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Sa‘di-ye Shirāzi and Bono Giamboni in Dialogue: A Comparative Approach to Temperance

This article presents a study of two coeval works on morals: the first belongs to the classic Persian tradition, the Golestān (The Rose Garden) by Sa‘di (Shirāz 1210–91 or 1292); the second, Il libro de’ vizî e delle virtudi (Book of Vices and Virtues) by Bono Giamboni (Florence 1240–92), belongs to the first didactic prose in vernacular Italian. The study will specially concern the theme of temperance قناعت qanā‘at, central to both Islamic and Christian morals. An analysis is made of passages dedicated to this theme in both texts, also through comparative observations, in order to identify the approach characteristic to each work.

Keywords: Sa‘di; Bono Giamboni; Ethics; Temperance; Medieval Moralistic Literature

Introduction

Every ethical doctrine is, or claims to be, an answer to moral skepticism¹ and sets out the principles of a kind of behavior which can reconcile the human quest for happiness with the norms required by community life. Two fundamentally different ways exist to establish such principles, and both have recourse to what they hold to be the essence or nature of mankind. For the first of these, such an essence or nature can only be understood in its relationship with a transcendent reality, or with God himself. For the second, human essence or nature is sufficiently defined by a characteristic feature of its own, such as sensitivity, reason, feeling, etc. The first way leads to theological ethics, the second to humanistic ethics.² Theological ethics falls within the context of a philosophy founded in and crowned by a theology: everything in the

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¹The classical expression of moral skepticism is to be found in Plato’s *Republic* (Book 1), where Thrasymachus claims that the morals established in a community only serve the interests of those holding power in that same community, asking why should a man be moral if immorality allows so many to obtain success and happiness at a cheap price?

²In the practical domain, both ethics may largely coincide, but they diverge in admitting or denying the possibility of changing the prescribed moral code.

world has an end, and the end of all things is God; so the end of a human being is the contemplative life, which must resemble, as far as possible, the divine “life,” and the “happiness” to which human beings naturally aspire consists only in this end. The means to achieve happiness are virtues, which consist in the exercise of reason. Reason may be employed to discipline the impulses of the senses and then give rise to moral virtues, such as temperance and justice; or else it may be exercised in science, art and wisdom, which are purely “intellectual” virtues.³ Humanistic ethics is based on the needs of humankind, first of all survival. Not just biological survival: but survival of the human being as a conscious subject guided by reason and the survival of the community as peaceful coexistence and free collaboration among individuals. “Humanistic” morals take the form of norms or laws designed to govern the conduct of human beings towards themselves and others. Moral norms sanction reciprocity of behavior, according to which what is licit for one towards others, is licit to others towards them. Respect and justice thus become the fundamental conditions for individual and social life, since they prevent conflict and guarantee coexistence and collaboration. Theological ethics may in part embody humanistic ethics, but the contrary is not possible.

The texts this work is concerned with, though based on different approaches, both belong to the genre of theological ethics. Both Sa‘di and Bono Giamboni belong to a religious tradition—Islamic and Christian—which is the theoretical base (with all relevant doctrinal references) for describing the moral system outlined in their works. A comparative critical approach to ethics does not only deal with “how” moral discourses work, but also with “what means” are used to present such discourses to the public for which they were written: these will be the key points of our study. Moral (and religious) ideas, which base moral discourses, always belong to a certain time, a certain community and a certain place. However, works of this genre share a common purpose, namely, to indicate how to live a happy life, fulfill one’s humanity and access a life after death, which represents a coherent realization of life on earth.

Authors and Works

Moslehoddin ‘Abdollah Sa‘di was born in Shirāz around 1210 and, under the protection of the Salghari atabeg Sa‘d ben Zangi, completed his studies at the Nezāmiye in Baghdad,⁴ where he stayed until 1226. After the Mongolian invasion which overthrew his patron, Sa‘di began to travel around much of the Near and Middle East, as well as in the Arabian peninsula, staying away from his native city until 1256. He finally settled down in Shirāz until his death (1291 or 1292), respected and revered by his

³Thomas Aquinas confirmed Aristotle’s stance, declaring that “God is the ultimate end of Man” and also setting Faith, Hope and Charity—the three theological virtues directly infused by God—as the condition for the achievement of this end (D’Aquino, *Somma contro i Gentili*, 603–7).

⁴Nezāmiye of Baghdad, established by the Seljukid Vizir Nezām al-Molk in 1065, was one of the earliest universities in the world.

fellow citizens.⁵ Two works by Sa'di belong to the genre of moral literature:⁶ his most famous work, in rhymed and rhythmic prose mixed with verse, the *Golestān*⁷ (1258), and the *Bustān*,⁸ a *mathnavi* of 4,100 verses completed in 1257.⁹ The *Golestān*,¹⁰ on which we focus, consists of eight chapters, each of which contains a succession of anecdotes taken from different sources (ranging from exemplary events which took place in ancient Persia to traditions of the Prophet, to autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical narratives,¹¹ etc.), intending to show the good and evil in human behavior.¹² Generally speaking, anecdotes are stories which have the power to burst into our lives, to catch our attention and to induce us to follow them from beginning to end, sometimes being intimately transformed by them.¹³ This was Sa'di's intention, as we shall see. Sa'di deliberately chose to compose a moral work based on anecdotes using the *maqāmāt* genre, responding to the *adab* principle of "to educate without pulling [sic] and to instruct while entertaining";¹⁴ he had in fact an alternative model in a literary genre widespread in the Islamic world called *al-Maḥāsīn wa-l-Masāwī*, and widely used to deal with moralizing subjects, in particular debates on vices and virtues.¹⁵

Bono Giamboni was the dominant figure of thirteenth-century moral and allegorical treatises in the vernacular Italian of Florence. Like his father, he acted repeatedly as a judge in the civil court of the podestà of the district of Por San Piero in Florence, an activity documented, with different roles, from 1261 to 1291. He was also translator/vernacularizer of works in Latin¹⁶ and the original author of two important moral treatises: *Della miseria dell'uomo*¹⁷ (Of the Misery of Man) and *Il Libro de' Vizi e delle Virtudi* (The Book of Vices and Virtues, which we shall henceforth call the

⁵Losensky, "Sa'di."

⁶Here we do not take into account his lyrical works, even though moralistic contents can also be found in some of his *qasidas*. On Sa'di's inspiration and his didactic art, see Movahhed, *Sa'di*, 65–86 (especially from 75).

⁷Lewis, "Golestān-e Sa'di."

⁸Wickens, "Bustān." For an English translation, see Wickens, *Morals Pointed and Tales*.

⁹Sa'di, *Kolliyāt-e Sa'di*, 205–26.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 13–195.

¹¹"Sa'di a fait parler à la première personne le personnage qu'il a créé dans ses deux oeuvres majeures, le sage Sa'di. La frontière qui sépare l'auteur de son personnage est tenue mais réelle, puisqu'à n'en pas tenir compte, on risque de s'engager dans des invraisemblances"; de Fouchécour, *Moralía*, 312.

¹²On the moralizing function of the *Golestān* and *Bustān*, and the related textual devices, see de Fouchécour, *Moralía*, 315–19.

¹³See Tagliapietra, *Alfabeto delle proprietà*, 11–23.

¹⁴See Azarnoosh and Umar, "Adab."

¹⁵See Geries, *Un genre littéraire arabe*.

¹⁶He translated Vegetius' *Epitome de rei militari* into the Florentine vernacular, and—in an especially effective and solemn manner—Paulus Orosius' *Historiae adversus paganos* (Segre, s.v. Bono Giamboni, *Dizionario Critico della letteratura italiana*, 377–9; Foà, s.v. Giamboni, Bono (Bono di Giambono), *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. LIV, 302–4).

¹⁷This work is to be considered a remake of the *De miseria humanae conditionis* by Innocent III: after removing the ascetic parts, Bono transformed the Latin text into a treatise on secular morality (Giamboni, *Della miseria dell'uomo*).

Libro).¹⁸ With the latter text, which we will compare with Sa‘di’s *Golestān*, Bono Giamboni “seems to have been the first person in Italy to have conceived of creating an artistic prose which could be adapted to a context at once narrative, didactic and eloquent.”¹⁹ It was in fact the first Italian work of doctrinal prose and, according to critics, opened the way to Dante’s *Convivio* and to fourteenth-century prose. Bono used a highly allegorical language to lift his text to a moralistic level suggesting a model of behavior: following the model of medieval didactic literature, the allegory of Bono is constituted by the personification of abstract entities (vices and virtues in particular, but also faith and philosophy, for example) and by the construction of a conflict between the two.²⁰ This vision of vices, ranked in order as an army, besieging the fortress of the human soul, dates back to the *Moralia in Iob* of Gregory the Great (about 540–604), written between 578 and 595, a text which had an enormous impact throughout the Middle Ages. It is interesting to remember that the idea of capital vices, absent in the Bible and among the early Fathers of the Church, became a long-lasting *topos* which nourished all of medieval culture, thanks to Gregory the Great. The allegory of vices and virtues, described in a great many literary works and in thousands of examples of figurative art for meditation by the illiterate too, substantially summarizes the moral teachings of the Middle Ages.²¹ It is easy to recognize, at the base of this allegorical construction, the Stoic idea of morals as a battlefield (where the virtuous man is the one who has suppressed all passion) and of virtues as warriors fighting the temptation of vices leads us back to the principle of the war of the soul against evil, which of course is rooted in original sin.

Both these authors were independent personalities. Following the custom of medieval Muslim literature, Sa‘di addresses to the rulers of Shirāz several panegyrics and some passages of *captatio benevolentiae* in his moral works as well.²² However he was never a court poet in the strict sense of the word, and the fame and authority he enjoyed allowed him to keep a profound intellectual freedom to the end. Bono Giamboni belonged to the educated bourgeoisie of communal Florence, and was able to write free from political or material pressures.

Despite their intellectual independence, it should be remembered that Sa‘di’s text still belongs to the context of court literature (where the advice literature had an undisputed prestige) and its “light” structure of anecdotes with a tinge of subtle

¹⁸Giamboni, *Il libro de’ vizi e delle virtudi e Il trattato di virtù e di vizi*.

¹⁹For a detailed description of philological aspects and literary precedents of the *Libro*, see Cesare Segre’s introduction to the edition of the text (Giamboni, *Libro*, XII–XXIX).

²⁰“Biblical and Virgilian allegoresis meet and mingle in the Middle Ages. The result is that allegory becomes the basis of all textual interpretation whatsoever. Here lie the roots of that which may be called medieval allegorism. It finds expression not only in the ‘moralizing’ of Ovid and other authors through allegorical interpretation, but also in the fact that personified beings of a suprasensual nature ... could become the principal personages of poetic creation: from Prudentius’s *Psychomachia* to the twelfth-century philosophical epic; from the *Romance of the Rose*, to Chaucer and Spenser and Calderon’s *Autos sacramentales*.” Curtius, *European Literature*, 205.

²¹See Casagrande and Vecchio, *I sette vizi capitali*, 183–6.

²²See *Golestān*, 16–22 (several passages in the introductory part).

irony met the expectations of Persian courts of his day. Bono's text, on the other hand, belongs to the genre of medieval preaching and sermons, addressed to churches and public squares rather than to courts, whose aim was to admonish by instilling fear and to moralize through an allegorical language. The allegory responded to the hallowed medieval practice of transmitting moral and theological teachings *per visibilia ad invisibilia*.

Notwithstanding the conventions of their respective literary canons, one does find affinities between the two authors in the reasons underlying the composition of their works. Sa'di tells us:

I was one night meditating on the time which had elapsed, repenting of the life I had squandered and perforating the stony mansion of my heart with adamantine tears. ... After maturely considering these sentiments, I thought proper to sit down in the mansion of retirement to fold up the skirts of association, to wash my tablets of heedless sayings and no more to indulge in senseless prattle.²³

At this point, a friend appears who cheerfully invites him to conversation, but Sa'di tells us: "I would give him no reply nor lift up my head from the knees of worship."²⁴ Another friend informs the one who has just arrived of the poet's decision to keep silent, but the latter objects that a tongue like Sa'di's could never stay still in his mouth, and that to flee from relations with one's friends is both unpleasant and foolish. So finally Sa'di is convinced to start talking again. Conversing in a garden delighted by the singing of birds and the perfume of roses, hyacinth and wild herbs, he makes his decision:

I may compose for the amusement of those who look and for the instruction of those who are present a book of a Rose Garden, a *Golestān*, whose leaves cannot be touched by the tyranny of autumnal blasts and the delight of whose spring the vicissitudes of time will be unable to change into the inconstancy of autumn [and adds:] we have in this book recorded, by way of abridgment, some rare events, stories, poetry and accounts about ancient kings, spending a portion of our precious life in the task. This was the reason for composing the book *Golestān*; and help is from Allah.²⁵

Bono Giamboni began to write the *Libro* during a very troubled night, seized by an anxiety so great as to regret having been born: "Almighty God, why did you let me into this miserable world, letting me suffer such great pain, and endure such fatigue and torment? Why did you not kill me in my mother's womb, or put me to death at

²³English translations of *Golestān* come from: *The Gulistan or Rose Garden*, transl. by Rehatsek (from now on *The Gulistan*).

²⁴*The Gulistan*, 63–64.

²⁵*The Gulistan*, 66, 71.

the moment I was born?”²⁶ As he complains, “above his head there appears a figure”; it is the personification of Philosophy²⁷ which first gently reproves him:

My son, it marvels me that you, though a man, behave like an animal, with your head always bent, and looking at the dark things of the earth, and hence you have fallen into a severe illness. If only you would lift up your head and look at the sky, and take into account the beautiful things of the sky, as human beings should naturally do, you would free yourself from every ill, and would see the sin you are committing with your behavior, and it would pain you.

Bono does not immediately recognize who it is that has come to succor him, and Philosophy has to convince him patiently to accept her explanations (which concern the state of humanity in this world and the loss of the goods of Fate as well as of the goods of Nature).²⁸ Bono responds pessimistically, raising constant objections. Finally, the author departs with Philosophy, “to go to the Virtues with which one gains Heaven.” The *Libro* thus was born from Bono’s unhappiness and suffering, disappointment and imperfection of his material life, and was composed to recount the steps which led him to consolidate his faith and know good and evil (or rather virtues and vices), the purpose of life and how to gain Heaven after the death of the body.

Both authors, taking their cue from an existential malaise (however conventional this motivation may be), design a work able to contribute to how humanity must behave righteously in this world, proposing two substantially didactic texts. In the case of the *Golestān*, the text makes use of rich and witty anecdotes, whereas in the *Libro* the text exploits the power of allegorical speech.²⁹ Both works overtly fit within the framework of their respective religious and doctrinal system, i.e. the authors are coherent, beyond doctrinal dogmas, with the codes of beliefs, body of teachings and instructions relevant to their respective religious systems. However, each freely interprets spirit and letter with shared didactic purposes.

No doubt exists that Sa’di’s work had a greater impact on the Persian literature and civilization of his day and after, than Bono’s had on his. Whilst Sa’di’s fame is not only beyond dispute, but also an important element of Persian culture today, Bono has

²⁶*Libro*, 3–4. The translation is ours. The *Libro* has only been translated into French (Giamboni, *Le livre des vices et des vertus*). No English translation exists.

²⁷In Bono’s interpretation, Philosophy is the guide and master of Virtues, the highest expression of Reason.

²⁸The goods of Fate (*Ventura*) are represented by the conditions of life in which destiny has placed human being; the goods of Nature (*Natura*) are properly the body, health, the material condition in which man lives. (*Libro*, 9–15).

²⁹According to the assumption that *allegoria fidem instruit*. It should however be remembered that Bono could count on a rich repertoire of anecdotes (lives of the saints, stories from the Bible, popular tradition) represented by the medieval literature of the *exempla*, yet decided not to use it. In his day, this literature not only enjoyed enormous popularity, it was also meticulously recorded in writing, mainly for the use of preachers. Curtius, *European Literature*, 57–61.

almost been forgotten, except within specialized milieux. However, here we shall try to identify the way each approaches the theme of Temperance (crucial for both religious traditions), with respect to which the relative success of the text has no real bearing. Sa'di, in his main works, presents under a new form the Islamic³⁰ and pre-Islamic traditions of Persian moralistic literature.³¹ Bono, in his turn, is an interpreter and a “vernacularizer” of a religious tradition, which in the thirteenth century had accurately codified a complex system of moral values in the so-called septenarium of vices and virtues.³² Our authors show the pulse of the moral situation of medieval Persia and thirteenth-century Europe, and may be read as a representation of the complex social framework within which they provide their guidance. In other words, their texts represent the evolution of a certain literary genre in a different linguistic and cultural context.

Temperance, قناعت qanā'at: definitions of a virtue

In Sa'di's day, Islamic morals had already been laid out in detail, and its principles were well known and widespread.³³ For a general description of the term قناعت *qanā'at* we can begin by referring to the *Loghat-nāmeḥ-ye Debkhodā*,³⁴ which, on the basis of the glosses of the main Persian dictionaries, provides us with this range of definitions: contentedness, being satisfied with what destiny has given us, being content, being satisfied with little; eating, drinking, dressing, etc. with simplicity; being satisfied with what is necessary; moderation; spiritual happiness for what has been given to us; considering sufficient what little a human being needs to live.

Based on the main medieval works on morals, the previous definition may be integrated as follows: when human beings are content with what little they have and feel no more avidity or desire, they are practicing the virtue of temperance (قناعت پیشگی *qanā'at-pishegi*). Temperance is thus also defined as the opposite of avidity and desire. This virtue also implies not showing off one's poverty or the state of need in

³⁰For a review of the treatises on Islamic morals which Sa'di could refer to, see: Ebrāhi and Torābi, “Barrasi-ye tatbiqi-ye farhang-e qanā'at” 23–47.

³¹The most complete study of Sa'di's work in the context of Persian moralistic literature is de Fouchécour, *Moralia*, 311–48.

³²Bono's immediate references are to be found in Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae* (for the pseudo-autobiographical framework), in Prudentius' *Psychomachia* (for the battle allegory), in Saint Bernard's *Parabola*, in Alain de Lille's *Anticlaudianus*, in Claudian's *In Rufinum* and in Cicero's *De Inventionione* (de Agostino, “Itinerari e forme della prosa,” 586). It should also be remembered that Bono's text belongs to a literary genre, that of vices and virtues, which was among the most successful in the Middle Ages (see Casagrande and Vecchio, *I sette vizi capitali*).

³³Before the end of the twelfth century, we find in Persian literature “a long line of works with the same title, *Makārem al-aklāq*, comprising lists of opposed virtues and vices, well defined and illustrated with quotations, aphorisms, and anecdotes” (Rahman, “Aklāq”). For a review of Sa'di's sources, see Ebrāhi and Torābi, “Barrasi-ye tatbiqi,” 25–9.

³⁴قناعت, in *Loghatnameḥ-ye Debkhodā*. It should be remembered that the glosses of this twentieth-century encyclopedic dictionary are based on the occurrences of the lemma in ancient dictionaries and classical literary texts.

which a person may find themselves. Temperance is the mother of all virtues, since practicing it leads to peace in this world and admission to the other. The virtue which educates the lustful soul, correcting its defects and raising it to detachment from worldly goods and pleasures, from everything which is not strictly necessary. قناعت *qanāʿat* is based on the trust (or faith) that God gives to each creature what they need: this trust keeps human beings away from avidity and greed. Eating, drinking and mating are bestial instincts, and to follow them means to follow the customs of animals: cultivating قناعت *qanāʿat* raises human beings above the beasts. The practice of this virtue includes restraint from coveting what belongs to your neighbor, because this indifference will allow a human being to avoid suffering. قناعت *qanāʿat* therefore is a means of achieving happiness. The practice of this virtue allows a person to benefit from a limitless treasure, lead a peaceful and wholesome life, preserve their honor and dignity, ensure their positive fate on the Day of Judgment, be moderate (balanced) in their work and profits, grow spiritually, keep their faith firm and whole, to accept without resistance what God grants.³⁵

Saʿdi feels no need to define this term in his texts, taking it for granted that his reader knows its meaning and scope. On the other hand, Bono Giamboni, in various parts of his book, is careful to define Temperance. Reference in the first place is to the treatises by Gregory of Nyssa (about 335–94), Thomas Aquinas (1225/26 to 1274) and Augustine (354–430); temperance belongs to the cardinal virtues, and is defined in this way: temperance is the moral virtue which moderates the attraction of pleasures and makes one capable of equipoise in using created goods. It ensures the rule of the will over instincts, and keeps desires within the bounds of honesty. The temperate person directs their own sensual appetites towards the good, keeps a healthy discretion, and does not follow their own instinct and force, submitting to the desires of their heart. Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament and in the Apocrypha: “Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites” (Ecclesiasticus 18:30), and also in the New Testament: “Training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly” (Titus 2:12).³⁶ Besides doctrinal sources, Bono Giamboni certainly must have had in mind Brunetto Latini’s *Tresor*, where temperance is thus defined:

Temperance is mastery which keeps steadfast before lust and other indecorous impulses, that most noble virtue which keeps in check the pleasures of the flesh and gives measure and moderation when we are in prosperity, so that we do not rise in pride or remain slaves of our will; because when the will wins over reason, man is on an evil path.³⁷

³⁵<http://wiki.ahlolbait.ir/قناعت>

³⁶*New Revised Standard Version—Catholic Edition* (<http://bible.oremus.org/>).

³⁷Latini, *Tresor*, 494: *Atemprance est cele seingnorie que l'en a contre luxure et contre les autres amove-menz qui sont desavenans, ce est la tres noble vertus qui refraint les charnels delis et qui nos done mesure et*

Bono himself, in his *Libro*, has Philosophy give a clear definition of Temperance in these words: "Temperance is the virtue of the soul whereby the human being keeps in check the desires of the flesh which assault and tempt him So you can see that Temperance is used when human being abstains from illicit pleasures, or when he holds back the fire of lust with the reins of reason, or when he represses the signs of lust, or when he withholds from eating or drinking immoderately, or when he moderates his expenditure to what is proper, or when he is humble towards his neighbor, or when he is honest and content with what life offers him, or when he is ashamed of excess, of evil or of obscene speech. And one always uses this virtue when one keeps to the middle path in things."³⁸

Philosophy specifies:

And this Virtue is put into practice in eight ways, each of which has its own name. These ways are the Virtues which are born from Temperance and are the captains of her troops, and have these names: Continnence, Chastity, Modesty, Abstinence, Thrift, Humility, Honesty and Shame.³⁹

Each of these manners of practicing temperance is then defined and described (see below).

قناعت qanā'at in Sa'di's Golestān

The theme of temperance is central to Sa'di's work, beyond the quantitative impact of the term قناعت qanā'at, which appears 16 times in the text. Both in the *Golestān* and in the *Bustān* we find a whole chapter dedicated to this virtue (the third chapter of the *Golestān* and the sixth of the *Bustān*) and the principles of this virtue are to be found in many other passages of his works. Here we shall try to identify the main principles, in order to highlight the exact connotations of such virtue in his work.

As we said, the third chapter of the *Golestān* is dedicated entirely to temperance: *dar fazilat-e qanā'at* that is, "The excellence of contentment," and opens with a brief anecdote showing how such a virtue, which would lead the rich to be more generous and the poor to be satisfied with their state, is the ground for a balanced and more fair society:

ای خداوندان نعمت اگر شما را انصاف بودی و ما را قناعت رسم سوال از جهان بر خاستی

ای قناعت توانگرم گردان که ورای تو هیچ نعمت نیست⁴⁰

atemprement quant nos sumes en prosperité, si que nos ne montons en superbe ne ne consivons la volonté; car quand la volonté vainc le sens, l'ome est en male voie.

³⁸ *Libro*, 61.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁰ *Golestān*, 91.

Lords of wealth, if you were just and we contented, the trade of begging would vanish from the world.

O contentment, make me rich

For besides thee no other wealth exists.⁴¹

From this passage on, in a series of twenty-eight *hekāyat*, Sa'di shows all the shades of this virtue: attachment to wisdom rather than to worldly goods and power (*hekāyat* no. 2); the capacity for being content with what one has and one's state, however humble, in a dignified manner (*hekāyat* nos. 14, 18, 19, 24, 27), rather than humiliating oneself with petitions to the rich and powerful (*hekāyat* nos. 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13); moderating avidity for food (*hekāyat* nos. 4, 5, 6, 7),⁴² moderating the desire for belongings (*hekāyat* no. 23) and stigmatizing greed when one is privileged by the possession of riches (*hekāyat* nos. 20, 21, 22).

The third *hekāyat* summarizes some of these shades: it speaks of a dervish in misery who calls on himself to be content with the very little he owns, rather than feeling obliged to someone else:

به نان خشک قناعت کنیم و جامه دلق که بار محنت خود به که بار منت خلق⁴³

Let's be contented with dry bread and a patched robe

For it is easier to bear the load of one's own trouble than that of thanks to other.⁴⁴

And after someone suggests he ask for help from a rich benefactor, the dervish adds:

خاموش که در پستی مردن به که حاجت پیش کسی بردن

هم رقعہ دوختن به و الزام کنج صبر کز بهر جامه رقعہ بر خواجگان نیش

حقا که با عقوبت دوزخ برابر است رفتن به پایمردی همسایه در بهشت⁴⁵

Hush! It is better to die of inanition than to plead for one's necessities before any man.

⁴¹*The Gulistan*, 148.

⁴²Concerning avidity for food, Sa'di says (*Golestān*, 180): "Sages eat slow, devotees half satisfy their appetite, recluses only eat to preserve life, youths until the dishes are removed, old men until they begin to perspire, but *qalandars* till no room remains in the bowels for drawing breath and no food on the table for anybody" (*The Gulistan*, 248).

⁴³*Golestān*, 92.

⁴⁴*The Gulistan*, 149.

⁴⁵*Golestān*, 92.

It is better to patch clothes and sit in the corner of patience

Than to write petitions for robes to gentlemen.

Verily it is equal to the punishment of hell

To go to paradise as a flunkey to one's neighbour.⁴⁶

In the twenty-first story, we find the opposite situation: a very rich merchant endlessly plans new business and new earnings, constantly postponing the moment to dedicate himself to his own soul. Sa'di warns him against such greed with these words:

آن شنیدستی که در اقصای غور بار سالاری بیفتاد از ستور
گفت چشم تنگ⁴⁷ دنیا دوست را یا قناعت پر کند یا خاک گور⁴⁸

Thou mayest have heard that in the plain of Ghur

Once a leader fell down from his beast of burden,

Saying: "The narrow eye of a wealthy man

Will be filled either by content or by the earth of the tomb."⁴⁹

The twenty-seventh tale is a very long anecdote about the ups and downs of a boxer, who leaves home hoping to be able to achieve success with the strength of his arms. His father, to dissuade him from seeking his fortune, admonishes him with these words:

پدر گفت ای پسر خیال محال از سر بدر کن و پای قناعت در دامن سلامت کش که بزرگان گفته اند
دولت نه به کوشیدنست چاره کم جوشیدنست⁵⁰

The father replied, "My son, get rid of this vain idea and place the feet of contentment under the skirt of safety because great men have said that happiness does not consist in exertion and that the remedy against want is in the moderation of desires."⁵¹

In the second chapter, dedicated to "The morals of dervishes," Sa'di clearly expresses how the true dervish, who is his model of the ideal man, pure of heart and focused

⁴⁶*The Gulistan*, 149.

⁴⁷In order to understand better this line, note that the phrase *chashm-tang*/narrow eye, indicates a greedy, envious person.

⁴⁸*Golestān*, 102.

⁴⁹*The Gulistan*, 161.

⁵⁰*Golestān*, 105.

⁵¹*The Gulistan*, 164.

totally and without hypocrisy on goodness and God, has among his goals that of possessing the virtue of temperance, which not only has a fundamental place in ascetic practice, but is also the source of other benefits for the soul:

طریق درویشان ذکر است و شکر و خدمت و طاعت و ایثار و قناعت و توحید و توکل و تسلیم و تحمل
 هر که بدین صفتها که گفتم موصوفست به حقیقت درویشست و گر در قیاست اما هرزه گردی بی نماز
 هواپرست هوسباز که روزها بشب آرد در بند شهوت و شبها به روز کند در خواب غفلت و بخورد هر
 چه در میان آید و بگوید هر چه به زبان آید رندست و گر در عباسست⁵²

The way of dervishes is praying, gratitude, service, obedience, almsgiving, contentment, professing the unity of God, trust, submission and patience. Whoever possesses these qualities is really a dervish, although he may wear an elegant robe, whereas a prattler who neglects his orisons, is luxurious, sensual, turns day into night in the bondage of lust, and night into day in the sleep of carelessness, eats whatever he gets, and speaks whatever comes upon his tongue,⁵³ is a profligate, although he may wear the habit of a dervish.⁵⁴

Besides the explicit mention of temperance as an essential virtue, in this passage we see expressed other associated qualities, such as gratitude for what God grants us, patience and submission. We also see how the absence of such virtue makes room for parallel vices—that is, indulgence in bodily pleasures, avidity and incapacity of measuring one's own behavior.

In the first chapter of the *Golestān*, dedicated to “The manners of kings,” we also have a tale which shows the crucial nature of this virtue: a dervish is alone in the desert, and pays no attention whatsoever to the king who passes next to him, provoking the ire of the sovereign. Says Sa‘di:

درویشی مجرد بگوشه ای نشسته بود پادشاهی بر او بگنشت درویش از آنجا که فراغ ملک قناعت است
 سر بر نیاورد و التفات نکرد⁵⁵

A solitary dervish was sitting in a corner of the desert when a padshah happened to pass by but ease having made him independent, he took no notice.⁵⁶

⁵²*Golestān*, 89.

⁵³Concerning human behavior, a theme which Sa‘di insists upon is that of the moral and controlled use of speech (*adab-e sokhan, adab-e sobbat*), see Rodziewicz, “The Culture of Reconciliation.”

⁵⁴*The Gulistan*, 145–6.

⁵⁵*Golestān*, 52.

⁵⁶*The Gulistan*, 104.

So temperance means renouncing worldly goods and being indifferent to the possibility of obtaining favors or benefits.

The second chapter of the *Golestān* speaks of a hermit who used to eat ten *man* of food each night and would pray until morning. A *ṣāḥbedel* (pious fellow) comments:

اگر نیم نانی بخوردی و بختی بسیار از این فاضل تر بودی⁵⁷

It would have been more excellent if he had eaten half a loaf and slept till the morning.⁵⁸

Temperance is in this case represented by moderation, by not exceeding in gluttony, but also not in outward gestures of devotion (always suspected of hypocrisy).

Again in the second chapter, we find the story of an ascetic who lived in a forest, eating the leaves of the trees, until a king came to visit him, offering him the luxuries of city life and telling him that in this way he could dedicate himself better to devotion and be an example, in words and behavior, to others. The hermit accepted, and gave in to the pleasures of gluttony and the beauty of a slave and of a girl, forgetting the way of the spirit.

زلف خوبان زنجیر پای عقلست و دام مرغ زیرک

[...]

هر که هست از فقیه و پیر و مرید وز زبان آوران پاک نفس

چون به دنیا ی دون فرود آید بعسل در بماند پای مگس⁵⁹

The curls of belles are fetters to the feet of the intellect and a snare to a sagacious bird. [...]

Any faqih, pir and murid

Or pure minded orator,

Descending into the base world,

Sticks in the honey like a fly.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Golestān*, 73.

⁵⁸ *The Gulistan*, 128.

⁵⁹ *Golestān*, 81.

⁶⁰ *The Gulistan*, 137.

The philosopher-minister holds forth before the king, who is pleased with his own generosity:

عالمان را زر بده تا دیگر بخوانند و زاهدان را چیزی مده تا زاهد بمانند⁶¹

“Bestow gold upon scholars that they may read more but give nothing to hermits that they may remain hermits.”⁶²

And concludes:

تا مرا هست و دیگرم باید گر نخوانند زاهدم شاید⁶³

When I have and covet more

It will not be proper to call me an anchorite.⁶⁴

Being content with what one has is therefore a sign of temperance, as is not to desire to improve one's condition, preferring to trust in God, knowing He will give us whatever we need to survive.

In the sixteenth story of the first chapter, we read about a man who lives in poverty and tries to join the service of the king to free himself from this state. Sa'di discourages him, presenting him all the unknowns and dangers of such a choice, and calls him to temperance:

پس مصلحت آن بینم که ملک قناعت را حراست کنی و ترک ریاست گویی

به دریا در منافع بی شمار است و گر خواهی سلامت بر کنار است⁶⁵

I'm of opinion that thou shouldst retire to the domain of contentment and abandon aspirations to dominion. Wise men have said:

“In the sea there are countless gains,

But if thou desirest safety, it will be on the shore.”⁶⁶

⁶¹*Golestān*, 82.

⁶²*The Gulistan*, 137.

⁶³*Golestān*, 82.

⁶⁴*The Gulistan*, 138.

⁶⁵*Golestān*, 41.

⁶⁶*The Gulistan*, 91–2.

In the second chapter, always referring to the ups and downs of fortune described in an anecdote within the twenty-eighth tale, Sa'di finally expresses his moral:

... آنگه که تو دیدی غم نانی داشتم و امروز تشویش جهانی
اگر دنیا نباشد دردمندیم و گر باشد به مهرش پای بندیم
حجابی زین درون آشوب تر نیست که رنج خاطرست ار هست و گر نیست
مطلب گر توانگری خواهی جز قناعت که دولتتست هنی
گر غنی زر به دامن افشانند تا نظر در ثواب او نکنی
کز بزرگان شنیده ام بسیار صبر درویش به که بذل غنی⁶⁷

“When thou sawest me last, I was distressed for bread and now a world of distress has overwhelmed me.”

If I have no wealth I grieve

If I have some the love of it captivates me.

There is no greater calamity than worldly goods.

Both their possession and their want are griefs.

If thou wishest for power, covet nothing

Except contentment which is sufficient happiness.

If a rich man pours gold into thy lap

Care not a moment for thanking him.

Because often I heard great men say

The patience of a dervish is better than the gift of a rich man.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *Golestān*, 77.

⁶⁸ *The Gulistan*, 132.

Being poor afflicts us, being rich makes us slaves of worldly goods. The goods of the world are the true danger for man: if one has them, one fears losing them, if one does not have them, one is tormented by desire for them. Temperance is the only true richness.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to “love and youth,” and we find a tale, the seventeenth, written in the first person, which invites one to control the impulses of carnal passion. In the mosque of Kashghar, the poet meets a beautiful and alluring youth who is studying Arabic; he approaches him with a joke, and surprises him with his erudition. However, when the youth learns who he is and invites him to stay, the poet, so as to avoid temptation, decides to leave, saying:

بزرگی دیدم اندر کوهساری قناعت کرده از دنیا بغاری
چرا گفتم به شهر اندر نیایی که باری بندی از دل برگشایی
بگفت آنجا پریرویان نغزند چو گل بسیار شد پیلان بلغزند⁶⁹

I beheld an illustrious man in a mountain region

Who had contentedly retired from the world into a cave.

Why, said I, comest thou not into the city

For once to relax the bonds of thy heart?

He replied: “Fairy-faced maidens are there.

When clay is plentiful, elephants will stumble.”⁷⁰

In this case, temperance concerns the pleasures of the flesh, and, as we shall see, this is a rare occurrence in the *Golestān*.

In the last chapter, too, “On rules for conduct in life,” we have some anecdotes inspired by temperance. The thirtieth involves moderation in food and then extends to moderation in the possession of worldly goods and control over carnal desire. Sa’di writes:

حریص با جهانی گرسنه است و قانع به نانی سیر حکما گفته اند توانگری به قناعت به از توانگری به بضاعت.

روده تنگ به یک نان تهی پرگردد نعمت روی زمین پر نکند دیده تنگ
پدر چون دور عمرش منقضی گشت مرا این یک نصیحت کرد و بگذشت

⁶⁹*Golestān*, 135.

⁷⁰*The Gulistan*, 196.

که شهوت آتشست از وی بپرهیز بخود بر آتش دوزخ مکن تیز
در آن آتش نداری طاقت سوز بصبر آبی برین آتش زن امروز⁷¹

A greedy person will still be hungry with the whole world, whilst a contented man will be satisfied with one bread. Wise men have said that poverty with content is better than wealth and not abundance [Wise men have said that strength accompanied by temperance is better than strength accompanied by wealth].

Narrow intestines may be filled with dry bread

But the wealth of the surface of the world will not fill a greedy eye.

When the term of my father's life had come to an end

He gave me this one advice and passed away:

Lust is fire, abstain therefrom,

Make not the fire of hell sharp for thee.

In that fire the burning thou will not be able to bear,

Quench this fire with water today.⁷²

The continuous novelty of stories is linked to the impossibility of exhausting the moral question they arise from; likewise, the possibilities of human experience are inexhaustible, while knowledge is finite.

Temperance in Bono Giamboni's Libro

Bono's *Libro* has a completely different structure from Sa'di's *Golestān*. In his pseudo-autobiographical tale, the author, guided by Philosophy, undertakes an allegorical voyage to the court of Religion, undergoes the examinations of Faith, is trained by the Cardinal Virtues, observes from a hilltop the battle between Vices and Virtues (where Virtues prevail), listens to the account of a war against heresies and religions (Islam in this case), is exhorted to do "good" by all the personified Virtues, is questioned by them, and is finally welcomed among the "devotees" after the last, affectionate recommendations by Philosophy. Vices and virtues, personified and ready for an allegorical battle, are defined by the way they line up.⁷³ The underlying idea of this

⁷¹*Golestān*, 176.

⁷²*The Gulistan*, 243.

allegory is that (it is worth paraphrasing here the observations of Le Goff) life down here is a struggle for salvation; the world is a battlefield where human beings fight against the devil—that is, actually, against himself. In fact, having inherited original sin, human beings run the risk of letting themselves fall into temptation, of committing evil and of damning themselves. People house the clash between vice and virtue within themselves, and what is at stake is their eternal destiny. Drawing on warrior traditions derived from both Roman and barbarian sources, the gnostic theme of the struggle between vice and virtue, which soon became part of Christian literature and iconography, brought the prospect of the other world down to earth and into the soul of every Christian. Human beings, in this battlefield for life or death which is the world, have as their allies God, the Virgin, the saints and angels and the Church, and especially their own faith and virtues; however they also have enemies: Satan, the demons, the heretics and above all their own vices and weaknesses which come from original sin. For Christians, the presence of the other world must be constantly alive and felt, since in every instant of their existence, their salvation is at stake, and even if they are not aware of it, this struggle for their souls is ceaselessly being fought down here. The daily life of a Christian in the Middle Ages revolved around an eschatological plot.⁷⁴

Describing the opposing ranks, Bono tries to define in the clearest possible way what is substantially part of the nature of human being, for better or for worse.⁷⁵ While it is true that the whole system for classifying and defining vices and virtues had already been carefully codified by Bono's time (see above), he intervenes actively (as shown in several points by the editor of his work, C. Segre) on the doctrinal materials available to him.⁷⁶

Temperance, as a lemma, appears thirteen times in Bono's text, and two chapters are directly dedicated to it. Chapter XXXV (Of the ranks of Temperance and her captains) and chapter LXXIII (Of the admonishments of Temperance). Reading these two chapters, and the other occurrences of the term, allow us to accurately outline the character of this virtue, fitting into the traditional context of the interior conflict between the lowest, animal impulses human beings and their efforts to detach themselves from the materiality of the body to elevate their souls towards God.

The first occasion when Temperance appears is in chapter XXXII, at the preparatory phase of the allegorical battle. Bono first describes the armies of the vices (eight ranks altogether, each subdivided among various captains)⁷⁷ and then those of the

⁷³Bono's inventiveness, though undoubtedly original in its developments, is mainly based on Aurelius Prudentius Clemens' (348–after 405) *Psychomachia* and the well-known theme of the struggle between body and spirit.

⁷⁴*Dizionario dell'Occidente medievale*, 4.

⁷⁵Bono's *Libro* fits this battle into a cosmic conflict against God launched by Satan, who exploits heresies and vices, which are defeated by Faith and Virtue respectively. *Libro*, 66–9.

⁷⁶*Libro*, XVII note 1.

⁷⁷They are, in order: Pride, Vainglory, Envy, Wrath, Despair, Greed, Gluttony and Lust. It should be noted that there is no symmetry between the armies of vices and those of virtues; indeed, virtues, with

virtues. There are four cardinal virtues and each, like the vices, has its captains, to which they refer:

E quando vidi questo [oste delle virtudi], dissi:—Maestra de le Virtudi, che intendono di fare queste genti che sono divise in quattro parti? E chi sono i signori di ciascun'oste?—Ed ella disse:—Queste Virtù son provocate a battaglia: però voglion fare le schiere loro, da che veggono i loro nimici schierati. E i quattro signori che son guidatori de le dette quattro osti, cioè catuno della sua, son quattro Virtù principali laonde nascono tutte l'altre Virtudi—. E io dissi:—E come hanno nome?—Ed ella disse:—Prudenzia, Iiustizia, Fortezza e Temperanzia—. E io dissi:—Ben so' coteste grandissime Virtudi, e molto ho già udito predicare dell'opere loro -. Ed ella disse:—Le loro opere son tutte perfette, e nasconne quanti beni nel mondo si fanno.⁷⁸

And when I saw [the army of virtues], I said: Mistress of virtues, what do these people, divided into four parts, intend to do? And who are the commanders of each army? And she replied: Against these virtues, battle has been declared, so they want to line up their troops, since the enemy have already formed their ranks. And the four commanders who are respectively at the head of the four armies are the four main virtues from which all other virtues are born. And I said: What are their names? And she replied: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. And I said: These are certainly very great virtues, and I have heard much spoken about their works. And she replied: Their works are all perfect, and all the good that is done in the world arises from them.

So all the good in the world arises from the four cardinal virtues. In the case of Temperance, the following “good” arises: Continenence, Chastity, Modesty, Abstinence, Thrift, Humility, Honesty and Shame, in their turn defined as follows (chapter XXXV):

Contenenza è virtù per la quale l'uomo s'astiene de' desideri non liciti. Castità è virtù per la qual l'uomo costringe lo 'ncendio della lussuria col freno della ragione. Pudicizia è virtù per la qual non solamente si rinfrena lo 'ncendio della lussuria, ma rinfrenasi i suoi segni; e sono i segni della lussuria i reggimenti del corpo e l'abito del vestimento. E così vedi che differenza ha tra Castità e Pudicizia, perché Castità rinfrena i movimenti della lussuria, ma Pudicizia i movimenti e i segni. E dividesi Castità in tre parti: perché altra è Castità virginale, che non ebbe anche uso d'uomo, e altra è castità vedovale, che già uso d'uomo ha avuto, ma or se ne astiene; e altra è castità matrimoniale,

their ranks, are half as many as the vices with their captains. This unbalance is of course functional to revealing the intrinsic power of good compared to evil. In chapter XVIII on Pride, “root of every evil,” he derides the uselessness of virtues, and casts irony on how temperance tries to weigh everything, always standing with scales in hand (“Do you have trust [...] in Temperance? Yet she still holds in her hands scales to find the mean of all things.” *Libro*, 96).

⁷⁸*Libro*, 56.

c'ha uso d'uomo, ma legittimamente; e catuna di queste è detta castità. Astinenzia è virtù per la quale si costringe la volontà della gola, cioè del mangiare e del bere di soperchio. Parcità è virtù per la quale si ritiene quel che si convien ritenere, secondo che Larghezza è virtù per la quale quel ch'è convenevole si spende. La Umilità è virtù per la quale l'uom porta vile abito, e l'ben che fa nasconde acciò che non appaia di fuori; e dividesi in tre parti: per la prima s'umilia l'uomo al maggiore, e questa è detta bastevole; per la seconda s'aumilia al pare, e questa è detta perfetta; per la terza s'aumilia l'uomo al minore, e questa è detta sopraabbondevole. Onestà è virtù per la quale tutte le cose che bisognano alla vita dell'uomo si recano ad uso temperato. Vergogna è virtù per la qual si vergogna l'uomo de le soperchianze e de' mali, e si rifrena la lingua che sozze parole o di soperchio non favelli.⁷⁹

Continence is the virtue thanks to which we abstain from illicit desires: Chastity is the virtue thanks to which man represses the fire of lust with the use of reason. Modesty is the virtue thanks to which one not only controls the fire of lust, but also its manifestations, which are the movements of the body and the way one dresses. Now consider the difference between chastity and modesty: the first subdues the drive of lust, while the second subdues its manifestations. And chastity is divided into three parts: virginal chastity (when there has been no contact with a man), widow's chastity (when there has been contact but one now abstains), matrimonial chastity (when there is contact but in a legitimate manner). Abstinence is the virtue thanks to which one subdues the desires of gluttony, that is drinking and eating immoderately. Thrift is the virtue thanks to which one withholds what is proper, whereas Largesse is the virtue thanks to which one spends what is proper. Humility is the virtue thanks to which man wears plain clothes and does not boast in public of the good he does; this virtue has three manners: when one humbles oneself before someone more important (called sufficient), or before a peer (called perfect), or before someone of a lower level (called superabundant). Honesty is the virtue thanks to which one makes moderate use of everything necessary for life. Shame is the virtue thanks to which man is ashamed of every excess and of the evil he does and thanks to which he does not speak too much or pronounce unsuitable words.

While the four Cardinal Virtues are the pillar and foundation of the Christian system of doctrine, the complex of sub-virtues which derive from them tends to fluctuate, as we can also see from the different versions of the *Libro*.⁸⁰ If we consider the final version, we can see how, for Bono, Temperance is basically achieved “when one steers a middle course in things”; when man withholds from “illicit” desires according to Christian morals;⁸¹ when he uses reason to put a brake on bodily impulses, when he

⁷⁹*Libro*, 61.

⁸⁰*Libro*, XV–XVII.

⁸¹The sub-virtues of chastity, for example, are three typically Christian categories: virginal, that of widows and matrimonial.

avoids gestures which would unleash such impulses (in movements and clothing); when he eats and drinks moderately; when he spends moderately; when he is moderate in showing himself off and maintains an honest behavior without excesses; when he shows embarrassment (shame) before excesses (in word or deed) whether his own or of others, managing to withhold from them. Two points seem to be of special interest: one concerning Humility, which in its turn is described with three expressions: *sufficient*, *perfect* and *superabundant*, according to whether one is dealing with someone of higher, equivalent or lower social rank. Here in fact the middle way does not seem to be the prevailing criterion. Humility appears rather as an absolute good, especially if expressed towards one's inferiors. Reference is in any case to a kind of behavior based on awareness of one's limits and detachment from any form of pride or excessive self-assuredness. The second point concerns Honesty, defined as a moderate use of all things needed in life, and hence closely tied to one of the ancient meanings of this term, which also indicated decorum, dignity, nobility of the soul and modesty, that is composure and restraint.

The other passage in which Bono expresses himself on the issue of temperance is in chapter LXXIII.⁸² Virtue now admonishes the "maker of the work" so that he may understand how to behave to earn heaven, since Temperance holds one of the five keys. Here eschatology becomes individual, as we speak of the ultimate purpose for human beings' moral commitment according to Bono, that is ensuring Heaven after death. The admonitions of Temperance are perfectly symmetrical to the previous definitions:

Appresso venne la Temperanza ad aprire e mostrare i suoi amonimenti, e disse:—Figliuol mio, io tegno le chiavi de la quinta porta di paradiso, e no-ll'apro a neuno che nel detto luogo vogli andare, se non è d'animo temperato in refrenare i desiderî de la carne laonde è assalito e tentato, e in tenere il mezzo di tutte le cose. E puote l'uomo esser d'animo temperato per [otto] virtudi, cioè per [contenenza] e castitade e pudicizia e astinenzia e parcitade e umilitade e onestade e vergogna. [Per contenenza puote l'uomo esser d'animo temperato, quando s'astiene dai desiderî non liciti]. Per castità è l'animo temperato, quando costringe l'uomo l'incendi de la lussuria col freno della

⁸²The framework of the system that gives access to Paradise is described in chapter LXIX (*Of the words said about the five Virtues which hold the five keys to heaven.*) where Prudence says: "Know that there are five doors from which one enters, before being able to go to Heaven. The keys to the first door are held by the Christian Faith, which opens it to none, and allows no one to enter that blessed place, unless he knows God and believes in what He commands. Prudence holds the keys to the second door, and does not open it to anyone or let him enter Heaven, unless he is wise and aware of matters of the world, has knowledge of good and evil and, thanks to his Reason, chooses good and flees the evil he has recognized. Justice holds the keys to the third door, and does not open it to anyone or let him enter Heaven, unless he has a righteous soul and does his duty towards everyone towards whom he has an obligation. Fortitude holds the keys to the fourth door, and does not open it to anyone or let him enter Heaven, unless he has a strong soul, able to withstand the difficulties, fatigues, tribulation and adversities of the world patiently and not to exceed in joyfulness when things go well. Temperance holds the keys to the fifth door, and does not open it to anyone or let him enter Heaven, unless his soul is temperate in dominating the desires of the flesh and to keep the right middle way in all things" (*Libro*, 108–9).

*ragione. Per pudicizia è l'animo temperato, quando non solamente l'incendi, ma i segni della lussuria rifrena, che sono ne' reggimenti del corpo e ne' vani ornamenti. Per astinenza è l'animo temperato, quando s'astiene l'uomo del manicare e del bere di superchio. Per parcitate è l'animo temperato, quando ritiene l'uomo quello che si conviene: ché la larghezza è quando quello ch'è convenevole si ispende. Per umiltà è l'animo temperato, quando porta l'uomo vile abito, e 'l ben che fa sí nasconde, acciò che non paia di fuori. Per onestà è l'animo temperato, quando tutte le cose che li fanno bisogno a la vita reca ad uso temperato. Per vergogna è l'animo temperato, quando si vergogna l'uomo de le soperchianze e de' mali e delle sozze parole. Per tutte le dette virtù è bisogno ch'abbia l'animo temperato chi per la detta porta vuole intrare.*⁸³

Immediately after, Temperance came to open and express her advice, saying:—My son, I own the keys to the fifth door of heaven, but I open it to none who wishes to go there, unless his soul is temperate in dominating the desires of the flesh which assault and tempt him, and knows how to keep the right middle way in all things. Man can be of a temperate soul thanks to eight virtues, that is continence, chastity, modesty, abstinence, thrift, humility, honesty and shame. Thanks to continence, man is of a temperate soul because he abstains from illicit desires. Thanks to chastity, the soul is temperate because it holds down with the bridle of reason the flames of lust. Thanks to modesty, the soul is temperate because it not only holds down the flames of lust, but also holds down its manifestations in bodily gestures and superfluous ornaments. Thanks to abstinence, the soul is temperate because it withholds from drinking and eating immoderately. Thanks to thrift (sobriety), the soul is temperate because man withholds for himself only what is needed, while largesse consists in spending properly. Thanks to humility, man is temperate because he wears plain clothes and if he does good, does not boast of it. Thanks to honesty, the soul is temperate because everything necessary for life is used with moderation. Thanks to shame, the soul is temperate because man is ashamed of excessive gestures, of the evil he has committed and of obscene words. He who wishes to enter through this door must possess a soul which is temperate thanks to all the virtues we have mentioned.

Bono substantially repeats in full, but under the form of advice, what he expressed as a description in chapter XXXV, without adding anything except—a little later—a fervent appeal to Philosophy, where he complains that he does not feel up to the tasks to which virtues call him, and hence feels desperate about his destiny after death. It is always Philosophy which settles this doubt, and has Bono accepted among the faithful of virtue at the close of the book, trusting his commitment and making herself his guarantor.

⁸³*Libro*, 115–16.

We can observe that in the *Libro* the virtue of Temperance is treated in an extremely rigid and normative manner, and it is instead the set of sub-virtues that represents a way to place this theoretical framework into the experience of life.

Conclusions

Here we propose some comparative observations: the texts have been considered as a whole, although in the body of the article of course we have only quoted the most significant passages.

If, as we have seen, the reason for composition and the purpose of both works are largely shared, the structure of the two books is radically different: Sa'di creates a theatre of exemplary anecdotes⁸⁴ according to the tradition of the اندرز *andarz*;⁸⁵ Bono follows a pedagogical-allegorical model, trying to describe in full the temptations and dangers against which man, using his reason, must oppose his will to do good. The human spectacle which Sa'di's text offers has many facets and is lively: his brilliant language flows without worrying about the consistency of its contents.⁸⁶ Bono's allegory has a compact and rigid structure; each question of humanity is framed within a structured scheme, so that each element finds its place and definition in a framework which is simple, essential and complete. The structure of the works affects the manner in which the topics are dealt with. Sa'di's text is light and ironic, Bono's serious and composed. The former certainly seeks to educate his readers, but he also tries to involve them and convince them with irony and a certain warm-heartedness which embraces human limits; the latter describes fearsome scenarios of human abjection and perdition which induce man to seek the straight path to earn Heaven. In terms of style, the same pattern can be identified: Sa'di's figured language is more poetic, Bono's allegorical language more didactic; while the former is a great artist, the latter is an honest author of treatises.

The comparison which we have drawn on temperance should be read against this background. Regarding temperance, Sa'di is interested in the human being's capacity to stay in their condition, however unfortunate, to accept it without compromise, safe-

⁸⁴Says Sa'di: "Our intention was advice and we gave it. / We recommended thee to God and departed." *The Gulistan*, 72; *Golestān*, 23.

⁸⁵The following has been said of Sa'di's work: "In both of his major works [*Golestān* and *Bustān*], Sa'di prefers to impress moral lessons on the reader's mind by means of exemplary anecdotes and vivid comparisons rather than dry statements of principle. This method was maintained by all the imitators of the *Golestān* and *Bustān*." Shaked and Safa, "Andarz."

⁸⁶From an aesthetic point of view, Sa'di's work is perfectly in line with tradition: "[An] important and original facet of Persian moral thought was reliance on literature. ... Persian moral thinkers proceeded in a totally different fashion, turning to the rhetorical and poetic aspects of discourse and relying on the special power of language to exhort and persuade. Three devices predominated: the maxim, expressed sonorously and poetically in order that it might remain in memory; the anecdote (*hekāya*), often specifically illustrating such an elevated pronouncement; and verse exploiting the full potential of language. Indeed, even systematic moral thought, when first expressed in Persian, was presented with emphasis on rhetoric and poetics; the chronological evolution of Persian moral thought can thus be witnessed in the development of elevated locutions." de Fouchécour, "Etichs."

guarding honor and dignity,⁸⁷ which are more important than material needs, avoiding attachment to earthly goods and finding a proper balance between their own well-being and a responsible presence in the community. For Bono, the virtue of temperance, in the normative context of the Christian tradition, represents a constant quest of the believer for an existential condition beyond the dimension of human beings' animal impulses: temperance in a way saves people from themselves, from the desires of their guts and sexuality, from the excesses of selfishness and from those of material avidity. It puts a bridle on the link that human beings tend to establish with this netherworld, and opens the gates of the other world. The stress on the vices that temperance is called upon to correct are very different. While in the *Golestān* greed and attachment to worldly goods are the nucleus around which such virtue must be practiced, in the *Libro* priority definitely goes to lust, confirming the radical hostility to sex of Christian morals.⁸⁸ Temperance which should be exerted over the vice of gluttony is a theme common to both texts, with an intensity and recurrence which we can consider similar, while the principle of balance and moderation, of *in medio stat virtus* (*andāzeh* or *miyānehravi* in Persian tradition),⁸⁹ extends to the other contexts shared by both texts (possession of goods, showing off, verbal expression,⁹⁰ etc.). At the base, what the two texts have also in common is the fact that the morality they convey has no claim to be original: it is traditional and common and in this lies also its authority and the power of persuasion (it is well known, in fact, that the public only accepts what it recognizes to be already in itself).

Another element which seems profoundly to distinguish the two texts is their outlook: Sa'di is guided in his moralizing mission not only by the tradition, but also by his own experience and hence his understanding of the dynamics of the world; his wisdom comes from below rather than above, and this is also the reason for his insisting on the importance of preserving one's dignity and honor and avoiding self-humiliation to obtain favors. Bono's path to knowledge and moralistic writing is guided by Philosophy, by a supreme comprehension which comes more from above than below. These different outlooks manifest themselves right from the motives leading to composition of the book (however conventional they may be): whereas Sa'di complains of himself, his own limits, his incapacity to fully live the spiritual dimension, Bono complains of life itself, falls ill because of the adversities and

⁸⁷On the importance of dignity and honor, in the *Golestān* we read: "And philosophers have said: If for instance the water of life were to be exchanged for a good reputation, no wise man would purchase it because it is preferable to die with honor than to live in disgrace." *The Gulistan*, 153; *Golestān*, 95.

⁸⁸In this sense, Sa'di's freedom of thought and expression appears clearly in his obscene verses (Zipoli, "Le khabīthāt oscene di Sa'di"; Zipoli, *Tesori e Serpenti*, 158–70; Zipoli, *Irreverent Persia*, 91, 95–7, etc.).

⁸⁹"Measure" represents one of the ethical principles of the *Adab* (*āyin*) in the Iranian context, representing the foundation of education, culture, good behavior, courtesy, proper demeanor (for an overview of the advantages of moderation and evils of intemperance in Iranian texts see Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Adab i. Adab in Iran," the first part in particular, "The definition of Adab").

⁹⁰"To sit in a corner, like one with a cut tongue, deaf and dumb, / Is better than a man who has no command over his tongue." *The Gulistan*, 64; *Golestān*, 17.

fatigue of existence, finds the origin of his distress outside of himself, and therefore seeks external help, a spiritual guide.⁹¹

These different outlooks bring out two different ideas of human beings in relation to themselves and the world: Sa'di's, deeply immersed in his social context and religious community, recognizes in individual experience a general, collective value; Bono's, more concentrated on individual salvation, and hence on his own destiny, is obsessed by a world which is constant fall and temptation. However, when we read these texts, we are left with the feeling that temperance for Sa'di is good in itself and has an absolute value, whereas for Bono it is more instrumental to be recognized as a good Christian and to enter Heaven. For the former, it seems more the condition for an existence worthy of the name, for the latter more an idea from above, dictated by reason, accepted by faith and realized for fear of God's punishment.⁹²

However, an aspect shared by the two texts is certainly awareness that a human being cannot truly progress towards the good and towards God without the intervention of a transcending element, a fact taken for granted in both the Islamic and the Christian context. In both cases, however, this intervention "from above" does not absolve the human being from responsibility and personal commitment. When Bono Giamboni confides to Philosophy the "superhuman" difficulty of realizing virtues, he declares that being virtuous is not within the reach of a human being in the absence of superior help. Sa'di says, instead, that this virtue is human, naturally belongs to mankind, that reason (*kherad*) makes us understand the need for it and that faith and God's help can make it perfect.

Hypocrisy too, which in our case means showing oneself temperate without truly being so, is the worst evil for both our authors: Sa'di says so ceaselessly in his text, especially in his second chapter on the ethics of the dervishes (see for example the tale no. 6 which ends with this verse):

ای هنرها گرفته بر کف دست عیبها بر گرفته زیر بغل

تا چه خواهی خریدن ای مغرور روز درماندگی بسیم دغل⁹³

O thou who showest virtues on the palms of the hand

⁹¹This outlook, which places human beings in a substantially disarmed position before their own weak nature in the face of evil and makes having a guide necessary, is made explicit by Prudence in this passage where she puts to the test the seriousness of Bono's repentance: "we see that the majority of the great evil done in the world is done taking us as a pretext and pretending to behave well, and would not be carried out in another way. This is something we cannot realize before evil has been committed: in fact, we have such trust in the pretty words you say and in the good intentions you show, that we welcome you as faithful and as subjects and make men wish you well, since we fail to perceive your evil intent: God alone, in fact, knows the heart of men. And you show your ingratitude." *Libro*, 106.

⁹²The words of John's Gospel seem to be forgotten: "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (John 4:18).

⁹³*Golestān*, 65.

But concealest thy errors under the armpit

What wilt thou purchase, O vain-glorious fool,

On the day of distress with counterfeit silver?⁹⁴

Bono affirms the same in a peremptory fashion in chapter LXVII:

*perché li ipocriti, che sono di cotesta maniera, che mostran di fare una cosa e fannone un'altra, Dio li innodia sopra li altri peccatori.*⁹⁵

God hates hypocrites more than other sinners, because they show they are doing one thing, while actually they are doing another

No less than other texts, moralistic literature is an opportunity to speak of human beings and the world. Whether the goal of human existence be perfect asceticism or ensuring oneself entry to Heaven, control over human nature, in all its aspects, is the path for human realization.

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⁹⁴*The Gulistan*, 118.

⁹⁵*Libro*, 107.

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