Rhetoric and Philosophical Discourse in Giordano Bruno's Italian Dialogues

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Abstract   The Renaissance writers adapted the dialogue form to represent the culture they were creating, using it for numerous subjects: philosophy, ethics, politics, religion, the arts, the study of language, and literature. The dialogue was an appropriate form for works which are at once serious, ironical, and critical. Giordano Bruno's Italian dialogues are a case in point. This essay scrutinizes the structure of these works, with special attention to the role of the interlocutors in his rhetoric.

During his sojourn in England (1583–85), Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) published six Italian dialogues.[1] Since the end of the nineteenth century, these works have been the object of scholarly research. The dialogues have been studied not only as philosophical works[2] but also—since the second

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1. In 1584 Bruno published *La cena de le Ceneri*, *De la causa, principio et uno*, *De l'infinito, universo e mondi*, and *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante*; in 1585 *Cabala del cavallo pegaseo* and *De gli eroici furori*. Recently, a reprint of the original editions appeared; see Bruno 1999a. All dialogues were published in London with John Charlewood; the title pages display mere fictitious indications of places and editors. The edition we used was Bruno 2002a. For the titles we use the following translations: *The Ash Wednesday Supper* (Bruno 1995 [1977]), *On Cause, Principle, and Unity* (Bruno 1998), *On the Infinite Universe and Worlds* (Bruno 1950), *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast* (Bruno 1992 [1964]), *The Cabala of Pegasus* (Bruno 2002b), and *The Heroic Frenzies* (Bruno 1964).
2. For extensive bibliographical information, see Ciliberto 1998: 169–200.

half of the twentieth century — in terms of the constitution of the text[3] and of style and argumentational strategies.[4] This essay examines how the literary form of these works affected the exposition of Bruno's developing views on cosmology and ethics. We analyze the structure and style of these dialogues, paying attention to the literary tools and rhetorical means that the author employed for convincing his audience of the importance and veracity of his philosophical views. Principally, the following issues are tackled: (1) Bruno's view on the form and content of philosophical discourse, and his adoption of the vernacular; (2) the dialogue as literary genre in the Renaissance; (3) the general (rhetorical) structure of the Italian dialogues, with special regard to the role of "spokesmen," "adversaries," and "secondary" figures in the architecture of Bruno's argumentation.

1. Bruno on the Form and Content of Philosophical Discourse

Bruno's Latin and Italian works were composed in several literary and philosophical genres. Some of his works have an obvious literary form, namely: comedy,[5] dialogue,[6] the so-called "canzoniere" (collection of poems with commentary),[7] and the didactic or philosophical-scientific poem which alternates poetry and prose.[8] Other works, by contrast, were written as traditional philosophical treatises, in particular those in which he chooses to set out his views in the form of theses (*articuli*) accompanied by more or less extended explanations.[9] Bruno also composed several commentaries on works by Aristotle[10] and Ramon Lull.[11] And finally, the extant elaborations of his university lectures are worth mentioning.[12]

3. See in particular Aquilecchia 1993a.
4. Style and some specific forms of argumentation in the dialogues have been scrutinized in Bàrberi Squarotti 1958 and 1960; Tissoni 1961; Ciliberto 1979: "Introduction." See also Wildgen 1998; Ricci 2003; Saiber 2005; Ellero 2005.
5. Such as *Candelaio* (*Candlebearer*), in Bruno 2002a, 1:257–424.
6. The first five Italian dialogues; see note 1 above.
7. *Heroic Frenzies* is a case in point.
8. The works known as the Frankfurt trilogy (1591): *De monade*, *De minimo*, and *De immenso*.
9. Definition and explanation assume several forms in Bruno's works. One of these forms consists of the structure characterized by *definitio* and *applicatio* or *praxis*, where concepts and terms under discussion are investigated as to their determinate (semantic and doctrinal) values. See, for example, *Camoeracensis Acrotismus, seu Rationes articulorum physicorum adversus Peripateticos* (Paris 1588) and *Articuli centum et sexaginta adversus huius tempestatis Mathematicos* (Prague 1588).
10. See *Figuratio Aristotelici Physici auditus* (Paris 1586) and *Libri Physicorum Aristotelis explanati* (published only in the national edition of his Latin works in the nineteenth century).
11. See, for example, *De lampade combinatoria Lulliana* (Wittenberg 1587).
12. Examples are *De progressu et lampade venatoria logicorum* (Wittenberg 1587), on Aristotle's *Topics*, and *Artificium perorandi* (published after his death in 1612 by Johann Heinrich Alsted in Frankfurt), on rhetoric.

It must be noted that Bruno did not slavishly follow the specific rules of the traditional genres and, in particular, of the prevailing sixteenth-century models.[13] He introduced several novelties, and a striking characteristic of his production is the cross-pollination between genres. This has resulted in a most singular philosophical oeuvre. In the past, the literary quality of his works has been noted by a host of scholars, regarding particularly the comedy *Candlebearer*, the dialogues *Ash Wednesday Supper* and *Heroic Frenzies*, and the so-called Frankfurt trilogy, consisting of *De minimo*, *De monade*, and *De immenso* (1591).[14] In Bruno's view, however, literary genres are principally a means for developing and structuring discourse and argumentation.[15] Thus, literary genres, and in consequence their inherent aesthetic qualities, serve (or, better, are subordinated to) a philosophy which, from his first Italian dialogues, he planned as revolutionary in content as well as in form. The ranking of "content" above "form" should be kept in mind in possible comparisons with classical models, such as, for example, Plato as concerns the philosophical dialogue, Aristotle regarding (esoteric and exoteric) treatises, and Lucretius regarding the didactic poem. For Bruno held that the value of a philosophical work can never be assessed on the basis of a conformity to precise (stylistical or formal) rules.

As noted before, mixed forms characterize many of his works: *Candlebearer* (Bruno 2000a), for example, can be read as a philosophical comedy, *Ash Wednesday Supper* as a philosophy in comedy, and *On Cause* also has comical aspects.[16] However, as far as philosophical doctrine is concerned, Bruno rejected any form of eclecticism and "concordism," which characterized many expressions of Renaissance philosophical culture, as in Marsilio Ficino[17] and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.[18] He also refused skepticism, which had a crucial role in the early modern polemics against dogmatism.[19] By contrast, Bruno propagated the ideal of a personal pur-

13. See the proemial letter to *The Ash Wednesday Supper* in Bruno 2002a, 1:431–32.
14. See Aquilecchia 1991 and 1993a; Farinelli 2000. Dilthey (1929: 297–98) considered Bruno the first philosophical artist of the modern world ("der erste philosophische Künstler der modernen Welt").
15. See, for example, the preface to *De umbris idearum* and the proemial letters of the Italian dialogues. For a discussion of the broader context of Bruno's prologues in *Candelaio*, see Buono Hodgart 1997 (in particular the first two chapters).
16. See Aquilecchia 1999 and Nuccio Ordine's "Introduzione" to Bruno 2002a, 1:31–36.
17. One of the main characteristics of Ficino's *Theologia platonica* is the harmonization of Platonism and Scholasticism.
18. In his *Conclusiones nongentae* (1486), Pico presented nine hundred theses that he derived from all major traditions known in his day, including ancient authors (Plato, Aristotle, and their Hellenistic commentators) and medieval Arabic and Christian philosophers and theologians. Pico planned to debate these theses at Rome before the pope and leaders of "all schools," but the book was prohibited. For discussion, see Dorez and Thuasne 1976.
19. Cf., for example, the works of Michel Montaigne, Pierre Charron, and Francisco Sanchez.

suit of knowledge and wisdom and to a multifaceted elaboration of the latter: truth is unique, but frequently there might be more than one way to set it out. The manifold ways of being and of knowledge entail, in his view, the originality of every individual manifestation of being and cognition, historically and culturally so. These are, *in nuce*, the philosophical assumptions underlying the multiplicity of literary genres and styles in his work.

In *De umbris idearum* and in *On Cause*, Bruno (2002a, 1:602, 688, 690) explicitly approved the "investigation of various philosophies," and thus, although acknowledging a determinate hierarchy in modes of knowledge (running from sense to intellectual intuition), he allowed for "various ways of philosophizing" (cf. Bruno 2004: 36). In *Heroic Frenzies*, he stressed that "there are as many kinds and species of true rules [i.e., writing], as there are kinds and species of true poets" (Bruno 2002a, 2:528). And in *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, he even claimed that "there exists no book which has not been examined by the gods, and which—whenever it is not pointless—has not been used by them" (ibid., 2:278). Thus, the gods would not admit "golden genres" without taking into account the inherent qualities of a text; in turn, they do not loath works only because they belong to a genre viewed as inferior. A critical assessment should regard the work *in se*, not the genre, and therefore theological or "prophetical" works that are praised only because they pertain to a well-reputed genre can be done away with,[20] while historical or allegedly dissolute works may be effective.[21] It goes without saying—Bruno argued—that the search of valid views in the philosophical schools does not entail any accommodation among the different traditions but, rather, aims at discovering the latter's origins and developments, including (apparent) priorities and derivations. In Bruno's view, every "stage of knowledge" has its own legitimacy in a scale of values. There is no absolute truth without "degrees," nor can truth be assessed independently from its various forms of expression.

In most of his works, Bruno harshly criticized the *grammatici*, because, inspired by a false idea of perfection, they erroneously reduced the content of discourse to the mere words. Thus, they tendentially corrupted every branch of knowledge,[22] adhering dogmatically to literary genres which, by contrast, should be constantly renewed in order to preserve their vitality. Bruno's criticisms of the grammatici bear on a specific category of scholars, most noticeably the humanist pseudo-philologists (for example, Mam-

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20. Cf. *Cabala del cavallo pegaseo*, in Bruno 2002a, 2:462.
21. See *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante*, in Bruno 2002a, 2:278–79.
22. Cf. *De umbris idearum*, in Bruno 2004: 32–33; *De la causa, principio et uno*, in Bruno 2002a, 1:635–36; *De gli eroici furori*, in Bruno 2002a, 2:686–87; *De triplici minimo et mensura*, in Bruno 1879–91, 1.3:135.

furio in *Candlebearer*), who adore ancient and contemporary poetic, literary, or linguistic models, such as Virgil, Cicero, and Petrarch. Bruno vigorously rejected the view of a Golden Age not only with regard to nature and humanity, but also to poetry, literature, and philosophy. In his view, the decay of philosophy, considered as true wisdom, started already with Plato, and in particular with Aristotle, in whose thought abstract being prevailed over concrete reality, that is, over nature as primary object of philosophical reflection. According to him, Aristotle's natural philosophy was conditioned by his logic and metaphysics.[23]

Clearly distancing himself from the Socratic tradition, Bruno argued that ethics cannot be detached from natural philosophy, in particular from a discourse on the infinite universe.[24] Thus, he rejected a "grammatical" (see above) approach in every realm of philosophical investigation. Philosophy should count and convince because of its matter and arguments, not its style or its respect for tradition, conventions, and fashions. Bruno's polemics against "grammarians" regarded all literary styles, and attacked pedantry in its various forms, as servile adherence to models and thus as veneration and ultimately as fetishism.

In a passage in *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast* (1584), Bruno (2002a, 2:175) explicitly refers to himself as "Giordano," who

> speaks the common language and uses it freely and outspokenly, bestowing their own names on things on which nature bestows their own being. He does not call obscene what nature makes worthy; he will not cover up what she shows openly. Bread he calls bread, wine wine; the head he calls the head and the feet feet, and all the other parts by their proper names; eating he says, if it is eating, sleeping, if it is sleeping, drinking, if it is drinking; and accordingly he denotes all other natural acts by their own proper titles. (Our translation)

This is not just simple and somewhat belated[25] information on Bruno's writing in the vernacular instead of Latin.[26] It is rather a programmatic statement and likewise a justification of his choice of a particular manner and style.[27]

23. Cf. *De la causa, principio et uno*, in Bruno 2002a, 1:729–30, 736–37.
24. See Bruno's considerations in *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* and *Eroici furori* as well as the prefatory epistle of *De l'infinito universo e mondi*.
25. As is declared in his fifth Italian work.
26. As to the leading Italian dialect: by the sixteenth century, Italian writers still had the choice among three different options. The "fundamentalists" considered Petrarch the supreme paradigm; the "moderate conservatives" adopted the upper-class dialect of Florence; while the "liberals" held the plurality of dialects to be rather a virtue than a vice, insisted on integrating some of the vocabulary of the author's native region into the written language, and wanted to introduce greater freedom in grammatical and lexical rules. Obviously, Bruno's vernacular was of the third type, proudly showing off his Neapolitan roots.
27. See Blum 2005. Blum (172) refers to the outspoken obscene line in Pietro Aretino's *Capi-*

It has been argued that Bruno chose to write his philosophical dialogues in Italian, because "a new subject required a new language."[28] It should be kept in mind, however, that before 1584 Bruno had published (unconventional) Latin works and after 1586 he was to publish only Latin works, which (in particular his Frankfurt trilogy) presented some unorthodox peculiarities.[29] Other scholars (such as Michele Ciliberto [1986]) have suggested that Bruno wanted to demonstrate his contempt for the universities, and still others[30] have noted that Italian culture was high fashion at the Elizabethan court, and so was a kind of (English) vernacular culture. This is all true, but the Italian of Bruno's dialogues was far from being easy, and a typical London courtier probably still had a better command of Latin than of Italian. In 1953, Giovanni Aquilecchia claimed that one had to look more closely at what authors influenced Bruno stylistically before we could come to any conclusions about a correspondence of language and philosophical contents. He also argued for (possible) influences exerted on Bruno by similar unorthodox and restless spirits.[31]

Aquilecchia rightly stressed that Bruno fully developed the critical potentialities of the vernacular dialogue. Turning upside down traditional values and certainties merely based on a *consuetudo credendi*, Bruno's dialogues can be viewed as a "laboratory," that is, as a set of experimental texts which inherit the most innovative aspects of what Aquilecchia (1998: 8) defined as an "alternative classicism" and thus of the heterodox strand of Renaissance literature and philosophy: from Pietro Aretino to Anton Francesco Doni and from Ortensio Lando to Nicolò Franco.[32]

2. Renaissance Dialogue

Dialogue is unique among the familiar genres of argument and exposition in that, at the same time as presenting a multiplicity of variegated information, opinions, and views, it also represents the process by which information or views are exchanged between particular speakers and then

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tolo al Duca di Mantova, which declares his anti-Petrarchist spirit: "dice pane al pane e cazzo al cazzo" ("bread he calls bread, and cock he calls cock").

28. This view was first proposed by Dilthey, then adopted by Corsano (1940: 121–23).

29. For example, the conception of the supreme divinity as Mind, defined as a monad, that is, as an impersonal entity. This view, which is derived from Neoplatonic and Neopythagoric ideas, plainly contradicts Jewish and Christian conceptions of God. In a similar vein, Bruno develops in his later Latin works (for example, *Lampas triginta statuarum* and *Summa terminorum metaphysicorum*) the conception of the triad Mind, Intellect, and Soul/Spirit/Love—viewed as manifestations of one divinity—which replaces the Christian Trinity.

30. See Aquilecchia's (1993b [1953]) introduction to Bruno.

31. See also Blum 2005: 189–90.

32. See Canone 2006.

transmitted to a specific audience. The relation between reader and text may be distanced by irony or intimate to the point of symbiosis, but the parallel remains: each word, each argument is simultaneously part of a literary fictional conversation and an actual literary exchange. Relations in a dialogue are complex: one speaker may be identified confidently as a representative of the author; another, as a representation of the reader. The "authorial" role may be splintered among a number of different speakers, or the role division between author and reader may be changed. Dialogue calls attention to the transmission of information: the act of persuasion is played out before us, and we cannot simply absorb the message without reflecting on the way in which it is being sent and received. Dialogue differs from other genres of exposition because it is uniquely equipped to provide a "portrait" of communication in a given society.

In classical antiquity, the dialogue was one of the main genres of literary prose, boasting brilliant authors such as Plato and Lucian in Greek and Cicero in Latin. It is no surprise that Renaissance humanists, such as Erasmus, Pontano, and Valla, would want to continue this glorious tradition. And indeed, a great many dialogues were written from the time of Petrarch onward. Some had high literary ambitions, others were intended as schoolbooks from which to learn spoken Latin. In Erasmus's *Colloquia* (1523), for example, both aims were met.[33] During the sixteenth century, many dialogues in the vernacular appeared, particularly in French, Italian, German, and Dutch.[34]

The flourishing of dialogue can be explained in several ways.[35] Renaissance writers were interested in forming a new culture around learned and courtly dialogue; the literary form, especially the Ciceronian style, could be used to evoke the culture they were creating. For humanists, the Ciceronian dialogue was a way of defining a new culture based on conversation among gentlemen, which was the humanist answer to the barbarous hairsplitting disputations of Scholasticism. Thus, dialogue was not just an alternative literary form in the Renaissance, it was also an alternative philosophical activity. In dialogue, the character and oratorical skills that the humanists were cultivating could be displayed in the community they imagined. It could be adapted to numerous subjects: politics and ethics, religion and the arts, language and literature were all discussed in this form. Furthermore, the dialogue was an appropriate form for works which

33. For discussion, see IJsewijn 1977: 229–38; Marsh 1980.
34. For the Italian context, see Ordine 1988; Girardi 1989; Forno 1992; Vianello 1993; Zorzi Pugliese 1995; Paternoster 1998. Aristotelian dialogues are discussed in Bianchi 2000. For further bibliographical references, see Godard 2001: 13–23.
35. See Burke 1989; Cox 1992; Bianchi 2000.

were at once serious and playful. The Greek tradition of the "seriocomic" (*spoudogeloios*) is present in the works of Erasmus, Thomas More, Baldassarre Castiglione, and François Rabelais as well as in the author under discussion, Giordano Bruno.

A Renaissance dialogue may be anything from a language-teaching primer to a comic exchange of verses; anything from a primitive catechism to a debate on the immortality of the soul. For our present purposes, several types of classification are pertinent. First, a distinction can be made between "ornamental" and "dramatic" dialogues (see Rockwell 2003: chap. 6). A purely ornamental dialogue was used for didactic purposes, where the form and content do not in any organic sense interpenetrate or else where the content of the work is not in any sense modified or unsettled by the form of the dialogue. By contrast, truly dramatic dialogues give the reader a far more demanding role: we become actively engaged as vicarious participants and referees. A second classification is based on the distinction between (more or less) "documentary" and "fictional" forms of dialogue (Cox 1992: chap. 3): the former involves more or less historical figures (Plato, Cicero), while the latter does not (Lucian).[36]

In her study of the Renaissance dialogue, Virginia Cox (ibid.: xi) states that the concerns of most critics who have approached the genre tend to be either formal or epistemological, that is, the dialogue is scrutinized either as a work of art or as a vehicle for thought. Instead, Cox directs our attention to the social history of the dialogue, arguing that different forms of dialogue are stylizations of different forms of social interaction. For example, the fact that the great majority of (Italian) Renaissance dialogues conform, in certain key respects, to the Ciceronian model has a sociological rather than a literary rationale. It was the elitist stamp of the Ciceronian dialogue (based on deliberate imitation) which guaranteed its success in the cultural economy of the Italian courts.

Cox (ibid.: 34–46) has drawn attention to another important phenomenon: the enormous impact of printing on a culture which was still in many ways oral even among social elites. The extent to which men of letters continued to participate in a rich oral culture during the Renaissance is revealed by the number and importance of the more or less formal discussion groups often called "academies." By the second half of the sixteenth century, with the exploration of other types of dialogue than the Ciceronian, the dialogue had come of age, and in a relatively short time, from

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36. In the fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, Lucian was regarded as a reputable model for moralistic satire. After the Reformation, however, and particularly after 1550, his reputation declined, and he began to be represented as a subversive writer bent on undermining respect for philosophical, political, and religious authority.

1561 to 1585, three significant works on dialogue were written: by Carlo Sigonio (*De dialogo liber*, 1560), Sperone Speroni (*Apologia dei dialoghi*, 1574), and Torquato Tasso (*Dell'arte del dialogo*, 1585).[37] It is significant that these theories of dialogue appeared at a time when open dialogue was being suppressed in the name of Catholic orthodoxy. In dialogues produced in the last third of the century, there is an almost total absence of any thesis which offered a substantial challenge—however hedged with caveats and disclaimers—to the political or religious orthodoxies of the day (Cox 1992: 70–83). The theories arose in a climate that brought an end to the extraordinary output[38] of literary dialogues in Italy.[39]

Some views of the aforementioned theorists are pertinent to the issue under scrutiny. In his *Apologia*, Speroni (1596 [1574]: 523–24) distinguished between two kinds of dialogue, which we may describe as the reported dialogue and the representative one. The reported dialogue is like an ancient epic, in which the author narrates (like a historian) the actions and words of others. In the representative dialogue, the interlocutors are supposed to speak for themselves. Moreover, since the reported dialogue (which Speroni associates with Cicero and Xenophon) is like a history, where one does not report all facts but only the important ones, it should only report the worthwhile words of serious people. By contrast, the representative dialogue, associated with Lucian, is free to imitate the ridiculous and ignorant. Later, Tasso (1998 [1585]) distinguished among (1) representative or dramatic dialogues, which can be performed onstage and in which the characters directly express themselves; (2) historical or narrated dialogues, in which the narrator expresses his or her thoughts and reports what people say; and (3) mixed dialogues, in which there is a mixture of narration and direct representation of the dialogists' words. Needless to say, the formal distinction does not always hold; there are directly quoted dialogues in which the characters are so similar that they really seem like ornamental variations of the author's views. Likewise, there are narrated dialogues where the narration does not affect the lively differences between reported characters.

Bruno wrote outside Italy, of course, but he did not write outside the Italian dialogue tradition. Two features of his dialogues need to be mentioned here. First, he renounced the documentary mode of dialogue almost entirely. Second, in sharp contrast to his contemporary Italian colleagues,

37. See Cox 1992: 61–69.
38. See above, in particular notes 33–34.
39. In Sigonio's model of the dialogue all characters are great and admirable men; there is no room for courtesans and moneylenders. Tasso's work was written when he was paranoid about expressing heterodox views (see Rockwell 2003: chap. 6).

he vehemently attacked several forms of religious, philosophical, and political authority. Some important clues to his literary and philosophical intentions are furnished by the proemial letters to the Italian dialogues.

As is well known, the first three dialogues were dedicated to Michel de Castelnau, French ambassador in London, while *Expulsion* and *Heroic Frenzies* were dedicated to Philip Sidney, poet and major representative of the court of Elizabeth I of England (Puliafito 2004). Bruno, who arrived in England in the spring of 1583, enjoyed the patronage of both the ambassador and the poet as well as a certain benevolence from the queen (who protected him against the hostile academic environment), as mentioned by the philosopher with admiration in *Ash Wednesday Supper*, *On Cause*, and *Heroic Frenzies*. Usually, the proemial letters were the last part of a book to be composed and printed. Most probably, this also holds for Bruno's dialogues.[40] As concerns *Cabala*, Bruno suggests that he did not find a dedicatee who was willing to accept this "role" and thus, as was usual, to cover the expenses of printing the work. It is almost impossible to establish whether this is true or merely a literary artifice to underline the singular nature of the work. However, it seems reasonable to assume that, given the heterodox doctrinal implications of *Cabala*, Bruno simply failed to find a sponsor. As a matter of fact, although largely presented through hints and allusions, the anti-Christian drive of the work could be easily gathered by any contemporary reader. So it happened that *Cabala* came to have an ironical dedication addressed to an ecclesiastic, a certain don Sapatino, that is, Sabatino Savolino, a relative of the philosopher's mother, an obscure clerk whom Bruno elevates to bishop of Casamarciano (which was not a bishopric).

The proemial letters to the dialogues are relatively autonomous, because here the author speaks in the first person. Those epistles are interrelated and connect one dialogical work to another. From the epistle to *Ash Wednesday Supper* through that to the *Argument* of *Heroic Frenzies*, Bruno claims novelty for his own philosophy. This refers to the cosmology of the infinite and its "usefulness" in a radically renewed ethics, that is, a moral philosophy that accounts for the different roles that humans play in a universe which is no longer geo- or anthropocentric. The function of the autobiographical elements in the proemial letters should be inferred from this context. They show the author as the creator of a profound change and ready to accept the consequences of his actions, including sacrifice and

40. When *Ash Wednesday Supper* was in press, Bruno decided to carry out substantial modifications, although only in a limited number of copies, regarding the major part of dialogue II and the beginning of dialogue III. However, this did not affect the prefatory epistle. See Bruno 2002a, 1:579–89.

prosecution. This "messianic" strand of Bruno's work also explains why in the epistles he employs several images and metaphors that reinforce the distinction between the testimonies of truth and the deceitful figures which are all the more dangerous when disguised as benefactors of humankind (who promise an illusory happiness in another world).

Let us now examine how Bruno's drive toward cosmological and ethical reform is actualized in the dialogues: more specifically, how his intentions, as expressed in the proemial letters, are shaped by his literary and rhetorical craftsmanship.

3. Structure of the Italian Dialogues

Before analyzing the rhetorical structure of Bruno's dialogues (subsections 3.3–4), it would be useful to pay attention to two preliminary issues: the balance of power in his dialogues and the relationship between Bruno as an author and the interlocutors in his dialogues (subsections 3.1–2).

3.1. Balance of Power and a Polyphony of Voices

In a dialogue, there are close links between verbal exchange and extra-verbal situation.[41] The interlocutors alternate not only in the roles of speakers and hearers but also, on a more general level, in the roles of agents (or patients) of speech acts and agents (or patients) of (physical) actions. Several modes of interaction can be distinguished. First, a situation of two independent agents, each of whom is in a position to pursue his or her own intentions. Second, a relation between an independent and a dependent agent, which is based upon authority or power: agent A controls the behavior of agent B. Third, a situation with influencing and influenced agents, where the intentions of one agent are not blocked but only affected. Agent A tries to impose his or her intentions on the influenced agent B, who is in a position to accept or reject A's influence. If B accepts, he or she becomes a dependent agent: if B does not accept and A persists, the situation becomes one of conflict.

These possible situations yield a typology of dialogues. The first type is the harmonious, symmetrical dialogue, such as that characterized by spontaneous cooperation and ranging from a rational solution of a common problem to a friendly chat or an affectionate exchange between lovers. A second type is the authoritative, assymetrical dialogue, characterized by unequal, dominated interaction. This last type is the antagonistic dialogue, characterized by debates, polemics, arguments.

41. For the following division and scheme, see Doležel 1977.

Bruno's first two cosmological dialogues—*Ash Wednesday Supper* and *On Cause*—do not correspond to any single type but rather are a mix of authoritative (the long monologues of Teofilo and Filoteo), harmonious (the exchange between Teofilo and Smitho in *Ash Wednesday Supper* or between Filoteo and Dicsono in *On Cause*), and antagonistic intercourse (in particular, between Frulla and the pedant Prudenzio in *Ash Wednesday Supper* and between Gervasio and Polihimnio in *On Cause*). The third cosmological dialogue, *On the Infinite*, as well as the ethical dialogues—*Expulsion of the Triumphamt Beast*, *Cabala*, and *Heroic Frenzies*—can be described, except for some passages in *Cabala*, as more or less harmonious dialogues.

Let us now examine the relationship between author and spokesmen. In philosophical dialogues, where the contrast of the ideological dimension of different languages is important, characters tend to be exemplary representatives of the languages (social, professional, and regional background) they speak. In other words, characters tend to be simplified so that they become pure voices, identifiable to the reader as belonging to a certain class and profession. Obviously, the text of a dialogue cannot be simply cited as a source for the ideas of the author as if it were a monologue. What distinguishes the dialogue is the diversity of opinions and characters. A dialogue is a way of bringing different opinions together while preserving the voice of each opinion, that is, what Bakhtin (1981: 324) defined as polyphony; the interaction of different voices and the difference between what he calls "the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author."

The failure to account for the diversity of the voices in a dialogue leads to interpretative strategies that isolate some feature from the whole. Especially in philosophy, where our professional discourse is built around the comparison of ideas formulated in the voice of a recognized professional language, it is tempting, and not altogether unwarranted, to try to extract from a dialogue a single voice with a unified content. This is done in two ways: (1) you extract a single voice from within the dialogue, like that of Teofilo or Filoteo in the case under scrutiny, and consider it as the essential message of the whole; or (2) you take the whole as the single voice of the author, ignoring the differences between the voices. Neither of the strategies is entirely unwarranted, for the dialogue lends itself to being treated as an encyclopedia of voices on a subject that can be mined for variegated positions.

The danger of arbitrarily isolating voices arises when one tries to establish "exactly" what the author believed. Plato scholarship has struggled with this problem for centuries; one is tempted to think that this struggle

is the real legacy of Plato.[42] Readers can never be confident in their reading, so they must continually reinvent Plato through different interpretative moves. As will be pointed out below, Bruno's dialogues raise similar problems.

A helpful classification contrasts the "open" or skeptical dialogue with the closed or didactic form, making due allowance for texts which appear to be open but are really closed and vice versa. This broad distinction is gradable. Dialogues range accordingly from a mere catechism (which is little more than a monologue where a student asks a master questions, as in Scholastic colloquia), through more dramatic forms (where the situation may be just as important as the speeches), to disputations (different points of view are expressed; one speaker is allowed to win, more or less subtly), to conversation (impossible to identify the author with any point of view; the meaning develops out of the interaction among the different characters). From what follows, it will become clear that Bruno's dialogues can be viewed as relatively closed dialogues, as they permit the individuation of the author's views.

3.2. Bruno's Views and the Interlocutors

The dialectic of argument in Bruno's dialogues is not structured in the frame of a discussion between a spokesman and a clearly defined interlocutor or antagonist. Although the pedants who oppose Teofilo and Filoteo, in *Ash Wednesday Supper* and *On Cause*, respectively, have no apparent function in the (doctrinal) exposition of the author's views and in the underpinning and demonstration of his arguments, their (parodic) role should not be underestimated, as will emerge below. Furthermore, the impact of other interlocutors is anything but marginal with respect to the role of the major spokesman.

Except for the proemial epistles already mentioned, Bruno does not appear in the first person in his Italian dialogues. The interlocutor Teofilo or Filoteo, who figures in the first three dialogues (*Ash Wednesday Supper*, *On Cause*, *On the Infinite*) is an alter ego of the Nolan, more precisely the "faithful herald of the Nolan philosophy."[43] Yet, ideas and views of Bruno are also expressed by other interlocutors, supporting the position of the Nolan. This (dis)appearance of the author is programmatic: Bruno intentionally eschews the dialogic scheme of a master who expounds and a pupil

42. See also Jonathan Lavery's contribution, "Plato's *Protagoras* and the Frontier of Genre Research," in part one of this special issue.
43. *De la causa*, in Bruno 2002a, 1:746. Recall that Bruno was born in Nola (near Naples) and that in the Italian dialogues he often presented himself and his philosophy as the "Nolan."

who passively listens.[44] As to the channel employed for the dissemination of philosophical views, the Italian dialogues implicitly refer to a classical interpretation of the Platonic dialogue, where Socrates appeared as a master of dialectical truth rather than of a particular "school." However, while in this view of Plato's works the author's master was among the main spokesmen, in Bruno's dialogues this task is assigned to an alleged pupil, who is presented as totally committed, even addicted, to the author's philosophical views.[45]

The multifaceted relationship between Bruno and his spokesmen is a literary invention and thus the effect of a precise rhetorical construction. It is inspired by Bruno's critique of traditional philosophy. Philosophical research and teaching should not be conditioned by one particular school, but should rather consist in an open confrontation of doctrines and views from all kinds of schools. In the six dialogues, authority is a central issue, whether it concerns scientific, religious, or moral authority, and Bruno's approach aims at avoiding the creation of new "absolute" authorities.

One of the principal aims of Bruno's rhetoric is virtually unique to him. Unlike most of the classical and contemporary dialogues, the exchange between the interlocutors in his Italian dialogues consciously highlights the *genealogy* of the views regarding the issue under discussion. The interlocutors are not merely functional in the logic of demonstrating the views of the spokesman, but rather represent, or most of the time suggest, different points of view, so as to reveal the "history" (in the sense of the Latin *historia*) of the actual views of the author. The recurrent use of expressions such as "I remember," "as I once thought," etc. by the interlocutors of the dialogue are part of this strategy.

Apparently, every dialogue has a distinct spokesman, who in the first dialogues is named Teofilo or Filoteo. However, as noted before, secondary figures, such as Smitho, Dicsono, and Elpinio, although important interlocutors, are certainly not antagonists. Rather, they often represent views that the author once held or ideas that he now only partly endorses. Thus, the author's voice is split up into main and secondary spokesmen, and the exposition of philosophical views is not the outcome of the dialectical intercourse between spokesman and antagonist(s) but develops, as it were, "organically."

It thus seems reasonable to assume that Bruno's main interest is not—

44. In effect, this scheme was inverted in *Candelaio*, where the figures of "pupil" and "servant" are depicted as more positive characters than those of *magister* and patron.
45. Such as Teofilo and Filoteo, introduced in *Ash Wednesday Supper* and *On Cause*, respectively, as "faithful followers" of the Nolan philosophy.

or at least not always—a thorough demonstration of his views; rather, he intends to reveal or to suggest their "organic" emergence, that is, as they developed over time. Most illustrative are Teofilo's remarks on Copernicus in *Ash Wednesday Supper*: "at first I thought that Copernicus was utterly absurd, then I held it for probable, while I now endorse it with absolute certainty."[46]

This sheds a new light on the complex role of the pedants in the economy of the dialogues: they are certainly not to be viewed as "real" antagonists, but they are not even "fake" antagonists either. Rather, they represent (fragments of) views held by Bruno in the past. Eventually, Bruno's current views appear, and theses come out through many channels. In *Ash Wednesday Supper*, he even grants the pedant the honor of pronouncing the final words. Thus, the conclusions in the dialogues are not the outcome of a strict and linear dialectical procedure but arise from a "gestational" development through several stages. Thus, Bruno's dialogues do not report disputes in which the participants aim only to win and show off but rather depict conversations between individuals who sincerely desire to learn from the other.

Strictly linked to this distinctive tendency is the absence of psychological depth in the interlocutors in Bruno's dialogues (on which more below). Psychological coloring is not what primarily interested him, because all interlocutors are ultimately functional in bringing to the fore views that the author intends to present.

In this context, something needs to be said about Bruno's use of "historical" figures as dialogic interlocutors. In the past, more or less precise identifications have been proposed for some interlocutors. In *Ash Wednesday Supper*, for example, Smitho has been identified as a certain John Smith,[47]

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46. See Teofilo's speech addressed to Torquato and Nundinio in *Cena*: "Per il che voglio che sappiate, ch'io prima ch'avesse questa posizione per cosa certissima, alcuni anni a dietro la tenni semplicemente vera. Quando ero più giovane e men savio, la stimai verisimile. Quando ero più principiante nelle cose speculative, la tenni sì fattamente falsa, che mi maravigliavo d'Aristotele che non solo non si sdegnò di farne considerazione, ma anco spese più de la mittà del secondo libro *Del cielo e mondo* forzandosi dimostrar che la terra non si muova. Quando ero putto et a fatto senza intelletto speculativo, stimai che creder questo era una pazzia" (Bruno 2002a, 1:535–36). "For I want you to know that some years ago, before becoming certain of my position, I considered it as simply true; when I was still younger and less wise, I thought it was probable; when I was a novice in speculation, I thought it so obviously false I marvelled that not only did Aristotle not disdain to take it [the mobility of the earth] into consideration, but he spent more than half of the second book of *De caelo et mundo* attempting to demonstrate the immobility of the earth. When I was a stripling, without any speculative intelligence at all, I thought that to believe it was folly" (Bruno 1995 [1977]: 187).
47. Cf. Aquilecchia in Bruno 1955: 82.

while some scholars have argued that Eliotropio in the first dialogue of *On Cause* could be John Florio (1553–1625).[48] In this same work, there figures Dicsono, who corresponds to Alexander Dicson (1558–1604).[49] Several scholars hold that Fracastorio in *On the Infinite* has been modeled upon the Venetian physician Girolamo Fracastoro (1478–1553);[50] while the interlocutor Albertino, whom we encounter in the fifth dialogue, has been identified as Alberico Gentili (1552–1608), the Italian jurist who moved to England.[51] In *Heroic Frenzies*, in addition to Luigi Tansillo,[52] Vincenzo Spampanato has hypothesized several historical identifications, all related to the Nolan environment of the philosopher's youth. They include namely Cicada, Cesarino, Maricondo (also called Mariconda), Severino, Minutolo, as well as two female figures—Laodomia and Giulia—who appear as interlocutors in the final dialogue of the group.[53]

It should be borne in mind that Bruno does not care about possible anachronisms: he introduces historical persons such as Girolamo Fracastoro and Luigi Tansillo into a contemporary scene and involves them in the exposition of his own philosophical views. Nor did he bother about the (psychological) likeness between the interlocutors Eliotropio and Albertino and the historical figures of John Florio and Alberico Gentili. In effect, the informed reader may have good reasons for doubt about Florio and Gentili as convinced defenders of the Nolan philosophy.[54] But these considerations do not affect the broader aims of the dialogical structure or Bruno's more specific philosophical intentions. In his Italian dialogues, Bruno is not interested in any presumed "realism" or respect for "historical" likelihood. Rather, he aims at a dramatic characterization that will strengthen the expressive individuality of the interlocutors and that will be useful from an argumentative and rhetorical point of view. Thus, regarding the interlocu-

48. Proposed by Yates 1934: 103–4; cf. Bruno 2002a, 1:614n1.
49. Cf. Bruno 2002a, 1:645n1.
50. Cf. Bruno 2002, 2:14n10. Fracastoro was the author of a homocentric astronomical system, geocentric but alternative to Ptolemy.
51. Berti 1889: 186; Ludwig Kuhlenbeck in Bruno 1904–9, 3:233; Aquilecchia 1993c: 382–85.
52. The poet Luigi Tansillo (1510–1568), who was much appreciated by Bruno. In *Ash Wednesday Supper*, Bruno quoted passages of Tansillo's *Vendemmiatore* (2002a, 1:456). In *Heroic Frenzies*, four sonnets by Tansillo are quoted, among which the well-known *Poi che spiegat' ho l'ali al bel desio* (ibid., 2:568–69).
53. Spampanato 1921, 2:37, 53, 64–65.
54. John Florio and Bruno were acquainted and probably friends. Florio was active as a teacher of Italian and published grammars and vocabularies. As far as is known, he did not have specific philosophical interests (for discussion, see Wyatt 2005). Alberico Gentili was a convinced Protestant and polemized with Catholicism, while Bruno criticized both from a philosophical point of view but in the end preferred Catholicism to Protestantism (see Mignini 2000).

tors in his dialogues, Bruno prefers a linguistic-expressive characterization to psychological and historical verisimilitude.

In the previous subsection, we saw that Bruno's dialogues are relatively closed in the sense that they allow the individuation of one privileged spokesman. Here we have established that one of his underlying motivations for adopting the dialogic form was probably the possibility, inherent to this literary genre, of suggesting the gestation of philosophical views. Let us now examine other structural aspects of these works.

3.3. Rhetoric in the Cosmological Dialogues

In the first three Italian dialogues, Bruno presented and defended his cosmological and broad ontological views, pivoting on the movement of the Earth, the infinity of the universe, the plurality of worlds, and the substantial unity of reality, that is, the view of the infinite universe as a unique substance. The continuity of these dialogues is corroborated by the presence of an interlocutor who, under the name Teofilo or Filoteo, represents and defends Bruno's views.

Ash Wednesday Supper is built upon the subtle intermingling of reality and fiction. Three narrative levels can be distinguished. First, in the proemial letter, Bruno addresses his patron Michel de Castelnau, ambassador of France in England, insisting that his work should be interpreted allegorically. On a second level, the imaginary dialogue develops among four characters: the philosopher Teofilo, the English gentleman Smitho, and two comic figures, Frulla and the pedant Prudenzio. A dialogue reported by Teofilo constitutes the third level: an earlier (reported) debate on the cosmology of Copernicus, situated in the house of the noble Englishman Fulke Greville, between a philosopher called the Nolan and two English Aristotelians with fictional names. As in all the dialogues, "the Nolan" refers to Bruno himself, but the character and the author cannot be identified tout court. His feats are narrated by an intermediate fictitious figure, Teofilo. Many of Teofilo's views refer to a historical scientific debate, but we are not informed about its precise place and date. Thus, the dialogue presents three narrative instances: the author speaking in the proemial letter, the main interlocutor Teofilo, and the Nolan, whose opinions are reported only, not presented directly, but who consists as the highest authority.

Why did Bruno hide behind these fictional and discursive doubles? Anne Godard (2001: 164–70) has argued convincingly that in *Ash Wednesday Supper* Bruno intends to represent the real difficulties of satisfying the conditions for an argumentative discussion and to show the fictional possibility of achieving ideal practical conditions. The Nolan had been involved in a

fruitless dialogue with the English Aristotelians. His failure, which is told and commented upon by Teofilo, dramatizes the impossibility of a preliminary agreement on the rules of a free discussion.[55] The adversaries of the Nolan, animated by a presumed wisdom, are not inclined to give ear to his arguments. Nundinio, the first antagonist, limits himself to begging the question: the Earth cannot move, because it is the center of the universe. Torquato is even worse: he lacks the rudimentary mathematical knowledge needed to grasp Copernicus's arguments, which the Nolan attempts to explain. But the failure of the Nolan is followed by the success of Teofilo, who moves in a utopian, fictional space. The fictional alter ego of the author successfully defends the theories of the Nolan, who failed to do so in the real world apropos those of Copernicus. Bruno has constructed a double distance: between Copernicus and the Nolan and between the latter and Teofilo. Bruno thus presents a dramatis persona who is a philosophical authority that does not coincide completely with himself but who, like himself, aims at universal persuasion.

Ash Wednesday Supper also adds a messianic dimension to the enterprise of the Nolan: in the second dialogue, Teofilo recounts the difficulties met by the Nolan on the way to dinner through a dark and hostile London. The story highlights his "sufferings," the obstacles, the brutality of the people on the streets; it compares the Thames to the Styx and presents the Nolan as ready to sacrifice himself for the victory of truth (Bruno 2002a, 1:485). The philosopher described by Teofilo is a sort of messiah, who brings a new "gospel" of such audacity that it cannot be presented directly. Both Christ and the Nolan are prophets who are neglected and ignored in their homelands. In order to destroy the traditional system of authority, *Ash Wednesday Supper* presents a disarticulation of discourse, which in a certain sense reflects the decentralization of human beings in the Copernican world.

On Cause displays a narrative structure that is quite similar to that of *Ash Wednesday Supper*. The author "hides" himself behind the Nolan, whose views this time are explained and defended by two interlocutors—a major spokesman, Teofilo, and a minor spokesman, Dicsono. Gervasio, as a comical character, plays a role in the third dialogue, where he provokes the pedant Polihimnio to exhibit the most ridiculous aspects of his behav-

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55. *Cena*: "per che altrimente non è possibile saper, circa una arte o scienza, dubitar et interrogar a proposito, e con gli ordini che si convengono, se non ha udito prima. Non potrà mai esser buono inquisitore e giodice del caso, se prima non s'è informato del negocio" (Bruno 2002a, 1:463). "For it is impossible to know how to doubt and to inquire purposefully, and with profitable system, about any art or field of knowledge, if one has not first listened. One will never be a good examiner and judge of an issue if he has not first informed himself about the matter" (Bruno 1995 [1977]: 97).

ior (see in particular Bruno 2002a, 1:635). In *Ash Wednesday Supper*, dialogue II narrated an earlier event, the journey through dark and menacing London. In *On Cause*, by contrast, the discussion of cause, principle, and unity is preceded by a defense of the views presented in the previous work.

On Cause presents three central sections (dialogues II–IV) where the literary form of the dialogue assumes a substantial function in the exposition of the author's central views on cause and principle. In a discussion with Dicsono, who represents the "materialistic" strand of Bruno's thought, Teofilo explains that in the past he had endorsed a similar position, that is, a comparatively radical materialism, but that over time he arrived at a more balanced ontology based on two equivalent principles: soul and matter. *On Cause* ends with a long monologue interspersed with short and rather insignificant interruptions (at least from a rhetorical point of view) delivered by Teofilo as a hymn on the unity of reality.

Among the cosmological dialogues, *On the Infinite Universe and Worlds* is the work that has a form most similar to that of a scholarly treatise, as it is wholly devoted to a "didactic" and fully explicit defense of Bruno's views on the infinite universe. In the dialogues among Filoteo, Elpino, Fracastorio, Albertino, and Burchio, Bruno emphasizes again the "collaborative" character of knowledge. Elpino and Albertino (appearing only in the fifth dialogue) initially presented an Aristotelian point of view, but they are easily convinced by Filoteo's arguments for an infinite universe without any center at all. Fracastorio, most probably modeled on Girolamo Fracastoro (see previous section), also has a positive role in the development of Bruno's argumentation (particularly in the third dialogue), while Burchio represents the unvanquished, intransigent Aristotelian.

3.4. The Structure of the Moral Dialogues

In the cosmological dialogues Teofilo/Filoteo is a follower of the "Nolan philosophy." His commitment to Bruno's philosophy is not dogmatic but the result of quite a long and complicated journey, articulated as the different phases of a cognitive process: from sense to reason and eventually to the level of intellectual and intuitive knowledge. The interlocutors in the first three dialogues become gradually and progressively convinced of the value of the Nolan philosophy. The interchange among speakers gets more complicated in the moral dialogues (*Cabala of Pegasus*, *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, *Heroic Frenzies*), where a central spokesman, such as Teofilo or Filoteo, is lacking. Here, Bruno's views on ethics, politics, and the destiny of human soul are presented and articulated by several interlocutors. The central view in these works concerns the intimate link between moral and natural philosophy. The ontology of the One-All ("Uno-Tutto")

and the cosmology of the infinite universe are the basis for founding and promoting a new ethics. However, the latter, based on the conception of an indivisible and infinite Worldsoul, cannot be developed with the same "certainty" that characterized Bruno's natural philosophy in the first dialogues. Thus, in the proemial epistle to *Expulsion*, probably the most specifically "moral" work of the later three dialogues, Bruno (2002a, 2:177, 179) states that he intends to speak not assertively ("assertivamente") but in an "indefinite" way ("indefinitamente").

Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast divides into three dialogues—each subdivided into three parts—with three interlocutors: Sofia, Saulino,[56] and Mercurio. Sofia represents human wisdom, which is related to the art of nature and thus seen as a principle of contraries and as distinct from a superior "divine wisdom"; this wisdom—as Bruno (2002a, 2:363) states in the third dialogue of this work—pertains to the absolute God that "has nothing to do with the human world," since he does not contact human beings directly but only through nature. Mercurio enters the scene as interlocutor at the end of the first and the second dialogues. His contribution is rather limited in importance when compared with that of Sofia (who has the most significant role in the economy of the narrative) and Saulino. It should be kept in mind, however, that Mercurio's role in *Expulsion*, as in the mythological tradition, is that of a mediator between the divine world and the realm of human wisdom, while Sofia's function is to communicate this wisdom to Saulino, who represents passive reception without being deprived of wit.[57] It seems reasonable to assume that Saulino, characterized by his ironical questioning, represents the author's views, provoking, as he does, the analysis of issues from several points of view.

In *Expulsion*, which considers the ethics and religion of the "ancients" and the "moderns," Bruno compared the natural religion of Egypt and the civil religion of the Greeks and the Romans with the religion of the Jews and Christians, which had conquered Europe. As is well known, Bruno harshly criticized both Judaism and Christianity on philosophical grounds for having lost or obscured the "Egyptian" view of the divine as wholly communicated to nature. He also launched a vitriolic attack on Protestantism, because it put forth the justification through faith, to the detriment

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56. Spampanato (1921, 1:49, 64n4) identified this figure as Andrea Savolino, nephew of Bruno's mother. This hypothesis has been adopted by Giovanni Gentile and other scholars; cf. Bruno 1958, 2:571n1.

57. See the title page of the work: "Spaccio de la bestia trionfante, proposto da Giove . . . revelato da Mercurio, recitato da Sofia, udito da Saulino," that is, "The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast, proposed by Jove . . . revealed by Mercury, narrated by Sophia, heard by Saulino."

of good works. These are the basic views that inform Bruno's moral and religious criticisms in this work.

In *Expulsion*, Bruno proposes a reform of the moral realm, using the literary artifice of a purification of the mythological pagan heavens with their forty-eight constellations listed by Ptolemy. As to the fables associated with the constellations, Bruno referred in particular to Hyginus's astronomical treatise (first century BC).[58] The reform, involving the "expulsion" of the vices as well as of the related negative constellations, is staged on an Olympus suspended among past, present, and future. There, Jupiter summons the gods in order to put an end to the dominion of vice as expressed by several constellations: this functions allegorically as Bruno's characterization of Europe in his own time, that is, Christian Europe torn by the wars of religion. It should be borne in mind that Bruno considers the heavens, in particular the eighth heaven of ancient cosmology (the firmament or sphere of the fixed stars) not in a physical but in an allegorical and moral sense. Thus, the "ancient" cosmology, and in particular the heaven of the constellations, is a mere starting point for a moral discourse.[59] As has been noted before, in Bruno's view, heaven as a physical space is infinite, and the celestial and crystalline spheres are fictitious. All planetary spheres, as well as those ranging from the eighth to the tenth, are just a product of fantasy.

Modern readers may be puzzled by Bruno's attack on Jewish and Christian monotheism while attempting to reform paganism as well. There is a conceptual link behind this particular joint criticism, however. In Bruno's view, Greek paganism and traditional monotheism represent two forms of losing the ancient Egyptian view of the divine as totally communicated to nature. In monotheism, a transcendent God prevails over a "deus in rebus," while paganism is criticized for having introduced intollerable forms of anthropomorphism, including vices, into divine reality. From the play of dialogic voices in *Expulsion*, it clearly emerges that both lost the correct view of the interrelation among God, nature, and human beings.

The *Cabala of Pegasus*, together with the short dialogue *L'asino cillenico*, is one of Bruno's most radically antihumanist and anti-Christian works. It centers in a harsh polemic against the central position of human beings in reality—more specifically, against the immortality of the individual soul—and (again) the anthropomorphic view of God. The references made there to the doctrine of the transmigration of the human soul should be interpreted in this context. Bruno (2002a, 2:452) speaks about the "metamfisi-

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58. A modern edition is Hygin 1983.
59. Cf. *Spaccio*, in Bruno 2002a, 2:185.

cosi" or "transcorporazione de tutte l'anime" (that is, the transfer of soul from one body to another), but actually he views the substance of soul as unique and indivisible. In effect, it should be borne in mind that the substantial unity of soul is the basic view of *Cabala* and that the transmigration of souls has a mere allegorical sense, serving a specific purpose: to ridicule the (stupid) Christian image of human beings (see Spruit 2003).

In addition to the dedicatory epistle, *Cabala* presents an ample *Declamazione* addressed to the "studious, devout and pious reader." The work divides into three dialogues, the third of which is very short (less than two pages). The interlocutor who recurs throughout the work is the Saulino of *Expulsion*, representing the author's point of view. The other interlocutors are: Sebasto (who asks the questions), Coribante (representing the pedant), Onorio (who in previous lives was an ass but also the mythological horse Pegasus as well as Aristotle), and Alvaro (who utters only one line at the end of the work). The interlocutors in *L'Asino cillenico* are: the Ass, Micco Pitagorico,[60] and Mercurio. As suggested already by the title, the dialogue is centered upon "asinità" or stupidity, discussed by Bruno from a positive and a negative point of view. These viewpoints correspond to Mercurio's double and ambigous nature: messenger of the gods and god of language and communication, on the one hand, as well as god of deceit and mischief, on the other. As Bruno (2002a, 2:483) states, Mercurio is a "man among men, woman among women, wretched among the wretched, blessed among the blessed, all among all."

Also taken up later are the ethical and psychological-theoretical issues that were formulated but left unresolved in *Expulsion* (the substantiality of soul and thus the ontology of human beings). Vis-à-vis these issues, *Cabala* represents the *pars destruens*, while the last Italian dialogue, *Heroic Frenzies*, constitutes, as it were, the *pars construens*. This work focuses upon the human soul, whose metaphysical essence in *Cabala* was considered a mere illusion, because a manifestation of the unique soul. Bruno (2002a, 2:726) argues that a human being is the "author" of one's own essence through one's own activity and deeds as well as in virtue of the search for a reason underlying one's existence, which tends to be directed toward universal ends: "because the human soul aspires to universal truth and good, and is not satisfied with his own kind [i.e., humankind] only." In this sense, the human soul realizes itself fully in an *amor dei intellectualis*.

Heroic Frenzies is one of the better-known expressions of the Renaissance "philosophy of love" as it developed from Marsilo Ficino through Pico della Mirandola to Leone Ebreo (Judah Abravanel). The work has a com-

60. Recall that "micco" means "stupid" or "shortsighted."

plicated structure, and its philosophical and literary sources have been intensively debated.[61] It falls into two parts, each of which is in turn sub-divided into five dialogues. Thus, there are ten dialogues in all, a number that corresponds to the ten interlocutors staged by the work. In the first part there appear Tansillo and Cicada (dialogues I–V). In the second part there appear Cesarino and Maricondo (dialogues I–II), Liberio and Laodonio (dialogue III), Severino and Minutolo (dialogue IV), and Laodomia and Giulia (dialogue V).

Formally, the work can be viewed as a collection of poems with commentary. The text contains numerous sonnets and presents an intricate alternation of poetry and prose, thus referring to a well-known traditon in Italian literature, running from Dante Alighieri's *Vita nova* to Tommaso Campanella's *Scelta d'alcune poesie filosofiche*.[62] Also, while earlier dialogues already included sonnets and poems,[63] only in *Heroic Frenzies* does the very structure of the text turn upon the poetic word and its interpretation.

The central topic of *Heroic Frenzies* is the inner "reform of natural acts and emotions," which in *Expulsion* was viewed as the groundwork for an authentic reform of the external world, that is, the world of values and civilization. Indeed, the ethical strand of this dialogue is intimately linked to issues regarding human knowledge, as the intellect is thought to fix the objects and aims of the will.

Heroic Frenzies, in particular dialogue V of part I and the first two dialogues of part II, presents and discusses twenty-eight emblems, or "imprese," as Bruno calls them. There are no illustrations in the text, the emblems being only described. They are accompanied by a saying ("motto") and a poem and followed by an interpretation. In the case of both the poem and the emblem, Bruno emphasizes creative (poetic and figurative) expression as a "contracted anticipation": it has the capacity to conceal an enigmatic and prophetic content, which will be explained in the comment.

Besides the preliminary sonnet and the four sonnets by Luigi Tansillo, this philosophical dialogue contains seventy-seven sonnets composed by Bruno, some of which had been published already (with slight variants) in *On Cause*. Bruno suggests that some of the poems in *Heroic Frenzies* date

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61. See Tocco 1892: 526–29; Nelson 1958. Cf. the notes by Granada and Tirinnanzi in Bruno 1999b: 1347 and Bruno 2000b: 1455, respectively.

62. Dante's *Vita nuova* dates back to the period 1291–93; it was published for the first time in 1576. A critical modern edition is in Dante Alighieri 1999. *Scelta d'alcune poesie filosofiche* by Campanella was published in 1622; see the edition in Campanella 1954: 3–230.

63. See, for example, the sonnets "Al mal contento" in *La Cena de le Ceneri*, "De l'Amore" in *De la causa* (Bruno 2002a, 1:429 and 612–13). See also the three sonnets at the outset of *De l'infinito* (ibid., 2:30–31).

back to an earlier period, probably the time of his Neapolitan studies,[64] and it seems reasonable to assume that he was acquainted with local literary circles in Naples, which in those days followed the Petrarchan tradition for the most part. However, although the sonnets present Petrarchan rhythms and motives, Bruno harshly attacks this very tradition in *Heroic Frenzies*.[65] By contast, his poems are meant to be expressions of a "philosophical poetry," that is, inspired by the love for nature, viewed as the living manifestation of God, rather than by the love for a woman. Thus, analyzing divine love—although in a particular way—Bruno examines a different model than usual, namely, sacred poetry, with the aim to clarify possible similarities and differences vis-à-vis his own poetry. With this in view, he uses as an example the most celebrated sacred text on (divine) love, the Old Testament's Song of Songs. Bruno specifies, however, that his poems do not refer to a transcendent God. Further, he emphasizes that his philosophical discourse is "natural and physical" (Bruno 2002a, 2:495). Consequently, the metaphors he employs have a different role from those of the Song of Songs. In the latter work, they refer to a transcendent God, while in *Heroic Frenzies* they refer to that which is totally immanent in nature.[66]

Bruno's naturalism also colors the recurrent Platonic and Neoplatonic topics and terminology,[67] which in *Heroic Frenzies* intermingle with the Aristotelian and in particular with the Averroist tradition. Now, the Averroists' supreme happiness consists "in the perfection of the speculative sciences" (Bruno 2002a, 2:567). Bruno suggests, however, that a similar perfection should not be attributed to the "supreme object"—the one supremely good and intelligible—but to our intellect. Thus, the infinite divine object can be sought for "infinitely," but it can never be attained completely by human beings (ibid.).

In *Heroic Frenzies*, the dialogue form is used to represent not different opinions, but primarily different levels of philosophical theory and practice, of word and vision, of revelation and transmission. Here the literary genre is used to translate a vision, to transpose a knowledge of hetero-

64. Bruno arrived in Naples about 1562.
65. For discussion, see Hersant 2006.
66. For the function of metaphors, see *Argomento* in *Heroic Frenzies* (Bruno 2002a, 2, 495–96): "The other for the great dissimilarity which is seen between the appearance of this work and that one, even though the same mystery and psychic substance is concealed under the shadow of the one and the other; for no one doubts that the first idea of the Sage was to represent things divine rather than to present other things; with him the figure is openly and manifestly a figure, and the metaphorical sense is understood in such a way that it cannot be denied to be metaphorical" (translation by P. E. Memmo).
67. For discussion, see Canone 2003: 79–120.

geneous, non-propositional nature into the domain of discourse. In the ongoing discussion between the interlocutors, the dialogue touches upon several aspects of the relation between the soul and divine beauty. The relations between lover and loved are theorized through an analysis of the incomplete and painful relation of terrestrial lovers. Beyond the mimetic or narrative form of the representation, even beyond the discursive form, the dialogue suggests two different metalevels: one is literary, namely, the commentary on itself, and one is philosophical: a reality that can be touched only by means of the drive of will.

4. Conclusion

In Bruno's view, truth can be sought in various ways. His works argue for methodological pluralism in philosophical research. This fundamental pluralism determines his view of the relative value of literary and philosophical genres. His sharp criticisms of pedants and grammatici and his violent attacks upon all sorts of philosophical, political, and religious authority must also be derived from this philosophical inspiration. However, Bruno's use of various literary and philosophical genres influenced the shape of his works and, at least partly, their content. Specifically, the dialogue form adopted into his Italian enables Bruno to suggest or even work out the "genealogy" of his views, to discuss several aspects of various theoretical positions and their interrelations, to persuade the reader by means other than the direct presentation of "pure" or "bare" philosophical doctrines.

In general, the genre of a work conveys something of the author's posture toward the reader and the intentional purpose of the work. As a matter of fact, *Ash Wednesday Supper* (dialogues) and *De immenso* (poems and commentaries in prose) largely discuss the same subject matter, that is, cosmology after Copernicus. However, these works presuppose not so much different audiences but rather different relationships between the author and his audience, which are embedded or implicit in the respective genres of the two works. With the dialogue form, Bruno is issuing a program for cosmological and ethical reform which is innovative under several respects. His program is not traditional, because, having chosen this form, Bruno is not obliged to situate his own position in relation to all relevant theoretical alternatives available. Furthermore, this program is not dogmatic either, because Bruno intentionally hides himself behind a fictitious spokesman who, as a faithful follower of the Nolan philosophy, enters into debates with interlocutors whose positions represent fragments of truth. The specific relationship between author and spokesman and the

dialectic of the *civil conversazione* between the interlocutors in the dialogues express the desire for intimacy and the reality of separation. In this sense, they lay the ground for a certain kind of "incarnation," as it were, of the cosmological and ethical reform that Bruno had in mind, because they implicitly invite the reader to join a community rather than to endorse a specific view.

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