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Article abstract

Nicholas of Cusa's *De Ludo Globi* (1463) explores the tensions between the soul's terrestrial and transcendent aspirations; between its desire to engage materiality through creative self-expression and to remove itself from its historically-bound identity in mystical contemplation. Many of Cusa's arguments about the soul in this work are indebted to Augustine's *De Quantitate Animae* (388), and while the cardinal emphasizes different capacities of the soul, many of his analogies originate from this Augustinian source. Clearly Cusa's most significant appropriation is the dialogical framework itself, which being situated at the threshold between discursive reason and mystical contemplation becomes an effective vehicle for exploring the soul's cognitive and spiritual aptitudes. While both dialogues illustrate the rational or creative capacities of the embodied soul, they ultimately acknowledge the limitations of these capacities, and of the dialogic form itself, when compared to the higher reaches of the soul's contemplative powers.

# Nicholas of Cusa's Dialogue with Augustine: The Measure of the Soul's Greatness in *De Ludo Globi*

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*Nicholas of Cusa's De Ludo Globi (1463) explores the tensions between the soul's terrestrial and transcendent aspirations; between its desire to engage materiality through creative self-expression and to remove itself from its historically-bound identity in mystical contemplation. Many of Cusa's arguments about the soul in this work are indebted to Augustine's De Quantitate Animae (388), and while the cardinal emphasizes different capacities of the soul, many of his analogies originate from this Augustinian source. Clearly Cusa's most significant appropriation is the dialogical framework itself, which being situated at the threshold between discursive reason and mystical contemplation becomes an effective vehicle for exploring the soul's cognitive and spiritual aptitudes. While both dialogues illustrate the rational or creative capacities of the embodied soul, they ultimately acknowledge the limitations of these capacities, and of the dialogic form itself, when compared to the higher reaches of the soul's contemplative powers.*

*Le De Ludo Globi (1463), par Nicolas de Cuse, examine l'opposition entre les aspirations terrestre et transcendante de l'âme; entre son désir d'agir sur la matière par l'expression créatrice et le désir de se retirer, par la contemplation mystique, hors de l'identité circonstancielle. Nombre des arguments de Cuse sur l'âme dans cet ouvrage proviennent du De Quantitate Animae (388) d'Augustin, et plusieurs de ses analogies sont empruntées à cet ouvrage, même si le cardinal développe indépendamment les capacités variées de l'âme. De fait, le cadre dialogique constitue le plus important des emprunts de Cuse. Entre raison discursive et contemplation mystique, ce cadre devient un outil efficace d'exploration des aptitudes intellectuelles et spirituelles de l'âme. Tandis que les deux dialogues illustrent le potentiel de raison ou de création de l'âme incarnée, ils en reconnaissent à la fin les limites, tout comme celles du dialogue lui-même, en comparaison avec les possibilités de l'âme pour la contemplation, bien supérieures à celles-là.*

What is the nature of the soul? Does the soul find fulfillment in the body by engaging the material world? Or rather, does the soul realize its full potential by withdrawing from the physical realm so as to engage interior goals? In *De Ludo Globi (The Bowling Game)* (1463) Nicholas of Cusa offers ambivalent responses to these questions.<sup>1</sup> Set in the midst of the eponymous

1. Citations of *De Ludo Globi* refer to Nicholas of Cusa, *Dialogus De Ludo Globi*, ed. Hans Gerhard Senger, *Nicholai de Cusa Opera Omnia*, vol. 9 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998); hereafter cited as *DLG*. English

game, the philosophical dialogue celebrates the soul's innovative impulse to engage the physical universe and so fashion a wealth of ingenious expressions. Yet, the dialogue's celebration of human creativity is tempered by ascetic reflections, both advocating material disengagement and pondering mortal transience—sentiments doubtless provoked by Cusa's awareness that his own life's end was imminent.<sup>2</sup> However delightfully creative the dialogue's conceit, *De Ludo Globi* signals its own limitations, ultimately acknowledging that it cannot instruct the soul about itself. In this respect, *De Ludo Globi* shows the influence of Augustine's early dialogues, particularly Augustine's *De Quantitate Animae* (*The Greatness of the Soul*) (388 AD), which, as the title suggests, investigates the soul's manifold powers.<sup>3</sup> *De Quantitate Animae* features a series of thought experiments with geometrical figures, which serve to cultivate the soul's rational powers of mental abstraction and material detachment. In the hands of Cusa, Augustine's abstracted thought experiments become a ludic celebration of the soul's creative capacity to refashion its terrestrial condition. Though each dialogue emphasizes a different power of the soul, both works share the same transcendent orientation, pointing beyond their own dialectical structures toward a silent space of reflection within the self. Augustine's dialogue, cultivating the soul's capacity for material disengagement, follows this transcendent trajectory more fluidly and consistently. Cusa's dialogue, by contrast, struggles with the tension between the soul's terrestrial identity and its celestial aspirations. As a recreational sport and spiritual exercise, *De Ludo Globi* seeks to test the tensions inherent to the embodied soul, which both invests itself in its historical identity through creative expression and seeks to detach itself from this same identity through the contemplative search for God. Cusa

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translations, unless otherwise indicated, refer to "The Bowling Game" in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa*, trans. Jasper Hopkins, vol. 2 (Minneapolis, MN: Arthur J. Banning Press, 2001).

2. For the historical circumstances and intellectual interests influencing Cusa during the writing of *De Ludo Globi* in his later years, see David Albertson, *Mathematical Theologies: Nicholas of Cusa and the Legacy of Thierry of Chartres* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 255–76.

3. Citations of Augustine's *De Quantitate Animae* and *De Immortalitate Animae* reference *Soliloquiorum libri duo*; *De immortalitate animae*; *De quantitate animae*, ed. Wolfgang Hörmann, CSEL 89 (Vienna: Hoelder, Pichler, Tempsky, 1986); hereafter cited as *DQA*. English translations follow "The Magnitude of the Soul," trans. John J. McMahon, in *Writings of St. Augustine*, ed. Ludwig Schopp, vol. 2 (New York: CIMA, 1947).

draws upon Augustine's dialogic framework of the embodied spiritual exercise, but places more value on the material universe as an essential component to the soul's flourishing.<sup>4</sup> *De Quantitate Animae* suggests that the soul's magnitude augments the more it removes itself from the material world, but in *De Ludo Globi*, Cusa shows that the soul grows through its appreciative meditation upon the material universe as an expression of divine self-revelation.

Augustine's *De Quantitate Animae* enjoyed a prominence and currency in early modern Italy that contrasts with its relative obscurity in our own time.<sup>5</sup> Given that the dialogue was well known among Cusa's contemporaries and that the work experiments with geometrical figures in an unusual way, it is likely that Cusa not only knew this dialogue but was fascinated by it. In *De Quantitate Animae*, Augustine cites the individual's capacity to grasp geometrical principles as evidence of the soul's power and immortality. In the initial chapter, the dialogue announces its intention to address a set of questions about the soul that include the following: what makes the soul great; what is the effect of its union with body; what is the effect of its separation?<sup>6</sup> Augustine engages his

4. Brian Stock argues that Augustine's engagement with Christianity enables him to introduce a new understanding of "the incorporated self as a component of the ancient spiritual exercise," in *Augustine's Inner Dialogue: The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 55.

5. The recently published *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine* correctly notes that contemporary scholarship has mostly passed over this dialogue; however, the study itself fails to note important moments in the dialogue's reception; see Christian Tornau, "De animae quantitate," in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, ed. Karla Pollmann and Willemien Otten, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 232–35. Tornau's entry overlooks the dialogue's impact among early modern Italian writers. For instance, *The Letter to Cangrande*, attributed to Dante, cites Augustine's *De Quantitate Animae* as a framework for understanding the *Paradiso*'s ecstatic vision; see *Epistola 10, Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*, ed. Paget Toynbee, 2nd. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 192. Petrarch's notations on Cassiodorus's *De anima* show the former's familiarity with Augustine's dialogue; see Francisco Rico, "Petrarca y el de vera religione," *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 17 (1974): 313–74. Marsilio Ficino clearly knew the dialogue, appropriating its arguments about the soul in his *Platonic Theology*; see Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Augustine and the Early Renaissance," in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1969), 355–72 at 369. See also notes 19 and 48 below. More recently, Joost Joustra has explored the dialogue's influence on the thought of Leon Battista Alberti, in his paper "The Afterlife of Saint Augustine's On the Greatness of the Soul: Space and Theology in Alberti's *De pictura*," presented at the Renaissance Society of America's Annual Meeting, New York, NY, March 2014.

6. *DQA* 1.1 (Hörmann, 131; McMahon, 59).

interlocutor Evodius in a sequence of thought experiments with geometrical figures, requiring both discussants to form and compare mental representations of spatial quantity. Augustine aesthetically ranks this series of figures according to their integrity, equality, and symmetry, thus introducing qualitative criteria that he will summon later to demonstrate the soul's qualitative superiority. By forming and evaluating geometric figures in the mind's eye, the interlocutors demonstrate the soul's power not only to manipulate the dimensions defining the physical world but also to transcend the limits of time and materiality. Augustine more explicitly articulates the soul's transcending powers in *De Immortalitate Animae*, written within a year of *De Quantitate Animae*, in which he claims that the soul's capacity to grasp the immutable, rational principles inscribed in geometric figures is evidence of the soul's immortality.<sup>7</sup> This unspoken claim accounts for *De Quantitate Animae*'s protracted engagement with geometric figures and its fascination with the soul's rational proficiency. The dialogue argues that the rational faculties unlock the soul's potential to flourish, enabling the soul to realize its perfection and ultimate fulfillment in the contemplation of divine mystery.

Augustine initially seeks to establish that the soul is qualitatively greater than the body's material mass, even though the former lacks weight and dimension. He claims that indivisibility is qualitatively superior to and more powerful than divisibility, drawing upon the Pythagorean premise that unity is more potent than multiplicity.<sup>8</sup> So too, the indivisible, dimensionless soul is greater than the spatially extended bodily members.<sup>9</sup> The soul's powers over the body are observed in the way that it stimulates growth, governs the body's movements, and facilitates sense perception.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, even while directing these functions throughout the limbs, torso, and other members, the soul remains unified.

7. *De Immortalitate Animae* 1.1 (Hörmann, 101–02).

8. *De Quantitate Animae* 11.18 (Hörmann, 153; McMahon, 80). For the importance of unity in Pythagorean and Neoplatonic thought, see Plato, *Parmenides* 137C–143A in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, trans. H. N. Fowler, vol. 4, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1977), 237–55; Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 8.25, ed. and trans. R. D. Hicks, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 341–43; Macrobius, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* 1.6.7–10, ed. J. Willis, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1963), 19–20.

9. *DQA* 17.30 (Hörmann, 167; McMahon 91–92).

10. For a discussion of sensation, see *DQA* 23.41–23.44 (Hörmann, 181–86; McMahon, 104–09); for growth, see *DQA* 24.45 (Hörmann, 186–88; McMahon, 108–09). These powers correspond to the first

When Evodius asks whether the soul is distributed piecemeal throughout the spaces of the body, Augustine corrects this misconception with reference to the indivisibility and potency of the geometric point. As the most rudimentary principle generating the extension of lines and dimensions, it is the most powerful of figures. Every other figure can be reduced to smaller constituent components, but the point is inviolably unified.<sup>11</sup> Like the indivisible point, the indivisible soul is more powerful than the extended dimensions of the body that it animates and moves. Even if the body were to suffer dismemberment, the soul would remain unaltered: "We should not conclude that the soul has been cut or that it has been made smaller in a smaller place [...] for the soul did not occupy a place, but held the body, which was moved by it."<sup>12</sup> Even while governing sensation in the body's many parts, the soul remains independent of the body's material limitations.

Since it lacks space and mass, the soul's greatness is measured by its power: "Among the powers (*virtutes*) of the soul that which is called the soul's greatness is understood to refer not to any space but to a certain strength, that is to a power and force, a virtue in fact that is the more esteemed the more it despises [material] things."<sup>13</sup> To illustrate that this qualitative spiritual power outmatches the body's quantitative mass, Augustine compares and ranks geometric figures according to their aesthetic perfection. The interlocutors establish that equality and symmetry, not mass and area, represent the best standard for evaluating the excellence of geometric figures.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, a square is more perfect than an equilateral triangle, since the former contains four equal interior angles and so demonstrates a greater degree of equality. The square's

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and second grades of Augustine's spiritual ladder; see *DQA* 33.70–71 (Hörmann, 217–19; McMahon, 136–39).

11. *DQA* 11.18–12.18 (Hörmann, 153–54; McMahon, 80); *DQA* 14.23 (Hörmann, 158–59; McMahon, 84–85).

12. *DQA* 32.68 (Hörmann, 216; McMahon, 135): "non omnino animam sectam nec loco minore minorem esse factam. [...] Non enim locum ipsa, sed corpus, quod ab eadem agebatur, tenebat."

13. *DQA* 17.30 (Hörmann, 167; McMahon, 91): "Ea vero quae inter virtutes adpellatur animi magnitudo, ad nullum spatium, sed ad vim quandam, id est ad potestatem potentiamque animi relata recte intellegitur, virtus eo pluris aestimanda, quo plura contemnit." I have modified McMahon's translation. See also, *DQA* 14.23–24 (Hörmann, 158–60; McMahon, 84–85), and *DQA* 32.69 (Hörmann, 216; McMahon, 135).

14. *DQA* 8.13 (Hörmann, 147; McMahon, 74).

superior symmetry becomes more apparent if one imagines four equidistant lines extending from the figure's midpoint to its interior angles; in a triangle, only three such lines are possible.<sup>15</sup> The figure accommodating the greatest number of equal lines from centre point to perimeter is the circle. As the figure demonstrating maximal symmetry, the circle represents the ideal expression of equality.<sup>16</sup> Each successive polygon—triangle, square, and presumably also, pentagon and hexagon—forms an incremental improvement toward a more perfect equality, with the circle occupying the summit of this progression. As the most symmetrical of figures, the circle is best suited to represent the spiritual powers rendering the soul qualitatively superior to the quantitative bulk of the body. Even if the circle's area were less than that of a square, the circle would still be greater since its equality would render it aesthetically superior.<sup>17</sup> Yet, even more perfect and powerful than the circle is the indivisible point identifying the figure's centre and symmetry, since indivisible unity is prior to and more potent than all forms of extended dimension.<sup>18</sup> Significantly, Augustine and Evodius undertake these thought-experiments in the abstracted space of the mind's eye, without recourse to written diagrams or figures. Only mentally represented figures could achieve the perfected symmetry that Augustine seeks to illustrate.<sup>19</sup> Further, the soul's capacity to manipulate these interior representations illustrates its power over the dimensions defining material bodies.

What is the nature of these powers (*virtutes*) that foster the soul's greatness, enabling it to exceed all forms of corporeal measure? The Latin *virtus*

15. DQA 10.16 (Hörmann, 150–151; McMahon, 76–78).

16. DQA 11.17 (Hörmann, 151; McMahon, 78); and DQA 14.23 (Hörmann, 158–59; McMahon, 84–85).

17. DQA 16.27 (Hörmann, 163–65; McMahon, 88–89).

18. DQA 12.19 (Hörmann, 154; McMahon, 80); DQA 14.23 (Hörmann, 159; McMahon, 85); and DQA 17.30 (Hörmann, 167; McMahon, 91–92).

19. Cusa and Marsilio Ficino both appropriate this passage. Cusa applies Augustine's comparison of polygons to illustrate the qualitative difference between animal and human souls. The former are triangular, in so far as they include the three powers of growth, sensation, and imagination; the latter include these three as well as intellectual power, making human souls fuller, displaying a greater degree of equality; see *DLG* 38 (Senger, 43). Ficino relies on Augustine's scale of geometrical figures to illustrate that the soul grows to a more equal perfection (*aequalior*) through virtue: "Denique virtus animi est aequalitas quaedam, ut Magi tradunt, per quam animus et sibimet et ipsi vero bonoque consonat. Si quo pacto quadrangularis quaedam linea circularis efficiatur, perfectior evadet, non tamen quod longior fiat, sed quod aequalior;" see Ficino, *Platonic Theology* 8.2, ed. James Hankins and William Bowen, vol. 2. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 276.

can refer to power or to ethical virtue, and both meanings are at play in the dialogue. When Augustine describes the soul's *virtus* as "a certain equality of life completely in harmony with reason" whereby one "lives well and uprightly," he refers to ethical virtue.<sup>20</sup> When he describes the soul's power to form mental representations and engage in rational scrutiny, he refers to its cognitive powers.<sup>21</sup> These cognitive facilities are clearly of greatest interest to Augustine. He defines the soul specifically in terms of its reasoning aptitudes, arguing that this faculty not only distinguishes humanity from other creatures but also enables the soul to flourish.<sup>22</sup> While the body's growth is measured through height and mass, the soul grows by exercising its reason, which serves to extend and deepen the fullness of its knowledge. Augustine makes a distinction between reason (*ratio*), which identifies sound arguments, and reasoning (*rationari*), which applies reason through the discursive search for answers. The two capacities work in concert to strengthen the soul's interior powers.<sup>23</sup> The dialogue's preoccupation with discursive reason and mental representation reveals the young Augustine's conviction that the rational faculties are essential to the soul's maturation and perfection.

Reason is of critical importance within Augustine's schema because it represents a pivotal point between the soul's presence to its corporeal powers and its engagement with its own powers independent of the body. The final chapters of *De Quantitate Animae* present a seven-fold scale of the soul's cumulative aptitudes, leading from its maintenance of the body's vital systems to its mystical aspirations. The first two grades of growth and sensation pertain to the soul's corporeal powers; the following steps of reason and ethics describe the soul's engagement with its mental capacities. Finally, the three-fold movement

20. DQA 16.27 (Hörmann, 164; McMahon, 89): "virtus aequalitas quaedam esse vitae rationi undique consentientis [...] qui bene atque honeste vivit."

21. For the power (*vis*) of memory, see DQA 14.23 (Hörmann, 158; McMahon, 84): "Si autem te movet, cur tanta caeli, terrae marisque spatia memoria contineat, cum sit ipse nullius quantitatis: mira quaedam vis est." For the power of ratiocination and cogitation (*vim rationandi et excogitandi*), see DQA 33.72 (Hörmann, 220; McMahon, 139).

22. Augustine defines the soul as a rational power (DQA 13.22 [Hörmann, 158; McMahon, 83]); he defines humanity as rational animal (DQA 25.47 [Hörmann, 190; McMahon, 113]).

23. For discussion of the soul's growth through reason and learning, see DQA 16.28–20.34 (Hörmann, 165–74; McMahon, 90–97); and DQA 22.40 (Hörmann, 180; McMahon, 103). For the distinction between *ratio* and *rationari*, see DQA 27.52–53 (Hörmann, 197–200; McMahon, 118–21).



from tranquility to ascent and contemplation traces the soul's spiritual path toward divine mystery.<sup>24</sup> As this hierarchy of potencies illustrates, reason marks a threshold between the soul's detachment from the body and its entrance into ever-deepening mental processes leading toward interior truth. Augustine maintains that reason operates independently of sense experience, which he characterizes as an inferior faculty that even animals possess. The physical senses offer unfounded information, and so they distract the soul rather than assist it.<sup>25</sup> The soul grows in greatness as it withdraws from the material world and engages its rational powers, so as to learn from interior self-scrutiny and the illumination of grace.<sup>26</sup> Learning is not a process of ingesting sense impressions or knowledge from the external world but of recollecting understanding from within.<sup>27</sup> Regardless of whether Augustine intends to speak of recollection literally or figuratively, he clearly wishes to establish reason's autonomy from sense perception and the soul's independence from the body. Since materiality is perishable, reason is immutable, and the soul is immortal, the soul is strengthened by distancing itself from materiality and cultivating its interior reason.<sup>28</sup> In so doing, the soul initiates its own transformation and perfection.<sup>29</sup>

This detachment from the body is at once intensified and complicated in the subsequent stage following reason, namely, that of moral goodness (*bonitas*). In this fourth spiritual degree, the soul recognizes that its own immortality and mental capacities render it superior to the body and indeed to the entire material world.<sup>30</sup> And yet, despite this recognition, the soul nonetheless retains

24. DQA 33.70–76 (Hörmann, 218–25; McMahon, 136–44).

25. DQA 29.57 (Hörmann, 204; McMahon, 124): “Et omne, quod scimus, ratione scimus. Nullus igitur sensus scientia est.”

26. Stock, *Augustine's Inner Dialogue*, 42–43.

27. DQA 20.34 (Hörmann, 173; McMahon, 97): “nec aliud quicquam esse id, quod dicitur discere, quam reminisci et recordari.” Gerard O'Daly argues that Augustine did not believe in the soul's pre-existence and was speaking of recollection metaphorically; see “Did St. Augustine Ever Believe in the Soul's Pre-Existence?” *Augustinian Studies* 5 (1974) 227–35; for the converse, see R. J. O'Connell, “Pre-existence in the Early Augustine,” *Revue des études augustinienes* 26 (1980): 176–88.

28. DQA 17.30 (Hörmann, 167; McMahon, 91): “sed ad vim quandam, id est ad potestatem potentiamque animi relata recte intellegitur, virtus eo pluris aestimanda, quo plura contemnit.”

29. DQA 28.55 (Hörmann, 201; McMahon, 122): “sed ab his potius ad seipsam conligat [...] quod est novum hominem fieri vetere exuto.”

30. DQA 33.73 (Hörmann, 220–21; McMahon, 139).

its desire to remain with the body and within the world. In *De Quantitate Animae*, Augustine explains this corporeal attachment as rooted in the fear of death; however, in later works, as his Christian convictions ripen and deepen, Augustine writes appreciatively of the soul's love for the body and compassionate desire to care for it.<sup>31</sup> Thus, this fourth spiritual degree introduces the soul's desiderative, affective capacities, and with them a tension between reason and desire, between the recognition that the soul's greatness is limited by its material conditions and the desire to remain with the body even so. The soul remains rationally self-sufficient and yet compassionately present to the body.

The dialogue of *De Quantitate Animae* is situated on the threshold between the soul's rational/ethical powers, on the one hand, and its contemplative aptitudes on the other. Through the dialogue's philosophical exchange, Evodius and Augustine test the soul's rational powers as they mentally picture geometric figures, evaluate these static quantities, and refine their arguments and conclusions. By exercising their skills of reasoning, the interlocutors presumably bring about the very process of the soul's growth that they discuss. Augustine suggests as much when he explains that the dialogue's geometric thought experiments serve to strengthen reasoning and interior perception.<sup>32</sup> However, the final chapters of *De Quantitate Animae*, outlining the seven stages of the soul's progress, witness an abrupt stylistic change. The dialogic question and response is replaced by Augustine's monologic articulation of the soul's seven-fold flourishing: from its engagement with the material body to its interior quest for contemplative wisdom. This concluding reflection serves two purposes. First, it returns the dialogue to its point of departure, addressing Evodius's initial questions about the soul: what makes the soul great; what is the effect of its union with the body; what is the effect of its separation?<sup>33</sup> By now it is clear that the soul's greatness is fostered when it withdraws from the body to engage in higher forms of cognitive activity. Thus, the soul's final separation from the body does not signify death but rather the fulfillment of the soul's perfection, even though such perfection necessitates the painful departure from the body. Second, by outlining the contemplative reaches of the soul's powers,

31. *De Genesi ad Litteram* 12.35 and *Civitas Dei* 13.20. See Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 100–01.

32. *DQA* 15.25 (Hörmann, 161–62; McMahon, 87).

33. See note 6 above.

the concluding reflection gestures towards forms of thought extending beyond the dialogue's expressive capacities. This final movement to contemplative truth points toward an introspective silent dialogue, which takes place beyond the pages of the treatise and within the privacy of the soul's thought. The horizons of *De Quantitate Animae* extend beyond its own rational arguments, directing the soul to cultivate its own interior powers. Ultimately, the arguments of *De Quantitate Animae* are designed with a view to be abandoned and transcended, so that the soul would no longer need the external guidance of the text but would guide itself.

The dialogue of Cusa's *De Ludo Globi* takes place in the fictional context of a game of lawn bowling and, at first glance, this recreational setting may appear at odds with the geometrical thought experiments of *De Quantitate Animae*. In fact, Cusa's game serves a comparable function to Augustine's geometrical speculations, providing a framework that both offers analogies for the soul-body relationship and demonstrates the soul's unique powers. Cusa's dialogue revisits the questions of *De Quantitate Animae* regarding the soul: what makes the soul great; what is the effect of its union with body; what is the effect of its separation? Like Augustine, Cusa explores these questions analogically by comparing the geometric point and circle to the soul's powers. The critical difference between the dialogues is of course that Cusa situates these geometrical figures in the unpredictable flux of the physical world, thus transforming Augustine's abstracted representation of the perfect circle into the irregular spiralling motions of a spherical ball on a circular target range. Cusa's dialogical game is designed to engage the material world, and so the cardinal's articulation of the soul's powers embraces the very irregularities of the soul's material condition that Augustine's dialogue seeks to abandon. The dynamic and unpredictable context of a game captures Cusa's understanding of the soul as fundamentally creative and singular.<sup>34</sup> And yet, even while Cusa celebrates the soul's creative engagement with materiality, he also suggests that its ultimate desires lie beyond these creative impulses. Like the mental exercises of *De Quantitate Animae*, the ultimate goal of the lawn bowling game extends beyond the ludic exchange and toward the interior self.

34. Pauline Moffitt Watts, *Nicholaus Cusanus: A Fifteenth-Century Vision of Man* (Brill: Leiden, 1982), 230.

After establishing the context of the game, the dialogue of *De Ludo Globi* then considers the abstracted form of immaterial and indivisible "roundness," presumably because the ball, its movements, and the target range all represent embodied expressions of this circular form. Cusa explains that the circumference of roundness results from an indivisible point, which remains perfectly equidistant from the centre and invisible to the human eye.<sup>35</sup> As Hans Gerhard Senger notes in his critical apparatus to *De Ludo Globi*, the same heuristic device of an indivisible point is found in *De Quantitate Animae* 11.8.<sup>36</sup> For Augustine, the point's rudimentary nature entails a potency to extend into more complex forms, but the point also functions as a kind of anchor, marking the centre and symmetry of a geometrical shape.<sup>37</sup> As an indivisible entity that identifies symmetrical perfection, the point offers an effective illustration of the soul's powers over corporeal dimension. Cusa affirms the point's potency, but complicates Augustine's representation of static magnitudes, introducing the force of motion as a more fitting analogy to illustrate the soul's powers. Significantly, Cusa does not describe the point as a static anchor but as an *unfolding* force, whose movements cause it to be ubiquitously present throughout the perimeter.<sup>38</sup> Cusa highlights the dynamic potential of circular objects, in contrast to Augustine, for whom the circle represents symmetrical perfection and immutable reason.<sup>39</sup> For Cusa, the soul resembles roundness in so far as it is naturally suited to motion, since the soul moves the body as long as the flesh permits and persists in its intellectual movements even after the body fails.<sup>40</sup> Cusa grounds Augustine's abstracted circle in the material world, transforming it into a dynamic metaphor representing the vitality of the soul's self-movement.

35. *DLG* 8 (Senger, 9; Hopkins 1185): "Cum enim superficies a centro sphaerae undique aequae distet, extremitas rotundi in indivisibili puncto terminata manet penitus nostris oculis invisibilis. Nihil enim nisi divisibile et quantum a nobis videtur."

36. *DLG* (Senger, 23).

37. See note 18 above.

38. *DLG* 10 (Senger, 12; Hopkins, 1186).

39. Cusa emphasizes that round objects are best suited to perpetual motion, and so the point's continuous circling around the circumference suggests the soul's immortality; see *DLG* 21 (Senger, 24; Hopkins, 1191): "Forma igitur rotunditatis ad perpetuitatem motus est aptissima." See also Aristotle, *De Caelo* 2.3–8, 286a3–290b11 in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 1, Bollingen Series 71 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 472–79.

40. *DLG* 23–24 (Senger, 26–27; Hopkins, 1192).

Having identified the ideal of roundness and noted its suitability to motion, Cusa then applies the abstract perfection of roundness to the various forms of irregular circularity that constitute the game. The bowling ball is a deformed sphere, deliberately shaped with a concave depression that facilitates the ball's curved motion. When tossed, the ball's wobbling movements trace an irregular circular pattern on the playing field.<sup>41</sup> Likewise the field, designed as a series of concentric rings on the ground, is uneven and variegated with the subtle rises and depressions characteristic of any patch of earth. In addition to these three irregular forms of roundness, Cusa identifies additional factors of variability: cracks in the ball, pebbles on the pavement, and even changes in weather.<sup>42</sup> Drawing attention to the many inconsistencies complicating the game, Cusa departs from the Augustinian ideal of symmetrical perfection. Like the game ball's movements, the soul's powers are often shaped by its own terrestrially defined experience. The material inconsistencies rendering each game ball's motions unique and unpredictable are not dissimilar from the biographical particularities and historical circumstances that contour each individual's thought. Just as each pitch of the ball traces a singular and unrepeatable path, so too each individual soul has a unique capacity to launch his or her own innovative conjectures.

The dialogue then focuses on the game ball in play, interpreting its movements to illustrate the soul's powers with respect to the body and to itself. Cusa identifies two forms of the soul's motion: its animation of the body and its self-movement through mental representation, which it performs independently of the body.<sup>43</sup> The physical force of impetus, or the psychic force of the will, propels the ball, or individual, toward the intended target.<sup>44</sup> To illustrate the soul's power to animate the body, Cusa refers to the indivisibility and the ubiquity of the geometric point. The roundness of the ball consists of a single point, the

41. For a diagram of the *ludus globi* included in the Paris 1514 edition of Cusa's *Opera Omnia*, see Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus*, 201, as well as her edition of *The Game of Spheres* (New York: Abaris Books, 1986), 25.

42. DLG 6–7 (Senger, 7–8; Hopkins, 1184).

43. DLG 29 (Senger, 34–35; Hopkins, 1196): “Potest autem dici animam se movere dupliciter. Aut cum se facit causam motuum corporis, quod etiam facit dormiendo. Aut cum se facit similitudinem rerum, quod etiam facit extra corpus humanum.”

44. DLG 25 (Senger, 29; Hopkins, 1193). In his critical apparatus, Senger notes that Cusa's attention to impetus may show the influence of John Buridan (Senger, 25–26); however the analogy between impetus and the will is already briefly suggested in Augustine's *DQA*; see 22.37–38 (Hörmann, 176–78).

unfolding of which forms its circular shape.<sup>45</sup> In a similar way, the soul extends through the various parts of the body, while remaining inviolably unified. In a question that recalls *De Quantitate Animae*, Cusa's interlocutor John asks, "you seem to mean that in the body the soul is present at once in different places."<sup>46</sup> If this were so, then the soul would suffer partition in the manner of bodies and so would be diminished if the body were dismembered. Cusa clarifies this misconception, stating that the soul does not pass from one part of the body to another but is present in every part at once.<sup>47</sup> Relying on the Augustinian principle of an indivisible point, Cusa demonstrates that soul's power over the body's members does not compromise the soul's integrity.<sup>48</sup>

The soul not only animates the body but also moves itself by means of "the powers (*virtutes*) of living reason."<sup>49</sup> Just as the game ball's roundness facilitates that object's free movement, so too the soul's circular likeness indicates a disposition to self-motion. These powers or *virtutes* of the soul imply both ethical and cognitive acts. Cusa first draws attention to the rational power (*ratiocinari virtus*) of the soul's self-movement.<sup>50</sup> By means of reason, the soul evaluates quantities, understanding, for instance, that two is not equal to four.<sup>51</sup>

45. DLG 10 (Senger, 12; Hopkins, 1186): "Evolvere vero est punctum ipsum explicare, quod nihil aliud est quam punctum in atomis pluribus ita quod in singulis coniunctis et continuatis esse."

46. DLG 27 (Senger, 31; Hopkins, 1194): "Tu etiam videris dicere animam in corpore esse simul in diversis locis."

47. DLG 27 (Senger, 32; Hopkins, 1195): "non transit de una corporis particula ad aliam, cum sit simul in omnibus et singulis."

48. DLG 27 (Senger, 32; Hopkins, 1194): "Ipsa autem anima diversa corporis membra, quae in diversis locis sunt, vivificat [...] Tota igitur animae substantia, dum est in corpore, in diversis locis est." Cusa's contemporary Marcilio Ficino also relies on Augustine's *De Quantitate Animae* to argue for the soul's indivisibility; see *Platonic Theology* 7.5 (Hankins, 2.226–34), especially pp. 232–34, which directly correspond with DQA 32.67.

49. DLG 31 (Senger, 36; Hopkins, 1196): "Hae virtutes sunt vivae rationis, quae anima dicitur, et sunt vivae, quia sine motu vivae rationis non possunt esse."

50. DLG 28 (Senger, 32; Hopkins, 1195): "Ratiocinari virtus est animae." As outlined above, Augustine devoted considerable attention to the soul's rational powers. Augustine and Cusa are also united in understanding the soul's power to be not only rational but ethical. For an ethical interpretation of *De Ludo Globi*, see Hans Gerhard Senger, *Ludus Sapientiae: Studien zum Werk und zur Wirkungsgeschichte des Nikolaus von Kues* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 98–110.

51. DLG 28 (Senger, 33; Hopkins, 1195): "Aliqua est ratio perpetua et immutabilis, ut quod quattuor non sint duo, quia quattuor in se habent tria, quae non habent duo; igitur quattuor non sunt duo."

Reason enables the soul to quantify and calculate, which Cusa describes as the “measuring or numerical scale of motion.”<sup>52</sup> Further, reason enables the soul to unfold (*explicat*) from memory and compare all manner of geometric figures, points, circles, and polygons.<sup>53</sup> Drawing attention to the immaterial and enduring quality of geometric figures, Cusa affirms that the soul’s rational capacity to represent these measured forms interiorly testifies to the soul’s own immutability and transcendence, an argument derived from Augustine’s early dialogues.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, Cusa departs from Augustine by destabilizing the static framework of geometry and introducing dynamic metaphors for cognitive activity: the soul “runs by reasoning” and “is moved to reasoning from itself.”<sup>55</sup> Cusa turns his attention from immutable reason and toward the dynamic unfolding of creative mental acts; by doing so, the cardinal seeks to represent the soul’s activities as evolving and transformative, rather than as abstracted and unaffected by material change.

While Augustine had identified reason as humanity’s distinguishing attribute, Cusa asserts that creative freedom sets humanity apart from other creatures. Indeed he suggests that when human beings engage in creative acts, they most closely reflect the image and likeness of God.<sup>56</sup> Humanity’s distinctive ingenuity finds no better example than in the game itself: “I thought to invent (*invenire*) a game of wisdom (*ludum sapientiae*). No beast has the power of inventing a new game.”<sup>57</sup> Cusa identifies the *ludum sapientiae*, namely the

52. DLG 93 (Senger, 117; Hopkins, 1232): “sit ratio seu numerus motus.”

53. DLG 92 (Senger, 115; Hopkins, 1231): “Ex se notionalem multitudinis numerum explicat. Sic se puncto assimilat, qui complicit magnitudinem, ut de se notionales lineas, superficies et corpora explicet.” These metaphors of folding suggest the influence of Thierry of Chartres; for a reading of *De Ludo Globi*’s Chartrian debts, see Albertson, *Mathematical Theologies*, 270–76.

54. DLG 28 (Senger, 33; Hopkins, 1195); DLG 95 (Senger, 115–16; Hopkins, 1233). See also Augustine, *De Immortalitate Animae* 1.1.

55. DLG 28 (Senger, 33; Hopkins, 1195): “Dum autem ratio sic discurrit ratiocinando, utique ille discursus rationalis est.”

56. DLG 45 (Senger, 51; Hopkins, 1204), and DLG 93 (Senger, 117; Hopkins, 1232). According to Thomas A. Carlson, Cusa articulates an early modern understanding of humanity’s image and likeness. Human beings resemble the divine through their creativity; see *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and Creation of the Human Image* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 97–114.

57. DLG 31 (Senger, 35–36; Hopkins, 1196): “Cogitavi invenire ludum sapientiae [...] Nulla bestia talem habet cogitationem inveniendi ludum novum.”

philosophical dialogue of *De Ludo Globi*, as his own invention.<sup>58</sup> Yet in fact the dialogue represents the cardinal's creative repurposing of the lawn bowling game and not a new invention *per se*. His originality lies in the ludic framework of this philosophical exercise. Even the content of the treatise is derived from the cardinal's earlier writings.<sup>59</sup> As the example of *De Ludo Globi* illustrates, innovative thought is both derivative and original, relying on both memory and ingenuity. The term *invenire* means both to find and to invent, and so "innovation" suggests a memory-based exercise that finds and reconfigures the knowledge stored in the contents of thought.<sup>60</sup> When Cusa claims that the soul *invents* branches of learning, he means that individuals not only develop skills pertaining to geometry and music, for instance, but also make unique contributions to these disciplines.<sup>61</sup> Cusa's *De Ludo Globi* illustrates the derivative and innovative aspects of creativity. The dialogue draws upon Cusa's mental archive, utilizing his understanding of the bowling game, the quadrivium, Augustine's *De Quantitate Animae*, and his own earlier writings, in addition to many other medieval and ancient texts.<sup>62</sup> However, the dialogue refashions these sources into a new iteration, offering a playfully philosophical interpretation of the lawn bowling game. Creativity is experientially embedded, drawing upon the personal mental archive of one's accumulated experience and transforming these impressions into a newly fashioned form. For Cusa, it is not impersonal, abstracted reason but rather the uniqueness of applied creativity that gives the soul its power and dignity. Consequently, Cusa acknowledges individual expression in a way that the de-personalized psychology of *De Quantitate Animae* does not.

58. DLG 34 (Senger, 39; Hopkins, 1198): "Nam cum ego hunc ludum invenirem, cogatavi [...] quae alius nec cogitavit."

59. Albertson notes that the sole innovation of *De Ludo Globi* is the dialogue's formal structure (*Mathematical Theologies*, 267).

60. Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008), 237.

61. DLG 93–94 (Senger, 115–18; Hopkins, 1231–32).

62. For the dialogue's multidisciplinary synthesis of cosmology and theology, see David C. Albertson, "Mapping the Space of God: Mystical *Weltbilder* in Nicholas of Cusa and the Structure of *De ludo globi* (1463)," in *Weltbilder im Mittelalter: Perceptions of the World in the Middle Ages*, ed. Philipp Billion et al. (Bonn: Bernstein, 2009), 61–82 at 70–81; for an account of the ways in which the dialogue draws upon Cusa's earlier works, see Albertson's *Mathematical Theologies*, 255–76.



Cusa's interest in the uniqueness of the soul's thought follows naturally from the analogy of the game, which is constituted from a sequence of singular and unpredictable pitches, each of which is rendered unique by the irregular material conditions of the ball and terrain.<sup>63</sup> Having called his philosophical inquiry a "game of wisdom," Cusa encourages his reader to interpret the dialogic exchange of the philosophical conversation as mirroring the recreational exchange of pitches taking place within the bowling game, so that each cast of the ball represents the launching of a new conjecture. With each pitch, each ball traces a different pattern of curvature as it journeys toward its target, stopping at a distinctive point. Some pitches are more skilfully executed than others, with the more perfect ones landing closer to the Christological centre point of the target range.<sup>64</sup> The advantages of skill and practice apply not only to the game but to the philosophical exchange as well: Cusa's conjectures are more expert than those of John, since the cardinal is a seasoned interlocutor. John, as a neophyte, issues speculations more tentatively; yet through study and practice he might refine his thought so that his hypotheses more closely hit the philosophically just target.<sup>65</sup> Material irregularities in the ball and terrain affect the motion of each launched game ball; in a comparable way, variations in life history and education uniquely shape each interlocutor's knowledge base, resulting in a diversity of conjectures. Indeed, what makes both recreational and philosophical exchanges delightful is the variation and unpredictable quality of each participant's turn.<sup>66</sup> Cusa maintains a flexible evaluative standard of excellence that accommodates variation and individuality in a way that the Augustinian ideal of symmetrical consistency cannot. Many types of volleys are possible, with no one featuring as the archetype of excellence.<sup>67</sup> The game of wisdom does not present the ideal ball-toss, or the perfect response, or the model human existence. Cusa allows each ludic and philosophical movement to unfold uniquely through its distinctive trajectory. The cardinal's acceptance

63. *DLG* 54 (Senger, 60; Hopkins, 1209).

64. *DLG* 51 (Senger, 56–57; Hopkins, 1207); *DLG* 68–69 (Senger, 81–82; Hopkins 1217–18).

65. *DLG* 54 (Senger, 60; Hopkins, 1209).

66. *DLG* 50 (Senger, 55; Hopkins, 1206–07).

67. *DLG* 54 (Senger, 60; Hopkins, 1209): "Haec est summa mysteriorum huius ludi, ut discamus has inclinationes et naturales incurvationes taliter rectificare virtuoso exercitio, ut tandem post multas variationes et instabiles circulationes et incurvationes quiescamus in regno vitae."

of diversity and originality forms the most dramatic point of contrast between *De Ludo Globi* and *De Quantitate Animae*.

Despite Cusa's celebration of creativity, his Augustinian inclinations toward transcendence become ever more apparent when he considers the teleological significance of the game's target range as the site of the soul's ultimate desire and eternal rest. While Cusa affirms that the soul expresses its freedom in creative activity, he also affirms with Augustine that the soul is liberated when it withdraws from the material world.<sup>68</sup> These two claims to freedom are uneasily reconciled, since innovative thought draws upon the archive of one's personal history, while the intellectual/intelligible encounter with God necessitates the soul's self-distancing from its earthly identity. This tension between terrestrial and transcendent orientations is particularly evident in the playing field, as a conceptual space that both grounds Cusa's reflections in the material world and traces the soul's spiritual journey toward Christ. On the one hand, the playing field serves as a reminder of the imperfections of earthly life, with its irregularities and uncertain fortunes.<sup>69</sup> On the other, the field's sequence of nesting circles suggests the path to eternal beatitude, resembling the scale of celestial orbits structuring Dante's paradisaical journey, as well as the contemplative ascent of mental powers traced in Alan of Lille's *Sermon on the Intelligible Sphere*.<sup>70</sup> Most significantly, Cusa's spiritual playing field draws upon Augustine's scale of the soul's powers articulated in the final chapters of *De Quantitate Animae*. Like Augustine's scale, the nesting rings of *De Ludo Globi* point to interior goals located beyond the dialogical framework, within meditative silence. Both the dialogue of *De Ludo Globi* and the game of spheres inhabit a pivotal threshold, at once celebrating the singularity of human innovation within the material

68. For the soul's freedom in abstracting itself from the body, see DLG 31 (Senger, 36; Hopkins, 1197); for the soul's inventive freedom, which sets it apart from the animal kingdom, see DLG 34 (Senger, 39; Hopkins, 1198).

69. For the imperfections of earthly life, see DLG 58–59 (Senger, 66; Hopkins, 1211–12); for fortune see DLG 55 (Senger, 61; Hopkins, 1210).

70. E. J. Butterworth compares Cusa's dialogue to Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*; see "Form and Significance of the Sphere in Nicholas of Cusa's *De ludo globi*," in *Nicholas of Cusa: In Search of God and Wisdom. Essays in honor of Morimichi Watanabe by the American Cusanus Society*, ed. Gerald Christianson and Thomas M. Izbicki (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 89–100. H. Lawrence Bond notes structural affinities between Alan of Lille's mystical sermon and *De Ludo Globi*; see "The Journey of the Soul to God in Nicholas of Cusa's *De ludo globi*," in *Nicholas of Cusa: In Search of God and Wisdom*, 71–88.

world while also cultivating an attitude of detachment from the uniqueness of one's historical identity.

Cusa elucidates how the playing field represents a cumulative scale of the soul's tenfold powers, following Augustine's triadic division of the soul's corporeal, mental, and mystical aptitudes in *De Quantitate Animae*. Cusa's first four grades refer to the elemental and nutritive powers over the body, the next three—sensation, imagination, and reason—refer to the soul's own cognitive abilities, and the final powers trace the intelligible/intellectual search for the divine. These culminating mystical capacities are the most powerful and deeply embedded within the soul, seeking the primary cause for which the soul most deeply yearns.<sup>71</sup> In outlining this scale of powers, Cusa must acknowledge the limited good of human creativity, and of *De Ludo Globi* as an innovative expression, when compared to the central spiritual powers of intellectual meditation. The dialogue's conjectures and ludic innovations participate in the sensible, material universe, which functions as a shell concealing the immaterial vitality of the soul's interior awareness. Itemizing a series of binaries—light and darkness, distinction and confusion, flavour and blandness—Cusa conveys the disparity between the soul's inner powers and the limitations of materiality.<sup>72</sup> At this point, Cusa seems to follow Augustine's *De Quantitate Animae* in suggesting that the soul should distance itself from the body and the physical world in order to realize its full flourishing.

However, even while emphasizing the centrality of the soul's interior life, Cusa does not dismiss the value of the physical universe. The central target of the ludic dialogue represents not only the soul's highest power of intellectual intuition but also the game's Christological goal. As Cusa explains, the role of this intellectual power is to grasp the importance of God and of God's creatures, recognizing the divine nature as absolute and the material world as God's self-revelation.<sup>73</sup> As the spiritual power embracing appreciation of Creator and creatures, intellectual intuition fittingly coincides with the game's Christological target, since Christ, by his incarnated nature, unifies polarities of

71. For Cusa's ascending scale of the soul's power, see *DLG* 104 (Senger, 130–31; Hopkins, 1238–39); for the soul's desire for the primary Cause, see *DLG* 102 (Senger, 127; Hopkins, 1237).

72. *DLG* 105 (Senger, 132; Hopkins, 1239).

73. *DLG* 114 (Senger, 140; Hopkins, 1243–44).

creature and Creator, corporeal and spiritual, motion and rest, centre and circumference.<sup>74</sup> Because Christ is inseparable from God's maximal power, Christ represents both the source of created beings and their teleological goal in which they find their rest.<sup>75</sup> The soul's intellectual capacity empowers it to recognize the multiplicity of creatures as image-bearers reflecting the beauty and goodness of their divine creator.<sup>76</sup> Thus the soul does not grow simply by distancing itself from the material world but by reflecting upon its inner significance as the medium of God's self-expression. Cusa's meditation on the soul's power leads to a transcendent space in which detachment becomes a vantage point to evaluate the meaning of the material world as theophany. The dialogue's previous emphasis on human innovation is thus transformed into an appreciation of divine creativity, recognizing the limited good of one's individual expressions within a wider horizon of God's creative abundance. For Cusa, the movement within

74. *DLG* 75 (Senger, 88–89; Hopkins, 1221). For the way that Cusa's Christology in *De Ludo Globi* draws together the dialogue's various topics, see Albertson, *Mathematical Theologies*, 261–65.

75. As Bernard McGinn explains, for Cusa "creation is inherently Christological *both* in its beginning and its end—cosmogenesis is Christogenesis" (162). While Christ's historical existence as a creature may appear to contradict His role as the source of created life, Cusa explains that Christ's primacy derives from His nature and perfection. Christ is the maximal expression of the human microcosm; thus, it is through Him that the created beings filling the macrocosm have existence and through Him that those same beings return to God (Cusa, *De Docta Ignorantia* 3.3–4). As the lynch-pin uniting creation with the Creator, Christ reconciles the oppositions between God and the world, makes imminent God's transcendence, and gives a name to divine ineffability (Casarella, 290). Cusa continues to develop his Christology in later works. In *De Filiatione*, he describes the human intellect's ascent to the divine Word, revealing God's relation to created multiplicity (Albertson, 192–97). In *De Dato Patris Luminum*, he describes creation and the incarnation as mutually reinforcing revelations of Godself (Albertson, 197–204). For a more detailed account of Cusa's Christology, see Peter J. Casarella, "His Name is Jesus: Negative Theology and Christology in Two Writings of Nicholas of Cusa from 1440," in *Nicholas of Cusa on Christ and the Church: Essays in Memory of Chandler McCuskey Brooks for the American Cusanus Society*, ed. Gerald Christianson and Thomas M. Izbicki (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 281–307; Bernard McGinn, "Maximum Contractum et Absolutum: The Motive for the Incarnation in Nicholas of Cusa and his Predecessors," in *Nicholas of Cusa and his Age: Intellect and Spirituality: Essays Dedicated to the Memory of F. Edward Cranz, Thomas P. McTighe and Charles Trinkaus*, ed. Thomas M. Izbicki and Christopher M. Bellitto (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 151–75; and David Albertson, "That He Might Fill All Things: Creation and Christology in Two Treatises by Nicholas of Cusa," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8 (2006): 184–205.

76. This argument is developed in the minting analogy found in *DLG* 115–18 (Senger, 140–44; Hopkins, 1244–46).

the interior self engenders not a detachment from the physical world but rather a fuller appreciation of its significance.

This paradoxical movement of detachment and appreciation are found in the final passages of *De Ludo Globi*, where Cusa both hints obliquely at his imminent departure from this life and strongly affirms the value of the created world. Cusa's interlocutor, Albert, notes the approach of nightfall, and the cardinal speaks of the consequent need for departure: "there is no better way to say farewell (*valere*) to what I have said than to speak of Value (*valore*)."<sup>77</sup> However playful, this *jeux de mots* rings bittersweet with the cardinal's recognition that he has entered his twilight years and will soon say his final farewells. This departing movement in *De Ludo Globi* becomes an affirmation of creation's intrinsic worth. Comparing God to a minter and creatures to minted coins, Cusa highlights the beauty and significance of creatures, each having been stamped as valuable by the Creator Minter. As the soul undertakes this intellectual meditation on value, it finds the wealth of the universe to be present within itself.<sup>78</sup> Having affirmed the value of creation's multiplicity, Cusa's final words in *De Ludo Globi* return to the singular focus of the soul's yearning for the divine: "Commit to memory this specific point: there is but one true and precise and most sufficient form forming all things, shining forth variously in various signs."<sup>79</sup> Fittingly Cusa ends his dialogical *ludum sapientiae* with a meditation on the simple, formative, Christocentric point, which represents the goal of the *ludum globi*, the desired resting place of life's journey, and the summit of the soul's mystical powers. Cusa's final conjecture has hit its target, which not only brings the dialogue and the game to a close, but also anticipates his soul's imminent departure from this life.

Cusa's dialogue with *De Quantitate Animae* reveals a tension between the cardinal's humanism and mysticism, between his admiration for the self-expressive power of human ingenuity and the self-emptying practice that initiates the spiritual ascent. Cusa maintains the signature pieces of Augustine's geometric mental exercises, addressing similar questions about the soul, adopting the indivisible point and immutable circle as heuristic demonstrations of

77. DLG 110 (Senger, 137): "Et non incidit mihi, quomodo melius quae dixi valere faciam, quam si de valore loquar." The English translation follows that of Watts in her edition of *The Game of Spheres*, 115.

78. DLG 119 (Senger, 147; Hopkins, 1247).

79. DLG 121 (Senger, 149; Watts, 121): "Singularius tamen memoriae commenda, quomodo non est nisi una vera et praecisa ac sufficientissima forma omnia formans, in variis signis varie resplendens."

the soul's rational powers and immortality. By moving *De Quantitate Animae*'s arguments from the theoretical space of mental abstraction to the material and recreational space of a playing field, Cusa necessarily underplays Augustine's portrait of a rational, consistent, immutable soul, highlighting rather the ludic, dynamic, and creative qualities of the human spirit, as reflected through the unpredictable turns of the bowling game. Yet, despite these departures from Augustine's Neoplatonic meditations, Cusa returns to the same spiritual ladder of mystical ascent to argue that the soul's ultimate desire and fulfillment are found in God alone. While celebrating the ingenuity of the human spirit, Cusa ultimately acknowledges that its playful recreations, including the *ludum sapientiae* itself, represent a transitory means toward the soul's ultimate, transcendent aspirations. Thus, the inventive and elaborate analogies of *De Ludo Globi* must ultimately fold into the dialogue's monological conclusion, with its unadorned exhortation to reflect upon the primary cause of being. The greatness of the soul lies partially in its creative complexity, but more fundamentally in the simplicity of its desire for God.