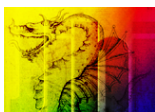


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– Section 4: Reviews –

Book Reviews

C. Carnino, R. Gronda, S. Mammola



## JIHI 2012

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## Book Reviews

C. Carnino, R. Gronda, S. Mammola

*Reviews of M. Matheus et al. (eds.), Le calamità ambientali nel tardo medioevo europeo: realtà, percezioni, reazioni, Firenze University Press, 2010; S.A. Reinert, Translating Empire. Emulation and the Origins of the Political Economy, Harvard University Press, 2011; A. Nicholls and M. Liebscher (eds.), Thinking the Unconscious. Nineteenth-Century German Thought, Cambridge University Press, 2010.*



**1** M. MATHEUS, G. Piccinni, G. Pinto, G.M. Varanini (eds.), *Le calamità ambientali nel tardo medioevo europeo: realtà, percezioni, reazioni*, Firenze, Firenze University Press 2010. ISBN 978-88- 8453-499-6 (print), €19,90; ISBN 978-88-8453-503-0 (online), €13,93.

The impression exerted by the recent floods and earthquakes in Italy has once again placed the issue of natural disasters at the center of attention and public debate in our country. This topic, however, is anything but provincial: to name only two world famous examples, suffice it to think of the great fear stirred up by Hurricane Irene in New York in september 2011, or of the tsunami that devastated Japan during the same year, apart from the enormous ongoing discussion about climate changes and their consequences for economy and society.

Prompted by all these stimuli a new line of research has arisen in the last years on a global scale, to give historical depth to such a complicated

weave—a line of research that, because of the matter of the subject, has been immediately and systematically designed with a strong interdisciplinary vocation. An interesting example in order to enter this fascinating strand of study, albeit from a very specific point of view, is the volume published in 2010 by Florence University Press *Le calamità ambientali nel tardo medioevo: realtà, percezioni, reazioni* (“Environmental calamities in the Late Middle Ages: realities, perceptions, reactions”), which contains the proceedings of the 12<sup>th</sup> Conference organized by the Centro per gli Studi sul Tardo Medioevo at San Miniato, in 2008. Besides the specific issues it addresses, the text is especially worthy of our attention since it is internally traversed by a strong methodological tension, which is completely understandable for a relatively new sector of research: the awareness of moving on a land that still must be largely established, where there are not already defined partitions, and where indeed a tendency to intersect different forms of knowledge prevails, allows us to grasp directly the building of a research area for which it is worth to dust off the full value of the metaphorical image of a “field”, in which objects and significantly different skills gravitate, according to relations that are all to be invented. This is exactly the kind of research that interests our journal.

Firstly, let us then more precisely define the contents of this specific book, relying on remarks entrusted to Gian Maria Varanini’s *Preface* and to Michael Matheus’ Introduction (*L’uomo di fronte alle calamità ambientali*, “Man against environmental calamities”, pp. 1-20). The title says: “Calamità ambientali”, literally “environmental calamities”. But the choice of this category was not obvious at all, and indeed Varanini, on behalf of the editors, accounts for the Italian lexical poverty with respect to a concept that does not seem to be appropriately designated by any commonly used term (“catastrofe”, i.e. “catastrophe”, or “disastro”, i.e. “disaster”). Even the adjective that accompanies “calamities” has caused some uncertainty: the intent was clearly to avoid any form of fatalism due to the expression “natural” and at the same time to emphasize the highly interactive role that the here examined disasters have with the environment in which they occur, not only because of the destructive consequences they produce, but also because often it is the environment itself, somehow, that causes them. At the beginning of the volume it is said that “Nature

knows no catastrophes". Obviously, we are not talking about an alleged paradise on earth corrupted by human activity here, but about the fact that qualifications such as "catastrophic" are inevitably associated with the presence of man on the scene: a volcanic eruption in a desert region is a natural show, but if it sweeps up a city, it becomes, in fact, a catastrophe. So, the consideration of the anthropic element directs attention to the sphere of demography, in its various forms, and to the techniques of engineering aimed to containing risks, for example, but also and chiefly to the study of mentalities and cultural re-elaboration of disastrous phenomena. Indeed, it seems a point of merit claimed by the editors of this book to have favored just the latter aspects, that have not been adequately considered yet by scholars. Matheus writes that "interdisciplinary cooperation is especially necessary between natural sciences and humanities. In other words: a field of research which for a long time has been set mainly in terms of natural sciences needs to open itself to the disciplines of history and to the history of civilization. The dialogue between natural sciences and humanities has been increasingly encouraged, but there is still a long way to go, so that different perspectives and different methods can complement each other in a proper and fruitful way" (pp. 9-10). So there is place for stratigraphic and archaeological surveys on the submerged villages in the Dutch polders as well as for the study of institutions put in charge by governments to check the territory; for researches on the apotropaic liturgies connected with the cult of saints as well as for inquiries into morphological changes of the Po's course as a result of violent floods, with severe consequences even on the trade sector (e.g., in this case, the crisis of Ferrara's river economy, following the stagnation of the river branch passing through her territory; see the article of Franco Cazzola, *Il Po*, "The Po", pp. 197-23): this plurality of approaches, which involves different kinds of expertise, often matured on the field and not only through the literary mediation, just allows to realize the complexity of the phenomena that have implications and repercussions sprawling in society, economy, culture; about this complexity, a "reticular" and "polyphonic" historiography can give in fact a image much more appropriate than, so to say, "one-dimensional" researches.

So what does this book deal with? The text is presented in a quadri-

partite form, with three sections respectively devoted to “the Sea”, “the Rivers”, “Mountains and Earthquakes”, after the initial large section focused on “Mental and Cultural Frameworks”. It’s a declared decision not to take into account particular calamities such as epidemics and diseases, because it would require a specific discourse—especially if one considers that the period in question (roughly the span ranging from XIII century to XVI century) is also marked by the Black Death and its subsequent resurgences, a topic to which specific studies have been devoted by the history of medicine, that on this subject has perhaps already reached a greater maturity than the knowledge collected here (which does not mean, of course, that they will have to travel forever on separate tracks).

The first section is the most methodologically committed: we will mainly refer to it, thereby presenting the outlines of the historiographical proposal contained in this volume; then, we will offer some trials of its possible applications, which could also find space in a journal like ours. The set piece of this first part is undoubtedly represented by G.J. Schenk’s article *Dis-astri. Modelli interpretativi delle calamità naturali dal Medioevo al Rinascimento* (“Dis-asters. Interpretative models of natural calamities from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance”, pp. 23-75). Here, the author tries to identify a series of typical interpretative models of the environmental calamities in the period under review, even if he recognizes that, because of the relative novelty of this kind of studies, it is not yet possible to draw a true evolutionary history of such models. To this end, he provides a brief overview of the concepts, images, myths and words associated to different types of disaster, especially floods and earthquakes. The most significant outcome of this survey is the discovery of the co-existence, in the Late Middle Ages, of numerous interpretative models, often remained isolated with respect to each other, at least until, with the revival of the cities—plural places, by their very nature—, they necessarily had to confront with each other. “So it seems that, from the Early to the Late Middle Ages, the different styles of thought and the explanatory models emancipated themselves from their collectives of thought, as if they circulated more freely, as if a hierarchy of explanatory models on authoritarian basis slowly failed, and such models were in competition with each other, complementing one another” (pp. 73-4). Thus, in addi-

tion to the more purely religious interpretations according to which ruin had to be considered on the basis of the biblical text as God's punishment, others were given having scientific or philosophical meaning and often involving astrology (indeed the word "*dis-aster*" derives from the latin word *astrum*); still those with technical and pragmatic implications are even more interesting. As for flooding, for example, in the XVI century we find texts that expressly state that such events occurs as a result of the country's deforestation and of the weakening of the essential role played by the roots of trees in retaining the land. Schenck mentions in this respect the unpublished *Memoria* written by Averardo Filicaia for the Grand Duke Cosimo de' Medici (later than 1557), which also contains the indication of preventive measures against the flooding of the Arno and Sieve through a system of canals of which a sketch was also provided. Averardo's has a clear "baconian", we should say, but in truth deeply humanistic awareness, when he justifies his speech: "Perchè le cose naturali disordinate, con gli stessi ordini di natura, aiutati con poco di arte, si riducono agli ordini loro" ("because natural things, if disordered, with the same orders of nature, aided by a little art, are reduced to their orders") (p. 63). And we cannot refrain from remembering the famous Machiavellian image of virtue as the ability to gear up for the events, as much as possible, with works that are precisely comparable to the precautionary embankment of a river, in order to avoid the flood, which he compares the disruptive and violent reverse of fortune. We recall it not only because it demonstrates once more the weight exerted by technique in the development of a new consciousness of mankind, but also because it clearly shows how the same examples of philosophers are often rooted in a *humus* whose consistency is to be rediscovered in order to grasp their full meaning (on the meaning even cultural that Arno's floodings had for Florentins, see the nice essay by Francesco Salvestrini *L'Arno e l'alluvione fiorentina del 1333*, "The Arno and Florentine flood of 1333", on pages 231-256). In any case, a paper like the one of Averardo indicates for Schenck that "the granducal administration looked, so to say, with socio-political eyes to natural disorder, which had to be transformed, through the professional work of engineers, in a human order [...] This geometrization of nature through the art of Grand Duke's order, a little god of Tuscany, was achieved for the expert in nat-

ural hazards through careful observation of the order of nature herself” (pp. 62-4). Here, as you see, a whole world comes into sight from a mere engineering project.

You can find an example of this setting-out in the other three contributions collected in the first section of the book. In the first one (*Riti propiziatori e di espiazione*, “Propitiatory rites and rites of expiation”, pp. 77-86), Anna Benvenuti examines “the ritual practice intended as the main antidote and defense against natural hazards [...] in the context of religious attitudes in the face of danger” (p. 78). In the second one (*L’arte di sconvolgere. Sulla rappresentazione di terremoto e rovina nella pittura murale del Trecento. L’esempio degli affreschi di Sant’Agostino a Rimini*, “The art of upsetting. On the representation of earthquake and ruin in 14<sup>th</sup> century mural paintings. The example of the frescoes of St. Augustine in Rimini”, pp. 87-110), Vera Fionie Koppenleitner focuses on the parietal cycle of St. Augustine in Rimini, dating back to 1315-18, to rebut the idea— popular among historians who have dealt with the issue— that the scene of the fall of the temple of Artemis at Ephesus represented there was inspired by the earthquake that struck Romagna in 1308; she shows in great detail that the episode depicted, taken from the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacopo da Varagine in reference to the life of St. John the Evangelist, must be interpreted in purely allegorical terms and not as a chronicle, since at that time “the representation of the devastating consequences of a contemporary natural disaster as a concrete historical event did not fit in the canons of issues worthy of pictorial representation” (p. 96). Finally, in the third one (*Horribile dictu: cataclismi ambientali e scrittura nel Tardo Medioevo*, “Horribile dictu: environmental cataclysms and writing in the Late Middle Ages, pp. 111-124), Francesco Tateo proposes a review of the compresence of environmental calamities in the XV-XVI century Italian literature, from Petrarch to Sannazaro (the correspondence between the latter and Galateo attests for example the early use of “catastrophe” to describe the destruction made by Europeans in the New World, until then quietly dipped in its golden age). We have alluded to Machiavelli and his metaphor of the “ruinous rivers”, but in the previous century already Leon Battista Alberti opened his *De iciarchia* recalling the nightmare of the flood and the Arno swelling after prolonged rains: and it is here that the historiographic re-



quirement of holding together both the level of literary elaboration and of material history manifest itself even more clearly, in order to understand better the density of the images used and accordingly also the implications that they could have in the philosophical plane, always watching out to distinguish the literary *topos* from the real impact of events.

And the fact that catastrophic events were well present to the consciousness of the Late Middle Ages man and that they had very important consequences for the society of the age is showed by a wide survey of the studies collected in the other parts of the work, dedicated for example to some real “cultures of risk”, in reference to the cases of Venice and the Netherlands and their relationship with the sea, that brought at the same time of prosperity and death. The essays by Elisabet Crouzet-Pavan (*Une histoire du risque: Venise et les perils de mer*, “A history of risk: Venice and the dangers of the sea”, pp. 127-157) moves on the plan of the Venetian popular tradition and art that rejoins this (*La burrasca*, “The Storm”, of Palma il Vecchio), but also deals with the magistrates in charge of the defense of the Lido and engineering interventions to protect the city. Dirk Meier (*Mareggiate e perdita di terra sulle coste del Mare del Nord nel Medioevo*, “Sea storms and loss of land on the shores of the Northern Sea in the Middle Ages”, pp. 159-193) shows a particular attention to the archaeological and geological data, analyzing the topographical changes following the sea storms, but also observing how it was just the human activity to increase their effects, because the operations of drainage and the extraction of peat created forms of subsidence in the plains that made the action of the sea even more violent, when the dams were overwhelmed. The section focuses on rivers presents a number of studies dedicated to relationship between some specific rivers and the regions or cities that they cross: in addition to the afore mentioned essays by Cazzola and Salvestrini on the Po and Arno, here you could find contributions on the Tiber (Anna Esposito, *Il Tevere e Roma*, “Tiber and Rome”, pp. 257-275) and the Sein (Andreas Sohn, *Acqua alta a Parigi. Percezioni e reazioni durante il Medioevo*, “High Water in Paris. Perceptions and reactions in the Middle Ages”, pp. 277-296). The book ends with a section dedicated to geological phenomena such as landslides, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. At the end of the book Robert Delort (*Osservazioni conclusive*, “Concluding remarks”,

pp. 401-402) draws the assessment of the Conference, summarizing some notions acquired through the various reports and looking once again to the contemporary situation, to recognize that, though the Middle Ages often appealed to faith for interpreting catastrophic events, we men of the twenty-first century are not much better about the causes of a possible global climate catastrophe. Hence, the moral: “The only certainty we have is that the future remains unknown but the past reveals to us our history, it suggests us, against the always threatening natural catastrophes, some effective but never definitive behaviors, and always less easy to perform, that allowed us to move forward and, in part, to win without ever triumph” (p. 422).

(Simone Mammola)



**2** S. A. REINERT, *Translating Empire. Emulation and the Origins of the Political Economy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England 2011. ISBN 9780674061514, €49.50 \$55.00 £40.95.

*Translating Empire* de Sophus Reinert s'appuie sur l'*Essay on the State of England* de John Cary et sur ses différentes traductions, qui apparurent en France, en Italie et en Allemagne au cours du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, pour explorer, selon une démarche comparatiste, les racines de l'économie politique à l'échelle de l'Europe. Dans cette perspective, l'analyse de S. Reinert vise à mettre en lumière la valeur de l'émulation, en tant qu'instrument privilégié pour réaliser le développement économique et accroître le pouvoir politique, à travers l'étude de la transmission et de la traduction des idées économiques. En même temps *Translating Empire* aide à comprendre, en

accord avec les travaux récents d'István Hont (2005) et de Michael Sorensher (2007), comment l'économie politique s'est définie au cours du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle par rapport à la compétition économique à l'échelle internationale.

Ce livre s'articule en cinq chapitres. L'objet du premier chapitre est constitué d'une réflexion introductive et conceptuelle. D'un côté, S. Reinert expose les informations disponibles sur les traductions d'œuvres d'économie politique dans l'Europe à l'époque moderne et a pour but de démontrer comment celles-ci constituèrent un vecteur fondamental dans l'émulation entre les pays. En outre l'auteur relève comment les flux de traductions représentent un outil à travers lequel l'on peut comparer le succès économique des nations européennes. D'un autre côté, le chapitre se focalise sur les théories de la concurrence économique et de la liberté politique, réservant une attention particulière à la question de la conceptualisation du commerce. En rupture avec tout un courant actuel de l'historiographie, S. Reinert affirme que le commerce n'a pas été considéré par les contemporaines de l'époque comme un outil de recomposition pacifique des relations internationales, mais comme un instrument de conquête et de suprématie au niveau européen. Dans cette perspective S. Reinert met l'accent sur la prééminence au cours du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle d'une conception de l'économie fondée sur la compétition plutôt que sur la coopération, sur l'hégémonie plutôt que sur l'harmonie entre les nations.

Dans le deuxième chapitre S. Reinert aborde la discussion de l'*Essay* de Cary (1695) dans le contexte des relations commerciales internationales et du réformisme moral qui marquèrent l'Angleterre de la fin du dix-septième siècle. S. Reinert met en évidence comment l'*Essay* codifia les politiques à la base de la compétitivité économique sur laquelle était fondée la grandeur économique et politique de l'Angleterre, articulées essentiellement sur une intervention politique encline à protéger et à développer les manufactures nationales à travers l'application de tarifs sur l'exportation de matières premières et sur l'importation de biens manufacturés et une politique commerciale agressive. De ce point de vue l'auteur relève que l'Angleterre atteint son développement économique non à travers l'adhésion aux principes du libéralisme économique, mais plutôt à travers une intervention forte du gouvernement. Dans cette pers-

pective S. Reinert s'appuie sur la dimension des pratiques politiques plutôt que sur le rôle de la réflexion économique dans le processus de développement de l'économie européenne du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Le troisième chapitre porte sur la traduction française de l'*Essay*, publiée en 1755 et réalisée par Butel-Dumont, représentant du groupe d'intellectuels réformateurs rassemblés autour de la figure de l'intendant du commerce Vincent de Gournay, qui virent dans la traduction d'œuvres clés d'économie politique un moyen décisif pour répandre la nouvelle science du commerce et exercer une influence sur les politiques gouvernementales. Dans cette perspective l'*Essai* de Butel-Dumont – qui se présente comme un travail théorique sur la nature de la société commerciale et qui approfondit, par rapport à l'*Essay* de Cary, l'analyse économique du commerce anglais – sert à proposer, comme le souligne S. Reinert, l'émulation du modèle anglais comme instrument utile à la France pour rivaliser au niveau international. En même temps, l'*Essai* de Butel-Dumont illustre bien le processus d'adaptation des traductions aux différents contextes économiques, politiques, sociaux, culturels et idéologiques dans lesquels elles circulèrent. En particulier S. Reinert se focalise sur le refus de Butel-Dumont des aspects les plus violents de la politique commerciale anglaise. De cela il ressort la pleine conscience qui caractérisa les contemporaines que la politique économique était une science belliqueuse et que le commerce représentait un instrument à travers lequel l'Angleterre tenta d'imposer sa propre domination au niveau européen et extra-européen.

Le quatrième chapitre déplace l'attention sur le contexte italien de la deuxième moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, marqué par un développement économique plus lent et contrasté comparé aux pays du nord de l'Europe et par l'incapacité de rivaliser avec ces derniers au niveau de la production de biens manufacturiers. Entre 1757 et 1758 Antonio Genovesi mit à jour l'*Essay* de Cary à travers une longue série de commentaires. Appliquant le nouveau langage scientifique newtonien à la sphère morale, la traduction italienne finit par donner une nouvelle signification à la question de l'émulation, en la plaçant dans le cadre d'une discussion plus générale concernant les modèles d'économie politique que pouvaient suivre les « nations pauvres » afin de sortir de l'état de faible développement

économique dans lequel elles se trouvaient. En particulier Genovesi approfondit davantage la dimension de l'analyse historique – élément qui constitue d'ailleurs une particularité de la réflexion économique du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle de l'Italie méridionale – en analysant le modèle anglais dans le cadre d'une vision historique du progrès. À travers la traduction de Genovesi, S. Reinert met l'accent sur le lien étroit entre la discussion économique et la réflexion politique qui marqua le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle européen, indiquant comment le développement économique fut perçu et représenté en tant qu'instrument d'indépendance politique, dans le cadre d'une théorie de la liberté politique fondée sur la capacité des activités économiques à créer de la richesse.

Il nous semble toutefois que S. Reinert ne donne pas une lecture fidèle de la pensée de Genovesi en indiquant que Genovesi proposa un modèle de développement économique fondé sur la production manufacturière. Selon Genovesi, comme il le clarifia dans les *Elementi del Commercio* et dans les *Lezioni di Commercio*, un pays pauvre en matières premières et marginal dans le commerce international comme le Royaume de Naples devait viser principalement au développement quantitatif et qualitatif de la production agricole, destinée au marché, libre des contraintes internes, et non pas à la production nationale de biens manufacturiers et de luxe. Dans cette perspective le jugement positif de Genovesi sur la consommation des biens de luxe, qui fut considérée comme avantageuse uniquement lorsqu'elle est limitée dans la société, apparaît plus nuancé que celui indiqué par S. Reinert.

Le cinquième chapitre analyse la traduction en allemand de l'*Essay*, effectuée par Christian August Wichmann en 1788, à partir de l'édition de Genovesi, et reconstruit le processus à travers lequel l'écrit de Cary fut découvert par Peter Christian Schumacher pendant son "Grand Tour", dans le but d'étudier la culture économique européenne. Ce chapitre contextualise la circulation de l'œuvre de Cary dans le cadre de la tradition caméraliste qui, comme le souligne S. Reinert, influença profondément la façon dont l'*Essay* fut accueilli et utilisé. Si, à l'époque où l'*Essay* fut traduit par Wichmann, celui-ci avait désormais montré la nature de l'hégémonie économique de l'Angleterre, codifié les politiques à suivre afin de rejoindre cette hégémonie et montré la façon dont le pouvoir était assuré grâce à

un développement émulateur, dans le contexte allemand l'œuvre de Cary ne fut pas vraiment utilisée pour réfléchir sur la compétition internationale ou sur des questions politiques, mais plutôt comme moyen, à travers l'émulation, pour accroître le bien-être interne, préserver les ressources naturelles et stimuler les manufactures nationales.

*Translating Empire*, qui reprend et développe en partie des thèmes déjà abordés par S. Reinert dans ses articles précédents, et qui se présente comme une œuvre à la structure plutôt hétérogène, construite à travers la juxtaposition de l'analyse des différentes traductions européennes de l'*Essay* de Cary, représente quand même un véritable apport à la connaissance de la réflexion économique du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle en Europe. L'ouvrage de S. Reinert constitue une tentative réussie d'analyser et de comprendre la réflexion économique de l'Europe au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle dans le contexte dans lequel celle-ci se produisit et circula, mettant en évidence ses spécificités et ses traits distinctifs.

*Translating Empire* permet en même temps de remettre en cause certains principes sur lesquels s'appuie l'historiographie de la pensée économique. S. Reinert relève en effet comment, lors du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle en Europe, l'adhésion au libéralisme économique et à une notion du commerce en tant qu'instrument pacifique de reconstitution des différents intérêts nationaux fut moins claire et non exemptes de problèmes par rapport à ce que les historiens de la pensée économique ont pendant longtemps affirmé. De cette manière l'auteur met en question l'utilité de rechercher dans la réflexion du dix-huitième siècle le premier témoignage des principes de l'économie classique. Si la question de la liberté économique et du commerce et la signification que ces concepts assumèrent au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle constitue un thème complexe, qui semble difficile à traiter à travers l'étude de la traduction et la circulation de l'*Essay* de Cary, *Translating Empire* représente en tout cas une occasion précieuse pour réfléchir sur la méthodologie de l'histoire de la pensée économique. Une attention plus marquée aux contextes dans lesquels prit forme la réflexion économique de l'Europe du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et à ses spécificités devrait par ailleurs pousser non seulement, comme le souligne à ce propos S. Reinert, à étudier les œuvres d'économie politique qui ont été négligées jusqu'à présent par l'historiographie, parce qu'elles ne répondaient pas aux prin-

cipes de l'économie classique, mais également à approfondir l'analyse des concepts issus de la réflexion économique des auteurs du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, comme celui de consommation et de luxe, encore très peu étudiés par les historiens de la pensée économique, qui se sont focalisés principalement sur les concepts de valeur et de prix.

*Translating Empire* se situe aussi dans le cadre de l'historiographie la plus récente de l'âge des Lumières, qui vise désormais depuis plusieurs décennies, d'un côté, à mettre en évidence le caractère pluraliste des Lumières en Europe, en rupture avec le modèle franco-centriste de rayonnement des lumières françaises vers la périphérie, d'un autre côté à mettre en question la tendance à se focaliser – comme dans le cas du “Conservative Enlightenment” de John Pocock – sur les identités nationales des Lumières. Dans le cadre de cette préférence pour une vision cosmopolite des Lumières, qui privilégie l'étude de la circulation européenne des idées et les modalités de leur réception par les opinions publiques des différents espaces, l'étude des traductions constitue aujourd'hui, comme le démontrent d'ailleurs les études de Fania Oz-Salzberger (1995 ; 2006) et de Lázló Kontler (2001 ; 2007), un outil central. S. Reinert, à travers son étude sur la traduction de l'*Essay* – qui dépasse l'analyse en termes d'influence du texte, pour s'intéresser à la transmission et au contexte de l'accueil de l'œuvre, c'est-à-dire au projet politique implicite à la traduction de Cary – contribue donc à mieux saisir la réflexion du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle européen et ses caractéristiques spécifiques. Il faut souligner que l'étude de la traduction, de la circulation et de la transmission d'idées permet également d'explorer la création et le développement du langage économique et de l'économie politique. Non seulement l'impossibilité de traduire l'équivalence de mots étrangers contribua à l'élargissement du lexique disponible, mais la traduction constitue également un processus qui intègre la reproduction et la création originale, à travers l'intervention du traducteur et la contextualisation de l'œuvre dans un cadre économique, politique, idéologique et culturel différent. Ces aspects ont été toutefois en partie négligés par S. Reinert.

Reprenant une intuition déjà exprimée par Franco Venturi (1958-1965 ; 1960-1990) et qui trouve aujourd'hui un nouveau souffle dans les travaux de John Robertson (2005) et Koen Stapelbroek (2008), S. Reinert non

seulement reconnaît nettement dans le discours économique une caractéristique clé de la réflexion européenne du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, mais met également l'accent sur les fortes implications politiques du langage économique. *Translating Empire* tend à se focaliser sur la façon dont le développement économique a été perçu comme moyen pour réaliser l'hégémonie politique ou pour préserver l'indépendance politique des nations. La réflexion, surtout française et italienne, de la deuxième moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle montre une réalité bien plus complexe. Dans ce cadre le cas de l'Italie est significatif, car il permet de saisir dans quelle mesure le discours économique constitua un langage de réforme et de critique de la société d'ancien régime, complexe et aux multiples facettes, dans une réalité, où il n'y avait pas un Etat unitaire, mais où les idées circulaient et se modifiaient face à des contextes différents. Dans cette perspective il aurait été intéressant développer davantage l'analyse sur la valeur politique de la réflexion économique en Europe au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

En conclusion, il faut souligner surtout la forte dimension interdisciplinaire qui marque *Translating Empire*. Du point de vue méthodologique, S. Reinert a parfaitement réussi à intégrer l'analyse économique, l'histoire des idées économiques, l'histoire économique, l'histoire des pratiques économiques et politiques et l'histoire culturelle. En outre, dans le premier chapitre, l'auteur utilise largement les instruments de l'histoire conceptuelle, également à travers un élargissement de l'étude aux dictionnaires et aux encyclopédies du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, contribuant à approfondir notre connaissance sur les notions centrales de la réflexion économique du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle en Europe. Il faut souligner toutefois que la reconstruction de S. Reinert aurait sans doute gagné à être élargie à une réflexion plus analytique portée sur les glissements sémantiques liés aux différentes traductions de *l'Essay* et sur l'éventuelle création de syntagmes lexicaux dans les différents contextes linguistiques.

Au-delà de ces remarques *Translating Empire* constitue un travail réussi d'histoire intellectuelle, au caractère fortement interdisciplinaire, capable de tenir compte non seulement de la dimension théorique mais également de la dimension matérielle et symbolique des idées. L'étude ne porte pas en effet uniquement sur les idées économiques, mais également sur la façon dont elles se formèrent, le projet politique qui était implicite, la façon



dont elles furent reçues et leurs effets sur la société. Dans cette perspective *Translating Empire* contribue à nous faire méditer sur l'opportunité d'intégrer l'histoire des idées économiques dans une approche d'histoire intellectuelle, qui permette de reconstruire les liens entre les idées économiques et les contextes sociaux, économiques, politiques et institutionnels dans lesquels elle se développeront et de mettre donc en évidence la valeur et les spécificités de la réflexion économique européenne du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

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**3** A. NICHOLLS and M. Liebscher (eds.), *Thinking the Unconscious. Nineteenth-Century German Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010. ISBN 9780521897532, £58.00.

The book reviewed here is a collection of ten papers, plus a long introduction by the editors and a short epilogue written by S. Shamdasani, on the concept of the unconscious as formulated by a certain number of German post-Kantian thinkers. The aim of the book is to show that Freud's use of the notion of the unconscious does not come out of nothing, but belongs to a well-established tradition of thought. Following Leibniz's criticism of Descartes' identification of mind and consciousness, many German thinkers were led to argue that mind should be viewed as broader than consciousness on the basis of the simple consideration that many mental phenomena that bring about conscious effects are not conscious events. In so doing, German philosophers raised doubts about the theoretical availability of the standard Cartesian paradigm, and tried to develop an alternative view that could explain those phenomena that Descartes had not been able to account for. One of the two distinctive theses of the book is that Leibniz's conception of *petites perceptions* gave birth to a new and original conception of mind that had considerable success in German-speaking world, and paved the way for the birth of the psychoanalytic movement.

The other distinctive thesis is that the various uses of the concept of the unconscious made by German philosophers cannot be traced back to a univocal meaning. Indeed, there are at least three different conceptions that run through 19<sup>th</sup> century German thought. The first one, which is not widely enough discussed in this book, is the idea of the cognitive unconscious: according to this view, the difference between consciousness and unconsciousness amounts to a difference in the level of attention. Herbart's psychological notion of the threshold of consciousness is the first example of this way of conceiving the notion of the unconscious. A long article by Heidelberger, entitled *Gustav Theodor Fechner and the unconscious*, explores the theory of the unconscious of Herbart's most original follower: the aim of the paper is to show how different suggestions (both philosophical and scientific) are combined by Fechner so as to es-

establish the new discipline of psychophysics, and what role he attributes to the idea of threshold in the light of his psychophysical treatment of the unconscious.

The second conception is the romantic and vitalist interpretation of the unconscious. The great achievement of this approach is that it brings to light the importance of natural elements for the constitution of subjectivity. According to Schelling, human nature is the opaque, unconscious ground of the self: it is “the aspect of ourselves which makes reflective consciousness possible but cannot itself be thought of *either* as self-determined or as causally determined” (70). Bowie’s *The philosophical significance of Schelling’s conception of the unconscious* highlights Schelling’s difficulties in shaping a non-reductionist and non-materialistic conception of nature which could explain the origin of self from natural activities. Schelling’s realization of the dependence of the I upon its bodily substratum was at the basis of many subsequent efforts to carry on a process of detranscendentalization of the subject. The articles written by Bishop, Nicholls, Görner, and Bell, are all attempts to grasp the various aspects of such a complex movement of naturalization of mind. So, in his *The Unconscious from the Storm and Stress to Weimar Classicism* Bishop provides an analysis of the image of the unconscious formulated by Goethe and Schiller in their writings on aesthetic, with an eye to determine the relationship between their understanding of the unconscious and their acquaintance with the most recent scientific knowledge of the time – in particular, medical knowledge. On the other hand, Nicholls’ *The Scientific unconscious* focuses our attention on the influence exerted by Goethe’s conception of the unconscious on important philosophers and scientists such as Helmholtz, Du Bois-Reymond, and, obviously, the young Freud. In *The hidden agent of the self* Görner purports to investigate how romantic artists managed to penetrate what he calls the “non-rational area of human existence” (121). Finally, Bell discusses Carus’ theory of the unconscious in his article entitled *Carl Gustav Carus and the science of the unconscious*, in which he provides an interesting explanation of Carus’ idea of the unconscious as a “form of biological information-processing system”, that is, as the biological source of meanings constituting experience (159).

The third conception of the unconscious is far less neutral than the first two. Indeed, it insists on the irrationality and destructive power of the unconscious element of mind, and calls attention to its relationship with the notion of sexuality. When seen from this perspective, the unconscious cannot be interpreted as the natural basis of self, which acts behind the curtain of consciousness, and which cannot be completely brought to light through acts of reflection. On the contrary, the unconscious has to be understood as a force that aims at dissolving the subject. The self loses therefore its centrality and becomes something secondary and superficial, whose exclusive goal is to communicate with outer reality, and, in so doing, to counteract the destructive tendency of the unconscious. Freud's late discovery of a death drive at the heart of mind is only the most refined formulation of a widespread insight in the German-speaking world of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In his extremely interesting article, *Freud and nineteenth-century philosophical sources on the unconscious*, Gödde reconstructs the different phases of Freud's intellectual development, showing that Freud originally adopted an anti-vitalist conception of human nature that was strongly influenced by Helmholtz and Brentano, and was grounded on the new discoveries of biological evolution and physiology. It is only in his later years that Freud came to realize the limitations of his topographic model of the unconscious, and subjected it to a thorough revision that led to his mature metapsychology, which revolves around the dualism of Eros and the death drive, and "the dynamic relationships between the ego (...), the id (...), and the super-ego" (278). Freud represents the culmination of an entire tradition of thought since his idea of metapsychology stems from his confrontation and assimilation of all the theoretical options available at that time. The conclusion reached by Gödde becomes more clear if read in the light of the contributions written by Janaway and Gardner, devoted to discussing, respectively, Schopenhauer's and Von Hartmann's views of the unconscious. In these articles, the authors analyze in detail the metaphysical conception of the unconscious that the two German philosophers set over against any optimistic view of human nature. So, in his *The real essence of human beings*, Janaway focuses his attention on the interesting mixture of ethical, psychological, and metaphysical suggestions that characterizes Schopenhauer's notion

of will as the unconscious, primordial force that rules the world. The same approach is followed by Gardner in his *Eduard Von Hartmann's Philosophy of the Unconscious*. Gardner points out with great clarity that Hartmann's metaphysics of the unconscious is an extremely complex construction, in which a teleological metaphysics of nature based on will goes hand in hand with a refusal of a priori arguments and with a pessimistic worldview of reality. Liebscher's contribution, entitled *Friedrich Nietzsche's perspectives on the unconscious*, fills the gap in the pathway from these metaphysical conceptions to Freud's psychological theory of the unconscious. Liebscher's aim is to clarify the overall direction of Nietzsche's thought, and to bring to light the reasons that prompted the latter to withdraw his early adhesion to Schopenhauer's philosophy. Nietzsche's philosophical development is particularly interesting because it can be described as a coming to consciousness of the theoretical untenability of the notion of the unconscious. Indeed, after reading and assimilating a great number of theories of the unconscious (Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Helmholtz, etc.), the mature Nietzsche became convinced that there was no need to use this notion. Since the unconscious is wholly complementary to consciousness (being defined as that which is not conscious), and since the concept of human consciousness is a distortion, the dissolution of the concept of consciousness necessarily entails a concomitant dissolution of the concept of the unconscious. Like consciousness, the unconscious is "an interpretation, an expression of the will to power as its highest form", that is, "an attempt to impose, being, stasis, and theoretical structure upon processes of transition and becoming" (257). In this sense, Liebscher concludes that Nietzsche's discovery of the will to power led to the complete exhaustion of the concept of the unconscious.

Liebscher clearly demonstrates that to say that Freud represents the culmination of a tradition of thought does not mean that the psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious should be viewed as its necessary conclusion. Indeed, many other theoretical solutions were available. It is for this reason that the editors of the volume are very careful in stressing the fact that the three conceptions of the unconscious are not to be viewed as mutually exclusive theoretical options concretely at work in the German philosophical debate of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rather, they rep-

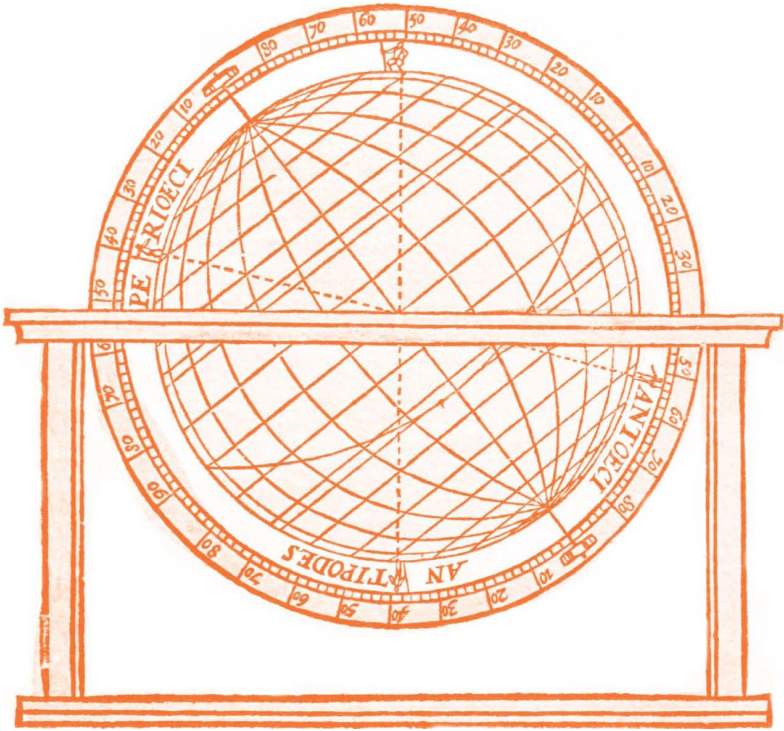
resent ideal types, general paradigms of interpretation whose theoretical validity consists exclusively in their heuristic power of shedding light on the various theories and accounts of the unconscious formulated by German thinkers, philosophers, and poets. The advantages of this approach are twofold. First of all, it allows them to organize in a simple and ordered way a great amount of material, without betraying its richness. Accordingly, it is easy to see the different lines of development of the idea of the unconscious, and to understand the points of disagreement amongst the various authors. Secondly, it provides a powerful reading key that makes it possible to appreciate the contemporary relevance of that debate. What emerges is a different image of German philosophy of the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which an outstanding role is attributed to the problem of rethinking from the very beginning the Kantian and idealistic project of grounding objectivity, science, meaning upon subjectivity.

However, it is difficult to avoid the impression that this impressive clarity stems from a too narrow selection of material, which raises some questions concerning the practice and intent of interdisciplinary research. Indeed, many interesting themes that were at the center of attention for the German-speaking world of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are left completely unexplored. It seems hard to understand the rise of the notion of the unconscious without paying due attention to the research on the nature of language, to the growth of interest in anthropology and ethnology, to the analysis of myth (Bachofen), to the study of ancient civilizations, to the study of the psychology of folk (Wundt). All these approaches were as important as the ones discussed in the book for a correct definition of the unconscious. So, the criterion of selection of material adopted is theoretically justifiable if and only if one is willing to accept the assumption that the notion of the unconscious is, in the last analysis, a *philosophical* concept.

Keeping the latter remarks in mind, a few words should be said about the kind of interdisciplinarity adopted by the different authors of the book. Undoubtedly, the unconscious is an extremely complex notion, in which medical knowledge, biological considerations, the results of physiological and psychological analyses, philosophical arguments fuse together. In this sense, an interdisciplinary approach seems the most fit-

ting to appreciate the richness of the concept. However, with the partial exception of Heidelberger's article on Fechner, the contributors of the volume tend to privilege the philosophical point of view to the detriment of other perspectives of analysis. It is true that in many cases attention is called to the different ways in which German philosophers tried to use the most recent scientific discoveries to defend their views on the nature of mind. But almost no attempt is made to highlight the ways in which the critical assimilation of scientific discoveries determined the very constitution of philosophical concepts. This narrow conception of interdisciplinarity has undoubtedly the merit of singling out and identifying the specific form of philosophical reflection: the rational articulation of concepts that makes it possible to understand philosophies of the past. But this goal (which only defines the concept of a *philosophical historiography*) is achieved through a depotentialization of the theoretical influence exerted by extra-philosophical insights. The consequence of this approach is that German thinkers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are sometimes treated as they were pure philosophers concerned with purely philosophical issues, while their idea of philosophy and philosophical work revolved around the assumption that philosophy and sciences (both natural and human) are not two clearly distinguished enterprises. This point is implicitly recognized by Gardner when he remarks that Hartmann refuses a priori reasoning, but its theoretical bearings do not seem to have been fully appreciated. A broadening of the notion of interdisciplinarity seems therefore needed in order to enlarge the scope of philosophical reflection, and to enhance the effectiveness of its methodology of historical research.

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*A particular from the frontcover of S.A. Reinert's Translating Empire.*