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The Animist, Almost Feminist, Quite Nearly Pantheist Old Materialism of Giordano Bruno

Mary-Jane Rubenstein

Reattunement

As Joerg Rieger reminds us in his contribution to this volume, “Which Materialism, Whose Planetary Thinking?” a torrent of movements, philosophies, and consumer practices—many of them incompatible with one another—have either claimed or received the term “materialism.” In the face of this semantic riot, the collaboration at hand has chosen to focus on the politically transformative potential of those manners of thinking and being that locate agency, creativity, and change within the animal-vegetal-mineral world, rather than in some spiritual sphere above, beyond, or even within it. Such *materialisms* affirm some of what has been gathered under that name while contesting others; in particular, they resist the impulse to reduce the world to information, subatomic particles, or the random firing of neurons. At their best, the vibrant materialisms that our loose collective finds most compelling do not merely collapse the tired old distinction between mind and body. Rather, they render it just that: tired and old, hardly even worth mentioning.

As this distinction and its scientifically reactionary reversals are all products of the intellectual tradition we incoherently call “Western,” the clearest paths toward a truly generative materialism will likely run through traditions that have very little to do with mainline Greco-Roman-Abrahamism. In this spirit, some of the papers in this volume’s first section attune us to counter-Christianities, while others turn us toward the variously agential materialities within Confucian, Daoist, Africana, Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Native American, and other broadly “animist” Indigenous philosophies. Most of the contributions to this book’s second section seek similarly to dismantle the tired old opposition

by swerving around it, drawing our attention to contemporary theories of immanence that set themselves explicitly against the tired old distinction, whether they attribute it to Kant, Descartes, Platonized Christianity, or indeed, “the West.”

As we pursue these non- or anti-“Western” vitalisms, however, I find myself wondering whether it might be instructive to revisit the source of the problem in order to recall its structure, contours, and conceptual cross-bracings. After all, the distinction between spirit and matter has traditionally mapped itself onto those old hierarchical privileges of light over darkness, male over female, mind over body, and of course God over creation. So, attending to its formulation means attending to the formulation of its racially, environmentally, sexually, and theologically toxic companions. To be sure, there is no singular source of these perennial privileges, yet they find paradigmatic articulation in the work of Aristotle. By returning to this articulation, and to its startling deconstruction in the work of one of Aristotle’s heretical commentators at the dawn of the modern age, I am hoping to locate a structural incoherence at the heart of the “Western” tradition with respect to the status of matter. Ultimately, I am seeking unexpected, renewable, planetary resources that might recode matter’s dark femininity as active, creative, transformative—perhaps even divine. This recoding brings us dangerously close to the perennial heresy known as “pantheism,” but it could be that such heretical proximity might be a productive stance from which to mobilize the material against the disembodied, the planetary against the global.

Matter in Waiting: Aristotle

Aristotle’s *Physics* encodes matter as passive and inert, lying in wait for another principle to discipline, order, and shape it. It is matter’s “own nature,” Aristotle explains, “to desire and yearn for [form].”¹ Form, he continues, provides unity, order, and animacy, transforming matter’s empty potential into actuality.² This means that matter itself has no qualities apart from “privation.”³ And lest we think the persistent gendering of these terms is merely implicit or accidental, *Physics* clearly states that “what desires the form is matter, as the female desires the male, and the ugly the beautiful.”⁴

At first glance, Aristotle seems to give us the stark opposition of matter and form that our contemporary immanentisms so fastidiously contest. Yet even in the work of this paradigmatic dualist, the dualism is not so simple; rather, Aristotle insists that form is “not independent of matter.”⁵ Indeed, as one commentator glosses a famous example, “all natural forms are like something which is ‘snub,’ where something is snub only if it is concavity-realized-in-a-nose.”⁶

Unlike the Platonic Forms, which dwell in a realm prior to and independent of the material sphere, Aristotelian form is totally bound up with matter; in fact, matter allows form to come into being in the first place. Matter, in Aristotle's words, is the "ultimate substratum"—that which precedes, underlies, and follows each evanescent configuration of matter-and-form.⁷ So when a tree becomes logs or mulch, the forms change dramatically, but the material of the wood persists. And when a log becomes fire, the "proximate material" of the wood disappears, but *matter itself* persists as fire, smoke, and ash.

In sum, matter is the condition of possibility of all substance. It is that ineffable primordium of which nothing can be properly predicated because it enables predication itself. Those who have ears to hear might pick up traces in this primordium of some feminized, apophatic divinity. Indeed, the medieval philosopher David of Dinant (1160–1217) took Aristotle's "ultimate substratum" to mean that the divine intelligence was identical to primal matter—or in a Christian register, to the "deep" or *tehom* of Genesis (1:2).⁸ Such divine materiality led him to proclaim the equivalence of creator and creation. If, as David reasoned, "the matter of the world is God himself, and the form that comes to animate matter is nothing other than God making himself sensible," then "the world is therefore God himself."⁹ For this crime, which *The Catholic Encyclopedia* continues to brand "the most thoroughgoing pantheism,"¹⁰ David's books were burned, his followers executed, and his ideas given a particularly uncharitable treatment by Albertus Magnus and his star pupil, Thomas Aquinas.¹¹

David's theo-materialist interpretation of Aristotle did not, therefore, become the received reading of Aristotle. This is not to say that David was the only person to identify the divine intelligence with prime matter; to the contrary, a similar position has been ascribed to the Islamic philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes), who asserted the eternity of matter against the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. It has also been ascribed to the Jewish Neoplatonist Ibn Gabirol (Avicbron), whom early modern Christians often mistook for a Muslim Aristotelian.¹² The extent to which these philosophers actually divinized matter is a question of ongoing debate,¹³ but they certainly held it in higher esteem than Aristotle himself. Despite matter's interiority and anteriority to form, and despite its resistance to all conceptualization, Aristotle hardly divinizes it. Rather, he ascribes divinity to a (sometimes singular, sometimes plural) "Prime Mover" positioned sufficiently beyond the fixed stars to give them a cosmogonic first push.¹⁴ This Prime Mover is pure actuality, which is to say, form uncontaminated by matter. Matter, in the meantime, continues throughout the authorship to embody pure passivity, privation, and longing. In relation to form, it is unquestionably the inferior term—the ugly, womanly, shapeless gunk that needs

something manly to bring it to order and life. And yet, it nevertheless precedes and conditions the possibility of form.

In sum, matter occupies a position of raging ambivalence in the work of Aristotle and his interlocutors—an ambivalence that rarely finds elaboration in contemporary critiques of Western dualisms, but which would certainly assist their cause. With this aim in mind, I would like to turn to the brilliant exploitation and deconstruction of this Aristotelian ambivalence in the work of the under-attended Renaissance philosopher Giordano Bruno, a Dominican friar-turned-pantheist whom the Inquisition executed at the dawn of the seventeenth century.

Matter Reimagined: Giordano Bruno

At the beginning of his dialogue in *Cause, Principle, and Unity* (1584–85), Bruno’s mouthpiece, Teofilo (one of several including Filotelo, Discono, and Gervasio), denounces those Aristotelian pantheists who teach that “matter alone is the substance of things, and that it is also the divine nature, as the Arab named Avicebron has said.”¹⁵ Although Teofilo will eventually assert this very position, he uses this racialized aside about Ibn Gabirol to placate his European-Christian audience and throw them off Bruno’s track. Teofilo even goes so far as to insist that true philosophy must make absolute distinctions between form and matter, “active potency” and “passive potency,” and “the power to make” and “the power to be made” (55). In short, he says, true philosophy must distinguish creator from creation.

As the reader will no doubt notice—perhaps with a bit of consternation, considering the iconoclasm I have been promising from this text—these are traditional, Aristotelian categories, mapped in raced and gendered opposition, under the distinction between God and the world. The likeliest explanation for Teofilo’s beginning with the very dualisms he will go on to abolish, is that he is meeting his readers at their own level. The universities of the late sixteenth century were filled with neo-Thomist Christians (scholars who Bruno had ridiculed in an earlier, more audacious dialogue as “Peripatetics who get angry and heated for Aristotle”¹⁶), and Teofilo is staking his eventual implosion of these terms on an analogical premise that his interlocutors will find unshakable: *form* is different from *matter*, as (light-masculine) *activity* is different from (dark-feminine) *passivity*, and as *maker* is from *made*.

Even though these categories traditionally line up under the headings of “God” and “creation,” respectively, Teofilo makes it clear from the beginning that his investigation into the “cause and principle” of the universe will have nothing to do with God. He is only a natural philosopher, he explains, and as

such he is dealing with only natural causes (34). Bracketing the question of the *first* principle and cause, he will only “look into the principle and cause insofar as . . . either it is nature itself or it shines in the elements and the bosom of nature” (36). In other words, he will examine the source of all things in as far as it either *is* or *animates* the material world itself. A source-of-all-things, he strategically assures us, that certainly is not God.

In line with Greco-Christian tradition, Teofilo begins his cosmogony with the “form” of the universe, which he calls “the world soul:” “a vital, vegetative, and sensitive principle in all things which live, vegetate, and feel” (6). The chief faculty of the world soul is what Bruno calls “the universal intellect,” which he designates as “the universal physical efficient cause” (37/39). The world soul is therefore the *principle* of the universe, meaning it precedes, contains, and fills everything that exists; whereas the intellect is the universal *cause*, meaning it brings everything into being.¹⁷ Matter, by contrast, is the stuff *on* which the world soul works. Matter “has no natural form by itself but may take on all forms through the operation of the active agent which is the principle of nature,” the world soul (56). But precisely because matter is, in this sense, the “receptacle of forms” (61),¹⁸ matter is indispensable to the emergence of anything that is. After all, Discono asks, “how can the world soul . . . act as shaper, without the substratum of dimensions or quantities, which is matter?” (55). Since form cannot exist independently of matter, it must be internal to it, “forming [matter] from inside like a seed or root shooting forth and unfolding the trunk” (38).

At this point in the dialogue, we have come as far as Aristotle will go, with matter figured as the surprisingly formidable “universal substratum”—the stuff that remains even as accidental forms arise in it and fall away. As we have seen, Aristotle nevertheless persists in denigrating matter as sheer passivity, as possessing neither powers nor qualities, and as “yearning” for a masculinized form to come and make it into something. The contradiction is enough to prompt the character of Discono to cry, “Why do you claim, O prince of the Peripatetics, that matter is nothing, from the fact of its having no act, rather than saying that it is all, from the fact that it possesses all acts?” (82). Why does Aristotle fail to adhere to his own insight? If form does not exist without matter, but is rather preceded, followed, and even generated by it, then one presumably ought to say that matter is not empty of all qualities but rather full of them, containing *in potentia* all the forms it actualizes over time. This, says Filoteo, is what David of Dinant knew (7), and what Averroes almost knew, “. . . he would have understood still more,” he laments, “had he not been so devoted to his idol, Aristotle” (80): *matter does not lack form* and so cannot desire it. Rather, matter gives rise to form, and as such can only be said to be “deprived

of forms” in the same way that “a pregnant woman lacks the offspring which she produces and expels forth from herself” (81).

According to all of the characters that the dialogue presents as respectable interlocutors, the reason that so few people have reached the insight that matter contains and gives rise to all things, is that Aristotelians hate women. As we have seen, the *Physics* explicitly aligns matter with femininity—an unshaped ugliness lying in wait for masculine form to bring it to order and beauty. Bruno gives this position a comical, exuberant spokesman through the dopey character Poliinnio, “one of those stern censors of philosophers . . . reputed to be a follower of Socratic love, an eternal enemy of the female sex” (29).

The fourth dialogue opens on Poliinnio alone, who in the absence of his quicker-witted colleagues is free to deliver his thoughts on the manifold ills of matter in an uninterrupted, verbose, and increasingly ridiculous rant. “And the womb never says ‘enough,’” Poliinnio begins, likening the operations of matter to the hysterical longings of a sex-crazed woman (70). Matter, according to Poliinnio, displays “the insatiable craving of an impassioned female” (10) inasmuch as “she” is “never sated with receiving forms” (70). For this reason, he explains, matter is:

. . . called by the prince of the Peripatetics . . . *chaos*, or *hyle*, or *sylva* [abundant material], or . . . cause of sin . . . disposed to evil . . . not existing in itself . . . a blank tablet . . . unmarked . . . litter . . . field . . . or *prope nihil* (almost nothing) . . . finally, after having taken aim with several comparisons between various disparate terms . . . *it is called “woman”* (70).

Citing Helen of Troy, Delilah, and Eve, Poliinnio goes on to charge women with having caused the downfall of all great men and nations. Similarly, he reasons, matter is the ruin of all form, which on its own “does not sin, and no form is the source of error unless it is joined to matter” (71). It is, therefore, no accident, Poliinnio concludes, that the *Physics* compares matter to femininity. For it cannot be denied that matter shares all the qualities of:

. . . the female sex—that sex, I mean, which is intractable, frail, capricious, cowardly, feeble, vile, ignoble, base, despicable, slovenly, unworthy, deceitful, harmful, abusive, cold, misshapen, barren, vain, confused, senseless, treacherous, lazy, fetid, foul, ungrateful, truncated, mutilated, imperfect, unfinished, deficient, insolent, amputated, diminished, stale, vermin, tares, plague, sickness, death (72).

This lengthy and progressively absurd monologue ends up serving three purposes in the text at hand. First, it exposes the traditional philosophical

denigration of matter as a product of untrammelled sexism. Second, it exposes such sexism as baseless and anti-intellectual, coming as it does from the mouth of a character who Gervasio calls “the biggest, most bumbling beast that exists in human form” (34). And third, it provides Teofilo with the metaphorical basis of a radical transvaluation of matter itself. Turning the Peripatetics’ own associations against them, Teofilo provokes them, unwittingly, to demonstrate the preeminence of *hyle*, which “sends all forms forth from its womb” and as such, is the origin of all that is (82). In effect, Teofilo’s strategy is to retain the traditional gendering of matter while shifting our focus from the heteronormative sex act to the act of giving birth. From this vantage point, he is able to assert that far from lacking, desiring, or indeed receiving anything, matter already “possesses” within itself everything it eventually brings forth (82). As his dialogic twin Filoteo suggests in his framing summary, matter is “not a *prope nihil*, an almost nothing, a pure and naked potency, since all forms are contained in it, produced by it, and brought forth by virtue of the efficient cause (which . . . can even be indistinguishable from matter)” (9).

At this point, Teofilo is finally able to unify all the distinctions he has taken such pains to separate. While it is the condition of possibility of all things, this material cause is the principle of creation, which is to say the world soul itself. And in as much as matter brings all things forth, it is also the efficient cause of creation, which is to say the universal intellect. Hence the coincidence of corporeality and intellect, body and soul, principle and cause, activity and passivity, and—most centrally for our purposes—matter and form (8, 66). Crucially for Bruno, however, this coincidental cascade does not erase the distinctions it holds together. Rather, as Filoteo explains, the assertion that “all is one” means “there is unity in the multiplicity and multiplicity in the unity . . . being is multi-modal and multi-unitary” and, as Teofilo puts it, “multiform and multifigured” (10, 90).¹⁹

Especially for those of us with an eye on pantheism, the question becomes whether this many oneness of form and matter, act and potency, and intellect and material also amounts to a differential coincidence of *God* and *world*. Filoteo tempts us with this possibility when he suggests that “what is supreme and divine is all that it can be” and that likewise, “the universe is all it can be” (8). Perhaps this means (by virtue of the transitive principle) that the universe itself is “supreme and divine?” Teofilo is understandably reluctant to assert this particular identity, and so he qualifies it with a move he learned from Nicholas of Cusa: the distinction between “contracted” and “uncontracted” infinities.²⁰ “The universe is all that it can be, in an unfolded, dispersed, and distinct manner,” he explains, “while its first principle is all it can be in a unified and undifferentiated way” (66). Therefore, he implies, the two do not coincide. If,

however, the divine first principle relies upon the universe that incarnates it as form relies upon matter, then creator and creation would coincide after all. Discono tries numerous times to get Teofilo to extend his dialectics in this manner, but Teofilo keeps reminding him that their conversation has deliberately excluded “the supreme and most excellent principle” (81), restricting itself to physical causation. None of this, he repeatedly insists, has anything to do with God.

Rhetorically and strategically speaking, Teofilo’s restraint here is perhaps well-advised. Logically speaking, however, there is no reason to limit the coincidence of opposites to physical causes—especially in as much as the physical and the metaphysical presumably coincide in the unity of sensible and intelligible matter. By leading us to this possibility without quite entertaining it, Bruno allows his reader to contemplate the notion of God’s identity within the universe, should she be so inclined—while himself stopping a hairsbreadth short of heresy. Even so, Bruno does allow Teofilo to conclude that if matter indeed contains all forms, then it “must, therefore, be called a divine and excellent parent, generator, and mother of natural things—indeed nature entire in substance” (83–84). At this point, one starts to wonder just what use the perennially bracketed “supreme first principle” might ultimately be. If nature is itself divine, if it generates all sensible and intelligible things from itself and is, as such, an omni-gendered parent (both “generator” and “mother”), then what on Earth would we need from a God above, beyond, or before this spiritual-material divinity? One might suggest, perhaps, that such a God is required to give the universe a first push at the beginning of time, but this would limit, rather severely, the function and continuing relevance of God. Besides that, there is no “beginning of time” for Bruno; the universe is eternal and so needs no first push.

Theologically speaking, then, what this “strictly physical” dialogue has done is to call each of the divine faculties down into nature itself—all the while pretending not to speak of God. It is precisely by bracketing the “supreme first principle” that Bruno goes on to render such a principle irrelevant, leaving us with an omni-formed, ensouled matter as the creator and end of all things. Insofar as this created creator is both intellectual and extended, Bruno’s “cause and principle” of the universe looks remarkably like the single Spinozan “substance” it goes on to influence.²¹ For Bruno as for Spinoza, the manifold animals, vegetables, and minerals around us are all physical and ideational expressions of the same substance, which is composed substantially of its expressions and is for that reason many in its oneness—or in Filoteo’s words, “multi-modal,” “multi-unitary,” “multiform,” and “multifigured.”

This multi-unitary substance leads Bruno to proclaim the vitality of all things. Because everything in existence is an expression of the world soul, Bruno reasons, *everything has a soul*—and everything is therefore animated. The logic seems to him so sound that he asserts, in a prefatory summary of the dialogue, “It is . . . unworthy of a rational subject to believe that the universe and its principal bodies are inanimate” (6). Although this statement seems to limit the scope of animacy to the world as a whole (and the Sun, Moon, and stars), Teofilo proceeds, over the course of his instruction, to extend animacy to all inner-worldly beings. The teaching, his interlocutors object, is a strange one, “Common sense tells us that not everything is alive,” cautions Discono, only to be immediately countered by Teofilo’s reply, “The most common sense is not the truest sense” (42).

This exchange stirs the ire of the embattled Poliinnio who attempts to force the argument into absurdity. “So my clogs,” Poliinnio asks, “my slippers, my boots, my spurs, as well as my ring and my gauntlets are supposedly animated? My robe and my palladium are animated?” (43). Teofilo’s remarkably measured answer is that “the table is not animated as table, nor are the clothes as clothes, nor is leather as leather . . . but . . . they have within them matter and form. All things, no matter how small and miniscule, have in them part of that spiritual substance which, if it finds a suitable object, disposes itself to be plant, or to be animal” (44). The omni-creativity of this multi-unitary spiritual substance—which, we will recall, is also a material substance—means that all things, “even if they are not living creatures, are animate” (44). Nothing is inert, dead, mere, or for that matter, exploitable matter.

For Teofilo, this universal animacy means that the pre-Socratic philosopher, Anaxagoras, was right when he said that “all things are in all things.”²² After all, the same spiritual-material world soul that animates the cactus also animates the polar bear, so the whole universe appears in contracted form in each of them. As Teofilo puts it, “each thing in the universe possesses all being” (89). Far more recently than Anaxagoras, Nicholas of Cusa had taught this same precept as a theological principle: God is present everywhere throughout the boundless universe, he argued, and as such God is as fully present in a mustard seed as in a man.²³ This radical indwelling was, in fact, what it meant for Cusa to call God “creator” in the first place. “Creating,” he ventured, “seems to be not other than God’s being all things.”²⁴ And, to the extent that God is the being of all things, and all things dwell reciprocally in God, it can in fact be said that “all are in all and each are in each.”²⁵

Although the logic is nearly indistinguishable from Cusa’s, Teofilo does conceive two major, but subtle, departures from his more orthodox predecessor. First, he effectively eliminates the Cusan difference between God and the

universe, entreating us, by virtue of this entangled animacy, not to “look for the divinity outside of the infinite world and the infinity of things, but inside that world and those things” (82). Second, he qualifies the Cusan-Anaxagoran proclamation of “all things in all things” with a pre-Spinozan principle of particularity. “Everything is in everything,” Teofilo affirms, “but not totally or under all modes in each thing” (90). So, this piece of toast has carbon, wheat, yeast, salt, fire, human labor, mechanical production, time, space, and, most likely, traces of polycarbonate or polyvinyl chloride in it—indeed, it has the *substance* of the whole universe within it—but it does not, for all that, contain a teabag. To be sure, the toast contains and reflects the same “being” (and earth, vegetality, water, air, and probably trace plasticity) that also finds itself expressed as a teabag, but the teabag as teabag is not in the toast as toast. Hence, the universal interrelation *and* the irreducible particularity of all things—a differential holography enacted through the divine generativity of matter itself. In his bold sort of qualified stutter, Teofilo is therefore led once again to conclude that matter is what we have meant by the origin, end, and life of all things: matter, he suggests, is indeed “so perfect that, if well pondered, [it] is understood to be a divine being in things, as perhaps David of Dinant meant, who was so poorly understood by those who reported his opinion” (86). This, at least, is the position of Teofilo, proponent of “what the Nolan holds,” reaching backward and forward across the centuries from one heretic to another to proclaim a transvalued, still feminine *matter*: an omncreative, omnitransformative, multimodal coinherence of intellect and extension that is not not divine.

Notes

1. Aristotle, “Physics,” in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1.9.192a, 16–17.
2. *Ibid.*, 2.1.193b, 7–8. The essence or “nature” of any particular thing, he insists, is “the form . . . rather than the matter, for a thing is more properly said to be what it is when it exists in actuality than when it exists potentially.”
3. *Ibid.*, 1.9.192a, 26; Aristotle, “Metaphysics,” in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, trans. W. D. Ross, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 7.3.1029a, 24–6.
4. Aristotle, “Physics,” 1.9.192a, 23–4.
5. Aristotle, “Metaphysics,” 6.1.1026a, 6.
6. “Form Vs. Matter,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/form-matter/>; February 8, 2016); quotation marks added. See Aristotle, “Metaphysics,” 6.1.1025a, 30–32.

7. Aristotle, "Metaphysics," 7.3.1029a, 24.
8. Enzo Maccagnolo, "David of Dinant and the Beginnings of Aristotelianism in Paris," in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Peter Dronke (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 435.
9. David's fragment is published in Tristan Dagron, "David of Dinant—Sur Le Fragment [Hyle, Mens, Deus] Des Quaternuli," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, Vol. 40 (2003): 424–5; translation mine.
10. William Turner, "David of Dinant," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 2017).
11. On David's alleged conflation of "active" divinity with "passive" matter, see Albertus Magnus, "Summa Theologiae Sive Scientia De Mirabili Scientia Dei," ed. E. Borgnet (Paris: Vives, 1894), 2.12.72.1, 2.12.72.4.2, and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 5 Volumes, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Allen: Christian Classics, 1981), 1, 3, 8.
12. Giordano Bruno, "Cause, Principle and Unity," in *Cause, Principle and Unity and Essays on Magic*, trans. Richard Blackwell, eds. Richard J. Blackwell and Robert de Luca, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 80, 55, 61. **Subsequent references to this text will be cited internally.**
13. The controversy with respect to Ibn Rushd poses the question of whether calling matter eternal renders it equal to God. Believing that it did, Bishop Etienne Tempier condemned two hundred and nineteen "Averroist" theses in 1277. Ibn Gabirol goes further than Ibn Rushd, not only identifying matter with form, but occasionally privileging the former over the latter. See Ibn Gabirol, *The Font of Life (Fons Vitae), Mediaeval Philosophical Texts in Translation* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2014), 5.42.334, 3.9.99.
14. On the numerically shifting movers, see Aristotle, "Metaphysics," 7.8.1073a-1074b and Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Worlds without End: The Many Lives of the Multiverse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 35.
15. Bruno, "Cause, Principle and Unity," 55. Cf. p. 64: "The Epicureans have said some good things, although they have not risen beyond the material quality."
16. Giordano Bruno, *The Ash Wednesday Supper*, trans. Edward A. Gosselin and Lawrence S. Lerner, Renaissance Society of America Reprint Texts (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 95.
17. On the distinction between principle and cause, see Bruno, "Cause, Principle and Unity," 36–7.
18. Here, Bruno is equating matter with Plato's *khôra*, which is propertyless "space" in Plato's *Timaeus*.
19. On the manyness of Bruno's "one," see Antonio Calcagno, *Giordano Bruno and the Logic of Coincidence: Unity and Multiplicity in the Philosophical Thought of Giordano Bruno*, ed. Eckhard Bernstein, Renaissance and Baroque Studies and Texts (New York: Peter Lang, 1998).
20. Nicholas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance*, trans. H. Lawrence Bond (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 2.4.113.

21. There is no incontrovertible evidence that Spinoza read Bruno, but commentators often deduce that he either may or must have done so. For these positions, respectively, see Steven Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 111, and J. Lewis McIntyre, *Giordano Bruno* (London: Macmillan, 1903), 337–43. For an analysis of the dialectical similarities between the two thinkers, see Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza,” in *The Summum Bonum*, ed. Evander Bradley McGilvary (Berkeley: The University Press, 1904).

22. Anaxagoras taught that the milk a child ingests, for example, can only become bone and blood, “if there is already bone and blood in the milk.” Patricia Curd, “Anaxagoras,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/anaxagoras/> (October 1, 2015).

23. Mary-Jane Rubenstein, “End without End: Cosmology and Infinity in Nicholas of Cusa,” in *Desire, Faith, and the Darkness of God: Essays in Honor of Denys Turner*, ed. Eric Bugyis and David Newheiser (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 21–2, 27–8.

24. Nicholas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance*, 2.2.101.

25. *Ibid.*, 2.5.117. For a contemporary cosmo-theological exposition of this principle, see Catherine Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 114–5.