

EPILOGUE

In this volume I have had to concentrate upon clearing away some of the luxuriant interpretive overgrowth that has come to envelop Nicholas of Cusa's metaphysics. For unless this is removed, it is destined to impede access to Nicholas's thought. Let a student be taught that Nicholas is a functionalist or that he regards the world as God in a contracted state or that he considers God to be the dialectical Other of finite subjectivity. Let this same student also be encouraged, by the very example of his teachers, to pass lightly over Nicholas's actual words—disregarding terms such as "*quasi*" and "*videtur*," while fastening upon apparent catchwords and lifting their significations out of context. Finally, let him be presented with a number of crucial mistranslations and faulty Latin passages. Left at this point to himself, such a student will require years of extra study in order rightly to reorient himself vis-à-vis Nicholas's texts.

One of the shortcomings of contemporary American education, I am convinced, is that so many educators within the humanities have developed a pronounced disaffection for the discipline of *explication de texte*, although continuing to indulge a predilection for the history of ideas. Now, there is nothing intrinsically suspect about the history of ideas. Indeed, what subject in the university curriculum could be more intellectually rewarding? But whenever the study of the history of ideas is divorced from training in *explication de texte*, it is bound to yield the kind of loose and undisciplined interpretations which we have just witnessed in the case of the Germans Walter Schulz and Heinrich Rombach.

The success or failure of the present volume may be judged in accordance with whether or not it has achieved its five goals: (1) to expose the indefensibility of a number of leading interpretations of Nicholas of Cusa's metaphysic of contraction; (2) to offer in place of these a more accurate, and a more textually oriented, understanding of *the main lines* of this metaphysic; (3) to exhibit the need for a pedagogical return to the discipline of *explication de texte*; (4) to furnish a basis for the reassessment of Nicholas's modernity; (5) to present a clear and reliable translation of *De Dato Patris Luminum*—one of Nicholas's most misunderstood metaphysical works.