

NICHOLAS OF CUSA'S DEBATE WITH JOHN WENCK

**A Translation and an Appraisal of
De Ignota Litteratura and Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae**

by

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**A DEFENSE OF LEARNED IGNORANCE
FROM ONE DISCIPLE TO ANOTHER
(*Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae
Discipuli ad Discipulum*)
by
NICHOLAS OF CUSA**

Our common teacher, master Nicholas of Cusa, now added to the College of Cardinals, once told me how well you understand the coincidences which he disclosed to us in the books of *Learned Ignorance* (presented to the Apostolic Legate)¹ and in many of his other works. [He spoke of] your ardent wish to gather together everything which here and there flows from him regarding these matters. [He also reported] that you do not allow any of the learned men to pass by you without talking with them about this approach. [And he mentioned] that you have induced many who had despised this study to break for a short while with their long-standing habit of laboring with the Aristotelian tradition and to give themselves over to *these* considerations, in the faith that something important lies hidden therein—to give themselves] to the extent that with an inward relish they become more deeply attracted and come to realize that this approach differs from others as much as sight differs from hearing. You have influenced many of these detractors in such way that together with you they behold with the mind's eye all secrets—[behold them] in the manner in which [this seeing] is progressively granted to a man. Therefore, since you are so eminent: I, a fellow-disciple of the same man, thought it right that there be brought to your attention certain points capable of misleading those who are not fully instructed; and [I thought that] you would know how to oppose such scoffings the more easily.

2 Today there came into my hands a treatise by a certain man who is not only undiscerning but also extremely arrogant—a man by the name of John Wenck, who calls himself a teacher of theology. To this treatise he gave the title *Unknown Learning*. After I read in it the grave reproaches and wrongs against our teacher and his books of *Learned Ignorance*, I went to our teacher—my mind distressed with great displeasure. I stated the reason for my coming and described the content of the reproaches.

The Teacher smiled for a moment and then, looking at me with

an eye of affection, said: “Do not be troubled, Friend, but thank the Creator, who gave you so much light that you excel this man in wisdom as Socrates excelled the intelligentsia of his day.”

I asked in what respect Socrates had excelled the Athenians. He replied: “In that he knew that he was ignorant, whereas the others (who were boasting that they knew something important, though being ignorant of many things) did not know that they were ignorant. Accordingly, Socrates obtained from the Delphic Oracle the attestation of his wisdom.”

And I: “Tell me, I ask, O Teacher, how did Socrates’ knowledge compare with that of the others?”

And he: “It was as the knowledge of the sun’s brightness on the part of one who sees is to the knowledge of the sun’s brightness on the part of one who is blind. For a blind man may have heard many [reports] about the sun’s brightness—even that its brightness is so intense that it cannot be comprehended. [And he may] believe that on the basis of what he has thus heard he knows something about the sun’s brightness; however, he remains ignorant of this brightness. By contrast, if one who has sight is asked regarding the sun’s brightness ‘How bright is it?’ he answers that he does not know. Moreover, he knows that he does not know; for since light is perceived by sight only, he knows by experience that the sun’s brightness excels [the power of his] sight.”

In this way [the Teacher] likened unto blind men very many of those who boast that they have a knowledge of theology. “For almost all who give themselves to the study of theology spend time with certain positive traditions and their forms; and when they know how to speak as do the others whom they have set up as their instructors, they think that they are theologians. They do not know that they are ignorant of that ‘inaccessible Light in whom there is no darkness.’² By contrast, those who by means of learned ignorance are brought from hearing to mental sight rejoice at having attained, by more certain experience, a knowledge of their ignorance.”

He said that a similar thing is found in Philo (that very wise man, to whom some authorities ascribe the books of Wisdom) in Question 51 of *Questions on Genesis*, where Philo speaks of Isaac’s well.³ In the words of the Teacher: “Just as those who dig a well seek water, so too those who pursue learning seek a summit. But [this summit] cannot be revealed to men. Now, certain conceited and mendacious individuals are accustomed to allege that they are the greatest musicians,

the greatest grammarians, that they have transcended the heights of philosophy, the wisdom of all learning, and the limitations of virtue. But a wise, humble, and modest man openly admits how far he is from the summit. And one who takes an oath manifests, through such a bond, his awareness that a man cannot know anything perfectly. Whoever supposes that he knows so much about so many points will make bizarre statements. For the summit of knowledge is reserved only for God, whom the soul calls as a witness to the fact that with a pure conscience it is confessing its ignorance. For by itself the soul knows that it knows nothing unfailingly.” The Teacher [said] these things.

- 4 I liked this comparison of the Teacher’s. But I remarked that, as a consequence, true theology cannot be committed to writing. He openly acknowledged that everything either written or heard is vastly inferior to true theology; however, he maintained that true theology is hidden in sacred Scripture. For theology deals with the Kingdom of God; and our teacher Christ, by [His example of] a hidden treasure, stated that this Kingdom is hidden.⁴ Thus, since every inquiry aims at, and searching the Scriptures involves, finding that which, when found, is hidden and remains hidden and inaccessible: he said it to be sufficiently evident that this [finding of what remains hidden] is not other than learned ignorance. “Very many teachers of our day,” he said, “who possess the field of the Scriptures (where they have heard that the treasure of the Kingdom of God is hidden), boast that therefore they are rich—as does that man who wrote *Unknown Learning*. But whoever has recognized that the treasure remains hidden from the eyes of all the wise glories in the knowledge that he is poor. And he sees that in knowing he is poor—something the others do not know [about themselves]—he is richer than they. Accordingly, because he knows of his poverty he humbles himself; but the other, because of his presumed riches, vaunts himself—even as this ignorant man, inflated with the vanity of verbal knowledge, does not hesitate in his exordium to promise to elucidate eternal wisdom.”

Thereafter, I, who was in a hurry to nullify what was written in *Unknown Learning*, began to ask who this former Abbot of Maulbronn was, through whom *Learned Ignorance* had been delivered to our adversary.⁵

The Teacher replied that the Abbot was a man of keen intelligence and of holy conduct who cherished the books of *Learned Ignorance*—especially because the Apostolic Legate and very many other great

5 men praised them for containing something important. Indeed, the Abbot was bound to this Legate by most singular affection. [The Teacher] added his belief that the Abbot had not given these books to this man [Wenck] but to another religious, from whom they had then come to Wenck. He further stated that in the dispute between the Apostolic See and the Council of Basel—a dispute which was being carried on through [a series of] diets—the Abbot had urged as true the cause of the Apostolic See, to which cause Wenck was opposed. The Teacher showed me the Adversary’s words at the end of his compilation, where he calls the Teacher a pseudo-apostle.⁶ ([He showed me this] so that I would see that this man spoke from emotion. For you know, dearest Friend, that no one resisted the men of Basel with so much fervor as our teacher.) Thus, this Wenck, who deviated from all the teachers [*doctores*] of the University of Heidelberg and took up the condemned cause of the men of Basel (in which cause he presumably is tenaciously continuing), was not ashamed to call the Defender of the truth a pseudo-apostle. For he was concerned to make him hateful, and of little moment, to the Abbot and all others. But the deceitfulness did not prevail, for the truth triumphed.

But having read aloud to the Teacher the charges made by the adversary of *Learned Ignorance*, I saw him groan momentarily. When I inquired more closely about his reason, he answered: “If anyone studies the more important sages of antiquity, he finds that they took great precautions that mystical [teachings] not come into the hands of the unlearned. We read that Hermes Trismegistus gave to Asclepius, and Dionysius the Areopagite to Timothy, such an admonition.⁷ And we know that even our Christ taught this; for He forbade the casting of a pearl (which is a figure of the Kingdom of God) before swine, in whom there is no intellect.⁸ Thus, Paul declared that the things which he saw when caught up from this world into the third, intelligible heaven were not lawful to be revealed.⁹ In each case there is a sole reason for this [prohibition and admonition]. For, indeed, where [a doctrine] is not understood, it not only fails to bear vital fruit but is despised and brings on death. [These sages] especially admonished [us] to beware lest a mystery be communicated to minds bound by the authority which long-standing custom possesses. For so great is the strength of long-established observance that many people’s lives are erased sooner than their customs, as we experience with regard to the persecution of the Jews, the Sarracens, and other obdurate heretics who assert as a law—which they prefer to their lives—an opinion

which has become established by prolonged acceptance. But the Aristotelian sect now prevails. This sect regards as heresy [the method of] the coincidence of opposites. (Yet, the endorsement of this [method] is the beginning of the ascent unto mystical theology.) Hence, this method (*via*), which is completely tasteless to those nourished in this sect, is pushed far from them, as being contrary to their undertaking. Hence, it would be comparable to a miracle—just as it would be the transformation of the sect—for them to reject Aristotle and to leap higher.”

The Teacher said these things; but I did not immediately grasp or record them all. However, I did immediately suggest that while I read aloud *Unknown Learning* he arouse his mind to refuting this work. But he seemed to me to be sluggish and slower than I wished. For it did not seem to him that that writing was of such significance that it was suitable either to be read or to be reproached. As an attestation that a serious man ought not to attend to the refutation of the ignorant, he adduced what the great Dionysius writes in chapter 11 of *The Divine Names*.¹⁰ There Dionysius says the following: because Paul stated that God cannot be ignorant of Himself,¹¹ he was reproached by Elymas the magician on the grounds that he had denied that God is omnipotent. When Dionysius proposed to reproach Elymas, he, Dionysius, admitted to being greatly afraid that he would be ridiculed as being someone mindless who endeavored to demolish the buildings of boys-at-play—buildings which are fragile and are built upon the sand.

7 Dionysius called [such a demolisher] an imitator of inexperienced wrestlers, who often persuade the weak to become their adversaries, who vigorously fight in mock battle against absent [opponents], and who constantly beat the air with useless blows. They suppose that they have conquered their adversaries; and they proclaim themselves victors even though they do not even test the strength of these others. The Teacher said that this was properly analogous to what was being proposed [by me]. But I added (and he did not object but even conceded) that Dionysius had refuted the evil inference of that magician.

Thus, I overcame his kindness. And so that we might at least get started, he permitted me to read aloud rapidly. I read the exordium—[reading] from the words of David: “Be still and see that I am God.”¹² And I continued with this section—[reading] that *God wills to remove our leisure*¹³ and that *He commands our sight to be re-directed unto Himself. Not remaining in a mere cognitive seeing, which puffs us up (from which cognitive seeing, he says, demons derive their name in*

Greek), but instead by directing our unbusied sight unto that which is truly God, we may have satisfying rest from all our commotion. For He says “I am God.” Here “I” singularizes and openly excludes every creature from the Divine Nature—distinguishing God from every creature, since God is Creator, not creature.¹⁴ Thereafter, [our adversary] concludes with these words: The whole exercise of busying our mind with Unknown Learning—[an exercise] necessary with respect to the struggle of making an inroad against Learned Ignorance—is governed by this verse.¹⁵

When [I had read all of these statements] the Teacher, having with his hand enjoined silence, said in a gentle voice: “He put forth these points as a shield, but without having sufficiently reflected upon them in advance. For to a sound intellect all of them are consistent with *Learned Ignorance*. This man seems to have read few things and not to have understood the things he did read. For mystical theology leads to a rest and a silence where a vision of the invisible God is granted

8 to us. But the knowledge which is exercised for disputing is knowledge which looks for a victory of words and which is puffed up. It is far removed from the knowledge which approaches God, who is our peace. Hence, since [our adversary] proposes to hold a dispute—[a dispute] arising out of his knowledge—he could not conceal what kind of knowledge this was. For that which puffs up and arouses to conflict manifests itself—[showing] that it is not (as is learned ignorance) knowledge which, by means of rest, tends toward mental seeing. Now, he thought that he had disclosed something new when, from out of his inflating knowledge, he states what is meant in Greek by “*daemones*.” But presumably he has not examined Plato or Apuleius (*On the God of Socrates*) or Philo (who said that Moses called *angels* those whom the Greeks called *demons*, even though in Greek good demons and evil demons are distinguished).¹⁶

“But when he adds that by means of the pronoun ‘I’ the prophet singularized God and excluded and distinguished Him from every creature (in which regard, he says, his own undertaking is confirmed), he seems to establish his view quite naively. For no one was ever so foolish as to maintain that God, who forms all things, is anything other than that than which a greater cannot be conceived.¹⁷ Accordingly, God is not this or that—not the sky or the earth. Rather, He is the Bestower of being upon all things—so that He is, properly speaking, the Form of every form. And any given form—since it is not God—is not, properly speaking, form; for it is formed by the uncontracted and

absolute Form. Therefore, no being can be absent from the most absolute, most perfect, and most simple Form, since this Form bestows all being.¹⁸ And since all being is from this Form and cannot be outside it, all being is in this Form. However, in this Form all being can be nothing other than this Form. For this Form is the infinite, most simple, and most perfect Form of being. Clearly, then, God ought in no respect to be conceived to have being in the manner in which something singular—which is different and differentiated—is conceived to be. Nor [ought He to be conceived to have being] in the manner in which a universal or a genus or a species is conceived to be. Rather, [He ought to be thought to exist], beyond the coincidence of the singular and the universal, as the most absolute Form of all things generic, specific, and singular, and of all forms which can be conceived and spoken of. For Ineffable Form, which surpasses every concept, is the Beginning, the Middle, and the End of all such things.

“For suppose someone sees—beyond all knowledge of mathematics (which posits limits and measures for things) and beyond all plurality and number and harmonious proportion—all things apart from measure, number, and weight. Then, assuredly, he sees all things in terms of a most simple oneness. And to see God in this manner is to see all things as God and God as all things. But through learned ignorance we know that God cannot in this manner be seen by us. Now, if anyone sees all things in terms of number, weight, and measure, he sees hereby that that [which he sees] cannot be without difference and agreement. But since there cannot be otherness with respect to the Kingdom of God, in which there is a simplicity and peace that transcends all the senses, there is not [in God] singularity in the sense in which our adversary conceives it. Rather, [there is singularity] in the sense in which Avicenna (in his *Metaphysics* [in the section] on confirming the prophet) speaks about the singularity of God.¹⁹ Here he admonishes against speaking to the people about this singularity because it would lead them astray rather than instruct them. For singularity—in the sense in which he enjoins that it be kept concealed—is Singularity of singularities. And thus God is called unsingularly Singular—just as [He is also called] infinite End, limitless Limit, and indistinct Distinction. For whoever directs his mind’s eye toward the Absolute Singularity of all singulars sees clearly enough that Absolute Universality coincides with Absolute Singularity—just as the Absolute Maximum coincides with the Absolute Minimum, in which [Maximum-Minimum] all things are one. Hence, when by

means of negative theology Avicenna attempts to ascend unto the singularity of God,²⁰ he frees God from everything singular and universal. But prior to Avicenna the divine Plato, in the *Parmenides*, more keenly made such an attempt to open a way to God. The divine Dionysius imitated Plato to such an extent that he is quite frequently found to have cited Plato's words in series. Nevertheless, together with Avicenna I concede that these [points] are not acceptable to an adversary who is from the common people and who distorts the loftiest prophetic visions into commonplace conceptions which are not representative of God. [In so doing, he proceeds] counter to the teaching of all the wise, including the great Dionysius, who in Chapter 10 of *The Divine Names* (in Ambrose the Camadolesian's very recent translation, which we received from our most holy lord, Pope Nicholas) speaks as follows: 'Therefore, we must understand divine things not in a human manner but by going wholly outside ourselves and crossing over straightway unto God.'²¹ There [he says] many things regarding this [point].

- 11** "Now you see, my friend, with how naive and weak a prop *Unknown Learning* is supported."

After our teacher, with regard to what had been read aloud, had thus given these replies point by point, I continued with the reading. From the subsequent passage²² [I read about] our teacher's glorying over his having found, by the gift of God, that he was incomprehensibly led to incomprehensible matters by means of transcending things which are corruptible²³ and humanly knowable. After many abusive remarks (which did not disturb the Teacher), [our adversary] says that the gospel of I Corinthians 13, where he [viz., Paul] maintains that comprehension depends upon a mirror and a symbolism, contradicts this "finding."²⁴

The Teacher enjoined me to stop for a moment and said: "See how a difference of sense arises when the respect is different. This man discerned, with respect to the mirror and the symbolism, that God—as He is [in Himself]—is incomprehensible. For in an image the truth cannot at all be seen as it is [in itself]. For every image, in that it is an image, falls short of the truth of its exemplar. Hence, it seemed to our critic that what is incomprehensible is not grasped incomprehensibly by means of any transcending. But if anyone realizes that an image is an image of the exemplar, then leaping beyond the image he turns himself incomprehensibly to the incomprehensible truth. For he who conceives of each creature as an image of the one Creator sees

hereby that just as the being of an image does not at all have any perfection from itself, so its every perfection is from that of which it is an image; for the exemplar is the measure and the form (*ratio*) of the image. Now, God shines forth in creatures as the truth shines forth in an image. Therefore, if anyone sees that the very great variety of things is an image of the one God, then when he leaves behind all the variety of all the images, he proceeds incomprehensibly to the Incomprehensible. For he is led into an ecstasy when he gazes in wonderment at this infinite Being which in all comprehensible things is present as in a mirror and in a symbolism. He sees clearly that this Form, of which every creature is an image, is not comprehensible on the basis of any created thing. (For no image can be an adequate measure of the truth, because in that it is an image it falls short.) Therefore, the absolute truth is not comprehensible.

12 “If, then, we are somehow to approach the absolute truth, we must do this by means of some incomprehensible glimpsing—as in the manner of a momentary rapture—just as with the bodily eye we momentarily but incomprehensibly glimpse the brightness of the sun. [The point is] *not* that the sun is not maximally visible when sunlight by its own strength forces itself upon our eyes; rather, [the point is that the sun], because of its most excellent visibility, is invisible to our grasp. In a similar manner God, who is Truth, which is the object of the intellect, is maximally intelligible; yet, because of His super-excellent intelligibility He is unintelligible. Hence, only learned ignorance, or comprehensible incomprehensibility, remains the truer way for transcending unto Him.”

And I: “Dearest Teacher, although the consideration which you disclosed in *Learned Ignorance* did not come to you by means of study but rather by the gift of God, you no doubt have consulted many of the ancient sages in order to see whether the same point shines forth in them all. Hence, I ask that if any of the things which you have read come now to mind, you state [them].”

And he: “I confess, O Friend, that at the time I received [this] thought from on high I had not examined Dionysius or any of the true theologians. But with eager steps I betook myself to the writings of the teachers, though I found only a revelation expressed in various symbols. For example, Dionysius says to Gaius that most perfect ignorance is knowledge;²⁵ and he speaks in many places about one’s knowledge of his ignorance. And Augustine says that God is attained 13 by ignorance rather than by knowledge.²⁶ For ignorance removes, but

understanding conjoins. But learned ignorance unites all the ways by which we can approach the truth. In his *Metaphysics* Algazel said elegantly, in regard to God: ‘If anyone knows demonstratively the necessary impossibility of his apprehending Him, then he is a knower and an apprehender; for he comes to know that God cannot be grasped by anyone. But if anyone cannot apprehend, and does not know (on the basis of the aforementioned demonstration) that it is necessarily impossible to apprehend God, then he does not know God. And all men are thus ignorant, except for the worthy, the wise, and the prophets—all of whom have profound wisdom.’²⁷ Algazel [said] these things.

“But Aurelius Augustine—expounding the word of Paul in Romans 8 (‘We do not know what to ask for’)—declared, after other things, how it is that we have learned ignorance: ‘We know that what we seek exists; but we do not know what kind of thing it is. We have this “learned ignorance,” so to speak, through the Spirit, who helps our infirmity.’²⁸ And after a few [other statements]: ‘Since Paul says that the Spirit implores with unutterable groanings, he indicates that the unknown thing is both unknown and not altogether unknown. For if it were altogether unknown, it would not be sought with groaning.’²⁹ Augustine [said] these things.

“Therefore, we possess learned ignorance, without which God would not be sought. Previously, I wrote a treatise *On Seeking God* (*De Quaerendo Deum*). Read it; for you will there discover that although [God] is everywhere and is not removed from us (as Paul said to the Athenians when he converted Dionysius),³⁰ nevertheless we approach more closely to Him when we find that He has moved farther away.³¹ For the better we grasp the Inaccessible’s greater distance from us, the closer we come to [this] Inaccessibility.”

- 14** Although after the Teacher had said these things in this way I did not yet have my fill of hearing such points, nevertheless when I considered that much still needed to be said, I did not allow him to cite the common teachers. For I stated that the illustrious [teachers already mentioned] . together with those cited in *Learned Ignorance*, were sufficient for our purposes. He assented; and I hastened on. I read about our adversary’s claiming that the Teacher had used a stratagem (in order to escape all attack) when he indicated his intent to turn, in elevation of mind, unto that Simplicity, where there is coincidence of contradictories.³² When [I had read this] the Teacher laughed and said:
- “When he claims that there was added a stratagem which pre-

cludes all attack on my writing, he shows that he is moved by an envy against my person. But when he alleges that both the fundamental principle-of-knowledge (which is enfolded in the principle ‘every thing either is or is not [the case]’) and all inference are destroyed,³³ he is misconceiving. For he fails to notice that learned ignorance is concerned with the mind’s eye and with apprehension-by-the-intellect [*intellectibilitas*—so that whoever is led to the point of *seeing* ceases from all discursive reasoning, and his evidence comes from sight. ‘He bears witness to what he has seen’—as John the Baptist says of Christ and as Paul says of his own rapture.³⁴ However, whoever pursues truth on the basis of evidence from hearing—even as we are quite commonly led by faith, which comes as a result of hearing³⁵—has need of inference. Hence, if someone were to make the following statement, he would not at all be speaking accurately: ‘Since you say that the evidence from seeing is more certain because it proves apart from any rational consideration and any inference, then you are denying that the evidence from hearing and that all discursive reasoning are of any importance.’³⁶

15 “So logic and any philosophical investigation do not attain unto seeing. Now, a hunting-dog makes use of the [capability of] inference with which he is endowed—makes use of it in regard to footprints and in relation to sensible experience—in order by this means to attain, at length, what is sought; similarly, each animal in its own way [makes use of the capability of inference]. (Accordingly, the most wise Philo said that reason is present in all animals, as Blessed Jerome relates [of him] in *De Illustribus Viris*).³⁷ By comparison, man [makes use of] logic. For, as Algazel states, ‘we are naturally endowed with logic; for logic is the power of reasoning.’³⁸ Now, rational animals reason discursively. Discursive reasoning investigates and makes inferences. Inference is, necessarily, bounded by a *terminus a quo* and a *terminus ad quem*. And things which are opposed to each other we call contradictories. Hence, opposing and separate boundaries belong to inferential reasoning. Therefore, in the domain of reason [*ratio*] the extremes are separate; for example, with regard to a circle’s definition [*ratio*] (viz., that the lines from the center to the circumference be equal): the center [of a circle] cannot coincide with the circumference. But in the domain of the intellect [*intellectus*]—which has seen that number is enfolded in oneness, that a line is enfolded in a point, that a circle is enfolded in a center—the coincidence of oneness and plurality, of point and line, of center and circle is attained by mental

sight apart from inference (as you were able to read about in the books *De Coniecturis*,³⁹ where I also asserted that God is beyond the coincidence of contradictories,⁴⁰ since He is the Opposition of opposites, according to Dionysius).⁴¹

“Henry of Mechlin was once brought (as he tells us in *Speculum Divinorum*)⁴² to seeing, in the case of intellectual things, the coincidence of oneness and plurality—a coincidence at which he very greatly marveled. But, as you have often heard, if someone realizes -that understanding is, in equal measure, both a motion and a rest of the intellect (as, in the *Confessions*, Augustine says of God [that He is both motion and rest]),⁴³ then he frees himself more easily from other contradictories.”

- 16** Having said these things, the Teacher then suggested that I consider the fact that learned ignorance elevates someone, in the way that a high tower does, so that he may see. “For being situated up there, he sees that which is being sought (through various inferences and in the manner of a tracker) by one who is wandering about on the plain.. And he sees to what extent the seeker comes toward and recedes from what is sought. Now, learned ignorance, which pertains to the high region of intellect, makes judgments in a similar way about rational inference.”

After the Teacher had in this way made these statements, whose substance I believe you have heard from him at different times, I said: “Our opponent does not seem to have understood what you meant by ‘coincidence of contradictories.’ For, as you heard,⁴⁴ he ascribes to you (howbeit, falsely) the statement that the creature coincides with the Creator; and he attacks this claim.”

To these [words] the Teacher [replied]: “I said that ‘the sensual man does not discern the things which are of the Kingdom of God.’⁴⁵ And if emotion had not overpowered our adversary, he would not have falsified my writings. But, so it seems, he was set in his desire roundly to attack these writings. And because of this desire he is found to be a falsifier-both in regard to meaning and in regard to words. (‘It is the custom of the most obstinate heretics to truncate the Scriptures,’ maintain the Fathers of the Sixth Synod.)⁴⁶ For a lover of truth denies that any such doctrine comes from the books of *Learned Ignorance*; and any of the things which [our adversary] infers, the lover of truth would not accept in the manner in which [our adversary] infers them. Indeed, to say that an image coincides with its exemplar, and that what is caused [coincides] with its cause, is characteristic of

a man who is unintelligent rather than of a man who is mistaken. For from the fact that all things are in God as things caused are in their cause, it does not follow that the caused *is* the cause—although *in the cause* they are only the cause, just as you have often heard regarding oneness and number. For number is not oneness, although every number is enfolded in oneness, even as the caused [is enfolded] in the cause. But that which we understand as number is the unfolding of the power of oneness. Thus, in oneness number is only oneness.

17 “However, I think that you have adequately discerned—from what you have eagerly read in the book *De Dato Lumine*—what I believe about this matter.⁴⁷ For whoever examines the mind of someone writing on some point ought to read carefully all his writings and ought to resolve [his statements on this point] into one consistent meaning. For from truncated writings it is easy to find something which by itself seems inconsistent but which when compared with the whole corpus is [seen to be] consistent. By way of an analogy: When a poisonous animal is viewed not as a whole but in terms of its separate parts, it seems to possess no beauty or goodness. But when the parts are related to the whole of which they are members, they are found to have their beauty and their goodness. For the whole, which is wholly beautiful, is composed of a beautiful harmony of the parts. In like manner, St. Thomas, in the *Contra Gentiles*, says that certain men—on the basis of the words of the great Dionysius—were led to say that God is all things.⁴⁸ [They were led to say this] because in *The Celestial Hierarchy* Dionysius maintains that God is the Being of all things.⁴⁹ But if they had read all the works of the Areopagite, then they would surely have discovered in *The Divine Names* that God is the Being of all things in such way that He is not any of these things, since what is caused can never be raised unto equality with its cause.⁵⁰ I do not believe that this [fact about God] can be discerned otherwise than by means of learned ignorance. For example, God is present everywhere in such way that He is present nowhere (for he is not absent from any place who is not present at any place); thus, God is present at every place non-spatially, just as He is great without quantity. Similarly, He *is* every place non-spatially, every time non-temporally, and every existent non-existent. But He is not on this account any existent thing, even as He is not any place or any time. And yet, He

18 is all in all, even as the one is all things in all numbers. For were the one removed, number could not continue to be;⁵¹ for number can exist only through the one. And because the one is every number, (not nu-

merically but by way of enfolding), it is not any number. For example, it is neither the number two nor the number three.”

Hereto I appended [the following request]: that leaving aside the superfluous matters the Teacher, rather, dispel the Adversary’s delusions—something which, I added, could easily be done since, in the manner mentioned, they are founded upon a false assumption.⁵² Whereupon, the Teacher enjoined me to dispel, at any rate, the more obvious delusions and to permit him to deal, insofar as possible, with the unobvious ones.

Then, having the Adversary’s text at hand, I read from the place where he declares it wrong (since possession and privation are not identical) to say that knowing is not-knowing.⁵³

Immediately interrupting the reading, the Teacher said: “I am amazed at why [this] man, who regards himself as of considerable importance, maintains that the foregoing point is stated in the foregoing way in the books of *Learned Ignorance*. For although the title of chapter I is heuristically stated as ‘How it is that knowing is not-knowing,’ it does not thereby assert that knowing is not-knowing—except in the manner in which [the matter] is there explained: viz., that [someone] knows that he does not know. In this chapter a very clear exposition is made regarding the knowledge of one’s ignorance, just as we have also sufficiently discussed this topic above. At the beginning of the book *The Divine Names* the great Dionysius says that this knowledge is supreme and divine.⁵⁴ And he adds that this knowledge—in terms of which there is ignorance⁵⁵ of the Super-substantial—surpasses every word and all meaning and must be attributed to [the gift of] God.”⁵⁶

Hereafter I read how it is that he reproaches that part in which we are enjoined to leave behind sensible things through learned ignorance in order that we may come to the Incomprehensible.⁵⁷ [He bases his reproach] on the belief that this [injunction] runs counter to what is read in Wisdom, chapter 13: viz., that the Creator can be knowably seen from the greatness of the beauty of creation.⁵⁸ I stated that this was not at all injurious to the undertaking. For since there is no comparative relation of the creature to the Creator, no created thing possesses a beauty through which the Creator can be attained.

- 19** But from the greatness of the beauty and adornment of created things we are elevated unto what is infinitely and incomprehensibly beautiful—just as from a work of craft [we are referred] to the craftsman, although the work of craft bears no comparative relation to the crafts-

man. I said, in addition, that our adversary ought rightfully to have been filled with shame when he added that the Teacher of learned ignorance had scorned creatures as not conducing to our knowledge of God.⁵⁹ For in the last chapter of Book One of *Learned Ignorance* [our adversary] finds it to be most sufficiently stated that all worship of God is necessarily founded on affirmative statements, although learned ignorance reserves for itself the judgment about what is true. Wherefore, I concluded that everyone easily discerns the perverse mind and the crudity of understanding of that man, when he says:⁶⁰ *So, then, the author of Learned Ignorance, entering into intense darkness and leaving behind all the beauty and comeliness of creatures, vanishes amid thoughts. Still being a pilgrim, and hence not being able to see God as He is, he does not at all glorify God. Rather, going about in his own darkness, he leaves behind the peak-of-divine-praise to which all psalmody is brought. Who among the faithful does not know that this is unbelieving and most impious? And [our adversary] adds that a meagerness of instruction in logic has led him [i.e., the Teacher] to this error. In his own ignorance he thought that by way of logic he had found⁶¹ an adequate and precise comparative relation to God—[a relation which] would be a means for pursuing and knowing God.*

To these [charges] I [replied]: “These are the words of a lying and conceited man who knows no theology.”

20 Having praised my statements, the Teacher added that with someone who is mad we ought to deal sparingly rather than heaping insults upon him. “For that with which [our adversary] finds fault is sought in learned ignorance—as in *The Mystical Theology* our Dionysius (whose feast we are celebrating today)⁶² instructs us thus to ascend into darkness with Moses.⁶³ For God is found when all things are left behind; and this darkness is light in the Lord. And in that very learned ignorance we approach nearer to God, as all the sages both before and after Dionysius have attempted [to do]. Hence, the first Greek commentator on Dionysius said: ‘Whoever desires to attain unto God seems to ascend unto nothing rather than unto something; for God is not found except by one who leaves behind all things.’⁶⁴ Such an individual is regarded by our adversary as vanishing when he leaves behind all things; but according to the first theologians, this individual can only *then* be carried away with Moses to the place where the invisible God has been dwelling.⁶⁵ Now, Dionysius calls [this] darkness a divine ray.⁶⁶ And he states that those (of whose number is our adversary) who are fastened to visible things and think that there is not

anything existing super-substantially above the objects available to the eyes and senses believe they can attain, by means of their own knowledge, unto Him who has made [this] darkness His hideaway.⁶⁷ Moreover, he counsels Timothy to beware lest any such ignorant men should hear these mysteries.”⁶⁸

And then because of his kindness our teacher enjoined me that I should, if possible, lovingly give [the following] counsel to our adversary since he is incapable of [grasping] these high intellectual matters: viz., (1) to impose silence upon his own mouth, (2) to esteem that which he cannot grasp (rather than to reproach it), and (3) not to believe that someone to whom God has not granted it can, by [making] an effort, ascend unto these mysteries. “But if he hopes to obtain grace in order to be brought from blindness to light, then let him read with discernment the previously mentioned *Mystical Theology*, Maximus the Monk, Hugh of St. Victor, Robert of Lincoln,⁶⁹ John the Scot, the Abbot of Vercelli,⁷⁰ and other more modern commentators on that book. Doubtlessly, he will realize that he has hitherto been blind.”

Admiring the longsuffering of the Teacher, I added: “I cannot bear [our adversary’s] comparing you to one who is ignorant of logic, as Averroës [compared] Avicenna.”

Whereto the Teacher [responded]: “Do not let this annoy you. For even if I were the most ignorant of all men, I would at least be satisfied that I knew of my ignorance—whereas my adversary does not have this knowledge [of his ignorance], although he is without understanding. We find it written that Blessed Ambrose added to his prayers [the request]: ‘Deliver us, O Lord, from the dialecticians.’⁷¹ For a superabundance of logic is injurious, rather than beneficial, to very sacred theology.”

And I: “Since you, O Teacher, tried to show that God cannot be known as He is (herein is the root of learned ignorance), why does our adversary foist upon you an untruth regarding exact precision?”⁷²

Whereto the Teacher [replied]: “He speaks now in this way, now in that way. For he has read the books of *Learned Ignorance* only in order to confound (if possible) what is correctly expressed [in them].
 22 Hence, he has understood nothing of what he has read. Thus, it happened that in reproaching what was not written as if it had been written, he confounded himself rather than doing injury to learned, sacred ignorance, which cannot be spurned by anyone who has apprehended it. For in all my works nothing is more clearly found than the contrary of that upon which he fastens. For had he wanted to, he could

everywhere have ascertained that I believe only this: viz., that precision—as it is—remains inaccessible to all. Nevertheless, I affirm that learned ignorance alone excels incomparably every mode of contemplating God, even as all the saints also teach.”

I continued with the reading—[reading aloud the passage] where our adversary says:⁷³ *I come now—through theses and corollaries—more specially to his statements. First thesis: All things coincide with God. This is evident because He is the Absolute Maximum, which cannot be comparatively greater and lesser. Therefore, nothing is opposed to Him. Consequently, God—on account of an absence of division—is the totality of things. And no name can properly befit Him, because the bestowal of a name is based upon the determinate quality of that upon which the name is bestowed. Meister Eckhart alludes⁷⁴ to this [thesis].*

[Our adversary] adds that the bishop of Strasburg condemned those who were asserting (1) that God is, formally, all things and (2) that they were God—not being distinct [from Him] in nature.⁷⁵ Then, 23 attacking the supporting reason, he says: *if there were neither distinction nor opposition of relations in God, what would follow would be altogether absurd; for in that case the [doctrine of] the Trinity would be abolished, etc.*⁷⁶

Whereto the Teacher [responded]: “Should not this falsifier be ridiculed rather than refuted? Why does he not state the place where this thesis is found in the books of *Learned Ignorance*?”

And I: “He was unable to state [the place] because [this thesis] is nowhere found [there]. For I have read very carefully and do not recall ever having found [the statement] that all things coincide with God. (In the second [book] of *Learned Ignorance* I did indeed find [the statement] that the creation is neither God nor nothing.)⁷⁷ I do not understand what our adversary means; and perhaps he does not understand his own [meaning]. For I have found it to be necessary (and this is what I did [there] read) that all the divine attributes coincide in God and that all of theology is arranged in a circle, so that in God justice is goodness, and conversely, (and similarly for the other attributes).⁷⁸ All the saints who have considered the infinite simplicity of God agree about this point.”

[And the Teacher]: “Nevertheless, [the doctrine of] the Superblessed Trinity is compatible with this [doctrine of the divine simplicity]. For the infinite simplicity allows that God is one in such way that He is three, and is three in such way that He is one—even as this

[point] is explained more clearly in the books of *Learned Ignorance*.⁷⁹ (In like manner, we read that Pope Celestine, in professing his faith, spoke as follows: ‘We confess our belief that the indivisible holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is one in such way that it is three, and is three in such way that it is one.)⁸⁰

24 “See how it is that he who does not pay attention to the coincidence of unity and trinity has no understanding at all regarding theological matters. Nor does it follow from this [doctrine of coincidence] that the Father is the Son or the Holy Spirit. To [this] stiff-necked man the following cannot occur: viz., that in the coincidence of supreme simplicity and indivisibility, of oneness and trinity, the person of the Father, the person of the Son, and the person of the Holy Spirit are distinct. Words whose significations are not compatible with theology hinder him. For example, when we say that the Father is one person, the Son another person, and the Holy Spirit a third person, ‘otherness’ cannot retain its [ordinary] signification. For this word is under assignment to signify an otherness which is separate and distinct from oneness; and so, there is no otherness unless there is number. However, such otherness cannot at all befit the indivisible Trinity. Hence, a commentator on Boethius’s *De Trinitate* ([a commentator who is] easily the most intelligent man of all those whom I have read) says: ‘From the fact that there is no number in God, in whom trinity is oneness (in whom, as Augustine says, if you begin to number, you begin to err),⁸¹ it follows that in God there is no difference in the proper sense of the word.⁸² (‘In the proper sense of the word’ means ‘in accordance with the word’s assignment.’) Now, this [point about God] is better understood than it can be expressed, although it is never so perfectly understood that it cannot be more perfectly understood. Whoever desires to ascend unto the divine mode must rise above all imaginable and intelligible modes. For the divine mode, which is the Mode of every mode, is attained only above every mode. For nothing similar to it can occur to our mind—as Paul said most elegantly in Acts 17. For who can conceive of a mode which is indistinctly distinct?—as Athanasius says, ‘neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance.’⁸³ For all the [symbolic] likenesses proposed by the saints (including the most divine Dionysius) are altogether disproportional [to God]; and to all who do not have learned ignorance (i.e., a knowledge of the fact that [the likenesses] are altogether disproportional), [the likenesses] are useless rather than useful. However, in Book One of *Learned Ignorance* enough (though dispropor-

tionally less than could be said) is found stated about these matters— [stated] in the manner in which God has granted it.”⁸⁴

I, not permitting to remain undiscussed that which our adversary alleged about Meister Eckhart, asked whether the Teacher had learned anything from Eckhart.

25 The Teacher said that here and there in [various] libraries he had seen (1) Eckhart’s many expository works on very many books of the Bible, (2) many sermons, and (3) many disputations. Furthermore, he had read many articles extracted from Eckhart’s writings on John— [articles which were] criticized and rejected by others. And he had seen at Mainz, at the home of the teacher John Guldenschaf,⁸⁵ the short writing of Eckhart’s in which he replies to those who had attempted to reproach him, and in which he sets forth his own views and shows that the critics have not understood him.⁸⁶ The Teacher said, however, that he had never read that Eckhart thought the creation to be the Creator; and he praised Eckhart’s genius and ardor. Yet, he wished that his books would be removed from public places; for the people are not suited for [the statements] which Eckhart often intersperses, contrary to the custom of the other teachers; nevertheless, intelligent men find in them many subtle and useful [points].

Thereupon I read the corollary which our adversary sets forth: viz., that in⁸⁷ *Absolute Maximality all things are that which they are, because [Absolute Maximality] is Absolute Being, in whose absence there is nothing.*⁸⁸ He adds that Eckhart too maintains that being is God;⁸⁹ and he infers therefrom that the individual existence of things within their own genus is destroyed.⁹⁰

26 Whereupon the Teacher said: “We might reply to our adversary what Augustine, in the *Confessions*, replied when he praised God as the source of all being, adding: ‘What is it to me if you do not understand?’⁹¹ For since we name God *Creator* and say that He exists: elevating ourselves unto coincidence, we say that God coincides with being. Moses names Him *Former*: ‘Therefore, God formed man,’ etc.⁹² Therefore, if God is the Form of forms, He gives being—even though the form of earth gives being to earth, and the form of fire [gives being] to fire. Yet, the Form which gives being is God, who forms every form. Hence, just as (1) an image has a form which gives to it that being through which it is an image, and (2) the form of the image is a formed form, and (3) whatever truth [the image] has, it has it only from [that] form which is its truth and exemplar, so, in God, every creature is that which it is. For in God every creature—[each of]

which is the image of God—is present in its Truth.⁹³ Nevertheless, the individual existence of things through their own forms is not thereby destroyed. If that man cared about the truth, he ought to have added—on the basis of what he could have found stated quite extensively, clearly, and distinctly in *Learned Ignorance*—the contrary corollary.

“The case is similar when [our adversary] mentions Meister Eckhart. For Eckhart, toward the beginning of [his commentary on] Genesis,⁹⁴ where he advances his views about being (after he has proved (1) that God is Being itself and is the one who grants being and (2) that particular forms are this or that being), adds that the individual existence of things through their own being is not therefore destroyed but instead is established. He proves this [point] by means of three illustrations: viz., matter, the parts of a whole, and the humanity of Christ. For matter is not destroyed and altogether reduced to nothing by virtue of the fact that the entire being of the whole comes from the form. Nor is the part [reduced to nothing] by virtue of the fact that the being of the part is completely from the being of the whole. And by virtue of our saying that in Christ there is only the personal, hypostatic being of the Word, we are not denying that Christ was a real man along with other men. ([Eckhart] there adds the reasons for this [thus illustrated point]).”

Next, I read the other corollary: that *Absolute Maximality contains all things in itself and is present in all things*.⁹⁵ I added the adversary’s statement: viz., that *those who universalize maintain that in such a precise Abstraction [i.e., in Absolute Maximality] all things are essentially divine*.⁹⁶

27 Whereto the Teacher [replied]: “I do not know what he means by ‘those who universalize.’ We know from the Apostle Paul and from all the wise that God is in all things and that all things are in Him.⁹⁷ However, no one [who holds this position] thereby affirms that there is composition in God; for in God all things are God. For example, in God the earth is not the earth but is God—and similarly regarding each other thing. Hence, when that man infers that this [doctrine] is inconsistent with the [doctrine of] divine simplicity, he understands nothing at all. For just as it is not inconsistent with the simplicity of oneness that every number is enfolded in oneness, so [it is not inconsistent] with the simplicity of the Cause that everything caused [is enfolded in the Cause].

“And when he proclaims that infinite perfection cannot be made more perfect,⁹⁸ I admit it,” said the Teacher. “Accordingly, all the per-

fection of all perfect things is, in God, God. He is the Absolute Perfection of all things, and He enfolds all the perfections of all things. For if there were positable a perfection which is not enfolded in Divine Perfection, Divine Perfection could be greater and would not be infinite.”

See, dearest Friend and Fellow-disciple, how our teacher draws from the Adversary’s reasoning an inference which opposes the Adversary.

Hereafter, I read aloud to the Teacher the second thesis which the Adversary extracted: viz., that precision cannot be comprehended;⁹⁹ and [I read about] his wonderment at how precision can be seen in learned ignorance if it cannot be comprehended.¹⁰⁰

Then the Teacher added: “It is not strange that he might wonder; for nothing is more wondrous to a man than is learned ignorance, i.e., the seeing that precision cannot be seen—as, above, I sufficiently discussed this [point]. When he says that this foundation destroys the knowledge of God, he speaks the truth. For someone’s belief that he knows some thing which cannot be known is not knowledge. With regard to such a thing, knowing is knowing that he cannot know.

28 “[Our adversary] stated a true corollary: viz., that all likeness is imperfect.¹⁰¹ But when he wonders about how it is that (in the case of things which have limits to their magnitude) if a similarity is posited, then a greater similarity can always be posited *ad infinitum*.¹⁰² let him consider the dividing of a finite line. For in this case we do not come to an indivisible point, even though we seem to approach it through [dividing] the parts of parts.

“The other corollary is likewise true: viz., that truth is not attained by means of likenesses.”¹⁰³

Subsequently, I read the third thesis, which [our adversary] claims to have taken from *Learned Ignorance*: viz., that quiddity is unattainable.¹⁰⁴

The Teacher said: “Although [quiddity *is*] intelligible, as he proposes (even as God is supremely intelligible and the sun supremely visible), nevertheless it is never actually understood. Nor from the coincidence of opposites in the Maximum does there follow—as our opponent infers—this *poison of error and falsehood*: viz., the destruction of the fundamental principle of the sciences, i.e., of the first principle.¹⁰⁵ For that principle is first with respect to discursive reasoning but not at all with respect to intuitive understanding—as I said earli-

er¹⁰⁶ about this [matter].

“Nor is it true, if God is everything which is, that He did not therefore create all things from nothing. For since God alone is the enfolding of all the being of every existent: in creating, He unfolded heaven and earth. Or better, since God is, by way of enfolding and in an intellectually divine manner, all things: He is the Unfolder of all things, the Creator of all things, the Maker of all things—and whatever [else] can be said concerning this [point]. This is the way the great Dionysius argues.¹⁰⁷

- 29 “And if there were Beghards who made such statements as our adversary alleges (viz., that, in nature, they were God),¹⁰⁸ then they were rightfully condemned—just as Almericus too was condemned by Innocent III at a general council (about which [you may read] in the chapter ‘*Damnamus de Summa Trinitate*’). Almericus did not rightly understand that God is all things by way of enfolding; some of his errors are cited by John Andrea in *Novella*.¹⁰⁹ Men of little understanding chance to fall into error when they search out higher [truths] without learned ignorance. They are blinded by an infinity of supremely intelligible light in their mind’s eye. And having no knowledge of their blindness, they believe that they see; and as if they were seeing, they become rigid in their assertions—just as the Jews, who do not have the Spirit, are by the letter led unto death.¹¹⁰ Moreover, there are some men who—when they find in other men views to which they are unaccustomed (and especially when they find that these others believe themselves to be learned just in case they recognize themselves to be unknowing)—think that these others, who have sight and are wise, are really ignorant and erring. Hence, all the saints rightly admonish that intellectual light be withdrawn from those with weak mental eyes. Holy Dionysius’s books, Marius Victorinus’s *Ad Candidum*
- 30 *Arrianum*, Theodorus’s *Clavis Physicae*, John Scotus Erigena’s *Periphyseos*, David of Dinant’s books, Brother John of Mossbach’s commentaries on the propositions of Proclus, and other such books are not at all to be shown to those [with such eyes].”

I subsequently read, in turn, the fourth thesis. The Teacher heard that in this thesis the Adversary claims [that the following view] comes from *Learned Ignorance*: viz., that there is a single nature for the image and the exemplar.¹¹¹

Whereupon the Teacher cried out: “Far be it! Far be it! This is the detestable outrage of a shameless falsifier!” And seizing a copy of

Learned Ignorance, he read from Book One, chapter eleven:

The fact that spiritual matters (which are unattainable by us in themselves) are investigated *symbolically* has its basis in what was said earlier. For all things have a certain comparative relation to one another ([a relation which is], nonetheless, hidden from us and incomprehensible to us), so that from out of all things there arises one universe and in [this] one maximum all things are this maximum.¹¹² And although every image seems to be like its exemplar, nevertheless except for the Maximal Image (which is, in oneness of nature, the very thing which its Exemplar is) no image is so similar or equal to its exemplar that it cannot be infinitely more similar and equal. (These [doctrines] have already been made known from the preceding [remarks]).

These [words are found] in that passage.

31 “Notice,” said the Teacher, “that that falsifier alleges to be affirmed of every diminished image that which according to Paul is stated exclusively of the only begotten Son, who is the Image which is consubstantial with the Father.”¹¹³

Whereto I, very greatly aroused, added: “Let this mendacious truncator of books go away now and hide himself. For he who offends against the light—something which I consider to be the sin against the Holy Spirit—is not worthy of the light.”

After I had quickly read aloud the subsequent [points], the Teacher showed me how the Adversary used falsity and truncation and mendacity and perverse interpretation in regard to them all. And of the place where [the Adversary] tries to say about Socrates some things which he knows nothing of,¹¹⁴ the Teacher remarked: “Let him look at Plato’s book *De Apologia Socratis*, where Socrates pleads his own cause at the trial, and he will discover his own fantasies, which are devoid of all truth.”

And I: “Concerning [this] grey-haired man of advanced age who regards himself as one of the intelligentsia: how astounding that he writes such puerile foolishness!—especially when he construes learned ignorance as a life of detachment.”¹¹⁵

I asked whether something was to be said against the charge which the Adversary makes, in the fifth thesis, against the view that the Maximum is actually every possible thing.¹¹⁶ Whereupon [the Teacher] said that it is vain to contend with one who lacks understanding. “For since God is purest, infinite Actuality: He is, absolutely, everything which is at all possible; and in this coincidence is hidden all apprehensible theology. The Adversary does not understand what theology is or what he is attacking or what he is saying. For example, because

it is stated in *Learned Ignorance* that ‘God is not this thing and is not any other thing, but is all things and is not any of all things’¹¹⁷ (which are the words of Holy Dionysius),¹¹⁸ he says that the [expression] ‘is all things and is not any of all things’ is self-contradictory;¹¹⁹ and he does not understand that in the mode of enfolding [God] is all things but that in the mode of unfolding He is not any of these things. And since [our adversary] does not have any understanding, he laughs when he reads very weighty words. He does not know that they are [the words] of the saints and that the one who explicated learned ignorance adduced them in order (in accordance with the instruction of Holy Dionysius) not to pass beyond the bounds of the saints.

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“The same holds true for those things which are stated about measure in the third corollary of the fifth thesis and in the [immediately] subsequent [comments]. For he cannot grasp that the infinite is the most adequate measure of finite things—even though the finite is altogether disproportional to the infinite. Nor can he grasp the example about the infinite line. He charges this example with falsity.¹²⁰ But [he does so] in vain, because the impossibility of there actually being an infinite line is shown in many ways in *Learned Ignorance*;¹²¹ however, by the positing of an infinite line the intellect is helped to make headway toward the unqualifiedly Infinite, which is Absolute Necessity of being.”

[The Teacher] added that Augustine had attained, as follows, unto [the view] that God is measure: “God is in all things, but not through parts; rather, He is as a whole in all things—whether these things be great or small. Therefore, since He is equally in all things, He is the most equal Measure of every measure.”¹²² Hereby, however, Augustine does not deny the unendedness of that magnitude which is Absolute Magnitude.

“But when in the sixth thesis [the Adversary] attacks Parmenides, he is endeavoring to attack not only *him* but all the learned and holy theologians whom he does not at all understand. ([I spoke] above about this [point].)¹²³ And in his own way he afterwards states, most falsely, that the following [view] comes from *Learned Ignorance*: ‘Because all the things which befit God are God, He is neither Father nor Son . . . etc.’¹²⁴ It is right to hold that in accordance with the consideration of infinity God is neither Father nor Son. For the consideration of God according to infinity occurs by way of negation; and so, in that case, all things are denied [of God]—even as Holy Dionysius, too, says this very thing in these very words at the end of *The Mysti-*

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cal Theology.¹²⁵

“When [the Adversary] attacks [divine] foresight,¹²⁶ he shows that he is totally ignorant. For that point (although it is very clearly made) is not understandable by such a perceptually oriented investigator as our adversary shows himself to be.”

Because in the remaining theses [this] falsifier proceeds by at times adding what he did not find and at times affirming what was not affirmed, the Teacher, having become weary, wanted to turn toward more useful pursuits. Thus, I was constrained to pass more quickly over the Adversary’s invective. But after I had rapidly read from *Unknown Learning* the theses which [the Adversary] says he excerpted from *Learned Ignorance*, the Teacher picked up a copy of *Learned Ignorance* and read the second and the third chapters of Book Two. And he showed clearly that the seventh thesis, together with its corollaries, was excerpted perversely. For in those chapters nothing is expressly dealt with other than [the view] that the being of creation derives from Absolute Being in a manner which can neither be expressed nor understood; there is no other assertion, although different modes of discourse are touched upon.

But [regarding] the place where the Adversary attacks [the view] that God is the Absolute Quiddity of all things,¹²⁷ the Teacher said: “That man understands nothing at all. For God is the Quiddity of all quiddities and is the Absolute Quiddity of all things—even as He is the Absolute Being of beings and the Absolute Life of living things. (The church expresses this in prayer: ‘God, Life of living things,’ . . . and so on.) To say this is not to confound or to destroy the quiddities of things but to establish them, as wise men recognize.”

The Teacher did not care to comment on the other theses; and he scorned the ignorance of the Adversary. Nevertheless, I asked him to comment on the fact that the Adversary, with sheer impudence and in an abusive way, disdains him as being wretched, impoverished, blind, and empty of understanding.¹²⁸

34 Where to the Teacher [responded]: “I openly acknowledge all that he says about the blindness of the intellect.” But [the Teacher] asserted that he excelled the Adversary in that he knew he was blind.

And [of the passage] where [the Adversary] charges that Jesus is dishonored,¹²⁹ the Teacher said: “The intent of *Learned Ignorance* is not that Jesus be dishonored but that He be magnified in our understanding and affection.” But the Adversary, he showed, speaks as

would someone who said [the following]: “If anyone were elevated to become a supremely majestic person—so that he were King of kings and Lord of lords (as Christ is elevated)—he would *thereby* be dishonored.” Now, no one doubts that this statement is characteristic of a mad man.

Therefore, after the Adversary’s writings had been compared with the text of *Learned Ignorance*, and after it had been shown that the Opponent falsely elicited the asserted theses and either understood nothing of all [these matters] or, at least, chose to understand nothing of them (interpreting all of them perversely), the Teacher said: “What was written in *Learned Ignorance* about Jesus was written in accordance with Holy Scripture and in a manner which befits the goal that Christ increase in us. For in its own way *Learned Ignorance* endeavors to lead us to those [teachings] about Christ which were left to us by John the Evangelist, Paul the Apostle, Hierotheus, Dionysius, Pope Leo, Ambrose in his letters to Herennius, Fulgentius, and the other loftiest holy intellects. Nevertheless, *Learned Ignorance* falls short, as do all those intellects which have ever undertaken to describe that mystery.”

35 Having turned toward me with a loving countenance, [the Teacher] said: “Friend, you know perfectly well that those who through the loftiness of faith pass beyond sensible things and are joined to Christ and to truth are held in contempt by the ignorant men of this world. For, as the great Dionysius testifies in chapter 10 of *The Divine Names*, ‘he who is joined to the truth knows how he is well off, even if most [people] reproach him as having become mindless and beside himself.’¹³⁰ And [Dionysius says] that through their deaths the principal leaders have declared of the truth that it alone is the one and simple divine notion.”¹³¹

Hence, with very great affection of heart [the Teacher] admonished me not to grow lukewarm in my fervent study [but to continue] until the point where I would be elevated unto simplicity of understanding, in order that I would better know the unknowable God (who through knowledge and ignorance is known in and from all things, as Dionysius attests in the same chapter)¹³² and Blessed Jesus (who alone is the highest of all things, the perfection of all things, and the fullness of all things). And [he admonished] that through this studying I apply, to the degree granted, my mind’s every effort to seeing that I am never worthy to understand anything. And he promised that if I in any way at all tasted the divine sweetness of so great a mystery of ineffable

grace, then none of the sophists could ever confuse me.

“For by our every movement we seek only peace; and the Peace which surpasses all the senses is our peace (viz., the Life of our life); living from and in this Peace we are tranquil with inexpressible delight. Accordingly, everyone who apprehends [this Peace] will say with Paul: Who shall separate me from this true Life?¹³³ Not death—because as dying I live.¹³⁴ Therefore, nothing will separate you at [that] time when the most frightful of all frightful things will not frighten you. You will laugh at all the blind when they promise to show you Him whom they do not see; and you will cling to the embraces of Him whom your soul will love with all its might. To whom be glory forever.”

- 36** This, O most lovable Fellow-disciple, is what I have remembered [as coming] from the Teacher’s heart in defense of *Learned Ignorance*. Although many things have slipped from my memory, I transmit these things to you for reading and, where it seems to you needful, for communicating. [I transmit them] so that in your fervor there may grow that admirable seed by which we are elevated for seeing divine matters Oust as I have long since heard that throughout Italy great fruit will be forthcoming from that seed which was received in studious intellects because of your solicitous cultivation). For this speculation will surely conquer all the modes of reasoning of all the philosophers, although it is difficult to leave behind things to which we are accustomed. Do not hesitate to let me continually share in whatever progress you make. For by this [means] alone—as by a certain divine nourishment—I am joyously restored. Here below, I continually aspire (through learned ignorance and according as God deems fit to grant) unto the fruition of that life which I now thus behold from afar and which I daily strive to approach closer to. May God, who is so greatly desired and who is eternally blessed, grant that we, being freed from the present condition, may by divine gift obtain this [fruition].

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Ap.</i>	<i>Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae</i>
<i>DI</i>	<i>De Docta Ignorantia</i>
<i>DP</i>	<i>De Possesit</i> (text edited by J. Hopkins in <i>PNC</i>)
<i>IL</i>	<i>De Ignota Litteratura</i>
<i>MFCG</i>	<i>Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft</i> (ed. Rudolf Haubst)
<i>NA</i>	<i>De Li Non Aliud</i> (text edited by J. Hopkins in his <i>Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-other: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Li Non Aliud</i> . Minneapolis: Banning Press, 3rd ed. 1987)
<i>NC</i>	<i>Nicolò da Cusa</i> . Florence: Sansoni, 1962. (Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Magisterio dell'Università di Padova)
<i>NK</i>	<i>Nikolaus von Kues. Einführung in sein philosophisches Denken</i> . Ed. Klaus Jacobi. Munich: K. Alber, 1979
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. J-P. Migne
<i>PNC</i>	J. Hopkins. <i>A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa</i> . Minneapolis: Banning Press, 3rd ed. 1986
<i>SHAW</i>	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse</i> . Heidelberg: C. Winter
<i>M</i>	Codex Latinus 190, Mainz, Stadtbibliothek
<i>T</i>	Codex Latinus 228/1467, Trier, Stadtbibliothek
<i>v</i>	E. Vansteenberghe, ed. <i>Le "De Ignota Litteratura" de Jean Wenck de Herrenberg contre Nicolas de Cuse</i> [Vol. 8, Heft 6 (1910) of <i>Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters</i>]. Münster: Aschendorff, 1912

PRAENOTANDA

1. The English translation of *IL* was made from the new edition of the Latin text, appended to the present volume. The translation of *Ap.* was made from *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*, Vol. II, edited by Raymond Klibansky (Leipzig: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1932). A number of references in the notes have also been adapted from this volume.
2. All references to Nicholas's works are to the Latin texts—specifically to the following texts in the following editions:
 - A. Heidelberg Academy Edition: *De Coniecturis, De Deo Abscondito, De Quaerendo Deum, De Filiatione Dei, De Dato Patris Luminum, Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae, Idiota* (1983 edition) *de Sapientia, de Mente, de Staticis Experimentis, De Pace Fidei, De Venatione Sapientiae*.
 - B. Heidelberg Academy Editions as found in the Latin-German edition of Felix Meiner Verlag's Philosophische Bibliothek: *De Docta Ignorantia, De Beryllo*.
 - C. Banning Press Editions: *De Visione Dei, De Possest, De Li Non Aliud*.
 - D. Strasburg Edition as reprinted by W. de Gruyter: all remaining Cusanus works, unless specified explicitly as Paris Edition.

For some treatises the reference indicates book and chapter; for others, margin number and line; for still others, page and line. Readers should have no difficulty determining which is which when they consult the particular Latin text. For example, “*DI* II, 6 (125:19-20)” indicates *De Docta Ignorantia*, Book II, Chap. 6, margin number 125, lines 19 and 20.

3. The margin numbers appearing in the translation of *Ap.* correspond to the page-numbers in Vol. II of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*. And the margin numbers in the translation of *IL* correspond to the margin numbers in the new edition of the Latin text; they also correspond to the page numbers in the earlier edition published by E. Vansteenberghe. Insofar as possible the line lengths have also been made to correspond, so that all references to page and line of Vansteenberghe's edition can be treated as references to section and line of the new edition.
4. References to Aristotle's works include, in parentheses, the standard Bekker numbers as indicated in the Loeb Library editions of the Greek texts. However, since the Loeb Library volumes have more lines per Bekker page than do the Bekker texts themselves, an improvisation was necessary in citing. Accordingly, a reference such as “*De Anima* 2 (423^a23-24.2)” is meant to indicate not only lines 23 and 24 in the Loeb version but also the two lines following line 24 (both of which precede line 25 as marked in the Loeb margin).
5. Any Latin words inserted into the English translations for purposes of clarification are placed in parentheses—except that nouns whose case has been changed to the nominative are bracketed.
6. References to the Psalms are to the Douay version (and, in parentheses, to the King James' version).
7. In the Latin text of *IL*, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling (except for prop-

er names) are editorialized. In particular, the references to Scripture are editorialized.

NOTES TO A DEFENSE OF LEARNED IGNORANCE

1. Viz., Cardinal Julian Cesarini (1398-1444). See n. 1 of *DI* Notes to Book One.
2. I John 1:5.
3. Philo. *Questions and Answers on Genesis* IV, 191. Trans. Ralph Marcus [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953 (Loeb Library Series. Supplementary Vol. I)]. Also see Gen. 26:15.
4. Matt. 13:44.
5. *Unknown Learning* is addressed to John of Gelnhausen, once abbot of Maulbronn.
6. *IL* 41:15. In *Ap.* Wenck is referred to throughout as “the Adversary.” Nicholas as “the Teacher.” The term “*adversarius*” may well have been chosen with an eye to I Pet. 5:8.
7. Hermes Trismegistus. *Asclepius* 1 [*Corpus Hermeticum*. ed. A. D. Nock (Paris: Société d’Edition “Les Belles Lettres.” Vol. 2. 1945), p. 297, lines 8-9]. Pseudo-Dionysius. *The Divine Names* I, 8 [*Dionysiaca* I, 56 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2 vols., 1937, 1950)].
8. Matt. 7:6.
9. II Cor. 12:2-4.
10. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* VIII, 6 (*Dionysiaca* I, 428-432). N.B. The divisions in the Latin translation by Ambrose Traversari differ from the standard ones. Nicholas uses Ambrose’s translation.
11. II Tim. 2:13. Nicholas writes “*ignorare*”, though both the Vulgate and the Latin translations in *Dionysiaca* I, 429 have “*negare*”.
12. Ps. 45:11 (46:10). Cited from Wenck’s text (19:22-23).
13. The clause “God wills to remove our leisure” misrepresents Wenck’s text.
14. *IL* 20:7-17.
15. *IL* 20:17-20.
16. Plato. *Apology* 31d. Apuleius. *De Deo Socratis* 6, 133 [p. 26 of Apulée, *Opuscules philosophiques et fragments*, ed. and trans. Jean Beaujeu (Paris: Société d’Edition “Les Belles Lettres.” 1973)]. Philo, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, *op. cit.*, IV, 188.
17. This is the description formulated by Anselm of Canterbury in *Proslogion* 2. It may have been suggested to Anselm by certain closely similar descriptions in Augustine: e.g., *Confessions* VII, 4: “*Neque enim ulla anima unquam potuit poteritve cogitare aliquid quod sit te melius, qui summum et optimum bonum es*” (*PL* 32:735).
18. Nicholas here refers to God as “*this* Form,” though a few lines earlier he stated that God “is not this or that.” These statements are not incompatible. In the present sentence and the subsequent ones “*this* Form” is a place-holder for “Form of forms,” “Absolute Form.” Absolute Form is not this or that form (e.g., form of the sky, form of the earth, etc.).
19. *Metaphysica*, Tractate X, chap. 2 (Venice edition of 1498).
20. *Ibid.*
21. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* VII, 1 (*Dionysiaca* I, 385-386.)

22. *IL* 20:21-26.
23. Both *IL* and Nicholas's letter [*DI* III (263:9)] have "*in corruptibilium*".
24. *IL* 21: 8-11.
25. Pseudo-Dionysius. *Epistola* 1: "To Galus" (*Dionysiaca* I, 607). Cf. *DP* 53:14.
26. Augustine. Sermon 117, chap. 3 (*PL* 38:663).
27. Algazel, *Philosophia*, Book I, Tractatus III (the very end) [*Logica et Philosophia Algazelis Arabis*, edition of Peter Liechtensteyn (Venice. 1506)].
28. Augustine, *Epistola* 130 ("To Proba"), chaps. 14-15 (*PL* 33:505).
29. *Ibid.*, chap. 15 (*PL* 33:505-506) N.B. Add as note for 13:16 of Klibansky's text of *Ap.*: 'dicat: dicit *Tr*'.
30. Acts 17:27.
31. *De Quaerendo Deum* 1 (18:2-5) [Vol. IV of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner. 1959)].
32. *IL* 21:20-24.
33. *IL* 21:34-22:1.
34. John 3:32. II Cor. 12:2-4.
35. Rom. 10: 17.
36. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (*Ap.* 14:22) I am reading "*aliquid*" for "*aliud*". This is a conjecture.
37. Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, chap. 11 [ed. Guilelmus Herdingius (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner. 1879), p. 17].
38. Algazel, *Logica*, *op. cit.*, chap. 1.
39. *De Coniecturis* I, 6 (25:10-17); II, 1 (76-78).
40. In *De Coniecturis* II, 1 (78:13-15) Nicholas states that in God all things coincide without any difference. But he nowhere therein explicitly states that God is beyond the coincidence of contradictories, as he does at the end of *De Visione Dei* 9.
41. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* V, 10 [*Dionysiaca* I, 364 (last line) and 365 (first line) of Ambrose's translation].
42. Henry Bate of Mechlin, *Speculum divinatorum et quorundam naturalium*, ed. G. Wallerand (Louvain. 1931). [R. Klibansky, ed., *Ap.*, p. 15n.: The passage envisioned by Nicholas is nowhere to be found. But II, 36-37 and II, 21 (p. 226 and pp. 190-191 of Wallerand) come closest to it.]
43. Augustine, *Confessions* XIII, 37 (*PL* 32:868).
44. Note Wenck's first thesis. which is discussed later in *Ap.* The present allusion seems to be to Wenck's *exordium*. (See *Ap.* 7:10-22.)
45. I Cor. 2:14. This verse is alluded to in *DI* III, 6 (216:2-3).
46. R. Klibansky. ed.. *Ap.*, p. 16n.. refers the reader to acts 6 and 14 of the sixth ecumenical council (680/681). [J. D. Mansi. *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 31 vols. (Venice. 1757-1798). Vol. 11 (1765), pp. 326. 595. Reprinted and continued in 60 vols., ed. L. Petit and J. B. Martin (Paris. 1899-1927)].
47. *De Dato Patris Luminum* III (105) [Vol. IV of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner. 1959)].
48. St. Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, 26.
49. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy* IV, 1 (*Dionysiaca* II, 802).
50. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* I, 5 (*Dionysiaca* I, 39).
51. *DI* I, 5 (13:22-29).
52. Viz., the assumption that Nicholas regards Creator and creature as coincid-

- ing. See *Ap.* 16:10-11.
53. *IL* 23:23-24.
54. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* I, 1 (*Dionysiaca* I, 7).
55. The Latin translation by Ambrose Traversari has the word “*noscitur*”; nonetheless, Nicholas says “*nescitur*”. See *Dionysiaca* I, 8.
56. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* I, 1 (*Dionysiaca* I, 7-8).
57. *IL* 23:35-24:2.
58. *Wisd.* 13:5.
59. This is implied in *IL* 24:2-9.
60. *IL* 24:7-16.
61. Nicholas says “*repperisse*”, whereas both mss. of Wenck’s treatise have “*recepisse*”.
62. The feast day of Dionysius is Oct. 9.
63. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Mystical Theology* I, 3 (*Dionysiaca* I, 577).
64. Maximus the Confessor, in his various commentaries on Dionysius. The exact sentence alluded to by Nicholas seems nowhere to be found. The passage agrees more closely with Thierry of Chartres. *Commentarius in Librum Boetii de Trinitate* (*PL* 95:398).
65. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Mystical Theology* I, 3 (*Dionysiaca* I, 575).
66. *Ibid.*, I, 1 (*Dionysiaca* I, 568).
67. *Ibid.*, I, 2 (*Dionysiaca* I, 569-570).
68. *Ibid.*, I, 2 (*Dionysiaca* I, 569).
69. I.e., Robert Grosseteste.
70. I.e., Thomas Gallus.
71. Found in Henricus Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim. *Apologia adversus calumnias propter declamationem de vanitate scientiarum et excellentia verbi Dei, sibi per aliquos Lovanienses theologistas intentatas* [in Vol. II of the *Opera in duos tomos* (Lyons, n.d.), section 9 (p. 286)].
72. Viz., the untruth that logic provides a precise comparative relation to God. See *Ap.* 19:18-22.
73. *IL* 24:17-26.
74. See n. 56 of the English translation of *IL*.
75. *IL* 25:17-21.
76. *IL* 25:22-32.
77. *DI* II, 2 (100:3-4).
78. *DI* I, 21 (66:4-8).
79. *DI* I, 19.
80. R. Klibansky, ed., A., p. 23n.: “This statement is not found in Celestine I or in the other popes with this name.”
81. R. Klibansky, ed., *Ap.*, p. 24n.: “Augustine’s works . . . nowhere exhibit these words”; but the meaning corresponds to *De Trinitate* VI, 7 (*PL* 42:929); VI, 10 (*PL* 42:932); VIII, 1 (*PL* 42:947).
82. Note Thierry of Chartres, *Commentarius in Librum Boetii de Trinitate* (*PL* 95:404).
83. See the Athanasian Creed.
84. *DI* I, 24.
85. R. Klibansky, ed., *Ap.*, p. 25n.: “John Guldenschaf [was] dean of the clergy

of St. Stephan's at Mainz from 1436 until his death in 1439."

86. A. Daniels. *Eine lateinische Rechtfertigungsschrift des Meister Eckhart* [in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, 23 (1923)].

87. *IL* does not have the Latin word "in".

88. *IL* 26:1-3.

89. *IL* 26:3-5.

90. *IL* 26:20-21.

91. Augustine, *Confessions* I, 6. Nicholas takes this quotation from Meister Eckhart. See Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Vol. I: *Prologi. Expositio Libri Genesis. Liber Parabolarum Genesis*. Ed. and trans. Konrad Weiss (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1964), p. 46.

92. Gen. 2:7.

93. Cf. *Ap.* 27:4-5.

94. Meister Eckhart, *Prologi, op. cit.*, p.45.

95. *IL* 26:27-28.

96. *IL* 26:31-33.

97. Rom. 11:36. Col. 1:16.

98. *IL* 26:35-27:1.

99. *IL* 27:4-5.

100. *IL* :8-12.

101. Corollary 1 of thesis 2 (*IL* 27:29-31).

102. *IL* 28:8-10.

103. Corollary 2 of thesis 2 (*IL* 28:13-15).

104. *IL* 28:26-27.

105. *IL* 29:15-19.

106. *Ap.* 15.

107. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* I, 7 (*Dionysiaca* I, 48-51).

108. *IL* 29:32-34.

109. John Andrea, *Novella super primo libro decretalium* [heading "De Summa Trinitate et Fide Catholica"; section "Damnamus" (Vol. I. p. 5 verso. col. 2)]. Venice. 1489.

110. II Cor. 3:6.

111. *IL* 30:8-9. Cf. 30:10-12.

112. *Ap.* has "*ipsum maximum*". whereas *DI* has "*ipsum unum*".

113. Col. 1:15. Heb. 1:3.

114. *IL* 31:7-8, 13-16.

115. Nicholas uses the Latin "*abstracta vita*" for Wenck's German phrase "*abgescheiden leben*". See *IL* 31:24.

116. *IL* 31:29-31. Cf. 32:3-5.

117. *DI* I, 16 (43:14-16).

118. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* V, 8 (*Dionysiaca* I, 355-356).

119. *IL* 33:4-5.

120. *IL* 32:7-8.

121. E.g., cf. *DI* II, 5 (119:11) with II, 1 (97:15-17). Cf. I, 6 (15:8-9); II, 1 (91:9-10); II, 6 (125:9-10). Also note the discussion about number in *DI* I, 5. Passages such as *DI* I, 13 (36:5-6) and I, 16 (42:4-5) do, however, mislead.

122. R. Klibansky, ed., *Ap.*, p. 32n.: "The [foregoing] opinions are quite often

found in Augustine's works, though the [exact] words nowhere are."

123. *Ap.* 31:21-23. Regarding the attack on Parmenides, see *IL* 33:32-33.

124. See corollary 2 of thesis 6—especially *IL* 34:33 - 35:2.

125. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Mystical Theology* V (*Dionysiaca* I, 600).

126. See corollary 3 of thesis 6—especially *IL* 35:19-20.

127. See corollary 2 of thesis 7—especially *IL* 36:14-15.

128. *IL* 38:7-8.

129. *IL* 38:14.

130. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* VII, 4 (*Dionysiaca* I, 411).

131. *Ibid.* (*Dionysiaca* I, 413-414).

132. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* VII, 3 (*Dionysiaca* I, 404).

133. Cf. Rom. 8:35.

134. II Cor. 6:9.

To conclude, the whole point of John Wenck's polemics with Nicolas of Cusa lies ultimately in dealing with formulations and ideas from the German texts of Meister Eckhart. Cusanus, who surely knew German Eckhartian and pseudo-Eckhartian tradition, would not surprisingly like remember and analyse them in "De docta ignorantia" and "Apologia doctae ignorantiae". Unfortunately, Wenck doesn't hesitate not to forget these controversial texts condemned in the bulla "In agro dominico" (promulgated by Pope John XXII in March 27, 1329) and by the theologians at the university of Heidelberg in Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464). In the 21st century, Nicholas of Cusa or Cusanus is variously appreciated as a Christian disciple of the burgeoning Italian humanism of the 15th century, one of the great mystical theologians and reforming bishops of the late Middle Ages, and a dialogical religious thinker whose philosophical and political ideas peacefully contemplate the unity of old wisdom and new, Christian and Muslim. As a humanist, he praised the plainspoken delivery of the idiot or lay philosopher more than the excessive eloquence or vast erudition of the well-trained scholar. Nicholas of Cusa retrieved the idea of the limits of human knowing not just as a finite end but as a path of inquiry centered on the infinite. A second edition of Nicholas of Cusa's Debate with John Wenck appeared in 1984. vi. INTRODUCTION. Moreover, the theological faculties had scarcely adjusted to the prolonged debate between Ockhamism and Thomism, nominalism and realism, when the very underpinnings of Scholasticism were weakened by the rise of Jean Gerson's version of the devotio moderna and by the renewed spirit of Eckhart's speculative mysticism. Nicholas of Cusa (1401 - 11 August 1464), also referred to as Nicholas of Kues and Nicolaus Cusanus (/kjuːˈseɪnʊs/), was a German philosopher, theologian, jurist, mathematician and astronomer. One of the first German proponents of Renaissance humanism, he made spiritual and political contributions in European history. A notable example of this is his mystical or spiritual writings on "learned ignorance," as well as his participation in power struggles between Rome and the German states of the Holy