Soon after Franz Pfeiffer published his edition of Eckhart’s German sermons and treatises in 1857, scholars became interested in exploring the relationship between Meister Eckhart (1327) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64). An obvious, and frequently referenced, point of departure has been the interpretation of what Cusanus has to say about Meister Eckhart in his *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* (Defense of Learned Ignorance). Cusanus...
wrote his *Apologia* around 1449 in response to a 1442–43 polemic Johannes Wenck wrote, entitled *De ignota litteratura* (On Unknown Learning) in which the Heidelberg theologian attacked Cusanus’s early major work, *De docta ignorantia* (On Learned Ignorance) (1440). Wenck criticizes Cusanus for presenting unorthodox views of God, the creation, and Christ, and places Cusanus in the tradition of the condemned Beguines, Beghards, and Meister Eckhart. In particular, Wenck accuses Cusanus and Eckhart of pantheism and of confusing Christ with human nature in general.

Wenck begins by misstating Cusanus’s principle that, “All things coincide in God,” as “All things coincide with God.” He then goes on to say that, “This thesis is alluded to by Meister Eckhart.” Wenck then cites two passages from Eckhart that seem to assert the identity of the human soul with God. The first is taken from the *Book of Divine Consolation* and describes the man who “becomes empty” of creaturely images, and the second is taken from German Sermon 2, “Iesus intravit in quoddam castellum,” where Eckhart describes the “citadel” or “spark” in the soul. Wenck goes on to tie these teachings of Eckhart to the condemned Beghards and Beguines, who “were claiming (1) that God is, formally, whatever is and (2) that they were God—not being distinct [from Him] in nature.” Wenck then attempts to paint Cusanus as a pantheist in the same vein by referring to his assertion in *De docta ignorantia* that “Absolute Maximality is Absolute Being, in whose absence there cannot be anything” before immediately stating that “Eckhart, in his work on Genesis and Exodus, alludes to this [same point].” Wenck then goes on to cite two more passages from Eckhart: one, which asserted that “God is Being,” and another that insisted on the eternity of creation. Finally, Wenck accuses Cusanus of holding that all things are one and essentially divine, an error, he claims, that arises

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3 On the long delay between Wenck’s attack and Cusanus’s response, and the debate in the literature as to its cause, see Frost, 176–78.
8 Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, 1, 2, 6; 1, 6, 15.
10 The passages he cites are from the *Prologus generalis*, n.12 and *Expositio libri Genesis*, n. 7. They correspond to article numbers 36, 43 from *Proc. Col. I*. See Frost, 180.