JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY HISTORY OF IDEAS

2018

Volume 7 Issue 14
Item 13

– Section 4: Reviews –

Book Reviews

R. Soliani, L. Randone, E. Pasini

JIHI 2018

Volume 7 Issue 14

Section 1: Editorials

Section 2: Articles

Section 3: Notes

Section 4: Reviews

Book Reviews

R. Soliani, L. Randone, E. Pasini

Reviews of Pisanelli, Condorcet et Adam Smith. Réformes économiques et progrés social au siècle des Lumières*, 2018; Matino, Klestinec eds.,* Art, Faith and Medicine in Tintoretto's Venice*, 2018; Holmberg,* The Maurists' Unfinished Encyclopedia*, 2017.*

1 Simona Pisanelli, *Condorcet et Adam Smith. Réformes économiques et progrés social au siècle des Lumières*, Paris: Classiques Garnier, Bibliothèque de l'économiste 16, 2018, p. 214. ISBN: 9782406070504, € 29,00.

Historically, Condorcet's economic thought has drawn less attention than it deserved, as J.-C. Perrot remarked in 1992 (in his *Histoire intellectuelle de l'économie politique*, cited by Pisanelli at p. 14-15). Today, literature on him has considerably evolved, thanks to several authors like Rieucau and Menudo, and Pisanelli offers an interesting contribution to this fruitful thread. The book tackles a fascinating issue, that is, the relation between two main ideas of Condorcet's, compared with Smith's approach: *perfectionnement réel de l'homme* and economic growth, understood as the necessary pre-condition to it. Pisanelli mainly considers Condorcet's economic thought and finds in it a significant agreement with 20-years-older Smith, whom Condorcet esteemed very much, particularly for his opinions concerning free trade, taxation and colonialism.

Before the rational reconstruction, Pisanelli contextualizes Condorcet in the contemporary French debate, and scrutinizes his biography with accuracy, to

assess the possibility of personal meeting between him and Smith—in the end, any encounter is excluded. But the intellectual links between them were very strong. Sophie de Grouchy, Condorcet's young wife, translated the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* into French. Condorcet himself was involved into the project of the French translation of the *Wealth of Nations*, even though he eventually did not participate, and wrote instead a synopsis in the journal *Bibliothèque de l'homme*. A paragraph on the consequencies of Smith's journey to France and Switzerland concludes Pisanelli's erudite first chapter, which offers an original contribution on the circulation of ideas between Great Britain and France in the second half of the 18th century.

Pisanelli stresses that both Condorcet and Smith had the same aim, which was indeed common to most of authors in the age of Enlightenment: analyzing economy, in order to implement policies that would improve the social order in the widest sense. As mentioned above, the book discusses three topics of economic analysis. On free trade, Pisanelli evokes the lively debate in Great Britain and France, and provides textual evidence of Condorcet's favourable attitude. Condorcet was a friend of Turgot's and close to the Physiocrats, and shared their idea of a positive interaction between free trade, investment and productivity, supporting also high wages and education of labourers. Here, not only is Condorcet juxtaposed with Smith, but also with Necker.

Then Pisanelli carefully reconstructs the discussion on the *impôt unique* and on *luxe* that involved Turgot, Voltaire, Morellet, Le Mercier de la Rivière and many others. At the beginning Condorcet shares the Physiocratic argument, but later he appears nearer Smith. The root of the difference lies in the different position on the origin of surplus, where Smith was more advanced than Physiocrats.

Pisanelli devotes great attention to the debate on slavery, a topic which she has treated also in other papers. Here many different opinions are at play, depending upon the various social roles of the characters involved, as she demonstrates with reference to Le Mercier de la Rivère and Pierre Poivre. Two chapters are devoted to this issue, the second of which presents the position of Condorcet and Smith: both of them are against slavery, for ethical as well as economic reasons, since not only waged labour is more productive than slavery, but it is also part of the evolution of the "commercial society".

Both the *intermède* paragraph on luxury and the two chapters on slavery

are a plus of the book. Indeed the work has an interdisciplinary flavour. It is not narrowly limited to economic issues, but involves also topics related to social history and public ethics, thus helping the reader to grasp the real content of a key concept of Enlightenment: the *perfectionnement humain*. One could be slightly puzzled by the variety of topics dealt with in the book—free trade, equilibrium, taxation, luxury, slavery—even though each point is accurately developed and we can detect a sort of *fil rouge* linking them. The essay is far from being steeped in *esprit de système*; indeed, it offers a stimulating double portrait of two major characters of their century, depicted with *esprit de finesse*.

Riccardo Soliani

2 Gabriele Matino, Cynthia Klestinec eds., *Art, Faith and Medicine in Tintoretto's Venice*, Venice: Marsilio, 2018, p. 136. ISBN: 9788831729475, € 21,00.

Those familiar with Tintoretto's deep religious devotion, as well as with his attentive research on the human body, may be surprised by the almost complete absence of the artist from the *Art, faith and medicine in Tintoretto's Venice* exhibition held at the Scuola Grande di San Marco. It is Venice itself, the city in which Tintoretto displayed his entrepreneurial spirit, that is the focus of the exhibition. In those days, Venice was the capital of medical publishing. Its churches and buildings were the testing ground for ambitious, visionary architects and artists, and its government stood out for a strong interest in public health.

Organized as part of the celebrations for the 500-year anniversary of Jacopo Tintoretto's birth, the exhibition boasts two major achievements.

The first is that it has encouraged the undertaking of some important restorations. Eighteen books and manuscripts have been restored in the build up to the

exhibition. In addition to this, paintings commissioned to Domenico Tintoretto and Jacopo Palma the Younger have been returned to their own original place for the first time since their removal from the chapel of the Scuola Grande in 1806.

The second achievement is that of bringing together several types of objects, such as paintings, books, instruments and documents. These show that the Scuola Grande di San Marco – at once a lay confraternity, a space for tending to the ill, a monument of Renaissance art and architecture and now the abode of the History of Science Library – qualifies as the privileged site from which the complexity and liveliness of the sixteenth-century scientific revolution can be observed.

The catalogue is a precious instrument that articulates the themes of 'art', 'faith' and 'medicine' while promoting a dialogue between the exhibition display cases and, in turn, between these and the paintings (otherwise not so obvious). In light of the catalogue, one returns with new eyes to the majestic painting placed in the centre of the exhibition. The old Sala Capitolare was originally decorated with a series of paintings begun by Jacopo Tintoretto and finished by his son Domenico. The author of the devotional painting *Venice Supplicating the Virgin to Intercede with Christ to End the Plague* (1631) that is situated at the centre of the room is Domenico Tintoretto himself.

The manifold remedies with which the Serenissima faced the several plague outbreaks are analysed in the contributions by Michelle Laughran and Jennifer Gear. At the time, Venice was at the forefront of scientific advancements. It was one of the first cities to build, in 1348, special public committees called *Provveditorati alla Sanità* intended to organise the resistance to the epidemics. The *Provveditorati* became permanent starting from 1486. Their role was to regulate public hygiene, coordinate the Quarantine periods (which were first applied in Dubrovnik, a Venetian city), and offer shelter to the poor (as it happened during the 1528 plague). Every year, some 600,000 pounds of *teriaca* (theriac) were produced by licensed Venetian chemists. There was a reason why theriac, which was considered the strongest antidote against the plague, became known in England as 'Venetian Treacle'.

Among remedies believed to be beneficial against plague outbreaks, the commissioning of artworks representing the religious faith of Venetian citizens went hand in hand with measures regulating public hygiene, the preparation of

medicaments, and the remedies that even lay-readers could find in the increasingly available books in vernacular. In fact, divine intervention was believed to be the most effective of these. To oppose the Black Death, the members of the Scuola Grande di San Marco chose to flog themselves. In 1486, the San Rocco confraternity was pushed to the point of acquiring the relics of their patron saint to ensure protection against contagion. In 1576, even the Venetian Senate begged for divine help, vowing to build a church for *Cristo Redentore* (what would then become the *Basilica del Redentore* on the Giudecca island). It is in this context that *Venice Supplicating the Virgin to Intercede with Christ to End the Plague* finds its meaningfulness. This artwork was commissioned to Domenico Tintoretto by the members of the San Francesco della Vigna congregation during the 1631 outbreak. Considering that the year before Venetian people had marched in procession every week, reciting litanies composed by then-Maestro of the St Mark's Basilica Claudio Monteverdi, and that the text at the centre of the painting is the vulgarized version of one such litany, it is safe to assume that the painting was used as an insignia during the religious processions that took place in the city.

In their analysis of the painting, Jennifer Gear and Gabriele Matino compare the final artwork with the initial sketch. Their contribution is situated within the increasingly important research field that studies preparatory materials. This is a central aspect of the main exhibition for the 500th anniversary of the birth of Tintoretto, that was celebrated at the Palazzo Ducale, where a whole room was devoted to display the stages in Jacopo Tintoretto's method of work, from the study of the site to the project stage to, at last, the act of drawing[1]. In the case of *Venice Supplicating the Virgin to Intercede with Christ to End the Plague*, the differences between the final artwork and the preparatory model are remarkable. On the former, the background offers a glimpse of the desolate city, with the *pizzigamorti* (body clearers) taking away the diseased. In the latter, however, there are piles of infected bodies that occupy no less than a third of the picture. According to Matino, these bodies – which, in their being revolting, bring to mind the ephemerality of life – are an example of how Domenico took distance from the aesthetic canons of his father. These bodies may be compared to the

[1] The exhibition "Tintoretto 1519-1594", held at the Doge's Apartments in Palazzo Ducale, was curated by Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman, under the consultative direction of Gabriella Belli.

sketches, preserved in the Metropolitan Museum (Inv. 1975.1.533-539) and at the Fondation Custodia in Paris (Inv. 1362), in which the hand and the eyes of Domenico investigate the unattractive sides of the female body, particularly skinny bodies, awkward poses, balding foreheads and swollen groins. According to Matino, this interest in the imperfections of the human body owes much to Tintoretto's acquaintance with Agostino and Annibale Caracci. In 1582, the Caracci brothers, together with their cousin Ludovico, founded the Accademia degli Incamminati in Bologna. In this academy, models were required to assume Michelangelo-inspired poses. Differently from what happened in the workshop of Jacopo Tintoretto, however, the grandeur of Buonarroti was then transposed back to the natural sphere.

Jacopo Tintoretto's depiction of bodies was based not only on live observation, but also on the superhuman figures of Michelangelo. That of Domenico, by contrast, was more oriented towards realism. Yet, in what way were bodies depicted in the anatomy texts that Venetian publishing houses released during the sixteenth century?

The contribution by Cynthia Klestinec reminds the reader that the study of anatomy – the study of the parts of the human body and of both their sacred and scientific meaning – had many functions and was promoted not only by universities but also by the civic and religious institutions of the cities in which the dissections took place. Those who aimed at exploring the philosophical dimension of anatomy did not need a constant, direct contact with the corpses because they could accompany their reading with the anatomical tables. The plates by Vesalius were a visual synthesis of different body manipulations and, in the oil paintings of the anatomical studies of Fabrici, different colours were employed to distinguish each part of the human body.

As Ilaria Andreoli notes in her article, starting from the mid-sixteenth century pictures become more beautiful and accurate. These were drawn by artists

of high calibre, such as Jan Steven van Calcar, an apprentice to Titian and believed to be the illustrator of the works of Vesalius, and Gaspare Becerri. After working with Michelangelo on the Sistine Chapel, Becerri drew the original illustrations of Valverde's *Historia de la composicion del cuerpo humano*. The finesse of the artists' drawings were related to the needs of the users, who were not only physicians, but also clerics, lawyers and middle-class people interested in the new developments in anatomy and in new ways of looking at the real.

A similar degree of accuracy distinguished the surgery handbooks in the second half of the sixteenth century. While the anatomical tables were mostly taken from Vesalius, more and more detailed illustrations depicted surgical instruments, as well as models for artificial limbs. As Paolo Savoia contends, precision in drawing was a way to promote the dialogue with the world of artisans. This goes a long way to show that, at the time, surgeons were considered as the expert of medicine most prone to innovation and experimentation. The ideal surgeon, as the Venetian Giovanni Andrea della Croce describes it, is an "inventor of new instruments" (100). Willing to separate themselves from both learned physicians and barber-surgeons, surgeons emphasized that they were able not only to use, but also to invent, new instruments that could readily restore the health of their patients.

Tommaso Rangone, on whom the contribution of Sabrina Minuzzi is focused, was also well aware that promotional strategies could grant access to the important social and institutional sites of the Venetian Republic. A physician and astrologer, Rangone relocated to Venice at the beginning of the 1530s and there readily appreciated the recent developments of scientific knowledge. He published several texts in Latin and vernacular, wrote *regimen sanitatis* (health regime) specifically for the city of Venice and authored texts how to treat syphilis, at the time a prominent scourge. He studied how to make therapeutic use of plants from the New World and explored solutions on how to purify the air of Venice. Moreover, Rangone was skilled in using the arts and the publishing industry to create his self-image as that of a physician investigating the macro- and microcosm to extend the human lifespan, namely a physician both modern and charitable. This is the depiction that emerges from the coin that Rangone asked Matteo Pagano to manufacture in 1562. In this year, Rangone established that a yearly revenue was to be given to destitute girls. He was also honoured with the title of Knight of Saint Mark, and was elected *Guardian Grande* (chief

officer) of the Scuola di San Marco. The coin is an illustration of the myth of Zeus leaning Heracles against the breast of a sleeping Hera. Suddenly awaken, Hera sprays a few drops of milk in the sky, thus creating the Milky Way. A few more drops, falling to the ground, make three lilies blossom, together with three birds.

Notwithstanding this particular Pagan subject, the ideal role Rangone is depicted in is that of the physician who, in imitation of Christ and his compassion, medicates the wounds inflicted upon humankind by the original sin. The theme of charity becomes central from the fifteenth century onwards, modifying the very nature of the Scuola Grande di San Marco. Paola Benussi's contribution shows that once the original communitarian interests towards religious atonement were set aside (the Scuola Grande di San Marco had initially been founded as a confraternity of flagellants), the School became a lay confraternity with a clear-cut division between social classes. The more affluent members managed the money destined to the poor—that is, they administered the alms, the *grazie* (gratuities) as dowries for destitute girls, the maintenance of the houses for the impoverished, and the healthcare for those who could not afford it. The poor themselves were in charge of more modest tasks, mainly religious and penitential activities directed to preserve the spiritual health of the whole confraternity.

The exploration of the intriguing tension between "art", "faith" and "medicine" has been already recognized as central to the scholarly study of the sixteenth-century scientific revolution. By focusing on how scientific and religious ideas were rooted into the social fabric of the Serenissima, and how artists, surgeons, and civil and religious institutions choose to put to the test or innovate traditional procedures, the exhibition and the catalogue examine the iridescent cultural life of Venice with the aim of showcasing, even to a non-specialist audience, the crucial role of urban communities in the history of ideas—a critical, yet rarely attempted feat.

Lucia Randone

3 Lynn Holmberg, *The Maurists' Unfinished Encyclopedia*, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2017, p. xv-313. ISBN 9780729411912, £ 70.

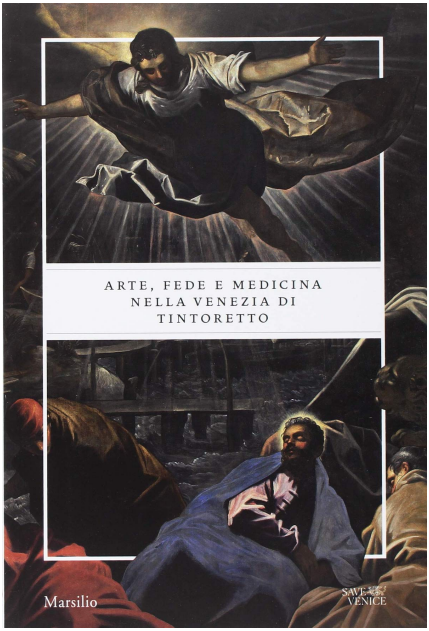
The Congregation of Saint-Maur, founded in 1618 inside the Benedictine order, by 1770 had already been the subject of a reference work, a *histoire* (in the academic meaning of annual records) and a literary history (F. Le Cerf, *Bibliothèque historique et critique des auteurs de la Congrégation de Saint-Maur*, La Haye: Pierre Gosse, 1726; E. Martène, *Histoire de la Congrégation de Saint-Maur*, éd. par G. Charvin, 10 vols., Paris: Picard, 1928-1954; R.P. Tassin, *Histoire littéraire de la congrégation de Saint-Maur, ordre de S. Benoit*, Paris: Humblot, 1770). Distinguished for their learning, they were based at St-Germaine-des-Prés, where their most famous representative, Mabillon, spent 43 immensely productive years. The Maurists edited the Fathers, collaborated to Du Cange's *Glossarium*, and variously deployed their erudition. They were suppressed during the Revolution, their superior general being guillotined in 1790.

A particular enterprise of theirs remained unachieved and largely unsung: two monks, Dom antoine-Joseph Pernety and Dom François de Brézillac, devoted years of toil to the project of a universal dictionary of arts, crafts, and sciences, that was initiated in the same year 1747 in which the *Encylopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* made its start. Pernety would eventually develop a taste for esotericism and leave the Congregation to become a disciple of Swedenborg's. The author describes her approach to an unfinished manuscript devoid of any prefatory material as that of "a detective", looking for "clues" in the six in-folio volumes that have survived, and thus scrutinizing nearly 7000 articles, illustrations, "and a multitude of working lists" (11). She analyses the plans, the lemmatisation, the distribution of authors and articles, the sources (e.g. Wolff's *Mathematisches Lexicon*, the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*), the project phases and its transformations. Much information is presented, and the comparison with the *Encyclopédie* is constant.

The project was abandoned around 1754-55, and the decision, the author says, "could have many reasons" (138): it had become too large and expensive to manage; its success relied, as it had often happened in the Congregation, on individual efforts that were not entirely dependable; the autonomy and amplitude of its cultural program were insufficient and, had it been published, it would probably have been "eclipsed by the controversial but successful *Encyclopédie*" (242). But

the very fact that, among a congregation of pious supererudites, this much more mundane enterprise was begun, testifies to the spirit of a time when compilers of encyclopedic dictionaries "aspired to describe and illustrate work processes rather than merely defining the vocabulary of artisans" (182). All these aspects are thoroughly studied and attentively assessed in this book, that–although its object may be deemed by some exceedingly particular–is indeed informative and useful.

Enrico Pasini



Details from Tintoretto and workshop, The Dream of St. Mark*, around 1585 (cover of Matino, Klestinec eds.,* Art, Faith and Medicine in Tintoretto's Venice*).*