The Nolan [Giordano Bruno]. . . has released the human spirit, and set knowledge at liberty. Man’s mind was suffocating in the close air of a narrow prison house whence only dimly, and, as it were, through chinks could he behold the far distant stars. . . . He . . . made his affirmation that the universe is infinite; . . . that the moon, the sun, and innumerable other bodies are in this ethereal region, and the earth also; that it is not to be believed that there is any firmament, base, or foundation to which are fixed these great animals which form the constitution of the universe, the infinite material of the infinite divine potency.

- Giordano Bruno, Cena de la ceneri (1584)

01-P5) Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), “Expulsion of Triumphant Beast” (1584)

“And this, oh Momus,” said Jove, “do not consider as bad, because you know that animals and plants are living effects of Nature; this Nature (as you must know) is none other than God in things.”

SAUL. So, natura est deus in rebus.

SOPHIA. “However,” he said, “diverse living things represent diverse divinities and diverse powers, which, besides the absolute being they possess, obtain the being communicated to all things according to their capacity and measure. Whence all of God is in all things (although not totally, but in some more abundantly and in others less).

Therefore, Mars can more efficaciously be found in a natural vestige and mode of substance, not only in a viper and scorpion but also in an onion and garlic, than in any manner whatsoever of inanimate painting or statue. Think thus, of the Sun in the Crocus, in the narcissus, in the heliotrope, in the rooster, in t be lion; you must think thus of each of the gods for each of the species under various genera of the entity. Because just as Divinity descends in a certain manner, to the extent that one communicates with Nature, so one ascends to Divinity through Nature, just as by means of a life resplendent in natural things one rises to the life that presides over them."

“What you say is true,” answered Momus, “because indeed I see how those wise men through these means had the power to make intimate, affable, and friendly toward themselves, the gods, who, by means of cries they sent forth through statues, gave these wise men advice, doctrines, divinations, and superhuman institutions; whence with magic and divine rites they rose to the height of Divinity by means of the same ladder of Nature by which Divinity descends even to the lowest things in order to communicate herself.

“But that which seems to me should be deplored is the fact that I see some senseless and foolish idolaters who no more imitate the excellence of the cult of Egypt, than the shadow approaches the nobility of the body, and who seek Divinity, for which, they have no reason whatsoever, in the excrements of dead and inanimate things. These idolaters, nevertheless, mock not only those who are divine and sagacious worshipers but also those of us who are reputed to be beasts. And what is worse, with this they triumph by seeing their mad rites in so great repute and those of the others entirely vanished and broken.”

“Let this not trouble you, oh Momus,” said Isis, “because Fate has ordained the vicissitude of shadows and light.” “But the evil,” answered Momus, “is that they hold for certain that they are in the light.” And Isis added that the shadows would not be shadows to them if they were known by them. Those worshipers, then, in Order to procure certain benefits and gifts from the gods through the knowledge of profound magic, entered into the midst of certain natural things in which, in such manner, Divinity was latent and through which she was able to and wanted to impart herself to such
effects. Therefore, those ceremonies were not vain fantasies, but hive words which touched the very ears of us gods. Just as we want to be understood by these worshipers, not through utterances of language which they may be able to contrive, but through utterances of natural effects, they wished to strive to be understood by us through these utterances, as well as through acts of ceremonies. Otherwise we should have been deaf to their prayers, just as a Tartar would be toward the Greek tongue, which he had never heard.

Those wise men knew God to be in things, and Divinity to be latent in Nature, working and glowing differently in different subjects and succeeding through diverse physical forms, in certain arrangements, in making them participants in her, I say, in her being, in her life and intellect; and they therefore, with equally diverse arrangements, used to prepare themselves to receive whatever and as many gifts as they yearned for. Then, for victory, they libated to magnanimous Jove in the eagle, where, in accordance with such an attribution, Divinity is latent. For prudence, in their sacrifices to sagacious Jove, they libated to the serpent; against betrayal, they libated to menacing Jove in the crocodile. So for other innumerable ends, they libated to other innumerable species. All of this was done not without a magic and most efficacious doctrine. [. . . ]

Here then is why it is that crocodiles, roosters, onions, and turnips were worshiped, but were worshiped as gods and Divinity in crocodiles, in roosters, and in other things. This Divinity in certain times and periods, places, and regions, successively and at the same time, found, finds, and will find herself in various subjects, which, although they are mortal, have a relationship with Divinity according to how close to and familiar she is with them, not according to what she is in herself, that is, most exalted, absolute, and without association with things produced. You see then that there is one simple Divinity found in all things, one fecund Nature, preserving mother of the universe insofar as she diversely communicates herself, casts her light into diverse subjects, and assumes various names. See how we must diversely ascend to her by partaking of various endowments; otherwise we, in vain, attempt to contain water in nets and catch fish with a shovel.

Then they attributed the life that gives forms to things to two most important
principles, that is to say, to the two bodies that are most important in the neighborhood of our globe and maternal divinity, the sun and the moon. Afterward, they construed that life according to seven other principles, distributing it among seven lights called wandering lights, to which, as like unto an original principle and fecund cause, they reduced the differences of species of any genus whatsoever, saying of plants, of animals, of rocks, of influences, and of many other things that these were Saturn’s, these Jove’s, these Mars’s, these and those things of this and the other. So it is with parts, with members, with colors, with seals, with characters, with signs, with images, which are distributed into seven species. But they did not fail, because of this, to construe that there is found in all things, Divinity, who, since she diffuses and imparts herself in innumerable ways, has innumerable names and who, by innumerable paths with principles pertaining and appropriate to each way, is sought after as we honor and cultivate her with innumerable rites, because we seek to receive from her innumerable kinds of favors.

In this, however, we need that wisdom and judgment, that skill, industry, and use of intellectual light that are revealed to the world by the intelligible sun, sometimes more and sometimes less, sometimes most greatly and sometimes most minutely. This custom is called Magic, and she, inasmuch as she depends upon supernatural principles, is divine; and, inasmuch as she turns toward the contemplation of Nature and to the scrutiny of her secrets, she is natural. And she is said to be intermediate and mathematical, inasmuch as she depends upon the reasons and acts of the soul that is at the horizon between the corporeal and the spiritual, the spiritual and the intellectual.

Now, to return to the discussion from which we departed, Isis said to Momus that the stupid and senseless idolaters had no reason to laugh at the magic and divine cult of the Egyptians, who in all things and all effects, according to the respective principles of each, contemplated Divinity. And they knew how, by means of the species that are in the bosom of Nature, to receive those benefits they desired from her. Just as she gives fish from the sea and from rivers, wild animals from deserts, minerals from mines apples from trees, so from certain parts, from certain animals, from certain beasts, from certain plants, emerge certain destinies, virtues, fortunes, and impressions. Therefore Divinity
in the sea was named Neptune, in the sun, Apollo, on the earth, Ceres, in deserted
regions, Diana; and she was differently named in each of the other species, which, as
diverse ideas, were diverse divinities in Nature, all of which were related to the one
Divinity of Divinities and source of ideas regarding Nature.

SAUL. From this it seems to me that that Cabala of the Jews (whatever wisdom
may be found in its genus) has proceeded from the Egyptians, among whom Moses
was instructed. First, that Cabala attributes an ineffable name to the first principle from
which, second, there proceed four names, which afterward are converted into twelve, in
a straight line change into seventy-two, and obliquely and in a straight line into one
hundred forty-four, and farther on are unfolded by fours and by twelves into names as
innumerable as species. And likewise, according to each name (inasmuch as it befits
their own language), they name one god, one angel, one intelligence, one power, who
presides over one species. From this we see that all Deity finally reduces itself to one
source, just as all light is reduced to the first and self-illuminated source and images that
are in mirrors as diverse and numerous as there are particular subjects are reduced to
their source, the one formal and ideal principle.

SOPHIA. So it is. So, then, that God, as absolute, has nothing to do with us
except insofar as he communicates with the effects of Nature and is more intimate with
them than Nature herself. Therefore, if he is not Nature herself, he is certainly the
nature of Nature, and is the soul of the Soul of the world, if be is not the Soul herself.
However, according to the special reasons that they wanted to accommodate to
themselves in order to receive his assistance, they had to present themselves before
him in the manner of ordered species, just as lie who wants bread goes to the baker, he
who wants wine goes to the cellarer, lie who longs for fruit goes to the gardener, lie who
wants instruction goes to the master, and the same applies to all other things. Likewise,
one Goodness, one Happiness, one Absolute Principle of all riches and fortunes,
contracted into various laws, pours forth gifts according to the exigencies of particular
beings.

From this you can infer how the wisdom of the Egyptians, which is lost,
worshiped not only the earth, the moon, the sun, and other stars of the heaven but also
crocodiles, lizards, serpents, onions. This magic and divine rite (through which Divinity so easily imparted herself to men) is mourned by Trismegistus, who said when reasoning with Asclepius: “Do you see, oh Asclepius, these animated statues full of feeling and spirit that are the cause of such and so many worthy works, these statues, I say, prognosticators of future things that bring infirmities, cures, joys, and sadnesses, according to the merits of human affects and bodies? Do you not know, oh Asclepius, that Egypt is the image of heaven or, better said, the colony of all things that are governed and practiced in heaven? To speak the truth, our land is the temple of the world. But woe is me! The time will come when Egypt will appear to have been in vain the religious cultivator of divinity, because divinity, remigrating to heaven, will leave Egypt deserted. And this seat of divinity will remain widowed of every religion, having been deprived of the presence of the gods, for which reason there will succeed in that land strange and barbarous people without any religion, piety, law, and cult.

“Oh Egypt, oh Egypt! Of your religions there will remain only the fables, still incredible to future generations, to whom there will be nothing else that may narrate your pious deeds save the letters sculptured on stones, which will narrate, not to gods and men (because the latter will be dead and deity will have transmigrated into heaven), but to Scythians and Indians, or other people of a similarly savage nature. Shadows will be placed before light, death will be judged to be more useful than life, no one will raise his eyes toward heaven. The religious man will be considered insane, the impious man will be considered prudent, the furious man, strong, the most wicked man, good. And believe me, capital punishment will still be prescribed for him who will apply himself to the religion of the mind, because new justices will be found, new laws. Nothing holy will be found, nothing religious; nothing worthy of heaven or of celestials will be heard. Only pernicious angels will remain, who, mingling with men, will force upon the wretched ones every audacious evil as if it were justice, giving material for wars, rapines, frauds, and all other things contrary to the soul and to natural justice. And this will be the old age and the disorder and irreligion of the world. But do not doubt Asclepius, for after these things have occurred, the lord and father God, governor of the world, the omnipotent provider, by a deluge of water or of fire, of diseases or of pestilences or of
other ministers of his compassionate justice, will doubtlessly then put an end to such a blot, recalling the world to its ancient countenance.”