Introduction

NOTWITHSTANDING the contradictions and inconsistencies, both real and imaginary, that scholars have noted in Tommaso Campanella's voluminous *oeuvre*, no one can doubt that for him life and thought were inseparable. Beginning in youth and continuing through a long, tormented life, he was sustained and guided by an unquenchable sense of mission that absorbed all his immense energies and left him indifferent to the gratifications, comforts, and rewards that men normally seek. He saw himself as the bearer of a message, the designer of a program for mankind involving nothing less than a thorough reform of virtually all human institutions, both secular and spiritual. To achieve this great mission he was willing to risk and endure imprisonment and torture time and time again, to work tirelessly under inhuman conditions for years on end. For him life had but one purpose, and an untimely death was to be shunned only because his mission would thereby be left unaccomplished. Even in his darkest hours he was not tempted by the solace of a martyr's death nor broken in spirit. He was only twenty-four when he entered the first of several prisons he would occupy during his life, and he was not completely free until he was sixty-one. He was a great survivor.

Even before he had come to write *The City of the Sun* he had experienced more than enough persecution to make its confident optimism seem implausible. Yet through the many more years of persecution that were to follow its composition his faith in the advent of a political, religious, and social renewal such as it envisioned rarely waivered. In such grim circumstances a more common man would have doubted whether so

sanguine a view of humanity's future was even remotely credible. Campanella never did. That he could sustain his hopes through so much suffering and at the same time pour out a stream of books ranging over almost every area of human knowledge is a fact that would strain belief without the evidence of the books themselves. Numerous as they are, they would be substantially more numerous if all that he wrote had survived.

Equally extraordinary is the fact that the two institutions chiefly responsible for his persecution—the Church of Rome and the Spanish monarchy—are presented in his writings as the most promising agents of his cherished reforms, as the instruments through which his philosophy would find its practical expression. Inevitably this has raised the question as to whether Campanella was being sincere. Certainly there have been formidable doubters, most notably Luigi Amabile. But it is now generally agreed that, though his pro-hispanism was probably tainted by self-interest—by his need to allay the suspicions of his tormentors and soften their hostility so as to win release from prison—his real views on religious and political matters were on the whole those he expressed openly again and again between 1594 and 1628. Indiscreet but fiercely tenacious, he was not one to play fast and loose with his beliefs even for his freedom.

On the contrary, disregarding all danger to himself, he had the boldness—not to say the temerity—to defend the unpopular opinions of others as vigorously as he defended his own. The case of Galileo, first in 1616 and then again in 1632, is an example. Certainly his spirited *Apologia pro Galileo* does not smack of opportunism, for it was written only a few months after the Holy Office had proscribed Copernicus' heliocentric theory and had forbidden the astronomer to teach it, as

Campanella well knew. The agonies and humiliations he had earlier suffered at the hands of that same Holy Office did not detain him from taking up the cause of a man whose views he did not share. As soon as the work was completed, moreover, he presented a copy to Cardinal Caetani, who had been given the task of expurgating Copernicus' *De revolutionibus*. Surely he recognized that opposition to such high authority was not the way to gain his freedom. At the time Campanella was passing through one of the grimmest periods of his imprisonment. He was confined—"buried," as he said in a letter to Galileo—in the windowless, damp dungeon of Castel S. Elmo, the worst of several Neapolitan fortresses in which he had already spent seventeen years (1599–1616) and was to spend ten more. Under the circumstances his *Apologia* was a remarkable feat of courage in the cause of learning.

The situation was to be very different in 1632. Having finally been released from his Neapolitan bondage in 1626, he was rearrested after a few scant weeks of liberty and transported to Rome, there to answer charges of heresy. Until 1629 he was confined to the precincts of the Holy Office and the monastery of S. Maria sopra Minerva. Then he was turned over to the custody of his Dominican superiors, and a period of real but still precarious freedom began. By then his many books had won him powerful supporters. Pope Urban VIII, on whose behalf he had employed his skill in astrology and magic, had assigned him a pension, and there were even rumors that he was to be invested with a cardinal's hat. After so many desperate years he had arrived at a position of influence, and everything seemed to augur well for the fulfillment of his great mission. It was a time to walk circumspectly and spare himself new difficulties. But Campanella could not be cautious.

In February 1632 Galileo published his great *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, in which he reviewed the evidence for heliocentrism. Seven months after publication its sale was prohibited and, near the beginning of the following year, the author, old and in ill health, was summoned to the Holy Office and told that his work had been condemned. He was required to make a public abjuration of his views and was then sentenced to jail. This sentence, however, was immediately commuted to permanent house arrest. As in 1616, but now free and influential in the Roman Curia, Campanella again entered the lists on Galileo's behalf, offering his services as defender and risking his hard-won but still new-fledged prestige to obtain a reversal of the decision. It was a futile effort that only strengthened the hand of his enemies and cost him the pope's warm friendship. Campanella's letters to Galileo during this period show that he knew what risks he was taking. Yet he felt he was not doing enough. In a letter dated October 22, 1632, he apologized to his friend for his "cowardice born of prolonged sufferings and calumnies."

It was characteristic of him to underrate his courage. It was also characteristic of him not to let his own unhappy experiences determine his judgment of men and institutions—hence, in large part, his long adherence to Spain and his lifelong adherence to the Roman Church. He felt they had been divinely appointed to carry out the mission his messianic fervor envisioned for them. The proof of this was evident to him in history and in the stars.

Born the son of an illiterate cobbler in Stilo, Calabria, in 1568, Giovanni Domenico Campanella joined the Dominican order at fourteen, adopting the name Tommaso out of admiration for the great angelic doctor, the

chief luminary of the order. The step probably reflected a yearning for further education rather than an inclination to a clerical vocation, for in sixteenth-century Italy a youth with no private means had virtually no other way to pursue studies beyond the elementary level, and Campanella's love of learning was already very pronounced. Conspicuous for his large, powerful physique, endowed with enormous energy, insatiable curiosity, and a prodigious memory, he devoured books of every kind, the prohibited as well as the obligatory and the allowed. Very early, in fact, he began to display strong anti-Aristotelian tendencies that disturbed his superiors. Then in 1588 he was shown a copy of Bernardino Telesio's *De rerum natura* in the incomplete 1570 edition. Enthralled by it, he immediately set out to visit the octogenerian author, a fellow Calabrian and bishop of Cosenza, arriving only to find his body lying in state in the cathedral. After writing a Latin elegy, he affixed it to the bier and departed.

But Telesio's ideas were to leave a lasting mark on Campanella's thought, and his first significant work would be the *Philosophia sensibus demonstrata*, a defense of Telesio's anti-Aristotelianism, which he completed in seven months. Telesio had affirmed that all of nature is animated and endowed with varying degrees of sensation and that all that happens in nature results from the interaction of two opposing forces, heat and cold, the one emitted by the sun, the other by the earth. He urged that nature be studied at first hand, avoiding all presuppositions, and he advised that we seek to acquire knowledge by means of our senses, rather than through reason. "*Non ratione*," he declared, "*sed sensu*." These ideas pleased Campanella immensely since they tended strongly in the direction of his own thinking, but his enthusiastic espousal of them brought him into conflict with his superiors who preferred to trust in the en-

trenched authority of Aristotle for their philosophy and resented his habit of challenging all received opinion. Unable to brook intellectual restraints, Campanella left his isolated post in Altomonte without permission and made his way to Naples, where he took up residence in the convent of San Domenico Maggiore.

There, through the closing months of 1589 and for the next two years, he was active in several learned circles where he became acquainted with Giambattista Della Porta, the noted dramatist and polymath, who apparently encouraged him to pursue his already lively interest in magic and the other occult sciences. He saw his *Philosophia sensibus demonstrata* through the press and wrote *De investigatione rerum* and *De sensu rerum* (both of which would soon be seized from him by agents of the Holy Office). But in Naples too his study of magic, combined with his outspoken anti-Aristotelianism, set him at odds with some of his fellow Dominicans. Charges of a rather indeterminate nature were brought against him (among them, a charge that he kept a familiar devil, to whom he owed his great learning, lodged beneath one of his fingernails), and the grim pattern of events that he was to experience again and again began to unfold. He was arrested, imprisoned briefly in San Domenico, and then tried. On this occasion, as on graver ones later, the real verdict of his judges is unknown. All we know is that in August 1592 he was ordered to abandon his Telesian views, to leave Naples within a week, and to return to Altomonte. Disregarding these orders, he journeyed to Florence instead, whence had come some vague promise of a professorial chair at one of the Tuscan universities. The expectation proved illusory, however, and he soon continued on to Padua where he became acquainted with Galileo and Paolo Sarpi. There he enjoyed almost a year of complete freedom during which he flung himself into new

projects. He wrote the *Apologia pro Telesio* and the *Rhetorica nova* along with other works which introduced the religio-political thesis he was to develop at great length under far less happy circumstances.

Having got possession of all his manuscripts by theft more than a year before, the Holy Office stepped in again in 1594, arresting him upon a variety of charges, one of them being that he had discussed questions of faith with a lapsed Jewish *converso*. During the investigation that followed, torture was twice applied to force a confession from him. When this failed, he was remanded to prison for the remainder of the year, and then, without permission obtained from the civil authorities to extradite him, he was clandestinely transported to Rome, where his incarceration continued until the next year. Giordano Bruno, with whose ideas Campanella's have often been associated (though the two probably never met), had preceded him to the same prison of the Inquisition several years before and would leave it only to walk to the stake in 1600. During this period Campanella continued to write, defending his philosophy, seeking character references, pleading for support or protection wherever he might find it. But nothing helped. In May 1595, after again being tortured, he was condemned upon grave suspicion of heresy and ordered to make a humiliating public recantation of his doctrines. This time he yielded, just as Galileo was to do thirty-eight years later. Then, as part of his sentence, he took up obligatory residence in the monastery of S. Sabina on the Aventine.

There he wrote a work on physics, another on poetics, and a *Dialogue against Lutherans, Calvinists and Other Heretics*. This relatively mild detention might have lasted for many years, but mischance intervened. On March 5, 1597, a Calabrian bandit about to be hanged in Naples divulged "secret" information making Campa-

nella out a heretic, and once again the prison doors of the Inquisition opened for him. Months of apparent indecision on the part of the authorities ensued before he was released and again ordered to return to Calabria. Reluctantly, he obeyed. After a somewhat prolonged stopover in Naples, he was back in the monastery of S. Maria de Gesú in his native Stilo by the fall of 1598. He was then barely thirty years old.

Undaunted by his terrible experiences as a prisoner in Naples, Padua, and Rome, still full of wild hopes and irrepressible energy, he now embarked upon the most dangerous and ultimately the most ruinous enterprise of his life. He abandoned his passive role as thinker to become a man of action, publicly lashing out at both the Church and the Spanish authorities, apparently with the design of making himself the direct agent of the religious, political, and social renewal he wished to see implemented. Since there is scarcely any evidence that he had changed his mind at this date about the roles he had announced for the Church and Spain, it is difficult to explain why he now attacked them. It may be that he planned to establish a model commonwealth which they were then to imitate on a worldwide scale, or it may be that he was simply driven to action by what he had deduced from old prophecies, recent natural disasters, and astral configurations, all portending that the year 1600 would witness great upheavals and sweeping changes. But we really do not know, since much of the information about this crucial episode derives from the statements of men testifying under torture or threats of torture and death. It is certain in any case that on September 6, 1599, Campanella was arrested along with some 150 others and transported to Naples in chains.

Under the brutal, unconcealed tyranny of Spain, often operating in league with the ubiquitous Inquisition, the provinces of southern Italy had been reduced

to such pitiful straits that the danger of sudden popular uprisings was ever present. There had been several in that century. Secular and ecclesiastical authorities were widely regarded as mere exploiters of the native population. Extreme poverty, high unemployment, and every kind of repression had driven a large number of the able-bodied to take up banditry and organized brigandage as regular vocations, the only ones promising them subsistence. Among these elements, and among the many who sympathized with them, the emergence of any leader who could give them some promise of success was all the tinder needed to start a conflagration.

That a revolt against both the Church establishment and the government had been planned during the summer of 1599 is beyond doubt, and that Campanella was somehow prominently involved from the beginning is scarcely less certain. Such debate as there is concerns the precise nature of his involvement, and most authorities (Amabile, Amerio, Bobbio, and Firpo among them) assign him a major role, if not indeed the leading one, for there is considerable agreement between Campanella's published views and the testimony of hostile witnesses who, being illiterate, could have learned them only from Campanella's own lips. The aims of the rising, it would appear, were to drive out the Spanish powers, subdue the ecclesiastical authorities, and reorder Calabria as a theocratic, communistic state along lines that are developed in *The City of the Sun*. At the appropriate moment a Turkish fleet was to materialize off the coast to aid the rebels. Though Campanella even under torture vehemently denied that he was guilty of either heresy or sedition, he did confess to having preached that the turn of the century would be marked by great political changes. His co-conspirators went beyond this, saying that he had spoken of floods, earthquakes, stellar conjunctions, and other evidence signaling the

imminence of a new age in which all men would enjoy their "natural freedom." Inspired by Campanella, perhaps other friars had made similar messianic pronouncements. But many who joined the conspiracy doubtless had less lofty motivations, seeing no more in it than an opportunity to pillage, steal, and settle old scores.

The existence of the plot became known to the authorities well before the revolt could get underway. After a brief flight, Campanella was put into the hands of his pursuers by a friend whom his father had once rescued from death. Shortly later he was transported to Naples with a motley retinue of true and suspected allies, and then the long dark period of his life began.

A series of inconclusive trials interrupted by jurisdictional disputes between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities followed. In none of these was Campanella actually pronounced guilty of either heresy or sedition. But he continued to be regarded as too dangerous a man to let go, and late in 1602, more than two years after his capture, the Inquisition sentenced him to life imprisonment without hope of reprieve. The civil trial for sedition meanwhile went on and, in fact, was never brought to a formal conclusion. Harsh as the sentence was, Campanella had expected nothing less than the death sentence, and he had already been long engaged in a plan to thwart its ever being carried out. For he knew that, though torture had failed to extract a full confession from him, he had nevertheless been forced to reveal a good deal of incriminating evidence. He also knew, however, that under canon law an insane man's repentance was invalid and that the execution of such a man would therefore consign him to eternal damnation. This no mortal judge could take it upon himself to do.

On Easter Sunday, 1601, therefore, he set fire to the

pallet in his cell and began to feign insanity, a deception he continued for the next fourteen months. Meanwhile, his far from credulous jailers spied on him night and day and twice tested him under torture without ever swaying him from his course. It is to his cleverness in devising such a scheme and to his extraordinary fortitude in carrying it through that he owed his life. The second of the two tests under torture was the most barbarous ordeal he ever underwent. For more than thirty-six hours without pause he was subjected to *la veglia* (the wake). His arms were twisted behind him and bound at the wrists by a rope that at the same time allowed him to hold himself suspended a few inches above a seat fitted with sharp wooden spikes. When the pain in his arms and shoulders became unbearable, he was compelled to seek relief by lowering himself on the spikes, which would then tear into his flesh. His courage in not betraying himself to his tormentors through this terrible ordeal won for him what was tantamount to a certificate of insanity, and thereafter he was no longer in danger of execution.

Until 1604 he was held in Castel Nuovo, where conditions were relatively tolerable. Then, after an attempted escape, he was transferred to the damp underground dungeon of Castel S. Elmo, where, chained hand and foot, he would remain for the next four years. As he was to say more than once, that dungeon was his Caucasus, where, like the bound Prometheus, he was restrained from accomplishing his mission to mankind. Astonishingly, despite the chains and the darkness, he wrote some of his most moving lyrics there as well as the *Monarchia del messia* and the *Atheismus triumphatus*, sometimes using blank sheets of paper that his guards, having been bribed, periodically slipped into his breviary. It is said that he underwent a conversion from which he emerged more deeply convinced of his mes-

sianic mission and more accepting of his suffering. In 1608 he was released from the dungeon and restored to better quarters where he could write with less difficulty and even receive visitors. This happier situation lasted until 1614 when, apparently as a result of his indirect contact with the outside world, old suspicions were rekindled and he was returned to his shackles in S. Elmo for four more wretched years. Still, his writing never ceased. *Quod reminiscentur*, much of the *Theologia*, the *Apologia pro Galileo*, along with works on rhetoric, poetics, medicine, dialectics, and astrology, date from this period—amazing achievements, since for lengthy periods Campanella was without books and had to trust to his memory for facts and citations.

In 1618 he was once again released from his dungeon and returned to fairly humane confinement in Castel Nuovo. There he devoted most of his energy to the completion of works already underway, to revising and translating them from Latin to Italian and vice versa. There too he became even more active in his relentless endeavor to regain his freedom, a goal he never despaired of achieving and toward which he had begun to work even while awaiting sentence. Now, being better known, he could appeal to a larger number of individuals to intercede for him. Letter after letter went out to influential sympathizers, learned acquaintances, powerful churchmen, and monarchs, pleading his case and promising to accomplish great things, not only in the world of learning but also in technology and even in finance once he was at liberty.

In May 1626 all these efforts seemed to come to fruition. He was released and permitted to return to the same Neapolitan monastery where thirty-five years earlier he had had his first taste of prison life. But this was merely a false dawn. Only a few weeks later he was arrested again by orders of the papal nuncio and trans-

ported to Rome, chained and in disguise, for his release had come through the secular authorities and was deeply resented by the Inquisition. There he was confined in the Holy Office for three more years while he fought fiercely and on the whole successfully to clear his books from charges of doctrinal errors. Not until 1629 did he begin that short decade of freedom that would end with his death at the age of seventy-one, after having spent nearly half his entire life in confinement.

Half of that short decade of freedom was passed in Rome. It was in this period that he enjoyed and then lost the favor of Pope Urban VIII, who, fancying himself a poet, was flattered by an elaborate commentary Campanella provided for his youthful verses. For a while he was listened to in the Curia, but his sudden change of fortune inevitably aroused jealousy, and his efforts to establish a missionary college and get his books approved for publication (many of them having already appeared in Germany) were successfully obstructed. So too were his efforts, undertaken against the pope's own wishes, to get Galileo's great dialogue a fair hearing in 1632. The event that ended his Roman sojourn, however, came two years later when one of his former disciples was found to be involved in a conspiracy directed against the Spanish viceroy in Naples. Campanella was immediately suspected of complicity, and the Spanish authorities put strong pressure on the pope to obtain his extradition to Naples. Unwilling to appear weak or submissive, though his enthusiasm for Campanella had now cooled, the pope joined with the French ambassador in a scheme to get him safely out of the way. Accordingly, once again assuming a disguise, Campanella slipped quietly out of the Holy City and made his way to France.

Welcomed to Paris by both Louis XIII and Richelieu—doubtless in part because he had some years be-

fore abandoned his advocacy of Spanish supremacy—he spent his last years there in relative peace, busily preparing his books for the press while devoting his considerable polemical talents to the conversion of Protestants, with remarkable success if the testimony of his letters is to be trusted. Early in 1639, foreseeing his imminent death in the stars, he sought to nullify their malefic influence by resorting to propitiatory rites he had found apparently efficacious in 1626 when he had applied them on behalf of Urban VIII in similar circumstances; but he died on May 21 of that year in the Dominican monastery in Rue St. Honoré.

In all, Campanella is believed to have written more than a hundred books, some of which were taken from him and never returned, others simply lost. Those that have survived form a very large corpus. Among these, *The City of the Sun* is one of the shortest, but ever since its initial publication in 1623 it has remained the best known, the only one that has enjoyed a measure of popular favor. Some students of Campanella's writings do not attach great importance to it within the whole context of his thought, especially when it is set against works of vastly greater complexity and breadth like the *Theologia*. Others—certainly the majority—have found in it the germ of virtually all his major ideas. If we may judge by the author's own frequent references to it, we must conclude that he had a high regard for it throughout his life. As late as 1637 we find him writing to Richelieu to express the hope that the Cardinal would build the *Civitas solis* he had designed.

Campanella wrote *The City of the Sun* in Castel Nuovo in 1602, the same year he was sentenced to life imprisonment and only three years after the aborted Calabrian uprising. It has often been regarded as an idealized description of the society he had hoped would

emerge from that brash and disastrous undertaking. But we know that even by this date he had abandoned any expectation of bringing about a fundamental reordering of society through violence while he continued passionately to believe in the need for such a reordering. Before vital institutions could be radically improved, he now recognized, men's hearts and minds would have to be changed. We note that the Solarians, as the citizens of his utopia are called, do not engage in warfare to impose their way of life upon their very different neighboring states. They live in a "philosophic community" and are governed according to reason and the law of nature by a philosopher who is at once both prince and priest. Here we have a glimpse of the theocracy Campanella hoped would one day universally obtain. To him, indeed, this was more than a hope. It was a certainty, and his sacred duty was to hasten the day of its coming. Up to the early 1630s he believed that Providence had appointed the Spanish monarchy to be the secular instrument through which a worldwide Catholic hegemony would be established. To him, Spain's vast possessions around the globe were a sign of divine favor. In his last years, however, recognizing the corruptness and fragility of that far-flung empire, he came to believe that this role had passed to France. But the universal Roman Church Campanella envisaged was to be very different from that of his own day. It would be stripped of doctrinal inessentials, cleansed of ecclesiastical abuses, and broadened sufficiently to win over the adherents of other sects without compromising its fundamental truths. The pontiff would be both spiritual and secular master of this all-encompassing empire. In fact, spiritual and secular functions would no longer be sharply distinguishable, for, as Campanella observed in a letter to Pope Paul V, canon law would suffice for all purposes, and civil law could be disposed of.