

SOME REMARKS REGARDING NICHOLAS OF CUSA AND HIS MANUSCRIPTS

JAN BERND ELPERT, OFMCAP
Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule MÜNSTER

1. INTRODUCTION

A few years before Nicholas of Cusa's death he wrote a book entitled *On the Pursuit of Wisdom (De venatione sapientiae)*. Here he compared the philosopher –i. e. also himself with a hunter for wisdom¹–. But Cusanus was not only a pursuer of wisdom but also a pursuer in libraries searching for old manuscripts and handwritings, as we know.

When in 1434 Cusanus finished his book on *Catholic Concordance* we can read in the preface that to complete this book he was searching in archives and libraries for old original documents that were lost in order to study the originals rather than from collected handbooks.

“Other Nations should not be surprised to read in the documents quoted below things that they have not heard before. For I have collected many original sources that have long been lost in the armouries of ancient cloisters. Those who read these

1 Cf. *De ven. sap.*, h XII, c. 1, N. 5, Z 11-13: “Nihil enim sunt philosophi nisi venatores sapientiae, quam quisque in lumine logicae sibi conatae suo modo investigat”. The works of Cusanus are quoted out of Nicolai de Cusa, *Opera omnia iussu et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Heidelbergensis ad codicum fidem edita*, Leipzig-Hamburg (Felix Meiner) 1932 ff [= h Vol.]; N. = numerus; Z. = linea. Here I want to express my gratitude to Fr. Michael Duffy for his assistance to correct my English text.

things therefore should be aware that they have been quoted here from the ancient originals rather than from some abbreviated collection"².

We are in the presence of a person who belongs to the circle of humanists in the 15th century. Already as a young man Cusanus was well known among the Italian humanists with whom he had been in contact since his time when he was studying canon law in Padua³. Now in his first big opus he considered not only the codified law, much more he was hunting in old archives and libraries after long forsaken sources and original documents in order to gain new insights from them. One fruit of such work was, for example that he became one of the first to expose the donation of Constantine as a fake and speak of it as an apocryphal work⁴.

The young man who was thirsty for knowledge had the intuitive insight that knowledge means research. His hunting for old manuscripts and ancient documents has to be seen in the light of his persuasion that is expressed in his first philosophical opus *De docta ignorantia*: "our knowledge is never so precise that it cannot be more precise"⁵. Or even as we can read in his Dialogue *Idiota de sapientia*, where he writes:

2 *Conc. Cath.*, praefatio, h²XIV/1, N. 2, Z. 17-23: "Non admirentur itaque nationes ceterae, si infrascripta testimonia certorum inauditorum legerint. Originalia enim multa longo ab usu perdita per veterum coenobiorum armaria non sine magna diligentia collegi. Credant igitur, qui legerint, quia omnia ex antiquis originalibus, non ex cuiusquam Abbreviata collectione, huc attracta sunt". The English translation is from: *Catholic Concordance*, P.E. Sigmond (ed.), Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 1991, 3.

3 Cf. Letter of Ambrogia Traversati to Christoph Bishop of Cervia on Oct. 24th 1435: "Nicolaus Trerverensis, homo studiosissimus et librorum copia insignis scripsit ad me multumque oravit ut te interpellarem... Et quoniam ut audio, homo est multum eruditus, te oro habeas causam suam commendatam". Ambrosii Traversatii, *Latinae Epistolae in libros XXV*, L. Mehus (ed.), Firenze 1759, t. III, 48. Cf. also C. Vasoli, "Cusano e la cultura umanistica fiorentina", M. Thurner (ed.), *Nicolaus Cusanus zwischen Deutschland und Italien*, Berlin (Akademie Verlag) 2002, 75-90; G.F. Vescovini, "Cusanus und das wissenschaftliche Studium in Padua zu Beginn des 15. Jahrhunderts", en *Ibid.*, 93-113; H. Schnarr, "Frühe Beziehungen des Nikolaus von Kues zu italienischen Humanisten", en *Ibid.*, 187-213.

4 Cf. *Conc. Cath.* III, h XIV/3, c. 2, N. 294-312. Afterwards Lorenzo Valla gave the certain proof of the forgery. Cf. Lorenzo Valla, "De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione", W. Setz (ed.), Weimar (Böhlau) 1976. Cf. also M. Fois, *Il pensiero cristiano di Lorenzo Valla nel quadro storico-culturale del suo ambiente*, Roma (Liberia Editrice dell'Università Gregoriana) 1969, 324-332; G. Piaia, "Tra il Fulgoso e il Valla: La critica del Cusano alla Donatio", en M. Thurner (ed.), *o.c.*, 115-128.

5 Cf. *De docta ign.* I, h I, c. 3, N. 10, Z. 14-16: "Intellectus igitur, qui non est veritas, numquam veritatem adeo praecise comprehendit, quin per infinitum praecisius comprehendit possit," "Hence, the intellect, which is not truth, never comprehends truth so precisely that truth cannot be comprehended infinitely more precisely". The English version is from *On learned ignorance*, transl. by J. Hopkins, Minneapolis (The Arthur J. Banning Press) 1985², 8.

*"For nothing that can be found [here] is so precise that it cannot be more precise. And nothing [here] is so correct that it cannot be more correct, or is so true that it cannot be more true, or is so just that it cannot be more just, or is so good that it cannot be more good"*⁶.

Therefore one has to be always on the way to enlarge knowledge and to make it more precise. According to the slogan of Italian humanists "back to the original sources", we see already the young student Cusanus looking for any knowledge he can gain. As he was a student at Padua (1417-1423) he had already come in contact with several persons from the Italian humanist circle⁷. He met Domenico Capranica (1400-1458), who will be his long-life friend, as well as Paolo Pozzo Toscanelli (1397-1482)⁸, who gave to him in 1443 the mystical theology of Dionysius Areopagita in the translation of Ambrogio Traversari. Traversari translated also the *De vitiiis philosophorum* of Diogenes Laertius ordered by Cosimo de' Medici, which Cusanus received only in 1462 as we can read in his late work *De venatione sapientiae*⁹. At Pisa he became also friendly with Giordano Orsini (1360/70-1438) whose secretary Nicholas became in 1426 during the embassy to Bohemia against the Hussites. He came in contact also with Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459)¹⁰,

6 *De sap.* II, h²V, N. 38, Z. 13-17: "Nihil enim reperibile est adeo praecisum, quod non possit esse praecisius, et nihil ita rectum, quod non possit esse rectius, aut ita verum, quod non possit esse verius, aut ita iustum, quod non possit esse iustius, aut ita bonum, quod non possit esse melius". The English version is from *The layman on wisdom*, transl. by J. Hopkins, Minneapolis (The Arthur J. Banning Press) 1996, 563.

7 Cf. G.F. Vescovini, *o.c.*, 93-113; H. Schnarr, *o.c.*, 187-213.

8 Cf. C. Vasoli, *o.c.*, 75-90, esp. 80-85.

9 Cf. *De ven. sap.*, prolog., h²V, N. 1, Z. 11-14. The translation which Cusanus hold in his hand is conserved today as Cod. Harl. 1347 in London. It was Andrea de Bussi, who copied the book out of a manuscript of Pietro Balbo. Cf. R. Haubst, "Kritisches Verzeichnis der Londoner Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Nikolaus von Kues", *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 3 (1963) 16-100, here 27.

10 Cf. H. Schnarr, *o.c.*, 187-213. Schnarr (205) quotes out of a letter of Poggio (Poggius, *Epistulae* III, ep. 12) from 1427 the following judgement about Cusanus: "Als ich bezüglich der Geschichte (Historia) des Plinius jenen Nikolaus von Trier vieles fragte, fügte er zu dem, was er mir gesagt hatte, hinzu, er habe einen hinreichend großen Band der Geschichten (Historiarum) des Plinius. Als ich daraufhin sagte, er möge doch zusehen, ob es nicht die Naturgeschichte (Historia naturalis) sei, antwortete er, er habe auch dieses Buch gesehen und gelesen, aber es sei nicht jenes, worüber er spreche; in ihm seien nämlich die Kriege Germaniens (Bella Germaniae) enthalten. Wie weit man ihm glauben darf, werde ich beurteilen, sobald ans Licht gekommen ist, was er berichtet über Cicero 'Über den Staat' (De re publica) und die übrigen; bis dahin bezweifle ich weder nicht vertraue ich auf seine Worte; er ist nämlich gelehrt und, wie es scheint, in keiner Weise ein Schätzer (verbosus) oder trügerisch (fallax). Wie ich höre, wird er rach-schnell in seine Heimat zurückkehren, (aber bald) wieder an die Kurie zurückkehren; dann werden wir alles offener wissen-erkennen. Es ist ein Brief vorhanden von einem

Antonio Loschi (1365-1441)¹¹, who wrote a Latin commentary on eleven of Cicero's orations, and further with *Cenci dei Rusticci*. As we can see Cusanus was well established in the humanist circle and later from 1426 on he was even well known as Nicholas of Trier. During his time at Padua he became enthusiastic for the eloquence and rhetoric of Cicero and the poetry of Virgil. Since he found manuscripts of the histories of Plinius, the first part of the *Annales* of Tacitus and twelve comedies of Plautus¹², he had quite a name among the Italian Humanists and was perhaps since 1424 but certainly since 1427 well known as a hunter, mediator and collector of manuscripts¹³.

2. THE LIBRARY

Most famous is the Cardinal's library in his native town Kues, which is till today one of the most precious private libraries in the world since it holds the complete manuscript-collection of the great humanist Cardinal¹⁴. The value of this library cannot be overestimated because it is not only one of the earliest private libraries in Germany, but it also overcame the turmoil and confusions of the Thirty-year-war and secularisation almost unscathed¹⁵. All in all we can find here about 314 manuscripts which stem from the 9th up to the 15th century¹⁶. Most of these manuscripts were collected by Nicholas himself during his journeys to the Orient (Constantinople), Italy

gewissen Gefährten, dem er die Sorge für die Bücher übertragen hat, er habe die Bücher nach Frankfurt geschickt, damit sie von da nach Venedig gebracht werden".

11 Cf. M.E. Cosenza, *Biographical and bibliographical Dictionary of the Italian humanists*, t. III, Boston (Hall) 1962, 2030-2033.

12 The twelve comedies are: *Bacchides*, *Mostellaria*, *Menaechmi*, *Mile Gloriosus*, *Mercator*, *Pseudolus*, *Poenulus*, *Persa*, *Rudens*, *Stichus*, *Trinummus*, *Truculentus*.

13 Cf. here also the letters of Poggio Bracciolini Nr. 67, 70, 73 en E. Meuthen - H. Hal-lauer (ed.), *Acta Cusana. Quellen zur Lebensgeschichte des Nikolaus von Kues*, Hamburg (Felix Meiner) 1976; and H. Schnarr, *o.c.*, 187-213.

14 Cf. C. Bianca, "Nicolò Cusano e la sua biblioteca", en E. Canone (ed.), *Bibliothecae selectae da Cusano a Leopardi*, Firenze (Olschki) 1993, 1-11; C. Bianca, "Le cardinal de Cuse en voyage avec ses livres", en R. de Smet (ed.), *Les humanistes et leur bibliothèque. Actes du Colloque International, Bruxelles 26-28 août 1999*, Leuven (Peeters) 2002, 25-36; E. Meffert, *Nikolaus von Kues: Sein Lebensgang, seine Lehre vom Geist*, Stuttgart (Verlag Freies Geistesleben) 1982, 109-118; G. Neusius, "Die Büchersammlung des Cusanus und die Bibliothek des St. Nikolaus-Hospitals", *Libri Pretiosi. Mitteilungen der Bibliophilen Gesellschaft Trier e.V.* 13 (2010) 41-47; Id., "Nikolaus von Kues und seine Bibliothek. Teil V: Der Leser und Sammler", *Spectrum - Die Mitarbeiterzeitschrift der Cusanus Trägergesellschaft Trier* 22 (2010) Heft 3, 12-13.

15 Cf. E. Meffert, *o.c.*, 109-118.

16 For the inventory is still valid the published index of Marx, although some details have to be revised yet. Cf. J. Marx, *Verzeichnis der Handschriftensammlung des Hospitals zu Cues bei Bernkastel-Mosel*, Trier (Selbstverl. des Hospitals) 1905 (ND Frankfurt a. M. 1966).

and Nuremberg¹⁷, others were gifts of popes and friends. About 270 manuscripts from the Library at Kues belonged personally to Cusanus¹⁸. These manuscripts contain books of various scientific fields such as philosophy, theology, ecclesiastical and secular justice, geography, history, medicine and astronomy. Some of these manuscripts are decorated with precious paintings and initials and from some books Cusanus held a second edition simply because of bibliophile reasons¹⁹. His wide collection shows already how the Cardinal was interested in different fields and that he was studying always not only one subject but much more a vast program so that it might not be exaggerated to say that he was an encyclopaedic thinker. Of course we can find in his library also his own works (f. ex. *De docta ignorantia*, *De coniecturis*, *De pace fidei*) as well as the outlines of his sermons, which were written in the Latin language nevertheless he preached in the churches in his vernacular language. Furthermore his library possesses up to the present day about 160 mediaeval documents and deeds²⁰. Later during the 17th and 18th century some of his manuscripts were lost but they found their way f. ex. to the state libraries of Brussels (11 manuscripts), into the Vatican (2 manuscripts) and London (33 manuscripts)²¹.

17 It is told that during the diet at Nuremberg in 1444, where he participated as a legate, he bought 16 manuscripts. Cf. J. Marx, *Verzeichnis*, VI.

18 Cf. J. Marx, *Verzeichnis*, VI-VII; E. Vansteenbergh, *Le Cardinal Nicolas de Cues (1401-1464). L'action - La pensée*, Paris (Champion) 1920, 409-440; also P. Rotta, "La biblioteca del Cusano", *Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica* 19 (1927) 22-47.

19 F. ex. he hold e special precious edition (Cod. Cus. 44) from the opus of Dionysius Areopagita.

20 Cf. G. Kortenkamp, *Die Urkunden des St. Nikolaus-Hospitals in Bernkastel-Kues an der Mosel*, Trier (Kliomedica) 2004; also Id., "Die Urkunden des St. Nikolaus-Hospitals", *Litterae Cusanae* Bd. 5, Heft 1 (2005) 1-8.

21 Cf. R. Haubst, "Kritisches Verzeichnis der Londoner Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Nikolaus von Kues", *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 3 (1963) 16-100; E. van de Vyver, "Die Brüsseler Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Nikolaus von Kues", *Ibid.* 4 (1964) 323-335; R. Danzer, "Nikolaus von Kues in der Überlieferungsgeschichte der lateinischen Literatur nach Ausweis der Londoner Handschriften", *Ibid.* 4 (1964) 384-394; R. Haubst, "Kritisches Verzeichnis der Londoner Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Nikolaus von Kues. Erste Fortsetzung", *Ibid.*, 5 (1965) 137-161; E. van de Vyver, "Die Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Nikolaus von Kues in der königlichen Bibliothek zu Brüssel", *Ibid.* 7 (1969), 129-145; H. Hallauer, "Neue Handschriften in London", *Ibid.* 7 (1969) 146-157; A.H. Hallauer - F. Hoffmann, "Kritisches Verzeichnis der Londoner Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Nikolaus von Kues. Zweite Fortsetzung", *Ibid.* 8 (1970) 199-226; L. Tetzner, "Die Hebräischen Handschriften aus der Bibliothek des Kuesers Hospitals im British Museum", *Ibid.* 8 (1970) 227-237; "Kritisches Verzeichnis der Londoner Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Nikolaus von Kues. Dritte Fortsetzung", *Ibid.* 10 (1973), 58-103; G. Santinello - R. Haubst - W. Krämer - H. Spilling, "Kritisches Verzeichnis der Londoner Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Nikolaus von Kues. Vierte Fortsetzung", *Ibid.* 12 (1977) 18-71; W. Krämer, "Kritisches Verzeichnis der

We want to take a look now at the content of his collection. Of course we have to say that at this point we cannot take into consideration all the manuscripts. Rather I present only a few occasionally compiled notes, which nevertheless can give us interesting insights into the workshop of the Cardinal's intellectual creative power and vigour. First, we see that he possessed a rich collection of several patristic writings. The most eminent author among his manuscripts is St. Augustine²². Several transcriptions were probably made by himself personally. Among them one can find the *Confessiones* (Cod. Cus. 33 & 34), *Liber Soliloquiorum* (Cod. Cus. 35 & 57), *De Trinitate*, *De ordine*, *De genesi ad Litteram*, *De doctrina Christiana*, *De vera religione*, *Tractatus in Evangelium S. Ioannis* (Cod. Cus. 32), *Epistolae* (Cod. Cus. 31). We may not forget here even St. Augustine's great teacher St. Ambrose, who is also available to Cusanus, as we can see in Cod. Cus. 38 from 1455. Here we find e. g. *De officiis*, *Liber de bono mortis* and *Epistola ad Irenaeum*²³. Other patristic authors are f. ex. Cyril of Alexandria, Origen, Lactantius, Gregory Nazianzus, Basil, Jerome, John Chrysostomos (Cod. Cus. 46 contains f. ex. *Commentary to the letter to the Hebrews*, *De bonitate et humana malicia*), Cyprian, Tertullian, Eusebius of Cesarea, Leo the Great to mention only a few²⁴. In many of his manuscripts we can still see the thinker at work, who made his own personal critical comments or was even underlining important concepts in the text.

3. PROKLUS

Before we take into consideration the influence of Proclus on Cusanus we want to have a short look at what Cusanus read from Plato. He obviously knew all platonic translations that were known during the mediaeval time. He possessed the Timaios in the translation of Gregory Tifernate (+1466) (Cod. Cus. 157); Menon and Phaidon (Phaedo) in the translation of Enrico Aristippo, Parmenides with the commentary of Proclus in the translation of William of Moerbeke (1215-1286) (Cod. Cus. 186). Moreover he had also access to the platonic translations of the humanists: Leonardi

Brüsseler Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Nikolaus von Kues", *Ibid.* 14 (1980) 182-197; H.J. Hallauer, "Kritisches Verzeichnis der Londoner Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Nikolaus von Kues", *Ibid.* 15 (1982) 43-57. Cf. further R. Sabbadini, *Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci ne' secoli XIV e XV*, Firenze (Sansoni) 1914 (ND 1967); B.L. Ullman, "Manuscripts of Nicholas of Cues", *Speculum* 13 (1938) 194-197.

²² Nineteen of Nicholas' manuscripts including two at Brussels (f. ex. Cod. Brux. 9581-95) contain writings of St. Augustine. Cf. E. Vansteenbergh, *Le Cardinal*, 409-413.

²³ Cf. J. Marx, *Verzeichnis*, 32-33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21-63.

Bruni (1369-1444) translated Phaidon (Phaedo), Apology, Criton (engl. Crito), Menon, Phaedrus and the letters (Cod. Cus 177). Pietro Candido Decembrio (1399-1477) translated the Politeia (Republic) (cod. Cus. 178). From Trapezunt he got the Laws (cod. Harl. 3261) and Parmenides –dedicated especially to the Cardinal–, and also he acquired the new translation of the Platonic Theology of Proclus made by Pietro Balbo.²⁵ One word on the platonic Parmenides. Firstly, Cusanus knew Plato's Parmenides in the translation of Moerbeke in his Cod. Cus. 186 which followed the text only up to 128c, the end of the first hypothesis. Around 1459 he received the full text in the translation of Gregory of Trapezunt (Ms. Volterra Biblioteca Guarnacci 6201, fol. 61r-86v), which may not be considered the best one²⁶. This manuscript contains notes from the hand of the Cardinals Cusanus and Bessarion²⁷.

From the platonic tradition it was especially also Proklos who had been studied deeply and profoundly from Cusanus. This relationship between the Cardinal and Proklos is for a long time always a field for research²⁸. In the library at Kues we find in Cod. Cus. 185 *Procli De theologia Platonis Libri VI* in

25 Cf. here also Th. Leinkauf, *Nicolaus Cusanus. Eine Einführung*, Münster (Aschen-dorff) 2006, 27; and P.O. Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance thought and letters*, t. III, 24-36, Roma (Ed. di Storia e Letteratura).

26 Cf. R. Klibansky, "Plato's Parmenides in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance", *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 1 (1941-1943) 289-304.

27 Cf. K. Bormann, "Die Randnoten des Nikolaus von Kues zur lateinischen Übersetzung des platonischen 'Parmenides' in der Handschrift Volterra, Biblioteca Guarnacci, 6201", J. Helmuth - H. Müller - H. Wolff, *Studien zum 15. Jahrhundert*. Festschrift für Erich Meuthen, Bd. 1, München (Oldenbourg) 1994, 331-340.

28 Cf. especially. W. Beierwaltes, "Cusanus und Proklos. Zum neuplatonischen Ursprung des non-aliud", en *Niccolò Cusano agli inizi del mondo moderno*. Atti del Congresso internazionale in occasione del V centenario della morte di Niccolò Cusano. Bressanone, 6-10 settembre 1964, Firenze (Sansoni) 1970, 137-140; Id., *Procliana. Spätantikes Denken und seine Spuren*, Frankfurt a. M. (Klostermann) 2007; C. D'Amico, "Nikolaus von Kues als Leser von Proklos", en K. Reinhardt - H. Schwaetzer (ed.), *Nikolaus von Kues in der Geschichte des Platonismus*, Regensburg (Roderer) 2007, 33-64; R. Haubst, "Die Thomas- und Proklos-Exzerpte des 'Nicolaus Treverensis' in Codicillus Strassburg 84", *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 1 (1961) 17-51; R. Klibansky, *Ein Proklos-Fund und seine Bedeutung*. Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Heidelberg 1929; J. Koch, "Nikolaus von Kues und Meister Eckhart. Randbemerkungen zu zwei in der Schrift de coniecturis gegebenen Problemen", *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 4 (1964) 164-173; C. Riccati, "La presenza di Proclo tra neoplatonismo arabizzante e tradizione dionisiana (Bertoldo di Moosburg e Niccolò Cusano)", G. Piaia (ed.), *Concordia Discors. Studi su Niccolò Cusano e l'umanesimo europeo offerti a Giovanni Santinello*, Padova (Ed. Antenore) 1993, 23-38; *Cusanus-Texte. III. Marginalien. 2. Proclus Latinus*. Die Exzerpte und Randnoten des Nikolaus von Kues zu den lateinischen Übersetzungen der Proclus-Schriften: 2.1 Theologia Platonis Elementatio theologica, hg. und erl. v. H.G. Senger, Heidelberg 1986 (Abh. der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissft, Phil-hist. Klass, Jg 1986, 2. Abh.).

the translation of Petrus Balbus, in Cod. Cus 186 we can read *Procli Expositio in Parmenidem Platonis* in the translation of William of Moerbeke and in Cod. Cus. 195 we have *Procli Elementatio theologica* also translated by William of Moerbeke, as well as three other books among them the famous *Liber de Causis*. Cusanus made his own notes on all these manuscripts, which had been edited.

Before Cusanus wrote his first theological-philosophical book *De docta ignorantia*, i. e. before 1440, he had already come in contact with Proklos. The Library of the University of Strasbourg holds the Codex Argentoratensis 84, which belonged without any doubt to our Cardinal. In this Codex we can find some extracts of the Latin translation *In Parmenidem* and some parts of *De Theologia Platonis*. It is not clear when exactly Cusanus wrote these excerpts of Proklos. Vansteenberghé was convinced that these excerpts have to be dated very early²⁹. He made clear that Cusanus got this manuscript between 1424 and 1426. Haubst, Koch and Beierwaltes are convinced that the excerpts were written into this Codex later. Beierwaltes affirmed the best convincing argument would be to date the excerpts after Cusanus had written *De coniecturis* (1441/42)³⁰. It was then Claudia D'Amico, who anew proposed to date those excerpts before *De docta ignorantia* (before 1440).³¹ Very clear is the fact that already in 1439 on August 4th Cusanus wrote to Thomas Parentucelli (later Pope Nicholas V) that he is very interested to receive soon the translation of *De Theologia Platonis* from Ambrogio Traversari³². The original Greek text was one of some books that were brought by Cusanus from Constantinople in 1437. Unfortunately Ambrogio died on 21st of October in 1439. The Cardinal had been able to copy by his own hand only a small fragment of this unfinished translation, which we can read today in the above mentioned Codex Argentoratensis 84. Only in 1460 did Cusanus receive the complete version, when his friend Pietro Balbo finished the translation. We can hear a small echo of this work in the book *De li non aliud* (1461/62) of

29 E. Vansteenberghé, "Quelques lectures de jeunesse de Nicolas de Cues d'après un manuscrit inconnu de sa bibliothèque", *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 3 (1928) 27-248.

30 W. Beierwaltes, *Procliana*, o.c., 193-194.

31 Cf. C. D'Amico, *Nikolaus von Kues als Leser von Proklos*, o.c., 37. Cf. also the introduction of C. Steel in: *Commentaire sur le Parménide de Platon. Trad. de Guillaume de Moerbeke*, t. I-II avec notes marginales de Nicolas de Cues, C. Steel (ed.), Leuven (Univ. Press) 1982/85, 21.

32 Cf. *De ven. sap.*, h XII, adnot. 9, 153: "Dimisi apud generalem Camaldulensium Proclum de theologia Platonis, ut transferret. Supplicio instantissime, quoniam nunc vacare liberius poterit. Solicita eum".

Cusanus, where Pietro Balbo is one of the interlocutors³³. Nevertheless we can note that from 1458 on Cusanus mentions Proklos by name in his own books³⁴, which shows that towards the end of his life he was much more occupied with the studies of Proclus' thinking, although he knew him from a much earlier time³⁵. Through his whole life Cusanus was inspired by Proklos. It started with the first contact through the Codex of Strasbourg and was deepened by his own interest in reading Proklos, who helped him to strengthen the concept of unity as a principle. Moreover he became much clearer to think this unity without any opposition to the multiplicity, as even prior to the unity, which enfolds the plurality³⁶.

4. DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA

Cusanus, as we know, had a special admiration for Dionysius Areopagita³⁷. He possessed the opus of this important Christian thinker in three different translations (Cod. Cus. 43 & 45) as well as one special decorated edition (Cod. Cus. 44). Cod. Cus. 43 contains *De coelesti hierarchia*, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, *De divinis nominibus* and *De mystica theologia* in the translation from Ambrosius Traversari³⁸. It was Nicholas himself, who asked Traversari

33 Cf. *De non aliud*, h XIII, c. 1, N. 1, Z. 3-5: "Ego [Abbot Johannes Andreas dei Bussi; J.B.E.] enim in Parmenide Proculique commentariis, Petrus vero in theologia Platonis eiusdem Proculi, quam de graeca latinam facit." and c. 20, N. 90, Z. 18-20: "Cum enim Proculum illum Platonicum in libro de Platonis divini theologia de Graeco verterem hiis diebus in Latinum".

34 It starts with *De beryllo* and continues in *De principio* and *De venatione sapientiae*.

35 Cf. M. De Gandillac, *Nikolaus von Cues. Studien zu seiner Philosophie und philosophischen Weltanschauung*, Düsseldorf (Schwann) 1953, 88.

36 Cf. here C. D'Amico, *Nikolaus von Kues als Leser von Proklos, o.c.* and also J.B. Elpert, "Unitas - Aequalitas - Nexus. Eine textkommentierende Lektüre zu *De venatione sapientiae* (Kap. XXI-XXVI)", *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 32 (2008) 127-182.

37 Cf. H.G. Senger, "Die Präferenz für Ps.-Dionysius bei Nikolaus von Kues in seinem italienischen Umfeld", in Id., *Ludus sapientiae. Studien zum Werk und zur Wirkungsgeschichte des Nikolaus von Kues*, Leiden-Boston-Köln (Brill) 2002, 228-254 (with further bibliography). The article is also published under: Id., "onde è tanto celebre la teologia negativa di Dionisio sopra quella dimostrativa de Aristotele et scolastici dottori". Die Präferenz für Ps.-Dionysius bei Nicolaus Cusanus und seinem italienischen Umfeld", in T. Boiadjev - G. Kapriev - A. Speer (ed.), *Die Dionysius-Rezeption im Mittelalter* (Intern. Kolloquium in Sofia 8-11 April 1999), Turnhout (Brepols) 2000, 505-539.

38 For Ambrosius Traversari cf. *Ambrogio Traversari Camaldolese nel VI centenario dalla nascita 1389-1986*, Arezzo (Ed. Camaldoli) 1987; G.G. Garfagnini (ed.), *Ambrogio Traversari nel VI centenario della nascita*. Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Camaldoli Firenze, 15-18 settembre 1986), Firenze (Olschki) 1988; S. Frigerio (ed.), *Ambrogio Traversari, un monaco e un monastero nell'umanesimo fiorentino*, Siena (Ed. Camaldoli) 1988; C. Somigli - T. Basgellini, *Ambrogio Traversari*, Bologna (Ed. Dehoniane e.a.) 1986.

in 1436 to translate the books of Areopagita into Latin. It was then in 1443 when he received from Paolo del Pozzo Toscanelli the mystical theology of Dionysius in the translation of Traversari, his best friend (*amicissimus*), who already had died on 21st October in 1439. The mystical Theology was a book that –as Nicholas confessed later in a letter– seemed to him by far the best text, which would be sufficient for him³⁹. The library of Mainz possesses a manuscript with texts from Albert, Lullus, Gerson, Dionysius and Cusanus remarking at the end of the mystical theology that he got this manuscript from Toscanelli. Whether this manuscript is really the original one or a copy remains unclear⁴⁰. Cod. Cus. 44 is the special decorated one in the translation of an anonymous author from the Renaissance, which often sounds similar to the translation of Joannes Scotus Eriugena⁴¹. Cod. Cus. 45 contains some extracts from Areopagita's books in translations of Robert Grosseteste (*De hierarchia angelica* and *De mystica theologia*) and from Thomas Gallo (Abbot of Verceil) and other writings like the commentary of Hugo of St. Viktor on Areopagita⁴². Furthermore we know that Cusanus knew and possessed the translations of Areopagita's books from Saracenus⁴³ as well as the commentary of Albertus Magnus on Dionysius (Cod. Cus. 96).

39 Cf. the letter to abbot Kaspar Aindorffer and the monks of Tegernsee from 14.09.1453: "Habeo textum Dyonisii proxime optime per quemdam amicissimum meum translatum, qui michi sufficit". Printed in: E. Vansteenbergh, *Autour de la docte ignorance. Une controverse sur la théologie mystique au XVe siècle*, Münster i. W. (Aschendorff) 1915, Ep. 5, 116. Cf. for the further correspondence of Cusanus with the monks of Tegernsee about the books of Areopagita and new transcriptions Ep. VIII, 119; Ep. IX, 121; Ep. X, 123.

40 HS I, 13 of the City-Library at Mainz, fol. 121v. Cf. here G. List - G. Powitz, *Die Handschriften der Stadtbibliothek Mainz*, Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz) 1990, 40; also K. Flasch, *Nikolaus von Kues. Geschichte einer Entwicklung*, Frankfurt a. M. (Klostermann) 1998, 224-225 and H. Schreiber, *Die Bibliothek der ehemaligen Mainzer Kartause*, Halle (Saale) 1927, 96. In cod. Vat. Palat. lat. 149, fol 243^v we can read: "Ambrosius Generalis Camaldulens, florentinus, hanc translationem fecit, qui 1440 decessit. Et magister Paulus, magistri Dominici physicus florentinus, magistro Nicolao de Cusza hos libros translatos 1443 transmisit". Cf. also *Apologia*, h II, N. 13, S. 11. Whether Cod. Cus. 43 is really the original of Toscanelli or perhaps a transcription of Cusa's secretary Peter von Erkelenz is not clear. Cf. here Nikolaus von Kues, *Vom Nichtanderen*, übers. u. mit Einf. u. Anm. hrsg. v. P. Wilpert, Hamburg (Meiner) 1987³, Anm. 14, 6, 188. Wilpert expresses here his doubt.

41 Cf. J. Marx, *Verzeichnis, o.c.*, 40.

42 Cf. *Ibid.*, 40-42. Cf. also *Apologia*, h II, N. 30, S. 20-21. Cf. here also L. Baur, *Nicolaus Cusanus und Ps. Dionysius im Lichte der Zitate und Randbemerkungen des Cusanus*, Heidelberg (Winter) 1941 (CT III. Marginalien 1. Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philos.-hist. Klasse, Jg. 1940/41. 4. Abh.), 9-17; K. Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mytik*. Bd. I: Die Grundlegung durch die Kirchenväter und die Mönchstheologie des 12. Jahrhunderts, München (Beck) 2001², 71-82 and Bd. III: Die Mystik des deutschen Predigerordens und ihre Grundlegung durch die Hochscholastik, München (Beck) 1996, 57-105.

43 He had the translation of Saracenus (Cod. Cus. 96) together with the commentary of Albertus Magnus since 1453.

5. ALBERT – HEYMERICUS – LULLUS

I mentioned Albertus Magnus and since we still want to take into consideration Raymundus Lullus we want to prepare this way through Nicholas' teacher at Cologne, Heymericus de Campo, because it was him who played an important role in this triangle: Areopagita, Proclus, Albertus and Lullus⁴⁴.

When Nicholas came to Cologne most probably in 1425 for his theological studies, Heymericus de Campo was just starting his university career and he became the teacher, who influenced the young student most⁴⁵. It was him who brought the young student in contact with Areopagita, Albertus Magnus, Proclus and especially with Lullus. Heymericus is well known as a prominent representative of Albertism in the line of Johannes de Nova Domo –his teacher at Paris– the founder of the Albertist School at Paris. The library at Kues reflects the interest of Nicholas on Albertus Magnus, whose influence can be seen especially in the early cusanian works⁴⁶. Cusa owned several

44 Cf. E. Colomer, "Nikolaus von Kues und Heimeric van den Velde", *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 4 (1964) 198-213, here 201: "Heimeric brauchte keinen anderen als Albert den Großen, in dessen Lehre sich der christliche Neuplatonismus und – wenn auch nicht immer in voller Harmonie – der wieder neu einsetzende frühe Aristotelismus verbinden, um das neuplatonische Gedankengut zu erschließen. Dafür genügen ihm die Kommentare Alberts zu *De divinis nominibus* des Ps.-Dionysius und zum pseudo-aristotelischen *Liber de causis*. Ps.-Dionysius und der *Liber de causis* sowie die *Elementatio theologica* des Proklus sind außer Aristoteles und Albertus diejenigen auctoritates, die bei Heimeric am häufigsten vorkommen".

45 For Heymericus de Campo cf. Kl. Reinhardt (ed.), *Heymericus de Campo. Philosophie und Theologie im 15. Jahrhundert*, Regensburg (Roderer) 2009.

46 Cf. R. Haubst, "Zum Fortleben Alberts des Großen bei Heimerich von Kamp und Nikolaus von Kues", en H. Ostlender (ed.), *Studia Albertina*. Festschrift für B. Geyer, Münster (Aschendorff) 1952, 420-447; I. Craemer-Ruegenberg, *Albertus Magnus*, München (Beck) 1980, 154-160; R. Haubst, "Albert wie Cusanus ihn sah", en A. Zimmermann (ed.), *Albertus Magnus. Doctor universalis 1280-1980*, Mainz (Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag) 1980, 167-194; H.G. Senger, "Albertismus? Überlegungen zur ‚via Alberti‘ im 15. Jahrhundert", en A. Zimmermann (ed.), *Albert der Große. Seine Zeit, sein Werk, seine Wirkung*, Berlin-New York (de Gruyter) 1981, 217-236; M.L. Führer, "The theory of intellect in Albert the Great and its influence on Nicholas of Cusa", en G. Christianson - Th.M. Izbicki (ed.), *Nicholas of Cusa in Search of God and Wisdom*. Essays in honor of Morimichi Watanabe by the American Cusanus Society, Leiden (Brill) 1991, 45-56; P. Arfé, "Alberto Magno e Nicola Cusano interpreti dell'Asclepius", en M. Thurner (ed.), *Nicolaus Cusanus zwischen Deutschland und Italien, o.c.* 129-151; J.M. Machetta, "Die Präsenz Alberts des Großen im Denken des Nikolaus von Kues", en Kl. Reinhardt - H. Schwaetzer (ed.), *Nikolaus von Kues in der Geschichte des Platonismus*, Regensburg (Roderer) 2007, 135-166 (also under the title: "Presencia de Alberto Magno en el pensamiento de Nicolás de Cusa, *Patristica et mediaevalia* 28 (2007) 55-82); M. Bender, *The dawn of the invisible. The reception of the platonic doctrine on beauty in the Christian middle ages. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Nicholas of Cusa*, Münster (Monsenstein und Vannerdat) 2010.

writings belonging to Albert⁴⁷. We find in Cod. Cus. 95 *De sacrificio missae* (fol. 1-84) and the *Summa de corpore Christi* (fol. 93-207v)⁴⁸. In Cod. Cus. 96 we have the Commentaries on Areopagita (fol. 1v-77v *Super coelestiam hierarchiam*; fol. 79-223v *Super de divinis nominibus*; fol. 223v-232 *In mysticam theologiam*; fol. 232-257 *In epistolas*)⁴⁹. Cod. Cus. 124 (fol. 171-204) conserves an excerpt of *Meteororum*⁵⁰. Cod. Cus. 130 contains *De sacramento altaris* (fol. 300v-301v) and in Cod. Cus. 193 we find some philosophical writings (fol. 1-10 *De causis proprietatum elementorum*; fol. 11-26v *De generatione et corruptione libri II*; fol. 26v-74v *Meteororum libri IV*; fol. 75-123v *Liber de anima*; fol. 123v-126 *Liber de nutrimento et nutribili*)⁵¹. Very interesting is Cod. Cus. 194, which contains *Libri VIII physicorum*. Cod. Cus. 204 (fol. 51v-54) and Cod. Cus. 207 (fol. 151-155v) are presenting some excerpts of Albert's writings⁵². And finally we discover in Cod. Cus. 209 the book *Speculum astronomiae*, where the authorship of Albert can be argued⁵³.

During his entire life Cusanus maintained a lively friendship with Heymericus and they exchanged their writings regularly. At the end it was Heymericus de Campo, the former teacher, who confessed later, after having read and studied Cusa's books (*De complementis mathematicis*; *De complementis theologis*, *De pace fidei*) that Nicholas was his teacher and instructor (*praeceptor meus*)⁵⁴.

Cusanus made a practice of collecting the writings of Heymericus. We can see them in Cod. Cus. 105 and 106⁵⁵. Without any doubt Cod. Cus. 106

47 Cf. E. Vansteenbergh, *Le cardinal, o.c.*, 422 and P. Moffitts Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus. A fifteenth-century vision of man*, Leiden (Brill) 1982, 15.

48 Cf. J. Marx, *Verzeichnis, o.c.*, 96.

49 Cf. *Ibid.*, 97-98.

50 Cf. *Ibid.*, 120.

51 Cf. *Ibid.*, 179-180.

52 Cf. *Ibid.*, 189-194.

53 Cf. *Ibid.*, 200. For the debate of Albert's authorship cf. H. Scott, *How Albert the Great's Speculum astronomiae Was interpreted and Used by Four Centuries of Readers: A Study in Late Medieval Medicine, Astronomy and Astrology*, Lewiston (Edwin Mellen Press) 2010; P. Mandonnet, "Roger Bacon et le Speculum Astronomiae (1277)", *Revue neoscholastique de philosophie* 17 (1910) 313- 335; L. Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols., New York (Columbia Univ. Press) 1923-28; N. Weill-Parot, *Les 'images astrologiques' au moyen âge et à la renaissance: spéculations intellectuelles et pratiques magiques (XIIIe-XVe siècle)*, Paris (Champion) 2002.

54 Cf. the commentar of R. Klibansky in *De pace*, h VII, praef., xx-xxi & xl. Cf. ebenso R. Imbach, "Das Centheologicon des Heymericus de Campo und die darin enthaltenen Cusanus-Reminiszensen. Hinweise und Materialien", *Traditio* 39 (1983) 467-477.

55 Cod. Cus. 105 contains: *Summarius dominice passionis epylogus* (fol. 1-32v); *Determinacio casus alicuius* (fol. 33-34v). Cod. Cus. 106 contains: *Sermo factus basilee in synodo in die S. Augustini per magistrum Emericum doctorem valentissimum* (fol. 1-6v probably written by

belongs together with Cod. Cus. 83 and 85 (writings of Lullus) and Cod. Cus. 96 (commentary of Albertus Magnus on Dionysius Areopagita) to the most important manuscripts in the hand of Cusanus⁵⁶. Klaus Reinhardt discovered that Cod. Cus. 24 also contains writings of Heymericus (fol 81r-481v: commentary on the Apocalypse). He published his findings in 1995. When exactly this manuscript came into the library of Kues and whether Cusanus himself had read the manuscript is not clear⁵⁷. It was especially Heymericus who made Cusanus, since early on, familiar with the thinking of Albertus Magnus, Raymundus Lullus and the neo-platonic tradition, which had become by then his spiritual homeland.

One word on Raymundus Lullus. Cusanus came in contact very early with the writings of Raimundus Lullus. He might have heard from the mallorcinian philosopher at Padua⁵⁸, but it must have been then his teacher Heymericus de Campo (1395-1460), who awaked the interest in Cusanus for these writings during his studies at Cologne (1425-ca. 1428). We know with certainty that in 1428 Nicholas inspired by Heymericus went to Paris where

Cusanus himself); *Quadripartitus questionum supra libros sententiarum* (fol. 13-22); *Questiones supra libros philosophiae rationalis, realis et moralis* (fol. 25-55v); *Theoremata totius universi fundamentaliter doctrinalia* (fol. 63-65v); *Ars demonstrativa* (fol. 65v-76v); *Tractatus de sigillo eternitatis omnium arcium et scienciarum exemplari basilee tempore concilii editus* (fol 77-85); *Disputacio de potestate ecclesiastica in concilio basiliensi collata* (fol. 89-188v); without title (fol. 189-194); *Collectio posicionum iuris naturalis divini et humani philosophice doctrinalium* (fol. 195-273v).

56 Cf. R. Haubst, *Bild des Einen und Dreieinen Gottes in der Welt nach Nikolaus von Kues*, Trier (Paulins) 1952, 12. Cf. further R. Imbach, "Les notes marginales de N. de C. au traité 'Colliget principiorum' d'Heymeric de Campo", en Kl. Reinhardt (ed.), *Heymericus de Campo. Philosophie und Theologie im 15. Jahrhundert*, Regensburg (Roderer) 2009, S. 15-51; C.M. Rusconi - Kl. Reinhardt, "Die dem Cusanus zugeschriebenen Glossen zu den Theoremata totius universi fundamentaliter doctrinalia des Heymericus de Campo", en *Ibid.*, 53-73.

57 Cf. Kl. Reinhardt, "Werke des Heymericus da Campo (+1460) im Codex Cusanus 24", *Traditio* 50 (1995) 295-310: "Die eigentliche Bedeutung jedoch dieser Einleitung zum Apokalypsen-Kommentar liegt meines Erachtens darin, daß sie uns Heymericus de Campo als Exegeten zeigt, genauer gesagt, als einen Theologen, der versucht, den biblischen Glauben mit dem rationalen Denken in Einklang zu bringen. Das belegen ein drucksvoll die oben im Abschnitt 7 transkribierten Texte; sie enthalten geradezu das Programm einer Bibelhermeneutik. Ob der Codex Cusanus 24 auch für die Cusanus-Forschung etwas hergibt, läßt sich schwer sagen. Es ist nicht klar, wann der Codex in die Bibliothek des Cusanus gekommen ist; auch wissen wir nicht, ob Cusanus ihn gelesen und benutzt hat" (310).

58 This has become rather sure since Charles Lohr could show, that some excerpts taken by Nicholas of Lull's writings are made out of italian manuscripts. Cf. Ch.H. Lohr, "Die Überlieferung der Werke Ramón Lulls", *Freiburger Universitätsblätter* 78 (1982) 13-28; Id., "Die Exzerptensammlung des Nikolaus von Kues aus Werken Ramón Lulls", *FrZPhTh* 30 (1983) 373-384.

he began on the 22nd of March⁵⁹ to make excerpts of Lullus' *Liber contemplationis*. We have these excerpts from his own hands still present in Cod. Cus. 83, fol. 51r-60v⁶⁰. During his journey to Paris he passed the city of Laon, where he discovered in the library of the Cathedral the famous *Libri Carolini*, which have been noticed and published afterwards again only in the 16th century⁶¹. Many studies have been published which point out the deep dependence of Cusanus on Lullus. Perhaps he is the one, who influenced and inspired him most. The traces can be found from *De docta ignorantia* up to end of Cusa's life. In his thinking he came across the concept of "concordantia", which becomes one of the central ideas in his thinking.

The Cardinal possessed nearly all the writings of the mallorcinian "vir phantasticus", which mostly he copied himself with his own hand. He knew at least 68 different writings of Lullus. In the library at Kues we find 39 writings complete, 6 writings are incomplete and 23 writings we find only in excerpts. Moreover he set up an index of 77 writings of Lull and he provided many manuscripts with his own notes and comments⁶². Especially in

59 We read in Cod. Cus. 83, fol. 51r, Z. 1f: "Extractum ex libris meditationum raymundi, quos propria manu scripsit et dedit fratribus cartusiensibus parisiis per me nicolaum Cuesse 1428 inceptum feria 2^a post judica in quadragesima". Cf. *Acta Cusana*, nr. 59.

60 Cf. J. Marx, *Verzeichnis, o.c.*, 83-84. Cf. further E. Colomer, *Nikolaus von Kues und Raimund Lull. Aus Handschriften der Kueser Bibliothek*, Berlin (de Gruyter) 1961, R. Haubst, "Der junge Cusanus war im Jahre 1428 zu Handschriften-Studien in Paris", *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 14 (1980) 198-205; E. Colomer, "Zu dem Aufsatz von Rudolf Haubst Der junge Cusanus war im Jahre 1428 zu Handschriften-Studien in Paris", *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 15 (1982) 57-70; Ch.H. Lohr, "Die Exzerptensammlung des Nikolaus von Kues aus den Werken Ramon Lulls", *FrZPhTh* 30 (1983) 373-384; Th. Pindl-Büchel, *Die Exzerpte des Nikolaus von Kues aus dem Liber contemplationis Ramon Lulls*, Frankfurt (Peter Lang) 1992; F. Domínguez Reboiras, "Nicolás de Cusa y las colecciones lulianas de París. Notas al códice 83 de la Biblioteca del St. Nikolaus Hospital en Bernkastel-Kues", *Revista Catalana de Teología* 19 (1994) 129-139.

61 The first edition of the *Libri Carolini* happened only in 1549 using most probably the manuscript of Laon (today: Paris, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal 663), which Cusanus could see and read. Cf. E. Meuthen, *Acta Cusana*, Nr. 65; also Id., "Nikolaus von Kues und die Geschichte", *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 13 (1978) 234-252, here 235-236. Cf. further W. Schmandt, *Studien zu den Libri Carolini*, Mainz (Universität) 1966. This has to be seen together with his discovery of the *Codex Carolinus* (Kaspar of Niedbruck bought 1554 the codex for the library of Vienna, where it is up to present day) in the library of the Cathedral of Cologne, which gets quoted by Cusanus in *De Concordantia Catholica*.

62 Cf. M. Honecker, "Lullus-Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Kardinal Nikolaus von Cues", *Spanische Forschungen der Görresgesellschaft*, 1. Reihe: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kulturgeschichte Spaniens, 6. Bd., Münster 1937, 252-309; E. Colomer, *Nikolaus von Kues und Raimund Lull. Aus Handschriften der Kueser Bibliothek*, Berlin (de Gruyter) 1961. The self-made catalogue of Lull's books can be found in Cod. Cus. 85, fol. 48v. For the excerpts cf. U. Roth, *Cusanus-Texte: III. Marginalien: 4. Raimundus Lullus. Die Exzerptensammlung aus Schriften*

these excerpts we can see how deeply Cusanus was engaged in Lullus. He possessed e. g. the early book *Liber contemplationis*, surely the *Ars generalis* (*Ars inventiva*, *Ars generalis ultima*, *Ars brevis*), self-made excerpts of *Libris meditacionum*, *Philosophia amoris*, *Philosophiae principia duodecimo*, *Libellus qui dicitur chaos*, *Liber de predicatione*⁶³ and also I want to mention here the Lullist Raimundus Sabundus, whose *Theologia naturalis seu liber creaturarum* (Cod. Cus. 196) was known by Cusanus⁶⁴.

Although Cusanus hesitates to mention Raymundus Lullus explicitly in his own books, he quotes him in some books in hidden allusions to him, but only rarely⁶⁵. The reason for this may lie in the fact that Lull had been considered heretic, though Pope Gregory XI. cancelled the condemnation in 1419. A fact that Cusanus was aware of, as, too, that at the university at Paris John Gerson exerted himself to forbid the teaching of Lull's thoughts there⁶⁶.

des Raimundus Lullus im Codex Cusanus 83, Heidelberg (Winter) 1999; Ch.H. Lohr, "Die Exzerptensammlung des Nikolaus von Kues aus den Werken Ramón Lulls", *FrZPhTh* 30 (1983) 373-384; Th. Pindl-Büchel, *Die Exzerpte des Nikolaus von Kues aus dem Liber contemplationis Ramon Lulls*, Frankfurt (Peter Lang) 1992; K. Reinhardt, "Die Lullus-Handschriften in der Bibliothek des Nikolaus von Kues: Ein Forschungsbericht", in E. Bidese - A. Fidora - P. Renner (ed.), *Ramon Llull und Nikolaus von Kues: Eine Begegnung im Zeichen der Toleranz. Akten des Internationalen Kongresses zu Ramon Llull und Nikolaus von Kues (Brixen und Bozen, 25-27 November 2004) - Raimondo Lullo e Niccolò Cusano: Un incontro nel segno della tolleranza. Atti el Congresso Internazionale su Raimondo Lullo e Niccolò Cusano (Bressanone e Bolzano, 25-27 novembre 2004)*, Turnhout (Brepols) 2005, 1-23.

63 We find Lull's opus in Cod. Cus. 81-88 as well as in Cod. Cus. 37 and 118. Cf. J. Marx, *Verzeichnis*, o.c., 31. 82-90. 115.

64 For Raimundus Sabundus cf. W.A. Euler, "Raimund von Sabunde", in *Theologische Realencyclopädie*, t. 28, 122-125; further: E. Colomer, "Das Menschenbild des Nikolaus von Kues in der Geschichte des christlichen Humanismus (Ramon Sibiuda – Nikolaus von Kues – Marsilio Ficino – Pico della Mirandola)", in *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 13 (1978) 117-143; Id., "El humanismo cristiano del Renacimiento: Petrarca, Ramon Sibiuda, Cusanus, Ficino, Pico, Juan Luis Vives", in A. Holderegger (ed.), *De dignitate hominis. Mélanges offerts à Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira à l'occasion de son 65^e anniversaire*, Fribourg (Univ.-Verlag) 1987, 133-171; P. Moffitt Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus*, o.c., 16.

65 Explicitly Lullus is mentioned only in *Sermo IV*, h XVI/1, N. 26, Z. 1 and *Sermo X*, h XVI/2, N. 13, Z. 29. Cf. E. Colomer, *Nikolaus von Kues und Raimund Lull*, o.c., 68-72. One has to note that in a very similar way also Master Eckhart and Albert the Great get rarely mentioned by Cusanus although he is not little influenced in his thinking by them.

66 Cf. W.A. Euler, *Unitas et pax. Religionsvergleich bei Raimundus Lullus und Nikolaus von Kues*, Würzburg-Altenberge (Echter) 1995², 274-275. Euler says further: "Man darf demnach mit gutem Grund annehmen, daß in den Schriften des Cusaners vielfach lullisches Denken nachwirkt, ohne als solches erkennbar zu sein". (275) Cf. further E.W. Platzeck, "Lullsche Gedanken bei Nikolaus von Kues", *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 62 (1953), 357-364: "Die Zitierungsweise des Cusaners führt öfters in die Irre, weil Nikolaus geflissentlich seine eigentlichen Quellen übergeht und solche Autoren angibt, die Ähnliches eher geschrieben" (364).

Nevertheless we find the *vir phantasticus* already present in *Sermo I*, a very early sermon of 1430, which Cusanus probably held also in 1428⁶⁷. Here we can feel the idea of a Trinitarian-Christological Metaphysics, which we find later in *De docta ignorantia*, too. In many books of Cusanus we can see that he owes a lot to the Trinitarian thinking of Lull and to the circular theology, as well as to the symbolical figures⁶⁸. But this does not mean that he copied only Raymundus, much more he developed in the line of the lullian *Ars generalis* his own *Ars coniecturalis*, which followed not so much the rational affirmative theology of Lullus but much more the negative theology in the line of Areopagita⁶⁹.

6. BONAVENTURA AND THE CODEx 1 OF THE CAPUCHINS

In conclusion, I want to say one short word about a manuscript of Nicholas of Cusa that found its way to the Capuchins. Obviously the manuscript is older than the Capuchin order itself, since we were founded only in 1528, meanwhile the Codex has to be dated into the 15th century. It is one of the oldest manuscripts that the German Capuchins hold in their archive today⁷⁰. Codex 1 contains the *Hexaëmeron* of St. Bonaventure and the *Theologia Scholarium* of Petrus Abaelardus. In the manuscript we find more than 115 glosses made by Cusanus himself⁷¹. He must have had this manuscript in his hands at a rather early stage. His remarks sometimes underline important concepts and subjects, sometimes he corrected the text, which shows

67 Cf. *Sermo I* (1430-1441), h XVI/1, 1-19.

68 Cf. R. Haubst, *Bild des Einen*, o.c., 60-83.

69 Cf. E.W. Platzeck, "Observaciones del P. Antonio Raimundo Pascual sobre lulistas alemanes. A. El lulismo en las obras del Cardenal Nicolàs Krebs de Cusa: I. El arte luliano en las obras del Cardenal Nicolàs de Cusa", *Revistas Española de Teología* 1 (1941) 731-765; Id., "II. Doctrinas teológicas y filosóficas de Raimundo Lullio en las obras de Nicolás de Cusa", *Revista Española de Teología* 2 (1942) 257-324; Id., "Die Lullische Kombinatorik. Ein erneuter Darstellungs- und Deutungsversuch mit Bezug auf die gesamteuropäische Philosophie", *Franziskanische Studien*. 34 (1952) 32-60. 377-407; Id., "Lullische Gedanken bei Nikolaus von Kues", *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 62 (1953) 357-364; Id., "Von der lullischen zur cusanischen Denkform", *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 4 (1964) 145-163.

70 Cf. *Handbuch der Handschriftenbestände in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, hrsg. v. deutschen Bibliotheksinstitut. Teil 1., bearb. v. T. Brandis u. I. Nöther, Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz) 1992, 273. Further L. Meier, "Vier Jahre Skotusforschung in deutschen Bibliotheken", *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 60 (1943) 145-167, here 152; and R. Thomas - J. Jolivet - D.E. Luscombe - L.M. de Rijk (ed.), *Petrus Abaelardus (1079-1142). Person, Werk und Wirkung*, Trier (Paulinus) 1980, 294.

71 Cf. Fr.N. Caminiti, "Nikolaus von Kues und Bonaventura", *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 4 (1964) 129-144, esp. 130.

that he knew the bonaventurian text quite well. We have to remember that Cusanus was from very early on (since he studied at Cologne 1425) at least familiar with the thinking of St. Bonaventure. The above-mentioned Codex Argentoratensis 84 at Strasbourg holds also some texts of St. Bonaventure and here we know that he had this Codex at least before 1440 in his hands. Already as a young student he possessed the *Itinerarium* and the *Mystical Theology* of Jean Gerson. This made some scholars believe that this would be the proof for his contact to the *Devotio Moderna* at Deventer⁷². The library at Kues shows us that he knew from St. Bonaventure the *Breviloquium* (Cod. Cus. 78 & 124, fol. 204v-244r)⁷³ and his *Commentary on the Sentences of Lombard* books II-IV (Cod. Cus. 75-77)⁷⁴. Cod. Cus. 64⁷⁵, which contains also the *Dydascalicon* of Hugh of St. Viktor, holds *De pietate* (fol. 41r-47v). It is a matter of discussion among scholars how much Cusanus and St. Bonaventure have in common. H.G. Senger thinks that apart from the idea of *docta ignorantia* and *coincidentia oppositorum* there is not too much which would connect both thinkers⁷⁶. On the other hand Th. Leinkauf is intent on showing the connection between Cusanus and St. Bonaventure⁷⁷. At least we can see that Cusanus mentions St. Bonaventure directly by name in several sermons⁷⁸ and this from the very beginning up to the end of his life, which cannot be underrated.

72 Cf. E. Meuthen, "Cusanus in Deventer", en G. Piaia (ed.), *Concordia discors, o.c.*, 39-54; J.F.M.M. Hoenen, "Ut pia testatoris voluta observetur. Die Stiftung der bursa cusanua zu Deventer", en I. Bocken, *Conflict and Reconciliation: Perspectives on Nicholas of Cusa*, Leiden (Brill) 2004, 53-73; J.F.M.M. Hoenen - J. Huitink, *Cusanus in Deventer: Handschriften, oude drukken en andere werken tentoongesteld ter gelegenheid van de zeshonderdste geboortedag van Nikolaus van Kues (1401-1464)*, Deventer (Stadsarchief en Athenaeumbibliotheek) 2001.

73 Cf. J. Marx, *Verzeichnis, o.c.*, 79-80. 124.

74 Cf. *Ibid.*, 78-79.

75 Cf. *Ibid.*, 71.

76 Cf. H.G. Senger, *Ludus sapientiae, o.c.*, 304: "Gedanken wie die der docta ignorantia und coincidentia oppositorum verbinden ihn (Nikolaus von Kues; J.B. Elpert) zwar mit Bonaventura, mit dem ihn aber darüber hinaus nicht viel verbindet".

77 Cf. Th. Leinkauf, *Nicolaus Cusanus, o.c.*, 25 (and index 225). Cf. further Id., "Cusanus und Bonaventura. Zum Hintergrund von Cusanus 'Gottesnamen' Possesit", *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 72 (2005) 113-132. Cf. also R. Haubst, *Bild des Einen, o.c.*, 343 (index); Id., *Die Christologie, des Nikolaus von Kues*, Freiburg i. Br. (Herder) 1956, 331 (index); Fr.N. Caminiti, "Nikolaus von Kues und Bonaventura", *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 4 (1964) 129-144; E.H. Cousins, "Bonaventure, the Coincidence of Opposites, and Nicholas of Cusa", en *Studies Honoring Ignatius Charles Brady Friar Minor*, St. Bonaventure NY (University Press) 1976, 177-197; G.F. Vescovini, "La 'dotta ignoranza' di Cusano e san Bonaventura", *Doctor seraphicus* 40-41 (1993/94) 49-68.

78 Cf. *Sermo* II, h XVII/1, N. 17, Z. 46; *Sermo* CCI, h XVIII/5, N. 2, Z. 1-2; *Sermo* CCXXX-IV, h XIX/3, N. 4, Z. 5 & N. 7, Z. 13; *Sermo* CCXLVIII, h XIX/4, N. 19, Z. 11; *Sermo* CCLIV, h XIX/4, N. 19, Z. 3 & N. 32, Z. 2.

How the Codex with the Hexaëmeron of St. Bonaventure came into the possession of the Capuchins is not easy to reconstruct. We can present here only a few clues. The manuscript belonged to the Library of Nicholas and most probably a Capuchin friar from Trier borrowed the book once for his studies. Why the manuscript wasn't given back to Kues remains unknown. Perhaps the friar died and the brothers found the book in his room and brought it to their library without knowing that it wasn't their own.⁷⁹ In any case the manuscript remained in the Capuchin convent probably from the 17th century up to its end 1803. Since the Monastery was founded in 1617 we can say that the manuscript came to the friary not before 1617, perhaps even later when in 1762 a new larger monastery was erected with a new church. During the Secularisation the manuscript was –probably sooner rather than later– in the friary of Bingen but then came to the Capuchins at Mainz, who had to leave the friary by the end of June in 1802. When the Capuchins could return to the city in 1853 the manuscript was given back to the friars because it was sealed with their library stamp without realizing that it belonged once to the library at Kues. From there the manuscript came later to the provincial archive at Koblenz. When Koblenz was closed down in the year 2007 the manuscript came into the provincial library at Münster where it is kept up to the present day.

The manuscript is 21,5 cm wide, in length ca. 31,5 cm and in height ca. 5 cm with the cover. It contains 164 pages. Page 1 to page 97 are written *recto e verso*, pages 98-102 are empty. From page 103-161 we read the *Theologia Scholarium* of Abaelardus. Pages 162-164 are again empty. The Codex is available also by microfilm, which can be seen at the library of the St. Nicholas Hospital at Kues as well as in the library of the Capuchins at Münster.

Here we end our small overview about some manuscripts associated with Nicholas of Cusa. We did not mention all, I did not talk about Johannes Scotus Eriugena, nothing about Anselm of Canterbury, nothing about Bernhard of Clairvaux, not one word about Meister Eckhart, I said nothing about the geographical books, I have been silent about the astronomical and medical books, as also I did not mention the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts

79 Lending without return – the anxiety of all librarians and archivists, is an old fact and caused often funny stories. Cf. here also R. Haubst, *Der junge Cusanus was im Jahre 1428 zu Handschriften-Studien in Paris*, in *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 14 (1980) 198-205, esp. 198. For another curious history of an old original manuscript in the field of my own cusanian studies cf. J.L. Schmitt, "Beschreibung des Lebens und des kirchlichen und literarischen Wirkens des Cardinals und Bischofs von Brixen Nikolaus Cusanus", hrsg. v. J.B. Elpert, *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 25 (1999) esp. xviii-xix.

in his library. But at least I hope succeeded in awakening your interest in the German Cardinal, who once went out into the world in order to search for wisdom, knowledge and truth. But as we are limited human beings we are not allowed to read everything at once, this is reserved to God alone, as Cusanus tells us:

“When I open a book, for reading, I see the whole page confusedly. And if I want to discern the individual letters, syllables, and words, I have to turn to each individually and successively. And only successively can I read one letter after another, one word after another, one passage after another. But You, O Lord, behold at once the entire page, and You read it without taking any time... But above time You see and read all things at once; for Your seeing is Your reading. Simultaneously –from eternity and beyond all passing of time– You have viewed all books that have been written and that can be written, and You have read them at once”⁸⁰.

And at the end we have to acknowledge that reading books and manuscripts has the risk of making us arrogant instead of humble, as Cusanus tells us. Therefore it is better to go out upon the streets where God’s wisdom can also be found. So let us hear for the last time Cusanus himself, what he tells us to remember and to reflect for all our scientific work:

“I am amazed at your [the scientists; J.B.E.] pride, because although in perusing countless books you tire yourself with continual reading, you have not yet been brought to a state of humility. Assuredly, this lack of humility results from the fact that the knowledge that pertains to this world –a knowledge in which you deem yourself to excel others– is, in the eyes of God, a certain foolishness; and, hence, it puffs one up. By contrast, true knowledge makes one humble... Transfer unto the highest levels, where wisdom dwells, this proclamation of wisdom’s in the streets, and you will find vastly more delightful truths than you find in all your most ornate books”⁸¹.

80 *De vis.*, h VI, c. 8, N. 29, Z. 6-18: “Cum aperio librum ad legendum, video confuse totam chartam; et si volo discernere singulas litteras, syllabas et dictiones, necesse est, ut me singulariter ad singula seriatim convertam; et non possum nisi successive unam post aliam litteram legere et unam dictionem post aliam et passum post passum. Sed tu, domine, simul totam chartam respicis et legis sine mora temporis; et si duo nostrum legunt idem, unus citius, alius tardius, cum utroque legis et videris in tempore legere, quia legis cum legentibus, et supra tempus omnia vides et legis simul; videre enim tuum est legere tuum. Omnes libros scriptos et qui scribi possunt simul et semel supra moram temporis ab aeterno vidisti et legisti simul et cum hoc cum omnibus legentibus eosdem legis seriatim” (Hopkins, 694).

81 *De sap.* I, h 2V, N. 1, Z. 5-9; N. 7, Z. 1-4: “Miror de fastu tuo, quod, cum continua lectione defatigeris innumerabiles libros lectitando, nondum ad humilitatem ductus sis; hoc certe ex eo, quia scientia huius mundi, in qua te ceteros praecellere putas, stultitia quaedam est apud deum et hinc inflat. Vera autem scientia humiliat... Hunc clamorem sapientiae in plateis transfer in altissima, ubi sapientia habitat, et multo delectabiliora reperies quam in omnibus ornatissimis voluminibus tuis” (Hopkins, 497. 500).

RESUMEN

El profesor Jan Bernd Elpert nos acerca a la inagotable figura de Nicolás de Cusa y su relación con un mundo desbordante de manuscritos, no menos atrayente que su propia trayectoria vital, debatiéndose de un férreo conciliarismo a una defensa firme de la figura del romano pontífice. Elpert pone de manifiesto cómo siendo estudiante en Padua se le abrió el mundo del humanismo italiano. De manera breve se nos presenta una biblioteca compuesta por un afán compilatorio de manuscritos de temas diversos y variados. Posteriormente, nos acerca a aquellos autores que influyeron significativamente en el pensamiento de Nicolás de Cusa: Proclo y la tradición platónica, Dionisio Areopagita, san Alberto Magno, Heymericus de Campo, Ramón Llull y san Buenaventura. Por último, se presenta un manuscrito en el que se contiene el Hexameron de san Buenaventura y la *Theologia Scholarium* de Abelardo, con glosas de Nicolás de Cusa.

Palabras clave: Nicolás de Cusa, Manuscritos, Filosofía (s. XV), Teología (s. XV), san Buenaventura, Dionisio Areopagita.

ABSTRACT

Professor Jan Bernd Elpert brings us closer to the inexhaustible figure of Nicholas of Cusa and its relationship with a boundless world of manuscripts, not less attractive than its own vital path, struggling from a fierce conciliarism to a firm defence of the figure of the Roman Pontiff. Elpert shows how, while being a student at Padua, the world of Italian humanism opened up to him. We are briefly presented with a library arisen from an eagerness of compiling manuscripts of various and varied themes. Subsequently, he brings us closer to those authors who significantly influenced the thinking of Nicholas of Cusa: Proclus and the Platonic tradition, Dionysius Areopagite, St. Albertus Magnus, Heymericus de Campo, Ramon Llull and St. Buenaventura. Finally, we find a manuscript containing the Hexameron by St. Buenaventura and the *Theologia Scholarium* by Abelard, with glosses by Nicholas of Cusa.

Keywords: Nicholas of Cusa, Manuscripts, Philosophy (15th century), Theology (15th century), saint Bonaventure, Dionysius Areopagita.