

*“Libertas philosophandi”, “libero filosofare”,
“free-thinking”, “liberté de penser”.*

Variations and transformations in modern philosophy

Mariafranca Spallanzani

This article tries to retrace through some authors of the 17th and 18th century the history of the motto libertas philosophandi, which, following its original affirmation and defence of the freedom of the philosopher, scholar or professor, finds in the age of Enlightenment the true universality of political, intellectual and civil rights.

Key-words: “Libertas philosophandi”, “Libero filosofare”, “Free-thinking”, “Liberté de penser”, Modern Philosophy.

In December 2000, the European Parliament, Council and Commission solemnly signed and proclaimed the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*. Article 10 protects the *Freedom of thought, conscience and religion*: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”¹. Article 11 protects the *Freedom of expression and information*: “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression”².

This is the welcome result of a long history of searching for and defending freedom of thought, with no lack of achievements and setbacks, victories and defeats, accelerations and delays. But the

¹ *Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union*

“Article 10

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

2. The right to conscientious objection is recognised, in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of this right”.

² *Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union*

“Article 11

Freedom of expression and information

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.

2. The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected”.

victories prevailed, making freedom of thought, expression, conscience and religion a public good in which subjects become personally engaged and involved in their own adhesion and fidelity.

This institutional history starts from the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* of 1789, inspired by the *Declaration of American Independence* of 1776. In article 11, the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* states as “l'un des droits les plus précieux de l'homme la libre communication des pensées et des opinions”: “tout citoyen peut donc parler, écrire, imprimer librement, sauf à répondre de l'abus de cette liberté dans les cas déterminés par la loi”.

Many important events mark this long history: the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (UDHR, part of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted by United Nations General Assembly in December 1940), whose articles 18–21 sanction so-called “constitutional liberties” and spiritual, public, and political freedoms, such as freedom of thought, opinion, religion, conscience, speech, and peaceful association of the individual; the *Convention of the Council of Europe for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (*European Convention on Human Rights*, Rome, 4 November 1950), which ratifies in article 9 freedom of thought, conscience and religion as a right of all³, and in article 10 adds freedom of expression⁴; the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of the United Nations* (ICCPR, 16 December 1966), which

³ *European Convention on Human Rights*.

“Article 9 – Freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

2. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others”.

⁴ *European Convention on Human Rights*.

“Article 10 – Freedom of expression.

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. [...]. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary” .

Seventeenth Century

The Travail of Philosophical Liberty: libertas philosophandi in the long Sixteenth Century

Miguel Á. Granada

The present article examines the vindication of the “freedom to philosophize” in astronomy and cosmology from Rheticus and Copernicus to Galileo and Kepler. The common thread of the study, the famous sentence by the Greek Platonist Alcinous taken up by Rheticus in his Narratio prima (1540), is traced through the Latin edition of Galileo’s Dialogo (Strasbourg, 1635), where it joins with similar motifs in Seneca’s Naturales Quaestiones, then widely diffused across Germany on the occasion of the comet of 1618. This development is studied in relation to the hardening of measures against philosophical and theological dissent in Protestant and Catholic circles as manifested in the sentences suffered by Bruno, Telesio and Patrizi.

Keywords: Rheticus, Melanchthon, Castellion, Jesuits, Kepler, Federico Cesi, Galileo.

In 1538 Georg Joachim Rheticus – a young professor of lower mathematics at the University of Wittenberg and pupil of Philip Melanchthon – undertook a study trip with the support of his teacher. In his first stage, in Nuremberg, Rheticus met the local mathematician Johannes Schöner, who mentioned the existence, in Poland, of a canon, named Nicholas Copernicus, apparently in possession of new calculations of the celestial movements whose publication could be of great interest for the perfection of the science of the stars. Schöner exhorted Rheticus to also meet Copernicus; at the same time, Rheticus received from the printer Johannes Petreius his willingness to publish the work of the Polish canon.

After visiting Ingolstadt and Tübingen, Rheticus returned to Wittenberg and got permission from Melanchthon and the authorities to visit Copernicus. Rheticus met the Polish canon in Frauenburg (on the Baltic coast) in the spring of 1539. The intellectually isolated Copernicus welcomed Rheticus warmly and offered him access to the manuscript of his work (*De revolutionibus*), regardless of their difference in religion. The reading of the work led to Rheticus’s rapid conversion to Copernican cosmology and his strong insistence

on publication against Copernicus' reluctance. In the course of a few weeks Rheticus wrote a first exposition of the content of *De revolutionibus*, whose publication Copernicus accepted as a kind of "probe balloon" to decide, depending on the reception, if the complete work could finally be published.

The *Narratio prima* was printed in 1540 in neighboring Danzig, dedicated to Schöner and hiding the name of its author under the mask of "per quendam Iuvenem, Mathematicae studiosum" with the addition, at the frontispiece, of the sentence of the Greek platonian philosopher Alcinoüs: δεῖ δὲ ἐλευθέριον εἶναι τῇ γνώμῃ τὸν μέλλοντα φιλοσοφεῖν ("It is necessary that the one who sets out to philosophize be free of thought")¹. This is surely the first claim and demand, in the sixteenth century, for philosophical freedom in the field of astronomy and certainly in the field of Copernicanism.

Rheticus does not develop or argue this motif in his exposition of Copernican astronomy and its *hypotheses*. However, at the conclusion of his *Narratio*, he invokes the Greek sentence again, when he exhorts Schöner to excuse the "ardor" and the youthful "enthusiasm" that could have been insinuated in his description, attacking "against venerable and sacred antiquity" in an excess of "freedom" incompatible "with the importance and dignity of the matter". Schöner should not attribute it to Copernicus – Rheticus added –, since

for him there is nothing better or more important than walking in the footsteps of Ptolemy and following, as Ptolemy did, the ancients and those who were much earlier than himself. However, when he became aware that the phenomena, which control the astronomer, and mathematics compelled him to make certain assumptions even against his wishes, it was enough, he thought, if he aimed his arrows by the same method to the same target as Ptolemy, even though he employed a bow and arrows of far different type of material from Ptolemy's. At this point we should recall the saying "It is necessary that the one who sets out to philosophize be free of thought"².

¹ G.J. Rheticus, *Narratio prima*, édition critique, traduction française et commentaire par H. Hugonnard-Roche, J.-P. Verdet avec la collaboration de M.-P. Lerner et A. Segonds, Wrocław, Ossolineum, 1982, p. 41. For an English translation, see *Three Copernican Treatises: The 'Commentariolus' of Copernicus, The letter against Werner, The 'Narratio prima' of Rheticus*, trans. by E. Rosen, New York, Dover Publications, 1959, p. 108 (I have modified the translation of the motto).

² G.J. Rheticus, *Three Copernican Treatises*, cit., pp. 186 f.

Libertas philosophandi, *English Style*

Mordechai Feingold

The present essay offers a brief survey of the travails of philosophical liberty in England during the first few decades of the seventeenth century, culminating with the foundation of the Royal Society in 1660. Focusing on metaphors used by the proponents of the new science it seeks to flesh out the extent to which the invocation of a purported papal cultural tyranny – especially in the aftermath of the condemnations of heliocentrism in 1616, and of Galileo in 1633 – enabled English savants to promote, and to legitimate, their own enterprise.

Keywords: *Libertas philosophandi, England, Science and Religion, John Wilkins, Spinoza.*

No sooner did John Rainolds commence lecturing in 1573 on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, than he promised his auditors some fireworks. In the course of expounding on the treatise, "it will often be necessary for me to disagree with learned men. I wish to make it clear from the beginning that I have no desire for controversy, but only for the truth". As 'a publike Teacher', the young master of arts declared, he was enjoined "to deliver sound and true opinions, not errors in the expounding of Authors". Consequently, Rainolds reiterated in a subsequent lecture, he felt "bound to disagree with whomever [he] must for the sake of truth"; "Plato is a friend, Socrates is a friend, and Aristotle is a friend, but the dearest of all friends is the truth. For this reason, I shall freely speak what I truly think". And while mindful of the corrosive effects of controversy, Rainolds preferred to follow Chrysostom: "Never prefer concord to truth"¹.

What has such seeming commitment to a freedom of opinion to do with Spinoza's vaunted *Libertas philosophandi*? Very little, most historians and philosophers would shrug. The vision of the hero-

¹ J. Rainolds, *John Rainolds's Oxford Lectures on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, trans. Lawrence D. Green, Newark, NJ, University of Delaware Press, 1986, pp. 103, 125, 313. John Rainolds, *An Excellent Oration of That Late Famously Learned John Rainolds, D.D. And Lecturer of the Greek Tongue in Oxford Very Usefull for All Such as Affect the Studies of Logick and Philosophie, and Admire Profane Learning*, trans. John Leycester, London, Thomas Harper for Thomas Slater and William Aderton, 1638, p. 3.

ic and solitary Spinoza, who cut his own path, and made little use of writings of others, remains pervasive. However, as recent scholarship has demonstrated, Spinoza, like other hyped Enlightenment radicals, was indebted to humanist scholars, ecclesiastical historians, and Biblical exegetes – indeed, often unaware that certain of his ideas had been anticipated by orthodox Christian scholars². Can similar influences be argued for Spinoza's utilization of *Libertas philosophandi*? Certainly, by now scholars are aware that Spinoza did not coin the phrase. They are also aware that such coinage did not originate with that proto-radical Tommaso Campanella. Rather, credit is due to an obscure professor of logic at the University of Valencia, Juan Bautista Monllor, who had incorporated the phrase into an oration he delivered in 1568 – two years before his death – and was published in 1591³.

Monllor introduced the phrase in order to argue that while Aristotle remains an unsurpassed authority in logic, he should not be treated any differently than other authors in the domain of natural philosophy. Nevertheless, as Anita Traninger has argued in an excellent chronicle of the pre-history of the phrase, neither Monllor nor other contemporary university professors imbued the slogan with revolutionary connotations; *philosophice loqui* was not conceived as an unbridled denunciation of authority. The critical stance exhibited by university professors was informed by a desire to integrate, not to negate, convinced as they were that concerted probing would harmonize divergent opinions. In this respect, the early modern period was heir to the medieval *libertas scholastica* – a freedom of discussion conferred on members of institutions of higher learning. Such freedom, however, denoted a privilege granted exclusively to members of a corporation, not a license for autonomy of mind, and considerable restrictions were imposed on the scope of deviant utterances. Spinoza's *libertas philosophandi* drew heavily on

² A. Grafton, *Good Company: Spinoza the Traditionalist and Some Unexpected Friends*, in W. Doniger, P. Galison, and S. Neiman (eds.), *What Reason Promises. Essays on Reason, Nature, and History*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2016, pp. 178-185. D. Levitin, *From Sacred History to the History of Religion: Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity in European Historiography from Reformation to "Enlightenment"*, "The Historical Journal", 55 (2012), pp. 1117-1160.

³ J.B. Monllor, *De Utilitate Analyseos Seu Ratiocinationis Aristoteleae & Philosopho Veritatem Potius Esse Amplectendam, Quam Personarum Delectum Habendam*, in *De Aristotelis Doctrina Orationes Philosophicae Tres*, Frankfurt/Main, Joann Wechel and Peter Fischer, 1591, p. 97.

La réserve des classiques et le problème des convictions

Denis Kambouchner

Libertas philosophandi is only claimed where it is restricted, incomplete or fragile. The awareness that many authors of the 16th-18th centuries had of the gap between what can be conceived and what it is prudent to declare constitutes, together with all subsequent practices, what can be called their reserve. Together with the historical distance of languages, contexts and belief systems, this contributes to making the problem of access to these authors' 'true beliefs' an especially thorny one, at least on the face of it – especially, of course, in matters of religion. With reference to Quentin Skinner's famous contributions, and recalling the way in which the problem arises in Montaigne, Descartes, Hobbes and Spinoza, I try to show that the main interpretive issues concerning these authors are not related to unexpressed thoughts, but always to the complexity of the very things that were to be understood, and therefore to the limits of what can be called their convictions.

Keywords: *Descartes, Dissimulation, Interpretation, Hobbes, Montaigne, Religion, Spinoza.*

1.

Les remarques qui suivent se rapportent à une donnée historique que nous connaissons tous : la conscience qu'ont eu les auteurs des siècles dont nous nous occupons, un très grand nombre d'entre eux sinon tous sans exception, de l'écart entre ce qui peut ou pouvait être pensé et ce qui peut ou pouvait être dit sans imprudence.

Cette donnée est de l'ordre de l'évidence. Celle-ci tient à l'existence, dans l'Europe desdits siècles, de multiples dispositifs de surveillance et de censure de la chose imprimée et du discours public et, le cas échéant, de persécution de leurs auteurs, sur fond d'affrontements et de déchirements confessionnels, de combat des autorités contre toutes les formes supposées d'athéisme, de rivalités institutionnelles et de controverses de toutes sortes.

Il y a lieu, encore et toujours, d'être fasciné par la complexité des conditions, des institutions et des pratiques avec lesquelles l'Europe est entrée dans la civilisation de l'imprimé, ou a constitué une telle civilisation. Parmi les objets de cette fascination, l'on doit compter, tout près des raffinements apportés à la présentation de soi et à l'art

politique, ceux qui ont été apportés à l'art d'écrire, moyennant en particulier toute une nouvelle méditation sur l'héritage des grands théoriciens anciens de la rhétorique.

Ces développements sont maintenant d'assez longue date bien étudiés. Il reste indispensable à cet égard de prononcer le nom de Leo Strauss, dont les théories provocantes sur l'art d'écrire des philosophes ont rencontré maintes objections, ce qui n'a pas empêché qu'elles fécondent, avec les révisions utiles, un grand nombre d'études, y compris récentes, sur la pratique de la dissimulation qui a été celle de nombreux auteurs, notamment au XVII^e siècle. Les auteurs dits libertins, qui ont beaucoup perfectionné certains aspects de cette pratique, ont fait l'objet d'un tout nouvel intérêt, de même que les œuvres d'un Torquato Accetto ou d'un Baltasar Gracián, dont les maximes apparaissent caractéristiques des esprits avisés de ces siècles. Nous restons fascinés par ces raffinements, et si l'on attachait de l'intérêt à ce genre d'étiquettes, on pourrait dire, ou peu s'en faut, que l'âge classique, d'âge de la représentation, est devenu dans l'esprit de beaucoup – historiens de la philosophie, de la culture ou de la littérature – *l'âge de la dissimulation*.

Il faut dire « beaucoup » et non pas « tous », car il n'y a en fait en la matière ni unanimité, ni même culture partagée.

D'une part, la conscience et l'examen de l'écart subsistant chez les auteurs dont nous nous occupons entre ce qui est dit et ce qui a pu être pensé ne sont pas entrés dans les mœurs académiques au point d'inspirer l'ensemble des études sur ces sujets. Un certain nombre de ces études abordent encore les écrits dont nous parlons au premier degré, comme exprimant directement la pensée de leurs auteurs, sans mettre en œuvre aucune interrogation de type pragmatique, ni témoigner de la moindre conscience de la nécessité d'une telle interrogation. Le fait que l'écart entre ce qui peut être pensé et ce qui peut être dit varie selon les matières, qu'il soit maximal dans les matières religieuses, morales et politiques, et minimal, par exemple, dans la logique ou dans certaines parties de la philosophie naturelle, n'explique pas seul une telle indifférence : au-delà des différences de nature et de structure entre les contextes impliqués dans l'étude de telle question et de telle autre, il y va, en dernière instance, d'une sensibilité à la dimension politique de la pensée philosophique en général. En tout état de cause, il est dommage que le principe avancé par Quentin Skinner dans son célèbre article de 1969, *Meaning*

Libertas Philosophandi in the 17th Century. Some preliminary remarks¹

Daniel Garber

In this essay I explore not the freedom of philosophical expression in the seventeenth century, but some of the reasons for the opposition to libertas philosophandi. After noting briefly the cases of Giordano Bruno and Galileo Galilei, I turn to two lesser known cases where philosophers were prevented from discussing their views in public. The first was a group of three young scholars who, in a public disputation held in Paris in August of 1624, attempted to refute Aristotle, then central to both theology and university philosophy. They were shut down by the civil authorities at the recommendation of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris, and sent out of Paris. The second was the actions, including legal action, taken against Descartes and his followers in Utrecht in the early 1640s, attempting to prevent his ideas from being taught at the University of Utrecht. The reasons for this resistance to intellectual innovation and change include fear of religious heterodoxy, the view that those who promote such novelties are more interested in personal fame than in the truth, and the resistance to changing an entrenched university curriculum, among other reasons. The claim is made that if we are to understand the arguments for libertas philosophandi, we must also understand what they were arguing against.

Keywords: Libertas philosophandi, Antoine Villon, Jean-Baptiste Morin, Descartes, Utrecht.

The question of the freedom to philosophize, the *libertas philosophandi* was a celebrated issue in the seventeenth century, widely discussed, and widely debated.

A central task of the history of philosophy is to explain why smart people held views that we now find so strange and uncongenial, to try to understand what the philosophical world looked like to our philosophical ancestors. In our round table today, we are going to explore an issue in seventeenth-century philosophy that we now find relatively unproblematic: the question of the freedom

¹ These were introductory remarks given at a session of the "Fifth Conference of the European Society for Early Modern Philosophy", meeting in Bologna on 9-11 September, 2019. The session was a round table discussion on *Libertas Philosophandi* in the seventeenth century and included remarks by Diego Donna and Pina Totaro.

to philosophize, the freedom to formulate, hold, and express the philosophical views that we think are correct. This freedom seems to us to be an obvious good, something that is beyond question. But this wasn't always so. In the seventeenth century, the freedom of thought and expression for philosophers and for scientists (the distinction wasn't made during the period) was a very important issue to articulate and to defend. So before entering into the defenses of *libertas philosophandi* in this session, I would like to reflect on why it was so necessary at the time to defend it? If it had defenses, we must suppose that it had attacks. Who attacked it and why?

There are a number of celebrated cases where philosophers and scientists were attacked for advancing views in opposition to authority. One such case is Giordano Bruno, burned at the stake on the Campo de' Fiori in Rome in 1600 after a long and complicated trial. But Bruno's is a difficult case to evaluate. Though there are many reasons why he might have been condemned and burned, it isn't at all clear exactly why he was. Was it for some theological herodoxy? Was it for his scientific views, his advocacy for an infinite universe with an infinity of planets and suns? Was it a matter of personal disputes? The unclarity of the situation makes his case somewhat difficult to use as a way of illuminating our question².

Another even more celebrated case where someone was attacked for the views he advanced is the case of Galileo. In 1632-33, Galileo was tried and convicted of teaching heliocentric doctrine in his *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo*, and placed under house arrest. Here it is clear exactly what the supposed crime was: Galileo was convicted for teaching the scientific doctrine of Copernicanism that the Roman Church forbade. This particular case was noticed by his contemporaries, including Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes and Leibniz, and widely discussed as a case of *libertas philosophandi*³.

The cases of Bruno and Galileo are often raised when discussing the *libertas philosophandi* in the period. But I would like to talk about two other cases, also important, but somewhat less well known. The first is the case of the condemnation of a group of three young schol-

² The literature on Bruno is vast. For an accessible account of his life, his trial, and his execution, see I. Rowland, *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher/Heretic*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. Chaps. 24-30 deal with his trial and execution.

³ For a useful collection of the main documents in connection with the incident, see M. Finocchiaro, *The Galileo Affair: A Documentary History*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989.

La Libertas philosophandi contre le dogmatisme selon Pierre Gassendi

Delphine Bellis

This paper intends to show that, from the beginning of his philosophical career, Pierre Gassendi borrowed the notion of libertas philosophandi from Cicero. This is a clue to the constructive role of Academic philosophy in the forging of Gassendi's thought and allows us to challenge various interpretations according to which Gassendi was first a Pyrrhonian before becoming a mitigated skeptic. The freedom to philosophize was conceived by Gassendi not as a way to challenge religious authorities, but as a method against any sort of philosophical dogmatism, inviting us to choose the most probable explanations of natural phenomena and allowing us to revise our opinions in case of new experimental evidence.

Keywords: Pierre Gassendi, Libertas philosophandi, Skepticism, Cicero, Probable.

À rebours des interprétations qui font de Gassendi un philosophe pyrrhonien qui aurait adouci son scepticisme de jeunesse pour le faire évoluer vers une forme mitigée proche de celle de Marin Mersenne¹, nous souhaitons montrer que l'anti-dogmatisme de Gassendi puise, dès ses premières œuvres, à une source cicéronienne à laquelle il reprend la promotion de la *libertas philosophandi*. Il ne s'agit pas là d'un simple outil sceptique contre les Aristotéliens, mais de ce qui définit profondément et constamment la démarche philosophique de Gassendi dès ses premiers travaux jusqu'à son *opus magnum* publié de façon posthume, le *Syntagma philosophicum*. Si Gassendi fait usage d'arguments pyrrhoniens en particulier pour attaquer les thèses aristotéliennes, cette fonction opératoire ne doit pas nous masquer le rôle de la philosophie académique pour la constitution de sa philosophie propre. Dès le début de sa réflexion philosophique, Gassendi se dote ainsi des outils qui lui permettront de dépasser la suspension pyrrhonienne du jugement et d'élaborer une connaissance de la nature comme connais-

¹ Richard Popkin qualifie ainsi Gassendi d'« avowed Pyrrhonist » (*The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1979, p. 84). Sur l'évolution de Gassendi dans son rapport au pyrrhonisme, voir également T. Gregory, *Genèse de la raison classique de Charron à Descartes*, Paris, PUF, 2000, p. 173.

sance approchée et recherche des causes les plus probables des phénomènes grâce à l'expérience. Gassendi fait donc sienne la *libertas philosophandi* cicéronienne bien plus que l'époque pyrrhonienne. Pour autant, cette liberté se déploie dans les limites de la connaissance rationnelle et ne saurait empiéter sur le domaine de la foi.

1. *La libertas philosophandi contre le dogmatisme des Aristotéliens*

Le premier ouvrage publié par Gassendi en 1624, le livre I des *Exercitationes paradoxicae adversus Aristoteleos*, constitue une attaque virulente, nourrie d'arguments sceptiques, contre la philosophie aristotélicienne. Si certains commentateurs ont considéré que Gassendi y embrassait la philosophie pyrrhonienne, il faut plutôt considérer qu'il s'agit d'un ouvrage polémique dans lequel le pyrrhonisme fonctionne d'abord comme un réservoir d'arguments pouvant être utilisés contre la philosophie aristotélicienne. Cet ouvrage n'est pas révélateur d'une « crise pyrrhonienne² » que traverserait alors le chanoine de Digne, mais il comporte en revanche des éléments qui annoncent sa philosophie ultérieure et qui permettent d'envisager un dépassement de la suspension pyrrhonienne du jugement en direction d'une connaissance de la nature reposant sur les observations et la recherche du plus probable³. Ce n'est donc pas tant parce qu'elle proposerait un ensemble de doctrines fausses ou incertaines que Gassendi s'oppose à la philosophie aristotélicienne, mais bien parce que celle-ci, de façon certes paradoxale, risque de rendre impossible le déploiement d'un authentique projet philosophique de connaissance de la nature. En effet, la critique centrale que Gassendi adresse aux Aristotéliens ne porte pas sur le contenu de leur doctrine, mais bien sur leur dogmatisme sclérosant et autoritaire qui voudrait empêcher que l'on pense différemment des doctrines imputées à Aristote. Dans la préface, Gassendi résume comme suit le livre I de ses *Exercitationes* : « l'on discute contre la manière de philosopher qu'ils admettent communément, et surtout l'on reven-

² Cette expression est employée par R. Popkin : *The History of Skepticism*, cit.

³ Sur ce point, nous nous permettons de renvoyer à notre texte : « Nos in Diem Vivimus » : *Gassendi's Probabilism and Academic Philosophy from Day to Day*, in S. Charles et P. Junqueira Smith (dir.), *Academic Scepticism in the Development of Early Modern Philosophy*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2017, pp. 125-152.

Filosofare liberamente a Leida.

Adriaan Heereboord, Johannes de Raey, Henricus Bornius

Antonella del Prete

*In the mid-seventeenth century in Leiden, themes developed in different though often close intellectual environments converged around the claim of the *libertas philosophandi*. Among them we can find the search for the autonomy of philosophy from theology; the refusal the faithfulness to Aristotelian dictates; the development of a confessional identity affecting philosophy; the commitment to Cartesian thought, caused by purely intellectual reasons or by choices involving academic politics. Such is the background, enhanced by elements concerning mostly the reflection upon the relationship between religious and civil authorities, on which Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-politicus* will stand out shortly thereafter.*

Keywords: *Libertas philosophandi, Philosophy and Theology, Dutch Cartesianism, Leiden University, Adriaan Heereboord; Johannes de Raey, Henricus Bornius.*

I Paesi Bassi del Seicento sono un laboratorio intellettuale, politico e sociale anche per quanto riguarda la *libertas philosophandi*. L'attenzione in genere si appunta a ragione sul *Tractatus theologico-politicus* di Spinoza; ma nel 1670 il tema e il sintagma hanno già una storia che mescola elementi diversi e li inserisce in dibattiti complessi e a tratti estremamente vivaci, che vedono l'intervento anche di attori esterni all'ambito prettamente intellettuale.

Un precedente può essere sicuramente rintracciato nei contrasti, talora accesi, che opposero i filosofi e i teologi medievali alle autorità ecclesiastiche, o che li contrapposero gli uni agli altri, in particolare in occasione dell'introduzione della filosofia aristotelica nelle università. Gli studi disponibili non sembrano attestare la presenza del sintagma *libertas philosophandi* ma mostrano che la difesa della libertà è accompagnata dalla percezione che la filosofia può evolvere, e che dunque sia compito dei filosofi indagare in modo da scegliere le teorie migliori; che questa libertà debba essere garantita nell'ambito della grammatica, della logica, e della fisica; che queste rivendicazioni, a seconda del contesto storico, sono dirette con-

tro le autorità ecclesiastiche o contro le facoltà di teologia, che invece intervengono con condanne dottrinali o altre forme di censura¹.

Gli studi dedicati alla *libertas philosophandi*, tuttavia, delineano una storia che si dipana su un arco temporale molto più breve, che parte dal Cinquecento. Si comincia con la citazione di un filosofo platonico, Alcino, che troviamo in alcuni testi fondamentali della nuova astronomia: la *Narratio prima* di Rheticus; la *Dissertatio cum Nuncio sidereo* di Keplero; il *Discorso intorno alle cose che stanno in sull'acqua* di Galilei; la traduzione latina dei *Dialoghi sui massimi sistemi* di Galilei, infine, che l'accompagna con una citazione dalle *Naturales quaestiones* di Seneca. Il testo originale di Alcino parla di uomo *eleutherios*, ma la frase viene parafrasata da Galileo come segue: «è verissima la sentenza di Alcino che 'Il filosofare vuol esser libero'»². Di che libertà si tratta? Quella di giudicare seguendo solo la propria ragione e il proprio giudizio: in questo contesto la libertà coincide con una difesa delle dottrine copernicane. La cosa è ancora più evidente se consideriamo le tracce che di questo tema si trovano nelle opere di Galileo: sebbene nei *Dialoghi* si parli di libertà filosofica, o di parlare liberamente, i riferimenti più cogenti sono l'invito, poche pagine oltre, a liberarsi dalla schiavitù dell'ossequio a questo o quel filosofo naturale e l'elogio del libero filosofare sulle cose naturali, fondato addirittura dalla Bibbia, che Galileo formula della *Lettera a Cristina di Lorena*³.

In un contesto intellettuale simile si situa anche l'*Apologia pro Galileo* di Campanella, che viene considerata il primo scritto espressamente dedicato alla difesa della *libertas philosophandi*. La posizione di Campanella è decisamente degna di attenzione, perché la sua difesa della libertà di filosofare non coincide con una condivisione delle dottrine copernicane, che rimasero sempre per lui difficili da concili-

¹ Tra i molti studi sul tema, si vedano L. Bianchi, *Censure, liberté et progrès intellectuel à l'Université de Paris au XIII^e siècle*, «Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen-Âge», LXIII (1996), pp. 45-93; A. de Libera, *Philosophie et censure. Remarques sur la crise universitaire parisienne de 1270-1277*, in J.A. Aertsen e A. Speer (a cura di), *Was ist Philosophie in Mittelalter? Qu'est-ce que la philosophie au Moyen-Âge? What is philosophy in the Middle Ages?*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1998, pp. 71-89.

² G. Galileo, *Opere*, Edizione Nazionale a cura di A. Favaro, Firenze, Barbera, 1890-1909, vol. IV, p. 65.

³ G. Galileo, *Opere*, cit., vol. V, pp. 320-321, ma si legga anche la lettera al Signor Tolomeo Nozzolini, *Opere*, vol. v, p. 297. Su questo percorso si vedano R.B. Sutton, *The Phrase Libertas Philosophandi*, «Journal of the History of Ideas», XIV (1953), pp. 310-316. Su Galileo e la lettera a Cristina di Lorena cfr. A. Damanti, *Libertas philosophandi. Teologia e filosofia nella Lettera alla Granduchessa Cristina di Lorena di Galileo Galilei*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2010.

Leviathan in the Classroom. State and University in Thomas Hobbes

Francesco Cerrato

*The expression *Libertas philosophandi* does not appear in the *Leviathan*. Yet, Hobbes deals with the topic of the confrontation of ideas between men when he debates both on the “state of nature” and on civil society. After an analysis of the concepts elaborated in the first part of the *Leviathan*, in order to clarify the link between intellectual dialogue and human passions, this essay investigates the relationships that must be established between Civil State and Universities, which is the topic of chapter XLVI entitled “Of Darknesse from vain Philosophy, and Fabulous Traditions”.*

Keywords: *Science, Universities, Libertas philosophandi, State, Nature, Natural Wit.*

1. *Virtue, Wit and Science*

Which notion of *libertas philosophandi* can we trace in the *Leviathan*, given that this expression does not appear in the text? This is the question I will try to answer in this paper. First of all, I propose some considerations regarding the way Hobbes presents the discussion of opinions in the “state of nature”, the condition preceding the institution of political order. The premise for a better understanding of the different roles the “state power” is called for, both in the field of scientific research and in academic teaching, is to consider the features assumed by the exchange of ideas before the contract, within a relational dynamics where only “the right of nature” (“*jus in omnia*”) is effective. I will concentrate on these issues, and, in particular, on the analysis of chapter XLVI, whose title is “Of Darknesse from vain Philosophy, and Fabulous Traditions”.

In order to verify the characteristics of the exchange of ideas in the “state of nature”, I start from chapter VIII, where Hobbes provides the definition of virtue. Virtue is the Other’s recognition of a quality we own. As Hobbes writes: “vertue generally, in all sorts of subjects, is somewhat that is valued for eminence; and consisteth in comparison. For if all things were equally in all men, nothing would

be prized"¹. Further on, Hobbes considers intellectual virtue: "vertues intellectuall, are always understood such abilities of the mind, as men praise, value, and desire should be in themselves"². Hobbes continues: "they go commonly under the name of a good witte". "These vertues are of two sorts; naturall, and acquired"³. Natural virtues only derive from natural wit, that is "that witte, which is gotten by use only, and experience"⁴.

This natural wit defines itself according to two main characteristics. Firstly, what Hobbes defines as "celerity of imagining, (that is a swift succession of one thought to another) and steady direction to some approved end"⁵. Secondly, natural wit is also defined as "good fancy", namely the ability to establish links between things, to identify similarities and differences. In order to be effective, this ability will have to be accompanied by a "good judgment", that is a good skill in "distinguishing, and discerning, and judging"⁶.

Besides the imaginative ability, which clearly consists, as emerges from the quotation, in the strength to elaborate reasoning, discussions, inductions and deductions, intellectual virtue is judged by Hobbes in relation to its capacity to produce effects⁷. This means that the ability to imagine and judge is not the only one to create intellectual virtue, since it also needs the accomplishment of a purpose through the force of will. In order to have intellectual virtue, it is always appropriate that: "besides the discretion of times, places, and persons, necessary to a good fancy, there is required also an often application of his thoughts to their End"⁸.

Since Hobbes defines intellectual natural virtues this way, we come closer to identifying what livens up the scientific discourse and discussion. However, those virtues can always be increased

¹ T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. N. Malcolm, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2012, 3 voll., vol. II, p. 104. For a reconstruction of the notion of wit in Hobbes's philosophy and, in general, in English culture in the early modern age, see: P. Withington, *Tumbled into the Dirt: Wit and Incivility in Early Modern England*, "Journal of Historical Pragmatics", 12 (2011), 1-2, pp. 156-177; R.D. Lund, *Wit, Judgment, and the Misprisions of Similitude*, "Journal of the History of Ideas", 65 (2004), 1 pp. 53-74.

² *Ibidem*.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, cit., p. 106.

⁷ On the Hobbesian notion of virtue and on the difference with the Aristotelian one, see: P. Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 1999, pp. 35-73.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

How to prevent repression: Equality and Natural Right in Hobbes, Spinoza, and some critics

Fiormichele Benigni

The natural equality of men is a primary and incontrovertible fact with which modern political theory has to deal. The awareness of the “original” power of individuals thus pushes Hobbes to outline a theory of the limits of power (and of the “duties of the sovereign”), which Spinoza translates into a republican and democratic political proposal. The themes of libertas philosophandi, repression and cultural control (which we study through some disputationes academicae written against Spinoza in the 18th century) can be read as a metaphor for the changes that new social and political subjectivities impose on modernity.

Keywords: Spinoza, Hobbes, Musaeus, Staalkopf, Disputationes.

1. *Equality and limits of power: Hobbes and Spinoza*

In *De cive*, Hobbes provides what can be considered the clearest summary of the 17th century theoretical framework of natural law. In the state of nature, all individuals have an unlimited right to everything (*ius in omnia*). However, this generates a condition of conflict so severe that it forces the individuals themselves to negotiate a rational way out, one that safeguards the original right of men but also gives sovereignty to a State able to ensure peace.

This model is based on an assumption of the original equality of men: in the state of nature, everyone is an equal possessor of fundamental and inalienable rights, but, moved by self-interest and desire for glory, each individual constitutes a potential threat to the life and security of others. Indeed, it is precisely the instinctive awareness of this equality that moves men to leave the state of nature, transferring their natural rights to an absolute sovereign and, as is well known, *ipso facto* renouncing any right of resistance.

From what has been said it is perfectly clear that in every complete commonwealth (i.e. a commonwealth in which no citizen has the Right to use his strength at his own discretion to protect himself, or in which the *right of the private sword* is excluded), there is somewhere a *sovereign power*, the greatest power that men can confer, greater than any power that an indi-

vidual can have over himself. The greatest power that men can transfer to a man we call ABSOLUTE power¹.

However, despite a long and rich interpretative tradition according to which Hobbes theorizes an absolute, monolithic and flawless state, in *De cive* the birth of the “political” is not by any means premised on a total removal of the “natural”. For all the sharpness of some of Hobbes’ expressions, the transfer of individual rights to the Sovereign does not seem to be really complete, nor definitively guaranteed.

Some of Hobbes’ remarks leave very little room for doubt: “it is one thing to say, *I give you the right to command whatever you wish*, another to say, *I will do whatever you command*”. Between “the right of sovereign power” and its *de facto* “exercise”, in fact, the balance of power is played out: as per a well-known example, it is a full right of the king to order me to kill myself, but I’m “not obliged to do so”; similarly, it may be right to order a child “to kill a parent”, but the order must come up against the fact that “a son may prefer to die rather than live in infamy and loathing”. Surprisingly, in both cases the full legitimacy of the command given within civil society is forced to measure itself with the harshness of the “laws of nature”, that is, in the Hobbesian lexicon, with what “right reason” “requires” of everyone², of men who care about their lives, or their glory, more than anything else.

The reality is that the pact establishing sovereignty in no way affects the anthropological facts. As animals who become subjects, individuals for Hobbes are no less governed by their own needs and interests, and the logic that guides their actions is still that of egoistic self-interest and cost-benefit reasoning. The function of the State must then consist in containing natural impulses, avoiding their uncontrolled explosions by means of clever balancing acts. Of course, it is theoretically conceded that in any case a sovereign has “legitimately” the absolute power to steal, dispossess, and kill.

¹ T. Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, ed. by R. Tuck and M. Silverthorne, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1998. From now on, I will cite it with DC, followed by the chapter and paragraph (here: DC VI, 13). For a general overview of Hobbes on this topic, see (also for the bibliography) L. Foisneau, *Hobbes. La vie inquiète*, Paris, Gallimard, 2016. See also F. Toto, *Potere e diritto, democrazia e anarchia nel De cive di Hobbes*, “Scienza & Politica”, XXXI, 60 (2019), pp. 157-184. A special acknowledgement to Francesco Toto, Leonardo Moauro and to Gianni Paganini, director of my research on *theses academicæ* at the University of Eastern Piedmont (2018-2020).

² *Ibidem*.

Superstition, Sedition, and Freedom in Spinoza's Res Publica

Francesca di Poppa

There is a tension in Spinoza between a definition of superstition that makes it inherently seditious (and therefore subject to the limitations that Spinoza sets for freedom of speech) and his justification for freedom of speech in Theological Political Treatise. Here, I will explain the tension based on an interpretation of superstition I have defended in previous work; then I will show how Spinoza was aware that suppression of superstition vis-à-vis its being seditious may promote, rather than prevent, instability. Finally, I will explore how Spinoza's tenets of universal faith are attempts to inoculate a society against the spread of superstitious beliefs and offer a few suggestions on a secular alternative to Spinoza's tenets of faith.

Keywords: *Spinoza, Philosophy, Ethics, Religion, Politics.*

1. *Superstition*

In 2017, I argued that Spinoza's use of the term "superstition" in TTP¹ is quite unique, as opposed to the use of the term in *Ethics*². In the latter, the opposition is between superstition and true religion; in the former, Spinoza defines "superstition" in political terms, as the kind of religious attitude that undermines allegiance to one's government. As I have shown, scholarly interpretations of Spinoza's concept of superstition focus on epistemic or psychological features: the basic idea is that superstitious attitudes consist of false beliefs about the Deity accompanied by antisocial passions. The problem is that this reading is not consistent with TTP: false beliefs about the deity, and even intolerance, are praised as piety when conducive to obedience to the law, as shown in Spinoza's discussion of Moses' leadership in TTP 17. Even Spinoza's own tenets of universal faith in TTP 14 contain untruths, such as the appeal to the notion of God

¹ From now on, TTP. All citations from Spinoza are from *Spinoza Complete Works*, trans. by S. Shirley. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by M.L. Morgan, Indianapolis, Hackett Academic Publishing, 2002; from now on Shirley, followed by page number.

² F. di Poppa, *Diagnosing Superstition: Superstition and Piety in Spinoza's Political Philosophy*, in M. Adams, Z. Biene, U. Feest, J. Sullivan (eds.), *Eppur si muove: Doing History and Philosophy of Science with Peter Machamer*, The Western Ontario Series in Philosophy of Science, vol 81, Cham., Springer, 2017.

as a judge, while in *Ethics* this notion is proven to be both false and harmful³.

As the discussion in TTP shows, then, “superstition” is a political concept, the content of which can vary. What counts as superstition in the 17th century Dutch republic is quite different from Moses’ Jewish state, or in a 21st century Western democracy. What is necessary and sufficient for superstition is that it poses demands of obedience that compete with the only legitimate demands of obedience: the government’s. Just like Hobbes, Spinoza is worried about the destabilizing effect that certain religious attitudes have on a state; contrary to Hobbes, Spinoza is aware of the many way in which strict censorship can backfire. Under Moses, or in an Islamic state (in Spinoza’s simplistic and inaccurate reading of Islam), censorship and religious uniformity are conducive to a stable government.⁴ However, in a relatively diverse state such as the 17th century Dutch Republic, a state that only a few decades before had fought against Spanish oppression, attempts on the part of Reformed Calvinism to hijack the government, and use it to enforce its orthodoxy on the whole population, are seen by Spinoza as potentially catastrophic⁵. His concerns are personal as well as political: expelled by a religious minority forced to aggressively police itself in order to keep existing in a Christian country, and then having his friend Adriaen Koerbagh die in prison, where he was sentenced because of his philosophical writings, it was clear to Spinoza that superstition endangered his own life as well as the peace and prosperity of the Dutch Republic. In TTP 18, his discussion of how the thriving Mosaic state collapsed after the priests obtained the power to issue decrees, thus competing with the government for the obedience of its subjects, is intended as a warning against the growth in power of the Reformed.

³ It is true that, in TTP 14, Spinoza insists on the maximum latitude of interpretations of such tenets, as long as it is conducive to obedience.

⁴ See the mention of the Ottoman Empire in the Preface to TTP.

⁵ Among much literature on the Dutch religious and political controversies, see J. Israel. *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall. 1477-1808*, Oxford, Oxford U.P., 1995, and *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 2002, and Israel’s *Introduction to Spinoza, Theological-Political Treatise*, edited by J. Israel, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 2007; S. James, *Spinoza on Philosophy, Religion, and Politics. The Theologico-Political Treatise*, Oxford, Oxford U.P. 2012; M. Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Golden Age*, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 2005; S. Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2018 (2nd ed.).

“He was in the world, and the world did not know him”.
Spinoza’s Christ and the Freedom of Philosophy

Diego Donna

Scholars have studied the figure of Christ within the Theological-Political Treatise for quite some time, as a symbol of the riddle that runs through Spinoza’s reflection on freedom of thought. Christ is placed by Spinoza at the centre of a specific problem in the Treatise, also reflected in the Ethics, which is: if freedom consists in adequately understanding our nature and the nature in which we are included, why is this understanding so difficult to reach for most of mankind? What kind of philosophical and political obstacles stand in the way of reaching intellectual perfection? As we shall see, Spinoza’s Christ incarnates this riddle, which is individual and collective at the same time, and corresponds to the distinction between the philosopher and common people.

Keywords: *Spinoza, Christ, Freedom of Philosophy, Imagination, Intellect.*

Introduction

In this contribution I will deal with the problem of freedom of thought, taking Spinoza as my starting point. I would like, however, to choose a specific and perhaps unusual perspective: the thesis I will set out is that the tension between imagination and intellect, expressed by the figure of Christ, lies at the root of Spinoza’s philosophical research. What’s more, it reflects the distance between common people and those who can gain access to the truth of philosophy.

In the *Theological-Political Treatise* Spinoza does not propose in any way to subordinate theology to philosophy, but indicates them as two separate and legitimate paths towards salvation, each operating in its own realm¹. And things could not be otherwise, considering the “uncertain and risky” conditions that dominate the everyday life of men, as Spinoza writes in chapter fifteen of the *Treatise*².

¹ Cfr. *Tractatus theologico-politicus* [TTP], 5, 15, *Opera*, 4 vols., III, ed. C. Gebhardt, Heidelberg, 1925 [G.], pp. 77, 188; [*Theological-Political Treatise*, in E. Curley (ed.), *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, 2 vols., II, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2016] [C.].

² Cfr. TTP, 15, G. III, p. 187: “Quare hoc totius theologiae et Scripturae fundamentum, quamvis mathematica demonstratione ostendi nequeat, sano tamen iudicio amplectimur. [...] Quasi vero ad vitam sapienter instituendam, nihil tamquam verum admittamus, quod

What would be the best tool for government? If it cannot be fear, which raises the risk of political uncertainty by undermining unanimity and consent – which is essential for Spinoza –, then people must act as if they were a unified mind (*una mente*). In any case, those who are not capable of rational self-determination must still be governed³, which can be considered as a Machiavellian position: “the divinity of Scripture must be established only by the fact that it teaches true virtue”⁴. This explains why religion is extremely useful in a practical sense, even while having nothing to do with the speculative domain dedicated to the true knowledge of nature: “Euclid wrote only about things quite simple and most intelligible. Anyone can easily explain his work in any language. [...] Nor do we need to know about his life, concerns and customs [...] or the fate of its book, or its various readings”⁵.

The *Theological-Political Treatise* recognises therefore the political use of religion (faith and revelation), in line with the development of the 17th-century libertine tradition, but defends at the same time the freedom of the philosopher. Freedom of the mind is a private virtue which differs from security, which is the virtue of the State, understood as civil society’s ability to conserve itself in its own right⁶. Spinoza’s *libertas philosophandi* does not yet resemble Voltaire’s freedom of thought: the case Spinoza is defending is philosophy itself, and the genitive in the expression “freedom of philosophy” must be taken literally. It simply indicates, as Spinoza writes in the introduction to the *Treatise*, just as in his letters to Oldenburg, that the freedom of action granted to the philosopher by a sovereign, not only does not undermine social peace, but is its actual precondition.

Christ is in this sense a symbol of the division between intellect (adequate ideas) and imagination (signs and parables), much more than a reconciliation between the two. He ultimately reflects the same contradiction felt by philosophers, who reserve speculative truths for themselves when faced with the ignorance of the masses.

ulla dubitandi ratione in dubium revocari queat, aut quod pleraeque nostrae actiones non admodum incertae sint, et alea plenae”.

³ Cfr. *Tractatus Politicus* [TP], 10, § 8, G. III, p. 356.

⁴ TTP, 7, G. III, p. 99; C. p. 172.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 111; C. p. 185.

⁶ Cfr. TP, III, § 12; 5 § 1, pp. 289, 295.

Libertas Philosophandi and the First Italian Translation of Works of Spinoza

Pina Totaro

For two centuries after their publication, the works of the 'notorious atheist' Spinoza were not only never translated into Italian, but their content was known only through short and often biased summaries drawn mostly from other authors. The first work by Spinoza to be translated into Italian did not appear until 1875: this was a translation of the Theological-Political Treatise, the only original book published during the lifetime of the philosopher. This text shows how Spinoza's defense of libertas philosophandi is the element that determined and gave rise to this first Italian translation published for the first time in Italy after the abolition of the Pope's temporal power and the declaration of freedom of expression and of the press.

Keywords: *Spinoza*, *Libertas philosophandi*, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, *First Italian Translation*, *Carlo Sarchi*.

For two centuries after their publication, the works of the 'notorious atheist' Spinoza were not only never translated into Italian, but their content was known only through short and often biased summaries drawn mostly from other authors and, above all, from the entry *Spinoza* in Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. On the other hand, the inquisitors of the Congregation of the Holy Office watched carefully over the production and circulation of books, and the Roman institution condemned Spinoza's works several times by inserting them in the *Index librorum prohibitorum*. In fact, the philosopher's books were first censored in 1679 and then again in 1690; not only was their reading banned, but also simply their possession¹.

The first work by Spinoza to be translated into Italian did not appear until 1875: this was a translation of the *Theological-Political Treatise*, the only book by the philosopher to be published during

¹ Cf. P. Totaro, *Documenti su Spinoza nell'Archivio del S. Uffizio dell'Inquisizione*, "Nouvelles de la République des Lettres", I (2000), pp. 95-128.

his lifetime. It had originally been published anonymously in 1670², using a fictitious place and publisher's name. The publication of the first Italian translation in 1875 formed part of the political-cultural panorama of a recently unified Italy, marked by the struggles of the "Risorgimento" and the ending of the Papal State as well as the thousand-year-long rule of the Pope, which resulted in a new definition of relations between the State and the Church and ever stronger nation-wide aspirations for freedom of expression and religion.

On the occasion of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the so-called "Breach of Porta Pia" of 1870, with which the unification of Italy and the conquest of Rome was completed, perhaps it is useful to retrace some steps in the history of the debate over the concept of freedom – of speech, of the press and of worship – which accompanied the establishment of a secular government and the beginning of a different role for culture in the politics of the State. One of the earliest outcomes resulting from the declaration of freedom of the press, officially announced in the new Kingdom of Italy in 1870³, was, in fact, the project for an Italian translation of the *Treatise* (and later of *Ethics*), through which Spinoza's philosophy entered university and scholastic programs for the first time. This came about largely due to the efforts of Carlo Sarchi, an economist and financial expert by profession, but also a scholar and lover of philosophical studies and, above all, of "Benedetto Spinoza, for whom he had so much veneration and sympathy"⁴.

Carlo Sarchi had contributed greatly to the process of industrialization of Italy at the time⁵, but he was especially noted – as Fran-

² The *Principia philosophiae Cartesiana*, published under the author's name in 1663, they cannot be considered a completely original work. In 1875 a work by Spinoza in Italian translation was finally published for the first time in Milan, at the Printing House of Lodovico Bortolotti & C., in via di San Vincenzino, number 1 (the address is specified on the title page). A translation of Spinoza's *Ethics* edited by C. Sarchi, was also published in Milan in 1879, after the death of its editor.

³ For an accurate historical reconstruction of the events referred to here, cf. V. Vidotto, *20 Settembre 1870*, Bari-Roma, Laterza, 2020.

⁴ So we read in *Commemorazione del Socio corrispondente dell'Accademia fisico-medico-statistica Carlo Sarchi presentata nella tornata del 19 giugno 1879 dal professor Francesco Viganò*, published in the same year of Sarchi's death, in *Atti dell'Accademia fisico-medico-statistica di Milano*, Milano, Tip. Bernardoni di C. Rebeschini e C., 1879, pp. 84-92: 92. The translation from Italian in English is mine.

⁵ Sarchi was unanimously considered "one of the most effective and zealous promoters of the industrial movement of the current century" (ivi, p. 86). F. Viganò also defines him as a "great economist" and an "unchallenged patriot" (ivi, p. XXXV), as "he promoted credit institutions, companies of cotton spinning, linen, railways, salt works, factories, stearic candles,

Leibniz's Physical Explanation of Real Presence

Laurynas Adomaitis

*The major question that concerns this paper is why Leibniz moved away from his early physical system, expressed in *Theoria motus abstracti* and the *Hypothesis physica nova*. The general claim is that metaphysics together with theology was part of the reason why Leibniz abandoned it. Leibniz saw that his views on bodily action as motion and impenetrability lead to a misguided interpretation of the Eucharist. His solution was, first, to fully endorse the activity principle of individuation; second, to abandon the explanation of impenetrability through the composition of *conatus* admitting it among the basic qualities of bodies. In changing his position, Leibniz was trying to avoid falling into a similar situation in which Descartes found himself regarding the doctrine of real presence.*

Keywords: *Leibniz, Physics, Theology, Activity, Impenetrability, Real presence.*

1.

Sometime during the Paris years (1672–1676), Leibniz came to be skeptical of what he had earlier called *phoronomia elementalis*, i.e. purely abstract geometrical mechanics. The earlier model of the *Theoria motus abstracti* and the *Hypothesis physica nova* consisted of a two-level structure – an abstract theory of motion (the *Theoria motus abstracti*) and a hypothetical reconciliation of that theory with experience (the *Hypothesis physica nova*). Leibniz had argued that all mechanical phenomena can be explained through geometrical terms given the sole hypothesis of ether. While staying in Paris he came to believe that there is a fundamental flaw in this approach and that the program of abstract mechanics is essentially incomplete.

Some reasonable suggestions are found in the secondary literature about why that happened. Arthur points out: “It is only after he has formulated the differential calculus in the spring of 1676 that Leibniz comes to the realization that endeavors [sc. *conatus*] should not be conceived as actually infinitely small parts of the continuum, but as arbitrarily small, finite motions”¹. Arthur’s argument

¹ R.T.W. Arthur, *Monads, Composition, and Force: Ariadnean Threads Through Leibniz's Labyrinth*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 178.

relies on Leibniz's new knowledge in mathematics to explain why he abandoned the earlier physical system. This is also corroborated by Duchesneau:

In this first phase of his career Leibniz had recourse to particularly useless mathematical models. Even if he had discovered the geometry of indivisibles of Cavalieri, he gave it a strongly deviant interpretation, very similar to that of Hobbes. It is only during his Parisian visit from 1672 to 1676 that Leibniz will truly discover the mathematics of the moderns under the guidance of Huygens and will eventually lay the groundwork for his own infinitesimal calculus².

The consensus seems to be that Leibniz had employed misguided mathematics to build his early physics and after learning proper methods in Paris he abandoned the system. This reading certainly fits the timeline. It should be acknowledged that improved mathematics was part of the reason why Leibniz abandoned the early system.

However, without denying the importance of Leibniz's improved mathematics, we will consider another avenue: the development of his metaphysical and theological ideas in this period. During the later Parisian years, Leibniz began arguing that no consistent notion of body as a purely extended substance can be achieved and that physics based on the notion of the body as pure extension commits a metaphysical error. In a text *De vera methodo philosophiae et theologiae ac de natura corporis* (1673/75)³, Leibniz claims: "Teachings about size and figure are very much advanced [sc. in mechanical science] but they do not yet reveal the secrets of motion because they ignore metaphysics where they must be sought"⁴. It seems that the emerging change of his understanding of physics had something to do with *metaphysics* and not only (but certainly including) mathematics.

² F. Duchesneau, *La dynamique de Leibniz*, Paris, Vrin, 1994a., pp. 89-90.

³ For another reading of this text see Ch. Mercer, *Leibniz's metaphysics: its origins and development*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 82-84. Mercer emphasizes Leibniz's awareness that most Cartesians went out of their way to avoid the mystery of the Eucharist and that, therefore, their physical theories were to be rejected. Ch. Mercer, *Leibniz's Metaphysics*, cit., p. 83: "In other words, the physics of Gassendi and Descartes violate the requirements of the Council of Trent and are to be rejected on those grounds".

⁴ In what follows, Leibniz's collected writings are quoted according to the following standard convention: A = G.W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*. Herausgegeben von der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Darmstadt, 1923 ff., Leipzig, 1938 ff., Berlin, 1950 ff., series 6, volume 3, p. 157.

Truth and Toleration in Early Modern Thought

Maria Rosa Antognazza

This paper identifies and revisits early modern models of religious toleration, focusing on the relationship between truth and toleration. It argues that, from a theoretical point of view, the culprit in intolerance is not belief in some objective truth per se, thereby challenging some common assumptions. After discussing approaches based on the rights of the individual conscience and on the unknowability of religious truths above human reason, it investigates whether grounds for a general and principled theory of toleration can be found in religious truth itself and, following the tradition of natural law, in some universal truth discoverable by natural reason.

Keywords: Religious Toleration, Religious Truth, Golden Rule, Natural Law, Natural Reason.

*Introduction*¹

This paper identifies and revisits early modern models of religious toleration, focusing on the relationship between truth and toleration. I will argue that, from a theoretical point of view, the culprit in intolerance is not belief in some objective truth per se. Some common assumptions – about the denial of religious truth, or about the reduction of religious truth to a minimal creed as the best ways to achieve universal toleration – will be challenged. Likewise, the narrative, centred on England and France, which has led to the celebration of the heroes of a supposedly “universal” toleration that still manages to exclude millions of people will be shown to be in need of significant revision². After discussing approaches based on the rights of the individual conscience and on the unknowability of reli-

¹ This paper is a revised, briefer version of *Truth and Toleration in Early Modern Thought*, published in I. Hunter and R. Whatmore (eds.), *Philosophy, Rights and Natural Law*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2019, pp. 36-70. Thanks are due to the editors of the volume and to the publisher for allowing me to reproduce this material. I am grateful to Howard Hotson for his insightful feedback.

² In an interesting and sophisticated discussion of Leibniz and toleration, Mogens Lærke follows the current historiographical consensus in taking Locke, Spinoza, and Bayle as the reference point of a modern conception of toleration. Compared to these “paradigmatic early modern thinkers of toleration”, it is claimed, Leibniz’s approach to toleration falls short (M. Lærke, *Virtual Union, the Seeds of Hatred, and the Fraternal Joining of Hands: Leibniz and Toler-*

gious truths above human reason, the paper will finally investigate whether grounds for a general and principled theory of toleration can be found in religious truth itself and, following the tradition of natural law, in some universal truth discoverable by natural reason.

1. *The denial of religious truth as a path to toleration*

With the outbreak of the Protestant reformation in the early sixteenth century, the clash between diverse religious communities and their systems of beliefs and values intensified. If the horror of early modern wars and persecutions originated from disagreement about the objective truth of some fine points of theology, it is tempting to conclude that one straight-forward way to avoid such disasters in the future would be the elimination of the very notion of religious truth. This is the path to religious toleration followed, for instance, by Baruch Spinoza³. Spinoza had himself suffered persecution at the hands of his own Jewish community. Excommunicated on 27 July 1656 by the Sephardic community of Amsterdam, he was banned from the synagogue for his “evil ways”, “abominable heresies”, and “monstrous deeds”. As a result, no one was to “communicate with him, neither in writing, nor accord him any favour nor stay with him under the same roof nor come within four cubits in his vicinity; nor [...] read any treatise composed or written by him”⁴.

In the event, plenty of people did read the treatise published anonymously by Spinoza in 1670 under the title of *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Against the backdrop of the developing metaphysical theses of his *Ethica*, Spinoza advocated the most radical separation between faith and reason, theology and philosophy. Truth, he argued, belongs only to philosophy; faith and theology are concerned instead only with obedience and piety:

tion, “Journal of Modern Philosophy”, 1, 1 (2019), 6, pp. 1-17. One of the aims of my discussion is to show that this widely endorsed historiography is in need of revision.

³ In an interesting article comparing Spinoza and Lodewijk Meyer on the issue of toleration, Jacqueline Lagrée argues that Spinoza, qua philosopher, is not especially tolerant since he thinks to know what is true. However, in her view, Spinoza can be tolerant as a “theologian” precisely because he firmly separates theology (or faith) and truth. See J. Lagrée, *Théologie et Tolérance: Louis Meyer et Spinoza*, “Revue de théologie et de philosophie”, 134 (2002), 1, pp. 15-28.

⁴ Quoted from S. Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 120-121.

PART II
Eighteenth Century

Anthony Collins' Conception of Free-Thinking in the Discourse of Free-Thinking

Richard Glauser

I examine Collins' definition of free-thinking, his further claim that free-thinking is a natural right, and two arguments in favour of free-thinking. I argue that Collins' notion of free-thinking as a natural right also involves a natural, epistemic duty, implicit in the normative content of the definition.

Keywords: *Free-Thinking, Epistemology, Judgment, Reason, Epistemic justification.*

Collins published his *Discourse of Free-Thinking* in 1713, after *An Essay Concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions* (1707, hereafter *Essay*) and before *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty* (1717, hereafter *Inquiry*). The three works are thematically inter-related and form, I believe, a broadly coherent whole. Much of the *Discourse* is polemical, but Section I and part of Section II are philosophically important in virtue of their epistemological content. Focusing on these two sections of the *Discourse* I examine Collins' definition of free-thinking (Part 2), his claim that free-thinking is a natural right (Part 3) and two of his arguments in favour of free-thinking (Parts 4 and 5). To conclude (Part 6) I argue that Collins' notion of free-thinking is normative, and that it is closely connected with his theory of epistemic duty. However, I begin (Part 1) by considering some basic epistemological notions that Collins discusses in the *Essay* and the *Inquiry*, as they shed important light on the *Discourse*.

1. *Basic notions*

In the *Essay* Collins describes propositions as follows: "All Propositions whatever consist of Terms or Words which stand for Ideas, concerning which some agreement is affirm'd or deny'd" [...]; "Is or is not are those Terms which signify the agreement or disagreement"¹. He distinguishes five types of propositions accord-

¹ A. Collins, *An Essay Concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions, The Evidence whereof depends upon Human Testimony*, London, 1709 (second edition corrected), p. 3.

ing to their epistemic status; they are judged to be either necessary, impossible, probable, improbable or doubtful (i.e. equally probable and improbable)².

According to Collins, to judge that a proposition is necessarily true is to judge that the ideas it expresses necessarily agree; to judge that a proposition is probably true is to judge that the ideas expressed probably agree, and so on³. Necessary propositions are evident in either of two ways: either they are self-evident (intuitively certain), or they are evident by proof (demonstratively certain). In the first case the agreement between two ideas is perceived immediately; in the second case the agreement is perceived mediately, i.e. by means of one or more ideas intermediate between the extremes.

Probable propositions are of two sorts: those that are justified by probable proofs, and those that are justified by testimony. In the first case, the agreement of the two extremes through intermediate ideas is perceived as only probable; the intermediate ideas are "internal Evidence" of the probability. In the second case, the agreement of the two extremes is perceived as probable by means of testimony, which is "external Evidence" of the probability⁴. A crucial point here is that the mind *perceives* an agreement (or a disagreement) as evident, or probable, or doubtful, or improbable, or false. etc. That is why "*Perception [...] must be every Man's Criterion to distinguish Truth from Falshood*"⁵. And if the mind perceives propositions as such or such, it is because they *appear* such or such to the mind:

All propositions must appear to me either self-evident, or evident from proof, or probable, or improbable, or doubtful, or false. [...] I can no more change those appearances in me than I can change the Idea of red rais'd in me. Nor can I judge contrary to those appearances; *for what is judging of propositions, but judging that propositions do appear as they do appear?* which I cannot avoid doing, without lying to myself: which is impossible. (*Inquiry*, p. 33 my italics).

² Cf. Cf. A. Collins, *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty*, London, R. Robinson at the Golden Lion in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1717 (second edition corrected), p. 33; in *Determinism and Freewill*, ed. J. O'Higgins S. J., The Hague, Nijhoff, 1976.

³ A. Collins, *Essay*, cit., p. 3: "[W]hen Truth, Falshood, Probability or Improbability are applied to Propositions, nothing is meant but the necessary or probable agreement or disagreement of the Ideas of which the extremes in Propositions consist".

⁴ Cf. A. Collins, *Essay*, cit., pp. 3-5.

⁵ Cf. A. Collins, *Essay*, cit., p. 10.

Libertas philosophandi ed esercizio della critica da Bayle a Voltaire

Lorenzo Bianchi

The idea of criticism, from Pierre Bayle's Dictionnaire historique et critique (1697) to Kant's «Preface» of the Kritik der reinen Vernunft (1781), plays a central role in modern philosophy. Bayle is an intermediary between the Seventeenth and the Eighteenth centuries: he brings in age of Enlightenment questions relating to scepticism and to philosophical, religious and historical criticism. The article analyses Bayle's idea of criticism and his heritage on the Eighteenth century, particularly on Montesquieu and Voltaire. Bayle's influence on Montesquieu and Voltaire is significant, despite their critiques of his hypothesis of an atheistic society. Bayle's legacy on these two authors – more evident in Voltaire – emerges not only from religious tolerance but also from an intellectual affinity for freedom of thought, historical criticism or moderate scepticism. Bayle's philosophical criticism and freedom of thought – especially on the problem of evil or on the antinomies of reason – also influence some texts of the clandestine philosophical literature.

Keywords: *Libertas philosophandi, Criticism, Pierre Bayle, Montesquieu, Voltaire.*

Introduzione

Dal *Dictionnaire historique et critique* di P. Bayle (1697) alle affermazioni kantiane della «Prefazione» della *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781) secondo cui «il tempo nostro è proprio il tempo della critica, cui tutto deve sottostare»¹, si può sostenere che la categoria di critica svolga un ruolo centrale e insostituibile tra XVII e XVIII secolo.

Del resto dall'*Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* di Richard Simon (1678) passando per il *Dictionnaire historique et critique* di Bayle numerose sono le opere fino a Kant e oltre nelle quali il termine critica compare nel titolo – si pensi, per non citare che due casi fra loro molto diversi ma ugualmente significativi, al periodico musicale *Critica musica*, fondato da Johann Mattheson nel 1722 (Amburgo 1722-1725, 24 numeri in totale), o alla *Histoire critique de la philosophie* di A.-F. Boureau-Deslandes, apparsa anonima ad Amsterdam nel

¹ I. Kant, *Critica della ragion pura*, trad. it. di G. Gentile e G. Lombardo-Radice, Introduzione di V. Mathieu, «Prefazione [1781]», Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1977, p. 7.

1737. Ma all'interno di questa presenza e rilevanza del regno della critica, l'opera bayliana segna certamente un punto centrale che non solo apre simbolicamente il secolo dei Lumi (la prima edizione del *Dictionnaire* è del 1697, la seconda edizione del 1702)² ma che costituisce per più versi un *unicum* nella cultura filosofica del suo tempo.

1.

Il *Dictionnaire* di Bayle recupera infatti tradizioni plurime, cartesiane e umanistiche insieme; e questo ne fa la sua paradossale originalità e insieme la sua irrisolta ricchezza. Chi volesse operare una genealogia di questo testo, dovrebbe rassegnarsi a individuare diverse istanze teoriche non sempre tra di loro omogenee: il cartesianesimo, certamente, che Bayle considera come l'orizzonte filosofico e scientifico della sua epoca, ma anche la tradizione scettica e critica, propria di chi valuta il pirronismo come «le parti de la sagesse»³ e come l'attitudine propria della ragione, e infine l'esercizio critico legato ai dibattiti della tradizione protestante. Il pensiero dell'autore del *Dictionnaire*, che si presenta in effetti come sostanzialmente asistematico e antinomico, si colloca nel punto d'incontro di differenti, quando non contrapposte, tradizioni di pensiero quali lo scetticismo e il calvinismo, il cartesianesimo e la tradizione libertina. Ma entro questo quadro complesso e non omogeneo la questione delle relazioni tra Bayle e il pensiero libertino – o meglio con quegli autori che René Pintard ha chiamato «libertins érudits», con una corrente di pensiero, quindi, legata all'esercizio di una libertà del filosofare nei confronti della tradizione e del *consensus gentium* – si pone con una particolare rilevanza⁴. Basti pensare all'importanza della figura di Giulio Cesare Vanini entro la genealogia degli «atei virtuosi» nelle *Pensées diverses* – dove Vanini appare come il «martire dell'ateismo» – o ancora alla presenza nell'opera maggiore di Bayle di temi

² Cfr. P. Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, A Rotterdam, Chez Reinier Leers, 1697; Id., *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, Seconde édition revuë, corrigée et augmentée par l'auteur, A Rotterdam, Chez Reinier Leers, 1702. Le citazioni dal *Dictionnaire* sono tratte dalla quinta edizione olandese (*Dictionnaire historique et critique*, Cinquième édition, A Amsterdam, Leyde, La Haye, Utrecht, Chez P. Brunel et alii, 1740).

³ Ivi, «Esopé», rem. B.

⁴ La bibliografia sui rapporti tra Bayle e la tradizione libertina è molto ampia. Per una sintesi si rinvia a L. Bianchi, *Libertinage et hétérodoxie chez Bayle. Quelques questions*, in *Libertinage et philosophie à l'époque classique (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle)*, n° 15 (2018), «Pierre Bayle et les libertins», pp. 19-38.

Libertas philosophandi e scienza del possibile in Christian Wolff

Matteo Favaretti Camposampiero

Although Christian Wolff's championing of the libertas philosophandi from the mid-1720s up to the late 1740s is widely recognized as a milestone in the development of the German Enlightenment, some aspects of it are still unexplored. This paper focuses on the historical and theoretical relationship between Wolff's ideal of philosophical freedom and his equally famous definition of philosophy as the science of possible things. These two issues appear to have been linked with each other since the very beginnings of Wolff's philosophical career, when his views about scriptural exegesis led him to demarcate philosophy from revelation as well as natural science from natural history.

Keywords: *Christian Wolff, Freedom to Philosophize, Definition of Philosophy, Scriptural Exegesis, Scientific Hypothesis.*

Dagli anni Venti agli anni Quaranta del Settecento, Christian Wolff intervenne più volte a sostegno della libertà filosofica, dando così un contributo fondamentale allo sviluppo dell'Illuminismo tedesco¹. Con i suoi interventi, Wolff fornì sia una giustificazione epistemologica sia una delimitazione giuridica della libertà che spetta al filosofo di proporre le proprie tesi al pubblico. Nonostante la notorietà del tema, diversi suoi aspetti restano ancora da chiarire. In particolare, qui vorrei soffermarmi sul rapporto che sussiste tra la difesa wolffiana della *libertas philosophandi* e la definizione wolffiana della filosofia come scienza dei possibili. Vorrei inoltre mostrare che il nesso tra i due temi nasceva dalle discussioni sull'esegesi scritturale che avevano coinvolto Wolff all'inizio della sua attività accademica.

¹ Le trattazioni più significative si trovano in C. Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von dem gesellschaftlichen Leben der Menschen und insonderheit dem gemeinen Wesen*, Franckfurt und Leipzig, Renger, 1736 (1721), § 304; Id., *Ausführliche Nachricht von seinen eigenen Schrifften*, Frankfurt a.M., Andreä, 1733 (1726), §§ 38-43; Id., *Discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genere* [1728], a cura di G. Gawlick e L. Kreimendahl, Stuttgart, Frommann, 1996, §§ 151-171; Id., *Jus naturae methodo scientifica pertractatum*, 8 voll., Halae Magdeburgicae, Renger, 1740-1748, vol. VI, §§ 909-913, e vol. VIII, § 447 e § 1025.

Nel *Discursus praeliminaris* del 1728, Wolff definisce la *libertas philosophandi* come «il permesso di proporre pubblicamente la propria opinione riguardo alle questioni filosofiche [*de rebus philosophicis*]»². L'esercizio di tale libertà consiste nell'affrancare il nostro giudizio da ogni condizionamento esterno, ossia nel giudicare sul vero e sul falso regolandoci solo su noi stessi e non sugli altri, cioè ascoltando le ragioni che realmente ci convincono, senza sottomettere il nostro intelletto al giudizio altrui³. Come sottolineato da più parti⁴, la difesa wolffiana di questa libertà è strettamente connessa alla fondazione del metodo filosofico, ossia dell'ordine che il filosofo è tenuto a rispettare nell'esposizione delle proprie tesi, e che prescrive di definire i termini prima di usarli e di dimostrare le proposizioni prima di assumerle come principi nell'argomentazione. In sostanza, il metodo wolffiano stabilisce un ordine di precedenza tale da garantire l'intelligibilità e la fondatezza delle tesi proposte dal filosofo: si deve esporre prima ciò che permette di comprendere e dimostrare quello che si espone dopo⁵. La piena aderenza alle norme del metodo è in contrasto con l'assunzione di tesi la cui verità venga ammessa solo per un qualche interesse⁶ o sulla base di pregiudizi o «ragioni estrinseche»⁷ (per es., in forza dell'autorità di chi la sostiene) e in assenza di una sufficiente giustificazione razionale. Il metodo filosofico è quindi incompatibile con ogni atteggiamento di sottomissione nei confronti di dogmi altrui e richiede libertà da ogni condizionamento dottrinale. Poiché chi non gode della *libertas philosophandi* è costretto a violare le norme del metodo, il godimento di questa libertà è una condizione necessaria per la pratica del metodo e quindi per l'esercizio stesso della filosofia⁸. Posta l'ampiezza del concetto wolffiano di filosofia, tale da includere ogni forma di

² Wolff, *Discursus praeliminaris*, cit., § 151.

³ Wolff, *Ausführliche Nachricht*, cit., § 41.

⁴ In particolare da C. Weber, «Von der Freyheit zu philosophieren». *Christian Wolffs Forderung einer libertas philosophandi als Bedingung und als Methode der Philosophie*, in R. Bach et al. (a cura di), *Formen der Aufklärung und ihrer Rezeption. Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Ulrich Ricken*, Tübingen, Stauffenburg, 1999, pp. 17-34; M. Hettche, *On the Cusp of Europe's Enlightenment: Christian Wolff and the Argument for Academic Freedom*, «Florida Philosophical Review», VIII (2008), 1, pp. 90-107; K. Zenker, *Denkfreiheit. Libertas philosophandi in der deutschen Aufklärung*, Hamburg, Meiner, 2012, pp. 251-259; e R. Theis, «Libertas philosophandi» – «Liberté de penser»: *La constellation Wolff/Kant*, «Revue philosophique de Louvain», CXII (2014), 4, pp. 633-654.

⁵ *Discursus praeliminaris*, cit., § 132.

⁶ Wolff, *Ausführliche Nachricht*, cit., § 39.

⁷ Wolff, *Discursus praeliminaris*, cit., § 155. Cfr. Id., *Ausführliche Nachricht*, cit., § 40.

⁸ Ivi, § 166.

Libertas Philosophandi – Die Debatte in Deutschland zwischen 1651 und 1711

Hubertus Busche

This essay reconstructs the early modern controversy about libertas philosophandi in Germany till 1711. This period is characterized by the two provoking philosophical inputs of Descartes and Spinoza to which several German philosophers and theologians made their replies. Regarding the different kinds of attitudes towards freedom of opinion it will be shown that the bulk of conservatives, especially of the Protestant Orthodoxy, sets narrow confines for libertas philosophandi and that in contrast Nikolaus Hieronymus Gundling is the only one during this period who claimed an unrestricted libertas academica, whereas his teacher Christian Thomasius remained half-hearted.

Keywords: Libertas dicendi scribendique, Libertas sentiendi et dissentiendi, Limites libertatis philosophandi, Libertas vs. Licentia, Libertinismus, Descartes - Spinoza - Nikolaus Hieronymus Gundling - Kant.

Die Debatten, die im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland von Philosophen, Theologen und Juristen um die „Freiheit des Philosophierens“ geführt wurden, sind nur halbwegs gut erforscht. Zwar liegen instruktive Darstellungen zur *libertas philosophandi* bei einzelnen bekannteren und wirkmächtigeren Denkern wie Christian Thomasius oder Christian Wolff vor. Es fehlen aber noch immer Spezialuntersuchungen, insbesondere zu den deutschen Avantgardisten bei der Erkämpfung der akademischen Meinungsäußerungsfreiheit, wie z.B. Nikolaus Hieronymus Gundling oder Christoph August Heumann. Immerhin ist Kay Zenker 2012 mit seinem monumentalen historischen Überblick über eine Vielzahl von Schriften, die in Deutschland im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert zur *libertas philosophandi* verfasst wurden, ein überaus verdienstvoller und bahnbrechender Beitrag zur Schließung dieser Lücken gelungen¹. Die Stärke von Zenkers pioniermäßiger Geländeerkundung birgt jedoch zugleich auch eine gewisse Schwäche, denn seine Versenkung in die Fülle der untersuchten Schriften (Bäume) lässt die großen historischen

¹ K. Zenker, *Denkfreiheit. Libertas philosophandi in der deutschen Aufklärung*, Hamburg, 2012.

Linien der Grabenkämpfe (den Wald) nicht klar hervortreten. Da die Rekonstruktion dieser historischen Frontverläufe jedoch in systematischer Hinsicht von großer Bedeutung ist, sollen diese im Folgenden – teils mit Zenker, teils gegen ihn – anhand der Quellen klarer herausgearbeitet und von einigen Fehlurteilen befreit werden, damit die Avantgarde gegenüber den Konservativen umso angemessener gewürdigt werden kann.

Insgesamt lassen sich vier Arten von *dramatis personae* unterscheiden: a) die ausländischen Impulsgeber und Bannerträger der *libertas philosophandi*, die in Deutschland rezipiert werden und an denen sich die Geister scheiden, namentlich Descartes, Spinoza und Collins²; b) das große Heer der Orthodoxen, welche die neuen Forderungen nach Denkfreiheit kategorisch und oft polemisch zurückweisen; c) die Gemäßigten, die einerseits die akademische Meinungsäußerungsfreiheit grundsätzlich befürworten, ihr jedoch andererseits klar definierte (und oft enge) Grenzen ziehen; und d) schließlich wenige einzelne Avantgardisten, die lange vor dem Durchbruch mit Kant eine schrankenlose *libertas philosophandi* einfordern. Zwischen den Veröffentlichungen der drei großen Herausforderer liegen jeweils einige Jahrzehnte: Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode* erscheint 1637, die *Meditationes* folgen 1641; Spinozas *Tractatus theologico-politicus* erscheint 1670, seine *Ethica* 1677; Collins' *A Discourse of Free-Thinking* folgt 1713. Die folgende Rekonstruktion kann aus Platzgründen lediglich die ersten beiden dieser drei Wellen³ und ihre spezifischen Brechungen analysieren. Sie endet kurz vor Collins' *Discourse* mit Christian Thomasius' Schüler Gundling. Es soll gezeigt werden, dass bis 1711 Gundling der einzige Avantgardist der *libertas philosophandi* in Deutschland ist.

Vorab sei kurz an drei Rahmenbedingungen erinnert, in welche die Debatten eingebettet sind. *Geistesgeschichtlich* handelt es sich um die ersten Phasen eines intellektuellen Prozesses, mit dem die

² Petrus Ramus und Pierre Gassendi dürfen hier als vernachlässigbare Größen gelten. Umgekehrt trägt Luther zur Freiheit des Denkens nichts bei, auch wenn protestantische Stimmen ihn oft als Helden für die Zurückeroberung der Denkfreiheit feiern. Zenker, *Denkfreiheit*, betont zu Recht, dass Luthers *christliche Freiheit* lediglich „Gewissensfreiheit“ ist (und diese nicht einmal im Sinne der Aufklärung), aber nicht „Kultfreiheit“ (28, Anm. 51), dass die *libertas philosophandi* von Luther gar nicht „thematisiert“ wird (36), dass Luther „eine intolerante Haltung gegenüber allen Andersgläubigen“ bestärkt (495) und dass folglich die Philosophie „im lutherischen Raum vorerst nicht viel mehr als eine Handlangerin, eine ‚Magd der Theologie‘ und Hüterin von Traditionen“ bleibt (42).

³ Diesen drei Phasen folgt auch Zenker, *Denkfreiheit*, schaltet jedoch Luther und den Ramismus vor.

Freedom of Speech and the Myth of Empiricism

Hanna Szabelska

In his 1994 book Freedom of Speech: Words Are Not Deeds, Harry M. Bracken, renowned American philosopher and friend of Chomsky, opposes empiricism and rationalism as the sources of competing approaches to the issue of freedom of speech. In his view, while freedom of speech flourished within the framework of Cartesian-type theories (Pierre Bayle), it was undermined within empiricist-type theories (John Locke). This is because the dualisms: mind/body and talk/action that entail distinction between subversive but private thoughts and subversive actions lie at the core of Cartesianism but are totally absent from empiricism. The aim of the present paper is to verify Bracken's thesis by setting it against contrary textual evidence and recent research by Peter Anstey, Anna Wierzbicka and others.

Keywords: *Bracken, Freedom of Speech, Dualism, Rationalism, Empiricism.*

In his 1994 book, *Freedom of Speech: Words are not Deeds*, American philosopher, Harry M. Bracken (1926-2011) traces the sources of the First Amendment to the US Constitution.

The text of the First Amendment (1791), the part of the Bill of Rights that guarantees the freedom of expression, religion and assembly, runs as follows:

Amendment I. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

John Locke is often said to be “the” philosopher of the American Revolution, but the principle of the freedom of speech, Bracken claims, is not Lockean but Baylean. However, Bracken cannot prove Pierre Bayle’s direct influence on the Founding Fathers. Instead, he suggests that “Madison, as a (the?) major influence in the drafting of the First Amendment, inserted the absolutist free-speech clause

because he, and probably others, took it to be a self-evident principle, rooted in a Bayle-type philosophical framework"¹.

Let's take a closer look at a Bayle-type framework as opposed to a Locke-type framework.

A Locke-type framework involves empiricism together with behaviourism. The essential characteristic of empiricism is abstractionism of an Aristotelian bent, that accounts for how the mind, conceived as a blank tablet, is written upon, i.e. how passive imprints are transformed into concepts². Knowledge entirely depends on the senses and therefore no ideas are innate³. A behaviourist complement to this package of concepts is the thesis that, for Locke and other empiricists, words are actions that exclude the privacy of thought. Locke's anti-essentialism opens the way to constructivism: "Since we are ignorant of the real essences of things, we are obliged to deal only with what he [Locke] describes as the nominal essences of things, and these essences are entirely of our own construction"⁴.

What follows from this for Bracken? First, if words are deeds, then heterodox statements should be punished since they infringe public order. Therefore, empiricism does not generally foster religious toleration. Quite the opposite, it supports persecution.

Secondly, the empiricist doctrine of human nature deemed malleable for epistemological reasons implies the need for control and the exertion of power by experts at writing on our blank tablets.

Thirdly, the Lockean constructivist model (anti-essentialism) facilitates including bodily characteristics, e.g. skin colour into the defining traits of man and in this way, it forms an intellectual environment nurturing racism or sexism⁵.

A Bayle-type framework involves rationalism that assumes the mind to be fitted with innate ideas. Combined with substance dualism, rationalism does not allow for identifying speech with a form of action, and consequently encourages granting freedom of expression. In addition, the substantially independent soul cannot be easily moulded and resists manipulation like that of modern market-

¹ H.M. Bracken, *Freedom of Speech: Words are not Deeds*, Westport, Conn., Praeger, 1994, p. 10.

² H.M. Bracken, *Descartes*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2002, pp. 58-60.

³ H.M. Bracken, *Freedom of Speech*, cit., p. 9.

⁴ H.M. Bracken, *Descartes*, cit., p. 123. Cf. H.M. Bracken, *Philosophy and Racism*, "Philosophia", 8, 1978, pp. 241-260; H.M. Bracken, *Freedom of Speech*, cit., p. 9.

⁵ But cf. constrained conventionalism: P.R. Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 125, 209.

Libertas philosophandi and liberty of hypothesising. Newton's method and Hume's turn in the Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion

Gianni Paganini

The experimental theist Cleanthes and the skeptical Philo in the Dialogues, Epicurus in the oration of the First Enquiry, all deal with the same problem and endorse the same epistemology. Both the method and the argument come from Newton's Principia: the former derives from the famous regulae philosophandi and the argument from the Scholium generale appended to the third book of the Principia. Not only the theologians of the Boyle lectures, but Newton himself, in the Scholium generale, had established a close connection between the use of induction, the rejection of hypotheses, the argument from design or final causes, and the conception of a "living, intelligent, powerful being", that governs the world as a Lord. It is notable that Newton did not hesitate to include God among the objects of "natural philosophy". The Dialogues represent a challenge to this "experimental theism" inspired by Newton, but they also aim at rehabilitating the function of hypotheses, against Newton's famous veto, albeit in a new form, compatible with the scepticism endorsed by the protagonist of the work, Philo. This new reading of the Dialogues centred on Philo's "hypotheticism" also sheds light on the meaning and scope of the work.

Keywords: David Hume, Isaac Newton, Hypothesis, Scepticism, Enlightenment.

In a famous essay dedicated to freedom of the press, Hume affirmed that "nothing surprises the foreigner more than the extreme freedom we enjoy in this country"¹, meaning England. In his view political freedom originates from the mixed form of government, neither wholly monarchical nor entirely republican. This situation has not only prevented England from falling back into "arbitrary power"², but has also positively evolved from the opposition between Court-Party and Country Party to that between Tories and Whigs. On the

¹ D. Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, Part 1, II *Of the Liberty of the Press* (*Essays moral, political, and literary*, edited and with a foreword, notes and glossary by Eugene F. Miller; with an apparatus of variant readings from the 1889 edition by T.H. Green and T.H. Grose, Indianapolis, Liberty Classics, 1987, vol. I, p. 9.

² *Ibidem*, p. 10.

contrary, he affirms, no positive evolution, has occurred in “clerical power”, because “freedom of thought was always fatal”³ to it.

During his long career as a writer, Hume had the opportunity to experience personally the contrast. In the public sphere, he had great success as an author of political, literary, and moral essays, as well as a historian with the *History of England*; in philosophy, on the contrary, he faced a persistent climate of censorship, and sometimes open hostility.

The first sentence of the *Treatise on Human Nature* is not Hume’s, but a telling phrase by Tacitus: “The rare and good fortune of a time when you may think what you like and say what you think” (*Rara temporum felicitas, ubi sentire, quae velis; & quae sentias, dicere licet*). The Roman historian was referring to the absence of political liberty under the dominion of bad emperors, such as Domitianus, but it is obvious that Hume was applying the quote to the obstacles that freedom of thought and expression still faced in the 1730s. Already in 1670 Spinoza had taken up Tacitus’s words to describe positively the advantages of a free state in the title of chap. 20 of *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (“It is shown that in a free state every man may think what he likes, and say what he thinks”).

In the *Treatise*, published anonymously, the name of God is hardly mentioned. Nevertheless, the book created a turmoil culminating in the publication of a pamphlet that accused Hume of atheism, on the basis that Hume’s scepticism concerning the idea of causality would sap the main argument in support of the existence of God, the causal demonstration. This accusation, coming from the most conservative circles of the Scottish Kirk, cost Hume nothing less than the denial of access to the chair of ethics and pneumatic philosophy in Edinburgh and later his failure to succeed to Adam Smith at the chair of logic at Glasgow University. And just to mention another major event in the field of suppression of ideas, fifteen years later, in 1757, when publishing the *Four Dissertations* that included the *Natural History of Religion* (immediately and harshly criticized by the bishop Warburton), along with *Of the Passions*, *Of Tragedy*, and *Of the Standard of Taste*, Hume gave up the idea of adding two other dissertations: *Of the Immortality of the Soul* and *Of Suicide* that had already been printed and which were here replaced by the more innocuous essay on taste. However, a couple of copies of two disser-

³ *Of the Parties of Great Britain*, cit., pp. 65-66.

Pressure on Enlightenment. Criticizing the Bible and Philosophy. From Nogarola to Du Châtelet

Ruth Edith Hagengruber

The Enlightenment is well known for its critical analysis of the Bible. Though the Renaissance sources have been acknowledged as an inspiration of this movement, the Querelle des femmes and its critique of the Bible has never been considered as a possible catalyst for the enlightened philosophical discourse. For centuries women have fought against interpretations of the Bible. This paper argues that the Querelle des femmes criticized the Bible not only because of its patriarchal content but also criticized philosophical thinking that, for supporting the views from the Bible and its misogynist stance, misused the instruments of rational philosophy. Arguments from 1400-1750, from Nogarola to Du Châtelet prove women philosophers' fight in favour of a critique of the Bible from a rational point of view, reflecting also on the status of what it meant, to argue rationally.

Keywords: *Bible critics, Querelle des femmes, Isotta Nogarola, Émilie Du Châtelet, Enlightenment.*

1. The Freedom to Philosophize: Bible Critique in the Early Modern History of Women Philosophers

Du Châtelet shared the liberal ideas of the radical Enlightenment. She was even a catalyst for it, as we understand today. In favour of this claim, this paper connects methods from her *Examinations of the Bible* to crucial ideas of the Querelle des femmes. Du Châtelet's philosophy manifests the importance of the principle of contradiction as conditional of any truth, and she continues to combat philosophical idolatries, sharing important ideas and methodical reflections with women from the Querelle des femmes and its critique of the Bible and philosophy. Throughout the more than one thousand pages of her *Examinations of the Bible* Du Châtelet demonstrated that God "shows irrational and senseless disregard for his laws of nature", as Judith Zinsser holds¹.

¹ J. Zinsser, *Emilie Du Châtelet's Views on the Pillars of French Society: King, Church and Family*, in L. Curtis-Wendtland e.a., *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women*, Surrey, Ashgate, 2014, pp. 17-32, p. 25. The quote refers to E. Du Châtelet, *Examens de la Bible*, ed. by B.E. Schwarzbach, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2011.

To relate Du Châtelet to the tradition of the Querelle, this paper will present a selection of texts. From the time of Isotta Nogarola (1418-1466) onwards, the women philosophers' critique shows that the understanding of biblical texts cannot be challenged by what is considered to be rational when both reason and rationality itself are subject to prejudice and contradiction.

From this perspective, Du Châtelet's Bible critique is not only an important contribution to the biblical critique of the Enlightenment. It also turns out to be the peak of a long history of women philosophers who took the liberty to philosophize, analysing the irrational claims both in the Bible and in traditional philosophy, also arguing against the culturally-established male idolatries.

2. *Fighting the pillars of a misogynist culture*

Scholarly work on Enlightenment philosophy and its radical criticism of the Bible has hardly taken into account what women philosophers had to say, as we learn from the relevant literature on this topic. This is all the more true in regard to radical enlightened thinking, that is held to be based on a truthful rational mind related to a male tradition. The Cartesian claim for non-contradictory reasoning and Fontenelle's strive for scientific arguments is taken as the point of reference for a rising critical encounter with the Bible.

However, for centuries the bold work of women philosophers prepared and encouraged this criticism with its philosophical methodical instruments. The interpretation of what is known as the Querelle has been banalized and women's arguments have been reduced to defences of their particular concerns. But this interpretation is far too short. A further reading instructs us that when these women thinkers criticized the Bible and the philosophical tenets in its defence, they did so for the sake of a better understanding of what a truthful discourse and the search for truth should be and what it cannot be. The reader of the text of the Querelle cannot but understand the strong relevance of its content to what Bible critics of the Enlightenment were heading towards. The two traditions are unified in their critique of the Bible but also in their critique of a dogmatic philosophical stance.

The debate on what reason is and how it may distance itself from dogmatic influence is a battle fought by many women philosophers

Le libertinage est-il une conséquence nécessaire du matérialisme ?
Le matérialisme face à l'éthique (La Mettrie, Diderot)

Charles T. Wolfe¹

The materialism of La Mettrie and Diderot has been the object of some recent reevaluations, most of which focus on their conception of matter, and how this changes, notably, our idea of a predominantly mechanistic materialism in the period. Less attention has been paid to their conception of liberty, or conversely, their denial thereof. Indeed, of the typical, and strident objections to materialism in terms of human freedom, building on the usual view of materialism as a necropolis of 'dead matter', two core objections emerge: that materialism reduces humans to deterministic, passive, sets of atoms, and that it is an immoralism. In this paper I focus chiefly on the second claim, and turn to Diderot's own objections to La Mettrie in this regard. Both philosophers share a large number of materialist tenets, but Diderot is upset by the ethical consequences La Mettrie draws. My aim is not to defend one or the other of their materialist approaches to ethics (and liberty) but to reflect on the aporias involved therein, in considering whether "libertinage" is a necessary consequence of materialism.

Keywords : *Materialism, Immoralism, La Mettrie, Diderot.*

« la morale se renferme donc dans l'enceinte
de l'espèce » (Diderot)²

1.

Quelle liberté pour le philosophe matérialiste à l'époque des Lumières radicales ? Celui-ci n'est-il pas l'ennemi de la liberté, même s'il n'est pas toujours l'apologiste du crime (comme La Mettrie selon Diderot, qui décrit, dans une formule sur laquelle je reviendrai plus loin, le médecin-philosophe malouin comme un auteur qui « semble

¹ ERC EarlyModernCosmology (GA 725883), Università Ca' Foscari. ctwolfe1@gmail.com Cet article fait partie d'un projet financé par le Programme Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation de l'Union Européenne (GA n. 725883 ERC-EarlyModernCosmology). Je remercie aussi le Dr Cat Moir pour sa lecture et ses conseils.

² Diderot, *Salon de 1767*, 5^e site, in H. Dieckmann, J. Proust et J. Varloot, Paris, Hermann (éds), *Ceuvres complètes*, 1975-, vol. XVI, p. 206. (Diderot est toujours cité, sauf autre indication, dans cette édition de référence, dorénavant indiquée DPV suivi du volume et de la page).

s'occuper à tranquilliser le scélérat dans le crime »³) ? Plutôt que de défendre la liberté, le philosophe matérialiste ne fait-il pas plutôt l'apologie du libertinage – sciemment, comme La Mettrie dans son *Discours sur le bonheur* ou son essai sur *La Volupté*, ou malgré lui, comme Diderot qui ne parvint jamais à écrire l'ouvrage de philosophie morale qu'il espérait ?

Je tenterai dans ce qui suit de répondre à cette question. Mais soulignons d'emblée que le problème de la liberté tel qu'il est traité ici est différent de la vision de la liberté que nous associons à la notion de *libertas philosophandi*⁴ : il s'agit moins de défendre un espace socio-politique de la liberté d'expression philosophique, que d'attaquer le « confort intellectuel », non seulement de l'Ancien Régime mais, oserait-on dire, de toute vision anthropocentrique et humaniste de la souveraineté de l'agir humain, libre, rationnel et moral. Le territoire de l'étude matérialiste de l'être humain est plutôt celui que La Mettrie vit clairement (et amèrement, si l'on songe à sa propre vie), et qu'il formula ainsi : « qui fait son étude de l'homme doit s'attendre à avoir l'homme pour ennemi »⁵.

Le philosophe matérialiste, qu'il soit de tendance immoraliste comme La Mettrie ou de tendance « morale mais inaboutie » comme Diderot, ne réduit pas l'être humain à un simple tas d'atomes de molécules, ou même à une machine impersonnelle (il est bien connu que l'ouvrage intitulé *L'Homme-Machine* ne réduit jamais le vivant au mécanique, ou la créature humaine à une horloge⁶) ; à la rigueur à un animal : Diderot écrit, élégamment, qu'« il n'y aura ni bonté ni méchanceté raisonnées, quoiqu'il puisse y avoir bonté & méchanceté animales »⁷. La Mettrie, quelques années aupa-

³ Diderot, *Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron*, livre II, § 6, DPV XXV, pp. 246-247.

⁴ R.B. Sutton, *The Phrase Libertas Philosophandi*, « Journal of the History of Ideas », 14 (1953), 2, pp. 310-316.

⁵ J.O. de La Mettrie, *Discours sur le bonheur*, in F. Markovits (éd.), *La Mettrie, Œuvres philosophiques*, éd. 2 vols., Corpus, Paris, Fayard, 1987, vol. II, p. 269. Il est donc étrange que J. Israel rattache La Mettrie à la tradition spinoziste de la liberté d'expression, justement la *libertas philosophandi* (*Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the making of modernity 1650-1750*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 709).

⁶ Cf. C.T. Wolfe, « Le mécanique face au vivant », in B. Roukhomovsky, S. Roux et al. (dir.), *L'automate : modèle, machine, merveille*, Bordeaux, Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 2012, pp. 115-138 et « Automata, man-machines and embodiment: deflating or inflating Life? », in A. Radman et H. Sohn (dir.), *Critical and Clinical Cartographies; Architecture, Robotics, Medicine, Philosophy*, Edinbourg, Edinburgh University Press, 2017, pp. 269-287.

⁷ Diderot, art. « DROIT NATUREL », in D. Diderot et J. le Rond D'Alembert (dir.), *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers...*, vol. V, Paris, Briasson, 1755, p. 115b.

*Diderot: teatro e libertà.
Filosofia, censura, scrittura clandestina*

Paolo Quintili

The theater of Diderot and Marivaux (but not only), in the eighteenth century, is the social and cultural place where a very high political stake is played. What is lawful to say and what, on the contrary, is it better or more prudent to be silent about, and not to say, or to which it is simply possible only to allude on the scene, with gestures, looks, movements? The theatrical space is, like the clandestine literature of the same era, also the place of a struggle for the affirmation of freedom of expression and thought, through «writing techniques» that make use of encrypted markers, signs that are allusions to a common code (art of writing) that only a few spectators have the opportunity to understand and decrypt. The essay analyzes some lesser known pièces by the two authors – Est-il bon? Est-il méchant? (Diderot) and L'Île des esclaves (Marivaux) – to identify the subtle interplay of references to the theme of political freedom of conscience, through the détours of clandestine writing and (self) censorship.

Keywords: Materialism, Clandestinity, The Art of Writing, Freedom, Heterodoxy.

À Olivier Bloch

Le commedie di P. Ch. De Marivaux, *L'Isola degli schiavi* (1725) e di D. Diderot, *È buono? È malvagio?* (1781) hanno molti tratti filosofici comuni¹. I due testi appartengono alla grande tradizione della cultura illuministica europea del secolo XVIII, con i suoi temi caratteristici – la libertà, i legami di servitù-signoria, i privilegi, il peso delle ineguaglianze, le false convenzioni sociali ecc. – e le sue utopie: un mondo giusto, senza servi né padroni (come insegnava Voltaire: essere liberi significa, nella pratica, «non avere né servi né padroni, voilà la vraie vie»²), relazioni umane improntate al rispetto dei diritti, dei sentimenti di umanità, della dignità reciproca degli esseri uma-

¹ Questo saggio è legato alle attività del « Laboratorio di Filosofia e Teatro » che lo scrivente dirige all'Università di Roma «Tor Vergata» dall'a.a. 2012-2013; cfr. P. Quintili, *Filosofie a teatro. Studi di messa in scena filosofica delle idee* (Unicopli, in corso di pubblicazione).

² Cfr. D. Diderot, *Les Eleuthéromanes* (1772), in *Œuvres Complètes*, éd. par J. Varloot, Paris, Hermann, 1978, vol. XX, pp. 549-555 (sigla DPV): «La nature n'a fait ni serviteurs ni maîtres. Je ne veux ni donner, ni recevoir de lois [...] et ses mains ourdiraient les entrailles du prêtre, au défaut d'un cordon pour étrangler les rois».

ni ecc. Il nuovo teatro borghese di Diderot – e prima ancora già in certe *pièces* di Marivaux – mette in scena un universo di rappresentazioni e di valori che “sfida” l’ordine sociale costituito, impone la critica dei pregiudizi e l’autonoma riflessione dello spettatore.

Tuttavia, nelle opere messe in scena (e talora, ma non sempre, pubblicate), l’ordine della rappresentazione e del discorso dei due autori segue o no, fedelmente, l’ordine delle idee e delle cose? O non sussiste piuttosto uno “scarto”, una cesura tra l’espressione del «detto», tra quanto Marivaux e Diderot esprimono apertamente nelle loro commedie, e il «non-detto» che fa capolino tra le righe, da pochi cenni? un gesto, un atto improprio, un’allusione criptata di quel personaggio che strizza l’occhio a un pubblico avveduto...

Si dimentica, troppo spesso, che l’età moderna, fino alla Rivoluzione francese, è l’età dell’assolutismo. Gli individui sono sottoposti a un regime di censura e di controllo molto stretto che impedisce, a priori, la libera espressione di “tutto” il pensiero di un autore. L’*intentio auctoris* è criptata, sottoposta al vaglio della critica e persino dell’autocensura, per la quale non tutto può essere detto e sussistono precise “condizioni storiche di possibilità” di ciò che si può pubblicamente esprimere e di ciò che non si può esprimere³. Anche il teatro e le arti drammatiche subiscono la stessa sorte delle opere filosofiche più audaci e eterodosse; ma molto spesso gli interpreti del teatro di Diderot e dei suoi predecessori non tengono in adeguato conto di questo presupposto taciuto e prendono il testo molto (o troppo) «alla lettera», nell’interpretare l’insieme delle opere teatrali.

Al tempo di Diderot e Marivaux gli uomini hanno “paura”, vivono sotto un costante regime di paura, costrizione, non-libertà. Diderot l’aveva sperimentato sulla propria pelle, nel 1749. Una *lettre de cachet*, una missiva della polizia con il timbro (*cachet*) dell’autorità reale, può spedire un individuo in prigione a tempo indeterminato, senza bisogno d’altro che del volere del sovrano e il solo motivo della «sicurezza» dell’autorità costituita che lo esige (ancora oggi: Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib ecc.). Un discorso antico che riecheggia in certe vicende della recente contemporaneità. Dopo l’imprigionamento a Vincennes, a causa della *Lettre sur les aveugles* (1749), Diderot *philosophe* entrerà in clandestinità. Da Platone a Kant, e forse anche oltre, in molti contesti, la scrittura filosofica è in una certa misura «clandestina» anche al proprio stesso interno, dove si cela-

³ Cfr. L. Strauss, *Scrittura e persecuzione*, a cura di G. Ferrara, Venezia, Marsilio, 1990.