

Diego Pirillo. *Filosofia ed eresia nell'Inghilterra del tardo Cinquecento: Bruno, Sidney e i dissidenti religiosi italiani*.

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Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first the main trait that has characterized Brunian studies has been the attention on the two years — from 1583 to 1585 — spent by Bruno in England. From Dilthey to Yates, from Orsini and Limentani to Aquilecchia to the most recent work of Ciliberto, Camerlingo, Gatti, Sacerdoti, and Bossy many essays have been dedicated to the vernacular dialogues published in London and to Bruno's biography. The English period, in fact, is important not only because, while in England, the philosopher delineated the main lines of his thought, but also because Bruno compared himself, in a very original way, with different cultural perspectives, which led him to thoroughly analyze the particular relations between religion and politics.

Pirillo's book analyzes the elements of these relationships, defining the themes developed by both Bruno and the authors he may have met or studied. Pirillo's research has a theoretical framework: we cannot study Renaissance philosophy, and especially that of Bruno, in isolation from its relations with literature, politics, and religion. In recognition of the historical nature of philosophy — and not by chance the author mentions the teachings of Eugenio Garin and Michele Ciliberto — Pirillo has four parts to his inquiry. In the first he outlines the extent of readership of Bruno in England, identifying the kernels of his thought that were accepted or those that caused opposition to him in the English cultural context. An interesting feature of this first chapter is the attention devoted to a group of Italians working in London at the end of the sixteenth century, such as Florio and Alberico Gentili, Pucci, and the exiled *religionis causa* who gathered in the circle of Leicester and Sidney. In the cultural life of London, these personalities not only required the vernacular as a common language of cultural discussion, but also contributed to the massive circulation of texts by Machiavelli, Aretino, and Tasso. When Bruno arrived in England he thus found the partners ready to discuss his philosophy with him; but he then gradually moved away from the positions of Sidney and was not always in agreement with Alberico Gentile. According to Pirillo's research, Bruno's life during his period in England was neither closed to the influence of French embassy — which housed him — or lonely: on the contrary, Pirillo believes that the cultural context significantly influenced the philosophy of the Italian.

Proceeding in this way, in the second chapter Pirillo reads Bruno's *Spaccio* against the background of the English apocalyptic tradition. The controversy over the Antichrist, which disturbed the English church during the years of Elizabeth, fed on the texts of Curione, Negri, Brocardo, Pucci, and Italian Protestants, with whom Bruno shared a strong hostility to the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, though there were otherwise neither biographical nor direct links of thought between them. Both the Italian Protestants and Bruno, however, were favorable to the reformed religion as a civil bond, based on the Erasmian idea of God's mercy.

The links between politics and religion are discussed in more detail in the third chapter, where Pirillo focuses on the *Spaccio* and its republican background. In this dialogue the limits of sovereignty and the constraint of the supreme law raise new questions about the interpretation of Bruno as an advocate of Elizabethan-style universal monarchy. In the fourth and final chapter Pirillo studies Bruno's response to the discovery of America, showing how his position diverged significantly from the policies of colonial intellectuals and British geographers, such as Dee and Hakluyt, and instead developed a strongly original theory based on the concept of spontaneous generation arising from the ontology of the Italian dialogues.

Pirillo in this book shows, through careful analysis, Bruno's philosophical developments while in close contact with the protagonists of the most influential and innovative English culture of his time; at the same time he emphasizes Bruno's distance from it, thus providing a original and critical point of view on politics and religion. Backed by an extensive mass of material presented in this book, interweaving between the circulation of texts and biographical events, the image presented is of a European thinker fully immersed in contemporary discussion, but at the same time located eccentrically with respect to it. Bruno's philosophy cannot be reduced to its sources, be they ancient or contemporary, as Pirillo is fully aware; but studies such as those presented in this text help us to understand the genesis of a powerful philosophy, over and above the paradigms that have dominated historiographical studies in the twentieth century.

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