

*La filosofia naturale di Giovanni Ciampoli*. Federica Favino.

Biblioteca di Galilæana 4. Florence: Olschki, 2015. xviii + 364 pp. €44.

---

In the early 1980s, researchers rediscovered Giovanni Battista Ciampoli (1589–1643), not as the mediocre poet but as the Galilean philosopher and chief secretary of briefs to the Apostolic See. It took a while before intellectual history and the history of philosophy and science assimilated him not solely within Galileo studies but independently from Galileo and the Lincei Academy. Federica Favino succeeds in showing him as a philosopher and thinker in his own right, who tried to form around himself a network of clerics and philosophers in the curia of Urban VIII's papacy, between 1629 and 1632. Hard upon these efforts came his exile on 23 November 1632; too ardent a Galilean, he was held exclusively responsible for the imprimatur in favor of Galileo's *Dialogo Sopra i Due Massimi Sistemi*, published in 1632. While in exile in Montalto (Marche) he tried to restore his influence and continue his dialogues through correspondence and encounters. Ciampoli was part of a specific European milieu and particular intellectual movement—moderate skeptics who believed man's knowledge phenomenologist and merely probable, based upon sensory perception. Ciampoli and his friends strove to build an anti-Aristotelian system for the study of nature and cosmology, emancipated from Scholastic theology. Eschewing metaphysics, Ciampoli tried to develop atomistic physics and a Copernican cosmology, albeit, unlike Galileo, admitting instrumental use of mathematics, rather than mathematics as a structural element of his theories.

Censored during his lifetime and after his death, initially by the Jesuit Cardinal Sforza Pallavicino (d. 1667), Ciampoli's work descended to posterity in a damaged form, occulting his heterodox thought. His treatises now published in this critical edition are uncensored: *De Intellectione*, greatly inspired by Epicureanism; *Del Sole e del Fuoco*, an atomistic theory built upon the identification of light and fire; and the *Libro Primo della Filosofia Naturale*. These works are considered the basis of Ciampoli's *Filosofia Naturale*, a wide-ranging opus, incomplete at the author's death. In Favino's presentation, Ciampoli's testament and the inventory of his papers precede those treatises. All the manuscripts were in the hands of Pallavicino, who bequeathed them to Stefano Pignatelli, before they migrated into the collection of the Roman Biblioteca Casanatense. Favino, with good reason, insists on the editorial metamorphoses that Ciampoli's works underwent—a care that underscores the importance of this new book. The Bologna redactions (1653–54) of Ciampoli revised and amended the Roman editions supervised by Pallavicino in the 1640s; the latter suppressed Ciampoli's empirical and skeptic works; the Bologna project, however, included them. In yet another edition, published in 1667, Pallavicino tried to transform his late friend's image into that of "serious scholar and severe poet" (33). Pallavicino, also concerned with his own image as former friend of Ciampoli, explains that the latter could not grasp metaphysics because his soul was deficient in the part of *imaginatio*, overinfluenced by its

corporeal faculty and thus drawn to lower appetites—the tangible physical world—instead of the metaphysical world. At the same time, this “metaphysical handicap” is linked to Ciampoli’s geometrical excellence. This becomes an argument in favor of Galileo and posthumously validates Ciampoli’s allegiance to Galileo as well as the editor’s friendship with Ciampoli. Due to Pallavicino’s censorship of Ciampoli’s works, their circulation, down to the eighteenth century, was restrained and surreptitious.

Apart from her edition of the *Filosofia Naturale*, Favino offers an excellent analysis of Ciampoli the thinker. She shows how the *De Intellectione* and the *Del Sole e del Fuoco*, aside from adopting Galileo’s achievements, are indebted not only to Hermetic and Neoplatonic traditions, but also, and importantly, to Gassendi’s works, works that had rapidly disseminated in manuscript form among Italian colleagues.

This volume unearths precious documentary material and reevaluates Ciampoli’s writings with clarity, while establishing, with varying certainty, their dates of composition, and situating them in a specific ideological and philosophical context. It explains the origin of the *Filosofia Naturale*; identifies its cultural, historical context and its generic status; and thus seizes, better than anyone has done to date, its author’s intentions. Moreover, the volume offers new or newly formulated insights into Galileo’s work and the dynamics of Ciampoli’s circle. Our sole regret is the absence of a complete bibliography of cited works at the end of the volume.

Evelien Chayes, *Université Bordeaux Montaigne*