

Ennio De Bellis. *Nicoletto Vernia: Studi sull'aristotelismo del XV secolo*.

Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento; Quaderni di "Rinascimento" 50. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2012. 236 pp. €25. ISBN: 978-88-222-6205-9.

This work offers the reader a survey on Nicoletto Vernia's (1420–99) oeuvre, which is outlined in a double context: the works are presented in the frame of Vernia's intellectual biography running from 1466 to 1499, thus giving a genealogy of his thought. The importance of Vernia's positions on the different subject matters is then exhaustively analyzed.

This double perspective conditions the work's bipartition. In chapter 1, Ennio De Bellis gives a precise account of the different works written and edited during these thirty-three years. The presence of historical documents corroborates the choice of presenting these according to a timeline. This historic-philological accurateness, combined with the three wills that Vernia left behind, allows Ennio De Bellis to relate the author's work to the main events of his life: his teaching activities, the offer of a chair at Pisa University, the dispersion of his library as a guarantee of his moving, his retraction, and the quest to have his library back.

Among the works Ennio De Bellis meticulously examines, the treatment given to Vernia's major editorial achievement, the edition of Aristotle's *Opera omnia cum commento Averrois*, published from 1483 onward, has to be emphasized, since it is presented within the philological discussions of his time. However, the importance of the episcopal edict by Pietro Barozzi in 1489 forces him to reconsider his Averroistic positions. Hereby the different viewpoints present in so-called Averroism are uncovered.

The significance of chapter 1 lies less in the accuracy of Ennio De Bellis's exposition than in his choice to clarify the different traditions Vernia absorbed. The importance of the Oxonian *Calculatores* and Parisian Sorbonne in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as well as their relation to the Patavian studio through Vernia's teachers, is meticulously stressed. This also explains his choice to insert some of his questiones within the works of other authors he edited, such as Gaetano da Thiene, Gilles of Rome, Urban the Averroist, Albert of Saxony, Walter Burley, and Marsilius of Inghen.

Part 2 demonstrates Vernia's contribution to the different realms of knowledge. Chapter 2 opens with his contribution to physics. The ties to the Oxonian *Calculatores* and the upraising discussions on the impetus theory, the terminist doctrine of the fourteenth century, and their Italian reception are thoroughly considered, showing the mediating position of Vernia on gravity, which is close to Marsilius of Inghen's theory.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to Vernia's contribution to medicine. The development of this discipline is traced back to its beginnings, thus accentuating the growing importance of empirical over theoretical knowledge. This evolution, leading to the question about the status of medicine within the hierarchy of sciences, is finally fixed by Vernia, who states that in order to be viewed as a science, medicine has to consider its relations to natural philosophy.

Chapter 4 considers Vernia's contribution to the discussion on universals. Here again De Bellis goes back to medieval discussions in order to trace the origins of Vernia's position, which chooses a *via intermediaria* between nominalists and realists.

Chapter 5 scrutinizes Vernia's contribution to the development of scientific methodology. In order to explain this, De Bellis goes back to the medieval distinction between *demonstratio quia* and *demonstratio propter quid*. Vernia's innovation consists in the coinage of the new concept of *inventio intellectus*, giving "a third successive moment to the *demonstratio quia* and preceding the *demonstratio propter quid* . . . with which the single hypothetical cause given by the inductive syllogism becomes an epistemological certainty, assuring the certainty of the causal relation, to be confirmed afterwards by the successive deductive syllogism" (207).

This bipartition presents the advantage of allowing a careful exposition of Vernia's philosophical progression. However, the redundancy of certain parts of the book has to be taken into account. Insofar as the author is committed to presenting a survey of Aristotelianism in the fifteenth century, he offers a significant

work here. But his choice not to cross the border of Vernia's century may seem incomprehensible to the curious reader left with the desire to know how Vernia's thoughts influenced the sixteenth century.

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