

Giordano Bruno

1548–1600

In many ways, the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno, influenced in his thought by the celebrated Platonist Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), is an ideal representative of contradictory forces in the Renaissance. He was educated as a Dominican friar but was accused of heresy in the 1570s and fled Italy, taking temporary teaching posts at Toulouse, Paris, Wittenberg, and Oxford, where he was the guest of the poet Fulke Greville and possibly Sir Philip Sidney. Bruno viewed the philosophical development of his own time, including the revolutionary work of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) and his closer contemporary Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) as the opening of a great age of science and philosophy. Like both Copernicus and Galileo, Bruno was severely persecuted by the Inquisition, but his fate was drastically worse, being burned at the stake in Rome when he steadfastly refused to renounce his philosophical and theological views. Bruno's many heresies included the view, espoused in the selection here, that the entire universe is both infinite and animate: God cannot be localized in a spatial heaven but is a spiritual and intellectual principle in all things. In particular he viewed the influence of conventional church authority, which eventually put him to death, as a perversion of wisdom and truth. In one inflammatory work, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, he represented the pope and other ecclesiastic authorities as the very evil that needed to be expelled. Among many ironies affecting his later reception and influence is the fact that while he saw himself as part of a scientific revolution, his rejection of empiricism, materialism, and the belief that nature could be understood as merely mechanical operations upon elementary particles or atoms put him on the wrong side of contemporary developments. Thus he has been associated with mystics and pseudoscientific projects such as the alchemists' search for the Philosopher's Stone and belief in the "arts of memory" as possibly allowing the direct assertion of mind over matter. For later thinkers, such as Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) and the Cambridge Platonists, particularly Ralph Cudworth (1617–1688), and, more dramatically, for thinkers such as Friedrich Jacobi (1743–1819) and Coleridge (below, page 493) in the Romantic era, Bruno appeared as a vital forerunner, a point of resistance to a view of nature as mechanical. His notion of spirit as distributed through nature was crucial not only for early versions of Pantheism, but lent at least analogical support to the development of naturphilosophie, after Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854), and Hegel (below, page 552).

There is a complete edition and translation of Bruno's *Della causa, principio, ed uno* (1584) by Robert De Lucca (1998). *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast* has been translated by Arthur D. Imerti (1964). See Dorothea Waley Singer, *Giordano Bruno, His Life and Thought* (1950), which includes a translation of Bruno's *On the Infinite Universe and Worlds*; Francis A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964) and *The Art of Memory* (1966); Paul-Henri Michel, *The Cosmology of Giordano Bruno* (1973); Hilary Gatti, *Giordano Bruno and Renaissance Science* (1999).

Theophilus: love / friend of God.

from
**Concerning the Cause, the
 Principle, and the One**
 1584

Dixon Then you say, Theophilus, that everything which is not a first principle and a first cause, has such a principle and such a cause?

Theophilus Without doubt and without the least controversy.

Dixon Do you believe, accordingly, that whoever knows the things thus caused and originated must know the ultimate cause and principle?

Theophilus Not easily the proximate cause or the proximate principle; it would be extremely difficult to recognize even the traces of an ultimate cause and creative principle.

Dixon Then how do you think that those things which have a first and a proximate cause and principle can be really known, if their efficient cause (which is one of the things which contribute to the true cognition of things) is hidden?

Theophilus I grant you that it is easy to set forth the theory of proof, but the proof itself is difficult. It is very practicable to set forth the causes, circumstances, and methods of sciences; but afterward our method-makers and analytical scholars can use but awkwardly their *organum*, the principles of their methods, and their arts of arts.

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Theophilus I should say, then, that one should not expect the natural philosopher to make plain all causes and principles; but only the physical, and only the principal and most essential of these. And although these depend upon the first cause and first principle, and can be said to possess such a cause and principle, this is, in any case, not such a necessary relation that from the knowledge of the one the knowledge of the other would follow; and therefore one should not expect that in the same science both should be set forth.

Dixon How is that?

Theophilus Because from the cognition of all dependent things, we are unable to infer other knowledge of first

cause and principle, than by the somewhat inefficacious method of traces. All things are, indeed, derived from the Creator's will or goodness, which is the principle of His works, and from which proceeds the universal effect. The same consideration arises in the case of works of art, in so much as he who sees the statue does not see the sculptor; he who sees the portrait of Helen does not see Apelles: but he sees only the result of the work which comes from the merit and genius of Apelles.¹ This work is entirely an effect of the accidents and circumstances of the substance of that man, who, as to his absolute essence, is not in the least known.

Dixon So that to know the universe is like knowing nothing of the being and substance of the first principle, because it is like knowing the accidents of the accidents.

Theophilus Exactly, but I would not have you imagine that I mean that in God himself there are Accidents, or that He could be known, as it were, by His Accidents.

Dixon I do not attribute to you so crude a thought, and I know that it is one thing to say that the things extraneous to the divine nature are accidents, another thing to say that they are His Accidents, and yet another thing to say that they are, *as it were*, His Accidents: By the last way of speaking I believe you mean that they are the effects of the divine activity; but that these effects, in so far as they may be the substance of things, and even the natural substances themselves, in any case are, as it were, the remotest accidents whereby we merely touch an apprehension of the divine supernatural essence.

Theophilus Well said.

Dixon Behold, then, of the divine substance, as well because it is infinite as because it is extremely remote from its effects (while these effects are the furthest boundary of the source of our reasoning faculties), we can know nothing,—unless through the means of traces, as the Platonists say, of remote effects, as the Peripatetic philosophers say, of the dress or outer covering, as say the Cabalists, of the mere shoulders and back, as the Talmudists say,² or of the mirror, the shadow, the enigma, as the Apocalyptic writers say.

Theophilus All the more is this the case because we do not see perfectly this universe whose substance and principle are so difficult of comprehension. And thus it follows that with far less ground can we know the first principle and cause through its effect, than Apelles may be known through the statue he has made. For the statue all may see and examine, part by part; but not so the grand and infinite effect of the Divine Power. Therefore our simile should be understood not as a matter of close comparison.

¹ Apelles (fourth century B.C.), Greek painter.

² [Royce] Cf. Exodus xxxiii, 18–31.

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Neoplatonics: followed from Plotinus, C. 335.
Cabalists: Hebrew mysticism
Talmudists: rabbinic philosophy
Mishnah and Gemara

Dixon Thus it is, and thus I understand it.

Theophilus It would be well, then, to abstain from speaking of so lofty a matter.

Dixon I agree to that, because it suffices, morally and theologically, to know the first principle in so far as higher spirits have revealed it, and divine men have declared it. Beyond this point, not only whatever Law and Theology you will, but also all wise philosophy has held it as a profane and turbulent disposition, to rush into demanding reasons and definitions for such things as are above the sphere of our intelligence.

Theophilus Very good: but these do not deserve blame so much as those deserve praise who struggle towards the knowledge of that cause and principle; who learn its grandeur as much as possible by allowing the eyes of their well-regulated minds to roam amongst yonder magnificent stars,—those luminous bodies which are so many habitable worlds, vast and animate, and are most excellent deities. These seem, and are, countless worlds not unlike that which contains us. It is impossible that these can have their existence of themselves, considering that they are composite and dissoluble (although not for that reason do they deserve annihilation, as has been well said in the *Timæus*). It is needful that they should know their principle and cause; and consequently with the grandeur of their existence, of their life and of their works, they show and set forth, in infinite space, with innumerable voices the infinite excellence and majesty of their first principle and cause. Leaving then (as you say) those considerations in so far as they are superior to all sense and intellect, we will consider that principle and cause in so far as, in its traces, it either is identical with nature itself, or lies revealed to us in the extent and in the lap of nature. Question me, then, in order, if you wish me to answer you in order.

Dixon I will do so. But first, since you constantly speak of Cause and Principle, I should like to know whether those are used by you as synonymous words?

Theophilus No.

Dixon Then what difference is there between the one and the other term?

Theophilus I answer that when we speak of God as first principle and first cause, we mean one and the same thing but from different points of view; when we speak of principles and causes in Nature, we speak of different things from different points of view. We speak of God as the first principle inasmuch as all things come only after Him in an ordered rank of *before* and *after*, either, according to their nature, or according to their duration, or according to their value. We call God the first cause, in so far as all things are distinct from Him, as the effect from the efficient, the thing

produced from that which produced it. And these two points of view are different, because not everything which comes first and is of more value is the cause of that which comes later and is of less value; and not everything which is the cause is prior to and of more worth than that which is caused, as will be plain to him who reflects carefully.

Dixon Then tell me, in speaking of natural things, what is the difference between cause and principle?

Theophilus Although at times the-one term is used in place of the other, nevertheless, properly speaking, not everything which is a principle is a cause, because a point is the principle of a line, but it is not the cause of the line; the instant is the principle of temporal activity, the place whence is the principle of the motion, the premises are the principle of the argument, but they are not the cause. Therefore principle is a more general term than cause.

Dixon Then restricting these two terms to certain special significations, according to the custom of those who reform their terminology, I believe you to mean that Principle is that which intrinsically brings to pass the constitution of things, and which remains in what it has produced. Thus, for instance, matter and form remain in their composite; or again, the elements of which things have been composed, and into which they tend to resolve themselves again, are principles. You call Cause that which operates from without in the production of things, and which has its being outside of the things produced, as is the case with the efficient cause, and the end for which the thing produced is ordained.

Theophilus Very good.

Dixon Since, then, we have come to an understanding concerning the difference between those things, I wish you to devote your attention first to the Causes and then to the Principles. And as to the Causes, I desire first to know about the first efficient cause, about the formal cause, which you say is conjoined to the efficient; and, lastly, about the final cause, which is understood to be the power which moves this.

Theophilus The order of discourse which you propose pleases me much. Now as to the efficient cause: I assert that the universal physical efficient cause is the universal Intellect, which is the first and principal faculty of the world-soul and which is the universal form of the Cosmos.

Dixon Your thought appears to me to be not only in agreement with that of Empedocles, but more certain, more distinct, and more explicit, and also (in so far as I can see from the above) more profound: yet you will give me pleasure if you will explain the whole more in detail, beginning by informing me just what is that universal intellect.

Theophilus (The universal intellect is the most intimate, real, and essential faculty and effective part of the

Pythagoras
Empedocles
Plotinus

Plato
Aristotle

world-soul. This is one and the same thing which fills the whole, illumines the universe and directs nature to produce the various species as is fitting, and has the same relation to the production of natural things as our intellect to the parallel production of our general ideas.³ This is called by the Pythagoreans the moving spirit and propelling power of the universe; as saith the poet, "Totamque infusa per artus, mens agitat molem, et toto se corpore miscet."⁴ This is called by the Platonic philosophers the world-builder. This builder (they say) proceeds from the higher world (which is, in fact, one) to this world of sense, which is divided into many, and in which not only harmony but also discord reigns, because it is sundered into parts. This intellect, infusing and extending something of its own into matter, restful and moveless in itself, produces all things. By the Magi this intelligence is called most fruitful of seeds, or even the seed-sower, since it is He who impregnates matter with all its forms, and according to the type and condition of these succeeds in shaping, forming, and arranging all in such admirable order, as cannot be attributed to chance, or to any principle which cannot consciously distinguish or arrange. Orpheus calls this Intellect the eye of the world, because it sees all natural objects, both within and without, in order that all things may succeed in producing and maintaining themselves in their proper symmetry, not only intrinsically but also extrinsically: By Empedocles it is called the Distinguisher, since it never wearies of unfolding the confused forms within the breast of matter or of calling forth the birth of one thing from the corruption of another. Plotinus calls it the father and progenitor, because it distributes seeds throughout the field of nature, and is the proximate dispenser of forms. By us this Intellect is called the inner artificer, because it forms and shapes material objects from within, as from within the seed or the root is sent forth and unfolded the trunk, from within the trunk are put forth the branches, from within the branches the finished twigs, and from within the twigs unfurl the buds, and there within are woven like nerves, leaves, flowers and fruits; and inversely, at certain times the sap is recalled from the flowers and fruits to the twigs, from the twigs to the branches, from the branches to the trunk, and from the trunk to the root. Just so it is with animals; its work proceeding from the original seed, and from the centre of the heart, to the external mem-

bers, and from these finally gathering back to the heart the unfolded powers, it behaves as if again knotting together spun-out threads. Now, since we believe that even inanimate works, such as we know how to produce with a certain order, imitatively working on the surface of matter, are not produced without forethought and mind,—as when, cutting and sculpturing a piece of wood, we bring forth the effigy of a horse: how much greater must we believe is that creative intelligence which, from the interior of the germinal matter, brings forth the bones, extends the cartilage, hollows out the arteries, breathes into the pores, weaves the fibres, forms the branching nerves, and with such admirable mastery arranges the whole? I say, how much greater an artificer is He who is not restricted to one sole part of the material world, but operates continually throughout the whole. There are three sorts of intelligence; the divine, which is all things, the mundane which makes all things, and the other kinds of spirits which become everything. For it is needful that between the extremes the means should be found, which is the true efficient cause, not so much extrinsic as even intrinsic, of all natural things.

Dixon I should like to see you distinguish, as you understand them, extrinsic cause and intrinsic cause.

Theophilus I call a cause extrinsic when as an efficient it does not form a part of the things compounded and produced. I call a cause intrinsic in so far as it does not operate around and outside of objects, but in the manner just explained. Hence a cause is extrinsic by being distinct from the substance and essence of its effects, and therefore its existence is not like that of things that are generated and decay, although it embraces such things. A cause is intrinsic with respect to the actuality of its own workings.]

of causes

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Dixon The aim, and the final cause for which the efficient is working, is the perfection of the universe, which implies that in diverse portions of matter all forms are actually existent. In this end the intellect takes such great pleasure and delight that it never wearies of calling forth all sorts of forms from matter, as it appears that Empedocles also would have it.

Theophilus Very well. Now I add to this that just as this efficient cause is omnipresent in the universe, and is special and particular in the parts and members thereof, just so its form and its purpose.

Dixon Now, enough has been said about causes; let us proceed to the discussion of principles.

Theophilus In order, then, to get at the constitutive principles of things, I will next discuss form. For this is in

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Dixon But principle and cause of motion of an intrinsic

Theophilus

considering that it within the ship. Action of the ship, is guides and moves distinct efficient cause far as it animates a part of that universe, it is not a part cause. Aristotle denies that the soul steersman has to that power which it is a perfection and an efficient cause, and that that is a thing and separated from

Dixon I perceive separate from powers of our mind value of an efficient affirmed concerning nus⁵ says, writing a Soul rules the universe souls rule our bodies the way in which the Soul, as if unbound, not hampered by the things. In giving life itself take any taint therefore it is eternal. The human soul is not. Since then, actions which exist in Greece should be attributed to the nature, we ought to which you have brot not only in the Soul it is the case (as the a

³[Royce] The reference is to a well-known scholastic parallel of the universals present in things and the universals present in our minds when we form our ideas of natural classes. The universal Intellect is related to the production of natural forms, or species, as our mind is related to the production of our ideas of these species.

⁴[Royce] Infused through the members, mind vitalizes the whole mass and is mingled with the whole body.

⁵Plotinus (above, page 127).

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some sort the same as the aforesaid efficient cause; since the intelligence which is a power of the world-soul has been called the proximate efficient cause of all natural things.

Dixon But how can the same subject be at once principle and cause of natural things? How can it have the definition of an intrinsic part instead of an extrinsic part?

Theophilus I declare that this is not incongruous, considering that the soul is within the body as the pilot is within the ship. And the pilot, in so far as he shares the motion of the ship, is a part of it. Yet considered in so far as he guides and moves it, he is not regarded as a part, but as a distinct efficient cause. Just so the soul of the universe, in so far as it animates and informs things, is an intrinsic and formal part of that universe. But in so far as it directs and governs, it is not a part, it does not rank as a principle, but as a cause. Aristotle himself grants this, who, nevertheless, denies that the soul has that relation to the body which the steersman has to the ship: yet considering it with regard to that power which thinks and knows, he does not dare to call it a perfection and form of the body; but he considers it as an efficient cause, separate in essence from matter. He says that that is a thing which comes from without, self-existent and separated from the composite.

Dixon I approve what you say, because if that existence separate from the body belongs to the intellectual powers of our minds, and if this intellectual power has the value of an efficient cause, much more should the same be affirmed concerning the Soul of the World. Because Plotinus⁵ says, writing against the Gnostics, that the Universal Soul rules the universe with much greater ease than our souls rule our bodies. Besides there is a great difference in the way in which the one and the other rules. The World-Soul, as if unbound, rules the world in such a way that it is not hampered by that which it controls, and does not suffer from, nor with other things. It rises without effort to lofty things. In giving life and perfection to the body, it does not itself take any taint of imperfection from that body; and therefore it is eternally conjoined with the same subject. The human soul is manifestly in quite the contrary condition. Since then, according to your principles, the perfections which exist in our inferior natures, in a far higher degree should be attributed to, and perceived in, superior natures, we ought doubtless to confirm the distinction which you have brought out. But we must recognize this not only in the Soul of the world, but also in every star. For it is the case (as the aforesaid philosopher holds), that they

on Plotinus

⁵Plotinus (above, page 127).

all have the power of contemplating God, the principles (sources) of all things and the arrangement of all parts of the universe. He does not indeed think that this takes place through memory, reasoning, and consideration; because each of their works is an eternal work, and there is no action which can be new to them, and therefore they do nothing which is not fitting to the whole, perfect, and with a certain and preordained order, and they accomplish all without an act of consideration. Aristotle shows this by using the example of a perfect writer, or zither-player. While in this case nature does not reason or reflect, he does not wish it to be concluded that she works without intelligence and final intention; because exquisite writers and musicians pay less attention to what they are doing, and yet do not blunder like the inexpert and clumsy, who while thinking and attending more, yet accomplish their work less perfectly, and not without blunders.

Theophilus You understand me. Let us now pass on to the more special. It seems to me that they detract from the divine goodness and from the excellence of that great soul and simulacrum of the first principle, who will not understand nor affirm that the world with all its members is animate. How should God be envious of his image, or how should the architect not love his own individual work, of whom Plato says that he takes pleasure in his work because of his own similitude which he admires in it. And truly, what more beautiful than this universe could be presented to the eyes of the Deity? And it being the case that this consists of its parts, to which of these should more be imparted than to the formal principle? I will leave for a better and more particular discourse a thousand natural reasons beyond this topical or logical one.

Dixon I do not care to have you exert yourself in that direction, considering that there is no philosopher of any reputation, even among the Peripatetics, who does not hold that the Universe and its spheres are in some way animated. I should now be glad to know in what manner you hold that this form makes its way into the material of the universe?

Theophilus It joins itself to it in such a manner that corporeal nature, which in itself is not beautiful, in so far as it is capable of it, shares the beauty of the soul, since there is no beauty which does not consist of some figure or form, and no form which has not been produced by a soul.

Dixon I seem to be hearing an entirely new thing. You hold perhaps that not only the form of the Universe, but all forms of natural objects are souls?

Theophilus Yes.

Dixon Have all things, then, souls? ↙

Theophilus Yes.

Dixon But who will grant you this?

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Theophilus But who with reason will be able to gain-say it?

Dixon According to common sense, not all things are alive.

Theophilus The commonest sense is not the truest.

Dixon I easily believe that that can be defended. But the fact that a thing can be defended does not suffice to make it true; considering that it also must be proved.

Theophilus That is not difficult. Are there not philosophers who say that the world has a soul?

Dixon There surely are many, and very notable ones.

Theophilus Then why do not the same philosophers say that all the parts of the world have souls?

Dixon They surely do say that, but only concerning the most important parts, and those which are true parts of the world. Since with no less ground they hold that the soul is no less omnipresent throughout the world and in every conceivable part of it, than the souls of living beings perceptible to us are completely present throughout them.

Theophilus Then what things do you think are not true parts of the Universe?

Dixon Those that are not what the Peripatetics call primal bodies, such as the earth, together with the waters and other parts, which, according to your statement, constitute the complete animate organism; or such as the moon, the sun, and other heavenly bodies. Beside these principal animate organisms there are those which are not primary parts of the universe, of which some are said to have a vegetative soul, some a sensitive soul, others an intellectual soul.

Theophilus Yet, if accordingly the soul which is in everything, is also in the parts of everything, why do you not hold that it is in the parts of the parts?

Dixon It may be, but in the parts of the parts of animate things.

Theophilus Now what things are there which are not animate, or are not parts of animate things?

Dixon Does it seem to you that we have so few such things before our eyes? All things which have not life.

Theophilus And what are the things that have not life, at least the vital principle?

Dixon To come to an understanding, do you hold that there may be any things which may not have soul and which may not have the vital principle?

Theophilus That, in fine, is what I hold.

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Theophilus I say, then, that the table as a table is not animate, nor the garments, nor the leather as leather, nor the glass as glass, but as natural things and composites they

have within themselves matter and form. Let a thing be even as small and tiny as you will, it has within itself some portion of spiritual substance, which, if it finds a fitting vehicle, unfolds itself so as to become a plant, or an animal, and receives the members of whatsoever body you will, such as is commonly said to be animated, because spirit is found in all things, and there is not the least corpuscle which does not contain within itself some portion that may become living.

* * *
Anaxagoras

Dixon You show me the seemingly true way in which the opinion of Anaxagoras⁶ may be maintained, who held that all things are in all things. For since spirit, or soul, or universal form, exists in all things, all may be produced from all.

Theophilus I do not say seemingly true, but true. For spirit is found in all things, those which are not living creatures are still vitalized, if not according to the perceptible presence of animation and life, yet they are animate according to the principle and, as it were, primal being of animation and life.

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On other occasions I shall be able to discuss more at length the mind, the spirit, the soul, the life, which penetrates all, is in all, and moves all matter, fills the lap of that matter and dominates it rather than is dominated by it. For the spiritual substance cannot be overpowered by the material, but rather embraces it.

Dixon That appears to me to conform not only to the sense of Pythagoras, whose opinion the Poet rehearses when he says,—

Principio caelum ac terras camposque liquentes,
Lucentemque globum lunae Titaniaque astra
Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus
Mens agit at molem, totoque se corpore miscet.⁷

but also it conforms to the Theologian who says, "The spirit rules over and fills the earth, and that it is which contains all things." And another, speaking perchance of the dealings of

⁶ Anaxagoras (500? B.C.—428 B.C.), Greek philosopher and mathematician.
⁷ [Royce] In the beginning the sky, the earth and fields of the waters, Glistening orb of the moon, and also the radiant sunlight, All is inspired with life, and trembling through every member, Mind vitalizes the mass, and with the whole body is mingled.
Virgil's *Aeneid* VI, 724 ff.

form with matter and dominated by actual

Theophilus I things, and in variously follow, that of all things. The constitutive principle contained within it. Its soul must be the first everything presides things, effects the parts. And therefore ter. This I understand

While this form thus impossible that its substance is not less than forms can change are not things, but they are accidents and

Theophilus W mal, eternal, and such which the Sophists hold ignorant of the substance corruptible soul mainly and principal composition. For the within itself no stable nothing. They call composition; they call perfection of a living from a certain symbol. Therefore, it is not greatly fear death and their being is imminent with a loud voice souls should fear death solutely constant principle

Dixon Then you of Anaxagoras who content, and in a sense t

Sophists: pre-Socratic Sophists were the world of 450 BC. During the 2nd half of the 5th c. BCE, the name began to refer to itinerant intellectuals who combined rhetoric and knowledge of various subjects. Concerning the Cause, the Principle, and the One ◇ 213

form with matter and with potentiality, says that the latter is dominated by actuality and by form.

Theophilus If then, spirit, mind, life, is found in all things, and in various degrees fills all matter, it must certainly follow, that it is the true actuality, and the true form of all things. The soul of the world, then, is the formal, constitutive principle of the universe, and of that which is contained within it. I say that if life is found in all things, the soul must be the form of all things; that which through everything presides over matter, holds sway over composite things, effects the composition and consistency of their parts. And therefore such form is no less enduring than matter. This I understand to be One in all things.

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While this form thus changes place and circumstance, it is impossible that it should be annulled; because the spiritual substance is not less real than the material. Then only external forms can change and even be annulled, because they are not things, but of things; they are not substances; they are accidents and circumstances.

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Theophilus We have then an intrinsic principle,—formal, eternal, and subsistent, incomparably better than that which the Sophists have imagined, who play with accidents, ignorant of the substance of things, and who are led to assume corruptible substances because they call chiefly, primarily and principally that substance which results from composition. For the latter is only an accident, containing within itself no stability and truth, and resolves itself into nothing. They call that the true man which results from composition; they call that the true soul which is either the perfection of a living body, or at least a thing which results from a certain sympathy of complexion and members. Therefore, it is not strange that they do so much and so greatly fear death and dissolution; as those for whom ruin of their being is imminent. Against this madness nature cries out with a loud voice, assuring us that neither bodies nor souls should fear death, since both matter and form are absolutely constant principles.

* * *

[Dixon] Then you approve, in some sort, the opinion of Anaxagoras who calls the particular forms of Nature latent, and in a sense that of Plato who deduces them from

ideas, and in a manner that of Empedocles who makes them proceed from intelligence, and in some sort that of Aristotle who makes them, as it were, issue from the potentiality of matter?

Theophilus Yes. Because, as we have said, where there is form, there is, in a certain manner, everything. Where there is soul, spirit, life, there is everything, for the creator of ideal forms and varieties is intellect. And even if it does not obtain forms from matter, it nevertheless does not go begging for them outside of matter, because this spirit fills the whole.

Polyhymnius Velim scire quo modo forma est anima mundi ubique tota,⁸ if it is indivisible? It must, then, be very big, even of infinite dimensions, if one may call the world infinite.

Gervasius There is good ground for its being large, as also a preacher at Grandazzo in Sicily said of our Lord: where as a sign that He is present through the whole world, he ordered a crucifix as big as the church, in the similitude of God the Father, who has the Empyrean heavens for a canopy; the starry heavens for his throne, and has such long legs that they reach down to the earth, which serves him for a footstool. To him came a certain peasant, and questioned him thus. Reverend father, now how many ells of cloth would it take to make his breeches? And another said that all the peas and beans of Melazzo and Nicosia would not suffice to fill his stomach. Look to it, then, that this World-soul is not made after such a fashion.

Theophilus I do not know how to resolve your doubt, Gervasius, but perhaps I can that of Master Polyhymnius. I can, however, to satisfy you both, give you a comparison, because I wish you to carry away some fruits of our reasoning and discourse. Know, then, in brief, that the Soul of the World, and the Divinity are not omnipresent through all and through every part, in the way in which material things could be there: because this is impossible to any sort of body, and to any sort of spirit; but in a manner which is not easy to explain to you if not in this way. You should take notice that if the Soul of the World and the universal form are said to be everywhere, we do not mean corporeally and dimensionally, because such things cannot be; and just so they cannot be in any part. But they are spiritually present in everything—as, for example (perhaps a rough one), you can imagine a voice which is throughout a whole room and in every part of the room; because, through all, it is completely heard: just as these words which I utter are heard completely

⁸"I want to know in what way the form is everywhere the whole soul of the world, if it is indivisible."

Let a thing be even
him itself some por-
nds a fitting vehicle,
r an animal, and re-
you will, such as is
spirit is found in all
sle which does not
nay become living.

ly true way in which
aintained, who held
ce spirit, or soul, or
ll may be produced

ly true, but true. For
h are not living crea-
g to the perceptible
are animate accord-
mal being of anima-

iscuss more at length
which penetrates all,
lap of that matter and
y it. For the spiritual
e material, but rather

nform not only to the
e Poet rehearses when

sque liquentes,
iaque astra
a per artus
orpore miscet,⁷

who says, "The spirit
it is which contains all
nce of the dealings of

ppher and mathematician.
fields of the waters,
iant sunlight,
gh every member,
body is mingled.
l. 724 ff.

by all, even were there a thousand present, and my voice, could it reach throughout the whole world, would be everywhere through everything. I tell you then, Master Polyhymnius, that the soul is not indivisible like a point, but in some sort like the voice. And I answer you, Gervasius, that the Divinity is not everywhere in the sense that the God of

Grandazzo was in the whole of the chapel, because, although he was present throughout the church, yet all of him was not present everywhere, but his head was in one part, his feet in another, his arms and his chest in yet other parts. But that other is in its entirety in every part, as my voice is heard completely in every part of this room.

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