

**NICHOLAS OF CUSA  
ON  
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE**

**BY JASPER HOPKINS**

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To the memory of my brother

**William Eugene Hopkins**  
(March 1, 1938 - March 31, 1983)

Ph.D. in Philosophy  
University of California, Berkeley  
(December 8, 1979)

**IDIOTA DE MENTE  
(THE LAYMAN ON MIND)**

by

**NICHOLAS OF CUSA**

(*Codex Cusanus Latinus 218,*  
ff. 106<sup>r</sup> et v (tituli) et 115<sup>r</sup> - 132<sup>r</sup>)

## CHAPTER TITLES

1. A philosopher approached a layman in order to learn about the nature of mind. Mind, in and of itself, is mind; but with respect to its function it is soul. Mind [*mens*] takes its name from measuring [*mensurare*].
2. There is a natural name and another name imprecisely imposed in accordance with the natural name. There is a Simple Beginning, which is the Art of arts; [therein] is enfolded the eternal art of the philosophers.
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## THE LAYMAN ON MIND

### CHAPTER ONE

A philosopher approached a layman in order to learn about the nature of mind. Mind, in and of itself, is mind; but with respect to its function it is soul. Mind [*mens*] takes its name from measuring [*mensurare*].

At a time when many people, in admirable devotion, were flocking to Rome because of the jubilee,<sup>1</sup> a philosopher who is foremost among all those philosophers now alive was reported to have been seen on a bridge, marveling at those who were crossing over. A certain orator, very desirous of knowledge, was eagerly looking for him. Recognizing him from the paleness of his face, from his long toga, and from other marks indicating the serious demeanor of a thoughtful man, the orator greeted him deferentially and asked why he remained standing in that spot.

“[Because of] wonder,” answered the Philosopher.

*Orator:* Wonder seems to be a stimulus for all those who are seeking to know a given thing.<sup>2</sup> And so, since you are esteemed to be foremost among the learned, I suspect that the wonder which holds you so captivated is very great.

*Philosopher:* You’re right, O Friend. For when I observe the countless people, from nearly all regions of the world, thronging across [this bridge], I am amazed at the single faith of them all—a faith present in so great a diversity of bodies. For although no individual can be like another, nevertheless among all these individuals there is a single faith that has brought them here, in such deep devotion, from the ends of the earth.

**52** *Orator:* Assuredly, the fact that by faith laymen attain [unto truth] more clearly than do philosophers by reason must be a gift of God. For example, you know how much investigation is required of one who rationally explores the [question of] the mind’s immortality.<sup>3</sup> Yet, none of all these laymen fail to know for certain, by faith alone, that the mind is immortal. For the concern and effort of them all is directed toward the following goal: that after the death [of their bodies] their souls, being unbedarkened by any sin, will be caught up unto a bright,

and most intensely longed-for, life.

*Philosopher:* You make an important and true observation, O Friend. For in continually traveling throughout the world I have consulted the wise in order to learn more about the immortality of the mind. For at Delphi knowledge was commanded, to the end that the mind might know itself<sup>4</sup> and might recognize itself to be united with the Divine Mind. But that which I hitherto sought I still have not attained, by clear reasoning, in as perfect a way as these uneducated people have attained it by faith.

53 *Orator:* If you don't mind, tell me what has impelled you—you who appear to be a Peripatetic<sup>5</sup>—to come to Rome? Are you expecting to find someone from whom to learn?

*Philosopher:* I had heard of the temple situated on the Capitoline and dedicated, by T. Attilius Crassus, to Mind—had heard that therein are present many writings, by the wise, on mind.<sup>6</sup> But perhaps I have come in vain, unless you, who seem to me to be a good and knowledgeable citizen, lend me a hand.

*Orator:* It is certain that that [same] Crassus dedicated a temple to Mind. But after so many devastations in Rome, no one can know whether in that temple there were books about mind and, [if so,] which books they were. But do not lament that you have come in vain; [for] you will hear from a layman—one to be marveled at, in my judgment—about the topic in which you are interested.

*Philosopher:* I ask that this be done straightway.

54 *Orator:* Follow me.

And when, near the Temple of Eternity,<sup>7</sup> they entered a certain small underground dwelling, the Orator addressed a layman, who was carving a spoon out of wood: “I am embarrassed, O Layman, that this very eminent philosopher finds you engaged in these mundane tasks. He will not expect to hear from you any speculative doctrines.”

*Layman:* I am gladly engaging in these tasks, which constantly nourish both mind and body. I am of the opinion that if this man whom you have brought is a philosopher, then he will not look down on me simply because I am applying myself to the craft of spoonmaking.

*Philosopher:* Perfectly correct. For we read that even Plato painted now and then—something that he is thought to have done only because it did not interfere with his speculation.

*Orator:* Perhaps for *that* reason examples from the art of painting were familiar to Plato. By means of these examples Plato made



profound matters easy [to grasp].

- 55 *Layman:* Indeed, in this craft of mine, I inquire symbolically into what I choose to, and I nourish my mind; I sell spoons and feed my body. In this way I acquire, in sufficient measure, all that I need.

*Philosopher:* When I approach a wise man of repute, I am accustomed to be especially concerned about issues that trouble me and to refer to written texts and to inquire as to his interpretation of them. But since you are a layman, I do not know how to prompt you to express yourself, so that I may discover what understanding you have regarding mind.

*Layman:* No one, I believe, can be prodded more easily than can I to say what he thinks. For although I admit that I am an uneducated layman, I am not at all afraid to state my view. (Well-educated philosophers and those who have a reputation for knowledge rightly deliberate more cautiously, fearing to fail.) So if you indicate plainly what you desire of me, you will receive a straightforward answer.

- 56 *Philosopher:* I cannot express myself tersely. If you agree, let's speak in a relaxed manner while seated.

*Layman:* That's fine with me.

After the stools were arranged in a triangle and the three men were seated accordingly, the Orator spoke: "You see, O Philosopher, the simplicity of this man, who is accustomed to have none of the things that propriety requires for receiving a man of such great importance [as you]. Give an example from among those problems that, as you said, trouble you the most. For the Layman will not conceal from you any of the things he knows. You will discover, I believe, that you have not been brought here in vain."

*Philosopher:* As yet, I am pleased with everything. But let me get down to the point. In the meantime remain silent, I ask, and do not let the somewhat protracted discussion make you restless.

*Orator:* You will find me eager, rather than loath, [for you] to continue.

- 57 *Philosopher:* So tell me, O Layman (you say that this is your name), whether you have some surmise about mind.

*Layman:* I think that no one who has not formed at least some kind of conception of mind either is or has been a complete human being. Indeed, even *I* have [a conception thereof]: mind is that from which derive the boundary and the measurement of every [respective] thing. Indeed, I surmise that mind [*mens*] takes its name from mea-

suring [*mensurare*].

*Philosopher:* Do you think that mind is something different from soul?

*Layman:* Yes, I do. For mind as it exists in and of itself is different from mind as it exists in a body. As it exists in and of itself it is either infinite<sup>8</sup> or an image of what is infinite. However, of those minds that are an image of what is infinite: because they are not maximal and absolute—i.e., are not infinite and do not exist in and of themselves—I admit that some of them can enliven a human body. And, accordingly, I concede that with respect to their function they are souls.

*Philosopher:* Do you grant, then, that a man's mind and soul are one and the same thing—being in and of itself *mind* but being with respect to its function *soul*?

*Layman:* I grant it, just as in an animal the perceptual power and the eye's visual power are one power.

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## CHAPTER TWO

There is a natural name and another  
name imprecisely imposed in accordance  
with the natural name. There is a Simple  
Beginning, which is the Art of arts;  
[therein] is enfolded the eternal art  
of the philosophers.

*Philosopher:* You said that mind takes its name from measuring. I haven't read among the various derivations of the word "mind" that anyone has held this view. To begin with, I ask you to disclose the reason for your assertion.

*Layman:* If we are to explore more carefully [the topic of] a name's meaning, then I think that that power present in us which enfolds conceptually the exemplars of all things—a power which I call mind—is not at all properly named. For just as human reason does not attain unto the quiddity of God's works,<sup>9</sup> so neither does a name. For names are imposed by the operation of reason. For we name one thing by one name, for a certain reason; and [we name] the very same thing by another name, for another reason. Moreover, one language has names that are more suitable, whereas another language has names that are cruder and less suitable. In this way, I see that since the suitability of names admits of more and less, the precise name [of a thing] is not known.<sup>10</sup>

**59**     *Philosopher* O Layman, you are moving quickly to profound issues! For according to what you seem to be saying, names are less suitable because, you believe, they have been assigned at will according as it occurred to each imposer [thereof] as a result of his reason's operation.

*Layman:* I want you to understand me more deeply. I admit that every name is united [to an object] in virtue of the fact that form has come to matter;<sup>11</sup> moreover, it is true that the form determines the name, so that in this way the [true] names [of things] do not arise by imposition but rather are eternal; furthermore, the imposition itself is arbitrary.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, I believe that whatever name is imposed is a fitting name,<sup>13</sup> even though that name is not precise.

*Philosopher:* Make yourself clearer, I ask, so that I may understand what you mean.

*Layman:* Gladly. I turn, then, to this art of spoon making. And, first of all, I want you to know that without any doubt I am making the following assertion: viz., that all human arts are "images" of the Infinite Divine Art. I do not know whether or not this view seems to you [to be correct].

**60**     *Philosopher:* You are posing deep questions. It's not possible to respond to them without reflection.

*Layman:* I wonder whether you have ever read a philosopher who did not know the foregoing [truth], for it is self-evident. For it is evident that no human art has attained unto full precision and that every human art is limited and bounded. For one art is bounded within its own bounds, and another art is bounded within its own different bounds. Moreover, each art is different from the others, and no art enfolds all the others.

*Philosopher:* What will you infer from this?

*Layman:* That every human art is limited.

*Philosopher:* Who doubts it?

*Layman:* Now, it is impossible for there to be more than one really distinct infinite thing.

*Philosopher:* I admit this point, too, since [if there were two allegedly infinite things,] the one thing would be limited in relation to the other.

**61**     *Layman:* Therefore, if the foregoing is true, then isn't only the Absolute Beginning infinite, because (as is self-evident) prior to the Beginning there is no beginning, so that the Beginning is not origi-

nated? Hence, Eternity is only Infinity itself, or the Absolute Beginning.

*Philosopher:* Admittedly.

*Layman:* Therefore, the one and only Absolute Eternity is Infinity itself, which is without beginning. Consequently, everything finite is originated from the Infinite Beginning.

*Philosopher:* I can't deny it.

*Layman:* Thus, every finite art derives from the Infinite Art. And so, the Infinite Art will have to be the Exemplar of all arts and the Beginning, the Middle, the End, the Measure,<sup>14</sup> the Truth, the Precision, and the Perfection of all arts.

**62** *Philosopher:* Continue on to that toward which you are hastening, because no one can object to these points.

*Layman:* Then from this artistry of spoonmaking I will make use of symbolic illustrations, in order that what I mean may become more perceptible.

*Philosopher:* I ask that you do so. For I see that you are en route to those [truths] to which I aspire.

Having taken a spoon in hand, the Layman said: "A spoon has no other exemplar except our mind's idea [of the spoon]. For although a sculptor or a painter borrows exemplars from the things that he is attempting to depict, nevertheless I (who bring forth spoons from wood and bring forth dishes and jars from clay) do not [do so]. For in my [work] I do not imitate the visible form of any natural object, for such forms of spoons, dishes, and jars are perfected by human artistry alone. So my artistry involves the perfecting, rather than the imitating, of created visible forms, and in this respect it is more similar to the Infinite Art."

*Philosopher:* I agree.

**63** *Layman:* Suppose, then, that I wanted to explain my art and to make perceptible the form-of-spoonness, through which a spoon is constituted a spoon. With respect to its nature, the form of spoonness is not attainable by any of the senses; for it is not white or black or of any other color; nor is it characterized by any sound, odor, taste, or touch. Nevertheless, I will endeavor to make the form of spoonness perceptible in the way in which this can be done. Hence, I hew out, and hollow out, a material (viz., wood) by means of various movements of the tools that I use. [I continue] until in the wood there comes to be the requisite proportion, wherein the form of spoonness

shines forth fittingly. In this way you see that in the befiguring proportion of the wood the simple and imperceptible form of spoonness shines forth, as in an image of itself. Hence, the true nature and the precision of spoonness, which is unmultipliable and incommunicable, cannot at all be made perfectly perceptible by any tools whatsoever or by any man at all. And in all spoons there shines forth variously only that most simple form, [shining forth] to a greater degree in one spoon and to a lesser degree in another, but not [appearing] in a precise way in any spoon.

- 64 Now, the wood receives a name from the advent of a form, so that when there arises the proportion in which spoonness shines forth, the wood is called by the name “spoon”; and so, in this way, the name is united to the form. Nevertheless, the imposition of the name is made at will, since another name could have been imposed. Thus, although [the imposition is made] at will, nonetheless [the imposed name] is not *other* than, and not wholly different from, the natural name that is united to the form. Rather, after the advent of the form the natural name shines forth in all the various names imposed variously by all the different nations. Therefore, the imposition of a name occurs by the operation of reason. For reason’s operation concerns things that are captured by the senses (reason distinguishes, harmonizes, and differentiates these things), so that in our reason there is nothing that was not previously in our senses.<sup>15</sup> In this way, then, reason imposes names and is moved to give *this* name to one thing and *another* name to another thing. But since in those things with which reason is occupied form is not present in its true nature,<sup>16</sup> reason resorts to surmise and
- 65 opinion. Hence, insofar as forms (both generic and specific) are captured by a name they are entities-of-reason that reason has made for itself from its harmonizing and differentiating of perceptible objects. Therefore, since these entities-of-reason are by nature subsequent to the perceptible objects of which they are likenesses,<sup>17</sup> they cannot persist if the perceptible objects have been destroyed.<sup>18</sup>

So whoever thinks that in the intellect there can be nothing that is not present in reason also thinks that in the intellect there can be nothing that was not first in the senses. And he must maintain that a thing is nothing except insofar as it is captured by a name,<sup>19</sup> and in every investigation his endeavor is to make known something regarding the name.<sup>20</sup> And this investigation is pleasing to [that] man because [therein] he makes inferences through his reason’s operation. He would deny that forms considered in themselves and in their true

nature, as separated [from matter], exist otherwise than as entities-of-reason; and he would hold Exemplars and Ideas to be of no account.

66 But those who admit<sup>21</sup> that in the mind's intellect there is something that was neither in the senses nor in reason—viz., the exemplifying and incommunicable true nature of the forms that shine forth in perceptible things—also say that, by nature, exemplars precede perceptible things, even as an original [precedes] an image [of itself]. And they assign an order such that, first in the order of nature, there is humanity in and of itself, i.e., apart from any preexisting matter; next, there follows (by way of humanity) the individual man and that which is there captured by the name “man”; next comes the form that is present in reason. Accordingly, if all men were destroyed, then humanity—insofar as it is a form that is captured by a name and is an entity-of-reason that reason has sought out from the likeness [that obtains] among men—cannot continue to exist. For [humanity, in the given sense,] is dependent upon men, who would no longer exist. Yet, there would not therefore cease to be the humanity through which the men were men. Humanity [in this latter sense] is not captured by the name of the form insofar as names are imposed by the operation of reason; rather, humanity is the true nature of that form which *is* captured by the name. Hence, the true nature continues to exist in and of itself after its image is destroyed. Moreover, all the immediately foregoing [proponents] deny that a thing is nothing other than is captured by the name. For in the manner that [something] is captured by a name, a logical and rational consideration is made about things. Accordingly, [the foregoing proponents] investigate the thing logically and make it known and esteem it. But they do not stop there (for reason and logic deal only with the images of forms). Instead, they attempt to view things theologically, as these things transcend the meaning of a name, and they turn their attention toward Exemplars and Ideas.

I am of the opinion that there cannot be more modes of investigation. If you, who are a philosopher, have read otherwise, then you will be able to have *knowledge* [hereof]. I, [for my part,] make a *surmise* in the foregoing way.

*Philosopher:* You touch marvelously upon all the schools of all the Peripatetic and of all the Academic<sup>22</sup> philosophers.

67 *Layman:* All these different modes—indeed, however many different modes might be conceived—are very easily reconciled and harmonized when the mind elevates itself unto infinity. For, as the Orator who is here present will explain to you at greater length on the

basis of the things he has heard from me: there is only one, most simple Infinite Form,<sup>23</sup> which in all things shines forth as the most adequate Exemplar of each and every formable thing. Thus, it will be altogether true that there is not more than one independently existing Exemplar, or Idea, of things. And, indeed, no one's reason can attain unto this Infinite Form. Hence, the Ineffable [Form] is not grasped by any names imposed by reason's operation. And so, insofar as a thing is captured by a name, it is an image of its ineffable and adequate Exemplar.

- 68 Therefore, there is one Ineffable Word, which is the Precise Name of all things insofar as these things are captured by a name through the operation of reason.<sup>24</sup> In its own manner this Ineffable Name shines forth in all [imposed] names. For it is the infinite nameability of all names and is the infinite vocalizability of everything expressible by means of voice, so that in this way every [imposed] name is an image of the Precise Name. And all [philosophers] have endeavored to assert nothing else—although, perhaps, that-which-they-have-said could be said better and more clearly. For, of necessity, all have agreed that there is one Infinite Power, which we call God and in which, necessarily, all things are enfolded. Moreover, he who said that humanity—insofar as it is *not* captured by a name—is the Precise Truth did not intend to speak of anything other than that ineffable Infinite Form. When we look unto the human form, we call that Infinite Form “the Precise Exemplar of the human form.” Thus, in a similar way, (1) the Ineffable is called by the names of all things, when we look unto the *images* of the Ineffable; and (2) in accordance with the exemplified things' specific differences—differences demarcated by our reason—the one altogether simple Exemplar *seems* to be more than one.

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## CHAPTER THREE

The manner in which the philosophers  
are understood and are in agreement  
[with one another]. On God's name and  
on preciseness. If one precise name  
were known, then all things would be known.  
On [this name's] sufficing for [a knowledge  
of all] knowable things. The manner in  
which God's Concept and our concept differ.

*Philosopher:* You have explained wonderfully well the statement of [Hermes] Trismegistus,<sup>25</sup> who said that God is named by the names

of all things and that all things are named by God's name.

*Layman:* By means of a very lofty intellectual grasp, enfold into a coinciding both naming and being named, and all will be clear.<sup>26</sup> For God is the Preciseness of whatsoever thing.<sup>27</sup> Hence, if someone had precise knowledge of one thing: then, necessarily, he would have knowledge of all things.<sup>28</sup> 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. Hence, if anyone attained unto a single instance of precision, he would have attained unto God, who is the Truth of all knowable things.

70 *Orator:* Expound, I ask, on [the topic of] a name's preciseness.

*Layman:* You know, O Orator, how it is that we produce mathematical figures by the power of our mind. Hence, when I wish to make triangularity visible, I construct a figure in which I make three angles, so that, thereupon, triangularity shines forth in the figure thus arranged and proportioned. To triangularity is united a name, which, by imposition, is "trigon". Accordingly, I say: if "trigon" were the precise name of the triangular figure, then I would know the precise names of all polygons. For, in that case, I would know that the name of a quadrangular figure ought to be "tetragon" and that the name of a five-angled figure ought to be "pentagon," and so on. And from a knowledge of the one name I would know (1) the figure named, (2) all nameable polygons, (3) their differences and agreements, and (4) whatever else could be known in regard to this matter.

In like manner, I maintain that if I knew the precise name of one of God's works, then I could not fail to know all the names of all God's works and to know whatever could be known. And since the Word of God is the Preciseness of every nameable name, then (as is evident) only in the Word can each and every [name] be known.

*Orator:* In your usual way, you have given a concrete explanation.

71 *Philosopher:* O Layman, you have taught the wonderful doctrine of the harmonizing of all the philosophers.<sup>29</sup> For, when I think about it, I can only agree with you that all the philosophers have wished to say nothing other than that which you have just said. For none of them were able to deny that *God is infinite*—in which expression alone there is contained all that you stated. [The Divine Word] suffices marvelously [for a knowledge] of all things that are knowable and are at all possible to be taught.



Focus, now, more on the topic of mind, and answer the following (let it be agreed that “mind” does derive from “measure,” so that the notion of measuring is the reason for the name “mind”): what do you presume mind to be?

- 72 *Layman:* You know that the Divine Simplicity enfolds all things. Mind is the image of this Enfolding Simplicity. Hence, if you call the Divine Simplicity “Infinite Mind,” then that Mind will be [considered] the Exemplar of our minds. If you say that the Divine Mind is the All-encompassing Unity of the [respective] true nature of [all] things, then you will say that our mind is an all-encompassing unity of the [respective] assimilation<sup>30</sup> of [all] things, so that it is an all-encompassing unity of [all] concepts. The Divine Mind’s Conceiving is a producing of things; our mind’s conceiving is a conceptualizing of things. If the Divine Mind is Absolute Being itself, then its Conceiving is the creating of beings; and our mind’s conceiving is an assimilating of beings. For what besuits the Divine Mind as Infinite Truth besuits our mind as a close image of the Divine Mind. If all things are present in the Divine Mind as in their precise and proper Truth, then all things are present in our mind as in an image, or a likeness, of their proper Truth. That is, they are present conceptually, for knowledge comes about on the basis of [conceptual] likeness.<sup>31</sup>
- 73 All things are present in God, but in God they are exemplars of things; all things are present in our mind, but in our mind they are likenesses of things.

Just as God is Absolute Being itself that is the Enfolding of all beings, so our mind is an image of that Infinite Being itself—an image that is the enfolding of all [other] images [of God]. [The situation is] as if the primary image of an unknown king were the exemplar of all the other images depictable in accordance with the primary image. For God’s knowledge, or “face,” is descendingly disclosed only in the mental nature [i.e., in mind], whose object is truth; and it descends further only by way of mind, so that mind is both an image of God and an exemplar for all the images-of-God that are [ontologically] subsequent to it. Hence, to the extent that all things subsequent to the simplicity of mind partake of mind, to that extent they also partake of the image of God. Thus, mind, in and of itself, is an image of God; and all things subsequent to mind [are an image of God] only by way of mind.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

Our mind is not the *unfolding* of the  
Eternal Enfolding [Being] but is its *image*.

However, the things that are [ontologically] subsequent to mind are not an image [of the Eternal Enfolding Being]. The mind is without [innate] concepts but does have a concreated power-of-judgment. Why a body is necessary for a mind.

*Philosopher:* From out of your mind's great resources you seem to be aiming to say that the Infinite Mind is the Absolute Forming Power and that, by comparison, a finite mind is a conforming and a configuring power.

*Layman:* I want to be understood in the following way (for what must be said cannot be expressed suitably; hence, an expansive number of words is quite useful): Notice that an *image* is one thing and an *unfolding*<sup>32</sup> is another thing. For example, equality is the image of oneness. For equality arises from oneness repeated once;<sup>33</sup> hence, equality is the image of oneness. But equality is not the unfolding of oneness; rather, plurality is. Therefore, equality is the image, not the unfolding, of the enfolding-oneness. In a similar way, I want to say that mind—of all the images of the Divine Enfolding [Being]—is the most simple image of the Divine Mind. And so, mind is the primary image of the Divine Enfolding [Being], which enfolds, by its own power and simplicity, all images-of-enfolding. For just as God is the Enfolding-of-enfoldings, so mind, which is an image of God, is an image of the Enfolding-of-enfoldings. [Ontologically] subsequent to [these] images [i.e., to minds] are the pluralities-of-things that unfold the Divine Enfolding [Being]. By comparison, number is the unfolding of oneness, motion is the unfolding of rest, time the unfolding of eternity, composition the unfolding of simplicity, time the unfolding of the present moment, magnitude the unfolding of a point, inequality the unfolding of equality, diversity the unfolding of identity, and so on.

75 On the basis of the foregoing [observations], ascertain the amazing power of our mind.<sup>34</sup> For in its power there is enfolded the assimilative power of an enfolding point;<sup>35</sup> through this power our mind finds within itself the power by which it assimilates itself to every magnitude. So too, because [the mind has] the assimilative power of an enfolding oneness, it has the power by which it can assimilate itself to every multitude. And, similarly, through [having] the assimilative power of an enfolding *now*, or present moment, [it has the power by which it can assimilate itself] to every time—[and so on regarding

the mind's having the assimilative power present in the enfolding that belongs] to rest, simplicity, identity, equality, and union [in relation to the mind's being able to assimilate itself to] all motion, composition, diversity, inequality, and disunion, respectively. And by virtue of being the image of the Absolute Enfolding [Being], which is the Infinite Mind, our mind has the power by which it can assimilate itself to all unfoldings. In addition, you see that you can speak of many such things [i.e., powers] which our mind has because it is an image of Infinite Simplicity, which enfolds all things.

76 *Philosopher:* It seems that only the mind is an image of God.

*Layman:* So it is, properly speaking. For all things [ontologically] subsequent to mind are an image of God only insofar as mind shines forth in them—even as mind shines forth more in more highly developed animals than in less highly developed ones, more in things capable of perceiving than in vegetative things, and more in vegetative things than in minerals. Hence, creatures that lack mind are unfoldings of the Divine Simplicity rather than images thereof—although in being unfolded in accordance with the shining forth of the image of mind, they partake variously of that image.

77 *Philosopher:* Aristotle claimed that no concept is concreated with our mind or soul, inasmuch as he likened the mind to a blank tablet.<sup>36</sup> But Plato maintained that concepts *are* concreated with our mind or soul, but [he said] that because of the burden of the body the soul has forgotten [them].<sup>37</sup> What do you believe to be true in this regard?

*Layman:* Doubtlessly, our mind was put into this body by God for its own development. Therefore, it is necessary that the mind have from God all that without which mind cannot attain unto [this] development. Therefore, we ought not to believe that concreated with the soul there were concepts, which the soul forgot in the bodily state; rather, we ought to believe that the soul has need of the body in order that its concreated power may proceed toward being actualized. The visual power of the soul cannot succeed in its operation (so that it actually sees) unless it is stimulated by an object; and it cannot be stimulated except by encountering forms conveyed, in a replicated way, by the intermediacy of the [sense] organ; and so, the soul needs the eye. Similarly, the power of the mind—a power that grasps things and is conceptual—cannot succeed in its operations unless it is stimulated by perceptible objects; and it cannot be stimulated except by the intermediacy of perceptual images. Therefore, the mind needs an instru-

mental body—i.e., one of such kind that without it stimulation could not occur. In this respect, then, Aristotle seems rightly to have thought that there are no concepts concreated with the soul at its beginning—concepts that the soul forgot upon becoming embodied.

But since mind cannot *learn* if it lacks all power of judgment (even as a deaf man could not at all learn to become a lyre player, since he would possess no judgment regarding harmony—through which judgment he would be able to judge whether he were learning), our mind has—concreated with it—power-of-judgment, without which it could not learn. This power of judgment is, by nature, concreated with the mind. Through it the mind makes its own judgments about rational considerations—[judging] whether they are weak or strong or conclusive. If by “concreated concept” Plato meant this power, then he did not at all err [in this respect].

- 78 *Philosopher*: How clear your teaching is! Each one who hears it is bound to assent to it. Without doubt your points must be carefully heeded. For, clearly, we experience that there is a mental power [*spiritus*] speaking within our mind and judging *this* thing to be good, *that* thing to be just, *another* thing to be true—and reproving us if we veer from what is just. The mind did not at all *learn* this discourse and this judgment; rather, they are innate to it.

*Layman*: From the foregoing [observation] we learn that mind is that power which, when stimulated, can assimilate itself to every form and can make concepts of all things, even though, [initially], it lacks all conceptual form.<sup>38</sup> [The situation is] similar, in a certain way, to unimpaired sight when it is in darkness—sight that never was in the presence of light. This sight lacks any actual concept of visible objects; but when it comes into the light and is stimulated, it assimilates itself to what is visible, so that it makes a concept [thereof].

- 79 *Orator*: Plato said that judgment is required of the intellect when the senses deliver opposite messages at the same time.<sup>39</sup>

*Layman*: He spoke accurately. For when the sense of touch confusedly presents something as at once both hard and soft or both heavy and light (opposite in the presence of opposite), recourse is had to the intellect, in order that it may judge, regarding the quiddity of both, whether what is perceived confusedly is more than one discrete thing. Likewise, when sight confusedly presents something as both large and small, don't we need the discriminating judgment of the intellect<sup>40</sup> as to whether it is something large or something small? But in a case

where the senses sufficed by themselves, we would not at all recur to the intellect's judgment—for example, in the case of seeing a finger that has no opposite [properties] that are present together.

80

## CHAPTER FIVE

Mind is a living substance. It is created in a body. The manner in which [it is there present]. Whether there is reason in brute [animals]. Mind is a living description of Eternal Wisdom.

*Philosopher:* Almost all the Peripatetics say that the intellect, which you seem to be speaking of as mind, is a power of the soul and that an act of understanding is its accident. Now, do you [claim] otherwise?

*Layman:* Mind is a living substance (1) that we experience as inwardly speaking and judging in ourselves and (2) that is more similar<sup>41</sup> to the Infinite Substance and Absolute Form than is any other power from among all the immaterial powers which we experience in ourselves. In the present bodily state the function of mind is to enliven the body, and because of this function it is called soul. Accordingly, mind is a substantial form, or substantial power, that (1) enfolds within itself all things in its own manner and (2) enfolds an enlivening power, through which it enlivens the body by vivifying it with a vegetative and a sensitive life, and (3) enfolds a rational, an intellectual, and an intellectible power.<sup>42</sup>

81

*Philosopher:* Do you mean that mind, which you acknowledge to be the intellective soul, existed *prior* to the body, as Pythagoras and the Platonists [taught], and that it *subsequently* became embodied?

*Layman:* [Mind is prior] by nature, not temporally. For, as you heard, I compared mind to sight [that is situated] in darkness. Now, sight was not at all *actually existent* prior to the eye but was prior thereto only *by nature*. Hence, because the mind is a “divine seed” that conceptually enfolds within its own power the exemplars of all things, it is at once placed by God (from whom it has that power, by virtue of having received being from God) in a suitable earthen body, where it can bear fruit and can unfold from itself, conceptually, an all-encompassing unity of things. Otherwise—i.e., had there not also been given to mind the opportunity to actualize [this power]—this seminal power would be given to mind in vain.

**82**     *Philosopher:* You are saying weighty things. But I would very much like to hear how this [mental activity] occurs.

*Layman:* The divine ways are not attainable precisely. Nevertheless, we make surmises about them—clearer surmises regarding one of the ways, obscurer surmises regarding another of them. Yet, I think that the following illustration which I shall give will be sufficient for you. You know that by its own nature sight does not discriminate but that, confusedly and in a certain undifferentiated totality, it senses an intervening thing that is encountered within the sphere of its operation, i.e., within the eye. This intervening thing is produced in the eye from a replication of the [visible] specific forms of the [external] object. Hence, if in an eye vision is present without the power of discrimination (as in the case of infants, where the use of discrimination is lacking), then just as the power-of-discrimination comes to sight (by means of this power sight discerns between colors), so mind comes to the sensible soul. Now, this visual power-of-discrimination is found in more highly developed brute animals (e.g., in dogs, who recognize their master by sight) and is given by God to sight as being the perfection and the form of sight. Similarly, to human nature is given—in addition to that power-of-discrimination which is found in brutes—a higher power that is to the animal power-of-discrimination as this latter is to the sensible power. Consequently, mind is the form, and the perfection, of the animal power-of-discrimination.

**83**     *Philosopher:* Excellently and beautifully put! But you seem to be coming close to the opinion of the wise Philo, who claimed that reason is present in animals.

*Layman:* We know by experience that there is in brutes a discriminating power of inference, without which their nature could not thrive. Hence, because their power of inference lacks a form—viz., an intellect, or a mind—it is confused. For it lacks judgment and knowledge. But because all discriminating comes from reason, Philo seems not absurdly to have spoken as he did.

**84**     *Philosopher:* Please explain how it is that mind is the form of inferential reasoning.

*Layman:* I have already said that just as sight sees but does not know what it sees unless there is the power-of-discrimination, which in-forms and clarifies and perfects it, so reason infers but does not know what it infers unless there is mind, which in-forms and clarifies and perfects the reasoning, so that the mind knows what it is infer-

ring. [The situation is] as if a layman who did not know the meaning of the words were to read aloud from some book:<sup>43</sup> the reading aloud would proceed by the power of reason. For he would read aloud by making inferences regarding the differences of the letters, which he would combine and separate;<sup>44</sup> and this would be the work of reason. Yet, he would remain ignorant of [the content of] what he was reading aloud. Moreover, suppose there were also another man, who were to read aloud *and* both know and understand that which he read. Here is a certain [symbolic] illustration of [the difference between] confused reason and reason formed by mind. For mind exercises discriminative judgment regarding instances of reasoning, [thereby discerning] which reasoning is good and which is sophistical. In this way, mind is the form that discriminates between instances of reasoning, even as reason is the form that discriminates between instances of perceiving and instances of imagining.

**85**     *Philosopher:* From where does mind have this power-of-judgment, inasmuch as mind seems to make judgments regarding all things?

*Layman:* It has [this power-of-judgment] by virtue of the fact that it is the *image* of the Exemplar-of-all-things. (For God is the Exemplar-of-all-things.) Hence, since the Exemplar-of-all-things shines forth in the mind as a true object shines forth in its image, mind has within itself that unto which it looks and in accordance with which it judges about external objects. It is as if a written code of law were alive: because it was alive, it could read within itself the judgments that were to be dispensed. Hence, mind is a *living* description of Eternal, Infinite Wisdom. But in our minds, at the beginning, that life resembles someone asleep, until it is aroused to activity by wonder, which arises from the influence of perceptible objects. Thereupon, by the operation of its intellectual life, mind finds described within itself that which it is seeking. (Understand this description, however, to be the shining forth of the Exemplar-of-all-things in the way that a true object shines forth in its image.) [The situation is] as if an indivisible and most simple pointed tip of an angle of a very highly polished diamond were alive and as if in this pointed tip were reflected the forms of all things. By looking at itself this [living tip] would find the likenesses of all things; and by means of these likenesses it could make concepts of all things.

**86**     *Philosopher:* You speak wonderfully and make very appealing

statements. Your example of the pointed tip of a diamond is quite pleasing. For the more pointed and more simple that angle would be, the more clearly all things would be mirrored in it.

*Layman:* Someone who considers the mirroring power in itself sees that it is prior to all quantity. But if he conceives that power to be alive with an intellectual life in which the Exemplar-of-all-things shines forth, then he is making an acceptable surmise about mind.

*Philosopher:* I would like to hear whether you can use this art of yours as a [symbolic] illustration in regard to the mind's creating [things].

*Layman:* Indeed, I can.

87 Upon taking in his hand a certain beautiful spoon, the Layman said: "I wanted to make a mirroring spoon. I looked for wood that was especially compact and was of higher quality than all other samples. I made use of tools, by means of whose movements I elicited [in the wood] a suitable proportion—a proportion in which the form of a spoon shined forth perfectly. Thereafter, I polished the surface of the spoon to such an extent that I brought about in the shininess of the spoon's form the form of a mirror, as you observe. For although the spoon is a very lovely *spoon*, nonetheless it is, in addition, a *mirroring* spoon. For in it you have every kind of mirror—viz., concave, convex, straight, and cylindrical. At the base of the handle there is a straight mirror, in the handle a cylindrical mirror, in the concavity of the spoon a concave mirror, and in the spoon's convexity a convex mirror. Hence, the form-of-mirror did not have temporal existence prior to [the form-of-]spoon. Rather, for the perfection of the spoon I added that mirroring form to the first form of the spoon, in order to perfect that [initial form]. As a result, the form of the mirror now contains within itself the form of a spoon. Moreover, the form of the mirror is independent of the [form of] spoon. For being a spoon does not belong to the essence of the mirror. Therefore, if there were disrupted the proportions without which the form of spoon could not be present (e.g., if the handle were removed), then [the object] would cease to be a spoon; however, the form of mirror would not on that account cease to exist. Similarly, God, through the movement of the heavens and from a suitable material, brought forth a proportion [viz., a body] in which animality would shine forth in a very perfect manner. To this proportion He then added mind as a living mirror—in the way I spoke of."



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## CHAPTER SIX

Speaking symbolically, the wise said that number is the exemplar of things. The marvelous nature of number. Number is from mind and from the incorruptibility of essences. Mind is a harmony, is self-moving number, and is a composite of the same and the different.<sup>45</sup>

*Philosopher:* You have made suitable [illustrative] use [of your art]. Moreover, in mentioning a single illustration, you disclose how the production of things occurs and how it is that (1) proportion is the locus (or domain or region) of form and (2) that matter is the locus of proportion. And you very much seem to be a Pythagorean, for [Pythagoras] asserted<sup>46</sup> that all things are from number.

*Layman:* I don't know whether I am a Pythagorean or something else. But I do know that no one's authority guides me, even if it attempts to influence me. However, I deem the Pythagoreans—who, as you state, philosophize about all things by means of number—to be serious and keen [philosophers]. It is not the case that I think they meant to be speaking of number qua mathematical number and qua number proceeding from our mind. (For it is self-evident that that [sort of number] is not the beginning of anything.) Rather, they were speaking symbolically and plausibly about the number that proceeds from the Divine Mind—of which number a mathematical number is an image.<sup>47</sup> For just as our mind is to the Infinite, Eternal Mind, so number [that proceeds] from our mind is to number [that proceeds from the Divine Mind]. And we give our name “number” to number from the Divine Mind, even as to the Divine Mind itself we give the name for our mind. And we take very great pleasure in occupying ourselves with numbers, as being an instance of our occupying ourselves with our own work.

89

*Philosopher:* Please explain the considerations that can move someone to claiming that numbers are the beginnings of things.

*Layman:* There can be only one Infinite Beginning, and it alone is infinitely simple. Now, the first originated thing cannot be infinitely simple, as is self-evident. Nor can it be a composite of other things that compose it, for then it itself would not be the first originated thing; rather, the things composing it would precede it by nature. Therefore, we must admit that the first originated thing is a composite in such a way that, nonetheless, it is not composed of other things

but is composed [only] of itself. Now, our mind does not comprehend that there can be any such thing [as that]—unless that thing be number (or something like number) [that proceeds] from our mind.

- 90 Number is a composite and is composed of itself. For every number is composed of even number and odd number.<sup>48</sup> So number is composed of number. If you say [merely] that the number three is a composite of three units, then you are speaking as if someone were to say that the walls and the roof, separately, make a house. For if the walls exist separately and so too does the roof, then a house is not composed of them. Likewise, three separate units do not constitute the number three. Therefore, if you consider the units according as they constitute the number three, you consider them as united. And what, then, are three united units other than the number three? And so, the number three is composed *of itself*, [that is, is composed of *numerical* units]—and similarly regarding all [other] numbers.
- 91 Indeed, when I behold in number only oneness, I see the number's *incomposite compositeness*, and I see a coincidence of simplicity and compositeness, or of oneness and multitude. Or rather, if I peer even more acutely, I see the number's *composite oneness*—just as in the case of the respective unitary harmonic wholes of an octave, a fifth, and a fourth. For a harmonic relation is a oneness that cannot be understood apart from number. Moreover, from the relation of a half-tone [to a full tone]—and from the relation of half a double [proportion], this relation being that of the side of a square to its diagonal—I behold a number that is simpler than our mind's reason can grasp.<sup>49</sup> For [this] relation is not understood without number; yet, that number would have to be both even and odd. A lengthy and very delightful discourse could be held on this topic if we were not hastening onwards to other points.
- 92 We know, then, that the first originated thing is that of which number is a symbolic type. Moreover, we cannot approach more closely to the quiddity of the first originated thing otherwise [than by considering number]. For the precise quiddity of each thing is unattainable by us in any other way than in a symbol, or in a figure. For we speak, symbolically, of the first originated thing as number, because number is the subject to which proportion belongs, since in the absence of number there cannot be proportion. And proportion is the locus of form, for without a proportion that is suitable to a form and congruent with it, the form cannot shine forth—just as I said that if

the proportion that is suitable for [having] a spoon were disrupted, then the form [of spoon] could not remain, because it would have no place. For proportion is like the aptitude of a mirroring surface for the appearance therein of an image: if the aptitude does not remain in existence, then the image perishes.

[By comparison,] then, see how it is that the infinite oneness of the Exemplar can shine forth only in a suitable proportion—a proportion that is present in terms of number. For the Eternal Mind acts as does a musician, who desires to make his conception visible to the senses. The musician takes a plurality of tones and brings them into a congruent proportion of harmony, so that in that proportion the harmony shines forth pleasingly and perfectly. For *there* the harmony is present as in its own place, and the shining forth of the harmony is made to vary as a result of the varying of the harmony's congruent proportion. And the harmony ceases when the aptitude-for-proportion ceases.

Accordingly, number and all things derive from mind.

93 *Philosopher:* Is there, then, no plurality of things apart from our mind's consideration?<sup>50</sup>

*Layman:* There is. But it is from the Eternal Mind. Hence, just as with respect to God the plurality of things is from the Divine Mind, so with respect to us the plurality of things is from our mind. For only mind numbers. If mind were removed, then no longer would there be discrete numbers. For because in a singular way mind understands there to be something one and the same, and because we also take that one under consideration singly, we say there to be something one. Because mind understands the one in a singular way and understands this *once*, mind is truly an equality of oneness. But when mind understands the one both in a singular way and by replicating it, we judge there to be more than one, calling it two—because in a singular way mind understands there to be something one-and-the-same [but understands this] *twice*, i.e., by doubling it. The case is similar regarding the other [numbers].

94 *Philosopher:* Isn't three constituted by two and oneness? And don't we call number a collection of units? Why, then, do you claim that number is from mind?

*Layman:* Those ways of speaking are to be taken to refer to a mode of understanding. For to make a collection [of units] is nothing other than to replicate one-and-the-same-thing that is common to

them.<sup>51</sup> Hence, if you see that two and three are nothing without the mind's replicating, then you notice sufficiently that number is from mind.

*Philosopher:* How is it that the plurality of things is a number in the Divine Mind?

*Layman:* The plurality of things has arisen from the Divine Mind's understanding one thing in one way and another thing in another way.<sup>52</sup> Hence, if you look closely, you will find that the plurality of things is only a mode-of-understanding on the part of the Divine Mind. And so, as I surmise, we can say without reproach that in the Mind of the Creator number is the First Exemplar of things. This fact is evidenced by the pleasing beauty that is present in all things and that consists in proportion.<sup>53</sup> Now, proportion consists in number. Hence, number is the principal indicator directing [us] unto wisdom.

**95** *Philosopher:* The Pythagoreans first said this, and thereafter the Platonists, whom even Severinus Boethius imitates.

*Layman:* In like manner, I say that number is the exemplar of our mind's conceptions. For without number mind can do nothing. If number did not exist, then there would be no assimilating, no conceptualizing, no discriminating, no measuring. For, without number, things could not be understood to be different from one another and to be discrete. For without number we [could] not understand that substance is one thing, quantity another thing, and so on regarding the other [categories]. Therefore, since number is a mode of understanding,<sup>54</sup> nothing can be understood without it. For since our mind's number is an image of the divine number—which is the Exemplar-of-things—it is the exemplar of concepts. Moreover, Oneness is prior to all plurality, and this unifying Oneness is the Uncreated Mind, in which all things are one thing. Subsequent to the One there is plurality, [which is] the unfolding of the Power-of-Oneness. This Power is (1) the Being of things,<sup>55</sup> (2) Equality of Being, and (3) the Union of Being and Equality; and this is the Blessed Trinity. By comparison, there is in our mind an image of that Divine Trinity. For our mind is also a unifying oneness that is prior to all plurality conceivable by mind; and subsequent to this oneness that unites all plurality comes a plurality that is an image of the plurality of things, even as our mind is an image of the Divine Mind. And the plurality [that is an image] unfolds the power of our mind's oneness; this power is an image of Being, Equality, and Union.<sup>56</sup>

96 *Philosopher:* I see that from a consideration of number you attain unto marvelous [truths]. Since Divine Dionysius maintains that the essences of things are incorruptible,<sup>57</sup> tell [me] whether you can illustratively support this point by recourse to number.

*Layman:* Number is constituted by the replication of oneness; and otherness follows contingently from the replication. Moreover, the compositeness of number comes from oneness and otherness, from the same and the different, from the even and the odd, from the divisible and the indivisible; furthermore, the [respective] quiddity of all things has originated, so that it is a number from the Divine Mind.<sup>58</sup> When you take note of [all the foregoing], then you attain, to some extent, unto (1) how it is that the essences of things are incorruptible, as is oneness, from which number [originates] and which is [number's] being, and (2) how it is that they exist in this and that way because of otherness, which is not of the essence of number but which follows contingently from the replication of oneness. Similarly, indeed, otherness does not belong to anything's essence. For otherness pertains to destruction, because it is division, from which comes perishing. Therefore, it is of the essence of no thing. You see, too, how it is that number is not anything other than the things enumerated. Herefrom you know that between the Divine Mind and things there is no actually existing intervening number. Instead, the number of things are the things.

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#### CHAPTER SEVEN

Mind produces from itself, by means of  
assimilation, the forms of things; and  
it attains unto absolute possibility, or matter.

*Philosopher:* Pray tell, do you think that our mind is a harmony or is self-moving number or is a composite of the same and the different or a composite of divisible and indivisible essence or is an entelechy? For the Platonists and the Peripatetics use such modes of speaking.

*Layman:* I believe that all those who have spoken about mind might possibly have said these and other such things because they were moved by what they experienced in regard to the mind's power. They found in mind a power of judging all harmony. And they found that mind produces from itself concepts and in this way moves itself, as a living discrete number would proceed to make discriminations by it-

self. [And they found,] in addition, that in this [work of discriminating] mind proceeds (1) by way of collecting and distributing or (2) in accordance with a mode of (a) simplicity and (b) absolute necessity or (c) absolute possibility or (d) necessary connection or (e) determinate necessity or (f) determinate possibility or (3) on account of its aptitude for perpetual movement. Because of these experiences, or various similar ones, they must be believed to have said plausibly those and other such things regarding mind or soul. For for the mind to be from the same and the different is for it to be from oneness and otherness—in the way in which number is composed of the same (as regards what is common) and the different (as regards individual units). These<sup>59</sup> are the mind's modes of understanding.

**98** *Philosopher:* Continue by explaining how it is that the soul is self-moving number.

*Layman:* I will do as best I can. I think that no one can fail to agree that mind is a certain living divine-number (1) that is very excellently proportioned for having an aptitude for reflecting the divine harmony and (2) that enfolds all sensible, rational, and intellectual harmony (and whatever else can be said more elegantly about this topic). [Mind is this living divine-number] to such an extent that whatever number, proportion, and harmony proceed from our mind resemble our mind as little as our mind resembles the Infinite Mind. For although mind is a divine number, nevertheless it is number in such a way that it is a simple oneness that of its own power produces its own numbers. Hence, that which the proportion of God's works is to God, this the proportion of our mind's works is to our mind itself.

**99** *Philosopher:* Many have wanted to say that our mind is very closely united to the divine nature and the Divine Mind.

*Layman:* I don't think they intended to say anything other than I said, although they had a different manner of speaking. For our mind differs from the Divine Mind as seeing differs from doing. The Divine Mind *creates* by conceiving; our mind *assimilates* by conceiving—i.e., by making concepts, or intellectual viewings. The Divine Mind is a reifying power; our mind is an assimilative power.

*Orator:* I recognize that the Philosopher does not have much time, and for this reason I have been restraining myself in extended silence. I have heard many points, and these were always most gratifying. But I would like to hear how it is that mind produces from itself, by means of assimilation, forms of things.

**100**      *Layman:* Mind is so assimilative that in the sense of sight it assimilates itself to things visible, in the sense of hearing it assimilates itself to things audible, in the sense of taste to things tasteable, in the sense of smell to things that can be smelled, in the sense of touch to things touchable. In the senses [mind assimilates itself] to things perceptible, in the imagination to things imaginable, and in reason to things accessible by reasoning. For example, imagination, in the absence of perceptible things, is like a sense that is without the power to discriminate between perceptible things. For to perceptible things that are absent, imagination conforms itself confusedly and without discriminating one state from another. But in association with reason imagination conforms itself to things, while discriminating one state from another. In all these instances our mind operates in the spirit of the arteries. When our mind is stimulated by encountering the forms conveyed, in a replicated way, from the objects unto the spirit [of the arteries]: by means of [these perceptual] forms our mind assimilates itself to the objects,<sup>60</sup> so that by way of the assimilation it makes a judgment regarding the object. Hence, that subtle spirit-of-the-arteries, which is enlivened by mind, is fashioned by mind into a likeness of the [perceptual] form, which has presented [itself as] an obstacle to [this] spirit's<sup>61</sup> motion. Analogously: by a man who has both the use of his mind and the skill, a pliable slab of wax is molded into the shape of the object that actually has presented itself to [this] artisan. Without mind no configuration can be made—whether in the art of sculpturing or of painting or of building. Rather, it is mind that marks off the boundaries of all things.

**101**      Therefore, suppose that a slab of wax were conceived of as being in-formed with a mind. In that case, the mind existing within the wax would configure the wax to every shape presented to that mind—even as the mind of an artisan endeavors to do now, when mind is applied from outside the object.<sup>62</sup> (What holds true for the wax also holds true for clay and everything pliable.) Similarly, the mind that is present in our body makes various fine or coarse configurations in accordance with the varying pliability of the arterial spirits present in the [sense] organs. Now, one [arterial] spirit is not configurable to that to which another is. Because the [arterial] spirit in the optic nerve cannot be affected by forms of sounds but only by forms of colors, it is configurable to the forms of colors but not of sounds. The case is similar with regard to the other [arterial spirits].

**102** Moreover, there is another spirit that is configurable—though in a gross and nondiscrete manner—to all perceptual forms; it is present in the instrument of the imagination. And in the instrument of reason there is present another spirit, which is configurable discretely and clearly to all perceptible things. All these configurations are assimilations for perceptible objects, since they are assimilations made through the intermediacy of corporeal (albeit subtle) spirits.<sup>63</sup> Hence, since mind makes these assimilations in order to have concepts of perceptible objects—and to this end mind is operative in a corporeal spirit—mind acts as a soul, enlivening the body. (By means of this enlivening an animal is constituted [an animal]. Thus, in its own manner the soul of brute animals makes assimilations that are similar [to ours,] although more confused, so that in its own manner it acquires concepts.) Now, from such concepts as those elicited in the foregoing way by assimilation, our mental power makes mechanical arts and both empirical and logical surmises. And it attains unto things in the manner in which they are conceived to be in the possibility-of-being, i.e., in matter, and in the manner in which the possibility-of-being is determined by form. Therefore, since [our mind] attains, by means of these assimilations, only unto concepts for perceptible objects (objects whose forms are not the true [formal natures]<sup>64</sup> but are forms obscured because of the changeability of the material), it follows that all such concepts are surmises rather than true [representations]. So, then, I maintain that concepts which are attained by means of assimilations made by reason are subject to uncertainty,<sup>65</sup> because they are [made] in accordance with *images* of the [true] formal natures rather than in accordance with the true formal natures themselves.<sup>66</sup>

**103** Hereafter, when our mind (not insofar as it is operative in a body that it enlivens but insofar as it is mind per se, yet uniteable to a body) looks unto its own immutability, it makes assimilations of forms not as they are embedded in matter but as they are in and of themselves. And it conceives the immutable quiddities of things, using itself as its own instrument, apart from any instrumental [corporeal] spirit<sup>67</sup>—as, for example, when it conceives a circle to be a figure from whose center all lines that are extended to the circumference are equal. In this way of existing no circle can exist extra-mentally, in matter. For it is impossible that in a material there be two equal lines; even less is it possible that any such [perfect material-]circle be constructible.<sup>68</sup> Hence, the circle in the mind is the exemplar, and measure-of-truth, of a circle in a [patterned] floor. Thus, we say that in the mind the



104 [respective] true nature of the things is present in a necessary connection, i.e., in the manner in which the true nature of the thing dictates (as was said regarding the circle). Because mind as it is in itself, i.e., as free from matter, makes these assimilations [of immutable quiddities], it assimilates itself to abstract forms.<sup>69</sup> In accordance with *this* power [of assimilation] it produces the mathematical branches of knowledge, which [deal in] certainty. And it finds its power to be the power (1) of assimilating itself to things insofar as they exist in a necessary connection and (2) of making concepts of things insofar as they exist in a necessary connection. Mind is stimulated to [make] these assimilations for abstract [forms]—stimulated by phantasms, or images, of [actual] forms. Mind detects these images—themselves having been made by assimilation—in the [sense] organs. (The situation is like someone's being stimulated by the beauty of an image to seek out the beauty of the [image's] exemplar.) With regard to this [abstract] assimilation mind's status is the following: viz., as if absolute pliability (i.e., pliability free from wax, clay, metal, and all pliable [materials]) were alive with a mental life, so that of itself it could assimilate itself to all shapes as they exist in themselves and not in any material. For such a mind would see that because it could conform itself to them all, the concepts of them all would be present in the power of its own living pliability, i.e., would be present in the mind itself.

105 But in the foregoing mode mind is still unsatisfied, because it does not behold the precise truth *of all things*. Rather, it beholds truth in a certain necessity that is ordered to each thing according as one thing exists in this way, another in that way, and according as each thing is composed of its own parts. And mind sees that this mode of being is not truth itself but is a participation in truth, so that one thing exists truly in one way, another thing truly in another way. This otherness cannot at all befit truth considered in itself, i.e., in its own infinite and absolute precision. Because of all the foregoing: mind, looking unto its own simplicity (not only insofar as this simplicity is free from matter but also insofar as it is incommunicable to matter, i.e., ununiteable thereto in the manner of form), uses this simplicity as an instrument, in order to assimilate itself to all things—assimilate itself not only abstractly, apart from matter, but also in terms of a simplicity that is incommunicable to matter. And in this way mind beholds, in its own simplicity, all things—just as if it were to behold in a point every magnitude and in a center every circle. And within its own simplicity mind beholds all things as without any composition of parts—be-

106 holds them not as one thing is this and another is that but as (1) all things are something one and (2) something one is all things.<sup>70</sup> And this is the intuiting of absolute truth.

[The situation is] as if someone were to see (in the manner indicated just a moment ago) how it is that being is participated-in, variously, by all beings—and were thereafter to behold (in the way we are now discussing, viz., simply and beyond all participation and variation) absolute being itself. Assuredly, such a man would see (beyond [all] determinate necessary connection) all the things that he previously saw in a variety—would see them most simply, without variety, in terms of absolute necessity, without number and magnitude, and without otherness. Now, in this most lofty manner mind uses itself insofar as it is the image of God. And God, who is all things, shines forth in mind when mind, as a living image of God, turns to its own Exemplar and assimilates itself thereto with all its effort. In this way the mind beholds all things as something one and beholds itself as an assimilation of that one. By means of this assimilation it makes concepts of that one thing which is all things.<sup>71</sup> (In this way it makes theological speculations.) In the one thing which is all things it very tranquilly finds rest as in the goal of all its concepts and as in the most delightful true being of its life. About this mode [of being], enough could never be said. Permit me to have stated these points hastily and roughly in the foregoing way. You will be able, with suitable refining, to restate these points more beautifully, so that they may be rendered more pleasing to readers.

107 *Orator:* I was very eagerly waiting to hear the very thing that you have very clearly just explained; and [these points] will seem very lovely to those who are seeking the truth.

*Philosopher:* Explain, I ask, how it is that mind attains unto indeterminate possibility, which we call matter.

*Layman:* [This occurs] through a certain sham reasoning and contrary, in a certain way, to the way in which the mind reflectively passes from necessary connection to absolute necessity. For when mind sees that all material objects have being that is formed through corporeity, then if corporeity is [mentally] removed, mind sees in terms of a certain indeterminate possibility all the things that it was previously viewing. And these things that it was previously viewing as *actually* existing in terms of corporeity, and as distinct and determinate, it now sees as confused and indeterminate and as *possibly* existing. And this is a mode of all-encompassing unity; in this mode all things

are seen in terms of possibility. This mode is not, however, a mode-of-being, because possibility-to-be does not [actually] exist.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

Whether it is the same thing for the mind to conceive, to understand, and to make concepts and assimilations. How, according to the physiologists, sensations are produced.

*Philosopher:* Enough of this! So that we not stray from our topic, explain whether the mind's conceiving is its understanding.

*Layman:* I stated<sup>72</sup> that mind is the power of conceiving. Hence, when stimulated, mind moves itself through conceiving—until it understands. Therefore, understanding is a completed movement [or operation] of the mind.

*Philosopher:* When is [mind] said to conceive?

*Layman:* When it makes likenesses of things (or, if you prefer, concepts of things) or when it makes [mental] genera, differentiae, species, property (proprium),<sup>73</sup> and accident. Hence, God created in the soul the *power* of conceiving; but mind does the things just mentioned. Nevertheless, the following are one-and-the-same thing: a mental power, a mental conception, a mental likeness, a mental concept, a mental genus, and a mental species. Although we do not say that understanding and conceiving are the same thing, nonetheless whatever is understood is also conceived, and conversely. Yet, an actual existent is understood and not [merely] conceived.<sup>74</sup>

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*Philosopher:* What do you mean?

*Layman:* Conceiving is nothing but grasping in the material or in the formal (or in some other) mode.<sup>75</sup> But an actual existent is said to be understood; i.e., its *individual properties* are grasped by the mind. Moreover, mind is said to understand because of the fact that it is moved. The beginning of its movement is called an impression (*passio*),<sup>76</sup> but the completion of its movement is called understanding. Now, just as disposition and habit are the same thing (it is disposition when it tends toward completion and is habit after its completion), so the mind's impression and the mind's understanding are one and the same thing.

*Philosopher:* But “understanding” does not seem to indicate a completion.

*Layman:* You are right. Properly speaking, “to understand” (*intelligere*) is ascribed to a mind when the mind is moved, even though there

is not said to be understanding (*intellectus*) until after the completing [of the mind's movement, or operation].

*Philosopher:* So all these things—viz., a power of conceiving, a conception, a likeness, a concept, an impression, and an understanding—are one and the same thing?

*Layman:* They are the same thing in such a way that the power of conceiving is not some particular one of them. For the power of conceiving is called a *power* because of an aptitude that it has from creation; but it is called a *conception* because of an imitating, since it imitates matter or form in that it mentally grasps in the material mode or in the formal mode, or both. However, from the fact that it is called conception, it is also [said to be] a likeness of a thing, or a concept of a thing. These names [viz., “conception,” “likeness,” “concept”] are predicable of one another truly, and each of them refers to an understanding.

**110** *Philosopher:* I am surprised that a conception can be called an understanding.

*Layman:* Although a conception is called conception because of an imitating, and although understanding is called understanding because of a completion, nevertheless the completion brings it about that the conception is said to be an understanding. For mind continues to conceive when it is brought to the completeness of an understanding.

*Philosopher:* Do you, perhaps, want to admit, as well, that the mind's impression is called an understanding?

*Layman:* I do. For understanding is an operation of the mind, and understanding's beginning is an impression.

*Philosopher:* So conception is an impression?<sup>77</sup>

*Layman:* This does not follow, as you see by yourself. Likewise, although generic and specific concepts are understandings, they are not thereby impressions of the soul. For an impression of the soul passes away, whereas generic and specific concepts remain.

**111** *Philosopher:* Enough of this! Since various individuals have various opinions, I am satisfied that I have heard from you in regard to these matters. But tell me (1) what name you give to the mental power by which [mind] beholds all things in a necessary connection and (2) what you call that other power by which [mind beholds all things] in absolute necessity.

*Layman:* I, who am a layman, do not pay much attention to words. Nevertheless, I think that we can suitably give the name “ab-

stract learning” (“*disciplina*”)<sup>78</sup> to that power by which the mind, when it looks unto its own immutability, considers the forms-of-things apart from matter. For through abstract learning<sup>79</sup> the mind is brought to this considering of form. But we can give the name “intellect” to that power by which the mind, in looking unto its own simplicity, beholds all things in simplicity and apart from compositeness.

*Philosopher:* One reads (1) that the power which you call abstract learning is called by some others intellect and (2) that the power which you call intellect, they call intellectibility.<sup>80</sup>

*Layman:* That’s not disturbing. For those powers can also suitably be given these names.

**112** *Orator:* I would like to hear from you, O Philosopher, how the physiologists think that sensations are produced. In this respect I imagine that you are more expert than the Layman, who will rejoice with me if *you* do this.

*Philosopher:* I would be happy to be able to relate something of interest. Accordingly, the answer to your question is as follows:<sup>81</sup> The physiologists say that the soul is associated with a very refined spirit diffused throughout the arteries—so that that spirit is a means of conveyance for the soul, whereas the blood is the means of conveyance for that spirit. There is, then, a certain artery which abounds with that spirit. This artery is directed to the eyes in such a way that near the eyes it bifurcates and (still abounding with that spirit) comes to the globes of the eyes where the pupil is. And so, that spirit, thus diffused throughout that artery, is the instrument-of-soul whereby the soul exercises the sense of seeing.

Two arteries, abounding with that spirit, are directed to the ears—and similarly for the nostrils. In the same manner, certain arteries are directed to the palate. That spirit is also diffused throughout the bone marrow all the way to the distal joints.

**113** The spirit, then, that is directed to the eyes is very swift. Accordingly, when it encounters a certain external obstacle, it is turned back and the soul is stimulated to take note of that which is encountered. Likewise, in the ears that spirit is turned back by voice, and the soul is stimulated to apprehend. Moreover, just as hearing occurs in very rarefied air, so also smelling occurs in dense air—or, better, in fummy air—which, upon entering the nostrils, impedes that spirit because of its fuminess, so that the soul is stimulated to apprehend the odor of these fumes. Likewise, when something moist and spongy enters the

palate, that spirit is impeded, and the soul is stimulated for tasting. Furthermore, the soul uses as an instrument-of-touch the spirit diffused throughout the bone marrow. For when some solid object presents an obstacle to the body, the spirit is impinged upon and somehow impeded; and herefrom comes a sense of touching.

With respect to the eyes [the soul] uses a fiery power; regarding the ears it uses an ethereal power—or, rather, a pure aerial power. With respect to the nostrils it uses a dense and fummy aerial power. With respect to the palate it uses an aqueous power. With respect to the bone marrow it uses an earthen power. And all this occurs in accordance with the order of the four elements, so that just as the eyes are superior [in power] to the ears,<sup>82</sup> so the spirit directed to the eyes is also superior and, as a result, is said to be to some extent fiery. Thus, in man the disposition of the senses is made after the likeness of the ordering, or the disposition, of the four elements. Hence, seeing is swifter than is hearing. Wherefore it happens that we see lightning before we hear the thunder, even though they occur at the same time. Moreover, the very strong, subtle, and acute direction of the rays of the eyes brings it about that the air yields to it and that nothing can resist it except something densely earthen or densely aqueous.

**114** Therefore, since that spirit is the instrument of the senses (the eyes, the nostrils, etc., are as windows and pathways through which that spirit has an outlet for sensing), it is evident that nothing is sensed except by means of an obstacle. Hence, the following occurs: if there is an obstacle, then that spirit (which is the instrument for sensing) is impeded and the soul—also impeded, as it were—apprehends confusedly through the senses the thing that is encountered. For in and of themselves the senses demarcate nothing. For example, the fact that when we see something we impose a demarcation on it is due not to the sense [of sight] but to the imagination,<sup>83</sup> which is associated with the sense.

However, in the front part of the head, in the chamber-of-imagination, there is a certain spirit that is much more refined and swift than the spirit diffused throughout the arteries. When the soul uses this spirit as an instrument, this spirit becomes more subtle, so that even when a thing is absent the soul apprehends the form-in-matter. This power of soul is called imagination because by means of this power the soul forms for itself the image of the absent thing. And in this respect imagination differs from the senses, which apprehend form-in-matter only when a thing is present. By comparison, the imagination apprehends

(though confusedly) form-in-matter when a thing is absent. As a result, the imagination does not discern [just a single] state but rather apprehends, confusedly, many states at once.

**115** Now, in the middle part of the head, in that chamber that is called the chamber-of-reasoning, there is a very refined spirit—even more refined than the spirit in the chamber-of-imagination. And when the soul uses that spirit as an instrument, that spirit becomes still more subtle, so that the soul distinguishes one state from another (if not a state, then something formed). Nevertheless, the soul does not grasp the true nature of things, since it apprehends forms united to matter. But the matter distorts the form, so that the form's true nature cannot be grasped. Now, this power-of-soul is called reason. The soul uses the bodily instrument in these three ways.

The soul apprehends through itself when it turns back on itself in such a way that it uses itself as an instrument—just as we heard from you, [O Layman].<sup>84</sup>

*Orator:* The physiologists, who made these points known to us in accordance with their experience, are surely to be praised. For [these points are] lovely and gratifying.

*Layman:* And our Philosopher<sup>85</sup> here deserves our very great praise and thanks.

**116**

#### CHAPTER NINE

Mind measures all things by making a point, a line, and a surface. There is one point, and it is both the enfolding and the perfection of a line. The nature of enfolding. How mind makes adequate measures of the various things, and whence it is motivated to do so.

*Philosopher:* I see that night is coming on. Would you like, then, O Layman, to hasten on to the many issues that remain and to explain how mind measures all things, as you stated at the outset.<sup>86</sup>

*Layman:* Mind makes a *point* to be the termination of a *line*, makes a *line* to be the termination of a *surface*, and makes a *surface* to be the termination of a material object. Mind makes number; hence, multitude and magnitude derive from mind. And, hence, mind measures all things.

*Philosopher:* Explain in what way mind makes a point.

*Layman:* A point is the juncture-place of one line with another, i.e., is the end of a line. Therefore, when you conceive of a line, your

mind will be able to consider the conjunction of its two halves with each other. If the mind does this, then the line [as conceived] will have three points because of its two end-points and the point of conjunction of the two halves—a conjunction that the mind has proposed to itself. Now, the end-point of a line and the juncture-point are not different kinds of points, for the juncture-point of the two halves is thereby the [common] end-point of [both] lines. Moreover, if to each half [at the juncture] the mind ascribes an individual end-point, then the line [as conceived] will have four points. Likewise, into however many parts the conceived line is divided by the mind, and however many end-points of those parts there will be, the line (as conceived) will be judged to consist of that many points.

**117** *Philosopher:* How does the mind make a line?

*Layman:* By considering length without width. And [mind makes] a surface by going on to consider width without solidity.<sup>87</sup> (However, neither a point nor a line nor a surface can *actually* exist in this way, for outside the mind only solidity<sup>88</sup> actually exists.) Thus, the measure or end-point of each thing is due to mind. Stones and pieces of wood have a certain measurement—and have end-points—outside our mind; but these [measurements and end-points] are due to the Uncreated Mind, from which all the end-points of things derive.

*Philosopher:* Do you consider a point to be indivisible?

*Layman:* I regard an end-point as indivisible, because the end does not have an end. If an end-point were divisible, it would not *be* an end-point, because it would *have* an end-point. And so, a point is not quantitative; and quantity cannot be constituted by points, because quantity cannot be composed of what is not quantitative.

**118** *Philosopher:* You agree with Boethius,<sup>89</sup> who says that if you add a point to a point, you have nothing more than if you added nothing to nothing.

*Layman:* Therefore, if you join the end-points of two lines, you will make a longer line, but the conjunction of the end-points will not constitute a quantity.

*Philosopher:* Do you say that there is more than one point?

*Layman:* There is neither a plurality of points nor a plurality of onenesses. Rather, since a point is the termination of a line, it can be found everywhere in the line. Nevertheless, in the line there is only one point, which, when extended, is the line.



*Philosopher:* In fact, then, in a line there is found to be nothing except a point?<sup>90</sup>

*Layman:* That's right. But because of the variability of the matter that is underlyingly present, a certain extension is also present there. (By comparison, although there is only one oneness, nevertheless number is said to consist of a plurality of onenesses because of differences among the things subject to oneness.) And so, a line is the development of a point; and a surface is the development of a line; and a solid is the development of a surface. Hence, if you remove a point, all magnitude vanishes. And if you remove oneness, all multitude vanishes.

**119** *Philosopher:* What do you mean [by saying that] a line is the “development” of a point?

*Layman:* [I mean that it is] the development, i.e., the unfolding, [of the point]—which [is to say] none other than the following: viz., that the point is present in the many atoms in such a way that it is present in each of them qua combined and connected. For there is one and the same point in all the atoms, just as there is one and the same whiteness in all things white.

*Philosopher:* What do you mean by “atom”?

*Layman:* With respect to the mind's consideration a continuum is divided into what is further and further divisible, and the multitude increases *ad infinitum*. However, in actually dividing, we come to a part that is actually indivisible. This part I call an atom, for an atom is a quantity that, because of its smallness, is actually indivisible.<sup>91</sup> So too, with respect to the mind's consideration multitude has no end; yet, it actually comes to an end. For the multitude of all things corresponds to a certain determinate number, although this number is unknown to us.<sup>92</sup>

**120** *Philosopher:* Is a point the completion of a line, since it is the termination of a line?

*Layman:* It is the line's completion and totality. This [completion, or totality,] enfolds the line within itself. For to affix points is to delimit a thing. But where a thing is delimited, it is completed. Now, the completion of it is its totality. Hence, a point is the termination of a line and is its totality and completion; this [totality, or completion,] enfolds the line, even as the line unfolds the point. For example, when in geometry I say that the totality of a line is from point *a* to point *b*, then by reference to points *a* and *b* I have designated the totality of

the line before drawing it from *a* to *b*. That is, [I have indicated] that the line is not to be drawn any farther. Hence, to enclose (whether actually or conceivably) the totality of a thing between this point and that, is that which it is to enfold a line in a point. However, to unfold [the point] is to draw the line, part by part, from point *a* to point *b*. Thus, the line unfolds what the point enfolds.

- 121**     *Philosopher*: I thought that a point is the enfolding of a line as oneness is the enfolding of number.<sup>93</sup> For anywhere in a line there is found nothing but a point, even as in number there is nowhere found anything but oneness.<sup>94</sup>

*Layman*: You've not misapprehended. The same thing is being expressed in a different manner of speaking. Moreover, with regard to *all* enfoldings, use your manner of speaking:<sup>95</sup> Movement is the unfolding of rest, because in movement there is found nothing but rest. Similarly, *the now* is unfolded by way of time, because in time there is found nothing but *the now*. And so on.

- 122**     *Philosopher*: What do you mean by saying that in movement only rest is found?

*Layman*: To move is to pass from one unchanging state to another, because as long as a thing remains in one unchanging state, it is not moved.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, in movement nothing is found except rest. For movement is a departing from an unchanging state. Hence, to be moved is to pass from one unchanging state, and this is to pass to another unchanging state. Thus, to move is to pass from rest unto rest, so that moving is nothing other than ordered rest, or nothing other than instances-of-rest ordered successively.

The following individual is greatly benefited: viz., he who pays careful attention to enfoldings and their unfoldings—pays attention especially to the fact that all enfoldings are images of Infinite Simplicity's enfolding. They are not *unfoldings* of its enfolding but are *images* thereof;<sup>97</sup> and these enfoldings exist in a necessary connection. Moreover, mind, which is the first image of Infinite Simplicity's enfolding [of all enfoldings], enfolds in its own power the power of these other enfoldings. And mind is the locus, or domain, of necessary connection,<sup>98</sup> because that which things truly are, they are as free from the changeability of matter—i.e., not as they exist materially but as they exist mentally. I believe I have already spoken more than enough about this last topic.<sup>99</sup>

- 123**     *Orator*: Even if repetitiously, not at all more than enough. For it

is useful to repeat often that which can never be repeated often enough.

*Philosopher:* Since as you say, O Layman, mind receives its name from measuring,<sup>100</sup> I wonder *why* it proceeds so eagerly to measure things.

*Layman:* [It does so] in order to attain the measure of itself. For mind is a living measure that attains unto its own capability by measuring other things. For it performs all [its operations] in order to know itself. But when seeking the measure of itself in all things, mind finds it only where all things are something one. *There* resides its precise truth, because *there* is present the adequate exemplar of itself.

**124** *Philosopher:* How can mind make itself be an adequate measure of such various things?

*Layman:* In the way in which the Absolute Face makes itself the measure of all faces.<sup>101</sup> For when you consider (1) that mind is a certain absolute measure that cannot be greater or lesser (since it is not contracted to anything quantitative) and consider, in addition, (2) that mind is a living measure, so that it measures by means of itself (as if a living pair of drawing-compasses were to measure by means of itself), then you attain unto how mind makes itself to be a concept, a measure, or an exemplar in order to attain itself in all things.

**125** *Philosopher:* I understand the comparison with a pair of drawing-compasses that are of no determinate quantity—in the sense that [mind is like an immaterial] compass but, nevertheless, extends itself and contracts itself, so that it assimilates itself to determinate things. But tell me whether mind assimilates itself to modes of being.

*Layman:* Indeed, to all [of them]. For it conforms itself to [absolute] possibility in order to measure all things with respect to their possibility. Likewise, it conforms itself to absolute necessity in order to measure all things in their oneness and simplicity, as does God. Likewise, it conforms itself to necessary connection in order to measure all things in their own being, and it conforms itself to determinate possibility in order to measure all things as they [actually] exist. Mind also measures symbolically and in a comparative way—for example, when it uses number and geometrical figures and makes itself to be a likeness of these. Hence, to one who views the matter subtly, mind is a living, uncontracted<sup>102</sup> likeness of Infinite Equality.

Apprehension of truth is in terms  
of multitude and magnitude.

*Philosopher:* Do not become weary of extending your discourse into the evening, my very dear Friend (so that I may continue to enjoy your presence, for I must depart [from Rome] tomorrow). Rather, explain the statement of Boethius (surely a very learned man)—viz., what he means when he says that the apprehension of the [respective] true nature of all things is in terms of multitude and magnitude.<sup>103</sup>

*Layman:* I think that he used “multitude” to refer to discreteness, whereas he used “magnitude” to refer to entirety. For someone rightly apprehends the true nature of a thing if he distinguishes that thing from all other things and if he also attains unto the entirety of the thing—the entirety short of which or beyond which he does not reach the complete being of the thing. For example, by means of abstract learning (*disciplina*)<sup>104</sup> in geometry, someone determines the whole of a triangle—in such a way that the triangle is neither something more nor something less. By means of abstract learning in astronomy, he determines the whole [pattern] of movements, as well as what occurs through [the movements of] individual things. By means of the abstract knowledge [*disciplina*] of magnitude one reaches the termination, and the measure, of the entirety of things, just as by means of the abstract knowledge of number, the discreteness of things is reached. Indeed, number avails for distinguishing a confused combination of things; likewise, number avails for assembling a combination of things. But magnitude avails for apprehending the end-point, and the measure, of the entire being of things.

127 *Philosopher:* If magnitude [requires] a distinguishing of the entirety from all else, then nothing is known unless all things are known.

*Layman:* You speak the truth. A part is not known unless the whole is known, for the whole measures the part.<sup>105</sup> For example, when hewing out a spoon part-by-part from wood, I look unto the whole in shaping the part—[look thereunto] in order to produce a well-proportioned spoon. Thus, the whole spoon, which I have conceived in my mind, is the exemplar to which I look when I fashion a part. I can produce a complete spoon when each part retains its proportion in ordered relation to the whole. Likewise, when one part [of a thing] is united with another part, it ought to bear an ordered relation to the entirety. Hence, with regard to the knowledge of an individual thing, a knowledge of its whole

and parts will have to precede. Therefore, if God, who is the Exemplar of all-encompassing unity,<sup>106</sup> is unknown, then nothing is known of all-encompassing unity; and if the all-encompassing unity is unknown, then it is evident that nothing can be known of its parts. Thus, a knowledge of God and of all things precedes a knowledge of any given thing.

*Philosopher:* Explain too, I ask, why Boethius says that without [recourse to] the quadrivium no one can philosophize rightly.<sup>107</sup>

*Layman:* [He does so] because of what has already been said. The power of numbers is contained in arithmetic and in music; from this power comes the discreteness of things. But in geometry and astronomy an abstract knowledge of magnitude is contained; from this knowledge there flows forth the complete apprehension of the entirety of things. Because of the foregoing considerations no one is to philosophize without [recourse to] the quadrivium.

**128** *Philosopher:* I wonder whether Boethius meant that magnitude and multitude are all that there is.

*Layman:* Not at all, I think. Rather, [he meant] that every existent is characterized by magnitude or multitude, since the making known of all things is done in accordance with the power of one or the other of them. Magnitude is delimiting; multitude is differentiating. Hence, demarcating, which delimits and encompasses [a thing's] total being, possesses the power of magnitude and pertains to magnitude; and the making known of demarcations is done, necessarily, in accordance with the power of magnitude. But dividing, as well as the making known of divisions, is done in accordance with the power of multitude. Moreover, the disclosures from syllogisms occur in accordance with the power of magnitude and multitude. For the fact that from two [propositions] a third [proposition] is inferred is owing to multitude; but the fact that [inference is] from universal [propositions] and from particular [propositions] is owing to magnitude. Furthermore, someone who is more at leisure than are we might be able to make something of the fact that from the power of multitude quantities, qualities, and the other categories descend and furnish a knowledge of things. [I say "someone more at leisure"] because the manner in which this derivation occurs is not easily known.

**129**

#### CHAPTER ELEVEN

In God all things are present in a trinity—  
and so too in our mind. Our mind is composed  
of modes of apprehending.

*Philosopher:* Earlier<sup>108</sup> you touched upon [the topics of] God's trinity and the mind's trinity. Explain, I ask, how it is that in God all things are present in a trinity—and so too in our mind.

*Layman:* You philosophers assert that the ten most general kinds<sup>109</sup> encompass all things.

*Philosopher:* This claim is surely true.

*Layman:* When you consider those kinds as they exist actually, don't you see that they are divided?

*Philosopher:* Indeed.

*Layman:* But when you consider them as without division prior to their beginning-of-being, what else can they be than eternity? For before all division there is union. Therefore, prior to all division, they must be united.<sup>110</sup> However, prior to all division union is most simple Eternity, which is God.

I say, in addition: since God cannot be denied to be perfect, and since the perfect is that to which nothing is lacking, the all-encompassing unity of things is present in the perfection that God is. Now, *supreme* perfection requires that the perfection be simple and one, without otherness and diversity; hence, in God all things are something one.<sup>111</sup>

**130** *Philosopher:* This disclosure which you make is clear and gratifying. But state, as well, how it is that [in God all things are present] in a trinity.

*Layman:* This would best be done at another time, in order that it might be stated more clearly. Nevertheless, since I determined to fulfill all your requests as best I can,<sup>112</sup> receive for now the following [view].

You know that in God all things are, from eternity, God. Consider, then, the all-encompassing unity of things [that exist] in the order of time. Since what is impossible does not occur, don't you see that from eternity this unity was *able to be made*?

*Philosopher:* The mind assents.

*Layman:* Therefore, you mentally behold all things in the capability-to-be-made.

*Philosopher:* Correct.

*Layman:* If all things were able to be made, then before they existed there was, necessarily, the power-to-make.<sup>113</sup>

*Philosopher:* So there was.

*Layman:* So prior to the all-encompassing unity-of-things as it ex-

ists temporally, you see all things as present in the power-to-make.

*Philosopher:* I do.

- 131** *Layman:* In order that there come into existence the all-encompassing unity-of-things that, with your mind's eye, you see as present in absolute capability-to-be-made and in absolute power-to-make, wasn't a union of both of these necessary—viz., of the capability-to-be-made and the power-to-make? Otherwise, what was able to be made through the power-of-making would never have been made.

*Philosopher:* Very well put.

*Layman:* Therefore, you behold all things—prior to any temporal existence of the things—in an [absolute] union that proceeds from absolute capability-to-be-made and absolute power-to-make. But prior to all time these three absolutes are Simple Eternity. Hence, you see that all things are present trinely in Simple Eternity.

*Philosopher:* [I see it] very well.

*Layman:* Note, then, that absolute capability-to-be-made and absolute power-to-make and absolute union [of the two] are only one infinitely absolute thing and only one deity. And with respect to order, the capability-to-be-made precedes the power-to-make. For every making presupposes a capability-to-be-made; and the power-to-make has that which it has—viz., its power-to-make—from the capability-to-be-made. And from both of these the union [has that which it has]. Therefore, since order dictates that the capability-to-be-made precede, then to that capability there is ascribed *oneness*, to which preceding appertains. And to the power-to-make there is ascribed *equality*, which presupposes oneness. And the *union* [proceeds] from oneness and equality.<sup>114</sup> Let these points suffice for now regarding this topic, if you will.

- 132** *Philosopher:* Add just one more thing: whether God's understanding is trine and one.<sup>115</sup>

*Layman:* The Eternal Mind understands all things in terms of oneness, equality of oneness, and the union of both. Even in eternity, apart from all succession, how would God understand without *being*, *equality of being*, and the *union of both*—a trinity in oneness? But it is not the case that God premises something in a material mode<sup>116</sup> or understands successively, as do we. Rather, since His understanding is His essence: necessarily, His understanding exists in a trine way.

*Philosopher:* Indicate, additionally, whether in its own way a similar thing occurs with regard to our mind.

**133** *Layman:* I hold it to be certain that (1) all originated things have in them a likeness to their Beginning and, therefore, that (2) in all of them there is found a trinity in a oneness of substance, after the fashion of the Eternal Beginning's true trinity and true oneness-of-substance. Therefore, in all originated things there must be found a capability-to-be-made (which descends from the infinite power of Oneness, or of Absolute Being), a power-to-make (which descends from the power of Absolute Equality), and a union of both (which descends from Absolute Union). Hence, our mind, the image of the Eternal Mind, endeavors to search out in the Eternal Mind—as does a likeness in its true nature—the measure of itself. For our mind (insofar as it is a likeness of the Divine Mind) must be considered to be a lofty power in which the capability-to-be-assimilated and the power-to-assimilate and the union of both are, in essence, one and the same thing. Hence, unless our mind were trinely one, it could not understand anything (even as the Divine Mind also [could] not [unless it were trinely one]). For when the mind moves itself to understand, at first it premises something like a capability-to-be-made, or matter. Thereto it unites something like a power-to-make, or form. And then, by means of something like a uniting of both, it understands. However, when mind grasps in the material way, it makes genera;<sup>117</sup> when it grasps in the formal way, it makes differentiae; when it grasps in a combined way, it makes species or individuals. Likewise, too, when it understands in terms of a proper impression, it makes propria; when it understands in an adventitious way, it makes accidents.

However, mind understands nothing unless after having premised something as a material and after having premised something else as a supervening form, it unites them in the manner of a composite. But by means of this successiveness, with respect to which I said that some things are premised as matter and as form, you see that our mind understands similarly to the Eternal Mind. For the Eternal Mind understands, without successiveness, all things at once and in every manner of understanding. But successiveness derives descendingly from eternity, whose image or likeness it is. Therefore, mind understands successively when it is united to a body, which is subject to succession. We must also carefully consider the following point: viz., that insofar as all things are present in our mind, they are there present also in terms of matter and form and the union [of these two].

**134** *Philosopher:* Your statements are very pleasing. But explain more clearly, I ask, that of which, in concluding, you cautioned [me] to take



note.

*Layman:* Gladly. Consider the nature that is animal. At times, mind grasps it insofar as it is a genus, for at those times mind considers, as if confusedly and unformedly, the nature of animal as being a material. At other times mind considers it insofar as it is signified by the name “animality”; and at those times mind considers it as a form. At still other times mind considers the nature of animal as something consisting of the genus and of the differentiae that come to it; and at those times, insofar as this animal nature is present in the mind, it is said to be present in a union, in such a way that (1) the matter and (2) the form (or, rather, the likeness of the matter and the likeness of the form) and (3) that thing considered as a composite are one and the same concept and are one and the same substance. For example, when I consider (1) animal as the material but consider (2) humanity as the form coming to the material and consider (3) the union of both, I say that the matter, the form, and the union are one substance. Or again, when I consider (1) color as the matter, (2) whiteness as the form coming to it, and (3) the union of both, I say that the matter, the form, and the union of both are one and the same accident. Likewise regarding all the other cases.

**135** Do not be disturbed, either, by the following fact: that since the mind makes the ten most general kinds to be first principles, these most general kinds have no common genus which can be premised as their matter. For mind (1) can consider something as a material and (2) can consider the same thing as a supervening form that comes to such a material and (3) can consider this same thing as a composite. [Such consideration occurs,] for example, when the mind considers the possibility of [something’s] being a substance (or the possibility of its being some other of the ten kinds, for we can say reasonably that matter is the possibility of being a substance or the possibility of being an accident) and considers the same thing as the form that comes to the thing-qua-matter, so that the thing is a composite that is a substance (or that is some other of the ten kinds) in such a way that these three are one-and-the-same most general thing. So in this all-encompassing-unity-of-things that is present in the mind, all things exist both in trinity and in oneness-of-trinity, after the fashion in which they exist in the Eternal Mind.

**136** *Philosopher:* Then, don’t the ten most general kinds have these modes-of-being independently of the mind’s consideration?

*Layman:* As they are present in the mind, not as they are in themselves, the ten most general kinds are understood as form and/or as a composite. (Nevertheless, they are considered to have these modes-of-being in their instances.) Moreover, if you rightly take note, [you will see also that] they cannot exist in themselves, independently of mind, as form and as a composite. You will especially recognize this fact when you note that [only] quality-in-its-instances, not quality as it is in itself, can be called an accident. So too, a species qua present in the mind will perhaps be said not to be able to be considered as a material, since [in the mind] a species and an individual are the same state considered in different ways. We will say, then, that in itself a species is perhaps not understood as a material but [is thus understood insofar as it is subsumed] in [the hierarchy of] its [specific and generic] superiors.

- 137 *Philosopher:* I am satisfied. But I would like for you to show me—in conformity with what was previously stated—how it is that actual existents exist trinely.

*Layman:* That will be easy for you to see if you note that all things, as they exist actually, exist in terms of matter, form, and their union.<sup>118</sup> For example, the following, viz., humanity (i.e., the nature), qua possibility of being a man, is a material. Insofar as it is *humanity*, it is a form. But insofar as it is an individual man it is a composite, and a union, of both [the matter and the form]—in such a way that (1) the possibility-of-being-a-man, (2) the form, and (3) the composite of both are one and the same thing, so that there is one substance of the thing. Likewise, too, the nature designated by the name “white” is a *material* with respect to the possibility of being white. In another mode of existing, this same nature is a *form*. The same nature is also a *composite* of both. [All this occurs] in such a way, however, that—as being that material, that form, and that composite of both—the nature of the quality is [one and] the same.

- 138 *Philosopher:* If existing in matter is existing possibly—and since possible being does not exist—how is it that all actual existents exist in matter?

*Layman:* Don’t be perturbed by that which you may recognize to be understandable without inconsistency. For I am not construing “actually existing” in such a way that actually existing is at odds with existing in matter. Rather, [my statement] is to be understood in such a way that all things as they actually exist (i.e., as they are present

here and in these things) exist in matter. For example, in wax this possibility is the possibility of being a candle; and in copper it is the possibility of being a basin.

*Philosopher:* Please add a word as to why the trinity is referred to as one and indivisible.

*Layman:* In the case of God: because of a uniting oneness, which is true substance. In the case of other things: because of [their respective] oneness-of-nature, which is, as it were, an image of the uniting oneness, which, properly speaking, is substance.

**139** *Philosopher:* When we say that the oneness is one and the equality is one, what's the basis for this statement?

*Layman:* Because of the oneness of substance.

*Philosopher:* But when our theologians—substituting “Oneness” for “Father,” “Equality” for “Son,” and “Union” for “Holy Spirit”—say that the Father is one and that the Son is one, what's the basis for their doing so?

*Layman:* Because of the singularity of person. For there are three singular persons in one divine substance—as I carefully discussed at an earlier time,<sup>119</sup> as best I could.

**140** *Philosopher:* To the end that I may understand what you said a while ago,<sup>120</sup> tell me whether you mean that our mind is composed of these modes of apprehending. In case it *is*, these modes will be the mind's substantial parts, since our mind is a substance. Tell me whether you think this view is right.

*Layman:* Plato<sup>121</sup> claimed that our mind is composed, as you said earlier,<sup>122</sup> of divisible and indivisible substance; he elicited this view from the manner of [the mind's] apprehending. For when the mind understands in the formal mode, it apprehends indivisibly, for a thing that has been understood formally is apprehended indivisibly. This, too, is the reason that we cannot speak truly of *humanities*; but we do speak correctly of *men*, for a thing that has been understood as matter or as a composite is understood divisibly. Now, our mind is a power of apprehending and is a virtual<sup>123</sup> whole that is composed of all the powers of apprehending. Therefore, since each mode [of apprehending] is a substantial part of the mind, each mode is predicated truly of the mind as a whole. But I think we can say [only] with difficulty in what way the modes of apprehending are substantial parts of the power that we call mind. For since the mind understands if not in one way then in another, its powers of understanding—which are its parts—cannot

be accidents. But it is very difficult to know and to say in what way they are *substantial* parts and are the mind itself.

141 *Philosopher*: O very excellent Layman, help me a bit in regard to this difficult point.

*Layman*: In terms of its powers mind consists of a power of understanding,<sup>124</sup> a power of reasoning, a power of imagining, and a power of perceiving—consists of these in such a way that the whole mind is called the power of understanding, the power of reasoning, the power of imagining, and the power of perceiving. Hence, mind consists of these as its “elements”. And in its own way mind attains unto all-in-all. And because [in its own way it attains unto all things] as they exist actually, all things are present in the senses as in a sphere and nondiscretely<sup>125</sup> but are present in reason discretely. Hence, there is a very express likeness between the mode-of-being of all things insofar as they exist actually and insofar as they are present in the mind.<sup>126</sup> For in us the power of perceiving is a power of the mind and is, therefore, *mind*—just as each part of a line is the line. For magnitude, considered in itself and apart from matter, is a suitable illustration of that which you have been seeking. For each part of magnitude is predicated truly of the whole of it. Hence, each part is of the same being as the whole.

*Philosopher*: Since mind is singular, from where does it have these powers of apprehending?

*Layman*: It has them from oneness. For because oneness *unites*, mind has the fact that it understands, in a communal way, something as matter or something as a composite. Likewise, from oneness, which is singularity, mind has the fact that it understands in a singular way. And from oneness, which is immutability, mind has the fact that it understands in a formal way. Hence, mind has from oneness the fact that it understands in a divided way, for division derives descendingly from oneness.

142

#### CHAPTER TWELVE

There is not one [common] intellect in all men. The number of disembodied minds—a number uncountable by us—is known to God.

*Philosopher*: I still want to hear what you think about several things. Certain Peripatetics say that there is one [common] intellect in all men.<sup>127</sup> Others—for example, certain Platonists—say that the

intellectual soul is not singular but that our souls are of the same substance as the world-soul, which they say to be inclusive of all our souls. But they state that our souls differ in number because they have respectively different modes of operation. Nevertheless, they claim that our souls are merged into the world-soul after our death. Tell me what you think in this regard.

**143** *Layman:* As you heard earlier on,<sup>128</sup> I maintain that mind is intellect. However, I do not hold that in all men there is but a single mind. For since mind has a function on account of which it is called soul, it requires a suitable relation with a body that is correspondingly proportioned to it. According as this relation is found in one body, it is not findable in another. Therefore, just as an identity of proportion is not replicable, neither is an identity of mind. Without a corresponding proportion the mind cannot enliven a body. For example, your eye's seeing could not be anyone else's seeing (even if it were separated from your eye and were joined to another's eye), because it could not find in another's eye the proper proportion that it finds in your eye. Similarly, the discriminating that is present in your seeing could not be the discriminating in another's seeing. Likewise, your understanding of that discrimination could not be someone else's understanding of it. Hence, I deem the following not at all to be possible: that a single intellect be present in all men.

But number seems to be removed when the variability of matter is removed (as is evident from what was said earlier);<sup>129</sup> and, as separated from the body, mind's nature is free from all variation of matter. Perhaps for this reason the Platonists said that our souls are merged into a common soul that is inclusive of ours. But I do not think that [this claim about] merging is true. For although when the variation due to matter is removed, we no longer grasp the multiplicity of number, nevertheless there does not thereby cease to exist the plurality-of-things, which is a number in the Divine Mind.<sup>130</sup> Hence, the number of separated substances is, for us, no more a number than not a number. For it is so uncountable by us that it is neither even nor odd, neither large nor small; nor does it agree in any respect with number that is countable by us.

[The situation is] as if someone were to hear a very loud shout which a very large army of men shouted forth but which he did not know that an army had shouted forth. It is evident that, in the shout which he hears, the voice of each man is different and distinct. Nevertheless, the one who hears it has no judgment regarding the number

[of voices]. Therefore, he judges the shout to be one voice, because he has no way of ascertaining the number.

144 Or, again: if in a room many candles are burning and the room is illuminated from them all, the light of each candle remains distinct from the light of the others. We experience this when the candles are successively carried away, because the illumination is reduced, since each removed candle takes with it its illumination. Suppose, then, that the burning candles are extinguished but that the illumination remains in the room; and suppose that someone enters the illuminated room. Although he would see the brightness of the room, he could not at all attain unto the distinctness and the discreteness of the lights. Indeed, he could not ascertain that a plurality of lights was there unless he knew that the lights of the extinguished candles were there. Even if he acquired this knowledge—viz., that a plurality was there—still, he could never distinguish, numerically, one light from another.

You will be able to adduce such examples with regard to the other senses. From the examples you can assure yourself that together with a knowledge of the plurality there would remain for us the impossibility of distinguishing the number [of things]. Natures that are free from all variation of matter, which is somehow understandable by us, are not, with respect to God (who alone is *infinitely* and *unqualifiedly* absolute), so free from all change that they cannot be changed and destroyed by Him (since immortality dwells by nature in God alone<sup>131</sup>). He who takes account of the foregoing fact sees that no creature can escape the number in the Divine Mind.

145

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

That which Plato called the world-soul and  
Aristotle called nature is God, who in all things  
works all things. How He creates mind in us.

*Philosopher:* Enough regarding that topic! What do you say about the world-soul?<sup>132</sup>

*Layman:* Time does not permit all things to be discussed. I think that Plato called world-soul<sup>133</sup> that which Aristotle called nature.<sup>134</sup> But I surmise that neither the world-soul nor nature is anything other than God, who in all things works all things<sup>135</sup> and whom we call the Spirit of all things.

*Philosopher:* Plato said that that soul contains in an indelible way the exemplars of things and that it moves all things. Aristotle said that

nature is astute, moving all things.

- 146 *Layman:* Perhaps Plato meant that the world-soul is as the soul of a servant who knows the mind of his master and is as his master's executing will. And Plato called this knowledge "concepts," or "exemplars". These are not set aside through any forgetfulness; consequently, the execution of divine providence's [will] does not fail. Moreover, that which Plato called the world-soul's knowledge Aristotle claimed to be the astuteness possessed by nature, which astutely executes the command of God. Both Plato and Aristotle ascribed a necessary connection to that soul, or nature, for the following reason: viz., because it is determinately bound to act as absolute necessity commands. But the following [status] is only a manner of understanding: viz., when our mind conceives of God as an Architectonic Art, to which an executing art is subject, so that the divine concept comes into being.

But since, necessarily, all things obey the omnipotent will, the will of God has no need of any other executor. For in omnipotence act-of-will coincides with execution-of-will. [The situation is,] so to speak, like when a glassblower makes a glass vessel.<sup>136</sup> He breathes out his breath, which executes his will. In this breath there is both a word—or concept—and power. For unless the glassblower's power and concept were present in the breath that he breathes forth, such a glass vessel would not arise.

- 147 Conceive, then, of an absolute creative art existing per se, so that the art *is* the artisan, and the mastery *is* the master. Necessarily, this art has in its essence (1) omnipotence, so that nothing can resist it, (2) wisdom, so that it knows what it does, and (3) the union of omnipotence and wisdom, so that what it wills is done. That union, which has within itself wisdom and omnipotence, is spirit qua will, or desire. (For there is not will-for, or desire-for, things impossible or altogether unknown.) By comparison, in the most perfect [divine] will wisdom and omnipotence are present; and because of a certain likeness the [divine] will is called spirit, for without spirit there is no motion. [This latter point is true] to such an extent that we give the name "spirit" to that which causes motion even in the wind and all other things. Now, by means of motion all artisans effect that which they will to. Therefore, the power of the Creative Art (this Art is the absolute and infinite Art, i.e., the Blessed God) works all things by His Spirit, or Will. In His Will is the wisdom of the Son and the omnipo-

tence of the Father, so that God's work is the work of the one indivisible Trinity. The Platonists were ignorant of this Union, Spirit, or Will. They did not recognize that this Spirit is God. Rather, they thought that it was originated from God and was a soul enlivening the world as our intellectual soul enlivens our body. Nor did the Peripatetics recognize this Spirit. They asserted that this power was nature-embedded-in-things, wherefrom come motion and rest—although, in truth, it is the Absolute God, who is forever blessed.

**148** *Orator:* How thrilled I am when I hear so lucid an explanation! But I ask that once again, by means of an illustration, you help us to conceive of the creation of our mind in this body of ours.

*Layman:* You previously heard about this topic.<sup>137</sup> But because a variety of illustrations renders the inexpressible clearer, here is [another one]. You know that our mind is a certain power that bears an image of the aforementioned Divine Art. Hence, whatever things are present most truly in the Absolute Art are present truly in our mind as in an image [of the Divine Art]. Therefore, mind is created by the Creative Art—as if that Art willed to create itself, and because the Infinite Art is unreplicable, there arose its image.<sup>138</sup> ([The situation is] as if a painter wished to reproduce himself by painting, and because he himself is not replicable, there would arise—as he was reproducing himself—his image.)<sup>139</sup>

**149** And because no matter how nearly perfect an image is, if it cannot become more perfect and more conformed to its exemplar, it is never as perfect as any imperfect image whatsoever that has the power to conform itself ever more and more, without limit, to its inaccessible<sup>140</sup> exemplar. For in this respect the image, as best it can, imitates infinity. [The situation is] as if the painter were to make two images [of himself], one of which was dead but seemed actually more like him, and the other of which was less like him but was alive—i.e., was such that when stimulated-to-movement by its object, [viz., himself, the original], it could make itself ever more conformed [to the object]. No one doubts that the second image is the more perfect qua imitating, to a greater degree, the art of the painter. In a similar way, every mind—even ours, too, although it is created as lower than all other minds<sup>141</sup>—has from God the fact that, as best it can be, it is a perfect and living image of the Infinite Art. Therefore, mind is three and one—having power, wisdom, and the union of both in such a way that it is a perfect image of the Art, i.e., in such a way that it can conform itself, when stimulated, ever



more and more to its Exemplar. In this way, even though our mind at the outset of its creation does not have the *actual* reflection of the Creative Art in terms of trinity and oneness, nevertheless it does have the concreated power through which it can make itself, when stimulated, more conformed to the actuality of the Divine Art. Hence, in the oneness of the mind's essence there is power, wisdom, and will. And master and mastery coincide in the essence as in a living image of the Infinite Art—an image which, when stimulated, can make itself always more conformed to Divine Actuality, while the preciseness of the Infinite Art remains always inaccessible.<sup>142</sup>

**150** *Orator:* Wonderfully and very clearly put. But I ask how mind is infused when it is created.

*Layman:* You have heard elsewhere about this point.<sup>143</sup> Receive now, once again, by means of another illustration, this same point.

Taking a [wine] glass and letting it hang down, [with its stem] between his thumb and his [fore]finger, the Layman struck the glass and it received a sound. And after the sound continued a bit, the glass broke, and the sound stopped. And the Layman said: “In the hanging glass a certain power arose as a result of my power. The former power moved the glass; from this movement the sound arose. But when the proportion of the glass was ruptured—the proportion in which the sound and, consequently, the motion were present—the motion stopped being there. And when the motion stopped, so too did the sound. But suppose that that power, because it was not dependent on the glass, were on that account not to have ceased but to have continued existing without the glass. In that case, you would have an illustration of how in us there is created that power which causes motion and harmony and which stops causing them as a result of the disruption of the proportion, although the power does not on this account cease to be. It is as if I were to teach you, on a given cithara, the art of cithara playing. Since the art does not depend on the given cithara, although this art was taught to you on [that] cithara: if the cithara were to break apart, the art of cithara playing would not for this reason be disrupted, even if there were not findable in our world any cithara that is suitable for you.”

**151**

#### CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Mind is said to descend from the Milky Way, down past the planets, to the body—and to return. On the indelible concepts of disembodied spirits and on our delible concepts.

*Philosopher:* You adduce most fitting and most beautiful illustrations for uncommon matters, far removed from the senses. Now because sunset is approaching, which does not permit us to linger longer, please tell me what the philosophers mean who say that souls descend from the Milky Way, down past the planets, to bodies—and return, by the same route, to the Milky Way. And why does Aristotle, when he wants to make a point about our soul's power, begin from reason—saying that the soul ascends from reason to abstract learning, and from abstract learning to intellectibility? By contrast, Plato speaks in the opposite way, claiming that intellectibility is basic and that when it degenerates, it becomes abstract learning or intellect—and that intellect, in degenerating, becomes reason.<sup>144</sup>

**152** *Layman:* I do not know their writings,<sup>145</sup> but perhaps [those] first-mentioned philosophers, who spoke of a descent and an ascent of souls, wanted to say the same thing as did Plato and Aristotle. For Plato looked unto the Creator's image, which is especially present in the intellectibility, in which mind conforms itself to the Divine Simplicity. The intellectibility he took to be basic and to be the mind's substance, which he claimed to continue on after [bodily] death. In the order of nature the intellectibility precedes the intellect. But the intellectibility degenerates into intellect when it draws back from the Divine Simplicity (in which all things are one thing) and wants to view all things in themselves as each of them has its own being, distinct from that of others. Thereafter, mind degenerates still more when by the operation of reason it grasps things not in themselves but according as a form (1) is present in matter, which is variable, and (2) cannot in that state preserve its true nature but sinks into being an image.

**153** However, Aristotle, who considered all things insofar as they are captured by a name (these names are imposed by the operation of reason), makes reason basic. And, perhaps, he means that reason ascends unto intellect by way of abstract learning that comes through names, and thereafter ascends most loftily unto intellectibility. Hence, he takes reason to be basic to the ascent of the intellect,<sup>146</sup> whereas Plato takes intellectibility to be basic to the descent of the intellect. Thus, between Plato and Aristotle there seems to be no difference except in the manner of their consideration.

*Philosopher:* Let it be so. Since all philosophers maintain that all understanding is of substance and accident, tell me how this claim is true of God and of prime matter.

*Layman:* Our understanding of God is a modification of our understanding of [the signification of] the name “being,” for God is being, understood nonexistantly—i.e., understood as not able to be participated in.<sup>147</sup> And this understanding is the same as the one that is had about substance and accident; but [it is an understanding that is] considered in another manner, i.e., modifiedly. Hence, our understanding of God is inclusive of all our understandings of substance and accident but is simple and singular.

Now, our understanding of prime matter is a modification of the understanding that we have of a material object. For if you understand a material object immaterially (i.e., apart from all corporeal forms), then you understand the same thing that is signified by “material object”; but [you understand it as considered] in a different manner, because [you understand it] immaterially. Without doubt, this is the understanding of [prime] matter.

**154** *Philosopher:* Do you think that the heavenly minds were created according to intellectual gradations<sup>148</sup> and that they have indelible concepts?

*Layman:* I think that some angels are intellectible [beings]; i.e., they are of the supreme rank. Others are intelligential [beings]; i.e., they are of the second rank. Others are rational [beings], i.e., of the third rank. And I think that in each rank there are likewise just that many ranks, so that in this way there are nine gradations, or choirs. And I am of the opinion that in this way *our* minds are below the initial gradation of such spirits but are above the entire gradation of the corporeal natures. Our minds are a union of the all-encompassing unity of beings, so that they are the terminal perfection of [the hierarchy of] lower natures and the beginning of the perfection of [the hierarchy of] higher natures. I am also of the opinion that the thoughts of the blessed spirits existing in tranquility apart from the bodily state, have invariable concepts, undeletable by forgetfulness—invariable and undeletable because of the presence of truth, which offers itself continuously as an object. And this state is the reward for [those] spirits who have merited the enjoyment of the Exemplar of things.<sup>149</sup>

**155** But our minds, because of their deformity, frequently forget things that they have known; they have a permanent concreated aptitude<sup>150</sup> for relearning them. Although without a body our minds cannot be stimulated unto intellectual progress, nevertheless [in the body] they lose concepts on account of neglect, inattention to the object, a being pulled

toward various and sundry things, and physical vexations. Concepts that we acquire here in this variable and unstable world and in accordance with the conditions of the variable world are not made permanent. They are like the concepts of scholars and students who are beginning to make progress but have not yet achieved the mastery. But when the mind proceeds from [this] variable world to the invariable world, the concepts acquired here are likewise transferred to an invariable mastery.<sup>151</sup> For when particular concepts pass over unto the perfect mastery, then in the universal mastery these concepts that previously were partly fluid and unstable cease to be variable. Thus, in this world we are learners; in the next world we are master-teachers.

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## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Our mind is immortal and incorruptible.

*Philosopher:* There now remains for you to say what you think about the immortality of our mind, so that I, having become more informed about mind (as much as was possible for today), may rejoice in having made progress in many respects.

*Layman:* Those who make intellectibility the basis of the intellect's descent assert that mind does not at all depend upon body. Those who make reason the basis of the intellect's ascent, and who make intellectibility its end, admit that mind does not at all perish with the body. As for me, I do not at all doubt that those who have a taste for wisdom cannot deny the mind's immortality—just as I elsewhere<sup>152</sup> made known to the Orator what I thought about this. Thus, if someone takes note of the fact (1) that the mind's viewing attains unto what is invariable and (2) that forms are freed from variability by the mind and are repositied in the invariable domain of necessary connection,<sup>153</sup> he cannot doubt that the mind's nature is free from all variability. For mind draws unto itself that which it frees from variability. For example, the invariable truth of geometrical figures is found not in [patterned] floors but in the mind.<sup>154</sup> Now, when the soul inquires by way of the [sense] organs, that which it finds is variable; when it inquires by way of itself [alone],<sup>155</sup> that which it finds is stable, clear, lucid, and fixed. Therefore, [mind] is not of the nature of variable things, which it attains unto by means of the senses; rather, it is of the nature of invariable things, which it finds within itself.

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Likewise, the exhibiting of the mind's immortality can suitably be pursued from a consideration of number. For since mind is a liv-

ing number, i.e., a number that numbers, and since every number is, in itself, incorruptible (even though number seems variable when it is considered in matter, which is variable), our mind's number cannot be conceived to be corruptible. How, then, could the author of number [viz., mind,] seem to be corruptible? Moreover, no number can deplete the mind's power of numbering. Hence, since the motion of the heavens is numbered by the mind, and since time is the measure of motion,<sup>156</sup> time will not exhaust the mind's power. Rather, the mind's power will continue on as the limit, measure, and determination of all things measurable. The instruments for the motions of the heavens— instruments produced by the human mind—attest to its not being the case that motion measures mind rather than mind's measuring motion. Hence, mind seems to enfold by its intellective operation all movement of succession, [and] mind brings forth from itself rational operations, [or rational movement]. Thus, mind is the form of moving. Hence, if [when] anything is dissolved, the dissolution occurs by means of motion, then how could the form of moving be dissolved through motion? Since mind is an intellectual life that moves itself<sup>157</sup>—i.e., is a life that gives rise to the life which is its understanding—how would it fail to be always alive? How could self-moving motion cease? For mind has life conjoined to it; through this life it is always alive. (By way of illustration: a sphere is always round, by virtue of the circle that is conjoined to it.) If mind's composition is as the composition of number, which is composed of itself, how would mind be dissolvable into not-mind?

**158** Likewise, if mind is a coincidence of oneness and otherness, as is number,<sup>158</sup> then how would it be divisible, since in it the divisibility coincides with the indivisible oneness? If mind enfolds the same and the different (since it understands both dividedly and unitively), how will it be destroyed? If number is a mode of the mind's understanding, and if in mind's numbering unfolding coincides with enfolding, then how will mind perish? For a power that enfolds while unfolding cannot become lesser. But it is evident that mind does this [viz., enfolds and unfolds in numbering]. For he who numbers unfolds the power of oneness and enfolds number into oneness. For example, the number ten is a oneness that has been enfolded from ten [replicated units].<sup>159</sup> Thus, he who numbers unfolds and enfolds. Mind is an *image* of Eternity, but time is an *unfolding* of Eternity. However, an unfolding of Enfolding Eternity is always lesser than is an image of Enfolding Eternity.<sup>160</sup>

If someone takes note of the mind's concreated power-of-judgment, through which the mind judges about all rational considerations, and if he notes that rational considerations are from mind, then he recognizes that no reasoning attains unto the measurements of the mind. Therefore, our mind remains unmeasurable by, unboundable by, and undelimitable by any reasoning. Only the Uncreated [Divine] Mind measures, delimits, and bounds our mind—even as Truth measures, delimits, and bounds its own living image, created from Truth, in Truth, and through Truth. How could an image that is the reflection of the Incorruptible Truth perish, unless Truth were to abolish the communicated reflection? Therefore, just as it is impossible that Infinite Truth (since it is Absolute Goodness) should withdraw its communicated reflection, so it is impossible that its image (which is nothing but its communicated reflection) should ever perish. (By way of illustration: after day begins-to-be because of the sun's shining, day will never cease as long as the sun continues to shine.)

159 Religion—which is innate [to us] and which has brought these countless people to Rome this year and has led you, a philosopher, unto intense wonderment,<sup>161</sup> and which has always been manifest in the world in a diversity of modes—attests that immortality-of-mind is naturally bestowed upon us. Thus, the immortality of our mind is known to us from the common, undisputed affirmation of all men—just as the humanity of our nature [is so known]. For we do not have more assured knowledge that we are human beings than we have that we possess immortal minds,<sup>162</sup> since the knowledge of both is the common affirmation of all men.

160 Receive favorably from a layman the foregoing things expressed so cursorily. But if they are not such [teachings] as you expected to hear as a result of the Orator's promise, nevertheless some of them are such that they will perhaps be able to afford you some kind of assistance unto higher matters.

*Orator:* I have been present at this reverent and, for me, very rewarding discussion. I have greatly admired your mind as it was discoursing profoundly on the topic of mind. And now, by undisputed experience, I know it to be most certain that mind is a power that measures all things. I thank you, O excellent Layman, both on my behalf and on behalf of this foreign philosopher whom I brought [with me] and who, I hope, will depart encouraged.

*Philosopher:* I think that I have never until now spent a happier day than this one. I do not know what will be the upshot. I give un-

ceasing thanks to you, O Orator, and to you, O Layman, a man very speculative. And I pray that our minds, stimulated with very great desire by this lengthy discussion, will be happily brought unto the enjoyment of the Eternal Mind. Amen.

## 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)].
- 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* [Contained in Vol. V (edited by Renate Steiger and Ludwig Baur) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1983). Replaces Baur's edition of 1937.]
- 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-Grünwald 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 a Appraisal of De Li Non Aliud* (Minneapolis: Banning, 3rd ed. 1987)].
- PL* *Patrologia Latina*, edited by J.-P. Migne. Series published in Paris.
- SCG* Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* [in Vol. II (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. (c) In the Latin text brackets indicate that a word or phrase found in the mss. should be deleted.
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*; *Sermones*; *De Coniecturis*; *De Deo Abscondito*; *De Quaerendo Deum*; *De Filiatione Dei*; *De Dato Patris Luminum*; *Coniectura de Ultimis Diebus*; *De Genesi*; *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*; *De Pace Fidei*; *De Beryllo* (1988 edition); *Cribratio Alkorani*; *De Principio*; *De Deo Unitrino Principio*; *De Theologicis Complementis*; *De Venatione Sapientiae*; *De Apice Theoriae*.
  - 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: *Idiotae de Sapientia, de Mente, de Staticis Experimentis* (1996); *De Visione Dei* (1988); *De Possess* (1986); *De Li Non Aliud* (1987); *Compendium* (1996). Margin numbers correspond to the margin numbers in the Heidelberg Academy editions; line numbers and some paragraph-breaks differ.
  - D. Codex Cusanus Latinus 219: *De Ludo Globi*.
  - E. Paris edition of the *Opera Omnia Cusani* (1514): *De Aequalitate*.

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 inside margins of the present edition of the Latin text of the *Idiotae* and the *Compendium* correspond to the folios in Codex Cusanus Latinus 218 (*Idiotae*) or 219 (*Compendium*).
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. The Appendix serves as a supplement to the respective bibliographies found in the present book and in four other books: (J. Hopkins) *A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa* (1986<sup>3</sup>); *Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance* (1985<sup>2</sup>); *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism* (1988<sup>2</sup>); *Nicholas of Cusa's De Pace Fidei and Cribratio Alkorani* (1994<sup>2</sup>).

7. 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). Not all of the sermons cited have as yet been published in the *Opera Omnia* series.

8. In the notes to the Latin texts no mention is made of trivial marginalia by later hands (such as 'nota quod' on folio 113<sup>r</sup>, Codex Cusanus 218).

9. The present edition of the Latin texts follows, principally but not uncritically, Codices Cusani 218 and 219. At places, it differs significantly from the Heidelberg Academy editions. Several examples from *De Mente* will illustrate this fact:

<u>Heidelberg Acad. Text (1983)</u>	<u>Present text</u>
<i>DM</i> 7 (100:13): spiritui	(100:16-17): spiritus
<i>DM</i> 12 (144:15): inhabitante	(144:19): inhabitantem
<i>DM</i> 13 (148:6): habens	(148:7): habentem
<i>DM</i> 13 (149:5): imaginis	(149:6): imago

The punctuation of the present edition will also, at times, reflect an understanding that differs from the understanding implicit in the punctuation found in the Heidelberg Academy texts.

10. Codex Monacensis Latinus 14213 (Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Germany) and Codex Magdeburgensis Latinus 166 (presently in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin) are described in *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*, Vol. IV (Hamburg: Meiner, 1959).

### NOTES TO *IDIOTA DE MENTE*

1. The jubilee year, 1450, was proclaimed by Pope Nicholas V. The ms. of *De Mente* was completed by Cusanus on August 23, 1450 at the Camadolese monastery in Val di Castro, near Fabriano, Italy.

2. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 2 (982<sup>b</sup>12).

3. In Chap. 15 Nicholas presents considerations in favor of the soul's immortality.

4. Nicholas alludes to the well-known inscription on the ancient Temple of Apollo, at Delphi: "Know thyself."

5. Nicholas makes his discussant a Peripatetic rather than a Platonist. And, indeed, Nicholas's own epistemology is cognate with the former school more than with the latter.

6. "MENS, AEDES (templum, Varro): a temple on the Capitol, probably within the area Capitolina, vowed by the praetor, T. Otacilius Crassus, in 217 B.C. after the defeat at Lake Trasimene, ... at the same time with the temple of Venus Erucina. In 215 both temples were dedicated by duoviri appointed for the purpose, that of Venus

by Fabius Maximus, and that of Mens by Otacilius .... The temple of Mens seems to have been restored by M. Aemilius Scaurus, consul in 115 B.C., either at that time ... or after his campaign against the Cimbri in 107 .... The day of dedication was 8th June ....” Samuel B. Platner, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 339.

7. Hildegund Menzel-Rogner, in her notes to Martin Honecker’s German translation of *Idiota De Mente*, refers us to *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei* 1888, Vol. IV, Part 5, p. 745, which mentions an inscription of Augustus that alludes to the Temple of Eternity. Also see *DI I*, 25 (84:1) and *De Sapientia II* (28:5-6), where the Temple of Eternity is also mentioned.

8. The Infinite Mind is God. As for the derivation of “mens” from “mensurare,” see Aquinas, *De Veritate* 10.1.reply.

9. *DI I*, 1 (4). *Ap.* 28:8-17. See, *supra*, n. 79 of Notes to the Introduction.

10. According to Nicholas all things other than God admit of comparative relation and of degrees of perfection. Just as their quiddities cannot be known precisely by us, so neither can their *most suitable* respective name—i.e., their *true* name, or *natural* name, or *precise* name, as Nicholas goes on to say. This natural name accords with a thing’s essential form. Both the eternal natural name and the essential form are known precisely by God alone. See section 7c of the present work’s Introduction.

11. Cf. *DM 2* (64:1-10). The true name is said to be united to the form.

12. *De Genesi 4* (172:6-9). *VS 33* (98:1-5).

13. Literally: “Nevertheless, I do not believe that any name other than a fitting one is imposed ....” Cf. *Compendium 3* (6).

14. The one word “Measure” translates “*metrum, mensuram*” at 61:13.

15. Through the Layman, Nicholas endorses this Thomistic-Aristotelian dictum. Cf. *Compendium 4* (9:6-7). *DVD 24* (107:14-15).

16. That is, form is not present as it truly is in itself.

17. Nicholas follows Anselm and certain other earlier thinkers in regarding concepts of material objects as mental likenesses of these objects. (See Chap. 10 of St. Anselm’s *Monologion*.) However, unlike Anselm, Nicholas does not consider a concept to be a natural name. See section 7c of the present work’s Introduction.

18. That is, if there were no sensible objects of a given kind, then there could no longer rightly be said to be a mental likeness of those objects. Similarly, a portrait of a cremated man is not still said (strictly speaking) to be his likeness. Moreover, no one, by viewing him, could any longer form a mental likeness of him.

19. That is, such a person must maintain that a thing is nothing more than what the name signifies it to be. Nicholas is here ascribing this view to the Aristotelians of his own day and earlier. Cf. *DM 14* (153:1-2).

20. That is, his endeavor is to clarify the signification of the name.

21. “... those who admit ...”: viz., certain Platonists whose works were known to Nicholas.

22. That is, all the sects of Aristotelians and Platonists.

23. *DI I*, 14 (37:6-7). *De Sapientia II* (38:23-26).

24. Nicholas is alluding to imposed names, not natural names. In a wider context, see *DI I*, 24-25. *DP 11*.

25. *DI I*, 24 (75:1-5): “Hence, Hermes Trismegistus rightly says: ‘Since God is the totality of things, no name is proper to Him; for either He would have to be called

by every name or else all things would have to be called by His name'; for in His simplicity He enfolds the totality of things." See Hermes Trismegistus, *Corpus Hermeticum* V, 10 [Vol. I, p. 64 of *Corpus Hermeticum*, text edited by A. D. Nock; translation into French by A.-J. Festugière (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1945)]. See also *Asclepius* 20 [Vol. II, *Corpus Hermeticum*, *ibid.*, pp. 320-321].

26. Nicholas is here calling us to the realization that in God opposites coincide, for God is undifferentiated being itself. *Ap.* 15. *DVD* 11 (47:16-20). *DP* 74:17. Kurt Flasch, *Die Metaphysik des Einen bei Nikolaus von Kues*. Leiden: Brill, 1973.

27. *DI* I, 16 (45:16-18).

28. *DM* 10 (127:1-16). Cf. *DP* 38:5-15. These themes dimly prefigure corresponding themes in nineteenth-century German idealism.

29. *De Filiatione Dei* 5 (83).

30. An assimilation is a likeness; the mind assimilates itself to all things by producing mental likenesses (images, concepts) of them. In *De Genesi* 4 (165:8-9) Nicholas interchanges "*assimilatio*" with "*similitudo*". Also cf. *De Genesi* 3 (164:12) with *De Genesi* 4 (165:4). See also *De Filiatione Dei* 6 (87). Note also Aquinas, *SCG* I.65.9: "Cognitio autem omnis fit per assimilationem cognoscentis et cogniti. In hoc tamen differt quod assimilatio in cognitione humana fit per actionem rerum sensibilium in vires cognoscitivas humanas; in cognitione autem dei est e converso per actionem formae intellectus divini in res cognitatas." *Index Thomisticus*, Vol. II, punctuation modified by me.

31. This passage and other passages such as *DM* 2 (64:12-13) and 11 (141:9-11) attest that Nicholas is an epistemological realist. See n. 17 above. Also see p. 292 of my *Miscellany on Nicholas of Cusa* (Minneapolis: Banning Press, 1994).

32. *DI* II, 3. *DVD* 11 (47:5-20).

33. *DI* I, 9 (24: 3-6). *CA* II, 7 (104-105). *De Sapientia* I (22:18).

34. Compare what Nicholas says about the mind's power with what he says about the power of a seed. *DVD* 7 (24).

35. More literally and clumsily: "For in its power is enfolded the assimilative power that is present in the enfolding that belongs to a point."

36. Aristotle, *De Anima* II, 12 (424<sup>a</sup>19).

37. Plato, *Meno* 85D-86B.

38. That is, initially the mind has no innate concepts or notions. But see n. 40 of Notes to the *Compendium*.

39. Plato, *Theaetetus* 186B.

40. Nicholas here uses "intellect" ("*intellectus*") in a general way, as a substitute for "mind". He does not mean to deny that *reason (ratio)*—and to affirm that *intellect-qua-distinct-from-reason*—discriminates in perception. Cf. *De Mente* 2 (64:10-13). In *De Quaerendo Deum* he employs "*intellectus*" in this same twofold way: viz., in a generic way at 1 (22:1) and at 3 (38:14-15) as referring to a mental operation contrasted with reason.

41. "... more similar": i.e., more *symbolically* similar.

42. Here the Layman seems to distinguish between intellectual power (*vis intellectualis*) and intellectible power, or higher intellectual power (*vis intellectibilis*). Yet, at *DM* 11 (141:3-4) this distinction is not retained. The explanation for this difference is found at *DM* 8 (111:13-15): what certain others call *intellectibilitas* Nicholas calls *intellectus*; and what they call *intellectus* he calls *disciplina* (abstract learning).

(See n. 78 and n. 80 below.) In the passage marked by the present note, therefore, Nicholas is not insisting upon a distinction between *vis intellectualis* and *vis intellectibilis*. Rather, he is indicating that mind includes the power that others have termed *intellectibilis*.

43. *De Genesi* 4 (171).

44. Ordinarily, a layman, who is an autodidact, would not know Latin, the language of most scholarly manuscripts in Nicholas's day. Moreover, in the Latin manuscripts, not all individual words are properly separated by a word space. (Thus, at times, "*adeo*" is confusable with "*a deo*".) Moreover, the letters "t" and "c" (as in "*sic*" or "*sit*") may not be easily distinguishable. Or the combinations "im," "mi" "ini" may not be differentiable without a sense of what the entire word is suppose to be. (Thus, "*in eo*", which is often written without an intervening space, may be confused for "*meo*".) A layman, who is not necessarily illiterate, might have learned how to expand the word-abbreviations used in Latin manuscripts and might have been taught how to pronounce Latin words—without, however, having learned to understand the meaning of Latin sentences.

45. This last sentence in the title is misplaced and goes with the material at the beginning of Chap. 7. The view that mind "is self-moving number" is a view that Aristotle called most unreasonable. *De Anima* I, 4 (408<sup>b</sup>32-33). [Cf. *DM* 11 (133:9), where mind is said to move itself to understand.] See Aquinas's commentary on *De Anima*, Book I, Lectio XI (*Sancti Thomae Aquinatis ... Opera Omnia*, Vol. XX (New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1949), pp. 31-33.

46. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 5 985<sup>b</sup>23ff. (Much of what we know about the Pythagoreans and Pythagoras comes from Aristotle.)

47. Nicholas holds that the human mind (1) through recursive definition constructs numbers and (2) through abstraction and idealization constructs geometrical configurations. These numerical relationships are believed by him to have ontological validity, inasmuch as they are "images" of the Exemplar-number in accordance with which the Divine Mind created the world. See *DI* I, 11 (32:1-6).

48. *De Coniecturis* I, 2 (8:8 - 9:9). *VS* 23 (69:9-12). According to Aristotle, the Pythagoreans regarded the unit as both even and odd [Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 5 (985<sup>b</sup>23ff.)]. Since all numbers derive from the unit, they are derived from the even and the odd. See also Boethius, *De Institutione Arithmetica* I, 2 (*PL* 63:1083) [G. Friedlein edition (Leipzig: Teubner, 1867), p. 13]. Michael Masi, *Boethian Number Theory: A Translation of the De Institutione Arithmetica* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1983), p. 76.

49. The relation between the side of a square and the square's diagonal is expressible by an irrational number. Similarly, on the Pythagorean harmonic scale, twice a semitone does not give a full tone, since the latter is divided into two unequal "halves". Doubling either half will yield a number either greater than or lesser than the full tone. The relation of either half to the whole will be an irrational number. Thus, if the numerical proportion for a full tone is 9:8, and if the proportion for either semitone is 256:243, then the relation of 256/243 to 9/8 will be an irrational number. For further discussion see n. 126 of Notes to *De Theologicis Complementis* in my *Nicholas of Cusa: Metaphysical Speculations [Volume One]*. By "half of a double [proportion]" Nicholas is referring to the square root of two.

*De Coniecturis* II, 1 (76:11-18). *De Coniecturis* II, 2 (83). *DP* 42. Boethius, *De*

*Musica* I, 16-19 and II, 28-31 [G. Friedlein edition (Leipzig: Teubner, 1867), pp. 201-205 and 260-267].

50. The human mind through discrimination and perspective perceives the world as a collection of discrete objects. For example, a perceiver may view a forest as one thing or as many things, viz., trees. Similarly, a tree may be viewed as one thing or as many things, viz., branches, leaves, and a trunk. These latter may be further discriminated in terms of size, color, etc. Nonetheless, plurality really characterizes the world, because even when no human mind is discriminating the world into different objects, the Divine Mind is so doing. Some interpreters have wanted to see in this theme of Nicholas's a foreshadowing of the doctrine that the eighteenth-century philosopher George Berkeley extended to cover existence—viz., the doctrine that *esse est percipi aut percipere*.

51. See, above, n. 207 of Notes to the Introduction.

52. *DI* II, 3 (108:8-15). *DM* 12 (143:10-12). Cf. Aquinas, *SCG* I.54.7: "But since the proper form of one thing is distinguished from that of another thing, and since distinction is the source of plurality, we must consider there to be, in the Divine Intellect, a certain distinction and plurality of understood forms, in accordance with the fact that that which is present in the Divine Intellect is the proper form of different things. Hence, since the [distinction and plurality] obtain in accordance with the fact that God understands the proper relation-of-assimilation that each creature has to Him, it holds true that the forms of things in the Divine Intellect are many and distinct only with respect to the fact that God knows that things are able to be like Him in many different ways." Cusa modifies Thomas's view by considering the resemblance as symbolical.

53. Giovanni Santinello. *Il pensiero di Nicolò Cusano nella sua prospettiva estetica*. Padua: Liviana, 1958.

54. Some interpreters have wanted to see in this statement, and in others like it, a prefiguring of Kant. But see n. 47 above. Note also *De Coniecturis* I, 2 (7:4-5): "Nec est aliud numerus quam ratio explicata."

55. According to Nicholas God is not the immediate being of things but rather is the ultimate Ground-of-being (*ratio essendi*) of each finite thing's essential being. See "Nicholas of Cusa and John Wenck's Twentieth-Century Counterparts," in my *Miscellany on Nicholas of Cusa*.

56. *DI* I, 7 (21) - I, 8 (22).

57. *DI* I, 17 (48:4-5). Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* 4 (*Dionysiaca* I, 274). Cf. *NA* 10 (37:1-24).

58. As number is the exemplar of all the human mind's *concepts*, so the divine number is the Exemplar of all *quiddities*.

59. The word "these" refers to understanding commonly and singularly, or understanding in accordance with sameness and difference.

60. See n. 30 and n. 31 above.

61. Though Codex Cusanus 218, as well as the Heidelberg Academy edition of *De Mente*, has "*spiritu*" in this passage, the correct sense (as the Paris edition recognizes) is "*spiritus*," a genitive.

62. That is, in the case of an artisan, mind is not applied from within. This point is reinforced by the illustration of the wax.

63. By "corporeal spirits" Nicholas is here referring to arterial spirits.

64. "... are not the true [formal natures]": i.e., are not the true natures of the things.

65. "... are subject to uncertainty": i.e., are surmising or conjectural.

66. Forms as they exist in matter are said by Nicholas to be images of their corresponding specific forms insofar as these latter are free of matter.

67. "... apart from any instrumental [corporeal] spirit": i.e., without any arterial spirit.

68. *DP* 60. N.B. Here in *DM* 7 (103-104) Nicholas is focusing on mathematical concepts—not empirical ones.

69. Abstract forms are forms free from union with matter. In the present passage, however, Nicholas is discussing abstract forms that are mathematical. Note *De Beryllo* 56:16-17 (chap. 33): "... *mathematicalia, quae a sensibilibus abstrahuntur* ..." For a brief explication of *DM* 7 (102-106) see, above, n. 201 of Notes to the Introduction. Regarding Nicholas's views on mathematics cf. the following: (1) Theo van Velthoven, *Gottesschau und menschliche Kreativität. Studien zur Erkenntnislehre des Nikolaus von Kues* (Leiden: Brill, 1977). (2) Fritz Nagel, *Nicolaus Cusanus und die Entstehung der exakten Wissenschaften* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1984). (3) Johannes Peters, "Grenze und Überstieg in der Philosophie des Nicolaus von Cues," pp. 91-215 in Hedwig Conrad-Martius *et al.*, editors. *Symposion. Jahrbuch für Philosophie*. (Munich: Alber, 1955 (Vol. 4)). (4) Vittorio Hösle, "Platonism and Anti-Platonism in Nicholas of Cusa's Philosophy of Mathematics," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* [New School for Social Research], 13 (1990), 79-112. (5) Hermann Löb, *Die Bedeutung der Mathematik für die Erkenntnislehre des Nikolaus von Kues* (Berlin: Ebering, 1907).

70. *De Filiatione Dei* 3 (68-70).

71. *De Filiatione Dei* 3 (70).

72. *DM* 7 (97:10-14).

73. Regarding the five predicables, see n. 117 below.

74. Cf. Anselm of Canterbury's *Reply to Gaunilo* 4 (Vol. I of F. S. Schmitt's critical edition *Sancti Anselmi Opera Omnia*). See also *Gaunilo pro Insipiente* 7 (*loc. cit.*).

75. "Grasping in the material mode" and "grasping in the formal mode" are explained in *DM* 11 (133:9-29).

76. As used here, "*passio*" has a meaning different from its meaning in *DVD* 6 (20). There it means *passion*, or *emotion*; here it is related to the mind's receptivity, or passivity, in an approximate Thomistic-Aristotelian sense. Cf. the use of "*passio*" in *De Beryllo* 71:3 (Chap. 39).

77. The Philosopher is making a fallacious inference from the previous two premises: (1) A conception is an understanding, and (2) an impression is an understanding. From these premises there does not follow (3a) that a conception is an impression or (3b) that an impression is a conception.

78. Nicholas here explains what *disciplina* (qua mental power) is: viz., the power to consider the forms-of-things apart from matter. Oftentimes this mental viewing of forms apart from matter has to do with geometrical forms, so that *disciplina* is closely associated with mathematical knowledge. In this context Nicholas uses "*disciplina*" and "*doctrina*" interchangeably. [See *DM* 8 (111:9).] Both may be translated either as *abstract learning* or as *abstract knowledge*. In *DP* 63 Nicholas indicates that "*mathesis*" is substitutable for "*disciplina*".

Note also *DM* 10 (126:14 & 17-18). *DM* 10 (127:23). *DM* 14 (153:3-4).

Since *disciplina* deals with abstracted forms and since forms are proportions, *disciplina* seems to be either an extended power of *ratio* (reason) or a power in between reason (*ratio*) and intellect (*intellectus sive intelligentia*). On the distinction between *ratio* and *intellectus*, see *De Coniecturis* I, 10 (52:2-6). Cf. *Ap.* 15 and *Ap.* 28:15-17 and *Ap.* 16:5-6. Note *De Coniecturis* I, 2 (7:4-5): “Nec est aliud numerus quam ratio explicata.”

79. The English “abstract learning” translates “*disciplina et doctrina*.” See n. 78 above.

80. Nicholas’s terminology in *De Mente* is as follows: “*ratio*” (reason); “*disciplina*,” or “*doctrina*” (abstract learning=abstract knowledge); “*intellectus*,” or “*intelligentia*” (intellect); “*intellectibilitas*” (intellectibility, or higher intellectual power). In *DP* 63:6 *intellectibilitas* is referred to as *intellectualitas*. Nicholas’s terminology is very fluid, as evidenced by *DM* 8 (111:13-17). Regarding Nicholas’s fluctuating descriptions of *ratio* and *intellectus*, see Hermann Schnarr, *Modi Essendi. Interpretationen zu den Schriften De docta ignorantia, De coniecturis und De venatione sapientiae von Nikolaus von Kues* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1973).

81. Cf. *De Quaerendo Deum* 2.

82. *Ap.* 14:14-23.

83. Earlier, at *DM* 7 (100:5-10), Nicholas attributed this demarcation to reason. The view expressed in the passage marked by the present note is that of the physicists (or philosophers of nature) of Nicholas’s day and is not necessarily Nicholas’s view.

84. *DM* 7 (103).

85. “... our Philosopher”: “*hic sapientiae amator*” (literally, “this lover of wisdom”).

86. *DM* 1 (57).

87. “...without solidity”: i.e., without thickness. Boethius, *De Institutione Arithmetica* II, 4 [*PL* 63:1120C = G. Friedlein edition (Leipzig: Teubner, 1867), p. 88 = Michael Mansi, *Boethian Number Theory: A Translation of the De Institutione Arithmetica* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1983), pp. 129-130].

88. “... only solidity”: i.e., only three dimensional figures.

89. Boethius, *De Institutione Arithmetica* II, 4 [*PL* 63:1120A = G. Friedlein edition, *op. cit.*, p. 87 = Michael Masi, *Boethian Number Theory, op. cit.*, p. 129].

90. *DI* II, 3 (105:24-25).

91. Boethius, *De Institutione Arithmetica* II, 4 [*PL* 63: 1121AB = G. Friedlein edition, *op. cit.*, p. 89 = Michael Masi, *Boethian Number Theory, op. cit.*, p. 130]. Note Hans G. Senger’s “Metaphysischer Atomismus. Zur Transformation eines Denkmodells durch Nikolaus von Kues,” pp. 311-329 (Vol. I) in Johannes Helmrath and Heribert Müller, editors, *Studien zum 15. Jahrhundert*. [Festschrift for Erich Meuthen]. Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994 (2 vols.).

See section 4.2 on pp. 46 - 49 of my *Nicholas of Cusa: Metaphysical Speculations: Volume Two* (Minneapolis: Banning, 2000).

92. *DI* II, 12 (172:6-9). Wisdom 11:21.

93. *DM* 9 (118:15-21). *Ap.* 16:24 - 17:2.

94. Cf. *DI* II, 3 (105:14-15) with *DI* II, 3 (105:24-25).

95. *DI* II, 3 (106).



96. “Movement” and “motion” (“*motus*”) signify change. Some change is also locomotion.
97. *DM* 3 (72). *DM* 4 (74-76).
98. Over-eager interpreters will, perhaps, wrongly see in this passage a foreshadowing of Hume’s view or Kant’s view regarding necessity and the mind.
99. *DM* 7 (103-104).
100. *DM* 1 (57: 6-7).
101. *DVD* 6 (19:13-15).
102. The Layman in his previous speech stated that mind is not contracted to anything quantitative. The same idea is repeated in the speech here. Nicholas does not mean that mind is altogether uncontracted, since only God is said to be thus Absolute.
103. Boethius, *De Institutione Arithmetica* I, 1 [*PL* 63: 1081AB = G. Friedlein ed., *op. cit.*, p. 8 = Michael Masi, *Boethian Number Theory, op. cit.*, p. 72].
104. See n. 78 above.
105. Cf. *DM* 3 (69:12-18). See also n. 28 above.
106. God is not here said to be the all-encompassing unity of things but, rather, to be the *Exemplar* of the all-encompassing unity of things. Here “the all-encompassing unity of things” refers to the universe, which has parts. God is the Exemplar of all things in that these things would not be what they are if God were not what He is.
107. Boethius, *De Institutione Arithmetica* I, 1 [*PL* 63: 1079 = G. Friedlein edition, *op. cit.*, p. 7 = Michael Masi, *Boethian Number Theory, op. cit.*, p. 71]. The quadrivium consists of the study of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.
108. *DM* 6 (95).
109. Nicholas here alludes to the ten categories described in Aristotle’s *De Categoriais*, as translated into Latin and commented on by Boethius.
110. “... united”: this single English word suffices to translate the Latin “*unita et conexas*.”
111. *DI* I, 24 (77). *Ap.* 27:1-8.
112. Cf. *DM* 1 (56:8-10).
113. *VS* 39 (115-117).
114. *DI* I, 7 (21). *CA* II, 7 (105).
115. Literally: “... whether God understands according as He is trine and one.”
116. See, below, *DM* 11 (133:7-12).
117. Genus, differentia, species, proprium, and accident are the five predicables, or second-order predicates, that are described by Porphyry and others. Porphyry substituted “species” for “definition” and in this way modified Aristotle’s teaching about the predicables. “Proprium” indicates a permanent property that is uniquely characterizing but that is not essential. E.g., being *capable of laughter* is a proprium of human beings.
- See, below, Notes to the *Compendium*, n. 36. See *DM* 8 (108:12-13).
118. *DP* 47:14-20.
119. *DI* I, 7-10.
120. *DM* 11 (133).
121. *Timaeus* 35A.
122. *DM* 7 (97:5-9).

123. That is, the mind's powers of understanding constitute a single holistic power.

124. Sometimes Nicholas uses "*intelligere*" and "*comprehendere*" in the broad sense of mentally apprehending, or mentally grasping. This sense includes apprehending via perceiving, imagining, reasoning, or understanding. At other times, he uses these two terms, narrowly, for differentiating understanding from reasoning, imagining, and perceiving. He interchanges "*comprehendere*" with "*intelligere*" in *DM* 11 (133:13-17). See also *DM* 11 (140:8-13). And cf. 140:15 with 140:20. When "*comprehendere*" is used in the broad sense, to signify conceiving, perceiving, inferring, etc., it cannot be rendered into English either by "to understand" or by "to comprehend."

125. *DM* 5 (85:8-20). *DVD* 8 (32:4-10): "For the eye is like a mirror; and a mirror, however small, figuratively receives into itself a large mountain and all that is on the surface of the mountain. And in a similar way the visible forms of all things are in the mirroring eye. Nevertheless, by means of the mirroring eye our sight sees only and particularly that to which it turns; for the power of the eye can be determined by the object only in a particular way. Consequently, it does not see all the things which are captured in the mirror of the eye." Regarding the vision that Nicholas calls *theosis*—a vision occurring in the next life—see *De Filiatione Dei* 3 (65-70).

This theme of mirroring—a theme inchoate in Nicholas's writings—is later found in Leibniz's monadology in a systematic way.

126. Nicholas says not only *likeness (similitudo)* but *very express likeness (expressissima similitudo)*, thereby attesting to his (non-naive) epistemological realism. See n. 31 above.

127. The Averroists take this position.

128. *DM* 11 (140:1-5) and 5 (80:6-8) and 5 (83:6-7) and 8 (108:5-7).

129. *DM* 11 (136:10-13).

130. *DM* 6 (94:11-16).

131. I Timothy 6:16. In the Latin text of *DM* 12 (144:19) the Heidelberg Academy edition (1983) has "*inhabitante*" (at their 144:15) instead of , correctly, "*inhabitantem*". The clause "*ipsi soli deo secundum naturam immortalitatem inhabitantem*" is an accusative absolute; and "*ipsi soli deo*" is a dative expression that is governed by "*inhabitantem*". The earlier Heidelberg edition (1937) should not here have been altered.

132. *DI* II, 9.

133. Plato, *Timaeus* 36DE.

134. Aristotle, *De Anima* II, 4 (415<sup>b</sup>15-18). Aristotle rejects the doctrine of world-soul.

135. I Corinthians 12:6.

136. *De Genesi* 3 (163-164).

137. *DM* 5.

138. Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 37D. *DI* II, 2 (104:5-9).

139. *Das Vermächtnis des Nikolaus von Kues. Der Brief an Nikolaus Albergati nebst der Predigt in Montoliveto (1463)*, edited and translated by Gerda von Bredow, p. 28 (Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, 1955). Cf. *DM* 13 (149:6-10).

140. An exemplar is inaccessible in the sense that its image can never attain unto

being its exact likeness—a likeness which, according to Nicholas, would be an identity.

141. Angels, too, are intellects, or minds. Regarding Nicholas's notion of hierarchy see *DI* III, 1 (184-189).

142. *Ap.* 22:5-6.

143. *DM* 5.

144. *DM* 8 (111). See n. 78 and n. 80 above.

145. The fictitious Layman is formally unschooled but is not illiterate. He goes on confidently to explain Plato's and Aristotle's opinions, which he may be presumed to have read about somewhere, rather than simply to have heard about. See n. 3 of Notes to *Idiota de Sapientia* I.

146. "... the ascent of the intellect": i.e., the ascent of what *Nicholas* terms "intellect" ("*intellectus*").

147. (1) *Ap.* 17:20-24). (2) *NA* 16 (79:5-6). *NA* 10 (36:4-17).

148. *De Ludo Globi* II (Codex Cusanus 219, ff. 152<sup>v</sup> - 153<sup>r</sup> = Paris edition, Vol. I, f. 162<sup>v</sup>).

149. *DM* 2 (68:11-19). *De Mente* 6 (94:14-19).

150. *DM* 4 (77).

151. *De Filiatione Dei* 2 (58).

152. *De Sapientia* I (17).

153. Nicholas appeals to the fact that the mind apprehends necessary truths; and, like Thomas, he seeks to associate this fact with the doctrine of the mind's immortality. Nicholas's other arguments on immortality are to be found in *Sermo* 153 (Haubst number), part of which is accessible in the Paris edition of Nicholas's works, Vol. II, ff. 83<sup>v</sup> - 84<sup>r</sup>. We may look forward to an article by Klaus Kremer (in a forthcoming volume of *MFCG*) on Nicholas's doctrine of immortality.

154. *DM* 7 (103). *DP* 63.

155. *DM* 7 (103).

156. Aristotle, *Physics* IV, 11 (219<sup>b</sup>1-2). Cusa, *De Ludo Globi* II (Codex Cusanus 219, f. 156<sup>v</sup>, lines 1-2 = Paris edition, Vol. I, f. 165<sup>r</sup>, lines 4-5).

157. *DM* 7 (97).

158. *DM* 6 (96:4-7),

159. Ten is an unfolding of oneness but is also a oneness that has resulted from an enfolding. *De Filiatione Dei* 4 (72:19-26). *Ap.* 16:25 - 17:1.

160. *DM* 4 (74:14-19).

161. *DM* 1 (51).

162. That is, we have as much assurance that we are immortal minds as that we are human beings.