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## NICHOLAS OF CUSA AND LYNDON LAROUCHE'S CONCEPT OF THE TRANSFINITE

The transfinite power of change and the paradox of the *coincidence of opposites*

By Pierre Beaudry, 6/27/18

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### INTRODUCTION

*“One is boring, two is conflicting, but three is peaceful.”*

Dehors Debonneheure

The current axiomatic change in world politics is generating one of the most significant political forms of *coincidence of opposites* in history. Not only is the fallacy of the centennial opposition between communism and capitalism coming to an end, but the millennial oligarchical fight between Zeus and Prometheus is also coming to its historical resolution.

What is about to change in the world today is greater than what led to the two World Wars of the last century. My last report<sup>1</sup> indicated that the reunification of the two Koreas was the singularity that opened up a new world of possibilities; the present report aims at helping the reader to understand how LaRouche and Cusa provided the means to resolve such conflicts.

Such an historical moment calls for the rediscovery of LaRouche's idea of the transfinite; an idea that Nicholas of Cusa wrote about in his last dialogue of

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<sup>1</sup> See [THE NEW PARADIGM, KOREA, AND THE CUSA COINCIDENCE OF OPPOSITES](#).

1464, entitled *De Apice Theoria*, in which he identified God as *Possibility Itself* (*Posse Ipsum*), which he understood as the One of the Many.<sup>2</sup>

The implication of this connection between Cusa's *Posse Ipsum* and LaRouche's transfinite lies in the fact that human beings have the *possibility* of understanding God only if they can infer that such a "transfinite" idea must originate from God's *power* of creating the Universe above and beyond the *coincidence of opposites*. This limitation is the epistemological boundary condition by means of which human beings have the ability to access the epistemological form of the transfinite, but primarily through the following three steps that Cusa proposed to take in solving the paradox of the *coincidence of opposites*:

Firstly, Cusa discovered that, by means of learned ignorance, man is only capable of *knowing God incomprehensibly*; that is to say, knowing in an incomprehensible manner because the human mind is finite. Secondly, he discovered how the finite mind of man could go beyond that limitation and become transfinite by discovering the principle of unity from the diversity of God's creation; that is, by discovering that if God were the *Unity of the original composition of the Universe*, then, there had to be a trace of that Unity across the Universe, and most significantly in the human mind. Thirdly, Cusa caused his assistant Peter to discover the same principle by walking him through the same process. Those are the three epistemological steps that Cusa developed in his last dialogue: *De Apice Theoria*.

What makes this last Cusa dialogue so outstanding is that it takes the reader beyond the approach of negative theology that Cusa had developed during his earlier years of writing, such as in *De Docta Ignorantia*, and shows how to change the axioms of one's own previous beliefs through the resolution of the paradox of the One and the Many. However, what also makes this epistemological experiment so difficult is that he does not simply eliminate the differences between opposites; he makes them coincide at a higher level and from the future by time reversal.

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<sup>2</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *De Apice Theoria*, (Concerning the Loftiest Level of Contemplative Reflection), Translated by Jasper Hopkins. I have been inspired to write about Cusa's *Posse Ipsum* thanks to a class recently given by Jacques Cheminade on the subject of "The Hunt for Wisdom."

## 1. GEORG CANTOR AND LYNDON LAROCHE'S IDEA OF THE TRANSFINITE

When Lyn first introduced the idea of the transfinite as an organizing-principle,<sup>3</sup> during the early 1970's, it was not a matter of numbers; it was for the purpose of identifying how political organizers required making necessary epistemological breakthroughs in their political organizing. Lyn chose the most difficult idea that mathematician Georg Cantor had addressed to Cardinal Johann Baptiste Franzelin on a question that Pope Pius IX had been debating in the 1869 Vatican Council regarding whether "man was able to know God through reason."

How does the human mind know the infinite? This was the question that Cusa had also raised four centuries earlier and had spent his life attempting to answer. For purpose of identification, let's first identify Cantor's intention in establishing the concept of transfinite which he identified as an "*Actual-Infinite*." He wrote to Cardinal Franzelin:

"Permit me, Monsignore, to present to you herewith a small essay (in proof sheet), of which I will take the liberty to send you several copies by book-post, as soon as the printing shall be completed.

"I would be pleased, if the attempt contained therein, to properly differentiate the *three main questions* respecting the Actual-Infinite, would also be submitted to examination from the standpoint of the Christian-Catholic philosophers."<sup>4</sup>

In his 1994 *Afterword* to the just quoted Cantor correspondence, Lyn remarked that "Cantor himself insists that his science and theology center around two crucial points of equivalence between his own work on the transfinite and Plato's principle of hypothesis. His opinion on these parallels is broadly correct. Cantor insists that his general notion of the *Transfinite* is equivalent to Plato's

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<sup>3</sup> Lyndon LaRouche, [\*THE TRANSFINITE AS AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE\*](#), ICLC Internal Memorandum 1981.

<sup>4</sup> [\*On the Theory Of the Transfinite\*](#), Correspondence of Georg Cantor and J. B. Cardinal Franzelin (1885-1886), Schiller Institute, reprinted from Fidelio Magazine, Fall 1994.

*Becoming*, and that his own *Absolute* corresponds to Plato's *Good*.”<sup>5</sup> Lyn further emphasizes that the epistemological function of the transfinite reflects the human creative potential of solving the ontological paradox of the *One* and the *Many* as Plato had developed in his *Parmenides* dialogue. Summarizing the process of becoming, Lyn provided the following example:

“Instead of focussing upon fixed objects, such as sense-objects, one must focus upon *change* itself as the primary fact of nature, and of mental life. In the given case, it is the change from *A* to *B*, and from *B* to *C*, which is crucial. It is this change which one can conceptualize as a unified object of thought, a *One*. This permits us to conceptualize the changes in the respective underlying sets of axioms and postulates, from *A* to *B*, as a unit, as a *One*.

“That *One* is a hypothesis. Any valid axiomatic-revolutionary discovery of that *type* is an instance of hypothesis as Plato defines hypothesis.

“Next, continue with the illustration provided. Examine the successive changes, from *A* to *B*, *B* to *C*, and, then, *C* to *D*. This sequence of changes—of hypotheses—is a *Many*, too. Scrutiny of this *Many* enables us to conceptualize a higher sort of *One*. As the first level of *One* — e.g., *A* to *B*—defined an hypothesis, the new *One* required is *a method of generating hypotheses: a higher hypothesis*. It is a method of discovery. In natural science historically, there is evidence of various types of relatively valid methods of discovery, but some proving more valid than others. Study of the *Many* alternative, relatively valid choices of methods of hypothesis (higher hypotheses) yields Plato's *hypothesizing the higher hypothesis*.

“That latter, hypothesizing the higher hypothesis, is Plato's knowledge of the *Becoming*. The notion of a *One* corresponding to a *Many* is Cantor's notion of a transfinite; he is occupied with examining the general

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<sup>5</sup> Lyndon LaRouche, [George Cantor: The Next Century](#), Schiller Institute, 1994



hierarchy of transfinitenesses as a domain defined in the sense indicated by Plato's principle of hypothesis."<sup>6</sup>

What Lyn demonstrates there is that a Platonic higher hypothesis is a transfinite unity of action coming from the future which is aimed at changing everything that is presently coming into being. This is also the point that Cusa made with respect to Possibility Itself (*Posse Ipsum*) as a means to solve the ontological paradox of the One and the Many by time reversal. So, let's now turn to Cusa.

## **2. POSSE IPSUM: CUSA'S TRANSFINITE IDEA OF GOD**

The world is now going through an axiomatic transformation from the geopolitical world of the past to a win-win world of peace and development of the future; that is, from an exclusion of the poor of the world to an inclusion of all of the peoples of the world. How can such an opposition be resolved? The resolution to such an opposition can only be found through the transfinite creative *power* of the human mind, and, most emphatically, through what Cusa identified as the idea of *Possibility Itself* (*Posse Ipsum*).<sup>7</sup>

After having spent his life investigating the most appropriate ways for the human mind to approach the idea of God the Creator, Cusa changed his method of approach from negative theology to positive theology and investigated the idea of "*Possibility Itself*" (*Posse Ipsum*); that is, *the actual power* of how the Infinite acts

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<sup>6</sup> Lyndon LaRouche, Op. Cit..

<sup>7</sup> The reason it is necessary to understand and master Cusa's method of solving the paradox of the *coincidence of opposites* is because that is the epistemological means of understanding how to solve the present world strategic situation. Clearly, the most fascinating examples of such a *coincidence of opposites*, at this present moment in history, is represented by the process toward reunification of the two Koreas. The June 2018 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which took place in Qingdao, China, demonstrated a fascinating way of dealing with "opposites." The current breakdown of the G7 and the emergence of the SCO should be the focus of our attention for quite an extended period of time to come because their opposition not only marks the end of seven decades of cold war between so-called capitalism and communism, but is also bringing the entire world to an understanding of how to deal with the *coincidence of opposites*.

on the Finite, and of how the One can be present in the Many; that is, by giving the Many the *possibility* of manifesting the One as the shadow of its Creator in each and all of its parts. Cusa inferred that the One surely has the *power* of manifesting itself everywhere it wishes to be remembered in the great diversity of the Universe.

Cusa's dialogue on *Posse Ipsum* was his last writing in 1464, a few months before he died in Toli, Italy. He wrote it in collaboration with his secretary, Peter of Erkelenz, who relentlessly asked him questions about the nature of God's Mind. In pondering this question, Cusa made a fundamental discovery that redefined all of his previous knowledge and understanding: he developed a profoundly revolutionary idea of God the Creator, which caused tremendous perplexity in his interlocutor, Peter.

The first stumbling block before his discovery was that the human mind cannot comprehend that which is "greater than all comprehension." In fact, this human imperfection has been one of the greatest stumbling blocks for philosophers and scientists throughout history, and especially for people such as Aristotle, Newton, Descartes, and Kant, because they resented the reality of that imperfect condition. Kant, for example, thought it was unfair on the part of God to give human beings such a yearning for the infinite, but without giving them the wings to get there. Kant did not realize that you had to construct your own wings in order to perform that miracle. And therefore, he missed the point because he did not understand the paradoxical significance of the Exultet Paschal Proclamation which sings: "*O happy fault (Felix Culpa) that merited such and so great a Redeemer.*"<sup>8</sup>

What is truly exciting in Cusa's dialogue is that he takes his interlocutor, Peter, and his reader through the process of his revolutionary discovery, forcing them to reflect in a completely different fashion on this yearning "trace" or "shadow" of divine quiddity that God left in our minds. Peter is clearly shocked by Cusa's discovery, because his inquiring mind was seeking the "quiddity" of God. Cusa wrote:

"Peter: Do you think that quiddity can be found?"

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<sup>8</sup> [O HAPPY FAULT!](#)

Cardinal: Yes, indeed. For the motivation which is present to all scholars is not vain.

Peter: If up until now no one has found [quiddity], are you attempting something over and beyond all the others?

Cardinal: I think that many men have seen it to some extent and have left behind in their writings their sighting of it. For if quiddity (which always has been sought and is presently being sought, and will henceforth be sought) were altogether unknown, how could it be sought, since even if it were found it would remain unknown? And so, a certain wise man said that it is seen by all men, although from afar.

Therefore, although for many years now I have realized that quiddity must be sought beyond all cognitive power and before all variation and opposition, I failed to notice that Quiddity which exists in and of itself is the invariable subsistent-being of all substances—and, thus, that it is neither replicable nor repeatable and, hence, that there are not different Quiddities of different beings but that there is one and the same [ultimate] Basis of all things. Subsequently, I saw that I must acknowledge that the [ultimate] Basis of things, or [ultimate] Subsistent-being of things, is *possible* to be. And because it is possible to be, surely it cannot exist apart from Possibility itself. For how would it be possible apart from Possibility? And so, Possibility itself—without which nothing whatsoever is possible—is that outside of which there cannot possibly be anything that is more subsistent. Therefore, it is Whatness itself, which is being sought—i.e., is Quiddity itself, without which there cannot possibly exist anything. And with enormous delight I have been engaged in this contemplative reflection during this festive season.”<sup>9</sup>

Here, the reader must pause for a significant period of time and savor Cusa's discovery of principle by taking into account two very important difficulties. One is that Cusa admits to having “failed to notice” the idea of quiddity as a “self-existing possibility.” So, he investigated past thinkers and discovered by time

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<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 1424.

reversal that the human mind was only capable of seeing it from afar and through an inversion of time. Secondly, this “Possibility Itself” (as if reflected over your own image in a mirror darkly) is what helped him make the difference between *seeking the quiddity* and *seeking to understand the potential tendency* which made him pay attention to quiddity as possibility.

And once these two different ideas (possibility and quiddity) were considered, as Saint Paul understood them in *1 Corinthians 13:12*, especially in a triply-connected process, which makes you see “darkly” the process of transformation that changes you into someone else, then, the possible is actualized; that is, potentiality and actuality become one in representing the transfinite by means of which *the progress of change becomes the change in progress*. As Lyn put it: “*The Content of Policy Is the Method by Which It Is Made.*”<sup>10</sup>

The blurriness of that mirror effect hides the most important axiomatic effect of all, because it indicates a change of identity, a change from the state of mental slavery to the state of sovereignty, from mortality to immortality. That is the central and proper issue of the transfinite with respect to creativity.

The same triply-connected principle applies in the metaphorical relationship of light and colors for Cusa; that is, when one applies the metaphor of light generating colors to the intelligible domain of epistemology, then, Possibility Itself (*Posse Ipsum*), as the Absolute Possibility, becomes intelligible as the incommensurable proportion between the creative human mind and the Creative Power of God.

Cusa said it was impossible to have any doubt about such a reality because when such proportionality is applied to the relationship between the human mind and the Universe as a whole, the mind can grasp that that which exists in the Universe can easily be understood as nothing else but reflections of an Absolute Possibility. In that sense, the human mind becomes the mediator of the multitude of that which exists in the Universe in concordance with the modality of Possibility

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<sup>10</sup> LaRouche, Lyndon H. *An Open Dialogue with Leonid Brezhnev: The Content of Policy Is the Method by Which It Is Made*. New York, N.Y.: New Solidarity International Press Service, 1980.



Itself (*Posse Ipsum*). That is how mind has been created to understand the relationship of God to the Universe as the One and the Many.

Then, Cusa brings Peter's understanding a step further by remarking that there are more or less amounts of Oneness expressed in different things, but in such a way that the maximum can be expressed by the human mind alone, because the human mind is closest to God's creative process. And, that, again, is relative to the degree of intellectual power of each mind. However, this process is how a mind can be brought to see the Incomprehensible, but never to understand it. Possibility Itself (*Posse Ipsum*), therefore, can manifest itself as a maximum without being understood as such. Thus, nothing is more certain than Possibility Itself, because even a doubt about its existence requires that It exist.

Although Cusa used several Latin terms to name God, such as "*possest*" or "*non-aliud*", he preferred to use the term "*Posse Ipsum*" because it is the most suitable metaphor for tackling the scriptures, especially the Gospels of Saint Paul and Saint John. "Posse" means both *power* and *possibility* to change. This door to the discovery of the transfinite was expressed by Lyndon LaRouche as a principle of change whereby the method of the transformation is the transformation of the method. Therefore, such a *performative dynamic of physical space-time transformation* is the only form of physical space-time in which the process that is being observed is triply-connected through the intrinsic motion of the observer, of the observed phenomenon, and the change between them within the form of a Riemannian triply-connected manifold.

### 3. CUSA'S IDEA OF *POSSE IPSUM* AS BECOMING

Since for Cusa God is the *Quiddity of all quiddities*, then God must also be the *Possibility of all possibilities* and the Trinitarian source of this triply-connected

dynamic process of becoming. Therefore, He is *Posse Ipsum*, or *Possibility and Power Itself*.<sup>11</sup>

However, immediately after Cusa identifies *Quiddity* with the idea of *possibility*, Peter becomes perplexed because he doesn't understand why Cusa is saying that his new approach is "easier" than his previous approach to God. Cusa responds:

"The clearer truth is, the easier it is. (I once thought that truth is better found amid the obscure.) Truth, in which Possibility itself shines forth very brightly, is of great power. For it proclaims [itself] in the streets, as you have read in my book about the Layman. Most assuredly, truth shows that it is everywhere easy to find."<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, when a young mind is confronted with the idea of the infinite and with the idea that everything which exists inside of that infinite can become an object of thought: "What boy or youth is ignorant of possibility?" (p. 1425) No youth, who has ever thought that thought, has ever doubted that his mind was not able to deal with the infinite content of his own mind in due course. However, very few such young minds have made their life's task to explain the dramatic fact that "nothing exists that is not possible to exist and that without possibility nothing whatsoever can either *exist* or *possess* or *act* or *be acted upon*." (p. 1425)

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<sup>11</sup> Cusa's translator, Jasper Hopkins wrote an insightful footnote on this point: "The Latin words 'posse ipsum' are here translated by 'Possibility itself.' Nicholas uses '*posse ipsum*' as a name for God. The meaning of 'posse' conveys not only the idea of possibility but also the idea of power. Therefore, in some contexts, I translate it appositively as 'possibility, or power'—or as 'possibility, or ability.' In Compendium 10 (29-31) and in the Compendium's epilogue, as well as in DM 11 (130-131), I rendered 'posse' by the English word 'capability,' doing so in order to bring out both the notion of power and that of possibility. (See the translations in my Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge.) In *De Possest*, however, the Word 'Possibility' works better, furnishing, as it does, a contrast with Nicholas's use of the word '*actus*,' while avoiding the term 'Potentiality,' which suggests a passive power, which Nicholas and others believe God not to have. Since words are, so to speak, spheres of meaning, not points of meaning, one dare not in the name of consistency be rigoristic. Any number of translations will be acceptable. English has no one word that will serve all the same purposes as does the Latin expression 'posse ipsum.' The intensive pronoun 'ipsum' ('itself'), in '*posse ipsum*,' I sometimes translate and sometimes leave untranslated. As Nicholas uses it, it frequently serves merely to indicate the case of the indeclinable verbal noun 'posse' and, therefore, need not always be expressed in English. I have let English style and clarity govern my choice of rendition, which on occasion becomes arbitrary."

<sup>12</sup> Cusa, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1425.

After Cusa had reflected on that fact, which for him could not be more obvious, he asks himself why he didn't think of this "possibility" before. This is when Peter becomes totally perplexed and asks Cusa why he missed such an idea that could not escape anyone. Here, Cusa's reply is worth pondering on. He said:

"Attentiveness is the only difference between your [seeing] and mine. For example, if I were to ask you what you saw in all of Adam's descendants who have existed, do exist, and will exist (even were they infinite in number), wouldn't you immediately reply, if you were attentive, that you saw in them all only the paternal possibility of the first parent?"<sup>13</sup>

The question which must arise in the reader's mind, here, is why is Cusa concentrating on something that is so obvious; that is, why is this question not in vain? Then, by bringing Peter to see as simply as he sees, by focussing him on the attention of simplicity itself, Cusa unraveled *Posse Ipsum* as the most positive illuminating function of God, through the metaphor of light reflecting the first cause as generator of all things, as the One does the Many. Cusa added:

"Therefore, Possibility itself is called Light by some saints — not perceptible light or rational light or intelligible light but the Light of all things that can give light — since nothing can possibly be brighter or clearer or more beautiful than Possibility. Therefore, look unto perceptible light, without which there cannot be perceptual seeing; and note that in every color and in everything visible there is no other basis than light, which appears in differing ways in the different modes-of-being of the colors. And note that if light is removed, then neither color nor anything visible nor [any] seeing can remain. But the clearness of light, insofar as light exists in itself, transcends visual power. Therefore, light is not seen as it is, but, rather, it is manifested in things visible—manifested more clearly in one thing and more dimly in another. And the more clearly a visible thing represents light, the more noble and beautiful [that thing is]. However, light enfolds and transcends the clearness and beauty of all visible things. Light manifests itself in visible things not in order to show itself as visible but, rather, in order to manifest

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<sup>13</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1425.

itself as invisible, since its clarity cannot be grasped in visible things. For he who in visible things sees light's clarity as invisible, [he] sees light's clarity more truly. Do you grasp these points?"<sup>14</sup>

Peter began to see what Cusa was leading him to discover. He began to see that light was to color as the One is to the Many. Cusa chose light as the most outstanding metaphor of God's creative power, as the *nec plus ultra of the process of transformation*. And therefore, he required light to become his measure of change.

Our eyes cannot see the light of the Sun directly no more than our mind's eye can see God's Light without being blinded by Him; but the human mind is able to infer the presence of light as the source of color, because when light disappears, so do colors. Thus, the mind can infer the existence of such an invisible reality present as invisible through colors because colors disappear when light is no longer there; and thus, light becomes the One generative cause of the Many, the transfinite power of generating colors. As a result, to know the existence of light through color is to understand how the process of metaphor works. Thus, Plato's principle of becoming is established in the form of participation of light to color as the proportional measure of the One to the Many. This is the principle of proportionality underlying *Posse Ipsum*. All manifestations of all possibilities can be understood as the power of ideas effecting change in the Universe.

Cusa concludes his dialogue with Peter, satisfied that he was able to make him recognize that *Posse Ipsum* is also the means of making other minds discover its powers. It is the possibility of transferring such a sense perception reality of light to the intelligible domain which represents the transfinite power of metaphorical proportionality. The discovery of such a performative principle establishes itself with the greatest of ease when the mind is able to discover that it is able to transfer the possibility of light to the possibility of Simple Being; that is, in the proportionality by means of which your mind can "[transfer] to [absolutely] Simple Being [considerations about] the being of color. For Simple Being, which

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 1426-27.



is visible to the mind alone, is to the mind as the being of color is to the sense of sight.”<sup>15</sup>

This metaphoric process of light and color is also how this governing epistemological principle is applied to society. It applies as the American Constitution does via the Common Good or the General Welfare. Moreover, such an application can best be expressed, as Lyn showed through the metaphorical process of classical artistic composition, through the discovery of principles in physical science, and in the moral education of a republican citizenry.

## APPENDIX

### NICHOLAS OF CUSA MEMORANDUM CONCERNING THE LOFTIEST LEVEL OF CONTEMPLATIVE REFLECTION<sup>16</sup>

“The loftiest level of contemplative reflection is Possibility itself, the Possibility of all possibility, without which nothing whatsoever can possibly be contemplated. For how would [contemplation] be possible without Possibility?

“I. Nothing can be added to Possibility itself, since it is the Possibility of all possibility. Therefore, Possibility itself is not the possibility of existing or the possibility of living or the possibility of understanding. (A similar point holds true regarding all possibility that has a qualification added.) Nevertheless, Possibility itself is the Possibility of the possibility-of-existing and of the possibility-of-living and of the possibility-of-understanding.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 1427.

<sup>16</sup> Jasper Hopkins noted that this section of [De Apice Theoria](#) identified as “*Memoriale apicis theoriae*” (17-28) was added to the dialogue by the Latin Editors. There is no reason to believe that this addition was part of the original dialogue with Peter, because, in the previous part (1-16), Cusa has already taken Peter to a highest level of discovery. Therefore the addition does not add to Peter’s discovery as such and should be viewed only as a recapitulation of the previous discovery process.

“II. Only what is possible to exist does exist. Therefore, existence does not add anything to the possibility of existing. Likewise, man does not add anything to the possibility of being a man; nor does young man add anything to the possibility of being a young man or of being a big man. And because possibility that has a qualification added does not add anything to Possibility itself, one who intently contemplates sees nothing other than Possibility itself.

“III. Nothing can possibly exist prior to Possibility. For without Possibility how would it be possible to exist? Likewise, nothing can possibly be better than Possibility — or be more powerful than Possibility, or more perfect, simple, clear, known, true, sufficient, strong, stable, easy, etc. And because Possibility itself precedes all possibility that has a qualification added, it cannot either exist or be named or be perceived or be imagined or be understood. For that which is signified by “Possibility” precedes all such things, although it is the Basis of them all, even as light is the basis of [all] colors.

“IV. Possibility with a qualification added is an image of Possibility itself, that which nothing is simpler. Thus, the possibility-of-existing is an image of Possibility itself; and the possibility of living is an image of Possibility itself; and the possibility of understanding is an image of Possibility itself. However, the possibility of living is a truer image of Possibility itself [that is the possibility of existing]; and the possibility of understanding is a still truer image [that is the possibility of living]. Therefore, in all things a contemplator sees Possibility itself, even as in an image the original (veritas) is seen. And just as the image is a manifestation of the original, so all things are only manifestations of Possibility itself.

“V. The possibility, or power, of Aristotle’s mind manifests itself in his books. They do not display the power of his mind perfectly; yet, one book [displays it] more perfectly than does another, and the books were produced only to the end that his mind manifest itself. Moreover, his mind was not forced to produce his books, for his free and noble mind willed to manifest itself. In a similar way, Possibility itself [manifests itself] in all things. Now, the mind is as an intellectual book that views in its own self and in all things the intent of its Author.

“VI. Although in Aristotle’s books only the power of his mind is contained, nevertheless those who are ignorant do not recognize this fact. Similarly, although in the universe there is contained only Possibility itself, nevertheless those who lack intelligence are unable to recognize this fact. Now, the living intellectual light that is called mind contemplates, in its own self, Possibility itself. Thus, all things exist for the sake of mind, and mind exists for the sake of seeing Possibility itself.

“VII. The possibility, or power, of choosing enfolds within itself the possibility of existing, the possibility of living, and the possibility of understanding. Moreover, the power of free will does not at all depend on the body, as does the sensual power of our animal nature’s desire. Hence, the power of free will is not affected by the weakness of the body. For that power never grows old or grows faint, as, in the aged, do sensuality and the senses; rather, it remains [strong] and governs the senses. For example, when the eyes are directed toward an object, the free will does not always allow the eyes to observe the object but turns them away, in order that they not view what is worthless or shameful. [Or, again, the will restrains the appetites] so that one does not [always] eat when hungry—and so on, as regards other examples. Therefore, the mind sees praiseworthy and shameful things, virtues and vices (something which the senses do not see); and the mind can compel the senses to abide by its judgment and not by their own desires. Hereby we experience that Possibility is powerfully and incorruptibly manifested in the mind’s power and that [the mind] has separate existence from the body. He is less amazed at this [separate existence] who experiences the fact that in aqua vitae certain herbs’ powers are separated from their bodies—who experiences it when he sees the same efficacy of aqua vitae as the herb had before it was immersed in aqua vitae.

“VIII. Intelligible things are what the mind sees, and they are [ontologically] prior to perceptible things. Therefore, the mind sees itself. And because the mind sees that its own possibility, or power, is not the Possibility of all possibility (since many things are impossible for the mind), it sees that it is not Possibility itself but is an image of Possibility itself. And so, since in the mind’s own possibility the mind sees Possibility itself, and since the mind is only its own possibility of existing, the mind sees that it itself is a mode-of-manifestation of

Possibility itself. And it sees that, likewise, this point holds true in the case of all existing things. Therefore, whatever-things-the-mind-sees are modes-of-manifestation of incorruptible Possibility.

“IX. Although the being of a material object is lowest and is very ignoble, it is seen by the mind alone. For that which the senses see is [only] an accident, which does not exist [independently] but which is present [in a subject]. That being (of a material object) which is nothing but the material object's possibility-of-existing, or power-of-existing, is not attained by any of the senses, since it is neither a quality nor a quantity; and so, it is not divisible or corruptible. For example, when I divide an apple, I do not divide the material object [as such]. For a part of the apple is a material object, just as is the whole apple. Now, the material object is long, wide, and deep; without these [properties] there is neither a material object nor a complete dimension. The being of a material object is the being of a complete dimension. Material length is not separated from width and depth, even as width is not separated from length and depth; likewise, depth is not separated from length and width. Length, width, and depth are not parts of a material object, since a part is not the whole. To be sure, the length of a material object is the material object; the same thing holds true of width and depth. Moreover, the length of the material being (this length is the material object) is not another material object than is the width or the depth of the [given] material being; rather, each of these [three properties] is the same indivisible and unreplicable<sup>69</sup> material object. Although the length is not the width or the depth, it is nonetheless the origin of the width; and the length together with the width is the origin of the depth. In this way the mind sees that in the triune being of a material object Possibility itself is manifested incorruptibly. And since the mind sees this [triunity] to be manifested in the lowest, material being, it also sees it to be manifested more nobly and more powerfully in every nobler being. And [the mind sees triunity to be manifested] more clearly in it itself than in living being or in material being. But how it is that triune Possibility is manifested clearly in a mind that remembers, understands, and wills was seen and revealed by the mind of St. Augustine.

“X. In its doings or makings the mind sees most certainly that Possibility is manifested in the maker's possibility-of-making and in the makeable's possibility-



of-being-made and in the possibility of the union of both. There are not three possibilities; rather, one and the same possibility is the possibility of the maker, of the makeable, and of the union. Likewise, with regard to sensation, vision, taste, imagination, intellection, volition, choice, contemplation, and all good and virtuous works: the mind sees that the triune possibility is the shining forth of that Possibility outside of which nothing is more active or more perfect. However, because Possibility does not shine forth in works of vice, the mind experiences them as worthless, wicked, and dead—and as obscuring and polluting the mind's light.

“XI. There cannot be any other substantial or quidditative Beginning — whether formal or material—than Possibility. Those who have spoken about different forms and essentialities and about different Ideas and species have not looked unto Possibility and seen how in different generic and specific modes-of-being it manifests itself as it wills to. Where Possibility does not shine forth things lack a basis — as what is worthless and as defect, error, vice, weakness, death, corruption, and the likes, lack being, because they lack the manifestation of Possibility.

“XII. The triune and one God—whose name is “the Omnipotent one,” or “the Power of all power” — is signified by “Possibility itself.” With Him all things are possible and nothing is impossible; and He is the Strength of all strength and the Might of all might. His most perfect Manifestation — outside of which no manifestation can be more perfect — is Christ, who by His word and example leads us unto a clear contemplative-vision [contemplatio] of Possibility. And this contemplative-vision is the happiness which alone satisfies the mind's supreme desire. These few points, by themselves, are points that can suffice.”<sup>17</sup>

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Indeed, for God, “nothing is impossible,” because even the impossible is a possibility for the Omnipotent One. Otherwise, how could He be Omnipotent? A

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<sup>17</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *De Apice Theoria*, (Concerning the Loftiest Level of Contemplative Reflection.

lot can be said about Cusa's Appendix of twelve articles, but I will limit myself to comment only on one, which is No. VIII. For my epistemological purpose, this section is the most significant because it relates directly to the transfinite nature of mind over sense perception. Here, Cusa establishes that the human mind is created in the image of God, or in the image of Possibility Itself (*Posse Ipsum*). This is the most significant transfinite jump to be made because without this one, none of the others can be made.

What Cusa is emphasizing is that not only mind has the possibility to see itself first through intelligible things ("Intelligible things are what the mind sees, and they are [ontologically] prior to perceptible things"),<sup>18</sup> but that by seeing itself first in this way, the mind also sees that its own identity does not depend on sense perception. Mind can break the chains of sense perception as the experiment of Plato's Cave demonstrates.

The dimly lit wall of *going along to get along* is therefore the most important obstacle to be taken down. In other words, mind can only be in the image of Possibility Itself; that is, of the light source itself, on the condition that it rejects the principle of *going along to get along*. As a result of such a turn around, the mind will forever after be first and foremost connected to the sovereign quality of the transfinite modes-of-manifestations of Possibility Itself (*Posse Ipsum*).

Thus, as Cusa demonstrated in the case of his assistant Peter, the resolution of the *coincidence of opposites* can only be made complete by making another mind discover the same pathway; that is, by making others discover that they can also replicate the same discovery of principle.

The transfinite method of Cusa reflects the indomitable spirit of thinking of the European Renaissance. The question this raises for us today is: How can such a principle be restored and applied to our current world situation in a manner such that it enables the greatest number of people to discover the infinite possibilities of *Posse Ipsum*?

**FIN**

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<sup>18</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, Op. Cit., p. 1433.