

Mediante universo: *A solution to the problem of the procession of a multitude from the One*

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At times, development in the field of intellectual history is guaranteed by the kind of productive misunderstanding embodied by Nicholas Cusanus's reception of the dictum *quodlibet in quolibet*, attributed to Anaxagoras. As Aristotle states, Anaxagoras held that everything has been mixed in everything, therewith accounting for the complex phenomenon of change.¹ The dictum *quodlibet in quolibet* accordingly is to be understood as restricted to the elementary level: "in everything there is a portion of everything, except of the intelligence."² This restriction entirely disappeared in Cusanus's interpretation of the dictum, presumably under the influence of the Dominican theologian Eckhart of Hochheim.³

Eckhart positively identified the dictum *quodlibet in quolibet* as an idea expressed in the eleventh proposition of the *Liber de causis*.⁴ Generally in his work, it is applied to spiritual beings, although sometimes it serves more specifically as a *proprietas divinorum*.⁵ If we take into consideration that, for instance, Thomas Aquinas is well aware of the physical background of the dictum *quodlibet in quolibet* attached to the name Anaxagoras, Eckhart deliberately seems to transpose the Anaxagorean dictum from a physical to a metaphysical or even

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1. Aristotle, *Phys.* I,4 (187b1).

2. Anaxagoras, fr. B 11 (Diels/Kranz II, 37).

3. Cf. H. Wackerzapp, *Der Einfluß Meister Eckharts auf die ersten philosophischen Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues* (1440–1450), (Münster, 1960), pp. 168ff.

4. Cf. Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 320 (LW III, 269, 7–9): "spiritibus ergo adhaerere est mutuo se totis penetrare, quodlibet esse in quolibet. Et hoc est quod in De causis dicitur: 'primorum omnium quaedam sunt in quibusdam' etc." Cf. *Liber de causis* prop. 11 (ed. Pattin, p. 161): "Primorum omnium quaedam sunt in quibusdam per modum quo licet ut sit unum eorum in alio."

5. Cf. Eckhart, *In Sap.* n. 271 (LW II, 601, 5–7): "Haec est proprietas divinorum, . . . quod in minimo habetur maximum, quodlibet in quolibet"; *In Eccli.* n. 20 (LW II, 248, 1): "in divinis quodlibet est in quolibet."

theological setting.⁶ What remains a matter of conjecture in the case of Meister Eckhart becomes, as we will see, a matter of fact in Cusanus, who seeks for a new and deeper founding of the Anaxagorean dictum.

Laying this new foundation, Cusanus makes use of an argument, which also stems from the Latin work of Meister Eckhart, namely, the mediative function of the universe. In Eckhart, as in Cusanus, the universe serves as an intermediary between God and particular being. Although Eckhart reveals himself in the *Prologi in Opus tripartitum* as a “thinker of immediacy,” the patron of the thesis that every singular being receives its transcendental perfections from God immediately, he apparently feels the urge to develop the mediative function of the universe as a conceptual safeguard that will make possible the philosophically significant expression of the idea of a “divine inherence.”⁷ This doctrine of the mediative function of the universe is central in this paper.

I

In the fourth chapter of the second book of *De docta ignorantia*, Nicholas explains that in the process of contraction there is, on the side of contracted being, a *maximum*, which, as *maximum contractum*, receives the properties of the Absolute maximum contractedly—*similitudo absoluti*. This *maximum contractum*, he declares, is the universe. It contains everything contractedly, just as the Absolute maximum contains everything absolutely. Although the Absolute maximum excludes all plurality, whereas the contracted maximum entirely includes it, both the Absolute and the contracted maximum are maximally one.

“God, who is one, is in the one universe,” Cusanus says, “whilst the universe is contractedly in all things.”⁸ God is in the particular entities absolutely that which they are—*quidditas absoluta*. Under this aspect of divine “inherence,” things are not distinct from one another. The universe, on the other hand, is in the particular entities contractedly that which they are. Of course, these *quidditates contractae* are distinct, for the *quidditas contracta* is nothing but the thing itself. Consequently, only the universe inheres in things in such a way that it is these things themselves.⁹

In the concluding section of the fourth chapter Cusanus deduces the insight “how God, who is most simple unity, as he exists in the one universe, is, as if in

6. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In Phys.* I, 4 1. 9 (Leon. ed., 30): “quod quodlibet esset in quolibet, ut Anaxagoras posuit.”

7. Cf. Eckhart, *Prol. in Op. prop.* n. 13 (LW I, 172, 15–173, 2): “omne ens et singulum non solum habet, sed et immediate, absque omni prorsus medio, habet a deo totum suum esse, totam suam unitatem, veritatem et totam suam bonitatem.”

8. Cusanus, *DI* II, 4 (*Opera omnia* I, 75, 13–15): “Deus igitur, qui est unus, est in uno universo, universum vero est in universis contracte.”

9. Cf. *DI* II, 4 (*Opera omnia* I, 74, 9–24).

consequence, through the mediation of the universe in all things, and the plurality of things is through the mediation of the one universe in God.”¹⁰ Eventually, the mutual inherence of God and the particular entities, mediated by the one universe, gives rise to a deeper foundation of the dictum of Anaxagoras: *quodlibet in quolibet*.¹¹ It is, so to speak, a basic insight.

The mediative function of the universe in the mutual inherence of God and particular being is established with recourse to the mediative function of the universe in the procession of particular being. Cusanus explains that “the beings which are parts of the universe, and without which the universe, since it is contracted, could not be one and whole and perfect, sprang into existence together with the universe.”¹² With the universe, all of its parts are produced, as it is the essential characteristic of the universe to include them. It is significant that Cusanus considers the relation of the universe to the particular beings as a relation of *totum* and *partes*.

Simul cum universo in esse prodierunt—the simultaneity of the universe and its parts serves as an argument in countering the position of *Avicenna et alii philosophi*, who held that there was first an intelligence, then a noble soul, and then nature.¹³ Having validated this simultaneity, Cusanus next disputes it from the craftsman’s point of view: “Just as in a craftsman’s design the whole, for instance a house, is prior to a part, for instance a wall, so because all things sprang into existence from God’s design, we say that first there appeared the universe and thereafter all things, without which it could be neither a universe nor perfect.”¹⁴ Instead of “from God’s design,” the Latin has the unequivocal clause “ex intentione dei,” which restates the priority of the universe as that of a *primum intentum*.

The mediative function of the universe results, ultimately, from the state of the universe as primarily intended. Absolutely, Cusanus says, the Absolute maximum is only present in the universe, which is contractedly all things—we therefore have to consider the Absolute maximum to be antecedently in the contracted maximum and only subsequently in all particulars.¹⁵ As God is absolutely present

10. *DI II*, 4 (*Opera omnia I*, 75, 16–18): “Et ita intelligi poterit, quomodo Deus, qui est unitas simplicissima, existendo in uno universo est quasi ex consequenti mediante universo in omnibus, et pluralitas rerum mediante uno universo in Deo.”

11. Cf. *DI II*, 5 (*Opera omnia I*, 76, 3–9): “Si acute iam dicta attendis, non erit tibi difficile videre veritatis illius Anaxagorici ‘quodlibet esse in quolibet’ fundamentum fortassis altius Anaxagora. Nam cum manifestum sit ex primo libro Deum ita esse in omnibus, quod omnia sunt in ipso, et nunc constet Deum quasi mediante universo esse in omnibus, hinc omnia in omnibus esse constat et quodlibet in quolibet.”

12. *DI II*, 4 (*Opera omnia I*, 74, 28–75,2): “Omnia autem entia, quae sunt partes universi, sine quibus universum—cum sit contractum—unum, totum et perfectum esse non posset, simul cum universo in esse prodierunt.”

13. Cf. *DI II*, 4 (*Opera omnia I*, 75 2–4).

14. *DI II*, 4 (*Opera omnia I*, 75, 4–8): “sicut in intentione artificis est prius totum, puta domus, quam pars, puta paries, ita dicimus, quia ex intentione Dei omnia in esse prodierunt, quod tunc universum prius prodiit et in eius consequentiam omnia, sine quibus nec universum nec perfectum esse posset.”

15. *DI II*, 4 (*Opera omnia I*, 75, 8–11): “absolutum maximum in contracto maximo prioriter consideramus, ut sit consequenter in omnibus particularibus, quia est absolute in eo, quod est omnia contracte.”

in that which is contractedly all things, and which is contractedly in all things, it is through the mediation of the one universe that He is in all things and that all things are in Him.

II

It is generally accepted that Cusanus took over the argument of the mediative function of the universe from Meister Eckhart of Hochheim.¹⁶ In fact, all relevant elements are taken from Eckhart's commentary on the Book of Wisdom, in which he develops the idea of the mediative function of the universe in the procession of particular being.¹⁷ This text has an overt parallel in what is to be considered Eckhart's *Hexaameron*—the beginning of his first commentary on Genesis—in which he proposes this doctrine as the better alternative among a series of answers to the question of the procession of multitude.¹⁸

Commenting on Wisdom 1:14 ("creavit enim, ut essent omnia"), Eckhart stresses the word *omnia* and consequently reads the text as an indication that the whole of the universe was intended in creation. Affirming the universe as *finis creationis*, he states that every agent by itself always intends the whole (*ipsum totum*), as the craftsman primarily intends the house itself, its parts only in

16. Cf. Wackerzapp, *Der Einfluß Meister Eckharts*, pp. 109ff.

17. In the broader context of his expositions Cusanus is likewise dependent on Eckhart. The idea that God is in things only absolutely, without the contraction to *hoc et hoc*—cf. *DI* II, 4 (*Opera omnia* I, 75,12–13): "Contractio dicit ad aliquid, ut ad essendum hoc vel illud"—that is distinctive for createdness, reflects Eckhart's distinction between *esse absolute* and *esse hoc et hoc*, which gives rise to a restriction of divine inherence to the level of absolute being. Cf. Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 206 (LW III, 174, 4): "Est quidem deus in quolibet, ut illud ens est, in nullo autem, ut illud est hoc ens." This passage is annotated by Nicholas in his private codex with the words "quomodo deus in omnibus et tamen in nullo." Cf. Wackerzapp, *Der Einfluß Meister Eckharts*, p. 134.

18. The question "quomodo ab uno simplici, puta a deo, possint immediate esse seu produci plura distincta et diversa" is explored here in the recapitulation of the answers suggested by Thomas and Avicenna, whose solution immediately evokes the comments of Maimonides and, again, Thomas, joined by the apparently not unsatisfying apology proposed by *quidam ex maioribus mundi*. These answers are followed by explanations of the immediate procession of multitude under the regime of natural necessity—a provocative thesis!—which Eckhart, as he himself claims, is apt to give usually together with this third and *better* rejoinder: "Tertio et melius dico quo re vera ab uno uniformiter se habente semper unum procedit immediate. Sed hoc unum est ipsum totum universum, quod a deo procedit, unum quidem in multis partibus universi . . . Ex his patet rudis quorundam quaestio et dubitatio qua quaeritur utrum deus prius produxerit angelum aut aliam quamlibet creaturam quam reliquam. Produxit enim immediate non hanc aut aliam partem universi, sed ipsum totum universum immediate, quod, inquam, universum non produceret nec esset universum, si quid partium essentialium deesset. Ex aequo autem universum non esset, si lapis vel lignum deesset, aut si natura angelici spiritus deesset" (*In Gen.* I nn. 10–13; LW I, 193, 11–197,4).

function of the whole. Being the *primum agens*, by Himself God produced and created in the first place the universe, which contains everything as its and everything's parts, because of the universe and in the universe.¹⁹ Several elements of the text in Cusanus already become visible here, i.e. the metaphor of the craftsman, the relation of *totum* and *partes*, and the idea of the universe as primarily intended in creation.²⁰

The most crucial step, however, remains to be taken. At stake is what a Latin sermon reckons among the *disputabilia*, the classical question: "How are the many things immediately from the simple One?"²¹ And indeed, the question can only be *how* a multitude comes immediately from the simple One, because *that* such immediate procession is to be accepted within a Christian context evidently results from the incommunicability of the act of creation. Eckhart's answer to this question is almost trivial: Immediately produced by the One is the universe, which as a whole contains a multitude of parts.

With this solution Eckhart disjoins two traditionally coupled theses, namely the axiom that from the One immediately comes one thing only—*ex uno non fit nisi unum*— and the doctrine of the gradual procession of multitude:

And thus perishes the question and difficulty, which burdens many people to this day, how from the simple One, which is God, immediately can be many things. For some hold, like Avicenna and his followers, that Intelligence is first and immediately created by the First, and all others subsequently by this Intelligence. Hence, one must say that the whole universe as one whole . . . descends from the simple One, one from the One, first and immediately.²²

Eckhart defends the axiom *ex uno non nisi unum*, but rejects the correlated doctrine of the gradual procession of multitude. One could even maintain that, in his opinion, a correct understanding of the axiom *ex uno non nisi unum* precludes

19. Cf. *In Sap.* n. 36 (LW II, 356, 3–7): "sicut omne agens per se semper intendit ipsum totum, puta artifex domum, partes autem non nisi propter totum et in toto, sic agens primum, deus, per se et primo produxit et creavit universum habens omnia, singula vero, utpote partes universi et partes omnium, non nisi propter universum et in universo."

20. The relation of *totum* and *partes* allows for further specification. Eckhart treats the relation of the one universe to its many parts as analogous to the relation of the soul—*forma hominis*—to the parts of the human body. This observation underlies a remarkable study of Bernard Muller-Thym, criticised by Vladimir Lossky. Cf. B. Muller-Thym, *The Establishment of the University of Being in the Doctrine of Meister Eckhart of Hochheim* (New York, 1939); V. Lossky, *Théologie négative et Connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart*, (Paris, 1960), pp. 122 n. 97, 302–6.

21. Cf. *Serm.* XXVIII, 2 n. 284 (LW IV, 256, 6–12).

22. *In Sap.* n. 36 (LW II, 356, 7–13) "Et sic perit quaestio et difficultas, multos gravans usque hodie, quomodo ab uno simplici, quod est deus, possint esse multa immediate. Sunt enim qui putant, ut Avicenna et sui sequaces, quod a primo sit primo et immediate creata intelligentia et ab illa deinceps alia. Dicendum est enim quod totum universum tamquam unum totum . . . est ab uno simplici, unum ab uno, primo et immediate."

all gradual procession. This becomes apparent in a later passage in the commentary on the book of Wisdom, where Eckhart refers back to the passage just cited with the words: “as has been said in the first chapter concerning the word *creavit enim, ut essent omnia*, since the whole universe and its one being are primarily intended by the first cause, its parts however and their being only secondarily, they acquire being from the cause of the universe mediated through the one being of the universe.”²³

There is a mutual constitution of unity and multitude, which explains the procession of the universe and its procession as a universe. Since *ex uno non fit nisi unum*, multitude can only be produced insofar as it forms some kind of unity, that is, the universe, in function of which it is produced. In a similar way, the inclusion of all of its parts equally is constitutive for this universe as a whole: “Just as the universe, if it lacked some perfect creature, would neither be perfect nor a universe, so on the same ground, if it lacked whatever minimal grade of the universe, it would be neither perfect nor a universe.”²⁴ The most perfect creature and the minimal grades of the universe, angelic nature and a stone or wood, equally relate to the *integritas* of the universe and its perfection. That is to say, if the universe were to descend from the first cause without all of its parts, it simply could not exist. A correct understanding of the axiom *ex uno non nisi unum*, therefore, precludes the doctrine of gradual procession. *Quod plerique non considerantes erraverunt et in varias quaestiones vanas et perplexitates inciderunt.*

III

To understand this Eckhartian doctrine in detail we have to return to still an earlier juncture in medieval thinking, the Condemnations of 1277.²⁵ Although the dating of his commentary on the Book of Wisdom remains uncertain, it is beyond doubt that Eckhart wrote it later than 1277.

Ex uno non fit nisi unum—this axiom is involved in several of the 219 articles condemned on March 1277 by Stephan Tempier, bishop of Paris.²⁶ Roland His-

23. *In Sap.* n. 72 (LW II, 401, 8–402, 2): “sicut supra capitulo primo super illo: ‘creavit enim, ut essent omnia’ dictum est, quod, sicut totum universum est primo intentum a causa prima, et esse ipsius universi unum, partes autem quaelibet et ipsarum esse secundario, accipiunt esse a causa universi mediante ipsi uno esse universi.”

24. *In Sap.* n. 73 (LW II, 403, 4–6): “sicut deficiente creato quolibet perfectissimo non esset perfectum universum, sed nec universum esset, sic pari ratione deficiente quovis minimo gradu universi nec perfectum esset universum, sed nec universum esset.”

25. For the broader context in Eckhart’s doctrine of unity—for creation is but an instance of the rule that all causality and procession conforms to the axiom *ex uno non nisi unum*—cf. W. Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel. Versuch über die Einheitsmetaphysik des ‘Opus tripartitum’ Meister Eckharts* (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 59), (Leiden, 1997).

26. Cf. H. Denifle and A. Chatelain, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* I, (Paris, 1889), pp. 543–58; R. Hissette, *Enquête sur les 219 articles condamnés à Paris le 7 Mars*

sette correctly has interpreted the axiom *ex uno non nisi unum* as “*expression de la doctrine néoplatonicienne de l’émanation*,” a classification nevertheless which leaves place for alternatives, considering the fact that medieval authors themselves perceived the axiom as genuinely Peripatetic.²⁷ And indeed, although strictly speaking his assertion is not pertinent to the theme, Aristotle himself is habitually quoted as holding in *De generatione et corruptione* that “the same, remaining in a like disposition, always produces the same.”²⁸ It is above all, however, in the Arabic tradition that the axiom *ex uno non nisi unum* is affirmed.²⁹ Here it is correlated with the doctrine of the gradual procession of multitude, a thesis which, as we saw, Cusanus and Eckhart assigned to Avicenna, although Maimonides read the association of *ex uno non nisi unum* and the gradual procession of multitude in Aristotle.³⁰

It should be noted that the relevant Parisian articles were condemned in the first place because of this doctrine of the gradual procession of multitude. Eckhart’s unequalled defense of the axiom *ex uno non nisi unum* does not compromise his work as a Christian directly, although it is peculiar and indeed significant that he holds this thesis *after* the Condemnations of 1277. According to Bernard Muller-Thym, it is his adherence to the tradition of Albert the Great that accounts for Eckhart’s apparent disregard for the ecclesiastical intervention.³¹

The French scholar Alain de Libera most convincingly demonstrated the

1277, (Louvain, 1977). Immediately relevant are articles 44 and 64 according to the order in the *Chartularium*, 28 and 33 in Hissette: (44/28): “Quod ab uno primo agente non potest esse multitudo effectuum;” (64/33): “Quod effectus immediatus a primo debet esse unus tantum et simillimus primo.” Hissette relates both articles to the influence of the axiom *ab uno (simplici) non procedit nisi unum (immediate)* on Siger of Brabant. Cf. Hissette, *Enquête sur les 219 articles*, pp. 70ff.

27. Hissette, *Enquête sur les 219 articles*, pp. 70–72. Cf. A. de Libera, “*Ex uno non fit nisi unum*. La Lettre sur le Principe de l’univers et les condamnations parisiennes de 1277,” in: B. Mojsisch and O. Pluta, ed., *Historia philosophiae medii aevi. Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters* I, (Amsterdam, 1991), p. 546: “La notion de «néoplatonisme» employée par R. Hissette n’est évidemment pas une catégorie de l’historiographie médiévale—les textes cités renvoient d’ailleurs à «Aristote, Avicenne, Algazel et à la quasi-totalité des péripatéticiens».”

28. Aristotle, *De gen. et corr.* II,10 (336a27–28): “Idem enim eodem modo se habens non est natum facere nisi unum et idem.” Cf. *translatio vetus* (ed. Judycka, 74, 16–17): “idem enim et similiter habens semper idem innatum est facere.”

29. Cf. Avicenna, *Metaph.* IX,4 (ed. Van Riet, 481,50–51): “Nosti etiam quod ex uno, secundum quod est unum, non est nisi unum.” Cf. Ghazali, *Metaph.* I,4 (ed. Muckle, 117,33–34); I,5 (ed. Muckle, 119, 9–11, and 24–26). Cf. Averroes, *Metaph.* XII comm. 44 (ed. Ven., 327vI): “ab uno et simplici non provenit nisi unum.”

30. Cf. Maimonides, *Dux neutr.* II,23 (ed. Justinianus, fol. 53v): “Aristoteles et omnes qui profundaverunt in philosophia, convenerunt in hac propositione, quod ex simplici non potest provenire nisi unum simplex. . . . Et secundum hanc intentionem dixit Aristoteles, quod a creatore non provenit proventu primo nisi unus intellectus simplex solummodo.” Cf. A. Hyman, “From What is One and Simple only What is One and Simple Can Come to Be,” in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. L. E. Goodman (Albany, NY, 1992, pp. 111–35).

31. Cf. Muller-Thym, *The Establishment of the University of Being*, pp. 95ff.

significance of the axiom *ex uno non fit nisi unum* in the thought of Albert the Great,³² who himself claims to have read this axiom in an *Epistola de principio universi esse* formally attributed to Aristotle.³³ Deeming it a genuine Peripatetic thesis, Albert even goes so far as to call it self-evident: "*per se nota est propositio, quod ab uno omnino non est nisi unum.*"³⁴ It is clear that an immense dilemma arises, especially for his students, when such a *propositio per se nota* is condemned by the Church.³⁵ Albert was not unaware of the problematic aspects of the axiom *ex uno non nisi unum*; rather, he regarded its problems as arising from misapprehension. Whereas all of the *peripatetici* concede the axiom, Albert observes in his commentary on the *Liber de causis*, it is rejected by some *theologi*, who apparently fail to understand it correctly.³⁶ In his *Summa theologiae*, Albert tries to reassure these theologians, confining the axiom *ex uno non nisi unum* to the *ordo naturae*—a strategy commonly adopted in the thirteenth century.³⁷

Whereas in Albert we find the necessity of defending the self-evident axiom *ex uno non nisi unum* against its ecclesiastical condemnation, the distinct form that Echart's solution of the dilemma receives originates in the thought of one of the *theologi* Albert disdained, namely Bonaventure. In his commentary on the second book of the Sentences of Peter Lombard, Bonaventure raises the question "whether the first principle produced everything by itself or through the mediation of something else?"³⁸ His approach to the question is very representative, and in its repudiation of the *philosophi* rather illustrative as well.

32. Contra: M. Grabmann, "Die Lehre des heiligen Albertus Magnus vom Grunde der Vielheit der Dinge und der lateinische Averroismus," in *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben* III (München, 1936), pp. 287–312.

33. Cf. besides the mentioned article his study *Albert le Grand et la Philosophie*, (Paris, 1990), pp. 64ff. Fully in accordance with the perspective of de Libera is the excellent inaugural dissertation of Thérèse Marie Bonin, *The Origin of Diversity in Albertus Magnus' De causis et processu universitatis a prima causa* (Notre Dame, 1993).

34. Albert, *Physica* 8, 2, 11 (*Opera omnia* IV,2, ed. Hossfeld, 615,15).

35. Ulrich of Strasbourg, for instance, tries a trinitarian interpretation of the axiom *ex uno non fit nisi unum*—*De summo bono* I, 1, 2 (ed. Mojsisch, 8–9). Cf. Muller-Thym, *The Establishment of the University of Being*, pp. 98–99.

36. Albert, *De causis et processu universitatis a prima causa* I, 1, 10 (*Opera omnia* XVII,2, ed. Fauser, 22,–15): "*Decima proprietas est, quod a primo, quod est necesse esse, immediate non potest esse nisi unum. Et hoc quidem iam omnes concesserunt Peripatetici, quamvis hoc quidam non intelligentes negaverint theologi. «Idem enim eodem modo se habens non est natum facere nisi unum et idem». Habitum autem est, quod primum est unum et idem et eodem modo se habens eo quod est impermutabile. Necesse est ergo, quod immediate non sit ab ipso nisi unum et idem. Nec hoc est contra theologum, quia Dionysius dicit, quod ea quae sunt a primo, per distantiam ab ipso accipiunt differentiam. Relata autem ad ipsum et in ipsum unum sunt et idem. Similiter Peripateticus concedit, quod a primo per primum et immediatum, quod aliquo modo distat ab ipso, tota producitur rerum universitas.*"

37. Cf. Albert, *Summa theol.* II, 1, 3 (ed. Borgnet 33, 26): "Ad id quod objicitur, quod ab uno non est nisi unum, dicendum, quod hoc est verum in agentibus per se, et per naturae necessitatem . . . Sed in operantibus per intellectum et per voluntatem, non est verum."

38. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.* 1, 1, 2, 2 (*Opera omnia* II, 28a): "Utrum primum principium produxerit omnia se ipso, aut mediante alio."

To hold that God produced things by another agent, Bonaventure says, offends truth *and* faith, and not only faith, but reason as well.³⁹ It is simply absurd (*omnino contra rationem*) to accept the idea of production out of nothing in the case of an agent of finite power. Even a philosopher—one notes the faintness of Bonaventure's praise!—even a philosopher has not made such a claim yet.⁴⁰ The error of the philosophers rather consists in the recognition of a gradually descending order in production, in the recognition, that is to say, of mediation.⁴¹ Interestingly enough, Bonaventure claims that this position can be shown to be erroneous.

This error relies on a false argument, since it says that because God is most simple, He produces only one. This, however, rather speaks for the opposite, for the more something is simple, the more it is powerful, and the more it is powerful, the more it has power over many things. Hence, if God is most simple, He therefore has power over all things without a medium.⁴²

Bonaventure thus wants to show that the axiom *ex uno non nisi unum* is already to be rejected on argumentative grounds alone, that is, without recourse to faith. He overtly challenges Albert on the philosophical level. Whereas the German Dominican lists the axiom as self-evident, Bonaventure is aware of its philosophical inadequacy.

In my view, Eckhart's clarification of the axiom *ex uno non nisi unum* is to be understood in its divergent filiation vis-à-vis these positions of Albert the Great and Bonaventure. Eckhart adopts from Albert the belief in the rational defensibility of the axiom, from Bonaventure the objection that its explanation actually advocates the immediate production of all things by God. From the One immediately comes only one thing, whose perfection consists in the inclusion of plurality. What at first glance may seem quite paradoxical, namely that Eckhart's practice

39. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.* 1,1,2,2 (*Opera omnia* II, 29a): "Dicendum, quod ponere, quod Deus produxerit res per aliud agens, est contra veritatem et contra fidem, . . . nec solum contra fidem, verum etiam contra rationem."

40. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.* 1,1,2,2 (*Opera omnia* II, 29a): "Et ponenti res omnes productas ex nihilo, *omnino* est contra rationem, ita ut non possit capi, quomodo agens potentiae finitae aliquid ex nihilo producat. Nec credo, aliquem philosophorum hoc posuisse."

41. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.* 1,1,2,2 (*Opera omnia* II, 29a): "plures fuerunt philosophi, qui posuerunt ordinem in producendo gradatim descendendo."

42. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.* 1,1,2,2 (*Opera omnia* II, 29a): "iste error . . . falsam habet *rationem*. Dicit enim, quod, quia simplicissimus est Deus, non producit nisi unum; sed hoc magis est ad oppositum, quia quanto aliquid simplicius, tanto potentius, et quanto potentius, tanto in plura potest: ergo si Deus simplicissimus, hoc ipso potest in omnia sine medio."

Without doubt, this argument of Bonaventure influenced the second part of Eckhart's commentary on Sap. 7:27 ("Et cum sit una, omnia potest"), where it is explained that "quanto quid est simplicius et unitius, tanto est potentius et virtuosius, plura potens. . . . Ergo quod est simpliciter unum—et ipsum solum—potest omnia" (*In Sap.* nn. 156–57; LW II,492,1–493,5).

of the axiom *ex uno non nisi unum* is to be explained from the position of one of its adversaries, reveals a strategy of mediation, a restricted reaction to the Condemnations of 1277.

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As we have seen, Eckhart of Hochheim supplied Nicholas of Cusa with a thesis on the mediative function of the universe in the relation between God and creatures. Whereas in Eckhart, the focus is on the productive dimension of this relation, in *De docta ignorantia* the mediative function of the universe obtains a broader scope, eventually founding Anaxagora's *quodlibet in quolibet*. Mediated through the one universe, God is in all things and all things are in God. The necessity of such mediation by the universe derives from the absurdity Nicholas seeks to exclude, that God be contracted, immediately inhering in particulars.

Ultimately, it is in Giordano Bruno that the mediating universe is left out. Defending in *De la causa, principio et uno* Anaxagora's dictum *quodlibet in quolibet* largely within the context of Nicholas's reasoning,⁴³ Bruno argued at the same time that God is in all things immediately.⁴⁴ The outcomes are well known, and illustrate the perils of a way of thinking pursued by Eckhart and Cusanus.

43. On Bruno's rendering of the Anaxagorean dictum cf. P.-H. Michel, *La cosmologie de Giordano Bruno* (Paris, 1962), p. 266; and more generally W. Beierwaltes, "Identität ohne Differenz? Zur Kosmologie und Theologie Giordano Brunos," in *Identität und Differenz* (Frankfurt am Main, 1980), pp. 176–203.

44. Cf. Giordano Bruno, *Summa term. metaph. (Opera latine conscripta I, 4, 81)*: "Deum intelligamus in omnibus et omnia in Deo non eodem modo; Deus in omnibus tanquam continens, in Deo tanquam contenta ab eo, sicque Deus in omnibus immediate, in Deo omnia non immediate."