

Nicholas of Cusa Shows Us the Path To Creating a New Renaissance

Zepp-LaRouche delivered these remarks (by videoconference) at the conclusion of her [keynote address](#) to the 25th Anniversary Conference of the Citizens Electoral Council (CEC), the LaRouche-associated organization in Australia, on May 17.

I'm very happy that you decided to make Nicholas of Cusa such an important factor in your conference, because I've been convinced, since I found his ideas many years ago, that his ideas are the best foundation to lead the world out of this existential crisis. Nicholas was very conscious that he was writing something, especially from the *De Docta Ignorantia* onward, so revolutionary, which had never been thought before, that he was, with his writings, beginning a new era. And if you look back at what the effect of his works was, you can actually see that he was absolutely on the mark; that his writings, indeed, marked the difference between the dark Middle Ages, and modern times.

He consciously broke with scholasticism, which dominated the universities at that time, which was the debate over how many angels could sit on the head of a pin, and also the stupid mechanistic views of the Peripatetics, which also was the leading ideology of the time. And he very consciously introduced a completely different method of thinking. The most famous idea of it, is the *coincidentia oppositorum*, which is the principle that the One has a higher power than the Many, in a way which I will specify immediately.

Also, in *De Docta Ignorantia*, and also in the dialogues of *The Layman* and many of the sermons, he very much rejected the idea of man being able to achieve knowledge through sensuous experience. In the famous Trinity sermon of 1444, he developed the idea that the conception of the goal of the human intellect deter-



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Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64), said Zepp-LaRouche, had “the beautiful idea” that mankind, at each point in his development, can, “with scientific rigor, define what is the next necessary breakthrough in knowledge.”

mines the road on which the mind travels to that goal; he called that the *praesupponit*—the future defines the present. It is that which the mind and faith defines as a goal, which defines the way how you achieve it, and which road you take. Knowledge, therefore, is not a logical extension of the addition of all existing knowledge of the past, but it is what we aim at, which is already in our faith and in our intention.

He arrived at a deep conception of the creation of the physical universe, which was the basis for Kepler, later on, to discover gravitation. He believed in the complete unity of faith and science, and that view allowed Kepler to come to his discovery overturning Copernicus and Ptolemy. And Cusa already had the same wonderful idea: that the more you study the universe, the laws of Creation, the more you become clear that this must all be the work of a tremendously loving Creator.

Concordantia

Nicholas already had the idea that the universe is totally determined by change, that this change has an upward development, and that neither the Earth nor the Sun is the center of the universe—and this was really the beginning of modern science. He also had the idea of *concordantia* in the universe and among mankind: that there is a cohesion between the laws of the macrocosm—the universe at large—and the laws of the microcosm, which is the cognitive powers of man; and that *concordantia* is only possible if all microcosms develop in the best possible way, and not in a linear way; but all unity in multitude, is based on the higher principle whereby the entire process of the totality is developing in a complex way, as in a fugal development, whereby the development of the one is necessary to facilitate the development of the other.

Cusa presumes the idea of a concordance in the universe, and for mankind, based on the development principle which must also be the basis for a better world order today. It must be absolute sovereign nations as developing microcosms, and this is the idea of the *Concordantia Catholica*, based on the representative system, that the government and the governed must relate to each other in a reciprocal relationship, whereby the government takes care of the best possible common good of the governed, and the representatives take care of the interests of the governed, and also represent the common good of the government.

This is a very important idea, because that conception of the representative system was really for the first time realized in the American Constitution in a full way. Each microcosm, therefore, only can fulfill its full potential by supporting the best possible development of the other microcosm. If you apply that to politics—and that was done in the Peace of Westphalia [1648], where



Cusa's concept of concordance—“Concordantia Catholica”—in the universe, and for mankind, is based on the principle of development, which is also the basis for the establishment of the common good, the keystone of the sovereign nation-state.

the principle of the “interest of the other” comes exactly from this Cusan idea—and that brought about the end of the 150 years of religious war in Europe. If you apply that to politics today, then the best possible development of one nation must include the best possible development of all other nations.

The ‘Common Aims of Mankind

What that means concretely for Australia, is that Australia must have as its self-interest, that China develop in the best way; also, Japan and all the countries in Southeast Asia, and vice versa. Obviously, this is only possible, if all of these nations are united through the common aims of mankind.

What are the “common aims of mankind”? Obviously, it means that this miserable, unworthy condition in which a majority of civilization finds itself, as a result of the policies of the Empire, must be overcome. That poverty must be eliminated, hunger must be eliminated, and this would be eminently possible and feasible, through the realization of all the different projects of the World Land-Bridge, which can also be the basis for peace, in relations with Russia, with China, with Japan, with many other countries.

This is only possible, because the One has a higher power than the Many. And mankind as a whole, is a higher idea than the many different cultures and religions. This was already the basic idea of another writing of Nicholas, which he wrote after the fall of Constantinople, the *De Pace Fidei*, where he has 17 wise men from different nations, and cultures, and religions, asking God for advice; and while others were talking about a clash of civilizations, in the pre-mature form, he had the idea that there was only one God, one Truth, and one Religion, and he already talked about *uno religio in rituum varietate*, “one religion with different rites,” which was an incredibly

progressive idea for a Cardinal of the 15th Century!

The creation of the physical universe, according to Nicholas, occurs through the creativity of man, and he even goes so far as to say—and again, this was in the 15th Century—that after the emergence of mankind, the continuous process of Creation, *only* occurred through the creative acts of man, which is unbelievably important.

He also had the notion of *manuductio*, which is basically a pedagogical, explaining how this method of development occurs. And he had an image, as if it were the metamorphosis of a plant, where the mind starts with a seed, and then through a multiple process of cognition, reaches the full dimension of the development of a tree with rich fruits, which then produces many more seeds and many more trees.

A New Philosophical Method

Nicholas was conscious that he had developed an epochal new philosophical method, and he also, in the *De Docta Ignorantia*, especially in the second book, developed what you could call an ontology of the universe. He even said that the fulfillment of the universe *is* the cognition and the creativity of man, that it is the *vis creatrix*, the “power of creation” expressed in man acting as *imago viva Dei*, as the “living image of God,” which drives the universe.

In the *De Docta Ignorantia*, he says, “All our great attention asserts in unity, that the faith is the longing of cognition. Because in every faculty, in the meaning of every scientific discipline, there are made certain presuppositions, the *quaedam praesupponuntur*, the first principle which can only come from faith and out of which the insight into that which needs to be investigated can be gained.”

This a very interesting idea, because it is the idea that if science and faith are the same, and if you have a belief in what has to be part of the divine order of Creation, then your mind will seek that, and in your investigation, you will fly like a bird toward the goal, where the bird does it sort of instinctively; where the goal is defined, but the road follows from that.

You find in these thoughts, for the first time in all of written history and literature, a discussion of how the method of hypothesis really functions, how you develop the thinking of a flank, how you create a poetical or a musical idea, by having this higher idea, which is the goal which can then be developed, in the same way that a great composer has a musical idea before he de-

velops the composition; as a poet has a poetical idea before he composes the poem. This is a very important method, which must be the basis of putting the political and economic order of our present world into cohesion.

Therefore, I think that in Nicholas of Cusa, you find all the crucial ideas, all the beautiful ideas; for example, the proof about the immortality of the soul, in which Nicholas argues that the fact that the soul creates all the arts—the sciences, geography, music—and that these remain forever, means that that which creates these things obviously has to have a higher power than the things created, and since the created things are immortal, the soul, the creator, has to be immortal, too.

Nicholas also had the beautiful idea that man, at each point of the development of mankind, can, with scientific rigor, define the next necessary breakthrough in knowledge. Now, is that not what we know today, when we say that the future of mankind has to become mankind in his identity as mankind in space? That with all the knowledge we have about the dangers from space, from asteroids, the dangers of our Solar System in a couple of billion years from now—that we have to have the idea of the goal, where the next scientific breakthrough has to be, in order to guarantee the existence of mankind? Nicholas already had that idea in the 15th Century, and I think therefore, the more you study him, the more you become happy and enlightened.

If the British Empire were to prevail, both financially, and in the sense of military doctrine, it is very likely that mankind will be extinct, and that we will prove to have been no more intelligent than the dinosaurs. But I have fundamental optimism that the universe is too beautiful, the laws of Creation are too powerful, that the plan of the Creator is too beautiful and strong, for this to happen, if we do our job.

So therefore, let's move with all powers we have, to use this epochal change, where we are right now,¹ to put the political and economic order in cohesion with the laws of the universe. If we do that, I think the future of civilization will be the brightest possible one, and I think we are in the middle of the fight. Glass-Steagall is now a realistic proposition, so let's move with all our power to get the whole Glass-Steagall globally, and then move on, to implement a Renaissance.

1. In opening her speech, Zepp-LaRouche mentioned the introduction on May 17, by Sen. Tom Harkin, of a Glass-Steagall bill into the U.S. Senate, as representing “a major step toward saving civilization from the bring of the abyss.”