

Abstract Master thesis

"The structure of reality in the *De Essentiis* of Hermann of Carinthia"

The thesis consists of three parts: the first is historical and the other two dedicated to a textual analysis. Historiographical, philological and hermeneutic considerations are strictly linked with the interpretation of the works produced by Hermann. Specifically, the first chapter contains a brief overview of the historical context in which Hermann of Carinthia worked and the relationship with its primary sources, which despite their size and complexity, can be grouped into four main areas:

- 1) the influence exercised on Hermann by the School of Chartres and, through the mediation of the latter, by the thinking of Boethius, Macrobius, John Scotus and the Platonic elements arising from Plato's *Timaeus*, taken, as we know, from the translation of Chalcidius;
- 2) the recuperation of Aristotelian elements and themes from the translations of the texts of Aristotle made by Arab authors, especially with regard to the naturalistic and scientific works of Aristotle starting with the *Introductorium maius in Astronomiam* Abu Ma'shar's, which also constitutes the fundamental astrological work of reference for the *De Essentiis*. The books on astronomy are also to be considered fundamental, primarily the Ptolemy's *Planisphere*, translated by Hermann in 1143;
- 3) The influence exercised on Hermann by the *Liber de Causis* (Latin translation of an Arabic remake of the Proclus' *Elementatio Theologica* probably to be attributed to the circle of al-Kindi) which re-proposes the key elements of Neoplatonic causality adapting them to the needs of monotheism and creationism, and by the *De quinque essentiis*, another work by al-Kindi.
- 4) Last but not least, the influence exercised by the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Honorius of Autun and the *Book of twenty-four philosophers*.

In the second chapter, after a brief presentation of the *De Essentiis*, explaining the fundamental philosophical objectives, the first book of the work is examined, and its most important passages are discussed to bring out the nature and structure of Hermann's metaphysical thinking. In this second section of the thesis, therefore, the attention focuses on what is the basic theme of this work, that is, an attempt to trace the original structure and foundation of reality as seen from Hermann's perspective.

To this end, in this chapter, the central metaphysical concepts have been taken into consideration, by which the Dalmatian philosopher aims to identify the basic structure of the whole universe. It focuses on the relationship between identity and diversity, emphasizing how Hermann has elaborated on this theme, a very particular concept which sees identity as the root of all diversity, and consequently that diversity depends on and is ontologically derived from identity. He elaborates this perspective to defend the Christian dogma of the Trinity dangerously attacked by Muslims, thus showing that there is no diversity in God and that He is identified with the unit and does not know any form of plurality. Hermann, in reference to the fundamental concepts of his sources, denies any form of original dualism.

The third chapter focuses on the analysis of the second part of *De Essentiis* in which the most significant passages have been examined and commented in order to reconstruct the entire physical and metaphysical reflections of the Dalmatian philosopher. In this part of his work, Hermann examines the *secundandaria genitura* trying to outline the conditions of possibility, the laws and the fundamental movements which, in turn, lead

to the formation of the natural world, in its various phases: mineral, vegetable and animal.

In order to introduce the discussion a reflection on the structure and movement of the planets has been presented. This concludes the reflection proposed in the book on the analysis of the creation of man. In particular, it highlights the role of the heavenly bodies that perform the function of regulating the sublunary world and are therefore active agents in the formation of the natural and changeable universe.

The main objective of this research is to evaluate the work of Hermann from a metaphysical-theological perspective that at the same time explains the physical conception that he proposes.

Among the most innovative aspects of this work, we believe we can report the demonstration of the strong affinity between the speculative *De Essentiis* and Chartrian Neoplatonism, in particular with the *Liber de causis* which seems to share - in every way - the general metaphysical system.

It was also shown how Hermann, through a blend of the Platonic and Aristotelian reflection, tried to legitimate the scientific-astrological discourse, reflecting on the structure of reality and the link that exists between the lunar and the sublunary world, in support of a creationist belief. Hermann therefore intends to "build" the validity of the scientific discourse in full agreement with the Christian tradition. He is determined to fill an important gap left by Plato and Aristotle in order to complete the analysis of the totality of reality. Hermann succeeds in this attempt by starting from the metaphysical structure of the essences that make a perfect "theoretical equilibrium" between Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy. The essences, in fact, in view of the Dalmatian philosopher combine immutability and movement, the generation of things and the fact that the universe arises from intact entities, immutable and perfect, without in any way altering the fundamental truths of Christian thought. In this way, he can strengthen the philosophical - conceptual bases, partly as a result of the attacks that these had received by Muslims and authors from different heretical perspectives which at that moment were growing within the Church itself. Hermann's metaphysical and theological issues appear intrinsically linked to each other: they are fully inserted in the debate on the origin of the cosmos and the *creatio ex nihilo*. Hermann therefore develops very interesting philosophical and theological solutions, also closely linked to scientific and astrological knowledge.

Following Hermann in his research for the Truth on the first **principle** of reality which is investigated in its entirety, in search of the ultimate and eternal foundation, immutable and therefore always true, we have shown ultimately that he formulates a metaphysics of causality built for theological purposes in order to certify, through an inspired meeting of divine goodness with human intelligence, the absolute predominance of a first principle that acts as the teleological and original element of all things, in perfect harmony with the needs of scientific thought. As is adequately emphasized, this perspective opens up to a view of the universe really new in its speculative depth.

This thesis has therefore shown how Hermann has, in some way, closed the "circle" in relation to the fundamental pillars of his theme, outlining a hermeneutic and metaphysical circularity that sees in the concept of 'primary cause' its fundamental centre of gravity, almost as if this represents not only the most important nucleus of his reflection, but also the condition of possibility for creation itself, since that very first cause is the original foundation of the whole. In the perspective of the Dalmatian philosopher, in fact, the starting point must necessarily correspond to the point of arrival: everything comes from God and at the same time has to return to Him.

One can therefore conclude that Hermann was able to fully state his purpose. We believe, therefore, that the fundamental value of this thesis is precisely to give due importance to a work that can definitely be described as a hidden jewel of medieval philosophy.