Koyré, Galileo e il "Vecchio Sogno" di Platone. Francesco Crapanzano. Biblioteca di Nuncius: Studi e Testi 73. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2014. xiv + 168 pp. €24.

Francesco Crapanzano's book offers an interesting analysis of one of the most influential readings on early modern science, namely the Alexander Koyré thesis concerning "Galileo's Platonism." It is well known that Koyré stressed the discontinuity between Galileo and the Aristotelian trends proper to that period. He also featured the emergence of modern science as a structural change to the way of thinking and referring to nature, which he considered emblematically marked by the substitution of Aristotle's qualitative and ingenuous physics with the mathematical idealism of Plato. Although Koyré studies have never really met the expectations of scientific audiences, and the idea that Galileo didn't perform experiments has been ultimately disproved by many serious scholars (among whom is the Italian Ludovico Geymonat, quoted on 60n56), Crapanzano highlights the opportunity for a study of the background and context of Koyré's interpretations, which he considers the result of a well-grounded philosophical approach. As he argues: "without the interpretation of Koyré and to some extent regardless of its validity, we could have had a philologically more accurate picture of Galileo, yet it would have been a far poorer one, on the ontological, epistemological or even more genuinely philosophical level" (78).

Notably, Crapanzano devotes much attention to a book often overlooked — *L'Introduction à la Lecture de Platon* (1945) — and to the slightly more known article "Galilée et Platon" (1943), whose analysis is developed in two succinct and readable chapters, with a third one intended to explore the cultural framework in which the interpretation of Koyré was shaped. In what a modern reader could arguably read as a poor and sometimes even slovenly exposition of Plato's dialogues (*Meno*, *Protagoras*, *Theaetetus*, *Republic*), Crapanzano discerns a good synthesis of the Athenian philosopher. Quite unconvincingly, however, the elements that would lead to the formulation of "Galileo's Platonism" in the *Études Galiléennes* are sometimes overshadowed by a redundant analysis invoked to sustain the otherwise rather conventional interpretation by the French historian.

Unlike the first, the following two chapters provide a solid and far more persuasive exposition of Koyré's ideas. Crapanzano rightly points out and discusses the value and limitations of Koyré's thesis, especially his reduction of the entire Platonic legacy to a mere "mathematical attitude" ("matematismo"). The dissimilarities between the metaphysics of Plato and the instrumental use of mathematics made by Galileo are clearly understood and illustrated in the light of recent historiographical trends. Even more appealing is the last chapter, where Plato's reading is analyzed in light of Koyré's early notes on the lessons by Adolf Reinach (1883–1917) as well as in the framework of the contemporary studies by Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) and, above all, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), whose philosophical backgrounds are individually and critically

analyzed. In this sense, the essential difference between Husserl and Koyré tends to be blurred in Crapanzano's analysis, as the scholar tries somehow to place these authors side by side (he indicates the possibility of "un comune orizzonte speculative" and "una relativamente omogenea costellazione di pensiero" [143]). Actually, it is really hard to imagine how Koyré could have possibly shared Husserl's ideas on the limits of a mathematical approach to the world.

Despite this, the general picture provided by Crapanzano is all in all well balanced, and his book has the unquestionable merit to remind us that a good history of scientific thought must be underpinned by strong philosophical ideas, not only to be influential, but also to generate new interpretations.

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