

**NICHOLAS OF CUSA:
METAPHYSICAL SPECULATIONS**

**Six Latin Texts
Translated into English
by
JASPER HOPKINS**

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DE PRINCIPIO
(On the Beginning)
by
NICHOLAS OF CUSA

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ON THE BEGINNING¹ (De Principio)

“ ‘Who art Thou?’ Jesus answered them: ‘[I am] the Beginning—
I who, indeed, am speaking unto you’ ”

John 8:25

- 1 For the exercise of our intellect I propose to treat, by the gift of God, certain points as regards the Beginning. In Greek [the word for] “Beginning” is feminine in gender; and in the passage above, it is in the accusative case.² Hence, Augustine interprets [the text as follows]: “ ‘Believe that I, who, indeed, am speaking unto you, am the Beginning—believe, so that you may not perish in your sins.’ ”³
- 2 First of all, then, let us investigate whether there is a Beginning. Plato, as Proclus writes in his *Commentary on the Parmenides*,⁴ maintained that this world sprang into being from some earlier Cause, inasmuch as what is divisible cannot exist *per se*; for that which exists *per se* is [all] that which it can be.⁵ However, since what is divisible can be divided, it is able not to exist. Hence, since, as concerns its own power, it is able to be divided and able not to exist: clearly, it is not existent *per se*, i.e., is not *authypostaton*.⁶
- 3 Moreover, a visible agent acts by means of an invisible power. For example, fire acts by means of heat, and snow acts by means of cold; and, likewise, in general, a [power] which *causes* or *begets* is invisible.⁷ But in the case of that which exists *per se*, causing and being caused, begetting and being begotten are the same thing. Therefore, what exists *per se* is not visible.⁸
- 4 Furthermore, if what is divisible existed *per se*, it would both exist and not exist at the same time. For example, if heat were *per se* that which it is, then it would make itself hot. And, thus, it would be both hot and not-hot. For how could it make itself hot if it were not [already] hot, and how could it be [already] actually hot if it could make itself become hot? Likewise, too, a thing cannot be moved *per se*.⁹
- 5 Therefore, just as all motion is from an unmovable cause, so everything divisible is from an indivisible cause. However, this visible, corporeal world is, assuredly, of a divisible nature, since what is corporeal is divisible. Therefore, this world is from an earlier, indivisible Cause. Our Savior made this point when He said: “Who among you,

by taking thought, can add a single cubit to his height?”¹⁰ For he who exists from a cause cannot add something so that his being becomes greater; rather, He who gives being, viz., God, gives the increase. As Paul states, “Neither he who plants nor he who waters accomplishes anything, but [only] God does, who gives the increase.”¹¹ From these considerations it is evident that only what is infinite and eternal is *authypostaton*, i.e., is existent *per se*, for it alone is indivisible and is that to which nothing can be added.¹² However, without contradiction, there can be additions to, and subtractions from, anything finite. Therefore, the finite is not *authypostaton*, or existent *per se*, but is from an earlier Cause.

- 6 Now, I say, the fact that there is only one Cause of all things, or one Beginning, and [not] many beginnings, is evident according to the teaching of Christ, who says that [only] one thing is Necessary.¹³ A plurality, being an otherness, is divisive, not necessary. Proclus demonstrates this point above, where he [uses] the following line of reasoning:¹⁴ ‘If there were many beginnings, assuredly they would be alike in this one respect, viz., that they would be *beginnings*. Therefore, they would partake of the One. But, surely, that which is partaken of is prior to its participants. Therefore, there are not many beginnings but there is a single Beginning, prior to multitude. But if you were to say that the beginnings are plural apart from their partaking of the One, that statement would self-destruct. For, surely, these plural beginnings would be both *alike*, by virtue of their not partaking of the One, and *not alike*, by virtue of their not partaking of the One. (For things which partake of the One are similar; therefore, things which do not partake of the One are dissimilar.) Obviously, then, it is not possible that there be a plurality of beginnings.’¹⁵
- 7 By the same reasoning it is evident that there is not a plurality of *beings* that exist utterly apart from the One. For since they would not partake of the One, they would at one and the same time, and in the same respect, be *alike* and *not alike*. Indeed, this is the subtle hypothesis of Zeno, who said: ‘If there are many things which are beings, then what is similar is dissimilar.’¹⁶ Proclus, as I previously stated, explains this hypothesis. Hence, to one who considers subtly, [it is evident that] there is only One Necessary Thing;¹⁷ if this Necessary Thing is utterly excluded, then (as reason concludes) nothing else would be possible to be. Therefore, when we consider necessary being, we see that Parmenides spoke the truth—viz., that there is only the

One—even as Christ, too, said that [only] One Thing is Necessary. Therefore, unless in the many we see the One, then in the many we see only divisiveness and unordered infinity and indeterminateness.

- 8 I think that Christ called the One Thing *Necessary* because all things are necessitated, or unified, or bound together, in order that they may exist and, while existing, may not slip away into nothing. Now, some things are unified, so that they *exist*; other things are more unified, so that they both *exist* and *live*; still other things are still more highly unified, so that they *exist* and *live* and *understand*.¹⁸ We know from experience that the soul is more unified than is the body. For the soul unites unto its own life the body that is made [alive] by it; and the soul keeps the body from dissolving.

Moreover, we see that power is begotten from union. For the closer the union, the stronger the power. Hence,¹⁹ the more unified a being is, the greater is its power. Thus, infinite and unqualifiedly maximal Union, which is also Oneness, is of infinite power. And so, unless this Oneness (which is called by Plato the Absolute One)²⁰ were present to the possibility-of-being, the possibility-of-being, or matter,²¹ would not *be*. Hence, being that is in potency is not [actually] *being*; nevertheless, insofar as being is seen in potency, it is not the case that it is seen apart from its participation in Oneness, since it is not [unqualifiedly] nothing. Rather, it is nothing (or what has altogether ceased or what does not at all exist) that is necessitated and constrained so as to be possible to be. And, in this way, prior to potential being and to actual being there is seen the One, in whose absence neither [potential being nor actual being] is possible to be.²² This One Necessary Thing is called God—as was said to Israel: “Hear, O Israel, your God is one God.”²³ And He is the Father of Jesus—as Jesus says to the Jews: “My father, whom you call God ...”²⁴ (about which [you may read] in Acts 4). God is Oneness itself—i.e., is *autounum*,²⁵ or One *per se*—although He is *better* than every nameable thing, including *authypostaton*,²⁶ as will be indicated later.²⁷

- 9 Moreover, we cannot deny that God understands Himself, since He is better than one who understands himself.²⁸ And so, He begets from Himself His own Rational Principle [*ratio*], or Definition, or Logos.²⁹ This Definition is the Rational Principle by which the One Necessary Thing understands both Himself and all that is bound together by Oneness and that is possible to be made by Oneness. Furthermore, Logos is the consubstantial Word, or Rational Principle, of the defined Fa-

ther, who defines Himself.³⁰ Logos enfolds within itself everything definable,³¹ since no thing can be defined without the Rational Principle of the One Necessary Thing. Therefore, Christ said that just as the Father has life within Himself, so the Father gave to the Son the having of life within the Son Himself.³² But in God *having is being*. Therefore, the Son is life that enlivens, even as is the Father; i.e., the Son is of the same nature and essence as is the Father.

10 Lest you doubt that the Son is the Beginning, take note of the fact that (1) since the Beginning is the *Beginning*, it is eternal and (2) whatever things are seen in Eternity are Eternity. Hereupon you will recognize that in Eternity there cannot be a Beginning without there being That which is begun. Now, to see in Eternity That which is begun is to see it in the Beginning. Hence, [in Eternity], That which is begun is the Beginning that is begun. Know, as well, that Eternity must not be considered to be a kind of extended duration, as it were, but must be thought of as, at once, Totality-of-being, which is the Beginning. Therefore, when Eternity is considered to be the Beginning, then our speaking of the Beginning of the Begun is nothing but our speaking of the Eternity of the Eternal or our speaking of the Eternity of the Begun. Eternity cannot be other than the Eternal; for Eternity cannot be earlier in duration than the Eternal, for the Eternal is co-eternal with Eternity. Thus, the Begun is co-eternal with the Beginning. For if the Beginning is the Beginning of the Begun (this statement is the same as saying that Eternity is the Eternity of the Eternal), then it is plainly evident that the Begun is eternal. Accordingly, you see (1) Beginning without a Beginning and (2) Beginning from a Beginning.³³

11 Since you see, in eternity, both a Beginning without Beginning and a Beginning from a Beginning, you also see That which is begun (1) from the Beginning that you see to be without Beginning and (2) from the Beginning that is from a Beginning. And in this way you see that (1) the Beginning, (2) the Beginning that is begun, and (3) That which is begun from both of these Beginnings³⁴ are a single Eternal Essence, which Plato calls the One. The foregoing statement³⁵ does not seem implausible. For we see in the case of temporal natures (1) a beginning without beginning, viz., fatherhood, and (2) a beginning that is begun, viz., sonship, and (3) that which is begun from them both, viz., the bond of love that proceeds from the beginning of both [fatherhood and sonship]. And we see that just as the generation's beginning-without-a-beginning is temporal, so also its beginning-from-a-beginning

is temporal. Likewise, the primary bond of love that proceeds from both beginnings is temporal. (The primary friendship or primary bond of natural love is that between a father and his son.) Therefore, just as we see these [relations] with regard to time, so too we rightly believe them to obtain most truly with regard to eternity. For time is to eternity as an image is to its exemplar, and those things which are temporal bear a resemblance to those things which are eternal.

- 12** From these considerations it is evident that the Word, who spoke to the Jews (as [is stated] in our theme text),³⁶ is the Beginning-from-a-Beginning and did not receive the name “Beginning” from [His relation to] the created world. Rather, before the world was made, that very Beginning was present in eternity, and after the world’s creation He spoke in the temporal order.
- 13** You might claim: “A hearer is disturbed when you say that the Beginning is from a Beginning. For none of the philosophers admit [the intelligibility of] this [utterance], lest in this way one proceed *ad infinitum* and lest the pursuit of all truth be abolished, because one could not arrive at a first principle.” I reply that it is not incoherent that there be, in eternity, a Beginning of a Beginning. For just as *whiteness is the whiteness of what is white*, so if what-is-white were whiteness, then it would not be any different to say that *whiteness is the whiteness of whiteness*. However, with regard to eternity the case *is* such that What-is-eternal is Eternity and that What-is-begun is the Beginning. And so, it is no more incoherent to say “Beginning of Beginning” than to say “Beginning of What-is-begun.” Nor does an infinite regress impede this [claim]. For this [claim] occurs with regard to what is actually infinite. For eternity, which is present as a whole and at once,³⁷ is only an actual infinity. By contrast, *where* what is contracted is not identical with what is Absolute, *there* that which is claimed by the philosophers is true: viz., that there is no limit of a limit (for example, there is no humanity of humanity),³⁸ because, [if there were], we would never arrive at a beginning, since an infinite [distance] cannot be completely traversed.
- 14** Assuredly, the Platonists confess this Trinity in which Christians believe. They posit a plurality of trinities; and, consequently, they posit a single Eternal Trinity before all the others³⁹ (even as they posit before everything temporal that which is eternal—for example, before a temporal man, the eternal man⁴⁰). But the Peripatetics, too, say this same thing⁴¹ about the First Cause, which they assert to be tricausal.⁴²

Likewise, the Jews ascribe to the Eternal God *oneness, understanding, and spirit*. And, similarly, the Muslims ascribe to the Eternal God *oneness, understanding, and soul*—as is evident from their books.⁴³ I have discussed these matters elsewhere.⁴⁴

15 Perhaps, as regards the understanding of our theme-text, you doubt, additionally, that the Word is the Beginning. I reply: As you have heard, the Word is the essential and self-existent Beginning-from-a-Beginning. Its eternity, which is also its essence, is the [Eternal] Logos, or Eternal Rational Principle (*ratio*) of Eternity and of all things enfolded in Eternity. Moreover, there is not anything that is possible-to-be-made for which the Beginning-from-a-Beginning is not the eternal Form of being (*essendi ratio*).⁴⁵ Since whatever things do not exist *per se* are not the cause of themselves and are not the result of chance and luck (which are only accidental causes and are not *per se* and essential causes), it must be the case that they exist from a Cause which is the self-existent Form-of-being of [all] things—even as the Absolute Living-Exemplar, which is also the Eternal Form, is the Cause of all likeness.⁴⁶ By way of illustration: the Form of circle is eternal and existent-*per-se* and absolute,⁴⁷ since it is not contractible or perceptibly representable; but without it no circle can either exist or be understood; and it is the eternal intellectual-exemplar of all perceptible circles whatsoever. In a similar way, whatever at all can exist is eternally present in the Form-of-being of all things, as in its Exemplar-Truth; and that-which-it-is it is through the Form-of-being of itself.

16 Hence, if you take notice: those words are the light of our understanding—those words of the Gospel where Jesus says “[I am] the Beginning, I who, indeed, am speaking unto you.”⁴⁸ For the Word made flesh⁴⁹ speaks; i.e., that Word—who is also God, who is the Beginning—speaks perceptibly. And the following is not difficult to grasp: viz., that the eternal Form-of-being speaks perceptibly in the things that, through it, exist in a perceptible way.⁵⁰ To speak is to reveal or to manifest. Therefore, since everything existent exists, it exists from That which exists *per se* and which is the Form of its substance; [this Form’s] speaking is its revelation, or manifestation, of itself. By way of illustration: Since everything that is made hot becomes hot, initially, from that which is hot *per se*, viz., fire, fire speaks, or reveals, itself in all hot things. Nonetheless, fire reveals itself in different ways in accordance with the differences among the hot things—reveals it-

self more fully in a pure flame than in a smoke-filled flame, and more purely in ignited coal than in hot ashes. In a similar way, Logos speaks in all rational beings, revealing itself more purely in seraphic spirits than in angelic spirits,⁵¹ and more purely in angels than in men, and more purely in men whose conduct is heavenly than in men whose conduct is earthly.⁵² But in Christ, Logos reveals itself beyond all degrees. In Christ, Logos did not speak as in someone other [than itself] but as in the purity of its Beginning—just as if fire were to reveal itself not in some other hot object but, rather, in a most pure flame that existed in the fire by means of an indissoluble union.

17 You might claim: “Since Christ immediately thereafter speaks of His own father (as the Gospel states),⁵³ it is strange that He who acknowledges that He is the Son calls Himself the Beginning.” I reply: Were He to say that He was begun, His statement would not be proper. For since a beginning is not any of the things begun [from it]:⁵⁴ in the divine nature, where the Father gives all things to the Son,⁵⁵ the Father is not something *other* than the Son, and the Son cannot properly be said to be begun, since what is begun *is* something *other* than the Beginning. Instead, just as the Father is the Beginning, so He grants to the Son to be a Beginning. Therefore, the Son is the Beginning-from-a-Beginning, even as He is Light from Light and God from God.⁵⁶

18 Perhaps you wonder, in addition, whether to be *authypostaton*⁵⁷ befits the Word. And it seems [to you] that it does. For in the Gospel there follow [the words] “then you will know that I am.”⁵⁸ Only one who exists *per se* can say truly “I am.”

I reply that human expressions are not precise in their application to God. However, just as Christ spoke in a human way about God, [doing so] because only in a human way can [His meaning] be grasped by men, so too because the Word of God speaks about *Himself*, we must presuppose that those sayings in the Gospel are more precise than all [other sayings about God made] in a human way. Since the Beginning does not exist from anything else, we say that it exists *per se* (for we could not conceive that anything else exists if we did not conceive that the Beginning exists). For the first thing that presents itself to our conception is being; next comes being such and such. And although the Beginning of being is not any of the beings—since a beginning is not any of the things begun [from it]⁵⁹—nevertheless, unless we conceive that the Beginning exists, we cannot form a concept

of it.⁶⁰

- 19** Plato, who saw one being, one power of being, one heaven, and one earth (as if he saw in all these things a single modified and contracted and altered thing), saw the One in itself and as absolute, when he separated and removed all [attributes] from the One. And as the One is thus seen, it is neither being nor not-being, and it neither *is* nor exists nor is existent nor is existent *per se* nor is a beginning—indeed, it is not even one.⁶¹ Rather, the expression “The One is one” would not be suitable, since the copula “is” cannot befit the One. But even if without the copula we say “one One,” the expression would not be suitable, since any expression that cannot be proffered without otherness or duality does not befit the One. Hence, if you take note, [you will see that] the Beginning of all nameable things is unnameable,⁶² since it cannot be any of the things begun [from it itself].⁶³ And for this reason⁶⁴ it also cannot be named “Beginning”. Rather, it is the unnameable Beginning of the nameable beginning, since, being something better, it precedes everything that is in any way nameable. Next, you see that contradictories are denied of the unnameable Beginning, so that (1) it is not the case that it *is* and is not the case that it *is not*, and (2) is not the case that it *both is and is not*, and (3) is not the case that it *either is or is not*.⁶⁵ Rather, none of these expressions attain Him who precedes all things describable.
- 20** Although the foregoing is true and although existing *per se* does not befit the unnameable Beginning (since existing *per se* is not understood as free of duality and division and since the One precedes all otherness), nevertheless to exist *per se* befits no one more truly than it befits that which is the Cause of all existing beings. For in comparison with that Cause none of the things that have been caused exist *per se* or are, *per se*, whatever-they-are. Whom could all words that signify something befit more truly than Him from whom all things have both what they are and what they are named? Which substance is a truer substance than that Substance which gives to every substance its substantial being—even though that “Substance” is better than all nameable substances?⁶⁶
- 21** Plato saw that *per-se*-being exists before all beings that are different from one another.⁶⁷ And, likewise, he saw that *per-se*-man and *per-se*-animal, etc., [exist prior to all individual men and individual animals]. Isn’t it true that all those things which he saw to exist *per se*, he saw not as present in something else but as present in himself con-

ceptually (as is touched upon in the preceding discourse⁶⁸)? So too, those things which he saw to be present conceptually in himself (present as in the source of conceptual or rational entities, which are likenesses of real beings) he saw to exist essentially, and above himself, in the Creator of beings,⁶⁹ even as they existed in him conceptually and as in a creator of concepts. Hence, in the present context the word “himself” or “itself” signifies all intellect, which is either Creator-intellect or assimilator-intellect.⁷⁰ The Creator-intellect makes-to-be; the assimilator-intellect understands. The Creator-intellect sees within itself all things; i.e., it sees itself as the creating or forming Exemplar of all things; hence, for it to understand is for it to create. The assimilator-intellect, which is a likeness of the Creator-intellect, sees within itself all things; i.e., it sees itself as the conceptual or befiguring exemplar of all things; and for it to understand is for it to assimilate.⁷¹ Hence, just as the Creator-intellect is the Form of forms⁷² or the formal Representation of species or the Locus of formable species, so our intellect is a form of forms⁷³ or an assimilation of assimilable things⁷⁴ or a locus of formable species or of formable assimilations.

22 Moreover, in order that you may become well-versed in these matters, consider carefully that Christ said “Before Abraham was made, I am.”⁷⁵ And elsewhere [He used the expressions] “before the creation of the world”⁷⁶ and “before the world was made”⁷⁷ and “before all things,”⁷⁸ and so on; for He exists *per se* prior to all being-made. For how could He be seen to exist *per se* subsequently to what-is-possible-to-be-made? Who would have brought into being what-is-possible-to-be-made? Wouldn’t it have been one who exists actually? Therefore, that which actually exists *per se* is rightly seen as prior to whatever is possible to be made. But how can it possibly be seen *prior to* what is possible to be made? Isn’t it the case that what-was-going-to-be was always beforehand going to be? Therefore, the possibility-of-being-made always accompanies what exists *per se*. Hence, since that which is made is temporal, the possibility of being temporally made accompanies eternally that which exists *per se*. But that which is seen to be eternally present with what exists *per se* is surely eternal. Now, there is not anything prior to the eternal. Therefore, [what accompanies that which exists *per se*] is likewise existent *per se*. Therefore, that which is made in the order of time is existent *per se* in eternity.⁷⁹ By way of illustration: When we say that we are going to make something, surely before this thing is made visible to others, it is pres-

ent in us, and we see it in ourselves, and that which is present mentally in our mind's word, or concept, and which exists invisibly for all others, is made temporally visible.⁸⁰

- 23 It is evident that all things exist from the Eternal. In the Eternal all things are the Eternal, which exists *per se* and from which derive whatever things have been made. All things temporal are from the timeless Eternal, even as all things nameable are from the Unnameable Eternal, and so on. The Eternal is before all ages. Now, before Before there is no before. Absolute Before is Eternity.⁸¹ Before the world was made, it is seen beforehand but is not at all seen before Before. Therefore, before the world was made, the world is seen—in Before—as not-made and, consequently, as existing *per se*.⁸² Therefore, the world that is seen before it was made is the Before qua existing *per se*; and the Before is the world qua existing *per se*. Hence, before the world was made, the world qua existing *per se* is the Before. Therefore, whatever things have been made have been made from the Before as it exists *per se*. The situation is as if one were to say “before the house was made” Assuredly, the house that was to be made is already named beforehand, when one says “before the house was made” Therefore, everything that is made was possible to be made⁸³ and was named beforehand. Therefore, before it was made it was present in the Word⁸⁴—just as [we read] in the verse “Let light be made, and light was made.”⁸⁵ The light that was made was present (already before it was made) in the Word, because its name was “light”; and light, qua made, did not have a name other than as it had before it was made. But because light, before it was made, was light which was to be made, it was existent *per se*.⁸⁶ Therefore, before everything that is made there is That which exists *per se*, even as before things temporal there is the Eternal.
- 24 However, Proclus maintains that the name “*authypostaton*” befits the First only qua Cause-of-existents-*per se* (e.g., qua Cause of man that exists *per se*, because self-existent man is eternal).⁸⁷ Proclus calls this Cause *the One*, i.e., the Ruler over all things and the God of gods. For he claims that specific forms⁸⁸ and other things which he posits as eternal—and, accordingly, as existing *per se*—(1) are enfolded in the First as in their Cause and Fount and (2) are unfolded in eternity: in the eternal world they are unfolded eternally and intelligibly, even as in the perceptible world they are unfolded temporally and perceptibly. And just as Proclus denies that the One (which he asserts to be

all things insofar as it is the Cause of them all) fails to exist *per se* but [affirms] that it is better than, and prior to, everything that exists *per se*,⁸⁹ so [he maintains] something similar regarding all [other characteristics]. For example, just as he states that the One does not *exist* but is before all existent things, and just as he states that the One does not *exist in space or time* but precedes all things spatial and temporal, so [he makes a similar point] regarding all [other characteristics], since the One is prior to every affirmation and to every negation. And in this regard Proclus speaks correctly, because the One is prior to and better than all things with respect to which affirmative or negative statements can be made.⁹⁰

- 25 But (with the exception of the One's three *hypostases*)⁹¹ Proclus is mistaken in saying that there can be a plurality of things co-eternal with the One. For the Eternal is the same thing as Eternity, which is unrepeatable,⁹² even as is the One. And so, like the One, the Eternal cannot be partaken of;⁹³ and, consequently, it is not any the less one and is not replicable. Hence, many men are seen to have erred as regards Eternity, which they have thought of as successive duration, albeit infinite duration. But he who considers the Beginning to be Eternity and who considers that in the Beginning, qua Beginning and Cause, all things are the one Beginning: he sees where the truth lies and sees all that Parmenides concludes by way of his reasoning—[sees it], that is, (1) by denying all things of the Beginning and (2) by affirming of the Beginning that it is not one or another of, or both of, [two] opposite [characteristics] and (3) by affirming that there is not a plurality of existents *per se*. For [if there were a plurality of them,] they would not partake of the One—in which case they would in that respect be similar [to one another] and, on the other hand, would not be similar [to one another], because they would not partake of the One. Or else, if they did not partake of the One, they would not exist *per se* but would exist through the One, of which they would partake.⁹⁴ Therefore, [in either case] there would not be a plurality of beings existing *per se*. Accordingly, the many things that have been made are that-which-they-are from That which exists *per se*. Therefore, they partake of the One,⁹⁵ since there cannot be many things without the One, of which they partake. For [otherwise] it would follow that contradictory statements are true at the same time, as was just set forth.
- 26 Earlier on,⁹⁶ I said that no name befits That which exists *per se*, since it is unnameable, indescribable, and ineffable; even the name

“One” does not properly befit it.⁹⁷ However, since there cannot be a plurality of things that exist *per se*, we conceive of [the Self-Existent] as we do of that which is one. And “One” is that by which we name it, in accordance with our concept; and we say that it is the one Cause-of-all-things, which enfolds within itself the specific forms of all things and which is exalted above all contradiction, positing, oppositeness, affirmation, and negation; for these [approaches] do not arrive at the Indescribable, though among things effable they do divide the true from the false. But there is no [proper] discourse regarding the One, because the One is undifferentiable. Hence, Plato said that both affirmations and negations are untruthful as regards the One.⁹⁸ Therefore, the One is not comprehensible by any sensing, any reasoning, any opining, any knowing, or any naming. Nonetheless, we *say* that [the names] “One” and “Good” more nearly befit God (who is the Cause of all things) because the unitary and the good are something desired by us all, even as not-being and evil are something shunned by us all.⁹⁹ Now, we say that God is the One than which nothing better can be conceived; and it does not enter into our mind that there is anything better than that which is desired by us all. Hence, we say that God is the One and the Good. And in God these are not different [from each other] but are the One, which Proclus calls *autounum*.¹⁰⁰

- 27 Moreover, we do not name God *the One* as being something known [to us], but we do so because the unitary is something desired prior to all knowing.¹⁰¹ Therefore, our comprehension of God is not like our comprehension of knowable things, on which, once they are known, names are imposed. Rather, the intellect, desiring what is unknown and being unable to comprehend it, imposes the name “One,” surmising to some extent the basis for this name—surmising it from the unfailing desire of all [creatures] for the unitary. Now, the reason that God is not approached intellectually was said by Proclus to be that, were such the case, only intellectual natures would be borne unto Him;¹⁰² for the non-intellectual natures would not desire Him. But since God is that for the sake of which all things are that which they are, He should be desired *naturally* by all things, as are the unitary and the good, which all things desire and which pervade all beings.¹⁰³
- 28 Notice further: there cannot be a multitude [of things] existing utterly apart from the One, as was evident.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, the Basis (*hypostasis*) of multitude is the One—but not the *one* that is partaken of and that is correlated with a multitude. For such a *one* does not exist

in itself but exists in something else,¹⁰⁵ viz., in a multitude. Now, everything that exists in something else exists from that which exists in itself; for that which exists in itself is prior to that which exists in something else; and in this something else it exists only otherwise [than as it exists in itself].¹⁰⁶ But existing-otherwise presupposes existing-in-itself. Therefore, the basis which exists in something else exists from that [Basis] which exists in itself. Likewise, the basis of what is correlated [with a multitude] exists from that [Basis] which is exalted [above all other things]; and the basis of what can be partaken of exists from that [Basis] which cannot be partaken of. Therefore, whatever presents itself for our consideration is either the One that is exalted [above all other things] or the *one* that is correlated with a multitude. But [the *one*] that is correlated has its basis only from [the One] that is exalted. Therefore, the One that is exalted is the Basis of all bases. If it does not exist, then there is not anything existent; and if it does exist, then all things are that which they are; and if it both exists and does not exist, then all else both exists and does not exist.

29 Therefore, since beings desire to exist, because to exist is a good thing: they desire the One without which they cannot exist.¹⁰⁷ But they cannot grasp what that [One] which they desire is. For each of the beings is one being by partaking of a oneness that can be partaken of—a oneness which derives its basis from the One which cannot be partaken of. But that which can be partaken of cannot comprehend That which cannot be partaken of (just as that which is graspable cannot comprehend that which is not graspable, and just as what is caused cannot comprehend its cause, and just as that which exists secondarily cannot comprehend that which exists primarily.) Although [each being] cannot comprehend That which it desires so ardently, nevertheless it is not totally ignorant of it but knows most certainly that That which it desires exists.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the intellectual nature, which knows that That [which it desires] exists and is incomprehensible, sees that it itself is more perfect the more incomprehensible it knows to be That [which it desires]. For the Incomprehensible is approached by way of this knowledge of one's ignorance.¹⁰⁹

30 Parmenides, noting the foregoing matters and looking unto the One that is exalted, said that there is One Being. For He saw that all multitude is enfolded in One Being. And since the Cause¹¹⁰ of multitude is Oneness, without which there cannot exist a multitude, Parmenides, considering the causal power of Oneness,¹¹¹ professed that there is

[but] One Being and considered all multitude to be present in the One Being. Zeno, seeing in the multitude of beings only One Being that was partaken of [variously], denied that there are many things which are beings. For insofar as they are many they do not exist utterly apart from the One; therefore, they exist on account of the One. Therefore, only if they partake of One Being are there many things which are beings. Consequently, the One [Being] is their Basis.¹¹² Zeno did not intend to say the same thing as did Parmenides, for he did not look unto the One that is exalted, as did Parmenides, but, rather, looked unto the one that is partaken of.¹¹³ However, before dying, Zeno came close to [making] Parmenides' assertion; for he saw that multitude is present in the One with respect to cause,¹¹⁴ but he was unable to keep the One only in multitude.¹¹⁵ Indeed, with respect to itself, the One exists prior to multitude; but that which multitude is, it is completely from the One.¹¹⁶ But if anyone considers that every oneness has a multitude conjoined with it and that every multitude is held together by a oneness that befits it, then he sees, as present together, the many beings and the One (seeing the many in the One, and the One in the many); without this [togetherness] there would be neither order nor specific form nor anything except confusion and disarray.¹¹⁷ Moreover, it does not matter if in the way in which we have just spoken about Oneness, you speak about Equality—as you know from the preceding discourse.¹¹⁸ For Equality unifies and can be called the Cause of union. And just [as the foregoing considerations hold true of] the One, so [they also hold true of] Goodness and Justice and the like.

- 31** Notice, furthermore, that some men say of duality that it is both a oneness and a multitude. For their statement is true in the following way: Just as that which is the cause of union is, with respect to cause, a oneness, so with respect to cause duality is a multitude. For duality is everywhere the mother of multitude.¹¹⁹ But duality does not exist utterly apart from the one. For whatever is subsequent to the one partakes of the one. (All later things partake of earlier things, but not vice versa.)¹²⁰ Duality is not the first oneness, preceding all other things and exalted above all other things; rather, it is a oneness that is partaken of. For duality has from oneness the fact that it is a oneness; and, thus, it is somehow a oneness and duality. And in this way it is seen to be a oneness [and]¹²¹ a multitude. But duality is a oneness qua partaker-of-oneness, and it is a multitude qua cause-of-multitude. I construe similarly that which certain others have said: viz., that duality is neither a oneness nor a multitude.

- 32 However, Plato posited two beginnings that are subsequent to the One: viz., the finite and the infinite—as, by way of illustration, number is (subsequently to the *one*) from the finite and the infinite. For if you consider a number’s oneness as separate from the number, [you will see that] it is the monad¹²² and is not a number but is the beginning of number.¹²³ If you consider multitude as existing utterly apart from oneness, [you will see that] it is a kind of infinity. Therefore, number is seen to be constituted from oneness and multitude as from the finite and the infinite. A similar point holds regarding [the constitution of] every being. However, Plato takes infinity for something boundless and confused yet suited to being bounded and delimited; and he takes the finite for form that delimits and bounds the infinity.
- 33 Moreover, if someone observes quite closely, [he will see that] the position of Melissus is not as absurd as Aristotle made it out to be.¹²⁴ For in our every consideration nothing other than infinity is seen: viz., a Delimiting Infinity and a delimitable infinity. Delimiting Infinity is a Limit-of-which-there-is-no-limit; and it is a Beginning that exists *per se* and that enfolds every limit; and it is God, [who is] prior to every [finite] being. On the other hand, the delimitable infinity is a lack of every boundary and of every determinateness—a lack that is delimitable by the Infinite Limit;¹²⁵ and the delimitable infinity is subsequent¹²⁶ to every [finite] being. Therefore, when the First Infinity delimits the second,¹²⁷ finite being arises from the Infinite Beginning, i.e., arises from the First [Infinity], which is *more than* [finite] being, since it precedes [finite] being. [Finite] being does not arise from the second [infinity], since the second infinity is subsequent to [finite] being. In the First Infinity all things determinable are present actually; in the second infinity all things determinable are present with respect to the omnipotence of the First Infinity, just as we say that all things can be created from nothing by the Almighty.¹²⁸ [We do] not [mean] that in nothing all things are present in potency¹²⁹—unless “potency” refers to *omnipotency*, where the possibility-of-making coincides with the possibility-of-being-made.¹³⁰ You might conceive of the nothing [in question] as the material utilized by the Omnipotent Form—material which He forms as He wills to. And [you might conceive of] the material utilized by a non-omnipotent form, i.e., by a finite power, to be a material that is not nothing but is a more formable or a less resistant material, viz., the possibility of being *that* thing which the form can form—in other words, a material that is receptive and compliant, so that it merits such a form. This [is what] Plato

said—viz., that forms are given in accordance with the merits of the material.¹³¹

34 Taking up again, then, the points already touched upon—viz., that it is evident that the Beginning is triune and is the Eternal—I say that from the triune Beginning this world is what it is. And (as was evident) it is *not* the case that there are *many* Beginnings. *Not-many* can be conceived only as one. Therefore, prior to this world and the many, there is the Beginning, which is not many [Beginnings]. Therefore, just as before the many there is the not-many, so before being there is not-being, and before intellect there is not-intellect, and, in general, before everything effable there is the not-effable. The beginning of any affirmation is a negation.¹³² For a beginning is *not* any of the things begun [from it].¹³³ But since everything caused exists more truly in its cause than in itself, affirmation exists in a better way in negation, since negation is its beginning. Therefore, the Beginning exists before both the maximum and the minimum of all affirmations. By way of illustration: not-being, the beginning of being, is seen as so prior to being that, by means of the coincidence of maximal [being] and minimal [being], it is seen as superexalted. For it precedes being that is both minimally and maximally being (in other words, [precedes being that is] not-being in such a way that it is maximally being).¹³⁴ The Beginning of being is not utterly not-being but is Not-being in the aforementioned manner.¹³⁵ For when I look unto being's Beginning, which is not something begun, I see that it is *minimally being*.¹³⁶ When I look unto being's Beginning, in which what-is-begun exists in a better way than it exists in itself, I see that the Beginning is *maximally being*. Now, because the same Beginning is ineffably above all opposites and all things effable, I see it—prior to both maximal [being] and minimal [being]—to be elevated above whatever things can be spoken of. Hence, all that is affirmed of being is, likewise, denied of the Beginning, in the aforesaid manner. But every creature is a being. Therefore, the Not-many, which is the Beginning of all things, enfolds all things, just as negation is said to be rife with affirmation—e.g., just as “not-being” signifies “not-to-exist-in-the-way-signified-by-‘being’ but to exist in a *better* way.”

35 Therefore, the ineffable Beginning is not named either *Beginning* or *Many* or *Not-many* or *One* or by any other name whatsoever but, before all things, is these things unnameably. For everything nameable or befigurable or representable presupposes otherness and multitude

and is not the Beginning; for Oneness is the Beginning of all multitude.¹³⁷ A plurality of things cannot be eternal, for the Eternal is Eternity, as was stated.¹³⁸ Now, the Beginning is the Eternal. The unreplicable Beginning is not changeable or partakeable-of, because it is Eternity. Therefore, nothing in this world bears its likeness, since the Beginning is not representable or imaginable. The world is a befiguring of the Unbefigurable and is a representation of the Unrepresentable.¹³⁹ The perceptible world is a befiguring of the imperceptible world; and the temporal world is a befiguring of the eternal and timeless world. The befiguring world is an image of the true, unbefigurable world.

36 When by means of contradictories¹⁴⁰ I see the Beginning, I see in it all things. For being and not-being encompass all things, since everything that can be spoken of or thought of either exists or does not exist. Therefore, the Beginning, which is prior to contradiction, enfolds all that contradiction encompasses. The Beginning is seen by means of the equality of opposites.¹⁴¹ Absolute Equality of being and of not-being cannot be partaken of, since a participant is something *other* than what is partaken of [by it].¹⁴² Therefore, equality that can be partaken of only in different ways by something else is not Equality that is the Beginning, which is superexalted above the equal and the unequal. Therefore, no thing at all can in equal measure¹⁴³ both be and not be. Hence, two contradictories cannot both be predicated truly of the same thing. Therefore, every creature partakes—with a degree of otherness—of the unpartakeable Beginning, even as unpartakeable Equality is partaken of with a degree of likeness.¹⁴⁴ Since a likeness of Equality is not Equality but is [only] its likeness, it cannot be a maximal likeness (than which there cannot be a greater likeness) or a minimal likeness (than which there cannot be a lesser likeness); for, [were it minimal or maximal], it would not be a likeness but would be either nothing or Equality itself. Therefore, Equality can be partaken of [only] with a degree of likeness that can be other or different, greater or lesser.¹⁴⁵

37 Since creatures are nothing¹⁴⁶ and have their entire being from their Cause,¹⁴⁷ their truth¹⁴⁸ is in their Beginning; for the Beginning is the Truth of all creatures. Therefore, this world (which our Teacher¹⁴⁹ calls created, when He says “before the creation of the world”¹⁵⁰) is not Truth; rather, its Beginning is Truth.¹⁵¹ Accordingly, in the created world nothing is found to be precisely true: there is no precise

equality or precise inequality, or precise likeness or precise unlikeness. For the world cannot grasp the precise Truth, as our Teacher states of the Spirit of Truth.¹⁵² Therefore, in the Beginning, which is Truth, all things are Eternal Truth itself.¹⁵³ Because our world, which was created by the Eternal World (i.e., created by the Eternal Beginning), is not situated in truth but is situated in the fallibility of change: it is situated not amid goodness (which befits God alone, i.e., the Creating World alone) but amid evil.¹⁵⁴

38 Someone might say that the world encompasses *all* things since it (1) is seen *before* its creation and (2) is seen *as* created. Before its creation and as present in its Beginning, the world was the Word [of God];¹⁵⁵ as created, the world was created by the Word. [The situation is] like [that of] (1) a [mental] word before its [perceptible] representation and (2) [the same] word as [perceptibly] represented. For when the intellect wants to manifest its mental word, whereby it understands itself, it does so by means of speech or writing or some other perceptible representation. Therefore, the word as prior to its [perceptible] representation is mental; but [the mental word] qua [perceptibly] represented takes on a perceptible form, and in this way what is imperceptible is made perceptible. Yet, the perceptible word has no comparative relation [*proportio*] to the imperceptible word. In some such way, the created world is related to the Creating World.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, it is evident that the Beginning of all things is not either something *other* or something *the same* in relation to its creatures (just as the [mental, perceptibly] unrepresented word is neither *other* nor *the same* in relation to the [mental word qua perceptibly] represented. For the First Beginning is prior to all otherness and identity.

The nature [of color] is said not to be colored either white or black—not that it is *deprived* of these colors, as might be a material object, but because of its excellence,¹⁵⁷ since it is the cause of these colors. In a similar way, we do not ascribe to the soul speech and silence—not because the soul is without speech and silence in the way in which a piece of wood is, but [because it is without them] in the way in which a cause is none of the things caused [by it].¹⁵⁸ For the soul causes speech and silence in the animal [body]. Similarly, we do not ascribe to the One Beginning [any of the properties] that proceed from it. And the One Beginning, which gives to all beings their basis,¹⁵⁹ is not something either *other* or *the same*¹⁶⁰ but is something superexalted because of excellence. And with regard to all the things created by the Creator: the Creator is not the same thing as His

creatures, even as a cause is not the same thing as what is caused [by it].¹⁶¹ Yet, the Creator is not so far removed [from His creation] that He is something *other*. For [if that were the case], then of the Creator and His creation, which together would constitute a number of things, there would have to be a beginning, since of every multitude a oneness is the beginning.¹⁶² And so, the First Beginning¹⁶³ would not be the *First* Beginning. The Apostle Paul made this point when he said that God is not far removed from us, because in God we exist and move.¹⁶⁴

39 We also say that the very first monad is unnumbered—not as is matter (which admits of being numbered but is boundless) but as a monad, which enfolds within itself, and produces, all numbers and all kinds of numbers and which is not something *other* than, or something *the same as*, any kind of number whatsoever. In like manner, as much as our ability allows us to, we make a kind of figurative concept of the One Beginning. Nonetheless, [our concept] falls exceedingly short of precision, since the One Beginning, which enfolds and unfolds (or produces) all multitude, is unreplicated.¹⁶⁵ If you add anything whatsoever to the [concept of] One Beginning (e.g., by calling it One *Being*),¹⁶⁶ the [concept of] One Beginning does not remain [the concept of the] unqualifiedly One but passes over into [the concept of] multitude. The many things which are beings have from the one First Beginning the fact that they are many; and they have from being the fact that they are beings. And likewise, all multitude, insofar as it is multitude, is from the One;¹⁶⁷ and contracted multitude has its contractedness from the contracted one—just as the many beings are both from the One and from one being. From the One, being has whatever it is; for if the One is removed, nothing at all remains. And if you consider correctly, [you will see that] addition to *the one* is not addition to the superexalted One but is a mode-of-being (i.e., a being-of-beings)—a mode-of-being of *the one*, which can be partaken of and which is contractible to variation, just as I said earlier¹⁶⁸ about Equality, which cannot be partaken of and about its likeness, which can be partaken of.

Thus, *being itself* is a universal mode-of-being of the oneness that can be partaken of; and *life* is a more specific and more perfect mode-of-being of the oneness that can be partaken of; and *intellect* is a still more perfect mode-[of-being of the oneness that can be partaken of].¹⁶⁹ Now, contractible oneness¹⁷⁰ is a likeness and an image of Absolute Oneness. Contractible oneness is only a representation, or a rev-

elation, of Absolute Oneness—just as indivisibility that can be represented, viz., a point, is related to the indivisible that is not at all representable, viz., the Absolute One. It is evident that the one being (1) is to the unqualifiedly One as is a multitude and (2) is to a multitude-of-beings as is a monad;¹⁷¹ in oneness-of-being there is seen a one that is contracted existently, and this [contractedness] is not possible apart from multitude. But the One Beginning is exalted, and uncontracted,¹⁷² above all multitude. [Now,] oneness-of-being gathers into itself the entire multitude of beings, for there can be no multitude of beings utterly apart from oneness-of-being; and oneness-of-being is unfolded in multitude. [A similar point holds true] regarding the life of living [beings], regarding the intellect of those [beings] who have intellect, and regarding all [other forms of being], since all multitude partakes of oneness and is united to its own monad.¹⁷³ But the multitude of monadic onenesses is enfolded in the very first One.

- 40 The Platonists thought that the One Beginning is God, who is the very First and the King of all things. And they thought that among all beings there are other gods, who partake of Oneness in a primary way. They ascribed to the very first God universal foresight; but to the other gods they ascribed partial foresight—just as we read that angels are appointed over the domains and that to them is given the power to harm the earth and the sea.¹⁷⁴ The Platonists also thought that the gods are in charge of the mechanical arts, as, for example, Vulcan is in charge of the art of iron-forging. But they acknowledged that all the gods—whether intelligential or celestial or mondial—have nothing except what was given to them by the very first God, the King of all, whom the ancients called Jove,¹⁷⁵ who, in their day, was most renowned as King of all. Hence, they said that all things were full of Jove, and they traced all things back to the One, because a multitude of princes¹⁷⁶ would be evil if it existed utterly apart from Oneness. But Oneness gives to every domain subsistent being, whereas division brings devastation, as the Prince over all things, viz., our King, the Messiah, teaches us.¹⁷⁷ Assuredly, if those [beings] were gods, they would be new and recent and created gods, who would not have existed before the creation of the world and who would exist on account of¹⁷⁸ the world. But since the world exists on account of God, we say with Paul that there is only one God.¹⁷⁹ For although there are those who are called gods (whether gods in Heaven or on earth) on the presumption that they *are* many gods and many lords, nevertheless for us there is [but] one God, who is Father, from whom all things exist and in whom

we exist. And there is one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things exist and through whom we exist.¹⁸⁰ He it is of whom [it is spoken] in our theme-text,¹⁸¹ who is the Beginning and who also speaks. To Him has been given all power that is in Heaven and on earth.¹⁸² To Him are subject all those created gods, or powers, of whom the afore-said [ancients] spoke. For He is the Word of the Living God,¹⁸³ through which Word all things exist.¹⁸⁴ In Him are hidden all the treasures of knowledge.¹⁸⁵ Just as through Him alone we came into existence and came into [this] temporal world, [so through Him alone] we will be able to be led unto endless existence and perpetual life. [We can be led] by means of the way which the Beginning showed [us] by deed and word—the Beginning,¹⁸⁶ viz., Jesus Christ, forever blessed,¹⁸⁷ who holds the pre-eminence in all respects.¹⁸⁸

ABBREVIATIONS

- Ap.* *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* [Vol. II (edited by Raymond Klibansky) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Leipzig/Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1932)].
- CA* *Cribratio Alkorani* [Vol. VIII (edited by Ludwig Hagemann) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1986)].
- DB* *De Beryllo* [Vol. XI, 1 (edited by Hans G. Senger and Karl Bormann) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1988)].
- DC* *De Coniecturis* [Vol. III (edited by Josef Koch and Karl Bormann) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1972)].
- DI* *De Docta Ignorantia* [Latin-German edition: *Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues in deutscher Übersetzung*, published by F. 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].
- DM* *Idiota de Mente* [Latin text contained in J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge* (Minneapolis: Banning, 1996)].
- DP* *De Possess* [Latin text as contained in J. Hopkins, *A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa* (Minneapolis: Banning, 3rd ed. 1986)].
- DVD* *De Visione Dei* [Latin text as contained in J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism: Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study of De Visione Dei* (Minneapolis: Banning, 2nd ed. 1988)].
- MFCG* *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft*, edited by Klaus Kremer and Klaus Reinhardt. A continuing series. Volumes I-XVII published in Mainz, Germany by Matthias-Grünewald Verlag. Volumes XVIII and higher published in Trier by Paulinus-Verlag.
- NA* *De Li Non Aliud* [Latin text as contained in J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-other: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Li Non Aliud* (Minneapolis: Banning, 3rd ed. 1987)].
- PG* *Patrologia Graeca*, edited by J.-P. Migne. Series published in Paris.
- PL* *Patrologia Latina*, edited by J.-P. Migne. Series published in Paris.
- SCG* Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* [in Vol. II, edited by R. Busa (1980), of *Index Thomisticus. Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog Verlag].

- ST Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* [in Vol. II (1980) of *Index Thomisticus*, *ibid.*].
- VS *De Venatione Sapientiae* [Vol. XII (edited by Raymond Klibansky and Hans G. Senger) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1982)].

PRAENOTANDA

1. (a) In the English translations brackets are used to indicate words supplied by the translator to complete the meaning of a Latin phrase, clause, or sentence. (b) When a clarifying Latin word is inserted into the translation, brackets (rather than parentheses) are used if the case ending or the verb-form has been modified.
2. All references to Nicholas of Cusa's works are to the Latin texts in the following editions (unless explicitly indicated otherwise):
 - A. Heidelberg Academy edition of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Felix Meiner Verlag: Hamburg): *De Concordantia Catholica*; *De Coniecturis*; *De Deo Abscondito*; *De Quaerendo Deum*; *De Filiatione Dei*; *De Dato Patris Luminum*; *Coniectura de Ultimis Diebus*; *De Genesi*; *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*; *De Pace Fidei*; *De Beryllo* (1988 edition); *Cribratio Alkorani*; *De Principio*; *De Theologicis Complementis*; *De Venatione Sapientiae*; *De Apice Theoriae*.; *Sermones* (Haubst's numbering of the sermons is given in roman numerals; Koch's numbering is given in arabic numerals.)
 - B. Texts authorized by the Heidelberg Academy and published in the Latin-German editions of Felix Meiner Verlag's series *Philosophische Bibliothek*: *De Docta Ignorantia*.
 - C. Editions by J. Hopkins: *De Aequalitate* (1998); *Idiotae de Sapientia, de Mente, de Staticis Experimentis* (1996); *De Visione Dei* (1988); *De Possest* (1986); *De Li Non Aliud* (1987); *Compendium* (1996). Except in the case of *De Aequalitate*, the left-hand margin numbers correspond to the margin numbers in the Heidelberg Academy editions; line numbers and some paragraph-breaks differ.
 - D. Paris edition of the *Opera Omnia Cusani* (1514): *De Ludo Globi*.
 The references given for some of these treatises indicate book and chapter, for others margin number and line, and 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 of the edition in the series *Philosophische Bibliothek* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag).
3. The folio numbers in the right-hand margin of the Latin text of *De Aequalitate* correspond to the folios in Codex Latinus Vaticanus 1245.

4. References to the Bible are given in terms of the Douay version. References to chapters and verses of the Psalms include, in parentheses, the King James' locations.
5. Italics are used sparingly, so that, as a rule, foreign expressions are italicized only when they are short. All translations are mine unless otherwise specifically indicated.
6. Citations of Nicholas's sermons are given in terms of the sermon numbers assigned by Rudolf Haubst in fascicle 0 [=zero], Vol. XVI of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1991).

NOTES TO *DE PRINCIPIO*

1. This work was completed in Rome on June 9, 1459. The manuscripts bear no title. But given the work's subject-matter, Josef Koch and others have called it *De Principio*, a title altogether appropriate. At 21:4 and again at 30:21 Nicholas alludes to both *De Principio* and *De Aequalitate* as *sermones*. However, the word "sermo" means not only *sermon* but also *discourse*; and, indeed, the two works are rightly categorized as discourses rather than as sermons, in spite of their having a theme-text. The critical edition of the Latin text [*Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*, Vol. X, 2b, edited by Karl Bormann and Heide D. Riemann (Hamburg: Meiner, 1988)] makes use of three manuscripts: Codex Latinus Vaticanus 1245; Codex Latinus Ashburnham 1374 (Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence, Italy); and Codex Latinus Toletanus 19-26 (the Cathedral Library in Toledo, Spain). Concerning the Toledo ms. see, above, n. 6 of Notes to the Preface.
2. In the Greek New Testament the term translated into Latin as "*principium*" is τὴν ἀρχήν (accusative case).
3. Augustine, *Tractatus in Joannis Evangelium* 38.11 (PL 35:1681).
4. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1961; reprint of the Paris, 1864, edition edited by Victor Cousin), III, 785:4 - 786:17. See *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, translated by Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 158-159. Nicholas had at his disposal a copy of the Latin translation (of *In Platonis Parmenidem*) made by William of Moerbeke. This copy is Codex Latinus Cusanus 186 in his Hospice Library at Bernkastel-Kues, Germany. It contains glosses in Nicholas's own hand. See Raymond Klibansky's *Ein PROKLOS-Fund und seine Bedeutung* [Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse, 1928/29 (5. Abhandlung)]. See also *Cusanus-Texte. III. Marginalien. 2. Proclus Latinus. Die Exzerpte und Randnoten des Nikolaus von Kues zu den lateinischen Übersetzungen der Proclus-Schriften. 2.2. Expositio in Parmenidem Platonis*, edited by Karl Bormann [Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse, 1986].
5. Contrast *VS* 3 (8:4-5), where Nicholas is not speaking of that which exists absolutely *per se*.
6. The term "*authypostaton*" (in Greek τὸ αὐθυπόστατον) is drawn from Proclus. See the reference in n. 4 above. The *authypostaton* is the self-existent, the existent *per se*.
7. This is a point made by Proclus. See the passage cited in n. 4 above.
8. See n. 4 above.

9. See n. 4 above.
10. Luke 12:25.
11. I Corinthians 3:7.
12. See, below, section 39:15-17.
13. Luke 10:42. This text is cited throughout the Middle Ages. (See, for example, Anselm's *Proslogion* 23) and even earlier [e.g., Augustine, *Sermo* 103.3.4 (*PL* 38:614-615); *Sermo* 255.6.6 (*PL* 38:1189)].
14. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), II, 726:33-41. Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, p. 104. Cf. Cusa, *VS* 22 (67:2-7).
15. The single quotes used here indicate that the wording is a paraphrase of Proclus's text and not a direct quotation.
16. See Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), II, 725:19-39 and 726:41 - 727:8. Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, pp. 103 and 104. Cusa, *VS* 21 (61:1-4).
17. See n. 13 above.
18. *De Principio* 39:18-21. *VS* 4 (10:6-11). *VS* 6 (15:9). *VS* 8 (20:11 - 21:6). *VS* 10 (28:5-7). *VS* 16 (48:5-10). *VS* 21 (60:6-12). *VS* 31 (93:8-16). *VS* 38 (112:12-14). See, below, n. 274 of Notes to *De Venatione Sapientiae*. See also *De Apice Theoriae* 5:3.
19. At *De Principio* 8:9 "Undo" is obviously a misprint for "Unde".
20. The Absolute One is Oneness itself, or the One itself. Proclus, *In Platonis Theologiam* I, 4 [Vol. I, p. 18, lines 13-24] of the Greek text printed in Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne*, 5 vols., text edited and translated into French by H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1968-1987). Cf. *The Six Books of Proclus on the Theology of Plato*, translated by Thomas Taylor (London, 2 vols., 1816), Vol. I, p. 11. Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), VI, 1096:16-29. Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, p. 443.
21. *DI* I, 11 (31:4-6). *DI* I, 22 (68:13-14). *DP* 28:1-3. Proclus, *In Platonis Theologiam*, *op. cit.* (n. 20 above), III, 21 (Saffrey and Westerink Greek text, Vol. III, p. 78, lines 10-14. Thomas Taylor translation, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 204).
22. *DP* 7:3-6 and *DI* II, 3 (110:12-13) respectively.
23. Deuteronomy 6:4.
24. John 8:54.
25. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), VI, 1109:15-16: "τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ ἔν οὐδεν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἢ αὐτοθεότης" Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, p. 454.
26. See n. 6 above. God is better than what is self-existent; yet, He is called Self-Existent, *faute de mieux*. Cf. the last sentence of *De Principio* 34.
27. *De Principio* 20 and 24 and 26-27.
28. God is not less perfect than is a mind that understands itself. So Nicholas does not refuse to ascribe understanding to God. But he ascribes it (metaphorically) *per viam eminentiae*, while claiming that we cannot conceive positively of what God's understanding is like, because it is not like anything in our possible experience or imagination.
29. "Et ideo rationem sui seu diffinitionem seu logon de se generat" (9:2-3). The *ratio sui seu diffinitio* is the Logos, or second member of the Trinity. Terms such as "ratio" have many different nuances in English translation, not to mention differ-

ent meanings. I here translate it as “Rational Principle,” though it might be rendered in other ways as well. Cf. n. 45 below. See also, above, n. 32 of Notes to *De Aequalitate*.

30. *NA* 1 (4:12-15).

31. *DP* 40:13-22. *CA* II, 6 (102).

32. John 5:26.

33. The reference is to the Father and the Son. The Son is eternally begotten from the Father. Cf. *VS* 31 (93:1-6).

34. Namely, the Holy Spirit.

35. “The foregoing statement ...”: viz., the statement that the Beginning is trine.

36. The theme-text is the text quoted at the outset of the discourse, viz., John 8:25.

37. Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae* V, 6 (*PL* 63:858A): “Aeternitas igitur est, interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio.”

38. Forms, such as the form of humanity, are limiting principles.

39. As Nicholas often repeats, following Proclus: the beginning of all multitude is a oneness. (Hence, if there are several trinities, there must be a single trinity of which they commonly partake.) *De Principio* 30:3 and 35:5 and 39:12. *DP* 46:8-9. *VS* 21 (59:10). See n. 110 and n. 116 below. See, below, n. 165 of Notes to *De Venatione Sapientiae*.

40. “... the eternal man ...”: i.e., the (Platonic) Form of man.

41. “... say this same thing ...”: i.e., say that the First Cause is trine and one.

42. That is, the First Cause is the ultimate *efficient*, *formal*, and *final* Cause of the universe. *DB* 17 and 35.

43. Nicholas is saying that Jews and Muslims adhere to an implicit trinitarian doctrine.

44. *PF* 9. *CA* II, 5.

45. The expression “*ratio essendi*” means *Form of being* or *Ground of being*. Cf. n. 29 above.

46. The second member of the Trinity, who is the Word of God, is the ultimate Form-of-being of all things. Nicholas here also refers to Him as the Absolute Living-Exemplar and as the (Eternal) Cause. Elsewhere he refers to God as the Essence of essences and the Form of forms. See, above, n. 135 of Notes to *De Beryllo*. *DI* I, 8 (22:7-9). See the passage (in *De Principio*) marked by n. 72 below.

47. The Form of circle is present in the Word of God, who is the Eternal Form of all forms. Thus, our mathematical concepts are “likenesses” of the exemplars in the Divine Mind. Cf. *DM* 6 (88:18-20). *DP* 63:6-11. Although Nicholas sometimes speaks, in the plural, of there being *exemplars* in the Mind of God [*DM* 3 (73:1-2)], nonetheless he maintains that there is but a single Exemplar [*DM* 2 (67:5-13)].

48. John 8:25.

49. John 1:14.

50. Here, following the Florence manuscript and the Paris edition, I read “*per ipsum*” in place of “*ipsum*”. This reading is absolutely essential if one is to avoid distorting Cusa’s philosophical position.

51. Seraphic spirits and angelic spirits are angels. Seraphims are here regarded as a higher order of angels. See *DM* 14 (154).

52. Philippians 3:19-20.
53. John 8:27.
54. *De Principio* 18:11-12 and 19:10-11 and 34:8 and 38:18-19. A beginning is none of the things begun from it.
55. See n. 32 above.
56. “Light from Light” and “God from God” are expressions from the *credo* of the Roman Catholic mass.
57. See n. 6 above.
58. John 8:28.
59. See n. 54 above.
60. “... we cannot form a concept of it”: i.e., we cannot form a positive concept of *what* it is.
61. *DI I*, 24 (76:1-4). *DI I*, 26 (88:14-15). *DVD* 13 (58:8-12). *PF* 7 (21:1-2). *DP* 41:4-8.
62. *DI I*, 5 (13:3-5). *DVD* 13 (52: 18-20). *DP* 25:1-3. *NA* 22 (99:10-13). *VS* 34 (103:9-12).
63. See n. 54 above.
64. “... for this reason ...”: viz., because it is unnameable.
65. Cf. *DI I*, 6 (16:8-10).
66. Anselm, *Monologion* 79. Unlike Anselm, who holds the doctrine of *analogia entis*, Nicholas holds that *nulla proportio finiti ad infinitum est*. Yet, he regards some names for God as more *fitting* than are others.
67. Nicholas takes up this theme at length in *NA*. God is not in the same domain as are finite beings. He does not admit of degrees of perfection, as do they. He cannot be comparatively related to them.
68. “... in the preceding discourse”: viz., in *De Aequalitate*.
69. *De Principio* 9.
70. In the corresponding Latin sentence (21:8) one must beware of misconstruing “*universalis intellectus*.” Regarding the distinction between the Creator-intellect and the assimilator-intellect see *DM* 7 (99-102).
71. To assimilate is to make like. The mind assimilates itself to a thing by receiving an image, or a likeness (*assimilatio*), of the thing. Since the mind is more than a mere passive receiver, it is sometimes said by Nicholas to make a likeness of the thing. One must avoid viewing Nicholas as somehow anticipating Kant’s “Copernican Revolution” in epistemology. See the introduction to my *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge* (1996). Cf. Cusa’s *Sermo* CCLXXXV (282), Paris edition, Vol. II, f. 185^v: “Nam sicut deus, qui est ipsa entitas, vocat de non-esse ad sui similitudinem creaturam, ut sit, ita quod vocare est intelligere et intelligere est esse, sic intellectualis natura in se colligit rerum similitudines, ut faciat se similem rebus.” See, below, n. 303 of Notes to *De Venatione Sapientiae*.
72. See n. 46 above.
73. *De Theologicis Complementis* 2:21-22.
74. “... an assimilation of assimilable things”: i.e., a likeness of things that can have a likeness.
75. John 8:58.
76. John 17:24.
77. John 17:5.

78. Cf. Colossians 1:15-17.
79. Ontologically prior to their creation all things exist in God as God. See, above, n. 81 of Notes to *De Beryllo*. See also *DI I*, 24 (77). *Ap.* 27:3-5.
80. Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion* 10:4-7. *Proslogion* 2:9-13. Gaunilo, *On Behalf of the Fool* 3.
81. The word “Before” is used as a name for God, just as “Eternity” is a name for God. As Beginning, God is ontologically prior to (i.e., before) all other things.
82. See n. 79 above.
83. This is one of the themes of *De Apice Theoriae*, which explores the notion of *posse-fieri*.
84. Colossians 1:16-17. The Word is God the Son. Cf., above, *De Principio* 22:16-17, where the “word” referred to is a human *concept*.
85. Genesis 1:3.
86. *De Principio* 22:13-14.
87. “... self-existent man is eternal”: i.e., the Form of man is eternal.
88. *VS* 1 (3:8). *VS* 26 (107:1).
89. See, above, *De Principio* 20:1-5.
90. Pseudo-Dionysius and Nicholas of Cusa make this same point. Edmond Vansteenberghe, *Autour de la Docte Ignorance. Une controverse sur la Théologie mystique au XV^e siècle* [Vol. 14 of *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1915)], p. 114, last paragraph, which is from Nicholas’s letter of September 14, 1453 to the abbot and monks at the Benedictine monastery in Tegernsee, Germany. See also Nicholas’s *De Deo Abscondito*.
91. The three *hypostases* are, for Nicholas, the three *persons* of the Trinity.
92. *PF* 7 (21:16): “Sed non possunt esse plura aeterna.” See, below, n. 105 of Notes to *De Venatione Sapientiae*.
93. *VS* 21 (62:6-7). See, below, n. 40 of Notes to *De Venatione Sapientiae*.
94. Cf., above, *De Principio* 6 (including n. 14).
95. Strictly speaking, for Nicholas, things partake of a (figurative) *likeness* of the One. See, below, n. 191 of Notes to *De Venatione Sapientiae*.
96. *De Principio* 19.
97. *DI I*, 24 (76:1-4). *DI I*, 26 (88:14-15). *De Principio* 19:6. *DP* 41:4-8.
98. *Procli Commentarium in Parmenidem*, edited by Raymond Klibansky and C. Labowsky. [Plato Latinus, Vol. III (London: Warburg Institute, 1953)], p. 72, lines 2-4. The accompanying English translation (on the page facing the Latin text) is made by Klibansky and Labowsky with the assistance of G. E. M. Anscombe.
99. *Procli Commentarium in Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 98 above), p. 56, line 34 and p. 58, line 1. The Latin words “*desiderabile*” and “*fugabile*” do not here mean *desirable* and *shuntable* but, rather, *desired* and *shunned*. Cf. *De Principio* 26:16-18: “et non intrat in nostram cogitationem aliquid melius esse eo quod ab omnibus nobis desideratur” (punctuation slightly emended by me). See also *De Principio* 29:1-2: “Entia igitur, cum esse desiderent, cum sit bonum, unum desiderant, sine quo esse nequeunt” *VS* 8 (20:6-7) and 38 (111:10). *Sermo* “*Ubi est qui natus est rex Iudaeorum*,” 18:22-24 {p. 102 of Josef Koch, editor, *Vier Predigten im Geiste Eckharts* [(Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse, 1936/37 (2. Abhandlung))]: “Deus enim est qui est, et esse est nomen eius, et est ipsum esse quod omnia appetunt” (punctuation emend-

ed slightly by me).

100. See n. 25 above. God is Oneness itself, or the One itself.

101. *Procli Commentarium in Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 98 above), p. 56, lines 30-33.

102. See n. 101 above.

103. Cusa, *NA* 23 (106:1-5).

104. *De Principio* 25.

105. "... exists in something else": i.e., exists in something that is other than it itself.

106. *De Coniecturis*, Prologue to Book I (3:1-2) and *De Coniecturis* I, 11 (54:6-23). *De Filiatione Dei* 1 (54:21-22). *De Filiatione Dei* 3 (62:4-5). *DP* 40:16 and 62:13.

107. See n. 99 above.

108. *De Theologicis Complementis* 2:46-52. *Sermo* IV, 3 (32:26-28) and *Sermo* VIII, 1 (19:11-14). See also *DVD* 16 (73:1-5).

109. *Ap.* 2:16-22.

110. Oneness is the Cause of multitude in the sense that it is the necessary causal condition of there being a multitude.

111. Here at *De Principio* 30:4 I am reading (with all three manuscripts and with the Paris edition) "*ad virtualem unitatis causam respiciens ...*," in spite of the fact that Nicholas writes "*univalem*" (and not "*virtualem*") in his gloss on Proclus in Codex Latinus Cusanus 186, f. 1^v, lefthand margin. Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), I, 620:12 (... ἐνισίαν τῆς μονάδος αἰτίαν ...). Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, p. 21. See pp. 9-10 of Karl Bormann, editor, *Expositio in Parmenidem Platonis*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above).

112. *De Principio* 28:1-2. See n. 159 below.

113. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), I, 711:22-31. Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

114. That is, multitude is present in the One as in its Cause.

115. That is, the One is not restricted to its presence in multitude. See n. 116 below.

116. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), I, 621:11-17. Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

117. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), I, 620:29-37. Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

118. "... from the preceding discourse": i.e., from *De Aequalitate*.

119. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), I, 711:41 - 712:2. Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

120. Nicholas is here referring to ontological priority and posteriority. *De Principio* 31 is drawn from Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), I, 711:38 - 712:14. Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

121. I have here (31:10) supplied "*et*" ("Et ita <dualitas> videtur unitas esse <et> multitudo ..."), though Codex Latinus Vaticanus 1245 (and the other two mss.) omit it. Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), I, 712:9. Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

122. The monad (*monas*) is numerical oneness; but numerical oneness is not a number. Cf. *DB* 13:3-6: "Non intelligas de uno numerali, quod monas seu singu-

- lare dicitur ...,” etc.
123. *DI* I, 5 (14:1-4).
124. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* I, 5 (986^b18-21).
125. The Infinite Limit (*finis infinitus*) is the Delimiting Infinity (*infinitas finiens*). Note Nicholas’s use of synonyms both here and at *De Principio* 30:17-18.
126. See the first sentence of n. 120 above.
127. That is, when the Delimiting Infinity limits (or delimits) delimitable infinity
128. Cf. Anselm, *De Casu Diaboli* 12: “Et possibile et impossibile erat <mundus> antequam esset. Ei quidem in cuius potestate non erat ut esset, erat impossibile; sed deo in cuius potestate erat ut fieret, erat possibile. Quia ergo deus prius potuit facere mundum quam fieret, ideo est mundus, non quia ipse mundus potuit prius esse” (F. S. Schmitt’s edition of the Latin text).
129. “...are present in potency”: i.e., are present potentially.
130. Nicholas devotes *De Apice Theoriae* to discussing the difference between the possibility-of-making (*posse facere*) and the possibility-of-being-made (*posse fieri*).
131. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium de Divinis Nominibus* II, 44 (p. 73, lines 28-29), edited by Paul Simon (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972) as Vol. 37, Part I in the series *Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*; series edited by B. Geyer.
132. *NA* 23 (107:1-3). Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), V, 999:37-38. Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, p. 350. Contrast this view with the view of Hegel, who regards *being* as prior to *not-being*.
133. See n. 54 above.
134. That is, not-being precedes the coincidence of being and not-being.
135. “... is Not-being in the aforementioned manner”: i.e., is Not-being qua beyond the coincidence of being and utter not-being.
136. “... it is *minimally being*”: i.e., it is not being.
137. See n. 39 above.
138. *De Principio* 25:2 and 23:1-2. *Aeternum per se subsistens is aeternitas*.
139. As He is in Himself, God is not truly representable; nonetheless, for purposes of worship, we represent Him metaphorically. Similarly, things partake only of a figurative likeness of Him.
140. Cf. *De Principio* 34:12-14: “... puta non-ens, entis principium, sic videtur ante ens quod per medium coincidentiae maximi et minimi videtur superexaltatum ...” (punctuation emended slightly by me).
141. The equality of opposites is the coincidence of opposites.
142. God, who is Not-other, cannot be partaken of. See, below, n. 191 of Notes to *De Venatione Sapientiae*.
143. “... in equal measure”: i.e., in the same respect.
144. *NA* 16 (79:5-6). See n. 142 above. The “likeness” is figurative, not literal.
145. Cf. Cusa’s *Sermo “Verbum caro factum est,”* section 8 [p. 80 of Josef Koch, editor, *Vier Predigten im Geiste Eckharts*, *op. cit.* (n. 99 above)]: “Et nota quod quamdiu aliquis sapiens potuit esse sapientior, non fuit Sapientia recepta, sed participatio eius. Sapientia autem absoluta, quae est ars omnipotentiae, non fuit neque in angelis neque hominibus neque prophetis, uti est, recepta” (punctuation emended slightly by me).

146. That is, of themselves creatures are nothing. Anselm, *Monologion* 28, opening sentence. *Proslogion* 22. Anselm draws this point from Augustine.
147. That is, their entire being is, ultimately, from their Ultimate Cause.
148. "... their truth": i.e., their true essence, or true being, which is their being in God. God is the Essence of essences, the Being of beings. See the references in n. 46 above.
149. "... our Teacher": viz., Christ.
150. See n. 76 above.
151. John 14:6.
152. John 14:17. Note also *Ap.* 22:5-6. *Ap.* 27:21-23.
153. See n. 79 above.
154. I John 5:19.
155. John 1:1. Colossians 1:16.
156. *DP* 10:15: there is "*quaedam similitudo impropotionalis*" ("a certain disproportionate likeness") between finite beauty and Divine Beauty. A disproportionate likeness is a symbolical likeness.
157. Cf. the example of sight and color, in *De Quaerendo Deum* 1 (20-22).
158. See the references in n. 54 above.
159. "... their basis" (*hypostasis*): i.e., their foundation, or grounding, in being.
160. God is He who is Self-same, or Self-identical. [See *De Genesi* 1 (145).] But He is not the same as anything else. And He is not *same* in any sense proportionate to our meaning of the term.
161. Here and in many passages in his other works Nicholas rejects pantheism. See, for example, *DI* II, 8 (140:5-8). *Ap.* 23:8-9. See also, above, n. 81 of Notes to *De Beryllo*.
162. See n. 39 above.
163. The First Beginning is God, the Creator.
164. Acts 17:27-28.
165. "... is unreplicated": i.e., is unique. See n. 92 above.
166. *VS* 22 (64:8-12). Saying of the One that it is One *Beginning* is already an additional predication. The One is neither *beginning* nor *one* in any sense that we can understand. See n. 97 above. See *De Principio* 35:1-3.
167. See n. 39 above.
168. *De Principio* 28.
169. See n. 18 above.
170. "... contractible oneness": contractible oneness is a oneness that can be partaken of.
171. See n. 122 above: a monad is a numerical oneness, a unit.
172. Nicholas's usual word for uncontracted, or unrestricted, is "*incontractum*"; here (39:29), however, he uses "*expansum*".
173. See n. 18 above.
174. Revelation 7:2.
175. Jove is, of course, Jupiter.
176. "... a multitude of princes": i.e., a multitude of gods.
177. Matthew 12:25.
178. Regarding the translation of "*propter*" as "on account of," cf. "*propter*" at *De Principio* 30:7.

179. I Corinthians 8:6. Acts 17:23-24.
180. I Corinthians 8:6.
181. John 8:25.
182. Matthew 28:18.
183. Revelation 19:13. I John 5:7.
184. See n. 180 above.
185. Colossians 2:3.
186. Colossians 1:18.
187. Romans 9:5.
188. Colossians 1:18.