

ecclésiastiques”. Among these, the “création médiate de la matière première, mise en évidence de la séparation de l’intellect qui s’unit à la substance humaine du dehors, identification de l’être et de la pensée dans les substances séparées, idée d’une mise en œuvre de l’intellect possible par l’humanité dans son ensemble” (p. 408). According to Fioravanti, a note of caution is in order here. “ (...) parler d’un averroïsme dantesque en l’identifiant aux thèses philosophiques précises d’un auteur précis peut toutefois s’avérer trompeur. (...) En effet, si nous restituons les affirmations ‘averroïstes’ de Dante dans l’ensemble de son discours, nous nous rendons souvent compte qu’elles ont une valeur non pas en soi, mais par rapport à ce qui intéresse réellement Dante, ce qui les place dans un contexte bien différent de celui dans lequel elles ont été formulées” (pp. 408-9). As a consequence, “Dante n’est pas averroïste au sens strict du terme, s’il y a bien un sens strict, mais (...) dans certains cas nous percevons entre lui et Averroès une sorte d’air de famille” (p. 416). All in all, this balanced skepticism is a good synthesis of the approach taken by most of the contributions to this volume.

Its readers will be also interested in the recent essay by P.B. Rossi, “L’itinerario dantesco di Bruno Nardi”, in *Grandi maestri di fronte a Dante* (2022).

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G. Catapano – O. Grassi (eds.), *Rappresentazioni della natura nel medioevo*, Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2019 (Micrologus Library, 94), 24 tables, XIV+340 pp.

This collection of eighteen papers was originally presented at the XXIII SISPM Annual Meeting held in Padua in May 2017. Five essays deal with philosophical representations of ‘Nature’; four with artistic representations, including visual arts, literature, and architecture; four with scientific representations, including medicine, alchemy, and numerology; two with theological and musical representations respectively; one with representation in the field of law. The volume opens with a preface (pp. VII-XIV) by the Editors, who provide a context for the papers. First comes a remark on the title: *natura* is said to be a multi-faceted term, “caratterizzato da un vastissimo campo semantico, che ripropone in parte la distinzione dei sei diversi significati attribuiti da Aristotele alla *physis* (*Metafisica* V, 4), e ne elabora di nuovi, in riferimento all’intellegibilità dell’esistente, all’*agere* e al *pati* degli elementi, alla *nativitas*, assurgendo con Giovanni Scoto Eriugena alla funzione di ‘nome generale di tutte le cose che sono e che non sono’ (*Periphyseon* I, 441a) e arricchendosi di varianti e sfumature che stimolano la cultura medievale, in tutte le sue forme espressioni” (p. X). ‘Representation’ is conceived here as a way of looking at the *natura* in all its facets. The term is also taken “come atto di creazione umana che entrando in rapporto con l’oggetto, in qualche modo lo faccia proprio, ponendolo dinanzi a sé e agli altri” (p. XII). The volume covers almost ten centuries, from Augustine to Leon Battista Alberti, that is from the 5th to the 15th century. It investigates the Medieval Latin world: except for P. Carusi’s contribution, the Arabic and Jewish Middle Ages are not considered. The papers are organized in chronological order, and not thematically. The volume ends with the “Indice di autori, studiosi e opere” (pp. 323-38), and the “Indice dei manoscritti” (pp. 339-40).

Nature is a multi-purpose term, and played an important role in medieval thought; by being able to understand the significance of nature in the Middle Ages we can reconstruct

and discuss elements of continuity and discontinuity in the conception of the world and of the man's place in it between, between the Middle Ages and the early modern age. *Rappresentazioni della natura nel medioevo* throws valuable, if largely indirect, light on this process of evolution.

First, A. Scafì, "Natura perfetta nell'Eden: un'utopia medievale" (pp. 3-25) gives a clear and careful account of Thomas Aquinas' description of the Garden of Eden (with 6 tables), as well as of Thomas's conception of Adam and Eve's human state in the terrestrial paradise. Scafì urges that, although in the scholarship regarding 'utopia' the focus is mostly on ancient *poléis* and on the Renaissance ideal cities, "l'idea di una natura perfetta nell'Eden è una importante utopia medievale" (p. 25) which is more extensive and more influential than scholars have thought.

Next, E. Moro, "Rappresentazioni della natura nel *De Genesi ad litteram* di Agostino" (pp. 27-40) considers certain views of Augustine of Hippo concerning nature found in his *De Genesi ad litteram*, a commentary on Gen. 1-3 in twelve books. Four points are addressed: (i) Augustine's conception of the origin and the status of the created natures (pp. 28-31); (ii) his representations of the divine action towards the cosmos (pp. 31-5); (iii) his conception of the relation between the biblical exegesis and the natural science (pp. 35-7); (iv) his view of the natural order with special reference to the miracles (pp. 37-9).

C.V. Crialesi, "Un approccio matematizzante nell'analisi della realtà naturale: l'*Explanatio in Calculo Victorii* di Abbone di Fleury" (pp. 41-58) presents a case in point of the mathematizing approach to the study of nature in the 10th century. Abbo of Fleury (940ca-1004) wrote an *Explanatio in Calculo Victorii*, a commentary on the *Calculus* by Victorius of Aquitaine (fl. 450); the latter is a treatise composed of a *Praefatio de ratione calculi* and of a series of multiplication tables. Victorius of Aquitaine and Abbo's works shed light on the early history of mathematics, before the introduction of Arabic numerals. A subtle paper, at the centre of which stands the assumption that "Abbone, sulla base del versetto sapienziale *omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti* (Sap. 11, 21) prende in esame le tre cause esemplari dalle quali dipende la configurazione complessiva del cosmo e delle singole cose create" (p. 43) so that "la *physica* renderà ragione dell'assunto teologico per cui il mondo è stato disposto secondo una struttura matematicamente ordinata" (p. 47). In that line, Crialesi analyses three points: Abbo's conception of mathematical causes (number, measure, and weight), the arithmetical proportionality in the growth or decrease of natural and artificial composites; and the ontological composition of *esse* and *id quod est* ascribed to every creature.

P. Carusi, "Natura, nature. *Mizāğ*, trasmutazione alchemica e filosofia aristotelica" (pp. 59-81) consists of an analysis of the meaning of the term 'nature' in Islamic alchemy, and it is a useful and scrupulous survey of a considerable quantity of recalcitrant Arabic text. It contains two main parts, one dealing with the concept of 'nature' (*ṭabīʿa*, or *kiyān*) in Islamic alchemic cosmology, the other dealing with the concept of 'nature' (*mizāğ*) in the bodily mixture in Islamic alchemical theories. Carusi highlights the need of further study of the role played by Aristotle, whom the Islamic alchemists recognize as a source, "allo scopo di comprendere da un lato la filosofia alchemica e dall'altro la collocazione dell'alchimia nel quadro della filosofia naturale islamica ad essa contemporanea" (p. 60).

There is one paper on 'nature' in medieval poetry. I am not competent in the field, but it seems to me that, despite the sheer breadth of this topic, V. Russo, "L'espressione dell'anima e la parola del corpo: su alcuni significati del *tópos* di matrice naturalistica nella lirica cortese" (pp. 83-96) finds an interesting twist. Her paper focuses on the aviary *topos* in Occitan and French poetry; Russo offers a diachronic analysis of the images of birds used in the

aforementioned poetic traditions arguing that for these poets ‘nature’ counts as a description of carnal love, not only as a representation of spiritual feelings.

Two papers deal with Thomas Aquinas’ philosophy. F. Amerini, “Limiti e significato di ‘natura’: Tommaso d’Aquino lettore di Aristotele” (pp. 97-110) discusses Thomas Aquinas’ commentary of Aristotle’s *Metaph.* V 4. From this rich and valuable paper we learn that “vi sono per Tommaso due modi principali di considerare la natura: il termine ‘natura’ può infatti essere associato o al *concetto di nascita*, oppure al *concetto di sostanza*, come ciò che è espresso dalla definizione di una cosa, e in entrambi i casi, la forma appare come l’elemento chiave, ciò che permette di distinguere e al tempo stesso tenere insieme il senso fisico e quello metafisico di natura, consentendo così di spiegare in che modo altri elementi (come la materia e il moto) possono essere detti natura” (p. 107). Amerini’s analysis shows that “il testo aristotelico costituisce una fonte d’ispirazione costante per Tommaso, una fonte che Tommaso stabilmente tiene unita a Boezio e alla sua popolare quadripartizione della natura” (p. 108). Interesting hints come from the paper by A. Porcarelli, “La rappresentazione della natura umana ‘sulla linea di orizzonte’ in Tommaso d’Aquino e i suoi riflessi nel personalismo pedagogico del XX secolo” (pp. 111-124) which is a tentative to elaborate on the influence of Thomas’ treatment of the *natura humana* and the pedagogical personalism of the 20th century.

There is one paper on the French Franciscan and theologian Jean de La Rochelle (1200-1245), by R. Saccenti, “*Impressio legis aeternae*’. La legge naturale nel trattato *De legibus* di Giovanni de La Rochelle” (pp. 125-138). The first part of the paper is devoted to the relationship between Jean de La Rochelle’s unedited *Quaestiones the legibus* and Alexander of Hales’s *Summa fratris Alexandri* with reference to the long and detailed discussion of the notion of law and its various species in the third part of the *Summa*. Then, Saccenti analyses the notion of ‘natural law’ in the *Quaestiones*. According to him “quella che Giovanni articola è una concezione della *lex naturalis* capace di ricomprendere piani diversi di normatività naturale, da quella di ordine fisico arriva a quella di carattere morale ... entro lo schema secondo cui la legge naturale è impressio della legge eterna nella ragione umana ... più ancora, Giovanni può includere nella sfera della legge naturale anche una forma di teismo, ossia di fede ‘naturale’ in Dio, quale frutto di un assenso della ragione, che si traduce nel precetto di amare Dio sopra ogni altra cosa” (p. 137).

G. Rossi, “*Iurisconsultus principia iuris [...] trahit a principiis naturae*’: la riflessione sulla natura in Alberico da Rosate e Baldo degli Ubaldi” (pp. 139-153) depicts ‘nature’ as a fundamental element in the work of two prominent 14th century justists, the *Dictionarium iuris* of Alberico da Rosate (c. 1290-1360) and the *Ius naturale* of Baldo degli Ubaldi (ca 1327-1400), shedding light on the link between law and nature as a constitutive part of the making of the medieval legal system. According to Rossi, ‘nature’ is the “limite invalicabile per l’attività del giurista, ... un argine alla arbitraria rilettura delle norme ma anche una bussola preziosa per indirizzare la riflessione nella direzione più conforme alla reale essenza delle situazioni su cui il giurista è chiamato a pronunciarsi” (pp. 144-5).

Two papers follow devoted to ‘nature’ as a source of inspiration for musical theories and musical strategies. P. Dessì, “I madrigali di Bartolino da Padova: lessico naturalistico e livelli di significazione” (pp. 155-72) analyses several madrigal texts by an Italian composer of the late 14th century, Bartolino da Padova, dealing in particular with the rethorical-musical strategies that the composer implements and argues that some semantic-expressive elements (e.g. repetitions of words) are “segni di quel sottile legame tra musica e contenuti semantici ed espressivi del testo, un nesso che la stessa musicologia ha sempre considerate estraneo

alla sensibilità musicale medievale” (pp. 157-8). The essay by A. Lovato, “La *plenitudo vocis articulata* e letterata nella musica armonica di Marchetto da Padova” (pp. 173-92) is devoted to the 14th century Italian composer Marchetto da Padova. Lovato offers a detailed and instructive account of Marchetto’s conception of the sound of the *vox* which is the core of his new approach to the discipline of music, as well as of his sources. Unless I have missed something, however, the author offers no explanation of the link between Marchetto’s conception of the sound of the *vox* and any concept or representation of ‘nature’ properly speaking. As far as I can understand, it is the sound of the voice itself that the reader should take as a ‘representation’ of ‘nature’.

Some contradictory positions about the separability of accidents in the debate on nature and art in the ‘Parisian natural philosophy’ of mid-15th century emerge in the paper by F. Zanin, “Forme artificiali e separabilità degli accidenti. Il dibattito su natura ed arte a Parigi alla metà del XIV secolo” (pp. 193-206). According to Zanin “I maestri parigini concepiscono la relazione tra sostanza e accidenti in modo dinamico, tale per cui essa si realizza nel tempo e non nell’istante, come sembra emergere dalle sottili distinzioni che essi propongono nell’analisi dei significati dei termini ‘ente’ e *aliquid*” (p. 205). The authors considered by Zanin are mainly Albert of Saxony, Marsilius of Inghen, and John Buridan. Buridan is dealt with also in another paper: C. Beneduce, “La fisiologia del tatto nel XIV secolo: il caso di Giovanni Buridano” (pp. 207-220) offers an account of the theory of the sense of touch in John Buridan’s commentaries on the *De Anima (tertia pars)* and on the *Parva Naturalia, De Sensu et sensato*. Beneduce draws attention to the role played by several medical positions, analyzing how these are harmonized with Aristotle’s theory, in Buridan’s treatment of the sense of touch and its identification with a nerve extending throughout the whole body. She reiterates a thesis already argued in her PhD Thesis (Pisa 2017), namely that “Buridano costruisce la propria filosofia naturale dando ampio spazio ad elementi medici” (p. 219).

The function of the representations in wooden reliquary coffins in Venice in the 13th and 14th centuries is analyzed by Z. Murat, “Rappresentare la ‘Natura Incorrotta’: casse reliquiario e corpi santi a Venezia fra XIII e XIV secolo” (pp. 221-239, with 10 tables) and the role played by these representations in the establishment of the cult of the saint’s incorrupt body, particularly in the Venetian Benedictine nunneries at the end of the 13th century.

C. Ponchia - F. Toniolo, “Dal margine al centro: raffigurazioni di natura nei manoscritti miniati tra XIII e XIV secolo” (pp. 241-258, with 13 tables) investigate how the representations of nature in illuminated manuscripts changed between the 13th and the 15th century, focusing in particular on animals and plants. The approach to nature underwent a deep change in this period by gradually acquiring in the end of 15th century a “piena centralità tanto che le immagini parlano da sole e possono sostituire del tutto il testo” (p. 257).

One paper is devoted to natural science and theoretical pharmacology during the 13th and the 14th centuries: I. Ventura, “Scienza della natura e farmacologia accademica tra XIII e XIV secolo: un progetto di lavoro” (pp. 259-274). This reads like an introduction to a more general project that Ventura is about to achieve. The paper investigates the connections established in medical works between complexion of natural substances used in medicine and their effects on the body, with reference to the medical theories by Dino del Garbo (1280-1327) and Jean de Saint-Amand (c. 1230-1303).

Then, there are two pieces on representations of nature in monumental art and in architecture respectively. X. Barral i Altet, “La terra, l’acqua e i loro abitanti: a proposito della rappresentazione della natura nell’arte monumentale romanica” (pp. 275-290 with 12 tables)

deals with the artistic use of earth and water in a series of mosaics of the Romanesque period (namely, those in the Cathedrals of Aosta, Dôme and Palermo, and in famous fabrics embroidered and other manufactures. R. Simonetti, “*Ipso ex naturae gremio*. La natura come modello nel pensiero e nella pratica architettonica di Leon Battista Alberti” (pp. 291-303) is a survey of several passages which testimonies of Leon Battista Alberti’s investigation on nature, aiming to provide new insights of the fact that nature is itself the model in relation to which Alberti evaluated the aesthetic and functional quality of the work of arts.

Anyone interested in the history of the medieval culture will find these papers instructive. As A. Paravicini Bagliani’s put it (“Conclusioni”, pp. 305-319), this volume is a thoroughly worthwhile enterprise if seen primarily as contributing to our knowledge of the “relazione storica tra uomo e natura, partendo dal Medioevo, in una prospettiva trasversale, possibilmente transculturale, al fine di far dialogare le varie tradizioni del pensiero occidentale, testuali e iconografiche, con particolare attenzione alle discipline scientifiche” (p. 305).

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