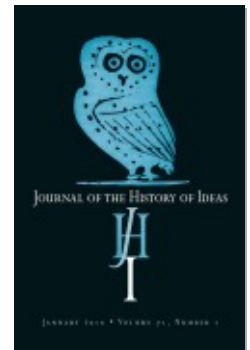Lovejoy's Readings of Bruno: Or How Nineteenth-century History of Philosophy was "Transformed" into the History of Ideas

Leo Catana

Lovejoy's Readings of Bruno: Or How Nineteenth-century History of Philosophy was "Transformed" into the History of Ideas

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I. INTRODUCTION

Arthur Oncken Lovejoy (1873–1962) dedicated a considerable amount of work to the Italian Renaissance philosopher Giordano Bruno (1548–1600). His first publication on Bruno was an essay published in 1904, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza."[1] It appeared only a few years after Lovejoy had finished his philosophical training at the University of California (1891–95) and Harvard University (1895–99).[2] More than thirty years later, in 1936, he returned to Bruno in his famous work illustrating his methodology for the history of ideas, *The Great Chain of Being.*[3]

Lovejoy's readings of Bruno in these two studies introduced a paradox. On the one hand, he presented *The Great Chain* as an example of a new discipline, the history of ideas, and he emphasized the methodological innovation of this new discipline as compared to the history of philosophy. On

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[1] Arthur O. Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," *University of California Publications in Philosophy* 1 (1904): 141–74. Bruno is treated in ibid., 145, 159, 160–66, 169–70, 173.

[2] Daniel J. Wilson, *Arthur O. Lovejoy and the Quest for Intelligibility* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 12–29.

[3] Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (1936; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960). Bruno is dealt with in ibid., 81, 86, 116–21, 249, 349n38.

the other hand, we can observe a high degree of continuity in Lovejoy's practice in these two works. He continued to use the same historiographical terms, in particular, "principles," "deductions" from these "principles," and "system of philosophy," a body of philosophical doctrines so established. Such terms were all conventional historiographical tools in nineteenth-century history of philosophy.

In order to resolve this apparent contradiction, we can consult the opening chapter of *The Great Chain of Being*, where Lovejoy announces the new method governing the history of ideas, and contrasts it explicitly with that of the history of philosophy:

> By the history of ideas I mean something at once more specific and less restricted than the history of philosophy. It is differentiated primarily by the character of the units with which it concerns itself. Though it deals in great part with the same material as the other branches of the history of thought and depends greatly upon their prior labors, it divides that material in a special way, brings the parts of it into new groupings and relations, views it from the standpoint of a distinctive purpose. Its initial procedure may be said—though the parallel has its dangers—to be somewhat analogous to that of analytic chemistry. In dealing with the history of philosophical doctrines, for example, it cuts into the hard-and-fast individual systems and, for its own purposes, breaks them up into their component elements, into what may be called their unit-ideas.[4]

In this passage Lovejoy placed the concept of unit-idea at the center of his method for the history of ideas, and he referred to this notion repeatedly in the remaining part of the introductory chapter.[5] However, in the remaining part of the book, which exemplified the new method for the history of ideas, he did not use the term "unit-idea" at all.[6] Instead, Lovejoy employed historiographical terms traditionally used in nineteenth-century history of philosophy, namely "principles" and "systems of philosophy."[7] Lovejoy

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[4] Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 3.

[5] Lovejoy refers to "unit-ideas" in ibid., 3, 4, (7–15), 15, (17), 19 (20–21). Where page references are in parentheses, he refers to "unit," not to "unit-ideas," but clearly means "unit-ideas."

[6] Ibid., 24–333, Lovejoy does not use the term "unit-idea" at all.

[7] Lovejoy uses the historiographical terms "principle" and "system" in *The Great Chain of Being*, 3, 4, 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 35, 38, 55, 64, 75, 77, 144, 145, 148, 151, 174, 176, 261, 345 (Plato's, Aristotle's, Plotinus's and other past philosophers' "systems"). See also ibid., 24–52 (the principle of otherworldliness, see also references to "Other-

himself resolved this apparent conflict between precept and practice in his opening chapter by explaining that the term "unit-idea" may have different senses, but that in this work it meant "principle":

> The type of "idea" with which we shall be concerned is, however, more definite and explicit, and therefore easier to isolate and identify with confidence, than those of which I have been hitherto speaking. It consists in a single specific proposition or "principle" expressly enunciated by the most influential of early European philosophers, together with some further propositions which are, or have been supposed to be, its corollaries. . . . The character of this type of ideas, and of the processes which constitute their history, need not be further described in general terms since all that follows will illustrate it.[8]

Although Lovejoy explained this uneven use of historiographical concepts in the opening chapter, he leaves the reader with the impression that unit-idea is a new and distinct notion in his new approach to the past. This discrepancy between precept ("unit-ideas") and practice ("principles," "systems of philosophy") begs the question whether the methodological statement cited on page 92 above was more of a rhetorical declaration—intended to produce the conviction in the minds of his readers that history of ideas was distinct from history of philosophy and thus deserved institutional independence—than an adequate description of the method actually practiced. It certainly did the trick as a rhetorical device.

In this essay I argue that a comparison of his early historiographical practice, as exemplified in his Bruno and Spinoza essay of 1904, with his mature historiographical practice, embodied in *The Great Chain of Being* of 1936, reveals two points of interest in Lovejoy's methodology. The first is that he transposed important historiographical concepts from nineteenth-century history of philosophy to the history of ideas, although his own

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worldliness" in the index), 52–55 (the principle of plenitude, see also references to "Plenitude" in the index), 55–66 (principle of continuity, see also references to "Continuity," in the index); Lovejoy, "The Historiography of Ideas," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 78 (1938), reprinted in Lovejoy, *Essays on the History of Ideas* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978), 8 ("system"); Lovejoy, "Reflections on the History of Ideas," *JHI* 1 (1940): 6 ("system"), 21 ("system"), 22 ("principles"); Lovejoy, "Reply to Professor Spitzer," *JHI* 5 (1944): 207, 208, 211 ("system"); Lovejoy, "Historiography and Evaluation: A Disclaimer," *JHI* 10 (1949): 141 ("system").

[8] Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 14–15.

programmatic statement at the first page of *The Great Chain of Being* seems to deny such a move. Daniel J. Wilson has analyzed the thematic continuity between Lovejoy's essay of 1904 and his work of 1936, but not the continuity of historiographical tools employed.[9]

The second and interrelated circumstance is that Lovejoy—in the two above-mentioned writings and in others besides—led his readers to assume that his new method for the history of ideas was free and independent of the method controlling the history of philosophy. A discussion of the methodological core concepts pertinent to the history of ideas should not be based on the historiographical framework specific to the history of philosophy, but on an alternative historiography, based on the notion of unit-ideas.[10] Lovejoy's self-proclaimed detachment from the history of philosophy has been re-affirmed by the fact that George Boas—a co-founder of The History of Ideas Club at Johns Hopkins University in 1923 who later published an article on Lovejoy—has belittled the significance of the historiography of history of philosophy. Boas, in 1948, thus made a juxtaposition, like Lovejoy had done in 1936, between history of philosophy and history of ideas, claiming that "the history of philosophy would be more profitable if it were the history of such unit-ideas [pursued by historians of ideas], rather than the successive exposition of systems [pursued by historians of philosophy]."[11] This second circumstance has resulted in an unfortunate situation where subsequent methodological discussions of the history of ideas have been focused on the linguistic phenomenon of "unit-idea," while ignoring the operative, nineteenth-century historiographical concepts in Lovejoy's 1936 work.[12] In these discussions, attention has been directed

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[9] Wilson, "Arthur O. Lovejoy and the Moral of *The Great Chain of Being*," *JHI* 41 (1980): 249–65, especially 252–56, 261.

[10] We do not find any explicit discussion of the methodological concepts taken over from nineteenth-century historiography of philosophy in the following publications of Lovejoy: *The Great Chain of Being*; Lovejoy, "The Historiography of Ideas," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 78 (1938), reprinted in Lovejoy, *Essays on the History of Ideas* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978), 1–13; Lovejoy, "Reflections on the History of Ideas," *JHI* 1 (1940): 3–23; Lovejoy, "Reply to Professor Spitzer," *JHI* 5 (1944): 204–19; Lovejoy, "Historiography and Evaluation: A Disclaimer," *JHI* 10 (1949): 141–42.

[11] George Boas, "A. O. Lovejoy as Historian of Philosophy," *JHI* 9 (1948): 405. Similarly, Boas, *The History of Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 3–163, especially 90–116.

[12] F. J. Teggart, "A Problem in the History of Ideas," *JHI* 1 (1940): 494–503; Leo Spitzer, "Geistesgeschichte vs. History of Ideas as Applied to Hitlerism," *JHI* 5 (1944): 191–203; Theodore Spencer, "Review. Lovejoy's *Essays in the History of Ideas*," *JHI* 9 (1948): 439–46; Roy Harvey Pearce, "A Note on Method in the History of Ideas," *JHI* 9 (1948): 372–79; Maurice Mandelbaum, "Arthur O. Lovejoy and the Theory of Historiography,"

towards the notion of unit-ideas, as formulated in the opening chapter of *The Great Chain of Being*, whereas his reluctance to use this notion in the remaining part of the book has been neglected. This lapse is especially striking in the studies focusing on Lovejoy's notion of unit-ideas, such as those of Quentin Skinner, Jaakko Hintikka, and Thomas Bredsdorff.

This situation may be improved if we look for developments outside such discussions of the method of the history of ideas. Recent research into the history of the history of philosophy allows us to contextualize Lovejoy's methodology for the history of ideas within its immediate historical background, nineteenth-century historiography of philosophy.[13] My own work in this field has made me aware of Lovejoy's indebtedness to this tradition. In this piece I provide a fuller and more detailed contextualization of his place in that tradition.[14] Even though a few historians of ideas have pointed out this background to Lovejoy's methodology, they have not yet explored the potential of this field of research—there are still vast areas to be examined in this respect. Frank Manuel, for instance, has noticed Lovejoy's veneration for nineteenth-century *Geistesgeschichte*, but without tracing Lovejoy's key concepts within this tradition; Donald R. Kelley has claimed

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JHI 9 (1948): 412–23; Philip P. Wiener, "Some Problems and Methods in the History of Ideas," *JHI* 22 (1961): 531–48; Maurice Mandelbaum, "The History of Ideas, Intellectual History, and the History of Philosophy," in *The Historiography of the History of Philosophy*, ed. J. Passmore ('S Gravenhage: Mouton & Co,1965), 33–42, 55–66; John Dunn, "The Identity of the History of Ideas," *Philosophy* 43 (1968): 85–106; Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8 (1969): 3–53; Jaakko Hintikka, "Gaps in the Great Chain of Being: An Examination in the Methodology of the History of Ideas," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 49 (1976): 22–38; Thomas Bredsdorff, "Lovejoy's Idea of 'Idea'," *New Literary History* 8 (1977): 195–211; Nils Bjorn Kvastad, "On Method in the History of Ideas," *International Logic Review* 17–18 (1978): 96–110; Daniel J. Wilson, "Arthur O. Lovejoy and the Moral of *The Great Chain of Being*," *JHI* 41 (1980): 249–65; Moltke S. Gram and Richard S. Martin, "The Perils of Plenitude: Hintikka contra Lovejoy," *JHI* 41 (1980): 509–11; Louis O. Mink, "Change and Causality in the History of Ideas," in Louis O. Mink, *Historical Understanding*, ed. Brian Fay, Eugene O. Golob, and Richard T. Vann (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), 206–14, 216, 218, 220; Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 201–3, 315; Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," in Skinner, *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1: 57–89; John P. Diggins, "Arthur Lovejoy and the Challenge of Intellectual History," *JHI* 61 (2006): 181–208; Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen, "Making Sense of Conceptual Change," *History and Theory* 47 (2008): 351–72.

[13] *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia*, ed. Giovanni Santinello (Brescia: La Scuola, 1979–81; Rome and Padova: Editrice Antenore, 1988–2004). Unfortunately, Santinello's edition does not give the line up to Lovejoy, only to the end of the nineteenth century.

[14] Leo Catana, *The Historiographical Concept "System of Philosophy": Its Origin, Nature, Influence and Legitimacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2008). I discuss Lovejoy briefly on 265–76.

that Lovejoy's methodology is primarily indebted to Victor Cousin's history of philosophy, a claim with which I disagree.[15] My intention is to identify and articulate some vital, but ignored, historiographical concepts in his methodology for the history of ideas, and to explain their sources in the historiography of nineteenth-century history of philosophy. Such an examination is important in order to get Lovejoy's method right, but also in order to endow future discussions of the methodology of history of ideas with a more adequate, disciplinary self-understanding.

My argument will proceed in two ways. In the first part of this article, I will present Lovejoy's reading of Bruno in the 1904 essay as overtly written in the tradition of history of philosophy, and I highlight the historiographical tools employed there. In the second part, I will turn to Lovejoy's reading of Bruno in the 1936 study, asking whether he applies the same, or new, historiographical concepts. In the course of this argument, I will discuss aspects of Lovejoy's interpretations of Bruno's works, but this discussion is subordinated to the main purpose, an examination of the historiographical sources to Lovejoy's theory and practice in the history of ideas. In the conclusion, I will draw out a few consequences for his concept of unit-idea, the crucial object to be studied in the history of ideas, and for his idea of interdisciplinarity, a crucial methodological feature in the history of ideas.

II. LOVEJOY'S HISTORIOGRAPHICAL
PRACTICE IN HIS STUDY OF 1904

When Lovejoy published "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza" in 1904, he had just turned thirty, and only five years had passed since he had completed his education in philosophy at Harvard University. At Harvard, he had attended William James's lectures on Kant, and George Santayana's lectures on Greek philosophy, including that of Plato.[16] This early introduction to the history of philosophy may have stimulated the young Lovejoy to work on historical themes later on. In 1899, when Lovejoy finished his studies at Harvard and was appointed to a position in philosophy at Stan-

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[15] Frank E. Manuel, "Lovejoy Revisited," *Daedalus* 116 (1987): 126–31, 135–36; Donald R. Kelley, *The Descent of Ideas: The History of Intellectual History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 4 *et passim*.
[16] Wilson, *Arthur O. Lovejoy and the Quest for Intelligibility*, 21. For an analysis of Lovejoy's intellectual formation, see also Wilson, "Arthur O. Lovejoy and the Moral of *The Great Chain of Being*," *JHI* 41 (1980): 249–65.

ford University, he sketched a proposal for instruction in philosophy, in which he wrote: "a thorough course in the History of Philosophy should be the basis of all work in the department."[17] Precisely which histories of philosophy he had read as a student at Harvard is unknown, just as it is unclear what kind of history of philosophy he intended to teach at Stanford. However, it is evident that at this early stage of his career he had already been initiated into the discipline of history of philosophy and thought highly of it. If we look at his essay of 1904, we find clues that help to clarify these uncertainties. In this piece, he referred to the following historians of philosophy, all writers of general histories: Johann Eduard Erdmann (1805–92), a German historian of philosophy with a Hegelian bent[18]; Eduard Zeller (1814–1908), the famous nineteenth-century German historian of ancient philosophy[19]; Kuno Fischer (1824–1907), another German historian of philosophy, who wrote on the history of philosophy from the Renaissance onwards[20]; and, finally, Harald Høffding (1843–1931), a Danish philosopher.[21] In the nineteenth century, German historians of philosophy were at the forefront of international research within this field, and this is reflected in Lovejoy's references in this early essay.

The history of philosophy had been founded as a philosophical discipline by the German Jacob Brucker (1696–1770) in his *Historia critica phi-*

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[17] Lovejoy in a letter to David Starr Jordan, dated 19 May [1899], cited in Wilson, *Arthur O. Lovejoy and the Quest for Intelligibility*, 28.

[18] Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 143, refers to Erdmann for his interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy, though without giving any references. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being,* 72 n7, discusses Abelard's philosophy and there he refers to Erdmann with the following words: "Cf. Erdmann, Hist. of Phil., I, 322." It probably refers to Erdmann, *A History of Philosophy*, English translation by W. S. Hough, 1890, or one of its reprints. This translation of 1890 is from the third edition of Erdmann's work, originally composed in German; Erdmann, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, 1866. Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," may refer to his work of Erdmann.

[19] Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 152, refers to Zeller's interpretation of Plotinus, though without stating a source. Zeller's *Die Philosophie der Griechen. Eine Untersuchung über Charakter, Gang und Hauptmomente ihrer Entwicklung*, came out 1844–52. A second edition, entitled *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung,* came out 1856–68.

[20] Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 142. Again, Lovejoy does not refer to any specific work of Fisher in this context. Fischer's *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie* came out between 1852 and 1904.

[21] Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 142. Lovejoy does not indicate a specific work of Høffding, but he may refer to his history of philosophy, *Den nyere Filosofis Historie*, first published 1894–95, though Lovejoy probably read it in a German or an English translation—perhaps the following English translation: Harald Høffding, *A History of Modern Philosophy: A Sketch of the History of Philosophy from the Close of the Renaissance to Our Own Day*, trans. B. E. Meyer (London, 1900).

losophiae[22] which had an enormous influence upon general histories of philosophy produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and, in some cases, even the twentieth century.[23] The discipline, whose history we have only begun to understand recently, became increasingly important in nineteenth-century European departments of philosophy, in particular in Germany.[24] Speaking in general terms, this strain of nineteenth-century intellectual life was one with which the young Lovejoy was familiar, and obviously also one which fascinated him from the outset of his career. Donald Kelley has recently argued that Lovejoy's main historiographical source was the (allegedly) eclectic history of philosophy of Victor Cousin (1792–1867). Kelley overloooked a much wider tradition of general histories of philosophy composed in Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[25]

Giordano Bruno was not just any figure in the narrative frequently told in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century general histories of philosophy. Brucker had presented Bruno as an anti-hero who had turned away from the "sectarian mode of philosophizing" characteristic, according to Brucker, of late medieval and Renaissance philosophy, especially within Aristotelianism. Bruno thereby paved the way to what Brucker called "eclecticism," that is, systems of philosophy based on principles. Bruno was thus credited with having made possible the eclecticism, as Brucker characterized it, manifest in the philosophies of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, René Descartes, and others besides. Bruno, however, was not intellectually equipped to work out a system of philosophy, according to Brucker; his

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[22] Leipzig, 1742–44.

[23] Jacob Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae a mundi incunabulis ad nostram usque aetatem deducta* (Leipzig: C. Breitkopf, 1742–44; appendix, 1 vol., Leipzig: Heir of Weidemann and Reich, 1767). For Brucker's influence on history of philosophy, see P. Casini, *Diderot "philosophe"* (Bari: Laterza, 1962), 254–61; L. Braun, *Histoire de l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Ophrys, 1973), 120–21; M. Longo, "Le storie generali della filosofia in Germania 1690–1750," in *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia*, general ed. G. Santinello, 2: 611–32; G. Piaia, "Jacob Bruckers Wirkungsgeschichte in Frankreich und Italien," in *Jacob Brucker (1696–1770). Philosoph und Historiker der europäischen Aufklärung*, eds W. Schmidt-Biggemann and T. Stammen (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 218–37.

[24] Ulrich J. Schneider, "The Teaching of Philosophy at German Universities in the Nineteenth Century," in *History of Universities*, ed. L. Brockliss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 197–338; Schneider, "Teaching the History of Philosophy in 19th-century Germany," in *Teaching New Histories of Philosophy*, ed. J. B. Schneewind (Princeton, N.J.: University Center for Human Values, Princeton University, 2004), 275–95.

[25] Compare with Kelley, *The Descent of Ideas: The History of Intellectual History*, 4, 7, 9–29.

system was "more like a monster than an apt and rational system" (*inde monstrum magis, quam aptum et rationale systema*).[26] The French philosopher Pierre Bayle had interpreted Bruno's philosophy as a Spinozistic system of philosophy in the 1690s.[27] Brucker revised this interpretation of Bayle, pointing out Bruno's synthesis of Epicurean and Pythagorean doctrines, and determined Bruno's system of philosophy, despite its defects, as an "emanative system of philosophy" (*systema emanativum*), not a Spinozistic one.[28] After Brucker, expositions of Bruno's life and thought became standard in general histories of philosophy.[29] This frequent treatment of Bruno, and indeed the frequent comparisons with Spinoza, may have elicited the intellectual passions of the young Lovejoy well before 1904. This eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tradition, as well as monographs borrowing the key analytic tools from such general histories of philosophy, formed an important but hitherto unexplored background for Lovejoy's interpretations of Bruno's thought.

In addition to these nineteenth-century historians of philosophy, there was, however, one significant exegete of Bruno in the eyes of the young Lovejoy: James Lewis McIntyre. McIntyre was an American historian of philosophy whose monograph, *Giordano Bruno*, had been published in London and New York in 1903 and attracted international, scholarly attention. Lovejoy probably alluded to this work of McIntyre in this essay of 1904, when he made the somewhat polemical statement that:

> It may be assumed that the close affinity between Bruno's system and Spinoza's is by this time well recognized by all competent stu-

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[26] Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, 5: 38.15–20. The alleged lack of system in Bruno's philosophy is repeated in ibid., 5: 40, 51, 54–55, 62.

[27] Ibid., 5: 50.12–17, 51.39–52.8. Pierre Bayle, "Brunus (Jordanus)," in Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 5th ed., ed. Des Maizeaux et al. (Amsterdam: P. Brunel, etc., 1740), 1: 680b.24–25, had stated about Bruno's philosophy: "son [Bruno's] Hypothese est au fond toute semblable au Spinozisme." This identification is emphasized ibid., 681a.23–24, 681b.15–18. For a discussion of this identification, see Saverio Ricci, "Bruno 'spinozista': Bruno 'martire luterano'. La polemica tra Lacroze e Heumann," *Giornale critica della filosofia italiana* 65 (1986): 42–61; Saverio Ricci, *La fortuna del pensiero di Giordano Bruno 1600–1750* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1990), 239–42, 267, 357–76.

[28] Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae* 5: 52.8–54.23.

[29] For accounts of Bruno's philosophy in the nineteenth century, see Delfina Giovannozzi, "Giordano Bruno nei manuali di storia della filosofia del XIX secolo," in *Brunus redivivus: Momenti della fortuna di Giordano Bruno nel XIX secolo*, ed. Eugenio Canone (Pisa-Rome: Istituti Editoriali Poligrafici Internazionali, 1998), 289–321.

dents of the subject; Mr. McIntyre, in his recent study of Bruno, has drawn out the lines of connection in some detail but has, I think, rather understated the case than otherwise.[30]

One important intention behind Lovejoy's essay of 1904 was to contribute to Bruno scholarship by refuting, heroically, one very recent and prominent interpretation of Bruno's philosophy and its influence. Which alternative conceptual connections did Lovejoy establish between Bruno and Spinoza? To what extent did he draw on traditional, nineteenth-century historiographical tools in his endeavor? Before answering these questions, I shall briefly summarize McIntyre's interpretation.

McIntyre had introduced his readers to Bruno's philosophy by providing lengthy English translations of central passages from Bruno's various Latin and Italian works—translations, which were inserted within his exposition of Bruno's individual works and the problems discussed in them. The motivation behind this procedure was, McIntyre stated, that "Bruno's works are still comparatively unknown to the English reader."[31] T. Whittaker applauded McIntyre's book in a review published in *Mind* in 1904, stating that "Mr. McIntyre has here provided the English reader, for the first time, with an adequate and circumstantial account of the philosophy as well as the life of Giordano Bruno."[32] However, McIntyre consciously chose to sidestep the nineteenth-century tradition for exposing past philosophers' so-called systems of philosophy. As he explains: "I have sought to give not a systematic outline of Bruno's philosophy as a whole under the various familiar headings, which would prove an almost impossible task, but a sketch, as nearly as possible in Bruno's own words, of the problems which interested this mind of the sixteenth century, and of the solutions offered."[33] Immediately after its publication, he received fierce criticism from reviewers orientated towards nineteenth-century historiography of philosophy, e.g., D. MacCarthy's 1905 review in the *International Journal of Ethics*. Although MacCarthy praised McIntyre's book as "the first philosophical biography of Bruno of any thoroughness in the English language," he deplored its reluctance to "give a systematic outline of Bruno's philosophy." MacCarthy rejected McIntyre's monograph as "a patchwork of unreconciled quotations." He concluded, however, on a somewhat more

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[30] Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 167.
[31] McIntyre, *Giordano Bruno*, viii.
[32] *Mind* 13 (1904): 281–84. The citation is from ibid., 281.
[33] McIntyre, *Giordano Bruno*, viii.

conciliatory note: "This is more Bruno's fault than his expositors'; but granted that it was impossible to make a system out of theories which Bruno taught as coherent, there was a second alternative to the merely selective method; namely to point out how badly his philosophy hung together."[34] MacCarthy, unlike McIntyre, accepted the assumption that all genuine past philosophers had produced systems of philosophy and scorned Bruno for being unable to produce such a system. He took issue with McIntyre for not explaining the lack of system in Bruno's philosophy. This criticism indicates the historiographical tensions inherent in the scholarly subject with which Lovejoy dealt in 1904: Bruno and his philosophy. Lovejoy agreed with MacCarthy about one methodological assumption, that past philosophers' systems should be exposed, although Lovejoy did not agree with his evaluation of Bruno.

McIntyre noted that there were striking similarities between Bruno's notion of unity and Spinoza's notion of substance, but he nevertheless opted for a cautious line, observing the many differences between the two philosophies. Consequently, he dismissed earlier efforts to depict Bruno as a forerunner to Spinoza, on the grounds that neither internal nor external evidence supported such claims.[35] Lovejoy, on the other hand, held that Bruno and Spinoza had a common source, Neoplatonism, and that their respective philosophies should be interpreted as different organizations of essentially Neoplatonic principles. Lovejoy explained that:

> My thesis is that the more general and fundamental principles of Spinoza's metaphysics are in no respect original; that he is, like Bruno, a consistent Neo-Platonist of the Renaissance type; that his way of dealing with the problem of the relation of substance to its attributes is one already foreshadowed in Plotinus, fully worked out by mediaeval theologians, and much used by Bruno, and by other metaphysicians of Spinoza's century; and that the character, the historical rôle, and the typical significance of Spinoza's system can be understood only in the light of its relation to these earlier applications of a similar dialectic to a similar problem.[36]

The term "principle," used in the first line in the citation above, can include a variety of meanings: in particular, (a) an ontological origin, correspond-

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[34] Desmond MacCarthy, "Giordano Bruno. By J. Lewis McIntyre," in *International Journal of Ethics* 15 (1905): 245–47.
[35] McIntyre, *Giordano Bruno*, 176, 337–43
[36] Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 145.

ing to *principium* in Latin and *archê* in Greek; and (b), a hypothesis or maxim from which a logical deduction can take place. In the citation above, "principle" should be understood in the second sense. The term "system," also featured in the quote above, is the outcome of deductions from such principles.

Lovejoy structured his essay according to this novel scheme of interpretation. In the first section he described the philosophy of Plotinus and what he calls the "dialectic" of Neoplatonism—that is, according to Lovejoy, the three principles constituting the Neoplatonic system—and its alleged influence in subsequent metaphysics in medieval and Renaissance philosophy.[37] He explained, in rather generic terms, that:

> Here, then, we have the essence of what may be called the dialectic of Neo-Platonism: (1) the Absolute Being is conceived as transcendent of all determinate and limiting qualities and relations, and therefore simple, immutable, and capable of only negative characterization by the human intellect; (2) the same Being is conceived as necessarily inclusive of all the reality that in any sense exists, and thus as holding within itself the whole universe of concrete, manifold and temporal existences; (3) the Absolute Being is conceived as necessarily transcending itself, and therefore as the dynamic ground necessitating the coming into being of all possible realities in all possible modes and scales of being. . . .[38]

This assertion, stated without any documentation, served as the basis for Lovejoy's interpretation of Bruno and Spinoza in 1904, and it reappeared in a more elaborate form in 1936. In the second section of this 1904 essay, Lovejoy described Bruno's metaphysical interpretation of these three Neoplatonic principles, and in the third and last section he exposed Spinoza's interpretation of the very same Neoplatonic principles.[39] Lovejoy's composition was thus much more formal than McIntyre's, since so-called principles became crucial expository devices in Lovejoy's reading. This historiographical practice is important for the present purpose, and we need not discuss the meaning of the other philosophical terms used in the quotation above.

Lovejoy determined Bruno's philosophy within this conceptual framework, though in an ambiguous manner. He claimed, on one occasion, that

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[37] The first section we find in Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 150–59.
[38] Ibid., 156–57.
[39] Ibid., 160–74.

the ''principle of infinity'' was the privileged principle from which Bruno ''deduced'' his philosophical doctrines. In Bruno's system, this principle of infinity was placed at the center, and by means of this principle he deduced the same content as that deduced from the three above-mentioned Neoplatonic principles, in particular that of the ''self-sufficiency of the Absolute.''[40] It is not quite clear, admittedly, which of the three principles Lovejoy had in mind in this statement. On another occasion, however, Lovejoy assigned to Bruno's system a different principle, namely that of the coincidence of opposites, thereby leaving his readers in doubt as to which of the two principles was most important in Bruno's system, and why he should bother with complicated Neoplatonic principles if he could retrieve the same propositional content from his own principles, whatsoever they were.[41] Kuno Fischer, a German historian of philosophy, had identified the last-mentioned principle, the coincidence of opposites, in his *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*, dating from the second half of the nineteenth century.[42] Other historians of philosophy might have done the same, but Fischer is of interest because Lovejoy referred explicitly to him in his essay of 1904.[43] Armed with such nineteenth-century identifications of Bruno's so-called principles,

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[40] Ibid., 160–61: "The fundamental notion in the system of Bruno is that of the infinity of true Being; and this means primarily and essentially *logical* infinity; that is to say, it means that the concept of the ultimate reality is a concept transcending all logical limitation, not determined by other concepts, not dependent for its meaning for any predication of extrinsic relations. And from this Bruno deduces all the consequences which earlier Neo-Platonism had deduced from its corresponding fundamental notion of ontological 'self-sufficiency.' " The quote, advanced as documentation, is from Bruno, *De la causa* iii, ed. Lagarde (Göttingen: Dieterichsche Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1888), 260. In this passage, Bruno had referred to negative theology, probably inspired by Cusanus, but he did not refer to a "system" or to a "principle," or to a "deduction." Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 162, refers once again to this so-called principle in Bruno's system.

[41] Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 164: "This supersession of the principle of contradiction became, as is well known, a doctrine formally professed by Bruno— that of the *coincidentia oppositorum*. Concepts seemingly contrary turn out upon analysis to be the same; A and not-A prove to coincide. This is especially—Bruno does not appear to say, exclusively—true in 'maximal or minimal' instances of any quality or activity or mode of being; the extreme of one thing is the same as its opposites."

[42] Kuno Fischer, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie* (Munich: F. Vassermann, 1878–93), 1: 99.21–28.

[43] Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 142. Another possible source is E. Erdmann, *A History of Philosophy*, trans. W. S. Hough (New York: Macmillan, 1890), 1: 658: "With this renunciation of Christianity, however, the doctrine, of which Bruno always confesses himself to be the disciple, when he not only announces the *coincidentia oppositorum* as his principle, but adopts its chief consequences,—the doctrine, namely, of Nicolas of Cusa, must undergo very essential modifications."

and, rather surprisingly, with McIntyre's English translations of Bruno's works, Lovejoy set forth a new interpretation of Bruno's philosophy in this 1904 essay.[44]

It is not my intention to discuss Lovejoy's actual readings of Plotinus, Bruno, and Spinoza, but to highlight the analytic tools he employed. As is fairly clear, Lovejoy's most important historiographical concepts in this early study were the concepts of principle and system of philosophy. The term "unit-idea," on the other hand, is completely absent in this early study. These historiographical concepts, principle and system of philosophy, had been given a prominent position in Brucker's historiography of the history of philosophy, and it is, with all probability, the ultimate source of these analytic tools of Lovejoy.[45]

Brucker had thus defined the task of the historian of philosophy as follows, using precisely these concepts:

> *In order to pass a sound and proper judgment on the propositions of philosophers, it is necessary to reconstruct the whole system on the basis of their writings.* First of all, the general principles, which constitute the foundation underlying the entire building of doctrines, should be reconstructed; on these [general principles] the conclusions should be erected, conclusions that derive willingly from these sources [the general principles]. For since it is the main task of the philosopher to deduce the special ideas from some general principles by means of an apt connection, you [i.e., the historian of philosophy, to be distinguished from the past philosopher] should prefer, due to higher merit, the interpretation that aptly conforms with, and internally coheres with, the form and order of

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[44] On three occasions in his 1904 essay, Lovejoy states explicitly that he cites Bruno's works from McIntyre's book of 1903 (Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 164 nn2, 3, 4). Lovejoy refers to three works of Bruno in this 1904 essay: The Italian dialogue *De la causa, principio et uno* (London, 1584), and two Latin poems, *De immenso et innumerabilibus, seu de universo et mundis* (Frankfurt, 1591), and *De triplici minimo et mensura* (Frankfurt, 1591). Almost all of Lovejoy's interpretative comments on, references to, and quotations from these three works (Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 161–66) derive from McIntyre's exposition (McIntyre, *Giordano Bruno*, 167, 173–74, 177–79, 199–200). When Lovejoy brings English translations from Bruno's works, they typically coincide with passages from the same works found in this work of McIntyre, though often with emendations and interpolations on Lovejoy's part.

[45] For the influence of these historiographical notions in nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of philosophy, history of problems, and history of ideas, Catana, *The Historiographical Concept "System of Philosophy,"* 193–276.

the whole system, even though it seems to suggest something else at first sight.[46]

Brucker believed that all past philosophers, even such remote figures as Thales of Miletus (fl. ca. 585 BCE) and Plato, strove to develop their philosophies according to the methodological ideal denoted by a "system of philosophy" and its deductions from general theories, the so-called "principles." In fact, this methodological ideal had been promoted in some circles at Northern European universities one hundred and fifty years before Brucker published his *Historia critica philosophiae* in the 1740s, but Brucker assigned the ideal to all past philosophers and, as a consequence, applied it universally as a historiographical tool. This was a distinct methodological innovation compared to his predecessors, e.g., Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* (third century CE) and Thomas Stanley's *History of Philosophy* (1655–62).

The problem in this procedure was that Brucker consistently conflated two distinct meanings of the Greek term for principle (in Greek, *archê*, in Latin, *principium*), namely its ontological meaning, that is, a beginning, and its logical meaning, that is, a starting point for a logical deduction. Brucker typically interpreted an ancient philosopher's statement about the beginning of the world, i.e., its principle, as a hypothesis from which propositions about the world could be deduced. For example, Brucker interpreted Thales' statement about water as the beginning of the world as a hypothesis from which Brucker deduced various philosophical theories, attributing them to Thales' so-called system of philosophy. Brucker undertook this rather distorting form of interpretation in order to force past philosophies into his axiomatic-deductive model of explanation, e.g., the philosophies of Thales, Plato, Aristotle, and Bruno.[47] In the case of Bruno, Brucker identified the notion of the minimum as the privileged principle in Bruno's system, thereby confusing its ontological and logical uses in Bruno's writings,

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[46] Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, 1:15.10–18: "*Ut itaque de sententia philosophorum sanum rectumque iudicium ferri queat, totum ex eorum scriptis systema* ita *eruendum est*, ut ante omnia principia generalia, quae fundamenti loco toti doctrinarum aedificio subiiciuntur, eruantur, et his demum illae superstruantur conclusiones, quae ex istis fontibus sponte sua fluunt. Quemadmodum enim hoc praecipue philosophi officium est, ut ex positis quibusdam principiis generalibus, specialia dogmata iusto nexu derivet, ita eam interpretationem merito alteri praetuleris, quae cum toto systematis habitu et connexione convenit apteque inter se cohaeret, etsi prima facie aliud dicere videatur." (Brucker's italics, my translation.)

[47] For Brucker's conflation of these two senses in his expositions of these four philosophers, see Catana, *The Historiographical Concept* "*System of Philosophy*," 35–114.

and, even more importantly, institutionalizing a century-long search for the "proper" principle in Bruno's philosophy.[48] The axiomatic-deductive ideal of science was articulated from time to time in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but this was not done without criticism, and one may even ask whether those who preached such a method actually practiced it. Before the seventeenth century, this methodological ideal was unknown, and after the eighteenth century it was largely given up. Hence, as historiographical tools, the notions "principle" and "system of philosophy" are of little value.

These historiographical concepts of Brucker became an integrated part of history of philosophy as a discipline, and they remained so throughout nineteenth-century histories of philosophy—these concepts even feature in twentieth-century general histories of philosophy, e.g., that of Friederick Copleston (1907–94), printed between 1946 and 1976 and reprinted numerous times subsequently.[49] The historiographical statements of Erdmann, Zeller, Fischer, and Høffding, to whom Lovejoy referred in his study of 1904, can be seen within this Bruckerian model for the history of philosophy.[50] In other words, the early Lovejoy had not only learned something about past thinkers by studying the history of philosophy, he had also acquainted himself with certain historiographical tools by which this history was narrated—the concepts of principle and system of philosophy being the most important tricks of the trade.

In his 1904 essay, Lovejoy consciously posed as a historian of philosophy when refuting McIntyre's assessment of the relationship between Bruno and Spinoza, and he did so by means of a novel identification of the principles in their respective systems. In this endeavor, he employed uncritically historiographical categories commonly used in nineteenth-century histories of philosophy, i.e., principles, "deductions" from them, and systems of philosophy produced by such deductions. Although his identification of the two thinkers' principles may have been a novelty, his use of these categories

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[48] Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, 5: 41.1–25.

[49] For Copleston's adherence to the historiographical tools "principle" and "system of philosophy," see F. Copleston, "Introduction," in Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Image Book, 1985), 1:2–9.

[50] For their programmatic adherence to this model, centered around the historiographical concept "system of philosophy," see E. Erdmann, *A History of Philosophy*, trans. W. S. Hough, 1:1, 3–5; E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (2nd ed., Tübingen and Leipzig: L. F. Fues, 1856–68), 1:v, vi, 5, 7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17; K. Fischer, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie* (Munich: F. Vassermann, 1878–93), 1: 4–14; H. Høffding, *Den nyere Filosofis Historie* (3rd ed., Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1921–22), 1:xiii.

was certainly not. On the contrary, it even appears naive if compared with criticism levelled by prominent nineteenth-century historians of philosophy. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, for instance, had complained that Brucker's axiomatic-deductive method was formalistic and ahistorical[51]; Zeller argued, in the second half of the nineteenth century, that historians of philosophy should not deal with their material "from above," that is, deductively, according to pre-established concepts about the grand schemes of historical development, as Hegel's notion system of development encourages one to do, but "from below," that is, inductively, on the basis of historical evidence.[52] Zeller did not reject the historiographical concepts of principle and system of philosophy entirely, but he watered them down to regulative concepts, which had to accommodate historical and textual observations. Lovejoy, who otherwise treated Zeller with admiration, carried out a practice contrary to the one recommended by Zeller, since he repeatedly sought to explain the "systems" of individual philosophers on the basis of "deductions" from their "principles." When seen in this context, Lovejoy appears as a rather conservative historian of philosophy who returned to some of the more problematic and unsophisticated strains in the tradition, even though important scholars in the nineteenth century had criticized these historiographical notions.

III. LOVEJOY'S HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PRACTICE IN HIS STUDY OF 1936

Lovejoy's ambition in *The Great Chain of Being* was to trace what he perceives as the history of a cluster of metaphysical ideas, "the chain of being," from Greek antiquity to the nineteenth century. In this section I will not examine the validity of his readings of various sources, but I will refer the reader to his critics.[53] I will, however, look at the historiographical tools

[51] G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. Jules Michelet (2nd ed., Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1840–44), 1: 57.6–17; id., *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), eds W. Bonsiepen and H.-C. Lucas, in G. W. F. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968-), 20:12.25–31.

[52] Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 1: 14. See also Zeller, "Die Geschichte der Philosophie, ihre Ziele und Wege," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 1 (1888): 1–10. Lovejoy refers to this review, founded by Zeller; see Lovejoy, "The Dialectic of Bruno and Spinoza," 152 n1, 168 n1.

[53] Edward P. Mahoney, "Lovejoy and the Hierarchy of Being," *JHI* 48 (1987): 211–30; J. D. North, "Some Weak Links in the Great Chain of Being," in *Empirical Logic and Public Debate: Essays in Honour of Else M. Barth*, ed. E. C. W. Krabbe, R. J. Dalitz, P. A. Smit (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 105–20; Miguel A. Granada, "Il rifiuto della

employed, in order to determine the extent to which he carries on those methods used in his 1904 essay.

The great chain of being consisted of three so-called principles, provided by Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus.[54] Plato established the principle of plenitude by means of his notion of the good, which transcends being and language, and through his doctrine of ideas.[55] Aristotle provided the principle of continuity[56] as well as the principle of unilinear gradation, the latter principle to be elaborated by Plotinus and other Neoplatonists later on.[57] These three principles became "agglutinated," Lovejoy explained, and exercised an enormous influence upon the Western tradition of philosophical and religious thought. Lovejoy did not point to any historian of philosophy who had assigned these three principles to Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. One can, however, find antecedents among eighteenth- and especially nineteenth-century historians of philosophy. In the case of Plato, for instance, Brucker was the first to determine his doctrine of ideas as a "general principle" in his system of philosophy, thereby refuting a Neoplatonic interpretation.[58] Virtually all nineteenth-century historians of philosophy followed Brucker's line of interpretation, e.g., Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann (1761–1819), Hegel, Ueberweg, Zeller, and many others besides.[59] Lovejoy, in his determination of principles, also followed this trend in nineteenth-century Plato scholarship. He had stated explicitly that he wanted to trace the history of certain unit-ideas, and that these should be understood as principles;

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distinzione fra *potentia absoluta* e *potentia ordinata* di Dio e l'affermazione dell'universo infinito in Giordano Bruno," *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 49 (1994): 509 n40.

[54] Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 20–21.

[55] For Plato's principle, see ibid., 24–52. On page 48, Lovejoy admits that only the *Timaeus* was known throughout the Middle Ages, but insists that the demiurge in the *Timaeus* was a personification of a Platonic idea of the Good. Lovejoy does not indicate a source for this interpretation, but simply refers to "many interpreters" (ibid., 48). F. Ueberweg, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie von Thales bis auf die Gegenwart* (2nd ed., E. S. Mittler & Sohn: Berlin, 1865–66), 1: 102–3, had advanced a similar interpretation of the demiurge in the *Timaeus*, and he may well be among these "many interpreters."

[56] For Aristotle's principle of continuity, see Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 55–58.

[57] For Aristotle's principle of unilinear gradation, see ibid., 58–66.

[58] Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, 1: 695.30–37, 811.21–24. For the history of Plato scholarship and Brucker's contribution to it, see Eugene N. Tigerstedt, *The Decline and Fall of the Neoplatonic Interpretation of Plato: An Outline and Some Observations* (Helsinki and Helsingfors: Societas scientiarum Fennica, 1974).

[59] Wilhelm G. Tennemann, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1st ed., Leipzig: A. Barth, 1812), 84; Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 2: 166–95, especially 174–75, 194; Ueberweg, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie von Thales bis auf die Gegenwart*, 1: 101–2; Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 2: 412.

this is precisely what he did when tracing the great chain of being throughout history. Evidently, in his expositions of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and other past thinkers, he used the same key analytic tools employed in his study of 1904, especially "principle" and "system of philosophy."[60]

This historiographical continuity between 1904 and 1936 also stands out in Lovejoy's interpretation of Bruno. Bruno's philosophy can, Lovejoy argued in 1936, be accounted for by referring it to the first of these three principles, that of plenitude, that is, the alleged Platonic principle. From this principle—or the "principle of sufficient reason," from which the principle of plenitude is deduced—Bruno "deduced" an "infinite," "infinitely populous," and "decentralized" cosmology.[61] As in his essay of 1904, Lovejoy was eager to identify one single principle from which the doctrines in Bruno's writings were deduced. However, as we have seen above, in 1904 he had identified two other principles—that of infinity and that of coincidence of opposites—but he does not provide any arguments or evidence for this new and seemingly arbitrary attribution of yet another principle, although the principles are identified in almost the same few works.[62]

To sum up, Lovejoy's readings of Bruno had different results in 1904 and 1936, but his historiographical practice remained unchanged. His 1936 expositions of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus are equally structured by the concepts of principle and system of philosophy. However, the continuity of these interpretative tools is much more evident in the case of Bruno, since Lovejoy made explicit statements about his alleged principles in 1904 as well as in 1936.

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[60] For his use of the historiographical concepts principle and system of philosophy, see references in n. 7 above.

[61] Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 116: "Those convictions were for him [i.e., Bruno's theories about the "decentralized, infinite, and infinitely populous universe" (ibid., 116)] primarily, and almost wholly, a deduction from the principle of plenitude, or from the assumption on which the latter itself rested, the principle of sufficient reason." See also ibid., 117: "The 'infinity of worlds' was, it is true, well known to have been a thesis of Democritus and the Epicureans, but this told against the theory rather than in its favor; it was its deducibility from much more orthodox premises than the Democritic that assured its triumph in the seventeenth century."

[62] In Lovejoy's study of 1904, he refers to the three works of Bruno listed in n. 44 above (*De la causa*; *De immenso*; *De minimo*). In *The Great Chain of Being*, 116–21, he refers to the first two works and one work unmentioned in his 1904 study (*De l'infinito, universo e mondi* [London, 1584]). In *The Great Chain of Being*, 120 n35, Lovejoy explains that in this 1904 essay "a fuller analysis of the parts of Bruno's system not especially pertinent to the present study is presented." This statement is somewhat unconvincing, since he stated in 1904 that one of the principles assigned to Bruno was the "fundamental notion in the system of Bruno" (see note 40 above); if it was fundamental, one should think that it had consequences of all parts of Bruno's philosophy.

IV. CONCLUSION

If all this remained unchanged, what did change with his new method for the history of ideas? Two elements were novel, when compared with nine-teenth-century historiography of philosophy. First, Lovejoy's contention, that such principles, or unit-ideas, as he calls them programmatically in the quote on page 92 above, exist independently in certain "groupings" and have their own life throughout the history of thought. It is open to debate whether such an idealistic claim is sustainable or not, and, if it is, in which form. Quentin Skinner denied it vehemently back in 1969, whereas Knud Haakonssen, John P. Diggins, and other recent authors have rejected Skin-ner's criticism in the meanwhile, leaving the issue unresolved.[63] As the pres-ent article points out, however, Lovejoy's concept of unit-idea was a redressing of the nineteenth-century historiographical concept of principle, originally denoting the starting point for a deductive procedure resulting into a complex of philosophical theories. This is an important circumstance to keep in mind when discussing his notion of unit-idea, but it has not yet been taken into consideration in the methodological debates about this notion, as explained at the beginning of this article.

We need to recall that unit-ideas, understood in this deductive sense, were not all that Lovejoy dealt with in his works—he also dealt with ideas, the sense and reference of philosophical terms applied abundantly in the history of thought, e.g., terms like "God," "the good," "nature," "infin-ity," etc. By insisting on the concept of unit-idea in his methodological statements, Lovejoy, ironically, transferred a central, historiographical con-cept from the history of philosophy to the history of ideas, namely that of principle; this concept was only endowed with a fragile, methodological foundation. When transferred to the history of ideas in Lovejoy's method-ology, it obscured the material to be analyzed in the history of ideas, namely ideas. If we leave behind this nineteenth-century historiographical concept of principle—and indeed Lovejoy's redressing of it as unit-idea—and redi-rect our attention towards ideas presented in texts throughout the history of thought, we will still have very rich material to explore.

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[63] For criticism of Lovejoy's notion of unit-ideas as existing independently, see Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," in Skinner, *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1: 62. For criticism of Skinner's attack on Lovejoy, and for criticism of Skinner's alternative method, see Knud Haakons-sen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy from Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 8–14; John P. Diggins, "Arthur Lovejoy and the Challenge of Intellectual History," *JHI* 61 (2006): 184–87, 193–95.

The second novelty lies in his claim about interdisciplinarity in the history of ideas—a claim that also stands out conspicuously in the quotation on page 92 above. To the degree that unit-ideas determine the content of various disciplines, it is possible to carry out interdisciplinary work. Lovejoy explained that

> any unit-idea which the historian thus isolates he next seeks to trace through more than one—ultimately, indeed, through all—of the provinces of history in which it figures in any important degree, whether those provinces are called philosophy, science, literature, art, religion, or politics.[64]

Lovejoy certainly deserves praise for his desire to offer a methodological foundation for interdisciplinary work in the history of thought. His nineteenth-century background leads us, nevertheless, to question his conception of interdisciplinarity. As we have seen, he inherited his conception of past philosophy from nineteenth-century historians. He, too, conceived of past philosophy as autonomous, inward-looking, and characterized by its successive principles and systems, as pointed out above. Admittedly, some seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophers did claim that they practiced philosophy in this manner, but the conception is inadequate in regard to actual practice in pre-seventeenth-century philosophy as well as in post-eighteenth-century philosophy. Charles B. Schmitt and John Inglis have argued convincingly that philosophy in the first period was far more interdisciplinary than the nineteenth-century histories of philosophy led scholars, including Lovejoy, to believe.[65] Rather paradoxically, Lovejoy's notion of interdisciplinarity reinforces the ahistorical assumption endorsed by nineteenth-century historians of philosophy, namely that past philosophy was autonomous in regard to non-philosophical disciplines.

This assumption about past philosophy is transferred to Lovejoy's idea of interdisciplinarity, where unit-ideas, the replacement of principles, now constitute the deductive starting point for the content of various disciplines. To Lovejoy, then, interdisciplinarity denoted a practice in which the histo-

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[64] Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 15.

[65] For Renaissance Aristotelianism drawing on non-philosophical disciplines, see Charles B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 104–5. For a denial of medieval philosophy as autonomous in regard to non-philosophical disciplines, see John Inglis, "Philosophical Autonomy and the Historiography of Medieval Philosophy," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 5 (1997): 21–53.

rian identified one such principle, or unit-idea, found in a philosophical system, and traced the effects of this principle upon non-philosophical disciplines, through "the provinces of history in which it figures." Eventually, a fusion, or a "grouping," of principles could be found and traced, e.g., the great chain of being.

If Lovejoy's conception of past philosophy is a historical misconception, then his notion of interdisciplinary work in the history of thought is equally misconceived; such principles, forming the matrix of various disciplines, we do find in methodological statements made by some seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophers, but hardly before or after, as noted above. Even worse, it remains doubtful as to whether one can count on such cross-disciplinary effects of so-called principles even in the case of these two centuries. That is not to deny the existence of connections between philosophical and non-philosophical disciplines in these two and indeed in all other centuries. My point is simply that these connections may have been established between ideas (not principles) in philosophy and non-philosophical disciplines, and that these connections may have been instituted in other ways than that prescribed by the historiographical notion of unit-idea. Finally, we should also accept the methodological possibility that interdisciplinary connections may not involve philosophy at all—a possibility, which Lovejoy ignores due to his use of the notion of unit-idea, derived from a philosophical system.

If all this is so, we have to revise Lovejoy's concept of interdisciplinarity and to adopt a different practice in the history of thought. His idea of interdisciplinarity offered a certain propositional convenience, since it was based on common principles, or unit-ideas, ultimately derived from philosophy, whose effects could be traced in non-philosophical disciplines. We would have to replace this convenience with historically informed explorations of local and contingent connections between ideas set forth in (parts of) philosophy and ideas set forth within philosophy's disciplinary neighbors. This alternative practice would surely be open to interdisciplinary work, but it would be of a different kind than the one recommended by Lovejoy.

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