

Giordano Bruno. *Cabala del cavallo Pegaseo: Die Kabbala des pegaseischen Pferdes*.

Ed. Sergius Kodera. Giordano Bruno Werke. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2009. cxxvi + 198 pp. index. tpls. gloss. bibl. €88. ISBN: 978-3-7873-1806-3.

Following two previous volumes (containing *De la causa, principio et uno* [2007] and *De l'infinito universo et mondi* [2007]), the book is the latest volume of an Italian-German edition of Bruno's vernacular works, conceived by the Italienzentrum of the FU Berlin, together with Meiner Verlag. The *Cabala* (1585) probably constitutes one of the most radical and ironic dialogues of the Italian philosopher. Although it does not seem to have been mentioned during the inquisitorial process — which ended with Bruno's execution in 1600 — some of the major themes discussed in it had been evocated right from the beginning of that process.

Sergius Kodera's introduction offers a number of interesting suggestions, which guide the reader through the complex literary structure and philosophical contents of the work. The adaptation of Kai Neubauer's German version (Hamburg 2000) — based on the critical edition of Giovanni Aquilecchia — appropriately aims to be as literal as possible. At the same time it offers the reader positive help in the interpretation of the text thanks to the commentary and to some translator's interventions in square brackets, including translations of the few Latin quotes and some minimal additions to clarify the text. Kodera's analysis focuses first on the *Cabala* as a literary work ("Zu Brunos literarischem Stil" [xiii–xix]). Choosing the dialogical form, Bruno is aiming (in this case in particular) to diffract his own position by means of several different interventions. Analyzing onomastical choices as well as theoretical issues, Kodera refutes the current identification of Saulino as the character bearing Bruno's positions and recognizes in Sebasto, the voice of common sense, a much more suitable character for this role.

After having situated the *Cabala* in its historical context ("Historischer Kontext" [xxi–xxviii]) a large "Sinopsis" is devoted to the presentation of each singular component of the work, including the long series of paratexts and the *Asino cillenico*, a sort of appendix to the dialogue itself. The second part of the introduction is devoted to the *Dramatis personae*, the "masks" or "characters" of the dialogue, and to the major themes Bruno deals with in the *Cabala*. Kodera refers in particular to: the *vicissitudo*, the law of perpetual transformation implying the continuous flowing of the forms; the related idea of ever-changing fortune; the ambiguous relationship between wisdom and ignorance; the idea of pragmatic knowledge, acquired not by means of contemplation but by a daily investigation of the world, looking for the *occasiones* in order to interfere with the natural course. Kodera's points are used, on the one hand, to exclude any positive cabbalistic implication in Bruno's thought and on the other, to suggest all the theoretical, anthropological and political effects of his radical offensive against the leading culture of his time. The same polemical intent can be traced through his whole

philosophical production and in particular in his vernacular work, starting from the time of *Candelaio*, the comedy Bruno published 1582 in Paris, and taking in the *Spaccio della bestia trionfante* (1584), to which the *Cabala* is closely connected. The objects of his criticism are the philosophers of the School, who are completely submitted to the authority of Aristotle. The latter turns out to be one of the successive incarnations of Onorio, the flying ass who did not drink the water of oblivion and can therefore bear witness of the continuous flowing of the soul through different form of life. In the same way as in the *Spaccio*, the criticisms of the *principium auctoritatis* lead to a violent attack against any form of faith. Jews and Christians, followers of Saint Paul as well as reformers, are condemned as the most pestilential sort of *asinitas*. Dealing with the famous praise of the hand in Dialogue 2, Kodera insists on what he considers in Bruno's perspective as the "thievery" of knowledge, which he understands as the result of a complete inversion of (Neo)Platonic psychology, far removed from the platonic doctrine of anamnesis. Analysing Bruno's gnoseology, Sergius Kodera insists on what may probably be considered the most radical doctrine contained in the *Cabala*: the ontological homogeneity of human and animal souls.

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