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### Ramon Llull, *Vida i Obres. Volum I*

Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2015

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The authors

Review of *Ramon Llull: Vida i Obres. Volum I, Anys 1232-1287/1288, Obres 1-37*, edited by Pere Villalba i Varneda. Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2015. 1001 pp. ISBN 978-84-9965-259-7.

In 2016 the seven hundredth anniversary of Ramon Llull's death (1232-1316) was celebrated, and the publication of the impressive work *Ramon Llull: Vida i Obres* has been the best way to commemorate it. The precious volume is edited by the Institute of Catalan Studies and published in five hundred numbered copies, funded by Elsa Peretti Foundation. It is the first of three books — the publication of the other two has been planned for the next two years — and offers a deep and extensive examination of the life and works of the Catalan philosopher and mystic, focusing on the first fifty years of Ramon Llull's life. The editor, Pere Villalba i Varneda, is Professor of Classical Philology Emeritus at the Autonomus University of Barcelona, member of the Raimundus Lullus Institut of Freiburg, of the Maioricensis Schola Lullistica of Mallorca and of the Editorial Board of Raimundi Lullii Opera Latina (Corpus Christianorum - Continuatio Mediaevalis), within which he edited the *Arbor Scientiae* (Turnhout 2000).

Because of the extensive aim of this volume, its approach is encyclopedic but not unfocused: the first two sections depict the historical and cultural background of Llull's time, his family and roots, the ten years in which he realises his missionary vocation and the consequent radical change of life, his philosophical and theological studies, and finally the first two works he made: the *Libre de contemplació en Déu* and the *Compendium logicae Algazelis*. The third and largest chapter deeply analyses one by one the thirty-five works written in fourteen years, throughout his stay in Mallorca and Montpellier. Although they are less than a tenth of his whole intellectual production (which is around two hundred and eighty books), these works cover all the manifold subjects he dealt with during his long life: theology, natural philosophy, dialectic, grammar, logic, catechesis, devotion, morals, jurisprudence and education. It is impossible to give a full account of these thirty-seven works that are so punctually and extensively described in the volume, therefore we will briefly present only two of them, which represent the complexity and depth of Llull's thought. The first one, the *Libre de contemplació en Déu*, is the first work written by Llull (Mallorca 1271). It includes all the fundamentals of the lullian philosophy, although not

yet complete; in potential it contains all essential aspects of his ars: the encyclopedic and systematic view; the wide and structured schematism; the subjects' hierarchies and trees; the recursive, crossed and circular references of terms and conceptual objects. This work also introduces the real meaning of the lullian mystique: it is not an irrational and transcendental insight into the Divine, but rather a complex intellectual experience which creates step by step an intuitive consciousness of the close relationship between the reality and God. This comes together in that ternary framework, so strictly developed in the mature stage of Llull's thought, which sets and distributes the relationships between God himself, human knowledge and natural life.

In the same period he attended to *Libre de contemplació*, he also wrote the *Compendium logicae Algazelis* (Montpellier 1271/1272), a short treatise about al-Ghazālī's logic: this work shows the narrow and constant ties between Llull and Arabic philosophy, underneath the common roots of a Neoplatonist background. Arabic — which he studied during the period of his intellectual formation — is the language, together with Catalan and Latin, he often used for his manuscripts. He aimed to reach the Islamic readers in the Iberian peninsula and Northern African countries, such as Tunisia and Algeria he visited several times during his life, at-tempting to convert Muslims. The conviction of proselytism finally achieved the martyrdom that led to his death. Despite his primary missionary vocation, Llull's is also interested in Arabic theology and philosophy on theoretical grounds: he derived from it, for instance, his peculiar idea of *intentiones primae et secundae*. However, he declines these gnosiological concepts on moral grounds, which also owe some of their conceptual components to St. Augustine. Instead he expresses them through an intellectual and mystical effort to abstract from human intellect the ideas of the last final cause (*intentio prima*) and, consequently, the instrumental one (*intentio secunda*). The hierarchical view of God's attributes and principles — so often recurring in his works and one of the fundamental components of his dialectic framework — is also more based on Islamic theology than on the Neoplatonists. Finally, an atomistic idea of matter and natural elements, already present in his first work such as in the *Liber Chaos* (Montpellier 1288), informs both the physical theory and the combinatory logic — the latter in the way of a "corpuscular" referring of terms to one another — and also comes from kalam philosophy, i.e. the Islamic scholastic to which belonged al-Ghazālī.

Above all this "medieval-modern" philosopher paved the way of a different logic, a kind of "computational" dialectic that wants to disclose the many links among the things — rather than the relationships among words — showing an interrelated world which illuminates God's perfection. It was an evocative idea that fascinated many later thinkers, such as Nicholas of Cusa, Giordano Bruno, Jaques Lefèvre d'Étaples, Charles de Bovelles, Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz. So, this complete volume (also edited in a digital version provided with the book), with its deep descriptions, tables, pictures, including hard-paper movable combinatory wheels and an engaging DVD documentary (Tes-

sari and Rigobon is the first step of an important cultural project which contributes to our understanding of what and how much this important author gave to our modernity's view.

## **Bibliography**

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