THE INTERNATIONAL
Schiller Institute

Zepp-LaRouche Open Letter:

Replicate Cusa's Thinking and Initiate a New Renaissance for Our World Today

November 2025

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November 5, 2025

Dear Friend:

In today's world, which is challenged by the dangers of wars, geopolitical tensions, mass starvation, poverty and cultural crisis, one of the most important and uplifting interventions came from Pope Leo XIV in his Jubilee Audience on October 25, 2025 in St. Peter's Square in front of tens of thousands of pilgrims. The Holy Father introduced Nicolaus of Cusa, the Cardinal and outstanding thinker of the 15th century, in his sermon as someone whose method of thinking enables man to see the hope of a better future and a way to find solutions to even the most difficult of problems.

The Pope's extended reference to Nicolaus of Cusa and this conception of the "coincidentia oppositorum," the coincidence of opposites, is of the highest strategic importance, because it provides the key to always find a solution to any problem on a higher level than that on which the problem arose. Cusa developed in his "Docta Ignorantia" and other writings the argument that Man, as the "imago viva dei," the living image of God, can always use his creative powers ("vis creativa") to find the higher "One" which is of a higher power and magnitude than the "Many." This way of thinking enables the human mind to think the one humanity first, before one thinks of the diversity, and in this way overcome otherwise seemingly unsolvable conflicts.

The Pope explained that, in the troubled times of the fifteenth century, Nicolaus could not see the unity of the Church, nor the prospect of peace in an age where Christianity was threatened by external forces. But Nicolaus understood that "there are opposites that must be held together, that God is a mystery in which what is in tension finds unity…. What a great gift for the Church!" the Pope said. "What a call to the renewal of the heart!" From Nicolaus, he continued, the Church can learn to make space, to hold opposites together, to hope for what is not yet seen."

We want to bring this extremely important intervention by Pope Leo XIV to your attention, because it does provide a new approach to the challenges mentioned above. Going back decades, my late husband, Lyndon LaRouche, the Schiller Institute and I always promoted this approach of Cusa's, a point singled out by the American priest, Father Harry Bury, in recent remarks of great importance.

The Schiller Institute would like to invite you to start a dialogue among representatives of the different religions, but also academics, think tanks, and generally people of goodwill, to apply Cusa's method of the coincidence of opposites to the urgent problems of the present situation. Just as Nicolaus of Cusa was the most important intellectual influence for the Golden Renaissance of the 15th century, we can replicate his thinking and initiate a new renaissance for our world today.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche
Founder, Schiller Institute

Pope Leo Discusses Cusa with 10,000 Jubilee Pilgrims in St. Peter's Square

CC/Nick in exsillo

Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa relief from his memorial in Basilica di S.Pietro in Vincoli.

by Dennis Small
October 25, 2025

Pope Leo XIV addressed a crowd of some 10,000 pilgrims from 93 countries on Oct. 25, who had gathered in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on the occasion of the Jubilee Audience, and centered his remarks on the 15th-century giant Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa. He compared today's situation to "another troubled age, the 15th century," when "many of his [Cusa's] contemporaries lived in fear, others took up arms and prepared new Crusades." Cusa, however, "believed in humanity. He understood that there are opposites which must be held together." The Pope implored: "Let us become a people in whom opposites are brought into unity."

Vatican News, the official news portal of the Holy See, headlined their article on the Pope's speech "Pope at Jubilee Audience: We Hope For What We Do Not Yet See." At the Jubilee Audience on Oct. 25, Pope Leo XIV holds up the example of Nicholas of Cusa, "a great thinker and a servant of unity.'" The following is the full text of that section of the Pope's remarks, as taken from the English simultaneous interpretation of the video.

"In another troubled age, the fifteenth century, the Church had a cardinal who is still little-known today. He was a great thinker, and a servant of unity. His name was

Nicholas, and he came from Kues in Germany, and is known as Nicholas of Cusa. He can teach us that to hope also means to not know. As St. Paul writes, what a person already sees, how can he still hope for it? Nicholas of Cusa could not see the unity of the church, shaken by opposing currents and divided between East and West. He could not see peace in the world or among religions, in an age when Christendom felt threatened from without. Yet as he traveled as a diplomat, he prayed and reflected. For this reason, his writings are full of light.

"Many of his contemporaries lived in fear, others took up arms and prepared new Crusades. Nicholas, however, from a young age, chose to keep company with those who had hope. And with those he delved into new disciplines, reread the classics, and returned to the sources. He believed in humanity. He understood that there are opposites which must be held together; that God is a mystery in which what is in tension finds unity. Nicholas knew that he did not know, and thus came to understand reality ever more deeply.

"What a great gift for the Church! What a call to the renewal of the heart. These are his lessons. To make room; to hold opposites together; to hope for what is not yet seen. Nicholas of Cusa spoke of a Learned Ignorance, a sign of intelligence. The protagonist of some of his writings is a curious character, the Layman. He's a simple person, uneducated, who poses to the learned basic questions that shake their certainties. It's the same in the church today. How many questions challenge our teachings? The questions of the young, the questions of the poor, the questions of women, the questions of those who have been silenced or condemned because they are different from the majority. We are living in a blessed time. So many questions. The church becomes an expert in humanity when she walks with humanity and carries in her heart the echo of its questions.

"Dear brothers and sisters, to hope is to not know. We do not already have the answers to all questions. But we have Jesus. We follow Jesus. So we hope for what we do not yet see. Let us become a people in whom opposites are brought into unity. Let us go forward, as explorers into the new world of the Risen One. Jesus goes before us. We learn as we advance, step by step. It is a journey not only of the church but of all humanity, a journey of hope."

POPE AT JUBILEE AUDIENCE: WE HOPE FOR WHAT WE DO NOT YET SEE

The four-and-a-half minute section of the Vatican News video begins here.

Father Harry Bury to IPC:

Cusa and LaRouche Can Be Our Inspiration

Harry J. Bury is an American Roman Catholic priest and Professor Emeritus of Organizational Behavior and Administration from Case Western Reserve University. He taught at Baldwin Wallace University from 1980–2010, and consulted not only in the U.S., but also in Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Thailand, The Philippines, several nations in Africa, and other countries.

Bury's activism started as a new priest serving at the university's Newman Center in the '60's when young Catholic men asked him to write a letter for them as a conscientious objector for the Vietnam War. In 1971, at the request of some Vietnamese, he and three others chained themselves to the U.S. Embassy gate in Saigon to protest the Vietnam War. Forty-three years later, in 2014, Fr. Bury was awarded the key to Ho Chi Minh City for his efforts to end the Vietnam war.

For decades, starting as early as 1971, Fr. Bury worked with Mother Theresa. He spent time working with her in India, raised money to support her work, and was invited to co-celebrate Mass with Pope John Paul II for her beatification to Sainthood in 2004.

Bury believes in dialogue and compromise between people in the community and around the world. And he is fearless in acting upon that belief. In 2005, Harry was abducted in Gaza while serving as a human shield between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian citizens. Throughout his life he's never hesitated to "risk the worst in order to achieve the best." Today, now 95, a priest for 70 years, Fr. Bury is still actively pursuing that motto and task.

The following remarks were delivered by Father Bury on Oct. 31, 2025, to the 126th consecutive weekly meeting of the International Peace Coalition. He was introduced by moderator Anastasia Battle, who noted the length of his priesthood, his lifelong peace activism, and his leadership in Pax Christi.

Thank you so much, Anastasia. I really feel honored and grateful that I have a chance to share with you and build upon what has been said today. It's been really significant and helpful to most of us, and I hope the Schiller Institute continues to do what we've been doing every Friday morning. This is really significant, and it's going to make a big change.

I'd like to build, if I can, on what Helga and you others have said. As she mentioned, last Saturday Pope Leo was celebrating the Jubilee of Education. So the emphasis was on the intellectual life. Pope Leo spoke of Nicholas of Cusa in a most positive way. Nicholas of Cusa was a Cardinal in the Church, when there were challenges like we are facing today in Europe particularly. Nicholas of Cusa was a catalyst of beginning the Renaissance; and it's my opinion that Nicholas of Cusa—it's only opinion now, of course—but that Nicholas of Cusa was for the 15th Century what Lyndon LaRouche was and is for the 20th and 21st Centuries. Lyn LaRouche was also a renaissance man. Both he and Nicholas of Cusa were geniuses and contributed to the world's intellectual, financial, and human development of us humans. Both believed in the unity of humanity; that we are all one. That means that what's good for you needs to be good for me and vice versa, or it's not any good.

Both believe in the unity of humanity; that we be all one and are united. So both believed in the potential of humanity, and the goodness of humanity. Too many people today think that there are evil people in the world. Helga [Zepp-LaRouche] has pointed out many times, and the Schiller Institute has taught that there are no evil people in the world; there are only good people who do evil things because they don't know any better. That's what Jesus said from the Cross. Of the very people who were crucifying him, he said, "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do." If those soldiers who were crucifying Jesus knew he was the Son of God, they would never have crucified him. They didn't know any better.

So, both Nicholas of Cusa and Lyndon LaRouche believed in humanity. They believed that the potential of humanity is to overcome life's challenges. In this sense, they both were apostles of hope. Both presented new ways of thinking; new ways of perceiving reality. Both taught that humanity doesn't know absolute truth; what we know is probability, and that's why we keep discovering. Discovering more and more truth, but we never arrive. That's why the intellectual life that Pope Leo was attempting to point out to us is so significant and important.

Both Nicholas of Cusa and Lyndon LaRouche believed in the significant potential of humanity; that we have the capability of making change for the better. As I say, they really are apostles of hope. Both presented new ways of thinking; new ways of perceiving reality. Both taught that no one knows absolute truth, so we can learn. We need to learn, and we have the capability of learning. That's our challenge. We all are in the process of discovering truth, but we never arrive. So, nobody can be absolutely certain about what they think; not if they understand what Nicholas of Cusa and Lyndon LaRouche were saying. We can all learn; we can all grow; we can all change. There is hope for the human race.

Both of them encouraged people to think outside the box; to think differently. And so, they had enemies. The enemies spoke up and convinced people that Nicholas of Cusa, a Cardinal, was really not a good person. They slandered him. So, he never was canonized a saint by the Church. And Lyndon LaRouche experienced the same thing. He was slandered and they lied about him. It led people to believe that he was evil. So, he went to prison. They both suffered a great deal, but they weren't discouraged. Despite what they went through, both of them had hope. Both of them saw that humanity could make changes for the good. So, they bring hope to the world, and we're to carry that on now what both Nicholas of Cusa and Lyndon LaRouche have passed on. It's our opportunity; it's the grace of God for us to follow in their footsteps and think and come up with ways of contributing to the peace of this world. We can do it! That's what both of them said; we can do it. We, humanity, can do it.

So, let's do it! Let's be peacemakers like Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa and the dear friend of many of you, Lyndon LaRouche. They can be our inspiration; they can increase our hope. And that's what I perceive and expect to see happening; because of them, and also because of you, all of you. We're going to make a difference. We are making a difference. We are not discouraged; we are filled with hope. Thank you very much.

HELGA ZEPP-LAROUCHE: I just want to thank you, Father Bury. In my view, the speech you just gave is probably one of the most important speeches ever given in the history of the United States. Thank you very much.

BURY: I'm grateful.

FATHER BURY'S VIDEO ADDRESS

Father Bury's Oct. 31 video presentation can be viewed here.

Click here for Full Issue of EIR Volume 28, Number 26, July 6, 2001

EIR Feature

Honoring Nicolaus of Cusa: A Dialogue of Cultures

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Editors' note: *This speech was delivered at a conference of the Schiller Institute in Bad Schwalbach, Germany on May 6, 2001, as a contribution to the 600th birthday of Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa. The speech is a historical first, in that it presents the development of the nation-state, as it originates in Cusa's revolutionary work. Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche's analysis is informed by the work of the late Baron Friedrich von der Heydte, but takes a different emphasis: the importance of the Fifteenth-Century Golden Renaissance in the emergence of the nation-state.*

It is an extraordinary joy for me to speak about my good friend, Nicolaus of Cusa. And, given the fact that it is his birthday somewhere between April and June, he will be 600 years old. And I really mean the joy of a friend having a birthday, because when a friend has a birthday, you realize that without this individual, the world would be so much poorer. And I hope that with my remarks I will interest you in studying Nicolaus of Cusa, his ideas and concepts, so that he becomes one of your dear friends, too, if he is not so already.

The reason why this particular man is so extraordinarily important is, because it was his ideas which gave the beautiful, Italian Renaissance—the Golden Renaissance of Florence—an even higher expression, because he was the towering genius among all the many geniuses who came together at that point. And it was this unbelievable, fantastic explosion of human creativity expressed in this Renaissance, which succeeded in overcoming the Dark Age of the Fourteenth Century. And it is more urgent than ever before, to study the example of the Golden Renaissance, to find the clues to how we can overcome the Dark Age of today.

As during Nicolaus's time, when the issue of peace was of the highest actuality, so today we have terrible wars raging in Africa, in the Middle East, in the Balkans, but also within nations, like Colombia, Indonesia, and many other countries. The image of man, which Nicolaus so beautifully defined, is once again in shambles; and when the British press talks about "culling people" in the context of the next global flu epidemic, being the equivalent of hoof and mouth disease for human beings, you can see what the value of human life is today. As in Cusa's time, the challenges of these new diseases are such that a new scientific revolution is required. But, also, the issues which concerned him—namely, what should be the principles according to which countries, nations, and peoples relate to each other?—are of the utmost importance today.

To answer all of these questions, one of the most important struggles to understand, both then and now, is the conflict between those, on the one hand, who contributed to the emergence of the sovereign nation-state, through fundamental changes in world outlook during the transition from the Thirteenth to the Fourteenth Centuries, and especially in the Fifteenth Century and Nicolaus's contribution; and those on the other side, who wanted to go back to imperial structures of the period before that, such as the forces of globalization today. That globalization is a new version of the old Roman Empire, an Anglo-American version, which actually kills entire continents and turns the world into a global plantation, is now being seen by more and more people.

But, how precious the instrument of the sovereign nation-state actually is for the defense of the common good, and what enormous efforts it took, to arrive at the concepts of national sovereignty and a community of states based on international law—the knowledge of this has been thoroughly obscured by those who benefit from globalization, and who point to the nation-state as the source of all evil.

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Helga Zepp-LaRouche: "Can we not, for our own sakes, and as the most beautiful birthday present we could give to Nicolaus of Cusa for his 600th birthday, develop the same power of intellect, the same existential commitment and passion to great ideas?"

What I want to do in this presentation, is to set the record straight, and completely agree with that genius of international law, the late Baron Friedrich von der Heydte, that the ideas of a community of states based on international law, are so very integral to European culture, that this culture cannot even be thought of, without them. Globalization directly threatens the very essence of European culture. Let me therefore present to you some of the ideas, which went into the emergence of the nation-state and the community of nations based on international law, and then show you, why the works of Nicolaus of Cusa meant a qualitative change in the tradition of all Platonic thinkers before him, and why his breakthrough of the *coincidentia oppositorum,* the thinking of the opposites in coincidence—which today is represented in a qualitatively enriched form by Lyndon LaRouche—is exactly the level of thinking necessary for a Renaissance today!

Birth of the Nation-State

So, what steps were necessary, for the nation-state to come into being?

Dr. Sergei Glazyev spoke two days ago about world organizations, the IMF, World Bank, WTO;[1] and if, while I'm speaking, you think about the emergence of the nation-state, you can actually see that the effort to put these current instruments of globalization in control of the world, is an effort to turn the clock back before A.D. 1000, 1100; actually, before the idea of sovereignty existed.

The Middle Ages in Europe were essentially dominated by two poles: the Holy Roman Empire, on the one hand, and the Papacy, on the other; but, despite changing rivalries, these were united in the concept of a universal, occidental Christianity, in which the philosophical idea of the "*reductio ad unum,*" the reduction of the multitude to unity, governed the political thinking of the time. For example, the "Königsspiegel" ("The King's Mirror") of Gottfried of Viterbo (1180) develops this universal idea of the Emperor, with all its tradition, in a straightforward way. Even if there were other, regional ruling structures from the Tenth to the Twelfth Centuries, one could not call these regional power formations, "states."

It took the decisive change in political thinking, during the transition from the Thirteenth to the Fourteenth Centuries, for the different aspects of what eventually, with Nicolaus of Cusa, constituted the sovereign nation-state, to emerge.

Around the turn from the Thirteenth to the Fourteenth Century, the top of the old hierarchical order—the Empire, and the Church as a temporal power—lost influence, and power structures on a lower level were strengthened. Eventually, these no longer recognized any power, or decision-making authority, above them, arrogating to themselves the right to decide about the life and death of their subjects.

1. Sergei Glazyev, "Reconstruction After the Financial Crash," *EIR,* May 18, 2001.

Thus, in the beginning, these regional ruling structures achieved a "status," a state, *état*.

The Infante Peter of Aragon talks in his "Fürstenspiegel" ("Prince's Mirror") of 1355, of a "conservative status." The same formulation is used in a letter by Petrarch to Francesco of Carrara, about the administration of the community. Also, English authors of the Fourteenth Century use the word "status" for "state."

The only challenge to the universal hierarchical order of the Holy Roman Empire, was in the Tenth- and Eleventh-Century establishment of Norman monarchies on the outskirts of the Empire—in western France, England, Sicily, Russia, and Poland—which ignored the philosophy of the power of the Empire, and based themselves on a strong administration, their own nobility, a mercenary army, a jurisdiction, and a coherent financial and trade policy. The Norman historian Orderic Vitalis (1075-?1143), for example, did not entertain the idea in his work, that the Holy Roman Empire of his time continued the Roman Empire of the past, but assumed instead that it was the Normans who were the carriers of world historical development, for which divine Providence had selected them. This was a peripheral development, but it did not go unnoticed.

The two individuals who can be called the pioneers—not prophets, but pioneers—of the modern state, were John of Salisbury (1120-80) and Guillaume d'Auvergne (?1180-1249); their social teaching was, however, still based on a cosmological order. John of Salisbury wrote the so-called *Policraticus,* a work of state theory, "[a]bout the vain worries of the courtiers and the influence of the philosophers," which is one of the few timeless works of state science. But the "*res publica*" is still, for him, embedded within a *spiritual* hierarchy. The same is true for Guillaume d'Auvergne, Bishop of Paris, who in 1235 wrote of the "state of the angels," being a model for the commonwealth on Earth. These two books were the first social theory ever, and crucial for the new theory of the state in France, in which the tendency for a developing nation-state was most advanced.

The *Policraticus,* taught by the Cistercian monk Hélinant de Froidmont and Guillaume d'Auvergne, influenced Gilbert de Tournoi, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Aegidius Colonna of Rome, who wrote the first modern theory of the state.

John of Salisbury emphasized political justice, as being an important step in the evolution of political theory. Aegidius Colonna was the first to speak of political theory as an independent science, and he was the educator of Philip the Fair (1268-1314).

Emerging National Sovereignty

So, the first sovereign nation-states emerged in England, with Henry II Plantagenet (1154-89); in France, with Louis IX (St. Louis) (1226-70); in Sicily, with Friedrick II Hohenstauffen (1212-50); and in Spain, with Ferdinand III (el Santo), and his successor, Alfonso the Wise (1252-58).

These new state formations were all based on similar features. First, a clearly ordered jurisdiction. Second, a territorial structure according to jurisdictional districts. Third, the superiority of royal courts over those of the nobility and Church. Fourth, the strengthening of royal courts, and the issuance of new laws and institutions in a code promulgated in the king's name.

In England, France, and Sicily, an order of financial administration developed parallel to the jurisdiction.

The result of these reforms in these four states was, that it was the new power structure which had control over life and death, it being exclusively in the hands of the leadership of the state, and no longer in the hands of the lesser nobility.

There was a consolidation of power internally, and at the same time, a declaration of sovereignty toward the external. What that meant was, first, not to recognize any higher Earthly power; second, the leadership of an emperor in his own territory; third, to be a coherent community.

This notion, not to recognize any higher Earthly power, suddenly became *the* leitmotif of the transition from the Thirteenth to the Fourteenth Centuries, and this became one of the most powerful ideas in the development of modern Europe!

At the beginning of the Fourteenth Century, in the fight between Pope Boniface VIII and Philip the Fair, this became the fighting slogan of the royalist party. It led to the summoning of the Estates-General in 1302, and the Act of 23 February, in which Philip declared his intention to disinherit his sons, if they were ever to recognize any higher authority in France than God.

Alfonso the Wise in Spain, and Frederick II in Sicily, adopted the same formulation.

In Sicily, interestingly enough, it was the father and brothers of Thomas Aquinas, who helped Frederick II found the Sicilian state. Thomas Aquinas developed this idea to a general theory.

A counter-tendency was the theory of the "Emperor status" of the Pope, as a temporal power. The main theoretician of this was Aegidius Colonna, and his ideas were taken up by Pope Boniface VIII, who expressed them in the Bull *Una Sancta*.

There is an anecdote told—I don't know if it's true, but the anecdote is told—that Boniface once climbed the stairs of a church in Rome, and shouted at people: "*Ego Caesar, ego Imperator!*" Which, obviously, was absolutely not the intention of what Popes are supposed to be.

On the other side of the conflict, you had the emerging national sovereignty, where, for the first time, a shift occurred, such that in the state, not only the interest of the king, but the common good, was a concern.

One step in this direction was the writing of Alfonso the Wise, that the king, as the representative of God, has to guarantee Justice and Truth for the people he governs.

The notion of sovereign equality was first mentioned by

the philosopher and poet Ramon Llull (Lullus) at the end of the Thirteenth Century. He also had the idea of a "*persona communa,*" in whom goodness, greatness, and stability for the community, are united. For Llull, however, in the Thirteenth Century, this *persona communa* was still the world Emperor.

Frederick II Hohenstauffen was the first to appeal to the reason of the rulers of the sovereign, *equal* states, instead of just demanding obedience of them.

A truly revolutionary breakthrough occurred, when the Dominican philosopher John Quidort of Paris elaborated the idea of a multitude of equal, independent states, and the idea, that there could be peace in the world only, if there were no Emperor. Only in a system of juridically equal states, each limited to its own territory, could there be peace and concordance. The drive for world dominion, the mere idea of being greater than others, necessarily brings non-peace, he wrote. This represented a decisive step in the evolution of the modern international law of peoples.

Quidort's writings were ammunition in the fight of France against the demands of papal power. The then-famous lawyer Peter Dubois wrote in 1305 in a leaflet: "In my view, there is rarely a reasonable person, who would like to believe that, concerning temporal matters, there should be one single ruler in the whole world, who would govern everything, and to whom all ears would listen; because if you drive toward such a condition, there will be wars, riots, and fighting without end, and no one could suppress it, because there are too many people, too great distances and differentiations of the individual countries, which are too big, and the natural inclination of people for opposition and dissonances is too large."

In this entire period, the unresolved tension between the empire and the emerging states was unresolved, and a "*concordantia disconcordantium*" was the essential conflict of the time. The best thinkers and most advanced kings of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries tried in vain to find a solution to overcome this tension.

The poet Dante is an illustration of Lyndon LaRouche's argument, that the beautiful visions of poets are often the inspiration for the politicians; such was the vision in his *De Monarchia,* which portrayed the ideal of world community, where the deep longing for peace was realized.

It is interesting that, long before this, what Professor von der Heydte calls the "birth-hour of the modern nation-state,"[2] actually went through its labor pains. St. Augustine wrote in the *City of God,* that only an evil state would be imperialistic—a clear reference to the Roman Empire—and that well-meaning men would not derive happiness from the *size* of their empire. Because its vast extent, would only have grown because of its injustice, against which justified wars would have been fought; whereas, the empire would be small, if there were calm and peaceful neighbors. And thus, according to Augustine, smaller states would be better than large, never-satisfied empires.

Extremely important for Alfonso the Wise, Llull, and Thomas Aquinas, was the question of justice in the state. Aquinas even said, that life in society cannot exist, if there is not someone on the top of the state, concerned with the *bonum communum,* the common good. And that is exactly what the problem is with globalization today—that at the top of these supranational institutions, they could not care less for the common good.

The 'Concordantia Catholica' and Political Freedom

What inspired the different philosophers, poets, and state theoreticians who contributed to the idea of the international law of peoples, and of national sovereignty, was a passionate drive for peace; and, justice and love were regarded as the preconditions for peace. Especially today, when there is no peace in many areas of the world, when globalization causes wars and threatens a new, global Dark Age, it is of the utmost importance to understand, that *it was the desire for peace, which stood at the beginning of the development of national sovereignty and international law*.

The philosopher whose political theory represented a grand design for a functioning peace-order in the world, who resolved the "*concordantia disconcordantium,*" was Nicolaus of Cusa, the greatest thinker of the Fifteenth Century. His *Concordantia Catholica* (*Catholic Concordance*), a paper written for the Council of Basel, not only contains, in Books I and II, ideas about the reform of the Church, but in Book III, an argument for the reform of the Holy Roman Empire. Nicolaus gives here, for the first time, a concrete institutional form to the constitutional demands on the ruler, which was a major step in the direction of modern constitutionalism, and even the separation of powers.

Completely new in Nicolaus's approach, was the idea of natural freedom and equality, as the basis for participation in government. Here, we have the beginning of the political rights of all people!

Nicolaus writes in the *Concordantia:*

> Therefore, since all are by nature free, every governance—whether it consists in a written law, or in living law in the person of a prince . . . can only come from the agreement and consent of the subjects. For, if men are by nature equal in power and equally free, the true, properly ordered authority of one common ruler, who is their equal in power, can only be constituted by the election and consent of the others, and law is also established by consent.

This was totally revolutionary—that the rulers and the governed are equal and equally free. And, at another place, he says, that what is true for the German, is also true for the

2. Baron Friedrich von der Heydte, *Die Geburtsstunde des souveränen Staates* (Regensburg, Germany: Druck und Verlag Josef Habbel, 1952).

Ethiopian! Nicolaus really meant human rights as a universal principle.

In Book III, he writes:

> Natural laws precede all human considerations, and provide the principle for them all. First, nature intends every kind of animal to preserve its physical existence and its life, to avoid what could be harmful, and to secure what is necessary to it. For the first requirement of essence is that it exist.

If one were to write a new constitution for a world of sovereign nation-states, this definition of Nicolaus's could go into it completely unchanged, because, first off, people have to exist.

He continues:

> But, from the beginning, men have been endowed with reason, which distinguishes them from animals. They know, because of the existence of their reason, that association and sharing are most useful—indeed, necessary for their self-preservation, and to achieve the purpose of human existence.

And therefore, Cusa argues,

> Human beings have built cities and adopted laws to preserve unity and harmony, and they established guardians of all of these laws, with the power necessary to provide for the public good.

Nicolaus then, in the clearest way, establishes the principle which separates the sovereign nation-state from the previous oligarchical forms of society, by defining the only legitimate source of power, as caring for the common good, to which all or a majority of people have to consent. He says:

> All legitimate power arises from elective concordance and free submission. There is in the people a divine seed by virtue of their common equal birth and the equal natural rights of all men, so that the authority—which comes from God, as does man himself—is recognized as divine, when it arises from the common consent of the subjects. One, who is established in authority as representative of the will of all, may be called a public or common person, the father of all, ruling without haughtiness, or pride, in a lawful and legitimately established government.
>
> While recognizing himself as a creature, as it were, of all of his subjects as a collectivity, let him act as their father, as individuals. That is the divinely ordained marital state of spiritual union based on a lasting harmony, by which a commonwealth is best guided in the fullness of peace toward the good of eternal bliss.

Now, is that not beautiful? I really enjoy reading this, to see that a constitution can be based on coherence with the common good, but that the ruler is also asked to act like a father to all, which obviously requires love.

Nicolaus then defines the representative system, in which the elected representatives enter a reciprocal legal relationship with both the government and the governed. He says:

> For this purpose [the public welfare], the ruler should have the best qualified of his subjects chosen from all parts of his realm, to participate in a daily council with him. These counsellors ought to represent all the inhabitants of the realm. . . . These counsellors ought constantly to defend the good of the public which they represent, giving advice and serving as the appropriate means through which the king can govern and influence his subjects, and the subjects on proper occasion can influence him in return. The great strength of the kingdom comes from this daily council. The counsellors should be appointed to this task by agreement in a general meeting of the kingdom, and they should be publicly bound legally by oath to speak out openly for the public good.

Now, you heard yesterday in the panel on the fight for D.C. General Hospital, a living example, if all the citizens would publicly speak out for the common good as it was done by Charlene Gordon or by Dr. Alim Muhamad, then the state would function; and that is exactly what we have to accomplish.

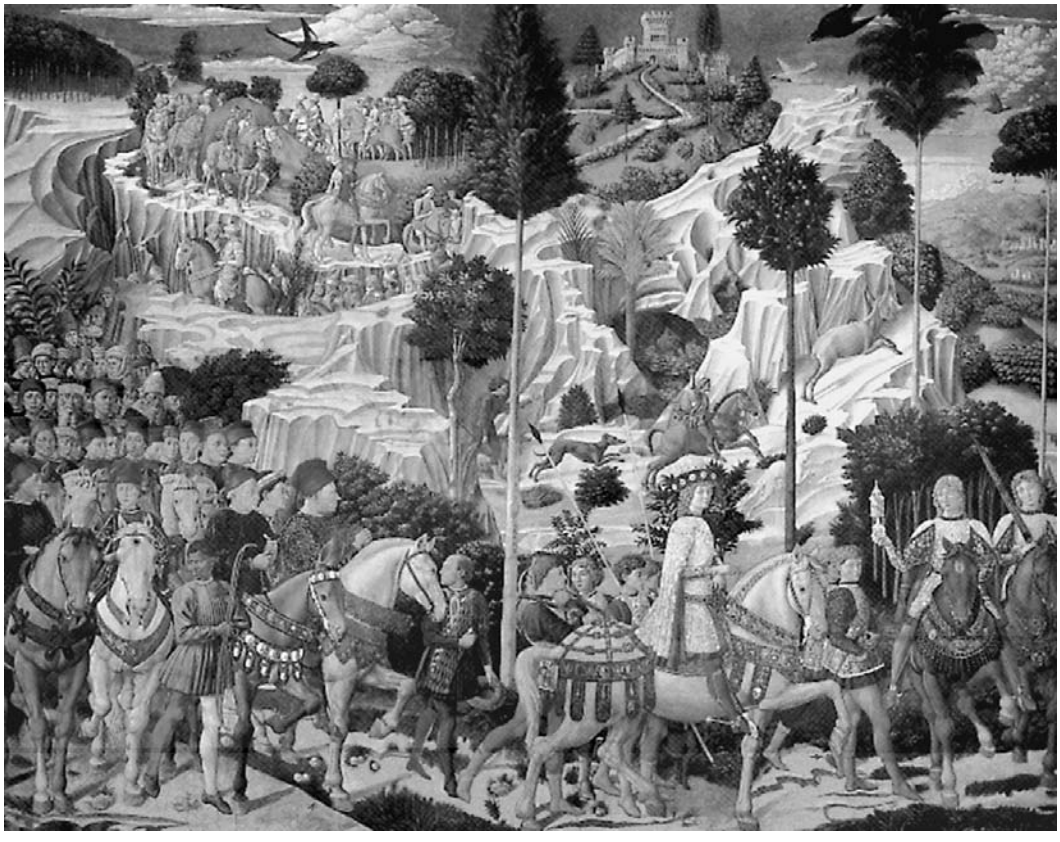
Nicolaus wrote this groundbreaking work in 1433, and it took another 343 years, until these ideas of a representative system as the *only* practical way to defend the inalienable rights of the individual, were formulated in the American Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution.

But, for Nicolaus, this was only his first major work; his real breakthrough was still to come.

Gifts of the Italian Renaissance

That Nicolaus was educated by the Brothers of the Common Life is quite probable, although it cannot be securely established. A great deal is known about his relationship to the pinnacle of the Italian Renaissance, which both influenced him, just as he inspired the best thinkers, philosophers, statesmen, and Popes, with his groundbreaking philosophical method, which was, on the one hand, in the Platonic tradition, but which also added a spectacular new dimension to the history of philosophical thought.

Nicolaus studied from 1417 to 1423 in Padua, so he was there when he was between 18 and 24 years old. Already, here, he came in contact with the most precious tradition of European civilization, which had been revived in Italy with Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, who had started a *de facto* war against the dogmatic, scholastic teaching which domi-



Benozzo Gozzoli, "Journey of the Magi" (detail). The painting portrays the arrival of delegations of religious leaders, poets, philosophers, and statesmen to the Council of Florence.

nated much of the academic life of Europe, by consciously reviving Plato and Classical Greek thinking.

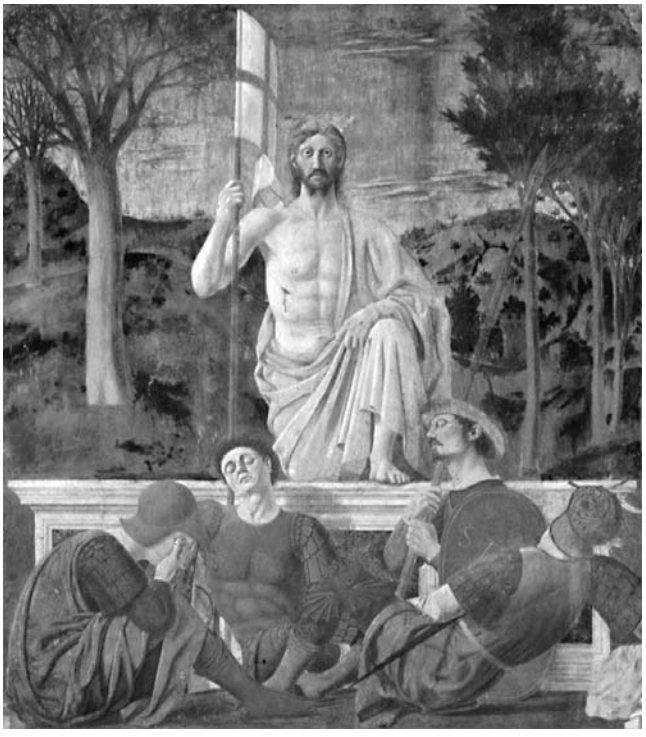
Petrarch pointed out, that Plato's teachings were coherent with Christianity, while Aristotle's were not; he also attacked the influence of Averroës. Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406), who knew Petrarch, was, like all humanists, an avid collector of manuscripts; he became chancellor of Florence in 1375, the year of Boccaccio's death. Leonardo Bruni, who translated several of Plato's writings, and was, from 1427 onward, the chancellor of this city, and Poggio Bracciolini, who was chancellor from 1415 to 1422, were both pupils of Salutati, and represented the continuation of the Platonist, anti-Aristotelian tradition. Bracciolini had known Cosimo de Medici since the Council of Constance; Cosimo had also befriended Nicolaus there.

Another group of people, with whom Nicolaus was in contact during his studies in Padua, were his close friend Giuliano Cesarini, Ambrogio Traversari, and Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, later Pope Pius II, all of whom were in this same tradition of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.

In Padua, Nicolaus also started his lifelong friendship with Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli (1397-1482), who wrote the famous letter to Fernão Martins, where he argued, that one could reach China and India by the sea route going west—which later was used by Columbus, and led to his discovery of the Americas. Through him, Nicolaus had also close contact to the great artists Leon Battista Alberti and Filippo Brunelleschi.

The translations of Bruni, Traversari, and others, of Plato and Aristotle, had already provoked profound debates about the Good, the value of poetry, and about the nature of the community, which represented the intellectual environment during Nicolaus's studies in Padua, which he clearly developed to a higher level in his *Concordantia Catholica*. But, from 1437 onward, Nicolaus, mediated by his friend Cesarini, took over important functions in the Vatican, and from this moment on, the history of Nicolaus, that of the Renaissance Popes, and the cultural Renaissance, became extremely closely intertwined. Already in 1437, Nicolaus travelled to Byzantium, where apart from his diplomatic mission to accompany and bring back the delegation of 700 representatives of the Orthodox Church, including the Byzantine Emperor and the Patriarch, he was successful in finding the documents proving that the formulation of the "*Filioque*"—namely, that the Spirit emanates equally from the Father and the Son—had already been part of the Creed in the early councils. As we have published, this proof played a very important role in the unification of the Church in the Councils of Ferrara and Florence.

Nicolaus had the closest contact with the 83-year-old Georgios Gemistos Plethon, who accompanied the Byzantine Emperor as an adviser. Plethon at that point knew the entirety



The cultural environment in which Cusa lived and worked included the flourishing of such artists as Piero della Francesca, who was in Florence after 1439. Here, his "The Resurrection of Christ."

of Plato, and naturally Proclus, and as a statesman in his own right, he intended a Renaissance based on Plato for Greece. In 1439, while in Florence, he wrote a sharp critique of Aristotle: Aristotle had misunderstood the Platonic ideas, he had denied God's creation of the world, and the existence of Providence, as well as the immortality of the soul, he had undermined ethics, and his theory was irreconcilable with Christianity.

Plethon, and Bessarion, the Archbishop of Nicea who also wrote polemically against Aristotle, sparked total excitement about Plato in Ferrara, and it was especially the famous doctor Ugo Benzi from Siena, who was teaching in Padua during Nicolaus's stay there, organized these debates. Cesarini, to whom Nicolaus had dedicated the *Docta Ignorantia* (*Learned Ignorance*), was the host of many of these lectures about Plato, which excited one of his listeners, Cosimo de Medici, in such a way, that he decided to found a Platonic Academy in Florence, and asked Plethon to translate the entire corpus of Plato.

Nicolaus also had direct contact with Cosimo de Medici, and Petrus Leonius (Pierleoni) from Spoleto, who was the personal doctor of Lorenzo de Medici, collected several of Cusa's writings and circulated them further.

Just to illustrate the unbelievable intellectual and cultural environment in which Nicolaus worked: He had close contact with Tommaso Parentocelli, later Pope Nicolaus V and the founder of the Vatican library, and Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, later Pope Pius II, and also Niccolò Albergati; he saw the works of Alberti, Fra Angelico, Donatello, Piero della Francesca, and Paolo Ucello, who had finished his frescos in Santa Maria Novella in 1430, where Masaccio had completed his "Trinity" fresco, painted in perspective form, in 1427.

Piero della Francesca was in Florence from 1439 on. Ghiberti created the bronze doors to the Baptistery in Florence, his "Gates of Paradise." Brunelleschi, in 1417, had created the first model of the cupola for the dome of Florence Cathedral, which was completed in 1437, and already in 1429 he had made new constructions of San Lorenzo and the Pazzi Chapel in San Spirito.

Since the Italian, and especially, Florentine, Renaissance is a prime model, to study how a civilization can overcome a Dark Age, it is useful to look at how the different influences came together. Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio's influence created the foundation. From the beginning of the Fifteenth Century, several great artists and philosophers created a new humanist movement. But it was the Councils of Ferrara and Florence, especially the contact with the Greek Platonic scholars, which gave this new movement its decisive boost.

The 'Coincidence of Opposites'

This was the intellectual and cultural environment in which Nicolaus of Cusa made a conceptual breakthrough. He himself writes, that on the way back from Constantinople in 1437-1438, he experienced an enlightenment, which allowed him to see all problems in a completely different light.

This was his unique "coincidence philosophy." He repeatedly stressed, that he was teaching something which had never been thought before. He insisted, that not one philosopher before him recognized the method of thinking embedded in the *coincidentia oppositorum*. Aristotle had put forward the idea, that contradictory statements could not be truthful at the same time. In a letter of Sept. 14, 1453, Nicolaus wrote, that the disallowance of contradictory statements had been the common axiom of all philosophy; Aristotle had said so merely in the most explicit form. All the philosophers had failed, the "great Dionysius" being the only exception, in a couple of places.

If one takes the totality of Nicolaus's attacks on Aristotle together, there isn't much left of him. Nicolaus reduces him—the absolute master in the teachings of the scholastics in almost all universities—to someone who has the wrong method, who cannot find anything, while restlessly running back and forth, incapable of understanding Platonic ideas.

In the "Apologia Docta Ignorantia," a defense of his *Docta Ignorantia* against the Heidelberg professor Johannes Wenck, who had accused him of pantheism, heresy, and confusion, Cusa writes:

> Nowadays, the Aristotelian tendency dominates, which finds the coincidence of opposites, which one has to

The Cathedral of Florence. Brunelleschi's dome was completed in 1437, a year before the Council of Florence began.

acknowledge to find the ascent toward mystical theology, to be a heresy.[3]

To those trained in this school, this approach seems to be totally nonsensical. They refuse it, as something completely opposite to their intentions. Therefore, it would be close to a miracle—as well as it would be a complete transformation of the school—if they were to abandon Aristotle, and reach a higher level.

Nicolaus then quotes Hieronymus quoting Philo, in basically making the point that logic, the Aristotelian method of thinking, is no better than the understanding (*ratio*) of an animal. Because, all understanding beings, humans and animals, are able to draw conclusions:

The methodological approach [i.e., the Aristotelian level of understanding—HZL] is necessarily limited between the starting point and the final point, and these opposing opposites we call contradictions. Therefore, for the methodological proceeding thinking, the goals are opposite and separate.

Therefore, on the level of understanding, the extremes are separated, like the notion of the circle, which says that the center cannot coincide with the circumference, because the distance from the center point to the circumference is always the same.

But, on the level of the reasonable mind, who sees that, within unity, number, within the point, the line, and in the center, the circle is folded in, the convergence of unity and multiplicity, point and line, center and circumference, are reached in the vision of the mind, without methodological back and forth: That, you could see in the book "*De Coniecturis*" ("On Conjectures"), where I showed, that God is even above the coincidence of the contradictory opposites, because, according to Dionysius, he is the opposite of opposites.

It is not very respectful, that Nicolaus talks here about the "methodological back and forth" of the Aristotelians! And what does he mean by their "intentions"?

Then Nicolaus continues:

After these words, the master reminded me to note, that learned ignorance, like a high tower, brings everyone to the level of vision. Because he, who is standing up there, has an overview of everything, for which the one moving over the field, looking for different traces, is searching; he also sees, how far the one searching, is getting closer or further away from what he is looking for. In this way, learned ignorance, which belongs to the domain of the reasonable mind, judges the methodological approach of the thought process of the understanding.

The metaphor of the tower in which reason is self-conscious about itself, the searcher, and that which is searched, is a pedagogical device to help the mind think in an elevated

3. The idea of mysticism during Cusa's time, did not mean what it means today; it merely meant a complete devotion to the truth—HZL.

way, from above.

Another device is in *De Beryllo* (*On Beryllus*), the idea that "coincidence thinking" is like a lens, through which one can see that which was previously invisible. "Coincidence thinking" is not what is seen, it is the method of thinking.

In *De Beryllo,* Nicolaus describes the sensuous world as a book written for us, even created for us, in such a way, that we can understand it from the way our cognition works. Nicolaus develops a truly subjective, cognitive approach here.

Other thinkers before Nicolaus had conceived the idea of a unity which precedes all contradictory statements. What makes "coincidence thinking" and the metaphor of beryllus as a lens different, is to show, how contradicting substantial causes coexist in a principled connectedness, before they separate into their differentiation.

If we have the beryllus, we see the opposites "*in principio convexio,*" before they exist in their duality. In the rectilinear, the Minimum of the acute angle, and the Maximum of the obtuse angle, coincide; before they separate into their contradictoriness, they are together in the rectilinear.

As we will see, this is no academic exercise; rather, Nicolaus is developing a method of thinking here, which has the most fundamental significance for the solution of political and religious problems. And, because Aristotle does not have a beryllus, he cannot think in an efficient way!

In the *Beryllus,* Cusa escalates his attacks on Aristotle, even though he—Aristotle, that is—had talked about a third principle of natural occurrences, namely, the "*steresis,*" the "*privatio*" or "*Beraubung*." But this had been merely an empty construct, it had not explained anything, only the absence of something. And, after Aristotle had introduced this worthless explanation, says Nicolaus, his scientific research got stymied. So Nicolaus concludes, that Aristotle therefore no longer has any significance for contemporary scientific studies! Which, at that point, was an absolutely, truly revolutionary statement.

There is also a very specific evolutionary conception that Nicolaus's "coincidence thinking" has for the evolution of the universe, which emphasizes its unity. But, in a radical difference to absolute unity and "biggest-ness" ("*maximitas,*" which is God), the "*unitas universi*" is a "contracted multitude" ("*unitas contracta*"), the incarnation of "unified multitude" ("*maximum contractum*").

In this universe, there exists a hierarchical order of higher and lower species, which develop into each other for multiple individual differentiations, but which are nevertheless each separated by a "species gap." Nicolaus says, that no animal, by itself, can become reasonable. But, if some animal were educatable in such a way (*capax*), that it could develop insight into the insight of man, and would prove this through its actions, then it would no longer be just an animal.

Nicolaus says, that no individual of any kind, so long as it is no more than an individual of its kind, has actualized the maximum perfection of its capacity. For man, this means that he has to be "snatched up," and mixed with the spiritual nature. Analogously, the inorganic is in relation to the plant, and the vegetative to the animal-like. The potentiality of the lower only realizes its perfect fulfillment through its introduction into a higher principle of being.

But the fascinating thing is that, what the late Professor Haubst calls the "biogenetic law of evolution," the "maximization principle" of Cusa, does not work from below upwards. Evolution is not understood as starting with the most primitive forms, to then become more diffentiated, which is what today's mechanistic theory of evolution suggests, but it occurs from above. In *De Mente* (*On Mind*), Nicolaus develops that God's knowledge only descends downward into the nature of the mind; further down in the scale of things, it only descends through the mind. "*Mens,*" the mind, is the image of God, but at the same time, the original image of all successive creatures.

This puts man in an extraordinary position in the universe: The world-creating mind—God—has only one avenue to the world, the human mind! This is not only a theory of cognition, this is a theory of world formation, of genesis, in which the mind has an irreplaceable mediative role! This is exactly the same idea, as when LaRouche says, that the universe "obeys" the cognitive powers of the mind!

Professor Haubst even reads Cusa in this way, that for Nicolaus, the universe finds its fulfillment of meaning only in the designation of man. In that sense, for the universe, man is irreplaceable. The universe needs man to have meaning. Without man, the universe would be only a torso. If the universe is not merely to end somehow, its sense designation and perfection can only be the divinely creative activity of the human mind.

In *De Mente,* Nicolaus writes, that number is a coincidence of unity and multiplicity. Here, we see that he does not restrict "coincidence thinking" to theological questions. These numbers are constitutive, because the eternal mind has created the world in a number-like way, as a composer composes. It is mind, as mind, which creates number, and everything else. The world is the music of the eternal mind, which causes proportions, and therefore the beauty of the things of the world. We recognize an idea here, which we find again in Kepler.

In *De Mente,* Cusa describes the infinite perfectability of the mind, which creates motions bringing order into the world, and in this way finds out its own laws of cognition.

As I said, this method of thinking, "from above," from the "*coincidentia oppositorium,*" is a universal methodological concept, applicable to all aspects of life. The most far-reaching discussion of this idea we find in *De Visione Dei* (*On the Vision of God*), a book written for the monks of Tegernsee, who were his close friends. It is probably the most intimate of all of Cusa's writings. Plato had made the argument that, in order to be truly free and philosophize, you have to be

among friends, because if you are together with people who are not your friends, you cannot speak freely, you have self-protection and guard yourself, and that blocks the ability of the mind to really come to the truth. So Nicolaus wrote this book *De Visione Dei* for his friends, the monks, and it clearly represents his innermost thoughts. Just because it was so intimate and loving, this book was already in the Fifteenth Century, one of the most read of his writings—it reminds me very much of the spiritual exercises of the Pope, described by the Vietnamese Bishop Nguyen Van Thuan. It is about the question, how to train the mind to think from the level of the highest truth. In this case, he uses the notion that God, the "opposite of opposites," is "behind the wall" of the *coincidentia oppositorum;* that you have to elevate your mind to that divine level, to be able to tackle all problems from the highest level, descending.

Complementing *De Visione Dei,* one must see another of his books, *De Pace Fidei* (*On the Peace of Faith*), written in the same year, 1453. Here you can see, that "coincidence thinking" is not some esoteric, far-away or mystical (in the modern sense) way of dreaming, but has the most dramatic political implications. For, on May 29, 1453, Sultan Mohamed II, who was known as "the Conquerer," had his most spectacular success: the takeover of Constantinople.

The West saw the fall of Constantinople as a total threat. Even the humanist Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini wrote to Pope Nicholas V, saying his hand trembled while writing these words, and he could not speak for the pain: "What a misery for Christendom! The fountain of the Muses has dried out. This was the second death of Homer and Plato." Reactions to the reports of what happened in Constantinople were those of terror.

Let me begin with a quote from the Cusa scholar Erich Meuthen, where he reports how descriptions of the fall of Constantinople were received in the West:

> First of all: Horror about the carnage. The West's image of the Turk was painted as a shrill mixture of blood-thirst, bestial cruelty, and perversion. The reports from Constantinople corresponded to what was considered to be certain anyway, yes, it could be aggravated: Blood was flooding the ground, as if it had rained, like water in the streets, blood was flowing. Children had been killed before the eyes of their parents, noble men slaughtered like animals, priest mutilated, monks tortured to death, holy virgins raped, mothers and daughters dishonored. It is reported that Mohamed the Conquerer forced the Emperor's daughter in his bed on the night of his victory. He wishes to convert her to his belief. She stands firm. Now, he drags her to the Hagia Sophia, toward a statue of the Madonna, which is used as a chopping block for executions. He shows her, how Christians are being beheaded here, rips her clothes off, and orders the girl to be beheaded on top of the Madonna, and sends her head to Emperor Constantine.
>
> Desecration of man and God in one. Churches are vandalized, altars profaned, reliquaries dispersed to the winds, the Holy of the Holies desecrated, . . .

and so on.

This happened in the Fifteenth Century, but it is happening today in the Middle East and many other places, in Africa, in the Balkans. And just now, just to help you to celebrate the birthday of Nicolaus, the Pope went on this truly historic mission to the Middle East, and two days ago he made a statement, and he said: Look, I ask for forgiveness for the crimes and the cruelties committed by the Crusaders in the Thirteenth Century. Which I think is a truly noble gesture, that he is almost on a personal mission to counter what is being done by Bush and Sharon, to bring peace to the Middle East, to make an effort to overcome this terrible danger of war, of which he is absolutely aware. Today, he's going to a mosque, which houses the tomb of John the Baptist. It's the first time that a Pope has ever gone to a mosque. So, you know, this is not theoretical, academic stuff from many centuries away; this has the highest political significance, if we want to find peace.

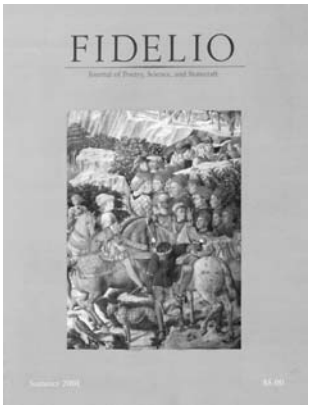
Now, modern historians refute these horror stories, and say that Mohamed II did not intend to destroy the city. On the contrary, they say that he reconstructed public buildings, and that he brought groups of Muslims, Christians, and Jews into the city for resettlement, and sponsored the arts and the sciences. That may be historically true; I only mention this quotation, to show you that these horror stories were the image the West had at the time of what had happened.

It is all the more amazing, to see the elevated, lofty view which Nicolaus presents in *De Pace Fidei,* about the peace of belief, of faith, knowing it was written under the impression of the terrible reports I mention above.

Nicolaus begins *De Pace Fidei* with the following words:

> News of the atrocities which have recently been perpetrated by the Turkish king in Constantinople and have now been divulged, has so inflamed a man, who once saw that region, with zeal for God, that amongst many sighs he asked the Creator of all things if in His kindness He might moderate the persecution, which raged more than usual on account of diverse religious rites. Then it occurred that after several days—indeed on account of lengthy, continuous meditation—a vision was manifested to the zealous man, from which he concluded that it would be possible, through the experience of a few wise men who are well acquainted with all the diverse practices which are observed in religions across the world, to find a unique and propitious concordance, and through this to constitute a perpetual peace in religion upon the appropriate and true course.

A Symposium on Cusa



The Summer 2001 edition of *Fidelio* magazine, the quarterly journal of the Schiller Institute, features a "Symposium on the 600th Anniversary of the Birth of Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa." It includes this speech by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, as well as "Nicolaus of Cusa's 'On the Quadrature of the Circle,' " by William F. Wertz, Jr.; "Nicolaus of Cusa Moved the Earth," by Bruce Director; "A Great Man of Ecumenicism," by Frauke Richter," and a translation of Cusa's "On Searching for God." Subscriptions are available for $20 from the Schiller Institute, Inc., P.O. Box 20244, Washington, D.C. 20041-0244. The Institute's website is www.schillerinstitute.org.

Cusa then has representatives of 17 religions and countries participate in a dialogue with the "divine Word," asking for help, because, they say, "this rivalry is on account of You, Whom alone all venerate in all that they seem to adore."

So, these representatives of 17 religions and countries go to God and say, Look, we are only killing each other because of You, because we all think that we do Your work. Please help us to overcome this terrible contradiction.

Interestingly, in the beginning of the dialogue, Nicolaus presents a no-illusions view about the oligarchical power structures of his time. One should consider, he says, that most human beings are forced to spend their lives in misery and great strain. On top of this, they live in slavish dependency upon their rulers. Therefore, almost none of them has the leisure to make use of his freedom of will, and arrive at consciousness of Himself. Worries about the physical condition and services they have to perform distract them too much. Therefore, they do not get to search for the hidden God. But, if a union of wise men, coming from all the different religions, were to come together, it would be easy to find a solution.

The approach Nicolaus then develops, really reflects the "vision from above." He says, that religious warfare is due to some hitherto undiscovered flaws in the self-understanding of the religions. One mistake had been not to differentiate between the prophet, and God Himself; secondly, they had mixed up traditions to which they were accustomed, with the Truth.

So, basically, the differences exist merely in rites, and not in what is essential.

Now, this is a truly mind-boggling approach, because, who could possibly argue, that the prophets were on the same level as God? So, if you say that the differences are only because of the different circumstances of the different prophets, who are not identical to God, and that the different traditions are not the same thing as the Truth, it is obviously easy to find a solution.

Then, the oldest of the participating philosophers, a Greek, asks: But, how should we bring the manifold of religions to one unity, since our people have defended their religion with blood, and they hardly will be willing to accept a new, unified religion?

The divine Word answers: You should not introduce a new religion. But, you should yourselves comprehend, and then show to the peoples, that the true religion is presupposed *before* all other religions. The unity is *before* the separation occurs.

Since the divine Word is talking to the wise men as philosophers, they can all agree, that there is only one wisdom. He does not talk to them as representatives of different religions, and therefore he can reach them on the level of reason, on a different level.

The peace-bringing new unity of religion is not—Nicolaus is very emphatic on this—some synthetic new belief, but what reason tells all who become conscious of its premises. Thus, the Greek philosopher reacts excitedly about the "*spiritual rationalis,*" which is capable of "*capax artitium mirabilium*"—the ability of the mind to participate in the most beautiful creations of art—and what follows is a hymn on the perfectability of the human spirit. If this spirit is oriented to wisdom, then man gets closer and closer to it. We never reach absolute wisdom, but we approximate it more and more. It tastes, as well, like a sweetness, more and more like eternal nourishment.

So, unity is guaranteed, when the orientation of the mind toward wisdom and truth is recognized as primary and basic. Then, the participation mediates between the One and the Many. Sometimes, it is only the experience of a great catastrophe, as was the perception of the fall of Constantinople in the West, and as is the threatening perspective of a generalized war in the Middle East today, which shocks people into seriously thinking of an alternative. If there is then an appeal to an alternative, and wise men and women to take the initiative, the catastrophe may be avoided.

In *De docta ignorantia* (*On Learned Ignorance*), he speaks of the "*spiritus universorum,*" the spirit of universality, which is efficient in every aspect of creation. Religions or nations, or peoples, are elements of differentiation, but "the totality [the universe—HZL], as the most perfect of the order

according to its nature, is presupposed to everything, so that everything can be in everything." This is Cusa's famous formulation, "*Quodlibet in Quolibet*."

Concerning the political order, this means, that the multitude of peoples can be integrated without a violation of their specific identity, because the totality of the order is already given before.

Further insight into the relation between the One and the Many in Cusa's notion, is that every human being is a microcosm—Dr. Alim talked yesterday about D.C. General Hospital as a microcosm, which is absolutely true—which means, that he has not just a place in the universe, the macrocosm, but he contains the entire cosmos in himself in a complicative way.

Every person is therefore the whole universe in the small.

Therefore, any "peace-order" cannot be based on some secondary consideration, but it can only exist, if each microcosm has the chance to develop its fullest potential, which it can only do, if *all* microcosms develop in a maximum way. This has tremendous implications for the relations among human beings, among nations, and among peoples. A peace-order of sovereign nations can only exist, if each one is allowed to develop in the best possible way, which means that the common good is taken care of in the optimal way, so that all of the citizens can prosper and their talents flourish. Only if each microcosm understands that it is in its best self-interest, for all other microcosms to develop in the best way, only if each nation and each people desires the best development for all others, can concordance exist in the macrocosm, in the world as a whole.

This is why "peace negotiations" which focus only on matters of conflict at the level of the understanding—so-called "political solutions"—which Cusa would call the Aristotelian way of running back and forth (one could say, he's almost talking about an Aristotelian shuttle diplomacy), do not work. One has to start with "coincidence thinking," the agreement of minds concerning the final goal of mankind as a whole, which is self-perfection, ennoblement, and increase in the general population potential, as the condition for the continued existence for generations to come (naturally, the construction of the Eurasian Land-Bridge today, as a cornerstone for a global reconstruction, is an expression of such a final goal of mankind as a whole)—these philosophical questions must be there at the beginning, as a pre-condition for a functioning peace-order in the world. And this is why the ideas of Nicolaus are the most modern ideas I can think of, among all previous thinkers.

What is needed for this today, to heal the wounds of all the tortured people in Africa, in the Balkans, in the Middle East and other areas in the world, is that the focus be on the "*spiritus universorum*"; but also on a limitless cultural optimism, as expressed, for example, in Nicolaus's sermon for Epiphany Day, which he delivered in 1454 in Brixen, and which has been called, correctly, a hymn to civilization, which praises the free and mechanical arts and sciences, as the great gift to mankind, which must be shared by all, so that the development of no one is unnecessarily delayed. At the end of the experiment of the Layman with the scale, he even says that every new discovery must be given over to an international pool, to which every people should have access, so that no one's development is unnecessarily delayed.

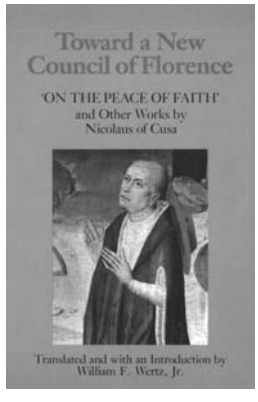
Nicolaus was convinced, that this was the only human way of thinking, and I fully agree with him. In 1459, he wrote, that the human soul is substantially superior to all otherness. It can eliminate all otherness, because it has the non-other image of everything. If the soul thinks in this way, it is in "*intertemporal tempus*," he says, in timeless time. This is what LaRouche calls the "simultaneity of eternity"!

Today, the idea of a community of sovereign nations, based on the common good of all, and based on the international law of peoples, has become a life-and-death issue for the entire human civilization. Can we not, for our own sakes, and as the most beautiful birthday present we could give to Nicolaus of Cusa for his 600th birthday, develop the same power of intellect, the same existential commitment and passion to great ideas? If I look around in this room, I see representatives from all corners of the world. Let us be joyful about the multitude of cultural differentiation and beauty, because we are *One*, before we are Many.

Toward a New Council of Florence

'On the Peace of Faith' and Other Works by Nicolaus of Cusa

Translations of seminal writings of the 15th-century Roman Catholic Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa, who, through his work and writings, contributed more than anyone else to the launching of the European Golden Renaissance. The title of the book, *Toward a New Council of Florence,* expresses our purpose in publishing it: to spark a new Renaissance today.



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October 1987

On the Sweetness of Truth

by Helga Zepp LaRouche

We are pleased to reprint "On the Sweetness of Truth" by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, to assist the reader in working through some of the concepts in Nicholas of Cusa's work, The Vision of God (De Visione Dei*). Cusa's concept of "the coincidence of opposites" inspires her current organizing of an institution to prevent world war and to bring many forces together to fight global famine and create modern healthcare systems worldwide – the Committee for the Coincidence of Opposites. Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the international Schiller Institute, is not only known for her expertise in Friedrich Schiller's work, she is also a renowned scholar of Nicholas of Cusa (Nikolaus Cusanus, Nikolaus of Kues), 1401-1464. This article was first presented in the 1987* Festschrift for Lyndon LaRouche, *published on the occasion of and in honor of the birthday of her husband, the late economist and statesman Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., during the period of the outrageous, unjust judicial assault against him. Mr. LaRouche many times identified the work of scientist and Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa as not only a significant theologian of the 15th Century, but more importantly, as the founder of modern science.*

Master of the Life of the Virgin

Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, 1401-1464. Proceeding from the principled unity of faith and knowledge leads to a fundamental insight into the physical and natural laws of the universe.

Nicholas of Cusa

"Who is there, who will not be enthralled to the highest degree, when he attentively reflects upon this?" says Nikolaus Cusanus in enraptured enthusiasm in the 19th chapter of *De Visione Dei*. Cusanus continues, "Thou, my God, dost reveal unto me, poor human, one such mystery ..., that to see Thee means at once to be united with Thee." Indeed, although this work is probably the most difficult among the theological-philosophical writings, it is also written in such a gripping way, that a sympathetic reader can not avoid being drawn into the course of the search for truth, and being seized by a glowing yearning to penetrate this mystery. Nikolaus of Kues' extraordinary pedagogical gift, for drawing his readers and students upwards, poetically, playfully with the aid of the Socratic method, to reach the highest summits of wisdom, here finds a glowing example.

The decision of the Cusanus Society, to publish *De*

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Visione Dei, must be considered most appropriate, precisely in this Year of St. Augustine, that is to say, the 1600th anniversary of St. Augustine's conversion to the Catholic faith. Among all the Church Fathers, Nikolaus of Kues [1401-1464] is certainly the most direct successor of Augustine, as may be demonstrated in hundreds of quotations, as well as from their entire shared methodological approach. Furthermore, the problems with which Augustine had to struggle in the period of the collapse of the Roman Empire, are not only related to those with which Nikolaus wrestled after the seizure of Constantinople, but are also very similar to those with which we are confronted today. In Augustine's, as well as at Nikolaus' times, just as in ours, the issue was the most fundamental values of what we call the substance of Western Christian civilization.

Cusa was the most direct successor of Augustine, as is evident in their shared methodological approach and in Cusa's many quotations from him. Shown: St. Augustine in His Study *by Sandro Botticelli, 1480.*

Once again, in many places on Earth, blood is being gruesomely shed in most brutal violations of human dignity, under the ostensible flag of religions, while an astounding number of efforts are being made at the same time, to define an ecumenical basis for a lasting peace in this world. But just as in the time of Nikolaus of Kues, the grand and decisive question is upon which principles this ecumenical peace shall exist, upon the highest—and therefore, true—principles, or upon the lowest common denominator, which eradicates precisely those parameters which distinguish true faith from the aberrations of sects and cults of all kinds.

De Visione Dei was written only three months after the work *De pace fidei* (*On the Peace of Faith*) and can indeed be understood as a further development of the ecumenical idea on a higher level. As will be shown, in this work lies the key to the most urgent questions of our time. It defines in a wonderful way a conception for the existential self-conception of the individual human being, and, since it proceeds entirely, in the tradition of Augustine, from the principled unity of faith and knowledge, it thus at once leads to a fundamental insight into the physical natural laws of the universe. Nikolaus here shows us the way upon which we can attain a completeness of our soul, and thus inner peace; and who would want to doubt that precisely in our strife-torn times, this represents a goal which only very few people even know how they might attain. This inner peace, which can issue only from the agreement of human practice with the ordering of divine Creation, is at the same time the only basis upon which peace in the world can ultimately be founded.

Awakening the Creative Power

At the beginning of *De Visione Dei,* Nikolaus writes a dedication to the Benedictine monks at the Tegernsee [Abbey], and only when one has studied the entire work through to its end, does one understand how rigorously this work is composed throughout its parts, and that, in a certain way, the result and the goal of the *manductio,* the didactic explication of ideas, and thus the resolution of the mystery, already rings through in the dedication. It lends itself perfectly to comparison with a great classical composer, who, after having composed an entire symphony, as a prelude so to speak, sets those notes still at the beginning, which contain the key to the composition as a whole.

This key, the significance of which only becomes evident after study of the entire work, lies in the following passages of Nikolaus:

> Thus, I pray especially that the Word from on high, and that omnipotent speech (*sermonem*), which alone can reveal itself, be granted me, in order that I, in accordance with your powers of conception, can represent the Wondrous (*mira-*

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Cusa dedicated his De Visione Dei *to the monks at the Tegernsee Abbey, a Benedictine monastery on the shores of Lake Tegernsee in Bavaria, Germany.*

> *bilia*), which reveals itself over and above every sensuous, comprehensible, and cognizing vision.

Contrary to today's prevalent, banalized understanding of what prayer actually means, it becomes clear here, that Nikolaus wants to awaken the creative power in himself, which alone he trusts to be capable of introducing the monks into the mystery. That he prays for the Word from on high, may well be so interpreted, that he is thus citing the "word" in the same sense in which he employed it in his Sermon No. 2 (from Christmas 1431), "The Word is become flesh, and dwelt among us," thus he prays to the mystery of eternal birth in God, whereby Nikolaus references the Augustinian explanation of the emergence of the Trinity upon the manifold paths of cognition, and where the divine Logos is understood under diverse names, first of all as an expression of divine self-recognition, consubstantial with the Father.

Since Nikolaus repeatedly bases himself on the Augustinian interpretation, the "Word" can indeed be understood here as the ideal original image of the creation. If thus at the beginning of his argument Nikolaus says that he prays in this sense, this then means nothing else than that he is appealing for the spark of divine creativity, and thus the power, in which he alone places his trust, that he be capable of communicating his message to the monks in such a powerful way, that it may elevate them to the highest possible level of understanding. It becomes thus clear from the very outset, that "prayer" does not at all mean appealing to God for the success of his efforts, but rather to mobilize within himself, to the point of the highest concentration, that Godlike creative force which alone can lead to recognition of the truth. It is the absorption in and concentration upon our very own most original nature, comparable to the concentration that a pianist or a concert director must achieve in the moment before the performance of a great work.

And further on, Nikolaus announces how, in a plastic way (*experimentaliter*), he will introduce the monks into the mystery, and have them "pre-taste a very delicious sample of that supper of eternal happiness of the soul." That Nikolaus repeatedly employs images of delicious dishes and bodily enjoyments to describe the most profound theological-philosophical conceptions, is not only one of the most lovable traits of his *manductio,* it is furthermore a hint of the resolution of what is announced as a mystery.

Nikolaus says quite clearly that it is his aim, to elevate the monks to the divine in a human way, which evidently presupposes a quite definite self-conception in himself, that is to say, that he be capable of doing this. But since this must occur in a human way, he stipulates, this must occur by way of a simile (*similitudine*), commensurate with human powers of comprehension.

Renaissance Perspective

It is most fascinating, that he chooses for this simile an image of the "All-seeing" in the form of an icon of God, particularly when one takes note of Nikolaus' influence upon the development of perspective in painting, especially upon Luca Pacioli and Leonardo da Vinci. He now proposes, to a certain degree as a pedagogical exercise, as an experiment, that this icon be hung upon a wall facing northwards, and furthermore,

Attributed to Jacopo de'Barbari, 1495

Self-portrait

Cusa influenced the development of perspective in painting, especially as seen in the work of Luca Pacioli (left) and Leonardo da Vinci.

that all the brothers gather in an extended semicircle around the icon. Regardless of the angle from which they now behold the icon, it appears to each of them, as if the vision of the icon were directed to him alone. It is obvious, that such an impression can only be mediated by a painting which is painted from the standpoint of concave perspective, thus from the standpoint of a lawfully curved space.

Nikolaus then leads the monks one step further, eliciting in them a self-consciousness: that a simultaneity exists in the relationship of the All-seeing icon to each individual monk, that each is at once beheld by the icon, and that each at once can become conscious that this is also true for all others. And further yet, that everyone who, striding from west to east, for example, or east to west, fixing his vision upon the icon, will notice that the vision of the icon moves with him continually.

While such an idea would surpass the simple powers of imagination of the monk, he can learn, by questioning the other monks, who themselves are also in movement, that the vision of the icon remains upon them all, even if they all move in contrary directions.

> He will thus learn, that the immobile countenance moves eastwards, that it at once also moves westward, and thus also to the north, and also to the south, and how it looks upon a particular point, such that it looks upon all at once, and as well upon a single movement, as upon all others at once.

And he continues:

> And while he becomes aware that this glance forsakes no one, he sees that the icon's vision takes attentive care of each, as if it concerned itself alone for him who discovers, that he is looked upon just now, and for none other, indeed so much, that no one who beholds the vision of the icon can conceive that the icon concerned itself for anyone else. He will also see that the vision thus cherishes the most attentive concern toward the most insignificant of creatures, as if it were the grandest or the entirety of the universe.

If one now imagines these movements of the monks around the icon in the form of a geometric representation, one obtains a multiply-connected and interlaced manifold, produced by multiple rotations, but in which the resting point commands the same attention as the process of movement itself, as also the totality of rest

and all movement at once. That this idea derives neither from a Cartesian, nor a Newtonian linear conception of space, is already evident from the fact that it is the curved perspective which makes it possible for it to appear at each point, as if he, that is to say, the most humble of creatures, were bequeathed the same attention as the entire universe.

Yet, after Nikolaus has thus generated for the monks not only a self-consciousness of themselves, their relations to each other, but also of the icon to all of them, and therewith an idea of a geometry surely leading beyond the purely sensuous powers of imagination, he now surprises them with the next conceptual step.

The 'Absolute Vision' of God

Cusanus now distinguishes, that is to say, between the simile of the All-seeing icon and the "absolute vision" of God, "theos," so named because his vision surpasses the vision of all others. Whereas vision in the sensuous realm, that act of vision which is bound to space and time of the world, bound to particular objects and other such conditions, thus has an existence bounded by virtue of its potentials implicated within it; God is, on the contrary, the truly unlimited existence, wholly real. "He is not proportionally (*improportionaliter*) more perfect." The sensuous appearance, therefore, of an icon can less approximate the supreme perfection of absolute vision than the notion." Nikolaus here establishes, that the reality of God represents a far higher principle than the manifold relation in the simile of the All-seeing icon, but that this simile has its usefulness nevertheless, because the geometrical projection downwards, adapted to a certain degree to the human senses and human powers of imagination, represents a more complex reality.

In Chapter 2 of *De Visione Dei,*, Nikolaus then draws out the point further:

> Yet that vision unfettered of all constraints (*visus ... absolutus*) thus encompasses the most appropriate measure and the truest original image of all powers of vision at once, and all modes of vision and each individual one. Without absolute vision, there can indeed be no bounded potential vision.

And regardless of the different subjective ways of beholding or contemplating God, it cannot be different, by virtue of the "supreme simplicity" of God, although for one or another reason we may assign to God this or that name. For in spite of the diverse characteristics one may attribute to God, He is the "absolute ground of meaning, in which all otherness (*alteritas*) is unity, and every diversity (*diversitas*) is sameness."

After Nikolaus has thus for the first time provided a definition of God, which demonstrates the inadequacy of all definitions themselves, he has at once touched more closely upon the mystery. In God, the simplest of implied potentials coincides with the absolute, all otherness is unity, and each diversity is sameness. How should the poor human understanding, with its potentials only implied and awaiting actualization, solve such a puzzle?

And now, just at this most precarious point, we may well be filled with wonder to see how Nikolaus in his *manductio* leads the monks one enormous step further. He challenges them once again to reflect upon the simile of the icon of God, and to let themselves be stimulated to speculation. But then he says, surprisingly: "Thou art challenged to say: 'Lord, now I behold Thy providence in Thine image in a form of sensuous experience'...," and from this passage onwards, the work takes on the form of a prayer, in such a way, in fact, that it *is* such both for Nikolaus, as well as for the monks. He has thus succeeded in achieving what he had prayed for in the dedication, that he might have the power to elevate the monks to his highest point of view, and then he displays to them the simile of implied potential absolute infinity commensurate with sensuous experience, contrasts this then to the actual notion of absolute infinity, and leads the monks yet further, to dialogue, as he himself does, in a direct prayer with God.

The power of recognition proceeds initially from God.

> In no way, Lord, by any idea, dost Thou permit me to entertain (*concipere*) the thought, that Thou, Lord, lovest anything else more than me, for Thy vision never foresakes me.... And didst Thou turn Thy countenance from me, it were impossible that I should continue to exist. Yet I know that Thy vision is the supreme beneficence, which can do no other than impart itself to him who is capable (*capax*) of receiving it. Thou wilt thus never be able to forsake me, as long as I remain capable for Thee. It thus be-

hooves me, so far as I am able, to be always more receptive for Thee.

Human Freedom and the Ecumenical Principle

Thus, what is derived here from the simile of the icon—the geometrically founded equality of intensity with which even the humblest of living creatures is contemplated, as well as the universe as a whole—is nothing else than the wonderful definition of human freedom, by virtue of which each individual person is capable of partaking in God, but it is his own decision, whether he remains receptive, and makes every effort to become more so. Nikolaus here not only establishes the potential equality of all people (and of the humblest of creatures) in natural law, but he also lays anew therewith the foundation of the ecumenical principle, upon which alone a unification of all religions can occur.

Divine providence is thus by no means meant in that Calvinist sense, in which the material success of a person on Earth represents the proof of that person's being one of the chosen people, entirely independent of the question of how morally or immorally that person behaves.

Quite to the contrary, divine providence is potential and challenge:

> I know, however, that the preparedness, which provides unity (with Thee), is nothing else than similitude. The incapacity to receive, on the other hand, issues from dissimilitude. If I make myself thus similar to your beneficence in every possible way, I shall be capable of receiving Truth in correspondence to the levels of similitude.

Here Nikolaus voices one of the most evident truths, to wit, that the question of intelligence is ultimately a moral question. If a person refuses to draw responsible consequences from something he recognizes, and thus makes himself "dissimilar" to the required task, he will close his ears and comprehend nothing. Moral dissimilitude always leads to an incapacity to be intellectually receptive.

Similitude, on the other hand, leads to ever growing comprehension.

> This power, which I have from Thee, and in which I possess a living image (vivam imaginen) of the power of Thy almightiness, is the free will, through which I am capable of either increasing or reducing the capacity to receive Thy beneficence. I can increase it by becoming more similar: if I strive to be good, because Thou art good; if I strive to be just, because Thou art just; if I strive to be charitable, because Thou art charitable.

Since Nikolaus clearly describes the lawfulness of creation of the universe in many other places in his works as a negentropic process of development, in which one species passes over into the next highest through the full accentuation of all of its potentials, because it participates thus in the higher species, the concept of the living image of the almightiness of God has a meaning which should be understood in the same sense here. To become more similar to God, and to be his living image, that is to say, likewise creative, means nothing else than to bring one's own identity into ever greater accordance with the ordering of creation of the universe.

Up to this point in his *manductio,* Nikolaus has indeed chosen various pedagogical steps to lead the understanding of the monks (and of the reader) step by step closer to the mystery, but he has done this essentially by an appeal to reason, even in those places where he chose comparisons drawn from the area of sensuous experience. But now, once again in an utterly surprising way, he introduces the commensurate emotional qualities, and it becomes clear that the issue of God's vision is by no means a dry academic affair.

> And what, Lord, is my life, but the embrace with which Thy delightful love so lovingly receives me! I love my life to the highest, because Thou art the delight of my life.

Thus, it is now stated that it is love which is the emotional quality making human beings similar to God, and it is love, which permits human beings to love their own lives. Indeed, this love imparts a feeling of delight, that is to say, it is free, grand, and beautiful. And if once a person has approximated his original image, if he can bear, that God "never ceases to contemplate me lovingly into the innermost of my soul," if the person thus has nothing to hide, nor a bad conscience, which would make such an uninterrupted contemplation into the innermost of the soul something unpleas-

ant to him, or even intolerable, it is then that human life first properly begins.

> And Thy vision is nothing but that which brings everything to life, none other than a permanent inspiration of love of Thee, which bring me the greatest of blessings, none other than that which enkindles in me love of Thee, and through the inspiration of love, through the enkindling, there is nourishment, through nourishment are my yearnings inflamed, and through this inflaming, I am steeped with the dew of joy, and through this steeping, I am inspired with the well-spring of life, and through the inspiration, there is a multiplication, creatures are bequeathed with existence, and Thy immortality is imparted unto them.

Anonymous drawing of Nicholas of Cusa, from the sculpture on his tomb in Rome.

'The Garden of All Delights'

Nikolaus defines this imparting of the capacity to participate in God as the "garden of all delights," in which even the absolutely greatest perfection could not be greater than the entirety of intellectual yearning (*desiderii rationalis*). The fascinating feature here, evidently, is that the Cardinal employs the highest of emotions, which people usually associate with sensuous attributes, such as love, yearning, delight, etc., to the realm of partaking in God. And indeed, if one has once worked in a truly creative way, and concerned himself for no other value than the truth, who would not have already himself felt, that these intellectual pleasures are truly more delightful than all of the things which do not dwell in this highest realm? The joy of truly creative discovery, a joy which never loses its childlike innocence, it is what "makes the heart overflow," expands it, and so enhances the creative potential of a person.

> The vision of the absolute ground of meaning, which is the ground of meaning of everything, is furthermore nothing else than to enjoy (*gustare*) Thee, God, in mind (*in mente*), for you are the sweetness itself of being, of life, and of cognition.

This vision, which is at once a tasting, is no simple relationship of a subject to an object. For God, symbolized by the icon which sees everywhere with the same intensity, is ever present and omnipresent. It instead depends on the individual person alone, on whether he severs himself and, by turning toward something else, prefers to deprive himself of the delicious taste of seeing the absolute ground of meaning.

The more the human being, however, contemplates the countenance of God, the more it appears to him, that the concentration of God's eyes is ever more penetratingly directed upon him, which means nothing else than that the absolute simplicity, and likewise the growing complexity, of this vision become ever clearer to him.

God's vision, his countenance, is at once free (*absoluta*) of all limitations of implied potential of particular existence, it is the absolute form, which is the countenance of countenances. And without losing this characteristic of the absolute, it yet imparts itself unto human beings to that degree of intensity, which the human being himself demands by his devotion to this countenance.

> Thus he who beholds Thee with a loving countenance, [says Nikolaus,] will discover nothing else than Thy countenance, which contemplates him lovingly. And the more he shall attempt to behold Thee with greater possible love, all the more full of love will he find Thy countenance. He who unwillingly beholds Thee, shall find Thy countenance in the like way. He who beholds Thee in joy, shall find Thy countenance as joyful as is his, which beholds Thee.

But how does Nikolaus guide his reader now to comprehend what the absolute form, the "countenance of countenances" is? He does this once more by producing self-consciousness in the beholder, by having him contemplate the same countenance through the eyes of many different creatures. He thus says:

> The human being can judge in no other way than humanly. If the person ascribes to Thee a countenance, he will not seek this countenance outside of the human species, because his judgement is bounded (*contractum*) within the human species, and in judging this, he steps outside the deficiency of this bound. Thus, a lion, were he to ascribe to Thee a countenance, would see it in no other way than as lion-like; a cow, as cow-like; and an eagle, as eagle-like.
>
> Oh Lord, how wonderful is Thy countenance, that a youth, if he wanted to form a notion of it, would imagine it as youthful, a man, as that of a man, and a venerable old man, as that of a venerable old man.

What a pedagogical genius Cusanus is! He makes it possible for every beholder to find his individual access to the countenance, by explaining that it is natural for everyone to believe that he recognizes in the countenance features similar to his own. And his images from the realm of animals are as insightful as they are humorous, for anyone who knows how to observe animals will immediately agree, that each species looks upon the world as if it were only to be understood from their point of view.

But how is the form of all formed countenances to be understood? It is absolute beauty itself, which grants to every beautiful form its existence. This countenance of countenances, however, is not beheld unconcealed, "as long as one does not proceed beyond all countenances into a kind of mystery and hidden silence, where there is no knowledge (*scientia*) and no concept (conceptus) of a countenance."

But it is still too early to reveal the mystery. Part of the aim of Nikolaus' *manductio* is really to awaken the curiosity of the monks, as well as the reader, about what this so mysterious knowledge might be. But he continues in ever new similes to approach the resolution.

> It is the all-surpassing light, to which darkness (*caligo*) lends certainty. It is the walnut tree, which in respect of its force (*virtualiter*), is already completely contained in the seed. Neither the seed of the nuts, nor all of the trees are at any time fully developable, they are nevertheless bounded in implicated potential, for only in this nut form can they develop their force. If thus I see the tree in the seed, I yet see it only in a force which is bounded in implicated potential, [Nikolaus argues further].

So, even the never fully exhaustible force of the seeds of the trees, and ultimately all diverse kinds of trees in their force of causality, are more than a force bounded by its implicated potentials.

Beyond such force of bounded implicated potential, there is the absolute, all-surpassing force, which lends to every seed power such a force; it is the original ground (*principium*), the cause (*causa*), which represents the cause of all effects (*effectui*) in an enfolded and absolute way. And the human being recognizes the principle common to all of the effects caused, he contemplates each walnut tree not in terms of its limited seed-force, but rather in respect to the creative cause of every seed-force. God is thus not only the countenance of all countenances, but rather the absolute power which effects everything, and thus the nature of all natures.

In an apparently very simple way, Cusanus leads the reader toward an ever more complex consideration, and finally employs once again the dialogue form of prayer to bring the reader even closer to the subject:

> Oh, God, whither hast Thou led me, that I see: Thy absolute countenance is the natural countenance of every nature, the countenance which is the absolute being in existence of every existence, the art and the knowledge of everything knowable.

To know everything knowable? What enticement for every human being hungering after knowledge; and who is there, who has followed Nikolaus in his discussion thus far, who would not hunger for knowledge?

> Thus, he who is worthy of beholding Thy countenance, sees everything openly, to him nothing remains hidden. Such a one knows everything. He, Lord, hath everything, who hath Thee.

'I Am to Myself My Own'

While the dialogue now reaches a great intensity alone in respect of its form, as Nikolaus now lists crucial questions as to how this delightful condition to know everything knowable might be achieved, the voice of God surprisingly answers from within him:

> Be thee thine, and I shall be thine!

At the discovery, that this possibility can be a certainty, Nikolaus now rejoices:

> Oh Lord, delight of all sweetness, Thou hast laid it in my freedom, that I am to myself my own (*mei ipsius*), if I only will.

EIRNS/Philip Ulanowsky

Lyndon and Helga LaRouche in 1986.

The human being is thus a free person, and not a "slave of sins," if he is himself. But he is only free, when he is indeed himself, but at once devoted to God, the Father, in childlike love. If the Father is denied, human beings cease to be children. Then they are not free either "in their own perfection of powers," but rather go "into a foreign land"; they come into a "sinister bondage under a prince, who is opposed to Thee, O God."

Here we have an immensely modern approach. The person, who develops the potential (*virtualiter*) with which he is endowed to the extent of his powers, is free, or as one would say today, "inner directed." On the other hand, he who surrenders his own destiny to other forces is not free, or, as one would say today, is "other directed." The person has thus surrendered his own freedom just when he acts "in his own perfection of powers," or as one would say today, if he merely satisfies his own needs. It is therefore in our own hands, if we "squander freedom and our best knowledge for the sake of the corrupted desires of the senses," for then "we lose in being," as Cusanus says in another place.

Lyndon LaRouche.

As if Nikolaus had intended, by revealing the dangers of a freedom wrongly understood, to clear away additional barriers to a still more profound understanding of the puzzle, he now introduces his standpoint, which one could call a relative conception of time. To this purpose, he chooses the image of reading and comprehending the content of all books written, and still to be written. The individual person requires a certain time to comprehend the content in temporal succession. God, however, has read them all at once from eternity, and yet reads each of them also in succession, regardless of whether he reads quickly or slowly, so that it seems as if "Thou wouldst read in time, because Thou readst together with them who read."

But it is not only the conception of time which is relativistic, it is also the optical perception, for the angle of God's eye has no quantitative limit, it is infinite, a circle, indeed even an "infinite sphere." His vision is *oculus sphericitatis,* everything around him he sees at once "from above" and "from beneath."

In the power of God's vision, which is indeed symbolized by the icon, the universal thus "coincides" with the particular. But one would need to see the way God sees to understand this correctly. If the person thus beholds, as if with the eyes of God, the human being in all persons wherever they may be, whether they are in motion or at rest, then he understands, that the person can only exist in his bounded potential, because "God as the original image of all persons, and as a person who is by virtue of himself (*homo per se*), which means as the absolute person, endows all other persons with existence." God is thus the essence of es-

sences "*which grants to all bounded essences to be that, which they are.*"

The Coincidence of Opposites

Once more, Nikolaus employs the image of the icon to circumscribe the goal of his *manductio* with yet greater intensity. The vision of the icon moves together with all those who move, and rests with all those who are at rest, and is yet at once highly sublime and unfettered from all these images. And now Cusanus introduces the notion capable of resolving the opposites, the "falling into one of opposites," because the person would have to seek the truth there where he meets with impossibility. But precisely there is God, absolute necessity. God as absolute necessity? After all the intellectual struggle in which Nikolaus has had his reader take part, he now grants him a brief pause to catch his breath, by formulating a thought central to his entire discussion.

> Thus have I found the place at which Thou canst be found unconcealed. It is surrounded by the coincidence of opposites. It is the wall of paradise, within which Thou dost dwell. Its gates are guarded by the supreme spirit of Reason (*rationis*). If this is not conquered, the way will not be open.
>
> It is thus on the other side of the coincidence of opposites, that Thou shalt be seen, by no means on this side. If, therefore, impossibility is necessity in Thy sight, then there is nothing, which Thy vision doth not see.

Thus, and this has by no means been understood in times thereafter, God is not the principle of the *coincidentia oppositorum*. This principle is rather the wall which encompasses paradise, which absolutely divides this side, where God can not be seen, from the other side, where He can be experienced and comprehended.

At the moment in which the person reaches the threshold of the entrance to Paradise, he suddenly grasps that God's conception (*concipere*) is "the entirely simple eternity itself," after which (*post*) nothing can come into being, and which accordingly must encompass everything.

> The infinite duration (*duratio*) thus, which is eternity itself, encompasses every succession (of things which come into being) (*successio*).

God, therefore, is in paradise, and the unity, which is at once absolute eternity, is the Non-Other. The wall, however, is the coincidence, the falling-into-one, where the later falls into one with the earlier, and the end with the beginning, just as multiplicity falls together with unity. It is the *coincidentia oppositorum,* the coincidence of opposites, but not unity itself.

And thus is the creation, which proceeds from God, unfolding into multiplicity and enfolding into simplicity, but God himself is neither enfolding nor distinguishing (*disiunctive*), nor a connecting (*copulative*) which is folding outward. While the wall of coincidence is at once a distinction and a connection, God is beyond it, "unfettered by anything which can be spoken or thought." But how should this be understood, if that wall is so high, that "no inventive mind" (*ingenium*) can climb it on its own power?

Nikolaus goes even so far as to call this problem, which is posed to the intellect, the wall of absurdity (*absurditatis*)—"as if it were impossible, that creating and being created coincided." But he then immediately explains, that just on this point there is no contradiction, for "Thy creation is just Thy existing." And Cusanus finally reaches the goal of his *manductio*:

> As long as I conceive the Creator as creating activity, I am still on this side of the wall of paradise. So am I (also) if I conceive the Creator as creatable; I have not yet entered but I am at the wall. By when I see Thee as absolute infinity, to whom neither the name of a creating nor of a creatable Creator belongs, then I begin to behold Thee unconcealed, and to enter the 'Garden of Delights.' ... Thou art therefore not the Creator, rather infinitely more than the Creator, although without Thee nothing comes into being, nor can come into being.

The Comprehension of Actual Infinity

On the background of these astounding sentences, it now becomes meaningful to recall the various interpretations of a conception of God, which the contemporaries and the philosophical schools had in the period when Nikolaus wrote down these formulations, schools ranging from the Peripatetics, the scholastics, and particularly the successors to William of Ockham, for whom the very idea of a continuously creating Creator was by no means self-evident. But here Nikolaus places him who understands the Creator "only" as creating,

outside the wall of Paradise, for he comprehends God and Creation only from the standpoint of the Understanding. If, however, the person comprehends God as creatable, then he finds himself "at" the wall; he thus at least knows of its existence, as well as of the existence of a higher truth behind the wall which surrounds Paradise, and, in Cusanus' philosophy, this is the level of Reason.

But this is indeed quite an astounding thought—to conceive of God, the Creator, as creatable, and to posit this idea as higher than that of a merely creating God! For if the Creator is also creatable, who and what then participates in this process of creation? The state of mind which, for Cusanus, surpasses the Understanding and Reason, is precisely vision, or the vision of God—*de visione Dei*. If God is understood as infinitely more than the Creator, the person then sees him unconcealed, he steps into the "Garden of Delights."

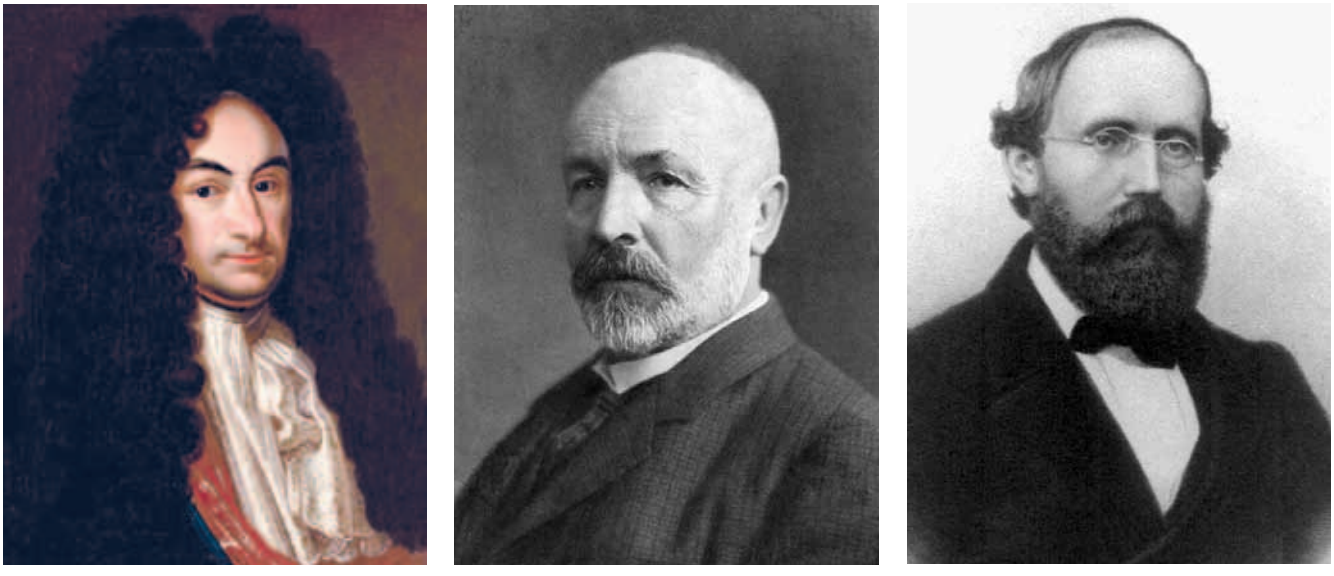
"For William of Ockham and his successors, the idea of a continuously creating Creator was by no means self-evident." —Helga Zepp-LaRouche

The vision of God, or entering the Garden of Delights, however, is not a passive condition. And a paradox apparently opens up once more; God is the goal of the effort, which one only reaches, if one climbs beyond the goal. But that means nothing else than that the limit of what is possible is broken through, that "capable-of-becoming coincides with capable-of-doing, and that potential coincides with actuality (*actus*)," says Nikolaus.

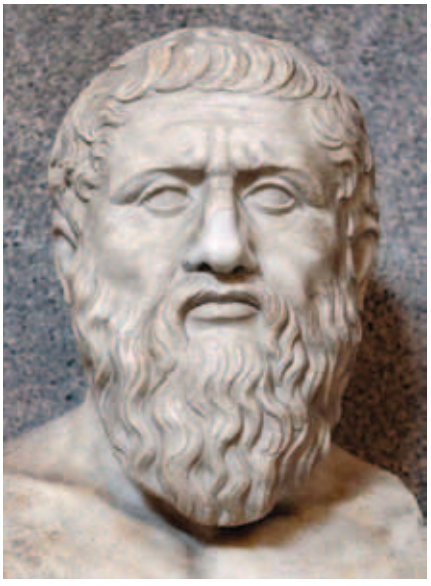
The comprehension of actual infinity as the creative principle is thus the mystery, which is hidden within the wall of the *coincidentia oppositorum*. With this step in his thinking, Cusanus has conceptualized the lawfulness of the principle of the development of the physical universe in a way that he holds his ground on all questions posed by modern natural sciences. Comprehension of this issue at once represents the conceptual breakthrough, which made Cusanus into the father of modern natural sciences, and upon which Leibniz, Cantor, Riemann, and LaRouche built.

As Nikolaus was working out this concept of actual infinity, he was thoroughly aware of the philosophical tradition of his thinking. Thus he writes straightforwardly in Chapter 14 of *De Visione Dei*:

That infinity is absolute infinity, follows, since



Cusa conceptualized the lawfulness of the development of the physical universe, making him the father of modern natural sciences, a concept built upon by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (left), Georg Cantor (center), Bernhard Riemann (right), and Lyndon LaRouche.



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Cusa chose the person of Socrates to explain the creative principle, which Plato called hypothesizing the higher hypothesis. For it is the Socratic method of thinking, alone, which makes creative thinking possible. Shown: A bust of Plato, and a depiction of Socrates teaching.

> the one cannot be the other, just as the essence of Socrates encompasses the whole of Socratic existence. In this simple Socratic existence there is no otherness or diversity. The existence of Socrates is the individual unity for everything which is in Socrates, so that the existence of everything which is in Socrates is folded into one in this single existence, that is to say, into individual simplicity, in which nothing other or different can be found. Yet more, in this one single existence there is everything which has Socratic existence, and is encompassed by him.

The Socratic Method

It is extremely important that Cusanus here choses the person of Socrates to explain the creative principle. For it is the Socratic method of thinking itself, which alone makes creative thinking possible. It is the thinking of hypothesis formation, in which Reason forms a series of hypotheses which become ever more adequate, which then, tested in reality, lead to a successively ever deeper and more complex understanding of the lawfulness of the universe. As such, human Reason can never fully comprehend Truth, rather it can do so to ever greater perfection. The capability of the person, however, which permits him to form this process as a whole, Plato calls the "hypothesis of the higher hypothesis": it is the generative principle. The Socratic method of thinking, particularly the Socratic dialogues themselves of Plato, has as its purpose putting the reader into the highest constitution of mind, which enables him to think at the level of the hypothesis of the higher hypothesis.

It is obvious, that Nikolaus is speaking about this very point when he speaks of the "simple Socratic existence," in which there is neither otherness nor diversity. Everything which has Socratic existence is enfolded within this single Socratic existence. Socratic existence is nothing else than the capacity for adequate hypothesis formation.

That Nikolaus of Kues speaks of Socrates at this place in his *manductio,* when he has already brought the reader very near to understanding the mystery hidden within the wall of the coincidence of opposites (*coincidentia oppositorum*), is at once a complete rejection of Aristotle and the peripatetic school of his time. For *De Visione Dei* was finished on November 8, 1453, and, as is known, Nikolaus had already published his *Apologia Docta Ignorantia* (*A Defense of Learned Ignorance*) in October 1449, that is, about five years earlier.

In this work Nikolaus formulated a final crushing polemic against Aristotelian epistemology, which itself proceeds from the absolutely contrary principle,

the principle of non-coincidence. Aristotle called the axiom of impossible contradiction "the surest of all principles."

In the *Apologia,* which was the answer to the "refutation" written by Johannes Wenck against his *Docta Ignorantia,* Nikolaus did not mince his words.

> Since at this time the Aristotelian sect is dominant, which holds the coincidence of opposites to be a heresy, while in the admission of this principle lies precisely the beginning of an ascent to mystical theology, they who have grown up in this sect refuse this way as completely senseless. It is rejected as a way contrary to their intentions. It would therefore be tantamount to a miracle—just as if it were a transformation of the school—were they to dare the leap to greater heights, while rejecting Aristotle.

This is speaking plainly, to be sure. Nikolaus holds the Aristotelians to be a sect, and even says, that they "intentionally" pursue a contrary goal, and especially, that it is precisely Aristotelian thinking itself, which makes the achievement of "greater heights" impossible. If one considers the subsequent history of science down to today, one must all the more admire the precision with which Nikolaus of Kues identified the barrenness and impotence of Aristotelian thinking.

He made clear in the *Apologia* how little he esteemed it, when he commented on the fact, that Johannes Wenck had been given the volumes of *Docta Ignorantia* at all, saying:

> We know, too, that our Lord Christ taught this, for he forbade throwing pearls, which is a simile for the kingdom of God, before swine, which have no understanding.

Absolute infinity as absolute unity is, of course, a notion which can only be thought within the philosophical tradition of Plato, Augustine, and Cusanus. But for Nikolaus, especially, it is the center of that which constitutes his Christian theory of evolution. Nikolaus had a most modern concept of the development of the physical universe, in which he not only distinguished between inorganic and organic matter, and, finally, human beings as beings endowed with Reason. He also posited the transition of each lower species into the next higher species, as a process through which each fully accentuated the potentials with which it is endowed, then, at the highest point, to push upwards toward the next higher species, and thus to participate in it.

The same also holds for human beings: since they are the highest species, beyond which only God exists, the person can only fully develop his potential as a human being, insofar as he partakes in God. Now, how does this process of partaking (*capax Dei*) occur?

> Thou showst Thyself, Oh God, in the humility of Thine infinite beneficence likewise as a creature, that we be thus drawn toward Thee. Thou drawst us toward Thee indeed in every possible way, in which the free creature of Reason can be drawn. Thereby, Oh God, in Thee coincideth the process-of-being-created with the process of creating.

How had Nikolaus expressed it earlier? As long as the person comprehends the Creator as a being which creates, he finds himself still outside the wall; once he comprehends Him as capable of being created, then he is at the wall, but not yet within Paradise. Thus, in God, both become one, and indeed in such a way that the person who is drawn to God partakes of Him.

> The similitude (*similitude*) which appears to be created by me, is, to wit, the truth which creates me.

The Triune God

After Nikolaus has now advanced yet a step closer to the mystery of Creation in this way, having seen the truth unconcealed to a certain extent for a brief moment, he interrupts his *manductio* as he had earlier, to break out into infinite jubilation over the "incomprehensible sweetness," which he has begun to taste. But the growing enthusiasm over the recognition of God goes hand in hand with that modesty worthy of love, so that at this point, where the magnificence of God has become more clear to him than ever before, Nikolaus calls himself "little man" (*homuncio*), which does not make him feel small, however, but rather fills him with yet greater joy.

Once Nikolaus has permitted the reader once again a moment of reflection and self-consciousness, he in

"Only as triune can God be completely seen." —Nicholas of Cusa. Shown: The Holy Trinity, a fresco by Raphael and Perugino. In the upper panel, Christ, the Son, is seated, flanked by saints and angels; the Holy Spirit is represented by the dove above his head; the image of the Father at the top is lost through deterioration, except for His attribute, the open book showing alpha and omega. The fresco is in the Chapel of San Severo, Perugia, Italy.

turn leads him one step further, and says: "Only as triune can God be completely seen." And, as in so many places in his work, he defines the trinity of God in a more profound way, one less liable to be misunderstood, than is often understood in the definition as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God as infinitely loving (*amans*) is at once infinitely worthy of being loved (*amabilis*), and out of both, God's capacity to love to an infinite degree, and his worthiness to be loved to an infinite degree, there grows the infinite bond of love (*amoris nexus*). God is thus the trinity of loving love, of love worthy of being loved, and the bond between loving and love worthy of being loved. They are three, that is to say, the loving one, the one worthy of being loved, and the bond, but at the same time they are the simple absolute essence of God. "It is thus a triune essence; and yet, there are not three in it, since it is entirely simple."

God is infinite love, and therefore he cannot hate. But it depends upon individual persons, whether they love God or not. God's beneficence allows it to lie in the "freedom of the soul endowed with Reason" of people, to love Him or not. It is therefore only within the dictatorship of Reason that freedom is possible.

Nikolaus also defines God as the process of cognizing, or knowing, which also recognizes itself, as that cognizing which is capable of recognizing itself, and the connection of both; and since this is so, the created recognition (knowledge) of human beings can achieve unification with God who can be recognized, and that is what happiness of the soul is.

> For he who receives God, the receivable light of the spirit, will be able to achieve such a unification with Thee, that he is united with Thee as the Son is with the Father.

The reader who has followed Cusanus up to this point, and who has been prepared to a certain extent step-by-step to behold the unconcealed truth, surely has a very different constitution of mind than at the beginning, when Nikolaus asked him to imagine the image of the icon. In a pedagogically unique way, Nikolaus has fulfilled the promise he made at the beginning, drawing his reader gently and continuously up to his standpoint.

The sentence: "For he who receives God, the receivable light of the spirit, will be able to achieve such a unification with Thee, that he is united with Thee as the Son is with the Father," contains such a condensed statement, that, without the *manductio,* its full content

could probably be understood only by very few. What is said here is nothing less than that God is receivable, and a unification with Him is possible.

In the trinity of God, more often defined as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the created God is the absolute mediator, who binds God to men, since He is at once entirely God and entirely human. And since the Son is no less God than is the Father, Nikolaus says:

> Thus Thou, God, worthy of love, art the Son of the loving God, of the Father; for upon Thee doth the goodwill of the Father rest (cf. *Mark* 1:11). So is all created existence enfolded into Thee, God, worthy of love.
>
> And further,
>
> For Thy conception is the Son, and everything is 'in Him.' (*Col.* 1:17) And the unity of Thee and Thy conception is the reality and originating activity, in which is the reality and unfolding of all.

The trinity is thus nothing else than the principle of creation, it is that which effects the development of the physical universe, for it is "originating activity." And the connecting bond which unifies the process of conceiving and the conception, for Nikolaus, is called "spirit" (*spiritus*).

> The spirit is, to wit, like a movement, which issues forth from the moving and the moved. The movement thus unfolds the conception of the moving one.

The person of Christ is thus the mediator, He is both absolutely united with God, as well as absolutely the Son of man. Through Him, human beings can fully partake of God, if they want to. It depends upon the person himself, whether he wants this unification of human nature, and through the person of Christ, this unification is "nothing else than the greatest possible drawing of human nature toward the divine, in such a way, that human nature as such can not be drawn any higher."

Sir Gawain / Wikimedia Commons / CC-BY-SA-3.0

The birthplace of Nicholas of Cusa (Nikolaus von Kues) in Kues, Germany

The 'New Man': *Homo Spiritualis*

The mystery hidden behind the wall of the coincidence of opposites is thus nothing else than the key to one's own creative powers as a person who identifies with Christ. For He is "the connection of divine nature which is creative, with human nature which is created."

Only if the person thus lives in the succession of Christ, and overcomes the "old man" of arrogance, the *homo animalis* in himself, and becomes a "new man," *homo spiritualis,* if he thus acts in accordance with the ordering of creation, then he contributes to a further development of this creation. Then he is a second God, as Nikolaus says in the work, *The Hunt for Wisdom* (*De venatione sapientiae*). As the living image of God (*imago viva Dei*), the person is also the living image of the absolute art of the Creator, indeed his soul is the place where the qualitatively new is conceived. Just as the manifolds of the universe are infinitely capable of perfection, so is the human power of cognition which recognizes itself also principally unlimited.

Through Christ and the participation in the divine principle of creation, which thereby becomes possible, the human being can participate far more directly in the conscious further development of the lawfulness of the physical universe than the Socratic method itself permits.

The universe consists of negentropically growing manifolds of ever higher orderings, whose microcosm is human Reason. If the person now recognizes this divine order of creation, at each singularity, that is to say, at the transition from one manifold into the next higher, by his creative efforts he will determine the *terminus specie* which enables further development. Since these manifolds become ever more complex in the course of evolution and of world history, human Reason must comprehend, in an ever more condensed way, the entire development of the universe in its essential features, since it is only from the standpoint of the totality, that something adequately new can be created.

Nikolaus proceeded from the standpoint that each human individual repeats in his spirit, as microcosm, the entire development of the macrocosm, but then in ever more complex form, the more developed the manifolds become. The human being creates something qualitatively new just when he actualizes absolute infinity in one point, and thus makes it become actual infinity.

It is at this moment, that creating and being created coincide also for human beings, since the actualization of infinity in one point (*terminus specie*),— in a singularity—means, that the knowledge upon which he bases his creation, must be adequate, that is to say, it must represent the greatest possible approximation to Truth at that time. Through the creative act, the human being extends anew the lawfulness of the universe in a lawful way. But that which he has created becomes at once part of himself. At this moment, he approaches the divine in the closest possible way, he is a living image of God, in which creating and being created coincide. He is not identical to God, but yet he is one with Him.

Everyone who has been able to follow Nikolaus in his *manductio,* will agree with him when he remarks upon this recognition in the words already cited: "Who is there, who will not be enthralled (*rapiter*) to the highest degree, when he attentively reflects upon this?" And we must indeed agree with Cusanus, that to know the Creator means to become united with him.

But the point at which the further creation of the universe must occur is not fortuitous. Thus, Nikolaus says:

> Divine knowledge (i.e., recognition) is necessity itself (*necessitas*), neither dependent nor in need of anything. But everything is in need of it. Without it, nothing can exist.

Neither is the point at which creation must occur fortuitous, nor is the further development itself. The physical universe, Creation, is a process of negentropic development of higher orderings. Knowledge of this process means at once the necessity to actively contribute to this development. That means nothing else than that creation is necessary.

The human being who so acts, represents the highest possible "perfection of spiritual beauty." And if Nikolaus here equates creativity with beauty, that then is the moment in which he anticipates the most important ideas of Friedrich Schiller, or, the other way around, in which Schiller will think like Cusanus.

For Schiller, it is uniquely the beautiful soul of the genius, which extends lawfulness in a lawful way, and thereby is free.

A beautiful soul is the human being who has not only developed his mind to the level of Reason, but has also developed his emotions such, that he can surrender himself to them without hesitation, without ever running the danger of violating Reason in this way. A beautiful soul, a genius, is the human being who does what is necessary with joy and passion.

And for Nikolaus, too, the highest state of mind is no dry, academic affair, as he lays out the full richness of delicacies in the most diverse images, a wealth in which that human being who has chosen the most noble of delicacies participates.

> Who can dissuade a bear from honey, once he has tasted of its sweetness? How great that sweetness of Truth is, which grants the most delightful life over and beyond all the sweetness of the body! For it is the absolute sweetness, from which everything issues, which is desired by every taste.

Who could entertain any doubt that the ideal of humanity which Nikolaus poses to us, is capable of overcoming the fragmentation of modern man and reestablishing the unified human being within us?

Again and again there have been great people who have brought the world into order for many generations, through the power of their minds and the courage of their ideas.

What could be more fitting to celebrate the day honoring such a person, than to reflect upon the grand and beautiful ideas of another such person?

Revival of Cusa Opens a New Vision for Peace

Helga Zepp-LaRouche spoke for 14 minutes about Nicholas of Cusa's role today on Oct. 29, 2025 at the beginning of a live weekly webcast, beginning here.

Brief Bibliographies

Lyndon LaRouche

2005 Man's Original Creations

2007 Kepler and Cusa

2011 Reflections on a Work by Nicholas of Cusa: The Strategic Situation Now

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Helga Zepp-LaRouche

1992 Nicholas of Cusa and the Council of Florence

2012 A Vision For The Future of Humanity

2021 Learn from Nicholas of Cusa — An address to a gathering of international youth.