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THE METAPHYSICAL IMPLICATIONS OF CAMPANELLA'S NOTION OF FICTION

GUIDO GIGLIONI

SUMMARY

Campanella's notion of fiction (*fabula*) hinges upon a multilayered view of reality based on a series of ontological divisions: *ens rationis divinae*, *ens reale*, *ens rationis*, *ens irrationalitatis* and *non ens*. They identify levels of being that span the full range of reality, from a minimum to a maximum degree (an ontological spectrum that in Campanella's philosophy is closely connected to the Telesian criterion of self-preservation). According to Campanella, any human foray into the territories of 'being of reason', 'being of unreason' and even 'non being' is always balanced by a natural 'return' to being and reality. This article intends to contextualise Campanella's views on fiction within the broader framework of his metaphysics.

1. THE ONTOLOGICAL COMPONENTS OF CAMPANELLA'S NOTION OF REALITY: REAL BEING (*ENS REALIS*), PRIMALITIES (*PRIMALITATES*), THE ARCHETYPAL WORLD (*MUNDUS ARCHETYPUS*) AND THE UNIVERSAL SENTIENCE OF NATURE (*SENSUS RERUM*)

AN inquiry into Campanella's view concerning the elusive nature of fiction should start with a discussion of his notion of reality, which he defines according to a series of ontological divisions. The most general division is the one between being (*ens*) and non-being (*non ens*); *ens* in turn is divided into «real being» (*ens realis*), «being of reason» (*ens rationis*) and «being of unreason» (*ens irrationalitatis*). When Campanella refers to *ens realis*, he is not espousing a view of reality in which being means an undifferentiated whole; rather, he looks at reality as resulting from an articulate system of original differences, such that being is inherently power, knowledge and love (a view that Campanella encapsulates in his theory of the so-called 'primaries of being': *posse, nosse, velle*). Every single *res* in nature is able to act, to know and to desire. Likewise, every essence is powerful, knowing and willing. *Res* are real, but their *essentiae*, located in what Campanella calls the «archetypal world», are even more real. The world of *ens realis* is the world of Thomas Aquinas. The world of *res* is the world of Telesio's physicalism. The world of archetypes, finally, is the world of Plotinus' Intellect.¹ A quo-

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¹ On Campanella's ontological views, see L. BLANCHET, *Campanella*, Paris, Alcan, 1920; E.

tation from the *Metaphysica* may help shed more light on the principal divisions of being in Campanella's system:

we call real being (*ens reale*) everything that we find as made by God or nature prior to the artificial operation of human reason (*ante rationis humanae operationem artificiosam*). A being of reason (*ens rationis*), on the other hand, is not reason or an operation of natural reason, but everything that, coming after the real being of beings (*post esse reale entium*), is produced by human reason or art, having a purpose in mind, whether this is within reason (*intra se*), like names, words and syllogisms, or outside reason (*extra se*), like a garment, a house, a piece of writing. All God's works, and everything that is outside God, are beings of divine reason or divine art (*entia rationis seu artis divinae*), but for us they are real beings (*entia realia*). Those beings that we make are called 'of reason', that is, artificial, if they are made for a certain use. If they are made with no use in mind, like a parallogism, the tricks staged by mountebanks, then they are called beings of unreason (*entia irrationalitatis*) or deception, regardless of whether they are active – such as a heretical statement, a fable, a sophism and a military stratagem – or passive – like when one thinks that God is a body, or he is wasting his time, or he is deceived by an apparition (*spectrum*) – or whether beings of unreason are both active and passive, like when someone who is deceived deceives other people.¹

As already suggested, Campanella's philosophical universe is characterised by various levels of reality, from beings of divine reason – i.e., the whole created reality, also called *ens reale*, when it has not become part of the world of human knowledge – to beings of reason (i.e., the world of human – inward and outward – knowledge and creation) and, finally, to the pure figments of the imagination that have no actual referent in the created being, figments which Campanella calls 'beings of unreason'. In the list above, God's ideas are at the top, while fables are mentioned as an example of 'active' being of unreason; mere semblances and apparitions are at the bottom of the ontological scale, defined as 'passive' beings of unreason. Elsewhere, Campanella refers also to non-being, *non ens*, as a possible source of creations. This is the domain of the devil and demonic magic: «no art is based on falsehood, unless it is diabolical, for the devil is the father of lies».²

Reality in the strict sense is therefore everything that is made (primarily) by God or (secondarily) by nature independently of the artificial operations

CASSIRER, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neuen Zeit*, Berlin, Bruno Cassirer, 1922, I, pp. 240-257; II, pp. 79-84; S. FEMIANO, *La metafisica di Tommaso Campanella*, Milan, Marzorati, 1968; G. DI NAPOLI, *La metafisica di Tommaso Campanella*, in *Campanella e Vico*, Padova, CEDAM, 1969, pp. 19-35; B. BONANSEA, *Tommaso Campanella: Renaissance Pioneer of Modern Thought*, Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 1969; R. AMERIO, *Il sistema teologico di Tommaso Campanella*, Milano-Napoli, Ricciardi, 1972; A. ISOLDI JACOBELLI, *Tommaso Campanella: 'Il diverso filosofar mio'*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1995; G. ERNST, *Tommaso Campanella: The Book and The Body of Nature*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2010.

¹ *Metaphysica*, I, pp. 89b-90b.

² *Poetica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 350.

of human reason. In defining reality as a product of «divine reason», Campanella introduces an element of conventionality and artificiality in the very roots of natural beings. There are, however, two important elements that prevent Campanella's metaphysics from drifting into the territories of theological arbitrariness: the reference to original, exemplary patterns of reality (*mundus archetypus*), upon which God modelled his creation of nature, and the universal law of self-preservation, which is the criterion that regulates all transformations among real beings and beings of reason. In this sense, all aspects of reality, both natural and artificial, are pervaded by a strong sense of purpose and usefulness. Campanella sums up this point by saying that all things of nature have the inner power to be because they know they exist, they want to exist and therefore they are constantly looking for ways and means to exist.¹ *Potentia*, *sapientia* and *amor* – Campanella's 'primalities' – are so intimately intertwined with each other that the distinction which identifies one from the other is not real, but formal; which means that being is one and is inherently power, knowledge and love, but we can have a glimpse of its innermost structure by distinguishing its defining attributes through our mind. Primalities are not actual «beings» (*entia*) or essences, but «being-nesses of being» (*entitates entis* or *realitates entis*).² Finally, to the real distinction between *ens realis* and *ens rationis*, and to the formal one between power, knowledge and will (the primalities), Campanella adds the Platonic distinction – a real distinction, in this case – between the archetypal, ideal world and the ectypal, corporeal one:

Within the first Being we place the archetypal world, boundless, infinite, self-identical, which transcends the boundaries and the measures of the corporeal world, being realer, truer and better than this one, and indeed in its being (*entitas*) it produces innumerable worlds endlessly, while surpassing them all in perfection. For God has the power to create innumerable worlds, as is demonstrated by Chrysostom, provided that these worlds are able to exist (*si ipsi esse existentialiter possent*). Therefore, those who imagine infinite corporeal worlds can imagine such worlds, because they are in fact (*revera*) in God.³

Our imagination's ability to devise infinite worlds is evidence that our mind is modelled upon God's power to create countless worlds. In this sense, the imagination is not arbitrary; indeed, it is the strongest evidence we have that we are made in God's image. The archetypal world of intelligible patterns of being defines the legitimate meaning of fictional representation (*fabula*). Reality in the strict sense is therefore an infinite reservoir of ideal possibilities, pregnant with meanings and virtual dispositions that are ready to be fulfilled every time the occasion presents itself. This is the primalitative and archetypal world, the most real world within Campanella's metaphysics.

¹ *Metaphysica*, II, p. 2a.

² *Ibid.*, p. 113a.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 243a-b.

This world transcends our individual souls and the corporeal worlds they inhabit. We, as any other finite *res* in nature, ‘occasion’ primalities, essences and ideas to be activated; we cannot cause them. This means that, in the final analysis, we ‘feel’ (*sentire*) the world, we do not know it (where feeling, *sentire*, retains all the force of Telesio’s notion of *sensus* and has very little of the eighteenth-century notion of sensibility). We feel that something is happening, we see the occasions that prepare the emerging of the ideal reality, but the underlying causes escape our mental grasp. As Campanella sums up this point, «it is evident that we know things in a partial way (*ex parte*), not as they are (*non prout sunt*), but as we are affected by them (*ut afficimur*)». Undoubtedly, this aspect of Campanella’s metaphysics is the one that is more closely indebted to Telesio’s physicalism.¹ According to the principles of Telesio’s sensism, we do not know things because they affect our senses in a direct and unmediated way, but because we know ourselves as being affected by things. To put it otherwise, everything in the corporeal world is perceived through sense.

2. THE NATURE OF POETIC REALITY

Poetry, like any other thing in nature, emerges from the sentient power of things and contributes to the self-preservation of the universe (*conservatio*). First and foremost, sense is touch. What cannot be touched is inferred. Language and metaphors are ways of ‘touching’ absent things. This point confirms Campanella’s belief in the physical nature of words. They are units of breathed air sculpted by our mouth in such a way that they resemble as closely as possible the real things they represent. In the *Metaphysica*, Campanella defines words as «signs of the things we know (*signa rerum scitarum*), which we utter so that we can signify to other people what we know». Words are thus at once social and physical constructs:

The first human beings, gathering together, began to express the information received from the outside through external signs, which no doubt were similar to the things identified by external marks so that they could be exhibited outwardly, as dumb people do now, especially through interjections; finally, they imitated the things themselves with their mouth. They beat the breathed out air with their teeth, lips, palate, tongue and gums, and modulate it with the throat, until they represent the thing they want. In this way, for instance, from the sound *tup*, *tup* that the percussion of wood makes in our ears, the Greeks said *τύπτω*, from the cracking of a whip, with which they flogged their slaves, the Latin said *verbero*, and now in Italian we say *batto*, which once was also said in Latin, imitating as it were the beating of viscous material.²

The human beings’ ability to shape the air with their mouths in order to create actual replicas of things is in fact a direct effect of the already men-

¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 86a.

² *Ibid.*, p. 86a-b.

tioned primordial tendency in the sentient spirit to be affected and to affect things (*res*).

As the spirit is affected by the things (*patitur a rebus*), in the same way, it imitates them and expresses these affections (*passiones*) with the mouth. However, since it is not affected by everything by itself (*non ab omnibus per se patitur*), it created the words, to the extent that they are capable of expressing something of those things by which it is affected (*afficitur*), or by mingling things that are close or connected to each other. So it [the spirit] said *lapidem*, as if 'it injures the foot' (*quasi laedentem pedem*), and *virgultum*, since 'it turns upwards' (*quia vergit sursum*). The fact is that the spirit cannot imitate the thing in its entirety through a word, but by indicating the most remarkable affect, operation or reality.¹

Like our perceptions of reality, our words are not imitation of things, but signs that describe our being affected by reality. Originally, the correspondence between words and reality was closer and tighter, directly connected to specific events in nature, important social functions or memorable actions.² Gradually, as time passed by, the link between the two became increasingly more tenuous and was replaced by arbitrary conventions meant to signify reality without relying on direct, natural likenesses. In a way, the 'sin' of replacing the *ens realis* with the imaginary constructions of the *ens rationis* started at the very beginning of human history, following the way human beings perceived reality and handled their languages. The chasm interposing between *verba* and *res* and the ensuing dematerialisation of the very physicality of words (understood as a blend of physical air and physical sound imitating a physical reality) represent a form of linguistic estrangement that runs parallel to the process of cognitive estrangement occurring every time we perceive reality. We do not perceive (and consequently know) things and the essences of things; rather, we know ourselves being affected by things and essences. And, in being affected – more or less violently – by things and essences, we tend to forget, in various degrees, ourselves and reality. Likewise, the link between words and things is not based on the essence of things, but on the way we feel and imitate things and essences. In the same way as our perceptions of things are not replicas of external objects or of their essences, but indications of the way we react to reality, so our words do not mirror reality, but the way we are affected by reality.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86b. On Campanella's view concerning the relationship between *voces* and *res*, see G. ERNST, *Immagini e figure del pensiero filosofico di Campanella*, in this volume, pp. 75-80.

² *Metaphysica*, I, p. 87a: «Romani et Hebraei rectius vocabula imponebant, quam nunc solemus, quoniam ab aliqua saltem proprietate, et officio, et eventu, et facinore: ut Fabius a serendis fabis: Lentulus a lentibus: Cinnatus a cinnino: Benjamin a filio doloris parturientis. At vocabula originalia, unde ista derivantur, priora sunt, nempe ab imitatione, quae ex literarum modulamine capi posset, ut cacare recte positum est, quia ca, ca, facit anus dum deponit superflua».

No word derives from the essence of a thing, but from the act through which the thing acts upon us. Hence unknown essences seem to be made known to us through characters, following, however, the way they affect us. Otherwise there should be as many characters as there are essences, as they report it happens among the Chinese. This would be excellent, if the characters were drawn from the essences. However, this can only be done by God, who alone knows them.¹

Words cannot represent things as they are in reality (*in re*) because there is an infinite distance separating the *entia rationis humanae* (words) from the *entia rationis divinae* (things). God, in a way, is the ultimate poet: He made the essences, He made the things, He knows them, He utters them. Better still: He does all these things in one single act. Human beings, by contrast, know things indirectly, by knowing their own reactions to their internal and external reality. Sense perception, especially the sense of touch, is the most direct grasp of things (Telesio), and yet even sense perception is already a mediated representation of reality: it is what we make of reality when we are touched by things (metaphysically speaking, it is a process of primalitative re-enactment of life and knowledge ‘on the occasion of’ being touched). The other four external senses, the internal senses, namely, the imagination and memory, even reason (understood as the discursive faculty), are already more distant from the reality of things that we ‘touch’. On an empirical and historical level, Campanella thinks that fiction, in all its various forms, originated as an attempt to fill the gaps that inevitably accompany our perception of reality: fables derive from allegories, allegories from metaphors, metaphors from resemblances among things.² As we have seen, metaphorical transfers occur constantly in our language, every time we realise that onomatopoeic imitations of things are not sufficient to render the inexhaustible richness of reality: «when we do not have the right word, or hearers do not like that particular word or cannot understand it, we borrow such a word from something similar».³ Likewise, on a larger scale, we devise fables to make up for a lack of reality (*la favola si fa per la mancanza del vero*).⁴

It seems, therefore, that the way Campanella describes the process of perception introduces an element of arbitrariness and conventionality at the very core of human knowledge. We are directly affected by reality, but our descriptions of it are inevitably distorted and subjective. And yet, for all its limitations, human knowledge is anchored to the *ens verum* of the primali-

¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 87a.

² *Poëtica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 1008: «Inventionem fabulae arbitror ab allegoria ortam esse, allegoriam vero a metaphora, metaphoram a similitudine rerum».

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Poetica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 324. On Campanella’s view about the use of fictional narratives in oratory, see Peter Mack’s essay in this volume, p. 27.

ties of being, and the same is true of any true art and poetry. By and large, Campanella is firmly of the opinion that there is no need to invent alternative realities when the actual, historical reality seems to be constantly bursting with events and situations worthy of being represented. As examples, he mentions the conflict that opposed Julius Caesar to Pompeo, or the geographical explorations led by Christopher Colombo, Walter Raleigh and Magellan.¹ Examining the characteristics of philosophical poems, Campanella points out that «invention consists in finding that which *is* or *was*, for there is no knowledge (*scientia*) of things that do not exist (*delle cose che non sono*)».² However, he is ready to admit that a poet deals not only with the world of external reality (*res*), but also and especially with the «representation» of such a reality, i.e., their «signs» (*signa rerum*), that is, stories (*fabulae*) and metaphors (*metaphorae*).³ In this respect, Campanella is willing to admit that a certain kind of compensatory mechanism is involved in the poetic representation of reality. We create fables when full knowledge of reality is not available (as already pointed out above, «la favola si fa per mancanza del vero»).⁴ Aesthetic pleasure (*voluptas*) and beauty (*pulchritudo*) are not inherent in things (*non insunt rebus*). It is the poet who adds a level of idealisation (*transfiguratio sermonis*) to the poem, through which «he says something and means something else, and reveals obscure things through clear ones».⁵ In this sense, the truth of fiction is symbolical: «the truth of a fable does not lie in its being represented (*figuratur*) in its sense, but in referring to a different sense».⁶ Even stories that are unlikely – but unambiguously so – can be used as parables to represent moral and religious meanings.⁷ However, Campanella cautions against the religious use of allegorical fictions, for Christianity has dramatically redefined the meanings of past religions and mythologies through the dogma of the incarnation.

Now that the truth about religious matters has been revealed by God himself made human, we are not allowed any longer to tell stories (*favoleggiare*) about these subjects, but we should express ourselves according to the Catholic faith.⁸

Unfortunately – Campanella continues in his analysis – the Greek (or better, the Aristotelian) notion of imitation has prevailed in the history of Western literature and has marred the very meaning of artistic representation. Admittedly, here Campanella is too severe and narrow with Aristotle's notion of imitation. In his opinion, Aristotle meant by imitation an imaginary,

¹ *Poetica*, in *Scritti lett.*, pp. 321-322.

² *Ibid.*, p. 350.

³ *Poëtica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 950.

⁴ *Poetica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 325.

⁵ *Poëtica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 954: «aliud dicit et aliud significat, et per clara obscura patefacit».

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1030: «fabula enim est vera, quando non in suo sensu, sed alieno figuratur».

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1100.

⁸ *Poetica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 325.

fictitious recreation of reality, what Campanella characterises as *fabulosa imitatio*.¹ He thinks that there are various kinds of imitation, and Aristotle confined his notion of imitation only to the «fantastic» one, which in fact, in Campanella's opinion, is the kind of imitation that is the most distant from the true nature of poetry, so much so that poets who follow Aristotle's canons of mimetic representation are mere liars.² An example of a modern poet who succumbed to the lure of 'Greek' fiction is Tasso, who, unlike Ariosto, derived all his stories from pagan traditions.³

Campanella believes that fiction should be concerned with reality also with respect to the aesthetic response it causes in an audience. Describing the defining characteristics of the heroic poems, Campanella insists that the story narrated be related to real events:

The main action should always be true, otherwise it moves little, for believable things do not produce emotions (*non enim credibilia sunt affectuosa*). Likewise, the main action should provide any added fable with likelihood (*similitudo*), for, if we know that the foundation is false, we do not believe anything any longer.⁴

Campanella does not rule out the possibility that a poet may use a certain amount of 'un-reality' in its creations. However, this does not mean for him that «we are going to sing impossible things». Impossible deeds performed by human beings would overcome the audience's ability to suspend their disbelief (*fides auditorum*), whereas such extraordinary events are legitimate and plausible when they are caused by God.⁵

Muslim clerics (*papassi*) imagine (*fingunt*) that Ali's sword slaughtered twenty Christians all at once with one blow, and Ariosto imagines that the golden spear of Argalia knocked down everyone it touched, for it had been hardened with a spell.⁶

Campanella's remarks on Ariosto's poetry are particularly interesting. Given the philosophical premises of Campanella's system, it is not surprising that the scope of Ariosto's imagination is deemed to be too wide to be entirely compatible with reality:

¹ *Poëtica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 980. See also *Poëtica*, p. 321. On the discussion on the limits of 'fantastic' imitation during the Renaissance, see G. GIGLIONI, *The Matter of the Imagination: The Renaissance Debate over Icastic and Fantastic Imitation*, «Camenaes», VIII, 2010, pp. 1-21 (<http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/la-recherche/les-unites-de-recherche/mondes-anciens-et-medievales-ed1/rome-et-ses-renaissances-art-3625/revue-en-ligne-camenaes/article/camenaes-no-8-decembre-2010>).

² *Poëtica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 968.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1102. See *Poëtica*, p. 337. On Campanella's poetics, see L. BOLZONI, «Al novo secolo lingua nova instrumento rinasca»: La ricerca campanelliana di una nuova lingua e di una nuova metrica, in *Tommaso Campanella e l'attesa del secolo aureo*, Florence, Olschki, 1998, pp. 61-88.

⁴ *Poëtica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 1098.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1038: «Ubi autem non insunt res mirae, finguntur [...] Non tamen canemus impossibilia [...] Possunt haec diis et miraculose tribui, non autem hominibus iuxta fidem auditorum».

⁶ *Ibid.*

a good poet, especially an epic one, will bring into existence the whole world. From this point of view, while he narrates Astolfo's and Ruggero's travels and mentions the Oriental kings, Ariosto surpasses Virgil and Homer. One inconvenience is that he learnt from Boiardo to indulge too much in stories (*fabulosissimus*).¹

And yet, for all his flights of the imagination, the *fabulosissimus* Ariosto is a better poet than Tasso. Ariosto, Campanella argues, «lived in the feminine century», and his creations reflect the reality of his time, whereas Tasso preferred to rely slavishly on the *fabulosa imitatio* of the Greeks.²

3. THE ROLE OF FICTION BETWEEN LACK AND EXCESS OF REALITY

To sum up what has been discussed so far, according to Campanella, works of fiction (*fabulae* and *parabola*) should imitate reality (*imitatio verorum*). In this sense, poetry at its highest and its best is an exemplary representation of reality, and as such it is linked to the good of the whole universe. When, for some reason, reality is too difficult, elusive, brutal, and when it remains invisible or cannot be represented, then the poet may resort to similarities (*similitudines*) and imitations (*imitationes*). However, inventions and fictions are not strictly necessary for works of poetry; they can be used when real, historical or scientific material is not available (*ubi desunt exempla vera*).

Our fictional representation of reality can be of two kinds: direct or symbolical. In the first case, unlikely or impossible events should not be used; in the second, unlikely and impossible events, precisely because of their absurd nature, should be treated as signs of realities that transcend the natural and ordinary meaning of things. This is particularly evident in the case of religious poetry: «Divine things can only be expressed through a comparison with human things, whether this is analogical, metaphorical or mixed».³ Campanella's notion of fiction rests therefore on the precarious notion of 'surrogated' reality. This means that fiction can sometimes be misused to replace, or to compensate for, or even to escape from reality, but also that it retains a close link with the uncontainable freedom of the imagination, the freedom from the oppressive rule of literal signification. A clearly and deliberately fictional account of things refers, beyond the sign, to a meaning that is transcendently 'other'.

It is therefore apparent how Campanella's notion of fiction brings to the fore all the characteristic aspects of his metaphysics. Poetry is an instrument of self-preservation and, in the great Campanellian scheme of things, the highest form of self-preservation on earth is the preservation of the State,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1040.

² *Poetica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 337.

³ *Poëtica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 1070.

which is closely related to the preservation of religion. Regardless of whether they are aware or not of this end, poets reach the purpose of promoting social and political stability by arousing feelings of pleasure and wonder in their audience, irrespective of whether the audience realises that it is part of this learning experience.¹ They produce genuine wonder and pleasure when they represent reality, understood as both *ens realis* and *ens rationis divinae*, intersecting both corporeal (ectypal) and intelligible (archetypal) being. Only when the representation is based on reality does fiction (*fabula*) become believable (*credibilis*) and capable to affect an audience (*affectuosa*). In giving form to the ideas of the archetypal world, poets produce exemplary imitations which, because of their level of universality, can be understood by the greatest number of people. It is through the process of 'exemplification' that true poetry shows its direct link to the *mundus exemplaris*.

Apart from the different ontological levels that are being re-enacted each time by a poetic representation (whether the corporeal, the mental or the archetypal one, or one of the primalitative functions of power, knowledge and will), one should ask what 'reality' means for a human being. According to Telesio's notion of experience as 'affectability', reality is what human beings perceive of things.² And human beings perceive things by becoming, to a certain extent, these things. In other words, they know things by imitating them, and perception is ultimately imitation. More than any other being in nature, a poet is that creature which has the ability to turn its sentient and imagining spirit into the thing he perceives and imagines. Referring to Horace, Campanella explains that no poet can move (*afficere*) other people if he himself is not moved (*affectus*).³ A poet has «a pure and shiny spirit, which easily transforms itself into any thing», and this transformation occurs «by imitating the affect that expresses them».⁴ Most of all, precisely because of the exemplary nature of his representations of things, he is able to make other people feel what he feels in the first place. The poet occasions the re-enactment of the primalities of being (power, knowledge and will), and through the poet, the audience, too, re-enacts the exemplary character of the situation that is being represented before their eyes or in their imagination:

When in Ariosto I read of Orlando's courage and generous deeds and about the mean actions of the coward, I am moved as if they were happening before my eyes, and often I cry.⁵

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1034.

² On Telesio's notion of affectability, see G. GIGLIONI, *The First of the Moderns or the Last of the Ancients? Bernardino Telesio on Nature and Sentience*, «Bruniana & Campanelliana», XVI, 2010, pp. 69-87.

³ *Poëtica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 1032. Cfr. Horace, *De arte poetica*, 99-105.

⁴ *Poëtica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 342.

⁵ *Poëtica*, in *Scritti lett.*, p. 946. On Campanella's appreciation of Ariosto's ability to repre-

The domain of fiction (*fabula*), entirely pervaded by the three primalities of power, knowledge and will, occupies the sphere of *ens rationis*, but it significantly intersects with large sections of the *ens realis*. In some cases, it also penetrates into the domain of *ens irrationalitatis*, not to say *non ens*. However, it is only when it does not favour our tendency to escape from reality that fiction contributes to expanding our grasp of the infinite potentialities of the intelligible world. According to Campanella, we resort to fiction and the work of imagination for two principal reasons: the first is to explore all that cannot be perceived through direct, 'tactile' perception; the second is to smooth the harshest aspects of reality and make them more tolerable. Nature devises the former reason to supplement a *lack* of reality and the second to come to terms with an *excess* of reality. In all these cases, fiction has a key role in the universal process of self-preservation, a law that regulates all aspects of reality. Through fiction and poetry, we adapt to reality. In the first situation mentioned above (i.e., lack of reality), we imagine things that we cannot experience directly (in a 'tactile' way, so to speak) and that can be plausibly connected to what we experience in a direct way (the level of *esse posse existentialiter* mentioned earlier). In the second situation (i.e., excess of reality, in the sense that reality is too complicated and difficult to be understood), we may be able to reach very abstract truths by producing representations that are accessible to the imagination. Such a process of mitigating the asperities of knowledge with the help of the imagination is evident with prophets and their key role in establishing and maintaining political stability. Finally, in the third situation (i.e., excess of reality, in the sense that reality is too violent), the response of the imagination is not a proper adaptation to reality and an actual manifestation of self-preservation. In this case, adaptation and self-preservation are only apparent, in that the figments of the imagination lead the human mind astray in the regions of non-being. The first two situations represent forms of appropriate, legitimate imitation; the third is a kind of deluded, compensatory and escapist imitation, good for tyrannising and tyrannised people.¹

sent virtues and affects, see *ibid.*, p. 1040: «Hac in re Ariostus est mirabilis, dum fidelitatis et magnanimitatis et eventus varii canit exempla in Orlando, in Zerbino, in Bradamante, etc.».

¹ On Campanella's belief in the interplay of tyranny and lack of knowledge, see G. ERNST, *Immagini e figure del pensiero filosofico di Campanella*, in this volume, pp. 80-85.