit dem Vergleich „Wie der Mensch Seele und Leib ist, so kann Christus Gott und Mensch sein“ in terminologischer Hinsicht Brunos Eingeständnis seiner Unfähigkeit, zu verstehen wie „die Menschheit [...] mit der Gottheit in der Konstitution eines Subjektes vereint wurde, so wie die menschliche Seele mit dem Leib vereint ist“.³⁰ In ihrer *Unergründlichkeit* ist die Inkarnation Christi ungeeignet zur fundamentalen Erklärung der Natur, wie Bruno sie anstrebt. Das bestimmt Brunos Entschluss, die Christologie in seiner Erforschung der

27 Augustinus 1841, Sp. 999: „[...] quod Verbo caro factum est, non Verbum in carnem pereundo cessit; sed caro ad Verbum, ne ipsa periret, accessit.“

28 Augustinus 1841, Sp. 999: „ut quemadmodum homo est anima et caro, sic esset Christus Deus et homo. Idem Deus qui homo, et qui Deus idem homo: non confusione naturae, sed unitate personae.“

29 Augustinus 1841, Sp. 999: „Ac sic et Filii divinitati est addita humanitas; et tamen non est personarum facta quaternitas, sed permanet trinitas.“

30 Firpo 1993, S. 253: „la umanità [...] fosse giunta alla divinità alla costituzione d'un soggetto come è giunta l'anima umana col corpo.“

kausalen Zusammenhänge beiseitezulassen: „Lassen wir also [...] diese Betrachtung, insofern sie höher als jeder Sinn und jede Vernunft ist, und betrachten wir Prinzip und Ursache, insofern sie, als Spur, entweder die Natur selbst sind oder doch wenigstens im Bereich und im Schoß derselben widerscheinen.“³¹ An dieser Entscheidung Brunos sind meiner Ansicht nach zwei Aspekte hervorzuheben: Einerseits hält Bruno die Christologie aufgrund ihrer *Unergründlichkeit* aus seiner Erforschung der Natur heraus und konzentriert sich auf die kausale Erklärung, wodurch er zu einem Notwendigkeitsdenken gelangt, das ihn zu der Theorie führt, die Welten und das Universum seien – in Entsprechung der Wirkung mit ihrem Prinzip oder ihrer Ursache – ebenso unendlich wie Gottes unendliche Macht. Andererseits bezieht sich Bruno jedoch vermittels seiner Quellen weitgehend auf die Christologie, die er allerdings im Lichte seiner Naturphilosophie von Grund auf uminterpretiert. Dies zeigt sich besonders deutlich bei der Betrachtung einer der wichtigsten Quellen Brunos, Nikolaus Cusanus, mit seiner Unterscheidung von *Komplikation* und *Explikation* innerhalb des Begriffes der Einheit.³²

— III

Bruno leugnet, wie gesagt, in seinem Prozess keineswegs, wankend im Glauben gewesen zu sein, verweist aber zur Recht-

fertigung seiner Zweifel wiederholt auf christliche Autoritäten. Zudem weist er in einigen Fällen die Anschuldigung zurück, er habe seine Unsicherheit in Schriften oder in öffentlichem Auftreten geäußert, und behauptet hinsichtlich anderer Fälle, was er im Widerspruch zum Glauben geäußert habe, beschränke sich ausschließlich auf den Bereich der Philosophie.³³ Wie Luigi Firpo ganz richtig betont, versucht Bruno angesichts der disziplinären und theologischen Anschuldigungen mit solchen Äußerungen „zu leugnen, was geleugnet werden kann, abzumildern, was unsicher ist, und für die bewiesenen Verstöße um Verzeihung zu bitten“;³⁴ andererseits, „auf dem Gebiet der Philosophie, leugnet er weder, noch mindert er die im Druck dokumentierten Ansichten, und weigert sich sogar, darin einen Fehler, d.h. eine Unvereinbarkeit mit dem Dogma und der Hl. Schrift anzuerkennen“.³⁵ Dies ist deutlich bei Brunos drittem Verhör in Venedig erkennbar: „gefragt, ob er öffentlich oder privat in den Vorlesungen, die er an verschiedenen Orten gehalten habe [...] jemals irgendeinen Satz gelehrt, vertreten oder diskutiert habe, der im Gegensatz oder Widerspruch zu dem katholischen Glauben und den Bestimmungen der Hl. Römischen

31 Bruno 2007, S. 91 (2. Dialog).

32 Wir können hier nicht näher auf Brunos Verhältnis zu Cusanus eingehen; zu diesem Thema s. Traversino 2015a, S. 43–58 und Traversino 2015b, S. 155–169.

33 S., z. B., Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 165–71 (insb. S. 168–169).

34 Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 105: „negare il negabile, attenuare l’incerto, invocare il perdono per le colpe provate“.

35 Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 105: „nel campo filosofico invece egli non nega né sminuisce l’opinione che le stampe documentano, e si rifiuta altresì di riconoscerne l’errore, cioè l’inconciliabilità nei riguardi del dogma e della Scrittura.“

Kirche“ steht,³⁶ verneint Bruno in seiner Antwort, jemals „direkt [d.h. auf theologischem Gebiet] irgendetwas gegen die katholische christliche Religion gelehrt zu haben“.³⁷ Sogar als er zugibt, dies *indirekt* in seinen *Centum et viginti articuli de natura et mundo adversus peripateticos* – „gedruckt mit Erlaubnis der Ordensoberen“³⁸ – getan zu haben, mildert er die Schwere dieses Geständnisses ab, indem er sagt, er habe dies „ohne irgendeinen Schaden für die Wahrheit nach dem Licht des Glaubens“ gelehrt.³⁹ Hier bezieht sich Bruno auf seine Theorie der Unendlichkeit der Welten als die „Wirkung der unendlichen Macht Gottes“⁴⁰ und erklärt, diese vorgebracht zu haben, „denn ich erachtete es für unwürdig der göttlichen Güte und Macht, dass, da Er außer dieser Welt eine andere und unendliche andere erzeugen konnte, Er eine endliche Welt erschaffen haben sollte.“⁴¹ Der „indirekte“ Wi-

derspruch, aufgrund dessen „man die Glaubenswahrheit als zurückgewiesen betrachten könnte“ bestand nach Brunos Selbstverteidigung also darin, dass er auf philosophischer Ebene „eine doppelte Weise der Unendlichkeit, die der Größe des Universums und der Vielzahl der Welten“ als Folge und Wirkung der unendlichen Schöpfermacht Gottes vertreten habe.⁴²

Man kann meiner Ansicht nach im Lichte solcher Aussagen Bruno nicht als *anti-christlich* bezeichnen. Bruno sieht in der Unendlichkeit des Universums den endgültigen Beweis der Existenz Gottes, „universale Vorsehung, kraft derer jedes Ding lebt, wächst, sich regt und in seiner Vollkommenheit ist“.⁴³ Entsprechend den oben genannten zwei Ebenen der Betrachtung, der philosophischen und der theologischen, erklärt Bruno, er verstehe auch die Vorsehung auf eine zweifache Weise. Zum einen, philosophisch gesprochen, begreift er die Vorsehung „auf die Weise, wie die Seele im Körper anwesend ist, ganz im Ganzen und ganz in jedem seiner Teile, und dies nenne ich Natur, Schatten und Spur der Gottheit“.⁴⁴ Zum anderen, theologisch gesprochen, erklärt

36 Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 167: „interrogatus se publicamente o privatamente nelle lettioni ch’egli ha fatto in diversi luochi [...] ha mai insegnato, tenuto o disputato articulo contrario o repugnante alla fede catholica et secondo la termination della santa romana Chiesa.“

37 Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 167: „Direttamente non ho insegnato cosa contra la religione catholica christiana.“

38 Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 167: „stampati con permissione de superiori.“

39 Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 167: „non preiudicando alla verità secondo il lume della fede.“

40 Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 167: „effetto della divina infinita potentia.“

41 Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 167: „perché io stimavo cosa indegna della divina bontà et potentia che, possendo produr, oltra questo mondo un altro et altri infiniti, producesse un mondo finito.“

42 Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 168, für beide Zitate: „indirettamente s’intende essere repugnata la verità secondo la fede“; „doppia sorte de infinitudine de grandezza dell’universo et de moltitudine de mondi.“

43 Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 168: „providenza universal, in virtù della quale ogni cosa vive, vegeta et si move et sta nella sua perfettione.“

44 Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 168: „nel modo con cui presente è l’anima nel corpo, tutta in tutto et tutta in qual si voglia parte, et questo chiamo natura, ombra et vestigio della divinità.“

er, er könne die Vorsehung nicht anders verstehen als „auf die unergründliche Weise, auf die Gott als Essenz, Präsenz und Macht in allem und über allem ist, nicht als ein Teil, nicht als Seele, sondern auf unerklärliche Weise“.⁴⁵ Auf dieser Überzeugung basiert auch der von Bruno anderenorts gebrachte metaphorische Verweis auf die altägyptische Anbetung der „Krokodile, Hähne, Zwiebeln und Rüben“, d.h. vielmehr, „in Krokodilen, Hähnen und dergleichen wurden die Götter verehrt und die Gottheit angebetet, die sich von Zeit zu Zeit, von Ort zu Ort, nacheinander und zugleich zusammen in verschiedenen Subjekten, wie sterblich sie auch immer sein mögen, befand, befindet, und befinden wird“.⁴⁶ Brunos *Anti-Christentum*, nach der Mehrzahl der Interpreten der hervorstechendste Aspekt seiner Botschaft, erweist sich nach meinem Dafürhalten in solchen Behauptungen eher als scheinbar denn als tatsächlich. Brunos Erforschung der natürlichen Welt zeigt eine stark christlich gefärbte Dynamik

hin zum biblischen Gott, und sie ist zugleich philosophisch und theologisch. Das wird offenbar, wenn man Brunos Forschung als *teleologisch* erkennt, ausgerichtet auf die „Gottheit, wie sie uns ganz nahe und vertraut ist und nicht, wie sie am höchsten, absolut, in sich selbst und ohne gewohnten Umgang mit den erzeugten Dingen ist“.⁴⁷ Aus Brunos Sicht kann der Mensch nur durch die Voraussetzung des unendlichen Universums, *potentia infinita creata* und *Verbum* der göttlichen Macht, Gott finden, „Ziel- und Endpunkt aller Philosophie und aller Naturtheorie.“⁴⁸ Bruno sagt geradeheraus, man könne Wissen über Gott erlangen, was „für jeden, der nicht glaubt, als etwas Unmögliches und Nichtiges erscheint“, geführt „durch ein übernatürliches und nicht durch das natürliche Licht“.⁴⁹ Ebenso entschieden stellt er fest, möglich sei solches Wissen nur „denjenigen, die die Gottheit nicht außerhalb der unendlichen Welt und der unendlichen Dinge suchen, sondern innerhalb derselben“.⁵⁰

45 Firpo 1993, Dok. 13, S. 168: „nel modo ineffabile col quale Iddio per essentia, presentia et potentia è in tutto e sopra tutto, non come parte, non come anima, ma in modo inesplicabile“.

46 Bruno 2009, S. 339 (3. Dialog, 2. Teil).

47 Bruno 2009, S. 339 (3. Dialog, 2. Teil).

48 Bruno 2007, S. 211 (4. Dialog).

49 Bruno 2007, S. 211 (4. Dialog).

50 Bruno 2007, S. 211 (4. Dialog).

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