

Nicolaus Cusanus and the *Quantum Potest* Participation **

Abstract: First, I intend to analyze N. Cusanus' standpoint regarding the issue of *analogy*, this being a common procedure in the texts of scholastics. How does *Cardinalus Teutonicus* relate to this inherent method of human thinking? Second, I am interested especially in a fragment from *De docta ignorantia* (II, 4) where N. Cusanus speaks about a certain type of participation: *quantum potest*.

Keywords: knowledge, analogy, participation, *quantum potest*, theology, Christology, divinization, N. Cusanus.

There are not few the thinkers who wrote their work after a revelation (*revelatio*). At least this is what they tell us. I remind here, without a certain order, but also not randomly, R. Descartes, B. Pascal and last, but not least, N. Cusanus¹. Some have dreamt, even several times, others have heard, and apparently they've heard well, after all, "faith comes from hearing" (*Romans* 10, 17), and to others it had happened in their travel, on the sea, we do not know how, but we know from where (from the *Father of Light*: "*credo superno dono a patre luminum*")². Whether our author came or left (to) from Constantinople it does not matter anymore now³. And if some wrote their

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** This study represents a revised version of the article in Romanian "Nicolaus Cusanus și doctrina analogiei" ("Nicolaus Cusanus and the Doctrine of Analogy") published in the magazine *Transilvania*, no. 6-7, 2011, pp. 88-93 and no. 8, 2011, pp. 14-19.

¹ I send to a few places in Cusanus' texts where he invokes revelation – *Donum Dei revelatum. Apologia doctae ignorantiae discipuli ad discipulum*, in Nicolaus of Cusa, 1932. *Opera Omnia*, volume II, editor R. Klibansky, Lipsiae, 5, 19-22: "I confess, my friend, that when I have received from above this concept, I had not yet seen «any writing» of the Dionysian ones or any other one of the ones belonging to real theologians; but I have went with great desire towards the writings of scholars and I have found nothing else but <that> revelation presented differently"; see *Ibid.*, 12, 14-17; see also *De docta ignorantia*, III, *Epistola auctoris...*, (cf. Andrei Beresch, 2008. Postface to *De docta ignorantia* (Iasi: Polirom), p. 557 sqq.).

² Cf. N. Cusanus, *De docta ignorantia*, III, *Epistola auctoris ad dominum Iulianum cardinalem*.

³ In the year 1934, in the seminary dedicated to N. Cusanus, M. Eliade stated that: "Nicolaus Cusanus had the intuition of the idea *De docta ignorantia* while he was crossing the Mediterranean (in November 1437) going towards Constantinople". Cusanus' text tells us, however, something else: "*in mari me ex Graecia redeunte*" (cf. A. Beresch, Postface to *De docta ignorantia*, ed. cit., p. 626). Anyhow, Cusanus' experience is on the sea, which means that is even more difficult to find. Regarding this road (gone-back) to Constantinople see also the study of Pascal Mueller-Jourdan, 2007. "Les linéaments d'une métaphysique de la communion: Notes sur l'acclimation d'un topique néoplatonicien en Bavière et sur ses conséquences possibles. Le cas du *De Icona* (1453) de Nicolas de Cues", in *Istina*, vol. 52, no. 4, pp. 503-514.

texts under the influence of such revelation, others did not want to write anything else after such an event (for example, Thomas of Aquinas).

I. Without any doubt, we all resort to analogies. Broadly, analogy (ἀναλογία), designates the idea of a correspondence between the elements of two different ensembles, through which it can be established a comparison between them. This method is inherent to all human thinking, being found in all cultures, with no exceptions; also, this method allows the highlighting of a certain type of unit of the divers, at the same time it is also the basis of this unit. Beyond the presence of this method encountered in the history of human thinking⁴, “analogy gets a special importance in the Middle Ages, because we are in a Christian universe where all that exists is the effect of a creating act. We find ourselves, therefore, in front of two types of being: the Creative Being and the created being [...]. The word being applied to different beings – Creator and creation – cannot, obviously, have an identical meaning. In other words, it cannot be unequivocal. Taken in an unequivocal way, the Being is identified with Nothingness [...]. Neither unequivocal, nor equivocal, the relation between the created being and the creative Being can only be analogically. Of what is this analogical report formed? [...] analogy alone helps us understand that the created being, an effect of God, is not God”⁵.

In conclusion to those above, we can notice that we are dealing with a *theological analogy* that designates the relation between creature and God, i.e. starting (contemplating) (from) the created ones we can form an idea about the One who created them (*Romans* 1, 20).

In the specialized literature dedicated to the work of Cusanus, there is an entire debate regarding the issue whether N. Cusanus uses or not, in his texts, *the analogy*. One of the first authors that may be invoked in this case is Rudolf Haubst who, in his article “Nikolaus von Kues und die *analogia entis*”⁶, argues the fact that N. Cusanus deliberately avoids the term “analogy” so that he does not enter the “scholastic” wars. On the other hand, in what the major themes of his metaphysics are concerned, in R. Haubst’s vision, the Cardinal does not abandon the idea of analogy, but

⁴ It seems that the first mentioning of the analogy, as method, between what is created and the supernatural plan, can be found in *Iliad*, book XVIII. Paul Grenet calls this form of analogy “literary”, being closer especially to comparison and metaphor (cf. P. Grenet, 1948. *Les origines de l’analogie philosophique dans les dialogues de Platon* (Paris: Bovin & Cie), p. 52, n. 133).

⁵ Cf. Hervé Pasqua, 1993. *Introduction à la lecture de “Être et temps” de Martin Heidegger* (Paris: L’Âge d’homme), p. 50. I also thank this way Mr. Hervé Pasqua, who, after reading one of my articles (“Nicolas de Cues: un théologien opposé à l’analogie”, in *Scientific Annals of the University* “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, (New series), Philosophy, Tom LVI [2009], pp. 21-28), encouraged me to continue the research of the issue of analogy in the texts of Cusanus.

⁶ Cf. R. Haubst, 1963. “Nikolaus von Kues und die Analogia entis”, in *Die Metaphysik des Mittelalters, ihr Ursprung und ihre Bedeutung* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter), pp. 686-695.

he struggles to refound⁷ it. However, according to other exegetes, such as Josef Koch and Paul Wilpert, the arguments of R. Haubst are not very satisfactory. Another interpreter of Cusanus' work, Stephan Wisse, distinguishes in the texts of the Cardinal between the *symbolic knowledge* and *analogical knowledge*. This author highlights the fact that the concept of analogy has an important place in the metaphysical foundation of the knowledge of God, while the symbolic knowledge places human existence in a concrete relation with the divine. In this context, it is not a coincidence the fact that N. Cusanus speaks about conjectures (*conicere*) and not about analogy⁸. The discussions of the interpreters definitely do not stop at this point.

According to other exegetes, "when R. Haubst and P. Hirt refer to the issue of analogy, a similar problem is at stake. The man recognizes in himself the Trinitarian structure of the divine reality, which is not, frankly speaking, possible otherwise but in an analogical manner. R. Haubst distinguishes in a justified manner between the concept of conjecture and the issue of analogy [...]. R. Haubst forgets, however, that Nicolaus Cusanus, who knew the philosophical tradition, does not consider analogy, but the conjectures. In his reading, P. Hirt goes beyond the simple theological interpretation of the concept of conjecture. The connection of continuity and discontinuity, of proportion and disproportion, which is characteristic to thinking through analogy, has a significant value for the human universe of signification in its totality, an universe to which it belongs both the thinking as well as the language about God"⁹.

⁷ In my opinion, here intervenes, at least in N. Cusanus' case, the participation of *quantum potest* (upon which I shall delay in the second part of this study), "the new analogy" for the majority of scholastic thinkers. On the other hand, Renaissance is also the Age of triumph of analogy. In this respect, E. Cassirer speaks of "ces épais réseau d'analogies tissées sur la totalité du cosmos, la totalité du monde physique et spirituel, comme pour le prendre dans ses rets" (cf. E. Cassirer, 1983. *Individu et cosmos dans la philosophie de la Renaissance*, translator Pierre Quillet (Paris: Minuit), p. 116). For the people of this Age, the world is a big animal, and the microcosm (man) is the image of macrocosm. For Paracelsus, for example, the mercury, intermediate between sun and moon (between gold and silver) is Christ in the world of matter, while Christ, mediator between God and world, is the spiritual and universal mercury" (cf. A. Koyré, 1971. *Mystiques, spirituels, alchimistes du XV^e siècle allemand* (Paris: Gallimard), p. 116; see also Laurence Bouquiaux, 1994. *L'Harmonie et le Chaos : Le rationalisme leibnizien et la "nouvelle science"* (Paris: J. Vrin), p. 178). As we shall easily notice, this is not the "new analogy" adopted by N. Cusanus, and the Christ of which Paracelsus is speaking about cannot be the Christ of Christians.

⁸ Cf. S. Wisse, 1963. *Das religiöse Symbol*, Essen, Versuch einer Wesensdeutung, pp. 128-130 and pp. 240-247.

⁹ Cf. Inigo Kristien Marcel, 2007. *L'art de la collection : introduction historico-éthique à l'herméneutique conjecturale de Nicolas de Cues*, traduit du néerlandais par Jean-Michel Counet (Louvain: Éditions de L'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie), pp. 76-77.

The points of view presented in the lines above (especially the interpretation suggested by R. Haubst) I tend to believe that offer only a half of satisfactory answer. About the correct part of this interpretation (the rejection of the idea of analogy) I shall discuss in the first part of this article, and about a possible solution to the problem debated by the interpreters of Cusanus' work I shall speak in the second part of the study.

For starters, I will have particularly in view the capital work of the Cardinal, *De docta ignorantia*. Not only in the reading of this text can it be easily noticed the fact that N. Cusanus gives up the monotony of scholastic "questions" (*quaestiones*) and uses the style of maieutic questions, Socratic, whose sequence is impossible to predict.

Against Aristotle and his followers¹⁰, N. Cusanus does not assign anymore to the creature the co-existence of the two ways, i.e. being in potency and being in act¹¹. This standpoint of the Cardinal by means of which it is intended the surpass of the Aristotelian perspective, of the act and of the potency, represents a real progress towards an understanding of the world as visible sign of the invisible (*Romans* 1, 20), of manifestation of

¹⁰ N. Cusanus attacks exactly the "sect of Aristotelians" with these terms: "Unde cum nunc Aristotelica secta praevaleat, quae haeresim putat esse oppositorum coincidentiam, in cuius admissione est initium ascensus in mysticam theologiam, in ea secta nutritis haec via penitus insipida [...] ab eis procul pellitur [...]" (cf. Nicolaus von Kues, 1932. *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*, editor R. Klibansky (Opera Omnia, volume II), Lipsiae, 6, 7-9); see also *De Non-Aliud*: „Philosophus ille certissimum credit negatiuae affirmatiuam contradicere, quodque simul de eodem utpote repugnantia dici non possent. Hoc autem dixit rationis uia id ipsum sic uerum concludentis [...] aiebat enim substantiae non esse substantiam nec principii principium; nam sic etiam contradictionis negasset esse contradictionem... Deinde interrogatus, si id quod in contradicentibus uidit, anterioriter sicut causam ante effectum uideret, nonne tunc contradictionem uideret absque contradictione, hoc certe sic se habere negare nequiuisset. Sicut enim in contradicentibus contradictionem esse contradicentium contradictionem uidit, ita ante contradicentia contradictionem ante dictam uidisset contradictionem [...]" (cf. Nikolaus von Kues, 1989. *De Non-Aliud (Die philosophisch-theologischen Schriften, Sonderausgabe zum Jubiläum, lateinisch-deutsch*, 3 vol. (Wien: Herder), here vol. 2, pp. 530-532).

¹¹ Cf. N. Cusanus, *Triologus de Possess*, § 25 : „In hoc aenigmate uides quomodo si posset applicatur ad aliquod nominatum, [quomodo] fit aenigma ad ascendendum ad innominabile, sicut de linea per possess peruenisti ad indivisibilem lineam supra opposita existentem, quae est omnia et nihil omnium lineabilium. Et non est tunc linea, quae per nos linea nominatur, sed est supra omne nomen lineabilium. Quia posset absolute consideratum sine applicatione ad aliquod nominatum te aliquantulum ducit aenigmaticae ad omnipotentem, ut ibi videas omne quod esse ac fieri posse intelligis supra omne nomen, quo id quod potest esse est nominabile, immo supra ipsum esse et non-esse omni modo, quo illa intelligi possunt. Nam non-esse cum possit esse per omnipotentem, utique est actu, quia absolutum posse est actu in omnipotente. Si enim ex non-esse potest aliquid fieri quacumque potentia, utique in infinita potentia complicatur. Non esse ergo ibi est omnia esse. Ideo omnis creatura, quae potest de non-esse in esse perducī, ibi est ubi posse est esse et est ipsum possessum”.

the hidden character (*Isaiah* 45, 15)¹², which offers a foundation for the understanding of *the world as theophany* (θεοφάνεια), as *manifestation of divinity*.

Even if in several of his texts he clearly states against scholastic Aristotelianism¹³, N. Cusanus structures his paper *De docta ignorantia*¹⁴ in a triadic manner, similar with the structure suggested – for example – by Thomas of Aquinas in *Summa Theologica*. The Bishop of Brixen starts book I, which deals with the absolute Maximum, under the auspices of modesty: “I try to make public my barbarian stupidities” (“*meas barbaras ineptias incautus pandere attempto*”). I do not think that this aspect is random, because you cannot say anything about the One who is beyond all, but some “ineptitudes” (*ineptias*). For N. Cusanus, *God goes beyond any concept and, a fortiori, any name* (DI book I, chapter 24)¹⁵. On the line of Dionysian apophaticism, the ignorance of the divine being (going, among others, also through Cusanus’ texts) it will turn

¹² Cf. Idem., *De pace fidei*, I, 4, 7: “qui es Deus absconditus” (Romanian translation by W. Tauwinkl, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2008, p. 42; Romanian translation by M. Moroianu (Iași: Polirom), 2008, p. 15); see also Idem., *De Deo abscondito*, Romanian translation by M. Moroianu (Iași: Polirom), 2008, pp. 61-77 (Romanian translation by B. Tătaru-Cazaban (Bucharest: Humanitas), 2008, pp. 119-133).

¹³ For example, from the very beginning of *The Apology of Learned Ignorance* (cf. Nicolai de Cusa, 1932. *Opera Omnia*, volume II: *Apologia doctae ignorantiae discipuli ad discipulum*, editor R. Klibansky, Lipsiae. Novam editionem curavit Burkhard Mojsisch, 2008), N. Cusanus clearly states against the Aristotelian paradigm, adopted by the majority of scholastics, which obturates the access to mystic theology: “Nam *garrula logica* sacratissimae theologiae potius obest quam conferat” (*Apologia* ..., II, 21, 11). On the other hand, the author to whom N. Cusanus replies, Iohannis Wenck, was the representative of the theology of school, i.e. of Aristotelian paradigm.

¹⁴ The sentence *docta ignorantia* does not appear for the first time at N. Cusanus and it cannot either be found *ad litteram* in the texts of Dionysius Areopagite as it is suggested most of the times (the closes formula is in *De mystica theologia* 1, § 1: ἀγνώστως ἀνατάθητι, which means that for Dionysius ignorance becomes identical with knowledge). The phrase appears as such in Augustine in *Epistolae* 130, *ad Probam*, c. 15, § 28, letter quoted by N. Cusanus. In that epistle, Augustine says: “Est ergo in nobis quaedam, ut ita dicam, docta ignorantia, sed docta spiritu Dei qui adiuvat infirmitatem nostram”; see also Idem., *De Ordine*, I, 11, 31. The idea of *learned ignorance* can be encountered also in the texts of the authors that follow after N. Cusanus. For example, in the letter of R. Descartes to Regius from January 10, 1642, the philosopher states: “Comme, en effet, notre science est parfaitement limitée, et que tout ce qui est su n’est presque rien à côté de ce qu’on ignore, c’est une marque de savoir que de confesser librement qu’on ignore les choses qu’on ignore: et la docte ignorance consiste proprement en ceci, car elle appartient proprement à ceux qui sont vraiment doctes”; see also the end of *Rule VIII*: „il démontrera que la chose cherchée dépasse tout à fait la portée de l’esprit humain et par suite il ne se croira pas plus ignorant pour ce motif, parce qu’il n’y a pas moins de science dans cette connaissance que dans n’importe quelle autre”.

¹⁵ Cf. Nicolas de Cues, 1998. *Sermons eckhartiens et dionysiens*, introduction, traduction, notes et commentaires par Francis Bertin (Paris: Cerf); especially Sermon XX, *Dies Sanctificatus*, in *Opera Omnia* XVI, fasc. 4, p. 337: “*Supra omnem igitur oppositionem et contradictionem Deus est*”.

into what Imm. Kant will call *the thing in itself* (das *Ding-an-sich* or *numen*), which cannot be known. In book II, *Cardinalus Teutonicus* deals with the issue of universe, of creation, and in the III one, the Christological issues hold his attention, i.e. the mediation between the absolute maximum and restricted maximum¹⁶. The mediation is made by Jesus Christ (1 *John* 2, 1; 1 *Timothy* 2, 5 *et passim*) who takes part at both, because He takes over Himself by Incarnation all the weaknesses of human nature “except the sin” (*Hebrews* 4, 15).

*De docta ignorantia*¹⁷ may be considered in a certain sense a “theory” of knowledge, and the possibility of knowledge resides in the proportion between finite and infinite, between known and unknown¹⁸. But, N. Cusanus says on several occasions that “between infinite and finite no proportion is possible” (*infiniti ad finitum proportionem non esse* – DI I, 3)¹⁹. Clearly, however, this axiom encountered in Cusanus’ texts – *between infinite and finite no proportion is possible* – can already be found in Aristotle (*De caelo*, 275 a: “the infinite is not under any possible report with the finite”), Bonaventura (*Super Sent.* III, d. 14, a. 2, q. 3), Duns Scotus (*Reportatio parisiensis* IV, dist. 49, q. 10, n. 5: “nulla est proportio finiti ad infinitum”) and Thomas of Aquinas (*Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1 ad 6: “finiti ad infinitum non possit esse proportio”; *De veritate*, q. 3, a. 1, arg. 7: “Sed nulla est proportio creaturae ad Deum, sicut nec finiti ad infinitum”).

I invoke here other examples from Cusanus’ texts that are significant for the issue in question: “all those who question judge *an uncertain thing according*

¹⁶ “The books from *De docta ignorantia* manage by turn (but not each separately) a theory of knowledge, an ontology and a cosmology, all of them being, so to say, “contracted” in the last book, in a Christology” (cf. N. Cusanus, *De docta ignorantia*, Romanian translation by A. Bereschi, ed. cit., p. 538, n. 97). For his Christology see Sermon “*Verbum caro factum est*” (December 27, 1253 in Brixen); see also the second Sermon “*Verbum caro factum est*” (January 1, 1454 in Brixen); regarding N. Cusanus’ Christology see the classic paper of R. Haubst, *Die Christologie des Nikolaus von Kues*, Freiburg, Herder, 1956; see also M. de Gandillac, 1943. *La philosophie de Nicolas de Cuse* (Paris: Aubier); see also Forbes Liddel, “The significance of the doctrine of the Incarnation in the philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa”, in *Actes du XIe Congrès international de philosophie*, Amsterdam, vol. 11 [1953], pp. 126-131.

¹⁷ By the doctrine of learned ignorance, N. Cusanus surpasses the Aristotelian principles, especially the one of non-contradiction and of the excluded third. Now one can also understand the critique from scholastic points of view, Aristotelian, the one that came from the professor from the University of Heidelberg, Iohannis Wenck, from 1443, against the doctrine of Cusanus in the polemic writing *De ignota Litteratura*.

¹⁸ According to N. Cusanus, “the task of learned ignorance consists of the contemplation of the Invisible” (cf. Nicolas de Cues, *Sermons eckhartiens* ..., p. 159).

¹⁹ Cf. N. Cusanus, *De docta ignorantia*, I, 1: “because it escapes from any proportion, the infinite as infinite is not known” (trad. cit., p. 31); see also Ibid., I, 3: “a finite intellect cannot exactly include the truth of things by the report of similarity” (trad. cit., p. 43). For the same idea, differently expressed, one can also see Ibid., I, 12; II, 2; see also *De pace fidei*, I, Romanian translation by M. Moroianu, ed. cit., p. 17 (W. Tauwinkl, ed. cit., p. 43).

to a proportion, making comparison with what is assumed to be certain. Therefore, any research that is done by means of proportion is comparative” (DI I, 1). A question seems to me legitimate at this moment. Why does N. Cusanus use in most of his texts the term of proportion and not that of analogy? First of all, I tend to believe that he uses this term because it still belonged to the language of mathematics unlike the term analogy which, ever since Platonic texts, has departed from its original meaning, the mathematic one. Moreover, I think that he wanted to distinguish also terminologically from the majority of scholastics that frequently used the term analogy, thus avoiding the endless disputes. On the other hand, I think he resorts to the term proportion for it cannot be understood without number, “because the number is the support of proportion – proportion not being able to exist in the absence of number”²⁰. As it results from the texts of N. Cusanus, the proportion between two entities cannot be made without number. The number makes the proportion, the analogy, possible. God does not need a number because He can know things without resorting to them. In conclusion, the number is connected only to the human condition and we can know things only by means of them. Only with the help of numbers we can distinguish among the many characteristic of things.

In conclusion to the ones above, *based on the comparison or the relation (proportio), which can never be exact, between a thing supposedly known and one unknown, any knowledge is in fact ignorance, because it always stays behind knowing the truth.* A conclusion perfectly Dionysian from the point of view of ending.

In the pages of this article I am interested especially in the *theological analogy*, i.e. in the relation between God and creature, which is, from Cusanus’ point of view, marked by a profound asymmetry: *God gives being to the entire creature and this one adds nothing to the being of God*²¹. The disproportion that exists between finite and infinite forms one of the fundamentals of *learned ignorance*: “Since it stands to reason that it does not exist a relation between infinite and finite, then it is also very clear the fact that where one may find something more or something less, one cannot reach the pure maximum, because those that belong to plus and minus are finite”²². From Cusanus’

²⁰ Cf. Idem., *Ydiota de mente*, VI, Romanian translation by M. Moroianu, *ed. cit.*, p. 313.

²¹ N. Cusanus in *De Vision Dei*, XIII, retakes a formula of Eriugena according to which God is *the similarity of the similar ones and the dissimilarity of the dissimilar ones, the opposition of the opposed ones and the contrariety of the contrary ones* (*De Divisione Nature* I, in PL 122, 517 C; see also Jean-Michel Counet, *Mathématique et dialectique...*, p. 44). Obviously, these formulas are of Dionysian inspiration (see especially *Celestial Hierarchy*, chapter II).

²² Cf. N. Cusanus, *De Dogta Ignorantiae* I, 3; II, 2; II, 4; see also *De Principio* 38; *Sermon* 16; see also Jean-Michel Counet, *Mathématique et dialectique...*, le chapitre III “Excursus la notion de splendeur et de disproportion chez Nicolas de Cues”, pp. 110-114.

point of view, *the relation between God and creature is the same relation (of disproportion) with the one between light and colors*²³.

If the analogy (proportion) between finite and infinite does not work in Cusanus' texts²⁴, what is the solution of the Cardinal? The mere recognition of the unknowability of the divine being is not an option. Agnosticism is not an answer²⁵.

Without any doubt, the fundamental postulate of the treatise *De docta ignorantia* seems to be the coincidence of the maximum with the absolute minimum: "The absolute maximum and contracted at the same time, i.e. Jesus the ever blessed" (*DI III*, Proemium). That unique absolute maximum, incommunicable, unfathomable from book I (*DI III*, 1), is made known through Jesus Christ: "This is the face of the unseen God" (*Colossians* 1, 15; see also *John* 1, 18; 14, 6). "God will not be seen by anyone unless Christ shows Him. For only He is allowed to show Him, because only the Son can show the Father"²⁶.

Unlike the majority of the scholastics, *N. Cusanus speaks about Christ not as about a concept, but as Savior, by means of Him we will obtain salvation and eternal life* (*DI III*, Proemium; see also *III*, 8: "Christum non amplectitur mediatorem et salvatorem, Deum et hominem, viam, vitam et veritatem"). N. Cusanus claims that the divine filiation, or the adoptive filiation, by means of which people may participate at the essential filiation of Christ, equalize with deification (θεώσις)²⁷, with their salvation: "To speak briefly, I state that the divine filiation does not mean anything else but deification, which in Greek means

²³ Cf. Idem., *De Dato Patris Luminum II*, 100. A similar example, this time the comparison is between sight and colors, we encounter in *De Deo abscondito*: "As it is the sight in the region of colors (for *regione coloris* see also *De coniecturis II*, 17), so it is God for us" (Romanian translation by B. Tătaru-Cazaban, *ed. cit.*, p. 131; M. Moroianu, *ed. cit.*, p. 75).

²⁴ According to Hans Urs von Balthasar, Nicolaus Cusanus is an author who favors the *cathological* dimension (*Kata-logische*, according to the original formula of Hans Urs von Balthasar), and not the analogical one (cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Théologique II. Vérité de Dieu*, section "Aspects catalogiques", pp. 159-198).

²⁵ However, an author such as Rudolf Stadelmann, in *Vom Geist des Ausgehenden Mittelalters. Studien zur Geschichte d. Weltanschauung von Nicolaus Cusanus* (Halle: Niemeyer), 1927, pp. 41-57, considers that N. Cusanus is a thinker very influenced by mysticism and who eventually falls into agnosticism. A conclusion completely displaced for a Cardinal of the Roman-Catholic Church. An unfair standpoint, from my point of view, towards N. Cusanus also has P. Duhem: "une absurdité renforcée d'une jonglerie de mots, voilà ce qui va porter tout le système métaphysique de Nicolas Chrypfs. La jonglerie de mots! Ce sera vraiment la méthode de notre philosophe. Il se donnera l'air de dérouler des chaînes de syllogisms" (cf. P. Duhem, 1959. *Le système du monde. Histoire des doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic*, tome X (Paris: Librairie Scientifique Hermann), p. 261).

²⁶ N. Cusanus refers here to the pericope in *John* 14, 7-9; see in this respect *De ludo globi*, 71 (Romanian translation by M. Moroianu, *ed. cit.*, p. 323).

²⁷ From the point of view of some interpreters, "Cusanus's notion of deification includes themes of ontology, epistemology, revelation and soteriology" (cf. Nancy J. Hudson, 2007. *Becoming God: The Doctrine of Theosis in Nicholas of Cusa*. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, p. 6).

théosis”²⁸. “For Cusanus, theosis pervades the entirety of the dynamic relationship between Creator and creation. It infuses at once creation's origin, its existence as itself, and its ultimate return to God”²⁹.

In another one of his text – *De pace fidei* – N. Cusanus states that: “Man does not want to be anything else but man, not an angel or other nature; he wants to be a happy man, who *acquires the ultimate happiness* [...]; *by means of a mediator all humans could reach their ultimate desire, and this is the Way, for it is Man by means of which any man can reach until God* [...]. *Christ is therefore the One assumed by all those who hope to acquire the ultimate happiness*”³⁰. For the Cardinal, there is no doubt that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and people³¹. The union of the two natures in Christ is effectively used as an argument to show that the created being does not add anything to God who is the Being itself, but this created being is neither annihilated; on the contrary, it is kept as it is, although it completely depends on God himself: “in homine assumpto a verbo concedimus unicum esse personale hypostaticum ipsius verbi, et nihilominus Christus vere fuit homo univoce cum aliis hominibus”³². Therefore, in Christ, the human nature does not have existence by means of itself; it subsists uniquely in the person of Word³³.

For the Bishop of Brixen, the union between the absolute maximum and the contracted maximum is made by Jesus Christ, man and God³⁴. *If between finite and infinite there is no proportion, there is the union*³⁵ *between Creator and creature*

²⁸ Cf. N. Cusanus, *De filiatione Dei*, chapter 1: “Ego autem, ut in summa dicam, non aliud filiationem dei quam deificationem, quae et *theosis* graece dicitur, aestimandum iudico”; see also the French translation suggested by Jean Devriendt, 2009. *La filiation de Dieu*, preface by Marie-Anne Vannier (Paris-Orbey: Arfuyen), p. 29. In *De filiatione Dei*, the term *deificatio*, which translates the Greek *théosis* (θεώσις), has 8 occurrences. The end of the text *De filiatione Dei* is assigned, even if not in an explicit manner, to the relation between God and the One. Interesting (and decisive) is the option of N. Cusanus for *théosis* and not for *bénosis* which seems to be, at a first look, in the center of his concerns.

²⁹ Cf. Nancy J. Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

³⁰ Cf. N. Cusanus, *De pace fidei*, XIII, Romanian translation by M. Moroianu, *ed. cit.*, p. 75 (W. Tauwinkl, *ed. cit.*, p. 90).

³¹ Cf. 1 Timothy 2, 5: “For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and people: the man Jesus Christ”; a quote taken over by N. Cusanus in *De ludo globi*, 51 and 75, Romanian translation by M. Moroianu, *ed. cit.*, p. 289 and p. 329.

³² Cf. Maître Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus Propositionum*, no. 19, in *Master Eckhart: Parisian Questions and Prologues*, (éd.) Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies), 1974.

³³ Cf. Jean-Michel Counet, *Mathématique et dialectique...*, le chapitre IX: “La dialectique des deux natures dans le Christ” (pp. 365-428).

³⁴ Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 370.

³⁵ “Before any plurality, there is the unity” (cf. N. Cusanus, *De pace fidei*, VI, Romanian translation by M. Moroianu, *ed. cit.*, p. 31 (W. Tauwinkl, *ed. cit.*, p. 59); see also the French translation of Roland Galibois and Maurice de Gandillac, 1977. *La paix de la foi*, § 6, Centre d'études de la Renaissance, Université de Sherbrooke, p. 45). The accepted thesis here by N. Cusanus is obviously one of Neo-Platonic origin; in a note, M. de Gandillac noticed the fact that the *Parmenides* of Proclus is the most annotated text from the library of Cusanus.

made by Christ (DI III, 12), a union that is beyond any concept (DI III, 2)³⁶. “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14, 6) tells the Savior to us, who is *Deus et homo* (DI III, 3; III, 5; III, 4; III, 8; III, 12; see also *De ludo globi*, 75), Creator and creature, *without interference, division, confusion or separation of the two natures*³⁷ is in Cusanus’ terms “*admirable union*”³⁸ (DI III, 3). The true center of the universe is Jesus Christ, as a mediator between God and cosmos. Without any doubt, “ce rôle cosmique du Christ³⁹ est le fondement de son activité proprement salvifique et rédemptrice. Le Christ assume en son humanité qui est le maximum contracté la nature humaine dans son universalité et toutes les natures humaines singulières, de sorte qu’en lui qui meurt et ressuscite dans son mystère pascal tous les hommes sont morts à leur vie ancienne et sont ressuscités pour une vie en Dieu. La résurrection du Christ est ainsi le signe et la promesse de la résurrection de tous les hommes. L’Église est le rassemblement de ceux qui sont réunis par une même foi au Christ, et qui vivent comme un avant-goût de ces réalités définitives que Dieu révélera à la fin temps quand il jugera les vivants et les morts”⁴⁰.

³⁶ “God escapes all conception” (“*deus potius aufugiat omnem conceptum*”) *De Deo abscondito* XV; see also *De visione Dei*, XIII, English translation by Jasper Hopkins: “God escapes all conception”; see the Romanian translation by B. Tătaru-Cazaban, *ed. cit.*, p. 132; M. Moroianu, *ed. cit.*, p. 75.

³⁷ The Cardinal N. Cusanus speaks of a union “without separation and without confusion” of the contracted nature and of the absolute nature in one hypostasis. Without any doubt, we find in Cusanus’ texts the issues and even the Christological terminology from Chalcedon (451). The Chalcedonian Christology adopted by N. Cusanus is not limited to concepts, for what concept without remains may include the person of Jesus Christ, *who is real man and real God, in two natures* (ἐν δύο φύσεσιν), *without interference* (ἀσυγχύτως), *without change* (ἀτρέπτως), *without division* (ἀδιαφέτως) and *without separation* (ἀχωρίστως).

³⁸ F. Bertin, when he interprets the Christological standpoint of N. Cusanus, speaks of a “*Personne théandrique*” (cf. Nicolas de Cues, *Sermons eckhartiens...*, p. 99, n. 1). However, contrary to this standpoint, the Chalcedonian formula speaks of a “union between two natures in one person, hypostasis”. In my opinion, Dionysius the Areopagite speaks explicitly for the first time of an *actio theandrica* (θεανδρικὴ ἐνέργεια – *Ep.* IV, in *PG* 3, 1072 C), and not of a “theandric person”. *There is no single work as the Monophysites changed the Dionisian text, but a new work.* Saint Maximus the Confessor in the scholium to *Epistle IV* states that: “no one must declare, adopting a crazy speech, Lord Jesus theandric (θεανδρικὴν); for he did not say theandric (θεανδρικὴν) from θεανδρικῆς, but from a theandric work (θεανδρικῆν), i.e. an interwoven work of God and man. This is why he said that God has incarnated (ἀνθρωθέντα) and not that God has become human. Dionysius has called theandric only the interwoven work”.

³⁹ This cosmic role of Jesus Christ from Cusanus’ texts brings the Cardinal very close to the standpoint of a Father of Church, Saint Maximus the Confessor (580-662). One of the places where N. Cusanus invokes Maximus the Confessor is this: “Sed si se gratiam assequi sperat, ut de caecitate ad lumen transferatur, legat cum intellectu Mysticam theologiam iam dictam, Maximum monachum, Hugonem de Sancto Victore, Robertum Lincolniensem, Iohannem Scotigenam, abbatem Vercellensem et ceteros moderniores commentatores illius libelli; et indubie se hactenus caecum fuisse reperiet” (cf. *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, in Nicolai de Cusa, *Opera Omnia*, volume II, editor R. Klibansky, Lipsiae, 1932 (Novam editionem curavit Burkhard Mojsisch, 2008), pp. 20-21).

⁴⁰ Cf. Jean-Michel Counet, *Mathématique et dialectique ...*, pp. 370-371.

Out of other coordinates, Joachim Ritter believed that in N. Cusanus' view it is "definitely not about separation or cut: there are not two worlds, one of the divine and a terrestrial one. The world is the visibility of the unseen God, just as God is the invisibility of the seen world. The same principle that keeps Cusanus apart from the scholastic *analogia entis* also keeps him apart from the Platonic or Neo-Platonic participation"⁴¹.

In what is regarded the standpoint of N. Cusanus to *analogia entis*, the author above mentioned is perfectly right, but regarding the "Platonic or Neo-Platonic participation", I do not think that his statement has any support. I shall try below to highlight this.

II. In the second part of this study, I delay only on one issue that caught my attention in *De docta ignorantia* and which is somehow connected to the ones presented so far. It is about the *quantum potest* participation. Before all, a short trip in history is, in my opinion, absolutely necessary.

The phrase *quantum potest* has a frequent use at the authors of Latin language, from Cicero to R. Descartes (*Meditation II*) and even B. Spinoza (*Ethics*, proposition 57, demonstration and scholium to proposition 73). In comparison with *analogia* (mathematical proportion), the expression *quantum potest* (as some Latin authors equalized the Greek expression *κατ' ἀνάλογίαν*) introduces less rigidity in the demonstration. In fact, man cannot enter God's essence, but he takes part, each according to his own capability (*quantum potest*), to deification (*théosis*).

It seems that the *quantum potest* participation (reception) represents one of the privileged themes in early scholasticism in order to explain the participation of the creature to the Creator. By means of this idea is saved the attribute of the divine perfection. The roots of this issue are, probably, in *Timaeus*, 38 c, where Plato refers to the participation of temporal things to eternity and divinity according to their own ability. On the other hand, Aristotle, in *De anima*, 415 b, refers to the participation of different under-moon beings to the divine world. Proclus in his *Elements of Theology*, proposition 122, invokes the same expression *quantum potest* to define the reception of divinity: "any subject that is capable of receiving the participation from gods enjoys their gifts that the norms of his constitution (*mesuras proprie ypostaseos*) allow"⁴².

⁴¹ Cf. Joachim Ritter, "Die Stellung des Nicolaus von Cues in der Philosophiegeschichte. Grundsätzliche Probleme der neueren Cusanus-Forschung", in *Blätter für Deutsche Philosophie*, 13 [1939-1940], pp. 111-155, here p. 128.

⁴² Cf. Proclus, *Eléments de théologie*, translator J. Trouillard (Paris : Aubier-Montaigne), 1965. On this issue (*quantum potest*) see also the comments suggested by A. Baumgarten to *De fato* (*On destiny*), Romanian translation by C. Todericiu, notes and comments by A. Baumgarten (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic), 2001, especially pp. 28-29 and pp. 85-86, n. 33, p. 103 *sqq*; see also *Liber de causis*, traducere, notes and comments by A. Baumgarten (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic), 2002, p. 123, p. 145 *sqq*.

Another very important occurrence in the history of the phrase *quantum potest* (and even for *analogia entis*) is to be found to Ioan Philopon, who stated that “in God the will of good is one and simple, to which it participates without any doubt each of the beings, *quantum potest* (as much as it is possible); but God wants everything to resemble to Him, and this resemblance is not the same for all things, but it differs depending on *the analogy of beings*, in the same way in which all things participate to being and good, but with the condition that each of them to be able and for its nature to allow it to participate to being and good”⁴³. This text proves that most of the Commentators of Greek language took into consideration the doctrine of analogy not just as cosmological principle, but ontological, i.e. *according to its own capacity of receiving*⁴⁴.

For Western thinkers, another extremely important source in the metamorphosis of the phrase *quantum potest* is, without any doubt, the *Corpus Areopagiticum*. Ysabel de Andia says that, “in his texts, Dionysius, uses the phrase *κατ’ ἀναλογίαν* to indicate *the proportion or the measure*, but also *the faculty, the ability or the capacity of each being to participate to its own cause*. In this sense, the phrase *κατ’ ἀναλογίαν*: “*according to proportion, analogy*”, or according to Vladimir Lossky’s translation, “*according to capacity, possibility*”⁴⁵, it is synonym with the expression *κατὰ δυνατόν*:

⁴³ Cf. Ioan Philopon, 1899. *De Aeternitate Mundi contra Proclum*, editor H. Rabe (Leipzig: Teubner); (reprint G. Olms, Hildesheim, 1984), p. 568 sqq.

⁴⁴ Cf. J.-F. Courtine, 2005. *Inventio analogiae. Métaphysique et ontothéologie*, Paris, J. Vrin, p. 212.

⁴⁵ Cf. Vladimir Lossky, “La notion des ‘analogies’ chez Denys le pseudo-Aréopagite”, in *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 5 [1930], pp. 279-309. According to Vladimir Lossky’s counting, the term *ἀναλογία* has 23 occurrences in *CH*, 31 in *EH*, 17 in *DN* and one occurrence in *MT*. A total of 72 occurrences. However, in *Corpus Areopagiticum*, one may encounter several terms that are part of the family of the notion analogy. For example, according to Ysabel de Andia, *ἀναλογία* has 26 occurrences *CH* 140 A; 165 B2; 168 A; 177 C; 257 C; 257 D; 273 A; 293 A; 305 C; 332 B; *EH* 372 D; 400 B; 432 C; 476 C; 477 C; 480 A; 500 D; 504 A; 513 D; 537 C; *DN* 588 A; 696 C; 701 A; 705 C; 872 C; 897 A; *ἀναλογος*, – *ως* has 48 occurrences: *CH* 121 BC; 124 A; 164 D; 180 C; 209 C; 260 C; 273 A2C; 285 A; 292 C; 301 ABC; 336 A; *EH* 373 A; 377 A2; 429 A; 445 B; 477 AD; 480 B; 501BC2D; 504 D; 505 D; 516 B; 532 BCD; 536 C; 537 C; 560 B; *MT* 1033 C (in reality, *ἀναλογος*, – *ως* has in *Corpus Areopagiticum* 38 occurrences and not 48); *ἀναλογικώς* : *DN* 825 A (cf. Ysabel de Andia, *L’union à Dieu chez Denys l’Aréopagite...*, Deuxième partie, chapitre IV : “L’analogie” (pp. 101-108). A total of 75 (to be more precise 65) occurrences. According to the critical edition of Dionysian texts (*Corpus Dionysiacum / Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. 1, De divinis nominibus*, editor Beate Regina Suchla, Berlin / New York, W. de Gruyter, 1990 and *Corpus Dionysiacum / Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. 2, De coelesti hierarchia ; De ecclesiastica hierarchia ; De mystica theologia ; Epistulae*, editor Günter Heil, Berlin / New York, W. de Gruyter, 1991), *ἀναλογία* has the following occurrences: *DN* 109, 3; 145, 15; 149, 20; 154, 13; 198, 11; 206, 6; *CH* 11, 13; 18, 10.15; 19, 22; 20, 13; 36, 23; 40, 9; 43, 4; 48, 18; 54, 4; *EH* 65, 2; 75, 9; 85, 6; 97, 18; 98, 25; 99, 10; 104, 10; 106, 2; 114, 3; 120, 5; *ἀναλογος* : *DN* 110, 13; 114, 1; 115, 8; 128, 6; 140, 15; 144, 5; 165, 16; 166, 1; 178, 17; *CH* 8, 9.17; 9, 8; 17, 5; 22, 5; 30, 20; 38, 1; 40, 7.13; 41, 3; 42, 12.19; 44, 21; 45, 14; 46, 1; 56, 10; *EH* 65, 11; 68, 2.8; 82, 20; 94, 13; 98, 4; 99, 3.20; 104, 21; 105, 8.15.24; 107, 5; 108, 8; 114, 23; 115, 18; 116, 4.14; 119, 5; 120, 11; 125, 16; *MTh* 147, 11; *ἀναλογικώς* : *DN* 188, 16. A total of 65 occurrences.

“according to power”⁴⁶. The phrase *quantum potest* from the philosophy of Latin language can be translated with the terms of Dionysius the Areopagite and with μέτρον⁴⁷ or ἀξίαν, *value, dignity or even merit* (the creatures participate to God *pro merito*⁴⁸, expression used in the Latin version of *Church Hierarchy* (EH I, 2; PG 3, 372 D – 373 B, to express the Greek κατ’ ἀξίαν). Anyhow, “each according to his capacity” is clearly the secret of Dionysian hierarchy⁴⁹. For Dionysius the Areopagite, ἀναλόγως signifies the extent of powers or the merits of each of us. The Dionysian analogy must be understood as “capacity” (*virtus*) of receiving the divine gifts.)

In conclusion to those above, it must be said that in the texts of Dionysius the Areopagite, the logical or mathematical connotation of analogy almost disappeared; or, rather, it has been integrated in an

⁴⁶ Johannes Scotus Eriugena translates the term ἀναλογία by *corrationabilitas*: “[...] juxta analogiam, id est corrationabilitatem” (cf. Jean Scot Erigène, 1975. *Expositiones in ierarchiam coelestem*, J. Barbet (éd.), *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis* 31 (Turnhout: Brepols), p. 60 and pp. 156-157). *Corrationabilitatem* literary means “proportionality”, an aspect that sends to the classic, original, mathematic sense; but he knows the other sense as well, of “personal analogy”, i.e. the “quantum” of participation to the divine light which is given (*donò*) to each man or to each angelic intelligence (cf. Jean Scot Erigène, *Expositiones super ierarchiam caelestem S. Dionysi*, III, 7; édite par H.-D. Dondaine, 1950. *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age*, 25-26, p. 260; see also Claude Buridant, 1998. *L’étymologie, de l’antiquité à la Renaissance* (Lille: Presses Universitaires Septentrion), p. 93). Later on, Hugues de Saint-Victor prefers to translate the term analogy in the following way: “according to analogy, i.e. according to the way and measure of possibilities” (*secundum modum et mensuram possibilitatis [...] secundum ordinem, et gradum et proprietatem*) (cf. René Roques, 1962. *Structures théologiques de la gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor. Essais et analyses critiques* (Paris: PUF), p. 323). In his turn, N. Cusanus also resorts to an interesting etymology. For him, “mind comes from measure” (*Ydiota de mente*, I, 57, Romanian translation by M. Moroianu, *ed. cit.*, p. 267). An etymology probably taken from Thomas of Aquinas, *De Veritate*, 10, 1. For Cusanus, in opposition with the majority of the scholastic tradition, *measurement is the fundamental operation of mind, but not the finite is the standard or the unity of measure of the infinite, but the opposite: any relative thing is in a radical opposition with the Absolute and it is however wrapped (“complicated”) in it.*

⁴⁷ Regarding the term μέτρον in *Corpus Areopagiticum* see René Roques, 1983. *L’univers dionysien. Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris: Cerf), pp. 59-64.

⁴⁸ I believe that a text of N. Cusanus from *De pace fidei*, XVI, can be invoked in this respect: “Paulus : Quid igitur iustificat eum qui iusticiam assequitur. Tatarus: Non merita, alias non foret gratia, sed debitum. Paulus : Optime ais, sed quia non iustificatur ex operibus in conspectu dei omnis vivens, sed ex gratia”. English translation by Jasper Hopkins: “Paul: What, then, justifies him who obtains justice? Tartar: Not his merits. Otherwise it would not be [a question of] grace but rather [of] debt. Paul: Exactly. Now, because no living [soul] is justified in the sight of God by works, but rather by grace” (<http://jasper-hopkins.info/DePace12-2000.pdf>); see Romanian translation by W. Tauwinkl, *ed. cit.*, p. 104; M. Moroianu, *ed. cit.*, p. 93.

⁴⁹ Cf. Florin Crîsmăreanu, “L’analogie et christologie dans le *Corpus Dionysiacum*”, in the *Scientific Annals of the University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”*, Iași, (New series), Philosophy, Tom LIV [2007], pp. 28-47.

ontological paradigm, where the proportion initially mathematic becomes *the measure of measure in God and the measure measured in the creature*.

In comparison with the interpretation given by the majority of scholastics, the Dionysian analogy does not have to be understood either as mathematical proportion, or in its gnoseological (scholastic) acceptance, but in an ontological sense, analogic, that modifies the very person of the one involved in such a spiritual hike.

The authors that came after Dionysius – especially his scholastic interpreters – have given a strictly gnoseological importance to analogy. Obviously, there are exceptions, on both sides⁵⁰. For the Western paradigm, three standpoints have caught my attention: Hugues de Saint-Victor, Albert the Great and, obviously, N. Cusanus.

A very faithful interpreter in what the Dionysian analogy in West is regarded is Hugues de Saint-Victor (1096-1141). In my opinion, Victor is one of the few Western authors who recovers the Dionysian acceptance of analogy. In his comment to *Church Hierarchy*⁵¹, analogy is clearly defined as appointing “*the human condition*”, i.e. what is “personal” of the human nature: “the analogy of nature, i.e. personal condition, property or what is suitable. *It is what man does by means of his power and knowledge, what man receives and what he can*”⁵². As in the case of Dionysius the Areopagite, it can be said that we have here two ways of analogy, the one according to which man can do something, according to each one’s capacity of doing (the analogy related to our human condition) and what he receives from God (it is his ability of receiving the divine gifts, which, in the end, is still related to our condition of *homo viator* (to speak of “divine analogies”, as Vl. Lossky suggests, seems to me too much).

Secondly, among scholastics, the most appropriate example seems to be Albert the Great (1195-1280), who recovers the sense of analogy from the Dionysian texts. For the exegetes of Albert’s work, the analogy from his texts is not an Aristotelian analogy, but it is the Dionysian one, it is an analogy of the receivers (*analogia recipientium*)⁵³.

In his turn, N. Cusanus, in *De docta ignorantiae*, uses only three times the phrase *quantum potest*, all occurrences are in book II (which is dedicated to the universe, the creature, therefore to *the microcosms, to man*): 1. book II,

⁵⁰ For example, Cajetan, radicalizes and simplifies Thomas’ standpoint from *De Veritate*, considering in *De Ente et essentia* (q. 3) that the analogy of proportionality is the only authentic one (cf. B. Pinchard, 1987. *Métaphysique et sémantique. Autour de Cajetan. Etude et traduction du De Nominum Analogia* [Paris: J. Vrin]).

⁵¹ Cf. Hugues de Saint-Victor, *In Hierarchiam Coelestem Sancti Dionysii Areopagitae secundum interpretationem Joannis Scoti*, in PL 175, 923 A -1154 C.

⁵² Cf. Ibid., 970 AB; see also R. Roques, 1962. *Structures théologiques de la gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor. Essais et analyses critiques* (Paris: PUF), p. 323, n. 6.

⁵³ Cf. Alain de Libera, 1990. *Albert le Grand et la philosophie* (Paris: J. Vrin), p. 102.

chapter 1 (Romanian translation p. 205, where it is about “the art that imitates nature as much *as it can*”, an aspect on which we are not particularly interested in here); 2. II, 4 (Romanian translation p. 237: “as long as the contracted one or concrete has everything that is from absolute, «it means that» it *imitates as much as it can* the one which is the absolute maximum. Therefore, we state that the ones revealed to us in the first book regarding the absolute maximum, *as they are good as maximum to the absolute, as absolutes, they are good in a contracted manner to the contracted as well*”); and 3. II, 12: “the movement of the whole, *according to its power*, aims at circularity” (Romanian translation p. 327; an aspect in which we are not interested here).

Among these three occurrences, we are especially interested only in one of them in this study, namely the fragment from Book II, chapter 4. In my opinion, here we encounter the two types of analogy encountered in the texts of Dionysius the Areopagite (distinction taken then over by Johannes Scotus Eriugena, Hugues de Saint-Victor *et alii*). First of all, the capacity, the ability of imitating God and, secondly, the gifts received from God for each according to each one’s capacity of receiving (*the analogy of receivers*). As it can easily be noticed, what some exegetes call the two types of analogy: the *human one* (analogy is a propriety of human, one of its conditions by which it participates to the divine ones) and the “*divine one*” (in my opinion, improperly thus called by Vl. Lossky⁵⁴), i.e. *the measure of measure that escapes any measurement*, in the words of N. Cusanus, “as they are good as maximum to the absolute, as absolutes, they are good in a contracted manner to the contracted”, are intimately connected, are intertwined.

As in the case of Dionysius the Areopagite, *in the texts of N. Cusanus, analogy* (κατ’ ἀναλογίαν understood as quantum potest) *must not be understood either as mathematical proportion, or as its gnoseological (scholastic) acceptance, but in an ontological sense, anagogic, that modifies the very person of the one involved in such a spiritual hike*. I tend to believe that in N. Cusanus’ case as well, God is shared by each one according to *his capacity (quantum potest)*. *Quantum potest* is intimately connected to the faculty of resemblance. As I get closer to God, I obtain the resemblance with Him.

⁵⁴ Vl. Lossky says that “one can speak of a personal “analogy” of God, which is an infinite analogy, according to which the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity participate to one another completely” (cf. Vl. Lossky, “La notion des “analogies”...”, p. 299). On the other hand, René Roques considers that there is a real ἀναλογία and a perfect ἀναλογία (cf. R. Roques, *L’univers dionysien*..., pp. 62-63). I cannot agree with these statements, no matter how great the names that support such standpoints, because ἀναλογία is an issue that is related exclusively to the human intellect (did not Hugo de Saint-Victor said that analogy belongs only to *human nature?*), therefore it is imperfect. God does not need ἀναλογία, unless we apply to Him our categories, i.e. we anthropomorphize Him. Analogy is by excellence a procedure that belongs only to man.

In the spiritual hiking, analogy is, without any doubt, necessary, but not also sufficient. After all, analogy of scholastic type (gnoseologic) is only a simple intellectual instrument. The role of analogy is that of helping us speak with a meaning about what is on the other side, about what is transcendental. In the structure of universe man occupies a privileged place (which sometimes uses analogy) – *man is microcosm*⁵⁵ –, because, in spite of his finitude, he is opened to transcendentalism. This path, traditionally, splits into two categories: *ascending analogy* (Aristotelian) and *descending analogy* (Platonic). The ascending one starts from the sensitive ones to the intelligible ones (with justification not only in Aristotelian doctrine, but also in the Scriptural one: *Romans* 1, 20 and *Wisdom of Solomon* 13, 5). Descending analogy (“*cathological*” would Hans Urs von Balthasar say) starts from God, from the initial cause to creatures, applying the principle of participation to the latter ones. In the first case, of ascending analogy, the first known is the finite being, including the human subject, the one who makes our experience possible. In the second case, the first known is the First Being, in the light of which all others are known.

The examples that illustrate the two types of analogy are multiple. It is about, first of all, the ancient dispute between Plato and Aristotle, metamorphosed during the Middle Ages in the dispute between the Persian Avicenna and the Moroccan Averroes. On both sides can easily fit in thinkers such as Maître Eckhart and Thomas of Aquinas, N. Cusanus and Iohannis Wenck, Duns Scotus and F. Suarez *et alii*.

In my opinion, together *with the moment F. Suarez the systematic analysis of analogy disappears*⁵⁶, this “*horrible analogy*” as Saint Bernard⁵⁷ says. Simultaneously with this moment one can notice *another disappearance* extremely significant for the world from patristic and scholastic period: *hierarchy*. According to F. Suarez, “*the creature takes part equally to the being of*

⁵⁵ For the phrase “*Man is microcosm*” see *On the Game of Globe*, Romanian translation by M. Moroianu, volume II, p. 271.

⁵⁶ According to J.-F. Courtine, it is about a “quasi-disappearance – anyhow, with its topic and architectonic function – of (recent) doctrine of the analogy of the being” (cf. J.-F. Courtine, 1990. *Suarez et le système de la métaphysique* (Paris: PUF), p. 521).

⁵⁷ Cf. Saint Bernard, 1866. *Hérésies de pierre Abélard, lettre cent quatre-vingt-dixième ou traité de saint Bernard contre quelques erreurs d'Abélard au pape Innocent II*, tome XI, in *Oeuvres complètes de saint Bernard*, traduction par M. l'abbé Charpentier (Paris: Vivés). According to J.-F. Courtine, *Inventio analogiae...*, p. 10, *analogia entis* marks “the rhythm of internal moves” of metaphysical systems until the disappearance and definite victory of Scotist destruction, an aspect highlighted, among others, by Oliver Boulnois (cf. O. Boulnois, 1988. “La destruction de l'analogie et l'instauration de la métaphysique”, in *Duns Scot, Sur la connaissance de Dieu et l'univocité de l'étant*, Introduction, traduction et commentaire (Paris: PUF), pp. 11-81; see also, of the same author, “Analogie et univocité selon Duns Scot : la double destruction”, in *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, 3-4 [1989], pp. 347-369).

God⁵⁸. It is obvious here the absence of hierarchy. On the other hand, in the thinking of the Fathers of Church and even of some Western authors, such as N. Cusanus, the issue of hierarchy is major especially in the participation of creature to God, each according to its capacity (ability), *quantum potest*.

After all, “by Thomistic commentators and others, especially with Cajetan and F. Suarez, theological analogy (whose roots are in *Divine Names*) was little by little reduce to a particular case of a general theory of analogy, radically non-theological”⁵⁹. According to the statements of J.-L. Marion, by the standpoints of Cajetan and F. Suarez it is obvious a significant metamorphoses with certain incalculable consequences for theology.

III. In the end of these lines, I tend to believe that such a situation could have been reached (the disappearance of Dionysian analogy and of the principle of hierarchy), because along the way it is about a certain set of presuppositions that make possible certain discourses, theological and metaphysical presuppositions. Unlike the majority of scholastics, where the metaphysical component dominated, I believe that for N. Cusanus primary are the theological, Christological presuppositions.

As it also captures very well in a note the Romanian translator of the paper *De docta ignorantia*, Andrei Bereschi, “the mediator universe of Cusanus represents the expression of a radicalism which not only that it does not accept anymore functional intermediations in the creation” (see *Romans* 1, 20), but it also suggests a *relation of interpenetration (God is in all and all are in God)*⁶⁰, to which I would add that the model of this *interpenetration (περιχωρησις)*⁶¹ of the divine and human meets in the Person of Jesus Christ. In my opinion, neglecting the Christological component, fundamental in Cusanus’ work, one can accuse N. Cusanus of pantheism as well. Such

⁵⁸ Cf. F. Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, II, sec. II, § 14.

⁵⁹ Cf. J.-M. Marion, 1977. *L'idole et la distance* (Paris: Bernard Grasset), pp. 305-306, considers that “in the posterity of F. Suarez the place occupied till then by analogy remains vacant!”. On the other hand, in the year 1921, B. Landry stated that “currently closed, the old notion of analogy reappears” (cf. Bernard Landry, 1922. *La notion d'analogie chez saint Bonaventure et saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain: Institut Supérieur de Philosophie), p. 68).

⁶⁰ Cf. N. Cusanus, *De docta ignorantia*, Romanian translation cit., p. 531, n. 39.

⁶¹ Περιχωρησις (Latin *circumincessio*) appears for the first time in Saint John of Damascus’ texts, *Exposition fidei* [The Exact Exposition of Orthodox Faith] (CPG 8043), Kotter, II, 51, 57-63: “It should be known, however, that, although we say that the natures of God interpenetrate and cover each other, we do however know that the interpenetration/perichoresis was made starting from divine nature; for it penetrates all, as it pleases, and covers all, but through it nothing penetrates”; see in this respect Priest Andrew Louth, 2010. *John of Damascus. Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*, translation by priest professor Ioan Ică senior and deacon Ioan I. Ică jr. (Sibiu: Deisis), p. 257; see also Ion Bria, 1994. *Dictionary of Orthodox Theology* (Bucharest: EIBMBOR), pp. 304-305.

allegations did not delay to appear even during his life-time⁶². Unless you take into account the place that Jesus Christ occupies in Cusanus' texts, then you can formulate such allegations.

On the other hand, there are interpreters that admit the fact that Christology is fundamental for N. Cusanus, except that they do not see anything else but a "conjectural Christology". It is true that N. Cusanus suggests a theory of representation as assumption (*conjectura*). In the Cardinal's words, "an assumption (*conjectura*) is a positive assertion which, in its alteration to truth, as it is in itself, it does however participate to it" (*De coniecturis*, III, I). In the opinion of some exegetes of Cusanus' work, "une conjecture est donc une représentation doublée de la conscience de son inadéquation"⁶³. Starting from the texts of the Cardinal, we cannot agree with Xavier Tilliette, who, in one of his texts, stated: "c'est de christologie conjecturale qu'il s'agit, en vue de mieux comprendre l'union hypostatique et l'être du Christ – lancée comme une exploration à la rencontre du mystère. De la christologie dogmatique et l'attestation qui la précède, la christologie conjecturale, toute proleptique, tout idéale, dessine en creux la forme ébauchée"⁶⁴. It is clear for everyone that X. Tilliette considers N. Cusanus a simple philosopher and, therefore, his Christology can be "conjectural". In my opinion, the Christology adopted by Cardinal N. Cusanus cannot be considered a "conjectural Christology", because the Christological Chalcedonian dogma was not founded on assumptions, conjectures.

Placing all his hope in Christ, N. Cusanus does not really resemble much either with that character described by G. Bruno, who "swims during storm and who is either on the top, or under the wave; for he did not see clearly, uninterrupted and totally the light and did not swim quiet and straight, but with jerks and interruptions"⁶⁵. G. Bruno rejects precisely the Christological component where N. Cusanus put all his faith into. And if he does this, then he definitely cannot get out of pantheism, because for him the double nature of Christ does not work any more. Bruno takes over from Cusanus

⁶² For example, Iohannis Wenck accuses Cardinal Cusanus of pantheism, because I think he did not manage to see Cusanus' work but in the light of scholastic Aristotelianism, neglecting thus totally Chalcedonian Christology upon which leans, in my opinion, the entire construction of Cusanus.

⁶³ Cf. Frédéric Vengeon, 2005. "Le symbolisme linguistique dans l'art des conjectures", in *Nicolas de Cues, penseur et artisan de l'unité*, sous la direction de David Larre (Lyon : ENS éditions), pp. 133-134.

⁶⁴ Cf. Xavier Tilliette, 1993. *Le Christ des philosophes. Du Maître de Sagesse au Divin Témoin* (Namur: Éd. Du Sycomore), Chapitre II "Nicolas de Cues", pp. 17-22.

⁶⁵ Cf. Giordano Bruno, 2003. *On Infinite, Universe and Worlds*, translation by Smaranda Bratu Elian (Bucharest: Humanitas), p. 96.

only the idea of God's immanence in the world and not the idea of His transcendence.

Unlike some scholastic thinkers who tried to reach, to know God starting from the seen ones, from creation (*by means of analogy*), for Cusanus, this *distance between God and world was crossed through the act of Incarnation*. In my opinion, N. Cusanus is one of the few Western thinkers who firmly states against the analogy of Aristotelian origin resorting to the arguments of Chalcedonian Christology. After all, *Cardinalus Teutonicus* tells us that *any other mediation than the one of God is false and deceiving*⁶⁶.

⁶⁶ Cf. N. Cusanus, *De docta ignorantia* III, 11: "Benedictus Deus, qui per Filium suum de tenebris tantae ignorantiae nos redemit, ut sciamus omnia falsa et deceptoria, quae alio mediatore quam Christo, qui veritas est, et alia fide quam Iesu, qualitercumque perficiuntur ! Quoniam non est nisi unus Dominus Iesus potens super omnia, nos omni benedictione adimplens, omnes nostros defectus solus faciens abundare".