

*Sub umbra illius quem desideraverum: the Precedence of Shadow in the Work of Giordano Bruno's *De umbris idearum**

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*Sub umbra illius quem desideraverum: the  
Precedence of Shadow in the Work of Giordano  
Bruno's De umbris idearum*

Noé Badillo

Giordano Bruno's *De umbris idearum* (1582), is a mysteriously antithetical doctrine pertaining to shadow as the source and point of origin concerning the metaphysical development of light into the realm of substance and corporeality. Intentionally counterpoised against the elementary and ordinal rigors of religion, Bruno's philosophy represents an exegesis in reverse. The treatise is an inversion of cosmological origin, of nature, of time, of physicality, and of systematic logic, inviting us as initiates into the origins of Humanism at its very core, as he sees the world as what Paul Henri-Michel calls "an object of his own awareness (*Le monde comme objet de connoissance*)."<sup>1</sup> Bruno's rebellion against these ties that bind us, are seemingly intended to deconstruct the objectivity and objectification of the externalized conception of the world, which exists in every waking moment in what lies before us. The concept of universal vanity in the *De umbris idearum*, represents something of a mirror held before our minds, seemingly obstructing the realization of the true.<sup>2</sup> However, the *De umbris idearum* represents the conception of shadow, as it is brought forth into light through metaphysical transformation. It is for this reason, that Bruno's treatise, like many from the sixteenth century, begins with the word *terminus*, which means conclusion or boundary, as does the Greek equivalent *peras*. However, the term represents a specific kind of *double-entendre*, known colloquially during the Renaissance as a *doublet*, in which the end is the beginning, and a boundary becomes a passage. A *doublet* exists, therefore, beyond the lexicon of comparative observation, and within the realm of metaphysics. Bruno's predilection for literary opacity and obfuscation, therefore, is symbolically revealing, in which the boundary of a shadow

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<sup>1</sup> Michel (1962) 55.

<sup>2</sup> Bruno (2004) 152.

becomes the very passage of light's existence.<sup>3</sup> Shadow and light obscure and reveal, shifting within the text as an excavation of form through the utilization of Platonic physics, from which there appears to be no linear or definitive trajectory. The presence of biblical and mythological paradigm within the *De umbris idearum* is multidimensional and parabolic, presenting the reader with a simulacrum that exists somewhere in the interstitial space between imagination and reason. The following essay focuses on a specific aspect of the *De umbris idearum*, involving the precedence of shadow as the corporeal and substantial element within Bruno's theory of light metaphysics.

The origins, principles, and functions of light and shadow, in the *De umbris idearum*, maintain a genealogy that are delineated within the text, including ancient Hebraic tradition, Pythagoreanism, Platonism, the Peripatetic tradition of Aristotle. The importance of the *De umbris idearum*, within the entire corpus of Bruno's writings, is that it represents a point of departure concerning a specific topic of metaphysics concerning light, which culminates with the *Summa terminorum metaphysicorum* of 1595. Literary influences within Bruno's writings from the Middle Ages, to his own time in the fifteenth century, include the writings of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), Albertus Magnus (c. 1200–1280), Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464), Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), and Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535).<sup>4</sup> However, while the aforementioned authors seem to have greatly influenced Bruno's writings on the subject of light, he is most often diametrically opposed to their propositions, utilizing their theories in an inferred and largely unacknowledged manner to build a stronger foundation for counterargument.<sup>5</sup> The extensive historiographical development of Bruno's philosophy, from that point on, appears to reflect back upon the ancient ideas which are perhaps a clearer source of his theory of shadow, in an incredibly complex and interpretive manner, in which ink has not been spilled over it, but elegantly articulated through linguistic foliations and diacritics, in a number of important works deservedly cited within this brief analysis.

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<sup>3</sup> Bruno (1963) 18.

<sup>4</sup> Michel (1962) 40.; Yates (1966) 206.

<sup>5</sup> Siedengart (2012) 18.; Farinella (2002) 596.; Scheuermann-Peilicke (2000) 109–134.

Bruno's *apologeticus*, at the beginning of the *De umbris idearum*, presents a triologue between three interlocutors, representing memory (*Hermes*), wisdom (*Philothimus*), and logic (*Logifer*). The contextual basis of their triologue is syllogistically structured, and represents the metaphysical principles presented in the treatise. The anthropomorphic representation of memory as Hermes, therefore, expresses the process of communication involving the interaction between the self and the divine, along with the intermediaries of wisdom and logic.<sup>6</sup> The hermetic relation between the self and the divine, pertains to memory, but also to its causation. The philosophical principle of the human person's relationship to the divine is presented by Bruno in a manner that touches on what is perhaps the most dangerous and extremely misunderstood problem in Socratic philosophy, involving the complex interaction between soul and psyche, the human mind and the gods, and the role of cognition within universal principles of design. Aristotle's philosophy of the *Peri psychēs*, is an elegant expression of this synergistic relationship as well, in which the edge of the soul is the psyche; it is the horizon of memory, the point at which the mind is kindled by the catalyst of cognition, revealing the presence of light before the eyes.<sup>7</sup> This inseparable bond, between the mind, the soul, and the psyche, is one of the core principles presented in the *Peri psychēs*, which, as Aristotle states, cannot exist independently of one another; a bond which exists, in a similar manner, in the triologue between interlocutors in Bruno's *De umbris idearum*.<sup>8</sup>

The representation of Philothimus as the embodiment of wisdom, relates human cognition to perception, stating that the intellect becomes sensible through the illuminating light of the sun (*nec cessat intellectus, atque sol iste sensibilis semper illuminare, ob eam causam quia nec semper*).<sup>9</sup> The role of Logifer, forms the connection between wisdom

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<sup>6</sup> Bruno (1962) 10. "I listen, but to hear more, it is a discussion between us." (*Audio, sed ut plus audiam, inter vos ipsos discutite*.)"

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle (1997) 55. The definition of the psyche as the edge of the soul is embodied within the etymology of the book's title, in which *peri* (περί), is defined as a locus (τόπος), or the edge of an area (ολόγυρα πλησίον), while *psychēs* (ψυχής), is defined as soul, breath (πνοή), or life force (ζωή).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 113. "Every entity in nature, therefore, which participates in life, is potentially a substance, according to its composition. (Επομένως, κάθε σώμα φυσικό, που μετέχει στη ζωή, θα μπορούσε να είναι ουσία, ουσία με την έννοια της σύνθεσης.)"

<sup>9</sup> Bruno (1962) 9.

and memory (*[m]entis & memoriae*), by presenting three distinct, principles relating the human spirit to the exercise of the senses, to sexuality and desire, to physical health and well-being, and to how wisdom solidifies memory (*figuris solidam seiactant conflare memoriam*).<sup>10</sup> The final principle of logic in Bruno's apology, represents the metaphysical, and therefore the formation of the physical, corporeal development of light into *substantia* and corporeality, which forms the main purpose of the *De umbris idearum*, as he states: "The following treatise is presented in two forms: the first which is greater and more general, in order to present the numerous operations of the soul, and the second to describe the multitude of operations, through specific methods, like an artifice or instrument, by which memory may exist and be found: and this itself is the meaning of shadows in thirty intentions."<sup>11</sup>

The precedence of shadow within the *De umbris idearum*, is important, because it represents the element within which cognition exists, that first brings forth light as physical and corporeal substance. However, it is within Platonism, and even more pertinently, within the philosophy of Socrates described by Plato in the *Meno*, and the *Phaedo*, from which we begin to find the causation of cognition itself. The causation of forms, which Socrates calls *aitai*, is related to a specific aspect of memory known as *anamnesis*—the innate knowledge of the soul.<sup>12</sup> This aspect of memory exists *a priori* to the awareness of one's human existence in the world, through an understanding of the *eidōs*, the underlying meaning, or *substratum* that is underneath, or beyond what we perceive.<sup>13</sup> It is this underlying form (*eidōs*) that has a cognitive function, which in the *De umbris idearum* is represented by shadow. The existence of shadow in Bruno's philosophy of light, is therefore the cognitive function of knowledge within the soul, the source of which is memory.

The connection, therefore, between the *De umbris idearum*, and the *Ars memoriae*, both published in the same year of 1582, is less pertinent

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 12–13.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 19. "*Artem istam sub duplici forma tractatus, atque via: quarum altera est altior & generalis tum ad omnes animi operationes ordinandas, tum etiam est caput multarum methodorum, quibus tanquam diversis organis artificiosa potest pertentari & inveniri memoria: Et consistit ipsa primò in triginta intentionibus umbrarum.*"

<sup>12</sup> Plato (1962) 364.

<sup>13</sup> Kelsey (2004) 21.; Morgan (1984) 238.

in my present inquiry concerning memory as mnemonic device and the ability of literary recollection, for which Bruno was known.<sup>14</sup> What is of greater importance, in the first instance, is memory as the source of causation from which cognition is brought forth within shadow, and in the second, the relation between memory and geometry as a metaphysical structure, or *substratum*, of light metaphysics, upon which the physical and corporeal world exist *unto* memory. A structure, therefore, built upon memory, is an ontological place of being, more so than a mere location within spatiotemporal existence. As stated by Bruno in reference to Plotinus, “light is first brought forth and then structured within the eyes of God: it is the second sense that it is an instrument: and it is within its own nature that this serves a purpose, as the cognition of light itself is its coherency.”<sup>15</sup> According to Giannis Stamatellos, the conceptualization of matter in Bruno’s *De la causa, principio, et uno* of 1584, “is not an empty substratum which excludes forms, but a complete substratum which contains and includes all forms within, potentially ready to be actualized in the plurality of things.”<sup>16</sup> Light as the passing of memory within time, denotes a dynamic world of luminosity, colour, and movement, so that the metaphysics of light embodies, permeates, and perpetually annihilates the *stasis* and solidity of the physical, not through destruction but through infinite and creative generation, *ad perpetuum*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Matteoli (2008) 83, 86.

<sup>15</sup> Bruno (1962) 41. “*Luciferos (inquit Plotinus) in facie Deus oculos fabricavit: cæterisque sensibus adhibuit instrumenta: ut inde tum naturaliter seruantur, tum etiam coguata luce aliquid contraherent.*”

<sup>16</sup> Stamatellos (2018) 8.

<sup>17</sup> Bruno (2013) 24.; Quoted in Badaloni (1997) 15. “...the time always takes away everything; everything is silenced, nullified and annihilated; and it is only that it cannot metamorphose, it is only eternal, and can persevere eternally as one, similarly and the same. – With this philosophy my soul grows, and my intellect is magnified. But whatever is the point of this evening in which I wait, if the transformation is true, I who am in the night, waits for the day, and those that are in the daytime, wait for the night. All that is, is either water or there, close or far, now or then, or quickly or slowly. So enjoy, and may you be healthy, and love he who loves you. (...*il tempo tutto toglie e tutto dà; ogni cosa si muta, nulla s’annihila; é un solo che non può mutarsi, un solo è eterno, e può perseverare eternamente uno, simile e medesimo.* – *Con questa filosofia l’animo mi s’aggrandisse, e me si magnifica l’intelletto. Però qualunque sii il punto di questa sera ch’aspetto, si la mutazione è vera, io che son ne la notte, aspetto il giorno, e quei che son nel giorno, aspettano la notte. Tutto quell ch’è, o è cqua o lià, o vicino*

The elements of light and shadow in the *De umbris idearum*, in one sense, denote archaic patterns of movement that form the process of metaphysics into physics; that is, the process of creation which is *behind* physicality, underneath it. It is in this manner, that the substratum by which the physical and corporeal is brought forth, by which it is formed. There are two aspects therefore, of Bruno's *De umbris idearum*, which pertain first to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and second to the *Physics*. According to Aristotle, the metaphysical causation of what is behind, or underneath the physicality of nature, is brought forth from the desire for knowledge, and most importantly, because of one's ability to perceive with the eyes, and to make observations within nature. As Aristotle states in the opening lines of Book Alpha, "[a]ll human beings, according to their nature, thirst for knowledge. A sign of this is their love of the senses, because regardless of practicality, they love the element of sense for its own sake, and most importantly the element of vision."<sup>18</sup> The expression of knowledge as desire, representative of the catalyst of cognition, is stated here as the origin of the senses, and the perception of light. The *Physics* is important, because it represents a theory concerning the first principles of nature (*próton arcón tis physis*), the elements (*stoicheía*), how they change (*metabolí*), and their root cause (*aitía*), which exist because of the metaphysics of cognition, and the senses.<sup>19</sup>

In another sense however, the *De umbris idearum* connects three principles in a classically syllogistic, Aristotelian sense. These three principles, as presented within the text, relate shadow and light first to time, secondly to direction, and third, to two aspects of memory. First through the study of the *anamnestic* function of memory, secondly, to the study of gnomonics.<sup>20</sup> The first aspect of memory is presented at the beginning of the treatise, embodied within an allegorical and mysteriously hermetic description of *flores noctis* that shift precisely and with great calculation, enraptured by the light of the sun. Heliotropic lupine express the relation between memory and movement, as

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*o lungi, o adesso o poi, o presto o tardi. Godete dunque, e si posete state sana, et amate chi v'ama).*"

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle (1999) 43. "Όλοι οι άνθρωποι από τη φύση τους διψούν για γνώση. Σημάδι, η αγάπη τους για τις αισθήσεις, διότι και ανεξάρτητα από την πρακτική τους χρησιμότητα τις αγαπούν γι' αυτές τις ίδιες, και περισσότερο από τις άλλες την όραση."

<sup>19</sup> Aristotle (1972) 9–13.

<sup>20</sup> Bruno (1962) 36.

expressed within the spirit of the flower (*humores attollit*), and its connection within the earth in which the flower is grounded; the movement of the flower is brought forth through the movement of the earth and the variation between light and shadow upon it (*[s]ensus autem fallax suadet moueri. Hic terrae girantis parte huic expositae oritur*). The connection between shadow and cognition is expressed as a presence within the very nature of the flower itself (*ab ipso vero herbae*), connecting the cognitive intellect of the nocturnal bloom to the intelligible movement of the light of the sun (*[h]unc intellectus non errans stare docet*).<sup>21</sup> The second aspect of memory is presented in the culmination of the treatise, in which the substantiated corporeality of light is extended beyond its own boundary or limit, in order to form an aspect of its own projection within latitudinal and longitudinal space. Light, in this sense, is brought forth beyond the limit of its own sphere, so that it becomes a reflection, an *anamnestic* projection of itself. The seemingly impenetrable boundary of shadow is now penetrated, as the clear and radiant diametric opposition of light and darkness extend with shadow as the intermediary.<sup>22</sup>

It is the second aspect of memory which inculcates the principle of geometry, as the metaphysical formation of light breaches the extension of its own previously impenetrable boundary into the realm of spatiotemporal existence. Memory is a form of reflection, based on the dual principle of self-cognition, as *anamnestic* awareness reflects upon its own existence, and the principle of extension, as the knowledge of one's self unfolds into the awareness of collective memory and existence, within the universe itself. What is beyond the boundary of self-reflective cognition, in the *De umbris idearum*, is described by Bruno in geometric terms. In this sense, the nocturnal flower, which is the apparatus of memory that turns heliotropically toward the light, is rooted within the earth and its movement around the sun, and a part of the greater universe in which it exists. It is this second aspect of memory which involves gnomonics, the ancient science of shadows involving the measurement of time according to the movement of the sun, also known as the creation of sundials.<sup>23</sup> These two, distinct aspects of memory

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–8.

<sup>22</sup> Cusanus (2000) 173.

<sup>23</sup> Bruno (1962) 36. "From the perpendicular interposition above the plane between the arcs and the direction of the gnomon, the projected line of the shadow gains along its meridian: and precisely at different times which orbit in the night around the stellar pole at different rings whose perimeters stretched within the numerous



form the beginning and then end, in a manner that they are guided by Bruno's *Triginta intentiones umbrarum*, thirty intentions which present the metaphysical process of light's transformation, from the metaphysical to the physical, to the internal, toward the breach of the external world, in which light, beyond self-reflection, sends us into the further into the abyss, to discover light within the total and complete inversion of the soul.

We are first initiated into the mystery of Bruno's *Triginta intentiones umbrarum*, through an extensive reference to the first book of Ecclesiastes, as well as to the second, also known as the *Canticum canticorum*, a text which utilizes the parabolic nature of shadow, light, and vision to elegantly portray the ontology of wisdom. The theological premise of these two texts, reestablishes Bruno's *apologia*, presented in the dialogue between Hermes, Philothimus, and Logifer. Shadow is established in the *Triginta intentiones* as the metaphysical, ideal, and supersubstantial, taking primacy over the initial presence of light. Shadow is the driving metaphysical force, perpetually at work underneath (*substratum*), within (*ipsum*), and infinite (*ad perpetuum*). According to Sergius Koderer, the structural premise of the *De umbris idearum*, is the cognitive potential of shadow, expressed through Bruno's subversive methods of biblical interpretation.<sup>24</sup> The other literary sources directly referenced in the *De umbris idearum*, particularly those which are of Platonic and Aristotelian origin, form the structural basis of Bruno's light metaphysics.

Within the tradition of Aristotle, syllogistic logic is applied to the principles of metaphysics; a tradition upheld and reinterpreted in recent literary works, including the philosophy of Annette Hilt, and Anne Eusterschulte. As stated by Annette Hilt, concerning the Peripatetic tradition of metaphysics, there is a significant relation between ἀρχή and

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circumferences are made manifest. (*Sicut ex interposito perpendiculariter super planum inter Arcon & oculum gnomone, ex umbra imaginabili lineam lucramur meridianam: & infallibiter alias multas temporum differentias quæ in nocturno polarium stellaturum circuitu ad differentias partiam circelli quas linea in illis tensa circumferentiam per numeros manifestat. Non minus et ideales umbræ per physica corpore ad ides innumeras poterunt tibi rerum significare proprietates & differentias*)."

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 20. "In shadow exists everything which I desire. (*Sub umbra illius quem desideraverum sedi*)."; Biblia Sacra Vulgata, *Canticum Canticorum*, 3:2.; Koderer (2015) 193–94. "...the ontology of the shadow becomes of crucial importance, for man cannot reside in the light, his domain is the shadow."

εἶδος as concerning the subject of οὐσία, in which ἀρχή is related to εἶδος within the structure of imagistic or reflective consciousness, whereas οὐσία represents the corporeal substance, which exists *a priori* to the other two elements. Shadow represents ἀρχή, the etiological source and causation of light itself, which emerges and emanates from it; an etiology which seems to be an inversion of a related concept in optical theory, in which shadow is that which imposes itself, or obstructs the preminent existence of light.<sup>25</sup> In relation to Bruno's theory of shadow, εἶδος appears related to the idea of *vanitas*, which we are invited to move beyond in order to perceive the light which emanates from ἀρχή as a functional aspect of οὐσία.<sup>26</sup> The functionality of Aristotelian metaphysics relates beautifully to the allegory of shadow presented in Ecclesiastes, in which the passing shadow before the sun allows us to apprehend the image of God without the mirror of vanity.<sup>27</sup> An interpretation of the same principle is stated in Anne Eusterschulte's voluminous work *Analogia mentis seu mentis: Analogie als erkenntnistheoretisches Prinzip in der Philosophie Giordano Brunos*, in which she states that "[t]he very comprehension of the nature of the question is problematic. It is in this respect that reflection above the state of being is possible at all, when not understood by spatial condition, which is the difference between being and thought."<sup>28</sup>

As Eusterschulte's philosophy on Bruno points to reflection as related to the ontology of light, we are literally brought to our knees before the weight of its own being within the *De umbris idearum*. As she states, "the analogy of corporeal light is made evident in the world by the

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<sup>25</sup> Bruno (1962) 21. "Shadow is that which is close to the substantiality of shadow which is the substance of shadow from which it emanates. It is itself the first foundation and first material according to the knowledge of physics which participates completely and solely within being a receiver of its own light: it is within shadow that light exists and functions as such. (*Umbram quoque quae est circa substantiam ab umbra quae ex substantia dicitur emanare. Ipsa est primum subiectum quod & materiam primam appellant phisici nostri Eius omnia participia cum puram non recipiant lucem: sub umbra lucis esse & operari dicuntur*)."

<sup>26</sup> Hilt (2005) 62.

<sup>27</sup> Ecclesiastes 8:13–14. "...but it is almost as if the passing of the shadow which does not fear the face of God it and it is vanity which is above the earth. (...*sed quasi umbra transeant qui non timent faciem Dei est et alia vanitas quae sit super terram*)."

<sup>28</sup> Eusterschulte (1997) 44. "Diese Problematik begreift die Erkenntnisfrage mit ein. Inwiefern ist eine Reflexion über das Sein überhaupt möglich, wenn nicht unter der Bedingung eines Abstandes, einer Differenz von Sein und Denken."

intelligibility of light as something which is unifying and good....”<sup>29</sup> However, in Bruno’s philosophy, this unifying association to light appears counterintuitive, as the source of the emanation of light is brought forth from shadow, from the ontological depths of the human soul, etiologically from within, rather than from above. After stating the primacy of shadow as the causation of light, Bruno makes a second important distinction in *Intentio II*, delineating between shadow (*umbra*) and darkness (*tenebrae*). Bruno delineates the two elements from one another, stating that vestigial darkness exists within light and conversely within darkness, so that both elements are active participants in the creation of one another, in a manner that they are both equal, as well as distinct. This process of duality brings forth what Paul Henri-Michel refers to as “the possibility of the existence of a material with form or a form with materiality.”<sup>30</sup> The delineation of shadow and light from one another creates a kind of alchemical relationship between the two elements as equal and opposing forces, which brings forth an inchoate admixture and composition between them, as a precursor in the creation of Platonic forms. Bruno concludes by stating however, that this type of relationship between darkness and light, while equal and participatory, is not true light (*plena lucis veritas*) but only vestigial, as a subtle presence within darkness.<sup>31</sup>

Bruno states that while the physical potentiality of shadow disintegrates under the presence of darkness, the interaction between shadow and light activates a physical, corporeal body which contains the potentiality that creates spirit and eternal emanation. Shadow, as he states, represents a kind of physical pressure or weight (*incumbere*) that activates light as a substance (οὐσία), which would otherwise be

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<sup>29</sup> Eusterschulte, *Analogia entis seu mentis*, 180. “...die Analogie des körperlichen Lichtes in der sinnfälligen Welt zum intelligiblen Licht des Einen und Guten....”

<sup>30</sup> Michel (1962) 79. “De cette dualité de principes ou de substances, il faut cependant se garder de conclure à la possibilité d’existence d’une matière sans forme ou d’une forme sans matière.”

<sup>31</sup> Bruno (1962) 21. “It is the combination of light and darkness. It is neither light and darkness, and they are both distinct. And comes from that which is not false light. That which is not true but false, and it is that which true nor false, which leaves a trace, as is being here proposed, according to light’s trace, of that which light takes part, not light as a whole. (*Vel compositum ex luce & tenebris. Vel neutrum à luce & tenebris, & ab utrisque seinctum. Et hæc vel inde quia non sit falsa lux. Vel quia nec vera nee falsa, sed eius quod verè es aut false, vestigium, & c. Habeatur autem in proposito, ut lucis vestigium, lucis perticeps, lux non plena.*)”

diaphanous and lacking corporeality.<sup>32</sup> The activation of light upon the presence of shadow is, according to Bruno, related to Platonic principles involving movement (*motuum*) through the conversion of material substances. Through this process, spiritual substance adheres directly to materiality, creating the corporeal forms of the universe that contains order, a structure of governing dynamics, a beginning and an end, a first and a last.<sup>33</sup> This process is defined within Aristotelian metaphysics as the interaction between οὐσία and ὕλη as it is focused on εἶδος, in which οὐσία becomes a function of ἀρχή, creating form through energy (ἐνέργεια) and structural dynamics (δυναμικός).<sup>34</sup>

It is in this manner that Bruno draws upon the philosophy of the soul presented by Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo*, by sharply deconstructing the dialectic between Simmias and Cebes, in which he appears to reject the diaphanous nature of the soul as a form of virtue, as well as the soul's corporeal nature as cumbersome. Socrates states, rather, that when knowledge is received by the body, it forms a corporeal bond with the soul, which frees one from the captivity of the senses, not through a rejection of sense, but through an embodiment of those senses.<sup>35</sup> The principle of paradox presented in the argument between Simmias and Cebes is carefully guided along by Socrates' clever method of interrogation in which the conclusion is already known, and the answer is stated as the question. Reason is stated in objection to the reasoner, to the point that the conclusion of the argument is only subtly suggested, and never overtly stated. In Bruno's *De umbris idearum*, this argument is contextualized within the metaphysics of shadow, in which the elegantly vaporous nature of light is made whole and realized through the substantive physicality of corporealization, not as an opposing principle, but as its source, and even perhaps its origin.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 22. "Although light's shadow seems inferior, it has the superior potential, because of its eternal emanation, to bring about the solidification of objects, in the way that from the heavens, the spirit, which is the void, becomes flesh. It is therefore shadow which bears its weight on darkness: this is the weight of shadow upon light. (*Et umbra lucis, quod est cum potentiae inferiores superioribus adspirantibus in aeterna eminentioraque obiecta subiinciuntur, ut accidit in caelis versanti qui spiritu irritamenta carnis inculcat. Illud est umbram incumbere in tenebras: hoc est umbram incumbere in lucem.*)"

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 29–30.

<sup>34</sup> Hilt (2005) 62.

<sup>35</sup> Plato (1951) 28–36.

This specific aspect of Bruno's metaphysics, involving the transference of diaphanous light into corporeal substance, pertains to light as something we are bound to (*cathenatus*), so that the more we ascend toward light, the more we are brought down into it, pulled downward by the activating substance of shadow. This metaphysical process, involving the dual nature of οὐσία is Bruno's *descensus*, expounded upon in the posthumous publication of the *Summa terminorum metaphysicorum* from 1609, as the process by which being (*ens*), relates to the substantial nature of the *anima mundi*, the meaning of which is love.<sup>36</sup> Through what Bruno calls the "praxis of descent," a new definition of the Aristotelian categories (*praedicamenta*) evolves, in which substance leads to truth, which leads to beauty, to principle, to cause, to element, material, quantity, quality, perfection, to actions, cognition, impulse, towards a differential continuum in which the nature of substance is defined in connection to its state of essential being.<sup>37</sup> The relationship between shadow and light is the primordial principle which brings all aspects of creation into being through the interaction of this duality.<sup>38</sup>

Bruno's reference to the Ark and of Hebraic wisdom at the beginning of the *Triginta intentiones umbrarum*, connects to the presence of Leviathan as a glorified beast (*glorificabit me bestia agri dracones*), which serves as a navigator within the depths of the sea.<sup>39</sup> Leviathan is an allegory of the metaphysical process of Platonic physics; the beast is the keeper of light. As we are brought down into the depths, so that light, which appears so plentiful, is crushed within the weight of the sea, it is solidified into corporal substance within the very belly of the beast, as the metaphysical process of substantiating essence, of solidifying light into form. The rarified nature of light as a diaphanous essence, requires by necessity that light is substantiated by the weight and solidity of shadow. As we are abducted by the beast and drawn into the depths of the sea, we are bound to Leviathan as the very conductor of this light within the opacity of shadow, "for shadow is not that which abducts the

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<sup>36</sup> Bruno (1609) 68.; Michel (1962) 79.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, (1609) 68–126.

<sup>38</sup> Michel (1962) 79. "Actual activity and passive receptivity, are inseparable from one another, and are completely inseparable from the primordial principle. (*Activité actuante et réceptivité passive, inséparables entre elles, sont inséparables toutes deux du principe primordial.*)"

<sup>39</sup> Isaiah 43:20, 43:14, 27:1.; Canone (2004) 151–52.

light, but conducts the light.”<sup>40</sup> When we submerge ourselves, and are drawn down into the depths of shadow by Leviathan, the light, which is essence, bears a clearer opacity and thus becomes corporeal, like a weight upon the ballast of one’s being.<sup>41</sup>

Bruno radically challenged, and continues to challenge, the normative rigors of logic concerning the subject of light. The antithetical, subversive nature of Bruno’s *De umbris idearum*, involving scriptural hermeneutics as it applies to the metaphysics of light, is an inversion of the perceptual framework of the world from the perspective of the human person. Bruno’s methodology, first concerning scriptural reinterpretation, and second concerning inequivalence, destructuralization and destabilization in the metaphysical process involving the emergence of light, brings forth, through this process of inversion, a unique understanding of the human person within the universe.<sup>42</sup> What emerges in the *De umbris idearum*, is a profound and transcendental idea of the self in relation to creation; in which creator is not an external force, imposing its will on humankind, but is a brilliant and infinite light emerging from the primordial depths of human consciousness, emanating from within. It is within this inversion of shadow and light, that we are invited into the world of Bruno’s unique idea of Humanism, in a manner that the emergence of light from shadow becomes an externalization of the human soul.

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<sup>40</sup> Bruno (1962) 29. “Ascension is the connection to which we are bound, as set forth by the idea of shadows: it is like a constant bond of something like a ring, but the reason that is closest to the comprehension that is enumerated in the following. It is not being bound to such rings but rather it is to be bound to the understanding of the shadow where Leviathan sleeps: in which light is not abducted by shadow; rather it brings forth the conduction of light, which is therefore not entirely true: it is however towards truth, and it is of truth, and for that reason, I do not think that in and of itself a misunderstanding but is truly mysterious. (*Ascensus quidem qui sit per cōnexa atque cōncathenata, in proposito umbrarum idealium: non est per catenam similibus constantem annulis, ratione quæ concipitur ex proximè dictis, atque deinceps enunciandis. Nec huius catenæ annulus esse debet umbra sub qua intelligitur Leviathan dormire: non inquam umbra abducens à luce; sed conducens ad lucem, quæ etiam si non sit veritas: est tamen à veritate, & ad veritatem, ideòque in ipsa non credas esse errorem sed veri latentiam*).”; Saiber (2003) 729.

<sup>41</sup> Bruno (1962) 29.; Saiber (2003) 731.

<sup>42</sup> Eusterschulte (1997) 43.

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