

ILEANA CHINNICI, *Decoding the Stars. A Biography of Angelo Secchi, Jesuit and Scientist*, Brill, Leiden 2019, pp. 368.

WRITTEN on the occasion of the bicentennial of the birth of the prominent nineteenth-century Italian astronomer Angelo Secchi, this book by Ileana Chinnici provides a thorough overview on his life and personality focusing especially on the historical and cultural context.

A multifaceted figure who was a Jesuit priest and a scientist at a time of clashing ideologies and momentous changes, an inventor and world-renown pioneer in solar studies and spectroscopy at a time when the traditional mindset restricted astronomical work to the domain of celestial mechanics, Secchi was, in Chinnici's words, «a man of his times» (p. 1) and a controversial figure within the cultural landscape of the time. Throughout his life, from the years which saw his rise to the European scientific élite during the mid-nineteenth century to the years following the annexation of the Pontifical State to the newly formed Italian kingdom, Secchi was first and foremost a man of science who advocated the importance of spectral studies in astronomy and had a long-lasting influence in laying down the foundations for the raise of astrophysics.

For this biography, Chinnici chose to rely especially on first-hand documents like Secchi's own diaries and his personal correspondence with family, friends, colleagues, and opposers. The wealth of material that the author skilfully managed to sift and report is impressive and allows not only for a reader-friendly account of Secchi's life, accomplishments and scientific contributions, but also a glimpse of the historical developments and cultural landscape of his times. As Chinnici points out in the preface, «[Secchi's] beautiful prose allows the biographer to have just to provide a frame, to set the scientific and historical context of the time» (p. x). The whole work may be seen, indeed, as a successful attempt to provide such a frame. In fact, its value lies not only in the considerable amount of biographical information that it is able to provide, but also in its relevance for the history and sociology of science, since it offers much food for thought for contemporary reflection on the history of modern science and on its place in the midst of past and present cultural and social changes.

The book has a narrative structure that follows, for the most part in chronological order, the main steps of Secchi's life and scientific accomplishments. After a concise introduction, the first two chapters are dedicated respectively to Secchi's early life and education and aim at a reconstruction of Secchi's early life that is «more accurate» (p. 11) than the others available, one that is careful to draw a clear picture of Secchi's personality and intellectual inclinations as well.

The third chapter ushers the reader into the central part of Secchi's biography, dwelling on the events that led to his appointment as director of the astronomical observatory at the Collegio Romano (a position that he held roughly uninterruptedly from 1847 until his death in 1878). In this capacity, Chinnici underlines, Secchi took various steps to modernize the observatory, for example by endowing it with a me-

teorological station and the first geomagnetic laboratory ever installed in Italy, and by relaunching publications to reconnect the observatory to the international community. The author's main intent seems here to be that of underlining two important aspects of Secchi's personality and mindset. Firstly, his dynamism and initiative. Secondly, his peculiar approach to scientific research: between a traditional approach to astronomy – which saw it as mainly concerned with pure mathematical calculation – and the 'new' one – which was essentially multidisciplinary and focused especially on the physical structure of astronomical objects and on the interactions of different and yet unified physical forces – Secchi was always more prone to the latter, finding it more in tune with his interests for the practical aspects of scientific research.

A further essential feature in Chinnici's portrait of Secchi is introduced in chapter four by an examination of some of his contributions to the progress of civil society and the state. Here the author highlights Secchi's strong sense of the common good and his conviction that science should serve especially for this purpose, rather than being kept hidden from the broader public. As it becomes clearer further on in the book, this attitude was a source of many troubles and much frustration for Secchi, especially when, towards the end of his life, he found himself grappling with both clerical and anti-clerical extremisms, forced to seek out a difficult balance between his allegiance to the Church and his will to contribute to the scientific progress of the newly founded Italian state.

Chapter five dwells on the events that accompanied the rise of Secchi's international career, ushering at the same time the reader into the last and most dramatic chapter of his life. Chapter six puts the historical narration on hold to examine a little more thoroughly some of Secchi's major contributions to scientific research, particularly the spectroscopic studies he carried out on stars, comets and planets, but also those concerning solar physics and further contributions to other scientific disciplines such as meteorology and limnology. A summary of the three major treatises produced by Secchi is also provided even though, as the author herself notes, «the reader will not find detailed scientific content or complicated technical language» (x).

Chapters seven and eight get back to the historical narration of Secchi's final years, that is, those between the annexation of Rome to the Italian kingdom in 1870 and his death in 1878. The former focuses on the trials that he had to face in the years immediately following the unification of Italy, a time when he often felt used as «a pawn in the difficult post-unity relations between the Papacy and the Kingdom of Italy» (p. 222). The latter introduces a positive note in this rather bleak scenario by dwelling on the «scientific friendship» between Secchi and Pietro Tacchini. An astronomer himself who was not only much younger than Secchi, but also «anti-clerical and something of a playboy», Tacchini became the main partner in Secchi's scientific endeavours. Significantly, Chinnici underlines that «the two men's common love for science and its advancement [...] overcame their divergent ideological, political, and moral beliefs» (p. 229), allowing them to launch the ambitious project of a society of Italian spectroscopists. The author notes that Tacchini's participation in the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Collegio Romano after Secchi's death led to accusations of opportunism from some Jesuit circles. However, the issue is not addressed in this book and is left to further studies.

The remaining chapters constitute an attempt to take stock of Secchi's life, both from a biographical and a scientific point of view. Chapter nine dwells longer on how Secchi's controversial personality and interests often led him into personal and scientific disputes. In this respect, the dispute with neo-Thomist circles concerning the nature of physical forces appears, from a philosophical perspective, particularly interesting. Secchi's view was that science should be concerned with mechanical and chemical forces whose action was grounded in the physical nature of matter itself, beyond the Thomistic distinctions of substance, matter and form. For these reasons he was unduly associated with the materialists of his days and accused, more or less explicitly, even by some of his Jesuit brothers, of atheism. As the author notes, astronomy itself, particularly in the form that Secchi advocated, came to be seen by many fundamentalists as a science that drew one away from God, whose practice had, therefore, to be prohibited within the Catholic Church (p. 265).

Chapter ten goes back to examining Secchi's biography by stressing especially how this climate of uncertainty and insecurity affected Secchi's health and left a mark on his final years. This, however, did not impede him to play a leading role in what became his last contribution to the progress of scientific research, that is, the setting up of a reform of the system of Italian astronomical observatories. A very brief conclusion dwells somewhat longer on the importance of Secchi's spectroscopic research for the subsequent development of astrophysics, highlighting how this legacy, which was appreciated and highly valued in the United States, was largely overlooked both in Italy and Europe. Probably, as Chinnici suggests, this was also due to «the complexity of his personality and the political implications of his being a Jesuit in an anti-clerical age» (p. 334).

The book provides an accurate portrait of Angelo Secchi and allows for a close-up picture not only of his life but also of the cultural and social environment characterizing his times. Admittedly, as the author herself acknowledges, there are «many aspects of his [Secchi's] life and scientific work that remain unexplored» (p. x). Nonetheless, this work constitutes a major contribution to scholarship in the field of the history and sociology of science, one that offers a fitting stepping stone for everyone interested in learning about Secchi and his times, particularly for what concerns the Italian context. Moreover, if it is true, as Chinnici suggests, that Secchi saw the dispelling of prejudices between science and church as his own mission, then his life must continue to talk to us in important ways in our own days.

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FRANCISCO RODRÍGUEZ VALLS, *¿Qué son las emociones?*, Senderos, Sevilla 2022, pp. 186.

FRANCISCO RODRÍGUEZ VALLS, Profesor titular de Antropología de la Universidad de Sevilla y responsable del grupo de investigación *Naturaleza y Libertad* de la misma Universidad, trata una temática de gran actualidad tanto en el ámbito de la psicología moral como de la filosofía moral: las emociones. Desde una perspectiva interdisci-

plinar el autor busca mostrar que el hombre necesita de la lógica de los afectos para orientar con sabiduría su vida. Una de las tesis principales es que las emociones, lejos de ser un error de la naturaleza, forman parte de la naturaleza de todo animal, hombre incluido. De aquí que el hombre se plantee el reto de tener emociones adecuadas a su naturaleza. Mostrar cómo es esto posible es asimismo propósito de esta obra, la cual se inscribe en el elenco de trabajos de investigación realizados por el autor en el ámbito de la antropología filosófica en diálogo con la psicología experimental y la neurobiología, entre otras disciplinas.

El libro consta de 6 capítulos y un elenco bibliográfico en el cual se ofrece una sucinta descripción de algunos textos de especial relevancia en la materia. Se incluyen también dos anexos. Mientras que uno de ellos ejemplifica la dimensión afectiva del conocimiento mostrando cómo el uso retórico de la palabra interpela las emociones de los ciudadanos, el otro ofrece fragmentos de la literatura universal en los cuales se ilustran actitudes emocionales a través del rostro.

En el primer capítulo se aborda la naturaleza de las emociones y su papel protagónico en la vida del hombre. En efecto, la toma de decisiones propia de la vida intelectual no es desencarnada: el saber emocional, esto es, el gusto o el disgusto frente a una determinada situación es una voz que reclama ser escuchada. Lejos de un simple fenómeno afectivo caracterizado por la sensación corporal, las emociones son un conocimiento preconceptual acerca de sí mismo y del entorno. Dicho conocimiento conlleva una intencionalidad que empuja a disponerse a la acción en pro de la supervivencia. La base anatómica, fisiológica y psíquica de las emociones permite hablar de una cierta universalidad de las mismas, hecho que no lleva a desconocer la influencia de la cultura en su expresión.

El capítulo segundo trata de la compleja distinción entre emoción y sentimiento, distinción que marca la línea divisoria entre la afectividad humana y animal. El sentimiento es propio del hombre en virtud de su espiritualidad: lo emocional es trascendido en el ámbito sentimental. El sentimiento surge cuando existe conciencia de la emoción y la capacidad para transformarla de acuerdo con criterios de valor. En esta misma línea se desarrolla el capítulo 3 en el cual se encuentran la emoción y la inteligencia autoconsciente. El hombre como sujeto corporal y consciente puede dialogar con el bagaje biológico y evolutivo e intentar modificarlo teniendo en cuenta el entorno social y cultural. Este diálogo es el que hace posible la formación de los sentimientos que el autor caracteriza como expresiones corporales del saber consciente. Siendo pacíficamente aceptado que la voluntad no ejerce un dominio tiránico sobre las emociones, el autor enfatiza que la educación sentimental se realiza desde lo que el sujeto considera qué debe sentir; así la energía emocional se transforma en sentimiento sentido. Ahora bien, dada la universalidad y pluralidad de los valores, el autor sostiene que la enseñanza de los sentimientos está sujeta a la variabilidad de los valores culturales. La universalidad de las emociones se somete por tanto a un proceso de diversificación sentimental que tiene en cuenta circunstancias sociales y personales.

El capítulo 4 plantea la relación entre las emociones y la inteligencia emocional, término que procede de la psicología experimental de la segunda mitad del siglo xx, popularizado por el divulgador científico David Goleman. Tener inteligencia emocional es saber cuándo expresar o cohibir las emociones que se sienten. El fondo de

la cuestión es que las emociones deben ayudar a vivir y no convertirse en estorbo que dificulte la existencia. Para eso no es suficiente con gestionarlas; antes bien, se trata de transformar la afectividad de manera creadora y consolidar hábitos. Si bien el planteo puede considerarse válido, llama un tanto la atención la ausencia de referencias a la virtud y la racionalidad práctica. Aunque resultan de interés las reflexiones en torno a las tecno-emociones, las afirmaciones con respecto a la ingeniería genética requieren algunas matizaciones.

El autor propone conceptualizar las emociones como un elemento mediador, es decir, una especie de bisagra entre el cuerpo y el alma, en el capítulo 5. Este entendimiento es presupuesto de la empatía, aspecto al cual se concede atención como medio para descubrir al otro de una forma más sutil y profunda que la que media a través de la palabra. El autor esboza también la idea de que la finalidad del tiempo de la existencia es desarrollar e integrar armónicamente el conjunto de estructuras que componen al ser humano: sensibilidad, afectividad, inteligencia y voluntad. La integración es, en efecto, una búsqueda activa en la que el hombre debe empeñarse en virtud de su unidad psicosomática. Aunque la angustia es la emoción más estudiada desde el siglo XIX, esto no comporta afirmarla como la emoción más importante. El autor desafía la tesis existencialista dando lugar a la esperanza: el sujeto esperanzado no se enfrenta a retos menores que el angustiado pero se sabe partícipe de una trama en la que la madurez consiste en cuidar y ser cuidado.

En el último capítulo se recogen las principales líneas teóricas sobre las emociones desde el siglo XIX hasta la fecha. El objetivo es establecer un diálogo interdisciplinar entre la filosofía, la psicología experimental y la neurociencia. No se trata de hacer una historia de las emociones sino reseñar aquellos aspectos salientes a los fines del libro. El autor sostiene que la visión de Darwin es decisiva actualmente en cómo se entienden las emociones. El valor de su teoría reside en comprender las emociones como un mecanismo favorecido por la evolución de la vida para garantizar una mejor supervivencia. Junto con Darwin los estudios de James-Lange son de referencia en este campo. En el ámbito de neurociencia destacan Joseph DeLoux y Antonio Damasio. Originariamente sus estudios se centraron en determinar la localización de diversas emociones en la neuroanatomía cerebral, y sus conclusiones están en la base de teorías generales de estos fenómenos afectivos. Otra aproximación es la realizada por autores como el psicólogo Richard Lazarus o Martha Nussbaum quienes apuntan al carácter cognitivo de la vida emocional: las emociones son el fundamento de las decisiones correctas. La novedad de lo humano frente a la emotividad animal puede explicarse también por los sistemas duales que tienen a Daniel Kahneman como uno de sus principales valedores. Desde hace unos años la fenomenología se ha incorporado a las teorías de la emotividad en vistas a otorgar una teoría completa de la acción humana. A grandes rasgos el autor identifica dos posiciones consolidadas. Por un lado, el realismo emocional, el cual defiende la dimensión natural de las emociones, y con ello, su dimensión común a la especie humana. Por otro lado, el constructivismo, posición que sostiene que las emociones son construidas por cada grupo cultural. Frente al constructivismo el autor plantea la relevancia de investigar la existencia de algún tipo de instinto emocional sobre el que construir el sistema cultural de las emociones. Para el autor la discusión interdisciplinaria se encuentra en dirimir este problema.

Esta obra de Rodríguez Valls se acomoda a las pretensiones de un público no especializado al tiempo que resulta una válida introducción a la antropología de la afectividad. Aunque se echa de menos la ausencia de referencias bibliográficas a pie de página, al final del libro el lector encontrará las fuentes de la obra para continuar profundizando en el tema.

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MICHAEL ROSEN, *The Shadow of God. Kant, Hegel, and the Passage from Heaven to History*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, London 2022, pp. IX+406.

WITH an academic background in political philosophy, Michael Rosen is a prolific writer on a variety of topics in philosophy, social theory, and the history of ideas. He is particularly known for his philosophical analysis of 19th and 20th-century European philosophy and Anglo-American political philosophy. As an expert on Hegelian philosophy, Rosen belongs to the continental and analytic traditions, and he always exhibits an interest in discovering the philosophical currents and phenomena running through the major historical events.

Secularism is often defined as an antidote to religion since the former emerged as a dissatisfaction with the latter. And what brings novelty to the inquiry of Rosen through *Shadow of God* is that he strives to establish that the secular habits of mind still retain the structure of religious thought. It examines the what and how of this phenomenon through the framework of looking at history with a philosophical outlook (philosophical history). Consequently, he seeks reconciliation between reason and religion in the context of Western secularism. Modernity, together with its Philosophical Enlightenment Movement, was the launching pad for humanity to seek knowledge apart from the epistemic claims derived from faith and religion. As an aftermath of this global-historical phenomenon, everything was set to be examined in the cold light of reason and science. In parallel with these tides, the unmatching of the fundamental religious principles and knowledge claims to the criteria of reason and science eventually resulted in the former's rejection or gave way to the rational or secular ways of approaching the world and towards the super-sensible realities.

Rooting firmly on the analytical and continental philosophical traditions, Michael Rosen through his seminal work *The Shadow of God* illustrates how the modern and secular ways of seeing the world and the supernatural realities are still being colored and influenced by religion and its fundamental principles. The theistic inheritance of the underpinnings of modern secularism and rationalism is elucidated from the historical-philosophical perspectives. This is vividly presented as a passage from Kantian thinking to Hegelian philosophy and the inevitable repercussions in the theistic and secular understandings of the reality of God.

The Shadow of God comprises long nine chapters which are methodically arranged to build on one another by continuing and deepening the central argument. The first chapter is a bridge into the central theme of the book where the author posits the

fact that the secular age is not purely secular, they are entangled with the shadows of God and religion with the aid of the illustrations and citations from the writings of the philosophers from various disciplines. The second chapter brings before the readers two pertinent issues: the problem of theodicy and the Euthyphro dilemma. Rosen is limiting himself only to how these segments are addressed in the transcendental philosophy of Kant. The subsequent chapters, four and five, deal with the Kantian conception of human freedom and how it overcomes the arbitrariness that if morality is merely the result of an act of will, then how can it have rational force? The fifth chapter deals with Kantian understanding of moral law embodied in the categorical imperative. Here, Kant is presented as a 'moral unanimist' who stands staunchly for the philosophical position that when one takes away one's self-interest, there is born a universal agreement on moral judgments. Nonetheless, Rosen is mindful of post-Kantian attempts to situate philosophy as essential to tackle moral disagreements. The way of humanity's grand mission to the ideal of historical immortality by engaging in the project of creating a just world is the focal point of the sixth chapter. As traditional and religious personal immortality receded, German idealists, notably Herder, Schiller, Fichte, and Hegel developed a modern conception of 'historical immortality' that gave human beings an object of identification and hope. The seventh chapter witnesses that Rosen returns once again to the idea of freedom and the arbitrariness between will and reason. He challenges the readers to go beyond one's reason and will to open themselves to the demands of our society and its morality (*Sittlichkeit*). In chapter 8, the author re-interprets the philosophies of Kant and Hegel as an inevitable development of Socratic religion through a speculative conception of reason. The outcome of Rosen's reconciliation is that the philosophical project continues, but in concrete life situations, to what extent we can go for reconciliation between reason and faith is to be developed further. In the final chapter, Rosen comes out of the shell of German idealism to reassert his novel finding of 'historical immortality' manifested in nineteenth-century British progressive liberalism and French philosophes.

Rosen is indebted to the title *The Shadow of God* as an expression made by Friedrich Nietzsche, in his work *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche could recognize the inactive traces of religion existing in the world despite the Enlightenment movement and the emergence of secularisation. The absolute death of religion did not fully take place but they all existed in changed forms and practices. It was deemed to be a shift from miracles stories or claims to revelations of the traditional religion to the ideas and practices that religions still carried. Nietzsche wanted to completely eradicate everything that was considered to be religious to give room to prosper in authentic human living.

Apart from many traces of traditional religion in the secularized modernity, Rosen focuses only on the single shadow, that is, the concept of personal immortality, and delves into the German idealistic philosophies of Kant and Hegel with the yardstick of self-transcendence. He enquires into the question of how the heavenly (traditional theistic-religious) personal immortality paved the way for the historical (secularized and modernist) notion of self-transcendence with the emergence of German idealism. An explication of the history of the world and philosophy pinpointed that the

problems in theodicy culminated in the understanding of personal immortality as a passage from heaven to history.

Two historic-philosophical reasons resulted in the falling of theodicy especially with its central dictum that the world was created by an omnipotent and benevolent God, which was at the hardcore of the traditional religion. The historical reason was the Lisbon earthquake (1755), killing more than a third of the entire population of the city. Moreover, many people who survived the earthquake lost their lives to the tsunami triggered by the earthquake. The fact that people who were worshipping the omnipotent and benevolent God lost their lives in the natural disaster raised serious doubts on the theistic conceptions of the traditional religion, especially the notion of God as omnipotent and benevolent. Rosen delineates the philosophical reason culled out from the famous dilemma posed by Plato's *Euthyphro*: Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods? The result of these problems of theodicy led to the spread of secularism as a counter-movement against the conceptions of traditional religion and German idealism was instrumental in accelerating its pace. On the contrary, as Rosen digs deeply into the secular approach towards the claims of theism, he unfurls a new religion or religious line that runs through the historical-philosophical passage of modern secularism and he terms it as 'Socratic religion.' To expose the overwhelming new Socratic religion among the German idealistic interpretations to illuminate and broaden the process of secularisation is the chief thrust of the *Shadow of God*.

Though the Kantian critique on human reason landed upon the graveyard of metaphysics, his transcendental philosophy evoked the theoretical position of denying knowledge to make room for faith. This task of acknowledging the credentials of (religious) faith took place on Kantian ethics which accommodates rational autonomy and freedom of human beings as well as the sovereignty of God. Along with this, Rosen interprets Kantian ethics and reaffirms that its concerns are not the creations of God or man but their meeting point. He also reacts strongly against the secularist interpretation of Kantian ethics where God drops out of the picture, ethics becomes anthropocentric and it is the human will that creates moral values. This typical Kantian version of ethics is very well aware that only human beings can know and realize moral requirements apart from any external realities. Relating to Nietzschean philosophy, Rosen establishes an unfailing theodicy that is at work within the anthropocentric Kantian morality. The Kantian God in his rationalistic religion is a *Socratic God* who can be intelligible to us with the aid of our moral knowledge. Rosen brings retributivist theory to counter the Kantian interpretation that Kant abolished God and made man God in his stead. Rosen argues for a Socratic God in Kantian thinking as the impartial executor of justice and thereby we can have awe and reverence and gratitude towards such a being but not a personal relationship with it.

From the theistic blending of Kantian morality, *The Shadow of God* advances to explore Hegelian philosophy. Rosen addresses Hegelian philosophy as a moment in history and philosophy in articulating how human beings relate to the world. Consequently, the understanding of the individual as embedded within history as a constituent element in *Geist* came to replace divine judgment and personal immortality. The theistic interpretation of the Hegelian philosophical system exhibits great re-

semblance to the religious doctrine of Lutheran Protestant Christianity. A metaphysical interpretation brings light on *Geist* – the rational structure running through the whole of reality. A comparison of the dynamic, self-differentiating, and self-realizing (in time) *Geist* with Greek *Logos*, Neo-Platonism's One, Spinozian substance, Rousseau's general will, Fichte's Absolute *Ich* and Schelling's World-Soul subsequently draws to the shadow of a Christian-Trinitarian God who is timeless, eternal and incarnated in the world. Rosen brings forth a greater historical shift from a Kantian conception of personal immortality to historical immortality with the blooming of Hegelian philosophy. Historical morality gives room for humanity to outlive the stark reality of death through certain social projects like liberalism and revolutionary socialism. But Rosen employs a critical approach to how the concept of historical immortality is destroyed by the Auschwitz episode of annihilation. As humanity made a voyage from the Lisbon earthquake to Auschwitz through history, Rosen posits the question of whether we can still maintain the ideas of collective moral progress and historical immortality. In addition to this, he unveils that theological concepts are secularized and branded as significant concepts of modern political thought.

This book proceeds with objectives that are philosophical and historical; it ventures to understand some of the deepest and most perplexing issues that face us – as philosophers and citizens. The author endeavors to delve deeply into the original language and the unique expressions with the nuances of the writings of the philosophers discussed in the text. The style of writing expresses great erudition and a characteristic combination of analytic precision and critical imagination. It accepts a dialectical approach in dealing with conflicting philosophical issues like ethics, freedom, and posterity by not proposing a single, unique, and inescapable rational way to respond to them. Though the book is historical in nature, a narrative sequence of events is not at all intended by the author. Rosen himself consents to the excessively abstract nature of the book, and the texts it examines are notoriously hard to penetrate despite all his strenuous efforts to make it as simple as possible-although no simpler. He strove with great care to include all the substantive points in the main text which is complimented by notes for references and the original quotations. Surrounded by Gods and shadows of Gods, *The Shadow of God* invites all to explore further the throes of reconciling religious faith with secularism. Yes, the wisdom of Rosen has the potential to enhance all such engagements in the nearby future.

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IRVEN M. RESNICK, KENNETH F. KITCHELL JR., *Albertus Magnus and the World of Nature*, Reaktion Books, London 2022, pp. 272.

IF we wanted to find a keyword that could give us a vivid image of the philosophical and theological testament of Albertus, so depicted by professors Resnick and Kitchell, I would choose 'walk'. Indeed, the name of Albertus is related to a nickname, *episcopus cum bottis* (bishop with boots), that truly describes his dynamic life which always held together both a religious mission and philosophical research. Albertus

became famous quite for his long travels (on his own foot) among Germany, Italy and French; hence, from my perspective, the image of a walk with boots provides a vivid path to enlighten some aspects of this book.

The volume is an introduction to the naturalistic thought of Albertus which provides both a historical cultural context and a biographical overview of the life of the *Doctor universalis*. We could divide the book into three sections. The first one (chap. 1-5) is an overview of Albertus's life, always involved in the most important philosophical and theological controversies of his time such as the renewal of the Aristotelian thought and the condemnation of the Jewish Talmud. The second group of chapters (chap. 5-8) provides a very useful map of the naturalistic method of Albertus. The last three chapters (9-11) deal with problems like sexuality, human races, monsters, magic and the legacy of the Albertus figure. The most quoted work throughout the book is the colossal *On animals* (*De animalibus*) of which the authors recently provide an English translation. Finally, we have an appendix in which the authors show arguments to count the kilometres the Dominican friar walked in his life.

In this instance, I would like to focus on two themes that can help us better understand the way Albertus deals with the challenges represented by the famous opposition between faith and reason. The first one concerns the specific Aristotelian reading as well as the attitude toward the so-called authoritative principle. Secondly, the notions of *experientia* and Encyclopedia.

Professors Resnick and Kitchell provide us with an image of Albertus as a liminal thinker. What do I mean by this expression? I mean that Albertus's thought covers a lot of fields from theology and philosophy to naturalistic problems, which gave him the opportunity, not without risks, to read Aristotle's thought in a Christian lent. In the thirteenth century, the Catholic world watched suspiciously the renewal of ancient thought, in particular Aristotle's. It is clear if we remember, for instance, the strong Aristotelian arguments on the eternity of the world, or the ambiguous opinion on the immortality of the individual soul, all themes that collided with the Christian thought. At the time, only Aristotle's works of logic and ethics were permitted to be studied in academic curricula and Metaphysics as well as his physical works could be lectured in Arts faculties only after a purgation. However, Albertus approached differently the Aristotelian challenge to Christianity. We could resume the entire sense of Albertus's Aristotelian project by referring to the clear argumentation provided by the authors that understood the bold character of the Dominican friar seek. If the purpose of the Church is to purge Aristotle to respond to the challenges he set, how can we purge his works if we don't investigate them? The authors mind us that «Albertus established this as a principal goal: to investigate and rehabilitate Aristotle for a Christian audience» (p. 68). So soon, not without risk, Albertus introduced Aristotle in Cologne *Studium generale* theological curriculum. In this light, we should read the entire encyclopedic project covering different fields of naturalistic thought as well as the obscure and ambiguous sides of human knowledge, from animal to meteorology, plants, astronomy, alchemy and necromancy. We are dealing with a colossal *Encyclopaedia* rooted in a Christian view of the world.

But what about the method of this Christian project? Some interesting passages of *De animalibus* as well as other of Albertus's naturalistic works, allow us to explain

how to conceive the so-called authoritative principle in such a project. Across Albertus's work, we can frequently encounter expressions like *probavi(mus) experimento/per experimentum* or *expertus sum*. *Experientia* is the main principle that allows Albertus to have a critical attitude toward the ancient thinkers. Such a method is the result of an intense seek either proved by first-hand empirical observations and experiments [that we have to conceive as «testing of concept fact more than an actual experiment» (p.134)] or with the help of experts in different fields such as hunting, fishing etc. In *De Animalibus*, arguing on the hunting with birds, Albertus puts the experience above Aristotle's claims by writing that «we do not follow the prince of philosopher in all cases, for he rarely or never experienced hunting with birds» (p. 143).

We have started our focus by pointing out Albertus's designation like *episcopus cum bottis*. The image of the boots as well as the travels across Europe probably describe the dynamic and empirical character of Albertus's Christian Encyclopedia. But how to conceive this genre? Since ancient times, encyclopedists catalogued all possible things to trace a map of the world and this kind of literary genre was not a tool of mere consultation, such as it is in present days. In Albertus, we can find personal arguments proven by his own experience, a peculiarity if compared to the other philosophers and compilers who rarely presented in their works their personal observations. It allows us to claim that this genre, in the hands of Albertus, as well as thanks to his boots, vehicle of the experience, is not only a compiling exercise but an opportunity «to extend the boundaries of human knowledge through scientific observations of the natural world» (p.129), namely, a vivid and hard reading of the book of nature as an expression of the Divine order.

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