

**A MISCELLANY
ON NICHOLAS OF CUSA**

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CHAPTER ONE

NICHOLAS OF CUSA AND JOHN WENCK'S TWENTIETH-CENTURY COUNTERPARTS

I

Nicholas of Cusa's treatise *On Learned Ignorance* (*De Docta Ignorantia*, 1440) was from the very outset of its publication seriously misunderstood. No misapprehension was more grave than was that of John Wenck, Professor of Theology at the University of Heidelberg, who vehemently polemicized against Cusa's work in one of his own, *On Unknown Learning* (*De Ignota Litteratura*, 1442 or 1443). When Wenck's attack finally came to Cusa's attention, Nicholas was so incensed by the distortion of his doctrines that he wrote a reply: *A Defense of Learned Ignorance* (*Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*, 1449).¹ The "debate" between these two fifteenth-century figures is well-known, and scholars today generally agree that Nicholas was correct in accusing Wenck of falsification and truncation. For Wenck both radically misrepresented Nicholas's program of learned ignorance and did so by leaving aside passages that are crucial to rendering a balanced judgment about the meaning of Nicholas's main themes. Yet, to some extent, Nicholas brought misunderstanding upon himself, since in *DI* he was not everywhere careful in articulating his themes—with the result that even today some of his statements invariably mislead a reader who is not careful to compare them with other related statements made elsewhere within *DI* itself.

Present-day interpreters have a distinct advantage over Wenck in that, unlike Wenck, they have at their disposal Nicholas's further clarification of his ideas in the *Apologia*. Accordingly, they have a guidebook, as it were, for discerning Nicholas's program in *DI*; and thus they are in a better position to render a critical judgment about Nicholas's meaning.

Nicholas took himself to be presenting, in *DI*, a consistent program. In fact, both at the time of writing *DI* and nine years later when he wrote the *Apologia* he regarded this program as coherent. Accordingly, one of his replies to Wenck's truncation was the following: "Whoever examines the mind of someone writing on some point ought to read carefully all his writings and ought to resolve [his statements on this point] into one consistent meaning. For from truncated writings it is easy to find something which by itself seems inconsistent but which when compared with the whole corpus is [seen to be] consistent."² This exegetical principle, presumed Nicholas, applies both to a comparison of passages within a given work and to comparing passages in one work with those in another. Thus, when in the *Apologia* he alludes to *De Dato Patris Luminum* (1445-46)—a treatise, he says, which also helps clarify his ideas in *DI*—he does so without any hint of disagreement therewith.

In fact, neither in the *Apologia* nor in any works written prior thereto does Nicholas show any signs of having abandoned, or significantly revised, any of the main themes that he developed in *DI*.³ Of course, it is always possible, in principle, that Nicholas's views changed substantially between the time of writing *DI* and the time of writing *De Dato* or that he himself did not recognize some inconsistency or other that obtained between these three works (just as it is also possible that he did not recognize some really present inconsistency within *DI* itself⁴). However, given Nicholas's studious treatment, in the *Apologia*, of his work of 1440, an interpreter should proceed upon the *prima facie* assumption that Nicholas's program of learned ignorance did *not* decidedly change within the nine-year interval. That is, the burden of proof will be upon the interpreter who claims that Nicholas's views *did* sizably shift—shift to such an extent that in the *Apologia* Nicholas either unintentionally misconstrued, or else deliberately falsified, his own earlier meanings. The evidence in support of such a claim

would have to be strong enough to override the *prima facie* assumption of consistency-of-approach. Moreover, were any interpreter of today to set out to understand *DI* without taking account of the *Apologia*, then assuredly he would be committing a methodological blunder and would be as guilty of truncation as was Wenck in his day— unless, that is, such an interpreter could marshal *weighty* considerations that would show that in the *Apologia* Nicholas misrepresented his own earlier views. And, to be sure, it is difficult to imagine even any *weak* (but plausible) considerations that would lend credence to the claim of misrepresentation.

Now, that which holds true regarding the consistency between the *Apologia* and *DI* also holds true regarding the presumable unity that obtains between *DI* and the works written subsequently to the *Apologia*. If we look, for example, at *De Venatione Sapientiae*, written toward the end of 1462 or the beginning of 1463,⁵ we find it to be a work in which Nicholas recapitulates some of his earlier ideas, even stating in the opening sentences his intent to do so. Although *De Venatione Sapientiae* is no mere recapitulation, since it contains material that is new, still Nicholas does there take up once again the familiar themes of (1) *docta ignorantia*, (2) *coincidentia oppositorum in deo*,⁶ (3) *deus ut maximum absolutum*, (4) *deus ut unitatis, aequalitatis, et nexi trinitas*, and (5) *entia finita ut participantia deum, id est similitudinem dei*. Moreover, into his treatment he integrates themes that were only hinted at in *DI* but that were dealt with at length in later works—such as the twin themes of God as *Possess*⁷ and as *Non-aliud*.⁸ Finally in *De Venatione* Nicholas reworks and extends the theme of *posse fieri* as it appeared in the dialogue *De Possess* (1460). So central is *De Venatione* that Werner Beierwaltes, mindful of St. Augustine, refers to it as Nicholas's *Retractiones*.⁹ And Siegfried Dangelmayr calls it “eine Schrift der Reminiszenzen.”¹⁰ Now, what strikes one about *De Venatione* is that in this work of 1462 or 1463 Nicholas nowhere repudiates any of the main

themes from *DI* (1440). That is, all things considered, we find an overall coherence in Nicholas's writings. Of course, minor shifts do occur; and new ideas are expressed. But the additions do not represent a significant veering from the original position.

Two examples of a shift in Nicholas's position—a shift subsequent to the time of writing *DI*—will suffice to illustrate that these deviations are not major. The first example comes from *De Venatione* itself, where in a certain respect Nicholas revises his theory of *posse fieri*.¹¹ For previously, in *De Possest* 29, he stated that *posse fieri* does not have a beginning (*initium*) but rather exists from eternity because of its relation to Absolute Possibility, which is God. But in *De Venatione* 3 (7:19) he maintains that *posse fieri* does have a beginning (*initium*)¹² and is *created*, even though it is not *made*. Yet, in both works he affirms clearly that *posse fieri* is preceded, ontologically, by God (who is called *absolutum posse*).¹³ The difference between the two doctrines seems to be due to the fact that Nicholas is adjusting his concept of *posse fieri* to his evolving distinction between the eternal and the perpetual: in *De Possest* he refers to *posse fieri* as eternal,¹⁴ whereas in *De Venatione* he calls it perpetual.¹⁵

A second illustration of a change in Nicholas's position is the switch from preferring "*possest*" ("Actualized-possibility") and "*Non-aliud*" ("Not-other") as names for God to preferring "*posse ipsum*" ("Possibility itself," or "Capability itself," or "Power itself").¹⁶ Yet, the reasons that Nicholas gives for this change show that he is neither repudiating the use of the earlier names nor abandoning his doctrine that God, as He is in Himself, is inconceivable to every finite mind and is therefore nameable only metaphorically.

II

There is initial reason to believe, then, that Nicholas of Cusa's views constitute a unity that does not veer substantially from the schema that is set forth in *DI*. Accordingly, an interpreter may proceed on the presumption of an overall consistency of Cusan

thought, while recognizing that this presumption may be overridden at any point by the weight of the textual evidence that is under reconsideration. Moreover, as has been urged, any attempt to explicate the meaning of Nicholas's claims in *DI* should, insofar as possible, be undertaken with an eye to the *Apologia*, though not to the *Apologia* only. Now, these two exegetical considerations may be supplemented by two others: strive to understand Nicholas's less clear utterances in the light of his more clear utterances; and be sure to take seriously Nicholas's clear, and clearly endorsed, claims. Thus, for example, in *DI* II, 3 the assertion that "the plurality of things arises from the fact that God is present in nothing" is obscure. So its meaning needs to be explicated, if possible, in terms of other statements made in Chapter three; but that assertion itself cannot be used to explicate these other statements. Similarly, in *DI* I, 17 the meaning of the utterance that God is the Essence of all things needs to be clarified in terms both of the immediate context and of the more remote context of the *Apologia*; but that utterance itself cannot serve to clarify either the immediate context or the context of the *Apologia*. Furthermore, when Nicholas claims, in *DI* I, 18, that "Aristotle was right in dividing all the things in the world into substance and accident," this claim must be taken seriously, not dismissed as a *modus loquendi* or as mere window dressing. And upon taking it seriously, an interpreter will be obliged to compare it with Nicholas's endorsements, elsewhere, of the distinction between substance and accident.

In Nicholas's day John Wenck violated three of the foregoing exegetical considerations. For he dismissed certain of Nicholas's clearly endorsed claims, he focused upon various of Nicholas's less clear statements and used them to understand the entire program of learned ignorance, and he jumped to the conclusion that Nicholas's position was radically incoherent. From all evidence Wenck was a good scholar, a man of intelligence and of extensive knowledge—someone respected enough to be elected

three times to the rectorship of the University of Heidelberg. Wenck's failure correctly to understand *DI* did not result from a paucity of intellect but rather from a defective methodology. He allowed himself to fasten upon a handful of Nicholas's more striking utterances, which he then proceeded to interpret without any awareness of the crucial qualifications that Nicholas had put upon these utterances. And he was too quick to approach Nicholas's text with the preconception that Nicholas had fallen prey to the (allegedly) heretical doctrines of Meister Eckhart.

In our own day there have arisen all too many counterparts of John Wenck.¹⁷ These are philosophers, theologians, and historians of proven intellect and reputable training who, like Wenck, go astray methodologically and fall victim to hermeneutical insufficiencies. Thus, like Wenck, they fasten unqualifiedly upon Nicholas's highly qualified sentences; and, when they neglect to interpret *DI* in the light of Nicholas's restatements in the *Apologia*, they err in a way that Wenck himself could not have, since the *Apologia* was later than Wenck's *De Ignota Litteratura*. Moreover, they truncate—thereby making Nicholas out to be radically inconsistent. Likewise, they dismiss his clearly endorsed claims as unserious and interpret the more clear in terms of the less clear. In the end, they unwittingly present us with the picture of a Nicholas of Cusa who never existed.

The most recent outstanding example of a competent scholar who thus goes methodologically astray is Professor Thomas P. McTighe, in his article "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas* in Cusa's Metaphysics,"¹⁸ as also in his previous articles on Cusa's metaphysics.¹⁹ These articles all reach a common set of conclusions—viz., that Nicholas taught the following overlapping doctrines: (1) that within the domain of finite things the distinction between the essential and the accidental collapses, (2) that the essence of each finite thing is God Himself, (3) that all finite things (whether individuals or kinds) differ from one another only accidentally, (4) that each finite thing is constituted only by

its set of relations with other finite things, so that no finite thing has a positive, finite, nondivine essence of its own which determines it to be what it is, (5) that all relations between finite things are internal relations, and (6) that finite reality is not arranged hierarchically. According to this way of viewing Nicholas's thought, Nicholas was aiming to destroy the Scholastic world-view.²⁰

Over against McTighe's way of construing Nicholas's metaphysics, I maintain that Nicholas held a different configuration of overlapping views: (1) that within the domain of finite things, the distinction between the essential and the accidental is preserved, (2) that each individual finite substance has its own essence, which is not identical with the Divine Essence, (3) that some finite individuals differ from others essentially, (4) that an individual thing is determined to be what it is by its own positive finite essence, so that its identity does not consist wholly of its differences from everything else, (5) that not all relations are internal relations, and (6) that finite reality is indeed arranged hierarchically. In my various works on Nicholas of Cusa—but especially in my *Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance*, *Nicholas of Cusa's Metaphysic of Contraction*, and *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism*—I have argued at length for the interpretation indicated above. I do not intend to recapitulate these arguments here. But I will allude to segments of them as I proceed to show just how McTighe's depicting of Nicholas's thought is fundamentally flawed. And I will do so under the guise of a "debate" that takes place between a Wenckian interpreter who is attempting to characterize Nicholas's program in *DI* and a Cusan disciple who is correcting the imposed interpretation.

III

1. *Wenckian Interpreter*. In interpreting *DI* we should, as you say, keep in mind such other works as *De Dato Patris Luminum*. For there Nicholas teaches "quod idem ipsum sit deus et creatura, secundum modum datoris deus, secundum modum

dati creatura": i.e., "that God and the creation are the same thing—according to the mode of the Giver *God*, according to the mode of the given *the creation*."²¹

*Cusan Corrector: Absit, absit! Ecce detestandum facinus inverecundi falsarii!*²² For you have truncated the text by leaving aside the very important prefacing words "*Videtur igitur . . .*": "It seems, then," The word "*Videtur*" serves to indicate that the ensuing statement is *not* being endorsed by Nicholas. And, indeed, Nicholas goes on to make perfectly clear that he is disavowing the statement cited in Latin. For he says explicitly: "Without doubt the foregoing manner of speaking lacks precision; yet, let us look into the correct understanding of the matter." And when he articulates the correct understanding, he makes a series of points that deserve quotation:

There does not [first] exist a thing to which a form [then] gives being, since whatever exists exists only through a form. Therefore, there does not exist a thing which takes its being from a form; for, [if there did,] this thing would exist before it existed. Rather, a form gives being to a thing in the following sense: in every existing thing the form *is* the being, so that the very form which gives being *is* the being which is given to the thing. Now, God is the Absolute Form of being; and this is the Apostle's teaching in this passage, for all the being of all things is given by the Father. But the form gives the being. Therefore, God, because He gives being to all things, is the Universal Form of being. Now, because form gives being to every single thing (i.e., the form *is* the being of the thing), God, who gives being, is rightly called by many the Giver of forms. Therefore, God is not the form of earth, of water, of air, of aether, or of any other thing; rather, He is the Absolute Form of the form of earth or of air. Therefore, earth is neither God nor anything else but is earth; and air is air, aether aether, and man man—each through its own form. For each thing's form is a descent from the Universal Form, so that the form of earth is its own form and not another's—and likewise for the other forms.

So water differs from air by virtue of its form, i.e., its being. And God is neither the Form of water nor the Being of water. Rather, He is the Creator, or Former, of the form of water, of the being of water. God, says Nicholas, is the Absolute Form of

being—in the sense that He is not the given form of any particular thing but is rather the Former, the Giver, of that given form. Water is water by virtue of having its own form, which differs from the form of air, as well as from other forms. Accordingly, God and the creation are *not* the same thing according to different modes. For although a creature derives its being from God's being, its being is not God's being, and God's being is not its being—any more than its form is God or God its form. So you do Nicholas an injustice by omitting the words "*Videtur igitur*" from the quotation. For by means of the deliberate omission you convey an impression that is *opposed* to the point that Nicholas is actually making.

2. *Wenckian Interpreter*: I do not deny that Nicholas uses the *language* of essence and of form. But I do deny that in using this language he means to ascribe to finite things a *positive* essence—or an essential form—of their own, since according to him all differentiation is accidental. Let's return to this topic later. At the moment, I want to point out that instead of accusing me of truncation, you should instead focus upon those who mistranslate Cusa's words, thereby distorting his doctrines. Take, for example, the word "*resplendentia*" as it occurs at *DI* II, 2 (103:3-5): "... creaturae esse non possit aliud esse quam ipsa resplendentia, non in aliquo alio positive recepta, sed contingenter diversa." Some translators construe this passage as: "... created being cannot be anything other than reflection—not a reflection received positively in some other thing but a reflection which is contingently different."²³ But the translation of "*resplendentia*" by "reflection" is a mistranslation, because "*resplendentia*" means splendor or resplendence, not reflection. Also mistaken is the interpretation implied by this mistranslation—viz., that the creaturely *esse* is the reflection of God, the *infinita forma*, and that to this reflected being or form diversity accrues contingently.²⁴

Cusan Corrector: You say that "*resplendentia*" does not mean

reflection but rather resplendence. This statement is very naïve. Even R. E. Latham in his *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources* gives "reflection" as a meaning. And Georges' *Lateinisch-Deutsches Handwörterbuch* lists as meanings "*Abglanz*" and "*Widerschein*."²⁵ "*Resplendentia*" does, no doubt, mean splendor and resplendence, but it also means reflection (as of light). The best translation will depend upon the context. In the context of mirrors and of mirror-images [as in *DI* II, 2 (102-103)], the mirror-image of a face is the reflection of that face, not its splendor or resplendence. By contrast, when the Latin text of Matthew 17:2 speaks of the transfiguration of Christ, using the words "*Et resplenduit facies eius sicut sol*," the Douay version rightly renders these words as "And his face did shine as the sun" In the context of mirrors, however, "*resplendere*" has the sense, in English, of *to be reflected*. So when Thomas Aquinas writes (*ST* I.12.8.ob.2) "*Quicumque videt speculum, videt ea quae in speculo resplendent*," a correct translation will be "Whoever sees a mirror sees those things which are reflected in the mirror."²⁶ Similarly, for Nicholas of Cusa in *De Filiatione Dei* 3 (65-67) the terms "*resplendere*" and "*resplendentia*" occur in the context of an extended illustration that concerns mirrors, and thus they have to do with reflection. Likewise, in *De Mente* 6 (92:8-10) Nicholas again uses "*resplendentia*" in the context of a mirror and a mirror-image: "*Est enim proportio quasi aptitudo superficiei specularis ad resplendentiam imaginis, qua non stante desinit repraesentatio*": "For proportion is as the aptitude of a mirroring surface for reflecting forth an image [of the original]: if the aptitude does not continue, the representation ceases." Here the word "representation" is used because Nicholas is speaking of a reflection, not because he is speaking of a resplendence. A reflected image is a representation of an original, whereas a resplendence is not.

Thus, the translation of the passage from *DI* II, 2 (103:3-5) is correct. And the word "reflection" serves to indicate that created being, though a reflection of Divine Being, is not Divine

Being—whether according to the mode of the given or in its essential being or *qua* contracted being or otherwise. For just as the reflection of a face in a mirror is not that face, so the reflection of God's Being in creation is not God's Being.

Moreover, the interpretation that is ascribed to the translator is also incorrect. For neither in the translation nor in the introduction thereto does the translator imply that God's creative communication is received positively by a *pre-existing* subject or that a finite thing's contingency is received *subsequently* to that thing's creation.²⁷ On the contrary, as the translation clearly indicates: "it is not the case that as a mirror is a mirror before it receives the image of a face, so created being exists prior to derivative, [participating] being; for created being *is* derivative being."

Who is he, then, who can understand how it is that the one, infinite Form is participated in in different ways by different created things? For created being cannot be anything other than reflection—not a reflection received positively in some other thing but a reflection which is contingently different. Perhaps [a comparison with an artifact is fitting]: if the artifact depended entirely upon the craftsman's idea and did not have any other being than dependent being, the artifact would exist from the craftsman and would be conserved as a result of his influence— analogously to the image of a face in a mirror (with the proviso that before and after [the appearance of the image] the mirror be nothing in and of itself).²⁸

So the otherness and diversity that beset a created object beset it from the very moment of its creation. Because a created being exists *aliunde* and not *per se*, it is, ultimately speaking (and only ultimately speaking), a totally dependent being.

3. *Wenckian Interpreter*: Well, I don't know about "*resplendentia*," but I do know that what you have just said is inconsistent with another translation by the same translator whom you are defending. Look for a moment at another text in *DI*: "*Cum igitur deus absque diversitate et invidia communicet et recipiatur, ita quod aliter et altius contingentia recipi non sinat . . .*"²⁹

The translator renders this passage as: "Therefore, since God imparts without difference and envy and since [what is imparted] is received in such way that contingency does not allow it to be received otherwise or to a greater degree . . . , " etc. This version has God imparting something which, then, because of contingency, turns out to be what it is and not something else. Yet, the subject of "*recipiatur*" is "God," not something other than "God," i.e., not "some finite actuality." For God imparts Himself and is received contingently.³⁰

Cusan Corrector: The translation neither says nor implies what you claim it does. For the expression "God imparts . . . and [what is imparted] is received . . ." does not deny that God imparts Himself. As *De Dato Patris Luminum* 2 (99:2-4) states: "The Giver of forms does not give something other than Himself; rather, His gift is best and is His own maximal goodness, which is absolute and in every respect maximum." [Cf. *De Venatione Sapientiae* 35 (105:19).] What God imparts is His goodness, which is also His Being. But what is received is goodness or being—not *His* goodness or *His* Being. For His gift "cannot be received as it is given, because the receiving of the gift occurs in a descending manner." That is, the receiving of the Infinite "falls short of the truth of the one who is imparting Himself," and "turns toward a likeness and an image, so that it is not the truth of the Giver but a likeness of the Giver" [*De Dato* 2 (99)].

So a created thing is an image of God, a likeness of God—a reflection of God, if you will. Neither the being nor the essence of a created thing is God's being or God's Essence. That is, a created thing, in its essential being, is not God. For although Divine Being is imparted, what is received is not Divine Being but a gift that descends from Divine Being, thus falling infinitely³¹ short of the truth of Divine Being and turning toward a likeness and an image.³² Accordingly, that which is incorrect is not the translation in question but rather your alternative translation, which wrongly makes "God" the subject of "*recipiatur*,"³³ even though

"God" is rightly the subject of "*communicet*." God is imparted, but God is not received. Any suggestion that the grammar of the clause "*Cum igitur deus . . . communicet et recipiatur . . .*" requires that "*deus*" be the subject of "*recipiatur*" would be extremely naïve and would show embarrassing unfamiliarity not only with *Nicholas's* use of Latin but also with the use of Latin by the Medievals generally.

We must take seriously *DI* III, 1 (182:5-6), which teaches clearly that God is unimpartible, incommunicable. In spite of the fact that God imparts Himself in creation, He is not impartible, because He Himself cannot be received; for only His image, or reflection, can be "received," though there is no preexistent receiving material or subject.³⁴ This is what Nicholas means when he affirms that "the Infinite Form is received only finitely."³⁵ Thus, created things are good because they *participate* in Divine Goodness, not because they *are* Divine Goodness in an essential way (i.e., not because *their* essence is Divine Goodness): "For he who conceives of each creature³⁶ as an image of the one Creator sees hereby that just as the being of an image does not at all have any perfection from itself, so its every perfection is from that of which it is an image . . ." (*Ap.* 11:19-22). In final analysis, then, Nicholas does not teach that when God creates, God is received. Rather, he teaches that an image of God's Goodness and Being is received, so that "God shines forth in creatures as the truth shines forth in an image" (*Ap.* 11:23-24).

4. *Wenckian Interpreter*. I'm not so much challenging the grammar as the idea that, according to Cusa, finite things have some (positive) essence other than God. I know that Nicholas does speak of a thing as at rest *in specifica natura sua* and that, regarding finite things, he uses expressions such as "*propria natura*," "*forma specifica*," "*internum substantiale principium*," and even "*forma substantialis*" and "*natura communis specifica*."³⁷ But he is not echoing Aristotle or Aquinas. For his language is simply an *auctoritas* whose wax nose he is twisting to

his own ends.³⁸ Willi Schwarz is, I believe, right against Haubst [and others] in concluding that for all the use of hylomorphic language in Cusa, matter does not and cannot function as a substrate.³⁹

Remember, as well, that in *DI* I, 17 (47:10-11) Cusa asserts: "An infinite line is the essence of a finite line. Similarly, the unqualifiedly Maximum is the Essence of all things." And in this same chapter he draws a very extended comparison between an infinite line, which is the one essence of all finite lines, and God, who is the one Essence of all finite beings. He maintains, for example, that just as two finite lines do not differ in essence (i.e., *qua* line) but differ only accidentally (e.g., with respect to length), so two finite beings differ only accidentally and not in terms of their essence, which is God.⁴⁰

Cusan Corrector: You are being misled by Nicholas's illustration of the infinite line and by his referring to God as "the Essence of all things." The illustrative comparison between God and an infinite line is not perfect and thus is meant by Nicholas to apply only in certain respects. It does not apply, for example, to actual existence, since Nicholas, as is made clear in *Apologia* 32 (and also in *DI*), teaches that there is not and cannot be an actually existing infinite line. So although God exists, He does not and cannot exist in the way that an infinite line does—because the actual existence of an infinite line is impossible, states Nicholas. Moreover, the comparison does not apply to essence as such, since although an infinite line, if it existed, would be the essence of all finite lines, which have no other essence, nonetheless, God, who does exist, is the Essence of all beings in the sense that He is the Essence of their essences. In *DI* I, 16 (45:4) Nicholas uses the longer expression "the Essence of all essences"; but he then, for stylistic reasons, switches to "the Essence of all things."⁴¹ So unlike finite lines, finite substances have a respective essence of their own. God is the Essence of these beings in that He is the *ultimate* Essence—the Cause—of their respective essence.⁴² Nowhere in *DI* I, 16-18 (or anywhere

else) does Nicholas assert that as one finite line differs from another only accidentally, so one finite being differs from another only accidentally. Instead, he introduces a comparison in order to make points about immutability and about participation: An infinite line may be conceived of as indivisible, immutable, and eternal; by comparison, God, too, may be thus conceived. Likewise, we may conceive of finite lines as participating in the infinite line; by comparison, God, too, may be conceived as being participated in by the essences of all things.⁴³

We must always carefully distinguish two levels of discourse in Nicholas's writings: viz., the ultimate and the nonultimate. Take, for example, a passage from *DI* II, 4 (115:5-9):

The Absolute Quiddity of the sun is not other than the Absolute Quiddity of the moon (since [this] is God Himself, who is the Absolute Being and Absolute Quiddity of all things); but the contracted quiddity of the sun is other than the contracted quiddity of the moon (for as the Absolute Quiddity of a thing is not the thing, so the contracted [quiddity of a thing] is none other than the thing).

God's being the Absolute Quiddity of all things does not preclude these things from having their own finite quiddities (just as God's being the ultimate Cause of all things does not preclude the existence of secondary causes of things). God is the ultimate Being and Essence of all things in that He is the ultimate Source and Sustainer of each thing's created being and essence; and no thing's finite, created being or created essence is Absolute Being or Absolute Essence, which is God.⁴⁴

In *DI* I, 17 Nicholas wants us to understand, by his reference to God as the Essence of all things, that no finite thing would be what it is unless God existed and were what He is, even though God's Being and Essence would be unaffected were the universe, or anything in it, not to exist [cf. *DI* II, 3 (110)]. Similarly, he intends to teach that just as an infinite line is the essence of all finite lines, which differ from one another in accordance with their respective degree of participation in it, so the Maximum Essence is the Essence of all essences, each of

which differs from the others in accordance with its respective degree of participation in the Maximum Essence. To make his point even clearer, Nicholas extends into Chapter 18 his discussion of the symbolism of an infinite line. "Aristotle," he says, "was right in dividing all things in the world into substance and accident." Notice that Nicholas does not here assert that the distinction between substance and accident collapses. Instead, he endorses some such distinction as Aristotle's (though not necessarily Aristotle's). Accordingly, in *DI* II, 3 (110-111) he repeats his discourse about substance and accident; and as an example of accident he mentions *quantity*. Furthermore, he also there argues that the relationship of God to His creation is *not* like the relationship of substance to accident.

For the creation is not adventitious to God in a correspondingly similar manner; for it does not confer anything on God, as an accident [confers something] on a substance. Indeed, an accident confers [something] on a substance to such an extent that, as a result, the substance cannot exist without some accident, even though the accident derives its own being from the substance. But with God a similar thing cannot hold true. How, then, can we understand the creation qua creation?—[a creation] which is from God but which cannot as a result thereof contribute anything at all to Him, who is the greatest. And if qua creation it does not have even as much being as an accident but is altogether nothing, how can we understand that the plurality of things is unfolded by virtue of the fact that God is present in nothing?"⁴⁵

Nicholas, instead of here repudiating the distinction between substance and accident, uses it in an initial attempt to understand the relationship between God and the universe. And he concludes that the relationship between God and the universe cannot be fathomed—certainly not on the basis of our knowledge of the difference between substance and accident. When speaking nonultimately, Nicholas acknowledges that substances differ essentially from one another. (This recognition leads him to speak plurally of substances in *DI* I, 18 and to endorse tacitly, in II, 9 (146:2), the view that the essence of stone is distinct from the essence of man, so that in accordance with their dis-

tinct essences, things are distinct.) But when speaking ultimately, he says such things as were just said above: viz., that the creation qua creation "does not have even as much being as an accident but is altogether nothing."⁴⁶ Similarly, when speaking ultimately, he acknowledges that God, qua Being itself, is the sole possessor of independence; but when speaking nonultimately, he ascribes to finite substances a limited measure of independence qua substances, which exist independently in a way that their accidents do not.⁴⁷

5. *Wenckian Interpreter*: I don't deny that, according to Cusa, there is finite actuality, finite being, finite form.⁴⁸ But finite form is not a positive center of determinateness;⁴⁹ for, according to Cusa, there can be no plural positive essences intrinsic to the respective things. The *quidditas* of the sun is Unity itself. Hence, the determinateness of the sun does not differ from that of the moon by virtue of a positive content. The quiddity of the sun is simply a condition of otherness. Thus, each thing is equally different from everything else. Ontologically speaking, things differ only numerically. Or to put it another way, all differentiation is accidental.⁵⁰

Cusan Corrector: I see now that you are being misled by more than the expression "the Essence of all things" and the illustration of an infinite line. And I see too that, like Wenck, you are not taking seriously what Nicholas takes seriously, viz., his pervasive use of Aristotelian-Thomistic terminology. Certainly, as you recognize, the use of this terminology does not make of Nicholas either a Thomist or an Aristotelian. Yet, this language cannot simply be dismissed either as irrelevant or as nose twisting. Your rationale for downplaying this terminology is drawn not only from the two misconstruals cited above but also from several other misinterpretations. Collectively these misinterpretations do determine a view that is incompatible with the Thomisticlike terminology, so that given these readings of yours, you have little alternative but to minimize the terminology. However, if you will continue to be patient, perhaps I can

show both that Nicholas himself does not equivocate with his terminology and that your rationale for entertaining a dismissive attitude is unsound.

To start with, though, let's look at a few more passages that will help to evince just how widespread Nicholas's use of Thomisticlike principles is. In the *Compendium*, composed during the last year of Nicholas's life, we find the doctrine that "nihil . . . est in phantastica, quod prius non fuit in sensu."⁵¹ And in Chapter 10 of this same work he calls truth the "adaequatio rei ad intellectum aut aequatio rei et intellectus."⁵² Similarly, in *De Visione Dei* 24 (107:14-15) we are told that "nihil tale potest esse in intellectu quod prius non fuit in sensu." Both of these works were written after *De Mente*—a fact which suggests that in *De Mente* Nicholas did not reject these Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrines.⁵³ Instead, he supplemented them by adding the theory that the mind, from the moment of its origin, has an innate power of judgment,⁵⁴ without, however, having innate ideas. Moreover, in *De Venatione Sapientiae* 36 (107:2) he maintains that "abstrahit . . . intellectus de sensibili intelligibilem speciem." Especially important is *De Venatione* 29, in which *visible* forms, *intelligible* forms, and *essential* forms are distinguished from one another. Furthermore, in this same chapter the essences which are present in things are distinguished from the likenesses thereof which are in the intellect. And Nicholas calls God *the Creator of the essential forms* and states that because the Divine Essence is unknown, none of the essences of [created] things can be cognitively comprehended. Yet, once again, he supplements these statements by speaking approvingly of those Platonists who say that a human being's essence is an actual determination of the capability to be made a human being. "Hence," he concludes more generally, "looking unto this infinite and indeterminate capability-to-be-made, the Platonists, as Proclus reports, said that all things are from the finite (or the determinate) and the infinite. By 'finite' they were referring to the determinate essence and by 'infinite' to the potency and the capability-to-be-made."⁵⁵

Even more important is *De Genesi* 3 (163:6-22):

A glassblower collects material. Then he tempers it in a stove with the help of fire. Afterwards, by means of an iron rod on which material is collected in order to receive—through an inflow from the glassblower—the form of the vessel conceived in the glassblower's mind, the glassblower breathes out his breath. The breath enters into the material; and by means of the breath's moving the material in conformity with the intent of the glassblower, a glass vessel is made by him from the material which previously lacked all form of a vessel. This [new] form so forms the material that there is such a vessel of such a kind that the material, now standing under⁵⁶ a form, lacks the universal possibility to become just any form at all of a vessel, for the universal possibility is [now] actually specified. But when the glassblower of this vessel of this kind proposes to make another vessel of another kind: seeing that neither this vessel nor its parts (since they are its parts) can possibly become that which he intends (since each vessel is a whole and is complete and its parts are parts of that whole), he causes the vessel or its pieces to be returned to the original material, by removing the actuality of the form by which the vessel was restricted. And after the material is thereupon reduced, through dissolution, to fluidity and universal possibility, he makes of it another vessel.

These views are unquestionably Thomisticlike, as are also the views expressed in *De Li Non Aliud* 11, where Nicholas alludes to the essence of a ruby. And he switches from referring to the ruby's essence to referring to its substance, which he distinguishes from its accidents. Moreover, he explains that the substance, or essence, of the ruby is distinct from the substance of a magnet or the substance of the sun or the substance of a lion, etc. And a ruby's color, its quantity, and its hardness he calls *accidents*; and these accidents, he says, are ontologically preceded by the substance of which they are accidents. Moreover, in Chapter 13 he states that multiple rubies are of the same species because they have a common substantial specific principle.⁵⁷

6. *Wenckian Interpreter*: Sure, all of this sounds Thomisticlike, but is it *Thomistic*? What Nicholas really says in *De Li Non Aliud* indicates that quiddities exist as a plurality only within the mind and that even *humanitas* is not a positive quid-

ditative content.⁵⁸ In other words, there is but one essence, Unity itself, which in its indistinction embraces all determinateness and which, therefore, is "not other" than anything else. Plural essences are the result of the intellect's contemplating things in a prior way. Through this creative act one can assert that essences are *alias et alias*. When, however, the region of distinct intelligibles is transcended, Not-other is seen to be the essence of all essences, since it is whatever is discerned in all essences.⁵⁹ This is Nicholas's point in *De Li Non Aliud* 10.

Cusan Corrector: Here is another one of the misinterpretations that I said were confusing you and inducing you to underemphasize Nicholas's Thomisticlike terminology. For *De Li Non Aliud* 10 does not mean what you allege. Let's look again at the passage in question: "When I look at things, beholding their essences: since things exist in accordance with their essences, then when I behold these essences through the understanding prior to [the things' existence], I maintain that they are different from one another. But when I view them above the understanding and prior to other, I do not see different essences but see no other than the simple Constituting Ground of the essences that I was contemplating in these things. And I call this Ground *Not-other* or the *Essence of essences*, since it is whatever is observed in all the essences."⁶⁰

In the foregoing passage Nicholas is teaching that things exist in accordance with their essences. (He uses the plural, meaning each thing's respective essence.) However, these essences can be contemplated apart from the individual things which exist through them. In this *Wesensschau*, so to speak, these essences are displayed to the mind.⁶¹ And the *Wesensschau* can be carried a step further: we can contemplate the essences in their Constituting Ground, i.e., in God, the Essence of essences: as viewed in God they *are* God, rather than being their distinct selves. So "the forms of things are not distinct except as they exist contractedly; as they exist absolutely they are one, indistinct [Form], which is the Word in God."⁶² Yet, as these distinct forms exist contractedly, they exist only in individuals.⁶³

7. *Wenckian Interpreter*: Then, isn't Cusa's metaphysics of unity very much like Plato's? The true ontological home of every being, of every essence, is the indistinction of the One. *There* each thing is truly itself, and, of course, is everything else.⁶⁴ Moreover, doesn't Cusa assert, in *DI I*, 17 (50:17-19), that "no thing exists in itself except the Maximum; and everything exists in itself insofar as it exists in its Essence [*ratio*], because its Essence is the Maximum"? So a thing has no positive essence other than the Maximum Essence, viz., God.

Cusan Corrector: You have to be careful. As each thing exists in God ontologically prior to its creation, it is indeed God and not its own finite, distinct self.⁶⁵ It exists in God as what is causable exists in its cause.⁶⁶ Accordingly, from this viewpoint, it exists in its ultimate Cause or ultimate Essence; and just as the Ultimate Essence exists *per se* and *in se*, so too does whatever, in it, is it. "And so, [a thing] exists more truly in the Form of forms than in itself."⁶⁷ This statement implies that a thing does also exist in itself qua created thing—i.e., from the point of view of creation. Both of these points of view—the ultimate and the nonultimate—seem, in the present instance, to parallel those of St. Anselm in his *Monologion*. For in *Monologion* 34 we read that "before [created things] were made and once they have been made and after they have perished or have changed in some manner, they always exist in this [Supreme] Spirit as what this Spirit is, rather than as what they are in themselves." And in *Monologion* 36 he adds: "No one doubts that created substances exist in themselves much differently from the way they exist in our knowledge. For in themselves they exist in virtue of their own being; but in our knowledge their likenesses exist, not their own being. It follows, then, that the more truly they exist anywhere by virtue of their own being than by virtue of their likenesses, the more truly they exist in themselves than in our knowledge. Now, it is evident that the more truly the Creating Being exists than does the created being, the more truly every created substance exists in the Word (i.e., in the Understanding) of the Creator than in itself."

8. *Wenckian Interpreter*: But insofar as a thing exists as its finite, created self, this finite determination is without density, without positive content. Looked at from the point of view of *explicatio* (unfolding) God is immediately and directly the being of every creature.⁶⁸ "The being of every creature," writes Nicholas in his letter to Roderick,⁶⁹ "flows in an absolutely immediate way from the Absolute Being, because the latter is equally present to all things."

Cusan Corrector: You are misreading again. Looked at from the point of view of *complicatio* (enfolding) God is immediately the being of every creature. But looked at from the point of view of *explicatio* God is only ultimately the (absolute) being of every creature. The letter to Roderick does not teach otherwise. The being of every creature flows forth altogether immediately from God in the sense that a finite thing's being is a participation in the Word of God: "Omnia igitur in tantum sunt in quantum ipsam verbi entitatem participant."⁷⁰ Nicholas is excluding the Neoplatonic alternative which postulates *Nous* and a world soul, both of which are alleged by Neoplatonists to emanate from God and to be participated in by created substances. On Nicholas's view species have no exemplar except the Divine Mind, through which Mind they are what they are.⁷¹ Accordingly, he mentions that the world is archetypally present in the eternal Mind of God.⁷² Created substances, he believes, partake in unequal measure of (a likeness of) God's oneness and perfection.⁷³ (This belief furnishes him, in *DI* II, 5 (118) a basis for associating the doctrine of each thing's "immediate" participation in the Word of God with his doctrine of *quodlibet in quolibet*).

9. *Wenckian Interpreter*: In using the expression "*fluit . . . immediatissime*" in the letter to Roderick, isn't Cusa likewise denying a hierarchy among created things—denying, that is, a *Stufenkosmos*?⁷⁴

Cusan Corrector: Once again, you need to be more precise. Nicholas does seem to believe that there are no degrees of

existing—that there is no sense in which one created substance *exists* more than does another. That is, he seems not to endorse Anselm's view as propounded in *Monologion* 31: "Therefore, it is clear that a living substance exists more than does a nonliving one, that a sentient substance exists more than does a nonsentient one, and that a rational substance exists more than does a nonrational one." But Nicholas does agree with Anselm (*Monologion* 4) "that a horse is by nature better than a tree and that a man is more excellent than a horse" So Nicholas subscribes to the doctrine of a hierarchy of more and less perfect beings that can be arranged according to gradations of species and genera. Such gradations are alluded to again and again in *DI*.⁷⁵

10. *Wenckian Interpreter*: Call this a hierarchy, if you want to. Anyway, my main point was that Nicholas nowhere teaches the doctrine of degrees of being, or existing—as you said Anselm does. But let me here reemphasize my other point: viz., that for Cusa there is no Thomistic *natura communis* in a finite substance. If there were, this *natura* would be an absolute, a *praecisio*, exempt from the condition of "more or less."⁷⁶ Nicholas does, as I said, use the language of *essential* form. But he notes in *Apologia* 8 that contracted form is not, properly speaking, form at all.⁷⁷

Cusan Corrector: Finite quiddities are without *praecisio*, as you state, since only God, the Absolute, escapes the condition of being subject to greater and lesser degrees in any respect whatsoever. Unlike Absolute Quiddity, finite quiddity is subject to degrees of perfection. The quiddity of a rational-sensible being is more perfect than is the quiddity of a merely sensible being. As Nicholas writes in *DI* III, 1 (184:3-5), "the first general contraction of the universe is through a plurality of genera, which must differ by degrees." Species also differ from one another by degrees, as do individuals too.⁷⁸ And in a human being the intellectual nature is superior to man's sensible nature, but it is inferior to the intellectual nature of an angel. Indeed, no finite quid-

dity escapes gradation. Yet, it does not for this reason fail to be *quiddity*, a positive determination. Each finite thing is what it is—is self-identical. Yet, it is not absolutely self-identical, as is God. For it is not a perfect specimen of its kind.⁷⁹ One dog can be a more perfect specimen of dog than is another. Likewise, one human being can be a more perfect example of human being than is another. And the species *human being* is a more excellent species than is the species *dog*.

When in *Apologia* 8:17-19 Nicholas refers to God alone as Form and in *DI* II, 9 (149:21-22) says that forms are *images* of the one infinite Form, he does not mean that forms have no being of their own qua created things, which are, to be sure, images and reflections of the Uncreated. By comparison, when he elsewhere endorses the statement that there is only one Cause of all things,⁸⁰ he is not thereby denying the existence of secondary causes. On the contrary, he calls God the Cause of all causes.⁸¹ Compared with God, who is Absolute Form, finite forms are but diminished images and are unworthy of the name “form”. Yet, in an even more strict sense God Himself is also not Form, for as altogether undifferentiated and uncontracted, He surpasses all form.⁸² Hence, He is the Form of forms in a symbolic sense only. So when Nicholas asserts that, in one sense, finite substances are improperly said to have (essential) forms, there does not follow that, in another sense, they do not have those forms. By comparison: when he asserts that, in one sense, God is improperly called Form, there does not follow that, in another sense, He is not the Form of forms and the Essence of essences.

11. *Wenckian Interpreter*: You mentioned self-identity. I contend that Nicholas regards God alone as self-identical. True, *De Genesi* characterizes the finite thing as *idem sibi ipsi* (i.e., as the same as itself).⁸³ But this identity, this sameness of a diverse thing with itself, is inextricably involved in otherness. What is *idem sibi ipsi* is also *alteri aliud* (i.e., other than another). Creaturally identity is not the authentic identity of self-hood. Its very

sameness is relational. No finite thing qua finite is an autonomous center. As I said earlier, no thing has a specific form that is somehow autonomous and that interposes itself between the individual and God.⁸⁴ The final effect of Cusa's doctrine of the unity of essence is the radical divorce of individual and essence: the finite individual and its essence nowhere exhibit even a partial identity.⁸⁵

Cusan Corrector: Wait a minute! Where do you get all this from?

12. *Wenckian Interpreter*: From a number of places. But one place in particular is *De Sapientia* II (39:13-14): ". . . cum praecisio non sit de hoc mundo et aliud aliter existere necesse sit" Maurice de Gandillac translates the last and crucial part of this sentence with complete accuracy: "Tout ce qui diffère d'autre chose ne peut exister que par cette différence même." Everything that differs from something else can exist only by that very difference. In other words, in every order of multiplicity the very being of the members is constituted by difference. And this can mean only that things are essentially relative.⁸⁶

Cusan Corrector: Either you are being led astray by your mistranslation, or you are mistranslating because of your faulty preconception—or, to some extent, perhaps both. In any event, the translation is inaccurate. For "cum . . . aliud aliter existere necesse sit" does not mean "everything that differs from something else can exist only by that difference." You are right to give a periphrastic rendering; yet, you paraphrase and expand the Latin meaning incorrectly. What Nicholas is saying may properly be expanded as follows: "Since . . . it is necessary that what is other [than something else] exist in a way that is other [than the way in which that other thing exists]" ⁸⁷ There is nothing signified here regarding a thing's existing only through difference. Though every finite thing is different from every other finite thing, nonetheless each finite substance is what it is—and is so in accordance with its essence. This tenet explains

why Nicholas writes, in *De Venatione Sapientiae* 27 (80:8-9), "Consistent singula in sua praecisione, ut non sint aliud quam id quod sunt": "Singular things consist of their own [degree of] precision, so that they are not other than what they are." This degree, he says further, has been determined by God. And in *De Visione Dei* 14 (62:3-5) he notes: "the essence of Socrates encompasses the whole of Socratic being. In the simple Socratic being there is no otherness or difference."⁸⁸ (Yet, Socratic being is other than canine being, for example.)

13. *Wenckian Interpreter*: Your last quotation reminds me of a passage from *De Ludo Globi* II (Codex Cusanus 219, f. 153^v): "Malum igitur et posse peccare et mori et alterari non sunt creaturae dei, qui entitas. De essentia igitur cuiuscumque non potest esse alteritas, cum in ipsa non sit entitas nec ipsa in entitate": "Evil, therefore, and the ability . . . to be other are not creations of God, *who is being*. Consequently otherness cannot pertain to the essence of any thing, since there is no being in otherness nor is it in being."⁸⁹

Cusan Corrector: Your translation is misleading by virtue of the rendering "cannot pertain to the essence of any thing" instead of the rendering "cannot belong to the essence of any thing." In fact, Nicholas's point would be better expressed in English by saying simply: ". . . otherness cannot be essential to any thing" Now, a thing's essential form is that which actualizes it: "the form of earth gives being to earth, and the form of fire [gives being] to fire,"⁹⁰ etc. Insofar as the form of fire gives being to fire, it causes fire to exist as fire and not as earth. Thus, identity rather than otherness is essential to each thing. Accordingly, Nicholas writes in *De Genesi* 1 (147:5-7): "For form causes a thing to be the same as itself; but that a thing is other than something else is due to the fact that it is not the Absolute Same, i.e., is not the Form of every form."⁹¹ Moreover, with regard to essences such as *humanitas*, he declares in *De Venatione* 33 (99:12-13): the word " 'humanity' signifies precisely (*praecise*) that by which a man is a man." Nicholas does

not claim that the essence *humanitas* is constituted by its difference from everything else or, more generally, that "everything is what it is by not being all else."⁹² If a thing's essence consisted solely in its difference from everything else and in its internal relations with them, then its identity would always be changing. To avoid the absurdity of this consequence (as an interpretation of Nicholas's texts), you are forced to maintain that, according to Nicholas, things have no essence but God, who is unchanging, and that Nicholas's Thomisticlike language is empty-headed. Yet, what you should be doing is taking seriously Nicholas's language and repudiating your own interpretation of internal relations, a doctrine completely foreign to Nicholas.

To recapitulate, then: A thing's essential form gives it identity as what it is. Otherness does not beset a thing's essence qua essence; for a thing is defined in terms of that essence, rather than in terms of all that that thing is not. Yet, as Nicholas says in *DI* II, 4 (115:7-8), "the contracted quiddity of the sun *is* other than the contracted quiddity of the moon," etc. Insofar as the quiddity of the sun is solar quiddity, the sun is the same as itself, and otherness does not belong to its essence; but insofar as solar quiddity is different from lunar quiddity, the sun is an *other*. That is, the sun is not essentially other than itself, but it is essentially other than the moon. And it is essentially other than the moon because it is essentially the same as itself. In *De Li Non Aliud* 10 (37:19-21) Nicholas goes on to state that "when [you see] an essence in something other—as [when] you see humanity in Socrates—you see it as other in this other" And so, otherness does *pertain to* the essence of a thing, but it does not *belong to* the essence qua essence; for the fact that the thing is other than something else is *not* due to its essential form but is due to the fact that no finite thing can be the Absolute Self-same (i.e., God), wherein there is no differentiation.⁹³

To repeat, then: the passage in *De Ludo Globi*⁹⁴ indicates that otherness cannot belong to the essence of anything because the essence (i.e., the essential form) makes the thing what it is, not

what it is not. (Indeed, to say that 'what a thing is, it is by not being all else,' goes far beyond anything either stated in or implied by Nicholas's texts.⁹⁵ In short, one creature is not made to be different from another by otherness, for *otherness* does not exist either in itself or in God or in a created essence.⁹⁶

14. *Wenckian Interpreter*: As you understand Nicholas, then, he is claiming that a thing of one kind differs from a thing of another kind by virtue of its being what it is and its not being able to be infinite. And what it is, i.e., its essence, is a positive determination that is associated with the form that gives to the individual thing its actual existence as that kind of thing, so that this essence qua essence furnishes to the thing its identity as that kind of thing. Hence, the thing, with respect to its essence, is what it is and is not another, for otherness cannot be essential to anything. But would you also say, on Cusa's behalf, that each individual thing of the same species contracts that species in some given degree of perfection, so that one individual differs from another individual of the same kind because of its different degree of contraction?

Cusan Corrector: Yes, this is what Nicholas declares in *DI* III, 1 (184:10-12): "among many individual things of the same species, there must be a difference of degrees of perfection." For example, "although there is a single humanity of all human beings, there are various individuating principles which contract it to this or that person—so that in Jesus Christ there were only the most perfect and powerful principles and those nearest to the essence of the humanity that was united with the divinity."⁹⁷

15. *Wenckian Interpreter*: You admit, don't you, that for Cusa "individuating principles cannot come together in one individual in such harmonious comparative relation as in another [individual]"?⁹⁸ Would you also agree that Nicholas's treatment of the "identity of indiscernibles" theme is different from Leibniz's? For the upshot of the principle of indiscernibles in Leibniz's system is the establishment of the absolute identity of indi-

vidual and essence, the reduction of all differentiation to the formal or essential type, and the elimination of all contingency or irrationality.⁹⁹

Cusan Corrector: I agree that Leibniz's system and Nicholas's are different and that the role of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles is also different. But I don't agree with your characterization of Nicholas's metaphysics of unity.

16. *Wenckian Interpreter*: From what you've been arguing, I realize that you are opposed to some parts of my characterization. But surely you would not find fault with the remaining interpretation. I have in mind the following five interpretive points: (1) *Alteritas* is not a principle and therefore not a principle of being.¹⁰⁰ (2) Because *alteritas* is not a principle, then *a fortiori* it is neither a derived principle nor an underived principle.¹⁰¹ (3) *Alteritas* is not that which functions to pluralize unity; it is the plurality which descends from unity.¹⁰² (4) *Alteritas* follows multiplication contingently.¹⁰³ (5) *A* is not *B* because *A* is not God, the Absolute; and this is an event of sheer contingency.¹⁰⁴

Cusan Corrector: I have no quarrel with claims 1 through 4 regarding Nicholas's program of learned ignorance. However, a bit later I will add several qualifications regarding claim 5. But for right now I simply want to point out that your other claims—the ones we've been discussing hitherto—do not follow from these four.

17. *Wenckian Interpreter*: Since you unreservedly accept four of the five foregoing claims about *alteritas* and *contingentia*, how will you respond to the following commentary on the program of learned ignorance?—a commentary that I object to:¹⁰⁵

So when Nicholas terms each creature a created god or a god manqué, he does so in order to emphasize that God was not niggardly or envious in creating: He imparted as much being and perfection as could be received. But now the question arises: received by what?, since God created *ex nihilo*. Here Nicholas's response is altogether unsatisfactory: a thing's degree of perfection comes from God; its imperfection and limitation come neither from God nor from any positive cause but only

from contingency. And the introducing of the word "contingency"—like Augustine's having introduced the phrase "deficient cause" vis-à-vis Satan's fall—signals that Nicholas has no intelligible explanation to offer. He is thus reduced further and further to unintelligibility: "There remains only to say that the plurality of things arises from the fact that God is present in nothing."¹⁰⁶

What I object to is the assertion that Nicholas has no intelligible explanation to offer. Indeed, the five claims that I have made are the basis for an intelligible theory of *alteritas*.

Cusan Corrector: It depends upon what you are willing to call intelligible and upon what the context is. The quotation above deals with the context of creation *ex nihilo* and of contingency. And in this context you must be careful lest you call intelligible what Nicholas himself calls unintelligible. Throughout *DI* II, 2-3 Nicholas reiterates that the origin of plurality from Oneness cannot be understood. In II, 2 (100:1-3) he asks rhetorically: "Who, then, can understand created being by conjoining, in created being, the absolute necessity from which it derives and the contingency without which it does not exist?" And a bit later he states: "the creation as creation cannot be called one, because it descends from Oneness; nor [can it be called] many, since its being derives from the One" ¹⁰⁷ Creating, he says, *seems* to be "not other than God's being all things. Therefore, if God is all things and if His being all things is creating: how can we deem creation not to be eternal, since God's being is eternal . . . ?" ¹⁰⁸ And again, rhetorically: "Who could understand the following?: how all things are the image of that one, infinite Form and are different contingently—as if a created thing were a god manqué, just as an accident is a substance manqué" ¹⁰⁹ And in *DI* II, 3 (109:9 - 110:3) he asks further: "How, then, can you understand there to be a plurality whose being comes from the One without [there occurring] any multiplication of the One? That is, how can you understand there to be a multiplication of Oneness without there being a multiplication [of Oneness]? Surely, [you can] not [understand it] as [you understand the multiplication] of one species or of

one genus in many species or many individuals; outside of these [individuals] a genus or a species does not exist except through an abstracting intellect. Therefore, no one understands how God . . . is unfolded through the number of things." And all these citations square with *Apologia* 33:12-17: "The Teacher picked up a copy of *Learned Ignorance* and read the second and the third chapters of Book Two In those chapters nothing is expressly dealt with other than [the view] that the being of creation derives from Absolute Being *in a manner which can neither be expressed nor understood*" ¹¹⁰

Nicholas's emphasis in *DI* II, 2-3 is, indeed, upon the fact that no finite mind can understand how a plurality of beings arose from Oneness of Being, how temporal beings arose from Eternal Being, and how contingent beings arose from Necessary Being. So if when someone asks how it came about that Supreme Oneness created a diversity, he is told that the diversity is due to contingency,¹¹¹ then recourse to the notion of contingency does not foster any positive understanding. For it is the equivalent of his being told that created things are diverse because they are not God and because whatever is not God is other and different. This latter statement is only minimally informative. For although we can understand the logical impossibility of God's creating another God, we cannot—claims Nicholas himself—understand the logical (and the theological) possibility of His creating a god manqué that is beset by multiplicity, temporality, and otherness. How radical Nicholas deems our incomprehensibility to be is evident from the unintelligibility of his own declaration: "There remains only to say that the plurality of things arises from the fact that God is present in nothing."

18. *Wenckian Interpreter*: What were your reservations about my fifth claim above?

Cusan Corrector: Three things. First, instead of saying "*A* is not *B* because *A* is not God" you should say, more precisely, "*A* is *A* and not *B* because *A* is not God." Secondly, when you add that "this is an event of sheer contingency," you should explic-

itly reaffirm something that I think you must certainly also realize: viz., that according to Nicholas (a) God foreknew the world which would be created and (b) He could have created a different world or willed not to create at all.¹¹² Thus, not even contingency escapes God's omnipotence. Thirdly, your expression "sheer contingency" conduces to the misimpression that, according to Nicholas, contingency alone accounts for plurality. Yet, as Nicholas explains in *De Mente* 6 (94:9-10), "the plurality of things has arisen from the Divine Mind's understanding one thing in one way and another thing in another way."¹¹³ And in *De Venatione Sapientiae* 27 (82:4) he uses the word "*praeconceptum*";¹¹⁴ and a few lines earlier he remarks: "Sed deus ipse determinavit intra suum conceptum, quod mundum istum seu hanc, quam videmus, pulchram creaturam crearet."¹¹⁵ Now, you allege that Nicholas rejects a Thomisticlike theory of exemplars and that precisely because he does so he must have recourse to contingency to account for diversity.¹¹⁶

But, in fact, Nicholas's theory of exemplarism resembles that of Anselm of Canterbury in the *Monologion*: "... whatever was made—whether it lives or does not live, or howsoever it exists in itself—exists as life itself and truth itself in the Supreme Spirit. But since for the Supreme Spirit to know is the same thing as for it to understand or to speak: all the things that it knows, it must know in the same way in which it speaks of them or understands them. Therefore, just as all things exist as life and truth in the Word of this Spirit, so they [also] exist [as life and truth] in this Spirit's Knowledge."¹¹⁷ According to Anselm God's Knowledge, in this context, is His Word, the second member or the Trinity, through whom God created the world. And the Word of God is the sole Exemplar, or Form, of creation.¹¹⁸ Through His Word, God the Supreme Spirit speaks of both Himself and the creation.

Like Anselm, Nicholas also (as we have seen) indicates that within the Divine Mind there is a Concept, an Archetype,¹¹⁹ of creation. And this view is what lies behind the previously

alluded to statement that "the plurality of things has arisen from the Divine Mind's understanding one thing in one way and another thing in another way."¹²⁰ Similarly, it underlies the repeated references to God as the Form of forms and as the Cause of all causes.¹²¹ Moreover, it underlies the claim that all things are in God as things caused are in their cause, as well as the claim that "in God every creature—[each of] which is the image of God—is present in its Truth."¹²² For as the exemplar is the measure and the form of the image, so "God shines forth in creatures as the truth shines forth in an image." And, finally, Nicholas's doctrine of *archetypus* explains why in *De Mente* Nicholas makes such statements as that "all things are in God, but there [they are] exemplars of things; all things are in our minds, but here [they are] likenesses of things."¹²³ Of course, when speaking more strictly, Nicholas dispenses with the plural "*exemplaria*" and uses the singular "*exemplar*": ". . . infinita forma est solum una et simplicissima, quae in omnibus rebus resplendet tamquam omnium et singulorum formabilium adaequatissimum exemplar."¹²⁴

There is, to be sure, a crucial difference between *Nicholas's* speaking of a single Exemplar, which is the Word of God and *Anselm's* speaking thereof: viz., that Anselm retains the doctrine of *analogia entis*, whereas Nicholas replaces it with his doctrine of *nulla proportio*.¹²⁵ Thus, for Nicholas, finite things bear only a symbolical likeness to God, the "Exemplar" of which they are "images".

19. *Wenckian Interpreter*: You have accused me of basing my interpretation partly upon mistranslations. But won't you have to admit that your own interpretation is also built upon the following flawed translation of *DI* II, 2 (99:6-10): "Similarly with things: since they cannot be the Maximum, it happens that they are diminished, other, distinct, and the like—none of which [characteristics] have a cause. Therefore, a created thing has from God the fact that it is one, distinct, and united to the universe" ¹²⁶ This translation makes Nicholas's statement

self-contradictory: a thing's being distinct does not have a cause; and yet, God is the cause of a thing's being distinct. The problem results from translating both "*distincta*" and "*discreta*" by the one English word "distinct," instead of rendering "*discreta*" by "determinate".

Cusan Corrector: Yes, the translation is incorrect. But a revision of the translation along the line you suggest will make no difference to my overall interpretation, which can accommodate a revised rendition. Nonetheless, for three reasons, I don't think that "determinate" is the best translation for "*discreta*". First, when Nicholas means the equivalents of our words "determine," "determined," and "to be determined," or "determination," he uses "*determinatum*," "*determinari*," or "*determinatio*," as in *DI* II, 7 (130-131).¹²⁷ Secondly, "*discreta*" is cognate with "*discernere*," not with "*determinare*"; and Nicholas often uses "*discretio*" and "*discernere*" together, as, for example, in *De Coniecturis* 8 (32:3-4).¹²⁸ Thirdly, Nicholas, like Thierry of Chartres, uses "*discretio*" and "*discreta*" also with respect to the Trinity; and no person of the Trinity is fittingly said to be a determination of God. In fact, the significance of Nicholas's use of "*indivisio*," "*discretio*," and "*conexio*" in *DI* I, 10 (28:12-13) to indicate a trinity that is also a oneness can be understood better by reference to *Sermo* 22 (*Dies Sanctificatus*), Section 17.¹²⁹ This latter passage will also help to elucidate his use of "*una*," "*discreta*," and "*conexa*" in *DI* II, 2 (99), where he is also pointing out a trinitarian image that is present in every creature.

An example of Thierry of Chartres' use of "*discretio*" can be found in his *Glosa super Boethii librum De Trinitate* V, 26, 93-96: "Non tamen proprietates haec quae est Filius est proprietates quae est Pater vel Spiritus sanctus, quia sic discretio non esset personarum sed Pater esset Filius et Spiritus sanctus—scilicet genitum et procedens."¹³⁰ Here "*discretio*" is best translated by "distinction". And in Nicholas of Cusa's writings it can also oftentimes be rendered in this same way. In fact, Nicholas tends

to use "*distinctio*" and "*discretio*" as interchangeable expressions. Accordingly, in *Apologia* 10:3 he refers to God as *indistincta distinctio*, though a bit later, in *Apologia* 24:17 he switches to speaking of Him as something *discretum indiscrete*.¹³¹

All in all, then, I would prefer to translate the passage in *DI* II, 2 (99) as: "Similarly with things: since they cannot be the Maximum, it happens that they are diminished, other, differentiated, and the like—none of which [characteristics] have a cause. Therefore, a created thing has from God the fact that it is one, distinct, and united to the universe However, it does not have from God (nor from any positive cause but [only] contingently) the fact that its oneness exists in plurality, its distinctness in confusion, and its union in discord."

20. *Wenckian Interpreter*: You admit to a mistake in the translation you are using; and you do not rule out my translation of this very passage, though you do not fully concur with it. At the same time, you agree with some of my main points about contingency and otherness; but you disagree with my position insofar as it coincides with that of Heinrich Rombach. Perhaps, then, for the time being, *lassen wir es dabei bewenden*, as the Germans say. If need be, we can always continue our discussion on another day, with an eye toward still other passages and other difficulties.

Cusan Corrector: I disagree with your views about Nicholas of Cusa not only to the extent that they correspond to those of Rombach¹³² but also to the extent that they approximate those of Henry Bett¹³³ and of Vincent Martin.¹³⁴ *Licet tamen quoad te condemnem peccata, diligo peccatorem*. For, in your case, the exegetical sins do not detract from the brilliance of the intellect that shines forth in spite of them. Instead, they bear vivid witness to the fact that a number of Nicholas's statements tend to mislead. If a reader gets off on the wrong foot in interpreting any one of them, then he will be led, almost ineluctably, to give a distorted account of Nicholas's metaphysics as a whole, there-

by making himself, *nolens volens*, an ally of John Wenck. For, together with Wenck, his getting off on the wrong foot results in part from his truncating some texts, his ignoring other texts altogether, and his neglecting important qualifications that Nicholas himself placed upon his *prima facie* most startling statements.

NOTES

NOTES TO THE PREFACE

1. Chapter Two, "The Role of *Pia Interpretatio* in Nicholas of Cusa's Hermeneutical Approach to the Koran," was originally published on pp. 251-273 in Gregorio Piaia, editor, *Concordia discors. Studi su Niccolò Cusano e l'umanesimo europeo offerti a Giovanni Santinello* (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1993). It is reprinted here with minor changes, including Americanized punctuation.
2. See, below, n. 1 of Notes to Introduction to Translations.

NOTES TO WENCK'S COUNTERPARTS

1. Rudolf Haubst reports that Wenck responded to Cusa's *Apologia* by writing a further criticism, viz., *De Facie Scolae Doctae Ignorantiae*. [See pp. 102-103 of R. Haubst, *Studien zu Nikolaus von Kues und Johannes Wenck*. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters, Vol. 38, Heft 1 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1955).] This further treatise by Wenck has never been found.

In the present chapter, as also throughout the book, all references to Nicholas's works are to the Latin texts. See the sections on *Praenotanda* and *Abbreviationes*. The abbreviation "*DI*," used in the present chapter *et passim*, stands for the title "*De Docta Ignorantia*."

2. *Ap.* 17:4-8.
3. I have maintained, against Josef Koch *et al.*, that there is no sharp distinction between *DI* and *De Coniecturis*. Certainly there is no justification for Koch's dichotomizing judgment that *DI* is an example of a *Seinsmetaphysik*, whereas *De Coniecturis* is an example of an *Einheitsmetaphysik*. (See my *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-other*, 3rd ed., pp. 12-13, and *A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa*, 3rd ed., pp. 32-33.) To be sure, there are differing emphases in Nicholas's different works; and there do occur new ideas throughout the succession of his works. But these constitute modifications and expansions, not transformations, of the initial program set forth in *DI*.
4. For example, there is (it seems to me) an incoherence in Nicholas's Christology. See, below, n. 10 of Notes to Introduction to the Translations.
5. Erich Meuthen in his review for *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 103 (1983), 448.

6. In *VS* Nicholas does not use the words "*coincidentia*" and "*coincidere*." But he retains the *idea* that opposites coincide in God. See, for example, *VS* 34 (103) and *VS* 13 (35 and 38).

7. This theme is adumbrated in *DII*, 4 (11:13-14).

8. This theme is adumbrated in *DII*, 4 (11:12-13).

9. Werner Beierwaltes, "Das seiende Eine. Zur neuplatonischen Interpretation der zweiten Hypothese des platonischen *Parmenides*: das Beispiel Cusanus" (pp. 287-297 in G. Boss and G. Seel, editors, *Proclus et son influence. Actes du Colloque de Neuchâtel, juin 1985*. Zurich: Editions du Grand Midi, 1987), p. 291.

10. Siegfried Dangelmayr. *Gotteserkenntnis und Gottesbegriff in den philosophischen Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues* (Meisenheim, Germany: A. Hain, 1969), p. 273.

11. "*Posse fieri*" may be translated in many ways. See my *Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa*, 3rd ed., p. 183, n. 10. In the present context it may appropriately be rendered as "the possibility to be made" and as "the possibility to become."

12. Cf. *VS* 3 (8:1).

13. *DP* 29:2-3; 27:4-6. *VS* 38 (110:7-9); 39 (116:13-16).

14. *DP* 28:7-9. Here Nicholas is discussing the possibility of the world's being made.

15. *VS* 3 (7:21); 39 (117:3).

16. *De Apice Theoriae* 5:1-6. *NA* 2 (6:14-15). *DP* 15. See, below, in Part III, Review I, in which I briefly discuss (and reject) Peter Casarella's claim that a substantive change takes place in Nicholas's thoughts (on *possibility*) as expressed in *De Possess* and in *De Apice Theoriae*.

Both the theme of *possess* and that of *non-aliud* are alluded to by Nikolaus in *DII*, 4 (11).

17. One difference between John Wenck and present-day Wenckians is that whereas Wenck aimed to denounce Nicholas of Cusa's ideas as heretical and irrational, some of his present-day counterparts aim to praise Nicholas's ideas for their philosophical depth and novelty.

18. *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 64 (Winter 1990), 55-71.

19. "The Meaning of the Couple, 'Complicatio-Explicatio' in the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 32 (1958), 206-214. "Nicholas of Cusa and Leibniz's Principle of Indiscernibility," *Modern Schoolman*, 42 (November 1964), 33-46. "Nicholas of Cusa's Theory of Science and Its Metaphysical Background," pp. 317-338 in *Nicolò Cusano agli inizi del mondo moderno*. Atti del Congresso internazionale in occasione del V centenario della morte di

Nicolò Cusano. Bressanone, 6-10 settembre 1964. (Florence: Sansoni, 1970). "Nicholas of Cusa as a Forerunner of Modern Science," pp. 619-622 in *Actes du dixième congrès international d'histoire des sciences*. Vol. I (Paris: Hermann, 1964). These works will be cited hereafter with shortened titles.

20. McTighe, "Cusa's Theory of Science," p. 338.

21. See McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 63 and *De Dato Patris Luminum* 2 (97:15-17). (On p. 63 McTighe mistakenly records the title of Nicholas's work as *De Dato Patris Luminis*; and in n. 37 on the same page he makes a second mistake, this time recording the title as *De Dato Patris Luminiae*. But "*Luminiae*" is not even a Latin word. In the *Apologia* and elsewhere Nicholas does sometimes write "*De Dato Patris Lumine*.") See also my critique of Klaus Jacobi on pp. 39-52 of my *Nicholas of Cusa's Metaphysic of Contraction*.

22. *Ap.* 30:8.

23. J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance*, 2nd ed., p. 92.

24. See McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 64 (a part of which is excerpted almost verbatim in the above speech): "Both the translation and the interpretation it implies are erroneous. In the first place, *resplendentia* means 'splendor' or 'resplendence,' not reflection [*sic*, without quotation marks]. Secondly, the splendor is not the splendor of the finite *esse*, but of the *infinita forma*, which communicates itself to the creature but is not positively received by any pre-existing subject. Finally, *contingentia diversa* refers to the condition of being other which falls outside being. The contingency of diversity does not attach to an independent finite *esse*. Diversity or otherness is the *esse diminutum* of the creature."

25. Karl Georges, *Ausführliches Lateinisch-Deutsches Handwörterbuch*, 8th edition, revised by Heinrich Georges [Basel: Benno Schwabe, 1962 (Vol. II)].

26. And, in fact, the translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province has "whoever sees a mirror, sees what is reflected in the mirror." See Vol. I, p. 55, column 1 of St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947).

27. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 64.

28. *DI* II, 2 (102:12 - 103:9).

29. *DI* II, 2 (104:13-15). The translation of this passage—i.e., the translation referred to by McTighe—is by J. Hopkins.

30. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," pp. 64-65. I have corrected a misprint in McTighe's Latin quotation by putting "*altius*" in place of "*alius*" (McTighe's p. 64). Part of my recapitulation of McTighe's position, here as elsewhere, is virtually verbatim.

31. *DI* II, 8 (140:5-8).

32. This is also Nicholas's point in *DI* II, 2 (104:5) when he states that "the Infinite Form is received only finitely."

33. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 65 : God "imparts himself and it is he who is received Contingency attends upon the reception of God"

34. "It is not the case that as a mirror is a mirror before it receives the image of a face, so created being exists prior to derivative [participating] being; for created being is derivative being." *DI* II, 2 (102:12-15).

35. *DI* II, 2 (104:5).

36. N.B.: Not just the *human* creature is an image of God.

37. McTighe, "Cusa's Theory of Science," p. 320. Parts of the foregoing are verbatim.

38. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 70, n. 66, partly verbatim.

39. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 69, verbatim except for the bracketed words.

40. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 62: "Now what is true of lines and their diversity is true of all things with respect to their essence, God, the *ratio omnium rerum*." See also pp. 69-70.

41. The longer expression "the Essence of the essences of all things" would be tedious, as would also "the Essence of the (respective) essence of each thing."

42. Cf. *DVD* 9 (36:10-11): "Therefore, you are the Essence of essences, giving to contracted essences that they be that which they are."

43. With regard to Nicholas's statement, at the end of *DI* I, 17 ("We have now seen clearly how we can arrive at God through removing the participation of beings"), see pp. 11-12 of J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance*, 2nd ed.

44. By contrast, note McTighe's phrase "the quiddity which is the same for both" [i.e., for both God and creatures] on p. 328 of his "Cusa's Theory of Science." But contrary to McTighe's interpretation, Nicholas teaches that Absolute Quiddity and contracted quiddity are never the same. In *DI* II, 4 (115), where Nicholas speaks of "the Absolute Quiddity of the sun," this is not the *sun's* quiddity any more than it is the *moon's* quiddity, since these latter are contracted quiddities. Yet, it is referred to as the Absolute Quiddity *of the sun* because the sun would not be what it is apart from the participation of its quiddity in Absolute Quiddity, its Ground of being and of essence.

45. *DI* II, 3 (110:20 - 111:6).

46. If Nicholas were speaking from a single point of view, this statement would be nonsensical, since an accident is a part of creation. Anselm of Canterbury, in *Monologion* 28, also speaks from two different points of view

when he notes that in a certain respect created things may be said not to exist. A similar point is made by Augustine in his *Expositions of the Psalms* 134.4.

47. Cf. McTighe, "Contingentia and Alteritas," p. 64: "In Cusa's metaphysics God is the sole possessor of independence, *Eigenständigkeit*." And in n. 39 on the same page he denies that creatures have any independence, according to Cusa.

48. McTighe, "Contingentia and Alteritas," p. 65.

49. McTighe, "Cusa's Theory of Science," p. 330.

50. "Cusa's Theory of Science," pp. 326-327, almost verbatim.

51. *Compendium* 4 (9:5).

52. *Compendium* 10 (34:17-18).

53. See *De Mente* 2 (64:10-11) and 2 (65:4-7).

54. *De Mente* 4.

55. *VS* 29 (88:14-17).

56. "... *materia ipsa nunc stans sub forma*," *De Genesi* 3 (163:13). Cf. McTighe: "... in Cusa, matter does not and cannot function as a substrate." "Contingentia and Alteritas," p. 69.

57. Cf. *DI* II, 6 (126:6-8): "For example, dogs and the other animals of the same species are united by virtue of the common specific nature which is in them."

58. McTighe, "Cusa's Theory of Science," p. 324, partly verbatim.

59. McTighe, "Cusa and Leibniz's Principle," pp. 40-41, largely verbatim. See also p. 43: "Plural essential diversities, or universals, are . . . purely mental constructions, explicated by the mind out of the resources of its own internal *complicatio*."

60. *NA* 10 (39:5-11).

61. The essences themselves, Nicholas stated in *VS* 29 (86:8-10), are not in the mind; but, rather, their likenesses are in the mind.

62. *DI* II, 9 (148:11-13).

63. *DI* II, 6 (124-125)—especially 125:12-13. Cf. *DI* II, 3 (109:11-15).

64. McTighe, "Cusa's Theory of Science," p. 322, virtually verbatim.

65. *Ap.* 27:4-5: "For in God all things are God. For example, in God the earth is not the earth but is God—and similarly regarding each other thing." See also *DI* I, 24 (77).

66. *Ap.* 16:21-22.

67. *DP* 13:7-8.

68. McTighe, "Cusa and Leibniz's Principle," p. 41, almost verbatim. See also the bottom half of p. 43.

69. *Nicolai Cusae Cardinalis Opera*, Vol. II, Letter I, f. 3' after the *Excitationes* (Paris edition, 1514; reprinted in Frankfurt am Main by Minerva Verlag, 1962). The passage is translated by McTighe on p. 41 of his "Cusa and Leibniz's Principle."

70. Nicholas adds that no created thing participates in the Word of God *as the Word is in itself*. [This is what Nicholas means when he sometimes says, unqualifiedly, that God cannot be participated in. See *De Quaerendo Deum* 2 (37:13-14) and *NA* 16 (79:5-6).] Regarding Nicholas's denial of a world soul that is other than God, see *DI* II, 9 (149:16-20). Cf. *DI* II, 12 (166:15-18). Also see *De Mente* 13 (145:2-3 and 7-9). Cf. *De Mente* 5 (85:3-4).

71. *VS* 28 (84:2-3).

72. *VS* 38 (110:14-15).

73. *VS* 22 (65:23-24). *DI* II, 3 (108:8-11). *Letter to Roderick* as cited in n. 69 above. Also note *De Aequalitate*: "Sed in aliis [aequalitas] participatur aliter, cum aequalis participatio sit impossibilis. Aequalitas igitur omnibus aequaliter adest, sed non aequaliter recipitur, sicut solaris radius in prato omnibus herbis aequaliter adest, sed non aequaliter recipitur" Cited from p. 404, Vol. III of Nikolaus von Kues, *Philosophisch-theologische Schriften*, translated by Dietlind and Wilhelm Dupré; edited by Leo Gabriel (Vienna: Herder, 1967). We must remember that Nicholas, when not intent upon excluding a substance's participation in Nous or in a world-soul, does speak of more immediate and less immediate participation in God: "Some beings—viz., simple finite substances—participate more immediately in Maximum Being, which exists in itself. And other beings—viz., accidents—participate in [Maximum] Being not through themselves but through the medium of substances" *DI* I, 18 (52:23-27).

74. McTighe, "Cusa's Theory of Science," pp. 325 and 333.

75. E.g., *DI* II, 6 (124-125), II, 12 (172:6-8), III, 1 (184-188), III, 3 (197-198). See also *DVD* 24 (107). *De Genesi* 1 (152:1). *De Genesi* 4 (168). *De Dato* 5 (113-114).

76. McTighe, "Cusa's Theory of Science," p. 321, partly verbatim. Cf. McTighe, "Cusa and Leibniz's Principle," pp. 42-43.

77. McTighe, "Cusa's Theory of Science," p. 328.

78. *DI* III, 1 (186-187). *DVD* 22 (98).

79. *DI* III, 1 (185:6-8): "Genera do not reach the limit of the universe; species [do not reach] the limit of their genera; and individual things [do not reach] the limit of their species."

80. *NA* 20 (93:4). *VS* 34 (103:8-9).

81. *VS* 39 (120:11-12).

82. *VS* 34 (103:8-9).

83. See *De Genesi* 1 (146:3-4; 146:10; 149:6); 2 (154:10).

84. McTighe, "Cusa's Theory of Science," p. 327, almost verbatim.

85. McTighe, "Cusa and Leibniz's Principle," p. 44, virtually verbatim.

86. McTighe, "Cusa's Theory of Science," p. 323, virtually verbatim. Cf. "Cusa and Leibniz's Principle," p. 44, where McTighe gives the equivalent

translation "*Praecisio* is not of this world. Hence everything that differs from another can *exist only by that difference*" (italics his).

87. Cf. Nicholas's meaning in *DVD* 25 (110:11-14).

88. Cf. *De Dato* 2 (100:13-20).

89. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 65. McTighe's translation.

90. *Ap.* 26:5-6.

91. Cf. *DVD* 14 (62:1-2).

92. The quoted words represent McTighe's interpretation of Nicholas in his "Cusa's Theory of Science," p. 332.

93. *De Genesi* 1 (147:5-7). Cf. *DVD* 14 (62:1-2).

94. Viz., the passage cited at the outset of speech 13 above. Cf. *De Mente* 6 (96:12).

95. See McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 60: "To be for a creature *is* to be different." Cf. n. 92 above.

96. Cf. *DVD* 14 (60-61).

97. *DI* III, 8 (228:1-5). Cf. *DI* III, 1 (189).

98. *DI* III, 1 (189:1-2). Cf. Proposition 18 of the Propositions to *NA* (123:10-13).

99. McTighe, "Cusa and Leibniz's Principle," p. 39, mostly verbatim.

100. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 58.

101. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 59.

102. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 58, virtually verbatim.

103. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 58.

104. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 59, verbatim (punctuation altered).

105. See McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 55.

106. J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance*, p. 19. The quotation in the last sentence above is from *DI* II, 3 (110:11-12).

107. *DI* II, 2 (100:15-17).

108. *DI* II, 2 (101:2-5). Nicholas proceeds, in II, 3, to distinguish *complicatio* from *explicatio*. But as the title of Chapter 3 discloses, even this enfolding of all things in God ontologically prior to their creation, as well as their being unfolded in creation, is not understandable.

109. *DI* II, 2 (104:1-4).

110. Italics added.

111. See McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 61: "... to be different or other is a function of the contingency ... that accompanies, as it were, divine self-communication."

112. *VS* 27 (82:10-12): "Sed quia ipsa mens aeterna libera ad creandum et non creandum vel sic vel aliter, suam omnipotentiam, ut voluit, intra se ab aeterno determinavit." Cf. *VS* 38 (114:9-11): "Et haec determinatio est

creatoris ipsius posse fieri, qui cum sit omnipotens, solus determinare habet, quod posse fieri sic aut sic fiat." See also *VS* 28 (83:11-12): "Et ita omnia mens divina determinavit sapientissime, ita quod nihil caret ratione cur sic et non aliter"

113. See also *DI* II, 3 (108:8-11).

114. "Et secundum hunc aeternum conceptum, creando posse fieri, ipsum determinavit ad mundum et eius partes in aeternitate praeconceptum." *VS* 27 (82:2-4).

115. *VS* 27 (81:16-17).

116. McTighe, "*Contingentia* and *Alteritas*," p. 61, partly verbatim. The extended passage is as follows: "But, one might object, surely there is an exemplar actuality which is the model for the finite actuality, i.e., a divine idea in the mind of God. In that case the emergence of earth as different from other things can hardly be said to be a matter simply of contingency. The finite actuality as an image of the infinite actuality is what it is because it expresses in a limited way what the exemplar actuality possesses unlimitedly. But it is precisely because Cusa rejects any such theory of exemplars or divine ideas that he must have recourse to contingency to account for diversity."

117. *Monologion* 35. Cf. Nicholas's *De Mente* 3 (6:15-17): "Et cum verbum dei sit praecisio omnis nominis nominabilis, solum in verbo omnia et quodlibet sciri posse constat." See also *De Sapientia* II (34:12 - 35:1).

118. Cf. *Monologion* 9 with *Monologion* 35. See also *DI* II, 9 (148:10-13): "Hence, the forms of things are not distinct except as they exist contractedly; as they exist absolutely they are one, indistinct [Form], which is the Word in God."

119. *VS* 38 (110:14-15): "Patet posse fieri mundum se referre ad mundum archetypum in aeterna mente dei." Cf. *VS* 38 (111:1-2): "Video igitur omnia quae fieri possunt non habere nisi simplex illud exemplar, quod non est aliud ab omni quod fieri potest, cum sit actus omnis posse." Cf. *Sermo* 22, *Dies Sanctificatus* (28:1-4): "Et considera bene hic, quo modo universum, si consideratur in pura unitate, tunc est Deus, quia mundus archetypus et Verbum, quia nihil tunc est extra ipsum etc." *Sermo* 30, *Constituite diem solemnem* (12:29-32): "Quo modo mundus in Deo Verbo? Dico quod archetypus mundus ut in forma artis Deus est: ut participatur, contrahitur. Et ita exeunt creaturae, sicut in artificiato etc." See also *VS* 29 (87:10-12): "Solutus deus, creator et dator formarum illarum essentialium, illas in se ipso intuetur. Deus enim proprie non intelligit, sed essentialiter."

120. *De Mente* 6 (94:9-10). See also *DI* II, 3 (108:8-11).

121. Strictly speaking, of course, God is not Form, according to both Nicholas and Anselm. See Nicholas's *VS* 34 (103:8-9). Cf. Anselm's general account in *Monologion* 65.

122. *Ap.* 26:10-11.

123. *De Mente* 3 (73:1-2).

124. *De Mente* 2 (67:4-6). See especially *De Mente* 2 (67-68). See also *De Mente* 5 (85:3-4). Also note *DI* II, 9 (149:8-10): "Therefore, when it is said that God created man by means of one essence and created stone by means of another, this is true with respect to things but not true with respect to the Creator" Note *VS* 28 (84:2-3): "Ideo [species] non habent exemplaria nisi mentem divinam, per quam id sunt quod sunt"

125. Nulla proportio infiniti ad finitum. See *DI* I, 3 (9:4-5).

126. "... ita quidem contingit rebus, quoniam maximum esse non posunt, ut sint diminuta, altera, distincta et cetera huiusmodi, quae quidem causam non habent. Habet igitur creatura a deo, ut sit una discreta et conexa universo"

127. See also *VS* 27-28.

128. See also *VS* 6 (14:24-25). *VS* 22 (67:16).

129. See also *Sermo* 22, *Dies Sanctificatus*, (27:15 - 28:11). Cf. *Sermo* 23, *Domine, in Lumine Vultus Tui*, (17:3-15). *Sermo* 24, *Jhesus in eyner allerdemutlichster Menscheit*, (18:11-30, Latin text).

130. P. 298 in Nikolaus M. Häring, editor, *Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and His School* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1971). I have altered spellings and punctuation in the passage cited.

131. In *Ap.* 24:17 Nicholas calls the *mode* (whereby we speak of God) "*discretus indiscrete*." But in speaking of God in accordance with this mode, we are speaking of Him Himself as *discretus indiscrete*.

132. Heinrich Rombach, *Substanz, System, Struktur. Die Ontologie des Funktionalismus und der philosophische Hintergrund der modernen Wissenschaft* (Freiburg: K. Alber, Vol. I, 1965).

133. Henry Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa* (London: Methuen, 1932).

134. Vincent Martin, "The Dialectical Process in the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa," *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 5 (1949), 213-268.

NOTES TO CUSA'S HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

1. Nicholas himself uses the word "*digressio*," for example, in the title of *CA* I, 20. (Here as elsewhere I use "*CA*" as the abbreviation for "*Cribratio Alkorani*.")

2. Giovanni Santinello, *Introduzione a Niccolò Cusano* [Bari: Editori Laterza, 1987 (2nd edition), pp. 122-123]: "The plan of the three books that compose *Cribratio Alkorani* is not very clear. Nevertheless, in spite of various digressions which often interrupt the development [of the plan] we can say that in the first book Cusanus makes a general comparison between the Koran