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The *Fundamentum naturae* and the
Plato-Aristotle controversy in Nicholas of Cusa's
De docta ignorantia

Abstract

Fundamentum naturae is an anonymous text that Nicholas of Cusa († 1464) used as a source for drawing up his masterpiece *De docta ignorantia*, Book II, chapters 7–10. Here he discusses the Platonic notion of ‘soul of the world’ by applying his method of learned ignorance, thus presenting a cosmological doctrine that is to his mind ‘*prius inaudita*’: the universe is in itself a relational unit constituted as the image of the Trinity. In this paper, after introducing the content of *Fundamentum naturae* and considering the hypotheses still debated as to the identity of the author of the text and the cultural context in which it was written, I offer my own suggestions 1) about the hypothesis of M.J.F.M. Hoenen, who considers *Fundamentum naturae* to be a product of the University Albertism of the 15th century; 2) about the political reasons that led Nicholas of Cusa to “plagiarize” the work selectively, removing part of the original text that concerns the Aristotelian tradition, while adding some of his own considerations about Platonic philosophy, that appear, in my interpretation, to be polemical with regard to the Byzantine Platonists.

¹ This research was funded by the Department of Philosophy “Piero Martinetti” of the University of Milan under the Project “Departments of Excellence 2018–2022” awarded by the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR).