

**NICHOLAS OF CUSA:  
METAPHYSICAL SPECULATIONS**

**Six Latin Texts  
Translated into English**

**by**

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**DE VENATIONE SAPIENTIAE**  
**(On the Pursuit of Wisdom)**

by

**NICHOLAS OF CUSA**

(Translated from Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia.  
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## ON THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM<sup>1</sup> (*De Venatione Sapientiae*)

### Prologue<sup>2</sup>

My purpose here was to leave behind for posterity my summarizingly recorded pursuits-of-wisdom, which up until this present state of old age I have supposed, on the basis of mental insight, to be quite true. For I do not know whether perchance a longer and more propitious time for reflecting will be granted to me, since I have now completed my sixty-first year of age. A considerable time ago I wrote a piece on seeking God.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter, I continued-on and again set forth other surmises. But aroused now—after having read in Diogenes Laërtius’s book on the lives of the philosophers<sup>4</sup> about the philosophers’ various pursuits of wisdom—I have directed all my intelligence to so pleasing a speculation [on the pursuit of wisdom], a speculation than which nothing more pleasant can occur to a man. I, who am a sinful man, timidly and modestly disclose the points (though they are small ones) that I have discovered through very careful reflection—[disclose them] in order that quite acute thinkers may be motivated to deepen their minds further And I will proceed in the order that follows.

By an appetite innate to our nature<sup>5</sup> we are stimulated toward obtaining not only knowledge but also wisdom, or savory knowledge. First of all, I will make a few remarks about the reason for this [motivation]. Thereafter, I will describe for one who is willing to philosophize—I call the pursuit of wisdom philosophizing—[various] regions, and within these regions certain places; and I will lead [him] into fields especially replete, it seems to me, with the bounty which [philosophers] are seeking.<sup>6</sup>

2

### CHAPTER ONE

Wisdom is the intellect’s sustenance.

Since our intellectual nature is alive: then, of necessity, it is nourished. But it cannot at all be replenished by any other food than the food of intelligible life, even as every living thing is nourished by food similar to its life. For example, since the vital spirit delights in moving (this movement is called life), then unless the force of the spirit’s life is restored by a replenishment natural to it, it expires and perishes. The Pythagoreans said that there is a vital spirit in the vapor of the seed

and that a body exists potentially in the seed's body. The Stoics, too, who [were followers] of Zeno,<sup>7</sup> approved of this [doctrine] and said that the substance of the fruit-bearing seed is in the vaporizable spirit, which, after it has expired in grain or in some other seed, does not produce fruit. (We see that fire perishes and expires if its nourishment has ceased.) Hence, since even celestial objects are moved, the ancients called them spirits—as the wise Philo and as Jesus, son of Sirach,<sup>8</sup> maintain that the sun is a spirit. And so, they said that the sun is nourished by oceanic vapors; and they maintain, likewise, that the moon and the planets (which they thought to abound with divine life) are replenished by vapors from other bodies of water. And in the belief that the other gods took delight in vapors, they placated them with incense and fragrant aromas. They offered to them the vapors of a most pleasant odor, and they claimed that the spirit of ethereal life, i.e., the spirit of celestial life, is present in the nature of very purified fire.

- 3     However, all animals have a natural disposition toward, and a fixed memory of, what nourishes them; and they have a sense of what is like them, sensing which [other animals] are of their same species. Therefore, Plato said that, necessarily, this fact is due to the Idea, since apart from Ideas nothing would remain in existence. Herefrom you may infer that Ideas are not separated from individuals in such a way as to be extrinsic exemplars. For the individual's nature is united to the Idea itself, from which it has all these [endowments] naturally. Laërtius said<sup>9</sup> that Plato maintained that the Idea is both one and many, both stationary and moved. For insofar as it is an incorruptible specific form, it is intelligible and one; but insofar as it is united to many individuals, Plato spoke of it as many. Likewise, Plato said it to be fixed and stationary insofar as it is unalterable and intelligible; but he spoke of it as moved insofar as it is united to movable things. Proclus explains<sup>10</sup> more fully that essential beginnings are intrinsic and not extrinsic and that through the contact whereby the individual is united to its Idea, it is in contact with the Divinity by way of that intelligible Idea, so that an individual, in accordance with its capability, exists in the best way in which it can exist and be conserved. Moreover, Laërtius reports<sup>11</sup> that Plato speaks of Ideas as the beginnings of those things which exist by nature, so that [because of these beginnings] those things are the kinds of things they are. If these [Platonic teachings] are properly understood, then perhaps they are not as much opposed to the truth as inept interpreters of Plato have suggested.

4 Epicharmus, too, said<sup>12</sup> that all living things partake of thought and wisdom. A hen, for example, does not give birth to living offspring but, rather, “first incubates her eggs and enlivens them with heat. But her nature alone knows these things by means of wisdom (insofar as wisdom is possessed); by wisdom her nature is taught.” And, again, Epicharmus says:<sup>13</sup> “Surely, it is not at all strange, if I may say so, that they<sup>14</sup> please one another and favor one another and seem to one another to be excellent beings. For a dog seems to another dog to be something beautiful; and a cow seems to a cow to be something beautiful; and a donkey, to a donkey; and, likewise, a pig seems to another pig to excel in attractiveness.” Indeed, every animal seems to have an innate understanding of those things that are necessary for the animal’s conservation both with respect to itself and, since it is mortal, in its offspring; and, hence, it has the industriousness to hunt for its own nourishment and has suitable sight (*lumen*) and has organs suited for its hunting (e.g., animals which hunt at night have a light that is inherent in the eyes); moreover, every animal recognizes and chooses and unites-to-itself that [food] which it has found. If so, then surely our own intellectual life will not at all lack these [perfections].

Accordingly, our intellect is endowed by nature with logic, so that by this means it infers and makes its own pursuit.<sup>15</sup> For logic<sup>16</sup> is, as Aristotle said, a most exact instrument for pursuit both of the true and of the truthlike. Hence, when the intellect finds [what is true] it recognizes [it] and eagerly embraces [it]. Therefore, wisdom is what is being sought, because wisdom nourishes the intellect. Wisdom is immortal food; therefore, it nourishes immortally. Now, wisdom shines forth in various rational considerations, which partake of wisdom in various degrees. In various rational considerations the intellect seeks the light of wisdom, in order to suckle from it and to be nourished from it. Just as the sensible life reasonably seeks its sustenance in the various perceptual objects by which at some previous point it was nourished, so the intellect pursues intelligible food by means of perceptual indicators once reason has been applied. Hence, the intellect is replenished by one food better than by another; but that [intelligible food] which is the more valuable is found with greater difficulty.

5 Because in order rightly to nourish his animality man needs greater industriousness than does any other animal, and because to this end he needs to use his naturally endowed logical powers in the pursuit of material food, he is not as devoted and attentive to intellectu-



al [food] as his intellectual nature demands. When this preoccupation [with material food] is excessive, it detracts from speculative preoccupation with wisdom. Therefore, philosophy, being contrary to the flesh, is said by writers to mortify [the flesh].

Moreover, great differences are found among philosophers. These differences occur chiefly because one intellect is a better pursuer [than is another], inasmuch as it is more exercised and quicker in logic and uses logic precisely—and because one intellect knows better in which region wisdom (which is being sought) is more readily found and in what way it is possessed. For philosophers are nothing but pursuers of wisdom, which each philosopher investigates in his own way in the light of the logical power that is innate to him.

## 6

## CHAPTER TWO

The principle by means of which I have searched out wisdom's explanations.

The Milesian Thales, the first of the wise, says that God is very ancient because he is unbegotten and that the world is very beautiful because it was made by God.<sup>17</sup> When I read these words in Laërtius, they very greatly pleased me. I behold our very beautiful world, united in a wonderful order—an order in which the Supreme God's supreme goodness, wisdom, and beauty shine forth. I am moved to inquire about the Designer of this very admirable work, and I say to myself: "Since what is unknown cannot be known through that which is even more unknown, I must grasp something that is most certain—something presupposed and undoubted by all pursuers [of wisdom]; and in the light of that [certainty] I must search out what is [presently] unknown. For the true is consistent with the true." After my eager mind inquired diligently within itself regarding these matters, a pronouncement of the philosophers occurred to me—a pronouncement which even Aristotle made at the outset of his *Physics*: viz., that what is impossible to be made is not made.<sup>18</sup> After I had turned to this pronouncement, I examined the regions of wisdom by means of the following line of reasoning, such as it is.

## 7

## CHAPTER THREE

The line-of-reasoning by which reason pursues [wisdom].

Since what is impossible to be made is not made, nothing has been made or will be made that was not possible to be made or is not pos-

sible to be made. That which *is*, but which has not been made or created, was not possible to be made or created and is not possible to be made or created. For it precedes the possibility-of-being-made<sup>19</sup> and is eternal, because it has not been made or created and cannot be made anything other [than it already is]. But since it is not the case that whatever has been made or will be made has been made or will be made in the absence of the possibility-of-being-made, then [whatever has been made or will be made] has one absolute Beginning, which is the Beginning and Cause of the possibility-of-being-made. This is the Eternal Thing, which precedes the possibility-of-being-made. It is the absolute and incontractible<sup>20</sup> Beginning, for it is all that can be.<sup>21</sup> Now, that which is made is made from the possibility-of-being-made, because the possibility-of-being-made becomes, actually, everything that is made. But everything that has been made from the possibility-of-being-made either is the possibility-of-being-made or is subsequent to it. However, it is by no means the possibility-of-being-made; rather, it is subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made and imitative of it. Since the possibility-of-being-made has not been made, it has not been made from itself or from something other than itself. For since the possibility-of-being-made precedes everything made, how could the possibility-of-being-made be made? On the other hand, since [the possibility-of-being-made] is subsequent to that which is all that can be, viz., the Eternal, it has a beginning.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, the possibility-of-being-made cannot perish. For if it perished, this perishing would be possible to be made to occur. Therefore, it would not be the case that the possibility-of-being-made would have perished. Therefore, although the possibility-of-being-made has a beginning, it remains forever and is perpetual.<sup>23</sup>

- 8** Since [the possibility-of-being-made] has not been made but, nevertheless, has a beginning, we speak of it as created, for it does not presuppose anything from which it exists, except its Creator. Therefore, all things that are subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made have been made by the Creator from the possibility-of-being-made. Now those things which have been made to be [all] that which they can be made to be are called celestial things and intelligible things. But those things which exist but are not [all] that which they can be made to be are never constant, and they perish. Therefore, they imitate perpetual things but will never attain them. Therefore, they are temporal and are called earthly things and perceptible things.

Therefore, when I turn toward contemplating the Eternal, I see in

an unqualified way Actuality itself; and in it I mentally behold all things as they are present in their Absolute Cause in an enfolded way. When I look unto the everlasting and perpetual, I intellectually see the possibility-of-being-made, and in it I see the nature of each and every thing as it ought to be made in accordance with the perfect unfolding of the Divine Mind's predestining.<sup>24</sup> When I look unto time, I grasp perceptually that all things are unfolded in a succession, in imitation of the perfection of things perpetual. For perceptible things imitate those intelligible things. Therefore, in created possibility-of-being-made all created things have been predetermined, so that this beautiful world would be made as it is. [I will speak] more fully about this topic a bit later.

I will add an example, although a remote one, regarding how the foregoing can be conceived.

## 9

## CHAPTER FOUR

How one is aided by an example from the art of logic.

The intellect of a teacher wills to create the art of syllogisms. His intellect precedes this art's possibility-of-being-made; and in his intellect this art is present as in its own cause. Therefore, the intellect posits and establishes this art's possibility-of-being-made. For what this art requires is possible to be made: viz., nouns, verbs, propositions from nouns and verbs, and syllogisms from these propositions. A syllogism is made from three propositions, two of which are premised; from these two a third proposition follows as a conclusion. Moreover, it is required that the subjects and the predicates of all three propositions have only three terms.<sup>25</sup> And so, it is necessary that in the premises one term, called the middle term, appear twice. Accordingly, this happens when in the first premise (called the major premise)<sup>26</sup> that middle term is the subject and in the minor premise is the predicate—or else when it is the predicate in both premises or is the subject in both. And in this way there arise three figures. Various moods of each figure arise from various and useful combinations of propositions, with useless combinations rejected (for example, the [useless] combination of three negative propositions or of three particular propositions, and as regards other useless figures). The first syllogism, consisting of three affirmative universal propositions in the first figure, is called *Barbara*. The second syllogism, consisting of [three] universal [propositions] such that the major premise is negative, the minor premise af-

firmative, and the conclusion negative, is called *Celarent*. And so on. Now, these are specific syllogistic forms and are based on reason and are abiding; every syllogism that is expressed in perceptible words must imitate these forms. And in the foregoing way this art's possibility-of-being-made is unfolded.

- 10** This art [of the syllogism] the master-inventor handed down to an obedient student and gave instruction that he construct syllogisms in accordance with all the modes set before him. To some extent, perhaps, the artistry of the world is like this. For the world's Master [Artificer], the glorious God, in willing to make a beautiful world, created the world's possibility-of-being-made; and within this possibility He created, in an enfolded way, all the things necessary for establishing this world. Now, the world's beauty required not only things that would exist but also things that, in addition, would be alive and things that, over and above, would be intelligent; and it required that there be various kinds-of-beauty, or modes-of-beauty, of these three required things. These modes-of-beauty are the Divine Mind's practical predeterminate forms and are useful beautiful-combinations that are suitable for the world's structure.

God committed this divine work to something obedient, viz., to nature, which was concreated with the possibility-of-being-made, so that in accordance with the Divine Intellect's previously mentioned predeterminate forms nature unfolded the world's possibility-of-being-made. For example, in accordance with the predeterminate form of man nature unfolded the possibility of man's being made—and so on, just as in the course of constructing syllogisms the syllogizer looks unto predeterminate argument-forms, which are called *Barbara*, *Celarent*, [etc.].

**11**

CHAPTER FIVE

How one profits from a geometrical example.

Now, it seems that a geometer imitates nature when he forms a circle. For he looks unto the predeterminate form [*ratio*] of a circle, and he endeavors to work in conformity with this form as much as the receiving material's possibility-of-being-made permits this; for one receiving material is more accommodating than is another. This form, or definition, [of *circle*] is nothing other than “the equidistance of the circle's center from its circumference.” This is the true form or “cause”

of circle; it does not admit of more and less. However, no perceptible circle can be made so perfectly that it precisely attains that form. For the possibility of being made a perceptible circle is subsequent to that intelligible, unmoving, and unvarying form, which the possibility-of-being-made-a-circle imitates and is subsequent to, in a perceptible material, as an image imitates and is subsequent to its original.<sup>27</sup> Since the perceptible material is variable, the circle that is described [therein] will by no means be all that a perceptible circle can be made to be; for than any given perceptible circle there can be made one that is truer, more perfect, and more similar to the aforesaid intelligible circle.<sup>28</sup>

**12** Thus, when a geometer wants to form a right angle, he looks unto its intelligible form, which is that which an intelligible right angle can be and which no perceptible angle can imitate exactly. And when he makes an acute or an obtuse angle, he does not look unto any other specific form than the specific form of a right angle, than which an acute angle is smaller and an obtuse angle is larger. For an acute angle can always become more similar to a right angle—and likewise for an obtuse angle. And if either of them were such<sup>29</sup> in the least degree, so that it could not be [such] in a lesser degree, then it would be a right angle.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, they both are enfolded in the form of a right angle, since they *are* right angles when they are that which they can become. In a similar way, nature, too, when it produces either male or female, looks unto no other specific form than the human form, although the form of man is neither male nor female. (These latter [features] befit [only] perceptible things.) For the specific form is an intermediary that unites within itself things which veer from it either to the right or to the left.

**13** You will see the foregoing statements to be true if you attend to the fact that intelligible things neither are nor have any of the [characteristics] which are found in perceptible things. For example, they do not have either color or shape, which are attained by perceptual sight, either hardness or softness or any such thing which is perceived by touch. Likewise, they do not have either quantity or sex or anything which the senses apprehend. For all perceptible things are subsequent to intelligible things, even as things temporal are subsequent to things perpetual. Similarly, no intelligible things are present in eternity, which precedes everything intelligible, even as the eternal precedes the perpetual. Now, whatever things are precise and permanent are more

beautiful than things that are imperfect and changing.<sup>31</sup> Thus, intelligible things are more beautiful than are perceptible things, which are beautiful to the extent that intelligible forms, or intelligible beauties, shine forth in them.<sup>32</sup>

14

## CHAPTER SIX

An analysis of the possibility-of-being-made.

One who reads these remarks will, no doubt, be intent on conceiving the possibility-of-being-made. And this conceiving will be difficult because the possibility-of-being-made comes to no end except in its own Beginning. So how could a concept be formed of that which is undelimitable? Nevertheless, so that you do not altogether go astray, I will help you with a certain rough-and-ready example.

Let God be called Eternal Light; and let the world be altogether invisible, being judged by sight not to exist, since sight does not judge anything to exist unless that thing is seen by sight.<sup>33</sup> Now, the Light decreingly wills to make the world visible. And because the possibility of the world's being made visible is color (color is a likeness of light, for light is the basis of color), Light creates color, in which is enfolded all that can be seen. For just as when color is removed nothing is seen, so from the presence of color and through light everything visible is brought, *qua* visible, from potency to actuality.<sup>34</sup> Hence, because color shines forth in different ways in colored objects, it appears as nearer to light in certain [of these] objects. And these objects are more visible and, as such, are more noble—for example, the color white. Nevertheless, nothing colored partakes of any color so perfectly that that color could not be partaken of more perfectly; and there is no limit on the possibility of being made [colored] except [the limit] due to the color itself. Some things (e.g., things celestial) remain constantly and perpetually of the same color; other things (e.g., things terrestrial and things that are of this corruptible world) remain of the same color inconstantly and non-permanently. Color, then, is the possibility of being made visible. For whatever is seen is seen because it is colored. And it is seen discretely from whatever else is colored; and it is discerned on account of its own discrete and singular color.

15

And because the sense-of-sight, which is a lucid spirit, partakes of discrete and cognitive light, and because (in order to make judgments about all colors) it itself is not at all colored,<sup>35</sup> color does not

belong to sight's possibility-of-being-made. Likewise, too, the intellect is more lucid than is sight. For it very subtly discerns things which are invisible—namely, intelligible things abstracted<sup>36</sup> from things visible. Therefore, color also does not belong to the intellect's possibility-of-being-made. Rather, the possibility of being made a bright and beautiful world and of being made whatever things are in the world and of being made even color itself is simpler than color, which is called a likeness of the Eternal Light. And as a seed of participatable light and beauty, the possibility-of-being-made enfolds in its passive power all lucid things which exist, which live, and which understand. Since this seed<sup>37</sup> is the possibility of an animal's being made (an animal is something which exists, lives, perceives, and, in its own way, understands),<sup>38</sup> participation in this seed displays to some extent the lucid animal seed. The animal seed would not have these powers unless it were the image of—and partook of the likeness of—(1) the possibility of the world's being made and (2) the aforementioned seed-of-seeds.

Hence, the seed of the seeds that exist and live and understand is a participatable likeness of God—a likeness which we call the possibility-of-being-made. From this likeness the Eternal Light brought forth this beautiful and bright world and established all that comes into being. For since this likeness is a participatable likeness of Eternal Light, it is good (something which is evident in the widespread pervasiveness of itself) and is great (because its [passive] power is never endable). But true, delightful, perfect, and altogether praiseworthy is [the Eternal Light], whose works are praiseworthy and glorious, as I will explain in what follows.<sup>39</sup>

**16****CHAPTER SEVEN**

There is a single Cause of the possibility  
of being made all things.

That in which my pursuits' surmises find rest is the following: viz., (1) that of all things there is only a single Cause, which creates the possibility of everything's being made and (2) that that Creating Cause precedes all possibility-of-being-made and is its Delimitation. The Creating Cause can neither be named nor partaken of;<sup>40</sup> rather, its likeness is partaken of by all things. And because there are various participants among all the things that partake of the likeness of the Creating Cause—partake in accordance with the same species of like-

ness—we come to one thing that is maximally such. And it is the first thing or chief thing or beginning of that specific participation; and in [that] ordering it is maximally such and *per se* such, in relation to other things of that same species; and the other things of that ordering partake of its specific likeness. By way of illustration: we call light a likeness of the First Cause—a likeness which shines forth firstly and foremostly in what is maximally bright, viz., the sun, as in that which is bright *per se*, but which shines forth in other bright things as in things that partake of the sun’s light. However, the Cause of the sun’s light has nothing in common with the sun’s light but is the Cause of all things and therefore is none of all things.<sup>41</sup>

But I will now disclose by what line of reasoning I conduct my pursuits, so that you may grasp and judge both the aforesaid and what follows.

- 17** It is certain that the First Beginning was not made, since nothing is made by its own self but by that which is prior. Now, that which is not made cannot either be destroyed or perish; and we call it eternal. And because the possibility-of-being-made cannot bring itself into actuality, the possibility-of-being-made is not the Eternal Beginning. (For bringing-[into-actuality] results from what is actual, so that it implies a contradiction<sup>42</sup> to say that a passive potency brings itself into actuality; and, thus, actuality is prior to potency.) A certain holy teacher rightly said: it is heresy to affirm that passive potency has always existed.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, passive potency is subsequent to the First Cause.

The great Dionysius maintains, in Chapter 9 of *The Divine Names*, that the First [Beginning] is “eternal, unchangeable, unalterable, unmixed, immaterial, most simple, without need, unincreasable, undiminshable, uncreated, ever-existent.”<sup>44</sup> These claims and all similar ones are seen to be true by each one who pays attention to the fact that the First [Beginning] precedes the possibility-of-being-made. For “changeable,” “alterable,” “material,” “increasable,” “diminishable,” “creatable,” and whatever other similar [predicates], imply passive potency and do not at all precede the possibility-of-being-made. And so, they must be denied of the Eternal Beginning.

- 18** I will take these two [predicates], viz., “unincreasable” and “undiminshable,” and with them [at my disposal] I will hasten onwards in my pursuit and will articulate [my reasoning as follows]: What is unincreasable cannot be greater [than it is]; and so, it is max-



imal. What is undiminishable cannot be less great [than it is]; and so, it is minimal. Hence, since [the First Beginning] is both maximal and minimal, assuredly it is not less great than anything else, because it is maximal; nor is it more great [than anything else], because it is minimal. Instead, it is the most precise formal cause (or exemplar-cause) and most precise measure of all things,<sup>45</sup> whether large or small. (By comparison, in my book *De Beryllo* I showed by means of the symbolism of an angle that the maximal angle, which is necessarily likewise the minimal angle, is the formal and most adequate cause of all angles that can be made.)<sup>46</sup> Yet, [the First Beginning] is not merely the formal Cause; rather, it is also the efficient and the final Cause, as Dionysius himself shows, where he writes about the beautiful.<sup>47</sup> For since beauty that is what it can be, and that is unincreasable and undiminishable, is both maximal and minimal, it is the actuality of the possibility of any beautiful thing's being made. It efficiently causes all beautiful things, conforming and turning them to itself insofar as their capability admits. A similar point holds true regarding the good that is what it can be, and regarding the true, regarding the perfect, and regarding whatever we praise in created things. We see that in God these things are the Eternal God, since [in God] they are that which they can be.<sup>48</sup> And so, we praise God as the efficient, formal, and final Cause of all things. It is now clear that we must take note especially of the fact that the possibility-of-being-made cannot be delimited by anything that is subsequent to it or that can be made. Rather, its beginning and its end are the same thing. [I will say] more about this topic a bit later.

## 19

## CHAPTER EIGHT

How Plato and Aristotle pursued [wisdom].

Plato, a pursuer who is distinguished in a wonderful manner, considered higher things to be present in lower things by way of participation; but he considered lower things to be present in higher things by way of excellence. And so, since he recognized that many things are called good because of their participation in the good (and similarly as regards things just and things noble), he noted that these [good and just, etc.] things received the name of what was participated in. And he turned toward viewing that which is good *per se* and that which is just *per se*, and toward seeing that if participants are good and just, then assuredly those [realities] which are good and just *per se* are max-

imally such and are the causes of the other things. And with this point the very keen-minded Aristotle, leader of the Peripatetics, agrees. When he, too, saw, in the case of natural objects, many that were hot by participation, he affirmed that we must come [inferentially] to that which is hot *per se*—to that which is maximally hot and is the cause of heat in all [hot] objects, as fire [is such a cause]. And in this way Plato and Aristotle arrived at the first and *per se* Cause of all causes—and, likewise, at the Being of [all] beings, the Life of [all] living things, and the Intellect of [all] things having intellect.

20 Now, Plato pursued the universal Cause of all things—pursued it in the following manner by means of an ascent from what is good by participation to what is good *per se*: he considered all beings (even those not yet in act but still merely in potency) to be called good because of their participation in a single Good. For neither the progression from potency to actuality nor any actually existing thing fails to partake<sup>49</sup> of the Good. Therefore, that which is maximally good, viz., the one *per se* Good, is desired by all. For everything choosable is choosable under the aspect of the good. Therefore, since the choosable and desirable End is the Good, [this] *per se* Good will be the Cause of all things, since all things are turned toward their own Cause and seek it; from it they have whatever they have. Therefore, Plato affirmed that the First Beginning, viz., God, is *per se* One and *per se* Good. And the beginnings of other things—viz., of being, of life, of intellect, and the like—he called existence *per se*, life *per se*, intellect *per se*; and he said that they are the beginnings and causes of existing, living, and understanding.

21 Proclus calls all these [beginnings] creator-gods,<sup>50</sup> by participation in whom all existing things exist, all living things live, and all beings-that-understand understand. And since whatever lives and understands would neither live nor understand unless it existed, he called the cause of beings a second god, viz., the Creator-Intellect. ([This second god is] subsequent to the first God of gods, whom Proclus affirmed to be the singular Good, as I said.<sup>51</sup>) Proclus believed this Creator-Intellect to be Jove, the king and ruler over all things. Proclus also posited celestial gods and mundane gods and various other likewise eternal gods, according as he expressed these matters extensively in his six-book work *The Theology of Plato*. Nevertheless, at the head of all [these other gods] he placed the God-of-gods, the universal Cause of all things. And so, those attributes which we ascribe to our

good God—attributes which are different [from one another] only in conception and not in reality—Proclus is seen to assert of different gods, because of differing distinctions among the attributes. [For] he was moved by [the consideration that] nothing is intelligible unless it actually exists, since, necessarily, being is participated in by what is intelligible.<sup>52</sup> And so, everything that is understood, he affirmed to [really] exist. Thus, he asserted to exist intellectually (in the way specified above)<sup>53</sup> an intelligible man, an intelligible lion, and whatever else he saw to be abstract and free-of-matter.

22 However, the Peripatetics do not agree with Proclus on this point. They recognized that conceptual being is constituted by our intellect and does not attain the status of real being. Nor do the Peripatetics agree with the point that the Good is more ancient than is being; they say that *one* and *being* and *good* are interchangeable. Hence, since the cause of being is the First Cause and is the Creator-Intellect of all things, those who say that *one*, *being*, and *good* are interchangeable profess, as well, that the Cause of *one*, *being*, and *good* is [one and] the same [Cause]. Nevertheless, Aristotle—who like Anaxagoras asserted that the First Cause is Intellect, which is the beginning of motion—does not ascribe to the First Cause the governance of the entire universe but the governance only of things celestial. However, he says that the celestial things govern our earthly things. But Epicurus attributes to God alone the entire governance of the universe, without anyone else's assistance.

By everyone's admission the First Cause is tricausal: viz., efficient Cause, formal Cause, and final Cause. This First Cause is called by Plato the One and the Good, and is called by Aristotle Intellect and the Being of beings. Nonetheless, our divine theologians have taught by revelation from on high that the First Cause is one in such a way that it is three, and is three in such a way that it is one. Since the First Cause is an efficient Cause, it is called Oneness, according to Plato; and since it is a formal Cause, it is called Being, according to Aristotle; and since it is a final Cause, it is called Goodness, according to both Plato and Aristotle.

But I will sketch below, as God grants, how it is that in this present lifetime this most sacred Trinity-in-oneness (which precedes everything intelligible, all continuous quantity, all discrete quantity, all number, and all otherness) can be seen symbolizingly by a believer,

23

## CHAPTER NINE

Sacred Scripture and the philosophers have named  
in different ways [one and] the same thing.

If anyone, armed with the views that have been set forth in the foregoing way, turns first of all to the world's genesis as described by Holy Moses long before [the time of] the philosophers, he will there find what has been said above about the beginnings. For Moses says: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and, thereafter, light.<sup>54</sup> By this statement Moses indicates that the possibility of being made a world—the world that consists of the heavens and the earth—was created in the beginning. For subsequently Moses spoke of that which actually was made to be the heavens, viz., the firmament, and of that which actually was made to be the earth, viz., dry land, and of that which actually was made to be light, viz., the sun (according to Dionysius).<sup>55</sup> For in the possibility-of-being-made were created confusedly and enfoldedly all the things which we read to have been subsequently made and unfolded.<sup>56</sup> Hence, when Moses says that God commanded “Let there be light,” and light was made,<sup>57</sup> he says these things with respect to the nature of the possibility-of-being-made. For in the possibility-of-being-made God saw light and saw that light is good and that light is necessary for the beauty of the visible world. And He commanded the nature-of-light that was in the possibility-of-being-made to become light in actuality, and light was made from the possibility-of-light's-being-made. Light was made naturally, by the command of the Creator's Word. This movement by which possibility is moved in order to be made actual is called a natural movement. For it is from nature, which is the instrument of the divine command—an instrument created in the possibility-of-being-made—so that, naturally and pleasingly and with all labor and exertion excluded, that which is possible to be made is actually made. But the Word of God—unto which Word nature looks in order that all things may be made—is God. For whatever is *of* God *is* God Himself.

24

The Platonists, however, call this Word the Creator-Intellect, which they also say to be the Only Begotten and the Lord of all things, as Proclus believes.<sup>58</sup> For they call God the One. And so, they call the Creator-Intellect the Only Begotten; but certain call it the First Intelligence. Anaxagoras, though, calls it Mind;<sup>59</sup> the Stoics call it the Word, which they also say to be God, as we read in Laërtius.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, the Stoics very closely followed the Prophet David, who said:

“By the Word of the Lord the heavens were established.”<sup>61</sup> And elsewhere, [he wrote]: “He spoke and they were made; He commanded, and they were created.”<sup>62</sup>

As for what the philosophers thought about these beginnings, take note of the following [items]: Anaxagoras says that Mind, the beginning of motion, drew near to matter, in which all things were present confusedly, and it structured things discretely, as individuals. Likewise, Plato calls God and matter two beginnings of things. Aristotle resolves all things into actuality and potentiality. Pythagoras likens the beginnings to the monad<sup>63</sup> and to duality; he said that duality is as an indefinite material that is subject to the fashioning monad.<sup>64</sup> The Stoics speak of God, whom they call Mind and Jove,<sup>65</sup> as the Artificer of this vast work. To the Stoics it seemed that there are two beginnings of all things: acting upon and being acted upon.<sup>66</sup> That which is acted upon they call substance-without-qualities, or matter; but that which acts upon they call the Word, which they also say to be God. However, Epicurus stated that by the command of God all things come from matter, which he believed to be an infinity of atoms. These views [can be read] more extensively in Laërtius.

**25** If you rightly consider these [philosophers’ opinions, you will see that these philosophers] aim to say nothing except that which is being set forth [by me]: viz., that God, who is purest Actuality, makes all things from the possibility-of-being-made. But Moses stated explicitly that the possibility-of-being-made is God’s creature. (Thales is of no other opinion when he says that the world is the work of God, whom he professes to be the Most Ancient One.)<sup>67</sup> Therefore, God is the Beginning and Creator of the world’s possibility-of-being-made; He preceded the world, which was made. In God the world (which [Moses] speaks of as made) was present as the possibility-of-being-made, because nothing that was not possible to be made is actually made.

Likewise, Plato, too, holds that the world is begotten, or made. For he says repeatedly that, of necessity, everything perceptible exists from a prior beginning and that time does not exist prior to the world’s possibility-[of-being-made], because when [the world] was produced, time was co-existent with it.<sup>68</sup>

**26** Aristotle, however, denies that the possibility-of-being-made has a beginning. Thus, he believes that neither motion nor time was made, being deceived by the following reasoning: if the world were made,

then it would antecedently have been possible to be made; but without motion the possibility-of-being-made is not actually made [to be anything]. Hence, he concludes that neither motion nor time has been made.<sup>69</sup> If he had noted that prior to the possibility-of-being-made there is actually that which is eternal, he would not have denied that the possibility-of-being-made was originated from that which precedes it. For successiveness—which is present in the case of motion, the measure of which motion is time—indicates, in and of itself,<sup>70</sup> that time and motion and things that are moved are not eternal. Since eternity is actually and all-at-once that which (it) is possible to be, it precedes successiveness. For successiveness falls short of the eternal. Therefore, Plato, seeing more clearly [than Aristotle], rightly said that time is the image of the eternal.<sup>71</sup> For time imitates the eternal and is subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made.<sup>72</sup> For how could there be successiveness unless successiveness were possible to be made?

Anaxagoras posited the beginnings of things and an end of time. For when he was asked whether the ocean would ever be present where the Lampsacian mountains were, he replied: “Yes, indeed, unless time runs out.”<sup>73</sup> Therefore, he believed that time would some day reach an endpoint; so too did the Stoics, who affirmed that the world is corruptible and who agreed more closely with the truth revealed to us by faith.

27

## CHAPTER TEN

The ways in which the wise  
have named the possibility-of-being-made.

Thales the Milesian likened water to the possibility-of-being-made. [He did so] when he saw that air is made from moist-vapor and that fire is made from a fineness of moist-vapor and that earth is made from a thickness of water and that all living things are nourished from—and, hence, made from—water. For living things are nourished from the things by means of which they live. But the fact that water is not the possibility-of-the-world’s-being-made or the possibility-of-all-things’-being-made (even though in water the possibility-of-all-things-being-made shines forth a great deal) is evident from the following [consideration]: God, as Thales rightly says, is the Most Ancient One.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, He precedes everything made or created. Therefore, since water is subsequent to God, it is made. Therefore, the possibility-of-being-made precedes water.

28 But Zeno the Stoic said that by the intermediary of air God transformed the substance of fire into water. And [he said that] just as the seed is contained in the fruit, so the ground-of-producing resided in a humor—i.e., in a material fit for operating most suitably, a material from which other things are begotten after these things.<sup>75</sup> You need to understand that our beginning, viz., the possibility-of-being-made, precedes water and all elements and whatever has been made—whether these exist or are living or understand. This humor of which Zeno [spoke] is not pure water, even if it is aqueous. For since one sample of water is granted to be purer and simpler than is another, any givable sample of water can be still purer and simpler [than it is]. Therefore, the possibility of being made to be things perceptible and things corporeal is to be attributed not to a single element but to all elements, which are composed of one another. Laërtius writes that the Stoics held these opinions. In his life of Zeno of Citium,<sup>76</sup> Laërtius, speaking about the perceptible and corruptible world, says that the world was made when the substance of fire was turned through the intermediary of air into a humor. Thereafter, the coarser part of the humor was made earth, but the finer part became air, and the more and more rarefied part became fire. And from these mixtures there arose animals and trees and other kinds of mundane creatures.

29 It is evident enough that those [philosophers] and their followers spoke of this perceptible and terrestrial world and that in this [earthly world] are found not simple elements but intermixed elements, so that one thing can be made from another and so that all things (even living things) can be made from all things. For if there were a simple and pure element, then since it would be that which it could be made to be, it would not be in potency to anything else. (By comparison, Dionysius asserts in the *Celestial Hierarchy* that fire is unchangeable<sup>77</sup>—indeed, affirms elsewhere, viz., in the book *On the Divine Names*, in the chapter on evil,<sup>78</sup> that no entity is corrupted with respect to its nature and substance, even though some entities are corrupted with respect to features accidental to them.) The Stoics, however, affirmed that parts of this earthly world are corruptible; hence, they concluded that this [entire] world is both begotten and corruptible. But the Peripatetics teach that the world is renewed through its circular course; and so, they say that it can never perish, because its circular motion always continues, and they call the world unbegotten. Nevertheless, they say that it is most certain that the entire world can never perish. For intelligible things, which are the world's principal parts, are that

which they *can be made to be*, as I said above.<sup>79</sup>

30

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

The three regions, and the ten fields, of wisdom.

In order to develop my proposed theme, I will state that there are three regions of wisdom: the first is that in which wisdom is found eternally as it is; the second is that in which wisdom is found in a perpetual likeness [of itself]; the third is that in which wisdom shines forth remotely in the temporal flux of [that] likeness.<sup>80</sup>

However, I deem there to be ten fields very suitable for the pursuit of wisdom: I call the first field learned ignorance; the second, actualized-possibility; the third, not-other; the fourth, the field of light; the fifth, that of praise; the sixth, that of oneness; the seventh, that of equality; the eighth, that of union; the ninth, that of delimitation; the tenth, that of order.

31

## CHAPTER TWELVE

The first field, viz., the field of learned ignorance.

Upon entering into the first [field], I note that the Incomprehensible is grasped incomprehensibly.<sup>81</sup> Eusebius Pamphili reports that there once came to Athens a man from India whom Socrates greeted with the question whether anything could be known if God were not known.<sup>82</sup> Puzzling over the question, the Indian asked how that would be possible; he did not mean that nothing is known but meant that not even God is altogether unknown. For all things, because they exist, bear witness of God that He exists.<sup>83</sup> Or better: because God exists, all other things exist. In other words, because whatever is known can be known better and more perfectly, nothing is known as it is knowable.<sup>84</sup> Hence, just as the fact of God's existence is the [ultimate] cause of the knowledge of every other thing's existence, so because what God is is not known as it is knowable, the quiddity of any thing whatsoever is not known as it is knowable. Aristotle says that quiddity is always sought—even as he himself seeks it in first philosophy but does not find it.

It seemed to Proclus that the quiddity of that which exists foremostly—[this quiddity is] the most difficult thing of all to discover—is nothing other than the One-which-is-many: one in essence, many in potentiality. But hereby there is not known what the One-which-is-many is. ([I will speak] more fully about this topic a bit later.)<sup>85</sup> For



it cannot happen that that which precedes the possibility-of-being-made is known. Therefore, since God precedes, He cannot be made comprehensible. And since what the possibility-of-being-made is is not comprehensible (just as its Cause, which precedes it, is also not [comprehensible]), no thing's quiddity is actually comprehended as it is knowable, if its causes are unknown.

- 32 Therefore, the better someone knows that this knowledge cannot be had, the more learned he is. Regarding the degree of the sun's brightness: someone who *denies* is more learned than someone who *affirms* that that brightness is comprehensible by sight.<sup>86</sup> And regarding the magnitude of the ocean: someone who *denies* is more learned than someone who *affirms* that that magnitude is measurable by one or another measuring-standard for liquids. If so, then surely he who *denies* is more learned than he who *affirms* that Absolute Magnitude (uncontracted to the brightness of the sun, or to the breadth of the ocean or to the breadth of anything else, and altogether boundless and infinite) is measurable by the mind's measuring-standard, which is contracted to the mind. I expounded this part [of my theme], as best I could, in my book *On Learned Ignorance*.

How wondrous a thing! The intellect desires to know; nevertheless, this natural desire of the intellect to know God's Quiddity is not innate to it.<sup>87</sup> Rather, [what is innate is its desire] to know that its God is so great that there is no end of His greatness. Hence, He is greater than everything conceived and knowable.<sup>88</sup> For the intellect would not be satisfied with itself if it were a likeness of a Creator so small and imperfect that He could be greater and more perfect. For, assuredly, [a Creator who is] of infinite and incomprehensible perfection is greater than everything knowable and comprehensible.<sup>89</sup> Every creature asserts that this [infinite and perfect Creator] is its God and that it itself is a likeness of this God—not [a likeness] of a lesser than Him. For every creature is satisfied with its own species as being a most perfect species (as Epicharmus said)<sup>90</sup> because it knows that it is a likeness, and a perfect gift, of its God-of-Infinite-Beauty. And so, Moses wrote that God saw all the things which He had made, and they were exceedingly good.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, each thing rightly finds rest in its own species, which, from the Best, is exceedingly good.

- 33 Furthermore, take note of how it is that God, who exceeds the possibility-of-being-made, precedes all that can be made. Therefore, there can be made no more-perfect-thing that He would not precede. There-

fore, He is all that which can be, is everything perfectible and everything perfect. Hence, He is Perfectness itself, which is the perfection of all perfect and perfectible things. Therefore, the intellect rejoices that it has such fulfilling and undepleishable food; it recognizes that by means of this food it is fed immortally and perpetually and that it lives most delightfully and is ever perfected in wisdom and can ever grow and be increased. By comparison, he who has found an infinite and uncountable, incomprehensible, and inexhaustible treasure rejoices more than he who has found a finite, countable, and comprehensible one.<sup>92</sup> Recognizing this fact, the great Pope Leo says in a sermon where he praises the Ineffable God: “Let us think it to be a good thing concerning ourselves that we are surpassed. No one comes nearer to a knowledge of the truth than he who understands concerning divine things that even if he makes much progress, what he seeks will always be beyond him.”<sup>93</sup>

You now see that the [wisdom-]pursuing philosophers (who have endeavored to pursue the quiddities of things without having known God’s Quiddity and who have endeavored to make known the ever-knowable<sup>94</sup> Quiddity of God) have expended useless efforts, since they have not entered into the field of learned ignorance. Only Plato, who saw somewhat more clearly than did the other philosophers, said that he would be surprised if God were to be found—and would be even more surprised if, having been found, God could be made manifest.<sup>95</sup>

## 34

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The second field: actualized-possibility.

When the intellect enters into the field of Actualized-possibility<sup>96</sup>—i.e., [the field] where possibility exists actually—it hunts for food that is most sufficient. For God—whom Thales the Milesian rightly affirmed to be the Most Ancient One because He was not made, or begotten<sup>97</sup>—is more ancient than is anything nameable; for He is prior to something and nothing, to the effable and the ineffable, and to the possibility-of-being-made and what-has-been-made. Therefore, it is not possible<sup>98</sup> that the Eternal not exist as [fully] actual. Humanity, for example, although it is that which humanity is supposed to be, is not actually that which it can be made to be; for it is subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made and is subject to the omnipotent power of the Creator of the possibility-of-being-made.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, none of all

the things that are subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made are ever free from the possibility of being made something other than they are. God alone is Actualized-possibility, because He is *actually* that which (He) can be.<sup>100</sup>

**35** Therefore, God is not to be sought in any field other than actualized-possibility. For regardless of whatever thing is pointed to, God is not that thing, because that thing can be made to be other [than it is].<sup>101</sup> God is not small, because what is small can be larger; nor is He large, because what is large can be smaller. Rather, God is prior to all that can be made to exist otherwise [than it does exist], and He is prior to whatever things differ. For He is prior to all difference: [He is] prior to the difference between actuality and potentiality, prior to the difference between the possibility-of-being-made and the possibility-of-making, prior to the difference between light and darkness—indeed, prior to the difference between being and not-being, something and nothing, and prior to the difference between difference and non-difference, equality and inequality, and so on. Hence, if you look unto all the things that are subsequent to God, all are different from one another; and even those that in kind-of-being or in species agree with one another differ in number.<sup>102</sup> However, God Himself is prior to all difference between difference and agreement, because He is Actualized-possibility. And since He is prior to the difference between one thing and another, He is no more one thing than another; and because He is prior to the difference between small and large, He is not greater than one thing and lesser than another, nor is He more equal to one thing and more unequal to another.

**36** In this field there are very delightful pursuits, because Actualized-possibility is actually everything possible. Therefore, whatever is subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made, so that it is actually made, exists actually only because it imitates the Actuality of Actualized-possibility. This Actuality is eternal, uncreated Actuality; it is necessary that whatever is actually made be made in accordance with Eternal Actuality. For since the possibility-of-being-made and being-actually-existent differ, and since Eternity (which is God) precedes that difference, you see in Eternity (in which the possibility-of-being-made and being-actually-existent do not differ) all the things that have been made and that can actually be made. And you see them to be, in Eternity, Eternity itself.<sup>103</sup> Hence, all that has been made or that will be made—including, of necessity, created possibility-of-being-made—is subsequent to its own Actuality, which is Eternity.<sup>104</sup>

37 Moreover, the *one* and its *potency* differ. For with respect to actuality the one, insofar as it is the beginning of number, is subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made, because it is replicable<sup>105</sup> and is not actually [all] that it can be. But with respect to potentiality the one is every number. Therefore, the one and its potency differ. So look unto Actualized-possibility prior to that difference, and you will see that in Eternity the one and its potency, prior to all difference, are actually Eternity. Therefore, you see that every number that actually can be made from the potency of oneness<sup>106</sup>—every number that can be made subsequently to the possibility-of-being-made—is, [in Eternity], actually Eternity. And the actuality of a number that is made or that will be made is subsequent to that eternal Actuality, as an image is subsequent to its original [*veritas*]. For just as in Eternity the monad (*monas*)<sup>107</sup> is one (*unum*) in such a way that it is actually all things that the one (*unum*) can be made to be,<sup>108</sup> so in Eternity the number two is two in such a way that it is all the things that two can be made to be. A similar point holds true for all [numbers]. So you see that the number two, which exists actually as subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made, imitates the actuality of the two that is present in Eternity. However, regarding the two that exists subsequently to the possibility-of-being-made: its proportion to the two that is present in Eternity is as the numerable to the innumerable or as the finite to the infinite.

38 It is evident that the philosophers who have not entered this field have not tasted of its very delightful pursuits. Now, that which frightened them away from having entered this field was the following; viz, that they [wrongly] presupposed that God, too—just as other things, which are subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made—must be sought within a difference of opposites. For they did not think that God is found prior to a difference of contradictory opposites. Therefore, claiming that the pursuit of God is included within the scope of the principle “Each thing either is or is not [the case],”<sup>109</sup> they did not seek Him (who is more ancient than even that principle and who exceeds the scope of that principle)<sup>110</sup> within the field of actualized-possibility, where possibility-of-existing and being-actually-existent do not differ.

Elsewhere I have written in a triologue more things about Actualized-possibility. Therefore, let these present points, thus touched upon, suffice for now.

39

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The third field, viz., the field of Not-other.

In his *Metaphysics* Aristotle writes that in the first place Socrates turned his intellect to definitions,<sup>111</sup> for the definition imparts knowledge. For the definition expresses the agreement in genus, and the difference in species, of the thing defined; and this agreement and this difference are enfolded by the word in its signification. Therefore, what we are seeking is seen—in the way in which it can be known—in its definition. Therefore, the intellect, which pursues that which precedes the possibility-of-being-made, must consider the fact that it also precedes other. For that which precedes the possibility-of-being-made cannot be made other, because other is subsequent to it. And because of this fact no other terms can define it, i.e., specify or determine it through genus and differentiae, which it precedes. Hence, it must be the definition of itself. This point is also clear from the foregoing, since [that which we are seeking] precedes the difference between the definition and the defined. And not only [must it be the definition of itself], but also all things must be defined through it, since they cannot exist unless they exist and are defined through it. Dionysius saw these points very clearly in the chapter on the Perfect and the One, in *The Divine Names*, where he says: “That One—the Cause of all—is not a one out of many; rather, it is prior to everything one, prior to all multitude, and is the definition of every one and of all multitude.”<sup>112</sup>

40

Now, to the field where there is the most delightful pursuit of that which defines itself and all things I give the name “Not-other.” For Not-other defines itself and all things. For when I ask “What is Not-other?” the following answer will be the most suitable: “Not-other is not other than Not-other.”<sup>113</sup> And when I ask “What, then, is other?” the following answer will be correct: “Other is not other than other.” And, in like manner, the world is not other than the world; and similarly about all other things which can be named.

You now see that the Eternal, that Most Ancient, can be sought in this field by a very delectable pursuit. For inasmuch as it is the Definition of itself and all other things, it is not found more clearly in any other [field] than in Not-other. For in this field you come upon the trine and one Most Ancient, who is the Definition even of Himself. For Not-other is not other than Not-other. The intellect marvels over this mystery when it notices attentively that *trinity*, without which God does not define Himself, is *oneness*, because the Definition is the de-

fined. Therefore, the trine and one God is the Definition defining itself and all other things. Hence, the intellect finds that God is not *other* than other, because He defines other. For if Not-other is removed, other does not remain. For if other is to exist, it will have to be none other than other. Otherwise, it would be something other than other and hence would not exist. Therefore, since Not-other is prior to other, it cannot be made other, and it is actually everything which is at all possible to be.

- 41 But notice that “Not-other” does not signify as much as does “same.” Rather, since same is not other than same, Not-other precedes it and all nameable things. And so, although God is named “Not-other” because He is not *other* than any other, He is not on this account the same as any other. For example, it is not the case that just as He is not *other* than sky, so He is the same as sky. Therefore, all things have, from the fact that God defines them, their being not other than they are; and from Not-other they have the fact that they beget no other in species but produce what is similar to themselves. Therefore, goodness is good-making, and whiteness is white-making; and similarly for all other things.

Pursuers who are philosophers did not enter this field, in which, alone, negation is not opposed to affirmation. For Not-other is not opposed to other, since it defines and precedes other. Outside this field negation *is* opposed to affirmation<sup>114</sup>—for example, immortal to mortal, incorruptible to corruptible, and so on for all other things except Not-other alone. Therefore, seeking for God in other fields, where He is not found, is an empty pursuit. For God is not someone who is opposed to anything, since He is prior to all difference from opposites. Therefore, God is named *animal*, to which *not-animal* is opposed, and *immortal*, to which *mortal* is opposed, in a more imperfect way than He is named *Not-other*, to which neither other nor nothing is opposed. For Not-other also precedes and defines nothing, since nothing is not other than nothing. The divine Dionysius said, most subtly, that God is *all in all and nothing in nothing*.<sup>115</sup>

Last year at Rome I wrote more extensively about Not-other in a tetralogue. And so, enough about this [topic] at this time.

42

#### CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The fourth field, viz, the field of light.

I want now to enter into the field of light and, by means of the light

that has been granted, to look for the light of Wisdom. For as the Prophet says, “the light of Your countenance” (i.e., the light of the knowledge of God) “has been imprinted upon us”;<sup>116</sup> and in that light an exceedingly pleasing and joyous pursuit is made.

Now, I assert that everyone who sees snow affirms that it is white. To contradict this assertion would be madness. Thus, an assertion which every intelligent man calls true cannot [reasonably] be denied to be true.<sup>117</sup> Now, since that which defines all things is a definition, assuredly the definition which defines itself and all things is exceedingly good. Moreover, that definition is great, true, beautiful, wise-making, delightful, perfect, clear, equal,<sup>118</sup> and sufficient. Every intellect acknowledges that all of the foregoing [properties]<sup>119</sup> and other [properties] similar to them are asserted most truly of that definition.

**43** Therefore, in the definition those [properties] are the definition, and in the thing defined they are the thing defined. Therefore, when by way of definition I say that the world is not other than the world, I see that all of those [properties] that I premised are, in that definition, the definition (which is predicated truly of all those [properties]) and that in the defined world they are the world. So goodness, greatness, truth, beauty, wisdom, perfection, clarity, and sufficiency are, in the defined world, the world; in the defined earth they are the earth. Just as in God-qua-defined they are God, and in Not-other they are Not-other, so in other they are the other. Therefore, when in the sun (which is something other) they are the sun, they are a sun that is said to be an other (viz., sun). Therefore, just as in God they are not other than unqualifiedly Not-other, so in the sun they are not other than other-that-is-called-sun. Therefore, the goodness of the sun is not unqualifiedly Not-other but is solar not-other, since in the sun [that goodness] is the sun. A similar point holds true in regard to all [those] other [properties].

**44** Here the intellect pursues wonderful and most savory knowledge, when in the eternal, most simple God it beholds most assuredly all those [properties] as God Himself who defines Himself and all things—and, hence, also beholds them, in every thing defined, as the thing defined. From this [consideration the intellect] knows that none of all existing things can be altogether devoid of the good, the great, the true, the beautiful, and so on regarding each of the aforesaid [properties]. And because no thing at all is devoid of sufficiency, all things

have been very adequately made, for each thing has as much sufficiency as is adequate for it. Likewise, no thing at all is devoid of wisdom and of clarity or of light, but each thing has as much of these as its nature requires, so that in the best way in which it can be, it is not other than it is.

- 45** O the marvelous Wisdom-of-God, which saw to be exceedingly good all the things that it made!<sup>120</sup> Therefore, [for us] to come, by means of [each and] every pursuit, to a marveling at this Eternal Wisdom is [for us] to draw near [to it]. Since, as Philo the wise says,<sup>121</sup> wisdom is a vapor of the power of God's majesty, a pursuer [of wisdom] marvels at the novel and very pleasant fragrance of this vapor—a fragrance that refreshes his entire intellectual capability. And because of that fragrance he is inflamed with indescribable desire for hastening to lay hold of the wisdom which he does not doubt to be nearby. Because of this joyous hope the pursuer's progress is both sustained and accelerated; but yet, it is slowed because of the burdensome body which he carries around with him.<sup>122</sup> And being unable to lay hold of very swiftly moving wisdom, which goes from one end [of the universe] to the other, he desires to be released from his body. And he renounces the intimate bond which unites him to his body, a bond which cannot naturally be greater. And he does not fear to die in order to lay hold of, and taste of, God's immortal food, viz., wisdom. And as the Incarnate Wisdom of God has taught us, it is not possible that any pursuer arrive by any other means at an apprehension of wisdom. Only someone who is worthy apprehends Incarnate Wisdom. But he who does not know that Wisdom is to be preferred to all things, including his own life, is not all-worthy. But let him be so aflame with love of Wisdom that he loses himself and all things but gains Wisdom.

**46**

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A continuation of the same topic [viz., on light].

The intellect rejoices in this most joyous pursuit. For this pursuit is good, great, true, beautiful, wise, delightful, perfect, clear, equal, and sufficient. For when the good is defined, the intellect sees that all of the aforementioned [properties]—viz., great, true, and the rest—are the good. And when the great is defined, the intellect sees that in the great, [qua defined,] the good, the true, and the rest of the [properties] are the great. And, similarly, in any one of those [properties] all [the other properties] are that [property]. And because in Not-other they are Not-



other, in Not-other good is not *other* than great and true and the rest of them; nor in Not-other is great *other* than the good and the true and the rest of them. For Not-other makes them all to be Not-other. Similarly, other makes them all to be other. For in an other, good is [this] other. A similar point holds true for the great and for the true. Therefore, since each thing is an other, it is not the case that the good will not be *other* than the great or than the true; yet, just as in Not-other [the good] is Not-other, so in an other it is [that] other.

47 Hence, since the sun is an other, it is not the case that its goodness is none other than its greatness or its truth, and so on. Rather, since each of those [properties] is solar, each is *other* than another [of them]. For solar goodness, contracted to the sun, is not that Absolute Goodness which is Not-other. And so, solar goodness is *other* than solar greatness and than solar truth and than the rest [of those properties]. For unless each of them [viz., solar goodness, solar greatness, etc.], were other, none of them would in any respect be other in the other which is called the sun. For the sun is in one respect good; in another respect, great; and in another, true; and so on regarding each of the [properties]. Therefore, falling short of the simplicity of Not-other, other is not free of composition, in contrast to Not-other. But an other in which Not-other shines forth the less is the more composite; for example, it is more composite in the case of a perceptible other than in the case of an intelligible other. Moreover, in solar goodness—in which greatness, truth, and the rest are that goodness—greatness does not fail to be other; rather, it is *other* than truth; and [in solar goodness] each [property] is *other* than each [other property], since in solar goodness, which is an other, each is solar goodness. Therefore, necessarily, solar goodness admits of composition, since [goodness which descends] from the simplicity of Not-other, or God, is contracted into solar otherness. So goodness, greatness, truth, and the rest (which in something composite are the composite) must be other and composite—even as in most simple God they are not *other* but are incompositely the simple God Himself, as things that are caused are, in their cause, the cause.<sup>123</sup>

48 Now, whatever the intellect can conceive of is either Not-other or other. Variation does not pertain to Not-other, since Not-other is that which (it)<sup>124</sup> can be, and is most simple and most perfect. And so, the intellect sees that all variation pertains to other. Therefore, the varieties of the modes-of-being of other receive differing names. Accord-

ingly, goodness, greatness, truth, and the rest constitute, in accordance with one mode of combination, that which is called *existing*; in accordance with another mode they constitute that which is called *living*; in accordance with still another mode they constitute that which is called *understanding*—and so on regarding them all. Now, all these things that exist and live and understand are none other than various receptions of Not-other, which defines them all. From these receptions there follow various degrees of Not-other's shining forth. In one thing [it shines forth] more clearly, and in another more dimly; [it shines forth] more clearly and lastingly in intelligible things, but more dimly and corruptibly in perceptible things. And it shines forth differently in the [different things].

## 49

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

A continuation of the same topic [viz., on light].

Proclus reports in Book One of *The Theology of Plato* that in the *Alcibiades* Socrates, who represents Plato, says that when the intellectual soul looks within itself, it observes God and all things.<sup>125</sup> For the intellectual soul sees that the things which are [ontologically] subsequent to it are shadows of intelligible things; and Proclus says that the things which are [ontologically] prior to the intellectual soul are seen, in the depth [of the soul], with one's eyes closed, as it were. For he says that all things are present in us in an enlivened way. This is the divine judgment of Plato.

I, too, think, as does Plato, that all things are in all things by virtue of these latter's respective mode-of-being. Thus, in our intellect all things are present in accordance with the intellect's mode of being. For example, goodness, greatness, truth, and all [the rest of] those ten [properties]<sup>126</sup> are, in all things, all [those] things: in God they are God; in the intellect, the intellect; in the senses, the senses.<sup>127</sup> If, then, these [properties] are, in God, *God* and in the intellect *the intellect* and in all things *all things*, surely in the intellect all things are the intellect. Therefore, in the intellect all things are present intellectually or conceptually or knowably. And because the intellect is good, great, true, beautiful, wise, and the rest of the ten, then when it beholds itself, it sees itself to be such as I have just said; and it is thoroughly content, since it sees that it is perfect<sup>128</sup> and adequate. And since the intellect is those [properties] intellectually, it is able by means of its own intellectual goodness to understand Absolute Goodness and con-

tracted goodness.<sup>129</sup> Likewise, [through its own intellectual] greatness [it is able to understand Absolute Greatness and contracted greatness] and through [its own intellectual] truth [it is able to understand Absolute Truth and contracted truth]. Similarly, by means of its own intellectual wisdom it makes concepts of Wisdom, which is free of all things, and concepts of wisdom that is contracted to all things; and by means of wisdom it beholds the order of things and contemplates the things that are ordered.

50 Hence, since knowledge is assimilation,<sup>130</sup> the intellect finds all things to be within itself as in a mirror that is alive with an intellectual life.<sup>131</sup> When the intellect looks within itself, it sees in itself all the assimilated things. And this assimilation is a living image of the Creator and of all things. But since the intellect is a living and intellectual image of God, who is not *other* than anything: when the intellect enters into itself and knows that it is such an image, it observes within itself what kind of thing its own Exemplar is. For, without doubt, the intellect knows that this Exemplar is its God, whose likeness the intellect is. For by means of the intellect's own goodness-of-conceiving the intellect knows that God's goodness, of which it is an image, is greater than it can conceive or think. Similarly, in looking into its own greatness (a greatness that intellectually encompasses all things), the intellect knows that the Exemplar-Greatness of its own God exceeds the scope [of the greatness]<sup>132</sup> that is the image of the Exemplar-Greatness—exceeds it because there is no limit of the Exemplar. A similar point holds true regarding all the rest of [the ten properties]. Moreover, the intellect sees, [ontologically] above itself, intelligences that are more lucid and more capable of grasping the Divinity; and [ontologically] subsequent to itself it sees perceptual cognition, which is dimmer and less capable of grasping the Divinity. Just how sufficient intellectual pursuit is, when within itself it continues unceasingly to deepen itself, is shown by the findings of the theologians, the philosophers, and the mathematicians—findings disclosed to us in multiple ways by their writings. But the manner in which Dionysius made an assuredly excellent pursuit in the field of light is found in his book *On the Divine Names*.

51

#### CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The fifth field, viz., the field of praise.

After I had passed through this field of light, a most lovely field of

praise-for-God immediately presented itself.<sup>133</sup> For after I had stored away in the refectory of my mind those things which I pursued in the field of light (among which were [concepts of] the aforementioned ten [properties], viz., goodness, greatness, truth, and the rest of them), I found all those things, and more, planted in the field of praise-for-God. And I said: “Since this beautiful and gladdening field yields only those ten [properties] and their likes, those ten are praises directed toward God.” And looking within myself, I took note of the fact that when the intellect affirms that the Definition that defines itself and all other things is good, great, true, etc., it endeavors to express praise for the Definition. For the intellect praised that Definition—which is God—because it is good, because it is great, because it is true, and so on. Therefore, what are those ten except a praising of God? What is praised by means of them except *that* Praise which is God? Are not all of [the ten] praised? Goodness is praised, greatness is praised, truth is praised, and each of the remaining things [is praised]. Therefore, these ten, along with other things that are praised by everyone of sound intellect, are used in praise of God and are rightly ascribed to God, because He is the Fount of praise.

52 Therefore, from the fact that all things are praisings and blessings directed toward God, they are that which they are. And so, the Prophet David, looking upon all the works of God, sang: “Bless the Lord, all you His works! Praise and superexalt Him forever!”<sup>134</sup> And he names [these works] individually: angels, the heavens, the earth, water, and all other created things, which praise God.<sup>135</sup> For all are nothing but a lovely and joyous praising of God. For as Dionysius attests, divine matters are known only by way of participation. For no intellect attains unto how divine matters are present in their Beginning and Foundation. “But whether we call that hidden Supersubstantial [Being] *Light* or *Life* or *Word*, we comprehend nothing other than the participants and powers that emanate from it to us; by means of these participants and powers we are transported unto God, and they bestow upon us substance and life and wisdom.”<sup>136</sup> Dionysius [says] these things. Therefore, each work of God rightly praises God because He is good. For each work acknowledges that it itself is good and praiseworthy by virtue of His gift. (A similar point obtains regarding great, true, and the rest.)

53 In the field-of-praise all the prophets and seers and higher intellects have conducted their very devout pursuits—something to which

sacred Scripture and the writings of the saints attest. In these writings all things are traced back to a praising of God. For example, when Dionysius wrote on the divine names, he called those names praises directed toward God. By means of those names he praised God, and he interpreted them unto the praise of God. For example, in the chapter on wisdom he praises intellect and reason; and he says that God is praised from a consideration of all substances.<sup>137</sup>

Therefore, in this field of praise I have grasped the fact that very savory knowledge<sup>138</sup> consists in praise for God, who<sup>139</sup> fashioned all things from out of His praises<sup>140</sup> and for the purpose of their praising Him. For just as different hymns of praise contain different harmonic combinations, so each species—viz., human, leonine, aquiline, and so on—is a special hymn composed of praises of God and made for the purpose of praising Him.

Celestial hymns are more gladsome and more praise-filled than are earthly hymns.<sup>141</sup> For example, the sun is a marvelous combination of praises for God. Moreover, each hymn is beautiful and individual in that it has, by virtue of its individuality, something which the other hymns lack. And so, all hymns are accepted by God, who said that all the things which He created were good through partaking of praise for Him; and He blessed all things. From the foregoing [considerations] I have concluded that, more than do all other visible things, man—who is a certain living and intelligent and very excellently composed hymn of praisings of God—has received from God's praises the obligation to praise God unceasingly and above all other things. And I concluded that his life consists only in the following: viz., that he render to God that which he has received in order to exist: viz., praises.<sup>142</sup> As a result thereof, he will hasten unto [man's] goal and will obtain the most happy rewards of immortal praises.

## 54

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

A continuation of the same topic [viz., on praise].

Therefore, all things praise God by their very existence. Since each thing is so perfect and sufficient that in no respect does it lack praise, assuredly it praises its Maker, from whom alone it has that which is praised. Therefore, all created things naturally praise God.<sup>143</sup> And when a creature is praised, it itself (which did not make itself) is not praised but its Creator is praised in regard to it. Therefore, idolatry, by means of which divine praise is given to a creature, is the mad-

ness of an infirm, blind, and misguided mind. For when one worships in place of God that which by its own nature praises its own Maker, surely this is an instance of madness. Moreover, there is not anything that recognizes to be God anyone other than Him whom it praises as Creator and than whom, as it knows, nothing is more excellent. Therefore, every creature knows and recognizes (as much as suffices for it) its Omnipotent Creator; it praises Him and hears and understands His word and obeys it.<sup>144</sup> For example, if the Creator were to command a stone to come alive, surely the stone would hear, would understand, and would obey. “For the dead shall hear the word of God and shall live,”<sup>145</sup> just as Lazarus<sup>146</sup> (who was dead for four days) and other dead men heard and became alive, even as Christians know these [events to have occurred]. Herefrom it is certain that when man (who has free choice)<sup>147</sup> ceases from praising God and when he no longer listens to the word of God (which speaks in him and in his conscience)<sup>148</sup> and no longer wills to understand and to obey, in order to act uprightly, then he is inexcusable (since he is reproached by his own nature) and is unworthy of the communion of the blessed, who praise God perpetually.

**55** Moreover, I pursued in this field the fact that the perpetual and most joyous praising of the Lord on the part of saintly spirits is indescribable. The more they love, the more praise they voice; and the more they praise, the more praise they themselves obtain and the more closely they draw near unto Him who is infinitely praiseworthy, even though they will never arrive at equality with Him. For just as a limitable time can never be extended to the point that it becomes like unlimitable perpetuity,<sup>149</sup> so neither can perpetuity, which is originated, ever be made equal to Eternity, which is unoriginated. Likewise, the perpetual damnation of rebel spirits will never become temporary and limitable.

But if worshipful observance (1) that exalts men who are perfect praisers of God<sup>150</sup> unto fellowship with both God and the saints and (2) that adorns them with divine praises is always maintained, it teaches what kind of praise they will obtain. Now, those who are perfect praise God in the highest and cast away things which can hinder this praise (e.g., love of self and of this world); and they deny themselves, giving themselves over to religion and mortifying the hindering love of self and of the world. They imitate the Teacher of truth, the Incarnate Word of God, who freely and by His word and example taught that the most terrible of all terrible things, viz., a most ignominious

death, is to be endured unto the praise of God. The countless number of martyrs who have followed Him in death have obtained immortal life. And today very many religious who have died to the world and who devote themselves to these praisings of God, struggle to become perfect praisers of Him.

56

## CHAPTER TWENTY

A continuation of the same topic [viz., on praise].

The prophet enjoined [us] to sing the praises of God by means of a ten-stringed harp. Heeding this [injunction], I have taken up only ten strings-of-praise: goodness, greatness, truth, and the other previously-mentioned “strings”. Now a harp is the work of intelligence, in order that man may have an instrument by means of which to arrive at sweet and delightful [musical] arrangements. For he makes to be audible and perceptible those arrangements which he has within himself intelligibly. And since these arrangements are in the intellect, those beings who have intellect are delighted to hear with the ear, and hear perceptibly by means of sound, that which they have in a non-perceptual way in the soul. Hence, if the [musical] sounds agree with the living harmonic numbers of the soul, then [men] praise the harp-player; if there is discord, then [men] blame the harp-player.

Three things are required if there is to be the singing of psalms: a harp composed of two things—viz., of a sound-board and of strings—and a harp-player: in other words, intelligence, nature, and an object. The harp-player is the intelligence, the strings are the nature, which is moved by the intelligence, and the sound-board is [the object], which befits the nature. Even as [these three] are present in the macrocosm, they are also present in man, who is a microcosm.<sup>151</sup> In man there is intelligence, human nature, and a body that besuits the nature. Thus, man is a living harp, having within himself all the things [necessary] for singing to God the praises with which he is acquainted within himself. For in and through the harp and the cithara, in and through the cymbals of jubilation and [other instruments] that sound good, every spirit praises the Lord. Our intellectual spirit has within itself all these instruments as living instruments.

57

Now, it is amazing wherefrom a man of sound intellect naturally has a knowledge of praising and of things praiseworthy or blameworthy.<sup>152</sup> For unless this knowledge were necessary to that nature—necessary for feeding it and sustaining it—man would not have knowl-

edge greater than does an ass. For just as Divine Providence does not stint with regard to things that are necessities, so it does not lavish with regard to things that are superfluities. And since we are nourished and fed from the things on the basis of which we exist, every living being seeks its own food. When it comes upon this food, it recognizes it,<sup>153</sup> and this [recognition occurs] because of the compatibility between the food and that on the basis of which the living being exists. Therefore, since in accordance with his intellectual soul man naturally knows praiseworthy things and embraces them and delights in them as in food compatible with his nature, he knows that he naturally exists from those things which he praises and embraces on account of their natural compatibility with his own being. Therefore, by the gift of Divine Providence the intellect has within itself all the knowledge-of-principles that is necessary for it [to have]. By means of these principles the intellect pursues what is compatible with its nature, and its judgment [in this respect] is infallible.<sup>154</sup>

And since the intellect's principles are praiseworthy, as are those ten frequently-mentioned [properties], and since man himself is originated from these principles<sup>155</sup> in order that God's praiseworthy-creature (*laus*) may praise its Creator, man is not altogether ignorant of his God, whom he knows to be praiseworthy and glorious forever. Moreover, man does not need any other knowledge, because he knows as much as is sufficient for him [to know] in order to do those things which he was created to do. Therefore, in praising God because He is good, assuredly man knows that goodness is praiseworthy. A similar point obtains regarding [his knowledge of] truth and wisdom and the rest. And although man does not know *what* these things are,<sup>156</sup> nevertheless he does not have complete ignorance of them, since he knows that they are praiseworthy and are enfolded in the praise of God and befit the praise of God to such an extent that without them man does not grasp that either God or anything else is able to be praised.

**58** Moreover, man knows that he must exercise his free choice<sup>157</sup> to the end of [choosing] things praiseworthy, so that he may be praiseworthy by choice as well as by nature. Goodness, virtue, truth, honorableness, fairness, and other such things are praiseworthy; and either they or their opposites can be chosen by free choice. If they are chosen, then the whole man—perfectly praiseworthy both because of his natural [tendencies] and because of his free choice—praises God. But if man chooses vices and things opposed to what is praiseworthy, he himself is not praiseworthy but is at odds with both himself<sup>158</sup> and



God. How, then, will one who is at odds with what is praiseworthy be able to praise God?

But one who ever-praises God makes progress continually—as a cithara-player makes progress in playing the cithara—and he becomes ever more like unto God. And this is the end of man: viz., to become more like unto God, as Plato rightly said.<sup>159</sup> For the more man praises God, the more pleasing he is to God. Therefore, he becomes both more praiseworthy and more like unto Divine Praiseworthiness. The wise Socrates rightly ascertained that we know nothing more assuredly than those things which are praiseworthy. And he admonished that our striving be directed only toward those praiseworthy things, with other things being cast aside as superfluous and uncertain. For he urged that we expend our efforts on praiseworthy moral practices (the knowledge of which we can elicit from ourselves)<sup>160</sup> and that from repeated acts we acquire a perfecting habituation—and in this way become progressively better.

## 59

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The sixth field, viz., the field of oneness.

When Aurelius Augustine endeavored to pursue wisdom, he wrote in his book *On Order* that the attention of all philosophers is focused on the One.<sup>161</sup> Subsequent to Augustine the very learned Boethius, writing about Oneness and the One, likewise declared for a fact that the pursuit of wisdom is to be made in that field.<sup>162</sup> Augustine and Boethius followed Plato, who asserts that the One is the first and eternal Beginning.<sup>163</sup> Prior to Plato there was Pythagoras the Samian, who investigated all things in terms of the property of number and who affirmed that the monad [*monas*] is the beginning of all things;<sup>164</sup> for oneness (*unitas*) precedes all multitude.<sup>165</sup>

Therefore, I want mentally to survey, for the sake of pursuit, this field of oneness. For although Not-other precedes oneness, nevertheless oneness is seen to be near to Not-other. For *one* and *same* are seen to partake of Not-other more than do other things. Plato claimed that the One is eternal; for he did not see anything except as subsequent to the One. For the One is prior to finitude and to infinitude, as says Dionysius,<sup>166</sup> who in this respect imitates Plato, when (as Proclus reports)<sup>167</sup> Plato posited—subsequent to the First Beginning—the finite and the infinite as beginnings. [He did so] because every existing thing is a combination of the finite and the infinite: from the finite it has

its being; from the infinite it has its power.<sup>168</sup> And since the One is that which it can be and is altogether simple and unreplicable, it is seen to enfold within itself all things, which do not at all remain if the One is removed. “For all things exist insofar as they are one.”<sup>169</sup>

60 Now, the One encompasses both those things which actually exist and those which are possible to come into existence. Therefore, the One is more comprehensive than is being, which exists only if it exists actually—although Aristotle states that *being* and *one* are convertible.<sup>170</sup> But that which moved Plato to avow that the One is to be preferred to all things and is the Beginning of all things was [the following]:<sup>171</sup>

Since what is originated has nothing from itself but has all things from its Beginning, then if the Beginning is posited, all originated things must be posited. Yet, if being is posited, then being-in-potency (which surely is something) is not posited; if life is posited, being qua devoid of life is not posited; if intellect is posited, being qua not-intelligent is not posited. Moreover, existing, living, and understanding *are* found in this world.<sup>172</sup> Therefore, the Beginning of the world will not be either being or life or intellect; rather, the Beginning will be that which enfolds in itself these things and what they can be.

And this Beginning Plato called the One. For “one” is predicated truly of potency and of actuality: “Potency is one”; “Actuality is one.” Likewise, [“one” is predicated truly] of being, life, and intellect.

61 Moreover, [according to Plato] there cannot be a multitude that does not partake of oneness. For if there were [such a multitude],<sup>173</sup> what is similar would be what is dissimilar, by virtue of not partaking of oneness: all the many things would be similar and, likewise, dissimilar for the same reason, viz., that they would not partake of oneness.<sup>174</sup> Therefore, all multitude, all plurality, all number, and all that can be said to be one would cease-to-be if the One were removed—even as these points are disclosed with wonderful subtlety in Plato’s *Parmenides*. Therefore, it cannot be the case that the One is *made*, since the One exists prior to what is made. Nor can the One be corrupted or changed or replicated, since it precedes the possibility-of-being-made and is all that which (it) can be. But as Dionysius states: “The One, which exists, is said to be replicated, producing from itself many substances; nevertheless, it remains one thing, which is God,

and the one God is united by replication and by procession.”<sup>175</sup> Therefore, all things that are possible to be made are both possible to be made and actually made by means of a partaking of unchanging and unreplicable Oneness. And because there can be only a single Oneness (which, as Dionysius says,<sup>176</sup> is more excellent than the senses and is incomprehensible to the mind and antecedent to the mind), Oneness is the one thing that unites all things, so that each thing exists insofar as it is one.<sup>177</sup> Moreover, prior to the possibility-of-being-made there is only the Eternal One.

**62** Hence, the following affirmation is not true: viz., that prior to the possibility-of-being-made there are gods who partake of the One as of a divine species. For since the Eternal One is unreplicable (because it is prior to the possibility of being replicated), there cannot be many gods united in one God (as being a first and eternal God)—united as in a divine species. For if there were gods, they would be more than one. Therefore, in eternity they would partake differently of the divine nature—something which is impossible, since the divine nature is something eternal and since absolutely simple Eternity is altogether unable to be partaken of. Therefore, Proclus engaged in utterly futile efforts in his six books on *The Theology of Plato* when he aimed to investigate, on the basis of uncertain surmises, the differences between those eternal gods and their ordered relation to the one God of gods. For there is only one eternal God, who—with regard to all the things because of which Proclus posits gods—is the absolutely sufficient Governor of this entire world.

**63** In all their inferences from this perceptible world and from those things which are necessary for the world in order for it to be that which it is—to be it in the best way in which this can occur—philosopher-pursuers are seen to inquire about God, about the gods, about the heavens and their motion, about fate, the intelligences, spirits, Ideas, and about nature itself. [They inquire about these things] as if all these things were necessary for this earthly world and as if this [earthly] world were the goal of all these things’ works. This is the way Aristotle speaks of<sup>178</sup> God, as does also Plato. Aristotle asserted that God governs the heavens by His providence.<sup>179</sup> But [he said] that the heavens exist for the sake of this [earthly] world and are moved by intelligences. [He added] that, consequently, the begettings and all the things necessary for conserving this world—necessary in accordance with the order and the motion of the heavens—are naturally

done and continued. Plato and Aristotle did not pay attention to the fact that countless stars are larger than this habitable earth and that so many intelligences were made not for the sake of this earthly world but for the praise of the Creator, as was mentioned above.<sup>180</sup> Therefore, there is one omnipotent God, who creates all things for the purpose of praising Him and who governs in terms of the best providence, as Epicurus rightly said.<sup>181</sup> (Epicurus did not deny that there are gods; however, he said to be very far from the truth that which is spoken and written of the gods.)

We must take note of the fact that of those who have ever affirmed there to be a plurality of gods, none have failed to prefer one God (viz., the God of gods) to a multitude [of gods].

Therefore, in this field of oneness wise pursuits are made (as Augustine made in his book *On the Trinity*) by him who sees that fertile *Oneness*, which begets from itself *Equality*, and that *Uniting Love*, which proceeds from Oneness and from Equality, exist in Eternity in such a way that they are most simple Eternity itself. I have written down elsewhere—in *Learned Ignorance* and *The Vision of God* and in many other books—the things which I was able to conceive as regards this topic [of the Trinity].

## 64

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

A continuation of the same topic [viz., on oneness].

Carefully surveying the field of oneness, Plato found the One, which is the Cause of all things and is prior to potentiality and to actuality,<sup>182</sup> which actuality arises from potentiality. And he found that the One, in order to be the Cause of all things, is not any of all the things; and in order to be the Cause of a plurality of things, it itself is not a plurality of things.<sup>183</sup> Hence, denying all things of the One, Plato saw it ineffably before all other things.<sup>184</sup> The book *Parmenides* shows how Plato made his pursuit of the One by means of logic. And Proclus, in his second book of *The Theology of Plato*, sums up [Plato's view] when he says:<sup>185</sup> he-who-believes-Plato remains amidst negations. For an addition<sup>186</sup> to the One contracts and diminishes the excellence of the One; and by means of an addition we are shown not-One rather than One.

Dionysius, who imitates Plato, made a similar pursuit within the field of oneness; and he says that negations that are not privative assertions but are excellent and abundant [negative assertions] are truer

[in regard to God] than are affirmations.<sup>187</sup> Proclus, however, who cites Origen, comes after Dionysius. Following Dionysius, he denies of the First, which is altogether ineffable, that it is one and good—although Plato called the First one and good.<sup>188</sup> Since I think that these marvelous pursuers are to be followed and praised, I refer one-who-is-studious to the careful considerations left behind for us in their writings.

65 And because in the field of oneness there is a certain singular meadow where very unique bounty is found, let us now visit that meadow for the sake of our pursuit. The meadow is called singularity.<sup>189</sup> For since the One is none other than the One, it is seen to be singular, because in itself it is undivided and yet is distinct from what is other [than it itself]. For the singular encompasses all things; for all things are individual things, and none of them are exactly repeatable. Therefore, since things individual are also things not exactly repeatable, they show that the One, which is the Cause of all singular things, is maximally unrepeatable; and [they show] that the One is essentially singular and essentially unrepeatable. For it is that which it can be and is the Singularity of all singular things. Hence, just as the Simplicity of all simple things is simple *per se*, than which there could not be anything more simple, so the Singularity of all singular things is singular *per se*, than which there cannot be anything more singular. Therefore, the Singularity of the One and Good is maximal, since, necessarily, everything singular is one and good and, hence, is folded in the Singularity of the One and Good. Likewise, the singularity of a species is more singular than the singularity of its individual members, the singularity of a whole is more singular than that of its parts, and the singularity of the world is more singular than that of all its individual members. Hence, just as [our] maximally singular God is maximally unrepeatable, so [ontologically] subsequent to God the singularity of the world is maximally<sup>190</sup> unrepeatable; and, next, [the singularity] of species [is maximally unrepeatable]; and thereafter [comes the singularity] of individuals, none of which are exactly repeatable.

Therefore, each thing rejoices over its singularity, which is present in it to such an extent that that thing is not exactly repeatable (just as in the cases of God, the world, and angels [exact repetition also is] not [possible].) For all things rejoice that in this respect they partake of the likeness of God.<sup>191</sup> And when from an egg a chick is made: al-

though the singularity of the egg ceases-to-be, nevertheless singularity itself does not cease-to-be, since the egg is as singular as the chick; and the one is not singular by virtue of another singularity than is the other.

**66** But there is one Cause of all singular things; it singularizes all things. It does not exist as a whole or as a part or as a species, an individual, a this, a that, or anything nameable. Rather, it is the most singular Cause of individual things. Since what is singular is made singular by an eternal Cause, it can never be resolved into what is not-singular. For by whom would be resolved that which has been made singular by an eternal Cause? Hence, a singular good never ceases to be [a singular good], since everything singular is good. Likewise, a singular being never ceases to be a singular being, since every actually existing singular is a being. And a singular material object, however much it may be divided, always remains a singular material object. Likewise, a line and a surface and a singular whole are not divisible except into singular parts, which were contained in the singularity of the whole. Therefore, no variation affects the singular but affects the accidents belonging to the singular—accidents which make the singular to be such and such. But if there is no variation in such accidents—e.g., either in quality or in quantity—the singular always continues on in the same manner, as is evident in the case of the heavenly bodies. Thus, Dionysius said that according to nature and substance not anything is corruptible but that accidents of the nature or the substance [are corruptible].<sup>192</sup> Therefore, singularity is incorruptible; it forms and conserves all things. And all things, by a most natural desire, seek the Cause of their singularity as being the sufficient and perfect most singular Good of all.

**67** I want to tell you of one more thing that I see to be marvelous above other things. By means of [considering] it you will ascertain that at one and the same time all things bear a likeness to God. Dionysius rightly said that opposites are to be affirmed and denied of God at the same time.<sup>193</sup> And so, if you turn toward all things, you too will discover [this fact] equally well. For since all things are singular, they are both *similar*, because they are singular, and *dissimilar*, because they are singular;<sup>194</sup> [and they are *not similar*, because they are singular], and *not dissimilar*, because they are singular. A corresponding point holds regarding *same* and *different*, *equal* and *unequal*, *singular* and *plural*, *one* and *many*, *even* and *odd*, *concordant* and *discordant*, and

the likes, although this [claim] seems absurd to the philosophers who adhere—even in theological matters—to the principle that each thing either is or is not [the case].<sup>195</sup>

Note, too, that the possibility-of-being-made is singular.<sup>196</sup> And so, whatever has been made or is made is singular, because it is made from the possibility-of-being-made. Therefore, the possibility-of-being-made is an imitable singularity; in its singular power all things are enfolded in a singular way, and they are unfolded from it in a singular way.

Moreover, singularity is nothing other than a likeness of Eternal Light. For singularity is discreteness. But light's nature is to discriminate and to singularize. [I have discussed] these points above<sup>197</sup> and also in the book that I wrote very recently in the Ancient City<sup>198</sup> regarding the shape of the world.<sup>199</sup>

68

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The seventh field, viz., the field of equality.<sup>200</sup>

Let us enter the field of equality—a field filled with pursuits. Assuredly, it is not the case that anything as it actually exists is replicable.<sup>201</sup> For since equality that is what it can be is prior to *other* and to *unequal*, it is found only in the domain of eternity; by contrast, equality that can be made more equal<sup>202</sup> is subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made. Hence, equality that is actually what it can be is unreplicable; for in eternity eternal Oneness begets it. Therefore, a plurality of things cannot be precisely equal. For if many things were [precisely] equal, they would not be a plurality but would be Equality itself. For just as goodness, greatness, beauty, truth, etc., which in eternity are Eternity itself, are also so equal that they are Equality, which is Eternity: so they are not more than one. Likewise, there cannot be a plurality of eternal things, since the Eternal is Actualized-possibility, i.e., is [actually] that which unqualifiedly can be. And likewise all eternal things are not more than one eternal thing, even as eternal Goodness, eternal Greatness, eternal Beauty, eternal Truth, eternal Equality are not more than one eternal thing. Similarly, they are not a plurality of equal things, because they are so equal that they are most simple Equality itself, which precedes all plurality.

69

Likewise, the equality of each actually existing thing is not replicable. For—like number—precision, which consists in what is indivisible, is not replicable, even as the number four or the number five is

not replicable. Hence, humanity does not become plural in a plurality of men, even as oneness does not become plural in a plurality of unitary things. Moreover, humanity itself cannot be partaken of equally by a plurality of men, to whom humanity gives the name “men”. For men are [men] by partaking of unreplicable humanity—indeed, by an unequal partaking, which makes them to be more than one. And just as humanity is unreplicable as it is, so also this particular man, as well as every [particular] thing, [is unreplicable]. Moreover, every composite is composed of unequal parts. Thus, a composite number cannot be composed except of the even and the odd, and a harmonic tune is composed of the base and the treble.

**70** It is evident that all equal things, which are not absolute Equality,<sup>203</sup> can be made more equal. And this possibility of all things’ being made [more equal] is defined and delimited only by Equality itself, which precedes the possibility-of-being-made and which alone is not *other* than anything, whereas all other things are unequally unequal to one another. Yet, none of them lack equality, through which each one of them is that which, equally, it is (because it is neither more nor less [than what it is]) and is altogether none other than what it is. But Equality itself is the Word of Not-other, i.e., of God the Creator, who defines and speaks of both Himself and all things.<sup>204</sup>

Therefore, all things, though unequal to one another, partake of equality as the form-of-being of each of them; and in this regard they are equal [to themselves, respectively]. But because they partake of equality unequally, they are unequal [to one another]. Therefore, all things both agree and differ. Just as each species is a *oneness* that unites within itself all the members that belong to that species, so also it is an *equality* that equally forms [all] the united members; and, likewise, it is the *union* of them all.

Because at an earlier time at Rome I wrote extensively about equality,<sup>205</sup> let these present statements, as expressed here, suffice.

**71**

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The eighth field, viz., the field of union.

Making now our pursuit in the field of union, we note that union is constituted prior to all division. Therefore, we see that this indivisible Eternity is that which it can be, that it precedes the possibility-of-being-made, and that it proceeds most directly from eternal Oneness and Equality-of-Oneness.<sup>206</sup> For just as division proceeds from plurality



and inequality, so loving Union proceeds from Oneness and Equality. Since prior to plurality Oneness and Equality are present in indivisible, most simple Eternity, their Union will likewise be eternal. Therefore, (1) Oneness and (2) the Equality begotten from Oneness and (3) the Union of both [the Oneness and the Equality] are—prior to the possibility-of-being-made and to plurality-which-divides—simple Eternity itself. For eternal Oneness, eternal Equality-of-Oneness, and the eternal Union of both are not an eternal, divided plurality but are Eternity itself, which is unrepeatable and altogether indivisible and unchangeable.

Although the Begetting Oneness is not the Equality begotten from it or the Union proceeding from it, nevertheless it is not the case that the Oneness is one thing,<sup>207</sup> the Equality another, and the Union still another; for they are Not-other, which precedes other. Therefore, just as eternal Oneness (which is what it can be) enfolds unitedly within itself all things, and just as Equality-[of-Oneness] enfolds within itself all things equally, so also the Union of both unites all things within itself.

72 Therefore, because that which all existing things are they are from that eternal Trinity (which is spoken of, although less properly, as Trinity), I see that they imitate the Trinity. For in each thing I see oneness, being, and the union of both, so that each thing is actually that which it is. (Being, i.e., the form-of-being, is equality-of-oneness.) For uniting-oneness begets from itself an equality with itself. Equality-of-oneness is nothing but the form-of-being,<sup>208</sup> which is called being because in Greek “being” is derived from “one”.<sup>209</sup> Therefore, every existing thing is nothing but oneness and equality-of-oneness (which is being) and the union of both. Oneness is a restrictedness on fluidity; equality is a forming of what is unitary and restricted; the union is the loving bond of both. Unless the possibility-of-being-made were restricted with respect to its disorderly fluidity—restricted by a uniting power—it would not admit of beauty<sup>210</sup> or form. But because it is restricted by a oneness that directs all things toward a goal, form (which such a restriction requires or earns) is begotten from the oneness. Therefore, from the oneness and the form there proceeds the loving union of both.

73

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

A continuation of the same topic [viz., on union].

You now recognize that love, which is the union of oneness and of being,<sup>211</sup> is something very natural. For it proceeds from oneness and

equality, which are its very natural beginning. From them is breathed forth the union in which they are most desiringly united. Therefore, nothing is devoid of that love, without which no thing would continue to exist. Therefore, an invisible spirit-of-union<sup>212</sup> pervades all things. All the parts of the world are conserved within themselves by this spirit, and these parts are united to the world as a whole. This spirit unites the soul to the body; and after it has departed, enlivenment [of the body] ceases.

The intellectual nature will never be deprived of such a spirit-of-union, since that union is [the union] of an immaterial nature.<sup>213</sup> For since both the oneness and the being of the intellectual nature are intellectual, they are bound together by an intellectual union. But the intellectual union of love can neither fail nor perish, since the activity of understanding is nourished by immortal wisdom. Therefore, the natural union of the intellectual nature—a nature inclined toward wisdom—not only conserves the intellectual nature, in order that it may exist, but also adapts it to that which it naturally loves, in order that it may be united thereto. Hence, the spirit of wisdom descends unto the spirit of intellect<sup>214</sup> in accordance with the fervor of the desire—as what is desired descends unto the one who desires—and turns the spirit of intellect unto itself, united to the spirit of intellect by love. As Dionysius says:<sup>215</sup> like fire, it assimilates what is united to it—assimilates it according to the aptitude of each [assimilated] thing. And in this union of love the intellect finds happiness and lives happily.

Few philosophers recognized the foregoing [truth]. For the philosophers are not found to have recognized the Beginning-of-union, without which nothing exists and every intellectual nature would lack happiness. Because they failed in that regard, they did not attain true wisdom. Elsewhere, including in various sermons, I have spoken and written many things about this topic. It suffices to have summarized them as I just have.

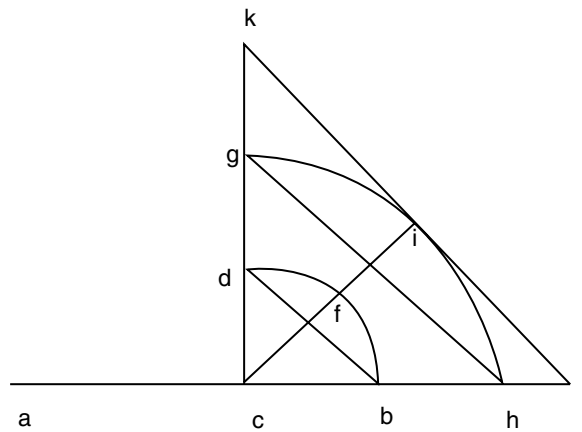
## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

A continuation of the same topic [viz., on union].

I will now furnish a mathematical illustration, so that you may see that since the aforementioned Trinity is a Oneness, it is that which it can be, although it precedes all that is understood and although it is comprehended only incomprehensibly by any human mind.<sup>216</sup> By means of this illustration God is seen as prior to the possibility-of-being-made

and as prior to what is impossible; [He is seen] in such a way as to be that thing—whatever it is—which the impossible succeeds.<sup>217</sup>

I premise that a straight line is simpler than a curved line, since a curved line, deviating from a straight line, cannot be conceived apart from *concave* and *convex*. Next, I presuppose that the first bounded rectilinear figure is a triangle, into which all polygons are resolved, as into a prior and simpler figure, and before which there is no other figure into which the triangle can be resolved.<sup>218</sup> But since there is no line that is without a length, a line that is not as long as its length [could be] is imperfect in comparison with a line that cannot be longer. Therefore, if the First Beginning<sup>219</sup> could be depicted, it would be a perfect triangle of three perfect sides—just as in the following way the intellect sees the [perfect triangle] in a perceptible triangle's possibility-of-being-made.



- 75 Let  $a b$  be a straight line. And at one of its points, viz.,  $c$ , describe a quadrant whose radius is  $c b$ . And draw another radius  $c d$ . And let the arc  $d b$  be a quadrant-arc whose midpoint is  $f$ . And draw the chord  $d b$ . Then extend  $c d$  and  $c b$  to infinity. And at  $c$  describe the quadrant of a larger circle—the quadrant-arc being  $g h$ , whose midpoint is  $i$ . And draw, as previously, the chord  $g h$ ; and draw a tangent, viz.,  $k i l$ , at a right angle to the arc  $g h$ .

It is certain that the triangle-like figure  $c d f b$  has for its center a right angle and has with respect to its arc two angles, each of which is greater than  $45^\circ$ —as much greater as is the size of the angle between the chord and the arc. Now, in the larger circle, viz.,  $c g i h$ , the angles with respect to the arc are larger than they are in the small-

er circle [ $c d f b$ ], for the angle of incidence with chord  $g h$  is greater than with chord  $d b$ . Therefore, it is certain that the angles formed by the radius<sup>220</sup> and the arc can become ever larger when the arc is the arc of an [ever-]larger circle. Therefore, if it were possible to draw the arc of a maximal<sup>221</sup> circle, which cannot be larger, those angles with respect to the arc would, necessarily, be that which acute angles are able to be. And so, they would be right angles; for when an acute angle cannot be larger, it is a right angle. And because the arc intersecting the two straight radii would form two right angles, it could not possibly fail to be a straight line.

76 Therefore, let there be the triangle  $c k l$ , which, as above, I mentally view with my mind. Assuredly, since  $c k$  is the radius of a circle that cannot be larger, the radius  $c k$  will also be a line that cannot be longer—and similarly for  $c l$ . Now, the arc  $k l$  cannot be smaller [than  $c k$  or  $c l$ ]. For how could the arc of a quadrant be smaller than the radius of the circle? Therefore, all [three of] these lines, which are the sides of the triangle, will be equal. And since each [of the lines] is maximal, then if you were to add to any side of the triangle the other side or the two other sides, the side added-to would not be made longer.<sup>222</sup> Therefore, each side is equal to each other side and to two sides together and to all the sides together.

Furthermore, the exterior angle, viz.,  $k c a$ , is equal to the two interior angles that are opposite to it [viz.,  $c k l$  and  $c l k$ ]. And because  $a c k$  is as  $k c l$ , the two right angles  $c k l$  and  $c l k$ <sup>223</sup> will be as  $k c l$ . But because every triangle has three angles equal to two right angles, and because each of the aforementioned angles [viz.,  $k c l$ ,  $c k l$  and  $c l k$ ,] is equal to two right angles, each of the angles is equal to all three angles. Similarly, each angle is equal to the other and is equal to both others [together] and is equal to all three [together]. Moreover, this triangle would be the enfolding of all befigurable figures—as being their beginning and resolution and as being their end and most precise measure. Therefore, as is evident: if [this triangle's] possibility-of-being-made were so perfected that it would be altogether actualized, so that it were actualized-possibility, then the foregoing consequences would, necessarily, obtain in the foregoing way.<sup>224</sup>

77 Now, I am most certain that if I see these [consequences] to be somehow or other necessary, then they actually<sup>225</sup> obtain in an incomparably truer way with regard to Actualized-possibility.<sup>226</sup> For

whatever can reasonably be seen [in the case of the illustration] is not lacking to Actualized-possibility, since Actualized-possibility is actually and most perfectly all things comprehensible and all things that transcend all comprehension. As Blessed Anselm truly asserts: God is something greater than can be conceived.<sup>227</sup> And St. Thomas in his book *On the Eternity of the World* speaks quite clearly as follows: “Since it pertains to God’s omnipotence that He transcend all intellect and all [finite] power, someone expressly detracts from God’s omnipotence if he says that there can be understood on the part of creatures something which cannot be made by God.”<sup>228</sup> Therefore, in Actualized-possibility, which is actually eternal, I see the maximal triangle to exist in the way previously described. Therefore, Actualized-possibility is prior to all material quantity, since in material quantity—whether discrete quantity or continuous quantity—Actualized-possibility is not to be found. Rather, Actualized-possibility precedes everything perceptible, everything intelligible, and everything finite. For among all those things that can be conceived, there is not found that Trinity which is Oneness, or that Oneness which is Trinity.

- 78 Moreover, you see that one nature’s possibility-of-being-made does not reach its limit in that same nature,<sup>229</sup> because Actualized-possibility and the possibility-of-being-made are of different natures. For example, if the heatable were to be that which it can be, it would no longer be that which can be heated but would be only that which heats. Pieces of wood can be made hotter and hotter. But when they have been heated to the point that they cannot be made still hotter, then from out of their potency fire arises actually; this fire cannot be made hotter but only heats. And if in the case of one heatable object we come more quickly to that which heats than we do in the case of another, then we do so because the one object comes more quickly to the limit of its heatability than does the other object. And that object which is never made so hot that it cannot be made hotter never comes to its limit and, thus, never becomes fire. In what is heatable, heating is only potentially heating. Therefore, when heating comes from potency into actuality, it is not the case that something essentially new arises. For the same thing passes from one mode of being into another mode of being. Therefore, since fire is present potentially in everything heatable (although it is less distantly present in one thing and more distantly present in another), this fact shows that fire is hidden in every object of this world. For all things are either fire-that-heats or what-can-be-heated. But since fire cannot be made cold, even

though it can actually be extinguished or suffocated, water is not present potentially in fire, and (as Dionysius says)<sup>230</sup> fire is unchangeable.

- 79** This is the gist of the rule of learned ignorance: viz., that with regard to things that admit of more and less we never come to an unqualifiedly maximum or to an unqualifiedly minimum, even though we do come to what is actually maximal and to what is actually minimal. For example, when what is heatable arrives at being unqualifiedly maximal, it is no longer something heatable but is something that heats. For the maximum of the heatable is the heating. Likewise, the maximum of that-which-can-become-cold is that-which-causes-to-be-cold; and the maximum of the movable is what moves by nature; and, in general, with regard to nature, the maximum of what-can-be-caused is what-causes. The causability is not the causing that is present potentially; however, in the causability the causing is present potentially. For the causable never becomes the causing; rather, at the limit of causability the causing that is present potentially passes over into actuality. Hence, the heatable never becomes the heating fire, although at the limit of heatability the fire that is present potentially in the heatable object passes over into actuality.

And, likewise, at the limit of things intelligible we see the active intellect.<sup>231</sup> The limit, then, of things intelligible is an actuality. Likewise, the intelligible in actuality is the intellect in actuality; and the perceptible in actuality is the senses in actuality. Likewise, at the limit of things illuminable is the light that illumines; and at the limit of things creatable is the Creator who creates and who can be seen in creatable things but who is actually present only at the Limit of creatable things. This Limit is an unlimited, or infinite, Limit. For great is our pursuit by means of the net of this oft-mentioned rule [of learned ignorance].

**80**

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The ninth field, viz., the field of delimitation.<sup>232</sup>

The field next to union—a field which I call delimitation—is full of very desired bounty and is most suitable for [making] a pursuit [within it] and is maximal and undelimited, because there is no end of its magnitude. For Delimitation does not have either a beginning or an end. Rather, it contains within itself the beginnings, the middle-parts, and the ends of all delimitable things—even as it unfolds all things

and determines all things, since in being the Root of omnipotence it contains all things within its own power. Individual things exist in their own precise way, so that they are none other than what they are. But Undelimited Delimitation<sup>233</sup> is the End of all endable things and is the Preciseness and Delimitation of all precise things. The Delimitation that is all that (it) can be precedes all delimitation of those things that can be made. Therefore, it determines all things and defines individual things. For the Delimitation of the possibility-of-being-made is, assuredly, undelimited and contains antecedently and determinately within itself all that can be made. Therefore, it is the Delimitation of all things and of all knowledge.

**81** But what is that which posits a delimitation except Mind and Wisdom? For Mind, as Anaxagoras very well saw, determines disordered possibility and discerns all things and moves all things so that they arrive at their own delimitation, which Mind has predetermined for them. Mind has defined the exemplars of things.<sup>234</sup> These exemplars are, as Dionysius very well saw when he wrote *On the Divine Names*, the forms of things. They pre-exist in Mind; in accordance with them Divine Wisdom predestined<sup>235</sup> (or predetermined) and produced all things. What, then, are those exemplars (about which you also heard earlier on)<sup>236</sup> other than delimitations that determine all things? It is certain that the Divine Mind is the Delimitation of all those forms. For the Divine Mind has reasonably determined those exemplars within itself. If you direct your vision unto [the state ontologically] prior to the possibility-of-being-made, and if from a human viewpoint you consider that God planned from eternity to will to create, then (since nothing was as yet created—neither heavens nor earth nor angels nor anything else) surely those exemplars were not more creatable than were other exemplars that have nothing in common with them and of which we cannot form any concept<sup>237</sup> But God Himself determined within His own Concept that He would create this world, i.e., this beautiful creation which we see.

**82** Therefore, from the [Divine] Mind's [pre-]determination within itself, all things received the delimiting of their being such and such. And in creating (in accordance with its eternal Concept) the possibility-of-being-made, the Divine Mind determinately ordered it unto this world and this world's parts—determinately ordered it as it was pre-conceived in eternity.<sup>238</sup> For the possibility-of-being-made was not created as nondescript and indeterminate but was created to the end,

and delimitation, that it become this world and not anything else. Therefore, that Concept (which is also called a mental Word and Wisdom) is a Delimitation that has no delimitation. For no other mind preceded the Divine Mind and determined it to create this world.<sup>239</sup> Rather, because the eternal Divine Mind is free to create or not to create either in this way or in that, it determined—as it willed to, and of itself, and from eternity—its own omnipotent act.

The human mind, which is an image of the Absolute Mind and which in a human fashion is free, posits, in its own concepts, delimitations for all things; for it is a mind that conceptually measures all things.<sup>240</sup> In this conceptual way it imposes a delimitation on lines, which it makes to be long or short; and it imposes end-points on the lines, just as it chooses to. And the human mind first determines within itself whatever it proposes to do; and it is the delimitation of all its own works. Moreover, whatever-it-does does not delimit it so that it cannot do more things; rather, in its own way it is an undelimited delimitation.<sup>241</sup> I wrote about this topic in my book *On Mind*.<sup>242</sup>

83

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

A continuation of the same topic [viz., on delimitation].

It is evident that Divine Wisdom lies hidden in this field and is to be found by a diligent pursuit. For Divine Wisdom is that which has placed limits on the ocean and on dry land, on the sun, the moon, the stars, and their movements, and which has determined for every creature a law beyond which it cannot pass. Divine Wisdom has determined the species, the orbit or the place for each individual thing. It has placed the earth in the middle, and it has determined that the earth be heavy and be moved toward the center of the world so that in this way it would always exist in the middle and never veer either upwards or sideways. Divine Wisdom has determined for every creature its measure, its weight, and its number.<sup>243</sup> And in this way the Divine Mind has most wisely determined all things, so that no thing lacks a reason for existing in the way it does rather than in some other way.<sup>244</sup> And if things were to lack such a reason, then all things would be disordered. Therefore, the Divine Mind is the Measure and the Delimiting of all things, because it is the Rational Ground and the Definition of both itself and all things.

84

Therefore, the possibility-of-being-made that concerns the perfection and delimitation of species is itself not delimited by those species



but rather by their Undelimited Delimitation.<sup>245</sup> And so, species have as exemplars<sup>246</sup> only the Divine Mind, by means of which they are what they are and with respect to which they are delimited. For the Divine Mind is Reason which cannot be greater and more perfect [than it is]; and so, it is also Mind itself. For reason is perfect to the extent that mind, or intellect,<sup>247</sup> shines forth in it. Therefore, Mind shines forth differently in different [exemplifications of] reason—in one [exemplification] more perfectly than in another. Therefore, since Reason that cannot be more perfect is everything which it can be, it is Eternal Mind itself. Therefore, the forms, or exemplars, of all things look unto that Eternal Reason, in which they are most perfectly delimited. For they are valid and perfect forms only insofar as they partake of Eternal Reason, which is Eternal Mind; by partaking thereof they are what they are. Therefore, the variety of exemplars results only from a difference in the forms' participation, since they partake differently of Eternal Reason.

**85** Therefore, all things that are determined in species by their exemplars are content, because by means of their species their possibility-of-being-made is determined. In and through these species things partake of Eternal Reason<sup>248</sup> and of the Divine Mind,<sup>249</sup> which is the most excellent Creator of them all. Therefore, since a species is a specific determination of the possibility-of-being-made, it shows to be of the same species those things whose possibility-of-being-made would receive the same delimitation if that were possible. For example, all men are of the same species because if each man could be made to be that which a man could become, the perfection of each's possibility-of-being-made would be delimited by the exemplar-form, i.e., by intelligible human nature. The case is similar with regard to all circles, each of which, if it could be made to be as perfect as a circle could become, would be delimited by that exemplar-form of 'equidistance of the center from the circumference'; and so, they are all of the same species. Those who have not paid attention to this fact have often been deceived: they have denied to be of the same species things that were of the same species, and they have affirmed to be of the same species things that were not so.

**86** CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

A continuation of the same topic [viz., on delimitation].

Granted that our mind is not the origin of things and does not deter-

mine their essences (for this [ontological] prerogative belongs to the Divine Mind), it is the origin of its own operations, which it determines; and in its power all things are enfolded conceptually. In vain have very many pursuers [of wisdom] tired themselves with seeking to apprehend the essences of things.<sup>250</sup> For the intellect apprehends nothing which it has not found in itself.<sup>251</sup> But the essences and quiddities<sup>252</sup> of things are not themselves present in the intellect; rather, only the notions-of-things, which are assimilations and likenesses of things, are present there.<sup>253</sup> For the intellect's power consists in [the intellect's] being able to assimilate itself to all intelligible things. Thus, in the intellect are present representations, or assimilations, of things. Hence, the intellect is called the locus of representations. But the intellect is not at all the essence of essences. Therefore, in vain it looks in its own understanding for things' essences, which are not present there. For just as sight has in its own power<sup>254</sup> only visible representations, or visible forms, and just as hearing has only audible forms, so too the intellect has in its own power only intelligible forms, or intelligible representations. But God alone has in His causal power the essences and essential forms of all things.

- 87 Hence, although all things are visibly present in sight, nevertheless sight cannot on this account attain unto intelligible objects, which precede and transcend sight's power; nor can it directly attain unto audible objects, which are not encompassed by its power. Nevertheless, at times, sight attains unto these [sounds] indirectly in invisible signs and visible writings;<sup>255</sup> but it does not at all—either directly or indirectly—attain unto intelligible objects.<sup>256</sup> For sight is subsequent to intelligible objects and is of insufficient power to apprehend them. Similarly, the intellect cannot at all attain unto—so as to understand them—the essential forms and quiddities of things, since they precede and transcend its conceptual power. (The intellect can, however, through those things which it understands, make surmises about essential forms.) God alone, the Creator of and Giver of<sup>257</sup> those essential forms, beholds them in Himself. Properly speaking, God does not *understand*; rather, He *imparts being*. And [for Him to do] this is [for Him] to be the Delimitation of all things. For the possibility of being made comprehending does not reach a limit except in the case of [that] Intellect which is what it can be.<sup>258</sup> And so, that Intellect's understanding does not arise because of things, but things exist because of it. By contrast, our intellect understands when it assimilates itself to all things.<sup>259</sup> For it would not understand anything if it did

not assimilate itself to what is intelligible, in order to read within itself that which it understands—i.e., to read it within its own word, or concept. Moreover, within itself the intellect is able to attain unto its own quiddity and essence only in the manner in which it understands other things: viz., by forming, if it can, an intelligible assimilation of itself.<sup>260</sup> By comparison, sight does not see itself. For unless sight were made visible, how could it see [itself]? But from man's seeing other things, he rightly attains unto the fact that sight is present in him; nevertheless, he does not see his sight. Similarly, man, in knowing that he understands, understands that intellect is present in him. Nevertheless, he does not understand what intellect is.<sup>261</sup> (These points were touched upon previously, where the reply of the man from India was reported.)<sup>262</sup> For since the Divine Essence is not known, it follows that no thing's essence can be cognitively comprehended.

**88** Recall that I stated above that the notions of things are subsequent to the things.<sup>263</sup> Therefore, the intellective power extends itself to the notions of things; and, thus, it is subsequent to the essences of things. Now, the essence of the intellective power is [ontologically] earlier than the intellective power itself and [ontologically] earlier than perceptual essences, which are less excellent [than the intellective essence] and which are subsequent to it. For it is not the case that the essence of the intellective soul just is the intellective soul's power. Indeed, [such an identity of essence and power as] this can hold true only in the case of God, who precedes the difference between actuality and potentiality, as is seen to have been shown sufficiently above.<sup>264</sup> For we do not know all the things that can be known by man. For example, you are not a grammarian, a rhetorician, a logician, a philosopher, a mathematician, a theologian, a mechanic, and all other such things which you can nonetheless become since you are a man. Although in you the possibility-of-being-made-a-man is actually determined in such a manner as you are (this determination is your essence), nevertheless the possibility-of-being-made-a-man is not at all perfect and [fully] determined in you.

Hence, as Proclus reports,<sup>265</sup> the Platonists—viewing this infinite and boundless possibility-of-being-made—asserted that all things derive from the finite, or determinate, and the infinite: the Platonists related the finite to [a thing's] determinate essence, and they related the infinite to [its] power and [its] possibility-of-being-made.

89

## CHAPTER THIRTY

The tenth field, viz., order.

Dionysius, that man who was keener than all others, discovered in his quest for God that with respect to God opposites are truly predicated together and that with respect to God privation is an excellence,<sup>266</sup> for God is said [by him] to be the insubstantial Substance of all things, who transcends all substance.<sup>267</sup> Afterwards, he came to speak as follows, in his chapter on wisdom:

In addition to the foregoing points we must ask how it is that we know of God, who is neither understandable nor perceptible nor anything at all that is characteristic of intelligible things. Perhaps we will speak truly [if we say] the following: that we do not know God according to His nature; indeed, He is the Unknown, and He transcends all reason and all the senses. But we ascend from all creatures' very orderly arrangement, as it is produced by God and as it displays certain images and likenesses of the Divine Exemplars of it itself—ascend rightly and appropriately, as best we can, unto that which transcends all things in that it is the most eminent Privation of all things and the Cause of all things. Hence, God is known both by means of all things and apart from all things; and He is known through knowledge and through ignorance. Concerning Him there is an understanding, an explanation, a notion, a feeling, a sensing, an opinion, an imagining, a name, and all other things; and, yet, He is not understood, not spoken of, not named, and is not any of the things that exist, and is not known in terms of any creature. In all things He is all things, and in nothing He is nothing; on the basis of all things He is known to everyone, and, yet, it is not the case that on the basis of any of them He is known to anyone. Indeed, we very rightly make these statements about God; and from a consideration of all substances He is celebrated and praised in accordance with the likeness [to Him] of all things and the orderliness of all things—of which things He is the Author.<sup>268</sup>

Moreover, a very divine knowledge of God is obtained through ignorance (in accordance with that union which is beyond understanding) when the intellect—withdrawing from all beings and then taking leave of itself—is united to the superresplendent rays and is then and there illuminated by an inscrutable depth of wisdom. Indeed, as I have said, [the Divine Mind] is to be known from all things. For according to the Holy Scriptures the Divine Mind creates all things and always harmonizes all things and is the indestructible Cause of the order and harmony of all things. And it always unites the end-points of primary things to the beginning-points of secondary things and beautifully makes a single union and harmony of the universe.<sup>269</sup>

90 These statements have seemed to me to be important and to contain very fully the entire pursuit of that divine man; and so, I have judged

that they ought to be inserted here. The Apostle Paul, the teacher of this same Dionysius, said that the difference between those things that are from God and other things consists in the fact that the things that are from God are, he said, orderly.<sup>270</sup> Elsewhere<sup>271</sup> Dionysius rightly acknowledged that God is the Ordering of all ordered things. Therefore, at the limit of things that can be made orderly the Author of order is seen. For since this world was meant to be beautiful, and since its parts could not be exactly alike but [had to be] different so that an immense beauty would shine forth more perfectly in the variety of parts because no parts, however different, would be devoid of beauty, the Creator was pleased to create together with the variety such an orderliness that the Ordering that is Absolute Beauty itself would shine forth in all things together. Through this Ordering the highest-things-from-among-the-lowest-things, harmoniously united to the lowest-things-from-among-the-highest-things, would come together into a single beautiful universe. And through this Ordering all things, being content with their own gradation in relation to the goal of the universe, would enjoy peace and rest, than which nothing is more beautiful.

**91** The foot, which is lowest in man, is content with the fact that it is the lowest and is a foot—even as the eye is content with being an eye and with being in the head. For the foot and the eye recognize that, as regards man's perfection and his beauty, they are necessary members if they are as they are and if they are located in their prescribed place. Outside of these prescribed places they are neither beautiful nor necessary, nor do they view the perfect beauty of the entire body, nor do they contribute to the body's complete beauty. Rather, insofar as they are aberrant, they render the entire body deformed. Therefore, their size is ordered so as to be beautiful, so that from them and the other members the size of the body turns out to be beautiful. Therefore, the proportion of each member to each other member, and to the whole, is ordered by the Orderer of all things, who created man as beautiful. For this is the proportion without which the one relative relation of the whole and of the parts to the whole would not at all seem beautiful and best-ordered.

**92**

#### CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

A continuation of the same topic [viz., on order].

Furthermore, so that you may view order in eternity, consider [the following]: Since all things which [derive] from the possibility-of-being-

made, so that they actually exist, presuppose an order in terms of which what is possible to be made is [actually] made, then surely order itself, which is all that it can be, is eternal. For if order had been created, then surely in an *orderly* way it would have passed over to actuality from what-is-possible-to-be-made. Thus, order would already have existed before it existed—[something contradictory]. Therefore, order has neither a beginning nor an end. Hence, order is eternal.

But how is it that order is present in the most simple Beginning of things unless order is the Beginning itself—is *Beginning without beginning* and is *Beginning from a Beginning* and is also *Beginning proceeding from both* of these?<sup>272</sup> For apart from these [three] order cannot be seen to be present in the Beginning, since a beginning, a middle, and an end are of the essence of order. If [these three] are denied to be present in the simplicity of the Eternal Beginning, which is also Eternal Order, then order is denied [to be present there]. If order is removed, then nothing remains, since what is deprived of order and beauty cannot exist.<sup>273</sup> For how could being that lacks order and beauty have passed from potentiality to actuality? And if the Beginning lacks order, then from where do things originated have their order?

- 93 Furthermore, I see [the following]: From the fact that there is Beginning without a beginning, Beginning from a Beginning, and Beginning proceeding from both, there will likewise be (1) that which is originated but not from any prior originated thing, (2) that which is originated from this first originated thing, and (3) that originated thing which proceeds from these two. That which is originated apart from any earlier originated thing is *essence*; that which is originated from this first originated thing is *power*, and that originated thing which proceeds from these two is *operation*. Indeed, these [three] are found in all things, so that all things partake of Divine Order. This entire world is a world of things intellectual, things living, and things existent.<sup>274</sup> The intellectual nature is supreme, not having prior to it anything originated earlier [than it]. The vital nature is in the middle, being preceded by the intellectual nature, which is its basis (*hypostasis*). But the nature of existence proceeds from both [of these others]. In the first nature the two subsequent ones are enfolded; for it understands, lives, and exists. The second nature lives and exists; therefore, in the second nature is enfolded the third nature (just as the third nature is also enfolded in the first nature); this third nature only exists. The first nature's existing and living are its understanding. The second nature's existing and understanding are its living. The third na-

ture's understanding and living are its existing.

- 94 Divine Dionysius describes what participation in the Divine Order is in the case of the angelic hierarchy and what it is in the case of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. One who studies the matter sees and marvels at the following: at what a partaking of order there is on the part of species and by each species; at what [order] there is in celestial bodies and in both their temporal movements and the temporal movements of living beings; at what a partaking of order there is on the part of all things which arise from the human mind (on the part of the mind's powers, its management and governance of both affairs-of-state and private affairs, its knowledge of the mechanical and the liberal arts). And [he sees and admires] by what very orderly rules and means all things beautifully proceed, are beautifully found to exist, are beautifully composed, and are beautifully imparted.

When asked, the boy whom Meno kept questioning in an orderly way gave correct answers to all the questions about geometry, as if he had a knowledge that was innately present in the order. (Plato reports this in the *Meno*.)<sup>275</sup> For someone benefits if he knows how to reduce to orderliness that which he is studying and investigating. Moreover, no orator or anyone else is accomplished if his speech lacks order. For one who has no sense of order neither understands himself nor is understood [by anyone else]. For order is wisdom's resplendence. Without it wisdom would be neither beautiful nor clear, nor would it work wisely. Memory that has been brought into an orderly state remembers easily, as is evident in the art-of-remembering, which is based on orderly locations. A lecturer, in order to grasp and to remember what is to be said, groups [what is to be said] and arranges these groupings. Thus, it is evident that order greatly partakes of the light of wisdom.

95 CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

A continuation of the same topic [viz., on order].

Therefore, Supreme Wisdom imposed an orderliness on the heavens and on the earth and on all things so that it would manifest itself in the best way in which a creature would be able to [receive this manifestation]. (The orderliness of an army manifests the practical wisdom of its commander more than do all the things that the army does.) Therefore, the orderliness of the universe is the first and very precise image of eternal and incorruptible Wisdom; through orderliness the en-

tire world-machine continues-on peacefully and very beautifully.

O how beautifully [Eternal Wisdom] has placed man—who is the connecting bond of the universe and is a microcosm<sup>276</sup>—at the summit of sensible natures and the nadir of intelligible natures! In man, as in an intermediary, Wisdom unites the lower temporal things and the higher perpetual things. Wisdom has stationed man on the horizon<sup>277</sup> of time and perpetuity, as the order of perfection required. We, who are like other animals in having senses, experience within ourselves that, in addition thereto, we have a mind that knows and appreciates order. And in this respect we know that we are capable of attaining unto Immortal Wisdom—the Ordainer of all things—and that along with the other intelligent beings we are capable of being united to God. For just as in and through that part by means of which we are joined to the other animals we obtain the nature of animals, so in and through that part by means of which we are joined to the intellectual nature we partake of the intellectual nature; and, hence, [we know that] our intellectual spirit, which is united to things perpetual, is not extinguished by virtue of the mortality of our animality.<sup>278</sup>

**96** Indeed, we know that when the possibility of our dying (because of the union by which [our sensible nature] is united to what is mortal) is dispelled, our mortal nature can rise up unto the life of our immortal spirit—rise up by the power of the Word-of-God (through whom all things were made),<sup>279</sup> incarnated in the man Jesus Christ. The humanity in Christ not only is the means-of-union of a lower nature and a higher nature,<sup>280</sup> of a temporal nature and a perpetual nature, but also is the [assumed] humanity of God the Creator and of Eternal Immortality.<sup>281</sup> [Our mortal nature will arise unto immortal life] if we are conformed to Christ our Mediator—something which occurs by means of faith and love.<sup>282</sup> Now, what is more beautiful than the marvelous ordering of regeneration? By this ordering—which is described in the most holy Gospels—we attain this resurrection of life.

I have said some things about the fields of the pursuits of wisdom. In those fields Incarnate Wisdom has manifested its own pathway by its own example. By means of that pathway one who is dead arrives at being resurrected unto a life which is everything that is being sought [by him]. We desire wisdom in order to be immortal. But since no wisdom frees us from this lifetime's horrible bodily death, true wisdom will be wisdom through which that necessity of dying is made into a virtue<sup>283</sup> and will be wisdom which becomes for us a sure and



safe passage unto the resurrection of life. This [passage] happens only by the power of Jesus and only for those who remain steadfastly on His pathway. Therefore, our utmost endeavor must be centered on that task; and only on that safe pathway does there occur the pursuit from which there follows the most certain possession of immortality.

97

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

The meaning of a word.

If with deep meditation you ponder all things, you will find that the pursuers [of wisdom] looked carefully at a word's meaning, as if a word were a precise representation of things. But because the first man assigned words to things on the basis of the form which he conceived, it is not the case that words are precise and thus that a thing cannot be named by a more precise word. For the form which a man conceives is not the thing's essential form, which precedes each thing. If anyone knew the name of that form, he would name all things correctly and would have a most perfect knowledge of all things.<sup>284</sup> Hence, there is no discord in the substantifying form of things but only in the words variously assigned to things on the basis of the various forms. And the entire difference of opinion among those who dispute has to do with the representation of a thing's essence—a representation which likewise varies. As Plato in his letters to the tyrant Dionysius writes most elegantly: truth precedes words, *orationes* (i.e., definitions by words), and perceptible representations.<sup>285</sup> He gives as an example a depicted circle, its name, its definition [*oratio*], and the concept of it. And for this reason Dionysius the Areopagite instructs us to turn to the [user's] intention rather than to the word's [usual] meaning<sup>286</sup>—although in *On the Divine Names* he himself, like Plato, places much emphasis upon the signification of a word.

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Moreover, no one was more intent than Aristotle upon seeking out a word's meaning—as if the one who assigned the names for all things had been most skilled at expressing in his words that which he knew, and as if [for us] to attain to his knowledge were [for us] to attain to a perfect knowledge of [all] things knowable. And for this reason Aristotle asserted that the light of knowledge is in the definition, which is the unfolding of the word.

I believe that these points hold true for the human knowledge which the one called the first Adam, or first man, is thought excellently to have possessed in the beginning.<sup>287</sup> And for this reason

knowledge which is consolidated in the meaning of a word is most pleasing to man, as conforming to his nature. But the pursuer of divine Wisdom must refuse to predicate of God human words according to their human assignment. For example, the life which extends to all living things does not reach unto God, who is the Cause of all life—and similarly for all other words.<sup>288</sup>

- 99 Also, the distinctions made by pursuers who interpret words should be carefully heeded. For example, St. Thomas, in his commentary on Dionysius's book *On the Divine Names*, maintains that three things must be noticed with regard to the substances of existing things.<sup>289</sup> First, [there is] the particular (e.g., Plato); it includes—in itself and actually—individuating and last principles. Second, there is the species or the genus (e.g., *man* or *animal*), in which the last principles are included actually but particulars potentially. For example, “man” signifies “who has humanity”—apart from any distinguishing because of individuating principles. The essence (e.g., humanity) is third; by the word “humanity” only the principles of the species are signified. For no individuating principle belongs to the form of humanity; for “humanity” signifies exclusively that in virtue of which a man is a man, and no individuating principle is of such a kind. Hence, by the word “humanity” no individuating principle is signified, whether actually or potentially; and to this extent [the humanity] is
- 100 said to be the nature. See that by this [threefold] distinction of terms [that] very learned man clarified many things which elsewhere are obscure. How greatly Aristotle, too, labored to distinguish words is shown by his *Metaphysics*. Hence, through the distinctions of words, with which task many very learned men have been engaged, many differences among writers are harmonized.

But our quest for Ineffable Wisdom, which precedes both the assigner of names and everything nameable, takes place in silence and by seeing rather than in talkativeness and by hearing. Our quest presupposes that the human words which it uses are neither precise nor angelic nor divine. But it adopts them because otherwise it could not express what is conceived. [It adopts them] on the assumption, however, that (1) it does not intend for them to signify any such thing as that for the sake of which they received their meaning, but to signify the Cause of such things, and that (2) the verbs are timeless, since the intention of our quest is to represent eternity by means of them.

101

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

The bounty that has been captured.

Now that I have traversed the ten fields in the foregoing manner, there remains for me to gather together what I have captured. Assuredly, I have made a sizeable pursuit in order to obtain a sizeable bounty; for not having been content with a sizeable thing that could be *greater*, I sought for the *Cause* of greatness, since [that Cause] cannot be greater. For if it could be greater, it could be made greater by virtue of what had been caused by it. So the later would be earlier than the earlier—[something impossible].<sup>290</sup> Therefore, it is necessarily the case that the Cause of greatness is that which it can be. But let us, for now, name the Cause of greatness [simply] *Greatness*. Greatness, then, precedes the possibility-of-being-made, since Greatness cannot be made anything other [than it is], since it is everything that it can be.<sup>291</sup> Therefore, Greatness is Eternity, which has no beginning or end, since it has not been made, because prior to everything made comes the possibility-of-being-made, which Greatness precedes. And because “greatness” is predicated truly of God and of every creature (as we discovered above, in the field that concerns praises), let us apply [the concept of] greatness to things perceptible and to things intelligible and, thereafter, also to things praiseworthy, in order to see whether we can elucidate greatness as it is captured in relation to the senses or the intellect. To this end, I draw a line *a b*, and I say that the line *a b* is great, because it is greater than one-half of itself, and that it can be made greater by extending, or augmenting, it. But it will not become a greatness which, since [it cannot be made greater], would be what it can be.<sup>292</sup> If a line were made so great that it could not be greater, it would be that which it could be; and, [in that case], it would not be *made* but would be eternal and would precede the possibility-of-being-made and would not be a line but would be Eternal Greatness.<sup>293</sup>

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In the foregoing way I see that since whatever can be made greater is subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made, it is never made to be [all] that which it can be. But because Greatness is [all] that which it can be, it cannot be either greater or lesser [than it is]. And so, Greatness is neither greater nor lesser than anything great or than anything small but is the efficient Cause of all things great or small, and is their formal Cause and final Cause and their most adequate Measure. In all great things and all small things Greatness is all [these] things;<sup>294</sup> and, at the same time, it is none of all [these] things, since all great things

and all small things are subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made, which Greatness precedes.

**103** Hence, since a surface and a material object and continuous quantity and discrete quantity (or number) and quality and the senses and the intellect and the heavens and the sun and whatever else has been made are not devoid of greatness: in all of them Actualized-possibility<sup>295</sup> (as I am calling Greatness) is that which they are but, yet, is none of them all. Actualized-possibility, then, is both all things and none of all things. Moreover, it is true that great things are great by virtue of greatness. In that case, the name “greatness,” which is the name of the form of great things, does not befit that which precedes the possibility-of-being-made, since [that which thus precedes] is not a form but is the Absolute Cause of forms and of all things. Therefore, no name from among all the things that can be named befits that thing (although its own name is not *other* than any nameable name); and, yet, That-which-remains-unnameable is named by every name.<sup>296</sup>

**104**

#### CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

A continuation of the same topic [viz., on the bounty captured].

Accordingly, since I see that what is good is [also] great and that a greater good can be made (for one good is granted to be more good than is another), [I see that that] Good which is so good that there cannot be a greater good than it (since it is Actualized-possibility) is (according to the immediately aforesaid)<sup>297</sup> the Cause of greatness. That which is so beautiful that it cannot be more beautiful is the Cause of greatness. And that which is so true that it cannot be more true is the Cause of greatness. That which is so wise that it cannot be more wise is the Cause of greatness—and so on regarding all ten praiseworthy [properties].<sup>298</sup> And, in equal measure [with what was just said], greatness that is so good that it cannot be better is the Cause of goodness. And beauty that is so good that it cannot be better is the Cause of goodness—and so on.

Therefore, I see that Actualized-possibility is the Cause of goodness, of greatness, of beauty, truth, wisdom, delight, perfection, clarity, equality, and sufficiency. The delimitation of the possibility-of-being-made, on the part of nine of these, shows that Actualized-possibility is the Cause of the tenth of them. For example, the delimitation of the possibility-of-being-made on the part of the greatness of goodness, the greatness of beauty, the greatness of truth, etc., shows

that Actualized-possibility is the Cause of greatness. And the delimitation of the possibility-of-being-made on the part of the goodness of greatness, the goodness of beauty, the goodness of truth, etc., shows that Actualized-possibility is the Cause of goodness. In a similar way, then, nine [of them] always show that Actualized-possibility is the Cause of the tenth [of them].

**105** Therefore, since I see that Actualized-possibility is the Cause of all praiseworthy things and that all ten praiseworthy [properties] are praiseworthy because of their partaking of praise, I call Actualized-possibility *Praise which is that which it can be*, because it is the Fount and Cause of praiseworthy things. And so, not inappropriately, I praise Actualized-possibility as Praise, since the great prophet Moses says in his song: “The Lord is my Praise.”<sup>299</sup> And because I see that God is the essential Cause of all praiseworthy things, I also see (just as does previously-mentioned Dionysius) that the essences, or subsistences, of all things that have been made or that will be made are (by partaking of [those ten] praiseworthy [properties]) that which they are.

Therefore, [the bounty] that I have captured by my pursuit is the following: that my God is He who is worthy of praise by all praiseworthy things. [He is praiseworthy] not as someone who partakes of praise but as being Absolute Praise itself, which is praiseworthy *per se*, and as being the Cause of all things praiseworthy. And so, He is prior to and greater than every other praiseworthy thing, because He is the Delimitation of all praiseworthy things and is Actualized-possibility. And all the works of God are praiseworthy because they are constituted by partaking of [those ten] praiseworthy things, through which God (qua Cause) and everything praiseworthy (qua caused) are praised.

I know that my God, who is greater than all praise, can be praised by no praiseworthy thing in proportion to His praiseworthiness. And to everyone who is endeavoring ever better to praise Him, to him He reveals Himself in order that he may see Him to be praiseworthy, glorious, and superexalted forever. Not only [do devout seekers see Him] in goodness (by which He imparts Himself to all things) or in greatness (which He bestows on all things) or in beauty (which He generously gives to all things) or in true being (which no entity lacks) or in wisdom (which ordains all things) or in delight (by which all things are delighted with themselves) or in perfection (wherein all things glory) or in clarity (which illumines all things) or in equality (which purifies all things) or in sufficiency (by means of which all things are

at rest and are content) or in other partakings of the divine—[not only do they see Him there] but they also praise Him as the God of gods in Zion, contemplating Him in His own revealed light.<sup>300</sup>

106

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

A continuation of the same topic  
[viz., on the bounty captured].

If you rightly think about it, truth, the true, and the truthlike are all things that are seen by the mind's eye. Truth is all that which it can be; it is not increasable or decreasable but is eternally permanent. The true is a perpetual likeness of Eternal Truth—a likeness partaken of intellectually. And because one true thing is truer and clearer than another, that true thing which cannot be more true is absolute and eternal Truth. For Eternal Truth is a truly affirmable Actuality that actually and truly affirms itself and all things. But the truthlike is a temporal likeness of the true, which is something intelligible. Likewise, the perceptible is a likeness of the true, because it is an image of the intelligible, as Dionysius rightly said.<sup>301</sup> Earlier even Plato had seen this [same] point.<sup>302</sup>

Therefore, the intellect is true, even as it is also good and great, and so on, as regards the remaining ten [properties]; for the intellect is an intellectual partaking of those ten. And, in addition, the intellect is true by virtue of understanding, when the intellect corresponds to the thing understood.<sup>303</sup> For the intelligible thing is truly understood when its intelligibility is so purified of everything extraneous that it is actually the true intelligible representation, or intelligible form, of the object. Thereupon the intellect is actually true, because then the intellect is the same as what is understood.

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What is corruptible is understood only by means of its incorruptible specific form. For from what is perceptible the intellect abstracts the intelligible representation.<sup>304</sup> The intelligible representation, or intelligible form, of heat is not itself hot; nor is [the intelligible form] of coldness cold, and so on. Rather, the intelligible form is free from all changeability, so that it truly represents the [natural] form of the object as being that object's true exemplar.<sup>305</sup> And because only that incorporeal and immaterial representation, or form, of an object is actually intelligible and is transformable into that which is actually understood: the intellect is, obviously, higher and purer than everything temporal and corruptible; and the intellect is naturally perpetual.<sup>306</sup>

You will recognize these facts most clearly when you see that things that have been purified of all corruptible material—things that do not need abstracting—are understood immediately. For example, according to Proclus the absolute One is intelligible *per se* and is amenable to the intellect, just as light is amenable to sight and just as other intelligible things, which are principles in mathematics and in the other sciences, are known *per se*.<sup>307</sup> They are the intelligible representations, or intelligible forms, of themselves.

108

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

An explication.

I will repeat one thing that has been said very often [by me]—repeat it since it is the gist of our entire pursuit: viz., that since what-is-made is subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made, it is never made in such a way that the possibility-of-being-made is exhaustively delimited in it. For although the possibility-of-being-made (according as it exists actually) is delimited, nevertheless it is not unqualifiedly delimited. For example, in Plato the possibility of being made a man is delimited; but the possibility of being made a man is not exhaustively delimited in Plato. Rather, there is only that delimiting mode which is called platonic; and countless other, more perfect modes remain [outside of Plato]. But even *in* Plato the possibility of being made a man is not [exhaustively] delimited; for a man can be made to be many things which Plato was not: e.g., a musician, a geometer, a mechanic.

Hence, the possibility-of-being-made is not unqualifiedly made determinate except in Actualized-possibility, which is both its Beginning and End, as Dionysius attests:<sup>308</sup> in a similar way, [he says], number is delimited in the monad, which is both its beginning and end; for the beginning of every number is the monad; and, likewise, the end of every number is the monad. However, the possibility-of-being-made is delimited *actually* in the world, than which world nothing more perfect or greater actually exists. As the rule says: “With regard to things that admit of being greater we do not come to the unqualifiedly Maximum but we do come to an actually maximum.”<sup>309</sup> For example, with regard to a quantity that admits of being greater we do not come to a maximal quantity, than which there cannot be a greater quantity; for the Maximum, which cannot be greater, precedes quantity; nevertheless, we do indeed come to an actually maximal quantity, viz., the quantity of the universe.

**109** What-is-made is always singular and unrepeatable,<sup>310</sup> as is every individual thing; but it is not always incorruptible (only what is first-made<sup>311</sup> is incorruptible). For since what imitates what is first-made is—by partaking of the first-made—that which it is, it is corruptible. For it cannot partake of the first-made's incorruptible singularity, which is unreplicable. And the fact that first-made things, whose being does not depend on partaking of an earlier-made thing, are incorruptible is due to the fact that in them the possibility-of-being-made is determined specifically. Consequently, intelligible beings and celestial beings are incorruptible—e.g., intellectual natures and the sun and the moon and the stars. But as for the sun's, the moon's, and the stars' being first-made things, Moses clearly reports in Genesis that they were made by God in order always to shine.<sup>312</sup> Therefore, this shining is always and uninterruptedly necessary for the visible world if the world's visibility is not to fail. And so, things which have been made for the purpose of always shining must remain always shining. Therefore, they were not made subsequently to some earlier-made thing by partaking of which they are that which they are. Likewise, the possibility of being made the sun or made the moon or made the stars is determinate in these individual [celestial bodies], which we see.

Individual things that are of a sensible nature imitate their intelligible exemplars. And, as Dionysius says, they are images of those exemplars.<sup>313</sup> The exemplars, in accordance with their singularity, are not replicable. Nevertheless, since the images are [images] of intelligible [exemplars], by participation in which the images are what they are, and since the intelligible [exemplars] cannot be precisely imitated by perceptible things, the images partake differently and temporally of those [exemplars], which are perpetual. Therefore, on this account, the images cannot be perpetual.

**110**

#### CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

A review.

In order now to express more clearly what I intend—[express it] by means of a review of what has been said—I will add [what follows].

It is certain that<sup>314</sup> the possibility-of-being-made points to something that precedes it. And so, because *that something* precedes the possibility-of-being-made, it itself cannot be made. Nor has it been made, since there is not made anything which was not possible to be made. Therefore, that which is made is subsequent to the possibility-



of-being-made. But since that to which the possibility-of-being-made points, and which it presupposes, precedes the possibility-of-being-made, it is, necessarily, Eternal. Hence, since that which is Eternal cannot be made, necessarily it will be the case that at least that which is eternal not be *other* than what is affirmed in regard to the possibility-of-being-made. Therefore, what is Eternal is not *other* than all that is made, although it itself is not made. Therefore, it is the Beginning and the End of the possibility-of-being-made. Hence, that which is made is a representation<sup>315</sup> of what is Unmakeable and Eternal.

It is evident that the possibility of the world's being made points to an archetypal world in the Eternal Mind of God.<sup>316</sup> And because Eternity is neither repeatable nor replicable and is not something indicating possibility (since it precedes the possibility-of-being-made): just as it is neither intelligible nor perceptible, so it is neither fully representable nor fully imaginable nor fully assimilable.<sup>317</sup> Therefore, the possibility-of-being-made is not ultimately delimited by something which is subsequent to it; rather its Delimitation precedes it.

**111** Therefore, I see that whatever-can-be-made has only that simple Exemplar which, since it is the Actuality of all possibility, is not *other* than anything that can be made. And [I see] that since [that Exemplar] is the Actuality of all possibility and cannot be other or greater or lesser and cannot exist otherwise or in another manner [than it does exist], it is not *other* than anything or greater or lesser than anything, nor does it exist otherwise or in another manner [than it does]. And so, it is the Cause, Exemplar, Measure, Mode, and Order of all existing, living, and understanding beings; and in each and every being there is findable nothing which does not exist and proceed from [that Exemplar] as from its Cause. And because all things are only a representation of only that Cause, all are turned toward it, all desire it, proclaim it, praise it, glorify it, and cry out that it is that infinite Good which shines forth in all things and by participation in which all things are that which they are.

Therefore, on the basis of all actually existing things I infer that that which is the Undelimited Delimitation<sup>318</sup> cannot be grasped by any delimiting, or by any act, of any intellect, since the intellect and all other things are an image and a likeness of it. For I see that all actually existing things are manifest images of this their Exemplar, in comparison with which they neither exist actually<sup>319</sup> nor are perfect images of it, since every image among them all can be more perfect and more precise.

**112** Nevertheless, at the limit at which the perfection and the precision of the image are delimited I see, from an infinite distance, the Undelimited Delimitation. Likewise, I see that actuality-of-life is a very noble image of the Undelimited Delimitation. But since life can be purer and more perfect and unmixed and without shadows: from afar I see, in the delimitation of simplicity and of precision, Eternal Life, which is the Exemplar of all life and which is true Life, the Maker of all life. All of this present life is, in relation to that Life, something less than is a depicted fire to a real fire.

Next, I focus upon the activity of the intellect, which is a certain likeness<sup>320</sup> of its own divine and eternal Exemplar. I see that the Limit of this living and understanding likeness—a Limit which manifests the precise Likeness of God<sup>321</sup>—is infinitely distant from all activity of the intellect.

Moreover, I say: Everything which can exist or which can exist and live or which can exist, live, and understand is not as precise an image of the Eternal Exemplar as the likeness of the Exemplar demands.<sup>322</sup> From this fact I see God transcendentally above all existing or makeable things—above their existence and also above their living and their understanding. For He is greater than everything that can exist or live or understand.<sup>323</sup> And as much as an original (*veritas*) excels an image and likeness of itself, so much more excellent and more perfect is God than all things. For the original (*veritas*) is the basis (*hypostasis*) of [every] image and [every] likeness of itself; it is not *other* than these images and likenesses. The images are copies of the original; and they exist and partake of the truth of their exemplar insofar as they imitate and represent it.

**113** All of the immediately foregoing things which I see in the way I have and which cannot be spoken of or written of in the way that I see them—all of them are reducible by me to nothing more concise than that the limit of the possibility of being-made-to-be-all-things is the possibility<sup>324</sup> of making all things. For example, the limit of the possibility-of-being-made-determinate is the possibility-of-making-determinate, just as the limit of the possibility-of-being-made-hot is the possibility-of-making-hot. For example, fire, which is said to be the limit of the possibility-of-being-made-hot can make-to-be-hot. And, likewise, the possibility-of-being-made-bright reaches its limit in the possibility-of-making-things-to-be-bright, as with regard to perceptible things the sun is said to do and with regard to intelligible things the Divine Intellect, or [Divine] Word, which illumines every

intellect, is said to do. Moreover, the limit of the possibility-of-being-made-perfect is the possibility-of-making-perfect-things; and the limit of the possibility-of-being-moved is the possibility-of-making-to-move. Therefore, the object of desire which all things desire because it is the Limit of things desirable is the Cause<sup>325</sup> of all desire and is the Limit of all choosable things and the Cause of all choosing.

**114** From the foregoing, [the following] is evident: Since the Delimitation of all possibility-of-being-made is the Omnipotent one, who is able to make all things, He can also make the possibility-of-being-made. And so, He is the End of that of which He is the Beginning; and the possibility-of-being-made is not prior to the Omnipotent one, even as in all things that have been made the possibility-of-being-made is seen antecedently. That is, *unqualified* possibility-of-being-made is seen, whose beginning and end are the Omnipotent one; and, likewise, [there is seen] possibility-of-being-made that is *contracted* to that which is [actually] made. In this contracted thing the possibility-of-being-made is delimited, when what-was-possible-to-be-made-such is actually made such. This determining is a determining on the part of the Creator-of-the-possibility-of-being-made. Since the Creator is omnipotent, He alone has the power of determining that the possibility-of-being-made [actually] be made such and such. And because the possibility-of-being-made is delimited only by the Omnipotent [Creator], all determining of the possibility-of-being-made, in the case of that which is [actually] made, is not a delimiting of it in such a way that the Omnipotent [Creator] can no longer make of it whatever He will. Rather, it is a determining (of the possibility-of-being-made) which is contracted singularly to this [particular] thing and which is the nature and substance of the thing which has been thus made.

**115**

#### CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

Summarizing conclusion.

Because there is made nothing which was not possible to be made, and because no thing can make itself, it follows that possibility is threefold: viz., the possibility-of-making, the possibility-of-being-made, and possibility-made-[actual].<sup>326</sup> The possibility-of-being-made is prior to possibility-made-[actual]; and the Possibility-of-making is prior to the possibility-of-being-made. The Possibility-of-making is the Beginning and the End of the possibility-of-being-made; possibility-made-[actual] is made by the Possibility-of-making from the possi-

bility-of-being-made.

Since the Possibility-of-making is prior to the possibility-of-being-made: it is not made; nor can it be made to be anything other [than it is]. Therefore, it is all that which (it) can be. Therefore, it cannot be greater; and we call it maximal. Nor can it be lesser; and we call it minimal. Nor can it be other [than it is]. Therefore, it is the efficient Cause, the formal Cause (or exemplar-Cause), and the final Cause of all things, since it is the Delimitation and End of the possibility-of-being-made and therefore also of possibility-made-[actual]. Hence, all things that can be made and that have been made are present antecedently in the Possibility-of-making as in their efficient, formal, and final Cause; and the Possibility-of-making is present in all things as the Absolute Cause is present in all things caused.

**116** But, in all things that have been made, the possibility-of-being-made is the respective thing which has been made (for no thing is actually made except that which was possible to be made.) But [the possibility-of-being-made is that respective thing] in a different mode of being: qua in potency, in a less perfect mode; qua in actuality, in a more perfect mode. Therefore, the possibility-of-being-made and possibility-made-[actual] are not different in essence. However, the possibility-of-making—although it is not *other* [than anything]—is not essence, since it is the Cause of essence, for essence is something caused by it.

However, since the possibility-of-being-made is not possibility-made-[actual], the possibility-of-being-made is not made from the possibility-of-being-made. Rather, prior to the possibility-of-being-made there is not anything except the Possibility-of-making. Therefore, the possibility-of-being-made is said to be made from nothing.<sup>327</sup> Thus, we say that the Possibility-of-making precedes not-being (*nihil*) but not that the possibility-of-being-made [precedes not-being]. Therefore, we say that the possibility-of-being-made was created from nothing, since it was produced by the Possibility-of-making but was not *made*.<sup>328</sup>

But since we call Absolute Possibility-of-making omnipotent,<sup>329</sup> we say that the Omnipotent one is eternal and is neither made nor created and is one who can neither be annihilated nor made to be otherwise than He is, because He is prior to not-being [*nihil*] and to the possibility-of-being-made. Moreover, we deny of Him all [properties] which are nameable, since they are subsequent to the possibility-of-being-made. For what is nameable presupposes the possibility of being made to be that which it is named to be.

**117** The possibility-of-being-made reaches its limit only in the Possibility-of-making; and so, it will not be annihilated. For if this [annihilation] were made to occur, it would be *possible for it to be made* to occur.<sup>330</sup> How, then, would the possibility-of-being-made have been annihilated? Therefore, it is perpetual, since it has a beginning but cannot be annihilated and since its end-point is its beginning-point. But given that some things which are possible to be made are first-things and others are subsequent to first-things and are imitators of them: as regards first-things,<sup>331</sup> they themselves are perpetual, as is the possibility-of-being-made, since their possibility-of-being-made is actual and complete; as regards things subsequent to [first-things], their possibility-of-being-made is not complete and perfect except according to an imitation of the complete, and, hence, they are not perpetual but, instead, imitate things perpetual. Now, that which is not perpetual and stable, but is changed, is unstable and temporary. Let these statements be [here] briefly repeated [in this way] regarding the points earlier introduced.<sup>332</sup>

**118** But since in the art of this general pursuit of wisdom we are more firmly established by means of particular instances, let me apply this form of our pursuit to something perceptible, and let that thing be heat. And let me say: possibility is threefold: viz., the possibility-of-making-hot, the possibility-of-being-made-hot, and possibility-made-[actually]-hot. And by particularizing let me proceed along the same lines as, just above, [I proceeded] by generalizing. And let me say: Possibility-made-[actually]-hot has prior to it the possibility of being made hot; but the possibility of being made hot cannot make itself actually to be hot. Therefore, prior to the possibility of being made hot there is the possibility of making hot. And because the possibility of making hot precedes the possibility of being made hot, it is all that which hot can be; and so, it cannot be greater or lesser or other [than it is]. Therefore, it is, with respect to all hot things, the creator of the possibility of being made hot; and from the possibility-of-being-made-[hot] it brings everything hot into actuality; and it is the efficient, the formal, and the final cause of all hot things.<sup>333</sup> And it is present in all hot things as a cause is present in what is caused [by it]; and all hot things are present in it as what is caused is present in its cause. And in contrast to hot things it will be without beginning and without end and will not at all be the essence of hot things but will be the cause of their essence and will be unnameable by any of their names.

**119** Now, the possibility-of-being-made-hot has a beginning but is without an end; and there are some hot things in which the possibility-of-being-made-[hot] is completed, and they always remain hot. Other hot things are subsequent to them and are unstable, and heat does not remain in them. And although some people say of this [or that] intensely-burning fire that it is that hot thing which is all that a hot thing can be, nevertheless this fire is *not* that thing; for no heat of any perceptible fire is the end-point of all possibility of being made hot, since all perceptible heat can be hotter [than it is]. But that which we call fire is, according to Plato,<sup>334</sup> fiery or something set on fire; and it is not as intensely on fire as it could be. Therefore, fire-*per-se* precedes, and is the cause of, every ignitable thing and everything that has been set afire; and prior to all perceptible fire fire-*per-se* is altogether invisible and unknown. Therefore, it is a likeness of the First Cause, as Dionysius extensively explains this fact.<sup>335</sup> This fact was seen by that saint who said that God is a consuming fire.<sup>336</sup>

**120** However, motion and light are prior to this perceptible fire. For by means of motion what can be set afire is set afire; and light accompanies the motion. A similar point holds true of the bright as it does of the hot, and holds true of light as it does of fire. [And it is true] that neither the sun nor anything perceptible is light [itself], which is the cause of [all] bright things; rather, all these [perceptible] things are bright but are not light itself. The case is similar, too, regarding cold and moist and whatever else is partaken of according to a greater or a lesser degree.

Oneness is the beginning of all multitude, as Proclus says.<sup>337</sup> And, as Aristotle claims,<sup>338</sup> what is maximally such [as it is] is the cause of all things such [as that]; and what is such [as it is] *per se* is the cause of all things that are such [as that] by participation; and what is simple *per se* is the cause of all things that are such [as they are] *per se*, as the Platonists maintain; and what is *per se* without a [restricting] addition is the cause of whatever is *per se* with a [restricting] addition.<sup>339</sup> And this thing that is unrestrictedly *per se* is the Cause of each and every cause, just as earlier-on [I showed that] the Beginning of all things is given various names on account of the various differences among its participants, even though the Beginning itself precedes everything nameable.

The foregoing statements have been made by the Platonists and the Peripatetics; their statements need to be understood correctly as concerns *beginning* and *cause*. For there is only one Causal Begin-

ning—which I am calling Actualized-possibility, unto which all possibility-of-being-made is determined.<sup>340</sup> What is first in an order is called, as well as [*first*], the *beginning* of the other things which are ordered subsequently to it; and it is called maximally such, and by partaking of it other things are such; nevertheless, it does not exist maximally *in an unqualified way* but is maximally *such* [as it is].

**121** Moreover, from these [considerations] you will be able to investigate the order of [ontological] priority and posteriority. For what is *per se* precedes all its participants. For example, what is hot *per se*—viz., what is a fire—precedes hot air, hot water, hot earth, and all else that is possible to be made hot. And for that reason fire cannot be made moist or cold or earthen or dry; for fire precedes these. And because water is cold *per se*,<sup>341</sup> it is prior to earth, which can be made cold. So too, water is not subsequent to air, because air, too, can be made cold. Similarly, air is prior to earth, because air is moist *per se*; but earth can be made moist, and it is not subsequent to water, which, likewise, can be made moist. Similarly, among the elements earth is the last and fire is the first. But air and water both occupy the middle position, and the one [of them] is not earlier in order than is the other but is present at the same time as the other is. And so, just as water is united to earth without an intermediate, so air is united to dry earth [without an intermediate], even though the friendship of fire with air and of water with earth is greater [than the friendship of air with earth]. And because water is turned into air and air is turned into water, and because air and water can be variously mixed and can partake of the heat of fire and can be solidified in earth, it must be the case that things which are generated come from these [four elements].

**122** And, consequently, because earth, water, air, fire, the moon, and the stars partake of light, light *per se* will be the cause of all bright things. Certain men call the sun *light per se* because among [those] perceptible things which are bright the sun is maximally bright. Hence, the sun is said to be the cause of all things that partake of light with respect to the fact that they are perceptibly bright.<sup>342</sup> But since the sun is not light [itself] but is something bright (as was said earlier),<sup>343</sup> light is the cause<sup>344</sup> of the sun and of all bright things; for light is not any of all the bright things. Therefore, the sun, which is maximally bright, is not dry or moist or hot or moonlike or Venuslike or Mercurylike or Jupiterlike or Saturnlike.<sup>345</sup> Nor is it of the nature of any [other] star<sup>346</sup> or of any [other] visible thing; rather, the sun is the beginning

of all light, whether elemental light or mineral light or vegetable light or perceptual light.<sup>347</sup>

**123** Similarly, wisdom *per se*, which is intelligible light, precedes whatever can partake of intelligible light—whether [what partakes of it] is called the senses or the imagination or the judgment or reason or the intellective soul or intelligence, or by whatever other name what partakes of it is named. Wisdom *per se* is earlier than all things perceptible and all things intelligible and all discreteness and order—of all of which it is the cause. Now, the sun is perceptible because it is visible. Therefore, the senses precede it [ontologically]. But because light, which is visible *per se*, is the material cause of visible things, and because actually seeing is actually being visible, seeing is the formal cause of visible things, since the power to see is the cause of the power to be seen. And so, it is evident that, in the case of seeing, perceptual light is united with intelligible light—[the two being united] as extremes, viz., the summit of the lower, corporeal nature united with the lower-level of the higher, cognitive nature.

**124** All men, not unjustifiably, praise the great Plato, who ascended [inferentially] from the sun unto wisdom by way of a likeness.<sup>348</sup> Thus too [proceeded] the great Dionysius, who ascended [inferentially] from fire unto God, and from the sun unto the Creator, by means of likenesses-of-properties which he expounds.<sup>349</sup> Likewise also Gregory the Theologian, in his theological orations against the Eunomians,<sup>350</sup> urges that [this ascent] be made, because in this present world—where we know in part and prophesy in part—we must ascend by means of a mirror and a symbolism, as the divine Paul reports.<sup>351</sup>

By means of the foregoing [reflections] I think that I have explicated as best I could a rough and unrefined conceptualization of my pursuits [of wisdom]. And I submit all [these explications] for one's better speculating on these lofty matters.<sup>352</sup>



## 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 Possess* (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 VENATIONE SAPIENTIAE*

1. This work was written around the turn of the year 1462-63 in Italy at either Città della Pieve (region of Perugia) or Chianciano (region of Siena). See p. xiii of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*, Vol. XII (Hamburg: Meiner, 1982), edited by Raymond Klibansky and Hans G. Senger). Note also Erich Meuthen's review (of Vol. XII) in *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 103 (1983), 446-448 (especially p. 448). *De Venatione Sapientiae* is extant in but one manuscript, viz., Codex Latinus Cusanus 219.

The translation of this Latin text is made difficult not only by the existence of but a single manuscript (not an autograph) but also by the fact that Nicholas seems to have written this work hurriedly. Its sentences are not smooth—nor even always grammatical. There are lacunae and unclarities. The omissions and imprecisions greatly increase the risk of a translator's misapprehending Nicholas's intended meaning, where this meaning can still be detected. In the notes which follow, I indicate important places where I disagree with the editors of the (altogether estimable) Heidelberg Academy edition of the Latin text. However, I do not explicitly signal the many changes of punctuation that I prefer. These changes will, nevertheless, be reflected in the English translation itself.

2. The prefacing rubric reads, in translation: Prologue, by the very reverend lord Nicholas, Cardinal of St. Peter in Chains, to his book *On the Pursuit of Wisdom*.

3. *De Quaerendo Deum* (1445).

4. Diogenes Laërtius's *De Philosophorum Vitis* was translated from Greek into Latin by Ambrose Traversari in 1433. A copy of this translation, with Nicholas's glosses, is found today in the British Museum (Codex Latinus Harleianus 1347). See "Kritisches Verzeichnis der Londoner Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Nikolaus von Kues," *MFCG* 3 (1963), 16-100 (especially 25-32).

5. Cf. *DI* Prologue (1:19-24) and *DI* I, 1 (2).

6. In the Latin text corresponding to this sentence the editors' addition of "quos" is unnecessary (but is also untroublesome).

7. Nicholas here draws upon Diogenes Laërtius's *Lives of the Philosophers*. Zeno the Stoic, or Zeno of Citium (in Cyprus), founded his school, the Stoa, in Athens around the beginning of the third century B.C.

8. Cf. Wisdom 13:2. (Philo Judaeus was regarded by Nicholas as the author of the book of Wisdom; see n. 121 below.) Jesus, son of Sirach, is the author of Ecclesiasticus, where there is found no passage corresponding to Nicholas's citation.

9. *Diogenis Laertii de Clarorum Philosophorum Vitis*, edited by Gabriel Cobet (Paris: Didot, 1862), III, 64 (p. 83).

10. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1961; reprint of the

Paris, 1864, edition edited by Victor Cousin). Nicholas's allusion is a general one. See *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, translated by Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

11. Laërtius, *op. cit.* (n. 9 above), III, 77 (p. 85). Nicholas writes [VS 1 (3:16-17)]: "Refert etiam Laërtius Platonem dicere ideas principium et initium esse ...." The redundant expression "*principium et initium*" is adequately rendered by a single English word. In VS 1 (3:12) Nicholas uses "*principia*". Here, too, at VS 1 (3:16-17), the plural captures the meaning: "Moreover, Laërtius reports that Plato speaks of Ideas as the *beginnings* ...."

12. Laërtius, *op. cit.* (n. 9 above), III, 16 (p. 72). Nicholas writes: "Gallina enim non parit viventes, sed ova prius incubat et calore animat. Haec autem sapientia, ut sese habet, natura novit sola; ab ea quippe eruditur."

13. Laërtius, *ibid.*, III, 16 (p. 72). Nicholas writes: "Nihil profecto mirum, si ita loquar, et placere eas sibi et mutuo fovere et videri praeclara. Nam et canis cani videtur esse pulcherrimum et bovi bos et asino asinus, susque item sui videtur venustate praestare."

14. The antecedent of this pronoun is not specified either by Nicholas or by Laërtius. Epicharmus, the comic poet, was born on the Greek island of Kos around 540 B.C. and died in Syracuse, on the island of Sicily, in 450. His fragments are collected in Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Weidmann, Vol. I, 1906, 2nd ed.).

15. *DI I*, 1 (2:6-7). *DM 4* (77:27-28). *Compendium 10* (34:1-2).

16. In this Latin sentence (4:16-18) "*logice*" is nominative singular—Nicholas's transliteration of the Greek "*λογική*"

17. Laërtius, *op. cit.* (n. 9 above), I, 1, 35 (p. 9).

18. Aristotle, *Physics VIII*, 9 (265<sup>a</sup>19): "οὐ γὰρ γίγνεται τὸ ἀδύνατον." Nicholas writes: "*impossibile fieri non fit*" [VS 2 (6:14)]. Both expressions could equally well be translated by "what is impossible to occur does not occur." I have not preferred this alternative translation because it does not fit in well with Nicholas's going on to speak about *factum* and *creatum*. See n. 19 below.

19. Where Nicholas uses "*posse-fieri*" as a noun, without an ensuing predicate, I prefer to hyphenate both it and its English translation. I here (*viz.*, in *VS*) render the expression, almost always, as "the possibility-of-being-made" because this rendering better befits the context of God's creating all things from *posse-fieri*. (But see, below, n. 21 of Notes to *De Apice Theoriae*.) The English word "possibility," therefore, must (in the context of *VS*, where "*posse-fieri*" is not a name for God) be construed by the reader as conveying the idea of power and of passive potency. Furthermore, the translation "the possibility-of-being-made" corresponds better to the translation of "*posse-facere*" as "the possibility-of-making"; *posse-facere* ontologically precedes *posse-fieri*, Nicholas states in VS 39 (115:8). As the ultimate Causal Beginning of everything, God is *posse-facere*; and He is *possest* (Actualized-possibility), says Nicholas [VS 13 (35:13-14)]. Accordingly, He is all that He can be—in the sense that He is eternal and cannot be *other* than He is. But He is also all that can be—in the sense that no finite being can exist unless, ultimately considered, it is derived from Him as Creator and unless it is at every moment sustained in existence by Him as Ground-of-being. VS 28 (83:13-14).

In *DM 11* (131) Nicholas uses "*posse fieri*" to refer to the first member of the Trin-

ity. In that context *posse fieri* is said to be prior to (though not ontologically or chronologically prior to) *posse facere* (the second member of the Trinity).

20. Even in this late work, *VS*, Nicholas uses the language of contraction. He never abandons the notion that God alone is Absolute (i.e., Uncontracted), whereas all other things are, necessarily, contracted, or restricted, in various ways. Contracted being is finite being. God alone is Infinite. The universe and all its parts are finite, though in *DI* II, 1 (97) Nicholas refers to the universe as “privatively infinite”: it is finite but is not bounded by any physical reality external to itself. Lacking these external limits, it is “unlimited” and “infinite”.

See *VS* 17 (49:20), where Absolute Goodness is contrasted with contracted goodness. See, below, n. 33 of Notes to *De Apice Theoriae*.

21. As *possest*, God is both (a) all that can be and (b) all that *He* can be. See n. 19 above. When Nicholas writes that the Absolute Beginning *est omne quod esse potest*, only the context can help the reader decide whether he means *a* or *b* or both. Where he may mean both equally, I use parentheses: “... is all that which (He) can be.”

22. The possibility-of-being-made (*posse-fieri*) is itself something created and finite. But it is not made by God from itself. All actually existing things were created by God from *posse-fieri*; but *posse-fieri* was created by God *ex nihilo*. See *VS* 39 (116:9-12).

Cf. *DP* 29, where the question is raised as to whether or not *posse-fieri* has a beginning. Nicholas there implies, and here in *VS* expressly states, that the beginning of *posse-fieri* is God, the Creator. However, when *posse-fieri* is considered qua in God ontologically prior to its being created, it must be considered to be God. (See n. 48 below.) For whatever is in God is God. In *DP* 29 Nicholas focuses upon the coincidence of *posse-fieri* and *posse-facere* IN GOD.

23. Things perpetual, according to Nicholas, are created things that will never actually come to an end, although God could destroy them if he willed to. *Posse-fieri* is perpetual. But so also are angels, certain heavenly bodies, and the rational, human soul—all of which have been created through the instrument of *posse-fieri*.

Proclus distinguishes two meanings of “perpetual”—one that indicates eternity and one that indicates everlastingness in time. See *Elementa Theologiae*, Proposition 55, corollary. [English is on p. 339 of Vol. II of Thomas Taylor’s translation *The Six Books of Proclus ... [and] Proclus’ Elements of Theology* (London, 1816)]. Cf. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, Greek text edited and translated by E. R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), p. 53.

24. As is here evident, Nicholas does not reserve the word “*praedestinatio*” for the context of salvation.

25. Every complete syllogism consists of three propositions: two premises and a conclusion. Each of the propositions has both a subject-term and a predicate-term. The two premises must have one term in common (either both subject-terms or both predicate-terms or the subject-term of one and the predicate term of another) so that altogether there are only three different terms. For example, in the syllogism “(1) Every man is a mortal being. (2) Socrates is a man. Therefore, (3) Socrates is a mortal being” the three terms are “Socrates,” “man,” and “mortal being”; and “mortal being” is the term common to the two premises. Of the two premises, the one that contains the predicate-term of the conclusion is called the major premise; and the one that contains the subject term of the conclusion is called the minor premise. (In the

example above, premise *I* is the major premise.) Propositions may be affirmative or negative; they may be universal or particular or indefinite or singular. A proposition is universal if it begins with “All” or “None,” etc.; it is particular if it begins with “Some” or “Many,” etc.; it is indefinite (e.g., “Man is an animal”) if it lacks a quantifier but is not singular; it is singular (e.g., “Socrates is a man”) if the subject-term names an individual. (Singular propositions are sometimes counted as approximating universal propositions—for purposes of conversion, obversion, and contraposition.) Thus, any proposition will be either (1) a universal affirmation, (2) a universal negation, (3) a particular affirmation, (4) a particular negation, (5) an indefinite affirmation, (6) an indefinite negation, (7) a singular affirmation, or (8) a singular negation. The first four types of proposition are labeled, respectively, *A*, *E*, *I* and *O*. A syllogism’s *mood* is specified by the types of propositions —*A*, *E*, *I*, or *O*—that constitute the syllogism. A syllogism’s *figure* is determined by the position of its middle term (*M*) in the premises (*S*=subject-term; *P*=predicate-term):

	Figure I	Figure II	Figure III
Premise 1:	M - P	P - M	M - P
Premise 2:	S - M	S - M	M - S
Conclusion:	S - P	S - P	S - P

The valid syllogistic moods for Figure I are AAA (*Barbara*), AII (*Darii*), EAE (*Celarent*), and EIO (*Ferio*). (The names are the mnemonics that were used in the Middle Ages as an aid to remembering which argument-forms are valid.) In addition, AAI and EAO are also valid moods for Figure I, given certain assumptions about existence. Not all apparent syllogisms are well-constructed. For example, a syllogism having the mood AAE is invalid in all figures. For a negative conclusion cannot be validly inferred from two affirmative premises.

26. See n. 25 above. The major premise need not always be the first premise.

27. At 5 (11:10) the Heidelberg Academy edition of *VS*—which follows the only extant manuscript, viz., Codex Cusanus 219—has “*sensibilis circulus*”. But I regard the Paris edition’s “*sensibilem circum*” as preferable, given that Nicholas elsewhere uses the accusative, not the nominative, for the predicate position following “*posse fieri*”. Cf. *VS* 6 (14:11); 6(15:6-7); and 37 (108:7-8) [predicate position] with 5 (11:14) [subject position].

28. *DI* II, 1 (92). *DP* 60.

29. “And if either of them were such in the least degree ...”: i.e., if either of them were acute or obtuse in the minimal degree.

30. Note the different example at *DB* 10.

31. Regarding Nicholas’s emphasis on beauty, see Giovanni Santinello, *Il pensiero di Nicolò Cusano nella sua prospettiva estetica* (Padua: Liviana, 1958).

32. The themes expressed in this sentence and in the previous one attest to Nicholas’s affinity with the Platonic tradition. In *VS* Nicholas frequently mentions Plato approvingly [e.g., at 9 (26:9-10); 12 (33:19-21); 17 (49:8); 33 (97:14-15 and 19-20); 39 (124:1-2)]. He associates Plato’s views with those of Proclus and of (Pseudo-)Dionysius.

Nicholas does not hesitate to disagree with Plato—as, for example, in *DM* 4, where he favors Aristotle’s view that the human mind has no innate concepts but at birth is a blank tablet. Nicholas there also reminds us, à la Leibniz later, that the mind does

have an innate power of judgment. See also *DM* 15 (158:15-18). *Compendium* 10 (34:1-2).

33. *De Quaerendo Deum* 1 (20-22).

34. "... is brought ... from potency to actuality": i.e., is brought from the possibility of being seen to actually being seen.

35. *De Quaerendo Deum* 1 (20:6-10). *Compendium* 4 (9:10-12).

36. Even in his late works, such as the present one and the *Compendium*, Nicholas holds the view that empirical knowledge results from the intellect's abstracting an intelligible form, i.e., a concept, from sensory images. Cf. *Compendium* 6 (18:17-19). *DP* 60:16-21. *VS* 36 (107:2). See n. 132 of the Notes to *De Beryllo*. See also, in his early work *DI*, the passages at II, 6 (126) and II, 9 (150:last part). Note also pp. 29-31 of my *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge*.

37. "This seed" refers to the possibility-of-being-made, which Nicholas a few lines later calls the seed of seeds.

38. According to Nicholas non-human animals do not have intellect (*intellectus*) but they do have some degree of reason (*ratio*). *DM* 5 (83). See p. 62 of my *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge*.

39. The Latin passage here at 6 (15:18-22) is confusedly written. I understand it as I have translated it. Cf. *VS* 7 (18:12-19). See my n. 1 above.

40. The Creating Cause, viz., God, cannot be partaken of; only His likeness can be partaken of. See *NA* 16 (79:5-6). *VS* 22 (65:23-24). *VS* 7 (16:5-7). *De Filiatione Dei* 4 (78:2-6). *De Filiatione Dei* 5 (80:1-4). *Sermo "Verbum caro factum est"* section 8, lines 22-27 on p. 80 of Josef Koch, editor, *Vier Predigten im Geiste Eckharts* [Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse (1936/37), 2. Abhandlung]. See the last paragraph of Chap. 6 above, where *posse-fieri* is said to be a likeness of God (who is *posse-facere*). God *can be* named but only symbolically and metaphorically, since there is no comparative relation between the infinite and the finite. He *cannot* be named by any name that tells us, really, what He is or what He is like. God is not even *one* or *being* (says Nicholas) in any sense in which the meanings of these terms can be understood by finite minds, whether human or angelic.

41. *Ap.* 17 (last half).

42. As at *VS* 7 (17:5) medieval writers sometimes use only "*implicat*" where "*implicat contradictionem*" is understood. I prefer to supply "*contradictionem*" here so as to prevent confusion. Nicholas himself supplies it at *De Theologicis Complementis* 3:47. Cf. John Wenck, *De Ignota Litteratura* 30:27-28 and 36:26 [Latin text as found in my *Nicholas of Cusa's Debate with John Wenck* (Minneapolis: Banning, 1984)]. See also p. 150, n. 4 in Raymond Klibansky and Hans G. Senger's edition of *De Venatione Sapientiae* [Vol. XII of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1982)].

43. Thomas Aquinas, *De Aeternitate Mundi*, near the beginning. See Aquinas *et al.*, *On the Eternity of the World*, translated by Cyril Vollert *et al.* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1964), p. 19 (bottom).

At *VS* 26 (77:6-7) Nicholas mentions both Thomas and his *De Aeternitate Mundi*.

44. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* IX. 4 (*Dionysiaca* I, 458-459. *PG* 3:911). Nicholas here follows the Latin translation of Robert Grosseteste, completed ca. 1235. The facing Latin translation found in *PG* is that of Balthasar Cordier, made

in 1634.

45. *DI* I, 20 (61:20-25). *DB* 12. *DP* 13:9-13.

46. *DB* 12 and 14.

47. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* IV.7 (*Dionysiaca* I, 184. *PG* 3:703B).

48. *DI* I, 22 (69:3-4). I, 24 (77:1-7). II, 5 (119:15-19). *Ap.* 27 (beginning section). *VS* 16 (47:last line). As things exist in God they are God and not their finite selves. They exist in God as what is caused exists in the power of its cause. Nicholas teaches a version of exemplarism which speaks of exemplars in the mind of God but which makes clear that, in last analysis, these “exemplars” are but a sole Exemplar, viz., the Word of God, or second member of the Divine Trinity. *DM* 5 (85:4): “Deus enim est omnium exemplar.” See also *DM* 6 (92:15-16). *DM* 6 (94:12-14). Cf. *VS* 38 (111). See, above, n. 81 of Notes to *De Beryllo*.

49. Throughout the translation I render “*participare*” either as “to partake of” or as “to participate in,” using the two expressions interchangeably.

50. Proclus, *In Platonis Theologiam* I, 3 [Vol. I, p. 13, line 6 through p. 14, line 4 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)]. Cf. *The Six Books of Proclus on the Theology of Plato*, translated by Thomas Taylor (London, 2 vols., 1816), Vol. I, p. 7.

51. *VS* 8 (20:10-11). Nicholas identifies Proclus’s view with Plato’s.

52. The Latin text here at *VS* 8 (21:10-14) is corrupt. After “*motus*” I add “*quod*” (as does the Paris edition), though the Heidelberg Academy’s addition of “*eo quod*” is unobjectionable.

53. “... to exist intellectually (in the way specified above)”: i.e., really to exist—though in a supersensible domain, the domain of intelligible beings such as the Forms.

54. Genesis 1:1 and 1:14-15.

55. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* IV.4 (*Dionysiaca* I, 164-167. *PG* 3:698C - 699A).

56. Cf. Augustine’s notion of *materia informis*, which is, he says, *prope nihil*. *Confessiones* XII, 8 (*PL* 32:829). According to Nicholas God created all things at once (Ecclesiasticus 18:1). Moses’s days of creation are descriptions that assist finite human minds to discern in slow motion, as it were. Cusa, *De Genesi* 2 (159).

57. Genesis 1:14-15.

58. Cusa, *DB* 35. Proclus, *In Platonis Theologiam*, *op. cit.* (n. 50 above), V, 16-20 (Saffrey and Westerink Greek text, Vol. V, pp. 52-76. Thomas Taylor translation, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 348-367). *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 10 above), I (642-643).

The mention of “only begotten” occurs in *In Platonis Theologiam* V, 14 (see Thomas Taylor translation, Vol. I, p. 343, lines 3-4).

59. Laërtius, *De Philosophorum Vitis*, *op. cit.* (n. 9 above), II, 6 (p. 34).

60. Laërtius, *De Philosophorum Vitis*, *op. cit.* (n. 9 above), VII, 134 (p. 188). Laërtius uses “*λόγος*,” rendered into Latin, in Nicholas’s text, as “*verbum*” (“word”).

61. Psalms 32:6 (33:6).

62. Psalms 32:9 (33:9).

63. Nicholas uses “*monas*” in the sense of “*unitas*,” oneness. See the text marked by n. 108 below.



64. Laërtius, *De Philosophorum Vitis*, *op. cit.* (n. 9 above), VIII, 25 (p. 210).
65. Laërtius, *ibid.*, VII, 135 (p. 188).
66. Laërtius, *ibid.*, VII, 134 (p. 188).
67. Laërtius, *ibid.*, I, 35 (p. 9).
68. Here at *VS* 9 (25:11-12) I am reading the text as "... non ante ipsius mundi posse-<feri> constare tempus, quia cum conderetur, simul et tempus affuit."
69. Aristotle's reasoning (according to Nicholas) appears to be as follows, when expanded:
- If the world has no beginning, then motion and time are without a beginning.
- If the world has a beginning, then the possibility of the world's being made precedes the world's actually being made. Possibility-of-being-made can be actualized only through motion; so both motion and the possibility-of-being-made must have preceded the world's beginning. Moreover, the possibility-of-being-made cannot be its own beginning. So both it and motion (and therefore also time) are without a beginning.
- Either the world has a beginning, or the world has no beginning. In either case, motion and time are unoriginated.
70. "... indicates, in and of itself": i.e., indicates self-evidently. Regarding the view that time is the measure of motion, see Aristotle's *Physics* IV, 11 (219<sup>b</sup>1-3).
71. Laërtius, *De Philosophorum Vitis*, *op. cit.* (n. 9 above), III, 73 (p. 84). Plato, *Timaeus* 37D.
72. This statement relates to Nicholas's view, not to Plato's.
73. Laërtius, *De Philosophorum Vitis*, *op. cit.* (n. 9 above), II, 10 (p. 35).
74. See n. 17 above.
75. Laërtius, *De Philosophorum Vitis*, *op. cit.* (n. 9 above), VII, 136 (p. 188).
76. Citium is a city in Cyprus. It is known today as Kiti and is situated south of Larnaca.
77. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Caelesti Hierarchia* XV, 2 (*Dionysiaca* II, 997; the grammatical subject is "ignis". *PG* 3:330B). Nicholas here follows Grosseteste's Latin translation (made ca. 1235).
78. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* IV, 23 (*Dionysiaca* I, 274. *PG* 3:723).
79. *VS* 3 (8:4-5).
80. The first of these regions is that of God, who is eternal. The second region is that of incorruptible contracted things: *posse-feri*, intelligences (angels), intellects (rational, human souls), celestial bodies (sun, moon, stars)—all of which are perpetual (i.e., all of which have a beginning but no end). The third region consists of whatever else in the world is temporal and perishable. See *VS* 32 (95:17-21). *VS* 37 (109). *VS* 39 (117).
81. *DI* I, 4 (12:23-25). Cusa, *Letter to Cardinal Julian* at *DI* III, epilogue (263:6-8). *Ap.* 13 (last sentence). *DVD* 13 (53:6-14).
82. Eusebius, *De Praeparatione Evangelica* XI, 3 (*PG* 21:850A). *DB* 8:2-4. *DP* 38:13-14.
83. Cusa, *Sermo* CLXXXVII (Haubst number); "*Spiritus autem Paraclitus*": "Primo attendere debemus Deum esse creatorem omnium visibilium et invisibilium.

Nam cum omnia, quae sensibilis mundus habet, sunt finita, illa ex se esse non possunt. Finitum enim potest aliter esse; ideo esse suum non est aeternitas, quae aliter esse nequit, neque infinitas neque absoluta necessitas; et ideo, si id, quod non est aeternitas ipsa, ex se esset, esset antequam esset. Sic igitur necessario devenitur ad principium omnium finitorum, quod erit infinitum, etc.” Cf. *DVD* 13 (54:11-15). *VS* 38 (110). See, above, n. 162 of Notes to *De Aequalitate*.

See also Rudolf Haubst, *Streifzüge in die cusanische Theologie* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1991), p. 69: “Um zum Glaubensverständnis zu führen, hat N[ikolaus] v[on] K[ues] die Kraft des natürlichen Denkens nirgends verkürzt oder ausgehöhlt, sondern diese immer wieder bis an ihre Grenzen, im besonderen auch bis zu der Einsicht (der docta ignorantia) strapaziert ....”

See my *Glaube und Vernunft im Denken des Nikolaus von Kues. Prolegomena zu einem Umriß seiner Auffassung* (Trier: Paulinus Verlag, 1996). We need to distinguish clearly between Nicholas’s certainty of God’s existence and his uncertainty about what God’s nature is like. The doctrine of learned ignorance relates only to the latter.

84. “... nothing is known as it is knowable”: This is an extension of the notion of learned ignorance. In his *Apologia* Nicholas calls the root of learned ignorance the view that God cannot be known as He is. (See *Ap.* 21-22.) But in *VS* 26 (79:1-3) he writes: “This is the gist of the rule of learned ignorance: viz., that with regard to things that admit of more and less we never come to an unqualifiedly maximum or to an unqualifiedly minimum ....” In *DM* 3 (69:15-16) we are told that only God has precise knowledge.

85. *VS* 21-22.

86. *Ap.* 2.

87. The human mind, suggests Nicholas in *DM* 15 (159:7), has an innate religious propensity [which can, however, be resisted; cf. *VS* 20 (58:1-4) as regards moral principles]. Yet, there is no natural desire to know *what* God is. Nicholas seems, rather, to believe that what is natural is the desire to know God (knowledge by acquaintance) and to know that He is *so great as to be unknowable* by any finite mind.

At *DM* 15 (159:7) “*connata religio*” means much more than Honecker and Menzel-Rogner’s German translation “*unsere Religion*” [*Der Laie über den Geist* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1949), p. 88]. Cf. *DM* 4 (78:6-7), “*iudicium ...connatum*,” with *DM* 15 (158:15), “*iudicium...concreatum*.”

88. God “is not able to be conceived unless all that is able to be conceived is actually conceived” (*DP* 41: 17-19). Cf. *VS* 26 (77:5-6) with Anselm of Canterbury’s *Proslogion* 15.

89. Here is an example of a Latin sentence that, because of its “omission,” many translators have misapprehended (“*Omni enim scibili et comprehensibili infinitae et incomprehensibilis perfectionis utique maior est*”).

90. See n. 13 above.

91. Genesis 1:31.

92. *DVD* 16 (71). *DB* 53 (last sentence). *Sermo CLXXXIX* (Haubst number), “*Qui manducat hunc panem*” (Paris ed., Vol. II, f. 106<sup>v</sup>, line 15 from bottom): “*Deus est thesaurus vitae infinitus*.”

93. Pope Leo I, *Sermo* 29, “*In Nativitate Domini IX*” (*PL* 54:226C).

94. God’s Quiddity is known only to Himself. *DI* I, 26 (88: last sentence). *CA*

II, 1 (88:16). *CA* II, 6 (102:1-2).

95. Plato, *Timaeus* 28C. See also n. 32 above.

96. See *DP*, where Nicholas develops this theme of *possest*, Actualized-possibility.

97. See n. 17 above.

98. Here, at *VS* 13 (34:78), “Non igitur potest fieri quod ...” should be translated as “Therefore, it is not possible that ....” See n. 19 above.

99. “God’s creative power is not exhausted in His creation” *DP* 8:12-13.

100. “Solus deus est possest, quia est actu quod esse potest” [*VS* 13 (34:12-13)]. The expression “... est actu quod esse potest” is ambiguous. It can mean either “is actually that which can be” or “is actually that which He can be.” I use parentheses—here and elsewhere in the translation—to indicate that either sense (or both senses) may be intended by Nicholas. Cf. n. 21 above.

101. The theme of God as Not-other (*non-aliud*) intersects with the theme of God as Actualized-possibility (*possest*). It is not surprising that these two themes are placed in sequence in *VS* (viz., in *VS* 13 and 14).

102. However, as Nicholas makes clear, no two objects differ from each other in number alone. [See *DI* I, 3 (9) and II, 1 (91-94).] See the translated text marked by n. 194 below. Also see *DI* I, 17 (49:2). Leibniz later capitalized upon this same theme.

The foregoing Latin sentence [*VS* 13 (35:10-13)] needs to be repunctuated; and “*aut*” should not be added by the editor.

103. In Eternity (i.e., in God) there is no plurality. See n. 48 above. The plural mode of discourse (“you see *them* to be ...”) is but a *modus loquendi*.

104. Here, at *VS* 13 (36:5-10), the two Latin sentences (“*Nam ... aeternitas*”) require repunctuation. Regarding the translation of “*fieri possunt actu*” at 36:7-8, cf. 37:7-8.

105. *Compendium* 4 (8:16-17). I regularly translate “*multiplicabilis*”/“*multiplicabile*” as “replicable” or as “precisely replicable”; and I translate “*plurificabilis*”/“*plurificabile*” as “repeatable” or as “precisely repeatable.” In *Compendium* 4 and *VS* 22 (65) Nicholas means that no thing can be reproduced or can reproduce itself in such a way that the two things differ in number alone. Nicholas uses “*multiplicabilis*” and “*plurificabilis*” interchangeably, without a difference of meaning. When he uses both words together—at *VS* 38 (110:15-16)—he does so because of emphasis, not because of significance. Other such redundancies occur throughout *VS* (and his other works). Examples in *VS* include “*virtus seu potentia*” [21 (59:19)]; “*species seu forma*” [24 (72:6)]; “*pulchritudo sive species*” [24 (72:12)]; “*essentiae et quidditates*” [29 (86:8-9)]; “*creator et dator*” [29 (87:10)].

106. *DI* I, 5 (14:1-8).

107. See n. 63 above.

108. Nicholas is not here drawing any distinction between *monas*, *unum*, and *unitas*.

109. *De Aequalitate* 26:5-6. *VS* 22 (67:9-10). *Compendium* 11 (36:8). “*Quodlibet est vel non est*” may be acceptably translated either with or without the addition of the words “the case.”

110. The principles of non-contradiction and of excluded middle apply within the domain of the finite (*Ap.* 15). They do not apply to God, who, qua undifferentiated Being itself, is said to be that in which all differences coincide [*DC* II, 1 (78:13-

15); cf. *DI* I, 22 (67:7-8)] and is also said to be *beyond* the coincidence of contradictories [*DVD* 9 (39:10-11)]. See n. 114 below.

111. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* I, 6 (987<sup>b</sup>1-4).

112. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* XIII, 2 (*Dionysiaca* I, 541-542. *PG* 3:978D-979A). Ambrose Traversari's translation, which Nicholas here follows, nonetheless has "*definitivum*" where Nicholas writes "*diffinitum*" [viz, at *VS* 14 (39:20)].

113. *NA* 1. "Not-other" is used by Nicholas as a name for God. (But it is not always used by him as such a name.) The formula "Not-other is not other than Not-other" is used in *De Li Non Aliud* 5 (18) to express trinitarianism.

Nicholas uses two different Latin phrases: "*non aliud quam*" and "*non aliud a*". The first of these expresses sameness, or identity: "non-aliud est non aliud quam non-aliud." One might well translate this sentence as "Not-other is none other than Not-other"—except for the fact that it does not indicate the trinitarianism as pointedly as does "Not-other is not other than Not-other." Yet, it does indicate the sameness of being. I do sometimes, in the translation of *VS*, use "none other than" to render "*non aliud quam*". As a translation for "*non aliud a*" I put "not other than": every finite thing is both the same as itself and *other* than that which is not it itself. God alone is not *other* than anything which He is not, for He transcends all comparison with all that is not-God (because the Infinite bears no comparative relation to the finite). The fact that God is not *other* than anything does not mean that He is the same as all else.

114. This passage is important because it attests to Nicholas's not having rejected the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction in its application to all finite thought. Nicholas excludes its applicability only to God. For God is not *good* in any sense that is opposed to our concept of *not-good*; nor is He *one* in any sense opposed to our concept of *not-one*; nor is He *being* qua opposed to *not-being* (as we understand these terms). In short, God infinitely transcends all positive conceptualization by finite minds. See n. 110 and n. 88 above. Also consider *De Quaerendo Deum* 5 (49:7-9): "Therefore, when you conceive God to be something better than can be conceived, you remove all that is bounded and contracted." This is the *via remotionis*, or *via negativa*. Cf. *Sermo* CCIV (Haubst number), entitled "*Cum omni militia coelestis exercitus*" (Paris ed., Vol. II, f. 120<sup>v</sup>, lines 17-18 from bottom).

115. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* VII, 3 (*Dionysiaca* I, 405. *PG* 3:871A).

116. Psalms 4:7(4:6).

117. *DI* I, 1 (2:13-15).

118. A definition is "equal" (*aequa*) in the sense that it accurately captures the nature of what is being defined.

119. I supply the word "properties". In a related context Nicholas himself uses the Latin word *proprietates*" [*VS* 39 (124:3)].

120. Genesis 1:31.

121. Wisdom 7:25. Nicholas regarded this book of the Catholic Bible as from Philo Judaeus. See *VS* I (2:14), together with the critical note in the Heidelberg Academy edition of the Latin text of *VS*.

122. Here is another instance of Nicholas's Platonism. See n. 32 above.

123. See n. 48 above.

124. See n. 100 above.

125. Proclus, *In Platonis Theologiam*, *op. cit.* (n. 50 above), I, 3 (Saffrey and Westerink Greek text, Vol. I, p. 15, lines 21-23). Thomas Taylor English translation, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 9. Plato, First *Alcibiades* 133B-C.

126. These ten are first listed at *VS* 15 (42:9-12): the good, the great, the true, the beautiful, the wise-making, the delightful, the perfect, the clear (or lucid), the equal, the sufficient.

127. See the references in n. 48 above.

128. Each thing is of a perfect kind, even though it may not be a perfect specimen of that kind.

129. See n. 20 above.

130. This is a basic theme of *Idiota de Mente*.

131. Cf. Nicholas's recourse to mirror-symbolism in *De Filiatione Dei* 3 (65-68). *DVD* 8 (32). See the reference in n. 125 above.

132. In the Latin text above (50:11) I regard the addition of "*magnitudinis*" after "*ambitum*" as necessary. See paragraph 2 of n. 1 above.

133. The expression "*laus dei*" is principally an expression in which "*dei*" is an objective genitive: it refers to the creation's praise of its Creator: "Bless the Lord, all you His works! Praise and superexalt Him forever" (Daniel 3:57). Indeed, all created things "praise God by their very existence" [*VS* 19 (54:3)], reflecting, as they do, His gloriousness. Created things are "praisings and blessings directed toward God" [*VS* 18 (52:1-2)]. But Nicholas also speaks of God Himself as Praise [*VS* 18 (51:14-15): "Quid laudatur per illa nisi laus illa quae deus?" Created things are created out of God's own praising, since God's act of creating is an act of His praising ("*laus dei*" with a subjective genitive).

134. Daniel 3:57. Nicholas mistakenly ascribes this text to David. See n. 1, paragraph 2, above.

135. All things by their very being bear witness to God's majesty and power and wisdom. *VS* 19 (54:3). See n. 133 above.

136. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* II, 7 (*Dionysiaca* I, 94-95. *PG* 3:646A).

137. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* VII, 3 (*Dionysiaca* I, 405. *PG* 3:871A).

138. Regarding the expression "*sapidissima scientia*" cf. *VS*, Prologue (1:18-19).

139. Here [*VS* 18 (53:9)] I am reading "*qui*" for "*quae*". See n. 1, paragraph 2, above.

140. Cf. *VS* 18 (53:17-18).

141. "Hymns" is a metaphor for various created beings—all of which are to God's praise insofar as they manifest His glory. See n. 135 above.

142. A creature's receiving being is its receiving God's approbation, or praise; for God saw that every thing created by Him was good. Genesis 1:31. See *VS* 19 (54:3-5).

143. That is, what created things are by nature attests to God's goodness, power, and wisdom. See n. 135 above.

144. Everything hears, understands, and obeys God's word in the sense that its being conforms to what God wills for it to be.

145. John 5:25.

146. John 11.

147. See the sentence marked by n. 157 below. *DVD* 4 (12:10-11).
148. God speaks in and through man's conscience. Nicholas regards the voice of conscience as a voice that originates from out of human nature, which itself is God-given. In *Compendium* 10 (34:1-2) he writes: "man naturally knows the good, the equal, the just, and the right ...." See the passage marked by n. 152 below. Cf. *DVD* 7 (28:5-6): "if I hearken unto Your Word, which does not cease to speak within me and which continually shines forth in my reason, I shall be my own ...." See *Sermo* in *p*, II, f. 169<sup>r</sup>, lines 18 ff.
149. Regarding perpetuity, see n. 23 above.
150. Here [VS 19 (55:10)] I am reading "*homines perfecti laudatores dei*" in place of "*homines perfecti, laudatores dei*". See 55:21: "*perfecti dei laudatores*".
151. *DI* III, 3 (198). See the translated text marked by n. 276 below. In regard to man as a microcosm, cf. Aquinas, *ST* I.91.1c.
152. See n. 148 above.
153. *VS* 1 (3:1-2). *Compendium* 2 (3:12-13).
154. See, above, the references in n. 15, n. 117, and n. 148.
155. This claim is related to Nicholas's earlier claim that man is originated from God's praises. See, above, n. 133 and the sentence marked by n. 140.
156. That is, man does not know *exactly* what these things are. *De Quaerendo Deum* 5 (49:20-22).
157. See the sentence marked by n. 147 above. See also *De Apice Theoriae*, paragraphs 21 and 22.
158. *DVD* 7 (28:1-3).
159. Plato, *Republic* X (613A-B).
160. "... we can elicit from ourselves": i.e., can elicit à la Meno's slave boy and as depicted by the Platonic Socrates in the non-aporetic dialogues.
161. Augustine, *De Ordine* II, 18.47-48 (*PL* 32:1017).
162. Dominicus Gundissalinus (Domingo Gundisalvo), *De Unitate et Uno* (*PL* 63:1075-1078). This short work has been falsely attributed to Boethius. A copy is found in Nicholas's library in Codex 205. Domingo, a Spaniard of the twelfth century, belonged to the school of translators and commentators at Toledo.
163. Plato, in the *Parmenides*.
164. Laërtius, *De Philosophorum Vitis*, *op. cit.* (n. 9 above), VIII, 25 (p. 210). See, above, *VS* 9 (24:13-14).
165. *De Principio* 35:5. *VS* 39 (120:7-8). *DP* 46:8-9. Proclus, *In Platonis Theologiam*, *op. cit.* (n. 50 above), II, 1 (Saffrey and Westerink Greek text, Vol. II, p. 14, lines 10-11. Thomas Taylor translation, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 99).
166. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* XIII, 3 (*Dionysiaca* I, 548-549. *PG* 3:979C).
167. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 10 above), II (738:20-21). Morrow and Dillon translation, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
168. Here the one English word "power" suffices to translate "*virtutem seu potentiam*" [*VS* 21(59:19)].
169. *De Pace Fidei* 8 (22:10). Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 10 above), I (704:7-10). Morrow and Dillon translation, p. 80.
170. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* IV, 2 (1003<sup>b</sup>22-24). *VS* 8 (22).
171. The indented section which follows is not a quotation but is Nicholas's

summary of Plato's reasoning.

172. "... are found in this world": i.e., they are posited.

173. "... if there were [such a multitude]": i.e., if there were a multitude that did not partake of oneness. Nicholas is alluding to an argument in Proclus's *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 10 above), II (726:28-41). Morrow and Dillon translation, p. 104.

174. That is, the many would be similar to one another with respect to not-partaking-of-oneness; and they would be dissimilar from one another by virtue of not partaking of oneness. These two respects are not the same, so that Nicholas is here mistaken in supposing there to be a contradiction. Cf. Cusa, *De Principio* 6 & 7.

175. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* II, 11 (*Dionysiaca* I, 113. *PG* 3:650B).

176. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* I, 1 (*Dionysiaca* I, 11. *PG* 3:587B).

177. See n. 169 above.

178. I supply "*dicit*" after "*Aristoteles*" at *VS* 21 (63:6).

179. Cf. *VS* 8 (22:7-11). Contrary to what Nicholas says, providence (*providentia*) is not rightly attributable to Aristotle's God, who has no knowledge of the world. Nicholas draws his point from Diogenes Laërtius, *De Philosophorum Vitis*, *op. cit.*, (n. 9 above), V, 32 (p. 118).

180. *VS* 18 (53).

181. *VS* 8 (22:10-11). Nicholas is mistaken about Epicurus's view.

182. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 10 above), VII (1154:6-8). Morrow and Dillon translation, p. 509.

183. Proclus, *ibid.*, VI (1075:26-33). Morrow and Dillon translation, p. 428.

184. Proclus, *ibid.*, VI (1075:19-24). Morrow and Dillon translation, p. 428.

185. Proclus, *In Platonis Theologiam*, *op. cit.* (n. 50 above), II, 10 (Saffrey and Westerink Greek text, Vol. II, p. 63, lines 13-16. Thomas Taylor translation, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 138).

186. "... an addition to the One": If we say of the One that it is powerful, wise, just, etc., we say of it more than that it is one. These additions belong to the *via affirmativa*. See the reference in n. 185 above. Also see Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 10 above), VI (1076:4-12). Morrow and Dillon translation, p. 428.

187. In the corresponding Latin sentence, I regard "*affirmationes*" [22 (64:15)] as needing to be deleted. In this respect I agree with the Paris edition. See the references to Proclus in n. 186 above.

See, above, paragraph 2 of n. 1. Also see Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Mystica Theologica* I, 2 (*Dionysiaca* I, 571-572. *PG* 3:999). Cf. *De Divinis Nominibus* VII, 2 (*Dionysiaca* I, 395. *PG* 3:870A): "Sane animi sensusque privatio excellentiam in Deo, non defectum, signat ..." (Ambrose Traversari translation).

188. Proclus, *In Platonis Theologiam*, *op. cit.* (n. 50 above), II, 8 [Saffrey and Westerink Greek text, Vol. II, p. 52, lines 4-10] and II, 12 (Saffrey and Westerink, Vol. II, p. 73, lines 11-14). Thomas Taylor translation, Vol. I, pp. 129 and 146].

189. The concept of singularity (*singularitas*) is contrasted both with *plurality* and with *universalizability*. Thus, it implies uniqueness as well as particularity. Nicholas teaches that every finite entity is such that it cannot be exactly replicated. See n. 105 above.

190. "... the singularity of the world is maximally unrepeatable": i.e., the world is as unrepeatable as it can be—i.e., is as singular as, in its own way, it can be.

191. Things partake of God's *likeness*, not of God Himself, teaches Nicholas. Cf. *VS* 7 (16:6-7). *NA* 16 (79:5-6). *De Filiatione Dei* 4 (78:5-6). *De Quaerendo Deum* 2 (37:13-14).

192. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* IV, 23 (*Dionysiaca* I, 273-274. *PG* 3:723D).

193. See the references to Pseudo-Dionysius in n. 187 above.

194. According to Nicholas, no two things differ in number alone. See n. 102 above.

195. See n. 109 above.

196. *VS* 27 (82:2-6).

197. *VS* 15-17.

198. "... in the Ancient City" ("*in Urbe Veteri*"): i.e., in Orvieto, Italy.

199. Raymond Klibansky and Hans Senger argue, convincingly, that the book on the shape of the world (*libellus de figura mundi*) is not *De Ludo Globi* but a work that has not survived. See pp. 155-156 (n. 11) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*, Vol. XII [*De Venatione Sapientiae. De Apice Theoriae*. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1982)].

200. In *VS* 21-26 Nicholas deals with the trinitarian notions oneness (*unitas*), equality-of-oneness (*unitatis aequalitas*), and union-of-both (*utrius nexus*). Oneness is the Father; Equality-of-Oneness is the Only Begotten Son; and Union of Oneness and Equality-of-Oneness is the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from both. Cf. *DI* I, 7-9. *CA* II, 7 (104-106). Created things are likenesses of God in that they too are a oneness, an equality, and a union, as Nicholas indicates here in *VS* 23 (70). They partake of oneness and equality and union insofar as these are symbolical likenesses of the Divine Nature. See especially *VS* 25 (72).

201. See n. 105 above.

202. By "equality" ("*aequalitas*," "*aequitas*") Nicholas does not necessarily mean exact equality. No two contracted things (i.e., finite things) are exactly equal in any respect. A few sentences later Nicholas states: "a plurality of things cannot be precisely equal." Cf. *DI* II, 1. See n. 102 above. Also note *DM* 3 (69:15-16): "... there is no preciseness except with God."

203. Absolute Equality is God.

204. *VS* 14 (39). *NA* 1 (5:7-10). Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion* 11 and 33-34.

205. Nicholas wrote *De Aequalitate* in 1459.

206. See n. 200 above.

207. "... is not one thing": i.e., Oneness is not a different being or substance from Equality-of-Oneness. It is, however, distinct. See Anselm of Canterbury's discussion in his *De Incarnatione Verbi* 2.

208. The English "form-of-being" adequately translates "*species seu forma essendi*" at 72:6.

209. Nicholas sees a connection between ὄν, ὄντος (*entitas*) and ἓν (*unum*). *DI* I, 8 (22).

210. Here the English "of beauty or form" adequately translates "*pulchritudinis sive speciei aut formae*" (72:12). As with the ancient Greeks, so with Nicholas beauty and form are closely related. The word "*speciosus*" means *beautiful*.



See the reference in n. 31 above.

211. In *VS* 24 (72) Nicholas spoke of equality-of-oneness as *being* (*entitas*). Here he implicitly speaks of *being* as equality-of-oneness.

212. The spirit-of-union is a spirit-of-love, a spirit of loving union. *DI* I, 8 (26). Cf. *DVD* 17 (79). *CA* II, 7 (104).

213. Here at 73:12 I take “*ipsa*” to refer to “*conexio*” rather than to “*natura*”. The expression “*ipsa ... spiritualis naturae*” (73:12) parallels the expression “*nexus ... intellectualis naturae*” (73:15-16).

Nicholas uses “*nexus*,” “*unio*,” and “*conexio*” interchangeably. Cf. *DI* I, 10 (28:14 and 19), where he twice writes “*unio sive conexio*.” In *DI* II, 7 (130:8) the Holy Spirit is referred to as *nexus infinitus*. In *DI* I, 9 (26:2-3) the Holy Spirit is referred to as *conexio*.

Similarly, whereas *VS* 25 (73:7-8) speaks of an invisible *conexionis spiritus* that binds together the parts of the world, *DI* II, 12 (174:11-12) speaks of a *spiritus unionis* which unites the essential parts of the world.

214. Here (73:19) Nicholas writes “*spiritum intellectus*”; at 73:20 he writes “*spiritum intelligentiae*.” Since he is using these expressions interchangeably, I have translated them by the same English expression (“spirit of intellect”) so as to avoid misunderstanding. Cf. n. 50 on p. 308 of my *Miscellany on Nicholas of Cusa* (1994).

215. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia* II, 1 (*Dionysiaca* II, 1113. *PG* 3:394A).

216. See the references in n. 81 above.

217. God is beyond the coincidence of contradictories; and , yet, in Him all differences coincide. See n. 110 above.

218. *DI* I, 20 (60).

219. “... the First Beginning”: viz., God.

220. That is the radii *c d* or *c b*; *c g* or *c h*.

221. A maximal circle is an infinite circle, which in *DI* I, 13 (36:1-3) Nicholas says to be a maximum line, a maximum triangle, and a maximum sphere. See n. 224 below.

222. Infinity added to infinity is still infinity. There can be only one infinity, maintains Nicholas. See the corresponding passages in *DI* I, 14 (37:6-12) and *De Theologicis Complementis* 3:37-49.

223. These are right angles because the triangle is infinite.

224. According to Nicholas there can be no actually existing infinite triangle. *Ap.* 32. Cf. *DI* II, 5 (119:11) with II, 1 (97:15-17). Cf. *DI* I, 6 (15:8-9); II, 1 (91:9-10); II, 6 (125:9-10). Passages such as *DI* I, 13 (36:5-6) and I, 16 (42:4-5) do, however, convey the false impression that Nicholas is speaking of what he takes to be an actually infinite line.

225. See n. 224 above.

226. *DVD* 1 (6:3-4).

227. Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion* 15.

228. Aquinas, *De Aeternitate Mundi* 3. Aquinas *et al.*, *On the Eternity of the World*, *op. cit.* (n. 43 above), p. 20.

229. *DP* 8:11-16: “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.”

230. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Caelesti Hierarchia* XV, 2 (*Dionysiaca* II, 997. *PG* 3:330B). Nicholas earlier made this same point. (See the translated text marked by n. 77 above.)

231. Nicholas nowhere says much about the distinction between active and passive intellect. See *Sermones*, in *p*, II, f. 112<sup>v</sup>, lines 6-3 from bottom, and f. 140<sup>r</sup>, lines 18 ff.

232. The Latin word “*terminus*,” used throughout *VS*, conveys many overlapping conceptualizations: limitation, delimitation, limit, boundary, end, goal, termination, end-point, and so on. Nicholas tends to use it interchangeably with “*finis*”. I have translated it in various of these ways, depending upon the context. God, as Nicholas states at the end of *VS* 26, is an “unlimited, or infinite, Limit” (*terminus interminus seu infinitus*): as Himself unlimited, He delimits all other things insofar as through creation He defines what they are. See *VS* 14, above, where God is called *diffinitio se et omnia diffiniens* [14 (40:15-16)]. Nicholas, like all medievals, often leaves out the Latin word for “other”; but he understands it as present. It is important, therefore, to translate the foregoing formula as: God is “the Definition defining itself and all other things.” At 40:9-10 Nicholas shows that he understands the formula in this way, for he writes: “Nam cum sit sui ipsius et omnium *aliorum* diffinitio ...” (emphasis mine).

This point about understanding “*alius*”/“*aliud*” is important. Failure to grasp it has led to misconstruing various medieval arguments. See, for example, my brief discussion of Gaunilo’s critique of Anselm—in n. 6 on p. 191 of my *Anselm of Canterbury: Volume Four: Hermeneutical and Textual Problems in the Complete Treatises of St. Anselm* (New York: Mellen, 1976).

233. At the end of *VS* 26 (viz., at 79:19) I translate “*terminus interminus*” as “unlimited Limit”; but here at *VS* 27 (80:9-10) I translate “*interminus terminus*” as “Undelimited Delimitation.” See n. 232 above. Words are spheres of meaning, not points of meaning—to use an apposite metaphor.

234. Nicholas here, as also at *DM* 3 (73:1-2) and elsewhere, speaks of exemplars (plural) as present in the Mind of God. However this use of the plural “*exemplaria*” is but a *modus loquendi*. For Nicholas makes emphatically clear at *DM* 2 (67:5-8) his belief that there is only one Exemplar, which is infinite and ineffable and is the most adequate Form of all formable things. (See n. 48 above.) This Exemplar is the Word of God, the second member of the Trinity. Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion* 10-12 and 30.

235. See n. 24 above.

236. *VS* 17 (50). *VS* 1 (3).

237. According to Nicholas, God created the human mind as capable of certain concepts but not of all concepts. Although the human mind was created with a power of inference, it was not created having innate concepts. See n. 87 above. See also *DM* 4 (77:20-22), as well as the remainder of *DM* 4.

238. Here Nicholas expands upon his earlier point [*VS* 22 (67:11)] that *posse fieri* is singular.

239. “*Hic mundus*” (“this world”), which sometimes refers simply to the earth [e.g., at *DI* II, 12 (170:2)], here refers to the universe.

240. *DM* 7 (99:7-10): “The Divine Mind *creates* by conceiving; our mind *as-*

*similates* by conceiving—i.e., by making concepts, or intellectual viewings. The Divine Mind is a reifying power; our mind is an assimilative power.” But here in *De Venatione Sapientiae*, as also in *De Aequalitate* 13, Nicholas emphasizes the mind’s constructing of measuring-standards. See *Sermo in p.*, II, f. 90<sup>v</sup>, lines 33 ff.

In *DM* 1 (57) Nicholas asserts that “*mens*” (mind) derives from *mensurare* (“to measure”); and in *DM* 3 (71) he mentions its derivation as from “*mensura*”.

241. Qua “*interminus terminus*” the human mind is an image of God. Cf. *VS* 27 (80:9-10), where God is referred to as *interminus terminus*. See n. 232 above.

242. Written in 1450.

243. Wisdom 11:21.

244. Cf. Anselm of Canterbury: “God does nothing without a reason” (*Cur Deus Homo* II, 10, near the end). Leibniz was later to capitalize upon this theme.

245. That is, *posse-fieri* is delimited only by God, who also delimits and defines the species.

246. See n. 234 above.

247. “... *mens seu intellectus*” (“mind, or intellect”): In and of itself mind is intellect; in relation to the body mind is soul. See *DM* 1 (57:9-19). *DM* 5 (80:6-7): “*Philosophus: Omnes paene Peripatetici aiunt intellectum, quem tu mentem dicere videris ...*”

248. Eternal Reason is the Word of God, the Son of God.

249. Strictly speaking, things partake only of God’s *likeness*. See n. 191 above.

250. *DB* 43.

251. Nicholas espouses a critical representational realism: the mind perceives real objects *by means of* their formal likenesses (viz., perceptual images, i.e., *species sensibiles*). From these images, the intellect abstracts conceptual forms (*species intelligibiles*). *VS* 36 (107:2). See, above, n. 73, n. 74, n. 132, n. 135, and n. 137 of Notes to *De Beryllo*.

It is wrong to ascribe to Nicholas the view that the mind knows only its own representations and never the objects themselves.

252. Essences are quiddities. See n. 105 above regarding Nicholas’s use of redundant expressions.

253. Once again Nicholas attests to his epistemological realism.

254. “... in its own power”: “*in sua virtute et potentia*” (86:15); see n. 105 above.

255. “... in visible signs and visible writings”: e.g., in musical script.

256. *Compendium* 10 (34).

257. “Creator and Giver: “*creator et dator*” (87:10); see n. 105 above.

258. That is, in the case of the Divine Intellect.

259. The intellect, as Aristotle says, becomes like all things. Nicholas expresses the point actively: the intellect likens itself (assimilates itself) to all things. This notion is developed at length in *DM*. Cf. *De Filiatione Dei* 6 (87).

260. The human mind does not know its own quiddity *precisely*, even as it also fails to know *precisely* the quiddity of any thing that is other than it itself. However, it *does* have knowledge of itself. Only God has knowledge of the human mind exactly as it is in itself. Note *De Coniecturis* II, 17.

261. That is, man does not understand exactly what his intellect, his essence, is. If Nicholas had emphasized and developed this point further and more radically,

he would have anticipated an essential theme of modern philosophy.

262. VS 12 (31:5-8).
263. VS 29 (87:15-17).
264. VS 13 (35:5-6).
265. Proclus, *In Platonis Theologiam*, *op. cit.* (n. 50 above), III, 8 (Saffrey and Westerink Greek text, Vol. III, pp. 30-34).
266. See the references in n. 187 above.
267. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* II, 4 (*Dionysiaca* I, 76. *PG* 3:642A): “*substantia substantiam superans*” (Ambrose Traversari translation).
268. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* VII, 3 (*Dionysiaca* I, 402-405. *PG* 3:870C - 871B). Nicholas follows Ambrose Traversari’s Latin translation.
269. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* VII, 3 (*Dionysiaca* I, 406-408. *PG* 3:871B). Nicholas follows Robert Grosseteste’s Latin translation.
270. Romans 13:1. I Corinthians 14:33 and 14:40.
271. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* V, 5 (*Dionysiaca* I, 340. *PG* 3:819C).
272. God, who is *Principium* (Beginning, Source, Principle), is a trine and one Beginning, as Nicholas expounds.
273. See n. 31 and n. 32 above.
274. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* IV, 23 (*Dionysiaca* I, 278 and 282. *PG* 3:726B and 726C). Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, *op. cit.* (n. 10 above), IV (902:30-35). Morrow and Dillon translation, p. 262. Aquinas, *In Librum Beati Dionysii de Divinis Nominibus* IV, Lectio 1 [p. 296, column A, bottom, of Vol. XV of *Sancti Thomae ... Opera Omnia* (New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1950); reprint of the Parma edition of 1864]. Cusa, *De Principio* 8:3-5, including n. 18 of Notes to *De Principio*. *De Apice* 5:3.
275. Plato, *Meno* 82B - 85C.
276. See n. 151 above. See also *Sermo in p*, II, 163<sup>f</sup>, lines 5-6.
277. Cusa, *De Aequalitate* 15:10-12. See also Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium de Divinis Nominibus* I, 67, 8 (p. 176, lines 44-54), edited by Paul Simon (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972) as Vol. 37, Part I in the series *Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*; series edited by B. Geyer. Cf. Aquinas, *SCG* II.80.13 [*Index Thomisticus*]. See also the twelfth-century text *Liber de Causis* II.22 [p. 21 in *The Book of Causes*, translated by Dennis J. Brand (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press; 2nd edition 1984)]. Note also Werner Beierwaltes, *Denken des Einen. Studien zur neuplatonischen Philosophie und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1985), pp. 376-377.
278. *DM* 15.
279. John 1:3. Colossians 1:16.
280. The lower nature is the sensible, temporal nature; the higher nature is the intellectual, perpetual nature. *DI* III, 3 (197).
281. One must beware of mistranslating this passage. God the Creator *is* Eternal Immortality. Through the second person of the Trinity an assumed human nature is united to the Divine Nature. This God-man is believed by Nicholas to be the historical Jesus. The following German translation is erroneous (not because of the translators’ lack of skills but because of Nicholas’s uncareful phrasing): “In ihm [d.h. Christo] ist die Menschheit nicht nur Mitte der Verbindung der höheren und niederen

Natur, der zeitlichen und der immerwährenden, sondern auch des Schöpfergottes und der ewigen Unsterblichkeit ....”

282. DVD 24 (109:1-2).

283. The proverb “*facere de necessitate virtutem*” goes at least as far back as Saint Jerome’s *Epistola* 54.6 (PL 22:552).

284. DM 3 (69:12-16): “Hence, if someone had precise knowledge of one thing: then, necessarily, he would have knowledge of all things. Likewise, if the precise name of one thing were known, then the names of all things would be known, because there is no preciseness except with God.”

285. Plato, *Epistola* VII (342A - 344 A). This letter is not to Dionysius but to his friends and followers. Cf. Nicholas’s mention of Plato in DB 55. See also DB 72:1-2 and *De Theologicis Complementis* 1:14-15.

286. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* IV, 11. (*Dionysiaca* I, 202. PG 3:707B).

287. *Compendium* 3 (6).

288. VS 22 (64:5).

289. Aquinas, *In Librum Beati Dionysii de Divinis Nominibus*, *op. cit.* (n. 274 above), V, Lectio 1 (p. 346, column B, first paragraph).

290. If Greatness *per se*, which is the cause of things’ being great, could be caused to be greater, it would be caused by itself to be greater. Thus, it would be the cause of its own greater greatness. Now, a cause is ontologically prior to its effect; but a greater greatness is ontologically prior to a lesser greatness. Thus, a cause that was the cause of its own greater greatness would be such that the later (*viz.*, the caused) would precede the earlier (*viz.*, the cause).

291. On Nicholas’s view every great thing can be made to be something still greater, for any given thing can be transformed by God into another thing that is superior to it. However, not every great thing can be made to be greater than it is while it remains the same kind of thing. Cf. VS 3 (8:1-8). DI II, 1 (97). DI III, 3 (201). DP 8:11-16. *De Ludo Globi* I (Paris edition, Vol. I, f. 154<sup>r</sup>, lines 4 to 8 from bottom).

292. In place of the Heidelberg Academy’s addition of the word “*sit*” at VS 34 (102:3), I add “*maior fieri nequeat*”. See paragraph 2 of n. 1 above.

293. An infinite line would not be a line; infinite greatness would not be greatness; infinite goodness would not be goodness. Infinity is only infinity and transcends all positive description and conceptualization, teaches Nicholas. Cf. DVD 13 (58:9-12). See n. 224 above.

294. Greatness is those things not in an unqualified sense but only insofar as it is present in them. And it is present in them as the power of a cause is present in its effect.

295. VS 13.

296. DI I, 5 (13:3-5).

297. VS 34 (103).

298. See n. 126 above.

299. Exodus 15:2.

300. Nicholas’s long Latin sentence here at VS 35 (105:17-27) is grammatically defective. See paragraph 2 of n. 1 above.

301. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* VII, 3 (*Dionysiaca* I, 403. PG 3:870D-871A).

302. E.g., in the analogy of the cave at the outset of *Republic* VII.

303. See *Sermo* in *p*, II, 162<sup>v</sup>, lines 29-46. Nicholas takes an Aristotelian-Thomistic view of truth as *adaequatio*. His view should not be misconstrued as Kantian—as the object of knowledge’s conforming to the intellect rather than the intellect’s conforming to the object. Some interpreters have, indeed, taken Nicholas’s words “*veritas, ... quae est adaequatio rei ad intellectum*” (“truth, ... which is the adequation of the thing to the intellect”) at *Compendium* 10 (34:20-21) to indicate a proleptic Kantian-like doctrine: the mind does not so much conform to the object as the object conforms to the mind. Norbert Henke, who speaks of Cusanus as the one “den man als eine der Wurzeln des deutschen Idealismus betrachtet” [*Der Abbildbegriff in der Erkenntnislehre des Nikolaus von Kues* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1969), p. 30] finds in Nicholas’s epistemology an inner contradiction: “angesichts einer geistphilosophischen Grundkonzeption des Cusanus ist zu vermuten, dass mit der Verwendung der spezifischen Abbildtheorie im engeren Sinn als Objektkausalität und als Anspruch auf adäquate Wiedergabe ein Widerspruch in seinem Denken notwendig auftritt” (p. 31). In assessing this contradiction, Henke views Nicholas as advancing a doctrine of *mens productiva*: “Wie könnte sich auch der Geist,” asks Henke, “allen Wesenheiten überhaupt angleichen, wenn er nicht schon alles irgendwie in sich enthielte? Diese assimilatio ist also ermöglicht durch apriorische Inhalte einer produktiven mens” (p. 38). Henke raises the question of what Nicholas means by “*assimilatio*”: “Durch den Begriff der Ähnlichkeit lässt sich die unkritische Adäquatheit des Abbildens, wie sie durch das Bild vom Kopieren im Wachs suggeriert wurde, ausschliessen. Der Begriff der Ähnlichkeit besagt aber andererseits auch, dass eine partielle Identität mit einem intendierten Gegenstand vorhanden sein muss. Mit der Ähnlichkeit ergibt sich als Konstituens des Erkennens ein Zugleich von Identität und Verschiedenheit, das die mens nicht zu überschreiten vermag. Aber ist dieses Anähnlichen ausschliesslich nur so zu verstehen, dass sich der Geist einem unbekanntem Etwas annähert? Wie kann er sich einem solchen Etwas überhaupt anähnlichen, wenn es ihm nicht schon vorher ähnlich ist? Die Vermutung liegt also nahe, dass der Geist selbst die Fremdheit eines Gegenstandes aufhebt und ihn mit sich verähnlicht” (p. 41). In other words, “[man] kann ... auch unter Abbilden ... die abbildliche Erstellung des Gegenstandes nach der Massgabe des erkennenden Subjekts verstehen .... Wenn das Subjekt die Norm für den zu erkennenden Gegenstand vermittelt, so kann man nur noch in einem sehr weiten Sinn von einem Abbilden sprechen, insofern die Norm durch den Einzelgegenstand abgebildet wird. Der Gegenstand wird an der Norm gemessen und ihr angeglichen” (p. 42). Henke rightly sees that Nicholas’s theory of knowledge goes beyond the naive realism of a crude copy-theory. But in pointing out this fact, he borders on over-emphasizing the activity of the human mind qua measurer; and he accuses Nicholas himself of having contradictory emphases. Accordingly, Henke does not properly characterize Nicholas’s proximity to the theories of Thomas Aquinas and of Albert Magnus but rather views Nicholas, in one of Nicholas’s (allegedly inconsistent) strands of reasoning, as quasi-Kantian: “Ausserdem bedarf es eines Vermögens, das aus einer universalen Überschau heraus die dinghafte Repräsentation der Idee beurteilt. Dafür reicht aber eine nur logisch-formalistische Urteilskraft etwa im Sinne Kants nicht aus. Über den Bereich des Logisch-Formalen hinaus bedarf es einer Kraft, die inhaltlich erfüllte Massstäbe setzt. Wie hat aber die Vernunft die absoluten Massstäbe in sich, wenn sie andererseits nur ein Vermö-

gen, eine Kraft ist, die sich den Urbildern bloss anähnlichen kann? Der transzendentale Ansatz zeigt sich dagegen bei Cusanus sehr deutlich in der Auffassung, dass die Kategorien nicht ausserhalb des Geistes sind. Ihre Seinsweise ist vielmehr in den Formen des Geistes, weil der Geist sie so denkt. Man muss darin eine Vorstufe für die moderne Ansicht von der Immanenz der Formen im Geist sehen" (p. 115).

This alleged anticipation of modernity is accentuated further by Michael Stadler [in his *Rekonstruktion einer Philosophie der Ungegenständlichkeit. Zur Struktur des Cusanischen Denkens* (Munich: Fink, 1983)], who also regards Nicholas as taking contradictory stances: "Das menschliche Erkennen, das noch wenige Sätze vorher [bei Cusanus] als eine 'adaequatio intellectus ad rem' begriffen schien, zeigt sich nun ganz entgegengesetzt als ein Formen, ja Hervorbringen der Gegenstände durch die *mens*. Der göttliche Geist schafft die Dinge vermittels der *mens*. Der menschliche Geist als Urbild ist es, der die Dinge seiner Form gemäss angleicht; seine Tätigkeit ist nunmehr eine 'adaequatio rei ad intellectum' und zwar in einer so ausgeprägten Weise, dass über ein blosses Angleichen hinaus von einem direkten Hervorbringen der Gegenstände gesprochen werden kann" (p. 47). Stadler sees Cusa as teaching that man's knowing is differentiating. The differentiation of the world into this and that "ist Schöpfung des Menschen, Produkt seiner begreifenden Tätigkeit. Die vom Menschen geschaffene differenzierte Welt ist ein *modus cognoscendi* der von Gott geschaffenen unendlichen Welt. Nur so ist der Sinn der Rede zu verstehen, dass alle Dinge, die nach dem infiniten Geist kommen ..., nur insoweit Abbilder, d.h. Schöpfungen des unendlichen Geistes sind, soweit sie am menschlichen Geist teilhaben. Daraus folgt, dass die Dinge *als strukturierte* nur insoweit von Gott geschaffen sind, als sie vom Menschen in seinem Erkenntnisakt geschaffen sind" (p. 49).

In my *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge* I have taken exception to the interpretations of Henke and of Stadler. And I have argued that in *Compendium 10* Nicholas does not mean anything radical by "*veritas ... est adaequatio rei ad intellectum*"—indeed, that he means *the same thing* as he would have meant had he written "*veritas ... est adaequatio intellectus ad rem*," that he means simply that truth is a congruence between state-of-affairs and the belief thereabout. In particular, Nicholas is not there distinguishing implicitly between a definition of *a priori* truth and a definition of *a posteriori* truth, such that *a priori* truth is *adaequatio rei ad intellectum*, whereas *a posteriori* truth is *adaequatio intellectus ad rem*. There are four reasons in support of my claim. First of all, in *Compendium 10* and *11* Nicholas is not discussing either various kinds of truth or differences-of-definition of "truth". He does not introduce his formula "*adaequatio rei ad intellectum*" in order to mark (even implicitly) a special distinction. Although he *does* imply at *10* (34:18-20) that if equality were removed, there could not remain intellect, whose understanding consists of adaequation, still at *12* (38:7-8) he says the same thing about the other faculties: "if equality is removed: there will remain neither senses nor imagination nor comparison nor proportion nor intellect ...." Secondly, Nicholas catches himself after saying "*adaequatio rei ad intellectum*" and immediately adds: "*aut aequatio rei et intellectus*," thereby evidencing that he is making no special issue of "*ad intellectum*" versus "*ad rem*". Thirdly, Nicholas's context is not the same as is Thomas's in *ST I*, 21, 2c, where Thomas differentiates between (1) a mind's being the measure of a thing which it causes and (2) a thing's being the cause and the measure of a mind's knowledge of it. When an artist produces a work that he has preconceived, his conception is the mea-

sure of that thing's being properly formed or not. (Cf. Cusa, *DB* 56.) By contrast, when the mind comes to know, for example, that the insect that it perceives is a bumble bee and not a fly, the object is the cause and the measure of the accuracy and adequacy of the mind's knowledge. In a different vein, God's justice can be called truth, argues Thomas, because the Divine Mind determines the standard of justice to which human works of justice are supposed to conform. Now, Nicholas, in the *Compendium*, is not dealing with Thomas's contrast; nor does he liken God's requirements to the work of an artisan—although he could have, since he does not disagree with Thomas in this regard. Nor does Nicholas, in the *Compendium*, come even close to suggesting that ordinary perception and intellection bear a resemblance to what an artisan does. Moreover, to be sure, Nicholas would agree with Thomas that a craftsman who makes a circular object or a geometer who draws a circle on parchment produces an object whose closer or more distant approximation to precise circularity is measured against the mind's understanding of a circle as a figure whose circumference is, at every point, equidistant from its center. In this sense *res conformatur ad intellectum*. Yet, none of all this relates to the points that Nicholas is adducing in *Compendium* 10-12. Fourthly, even though Nicholas does allude to man's naturally knowing "the good, the equal, the just, and the right" [*VS* 10 (34:1-2)], and even though he does mention logical truths such as the truth that "each thing either is or is not the case" [*VS* 13 (38:7-8); *VS* 22 (67:9-10); *Compendium* 11 (36:8)], he is not in the *Compendium* teaching—even though he believes—that the "truth" of moral actions depends on their conformity to the Divine Mind. Nor is he teaching that *a priori* truths, such as the truth that each thing either is or is not the case, consists in some kind of conformity between *res* and *intellectus*. Logical truths are expressions of the mind's innate *vis iudiciaria*, thinks Nicholas. The intellect, he says, understands a logical truth immediately. However, logical truths are not *imposed* by the human mind upon reality, so that reality is brought into conformity with the human mind's structures. The proposition "a whole is greater than any one of its parts" is known by the human mind *a priori* and necessarily: the rational mind must think in this way. But yet, God so constituted the world that wholes really are, and usually appear to be, greater than any one of the parts. The world is not the way it is because it conforms to the categories of human thought. Rather, God created both the human mind and the world in such a way that there is a congruence between categories of thought and categories of being. In other words, with respect to empirical knowledge, the human mind does not impose onto an unorganized manifold of sensations the structuralizing principle "no object both is and is not *x* in the same respect at the same time." Rather, God has created each thing in such a way that it is what it is and is not something else. And He has created the human mind in such a way that it cannot at all (when properly functioning) think that any object both is and is not *x*, in the same respect and at the same time. Nicholas does not maintain—whether in *De Mente* or *De Ludo Globi* or anywhere else—that Aristotle's categories do not objectively characterize the world apart from the human mind. Indeed, what he says is that "Aristotle was right in dividing all the things in the world into substance and accident" [*DI* I, 18 (53:15-16)]. And he also states that "all things have, from the fact that God defines them, their being not other than they are" [*VS* 14 (41:6-7)], for God is the "Immeasurable Measure of all things" [*DVD* 13 (59:2); cf. *DI* I, 16 (45-46) and *VS* 28 (83:10-14)] and is the "most adequate Exemplar of each and every formable thing" [*DM* 2 (67:5-



8)]. (See pp. 35-39 of my *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge*.) Indeed, the Divine Mind is the “Exemplar of our minds” [DM 3 (72:3-5)]. Thus, the universals that our minds make from comparisons are “a likeness of the universals contracted in things” [DI II, 6 (126:14-16); cf. DI II, 9 (150:21-25)]. Similarly, the numbers of which our minds make use are images of the divine number, which is the Exemplar of things [DM 6 (95:11-13); see also n. 138 of Notes to *De Beryllo*].

Finally, in the introductory section of my *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge* I erroneously ascribe to Martin Bormann a view that he does not hold but that others such as Michael Stadler do hold: viz., the view that with regard to empirical knowledge Nicholas believes that “*der Gegenstand gleicht sich der Vernunft an.*”

304. See n. 36 above.

305. Nicholas regards empirical concepts as representing truly (but not precisely) the existent object’s quiddity. See n. 303 and n. 36 above. See the introductory analysis in my *Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge*. Nicholas does not hold a nominalist theory of names. See *Compendium* 4-5. DM 2 (64-68) through all of DM 3. For a clear summary of the view expressed in the *Compendium* see Michael-Angelo Schramm, “Zur Lehre vom Zeichen innerhalb des Compendiums des Nikolaus von Kues,” *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 33 (October-December 1979), 616-620.

306. DM 15. Also see n. 23 above.

307. *Compendium* 11 (36:4-9).

308. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* XIII, 3 (*Dionysiaca* I, 549-550. PG 3:979C-982A).

309. DI I, 3 (9). VS 26 (79:1-2).

310. “... unrepeatable”: i.e., precisely unrepeatable. See n. 189 and n. 105 above.

311. “... first-made”: Nicholas is indicating ontological priority, for on his view God, in His creating act, created all things at once. See n. 56 above.

312. Genesis 1:14-18.

313. See the references in n. 301 above.

314. In this paragraph Nicholas presents something of an argument for the existence of God. See the references in n. 83 above.

315. “... is a representation of”: i.e., is a symbolic representation of ...

Cf. n. 320 below.

316. See n. 48 above.

317. “... nor fully assimilable”: i.e., there is no non-symbolical likeness of it that can be made.

318. VS 27 (82) and 28 (84).

319. *De Quaerendo Deum* 3 (45:11). Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion* 31 and *Proslogion* 22.

320. “... is a certain likeness of”: i.e., is a certain symbolical likeness of ...

Cf. n. 315 above.

321. The Limit (*terminus*) which manifests the precise Likeness of God is the Word of God, the “*figura substantiae eius*” (Hebrews 1:3). Cf. Colossians 1:15. DI III, 4 (203).

322. That is, no finite thing is such a likeness of the Word of God that there cannot be a vastly greater likeness thereof.

323. See n. 274 above.

324. See n. 19 above. The concept *posse-facere* (the possibility of making) conveys the notion of power. See n. 329 below.

325. "... is the Cause of all desire" ("*est omnis desiderii causa*"): i.e., is the Ground of all desire.

326. Possibility-made-actual (*posse-factum*) is to be distinguished from Actualized-possibility (*possest*), which is God. In the present chapter (*VS* 39) Nicholas refers to God as *posse facere*, the Possibility (or Power) of making.

327. Nicholas affirms the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*—i.e., creation neither out of the substance of God nor from any pre-existing material. His language of emanation, used elsewhere, is not in conflict with his present affirmation. Nicholas uses the term "*emanatio*" at *DI* III, 3 (199:16-17). *NA* 21 (97:14). *VS* 18 (52:10).

328. To be made is to be made from *posse-fieri*. Nicholas previously explained [*VS* 3] that *posse-fieri* is not made from itself. Therefore, it is not *made*; rather, it was *created* from nothing.

329. Here Nicholas makes explicit the conceptual connection between *posse* and *potens*. See n. 324 above.

330. *VS* 3 (7).

331. See n. 311 above.

332. *VS* 37 (109).

333. That is, the possibility of making hot is the (efficient, formal, final) cause of all hot things only *insofar as they are hot*.

334. Plato, *Timaeus* 49D. Cf. the claim in the text above—viz., that all perceptible heat can be hotter than it is—with the apparent counter-claim in *VS* 26 (78). The resolution of the discrepancy depends upon a view such as the following: a fire can always, in principle, be made hotter—but not so in practice.

335. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Caelesti Hierarchia* XV, 2 (*Dionysiaca* II, 994-1000. *PG* 3: 330A-C).

336. Hebrews 12:29.

337. See n. 165 above.

338. Aristotle, *Metaphysica* II, 1 (993<sup>b</sup>24-27). Cf. Cusa, *VS* 8 (19). Albertus Magnus, *Physica*, II, 1, 3 [Paul Hossfeld, editor, *Alberti Magni Physica*, Part I (p. 153, lines 89-90); this is Vol. IV, Part I (Münster: Aschendorff, 1987), of the series *Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*, produced by the Albert Magnus Institute at the University of Cologne, Germany]. Note Cusa, *DI* I, 17 (47:12-14).

339. Restricting-additions are qualifications. For example, something may be good *per se*, whereas something else is good only in a certain respect, under a certain qualification.

340. The Causal Beginning is also that unto which all created things are determined as unto their final Cause, or End.

341. Nicholas here follows Aristotle and Albert Magnus. Water is both moist and cold; but in water cold prevails over moist. See Aristotle's more general discussion of the four elements (earth, air, fire, water) and the four principles (the hot, the cold, the moist, the dry) in his *De Generatione et Corruptione*—especially II, 3-4. Albertus Magnus, *De Generatione et Corruptione* II, 1 and 2—especially II, 1, 7 through II, 1, 12 and also II, 2, 2-4 [Vol. V, Part II, edited by Paul Hossfeld, (Münster: Aschendorff, 1980)], in the series *Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*]. According to Albert (who is following Aristotle) fire consists of the hot and the dry, with the hot pre-

dominating; air consists of the moist and the hot, with the moist predominating; water consists of the cold and the moist, with the cold predominating; and earth consists of the dry and the cold, with the dry predominating (see II, 1, 8). The four elements may be transformed into one another by changing the proportions of the hot, the cold, the moist, and the dry.

342. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium de Divinis Nominibus*, *op. cit.* (n. 277 above), V, 35 (p. 324, lines 10-12 of Vol. 37, Part I): "... sol est principium totius luminis et omnes aliae stellae illuminantur a sole ...."

343. VS 39 (119-120).

344. "... is the cause of": i.e., is the causal ground of ....

345. Albertus Magnus, *De Generatione et Corruptione*, *op. cit.* (n. 341 above), II, 3, 5 (p. 206, lines 34-45).

Note Albert's *Super Dionysium de Divinis Nominibus*, *op. cit.* (n. 277 above), IV, 81: "Praeterea, omnis transmutatio reducitur ad aliquod principium quod non disponitur per illam, sicut sol dicitur calidus, quia est principium alterationis, quae est secundum calorem, cum ipse non disponatur per calorem" (p. 188, lines 57-61 of Vol. 37, Part I).

346. According to Nicholas and others, planets are stars but are not "fixed" stars. *DI* II, 12 (166:1-2): "Est igitur terra stella nobilis, quae lumen et calorem et influentiam habet aliam et diversam ab omnibus stellis ...."

347. Albertus Magnus, *Physica*, *op. cit.* (n. 338 above), II, 1, 5 (p. 83, lines 39-44): "Et posuerunt simile huius in lumine, quod egreditur de sole, quod quidem unum est iuxta solem, a quo egreditur, et postea descendens diffunditur in his quae illuminantur, et accipit diversitatem ex recipientibus et divisionem ..."

348. Plato, *Republic* VI (509A - 510B), where the illustration of the divided line is related to the imagery of the sun. Cf. *Republic* 516B with 519C, where the vision of the Good is likened unto a vision of the sun.

349. See n. 335 above.

350. Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio* XXVIII, 20 (*PG* 36: 51C).

351. I Corinthians 13:12.

352. In translating this sentence, one must compare the Prologue of *VS* (1:14-16).