

**A CONCISE INTRODUCTION
TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF
NICHOLAS OF CUSA
(Third Edition)**

By

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ON ACTUALIZED-POSSIBILITY¹ (De Possesit)

BERNARD: The long-desired opportunity to converse with the Cardinal has been granted us; and it is not troublesome to him to divulge a long-pondered concept. So I ask you, Abbot John, if you would, to set forth some [points] from your studies, in order to motivate a response from him. Once he is stimulated, surely he will disclose to us gratifying [teachings].

JOHN: He has listened to me very often already. If you start the discussion, he will undoubtedly respond more quickly, since he looks upon you favorably and esteems you highly. I will remain present if you consent. So let us draw nearer to the fire. Here is the Cardinal, seated and ready to accommodate your wishes.

CARDINAL: Come near. The cold, which is more severe than usual, presses us close together and excuses us if we sit together around the fire.

BERNARD: Since the season thus presses us, we are readily disposed to comply with your request.

CARDINAL: Perhaps some uncertainty is troubling you both, for you are agitated. Let me share in your pursuits.

JOHN: Yes, we have doubts which we hope you will clear up. If it is all right, Bernard will commence.

CARDINAL: Fine.

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BERNARD:² I happened to be studying the epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans, and I read that God manifests to human beings the things which they know about Him. But [the Apostle] states that this [revelation] occurs in the following manner: “The invisible things of Him, including His eternal power and divinity, are clearly seen from the creation of the world, by means of understanding created things.”³ We ask to hear from you an elucidation of this mode [of revelation].

CARDINAL: Who can express Paul's meaning better than Paul? Elsewhere⁴ he says that the invisible things are eternal. Temporal things are images of eternal things. Thus, if created things are understood, the invisible things of God are seen clearly—for example, His eternity, power, and divinity. Hence, the manifestation of God occurs from the creation of the world.

BERNARD: The Abbot and I find it strange that invisible things are seen.

CARDINAL: They are seen invisibly—just as when the intellect understands what it reads, it invisibly sees the invisible truth which is hidden behind the writing. I say “invisibly” (i.e., “mentally”) because the invisible truth, which is the object of the intellect, cannot be seen in any other way.

3 BERNARD: But how is this seeing elicited from the visible mundane creation?

CARDINAL: I know that what I see perceptibly does not exist from itself. For just as the sense [of sight] does not discriminate anything by itself but has its discriminating from a higher power, so too what is perceptible does not exist from itself but exists from a higher power. The Apostle said “from the creation of the world” because from the visible world as creature we are elevated to the Creator. Therefore, when in seeing what is perceptible I understand that it exists from a higher power (since it is finite, and a finite thing cannot exist from itself; for how could what is finite have set its own limit?), then I can only regard as invisible and eternal [this] Power from which it exists. (For the Creative Power can be understood only as eternal.) For unless [the world] were created, how would it exist from another power? Accordingly, the Power through which the mundane creation exists is eternal—and hence invisible, for “the things which are seen are temporal.”⁵ And this is the Divinity invisible to every creature.

4 BERNARD: Perhaps [Paul's meaning] is such as you clearly indicate [it to be]. Nevertheless, through this [passage] Paul seems to disclose very little about the most coveted knowledge of God.

CARDINAL: On the contrary. [He discloses] very many things, not just a few. For he said: “The invisible things of God are clearly seen from understanding the mundane creation.” [He did] not [mean this in the sense] that the invisible things of God are something other than the invisible God. Rather, [he said it] because in the mundane creation many things are visible; and any one of them, by virtue of its congruent form [*ratio*], is what it is. And so, Paul teaches that we must mount up from any given visible creature to its invisible Beginning.⁶

BERNARD: We duly understand all this—viz., how we are aroused by created things so that we may behold their eternal forms in their Beginning. This [point] could have been stated just this clearly by the Apostle if he meant nothing else. But if he intended to say

something more fully to one ardent with the desire to apprehend God, we ask that [it] be disclosed.

5 CARDINAL: I think that very many [of these] things are also very deep and lie hidden from me. But what I now believe is the following: The Apostle wanted to teach us how it is that we can invisibly apprehend in God those things which we see in the creation. Assuredly, for example, every actually existing created thing is able to exist; for what is not able to exist does not exist. So, then, not-being is not a created thing; for if it were a created thing, assuredly it would exist.⁷ Moreover, since to create is to bring forth from not-being to being, assuredly [the Apostle] indicates clearly that not-being is in no respect a created thing. And to have apprehended this [point] is no small matter.

6 But I add consistently: From the fact that every existing thing is able to be that which it actually is,⁸ we behold absolute actuality, through which the things that actually exist are what they are. (By comparison, when with the visible eye we see white things, we intellectually behold whiteness, without which a white thing would not be white.) Therefore, since actuality actually exists: assuredly it is also able to exist, because what is impossible to exist does not exist. Now, absolute possibility is not able to be anything other than possibility, even as absolute actuality [is] not [able to be] anything other than actuality.⁹ This possibility which was just now mentioned [viz., absolute possibility] is not able to exist prior to actuality—unlike the case where we say that some particular possibility precedes its actualization. For how would [absolute possibility] have become actual except through actuality? For if the possibility-of-being-made¹⁰ made itself actually exist, it would actually exist before it actually existed. Therefore, absolute possibility, about which we are speaking and through which those things that actually exist are able actually to exist, does not precede actuality. Nor does it succeed actuality; for how would actuality be able to exist if possibility did not exist? Therefore, absolute possibility, actuality, and the union of the two are co-eternal. They are not more than one eternal thing; rather, they are eternal in such way that [they are] Eternity itself.¹¹

Do these matters seem to the two of you to be thus or to be otherwise?

BERNARD: Surely, no rational being can disagree [with these points].

JOHN: Just as while I am gazing at the sun I cannot deny that it is radiant, so by your guidance I see that these [points] are very clear. But I am expecting you, in your own way, to derive important conclusions from them.

- 7 CARDINAL: I will be satisfied if I do not veer from your judgment. So I will continue along this route toward the conclusions to which I am hastening.

Now, I will call this Eternity which we thus see *the glorious God*. And I say that it is now evident to us that God is the simple Beginning of the world; He exists before actuality that is distinct from possibility and before possibility that is distinct from actuality. But all things that exist after Him exist with their possibility and their actuality distinct. And hence, God alone is what (He) is able to be;¹² but no creature whatsoever [is what (it) is able to be], since possibility and actuality are identical only in the Beginning.

- 8 BERNARD: Stop for a moment, Father, and clarify a doubtful [point]. In what sense do you mean that God is what (He) is able to be? For it seems that this can be said in like manner about the sun, the moon, the earth, and any other thing.¹³

CARDINAL: I am speaking in absolute and very general terms — as if I were saying: “Since possibility and actuality are identical in God, God is—actually—everything of which ‘is able to be’ can be predicated truly.” For there can be nothing that God [can be but] is not actually. (This point is easily recognized by anyone who takes account of the fact that absolute possibility coincides with actuality.) However, the case of the sun is different. For although the sun is actually what it is, it is not what it is able to be. For [the sun] is able to exist otherwise than it actually exists.

BERNARD: Proceed, Father. For, assuredly, no created thing is actually all that it is able to be. For God’s creative power is not exhausted in His creation. And thus, it is not the case that He is unable to produce a human being from a stone and to increase or decrease each thing’s size and, in general, to turn any created thing into any other created thing.¹⁴

CARDINAL: You speak correctly. Therefore, since the facts of the matter are such that God is Absolute Possibility, is Actuality, and is the Union of the two (and so, He is actually every possible being): clearly, He is all things, in the sense of enfolding all things. For everything that in any way either exists or can exist is enfolded in this Be-

ginning. And whatever either has been created or will be created is unfolded from Him, in whom it is enfolded.

- 9 JOHN: Although I have frequently heard you make these statements, they have never seemed to be anything except momentous and very difficult for me.¹⁵ So do not be reluctant to give an answer: Do you wish to say that created things, which are signified by means of the ten categories (viz., substance, quantity, quality, and the others), exist in God?

CARDINAL: I want to say that as-enfolded-in-God all these things are God; similarly, as-unfolded-in-the-created-world they are the world.¹⁶

JOHN: God, then, is great.

CARDINAL: Yes, He is great. But He is great in such way that He is greatness which is everything it is able to be. For He is not great by virtue of a greatness which is able to be greater, or by virtue of a greatness which is able to be divided and diminished. [In this respect, He is not] like created quantity, which is not what it is able to be.

BERNARD: If, then, God is great by virtue of a greatness which is what it is able to be and which (as you say) is unable to be greater and unable to be lesser, then God is maximal and minimal greatness, alike.

CARDINAL: Assuredly there is no error in one's saying that God is absolutely maximal and absolutely minimal greatness, alike. [To say] this is to say nothing other than that He is infinite and indivisible greatness—a greatness which is the measure and the truth of every finite magnitude. For how could a [greatness] that is the maximal [greatness] in such way that it is also the minimal [greatness] be too great [a measure] for anything?¹⁷ Or how could a [greatness] that is the minimal [greatness] in such way that it is the maximal [greatness] be too small [a measure] for anything? Or how can [a greatness] that is actually everything it is able to be fail to be the equality of being of every magnitude? Surely, it is able to be the equality of being [of every magnitude].¹⁸

- 10 BERNARD: These [teachings] are gratifying. Yet, it seems to me that neither the name ["greatness"] nor the fact [of greatness] nor any of the characteristics applicable to created magnitude are fittingly predicated of God, since these are infinitely different [from God]. And presumably this [point] holds true not only for greatness but also for whatever is predicated truly of created things.

CARDINAL: You are thinking correctly, Bernard. In fact, the

Apostle implied this very point. For analogous to the difference between visible things and invisible things, [two sets of things] which we assert to be infinitely different [from each other], he differentiated between what is apprehended in the case of created things and what is apprehended in the case of God.

JOHN: As far as I can tell, very many [truths] are contained in these few [statements]. For example, suppose that on the basis of the beauty of created things I say that God is beautiful; and suppose I know that God is so beautiful that He is a beauty which is everything it is able to be. Then, I know that God lacks nothing of the beauty of the whole world. And I know that all creatable beauty is only a certain disproportionate likeness to that Beauty (1) which is actually the possibility of the existence of all beauty and (2) which is not able to exist otherwise than it does, since it is what it is able to be. The case is similar concerning the good and life and other things—just as it is also similar concerning motion. For no motion is at rest or is what it is able to be—except for the motion which befits God, who is not only maximal motion but also minimal motion (i.e., motion which is most at rest). Indeed, you seem to me to be making this claim. Yet, I am uncertain whether in similar fashion we can fittingly say that God is sun or sky or man or any other such thing.

11 CARDINAL: We must not insist upon the words. For example, suppose we say that God is sun. If, as is correct, we construe this [statement] as [a statement] about a sun which is actually all it is able to be, then we see clearly that this sun is not at all like the sensible sun. For while the sensible sun is in the East, it is not in any other part of the sky where it is able to be. [Moreover, none of the following statements are true of the sensible sun:] “It is maximal and minimal, alike, so that it is not able to be either greater or lesser”; “It is everywhere and anywhere, so that it is not able to be elsewhere than it is”; “It is all things, so that it is not able to be anything other than it is”—and so on. With all the [other] created things the case is similar. Hence, it does not matter what name you give to God, provided that in the foregoing manner you mentally remove the limits with respect to its possible being.

12 BERNARD: I take you to mean that God is all things, so that He is not able to be anything other than He is.¹⁹ How can the intellect grasp this [doctrine]?

CARDINAL: Indeed, this [doctrine] must be affirmed most stead-

fastly. For God does not fail to be anything at all which is at all possible to be. For He is the very being—that is, the *entitas*—of possibility and of actuality.²⁰ But although He is all things in all things,²¹ He is all things in such way that He is not one thing more than another; for He is not one thing in such way that He is no other thing.

BERNARD: Beware lest you contradict yourself For a moment ago you denied that God is sun; and now you are asserting that He is all things.

CARDINAL: On the contrary! I affirmed that God is sun—though [He is] not [sun] in the same way as is the visible sun, which is not what it is able to be. For, assuredly, He who is what (He) is able to be does not fail to have solar being; rather, He has it in a better way, because [He has it] in a divine and most perfect way.

The essence of a hand exists more truly in the soul than in the hand, since the life is in the soul and since a lifeless hand is not a hand. (The same point can be made about the whole body and its individual members.) Now, the Universe is related to God in a way comparable to this—except for its not being the case that God is the soul of the world *in the way that* a soul is the soul of a man. Nor is God the Form of a given thing; rather, He is the Form for all things, since He is the efficient, the formal (or the exemplary), and the final cause.

13 BERNARD: Doesn't John the Evangelist²² want to say—in a way comparable to your statement about the hand and the soul—that in God all things are life?

CARDINAL: I think that “life” there means “truth” and “vitality.” For since things do not exist unless they are formed through a form, forms exist more truly and more vitally in the Form of forms than in matter. For a thing does not exist unless it is true and, in its own way, alive. When it ceases to be true and alive, it ceases to exist. And so, it exists more truly in the Form of forms than in itself; for in the Form of forms it is true and alive.

JOHN: You teach us excellently, Father. You seem to me to elicit all things from one thing. God, then, is all things, so that He is not able to be anything else. He is so present everywhere that He is not able to be present anywhere else. He is to such an extent the most congruent measure of all things that He is not able to be a more equal measure. The same points can be made about form and species and all other things. In this way it is not difficult to see that God is free of all opposition—[to see] how it is that those things which seem to us to be opposites are identical in Him, how it is that in Him nega-

tion is not opposed to affirmation, and other such things.

14 CARDINAL: Abbot, you have grasped the root of the matter; and you see that this thought, which cannot be explicated by means of many words, is enfolded in a very short word. For let us agree that [there is a single] word [which] signifies by a very simple signification as much as [is signified by] the compound expression “Possibility exists” (“*posse est*”)—meaning that possibility itself exists. Now, because what exists exists actually: the possibility-to-be exists insofar as the possibility-to-be is actual. Suppose we call this *possesit* [i.e., *Actualized-possibility*].²³ All things are enfolded in it [i.e., in *Actualized-possibility*]; and [“*Actualized-possibility*”] is a sufficiently approximate name for God, according to our human concept of Him. For it is equally the name of each and every name and of no name. And so, when God willed to first reveal knowledge of Himself, He said:²⁴ “I am God Almighty”—i.e., “I am the actuality of every possibility.” And elsewhere²⁵ [He said]: “I am I-who-am,” since He is He-who-is. (“Being”²⁶ in an unqualified sense is not predicated truly of those things which are not yet (1) what they are able to be or (2) what they are able to be conceived [to be].)²⁷ However, the Greek has “I am Being itself,”²⁸ where we [have] “I am I-who-am.” For He is the Form of being, or the Form of every formable form. But the creation, which is not what it is able to be, does not exist in an unqualified sense of “exist.” God alone exists perfectly and completely.

15 Accordingly, this name [“*possesit*”] leads the one-who-is-speculating beyond all the senses, all reason, and all intellect unto a mystical vision, where there is an end to the ascent of all cognitive power and where there is the beginning of the revelation of the unknown God. For, having left all things behind, the seeker-after-truth ascends beyond himself and discerns that he still does not have any greater access to the invisible God, who remains invisible to him. (For God is not seen by means of any light from the seeker's own reason.) At this point the seeker awaits, with the most devout longing, the Omnipotent Sun—expecting that when darkness is banished by its rising, he will be illumined, so that he will see the invisible [God] to the extent that God will manifest Himself. This is how I construe the Apostle's claim that from the mundane creation's having been understood—i.e., when we apprehend the world as created being and, transcending the world, seek its Creator—God manifests Himself to those who with most deeply formed faith seek Him as their own Creator.

JOHN: How far beyond the world you convey us mundane [creatures], Father!

- 16** Please indulge my conversing with Bernard while you are present. Tell me, zealous man, whether you have understood what was said.

BERNARD. Although little, at least something, I hope.

JOHN As you understand the matter, how can it be the case that all things are enfolded in Actualized-possibility?

BERNARD: Because by “possibility” in an unqualified sense, every possibility is meant. Hence, if I were to understand that every possibility is actual, [I would understand that] nothing more would be left over. For if anything were left over, surely this thing would be possible to exist. And so, it would not be left over but would simply have been unrecognized at first.

JOHN: You speak correctly. For if the possibility-to-be does not exist, then nothing exists; on the other hand, if [the possibility-to-be] does exist, then all things are-what-they-are in it, and nothing [remains] outside it. Therefore, necessarily, all created things have existed in it from eternity. For what-was-created always existed in the possibility-to-be, in whose absence nothing was created. Clearly, Actualized-possibility is all things and includes all things; for nothing which is not included [in it] either exists or is able to be made.²⁹ Therefore, in it all things exist and have their movement³⁰ and are what they are (regardless of what they are).

- 17** But, as you understand the Matter, how can it be the case that the one who ascends must be situated beyond himself?

BERNARD: Because no grade of knowing attains [this height]. For example, the senses do not make contact with anything which does not have quantity. Neither does the imagination. For what is simple and what cannot be greater or lesser, or cannot be halved or doubled, is not reached by any of the senses—nor even through any very acute power-of-imagination. Nor can the most penetrating intellect conceive the infinite, boundless, and one thing which is both all things and the thing in which there is no diversity of opposition. For unless the intellect becomes like the [putatively] intelligible object, it does not understand [it]; for to understand is to become like the intelligible things and to measure them by means of the intellect (i.e., conceptually). But this [measuring and becoming-like] is not possible in the case of that which is what (it) is able to be. For, assuredly, it is immeasurable, since [it is so great that] it cannot be greater. Therefore, how could it

be understood through the intellect, which is never so great that it cannot be greater?

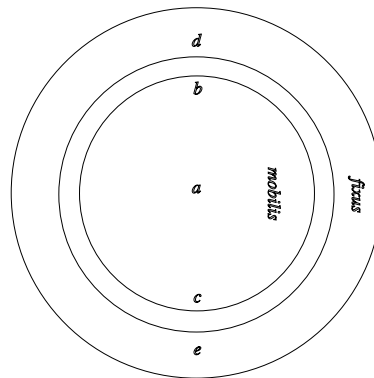
JOHN: You have penetrated more deeply than I had supposed into the statements of our father. Indeed, this last [point] makes me certain that the one who ascends must leave behind all things and must transcend even his own intellect, since Infinite Power cannot be grasped by a finite [power].

CARDINAL: I am happy with your progress and happy that I have spoken to those who, in proportion to their comprehension, enlarge upon what has been said.

18 BERNARD: It is evident to me that from the aforesaid [teachings I] can, all my life long, draw food for thought and can discourse at length [about them] and can continually make progress [with respect to understanding them]. Nevertheless, we desire to be led by a sensible image—especially [regarding the questions] how Eternal [Being] is all things at once and how the whole of eternity is within the present moment—so that when we leap forth, having left this image behind, we may be elevated above all sensible things.

CARDINAL: I shall try [to show you such an image]. I will take [the example] of boys [playing with] a top—a game known to us all, even in practical terms. A boy pitches out a top; and as he does so, he pulls it back with the string which is wound around it. The greater the strength of his arm, the faster the top is made to rotate—until it seems (while it is moving at the faster speed) to be motionless and at rest. Indeed, boys speak of it as then at rest.

So let us describe a circle, *b c*, which is being rotated about a point *a* as would the upper circle of a top; and let there be another circle, *d e*, which is fixed.



Is it not true that the faster the movable circle is rotated, the less it

seems to be moved?

BERNARD: It certainly seems true. And, as boys, this [is how] we saw [it].

- 19 CARDINAL: Suppose, then, that the possibility-to-be-moved is actual in it; i.e., suppose that [the top] is actually being moved as fast as possible. In that case, would it not be completely motionless?

BERNARD: Because of the rapid velocity, no change-of-state could be observed. And so, indeed, the motion could not be detected, since the change-of-state would have ceased.

JOHN: Since the motion would be of infinite velocity, points *b* and *c* would be temporally present together at³¹ point *d* of the fixed circle—without its being the case that point *b* was temporally prior to point *c*. (For if *b* were temporally prior to *c*, the motion would not be maximal and infinite.) And yet, there would not be motion but would be rest, since at no time would points [*b* and *c*] move away from the fixed point *d*.

CARDINAL: You speak correctly, Abbot. Hence, the maximal motion would at the same time also be minimal motion and no motion.

BERNARD: This seems to be necessarily so.

CARDINAL: In that case, just as the opposite points *b* and *c* would be always at point *d*, would they not always also be at the opposite point from *d*, viz., at *e*?

JOHN: Necessarily.

CARDINAL: Would this not likewise hold true for all the intermediate points of the circle *b c*?

JOHN: Yes, likewise.

CARDINAL: Therefore, the whole of the circle (even if the circle were maximal in size) would at every instant be simultaneously present at point *d* (even if point *d* were minimal in size). And [the whole of the circle would be] not only at *d* and *e* but also at every [other] point of the circle *d e*.

JOHN: So it would.

CARDINAL: Let it suffice, then, that by means of this image and symbolically we are somehow able to see how it is that (if the circle *b c* were illustrative of eternity and the circle *d e* were illustrative of time)³² [the following propositions] are not self-contradictory: “that eternity as a whole is at once present at every point of time”; “that God as the Beginning and the End³³ is at once and as a whole present in all things”; [and so on for] other such [propositions].

20 BERNARD: I see one further very important [lesson].

JOHN: What is it?

BERNARD: Things which are separated for us are not at all separated in God. For example, *d* and *e* are separated by [that] diameter of the circle of which they are opposite points. But [there is] no [such separation] in God; for when *b* comes to *d*, it is at the same time also at *e*. Similarly, all the things which are separated in time in our world are in the present before God. And all the things which [in our world] are separated as opposites exist conjointly in God. And all the things which *here* are different are *there* identical.

JOHN: These [facts] must certainly be noted, so that we may understand that God is beyond all difference, variation, otherness, time, place, and opposition.

21 CARDINAL: Now both of you will more readily understand how you will [be able] to harmonize the [statements of] the theologians. One of them says that Wisdom (which is God) is more movable than any other movable thing³⁴ and that [wisdom's] Word runs swiftly³⁵ and pervades all things and stretches from end to end³⁶ and moves toward all things. But another of them says that the First Beginning is fixed and immovable and that it remains at rest, even though it causes all [other] things to be moved. Others [say] that it is at once at rest and in motion; and still others [say] that it is neither at rest nor moved. Likewise, some state that God is generally in every place; others [state] that [He] is particularly in any given [place]; others [state] that [He] is both; and [still] others [state] that [He] is neither. These [teachings], and [teachings] similar to them, are more easily understood through the mirror-like medium [of our example]. Nevertheless, in God all these things are the simple God Himself in an infinitely better way than [is discernible]—even by means of anyone's highest leap—through the aforementioned example.

22 BERNARD: Indeed, even regarding the eternal forms of things, which in things are different from one another: we also see, in like manner, that in God these are not different [from one another]. For even if the points of circle *b c* are viewed as [illustrative of] the forms (or ideas) of things, still they are not more than one point, since a point and the whole circle are identical. For when *b* is at *d*: the whole circle is at *d*, and all its points are one point—even though they appear to be many when we look at circle *d e* ([which is illustrative] of time) and at its points.

23 CARDINAL: Both of you are coming quite close to the theology which is concise and most extensive, alike. We could pursue still many [other] very appealing [illustrations] regarding this motion of the top—e.g., (1) how a boy who wants to enliven a dead top (i.e., a top without motion) impresses upon it a likeness of his thought by means of a device conjured up from his intellect, and (2) how by both the forward and the backward motion of his hands (i.e., by the motion of both thrusting and pulling) he impresses upon the top a movement over and above the top's nature. For [the top], as a heavy thing, had only a motion toward the center [of the earth. But the boy] causes the top to be moved in a circular fashion, as is the sky. Moreover, this moving power (*spiritus movens*) is invisibly present to the top for a long or a short time, depending upon the impression of the imparted force. When this [power] stops turning the top, the top reverts Oust as was its original state) to motion toward the center [of the earth]. Isn't there here a likeness of the Creator, who wills to give the spirit-of-life [*spiritus vitae*] to what is not alive?

For just as He foreordained it to be done, so by means of motion the heavens (which are instruments for the execution of His will) are moved by a forward motion from east to west and at the same time by a reverse motion from west to east (as the astrologers are aware)³⁷ And the spirit-of-life, impressed from the living zodiac, enlivens that which of its own nature lacked life; and it enlivens as long as the spirit lasts; and then this thing returns to its earth. Such points (which do not, however, pertain to the present investigation), along with many others, are especially signified in [the example of] this boys'-game. They have been recalled in this cursory way so that you may observe (1) that even in a boys' device nature shines forth (and in nature God) and (2) that the wise men of the world who pondered this [matter] have attained unto the truer conjectures about what is knowable.

24 BERNARD: I thank you immensely, excellent Father, because by this very fitting symbolism³⁸ of the top many things which were uncertain and which seemed to be impossible have not merely been made plausible to me but [have] even [been shown to be] necessary.

CARDINAL: Whoever forms for himself the simple conception of God as He is signified by the composite word "*possesst*" grasps more readily many things which previously were difficult for him. For example, suppose that someone turns his attention to a line and applies [to it the concept] *actualized-possibility*, so that he views the line's possibility as actualized (i.e., so that he sees the line to be actually that

which it is able to be—sees it to be everything he understands that a line can become). Surely, from the sole consideration that [the line] is actualized-possibility, he recognizes that the line is maximal and minimal alike. For since the line is what it is able to be: it cannot be greater, and thus it is seen to be maximal; nor can it be lesser, and thus it is seen to be minimal. And because it is what a line is able to become, it is the boundary line of all surfaces. Thus, it is the boundary line of triangular shape, of rectangular shape, of all polygons, of all circles, of all figures which can be made from a line (whether a straight line or a curved line). It is the simple, the truest, and the most congruent exemplar of all figures. It is equality which contains all [figures] in itself and which configures all things through itself. And so, there is one figure for all linearly configurable things; and there is one form and cause of all different figures, regardless of how many different figures there are.

25 By this symbolism you see how if [the concept of] actualized-possibility is applied to something named, [this concept] becomes a symbolism for ascending to what is unnameable (just as by means of [the concept of] actualized-possibility you came from a line to an indivisible line existing above opposites, a line which is both everything and nothing of all things capable of linearity; it is no longer a line which is given the name “line” by us; rather, it is beyond every name for things capable of linearity). For [the notion of] actualized-possibility, considered in itself and without application to anything named, somehow by way of a symbolism leads you to the Almighty. As a result, you *there* behold all the things which you understand to be able to be, and to be able to be made—[behold them] above every name by which what-is-able-to-be is nameable. Indeed, [you behold them] above being and not-being (in whatsoever manner being and not-being can be conceived). For since not-being is able to exist through the Almighty, assuredly it is actual,³⁹ since absolute possibility is actual in the Almighty. For if some thing is able to be made from not-being by some power, assuredly [this thing] is enfolded within Infinite Power. Hence, *there*, not-being is being everything. And so, every creature which is able to be brought from not-being into being exists *there*, where to-be-able-[to-be] is to-be, and *there* it is Actualized-possibility itself.

26 From this point you will be able to elevate yourself so that, though ineffably and through a symbolism, you will behold above being and

not-being all the things which—from not-being and through Being-which-is-actually-all-things⁴⁰—come into being. And where you behold this [sight] you find no name which can be named by us with complete truth and complete distinctness. For neither the name “one-ness” nor “singularity” nor “plurality” nor “multitude” nor any other name which is nameable or understandable by us befits that Beginning. For *there* being and not-being do not contradict each other—nor do any other opposites which either affirm or deny a distinct state of affairs. For the name of this Beginning is the Name of names; it is no more a singular name for individual things than it is a universal name for both everything and nothing.

27 BERNARD: I understand you to be speaking of how the composite name “*possesit*” (“actualized-possibility”), compounded from “*posse*” and “*esse*,” has a simple signification which through a symbolism, and in accordance with your human concept, leads an inquirer to some kind of positive assertion about God. Moreover, you understand Absolute Possibility (insofar as it enfolds all possibility) to be above activity and passivity, above the possibility-to-make [i.e., the power-to-make] and the possibility-to-be-made. And you conceive of this [Absolute] Possibility as actually existing. But you say that this Being-which-is-actual is every possibility (i.e., Absolute [Possibility]). And so, you want to say that where every possibility is actual, there we arrive at the first all-powerful Beginning.

I do not doubt that all things are enfolded in this Beginning, which encompasses all the things which in any way are able to be. [Yet] I am not certain whether my statements are correct.

CARDINAL: Perfectly correct. Therefore, the Beginning does not exhaust its omnipotent power in anything which is able to be. And so, no created thing is Actualized-possibility. Therefore, every created thing is able to be what it is not. Only the Beginning—because it is Actualized-possibility itself—is not able to be what it is not.

BERNARD: This is clear. For example, if the Beginning were able not-to-be, it would not-be, since it is what it is able to be.

JOHN: Therefore, it is Absolute Necessity, since it is not able not to be.

CARDINAL: Your statement is correct. For how would [the Beginning] be able not to be, seeing that in it not-being is [identical with] it?

JOHN: Wonderful is God, in whom not-being is necessity-of-being.

28 BERNARD: Because the world was able to be created, there was always the possibility of its being. But with perceptible things, matter is said to be the possibility-of-being. Therefore, there was always matter. And because [matter] was never created, it is uncreated. Hence, it is the eternal Beginning.

JOHN: This argument of yours does not seem to proceed [correctly]. For uncreated possibility is Actualized-possibility itself. Therefore, the fact that the world was, from eternity, able to be created is due to the fact that Actualized-possibility is eternity. Hence, the following is true: in order for the possibility-of-there-being-a-world to be eternal, nothing else is required except that Actualized-possibility be Actualized-possibility. This principle is a unitary principle for all modes of being.

29 CARDINAL: The Abbot speaks rightly. For if the possibility-of-being-made does not have a beginning, it is because Actualized-possibility is without a beginning. For the possibility-of-being-made presupposes Absolute Possibility, which is coincident with actuality (*quod cum actu convertitur*) and without which it is impossible that anything be able to be made. But if Absolute Possibility were to need something else—viz., matter, without which it would be powerless—then Absolute Possibility would not be Actualized-possibility itself. For example, a man's ability-to-make requires material which is able to be made. (The reason is that [a man's ability] is not Actualized-possibility itself, in which making and being-made are possibility itself.) For the possibility which is predicated truly of making is the same possibility which is predicated truly of being-made.

BERNARD: It is difficult for me to grasp this point.

CARDINAL: You will understand when you consider the fact that in God not-being is Actualized-possibility itself. For if not-being coincides with the possibility-to-make, assuredly the possibility-to-be-made coincides with the possibility-to-make. For example, if you were the author of a book which you were writing: in your active ability, viz., in the ability to write the book, would be enfolded a passive ability, viz., the ability of the book's being written; for the not-being of the book would have being in your ability.

30 JOHN: The things you disclose are very important, Father. For all things are, and are seen to be, in Actualized-possibility as in their own Cause and Form [*ratio*]. Yet, no intellect except that intellect which is Actualized-possibility can grasp Actualized-possibility.

CARDINAL: Our intellect is not Actualized-possibility itself. (For [our intellect] is not actually what it is able to be; and so, it is always able to be greater and more perfect.) Therefore, it does not grasp Actualized-possibility itself, even though it glimpses it from afar. Only Actualized-possibility itself understands itself and, in itself, all things—since all things are enfolded in actualized-possibility.

JOHN: I see clearly how all things are denied of Actualized-possibility—since of all the things which can be named, none of them are Actualized-possibility; for [each of them] is able to be what it is not. Thus, [Actualized-possibility] is not quantity; for since quantity is able to be what it is not, it is not actualized-possibility. For example, [quantity] is able to be greater than it is or something other than it is. But this is not the case with Actualized-possibility, which lacks neither a greater magnitude which it is able to be nor anything at all which it is able to be; for possibility itself is actually the completest possibility.

- 31** But now answer my further question. Since that super-wonderful God of ours cannot by any ascent—even the highest ascent—naturally be viewed except through a symbolism: when the possibility of being seen (rather than the actual seeing) is attained and the seeker arrives at the shadowy dimness, how is it that, at last, He-who-remains-ever-invisible is seen?

CARDINAL: He will not be seen unless the possibility-to-be-seen is actualized by Him who is the actuality of every possibility—[actualized] by means of His self-revelation. For God is concealed and hidden from the eyes of all the wise; but He reveals Himself to, and gives grace to, those who are small, or humble.⁴¹ There is one Revealer, viz., the Teacher Jesus Christ. In His own self He reveals the Father, so that anyone who has merited to see Him who is Son sees the Father also.⁴²

- 32** JOHN: Perhaps you mean, Father, that He is shown to those in whom Christ dwells through faith.⁴³

CARDINAL: Christ cannot dwell in anyone through faith unless [this person] has the spirit-of-truth, which teaches all things.⁴⁴ For the spirit of Christ is diffused throughout one who is Christ-like. It is the spirit-of-love, which is not of this world. This spirit can be understood not by the world but by someone Christlike who has transcended⁴⁵ the world. This spirit, which renders foolish the wisdom of the world,⁴⁶ is of that kingdom where the God of gods is seen in Zion.⁴⁷ For [this

spirit] is the enlightening power of one who is born blind and who acquires sight through faith. But we cannot say how this happens. For who could explain it? Not even the one who was transformed from not-seeing into seeing! For he who received sight was asked many questions; but he neither knew nor could state the art by which Christ restored his sight.⁴⁸ Rather, he rightly said that Christ had been able to do [this] for him because he believed that he was able to be given sight by Christ. And Christ, seeing his faith, was unwilling for it to be ineffectual; for no one who trusts in Christ is ever abandoned [by Him]. For after a man has despaired of himself—so that he is certain that he is as someone infirm and completely helpless with respect to obtaining what he desires—he turns to his Beloved and, clinging to the promise of Christ by sure faith, he importunes in most devout prayer, believing that he cannot be cast away if he does not cease to implore Christ, who denies nothing to His own. Without doubt, he will obtain what is sought. For Christ, the Word of God, will appear, and will manifest Himself to him, and will come to him with His Father, and will make His dwelling,⁴⁹ so that He can be seen.

- 33** BERNARD: I take you to mean that living faith (i.e., faith formed by love), which makes someone Christ-like, fills the defect of nature and somehow “constrains” God, so that the fervent petitioner obtains whatever he asks for in the name of Christ. According to the measure of its faith, our spirit is strengthened as a result of the spirit-of-faith which is conceived in it—just as, when healed and strengthened by the spirit of faith in Christ, the dark and powerless visual spirit of the eye of the one-born-blind saw what previously was invisible to it.

CARDINAL: This is the supreme teaching of Christ, our only savior: viz., that He Himself, who is the Word of God, through which God created the world, provides all the things which nature lacks—provides them in him who with unwavering faith receives Christ as the Word of God, so that he, believing by the faith in which Christ is present, can do all things by means of the Word dwelling in him through faith.

- 34** In this world we see that some things are made by means of a human art and by the agency of those who have in their soul the art they have learned. Thus, the art is received in them and remains; and it is a word which teaches and governs those things which belong to the art. Similarly, the divine art, which is acquired in our mind [*spiritus*] by very firm faith, is the word of God which teaches and gov-

erns those things which belong to the creative and omnipotent art. And just as the artist who is untrained cannot do those things which belong to the art, so neither can the believer who is unprepared. Now, purity of heart is the preparation which is necessarily required of the believer who wills to see God. For [men-such-as]-these are blessed and shall see God, as the word-of-faith of our Christ teaches us.⁵⁰

35 BERNARD: I would like to be taught still more clearly about these points if possible.

CARDINAL: I deem it necessary that anyone who desires to see God desire Him as much as he can. For his ability-to-desire must be perfected, so that his desire actually glows as intensely as it can. Indeed, this desire is the vital love by which the one who seeks God loves Him with his whole heart, his whole soul—i.e., with all his might, i.e., as much as he can.⁵¹ Indeed, no one has this desire except one who loves Christ as the Son of God (even as Christ loves him). Assuredly, Christ dwells in this [person] through faith,⁵² so that he can say that he has the spirit of Christ.

36 JOHN: I understand that faith surpasses nature and that God is not visible by means of any other faith than faith in Christ. Since Christ is the Word of the omnipotent God and is the Creative Art: when He enters into our mind [*spiritus*], which receives Him by faith, He elevates our mind above nature into fellowship with Him. On account of, and by the power of, the spirit-of-Christ which dwells in it, our mind does not hesitate to be raised above all things, as is the Imperial Word.

BERNARD: Assuredly, Omnipotence itself—which God, the creator and the father of all things, is—is revealed in the commanding Word of the Almighty, who speaks and it is done.⁵³ Nor can [Omnipotence itself] be revealed in anything other than in its Word. Therefore, to whomever this Word manifests itself, [to him] the Father is shown in the Word, just as in the Son. Yet, how greatly amazing it is that man is able to ascend by faith to the Word of the Almighty.

37 CARDINAL: We see it written⁵⁴ that by the gift of the Holy Spirit some [persons] suddenly received the art of speaking in tongues, so that they were suddenly transformed from unknowing to knowing [different] kinds of tongues. This power was nothing other than participation in the divine art of speaking. Nonetheless, these [persons] had only human knowledge; but it was acquired suddenly by a supra-human infusion. Some of them received not only a knowledge of

tongues but also a skill characteristic of teachers; others received the power of miracles. Now, these things [which we read] are certain. Indeed, from the beginning [these] believers received, together with living faith, such a spirit—so that they would be certain that faith is of such great power. And such was expedient if [faith] was to be planted. But [it does] not [occur] now, after faith has been received, so that [faith] does not seek signs but is pure and simple.

38 Although this spirit is received by believers in measured degree,⁵⁵ it is a participant in the spirit of Christ. And it makes us certain that if the whole spirit of Christ were to dwell in us, we would obtain the highest degree of happiness, viz., the power of the Word of God (through which Word all things exist), i.e., a knowledge of our creation. For the highest degree of happiness—viz., the intellectual vision of the Almighty—is the fulfillment of that desire of ours whereby we all desire to know. Therefore, unless we arrive at the knowledge of God—viz., the knowledge by which He created the world—our mind (*spiritus*) will not be at rest.⁵⁶ For as long as [the mind] does not attain to this knowledge, it will not attain to complete knowledge (*scientia scientiarum*). This knowledge is the knowledge of God's Word; for the Word of God is the Concept both of itself and of the universe. Indeed, anyone who does not arrive at this Concept will not attain to a knowledge of God and will not know himself. For what is caused cannot know itself if its Cause remains unknown. And so, since this intellect does not know all things, it will grieve intellectually in the shadow of death with eternal deprivation.

39 JOHN: It occurs to me that to see faith is to see God.

BERNARD: How so?

JOHN: Well, faith is directed toward invisible and eternal things.⁵⁷ Hence, to see faith is to see the Invisible and Eternal One, viz., our God.

CARDINAL: You have made an important statement, Abbot. In the Christian there is only Christ. In *this* world [Christ is in the Christian] through faith; in the *other* [world He will be in the Christian] through truth. Therefore, when the Christian who is seeking to see Christ face to face leaves behind all the things which are of this world, so that in this rapture (after the removal of those things which were not permitting Christ, who is not of this world, to be seen as He is) the believer sees Christ in his own self apart from a symbolism: because he who is Christlike sees himself as free from the world, he

sees only faith, which has been made visible to him by the stripping away of worldly things and by the face-to-face revealing of his own self.

- 40 BERNARD: In my judgment these points are surely very significant, and you have stated them very concisely and clearly. Nevertheless, Father, I would still like to hear from you something about the most sacred Trinity, so that after having thus heard from you something about all the most important [points], I may be able to provide myself with some sort of devout consolation.

CARDINAL: The [points] which I have set forth above and which you have read in various of my treatises show that in various ways many things can always be said, although most inadequately. For after having very often held very many exceedingly deep meditations with myself, and after having very carefully sought out the writings of the ancients, I have ascertained that the ultimate and deepest contemplation of God is boundless, infinite, and in excess of every concept. For, assuredly, every thing of which there is a concept is encompassed by [that] concept. But God exceeds all this. For the concept of God is [an absolute] Concept, or an absolute Word, which enfolds within itself everything which can be conceived; but it is not conceivable in anything else. For whatever exists in something else exists otherwise [than it does in itself].⁵⁸ For it is not the case that anything is actually conceived by the intellect as it could be conceived. For it could be better conceived by a higher intellect. Only the *per se*, or absolute, Concept is actually the Concept of everything conceivable. But our concept—which is not the *per se*, or absolute, Concept but is the concept of some thing—does not conceive of the *per se* Concept. For the latter is the Concept no more of one thing than of another, since it is absolute.

- 41 And so, this unlimitable and unboundable, or inconceivable, concept of God we must also call ineffable, because of its infinity. For by no name or term can we limit or define that Word, since it cannot be conceived. Thus, we do not give God the name “one” or “three” or call Him by any other name whatsoever; for He exceeds every concept of one and of three and of whatsoever nameable thing. Rather, we remove from God every name for any conceivable thing, since He excels [every conceivable thing].

JOHN: So, then, the more an intellect understands the degree to which the concept of God is unformable, the greater [this intellect] is,

it seems to me.

CARDINAL: Your statement is correct, Abbot. And so, whoever supposes that he has apprehended God, knows that this [belief] results from the deficiency and meagerness of his intellect.

BERNARD: Therefore, the one who knows that he is unable to know is the more learned.

CARDINAL: All, even the most brilliant, will have to say this.

BERNARD: When I consider that we are unable to conceive of any thing as it is *able* to be conceived, it is clear to me that we are unable to conceive of God, who, assuredly, is not able to be conceived unless all that is able to be conceived is actually conceived.

42 CARDINAL: We know that we cannot obtain any numerical proportion between the diagonal and the side [of a square], since no two numbers can be exhibited which are related to each other in precisely this way.⁵⁹ Given any [two numbers], the relationship between them is either greater or lesser than [the relationship] between the diameter and the side. And given any [two numbers, two other] numbers can be found which are closer to the relation in question. Hence, although it seems possible [that there are two precise numbers], this possibility is never actually exhibited. (But the actualization *would be* the precise proportion, so that the numbers would be related in this precise way.) The reason is that unless there is exhibited a number which is neither even nor odd, it will not be the number in question. But every number which we conceive is, necessarily, even or odd (but not both). And so, we fail [to find the desired number]. However, we see that precision *is* present in that concept which expresses what is impossible for us [to conceive]. Thus, we have to say that our concept cannot attain to the proportion between the possibility and the actuality.⁶⁰ For we have no common medium by which to attain to the relationship, since the possibility is infinite and indeterminate, whereas the actuality is finite and determined; and between these there is no middle ground. But we see that these [viz., possibility and actuality] are not distinct in God. And so, He is above our concept.

BERNARD: Since it is not the case that anything known by us is known as it *can* be known (for it can be better known): only God's knowledge, in which every possibility exists actually, is perfect and precise.

43 JOHN: Isn't it altogether true, Bernard, that twice two is four and that every triangle has three angles, which are equal to two right angles?

BERNARD: Indeed.

JOHN: Therefore, it is not true that our knowledge does not attain to the precise truth.

CARDINAL: We must examine what is being said. For regarding mathematical [entities], which proceed from our reason and which we experience to be in us as in their source [*principium*]: they are known by us as our entities and as rational entities; [and they are known] precisely, by our reason's precision, from which they proceed. (In a similar way, real things (*realia*)⁶¹ are known precisely, by the divine [intellect's] precision, from which they proceed into being.) These mathematical [entities] are neither an essence (*quid*) nor a quality (*quale*); rather, they are notional entities elicited from our reason. Without these notional entities [reason] could not proceed with its work, e.g., with building, measuring, and so on. But the divine works, which proceed from the divine intellect, remain unknown to us precisely as they are. If we know something about them, we surmise it by likening a figure to a form. Hence, there is no precise knowledge of any of God's works, except on the part of God, who does all these works. If *we* have any knowledge of them, we derive it from the symbolism and the mirror of [our] mathematical knowledge. E.g., from figure, which gives being in mathematics, [we make an inference about] form, which gives being: just as the figure of a triangle gives being to the triangle, so the human form, or species, gives being to a man. We are acquainted with the figure of a triangle since it is imaginable; but we are not acquainted with the human form, since it is not imaginable and does not have quantity (whether the quantity be discrete quantity or a combination of quantities). Now, anything which does not admit of multitude or magnitude cannot be either conceived or imagined, and no image of it can be fashioned. Hence, it cannot be understood precisely. (For everyone who understands must behold images.) And so, with regard to [any of] these [divine works] we apprehend *that it is*, rather than apprehending *what it is*.

44 BERNARD: So if we rightly consider [the matter, we recognize that] we have no certain knowledge except mathematical knowledge. And this latter is a symbolism for searching into the works of God. Thus, if great men said anything important, they based it upon a mathematical likeness—for example, that species are related to one another as are numbers, that the sensitive is in the rational as a triangle is in a quadrangle, and many other such [comparisons].

CARDINAL: Your statement is correct. And so, let me speak here

in such way that both of you will know [the following]: if we want to see by means of a symbolism the Christian theological doctrine that God is one and three, we can have recourse to the beginning (*principium*)⁶² of mathematics. Assuredly, this beginning is both one and three alike. For we see that quantity—without which there is no mathematics—is both a discrete quantity, whose beginning is one, and a combination of quantities, whose beginning is three. But there are not two beginnings of mathematics; rather, there is one beginning which is also three.

BERNARD: As concerns discrete quantity, I understand well the one beginning; but as concerns a combination of quantities, I do not understand the trine beginning.

CARDINAL: The first figure [composed] of a combination of quantities is a triangle, to which the other figures are reducible—a fact which shows that it is the first. A quadrangle is reducible to triangles. But a triangle cannot be reduced to a figure of two angles or of one angle. Therefore, it is evident that the first beginning of mathematics is triune.

45 BERNARD: So if I were to see the beginning of mathematics in its purity, assuredly I would see it to be triune without plurality. For the beginning is prior to otherness and plurality, and is such that when all the things which are originated are reduced to the simple (*simplex*), they end at this beginning.

CARDINAL: Perfectly correct. But consider [the following]: to see the beginning, it is necessary to abstract the simple. (Without the simple none of the things which are originated can exist.) Therefore, if the simple, without which neither number nor figure is able to exist, is that which is no more one than three and is one in such way that it is three and is not three in number—since number is something originated—but is three in such way that it is the perfect beginning of all things: then, in a symbolism, God is seen to be triune in such way that He is the most perfect Beginning of all things.

46 JOHN: You say that God is three but not numerically three. Are not the three persons numerically three persons?

CARDINAL: Not at all. For the number which you view when you say this, is a mathematical number and is derived from our mind; and the beginning of this number [three] is oneness. But with God, trinity does not exist from any other beginning; rather, it *is* the Beginning.

BERNARD: Assuredly, in [this] Beginning the trinity *is* the Beginning and does not exist from number, which cannot exist before the Beginning. (For oneness is the beginning of all multitude.) Therefore, if in God trinity were number, it would be originated from itself.

CARDINAL: You see, then, that the First Beginning is triune-prior-to-all-number. And if you cannot conceive of the fact that it is prior to number, the reason is that your intellect conceives of nothing without a number. Nevertheless, your intellect sees that that-which-it-cannot-conceive cannot be denied beyond conception; and it believes [what it cannot conceive]. Therefore, just as [it sees] that God is great without a combination of quantities, so [it sees] that He is three without number or discrete quantity. And just as by ascribing magnitude to God it believes that He is great, so by ascribing number to Him it believes that He is three.

47 JOHN: I see that on the basis of the examination which we have made of creatures we affirm that the Creator is triune, even though (as was said) in Himself He remains ineffable with respect to every mode of discourse.

CARDINAL: What you say is correct. For without possibility and actuality and the union of the two there is not, and cannot be, anything. For if [anything] lacked any of these, it would not exist. For how would it exist if it were not possible to exist? And how would it exist if it did not actually exist (since existence is actuality)? And if it were possible to exist but it did not exist, in what sense would it exist? (Therefore, it is necessary that there be the union of possibility and actuality.) The possibility-to-exist, actually existing, and the union of the two are not *other* than one another. Indeed, they are of the same essence, since they constitute only one and the same thing.⁶³ [For example, consider a rose.] The possible rose, the actual rose, and the possible rose which is actual are not different roses from one another but are the same rose—even though possibility, actuality, and their union are not predicated truly of one another as they are of a rose.

BERNARD: I understand well that [the following] cannot be denied: when with my mind I see a rose, I see a triune [rose]. (1) For I see the possible rose. (For if possibility were denied of the rose, assuredly the rose would not be possible to exist.) (2) I [also] see the existing rose. (For if existence were denied of it, how is it that it would exist?) (3) And I see the possible and the existing rose in union. (For if the union of the two were denied [of the rose], the rose would not actually exist, since nothing actually exists unless it is possible to exist

48 and does exist. For actual existence proceeds from these two.) Thus, I see a triune rose from a triune Beginning.

However, I see that this Beginning is manifest in all things, since nothing which is originated fails to be triune. But I see that none of the things which have been originated are a part of [this] Beginning, even though all things exist in it as in their Cause and Form. Therefore, God is not [triune] as a rose is triune. For an eternal Beginning has nothing from what is originated; rather, it is absolute Triunity, from which all triune things are what they are.

JOHN: [This point] seems to me the same as it seems to you, Bernard. God from whom there is the possible rose, God from whom there is the existing rose, and God from whom there is the rose which is the union of the two are not different gods. For the possible rose, the existing rose, and the rose which is the union of the two are not different roses but are a triune rose. But Christians distinguish the following persons: (1) the person of Absolute Possibility itself, whom we call *the omnipotent Father*; (2) the person of Existence itself, whom—because He is of Possibility itself—we call *the Son of the Father*; (3) the person who is the Union of both and whom we call *the Spirit*, since natural love is the spiritual union of the Father and the Son. Although [Christians make these distinctions], I do not discern how I am supposed to see these differences of person by means of a symbolism.

49 CARDINAL: On account of the infinitely perfect Trinity in God, you are right, Abbot, in saying that the person of the Father, the person of the Son, and the person of the Holy Spirit are distinct. Nevertheless, the person of the Father is not distinct by virtue of any otherness; for the Blessed Trinity, which is not from anyone else but which through itself is what it is, transcends all otherness. And so, on account of the identity of essence (or of nature) the Father is not something *other* than the Son; yet, the Father is not the Son. That the Father is not the Son is not on account of not-being; for God is triune prior to all not-being. Rather, the reason is that existence presupposes possibility (since it is not the case that anything exists unless there is possibility, from which it exists) but possibility does not presuppose anything (since possibility is eternity). And so, since I see (1) God who does not presuppose a beginning for Himself, (2) God who does presuppose a beginning for Himself, and (3) God who proceeds from both of these—and yet, I do not see three gods but see oneness-of-deity in trinity—I do not doubt that that which I see thus distinctly in the deity-without-distinctions exists more truly and more per-

fectly than I see.

And so, just as I see that eternal Absolute Possibility *is* eternity and that the eternal Existence of Absolute Possibility is only from Absolute Possibility, so I believe that eternal Possibility has distinct being [*hypostasis*] and exists *per se*. And [I believe that] from God the Father, who exists *per se*, is begotten God who, from the omnipotence of the Father, is all that He is. Thus, He is the Son of Omnipotence; i.e., He *is* that which the Father *can*. He is the Almighty from Absolute Possibility (i.e., from the Almighty). From these [two] proceeds the Union of Omnipotence and the Almighty. I see (1) God [existing] eternally, (2) the same God [existing] eternally from God, and (3) the same God proceeding eternally from them both. But because the saints have seen this more clearly than we,⁶⁴ it is enough that we have come to the point [of seeing] that just as the perfection of the Beginning requires that it be one, so it truly requires that it be three. For the oneness would not be natural and most perfect if it did not have within itself all the things necessary for the most perfect Beginning—which things are represented in terms of trinity. Nor would the trinity be perfect if it were not one trinity which is oneness. For the oneness which is predicated of God is not a mathematical oneness but is a true and living oneness which enfolds all things. And the trinity [which is predicated of God] is not a mathematical trinity but a trinity of vitally reciprocal relations. For life, without which there is no eternal joy and no supreme perfection, is triune. Hence, it is of the essence of the most perfect Life that it be most perfectly triune, so that the Possibility-to-live is so omnipotent that from itself it begets a Life of its own. From these [two] proceeds Eternal Joy, the Spirit of Love.

51 JOHN: I ask to be heard a little, as to whether I have discerned something about these deep matters. I turn to[[the concept of] actualized-possibility. Since everything which exists is only that which is able to be,⁶⁵ I see that Actualized-possibility is the truest and most congruent Form of all things formable. Now, in every thing, I see possibility, existence, and the union of the two; without these it is impossible for any thing to exist. Moreover, I see that they are present in any given thing in such way that they are able to exist more perfectly. And so, where they are so perfect that they cannot exist more perfectly—as in Actualized-possibility—there I see the triune Beginning of all existing things. Therefore, in the perfection of the First Beginning it is necessary that there be present the perfection of all things which can have a beginning. If this perfection could be conceived to

be greater, then assuredly it would be the perfection not of the Beginning⁶⁶ but of what is originated.

CARDINAL: So the human intellect, which is unable to grasp the First Beginning as it is, must see this Beginning—which is hidden from it—on the basis of having understood originated things, as Paul teaches us.⁶⁷ Hence, if possibility is to be the most perfect possibility, it is necessary that there be in it existence and the union of possibility and existence. Likewise, if existence is to be the most perfect existence, it is necessary that there be in it possibility and the union of possibility and existence. And if [this] union is to be the most perfect union, it is necessary that there be in it possibility and actuality, or existence. Therefore, necessarily, we see this⁶⁸ in the most perfect triune Beginning, although the manner in which it there occurs surpasses all understanding.

52 BERNARD: Listen to me, I ask, as to whether I understand your speech. I turn to [the topic of] motion. For in the essence of motion I see, first of all, possibility; and [I see that] from possibility actuality is begotten, and from these two there proceeds motion, which is the union of possibility and actuality. Yet, no motion which can be conceived *is* as motion *can be*. For a motion is able to be both slower and faster; and so, in the possibility of the motion, actuality and the union of possibility and actuality are not present, since the actual motion is not moved as it is able to be moved.⁶⁹ But if the motion [actually] were what it is able to be, then in [its] possibility there would be (in equal measure) actuality and the union [of possibility and actuality. The motion] would actually be as much as it could possibly be. And such [motion] would be the union of possibility and actuality. (The same would hold true for actuality and this union.)⁷⁰ But this “motion” would not be understood. For since it would be [all] that which motion is able to be, assuredly it would be able to be neither greater nor lesser; and so, it would be maximal motion and minimal motion, alike, and the fastest motion and the slowest motion (i.e., motion which is most at rest), alike. And because it would be motion to which rest is not opposed: in the absence of this opposition, the name “motion” would not befit it. Indeed, it would no more be motion than not-motion, although it would be the exemplar, form, measure, and truth of all motion.

53 However, motion which is understood and which is the opposite of rest is understood because it is limited by rest, which is opposed

to it, and because it is conceived by means of a finite concept. Therefore, when we understand that this concept of motion is not the concept of that motion which is what it is able to be (though we cannot understand what kind of motion the latter is): after the mind has dismissed the motion which can be known, it turns toward seeing the motion which cannot be known. The mind does not seek it through either a name, a concept, or knowledge. Rather, [it seeks it] through an ignorance of all the things known about motion. (For [the mind] knows that it will not at all see *that* motion as long as any of these things remain.) Upon attaining to the not-being of motion, [the mind] then mounts up nearer to what is sought. For *then* that which [is sought] offers itself—above the being and the not-being of motion—in such way that [the mind] does not at all know what [that] is, since it is above every name. Where not-being is the necessity-to-be, and where the name of all things nameable is ineffable, *there* ignorance is perfect knowledge.

From your statements I have gathered these [points] in this way—whether correctly or not, I do not know.

CARDINAL: You have paid careful attention.

54 JOHN: [Bernard] is seen to have illustrated the extent to which instruction in the ignorance that leads to the Ineffable can be given. But let me add an image from my own thinking. Many symbolisms guide us. (Without them we have no means of approaching the unknown God; for the one who seeks what is unknown must look at something known.) Nevertheless, the beginnings in the least significant things are the most illuminating. Therefore, I take a very short⁷¹ and very concise word: viz., “in.” And I say: if I want to enter into (*intrare*) contemplating the Divine, I shall try to enter by means of in, since nothing can be entered except by means of *in*.

First, with respect to the formation of “in,” I notice (a) that “in” is composed of three equal lines,⁷² as if it were triune, and (b) that “i” and “in” are conjoined through a uniting power (*per spiritum connexionis*). For in “in” there is first “i,” then “in” and the union of the two, so that there is one simple expression, “in,” consisting of “i” and “in” and their union. Nothing is simpler than “i.” No letter can be shaped without this simple line; thus, [“i”] is the beginning of all [letters]. Of all [letters] “n” is generated first—[being generated] from the very simple “i,” which has been reduplicated. Yet, the letter “n” is not twice the letter “i” but is from the letter “i,” reduplicated once, so that there is one letter. For in “in” “i” is unfolded. Hence, if “i” is

added to "in," no additional sound occurs. For the efficacy of "i" was already in "in." For "n" is not consonant with "e" (as if "n" were "en") but with "i" (so that it is "in"). This fact is known by those who are familiar with Greek letters. Therefore, the union of "i" and "n" is very natural. Hence, the figure "in" seems to be a suitable [illustration] of a triune beginning.

Next, I notice that first there is "i," i.e., the beginning. From this beginning [comes] "n," in which "i" first manifests itself. For "n" is the knowledge and the name⁷³ of the potentiality of the "i," [its] beginning.

55 Next, I consider that through *in* one enters into God and all things. For all things which can be named contain in themselves nothing except *in*. For if there were not *in*, all things would contain nothing in themselves and would be entirely empty. For when I look at (*intueor in*) a substance, I see *in* substantiated; if [I look] at the sky, I see *in* made celestial; if [I look] at a place, [I see *in*] situated; if [I look] at a quantity, [I see *in*] quantified; if [I look] at a quality, [I see *in*] qualified; and so on for all the things which can be spoken of. Therefore, in a boundary [*in*] is bounded; in a limit it is limited; in an other it is made other. But if I see *in* prior to every name, then assuredly I see it not to be bounded or limited or any of the things which can be named. Whatever things I see in *in*, I see them to have entered into ineffability. For example, if I see a limit or a boundary in *in*, I can no longer call it by the name "limit" or "boundary." For it has passed over into *in*, which is neither a limit nor a boundary. Hence, in accordance with this fact, the name is seen to have changed into its opposite. Thus, in *in* a boundary is given the name "boundlessness" (*interminus*) or "non-boundary."

Now, *in* (which fills all things and without which all things are empty) is present in [all things], is immanent in [all things], completes [all things], and informs [all things].⁷⁴ Therefore, it is the perfection of every thing (*omnis rei*), of every boundary, of every limit, and of everything (*omnium*). Clearly, *in* is more than a limit or a boundary. Thus, in *in* a limit does not cease to be a limit; rather, it is all the more a limit. It is a limit within a limit (or a limit of limits), so that it is not called a limit, since it is not limited by any limit but rather surpasses [every limit]. In this way all things become ineffable when viewed absolutely. Therefore, in its very simple signification "in" enfolds affirmation and negation together—as if "i" were "yes" and "n" were "no" and these were conjoined in "in." For when "in" is added

to other expressions, it is either an affirmation or a negation;⁷⁵ but in itself it is the enfolding of both.

- 56 Therefore, “in” is seen to be a suitable image for illuminating divine theology. For in all things *in* is all things; in nothing it is nothing; and in *in* everything is *in*.⁷⁶ Who could set forth what could be said about this *in*, which is ineffable in itself?—who but Him whose Speaking is perfect, since it is Actualized-possibility! For only the Word which is the Expression of all things expressible can [express] this.

CARDINAL: Your reflection has been subtle, Father Abbot; and your symbolism is sufficiently suggestive, since it leads unto the spirit (*in spiritum*). For no one except the spirit of God knows the things which are in God⁷⁷—even as the spirit of man [knows] the things which are in man. Therefore, “in” is a symbolism of the spirit which searches all things.⁷⁸ But anyone who, as an investigator, attempts to enter into the majesty of God by means of *in* is overwhelmed by glory.⁷⁹ For the *in* which is seen and understood is *not* the light which illumines the manifestation of the incomprehensibility of the absolute deity in itself; rather, both “in” and all the [other] names which ascribe infinity to God attempt to show by [the method of] super-eminence His incomprehensibility.⁸⁰

- 57 BERNARD: Since by a short and concise word the Abbot shows that he has entered into profound matters: lest by saying nothing I seem to have heard in vain so many deep points, let me mention a symbolism in [the word] “*possesit*”—[a symbolism] which ought not to be rejected. I see that the “e” is a simple triune vowel. For it is a vowel of “*posse*,” of “*esse*,” and of the union of both. Assuredly, the very simple vocalization of “e” is trine: insofar as “e” relates to “*posse*,” it does not relate to “*esse*”; insofar as it relates to “*esse*,” it does not relate to “*posse*”; and insofar as it relates to the union of both, it does not relate [solely] to “*posse*” or [solely] to “*esse*” but to their union. Therefore, with “e,” I see that these unconfused relations—each of which is true and perfect by itself—are not three vowels, or vocalizations, but are one most simple and indivisible vocalization. So when I mentally contemplate these matters in this way, this symbolic viewing of orthodox faith furnishes me with a strong consideration (*magnum argumentum*) for believing that God, who is the triune and most simple Beginning, is in the world in something like the way (although the dissimilarity is very great) that the vocalization of “e” is in [the

utterance] “*possesit*.” (From *possesit*, [i.e., from Actualized-possibility], the world has (1) what it is able to be, (2) what it is, and (3) the union of these two.) For just as it has been established that the vocalization of “e” gives all things to “*possesit*” (since if “e” is removed, “*possesit*” altogether ceases to be a significative expression), so if God were removed, the world would altogether cease to be. I see no need to say more about the illustrative character of the symbolism; for the two of you can apply [the symbolism] better than [can] I.

58 CARDINAL: I praise your symbolism, Bernard. Surely it suits our topic. But there is no end of symbolisms, since no symbolism is so close that there cannot always be a closer one. Only the Son of God is the image (*figura*) of the substance of the Father,⁸¹ because the Son *is* whatever is able to be. The Form of God the Father⁸² is not able to be either truer or more perfect, since it is Actualized-possibility (*possesit*).

BERNARD: If after the many and the diverse [points] touched upon in your treatises and sermons, there still remain some [points] you ought to make about symbolisms, then add [them here]. For they [will] amply lead the intellect to theology.

CARDINAL: Agreed. Because it is very difficult to see how one thing which is essentially in all things *is* all things, let more lucid symbolisms be sought for this purpose. However, a suitable-enough symbolism for this is set forth in the treatise *On the Icon [of God]*.⁸³ Just as God (whose seeing is being) sees at once each and every thing, so He is at once each and every thing. Now, a man at one and the same time infuses the [same] word into the ears of each and every one of his listeners. Similarly, God, whose speaking is creating, creates at once each and every thing; and since the Word of God is God, God is in each and every creature. In the aforementioned treatise, *On the Icon [of God]*, I have spoken] in more detail about this [point].

59 But I see no closer intellectual symbolism for how, considered absolutely in Himself, God is the actuality of every possibility (or at once the most simple and the most infinite Form) than if I posit an infinite line. For in the treatise *Learned Ignorance* I stated that an infinite line (if it could be posited) is the actuality of a line's every possibility—i.e., is the boundary of all things which can be bounded by a line and is the most congruent exemplar of all figures capable of linearity. A similar point must hold for Absolute Being or Absolute Form. For Absolute [Being or Form] is boundless and infinite. Therefore, it is the

most congruent Exemplar of each terminated and finite [form], since it itself is neither greater nor lesser than anything. But it is necessary that God be absolute, since He precedes all not-being and, consequently, all otherness and contractedness. And so, He is not other than or different from anything—even though nothing [else] can approach to equality with Him, since all else is other and is limited.⁸⁴ Hence, since nothing is impossible for God,⁸⁵ we should look for Him (in whom impossibility is necessity) in those things which are impossible in this world. Just as in this world infinity is actually impossible, so Endless Magnitude is the Necessity which necessitates the existence of not-being, or nothing.

60 Consider also, in symbolizing mathematically, how it is that the supreme equality of quantities frees them from all plurality. For example, if you take the case of the lines of a circle, from its center to its circumference, as it is described in a floor: they seem to be equal but are not, because of both the changing character, and the material, of the floor. Thus, no line is precisely similar to the other—as is shown in *Learned Ignorance*.⁸⁶ But when the intellect considers the circle-in-itself, the many lines in the floor cannot (in the circle considered in itself) be other than one another, since the cause-of-otherness—viz., matter—is not operative. And so, [the lines] are not many. Therefore, what has been said about the lines [can be said] likewise about everything which has quantity—e.g., about a surface and about a material object. So (1) when I see that one surface in a floor is bounded by a circular figure and that an equal surface is bounded by a triangular figure and [another] equal [surface] by a hexagonal figure (and so on for all nameable figures) and (2) when thereafter I consider that these equal surfaces appear plural on account of the distinct subjects [i.e., the distinct parts of the floor] in which they are distinctly described: I mentally abstract from the subjects, and I see how one and the same surface could have seemed to me to be distinct surfaces since I saw it in distinct places and in distinct subjects [i.e., distinct parts of the floor].⁸⁷ Thereupon, I observe that one and the same surface is a circle, a triangle, a hexagon, and every figure by which a surface can be shaped and bounded.

61 By the foregoing symbolism I see that being itself, which is freed from particular determinations, is actually the form (formable in every which way) of the being of each and every being. [This form is the form-of-being] not mathematically and figuratively but most truly and

in a formable way (or, as we can also say, in a vital way). This symbolism pleases me. For I have just shown that the same surface is able to be circular, rectilinear, polygonal; and I have given an example of this. Assume, then, that we posit the actual existence of possible being—as should be done in matters theological. Assuredly, in that case, the symbolism guides [us] quite clearly. Therefore, I think that in accordance with an accurate understanding of mathematics a quite close symbolism can be made for theology.

Let it suffice that we have said these things about this [topic].

62 JOHN: I am afraid of appearing troublesome and wearisome. Otherwise, I would ask to be taught still further.

CARDINAL: Both of you, keep asking. For these discussions do not at all tire me but delight me immensely. And so, if anything remains [to be asked], do not at all be indulgent [with me] now; for on another occasion I will perhaps have less leisure.

JOHN: Among the innumerable things which I would like to learn is one thing in particular: viz., how it is that *negatively* we better attain to this omnipotent Form, which is said to appear above all being and not-being.

CARDINAL: We need to presuppose, Abbot, what you have heard from me on another occasion: viz., that there are three theoretical investigations.

1. The lowest [of these three] is physics, which centers on nature and examines inabstract forms which are subject to change. For nature is form-in-matter; and so, [in matter form] is not abstract and is in something other than itself; and, hence, it [exists] otherwise [than it does in itself]. Therefore, it is continually being changed, or altered, in accordance with the instability of the material. The soul, by the senses and by reason, investigates this [type of form].

63 2. Another theoretical investigation is [the investigation] of the Form which is completely abstract [*absoluta*] and completely stable—which is divine and is free of all otherness and so is eternal and without any change or variation. The soul, by itself and without images, investigates this Form. [The soul seeks it] beyond all understanding and learning—by its own highest acumen and simplicity, which some [persons] call intellectuality.

3. There is also a theoretical investigation which is in between [these two]. It deals with inabstract forms which are, however, stable. (This investigation is called mathematics.) For example, it deals with

a circle which, although it is free from corporeal and unstable material, is not free from every subject and from all intelligible material. For it does not deal with a circle as it is in a corruptible floor but as it is in its [i.e., the circle's] own rational ground, or definition. And this theoretical investigation is called *mathesis* or *disciplina* [i.e., learning]. For it is passed on by way of learning. And in investigating it, the soul uses the intellect together with the imagination. [I have written] elsewhere about these points.⁸⁸

64 At the moment, however, we are theologizing and discoursing about abstract (*absoluta*) Form, since it primarily imparts existence. Indeed, every form which comes to matter gives to matter both existence and a name. For example, when the figure of Plato comes to bronze, it gives to the bronze the existence of a statue and the name "statue." But, properly speaking, no inabstract forms—these exist apart from matter only conceptually—*impart* existence; rather, existence arises out of the union of these forms with matter. Therefore, it is necessary that there be a completely abstract Form which exists through itself, which is in need of nothing else, and which imparts (a) to matter the *possibility of existing*, (b) to the form present in the matter *actuality*, and (c) to the union of these two *existence as a thing*. Assuredly, then, the more the forms need a subject or a material in order actually to exist: the weaker and the more material they are and the more they imitate the nature of [this] subject, and so the less perfect they are. But the less they need a subject: the more formal, stable, and perfect they are. Therefore, it is necessary for the Form which does not at all need any other thing (since [this Form] is of infinite perfection) to enfold within itself the perfections of all the forms of formable things. For it is actually the Repository-of-being from which all existing things emanate—even as from eternity they have been conceived, or placed, in the Repository-of-wisdom.⁸⁹

65 Moses reports that God said: "I am Being itself"⁹⁰ As was previously mentioned,⁹¹ this statement is found translated in our books as "I am I-who-am." Therefore, *being* which is Being itself names for us the Form of forms. Being which is Being itself befits no positable form except that Form which is completely abstract and is so perfect that it is free from all need. Therefore, every form which is not Absolute Being itself can be more perfect. But being which is Being itself is the perfection of all being and, hence, the enfolding of all forms. Wherefore, unless Being itself were to impart forming being to all

forms, forms would not at all have [forming being]. Therefore, Divine Being, which is Absolute Being itself, is present in all things, giving to all of them such being as they have. But since all things desire the good and since nothing is more desirable than being (which Absolute Being itself causes to emanate from its own assuredly best repository): we say that God—to whom we give the name “Being itself”—is the only good. For from Him we receive a best gift, most pleasing to us: viz., our own being. But by all the means possible for us we seek to see the Fount of our being. And we discover that by *negation* we pursue the truer way, since He whom we seek is incomprehensible and infinite. So, in order that I may now tell you the things you asked me concerning negation, let us take the negation which seems to be the first of all negations: viz., “not-being.” Doesn't this negation both presuppose and deny?

66 JOHN: Assuredly, it presupposes being and denies being.

CARDINAL: Then, that being which it presupposes is prior to the negation.

JOHN: In accordance with our mode of understanding, this [inference] is undoubtedly necessary.

CARDINAL: Therefore, [that] being which the negation presupposes is undoubtedly eternal; for it is prior to not-being. And that being which the negation denies is originated posterior to not-being.

JOHN: It seems necessary.

67 CARDINAL: Therefore, the negation which besets *being*⁹² denies that this being, referred to in this way, is presupposed being. [To make] this [statement] is to say only: “being which is posterior to not-being is not at all eternal, ineffable being.”

JOHN: I cannot deny these [points].

CARDINAL: Hence, I see God more truly than [I see] the world. For I see the world only with reference to not-being and by way of negation—as if I were to say: “I see that the world is not God.” However, I see God prior to [any reference to] not-being; and so, no being is denied of Him. Therefore, His being is the complete being of all the things which either are or in any way can be. We cannot (without images) see this [fact] more simply and more truly by any other way [than negation]. For through the negation [“not-being”] you see—by a simple intuition from which you exclude everything subsequent to not-being—that the presupposed [being], which precedes not-being, is the eternal being itself of all being.⁹³

JOHN: I understand that the being presupposed in the negation

necessarily precedes not-being; for otherwise it is not the case that anything would exist. For who would have brought not-being into being? Not-being itself [could] not [have done so], since it would not presuppose being, from which to be brought forth. Therefore, if we affirm that something exists, then it is necessary that your claim be completely true.

- 68** **CARDINAL:** Your inference is correct, Abbot. Now, you see that some things do exist: e.g., the sky, the earth, the sea, and so on. But you see that the one is not the other; and so, you see these in their posteriority to not-being. Therefore, you see that [the following is true]: (1) from Eternal Being and (2) posterior to not-being, these things are what they are. For since Eternity itself precedes not-being, which cannot bring itself into being, it is necessary that all things be brought forth from not-being (i.e., from what does not exist) by Eternal Being. Therefore, for all things, Eternal Being is Necessity-of-being.

JOHN: If you can, Father, state more clearly how I can see all things in Eternal Being.

CARDINAL: If in its essence the sun were also thereby all the things it is not, then assuredly it would be prior to not-being and so [would be] both sun and all things, since nothing could be denied of it.

JOHN: I grant it. But the concept of the sun, which is finite, confuses me.

CARDINAL: Assist yourself, then, and look at the *very being of the sun*. Next, remove (1) [the determination] *of the sun* and (2) everything which is not abstract—thereby removing [all] negation.⁹⁴ You now see that nothing is denied of the “sun's” being. For when you see that the being of the sun is not the being of the moon, this [recognition] occurs because you see being which is inabstract and is contracted and limited in such way that it is called solar. Therefore, if you remove the boundary and see Boundless (*interminum seu eternum*) or Eternal Being, then you undoubtedly see it in its priority to not-being.

- 69** **JOHN:** In this way, then, I see that in the Eternal God any given being is both God and all things.

CARDINAL: So it is. For since the Eternal God brings forth all things from not-being: unless He were actually the being of each and every thing, how is it that He would bring [them] forth from not-being?

JOHN: Hence, the things said⁹⁵ by the saints are true. For they say that God is quantitative [e.g., great] without quantity, qualitative [e.g., good] without quality, and so on for all [the other categories].

CARDINAL: So they say. But tell [me] how you construe this [statement of theirs].

JOHN: I understand that God is the absolute truth of all the things we see. Hence, it is necessary [for us] to negate the contractedness of what is contracted, in order that we may attain to the Absolute. For, indeed, I observe how there is true quantity in visible quantity. Therefore, I attempt to behold in the Absolute the truth of this [true quantity]—the truth through which this true quantity is true. And I see that this truth is [Quantity-without-quantity, i.e., is] Quantity without such quantity as I saw to be subsequent to not-being and to be bounded and limited in such and such ways and which is designated by the name “quantity.” Therefore, I have to leave behind, on this side of not-being, all those things through which quantity is quantity rather than being all things. And so, I cast aside the name, the definition, the shape, and all the things apprehended of quantity by means of all sense, imagination, and intellect—so that in this way I may arrive at the not-being of this quantity. Thereupon, I behold the eternal Cause and Form of that which I saw at first. Although this eternal Cause or Form is ineffable and prior to every name, nevertheless I call this Eternity by the name “Quantity without quantity”; for it is the Form and the Truth of nameable quantity. But the form of a quantity is not itself quantitative. Likewise, the truth and the eternity [of a quantity] are not [quantitative]—even as the form of time is not temporal but is eternal.

71 CARDINAL: I am happy to have heard these things from you. The points you have made will not seem surprising to anyone who experiences for himself how heat-in-the-domain-of-sensible-things is devoid of heat in the domain of the more abstract cognitive powers. In the senses, where heat is sensed, heat-which-is-not-devoid-of-heat is present; but in the imagination or in the intellect heat-without-heat is touched upon. A similar point must be made about all the things with which the senses make contact. For example, [in the imagination or in the intellect there is contact with] a fragrance without fragrance, a sweet without sweetness, a sound without sound, and likewise for each distinct thing. Therefore, just as things which are present sensibly in the senses are present insensibly in the intellect (for in the intellect they are present not sensibly but intellectually and *are* the intellect), so all

things which are present mundanely in the world are present non-mundanely in God (for in God they are present divinely and *are* God). Similarly, temporal things [are present in God] non-temporally, for [they are present] eternally; and corruptible things incorruptibly; material things immaterially; and plural things non-plurally; numbered things non-numerically; composite things non-compositely; and similarly for all things. [To say] all this is [to say] nothing other than that all things—in their own most congruent Eternal Being, without any substantial or accidental differences—are in a most excellent way most simple Eternity itself.

72 BERNARD: Assuredly, I have heard deep matters being clearly resolved. From these [points] I infer that for the following reason the world, which was originated posterior to not-being, is said in Greek to be a beautiful *cosmos*: it is [derived] from the ineffable, eternal Beauty, which is prior to not-being. Now, the name [“cosmos”] denies that the world is ineffable Beauty itself. But it affirms that [the world] is the image of that [Beauty] whose truth is ineffable. What, then, is the world except the manifestation of the invisible God? What is God except the invisibility of visible things?—as the Apostle says in the verse⁹⁶ set forth at the beginning of our discussion. Hence, the world reveals its Creator, so that He is known. Or better: the unknowable God reveals Himself knowably to the world in imagery and symbolism (as, for example, when the Apostle rightly said that with God there is not both Yes and No but is only Yes).⁹⁷ From what has been stated, the domain-of-living-things which is eternal and prior to not-being begins to appear to me a bit. [I begin to see] *that it is* and [to see] what kind of thing is that great chaos about which Christ says that it exists between the inhabitants of eternal immortality and the inhabitants of Hell.⁹⁸ And [I begin to see] that Christ our teacher—who removes [our] ignorance and teaches us the way to an eternity of immortality—will repair all [the infirmities] which render us incapable of this eternal immortality.

73 It will now suffice that [we] have spoken of so many things. If you will, bring them to a conclusion by adding an epilogue.

CARDINAL: Perhaps time requires that we conclude in this way. The two of you set out from the supreme theologian Paul’s statement about how the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the mundane creation’s having been understood. We said that the eternal power and the invisible divinity of the Creator are clearly seen by that mind

which understands the world to be a created thing. For only if the created thing is seen to have been eternally present in the Creator's invisible power [*virtus seu potestas*] can it be understood to have emanated from the Creator. It is necessary that every creatable thing exist actually in the Creator's power—so that, consequently, He is the most perfect Form of all forms. It is necessary that the Creator be all the things which are possible to be—so that, consequently, He is the truest formal (or truest exemplary) Cause. It is necessary that the Creator have within Himself the Concept and the Rational Ground of all formable things. It is necessary that the Creator be above all opposition. For in Him there cannot be otherness, since He is prior to not-being. For if He were posterior to not-being, He would not be the Creator but would be a creature, brought forth from not-being. Therefore, in Him not-being is everything which is possible to be. And so, He creates not from any other, but from Himself; for *He* is everything which is possible to be.

74 And when we attempted to see Him beyond being and not-being, we were unable to understand how He could be visible. For He is beyond everything simple and everything composite, beyond everything singular and everything plural, beyond every limit and all unlimitedness; He is completely everywhere and not at all anywhere; He is of every form and of no form, alike; He is completely ineffable; in all things He is all things, in nothing He is nothing, and in Him all things and nothing are Himself;⁹⁹ He is wholly and indivisibly present in any given thing (no matter how small) and, at the same time, is present in no thing at all. He reveals Himself in every creature as the triune, most true, and most congruent Exemplar—and as surpassing infinitely all sensible, imaginable, and intellectual knowledge which adheres to images. For by these ways of knowing, nothing incorporeal and spiritual is attained to. Rather, this unintelligible [Reality] is encountered by the loftiest intellect—freed from all images—when all things have been transcended. [He is encountered]—ignorantly, or unintelligibly, in a shadow or in darkness or unknowingly—as being nothing of all existing things. [He is encountered] where He is seen in darkness and where it is not known what substance, what thing, or what being He is. [He is encountered] as a thing in which opposites coincide (e.g., motion and rest, together)—not as two but as above duality and otherness. This vision occurs in darkness, where the hidden God is concealed from the eyes of all the wise.

75 Moreover, unless by His own light He expels the darkness and re-

veals Himself, He remains completely unknown to all who seek Him by way of reason and intellect. But He does not abandon those who seek Him in deepest faith, surest hope, and the most fervent possible desire—i.e., [those who seek Him] by that way which we were taught by our only master, Christ, the Son of God, the living way, the sole Revealer of His own father, who is our omnipotent Creator. Therefore, all the statements we have made aim only at [making] us understand that our Creator surpasses all understanding. The vision of His countenance (a vision which alone brings happiness) is promised to us believers by the Son of God (who is Truth itself—provided that by following Him we hold to the way which has been disclosed to us by word and deed.

May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, blessed forever, grant this [steadfastness] to us. Amen.¹⁰⁰

ABBREVIATIONS

- Apologia* *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae (Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia, Vol. II, edited by Raymond Klibansky; published by Felix Meiner Verlag, 1932).*
- DAWB* *Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Vorträge und Schriften. Heft 97: Nikolaus von Kues. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1965.*
- DI* *De Docta Ignorantia (Latin-German edition: Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues in deutscher Übersetzung, published by Felix Meiner Verlag. **Book I** (Vol. 264a), edited and translated by Paul Wilpert; 3rd edition with minor improvements by Hans G. Senger, 1979. **Book II** (Vol. 264b), edited and translated by Paul Wilpert; 2nd edition with minor improvements by Hans G. Senger, 1977. **Book III** (Vol. 264c), Latin text edited by Raymond Klibansky, introduction and translation by Hans G. Senger, 1977.).*
- DP* *De Possess, Banning edition, 1986.*
- MFCG* *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft, edited by Rudolf Haubst. A continuing series published in Mainz, Germany by Matthias-Grünwald Verlag.*
- NA* *Directio Speculantis seu De Non Aliud (Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia, Vol. XIII, edited by Ludwig Baur and Paul Wilpert; published by Felix Meiner Verlag, 1944. Latin text reprinted—with J. Hopkins's English translation—by Banning Press under the title *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-other: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Li Non Aliud*, 2nd edition 1983).*
- NC* *Nicolò da Cusa. Florence: Sansoni, 1962.*
- NCMM* *Nicolò Cusano agli inizi del mondo moderno. Florence: Sansoni, 1970.*
- SHAW* *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Heidelberg: C. Winter.*

PRAENOTANDA FOR THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

1. Where, for clarification, words from the Latin text are inserted into the translation, the following rule is employed: when the Latin term is noted exactly as it appears in the Latin text, parentheses are used; when the case endings of nouns are transformed to the nominative, strokes are used.

2. *English* words and phrases that are bracketed are supplied by the translator to fill out the meaning implied by the Latin text.

3. Quotation marks are employed when Nicholas *mentions* a word rather than *uses* it. On occasion, however, he both mentions and uses a word in the same sentence. In such cases the word is italicized in the translation. (E.g., 65:3-4: “Therefore, *being* which is Being itself names for us the Form of forms.”) N.B.: In some passages italics are used solely for emphasis.

4. When words such as “beginning,” “being,” “truth,” “absolute,” “wisdom,” “form,” etc., refer to God, they are capitalized.

5. All references to Nicholas of Cusa’s works are to the Latin texts—specifically to the following texts in the following editions (unless explicitly indicated otherwise):

A. Heidelberg Academy edition of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia: De Concordantia Catholica; Sermones; De Coniecturis; De Deo Abscondito, De Quaerendo Deum; De Filiatione Dei; De Dato Patris Luminum; Coniectura de Ultimis Diebus, De Genesi, Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae; Idiota* (1983 edition) *de Sapientia, de Mente, de Staticis Experimentis; De Pace Fidei, Cribratio Alkorani, De Li Non Aliud* (Banning reprint); *De Venatione Sapientiae; Compendium; De Apice Theoriae*.

B. Text authorized by the Heidelberg Academy and published in the Latin-German editions of Felix Meiner Verlag’s Philosophische Bibliothek: *De Docta Ignorantia, De Beryllo*.

C. Paris edition (1514) of *Nicolai Cusae Cardinalis Opera: Complementum Theologicum, De Aequalitate, De Principio* (=Paris edition, Vol. II, Part I, fol. 7^r - 11^v).

D. Strasburg edition (1488) of the *Opera Cusana* as edited by Paul Wilpert and re-published by W. de Gruyter (Berlin, 1967, 2 vols.): *De Ludo Globi*.

E. Banning Press editions: *De Visione Dei, De Possess.*

6. For some treatises the references in the notes indicate book and chapter; for others, section and line; for still others, page and line. Readers should have no difficulty determining which is which when they consult the particular Latin text. E.g., “*DI* II, 6 (125:19-20)” indicates *De Docta Ignorantia*, Book II, Chapter 6, margin number 125, lines 19-20. And “*Apologia* 8:14-16” indicates *Apologia Doctae Ignorantia*, p. 8, lines 14_16. Citations of *De Possess* are in terms either of margin numbers alone or of both margin and line numbers.

NOTES ON ACTUALIZED-POSSIBILITY

1. In Ms. Cusanus 219 the *incipit* reads, when translated: “Here begins the dialogue (*dialogus*) on Actualized-possibility—a dialogue of the most reverend father-in-Christ, Lord Nicholas of Cusa, cardinal of St. Peter in Chains. There are three discussants.”

2. Codex Cusanus 219 here has “Iohannes” instead of “Bernardus.” But Codex Monacensis Latinus 7338 contains the obviously correct reading.

3. Rom. 1:20. One difficulty with the Latin version of this text is that the antecedent of “*intellecta*” is uncertain. Another is that “*a creatura mundi*” may be construed temporally. Nicholas here takes “*intellecta*” with “*ea*,” though later he takes it with “*creatura*.” He always construes “*a creatura mundi*” non-temporally. See *DP* 3:6; 4:34; 15: 10; 51:13-14; 73:3-4.

4. II Cor. 4:18.

5. *Ibid.*

6. “Beginning” is one of the names for God. See Rev. 22:13.

7. In this passage Nicholas implies that not-being does not exist. Later, however, he maintains that not-being does exist. (See *DP* 25:11-15. Cf. 27:22-23; 29:11-12; 59:16-19; 67:16-17; 73:15-16.) These passages are not contradictory. For although not-being exists in God, it does not exist as an object in the world: it is not a created thing. At times, however, Nicholas does tend to reify not-being. Note *NA* 7 (23:19-23): “If Not-other ceased, all the things it precedes would immediately cease. And so, not only would the actuality and the possibility of the beings which Not-other precedes cease but so also would the not-being and the nothing of these beings.”

8. Although a created thing is able to be that which it actually is, it is not actually (all) that which it is able to be—as Nicholas explains in *DP* 8.

9. I.e., absolute possibility is pure possibility; and absolute actuality is pure actuality. Nicholas does not make any systematic distinction between *possibilitas*, *potentia*, *potestas*, *posse* (nor between *actualitas*, *actus*, and *esse*). Thus, Absolute Possibility is also Absolute Power.

10. Nicholas contrasts the expression “*posse fieri*” with the expression “*posse facere*” (e.g., *DP* 27:6; 29:6-7) and with the expression “*posse esse*” (e.g., 24:11-14). It may be translated in a variety of ways: e.g., “to be able to be made,” “to be able to be done,” “to be able to become,” “to be possible to be made,” “the possibility to be made,” and so on. See also *DP* 28:1 - 29:9. At 29:1 “*posse fieri*” is associated with “*posse creari*” (28:1 and 7). At 35:1 Nicholas uses “*si fieri posset*” in the sense of “if possible”; and at 75:4 he uses “*quantum fieri potest*” in the sense of “as much as possible.” As a rule, however, he does not in this dialogue use “*posse fieri*” to mean simply “to be possible.”

11. Eternity itself is God. Possibility, Actuality, and their Union are members of the Trinity.

12. (1) Sometimes Nicholas says that God is everything which is able to be; (2) sometimes he suggests that God is everything which *He* is able to be; and (3) sometimes—as in the present passage—what he says may be construed either way, since

neither the text nor the context eliminates the ambiguity. As an example of 1, see *DP* 73: 10 (“It is necessary that the Creator be all the things which are possible to be”). As examples of 2, see 27:18-19 and 30:13-15 (“For example, if the Beginning were able not-to-be, it would not-be, since it is what it is able to be.” “This is not the case with Actualized-possibility, which lacks neither a greater magnitude which it is able to be nor anything at all which it is able to be”). As examples of 3, see both the text marked by the present note and 12:11-12 (“For, assuredly, He who is what (He) is able to be does not fail to have solar being”). Parentheses around “He” are meant to signal the ambiguity of the reading. The ambiguity of the Latin confuses Bernard, who asks for clarification.

That God is actually everything that can possibly be entails that He is actually everything that *He* (or anything else) can possibly be. *His* possibilities are possibility itself. To say that God is everything that He can be is to say that He cannot be anything other than He is. This latter point is made by Nicholas at *DP* 12:1-2, as well as throughout his work *NA*.

N.B. Matt. 19:26. Mark 10:27; 14:36. Luke 18:27. With God, states Scripture, all things are possible—even what is impossible with men.

13. I.e., we can say that the sun, etc., are what they are able to be.

14. See Luke 3:8 and 12:25.

15. “*Mihi*” here goes with “*difficillima*.” Cf. *DP* 24:6-7.

16. Alternative translation: “I want to say that implicitly-in-God all these things are God, even as explicitly-in-the-created-world they are the world.”

17. Regarding the sense of *DP* 9:18-25 see *DI* I, 16 (45:13-18). At *DP* 9:21-23 “*alicui*” is, twice, a dative of comparison. Note the dative of comparison in the sermon “*Ubi est qui natus est rex Iudaeorum?*” printed in *Cusanus-Texte. Vier Predigten im Geiste Eckharts*, ed. J. Koch, *SHAW*, 1937, p. 110, line 9. Cf. *DI* I, 5 (13:30); I, 15 (40:20-21). *De Dato Patris Luminum* 1 (93:15). *De Venatione Sapientiae* 5 (12:5). N.B. *Idiota de Sapientia* II (41:5-7).

18. In the English translation “greatness” and “magnitude” are used as equivalent English renderings for “*magnitudo*.”

19. Cf. notes 8 and 12 above.

20. “*Entitas*” may be rendered either as “being” or as “being itself,” depending upon the context. Throughout this treatise I use the latter rendering, since “*entitas*” is being used to refer to God. *Entitas* (*qua* God) is *ipsum esse, forma formarum, essendi forma, perfectio, omnis esse et ideo omnium formarum complicatio*. N.B. *DP* 14:14-15; 61:1-2; 65:1-16. Also see *De Venatione Sapientiae*, Chap. 24 and *DI* I, 8.

Cf. Thierry of Chartres, *Commentum super Boethii Librum de Trinitate* II, 21 (in *Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and His School*, edited by Nikolaus M. Häring (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1971), p. 75.

Like Pseudo-Dionysius and Meister Eckhart, Nicholas refers to God as the being of all being (“*entitas omnis esse*,” “*esse omnis esse*”). See *DP* 67:13 and *Sermo* “*Ubi est qui natus est rex Iudaeorum?*” printed in *Cusanus-Texte. Vier Predigten im Geiste Eckharts*, ed. J. Koch, *SHAW*, 1937, p. 102, line 9.

21. This expression is repeated at *DP* 56:2 and 74:5-6. *NA* 14 indicates explicitly that the formula is borrowed from Pseudo-Dionysius (not to mention I Cor. 15:28). God is “all in all,” teaches Nicholas, in the sense that He is being itself, which is present in every finite being. God is “nothing in nothing” (or, as Dionysius says, “not

anything in anything”) in the sense that He is none of the finite beings. In *Apologia* 17:17-18 Nicholas, again following Dionysius, states his point as follows: “God is the Being of all things in such way that He is not any of these things” Finally, Proposition 5 in the appendix to *NA* affirms that God is both the Being of being and the Not-being of not-being. Therefore, “God is nothing in nothing” also means, for Nicholas, that God is the very not-being of nothing. Cf. Proposition 7.

22. Cf. John 1:3-4.

23. Alternative reading for “*possesit*”: the-actual-existence-of-possibility.

24. Gen. 17: 1.

25. Exod. 3:14.

26. “*Esse*” may here be translated either as “being” or as “existence.” Cf. n. 20 above.

27. Cf. St. Anselm, *Proslogion* 22.

28. The Septuagint has Ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ ὄν.

9. See n. 10 above.

30. Acts 17:28.

31. “*Cum d puncto*” is used interchangeably with “*in d puncto*.” Note the meanings of “*cum*” and “*in*” at *DP* 19:23-24 and 22:5-6. Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion* 22: “*Unde si usus loquendi admitteret, [summa essentia] convenientius dici videretur esse cum loco vel tempore quam in loco vel tempore.*” F. S. Schmitt’s edition.

32. Interestingly, Nicholas uses the moving circle to illustrate eternity and uses the fixed circle to illustrate time. This procedure reverses the usual pattern of analogy, which likens the eternal to the fixed and unmoving.

33. Cf. Rev. 22:13.

34. Wisd. 7:24.

35. Cf. Ps. 147:15 (Douay version).

36. Cf. Wisd. 8:1.

37. The sun appears to revolve around the earth from *east to west* (i.e., “with the firmament”) once every day. At the same time, the sun actually moves among the stars from *west to east* (i.e., “counter to the firmament”), making one complete circuit of the heavens in a year. Because the sun changes its position in the heavens constantly at a uniform rate, it requires a few more minutes than do the stars to complete its daily apparent revolution about the earth. A similar effect is generally true for the planets as well.

38. Nicholas uses “*aenigma*” in the sense of a “symbolism.” Cf. I Cor. 13:12.

39. See n. 7 above.

40. I.e., through God.

41. Matt. 11:25.

42. John 14:9.

43. Eph. 3:17.

44. John 14:17 and 26.

45. John 16:33. I John 5:4-5.

46. I Cor. 1:20.

47. Ps. 83:8 (Douay version).

48. Note the story about the blind man in John 9.

49. John 14:23.

50. Matt. 5:8.

51. Cf. Luke 10:27.

52. Eph. 3:17.

53. Ps. 32:9 (Douay version).

54. Acts 2:4.

55. Cf. Eph. 4:7.

56. In this sentence Nicholas uses "knowledge" in two different senses: (1) our knowledge of God; (2) the knowledge by which God created the world. In the present passage he implies that in the next life believers will attain to the intellectual vision of God insofar as they will attain to the vision of Christ. However, they will never attain to the knowledge of God as He is in Himself. Cf. *DP* 40-41 and *DI* I, 26 (88:16-17).

57. Heb. 11: 1. II Cor. 4:18.

58. Cf. *DP* 62:13. See also *De Coniecturis* I, 11 (54:6-23). God cannot exist differently than He does exist, since all possibilities are actual in Him. Nor can He (acceptably) be conceived to be other than He is. N. B. *De Beryllo* 4 (5:3-4).

59. See *De Coniecturis* II, 1 (76:11-18). Cf. Nicholas's *Die mathematischen Schriften*, German translation by Josepha Hofmann (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 2nd edition 1979), p. 30. This example is also found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* I, 2 (983^a15ff.).

60. Here Nicholas uses "*ipsius posse*" and "*ipsius esse*" in place of "*illius possibilitatis*" and "*illius actus*." (Cf. *DP* 42:7; 42:13-14; 42:15-16.) I therefore rendered "*esse*" as "*actuality*."

61. *Realia* are contrasted with *rationis entia*.

62. Nicholas uses the notion of mathematical beginning as a basis for inferring truths about God, who is "the most perfect Beginning of all things" (*DP* 45:12-13).

63. In Section 48 Nicholas (through John) identifies the Father as absolute possibility, the Son as existence (or actuality), and the Holy Spirit as the union of possibility and actuality. Thus, in the passage about the rose, he formulates a symbolism which he will subsequently use to elucidate the doctrine of the Trinity. For the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are of the same essence.

64. I Cor. 13:12.

65. Earlier, Nicholas denied that the sun is that which *it* is able to be (*DP* 8:9-10). In the present passage he asserts that every existing thing, including the sun, is only that which is able to be. That is, it is one of the many things which are possible to be, even though it is not everything which it is able to be.

66. The Beginning has no beginning. That is, God is unoriginated.

67. Rom. 1:20. See n. 3 above.

68. Viz., this inter-relationship between possibility, actuality, and their union.

69. Because the possibility and the actuality do not coincide, Nicholas says that actuality is not present in the possibility. However, both possibility and actuality are present in the motion.

70. Le., in the existence (i.e., in the actuality) would be possibility and the union; and in the union would be possibility and existence. Note the previous speech of the Cardinal. See n. 60 above.

71. Re translation of "*abbreviatum*": cf. *DP* 54:7 with 57: 1.

72. In the handwritten ms. (Codex Cusanus 219) the word "in" appears as three strokes, with a light connecting line which forms the letter "n". It is not set off—e.g., by enlargement or by spacing—from the other words of the manuscript. More-

over, Nicholas adopts no convention for distinguishing *using* a word from *mentioning* it.

73. "Name" here translates "*nomen seu relatio*." For "*relatio*" here also means name.

74. Nicholas here uses words beginning with "in": "*inest*," "*immanet*," "*integrat*," "*informat*."

75. For example, "in" operates as a negative when prefixed to words such as "comprehensible" and "competent." But it has a positive force when prefixed to words such as "form" and "fuse."

76. See n. 21 above.

77. I Cor. 2:11.

78. I Cor. 2:10.

79. Prov. 25:27.

80. The way of super-eminence is illustrated by Nicholas's example of *in*: "Clearly, *in* is more than a limit or a boundary. Thus, in *in* a limit does not cease to be a limit; rather, it is all the more a limit. It is a limit within a limit (or a limit of limits), so that it is not called a limit, since it is not limited by any limit but rather surpasses [every limit]" (*DP* 55:18-21).

81. Cf. Heb. 1:3.

82. God the Son is the Form of God the Father. In his next speech the Cardinal calls the Godhead "the most simple and the most infinite Form."

83. This is another name for Nicholas's work *De Visione Dei*. The subsequent example about seeing and being corresponds to the discussion in *De Visione Dei*, Chap. 10.

84. In *NA* Nicholas expands upon this point.

85. Matt. 19:26.

86. Cf. *DI* II, 1 (92:1-4).

87. See Nikolaus von Cues, *Die mathematischen Schriften* (cited fully in n. 59 above), especially pp. 41, 123, 140-150. Nicholas "shows" how different plane-geometrical figures can be equal to one another. But *there* he is speaking of the infinite circle, which, though not actually existing, is conceived of as coinciding with all infinite polygons. Cf. *De Theologicis Complementis* 5 (last part). An infinite circle is so circular that it is a straight line. See also *DI* I, 15 (40).

88. *Idiota de Mente* 7 (103:6 - 104:5) and 8 (111:5-11).

89. Cf. Col. 2:3.

90. Exodus 3:14. See n. 20 above.

91. *DP* 14:12.

92. In his discussion of negation Nicholas does not clearly distinguish between using a word to mention itself and using a word to mention something other than itself.

93. God is the presupposed Being, the eternal Being of all being.

94. Nicholas here shows that he regards determination as negation. The principle "*omnis determinatio est negatio*" is a pillar of negative theology.

95. E.g., Augustine in *De Trinitate* 5.1.2 (*Corpus Christianorum* 50:207).

96. Rom. 1:20.

97. II Cor. 1:19. Nicholas uses this enigmatic verse as an example of a symbolism.

98. Luke 16:26.

99. See n. 21 above.

100. In Ms. Cusanus 219 the *explicit* reads, when translated: "Praise be to God. The end of the trialogue—or, more truly, of the guiding star—held by the most wise and most reverend father, Lord Nicholas of Cusa (presbyter of the Holy Roman Church, cardinal of the titular Church of St. Peter in Chains) with his two friends, Lord Bernard, chancellor of the archbishop of Salzburg, and John Andrea Vigevius, abbot of the monastery of St. Justine of Sezadium."