
Review: Giulio Gisoni, “*Profonda Magia*”: *Vincolo, Natura e Politica in Giordano Bruno*.

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In “*Profonda Magia*”: *Vincolo, natura e politica in Giordano Bruno* (2020) – written in Italian – Giulio Gisoni embarks on an intellectual journey through the writings of Giordano Bruno, a rebellious 16th century Italian, Dominican monk turned philosopher, metaphysician, and cosmological theorist. Gisoni seeks to unravel the meeting point of Bruno’s natural and political philosophies and identifies Bruno’s concept of *vinculum* (bond) as the crucial junction between politics and nature. Gisoni assumes that his readers are familiar with complex philosophical arguments, as he frequently employs highly technical language; an approach that may present a challenge for those who are only beginning to explore the philosophical relationship between magic, nature, and politics in the Renaissance.

Positioning himself within a historiographical tradition shaped by Antonio Corsano, Fulvio Papi, Paolo Rossi, Eugenio Garin, Cesare Vasoli, and others, Gisoni examines the connection between Bruno’s magical writings and his natural philosophy. This tradition challenges the popular reading of Bruno in the anglosphere during the 1960s, primarily through the studies of Frances Yates (1899–1981), who cast Bruno merely as a Hermetic *magus*. Gisoni instead reveals Bruno to be a thinker who sought to demystify theology and naturalise magic, aligning physics with metaphysics; realms that had previously been divided by the Aristotelian and Scholastic traditions.

Chapter I explores the historical and philosophical sources which shaped Bruno’s interpretation of *vinculum*, from pre-Socratic to Renaissance philosophy. In **Chapter II** Gisoni traces Bruno’s effort to demystify occultism, transforming it into *physica magica* (natural magic), and highlighting Bruno’s understanding of nature as a living bond of love (*vinculum amoris*) uniting the multiple manifestations of Being into oneness. The analysis surrounding the relationship of ‘unity and multiplicity’ of Being deepens in **Chapter III**, as Gisoni explores Bruno’s revival of the ideas of Avicenna (ca. 1021–1070) and David de

Dinant (1160–1217), both of whom saw matter as divine substance. Rejecting the scholastic rupture between physics and metaphysics, Gisondi paints Bruno as restoring such unity. In this view, the study of Being is identical to the study of Nature in its self-moving and self-creating capacity, refusing to separate the investigation of physical phenomena (physics) from the pursuit of first principles and causes (first philosophy-theology). Through the reconciliation of Parmenidean Being with the Heraclitean conception of Becoming, Bruno crafted his unique philosophical approach based on a universal monism wherein the one and the many, the infinite and the finite, coincide within a living cosmos as the perpetual vicissitude of Being. Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) emerges as a major figure of influence in Bruno’s reconciliation of the Aristotelian categories of ‘matter and form’ via the Cusanian *coincidentia oppositorum* (coincidence of opposites).

In **Chapter IV**, Gisondi shows how Bruno rejected the Aristotelian and Scotist error of placing logic before the natural world, thus subordinating the physical to conceptual logic. Gisondi notes how Bruno deciphered the Christian Trinity, reinterpreting this tripartite relationship within the Aristotelian dualism of ‘act and potency’ in nature. The result of Gisondi’s analysis is a natural trinity composed of matter, form, and *vinculum*; a lexicon that Catholic theology had appropriated from natural philosophy through centuries of exegesis. This analysis marks a decisive moment in Bruno’s naturalisation of dogma: theological categories are reabsorbed into physics, demystifying the Catholic trinity into natural categories.

The link between natural philosophy and politics is forged in **Chapter V**. Gisondi analyses Bruno’s concept of *vinciens* (a ‘hunter of souls’) as the one who asserts control over others through natural forces of attraction and repulsion; the same forces that operate upon elemental matter within the natural world. The *vinculum* thus acquires anthropological and political meaning. In *De vinculis in genere*, Bruno transformed natural magic into a human science of bindings, grounded in the universal *vinculum amoris* that unites all beings. In **Chapter VI**, the analysis of Bruno’s views on religion is presented. Gisondi notes that Bruno redefined religion as the institution administering moral and social laws since Scripture is not concerned with speculations about the natural world. To Bruno, religion’s purpose is not to glorify god(s), but to strengthen communal life among citizens.

Modern scholars are similarly concerned with the notion of political religion. Notably Eric Voegelin (1901–1985) in his work *Political Religions*, *The New Science of Politics*, and *Science, Politics and Gnosticism* (1952–1958), and Emilio Gentile (b. 1946) in his *Politics as*

Religion (2003) argue how immanentistic and eschatological ideas shaped modern totalitarian movements via ersatz religious ideologies and their desire for absolutism. Gisondi's interpretation of Bruno's *vinculum* provides a framework to bind the natural, the political and the religious. Bruno's *vinciens* foreshadowed the totalitarian desire to impose a perfect social order via the binding of humans to their leader(s). And therein lies Bruno's warning about the destruction of multiplicity, the very tension among opposites that sustains cosmic, natural and civic life.

Profonda Magia illuminates Bruno's *vinculum* as crucial to understanding the continuum between pre-Socratic natural philosophy, medieval and Renaissance philosophy, with modern eschatological and immanentistic political theories. Gisondi's study not only restores the depth of Bruno's synthesis of nature and politics but also exposes its lasting relevance: the danger of any system, religious or political, that seeks to erase the vital plurality which freedom and diversity depend on.