

Federica Favino

La filosofia naturale di Giovanni Ciampoli (Biblioteca di «Galilaeana» 4) (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2015), pp. xviii + 366, €44.00, ISBN 978 88 222 6323 0.

Giovanni Ciampoli (1589–1643) is a strange and elusive personality, who has been obscured because of scholars' incomplete understanding of his works – which were largely lost or never published – and a number of persistent legends about him that spread immediately after his death. This Florentine-born cleric, an enthusiastic participant in the meetings of the Accademia dei Lincei, played a crucial role in favouring the publication of Galileo Galilei's *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi*, and he paid a high price for this involvement by being removed from the prestigious post he occupied in the papal entourage. Despite the fact that his name appears in almost every publication about Galileo and his time, very few attempts have been made to outline Ciampoli's activities as a natural philosopher. This book by Federica Favino offers, therefore, an important contribution to our understanding of Ciampoli and his philosophy. The book is divided into two parts, the first a monograph, and the second an appendix containing a large number of works by Ciampoli, some made available here for the first time (i.e., the *Logica* or *De intellectione*; the *Del Sole e del fuoco*), and others not previously printed in their entirety (i.e., the *Filosofia Naturale*).

The monograph is largely in service of the texts published in the appendix and provides the reader with the fascinating reconstruction of the intellectual networks in which Ciampoli was involved, both in and beyond Rome. The description of these circles of clergymen, *novatores* and philosophers not only testifies to Favino's erudition, but offers answers to several important questions. First of all, it explains the reasons for the misunderstandings and the resulting oblivion to which Ciampoli fell victim, by outlining how the Jesuit historian Sforza Pallavicino exploited the writings of Ciampoli and Virginio Cesarini for his own agenda. Secondly, it offers a way towards deciphering some relevant aspects of Ciampoli's own thought, particularly in dialogues like the *Del Sole e del fuoco*, which reflected actual debates in Rome. Finally, it allows Favino to justify some unexpected sources present in Ciampoli's writings. The most notable case is that of Pierre Gassendi, whose as-yet-unpublished works Ciampoli knew – as Favino argues – thanks to his contacts in Rome, which he maintained even after he had left the city. The dialogue with Gassendi is particularly interesting, because it complicates the relationship between Ciampoli and Galileo, exposing contrasts between the two. As Favino shows, Ciampoli often appears to have been unsatisfied with the reluctance of the Pisan scientist to endorse publicly arguments that were of a purely

philosophical nature and unsupported by experience (one particularly clear example is the nature of light). Ciampoli's need for a philosophical framework sent him in search of other interlocutors, mainly because his agenda extended beyond issues of pure natural philosophy, to politics and ethics.

The other sections of the monograph part of the book have a more theoretical structure, and offer insights into the most significant aspects of Ciampoli's works published in the appendix. Favino's observations about Ciampoli's reaction to skepticism, which demonstrates his familiarity with Herbert of Cherbury's *De veritate*, are particularly interesting. In general, her analyses of Ciampoli's works are very persuasive and solidly argued, even though at times they are stylistically too dense and elliptical. This occasionally leads to passages that require clarification, e.g., at p. 81, where the discussion of parallel passages in Ciampoli and Gassendi about the question of the soul does not include an exposition on the real contents of ancient and Renaissance Alexandrism, which would have been useful for readers unfamiliar with sixteenth-century philosophy. But these are minor flaws in a work that is otherwise an important contribution to a particularly suggestive angle of the history of the Republic of Letters, and Favino's effort in outlining the unexpected characteristics of Ciampoli's works and suggesting further paths of investigation is highly praiseworthy.

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