

ROMAN READING PERMITS FOR THE WORKS OF BRUNO AND CAMPANELLA

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SUMMARY

Since the second half of the sixteenth century the Roman Congregations of the Holy Office and the Index granted licences for reading forbidden books. As a rule, reading permits for books by authors who were condemned for heresy, could not be issued. However, after the promulgation of the Clementine Index in 1596, the congregations gradually attenuated the total prohibitions, and started to issue licences for books prohibited in the first class of the Index. Here, the cases of Bruno and Campanella are discussed.

READING permits started being issued after the Church of Rome had begun to systematically censure ideas and works. The grant of licences for reading forbidden books was not the effect of an official decision, issued on a certain date, but rather a practice that arose with individual episodes related to quite dissimilar cases. The licences granted by the Roman Congregations of the Holy Office and the Index are the main, or rather the only, instrument for assessing the difference between the hypothetical and the real efficacy of ecclesiastical censorship, and this is because the intentional or casual inobservance of the prohibitions, the other factor determining this difference, can only be measured in an indirect way and solely for individual cases.

Initially, the prohibition to grant licences for works that were considered heretical, due to the author or the content, was total. Considering that the reading of suspect or prohibited works granted to confutate «haereses et errores» frequently led to contrary results, in 1564 the licences were limited to Inquisitors only.¹ After a few months, the permission to read prohibited works was extended to the cardinals of the Holy Office. However, given the rapidly increasing number of suspect books to be examined, the same constitution authorized the Cardinals to grant permissions «ad tempus, vel in

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¹ Pius IV issued the *Cum pro munere* constitution on 24 March 1564; *Bullarum diplomatum et privilegiorum sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum Taurinensis editio*, 25 vols., Turin, 1857-1872, and 5 vols., Naples, 1867-1885, VII, pp. 279-281.

perpetuum» to other persons.¹ This extension regarded consultors as well as qualifiers, that is, the (occasional) collaborators of the Holy Office.

During the final years of the sixteenth century the increase in licences was favoured by the institution of the Congregation for the Index. This was an unforeseen effect and certainly not one of the aims of Pope Pius V when he appointed the Commission for the Index of Forbidden Books. In the period between 1592 and 1596, during the transition from the Sixtine to the Clementine Index, the Congregation became directly involved in the grant of licences, and in this new role it tended to grant them not only to specialists charged with the correction of books, but also to common readers who simply promised that they would list suspect passages.

Then, after the promulgation of the Clementine Index in 1596, the Congregation for the Index started to grant licences, to individual persons as well as to groups. From this very moment, apart from some demanding cases that were transmitted to the Holy Office, the Congregation granted licences not only for books that were prohibited «donec corrigantur», but also for unconditionally forbidden works, including those by authors listed in the first class of the 1596 Index.² In the meantime, the formal distinction between unconditionally forbidden works and those condemned with the «donec corrigantur» proviso had also been modified by local Inquisitors, the Master of the Sacred Palace, and the Holy Office itself. Actually, they did not draw a distinction between works that could be permitted and those that could not on the basis of this principle, but rather by splitting the category of absolutely prohibited books into two groups. Only 'substantially' heretical works, that is, those written by heresiarchs and devoted to the spread of heterodox religious views, were considered as uncorrigible and thus excluded from possible reading permits. Alternatively, works by authors included in the first class that did not treat religious issues, were seen as corrigible, and thus possibly allowable.

Something needs to be said about the extant documentation. While the archive of the Index is preserved more or less in its entirety, the archive of the Holy Office suffered serious losses after its transfer to Paris during the Napoleonic era.³ By consequence, after the Paris mutilation, only a rather

¹ *Bullarum*, cit., VII, pp. 302-303. On 7 September 1564 the Constitution was officially read to the Cardinals; cf. Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede (from now on: ACDP), Sanctum Officium (from now on: SO), *Decreta*, 1563-1565, f. 96r. Several of the licences reproduced in this chapter were granted to Consultors and Qualifiers of both the Holy Office and the Index (to whom the constitution was extended later).

² Cf. *Catholic Church and Modern Science. Documents from the Archives of the Roman Congregations of the Holy Office and the Index*, vol. 1: Sixteenth-century Documents, eds. U. Baldini and L. Spruit, 4 tomes, Rome, 2009, t. 4, pp. 2567-2595.

³ See *Catholic Church and Modern Science*, cit., pp. 8-10, for a reconstruction.

restricted group of codices with Inquisition licences has been preserved. In addition to the licences recorded in the *Decreta* of the Holy Office (unfortunately most of the times without a list of books or titles), reading permits granted by the Inquisition are in files kept in the *Stanza storica*. Some of these codices represent without doubt the most significant collection of Inquisition licences, as they offer a virtually complete recording of the licences granted for determinate years. One group of codices cover, with small *lacunae*, a couple of decades during the first half of the seventeenth century, that is, roughly speaking, the period 1615-1640.¹ Other volumes present (apparently) partial recordings of two periods in the eighteenth century.² Nonetheless, they allow a reconstruction of the number and, in general, of the books licenced.

On 8 February 1600, the Congregation of the Holy Office decreed a total ban of Giordano Bruno's works. In a similar vein, in 1603 the Master of Sacred Palace prohibited Tommaso Campanella's «Opera omnia».³ According to the rules no reading permits could have been allowed for these authors, and yet, also in these cases the Congregations made several exceptions.

In the first decades after his death, Bruno is mentioned in a document preserved in the archive of the Index, dated 7 October 1606, which draws up an inventory of the library of Modesto Giunti in Florence, most probably with the aim of obtaining a licence for reading forbidden and suspect books. Giunti possessed «Jordani Bruni De Umbris et memoria».⁴ Let us now take a look at the individual licences for Bruno's works, taking into consideration also the other scientific and philosophical works mentioned in these reading permits.

On 30 September 1626, the Holy Office grants a three-years licence to Antonio Calvoro, a nobleman from Modena. In addition to works by Bartholomaeus Keckermann, Girolamo Vecchiotti, Rudolph Goclenius, Theophrast Paracelsus, Johannes Trithemius, and Otto Brunfels, the list mentions «Iordanus Brunus Nolanus de triplici minimo, et mensura».⁵

Within less than a year, on 17 August 1627, the Holy Office grants a licence to Francesco Calvo, from Genua, and in addition to works by Mercator,

¹ ACDF, SO, *Stanza storica* (from now on: *St. st.*), Q.1.a-p.

² ACDF, SO, *St. st.*, LL.2.h (1757-1767), and LL.2.l (1708-1748).

³ See *Index des livres interdits*, eds. J. M. De Bujanda et alii, 11 vols., Sherbrooke-Genève, 1980-2002, XI, p. 169 and p. 185. For discussion, see E. CANONE, *L'editto di proibizione delle opere di Bruno e Campanella*, «Bruniana & Campanelliana», 1, 1995, 1-2, pp. 43-61; J. M. DE BUJANDA, E. CANONE, *L'editto di proibizione delle opere di Bruno e Campanella. Un'analisi bibliografica*, «Bruniana & Campanelliana», VIII, 2002, 2, pp. 451-479; L. FIRPO, *Filosofia italiana e Controriforma: III. La proibizione delle opere del Campanella*, «Rivista di filosofia», XLI, 1950, pp. 390-401 (repr. in FIRPO, *Processi*, pp. 317-330).

⁴ ACDF, Index, *Protocolli*, Z (II.a.22), fols. 119r-121r, 124v.

⁵ ACDF, SO, *St. st.*, Q.1.d, f. 193r.

Artemidorus, Girolamo Cardano, Levinus Lemnius, Polidoro Virgilio, Ludovico Dolce, he is licenced to read: «Giordano Bruno Nolano dell'infinito universo, e mondi».¹

Then, on 6 April 1633, the Roman Inquisition grants Gaspare Dandolo, Venetian nobleman a licence for commentaries on Ramon Lull, among which «Iordani Bruni Nolani liber, cuius titulus A[...]a Artis lullianae».²

On 23 August 1634, Lorenzo Fontana, a physician from Verona, is granted a licence for books by Gioviniano Pontano, Jean Bodin, Albert the Great, Johann Wier, Pietro Pomponazzi, Cornelius Henricus Agrippa, Rudolph Goclenius, Agostino Nifo, Robert Fludd, Antonio Pellegrini, as well as for «Iordani Bruni de Memoria Artificiali».³

Within a year, on 17 January 1635, a licence was granted to Giovanni Battista Baldo (or Balbi), from Genua, for Bruno's «del infinito universo et mondi», and books by, among others, Polidoro Virgilio and Sebastian Münster.⁴

During the same year, on 12 September, Antonio Francesco Tonazzo, physician from Vicenza, obtains a licence for Agrippa, Lull, Bernard de Lavinheta, Albert the Great, Cardano, Goclenius, and «Iordani Bruni de venatione logica».⁵

A particular case is the extensive reading permit asked by and granted to the provincial of the Jesuits in Naples. On 30 January 1636, a licence is obtained for a log list of works, which includes scientific and philosophical works by Arnaldo de Villanova, Albert the Great, Agostino Steuco, Amatus Lusitanus, Conrad Gessner, David Origanus, Francesco Giorgio, Mercator, Cardano, Jean Bodin, Johann Jacob Wecker, Pontano, Juan Huarte, Johannes Kepler, Lemnius, Pol. Virgilio, Julius Caesar Scaliger, Trithemius, Bernardino Telesio, Paracelsus, Münster, Pellegrini, Albert the Great, Leonhard Fuchs, Thomas Erastus, and then: «Jordanus Brunus in artem brevem Lulli».⁶ After three years the licence is asked for again, and now the list of books granted on 18 August 1639 includes the same work by Bruno, as well as works by Steuco, Gessner, Origanus, Mercator, Bodin, Lemnius, Copernicus, Kepler, and Münster.⁷

On 28 February 1636, a similar licence is granted to the General of the Jesuits in Rome. Now a permit is granted for works by Gessner, Maestlin, Francesco Giorgio, Julius Caesar and Justus Josephus Scaliger, Bodin, Goclenius, Mercator, Dasypodius, Copernicus, Polidoro Virgilio, Agrippa, Paracelsus, Simone Simoni, Amatus Lusitanus, Arnaldus de Villanova, Gug-

¹ ACDF, SO, St. st., Q.1.d, f. 287v-288r.

³ ACDF, SO, St. st., Q.1.e, fols. 109r-110v.

⁴ ACDF, SO, St. st., Q.1.e, fols. 136r-137v.

⁶ ACDF, SO, St. st., Q.1.g, fols. 4r-5v.

² ACDF, SO, St. st., Q.1.e, f. 15v.

⁵ ACDF, SO, St. st., Q.1.e, f. 213v.

⁷ ACDF, SO, St. st., Q.1.f, fols. 92r-93v.

lielmo Grataroli, Hadrianus Junius, Paolo Foscarini, Wecker. Surprisingly, the list now mentions «Thomae Campanellae philosophia» and «Jordani Bruni de Umbris idearum et ars memoriae [...] Jordani Bruni De triplici minimo».¹

In the same year, on 23 April 1636, the Holy Office grants a licence to Girolamo Caracciolo for works by Francesco Giorgio, Patrizi, Telesio, Gessner, Albert the Great, and for «Thomae Campanellae opera».²

On 20 May, thre physician Giovanni Ronconi is granted a licence for Libavius, Artemidorus, Amatus Lusitanus, Telesio, Cardano, Lemnius, Wecker, Oswald Croll, Paracelsus, *Theatrum Chemicum*, and again for «Thomae Campanellae opera».³

As said before, no systematic recordings of inquisitorial reading permits have been preserved for the period after the 1640s. Thus, for the centuries to come, the documentation is utterly fragmentary. In the *Decreta* many licences are mentioned in almost every meeting, but mostly without any specification as to the works asked for. The archive of the Index does not keep any licence for the works of Bruno or Campanella. The only reference traced regards a list (dated 22 August 1659) of books to be kept in a closed cupboard, which mentions Erasmus' *Adagia*, Trithemius' *Steganografia*, Cardano's *De sapientia*, and Bruno's *De monade*, *De minimo* and *De immenso*.⁴

Then, on 25 september 1697, the Holy Office grants a licence to Marquis Pio Giuseppe Bellisomi, for «Campanellae Ord. Praedicatorum Astrologorum libri octo», and an astrological work by Guido Bonati.⁵

The last surviving licence specifically asked for the works of Bruno is granted by Holy Office on 23 September 1716: «[...] Lecto memoriali P. Josephi Caroli Amici Praepositi Congregationis Oratorij Bononiae supplicantis pro licentia retinendi in eorum Bibliotheca libros, et scripta Jordani Bruni Nolani, ac etiam eosdem legendi. Eminentissimi annuerunt ad triennium».⁶

In sum, as far as requests and reading permits for Bruno works are concerned, there are two entries for *De umbris idearum*, *De l'infinito*, and *De triplici minimo*, two entries for his comments on Ramon Llull, while *Ars reminiscendi*, *De progressu et lampade venatoria logicorum*, the Frankfurt trilogy, and his works in general are mentioned once. Instead, there are two general entries for Campanella's works, one entry for his 'philosophy', and one for his astrological works. All these licences were granted by the Inquisition, none by the Congregation for the Index. Indeed, as a rule, the most sensible and demanding cases were considered and handled by the Holy Office.

¹ ACDF, SO, *St. st.*, Q.1.g, fols. 37r-38v. See the Appendix for the text.

² ACDF, SO, *St. st.*, Q.1.g, f. 28r.

³ ACDF, SO, *St. st.*, Q.1.g, f. 39r.

⁴ ACDF, Index, *Protocolli*, KK (II.a.33), f. 571r-v.

⁵ ACDF, SO, *St. st.*, Q.1.p, f. 324r-v.

⁶ ACDF, SO, *Decreta*, 1716, fols. 302r-v, 304r (see the Appendix for the text); the permit is also recorded in ACDF, SO, *St. st.*, LL.2.l, f. 110r, with the date of 24 September 1716.

To be sure, licences for Bruno and Campanella are largely outnumbered by those for other fifteenth-century authors, such as, Cardano, Fuchs, Erasmus, Gessner, David Origanus, Lemnius, Amatus Lusitanus. This is not only due to their being condemned by the Inquisition and prohibited on the Index. It is a matter of fact that their works were not widely spread in seventeenth-century Italy.¹ And certainly, they did not trigger the interest of the contemporary learned audience, which was more interested in the practical potentialities of astrological, medical, and biological works. Surprisingly, notwithstanding his condemnation as a formal heretic, Bruno's works were not seen as particularly dangerous, as his name was never mentioned in the list of authors explicitly excluded from any licence, among whom we find, *inter alia*, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Charles Moulhin, Giambattista Marino, Louis Maimbourg, Francisco Salgado de Somoza, Mateo de Moya, Alessandro Marchetti's translation of Lucretius, and works on judicial astrology.

¹ For Bruno's works mentioned above, see R. STURLESE, *Bibliografia, censimento e storia delle antiche stampe di Giordano Bruno*, Firenze, 1987, pp. 1-15, 36-39, 56-60, 82-86, 104-117, and 130-131.

APPENDIX

The texts presented here are kept in volumes of two separate series of the historical archive of the Congregation of the Holy Office in Rome. The first derives from one of the codices of the so-called *Extensorum*, which consists of registrations of Inquisition decrees. As a rule (but not always), these decrees are also recorded in the series *Decreta*. The second document document derives from the latter series.

1.

Decree of the Congregation of the Holy Office

(Rome, 28 February 1636)

ACDF, SO, *St. st.*, Q.1.g, fols. 367r-368v

Feria v. Die 28. Februarij 1636

In Generali Congregatione etc.

Sanctissimus D. N. D. Urbanus etc. concessit licentiam P. Generali Soc. Jesu tenendi et legendi libros infrascriptos quorum titulus videlicet.

[...]

Conradi Gesneri Bibliotheca etc. Sebastiani Munsteri Cosmographia, Grammatica etc. [...] Michaelis Mestlini alterum examen Gregoriani Calendarij, eiusdem defensio contra Possevinum. [...] Francisci Georgij problemata, et Harmonia mundi [...] Didacus Stunica in Job [...] Josephi, et Julij Caesaris Scaligeri opera. Jo Bodini de republica et Methodus historica [...] Rudolphi Goclenij [...] Speculum completae physicae. [...] Jordani Brunii De triplici minimo [...] Matthei Beraldi, et Gerardi Mercatoris Chronologia, et Cosmographicae meditationes [...] Conradi Dasypodij Analysis Geometrica [...] Francisci Patritij nova philosophia. Hieronymi Cardani opera. [...] Roberti à Fuld¹ Microcosmus, et Macrocosmus. Davidis Origani Ephemerides. [...] Bernardini Tilesij philosophia. Antonij Mizaldi opera. Jo. Kepleri Astronomia, et opuscula varia. Jovianiani Pontani Carmina et alia opera. [...] Nicolai Cusani opera. Guglielmi de Ocam quaestiones variae, et tractatus. [...] Theodori Zuiggeri Methodus agriculturae et in moralia Aristotelis. Andreas Libavius de metallis. Jo. Funcij Chronologia. Levinus Lemnius de secretis [...] Pauli Constantini Phrygionis Chronologia [...] Jo. Baptistae Portae Physiognomica caelestis. [...] Jacobus Meilichius in Plinium [...] Promptuarium Theologicum Francisci Georgij [...] Nicolaus Copernicus de revolutionibus orbium caelestium [...] Polydori Virgilij de Inventoribus rerum [...] Henrici Cornelij Agrippae de occulta Philosophia [...] Theophrasti Paracelsi opera. [...] Simonis Simoj Synopsis Theoriae de humoralium febrium natura. Amati Lusitani Curat. Mi[...] Centuriae. Io Bodini Daemonomania. [...] Antonij Mizaldi Centuriae memorabilium [...] Sexti Philosophi Pyrrhoniatarum hypotyseon [...] Arnaldi de Villanova Epistola de sanguine huom. distillato. Guill. Grataroli modus faciendi quintam essentiam simplicem [...] Hadriani Junij de anno, et mensibus. Jacobi Micylli Arithmetica [...] Antonio Pellegrino delli segni della natura [...] Alberti Magni de secretis mulierum. Theodori Bibliandri Chronologia. Guill. Portelli de universitate Thomae Erasti de causa morborum

¹ «fuld» (*sic*).

[...] Thomae Campanellae philosophia. Franciscus Valesius de sacra philosophia [...] Camilli Leonardi speculum lapidum [...] Leonardi Fuchsij Institutiones medicae [...] Jo. Velcurionis [...] Physicam [...] Arnaldi de villanova del conservar la sanita. Conradi Gesneri apparatus medicamentorum generalium. [...] Jo. Thomae Freigij opera. [...] Guill. Gratarolae Opuscula [...] Jordani Bruni de Umbris idearum et ars memoriae [...] Lettera del P. Foscarini sopra l'opinione de' Pitagorici e del Copernico intorno alla mobilità dela terra, e stabilità del sole [...] Jo. Jacobi Weckeri de Secretis [...]

Ad triennium proxime futurum cum facultate illam communicandi Patribus eiusdem Societatis sibi benevisis, ita tamen ut libri in Bibliothecis ubi sunt reponantur in loco separata, et sub clave custodiantur ne ab alijs legi possint, et dicto triennio elapso predictos libros consignet huic S. Officio.

2.

Decree of the Congregation of the Holy Office
(Rome, 23 September 1716)

ACDF, SO, *Decreta*, 1716, fols. 302r-v, 304r

Feria iv. Die 23 Septembris 1716

Fuit Congregatio S. Officij in Conventu S. Mariae Super Minervam coram Eminentissimis, et Reverendissimis DD. S. R. E. Cardinalibus Acciaiuolo, Spada, Casono, Fabrono, Ptolomeo, Casino, et Otthobono Generalibus Inquisitoribus [...], in qua proposita fuerunt negocia infrascripta, quae dictus R.P.D. Assessor in notam sumpsit, et mihi Notario tradidit videlicet. [...]

Lecto memoriali P. Josephi Caroli Amici Praepositi Congregationis Oratorij Bononiae supplicantis pro licentia retinendi in eorum Bibliotheca libros, et scripta Jordani Bruni Nolani, ac etiam eosdem legendi. Eminentissimi annuerunt ad triennium.