

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE WORLD AS THEOPHANY: Nicholas of Cusa's Two Ontological Dimensions

Nicholas of Cusa's stature as a metaphysician is readily discernible from one striking feature: his ability to expound his basic ontological principles in a variety of ingenious modes. Works such as *DI*, *De Coniecturis*, *De Visione Dei*, *De Possess*, and *De Li Non Aliud*, for example, are markedly different in style and approach. Moreover, preliminary examination of the content shows that each of these works is distinctive—without, however, being distinctive in such way as to be fundamentally at odds with the others. That is, no work in the corpus of Cusan writings seems ever to veer fully from the essential ontological principles first laid down in *DI*. If we take this preliminary consideration as a provisional starting point, subject to further confirmation or disconfirmation, then we create a hermeneutical circle: we can use *DI* to cast light upon puzzling passages in a subsequent work; and we can use the subsequent work to illuminate an apparent obscurity in *DI*. Of special interest in this regard is the work *De Dato Patris Luminum*, which has become an exegetical focal point in relation to *DI*. For in accordance with our starting point: what Nicholas means, in *DI*, when he calls God the Essence of all things can be clarified by reference to his doctrine of theophany in *De Dato Patris Luminum*. Of course, if close examination of the two texts were to reveal a fundamental conceptual shift, then our tentative starting point would have to be either qualified or abandoned. Now, Klaus Jacobi is one of

those interpreters who regard *DI* and *De Dato* as compatible treatises;<sup>1</sup> in these works, he judges, Nicholas presents “a new kind of ontology,” one which “shatters all traditional notions of philosophy.”<sup>2</sup> Though it seems right for us to agree with Jacobi that in some respects Nicholas does present a new kind of ontology, it would be wrong for us to believe that Jacobi has rightly ascertained just what this ontology is. For when we recapitulate his interpretation of *De Dato*, as in Section I below,<sup>3</sup> the discrepancies between this interpretation and Nicholas’s text can readily be itemized, as in Section II.

## I

1.1. The central Scripture verse around which *De Dato* is oriented is James 1:17: “Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights . . . .” This verse seems to teach, explains Nicholas, that every creature is in a certain way God. For if God, who is the Best, gives only a best gift, He can give only Himself. Since the Best is simple and indivisible, God cannot give Himself partially and diminishedly.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, God’s gift does not go to already existing receivers; rather, these very receivers are created by God and are themselves God’s gift, because God’s giving is His creating. In fact, then, receiver and what is received are identical: God gives to creatures the fact that they are what they are.<sup>5</sup> But Giver and gift also seem identical, since God can give only Himself and only undiminishedly. It seems, therefore, that God and creatures are one and the same thing. According to Nicholas this identity is not merely apparent; indeed, the thesis of identity is *logically entailed* by the premises of his metaphysical system.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, together with advancing this identity thesis, Nicholas also affirms the profoundest difference between creatures and Creator: the self-same thing is God according to the mode of the Giver but is creature according to the mode of

the given. “God is everything which is,” says Nicholas. He is Being itself, which is absolutely one; and all being is God’s being. Each finite being, insofar as it exists, is God. Yet, a finite being is not the Giver of being but only the receiver thereof: i.e., it is God qua given. In other words, creatures are theophanies; they are God in the mode of manifestation, though they are not God Himself.<sup>7</sup> For though God gives only Himself and though His gift is maximally good, this gift cannot be received as it is given but only by way of a descent. Hence, the Infinite and Absolute is received finitely and contractedly. This finite reception falls short of the truth of God but is nonetheless a likeness of God.<sup>8</sup>

Nicholas’s ontological *problématique*, then, is posed by his twofold affirmation: (1) that God gives only Himself and only undiminishedly, so that He is wholly and indivisibly present in His creation; and (2) that the creation is not God, for God is oneness, eternity, and truth, whereas the creation is multiple, temporal, and a likeness.<sup>9</sup> Yet, how can Nicholas consistently assert both of these propositions? As if to answer this question, Nicholas makes a last attempt at clarification:

Because the Eternity which was given was received only contractedly, the beginningless Eternity exists as a received eternity which has a beginning. Therefore, *the world, insofar as in it Eternity is its entire being, has no beginning.* But because in the descent of the world Eternity was received only with a beginning, *the world is not Absolute Eternity but is contracted eternity* that has a beginning. Therefore, the Eternity of the world became an originated eternity, and the eternal world became a created world. *The world which with the Father is eternal and the world which was created through descent from the Father are not two worlds but are one and the same world . . . .* So the world is, as it were, the changeable, shadowy God, and the unchangeable and unshadowed world is the eternal God.<sup>10</sup>

We see, then, that Nicholas distinguishes two modes of being of the world: as the world exists in God, it is God and is beginningless; as it exists empirically, it is originated and is the finite mode of being of the Infinite. In this second

mode of being, the world is the contraction of the Absolute, the temporality of the Eternal, the unfolding of Oneness. In short, it is God's "other" mode of being.<sup>11</sup> God, of course, is not a being but is Being itself, the *Being* of beings; similarly, His Eternity is the *Being* of time.

Nicholas's discovery of the twofoldness of the ontological dimensions, and therefore of the duality of the ontologies (i.e., the ontology of identity and the ontology of difference), is the nucleus of the entire Cusan philosophy. It is this new kind of ontology which shatters all traditional notions of philosophy.

1.2. We have seen that, for Nicholas, God's creatures are God's gifts and that these gifts are theophanies, i.e., God's lights, or appearances. The human being is one such theophany. As a knowing *subject*, he recognizes God as the one who reveals Himself in all existing things—i.e., as Being, which in every being is whatever is. Therefore, in all our knowing, God is the one who is known;<sup>12</sup> in other words, all our knowledge is fundamentally knowledge of God.<sup>13</sup> This does not mean that when we have knowledge of earth or air or human being, we know God, who is earth, air, and human being. On the contrary. God is not earth, air, or human being as these exist concretely and empirically; instead, He is Absolute Being and Absolute Quiddity; He is not the form of earth, of air, or of human being; rather, He is the Absolute Form of the form of earth, the form of air, the form of human being.<sup>14</sup> Absolute Quiddity, says Nicholas, can be attained only by way of negation: we know that God is not this and is not that. Yet, in *De Possess* the *via negativa* becomes dialectically transformed into an instrument of reason in order to show that nothing can be denied of God.<sup>15</sup> According to the reasoning in *De Possess* 66-67, *not-being* is the first of all negations. But *not-being* negates only such being as is conceptually its opposite. However, it also presupposes being; and this presupposed being is unnegatable. As Nicholas puts it:

The negation which besets being denies that this being . . . is the presupposed being. This is to say nothing other than that being which is after not-being is not at all eternal, ineffable being . . . So I see God more truly than the world. For I see the world only negatively and with reference to not-being, as were I to say: "I see that the world is not God." But I see *God before not-being*. Hence, *no being is denied of Him. Therefore, His Being is the entire being of everything which is or in any way can be.*<sup>16</sup>

So the *via negativa* shows, through a dialectical reversal, *that nothing can be denied of God*. It is correct to say "The world is not God" (insofar as the world is created being, existing after not-being); but, for Nicholas, it is not possible to reverse this statement and to say "God is not the world." For God, as Absolute Being, is prior to not-being and to all negation. Thus, the *via negativa* has two phases. In its first phase it negates finite beings in order to approach more closely to knowing what God is not. But in its second phase it negates the negativity of finite beings in order to arrive at their positivity, i.e., at the uncreated mode of being of these same finite beings.<sup>17</sup> A thing, qua existing in God, is God; but it is also everything else from which, qua existing in the world, it is distinct. Accordingly, as a thing exists in its own most congruent eternal being, viz., God, it is most simple Eternity itself.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the *via negativa*, as Nicholas works out its dialectic, corresponds to his view that God and creatures are different modes of being of one and the same thing. For the *via negativa* begins by observing created beings and by denying that God has any such differentiating features as do they. But by a dialectical turning back upon itself, the *via negativa* becomes a *via positiva* which views God as the entire being of everything that is or in any way can be, so that nothing can be denied of Him in whom each thing is Himself and all things.<sup>19</sup> In this manner, the dialectic inherent in the *via negativa* accords with the dialectical relationship which binds together the ontology of identity and the ontology of difference.

1.3. Nicholas teaches that though God manifests Himself in His creation, He is not manifest equally in all creatures. In the Divine Trinity the second member is the *suprema apparitio patris*: the supreme manifestation of the Father. Correspondingly, among creatures, Christ is the highest manifestation of God. For in Christ God is revealed not in otherness but as Himself; in Christ the Absolute qua Absolute has become concrete.<sup>20</sup> Yet, in Christ humanity altogether loses its contractedness and otherness.<sup>21</sup> Combining these two points, we may say: as Christ reveals the concreteness of the Absolute, so He also reveals the absoluteness of the concrete.<sup>22</sup> In and through Christ we recognize that concreteness need not bespeak contractedness and that individual being need not bespeak otherness.<sup>23</sup>

*DI* teaches that Christ is both true God and true man—“*maximum simul absolutum et concretum*.”<sup>24</sup> Christ is God Himself in supreme substantial identity; and He is the difference in which God has expressed Himself. As uniting in Himself eternity and temporality, God and man, Christ unites two modes of being and thereby epitomizes the ontology of identity and the ontology of difference.

1.4. In the end, Nicholas censures traditional ontology, reproaching it for not recognizing that only God *is*, that beings in the world do not exist *simpliciter* but are only manifestations and unfoldings of Being itself.<sup>25</sup> The old ontology was an ontology of difference—one which did not grasp the idea of an ontology of identity. Nicholas’s new approach is innovative because it relates, dialectically, the one ontology to the other. But it is also innovative because it restructures the ontology of difference by conceiving of it as a theory of appearance, i.e., as *phenomenology*: the world, for Nicholas, is *apparitio dei*—the manifestation of God.<sup>26</sup>

## II

*Prima facie*, Jacobi’s interpretation is certainly appealing. For how could Nicholas, whose works display such philosophical ingenuity, be merely a continuer of the old philosophical traditions? Surely what is new in his philosophy is its dialectical aspect, attended by a self-conscious employment of paradoxical language (even though this language is not altogether innovative, given its roots in Pseudo-Dionysius and Meister Eckhart). Is not Nicholas’s genius to be seen in the fact that he appropriated various traditional motifs, which he then incorporated into a “new kind of ontology” in order to “shatter all traditional ideas of philosophy”? Jacobi wants to persuade us of all this and even more. For, like Walter Schulz, he believes both that Nicholas stands at the threshold of modernity and that Nicholas’s new conceptualization revolutionized the intellectual dimensions of its day. Yet, when we enumerate Jacobi’s many exegetical errors, we will become aware of how indefensible this historical judgment really is.

2.1. To begin with, Jacobi, like Schulz, fails to take seriously those parts of Nicholas’s text that do not serve his purpose. Schulz, we witnessed, minimized or even ignored key words such as “*quasi*” and “*videtur*,” as these appear in *De Visione Dei* 15 and elsewhere. Jacobi does a similar thing when he attempts to comprehend the significance of *De Dato Patris Luminum*. For in this treatise Nicholas states: “It *seems* (*videtur*) that every creature is in a certain way God” and “It *seems* to be the case (*videtur*) that God and the creation are the same thing.”<sup>27</sup> Jacobi, in the present instance, does not ignore the word “*videtur*”; he does something worse: he disavows it! Nicholas, he well sees, does use the word; but what he means, Jacobi assures us, is something much less tentative: it not only *seems* to be the case but it also *must* be the case; for Nicholas’s metaphysi-

cal premises *logically entail* the conclusion that God and the creation are one being in two different modes. Of course, Jacobi never tells us where, outside of *De Dato*, this argument is to be found; nor does he either construct or reconstruct it for us; nor does he tell us what to do with such statements as the one in *DI* II, 13 (177:9-10): "*Deus autem non est nisi absolutus*": "God, however, is only absolute."<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Jacobi surely cannot suppose that the argument occurs in *De Dato* itself; for the only relevant argument we find there is the argument in 2 (97), whose movement is in terms of a threefold occurrence of "*videtur*." Jacobi could not legitimately use this very argument to show that Nicholas means much more than *videtur*, that he means *necesse est*. Moreover, Jacobi ignores the fact that the last two sentences in 2 (97) have their verbs (*viz.*, "*erit*") in the future. Now, as is the case with many medieval authors, Nicholas sometimes employs the future, as here, to substitute for the subjunctive. And in the present context of *videtur*, the subjunctive serves as a reminder that his reasoning up to this point has been contrary to fact.

Though Nicholas is not endorsing the foregoing view, which he rejects as imprecise, there is nonetheless something in it which he regards as approaching a correct understanding of the matter.<sup>29</sup> This correct understanding he states in terms of the language of forms:

The philosophers maintain that it is form which gives being to a thing. But this statement lacks precision; for there does not [first] exist a thing to which a form [then] gives being, since whatever exists exists only through a form. Therefore, there does not exist a thing which takes its being from a form; for, [if there did.] this thing would exist before it existed. Rather, a form gives being to a thing in the following sense: in every existing thing the form *is* the being, so that the very form which gives being *is* the being which is given to the thing. Now, God is the Absolute Form of being; and this is the Apostle's teaching in the passage, for all the being of all things is given by the Father. But the form gives the being. There-

fore, God, because He gives being to all things is the Universal Form of being. Now, because form gives being to every single thing (i.e., the form *is* the being of the thing), God, who gives being, is rightly called by many the Giver of forms. Therefore, God is not the form of earth, of water, of air, of aether, or of any other thing; rather, He is the Absolute Form of the form of earth or of air. Therefore, earth is neither God nor anything else, but is earth; and air is air, aether aether, and man man—each through its own form. For each thing's form is a descent from the Universal Form, so that the form of earth is its own form and not another's—and likewise for the other forms.<sup>30</sup>

This passage is crucial because it contains the view that Nicholas is endorsing and because it purports to state this view precisely. Each thing's form gives being to that thing in the sense that it *is* that thing's being. This means that each thing has its own form, i.e., its own being, which is distinct from the respective form, or being, of other things. Earth and air are distinct from each other; they are also distinct from God in that neither of them is God. Moreover, God is not earth, and God is not air; rather, He is the Form of the form of earth and the Form of the form of air. God is called *Form* because He gives form to each respective thing; and He is called *Universal Form* in order to indicate that He is not the proper form of any existing thing; finally, since in giving form to a thing He gives its being, He may be called *Universal Form of being* or even *Universal Form of being for all forms*.<sup>31</sup> Now, if God is the Universal Form of being and if form not only gives being but is being, then God is the Universal Being of being. But just as He is not the proper form of any existing thing, so He is not the proper being of any existing thing.<sup>32</sup> Earth and air have their own respective being, and this being is not God. That is, *in their own being* they are not God. Similarly, God is not their own being; rather, God is Universal Being, the Being of their being.<sup>33</sup>

What this means is illustrated in *DI* by a symbolism: God's Being is to the respective individualized being of each

existing thing as a reality (e.g., a face) is to different mirror images of itself.<sup>34</sup> Now, mirror images are both distinct from one another and different from one another, because no two images are exactly alike.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, none of the images are the face, and the face is not any of its images. However, the images of the face could not exist if the face did not exist, though the face could exist without its images.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, the images would not be what they are (viz., images of this face) if the face were not what it is—though the identity and essence of the face is unaffected by the identity and essence of the respective image. By comparison, God is present in the world as the reality of the face is present in its images. God is not any object in the world, nor is any object in the world God. The world is the reflection of God, and God is the Reality which the world reflects. But even a reflection qua reflection has its own reality, its own being;<sup>37</sup> still, its reality, qua reflected, is dependent on the reality of the original that it reflects; and these two realities belong to ontologically different dimensions. Though the relationship between God and the world is illustratable by the relationship between an original and its image, it is not fully so, says Nicholas, because in the case of creation there is no preexistent receiving medium:

Created being cannot be anything other than reflection—not a reflection received positively in some other thing but a reflection which is contingently different. Perhaps [a comparison with an artifact is fitting]: if the artifact depended entirely upon the craftsman's idea and did not have any other being than dependent being, the artifact would exist from the craftsman and would be conserved as a result of his influence—analogously to the image of a face in a mirror (with the proviso that before and after [the appearance of the image] the mirror be nothing in and of itself).<sup>38</sup>

So, ultimately speaking, God is the entire being of the world, in that the world owes wholly to God the fact that it exists.<sup>39</sup> And, ultimately speaking, God owes nothing to the world, which confers nothing on Him and which, qua crea-

tion, "does not have even as much being as an accident but is altogether nothing."<sup>40</sup> When not speaking ultimately, Nicholas ascribes to the world its own being, which is relatively—not ultimately—independent. That is, the world's being, though derivative, is derivative *being*; accordingly, the world is neither God nor nothing.<sup>41</sup> Because Nicholas's thought moves on two different levels when he denies, in *DI* II, 2, that the world is nothing and affirms in the very next chapter that it is altogether nothing, he is not contradicting himself. Similarly, when he states at the outset of *DI* I, 8 that God is the being of things<sup>42</sup> and states in *Apologia* 26 that "the individual existence of things through their own forms is not thereby destroyed," there is no inconsistency. To be sure, then, Nicholas's ontology does have two dimensions; but as we shall see more clearly, these are not the two dimensions described by Jacobi.

Jacobi does not quite know what to make of the fact that Nicholas expresses his view in the language of forms. In fact, Jacobi glosses only lightly over *De Dato* 2 (98), preferring to sanction the opinion that here in *De Dato* the language of forms "accords poorly with the real thought of our author."<sup>43</sup> Let us dwell, for a moment, on just how startling Jacobi's method of interpretation is. We have already observed how he transforms Nicholas's phrase "*Videtur igitur quod . . .*" into "*Necesse igitur est quod . . .*" without offering even the slightest evidence for doing so. But now, even more startlingly: the passage in which Nicholas claims to be setting forth his view *precisely* is construed by Jacobi to be a passage which does not express Nicholas's real thought! Ironically, when we glimpse the whole of Jacobi's interpretation of Nicholas's ontology, we recognize that it accords more with the view which Nicholas regarded as imprecise than it does with the view which Nicholas proposes as correct. That is, according to Jacobi, Nicholas's real thought is that "God and the creation are the same thing—according to the mode of the Giver *God*,

according to the mode of the given *the creation*.”<sup>44</sup> Of course, Jacobi knows that Nicholas explicitly says: “Without doubt the foregoing manner of speaking lacks precision”;<sup>45</sup> but Jacobi apparently regards Nicholas as nonetheless believing in his heart that the foregoing manner of speaking really is more or less precise. By contrast, when Nicholas looks into “the correct understanding of the matter” and uses the language of forms, Jacobi regards him as having recourse to a mode of discourse which accords poorly with his real thought—i.e., as recurring to a mode of discourse which imprecisely expresses his position. So, lo and behold, Jacobi’s interpretation actually reverses Nicholas’s text by taking the imprecise for the precise, and the precise for the imprecise! And this reversal is nothing short of hermeneutically astounding.

Of course, there remains an alternative construal of Jacobi’s interpretation. Perhaps what he has in mind is something like the following: ‘Although in *De Dato* 2 (98) Nicholas really does say what he means, and does say it precisely, what he there means does not accord well with what he says and means elsewhere. When we take what he says elsewhere and bring it to bear upon what he says in *De Dato* 2 (98), we see that his real thought is closer to the so-called “imprecisely expressed” view of *De Dato* 2 (97) than to the view stated in the language of forms in *De Dato* 2 (98).’ Now, if this is Jacobi’s point, it too is untenable for the following reason: If *De Dato* is to be compared with any other works, the two most important works, vis-à-vis this comparison, will be *DI* and the *Apologia*.<sup>46</sup> For *De Dato* is a continuation of the topic presented in *DI* II, 2-3; and the *Apologia* refers explicitly to *De Dato*,<sup>47</sup> while nowhere expressing any disagreement with it. Now, when we examine these two works, we see that the language of forms is fundamental to Nicholas’s ontology. Therefore, it is impossible that the language of forms should “accord poorly” with his real thought.

## 2.2. What leads Nicholas to introduce an imprecise view

in order subsequently to correct it? The answer seems clear enough: the imprecise view vividly displays the quandary with which Nicholas wants to deal—namely, how can God, who is Absolute Perfection, create anything which is less than Absolute Perfection? It seems, *prima facie*, that if God is perfect, then the world He creates must also be perfect; and if the created world is perfect, then it must in some sense be God. Nicholas previously took up this same topic in *DI* II, 2, where he wrote: “every existing thing is that which it is, insofar as it is, from Absolute Being.”<sup>48</sup> And the reasoning continues: “But since the Maximum is far distant from envy, it cannot impart diminished being as such.” Unlike in *De Dato*, Nicholas here draws his conclusion straightway: “Therefore, a created thing, which is a derivative being, does not have everything which it is (e.g., [not] its corruptibility, divisibility, imperfection, difference, plurality, and the like) from the eternal, indivisible, most perfect, indistinct, and one Maximum—nor from any positive cause.”<sup>49</sup> This is the same conclusion as the one reached in *De Dato*, where we are told that though God can give only maximal goodness, this goodness can be received only restrictedly: “Therefore, the infinite is received finitely; the universal, singularly; and the absolute, contractedly. But since such a receiving falls short of the truth of the one who is imparting Himself, it turns toward a likeness and an image, so that it is not the truth of the Giver but a likeness of the Giver.”<sup>50</sup> And this passage parallels the one in *DI*: “The Infinite Form is received only finitely, so that every created thing is, as it were, a finite infinity or a created god, so that it exists in the way in which this can best occur. [Everything is] as if the Creator had said, ‘Let it be made,’ and as if because a God (who is eternity itself) could not be made, there was made that which could be made: viz., something as much like God as possible . . . For the most gracious God imparts being to all things, in the manner in which being can be received.”<sup>51</sup>

Like *DI*, then, *De Dato* also teaches that the world is an

imperfect reception of God's imparting, though God's imparting is perfect. In *De Dato* Nicholas can no more comprehend how the finite arose from the Infinite than he could in *DI*. But in *De Dato* 2 (99) he attempts to render it plausible by the same illustration he used in *DI* II, 3 (111:15-22): viz., the example of different mirrors receiving the image of a face. *De Dato* goes beyond *DI* by adding a number of other illustrations, in the hope of better being able to grasp how that which is illustrated is possible. The illustrations teach that God, who is Universal Form, is related to the forms of created things as (1) light is to color, (2) as the substantial form of Socrates is to one of Socrates' parts (e.g., his hand), (3) as a human soul is to the eye, (4) as substantial form is to quantity, quality, and the other accidents. These illustrations do not teach that the world is the "other" mode of being of God, that the world is the finite mode of being of the Infinite, as Jacobi supposes.<sup>52</sup> True, Nicholas refers to the world as a perceptible god and to a man as a humanified god, just as *DI* called every created thing a created god, *as it were*.<sup>53</sup> But a created god, or a perceptible god, is not God in the mode of appearance, as Jacobi believes;<sup>54</sup> indeed, it is not God at all, because God is never contracted but is always and wholly absolute. Nicholas uses the term "god" in order to emphasize that each thing is as perfect as it can be.<sup>55</sup> In this respect there is a certain parallel between it and God.

In *DI* Nicholas states again and again that only God is absolute and that God is only absolute.<sup>56</sup> Because created things are contracted, they are not God. Indeed, there is an infinite difference between contracted things and God, who is *absolutissimus*.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, "just as the Divine Nature, which is absolutely maximal, cannot be diminished so that it becomes finite and contracted, so neither can the contracted nature become diminished in contraction to the point that it becomes altogether absolute [i.e., altogether free of contraction]."<sup>58</sup> This infinite ontological gulf between God and the world is further insisted upon when

God is said to be the one "*absolute maximum incommunicabile, immersibile et incontractibile ad hoc vel illud*."<sup>59</sup> Hence, the empirical world is not God in the mode of appearance. Now, in *De Dato* Nicholas also rejects the view that God is mingled with the universe, that "God and the creation are the same thing—according to the mode of the Giver God, according to the mode of the given *the creation*."<sup>60</sup> The world *descends* from God and therefore cannot be God. God, says Nicholas in *De Dato*, is "beyond all affirmation and negation, all positing and removing, all opposition, all change and unchangingness."<sup>61</sup> Had Nicholas put forth, in *De Dato*, a position different from that in *DI*, he would have signaled this fact in the *Apologia*, where he was responding to John Wenck's attack on the entire program of learned ignorance. Yet, what we see in the *Apologia* is, rather, a continuation of the line of reasoning which begins in *DI* and runs through *De Dato*.

2.3. Jacobi's *general* misinterpretation of *De Dato* leads him to mistranslate several of Nicholas's Latin sentences which can be disambiguated only relative to a given interpretational context. These translated sentences Jacobi then takes as confirmatory of his overall interpretation. For example, he takes the sentence "*Mundus igitur non habet principium, ut in ipso aeternitas est omne esse eius*" to mean "Therefore, *the world, insofar as in it Eternity is its entire being, has no beginning*."<sup>62</sup> This translation suggests a view which Jacobi himself earlier ascribed to Nicholas: viz., that Eternity is the entire being of each empirical thing, that all being is God's being, that in this way each being, insofar as it exists, is God.<sup>63</sup> Yet, a more accurate translation of the sentence in question would be: "Therefore, the world does not have a beginning insofar as in the Father its entire being is eternity."<sup>64</sup> Nicholas's point is one that is made frequently in *DI*: viz., that in God everything is God. Moreover, though Nicholas maintains that God is all things (in the mode of enfolding),<sup>65</sup> he does not affirm either that all things are God or, *tout court*, that all being is