NICHOLAS OF CUSA’S
DIALECTICAL MYSTICISM
Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study
of De Visione Dei
(3rd Edition)

by
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THE ARTHUR J. BANNING PRESS
MINNEAPOLIS
Herrn Prof. Dr. Rudolf Haubst und allen Mitgliedern
des Instituts für Cusanus-Forschung gewidmet

The translation is made from the Latin text collated by Jasper Hopkins. That text is not
reproduced here online. It is available, together with the accompanying interpretive study,
in the printed (first and second) editions of this work. The page numbers here differ from
the page numbers in those editions.

Second edition 1988
(First published 1985)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 84-71736


Printed in the United States of America

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1 THE VISION OF GOD

I will now make known the things I previously promised you, most beloved brothers, regarding the ready accessibility of mystical theology. For I esteem you, whom I know to be motivated by a zeal for God, to be worthy of having disclosed to you this assuredly most precious and most abundant treasure. First of all, I pray the Heavenly Word and Omnipotent Expression, who alone can make Himself known, that I be given the ability to explain—in proportion to your ability to comprehend—the wonders which are revealed beyond all sensible, rational, and intellectual sight. But I will attempt to lead you—by way of experiencing and through a very simple and very common means—into most sacred darkness. Upon arriving there and sensing the presence of Inaccessible Light, each of you—of yourself and in the manner granted you by God—will endeavor to approach ever nearer. And [you will seek] to acquire in this lifetime, through a most pleasant savoring, a foretaste of that meal of eternal happiness to which we are called in the Word of Life by the Gospel of the Ever-blessed Christ.

2 If I strive to convey you by human means unto divine things, then I must do this through a likeness. Now, among human works I have not found an image more suitable to our purpose than the image of someone omnivoyant, so that his face, through subtle pictorial artistry, is such that it seems to behold everything around it. There are in existence many of these excellently depicted faces—e.g., the one of the archer in the forum at Nuremberg, the one of the preeminent painter Roger in his priceless painting in the city hall at Brussels, the one of the veronica [i.e., of the image of Christ] in my chapel at Coblenz, the one, in the castle at Brixen, of the angel holding the emblems of the church, and many others here and there. Nevertheless, so that you not be lacking in practical experience, which requires such a sensible figure, I am sending to Your Love a painting that I was able to acquire. It contains the figure of an omnivoyant [individual]; and I call it the "Icon of God."

3 Hang this icon somewhere, e.g., on the north wall; and you brothers stand around it, at a short distance from it, and observe it. Regardless of the place from which each of you looks at it, each will have the impression that he alone is being looked at by it. To the brother who is situated in the east it will seem that the face is looking toward the east;
to the brother in the south, that the face is looking toward the south; to
the brother in the west, that it is looking westward. First of all, then,
marvel at how it is possible that [the face] behold each and every one
of you at once. For the imagination of the brother who is standing in
the east does not at all apprehend the icon's gaze that is being directed
toward a different region, viz., toward the west or the south. Next, let
the brother who was in the east situate himself in the west, and he will
experience the [icon's] gaze as fixed on him in the west, just as it pre-
viously was in the east. But since he knows that the icon is stationary
and unchanged, he will marvel at the changing of the unchangeable
gaze.

Moreover, if while fixing his sight upon the icon he walks from
west to east, he will find that the icon's gaze proceeds continually with
him; and if he returns from east to west, the gaze will likewise not
desert him. He will marvel at how the icon's gaze is moved immovably.
And his imagination will be unable to apprehend that the gaze is also
moved in accompaniment with someone else who is coming toward
him from the opposite direction. Now, [suppose that] wanting to expe-
rience this [phenomenon], he has a fellow-monk, while beholding the
icon, cross from east to west at the same time that he himself proceeds
from west to east. And [suppose] he asks the approaching brother
whether the icon's gaze moves continually with him. Thereupon he will
be told that the gaze is also moved in this opposite manner; and he will
believe his fellow-monk. And unless he believed, he would not appre-
hend that this [simultaneous opposition of motion] was possible. And
so, through the disclosure of the respondent he will come to know that
that face does not desert anyone who is moving—not even those who
are moving in opposite directions. Therefore, he will experience that
the unmovable face is moved toward the east in such way that it is also
moved at the same time toward the west, that it is moved toward the
north in such way that it is also moved [at the same time] toward the
south, that it is moved toward one place in such way that it is also
moved at the same time toward all other places, and that it observes
one movement in such way that it observes all other movements at the
same time. And while he considers that this gaze does not desert any-
one, he sees how diligently it is concerned for each one, as if it were
concerned for no one else, but only for him who experiences that he is
seen I by it. This [impression] is so strong that the one who is being
looked upon cannot even imagine that [the icon] is concerned for
another. [The one who is pondering all this] will also notice that [the
image] is most diligently concerned for the least of creatures, just as for the greatest of creatures and for the whole universe.

5 On the basis of such a sensible appearance as this, I propose to elevate you very beloved brothers, through a devotional exercise, unto mystical theology. To this end I will [now] present three useful [considerations].

6 CHAPTER ONE

THE PERFECTION OF THE APPEARANCE IS PREDICATED TRULY
OF THE MOST PERFECT GOD

In the first place, I think we must presuppose the following: whatever is apparent with regard to the icon-of-God's sight is truer with regard to God's true sight. For, indeed, God, who is the summit of all perfection and who is greater than can be thought, is called "theos" by virtue of the fact that He observes all things. Therefore, if in the image the depicted gaze can appear to be beholding each and every thing at once, then since this [capability] belongs to sight's perfection, it cannot truly befit the Truth less than it apparently befits the icon, or appearance. For if one person's sight is more acute than another's, if one person's sight scarcely discerns nearby objects but another's discerns more distant objects, if one person's sight reaches its object slowly but another's arrives more quickly, then without doubt Absolute Sight, from which comes the entire sight of those who have sight, excels all the acuity, swiftness, and power both of all those who actually have sight and of all those who can be given it. For suppose I view abstract sight, which mentally I have freed from all eyes and organs. And suppose I consider (1) the fact that this abstract sight—in its own contracted being, according as those who see see by means of sight—is contracted to time, to the regions of the world, to individual objects, and to other such conditions and (2) the fact that, likewise, abstract sight is free from these conditions. Thereupon, I rightly grasp that it is not of the essence of sight that sight beholds one object more than another—even though the fact that while sight inspects one object it cannot [at the same time] inspect either another object or all other objects whatsoever characterizes sight in its contracted being.

7 But God, insofar as He is true Uncontracted Sight, is not sight that is less than the intellect can conceive abstract sight to be; rather, He is incomparably more perfect Sight. Hence, the appearance of the icon's gaze is less able to approximate the supreme excellence of Absolute
Sight than is conception. Therefore, that which is apparent in the case of that image must undoubtedly be present in an excellent way in Absolute Sight.

CHAPTER TWO

ABSOLUTE SIGHT ENCOMPASSES ALL MODES [OF SEEING]

Notice, next, that in those who have sight sight varies as a result of the variety of its contractedness. For our sight is conditioned by the affections of the organ [i.e., of the eye] and of the mind. Hence, a given individual looks [upon a given thing] now lovingly and gladly, later sadly and angrily, now as does a child, later as does an adult, and, still later, gravely and as does someone elderly. But Sight that is free from all contractedness—as being the most adequate Measure, and the most true Exemplar, of all acts of seeing—encompasses at one and the same time each and every mode of seeing. For without Absolute Sight there cannot be contracted sight. But Absolute Sight encompasses all modes of seeing—encompasses all modes in such way that it encompasses each mode. And it remains altogether free from all variation. For in Absolute Sight every contracted mode of seeing is present uncontractedly. For all contraction [of sight] is present in Absolute [Sight], because Absolute Sight is the Contraction of contractions. For it is Uncontractible Contraction. Therefore, most simple Contraction coincides with Absolute [Sight]. Now, without contraction nothing is contracted. Thus, Absolute Sight is present in all seeing, since all contracted sight exists through Absolute Sight and cannot at all exist without it.

CHAPTER THREE

THINGS PREDICATED OF GOD DO NOT DIFFER REALLY

Observe, next, that because of God's supreme simplicity whatever things are predicated of Him cannot differ really, even though we apply different words to God in accordance with different forms. But since God is the Absolute Form of all formable forms, He enfolds in Himself the forms of all things. Hence, although we ascribe to God sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, sense, reason, understanding, and other such things, in accordance with the different forms of signification of each word, nevertheless in Him seeing is not other than hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, perceiving, and understanding. And so, the
whole of theology is said to be circular,11 because [any] one of the attributes is affirmed of [any] other. And God's having is His being, His moving is His remaining at rest, His running is His being still—and so on regarding the other attributes. So although on the basis of one form we ascribe to Him moving and on the basis of another form we ascribe to Him remaining-at-rest, nevertheless because He is Absolute Form in which all otherness is oneness and all diversity is identity, there cannot be in Him a diversity of forms; for this diversity, as we conceive it, is not identity itself.

10

CHAPTER FOUR
GOD'S VISION IS SAID TO BE PROVIDENCE, GRACE, AND ETERNAL LIFE

Now, 0 brother contemplative, draw near to the icon of God and situate yourself first in the east, then in the south, and finally in the west. The icon's gaze looks at you in equal measure in every region and does not desert you no matter where you go. Therefore, a speculative consideration will be occasioned in you, and you will be aroused and will say: 0 Lord, by a certain sense-experience I now behold, in this image of You, Your providence. For if You do not desert me, who am the least of all men, then You will never desert anyone. You are present to each and every thing—just as being, without which things cannot exist, is present to each and every thing. For You who are the Absolute Being of all things12 are present to each thing as if You were concerned about no other thing at all. (Consequently, there is no thing which does not prefer its own being to everything else and does not prefer its own mode of being to all the modes of being of other things;13 and each thing so cherishes its own being that it would let the being of all other things perish rather than its own.) For You, 0 Lord, behold each existing thing in such way that no existing thing can conceive that You have any other concern than (1) that this very thing exist in the best manner it can and (2) that all other existing things exist only in order to serve the following end: viz., that this thing upon which you are looking exist in the best way.

11

You, 0 Lord, do not at all allow me to conceive, by any stretch of the imagination, that You, Lord, love anything other than me more than me, for it is me alone whom Your gaze does not desert. And since where Your eye is present Your love is also present, I experience that You love me, because Your eyes are most attentively upon me, Your lowly servant. 0 Lord, Your seeing is loving; and just as Your gaze
regards me so attentively that it never turns away from me, so neither
does Your love. And since Your love is always with me and is nothing
other, Lord, than You Yourself, who love me, You Yourself are always
with me, 0 Lord. You do not desert me, Lord; You safe-guard me on all
sides because You most carefully watch over me. Your Being, 0 Lord,
does not forsake my being, for I exist insofar as You are with me. And
since Your seeing is Your being, I exist because You look upon me. And
if You were to withdraw Your countenance from me, I would not at all
continue to exist.

12 But I know that Your gaze is that maximal goodness which cannot
fail to impart itself to whatever is capable of receiving it. Therefore,
You can never forsake me,14 as long as I am capable of receiving You.
Hence, I must see to it that, as best I can, I be made more and more
capable of receiving You. But I know that the capability which con-
duces to union is only likeness; but incapability results from unlike-
ness. Therefore, if by every possible means I make myself like unto
Your goodness, then according to my degree of likeness thereto I will
be capable of receiving truth. 0 Lord, You have given me being; and my
being is such that it can make itself more and more capable of receiv-
ing Your grace and goodness. And this power, which I have from You
and by virtue of which I possess a living image of Your omnipotent
power, is free will. Through free will I can either increase or decrease
my capability for receiving Your grace. I can increase it through con-
formity, when I endeavor to be good because You are good, when I
endeavor to be just because You are just, when I endeavor to be merci-
ful because You are merciful, when my every endeavor is turned only
toward You because Your every endeavor is turned toward me, when I
look most attentively only unto You (never turning the eyes of my mind
away) because You embrace me with a steadfast look, and when I turn
my love only toward You because You, who are Love,15 are turned only
toward me.

13 And what is my life, 0 Lord, except that embrace by which the
sweetness of Your love embraces me so lovingly? I love my life
supremely because You are the sweetness thereof. I presently contem-
plate eternal life in a mirror, an icon, a symbolism,16 because eternal
life is only Your blessed gaze, by which You never cease looking upon
me most lovingly—even to the point of beholding the intimate recess-
es of my soul. And Your seeing is only Your enlivening, only Your con-
tinually instilling Your most sweet love and, by instilling, inflaming me
with love for You. In inflaming me You feed me, and in feeding me You intensify my desires. In intensifying my desires You give me to drink of the dew of joy, and in giving me to drink You cause a fountain of life to well up in me. In so causing, You cause to increase and to be preserved. You impart Your immortality. You offer the unfading glory of Your celestial, most lofty, and most great kingdom. You make me a partaker of that heritage which is the Son’s alone, and You bestow upon me eternal happiness. [Your seeing is all of the foregoing,] wherein is the source of whatever delights can be desired. Not only can nothing better than this be imagined by any man or angel but also nothing better can exist by any mode of being. For this source is the absolute maximality (which cannot be greater) of all rational desire.

CHAPTER FIVE

[GOD’S] SEEING IS HIS TASTING, SEEKING, SHOWING MERCY, AND WORKING

0 how greatly manifold is that sweetness of Yours which You have reserved for those who fear You! For it is an uncountable treasure of most joyous joy. For to taste of Your sweetness is to apprehend the sweetness of all delights—to apprehend it in its own Beginning and by experiential contact. It is to attain, in Your wisdom, to the Form of all desirable things. Therefore, to see Absolute Form, which is the Form of all [forms], is no other than mentally to taste of You, who are God; for You are the Sweetness of being and of life and of understanding.

0 Lord, when You look upon me with an eye of graciousness, what is Your seeing, other than Your being seen by me? In seeing me, You who are deus absconditus give Yourself to be seen by me. No one can see You except insofar as You grant that You be seen. To see You is not other than that You see the one who sees You. By means of this icon of You, 0 Lord, I see how favorably disposed You are to show Your face to all who seek You. For You never close Your eyes; You never turn [them] away. And although I turn away from You when I completely turn to something else, You do not on this account change Your eyes or Your gaze. If You do not look upon me with an eye of grace, it is my fault, because I am separated from You through my turning away and through my turning toward something else, which I prefer to You. Notwithstanding, You still do not turn altogether away from me, but Your mercy follows me in case at sometime I might wish to
turn back to You in order to be capable of receiving Your grace. For the reason that You do not look upon me is that I do not look unto You but reject and despise You.

16 0 Infinite Graciousness, how unhappy is every sinner who forsakes You, the Stream of life, and seeks You not in Yourself but in that which in itself is nothing and would have remained nothing had You not called it forth from nothing. How foolish is he who seeks You, who are Goodness, and while seeking You departs from You and turns away his eyes. For everyone who seeks seeks only the good, and everyone who seeks the good and departs from You departs from that which he seeks. Therefore, every sinner strays from You and goes farther away. But when he turns back to You, You straightway come forth to meet him; and, before he beholds You, You cast Your eyes of mercy upon him with fatherly affection. Your showing mercy is nothing other than Your seeing. Hence, wherever any man goes Your mercy follows him for as long as he is alive, just as Your gaze, too, does not desert anyone. Therefore, as long as a man lives You do not cease to follow him and to urge him, with sweet and inward admonition, to cease from error and to turn unto You in order to live happily.

17 You, 0 Lord, are the companion for my journey; wherever I go Your eyes are always upon me. But Your seeing is Your moving. Therefore, You are moved with me; and You never cease moving as long as I am moved. If I am stationary, You are with me; if I ascend, You ascend; if I descend, You descend; in whatever direction I turn, You are present. And You do not desert me in time of tribulation. As often as I call upon You, You are nearby; for to call upon You is to turn toward You. You cannot be absent from him who turns toward You, nor can anyone turn toward You unless first You are present. You are present before I turn toward You; for unless You were present and unless You aroused me, I would be altogether ignorant of You. And how would I turn toward You, of whom I would be ignorant?

18 You, then, are my God, who sees all things; and Your seeing is Your working. Therefore, You work all things. Not, then, to us, 0 Lord, do I sing everlasting glory—not to us but to Your great name, which is Theos. For I have nothing which You do not give me; and I could not retain that which You have given unless You conserved it. Hence, You supply me with all things; You are the mighty and gracious Lord, who gives all things; You are the Minister, who supplies all things; You are the one who provides, the one who cares, the one who conserves.
And by means of Your one most simple viewing You, who are blessed forever, work all these things.

CHAPTER SIX
[OUR] VISION OF [GOD’S] FACE

0 Lord my God, the longer I behold Your Face, the more acutely You seem to me to cast the acute gaze of Your eyes upon me. Now, Your gaze causes me to reflect upon the following: that the reason this image of Your Face is depicted in the foregoing perceptible way is that a face could not have been painted without color and that color does not exist apart from quantity. But the invisible Truth of Your Face I see not with the bodily eyes which look at this icon of You but with mental and intellectual eyes. This Truth is signified by this contracted shadow-like image. But Your true Face is free of all contraction. For it is neither quantitative nor qualitative nor temporal nor spatial. For it is Absolute Form, which is also the Face of faces. Therefore, when I consider that this Face is the Truth of, and the most adequate Measure of, all faces, I become astounded. For the Face which is the Truth of all faces is not quantitative; hence, it is not greater or lesser than any face. Because it is neither greater nor lesser, it is equal to each and every face; and yet, it is not equal to any face, because it is not quantitative but is absolute and superexalted. It is, therefore, Truth, or Equality, that is free from all quantity. In this way, then, 0 Lord, I apprehend that Your Face precedes every formable face and is the Exemplar and Truth of all faces— and that all faces are images of Your Face, which cannot be contracted and cannot be participated in. Therefore, every face that can look upon Your Face sees nothing that is other than itself or different from itself, because it sees its own Truth. But Exemplar-Truth cannot be other or different; instead, these characteristics befall the image, by virtue of the fact that it is not the Exemplar.

Therefore, just as while I look from the east at this depicted face it seems likewise to look eastwardly at me, and just as while [I look at it] from the west or from the south it [seems] likewise [to look westwardly or southwardly at me], so the [depicted] face seems turned toward me regardless of how I change my face. In a similar way, Your Face is turned toward every face that looks unto You. Your gaze, 0 Lord, is Your Face. Accordingly, whoever looks unto You with a loving face will find only Your Face looking lovingly upon him. And the greater his endeavor to look more lovingly unto You, the more loving he will
likewise find Your Face to be. Whoever looks angrily unto You will find Your Face likewise to display anger. Whoever looks unto You joyfully will find Your Face likewise to be joyous, just as is the face of him who is looking unto You. For just as the bodily eye, in looking through a red glass, judges as red whatever it sees, and as green whatever it sees if looking through a green glass, so each mental eye, cloaked with contraction and passion, judges You who are the object of the mind, according to the nature of the contraction and the passion. A man can judge only in a human way. For example, when a man ascribes a face to You, he does not seek it outside the human species; for his judgment is contracted within human nature and does not, in judging, go beyond the passion that belongs to this contractedness. Similarly, if a lion were to ascribe to You a face, he would judge it to be only lionlike; an ox [would judge it to be only] oxlike; and an eagle [would judge it to be only] eaglike.

0 Lord, how admirable is Your Face! If a youth wished to conceive it, he would envision it as youthful; if an adult [wished to conceive it, he would envision it as] adult; and someone elderly [would envision it as] elderly. Who could conceive of this unique, most true, and most adequate Exemplar of all faces?—the Exemplar of each and every face and, yet, so perfectly the Exemplar of each that, as it were, it is not the Exemplar of any other. He would have to pass beyond all the forms and figures of all formable faces. And how could he conceive it to be a face, when he would transcend all faces and all likenesses and figures of all faces, as well as all concepts which can be made of a face and all color, adornment, and beauty of all faces? Therefore, as regards whoever sets out to see Your Face: as long as he conceives of something, he is far removed from Your Face. For every concept of face is less than Your Face, 0 Lord; and all beauty that can be conceived is less than the beauty of Your Face. All faces have beauty; but they are not beauty itself. But Your Face, 0 Lord, has beauty, and this having is being. Hence, Your Face is Absolute Beauty, which is the Form that gives being to every beautiful form. 0 Face exceedingly lovely! All the things which have received the gift of looking thereupon do not suffice for admiring its beauty.

In all faces the Face of faces is seen in a veiled and symbolic manner. But it is not seen in an unveiled manner as long as the seeker does not enter, above all faces, into a certain secret and hidden silence wherein there is no knowledge or concept of a face. For this obscuring-
mist, haze, darkness, or ignorance into which the one seeking Your Face enters when he passes beyond all knowledge and conception is that beneath which Your Face can be found only in a veiled manner. Yet, the obscuring mist reveals that Your Face is there, above everything beveiling. By comparison, when our eye seeks to see the sun's light, which is the sun's face, it first looks at it in a veiled manner in the stars and in colors and in all participants in the sun's light. But when our eye strives to view the sun's light in an unveiled manner, it passes beyond all visible light, because all such light is less than the light it seeks. But since it seeks to see a light which it cannot see, it knows that as long as it sees something, this is not the thing it is seeking. Therefore, it must pass beyond all visible light. So if one has to pass beyond all light, the place into which he enters will have to be devoid of visible light; and so, for the eye, it will be darkness. Now, while he is amid that darkness, which is an obscuring mist: if he knows that he is within an obscuring mist, he knows that he has approached unto the face of the sun. For that obscuring mist arises in his eye as a result of the excellence of the light of the sun. Therefore, the more dense he knows the obscuring mist to be, the more truly he attains, within that mist, unto the invisible light. I see, 0 Lord, that in this way and in no other the inaccessible light and beauty and splendor of Your Face can be approached unveiledly.

CHAPTER SEVEN
WHAT THE FRUIT OF [OUR] VISION OF [GODS] FACE IS AND HOW THIS FRUIT WILL BE OBTAINED

0 Lord, that sweetness by which You now feed my soul is so great that [my soul] is somehow aided by means of what it experiences in this world and by means of those most agreeable likenesses which You inspire. For example, since You, 0 Lord, are the Power, or Beginning, from which all things derive and since Your Face is the Power and Beginning from which all faces are that which they are, I turn toward this large and tall nut tree, whose Beginning I seek to see. And with the sensible eye I see that it is large, spacious, colored, laden with branches, with leaves, and with nuts. Then with the mind's eye I see that this tree existed in its seed not in the manner in which I here behold it but potentially. I consider attentively this seed's admirable power, wherein were present the whole of this tree, all its nuts, the entire seminal
power of the nuts, and, in the seminal power of the nuts, all [the deriv-
ative] trees. And I discern that this power is never at any time fully
unfoldable by the motion of the heavens. Yet, the seed's power, though
not [fully] unfoldable, is nevertheless contracted, because [the seed]
has power only with respect to this species of nuts. Hence, although in
the seed I see the tree, nevertheless [I see it] only in a contracted power.

Next, I reflect upon the entire seminal power of all the trees of var-
ious species—a power that is contracted to each species. And in the
seeds I see the trees in potency. If, then, I wish to see the Absolute
Power of all the powers of such seeds (this Absolute Power is the
Power that is also the Beginning and that gives power to all seeds), I
must pass beyond all seminal power that can be known and conceived
and must enter into that ignorance wherein remains no seminal power
or seminal force at all. Thereupon I will find amid obscuring mist a
most stupendous Power, accessible by no conceivable power. It is the
Beginning, which gives being to every power, whether seminal or non-
seminal. This absolute and superexalted Power gives to each seminal
power the power whereby it enfolds a tree potentially, together with
[enfolding] all that is required for a sensible tree and all that follows
from the being of a tree. Accordingly, this Beginning and Cause has
within itself—qua Cause, and in an absolute and enfolded manner—
whatever it gives to the effect. In this way I see that this Power is the
Face, or Exemplar, of every arboreal species and of each tree. In this
[Power] I see this nut tree not as in its own contracted seminal poten-
cy but as in the Cause and Maker of that seminal power. And so, I see
that this tree is a certain unfolding of the seed's power and that the seed
is a certain unfolding of Omnipotent Power.

Moreover, I see that in the seed the tree is not a tree but is the sem-
inal power, and the seminal power is that from which the tree is unfold-
ed, so that in the tree there can be present only what proceeds from the
seed's power. Similarly, in its own Cause, which is the Power of pow-
ers, the seminal power is not seminal power but is Absolute Power. And
so, in You my God the tree is You Yourself my God; and in You it is the
Truth and Exemplar of itself. Likewise, too, in You the seed of the tree
is the Truth and Exemplar of itself. Of both the tree and the seed You,
0 God, are the Truth and Exemplar. And that seminal power, which is
contracted, is the natural power of the species; it is contracted to the
species and is present in the species as a contracted beginning. But
You, my God, are Absolute Power and, hence, the Nature of all natures.
0 God, You have led me to the place where I see Your Absolute Face to be (1) the natural Face of every nature, (2) the Face which is the Absolute Being of all being, (3) the Art and Knowledge of everything knowable. So whoever merits to see Your Face sees all things plainly, and nothing remains hidden from him. He who has You, 0 Lord, knows and has all things. He who sees You has all things, for no one sees You except him who has You. No one can approach unto You, because You are unapproachable. Therefore, no one will apprehend You unless You give Yourself to him. How will I have You, 0 Lord?—I who am not worthy to appear in Your presence. How will my prayer reach You who are altogether unapproachable? How will I entreat You? For what is more absurd than to ask that You, who are all in all, give Yourself to me? How will You give Yourself to me unless You likewise give to me the sky and the earth and everything in them? Indeed, how will You give Yourself to me unless You also give me to myself? And while I am quietly reflecting in this manner, You, 0 Lord, answer me in my heart with the words: "Be your own and I will be yours."

0 Lord, Sweet Agreeableness of all sweetness, You have placed within my freedom my being my own if I will to. Hence, unless I am my own You are not mine. For [if You were mine when I did not will to be my own], You would be coercing my freedom, since You can be mine only if I too am mine. And because You have placed this matter within my freedom, You do not coerce me; rather, You await my choosing to be my own. This matter is up to me, then, not up to You, 0 Lord, who do not constrict Your maximum goodness but most generously shed it on all who are able to receive it. But You, 0 Lord, are Your goodness.

Yet, how will I be my own unless You, 0 Lord, teach me how? But You teach me that the senses should obey reason and that reason should govern. Therefore, when the senses serve reason, I am my own. But reason has no one to direct it except You, 0 Lord, who are the Word and the Rational Principle (ratio) of rational principles. Hence, I now see the following: if I hearken unto Your Word, which does not cease to speak within me and which continually shines forth in my reason, I shall be my own—free and not a servant of sin—and You will be mine and will grant me to see Your Face and then I shall be saved. 26 May You, therefore, be blessed in Your gifts, 0 God—You, who alone are able to comfort and encourage my soul, so that it may hope to attain unto You and to enjoy You as being its own gift and as being the infi-
My heart is not at rest, O Lord, because Your love has inflamed it with such desire that only in You alone can it find rest. I began to pray the Lord's Prayer, and You inspired me to attend to how it is that You are our father. Your loving is Your seeing. Your paternity is the seeing which paternally embraces us all, for we say "Our Father." For You are father of each and all alike. For [in praying the prayer] each confesses that You are "Our Father." Your paternal love comprehends each and every son. For the Father loves all sons in such way that He loves each son, because He is father of all in such way that He is father of each. He loves each son in such way that each son conceives himself to be preferred over all others.

If, then, You are father and are our father, we are, accordingly. Your sons. But paternal love precedes filial love. As long as we, Your sons, look unto You as sons, You do not cease to look upon us as father. Thus, You will be our paternal provider, showing paternal concern for us. Your seeing is Your providence. But if we, Your sons, renounce You who are our father, we cease being Your sons. And in that case we are not sons who are free and who are under our own power, but we depart to a distant region, separating ourselves from You; and thereupon we undergo harsh servitude to a ruler who is an adversary to You our God. But You, Father, who allow us (on account of the freedom conceded to us because we are the sons of You who are freedom itself) to depart and to waste our freedom and our best substance in accordance with the corrupt desires of the senses: You do not, for all that, altogether desert us. Rather, continually showing concern for us, You are present to us, and You speak within us and call upon us to return unto You. And You are always ready to look upon us with Your earlier paternal eye if we turn back and turn unto You. 0 gracious God, look upon me, who, remorseful, now turn back from wretched servitude—swinelike in its slimy filth, and in which servitude I was famishing—in order somehow to be fed in Your house. Feed me by Your gaze, O Lord. And teach me how it is that Your gaze sees all sight that sees, every object that can be seen, and every act of seeing, as well as all power to see, all power to be seen, and every actual seeing that arises from both. Since Your see-
ing is causing, You who cause all things see all things.

Teach me, 0 Lord, how it is that by a single viewing You discern all things individually and at once. When I open a book, for reading, I see the whole page confusedly. And if I want to discern the individual letters, syllables, and words, I have to turn to each individually and successively. And only successively can I read one letter after another, one word after another, [one] passage after another. But You, 0 Lord, behold at once the entire page, and You read it without taking any time. Now, if two of us men read the same thing, one more quickly and the other more slowly, You read with both of us; and You seem to read in time, because You read with us who are reading. But above time You see and read all things at once; for Your seeing is Your reading. Simultaneously—from eternity and beyond all passing of time—You have viewed all books that have been written and that can be written, and You have read them at once; but You also now read them successively, in accompaniment of all who are reading them. You do not read one thing in eternity and another thing in time, in accompaniment of those who are reading. Rather, You read [one and] the same thing—doing so in [one and] the same manner, because You are not mutable, since You are fixed eternity. But since eternity does not desert time, it seems to be moved with time, even though in eternity motion is rest.29

0 Lord, You see and You have eyes. Therefore, You are an eye, because Your having is being. Accordingly, You behold within Yourself all things. For if in me sight were the eye—as is the case with You my God—then I would view within myself all things. 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. But since Your sight is an eye, i.e., a living mirror, it sees within itself all things. Indeed, because it is the Cause of all visible things, it embraces and sees all things in the Cause and Rational Principle of all things, viz., in itself. Your eye, 0 Lord, proceeds to all things without turning. The reason our eye turns toward an object is that our sight sees from an angle of a certain magnitude. But the angle of Your eye, 0 God, is not of a certain magnitude but is infinite. Moreover, the angle of Your eye is a
circle—or better, an infinite sphere—because Your sight is an eye of sphericity and of infinite perfection. Therefore, Your sight sees—roundabout and above and below—all things at once.

To all who examine it, my God, how admirable is Your sight, which is *theos*! How beautiful and lovable it is to all who love You! How terrifying it is to all who forsake You, 0 Lord my God! For by Your vision, 0 Lord, You enliven every spirit, You gladden all who are made glad, and You dispel all sorrow. Look, then, mercifully upon me, and my soul shall be saved.

CHAPTER NINE

[**GOD’S VISION**] IS BOTH UNIVERSAL AND PARTICULAR;
AND WHAT THE WAY TO SEEING GOD IS

Since You behold at once each and every one [of us]—even as is befigured by this painted image that I look upon—I am amazed, 0 Lord, at how in Your visual power the universal coincides with the singular. But I take note of the following: that because seek [to understand] Your vision in terms of my own visual power, my imagination does not grasp how this [coincidence] can occur; since Your vision is not contracted to a sensible organ, as is mine, I am deceived in my judgment.

Your sight, 0 Lord, is Your essence. If, then, I consider human nature, which is simple and singular in all men, I find it in each and every man. And although in itself it is not in the east or the west or the south or the north, nevertheless in men who are in the east it is in the east, and in men who are in the west it is in the west. And likewise: although neither motion nor rest belong to the essence of humanity, nevertheless at one and the same time humanity is moved with men who move, it rests with men who are resting, and it remains stationary with men who are stationary. For humanity does not desert men, whether they are moved or are not moved, whether they are sleeping or resting. Hence, human nature, which is contracted and which does not exist apart from human beings, is such that it is present to one man as much as to another; yet, it is so completely present to one man that, as it were, it is not present to any other. If so, then in a much higher way [the case is parallel regarding] Uncontracted Humanity which is the Exemplar and Idea of the contracted human nature and which exists as the Form of, and Truth of, the form of the contracted humanity. For Uncontracted Humanity can never desert the humanity that is contracted in individual human beings. For it is the Form which gives
being to that formal nature [viz., to contracted humanity]. Without this Form, then, the specific form cannot exist, since it does not exist through itself. For the specific form derives from the Form which exists through itself and prior to which there is no other form. Therefore, that Form which gives specific being is Absolute Form; and You are this Form, 0 God—You, who are Former of heaven and earth and all things.34

Therefore, when I view contracted humanity and, by means of it, view Absolute Humanity (viz., by seeing in the contracted the Absolute, as in an effect the cause is seen and in an image the truth and exemplar is seen), You appear to me, my God, as the Exemplar of all men and as Human Nature per se, i.e., as Absolute Human Nature. But likewise, when with regard to all species I turn to [consider] the Form of forms: in all these species You appear to me as the Idea and Exemplar. And because You are the absolute and most simple Exemplar, You are not composed of many exemplars, but You are one most simple infinite Exemplar, so that You are the truest and most adequate Exemplar of each and every thing that can be formed.35Therefore, You are the Essence of essences,36 giving to contracted essences that they be that which they are. Apart from You, then, 0 Lord, nothing can exist.37

If, then, Your essence penetrates all things, then so too does Your sight, which is Your essence. Therefore, Just as none of all existing things can escape from its own being, so neither [can it escape] from Your essence, which gives to all things their essential being. Consequently, no [existing thing can escape from] Your sight, either. Thus, You see each and every thing at once, 0 Lord. And You are moved with all that is moved, and You remain stationary with all that is stationary.38 And because there are some things which are moved while others remain stationary, You 0 Lord, at once, are both moved and stationary; at once You both advance and are at rest. For if, in different things, being moved and being-at-rest occur contractedly and at the same time, and if nothing can exist apart from You, then neither motion nor rest exists apart from You. 0 Lord, You are present at one and the same time to all these things, and You are present as a whole to each [of them].39 Nevertheless, You are not moved and You are not at rest, because You are superexalted and are free from all these things, which can be conceived or named. Therefore, You are stationary and You advance, and likewise You are neither stationary nor do You advance. This very point is illustrated for me by this painted face. For if I am moved, its gaze
appears to be moved, since it does not desert me. If, while I am mov-
ing, someone else who is looking at the face remains stationary, then
the [face's] gaze does not desert him either but remains stationary with
him. However, a Face that is free from these conditions cannot pro-
perly be characterized as stationary and as moved; for [such a Face] exists
beyond all rest and motion, in most simple and most absolute Infinity.
Indeed, motion and rest and opposition and whatever can be spoken of
or conceived are subsequent to this Infinity.

Hence, I experience the necessity for me to enter into obscuring
mist and to admit the coincidence of opposites, beyond all capacity
of reason, and to seek truth where impossibility appears. And when—
beyond that [rational capacity] and beyond every most lofty intellectual
ascent, as well—I come to that which is unknown to every intellect
and which every intellect judges to be very far removed from the truth,
there You are present, my God, You who are Absolute Necessity. And
the darker and more impossible that obscuring haze of impossibility is
known to be, the more truly the Necessity shines forth and the less
veiledly it draws near and is present.

I thank You, my God, for disclosing to me that there is no other
way of approaching You than this way which seems to all men, includ-
ing the most learned philosophers, altogether inaccessible and impos-
sible. For You have shown me that You cannot be seen elsewhere than
where impossibility appears and stands in the way. And You, 0 Lord,
who are the Nourishment of the full-grown, have encouraged me to
do violence to myself, because impossibility coincides with necessity.
And I have found the abode wherein You dwell unveiledly—an abode
surrounded by the coincidence of contradictories. And [this coinci-
dence] is the wall of Paradise, wherein You dwell. The gate of this wall
is guarded by a most lofty rational spirit; unless this spirit is van-
quished the entrance will not be accessible. Therefore, on the other
side of the coincidence of contradictories You can be seen—but not at
all on this side. If, then, 0 Lord, in Your sight impossibility is necessi-
ty, then there is nothing which Your sight does not see.

CHAPTER TEN

GOD IS SEEN BEYOND THE COINCIDENCE OF CONTRADICTIONS,
AND HIS SEEING IS HIS BEING

I stand before the image of Your Face, my God—an image which I
behold with sensible eyes. And I attempt to view with inner eyes the
truth which is pointed to by the painting. And it occurs to me, 0 Lord, that Your gaze speaks; for Your speaking is none other than Your seeing. And because Your seeing and Your speaking are synonymous—since they do not differ really in You, who are Absolute Simplicity—I experience clearly that You see each and every thing at once. For when I preach, I speak at one and the same time to the church assembled as a congregation and to each individual present in the church. I speak one word, and in this one word I speak to each individual. That which the church is to me, this the whole world and each creature that exists or can exist is to You, 0 Lord. In like manner, then, You speak to each thing, and You see the things to which You speak. 0 Lord, who are the supreme consolation of those who place their hope in You, You inspire me to praise You on the basis of [an illustration regarding] myself. For You have given me one face, just as You willed to, and it is seen singularly and at once by all to whom I preach. And so, my one face is seen by each individual, and my simple sermon is wholly heard by each. But [only] successively and not at once can I individually hear all who speak. Nor can I see all individually at once, but [only] successively. Yet, if in me there were such great power that being heard coincided with hearing, and likewise being seen coincided with seeing, and speaking with hearing—as is the case with You, 0 Lord, who are supreme power—then I would hear and see each and every one at once. And just as I would speak to each at once, so also in the same moment when I would be speaking, I would be seeing and hearing the responses of each and all.

Hence, at the door of the coincidence of opposites, guarded by the angel stationed at the entrance of Paradise, 43 I begin to see You, 0 Lord. For You are present where speaking, seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, reasoning, knowing, and understanding are the same and where seeing coincides with being seen, hearing with being heard, tasting with being tasted, touching with being touched, speaking with hearing, and creating with speaking. If I were to see just as I am seeable, I would not be a creature. And if You, 0 God, were not to see just as You are seeable, You would not be God Almighty. You are seeable by all creatures, 44 and You see all creatures. For in that You see all creatures You are seen by all creatures. For otherwise creatures could not exist, since they exist by means of Your seeing. But if they were not to see You, who see [them], they would not receive being from You. The being of a creature is, alike, Your seeing and Your being seen.
By Your Word You speak to all existing things, and You summon into being nonexisting things. Therefore, You summon them in order that they may hear You; and when they hear You, they exist. Therefore, when You speak, You speak to all; and all the things to which You speak hear You. You speak to the earth, and You summon it to [become] human nature; and the earth hears You, and its hearing is its becoming man. You speak to nothing as if it were something, and You summon nothing to [become] something; and nothing hears You, because that which was nothing becomes something. 0 Infinite Power, Your conceiving is Your speaking. You conceive the sky and the sky is as You conceive it. You conceive the earth and the earth is as You conceive it. While You conceive, You see and speak and work and whatever else can be said.

But You are wonderful, my God! You speak once, and You conceive once. How is it, then, that all things do not exist at the same time but that many exist successively? How is it that from the one Concept there are so many different things? You enlighten me, who am situated at the threshold of the door; for Your Concept is most simple eternity itself. Now, posterior to most simple eternity no thing can possibly be made. Therefore, infinite duration, which is eternity itself, encompasses all succession. Therefore, everything which appears to us in a succession is not at all posterior to Your Concept, which is eternity. For Your one Concept, which is also Your Word, en folds each and every thing. Your eternal Word cannot be multiple or different or variable or changeable, because it is simple eternity. In this way I see, 0 Lord, that posterior to Your Concept there is not anything; rather, all things exist because You conceive [them]. Now, You conceive in eternity. But in eternity succession is—without succession—eternity itself, i.e., Your Word itself, 0 Lord God. Any given thing that appears to us in time was not conceived by You before it existed. For in eternity, in which You conceive, all temporal succession coincides in [one and] the same now of eternity. Therefore, where the future and the past coincide with the present, nothing is past or future.

But the reason that [only] in this world [do] things exist according to earlier and later is that You did not conceive mundane things before they existed. For if You had earlier conceived them, they would have existed earlier. Now, if earlier and later can occur in someone's concept, so that he conceives first one thing and then another, this concept is not omnipotent. (By comparison, that eye which sees first one thing
and then another is not omnipotent.) So because You are God Almighty, You dwell in Paradise on the inner side of the wall. Now, the wall is the coincidence where later coincides with earlier, where end coincides with beginning, where alpha and omega are the same. So, [in eternity], things exist always, because You command that they exist; but they do not exist earlier, because You do not command earlier. Now, when I read that Adam existed so many years ago and that a man like Adam was born today, the following seems impossible: (1) that Adam existed then because then You willed [his existence]; (2) that, likewise, [the other man] was born today because now You willed [his birth]; and (3) that, nevertheless, You did not will Adam to exist before [You willed the existence of] the man born today. But that which seems impossible is necessity itself. For now and then are posterior to Your Word. And so, to one who approaches unto You, now and then appear in coincidence in the wall which surrounds the place where You dwell. For now and then coincide in the circle of the wall of Paradise. But You, my God, who are Absolute Eternity, exist and speak beyond now and then.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

IN GOD WE SEE SUCCESSION WITHOUT SUCCESSION

I experience Your goodness, my God. Not only does it not spurn me, a wretched sinner, but it even nourishes me sweetly with a certain longing. With regard to Your mental Word or Concept's oneness and its variation, successively, in appearances, You have inspired a likeness that is pleasing to me. For the simple concept of a most perfect clock guides me, so that I may more wisely be caught up unto a vision of Your Concept and Word. For the simple concept of a clock enfolds all temporal succession. Now, let it be that the clock is the concept. Then, although we hear the sounding of the sixth hour before that of the seventh, nevertheless the [sounding of the] seventh is heard only when the concept gives the command. And in the concept the sixth hour does not occur before the seventh or the eight; rather, in the unitary concept of the clock no hour is earlier or later than another, although the clock never sounds the hour except when the concept gives the command. And when we hear the sounding of the sixth hour, it is true to say that six sounds at that moment because the master's concept so wills it.

Now, because in God's Concept the clock is the Concept, we see to
some small extent how the following are true: (1) that succession is present in the clock without there being succession in the Word, or Concept; (2) that in this most simple Concept are enfolded all movements and sounds and whatever we experience as in succession; (3) that whatever occurs successively does not in any way pass outside the Concept but is the unfolding of the Concept, so that the Concept gives being to each [successive thing]; (4) that the reason [each event] was nothing before it occurred is that it was not conceived before it existed. So, let the concept of a clock be, as it were, eternity itself. Then, in the clock, movement is succession. Therefore, eternity enfolded and unfolds succession; for the Concept of a clock—a Concept which is eternity—both enfolded and unfolds all things.

Blessed be You, 0 Lord my God, who feed and nurture me with the milk of likenesses, until such time as You grant more solid food.45 0 Lord God, guide me unto Yourself by these pathways. For unless You guide, I cannot stay on the pathway—on account of the frailty both of my corruptible nature and of the earthen vessel that I carry about.46 Trusting in Your help, 0 Lord, I turn once again in order to find You beyond the wall of the coincidence of enfolding and unfolding. And when at one and the same time I go in and out through the door of Your Word and Concept, I find most sweet nourishment. When I find You to be a power that enfolds all things, I go in. When I find You to be a power that unfolds, I go out. When I find You to be a power that both enfolded and unfolds, I both go in and go out. From creatures I go in unto You, who are Creator—go in from the effects unto the Cause. I go out from You, who are Creator—go out from the Cause unto the effects. I both go in and go out when I see that going out is going in and that, likewise, going in is going out. (By comparison, he who counts unfolds and enfolded, alike: he unfolds the power of oneness, and he enfolded number in oneness.) For creation's going out from You is creation's going in unto You; and unfolding is enfolding. And when I see You-who-are-God in Paradise,47 which this wall of the coincidence of opposites surrounds, I see that You neither enfold nor unfold—whether separately or collectively. For both separating and conjoining are the wall of coincidence, beyond which You dwell, free from whatever can be either spoken of or thought of.

CHAPTER TWELVE
WHERE THE INVISIBLE IS SEEN THE UNCREATED IS CREATED
Earlier, 0 Lord, You appeared to me as invisible by every creature since You are an infinite and hidden God. Infinity, however, is incomprehensible by every mode of comprehending. Later, You appeared to me as visible by all [creatures] because a thing exists insofar as You see it, and it would not exist actually unless it saw You. For Your seeing gives being, because [Your seeing] is Your essence. Thus, my God, You are both invisible and visible: You are invisible as You are [in Yourself]; You are visible in accordance with the existence of creatures, which exist insofar as they see You. You, then, my invisible God, are seen by all [creatures]. In all sight You are seen by every perceiver. You who are invisible, who are free from everything visible, and who are superexalted unto infinity are seen in everything visible and in every act of seeing.

I must, then, 0 Lord, pass beyond the wall of invisible seeing, on the inner side of which You dwell. But [this] wall is both everything and nothing. For You, who seem as if You were both all things and nothing of all things, dwell on the inner side of that high wall, which no intelligence can scale by its own power. At times, You appear to me [in such way] that I think You see all things in Yourself as would a living mirror in which all things shined forth. But because Your seeing is knowing, it occurs to me that You do not see all things in Yourself as would a living mirror; for, if You did, Your knowledge would derive from things. Hereupon, You appear to me to see all things in Yourself as would a power in viewing itself. For example, if the power of the seed of a tree were to view itself, it would see within itself a tree in potency; for the power of the seed is potentially a tree. But then it occurs to me that You do not see Yourself and—in Yourself—all things as would a power. For to see a tree in the potency of a power is different from the seeing by which the tree is seen in actuality. And then I find that Your infinite power is beyond the power of a mirror and of a seed and is beyond the coincidence of radiating and reflecting and, likewise, of causing and being caused. [And I find] that Your absolute power is absolute seeing, which is perfection itself and is above every mode of seeing. For Your seeing, which is Your essence, my God, is, without modality, all [these] modes, which display the perfection of sight.

But grant, most gracious Lord, that a lowly creature continue to speak to You. Your seeing is Your creating; and You do not see anything other than Yourself but are Your own object, for You are (1) the percever, (2) that which is perceived, and (3) the act of perceiving. If so,
then how is it that You create things that are other than Yourself? For You seem to create Yourself, even as You see Yourself. But You comfort me, Life of my spirit. For although the wall of absurdity (viz., the wall of the coincidence of creating with being created) stands in the way, as if creating could not possibly coincide with being created (since to admit this coinciding would seemingly be to affirm that something exists before it exists; for when it creates, it is—and yet is not, because it is created), nevertheless this wall is not an obstacle. For Your creating is Your being. Moreover, Your creating and, likewise, being created are not other than Your imparting Your being to all things, so that in all things You are all things, while nevertheless remaining free of them all. For to summon nonexisting things into being is to impart being to nothing. Hence, Your summoning is creating, and Your imparting is being created. And beyond this coincidence of creating with being created You, 0 absolute and infinite God, are neither creating nor creatable, although all things are that which they are because You exist.

0 Depth of riches, how incomprehensible You are! As long as I conceive of a creating creator, I am still on this side of the wall of Paradise. Similarly, as long as I conceive of a creatable creator, I have not yet entered in but am at the wall. But when I see You to be Absolute Infinity, to which belongs neither the name "creating creator" nor the name "creatable creator," then I begin to behold You unveiledly and to enter unto the source of delights. For You are not at all something such that it can be spoken of or conceived but are absolutely and infinitely exalted above all such things. Therefore, although without You nothing is made or can be made, You are not creator but are infinitely more than creator. To You be praise and glory forever and ever.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
GOD IS SEEN TO BE ABSOLUTE INFINITY

0 Lord God, Helper of those who seek You, I see You in the garden of Paradise, and I do not know what I see, because I see no visible thing. I know only the following: viz., that I know that I do not know—and never can know—what I see. Moreover, I do not know how to name You, because I do not know what You are. And if someone tells me that You are named by this or that name, then by virtue of the fact that he names, I know that [this] is not Your name. For the limit of every mode of signification that belongs to names is the wall beyond
which I see You. And if anyone expresses any concept whereby [allegedly] You can be conceived, I know that this concept is not a concept of You; for every concept reaches its limit at the wall of Paradise. Moreover, if anyone expresses any likeness and maintains that You are to be conceived in accordance with it, I know as well that this likeness is not a likeness of You. Similarly, if anyone recounts his understanding of You, intending to offer a means for Your being understood, he is still far away from You. For You are separated by a very high wall from all these [modes of apprehending]. For [this] wall separates from You whatever can be spoken of or thought of, because You are free from all the things that can be captured by any concept. Hence, when I am very highly elevated, I see that You are Infinity. Consequently, You are not approachable, not comprehensible, not nameable, not manifold, and not visible.

53 And so, one who ascends unto You must ascend beyond every limit and every end and [everything] bounded. But how will he attain unto You, who are the End at which he aims, if he is supposed to ascend beyond [every] end? Does not he who ascends beyond ends enter into what is indeterminate and confused and so, with respect to the intellect, into ignorance and darkness, which are characteristic of intellectual confusion? Therefore, the intellect must become ignorant and must be situated in a shadow if it wishes to see You. But how, my God, is the intellect in ignorance? Is it not with respect to learned ignorance? Therefore, 0 God, You who are Infinity cannot be approached except by him whose intellect is ignorance—i.e., whose intellect knows that it is ignorant of You. How can the intellect apprehend You, who are Infinity? The intellect knows that it is ignorant and that You cannot be apprehended because You are Infinity. For to understand Infinity is to comprehend the Incomprehensible. The intellect knows that it is ignorant of You, because it knows that You can be known only if the unknowable is known, the unseeable seen, and the unapproachable approached.

54 You, my God, are Absolute Infinity, which I see to be an Infinite End. But I cannot apprehend how it is that an end is an End without an end. You, 0 God, are Your own end, because You are whatever You have. If You have an end, You are an end. Therefore, You are an Infinite End, because You are Your own end, since Your end is Your essence. The essence of end is not limited by, or ended in, something other than end but by and in itself. Therefore, the End which is its own

E. My edition of the Latin text of *De Visione Dei* as found in J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa’s Dialectical Mysticism*.

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, Chap. 6, margin number 125, lines 19-20. And “Ap. 8:14-16” indicates *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*, p. 8, lines 14-16.

**NOTES TO THE TRANSLATION**

1. The reference is to the self-portrait of Roger van der Weyden (1400-1464) in his *Examples of Justice*.

2. These considerations are presented in Chapters 1-3 respectively.

3. Literally: "With regard to the icon-of-God’s sight nothing can be apparent that is not truer with regard to God’s true sight."


5. Note *DVD* 5 (18:2-3); 8 (33:1); and *NA* 23 (104:12-14).

6. "Free" translates both "abstractus" and "absolutus". N.B.: Although abstract sight is *absolutus ab his conditionibus*, it is distinguished by Nicholas from Absolute Sight, which is God. At the beginning of Chapter 2 Nicholas further explains that in human beings sight is conditioned by the dispositions (*passiones*) of the body and the affections (*passiones*) of the mind. Cf. *De Ludo Globi* I (26:1-6), Strasburg edition, reprinted in two volumes by de Gruyter, 1967, under the title *Nikolaus von Kues: Werke*, edited by Paul Wilpert.

7. Nicholas later makes clear that God, who is infinite, is not Sight—even as He is also not Goodness (Chapter 13). But just as, in accordance with the *via negativa*, He is called Goodness, so Nicholas here calls Him Sight, as well. Note *DVD* 12 (51:8-9).


9. In calling God the "Contraction [i.e., the Contractedness] of contractions," "Uncontractible Contraction," and "most simple Contraction" Nicholas does not mean to imply that either God or His Sight is contracted. These are *modi loquendi*. Indeed, just a few lines earlier Nicholas spoke of God’s Sight as "free from all contractedness" (8:7); and in Chapter 13 (57:12-13) he goes on to state flatly that the Infinite is not contractible. Also note *DVD* 6 (19: 10-11).


16. I Cor. 13:12.
17. Ps. 30:20 (31:19).
19. In the corresponding Latin text for this English sentence (16:5-7) I regard "igitur" as a mistake on Nicholas's part. Hence, I render the text as if Nicholas had written "enim".
20. Ps. 113B:1 (115: 1).
22. Literally: "... by the contracted shadow here."
23. See the references in n. 8 above.
31. See the references in n. 5 above.
32. *DI* II, 6 (125:2-5; 12-13).
33. "Uncontracted Humanity," "Absolute Humanity," and "Human Nature per se" are names for God. They are *modi loquendi*, since Nicholas does not believe that God is Humanity in any sense that can be conceived by us. See notes 7 and 9 above.
35. *De Mente* 5 (65:13-14). See the references in n. 8 above.
37. *DI* II, 3 (110:4-6).
42. Heb. 5:14. In the remainder of the Latin sentence—specifically at 39:6-7 I take the future tense of "coincidere" to express a present meaning.
45. Heb. 5:12.
46. II Cor. 4:7.
47. The beginning of Chapter 13 makes clear what kind of "seeing" this is. Also note *Complementum Theologicum* 2 (Paris ed., Vol. II, fol. 93, lines 18-21).
48. Chapter 5. See n. 18 above.
49. Chapter 10.
51. This view belongs to earlier medieval philosophy as well. Cf. Anselm of Can-
The formula "in all things You are all things" is from I Cor. 15:28 but is mediated to Nicholas from Pseudo-Dionysius. Note NA 14 (59:9). DP 74:6. DI 111, 4 (206:12).

52. Rom. 11:33.

53. In the corresponding Latin text (51:6) "ortum" is from "ortus,-us". (Cf. 13:14.) At 52:3 "horto" is from "hortus,-i"; I have added the "h" for clarity. As for God's being a creatable Creator, see Complementum Theologicum 14 (Paris ed., Vol. II, fol. 100v, lines 16-19). N. B.: In DVD17 (80:17) God is called fons deliciarum.

54. See n. 7 above.

55. See n. 53 above.

56. "End" ("finis") here has the sense of goal; but in the next paragraph it has more the sense of limit.

57. NA 19 (89:13-14).


60. DD 2 (100:13-20).


62. In Chapter 13 (58:11) Nicholas states that infinite goodness is not goodness but is Infinity. [Cf. Complementum Theologicum 12 (Paris ed., Vol. II, fol. 99v, lines 20-22.) Nevertheless, he continues to refer to God as Absolute Goodness—a modus loquendi associated with his conviction that God is not less than goodness.

63. DVD 6 (20:14-19); 15 (67:1-2).

64. See the references in n. 13 above.

65. DVD 12 (50:14-16).


67. See n. 63 above.

68. "End" ("Finis") here has the sense of goal, more than of limit.

69. This point is made in reference to the Incarnation. The incarnated Son of God continues to be infinite.

70. Nicholas does not hesitate to predicate "infinite" of "Infinity".

71. DI III, 12 (25:9).

72. As this chapter makes clear, "amabilis" means "able to be loved." But Nicholas, like the Ancients, tends to regard only certain kinds of things as able to be loved by us. Human nature is not able, for example, to love the ugly (qua ugly). What is able to be loved by human nature is what has worth or value. Hence, "amabilis" has the connotation of being worthy of love. Cf. DI III, 12 (255:5-8).

73. Nicholas is not here drawing the mistaken inference that nothing could be lovable (i.e., able to be loved) unless someone actually loved it. Rather, he is discussing the Trinity; and he goes on to indicate in the next sentence that the Son (Infinite Lovability) exists from the Father (Infinite Loving) and could neither exist nor be infinite apart from the Father. Cf. DI I, 20 (59). De Mente 11 (95:6-14).

74. DI I, 5 (14:9-12).


76. DVD 9 (38:7-9).