



RESEÑAS / BOOK REVIEWS

De Bellis, Ennio. *Nicoletto Vernia. Studisull'aristotelismodel XV secolo*, Firenze, Olschki, 2012. 233 páginas [ISBN: 978-88-22-26205-9]

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Since Duhem's seminal contribution on late medieval physical theories, Renaissance Aristotelianism has been one of the most debated topics by historians of early modern science and medicine. Building on Duhem's work, continuist historians emphasize the scientific and anti-rhetorical character of Aristotelian natural philosophy, in contrast with the diffusion of the new learning (*studia humanitatis* and practical mechanics) outside universities from the fifteenth century. Ennio De Bellis's book on the Paduan Aristotelian Nicoletto Vernia can be linked back to this tradition. De Bellis's aim is to fill a gap in the literature on fifteenth-century science and medicine as Vernia is considered as the "most important professor of Aristotelian philosophy in the second half of the century", primarily because he taught in Padua, a university which was a guiding force in natural philosophy and medicine. In this institution, which Vesalius has defined as the "most illustrious university of the world", he and spent the all his career of natural philosophy's professor. In contrast with North-European universities, Italian faculties of arts (where natural philosophy was taught) were connected with the superior faculty of medicine. The faculty of theology had a relatively low influence on the teaching of natural philosophy long before the catholic counter-reform. As the case of Vernia shows, the teaching of the Aristotelian natural philosophy and logic was preparatory to the study of medicine. This connection is echoed in Vernia's contributions to the discussion of the theoretical foundation of medicine in fifteenth century. In his *Quaestio an medicina nobilior atque praestantior sit iure civili*, the traditional alternative *ars-scientia* on the nature

of medicine is resolved by means of the recourse to Aristotelian physics and logic.

According to Vernia, medical science, not only in its diagnostic phase but even in the therapeutic one, needs a theoretical foundation, by means of which it can reduce the great quantity of acquired data to unitary criteria (p.175).

The book emphasises the prominent role of methodology in Vernia's work. De Bellis carefully describes the role of Vernia in the foundation of the doctrine of *regressus*. Logic is not a science, but the fundamental condition for the scientific study of natural phenomena. Because of the doctrine of *regressus*, lately developed by Zabarella, the Aristotelian Vernia is seen as the father of a new approach which has been the base of the revolutionary contribution of Harvey and Galileo. Relevant aspect of Vernia's work, such as the discussion of fourteenth-century terminist physical theories and his strong dependence on Averroist commentaries, are not seen as obstacles to the assumption of a clearly continuous connection between medieval and modern science and medicine. So, the emphasis of Vesalius and Harvey on direct experience in the study of anatomy and Galileo's refusal of Aristotelian qualitative physics have no place in De Bellis's reconstruction of Vernia's role in Renaissance science.

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