

PROLEGOMENA TO NICHOLAS OF CUSA'S CONCEPTION  
OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH TO REASON

by

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## PROLEGOMENA TO NICHOLAS OF CUSA'S CONCEPTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH TO REASON

“Ist der Weg des spekulativen Denkens, wenn dieses nicht eine ermüdende Spielerei wird, immer von einem Glauben her beschritten, von einem Glauben sei es der alten griechischen Frömmigkeiten, sei es der asiatischen Glaubensweisen, sei es der christlichen?”

—Karl Jaspers<sup>1</sup>

### I

Is there any such thing as the Cusan view of the relationship between faith and reason? That is, does Nicholas present us with clear concepts of *fides* and *ratio* and with a unique and consistent doctrine regarding their interconnection? If he does not, then the task before us is surely an impossible one: viz., the task of finding, describing, and setting in perspective a doctrine that never at all existed. For even with spectacles made of beryl stone or through the looking glass of Lewis Carroll, we could not descry the totally nonexistent.

Four lines of argument purport to show that the task before us is fundamentally impossible.

1. First of all, it may be argued (a) that Nicholas of Cusa can have a coherent doctrine of faith and reason only if he has a generally coherent theory of knowledge and (b) that since his theory of knowledge is generally incoherent, so too must be the aforesaid doctrine, which is an intrinsic part of the theory of knowledge. Let us grant—for the sake of the argument—the disputable logic of this reasoning, and let us focus on the question of whether Nicholas does or does not have a viable general theory of knowledge. Many philosophers judge the theory to be unviable. For example, the philosopher Hans Blumenberg writes: “I will not make what I believe would have to be a futile attempt at a unitary interpretation of the Cusan theory of knowledge. Here in particular the inner consistency of his philosophical accomplishment is doubtful. The reason for this can be specified: it lies, again, in the inability to deal with or successfully to evade the consequences of nominalism.”<sup>2</sup> Other philosophers are quick to agree that Cusa’s epistemology consists of a host of glaring contradictions: Cusa’s theory of representative perception is said to be incompatible with his doctrine of *homo mensura*—i.e., with his doctrine that man is the measure of the reality that is perceived and conceived by him. Cusa’s notion that empirical concepts are abstracted from perceptual and imaginative images is asserted to be contradicted by his further claim that all concepts are derived *a priori* from the mind itself. His tenet that at birth the mind is a *tabula rasa* is taken to be contradicted by his declaration that mind enfolds within itself the exemplars of all things. His doctrine that all empirical knowledge is but *coniectura* is alleged to be contradicted by his statement that the mind thinks things in terms of their respective exemplars. His claim that “truth is adequation of the thing to the intellect” (*veritas ... est adaequatio rei ad intellectum*) is seen as opposed to his likening

the mind to a living *mirror* that *reflects* reality. In short, his statement that the mind assimilates itself to the object-of-knowledge is alleged to be at odds with his view that the perceived object assimilates itself to the mind.

Moreover, it is argued that in Cusa's writings the very concepts of *ratio* and *intellectus* fluctuate so widely from treatise to treatise (being nowhere clearly defined) that to talk seriously about the relationship between *ratio* and *fides* or between *intellectus* and *fides* becomes impossible. If, for example, Nicholas has no consistent theory of empirical knowledge—has no consistent view of the relation between *sensus*, *imaginatio*, *ratio*, and *intellectus*—then he has no consistent view of natural theology either. And lacking a consistent view of natural theology, he necessarily also lacks a consistent view of the relation of *ratio* and *intellectus* to *fides*. Consider the interesting comment of Rudolf Haubst: “So wenig es Cusanus um eine ... ‘autonome Philosophie’ zu tun ist, so unbezweifelbar ist doch auch er von der grundlegenden Funktion und Bedeutung der philosophischen Erkenntnisse überzeugt, die man den Grundstock der ‘natürlichen Theologie’ nennen kann.”<sup>3</sup> This comment by Haubst is acceptable only if Nicholas's philosophy includes a coherent theory of knowledge; for, otherwise, Nicholas's philosophy of religion provides no basis for an intelligible doctrine of natural theology, with the result that we cannot be sure that he really endorsed natural theology.

In the end, some interpreters deem Nicholas's epistemology to be so muddled as to be philosophically unimportant. Perhaps with this verdict in the back of his mind, Karl Jaspers wrote: “Gross ist Cusanus nur durch seine Metaphysik.”<sup>4</sup>

Over against Karl Jaspers, Hans Blumenberg, Norbert Henke, and others we can safely deny that there *are* glaring contradictions in Cusa's general theory of knowledge. For his doctrine that there is in the intellect nothing that was not previously in the senses is *not* incompatible with his statements (a) “knowing is measuring”<sup>5</sup> and (b) “the mind is a ‘divine seed’ that conceptually enfolds within its own power the exemplars of all things.”<sup>6</sup> Nor is his view about the mind's initially being a *tabula rasa* incompatible with his view of the *a priority* of concepts. Interpreters who profess to find in Cusa's works an inconsistent epistemology are themselves victims of one or more errors of interpretation. Chief among these errors are the eight following:

Error 1: A *misreading of De Mente 7*, where Nicholas distinguishes between *empirical concepts* and *mathematical concepts*, but where interpreters allege to hold true of all concepts that which Cusa states only apropos of mathematical concepts. This misreading leads to a collapse of the distinction between empirical and non-empirical concepts and to the false claim that, for Cusa, the human mind makes empirical concepts from out of itself rather than by means of abstraction from perceptual images.

Error 2: A *misapplication of the contents of the treatise De Filiatione Dei*. Interpreters apply to the present cognitive situation in this lifetime that which Nicholas applied only to the future cognitive state of believers beyond this lifetime. Because of this mistaken application of Nicholas's concept of *intellectus purus*, these interpreters wrongly see Nicholas as prefiguring nineteenth-century German Idealism's concept of the *cogito*—of the “Ich denke”.

Error 3: A *misconstrual of Nicholas's statement that mind enfolds the exemplars of all things and unfolds from itself a unity of things*.<sup>7</sup> For what Nicholas says and means is that the human mind enfolds *in its power* the exemplars of all things—in the sense that it *has the power* to liken itself to all finite things by way of making concepts of them. And mind unfolds from itself a unity of things in the sense that it *actually* assimilates itself to things by actually abstracting from *species sensibiles* concepts of these things. Moreover, it unfolds an *all-encompassing* unity of things when it makes a concept of the universe.

Error 4: A *misinterpretation of Nicholas's formula “veritas ... est adaequatio rei ad intellectum.”*<sup>8</sup> With the words of this formula Nicholas does not mean that things assimilate themselves to the intellect but only that the intellectual concept “agrees with,” “corresponds to,” or “represents” the thing—even as, at a lower level of synthesis, the perceptual image also represents the thing. And when Nicholas speaks of mind as measuring all things and as determining the boundaries of all things, he is not repudiating the doctrines of *adaequatio* and *assimilatio*. For whereas the Divine Mind measures principally by *setting the measure* of all things in the world, the human mind measures principally by *taking the measure* of whatever things it encounters within the world.

Error 5: A *misidentification of Nicholas's statement that “a thing is nothing except insofar as it is captured by a name”* [*De Mente* 2 (65)]. For what Nicholas means is (1) that a thing is *cognitively* nothing, i.e., is unknown, except insofar as it is captured by a name and (2) that, in general, names name *really*.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Nicholas is not himself necessarily endorsing this latter construal in an unqualified way but is using it to characterize tersely a particular doctrine of the Aristotelians both of his own day and of earlier days.

Error 6: A *misunderstanding of the illustration of the mapmaker in Compendium* 8. For the mapmaker, in depicting his city, is not restructuring and creatively redefining the relationships of the parts of the city to one another. Rather, he is attempting to construct a scaled reproduction that corresponds to the pre-given order of objects in the city. If anything, Nicholas's illustration lends support to an epistemological critical-realism, not to an immanent idealism à la Bishop Berkeley or to a transcendental idealism à la Immanuel Kant or to phenomenalism à la John Stuart Mill or to conventionalism à la Henri Poincaré.

Error 7: *A misapprehension of Nicholas's doctrine of the categories.* Nicholas follows Aristotle both in identifying ten categories and in believing that the world is properly characterized as a plurality of accident-bearing substances even apart from the human mind's apprehension of them. Nicholas does not suppose that the human mind's categories are constitutive transcendental forms that are imposed upon an otherwise unordered and unstructured manifold of sensory data. Accordingly, his doctrine of categories is not at odds with his teaching that *nihil tale potest esse in intellectu quod prius non fuit in sensu* [*De Visione Dei* 24 (107)].

Error 8: *Supposing that in the treatise De Coniecturis Nicholas abandons the philosophy of his earlier De Docta Ignorantia,* so that the earlier doctrine of abstraction, the earlier theory of universals, and the earlier method of conceptualizing God are *Stück für Stück ersetzt*—in sum, so that an *Einheitsmetaphysik* replaces what previously was, in part, a *Seinsmetaphysik*.<sup>10</sup>

When we correct the foregoing eight interpretive errors, we go a long way toward removing all semblance of inconsistency from the Cusan theory of knowledge. And since, in last analysis, that theory of knowledge, including its concepts of *ratio* and *intellectus*, is, in a general way, consistent, it does not follow necessarily that an intrinsic part of that theory—viz., the doctrine of the interrelationship between *fides* and *ratio*, or between *fides* and *intellectus*—is hopelessly incoherent.

2. A second line of argument against the possibility of our task looks specifically at the doctrine of faith and reason itself and points to Nicholas's ostensibly conflicting utterances with respect to this doctrine. On the one hand, Nicholas *contrasts* the certitude of religious belief with the certainty of seeing: "To see is to apprehend with a supreme degree of certainty. Faith that arises in this way is small faith and is of little merit. For what is seen cannot not be believed .... Hence, Christ said: 'Blessed are those who have not seen but yet have believed.'"<sup>11</sup> But on the other hand, Nicholas *likens* the certitude of religious belief to the certainty of seeing: "Faith is the authority of the speaker in a case where I know to be true that which is said—know it no less than if I were to see it."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, there are other oppositions, as well. On the one hand religious belief is said to be acquired with a great struggle ("*in agone certaminis*").<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, religious belief is said not to involve great effort: "Intellegere est cum labore et successione, non autem fides."<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, faith is said to remove ignorance<sup>15</sup>—a statement which suggests that faith is a kind of knowledge. On the other hand, faith is said to make up the difference where reason (*ratio*) falls short<sup>16</sup> and is said to be higher than the act of understanding (*intellegere*)<sup>17</sup>—two statements which, when taken together, seem to suggest that faith is not a kind of knowledge. On the one hand, faith is called a gift of God,<sup>18</sup> and man is said to be unable to come to God of his own power.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the ability to believe or not to believe is said to be in

the power of each man's free will.<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, reason and understanding are said to be assisted by faith.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, there is said to be no comparative relation between the teachings of Christ and the reasoning of the philosophers.<sup>22</sup> On the one hand, God is declared to be inaccessible and greater than can be thought.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, a face-to-face encounter with God is asserted to be possible even in this present lifetime.<sup>24</sup> On the one hand, the first effect of faith is identified as fear, which draws the heart away from unclean affections.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, faith is said to remove ignorance in order to make room for love<sup>26</sup>—a statement which seems to imply that love, not fear, is the first-fruits of faith. On the one hand, understanding is said to elevate faith.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, faith is said to stand understanding upright and to stabilize it.<sup>28</sup> On the one hand, faith is said to be increased by understanding, and understanding is called the unfolding of faith.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, a Christian believer is encouraged by Nicholas to restrain his intellect from demanding signs and proofs of the fundamental tenets of religious belief.<sup>30</sup>

The foregoing ostensibly opposing tendencies within Cusa's doctrine of faith and reason are thought by some philosophers to show that Nicholas is not a systematic thinker but rather is merely an impressionistic generator of ideas—ideas which he is unable to work into a harmonious gestalt. According to this line of consideration no reader of his works should expect to find therein, or ever will find therein, a self-consistent position on any given topic—certainly not on the topic of faith and reason.

However, this verdict about Nicholas's patterns of thought is extreme and is not borne out by the textual evidence, which once again these philosophers have badly distorted. A proper understanding of Nicholas's statements will show—once we allow for those few places in which he actually has changed his mind<sup>31</sup>—an overall harmonious philosophical and theological stance. Since we do not have time to dwell on each of the alleged incompatibilities in the foregoing list, let us take a single item and use it as a sample of the misunderstanding that is displayed by the entire list: 'On the one hand, faith is called a gift of God, and man is said to be unable to come to God of his own power. On the other hand, the ability to believe or not to believe is said to be in the power of each man's free will.' Here we do not need to raise the profound issues of predestination and free will and to ask about their compatibility. We need only to take a closer look at what Nicholas actually states: "Faith is a gift of God. But that we believe the truth is not a unique gift of God, because reason is unable to dissent from truth. But that I believe the one who speaks the truth is a gift of God and is a grace."<sup>32</sup> Here Nicholas is relating the notion of faith to the notion of authority. God does not specially motivate an individual to believe the truth, for this believing is natural and is of the power of rational nature itself. But God well may motivate an individual to accept obediently

an authority *as an authority* and therefore to accept that authority's pronouncements *as true*. In this spirit St. Augustine himself declared: "I would not have believed the Gospel unless the authority of the Catholic Church had moved me."<sup>33</sup> And of his being motivated to accept both the authority of the Church and the authority of the Scriptures Augustine professed: "As unknowing I was led by God to Ambrose so that as knowing I would be led by Ambrose to God."<sup>34</sup> Whether or not we accept the Cusan-Augustinian view, *that view* is not, *prima facie*, incoherent.

3. A third line of argument also purports to show that the task of determining Nicholas's view of faith and reason is impossible. This line of reasoning does not require us to disqualify the Cusan general theory of knowledge as incoherent; nor does it claim that within that general theory of knowledge Nicholas's particular statements regarding faith and reason are contradictory. Rather, it maintains that the task before us is impossible precisely because there is no *one, unique* Cusan view of faith and reason. On the contrary: there are many *consistent* alternative ways in which Nicholas's scattered remarks on faith and reason can be configured. An illustration—viz., Nicholas's illustration, in *De Visione Dei* 6, of an omnivoyant portrait—may help us better to understand this argument:

... just as while I look from the east at this depicted face it seems likewise to look eastwardly at me, and just as while [I look at it] from the west or from the south it [seems] likewise [to look westwardly or southwardly at me], so the [depicted] face seems turned toward me regardless of how I change my face. In a similar way, Your Face, [O God,] is turned toward every face that looks unto You. Your gaze, O Lord, is Your Face. Accordingly, whoever looks unto You with a loving face will find only Your Face looking lovingly upon him.... Whoever looks angrily unto you will find Your Face likewise to display anger. Whoever looks unto You joyfully will find Your Face likewise to be joyous ....

Similarly, according to the present line of reasoning, it seems that Cusa's philosophical theology, or theological philosophy, can plausibly be interpreted in any number of alternative ways: as pantheistic, as agnostic, as idealistic, as rationalistic, as existentialist, and so on.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, as regards his doctrine of faith and reason: Is it existentialistic, rationalistic, fideistic, Augustinian, Thomistic, Ockhamistic, or just what? It can plausibly be viewed as any and all of these. It can be viewed as Augustinian insofar as Nicholas makes central use of the Scriptural maxim "Unless you believe, you will not understand."<sup>36</sup> It is Thomistic insofar as it starts by considering the foundation of religious belief to be a conviction that God exists.<sup>37</sup> It is Ockhamistic insofar as it teaches that God, as infinite, is neither three nor one but is Infinity itself.<sup>38</sup>

If we view Nicholas's position through existentialist eyes, we see as existentialist his call to us to restrain the intellect<sup>39</sup> and his corresponding call to us to choose this day whom we will serve, whether the Lord God or worldly idols (cf. Joshua 24:15). If we look unto Nicholas with a rationalistic gaze, he gazes back at

us with eyes that say: “If you want to attain that which you desire, then believe, and do as reason dictates” (“... *crede ...et fac, uti ratio dictat*”).<sup>40</sup> And his look also seeks to persuade us that by the expression “*cor hominis*” (“a man’s heart”) Scripture means *ratio animae* (the soul’s reason).<sup>41</sup> If we cast our eyes upon him fideistically, we see him as a fideist who stresses that faith begins where reasoning leaves off<sup>42</sup> and that faith is higher than understanding<sup>43</sup> and that we can know more clearly and more immediately by faith than by philosophy the truth of such propositions as that the soul is immortal.<sup>44</sup> In the end, then, what is Nicholas’s view of faith and reason? The line of reasoning now under consideration answers: it is a view so eclectic and so fragmented that *how* it is viewed will depend upon the *emphasis* read into it by the viewer—because it itself has within itself no intrinsic and objective emphases of its own.

We need not expend many words here objecting to this line of reasoning. For when we come to take a second look at Nicholas’s texts, we will observe that Nicholas’s writings are not so eclectic as to admit of arbitrary interpretive configuration.

4. A fourth line of argument alleging the impossibility of identifying and describing Nicholas’s doctrine of faith and reason calls attention to the pervasive paradoxicality of Nicholas’s utterances. “God is *being*, understood nonexistantly.”<sup>45</sup> God is “comprehended incomprehensibly.”<sup>46</sup> He is seen invisibly.<sup>47</sup> He is not effable; and yet, He is not ineffable either.<sup>48</sup> He is named in everything nameable; and yet, He remains unnameable.<sup>49</sup> He is signified in every term’s signification, even though He is unsignifiable.<sup>50</sup> He is the infinitely Maximum who is also the infinitely Minimum.<sup>51</sup> He is the Unattainable One, who is attained in all attainable things.<sup>52</sup> He is the Transcender of every mode, who is nonetheless modifiable.<sup>53</sup> He is not *other* than anything;<sup>54</sup> and yet, He is not the same as anything.<sup>55</sup> He exists so truly that He seems closer to not-being than to being.<sup>56</sup> He is the coincidence of opposites because in Him all things coincide;<sup>57</sup> and yet, He dwells beyond the wall of the coincidence of opposites.<sup>58</sup> The wall of coincidence, which separates the creation from God, is both everything and nothing.<sup>59</sup> It is the wall of absurdity,<sup>60</sup> which is also the wall of Paradise.<sup>61</sup> God is not only all in all but is also nothing in nothing.<sup>62</sup> He is not only the Being of being but is also the Not-being of not-being.<sup>63</sup> The names for God signify a “participation in Him who cannot be participated in.”<sup>64</sup> The human soul is immutable and immortal;<sup>65</sup> and yet, God alone is immutable and immortal.<sup>66</sup> The soul “sees itself to be nontemporal time.”<sup>67</sup> Human ignorance is a kind of knowing<sup>68</sup>, and knowing is a kind of ignorance.<sup>69</sup> The world is eternal; and yet, it is temporal.<sup>70</sup> The plurality of things arose from the fact that God, who is Being itself, is present in nothing.<sup>71</sup>

Moreover, with respect to faith and reason we have already seen samples of Nicholas’s paradoxical expressions: The acquiring of faith is difficult, he says;<sup>72</sup> and



yet, it is also easy.<sup>73</sup> Faith is God's gift;<sup>74</sup> and yet, it is man's act.<sup>75</sup> There is no true knowledge of God before there is a love of God;<sup>76</sup> and yet, there is no true love of God before there is a knowledge of God.<sup>77</sup> We are to believe in order to understand;<sup>78</sup> and yet, God, who dwells beyond the wall of absurdity, remains incomprehensible to believers who seek to understand what He is.<sup>79</sup> Believers are at times to restrain their intellects in order to allow for faith;<sup>80</sup> and yet, faith places no restraint on the intellect.<sup>81</sup>

Some philosophers regard the foregoing paradoxical Cusan expressions as unintelligible—as quintessentially obscure. And yet, these philosophers make only feeble attempts to illuminate the expressions. And they fail to take account of the Neoplatonic metaphysical context and of the Christian theological context in which these expressions are embedded. Nicholas is influenced by Plotinus, Proclus, Pseudo-Dionysius, and others in the Neoplatonic tradition who speak paradoxically. Similarly, paradox is intrinsic to Christian theology, which speaks of God as both *absconditus* and *revelatus*, as both *immanens* and *transcendens*, as both *perfecte misericors* and *perfecte iustus*. Christian theology speaks of Christ as both true God and true man, as both eternal and temporal, as both willing and not willing that all men be saved, and so on. At a later point in the history of theology Martin Luther was to mention the perplexing paradox of justification: the paradox that the Christian during this present lifetime is *simul peccator et iustus*.

Are not Cusa's paradoxical utterances—most of them, at any rate—as intelligible as is Neoplatonic metaphysics and Christian theology? If one deems these latter to be legitimate constructions of thought, then one must also judge Cusa's utterances to be similarly insightful rather than altogether obscure.

## II

Since the four preliminary objections to descrying and describing Nicholas's conception of faith and reason do not succeed in establishing the impossibility of the task, we may proceed to show that the task is altogether possible. We may do so by actually exhibiting the Cusan conception.

The Cusan conception begins with the recognition that the terms "*fides*" and "*ratio*" are ambiguous and that therefore a clear use of them requires the introduction of various distinctions. Nicholas distinguishes between empirical belief and religious belief. At the empirical level "seeing is believing," as we are prone to say—or "*non potest non credi quod videtur*," as Nicholas says.<sup>82</sup> By contrast, religious belief is over-belief, as William James put it; it is belief that goes beyond what the evidence justifies; it is belief in spite of not-seeing. We must distinguish—as does Nicholas, using other words—between three kinds of faith. Propositional faith is belief in the truth of a given proposition on the basis of the authority that propounds

the proposition. In this regard, Nicholas defines “*credere*” in the Augustinian fashion as “*cum assensione cogitare*”: “to think with assent.”<sup>83</sup> Propositional faith, then, is *assensus*. Insofar as it is *assensus religiosus christianus*, it is assent to the truth of the authoritative teachings of Christ, the Scriptures, or the Church. Here we need a further distinction: between the act of believing and the object of belief. “Propositional faith” refers to the act of believing. The proposition that is believed to be true is referred to as “the article of faith” (*articulus fidei*).<sup>84</sup>

A second kind of faith is saving faith. It is *fides ut fiducia*—faith as trust in God,<sup>85</sup> faith as commitment to God. This kind of faith is essentially associated with hope and love, so that without hope and love it is but a dead faith; and dead faith is no faith at all.<sup>86</sup> This repentant, loving, and committed sustained-act-of-belief is an essential means to the believer’s salvation.<sup>87</sup> Saving faith requires as its necessary condition propositional faith—requires, in particular, the belief that God has afforded a means of salvation.<sup>88</sup> Nonetheless, faith as assent differs from faith as trust just as surely as *credere deo* differs from *credere in deum*<sup>89</sup>—just as surely as lending credence to someone’s words differs from loving commitment and obedience.

A third kind of faith is systematic faith—i.e., faith as a system of articles-of-belief that constitute a religion: the Jewish faith, the Christian faith, the Muslim faith, etc.<sup>90</sup> Systematic faith is a system of dogmas that define an established religion. In *De Pace Fidei*, as is well known, Nicholas called for *religio una in varietate rituum*<sup>91</sup>—or as he says elsewhere *una fides communis credentibus*.<sup>92</sup>

Given these three different kinds of faith—or three different notions of faith—we need to take note of a further point: that faith is located between two polarities: the polarity of credulity and the polarity of knowledge. Faith, for Cusa as for the Christian tradition generally, is not credulity, is not gullibility, is not frivolously believing on the basis of no evidence or on the basis of flimsy evidence. It is also not the obverse of credulity, viz., fanaticism. The fanatic is someone who believes in such a way that no evidence, no further reflection, no new consideration will lead him to abandon or even to modify his view. Perhaps Winston Churchill said it right when he defined a fanatic as an individual who *cannot* change his mind and who *will not* change the subject. The man-of-faith is neither a dupe nor a fanatic. And as regards the other polarity—that of knowledge—the faith held by the man-of-faith is other than knowledge in the ordinary sense of “knowledge”. The man of faith believes on the basis of testimony and in the light of *some* evidence; but, by the ordinary canons of evidence, *that* evidence is insufficient by itself to justify his belief. Belief in the light of sufficient evidence is of no religious value, recognizes Nicholas.

Likewise, in the expression “faith and reason” different senses of “reason” must be distinguished. In one sense, reason has to do with rational grounds that suffice to prove and to demonstrate. By contrast, some rational grounds do not suf-

fice to prove and to demonstrate; they serve only to provide a *rationale*; they are not conclusivistic but yield, instead, only plausibilities. In this regard, Anselm of Canterbury sought not only *rationes necessariae* but also *rationes congruentes*. And these latter—these “fitting reasons”—were supposed by him to furnish a rationale for some given theological doctrine. In Anselm’s theology they were regarded as conditionally justifying—i.e., as serving to justify until such time as a contradictory overriding rationale might be found. As Boso pleads in Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*: “I agree that in this life no man can completely disclose so deep a mystery [as that of the immaculate conception of Christ]. And I do not ask you to do what no man can do but to do only as much as you can. For you will be more persuasive that deeper reasons lie hidden in this matter if you show that you see some rationale in it than if, by saying nothing, you evidence that you discern none at all.”<sup>93</sup> Stretching the notion of *ratio congruens* even further, Blaise Pascal, in the seventeenth century, spoke of the reasons of the heart: “*Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point.*” Nicholas, like Anselm before him and even like Pascal after him, recognized that religious belief, insofar as it has religious value, is not a matter of proof but is a matter of conviction. Thus, he could quote unreservedly the words of the New Testament: “The Jews require signs: and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified: unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness.”<sup>94</sup>

### III

The core of Nicholas’s conception of the relationship between faith and reason may be organized heuristically into ten points. These points run throughout Nicholas’s writings, so that it is not proper to speak of Nicholas as having an earlier and a later view.

*First Thesis:* Belief in the existence of God is not subject to formal philosophical proof; informally, however, there are many rationales that support this belief and that exhibit its reasonableness.

Nicholas nowhere repeats either Anselm’s *Proslogion* argument for the existence of God or Aquinas’s five ways. Nor does he offer new formal and conclusivistic arguments of his own or introduce technical philosophical distinctions as did the Scholastics. Instead, he proffers informal considerations such as those found in Sermon 187, where he reasons: All things in the physical world are finite and hence cannot exist from themselves. For what is finite can exist in a way other than it presently does. Hence, its being is neither eternal nor absolutely necessary; for eternal, absolutely necessary being cannot exist in a way other than it does. Consequently, if finite being were to exist from itself, it would exist before it existed—something impossible. Therefore, we come necessarily to a Beginning of all finite things—a Beginning which is eternal, infinite, and absolutely necessary.<sup>95</sup>

The foregoing reasoning is anything but rigorous. Indeed, it even seems naive in comparison with the Scholastic tradition's more sophisticated articulation and analysis of similar considerations. And yet, Nicholas is not attempting to prove; he is offering *Hinweise*, pointers: the experienced contingency of the universe's parts points to a being that is necessary per se and whom Nicholas identifies as divine. Even in *De Sapientia* II, where Nicholas maintains that the very question as to whether God exists presupposes that He does exist, he is not furnishing us with an argument for God's existence but is only giving us a way of conceiving of God. For example, when the Layman asks "Doesn't the question as to whether something exists presuppose being?" he receives an affirmative answer. He then goes on to assert: "So when you are asked whether God exists, reply by stating what is presupposed, viz., that He exists, for being is presupposed by the question."<sup>96</sup> To repeat: Nicholas does not suppose that this is by any means an argument for the existence of God. Rather, it is an argument having to do with our conceptually symbolizing God: according to affirmative theology, Nicholas is suggesting, God is to be conceived as existent—supremely existent—just as He may be conceived to be whatever is absolutely presupposed by any question about Him. Similarly, in *De Principio* Nicholas does not attempt to present a formal, technically valid, philosophical sound *a priori* argument for God's existence. Rather, he presents a rationale borrowed from Proclus; and he hastens to add that the rationale leads to the same conclusion as does the teaching of Christ: viz., that but one thing is necessary—the Almighty God.<sup>97</sup>

However, in *De Apice Theoriae* 12-13 Nicholas does present an *a priori* argument for the existence of God. Nonetheless, it does not constitute a formal, non-question-begging proof, since the reasoning *assumes*, rather than *establishes*, the claim that Possibility itself is God:

Since every question about what is possible presupposes Possibility, doubt cannot be entertained about Possibility. For doubt does not pertain to Possibility. For whoever would question whether Possibility exists sees as soon as he thinks about it that the question is not germane, since without Possibility no question could be posed about Possibility. Still less can one ask whether Possibility is this or that, since the possibility-of-existing and the possibility of being this or that presuppose Possibility itself. And so, it is evident that Possibility itself precedes all doubt that can be entertained. Therefore, nothing is more certain than is Possibility itself, since [any] doubt [about it] can only presuppose it, since nothing more sufficient or more perfect than it can be thought.

In sum, Nicholas shows equal respect for natural theology and for *a priori* reasoning as approaches to drawing inferences about God's being.<sup>98</sup> The philosophical assurance that belief in God's existence is reasonable is the foundation of all religious belief.<sup>99</sup> In this respect, but not in every respect, Nicholas follows St. Thomas.

*Second Thesis:* The revealed tenets of the Christian faith—though never ul-

timately irrational, because it is never unreasonable to believe God—sometimes run counter to empirical evidential reasons.

As Nicholas reminds us, Abraham believed that which reason judged to be empirically impossible; and when he did so, his faith triumphed over his reason.<sup>100</sup> Here we have a paradox of faith: that it is reasonable to believe what reason tells us it is unreasonable to believe—that it is reasonable to believe that there is truth which exceeds the grasp of reason. Nicholas would agree with Kierkegaard's expansion of the Abraham-Isaac story, in which Kierkegaard puts into Abraham's mouth the paradoxical words: "All is lost, but God is love." To be sure, this utterance is paradoxical. For if all is lost, then how can God be love? And if God is love, then how can all be lost? And yet, Abraham believed, paradoxically, both that God is love and that Isaac was lost. But in the reflexive movement of faith, he also believed, against all rational expectation, that God would raise Isaac up again from the dead. Job, too, spoke paradoxically when he confessed his own faith in God: "He will slay me, but I will trust in Him."<sup>101</sup> For how can I trust in God if He is about to slay me? And why is He about to slay me if I trust in Him? Nicholas of Cusa—as also later Martin Luther—speaks of the need to mortify haughty reason and to become as someone who is humbly foolish:<sup>102</sup> "for the foolishness of God is wiser than men."<sup>103</sup> Abraham and Job "foolishly" believed in God's resurrection power, though experience and reason taught them that dead men do not return from the grave. And yet, this folly was wisdom. For with God all things are possible.<sup>104</sup>

*Third Thesis:* God is revealed not only "above all understanding through Christ in the light of faith and of grace" but also "by the light of nature through the inclination of the inner man."<sup>105</sup>

Here again we see Nicholas's dialectic: God is revealed to us from without but also from within; He is revealed to us above our understanding but also through our understanding. It is characteristic of Nicholas's philosophy to emphasize both the power of man's natural capability and the limits of man's natural capability. Accordingly, he teaches that the human mind is naturally endowed with the power of logical judgment<sup>106</sup> and that "all men by nature desire wisdom."<sup>107</sup> In desiring wisdom, they are presupposing, argues Nicholas, that wisdom exists. All men desire a single wisdom, by participation in whose oneness they all may be wise. This single Wisdom Nicholas identifies as God. So, then, desire for wisdom has been implanted in rational nature in order that rational nature should come to discover the rationale of faith.

*Fourth Thesis:* Faith guides understanding; understanding is the unfolding of faith.<sup>108</sup>

The act of faith guides understanding in those cases where one must believe in order to understand. Understanding unfolds the content of faith insofar as understanding is the reward of faith.<sup>109</sup> But theological understanding, which is a

grace, is not always granted. Job trusted God but never understood why he himself was made to suffer. Faith is believing without fully understanding, in the hope of better understanding. That is, faith guides an initial understanding in the hope of a future deeper understanding. Faith without an initial understanding is empty, just as understanding without the guidance of faith is, if not blind, then at least shortsighted.<sup>110</sup>

*Fifth Thesis:* Sin has distorted man's cognitive faculties in the areas of morality and spirituality, so that the corrective of faith is essential for arriving at truth in these areas.

Nicholas recognizes the noetic effect of sin. The natural inclination of men for wisdom is subject, in fallen man, to the distorting influence of the passions.<sup>111</sup> Accordingly, not only religious believing but even philosophical thinking requires divine grace. For as the philosopher Baruch Spinoza recognized: oftentimes men do not desire something because it is good; rather, they call it good because they desire it. Freud was later fully to secularize this point when he introduced the notion of rationalization.

*Sixth Thesis:* Reason, in the last analysis, precedes faith; but, nonetheless, faith takes precedence over reason.

Nicholas would agree with Augustine's verdict in Augustine's Epistle 120 (*PL* 33:453): "Thus, if it is reasonable that faith precede reason with respect to certain profound issues which cannot yet be comprehended, then without any doubt the reason (howsoever small) that persuades us of this, itself precedes faith."

"What is altogether unknown," Nicholas keeps repeating, "is not loved."<sup>112</sup> And where God is not loved there is no saving faith. So, ultimately, some knowledge, some reasoning, and some understanding precede the act of salvific belief. The leap of faith, as Nicholas describes it, is never arbitrary. Reason is prior to faith; and yet, faith, once initiated, takes priority over reason, so that when authority and reason appear to conflict, the believer is to continue believing in the hope of obtaining an understanding. For faith and reason are coadjutants. Ultimately, that-which-is-believed-by-faith is reasonable, though it may contradict the narrow confines of empirical reasoning. Empiricism has no room for the doctrine of the Divine Incarnation. But Nicholas aligns himself with Anselm's attempt to show that the Incarnation was theologically necessary and that therefore the dogma of the Incarnation is theologically reasonable to believe. And together with Anselm he aligns himself with Augustine's attempt to point to the inner rationale of the doctrine of the Trinity by invoking a symbolizing illustration: a single body of water is a spring, a stream, and a pond, so that it is both one and three (*Cribratio Alkorani* II, 9). In *De Visione Dei* he uses a different illustration: God as Love loves even Himself. Therefore, the one God is He who loves, He who is lovable, and He who is the union of the two.

*Seventh Thesis:* The “faith of all faith” is that Jesus is the Son of God and was crucified.<sup>113</sup>

The expression “*fides/omnis fidei*” is used by Nicholas to express what he regards as the core presupposition not of any and all religious belief but of the Christian faith, distinguishing it from the Jewish faith and the Muslim faith. The Christian belief that underlies all other Christian beliefs is the belief that the incarnate Son of God was put to death. Without incarnation and death there is no atonement. Without incarnation and death there is no resurrection. Without incarnation and death there is no scandal to Christianity. Without the *σκάνδαλον* faith cannot triumph over reason and cannot perfect understanding.

Even the historical Jesus, the God-man, foresaw His own death; and through His human nature He believed in the salvific purpose of His future death. This faith on Jesus’s part was maximal faith, says Nicholas. And it is this faith whereof believers partake.

*Eighth Thesis:* The relationship between faith and reason just is the relationship between faith and understanding.

The distinction between *ratio* and *intellectus* plays no role in the question of faith and reason, because in this context Nicholas uses the two terms nontechnically and in the common theological parlance. The human mind, as rational, both reasons and understands. Nicholas addresses the problem of the relationship between faith and rationality—which includes reasoning and understanding.

*Ninth Thesis:* Both faith and understanding bring with them rest (*quies*).

“Faith,” writes Nicholas, “is a tranquil resting on the part of the intellect by virtue of its believing. But it is tranquil resting in a secondary way, because the primary tranquil resting [of the intellect] comes through its understanding.”<sup>114</sup> But if *quies intellectus* comes primarily through *intellegere* and only secondarily through *credere religiose*, does this mean that on Nicholas’s view *quies intellectus* can dispense with *credere*? Emphatically not. For as Kant later fully recognized, the human intellect is inherently prone to metaphysical and theological speculation. Accordingly, the intellect cannot avoid contact with the conundrums of metaphysics and the paradoxes of theology. These not only excite it but also frustrate it, depriving it of rest. Faith becomes the remedy that restores rest by triumphing over intellectual restlessness in the face of issues that seem intractable to the intellect’s methods and scope.

*Tenth Thesis:* For the religious believer faith is not only a present resource but is also an abiding *habitus*,<sup>115</sup> an abiding disposition.

We must not be misled by what Nicholas says in his fourth sermon, *Fides autem Catholica*: “Faith pursues God in the present; hope accompanies Him into Heaven; love embraces Him perpetually.”<sup>116</sup> This statement seems to suggest that

in the next life (where there is the intellectual vision of God) there is no need for faith—that, indeed, there is no place for faith. But such an inference belies Nicholas’s understanding of faith. Faith is a *habitus* that remains even in Paradise, where the believer sees God’s face as it truly is but does not see God’s essence, which remains forever unknowable except to God Himself.<sup>117</sup> In Paradise the believer continues to believe that God is Absolute Mercy and Absolute Justice even though He has forgiven some sinners and has condemned others. The rationale for these Divine Judgments will remain forever sealed within God’s sovereignty, where they are forever hidden from the believer. In Paradise God will be more fully revealed to the believer without being less fully hidden. For the finitude of the augmented revelation will still be infinitely disproportional to, and infinitely distant from, the infinitude of the undisclosed and undisclosable divine essence.

#### IV

The foregoing ten theses constitute the core of Nicholas of Cusa’s teaching on the relationship between faith and reason, or faith and understanding. Nicholas is not an existentialist, as certain philosophers seek to make him out to be. Nor is he a fideist, as others seek to assure us that he is. He is in fact a moderate rationalist, who stands in the Augustinian tradition when it comes to determining the relationship of faith to reason. Like Augustine, he knows better than to over-emphasize reason; but he also knows that he had better not ignore reason’s cognitive role, for God placed reason and understanding in man in order that thereby man might seek Him. In this light Nicholas quotes Augustine’s well-known “confession”: “Thou hast made us for Thyself; and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee.”<sup>118</sup> And he does not hesitate to enjoin upon his fellow-discussant Ferdinand, in *De Li Non Aliud* 1, that he accept no conclusion unless it is rationally compelling. Yet his notion of what is rationally compelling is, like Augustine’s, very broad, indeed.

But can’t we, then, also properly view Nicholas as a moderate fideist instead of as a moderate rationalist, someone may ask? And the correct answer is: Yes, we can—depending upon what is meant by the terms and upon what passages in his works we choose to emphasize. We do have some leeway in assessing and configuring his texts, since he nowhere *systematically* develops a position on faith and reason. And yet, this freedom-of-assessment on our part is clearly bounded, so that the range within which it must operate is clearly prescribed. We are true to the meaning of Nicholas’s texts if we designate him a moderate rationalist, or a moderate fideist, or a rationalistic fideist, or a fideistic rationalist. We veer far from his meaning if we refer to him as a fideist or an existentialist or an irrationalist or a rationalist or a Thomist or an advocate of the doctrine of double truth—or as earlier a fideist and then later a rationalist, or as earlier an advocate of blind faith and thereafter an advocate of reasoned faith,<sup>119</sup> and so on.



Nicholas himself, making use of a splendid metaphor, remarks: the left eye is reason; the right eye is faith.<sup>120</sup> Slightly readapting his metaphor to his own theory, we may say: just as the vision in our two physical eyes must be coordinated if we are to see clearly and to attain reliable knowledge of the world, so the left eye of reason must be coordinated with the right eye of faith if we are to arrive at a knowledge of God. For, on the one hand, Nicholas talks about the evidence corroborating *fides catholica*—evidence from miracles, from the honorableness of its teachings, from the wisdom of its counsel, from the death of its martyrs, etc.<sup>121</sup> But on the other hand, he reminds us that according to *fides catholica* God’s word is to be believed without evidence, once we are convinced that it *is* God’s word. In the end, he quotes the practical observation of Bishop Ambrose: “In matters of faith the pastors are believed, not the dialecticians.”<sup>122</sup> And he calls our attention to the fact that our knowledge of God is sacred ignorance (*sacra ignorantia*).<sup>123</sup>

. . . . .

NICHOLAS OF CUSA is strangely wonderful, wonderfully strange. From out of the past he speaks to us still today. His voice is heard not only in the Moselle region, not only in Europe and America but throughout the literate world. He has taught us: (1) that belief in God’s existence has a rational foundation, though not a philosophically demonstrable foundation; (2) that at times it is not unreasonable to believe that what-is-empirically-unreasonable is true; (3) that God is revealed in and through the very fact of man’s desire for wisdom; (4) that faith guides understanding, even as understanding is the unfolding and the elevating<sup>124</sup> of faith; (5) that man’s inclination toward knowledge and wisdom is opposed by a corrupting inclination toward pleasure, so that the former is in danger of being misdirected by the latter; (6) that reason is prior to faith but that faith takes priority over reason; (7) that the faith of all faith is, for the Christian, the scandalous belief that the Incarnate God suffered and died in order to purify and renew human nature; (8) that the relationship between faith and reason *is* the relationship between faith and understanding; (9) that faith brings to the intellect a tranquility otherwise not available to it; and (10) that in religious believers faith is a *habitus* that will continue into the next life, where *fiducia* and *assensus* will be associated with perfect obedience and perpetual love.

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## PRAENOTANTA

1. All references to Nicholas's sermons are in terms of the Haubst numbers (vs. Koch numbers). References to Sermons 1 through 48 are to the Heidelberg Academy edition in the series *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*. References to the other sermons and to *De Aequalitate* are in terms of the Paris edition (1514), *Nicolai Cusae Cardinalis Opera*, Vol. II, even though the text actually quoted for some of these sermons is from Renate Steiger's unpublished transcription of Codices Vaticani Latini 1244 and 1245. I have editorialized the punctuation of passages quoted from the Paris edition.

2. All references to Nicholas's works are to the Latin texts. References to *De Docta Ignorantia* are in terms of the Latin-German edition published by Felix Meiner Verlag in the series *Philosophische Bibliothek*. References to *De Sapientia*, *De Mente*, *De Visione Dei*, *De Possess*, *De Li Non Aliud*, and the *Compendium* are to the editions published by Banning Press. All other references (except for certain of the sermons) are to the Latin texts found in the Heidelberg Academy editions.

3. The following abbreviations are used:

<i>DI</i>	<i>De Docta Ignorantia</i>
<i>DM</i>	<i>De Mente</i>
<i>DVD</i>	<i>De Visione Dei</i>
<i>NA</i>	<i>De Li Non Aliud</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. Migne
<i>S</i>	<i>Sermon</i>
<i>p</i>	Paris edition (1514)

## NOTES

1. Karl Jaspers, *Nikolaus Cusanus* (Munich: Piper, 1964), p. 60.
2. Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, translated by Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1983), p. 526.
3. Rudolf Haubst, *Streifzüge in die cusanische Theologie* (Münster: Aschen-dorff, 1991), p. 65.
4. Karl Jaspers, *Nikolaus Cusanus, op. cit.*, p. 262.
5. *De Beryllo* 71:17-18.
6. *DM* 5 (81:6-11).
7. See n. 6 above.
8. *Compendium* 10 (34:20-21).
9. Nicholas does, however, seem to endorse the construal in some sense. Cf. his statement in *Compendium* 2 (3): “Therefore, *insofar as a thing falls within the scope of knowledge* it is apprehended by means of signs” (emphasis added).
10. Josef Koch, *Die Ars coniecturalis des Nikolaus von Kues* [Heft 16 in the series: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1956)], p. 16.
11. *S* 186 (*p* II, 110<sup>r</sup> middle). John 20:29.
12. *S* 176 (*p* II, 96<sup>v</sup> lines 9-10).
13. *S* 268 (*p* II, 167<sup>r</sup>, bottom).
14. *S* 4 (27:18-19).
15. *S* 186 (*p* II, 110<sup>v</sup>, lines 12-13 from bottom).
16. “Ubi ratio deficit, fides supplet.” *S* 4 (7:4-5).
17. *S* 4 (27:17).
18. *DI* III, 11 (244:17-18).
19. *S* 187 (*p* II, 104<sup>r</sup>, bottom).
20. *S* 189 (*p* II, 109<sup>v</sup>, middle). *S* 268 (*p* II, 167<sup>v</sup>, line 7).
21. *S* 4 (13:1-10).
22. *S* 187 (*p* II, 106<sup>r</sup>, lines 19-20).
23. *S* 258 (*p* II, 156<sup>v</sup>, lines 28-29).
24. *DVD* 6.
25. *S* 5 (36:47-48).
26. See n. 14 above.
27. *S* 4 (32:3-4).
28. See n. 20 above.
29. *DI* III, 11 (244:10-12).
30. *S* 4 (11:1-12 and 14:1-5). Nicholas also speaks of the need for the intel-lect to reduce to servitude its act of understanding and then to assume an attitude of belief. *S* 41 (*p* II, 70<sup>r</sup>, lines 24-25).

31. For example, Nicholas decided that “*posse ipsum*” is a more apposite name for God than was his earlier name “*possest*”. And his account of the mechanism of perception changes between *De Quaerendo Deum* 2 and *DM* 8. And so on.

32. *S* 254 (present excerpt not found in *p* II, 152<sup>v</sup> - 153<sup>r</sup>). Cf. *S* 213 (*p* II, 127<sup>r</sup>, lines 14-15: “Ubi est fides illa, ibi ratio seu logos est auctoritas”).

33. Augustine, *Contra Epistolam Manichaei* 5.6 (*PL* 42:176): “Ego vero Evangelio non crederem, nisi me catholicae Ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas.”

34. Augustine, *Confessions* 5.13.23 (*PL* 32: 717).

35. Cf. Rudolf Haubst, *Streifzüge, op. cit.*, p. 22: “An Cusanus haben sich in der Tat in den letzten hundert Jahren nahezu alle möglichen philosophischen Systeme versucht: Pantheismus, Idealismus, Agnostizismus, Rationalismus und so weiter.”

36. Isaiah 7:9 (Old Latin Bible). *S* 4 (26:13-14). *DI* III, 11 (244:8-9). *S* 41 (*p* II, 70<sup>r</sup>).

37. *S* 4 (22:1): “Fundamentum credulitatis est Deum esse.”

38. *De Pace Fidei* 7 (21:1-2). *DVD* 13 (58:11-12).

39. *S* 4 (14:1-2): “Christiana autem, quae suum intellectum oboedienter supprimit ....”

40. *S* 129 (sermon not found in *p*).

41. “Cor autem hominis ratio animae est.” *S* 187 (*p* II, 104<sup>r</sup>, line 6 from bottom).

42. See n. 15 above.

43. See n. 16 above.

44. *DM* 1 (52:1-5).

45. *DM* 14 (153:13).

46. *De Sapientia* I (12:6). *NA* 8 (30:5-6).

47. *NA* 8 (30:7).

48. *De Deo Abscondito* 10.

49. *De Venatione Sapientia* 34 (103:10-12).

50. *De Sapientia* II (29:22-24).

51. *DI* I, 4.

52. *De Filiatione Dei* 4 (72:13-14).

53. *De Filiatione Dei* 4 (78:6).

54. *NA* 6 (20:8).

55. *De Genesi* 1 (145:9).

56. *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* 20:6.

57. *DI* I, 4 (12:1-6). *De Coniecturis* II, 1 (78:13-14).

58. *DVD* 11 (47:19-20).

59. *DVD* 12 (49:2).

60. *DVD* 12 (50:6).

61. *DVD* 12 (51:2).
62. *NA* 14 (65:13).
63. Proposition 5 (115:4-5), following upon *NA*.
64. *NA* 16 (79:5-6).
65. *De Ludo Globi* I (*p* I, 155<sup>v</sup>, lines 12-13 = Codex Cusanus Latinus 219, f. 142<sup>v</sup>, line 14. Cf. *NA* 13 (51:11-12).
66. *DM* 12 (144:14-20). I Timothy 6:16.
67. *De Aequalitate* (*p* II, 16<sup>v</sup>, line 27).
68. Nicholas quotes approvingly from Pseudo-Dionysius's *Letter to Gaius*: "Our knowledge of Him who is above all known things is perfect ignorance." See Nicholas's *NA* 14 (71:8-9). Cf. *NA* 14 (65:12).
69. This is the message of *De Coniecturis*. Note the expression "*summaria tui ipsius coniecturalis cognitio*" at II, 17 (171:3) [cases here changed to the nominative].
70. *DI* II, 2 (101). *De Dato Patris Luminum* 3 (106:2-12).
71. *DI* II, 3 (110:11-12).
72. See n. 12 above.
73. See n. 13 above.
74. See n. 17 above.
75. See n. 19 above.
76. *S* 172 (*p* II, 92<sup>r</sup>, lines 23-24).
77. "Nam quod penitus ignoratur, non amatur." *S* 186 (*p* II, 110<sup>v</sup>, line 13 from bottom).
78. See n. 35 above.
79. Cf. *DVD* 13 (52:19-20) with *DVD* 12 (50:6). In *DVD* 16 (71) Nicholas speaks, paradoxically, of the intellect's understanding by not understanding: "Non igitur id quod satiat intellectum, seu est finis eius, est id quod [intellectus] intelligit. Neque id satiare potest quod penitus non intelligit, sed solum illud quod non intelligendo intelligit.
80. See n. 38 above.
81. "Ideo posse semper plus et plus intellegere sine fine est similitudo aeternae sapientiae." *S* 288 (*p* II, 188<sup>r</sup>, end of sermon). Cf. Rudolf Haubst's verdict: "Um zum Glaubensverständnis zu führen, hat NvK 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 ..." (*Streifzüge*, *op. cit.*, p. 69).
82. *S* 186 (*p* II, 110<sup>r</sup>, line 27).
83. *S* 189 (*p* II, 109<sup>v</sup>, lines 26-27).
84. *S* 4 (20:1).
85. Proverbs 3:5. Proverbs 22:19. I Thessalonians 2:2. I John 3:21. *S* 41

(19:19-22). Cf. *DVD* 17 (80): “confisus de infinita bonitate tua.”

86. *DI* III, 11 (250:12-13).

87. *S* 54 (*p* II, 48<sup>v</sup>, last paragraph).

88. *S* 41 (14:1-4).

89. *S* 4 (25:8-10).

90. E.g., in *S* 4 Nicholas speaks of *fides catholica*.

91. *De Pace Fidei* 1 (6:2-3).

92. *S* 4 (16:10-11).

93. Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo* II, 16.

94. I Corinthians 1:22-23.

95. *S* 187 (quotation not included in *p*): “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).

96. *De Sapientia* II (30:5-7).

97. *De Principio* 5-7. Luke 10:42.

98. “Sed volentes ad Dei cognitionem accedere oportet primo tenebras peccatorum abicere et arma lucis induere; oportet rationes naturales, quae sunt ut lumen putridi ligni in nocte lucentis et in die nihil, abicere; oportet postponere commutabile bonum et adhaerere incommutabili.

“Tunc accedit aut per inspirationem ad Dei cognitionem aut *per ratiocinationem aut per creaturas*, quae sunt speculum creatoris in praesenti, sicut Deus speculum creaturarum in futuro.” *S* 4 (33:1-11), my italics.

99. See n. 36 above. Also note *S* 4 (22:1): “Fundamentum credulitatis est Deum esse.” In *DVD* 18 (82) Nicholas symbolizes God as *lux receptibilis rationalis*.

100. *S* 268 (*p* II, 167<sup>r</sup>, last two lines).

101. Job 13:15.

102. “... tunc necesse est moriatur ipsa ratio et cedat prudentia eius, et humilietur superbia et praesumptio mentis mortificetur, et fiat homo quasi insipiens et stultus et servilis, de sua libertate scilicet rationis recedens se in captivitatem redigendo.” *S* 268 (*p* II, 167<sup>v</sup>, lines 2-5). See n. 111 below.

103. I Corinthians 1:25.

104. *S* 4 (27:7-8). Matthew 19:26.

105. *S* 258 (*p* II, 156<sup>r</sup>, lines 14-16 from bottom).

106. *De Venatione Sapientiae* 1 (4:15).

107. *De Pace Fidei* 6 (16:7-8).

108. *DI* III, 11 (244:10-11).

109. “Unless you believe, you will not understand.” See n. 35 above.

110. See the reference in n. 117 below. In that passage Nicholas alludes to the blinded eye of faith.

111. Note, for example, *S* 7: The soul that sins “perdit nitorem divini luminis et decorem gratiae” (5:5-6). “... omne peccatum est inordinatio mentis ...” (17:7). “Propter enim repugnantiam sensualitatis et rationis ...” (17:38-39). “Ex pugna voluntatis et rationis ...” (18:31). See also *S* 272 (*p* II, 173<sup>v</sup>). Nicholas never goes to Luther’s extreme in distrusting reason—an extreme that led Luther to call reason the Devil’s whore. See Luther’s last sermon in Wittenberg (1546) [Weimar edition, Vol. 51, pp. 123-134]. See n. 102 above.

112. *S* 186 (*p* II, 110<sup>v</sup>, line 13 from bottom).

113. *S* 245 (*p* II, 145<sup>v</sup>, lines 13-14 from bottom).

114. *S* 4 (27:14-16).

115. *S* 4 (26:11-13).

116. *S* 4 (1:24-26).

117. *S* 258 (*p* II, 156<sup>v</sup>, lines 15-21).

118. *S* 212 (*p* II, 125<sup>r</sup>, lines 7-9. Augustine, *Confessions* 1.1.1 (*PL* 32:661).

119. Regarding this last claim, note Siegfried Dangelmayr, “Vernunft und Glaube bei Nikolaus von Kues,” *Tübinger Theologische Quartalschrift*, 148 (1968), p. 445: “Dieses ‘Glauben’ ... ist ein Glauben der Vernunft selbst, nicht ein Glauben ohne oder gar gegen die Vernunft, es ist nicht ein Annehmen von etwas autoritativ und ohne Begründung Vorgebrachtem—einen solchen ‘blinden Glauben’ gibt es beim reifen Cusanus nicht mehr.” Cf. Dangelmayr’s pp. 432-433.

120. *S* 4 (23:16-17).

121. *S* 4 (28:1-8).

122. *S* 4 (23:42-44).

123. *DVD* 16 (71).

124. *S* 4 (32:3-4): “... tamen praecedente fide ita per intellectum fides elevatur ...” Similarly, through supporting evidences faith can be increased. See *S* 186 (*p* II, 110<sup>r</sup>, line 5 from bottom).