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Friedrich Hoffmann, *La differenza tra la dottrina di Stahl e la mia in patologia e terapia*, introduction, translation and notes by Francesco Paolo de Ceglia (Pisa: Plus, Pisa University Press, 2009), 291 pp., ISBN 978-888492643-2.

Francesco Paolo de Ceglia offers us the first Italian translation (and, actually, the very first translation) of *De differentia doctrinae Stahlinae a nostra, in pathologicis et therapeuticis* by Friedrich Hoffmann. This is – as the editor underlines – the work which best illuminates the differences and points of contact between the two greatest exponents of medicine of the early XVIII century. Although it is biased, the work is sufficiently well-balanced to illustrate the positions of both scientists and, in both cases, to indicate the final aim of the system in pathology and therapeutics. It also shows how marginal physiology was, although this is considered to be of central importance in the more usual interpretations. As is typical of the pre-Hallerian perspective, the two *professores* actually work on and revise individual cases taken from medical practice, framed only by what de Ceglia defines as a “pre-understanding” of natural dynamics.

De Ceglia translates the edition of the essay contained in the *Opera omnia* (Genevae, 1749). It had a limited circulation and was not the first edition (1739), which was printed while Hoffmann was still alive, whose circulation was even more restricted and, above all, ignored by historians. The usual interpretation is built up precisely around the alleged posthumous nature of the essay. The author supposedly planned to have it published post mortem, so that the purely virtual presence of the two adversaries would tone down the asperity of a personal confrontation. Thanks to patient bibliographic research, de Ceglia brings into focus an operation that was, instead, decidedly more complex. And this is not all. He goes so far as to show that *De differentia* could be attributed not to Hoffmann's pen, but to the zeal of his pupils. Hoffmann inspired them to compile it in the period 1724–1726 (so when Stahl was still alive). Whether or not the essay is spurious, the text faithfully reflects Hoffmann's thought and allows us to view his relationship with his adversary in a different way from the extrinsic mode typical of a comparison between deceased people.

De Ceglia's translation should have been introduced by an essay illustrating his excellent knowledge of the unpublished texts, the sources and the secondary literature. But this swelled up in the author's hands until it took on the dimensions of a book, and this is the form in which it was published (*I fari di Halle. Georg Ernst Stahl, Friedrich Hoffmann e la medicina europea del primo Settecento*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2009). This edition evidently completes the book (which is, however, not referred to here) and the book provides it with adequate historical-critical support. Indeed, the reader of the translation finds only a brief introduction, which offers the information indicated hereinabove and briefly recounts how the two authors established themselves at the university of Halle, their relationship with Pietism, which was widespread in the *Fridericiana*, and how they came into open conflict.

On this occasion too, the starting point of the dispute is focused on a question of medical semeiotics (the rapid pulse and the frequent pulse), which was, per se, marginal, but sufficient to rapidly involve deeply held convictions regarding the nature of heat, fever and sickness: in short, the whole physiopathological edifice.

De Ceglia does not underestimate the intensity of the dispute, but he contests the historiographical commonplace which has represented it as a clash between Hoffmann's "secular mechanicism" and Stahl's "pietistic animism" going so far as to further schematize the two sides, contrasting lay and religious knowledge, materialistic Cartesianism and a pious reaction to it. As is effectively demonstrated not by this introduction, but precisely by the aforementioned book, the relationship was actually much more complex. In comparing the two personages, the manifold aspects of their participation in the intellectual debate of the times cannot be disregarded: from the different types of scientific writing to the contrast between the two different personalities, from their different forms of religiousness to their different interventions in "cultural politics". We also agree with the need here emphasized to contextualize Hoffmann and Stahl within the medical tradition and not the philosophical-theological one, to which they did not belong.

The translation comes with a set of historical-critical notes, providing precise information on the personages and works cited. Given the nature of the essay, the explicative notes regarding illnesses and drugs are particularly useful. These are illustrated (wherever possible) by means of coeval pharmaceutical glossaries and lexicons, generally avoiding anachronistic translation into current terminology.

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