

CHAPTER THREE
NICHOLAS OF CUSA
AND FUNCTIONALIST ONTOLOGY

In Volume One of his *Substanz, System, Struktur*¹ Heinrich Rombach promotes the view that Nicholas of Cusa is "the Aristotle of modern thought."² This epithet seems fitting, thinks Rombach, because Nicholas is the initiator of *functionalist* ontology, in the modern sense of the word. According to Rombach, Nicholas not only propounds functionalism but also recognizes that in doing so he is propounding something new; nevertheless, Nicholas is said not to formulate an explicit *concept* thereof.³ Indeed, Nicholas, we are told, adheres to *three* different ontologies, without ever fully reconciling their differences: an ontology of substances, an ontology of functions, and an ontology of identity.⁴ The first of these considers objects not only as they present themselves to us in daily life but also as they are apprehended scientifically and philosophically within, say, the Aristotelian tradition. The second considers objects to be only moments of the whole and not to have any existence of their own—i.e., not to have any substantial existence. The third looks beyond substances and beyond moments-of-the-whole and attempts to grasp Being itself, wherein there is no plurality or differentiation whatsoever. These three ontologies, continues Rombach, cannot be derived from one another and do not lead into one another. Moreover, they are not supplementary to one another; for the first has nothing of value to offer to the second, and the second does not contribute anything to the third. Yet, all

three are operative in Nicholas's philosophy. And they include propositions which, if directly compared, are contradictory. However, thinks Rombach, if the ontologies are kept apart, their respective propositions may be regarded as mutually exclusive ways of referring to the same reality. For example, Nicholas states that things are different from God; but he also states that things are not different from God. Similarly, he teaches that the world is so radically separate from God that it is caused from out of itself and must be explained from out of itself; but he also teaches that everything which is is God, that outside of God there is nothing.⁵

Nicholas's lack of explicitness regarding these different ontologies seems to Rombach to explain why previous interpreters overlooked the functionalist dimension of Nicholas's metaphysics.⁶ This is the dimension upon which Rombach concentrates. He also discusses the dimension of identity but leaves undeveloped the dimension of substance.

Section I, below, summarizes Rombach's understanding of Nicholas's ontology—concentrating, as does he, on functionalism; Section II then challenges this understanding; and Section III proceeds to offer an interpretive restatement of *DI* II, 4 and 5.

I

1.1. *Functionalism.* Ontologically speaking, "functionalism" is a view that conveys a twofold idea: (1) negatively, that no finite thing is a substance, having some measure of relatively independent being; and (2) positively, that each finite thing is constituted only by its system of relationships to every other finite thing.⁷ In other words, each thing is only what it determines other things to be and what it is determined by them to be.⁸ Thus, each thing is identical with the whole; and no thing is itself.⁹ Moreover, no thing could exist alone; for a thing's being consists in its being

different from something else, so that its being is *only* its relationality.¹⁰ Expressed more paradoxically: each thing is the whole of what it is not—i.e., of what is other than it.¹¹ But were there not anything other than it, it too would be nothing, for it would be only possibility.¹² Since things are not substances,¹³ they do not have essences;¹⁴ or better, all essences are only the one and only essence of all things.¹⁵ Thus, whatever happens anywhere is a function of the whole,¹⁶ so that from a single fact the state of the world can in principle be read off. For example, if someone knew everything about the moon at the present moment, then he would also know everything about the state of the world at this moment. Or better, someone could not know the former *without* also knowing the latter, for everything which has hitherto occurred has contributed to the present state of the moon and expresses itself in and through the moon. Similarly, an observer with absolutely sharp discriminatory powers could infer the future state of the world from the present stage of the moon.¹⁷ In sum, not only does the state of the world *express* itself in and through the moon, but the moon *is* a state of the world as a whole. Whatever can be determined regarding the moon—its shape, its mass, its state of energy and of motion—is determined and determinable only through the whole of the system. And if the world-system is expressed in a determinate state, then only therein resides the precise definition of, say, the moon's constitution. Therefore, the world is in the moon moon and in the sun sun.¹⁸

1.2. *God and finite things in the world.* Functionalism, as exhibited above, was initiated by Nicholas of Cusa in *DI*. But we need to go beyond *DI* to glimpse clearly what Nicholas regards as the basic ontological distinction between God and finite things. For this distinction occurs most vividly in the dialogues *De Possess* and *De Li Non Aliud*. In the latter we are reminded that each finite thing in the world is *other* than all others, that each manifests what it is by contrast with the others which it is not;¹⁹ its very

being is relationality.²⁰ God, however, who is infinite, is incomparable with finite things. For example, He is not greater than they are or lesser than they are; nor is He *other* than they are. Since by virtue of transcending the entire domain of comparison with finite beings God cannot be *other*, Nicholas prefers, above all other names for God, the name "Not-other." In the former dialogue, i.e., *De Possesset*, we are told that God is the actuality of all possibility, whereas in finite things actuality and possibility are always distinct. Now, precisely because God is actually all that which He *can* be, He cannot be *other* than He is, whereas a finite thing is never all that which it *can* be, and hence it can always be *other* than it actually is.²¹ This fundamental ontological distinction between God as *non-aliud* and the creation as *aliud* is already implicit in *DI*.²²

1.3. *The world and finite things in the world.* Nicholas refers to the world as a finite infinity. It is unlimited because it is without boundaries and because there is no point at which it necessarily comes to a spatial end; accordingly, it can always be thought to be greater.²³ Yet, from the viewpoint of an absolute observer, the world is limited; indeed, it cannot outdistance the measure of its possibility, or matter, which is finite.²⁴ So although with reference to God's power, which is infinite, the world can be thought to be greater than it is, nevertheless with reference to its resisting possibility, or matter, which cannot actually be stretched unto infinity, the world cannot be thought to be greater.²⁵ Moreover, the world is not like a being; nor is it the mere sum of all beings.²⁶ It has no location. It is not something that exists along side of beings or even above them; it is not anything which can enter into comparative relations with them. Instead, the world must be understood as, so to speak, "sitting" amid beings as the precise definition of their *what* and their *that*. For between the world and a being in the world there exists absolutely no difference, since a being is the contracted actualization of the world-system at a given point in this system.²⁷ The individual thing is the

whole because it brings to expression, in a determinate moment, the state of the whole world. Indeed, its *content* is the world: "In each creature the universe is that very creature . . . and each thing receives all things in such way that in that thing the universe is contractedly that thing . . ." ²⁸ Thus, the universe is contracted quiddity, which is contracted in one way in the sun and in another way in the moon. Although the universe is not the sun and not the moon, nevertheless in the sun it is the sun, and in the moon it is the moon. Or, to generalize the point: "In a stone all things are stone; in a vegetative soul, vegetative soul; in life, life; in the senses, the senses; in sight, sight; in hearing, hearing; in imagination, imagination; in reason, reason; in intellect, intellect; in God, God."²⁹ Accordingly, each thing is only the world itself—in a contracted manner.³⁰

Insofar as the world is the particular thing and the particular thing has as its essence nothing other than the world itself, everything is bound up with everything, each thing is contained in the other: *quodlibet in quolibet*.³¹ What is present in each thing is *not* the plurality of things but the *universe*, which contains everything in an *inseparable* way and which *is* each thing. The universe is prior to the plurality of things: "*omnia praecedit [sic] quodlibet, plura non praecedunt quodlibet*."³² Therefore, in a strict and basic sense all things are the same: viz., the world. There is nothing new under the sun and nothing that is different from what exists elsewhere. All essences are only the one and only essence of all things": "*omnes essentiae sunt ipsa omnium essentia*."³³ Fundamentally, then, all things contain the same thing and differ from one another only from the point of view of their relation to one another. In the eyes of God, as Absolute Observer, there is no plurality of beings: there is only the world as a single creature.³⁴

As a functionalist, Nicholas does not regard the universe as a *cosmos*.³⁵ For *cosmos* has to do with an ordering of things which already exist in a relatively independent manner, so that they can be brought into harmony from out

of an initial *chaos*. Thus, *cosmos* and *chaos* are antithetical notions: the less chaos, the more cosmos; the less cosmos, the more chaos. But we have already seen that Nicholas's functionalist ontology is incompatible with the conception of substances—i.e., the conception of things which exist for themselves with relatively independent being and which admit of a *subsequent* global ordering. Nicholas does not teach that creation occurred successively—one thing after another and each thing for itself; instead, he teaches that everything was created at once.³⁶ So, on Nicholas's functionalist view, the world both is and is not each individual thing. On the one hand, the world is the presupposition of individual things; and, on the other, the world is not possible without individual things and does not precede them.³⁷ The conceptual antithesis to *world* is neither *not-world* nor *chaos*; rather, on functionalist theory, there is no conceptual antithesis to *world*.³⁸

1.4. *God and the world.* Nicholas's metaphysics is not pantheistic, for it posits the most radical distinction between God and the world: viz., that God exists of Himself and for Himself, whereas the world can never exist of and for itself.³⁹ To be sure, God is everything in the world; but He is all things only through the *mediation* of the universe, says Nicholas. Only if God were said to be *immediately* identical with each respective thing would Nicholas be proposing a pantheistic doctrine.⁴⁰ Viewed relationally, each thing is that which it itself is in contradistinction to all others. But when each thing is viewed as a representation of the whole world and as an embodiment of the one Divine Essence, then the Divine and Absolute Essence shows forth, and the inmost nucleus of the thing discloses itself as God Himself.⁴¹ Now, the relational aspect of a thing cannot be eliminated, because it is posited with the world itself. The relational aspect protects the individual and preserves its reality, even though the individual thing has the Divine Essence itself as its content. Rain remains rain and is, in all its particular features, just what it is for the maintenance of

the earth and of life on the earth. It demonstrates its reality in the fruitfulness of the fields, in the thirst of creatures, in the power of rivers and streams—even though in the rain, viewed absolutely, God Himself is manifest in transcendence of the world.⁴²

Not only is God the content of the world, He is also—because of the fact that the world is the actual *what* of each thing—the inmost essence of each thing: *omnium essentialium simplicissima essentia*. If we consider a being as it differs from other beings—i.e., consider it in its contracted and separate quiddity—we attain only its contracted essence, *quiditas contracta*. However, if we consider it in its absolute aspect—i.e., with reference to the oneness of all beings and to the unchangeable Essence—there springs forth the *quiditas absoluta*, which is identical with the Essence of God Himself.⁴³ Now, the Absolute Essence is this thing much better than this thing is itself. God is this pond more than this pond is itself, as Cusa says. God is a thing “precisely,” whereas this thing is only approximately itself—a disorderly copy of itself.⁴⁴ Because God is the precise Essence of each thing, He is present in everything. He is the Heart of all things; He is the Element, and the final Oneness, of which everything consists. We must take this identity of the essences of God and creatures in a very narrow sense. It means not only that in creatures there is contained nothing other than God Himself but also that in God there is contained nothing other than what any given determinate being contains. The sun contains the *entire* essence of God. Cusa advances from the essential content of the sun to the essential content of God only because of the fact that he posits the sun's unchanged content *absolutely* instead of relatively. Since the content of the sun is everything—i.e., everything apart from any negation—we can also consider the sun in absolute isolation and, accordingly, without the viewpoint of relation; and in this way we have before us *entitas absoluta*, i.e., God.⁴⁵

So in Nicholas of Cusa we find a new—i.e., a

functionalist—envisioning of *thing*, of *world*, and of *God*. Indeed, functionalism could virtually be called Cusan ontology.⁴⁶ Though Nicholas does not self-consciously abandon the ontology of substances, his ontology of functions is at odds with it.

II

The very boldness of Rombach's portrayal captures our imagination, thereby startling us into envisioning Nicholas of Cusa as a more strikingly pivotal philosophical figure than previously we had dared fancy. But once we scrutinize more closely Rombach's text, comparing it in detail with Nicholas's, we will recognize that our timidity is more praiseworthy than is Rombach's temerity. For the portrayal of Nicholas as a functionalist proves untenable.

We may catalogue the weaknesses of Rombach's account under seven headings: (1) textual and translation errors, (2) other outright errors, (3) misapplications of Nicholas's texts, (4) incoherence or *prima facie* incoherence, (5) misapprehensions, (6) imprecisions and unclarity, (7) lack of adequate documentation.

2.1. *Textual and translation errors.* One of the first things that strike a reader is how carelessly Rombach deals with Nicholas's text. We have already noticed his translation of "*qui ista prius inaudita legerint*" as "[*die Leser,*] *die so Unerhörtes früher nicht lasen.*"⁴⁷ Other such examples are easy to find. On p. 165 he writes: "*Alle Wesenheiten sind nur die eine und einzige Wesenheit des Alls.*"⁴⁸ "*omnes essentiae sunt ipsa omnium essentia.*" Here Rombach simply adds the German word "*nur*," for which there is no corresponding word (or idea) in the Latin text. But the small word "*nur*" (i.e., "only") makes no small difference in the sentence, for it helps foster the impression that Nicholas's texts contain the doctrine of functionalism. In this respect, then, Rombach mistranslates the sentence. But even worse, he appears

to misinterpret what he has translated; for he seems to take "*ipsa omnium essentia*" to refer to the universe, when, in fact, it refers to God.⁴⁹ But perhaps worst of all, Rombach does not even have the Latin text right, since he has "*sunt*" instead of "*sicut.*" When we look to see whether "*sunt*" is a simple misprint, we discover that it is not, that Rombach is following the reading in the Paris edition (1514) rather than the reading in the critical edition published by the Heidelberg Academy (Vol. I, 1932). Furthermore, Rombach does not even document the Latin citation; consequently, a reader must manage somehow or other to locate it for himself in Nicholas's texts. Nor does Rombach anywhere call attention to the fact that this reading differs from the reading in the critical edition. Finally, when we examine the Latin text and context, we recognize that the Paris edition's word "*sunt*" is not merely a less preferable reading but is, indeed, a mistaken one.

Let us take another example from the same page in Rombach (p. 165): "*Das All ist früher und eigentlicher und ursprünglicher als die Vielheit der Dinge: 'omnia praecedunt [sic] quodlibet, plura non praecedunt quodlibet.'*" Once again, Rombach gives no documentation. But he is referring to *DI* II,5 (117:15-17): "*Si igitur omnia sunt in omnibus, omnia videntur quodlibet praecedere. Non igitur omnia sunt plura, quoniam pluralitas non praecedunt quodlibet.*" Rombach has elided and revised Nicholas's text; yet, he does not indicate any elision or revision but prefers to convey the impression that he is quoting the Latin exactly. Moreover, his translation adds an idea not found in the Latin: viz., the idea that *das All ist eigentlicher als die Vielheit der Dinge*.

Other—less important—examples of Rombach's unreliability are his translation of "*consequenter*" and "*ex consequenti*" by "*folgerichtig*" and "*mitfolgend*," in a context where they should be translated by a *temporal* adverb.⁵⁰ Or again, the Latin text which he reproduces in footnote 21 on pp. 161-162 contains "*que*" instead of "*quae*" and is cited as *DI* I, 2 instead of as II, 1.

All in all, Rombach's handling of Nicholas's texts is exceedingly loose. And this looseness goes a long way toward explaining how he could possibly "find" functionalism therein.

2.2. *Other outright errors.* On p. 152, note 5 Rombach attempts to justify his choice of "Not-other" as that characterization of God which is the most important one for Nicholas of Cusa: "If we prefer this characterization of God above all others, even though it was found by Cusa only late (1462), the reason is that it is the one which best characterizes his thought. '*Non reperitur in alio aliquo clarius, quam in non aliud.*' De ven. sap. ch. 14." But Rombach is engaging in special pleading. For in Nicholas's very last treatise, viz., *De Apice Theoriae* (1464), we find: "*Videbis infra, posse ipsum, quo nihil potentius nec prius nec melius esse potest, longe aptius nominare illud sine quo nihil quicquam potest nec esse nec vivere nec intelligere quam possest aut aliud quodcumque vocabulum. Sive enim nominari potest, utique posse ipsum, quo nihil perfectius esse potest, melius ipsum nominabit. Nec aliud clarius, verius aut facilius nomen dabile credo.*"⁵¹ Here Nicholas makes it clear that, as a name for God, he now prefers "Possibility itself" to "Not-other."

On p. 172 Rombach maintains that, for Nicholas, all numbers are *parts* (*Teile*) of oneness. Yet, Rombach does not document this claim. Moreover, he *could not* document it even if he wanted to, for Nicholas nowhere advances it. Finally, even to suppose that Nicholas could consider numbers to be *parts* of oneness is to misconstrue completely the doctrines of enfolding and unfolding. Rombach's confusion about this topic underlies his concomitant confusion—which we shall examine later—concerning the topic of God and the world. For if God is to finite things as oneness is to numbers,⁵² and if numbers are parts of oneness, then things are parts of God.

On p. 172 Rombach also goes on to affirm, still in the name of Nicholas: "Now, insofar as everything is in God,

God is—when considered in terms of everything—the Absolute Maximum (*maximum absolutum*). And insofar as (1) He is present in everything and (2) nothing can be so small that it would not contain Him as a whole, God is likewise the Minimum (*minimum absolutum*)."⁵³ Once again, we may note that Rombach does not document this line of reasoning. And once again we may say that he *could not* document it even if he wanted to, for Nicholas nowhere reasons in this way. Except in a symbolic sense, Nicholas does not think that God can be comparatively considered in terms of anything—nor even in terms of everything. Moreover, even if God were so measurable, or comparable, His being all things would not *ipso facto* suffice either for His being—or for our inferring—that He is *Absolute Maximum* (as contrasted with *de facto* maximum). Furthermore, Nicholas does not reason that God is *Absolute Minimum* insofar as nothing can be so small that it would not contain Him. And, in any event, "contains" is the wrong word, since God is present in things in such way as not to be contained by them.⁵⁴ Finally, even to suppose that Nicholas could reason in the foregoing manner is to misapprehend completely his understanding of *Absolute Maximality* and *Absolute Minimality*.

Elsewhere Rombach observes, with reference to Nicholas's concept of *world*:

God "*harmonized* the relations of the parts *mutually and in every detail (ita proportionabiliter partium ad invicem proportionem constituens)*, [so] that everywhere the movement of the parts leads to the whole (*ut in qualibet sit motus partium ad totum*)" (*DI* II, 13).—This is perhaps the clearest definition of function in the Cusan texts.⁵⁵

But this is not a definition—and *a fortiori* not a definition of *function*.

A bit later (p. 210) Rombach interprets Nicholas's doctrine of *explicatio* (i.e., unfolding)—a doctrine which we have already seen Rombach not to comprehend—by affirming: "Through explication nothing is changed—or increased." This statement—at the very least—is mislead-

ing. For in the case of the world (though not in the case of numbers or of the infinite line) *unfolding* is the same thing as *emanation*,⁵⁶ where *emanation* signifies *creation* but does not connote temporal stages. To view things as created is to view them as no longer enfolded in God—i.e., to view their ontological status as *changed*.

On p. 225 Rombach makes the astounding assertion that “the connection between functionalism and Christian theology is so fundamental that the one necessitates the other.” But this statement is false both historically and conceptually.

2.3. *Misapplications of Nicholas's texts.* Just as Rombach is careless in his citing and translating of Nicholas's texts, so he is careless in his use of Nicholas's texts. For example, he appeals to *De Li Non Aliud* 10 to justify the following view, which he purports to find in *DI*: “Fundamentally, all things contain the same thing: only as they are considered *in relation to one another* are they different from one another. In the eyes of God, as Absolute Observer, there is no plurality of beings but only the world as a single creature” (p. 165). But in *DI* Nicholas nowhere teaches that in God's sight there is no plurality of creatures. Rombach seems to elicit this view *solely* from *Di Li Non Aliud* 10 (39:4-11), which is the only passage he refers to:

Therefore, when I look at things, beholding their essences: since things exist in accordance with their essences, then when I behold these essences through the understanding prior to [the things' existence], I maintain that they are different from one another. But when I view them above the understanding and prior to other, I do not see different essences but see no other than the simple Form of the essences which I am contemplating in these things. And I call this Form *Not-other* or the *Essence of essences*, since it is whatever is observed in all the essences.⁵⁷

But this passage does not make the points “elicited” by Rombach. First of all, it has nothing to do with whether or not God beholds the world as a multiplicity. Secondly, Nicholas is maintaining that as the essences exist *in God* they are God and therefore are not a plurality.⁵⁸ Since he is

talking about them insofar as they precede otherness, he is talking about them with reference to their state of enfoldedness, ontologically prior to their creation. Thirdly, the statement “Not-other is whatever is observed in all the essences” does not mean that fundamentally all things *contain* the same thing; in Nicholas's last sentence the Latin equivalent of the word “contain” does not at all appear. Rather, the statement is to be understood along the following lines: Not-other is whatever is observed in all the essences because it is the Cause of the essences' being what they are;⁵⁹ thus, too, Not-other defines all things, since each thing is not other than itself, so that Not-other is in it. Fourthly, we should notice that even in *De Li Non Aliud*, which dates more than twenty years after *DI*, Nicholas is still talking about the essences of things. Now, Rombach contends that “for functionalism ‘essence’ is no longer a meaningful word” (p. 213). But instead of drawing the conclusion that Nicholas is not a functionalist, he prefers to allege that Nicholas did not fully work out his functionalism, that he had the idea of functionalism but not the concept,⁶⁰ that he had three separate ontologies.

Similarly, Rombach's attempt to connect *DI* with *De Possest* leads him to misconstrue the latter. Let us reconsider the following statement of his:

We must take this identity of the essences of God and creatures in a very narrow sense. It means not only that in creatures there is contained nothing other than God Himself but also that in God there is contained nothing other than what any given determinate being contains. The sun contains the *entire* essence of God. Cusa advances from the essential content of the sun to the essential content of God only because of the fact that he posits the sun's unchanged content *absolutely* instead of relatively. Since the content of the sun is everything—i.e., everything apart from any negation—we can also consider the sun in absolute isolation and, accordingly, without the viewpoint of relation; and in this way we have before us *entitas absoluta*, i.e., God.⁶¹

Rombach cites *De Possest* 68:11-23 as support for this statement.⁶² But, first of all, *De Possest* 68 does *not* teach

that God and creatures have an identical essence. Secondly, it does not teach that in God there is *contained nothing other than* what any given determinate being contains. Ignoring the invidious word “contained” (“*enthalten*”), we should recall that not only are all *created* things present in God but so also are all *creatable* things.⁶³ As Nicholas tells us, “God’s creative power is not exhausted in His creation.”⁶⁴ Thirdly, Nicholas nowhere says that in creatures there is *contained nothing other than* God Himself. Indeed, Nicholas never denies, not even in *De Possess*, that creatures have their own contracted essence. This essence is not God but is that which makes the sun the sun and the moon the moon, so that “the being of the sun is not the being of the moon.”⁶⁵ When Nicholas says that God “is at once and as a whole present in all things,”⁶⁶ he is not saying anything more than Anselm had much earlier said in *Monologion* 22 and *De Veritate* 13. Moreover, *De Possess* 68 should be read in conjunction with *De Possess* 11 and 12: Nicholas is not maintaining that every finite thing contains God as its “core” of being, so to speak; he is rather providing us with a strategy for seeing how it is that “the invisible things of Him, including His eternal power and divinity, are clearly seen from the creation of the world, by means of understanding created things.”⁶⁷

Suppose we say that God is sun. If, as is correct, we construe this [statement] as [a statement] about a sun which is actually all it is able to be, then we see clearly that this sun is not at all like the sensible sun. For while the sensible sun is in the East, it is not in any other part of the sky where it is able to be. [Moreover, none of the following statements are true of the sensible sun:] “It is maximal and minimal, alike, so that it is not able to be either greater or lesser”; “It is everywhere and anywhere, so that it is not able to be elsewhere than it is”; “It is all things, so that it is not able to be anything other than it is”—and so on. With all the other created things the case is similar. Hence it does not matter what name you give to God, provided that in the foregoing manner you mentally remove the limits with respect to its possible being.⁶⁸

So God is not the sensible sun; and the sensible sun is not, in its own, contracted being, God. Nor can we strip away

the properties of the sun and find God lurking behind them, as it were—as if God were the sun’s essence and these properties were only accidents of God. We may indeed mentally strip away the sun’s determinations in order better to recognize why undifferentiated Being itself, which is God, cannot be conceived as it is. But Nicholas does not claim that God and finite beings are identical in essence, that God is “the ultimate Oneness of which everything *consists*.”⁶⁹ Rather, God is the ultimate Power which creates and sustains the finite being of each finite thing. Through His Power God is present in each finite thing, as the power of a cause is present in what it effects and sustains.

2.4. *Incoherence or prima facie incoherence.* On p. 152 Rombach states that, for Nicholas, “nothing is everything; each thing manifests what it is in that it is not something else.”⁷⁰ But on p. 214 we are told, with what presumably is supposed to have Nicholas’s endorsement, that “a thing is exactly identical with the whole. *Nothing is itself; everything is the whole.*”⁷¹ Perhaps there is some way to render these two passages compatible; but it is difficult to see how this can be done—given the occurrence, in the latter passage, of the words “exactly identical” (“*genau identisch*”). The difficulty is reinforced by a passage on p. 164 in which the word “*keinerlei*” appears: “*Es besteht keinerlei Unterschied zwischen der Welt und einem Seienden in ihr*”: “There exists *no difference at all between the world and a being in the world.*” Now, this is surely not Nicholas’s view. For Nicholas says explicitly—as Rombach himself recognizes⁷²—that the universe is neither the sun nor the moon.⁷³ Nicholas does say, however, that *in each thing* the universe is this thing. And no doubt this statement is what is confusing Rombach, who seems generally confused about the doctrine of *quodlibet in quolibet*. Rombach should content himself with saying, as he does on p. 208: “. . . *und so nimmt jedes alles auf, derart, dass das All in ihm jenes selbst in zusammengezogener Weise ist . . .*” But, instead, he switches from saying that in each thing the universe is this