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# The God beyond God: Theology and Mysticism in the Thought of Meister Eckhart\*

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To write about the relation of theology and mysticism is not an easy task. On the one hand, there are those who think that mysticism is by definition so foolish that the only wise word to be uttered about it is a word of dismissal; on the other, we have the virtually unanimous teaching of the mystics, Christian and non-Christian, that the goal of the mystic path, be it union with God, the universe, or some form of transformation or annihilation of our present condition, is beyond the power of human concepts or speech to describe. Despite these and other difficulties, there are figures in the history of Christian thought, and I intend to argue that Meister Eckhart was certainly among them, whose works compel us to take up the question of the theological status of mysticism and whose positions challenge us to test their coherence and validity in the light of our own theological programs.

An important qualification needs to be made at the outset. In this essay I do not intend to try to define mysticism, though I hope that the sense in which I will be using the term will gradually become clear. "Mysticism" is one of those words, like "religion" itself, which we all use and to some degree understand, but which proves difficult to define and therefore productive of endless methodological disputes. I have no wish to deny the importance of methodological questions, but the limits of this paper preclude any lengthy prolegomenon. While it may be possible and even useful to work out an abstract and therefore universal definition of a term that is, after all, an anachronistic one when

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applied to authors prior to the eighteenth century,<sup>1</sup> we must also be attentive to the work of recent scholars who have emphasized the variety of mysticisms present in world religions rather than the elusive search for a common core and definition of all mysticism.<sup>2</sup>

This paper is an attempt to analyze the theological character of one specific form of western Christian mysticism, that put forth by a German Dominican who died about 1328. Eckhart is arguably the most profound and influential, as well as the most controversial, late medieval mystical author. What makes Eckhart so specially suited for our theme is that no other figure combines as well as he the dual roles of professional theologian and mystical preacher and writer. A master at the University of Paris for two periods during the early fourteenth century and a teacher at the Dominican theologates at Strassburg and Cologne, he was also a powerful preacher (both in Latin and in the vernacular) who took as his central theme the union of God and the soul. The number of surviving manuscripts of his German sermons and treatises—let alone the numerous vernacular texts falsely ascribed to him—testify to his fame and influence as a preacher. To know Eckhart alone is not to know the whole of late medieval mysticism, but not to know Eckhart is to be virtually ignorant of the subject.

Interpretations of Eckhart over the centuries have been deeply colored by the posthumous papal condemnation in 1329 of twenty-eight propositions drawn from his works. Many interpreters who have stressed the distance between Eckhart's thought and traditional Christian belief have taken considerable delight in the condemnation, but their own expositions of Eckhart frequently seem to be motivated by concerns that are quite distant from those of the Dominican's own Christian theological positions. Even those who have sought to understand the Meister within the framework of his own thought, however, have had considerable difficulty in giving us Eckhart whole. This is illustrated by the continuing debate over the relative weight to be accorded the Latin and the Middle High German works in interpreting the Meister. Scholars who have sought to rescue Eckhart from misinterpretations largely founded on readings of the vernacular works have tended to stress the importance of the Latin treatises as the key to his careful and mature thought,<sup>3</sup> but their approach has not been convinc-

<sup>1</sup>The first appearance of "mysticism" in English noted in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is dated 1736.

<sup>2</sup>See the papers in S. T. Katz, *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), and esp. the remarks on p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>This approach was begun by H. Denifle, who first uncovered Eckhart's Latin writings at the end of the last century. For a survey of the history of Eckhart scholarship, see I. Degenhardt, *Studien zum Wandel des Eckhartbildes* (Leiden: Brill, 1967).

ing to those who, while admitting the importance of the Latin works, claim that Eckhart's true originality and real influence must be sought in the more lively vernacular sermons and treatises.<sup>4</sup> My purpose is to try to break through this conflict of interpretations and to present the broad lines of the integral Eckhart.

One classic entry into the problem of Eckhart's thought is through the investigation of the distinction between the manifested trinitarian God and the hidden Godhead. To choose this route is not to deny the validity of other ways of approaching the unity of Eckhart's thought. His writings display a coherent, if at times obscure, system, and hence no key issue can be fully understood in isolation from the whole; but there are distinct advantages to choosing this route that I hope will become evident below.

In a number of the vernacular sermons the Meister distinguishes between God and the Godhead or between God and God.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in the famous sermon 52, "Blessed Are the Poor," he says: "Therefore, we beg God to rid us of God so that we may grasp and eternally enjoy the truth where the highest angel and the fly and the soul are equal."<sup>6</sup> In sermon 83 we read: "When [the soul] sees God as he is God or as he is form or as he is three, there is something inadequate present in it; but when all forms are detached from the soul and she gazes only upon the One alone, then the pure being of the soul finds that it bears hidden in itself the pure formless being of divine unity that is being beyond being."<sup>7</sup>

This distinction between the trinitarian God and the hidden unity of the Godhead might be interpreted as a breakthrough beyond Christian trinitarianism to a form of mystical unitarianism.<sup>8</sup> One recent interpreter has seen Eckhart's language of breakthrough as a foretaste of the death of the metaphysical notion of God in modern existentialist

<sup>4</sup>Two recent works make this claim: R. Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1978); p. xii (hereafter cited as *Meister Eckhart*); and J. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978), pp. 161, 230 (hereafter cited as *The Mystical Element*).

<sup>5</sup>For an introduction to this distinction, see S. Ueda, *Die Gottesgeburt in der Seele und der Durchbruch zur Gottheit* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1965), pp. 113–19.

<sup>6</sup>Predigt (hereafter Pr.) 52, as found in J. Quint et al., eds., *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936–) (hereafter *Die deutschen Werke* will be abbreviated as *DW* and *Die lateinischen Werke* as *LW*). This text is to be found in *DW* 2:493.7–9. The translation used is that of Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart*, p. 216, with one emendation.

<sup>7</sup>*DW* 3:437.11–438.1 (here and throughout, the translation is the author's unless otherwise noted).

<sup>8</sup>D. T. Suzuki's remarks in *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1957), pp. 13–15, 19–20, seem to come close to this position.

philosophy.<sup>9</sup> Further, the fact that the distinction appears primarily in the vernacular works might seem to confirm the views of those who contrast the originality of the German preacher with the at least relative sobriety of the university professor. A study of both the Latin and the German works, however, enables us to see the shortcomings of these interpretations and to grasp something of the coherence of Eckhart's system.

Like all medieval theologians, Eckhart saw himself as a follower of Augustine. In his defense of his teaching first at Cologne and then at Avignon there was no authority to whom he appealed more frequently than to the bishop of Hippo.<sup>10</sup> But among the many Augustines, or many aspects of Augustine, the one that was nearest to Eckhart's heart was the Augustine of the *Soliloquies* who addressed Reason in the following dialogue:

A(UGUSTINE): Behold, I have prayed to God. R(EASON): What then do you wish to know? A: All the things I have prayed for. R: Sum them up in brief. A: God and the soul, that is what I desire to know. R: Nothing more? A: Nothing at all.<sup>11</sup>

God and the soul—that too is what Eckhart desired to know. Nothing more, but nothing less either. At one place in the fifty-third of the German sermons the Meister summarizes the content of his preaching in terms of four general themes that are really aspects of the correlative mysteries of God and the soul:<sup>12</sup> "When I preach I always speak of detachment (*abegescheidenheit*) and that man shall be free of himself and of all things. Second, that man shall be formed anew (*ingebildet*) in the simple goodness that is God. Third, that man shall think of the great nobility that God has bestowed on the soul in order that he miraculously come to God. Fourth, [I speak of] the purity of the divine nature—any brightness that is in the divine nature is ineffable. God is a word, a word that is not spoken."<sup>13</sup> Eckhart's proclamation of the necessity of inner detachment from the self and from all created things is a necessary precondition to union with God because only a

<sup>9</sup>Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart*, pp. 165, 213. Schürmann does admit, however, that Eckhart's intention was not that of modern atheism (pp. 117–18).

<sup>10</sup>See my paper, "Eckhart's Condemnation Reconsidered," *Thomist* 44, no. 3 (1980): 390–414.

<sup>11</sup>Augustine *Soliloquies* 7, trans. of C. C. Starbuck, in *Basic Writings of St. Augustine*, ed. W. J. Oates (New York: Random House, 1948), 1:262.

<sup>12</sup>The Meister frequently noted that both God and the soul were ineffable: e.g., Pr. 17 (*DW* 1: 242), Pr. 77 (*DW* 3:337–38), and Sermo 55.4 (*LW* 4:458).

<sup>13</sup>*DW* 2:528.3–529.2. For a consideration of these four themes, see Schürmann, "Eckhart and Soto Zen on Releasement," *Thomist* 42, no. 2 (1979): 285–312.

totally naked soul can receive the naked hidden God — “the greater the nudity, the greater the union.”<sup>14</sup> Man must make a pilgrimage into the desert within him in order to encounter the wilderness (*einoede, wüestunge*) of the hidden Godhead.<sup>15</sup> Perfect union with God on the one hand is a reformation, a recreation, a remaking (*inbilden*) of man back into the simple ground of God; on the other, it is a recognition of the godlike nobility that the soul never loses, an intellectual conversion to the noble part of the soul that Eckhart speaks of as the *vünkelin*, the *bürgelin*, or the *grunt*.<sup>16</sup> Finally, since the soul is truly divine in its innermost ground, and since the goal of life is the attainment not just of similarity and unity but of true and undifferentiated oneness with God,<sup>17</sup> the pure ineffability of the divine nature will always be the most fundamental theme of the mystical preacher’s message. These four themes suggest that we must begin with the study of the problems of Eckhart’s language about the divine nature in order to be able to understand the specific character of his teaching on the nature and destiny of the soul.

The most evident problems in Eckhart’s language about God, as I have suggested elsewhere,<sup>18</sup> are three: first, the relation between *esse* (“existence”) and *intelligere* (“understanding”) as terms used of God; second, the God/Godhead distinction that is our central topic of concern; and third, the problems of Eckhart’s teaching on the birth of God as Son or Word in the soul. The solution of each of these problems mutually implies the others, and a study of these implications can point the way toward an integral understanding of what Eckhart thought about God and the soul.

The paradoxes of Eckhart’s language about God cannot be solved on the basis of the vernacular works. While many key themes of his

<sup>14</sup>*Liber parabolorum Genesis* (*In Gen.* II), n. 32 (*LW* 1:501.4).

<sup>15</sup>The desert metaphor occurs primarily in the German works, where it is usually applied to God and only occasionally to man. See Pr. 10 (*DW* 1:171.15 and 1:172.1), Pr. 12 (*DW* 1:193.4), Pr. 28 (*DW* 2:66.6) (an application to the soul), Pr. 29 (*DW* 2:77.1), Pr. 48 (*DW* 2:420.9), Pr. 60 (*DW* 3:21.1–2), Pr. 81 (*DW* 3:400.4), Pr. 86 (*DW* 3:488.19), and the *Liber benedictus* (*Lib. ben.*) (*DW* 5:119.2–7). In the Latin works we find it in *In Gen.* II, n. 149 (*LW* 1:618.11–619.1).

<sup>16</sup>These metaphors for the innermost part of the soul have been widely discussed in the Eckhart literature. For a survey of their meanings, see B. Schmoldt, *Die deutsche Begriffssprache Meister Eckharts* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1954).

<sup>17</sup>Eckhart says that the soul does not seek the uniting of two things that remain distinct, but the true union in which no distinction can be found (e.g., *Expositio libri Sapientiae* [*In Sap.*], n. 282 [*LW* 2:614–15]). In the German sermons the same point is made at length in Pr. 64 (*DW* 3:86–90).

<sup>18</sup>See my paper, “Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity,” to be published in the proceedings of the International Conference on Neoplatonism in the History of Christian Thought held in Washington, D.C., in October 1978.

discussion of the divine nature find striking expression in the German sermons and treatises, their inner coherence is available to us only through the Latin writings, especially the technical questions and commentaries.<sup>19</sup> This is a good example of the symbiotic relation that obtains between the two sides of the Meister's literary production. The Latin works are designed primarily, but not solely, to lay out the major themes of a systematic speculative theology, while the vernacular works have as their purpose the communication of the religious implications of this theology to a broader audience.<sup>20</sup>

The initial problem, though, is that the technical Latin works themselves seem confused or contradictory in the way in which they speak of God. The early *Parisian Questions* deny the Thomistic identity of *esse* and *intelligere* in God to argue for the supremacy of the latter. "I declare," Eckhart writes, "that it is not my present opinion that God understands because he exists, but rather that he exists because he understands. God is an intellect and understanding, and his understanding itself is the ground of his existence."<sup>21</sup> But the prologue to his unfinished masterwork, the *Opus tripartitum*, places *esse est Deus* ("God is existence") as the first theological axiom from which all else flows.<sup>22</sup> When we read through the sermons and treatises, both Latin and German, we find numerous texts that identify God with pure existence (*esse* or *lûter wesen*, etc.),<sup>23</sup> but others that claim that we must get beyond existence in order to enter the true divine realm.<sup>24</sup> Despite these con-

<sup>19</sup>The key texts in the *LW* for Eckhart's treatment of the divine nature are the *Parisian Questions*, the prologues to the *Opus tripartitum*, and the dialectical texts to be found in *LW* 2:110–17, 270–90, and 481–94.

<sup>20</sup>It is instructive to note the interplay of themes between the two sides of Eckhart's literary oeuvre. Some basic issues, such as the birth of the Son in the soul, the distinction between God and the Godhead, and the desert motif, occur largely in the German works, but have parallels, implicit or explicit, in the Latin writings; others, such as the analysis of the relation between the just man and justice, the dialectic of distinction and indistinction, and the notion of the negation of negation, are more prevalent in the technical scholastic treatises. Some omnipresent concerns, such as the advantages and disadvantages of *esse* (*wesen*) as language for God, are equally present on both sides.

<sup>21</sup>*LW* 5:40.5–7.

<sup>22</sup>Both the *Prologus generalis* and the *Prologus in opus propositionum* advance this position (*LW* 1:156–65 and 1:166–82).

<sup>23</sup>E.g., *Expositio libri Genesis* (*In Gen.* I), n. 143 (*LW* 1:297); *Expositio libri Exodus* (*In Exod.*), nn. 14–21, 51, 161–69 (*LW* 2:20–28, 55, 142–48); *In Sap.*, n. 112 (*LW* 2:449); *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem* (*In Io.*), n. 60 (*LW* 3:49–50); Sermo 4.1 (*LW* 4:24–25). In the German works, see Pr. 39 (*DW* 2:266), Pr. 77 (*DW* 3:339–41), *Lib. ben.* 1 (*DW* 5:28–29), and *Von abegescheidenheit* (*Von ab.*) (*DW* 5:431).

<sup>24</sup>E.g., Sermo 11.2 and Sermo 29 (*LW* 4:112, 270). In the German works, see Pr. 71, Pr. 82, and Pr. 83 (*DW* 3:231, 431, 442), as well as *Von ab.* (*DW* 5:423).



trasts, there is a coherent structure to Eckhart's language about God. It is to be found by an analysis of the way in which a dialectical understanding of God as *unum* (this is, the One, or Absolute Unity) resolves the antinomies of God as *esse* and God as beyond *esse*. A study of the Meister's theories of predication and analogy inelectably leads toward a Neoplatonic dialectic that receives an explicit treatment in a number of places in the Latin works, most notably in his commentary on Wisd. 7:27: "And since Wisdom is one, it can do all things."<sup>25</sup>

In this text Eckhart shows how the dialectical consideration of the term *unum* gives us the clearest insight into how God can be at once indistinct, or immanent, in all things at the same time as and precisely insofar as he is completely distinct from, that is, transcendent to, all things.<sup>26</sup> The key to the analysis is to understand *unum* as the "not-to-be-distinguished." That is its *distinguishing* mark. To conceive of God as *unum* is to conceive of him as simultaneously distinct and indistinct, at once immanent and transcendent. "Everything that is distinguished by indistinction is the more distinct insofar as it is indistinct, because it is distinguished by its own indistinction. Conversely, it is the more indistinct insofar as it is distinct, because it is distinguished by its own distinction from indistinction. Therefore, it will be the more indistinct insofar as it is distinct and vice-versa. But God is something indistinct distinguished by his indistinction."<sup>27</sup>

The dialectic of *unum* manifests the way in which *esse* can be affirmed of God. *Esse* can be understood in two ways. When it is used primarily as a general metaphysical term applicable to created reality, as in the *Parisian Questions*,<sup>28</sup> it implies division and posteriority and hence is less suitable to God than is the term *intelligere*. But when *esse* is understood transcendently, that is, as signifying the reality of God and cosignifying the nothingness of creatures, it is legitimately affirmed of the ineffable God. By noting the dialectical character of these two understandings (what is affirmed of God must be denied of creatures and vice versa) the nature of the relation between *esse* and *unum* begins to come clear. Eckhart tells us that *unum* as the "not-to-be-distinguished" is a term that is negative in appearance only. Its reality is positive — not

<sup>25</sup>For a more detailed treatment of Eckhart's dialectic and its relation to Christian belief, see my "Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity."

<sup>26</sup>*In Sap.*, nn. 144–57 (*LW* 2:481–94). See the discussion of this text in V. Lossky, *Théologie négative et connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris: Vrin, 1960), pp. 261–65.

<sup>27</sup>*LW* 2:490.4–7. *In Io.*, n. 99 (*LW* 3:85), and a variety of other texts also teach that God is distinguished by his indistinction. A similar dialectic informs Nicholas of Cusa's treatise *De non aliud*.

<sup>28</sup>E.g., *LW* 5:47.7: "Unde statim venimus ad esse, venimus ad creaturam."



a negation, but “the negation of negation which is the purest affirmation and the fullness of the term affirmed.”<sup>29</sup> Hence it signifies the purity and core of meaning of transcendental *esse* better even than *esse* itself does by revealing the immanence hidden in transcendence.<sup>30</sup>

In a similar way, the dialectical understanding of *unum* shows us how *intelligere* in some contexts can be used as the preferred term for God. What does “understand” mean if not to become one with what is understood?<sup>31</sup> *Intelligere* transcendently understood signifies the perfect oneness that is found in God alone. As the Meister put it in a well-known Latin sermon: “The one God is intellect and intellect is the one God.”<sup>32</sup> But *intelligere* taken by itself does not display the mutual implication of both poles of the dialectic as explicitly as does the term *unum*.

What is the relation of the soul to God considered as the *unum* who is at once *esse* and *intelligere*? For Eckhart the soul finds its true beatitude in knowing God, that is, becoming one with him in a transcendental union. There are many ways in which Eckhart discusses how this union is to be achieved. The most striking of these, omnipresent in the German sermons,<sup>33</sup> more sparsely treated elsewhere,<sup>34</sup> is that of the birth of the Son in the soul.<sup>35</sup> Over and over again Eckhart speaks of the Father’s eternal begetting of the Son in that noble part of the soul that stands outside place and time. He often expresses this in terms that seem to deny any distinction between the self and the Son, and at times even the distinction between the self and the Father, as in German sermon 6, where we read: “The Father gives birth to the Son unceasingly, and I say yet more—he gives birth to me as his Son and the self-same Son. I say further that he gives birth to me not only as his Son, he

<sup>29</sup>*LW* 2:485.5–7. With the exception of Pr. 21 (*DW* 1:361–63), the negation of negation appears explicitly only in the Latin works. The Latin writings also contain analogous formulations, such as the notion of *quies* as the *privatio privationis* in *In Gen.* I, n. 158 (*LW* 1:306).

<sup>30</sup>*LW* 2:486.3–5. The same conclusion can be found in the German works, especially in those statements that emphasize *ein* or *einicheit* as the *grund des wesens* (e.g., Pr. 13 in *DW* 1:219).

<sup>31</sup>The *esse* of the intellect is an *esse ad aliud*, i.e., one aimed at oneness with the object (e.g., Sermo 14.2 in *LW* 4:144).

<sup>32</sup>Sermo 29 (*LW* 4:270.1–2).

<sup>33</sup>It is found in Pr. 2, 4, 5b, 6, 11, 14, 19, 22, 25, 28–31, 38, 39, 40–42, 44, 46, 49, 50, 59, and 75 (more important treatments italicized).

<sup>34</sup>In the German treatises we find it in the *Lib. ben.* 1 (*DW* 5:11–12, 41). In the Latin works, see *In Gen.* II, n. 180 (*LW* 1:650), *In Sap.*, nn. 281, 283 (*LW* 2:613, 615–16), and *In Io.*, nn. 118–19 (*LW* 3:103–4).

<sup>35</sup>Virtually every major study of Eckhart has something to say on this topic. For the sake of brevity, I mention only the work of Ueda referred to above (n. 5) and the study of K. Kertz, “Meister Eckhart’s Teaching on the Birth of the Divine Word in the Soul,” *Traditio* 15 (1959): 327–63.

gives birth to me as himself and himself as myself, and myself as his being and nature.”<sup>36</sup> Three passages of this nature were included in the papal condemnation.<sup>37</sup> Eckhart was at least equally daring in insisting that the Father not only eternally begets the Son in the soul, but also that the soul itself, after it has become a virgin by stripping itself of all things through detachment, must go further and become a wife, that is, must in turn beget the Son with the Father and beget itself as the selfsame Son in the Father.<sup>38</sup> While Eckhart’s language here may seem pantheistic, we must note that the birth of the Son or Word in the soul has deep roots in Christian thought<sup>39</sup> and that a number of interpreters have stressed the conformity of Eckhart’s views with Christian teaching on the divinizing power of grace.<sup>40</sup>

This is not the place to attempt an investigation of the question of whether or not Eckhart’s notion of the birth of the Son in the soul is pantheistic or not. For our purposes it is more important to note that the peculiar twist that Eckhart’s doctrine of divinization took was primarily due to the fact that for him “gottes grund und der sele grund ain grund ist” (“God’s ground and the soul’s ground is one ground”).<sup>41</sup> The Father gives birth to the Word in the soul and the Father and the Son together engender the Subsistent Love that is the Holy Spirit there because in its deepest reality the source of the trinitarian processions is one with the source of the soul. This insight enables us to solve at least one of the paradoxes connected with the birth of the Son in the soul in the Meister’s writings, and it will also have implications for the related paradox of the God/Godhead distinction. It has long been noted that there is another series of texts in Eckhart that seems to say that it is the soul’s breakthrough (*durchbruch*) to the hidden Godhead rather than the birth of the Son that is the ultimate goal of the mystic

<sup>36</sup>*DW* 1:109.7–10.

<sup>37</sup>Bull *In agro dominico*, propositions 20–22.

<sup>38</sup>E.g., Pr. 2 (*DW* 1:27–32). The root of this is Eckhart’s claim that being born and bearing (i.e., being a mother) are dialectically inseparable (e.g., Pr. 76 in *DW* 3:325). This teaching is the foundation of many of the paradoxical statements, found especially in the vernacular works, to the effect that man is in some way responsible for the Godhead of God (e.g., Pr. 14 in *DW* 1:240 and Pr. 52 in *DW* 2:486–506).

<sup>39</sup>See H. Rahner, “Die Gottesgeburt: Die Lehre der Kirchenväter von der Geburt Christi im Herzen der Gläubigen,” *Zeitschrift für katholischen Theologie* 59 (1935): 333–418.

<sup>40</sup>See esp. the article of Kertz referred to above. It should be noted that Eckhart argued that he intended nothing more than what the Fathers had said about the divinization of man, and he frequently quoted a favorite text from Augustine (*In ep. Io. ad Parthos*. 2.14; see *Patrologia Latina* 35, 1997) in this connection (e.g., *LW* 2:174, 355; *LW* 3:40; *LW* 4:462; and *DW* 2:238–39, 278, 343).

<sup>41</sup>Pr. 15 (*DW* 1:253.5–6). See also Pr. 5b, Pr. 10, and Pr. 24 (*DW* 1:90, 162, 415).

path.<sup>42</sup> Such texts could also be used to confirm the interpretations of the God/Godhead distinction that see in it an at least inchoate abandonment of the Christian doctrine of God. But the teaching that God and the soul have one ground provides the clue to the mutual relation of the two themes of birthing and breakthrough that J. Caputo has recently pointed out: “We have therefore two contrasting formulations of the relationship between the breakthrough to the Godhead and the birth of the Son. In the one, the breakthrough to the Godhead is *more radical* than the birth of the Son and indeed the ground and basis of it. In the other, the birth of the Son *crowns* and *perfects* the unity with the Godhead as fruitfulness perfects virginity.”<sup>43</sup> Because the soul has broken through and become one with “das vinsterniss oder das vnbekanntnis der verborgenen gothait,”<sup>44</sup> it must always be giving birth to the Son. A number of texts in the vernacular sermons speak of this, none more hauntingly than a passage from sermon 71: “When the soul comes into the One, entering into pure loss of self, it finds God as in Nothingness. It seemed to a man that he had a dream, a waking dream, that he was great with Nothingness as a woman with child. In this Nothingness God was born. He was the fruit of Nothingness; God was born in Nothingness.”<sup>45</sup>

What is the relation between this “Nothingness,” this “verborgene gothait,” and the three Persons of the Christian Trinity? Is the God beyond God with which the ground of the soul is one a move beyond Christianity implying a sort of mystical atheism?<sup>46</sup> Though it must be admitted that in seeking to express the mystery of the relation of the Trinity and the Unity in God Eckhart strains language to its limits, I do not think that this is the case.

The first thing we must note is Eckhart’s constant protestation of the absolute ineffability of God.<sup>47</sup> In the long and hallowed tradition

<sup>42</sup>The literature on the breakthrough motif is extensive, and the texts are many. For a few classic passages, see Pr. 26, Pr. 29, and Pr. 52 (*DW* 2:31–32, 76–77, 504–5), and Pr. 69 (*DW* 3:178–80). For background and discussion, see Ueda.

<sup>43</sup>J. Caputo, “Fundamental Themes of Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” *Thomist* 42, no. 2 (1978): 197–225 (quotation from p. 224) (hereafter cited as “Fundamental Themes”). See also his discussion in *The Mystical Element* (n. 4 above), pp. 127–34, as well as Ueda, p. 145.

<sup>44</sup>Pr. 15 (*DW* 1:253.1).

<sup>45</sup>*DW* 3:224.4–225.1.

<sup>46</sup>The phrase “mystical atheism” is from Caputo, “Fundamental Themes,” p. 211.

<sup>47</sup>To cite just a few examples: *In Ex.*, nn. 45–78, 170–84, sections that form two important treatises on the divine names (*LW* 2:50–82, 148–58); *Sermones et lectiones super Ecclesiastici c. 24:23–31* (*In Eccli.*), nn. 62–63 (*LW* 2:291–93); *In Io.*, nn. 195, 206 (*LW* 3:163, 173); *Sermones* 4.2, 21.2, 37, and 55.4 (*LW* 4:31–32, 112, 320, 458); Pr. 7 (*DW* 1:123); Pr. 51 and Pr. 53 (*DW* 2:476–77, 529); Pr. 76 and Pr. 83 (*DW* 3:322–24, 441–42).

of Christian negative theology, the Meister takes a special case, not only for the intricate dialectic of his technical expositions of the limitations of our knowledge of God, but also for the poetic daring with which he proclaimed this to his vernacular audience. “How then should I love him [God]?” Eckhart asks his audience. “You should love him as he is—a non-God, a non-Spirit, a non-Person, a non-Image. Yet more, [you should love him] insofar as he is a sheer, pure and clear Absolute Unity differentiated from all duality. Let us eternally sink down into this Unity from something to nothing.”<sup>48</sup> From the standpoint of such negation, neither Trinity nor Unity are fully adequate terms to give knowledge of a God who is “one without unity and three without trinity.”<sup>49</sup>

The divine ineffability did not reduce Eckhart to silence, any more than it did the authorities upon whom he relied. A favorite Augustine citation of the Dominican was from *On Christian Doctrine* 1.6, where the bishop of Hippo had pondered the paradox of statements about the ineffable, remarking: “If what is said were ineffable, it would not be said. And for this reason God should not be said to be ineffable, for when this is said something is said. A contradiction in terms is created, since if that is ineffable which cannot be spoken, then that is not ineffable which can be called ineffable.”<sup>50</sup> To understand how Eckhart dealt with this paradox we must be constantly attentive to the interlacing complexity of all the ways he uses language when he speaks of God. The technical virtuosity of the Latin works and the lyrical outbursts of the vernacular writings provide strategies not for expressing what is inexpressible but for suggesting what lies beyond speech. Each strategy is partial—the two sides of the corpus are meant to be complementary, but even in combination they do not give us a doctrine in the sense of a set of truths to be summarized, or a map of any terrain.<sup>51</sup> They are more pointers toward a horizon that continually eludes us.

The God/Godhead distinction as found in the German works is by no means uniform. Frequently, it is used to distinguish the Father as the source of the other Persons of the Trinity, as when we read: “The Father is an origin of the Godhead for he comprehends himself in

<sup>48</sup>Pr. 83 (*DW* 3:448.7–9).

<sup>49</sup>Sermo 11.2 (*LW* 4:112.6).

<sup>50</sup>Augustine *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson (New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1958), p. 11.

<sup>51</sup>A similar point is made regarding Aquinas’ discussion of God by D. Burrell, *Aquinas: God and Action* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), esp. chap. 3.

himself.”<sup>52</sup> Such usages can be squared with traditional trinitarian theology and bring Eckhart close to a number of his immediate predecessors, such as Bonaventure.<sup>53</sup> At other times, however, this language is invoked in more radical fashion to distinguish between the three Persons and their hidden ground, the God beyond God mentioned in sermon 52. Among the passages in this vein, there is a striking text from sermon 48, whose splendor is unfortunately much diminished in translation: “I intend to say something else that sounds even more astonishing. I say on the basis of solid truth, eternal truth, perpetual truth, that this same light (the spark of the soul) is not satisfied with the simple immobile divine being that neither gives nor takes. Further, it wants to know where this being comes from. It wants to penetrate to the simple ground, the silent desert where distinction never gazed, where there is neither Father, nor Son, nor Holy Spirit.”<sup>54</sup>

It has been said that the God beyond God problem does not arise in the Latin works.<sup>55</sup> This is not really true, since not only are there some passages that parallel the first form of the German sermons, where, following the authority of Augustine, unity is ascribed to the Father as the origin and source of the divinity of the other Persons;<sup>56</sup> but there is also a series of texts that offer at least an analogy to the second form by distinguishing between the Trinity and its ground, the divine essence or substance, according to the four transcendental terms.<sup>57</sup> It is necessary to turn to a variety of passages in the Latin works in order to put this second class of statements, those distinguishing between Trinity and ground, in the proper theological perspective. A brief consideration will also suggest that the God beyond God of the vernacular writings is a special form of the way in which the Meister

<sup>52</sup>Pr. 15 (*DW* 1:252.2–3). For similar texts, see Pr. 12, Pr. 13, Pr. 21, and Pr. 22 (*DW* 1:193.8–194.8, 217.2–5, 363.9–10, 389.9–10); Pr. 26 and Pr. 49 (*DW* 2:29.1–2, 31.1–32.3, 434.1–4); and Pr. 51 (*DW* 3:470.2–10).

<sup>53</sup>See the discussion of “Father as ‘Fontalis Plenitudo,’” in E. Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978), pp. 52–54.

<sup>54</sup>*DW* 2:420.4–10. For other texts, besides those mentioned in nn. 6 and 7 above, see Pr. 2 (*DW* 1:43.3–44.2) and Pr. 67 (*DW* 3:132.1–134.1), where the distinction is between the pure being of God as *intellectus* and the Three Persons; and Pr. 80 (*DW* 3:379.6–380.2), which is similar.

<sup>55</sup>Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart* (n. 4 above), p. 116.

<sup>56</sup>E.g., *In Gen.* II, n. 215 (*LW* 1:691); *In Sap.*, n. 57 (*LW* 2:384). See also the discussion of the distinct/indistinct relation of the Father to the Son in *In Io.*, n. 197 (*LW* 3:166).

<sup>57</sup>These come in two forms: a text where *unum* is the divine substance and *ens*, *verum*, and *bonum* are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (*In Io.*, n. 360, in *LW* 3:305–6); and texts where *esse* is the undetermined and absolute divine essence and *unum*, *verum*, and *bonum* are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (*In Io.*, nn. 511–13, 516–18, 562, in *LW* 3:442–45, 446–48, 489–90).

treats the priority of the divine unity over the Trinity of Persons in the Latin commentaries.

Eckhart tells us that if we could see God's essence, the name that we would give it would be *unum*, Absolute Unity.<sup>58</sup> His sense of the indescribable purity of Absolute Unity led him to a disagreement with Thomas Aquinas on the question of the plurality of the divine attributes. For Thomas, the plurality of attributes has a foundation in the divine being as well as in our own intellects;<sup>59</sup> for Eckhart, any plurality is solely from the point of view of our own manner of conceiving.<sup>60</sup> Even when treating the notional acts founded in the relations that are the Three Persons (i.e., the terms expressing the distinguishing realities of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), Eckhart strove to emphasize the prior role of Absolute Unity. "Nature always originates from the One and returns to the One," he says; "in the Godhead's notional acts [we find the same, for] the one essence is their root and the Three Persons are the one essence."<sup>61</sup> Eckhart also seems to disagree with Aquinas on another important technical point that emphasizes the priority of Absolute Unity. In his *Commentary on Exodus* he quotes without any disapproval the suspect view of Gilbert of Poitiers that in God the relations that constitute the Trinity do not enter into the divine substance, but remain *quasi foris stans*—"as if they were standing outside."<sup>62</sup> *Unum* is one of the terms to be reserved to the hidden ground of the divine nature, though both the terms that are proper to the Persons of the Trinity (i.e., the notional acts) and also the transcendental terms that are appropriated to them like "being" to the Father, "truth" to the Son, and "goodness" to the Holy Spirit, are all convertible with *unum*.<sup>63</sup>

If we wish to be true to Eckhart, we must admit the grounding priority of the hidden Unity of the Godhead, absolute and undetermined *esse*, the God beyond God, over the Trinity of Persons. But if we stop there and refuse to recognize that the *unum* dialectically demands expression as a Trinity of Persons we shall also be false to the Meister. A text from vernacular sermon 10 puts the dialectical

<sup>58</sup>*In Ex.*, n. 57 (*LW* 2:63).

<sup>59</sup>*In I Sent.* d. 2, q. 1, a. 3; and *ST Ia*, q. 13, a. 4.

<sup>60</sup>*In Ex.*, nn. 58 and 61 (*LW* 2:64, 66). These two passages were combined to form article 23 of the condemned propositions of the Bull *In agro dominico*. It is significant that the major part of the condemned proposition is actually a quotation from Maimonides.

<sup>61</sup>*In Io.*, n. 67 (*LW* 3:55.13–56.2). A similar formula can be found in Pr. 24 (*DW* 1:419), where the Three Persons are one *wesen* in the ground of the divine being.

<sup>62</sup>*In Ex.*, n. 65 (*LW* 2:70). See Aquinas, *De pot.* q. 8, a. 2; and *ST Ia*, q. 28, a. 2.

<sup>63</sup>*In Io.*, n. 360 (*LW* 3:305.9–306.2). The same convertibility holds when *esse* is dialectically conceived as the divine ground: e.g., *In Io.*, n. 562 (*LW* 2:489–90).

relation in a nutshell: “Distinction comes from Absolute Unity, that is, the distinction in the Trinity. Absolute Unity is the distinction and distinction is the Unity. The greater the distinction, the greater the Unity, for that is the distinction without distinction.”<sup>64</sup> This text makes explicit reference to the Latin sermons for Trinity Sunday<sup>65</sup> and is fully coherent with Eckhart’s teaching on the Trinity when viewed in global fashion. The Meister is affirming the necessity for an ineffable source within God for the dialectic of immanence and transcendence between God and creation. In Eckhart’s thought the dynamic relation between God and creation must be grounded in the inner dynamism of the divine nature itself.<sup>66</sup> God as the God beyond God is still distinguished by indistinction and is therefore “the more indistinct insofar as he is distinct,” that is, the more one insofar as he is three and vice versa. Only when we have reached the God beyond God, when we have come to the inner unity where there is no Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, will we realize why God must be three.

For Eckhart, Absolute Unity gives rise to the distinction that is the Trinity in a dynamic fashion best seen in the notion of *bullitio*. *Bullitio* (literally, “boiling”) is simple formal emanation, the total transmission of the pure essence of reality. Because of its formal character, it has nothing to do with the extrinsicism of efficient or final causality and thus remains completely within its principle. It is a conversion of the principle in itself and upon itself—a silent inner reduplication, a negation of negation, metaphorically described as *bullfire* (“to boil”), *intumescere* (“to swell”), or *parturire* (“to bring forth”).<sup>67</sup> “The One,” he says, “acts as a principle. For this reason, properly speaking, it does not produce something like itself, but what is one and the same as itself.”<sup>68</sup> The divine inner *bullitio*, the emanation of the Persons of the Trinity, provides the exemplary model for all *ebullitio*, that is, all efficient and final causality, either creation of the part of God or the making of one thing from another by secondary causes. In fine, the

<sup>64</sup>*DW* 1:173.2–5. This passage is not present in all manuscripts, but its authenticity is solidly established by the arguments of the editor of the *DW*, J. Quint.

<sup>65</sup>Sermones 2–4 (*LW* 4:5–32). Quint (*DW* 1:173, n. 1) notes that no text in the Latin sermons corresponds exactly to the German passage, but he cites a number of parallels from these sermons and from other places in the Latin works.

<sup>66</sup>This appears very clearly in the lengthy comments on the Prologue of John (*LW* 3:3–112).

<sup>67</sup>The key texts are *In Ex.*, n. 16 (*LW* 2:21.8–22.9); *In Sap.*, n. 283 (*LW* 2:615.12–616.4); *In Io.*, n. 25 (*LW* 3:20.5–6); Sermones 25.1, 25.2, and 49.3 (*LW* 4:236.4–8, 239.10–11, 425.14–426.14). These should be compared with the treatment of the formal emanation of *vita* in *In Io.*, nn. 61–69 (*LW* 3:50–58).

<sup>68</sup>*In Io.*, n. 342 (*LW* 3:291.4–6). One peculiarity about this text suggests a possible emendation. This is the only place to my knowledge where the text uses *ebullitio* and not *bullitio* (p. 291.8) to describe the inner trinitarian emanations. *Bullitio* would seem to be closer to Eckhart’s mind.



divine unity is prior to the Trinity as the hidden ground of the *bullitio* of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but it can never be considered alone as standing in some sort of frozen immobility, nor could such a desert without bloom be the goal of the soul's journey.<sup>69</sup> The *unum* is not negation, but negation of negation, the *sum qui sum* ("I am that I am") of Exod. 3:14 that signifies the conversion of the ground of *esse* upon itself.

To examine fully the import of the dialectical solution to the God/Godhead distinction would demand an essay larger in scope than this. Such an investigation would have to show not only that this resolution brings us to the core of Eckhart's thought on the issue, but would also have to take up the more complex question of the adequacy of this approach to the expression of Christian belief. I would maintain that in both these areas an affirmative response is indicated, in the former not least of all because the dialectic answer to the God/Godhead problem coheres so well with the dialectical resolution of the paradoxes of Eckhart's language about God as *esse* and *intelligere*.

It is time to take stock of the path so quickly traversed. In trying to make Eckhart's paradoxes clear I may seem only to have succeeded in wrapping them deeper in the cloud of unknowing. There is some legitimacy in such judgment, especially since the Meister himself never claimed that he could solve the problem of God and the soul, that he could provide clear and accurate information about that desert where God and the soul become one. What Eckhart's extensive writings do assert is that the effort to frame and explore the appropriate paradoxes is not without its reward. Intellect, left to its quotidian functions, would never be in a position to note what might be suggested by the limitations of its most spectacular fireworks.

Meister Eckhart was certainly a theologian, as I hope we have seen by now. But what about Eckhart the mystic? Even though he has been almost universally considered a mystic—frequently a classic western mystic—the appellation of "mystic" to the German Dominican deserves careful consideration. Indeed, one recent interpreter has refused to call Eckhart a mystic at all, but insists on referring to him as metaphysician alone.<sup>70</sup> It seems more correct to insist that Eckhart was a true mystic in the general sense of one whose efforts were bent

<sup>69</sup>I would disagree with Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart*, p. 115, on the sterility of the desert.

<sup>70</sup>C. F. Kelley, *Meister Eckhart on Divine Knowledge* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 107–8.

to understanding and achieving the union of God and the soul.<sup>71</sup> But the case of Eckhart does seem to force us to a critical differentiation of types of mysticism that is important for the later Middle Ages and may not be without significance in other contexts.

Meister Eckhart shows little interest in special states of religious experience. If we define mysticism in terms of some experienced awareness of divine presence, usually of transitory nature, as many modern interpreters in dependence on the accounts of many mystics have done,<sup>72</sup> we must deny that Eckhart was a mystic or even a theologian of mysticism. A careful search reveals that there are only three treatments of *raptus* or what we would call mystical ecstasy in his voluminous writings. Once in a vernacular treatise he mentions its existence while laying emphasis on the superior importance of the love of God,<sup>73</sup> and twice in the Latin works he has perfunctory treatments based on the discussions of Augustine and Aquinas.<sup>74</sup> In addition, one text from a poorly attested German sermon seems to affirm that we can experientially discern the presence of God;<sup>75</sup> but even if this be authentic, it is certainly not Eckhart's usual voice. The evidence of the vernacular works, where one would expect considerable appeal to the experience of his listeners, is especially revealing. The *Counsels of Discernment* warn that feelings are misleading<sup>76</sup> and teach that the inner being of God's love is more important than any sensed manifestation.<sup>77</sup> The sermons echo this warning against sensible consolation.<sup>78</sup> As the Meister puts it in one place: "There are people who want to see God with the same eyes with which they look at a cow, and they want to love God the same way they love a cow . . . for the milk and the cheese."<sup>79</sup> If sensible consolation is suspect, Eckhart does not make sensible desolation the central factor in his mysticism either. It is true

<sup>71</sup>For a survey of some attempts to characterize Eckhart's mysticism and evaluate its orthodoxy, see Ueda, pp. 140–45.

<sup>72</sup>To mention only one classic account, see W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1961), chaps. 16 and 17.

<sup>73</sup>*Von ab.* (DW 5:420.6–421.4). Eckhart does discuss the *raptus* of Paul to the third heaven in several places, notably Pr. 23 (DW 1:403–8).

<sup>74</sup>Sermo 22 (LW 4:202) cites the treatment of Aquinas in *De ver.* q. 13, a. 2. In the *Sermo die b. Augustini* (LW 5:93–95) the Meister speaks of *exstasis mentis* as one of the three forms by which the divine light raises the intellect to what is above it, citing the example and teaching of Augustine.

<sup>75</sup>Pr. 56 (DW 2:589.2–6). The sermon is found in only three manuscripts, although Quint does defend its authenticity (see DW 2:586–87).

<sup>76</sup>*Die rede der underscheidung* 15 and 20 (DW 5:240–44, 262–74).

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.* 10 (DW 5:215–24).

<sup>78</sup>E.g., God prefers to give rational rather than sensible consolation in Pr. 86 (DW 3:482).

<sup>79</sup>Pr. 16b (DW 1:272). The translation is that of Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart*, p. 102.

that in the vernacular *Book of Consolation* and elsewhere he argues for the importance of learning to accept trials as the will of God,<sup>80</sup> and he appreciates the power of the Cross;<sup>81</sup> but it is crucial to note that the message of inner detachment and humble conformity with God's will can be found by learning to accept any situation, good or bad, in the proper frame of mind. Eckhart's real appeal is to an intellectual and above all to a religious conversion, one in which our eyes are finally opened to see what has always been the case. In one impassioned sermon the Meister pleaded with his audience that if only they could realize the joy and truth within themselves they would all be transformed before they left the church that very night.<sup>82</sup>

Eckhart preached and wrote in the midst of a society that was undergoing a remarkable outpouring of interest in new forms of religious life and new styles of religious experience.<sup>83</sup> Since the late twelfth century, small groups of women and, less frequently, men, generally called Beguines and Beghards, respectively, had begun to form religious cells and houses in the cities of the Lowlands and Germany. In addition, the Dominican order to which Eckhart belonged had experienced a remarkable growth in its houses of religious women. Eckhart's vernacular works have often been studied in the light of this historical background. Herbert Grundmann, for one, has argued that the Meister's idea of total detachment or *abegescheidenheit* can be seen as a theological higher synthesis of the stress on apostolic poverty found among the Beguines.<sup>84</sup> Gordon Leff, for another, in studying the shift in the papacy from guarded encouragement to disapproval of the new religious groups, see Eckhart's condemnation as a form of guilt by association, a rap on the knuckles for a popular preacher whose more extreme statements seemed conducive to the errors of autotheism and antinomianism of which the Beguines and Beghards came to be accused in the fourteenth century.<sup>85</sup>

There is another frequently unnoted connection between Eckhart's teaching and the special religious background of his time. To anyone with an acquaintance with some of the famous Beguine mystics, with

<sup>80</sup>E.g., *In Io.*, nn. 76–77 (*LW* 3:64–65), on the uses of adversity.

<sup>81</sup>E.g., *Sermo* 45 (*LW* 4:380–87).

<sup>82</sup>Pr. 66 (*DW* 3:113–14).

<sup>83</sup>The best study of this religious context is H. Grundmann, *Die religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter*, 2d ed. (Hildesheim: Olms, 1961).

<sup>84</sup>H. Grundmann, "Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen der deutschen Mystik," in *Altdeutsche und Altniederländische Mystik*, ed. K. Ruh (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), esp. pp. 82–97 (hereafter cited as "Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen").

<sup>85</sup>G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), 1:208–10.

a Mechtilde of Magdeburg, for instance,<sup>86</sup> what will be immediately striking about Meister Eckhart is his lack of interest not only in visions, locutions, elevations, palpitations, and the like, but even in ecstasy or *raptus*, the conscious experience of union. The lives and writings of the Beguines, on the other hand, overflow with these special experiences, from the highest to the lowest varieties.<sup>87</sup>

Eckhart will have none of this. I would suggest, then, that his insistence that the union of God and the soul is not a matter of a special state or experience outside the usual daily round, but is rather a special awareness of the meaning of everyday life, should be seen as an important criticism of aspects of the religious fervor of his time, a criticism that may well have been forgotten by some of his followers.

If Eckhart is really a mystic—and I believe that we can use that term of him—we must be more careful about distinguishing two types of mysticism, at least in the history of Christianity. One type stresses forms of extraordinary experience, unique moments of conscious awareness of standing outside ourselves in union with God. Another type, the Eckhartian type, aims at penetrating the ordinary in order to reveal the extraordinary.<sup>88</sup> It distrusts consolation and desolation, or indeed anything that smacks of the transitory moment. It seeks a new form of understanding that leads to a new way of life best expressed by Eckhart's teaching about "living without a why" (*sunder warumbe*). When I truly recognize the unity of ground of God and the soul the Meister says that "here I am living from what is my own as God lives from what is his own. . . . From this inner ground you should do everything you do without a why."<sup>89</sup>

Had we time to survey the history of Christian mysticism in broader fashion, I think it would become clear that the two types I have suggested are really two tendencies, complementary approaches

<sup>86</sup>Mechtilde (c. 1210–c. 1280) lived as both a Beguine and later as the superior of a Cistercian convent. Her great work, *Das fliessende Licht der Gottheit*, was written down under the direction of her Dominican confessor, Heinrich of Halle. For a translation of one version, see L. Menzies, *The Revelations of Mechtilde of Magdeburg* (London: Longmans, 1953).

<sup>87</sup>Visions and sensible experiences of union are frequent in Mechtilde: see, e.g., bks. 2.4, 2.7, 2.8, 2.20, 2.25, 2.26, 3.1, 3.3, and esp. the brief autobiography in 4.2. For a broader discussion of ecstatic experience among the Beguines, see Grundmann's remarks on the *iubilus* in "Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen," pp. 87–90.

<sup>88</sup>Analogies to this type of mysticism are also found outside Christianity, as D. Duclow has reminded me. See, e.g., M. Buber's witness to the hallowing of the everyday in *Between Man and Man* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1965), pp. 13–14.

<sup>89</sup>Pr. 5b (*DW* 1:90.8–12). Living "without a why" occurs in a number of German sermons, such as Pr. 5a (*DW* 1:80–81) and Pr. 26 (*DW* 2:26–27). There are echoes in the Latin works, e.g., Sermo 4.1 (*LW* 55:22–23); *In Ex.*, n. 247 (*LW* 2:201).

frequently intermingled in those we call mystics. Meister Eckhart is a remarkably pure example of mysticism of the second variety. His message may well have been misunderstood in his own time and by his immediate followers, but the power of his words have bridged the centuries. Eckhart was fully capable of constructing theological arguments of remarkable intricacy and depth, but his insights are no less striking when couched in almost artless simplicity. After all the paradoxes of his teaching on God have been exhausted, his message is perhaps best expressed in such simple phrases as “Herze ze herzen, ein in einem minnet got.”<sup>90</sup>

<sup>90</sup>“Heart to heart, one in the One, so God loves” (*Lib. ben.* 1 [*DW* 5:46.15]).