

Emiliano Ventura

19. R/C Recensioni e commenti Interview to Guido del Giudice*

Guido del Giudice is now considered one of the main experts on Giordano Bruno, having published several books and having translated some of Bruno's texts, such as the recent "The god of geometrician" and "Summa of the metaphysical terms". He was also able to find an original manuscript of Bruno. Besides his knowledge of Bruno's philosophy, Guido del Giudice is also known for his work of communication: he has already taken part to the creation of two Dvds with considerations and fascinating explanations about the philosopher and his philosophy. In his last book, *I will tell the truth, Interview to Giordano Bruno*, he joins his perfect understanding of the topic and the ability in communicating, pretending to be talking, interviewing, the philosopher who's in the Roman jails of the Church. What derives is an amazing text, with a rare and deep philosophical richness, most of all because of del Giudice's ability in making the philosopher's words seem perfectly natural. It seems like listening to Bruno himself: only a habit and an incredible knowledge of the topic makes this mimicry possible. We met him and asked some questions about his ten-years-long research, and his new book.

Q. The deep interest for the Nolan philosopher is first demonstrated with the creation of the website www.giordanobruno.info, which rapidly turned into an editorial experience, a first publication dedicated to Bruno. Can you tell us how did this story start?

A. My online adventure started basically by chance, when, in 1998, I decided to create a website and to dedicate it to Giordano Bruno, because of my passion for philosophy, and particularly for his thought. I have always believed that the Nolan, a thinker who had never refused any means to get access to knowledge, a genius in the field of mnemonics, theoretician of an artificial intelligence, would have found Internet an ideal mean. The website, which was originally structured in a very basic way, arouse, unexpectedly, a great interest, testified by the number of emails and contacts from all over the world. Particularly two years later, during the 4th centenary of the stake, several celebrative initiatives took place in Italy, I realized that the website had become a landmark not only of mere admirers of the philosopher, but also of important scholars from Italy and abroad. It was because of this experience that I decided to write a handbook for the occasion, which was my first publication. The title is clear: *WWW.Giordano Bruno*, which includes the description and testimonies of the celebrations that, in 2000, made hundreds of fans gather around the monument of Campo de' fiori.

Q. From those online pages derived the books, some texts which have the advantage of showing different aspects and perspectives of the Nolan, such as "The coincidence of the opposites", where Bruno's philosophy is seen and compared with the Oriental philosophy. This is an original hint, most of all to relate the Oriental images and Bruno's ones. Bruno as well supports the idea that wisdom was spread from the East to the West, first Egypt and then Greece, it's the saying "ex Oriente lux", can you describe this idea in depth?

A. *The coincidence of the opposites* is the first work derived from the reflections I developed about the Nolan's thinking, so this is why it is my favorite work. The intuition which led to it derived, mainly, from what I had read and studied in that period, and it immediately generated interest, even among the experts, because of its originality. This "Oriental Bruno" had only been described by Lorenzo Giusso till then, pointing out his rediscovery of an hermetic Egypt, depositary of a flourishing pantheism, from which all the other cults should derive. The book, which begins with the reflection on the conception of God, derived from the grafting of the hermetic doctrine in a fertile land of Hellenistic wisdom, led me to find in the Nolan's thought some consonances with the Oriental philosophy, and particularly with the Taoism, which seem much

more surprising when substantiating in amazing analogies between the images that Bruno created for his works and the mandala of the Oriental tradition. Apparently he deals with puzzling correspondences, considering the absence of direct links between the Nolan philosopher and the Oriental thinkers, and which can only be explained as transcendental structures of thought. Overcoming the limits of time and space, Giordano Bruno, through Pythagoras and Heraclito, gets to talk to the Brahamans and the fathers of Taoism in this book. The analogies concern also the concepts of metempsychosis and cyclicity of vicissitudes, but it is mainly the theory of the opposites which is closer to the idea of yin-yang and links Bruno's thinking to the Oriental one, together with the conception of shadow which is the "linking point" between shadow and light, good and evil, true and false. It's a book whose potentiality, I think, has not still been expressed completely, so that I will write a second and wider edition, considering the other studies I led in these years, and I will also have it translated. I think it might be useful to spread Bruno's works, particularly in those countries, such as the Anglo-Saxon ones, where the interest for natural religiosity is more alive and deeper felt.

Q. You defined Bruno "a runner of the thinking marathon", can you explain it better?

A. When dealing with the biography of the Nolan, one cannot help being fascinated by the incredible dynamism of this little friar, exiled and persecuted. In a period when travelling was dangerous and uncomfortable, often with makeshifts, on foot or by mule, tracing the course of rivers, and considering unreliable and venal coach drivers as the best solution, he travelled along a way which, with the streets that we have now, which of course are not the same as those of that time, I consider being ten thousand kilometers long. This was all animated by the desire of finding an university where to teach and spread his ideas, the results of his tireless reflection. It's not clear how, being in such an uneasy condition to have a decent living standard, he had enough time to write so much. Fortunately, considering the fact that he did not really live a long life, he left a good amount of work, which would have been bigger, if there had not been the censorship of the Inquisition to cut some important ones. But at that time it could have been worse. Among some other brilliant intellectuals, who were accused of being heretics, we can recall the poor Vanini, who had his tongue cut, before being strangled and burnt in Toulouse, at the age of 34!

Q. Can you tell us how did you find an original signature of Bruno?

A. When I aimed at the ambitious and hard target of releasing to the public the works which had still not been translated from Latin, maybe sacrificing something in terms of the philological accuracy for a reconstruction of the biographic-cultural background of the work's composition, I decided to run through all the stops made by Bruno in his *peregrinatio*, personally going to those places. I was convinced that living again the atmospheres, both cultural and environmental, in which the philosopher was to work every time, could help me in understanding such an original and versatile thinker. Thus, each of my books was preceded by a preparatory research travel, linked to the work I was dealing with, and I was actually right. The first of these works, still not translated, which drew my attention was *Camoeracensis Acrotismus*, a puzzling text even in the title, which gave me the opportunity of making an unexpected discovery. By carefully examining the *Acrotismus* kept in the National Library of Prague (the one that has, on the frontispiece, the dedication made by Bruno to Tycho Brahe, and, on the last page, the ferocious pun of the dedicatee: "Nullanus, null and nil. Names are often fit for those who have them"), I caught a glimpse on the back of the first page, which was damaged and ruined by the time, a sentence mostly unreadable which started with the word "Jordanus". Well, by having a computerized analysis of the page done, and comparing it with other original manuscripts of Bruno, I could notice a series of similar calligraphic elements, which made me think it could be handwritten by the Nolan, completing the dedication of the frontispiece. If an academic had made the same discovery, it would have been trumpeted from the rooftops, while it shamefully passed over in silence. This polemical remark is necessary, since this translation was a turning point in my relation with the academic environment.

Until that moment, they had looked at me with attention and almost with sympathy. But then, noticing that I had questioned their hegemony and, most of all, their business, some wretched representatives of the academic pedantry suddenly started to consider Guido del Giudice, a former promising and passionate freelance researcher, as an opponent. Luckily, they didn't consider the power of Internet, the kingdom of free spirits, which helped in facing the media boycotting my books. And I also have to truly thank by brave

publisher, Sante Di Renzo, who always supported my research with expertise and enthusiasm.

Q. In the work Two Orationes you describe the philosopher during his stay in Germany, and in those pages you make it clear what made Bruno write the Orationes in the most quiet period of his exile; you add an element to that philosophical pilgrimage, that gaiting and running which is intimately linked to the work of the Nolan.

A. The translation of the two *Orationes* is due to my travels to Germany, mainly to Wittenberg and Helmstedt, where they were pronounced and where the Nolan spent the most quiet period of his life, since he was allowed to teach in two of the best universities of that time: the *Leucorea* and the *Academia Julia*. In the book I talk about the reactions to Bruno's works in what he called, with gratitude, the "house of German wisdom", as he says in *Oratio Valedictoria*. The orations give Bruno the occasion to talk about his philosophical ideas, as in some famous dedications of his works. Here we can clearly read about the ideological basis of his tireless intellectual research; about the denunciations of man's vices and hypocrisies; about the academic pedantry. All these elements prove that the Lutherans turned out to be much more hospitable and appreciative than the Catholics. If there had been no religious conflicts between Lutherans and Calvinists, probably Bruno could have had a normal life, dedicated to the education of his several German students, among whom we can recall the loyal Besler. The text analysis, during the translation, led me to another interesting discovery, allowing me to find in *Valedictoria* an almost literal translation of an extract of *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, which critics hadn't still noticed, and which proves the fact that the Nolan had known and admired Rabelais' work. Besides, it confirms the existence of Oriental elements, linked to Apollonius of Tyana, a mysterious character, but whom Bruno knew well.

Q. One of the last activities is the publication of "The god of the geometricians", an essay which includes Bruno's dialogues about the compass of Fabrizio Mordente, another important element which was missing in the understanding of the Nolan. We are introduced to the second stay in Paris, that happens when, having left England, Bruno gets back to France with the ambassador; in the meanwhile he had published the dialogues in vulgar and had given a better definition of his heliocentric and infinitistic idea of the universe. We find him with Corbinelli, that is the person thanks to whom he will meet the mathematician Fabrizio Mordente. That is one of the points which I want to understand: the importance given to these two people. With Corbinelli and Mordente you are able to directly enter into the world which saw incarnated the word and the life of the Nolan.

A. *The god of geometricians* is the first complete translation of the four dialogues that Bruno wrote in his dispute with the mathematician from Salerno Fabrizio Mordente. Besides helping me in understanding another moment of the Nolan's *peregrination*, it is particularly interesting to make the philosopher's personality clearer, as it is relevant in underlining the "scientific" part of his thought. The interest for Mordente's compass shows the necessity for finding a practical instrument which could help him supporting the thesis of the infinite indivisibility of the minimum, an openly opposite idea to the Aristotelian thesis, in a period when the instruments were rare and rudimental.

The four dialogues are particularly lively, because they show both a notional aspect and the description of an interesting episode of the second stay in Paris. In the book we can find the meeting/dispute with the touchy inventor, through the correspondence of Jacopo Corbinelli, patron and loyal friend of the Nolan, whom he defines "nice friend, Epicurus for life". What emerges from Jacopo's letters about these two exiles is that, instead of helping each other, they decide to keep fighting, just like Renzo's capons in *I Promessi Sposi*, wasting their energy in a fight between poor people, which shows a sort of comic and grotesque theatricality. As in the case of Tycho Brahe and the *Acrotismus*, the philosopher's great enthusiasm leads again to misunderstanding and despise.

Q. In 2010 Di Renzo Editore publishes "Giordano Bruno: Summa of the metaphysical terms", which you edited and translated. It is one of the less known texts of the Nolan, but it has the advantage of making us know and almost see the philosopher in the moment of the lesson, since it is the text of the lessons that Bruno used to dictate to the student Raphael Egli. One easily sees the deep knowledge of the Aristotelian philosophy, both as an actual instrument of research and as source of money, since Bruno could earn something by teaching Aristotle's theories. In this sense it is maybe the most intimate or daily text of the philosopher, since one can literally see him at work.

A. The *Summa of the metaphysical terms* is a text which, thanks to my "on the road" approach, allowed me

to investigate, this time, the relation between Bruno and the movement of the Rosicrucian. A link that had only been hypothesized by Frances Yates, but without bringing those factual data which I could find in Switzerland, opening a branch of research which is generating great interest and which I developed shooting a documentary. Actually, in the *Summa*, which is the transcription of the lessons about the Aristotelian terminology made by Bruno to his student Raphael Egli and other Swiss scholars, we can see for the first time the philosopher as a teacher.

The image of the Nolan, who, *stans pede in uno*, standing on one foot, gives his lesson, is remarkable, since he's able to dictate and think about new things at the same time so fast that the students can't easily follow him when writing. *Summa* is an extraordinarily evocative text, full of memorable pages, mainly in the second part, even if we will always regret the loss of the third one, maybe the most important one, dedicated to the *anima mundi*.

Q. In the essay "Bruno in Switzerland, among alchemists and Rosicrucian", the relations between the ideas, the similarities and differences between the Rosicrucian and Bruno are pointed out clearly, such as in the similarity between Bruno and the Rosicrucian for the project of political reformation represented by Henry of Navarre. But you also point out the unbridgeable distance between the Christianity of the Rosicrucian and the anti-Christianity of Bruno.

A. When talking about Giordano Bruno, one always has to avoid the will to link him to one or another ideology. He never belonged to any Church, and even in his relation with the Rosicrucians, according to my research, he didn't change, since he was only their inspirer. The Rosicrucians then agreed with him and decided to use some of the key concepts of his philosophy, which they still have in their doctrine, not the opposite. They were also sharing his irenistic project of religious peace, which led to having great hopes towards Navarre, and then being frustrated by his assassination. Despite being flattered by the interest that the movement was showing to him, the clear anti-Christian connotation of Bruno's philosophy, which is the gist of *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* and, most of all, of *Cabala del cavallo Pegaseo*, because of the negation of the double human and divine nature of Christ, could never lead him to adhere completely to the Rosicrucian movement. Nevertheless, the necessity of having a series of followers, which he felt, to spread his philosophy, makes us believe that the Nolan considered this brotherhood as the beginning of that sect of "Giordanists" which he told his jail mates in Venice to have created in Germany.

Q. Since you made this journey through the Nolan's thought and his pilgrimage in Europe like nobody else did, could you tell us if there is any realistic chance, among the Vatican archive and old forgotten shelves, of finding any word or work lost or unknown written by Bruno or about his philosophy?

A. I truly think so. As I said, the third and last part of *Summa of the metaphysical terms* must have been among the confiscated books of the Nolan when he was arrested, and it must probably be in some hidden shelf of the Vatican archive, maybe together with some other inedited work. The discovery of the so-called Norov code, from the name of the Russian bibliophile who bought it in 1863 by an antiquary of Paris, which gave us the chance to read the texts of the so-called "magical" period of Bruno, makes me believe that, maybe in the countries of Eastern Europe, there might be some work of the German or Prague period, so there might still be something interesting.

Q. I think there are some aspects of Bruno's thought which turned out to be important in the history of modern and contemporary philosophy. I'm referring to "Spaccio della bestia trionfante", where he tries to reform human morality by eliminating old vices: there is something which anticipates the "Transvaluation of all values" described by Nietzsche, or the heroic fury, where the furious feeling is a vice, the breaking of a limit, an extreme feeling which, over the apathy of the stoical and of the wise man, he gets close to Kierkegaard's anguish or Heidegger's angst. I think there are important hints besides the heliocentrism and the infinite worlds which we all acknowledge.

A. These that you quoted are only some of Bruno's suggestions, which we can find in modern science and philosophy. Alexandre Koyré, who didn't consider Bruno a modern soul, acknowledged that his influence was so deep, that we can't help giving him an important role in the history of human soul. One can think, for example, to the incredible criticism to the self-reference, which links Bruno to the modern theories of quantum physics. In *De triplici minimo et mensura*, he wondered whether the particle of minimum substance is subject to the normal physical laws and whether it is measurable by the logical skills of human mind, anticipating, already in 1591, the same doubts as Heisenberg and Bohr had, who considered the intervention

of the observer in scientific analysis as a subjectivizing factor of the same observation.

Q. From your analysis in the new book "I will tell the truth. Interview to Giordano Bruno", it becomes clear that the arrest of Bruno in Venice, because of the intervention of the informer Mocenigo, was not a extemporary fortuity, but a planned operation of the Dominicans and of the Church.

A. The research which I did on Ippolito Beccaria, the General Master of the Dominican Order, who has the role of the interviewer in the book, while Bruno is in the jails of the Roman Inquisition, opened new scenarios within the final moments of the Nolan. A character whom has been completely ignored by biographers, this resolute and merciless religious man, most of all towards the brothers who would dishonour their frock, followed with a watchful eye the most dangerous people from this point of view: Tommaso Campanella and Giordano Bruno. The suspicious presence of Beccaria in Venice, during the crucial phases of the arrest of the philosopher, makes us believe that there is a direct involvement in the fatal event. The continuous movements of Bruno and the caution with which, before accepting the invitation of the nobleman Mocenigo, he stayed in Venice in a rented room to analyse the situation, which he evidently did not trust, show that there was some sort of pervert game, which will end up in the arrest in the night of 22 May 1592. It seems that Zuane Mocenigo, a miserable and easily influenced man, who was also very close to the Venetian Inquisition, was also the bait of a trap which had been patiently built to finally catch the Nolan. The biographic tradition, influenced by political-religious motivations, has always seen Cardinal Bellarmino as the "bad guy" in the whole story. But actually, way before Bellarmino came into the story, Beccaria was the one who was famous for his strong will to persecute. He was the only one who claimed, several times, that he was in favour of the strong and continuous torture of the prisoner, and finally it was him who took charge of the last effort, which of course failed, to convince the Nolan to abjure.

Q. For Bruno it's not possible to have a direct knowledge of God, because of his "shining" nature and because of the "shadowy" human condition. This non-knowledge makes Bruno part of a negative vision of the divine, a perspective which starts with Dionigi and Eckhart and ends up with the conception of negative of the 20th century. I'm referring to Heidegger and to the truth of being which gives a negative auroral to the Greek definition "aletheia", which means non-hiding. Do you think that this absolutely modern vision of Bruno has been understood and accepted?

A. When talking about the divinity, the Nolan always refers to the communicated form, the *mens insita omnibus*, never to the *mens super omnia*, which is inaccessible in its true essence for the shadowy human knowledge. We can't have any form of knowledge of this "hidden God", of a clearly Cusanian kind, while the communicated God, which is the expression of the absolute divinity, even if shadowy, is the only one which, through the experience of the heroic fury, is understandable for the human mind. Its coincidence with Nature leaves out the necessity of an intermediary, be it Christ or the Church, and opens the way to a whole series of "magical" correlations, in the sense of natural magic, which are openly in contrast with the Christian doctrine.

It's a kind of vision which hasn't still being understood, since it has been overcome by mnemonical and magical-alchemical suggestions, which are more easy to understand. Only in the last years it has been studied in-depth and spread by the best scholars.

Q. What do you think about the Vatican not having apologised for Bruno's trial, as they did for Galilei?

A. The letter that the Vatican State Secretary, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, wrote in 2000, for the fourth centenary of the stake, was clear: even if he acknowledged the disproportion of the philosopher's condemnation, the Church still historically supports its legitimacy, considering the events and the regulations of that time. If we compare the treatment of Galilei and Bruno, we can't forget a fundamental element: Galilei abjured his ideas, Bruno didn't. According to the Catholic Church, his autos testimonies a submission to the religious authority, in spite of the fact that the evidence of reason and experiences required the opposite. It also makes him worthy of rehabilitation and even turns the memory of what was an heretic into a champion of the Catholicism. If you visit the bookstore of the Vatican Museums, you will find the souvenirs with Galileo's face together with those of Benedict XVI! They accused Galileo because of scientific statements, and basically on the heliocentric issue. His rehabilitation was a step back which, sooner or later, the Church had to take, unless they wanted to keep denying the evidence in the third millennium. Bruno's thought, on the other hand, apart from the astronomical statements, which are even bolder than Galileo's ones, "lead him

to some intellectual choices” – this is Cardinal Sodano speaking – “which progressively turned out, on some relevant elements, incompatible with the Christian doctrine”. The doubts about the nature of the Holy Spirit, the statement of the divinity of the substance and, mainly, the denial of the double nature of Christ and his role as intermediary: they all denied any otherworldly investiture of the religious institution, acknowledging a mere function of political-social handling of the truth.

*The italian version of the interview: published on [Ticonzero news](#) in January/February 2013.