Engaging Eckhartian Mysticism In A Secular Context: A Hermeneutical Study In Post-Kantian Thought

Christopher David Shaw
Regent's Park College, University of Oxford
Faculty of Theology and Religion
Supervisor: Prof. Mark Julian Edwards

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology and Religion

22-February-2017

Engaging Eckhartian Mysticism In A Secular Context: A Hermeneutical Study In Post-Kantian Thought

Abstracts

- Short Abstract ……... 9
- Long Abstract ……..... 10

Part I
Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

On the Hermeneutic Application of Eckhart's Mystical Ontology……..... 16

- Meister Eckhart's Mystical Ontology: *Esse est deus* ……16
- Mystical Ontology and the Problem of Secularity ……24
- A Prolegomenon to Theology in the Third Millennium …….. 30
- Statement of Thesis ……..... 32
- Structure and Orientation ……..33

Chapter I

The Hermeneutic Method (Hans-Georg Gadamer): Interpreting Eckhartian Mysticism and The Fusion of Horizons ……. 34

- An Introduction to Gadamerian Hermeneutics and Its Relevance for (Mystical) Theology and the Problem of Secularity …….. 35
- Hermeneutic Methodologies and the Movement of Tradition: Alternative Approaches……... 41
- Language and Historical Transmission: The Ontology of the Text ……. 58
- The Fusion of Horizons: Medieval Mysticism and the Contemporary Moment …. 65
- Problems, Criticisms, Summary, and Conclusion …… 72

Part II
Toward an Ontological Interpretation of Eckhartian Mysticism

Chapter II
Mysticism as a Modern Category of Theology..... 81

- Mystical Theology: A Preliminary Orientation 84
- Mysticism as a Modern Category of Theology 88
- Christian Mysticism and the Contemporary Horizon 102
- A Brief Record of the Modern Study of Eckhartian Mysticism 105
- Problems, Criticisms, Summary, and Conclusion 113

Chapter III
Contemporary Theological Interpretations of Eckhartian Mysticism 118

- Bernard McGinn on Eckhartian Mysticism 119
- Amy Hollywood on Eckhartian Mysticism 139
- Oliver Davies on Eckhartian Mysticism 146
- Denys Turner on Eckhartian Mysticism 157
- Problems, Criticisms, Summary, and Conclusion 170

Part III
The Ontological Turn:
Post-Kantian Approaches to Eckhartian Mysticism

Chapter IV
On Mysticism and Ontology in Post-Kantian Thought: Landmarks of the Modern Philosophical Horizon 179

- Mysticism and Post-Kantian Thought 181
- G.W.F. Hegel and Eckhartian Mysticism: On the Hermeneutical Influence of Dialectics 186
- Martin Heidegger and Eckhartian Mysticism: On the Hermeneutical Influence of Phenomenology 192
- Jacques Derrida, Michel Henry, and Eckhartian Mysticism: On the Hermeneutical Influence of Contemporary Philosophy and Theology 199
- Problems, Criticisms, Summary, and Conclusion 208

Part IV
Theology and the Problem of Secularity:
A Hermeneutic Application of Eckhartian Mystical Ontology

Chapter V
Theology, Mysticism, and the Problem of Secularity: Alternative Approaches ……. 214

- Alternative Approaches I: Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Christianity in a 'World Come of Age'……... 216
- Alternative Approaches II: Paul Tillich on the 'Future of Religions'…..……..…. 222
- Alternative Approaches III: Don Cupitt on 'Secular-Theology'…….. 232
- Alternative Approaches IV: Guidance for Further Reading and a General Survey of Relevant Literature ……..……. 241
- Problems, Criticisms, Summary, and Conclusion …… 253

Chapter VI
Engaging Eckhartian Mysticism in a Secular Context …… 260

- Charles Taylor and the Nova Effect: Between Orthodoxy and Unbelief …… 261
- Eckhartian Mystical Ontology and the Theological Problem of Secularity …… 267
- *Esse est deus*: God's Being as Presence and Immanence …… 273
- On Exceeding Determinations: God, Being, and the Importance of Heterodoxy ... 279
- Problems, Criticisms, Summary, and Conclusion ……... 292

Chapter VII
Conclusion: Eckhartian Mystical Ontology and the Contemporary Moment ……. 298

- Fusing Horizons: Understanding, Interpreting, and Applying Eckhartian Mysticism in the Contemporary Moment …… 300
- Being as Dwelling: The Mystical Presence of God ……. 306
- On Dwelling: Ontology, Morality, and Mysticism in a Secular Age (Conclusion, Summary, and Restatement of Thesis) ……... 321
- Being is God: A Hermeneutical Reflection and Final Remarks ……...323

Bibliographical Notes ……. 329

DOMINUS
ILLUMINATIO
MEA

Abstracts

Christopher David Shaw
Thesis – Short Abstract

DPhil Theology and Religion
Regent's Park College
Hilary 2017

Engaging Eckhartian Mysticism in a Secular Context:
A Hermeneutical Study in Post-Kantian Thought

The aim of this thesis is to define, develop, and defend an interpretation and application of the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart. Briefly, mystical ontology should be understood as a distinctive theology insofar as it presents God's being, the being of the world, and the individual's being as an essentially unified whole. My research focus for this thesis will then be to situate Eckhart's theology within current debates on mysticism and amidst the post-Kantian philosophical turn toward ontology. The cumulative effort of this thesis will reach its height when I apply my conclusions on the mystical nature of being that can be found in Eckhart's medieval writings and transcriptions in order to address the modern, theological problem of secularity. This effort will be implemented with the objective of creating a space for dialogue between Christian theology and the generally secularized culture that, in part, defines the present age. In so doing, this thesis will demonstrate the philosophical and cultural relevance of this particular understanding of the nature of being when treating modern problems in theology. The guiding question for this thesis will be the following: what insights can Meister Eckhart's thought offer to theologians today in addressing the problem of secularity? My overall thesis will then be: *the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart can be interpreted and applied in a manner that successfully opens a space for constructive dialogue between secular culture and the presence of God in the world*.

Overall, this thesis should be read as a scholarly project on Eckhartian theology and its applicability toward productively treating the problem of secularity. All of my conclusions will be derived as a result of having been situated and argued for amidst current debates on relevant topics, as well as in relation to other major works that are indispensable for such a project. To be clear, my aim will not be to appropriate Eckhart's work and to assimilate it to a post-Kantian perspective. Rather, I will look to Eckhart for his clear and definitive theological statements. I will then interpret those statements and apply them in a manner that efficaciously engages specific principles of secularity in demarcating a common ground for dialogue.

Christopher David Shaw
Thesis – Long Abstract

DPhil Theology and Religion
Regent's Park College
Hilary 2017

Engaging Eckhartian Mysticism in a Secular Context:
A Hermeneutical Study in Post-Kantian Thought

The aim of this thesis is to define, develop, and defend an interpretation and application of the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart. Briefly, mystical ontology should be understood as a distinctive theology insofar as it presents God's being, the being of the world, and the individual's being as an essentially unified whole. My research focus for this thesis will then be to situate Eckhart's theology within current debates on mysticism and amidst the post-Kantian philosophical turn toward ontology. The cumulative effort of this thesis will reach its height when I apply my conclusions on the mystical nature of being that can be found in Eckhart's medieval writings and transcriptions in order to address the modern theological problem of secularity. This will be carried out with the objective of creating a space for dialogue between Christian theology and the generally secularized culture that, in part, defines the present age. In so doing, this thesis will demonstrate the philosophical and cultural relevance of this particular understanding of the nature of being when treating modern problems in theology. The guiding question for this thesis will be the following: what insights can Meister Eckhart's thought offer to theologians today in addressing the problem of secularity? My overall thesis will then be: *the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart can be interpreted and applied in a manner that successfully opens a space for constructive dialogue between secular culture and the presence of God in the world*.

A critical discussion on Eckhart's mystical ontology and its hermeneutic application toward the problem of secularity will develop over the four successive parts of this thesis. As a matter of orientation, Part I will begin by defining the key themes and questions that will be necessary for this study. It is here that the guiding methodology for this project will also be presented. Bearing these general aims in mind, Part I will be broken down into two sections: the Introduction and Chapter I. The Introduction will take a wide-ranging look at the specific tasks that the thesis will cumulatively treat. Notably, the notions of 'secularity' and 'mysticism' will both be defined, and they will be further contextualized as the central points for dialogue. Quite importantly, then, Charles Taylor's work, *A Secular Age*, will serve as a benchmark for how it is that the dialectic between religion and secularity is to be framed and understood. Further to this, I will also follow Taylor's estimation that theologians in the third millennium will be searching for new ways of bridging the existing divide between 'orthodoxy and unbelief'. My contribution to Taylor's call, in this respect, will come in the form of my hermeneutic application of the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart. In shifting this medieval theologian into a modern setting for discussion, I will bring into relief his clear and

definite commitment to the notion of God's immediate and radical presence in and amidst the world, and in all things. The aim in doing so will be to connect theology with secular culture in terms of the latter's demand, by definition, to concern itself fundamentally with matters 'of and in the world.' Lastly, it is in the Introduction that I will also indicate my plan to unveil, at a later point in this project, a mystically informed manner of being that I will have derived directly from the works of Eckhart himself. Following this, Chapter I will go into length and detail in order to explain and apply the very important philosophical concept of 'hermeneutic understanding' as it has been presented by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his *Truth and Method*. The depth and extent of this chapter should, among other things, make it clear that methodology is not at all an inconsequential aside in my work. Instead, it is a fundamental aspect of the thesis as a whole and its conclusions. To be absolutely clear, the aim in reading Eckhart in order to treat a modern problem for theology is not to commit to a historical study, per se. It is rather to look to a figure from the Christian tradition who happened to articulate a premise on the nature God that has the distinctive potential to be adapted to and for a modern situation and interpretation in the manner noted above. That being said, this thesis in no way relinquishes its responsibility to historical data. Rather, this thesis simply reads the material at hand with a view toward how it might make a relevant and meaningful contribution toward resolving one of the challenges that theology faces today. More simply, I will be looking to Eckhart for his defining statements, and then working to apply those statements in an effort to treat the modern theological problem of secularity.

Part II of this thesis will build upon the previous one by discussing the modern category of mysticism (Chapter II). This effort will be further refined as I move to define Eckhart's particular species of mysticism from within this genus (Chapter III). In serving these tasks, Chapter II will primarily focus on the relationship between the ancient, medieval, and modern references to the term 'mysticism' and its various denotations. I will then work to give this stream of thought a recognizable sense of continuity from its earliest appearances in Christian writings all the way through to its contemporary status and value for the present condition of religious belief as it comes to face the horizon of 'a secular age.' Following this, and as a reflection of one of the constant sources of reference from within the modern discourse on mystical theology, I will turn, in Chapter III, to a detailed presentation of Eckhart's thought as a mystical ontology. Above all, the primary task of this chapter will be to isolate and identify his most enduring and definitive theological statement: 'Being is God'. This conclusion will be drawn as a result of an extensive review of secondary literature on the subject, as well as a thorough scan of the surviving oeuvre of Eckhart's writings and medieval transcriptions. I will then proceed to imbed Eckhart's thinking into the category of mystical theology by arguing that his unique approach to the style of theologizing is best understood (see above) as a mystical ontology.

Part III will go on to reassert the hermeneutic method of this thesis insofar as it will operate in the capacity of broadly outlining the definitive philosophical features of post-Kantian thought, and especially those features that have worked, once again, to make Eckhart's thought and sense of relevancy particularly visible. The entirety of Part III will be defined and constituted by a single chapter, Chapter IV, wherein I look to some of the

most prominent features of post-Kantian thought in order to demonstrate how and why it is that Meister Eckhart's theology has, once again, come to the fore as a topic of philosophical interest. In brief, I will argue that both the turn toward ontology and the revised approaches to epistemology have set the conditions that have allowed for a modern retrieval and application of Eckhart's medieval thought. To demonstrate these points, this chapter will concentrate on the broad conceptual schemata of Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Martin Heidegger, Michel Henry, and Jacques Derrida. Additionally, and to further illuminate my arguments, I will also turn to these figures at different points when they discuss Eckhart, in particular, and/or mysticism, in general.

Finally, Part IV of this thesis will bring together the previous parts in order to present the entire project in clear view. The three chapters that make up this part will begin with a review of scholarly literature (Chapter V). This will be executed in order to collect, into a single forum, a number of thinkers who have contributed to the on-going discussion concerning points of intersection between theology and secularity. At every turn in this analysis my own position will be compared to and contrasted with the other voices from within this discourse. Having thus carried out such a review, I will proceed in the following chapter, Chapter VI, to announce my interpretation and application of Eckhart's thought as my own unique contribution to the modern theological dialogue with secular culture. This chapter will, again, turn to Charles Taylor's vision of 'a secular age' and the new and constructive searches for 'fullness', so to speak, that are, in his view, characteristic of the current times – and even what one might expect of and from the future of Christian life and thinking. The main thrust of my argument will find its context in the unique manner that Eckhart overlaps the transcendent essence of God with the immanent being of the world. Thus it will be argued that the secular focus on matters of and related directly to the world – along with the sense that a strictly immanent world-view is not enough to satisfy the more robust demands of human life and lived experience – can be constructively met with Eckhart's definitive theological position that the essence of God is entirely and completely manifest in and through the full constitution of existence itself. The simple notion to be distilled from this is that Eckhart's presentation of God's immediate and full presence in and amidst the world serves as a point for dialogue between theologians and secularists who, in respect to the latter, are rejecting elements of interest that are outside of, or, as it were, transcendent to, the world in favor of a focus on all things immanent. In this way, the secularist can be encouraged to think about God in a manner that locates God within the world. The final chapter, Chapter VII, will augment the previous chapter, and the thesis as a whole, by designating a particular manner of being and existential comportment that accompanies an ontological revelation of the variety just described. In other words, it is here that I will develop my descriptive account of Eckhart's position on the subject of ontology into something that also provides the groundwork for a moral practice and world-view. To be clear, I will characterize the effect of one's acknowledgement and affirmation of the divine ground and essence of all being as an ethical imperative – and one that is captured under the mystically informed concept of 'dwelling'. Put another way, if one's manner and understanding of being are to be classified as 'dwelling', one will have thereby accepted the essential nature of God's being and essence as in all things, and thus comport oneself in a way that reflects such an understanding. The thesis will come to its end with the ontological/ethical

conclusion that to dwell is to exist in such a way that the ubiquitous presence of God, and the unity of all things under this ontological principle, is both recognized and affirmed through the practice of love – a love that is fully and completely realized in the world, amidst, with, and in relation to all things.

Overall, this thesis should be read as a scholarly project on Eckhartian theology and its applicability toward productively treating the problem of secularity. All of my conclusions will be derived as a result of having been situated in and argued for amidst current debates on relevant topics, as well as in relation to other major works that are indispensable for such a project. To be clear, my aim will not be to appropriate Eckhart's work and to assimilate it to a post-Kantian perspective. Rather, I will look to Eckhart for his clear and definitive theological statements. I will then interpret those statements and apply them in a manner that efficaciously engages specific principles of secularity in demarcating a common ground for dialogue.

Part I

Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

On the Hermeneutic Application of Eckhart's Mystical Ontology

This introduction will present the main concepts and arguments for this thesis. I will then move to situate these concepts and arguments within the context of the theological problem of secularity. Next, my interpretive use of Meister Eckhart's medieval thought will be introduced as it relates to the challenges facing theology at the dawn of the third millennium. Following this, I will present a concise statement of the aim of this thesis, as well as a brief schematic of how this aim will be carried out and demonstrated over the four main parts of this work.

Meister Eckhart's Mystical Ontology: *Esse est deus*

The principal theological concept that will be addressed over the course of this thesis is that of the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart (ca.1260-ca.1328). Mystical ontology is a concept that refers to the special union that persists between God and the individual soul. This union is mediated through a shared sense of being; that is to say, an ontological foundation that equally substantiates both God and the individual soul. This unique focus on ontology within the framework of mystical theology, or mysticism more broadly, is at the center of Eckhart's thought. Moreover, as this study will show, it is also a theme that has been continually drawn to the fore and re-presented under the philosophical guise of post-Kantian thought. What is clear, in this case, is the fact that both Eckhart and many of his post-Kantian predecessors have made ontology – the nature of being – a primary point of concentration in their works. What is more contestable about this description of

Eckhartian theology, as such, is its unique predication of ontology with the, at times, abstruse concept of mysticism.

The concept of mysticism has become highly contested in contemporary scholarship. It has been employed to denote a whole range of thought that, all too often, only vaguely revolves around the relationship of the human to God, the absolute, or divinity of some nature. To be sure, the modern reconstructions of this term have evolved to take on new meanings and contextual references. Nonetheless, the roots of this word have a long history in Christian and pre-Christian thought. Today, mysticism is often employed haphazardly as a general term to speak about spirituality, perennial theology, and/or new and emerging religious movements. There is, of course, some legitimacy to these quite idiosyncratic employments of the word. However, this thesis aims to take a much narrower route in exploring this complex category of thought. I will do so by looking to the concept's more specific development as a category of Christian theology and its association with the history of the greater Christian tradition.

In summary, the etymological sources for the terms mysticism and mystical theology can be traced to pre-Christian thought and rituals. However, the manner in which the term has evolved and been employed in modern times is, primarily, a consequence of certain theological interests that arose in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Acting from a pivotal point in the evolution of the meanings and expressive character of the terms at play, early-modern theologians began to demonstrate a set of definitions and approaches to mysticism that more closely reflect the now well-established contemporary denotations. In Chapter II this study will briefly consider these modern characterizations of mysticism and mystical theology. By way of this effort, I

will announce one of the more authoritative presentations of what is now referred to and/or classified as mysticism and mystical theology. In particular, I will look to the theologian, Meister Eckhart, as one of the foremost custodians of this unique tradition, and as a thinker who can demonstrate unparalleled conceptual precision in this style of theologizing.

Though Eckhart and his contemporaries did not involve the actual terms mysticism or mystical theology as a part of their normal vocabulary, what we find in Eckhart, conceptually speaking, aligns rather congruently with the more precise and controlled use of this term that exists today. As a point of orientation, I will now turn to the *Oxford English Dictionary* to provide a working definition of the term 'mysticism', and, especially as it relates to 'mystical theology':

> Mystical theology; belief in the possibility of union with or absorption into God by means of contemplation and self-surrender; belief in or devotion to the spiritual apprehension of truths inaccessible to the intellect.[1]

Stating a definition of 'mystical theology' presents a host of issues,[2] and many scholars simply avoid the task of doing so altogether. However, using a fundamental working term without a definition can lead, as William James (1842-1910) notes in his study of 'mysticism', to the employment of that term with little to no contextual or referential value. Thus, concerning definitions, he tenders his aim to "keep it useful by restricting

[1] "mysticism, n.". *OED Online*. June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124654?redirectedFrom=mysticism& (accessed June 30, 2014).

[2] For example, the phrase 'belief in' can be problematized concerning implications of faith over and against knowledge claims, or claims of certainty, etc. This issue can be resolved with a reference, once again, to the *OED*, where 'belief' is defined quite simply as a "[m]ental conviction". "belief, n.". *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/17368?rskey=FSVMUu&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed January 26, 2017).

it".[3] While James is not one to try to oversimplify the meaning and history of 'mysticism', he is, at the very least, offering his reader a point by which to establish a common understanding of a crucial term within his study. This does not mean that in my choice to use the *OED* definition of 'mystical theology' I am neglecting to recognize that the term is, as Louise Nelstrop points out, "subject to modern theoretical debates",[4] and even more, that 'mysticism' appears "to cover a very diverse set of devotional activities".[5] It is more that with any attempt to control the definition of the many "different facets of Christian mysticism", one begins to find that the "boundaries … seem strained to bursting."[6] These are indeed important points. However, what makes this project in a sense exempt from such complications, is the fact that it is not focused on writing a history of mystical theology, but instead focuses on a single theologian and the mystical theology that he espoused. Interestingly then, and in congruence with Nelstrop's problematization with definitions per se, is the fact that Eckhart's own mystical theology does not overlap with complete symmetry with the *OED* definition offered above. Nonetheless, that definition was presented with the aim of offering a basic guideline for understanding how it is that mystical theology will be broadly used over the course of this thesis. Although such a definition carries clear limitations (along the terms noted by Nelstrop), it is far more important that both author and reader can share in a common understanding of the term as a basic guideline for dialogue. From that point forward, areas of contention and dissent can be noted accordingly and used in such a way so as to

[3] James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 290.
[4] Nelstrop, Louise and Magill, Kevin and Onishi, Bradley B., *Christian Mysticism: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Approaches* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 2.
[5] Ibid, 1.
[6] Ibid 255.

further develop this conversation. Notably, then, minor points of denotative distinctions are permitted (as will be shown below). [7]

The above definition allows for the terms mysticism and mystical theology to be used interchangeably, and, importantly, this convention will be followed throughout the course of this thesis.[8] A convincing argument for using the two terms interchangeably is presented by Mark A. McIntosh[9] in stating that the semantic separation of mysticism from mystical theology will result in a greater estrangement between the two terms. The fallout of this estrangement is unproductive in that mysticism could be (and certainly has been) easily associated with a wide variety of ideas and practices that can undermine the validity and continuity of the long-standing and historically important sub-field of mystical theology. These points will be discussed in more detail in Chapter II, where both the ancient and the modern uses of these terms are considered in respect to both their points of continuity and divergence. There, among other things, it will also be argued that keeping the word mysticism tied to theology, or leaving mysticism to also imply mystical theology maintains the distinctiveness and legitimacy of this particular category of thought.[10]

In the case of Eckhart, and in echoing the points made above, it should be noted that the first element of this *OED* definition is especially of interest. This is because

---

[7] Mysticism as a term and category of theology will receive more detailed treatment (including alternative definitions and/or approaches) in Chapter II and Chapter III.

[8] This also follows in accordance with Bernard McGinn's lexical convention. See: McGinn, Bernard, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1992), xiv. See, also: Chapter II.

[9] Though clear about his conventions, the rationale for the interchangeability of these terms is insufficiently treated in McGinn's text. Thus I have deferred McIntosh, insofar as his views (which also reflect my own) offer a convincing support to McGinn's above noted conclusion on terminology; especially, in respect to McIntosh's point on maintaining a link of congruity and reference between the terms (so as to keep them from ultimately referring to quite disparate events, ideas, and/or personalities).

[10] See: McIntosh, Mark A., *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998), 5-9.

Eckhart, as a Dominican, held that the intellect qua contemplation was the agency, or intellective power, through which this union or absorption into God would take place; although notably, the nuance in both the definition and use of the term 'intellect' clearly varies a great deal between Eckhart's medieval context[11] and the modern English one. This is because, for Eckhart, the intellect has a function beyond the formation of determinate concepts (and the execution of judgments, thereupon). In fact, for Eckhart, the crucial capacity of the intellect is its distinctive function as the conduit through which one might realize one's indeterminate union with God.[12] Notably, it is the relation between indeterminacy (in respect to one's ability to experience God, as such) and determinacy (in respect to one's ability to both formulate and attach concepts to things) that divides the medieval from the modern understanding of this faculty. Bearing these

[11] See: Woods, Richard, "Meister Eckhart and the Neoplatonic Heritage: The Thinker's Way to God" in *Thomist; a Speculative Quarterly Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (October 1990), 609-639.

[12] In this case, Woods' article, once again, is excellent for context. However, in C. F. Kelley's book the topic of 'knowledge' in Eckhartian thought remains the most adept resource for a conceptual approach to resolving this disparity in meaning. Referencing Eckhart, Kelley clarifies the discrepancy over how knowledge and the intellect are portrayed in Eckhart's idiom over and against modern assumptions concerning this language. He writes: "[b]ut to prevent us from confusing this direct, contemplative knowledge with our mere human mode of discursive knowledge, [Eckhart] adds that 'no distinct thought attaches to this knowledge, it stands wholly in itself, it is detached and apprehends God directly as unmanifest, as he is in himself.'" Kelley, C. F., *Meister Eckhart on Divine Knowledge* (Cobb: Dharma Café Books, 2009), 173. Kelley is quoting Eckhart from: Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen Werke*, Erster Band of *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. Josef Quint (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1937) 314-315. To be sure, what Kelley has described concerning Eckhart's understanding of the 'intellect' stands over and against the variety of determinate knowledge that would characterize almost any modern understanding of this word. Thus, as another means of distinguishing the nuances of meaning in this case, one ought to consider Eckhart's distinction between 'superior reason' [*ratio superio*r] and 'inferior reason' [*ratio inferior*]. The former highlights his special implications for the intellect in accessing – and realizing one's unity with – the indeterminate truth and reality of the divine intellect, while the latter remains consistent with the standard implementation of the intellect's ability to facilitate rational processes and formulate – and make judgments based upon – determinate concepts. This distinction between inferior and superior reason is common throughout Eckhart's writings, and it reflects one of his points of sustained reliance on a theme that he inherited from Augustine. See, for example: Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, eds. and trans. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1981), 107 (The Book of the Parables of Genesis, 39). Finally, and as a central support that exemplifies the role that the intellect holds in relation to unifying the soul to God, Eckhart preaches that "God is one intellect and intellect is one God. … Rise up then to intellect; to be attached to it is to be united to God." Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, eds. and trans. Bernard McGinn, Frank Tobin, and Elvira Borgstadt (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 226 (Sermon XXIX).

points of distinction in mind, it will be made clear that the concept of 'mystical ontology' (as it relates to and is inspired directly from Eckhartian thought) that I am forwarding here and in what follows, can and indeed does overlap quite readily with the above noted definition of 'mystical theology'. The difference is that 'mystical ontology' will be employed in this thesis to denote: *a belief in the possibility of union with or absorption into God by means of a correct understanding of the essence of one's own being and of the essence of being in general*.[13] This slight modification of the *OED* definition of mystical theology encapsulates my use and meaning of the concept of mystical ontology, as it relates to Eckhart's theology. Further, my engagement with the concept in this way should be read as an attempt for clarification of the latter concept by means of its consistency with and its further specification of the former.

Although mystical ontology was not a term that was used by Eckhart himself, nevertheless, his theology is more than sufficient for such a classification insofar as he definitively declares that "Being is God" [*Esse est deus*].[14] This single distinctive phrase speaks volumes on Eckhart's understanding of ontology. Quite simply, it becomes apparent that he had an understanding of God that was predicated by his special use of the term 'being'.[15] As a scholastic master and a vernacular preacher, Eckhart's ruminations on the ontology of God are captured in both of his Latin and his Middle High

[13] Notions of and pertaining to the 'intellect' have in this case simply been left out for the purpose of clarity (see footnotes: 11 and 12 of this thesis), especially when discussing Eckhart's approach to this philosophical subject; an approach that, as it has been shown above, does not pose a clear sense of conceptual overlap with its modern inflection in the *OED* definition of 'mystical theology'.
[14] Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Erster Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. and tran. Josef Koch, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1958), 156 (Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum, 12). See, also: Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke II*, ed. Niklaus Largier (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2008), 472 (PROLOGUS GENERALIS IN OPUS TRIPARTITUM). While it is clear that such a statement is not, at face value, unique to Eckhart, his elaboration of and legacy concerning this statement is in fact distinctive. See: Chapters III and VI.
[15] See: Chapter III.

German works. Both of these contributions will be read in tandem in order to offer a philosophically and linguistically robust account of his thought on the fundamental nature of all being as it relates to God.

For example, in a Latin text, Eckhart comments: "God alone is in the proper sense being … Every other thing is this being, for example, a stone, a lion, a man, and so on …."[16] As a complement to this, in his vernacular preaching he develops his philosophical notion of being and converts it into an ethical standard when he states:

> God as being pours himself out into all creatures … This is a good lesson to us to love all creatures equally with all that we have received from God, and … we should favor them equally out of divine love … Thus God loves all creatures equally and fills them with his being. And, thus, too, we should pour forth ourselves in love over all creatures.[17]

Eckhart begins and ends this comment with the metaphor of pouring out and pouring forth. The repetition in his use of this verb is not coincidental. Rather, it highlights the reciprocal nature of God's being as the same being that substantiates – or is the essence of – the world and individual souls. So much so that there is a constant interchange between the two, and when one is poured out, the other is filled, and vice versa. Finally, and quite importantly, it should be mentioned that it is love that actualizes this pouring.[18] Ultimately, what emerges from the teachings and sermons of this medieval master is a concept of being that describes the essential union between God and the soul. It is

[16] Here, Oliver Davies is quoting Eckhart from his *Prologus in opus propositionum* 8,4,25. Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Erster Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, tran. and ed. Josef Koch (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1958), 170. See: Davies, Oliver, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian*, (London, SPCK Publishing, 1991), 108.

[17] Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, ed. and tran. Maurice O'Conell Walshe (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009), 428 (Sermon 88). Walshe translates the Middle High German term of '*ervüllet*' as 'fills' and '*vliezen ûf*' as 'pour forth'. See: Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke II*, 118, lines 20-21 (Predigt 75).

[18] See: Mieth, Dietmar, *Einheit im Sein und Wirken*, München: Piper, 1986.

precisely this union between God and the soul that can be defined as mystical.[19] Further, as a result of Eckhart's constant emphasis on being – the being of the soul and the being of God – as the common principle that facilitates this union, it is quite right and accurate to describe this variety of theology as a mystical ontology.

This thesis will in part argue that it is precisely this theme of mystical ontology that we find in Eckhart that has been preserved through the ages, and that has also been revived in post-Kantian thought. Bearing this trend in mind, I will then move to show how Eckhartian thought can be hermeneutically re-presented and applied toward the end of creating a constructive space for dialogue between Christian theology and secular thought.

Mystical Ontology and the Problem of Secularity

In what follows I will briefly introduce the overall aim of this thesis in respect to how Eckhart's mystical ontology can be used to treat the theological problem of secularity. I will largely rely on Charles Taylor's (1931-) work, *A Secular Age*,[20] in presenting the framework for the development of my arguments pertaining to secularity in general.[21] To begin, I will now introduce the crucial terms and context that will highlight my approach to the theological problem of secularity.

---

[19] The adjectival version of the substantive 'mysticism' as 'mystical theology' is completely consistent according with the OED definition of the latter. Mystical: "Having a spiritual character or significance by virtue of a connection or union with God which transcends human understanding." "mystical, adj.". *OED Online*. June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124648?redirectedFrom=mystical (accessed June 30, 2014).

[20] Taylor, Charles, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

[21] In contrast to Taylor's estimation of this age as one that is in part defined as secular, the notion of the 'post-secular' will be addressed as point for discussion in Chapter V. See, also: footnote 33 of this thesis.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term 'secular' as: "[o]f or pertaining to the world."[22] Adding to this, Charles Taylor examines the meaning of this term from a more etymological perspective; he writes: "'[s]ecular' … comes from 'saeculum', a century or age. … People who are in the saeculum, are embedded in ordinary time, they are living the life of ordinary time; as against those who have turned away from this in order to live closer to eternity."[23] Taylor's description is useful because it complements the *OED* definition by stressing the role of time in relation to secularity, and more precisely, one's experience in and of time[24] in the world. In compounding these two definitions it becomes clear that, when considering the meaning of this term, there ought to be an emphasis both on the world and on ordinary time. As a further complement to and elaboration of these points, Harvey Cox explains that:

> From the very beginning of its usage, secular denoted something vaguely inferior. It meant 'this world' of change as opposed to the eternal 'religious world.' This usage already signifies as ominous departure from biblical categories. It implies that the true religious world is timeless, changeless, and thus superior to the 'secular' world which is passing and transient. Thus the vocation of a 'secular priest,' one who served in the 'world,' though technically on the same level, was actually thought of as someone less blessed than that of the 'religious' priest who lived his life in the cloister, contemplating the changeless order of holy truth.[25]

[22] "secular, adj. and n.". *OED Online*. June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/174620?redirectedFrom=secular& (accessed June 30, 2014).
[23] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 54-55.
[24] In making this point, Taylor also draws closer to the Greek term, *aeon*, which was often translated into Latin as *Saeculu*m. In this case, both terms have a distinctive reference to time. See: Cox, Harvey, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Collier Books, 1990), 16. Cox also points out that the alternative words for 'world' [Latin: *mundus* and Greek: *cosmos*] were eventually assimilated to a common meaning. He writes: "[t]he impact of the Hebrew faith on the Hellenistic world, mediated through the early Christians, was to 'temporalize' the dominant perception of reality. The world *became* history. *Cosmos* became *aeon*; *mundus* became *saeculum*." Ibid, 16.
[25] Ibid, 17.

To summarize and clarify his point, Cox adds that: "[i]n its first widespread usage, our word *secularization* had a very narrow and specialized meaning. It designated the process by which a 'religious' priest was transferred to a parish. He was secularized."[26] Bearing this in mind, I will repeat this thesis' definition of the 'secular' as concerning matters, '[o]f or pertaining to the world.'

In their respective discussions both Taylor and Cox express a degree of uniformity in their discussions that is consistent with the *OED* definition of 'secular', and as a measure of consistency with other key terms at play, this thesis will do the same. Taylor's etymological investigation brings an important point to the fore, one that must be clarified from the outset of this project: my reading and hermeneutic analysis of the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart will not be employed in order to argue for any direct symmetry or absolute agreement between Eckhart's medieval theology and secularity. Simply put, there are crucial and irreconcilable factors that separate these two categories from one another, not least of which are Eckhart's discussions on eternity (or to use Taylor's vocabulary, 'higher time' over and against 'ordinary time'). My aim in this thesis is far more modest: I am interested in showing that there are simply points of contact and intersection between Eckhart's theological presentation of mystical ontology and certain defining principles of secularity. I will demonstrate these points of contact with an eye toward creating a space for constructive dialogue between these two categories.

First however, in order to gain a better understanding of how secularity has come to such a position of prominence in modern culture and the implications that this has for theology today, I will turn again to Taylor's seminal work, *A Secular Age*. As a point of

[26] Ibid, 17.

orientation, he presents the reader with his guiding motive, which is to trace the transition from "a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others."[27] Following Max Weber,[28] Taylor characterizes this shift in understanding as moving from an "enchanted"[29] world (here referring to the world before the year 1500)[30] of belief to one that is "disenchanted",[31] or highly rationalized, scientific, and exposed to a plurality of beliefs (religious and otherwise). According to Taylor: "[i]t is this shift in background, in the whole context in which we experience and search for fullness, that I am calling … a secular age".[32]

The question as to why this secular age, or secularity in general, poses a problem for theology is one that needs to be explored.[33] Taylor sees the shift to secularity as a problem for theology insofar as it "consists … of a move from a society where belief in

---

[27] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3.
[28] See: Weber, Max, *The Sociology of Religion*, tran. Ephraim Fischhoff, Boston: Beacon Press, 1971. For critical analyses of Weber's employment and the legacy of these terms, see: Lehmann, Hartmut, *Die Entzauberung der Welt: Studien zu Themen von Max Weber*, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2009. See, also: Jenkins, Richard, "Disenchantment, Enchantment and Re-Enchantment: Max Weber at the Millennium" in *Max Weber Studies*, Vol 1. No. 1 (November 2000), 11-32.
[29] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 26.
[30] Ibid, 26.
[31] Ibid, 25.
[32] Ibid, 14.
[33] In contrast to Taylor's view that the current age is one that is, in part, defined according to a pervading sense of secularity throughout Western culture, there are some who reject this idea as an erroneously ascribed meta-narrative. This counter position is, among other places (for example, see: Berg-Sørensen, Anders, *Contesting Secularism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Anders Berg-Sørensen, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013.), well represented by a number of the proponents of what is called 'post-secularism'. This notion and several of its adherents will be addressed over and against the views espoused in this thesis in Chapter V. At this point, I will simply make note of several texts that are useful in orienting the discussion on this topic. See: Ward, Graham, *True Religion*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.; Blonde, Phillip, *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between philosophy and theology*, ed. Phillip Blond (New York: Routledge, 1998.; Shakespeare, Steven, *Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Introduction*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007.; Hankey, Wayne J., Hedley, Douglous, *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric, and Truth*, eds. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005.

God is unchallenged and indeed unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace."[34] For Taylor, the implications of these changes and shifts in the general cultural attitudes of the modern West are reducible to the imposing problem that any notion of transcendence might be relegated to obsolescence when attempting to understand the greater human experience.[35] Prominent secular thinkers such as Richard Dawkins[36] and Sam Harris[37] see this shift as a positive one. Taylor takes a slightly different path however: he does not simply perceive this secular age as marking the end of the search for "fullness"[38] (a fullness that in the past has been provided by religion), but rather as one of the complete transformation of this search. Despite the secular conditions that in part define modern culture, he writes that: "[o]ur age is very far from settling in to a comfortable unbelief."[39] As I stated earlier, my orientation to the theological problem of secularity is one that follows closely in step with the picture of the modern world as it is presented in Taylor's writings. That is to say, I agree with his estimation that this secular age has made it increasingly difficult to embrace and/or believe in God; especially a concept or an idea of God that presents God as being outside of and/or metaphysically distinct from the world.

The challenges that are posed by secularity to theism are many and they are complex. However, despite these challenges, it is Taylor's view that "Christian life today

[34] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3.
[35] Taylor defines this problem as the "malaise of immanence": Ibid, 309-310. See, also, Chapter VI. The subject is also treated in: Cooper, David E., *The Measure of Things: Humanism, Humility, and Mystery*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
[36] See: Dawkins, Richard, *The God Delusion*, London: Bantam Press, 2006.
[37] See: Harris, Sam, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 2005.
[38] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 14.
[39] Ibid, 727.

will look for and discover new ways of moving beyond the present orders to God."[40] I am in full agreement with Taylor on this front, and it is at this point that I will present one of the key aims of this thesis in terms of its discussions on the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart and its potential for application to and meaning in and for this secular age.

This thesis will present the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart as a means of theologizing that conceptualizes God as, among other things, the essential fabric of the world and the here and now. Simply put, for Eckhart, God was not limited to certain places and/or sacred spaces. For Eckhart, God was in no way outside of time in a distant and entirely transcendent realm. Rather, Eckhart understood God's being as equally and ubiquitously present in the world and in all things. In this way, the vernacular preaching of this medieval theologian is especially striking in the context of our modern secular world.

Even so, in this current secular age, the horizon of meaning in which one receives and interpret Eckhart's words is entirely different from the latter's own late-medieval context. One cannot be given free rein in interpreting his thought while at the same time striving to maintain a meaningful hermeneutic connection to the past and the flow of tradition, and it is for this reason that a careful reading of Eckhart ought to be executed. However, this does not preclude the possibility of drawing out new meanings and possibilities for the application of his thought when it is interpreted in and for another historical horizon. In fact, the latter situation speaks to the living and indeed the classic quality and depth of Eckhart's thought, whereby it remains pregnant with the possibility to bear fresh and innovative thoughts when given new referential points for engagement.

[40] Ibid, 755.

This thesis will present a number of those referential points as they relate to the present secular age. In other words, I will look to excavate any theological insights that Eckhart's mystical ontology might be well-suited to offer to an age in which people are concentrated almost entirely on matters: "[o]f and pertaining to the world." This 'immanent focus' is the problem posed by secularity that I will be addressing over the course of this thesis.

A Prolegomenon to Theology in the Third Millennium

Taylor argues that the theological/atheological choices in this secular age are simply too polarized. On the one hand, there is the path of religious "orthodoxy",[41] and on the other, there is simply "unbelief"[42] in respect to any spiritual or religious matters whatsoever. He also argues that this dialectical opposition between orthodox belief and non-belief is effectively "unstable",[43] and that many people today are simply "looking for a third way"[44] to understand transcendence, while at the same time maintaining their focus on matters of interest that are immanent[45] and 'of the world'. As a result of this situation, Taylor predicts that the new millennium will bear witness to a number of alternative ways of approaching transcendence, broadly speaking. In other words, in a world in which the binary options of religiosity and atheism fail to adequately represent the conditions of culture, people will surely look for alternative ways of making sense of transcendence that cut a middle path between the noted polarities. Taylor refers to this phenomenon as

[41] Ibid, 302.
[42] Ibid, 302.
[43] Ibid, 302-303.
[44] Ibid, 302.
[45] Ibid, 309.

the "nova effect".[46] He holds that at the present dawn of the third millennium: "we are just at the beginning"[47] of new stage in human history in which this variety of "religious searching"[48] will assert its legitimacy in and relevance for modern Western culture.

This thesis will take up Taylor's call to determine 'a third way', or in other words, a 'nova effect'. I will do so by following three basic points that he sets out as the criteria for such a task: firstly, I will articulate a theology that features a unification of the dual principles of transcendence and immanence.[49] Secondly, I will look to a 'heterodox' (in other words, doctrines that are "[n]ot in accordance with established doctrines or opinions, or those generally recognized as right or 'orthodox'"[50]) formulation of Christian theology in order to offer an intermediary alternative to the binary poles of orthodoxy and atheism.[51] Thirdly, I will designate an approach to religious thinking that, despite the heightened sense of skepticism in the world today, actually acknowledges the great mass of people who still remain, albeit in an unconventional sense, quite "far from settling in to a comfortable unbelief."[52]

This task will be addressed and argued for in a cumulative manner over the course of this thesis. Moreover, the heterodox theology of Meister Eckhart will serve as the primary referential material for this discussion. However, it must be noted that any interpretations and conclusions that will be offered concerning the application of his thought in and for a modern secular context will ultimately be hermeneutic. In other words, this thesis has not been proposed as a purely descriptive exercise; on the contrary,

[46] Ibid, 302.
[47] Ibid, 535.
[48] Ibid, 535.
[49] Ibid, 309-310.
[50] "heterodox, adj. and n.". *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/86438?redirectedFrom=heterodox (accessed January 27, 2017).
[51] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 302.
[52] Ibid, 727.

it is fundamentally constructive concerning its methodology and its conclusions. My hermeneutic reading of the special ontology that can be found in Eckhart's sermons and treatises will shape my penultimate conclusion that a mystically-informed manner of being in the world is best understood and classified as 'dwelling'. It will further argue that it is precisely this manner of dwelling that can function as a shared point for dialogue between Christian theology and secular thinking.

Statement of Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to define, develop and defend an interpretation and application of the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart. Briefly, mystical ontology should be understood as a distinctive theology insofar as it presents God's being, the being of the world, and the individual's being as an essentially unified whole.

My research focus for this thesis will then be to situate Eckhart's theology within current debates on mysticism and amidst the post-Kantian philosophical turn toward ontology. The cumulative effort of this thesis will reach its height when I apply my conclusions on the mystical nature of being that can be found in Eckhart's medieval writings and transcriptions in order to address the modern theological problem of secularity. This effort will be implemented with the objective of creating a space for dialogue between Christian theology and the generally secularized culture that, in part, defines the present age. In doing so, this thesis will demonstrate the philosophical and cultural relevance of this particular understanding of the nature of being when treating modern problems in theology.

The guiding question for this thesis will be the following: what insights can Meister Eckhart's thought offer to theologians today in addressing the problem of secularity? My overall thesis will then be: *the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart can be interpreted and applied in a manner that successfully opens a space for constructive dialogue between secular culture and the presence of God in the world*.

Structure and Orientation

This critical discussion on Eckhart's mystical ontology and its hermeneutic application toward the problem of secularity will develop over the four successive parts of this thesis. First, I will begin by defining the key themes and questions that will be necessary for this study. It is here that the guiding methodology for this project will also be presented. The second part will discuss the category of mysticism, as it is broadly understood. This effort will become more focused as I move to define Eckhart's idiosyncratic variety of mysticism from within this general category. The third part will outline the definitive philosophical features and the basic setting of post-Kantian thought; special attention will then be directed toward certain definitive landmarks of this horizon that have made Eckhart's thought not only visible, but also relevant and meaningful, once again. The fourth and final part of this thesis will then present my post-Kantian interpretation of Eckhart's unique approach to ontology as a means for addressing the problem of secularity.

Chapter I

The Hermeneutic Method (Hans-Georg Gadamer): Interpreting Eckhartian Mysticism and The Fusion of Horizons

The aim of this chapter is to present the methodology that will be used in this thesis. More specifically, this chapter will show precisely how Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic theory will guide my interpretation of the medieval Christian theology of Meister Eckhart.[53]

The first of this chapter's four subsections will present an overview of Gadamer's hermeneutic theory. I will then move to demonstrate how his particular method of interpretation is relevant to theology, and in particular to mystical theology. Following this, I will situate Gadamer's distinctive approach to hermeneutics among the voices of other twentieth and twenty-first century philosophers and theologians who have developed similar projects. Next, I will turn again to Gadamer in discussing his crucial notion of the ontology of the text. From here, the discussion will naturally evolve into a description of Gadamer's key concept of the 'fusion of horizons', and how it is that this concept relates to the process of interpreting historical texts from within an altogether different historical moment. This chapter will then conclude with a critical analysis of Gadamer's hermeneutics by presenting the main tenets of his theory that will ultimately guide the development of this thesis, as well as its conclusions.

This chapter will provide an outline of the methodology of this thesis. In tying this methodology to the content of this thesis as a whole, this chapter will ask the following question: how is it that a specific theological idea from a medieval author can

[53] The distinctively mystical element(s) of Eckhart's theology, as noted in the chapter title, will be more fully developed in Chapters II, III, and VI.

be engaged and applied in a modern context in order to address certain principles of secularity? My main argument for this chapter will then be that: *Gadamer's hermeneutic theory offers a sound and effective methodology for interpreting historical texts; which is to say, an interpretation that simultaneously takes into account the original meaning of the text as well as its reconfigured meaning and application for the present moment*.

An Introduction to Gadamerian Hermeneutics and Its Relevance for (Mystical) Theology and the Problem of Secularity

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) was the first philosopher to fully develop Martin Heidegger's existential hermeneutics into a general hermeneutic theory of history.[54] As a student, Gadamer attended Heidegger's 1923 lecture series in Freiburg titled *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity*.[55] Consequently, Gadamer would later become one of the prime recipients of his predecessor's efforts to rethink hermeneutics. In fact, and by his own admission, Gadamer's historical expansions of his teacher's existential hermeneutics lead to the publication of his seminal work *Truth and Method* (1960).[56]

In *Truth and Method* Gadamer's aim was to offer a description of the common elements that are at play in all modes of understanding and their subsequent interpretations (see below). Two of his key terms in this project are (as was noted above) 'understanding' and 'interpretation'. In Gadamer's use of these terms, at least according

[54] Hoy, David Couzens, "Heidegger and the hermeneutic turn" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 178.
[55] Dostal, Robert J., "Gadamer: The Man and His Work" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 16.
[56] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method*, 2nd Rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, London: Continuum, 2006. Dostal also supports this comment. See: Dostal, *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 247.

to Robert Dostal, his inheritance from Heidegger becomes quite evident.[57] In other words, Gadamer borrows directly from Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) in making use of and expanding upon his teacher's conceptual link between and development of these two terms.[58] However, despite the many similarities that one can establish between the hermeneutic theories of Heidegger and Gadamer – even those that, according to Dostal, Gadamer himself acknowledges – I am more inclined to agree with commentators such as Jean Grondin[59] who are keen to show the very important differences and distinctions that separate their philosophies. With this in mind, this section will first introduce Gadamer's definitions and developments of the aforementioned concepts. The following section will be devoted to briefly presenting and analyzing alternative hermeneutic theories – and Heidegger's model, of course, will be among those that are discussed.

At the outset of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer presents the following basic tenet of his project:

> [T]he purpose of my investigation is not to offer a general theory of interpretation and a differential of its methods … but to discover what is common to all modes of understanding and show that understanding is never a subjective relation to a given "object" but to the history of its effect; in other words, understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood.[60]

In this important introductory statement, Gadamer is clear about his aim. His hermeneutic theory is, first and foremost, about revealing the structure of understanding in general,

[57] Dostal, *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 252.
[58] See: Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, tran. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1962), 182-195, ¶ 31 and ¶ 32.
[59] Grondin, Jean, "Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 36-51.
[60] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxxviii.

and consequently the individual interpreter's relation to the conditions of history. Later on in the text, he develops this thinking in stating that "*[u]nderstanding is ... participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated*."[61] For Gadamer, the interpreter is the individual agent (or the subject) who thinks and acts in time – standing at once as the recipient of tradition and the active agent for influencing its future course. As was previously noted, the interpreter's framework for understanding is a result of his or her cultural context – or 'horizon' – along with the confluence of tradition that informs that context. In thirteenth and fourteenth-century Europe, Meister Eckhart's understanding of the world would have been informed by the cultural (the intellectual, religious, economic, and otherwise) conditions of the day. Clearly in the twenty-first century, the interpreter's understanding of himself or herself and his or her world is quite different to that of Eckhart's. This is especially the case in respect to the movement of culture and the advancement of ideas. Of interest to this discussion is the way that these two – past and present – frameworks merge in the event of the twenty-first century interpreter engaging with a subject matter from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The modern interpreter is bound to mediate the subject matter of the past in and through his or her own language and cultural context. It is through this act of mediation that these two quite distinct moments in history are effectively merged in and through a single understanding – a merger that occurs in the mind of the interpreter. In other words, the new understanding that emerges is simultaneously informed by the subject matter that is under examination and the nuanced vantage point and world of the interpreter.

[61] Ibid, 291 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(ii)).

For Gadamer, the obvious medium for any understanding is language. In his thinking, language is the common element that holds tradition together as a homogeneous and continuously unfolding process. To this end, he writes: "[j]ust as things, those units of our experience of the world that are constituted by their suitability and their significance, are brought into language, so the tradition that has come down to us is again brought to speak in our understanding and interpretation of it."[62] Following this idea, this thesis will work to bring Eckhart into the language of the modern world.

As it relates to this thesis as a whole, my hermeneutic reading of the mystical theology of Meister Eckhart will unfold in the following manner. Part II of the thesis will introduce the concept(s) of mysticism in general. Subsequently, and more particularly, I will introduce my guiding claim concerning the mystical theology of Meister Eckhart. Part III will discuss the post-Kantian context through which my reading of Eckhart takes place. In doing so, my aim will be to expose and comment on some of the conditions of the current historical horizon that have influenced this very specific reading of Eckhart. Finally, Part IV of the thesis will be devoted to showing how this post-Kantian interpretation of Meister Eckhart's mysticism can be taken up as a point for constructive dialogue between Christian theology and certain principles of secularity.

As a working methodology for presenting the conditions for understanding as well as a model for interpretation, Gadamerian hermeneutic theory will simultaneously guide the form and be integrated into the content of this project. In other words, this thesis will work to define, develop, and defend a post-Kantian reading of a pre-Kantian theology that follows closely in step with Gadamer's hermeneutic model. It should also be noted that a reading such as this does not aim to recreate the historical context of

[62] Ibid, 452, III, 5, 1 (A).

Meister Eckhart and/or to present his theology in a way in which his contemporaries might have received it; this is the work of philology, not of hermeneutics. Rather, the aim of this project is to shed new light on the mystical theology of Eckhart when reading his works from within a modern secular context. Fundamentally, for Gadamer: "[h]ermeneutical experience is concerned with *tradition*."[63] Moreover, a text, no matter how historically distanced it is from the present, remains accessible as an element of that tradition, and thereby as a direct link to any particular (and often times quite dissimilar) moment in history. The task of the interpreter, then, is to balance the historical particularity and original meaning of the text with the influences that are imposed onto his or her interpretation of that text by his or her own context and cultural conditions. What emerges from this process is a synthesis – a synthesis wherein past events and tradition are mediated in and through the present by way of a single act of interpretation. In developing this point, Gadamer writes that: "[i]n the course of our reflections we have come to see that understanding always involves something like applying the text to be understood to the interpreter's present situation."[64] Interestingly then for the interpreter, hermeneutics unfolds as an active and directly involved mode of participation in tradition. This is especially the case in respect to the interpreter's reception of tradition and his or her influence on its future course and direction. In this way, tradition is not something that is static and fixed in time. Rather, it is constantly being mediated and re-presented anew in and through the mind and the world of the interpreter. In this way, a historical text can at once be distant in respect to its historical location, yet all the while radically present in respect to the projection of its meaning and its possibilities for

[63] Ibid, 352, II, 4, 2 (B).
[64] Ibid, 306-307, Part II, 4, 2 (A).

application within the horizon of the interpreter. Moreover, no matter how historically distant the text might be, or how relevant its application is for the present times, the fact remains that each and every interpretation and its application brings all of these elements together in the mind of the interpreter wherein they are synthesized and presented anew in the form or his or her subsequent interpretation. To this end, Gadamer states that "[h]ermeneutic work is based on a polarity of familiarity and strangeness … It is in the play between the traditionary text's strangeness and familiarity to us, between being historically intended, distanced object and belonging to a tradition. *The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between*."[65] For Gadamer, it is the mind of the interpreter that hosts this in-between event of interpretation. He further develops this notion of the participatory role in the on-going process of tradition when he puts forward the idea that "[t]radition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves."[66] It is with this in mind, that Gadamerian hermeneutic theory presents one with both the interpretive right and the necessary instructions to mediate historical texts in and through the thought, language, and conditions of the contemporary moment. It will be this guiding principle that will lead the whole of this study in its interpretation of the medieval mysticism of Meister Eckhart; an interpretation that will unfold for the end purpose of creating a space for dialogue between Christian theology and certain principles of secularity that have, in part, come to define the cultural horizon of the modern, Western world.

[65] Ibid, 295, Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iii).
[66] Ibid, 293, II, 4, 1, (B)(iii).

However, before I proceed any further with the development and application of Gadamerian hermeneutics for the stated aim of this thesis, I would like to present a number of alternative approaches to this discipline for the purpose of both criticism and clarification.

Hermeneutic Methodologies and the Movement of Tradition: Alternative Approaches

Hermeneutics has its etymological and philological origins in Greek mythology. Richard E. Palmer explains that "[t]he Greek word *hermeios* referred to the priest of the Delphic oracle"[67] and "[t]his word and the *hermeneuein* and the noun *hermeneia* point back to the wing-footed messenger-god Hermes".[68] Palmer adds:

> Significantly, Hermes is associated with the function of transmitting what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp. The various forms of the word suggest the process of bringing a thing or a situation from unintelligibility to understanding. The Greeks credited Hermes with the discovery of language and writing – the tools which human understanding employs to grasp meaning and to convey it to others.[69]

The long and detailed history of this term, in respect to its various practices and applications, has been a constant in philosophical and theological thinking from the Greeks to St. Augustine. The medieval and early modern application of the term and its practice is also well documented by historians of hermeneutic theory such as Werner

[67] Palmer, Richard, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 13.
[68] Ibid, 13.
[69] Ibid, 13.

Jeanrond.[70] The modern present day manifestation of hermeneutics was first initiated by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), and then later expanded by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). Unfortunately, there is not enough space here to consider the long and detailed history of this category of thought in full. Therefore, I will refer my readers to the works of Palmer[71] and Jeanrond[72] for a more comprehensive treatment of the history of this tradition, and especially its more modern developments. It should also be noted that Martin Heidegger offers a condensed, but very good study of the etymology of this term and its development in classical thinking and early Christian theology.[73] In what follows, this section will treat a number of hermeneutic theories that are contemporary with Gadamer's own thinking on this subject. This overview is meant to give a brief analysis of several alternative approaches to hermeneutics and to situate Gadamer's unique approach within the context of other twentieth century contributors to the field. I will begin this study with a brief analysis of the hermeneutic theory of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Gadamer's teacher and intellectual predecessor.

For Heidegger: "[i]n hermeneutics what is developed for Dasein is a possibility of its becoming and being for itself in the manner of an *understanding* of itself."[74] In defining what it is that he means by the term 'hermeneutics', he writes: "[t]he expression '*hermeneutics*' is used here to indicate the unified manner of the engaging, approaching,

[70] Jeanrond, Werner, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1994), 12-39.
[71] Palmer, Richard, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969.
[72] Jeanrond, Werner, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1994.
[73] Heidegger, Martin, *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, tran. John van Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 6-11, §2.
[74] Ibid, 11, §3.

interrogating, and explicating of facticity."[75] Clarifying this, he adds that "hermeneutics is the announcement and making known of the being of a being in its being in relation to … (me)."[76] In response to this, Jeanrond comments that "Heidegger's goal [in hermeneutics] was … to offer a fundamentally ontological approach to human existence".[77] Jeanrond is quite right to point this out. However it should also be noted that Heidegger's hermeneutics was cast as a formal universal structure that would reveal one's individual relationship to the world. Therefore, it can be definitively stated that Heidegger developed a theory of existential hermeneutics.

Heidegger's move to establish an existential hermeneutics was quite different from the projects of his modern predecessors in this field. For example, according to Jeanrond, Schleiermacher's aim was to expand theological hermeneutics from a merely exegetical exercise concerning Scripture to one of human understanding in general – a process that would then be applicable to any and all texts, and not just those deemed sacred. In this way, Schleiermacher was the first modern hermeneutic thinker to shift the discipline from a purely theological endeavor to one that was more universal and philosophical in both its range and application. Later on in the nineteenth century, Dilthey would build upon Schleiermacher's developments in hermeneutics. Dilthey argued that such a schematic for interpretation ought to traverse all areas of the humanities and even serve as the principle bearing for guiding the critical direction of academic discussions and debates therein.[78] It is this link in the development of hermeneutic thinking that compels Jeanrond to argue that "Dilthey's hermeneutical

[75] Ibid, 6, §2. For clarification, Heidegger defines 'facticity' in the following manner: "'*Facticity*' is the designation we will use for the character of the being of 'our' 'own' *Dasein*. Ibid, 5 (Part One).
[76] Ibid, 7, §2.
[77] Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 45.
[78] Ibid, 51-52.

thoughts … provide the bridge between Schleiermacher and hermeneutical developments in the twentieth century."[79] Progressing chronologically, Heidegger picks up on Dilthey's developments, but in a highly critical way. He suggests that Dilthey was moving hermeneutic theory in the right direction, yet only to a "small extent",[80] and further, that his focus on the humanities – or the human sciences [*Geisteswissenchaften*] – exposed the "disastrous limitations in his position". [81] For Heidegger, hermeneutics was far more than a technique[82] for understanding texts or even a foundation for the humanities.

Fundamentally, for Heidegger, hermeneutics was the basic interpretative process from which all 'being' was to be "encountered, seen, grasped, and expressed in concepts."[83] It is also at this point that Heidegger's thinking begins to show a resemblance to what one finds in Gadamer. That is to say, Gadamer holds that the conditions for interpretation are historical effects that work to shape not only one's perception and prejudices, but also the entire horizon for understanding that the interpreter acts within.[84] Commenting on the relationship between Heidegger and Gadamer, Grondin summarizes their distinctions in referring to the former's model as a "[h]ermeneutics of existence" and the latter's as a "[h]ermeneutics of text interpretation".[85] Grondin expands on this point in suggesting that "Heidegger is primarily concerned with the anticipation of existence that is involved in every understanding and that his hermeneutics of existence is interrogating".[86] Gadamer, on the other hand, according to Grondin "seems to concentrate … on the certainly more limited

[79] Ibid, 51.
[80] Heidegger, *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 11, §2.
[81] Ibid, 11, §2.
[82] Ibid, 10, §2.
[83] Ibid, 11, §3.
[84] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 459 (Part III, 5, 3 (B)).
[85] Grondin, *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 49.
[86] Ibid, 48.

problem of text interpretation in the human sciences."[87] To a certain extent I am in agreement with Grondin on this point. However, his claim regarding Gadamer's concentration on the interpretation of texts is too reductive. Gadamer is primarily interested in language as the medium for self and world understanding.[88] The text, in Gadamer's project, has the specific function of fusing otherwise distinct horizons, by presenting the conditions for historical understanding, and maintaining the stream of tradition through the transmission of understandable content by way of language.[89] It is in this spirit that Gadamer writes: "*language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs*."[90] My position in contrast to Grondin's is not meant to undermine the importance of the text in Gadamer's thinking. Rather, it is simply to show that there ought to be a shift in emphasis; namely, concerning the idea that language is primary for Gadamer, and that the text is simply the common vehicle for the transmission of language.

In contrast to Gadamer, Heidegger is far more focused on the immediate disclosure of one's relationship (in other words, Dasein's relationship) to the world, and vice versa. Heidegger's central aim in *Being and Time* was to define 'Being' as the single comprehensive element of all existence,[91] and to understand the nature of 'Being' from both its universal and individual situations. Put simply, his project is therefore the process or working out of possibilities to the question: "'[w]hat *is* 'Being'?'"[92] This question finds its distinctively hermeneutic form in ¶ 31 and ¶ 32 of *Being and Time*. David

[87] Ibid, 48.
[88] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 452 (Part III, 5, 3 (A)).
[89] Ibid, 385-406 (Part III, 5, 1 (A & B)).
[90] Ibid, 390 (Part III, 5, 1).
[91] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 26, ¶ 2, (6).
[92] Ibid, 25, ¶2 (5).

Couzens Hoy reaffirms this when he writes that the noted sections are where "Heidegger makes interpretive understanding the central mode of human existence".[93] It is also at this point that Heidegger designates 'understanding' as a "basic mode of Dasein's *Being*."[94] Following this, it can be said that Dasein's engagements and interactions with the world, in all cases, discloses a specific understanding of both the world and of Dasein's sense of identity within and relation to it. In this way, "understanding always pertains to the whole of Being-in-the-world. In every understanding of the world, existence is understood with it, and *vice versa*."[95] This relationship between Dasein and world creates a "'circle' in understanding"[96] – a circle that is constantly presenting, as well as being altered by new interpretations and meanings of existence. It is Heidegger's position moreover, that "[i]n the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing."[97] From this last statement, it can be shown that Heidegger's project, though similar in form, was in its overall aim quite different from Gadamer's. That is to say, while Heidegger was working out a program to radically reorient one's sense of 'Being' so as to have an understanding of its primordial nature, Gadamer's hermeneutics were trying to show that all understandings are, to some extent, informed by historical conditions. In this way, they are not just products of objective research and scientific methodologies in the way that, according to Gadamer, the natural sciences might like to frame them.[98]

Paul Ricoeur's (1913-2005) hermeneutic theory emerges as a response to issues that were not altogether dissimilar to those that Gadamer was working to treat. However,

[93] Hoy, *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 177.
[94] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 182, ¶ 31 (143).
[95] Ibid, 194, ¶ 32 (152).
[96] Ibid, 195, ¶ 32 (153).
[97] Ibid, 195, ¶ 32 (153).
[98] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxviii.

despite a number of similarities, Ricoeur's hermeneutic project is quite different from Gadamer's.[99] To begin with, Ricoeur's approach to hermeneutics addresses "a range of attitudes that a reader may entertain when confronted with a text."[100] In other words, he seeks to bring into conversation the attitudes of the "speaker, writer, or author"[101] as well as that of the "reader".[102] He does so with a greater weight on the opening to the "self"[103] than what we find with Gadamer and his emphasis on tradition. In this way, there is a real shift in direction that separates Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory from that of Gadamer's. It is with the shift to the self in mind that Ricoeur's central claim for hermeneutics becomes clear, that is: "[t]o 'make one's own' what was previously 'foreign' remains the ultimate aim of all hermeneutics."[104] In developing this main point, he continues: "[i]nterpretation … wants to equalize, to render contemporaneous, to assimilate in the sense of making similar. This goal is achieved insofar as interpretation actualizes the meaning of the text for the present reader."[105] In this passage, Ricoeur makes it evident that interpretation is a key element of his hermeneutic thinking. However, and unlike Heidegger and Gadamer, he relegates interpretation from the internal dialectical process of hermeneutics, and replaces it with "explanation".[106] It is with this move in mind that commentators, such as Dan R. Stiver, are led to suggest that in calling attention to 'explanation', "he went

[99] An excellent compilation of Ricoeur's writings on religion and theology is presented in the following edition: Ricoeur, Paul, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, ed. Mark I. Wallace, tran. David Pellauer, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.
[100] Ricoeur, Paul, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 71.
[101] Ibid, 71.
[102] Ibid, 71.
[103] Ibid, 94-95.
[104] Ibid, 91.
[105] Ibid, 91-92.
[106] Ibid, 86.

beyond both Heidegger and Gadamer in preferring a 'long route to understanding."[107] However, Stiver is a bit too intrepid in suggesting that Ricoeur went 'beyond' Heidegger and Gadamer. Rather, it would be a more correct to simply state that he chose an alternative route. In what follows, I will aim to show how and why this was the case.

To navigate what is meant in Stiver's statement – and even more, in Ricoeur's inclusion of 'explanation' into his dialectic – a brief review of Ricoeur's meaning of 'understanding' and 'explanation' must now unfold. Ricoeur's dialectic between understanding and explanation has an end, and he refers to that end as 'comprehension'. He summarizes his dialectic toward comprehension when he writes:

> I propose to describe this dialectic first as a move from understanding to explaining and then a move from explanation to comprehension. The first time, understanding will be a naïve grasping of the meaning of the text as a whole. The second time, comprehension will be a sophisticated mode of understanding, supported by explanatory procedures.[108]

In this statement, comprehension functions as a stage of understanding – its consummation. To qualify this idea, Ricoeur adds: "[e]xplanation, then, will appear as the mediation between two stages of understanding."[109] Ricoeur's sense of explanation diverges from Gadamer's notion of interpretation insofar as it is less concerned with tradition and more concerned with the text being the muse for the instigation and ultimately the presentation of a new idea. In doing so, it becomes an event[110] that can, in effect, provide a new mode of being[111] for the interpreter. In this way, Ricoeur attempts

[107] Stiver, Daniel, R., *Ricoeur and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 37.
[108] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 74.
[109] Ibid, 75.
[110] Ibid, 92.
[111] Ibid, 94.

to build on the notion of interpretation by referring to it as an "appropriation"[112] of the meaning of a text that has the potential to inform the life and sense of being of the interpreter, as the subject. However, as Ricoeur points out, this appropriation cannot be done haphazardly. In fact, it must involve his synthetic measure of comprehension.[113]

The hermeneutic presentation that Ricoeur offers consistently and finally relates to the self. In other words, the appropriation of a text by the interpreter offers the conditions from whence a sense of self can take form. He writes:

> [The text] gives to the subject a new capacity for knowing himself. If the reference of the text is the project of a world, then it is not the reader who primarily projects himself. The reader rather is enlarged in his capacity of self-projections by receiving a new mode of being from the text itself.[114]

Ricoeur adds an existential element to this statement when he suggests that without its interpretive power, or that which provides it with its capacity for selfhood, the self lacks content. In this way, for Ricoeur, the self takes priority over tradition, insofar as a text, first and above all else, informs one's sense of self-understanding. In one of his penultimate statements concerning hermeneutics, Ricoeur writes: "[i]n this self-understanding, I would oppose the self, which proceeds from the understanding of the text, to the ego, which claims to precede it. It is the text, with its universal power of world disclosure, which gives a self to the ego."[115]

From this brief review of Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory, it should be clear that his emphasis departs from tradition and thereby decreases the radius of its circle, so to speak, in favor of a more precise treatment of self-understanding as opposed to the generalities

[112] Ibid, 92.
[113] Ibid, 92.
[114] Ibid, 94.
[115] Ibid, 95.

of tradition. Does this go 'beyond', in the sense of improving upon, Gadamer's hermeneutics, as Stiver suggests above? Doubtless, there is a change in emphasis. However, Gadamer's appeal to tradition is a strong one. In respect to the project of this thesis, Gadamer's approach is in fact far more useful. After all, and in what follows, the very current of tradition itself will be under examination. Moreover, not only does this follow Charles Taylor's description of the movement of tradition from a religious to a secular one, but it also serves the project of this thesis in addressing a public issue for interpretation as opposed to a personal one. In any case, Ricoeur's insights regarding hermeneutics are profound and could be used in an altogether different setting, one in which the works of Eckhart are being read in a way that informs one's own self-understanding as opposed to addressing their relevancy specifically toward tradition itself. Thus I am drawing on Ricoeur, in this case, simply to highlight how his hermeneutic theory tends, at least more so than the other thinkers under scrutiny here, specifically toward the individual as its main point of emphasis. For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to note that Gadamer, in contrast to Ricoeur, is more often inclined to stress the holistic role of tradition in his thinking.

In addressing tradition from the standpoint of theology, David Tracy (1939-) develops a hermeneutic model that, similar to Gadamer, is based on the historicity and movement of time and tradition. Tracy writes: "[t]he systematic theologian … must operate in a manner more faithful to the actual finitude and historicity of every thinker in any cultural tradition."[116] He expands on this position in writing:

[116] Tracy, David, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), 100.

> All contemporary systematic theology can be understood as fundamentally hermeneutical. This position implies that systematic theologians, by definition, will understand themselves as radically finite and historical thinkers who have risked a trust in a particular religious tradition. They seek, therefore, to retrieve, interpret, translate, mediate the resources – the questions and answers, form and content, the subject matter – of the classic events, images, persons, rituals, texts and symbols of a tradition.[117]

Tracy argues that the given cultural conditions that make up the theologian's world will influence his or her interpretation of a text. Insofar as conditions and culture undergo movement and change, so too then must interpretations. In fact, for Tracy, to simply repeat a long-standing interpretation of a text is to invalidate that text's on-going presence and ability to disseminate meaning in respect to what it is that it communicates in and as a result of the present times. To this end, he writes: "[s]ystematic theologians cannot simply repeat; they must critically interpret the tradition …".[118]

I am in agreement with Tracy's points here. In many ways, they reflect much of what can be found in Gadamer's hermeneutic theory. However, Tracy has an altogether different aim in his writing than what one finds in Gadamer, as well as in the project of this thesis. That is to say, Tracy's theological hermeneutics culminate in his effort to announce a pluralistic attitude toward religions. Ultimately, Tracy proposes that people of different cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs can converse with one another in a highly empathic manner. In fact, he suggests distinctive religious traditions can find a commonality through understanding each other in analogous terms. To this end, he concludes the following:

[117] Ibid, 104.
[118] Ibid, 405.

> We understand one another, if at all, only through analogy. Who you are I know only by knowing what event, what focal meaning, you actually live by. And, that I know only if I too have sensed some analogous guide in my own life. If we converse, it is likely we will both be changed as we focus upon the subject matter itself – the fundamental questions and the classical responses in our traditions.[119]

Tracy's approach to hermeneutics and to the multi-religious globalized world is a strong and productive contribution to inter-religious and/or pluralistic dialogues. Much can be taken from Tracy's thinking for the methodology of this study. However, at base, Tracy's project and the project of this thesis diverge in the sense that I am working to develop a space between Christian theology and certain principles of secularity, and my aim is to do so by referring to a special presentation of ontology that I am interpreting as the core matter of Meister Eckhart's mystical thinking. Tracy, on the other hand, is addressing a related, but in reality, altogether different issue; namely the challenge of religious diversity and the problem of locating common ground between seemingly disparate traditions. Our projects diverge further in the sense that my aim is to discuss theology and secularity in and through the univocal vocabulary of ontology, and not by way of analogy, as Tracy advocates.

It should also be noted that my criticisms of Tracy in no sense constitute an attempt to diminish the legitimacy of his project. It is simply the case that there is not enough methodological overlap between Tracy's project and the project of this thesis. This is especially the case insofar as Gadamer's appeal to language does not limit itself to analogy in the way that Tracy's project does. Rather, Gadamer's appeal to language encompasses a much greater variety of linguistic applications insofar as it is concerned

[119] Ibid, 455.

with the broader notion of human understanding. Again, bringing to attention his thinking to this effect, Gadamer states:

> [T]he aim of my investigation is … to discover what is common to all modes of understanding and to show that understanding is never a subjective relationship to a given 'object' but to the history of its effect; in other words, understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood.[120]

In this statement, Gadamer's approach appears, in some respects, to be both similar and distinct to Tracy's. In fact, one could argue that Tracy's approach accounts for these different understandings and aims to align them through analogies. However, Gadamer's touchstones are the text and tradition; or the sense in which the realm of understanding and communication is constantly undergoing revision on account of the historical horizon in which it arises. Therefore, analogy, as a means for communicating similar ideas in quite distinct contexts would be just one way, among many others, of establishing new understandings. In this way, Gadamer's hermeneutic model is simply more comprehensive in its possibilities for interpretation and communication than what one finds in Tracy's writings.

The final author to be analyzed in this section will be Jean-Luc Marion (1946-). In his 2013 lecture series 'Givenness & Hermeneutics',[121] Marion presents an overview of his phenomenological conclusions as they relate to hermeneutics. Marion's phenomenological reflection leads him to argue that 'givenness' is the subject matter of an intentional encounter in consciousness. In other words, that which is given is simply a

[120] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxviii.
[121] Marion, Jean-Luc, *Givenness & Hermeneutics*, tran. Jean-Pierre LaFouge, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2012.

phenomenon that is an "inherent *factum*"[122] of being. His use of the term 'givenness' comes about rather ingeniously. Taking up the language and terminology of Husserl and Heidegger, Marion defines the common German statement '*es gibt*' as literally meaning, 'it gives'. This is interesting, and for the reason that in German, this statement is used as the equivalent of the English statement 'there is'; as in, 'there is a book on the table'. In this way, Marion moves to extract further meaning from this common phrase by understanding 'that which is' as being 'given'.[123] The everyday use of this phrase compliments its more literal meaning by suggesting that the 'thereness', or rather, the 'isness' of an intentional object has such an ontological property on account of its having been given.

Further, for Marion, in order to be given, a phenomenon must deliver meaning. However, the meaning that is presented is not determined entirely by a subjective act of the interpreter. Instead, the intentional object that is truly given carries with it an intrinsic meaning; a meaning that is, of course, open to a limited range of interpretations in respect of the object's meaning. Interestingly, for Marion, part of the givenness of an object of perception is its rather specific and controlled scope of meaning that it should rightly and/or correctly convey to the interpreter. Summarizing this in his own words, Marion writes: "[o]nly phenomenon with a meaning is literally giving itself, the phenomenon which is mediated by its own meaning."[124] At this point, it seems fair to question precisely how Marion's phenomenological conclusion might link up with hermeneutics. In moving to strengthen this connection, Marion writes:

[122] Ibid, 31.
[123] Ibid, 19.
[124] Ibid, 37.

> Hermeneutic practices a givenness of meaning on the given, from an appropriate meaning to the given in such a way that the latter, instead of returning to its anonymity and remaining in hiding, is deliberately released and freed in its manifestation.[125]

Further on in the text, he develops and clarifies this point in stating: "[f]or we need to understand hermeneutics itself in view of the way the given is received and identified."[126] In other words, that which is given will present, or rather show itself, in a recognizably consistent way. In doing so, the interpretation of the intentional object is interpreted rightly when it correctly engages with and orients one's understanding in relation to that object. Marion refers to this orientation as "an opening toward an interpretation."[127] In fact, without an orientation, or perhaps better, an attitude of this variety, that which is given might altogether fail to appear as such.[128]

Marion concludes his thinking on the relation between phenomenology and hermeneutics by stating: "[t]he phenomenology of givenness is managing the gap between what gives itself and what shows itself, whose challenge sets the self of the phenomenon, only by the exercise of a properly phenomenological hermeneutics."[129] In order to explicate the place of hermeneutics in his dialectic, he turns to Gadamer. In doing so, however, he exposes some rather glaring holes in his own argumentation, and indeed in his own reading of Gadamer.[130] Gadamer's dialectic is quite clearly arranged as an interchange between the part and the whole – the interpreter and tradition, whereas, Marion is trying to read Gadamer as constructing a dialectical relationship that is solely

[125] Ibid, 41.
[126] Ibid, 51.
[127] Ibid, 25.
[128] Ibid, 25.
[129] Ibid, 63.
[130] Ibid, 43-45.

between the intentional object and the interpreter. Further, Gadamer is insistent that language is the medium that facilitates any hermeneutic understanding or interpretation. Not only that, the text becomes Gadamer's primary reference point for the transmission of tradition and the fusing of horizons. Gadamer's reliance on language is unequivocal.

For Marion, what comes into language is the interpretation of what is given. However, that which is given is, ostensibly, not always a linguistic phenomenon, such as a text. For Gadamer, the fusion of otherwise distinct horizons is, in this respect, more clearly marked insofar as the language and content of a text that is a horizon apart is brought into the horizon of the interpreter. Furthermore, as a result of the interchange between what is presented in the text and the horizon of the interpreter, an altogether new interpretation is forged. In Marion's case, this process is not so straightforward. This is because Marion purports to interpret the givenness of any intentional object that presents itself as such – be it a verbal or a non-verbal phenomenon. In fact, Marion goes so far as to simply assume that anything of even a non-verbal nature will retain something constant and particular to it to share with the interpreter. In this way, it is not tradition that has the primary influence on meaning. Rather, it is something intrinsic about that which is given that provides this meaning when it is correctly interpreted.

This last point is actually problematic for a thinker like Gadamer, because any serious fusion of horizons (see below), requires that the distinctiveness of those horizons be brought into account. It becomes not only possible, but indeed likely that the interpretation of a phenomenal object will take on a new meaning. Thus, for Gadamer, the sense that something is constant about a meaning – a meaning that is given, so to speak – is not consistent with his thinking. Rather, in Gadamer's view, a meaning is

fundamentally assigned to a subject matter (which naturally includes the meaning of a text as well). In this way, the only thing that is constant is not the meaning itself that is repeatedly given, but the fact that interpretation of any given object is "infinite"[131] and, therefore, not at all limited by the idea that an object already contains within itself any kind of primordial meaning.

In trying to reconcile these two ideas, the closest thing that could suffice, for Gadamer, would be language, though in a different way from what one finds in Marion. After all, language, unlike the given, undergoes significant changes in time and across culture. In truth, the only things that makes Gadamer's position on language comparable to Marion's idea of the given is that they both serve as an accessible link between two horizons. When the language of one horizon is brought into the world of another the effect is to fuse them. Ultimately then, language, and more tangibly, a text, can transmit meaning from one horizon to another. In this way, language, for Gadamer, takes on an ontological role as the courier of tradition. Accordingly, it is language that facilitates tradition; it is language that moves tradition; and finally, it is language that makes tradition available to future generations as the recipients of its perpetual stream.

As a matter of conclusion, I have highlighted these various hermeneutic theories in order to show how it is that they stand in contrast to Gadamer's approach to this realm of philosophy. Moreover, I have done this in order to also show why it is that Gadamer's particular approach to hermeneutics is appropriate to and for the project of this thesis, and especially when viewed alongside other outstanding representatives of this field. In reviewing these authors, my secondary aim then was simply to further clarify the nuances of Gadamer's unique theory and its specific relevancy for this project by showing how it

[131] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 298 (Part II, 4, 1, (B)(iii)).

differs from (and, for this purposes of this thesis, is preferable to) these other influential contributors to this field of thought. In what follows, a selection of the distinctive features of Gadamer's own hermeneutic theory that were more conspicuously brought into plain view as a result the above discussions will now be presented and developed.

Language and Historical Transmission: The Ontology of the Text

One of the distinguishing features of Gadamerian hermeneutics is its reliance on language and the role of the text in the transmission of tradition. In a later essay, he summarizes his project in *Truth and Method*, thus:

> I have tried to present in *Truth and Method*, through the aspect of linguisticality that operates in all understanding, an unambiguous demonstration of the continual process of mediation by which that which is societally transmitted (the tradition) lives on. For language is not only an object in our hands, it is the reservoir of tradition and the medium in and through which we exist and perceive our world.[132]

Here, Gadamer expresses his focus on language as the public means through which all aspects of thought and tradition can be transmitted. In this way, language allows for ideas to be communicated from person to person, from one particular culture to another, and from one historical period to another, and so on. Commenting on this, Brice Wachterhauser states that: "[t]here are no contexts of human understanding that are not constituted in terms of some linguistic framework and when we understand the world, ourselves, or others, we do so in terms of that framework."[133] In this statement,

[132] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. and tran. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 29.
[133] Wachterhauser, Brice, "Getting it Right: Relativism, Realism and Truth" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 66.

Wachterhauser is, for the most part, consistent with Gadamerian thought. However, one criticism that can be advanced against this purely linguistic framework is that aesthetic experience can also serve as a medium for the transmission of tradition – an argument that, in fact, Gadamer is sympathetic to. After all, Part I of his *Truth and Method* [134] is devoted to the experience of art and he also later developed a number of essays on the topic of the beautiful and other forms of art.[135] Gadamer's answer to my objection is quite simple. He writes: "[l]ike all other kinds of experience, aesthetic and religious experience seek expression in language."[136] What makes a linguistic experience different from an aesthetic (or a religious one) is that it is intelligible and transmittable. In other words, regardless of what the subject matter actually is (be it linguistic or aesthetic), in order to be understood it must come into language. Summarizing this point in his own words, Gadamer writes: "*language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs*."[137] He reaffirms this point when he advances the following position: "[f]or man's relation to the world is absolutely verbal in nature, and hence intelligible."[138] In this way, Gadamer also demonstrates his Heideggerian influence,[139] insofar as language is not only a means for communication, but also the medium for self and world understanding, and their disclosure.[140]

There is a deeper argument that might develop from this variety of philosophizing concerning linguistic and pre-linguistic understandings and the transmission of meaning by way of aesthetic experience. It is therefore not difficult to imagine Gadamer's own

[134] See: Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 1-171 (Part I).
[135] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, tran. Nicholas Walker, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
[136] Ibid, 140.
[137] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 390 (Part III, 5, 1).
[138] Ibid, 471 (Part III, 5, 3, (C)).
[139] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 192-194 ¶32 (151-152).
[140] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 452 (Part III, 5, 3 (A)).

concentration on Immanuel Kant's, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* ,[141] that serves as the central reference for his discussions in Part I of *Truth and Method*.[142] Incidentally, this exposes another weak point in Gadamer's argument concerning hermeneutics and language; his unconvincing attempt to link aesthetic experience to linguistic hermeneutic experience. Scholars such Jean Grondin[143] and J.M. Baker, Jr.[144] level a similar criticism against Gadamer, and I am inclined to agree with them regarding this inconsistency in his thinking. Even so, this thesis deals specifically with the interpretation of texts, and not aesthetic experience, per se. Therefore Gadamer's inconsistencies regarding the relation of the latter to the former do not impact the overall applicability of his hermeneutic model to a project such as this one. Günter Figal[145] supports my position on this account when he summarizes that Gadamer's legacy is, as it were, weighted on his account of text interpretation and the linguistic turn in hermeneutics. It is this area of his thought that I will focus on for the remaining parts of this chapter, and in subsequent chapters.

Concerning the being of tradition and its mode of transmission by way of language, Gadamer holds that "[t]he mode of being of tradition is, of course, not sensible immediacy. It is language, and in interpreting its texts, the hearer who understands it relates its truth to his own linguistic orientation toward the world." [146] More fundamentally, he notes that "[t]o have a world means to have an orientation toward

[141] Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Mathews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
[142] Gadamer, Truth and Method, 1-171 (Part I).
[143] Grondin, *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 42.
[144] Baker, J. M. Jr., "Lyric and Paradigm: Hegel and the Speculative Instance of Poetry in Gadamer's Hermeneutics" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 143-166.
[145] Figal, Günter, "The Doing of the Thing Itself: Gadamer's Hermeneutic Ontology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 102.
[146] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 459 (Part III, 5, 3 (B)).

it."[147] It is statements like these that compel commentators such as Wachterhauser to draw the following conclusion: "Gadamer's position can be further illuminated by focusing on his claim that language is a 'medium' through which the world is disclosed to us."[148] Wachterhauser develops this idea further:

> [A]s a medium, words mediate the world to us; they are the vehicle by which the intelligibility of the world is delivered to us, as it were. These are strong claims but they are not saying that language is the ontological ground of the world's intelligibility. They are claiming that because we always grasp the world through some historically particular language that our grasp of the world is always limited, "finite," subject to possible revision, emendation and so forth.[149]

In this case, Wachterhauser's interpretation of Gadamer is one that, in form, falls parallel to the project of this thesis, namely: to interpret Eckhart in light of post-Kantian philosophy and in view of the pervasive secular conditions in the contemporary Western world.

To demonstrate this parallel, I will highlight two examples from the works of Meister Eckhart in order to bring Gadamer's model for interpretation more in line with the project of this thesis. The first is an example from Eckhart's commentary on John. The second is from one of Eckhart's vernacular sermons. In commenting on John 1:1 – "In the beginning was the Word",[150] Eckhart writes: "[i]n interpreting this Word and everything else that follows my intention is the same as in all of my works – to explain what the holy Christian faith and the two Testaments maintain through the help of the

[147] Ibid, 440 (Part III, 5, 3 (A)).
[148] Wachterhauser, *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 67.
[149] Ibid, 67.
[150] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 122 (Commentary on John, 1). As it happens, Eckhart's commentary, here, on the 'Word' is rather fitting alongside of Gadamer's claim concerning the ontology of language.

natural arguments of the philosophers."[151] This is a useful example because it demonstrates how Eckhart himself was completely candid about his hermeneutic reading of Scripture. That is to say, Eckhart was interpreting Scripture with an interest in assimilating its content to the ideas and the language of philosophy.[152] In other words, Eckhart was very open about the contours of his interpretive lens when commenting on Scripture; a lens that, almost undoubtedly, influenced and shaped some of his very unique theological conclusions.

This first example is one given by Eckhart's own omission regarding his own influences and interpretative prejudices. The following example from one of Eckhart's vernacular sermons is one that I will bring into the contemporary horizon on account of its time-appropriate implications. He preaches: "[f]or whoever seeks God in a special way gets the way and misses God, who lies hidden in it. But whoever seeks God without any special way gets Him as He is in Himself, and that man lives with the Son, and he is life itself."[153] There are many ways in which this passage could be interpreted; Eckhart's original and intended meaning would itself be a matter for debate. In any case, what is clear is that he is critiquing 'special way[s]' to God in favor of a more open means of seeking God 'without any special ways'. A statement such as this could have been applied to any number of circumstances in his time, and it certainly has a broad range of possible interpretations within the current moment. For example, in the introduction of this thesis, I quoted Charles Taylor in saying that: "Christian life today will look for and discover new ways of moving beyond the present orders to God."[154] That is to say, he is

[151] Ibid, 122-123.
[152] Ibid, 327 (endnote: 3).
[153] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 110 (Sermon 13 (b)).
[154] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 755.

interested in the emergence of a model for Christian life that is not restricted by the boundaries of orthodoxy.[155] In light of Taylor's statements, Eckhart's words could easily be interpreted as suggesting something quite similar in terms of a more open way to God that is not preordained by any specific habit, ritual, and/or a rigid orientation that dictates the mechanics of a very specific 'way' to God. That is not to say that Taylor's words, in this case, are a mirror image of what we find in Eckhart. Rather, the point is to argue that the interpretive horizon that Taylor is describing can find new meaning for, and at the very least, a notable conceptual resemblance to the words of this late-medieval homily.

Coincidentally, for Gadamer, the practice of homiletics in and of itself served as a superb medium for hermeneutic experience. As an example of his theory of interpretation par excellence, Gadamer writes:

> One must take it up into himself what is said to him in such fashion that it speaks and finds answer in the words of his own language. This observation holds true in every respect for the text of the Christian proclamation, which one really cannot understand if it does not seem to speak directly to him. It is in the sermon, therefore, that the understanding and interpretation of the text first receives its full reality. It is the sermon rather than the explanatory commentary of the theologian's exegetical work that stands in the immediate service of proclamation, for it not only communicates to the community the understanding of what Scripture says, but also bears witness itself. The actual completion of understanding does not take place in the sermon as such, but rather in its reception as an appeal that is directed to each person who hears it.[156]

Gadamer's thinking on homiletics as a medium for interpretation is especially appropriate for the case of Eckhart insofar as his sermons constitute a great portion of his works that have survived through the ages. Moreover, the task of this thesis is to interpret the content of his sermons (as well his commentaries and treatises) in a similar manner as to

[155] Ibid, 302.
[156] Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 57-58.

that described by Gadamer in the above quotation. Carrying that theme forward, the hermeneutic act occurs for 'the community', or 'each person who hears' and interprets the theologian's homiletic statements.

Whether it is through the sermon of a medieval preacher or written in the verses of Scripture, language becomes one of the principle modes for the transmission of tradition. In this way, according to Gadamer, language gains its own sense of 'being' as the "being of tradition".[157] This idea that language is in relation to tradition recalls Gadamer's words quoted at the outset of this section: "language is not only an object in our hands, it is the reservoir of tradition and the medium in and through which we exist and perceive our world."[158] In other words, tradition is transmitted through language, and it is the right of the interpreter as the recipient of tradition to judiciously modify its meaning in order for it to have significance within his or her own particular historical horizon. In this way, and as it has already been stated, language is the ontological medium of tradition. The interpreter has the right and the capacity to take hold of its content and re-present it in and for the continued movement of that tradition. That is why, in a rather empowering statement, Gadamer remarks that "[t]radition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it and participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves."[159] Accordingly then, the interpreter is an individual agent who acts amidst, and is circularly consigned to the whole stream of tradition.

[157] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 459 (Part III, 5, 3 (B)).
[158] Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 29.
[159] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 293 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iii)).

The Fusion of Horizons:
Medieval Mysticism and the Contemporary Moment

According to Gadamer, the interpreter exists within a context of historically conditioned circumstances – circumstances that, at the same time, inevitably also become subject to emendation as a response to immediate contextual affairs and interests. These particular historical moments and their contexts are what Gadamer refers to as 'horizons'. However, he holds that each distinct horizon is still linked to previous ones by way of their forward flow from the expansive stream of tradition. In this way, the horizon of Meister Eckhart is linked to the contemporary horizon by way of its participation in and contribution to Western tradition as a whole. The imprint of the past is, therefore, visible in the conditions of the present. Accordingly, Gadamer explains that: "the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past."[160] Moreover, as the dialectical antithesis to the whole that is tradition, there stands the individual interpreter. The constant interplay between tradition and the interpreter is what Gadamer refers to as the 'hermeneutic circle'. The two – the interpreter and tradition – are, in fact, inseparable and they constitute the dialectical relationship that is, for Gadamer, the 'part' in relation to the 'whole'.[161]

This relation of the 'part' to the 'whole' – that is to say, the interpreter to tradition – is what gives motion to the constantly revolving hermeneutic circle. Not only is this hermeneutic circle key to Gadamer's hermeneutic model, but it also describes an ontological relationship that persists between the subject and his or her world. To this end, he writes: "the circle of understanding is not a 'methodological' circle, but describes

[160] Ibid, 305 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iv)).
[161] Ibid, 291 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iii)).

an element of the ontological structure of understanding."[162] Consequently, Gadamer holds that any understanding whatsoever is a product of the interplay of this hermeneutic circularity. On the movement of this process from the purely theoretical to the practical realm, Gadamer states: "[t]he circle, then, is not formal in nature. It is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter."[163] That is to say, for Gadamer, the hermeneutic circle is far more than a mere matter of speculation; it is how the interpreter comes to understand himself or herself, his or her world, and whatever it might be that is the subject matter of his or her interpretations. In this way, the circumference of the hermeneutic circle becomes comprehensive. It should be noted, however, that the focal point for this hermeneutic circle is in the mind of the interpreter. It is from this location that all of the elements of the hermeneutic circle are fused together. Because of this, Gadamer refers to his methodology as a "phenomenology".[164] However, Gadamer's appeal to such a category is, for some commentators, a bit too vague and therefore scholars such as Dostal point out that his use of the term 'phenomenology' is not entirely parallel with the more systematic approaches that are characteristic of philosophers such as Edmund Husserl.[165] Dostal writes:

> By referring to his "method," Gadamer means, not a set of procedural rules, but rather the discipline of attending to things. By calling his method "phenomenological," he does not thereby subscribe to Husserl's account of the phenomenological method but rather indicates that the task of the

[162] Ibid, 293-294 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iii)).
[163] Ibid, 293 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iii)).
[164] Ibid, xxxii.
[165] See: Husserl, Edmund, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book*, tran. F. Kersten, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982.

> enterprise is descriptive – in this case, descriptive of the human experience of understanding, i.e., of hermeneutical experience.[166]

In this statement, Dostal's comments on Gadamer's hermeneutic method as a phenomenological one are cautious. He is quite right to point out that the aims of philosophers like Husserl were quite distinct from what is, for the most part, to be found in *Truth and Method*. Even so, Gadamer's move to synthesize and mediate what would have otherwise been distinct horizons in and through the mind of the interpreter does provide his model with the general characteristics of phenomenology. Parenthetically though, his argument that objectivity[167] is overcome through relating the structure of understanding to the subject and the subject matter [*Sache*] of interpretation does give his model an important resemblance to Husserlian phenomenology. Nevertheless, whether or not Gadamer's model qualifies as a phenomenology or not is beside the point. One can be sure, however, that what makes Gadamer's 'phenomenology' distinctive is his aim to mediate the whole of tradition in and through the mind of the interpreter and in a given moment of hermeneutic interpretation.

Tradition, in part, is a chronological chain of related historical events. The whole of tradition can be broken down into separate and unique horizons, with each new horizon presupposing a previous or a past horizon that served as its condition (or rather set of conditions) for emergence.[168] A hermeneutic theory of history such as this suggests that nothing absolutely unrelated to the past can ever emerge. Instead, new thoughts and ideas, and so on, are the results of and responses to past conditions that are combined with contemporary opportunities. This is a radically participatory and existentially

[166] Dostal, *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 251.
[167] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxii.
[168] Ibid, 305 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iv)).

engaging view of history, and it is one that I find convincing, simply because it accurately reflects the process of history unfolding in a continuous, innovative and critical manner. This is a position that also finds support in the writings of Jürgen Habermas.[169] It is a view that accounts for – or at least avoids being derailed by – the criticism of 'discontinuity' in history that comes from certain postmodern[170] thinkers, such as Michel Foucault,[171] for example. Gadamer's aim, however, is not exactly to develop a theory of history, per se; rather, it is to understand a model for interpretation that accounts for the influence that history and tradition have on the individual subject as interpreter.[172] Even so, Gadamer is not at all interested in making merely passive observations about the concept of the interpreter in relation to tradition. Instead, his hermeneutic theory encourages real and critical engagements with tradition. Thus, through my reading of Gadamer, this challenge serves as an impetus for moving beyond antiquated ways of thinking and toward a more open[173] and humane future.[174] It is this critical exercise that takes form, most notably for Gadamer, in and through the act of interpreting tradition and the effect that such an interpretation might have on directing the flow of a tradition's future course.

---

[169] Habermas, Jürgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, tran. Fredrick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 7.

[170] My aim here is in no way to detract from the diverse and nuanced picture of what many postmodern thinkers have brought to both culture and philosophy. In fact, contributions from Jacques Derrida will be discussed in Chapter IV as highly relevant material for the purposes of this thesis. Additionally, several postmodern thinkers will be accounted for in Chapter V. At that point, an analysis of the relationship between the modern and the postmodern will also be addressed.

[171] Foucault, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, tran. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 4. Along a different (but related) line of thought, Foucault might well have embraced the study of a Christian theologian who had a number of his propositions condemned and otherwise set for a historical forfeiture into oblivion.

[172] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxviii.

[173] Ibid, 350 (Part II, 4, 3 (B)).

[174] Ibid, 8-17 (Part I, 1, 1 (B)(i-ii)).

For Gadamer, when approaching a text, and especially one from a markedly different horizon than that of the interpreter himself or herself, one's interpretation of that text will emerge in a way that reflects the context of one's present horizon and its sustained relation to tradition. He writes: "[t]he anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the commonality that binds us to tradition. But this commonality is constantly being formed in our relation to tradition."[175] In an interpretative act such as this, the interpreter is thus granted the freedom to appropriate the content of a given text in order to discover a meaning and significance of that text within his or her own immediate horizon. That is why Gadamer reminds his reader: "[i]n the course of our reflections we have come to see that understanding always involves something like applying the text to be understood to the interpreter's situation."[176] Gadamer presents an example of what he means by an application of the text when he makes the following points on law and the gospel:

> A law does not exist in order to be understood historically, but to be concretized in its legal validity by being interpreted. Similarly, the gospel does not exist in order to be understood as a merely historical document, but to be taken in such a way that it exercises its saving effect. This implies that the text, whether law or gospel, if it is to be understood properly – i.e., according to the claim it makes – must be understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way. Understanding here is always application.[177]

This same argument can be upheld when interpreting the medieval works of Meister Eckhart and applying them to the concrete historical situation of the modern Western world. As was stated in the Introduction to this thesis, there will be two overlapping

[175] Ibid, 293 (Part II, 1 (B)(iii)).
[176] Ibid, 306-307 (Part II, 4, 2 (A)).
[177] Ibid, 307-308 (Part II, 4, 2 (A)).

layers in this interpretation. The first of these layers will be the post-Kantian philosophical context that will be brought into view when reading Eckhart. The second will be the deeper cultural background of secularity that is almost ubiquitous across the modern Western world.

Still, there are strong criticisms against interpreting Eckhart in such a manner. For example, historian Bernard McGinn disagrees with the implementation of modern methodologies to examine thinkers and other figures that are outside of that context. On this issue, McGinn argues: "[i]t is my conviction that the search for more adequate terms to describe particular types of mysticism should begin with the text of the mystics themselves, rather than with our modern vocabulary and methodological perspective."[178] This is an important critique, and it is one that is taken up in greater detail in Chapters II and III of this thesis. However, for the time being, I would just like to briefly note that, according to Gadamerian hermeneutics, to avoid bringing the language of Eckhart into modern vocabulary would be a non-possibility. Regarding the continual transformation of language as it relates to the changes of the world, Gadamer notes that "[l]anguage is the record of finitude not because the structure of human language is multifarious but because every language is constantly being formed and developed the more it expresses its experience of the world."[179] Moreover, he adds that "[t]he mode of being of tradition is … language, and in interpreting texts, the hearer who understands it relates its truth to his own linguistic orientation to the world."[180] In other words, the interpreter is in a position where he or she must make sense of the subject matter of interpretation in his or

[178] McGinn, Bernard, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man From Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 37. As it happens, McGinn does equivocate on this point. See: Chapter II.
[179] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 453 (Part III, 5, 3 (B)).
[180] Ibid, 453 (Part III, 5, 3 (B)).

her own language in order to understand it. It could even be argued that every piece of McGinn's own scholarship on Eckhart does just this; it converts the ideas that are announced in Eckhart's Middle High German and Latin works and presents them in modern American-English. However, in making this point, I do not want to sidestep the importance of McGinn's criticism, insofar as it is one that, despite its problems, ought to be taken quite seriously. Therefore, and in light of what has been said regarding both Gadamer and McGinn, I would argue that the interpreter of a text that was composed within a different horizon from his or her own ought to take seriously the context of that separate horizon in order to draw as much from the text as possible and to provide an interpretation that is as faithful to the original meaning as possible. In following with this principle, this thesis will aim to interpret Eckhart's theology in a manner that will take into serious consideration his own world, while at the same time drawing on certain elements from his works that have a profound meaning and application for the world today.

In other words, this thesis will focus on what I will later argue to be the fundamental and enduring thread in Eckhart's thinking; his statement and its surrounding theology that 'being is God' [*Esse est deus*].[181] Eckhart presents his theology rather concisely in the context of an ontology when he states that: "God … is every being and the whole existence of all things ('In him, through him, and from him' [Rm. 11:36])."[182] Chapter III will develop this idea amidst an analysis of other contemporary commentators on Eckhart; an analysis that will be supported through a far-reaching examination of Eckhart's vernacular and Latin sermons and writings. Subsequently, his fundamental

[181] Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke* (Erster Band, 1958), 156 (Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum, 12).
[182] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 212 (Sermon VI).

claim that 'being is God' will be discussed in two distinctive, albeit related, ways. First, in Part III, I will show how the post-Kantian philosophical horizon has directed the modern interpretive focus toward ontology, and thereby has brought this particular element of Eckhart's thinking to the fore. Following this, Part IV will treat my interpretation of Eckhart's mysticism as a means for constructive dialogue between Christian theology and certain principles of secularity; namely, secularity's concentration on immanence.

My use of Gadamer's hermeneutic method to carry out the aim of this thesis can ultimately be traced to my agreement with his statement that certain works have a "significance that cannot be lost and that is independent of all circumstances of time – a kind or timeless present that is contemporaneous with every other present."[183] In this way, Eckhart's theology rises out of and beyond its medieval context insofar as the profundity of his message is one that can resonate within almost any horizon. I will argue that this current horizon – the post-Kantian and secular horizon – is one in which his theology is particularly relevant and meaningful.

Problems, Criticisms, Summary, and Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to introduce Gadamerian hermeneutics and to demonstrate how it would be used as the methodology for this thesis. In doing so, I first moved to show how such a model for interpretation could present the fusion of two distinctive horizons so that the subject matter from one could be faithfully and appropriately interpreted into the other. This was an important move insofar as it set into place the

[183] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 290 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(i)).

central question for this thesis; which again, is: *what insights can Meister Eckhart's thought offer to theologians today in addressing the problem of secularity?* It should now be clear that this question frames a distinctively hermeneutic task. Even so, it is not one that is without contention.

As a response to these possible contentions, I would like to address three points that are particularly open to criticism. Firstly: the problem of an aesthetic experience as something that persists free from and/or rejects a linguistic configuration. Secondly: the problem of misappropriating an author's intent and/or the original meaning of his or her text. Thirdly: the problem of relativizing and isolating an understanding by rendering it absolutely local (that is, exclusive to the mind of the interpreter). On the first issue: the apparent incommensurability between aesthetic experience as a form of understanding and linguistic understanding is something that Gadamer attempts to reconcile. Gadamer considers art to be a prime example of how truth can be experienced in a manner that is radically different from the truths delivered through objective scientific methodology.[184] In fact, Gadamer goes so far as to state that: "[t]he fact that through a work of art a truth is experienced that we cannot attain in any other way constitutes the philosophic importance of art, which asserts itself against all attempts to rationalize it away."[185] In this way, Gadamer upholds the profound significance of aesthetic experience and the unique sense of truth provided therein. However, he does not think that such an experience can stand alone, free of language. Instead, he writes: "[i]n every case, it is only the constitution of coherent meaning that lets us claim that we have understood what

[184] Ibid, xx.
[185] Ibid, xxi.

is said. And this alone brings our encounter with the language of art to fruition."[186] In other words, for Gadamer, any aesthetic experience is only rendered as a meaningful[187] experience insofar as one understands its meaning in and through the language of the interpreter.[188] Interestingly, a similar configuration of something non-linguistic into a linguistic framework can be found in Eckhart when he describes the peculiar event of an "unknown-knowing". [189] For example, in a vernacular sermon, Eckhart's transcription states that "This not-knowing makes her [the soul] wonder and leads her to eager pursuit, for she perceives clearly that it is, but does not know how or what it is. … And so this is unknown-knowing…"[190] In other words, this variety of knowing allows one to 'know' that something exists but it withholds any conceptual knowledge of its contents in respect to its determinable and necessary attributes.[191] In this way, for both Gadamer and Eckhart, what is encountered in experience, be it aesthetic or religious, eventually makes its way into language so as to make sense of that experience. In an essay that examines the place of language in respect to mystical experience, Jacques Derrida makes this point in a far more convincing manner than Gadamer when he explains that in the act of stating terms such as "ineffable",[192] "unpronounceable",[193] and "unthinkable",[194] one is already submitting that experience to language, albeit by way of negation.[195]

[186] Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and other Essays*, 48.
[187] Ibid, 48.
[188] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 115, (Part I, 1, 2 (B)).
[189] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 34 (Sermon 1).
[190] Ibid, 34 (Sermon 1).
[191] Eckhart's notion of 'unknown-knowing' is discussed with context in Chapter III and Chapter IV.
[192] Derrida, Jacques, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, tran. Ken Frieden (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 103.
[193] Ibid, 103.
[194] Ibid, 103.
[195] Ibid, 103.

The second criticism noted here involving Gadamerian hermeneutics concerns the possibility of a distortion of meaning and/or a misinterpretation of the author's original intent when interpreting a text. This is clearly a serious issue and it seems that one could begin to wage such a criticism against the project of this thesis. To be clear, Eckhart's intended audience would not have been one holding secular beliefs. Moreover, his works were incontestably intended to convey a solely Christian message. The project of this thesis broadens its intended audience by appealing to both Christian and non-Christian readers; and even more, an audience that is interested in constructively treating the binary opposition that separates and polarizes Christian theology and secular thinking. Therefore, in taking a new and quite different audience into account, and in order to avoid the appropriation of a text and a fundamental misinterpretation of its original meaning, the interpreter must engage in a practice of what Gadamer refers to as "play" [*Spiel*].[196] In other words, the interpreter must work to understand the original meaning of the text so as to make the most of his or her understanding and application of the meaning of that text, regardless of whoever the interpreter's intended audience might be. This serious play that occurs between the text and the interpreter helps the interpreter to extract the most from the text, including its original audience, when presenting its meaning anew. In other words, serious play becomes a practice that distinguishes good hermeneutic interpretation from something more akin to a mere subjective misappropriation. On this level of engagement, Gadamer writes: "[s]eriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play."[197] Further elements of this criticism will be addressed

[196] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 484 (Part III, 5, 3, (C)).
[197] Ibid, 103 (Part I, 2, 1 (A)).

again, and as it specifically relates to Eckhart, in Chapter III. For now however, Gadamer's main point is that the original meaning of an author and of a text is not in any way to be overlooked. Rather, a serious play between the interpreter and the text must ensue in order to come as close to the original meaning of a text as possible. In doing so, as Gadamer would have it, this would actually deepen the level of engagement with the subject matter, making one's interpretation more comprehensive, informed and indeed profound.

The third and final criticism of Gadamerian hermeneutics, and incidentally – one that is also posed by Jürgen Habermas[198] – is the problem of relativizing understanding inasmuch as all sense of objectivity is lost and understandings between separate individuals become absolutely incommensurable. Commentators such as Grondin contest this point by suggesting that a serious interpretation should be transmittable and recognizable as being proficient among qualified peers. In other words, an "over-interpretation"[199] or "interpretations that are too subjectively biased",[200] are most often obvious to the trained eye, and they are in no way reflective of Gadamer's careful instruction.[201] However, this does not, as we have seen, restrict the interpreter from bringing the text into light in the context of his or her horizon. In fact, to do so in a serious manner is to simply participate in tradition. To this end, Gadamer writes: "[u]nderstanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which the past and present are constantly

[198] See: Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 68.
[199] Grondin, *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 43.
[200] Ibid, 43.
[201] Ibid, 43.

mediated."[202] Here Gadamer is claiming that a serious engagement with elements of tradition, including texts, is an engagement with tradition itself, as a whole. Further, because each engagement or interpretation is facilitated through tradition, it thus renders any and all interpretations available for public reception, assessment and critique. Finally, Gadamer makes his position clear: the medium for individual interpretations and in turn, their entrance into the public sphere is, in fact, language itself. Indeed it is through language that interpretations become commonly accessible. On this point he argues: "[i]n fact, historical consciousness too involves mediation between past and present. By seeing that language is the universal medium of this mediation".[203] In furthering this point, Gadamer holds that communicability of language then enables hermeneutics to assume "universal dimensions."[204] In defending the public accessibility of hermeneutics, Richard Rorty clarifies Gadamer's point by stating: "[h]ermeneutics sees the relations between various discourses as those of strands in a possible conversation, a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites the speakers, but where the hope of agreement is never lost so long as the conversation lasts."[205] In this case, Rorty's statement is consistent with what can be found in Gadamer's thinking; that is to say, conversations between individuals and serious attempts at mutual understandings are the only interlocutory elements that are required in order to transcend a radically localized hermeneutic isolation. It is at this juncture that Gadamer's position on language – as that which opens up the universal dimension of hermeneutics and makes ideas transmittable and communicable – becomes paramount. In any case, what emerges from this discussion

[202] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 291 (Part II, 1 (B)(ii)).
[203] Ibid, 470 (Part III, 5, 3, (C)).
[204] Ibid, 471 (Part III, 5, 3, (C)).
[205] Rorty, Richard, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 318.

is fundamentally a question of epistemology. For Gadamer, it is the historical horizon that offers the common context, and it is language that offers the means for agreement among understandings. In this way, it is language that brings forth cultures and holds together traditions.[206] Moreover, it is language that allows for the fluid and understandable communication of ideas between individuals, as a result of which no individual interpretation stands alone as an isolated part. It is rather, through language, that the individual is united to the whole of tradition. For Gadamer, this is one cycle of the hermeneutic circle.[207]

The hermeneutic circle is not a static process, nor is it one that moves toward completion. There is not a single endpoint wherein the last and most complete understanding of a text takes place. For Gadamer, it is this circle that propels the stream of tradition. Furthermore, interpretations are constantly undergoing revision, so long as the horizon within which they arise is one that is also undergoing change. It is with this in mind that Gadamer proposes the following, very significant, hermeneutic principle: "the discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process."[208] A text that enters into tradition is ultimately subject to a limitless amount of interpretations and possible applications of its meaning. This principle, no less, applies to the late-medieval works of Meister Eckhart.

The remainder of this thesis will move to demonstrate the continued relevance of the mystical theology of Eckhart and how such a theology has a new and profound place in the historical horizon that is the present age. In what follows, I will show how it is that Eckhart's unique understanding of ontology has come to the fore in and through the post-

[206] Gadamer, T*ruth and Method*, 452 (Part III, 5, 3, (A)).
[207] Ibid, 293 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iii)).
[208] Ibid, 298 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iii)).

Kantian horizon and various readings of his work. This specific interpretation will ultimately be applied to address the contemporary theological problem of secularity, inasmuch as it will serve as a point for dialogue between this particular historical condition and a modern understanding of Christian theology.

Part II

Toward an Ontological Interpretation of Eckhartian Mysticism

Chapter II

Mysticism as a Modern Category of Theology

This chapter will briefly examine the modern study of mysticism so as to clarify its relation to Eckhartian thought. Additionally, I will also present and defend a particular definition of the term 'mysticism' that will be used over the course of this thesis.

To be sure, the term mysticism has, at times, been less-than-carefully employed to cover a broad range of topics, not all of which are either rigorous in their structures and accounts and/or reliable in their intellectual scope and honesty. Reflecting on this, Jean-Luc Marion raises a similar concern in asking: "[d]oesn't using the term 'mystic' involve a certain admission of uncontrolled subjectivity?"[209] Marion's skeptical view of the term suggests the complications and negative connotations that surround it. Even so, this term, like any other, requires consideration so that it might be presented in a manner that is regulative concerning its use, authoritative in respect to its history and meaning, and public insofar as it is both accessible and communicable in an accurate and informed manner. In order to carry out the above noted tasks, this chapter will be separated into five sub-sections: first, I will offer a basic orientation to the modern category of mysticism. In doing so, I will also point out the historical and contextual evolution of this term's original use as an adjective and then much later on as a substantive. The aim of this will simply be to bring to attention the referential shifts that the term 'mysticism' has undergone over its long and diverse history. In conclusion, I will present a definition of

[209] Marion, Jean-Luc, "Introduction: What Do We Mean by 'Mystic'?" in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, eds. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard, tran. Gareth Gollard (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 1.

'mystical theology' that will be used for the duration of this thesis. The second sub-section will expand upon the first by offering a condensed history of this term, especially in respect to both pre-Christian and early-Christian thought. Adding to this, I will offer examples from medieval Christianity to further demonstrate the evolution of the term. This section will also take into account the current status of this term, as well as critical reviews on the perceived disjunction between pre-modern and modern accounts of mystical theology. The third sub-section will then move to address contemporary constructive attitudes toward mystical theology by presenting a number of views on the present role of mysticism in Christian thinking, as well as some ruminations on the future of this category as a form of religious understanding in an increasingly secularized world. The fourth sub-section will serve to prepare the background for my later argument that Eckhart indeed is the appropriate interlocutor for engaging mysticism in a secular context. This sub-section will also include an overview of the modern study of his thought. Finally, and as a measure of uniformity, this chapter will conclude with a discussion on any outstanding issues that are in need of further direction and/or resolution before proceeding to the next chapter. It is here that I will also present this chapter's conclusion.

In order to unite the above noted points, this chapter will make the following cumulative argument: *the modern study of mysticism has promoted the retrieval of certain figures of ancient and medieval Christian thought, and it has done so in such a way that these theologies have been recognized for their capacity to treat and/or be applied toward various contemporary problems in theology.* In doing so, this chapter will contribute to Part II of this thesis by presenting a working definition for the term

'mysticism' and by offering a background to the modern interest in and study of this unique category of theology. This chapter will in this way contribute to the whole of the thesis by introducing mysticism as a specific element of Christian thought that is particularly well suited to treat the modern theological problem of secularity.

Mystical Theology: A Preliminary Orientation

This sub-section will serve as a basic orientation to the study of mystical theology as a category of Christian thought. I will conclude by offering a definition of this term that will be used for the duration of this thesis.

In the Introduction, it was pointed out that over the course of this project I will be following Bernard McGinn's convention of using the terms 'mysticism' and 'mystical theology' interchangeably.[210] Even so, one must be cautious in the employment of these terms, and take special care to be aware of McGinn's concomitant observation (and incidentally, a view that is also shared by Michel de Certeau[211]), that "[n]o mystics (at least before the [twentieth] century) believed in or practiced 'mysticism.' They believed in and practiced Christianity (or Judaism, or Islam, or Hinduism), that is, religions contained mystical elements as parts of a wider historical whole."[212] From this idea, it becomes clear to see that those who are nowadays classified as mystics have, for the most part, been classified as such retroactively, and as a consequence of the development and popularization of the theological category of mysticism. With this in mind, I will return to

[210] McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, xiv. See, also footnotes: 8 and 9 of this thesis.
[211] de Certeau, Michel, "Mysticism" in *Diacritics*, tran. Marsanne Brammer, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Summer 1992), 13. It is worth pointing out that de Certeau's point is further solidified by his choice to reference Eckhart in this specific case and for this very same purpose.
[212] McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, xvi.

McGinn's very salient point that those who (in most cases) are now referred to as mystics are in their own context simply theologians of their particular faith. It is only by way of their distinctive beliefs and conclusions that modern scholarship, generally speaking, has elected to further specify these theologians as mystics.

Concerning scholarship, there is little contention to the fact that the two principal contemporary custodians of the Western mystical tradition are Bernard McGinn[213] and Kurt Ruh,[214] both of whom have produced their own multi-volume series on the history and key figures of this variety of theology. Additionally, there are many other equally erudite yet shorter volumes on the subject from authors such as Andrew Louth[215] and Peter Dinzelbacher,[216] to name but two. There are also many worthwhile contributions to the more theoretical discussion surrounding mysticism as a topic, such as those found in the work of Mark A. McIntosh[217] and Louise Nelstrop.[218] Further to this, editions from Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore,[219] Michael Kessler and Christian Shepard,[220] and Amy

[213] McGinn, Bernard, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1992.; McGinn, Bernard, *The Growth of Mysticism*, London: SCM Press Ltd. 1994.; McGinn, Bernard, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005.; Bernard, McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism (1350-1550)*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2012.
[214] Ruh, Kurt, *Die Grundlegung durch Kirchenväter und die Mönchstheologie des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Erster Band von *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, München: C.H. Beck, 1990.; Ruh, Kurt, *Frauenmystik und Franziskanische Mystik*, Zweite Band von *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, München: C.H. Beck, 1993.; Ruh, Kurt, *Die Mystik des deutschen Predigerordens und ihre Grundlegung durch die Hochscholastik*, Dritte Band von *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, München: C.H. Beck, 1996.; Ruh, Kurt, *Die niederländische Mystik des 14. Bis 16. Jahrhunderts*, Vierte Band von *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, München: C.H. Beck, 1999.
[215] Louth, Andrew, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.
[216] Dinzelbacher, Peter, *Christliche Mystik im Abendland: Ihre Geschichte von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des Mittelalters*, Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh GmbH & Co., 1994.
[217] McIntosh, Mark A., *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998.
[218] Nelstrop, Louise and Magill, Kevin and Onishi, Bradley B., *Christian Mysticism: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Approaches*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2009.
[219] Nelstrop, Louise and Podmore, Simon D., *Exploring Lost Dimensions in Christian Mysticism: Opening to the Mystical*, eds. Louise Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore, Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.; Nelstrop, Louise and Podmore, Simon D., *Christian Mysticism and Incarnational Theology: Between Transcendence and Immanence*, eds. Louise Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore, Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.

Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman[221] have also been helpful in improving the overall discourse on the subject. Of course, this is just a sample from the sea of literature that is available on the topic.[222]

Collectively, these works account for a spread of theologians and/or approaches to theology that spans nearly the entire history of Christian thought. Bearing in mind this immense time frame and its consequent myriad of horizons, the question of what the common feature is that bundles this diverse group of thinkers together under a single umbrella term is a perplexing one. How might one think about a single definition given that, after all, no two mystics are exact mirror images of one another in respect to their theologies? Even within the general context of Christianity, the diversity of mystics is evident. For example, some wrote in poetic verse, while others wrote in scholastic prose; some were charged with heresy,[223] while others were made into Doctors of the Church; and some were highly educated and charted members of the clergy, while others were common, laymen and laywomen. In other words, that which has come to be known and understood as mysticism, in actuality, describes a significant variety of expressions and claims of belief. Thus the above noted point from Marion becomes all the more relevant in attempting to propose a single definition for such a wide array of thought.

---

[220] Kessler, Michael, and Sheppard, Christian, *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, eds. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.
[221] Hollywood, Amy and Beckman, Patricia Z., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
[222] For a more comprehensive record of authorship on 'Mystical Theology', see the extensive bibliography that has been included at the end of this thesis.
[223] By heresy, here (and throughout), I mean a doctrine (or set of doctrines) that is officially condemned by an ecclesiastical body that is qualified to deliver such a mandate. The *Oxford English Dictionary* also offers this complementary definition of 'heresy': "Theological or religious opinion or doctrine maintained in opposition, or held to be contrary, to the 'catholic' or orthodox doctrine of the Christian Church, or, by extension, to that of any church, creed, or religious system, considered as orthodox." "heresy, n.". *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/86195?redirectedFrom=heresy (accessed January 27, 2017).

As a matter of background and support for my definition of mysticism, the following sub-section will offer an etymological account of some of the more notable occurrences of this term. In doing so, this sub-section will function to demonstrate a number of the various historical, contextual and referential shifts that both the structure and meaning of this term have undergone over the course of its long history. Ultimately, then, in analyzing this term in its modern usage, and in view of the full scope of its historical employment, one will be better able to identify the enduring particulars of the term that have, in effect, allowed for its noted definition.

Joining in on the task at hand, Marion finally argues that, even in spite of the many difficulties that are at play: "linguistics defines the meaning of a term according to a value obtained through its delimitation by the near synonyms that frame it, approximate it, and yet which can never be substituted for it as equals."[224] In this way, and when given a manageable view of the history of a term and its pathway(s) into contemporary language, one is then better able to establish a qualitative meaning that is broad enough to account for a complex history, yet narrow enough to determinatively articulate something that is recognizably distinctive. Thereby, and in holding to these guiding principles, I will again offer the following definition of 'mystical theology', as it has been presented in the 'Oxford English Dictionary': *[m]ystical theology; belief in the possibility of union with or absorption into God by means of contemplation and self-surrender; belief in or devotion to the spiritual apprehension of truths inaccessible to the intellect*.[225]

[224] Marion, *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, 1.
[225] "mysticism, n.". *OED Online*. June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124654?redirectedFrom=mysticism& (accessed June 30, 2014).

Mysticism as a Modern Category of Theology[226]

In what follows, I will offer some remarks on the etymological study of the term 'mysticism', as well as a historical perspective of this term's development and use in Christian thought and practice. These objectives will be carried out with the end goal of presenting mysticism in full-view of its terminological and historical narrative as a unique and modern classification of an otherwise distinctive and long-standing manner of theologizing.

To begin, in respect to its etymological sources, mystical theology has a pre-Christian history. Commenting on this, Amy Hollywood succinctly presents the dominant, though not uncontested,[227] etymological theory in suggesting that the term was:

> Derived from the Greek, *muo*, which means to close, particularly the eyes, the adjectives mystic and mystical and the adverb mystically were used to modify an array of practices within the ancient Greek mystery religions, Greek Neoplatonic philosophy, and, most lastingly, Christianity. They then moved seamlessly into Latin and from thence into the Western European vernaculars. In the earliest Greek and Latin uses, mystic simply meant hidden.[228]

As a distinctively Christian phenomenon, Louis Bouyer argues that this term received its first robust treatment through the works of Origen of Alexandria (185-254 CE).[229] This is

[226] Much of the bibliographical data from this sub-section was developed from references that were provided in: McGinn, Bernard, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1992.
[227] See, for example: Harrison, Jane, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908. See, also: Harrison, Jane, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
[228] Hollywood, *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, 5.
[229] Bouyer, Louis, "Mysticism: An Essay on the History of the Word" in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods, (Garden City: Image Books, 1980), 42-55. Reference from: Hollywood, *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, 5.

most definitively the case in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*.[230] However, Origen was not one to often make explicit use of the term 'mystical theology'. One example of his usage of this term can be found in the surviving fragments from his *Commentary on Lamentations*, where he employs the term in the genitive plural: mystikón [*μυστικῶν*].[231] In this example, as well as in other cases[232] – such as can be found in *On First Principles*[233] – Origen typically employs the term 'mystical' so as to designate something, as Mark Edwards[234] argues, that is hidden from or inaccessible to ordinary understanding and knowledge. Bearing this designation in mind, Bouyer is keen to challenge the common association between Neo-Platonism and Christian mysticism[235] by shifting attention to another source – that of the pre-Christian Hellenistic "Mystery religions".[236] In doing so, he observes that the term 'mystic' [*μυστικός*] rarely occurs among the Neo-Platonic authors.[237] In fact, it can only be found in one case in the entirety of the *Enneads*,[238] and even then, it is only used adverbially (as in: *μυστικῶς*).[239] Even so, this statement is not meant to undermine the important role that the Platonists and Neo-Platonists did in fact play in adapting and transmitting the larger repository of mystical

[230] Origen of Alexandria, *The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies*, tran. R. P. Lawson, Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1957.
[231] Origen of Alexandria [*Origenes*], *Jeremiahomilien, Klageliedkommentar, Erklärung der Samuel- und Königsbücher*, Dritte Band of *Origenes Werke*, ed. Erich Klostermann (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1901), 241 (Lines 2 and 3 from Nr. XIV, Klagel. Jerem. 1,4).
[232] See, also: Ibid, p. 94 (Line 2 from Homilie XII Jerem. 13, 12-17); 141 (Line 25 from Homilie XVI, Jerem. 16, 16-17,1).
[233] See: Origen of Alexandria [*Origenes*], *Origenes Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien*, 3rd ed., eds. and trans. Herwig Görgemanns and Heinrich Karpp, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992), 726 ((276) Line 14 from Book IV [*Viertes Buch*], Kapitel 2, 8-9).
[234] For a more detailed presentation of this topic, see: Edwards, Mark, *Image, Word and God in the Early Christian Centuries*, Farnam: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2013.
[235] See, also: Edwards, Mark, *Origen against Plato*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2002.
[236] Bouyer, *Understanding Mysticism*, 43.
[237] Ibid, 53-54.
[238] Ibid, 53.
[239] Ibid, 53-54.

terminology that can be found in mystery religions. The point here is simply in reference to the use(s) of the term 'mysticism' itself in Neo-Platonic literature.

Carrying this point forward, Bouyer points out that the earliest manner in which the ancient Christian writers used the term 'mystical' was more closely aligned with that of the Greek mystery religions; and most notably, in respect to their common use of the term 'mystical' in referring to an actual physical/material rite of passage.[240] Even so, Bouyer does grant that the appearance of the term in Christian writing garnered it with a far greater array of application than is found in its very narrow usage in the context of the Greek mystery religions. In particular, he draws upon the tendency of the early Church Fathers to use the term in direct relation to the Sacraments – and perhaps most prominently, in respect to the Eucharist.[241] Notwithstanding, it would be difficult to draw a direct line from the Greek mystery religions to early Christian thought. More modestly then, Bouyer's aim, in this case, is simply to identify a notable overlap between these two strands of religious thought.

For the purpose of this chapter, the more important point that Bouyer highlights in his article is the fact that, in the context of early Christian writings, the term 'mystic' began to take on a revised and, indeed, a more expansive set of meanings and applications. He writes: "[t]he Christian texts … in which the word μυστικός is acquiring the particular religious and doctrinal meaning which it has never had before may be

[240] Ibid, 43. See, also: Edmonds III, Radcliff G., "Imagining the Afterlife" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, eds. Esther Eidinow and Julia Kindt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 551-563; Hitch, Sarah, "From Birth to Death: Life-Change Rituals" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, eds. Esther Eidinow and Julia Kindt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 521-536. It should also be noted that the standardized terminology concerning "rite of passage", in this case, is in reference to Arnold van Gennep's study, *Les rites de passage* (1909). Van Gennep, Arnold, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.
[241] Bouyer, *Understanding Mysticism*, 48-49.

classed roughly speaking, in three great groups: biblical, liturgical, and spiritual."[242] As a support for this point, Bouyer draws on texts from Philo of Alexandria,[243] Clement of Alexandria, [244] Origen of Alexandria, [245] Didymus, [246] Theodoret, [247] Eusebius of Caesarea, [248] St. Cyril of Alexandria, [249] Maximus the Confessor, [250] Hesychius of Jerusalem,[251] St. Nilus,[252] St. John of Chrysostom,[253] St. Gregory of Nyssa,[254] and many others. All these writers are presented in support of his argument concerning the early transition of the term into its fuller and more nuanced Christian meaning(s). The main point to take from this is that the employment of the term 'mystical' experienced some degree of referential latitude by way of its emergence into a distinctly Christian idiom and the various thematic contexts of Christian thought. However, and in spite of its increasing range in application, Bouyer does contest that, at base, the use of the term 'mystical' in early-Christian thought is reducible to the denotation of one's "experience of the invisible objective world: the world whose coming the Scriptures reveal to us in Jesus Christ, the world into which we enter, ontologically, through the liturgy, through this same Jesus Christ ever present in the Church."[255] In summary, Bouyer is intent on showing the distinctly Christian manifestations and meanings that have been attributed to this term. But in doing so, secondarily, he shows that the term also has the flexibility to

[242] Ibid, 44. This claim is poignantly address by Michel de Certeau. See: de Certeau, *Diacritics*, 13.
[243] Bouyer, *Understanding Mysticism* , 45.
[244] Ibid, 45.
[245] Ibid, 45.
[246] Ibid, 46,
[247] Ibid, 46.
[248] Ibid, 47.
[249] Ibid, 47.
[250] Ibid, 47.
[251] Ibid, 48.
[252] Ibid, 48.
[253] Ibid, 48.
[254] Ibid, 49.
[255] Ibid, 53.

undergo significant changes in its meaning and application (for example, as it is referred to in the context of the Greek mystery religions) that are, in part, dependent upon the context of its employment.

As a further example of the evolutionary history of this term in respect to its referential modifications and adaptations, Bouyer draws on an important example from the fifth and/or sixth centuries CE with the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. It is at this critical juncture Bouyer recognizes in Pseudo-Dionysius: "evident borrowings from the contemporary phraseology of Neoplatonism."[256] This referential shift is perhaps best represented in Pseudo-Dionysius' treatise titled *On Mystical Theology* [*Περὶ μυστικῆς θεολογίας*].[257]

The above noted examples are meant to function merely as a sample of the vast record concerning the history and role of mystical theology in Christian thought. To be sure, there is not adequate space to offer an exhaustive presentation of the long history of this subject matter. Therefore, in order to progress this summary of the evolution of this term from its ancient connotations to its modern meaning and context, I must now make a gigantic leap[258] in Christian history in order to present an example of mystical theology that is more closely aligned with the *OED* definition of the term that is guiding this thesis. With this in mind, I will now move ahead to the sixteenth century, to the Spanish, Baroque thought of the Carmelite nun, St. Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582). In her

[256] Ibid, 52.
[257] Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, tran. Colm Luibheid (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), 133-141. For a more complete etymological study of the Pseudo-Dionysius' use of the term '*mustikos*' in its context, see: Bouyer, Louis, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, tran. Mary P. Ryan (New York: The Seabury Press, 1963), 406-416. The reference for this quote and a supplementary discussion is also available in: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 133 (footnote: 1), 135 (footnote: 2).
[258] For a review of the most significant mystical theologians and theologies between Pseudo-Dionysius and St. Teresa, see: McGinn, Bernard, *The Growth of Mysticism*, London: SCM Press Ltd. 1994.

autobiographical reports, St. Teresa presents the following, revised, yet at the same time explicit, account of mystical theology:

> I used sometimes, as I have said, to experience in an elementary form, and very fleetingly, what I shall now describe. When picturing Christ in the way I have mentioned, and sometimes when reading, I used unexpectedly to experience a consciousness of the presence of God of such a kind that I could not possibly doubt that he was within me or that I was wholly engulfed in him. This was in so sense a vision: I believe that it is called mystical theology.[259]

Here, St. Teresa's statement serves as a prime example of a distinctive way of thinking about and/or classifying mystical theology. To repeat what has just been stated, this example is beginning to show a striking resemblance to the manner in which mystical theology is being conceived of, defined, and employed in this thesis. Further to this, comments such as St. Teresa's were not at all an anomaly at this point in history. Concerning St. Teresa's own theology, this particular autobiographical comment finds its place in her more developed theological narrative *El Castillo Interior* (1588).[260] In addition to this, in 1556 Henrici Harphii published his *Theologiæ Mysticæ*,[261] which, in a similar way to the 'The Interior Castle', presented mystical theology as a fully developed and, to some extent, regulated practice of prayer and contemplation. In any case, St. Teresa's statement is significant insofar as it establishes a clear and distinct benchmark in the long history and evolution of the term under review. In this respect, one might well argue that St. Teresa's account of mystical theology is a sufficient exemplification of the

[259] Teresa of Avila, *The Life of Teresa of Jesus: The Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila*, ed. and tran. E Allison Peers (New York: Doubleday Image Books, 1960), 119 (1.10). Reference from: McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, xiii.
[260] Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1979.
[261] Harphii, Henrici, *Theologiæ Mysticæ*, Coloniæ: Apud hæredes Arnoldi Birckmanni, 1556.

OED definition of this term and the ability of that term to be retroactively applied to theologians who share, in the very least, a theological resemblance[262] to the type of human/divine encounter that was announced by Teresa. The above noted occurrences and references to the variety of usages and applications of the term 'mystical theology' have been offered as a basic illustration of the denotative evolution of this term in and through Christian history. The point of this exercise, quite simply, has been to prepare the way for the even broader range of application that this term has encountered in modern thought, and to do so without losing sight of its hermeneutical arc; that is to say, its origins, history, and its place in the ever-growing stream of tradition.

Beginning then with St. Teresa's account of mysticism as one example of the modern turning point for this term, a new period in the study and analysis of this subject had come into its own. To this effect, Amy Hollywood has commented that "[t]he story of the modern articulation of the category of mysticism is only beginning to be written."[263] In this way, my argument concerning St. Teresa's novel tone and referential context for mysticism is in line with scholars such as Don Cupitt and Michel de Certeau who hold that there is a detectable starting place for the modern study of this category that has its sources in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[264] Interestingly, it was also during this time period that, as de Certeau claims, in some respects mysticism had begun to detach itself: "from traditional theology or church institutions".[265] He goes on to point out that the advent of the study of mysticism (and the more common use of the term as a

[262] Consider this, by analogy, as an application of Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of 'family resemblances': Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., tran. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 31e-32e (¶ 66 and ¶ 67).
[263] Hollywood, *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, 6.
[264] Cupitt, Don, *Mysticism after Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998), 12-29. See, also: de Certeau, *Diacritics*, 13.
[265] de Certeau, *Diacritics*, 13.

substantive [*la mystique*[266]]) had its beginnings during that period in France,[267] whereupon ancient and medieval thinkers were retroactively classified under this newly adopted early-modern terminology.[268] In his own words, he explains: "[t]he identity of 'mysticism', once posited, created relevant criteria, imposed a reclassification of history, and permitted the establishment of facts that served from then on as a foundation for any study of mystics."[269] To be sure, de Certeau's has become the generally prevailing view; more recently however, scholars such as Barbara Newman[270] and Sara S. Poor[271] have disputed his conclusions. In addition to this, my own research has uncovered the regular oscillation between this term's usage as a substantive and as an adjective in the *Pro Theologia mystica clavis* (1640)[272] of the Dutch theologian, Maximilian Sandæi.[273] In any case, these points concerning the exact focal point wherein mysticism was first referenced as a substantive and then followed by the retroactive application of this term to earlier thinkers remains somewhat unsettled. However, what can be observed with far less controversy is the fact that, in the nineteenth century, mysticism emerged as a rapidly

[266] Ibid, 13. A note on translation from Marsanne Brammer: "*The masculine gendering of the word mystic (le mystique) and its accompanying pronouns … is primarily due to French usage. The word mystique without any article functions in French as the adjective mystical; with a feminine article (la mystique) the word means 'mysticism,' and with a masculine article (le mystique) the word means 'the mystic,' irrespective of that mystic's gender."* de Certeau, Michel, "Mysticism" in *Diacritics*, tran. Marsanne Brammer, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Summer 1992), 11.
[267] de Certeau, Michel de, "'Mysticque' au XVIIe siècle: Le Problème du langage 'mysticque.'" in vol. 2 of *L'Homme devant Dieu: Mélanges offerts au Père Henri du Lubac* (Paris: Aubier, 1964), 267-291. Quoted from: McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 266-267 (see, also: p. 420; endnote: 6).
[268] Hollywood, *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, 7 (footnote: 12).
[269] de Certeau, *Diacritics*, 15.
[270] See: Newman, Barbara, "Latin and the Vernaculars" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 225-239. Reference from: Hollywood, *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, 7 (footnote: 12).
[271] Poor, Sara S., "Transmission" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 240-251. Reference from: Hollywood, *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, 7 (footnote: 12).
[272] Maximilian Sandæi, *Pro Theologia mystica clavis*, Cologne: Ex Officinâ Gualterinâ, 1640. See, for example: 'FRVCTVS': Ibid, 1. In the initial pages of this work Sandæi offers a representative sample of the conventions that are maintained over the remainder of his text.
[273] See, also: Maximilian Sandæi, *Maria flos mysticus*, Mainz: Schönwetter, 1629.

developing and distinctive topic for research, commentary, and analyses in both academic and popular writing. In what follows, I will offer a record of some of the more important works that have defined the most recent – that is to say, the nineteenth century to the present – phase of this modern phenomenon.

Most notably, this record has its origins in Germany as a result of pioneering publications such as Johann Sebastian von Drey's (1777-1853) *Über das Verhältnis des Mysticismus zum Katholicisims* (1831)[274] and Johann Joseph von Görres' (1776-1848) multi-volume *Die Christliche Mystik* (1836-1842).[275] Later on in that century, Albrecht Ritschl's (1822-1889) influential work *Theologie und Metaphysik* (1881) would appear.[276] Soon afterwards, Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) produced a history of the subject in his *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (1885-1890).[277] The nineteenth century approach to mysticism was then sealed by William Ralph Inge's (1860-1954) *Christian Mysticism*,[278] which was first presented in 1899 at the University of Oxford as that year's 'Bampton Lectures'. Meanwhile, at the dawn of the twentieth century, in the United States, William James (1842-1910) had come to popularize the notion of 'experience' in

[274] Drey, Johann Sebastian von, "Über das Verhältnis des Mysticismus zum Katholicismus" in *Theologische Quartalschrift*, (1831), 25-54. See: McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 421 (endnote: 8).
[275] Görres, Johann Joseph von, *Die Christlicher Mystik*, Erster Band, Regensburg: Verlag von G. Joseph Manz, 1836; Görres, Johann Joseph von, *Die Christlicher Mystik*, Zwiter Band, Regensburg: Verlag von G. Joseph Manz, 1837.; Görres, Johann Joseph von, *Die Christlicher Mystik*, Dritter Band, Regensburg: Verlag von G. Joseph Manz, 1840.; Görres, Johann Joseph von, *Die Christlicher Mystik*, Vierter Band, Regensburg: Verlag von G. Joseph Manz, 1842. Reference from: McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 421 (endnote: 8).
[276] Ritschil, Albrecht, *Theologie und Metaphysik: zur Verständigung und Abwehr*, Bonn: A. Marcus, 1881. Reference from: McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 268.
[277] Harnack, Adolf, *Die Entstehung des Kirchlichen Dogmas*, Erster Band of *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Freiburg: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1888.; Harnack, Adolf, *Die Entwickelung des Kirchlichen Dogmas I*, Zweiter Band of *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Freiburg: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1888.; Harnack, Adolf, *Die Entwickelung des Kirchlichen Dogmas I*, Dritter Band of *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Freiburg: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1897. Reference from: McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 268.
[278] Inge, William Ralph, Ch*ristian Mysticism*, London: Methuen & Co., 1899. Reference from: McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 273.

relation to mysticism with his publication of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).[279] The twentieth century began to see more and more attention devoted to the subject, as can be evidenced by Evelyn Underhill's (1875-1941) *Mysticism* (1911),[280] Ernst Troeltsch's (1865-1923) *Die Soziallehren der Christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, (1912)[281] and Albert Schweitzer's (1875-1965) *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (1929).[282] It was also during this time that the groundbreaking comparative work on both Oriental and Occidental mysticism appeared from Rudolf Otto (1869-1973) in his *West-östliche Mystik: Vergleich und Unterscheidung zur Wesensdeutung* (1926).[283] To be sure, by the time that Aldous Huxley (1894-1963)[284] was writing on the topic, the floodgates had burst wide-open, and mysticism had become firmly established as a unique category for enquiry, not only in theology, but also across a number of other related disciplines.

At present, there is an extensive amount of literature that is available on the topic of mysticism.[285] Perhaps needless to say, there are just as many views on the topic as there are publications. Nonetheless, and in rising above the mass, one of the more notable and indeed influential of these views comes from a relatively recent article by Leigh Eric Schmidt.[286] His argument is especially interesting insofar as it works in quite the opposite

---

[279] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 326.
[280] Underhill, Evelyn, *The Essentials of Mysticism and other Essays*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920. Reference from: McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 273.
[281] Troeltsch, Ernst, *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, I Band of *Gesammelte Schriften*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck GmbH & Co., 1994. Reference from: McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 270.
[282] Schweitzer, Albert, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus; Reich Gottes und Christentum*, Band 4 in *Gesammelte Werke in fünf Bänden*, München, C. H. Beck Verlag, 1993. Reference from: McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 271.
[283] Otto, Rudolf, *West-östliche Mystik: Vergleich und Unterscheidung zur Wesensdeutung*, Gotha: L. Klotz, 1926. Reference from: McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 328.
[284] Huxley, Aldous, *The Perennial Philosophy: An Interpretation of Great Mystics, East and West*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1945.
[285] For example, see, especially: Ibid, 265-343.
[286] Schmidt, Leigh Eric, "The Making of Modern 'Mysticism'" in *Journal of the American Academy of*

direction of this sub-section and this chapter by trying to undo rather than to fasten together mysticism as a historically accurate and theologically consistent category of thought and research. In *The Making of Modern "Mysticism"* Schmidt builds from other critics of the category of mysticism such as Steven T. Katz,[287] Wayne Proudfoot,[288] and Grace Jantzen,[289] in arguing that mysticism, in the manner in which it has come to be known by the modern public, is in reality, a misconstrued byproduct of eighteenth century Romanticism. Further, that it has little or nothing to do with the mystical theologies that were announced by certain ancient and medieval Christian writers.[290] Concerning this, Schmidt explains that: "[t]hrough the early decades of the eighteenth century, the English category of 'mysticism' did not exist. The prevailing classification instead was 'mystical theology'; and it signified a specific devotional branch within Christian divinity."[291] Further to this, and as a characterization of this divergence, Schmidt makes the accusation that: "[w]hen *mysticism* came to have a life of its own apart from mystical theology and biblical commentary, it initially took on a sectarian as much as universal connotations."[292] The discourse on mysticism in the "singular"[293] as opposed to its expression under the title of a given religious tradition is a point that was first recognized by Michel de Certeau,[294] insofar as, and similarly to Schmidt, he observes that, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,[295] mysticism began to imply "a

---

Religion, Vol. 71, No. 2 (June 2003), 273-302.
[287] Katz, Steven T., *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978
[288] Proudfoot, Wayne, *Religious Experience*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
[289] Jantzen, Grace, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
[290] Schmidt, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 273-276.
[291] Ibid, 276.
[292] Ibid, 279.
[293] de Certeau, *Diacritics*, 23.
[294] Ibid, 11-25.
[295] Ibid, 13.

distancing from established Church authority. It indicates the unity of a modern lay reaction before sacred institutions."[296] Carrying over de Certeau's observations though, in a markedly more disparaging tone, Schmidt's article produces a wide range of examples of some rather dubious and/or arcane forms of religiosity that were "becoming loosely spiritual, intuitive, emancipatory, and universal."[297] Even more, his critique is not solely aimed at the common practices of mysticism, but broadens to condemn figures from Schleiermacher to James for institutionally instigating this modern "liberal"[298] phenomenon.

Schmidt is correct in pointing out, for example, that there is insufficient evidence to support a direct and demonstrable lineage of mystical thinkers that would link the early Church Fathers[299] to the Quietists,[300] the Transcendental Club,[301] or the Theosophical Society,[302] to list just a few of the accused. However, what he fails to account for in his article, amongst other things, is the vast number of occurrences in pre-modern theology wherein the lines of orthodox Christian teaching and ecclesial hierarchy were, in fact, breached. Moreover, such instances were not so radically different than what one might find, as Schmidt does, in movements such as American Transcendentalism.[303] My case and point here rests upon the markedly diverse religious landscape of the late Middle Ages wherein the same and/or similar 'liberal' phenomena were commonplace. In other words, the mystical trends that Schmidt is condemning as purely modern phenomena are

[296] Ibid, 23.
[297] Schmidt, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 286.
[298] Ibid, 286. It is worth noting that Schmidt manages to use the term 'liberal' on twenty-eight separate occasions over the course of his article.
[299] Schmidt, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 280.
[300] Ibid, 279.
[301] Ibid, 290.
[302] Ibid, 290.
[303] Ibid, 286.

not at all historically isolated in the manner that he presents them to be; instead, such attitudes and trends have circulated amidst devotional communities and by way of individual practitioners for a very long time.

My counter-argument begins with a religious phenomenon in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that would come to be known as the 'Free Spirit' [*libertas spiritus*] heretics.[304] The Free Spirit did not constitute a singular religious movement, per se.[305] Rather, it operated as a term to identify a number of known heretics at the time who were professing an overtly unorthodox and often extreme variation of some of the then more prevalent mystical theologies.[306] Accounting for this, McGinn explains that:

> [M]ystical heresy was part and parcel of the new mysticism that emerged in the thirteenth century, at least in the sense that the core suspect points were also taught by some fourteenth-century mystics who were accepted as orthodox. Issues such as indistinct union with God, the need for total interiorization, annihilation of the created will, and the secondary status of outward practices of piety were potential flash points of controversy, though they were capable of being given orthodox interpretations.[307]

Although there were other heretical movements in this period, such as the Waldensians[308] and the Hussites,[309] to name but two, the Free Spirit was unique in respect to its characteristically mystical core set of teachings. It should be noted that for a more in-depth look into these cases one should refer to Robert E. Lerner[310] and Richard

---

[304] McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, 48-79.
[305] Lerner, Robert E., *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), 22.
[306] McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, 79.
[307] Ibid, 79.
[308] Kieckhefer, Richard, *Repression of Heresy in Medieval Germany* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1979), 53-73.
[309] Ibid, 83-96.
[310] Lerner, Robert E., *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972.

Kieckhefer,[311] both of whom have produced excellent works on the subject of heresy in the Middle Ages. Interestingly, both of their accounts also make extended references to Eckhart. This is because, prior to the condemnation of his theological articles, Eckhart was actually allotted the duty of tempering the heretical tendencies that had become, in some cases, rife within many of the beguine communities of the time. McGinn brings this point into view when he writes that:

> [Eckhart's] attitude toward many of the ideas put forth by beguines and others, especially their emphasis on visionary experience, was designed to serve as what might be called a critical correlation for some of the exaggerations he noted in contemporary mysticism. In addition, some of his later vernacular sermons can be viewed as critiques of the tendencies condemned by the Council of Vienne in 1311 as evidence of the *secta libertatis spiritus*. … The purpose of his preaching was not to recriminate and condemn but to invite believers, even those who might be in error, to come to a deeper and more authentic realization of their inner union with God. … [However,] Eckhart's attempt to harmonize the aspirations of those who sought indistinct union with God with the rigidifying doctrinal and moral positions of the fourteenth-century church were doomed to failure.[312]

The broader point that I am making in this section and in stating these examples is that since antiquity, Christian mysticism has, for better or for worse, lent itself to deeply personal and intimate claims about the nature of the human/divine relationship. Moreover, the tendency toward perennial thinking is not at all unnatural to such metaphysical convictions. With this in mind, on the one hand, I can grant that mysticism, in its use as a substantive is (until proven otherwise) a modern terminological invention. However, on the other hand, the use of this term in order to simply categorize, study, and

[311] Kieckhefer, Richard, *Repression of Heresy in Medieval Germany*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1979.
[312] McGinn, Bernard, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man From Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 9-10.

better understand a diverse group of authors who have, in varying ways, developed a distinctive and recognizable mode of theologizing is not at all ill-founded. Again, this does not mean that a modern mystic, as Marie Mikulová frames it, such as G.W.F. Hegel,[313] and a medieval mystic, such as Eckhart, are expressing identical thoughts. Rather, it is simply the fact that they share enough in common concerning their theological conclusions that classifying their thought under the same term offers a sure example of how it is that, despite their notable differences and the nuance of their theological and philosophical systems, they can still be accurately and correctly accounted for as mystics.

Christian Mysticism and the Contemporary Horizon

This subsection will be devoted to examining the perspectives and predictions of a number of contemporary scholars and theologians as they reflect on the current state of mysticism, as well as its role in and for the future of Christian thought and identity. This sub-section will then conclude by arguing that Eckhart's ontological statements on the being and nature of God are philosophically and anthropologically grounded in such a manner that they might offer the appropriate content for a productive dialogue between certain elements of secular culture and Christian belief.

In reflecting on the vast range in possibility concerning the interpretative engagements with mystical and spiritual texts, Bernard McGinn writes that "[s]pirituality is hermeneutical, at least in my usage, insofar as it is an interpretive dialogue, or

[313] See: Mikulová, Marie, "Kierkegaard's Encounter with Mysticism through Speculative Idealism" in *Liber Acadamiæ Kierkegaardeniensis*, Tom. V, ed. Niels Tholstrup, (København: C. A. Reitzels Forlag A/S, 1984), 83.

conversation, between the classics of the various traditions and contemporary human experience."[314] Conveniently, these words are very much in agreement with much of what has just been stated in Chapter I of this thesis. Interestingly though, in this particular instance, McGinn's concerns are less historical and/or academic in their aim, and more focused on confronting the "ambiguous situation of spirituality at the dawn of the third millennium."[315] In striking up this conversation,[316] McGinn joins the likes of Niklaus Largier,[317] Louis Dupré,[318] James M. Houston,[319] and Karl Rahner,[320] all of whom have also contributed thoughtfully to this purely speculative discussion.

In reflecting on the ambition to synthesize religion with modern culture, Louis Dupré simply asks: "[i]n advocating a new attitude [in respect to, "today's religious scene"[321]] are we, in fact, not proposing a new religion?"[322] This is an important question. Therefore, let me be clear in stating that I am in complete agreement with Karl Rahner when he argues that:

> [T]he *first* thing to be said about a future of spirituality is quite obviously that, despite all change coming or to come, it is and will remain, albeit in a mysterious identity, the old spirituality of the Church's history up to the present age. Consequently the spirituality of the future will be one related to the living God, who has revealed himself in the history of humanity,

---

[314] McGinn, Bernard, "Spirituality Confronts its Future 1" in *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, Vol. 5, (Spring 2005), 90.
[315] Ibid, 88.
[316] McGinn, Bernard, "Mystical Consciousness: A Modest Proposal" in *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2001), 156-171.
[317] Largier, Niklaus, "Mysticism, Modernity, and the Invention of Aesthetic Experience" in *Representations*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (Winter 2009), 37-60.
[318] Dupré, Louis, "Spiritual Life and the Survival of Christianity: Reflections at the End of the Millennium" in *Cross Currents*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Fall 1998), 381-90. See, also: Dupré, Louis, "Spiritual Life in a Secular Age" in *Daedalus*, Vol. 111, No. 1 (Winter 1982), 21-31.
[319] Houston, James M., "Modernity and Spirituality" in *Faith and Modernity*, eds. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden, (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994), 182-207.
[320] Rahner, Karl, *Theological Investigations: Volume XX Concerns for the Church*, tran. Edward Quinn (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1982), 143-153.
[321] Dupré, Louis, "Spiritual Life in a Secular Age" in *Daedalus*, Vol. 111, No. 1 (Winter 1982), 31.
[322] Ibid, 29.

> who has established himself in his most intimate reality–even as basic ground, as innermost dynamism and final end–at the very heart of the world and the humanity created by him."[323]

To summarize, it is Rahner's expectation that each historical and cultural horizon will both influence and affect the manner in which Christianity is presented. However, regardless of the changing hermeneutic landscapes and the need for the Church to adapt to and/or with them, the fundamental elements of Christianity remain stable and unchanged.

Placing this manner of thinking into the context of the late twentieth century, Rahner goes on to explain that: "Christian faith today (and consequently spirituality) must be continually freshly realized: in the dimension of a secularized world, in the dimension of atheism, in the sphere of technical rationality".[324] There is no doubting the fact that Rahner is well aware of the challenges that Christianity is facing and will, in all likelihood, continue to face for some time into the future. This attitude is in stark contrast to the dismissive and/or subversive techniques that have been characteristic of the 'Radical Orthodoxy' movement when grappling with (and/or simply neglecting) real theological challenges.[325] Moreover, Rahner goes on to argue that such points of criticism toward Christianity might actually have a productive function insofar as they prune away the decaying foliage of the tradition so as to more fully expose, so to speak, the living vine. To this effect, Rahner's convictions, as well as his predictions, become quite clear when he writes:

---

[323] Rahner, *Theological Investigations: Volume XX Concerns for the Church*, 144-145.
[324] Ibid, 149.
[325] See: Chapter V.

> It has already been pointed out that the Christian of the future will be a mystic or he will not exist at all. If by mysticism we mean, not singular parapsychological phenomena, but a genuine experience of God emerging from the very heart of our existence, this statement is very true and its truth and importance will become still clearer in the spirituality of the future.[326]

In this case, Rahner's definition of mysticism is extremely useful, especially insofar as he brings 'existence' into the conversation as a mutual meeting point between each individual soul and God – a point that has a clear and definite reflection in the works of Eckhart.[327] For example, consider Eckhart's words from one of his Latin sermons in which he is commenting on 1 Corinthians 15:10: "*By God's Grace I am what I am*".[328] He states: "[t]hrough its own act of existence the soul stands in God's act of existence, in God, though you should remember that everything is in God only by reason of its existence–and as such it is totally in him."[329]

A Brief Record of the Modern Study of Eckhartian Mysticism[330]

As a matter of preparation for the following chapter (III), in which I will articulate my distinctive interpretation and indeed application of Eckhartian thought, I will now offer a brief record of the modern retrieval and study of this medieval figure. In so doing, I will

[326] Rahner, *Theological Investigations: Volume XX Concerns for the Church*, 149.
[327] In respect to linguistic variations associated with the term 'being' (and ontology, in general), the following explanation from Eckhart becomes particularly useful: "[t]he term 'is' and the term 'existence' signify the same thing, though as different parts of speech." Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 147 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 19).
[328] Ibid, 216-223 (Sermon XXV).
[329] Ibid, 221.
[330] Much of the bibliographical data from this sub-section was developed from references that were provided in the following work: Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 11-21. I will also recommend the following two articles: O'Regan, Cyril, "Eckhart Reception in the 19th Century" in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, ed. Jeremiah M. Hacket, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 629-667. Moran, Dermot, "Meister Eckhart in 20th-Century Philosophy" in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, ed. Jeremiah M. Hacket, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 669-698.

first point out a number of the most notable critical editions and translations of his works. Following this, I will also preview Chapter IV by recording Eckhart's presence in modern philosophy and theology. Finally, I will present a number of commentaries and/or interpretations of Eckhartian theology that have, to varying degrees of satisfaction, served to reunite Eckhart with modern audiences.

One would be correct to observe that the modern study of mysticism was, at least chronologically speaking, accompanied by the modern and critical recovery of Eckhart's works, and the outpouring of studies that resulted from these efforts. It is widely agreed[331] that this modern critical study of Eckhart began in 1857 with the publication of Franz Pfeiffer's[332] collection of Eckhart's German sermons, treatises, and other materials. Building from this newly restored foundation, in 1886 Heinrich Denifle[333] contributed immensely to the cause when he published an expansive collection of Eckhart's Latin treatises. The next major stone to be set in modern Eckhart studies (at least in the German-speaking world) did not come until 1936 when, together, Joseph Koch and Josef Quint published the first edition[334] of a still ongoing series of Eckhart's collected German and Latin works. As it happens, these editions did omit some of the works that had been previously included by Pfeiffer as a result of Koch's and Quint's judicious conclusions regarding the spurious nature of a number of those texts. In any case, the Koch/Quint editions are still considered to be definitive, and their work has continued through the

[331] McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 1-2. See, also: Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 11.
[332] Meister Eckhart, *Deutsche Mystiker des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts (Zweiter Band: Meister Eckhart)* ed. Franz Pfeiffer, Leipzig: G. J. Göschen'sche Verlagshandlung, 1857.
[333] Denifle, Heinrich, "Meister Eckharts lateinische Schriften und die Grundanschauung seiner Lehre." *Archiv für Litteratur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters, Band 2* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1886): 417-640, 673-687.
[334] Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen Werke*, Erster Band of *Die deutschen und lateinische Werke*, eds. Josef Koch and Josef Quint, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1936.

efforts of a line of editors whose scholarship is (and has been since its onset) supported by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*.

The first translation of Eckhart into English came from C. de B. Evans and was published by John M. Watkins of London.[335] From there, Eckhart's German works were rendered into English by a number of other hands, and with varying degrees of accuracy, until they finally reached Maurice O'Connell Walshe, whose original three-volume collection[336] has, more recently – and with the assistance of Bernard McGinn – been updated and consolidated into a single volume containing, among other things, ninety-seven complete sermons and four treatises.[337] As an accompaniment to Walshe's well-respected contributions, further translations have been made in an effort to focus the reader on a core selection of Eckhart's Latin and German works. This includes a widely cited edition from Bernard McGinn and Edmund Colledge,[338] as well as an edition of selected Latin works[339] from Bernard McGinn, Frank Tobin, and Elvira Borgstadt.[340]

The modern re-birth of Eckhart studies has also been accompanied by a growing number of philosophers and theologians who have, to a greater or lesser degree, incorporated Eckhart into their thought. In what follows, I will indicate a number of the

---

[335] Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart by Franz Pfeiffer: Translation with some Omissions and Additions*, Vol. 1, tran. C. de B. Evans, London: John M. Watkins, 1924.; Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart by Franz Pfeiffer: Translation with some Omissions and Additions*, Vol. 2, tran. C. de B. Evans, London: John M. Watkins, 1931.

[336] Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Sermons & Treatises Vol. I*, ed. and tran. Maurice O'Connell Walshe, Shaftsbury: Element, 1979.; Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Sermons & Treatises Vol. II*, ed. and tran. Maurice O'Connell Walshe, Shaftsbury: Element, 1987.; Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Sermons & Treatises Vol. III*, ed. and tran. Maurice O'Connell Walshe, Shaftsbury: Element, 1987.

[337] Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, ed. and tran. Maurice O'Connell Walshe, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009.

[338] Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, eds. and trans. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1981.

[339] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, eds. and trans. Bernard McGinn, Frank Tobin, and Elvira Borgstadt. New York: Paulist Press, 1986.

[340] For the purpose of consistency in referencing throughout this thesis, I will aim to rely on the translations here documented at footnotes: 337, 338, and 339 of this thesis. However, when and where necessary, I will provide advice for corrections and/or my own translations from both the German and the Latin texts.

more significant occurrences in this trend. This record has its starting point with the now well-known conversation[341] between Franz von Baader and G.W.F. Hegel that, depending on the source, is reported to have occurred in Berlin sometime during the Winter Semester of 1823-1824.[342] As the report goes, the conversation took shape while Baader was reading excerpts from Eckhart's German sermons aloud to Hegel.[343] It is said that soon after this exchange Hegel introduced Eckhart into his 1824 lectures titled *Der Begriff der Religion* at the University of Berlin.[344] Following these events, in 1840, Hans L. Martensen (interestingly, the man who was primarily responsible for introducing Hegelian philosophy to Denmark) contributed a translation of a number of excerpts from Eckhart's sermons into Danish.[345] This was accompanied by a summary and an analysis of these works, or at least the works that he considered to hold "important points of comparison with recent philosophy and theology."[346] Contributing further to the growing philosophical appreciation of Eckhart was Arthur Schopenhauer, who in his 1859 expanded edition (3rd edition)[347] of his original 1819 *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, offered high praise for Eckhart, as well as for Pfeiffer's 1857 edition that had provided Schopenhauer access to Eckhart's works.[348] The next major philosopher to engage substantively with Eckhart was Martin Heidegger, who, while still in the early stages of his academic career at Freiburg, prepared a number of lectures on the

[341] Nicolin, Günther, *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1970), 261.
[342] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, J. M. Steward, and H. S. Harris, vol. I of *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter Hodgson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 347 (footnote: 166).
[343] See: Chapter IV.
[344] Hegel, *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, 261.
[345] Martensen, Hans L., *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 146-243.
[346] Ibid, 153.
[347] Schopenhauer, Arthur, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. I, tran. E.F.J. Payne, New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1969.; Schopenhauer, Arthur, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. II, tran. E.F.J. Payne, New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1969.
[348] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. I, 381.

philosophy/phenomenology of religion – some of which were never delivered. Among those papers were his notes from 1918-1919 that were intended to be given as a lecture for the Winter Semester of 1919-1920,[349] titled *Die philosophischen Grundlagen der mittelalterlichen Mystik*.[350] As a part of this lecture, Heidegger had put together a short and centralized piece that he called *Irrationalität bei Meister Eckhart*.[351] After Heidegger, perhaps the most developed and sustained philosophical interaction with Eckhartian thought came from Michel Henry in his first major published work *L'essence de la manifestation* (1963).[352] More recently in 1987,[353] Jacques Derrida's essay, *Comment ne pas parler: Dénégations*,[354] drew Eckhart to the forefront of philosophical fashion and interest. Finally, in 1994 Henry once again brought Eckhart into widespread philosophical discussions with his article *La signification ontologique de la critique de la connaissance chez Maître Eckhart*.[355] Clearly, there is much to be discussed regarding Eckhart's presence in modern philosophy and theology, and especially insofar as it is of particular relevance to this thesis. However, here is not the place for such a digression, and I will therefore refer the reader to Chapter IV where these topics and others will be taken up in greater detail.

The final segment of this sub-section will be committed to recording a selection of the authors who have produced notable analyses, comparisons and/or commentaries on Eckhart. Also, it should be noted that rather than concentrating on scholarship from the

[349] Heidegger, Marin, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 260-261.
[350] Ibid, 229-254.
[351] Ibid, 239-241.
[352] Henry, Michel, *The Essence of Manifestation*, tran. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 280-346.
[353] Derrida, *Derrida and Negative Theology*, 73.
[354] Ibid, 73-142.
[355] Henry, Michel, "La signifaction ontologique de la critique de la connaissance chez Maître Eckhart" in *Voici Maître Eckhart*, ed. Emilie Zum Brunn (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1994), 175-185.

most recent decades (an activity that will be taken up in Chapter III), I have elected to broaden the picture of Eckhart studies by recording contributions from the past two centuries of writing that have either been concentrated on, or that in some other way, have involved Eckhart for a particular purpose. As a consequence of this study, my secondary aim here is to show the wide range of appeal that Eckhart has experienced in modern thought and scholarship. With the above points in mind, I will therefore begin this record with a notable case; that of the Protestant thinker Carl Schmidt[356] who in 1839 argued that Eckhart was a pantheist thinker, and that his philosophy was not at all reconcilable with Christian doctrine. Following Pfeiffer's 1857 edition of Eckhart's collected German works, the interest in Eckhart grew quite rapidly with notable pioneering publications such as Adolf Lasson's *Meister Eckhart, Der Mystiker*[357] (1868). Interestingly, from this point, Eckhart's thought began to be conflated with a growing sense of German identity, and thus his appeal began to spread beyond the borders of philosophy and theology to a much wider public. For example, in 1899 Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* [358] suggested that Eckhart's place in German history served as a late-medieval precursor for the then newly-forming attitude of 'Pan-Germanism' (a profoundly racist socio-political identity that was gaining momentum at the time). Following this, in 1933 a great admirer of Chamberlain's

[356] Schmidt, Carl, "Meister Eckhart: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Theologie und Philosophie des Mittelalters" in *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, Vol. 12 (1839), 663-744.
[357] Lasson, Adolf, *Meister Eckhart, Der Mystiker: Zur Geschichte der Religiösen Speculation in Deutschland*, Berlin: Verlag von Wilhem Hetz, 1868.
[358] Chamberlain, Houston Stewart, *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. Band. 1. München: Bruckman, 1899.

work, Alfred Rosenberg,[359] attempted to instill Eckhart as a cultural folk hero into the propaganda for the newly instated 'National Socialist German Workers' Party'.

Together, Chamberlain and Rosenberg serve as clear and definite examples of the misappropriation of Eckhart's person and his works by fanatical peddlers of inimical propaganda. Indeed the following pieces (below) are to be noted for altogether quite different qualities. For example, while Rosenberg was reading Eckhart for the purpose of cultural isolation, contemporaneously (in 1926) Rudolf Otto[360] was reading Eckhart as a figure for inter-cultural and inter-continental dialogue. Also, in that same year Otto Karrer[361] made the very incisive observation that Eckhart's theology was not at all Thomistic, but instead that it had emerged from an "alternative school of late medieval Neoplatonic and Augustinian scholasticism"[362] – a critical point that would also find support from John D. Caputo when he pointed out the very important distinction between Eckhart's "*esse est deus*"[363] and Aquinas' "*deus est suum esse*".[364] Other unique and notable publications continued to emerge including a still often referenced piece from Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki,[365] who, in 1957 made a critical comparison between Eckhart's Christian mysticism and Zen Buddhism. Then, and as a final quite distinctive reading of Eckhart, I will note Heribert Fischer's[366] 1974 account that strongly contested the idea

[359] Rosenberg, Alfred, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit*, München: Hoheneichen – Verlag, 1934.
[360] Otto, Rudolf, *West-östliche Mystik: Vergleich und Unterscheidung zur Wesensdeutung*, Gotha: L. Klotz, 1926.
[361] Karrer, Otto, *Meister Eckhart: Das System seiner religiösen Lehre und Lebensweisheit*, München: Josef Müller, 1926.
[362] See: Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 16.
[363] Caputo, John D., *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 103-109.
[364] Ibid, 103. For an annotated list of points where Eckhart deviates from Aquinas' theology, see: Flasch, Kurt, *Meister Eckhart: Philosopher of Christianity*, trans. Anne Schindel and Aaron Vanides, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 245-246.
[365] Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, New York: Routledge, 2006.
[366] Fischer, Heribert, *Meister Eckhart: Einführung in sein philosophisches Denken*, Freiburg: Verlag Karl

that Eckhart was a mystic at all. Instead, Fischer held that such a classification did an injustice to what he saw as the careful and quite systematized work of a quintessentially Scholastic philosopher.

In the years between Fischer's work and the present day, there has been a vast swathe of scholarship that has been devoted to Eckhart. As previously mentioned, Chapter III of this thesis will function, in part, to present a revealing cross-section of the past four decades of research on this topic. As a brief pause on my way toward a conclusion, I would however, like to bring the reader up to date on some of the most recent trends in Eckhart studies – namely those which apply Eckhartian mysticism to solve and/or treat modern philosophical and/or theological problems. Perhaps the best example of this is Ben Morgan's 2012 publication *On Becoming God*,[367] which examines late-medieval conceptions of the 'self' in order to address modern philosophical problems concerning identity. I have elected to highlight Morgan's work because, in a way, it parallels my own. To clarify, both Morgan and I are interpreting Eckhart's work into a distinct framework and applying these interpretations toward the treatment of important modern issues. Moreover, both Morgan and I take Eckhart's context and historical situation very seriously. Yet even so, we both agree that his thought has the fluidity to be applied toward the treatment of modern questions. Perhaps this is precisely what McGinn meant when he called for an "interpretive dialogue, or conversation, between the classics of the various traditions and contemporary human experience."[368]

Alber, 1974.

[367] Morgan, Ben, *On Becoming God: Late Medieval Mysticism and the Modern Western Self*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2012.

[368] McGinn, "Spirituality Confronts its Future 1" in *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, 90.

As a conclusion to this record of scholarship on Eckhart, I will refer the reader to the most comprehensive bibliography on the subject to date: Niklaus Largier's *Bibliographie zu Meister Eckhart*.[369] Consequently, concluding this sub-section by referencing a sizeable bibliography serves to cement yet another crucial point; that even in conceding that mysticism is a modern categorical invention, the immense levels of interest that it has drawn to real figures in history cannot be disregarded as a fabrication. In summary then, the far more important point concerning the modern category and study of mysticism to be taken away from this chapter is that it has actually served in creating and facilitating a newfound interest in the retrieval of certain authors from within the depths of history's labyrinth – figures who, for better or for worse, have come to be regarded, read, and understood as mystics. Largier's bibliography is certainly, as I will show, a considerable testament to the modern interest in mysticism and one of its most influential representatives.

Problems, Criticisms, Summary, and Conclusion

When engaging with Eckhart's unique late-medieval theology, Davies, for one, warns the modern interpreter that "the least satisfactory readings of him occur where the interpreter is strongly committed to a particular ideological viewpoint."[370] By this account one might question whether the project at hand is one in which Eckhart is being read along with a 'particular ideological viewpoint'. After all, I am interpreting and applying Eckhart's medieval religious thought in order to address issues in modern secular culture. To state the obvious, secularity was not a problem that Eckhart had in mind when designing

[369] Largier, Nicklaus, *Bibliographie zu Meister Eckhart*, Freiburg (Schweiz): Univeritätsverlag, 1989.
[370] Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 19.

sermons for his audiences and/or treatises for scholastic debate. From this perspective, one could present the charge that my engagement with Eckhart is among those that are, as Davies contends, the 'least satisfactory'. Certainly, if one's criterion for a 'satisfactory' reading of Eckhart lies in the provision of a purely descriptive and/or historical account of Eckhart's life and works in context, then one might very well take issue with my project. However, I am convinced, in a way that is reminiscent of McGinn, that there is much to be gleaned from engaging "the classics of the various traditions and contemporary human experience."[371] Here, McGinn's comment is not far off from Gadamer when the latter writes: "when we call something classical, there is a consciousness of something enduring, of significance that cannot be lost and that is independent of all circumstances of time – a kind of timeless present that is contemporaneous with every other present."[372] In fact, for Gadamer, the 'classic' is a clear indication of how two distinct historical horizons can be fused through the act of interpretation. In other words, the content of a 'classic' is at all times contemporaneous insofar as it "is something raised above the vicissitudes of changing times and changing tastes."[373] In this way, he adds, a 'classic' is "immediately accessible".[374] Are Eckhart's works then, to be considered as 'classics'? In this sense, they indeed are. It would be naive to think that the renewed interest in Eckhart has been a result of anything but the ability of his texts to provide meaning in and for modern times. Moreover, in the seeking

[371] McGinn, "Spirituality Confronts its Future 1" in *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, 90.
[372] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 288 (Part II, 4, (B)(ii)).
[373] Ibid, 288 (Part II, 4, (B)(ii)).
[374] Ibid, 288 (Part II, 4, (B)(ii)).

out of such texts one would do well to recall Heidegger's hermeneutical axiom that "[e]very seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought."[375]

Having made these points regarding Gadamerian hermeneutics, the notion that a text has a distinctive meaning within a horizon that is other than its own does not give the interpreter free rein to misappropriate its meaning. Gadamer accounts for this in stating that a 'classic': "always contains a temporal quality that articulates it historically."[376] In order to interpret a classical text in the most genuine and productive way possible, one must take very seriously the context from which it originated. To recall what was already stated in Chapter I, Gadamer refers to this type of serious and meaningful engagement as "play"[377] between the interpreter and the subject matter of interpretation. In following this methodology, such a manner of play will inevitably be more revealing in respect to the qualities that demarcate each of the above noted elements of interpretation. In other words, in taking the context and the intellectual integrity of the subject matter (that is to say, the 'classical' text) seriously, this will actually offer the background for an even deeper interpretation and a more sophisticated application of the subject matter in play. Therefore, even in spite of the fact that this thesis serves to offer an interpretation and application of Eckhartian mysticism that might function as a bridge for dialogue between Christian theology and secular culture, it by no means relinquishes its commitments to upholding the integrity of Eckhart's thought in respect to its original aims and context. To put this in another way, any meaningful application of a subject matter first requires a serious engagement with the details and nuance that made that thinker's historical and contextual horizon distinctive. In this thesis, my aim is to offer an image of Eckhart for

[375] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 24, ¶ 2 (5).
[376] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 288 (Part II, 4, (B)(ii)).
[377] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 484 (Part III, 5, 3, (C)). See, also: Chapter I.

who he is – a late-medieval scholastic theologian and preacher. In accounting for this, my methodical claims will then allow me to apply a far more competent and capable reading of Eckhart toward the specific theological problem that I am working to address.

In summary then, my aim is not to misappropriate Eckhart for any ill-guided or purely subjective end or goal. Rather, it is to simply offer an interpretation of Eckhartian mysticism that can be applied toward making real progress – which in this case, translates to the delineation of a point for dialogue and shared space – between Christian theology and the significant influence that secularity continues to bear over Western culture and tradition. Further to this, while mysticism may be a modern categorical invention in terms, I have shown that it is in fact a legitimate one. Quite importantly moreover, I am not alone in thinking this way. Consider, for example, de Certeau's candidly progressive response to the modern category of mysticism and its ongoing narrative:

> The interest in mystics and the fascination they inspire imply a new kind of relationship with religions. In the West, the study of mysticism is currently less determined by the scientific necessity of defending the mind against churches that are increasingly in the minority. But because of this new situation, this study has been led to consider mystical languages as a symbol–possibly the metaphor–of a hidden 'Essence' that must be identified philosophically, or a 'meaning of life' to be elucidated in the conceptual terms of a society that has ceased to be religious. From this point of view, mysticism is less a heresy or a liberation from religion than an instrument for the work of unveiling, *within* religion itself, a truth that would first be formulated in the mode of a margin inexpressible in relation to orthodox texts and institutions, and which would be able to be exhumed from beliefs. The study of mysticism thus makes nonreligious exegesis of religions possible. It also gives rise, in the historical relation of the West to itself, to a reintegration that eradicates the past without losing its meaning.[378]

[378] de Certeau, *Diacritics*, 24.

Bearing my point in mind, along with de Certeau's rather unconventional conclusion on this subject, it becomes increasingly obvious that the complete dismissal of a long and traceable history of theologians who – either to the support of orthodox faith or its detriment – have forwarded a "*belief in the possibility of union with or absorption into God*"[379] would be an egregious rejection of an important and distinctive theological conclusion that, in one form or another, has been present within Christianity since its origination. To be sure, it is this definition and its constituent elements that together functions toward the articulation of a unique mode of theologizing that – even though it often wavers in terms of its apologetic commitments – has a long and detailed past, as well as (as was shown above) the prospects for a meaningful and relevant place in the future of Christian thought and identity.

[379] "mysticism, n.". *OED Online*. June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124654?redirectedFrom=mysticism& (accessed June 30, 2014).

Chapter III

Contemporary Theological Interpretations of Eckhartian Mysticism

This chapter will focus on four contemporary interpretations of Meister Eckhart's mystical theology, and subsequently identify a conceptual feature of his thought that accurately presents his distinctive approach to mysticism. I will begin with a study on Bernard McGinn's historical interpretation of Eckhartian mysticism. This will be followed by a review of Amy Hollywood's thematic interpretation of Eckhart's oeuvre. Next, I will look to Oliver Davies for his interpretation of the conceptual background to Eckhart's theology. Finally, I will conclude with Denys Turner's linguistic interpretation of Eckhart's medieval theology. Each of these interpretations will be situated against and/or alongside other scholars who have contributed to the field of Eckhart studies. The four central interpretations that will be discussed have been selected in order to present the breadth of contemporary Eckhart studies. Moreover, as a result of addressing Eckhart's thought from these four perspectives, I will be better able to locate the most distinctive and enduring element of Eckhart's mysticism. That is to say, I aim to discover the identifiable and lasting thread that characterizes his particular species of the genus mystical theology. Each of the four interpretations will also contribute to my own reading of Eckhartian mysticism as a mystical ontology. My critical assessments of McGinn, Hollywood, Davies, and Turner will conclude with a defense of the claim that Eckhartian mysticism is best understood as a 'mystical ontology', which was defined in the introduction to this thesis as: *a belief in the possibility of union with or absorption into God by means of a correct understanding of the essence of one's own being and of the*

essence of being in general. Finally, it must be noted that the term being,[380] as it appears in the works of Eckhart and over the course of this chapter, has two meanings: first, as 'absolute being' [*esse absolutum*]; this is the being of God, and it is, for Eckhart, the essence of all things.[381] Second, 'determinate being' [*esse determinatum*]; this is the contingent being of accidents[382] (albeit fundamentally substantiated in and by absolute being).[383]

This chapter will contribute to this section by articulating how and why I understand 'being' to be at the center of Eckhart's particular brand of mystical theology. Further, this chapter will contribute to the whole of this thesis by presenting the main tenets for a mystical ontology that will later serve as my point for dialogue between Christian theology and secular culture. The guiding question for this chapter is simple: what is the defining and enduring feature of Eckhart's thought? From here, *I will ultimately argue that this is, in fact, 'being' and that, further, Eckhart's unique approach to theology, in this manner, is best understood and categorized as a 'mystical ontology'*.

Bernard McGinn on Eckhartian Mysticism

Bernard McGinn has been contributing to Eckhart studies for the better part of four decades. He has written extensively on a range of topics concerning Eckhart, and is one of the key figures in bringing the long history of Christian mysticism into academic light in the English-speaking world.

---

[380] The term 'being', as it relates to Eckhartian theology, will be discussed and clarified over the course chapter. For a more complete description of Eckhart's multiform uses of this term, see: Davies, *Meister* Eckhart, 108.
[381] Ibid, 108.
[382] Ibid, 108.
[383] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 174 (Commentary on Ecclesiasticus, 42).

McGinn's approach to Eckhartian thought is best categorized as historical. This is evidenced through his multi-volume series titled *The Presence of God: A History of Western Mysticism*, which is the most comprehensive treatment of the history of Western mysticism that is available in English.[384] Kurt Ruh's multi-volume series on the mysticism of the late-middle ages is the only study that comes close to McGinn's in terms of its depth and scope. However, Ruh limits his work to the mystics of the Middle Ages.[385] Due to the manner of McGinn's classification of Eckhartian mysticism, his study will presently be prioritized over Ruh's, although at relevant points, Ruh's contributions to the field will also be drawn into this discussion. Moreover, McGinn's legacy and method has been carried on and built upon by a whole host of his students who continue, in their own ways, to shape and define the field. Following from this, McGinn's influence on my own research will be most notably presented and carried forward in respect to my agreement with his decision to read and interpret Eckhart as an individual and inextricable part of the whole of the Western Christian mystical tradition.[386]

As a historian of Western Christianity, McGinn is quick to announce that he interprets Eckhart on Eckhart's own terms. That is to say he understands Eckhart first as a Christian theologian and only secondarily as a mystic. This classification, however, is not without contention. For example, Oliver Davies inversely orders these categories in what will be shown below. In any case, McGinn's reason for this is based on the idea that the mystics of the ancient and medieval worlds would have not, with only a few

[384] All volumes in this series were cited in Chapter II (footnote: 213 of this thesis). See, also: Bibliography.
[385] All volumes in this series were cited in Chapter II (footnote: 214 of this thesis). See, also: Bibliography.
[386] The position that Eckhart is a mystic is a dominant scholarly view. However, Kurt Flasch has contested this generally prevailing view. See: Flasch, Kurt, *Meister Eckhart: Philosopher of Christianity*, trans. Anne Schindel and Aaron Vanides, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.

exceptions,[387] categorized either themselves or their works as being mystical.[388] In holding this view, McGinn is taking a rather reserved approach to the very discourse of which he claims to be an authority. It is precisely this approach – that is to say, of understanding Christian mysticism as a sub-category of, in this case, the entire history of Christian theology – that makes his interpretation of Eckhart both unique and important. In addressing this movement from the general to the particular, my analysis of McGinn's approach to Eckhartian mysticism will unfold in two parts. First, I will discuss his concept of mysticism as a sub-category of Christian theology, and how it is, precisely, that Eckhart fits into that category. Then, I will examine McGinn's move to identify a unique and defining feature of Eckhart's thought; this is to say, a feature that he considers to be definitive of Eckhart's works, thus making his theology stand out from the more general category of Christian mysticism.

From the outset, McGinn is reluctant to define mysticism.[389] Instead, he claims to locate certain thinkers within the following basic rubric: "[a] central claim of my approach to the history of Western mysticism … has been that consciousness of God's immediate presence provides the best general category for understanding the complex history of Christian mysticism."[390] As is shown throughout McGinn's study, this is a fairly reliable means for determining what should and should not be included in the greater mystical catalogue; most importantly because it highlights the 'immediate presence of God'. In the remainder of this chapter, as well as Part III of this thesis, I will

[387] See: Chapter II; especially concerning the sixteenth century Spanish, Carmelite nun, St. Teresa of Avila, and her important remark on the term 'mystical theology'.
[388] McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, xvi.
[389] McGinn, Bernard, "The God beyond God: Theology and Mysticism in the Thought of Meister Eckhart" in *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Jan., 1981), 1.
[390] McGinn, Bernard, *The Mystical Thought of Meister* Eckhart, 132.

move to build on McGinn's description by adding points of precision that can be brought into view through various scholarly interpretations of Eckhart, as well as several important re-presentations of Eckhart's thought that have been brought to the fore in and through post-Kantian philosophy. For now, however, I will simply analyze McGinn's description of mystical theology and its relation to Eckhart by giving special attention to the following three key elements of McGinn's denotative formula: 'consciousness of God's immediate presence', 'history', and 'Christianity'.

To begin with, McGinn's use of the term 'consciousness',[391] as in 'consciousness of God's immediate presence', signals his tendency to follow the Greek and, especially,

[391] 'Consciousness' is an important theme in philosophy and theology; however, it is also one that renders its share of complications and inconsistencies when being employed. Nevertheless, and in view of these routine challenges of definition, Robert van Gulick explains that "[p]erhaps no aspect of mind is more familiar or more puzzling than consciousness and our conscious experience of self and world. The problem of consciousness is arguably the central issue in current theorizing about the mind. Despite the lack of any agreed upon theory of consciousness, there is a widespread, if less than universal, consensus that an adequate account of mind requires a clear understanding of it and its place in nature. ... [And that, methodologically speaking, a] comprehensive understanding of consciousness will likely require theories of many types. One might usefully and without contradiction accept a diversity of models that each in their own way aim respectively to explain the physical, neural, cognitive, functional, representational and higher-order aspects of consciousness. There is unlikely to be any single theoretical perspective that suffices for explaining all the features of consciousness that we wish to understand. Thus a synthetic and pluralistic approach may provide the best road to future progress." Van Gulick, Robert, "Consciousness", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition) EdwardN.Zalta (ed.), URL=<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/consciousness/>.
Thus, every instance of this term in the main body of this text will be most adequately received if taken in direct reference to each noted author's unique employment of it. To aid in this effort, I will offer context for understanding at these points. However, one should also be aware that clear definitions of this term in its usage are simply not often enough presented to the reader in either primary or secondary source materials. To account for this, I will venture a rudimentary guideline for this term and its occurrences within this thesis by offering the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition solely as a basic orientation to the subject matter at hand. Consciousness: "Internal knowledge or conviction; the state or fact of being mentally conscious or aware of something." "consciousness,n.". *OED Online*. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://ezproxyprd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/39477?redirectedFrom=consciousness (accessed January 30, 2017). Additionally, and in order to assist with some measure of elaboration on this topic, I will alert the reader, at certain points (via notes), of noteworthy descriptions on this subject that can, at the very least, add tangentially worthwhile material to the discussions at hand. For example, and to begin, John Hick presents a variety of useful points on what he calls: "human consciousness of the Transcendent". Hick, John, "Mystical Experience as Cognition" in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods, (Garden City: Image Books, 1980), 425. Concerning this category, he writes: "what is going on is not fundamentally different in character from what is going on in other forms of awareness which we take to be awareness of our environment." Ibid, 425. In other words, he is simply noting that the content of one's consciousness, in this case, is the 'Transcendent' (i.e., an absolute and non-discursive principle of

the Neo-Platonic[392] tracks in mystical thinking, with a special focus on 'intellect' or *noûs*[393] as a key element of resource for classification.[394] He does this by linking consciousness with what he refers to as the Greek contemplative ideal.[395] Relatedly, though, in passing, one should also take note of William James' discussion on "mystical states of consciousness"[396] insofar as his analysis adds relevant layers of psychological study and details[397] to McGinn's primarily historical approach to mysticism qua consciousness.[398] In any case, McGinn's use of the term 'consciousness' allows for a range in meanings that are contextualized, individually, by each mystic and/or mystical theology that he describes. To return to his position concerning the influence that Greek thought had on Christian mysticism, let it suffice to say that consciousness, though not defined by McGinn, is ostensibly linked to the various capacities of the mind and/or the intellect. Directly following along in this pattern, McGinn's appeal to consciousness is,

---

divinity, or, as he notes at another point, "infinite reality"). Ibid, 423. How this affects one's state of consciousness will, supposedly, vary from mystic to mystic (according to their theological programs, etc.). However, and interestingly, this state of consciousness and its contents (the Transcendent) is the starting point for what Hick comprehensively refers to as a "[m]ystical experience". Ibid, 422. Even more, for Hick, such a "first-hand religious experience" (Ibid, 422) is, in his view, "the core of religion" (Ibid, 422) in general. Clearly, for Hick, consciousness plays a major role in how it is that divinity is made available to each individual practitioner. See: Ibid, 422-37. For further reading on this topic, see, also: McGinn, Bernard, "Mystical Consciousness: A Modest Proposal" in *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2001), 156-171.

[392] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 327 (endnote: 3).

[393] McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 25.

[394] For competing views on this, see: Edwards, Mark, *Plato against Origen*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002. And, Louth, Andrew, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.

[395] McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 23-61.

[396] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 290. Psychological studies similar to James' are not at all uncommon and/or confined to the early part of the twentieth century. One particularly useful example of this is given from Arthur J. Deikman. Concerning what he calls a 'receptive mode' of consciousness (which he associates with 'mystical states'), he writes, "[if one] is deeply into that mode, [one's] state of consciousness may feature a marked decrease in the distinction between himself and his environment to the extent that [one] merges with it or has a nonverbal (ineffable) perception of unity". Deikman, Arthur J., "Bimodal Consciousness and the Mystic Experience" in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods, (Garden City: Image Books, 1980), 263.

[397] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 290-327.

[398] McGinn does account for a number of the psychological approaches to mysticism at various points in his work. See, especially: McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 326-343.

also then, indicative of his sympathies with the Dominican emphasis on the intellect (insofar as consciousness is considered to be a power of the intellect) over-and-against the Franciscan emphasis on the will – a refutation that was at the center of late-medieval scholastic quidlibets. Hence, for McGinn, Eckhart, as a Dominican, is well suited to be positioned at the apex of the Christian mystical tradition, rather than, say for example, St. Francis or St. Bonaventure, both of whom were proponents of the primacy of the will over the intellect in their respective theologies. In any case, in viewing Eckhart's theology from the standpoint of consciousness, one has to be sure not to simply reduce his theology to a matter of various mental exercises. Rather, one is simply meant to have an understanding of the being of God to be radically present in all things. On this subject, Eckhart instructs his novices:

> The true possession of God depends on the mind, an inner mental turning and striving toward God – but not in a continuous and equal thinking of Him, for that would be impossible for nature to strive for, very difficult and not even the best thing. A man should not have, or be satisfied with, an imagined God, for then, when the idea vanishes, God vanishes! Rather, one should have an essential God, who far transcends the thought of man and all creatures. Such a God never vanishes unless a man willfully turns away from him. He who has God thus essentially, takes Him divinely to him and God's image appears to him from out of all things, and for him God shines forth in all things, for all things taste divinely to him, and God's image appears to him from out of all things.[399]

The quotation from Eckhart's *Talks of Instruction* serves to dislodge any idea that Eckhart is asking his listeners to remain fixated in or on a state of thinking about God, as if God were a particular object on which to think. Rather, Eckhart is presenting God as principle of being that is to be understood 'in all things'. Thus, an understanding, as such, would then inform one's complete manner of comportment toward oneself, others, and

[399] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 491 (The Talks of Instruction, 6).

the world in general.[400] The point to take away from this discussion is that when talking about consciousness in relation to mysticism, in general, and Eckhart, in particular, one must be absolutely aware that Eckhart is not one to promote states of ecstasy and/or everlasting bliss that can so often be confused as the main goal when thinking on mysticism and 'consciousness of God's immediate presence'.[401] Though, in defense of McGinn's position, his further qualification of 'consciousness' to the 'consciousness of God's immediate presence' does add some degree of flexibility concerning how it is that Eckhart has moved to emphasize a far more subtle approach to understanding God's essential and ubiquitous presence in the world. Bearing this point of clarification in mind, 'consciousness' certainly, then, is an acceptable element in broadly determining Eckhart's thought, if and only if it is thought of in respect to one's optimized intellectual orientation toward God, and in the manner that was noted in the above quotation.[402]

The second element of McGinn's description of what constitutes Western, Christian mysticism is 'history'. His placement of Eckhart within the historical stream of this tradition, and even at its apex, demonstrates his belief that Eckhart is, and archetypically so, well-established among the ranks of those who have expressed their conceptions of God in a mystical manner. In fact, for McGinn, Eckhart and his contemporaries were so instrumental and definitive in their contributions to the entire

[400] The directives for Eckhart's ethics are best presented in his Scriptural exegeses. See, especially: Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 161 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 109).
[401] See discussion on Denys Turner (below).
[402] It should also be noted that Gadamer too addresses the topic and the meaning of consciousness at various points. However, to address his definitions of the term in its various contexts would drive the task at hand far off of its course. To summarize his points, Gadamer defines consciousness on the grounds of the 'structure of reflexivity'. This means that one is able to identify one's conscious self over and against the subject matter that has entered into one's consciousness. For example, one could say, that one is conscious of the fact that one is writing. Thus, there is the flow of action that is writing, along with a conscious fact that one is lucidly aware of the fact that one is writing. This is an illustration of the structure of reflexivity that, for Gadamer, presents the conditions for the possibility of consciousness. See: Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 337 (Part II, 4, 3, (A)).

stream of mystical theology that he refers to the richness of their style and the widespread dissemination of their thought as *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*.[403] In many ways, McGinn is right to position Eckhart at the height of the Western Christian mystical tradition. However, his project differs from mine inasmuch as his is one that traces this tradition from the second century CE and concludes in the sixteenth, whereas, my study is definitively post-Kantian in both its interpretation and its application of mystical thinking. It could therefore be said that while McGinn looks for the origins of Eckhart's thought in and through the ancients, my project is one that goes in the exact opposite direction in discussing his influence and relevancy in and amidst modern thought and culture.

In Part III of this thesis, it will be shown that the more philosophical current of the ever-widening stream of mysticism ran its course well into the modern period. For example, in their own time, the writings of both Friedrich Schelling and G.W.F. Hegel were commonly understood as being among the latest installments to the mystical canon.[404] Even more, Eckhartian mysticism, in particular, featured prominently in the thought of a number of post-Kantian thinkers, such as Arthur Schopenhauer, Hans L. Martensen, and Franz von Baader.[405] I have simply highlighted this list of recent additions to the mystical tradition, on the one hand, to support McGinn's claim that there is a long and sophisticated history that pertains to Western Christian mysticism, and on the other, to further his point by indicating examples that go far beyond the sixteenth

[403] McGinn, Bernard, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005.
[404] See: Mikulová, Marie, "Kierkegaard's Encounter with Mysticism through Speculative Idealism" in *Liber Acadamiæ Kierkegaardeniensis*, Tom. V, ed. Niels Tholstrup, (København: C. A. Reitzels Forlag A/S, 1984), 31-91.
[405] See: Chapter IV.

century endpoint of his historical record and study on the subject. In brief then, let it suffice to affirm that there is indeed a long and credible history to mystical theology.[406]

The third and final element of McGinn's above noted description of mysticism is the restriction of his study to 'Christian' thought. This of course is a perfectly reasonable criterion for a study of mysticism. However, in respect to Eckhart, the question remains open as to whether or not his theology was, in fact, orthodox Christianity. It is McGinn's position that Eckhart's theology ought to be reinstated as accepted doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. After all, Eckhart was undoubtedly a Christian, as McGinn and many others point out. Notwithstanding, important elements of Eckhart's theology were condemned as either heretical or suspect of heresy. This is an important point to bear in mind, insofar as Chapter VI of this thesis will actually embrace Eckhart's apparent heterodoxy as a point for contact when engaging Charles Taylor's attempt to go beyond the binary of both "orthodoxy"[407] and "unbelief",[408] and ultimately, to open his reader up to the possibility of a "third way"[409] of understanding God that speaks from a middle ground between these more conventional categories and established poles of thought and belief. In any case, and for the record, Eckhart's thought was definitively Christian and he was a Christian thinker; it would seem imprudent to argue otherwise. Thus, McGinn's above noted criterion is both effectively and truthfully applied to Eckhart. What is a matter of debate, however, is the question of Eckhart's espoused orthodoxy.

Concerning the noted controversy, there are a few simple and obvious facts that now must be noted as a matter of orientation: Eckhart was a Dominican preacher and a

[406] See: Chapter II.
[407] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 302.
[408] Ibid, 302.
[409] Ibid, 302.

master of scholastic theology. He held high positions of administration within his order and he was twice appointed as a master with a teaching duty [*magister actu regens*] in Paris.[410] This dual appointment was not insignificant. In fact, before him only Thomas Aquinas had twice earned this Dominican chair in theology. In Germany, from his early days in Erfurt, as both the prior of a convent and as the vicar of Thuringia, to his work as the first Provincial of Saxony, and then to several posts in Teutonia, in both Strasburg and Cologne, Eckhart served in wide-variety of ecclesial roles.[411] From pastoring to administration, he was obviously an extremely capable and, quite clearly, highly respected member of his order. This, coupled with the fact that the majority of his works emerged as exegetical commentaries on Scripture makes McGinn correct in classifying Eckhart as a Christian theologian. The only controversy in this respect comes from the Papal Bull *In agro dominico* of 1329; a Bull, issued by Pope John XXII, that would see seventeen articles that were attributed to Eckhart condemned as heretical, and another eleven documented as being "evil sounding, rash, and suspect of heresy".[412] Eckhart himself was never condemned, though his status and legacy as an orthodox Christian theologian, has, from that point forward, been rather complicated.

McGinn disputes the conclusions of the 1329 Bull and argues for Eckhart's re-induction into orthodox Christian thought.[413] He does so on the grounds that he sees the

---

410 Eckhart's first appointment as *magister actu regens* was in 1302. This was followed by a two-year appointment to the same chair from 1311-1313.

411 The claims have been supported by both James M. Clark and Oliver Davies. See: Clark, James M., *The Great German Mystics: Eckhart, Tauler and Suso*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949.; Davies, Oliver, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian*, London, SPCK Publishing, 1991.

412 Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 80 (The Bull "In agro dominico" (March 27, 1329)).

413 See: McGinn, Bernard, "Eckhart's Condemnation Reconsidered" in *Thomist; a Speculative Quarterly Review*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (July 1980), 390-414.; McGinn, Bernard, ""Evil Sounding, Rash, and Suspect of Heresy": Tensions between Mysticism and Magisterium in the History of the Church" in *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 2 (April 2004), 193-212.

Bull as merely an inconvenient formality that was issued to deal with a number of challenges that, at the time, were caused by a growing number of heretical groups and the popular surge of non-ecclesiastically sanctioned spiritualities of the beguines and the beghards. Further, McGinn also argues in support of the orthodox basis of Eckhart's condemned articles. This position, however, is clearly not without contention. For example, Kurt Flasch convincingly argues that the lack of any mediation between the individual soul and God was a doctrine quite apart from Aquinas' theology – that is to say, the late medieval standard of orthodoxy – on several crucial accounts;[414] most notably among these, their differences concerning the Trinity.[415] In this case, Flasch correctly points out the fact that Eckhart "transferred man as God's son into the Trinity, not in a similarity to it, but in correlativity and identity. The expansion of the oneness of Father and Son to include humans seemed irreconcilable with the orthodox concept of God."[416] In addition to these doctrinal arguments, Robert E. Lerner has presented evidence for the severity of the Bull and its charges of heresy based on how far and wide the Papal document was actually spread,[417] and Flasch concurs with his astonishment that the trial actually continued even after the death of Eckhart, suggesting the seriousness of the case and, indeed, the matter as a whole.[418] Somewhere in between these two positions, Richard Woods suggests that the condemnation was more likely to be the result of a long-standing dispute between the Franciscan and Dominican orders at the time.[419]

[414] Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 234-251.
[415] Ibid, 345-246.
[416] Ibid, 239.
[417] Lerner, Robert E., "New Evidence for the Condemnation of Meister Eckhart." *Speculum*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (April 1997), 347-366.
[418] Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 236.
[419] Woods, Richard, *Meister Eckhart: Master of Mystics*, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 181-194.; Woods, Richard, *Eckhart's Way*, Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1986), 212-215.

However, Woods' attempt at reconciliation is no longer such a straightforward matter insofar as it has been shown that Eckhart's initial denouncers were, in fact, fellow Dominicans.[420] In any case, in the eyes of these scholars, the matter is still up for debate. In the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, however, the condemnation remains in its original state. In fact, a series of petitions beginning in 1980 and consolidated in subsequent years was submitted to Pope John Paul II with an aim of rescinding the 1329 Bull.[421] Despite these efforts, no response has been issued and the condemnation still stands today.

The task of presenting Eckhart as an orthodox Christian thinker has been made further complicated by, most notably, the current Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI. While still a Cardinal, Joseph Ratzinger penned a letter titled *Christian Meditation: Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some Aspects of Christian Meditation*.[422] In this letter, while praising other figures who feature prominently in the Christian mystical tradition, Ratzinger points out that one must exercise due caution when approaching Eckhart and others who teach a "negative theology"[423] so as not to fall into the danger of "syncretism",[424] or fusing Christian meditation with non-Christian beliefs and practices. To this, Ratzinger comments: "they [or, mystics such as Meister Eckhart] propose abandoning … the very idea of the One and Triune God, which is Love, in favour of an immersion 'in the indeterminate abyss of the divinity'."[425] This latter statement from this

[420] Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 234.
[421] Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart – The Man from whom God hid Nothing*, ed. Ursula Flemming (Leominster: Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, 1995), xxvii-xix .
[422] Ratzinger, Joseph, *Christian Meditation: Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some Aspects of Christian Meditation*, London: The Ludo Press Ltd, 1990.
[423] Ibid, 11.
[424] Ibid, 12.
[425] Ibid, 12. Here, Ratzinger quotes directly from Eckhart and accuses him of this type of dangerous theologizing. See footnote 15 of the letter that is here being referenced. Ibid, 12.

quotation is taken directly from Eckhart.[426] Bearing these comments in mind, it seems all the less likely that Eckhart will be re-inducted as a standard bearer of Christian orthodoxy, especially insofar as Ratzinger is clearly directing this criticism toward the heart of Eckhartian theology.

The full range of the debate concerning Eckhart's orthodoxy cannot be discussed here. However, I will say that the most direct means of addressing this controversy is one that allows for the following two points: first, Eckhart was, by his own confession,[427] a Christian and his theology was also broadly Christian in respect to its idiom, its references, and its overall presentation. Secondly, the Bull issued by his Church that condemns seventeen of his articles still stands today. Therefore, the official position of the Church is that certain elements of his theology were, and still are, heretical. For Eckhart, it was simply the case that his belief in the soul's absolute unity and identity with God was so radical that it undermined the church's position on humanity's created condition and subsequent alterity in relation to God. Again, this comes into conflict with Ratzinger's *Letter* when he points out that "it is necessary … to bear in mind that man is essentially a creature, and remains such for eternity, so that an absorbing of the human self into the divine self is never possible, not even in the highest states of grace."[428] Ratzinger's declaration against any sense of a complete absorption into God is, in this

[426] Ibid, 12 (footnote: 15). Quoting Eckhart, Ratzinger writes: "Meister Eckhart speaks of an immersion 'in the indeterminate abyss of the divinity', which is a 'darkness in which the light of the Trinity never shines'. Ratzinger takes this quote from the German that reads uninterruptedly as follows: "*Es ist das verborgene Dunkel der ewigen Gottheit und ist unerkannt und ward nie erkannt und wird nie erkannt warden. Gott bliebt dort in sich selbst unerkannt, und das Licht des ewigen Vaters hat da ewiglich hineingeschienen, aber die Finsternis begreift das Licht nicht (Joh. 1, 5).*" Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Deutsche Predigten und Traktate*, ed. and tran. Josef Quint (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1955), 261 (Predigt 23). Walshe's English translation of this text can be found at: Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 283 (Sermon 53).
[427] Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 235.
[428] Ratzinger, *Christian Meditation*, 13.

instance, diametrically opposed to Eckhart's thinking. For example, in one of his vernacular sermons Eckhart preaches:

> Therefore I pray to God to make me free of God, for my essential being is above God, taking God as the origin of creatures. For in that essence of God in which God is above being and distinction, there I was myself and knew myself so as to make this man. Therefore, I am my own cause according to my essence, which is eternal, and not according to my becoming, which is temporal. Therefore, I am unborn, and according to my unborn mode I can never die. According to my unborn mode I have eternally been, am now, and shall eternally remain.[429]

Here, Eckhart makes his theology of an absolute union between the soul and God quite explicit. Moreover, one can only assume that the above noted exegetical remarks are his genuine understanding of Mathew 5:3 (the verse on which this homiletic excerpt is based). In another case, in which he appeals to 2 Corinthians 3:18 to make a point on the nature of union, he quotes directly from the Pauline Epistle in preaching that: "'We are wholly transformed into God and changed'".[430] Comments such these are commonplace throughout the Eckhartian corpus. Simply put, he preached and taught a theology of absolute mystical union.

Union is a key element in this thesis' working definition of 'mystical theology', which again is a "belief in the possibility of union with or absorption into God by means of contemplation and self-surrender…".[431] According to this definition, then, Eckhart's theology would clearly be a 'mystical theology' insofar as presenting the union between the soul and God in various ways was an on-going process in his thinking. However, the absolute degree of union that Eckhart proclaimed in his theology was far more than what

[429] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 424 (Sermon 87).
[430] Ibid, 332 (Sermon 65). Here Eckhart is quoting 2 Corinthians 3:18.
[431] "mysticism, n.". *OED Online*. June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124654?redirectedFrom=mysticism& (accessed June 30, 2014).

the Church considered to be acceptable. For example, his interpretation of 2 Corinthians 3:18 is directly challenged in the 1329 Papal Bull when his inquisitors identified the following heresy from his teachings: "We are fully transformed and converted into God … as one, not as *like*. By the living God it is true that there is no difference."[432] This coupled with the words of caution from the then Cardinal Ratzinger, almost seven hundred years after the fact, makes for a strong case against the orthodoxy of Eckhart's teachings. It is with these points in mind that when asking the question as to whether or not Eckhart's theology was heretical, the official answer from his own Church was, and remains, affirmative. The question then remains as to the extent that a heretical theology can still be considered Christian. In my view, and this is a view shared almost unanimously by Eckhart scholars, he ought still at the very least to be considered a Christian (though, not an orthodox one). After all, in his own defense he writes: "I can be in error, but I cannot be a heretic, because the first belongs to the intellect, the second to the will."[433] The case of the condemnation of Eckhart's articles is an interesting one, especially in light of the fact that a significant motivating factor behind several of his ecclesial appointments was, in fact, to quell heresy among the rapidly expanding groups of non-ecclesial religious women.[434] In brief, Eckhart's legacy as a teacher and a preacher of orthodoxy is not a simple matter. Yet, at base, he still remains a Christian thinker. It is with this conclusion in mind that McGinn is then right to define Eckhart as a Western

[432] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 27 (Note C: In Agro Dominico, Article 10).
[433] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 72 (Response to the List of Forty-Nine Articles).
[434] For a more detailed analysis of the state of the Church and heresies of the time, see: Lerner, Robert E., *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972.; Kieckhefer, Richard, *Repression of Heresy in Medieval Germany*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1979.

Christian mystic insofar as Eckhart fits all of the principal criteria of McGinn's description of this category.

The next step of this section will discuss how it is that McGinn moves from the general to the particular in defining Eckhart's approach to and style of mysticism over and against that of the many others who have also been included in this tradition. In attempting to extract a single defining characteristic of Eckhart's mystical theology that sets him apart, McGinn looks to his distinctive set of terms and metaphors. In doing so, he writes: "[n]ow I would like to propose that the description 'mysticism of the ground' (MHG *grunt/grund*) can provide a helpful prism for understanding the special character of the mysticism of Eckhart and those influenced by him, Dominican and non-Dominican."[435] The latter statement is interesting in that it seems to me as if McGinn presents the 'Dominican and non-Dominican' influence of Eckhart's thought as a respectful rebuke of Ruh's attempt to classify Eckhart's theology as a distinctly Dominican mysticism.[436] In regard to this divergence in opinions, I prefer McGinn's claim simply due to the fact that (as noted above) two of Eckhart's brethren from the Order of Preachers challenged and eventually testified against him in Cologne. However, Ruh is correct in linking Eckhart to Albertus Magnus and, later on, to Johannes Tauler and Heinrich von Suso (all Dominicans). Even so, Eckhart's theology remains quite unique among his contemporaries and grouping it in such a genus, in my opinion, obscures its particularity. Further, McGinn's approach also differs from Ruh's because he looks for a definitive characteristic of Eckhart from within the texts themselves. It is on this point, however, that McGinn's criticism, in discouraging the assimilation of Eckhart

[435] McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 37.
[436] Ruh, Kurt, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (München: C. H. Back, 1985), 31-46 and 187-195.

to "our modern vocabulary and methodological perspectives"[437] could find, in the form of my own aim in this chapter, a valid target. This is worthy of note insofar as the current undertaking is to present Eckhart's own unique sub-category of mystical theology as a 'mystical ontology'. Though to be sure, McGinn does equivocate on his point, especially concerning his 'hermeneutic' view that was noted in Chapter II. In any case, the remainder of this chapter will both directly and indirectly address this criticism forwarded by McGinn, as it relates to my own task in this thesis.

In Chapter I, I showed that when reading a medieval text, regardless of its content, the horizon of the interpreter is brought together, or 'fused', with the horizon of the text. In other words, two very different horizons are brought together in and through the singular act of interpretation. That is why even Gadamer himself is reluctant to refer to his hermeneutic theory as a 'methodology', per se. Rather, he understands it to be a phenomenological experience; or, in other words, an event that occurs in and through one's consciousness.[438] Still, it should be noted that this particular hermeneutic method does not simply give one absolute creative rein in appropriating a text. After all, as Grondin rightly points out, "over-interpretation" or "interpretations that are too subjectively biased" are most often obvious to the trained eye, and they are in no way reflective of Gadamer's careful instruction.[439] Rather, Gadamer encourages the interpreter to join in on an inevitable sort of play between the subject matter under interpretation; a play involving language and meaning that engages the subject matter under interpretation and the interpreter himself or herself. He writes: "[t]he weight of

[437] McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 37. See, also: Chapter I.
[438] See Chapter I for specifics on how Gadamer employs the terms 'phenomenology' and 'consciousness'.
[439] Grondin, Jean, "Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 43.

things we encounter in understanding plays itself out in a linguistic event, a play of words around and about what is meant."[440] Moreover, the more serious the interpreter is about the subject matter, the more serious the play, and, consequently, the quality of the interpretation. To this end, he explains: "[s]eriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play."[441] In any case, all interpretations are "subject to the supreme criterion of 'right' interpretation."[442] It is with this hermeneutic approach in mind that I find McGinn's criticism regarding the interpretation of Eckhart from modern methodological perspectives to be ill-founded.

McGinn's criticism of the displacement of a medieval vocabulary with a modern one, of course, is another charge that can be made against the current project. I will argue my defence against McGinn's charges in two steps. First, as a consequence of my hermeneutic engagement with Eckhart, the immediate horizon – one could even say, the post-Kantian horizon – is synthesized with Eckhart's distinctive late-medieval idiom. As a result of that synthesis, and through the act of interpretation, language is adapted from one horizon to another in order to convey both a correct and an understandable meaning of the text that, in this case, manifests itself in both modern, and more specifically, post-Kantian terms. Such an action is not at all an injustice to the original text. Rather, it is simply a genuine act of interpretation insofar as it apprehends the original meaning of the subject matter and conveys it in terms that are understandable within one's own immediate horizon. Secondly, I disagree with McGinn's entire endeavor to locate a single concept or term from Eckhart's oeuvre that would adequately present the core of his

[440] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 484 (Part III, 5, 3, (C)).
[441] Ibid, 103 (Part I, 2, 1 (A)).
[442] Ibid, 117 (Part I, 2, 1 (B)).

theology. In my view, the profound and expansive thought of Eckhart cannot be reduced to a single creative term or phrase from his writings and sermons. To do so would undermine not only the value of his great assortment of terms, but also the role they play in presenting his idea of the human/divine relationship. In what follows, the concept of 'mystical ontology' that I have chosen to describe the whole of Eckhart's theology will be based upon one of his key terms, but it will not at all be reducible to that single term. In fact, it is my aim to present Eckhart's theology as a 'mystical ontology' so as to allow for the broad and inclusive representation of the whole assemblage of his language and vocabulary. This inclusion, of course, involves Eckhart's use of the term 'ground' [*Grunt*]; the same term that McGinn singles out in an effort to distinguish the medieval master's mysticism from others.

According to McGinn, "*Grunt* can be described as an 'explosive metaphor' in the sense that it breaks through previous categories of mystical speech to create new ways of presenting a direct encounter with God. When Eckhart says, as he frequently does, 'God's ground and my ground is the same ground', he announces a new form of mysticism."[443] In bolstering his point, he adds that "*Grunt* is employed by Eckhart in a rich variety of ways, but the basic intention of the semantic field of ground-language is always geared to one goal: achieving indistinct identity of God and human in what Eckhart calls the 'simple One' (*einvaltigez Ein*)."[444] The following excerpt from one of his vernacular sermons helps to put this into context:

> The soul's every external act is effected by some means. But in the soul's essence there is not activity, for the powers she works with emanate from the ground of being. Yet in that ground is the silent 'middle': here nothing

[443] McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 38.
[444] Ibid, 47. For a more in depth presentation of the semantic meanings of the 'ground', see: Ibid, 338-344.

> but rest and celebration for this birth, this act, that God the Father may speak His word there, for this *part* is by nature receptive to nothing save only the divine essence, without mediation. Here God enters the soul with His all, not merely with a part. God enters here the ground of the soul.[445]

In this instance, the term 'ground' is employed as a figure of speech to describe, principally, the ontological and shared nexus between the soul and God. Thus McGinn is quite right to point out the importance and the unique functions of the 'ground' in Eckhart's thought. However, I would argue that this term, insofar as it refers to the 'silent middle' where God and the soul are one and the same, does not adequately capture, in its regular use,[446] the greater ontological emphasis at work in Eckhart's thinking on the nature of being, in general. For it is precisely this emphasis on the divine essence of all being – and not just individual being or the being of the soul – that makes Eckhart's approach to mysticism unique. In the language of the 'ground' this greater emphasis on God's ubiquitous nature is relegated, if not all together neglected, in favor of the priority that this metaphor gives to the 'ground' of the individual soul. Concerning the more expansive nature of God's being, according to Eckhart, one ought to consider his simple statement that "[l]iterally speaking, in the realm of nature existence is always one and in the One. Existence is God, or is immediately from him. God is united and is in all things under the covering of the One, and vice versa under the One's covering and property each thing grasps God. In that One God and the soul, indeed God and all things, come together."[447] It must be kept in mind that, for Eckhart, God is in all things, and not just the soul, as their true being and essence. It is in view of this divine ubiquity that I consider the concept of 'mystical ontology' to be a more complete means of describing

[445] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 30-31 (Sermon 1).
[446] McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 39.
[447] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 160 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 107).

Eckhart's theology. Moreover, this concept envelops Eckhart's notion of the 'ground' and further, as will be shown below, many more of his theological concepts.

The main point in my argument against McGinn's position is that the 'ground' refers to the particularity of the soul, whereas 'mystical ontology' refers, in part, to the universal nature of God's being in general. Moreover, despite the fact that 'mystical ontology' is not a part of Eckhart's vocabulary, it does allow for the inclusion of other elements of his thought as concepts that are all of equal importance in systematically holding together the whole of his mystical theology.

Amy Hollywood on Eckhartian Mysticism

As a former student of Bernard McGinn, Amy Hollywood's discussions on medieval mysticism share a resemblance to her teacher's, while at the same time she brings forward her own unique voice and contribution to the field. Much of her work focuses on the beguines and the late-medieval spirituality of mendicant women. Insofar as she centers her attention on shared themes that connect the aforesaid women to Eckhart, her study of Eckhartian mysticism is most comprehensively categorized as a thematic interpretation. For example, this is already evidenced in the title of her book, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*.[448] My engagement with Hollywood's work will begin with her interpretation of the following Eckhartian themes: 'the soul as virgin wife' and 'the birth of the son in the soul'. From there, I will comment on her more general approach to Eckhart's unique idiom and ontology.

[448] Hollywood, Amy, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995.

Hollywood's work on Eckhart draws together a constellation of female medieval thinkers from both the German and the French traditions. In doing so, she suggests that Eckhart's use of feminine metaphors is likely to have been something that was inherited from a number of his female contemporaries.[449] Though, to be sure, this view is certainly contested and difficult to maintain when considering the diverse range of Eckhart's metaphors, many of which can be seen to involve some generic aspect of the distinctly female experience.[450] In any case, by doing so, her study sets itself apart from other scholars, such as Davies who, instead, emphasizes Eckhart's conceptual heritage as being more in line with that of Albertus Magnus and Dietrich von Freiberg.[451] Summarizing her project, she writes: "I intend to show … how Eckhart sought to place [the beguines'] ideas within the philosophical vocabulary he had as a schoolman. In doing so, he gives the beguines' thought the semblance of scholastic legitimacy while radically subverting the language of the schools."[452] The former point of this statement is more plausible, and it is a useful argument to follow. The latter, however, is less convincing and, indeed, suffers acutely from the 'over-interpretation' that Grondin warned of above, when appropriating, more than interpreting, a text by way of Gadamer's hermeneutic methodology.[453] However interesting Hollywood's argument might be, there is simply no textual evidence whatsoever that supports the idea that Eckhart's intended to 'subvert the language of the schools'. However, concerning her point on giving 'scholastic legitimacy' to the thought of the beguines, there is much to be gleaned from this. In this

[449] Hollywood, Amy, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 7.
[450] Kikuchi, Satoshi, *From Eckhart to Ruusbroec: A Critical Inheritance of Mystical Themes in the Fourteenth Century* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014), 171. See, also: Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 193.
[451] Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 17.
[452] Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, 121. See, also: Ancelet-Hustache, *Jeanne, Master Eckhart and the Rhineland Mystics*, tran. Hilda Graef, New York: Harper, 1957.
[453] Grondin, *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 43.

case, her textual support for this argument is both detailed and convincing. Again, however, Davies and Satoshi Kikuchi would contend that figures of speech, such as the 'birth of the Son in the soul', were already commonplace in scholastic theology and had been present in a number of thinkers ranging anywhere from Origen of Alexandria to Maximus the Confessor.[454] In spite of their difference in opinion and/or records, Davies' argument, in particular, does not take away from the fact that Eckhart had a unique and long-standing pastoral relationship with the women of both ecclesial and non-ecclesial religious houses.[455]

Hollywood's claim gains traction in and through the content and intended audiences of Eckhart's sermons. From a homiletic perspective, one can perhaps assume that his use of feminine themes would have profoundly resonated with audiences that were comprised primarily of women – a point that Flasch wholly succeeds in demonstrating.[456] In fact, such themes are so common in and definitive of his work that Josef Quint made use of them as criteria in determining the legitimacy of works that were genuinely Eckhart, as opposed to pseudepigrapha.[457] To this point, Hollywood adds: "[t]he authenticity of the primary themes and images found in the sermons is attested to by their repetition and elaboration throughout the corpus."[458] There is, thus, little question that the key feminine themes that Hollywood builds her study upon were, in fact, central to Eckhart's work.

---

[454] Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 128-129. See, also: Kikuchi, *From Eckhart to Ruusbroec*, 171.
[454] Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 17.
[455] Ibid, 68-72.
[456] Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 236.
[457] See: Josef Quint's introduction in: Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen Werke*, Erster Band of *Die deutschen und lateinische Werke*, eds. Josef Koch and Josef Quint (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1936) x-xv. As noted in: Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, 264 (endnote: 3).
[458] Ibid, 120.

Hollywood highlights the following two feminine themes from Eckhart's oeuvre: first, 'the soul as virgin wife' and, second, 'the birth of the Son in the soul'. I will begin by discussing the former, which is also, incidentally, the title of her monograph. She interprets this theme as having an equal emphasis on both 'virginity' and 'wifehood'. She argues that while seemingly opposed in practice, at least metaphorically speaking, the concept is comprised of distinct, yet mutually reciprocal components of a single mystical mode of being. First, 'virginity', in Hollywood's view, refers to the soul's freedom – or, chastity, as it were – from conceptual determinations of things and, even more, one's sense of attachment to such determinations. In other words, one ought to clear one's intellect of determinations that render created things as ontologically distinct in and of themselves, and learn to understand oneself, the world, and God as fundamentally united in and through a single indistinct essence. In this way, 'virginity' represents a state of intellectual being that implies the recognition of the totality of creation as being substantiated in and through a shared and universal essence of divine being. Conversely, 'wifehood' refers to the affectivity or the productive result of this 'virginity'. In other words, 'wifehood' is the lived result of one's 'virginity'. That is to say, the 'virgin wife' will comport himself or herself in and amidst the world according to the ontological truth that was revealed to him or her in and through his or her intellectual virginity. For Hollywood, however, there is more than just a metaphor at work with 'the virgin wife'. She argues that the oppositional nature of 'virginity' and 'wifehood' are in place for another reason. That is: "[t]he contradiction [between virginity and wifehood] creates an aporia, a breakdown of logical categories and human reason, and provides a glimpse into the mystery of nondualistic reality which Eckhart is trying to engender."[459] This is,

[459] Ibid, 153.

indeed, a fascinating insight. However, again, there is simply no textual basis from which she can support this claim. Rather, it seems more plausible that Eckhart was simply producing theological themes that would resonate with his audiences. Concerning this point, Hollywood neglects to take account of the idea that Eckhart was preaching to women who had taken vows of chastity and might have even worn the monastic bridal veil as a symbol of their life-long commitment to wifehood and marriage to Christ, their eternal bridegroom.

Hollywood's appeal to the 'breakdown of logical categories' in Eckhart's thought also resembles what can be found in the assessments of Michael Sells,[460] Bruce Milem,[461] and Cyprian Smith[462] on Eckhart's language as it relates to mystical theology. This very fashionable linguistic interpretation is interesting. However, as it stands, it is mere conjecture, and it is certainly an example of McGinn's previously noted criticism; that is, the attempt to appropriate Eckhart into modern methodologies for purposes other than his own. What one can be sure of is that Eckhart was dispatched by his order to preach, in many cases, to women. The genius of his homiletic approach and vocabulary was not in his attempts to deconstruct dualisms through language and logical contradictions. Rather, it lies in the fact that he tried to connect with the lived reality of his congregation by presenting themes that had a distinct resemblance to their daily experiences. In doing so, Eckhart would have made his abstract theology more accessible by entering it into practical and meaningful terms – terms that would have been all too familiar to the nuns

[460] Sells, Michael A., *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.
[461] Milem, Bruce, *The Unspoken Word: Negative Theology In Meister Eckhart's German Sermons*, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002.
[462] Smith, Cyprian, *The Way of Paradox: Spiritual Life as Taught by Meister Eckhart*, London: Longman and Todd Ltd, 2004.

and beguines that would have been under his charge. My point here is that Eckhart's notion of 'the virgin wife' is already pregnant, so to say, with considerable meaning. The assumption that his intent was to incite some manner of a mystical experience, as a direct result of the mere utterance of these themes is intriguing, but it is ultimately unjustified. What is evident is that Eckhart goes into great detail about the meaning of these themes. In doing so he makes clear his understanding of how the soul comes to understand his or her being, or more plainly, one's ontological condition in God. Moreover, he clarifies how a correct understanding of this manner of being should result in affective behavior that reflects such an ontological union.

The second feminine theme that Hollywood investigates is the notion of the 'birth of the Son in the soul'. On this subject, Eckhart preaches: "God's chief aim is giving birth. He is never content till He begets His Son in us. And the soul, too, is in no way content until the Son of God is born in her."[463] Here, the birthing event allows for the individual soul to bear the Son in himself or herself. Such a birthing, for Eckhart, is a radical Christological event wherein the soul not only gives birth to the Son, but also becomes the Son. Through this theme, Eckhart presents his concept of union, wherein the soul is united with God, and the result of this unification is the birth of the Son, or, in other words, the divinization of the soul. Conveniently, both of these feminine themes share much in common and both go straight to the core of Eckhart's mystical approach to ontology.

In demonstrating the importance and the conceptual overlap of these themes, Hollywood draws on the following passage from one of the Eckhart's vernacular sermons:

[463] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 347 (Sermon 68).

> A virgin who is a wife is free and unfettered by attachment; she is always as near to God as to herself. She brings forth many and big fruits, for they are neither more nor less than God Himself. *This* fruit and *this* birth that virgin bears who is a wife, bringing forth daily a hundred and a thousandfold! Numberless indeed are her labors begotten of the most noble ground or, to speak more truly, of the very ground where the Father ever begets His eternal Word: – it is thence she becomes fruitful and shares in the procreation.[464]

In this passage, Eckhart presents his theology in full thematic form. For all of my disagreements with Hollywood, she is absolutely right to give attention to the abovementioned feminine themes and the importance that they play in Eckhart's thinking. While Eckhart's employment of these themes might not be mirror images of what one would find in either Mechthild von Magdeburg or Maguerite Porete, it is clear that they would have served a unique function for devotional women during the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries.

Hollywood's project of reading Eckhart alongside other well-known female mystics of the late Middle Ages is a valuable one. I think she is right in her assessment of Eckhart as a sort of mediator between the beguine mystics and the scholastic methods of the time. After all, he brilliantly appropriates these themes so as to convey his mystical theology as it directly relates to the ontological condition of the soul in God. In fact, this ontological element of Eckhart's thought is something to which Hollywood also devotes considerable attention. In respect to the centrality of ontology in Eckhart's works, she makes the following observation:

[464] Ibid, 78-79 (Sermon 8). Also, note that in this case, I have elected to use the Walshe translation (in place of Hollywood's) in order to maintain consistency with the numbering and organization of the sermon.

> We are led, increasingly, to an awareness of the way in which Eckhart's theories of language and attribution are always intimately involved in his ontology. In other words, the way one talks about God, creation, and their relationship is a direct reflection of and result of the actual ontological status of these beings and their relationship.[465]

Hollywood's conclusive point effectively supports my own argument that Meister Eckhart's unique understanding of ontology is something that runs through, and is at the core of each and every one of his thematic conceptualizations of God's being. Indeed Hollywood's emphasis on ontology only serves to strengthen my position further in classifying Eckhart's theology as a mystical ontology. To reiterate, as a mystical ontology, each and every one of his concepts are allowed their full, expressive meaning and value to be considered without reducing his thought to a single one of those concepts. In other words, the classification of Eckhart's theology as a mystical ontology extends itself into the entire conceptual framework of his thought, without excluding one element in favor of another.

Oliver Davies on Eckhartian Mysticism

Oliver Davies' work on Eckhart provides the reader with a detailed overview of the Dominican's authorship, and with a special concentration on his use of the conceptually laden term, 'union'. It is primarily with this analysis of the above noted term in mind that I will classify Davies' approach to Eckhart as conceptual. In what follows, I will begin by discussing his primary classification of Eckhart as a mystic, and his disagreement with McGinn's idea that Eckhart is first and foremost a theologian. From this point, I will move on to an examination of Davies' commentary on Eckhart's concept of 'union', and

[465] Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, 136.

specifically as it relates to Eckhart's theme of the 'birth of the Son in the soul'. Finally, Davies' discussion on the concept of 'being', and its multiple connotations, will be discussed in relation to my own position, that the whole of Eckhart's thinking is best represented as a 'mystical ontology'.

Concerning the classification of Eckhart's works, at the very outset of Davies', *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian*,[466] he presents the reader with the following position:

> Are we to regard [Eckhart] as a mystic or a theologian, or both? The answer given here is that he is both, but a mystic first and a theologian second. This is an important point for it means that we shall read his theology as *an instrument for the articulation* of what is essentially a mystical, and therefore experiential, vision. Thus theology, and the language in which it is written, becomes a medium through which Meister Eckhart seeks to express and to convey the quality of character of his own sense of an existential encounter with God. [467]

Davies arrives at this conclusion as a result of what he understands to be the "experiential basis to Eckhart's thinking".[468] In other words, for Davies, the correlation between mysticism and experience is nearly one-to-one. This is in contrast to theology, which, for Davies, has no necessary relationship to or with experience, per se. Rather, the latter functions merely as a description of the nature of God.

Davies is right to emphasize the experiential component of Eckhart's works. In support of this idea, he points out that St. Dominic, the founder of the Dominican order, was another figure who gave precedence to experience as a special means of knowing

[466] Davies, Oliver, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian*, London, SPCK Publishing, 1991.
[467] Ibid, 3.
[468] Ibid, 3.

God.[469] To lend further support to this experiential aspect of Eckhart's teaching, it can be noted that he consistently concludes his sermons by, in one way or another, alluding to the desire for a direct experience of God. For example, he preaches: "That we may thus in truth become the Son, may that truth help us, of which I have spoken. Amen."[470] Similarly, in another sermon he states: "That we may so desire God that He may be willing to be born in us, so help us God. Amen."[471] Finally, and quite poignantly, he concludes: "May God help us to come to this experience. Amen."[472] Davies is not alone in pointing out the experiential component of Eckhart's theology. For example, both Ruh[473] and Dietmar Mieth[474] have also written in support of this. The truth is that variations of these experiential dictums are a constant throughout all of Eckhart's collected sermons. Doubtlessly, he was interested in inciting a first-person experience of the divine.

To clarify this point via contrast, consider the preacher Eckhart's appeal to first-person experience, over and against (what at least appears to be) the distanced scientific description of mysticism by William James. The latter writes: "[w]hether my treatment of mystical states will shed more light or darkness, I do not know, for my own constitution shuts me out from their enjoyment almost entirely, and I can speak of them only at second hand."[475] Read against this quotation it becomes clear that Eckhart is not interested in being an outside observer. His aim is participation and the immediate experience of being united with God. Bearing the importance that experience holds in

[469] Ibid, 3-6.
[470] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 98 (Sermon 11).
[471] Ibid, 181 (Sermon 29).
[472] Ibid, 161 (Sermon 24 (a)).
[473] Ruh, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker*, 189.
[474] Mieth, Dietmar, *Meister Eckhart: Gottserfahrung und Weg in die Welt*, Olten: Walter-Verlag AG, 1984.
[475] James, *The Varieties of Religious* Experience, 290.

Eckhart's thought in mind, I am inclined to agree with Davies, Ruh (although Ruh is reluctant to concede that Eckhart himself actually had experiences that were to the ilk of those that he preached[476]) and Mieth in saying that, for Eckhart, the realization and lived experience of God's presence and being is vital to a complete understanding his work. However, I would argue that one should be cautious when considering how it is that experience itself – that is to say, an immediate mystical experience – fits into Eckhart's thought. Noting this, I will make two specific points that are in contention with Davies' more general emphasis on experience. First: Eckhart's works are highly instructive, and therefore his writings do function as 'an instrument for the articulation' of the nature of God and the human/divine relationship (see above). For an example of this, see the six stages toward the cultivation of the soul's nobility in Eckhart's treatise *The Nobleman*.[477] Secondly, as a result of Eckhart's manner of informing one's understanding, or instructing how one ought to correctly conceive of God, I maintain that Eckhart ought to be fundamentally thought of as a theologian. It just so happens that the understanding of God that he disseminates is one that is mystical.

The first point will be made clearer in the discussion on Denys Turner, below. At that point, I will show how it is that my reading of Eckhart surfaces in between Davies' emphasis on experience and Turner's almost total rejection of this idea. For now, I will address the second point, which incidentally, brings my position closer to that of McGinn's, as it was discussed above. Also, and as I stated earlier, in respect to classifications, it is more precise if one moves from the general to the particular. This thesis has followed this model in moving from the genus of theology to the species of

[476] Ruh, *Meister Eckhart*, 189. See, also: Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 3.
[477] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 559 (The Nobleman).

mystical theology, and finally to the sub-species of Eckhartian mysticism. In this way, each category becomes increasingly more specific. Davies' approach, on the other hand, seems to complicate these matters. His discussion is slightly different to my own, or, say even McGinn's, insofar as he is claiming that theology, as a practice, is merely speculative, while mysticism is empirical and experiential. Here, I contend that the two do not have to be separated. For example, Eckhart goes to great lengths to present – and with, it must be said, exquisite, scholastic precision and logic – what it is that he understands God to be, and further, how it is that one might experience God in and through all things. Be it through one of his commentaries, treatises, or sermons, Eckhart is uniformly aiming to influence how it is that one ought to understand God, and consequently, how this understanding will then inform the manner that one experiences God. To Davies' defense, this obviously does not preclude an experience of God, or even the recognition of the importance of such an experience. Rather, my point is that an experience that results from an understanding of Eckhartian theology is one that is first shaped by what Eckhart considers to be a correct intellectual orientation toward the nature of God's being and one's ontological union therewithal.

In fact, Davies' attention to the concept of 'union' in Eckhart is quite useful in highlighting how it is that the accidental being of created things is united to the essential being of God. Furthermore, Davies' emphasis on 'union', as it occurs in the works of Eckhart also brings Eckhart's theology directly into line with the *OED* definition of 'mystical theology'. In any case, and in spite of the centrality of this concept of union throughout the works of Eckhart, it remains one of the more philosophically perplexing elements of his thinking. To this effect, Davies' analysis of 'union' in Eckhart is

indispensable insofar as it firmly positions Eckhart's thinking within the tradition of mystical theology and it shows how it is that this mystical principle relates to being, be it human or divine. To illustrate these matters, Davies turns his attention to a Trinitarian example drawn from Eckhart's commentary on the Gospel of John to help elucidate his concept of 'union':

> What follows expresses this – 'The Word was with God.' It does not say 'under God', or 'descends from God', but says 'The Word was with God'. The phrase 'with God' bespeaks a kind of equality. … In things that are univocal what is produced is always equal to the source. It does not just participate in the same nature, but it receives the total nature from its source in a simple, whole and equal manner. Thus … what proceeds is the son of its source. A son is one who is other in person but not in nature.[478]

This reflection on the relationship between essences and accidents is conveniently situated in Trinitarian terms. In other words, the Father and the Son are united in essence, but remain distinct insofar as the Son, here, refers specifically to the accidental or finite element of God's being. This is a consequence of Eckhart's metaphysics – a system that is balanced upon the dialectic between Creator and creation. Again, for Eckhart, it is the intellect that has the special capacity, or power, so to speak, to unite these distinct metaphysical elements. On this matter, Eckhart preaches: "I have said before, knowledge and the intellect unite the soul with God. Intellect penetrates into the pure essence; knowledge runs ahead, preceding and blazing a trail so that God's only-begotten Son may be born."[479] Here, it is shown that it is the intellect that first unites the soul to God, so that

[478] Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Dritter Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, eds. Albert Zimmermann and Loris Sturlese, trans. Karl Christ, Brunno Decker, Josef Koch, Heribert Fischer, Loris Sturlese, Albert Zimmermann (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1994), 7 (EXPOSITIO SANCTI EVANGELII SECUNDUM JOHANNEM; SECUNDUM JOHANNEM 1:1-5). The Latin for the concluding line of this quotation reads as follows: *Filius est enim qui fit alius in persona, non aliquid in natura*." For the English translation of this text, see: Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 105-106.
[479] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 165 (Sermon 25).

the Son may be born. On this subject, Davies' quite rightly points out that "Eckhart wishes to stress two facts. The first is that the 'something' in the soul exists *beyond the level of specific being within the world*, and the second is that *it exists in a state of direct relationship with God*."[480] It is through this relationship, by way of the intellect, that the soul's essential relationship – or union – with God is first revealed. Furthermore, it is precisely this union, between soul and God that makes way for the consequent 'birth of the Son'.

The fundamental and philosophically pregnant imagery of 'the birth of the Son' is ubiquitous throughout the works of Eckhart. In fact, Davies' goes so far as to refer to this imagery as "Eckhart's trademark".[481]. However, in what has already been shown, this does not at all mean that Eckhart was the first theologian to use this imagery. What it does mean, instead, is that Eckhart did make regular use of this imagery, and it certainly plays a central role in his thought. From a conceptual standpoint, what is most remarkable about this imagery is its ability to fuse metaphysics with Trinitarian theology. In this way, for Eckhart, the 'birth of the Son' demonstrates, at once, a metaphysical dialectic between essence and accident, as well as the effect of their union. Conveniently, it presents this deeply philosophical claim in and through the language of the Holy Trinity.

In expanding on his metaphysics, Eckhart understands Sonship to be a possibility for anyone, as, according to him, it is both every soul's potentiality and its teleological end. To this end, Eckhart states: "Then be a son, be an offspring of God".[482] In this way: "They are all connected in the One from which they come, in the One in which they are,

[480] Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 136.
[481] Ibid, 145.
[482] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 159 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 103).

and in the One in which is their goal."[483] In following this thinking, the soul can be united with God as One, and, thus, transformed – or rather, incarnated – into the Son. On the radical nature of this union and its consequent incarnation, Eckhart preaches: "The Father bears His son in the inmost part of the soul, and bears you with his only-begotten Son, no less. If I am to be the Son, then I must be the Son in the same essence as that in which he is Son, and not otherwise."[484] For Eckhart, the soul becoming the Son is the soul's realization and prioritization of its own essence over and against its accidental nature. In parsing together these terms, it becomes clear that Eckhart's metaphysics and his theology can be understood as if they were one and the same. Interestingly then, what emerges from this picture is nothing less than a quite developed and sophisticated ontology; that is to say, an ontology that is conceptually supported through a cogent metaphysical system and set into theologically meaningful terms that vividly express the nature of God's being.

To better understand how it is that Eckhart's metaphysics align with and ground his theology it is useful to consider Davies' following observation on the multiform function of 'being' in Eckhart's thinking:

> Eckhart tells us that there are, as it were, two kinds of being. The first he calls 'being' (*esse*), 'absolute being (*esse absolutum*), 'simple being' (*esse simpliciter*) or 'being itself' (*esse ipsum*), while the second he calls 'being this or that' (*esse hoc et hoc*; *esse hoc aut aliud*; *esse huius et huius*), 'being such and such' (*esse tale*) or 'determinate being' (*esse determinatum*). The former is the being of God, which is infinite and uncontaminated by any form or admixture, while the latter is the specific and local being of entities within the world...[485]

[483] Ibid, 156 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 97).
[484] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 134 (Sermon 18).
[485] Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 108.

From this discussion, it becomes apparent that Eckhart's thinking is hinged upon both the distinction and the relation between determinate and indeterminate being.[486] Having said that, there is one point regarding these matters that requires some clarification; namely, Davies' concluding observation concerning the strictly oppositional relationship between the two noted manifestations of being. To be clear, Davies is correct to address Eckhart's position that "God … is infinite"[487] and further, that God "is not determined by the confines or limits of any genera of beings."[488] While at the same time: "every created being radically and positively possesses existence, life, and wisdom from and in God, not in itself, as a created being",[489] and more simply: "God is inside all things in that he is existence."[490] Even so, there is a delicate point at play here that must be made apparent. If by 'admixture' one assumes that indeterminate and determinate being are absolutely in opposition, then there is a misunderstanding of the dialectic that is here at play; that is to say, these two metaphysical poles exist dialectically – in opposition and in relation. To clarify this point through an analogous subject, Eckhart writes that while "prime matter is infinite in relation to all the infinite number of forms that can be generated",[491] it nevertheless "does not find any form in which all forms exist."[492] Put another way (and thoroughly in the linguistic context of Ecclesiastes 24:29): "God, as … infinite existence, is the meat of everything that is".[493] Thus for Eckhart, the philosophical point that he is aiming to demonstrate is that God is "the one existence in which all things are

[486] Eckhart draws on the works of Plato to illustrate this point in his thinking. See: Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 170 (Sermon 26).
[487] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 166 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 144).
[488] Ibid, 166 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 144).
[489] Ibid, 178 (Sermons and Lectures on Ecclesiasticus, 52).
[490] Ibid, 179 (Sermons and Lectures on Ecclesiasticus, 54).
[491] Ibid, 174, (Sermons and Lectures on Ecclesiasticus, 42).
[492] Ibid, 174, (Sermons and Lectures on Ecclesiasticus, 42).
[493] Ibid, 174, (Sermons and Lectures on Ecclesiasticus, 43).

founded",[494] while at the same time, those things in themselves are, ontologically speaking, a mere "nothingness… in themselves in relation to God."[495] Thus, the contested use of the term 'admixture', in this case, might be better understood as a description of the unity between God and the individual person, which in turn, bears the 'Son in the soul'.

In spite of the dialectical cogency described above, there still remains some degree of equivocation in Eckhart's thought concerning the relation between Creator and creation. Therefore, concerning the above noted comments on 'admixture', it is perhaps reasonable to conclude that Davies' position on 'union', as it occurs in Eckhart, is not as absolute as my reading – and indeed Turner's as well (see below) – of his use and meaning of this concept. Though, to be sure, such an apparent discrepancy is not in all cases a problem of the interpreter, rather it is a problem of the texts themselves. This is because, at times, Eckhart comes across as more absolute in this respect, and at others, not so much.[496] What one should therefore keep in mind is that Eckhart's thinking is likely to have shifted concerning these points at various times in his career. One can imagine that his own thinking would have been under the constant influence of other theologians, both his contemporaries and also the historical figures that he engaged in his readings. Moreover, as a preacher he might have even taken care so as to specially formulate his concepts for a given audience. At base, Eckhart's life spanned almost seventy years, and it is only reasonable to allow him some space for a change of mind and thought during such a frame of time. Whatever the case, what is evident from

[494] Ibid, 159, (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 104).
[495] Ibid, 174, (Sermons and Lectures on Ecclesiasticus, 61).
[496] Eckhart's preaching on the "image of God" is an example of his less than absolute position on the univocal relationship between the soul and God. For an example of this, see his sermon for the feast day of St. Augustine: Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 114-118 (Sermon 14 (b)).

Davies' observation is the importance that 'being' plays in Eckhart's thinking. After all, it is from this ontological understanding that his concept of union emerges and consequently, the imagery too, of 'the birth of the Son'. The fact of the matter is that 'being' is at the core of Eckhart's thinking, (regardless of the nuance that might be involved in one's interpretation of it) and not a single one of his many creative themes or concepts can be understood properly without a firm understanding of his fundamental approach to ontology.

Davies' interpretation of Eckhart is one that primarily focuses on the concept of 'union' and its related imagery as the 'birth of the Son in the soul'. He is in the right to draw on these elements in creating a definitive study of Eckhartian mysticism. However, I believe that what Davies indirectly shows, and what I myself would like to directly emphasize, is how pivotal 'being' actually is, not only to part, but to the entire edifice of Eckhart's thinking. Certainly, the principle of union[497] between Creator and creation is what – by definition – makes Eckhart's thought mystical. Moreover, 'the birth of the Son' is the event that realizes this union in, through, and amidst one's lived reality. However, neither of these features of Eckhart's thought adequately captures the full breadth of his thinking. After all, the latter refers only specifically to the relationship between the soul and God and not the whole of creation and existence, in general. The former, moreover, is a concept that is contingent upon a more fundamental approach to ontology – an approach that renders union as a possibility in the first place. In truth, to understand Eckhart's mystical theology, one must first understand his ontology. This is because it is

[497] The extent and degree of this union varies between mystical authors (and interpretations thereon). For example, while Eckhart emphasizes an absolute union between God the soul in respect to a shared essence of being, a text such as the *Song of Songs* might be interpreted so as to preserve a more stringent sense of alterity between the entities being united.

through his understanding of 'being' that the rest of his theology begins to make sense. Therefore, what remains distinctive about my own claim is my insistence that the consistent current that runs through the whole of Eckhart's theology is one that originates from his ontology, and that this primary feature of his thought must be emphasized and made clear before any other creative element of his thought can be correctly understood. All things considered, what I appreciate most of all about Davies' work on Eckhart is his convincing presentation of the conceptual importance that 'union' plays in his thought. After all, this point makes it clear that Eckhart's theology is, in fact, a mystical theology. If it were not for such a convincing argument, my effort to further specify Eckhart's mystical theology as a 'mystical ontology' would be lacking in the type of affirmative and characteristically late-medieval appeal to authority that Eckhart himself would often assume in simply stating: "Hence the Philosopher … says…".[498]

Denys Turner on Eckhartian Mysticism

Denys Turner's interpretation of the theology of Meister Eckhart, as it is recorded in his book *The Darkness of God*,[499] is one that focuses almost entirely on the many unique linguistic elements of Eckhart's thought. In advance of this, he further develops this study with a special focus on Eckhart's employment of negative theology. Overall, Turner's aim is to draw a dividing line between modern and medieval forms of mysticism; a line that is defined by what he considers to be their very different approaches to mystical experience. In doing so, Turner argues that the quite subtle and conceptually sound

[498] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 68 (Commentary on Exodus, 73).
[499] Turner, Denys, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

mysticism of the medieval theologians has been both misunderstood and misappropriated in the context of modern theology, and especially as it pertains to experience. To execute his point, Turner draws on the negative and even the apophatic elements of Eckhart's thought, thus making his interpretation of Eckhartian mysticism, in large part, a distinctively linguistic one. In what follows, I will take up Turner's appeal to both the negative and the apophatic aspects of Eckhart's theology. This will be complemented with a discussion on Eckhart's meaning of the term 'detachment', and its relation to negative theology. I will then conclude with some remarks on mystical experience as it corresponds to the intellect, sensibility, and ontology.

Turner's analysis of medieval mystical theology is one that argues against what he considers to be the modern construction of mystical experience. Thus accordingly, Turner groups modern manifestations of mysticism as theologies that emphasize the role and place of experience in such a category as primary. Contrarily, he interprets the mystical thinking of medieval theologians as emphasizing, not experience per se, but instead, a discourse, as it were, pertaining mainly to how one ought to rightly conceive of God from a solely speculative perspective – thus rendering experience as merely an aside. Put more simply, rather than emphasizing what he considers to be the modern – and misinformed – emphasis on mystical experience, Turner's aim is to show that the medieval approach to mysticism was, more or less, strictly limited to demonstrating a correct understanding of God. To illustrate his point, Turner looks to a number of medieval mystics. However, for the purpose of the project at hand, his analysis of Eckhart is where this chapter must maintain its focus.

To present his point on the peculiar nature of Eckhart's didactic approach to mystical theology, Turner brings Eckhart's practice of negative theology into view. Before fully addressing the matter, however, Turner, situates his broader analysis with reference to the dual points of contact concerning the distinctively Christian proclamation of negative theology. Thus, the stage is set with Apostle Paul's speech at the Areopagus – a massive stone outcrop on the north-west slope of the Acropolis in Athens – and his subsequent conversion of a certain onlooker, Dionysius. In this event, the Christian narrative and subject matter of its approach to negative theology was born. Acts 17:16-32 recounts Paul's rhetorical praise of the Athenians for their altar ascribed to 'an unknown God'. Whereupon, Paul proceeds to use the inscription as a launching point to describe God by stating what it is that God is not. Many centuries after the actual Dionysius, the Pseudo-Dionysius made epigraphical use of the narrative's proclamation under the false guise of the convert himself. It is from this point – that is the appearance of the works of one Pseudo-Dionysius[500] – that Turner orients his study of Christian negative theology.[501] To be sure, the Dionysian corpus has had a demonstrably significant effect on Western Christianity, and Eckhart himself shows impressions of this thought in his own works.[502] For Turner, it is precisely this turn to negative theology that begins to acutely tune the medieval locutionary art of carefully training the mind to apprehend God at the ever so delicate nexus between apophatic and cataphatic thinking. To offer an example of this variety of theology, as it occurs in Eckhart, it is again helpful to turn to another

[500] Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, tran. Colm Luibheid (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), 133-141 (The Mystical Theology).
[501] Turner, *The Darkness of* God, 19-49.
[502] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 34 (Sermon 1).

conversion event; this time Paul's own, from Acts 9:8 – "Paul rose from the ground and with open eyes saw nothing"[503] – whereon Eckhart comments:

> I think this text has a fourfold sense. One is that when he rose up from the ground with open eyes he saw Nothing, and the Nothing was God; for when he saw God he calls that Nothing. The second: when he got up he saw nothing but God. The third: in all things he saw nothing but God. The fourth: when he as God, he saw all things as nothing.[504]

In this excerpt, the range in use of the term 'Nothing' serves as a compacted example of Eckhart's diverse implementation of negative theology. Reconfigured, this statement is claiming that God is a something (a universal essence), but also a nothing (not wholly reducible to any one single accident). He elaborates on this point when he continues: "He saw nothing, that is: God is a nothing and God is a something. What is something is also nothing. What God is, that He is entirely."[505] Subsequently, in shifting the context of his language, he moves to present the 'Nothing' of God by way of the Aristotelian language of accident and essence. In the same sermon, he goes on to say that: "He is an essence that contains all essence."[506] Again in adding yet another dimension to his practice of negative theology – and, subsequently, remaining thematically consistent with Acts 9 – he draws on the dichotomy between light and darkness to further demonstrate his theological message when he states: "The light that is God flows out and darkens every light. The light in which Paul saw God revealed God to him and nothing else."[507] Finally, in fusing the two approaches to negative theology, he adds: "By light he meant quite simply that with his eyes open he saw nothing. In seeing nothing, he saw the divine

[503] Ibid, 137 (Sermon 19).
[504] Ibid, 137 (Sermon 19).
[505] Ibid, 140 (Sermon 19).
[506] Ibid, 140 (Sermon 19).
[507] Ibid, 141 (Sermon 19).

Nothing."[508] Interestingly, and in very distinctive ways, Eckhart is making use of the linguistic technique of negative theology in order to communicate his idea of God's universal and indistinct, yet dazzlingly apparent and present, being.

Thus, regarding Eckhart's use of negative theology in order to describe the dialectic between God's indistinct being and the distinct being of creation, Turner rightly observes that:

> It follows from this that what marks out God's *esse* from that of creatures is, paradoxically, the utter impossibility of our saying anything at all about God's distinctness from creatures: in this alone is God distinct, that whereas one creature is distinct from another, God is not distinct from any of them. Thus, God's distinctness from creatures consists in something no creatures possess, his 'indistinctness', her not being any kind of thing, so that the distinctness of his *esse* is to be *esse indistinct*um.[509]

It is at this point that Turner is also careful not to reduce Eckhart's dialectic into a metaphysical dualism. To this end, he writes:

> Because to be God is not to be exclusive of any other kind of being; because God's *esse indistinctum* cannot be distinguished from the *esse distinctum* of the created human by any relation of displacement, so that to be the one entails not being the other; therefore, my being God, infinite, uncreated, 'nothing', cannot be exclusive of my being finite, created, a *hoc aliquid*, and *esse distinctum*.[510]

In respect to the coterminous nature of being as, at once, both distinct and indistinct, I am in complete agreement with Turner. However, his conclusion here raises an objection to his initial criticism of mystical experience as something that stands in strict contrast to speculative mysticism. In Turner's review of Eckhart, he looks to align Eckhart with his

[508] Ibid, 141 (Sermon 19).
[509] Turner, *The Darkness of God*, 164.
[510] Ibid, 165-166.

overall thesis in showing how his intellectual approach to theology was the defining feature of his mysticism as opposed to some manner of appealing to experiences. However, his attempt to keep these features of medieval and modern mysticism, respectively, in a state of opposition begins to collapse upon further consideration of his above noted analysis. That is to say, an understanding of God that accepts the above-mentioned tenets – that God is the essence of, and inextricably amidst all particular existence – will also have to accept that the event of understanding, or knowing, in this way, is also then an experience of God. In other words, for Eckhart, there are two obverse parts to his theology. This point becomes clearer when he writes: "Just as in every holy work, there are two things – the interior motive and the exterior act".[511] Bearing this reciprocal property of Eckhart's theology in mind, there are two definable moments: the first, an intellectual understanding; and, second, a manner of worldly comportment that is based upon that understanding. These remarks also shape Eckhart's conclusion as to why "God took on human nature".[512] Quite simply, the answer to this is that "'God is love'"[513] and "Nothing brings you closer to God or makes God so much your own as the sweet bond of love."[514] The question for Turner then, is: is love not an experiential event? Further, is love not something that qualifies as an experience, or is itself experienced? Clearly, it is. However, I will add that, in defense of Turner's position, for Eckhart, it is an experience that is, after all, inspired by a particular understanding of God.

Adding to this, one's experience of God in the capacity of an understanding/knowing would conveniently fall in step with the general Dominican

[511] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 42 (Commentary on Exodus, 4).
[512] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 450 (Sermon 92).
[513] Ibid, 62 (Sermon 5). This sermon is commenting specifically on 1 John 4:16: "God is love, and he who dwells in love in God, and God in him." Ibid, 62 (Sermon 5).
[514] Ibid, 60 (Sermon 4).

emphasis on the intellect. On this matter, Eckhart preaches: "Understanding is a foundation and support of all being."[515] Even so, a sensible experience of how one ought to comport oneself as a result of this understanding in one's everyday experiences would then follow accordingly. Thus Eckhart completes his thought in stating: "Love has no anchor except in understanding."[516] In this way, both the intellectual experience of God and the empirical experience of God, by way of one's everyday activities, are ontologically linked in and through one's being. In this way, Mieth is correct in emphasizing Eckhart's position that the reciprocal nature of one's understanding of God is incomplete without its actual effect, in and amidst the world.[517] Also, concerning 'knowing', Eckhart places this term in a special context regarding being and the experience of God when he preaches the following:

> The masters say being and knowing are all one, for what does not exist is not known; whatever has most being is best known. And since God has transcendent being; therefore He transcends all knowledge, as I said the day before yesterday in my last sermon, that the soul is in-formed in the highest purity, in the impress of pure essence, where she tastes God before He assumes truth or cognizability, where all naming has been dropped: *there* she knows Him most purely – there she receives being on an equal footing. … He is an indwelling in His own pure essence, where there is nothing that is contingent. Whatever is accidental must drop away. He is a pure presence in Himself, where there is neither this nor that, for whatever is in God, is God.[518]

My point here is that Eckhart combines his negative theology with a very particular kind of 'knowing',[519] and it is this 'knowing' – or this God-knowledge, so to speak – that is on equal footing with being. In this way, it is knowledge, via the intellect, that presents the

[515] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 141 (Sermon 19).
[516] Ibid, 141 (Sermon 19).
[517] Mieth, Dietmar, *Einheit im Sein und Wirken*, München: Piper, 1986.
[518] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 166-167 (Sermon 25).
[519] This 'knowing' will be compared against G.W.F. Hegel's 'Absolute Knowing' in Chapter IV.

soul with its first true experience of its own essential being that is, at the same time, actual being, capable of being experienced. Bearing the above noted objections in mind, my contention with Turner's position on his exclusionary view that medieval mysticism is speculative and modern mysticism is empirical, is that he loses sight of the way in which these two facets of the human experience are, in fact, inextricably intertwined. Therefore, it is my view that Turner is simply too radical in rejecting experience altogether. Though, to be sure, he is right to critique the level of enthusiasm that might accompany one's expression of a given mystical experience. After all, a part of Eckhart's ecclesial responsibilities as a Dominican were to curtail the growing enthusiasm for overtly ecstatic expressions of union with God.[520] Overall, Turner's critique of mystical experience does raise some important points. However, as I have shown, his error lies in taking his argument against experience simply too far. For to deny Eckhart's mysticism any reference to an actual experience of God would also be to deny Eckhart's principle of knowing God in all things also, and quite importantly, loving God in all things.

Beyond this, Turner's evaluation of Eckhart's use of language in reference to God and being takes another turn when he coins the notion of an "apophatic anthropology".[521] The apophatic (as applied to either theology, or in this case, anthropology) generally refers to a non-discursive elicitation of one's being, or being in general insofar as that being is in excess of, or transcends all linguistic and metaphysical determinations. To this end, Turner adds that: "I have argued that there really is no such thing as 'apophatic' *language* at all. For the 'apophatic' is what is achieved, whether by means of affirmative

[520] Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, 68-79.
[521] Tuner, *The Darkness of God*, 6.

or by means of negative discourse, when language *breaks down*."[522] Turner's point here is clear. But it is not entirely valid, especially insofar as the Greek word for apophasis simply means 'denial'. To that effect, apophasis certainly does exist in Eckhart's thinking; though, to be sure, in a sense that is quite apart from any sense of language breaking down. Rather, language functions in a manner that points beyond its strictly discursive capabilities in order to incite a non-discursive understanding.[523] In this way – be it apophatic theology, anthropology, or even ontology – language does not fail and 'break down', so to speak. Rather, it simply supersedes its discursive capabilities, by way of negation, and points toward that which is in excess of determinate understanding. That is to say, it points toward a non-discursive knowing that transcends determinable knowledge. In this way, language, for Eckhart, directs one's understanding and rightly orients it toward a non-discursive principle of divinity. In this sense, rather than 'breaking down', language functions in a most exceptional manner, even to the point where it describes that which is in excess of normal determinate description. In any case, and aside from this very acute disagreement, Turner's expansion of the apophatic from theology to also include anthropology is an important move in showing the indeterminate unity that is shared between God and the human person. However, I would again have to add to this that Eckhart's thinking does not stop at the human/divine relationship. Rather, it encompasses the whole of being in every possible manifestation. Therefore, and by extension, Eckhart's theology is more than an apophatic theology or an apophatic anthropology; it is, in fact, an apophatic ontology – or even better, a mystical ontology.

[522] Ibid, 150.
[523] This 'negative' element of Eckhart's thought is also characteristically Dionysian.

As something of an ancillary discussion in respect to Turner's study, I will just briefly touch on Eckhart's concept of 'detachment', insofar as it is relevant to the above noted topics of language, negative theology, and apophasis. On this special concept, Turner writes: "[d]etachment is the way of achieving that nameless, featureless depth within the self which is identical with the Godhead and which is also in another way, my own identity."[524] Doubtlessly, 'detachment' is a key concept in Eckhart's work. However, that said, the treatise titled, *On Detachment*, has a rather contentious reputation. This is because many Eckhart scholars, myself included, view this work in a spurious light. For a review of the scholarly views that, like my own, have readily criticized various popularly accepted texts in the Eckhartian corpus, see Werner Schüssler,[525] Gerhard Kreiger,[526] and Stephan Gotz.[527] Yet there are many who revere this piece and see it as quintessentially Eckhart, Markus Vinzent for one.[528] Although Vinzent makes a compelling case for this work, his own scholarly projects on Eckhart are notably on the liminal side of the guild insofar as he is tied up with the very contentious claim regarding the 're-discovery' of a number of the *Parisian Questions* that had previously been disregarded as pseudepigraphal. Unfortunately, there is not space to adequately address this more problematic branch of Eckhart's work here. Instead, I will

[524] Tuner, *The Darkness of God*, 173.
[525] Schüssler, Werner, "Gott — Sein oder Denken? Zur Problematik der Bestimmung göttlicher Wirklichkeit in den Quaestiones parisienses Meister Eckharts von 1302/03" in *Transzendenz - Zu einem Grundwort der klassischen Metaphysik: Festschrift für Klaus Kremer*, eds. Ludger Honnefelder and Werner Schüssler (München: Paderborn, 1992), 165. As noted in Vinzent: *Questions on the Attributes (of God): Four Rediscovered Parisian Questions of Meister Eckhart*, 164 (footnote: 2).
[526] Krieger, Gerhard, "Mystik und Scholastik: Zur Diskussion um Meister Eckhart im Blick auf seine Quaestiones parisienses" in *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift*, No. 107 (1998), 130–47 As noted in Vinzent: *Questions on the Attributes (of God): Four Rediscovered Parisian Questions of Meister Eckhart*, 164 (footnote: 2).
[527] Grotz, Stephan, "Meister Eckharts Pariser Quaestio I: Sein oder Nichtsein — ist das hier die Frage?" in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, No. 49 (2002), 370–98. As noted in Vinzent: *Questions on the Attributes (of God): Four Rediscovered Parisian Questions of Meister Eckhart*, 164 (footnote: 2).
[528] Vinzent, Markus, *The Art of Detachment*, Leuven: Peeters, 2011.

simply advise the reader to review the noted literature and to approach the concept of detachment and the stated treatise with a sufficient level of credulity. Moreover, insofar as Turner does not even bother to bring up the term detachment from its context as either *Abegescheidenheit* or *Gelassenheit*,[529] and only refers to it by way of related discussions, I will point out its actual occurrence from what I consider to be more reliable texts.

In Eckhart's *Talks of Instruction*,[530] one can glean a less controversial overview of his use of the term 'detachment'. It also comes up in his sermons. Although the occurrence of this term in both contexts is relatively infrequent, his employment of it in these instances is still helpful in understanding the concept of God in relation to being. For example, he instructs: "For the more detached, the more truly possessed, as the noble St. Paul says we ought to have 'as nothing, yet possessing all things' (2 Cor. 6:10). He is without possession, who does not desire or wish to have anything of himself or of all that is outside of him, or even of God or anything."[531] As a complement to this in a sermon, he writes: "But when images are detached from the soul and she sees nothing but the one alone, then the naked essence of the soul finds the naked formless essence of divine unity, which is superessential being, passive, reposing in itself."[532] In both of these instances, the basic meaning of 'detachment' is to surrender one's desire for finite things and to experience the world as a single and all-inclusive essence rather than as one metaphysical entity over and against countless others. Turner interprets 'detachment' as yet another form of negative theology in Eckhart's thinking. With this general point I

[529] For a far more comprehensive review of the concept of 'detachment' as it occurs across the complete works of Eckhart, see: Panzig, Erik A., *Gelâzenheit und abegescheidenheit: Eine Einführung in das theologische Denken des Meister Eckhart*, Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005.
[530] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 486-523 (The Talks of Instruction).
[531] Ibid, 519 (The Talks of Instruction 23).
[532] Ibid, 462 (Sermon 96).

would agree that through this term Eckhart is negating certain elements of created being in order to encounter their more essential reality of God's being therein.

To this effect, 'detachment' does play an important role in Eckhart's thinking. However, even then, the far more philosophically cogent and characteristically Eckhartian presentation of this aspect of his thinking comes in his theology of the 'poverty of Spirit'.[533] In any case, Turner brings 'detachment' into the conversation in order to support his case against the 'experientialism'[534] that, in his view, defines some of the modern forms of mysticism. In countering these more enthusiastic presentations of mysticism, Turner makes the following point concerning 'detachment' in stating that it is merely a "schemata for a possible experience"[535] and thus not an experience itself.

It has already been stated that Turner's division between modern mysticism (as he broadly conceives of it) and medieval mysticism hinges on the point of experience. In his view, the former is steeped in experience while the latter is entirely free from it. I would argue that Turner's either/or scenario fails to capture what is actually present in Eckhart's thinking. On the one hand, Eckhart does work to temper one's mystical experience by informing one as to how one might correctly understand God's being in relation to both one's own being and being in general. On the other, Eckhart beckons for experience to come and to inspire his listeners in the final and conclusive statement of the majority of his sermons. Therefore, my position is that Eckhart walks the centerline in this case. His words are instructive, and as a medieval master he worked to inform his audiences as to what he deemed to be a correct understanding of God. At the same time, as a result of his

[533] Ibid, 420-426 (Sermon 87). Incidentally, the 'Poverty of Spirit' concept also draws Eckhart's thinking into line with the *OED* definition of 'mystical theology' by way of its emphasis on 'poverty' as a form of 'self-surrender' toward God.
[534] Tuner, *The Darkness of God*, 5.
[535] Ibid, 178.

ontological conclusions regarding such an understanding, the listener would accordingly be subject and indeed welcome to a direct and immediate experience of God. In other words, Eckhart intended for his audience to come to an understanding of God that would allow for God's presence to be immediately and absolutely present in every experience (be it either intellectual or sensible) of their lives. In this way, God's being would inform one's daily mundane being in such a way that one would live at all times and under all circumstances with a knowledge of God's omnipresence. Bearing this in mind, 'detachment', as a concept, is helpful. But what this element of Eckhart's thought actually does, and what Turner neglects to emphasize, is that it instructs one as to how one ought to understand one's own being – and all of finite being – in relation to the being of God. To some extent, Turner does acknowledge the profundity of this point when he writes, in passing, that: "the crucial step, in my view, is the statement, *esse est Deus* [being is God]."[536] Clearly, Eckhart has a wide arrangement of creative elements that compose the whole of his thinking. However, in order to understand Eckhart's mystical theology, one must understand its relation to his ontology, a point to which Turner, too, even seems begrudgingly to concede. Once again, the point of this chapter is clear: for Eckhart, being is God. Eckhart's language, along with his use of negative theology and apophatic theology only serve to bolster this point. All of these, and especially the concept of 'detachment' are simply ways of arriving at one's true being in and with God. This is a mystical ontology.

[536] Ibid, 166.

Problems, Criticisms, Summary, and Conclusion

Over the course of this chapter four distinctive voices, each with a unique interpretation of Eckhart, have been evaluated. This critical engagement has been undertaken with an eye toward determining the most adequate means for classifying Eckhart's unique presentation of mystical theology. Starting with McGinn, I examined Eckhart's special use of 'the ground' as a manner of defining his theology from within his own historical context. Following this, I turned to Hollywood for her discussion on the more thematically feminine elements of Eckhart's diverse idiom. Then came an analysis of Davies' interpretation of Eckhart through the conceptual lens of 'union', especially as it relates to his notion of 'the birth of the Son in the soul'. I then concluded with an analysis of Turner's interpretation of negative theology in the works of Eckhart, and with special focus on the framework for 'detachment' as it relates to the aforementioned linguistic practice. What I have shown is that each element of Eckhart's thought that the abovementioned authors highlight is special in that it portrays one of the many important dimensions of Eckhart's oeuvre. However, what I have also argued is that none of these can be used as singular concept that will comprehensively and adequately classify the whole of his theology. Having said that, what is apparent is that each of these presentations ultimately convenes around Eckhart's sustained emphasis on universal and essential being; a being that is, fundamentally, God. It is with this in mind, that of the many distinctive elements of Eckhartian mysticism, I find the most telling and originative of them to be the statement, 'Being is God'. In other words, it is from this basic principle that all of the other formations of his thought take their shape.

Eckhart's theology is inextricably linked with ontology throughout the whole of his corpus. However, in his most thoroughgoing yet unfinished treatise, the *Three-Part Work* [*Opus Tripartitum*],[537] the statement becomes simple and clear: "Being is God" [*Esse ist Deus*].[538] On this, the Scholastic master writes:

> Being is God. This proposition is evident: first, because if being is something different from God himself, God neither exists nor is he a god. How can that be, or be something from which being is different and distinct, or to which it is foreign? Or if he is a god, in that case he exists by another, since being is different from him. Therefore God and being are identical, or God has being from another, and then he is not God himself, as was said above, but something else is before him and is the cause of his being.[539]

Richard Dobie refers to the statement 'Being is God' as Eckhart's "fundamental thesis".[540] Frank Tobin describes it as "the cornerstone of Eckhart's thinking".[541] It is true that far fewer pages of scholarship are devoted to this concept; even so, I am in full agreement with both Dobie and Tobin on this point (for the reasons noted above).[542]

The aforementioned quotation from Eckhart demonstrates his understanding of the primary and universal being of God. This claim is supported and extended to also

---

[537] For the complete text, see: Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Erster Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. and tran. Josef Koch, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1958. This edition has been revised and divided into two parts: Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Erster Band (Erster Teil) of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. and tran. Konrad Weiß, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1964.; Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Erster Band (Zweiter Teil) of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, eds. Albert Zimmermann and Loris Sturlese, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 2015.

[538] Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke* (Erster Band, 1958) 156-158 (Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum, 12).

[539] Ibid, 156-158 (Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum, 12). Text and translation quoted from: Dobie, Robert, "Meister Eckhart's 'Ontological Philosophy of Religion.'" *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (Oct., 2002), 571. Translation modified: note that for *esse*, I have replaced the original translation of 'existence' with 'being'. This is because of the general sense of being (as opposed to *ens*) that Eckhart is describing.

[540] Dobie, *Meister Eckhart's 'Ontological Philosophy of Religion*, 576.

[541] Tobin, Frank, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1986), 38.

[542] See, also: Albert, Karl, *Meister Eckharts These von Sein: Untersuchungen zur Metaphysik des Opus tripartitum*, Kastellaun: Aloys Henn Verlag, 1976.

include the being of all things in one of his Latin sermons when he preaches: "First, God is common: He is every being and the whole existence of all things ('In him, through him, and from him' [Rm. 11:36])."[543] He follows up this statement with an important qualification: "Secondly, note that whatever is common insofar as it is common is God, and whatever is not common insofar as it is not common is not God, but created."[544] Bearing this last statement in mind, one might object to the notion that all being is God's being by pointing out the distinction between the essential being of God and the accidental or created being of finite things, including the soul itself. To address this objection, one must consider the profound influence that Neo-Platonism held over scholastic theology. For example, in the following sermon Eckhart demonstrates the Neo-Platonic principle of 'emanation and return' through the language of sin and atonement. He preaches: "God is something and is a pure being, and sin is nothing and draws us away from God. … The soul is created … but all material things are created after nothing, far from God. By being poured into the body, the soul is darkened, and must together with the body be raised up again to God."[545] In this case, the soul is initially in a state of privation from God. However, in following with the Neo-Platonic structure of an emanation and return,[546] the soul then has the intellectual powers to recognize its finite being as a non-being, and to thereby understand its own true[547] being as substantiated in and through God. It is this sort of reflection on being that leads Tobin to make the following very accurate claim that: "[b]eing is not only a means of separating

[543] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 212 (Sermon VI).
[544] Ibid, 213 (Sermon VI).
[545] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 167 (Sermon 26). Perhaps it is not without coincidence that in this sermon Eckhart refers directly to Plato. Ibid, 170 (Sermon 26).
[546] Woods, Eckhart's Way, 87-92.
[547] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 68 (Commentary on Exodus, 73).

God and creatures. It also serves to show how they are one."[548] For Eckhart, it is simple: fundamentally, there is only the being of God, and all things are substantiated through the being of God. To this end, Eckhart definitively states: "God is totally existence and works in creatures through Existence itself and according to existence."[549]

To restate my point from the beginning of this section, the nature of being and its various conceptual formations play a key role in Eckhart's mystical theology. So much so that it is safe to say that all of his other idiomatic terms and phrases can be, at their base, drawn from the simple statement, 'being is God.' However, I do not believe that this single utterance either adequately and/or comprehensively describe the whole of Eckhart's thought. The truth is that Eckhart presents his mystical theology through a wide range of concepts and thematic expressions. While they might all be reducible to his first principle that 'being is God', such a reduction still fails to capture the other extraordinary elements of his thought that, altogether, make him a unique, imaginative and effective thinker. As a Parisian master and a vernacular preacher, he needed to find ways to express the highest standard of philosophical theology to audiences with far less of his training. Likewise, he needed to develop a means of channeling the vitality that was expressed through his sermons into his more measured scholastic letters. The combination of these two elements made for what appears to have been a fascinating personality; a personality that emerges from his texts in a way that, even today, presents him as a thinker who was superbly educated, yet still capable of connecting with his audience on the everyday level of their lived experiences.

[548] Tobin, *Meister Eckhart*, 39.
[549] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 148 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 23).

In short, Eckhart presents an array of concepts, terms, and phrases that all revolve around his theology of how the being of God, the being of the soul, and all being in general are fundamentally united as one, hence: "God is united and is in all things under the covering of the One, and vice versa under the One's covering and property each things grasps God. In that One God and the soul, indeed God and all things, come together."[550] It is with the above in mind that I will again forward the claim that Eckhart's theology is best described as a 'mystical ontology'. In moving from the general to the particular, Eckhart's thought was first presented as a 'mystical theology'. From this point it has now been further specified that his particular variety of mystical theology is distinctive insofar as it is a 'mystical ontology'. To review, the working definition for 'mystical theology' for this thesis has been defined as follows: "[m]ystical theology; belief in the possibility of union with or absorption into God by means of contemplation and self-surrender; belief in or devotion to the spiritual apprehension of truths inaccessible to the intellect."[551] As a modification and further specification of this definition, I have defined 'mystical ontology' as: *a belief in the possibility of union with or absorption into God by means of a correct understanding of the essence of one's own being and of the essence of being in general*. To classify Eckhartian mysticism as a 'mystical ontology' is to subsume his entire manner of theologizing and its aims under the genus of mystical theology while at the same time presenting his more specific focus

[550] Ibid 178-179 (Sermons and Lectures on Ecclesiasticus, 52-53).
[551] "mysticism, n.". *OED Online*. June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124654?redirectedFrom=mysticism& (accessed June 30, 2014).

on the universal and essential nature of God's being and its absolute and indeed analogical[552] relationship to particular and accidental being.

The most significant criticism of my position would fall on my decision to refer to Eckhart's theology as, generally, a mystical ontology. However, one must keep in mind that this, of course, has been done so as to emphasize Eckhart's crucial statement that 'being is God', while at the same time, not reducing his thought to a single creative principle from within the whole of his oeuvre. In this way, the breadth and complexity of his thought, in all of its manifestations, is given its full and deserving focus. In uniting this last point with my own presentation of Eckhart's theology as mystical ontology, it is only right to reflect on Eckhart's own words when he preaches that "… a man should become a God-seeker in all things and a God-finder at all times, in all places, in all company, and in all ways."[553] For it is the case, according to Eckhart, that God abides in all of these. Being, in this way, is God. One is directed by the words of this medieval master to understand one's mystical relationship to such a foregoing ontological principle.

Meister Eckhart's mysticism is unequivocally focused on a presentation of God that is "manifested through existence"[554] and thus only realized through an "affirmation of existence."[555] In such a manner, his thought clearly reflects the unification of the founding ideas of both a fundamental ontology and a theology. It has been my aim in this chapter to emphasize just how central this nexus is to the whole of his thinking. Part III of this thesis will build from this chapter by entering into the discussion on how the post-

[552] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 178-179 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 52-53).
[553] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 516 (The Talks of Instruction 22).
[554] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 191 (Commentary on John, 572).
[555] Ibid, 185 (Commentary on John, 556).

Kantian hermeneutical setting has prepared the ground for the philosophical revival of Eckhart's thought and demonstrate the contemporary relevancy of his claim that 'being is God'. The fourth and final part of this thesis will then present a post-Kantian interpretation of the Eckhart's mystical ontology in the interest of engaging with and constructively treating certain elements of the theological problem of secularity.

Part III

The Ontological Turn:
Post-Kantian Approaches to Eckhartian Mysticism

Chapter IV

On Mysticism and Ontology in Post-Kantian Thought: Landmarks of the Modern Philosophical Horizon

This chapter will serve as the primary support for the hermeneutical arc of this project. For this reason, it will also be the sole chapter of Part III of this thesis. The content that will be discussed has the possibility to be explored in great depth and detail. However, for the purpose of keeping to the task at hand, the philosophers that will be touched upon will be primarily exposed at the various points wherein they bring Meister Eckhart directly into their conversations. Having said that, slight deviations to this rule will occur insofar as they serve to reinforce my hermeneutically oriented argument that, in the wake of the Kantian critique of metaphysics, modern philosophy has witnessed a multitude of creative explorations of two principal philosophical elements. These two elements can be summarized under the following provocations: 1) How is it that the ontological notion of 'being' is to be understood and/or approached after Kant?; 2) In what ways has the epistemological framework of 'knowledge' and 'certainty' been altered and/or advanced after Kant?

The five sub-sections of this chapter will be structured accordingly: the first will broadly introduce certain ideas in Kantian thought that set the scene for the revived interest in mystical theology. Following this section, I will review Hegel's brief interaction with Eckhartian thinking and relate this segment to his hugely influential developments in dialectical philosophy. The third sub-subsection will, in form, be quite similar to the second. However, here I will review Heidegger's brief work on Eckhart and consequently its link to the former's phenomenological investigation of fundamental

ontology. The fourth sub-section will be a more condensed review of two contemporary philosophers who have also turned to Eckhart in order to help elucidate and/or support certain points in their thought. I have also elected to render this sub-section in a far more concentrated presentation than the previous two for the simple reason that, from a hermeneutical point of view, the respective contributions of these contemporary thinkers are nowhere near (at present) as influential in the greater stream of Western thought and tradition as both Hegel and Heidegger. Insofar as this thesis is, in a sense, taking the long view toward history, I will be prioritizing those who have demonstrated a lasting and impactful presence in the history of thought, as opposed to those who have just arrived on the scene, so to speak. Finally, the fifth sub-section will outline any problems that might have arisen over the course of the chapter and then offer a summary and conclusion of both this chapter and Part III of this thesis.

To reiterate, the central aim of this chapter is to simply present a philosophical description of the conceptual setting in which post-Kantian thought has emerged in its most definitive forms. In other words, this chapter will function with the modest aim of only cursorily sketching the landscape of the post-Kantian philosophical horizon. This aim will be supported, as it relates specifically to Eckhart, by then bringing into view the treatment of Eckhart from within modern philosophy and theology. This referential task will be executed in order to show the variety of ways in which Eckhart's thought has been drawn upon in modern thought in order to address modern philosophical issues. In addressing these points, and others, I will ultimately argue that: *the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart has the unique potential to occupy a distinctive location within the horizon of post-Kantian thought; a location that can function in hermeneutically*

orienting both the articulation and development of various conclusions concerning ontology and epistemology. This chapter will contribute to (and in effect, constitute) Part III of this thesis by presenting a selection of the hermeneutical conditions that have been ensconced in post-Kantian thought. Put more simply, this chapter will offer a basic orientation to the philosophical horizon under review. Further, it will explore how it is that such a horizon has set the condition that has made a modern retrieval of Eckhart both relevant and intriguing. As a part to the whole, then, this chapter will contribute to this thesis by showing how it is that Eckhartian mystical ontology can be interpreted and applied within said horizon in order to effectively engage his mystical ontology with certain elements of secularity.

Mysticism and Post-Kantian Thought

In the opening lines of the preface to the first edition (1781) of the *Critique of Pure Reason*,[556] Kant eloquently sets the tone for the project that would follow – in respect to his critical works and the variety of philosophy that would ensue in the wake of these works – when he writes: "[h]uman reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason."[557] Take for example, the metaphysical idea of "God"[558] (i.e., "the highest rational concept of a being of all beings"[559]). For Kant, the

[556] Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
[557] Ibid, 99 (A vii).
[558] Ibid, 408 (B 395).
[559] Ibid, 406 (A 335-336 / B 392-292).

idea of God is a necessary metaphysical conclusion insofar as it provides the theoretical foundation for the possibility of all beings and existence in general. However, he admits that no "objective deduction"[560] of the real existence of the idea of God is possible.[561] This is because the idea of God, as such, cannot be shown to have real objective existence. In other words, God is an idea – a mere thought "without content".[562] This problematic also extends to the other constituent ideas of reason: that is to say, the "thinking subject"[563] (in other words, "the soul"[564]) and "the series of conditions of appearance"[565] (that is to say, "the world"[566]). To reiterate, the issue at hand for metaphysics is that reason naturally formulates and points to these foundational ideas, but it cannot prove, with any apodictic certainty, that they have real objective existence.

The result of the inability to deduce an objective connection between ideas and existence forms the basis for Kant's skepticism regarding the genuine authority of speculative philosophy as a whole. Indeed he begins to articulate the point that metaphysics, as such, is far more a matter of how one comes to understand and conceptualize an object, as opposed to how that object is in and of its own accord. This observation results in the classification of all objects in general into two modes: phenomena and noumena. To put this into more familiar language, a noumenon refers to an "object in itself"[567] while a phenomenon is the "representation" [568] of such an object to

[560] Ibid, 406 (A 336 / B 393).
[561] Ibid, 406 (A336 / B 393).
[562] Ibid, 193 (A 51 / B 75).
[563] Ibid, 406 (A 334 / B 491).
[564] Ibid, 408 (B 395).
[565] Ibid, 406 (A 334 / B 491).
[566] Ibid, 408 (B 395).
[567] Ibid, 360 (B 306-307).
[568] Ibid, 360 (B 306-307).

the thinking subject as a "determinate concept".[569] In other words, an object exists independently from any ideal projections and/or conceptual determinations; it exists in-itself. However, when encountered by the thinking subject, the subject then, and as a mode of apperception, renders that object into a determinable concept in and through the synthetic operation of how it is that it comes to understand any given object. In this way, Kant ventures to show that metaphysics tell the philosopher far more about how it is that the mind itself operates and understands objects from an ideal perspective than about the real modality of objects, as they exist in themselves.[570]

Interestingly, it is the latter designation of objects as 'things in themselves', and pure reason's prohibition from accessing objects as such that serves as the foregoing challenge to philosophy after Kant (see below). This dilemma of reason is succinctly announced in Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*[571] (1783): "[n]ow, since the transcendental Ideas have made it necessary to approach them and thus have led us, as it were, to the spot where the occupied space (namely experience) touches the void (that of which we can know nothing, namely, *noumena*), we can determine the bounds of reason."[572] To be sure, the 'noumenon' or 'thing in itself' was actually a life-long fascination for Kant. For example, in one of his pre-critical works, *The Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755),[573] Kant writes: "[i]n universal stillness of nature and the tranquility of the mind, the immortal soul's hidden capacity to know speaks an unnamable language and provides inchoate ideas which are certainly felt but

[569] Ibid, 360 (B 307).
[570] See: Ibid, 149 (A 11-12 / B 24-26).
[571] Kant, Immanuel, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, ed. Lewis Beck, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1950.
[572] Ibid, 102-103 (§57; 353-355)
[573] Kant, Immanuel, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, tran. Ian Johnston, Arlington: Richer Resources Publications, 2008.

are incapable of being described."[574] Kantian philosophy prior to 1781 had a vastly different tone than what one is sure to draw from the 'Critiques'. Even so, I have elected to highlight this early work in order to demonstrate the presence of this variety of thought as a constant matter of consideration over the course of his entire body of work. As an example of his far more critical tone – that is representative of his later works – when referencing this subject matter, one need not to look any further than an essay that he published in the *Berlinische Monatschrift* in May of 1796 titled *On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy*.[575]

This essay embodies Kant's frustration with the new direction of philosophy. To put this into context, he is very much opposed to the rise in the popularity of Romanticism and the supposed superiority with which such philosophers carry themselves and cast their thoughts. On this matter, he writes:

> The principle of wanting to philosophize under the influence of higher *feeling* is, among all principles, the one best suited to produce a superior tone. … Long live philosophy drawn from feelings, a philosophy that leads us directly to the things themselves! Away with rational argumentation from concepts, which searches for things only through the detour of universal characteristics and which, before it even has the material that it can grasp immediately, demands determinate forms to which it can attribute that material![576]

At another point in the same essay, he embattles the "new mystical-Platonic language"[577] of the times. Relating this to his own theory of transcendental ideas, he proclaims:

---

[574] Ibid, 146.
[575] Kant, Immanuel, "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy" in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, ed. and tran. Peter Fenves (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 51-81.
[576] Ibid, 58 (395).
[577] Ibid, 63 (398).

> For intimation is obscure preexpectation and contains the hope of a disclosure that is only possible in tasks of reason solved with concepts; if, therefore, those intimations are transcendent and can lead to no proper *cognition* of the object, they must necessarily promise a surrogate of cognition, supernatural communication (mystical illumination), which is then the death of all philosophy.[578]

Kant considered those who were spreading and teaching such philosophies to be 'mystagogues'.[579] In other words, those who:

> In a word: all think themselves superior to the degree that they believe themselves exempt from work; and, following this principle, matters have recently gone so far that a purported philosophy announces itself openly and without an effort at concealment; in this philosophy one need not work but only listen to and enjoy the oracle within oneself in order to bring all the wisdom envisioned with philosophy into one's possession: and this announcement is indeed made in a tone indicating in the same class as those who, in a scholarly manner, consider themselves obligated to progress slowly and carefully from the critique of their faculty of knowledge to dogmatic knowledge.[580]

What is interesting about the style of philosophizing that Kant is here so severely deriding is that it is one that he himself helped to propagate by articulating the theoretical conditions for its creation. A clear example of this is in the statement from Kant that began this sub-section: "[h]uman reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason."[581] For many who were to follow in the path of Kant, the temptation to resolve those transcendental problems was simply too great. For better or for worse, the attempts to do so are nearly definitive of what can now be

[578] Ibid, 62 (398).
[579] Ibid, 63 (398).
[580] Ibid, 52 (390).
[581] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 99 (A vii).

considered to be post-Kantian philosophy. Indeed, the intellectual horizon of post-Kantian thought took its mission and form from the following statement: "[a]nd now to the things themselves!"[582]

In what follows, I will discuss a number of highly influential post-Kantian thinkers. I will do so with special attention to their engagements with Eckhart and how it is that such engagements, coupled with their unique approaches to philosophy, have illuminated aspects of knowledge and the essence of being in respect to 'things themselves' that have, first, provided the conditions for a renewed relevancy of Eckhart's thought, and, second, worked to shape the landscape of the modern philosophical horizon.

G.W.F. Hegel and Eckhartian Mysticism: On the Hermeneutical Influence of Dialectics

After Kant, there emerged a movement in European philosophy which made great effort to resolve the problematic of pure reason's inability to divulge any kind of truth outside of its own ideal mechanization. Kant, indeed, was aware of dialectical reason as an alternative to pure reason. However, his acknowledgement of it comes primarily in the form of complete derision. In reference to its use among the ancients, he refers to it simply as the "logic of illusion".[583] G.W.F Hegel, on the other hand, entirely disagreed with his predecessor's estimation of this variety of logic. In fact, as he understood it, dialectical reason directed an alternative path toward knowledge in a way that pure reason could never attain. In fact, Hegel understood dialectics to be the formal structure

[582] Kant, *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, 53 (390).
[583] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 198 (A 61 / B 86).

of all knowledge and even its possibility. For example, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*[584] (1807), he writes: "[c]onsciousness simultaneously *distinguishes* itself from something, and at the same time *relates* itself to itself to it, or, as it is said, this next something exists *for* consciousness; and the determinate aspect of this *relating*, or of the *being* of something for a consciousness, is *knowing*."[585] In other words, while pure reason, according to Kant, designates an ontological separation between the thinking subject and any given object (of the world), dialectical reason, according to Hegel, demonstrates their necessary relation and ontological unity. This is made clear when he writes of the subject's desire that "[i]t does not aim at the destruction of objective being in its entirety, but only at the form of its otherness or its independence, which is a show devoid of essence; for it holds this objectivity to be *in principle* the same essence as itself, or its selfhood."[586] Hegel's modern approach to dialectical reason offered, to his mind, a resolution to the problems regarding the correspondence of knowledge to real being that were outlined in Kant's first *Critique*.[587]

An ontological reconciliation between the thinking subject and any object (or the world) is just the initial step for Hegel. For he wants to ultimately show that the thinking subject and the world are intended to also be reconciled, in respect to their essence, to God. To this end he explains: "[i]t is the *actual* 'I', the universal knowledge of *itself* in its *absolute opposite* … it is God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge."[588] Conclusions such as this begin to take on a mystical

[584] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, tran. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
[585] Ibid 52 (82).
[586] Ibid, 218 (361).
[587] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Hegel's Logic*, tran. William Wallace, Part One of *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 67-68 (§41 (2)).
[588] Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 409 (671).

tonality, as it were. Surely Hegel himself recognizes this and even embraces it. This is evident when he notes: "[f]or the mystical is not concealment of a secret, or ignorance, but consists in the self-knowing itself to be one with divine Being and that this, therefore, is revealed."[589] Interestingly, Hegel not only incorporated mysticism and mystical principles into his philosophy, but he also actually began to identify himself as a mystic.[590]

Hegel's entire body of work bears witness to his interest in mysticism. However, this is, by far and away, most completely represented in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* that were delivered in Berlin at various points between 1821 and 1831. In these lectures, Hegel's affinity for mysticism is laid bare. He regularly makes reference to mysticism and, in most cases, in direct relation to his own line of thinking. A full presentation of Hegel's proclivity toward mystical theology cannot be offered here. For now, I can only exhibit the essential pieces that will direct this chapter toward Hegel's encounter with Eckhartian thought. In his 1827 lecture, titled *The Consummate Religion*,[591] Hegel makes his adaptation of mystical theology to his philosophy unmistakable when he writes: "[t]he subsistence of the community is completed by sharing in the appropriation of God's presence [i.e., the *communion*]. It is a question precisely of the conscious presence of God, of unity with God, the *unio mystica*, [one's] self-feeling of God, the feeling of God's immediate presence within the subject." Again, this reference to mysticism is just one example among so many more. All of this is

[589] Ibid, 437 (722).
[590] Mikulová, *Liber Acadamiæ Kierkegaardeniensis*, 83.
[591] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *The Consummate Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, J. M. Steward, and H. S. Harris, vol. III of *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter Hodgson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

simply to show that it would be entirely false to claim any kind of opposition to the fact that Hegel held a deep appreciation for mystical theology.[592]

To further evidence this point, I will now recall Hegel's well-known exchange with Franz von Baader on the topic of Meister Eckhart. In a collection of notes on Hegel by his contemporaries,[593] Baader reports the following: "I was very often together with Hegel in Berlin [in the Winter of 1823/1824]. At times I would read to him from Meister Eckart [*sic*] whom he only knew by name. He was so excited that the following day he held an entire lecture on Eckart in front of me and in the end even said: 'There, indeed, we have what we want.'"[594] Baader's report is validated by Hegel's comment in his 1824 lecture, titled *The Concept of Religion*, when he states:

> Meister Eckhart, a Dominican monk of the fourteenth century, says in the course of one of his sermons on the inner life, 'The eye with which God sees me is the eye with which I see him; my eye and his eye are one and the same. In righteousness I am weighed in God and he in me. If God did not exist nor would I; if I did not exist nor would he. But there is no need to know this, for there are things that are easily misunderstood (and that can be grasped only in the concept).'[595]

As it happens, Hegel's quotation from Eckhart is actually patched together from several sermons. However, the core of the quoted material appears to have been adapted from Eckhart's sermon where he is recorded to have stated: "The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me: my eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing,

[592] See, especially: Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, J. M. Steward, and H. S. Harris, vol. I of *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 84 (3-4).
[593] Nicolin, Günther, *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1970. See, also: Hegel, *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, 347 (footnote: 166).
[594] Nicolin, *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*, 261 (397. Franz v. Baader). My translation.
[595] Hegel, *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, 347-348 (248).

one knowing and one love."[596] Doubtlessly, there are significant parallels between Hegelian philosophy and Eckhartian mystical theology. Moreover, this nearly haphazard statement from Hegel's lectures actually captures these similarities in a rather striking manner. At once, and in agreement with commentators such as Glenn Alexander Magee[597] and Cyril O'Regan,[598] Hegel's interpretation of Eckhart highlights the former's unique brand of dialectical philosophy, ontology, and his theory of knowledge. For example, concerning dialectics, the formal relationship of opposition is exemplified when he notes: "If God did not exist, nor would I; if I did not exist nor would he."[599] Then, concerning ontological unity, this is evidenced by his agreement that: "[t]he eye with which God sees me is the eye with which I see him; my eye and his eye are one and the same."[600] Finally, concerning a theory of knowledge that supersedes pure reason and is realized in the concept/notion [*Begriff*]: "[b]ut there is no need to know this, for there are things that are easily misunderstood (and that can be grasped only in the concept)."[601] In reflecting these elements of Hegel's system onto Eckhartian mysticism, there is surely an uncommon symmetry. For example, these three elements of thought are brought out once again at many points throughout Eckhart's Latin commentaries. Consider, for example, the following constellation of thoughts: "God's nature is intellect, and for him existence is understanding."[602] While at the same time: "All knowledge of things is through and in

[596] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 298 (Sermon 57). See, also: Hegel, *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, 348 (footnote: 167).
[597] Magee, Glenn Alexander, "Hegel and Mysticism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 271.
[598] O'Regan, Cyril, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 249-263.
[599] Hegel, *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, 347-348 (248).
[600] Ibid, 347 (248).
[601] Ibid, 348 (248).
[602] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 86 (Commentary on the Book of Genesis, 11).

their principles, and until knowledge is reduced to its principles it is always obscure, dark, and covered, because it is not sure knowledge."[603] Finally:

> The Philosopher [Aristotle] says that not only in things that are separate from matter is the intellective power the same as the intelligible object, but even in corporeal beings the sense faculty and sense object are identical. For even though the sense object does not give existence to the eye insofar as it is an eye or a being, and the eye does not give existence to the sense object insofar as it has being (for in this respect the sense faculty and sense object are two), nevertheless, insofar as they are in act as the eye seeing and the object being seen, they are still one. In one and the same act they are the eye seeing and the object being seen."

Just as the intellective act serves to realize the unity between the individual and God in Eckhart, Hegel too directs his argumentation in support of consciousness as a form and basis of, at once, divine being and human knowledge, hence: "our consciousness has immediate knowledge of God, that we have an absolutely certain knowledge of God's being. … What it maintains is not simply that consciousness of God is conjoined with self-consciousness, but rather that the relationship to God is only and exclusively immediate."[604]

I have taken some care to point out the similarities that are present between Hegel and Eckhart. My aim in doing so is not to suggest that they run absolutely parallel in regard to the respective philosophies. There are, in fact, very important differences, not the least of which is Hegel's teleological view of history as a whole,[605] a point that is more clearly drawn into the context of religion by Peter C. Hodgson.[606] Indeed, this is

[603] Ibid, 128 (Commentary on John, 20).
[604] Hegel, *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, 161 (71).
[605] See: Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *The Philosophy of History*, tran. J. Sibree, Mineola: Dover Publishing, INC., 1956.
[606] Hodgson, Peter C., *Hegel & Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 238.

something that is not at all present in Eckhart. In this case, my aim, as stated above, is rather more hermeneutic.[607] That is to say, by drawing these parallels, I am working to show how it is that the post-Kantian philosophical landscape opened itself up for fruitful engagements with Eckhart's medieval thought. For Hegel, this is simple; dialectics, ontology, and his particular theory of knowledge make it clear that, with Eckhart: '[t]here, indeed, we have what we want.'"[608]

Martin Heidegger and Eckhartian Mysticism: On the Hermeneutical Influence of Phenomenology

Martin Heidegger was a great admirer of Hegel, and he too shared some of Hegel's sentiments about the "holy"[609] nature of and endeavor that is philosophy – a perspective on Heidegger's thought that is also shared by John Macquarrie,[610] Jeff Owen Prodhomme,[611] Sonya Sikka,[612] and John D. Caputo.[613] Though to be sure, Heidegger was, in all respects, far less forthright than Hegel about matters of theology, and at other times, even seemed, as Laurence Paul Hemming[614] and Peter S. Dillard[615] argue, to entirely reject them. In any case, the pairing of Heideggerian thought with mystical theology has become something of a common practice. As it concerns Eckhart, the most

[607] See, especially: Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 284-287 (Sermon 24).
[608] Nicolin, *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*, 261 (397. Franz v. Baader).
[609] Heidegger, Martin, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 42 [60-61].
[610] Macquarrie, John, *Heidegger and Christianity*, London: SCM Press LTD, 1994.
[611] Prodhomme, Jeff Owen, *Heidegger's Relation to Theology*, New York: Humanity Books, 1997.
[612] Sikka, Sonya, *Forms of Transcendence: Heidegger and Medieval Mystical Theology*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
[613] Caputo, John D., "Heidegger and theology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 326-344.
[614] Hemming, Laurence Paul, *Heidegger's Atheism*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.
[615] Dillard, Peter S., *Heidegger and Philosophical Atheology*, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008.

developed work in this area comes from John D. Caputo.[616] While Caputo and I overlap in our thinking at many points, one element that will distinguish my contribution here from his is my engagement with a text titled *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* [*Gesamtausgabe, Band 60: Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*].[617] Further to this, unlike many commentators who have elected to focus on Heidegger's later writings for the purpose of extracting mystical tonalities and points of reference, such as John D. Caputo,[618] James M. Robinson,[619] John B. Cobb, Jr.,[620] and George Pattison,[621] I will, here be focusing on, for the most part, his earlier works.

Being and Time[622] (1927) announced that ontology ought to be the primary task of all philosophy. Heidegger's aim with this work was to expose the essence of existence itself. In what follows I will underscore this point and its various elaborations within *Being and Time*. The focus of this effort will be to demonstrate Heidegger's impact on the hermeneutical landscape of modern philosophy, and more specifically, to show how it is that ontology has come, once again, to the fore of philosophical and theological enquiry. Consider, for example, Heidegger's position that Being is at once particular and universal:

---

[616] Caputo, John D., *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1986.
[617] Heidegger, Martin, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
[618] Caputo, John D., "Meister Eckhart and the Later Heidegger: The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought Part One" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (October 1974), 479-494. Caputo, John D., "Meister Eckhart and the Later Heidegger: The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought Part Two" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (January 1975), 61-80.
[619] Robinson, James, M., "The German Discussion of the Later Heidegger" in *The Later Heidegger and Theology*, eds. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963), 3-76.
[620] Cobb, John B., Jr., "Is the Later Heidegger Relevant for Theology?" in *The Later Heidegger and Theology*, eds. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963), 177-197.
[621] Pattison, George, *The Late Heidegger* (Routledge: New York, 2000), 195-205.
[622] Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1962.

> Being, as the basic theme of philosophy, is no class or genus of entities; yet it pertains to every entity. Its 'universality' is to be sought higher up. Being and the structure of Being lie beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess. Being is the *trancendens pure and simple*. And the transcendence of Dasein's Being is distinctive in that it implies the possibility and the necessity of the most radical *individuation*. Every disclosure of Being as the *transcendens* is *transcendental* knowledge, *Phenomenological truth* (*the disclosedness of Being*) *is veritas transcendentalis*. [623]

This means that on the one hand, there are particular beings, for example, Dasein, that are individualized entities as such: "Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it."[624] While on the other hand, Being is a universal principal that ultimately substantiates, yet transcends all things: "[t]he Being of entities 'is' not itself an entity."[625] In this way, it can be more simply understood that all particular beings have Being as their essence insofar as they exist. In support of this point, Heidegger writes that: "*[t]he 'essence' of Dasein lies in its existence*."[626] Thus: "[t]he task of ontology is to explain Being itself and to make the Being of entities stand out in full relief."[627] The question concerning Eckhart then arises; how would this relate to his fundamental statement: "Being is God"[628]? Further, what would Being, conceived as such, mean for an individual Dasein who is tasked with interpreting his or her Being in light of such a "*veritas transcendentalis*"[629]? I will take up this question as this chapter unfolds.

---

[623] Ibid, 62, ¶ 7 (38). For the remainder of my discussion on Heidegger, I will make use of the Macquarrie/Robinson convention (reflecting, of course, the original German) of capitalizing 'Being' in its use as a substantive and in reference to its universal structure.
[624] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 32, ¶ 4, (12).
[625] Ibid, 26, ¶ 2. (6).
[626] Ibid, 67, ¶ 9 (42).
[627] Ibid, 49, ¶ 7 (27).
[628] Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke* (Erster Band, 1958), 156 (Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum, 12).
[629] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 62, ¶ 7 (38)

However, for now, it must simply be bracketed in accordance with the phenomenological convention that is the fate of all metaphysical questions[630] – the epoché [*ἐποχή*].

For Heidegger, phenomenology is, effectively, fundamental ontology, and thus in a 'newly arisen superior tone', he states: "'phenomenology' expresses a maxim which can be formulated as '[t]o the things themselves!'"[631] He supports this claim by arguing that "'Being is of all concepts the one that is self-evident. Whenever one cognizes anything or makes an assertion, whenever one comports oneself towards entities, some use is made of 'Being'"[632] Despite, however, the universal spread of Being in all of its functions and capacities, the sense of Being that is more important for Heidegger is in respect to the special entity for whom Being itself is an issue;[633] the entity that is 'Dasein':

> Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity–the inquirer–transparent in his own Being. The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of *Being*; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about–namely, Being. This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of its possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term "Dasein".[634]

With the above noted quotations in mind concerning both the individual and the transcendental qualities of Being, and the former's call to understand itself in respect to the latter, there should be little surprise that Eckhart is brought into this conversation as a partner in dialogue. For example, in a German sermon, Eckhart preaches: "What is life? God's being is my life. If my life is God's being, then God's essence must be my essence,

[630] Ibid, 77 ¶ 11 (52).
[631] Ibid, 50, ¶ 7 (27-28).
[632] Ibid, 23, ¶ 1 (4).
[633] Ibid, 68, ¶ 9 (42).
[634] Ibid, 27, ¶ 2 (7).

and God's self-identity my self-identity, neither more nor less."[635] This is especially the case because, like Heidegger's transcendental Being,[636] Eckhart too, in the same sermon holds that: "God's being is like nothing: in it is neither image nor form."[637] In other words, for both Eckhart and Heidegger, Being is, at once, both universal and particular.

For the most part, Heidegger's relationship to both Eckhart and mysticism is one that is illustrated by relation, and not direct reference. However, I have elected to bring Heidegger's direct commentary on Eckhart into this chapter for the simple reason that I want to highlight his critical assessment of certain elements of Eckhart's thought. Despite the fact that these are direct comments on Eckhart, there is still one problem: they are nothing more than a scant smattering of notes for a lecture that was never delivered. Thus I will have to withhold my judgments, to some extent, concerning Heidegger's familiarity with Eckhartian thought.

To begin, Heidegger's piece, titled *Irrationality in Meister Eckhart*[638] (1919), develops the topic of 'irrationality' by defining it as follows:

> The irrational is not what lies before all rationality as the fullness of multiplicity. The decisive moment is not the lacking overview, or theoretical indomitability, of sinking into fullness, but rather–because the object [*das Gegenständliche*] is approached in the essence or the form as the general or the universal, the value of objecthood [*Gegenständlichkeit*] increases with the increase of the general–the ever-expanding exclusion of particularizations from the form, out of the magnified emptiness of the same.[639]

[635] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 330 (Sermon 65).
[636] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 62, ¶ 7 (38).
[637] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 330 (Sermon 65).
[638] Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 239-241.
[639] Ibid, 239-240.

This rather opaque comment gains some clarity once it is put into context as a critique of Eckhart: "[n]ow it is strange that in as extreme a realism as that of Eckhart, a progression to the subject is found. The motive is not a theoretical one, just as the return to the ground of the soul in general may not be grasped as a theoretical process. It remains atheoretical– only Eckhart seeks to grasp it rationally and thus places it into theoretical contexts."[640] Reading these excerpts together, it becomes easier to piece together Heidegger's critical attitude toward Eckhart's theoretical – subject/object – language and metaphysical thinking. Granted, Heidegger is forthright in noting "the predominance of the theoretical"[641] in "medieval Scholasticism".[642] Nevertheless, he is quite critical of this approach and, to be sure, favors instead "[p]henomenological research into religious consciousness";[643] in other words, for Heidegger, "religious experience is not theoretical."[644]

Having made that point, Heidegger goes on to elaborate more on his reading of Eckhart, which he interprets as theoretical. However, due to Eckhart's object, which Heidegger calls the "primordial object"[645] or "the absolute",[646] a certain space for enquiry is made on a new level of the theoretical: the "mystical-theoretical".[647] Because Eckhart's subject/object theology does not refer to just any determinate object, as such, the "[a]bsoluteness of the object and subject"[648] and their "radical unity"[649] allows for "some

[640] Ibid, 240.
[641] Ibid, 238.
[642] Ibid, 238.
[643] Ibid, 231.
[644] Ibid, 236.
[645] Ibid, 241.
[646] Ibid, 241.
[647] Ibid, 241.
[648] Ibid, 240.
[649] Ibid, 240.

kind of loosening up of the subject-sphere."[650] This can be summarized by noting that Heidegger's reading of Eckhart brings into view the latter's subject/object metaphysics as something that goes beyond normal theoretical strictures and is thus better presented as being "mystical-theoretically"[651] conceived. In any case, it is not clear whether or not Heidegger approves of Eckhartian theology in this respect, and in relation to the task of phenomenology, as it was noted above. That said, Heidegger's concluding comments seem to attempt some reconciliation between what he understands as "Experience ('life') [*Erlebnis* ('*Leben*')]"[652] and "Theory of the experience (mystical theology) and its theoretical metaphysical utilization (religious, mystical world-view)".[653] In other words, the "mystical-theoretical meaning"[654] that he sees as characteristic of Eckhart's scholastic prose presents a theory that effectively redirects the course of its theoretical foundation and structure to arrive back at a "phenomenological understanding".[655] This happens, for example, in Eckhart, as Heidegger would have it, when the latter writes: "[t]he form of objecthood in general becomes an absolute object [*Gegenstand*]. The less the object [*Gegenständliche*] presents distracting content, stimulating a diverting and captivating apprehension, the more valuable and pure the objecthood itself becomes."[656]

The patchwork style of the above paragraph is, for better or worse, largely representative of the state in which Heidegger's notes were left and ultimately published in the sixtieth volume of his *Gesamtausgabe*. However, despite their appearance and their notable incongruities, there is still much to be garnered from this text. Heidegger was

[650] Ibid, 238.
[651] Ibid, 241.
[652] Ibid, 231.
[653] Ibid, 231.
[654] Ibid, 241.
[655] Ibid, 231.
[656] Ibid, 241.

searching for a history, a context, and a series of philosophical and theological reference points wherefrom he could define, develop, and deliver his ruminations on 'the phenomenology of religious life'. While this text might seem trite in comparison with *Being and Time*, it surely, and quite importantly indicates that Heidegger's phenomenological approach to ontology was pregnant with the possibility of being extrapolated into a rich and evocative "Phenomenology of Religion".[657] Quite unsurprisingly, Eckhart was among those who were handpicked by Heidegger for the announcement of such a project.

Michel Henry, Jacques Derrida and Eckhartian Mysticism: On the Hermeneutical Influence of Contemporary Philosophy and Theology

Over the course of this subsection, I will briefly discuss contributions from Michel Henry and Jacques Derrida as they relate to Eckhart. The limited space that I have for each subsection of this chapter will be even further reduced in the following analysis. This is in no way reflective of the significance and depth of these engagements with Eckhart. The reason for this is, simply, more methodological. That is to say, as of now, Henry and Derrida have obviously exerted nowhere near the same degree of influence on Western thought that Hegel and Heidegger have. Therefore, while the engagements with Eckhart that will be noted from Henry and Derrida might be lengthier, their place in the history of philosophy, as significantly influential figures of the modern hermeneutic horizon, has yet to be determined.

[657] Ibid, 1.

Michel Henry's *The Essence of Manifestation*[658] (1963) was clear in drawing parallels between his emerging phenomenology and Eckhart's medieval theology. For example, he writes: "[a]ctually speaking, this understanding is hardly ever encountered in history unless, however, it is found in an exceptional thinker who they used to call, and with good reason, a master: Eckhart."[659] Henry summarizes Eckhart's project as aiming "to make the absolute manifest".[660] In other words, "*existence means manifestation*"[661] and with a view that "*the immanent existence of the absolute is the essence of all possible existence in general*."[662] Henry parallels this point with the theological language of Eckhart, when he writes: "*the existential union of man with God is possible only on the foundation of their ontological unity*. Such is precisely the teaching of Eckhart".[663] To be sure, the recognition of the absolute as manifest in the immanent world is key for Henry. In fact, he argues, the problem for much of philosophy has been that "[i]mmanence has been defined by reference to transcendence and through the exclusion of the latter from its internal structure."[664] Henry wants to establish an understanding of 'transcendence' as the 'essence' of the "totality"[665] which "constitutes an absolutely universal structure".[666] This notion is repeated at several critical points,[667] and with varying degrees of clarity.

In another instance, Henry correlates his philosophical language with Eckhart's theological concepts when he writes that "the absolute … allows itself to be understood

[658] Henry, Michel, *The Essence of Manifestation*, tran. Girard Etzkorn, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973.
[659] Ibid, 309 (383).
[660] Ibid, 309 (383).
[661] Ibid, 303 (377).
[662] Ibid, 307 (382-383).
[663] Ibid, 309 (383).
[664] Ibid, 281 (350).
[665] Ibid, 286 (357).
[666] Ibid, 285 (355).
[667] Ibid, 286-287 (357).

without equivocation as immanence."[668] Further: "[t]hat which constitutes the nature and the foundation of essence is consistently thought of throughout the work of Eckhart in the light of this fundamental ontological concept."[669] Henry's language is, at this early stage in his writing, unfortunately, rather tautological. Thus I would like to offer a simple summary of his points for some direction and clarification: Henry holds that immanence and transcendence are not in opposition, but are, in fact, coterminous. His aim is that the soul becomes able to recognize this ontological fact of existence. In doing so, the soul will recognize himself or herself as a worldly manifestation of the transcendent essence of the totality of being. For Eckhart, this would constitute a fully realized union between the soul and God. For Henry, this would constitute a fully realized union[670] between immanence and transcendence. As it happens, Henry reckons Eckhart to be a theological predecessor to this variety of phenomenological philosophy. This claim looks particularly astute when read alongside Eckhart's Commentary on John, in which he writes: "the Father is shown when God is manifested through essence."[671] This manifestation is that which, in turn, gives the Father its self-same "existence as the Son"[672] in and amidst the immanent world.

The echoes that sound between Henry and Eckhart are indeed numerous. That being said, the more concentrated point for this thesis is that Henry has accomplished two things for the modern hermeneutic reception of Eckhart: first, he has demonstrated that Eckhart's theological language can, in a sense, be reconfigured so as to fit the language of philosophy and achieve the same (or a very similar) meaning – a point that Eckhart,

[668] Ibid, 324 (404).
[669] Ibid, 324 (404).
[670] Ibid, 318 (396).
[671] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 191 (Commentary on John, 572).
[672] Ibid, 190 (Commentary on John, 569).

himself observes in stating: "This is most clear if in place of the word 'God' we use the word 'existence'. God is existence."[673] Secondly, that Henry's central philosophical thesis centers on the overlap between immanence and transcendence as opposed to their opposition has opened contemporary philosophy up to this way of thinking – a way of thinking that, as Henry was clear to say, was previously articulated by "an exceptional thinker whom they used to call, and with good reason, a master: Eckhart."[674]

The next major bridge to unite Eckhart with contemporary philosophy was one that was set in place by Jacques Derrida in his 1987 essay titled *How to Avoid Speaking: Denials*.[675] In this essay, Derrida asks the very important question: "how is it possible to avoid speaking about negative theology?"[676] In doing so, he joins a host of other thinkers and scholars, such as Michael Sells,[677] Bruce Milem,[678] Cyprian Smith,[679] Oliver Davies,[680] Denys Turner,[681] and Tamar Tsopurashvili[682] who have also addressed this seemingly paradoxical task as it refers, specifically, to the works of Eckhart. With this in mind, at the outset of his essay, Derrida presents negative theology in the following manner:

---

[673] Ibid, 166 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 144).
[674] Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, 309 (385).
[675] Derrida, Jacques, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, tran. Ken Frieden (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 73.
[675] Ibid, 73-142.
[676] Ibid, 82.
[677] Sells, Michael A., *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.
[678] Milem, Bruce, *The Unspoken Word: Negative Theology In Meister Eckhart's German Sermons*, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002.
[679] Smith, Cyprian, *The Way of Paradox: Spiritual Life as Taught by Meister Eckhart*, London: Longman and Todd Ltd, 2004.
[680] Davies, Oliver, "Soundings: towards a theological poetics of silence" in *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, eds. Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 201-222.
[681] Turner, Denys, "Apophaticism, idolatry and the claims of reason" in *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, eds. Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11-34.
[682] Tsopurashvili, Tamar, "The Theory of Transcendentals in Meister Eckhart" in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, ed. Jeremiah M. Hacket, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 185-204.

> '[N]egative theology' has come to designate a certain typical attitude toward language, and within it, in the act of definition or attribution, an attitude toward semantic or conceptual determination. Suppose, by a provisional hypothesis, that negative theology consists of considering that every predictive language is inadequate to the essence, in truth to the hyperessentiality (the being beyond God) of God; consequently, only a negative ('apophatic') attribution can claim to approach God, and to prepare us for a silent intuition of God.[683]

Derrida's aim in writing this essay is one of case and example. He is not writing a theology, per se. Nor is he defending the real existence of God. His claims have more to do with grammatology, as it were, as it pertains to the layers of language and the conveyance of meanings. For example, in the context of negative theology, he writes of language that "[i]n the same word and in the same syntax it transmutes into affirmation its purely phenomenal negativity, which ordinary language, riveted to finitude, gives us to understand in a word such as *without*, or in other analogous words. It deconstructs grammatical anthropomorphism."[684] In doing so, he argues that in language, a trace of that which is beyond language has its effect. Entering this into more familiar Derridian terminology, he writes on the appearance of the infinite in finite language: "[i]t is itself an effect of trace or différance, which does not mean that the trace or différance (of which I have tried to show elsewhere that it is finite, insofar as it is infinite) have a cause or an origin."[685] To be sure, Derrida is not writing a theology in this case. However, if one were to examine his incitation, one might find that he is proposing a theology through his avoidance of discursively declaring one, as such.

[683] Derrida, *Derrida and Negative Theology*, 74.
[684] Ibid, 79.
[685] Ibid, 99. I have modified the original text printing of 'differance' to ' différance'.

Thus, even in negative theology, Derrida holds that something affirmative is, in truth, being spoken about God. To this end, he writes: "there cannot be an absolutely negative discourse: a logos necessarily speaks about something; it cannot avoid speaking of something; it is impossible for it to refer to nothing".[686] In this way, Derrida is clear to point out that theology is particularly well suited to deal with the mysterious origin of all speech. Thus he writes that: "[l]anguage has started without us, in us and before us. This is what theology calls God, and it is necessary, it will have been necessary, to speak."[687] In this way, speech takes on an essential quality, for even in the theological practice of denying discursive predicates about God an altogether different affirmation about God is made. On this matter, Derrida concludes that "[i]ndeed, it must have been possible to speak in order to allow the question 'How to avoid speaking?' to arise."[688] He then arrives at the following theological conclusion:

> God would be not merely the end, but the origin of this work of the negative. Not only would atheism not be the truth of negative theology; rather, God would be the truth of all negativity. One would thus arrive at a kind of proof of God–not a proof of the *existence* of God, but a proof of God by *His effects*, or more precisely, a proof of what one calls God, or of the name of God, but effects without cause, by the *without cause*."[689]

To illustrate this point in the given context of his essay, Derrida elects to highlight Eckhart's notion of "hyperessential Being"[690] [*vbervesende wesen*[691]], which is presented when "all images are detached from the soul and she sees nothing but the one alone, then the naked essence of the soul finds the naked, formless essence of divine unity, which is

[686] Derrida, *Derrida and Negative Theology*, 103.
[687] Ibid, 99.
[688] Ibid, 99.
[689] Ibid, 76.
[690] Ibid, 120
[691] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke II*, 188, lines 20-21 (Predigt 83).

hyperessential being, passive, reposing in itself."[692] Not only in this case, but over the course of his essay, Derrida is constantly referring to and praising Eckhart for "the strategy of his sermons"[693] that "put to work a multiplicity of voices and veils"[694] to demonstrate his fundamental point of theological reference. Not least in importance of these is Derrida's reflection on Eckhart's handling of the ineffability of God who Himself is a Word.[695] In this way, Derrida quite shrewdly observes that "the power of speaking … already proceeds from God."[696]

To better understand how Derrida's theory corresponds to Eckhart, it will be helpful to examine the latter's commentary on the opening verse of the Johannine 'Prologue': "'In the beginning was the Word.'"[697] In his extensive treatment of this fundamental theological utterance, he articulates its peculiar capacity, as a word, to both negate and affirm discursive being. He writes: "The word, *Logos* or idea of things exists in such a way and so completely in each of them that it nevertheless entire[ly] outside of each. It is entirely within and entirely without."[698] This quotation is particularly useful inasmuch as it can be drawn into Derrida's thought on the 'without':

> *Without* does not merely disassociate the singular attribution from the essential generality: wisdom as *being*-wise in general, goodness as *being*-good in general, power as *being*-powerful in general. It does not only avoid the abstraction tied to every common noun and to the being implied in every common generality. In the same word and the same syntax it

[692] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 462 (Sermon 96). I have elected to alter Walshe's translation of the term 'uberwesende' from 'superessential' to 'hyperessential' in order to maintain congruity with the text from Derrida. This is a matter of convention and not meaning, insofar as the meaning is equally well translated and represented by bother predicates.
[693] Derrida, *Derrida and Negative Theology*, 113.
[694] Ibid, 113.
[695] Ibid 115.
[696] Ibid, 98.
[697] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 122 (Commentary on John, 1).
[698] Ibid, 126 (Commentary on John, 12).

> transmutes into affirmation its purely phenomenal negativity, which ordinary language, riveted to the finite, gives us to understand in a word such as *without*, or in other analogous words. It deconstructs grammatical anthropomorphism.[699]

Derrida's point in the use of 'negative' language to deconstruct finite determinations and, thereby, to unveil a 'trace' of the infinite[700] is, perhaps, best illuminated in reference to Eckhart by the latter's paradoxical technique of the 'negation of the negation':

> St. Paul says, 'One God.' *One* is something purer than goodness or truth. … One is the negation of the negation and a denial of a denial. What does *one* mean? One means that to which nothing is added. The soul receives the Godhead as it is purified in itself, with nothing added, with nothing thought. *One* is a negation of the negation. All creatures have a negation in themselves: one negates by not being the other. An angel negates by not being another. But God negates by negation: He is one and negates all else, for outside of God nothing is.[701]

In other words, the first negation articulates finitude and the multiplicity by way of the individual's (accidental-) recognition of itself over and against other individuals (and/or objects). However, a second negation occurs that supersedes this division into multiplicity by uniting the totality of existence into a singular unifying principle that is the Godhead. In this way, multiplicity is negated on account of its relation to 'oneness'. Eckhart reiterates this later on in the sermon by stating "God alone has oneness. God's property is oneness; it is on this basis that God is God; otherwise God would not be. Whatever is number depends on one, and one depends on nothing."[702] Thus, in characteristic Eckhartian style, he concludes his homily with an appeal to lived

[699] Derrida, *Derrida and Negative Theology*, 78-79.
[700] Ibid, 99.
[701] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 467 (Sermon 97).
[702] Ibid, 469 (Sermon 97). In this sermon, Eckhart is commenting on Ephesians 4:6: "One God and father of all, who is blessed above all and through all and in us all." Ibid, 466 (Sermon 97).

experience: "That we may be thus made one with God, may He who is 'one God, Father of all' help us. Amen."[703]

Derrida is willing to apply the affirmative nature of negative speech to an array of different topics. He acknowledges that theology is particularly well suited for this task insofar as it begins, so to speak, with the 'Word'. Even so, at other points, Derrida is simply and openly willing to offer this infinite principle that transcends all discursive attempts at naming the standard variable notation of 'X'. In this way: "[d]espite appearances, then, this *X* is neither a concept nor even a name; it does *lend itself* to a series of names, but calls for another syntax, and exceeds even the order and the structure of predicative discourse. It 'is' not and does not say what 'is'. It is written completely otherwise."[704] Following this, 'X' functions as a word that can be replaced by any word in order to reveal what is hidden about said word. This non-discursive and revelatory element of language that, effectively, speaks beyond its own meaning is perhaps best presented by Eckhart when he preaches:

> About this, the wise man said, 'In middle of the night when all things were in a quiet silence, there was spoken to me a hidden word. It came like a thief by stealth' (Wisd. 18:14-15). Why does he call it a word, when it was hidden? The nature of a word is to reveal what is hidden. It revealed itself to me and shone forth before me, declaring something to me and making God known to me, and therefore it is called a Word. Yet what it was, remained hidden from me.[705]

In conclusion, Derrida's philosophy and commentary on Eckhart have helped in shaping a philosophical horizon that is receptive to Eckhart's very particular form of theologizing insofar as it has illuminated a special quality and epistemological function in language

[703] Ibid, 469 (Sermon 97).
[704] Derrida, *Derrida and Negative Theology*, 74.
[705] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 34-35 (Sermon 1).

itself. This quality is that language has the inbuilt ability to point beyond its immediate, finite reference points to something that is more primordial. In this way, the entire world that is recognizable through language begins to function as a series of symbols that point beyond themselves. Thus, even in negative theology and the attempt to avoid speaking, something indeed is spoken. In this respect, and in heralding the tone and aims of the same 'mystagogues'[706] that Kant so vehemently deplored, Derrida writes that "[t]here has been and will always be philosophical mystification"[707] and "speculation on the end and the ends of philosophy."[708]

Problems, Criticisms, Summary, and Conclusion

It is not possible to offer any scientific proof that the renaissance of Eckhartian mysticism, as it appears in key figures of post-Kantian thought, is the hermeneutic result of any tectonic shifts in the modern philosophical landscape. However, this is not a concern for Gadamer and his hermeneutic theory:

> The understanding and the interpretation of texts is not merely a concern of science, but obviously belongs to human experience of the world in general. The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically not a problem at all. It is not concerned with a method of understanding by means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigation like all other objects of experience. It is not concerned primarily with amassing verified knowledge, such as would satisfy the methodological ideal of science–yet it too is concerned with knowledge and with truth. In understanding tradition not only are texts understood but insights are acquired and truths known.[709]

[706] Derrida, Jacques, "Of an Apocalyptic tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, tran. John P. Leavey, Jr. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 33.
[707] Ibid, 32.
[708] Ibid, 32.
[709] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xx.

Here, Gadamer is making space for the revelation and affirmation of truth in a manner that is not restricted to the scientific mode of understanding. In doing so, he is allowing for truths to be presented in a manner that is, rather, more indicative of a hermeneutic understanding. As such, this chapter is a testament to Gadamer's method; there are no statistics here, there is only a downstream view of and report on the current state of culture and tradition. Somewhat relatedly, Hegel too then is right concerning the conditions of culture and history that influence and prepare the way for the philosopher's retrospective announcement of truth in his aphoristic proclamation that "[t]he owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk."[710] Such is the task of the philosopher: to organize, analyze, and announce what life and culture have already brought into plain view.

Beyond these points, and concerning Gadamer's effort to reform how it is that one can approach truth and understanding, there remains a lingering issue with this chapter as a whole that will require some clarification. That is, quite simply, the problem of theoretical consistency, not only between Eckhart and any one of the Post-Kantian thinkers discussed, but between these thinkers themselves. In other words, each of the above noted thinkers has a unique philosophy that is not, in most cases, reconcilable with the other philosophers (and their respective philosophies) that were discussed. On this point, I must be clear to state that the point of this chapter is not to invent any seamless consistency between these thinkers. It is plain that each of them engages with Eckhart, and for different purposes. My evaluations of these instances were not put in place to

[710] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *The Philosophy of Right*, tran. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 13.

construct a singular narrative that incorporates elements of each of these philosophies into an amalgamated modern philosophy. To be sure, there are distinct philosophies that are brought to attention here. As was stated in the introduction to this chapter, the point of my efforts has been to show the following: firstly, how the ontological notion of 'being' has been reconceived and approached after Kant, and secondly: the ways in which the epistemological framework of 'knowledge' and 'certainty' have been altered and/or advanced after Kant. All of the above noted analyses, of course, serve as individual instances that have provided the philosophical conditions that have shaped the modern philosophical landscape – and in such a way as to have created a special enclave for the re-presentation of Eckhartian mysticism and its application and interpretative relevance for Western culture today. Perhaps then, at least stylistically speaking, it will simply suffice to say that, in Eckhart, there already exists a precedent in referencing external authorities (as hermeneutical conditions) in philosophy and theology to support his own messages through his often repeated and axiomatic statement: "*Ein Meister sagt*...".[711]

For all of the noted points, the aim of this chapter was simple: to offer a basic topographical study of the modern landscape of post-Kantian philosophy. Thus, this chapter has ultimately functioned to draw attention to the philosophical setting in, by, and through which Eckhartian theology has, once again, found relevance and application for culture and the forward movement of tradition. As a final remark that will tie this chapter directly into the greater effort of this thesis – that is, to create a space for dialogue between Christian theology and secular culture – I find it apropos to recall from Hegel's

[711] "Literally, "A master says" [*Ein meister sprichet* / *Ein Meister sagt*], or, at other points, "The masters say" [*Die meister sprechent* / *Die Meister Sagen*]. See, for example: Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke I*, ed. Niklaus Largier (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2008), 256, lines 24-29, 257, lines 25-30 (Predigt 22).

lectures on *The Philosophy of History*[712] (1822-1823) on 'The Modern Time',[713] not only the elements of his thought that have accounted for the conditions for a renewed reception of Eckhartian mysticism, but also the aspects of his thought that have accounted for a revised understanding of secularity. This point becomes evident when he concludes that in modern times "[s]ecular life is the positive and definite embodiment of the Spiritual Kingdom–the Kingdom of the *Will* manifesting itself in outward existence."[714]

[712] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *The Philosophy of History*, tran. J. Sibree, Mineola: Dover Publishing, INC., 1956. These lectures were delivered at several points at the University of Berlin: *Wintersemester* 1822-1823; 1824-1825; and 1830-1831. It is the second, published edition of these lectures that will be referred to here. Interestingly, this edition acts as a composite of all three deliveries. However, the editor, Charles Hegel (G.W.F. Hegel's son) elected to use the manuscript editions from the first two deliveries as the basis for this latest (second) edition.
[713] Ibid, 412-457.
[714] Ibid, 442.

Part IV

Theology and the Problem of Secularity:
A Hermeneutic Application of Eckhartian Mystical Ontology

Chapter V

Theology, Mysticism, and the Problem of Secularity: Alternative Approaches

With this chapter the fourth and final part of this thesis commences. In what follows, I will present a selection of authors that address a variety of theological approaches to productively engaging with secularity. In order to both narrow and subsequently deepen this discussion, a particular focus will be centered on works from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Paul Tillich, and Don Cupitt, as they relate to the topics at hand.

Due to the breadth of this debate, a comprehensive review of this subject matter in its entirety simply cannot be contained within the margins of this chapter. Instead of amassing as many authors as possible, I have elected to discuss only three of the main voices from within this debate. In doing so, I will identify certain approaches to this topic that, collectively, highlight the greater spectrum of ideas that are at play in this on-going discussion. Further, due to the nuance of these discussions and the vocabulary therein, I have aimed for depth rather than breadth in this chapter. That is to say, in restricting my review to the works of three authors, I will be more able to provide the reader with a reliable account of these authors' distinctive voices while simultaneously including points of similarity and/or difference with my own approach to related themes. Having noted this, the fourth sub-section will function with a slightly different aim of simply and very briefly introducing the reader to a number of other authors and texts that have added to the subject matter under review. It must be noted though that due to the brevity of this final section, my comments will serve their greatest function if they are received in the capacity of indicators for further reading rather than as a review of literature, per se.

The reader should also take note that the authors discussed in this chapter are exclusively from Anglo-American or European backgrounds. This is in no way meant to be a slight toward contributors to this debate from outside this narrowed field of vision. Rather, this geographically concentrated effort has been employed so as to, once again, keep in step with Charles Taylor's description of this 'secular age' as one that is most closely associated with "the North Atlantic".[715] Bearing this in mind, this chapter will be separated into five subsections. The first will be committed to presenting a series of important and, indeed, haunting provocations that were announced by Dietrich Bonhoeffer from the period of his incarceration at Tegel prison in Berlin. Following this, I will turn to Paul Tillich's final public address on his vision of the future of religion, while at the same time, giving attention to other points of his systematic and pastoral works that highlight his unique approach to confronting secularity and a theological understanding of being in such a context. Next, I will discuss a selection of works from Don Cupitt in which he attempts to synthesize certain features of secularity with his own striking and original conceptions of theology in his efforts to forward a secular-theology. The fourth subsection will simply extend the foregoing conversation by pointing the reader in the direction of other pieces of modern and contemporary literature that broaden the scope of the topics under discussion. The final sub-section will then treat any arising problems and/or criticisms that ought to be noted – and especially those that will help bring greater lucidity to my own particular contribution to this discussion.

To be clear, the primary role of this chapter is to review a selection of literature that surrounds the topic of theology's relationship to secularity. As a response to this, I will work toward making (or at least introducing) the following conclusion: *a*

[715] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 1.

hermeneutic interpretation of Meister Eckhart's mystical ontology provides both an unbreakable link to tradition and a foundation for understanding theology that squares tightly with the demands of the modern secular horizon of understanding. This chapter will contribute to the final part (Part IV) of this thesis by articulating a number of alternative approaches (in other words, alternative to my approach; this will be more fully accounted for in Chapter VI) to evolving the conversation between theology and secularity. Finally, this chapter is essential to the whole of this thesis insofar as it further identifies the issues (and the opportunities) that are at stake when trying to establish common ground between theology and various principles of secularity.

Alternative Approaches I: Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Christianity in a 'World Come of Age'[716]

Secularization and Christianity's response to this cultural phenomenon has been a stable theme for theological engagement for the duration of the twentieth century. However, the Second World War serves as a clear point for demarcation between early and middle to late twentieth-century approaches to this on-going conversation. The most notable and oft referenced voice from this period belongs to that of the Lutheran pastor, theologian, and political defector, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945). Addressing secularity was not a prominent theme in the main body of Bonhoeffer's writings. Instead, his enigmatic comments on the intersection of theology and secularity come, primarily, from his collected letters that he wrote while incarcerated in Tegel Prison in Berlin, from April of 1943 until his execution in Flossenbürg concentration camp in April of 1945. Among

[716] Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. John W. De Gruchy, trans. Isabel Best, Lisa E Dahill, Reinhard Krauss, and Nancy Lukens, vol. 8 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, ed. John W. De Gruchy (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 450 (Letter 170 (503)).

these letters, several that were directed to his dearest friend, Ebhard Bethge, disclosed a number of fascinating provocations on the subject of "religionless Christianity".[717] It is with this peculiar concept in mind that I will begin this discussion with a telling excerpt from one of Bonhoeffer's letters, dated from the 30th of April, 1944:

> What keeps gnawing at me is the question, what is Christianity, or who is Christ actually for us today? The age when we could tell people that with words–whether with theological or with pious words–is past, as is the age of inwardness and of conscience, and that means the age of religion altogether. We are approaching a completely religionless age; people as they are now simply cannot be religious anymore.[718]

Later on, in the same letter, he continues:

> "Christianity" has always been a form (perhaps the true form) of "religion." Yet if it becomes obvious one day that this "a priori" doesn't exist, that it has been a historically conditioned and transitory form of human expression, then people really will become radically religionless–and I believe that this is already more or less the case (why, for example, doesn't this war provoke a "religious" reaction like all the previous ones?)–what does that then mean for "Christianity"?[719]

Finally, he concludes: "[h]ow can Christ become Lord of the religionless as well? Is there such a thing as a religionless Christian? If religion is only the garb in which Christianity is clothed–and this garb has looked very different in different ages–what then is religionless Christianity?"[720] Bonhoeffer's speculations in these letters are both daringly assertive and provocative. While they do not achieve a level worthy of being labeled as a systematic theology – and can therefore not be judged as such – they do succeed in presenting a tone of an alarming sincerity and a message that grapples with a desperate

[717] Ibid, 363, (Letter 137 (404)).
[718] Ibid, 362, (Letter 137 (402-403)).
[719] Ibid, 362-363, (Letter 137 (403)).
[720] Ibid, 363, (Letter 137 (404)).

yet sobering reflection on the future of Christianity. In effect, Bonhoeffer is acknowledging that 'Christianity' is a form of religion (among many other forms of religion and also varying presentations of Christianity itself), and that he was also writing from within an age where religion (broadly construed) had lost its grip on culture and society. However, he maintains that Christ still has meaning in this so-called 'world come of age'. Bonhoeffer is, at the very least, reflecting on how Christ might find relevance in and for a world where religion has been, in this sense, outgrown.

This 'world come of age' is, for Bonhoeffer, not a world without God; instead it is a world of God's more radical and immanent proximity. In commenting on the supplementation of secular language in place of religious language to speak about God, Bonhoeffer concludes that:

> It is not for us to predict the day–but the day will come–when people will once more be called to speak the word of God in such a way that the world is changed and renewed. It will be in a new language, perhaps quite a nonreligious language, but liberating and redeeming like Jesus's language, so that people will be alarmed and yet overcome by its power–the language of a new righteousness and truth, a language proclaiming that God makes peace with humankind and that God's kingdom is drawing near.[721]

Now, just over seven decades after Bonhoeffer penned these remarks, it would be a stretch to say that his prediction that secular language would replace religious language has fully come into effect. However, it seems Hans Küng's particularly germane post-war perspective on this issue would indicate that changes are – and have for some time been – underway, insofar as "in European lands we seem to have less a demolition than a transformation of religion".[722]

[721] Ibid, 390, (Letter 145 (436)).
[722] Küng, Hans, *Christianity: Essence, History, and Future*, tran. John Bowden (New York: Continuum

Bonhoeffer was compelled to find God in the world, not only in secular language, but also in the life of the world – in the here and now. Such an orientation led him to write that "[l]ater on I discovered, and am still discovering to this day, that one only learns to have faith by living in the full this-worldliness of life."[723] To this effect, he also found grounds for criticizing the church and its reluctance to embrace the world amidst its transformative 'coming of age'. In fact, he goes so far as to state that "[o]ur church has been fighting during these years only for its self-preservation, as if that were an end in itself."[724] Unfortunately, Bonhoeffer's *en passant* style, in this case, renders this passage quite difficult to fully and faithfully interpret. However, one can at the very least see that he is criticizing what he sees as the church's struggle to maintain its status quo. In any case, comments such as these are evidence that his incarceration inspired something of a polemic against certain aspects of the church to which he belonged. For example, in another instance of Bonhoeffer's more worldly-oriented attitude, he writes: "I often wonder why my 'Christian instinct' frequently draws me more toward nonreligious people than toward the religious, and I am sure this is not with missionary intent; instead, I'd almost call it a 'brotherly' instinct."[725]

Bonhoeffer's letters have drawn considerable interest from a whole range of Christian and non-Christian thinkers. The problem with these letters, from the perspective of a systematic theologian, is that they are not fully developed thoughts. Instead, they are an evolving set of reflections that were written for the private reading of Bonhoeffer's closest confidant, Eberhard Bethge. Therefore, to determine, with any degree of certainty,

---

International Publishing Group Inc, 1995), 763.
[723] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 486, (Letter 178 (542)).
[724] Ibid, 389, (Letter 145 (435)).
[725] Ibid, 366, (Letter 137 (406-407)).

what his precise meanings are from these letters is a non-possibility. However, what one can be certain of is the intensity of the circumstances from whence they were written down. As an example of my meaning here, in another letter he notes: "[s]irens are going off; I'll continue later."[726] In any case, I maintain the position that the definite meaning of these theological letters is truly unascertainable. In this respect, I would agree with Karl Barth's remarks in the following comment:

> Without being able to ask him personally, we shall have to make do with remaining behind, somewhat confused. …. Do we not always expect him to be clear and more concise in some other context, either by withdrawing what he had said, or by going even further? Now he left us alone with the enigmatic utterances of his letters–at more than one point clearly showing that he sensed, without really knowing, how the story should continue–especially how the program of an un-religious speech was to be realized.[727]

The commentaries and scholarship that surrounds these letters is bountiful and can by no means be adequately addressed here. Instead, I would like to highlight general points of contact between Bonhoeffer's letters and the project of this thesis. For example, and to add further context to what was stated above, in grounding his faith in the life and events of the immanent world, Bonhoeffer writes: "one only learns to have faith by living in the full this-worldliness of life."[728] Then, at another point, he clarifies this by stating that, "God wants to be recognized in the midst of our lives"[729] and in, "a 'worldly' way".[730] Subsequently, the meaning of this statement is further developed when Bonhoeffer writes

[726] Ibid, 376, (Letter 140 (419)).
[727] Barth's comment here comes from a letter he wrote for Walter Herrenbrück (21-December-1952) They have been quoted from: Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 591 (656). For a direct reference, see: Barth, Karl, "From a Letter to Superintendent Herrenbrück" in *World Come of Age: A Symposium on Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Collins, 1967), 90.
[728] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 486 (Letter 178 (542)).
[729] Ibid, 406 (Letter 152 (455)).
[730] Ibid, 373 (Letter 139 (416)).

that "[t]he transcendent is not the infinite, unattainable tasks, but the neighbor within reach in any given situation. God in human form!"[731] The systematic inference that is at play here is concerning the overlap – and not the alterity – between immanence and transcendence. Reinforcing this, Bonhoeffer writes: "[w]hat matters is not the beyond but this world"[732]; a statement that leads him to speculate on how certain transcendental theological notions can be "reinterpreted in a 'worldly' way".[733]

The points that I have drawn upon from Bonhoeffer have a distinct resemblance to the general aim of this thesis in arguing that *the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart can be interpreted and applied in a manner that successfully opens a space for constructive dialogue between secular culture and the presence of God in the world*. While the vocabulary and the points of reference differ between my efforts and what one finds in Bonhoeffer, the elements that do align rather congruently are as follows: first, the effort to '*interpret*' theology in a context that does not solely rely on the conventional terms of Christianity to understand itself. Second, is our shared aim to '*open a space for constructive dialogue*' with secular and/or 'religionless' culture. Thirdly, it is to present and emphasize '*the presence of God in the world*' over and against metaphysical dualisms that separate God from the world. Having noted these points of similarity, I am not making an appeal toward a state of theoretical uniformity between my own thought and that of Bonhoeffer's. Rather, I am simply indicating that the questions he poses are quintessentially representative of the horizon of the modern Western world and the **"**shift in background, in the whole context in which we experience and search for fullness"[734] in

[731] Ibid, 501 (Letter 186 (558)).
[732] Ibid, 373 (Letter 139 (415)).
[733] Ibid, 373 (Letter 139 (416)).
[734] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 26.

this "secular age."[735] In turning to Eckhart, my aim in this thesis, in a broad sense, is to take up the general motifs of Bonhoeffer's provocations, and to offer a more fully developed system of theology (as will be shown in Chapter VI) that has the potential to be constructively interpreted in and for "this world that has come of age".[736]

To conclude, Bonhoeffer's theological letters from Tegel prison are truly remarkable. Although one is left only to speculate as to the true and intended meaning of his words, he has, nonetheless, succeeded in provoking a fascinating conversation on how God can be understood in the modern world. Bearing this in mind, rather than offering an objective critique in this short review of Bonhoeffer's last theological utterances, I will simply reformulate some of his questions as an open provocation: who, what, and where is God for the world and for humankind today? Can one really speak about God in non-religious and/or secular terms? No doubt, this thesis has been designed with the aim of addressing questions just like these.

Alternative Approaches II:
Paul Tillich on the 'Future of Religions'

Throughout his complete systematic, popular and pastoral works, Paul Tillich (1886-1965), is consistently focused on and indeed devoted to making sense of religious faith as it is made to confront the situation of the modern world.[737] For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus primarily on a single lecture – and incidentally, his final public address – that served as a condensed approach to this theme. Following this, I will turn to

[735] Ibid, 26.
[736] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 426 (Letter 161 (477)).
[737] Tillich, Paul, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers), 1.

Tillich's greater oeuvre to further explore his thoughts and other points that are in need of detail and/or clarification.

That lecture noted above is titled 'The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian'.[738] In adopting a decisively progressive position concerning the intersection between theology and secularity (or as he puts it, "the relation of the sacred and the secular"[739]), Tillich states that "[r]eligion must use the secular as a critical tool against itself".[740] He arrives at this position on account of his noted discrepancy concerning what he refers to as "the two basic decisions"[741] of the modern subject-centered[742] theologian. To clarify, the first of these decisions that are made by such a theologian is to distinguish and to separate oneself "from a theology which rejects all religions other than that of which he is a theologian."[743] The second of these decisions, according to Tillich, is not to accept "a theology without a theos, also called a theology of the secular."[744] In other words, Tillich writes, "as theologians, we have to break through two barriers against a free approach to the history of religions: the orthodox-exclusive one and the secular-rejective one."[745] Concerning the modern situation for theology, Tillich's view is simply that "[b]oth sides are reductionistic".[746]

At a point emerging in between the perceived inadequacies of the above noted poles, Tillich uses the remainder of his final lecture to define his "hope for the future of

[738] Tillich, Paul, *The Future of Religions*, ed. Jerald C. Brauer (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966), 80-94.
[739] Ibid, 90.
[740] Ibid, 82.
[741] Ibid, 80.
[742] Ibid, 80.
[743] Ibid, 80.
[744] Ibid, 80.
[745] Ibid, 83.
[746] Ibid, 83.

theology";[747] a hope and a theological attitude that he terms "'[t]he Religion of the Concrete Spirit.'"[748] Tillich's aim in defining this modern posture of religiosity is to offer a framework for "theologians to understand the present moment and the nature of our own historical place, both in the particular character of Christianity and in its universal claim."[749] In other words, his 'hope' is to define (and perhaps even to initiate) a religious understanding that maintains its distinctive link to the long and formative Christian tradition, while at the same time, opens up the individual to the "universal religious basis"[750] and the "mysterious character"[751] of the "Holy"[752] as it is experienced and configured in and through one's "finite human situation."[753] Following along with the emerging image that can be drawn from this constellation of statements, Tillich's outline of a modern subject-centered[754] theology begins to take its form. To summarize, Tillich attempts to balance the retention of tradition with the freedom of subjectivity in stating that "[t]he universality of a religious statement does not lie in an all-embracing abstraction which would destroy religion as such, but it lies in the depths of every concrete religion. Above all, it lies in the openness to spiritual freedom both from one's own foundation and for one's own foundation."[755] If establishing the criteria and viability of such a religious attitude is not up to Tillich himself, he dispenses this project and its fulfillment, especially, to the historian of religions; that is to say, a historian of religions who understands the importance of tradition while being open to applying that knowledge

[747] Ibid, 91.
[748] Ibid, 87.
[749] Ibid, 84.
[750] Ibid, 86.
[751] Ibid, 87.
[752] Ibid, 86.
[753] Ibid, 81.
[754] Ibid, 80.
[755] Ibid, 94.

to and for his or her own unique historical context. Tillich rephrases and further situates this by maintaining the idea that "the historian of religions tries to place the reinterpreted concepts into the framework of the dynamics of religious and of secular history and especially into the framework of our present religious and cultural situation."[756] This notion involves relating to the secular while, and at the same time, holding one's sight on the character of Christianity, and its indispensable history. In doing so, this task for modern theology "must reject also the exclusive emphasis on the secular, or the idea that the sacred has, so to speak, been fully absorbed by the secular."[757] However, and in view of this, Tillich still maintains the modern, subject-centered claim, as he presents it, that "[t]he universal religious basis is the experience of the Holy within the finite."[758] Here, Tillich understands the 'Holy' to be the "sacramental basis of all religions".[759] In other words, the 'Holy' is the "revelation"[760] of God's presence in the "here and now",[761] and in a way "which can be seen, heard, dealt with, in spite of its mysterious character."[762] In this way, Tillich's position hinges on the fact that the 'Holy' is not simply limited to specifically or overtly religious objects, locations, institutions, and so on. Instead, it is embedded, universally, within the totality of "finite"[763] existence. In casting the 'Holy' in such a way that it is present in both the "sacred and the secular",[764] as they are conventionally determined, this presents the 'Holy' in a manner that is recognizably

[756] Ibid, 93.
[757] Ibid, 82.
[758] Ibid, 86.
[759] Ibid, 87.
[760] Ibid, 81.
[761] Ibid, 87.
[762] Ibid, 87.
[763] Ibid, 86.
[764] Ibid, 90.

"open to secularization."[765] Moving this reflection into plain view, Tillich definitively states that "[i]t is quite well to say that the Holy, or the Ultimate, or the Word is within the secular realm and I myself have done so innumerable times."[766]

In making this statement concerning the universal presence of the 'Holy' in all things, Tillich begins to compare and contrast his newly announced approach to theology with what he generally understands to be mysticism. In this context, he understands mysticism in the following manner:

> This mystical movement means that one is not satisfied with any of the concrete expressions of the Ultimate, of the Holy. One goes beyond them. Man goes to the one beyond any manifoldness. The Holy as Ultimate lies beyond any of its embodiments. The embodiments are justified. They are accepted but they are secondary. One must go beyond them in order to reach the highest, the Ultimate itself. The particular is denied for the Ultimate One. The concrete is devaluated.[767]

Mysticism, as it has been presented in this statement, tends toward a highly abstract understanding of God (as the 'Holy', the 'Ultimate', and so forth); in other words, one that does not determine God in and through one specific thing, but instead, prioritizes the revelation of God to be equally present in and through all things. Tillich forwards the idea that, by way of such an abstraction – over and against a concretization – of God, in this way, the "mystics were predecessors of the secular."[768] Tillich's observation concerning the above noted statement would be far more compelling if he could have referred to a specific mystic, such as Eckhart, as opposed to blanketing all mystics as having the same causal function. Further to this, his general classification of mystics as theologians who

[765] Ibid, 89.
[766] Ibid, 82-83.
[767] Ibid, 87.
[768] Ibid, 90.

have given preference to the abstract at the cost of the concrete is simply too reductive. As it stands, the counterargument to this point is of paramount importance to this thesis. The more robust treatment that this point deserves will be taken up in Chapter VI, where, as will be shown in the case of Eckhart, Tillich's claim will be unambiguously overturned. I will accomplish this by demonstrating the radical coterminality that persists between the abstract and the concrete; a coterminality that is fundamental to a complete and, indeed, consummative understanding of Eckhart's mystical ontology. At present then, it is more worthwhile to assess the idea that, in one manifestation or another, a mystic and/or mystics, per se, were, in some way "predecessors of the secular."[769] As stated above, Tillich envisions the 'mystical' as a theological approach that is "not satisfied with any of the concrete expressions of the Ultimate, the Holy."[770] As a result of this, in understanding God from a purely abstract point of view, the 'mystic' understands God as no particular thing, but instead, in all things. Thus, God is equally in all things, and not just those that are predetermined to be sacred. In this way, Tillich's understanding of the secular as "'belonging to the world'",[771] a point of overlap between his version of mysticism and the secular can be identified. I agree with this point, and even more, it shows a resemblance to the cumulative argument that is at work in this thesis. However, where Tillich and I part ways is in the simple fact that his understanding of mysticism rejects any commitment to the concrete, whatsoever. He is correct to point out that, perhaps, some mystics are hesitant to assign God any concrete particularity. However, thinkers such as Eckhart view the concrete world as the location and the opportunity to act based upon one's recognition of the abstract nature of God's essential

[769] Ibid, 90.
[770] Ibid, 87.
[771] Ibid, 89

being in and of the world. As a complement to this, and to better understand how and where Tillich and I differ on the finer points of mystical theology, it will be useful to turn to other points in his writing where his thoughts on these matters have been presented in more detail.

In *The Courage to Be*, Tillich writes: "[m]ysticism does not take seriously the concrete … It plunges itself directly into the ground of being and meaning, and leaves the concrete, the world of finite values and meanings behind."[772] In other words, for Tillich, the mystic shifts his or her self-identity from a strictly finite context to one where "the individual self strives for a participation in the ground of being which approaches identification."[773] These two statements, read together, suggest a rejection of the finite/concrete world in favor of a greater sense of identification with the ground of being, itself. Put in another way, in the *Dynamics of Faith*, he states that "[m]ysticism tries to merge the mind with the content of its unconditional concern, with the ground of being and meaning."[774] To reiterate, this view of mysticism is not necessarily wrong. Rather, it is simply the case that it lacks a particular point of reference. To Tillich's defense, however, he does comment on individual theologians who presented mystical theologies in what will be discussed below.

In respect to Tillich's individual set of concepts and definitions, it is worth pointing out that his notion of the 'holy' is far more in line with my own thinking as it relates to Eckhart than what one finds in his presentations of the term 'mysticism'. For example, he writes: "[t]he holy is first of all experienced in the present. It is here and now, and this means it encounters us in a thing, in a person, in an event. Faith sees in a

[772] Tillich, Paul, *The Courage to Be*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 186.
[773] Ibid, 157.
[774] Tillich, Paul, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1957), 71.

concrete piece of reality the ultimate ground and meaning of all reality. No piece of reality is excluded from the possibility of becoming a bearer of the holy…"[775] Here, Tillich is simply stating that each concrete finite feature of existence is ontologically situated in the same ground of being that substantiates all things. Thus, all things are latently capable of manifesting the holy ground of being by way of their sheer fact of existence. In this way, Tillich's understanding of 'mysticism' combined with the 'holy' share a much deeper resemblance with what it is that I am forwarding concerning mystical ontology. In other words, my presentation of a mystical ontology by way of Eckhart shares in Tillich's concept of 'mysticism' insofar as the latter prioritizes an understanding of the totality of existence, first, by way of its essence as opposed to its accidental nature. Adding to this, Tillich's concept of the 'holy' as the fundamental ground of all being (in other words, God) that is then recognizable in the here and now and through concrete existents come together to resemble my own concept of a mystical ontology. The important point and, indeed, difference from my writing to Tillich's is that I am not allowing for a reading of Eckhartian mysticism that dismisses the aspect of the 'holy' as perceptible and available in all things and at all times. In fact, to do so would be disingenuous to Eckhart's very complete and robust approach to mystical theology in announcing both a particular understanding of God and how it is that such a God is realized in and through concrete existence and ethical living. My criticism of Tillich, then, is not in respect to a perceived incomplete nature of his systematic theology. Rather, it is in respect to his definition of mysticism, which is presented with little or no reference to any actual mystics to support his positions. Even more, in broadly defining mysticism

[775] Ibid, 66.

as an approach to theology that neglects the concreteness of everyday life, he does a great injustice to actual mystics who absolutely and completely saw otherwise.

However, Tillich's approach to mysticism by way of his systematic theology (as noted above) is resistant to my criticisms if it is referenced to his historical theology. For example, in his book, *A History of Christian Thought*, he offers examples of theologians who now represent what is understood as mystical theology. A useful occurrence of this is as follows:

> Meister Eckhart was the most important representative of German mysticism. What did these mystics try to do? They tried to interpret the Thomistic system for practical purposes. They were not speculative monks sitting alongside of the world, but they wanted people to have the possibility of experiencing what was expressed in the scholastic systems. Thus, the mysticism of Meister Eckhart unites the most abstract scholastic concepts–especially that of being–with a burning soul, with the warmth of religious feeling and the love-power of religious acting.[776]

In other words, Tillich recognizes Eckhart as a theologian whose conceptual understanding of God was such that it necessarily informed his practical manner of living and acting in the world. Reemphasizing this point, Tillich adds that Eckhart's mystical theology "is a strange mixture between quietism–being quiet in one's soul–and a tremendous activism. … This also removes the difference between the sacred and the secular world. They are both expressions of the ground of being in us."[777] At this point in his writing, Tillich is moving more in the direction of my own thinking in this thesis. Indeed his ideas act as a kind of support for my own arguments, defending them against any charge of being an entirely idiosyncratic reading of Eckhart. In other words, and to

[776] Tillich, Paul, *A History of Christian Thought: From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc. 1967), 201.
[777] Ibid, 203.

be clear, Tillich is also reading Eckhart as a theologian who draws God's universal being into the particularity of existence in a manner that ought to inform how it is that one comports oneself in life and toward one's activities with such an understanding of God's presence in mind.

Again, having referenced Eckhart, Tillich's overall aims in his thinking begin to appear in a manner that is similar to my own project in this thesis. Although we differ in respect to our terminology, there is a common and identifiable goal that we share in respect to our greater theological visions. Perhaps more than anywhere else, this overlap is best exemplified in his presentation of what he refers to as 'the new being'. He writes: "[w]hat is the new being? The New Being is not something that simply takes the place of the Old Being. But it is a renewal of the Old which has been corrupted, distorted, split and almost destroyed. But not wholly destroyed. Salvation does not destroy creation; but it transforms the Old Creation into a New one."[778] In other words, the 'Old being' is the being of strictly finite existence and concern, whereas the 'New being' is one where eternity is made manifest and recognizable in and through the finite elements of existence. Thus, he goes on to write: "[w]here there is New Being, there is resurrection, namely, the creation into eternity out of every moment in time."[779] A conclusion such as this is not at all far from what will be presented in Chapter VI under the conceptual title of 'dwelling'. In this way, my efforts in this thesis and what is to be found in much of Tillich's writing do share many important points of common contact. Thus, one of the more important points that should be drawn from this review is the simple fact that my reading of Eckhart, as a possible interlocutor between theology and secularity, is not an

[778] Tillich, Paul, *The New Being* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 19-20.
[779] Ibid, 24.

interpretation without legitimacy and/or support. In fact, it is with Eckhart's very reference to the being of God in mind that Tillich, too, proposes to challenge "the difference between the sacred and the secular world." [780]

Alternative Approaches III:
Don Cupitt on 'Secular-Theology'

Don Cupitt (1934-) presents his theological ruminations in a manner quite apart from what one finds in the above noted works from both Bonhoeffer and Tillich. His style, by his own admission, resembles that of a "spiritual autobiography".[781] In this way, his thinking carries with it relics from his early days as an "orthodox, eternity-oriented and unreconstructed"[782] Anglican to his present position as a self-proclaimed heretic[783] and student of what he refers to as "Energetic Spinozism".[784] Put another way, his primary references for context are made up of his own experiences and conclusions as a life-long seeker of existential and theological meaning. Using a rather matter-of-fact tone, he asserts that the aim of his theology is to present a "working model of a simple, modern and fully up-to-date religion that makes no false claims at all. A religion with no lies, no self-deception and no compulsory untruths that you are commanded to believe. No authorities. Better still, it actually *works*. It gives real consolation."[785] What makes Cupitt's thinking important to this project and to this chapter is the fact that his voice is one that is one that is highly critical of Christianity, and even more, his secular ambitions

[780] Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 203.
[781] Cupitt, Don, *The Fountain: A Secular Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 72.
[782] Ibid, 3.
[783] Ibid, 72.
[784] Ibid, 3.
[785] Ibid, 79.

concerning theology seem to relinquish all but slight traces of any relationship to the Christian tradition. In fact, what Cupitt aims to provide instead is "a purely immanent religious vision that can reconcile us to our own complete immersion in time and contingency, and to our own mortality."[786]

Cupitt is clear about the fact that his aim is to construct a "secular theology";[787] that is to say, in this context, a theology that gives no preference to any pre-established or conventional religious identities.[788] His is a response to a general estimation that established orthodox religious identities are "in a state of terminal collapse".[789] The originality and zeal of his position becomes all the more evident when he states that he is searching for and attempting to define "an entirely new beginning" for religion and for religious thinking. His project, as such, is collectively developed through a significant number of his publications. In an effort to form a modest itinerary of his overall ambitions, I have collected a sampling of telling quotations that will help to summarize his project as a whole. In order to facilitate this effort, I will begin with an analysis of one of his works that is most closely related to the subject matter of this thesis. I will then expand upon this summary with an overview of a selection of other works from Cupitt that further develop the thoughts announced in the following descriptions.

As a starting point, Cupitt is forthright in declaring his aim to devise a "purely immanent religious vision";[790] that is to say, one that wholly rejects any and all forms of "transcendence",[791] "the One",[792] "the Absolute",[793] and/or even the notion of "eternity-

[786] Ibid, xi.
[787] Ibid, xii.
[788] Ibid, xi, 84.
[789] Ibid, 75.
[790] Ibid, xi.
[791] Ibid, xi.
[792] Ibid, 79.

in-the-midst-of-time."[794] This of course, makes any notion of God quite difficult to uphold in his "systematic theology".[795] Nonetheless, he does retain a profound reverence for being, in general. With this, his secularized agenda begins to take on a concrete appearance insofar as in place of a conventionally determined God, and/or any other traditional religious symbols, Cupitt chooses to imagine his "new religious outlook"[796] through the symbolism of a fountain.[797] In doing so, his aesthetic interpretation of the fountain's water cycle serves as an ideal metaphor to illustrate his newly envisioned God-concept. For example, he writes: "the whole fountain is in the end God: always passing away and dying, and always renewing itself. Nothing metaphysical, nothing absolute, but only ordinary silent rushing secular contingency, lived out ethically as generous self-giving."[798] To summarize, Cupitt is looking to a fountain as a symbol that can call one to conscience of one's utter transience[799] in this world – a state of being that compels one to affirm life[800] in a reverent, yet "secular and non-metaphysical"[801] way. Such a symbol is, at once, a reminder of the "pure rushing transience"[802] of life through its "ever-changing foaming liquid stream",[803] while, at the same time, designating a locality that is free from the claim of any "particular community".[804] Instead, "the Fountain is placed at a *focal* point, where many paths meet."[805]

---

[793] Ibid, 79.
[794] Ibid, 7.
[795] Ibid, 77.
[796] Ibid, xiii.
[797] Ibid, 8-13.
[798] Ibid, 84.
[799] Ibid, 4.
[800] Ibid, 6.
[801] Ibid, xi.
[802] Ibid, x.
[803] Ibid, 78.
[804] Ibid, 84
[805] Ibid, 84.

Cupitt's vision for a secular theology is intriguing, but it is not without its difficulties. For example, its abrupt cessation with tradition, its ostensible absence of any eternal aspect of God, and its reliance on imagery (that of the fountain) to symbolize and venerate life are all, in a sense, problematic. In what follows, I will briefly show how it is that my interpretation of Eckhartian mystical ontology helps to identify these as problems, and then moves to improve upon them. To begin, this thesis has argued that if it is one's aim to redirect the arc of history, this task cannot be accomplished with a theory that operates via a radical dislocation from tradition.[806] As I have already stated at numerous points, this thesis functions methodologically under the hermeneutic principle that without working from within tradition, one has no link or means of reference that are understandable to those whose interpretative lens is shaped by the tradition that defines their particular horizon.[807] In looking to Eckhart, the project at hand has a demonstrable connection to tradition, and a plan for redirecting its course from within its own horizon.[808] Cupitt's, on the other hand, goes to lengths to detach his theory from any such connections. Following from this, my second criticism of Cupitt is in respect to the absence of any eternal divine principle in his thinking. This is a complete about-face to what one is sure to find frequently and recurrently documented throughout the whole of Eckhart's mystical thought. As one conclusive example, in Eckhart's Latin sermon, *Induimini Dominum Jesum Christum (Rm. 13:14)*[809] this point is made evident when it is shown how eternity, or the "fullness of time"[810] exists amidst time, and further, how the recognition of this principle leads to one's recognition of God's complete and ubiquitous

[806] See: Chapter I.
[807] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 453 (Part III, 5, 3 (B)).
[808] See: Chapter I.
[809] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 284-287 (Sermon 24).
[810] Ibid, 286 (Sermon 24).

presence, not only in time, but also, in all of "human nature".[811] My third criticism concerning Cupitt centers on his rejection of all conventional religious imagery. In doing so, he instead begins to focus his thinking on the significance and aesthetic experience of a fountain. Eckhart acutely criticizes this idea of fixating on particular images as representations of God in a vernacular sermon on Ecclesiastes 50:10.[812] There, he emphasizes the point that it is not any single or particular image that ought to make God more apparent, but instead, God ought to be equally apparent in all images. On this matter, he writes: "God is in far nobler a fashion in the image than the image is in God."[813] Oliver Davies offers some helpful insight into understanding this point when he observes that Eckhart's theology is "a form of mysticism which seeks to transcend all imagery and yet which evolves from within the doctrinal field of a world religion which is more intensely image-based than any other."[814] The point being, that there are no shortages of possibilities for images and their associative employment in such cases (fountains, or otherwise). Rather, it remains that no single image has precedence over another in respect to its potentiality to manifest God, insofar as God is equally present in all things.

The specific work from Cupitt that was discussed in the foregoing analysis serves as an excellent model for how he would like to see the future of religion and/or religiosity to unfold. However, it must also be noted that Cupitt has many other works that lend themselves to the purpose of this chapter. In view of this, the remaining part of this subsection will highlight a selection of those texts in order to widen the overall picture of

[811] Ibid, 286 (Sermon 24).
[812] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 114-118 (Sermon 14 (b)).
[813] Ibid, 115 (Sermon 14 (b)).
[814] Davies, Oliver, *God Within: The Mystical Tradition of Northern Europe* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2006), 192.

Cupitt's thinking and its relation to the content of this thesis. In his work titled *The Revelation of Being*,[815] he presents his ontology in writing that "Being itself is … pure outpouring, slipping, formless, malleable contingency." [816] He supplements this metaphysical description with an ethical dimension insofar as "[w]hat is most fleeting is what best reveals Being: the Revelation of Being as love depends upon, and is intimately linked with, religious acceptance of one's own transience."[817] Cupitt's observations concerning the accidental and contingent qualities of being are, in a sense, compromised when he moves to include love into his formula. For Eckhart, the involvement of love with being is a much simpler step. This is because he declares love as an analogical feature of God's own being. With Cupitt, the connection between love and being is in no way as straightforward as this. Further confounding matters, in another text[818] he suggests that in his "postmodern spirituality"[819] there is an "eternal joy in pure contingency." [820] The question, then, would be, from where does this 'joy' and/or 'love' come from? In other words, what is the ontological relation of these emotional responses to the primary fact of being itself? After all, one could easily forward the objection that the passing contingency of one's own body and its subjection to corruption via time, circumstances, and age is not always a joyful experience. What then, is the source of this 'joy' and/or 'love'? At points, Cupitt does come close to answering this in a satisfactory manner. However, he does so in a way that is far less convincing than Eckhart (see below). An example of Cupitt's attempt at reconciling being and love with his particular

[815] Cupitt, Don, *The Revelation of Being*, London: SCM Press Ltd. 1998.
[816] Ibid, 16.
[817] Ibid, 18.
[818] Cupitt, Don, *Mysticism after Modernity*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998.
[819] Ibid, 101.
[820] Ibid, 101.

understanding of God comes to the fore in his text *The Religion of Being*.[821] In a crucial statement, Cupitt proclaims: "when we learn to think in a way that is as mild and amenable as Being itself, we can hope to achieve a contemplative marriage – even a unity – of Be-ing and Think-ing. And that is beatitude. It is the religion of Being's version of the spiritual marriage, the vision of God, the Unitive State."[822] Put another way, for Cupitt, the state of contemplative unity between the individual and being itself presents the individual with a beatific vision of God; that is to say, a vision of God that imparts a sanctified love and/or joy. He rephrases this revelatory moment of experience and its place within his spiritual program in stating that "the core of religion contracts down to the relation of the human person to the pure gift of Be-ing in the present moment."[823] In adding these comments together, Cupitt is advancing the idea that one's intellectual affirmation of being as a fundamental state of perpetual ontological transience is equivalent to a state of mind that ought to reveal love and/or joy via one's immediate lived experiences. Bearing this in mind, it becomes clearer why Cupitt intermittently seeks intellectual kinship in Eckhart.[824] More simply, Cupitt finds similarities within Eckhart insofar as they both argue, in Cupitt's words, that "God and the human individual are no longer to be thought of as two beings in apposition."[825] Moreover, it is precisely this ontological unity that Cupitt broadly sees Christianity as having missed the point on in respect to the vast majority of its history. Thus, in turning away from conventional Christianity, as it were, Cupitt is, here again, pressing for a new way of religious thinking

[821] Cupitt, Don, *The Religion of Being*, London, SCM Press Ltd. 1998.
[822] Ibid, 135.
[823] Ibid, 145.
[824] For example, see: Cuppit, *Mysticism after Modernity*, 95-105.
[825] Cupitt, Don, *Taking Leave of God* (London, SCM Press, 2001), 5.

when he writes that "the religion of the future will focus around Being".[826] Even more, he elects to plainly call this worldview 'the religion of Being";[827] that is to say, a religion that calls for a simple "attention to" and "affirmation of Being."[828]

There is considerable overlap between Cupitt's and my own project, in respect of the central role played by ontology and in the context of our shared emphases on Being. However, there also remain important distinctions. In addition to those already noted above concerning his recent work, *The Fountain*, there are several other points that must be noted in an effort to distinguish my own efforts in this thesis from what is found in Cupitt's writings. To begin, Cupitt's account of the feeling of love and/or joy that results from one's intellectual congruency with his principle of being is not satisfactory. This is because the moral element of this ontological connection is flawed (or at least incomplete) in his thinking. In other words, why is it that a feeling of love and/or joy would arise from one's connection with being if, in fact, being was not, at the same time, fundamentally love? Cupitt answers this by stating that love is the response to the intellectual affirmation of the metaphysical truths of one's existence. However, he does not say anything about love being the cause of existence. This very important point is something that is carefully described in Eckhart's works, and thus gives Eckhart a stronger foundation from which to claim that love ought to be the response to a correct understanding of existence. This point will be taken up in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis, in which I examine Eckhart's exegesis of 1 John 4:16; "God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him."[829] Another instance of the emphasis

[826] Cupitt, *The Religion of Being*, 145.
[827] Ibid, 150.
[828] Ibid, 150.
[829] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 62 (Sermon 5).

on love in Eckhart's understanding of God arises in his Latin sermon on 1 John 4:8; "God is love."[830] Quite plainly, 'love' is related to Eckhart's ontology insofar as "love is unifying and how the great union is."[831] Thus, love is the affective state that originates, substantiates and consummates the full unity of being in and through all things. This thought is brought out at another point in Eckhart's own words when he writes: "They are all connected in the One from which they come, in the One in which they are, and in the One that is their goal."[832] To Cupitt's defense, he does note that love is the response to one's intellectual union with being. However, Eckhart takes a small, but crucial step further by arguing that love is also the reason for being in the first place. In this way, love takes on a much greater role in one's ontological reflection on the nature of God in as much as it is not merely a response to being, but in fact, the reason for and the end goal of being, as well.

To reiterate, despite our numerous differences, Cupitt and I share much in common in our thinking. After all, I very much agree with his assessment that, in modern times, "few people are happy to be quite without any religious dimension to their lives. At least they would like to retain something of a religious sense of life's meaning…".[833] In fact, it is a point (and sentiment) such as this that makes the entire enterprise of this thesis a worthwhile project. That is to say, I too, have not forgone the possibility of a meaningful and revitalizing future for religion. Perhaps it is this shared feeling of

[830] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 212-214 (Sermon VI).
[831] Ibid, 212 (Sermon VI).
[832] Ibid, 156 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 96). Also, note that for Eckhart, God can be both 'being' and 'love' according to different modalities of determination. This is established in Eckhart's theory of the 'univocal', the 'equivocal', and the 'analogous', which receives its clearest treatment in his 'Lectures on Ecclesaisticus'. See: Ibid, 178 (Lectures on Ecclesiaticus, 52-53). For a critical commentary on Eckhart's presentation and meaning of this theory and other related points, see Flasch's discussion on 'primary determinations': Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 77-84, 132-141. This is configured in relation to 'love' by way of analogy. See, again: Ibid, 104-108, 111-112.
[833] Cuppit, Don, *Taking Leave of God*, 1.

optimism that has led us both to challenge and stand up for what we believe is worth holding onto and, indeed, carrying forward into the new millennium. Having mentioned this, it is perhaps obvious that anyone who promulgates clear and distinct challenges to the status quo of long established institutions and orthodox conventions is sure to be met with intense scrutiny. It is with this in mind that I share my greatest sympathy with Cupitt in stating that I too, "haven't made things easy for myself."[834]

Alternative Approaches IV:
Guidance for Further Reading and a General Survey of Relevant Literature

There is sufficient content in this chapter, alone, that it could easily be expanded into a book-length project. However, to better serve the more direct purpose of this thesis, only a very brief overview of some the key texts concerning the intersection of theology and secularity can be offered here. The authors in the above analyses have been presented in more detail in order to offer a telling cross-section of the issues and a picture of the greater context in which theology and secularity have mutually reformed one another's meaning and representation within the last seventy years, or so, of scholarship. In what follows, I will simply insert additional layers into that cross-section by briefly introducing a number of related texts and directing the reader to further points of interest and inquiry regarding the topics at hand.

To begin, I will simply quote from Jürgen Habermas (1929-) in order to set the tone for the discussions that will follow. Concerning the influence that secularity has had on tradition (and especially the religious elements thereof), the *Frankfurter Schule* philosopher writes: "[s]ecularization functions less as a filter separating out the contents

[834] Ibid, 73.

of traditions than as a transformer which redirects the flow of traditions."[835] Habermas' comment arises in an essay titled *An Awareness of What is Missing*,[836] in which he is responding to the perceived void in culture that has resulted from modernity's problematic and, often times, oppositional relationship with religious life and belief. While Habermas is hardly a voice for theology, his is one that forcefully influences the contemporary discourse on modernity. To summarize his points, Habermas does not see theology as something that will dissipate in direct proportion to the rise of secularity. Rather, he envisions secularity as, instead, the prime transformational tool in recalibrating and plotting the future direction that theology, in particular, and tradition, at large, will likely follow. Indeed, much of this thesis, especially in view of its methodological outlook, can be viewed as a complement to this observation. This point is further evidenced by the collection of authors that are to be recorded below.

In an essay titled, *The Idea of God and Modern Man*, the Marburg theologian, Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) boldly states: "*a revolution is necessary*. For, since the traditional ecclesiastical image of God is no longer credible to contemporary man, a *new image of God* is required; the old one is obsolete."[837] To be clear, Bultmann is responding to a particular Christian attitude toward faith that understands "the transcendence of God as Beyond which has nothing to do with the world."[838] Rejecting this view, Bultmann states: "[g]one is *the relation of man to the transcendent* [i.e., the transcendent presence

[835] Habermas, Jürgen, "An Awareness of What is Missing" in *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, tran. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 18.
[836] Ibid, 15-23.
[837] Bultmann, Rudolf, "The Idea of God and Modern Man" in *Translating Theology into the Modern Age: Historical, Systematic and Pastoral Reflections on Theology and the Church in the Contemporary Situation*, tran. Robert W. Funk, Vol. 2 of *Journal for Theology and Church*, ed. Robert W. Fund, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. 1965), 83. See, also: Ibid, 88.
[838] Ibid, 88-89.

of God][839] as that which stands over against man and the world".[840] With this parting, he seeks to present a "*new image of God*",[841] and goes on to declare that "*the transcendent* is to be sought and can be found not above or beyond the world, but *in the midst of the world*."[842] Bultmann's views on the overlap between transcendence and immanence and God and the world are largely in line with my own thinking in this thesis. His essay on this topic is one that is neatly intertwined with the philosophical culture of existentialism and the human person's need to confront a certain fullness (or lack thereof) of meaning in the here and now of one's life and lived experiences.

Another major figure speaking from the Continent that had a significant hand in orienting the dialogue between theology and secularity was the Jesuit priest and scholar, Karl Rahner (1904-1984) and his concept of the "Anonymous Christian".[843] To be clear, the problem that Rahner is attempting to address is how to think of an individual who lives his or her life in such a manner that it "should be called Christianity in a meaningful sense, even though it itself cannot and would not describe itself as such."[844] This problem presents a gray area for determining who ought to be and how one ought to be considered to be Christian. For clarification, Rahner offers the following criteria for his concept of the 'anonymous Christian':

> If it be true that the man who is the object of the Church's missionary endeavor is or can be already prior to it a man who is on the way towards his salvation and finds it in certain circumstances without being reached by the Church's preaching, and if it be true at the same time that the salvation which he achieves is the salvation of Christ, because there is no

[839] Ibid, 92.
[840] Ibid, 89.
[841] Ibid, 83.
[842] Ibid, 90.
[843] Rahner, Karl, *Theological Investigations: Volume VI Concerns for the Church*, tran. Edward Quinn (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1982), 390-398.
[844] Ibid, 391.

> other, then it must be possible to be not only an anonymous 'theist', but also an anonymous *Christian*, and this (since the Church of Christ is not purely interior reality) not in any merely intangible inner way, but also with a *certain* making visible and tangible of the anonymous relationship.[845]

Effectively, Rahner is making a case to christen those members of the human race, both past and present, who have, for reasons of historical, political, social, and/or geographical locations been unaware of the Christian message, and who were thereby, not explicitly confessing Christians. This can be drawn from a figure that, for example, predates the life of Christ to one who is born in present day Pyongyang. Put another way, Rahner is opening up the possibility for the Christian message to be communicated as a "revelation … which man always experiences implicitly in the depths of his being."[846] That is to say, Holy Scripture is, for Rahner, not the exclusive manner of God's self-communication. In fact, for Rahner, it is the "radical acceptance of [one's] being"[847] that, if authentically and genuinely understood, will manifest itself as – either anonymous or conventional – Christianity. Rahner's proposal is remarkable in that it breaks open any austere in-group/out-group boundaries that would otherwise restrict what it means to be a Christian. Even so, as he writes: "this is not a hermeneutic *principle* critically to reduce the whole corpus of traditional theology and dogma … to make Christianity in this form more acceptable".[848] Instead, Rahner is simply working to reveal a substratum of Christianity that he understands to be at the foundation of human nature and existence, itself.

Johannes Baptist Metz (1928-) takes up secularity as a natural platform for his theory of incarnation – a theory that subsequently takes its fully developed form as his

[845] Ibid, 396.
[846] Ibid 394.
[847] Ibid, 395.
[848] Ibid, 396.

"*political theology*"[849] (or at other points, a "(*socio-*) *critical theology*)."[850] In brief, this variety of theology embraces the secular emphasis on matters of the world, and proceeds to imbue them with theological implications. In his own words, he writes: "[t]he place where the responsibility of the Christian community starts is *the world in its permanent and growing worldliness*."[851] Even so, Metz remains clear concerning his intentions to preserve an understanding of "God in his transcendent superiority to the world". [852] In this sense, his theological directives gain their 'wordliness' as fundamentally ethical imperatives. For example, he writes: "Jesus' parables … are parables of the kingdom of God but, *at the same time*, they instruct us in a renewed critical relationship to our world."[853] It is precisely the 'renewed critical relationship' to the world that, according to Metz, ought to lead one to a moral conclusion that "[t]he Church exists for the sake of the world"[854] and for the greater purpose of instating "one kingdom of universal peace."[855] In this way, Metz's political theology, as he positions it, embraces the world insofar as he understands secularization as a fundamentally "*Christian event*" [856] that is *"at work within history*." [857] Thus, he situates the historical emergence of secularity as an opportunity to realize a genuinely Christian "view of the world".[858]

The Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo (1936-), as both as a Catholic thinker and a lauded critic of religion, occupies a rare space in his reflections on theology and the

[849] Metz, Johann-Baptist, *Theology of the World*, tran. William Glen-Doepel (London: Burns & Oats Limited, 1969), 115.
[850] Ibid, 115.
[851] Ibid, 142.
[852] Ibid, 32.
[853] Ibid, 114-115.
[854] Ibid, 50.
[855] Ibid, 138.
[856] Ibid, 19-20.
[857] Ibid, 19-20.
[858] Ibid, 32.

philosophy of religion. For Vattimo, the historical and cultural emergence of secularity as a dominant stream of Western thinking becomes a predictable response to the changes in religious identity, thinking, and attitudes of what he understands to be a "postmodern faith";[859] that is to say, a faith that has "nothing to do with the acceptance of dogmas or with disciplines imposed by a single authority."[860] Despite what at first glance might appear as an attack on religious institutions, Vattimo is clear in stating "that the main philosophical outcome … of the almost general discrediting of philosophical foundationalism is the renewed possibility of religious experience."[861] It is precisely this 'renewed possibility of religious experience' or the "rebirth of religion"[862] that, for Vattimo, deemphasizes the role of institutionally mandated doctrines and dogmas and emphasizes the individual "need for ultimate truth, and of a desire to recover one's own identity, especially with reference to transcendence."[863] In other words, Vattimo argues that while the authority of religious institutions fades into history, what is preserved is the possibility for a more authentic and liberated individual religious experience. Bearing this new state of being in mind, he goes on to state that "[i]f modern civilization secularizes itself, this is the positive mode in which it responds to the announcement of the religious tradition." In this sense, secularization becomes the context for a new approach to a more liberated religiosity in a 'postmodern' and 'post-metaphysical' world. This position then leads to his final assessment that "secularization shall no longer be conceived of as abandonment of religion but as the paradoxical realization of Being's religious

[859] Vattimo, Gianni, *After Christianity*, tran. Luca D'Isanto (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 8-9.
[860] Ibid, 8-9.
[861] Ibid, 16.
[862] Ibid, 18.
[863] Ibid, 87.

vocation."[864] This last segment of his thinking can be clarified by simply noting that Vattimo is seeking a religiosity that is more "at the core of the preaching of Jesus"[865] and less reliant on the role of institutional hegemony over the manner in which the human/divine relationship is both presented and understood.

John Macquarrie (1919-2007) is perhaps most celebrated for, among other things, his English translation of Heidegger's *Being and Time*.[866] However, and for the immediate task at hand, his voice will be recognized as one that was foundational for the modern dialogue between theology and secularity. His position on these matters is most succinctly announced in his book *God and Secularity*,[867] in which he observes that "[n]owadays theology has to be done in a secularized world. If the theologian cannot avoid the responsibility of speaking of God, it is equally true that he cannot avoid the responsibility of addressing himself to his own world and speaking the language of his time."[868] In introducing another element of perceived conflict, Macquarrie frames the theological problem of secularity in a manner that is reflective of my own thinking when he writes: "God and secularity: these are the poles between which the contemporary theological discussion moves, and at first sight they seem to be poles that are infinitely apart."[869] However, as he sees it, the task of the modern theologian in the face of this opposition is to remain "in search of the synthesis between God and secularity."[870] Macquarrie makes it patently clear his interest lies in resolving the conflict between

[864] Ibid, 24.
[865] Vattimo, Gianni, *A Farewell to Truth*, tran. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 86.
[866] Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1962.
[867] Macquarrie, John, *God and Secularity* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), 13.
[868] Ibid, 13.
[869] Ibid, 13.
[870] Ibid, 44.

theology and secularity, rather than allowing their continued polarity. To this end, he writes: "[w]e cannot allow our world to be cut in two, calling one sphere secular and the other sacred. Somehow the Christian has to find a synthesis between the two. … In other words, we must find God in the world."[871] Macquarrie does just this, and in so doing, he succeeds in further developing and clarifying a point that was I attempting to show at an earlier location in this thesis. The noted point is centered on the "Christian [whom] even in the midst of the temporal and the this-worldly, seeks a dimension of transcendence."[872] Macquarrie, in this case, is adamant in pointing out the difference between "shallow worldliness and holy worldliness".[873] The former refers to "things of the world cut off from deeper levels of reality";[874] that is to say, 'shallow worldliness' is defined by the selfish and superficial pursuit of "material well-being"[875] and "the satisfaction of economic needs is at its center".[876] The latter, however, refers to one's potential to "see beneath the surface of worldly things … to the holy depths that can give meaning and worth"[877] to the world in a more spiritual light. Macquarrie adds to this point when he writes: "[b]ut if we say that the church must serve the world, we must also say that it would serve the world ill if it merely conformed to the world's ways."[878] This careful distinction illustrates the intended orientation that one's approach to worldly matters ought to assume under this particular theological understanding.

[871] Ibid, 59.
[872] Ibid, 65.
[873] Ibid, 71.
[874] Ibid, 70.
[875] Ibid, 67.
[876] Ibid, 67.
[877] Ibid, 69.
[878] Ibid, 68.

Prior to Charles Taylor's defining contribution, *A Secular Age*,[879] which came out at the turn of the millennium, Harvard theologian, Harvey Cox's (1929-) book *The Secular City*[880] was perhaps the formative text outlining the secular conditions of the twentieth century. Cox's definition of secularity is closely related to the upward motion of global urbanization. Regarding this, he writes: "[t]he rise of urban civilization and the collapse of traditional religion are the two main hallmarks of our era and are closely related movements."[881] It is urbanization, in Cox's view, that has caused humanity to come to know the world entirely in reference to itself (in other words, not in reference to any conventional religious figures, identities, and/or symbols, and so on). Cox characterizes this idea by stating that "we experience the universe as the city of man."[882] In light of this contextual shift, Cox then forwards the argument that theology must begin "speaking in a secular fashion about God".[883] He bolsters this thought by stating that "[i]f theology is to survive and to make any sense to the contemporary world, it must neither cling to a metaphysical world view nor collapse into a mythical mode. It must push into the living lexicon of the urban-secular man."[884] To be clear, Cox's main motivation for and expectation of theology is that it be utilized as an instrument for "social change."[885] More simply, his prerogative remains focused on influencing the "events of everyday life".[886] This comes into clear view when Cox states that "[s]ecularization occurs when man turns his attention away from the worlds beyond and toward this world and this time

[879] Taylor, Charles, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.
[880] Cox, Harvey, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*, New York: Collier Books, 1990.
[881] Ibid, 1.
[882] Ibid, 1.
[883] Ibid, 212.
[884] Ibid, 220.
[885] Ibid, 91.
[886] Ibid, 229.

(*saeculum* = 'this present age')."[887] In other words, for Cox, what is important is how it is that one lives one's life within the world of the here and now. For him, this is the location where God "meets us".[888] In turn, this ought to affect how it is that one comports oneself in worldly encounters with, for example, "a client, a customer, a patient, a co-worker".[889] Fundamentally, Cox's effort is to make use of the secularization of the Western world in order to reorient the focus for theology from a metaphysically distinct world and/or entities to that of the present immanent world of immediate concrete relations.

The above selections have been offered, as stated at the outset of this subsection, merely to add additional layers to the already telling cross-section that occupied the first parts of this chapter. Doubtlessly, this list could go on for quite some time, and with seemingly no end in sight. However, what has been presented here is adequate to show that the debate on how theology ought to be understood in light of secularity is a pivotal and ever-growing conversation in current academic, pastoral and public realms, alike. Adding to this effort, recent editions from Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler,[890] as well as Clayton Crocket,[891] have worked to significantly increase the range of voices contributing to this important debate, with Mark. C. Taylor and George Pattison also adding to this now steady and ongoing conversation. For example, in his book, *After God*,[892] M. Taylor[893] echoes much of what the above review has already shown, for example:

---

[887] Ibid, 1-2.
[888] Ibid, 229.
[889] Ibid, 229.
[890] Smith, Anthony Paul and Whistler, Daniel, *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011.
[891] Crocket, Clayton, *Secular Theology: American Radical Theological Thought*, ed. Clayton Crocket, New York: Routledge, 2001.
[892] Taylor, Mark C., *After God*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.

> Religionists and secularists are mirror images of each other who share more than they are willing to admit; each reverses but does not displace the other. Although it is not immediately obvious, both perspectives rest on the same error. Bound by the exclusive logic of either/or, each side in this conflict sees religion and secularity as irreconcilable opposites.[894]

In writing this, M. Taylor frames the oppositional elements of religiosity and secularity as dialectical rather than exclusionary. In a similar manner of thinking to what can be found in this thesis, he moves forward from this state of dialectical opposition in the direction of "reconciliation".[895] Similarly, Pattison's long-standing commitment to topics concerning God and ontology,[896] religious experience and spirituality,[897] and the complexities of modernity[898] are also very much worthy of mention. In fact, a significant number of Pattison's works are deeply interwoven with the themes that are at the heart of the thesis. To address his written oeuvre adequately, as it relates to this thesis, would be an enormous undertaking that is well beyond the scope of what can be offered in this chapter. Therefore, to simplify this task, I will direct my reader to a recent article from Pattison in which he takes up the works of Søren Kierkegaard[899] in a manner that resembles what I am here attempting to do with Eckhart.

---

[893] In the main body of this thesis, Mark C. Taylor will be, from here forward, noted as 'M. Taylor'. I will follow this convention in order to distinguish between his person and/or writings and my numerous references to the works of Charles Taylor.
[894] Taylor, *After God*, 132.
[895] Ibid, 2.
[896] See: Pattison, George, *God & Being: An Inquiry*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011
[897] See: Pattison, George, *Agnosis: Theology in the Void*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996.
[898] See: Pattison, George, Thinking About God in an Age of Technology, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; Pattison, George, *The End of Theology – And the Task of Thinking about God*, London: SCM Press Ltd.
[899] Pattison, George, "Kirkestormen, neo-Gnosticism and Secular Christianity" in *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 73. (årg., 2010), 282-295.

As a final element to this subsection, I will point to a popular work[900] from the neuroscientist, public intellectual, and avowed atheist, Sam Harris. My aim in doing so is rather simple; that is to show that engaging Eckhart as an interlocutor for dialogue between secularity and theology is not something solely for authors who are of a religious disposition and/or leaning. For example, contrary to what he understands to be simple and misinformed cultural constructions of religious identity and belief, Harris still holds that a "deeper [universal] principle must be at work";[901] that is to say, a transcendental principle that is "usually interpreted through the lens of one or another religious doctrine".[902] It is Harris' aim to investigate the 'deeper [universal] principle of "self-transcendence"[903] and to present it in what he refers to as a "reasonable"[904] context and set of terms for understanding this otherwise scientifically elusive[905] phenomenon. Interestingly, and despite his ostensibly disparaging remarks about Western religion(s), Harris still has a uniquely focused appreciation for the thought and historical figure of Meister Eckhart.[906] For the purpose of this thesis, the important point to draw from this comment (and from those noted above) is the fact that well reputed authors from both sides of the discussion at hand have mutually recognized Eckhart as a figure who is particularly apt to impart an intermediary position regarding the special character of being that has been shown to arise between the conventionally determined binary of Christian theology and secular culture.

---

[900] See: Harris, Sam, *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality without Religion*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014.
[901] Ibid, 9.
[902] Ibid, 9.
[903] Ibid, 18.
[904] Ibid, 6.
[905] Ibid, 51.
[906] Ibid, 22.

To conclude, this subsection has served the modest function of summarizing and very briefly presenting a number of important texts that, in part, make up the contemporary discourse on how it is that theology ought to or has dealt with the challenges and, indeed, the opportunities presented to it by the gradual but steady secularization of Western culture. In the final chapters of this thesis, my own distinctive interpretation of Eckhartian mystical ontology will be presented and applied toward treating this same theological situation.

Problems, Criticisms, Summary, and Conclusion

The preceding survey is in no way meant to be comprehensive. However, it is meant to serve as a revealing cross-section that presents some of the more influential contributors to the debates surrounding the constructive intersections that exist between theology and secularity. One of the greater difficulties of such a survey is that one must account for a notable degree of equivocation concerning the terminology that is at play. To assume that each of these scholars (and, no less, Eckhart himself) have addressed terms such as 'secularity', theology', 'Christianity', and so on, in an absolutely parallel manner, as noted at the outset of this chapter, would be mistaken. Therefore, I have elected to discuss a limited selection of thinkers in some detail. Together, these selected authors cast a wide spectrum of the views that are all accounted for in this chapter. The choice to do so has also meant that I have not been able to review as many authors as some readers might have liked. However, in this case, and due to the nuance of the vocabulary involved, it was simply more important to present a controlled number of these discussions in a

fashion that allowed for the depth of meaning of the noted authors' language to become more visible.

An alternative approach to the intersection (or the lack thereof) between theology and secularity that was not covered here is that of 'Radical Orthodoxy'. To address this movement in any complete sense would require, at the very least, another chapter. Insofar as I have insufficient space for such a task, I will only be able to offer a few passing remarks on this subject. The more prominent authors from this particular movement that have engaged in topics that are closely related to this thesis are John Milbank,[907] Lawrence Paul Hemming,[908] and Conor Cunningham;[909] though, to be sure, there are also others.[910] Despite what could unfurl as a long list of names, in my effort to simply offer a succinct presentation of this complete movement, I will turn to James K. A. Smith as an individual who has collected the diverse pieces of Radical Orthodoxy and assembled them into a single intelligible whole.[911]

Smith begins by defining the terms of 'radical orthodoxy' in the following manner: "[i]t is orthodox insofar as it seeks to be unapologetically confessional and Christian; it is radical insofar as it seeks to critically retrieve premodern roots (*radix*)." Concerning this latter noted detail, one would be on point to underscore my reference to pre-modern theology in the context of Eckhart as a notable similarity. However, the very important difference comes in respect to my strong appeal to heterodoxy as a useful means for dialoguing with secularity and modernity. It is highly likely that, in light of my

[907] Milbank, John, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and pardon*, New York: Routledge, 2003.
[908] Hemming, Laurence Paul, *Heidegger's Atheism*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.
[909] Cunningham, Conor, *Genealogy of Nihilism*, London: Routledge, 2002.
[910] Milbank, John, Pickstock, Catherine, and Ward, Graham, *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, eds. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, London: Routledge, 1999.
[911] Smith, James K. A., *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

work's relation to modernity, Smith would pejoratively refer to a project such as mine as a "correlationist"[912] theology. This means that, rather than presenting Christianity in its full integrity, I might be considered, according to this theory, guilty of correlating Christian thought to secular culture as a means of establishing a more palatable social assimilation for religious thinking in a secular climate. To be clear, Chapter I of this thesis described in detail the process of hermeneutic understanding and interpretation according to Gadamer. To briefly reiterate those points, interpretation itself is an impossible task unless the subject matter being interpreted is understood within the matrix of a given horizon of tradition. This, however, does not mean that one is free to simply appropriate thoughts and ideas to one's own liking. It does, however, mean that subject matter from one horizon must be brought into intelligible terms that make sense within the given horizon of interpretation. There is nothing that is 'correlationist' about this, rather it is simply a constitute element of how understanding and interpretation both operate in any scenario or setting.

Significantly, 'radical orthodoxy' also rejects modernity in favor of a broadly construed notion of post-modernity. Again, to fully engage in this debate concerning the legitimacy of modernity and/or post-modernity would drive this project far from its course. Therefore, I will simply defer to Habermas to add some clarity to the matter at hand. Keeping close to the denotation of modernity itself, Habermas makes the following remark: "I believe that we should learn from the aberrations which have accompanied the project of modernity … rather than abandoning modernity and its project."[913] His

[912] Ibid, 33-35.
[913] Habermas, Jürgen, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project" in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, eds. Maurizio Passerin d'Entréves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 51.

position is then clarified at another point when he writes that: "the new, the modern world is distinguished from the old by the fact that it opens itself to the future, the epochal new beginning is rendered constant with each moment that gives birth to the new … [w]ithin the horizon of the modern age, the present enjoys a prominent position as contemporary history."[914] Put quite simply, modernity, as a manner of discourse presupposes a credulity that embraces and informs what comes to pass as new and contemporary. Thought of in this way, modernity already subsumes within its discourse a manner of critique that has in many cases been thought of as a uniquely post-modern brand of skepticism.[915] In this way, each new phase in history is simply yet another stage, by definition, of the modern.[916]

However, there is perhaps a more telling religious element of post-modernism for the adherents of 'radical orthodoxy'; that is, one that they refer to as the 'post-secular'. According to Smith, the post-secular, and the supporters of this movement, have elected to look to the Christian past in order to find a general reference for orientation that was either prior to, or "not yet contaminated by the invention of the secular."[917] In this way, the pre-secular, so to speak, is then recovered and given new meaning and application in the horizon of the post-secular. In doing so, all aspects of the secularizing trend of modernity have been, to this general view, successfully undermined as a result of the perceived failures (for example, claims regarding metaphysics and validity and/or the

[914] Habermas, Jürgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Fredrick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 6.
[915] See: Lyotard, Jean-François, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.
[916] See: Benavides, Gustavo, "Modernity" in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 186-204. Benavides' etymological study of the term 'modernity' begins with the statement that: "The term 'modern' and its equivalents in European languages derive from the Latin *modernus*, which itself derives from the adverb *modo*, a term that since the fifth century C.E. was equivalent to *nunc*, 'now'." Ibid, 186.
[917] Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 46.

dominance of the natural sciences, and so on) of modernity and secular culture. To a certain type of Christian thinker, such a movement might come across as counter-revolutionary and enthralling. Perhaps it would even be considered as a definitive victory against the secular. However, this begs the question as to how a secular thinker would respond to this. The conversation around the post-secular is not at all a dialogue between Christianity and secularity. Rather, it is simply a rhetorical subversion of this variety of thinking. The limitations of this movement are brought into objective view when one considers the historical observations that have been offered by Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age*. Again, and in following Max Weber, Taylor observes a long-term shift in historical thinking that traces from a generally 'enchanted' world (here referring to the world before the year 1500)[918] of belief to one that is 'disenchanted', or highly rationalized, scientific, and exposed to a plurality of beliefs (religious and otherwise).[919] According to Taylor: "[i]t is this shift in background, in the whole context in which we experience and search for fullness, that I am calling … a secular age".[920] From another view, Taylor is simply suggesting that secularity, in this case, is a set of historical conditions whereupon and wherefrom one is meant to take up (or not) one's ruminations on the questions of life and theology. Thus, and as it has already been noted many times, Taylor is not declaring an end to theological speculation. Rather, he is simply naming the principle features that comprise the current horizon of history, culture, and thought.

Another question that comes to the fore as a result of this discussion is, in what way (if any) would my overall argument be challenged if Eckhart's theology were to be considered orthodox? This would, indeed, be significant. First of all, it would mean that

[918] Taylor, A Secular Age, 26.
[919] Ibid, 25. See, also: Introduction.
[920] Ibid, 14.

orthodox Christianity would have made a major move in the direction of understanding the being of the individual to be, in full actuality and essence, the being of God.[921] This would also mean that orthodox Christianity would accept the essential being of God to be present in, and indeed, coterminous with all things, animate and inanimate, and to pervade the totality of existence in an equal and undifferentiated manner.[922] If these points were to be considered as orthodox Christian belief, many of the issues that differentiate secularity from Christianity would also become far less apparent. For example, this thesis has presented, time and again, the distinctive focus that Eckhart puts on the ontic totality of being. In other words, Eckhart opines that one ought to be able to locate God in all things, in all places, and at all times. Such a univocal approach to the immanent element of the being of God is, to be sure, unique to Eckhart, especially in his capacity as a recognized Christian thinker. To this point, recall once again, that the secular is here being understood as "[o]f or pertaining to the world."[923] Because of Eckhart's definitive statement on the relationship between God and existence in general – "Being is God" [*Esse est deus*][924] – I have brought forward the following definition of 'mystical ontology' as a description of his thought – a concept that serves the dual purpose of classifying Eckhart's unique stripe of mysticism, in general, and readying it for a constructive engagement with certain elements of secular culture. Again, 'mystical ontology' was defined at the onset of this thesis as: *a belief in the possibility of union*

[921] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 26-27 (Articles Condemned in the Bull of John XXII, Article 10).
[922] Ibid, 26 (Articles Condemned in the Bull of John XXII, Article 1).
[923] "secular, adj. and n.". *OED Online*. June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/174620?redirectedFrom=secular& (accessed June 30, 2014).
[924] Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke* (Erster Band, 1958), 156 (Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum, 12).

with or absorption into God by means of a correct understanding of the essence of one's own being and of the essence of being in general.

In summary, I have elected to turn to Eckhart as the most appropriate interlocutor for this project for a number of reasons. The primary reason is because of his unabated concentration on the special being of God – an essential being that is not withheld or withdrawn from the world, but is instead fully and absolutely present in it. This is a unique theology that can help to connect a direct line from Christian thinking to secularity (as it has been defined above). Although the audience and the times have clearly changed, the message remains as consistent and, indeed, as heretical as ever, 'Being is God'. In bearing this principle in mind, and coupling it with Habermas' words from the previous sub-section of this chapter, it is true that secularization is not putting an end to theology, as it were. Rather, it is simply a filter that "redirects the flow"[925] and carries it forward into new landscapes of thought, and under a new horizon of understanding – a horizon wherein matters 'pertaining to the world' are of the utmost importance. Theology, then, ought to respond by meeting secularity at their shared nexus; and do so by reasserting the notions of being and existence at the fore of this dialogue. In what follows, it will be shown that Eckhart helps to both facilitate and accomplish this task.

[925] Habermas, *An Awareness of What is Missing*, 18.

Chapter VI

Engaging Eckhartian Mysticism in a Secular Context

This is the keystone chapter of this thesis. What has been presented up to this point has been organized and developed in a cumulative manner in order to demonstrate the content and argument of what will here be expounded. To be clear, this chapter will ask the same question that has served to guide this thesis as a whole; namely, the question as to what insights Meister Eckhart's thought can offer to theologians today in addressing the problem of secularity. My overall argument for this chapter will then be: *the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart can be interpreted and applied in a manner that opens a space for constructive dialogue between secular culture and Eckhart's understanding of the presence of God in the world*.

This argument will be carried out first by reflecting on Charles Taylor's seminal work, *A Secular Age*.[926] Taylor's work has served a critical role in defining the criteria for secularity that this thesis has relied on in its assessment of certain pervading conditions of modern Western culture. This topic was brought to attention in the Introduction of this thesis. It is here, near to its conclusion, that it will receive a more complete treatment. Next, I will move to show precisely how it is that the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart can be interpreted in a manner that directly responds to Taylor's remarks on the future of theology and Christian thought in this secular age. Following this, the definitive statement concerning my position on Eckhartian mystical ontology will be presented. Then, I will proceed to tie my position on Eckhartian mystical ontology to Taylor's open call for new and constructive ways of moving beyond the

[926] Taylor, Charles, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

"opposition between orthodoxy and unbelief"[927] in looking for a "third way".[928] I will then uniformly conclude with a critical analysis and summary of the chapter and its deductions.

This chapter is critical to the whole of this thesis insofar as it draws out my interpretation on the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart from within the context of secularity, and with an eye toward creating a productive space for dialogue that will emerge at once as something profoundly theological, yet acutely attentive to certain principles of modern secular culture.

Charles Taylor and the Nova Effect: Between Orthodoxy and Unbelief

A secular age, for Taylor, in no way indicates that religion has ceased to exist, or that it does not significantly influence the lives of individuals and certain trends in society. His claim simply takes into account the vast changes that have occurred over the past five hundred years in respect to cultural, scientific and political changes and adaptations. Summarizing this, he directs his reader to his observation that Western culture has transitioned from "a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others."[929] Taylor hinges this momentous swing in history on the transition from an "enchanted"[930] world (here referring to the world before the year 1500)[931] of belief to one

[927] Ibid, 302.
[928] Ibid, 302.
[929] Ibid, 3.
[930] Ibid, 26
[931] Ibid, 26.

that is "disenchanted",[932] or highly rationalized, scientific and exposed to a plurality of beliefs (religious or otherwise). Thus, Taylor concludes that "[i]t is this shift in background, in the whole context in which we experience and search for fullness, that I am calling … a secular age".[933] The important point to emphasize here is that Taylor is not denying religion a place in modern secular society. Rather, he is merely accounting for a myriad of complex conditions that have come together, broadly, in challenging how it is that the "search for fullness"[934] is understood, presented, and/or experienced on personal, cultural and political levels.

To be clear, Taylor defines the above-noted term 'fullness' as: "an experience which unsettles and breaks through our ordinary sense of being in the world".[935] In other words, it is something that is brought about through a transcendental event of some variety. Accordingly then, and in opposition to fullness, Taylor understands "absence"[936] to be the deprivation of fullness; and furthermore, one that is brought about by way of one's willful rejection – or the "buffering"[937] – of oneself from any kind of transcendental encounter whatsoever. More concisely, Taylor's thinking suggests that the framework of the modern Western world is concretely focused upon defining elements of immanent world perspectives. To understand this, one must bear in mind that Taylor's conclusions are based on his view of tradition and a number of its fundamental shifts that have effectively brought secularity out from the shadows of cultural obscurity to, ultimately, stand in full light as one of the defining features of modern life. Two conditions, in

[932] Ibid, 25.
[933] Ibid, 14.
[934] Ibid, 14.
[935] Ibid, 5.
[936] Ibid, 6.
[937] Ibid, 539.

particular, according to Taylor, feature prominently as efficient causes for this shift: "[t]he first concentrates on the common institutions and practices – most obviously, but not only, the state."[938] The "second … consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to Church."[939] These points could easily digress into a long and complicated conversation. However, and for the sake of staying the course, let it suffice to say that, in presenting these conditions for secularity, Taylor is most of all interested in understanding the consequent movement of religion from an explicitly public expression to a more individual and private matter of experience. To be sure, this is not the strongest point in Taylor's argumentation. However, it does lead to his less objectionable, and indeed, more important compound observations that, first: "[o]ur understanding of secularity … is in terms of public spaces. These have been allegedly emptied of God, or of any reference to ultimate reality."[940] Secondly: "[d]eeply felt personal insight now becomes our most precious spiritual resource."[941] Taylor is not suggesting that the latter did not have credibility or existential validity in former times. Rather, he is simply stating that in a world that lacks (or is greatly depreciated in respect to) recognizable references to religion and the sacred, one is, then, more likely to turn toward internal insights and experiences to serve in establishing any religious understandings and/or a sense of authority on such matters. In other words, it is Taylor's view that "[f]or many people today, to set aside their own path in order to conform to some external authority just doesn't seem comprehensible as a

[938] Ibid, 1.
[939] Ibid, 2.
[940] Ibid, 2.
[941] Ibid, 489.

form of spiritual life."[942] Continuing along this line of thought, he concludes that, therefore: "the injunction would reason to be: let everyone follow his or her own path of spiritual inspiration. Don't be led off yours by the allegation that it doesn't fit with some orthodoxy."[943]

At this point, it is worth pointing out again that, despite the strong rhetoric of some of Taylor's claims concerning the outgoing tide of religious influence, he still remains quite hopeful about the future of religion, albeit, in a manner that is significantly altered from many of its past formulations. In fact, he is quite candid about this aspiration; even so much as to announce it as the core aim of his thinking in *A Secular Age*. He states: "Western modernity, including its secularity, is the fruit of new inventions, newly constructed self-understandings and related practices, and can't be explained in terms of perennial features of human life."[944] In other words, Taylor sees the modern West, at once, as a location for the free critique of religion and the stage for its transformation. Thus, Taylor's view is balanced between his criticisms of both religion and secularity. For him, such an intermediary position is representative of the struggle that many people now face in coming to terms with religious beliefs and ideas in a secular context. As an example of this, he writes: "[b]ut if our faith has remained at the stage of immature images, then the story that materialism equals maturity can seem plausible."[945] Yet all the while, he views the atheistic and/or the non-religious worldviews as lacking in something vital and profound about the world and human existence. That is to say, something that is in excess of secularity's demand to adhere to

[942] Ibid, 489.
[943] Ibid, 489.
[944] Ibid, 22.
[945] Ibid, 364.

immanent boundaries; boundaries that confine one to "the utter flatness"[946] or, the "emptiness of the ordinary."[947] Taylor's approximation of the modern Western world as one that is amidst a secular age is compelling. While the argumentation and detail of the conditions for or against secularity are, in their own right, far more complex than that which Taylor purports to treat, he nevertheless does succeed in leveling, at the very least, a broad critique of both religion and of secularity in regard to their respective abilities to capture the religious and/or spiritual needs and attitudes of the present day. Again, those needs and attitudes can be contextualized according to this project by the simple points that, firstly, Eckhartian thought exceeds the boundaries of Christian orthodoxy, thus freeing it of the need to conform to any standard other than its own content, meanings, and implications for spirituality. Secondly, Eckhart also helps to refocus one's attention regarding the location of God to the presence and existence of this world, as opposed to other worlds and/or lives. Finally, turning to Eckhart maintains an important link to tradition and hermeneutical understanding. In this way, he can be thought of as speaking from within tradition, but also challenging its norms and conventions. Thought of in this way, certain elements of secular culture and Christian theology are then free to evolve together into a productive dialogue. In Taylor's writing, he also sees possibilities for a constructive intersection between secularity and religion. However, he is also sure to note their oppositional qualities. For example, he is clear about his position that religion has been, and in many ways, continues to be reluctant to cope with the challenges posed to it by modernity. Concerning the latter, Taylor is direct in demonstrating what he sees as the

[946] Ibid, 309.
[947] Ibid, 309.

suppression of the full human experience when secular culture completely rejects any form of transcendence, whatsoever.

For Taylor, religion and secularity have both fallen short of fully accounting for the potential that they might have if they constructively critique one another and then grow together in unison. Rather, they have all too often only recognized their distinctions and have thus been almost entirely adversarial in their struggle for influence in the modern Western world. This opposition has created a sense of "instability"[948] between the two, and consequently, the culture that has formed between them. Taylor characterizes this instability in respect to the oppositional pull of influence that each of these categories has wielded in the past, and continues to wield. He writes:

> Again, this doesn't mean that everyone will go on being pulled both ways. Many, perhaps most, will end up opting for some solution, including the extreme ones of authoritarian orthodoxy and materialist atheism. But the situation as a whole remains unstable, in the sense that there is no long term movement towards a resolution of whatever kind. Successive generations keep re-opening the issues in new ways; children desert the solutions of their parents: one generation reacts to the Gibbonian high culture of the eighteenth century by turning evangelical; not very long after their descendants have become unbelievers, and so on. Both those who hope that unbelief will encounter its own limitations and aridity, and will peter out in a general return to orthodoxy; and those who think that all this represents an historic march towards reason and science, seem doomed to disappoint. Over time, there seems no stable resolution.[949]

In other words, the destabilization that has resulted from the modern West's oscillations between religious orthodoxy[950] and secular unbelief[951] is a result of the misguided assumption that these forces of culture must, in fact, each occupy a fixed state of mutual

[948] Ibid, 302.
[949] Ibid, 302-303.
[950] Ibid, 302.
[951] Ibid, 102.

opposition. For Taylor, the solution to this longstanding opposition is something that avoids appealing to the polarizing tendencies from either end of the debate. Even more, in light of this destabilization, Taylor aims to map a new middle path that, as he sees it, can lead toward a reconciliation of the noted dialectic:

> What this reflects is that in face of the opposition between orthodoxy and unbelief, many, and among them the best and most sensitive minds, were cross-pressured, looking for a third way. This cross-pressure is, of course, part of the dynamic which generates the nova effect, as more and more third ways are created."[952]

Here, Taylor has finally tapped the driving motivations behind this thesis. It is this search for a 'third way' that I have been seeking to develop over the course of this entire work. For all intents and purposes, this thesis is a 'nova effect'; it is a response to the dissatisfaction that currently exists concerning the binary of religion and secularity, or more accurately, and to use Taylor's vocabulary, "orthodoxy and unbelief".[953] The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to contextualizing my interpretation of Eckhkartian mystical ontology for the purpose of constructively treating the modern theological problem of secularity.

Eckhartian Mystical Ontology and the Theological Problem of Secularity

The modern theological problem of secularity (to repeat and emphasize what has already been noted above in this chapter as well as in the Introduction) is settled upon the following observation: "[t]he shift to secularity … consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to

[952] Ibid, 302.
[953] Ibid, 302.

one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace."[954] From a specifically Christian perspective, this would mean that not only have most direct and clear references to God been relegated from public and political prominence to private life, but that the cultural hegemony that Christianity had previously held in the West has also been undermined by the wide acceptance and growth of other religious traditions from within secular societies.

At this point, it is worth recalling the working definition of 'secular' that was presented in the Introduction to this thesis and that has persisted throughout its course. To be clear and consistent in respect to terminology from an early point on, the *Oxford English Dictionary* was cited for its definition of the term 'secular' as: "[o]f or pertaining to the world."[955] This definition arises over and against anything that would be: not of or pertaining to the world. Further, this term can be used in contrast to specific theological understandings that conceive of God as something other than, or, entirely outside of, the world. Karl Barth is a leading voice among theologians who have expressed an understanding of God's alterity to the world. For example, in *The Epistle to the Romans*, Barth writes:

> [I]f I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity, and to my regarding this as possessing negative as well as positive significance: 'God is in heaven, and thou art on earth'. The relation between such a God and such a man, and the relation between such a man and such a God, is for me the theme of the Bible and the essence of philosophy."[956]

[954] Ibid, 3.
[955] "secular, adj. and n.". *OED Online*. June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/174620?redirectedFrom=secular& (accessed June 30, 2014).
[956] Barth, Karl, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 10.

The theological understanding that Barth provides in this quotation is one that is quite the opposite of a God that is 'of or pertaining to the world', or rather, the 'earth'. Instead, Barth is quite clear that, for him, God is to be understood as a being that is absolutely transcendent of and in relation to the world. The distinction drawn here by Barth can be further determined by classifying it as a binary between immanence and transcendence as well as one that demarcates the opposition between the secular and the sacred. I do not mean to suggest that all of these terms are absolutely parallel in their denotations and possible connotations. Rather, I am here simply working to show that a rather obvious polarity can be established when it comes to thinking about God. On the one hand, God can be understood, following Barth, as completely transcendent to the world. Thinking about the nature of God in such a manner would be to reject God's worldly presence and to limit God's context to a sacred heavenly realm. While on the other hand, God can be understood to be radically present in the world, and thereby emphasizing God's worldly – or secular – and immanent state of being. It is precisely this latter position that I want to focus on now.

The theological problem of secularity, at least as far as it is being presented in this thesis, begins to take its form from within the framework of the immanence and/or the transcendence of God. The problem, here being addressed, that is posed for theology is that of an absolute, 'qualitative distinction' between God and the world (as Barth would have it); a notion that simply does not resonate with much of the modern disenchanted – or, what Taylor calls the "buffered"[957] world that has been shaped by the conditions of modernity. Further, Taylor holds that anything that is considered to be exclusively transcendent to the world, such as "spirits, moral forces, causal powers with a purposive

[957] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 539.

being"[958] is nowadays met with a firm sense of skepticism and incredulity.[959] These last points are, for Taylor, reminiscent of an enchanted world; that is to say, a world the West has been moving away from since at least the sixteenth century.[960] This shift from an enchanted worldview to a disenchanted one has also (and has already been shown) seen the eclipse of an interest in transcendent entities and/or an entirely transcendent world to a focus on matters pertaining to the immanent world. This shift, of course, has brought with it significant challenges to theology and its dealings with subject matters of a transcendent nature.

In making these statements, my aim is not to undermine the complexity and the richness that can be brought to a theological understanding when discussing transcendent entities (such as, for example, angels or demons) and/or transcendent worlds (such as, for example, heaven or hell). In truth, much can be gleaned from close and nuanced interpretations of these facets of theology. Instead, the aim of this chapter – and of this thesis as whole – is simply to present an understanding of God that gives priority to God's immediate presence in the here and now, so to speak, of this world. Chapter III of this thesis functioned to argue that, in the theology of Meister Eckhart, the immediate ontological and mystical presence of God was the most prominent and enduring element of the whole of Eckhartian thought, thus rendering the core of his theology an excellent source for understanding being, generally speaking, from a mystical perspective. Furthermore, in so doing, this thesis follows a theologian who occupies an integral, albeit heterodox, part of the whole of the Western Christian tradition.

[958] Ibid, 539.
[959] Ibid, 539.
[960] Ibid, 26.

In what follows, I will offer excerpts from Eckhart's Latin and his vernacular works in order to demonstrate my point concerning his theological focus on immanence and the presence of God in and amidst the world. To begin, in a Latin sermon, Eckhart makes the following claim regarding God and existence: "First, God is common: He is every being and the whole existence of all things ('In him, through him and from him' [Rm. 11:36])."[961] Later on in the same sermon, he adds to this by stating that: "Secondly, note that whatever is common insofar as it is common is God, and whatever is not common insofar as it is not common is not God, but created."[962] Here, what Eckhart means by 'common' is that God is essential to all things, and by the term 'created' he is simply referring to the accidental qualities by which one determines a given object. This overlap in terminology becomes clear when the comments from this Latin sermon are read alongside of one of his vernacular treatises. In *The Talks of Instruction*, he writes: "He who has God thus essentially, takes Him divinely, and for him God shines forth in all things".[963] It is important to point out that Eckhart's presentation of God's divine ubiquity is not limited to the world as something over and against the individual, but that it is also, in an equal fashion, the essence of that individual. This "special union"[964] between the soul and God is described in the following instructions to his Dominican novices:

> For we should be turned into Him and become fully united with Him, so that His own becomes ours and ours becomes His: our heart and His one heart and our body and His one body. Thus our senses and our will, our intention, our powers and our limbs are borne into Him so that we sense and become aware of Him in all the powers of the body and soul.[965]

[961] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 211 (Sermon VI).
[962] Ibid, 213 (Sermon VI).
[963] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 490 (The Talks of Instruction, 6).
[964] Ibid, 511 (The Talks of Instruction, 20).
[965] Ibid, 509 (The Talks of Instruction, 20).

Through these statements, Eckhart's position on God as an essential and universal ontological principle becomes quite clear. In fact, quite concisely he preaches that "[e]xistence is common to all things – not only common, but the same in all things."[966] Furthermore, that "God is common" and that, therefore, God is also "the whole of existence of all things".[967] These rather strong statements from Eckhart's sermons and treatises represent the entire edifice of his theology; so much so, that Chapter III of this thesis was devoted to arguing that Eckhart's theology is best understood and described as a 'mystical ontology'. Again, recall that for the purpose of this thesis, 'mystical ontology' is being defined as: *a belief in the possibility of union with or absorption into God by means of a correct understanding of the essence of one's own being and of the essence of being in general*.

From the vantage point of tradition, Eckhart's theology is unique in the long history of Christian thought insofar as it exemplifies a thinker who is unequivocally set on presenting an understanding of God that locates God as very much in and of the immanent world. Furthermore, and as will be discussed below, strictly because Eckhart's theology is heterodox,[968] it then readily lends itself as an answer to Taylor's call for a 'third way' of understanding God. In other words, Eckhart's theology can be interpreted in such a way that it effectively supersedes the modern binary of 'orthodoxy and unbelief' as a third and viable way of thinking about God that is neither restricted by institutionally determined dogma ('orthodoxy') or the complete dismissal ('unbelief') of all forms of transcendence. Therefore, in interpreting Eckhart's thought from within a

[966] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 221 (Sermon XXV).
[967] Ibid, 211 (Sermon VI).
[968] See: Chapter III.

secular horizon, one finds a surplus of theological content that can be interpreted and efficaciously applied to meet the modern world's unabated concentration on immanence.

Esse est deus: God's Being as Presence and Immanence

Meister Eckhart's fundamental theological statement comes from his foremost, yet unfinished Latin treatise, the *Three-Part Work* [*Opus Tripartitum*].[969] In the prologue to this work, Eckhart announces (in what I have already demonstrated in Chapter III) the most simple, complete and definitive principle of his theology that "Being is God" [*Esse est deus*]:[970]

> Being is God. This proposition is evident: first, because if being is something different from God himself, God neither exists nor is he a god. How can that be, or be something from which being is different and distinct, or to which it is foreign? Or if he is a god, in that case he exists by another, since being is different from him. Therefore God and being are identical, or God has being from another, and then he is not God himself, as was said above, but something else is before him and is the cause of his being.[971]

Eckhart's argument can be restated as follows: Being cannot precede God – otherwise there would be an original principle that precedes God and is, therefore, and in that sense, greater than God. However, this cannot be the case, because God is, by God's own implicit nature, the first principle of all being – including God's own being. It follows, then, that in stating that God is/exists, one is acknowledging that God has being. In order

[969] Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Erster Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. and tran. Josef Koch, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1958. For the reivsed editions of this text, see footnote: 537 of this thesis.
[970] Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke* (Erster Band, 1958), 156-158 (Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum, 12).
[971] Ibid, 156-158 (Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum, 12). Text and translation quoted from: Dobie, Robert, "Meister Eckhart's 'Ontological Philosophy of Religion.'" *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (Oct., 2002), 571. Translation modification. See footnote: 539 of this thesis.

for God to be, God must, therefore, be equiprimordial with being; or in other words, 'Being is God'. This fundamentally ontological utterance suggests something quite profound about all things and anything that is, will in the future be, and has already been. What, in fact, is being put forward by such a statement is that all things are, fundamentally, God. C.F. Kelley affirms this position in his strictly philosophical interpretation of Eckhart, when he writes: "[w]ith Eckhart we can now reasonably affirm that 'the entire created order is sacred,' inasmuch as it and all individual beings that comprise it are directly involved in the assimilation of all things to God, the Principle."[972] Further to this, he writes that: "[t]he Principle in which God creates or manifests individual beings is God himself".[973]

The implications for a theological position of this variety are significant. Eckhart is, in fact, proposing that all things are, in their essential being, God – even to the point of one's self-identity. On this latter point, Eckhart preaches: "God's self-identity is my self-identity, neither more nor less."[974] Even more, on the universality of God's being, Eckhart claims: "God is unseparated from all things, for God is in all things and is more inwardly in them than they are in themselves."[975] In this way, it becomes absolutely clear that Eckhart's understanding of God is one that locates God, intimately and unequivocally, in and amidst the immanent world. In other words, and to fully serve the rhetoric of this thesis, God is definitively "[o]f or pertaining to the world."[976] It is with the above in mind that I will herewith recall and restate my guiding thesis for this project

[972] Kelley, C. F., *Meister Eckhart on Divine Knowledge* (Cobb: Dharma Café Books, 2009), 72.
[973] Ibid, 74.
[974] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 330 (Sermon 65).
[975] Ibid, 263 (Sermon 49).
[976] "secular, adj. and n.". *OED Online*. June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/174620?redirectedFrom=secular& (accessed June 30, 2014).

as a whole: *the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart can be interpreted and applied in a manner that successfully opens a space for constructive dialogue between secular culture and his understanding of the presence of God in the world*. Thus, when being is equated to God, God can be understood through God's immanent presence in the world and in all things. It is precisely this compilation of principles that has led me to argue that, when God is to be understood in such a way, Eckhart's theology can be interpreted to show a commensurable – albeit not entirely symmetrical (see below) – resemblance to certain principles of secularity, and in particular, secularity's focus on immanence. Thus it is from this point that a constructive dialogue based upon the shared interest of immanence – in respect to both matters of the world and of God's presence within it – can now begin.

Despite these striking and distinctive similarities, there still remain some irreconcilable factors between the two. Among those, specifically, is Eckhart's presentation of God as eternal, which he proclaims in Trinitarian terminology as the "eternal Father".[977] This is especially the case when considered alongside of Taylor's comments (also mentioned in the Introduction) on time, secularity, and eternity: "[p]eople who are in the saeculum, are embedded in ordinary time, they are living the life of ordinary time; as against those who have turned away from this in order to live closer to eternity."[978] For Eckhart, this Taylorian distinction between time and eternity maintains its integrity, insofar as:

> When time comes to its end, that is eternity because then all time has an end since 'before' or 'after' is no longer. There, whatever is, is all present and new, and you have present to your view whatever happened or shall

[977] Ibid, 283 (Sermon 53).
[978] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 54-55.

> ever happen. There, there is neither before nor after; it is all present there. And in this ever present view I hold all things in my possession.[979]

To be clear, however, in this case Eckhart is referring to 'eternity' as a manner of perceiving existence without accidental qualifications; that is to say, qualifications, which strictly, and by their own account, come into and go out of existence within the framework of linear time. That is not to say that such a process would halt if given a glimpse of eternity. Instead, it simply means that the subject would know itself and the world through their "essential being"[980] as opposed to by their "accidental"[981] or determinate attributes. According to Eckhart: "If we do see God in this light",[982] that is to say, as "the essence that contains all essence",[983] then "we have an immediate knowledge of eternal life."[984] In other words, eternity is the essential foundation for time and temporality. Consequently then, and in concert with a correct intellectual orientation, eternity – and the essence of God – can be revealed in and amidst time. In effect, the dialectical relationship between time and eternity, for Eckhart, allows one to, at once "become holy in time and blessed in eternity".[985] In this way, Eckhart holds that "The soul is created as if at a point between time and eternity, which touches both."[986] It is this mediation, of sorts, then, that provides the framework through which God's – or the Father's[987] – eternal essence will "break through"[988] – or "give birth"[989] – into time and

[979] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 286 (Sermon 24).
[980] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 161 (Sermon 24 (a)).
[981] Ibid, 126 (Sermon 16).
[982] Ibid, 141 (Sermon 19).
[983] Ibid, 141 (Sermon 19).
[984] Ibid, 141 (Sermon 19).
[985] Ibid, 511 (The Talks of Instruction, 20).
[986] Ibid, 157 (Sermon 23).
[987] Ibid, 126 (Sermon 16).
[988] Ibid, 124 (Sermon 16).
[989] Ibid, 124 (Sermon 16).

reveal the "primal source"[990] of the soul – or the Son[991] – and all of the world in its divine essence.

An event of the manner of which has been just described suggests something peculiar about the immanent world of the here and now. That is to say, it is suggesting that the totality of immanent existence is inherent to an all-pervading transcendent essence. Therefore, and in effect, Eckhart presents an understanding of transcendence that is not at all otherworldly. In fact, his notion of transcendence is intimately and absolutely embedded within the immanent world. It is precisely this relocation of transcendence to an immanent context that appeases Taylor's criticism of what he refers to as the "malaise of immanence".[992] Interestingly, in Taylor's view, despite the focus that this secular age has placed on immanence, there still remains an unfilled existential void that has been left by the relegation of transcendence in general. On this certain "malaise", he writes:

> I have distinguished three forms which the malaise of immanence may take: (1) the sense of fragility of meaning, the search for an over-arching significance; (2) the felt flatness of our attempts to solemnize the crucial moments of passage in our lives; and (3) the utter flatness of the ordinary. Now I have been calling these "malaise of immanence", because everyone recognizes that they come onto our horizon, or onto our agenda, with the eclipse of transcendence. But it doesn't follow that the only cure for them is a return to transcendence. The dissatisfaction they give rise to can send people back to seek some relation to the transcendent, but it is also felt by those who for one reason or another cannot countenance such a return, or only in forms which are very far from traditional established religion. They too seek solutions, or ways of filling the lack, but within immanence; and thus the gamut of new positions multiplies. There is not only the traditional faith, and the modern anthropocentric shift to an immanent order; the felt dissatisfaction at this immanent order motivates not only new forms of religion, but also different readings of immanence. This expanding gamut is what I am trying to gesture at with the term "nova".[993]

[990] Ibid, 124 (Sermon 16).
[991] Ibid, 126 (Sermon 16).
[992] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 309.
[993] Ibid, 309-310.

Taylor's points here bring this conversation to an intriguing location, namely, the notion that many Westerners today remain unsatisfied with the 'flatness' of a strictly immanent worldview. In other words, for Taylor, there remains a desire to understand and/or experience more from life than what can be offered from such a one-dimensional picture. It is with this type of thinking in mind that Taylor conjures the rather intriguing position that, despite the emphasis on immanence in the world today, and the quite obvious retraction of traditional forms of religious belief, "our age is very far from settling in to a comfortable unbelief."[994]

It is with Taylor's comments in mind that I am, here, working to present an interpretation of Meister Eckhart's mystical ontology that brings transcendence into view through immanence, over and against the perspective that holds them in a state of opposition to one another. Ultimately, this hermeneutic presentation of Eckhart's understanding of God is meant to demonstrate the radical presence of God in and amidst the immanent world, thus bringing into consideration a theology that advocates for "God to shine forth in all things".[995] Further to Taylor's point, I aim to do so in a way that emerges from a position in between, on the one hand, a regress to "traditional established religion",[996] and an "anthropocentric shift to an immanent order",[997] on the other. This will be accomplished by viewing Eckhart's works as a heterodox theology – a declaration that has already been in place for nearly seven hundred years.

[994] Ibid, 727.
[995] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 491 (The Talks of Instruction, 6).
[996] Ibid, 310.
[997] Ibid, 310.

On Exceeding Determinations: God, Being, and the Importance of Heterodoxy[998]

Meister Eckhart's theology readily engages with and confronts the modern interpreter concerning his or her understandings of God, universal and particular being, and even the boundaries of conventional religious identities. Whether or not these polemics were, in fact, Eckhart's original intention is difficult to say with any degree of surety. However, his tone and rhetoric, especially as it is presented in his vernacular works, suggest a man with an audacious personality – a man who was not afraid to invite his audience to engage with even the most delicately nuanced points in his theology – points that, if misunderstood "could generate in the minds of the faithful a heretical opinion".[999] To this charge, the man who was criticized as the one who "wished to know more than he should"[1000] simply replies, "if one may not teach the unlearned, then no one can teach or write. For we teach the unlearned so that from being unlearned they may become learned."[1001] What I want to argue in this section is that Eckhart's mystical ontology is well equipped, in terms of its content and rhetoric, to engage with and to successfully open a space for constructive dialogue between modern secular culture and Christian theology. To put this in the context of Taylor's observations on modern secularity, this attempt for dialogue is just one among "many viable possibilities between fundamentalism and atheism".[1002] This entire project is, in some way, a constructive response to the modern Western world's demand "for some account why these other

[998] See, also: Shaw, Christopher David, *On Exceeding Determination and the Ideal of Reason: Immanuel Kant, William Desmond, and the Noumenological Principle*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.
[999] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 81 (The Bull "In agro dominico" (March 27, 1329)).
[1000] Ibid, 77 (The Bull "In agro dominico" (March 27, 1329)).
[1001] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 553 (The Book of Divine Comfort).
[1002] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 4.

roads were not travelled."[1003] Accordingly then, as Taylor states it: "[t]he goal in this case is not to return to an earlier formula, inspiring as many of these will undoubtedly be; there will always be an element of imitation of earlier models, but inevitably and rightly Christian life today will look for and discover new ways of moving beyond the present orders to God."[1004] Here, Taylor's comments also conveniently intersect with the methodology of this thesis; that is, not to create some new and spontaneous form of religion, but instead to look to tradition and then to interpret it anew. Despite the condemnation of seventeen of his articles as being heretical, Eckhart, impressively, remains a prominent figure of the wider Christian tradition. However, and to further qualify this broad claim, in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, the orthodoxy of his theology, at least in part, remains to this day quite problematic. Even so, and by his own declaration, his "will"[1005] and intentions were always with and were an integral part of the Christian faith and its tradition. When viewing Eckhart's legacy in this way, we are left with a theology that bridges the divide between "orthodoxy and unbelief".[1006] It is a space that has been created because of the simple fact that in this secular world "we are aware today that one can live the spiritual life differently"[1007] to that which is institutionally condoned and prescribed as right belief and/or practice. Moreover, if theology today need not conform to any institutionally determined conventions of belief or practice, then 'spiritual life' is, in fact, free to "take different shapes."[1008]

[1003] Ibid, 4.
[1004] Ibid, 755.
[1005] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 72 (Response to the List of Forty-Nine Articles).
[1006] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 302.
[1007] Ibid, 11.
[1008] Ibid, 11.

Read in this way, Taylor's comments should be understood as a challenge to the static features of religious identity and practice. However, in no way, one must recall, is Taylor suggesting that religion will altogether cease to exist in the new millennium. Rather, his vision is quite the opposite. For example, he writes: "we are just at the beginning of a new age of religious searching".[1009] Once more, he argues that this 'new age of religious searching' is a result of the failure of religious "fundamentalism",[1010] on the one hand, and "atheism",[1011] on the other, to capture the full range of the human experience and search for meaning. In respect to this either/or scenario, Taylor claims that "[i]t tells us that this predicament was spiritually unstable, offering on one side motives not to go back to the earlier established faiths, and on the other (among other things), a sense of malaise, emptiness, a need for meaning."[1012] Taylor has identified a complex situation for the modern world. His response is one of an open call, which comes in the form of (and as what was already noted above as) the "nova effect".[1013] To recapitulate what has already been said, the nova effect is a "third way",[1014] or an alternative to the "opposition between orthodoxy and unbelief".[1015] Even more, it is what "pushes us to explore and try our new solutions [and] new formulae" as a response to the failure of the previously established options.[1016] Above all else, this thesis should be received as a constructive attempt to define, develop, and defend the implementation of one of these 'third ways'. In other words, this thesis, to use Taylor's words, is a 'nova

[1009] Ibid, 535.
[1010] Ibid, 4.
[1011] Ibid, 4.
[1012] Ibid, 302.
[1013] Ibid, 300.
[1014] Ibid, 302.
[1015] Ibid, 302.
[1016] Ibid, 303.

effect'. The remainder of this section will be devoted to illustrating how and why that is the case.

To begin, Eckhart synthesizes being and God into a singular and coterminous principle (at least insofar as the former is an immediate and necessary consequence of the latter). What has been discussed above concerning Eckhart's central claim that 'being is God' is quite appropriately echoed in his commentary on the book of Genesis when he issues the statement that "Creation is the conferring of existence."[1017] He elaborates on this in the following comment:

> I say that it is true that only one thing always proceeds from a single thing that is uniform in relation to itself. But this one thing is the whole universe itself, which proceeds from God as one whole thing, though in many parts, just as God himself the producer is one or the simple One in existence, life, understanding and activity… [1018]

At this point, one could question the perceived unity of God and existence (or 'the whole universe', so to speak). It is precisely this questioning that allows for Eckhart's Trinitarian theology to be brought into relief. For example, in his commentary on John, he writes: "In things that are univocal what is produced is always equal to its source."[1019] Interestingly then, this principle of univocity becomes characteristically Johannine, when Eckhart states: "'The Word was with God.' It does not say 'under God,' or 'descends from God,' but says 'The Word was with God.' The phrase 'with God' bespeaks a kind of equality."[1020] In this way, and in directly equating the Son with the Word, Eckhart

[1017] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 87 (Commentary on the Book of Genesis, 14).
[1018] Ibid, 87 (Commentary on the Book of Genesis, 12).
[1019] Ibid, 124 (Commentary on John, 5).
[1020] Ibid, 124 (Commentary on John, 5).

holds "[t]hat the Son or Word is the same as what the Father or Principle is."[1021] However, despite this fundamental ontological sameness in the divine Persons, the relationship between Father and Son begins to take on a special metaphysical quality. In working toward an understanding of Eckhart's theology in this respect, one must begin by holding to the principle that "the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son … and that the Son is one with the Father"[1022] In other words, there is an absolute ontological unity between Father and Son. However, there is a metaphysical distinction between these Trinitarian Persons. In his commentary on John, Eckhart finds the context to announce this distinction when he states:

> God is not anything distinct or proper to some nature, but is common to all. He is outside and above every genus. The proof of this is that being, God's effect, is not in a genus and does not belong to any genus, but is common to every genus. When God came into this world, assumed a created nature and was made man it was as if he came to what is proper from the height of what is common.[1023]

In this comment, Eckhart is claiming that in the moment of God's emanation into creation God diversified God's own metaphysical constitution into what is 'distinct' from what is 'common to all'. Put into Trinitarian terms, this means that the absolute unity of God becomes a metaphysical multiplicity in and through the emanation of the Persons. Clarifying this through his exegesis of Genesis, Eckhart writes:

> In the one and the same time in which he was God and in which he begot his coeternal Son as God equal to himself in all things, he speaks in creating creatures, 'He spoke and they were made, he commanded and they were created' (Ps. 32:9). This is why in another Psalm, 'God has spoken once and for all and I have heard two things' (Ps. 61:12). The 'two

[1021] Ibid, 124 (Commentary on John, 6).
[1022] Ibid, 98 (The Book of the Parables of Genesis, 13).
[1023] Ibid, 161 (Commentary on John, 103).

> things are heaven and earth, or rather 'these two,' that is, the emanation of the Persons and the creation of the world …[1024]

To further illustrate this metaphysical point, it is worth drawing on another example of the emanation of the Persons from Eckhart's vernacular works. The reason for doing this is both for clarification of this idea here being discussed as well as to show that such thinking is not unique to a single medium for his theology (in other words, his scholastic, Latin works), but rather that it is a regular feature across all of his works. Thus, and in returning to the vernacular, he preaches:

> The Father can only give birth, the Son can only be born. All that the Father has and is, the profundity of the divine being and the divine nature, He brings forth all at once in His only-begotten Son. *That* is what the Son "hears" from the Father, that is what he has revealed, that we may be the same Son. All that the Son has he has from his Father: essence and nature, that we may be the same only-begotten Son.[1025]

Eckhart's metaphysical relationship between the Father and the Son, here, begins to emphasize a certain feature of creation – that of human nature. For example, in this previous quotation, he preaches to his congregation that "we many become the same Son."[1026] It is correct to assume that Eckhart does place a profound emphasis on human nature and its distinctive potentiality[1027] concerning the realization of its true being (see below). However, it is important to keep in mind that God's Sonship, so to speak, also extends to the whole of existence, and not just human nature.

[1024] Ibid, 85 (Commentary on the Book of Genesis, 7).
[1025] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 126 (Sermon 16). See, also: Ibid, 152-154 (Sermon 22).
[1026] Ibid, 126 (Sermon 16).
[1027] Ibid, 56 (Sermon 4).

When understood in this way, existence in general should be known according to its essential composition in God. Fusing this philosophical position with the language of theology and the Word, Eckhart preaches: "The Father speaks the Son out of the fullness of His power, and all things in him. All things speak God."[1028] The process of emanation now takes on a new feature. That is, the Father speaks the Word and the Son is born in creation, in general, and, in a very particular way, in human nature also. Then, insofar as creation has its being in God, creation itself, or "All things",[1029] also speak the Word by nature of their being in and of God. "Therefore," Eckhart writes in his commentary on John, "we teach first that God exists and works in all things and comes to all men and all things insofar as they exist, insofar as they are one, and insofar as they are true and good."[1030] In other words, the whole of creation, diverse in its parts and unified in its essence, communicates God.

I have drawn attention to this particular constellation of Eckhartian thought in order to show his emphasis on the being of God and how it is a defining and ubiquitous feature of existence in general. Now, in what follows, I would like to point to a rather intriguing feature from this constellation that indicates Eckhart's interest in human nature. Setting the tone for this evolution in this discussion, Eckhart preaches: "Now observe a wondrous thing! Seeing that God transforms such base things into Himself, what do you think He does with the soul, which He has dignified with His own image?"[1031] Again, this movement in emphasis from creation in general to that of human nature can be concisely identified in his commentary on John. First: "God is existence

[1028] Ibid, 153 (Sermon 22).
[1029] Ibid, 153 (Sermon 22).
[1030] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 159 (Commentary on John, 97).
[1031] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 167 (Sermon 25).

itself and is also creator. This is the meaning of 'He came into his own.'"[1032] And: "The things that are his own into which God came are Existence or Being".[1033] Even so, God's presence in existence, in general, has the distinctive capacity to be affirmed through various effects. On this matter, he writes: "In the first place, note that God, although he is everywhere and in all things as existence, and is also everywhere and in all things through his essence, is still said to 'come' when his presence is evident through some new effect."[1034] This is, perhaps, most notably the case concerning both speculative and practical human activity. At this point then, God's presence is manifest in the whole of existence, and even more, it has the potential to be intellectually and willfully realized in and through human thought and action.

Eckhart's special interest in the divine being of the individual soul is most adequately characterized in his discussions on the Son. To reemphasize this point, Sonship does take on several layers of meaning in Eckhartian theology. It can refer to a variety of things: first, it can refer to Jesus Christ; secondly, it can refer to the soul's realization of its divine being in God; thirdly, it can refer to human nature as a whole; and finally, it can refer to the totality of existence. Collectively, these elements of Sonship, though each distinct in their own right, are for Eckhart, also fundamentally related. The following quotation serves as an example of his multi-layered and nuanced theology of the Son. He preaches: "And as the Son is the single Word of the Father, he thus teaches the soul with one word how it should arise and how it should raise itself above itself and dwell above itself. The Father spoke a Word; this was his Son. In this single Word he

[1032] Here, Eckhart is commenting on John 1:11, Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 159 (Commentary on John, 96).
[1033] Ibid, 159 (Commentary on John, 97).
[1034] Ibid, 158 (Commentary on John, 96).

spoke all things."[1035] Eckhart's focus on the diverse nature of Sonship is also yet another indication of his emphasis on the unity between God and existence, or being in general. At the pinnacle of this edifice in his thought is the soul's capacity to understand and then to act in accordance with its divine essence. In fact, such an understanding and its consequent order in actions is the primary task of each individual person or soul. Situating this thought process in his commentary on John, Eckhart the scholastic, writes: "It is existence-for-God, I say, insofar as God is the principle that gives existence, and insofar as he is the end for which man exists and lives."[1036] In other words, from a teleological perspective, God created all of the world and humanity with the end that God could then fully realize God's self through God's creation. This teleological picture is a consistent trope in Eckhart's thinking. So much so that in his vernacular preaching, he dialogically poses the question and answer: "Why did God become man? That I might be born God Himself."[1037] Again, and in situating this thought in the thematic context of Johannine Christology, he writes: "John says therefore, 'The Word was made flesh' in Christ, 'and dwelt among us' when in any one of us the Son of God becomes man and a son of man becomes a son of God."[1038] Again, it is precisely this emanation of God into creation, and then, consequently, creation's full realization of itself as God that, for Eckhart, is the full consummation and the great purpose of existence. For humanity, either individually or as a whole, to realize this effect, is for humanity to wholly in-form

[1035] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 335 (Sermon 84).
[1036] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 163 (Commentary on John, 107).
[1037] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 126 (Sermon 16).
[1038] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 168 (Commentary on John, 118).

its Sonship from pure potentiality to actuality. For Eckhart: "That is why God took on human nature and united it with his own Person."[1039]

The key term in the above passage is 'united': God and human nature are united. With this in mind, I would like to remind the reader that it is this union between God and one's own being that has incited me to derive the following definition for 'mystical ontology': *a belief in the possibility of union with or absorption into God by means of a correct understanding of the essence of one's own being and of the essence of being in general*. In other words, and in the context of the discussion in this section, the border that divides the being of God from the being of creation and the individual soul is one that, according to Eckhart, was designed, from a teleological perspective, to be overcome. This process of going beyond the determinative qualities that separate God from creation is captured in his language of the 'break through' [*durchbrechen*]: "The spirit must transcend number and break through multiplicity, and God will break through him: and just as He breaks through into me, so I break through in turn into Him."[1040] This breaking through that Eckhart speaks of is the process of exceeding formal determinations that separate the whole of existence and, especially, the soul from God. This is, of course, on account of the end aim that the soul is to understand and to fully realize its unity with God. It is through such an intellectual orientation toward one's own being, the being of God, and the being of the totality of existence that the three can be understood to be wholly unified as one. On this absolute ontological singularity that unites all things in and as God, Eckhart instructs: "This union is far closer than when a man pours a drop of

[1039] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 450 (Sermon 92).
[1040] Ibid, 124-125 (Sermon 16).

water into a vat of wine, for that would make water and wine – but *this* is so turned into one that all creatures could never find out the difference."[1041]

The final point of this section is one that emerges as a direct consequence of Eckhart's insistence upon the absolute union between the being of the soul and God. It is also one that falls into step with Taylor's open call for a 'third way' of understanding spirituality; that is, once more, one that emerges as a result of the dialectical 'opposition between orthodoxy and unbelief'. As has already been noted in Chapter III of this thesis, Meister Eckhart was and is not a heretic. However, according to a Papal Bull, *In agro dominico*,[1042] that was issued by Pope John XXII on the 27th of March, 1329, seventeen articles that were attributed to Eckhart were condemned as heretical, and another eleven were documented as being "evil sounding, rash, and suspect of heresy".[1043] Despite the concerted efforts from fellow members of the Dominican order and other non-ecclesial assemblies to have the conclusions drawn in this medieval Bull rescinded, any and all objections challenging this long-standing decree have simply gone unheeded.[1044] In other words, in the eyes of his own church, a convincing sample of Eckhart's theology is – and for nearly seven hundred years has continued to be – deemed heretical. Moreover, much of what was condemned in Eckhart's works is at the heart of this very thesis. For example, article ten of the Bull reads as follows: "We are fully transformed and converted into God; in the same way as in the sacrament the bread is converted into the body of Christ, so I am converted into Him, so that He converts me into His being as one,

[1041] Ibid, 510 (The Talks of Instruction, 20).
[1042] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 77-81 (The Bull "In agro dominico" (March 27, 1329)).
[1043] Ibid, 80 (The Bull "In agro dominico" (March 27, 1329)).
[1044] Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart – The Man from whom God hid Nothing*, ed. Ursula Flemming (Leominster: Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, 1995), xxvii-xix.

not as like. By the living God it is true that there is no difference."[1045] Similarly, in article eleven, he is accused of preaching the following heresy: "All that God the Father gave His only-begotten Son in human nature He has given me: I except nothing, neither union nor holiness; He has given me everything as to him."[1046] As was already noted in Chapter III, the divergences in opinion concerning how accurately these theological summaries map onto Eckhart's actual statements are an on-going matter of debate among scholars. However, orthodoxy is not something that is officially determined by scholars; it is entirely an ecclesial matter. With this in mind, I will forward the statement that Eckhart taught and preached, at least according to what has been drawn together in *In agro dominico*,[1047] a heterodox theology.

For Eckhart, in his own lifetime, such a decision was likely to have been devastating, and the harsh affect that this proclamation had on Eckhart's wellbeing is almost palpable when reading his written defense against the charges of his inquisitors.[1048] However, seven centuries later, the Western world is obviously a far different place than it was during the late medieval period. Although Christianity (in its various formations) has been one of the constants of Western tradition, it is simply the case, now, that the cultural and intellectual hegemony that the Christian religion once held has been challenged by, among other things, the rise of a greater plurality and representation of other religious and non-religious options. Despite this change in the religious landscape of the West, Taylor is again careful to remind his reader that "[o]ur

[1045] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 26-27 (Note: C, Articles Condemned in the Bull of John XII, In agro dominico, March 27, 1329).
[1046] Ibid, 27 (Note: C, Articles Condemned in the Bull of John XII, In agro dominico, March 27, 1329).
[1047] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 77-81 (The Bull "In agro dominico" (March 27, 1329)).
[1048] Ibid, 71-77 (Selections from Eckhart's Defense).

age is very far from settling in to a comfortable unbelief."[1049] In other words, living in a secular age does not at all preclude the possibility of being religious – in either a conventional or a non-conventional sense of the term. Rather, it is simply the case that "[s]ecularity in this sense is a matter of the whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual, or religious experience and search takes place."[1050] Accordingly then: "[a]n age or society would then be secular or not, in virtue of the conditions of experience of and search for the spiritual."[1051] Moreover then, in this secular age, where the instability caused by the dialectic 'between orthodoxy and unbelief' has opened the option to look to 'third way[s]' of understanding human nature, the world, and God, heterodox approaches to theology have become a timely and appropriate option for guiding one's "experience of and search for the spiritual."[1052]

It has been the project of this thesis to present an interpretation of the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart. The purpose of this interpretation was ultimately to provide content that could be applied in treating the theological problem of secularity, and with the aim of creating a space for constructive dialogue between secular culture and Eckhart's understanding of the presence of God in the world. In particular, this section has shown that Eckhart's understanding of the being of God, the being of the soul, and being in general have a common link in and through their essential "ground of divine nature"[1053] where "The distinction between being and essence is taken as one and is one."[1054] This is an important point insofar as it offers a description concerning how one

[1049] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 727.
[1050] Ibid, 3.
[1051] Ibid, 3.
[1052] Ibid, 3.
[1053] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 564 (The Nobleman).
[1054] Ibid, 561 (The Nobleman).

might understand an overarching principle of unity that stands in excess of the determinative qualities of multiplicity. On this matter, Eckhart writes: "Be one, that you may find God! And in truth, if you were truly one, then you would even remain one in difference, and difference would be one to you, and then nothing could hinder you."[1055] For Eckhart, this overarching principle of being situates his understanding of God squarely in the world, and in matters of the here and now. It is with this in mind that I can state that the interpretation of Eckhart that has been presented in this thesis meets certain specific demands of the modern secular world insofar as its locates God within an immanent context, and thereby emphasizes the being of God as primary. Furthermore, it does so in a manner that exceeds the conventions of orthodox theology, while still providing the groundwork from whence a profound spiritual understanding can unfold.

Problems, Criticisms, Summary, and Conclusion

Eckhart's focus on the being of God, the being of the soul, and the being of the world as fundamentally one is, as I have already argued,[1056] both the primary and the enduring feature of his thought. So much so that, in fact, his theology has shown itself to be a matter of increased interest in modern times for Christian and non-Christian thinkers alike. However, despite what I have deemed here to be an immanent presentation of God – in accordance with the demands of our secular horizon of understanding – the truth is that Eckhart's conception of God is not, strictly speaking, so one-dimensional. For example, in one of his vernacular sermons, he preaches:

[1055] Ibid, 564 (The Nobleman).
[1056] See: Chapter III.

> The masters say being and knowing are all one, for what does not exist is not known: whatever has most being is best known. And since God has transcendent being, therefore He transcends all knowledge, as I said the day before yesterday in my last sermon, that the soul is in-formed in the highest purity, in the impress of pure essence, where she tastes God before He assumes truth of cognizability, where all naming has been dropped: *there* she receives being on equal footing. Therefore Paul says, "God dwells in a light which is inaccessible." He is an indwelling in His own pure essence, where there is nothing that is contingent. Whatever is accidental must drop away. His is a pure presence in Himself, where there is neither this nor that, for whatever is in God, is God.[1057]

Eckhart's statement here, concerning God's 'transcendent being' seems, in some ways, to run contrary to my efforts to demonstrate his concentration on the immanence of God. However, Eckhart's use of the term 'transcendent', in this case, should not be confused with a transcendent realm (such as heaven) that is other than the realm of the immediate and present world. Rather, it is the case that Eckhart's employment of the term 'transcendent' is univocally linked to the being of the immanent world. In other words, God's 'pure presence' is not determined by 'accidents', rather, it is the pervading essence, or 'super-essential essence' [*vberwesende wesen*],[1058] which functions as the ultimate ground of what is merely determined to be accidental through natural intellectual activity. Therefore, for Eckhart, understanding the relationship between immanence and transcendence is strictly a matter of the mind, or rather, how it is that one perceives oneself, the world, and God.

[1057] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 166-167 (Sermon 25).

[1058] My translation. Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke II*, 188 (Predigt 83, lines 20-21). My translation is a peculiar one (in fact, 'super-essential being' would be a more accurate/direct translation). However, I have elected to render Eckhart's '*vberwesende wesen'* into English as 'super-essential essence' in order to highlight his repetition of the word '*wesen*'. This decision more clearly emphasizes Eckhart's objective to conceptualize a 'super' or absolute essence that substantiates all other essences. This convention (and concept) is also reflected in the modern German translation of the text, which renders the phrase as: "*überseiendes Sein*". Ibid, 189 (Predigt 83, line 25).

While the essential nature of 'transcendent being' is what constitutes the being of the totality of existence, the transcendental aspect of transcendent being does pose another problem if it is associated directly with (the meaning of) secularity. This problem is, namely, secularity's focus on, as Taylor describes it, 'ordinary time' over and against 'higher time' or 'eternity'. To recall, he writes: "[p]eople who are in the saeculum, are embedded in ordinary time, they are living the life of ordinary time; as against those who have turned away from this in order to live closer to eternity."[1059] At the outset of this thesis, it was noted that I would not argue for any direct symmetry or an absolute agreement between my interpretation of Eckhart's theology and secularity. Simply put, despite the significant points of agreement that I have demonstrated, it remains that there are crucial and irreconcilable factors that separate these two categories from one another. Perhaps the most important of these differences is situated in the place that eternity holds in Eckhart's theology. For example, he occupies quite a radical position on the full and absolute presence of eternity in each and every immediate moment in time. In fact, at various points, he refers to this metaphysical synthesis as the "eternal Now";[1060] "For the now in which God made the first man and the Now in which the last man shall cease to be, and the Now I speak in, all are the same in God and there is but one Now."[1061] Even so, Eckhart does not advise that one face the world in any such state of metaphysical oblivion: "for that would be impossible for nature to strive for, very difficult and not even the best thing."[1062] Rather, his approach to eternity – and how one ought to comport

[1059] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 54-55.
[1060] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 79 (Sermon 8).
[1061] Ibid, 79 (Sermon 8).
[1062] Ibid, 491 (The Talks of Instruction, 6).

oneself in relation to eternity – is much more subtle. For Eckhart, this involves allowing "God's body"[1063] to become "your body".[1064] Or, in other words:

> [W]e should be turned into Him and become fully united with Him, so that His own becomes ours, and ours becomes His: our heart and His one heart and our body and His one body. Thus our senses and our will, intention, our powers and our limbs are borne into Him so that we sense and become aware of Him in all the powers of the body and soul.[1065]

For Eckhart, this means that one can maintain this "special union with God"[1066] wherein the 'eternal Now' is manifest, yet, all the while, do so in such a way that allows for one to accomplish mundane activities, and not simply be ecstatically held in a perpetual state of rapture.[1067] In this way, Eckhart explains to his Dominican novices: "one can become holy in time and blessed in eternity".[1068] Eckhart's dialectic of time and eternity is analogous to his dialectic of immanence and transcendence. That is to say, his concept of the eternal is at once "outside of time"[1069] and quite radically and profoundly present in time.[1070]

The notion of eternity plays a fundamental role in Eckhart's theology. This, of course, runs completely contrary to Taylor's insistence that, strictly speaking: "[p]eople who are in the saeculum, are embedded in ordinary time, they are living the life of ordinary time; as against those who have turned away from this in order to live closer to

[1063] Ibid, 509 (The Talks of Instruction, 20).
[1064] Ibid, 509 (The Talks of Instruction, 20).
[1065] Ibid, 509 (The Talks of Instruction, 20).
[1066] Ibid, 511 (The Talks of Instruction, 20).
[1067] Ibid, 491 (The Talks of Instruction, 6).
[1068] Ibid, 511 (The Talks of Instruction, 20).
[1069] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 120 (The Book of the Parables of Genesis, 162).
[1070] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 79 (Sermon 8).

eternity."[1071] In other words, there is, and by way of this concept, an irreconcilable difference between Eckhart's notion of time and the notion of time that is assumed in secular life. It could be argued that when discussing eternity, Taylor and Eckhart might not be using equivalent concepts. However, the force of Taylor's definition of eternity is such that it is broad enough to include almost any concept of the notion, whatsoever, including Eckhart's.

In summary then, Eckhart's theology – on account of its inclusion of eternity (among other things) into its matrix – falls incommensurably short of having any direct and/or absolute symmetry with secularity, per se. However, the project of this thesis, as a whole, and of this chapter, in particular, was not to demonstrate any symmetry in this way. Rather, the point is simply to open a space for constructive dialogue between secular culture and Eckhart's understanding of the presence of God in the world. This space has primarily been defined through an overlap of these dual forces and their shared focus on immanence – and thereby, the importance that each places on life in this world. Obviously, there is some nuance as to how this is understood. Even so, Eckhart's thinking is unique in respect to the absolute degree of his claim that 'being is God'. Coupled with this, too, then is the fact that this prominent and defining feature of his thought was found to be heretical. Altogether then, Eckhart is, here, being tendered as a thinker who can not only create a space for dialogue with secular culture and its focus on immanence, but who can also be interpreted and applied to meet Taylor's open call for a solution to the intellectual and existential failures of 'orthodoxy and unbelief', respectively. Now, am I, in this case, bold enough to state that Eckhart's theology – or rather, his mystical ontology – fully and completely meets this demand? The simple

[1071] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 54-55.

answer is: I am not. However, to do so is not in any way the point. The point is, rather, to simply establish a common ground for dialogue, and to indicate one possible way forward regarding how one might begin, in a meaningful sense, to think about God in this modern secular world.

Chapter VII

Conclusion:
Eckhartian Mystical Ontology and the Contemporary Moment

Crucial parts of this thesis have been formulated so as to articulate certain conditions of modernity (with specific attention to the influence of post-Kantian philosophy and secularity), the challenges that those conditions have posed to theology today, and then, how it is that Eckhart's very particular understanding of being has been brought to the fore as a constructive way of thinking about God within this complex historical horizon. More to the point, this has been done with an eye toward treating a number of specific problems in theology; that is to say, problems that pose significant challenges, not to only belief in God, in general, but also to the practice and influence of Christianity as a vital force in the public sphere.

Having made these statements, it should also be brought to attention that it is often the case that problems appear, quite simply, as critical measures in identifying, generally speaking, certain insufficiencies and/or inconsistencies in a given context. Naturally, it follows then, that theology – in any and all of its manifestations – is not (and, if I may, ought never to be) immune to criticisms. Even so, criticism does not necessarily suggest, to state the obvious, a total collapse of what it is that is being criticized. For example, and to further illustrate this point, simply consider the actions taken by Martin Luther on the 31st of October 1517: his ninety-five theses were merely disputations (in other words, criticisms) of accepted practices and beliefs in the Roman Catholic Church. Despite the gravity of these criticisms, his aims were far from an absolute subversion of the Christian faith and tradition. Instead, and quite appropriately,

the conceptual title of 're-formation' was designated to be the lasting name for this movement. Quite rightly, this important historical moment was thereby identified (in respect to its title) in a manner that was in line with its motivations. Now clearly – and nearly five centuries after the fact – I am in no place to suggest that the challenges posed to theology by secular culture will and/or should have the same re-forming effect that Wittenberg had on Rome. The challenges that are posed by secularity are altogether quite different than what one might find in the context of the above noted sixteenth-century example. Even so, and in spite of these differences, my point remains the same, namely, criticisms and challenges that are posed toward traditions and beliefs in no way imply an ensuing and/or imminent breakdown of the larger narrative that brought them forward in the first place. Instead, it is the case that if these criticisms and challenges are addressed in a sensitive and intelligent manner, then they can begin to be understood, truly, as opportunities for growth and clarification. In other words, any such criticisms, in most cases, ought to be received and considered as opportunities for the subject matter under review to be brought more precisely into step with the world in which it exists. Moreover, it should be done in a manner that resonates profoundly with and that provides meaning for those who make and live their lives under the horizon of this exact contemporary moment.

It is in seeing and understanding the criticisms and changes that secularity has posed to theology as opportunities for growth and development in the modern belief in God that I will now proceed with the conclusion of this thesis. As such, what follows will serve as my final scholarly statement concerning these matters. It will unfold in the following manner: first, I will begin by re-presenting and strengthening the bond between

my conclusion(s) and the methodological structure for this thesis. This will be accomplished through a final engagement with Gadamer's concept of the 'fusion of horizons'.[1072] I will situate this summary toward a particular view that brings into relief an application for Eckhart's medieval mystical thinking; an application that has meaning for and context within the contemporary historical moment. This methodological observation will be complemented and filled out by, next, addressing my more substantive claim regarding the special quality and capacity of the concept of mystical ontology.[1073] In doing so, I will advance the notion that this very peculiar manner and description of 'being' should be classified as 'dwelling'. Additionally, this section will also highlight the normative functions and implications of this newly announced concept and its claim. In other words, this section will go beyond a merely descriptive analysis of Eckhart's mystical ontology in order to explore a prescriptive conclusion that can be drawn from this work, as a whole. Next, and following in the spirit of the previous section's tone, I will bring the notion of 'being as dwelling' into view, not only as a scholarly description, but also as a genuine possibility for informing and guiding one's lived reality. Finally, this conclusion and this thesis will come to its end with a summary of the complete project, whereupon I will also proceed to make a few brief closing remarks.

Fusing Horizons: Understanding and Applying Eckhartian Mysticism in the Contemporary Moment

The greater thrust of this thesis has been focused toward the announcement of a particular interpretation of Eckhart's mystical ontology (and the context that has presented the

[1072] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305 (Part I, 4, 1 (B)(iv)).
[1073] See: Chapter III.

conditions for its re-presentation). In other words, what has emerged from this project, thus far, is an interpretation – and a careful appropriation – of a unique medieval scholastic thinker, and the distinctive thought and legacy that has been ascribed to him. To this statement, it should also be added that I am quite aware of the vastly different historical contexts that are at play in this project; Eckhart's culture, his contemporaries, his audience, and his motivations are seven centuries apart from the present day. Simply put, the world that influenced the thought of this medieval master of theology is, in an almost immeasurable amount of ways, different from the world today. However, and in full view of these differences, this thesis has accepted[1074] Gadamer's hermeneutic claim that, in spite of all this, it is tradition itself that feeds the flow of culture. Even more, as the rightful heirs to tradition, each person, here and now, is graced with the agency and the occasion to sway its course. Gadamer summarizes this principle of active historical engagement by stating that: "[t]radition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves."[1075]

In this way, one at once lives in a world and in a time that is at a distance from the defining events of tradition that have, each in their own part, worked to shape the present moment. While, at the same time, one lives in radical proximity to those historically distant events insofar as those events have set the conditions and causes that have shaped the scene of one's current horizon. In other words, from the viewpoint of history, one remains a world and a time apart from these events. Yet from the perspective of hermeneutics, one is living and acting in a horizon that has been directly affected by the

[1074] See: Chapter I.
[1075] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 293 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iii)).

consequences of these events. In this way, hermeneutics allows the interpreter to mediate tradition. This mediation occurs by way of living and acting amidst the effects of tradition and, also then, by taking ahold of the right and the opportunity to influence its ever-widening stream. It follows, then, that any engagement with a historical work or event would already be informed by its relation to the interpreter's historical location within a given tradition and vice-versa (in other words, the hermeneutic circle). It is with this in mind that Gadamer tells us that: "[t]he anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the commonality that binds us to tradition. But this commonality is constantly being formed in our relation to tradition."[1076] From this idea it can be induced that one's engagement with a subject matter of tradition unfolds in two ways: first, it informs the interpreter of the conditions from whence his or her own horizon is the effect; and, second, it affords the interpreter the right to make sense of a given subject matter in and through the context of the interpreter's own horizon. Moreover, the medium for this mode of transmission, according to Gadamer, is language. For him, this last point is so much the case, that he attributes the very being of tradition – that is to say, its maintainable, transmittable, understandable and communicable character – to language. On this issue, he writes: "[t]he mode of being of tradition is … language, and in interpreting texts, the hearer who understands it relates its truth to his own linguistic orientation to the world."[1077] This single statement has adequately summarized how it is that this particular methodology has guided the whole thesis and its unique conclusions.

[1076] Ibid, 293 (Part II, 1 (B)(iii)).
[1077] Ibid, 453 (Part III, 5, 3 (B)).

Eckhart, in his own horizon, was not dealing with the problem of secularity, at least in the manner that it is known today. Eckhart's treatises and sermons served to meet a particular need of his time. Based on the variety of pastoral, educational, and administrative positions that he held, it, at the very least, seems that his thinking was received and appreciated as broad reaching in its capacity to be translated into and, thereby, to meet the demands of, a number of very specific culturally determined functions. Accordingly, it follows that Eckhart's thought was constructed in such a manner that it would fit within the landscape of his own horizon. In doing so, it was responding to certain historically situated events and affairs. However – and in spite of the historical particularity from within which his texts emerged – this does not preclude one from accessing and rendering new meanings and/or applications for Eckhart's texts from within – and that are directed toward – the interpreter's own horizon. In fact, as Gadamer would have it, any true "understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves."[1078] Moreover, it is this 'fusion of horizons' that itself becomes the participatory hermeneutical event at the fore of tradition. This process of bringing the past into the interpretive matrix of the present is more definitively announced by Gadamer when he writes: "*[u]nderstanding is ... participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated*."[1079] Following in step with the aforementioned description of hermeneutical mediation, this thesis has largely functioned in a manner that draws on Eckhart's medieval theology and mediates its content in and through an event of understanding that

[1078] Ibid, 305 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iv)).
[1079] Ibid, 291 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(ii)).

circumscribes definitive elements that act as crucial parts to the whole contemporary moment.

Importantly though, it must be added that the ultimate aim of Gadamerian hermeneutics is to present the reader with the conclusive argument that it is simply not enough to merely understand and interpret in a, more or less, passive manner. Rather, Gadamer's hermeneutic theory ultimately gains its practical dimension on account of its desired effect and aim, which is to be critically applied to and for the interpreter's "concrete situation".[1080] Recall from Chapter I, Gadamer's consummative statement on the necessary role that the application of an interpretation plays in any meaningful understanding of a given subject matter:

> A law does not exist in order to be understood historically, but to be concretized in its legal validity by being interpreted. Similarly, the gospel does not exist in order to be understood as a merely historical document, but to be taken in such a way that it exercises its saving effect. This implies that the text, whether law of gospel, it if is to be understood properly–i.e., according to the claim it makes–must be understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way. Understanding here is always application.[1081]

It could be argued that a body of work such as Eckhart's has an altogether different function from that of a law or of the gospel. This argument could gain momentum if Eckhart's works were, in fact, nothing more than a description of his theological understandings. However, what one finds in Eckhart is quite different. As an example, consider the point that every one of his sermons is uniformly concluded in a state of prayer – asking, as it were, that his words be both understood and applied. One example of this that could just as well be reflected in one hundred others is the following: "That

[1080] Ibid, 308 (Part II, 4, 2 (A)).
[1081] Ibid, 307-308 (Part II, 4, 2 (A)).

we may be thus one in the oneness that is God Himself, my God help us. Amen."[1082] Let it, then, suffice to say that Eckhart had the full intention of realizing (and having his audience realize) his theoretical understanding of God in and through a mystically informed praxis. Even more, this example links directly onto Gadamer's above noted statement concerning the normative function (or even better, the practical consummation) of any genuine hermeneutic practice. Moreover, when relating this back to Eckhart, not only were his words apparently designed to affect both the intellects and the wills, so to speak, of his contemporaries, but they also hold the potential for a meaningful and compelling application in the world today. Up until this point, the theoretical emphasis of this thesis has been focused on the description of being as a mystical ontology, and the noted overlap between immanence and transcendence – both of which were drawn out of Eckhart's works in order to better align the profile of his thought alongside certain principles of secularity. At this point, now, and here at the conclusion of this project, I would like to add an additional dimension to this hermeneutic interpretation and application of Eckhart's thought: that is, in thinking on how *the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart can be interpreted and applied in a manner that opens a space for constructive dialogue between secular culture and Eckhart's understanding of the presence of God in the world*, I would like to now investigate a more normative, practical and, perhaps, existentially compelling dimension of his understanding of the mystical being of God.

[1082] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 127 (Sermon 16).

Being as Dwelling: The Mystical Presence of God

Up until this point, this thesis has worked to maintain a scholarly distance from the various subject matters under review. Now, in the final pages of this project, I would like to momentarily ease my adherence to this convention in order to make a few remarks on how this specially treated notion of being might be incorporated into one's life and daily affairs. In other words, if my speculative conclusions are to be accepted and, indeed, internalized, they ought then to be obversely rendered as a practical imperative which would compel one to act in, through, and with love as a consummative recognition and affirmation of one's own being – in God – and, indeed, the whole of being (and all of its parts) – as God. Moreover, I am turning to this moral effect as an observance of my belief that well-reasoned thought ought to have some influence on human behavior and conduct. With this in mind, and with a commitment to maintaining an unambiguous link to my working methodology, such a movement – from understanding to application – is now, altogether, both procedurally necessary and existentially compelling. Furthermore, if I were to avoid this step from theory to practice, so to speak, not only would I be deviating from my methodological directives, but, at least according to Gadamer's comments quoted above, I would have failed to fully 'understand' and, consequently then, to 'apply' the meaning of my interpretation in and for the "concrete situation"[1083] of the modern Western world. Perhaps, and merely in passing, it was in the spirit drawn from a similar conclusion that Karl Marx came forward with his presentation of what has become, in modern times, a dictum for philosophy: "[Hitherto] The philosophers have only interpreted the world differently; whereas, from here forward, the point is to change

[1083] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 308 (Part II, 4, 2 (A)).

it."[1084] Moving forward in such a spirit, albeit with tempered ambitions, I will now introduce the foregoing application of what has been my distinctive interpretation of Eckhartian mystical ontology.

My interpretation of Eckhartian theology has been presented in such a way that his work has been shown to be relevant and meaningful due to, among other things, its principle focus on God, by way of ontology. This point was shown to have both structure and context in the preceding discussions on the coterminous nature of both immanence and transcendence, and in respect to my argument that his heterodox theology can be judiciously interpreted so as to define a new space for religious thinking; that is to say, a space that comes into view as a result of the dialectic between "orthodoxy and unbelief".[1085] In other words, my interpretation of mystical ontology has satisfied certain criteria that have been set forth in respect to developing a religious understanding in and for a secular age. Again, and to summarize, this has been the case insofar as my interpretation of Eckhart's works have focused on three elements that have come to the fore in the contemporary hermeneutic horizon: being, immanence, and heterodoxy.

What remains then, insofar as "understanding … is always application"[1086] is to determine how it is that the interpretation of Eckhart that has been offered here can normatively affect one's lived reality. In other words, how can this particular interpretation be applied to inform one's manner of being-in-the-world and daily

[1084] My translation. The grammatical conventions of the German (especially, in this case: "es kommt darauf an"), does not allow for a direct translation into English. The bracketed "[Hitherto]" has been added for clarity only. The original German text reads: "Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden *interpretiert*, es kommt darauf an, sie zu *verändern*." This thesis by Karl Marx was first published in the following work from Engels. See: Engels, Friedrich, *Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der Klassischen deutschen Philosophie*, Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1888), 72, §11. Marx's 'Theses on Feuerbach' [*Theses über Feuerbach*] (1845) were published as an appendix in the above noted edition of Engels' work.
[1085] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 302.
[1086] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 308 (Part II, 4, 2 (A)).

existence? To address this type of provocation, it is perhaps best and, indeed, most fitting to turn to Eckhart the preacher. In one of his vernacular sermons, Eckhart exegetes 1 John 4:16: "God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him."[1087]

> Let us first take the phrase, "God is love." That is so, because whatever can love and is capable of loving, that He pursues with His love, to love Him. "God is love," secondly, because everything God ever created and that is capable of loving, that pursues *Him* by its love to love *it*, whether He will or no. Thirdly, "God is love" because with His love He drives everything that is capable of loving out of all plurality. As far as God is lovable in plurality, the love that He is drives this out of all plurality into His own oneness. "God is love," fourthly, because with His love He gives all creatures their being and life, and maintains them with His love.[1088]

Here, Eckhart's homiletic commentary on 1 John suggests that there is something extraordinary about one's manner of being insofar as it manifests love. More precisely, if one comports oneself in a loving manner and exhibits love holistically, then, and in accordance with the preposition that God is love, the conclusion would have to be the following: insofar as one understands one's being or, rather, existence[1089] – and acts in accordance with such an understanding – to be in and for love, then it follows that through such an understanding, and its consequent activities, one would realize the absolute and univocal cohesion (or, more simply, the unity) between one's own being and the being of God.

To further explain and clarify the above stated conclusion, it would be useful to analyze Eckhart's exegesis step by step. To begin, Eckhart makes four claims: first, God

[1087] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 62 (Sermon 5).
[1088] Ibid, 62 (Sermon 5).
[1089] Eckhart, the scholastic, writes that "The term 'is' and the term 'existence' signify the same thing, though as different parts of speech." Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 147 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 19).

is love because God works to actualize the love of whatever it is that has the potential to love. Insofar as God is love, God is working toward God's own self-consummation through potential love being incited to actual love. Second, God is love because the end, or the *telos*, of all created things that have the potential to actualize love, is to realize this capacity according to its ability. In other words, because God is love, God strives to realize God's self through the actualization of love in and through the creatures that are endowed with such a potentiality (to love). Third, God is love because, as the singularity (or, the one, unifying ontological principle) of all being, God is able to transcend the metaphysical condition of plurality (in other words, creation or finite, determinate being) by enabling and evoking that which otherwise participates pluralistically (that is to say, according to its finite determinations) in love. The implication, then, is that if and when the participant in and of plurality acts in such a capacity, the said participant ultimately transcends the condition of plurality by manifesting the unifying principle of God's all-encompassing singularity. In other words, in and through the manifestation of love, one becomes wholly united and one with love itself. In this way, one's condition of plurality gives way to its fundamental relation to the ultimate singularity that is God by letting said singularity come into and animate its existence, thereby, and in that way, transcending its plurality in, as, and through love. Fourth, and finally, God is love, according to Eckhart's sermon, because God originally conferred, and thus maintains, the existence of creation in the hope that creation will realize love in its/their being and in its/their life. In this way, love is the reason why existence is and it is the experience of love that is the greatest end of existence. In other words, love is the reason for being, in respect to both its origination and its consummation.

Reflecting, once again, on 1 John 4:16 in relation to Eckhart's commentary, it is important to identify several key elements that are common to both. In respect to 1 John 4:16, these elements are: 'God', 'love', 'he' (generally, a soul/created person), and 'dwelling' (both as a gerund and its adjectival and nominal derivatives). Following this, in Eckhart's commentary on this verse we find similar definitive elements: 'God', 'love' 'creation/plurality', 'oneness', 'being' [Modern German: "*Sein*"[1090]; Middle High German: "*wesen*"[1091]], and 'life' [Modern German: "*Leben*"[1092]; Middle High German: "*leben*"[1093]]. Now, when the elements from Eckhart's commentary are understood for what they are, that is exegetical remarks on 1 John 4:16, one can begin to assume that Eckhart is working to disseminate his understanding about the relationship between the being of God and the being of creation, and more specifically, the soul. In other words, when talking about what God is, as in "God is love", the being of God is disclosed as such. This is especially interesting when read in conjunction with what was pointed out in Chapter III. That being, of course, that the enduring and definitive statement of Eckhart's thought is his simple proclamation that: "Being is God."[1094] In other words, taking into full account what I have argued to be the definitive statement of Eckhart's theology, one can begin to see with greater clarity and textual consistency that Eckhart is talking about the relationship between God and creation by way of their common principle: 'being'. What his homiletic comments on 1 John 4:16, then, add to this is 'love'. Recall again, the Johannine verse under review: "God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God,

[1090] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke I*, 675 (Predigt 65).
[1091] Ibid, 674 (Predigt 65).
[1092] Ibid, 675 (Predigt 65).
[1093] Ibid, 674 (Predigt 65).
[1094] Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke* (Erster Band, 1958), 156 (Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum, 12).

and God in him."[1095] From this it can be deduced that if being (in its totality) is God, and that the being of God is love, then if a creature (and more exclusively, the soul[1096]) understands its own being to be, essentially, the being of God – that is love – and then acts accordingly, it necessarily follows that any creature who loves, generally, has fully realized, in life, its essential being in and as God. In other words, in and through love the being of God and the being of the soul become perfectly mirrored through their unity.

Interestingly then, this unified state of being – or this mystical ontology – coupled with its affective consequence that is love, altogether constitutes, at least according to the Johannine author and, subsequently Eckhart, the special concept of 'dwelling' (or, more precisely, in its textual conjugation: "dwells"[1097] [Modern German: "*bleibt*"[1098]; Middle High German: "*wonet*"[1099]; Latin: "*MANET*"[1100]]). This is a rather important concept as it pertains to mystical theology because it synthesizes a metaphysical principle of ontology together with a moral outcome that would be the necessary (that is to say, if one accepts on faith alone, the notion that God is love) result of such an understanding of being. To be sure, the moral quality of this mystical manner of being results when one's knowledge of one's being in and of God directly informs one's potentiality to love and/or to be loving in respect to one's total and actual moral comportment toward any and all things. Thus, the realization of one's being in God through love defines the conceptual framework for how it is that one 'dwells' simultaneously in God and in the world, and by

[1095] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 62 (Sermon 5).
[1096] Ibid, 167 (Sermon 25).
[1097] Ibid, 167 (Sermon 25).
[1098] As noted in the modern German version of 1 John 4:16: "*Gott ist die Liebe, und wer in der Liebe bleibt, der bleibt in Gott und Gott in ihm*." Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke I*, 675 (Predigt 65).
[1099] As noted in the Middle High German version of 1 John 4:16: "*Got ist diu mine, und der in der mine wonet, der wonet in gote und got in im*." Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke I*, 674 (Predigt 65).
[1100] As noted in the Latin version of 1 John 4:16: "*DEUS CHARITATE EST ET QUI MANET IN CHARITATE IN DEO MANET ET DEUS IN EO*". Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 62 (Sermon 5).

way of love. In this way, it could be restated that 'dwelling' is both one's fact of existence as well as one's mode of existence. Quite importantly, it is love alone that allows for one's manner of existence to transfer from mere 'being' to 'dwelling'.

To fully appreciate Eckhart's use of the term 'dwelling', one must also be aware of the nuance of his terminology in the original languages. Concerning the text under review, that is his sermon on 1 John 4:16,[1101] he makes use of the Middle High German verb form "*wonet*"[1102] as a translation from the Latin "*manet*".[1103] This translation is a very good one insofar as both verbs denote a special manner of being in respect to how it is that one lives and/or abides in the world. In fact, quite literally, 'wonen' (Middle High German) / '*wohnen*' (Modern German) means 'to live' in such a place and/or in such and such a manner. This will be treated in greater detail below. For the time being, what needs clarification is the translation from the Middle High German '*wonet*' to the Modern German "*bleibt*".[1104] In the case of 1 John 4:16, '*bleibt*' is now the standard translation that exists in most modern German Bibles. As such, it presents the reader with yet another dimension to the verse that suggests one's status of being as 'remaining' or 'staying' in God and in love. While this translation adds a rich theological dimension to the text, it unfortunately misses Eckhart's very particular meaning when he deliberately choses to translate the Latin, '*manet*', to the Middle High German, '*wonet*', as opposed to the Middle High German, '*blîbet*' (Modern German, '*bleibt*'). To demonstrate this point, it is necessary to turn to another of Eckhart's vernacular sermons wherein this will become clearer. Consider Eckhart's vernacular sermon on John 15:16: In this case, he

[1101] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 62-65 (Sermon 5).
[1102] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke I*, 674 (Predigt 65).
[1103] Ibid, 674 (Predigt 65).
[1104] Ibid, 675 (Predigt 65).

employs, even within the same sentence, the verb forms of both '*bleiben*' [Modern German conjugation: "*bleibt*"[1105]; Middle High German conjugation: "*blîbet*"[1106]] and '*wohnen*' ("Modern German: "*wohnt*"[1107]; Middle High German: "*wonet*"[1108]]. The statement in question reads as follows: "there he remains and there he dwells in love"[1109] [Middle High German: "*der dâ blîbet und der dâ wonet in der minne*"[1110]; Modern German: "*der da bleibt and der da wohnt in der Liebe*"[1111]]. I am pointing directly to this example because it clearly distinguishes '*wohnen*' from '*bleiben*' in both the Middle High German and in the Modern German texts. This is to show that Eckhart deliberately uses the verb '*wonen*', and he does so with the aim of indicating a rather unique way in which ones exists and/or abides. In other words, he is intentionally using this term to specify how it is that one 'dwells'. Again, this is not to say that the verb '*bleiben*'[1112] has nothing unique in and of itself to offer to a reading of 1 John 4:16. Rather, it is simply the case that in the case of 1 John 4:16, the Modern German verb '*wohnen*' offers a more direct understanding of the more robust account of the specific manner of being that Eckhart is referencing. Perhaps then it would suffice to conclude that when Eckhart says, '*wonet*' in the Middle High German text, he really does mean '*wonet*' / '*wohnt*' and not '*blîbet*' / '*bleibt*'. Effectively, this point demonstrates that the Modern German translation that has been quoted here, in this case, is not entirely consistent with the Middle High German transcriptions of Eckhart's preaching. In this instance, this very slight variation

[1105] Ibid, 317 (Predigt 28).
[1106] Ibid, 316 (Predigt 28).
[1107] Ibid, 317 (Predigt 28).
[1108] Ibid, 316 (Predigt 28).
[1109] My translation.
[1110] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke I*, 316 (Predigt 28).
[1111] Ibid, 317 (Predigt 28).
[1112] In fact, in certain contexts, '*bleiben*' can also mean 'to dwell'. Yet it lacks the etymological traces that broaden the context of the term by way of the noted Latin counterpart. For an example of '*bleiben*' functioning as 'to dwell', see its special use as '*inneblîben*' / '*Innebleiben*': Ibid, 322-323 (Predigt 28).

just so happens to carry with it a rather significant meaning. At the very least, it has been made clear from this brief analysis that Eckhart, indeed, fully grasped the sense of the Latin text in 1 John when rendering its meaning into his vernacular homiletic translations and exegeses. To be sure then, his aim was to describe a special manner of being in the world and comportment that results from the complete unification between the being of the soul and the being of God when it is fully consummated – and thereby consecrated – through love; and, if I may, *to be and exist in such a manner of mystical unity with God, through love, is to dwell*.

Another example of 'dwelling' as '*wohnen*' that serves to strengthen my point comes from Eckhart's vernacular sermon on Acts 1:4. In this sermon, he announces in Middle High German: "*Der mensche, der alsô übertragen ist über alliu lieht, der wonet in êwicheit*"[1113] [Modern German: "*Der Mensch, der so hinausgetragen ist über alles Licht, der wohnt in der Ewigkeit*"[1114]] In English, this has been translated as: "The man who is thus translated beyond all lights, dwells in eternity."[1115] The important point to focus on here is, once again, the use of '*wonet*' to suggest a unique manner of being that is, in fact, most appositely rendered as 'dwells'. Moreover, this second example has been

[1113] Ibid, 334 (Predigt 29).
[1114] Ibid, 335 (Predigt 29).
[1115] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 62 (Sermon 5). In this translation, take note of Walshe's decision to translate the Middle High German '*übertragen*' / Modern German '*hinausgetragen*' as 'translated': this is a sensible presentation of what is actually presented in the original text. In the above noted cases of both the Middle High German and the Modern German these terms are most often used metaphorically. According to the German etymological dictionary that was published by Jacob and Wilhem Grimm (Jacob Grimm, Wilhem Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, Elfter Band, (Leipzig: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1956), s.v. "übertragen.") the Middle High German '*übertragen*' even maintained, in most cases, a figurative rather than a literal meaning. However, the Modern German '*hinasugetragen*' is also used to express very mundane activities. Even so, the sense of 'going beyond' and 'crossing over' from one position to another is what is being communicated (to a more or less profound degree) in both cases. Thus, one could render these terms in English as 'carried beyond/over' or 'transferred', if, and only if, one also keeps in mind their common figurative parlance. I would like to thank Notger Slenczka for his insight and direction in the investigation of these terms.

brought to attention, along with the first, in order to demonstrate that when Eckhart says '*wonet*' he is quite clearly and purposely choosing this verb over and against what the Modern German translation of his sermon, as well as what most Modern German translations of the Bible render as '*bleibt*'. Again, both verbs, in of themselves, bring a special meaning to the text. However, similar to the Latin, '*manet*', the Middle High German, '*wonet*', (or '*wonen*' in the infinitive) denotes a distinctive (and strikingly parallel) manner of being. Further to this point, the verb '*wonen*' also serves as the root word for the Middle High German noun '*wonunge*' (Modern German: '*wohnung*' – a noun that can be used to denote a range of habitations). Here, it is shown that, once again, this Middle High German verb has an analogous function to the quoted Latin ('*manet*') in respect to '*maneo*' and its nominal derivation as '*mansio*'. Therefore, and to return to the original example concerning 1 John 14:16, when Eckhart translates the Latin[1116] scripture into the vernacular,[1117] the special use of the verb '*wonen*' is assuredly correct. In this way, it denotes a particular manner of living with implications that are intertwined with both being and spatiality. To conclude, the totality of this meaning is most adequately grasped in the English verb (which again, also has a similar nominal function to the Middle High German, '*wonen*', and the Latin, '*maneo*') 'to dwell', or simply, 'dwelling'.

Now, to proceed with the final aim of this brief etymological exploration, I will make my central claim concerning 'dwelling'.[1118] For Eckhart, 'dwelling' demarcates a particular mystical manner of being (as it has already been shown above). In the context

[1116] Latin text: "*DEUS CHARITATE EST ET QUI MANET IN CHARITATE IN DEO MANET ET DEUS IN EO*". Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 62 (Sermon 5).
[1117] Middle High German text: "*Got ist diu mine, und der in der mine wonet, der wonet in gote und got in im*." Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke I*, 674 (Predigt 65).
[1118] I would like to thank Mark Edwards and Nigel Palmer for their assistance with the history, meaning, and etymology of these terms in Latin and Middle High German.

of 1 John 4:16 – "God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him"[1119] – 'dwelling' connotes a specific mode of being and existing wherein the soul and God are united as one. As a result of the mystical unification of their being, the divinized soul then comports itself, accordingly, in all ways and toward all things in a loving manner. In other words, being is the nexus in which God and the soul mutually convene, and then they are both, together and at the same time, fully realized in and through the manifestation of love. Put more simply, one could state that existing in and through love is to understand and to act upon the fact of one's existence in God. Such an existence is what I, echoing Eckhart, am calling 'dwelling'. In this way, dwelling is a distinctive mystical variety of being; a variety that is, in fact, very much in line with my definition of mystical ontology. To recall once again, 'mystical ontology' has been defined as: *a belief in the possibility of union with or absorption into God by means of a correct understanding of the essence of one's own being and of the essence of being in general*. This definition was developed early on in order to demonstrate how Eckhart's concentration on being – as a mystical ontology – was to be understood as a unique stripe, or a species, so to speak, of the genus mystical theology. Here, now at the conclusion of this thesis, another element is being added to this presentation of the union between God and the soul: 'love'. Recall, again, Eckhart's words on this; he explains: "'God is love,' … because with His love He gives all creatures their being and life, and maintains them with His love."[1120] Also, that: "whatever can love and is capable of loving, that He pursues with His love, to love Him."[1121] But what is this ultimately divine

[1119] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 62 (Sermon 5).
[1120] Ibid, 62 (Sermon 5).
[1121] Ibid, 62 (Sermon 5).

and ontologically unifying love [Middle High German: '*minne*'] that Eckhart's speaks of in this case? He resolves this question in another vernacular sermon where he preaches:

> Now, whoever dwells [*wonet*[1122]] in the goodness of his nature, dwells in God's love: but love is without a Why. If I had a friend and loved him for benefits received and because of getting my own way, I should not be loving my friend, but myself. I ought to love my friend for his own goodness, for his virtues and for all that he is in himself. Only then would I love my friend aright, if I loved him as I have said. It is just the same with the man abiding in God's love, seeking not his own in God or himself or in any thing, but loving God solely for His goodness and for the goodness of His nature, and for all that He is in Himself. That is genuine love.[1123]

Here, Eckhart is describing how one might love without a self-serving purpose or reason – 'without a Why' . There is no self-oriented end or purpose for such a love, other than to love something or someone for its/his/her own sake. In this way, one is compelled to love by nothing more than a very simple impulse that emerges from the ground of one's own being, and that is directed toward that which one loves and for the sake of that which one loves. It is interesting, then, to speculate on how such a manner of loving might be received and understood today within this contemporary secular horizon. In other words, how ought one to understand these words and interpret them so as to find meaning in them for one's life and the world today? Are they merely to be isolated and kept as a static vision of the past? Or can they find meaning and shape in today's complex spiritual landscape? Up until now, this thesis has demonstrated the relevancy and applicability of Eckhart's thought on being and God. It has done so primarily as a descriptive exercise. However, at this point, I would now like to loosen the grip that scholarly conventions have held over much of this work; and, thereby, turn (as noted earlier on) to more

[1122] Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke I*, 316 (Predigt 28).
[1123] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 129 (Sermon 17).

prescriptive and, indeed, reverent meaning for these ruminations on being and God, in respect to love.

Concerning Eckhart, specifically, much of this thesis has focused on showing how his distinctive ontology-centered theology can be befittingly interpreted to emphasize the radical – and mystical – presence of God in the world. Recall, again, Eckhart, the preacher's, words that:

> A man may go out into a field and say his prayers and know God, or he may go to church and know God: but if he is more aware of God because he is in a quiet place, as is usual, that comes from his imperfection and not from God: for God is equally in all things and all places, and is equally ready to give Himself as far as in Him lies: and he knows God rightly who knows God equally [in all things].[1124]

The point, here, is that an understanding (or an awareness, as it were) of God, such as has been described in the above quotation, clearly indicates that God's presence is not restricted to certain localities. On the contrary, and according to Eckhart's ontological claim, it is that 'God is equally in all things and all places'. With this in mind, and bringing together the central principle of ontology of this thesis – "Being is God"[1125] – with its consequent principle of morality that has just been outlined – "God is love" [1126] – one can conclude the following: *if one understands one's being to be in and for God, one's activities will be comprehensively informed by this ontological principle; in other words, one will then demonstrate and manifest this understanding by comporting oneself toward the totality of existence in a loving manner.* Or, more simply, to (judiciously-) paraphrase 1 John 4:16: *If God is love, then he or she who dwells in love dwells in God,*

[1124] Ibid, 353 (Sermon 69).
[1125] Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke* (Erster Band, 1958), 156 (Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum, 12).
[1126] Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 62 (Sermon 5).

and God in him or her. 'Dwelling', once again, indicates one's manner of being when it is informed by God's mystical presence in and amidst oneself and the world. With the above in mind, I would like to make the following claim concerning 'dwelling': *if and when God, the world, and the soul are understood to be mystically united in and through their shared being, and, consequently, actualized through love, one's manner of being, in such a case, is best characterized as 'dwelling'.* Or, alternatively: *to realize one's being in God, through love, is to dwell*. The point here is that if one's being is characterized as 'dwelling', this implies that one's being is enlivened by, and demonstrated through, acts of love. Thus, the consummation of being, in Eckhart's mystical theology, is fully consecrated in and through 'dwelling'.

The question still remains: how is it that understanding being as dwelling (and, thereby, assuming all of its implications, as such) can have any meaning and/or application for not only the continuation, but more importantly, the thriving and the resonance of Christian theology in the modern secular world? To answer this, I will turn again to Taylor as the interlocutor for many of this thesis' central provocations. Again, at the center of this problem is the "eclipse of transcendence" [1127] insofar as it is understood to be something over and against the immanent world and its correlative affairs. However, as Taylor rightly points out, a purely immanent world-view suffers from an impoverishment of inspiration via what he terms (and was already discussed and quoted at length in Chapter VI), "the malaise of immanence",[1128] or simply, the existential "dissatisfaction"[1129] that arises from a full "eclipse of the transcendence"[1130] in all aspects

[1127] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 309-310.
[1128] Ibid, 309-310.
[1129] Ibid, 309.
[1130] Ibid, 309.

and moments of life. Quite clearly, what has been presented in this thesis[1131] is, among other things, a different reading of immanence; that is to say, one in which transcendence is not something over and against (or wholly 'other' than) immanence. Instead, it is one where transcendence is that which truly sanctifies immanence by way of one's recognition of their coterminous nature.

Secularity, in general, is immensely complex, and it has created no shortage of challenges for Christian theology. However, as I stated early on in this conclusion, challenges, if addressed in a sensitive and intelligent manner, can and ought to be received and understood as opportunities for the healthy growth and development of a tradition. Additionally, these challenges and criticisms can also be used for clarification regarding one's own beliefs and attitudes as they convene on and toward theology. Taylor, too, recognizes this when, concerning the current state and the future of religious belief he rather optimistically states: "[t]he goal in this case is not to return to an earlier formula, inspiring as many of these will undoubtedly be; there will always be an element of imitation of earlier models, but inevitably and rightly Christian life today will look for and discover new ways of moving beyond the present orders to God."[1132] I take his point, and I agree that the will to 'look for and discover new ways of moving beyond the present orders to God' is '[t]he goal' for theology today. And, in response to Taylor's open provocation, I have developed, and attempted to answer, the following question: *what insights can Meister Eckhart's thought offer to theologians today in addressing the problem of secularity?* It is this very question that served to introduce this thesis. Now, at its conclusion, I will close and settle what I have, up to this point, defended to be one of

[1131] See, especially: Chapter VI.
[1132] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 755.

many possible solutions to this task for theology.

On Dwelling: Ontology, Morality, and Mysticism in a Secular Age (Conclusion, Summary, and Restatement of Thesis)

My overall thesis for this project has been: *the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart can be interpreted and applied in a manner that successfully opens a space for constructive dialogue between secular culture and his understanding of the presence of God in the world*. Further, I have argued that this space for constructive dialogue has been opened on account of certain criteria that have been drawn mainly from Charles Taylor's, *A Secular Age*. Those criteria are as follows: first, to articulate a theology that is metaphysically formulated on the overlap between transcendence and immanence (as opposed to their alterity)[1133]; second, to identify a middle and unconventional way of understanding God that arises between the binary poles and dialectical instability of Christian orthodoxy and atheism[1134]; and third, to create a space for a religious attitude[1135] and/or a way of understanding the self, the world, and God in an age (and a historical-cultural context) that is "very far from settling in to a comfortable unbelief."[1136] To summarize, the former two criteria were more comprehensively addressed in Chapter VI. To be clear, these points were met, first, by declaring Eckhartian mysticism as a heterodox Christian theology[1137] and, second, by identifying the distinctive and enduring feature of his thought – 'Being is God' – as one that emphasizes the coterminous nature of immanence

[1133] Ibid, 309-310.
[1134] Ibid, 302.
[1135] This is to be understood as an analogical adaptation of Husserl's 'phenomenological attitude'. See: Husserl, Edmund, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), 113-114 §94-95. See, also: Chapter 5.
[1136] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 727.
[1137] See, also: Chapter III

and transcendence. The latter of the above noted criterion – that is, the articulation of a religious attitude that hermeneutically reflects the landscape of our secular horizon – has been addressed through the preceding discussion on the mystically conceived concept and understanding of being as 'dwelling'.

To be clear, this very particular concept of 'dwelling' was, here, introduced in order to demonstrate a persisting and surely fertile element of religiosity in this secular age. Further, 'dwelling', as it has been defined above, is a way of understanding being that is hermeneutically related to Eckhartian mysticism. In other words, Eckhart himself was not aiming to treat the same cultural conditions that one faces today. However, his theology has the 'classical'[1138] capacity to be appropriated and applied in and for the world, right now. In this way, Eckhart's theology has maintained lasting and, indeed, meaningful content for application(s) in today's modern secular world. Concerning 'dwelling', perhaps what is most important about such a notion, for this thesis, is that it, also, effectively assumes the meaning of the prior two above noted criteria within its conceptual framework. That is to say, if one understands one's being as 'dwelling', one is then living out a religious understanding that is theologically heterodox, univocally focused on the mystical presence of God in the world and consequently, 'in all things', and finally (and consummately), prescriptive of a particular religious attitude that has the potential not only to survive in a secular horizon, but to actually flourish. In this way, 'dwelling' is more than the continuance of a form of religious piety – it is, if I may, its transformation. *To dwell is to understand one's being – and all being – as the being of God; and, to live accordingly, in and through the practice of love.* Thus, the concept of

[1138] See: Gadamer's discussion on the "classical": Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 288-289 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iii)). This concept was also developed and applied to Eckhart in Chapter II.

'dwelling', as mystically informed manner of being, is this thesis' contribution toward: *opening of a space for constructive dialogue between Christian theology and secular culture*.

Being is God: A Hermeneutical Reflection and Final Remarks

The thesis, with all of its meaning and its implications, comes into form at a time nearly seven centuries after the death of Meister Eckhart. The question then remains: why look to a figure of Christian antiquity in order to treat a modern problem in theology? To answer this question, I must return to the guiding methodology for this thesis. However, before turning to *Truth and Method* itself, I would like to begin by highlighting one of Wachterhauser's very telling comments on Gadamerian hermeneutics and its emphasis on the continuity and influence of tradition. Wachterhauser writes that: "[s]uch traditions … form and shape us as epistemic agents long before we can ever begin to turn around and shape them and we never cease to belong to them more than they belong to us …"[1139] On this matter, Gadamer himself, simply states: "[h]ermeneutical experience is concerned with *tradition*."[1140] Therefore, and in carrying out such a methodology, this thesis does not intend to break with tradition, or, even more, to create wholly and radically anew a tradition of its own. These intentions are far too ambitious, and in truth, not even helpful. Instead, this thesis has reached back into tradition and focused on the figure of Eckhart and his thought in order to establish a deep and continuous link with tradition. In so doing, there is not any radical cessation or disjunction with tradition, as such, but merely a re-presentation of it. In other words, the point is simply to re-contextualize and apply a

[1139] Wachterhauser, *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 63.
[1140] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 352 (Part II, 4, 2 (B)).

hermeneutical reading of one particular stripe of mystical theology that has been in existence since the time of Eckhart – and, one could even argue, since the time of his Neo-Platonic and Platonic predecessors.[1141]

In fastening such a task so that it holds with precision to Gadamer's hermeneutic methodology, it is important to recall that, for Gadamer, any interpretation of a given subject matter of tradition is ultimately prejudiced by the context, or the horizon, in which it is interpreted – a context that is understood in and through its own language. In this way: "[t]he mode of being of tradition is, of course, not sensible immediacy. It is language, and in interpreting its texts, the hearer who understands it relates its truth to his own linguistic orientation to the world."[1142] Thus, the interpreter is both the direct and rightful heir to tradition and, ultimately, the agent for its evolution. To this rather proactive and empowering point, Gadamer makes it clear that his hermeneutic method is most effectively understood and practiced when the interpreter's grasp of and link to tradition is most firmly established. This hermeneutic circle between interpreter and tradition and their reciprocal affectation is accentuated when Gadamer writes:

> The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the commonality that binds us to tradition. But this commonality is constantly being formed in or relation to tradition. Tradition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of our tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves.[1143]

[1141] For example, see Eckhart's comments on Proclus' (among a great many other philosophers of antiquity), *Elements of Theology* (prop. 1.) in his, 'Commentary on the Book of Wisdom': Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 168 (Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 151). See reference for Proclus' text: Ibid, 199 (endnote: 156).
[1142] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 459 (Part III, 5, 3 (A)).
[1143] Ibid, 293 (Part II, 4, 1 (B)(iii)).

In other words, if one wills, in any way, to modify tradition, one must first demonstrate a comprehension of past elements from that tradition, as well as be able to identify the conditions of traditions that have, in a sense, formed the current horizon of the interpreter. In this way, I am again in agreement with Wachterhauser's approach to agency and empowerment in Gadamerian hermeneutics when he states that: "[s]imply put, one can change such norms only by demonstrating a deeper grasp of them."[1144] In fact, Wachterhauser's comment here recognizes and restates the aim of the Gadamerian final cause. After all, as a means of orienting his hermeneutic project,[1145] Gadamer openly encourages the interpreter to foster his or her individual ability to take hold of the trajectory of tradition. In doing so, one is thereby imbued with the power to redirect (to a greater or lesser extent) the grand arc of history, and in the direction of the interpreter's own will and desire.

In this way, the above noted hermeneutic vision corresponds to the aims of this thesis; an aim that, again, sought to interpret and apply the mystical ontology of Meister Eckhart in a manner that would successfully open a space for constructive dialogue between secular culture and Eckhart's understanding of the presence of God in the world. Put more simply, the aim is not to present yet another historical analysis of Eckhart's works and their contextual meaning. Instead, the aim here has been, ultimately, hermeneutic. That is to say, I have made use of tradition – or in this case, a figure of tradition – in order to strengthen the link to the present. Moreover, by forging this link, I would like to see it calibrated toward a new direction for the future. Taylor is correct in

[1144] Wachterhauser, *The Cambridge Companion to* Gadamer, 64.
[1145] For a more detailed description and an example of this project in his own work, see Gadamer's: "The Guiding Concept of Humanism" in his *Truth and Method*; especially the section on '*Bildung*'. See: Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 8-17 (Part I, 1, 1, (B)(i-ii)).

saying that "we are just at the beginning of a new age of religious searching, whose outcome no one can foresee."[1146] However, as it stands, and in a strikingly Gadamerian tone, Taylor concludes: "Christian life today will look for and discover new ways of moving beyond the present order to God."[1147] This thesis is a modest effort in trying to clear this space, and in doing so, in identifying, at the very least, the framework for one possible solution to the bifurcation between Christian theology and secular culture.

Eckhart himself was responding to the conditions of his own time. Those conditions are not reflected in an absolutely symmetrical manner in the current century. That is why making a full return to Eckhartian theology as the answer for the present is unjustifiable. However, what one can do, and as I have tried to show in this thesis, is to look to certain defining principles of his thought that have the potential to take root in an entirely new and very different context. Now, whether or not these medieval ideas are transferrable to a modern horizon remains to be seen. However, the conditions[1148] for receiving, at the very least, their abstractions seem to be ready to hand, and in the opinion of the author of this thesis, are begging for both articulation and representation in the modern world. Now, perhaps more than ever, the world is desperate to understand its being from the most fundamental point possible. It is for this reason, that I have elected to ground this thesis and its message on the simple, yet immensely meaningful, statement: 'Being is God.'[1149]

[1146] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 535.
[1147] Ibid, 755.
[1148] See above chapter subsection titled: 'On Dwelling: Ontology, Morality, and Mysticism in a Secular Age'.
[1149] Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke* (Erster Band, 1958), 156 (Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum, 12).

To conclude, I will simply turn to the words that can be found in a closing prayer from the medieval preacher, Meister Eckhart:

"*That we may be one in the unity that is God himself, so help us God. Amen*."[1150]

[1150] My Translation. My italics. Closing prayer from Eckhart's sermon for the 'Feast of the Ascension', on Acts 1:4; *Convescens praecepit eis, ab Ierosolymis ne discederent etc.* The transcription in the Middle High German reads: "*Daz wir alsô ein sîn in der einicheit, diu got selber ist, des helfe uns got. Âmen.*" Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Werke I*, 336 (Predigt 29).

Bibliographical Notes

Meister Eckhart

Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen Werke*, Erster Band of *Die deutschen und lateinische Werke*, eds. Josef Koch and Josef Quint, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1936.

———, *Die deutschen Werke*, Erster Band of *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. Josef Quint, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1937.

———, *Die deutschen Werke*, Zweiter Band of *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. Josef Quint, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1971.

———, *Die deutschen Werke*, Dritter Band of *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. Josef Quint, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1976.

———, *Die deutschen Werke*, Vierter Band (Erster Hauptteil) of *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. Georg Steer, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 2003.

———, *Die deutschen Werke*, Vierter Band (Zweiter Teil) of *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. Georg Steer, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 2003.

———, *Die deutschen Werke*, Fünfter Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. and tran. Josef Koch, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1963.

———, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Erster Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. and tran. Josef Koch, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1958.

———, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Erster Band (Erster Teil) of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. and tran. Konrad Weiß, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1964.

———, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Erster Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. and tran. Josef Koch, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1971.

———, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Erster Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. and tran. Josef Koch, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1976.

———, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Erster Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. and tran. Josef Koch, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 2003.

———, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Erster Band (Zweiter Teil) of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, eds. Albert Zimmermann and Loris Sturlese, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 2015.

———, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Zweiter Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, eds. Albert Zimmermann and Loris Sturlese, trans. Heribert Fischer, Josef Koch, Konrad Weiss, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1992.

———, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Dritter Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, eds. Albert Zimmermann and Loris Sturlese, trans. Karl Christ, Brunno Decker, Josef Koch, Heribert Fischer, Loris Sturlese, Albert Zimmermann, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1994.

———, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Vierter Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, eds. and trans. Ernst Benz, Brunno Decker, Josef Koch, Heribert Fischer, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1956.

———, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Fünfter Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, eds. Albert Zimmermann and Loris Sturlese, trans. Benhard Geyer, Josef Koch, Erich Seeberg, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 2006.

———, *Meister Eckhart*, Zweiter Band of *Deutsche Mystiker des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Franz Pfeiffer, Leipzig: G. J. Göschen'sche Verlagshandlung, 1857.

———, *Meister Eckhart: Sermons & Treatises Vol. I*, ed. and tran. Maurice O'Connell Walshe, Shaftsbury: Element, 1979.

———, *Meister Eckhart: Sermons & Treatises Vol. II*, ed. and tran. Maurice O'Connell Walshe, Shaftsbury: Element, 1987.

———, *Meister Eckhart: Sermons & Treatises Vol. III*, ed. and tran. Maurice O'Connell Walshe, Shaftsbury: Element, 1987.

———, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, eds. and trans. Bernard McGinn, Frank Tobin, and Elvira Borgstadt. New York: Paulist Press, 1986.

———, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, eds. and trans. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1981.

———, *Meister Eckhart – The Man from whom God hid Nothing*, ed. Ursula Flemming, Leominster: Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, 1995.

———, *Neue handschriftenfunde zur Überlieferung Meister Eckharts unde fiener Schule*,

Erster Band of *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. Josef Koch, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1958.

———, *Selected Writings*, ed. and tran. Oliver Davies, London: Penguin Books, 1994.

———, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, ed. and tran. Maurice O'Connell Walshe, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009.

———, *Meister Eckhart by Franz Pfeiffer: Translation with some Omissions and Additions*, Vol. 1, tran. C. de B. Evans, London: John M. Watkins, 1924.

———, *Meister Eckhart by Franz Pfeiffer: Translation with some Omissions and Additions*, Vol. 2, tran. C. de B. Evans, London: John M. Watkins, 1931.

———, *Meister Eckhart: Werke I*, ed. Niklaus Largier, Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2008.

———, *Meister Eckhart: Werke II*, ed. Niklaus Largier, Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2008.

Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor W. and Horkheimer, Max, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, tran. John Cumming, London: Verso, 1997.

Albert, Karl, *Meister Eckharts These von Sein: Untersuchungen zur Metaphysik des Opus tripartitum*, Kastellaun: Aloys Henn Verlag, 1976.

Ameriks, Karl, "The Critique of Metaphysics: Kant and Traditional Ontology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 249-79.

Ancelet-Hustache, *Jeanne, Master Eckhart and the Rhineland Mystics*, tran. Hilda Graef, New York: Harper, 1957.

Anderson, Pamela Sue, *Re-Visioning Gender in Philosophy of Religion: Reason, Love and Epistemic Locatedness*, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012.

Angelus Silesius, *Angelus Silesius: The Cherubinic Wanderer*, tran. Maria Shrady, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986.

Bach, Joseph, *Meister Eckhart der Vater deutschen Speculation*: *Als Beitrag zu einer Geschichte der deutschen Theologie und Philosophie der mittleren Zeit*, Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1864.

Baker, J. M. Jr., "Lyric and Paradigm: Hegel and the Speculative Instance of Poetry in Gadamer's Hermeneutics" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 143-166.

Barber, Daniel Colucciello, "Secularism, Immanence, and the Philosophy of Religion" in *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 152-171.

Barth, Karl, "From a Letter to Superintendent Herrenbrück" in *World Come of Age: A Symposium on Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Collins, 1967), 89-92.

———, *The Epistle to the Romans*, tran. Edwyn C. Hoskyns, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Bass, Diana Butler, *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*, New York: HarperCollins, 2012.

Bauerschmidt, Fredrick Christian, "The theological sublime" in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, eds. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), 201-219.

Beeck, Frans Jozef van, "Depth of Self-Awareness and Breadth of Vision: Joining Reflection and Interpretation" in *Theology after Liberalism: A Reader*, eds. John Webster and George P Schner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000), 257-302.

Beiser, Frederick C., "Hegel's historicism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 270-300.

———, "Moral Faith and the Highest Good" in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Paul Guyer, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 588-629.

Benavides, Gustavo, "Modernity" in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 186-204.

———, "There is Data for Religion" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (Dec. 2003), 895-903.

Bernstein, Jay M., "The Causality of Fate: Modernity and Modernism in Habermas" in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, eds. Maurizio Passerin d'Entréves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 245-268.

Blamires, David, "Eckhart and Tauler: A Comparison of Their Sermons on "Home quidam fecit cenam magnum" (Luke XIV. 16)" in *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (July 1971), 608-627.

Blattner, William, "Laying the ground for metaphysics: Heidegger's appropriation of Kant" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 149-176.

Blond, Phillip, "Introduction: Theology before philosophy" in *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between philosophy and theology*, ed. Phillip Blond (New York: Routledge, 1998), 1-66.

Boehme, Jacob, *Jacob Boehme: The Way to Christ*, tran. Peter Erb, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1978.

Bohman, James, "Two Versions of the Linguistic Turn: Habermas and Poststructuralism" in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, eds. Maurizio Passerin d'Entréves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 197-220.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. John W. De Gruchy, trans. Isabel Best, Lisa E Dahill, Reinhard Krauss, and Nancy Lukens, vol. 8 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, ed. John W. De Gruchy, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Bouyer, Louis, "Mysticism: An Essay on the History of the Word" in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods, (Garden City: Image Books, 1980), 42-55.

———, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, tran. Mary P. Ryan, New York: The Seabury Press, 1963.

Bowen, John R., "The Indeterminacy of Laïcité: Secularism and the State in France" in *Contesting Secularism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Anders Berg-Sørensen (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), 137-162.

Buber, Martin, *Meister Eckharts Mytische Schriften: In unsere Sprache übertragen von Gustav Landauer*, Berlin: Schnabel, 1920.

Buckley, James J., "Beyond the Hermeneutical Deadlock" in *Theology after Liberalism: A Reader*, eds. John Webster and George P Schner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000), 187-203.

Bultmann, Rudolf, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, New York: Charles and Scribner's Sons, 1958.

———, *New Testament Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, ed. Schubert M. Ogden, tran. Schuber M. Ogden, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

———, "The Idea of God and Modern Man" in *Translating Theology into the Modern Age: Historical, Systematic and Pastoral Reflections on Theology and the Church in the Contemporary Situation*, tran. Robert W. Funk, Vol. 2 of *Journal for Theology and Church*, ed. Robert W. Fund, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. 1965), 83-95.

———, "The New Testament and Mythology" in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans-Werner Bartsch, tran. Reginald H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K, 1972), 1-44.

Burbidge, John, "Hegel's conception of logic" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 86-101.

Burkhard, Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity, and Unity*, tran. Orrin F. Summmerell, Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 2001.

Byrne, Peter, *Kant on God*, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007.

Caputo, John D., "Heidegger and theology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 326-344.

———, "Meister Eckhart and the Later Heidegger: The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought Part One" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (October 1974), 479-494.

———, "Meister Eckhart and the Later Heidegger: The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought Part Two" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (January 1975), 61-80.

———, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1986.

Carlson, Thomas A., *Indiscretion: Finitude and the Naming of God*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

———, "Locating the Mystical Subject" in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, eds. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 207-238.

———, *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude & Creation of the Human*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Cavanaugh, William T., "Beyond Secular Parodies" in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* ,eds. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), 182-200.

de Certeau, Michel, "'Mysticque' au XVIIe siècle: Le Problème du langage 'mysticque.'" in vol. 2 of *L'Homme devant Dieu: Mélanges offerts au Père Henri du Lubac*, Paris: Aubier, 1964.

———, "Mysticism" in *Diacritics*, tran. Marsanne Brammer, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Summer 1992), 11-25.

———, *The Mystic Fable, Volume One: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, tran. Michael B. Smith, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

———, *The Mystic Fable, Volume Two: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, tran. Michael B. Smith, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Chamberlain, Houston Stewart, *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. Band. 1. München: Bruckman, 1899.

———, *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. Band. 2. München: Bruckman, 1899.

Chenu, M.-D., *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, eds. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little, trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968.

Chenavier, Robert, "Simone Weil: Completing Platonism through a Consistent Materialism" in The Christian Platonism of Simone Weil, eds. E Jane Doering and Eric O. Springsted (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 61-76.

Clark, James M., "C. G. Jung and Meister Eckhart" in *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (April 1959), 239-244.

———, *The Great German Mystics: Eckhart, Tauler and Suso*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949.

Classen, Albrecht, "Meister Eckhart's Philosophy in the Twenty-First Century" in *Mystics Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1/2 (March/June 2003), 6-23.

Coakley, Sarah, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002.

Cobb, John B., Jr., "Is the Later Heidegger Relevant for Theology?" in *The Later Heidegger and Theology*, eds. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963), 177-197.

Constable, Giles, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Conzemius, Victor, "Universal Christian Faith and Nationalism" in *Religion and Nationalism*, eds. John Coleman, Milelos Tomlen, tran. John Bowden, (London: SCM Press, 1995), 14-21.

Coole, Diana, "Habermas and the Question of Alterity" in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, eds. Maurizio Passerin d'Entréves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 221-244.

Cooper, David E., *The Measure of Things: Humanism, Humility, and Mystery*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Courtenay, William J., "Inquiry and Inquisition: Academic Freedom in Medieval Universities" in *Church History*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (June 1989), 168-181.

Coward, Harold, "A Hindu Response to Derrida's View of Negative Theology" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 199-226.

Cox, Harvey, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*, New York: Collier Books, 1990.

Crocket, Clayton, *A Theology of the Sublime*, New York: Routledge, 2001.

Cunningham, Conor, *Genealogy of Nihilism*, London: Routledge, 2002.

———, "Wittgenstein after theology" in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, eds. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), 64-90.

Cupitt, Don, *Mysticism after Modernity*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998.

———, *Sea of Faith*, Surrey: SCM Press, 2003.

———, *Taking Leave of God*, London, SCM Press, 2001.

———, *The Fountain: A Secular Theology*, London: SCM Press, 2010.

———, *The Religion of Being*, London, SCM Press Ltd. 1998.

———, *The Revelation of Being*, London: SCM Press Ltd. 1998.

Daly, Mary, *Beyond the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, London: The Women's Press Limited, 1986.

Dalle Pezze, Barbara, *Martin Heidegger and Meister Eckhart: a path towards Galassenheit*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008.

Dallmayr, Fred, "The Discourse of Modernity: Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Habermas" in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, eds. Maurizio Passerin d'Entréves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 59-96.

Davies, Oliver, *God Within: The Mystical Tradition of Northern Europe*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2006.

———, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian*, London, SPCK Publishing, 1991.

———, "Soundings: towards a theological poetics of silence" in *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, eds. Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 201-222.

———, "Why were Eckhart's propositions condemned?" in *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 71 (October 1990), 433-444.

Davidovich, Adina, "Kant's Theological Constructivism" in *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (July, 1993), pp. 323-351.

Davis, Brett W., *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007.

Dawkins, Richard, *The God Delusion*, London: Bantam Press, 2006.

Degenhardt, Ingeborg, *Studien zum Wandel des Eckhartbildes*, Leiden: Brill, 1967.

Deikman, Arthur J., "Bimodal Consciousness and the Mystic Experience" in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods, (Garden City: Image Books, 1980), 261-269.

Deleuze, Gilles, *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, tran. Anne Boyman, New York: Urzone, Inc., 2001.

Demkovich, Michael, *Introducing Meister Eckhart*, Liguori: Liguori/Triumph, 2006.

Denifle, Heinrich, "Meister Eckharts lateinische Schriften und die Grundanschauung seiner Lehre." in *Archiv für Litteratur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters, Band 2* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1886): 417-640, 673-687.

De Nys, Martin J., *Hegel and Theology*, London: T & T Clark International, 2009.

Derrida, Jacques, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, tran. Ken Frieden (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 73-142.

———, "Of an Apocalyptic tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, tran. John P. Leavey, Jr. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 25-72.

———, "Post-Scriptum: Aporias, Ways and Voices" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, tran. John P. Leavey, Jr. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 283-323.

Desmond, William, *Ethics and the Between*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.

———, *God and the Between*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

_____, *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double?*, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003.

———, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? Between Religion and Philosophy*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.

———, Perplexity and Ultimacy: Metaphysical Thoughts from the Middle, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

Despland, Michel, "On Not Solving Riddles Alone" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) 143-166.

Diamond, Eli, "Catherine Pickstock, Plato and the Unity of Divinity and Humanity: Liturgical or Philosophical?" in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric, and Truth*, eds. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 1-16.

Dickey, Laurence, "Hegel on religion and philosophy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 301-347.

Dietrich, Paul, "The Wilderness of God in Hadewijch II and Meister Eckhart and His Circle" in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994), 31-43.

Dillard, Peter S., *Heidegger and Philosophical Atheology*, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008.

Dinzelbacher, Peter, *Christliche Mystik im Abendland: Ihre Geschichte von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des Mittelalters*, Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh GmbH & Co., 1994.

Dobie, Robert J., *Logos & Revelation: Ibn 'Arabi, Meister Eckhart, and Mystical Hermeneutics*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010.

———, "Meister Eckhart's 'Ontological Philosophy of Religion,'" in *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (Oct., 2002), 563-585.

Drey, Johann Sebastian von, "Über das Verhältnis des Mysticismus zum Katholicismus" in *Theologische Quartalschrift*, (1831), 25-54.

Dreyfus, Hubert and Kelly, Sean Dorrance, *All Things Shinning: Reading the Western Classics to Find Meaning in a Secular Age*, New York: Free Press, 2011.

Dubuisson, Daniel, *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and*

Ideology, tran. William Sayers, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Dupré, Louis, "Spiritual Life and the Survival of Christianity: Reflections at the End of the Millennium" in *Cross Currents*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Fall 1998), 381-90.

———, "Spiritual Life in a Secular Age" in *Daedalus*, Vol. 111, No. 1 (Winter 1982), 21-31.

Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, tran. Joseph Ward Swain, New York: The Free Press, 1965.

Ebeling, Gerhard, "Theology and the Evidentness of the Ethical" in *Translating Theology into the Modern Age: Historical, Systematic and Pastoral Reflections on Theology and the Church in the Contemporary Situation*, tran. Robert W. Funk, Vol. 2 of *Journal for Theology and Church*, ed. Robert W. Fund, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. 1965), 96-129.

Edmonds III, Radcliff G., "Imagining the Afterlife" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, eds. Esther Eidinow and Julia Kindt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 551-563.

Edwards, Mark, *Image, Word and God in the Early Christian Centuries*, Farnam: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2013.

———, *Origen against Plato*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2002.

Engels, Fredrick, *Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der Klassischen deutschen Philosophie*, Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1888.

Engelsviken, Tormod, "Modernity and eschatology" in *Faith and Modernity*, eds. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden, (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994), 163-181.

Feuerbach, Ludwig, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, tran. Ralph Manheim, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967.

———, *The Essence of Christianity*, tran. George Elliot, New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957.

Fiddes, Paul "The quest for a place which is 'not-a-place': the hiddenness of God and the presence of God" in *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, eds. Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35-60.

Figal, Günter, "The Doing of the Thing Itself: Gadamer's Hermeneutic Ontology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 102-125.

Fiorenza, Francis Schüssler and Kauffman, Gordon D., "God" in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 136-159.

Fischer, Heribert, *Meister Eckhart: Einführung in sein philosophisches Denken*, Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 1974.

Flasch, Kurt, *Meister Eckhart: Philosopher of Christianity*, trans. Anne Schindel and Aaron Vanides, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.

Forster, Michael, "Hegel's dialectical method" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 130-170.

———, "Hegel and Hermeneutics" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 174-203.

Foshay, Toby, "Introduction: Denegation and Resentment" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) 1-24.

Foucault, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, tran. A. M. Sheridan Smith, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

Frede, Dorthea, "The question of being: Heidegger's project" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 42-69.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Hans-Goerg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History*, eds. Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson, trans. Lawrence Schmidt and Monica Ruess, Albany: SUNY Press, 1992.

———, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, tran. P. Christopher Smith, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.

———, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. and tran. David E. Linge, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

———, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, tran. Nicholas Walker, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

———, *Truth and Method*, 2nd Rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, London: Continuum, 2006.

Gangle, Robert, "Theology of the Chimera: Spinoza, Immanence, Practice" in *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 26-43.

Gill, Jerry H., "Kant, Analogy, and Natural Theology." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1984), pp. 19-28.

Godfrey, Robert G., "The Language Theory of Thomas of Erfurt" in *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (January 1960), 22-29.

Görres, Johann Joseph von, *Die Christlicher Mystik*, Erster Band, Regensburg: Verlag von G. Joseph Manz, 1836.

———, *Die Christlicher Mystik*, Zwiter Band, Regensburg: Verlag von G. Joseph Manz, 1837.

———, *Die Christlicher Mystik*, Dritter Band, Regensburg: Verlag von G. Joseph Manz, 1840.

———, *Die Christlicher Mystik*, Vierter Band, Regensburg: Verlag von G. Joseph Manz, 1842.

Grimm, Jacob and Grimm, Wilhelm *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm*, Elfter Band, Leipzig: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1956.

Grondin, Jean, "Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 36-51.

Grotz, Stephan, "Meister Eckharts Pariser Quaestio I: Sein oder Nichtsein — ist das hier die Frage?" in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, No. 49 (2002), 370–98.

Guignon, Charles B., "Introduction" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-41.

———, "Authenticity, moral values, and psychotherapy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 268-292.

Guyer, Paul, *Kant*, London: Routledge, 2006.

———, "Thought and being: Hegel's critique of Kant's theoretical" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1171-210.

Haas, Alois Maria, *Geistliches Mittelalter*, Freiburg (Schweiz): Universitätsverlag, 1984.

Habermas, Jürgen, "An Awareness of What is Missing" in *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, tran. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 15-23.

———, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project" in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, eds. Maurizio Passerin d'Entréves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 38-55.

———, "Pre-political Foundations of the Democratic Constitutional State?" in *Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, ed. Florain Schuller, tran. Brian McNeil, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 19-52.

———, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, tran. Fredrick Lawrence, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985.

Hankey, Wayne J., "Philosophical Religion and the Neoplatonic Turn to the Subject" in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric, and Truth*, eds. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 17-30.

Hansen, Thomas Blom, Modood, Tariq, "Secularism, Popular Passion and Public Order in India" in *Contesting Secularism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Anders Berg-Sørensen (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), 207-231.

Harnack, Adolf, *Die Entstehung des Kirchlichen Dogmas*, Erster Band of *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Freiburg: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1888.

———, *Die Entwickelung des Kirchlichen Dogmas I*, Zweiter Band of *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Freiburg: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1888.

———, *Die Entwickelung des Kirchlichen Dogmas I*, Dritter Band of *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Freiburg: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1897.

Harphii, Henrici, *Theologiæ Mysticæ*, Coloniæ: Apud hæredes Arnoldi Birckmanni, 1556.

Harris, Sam, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 2005.

———, *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality without Religion*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014.

Harrison, Jane, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908.

———, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Hart, Hendrick, "Conceptual Understandings and Knowing Other-wise: Reflections on Rationality and Spirituality in Philosophy" in *Knowing Other-Wise: Philosophy at the Threshold of Spirituality*, ed. James H. Olthuis, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 19-53.

Hart, Kevin, "'The Experience of Nonexperience'" in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, eds. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 188-206.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Stephan Houlgate, tran. T. M. Knox, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

———, "The Earliest System-Programme of German Idealism" in *The Hegel Reader*, ed. Stephen Houlgate, tran. H. S. Harris, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. Ltd., 1998), 28-29.

———, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, tran. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

———, *Hegel's Logic*, tran. William Wallace, Part One of *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.

———, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, tran. A. V. Miller, Part Two of *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

———, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, tran. A. V. Miller, Part Three of *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

———, *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, J. M. Steward, and H. S. Harris, vol. I of *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter Hodgson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

———, *Determinate Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, J. M. Steward, and H. S. Harris, vol. II of *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter Hodgson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

———, *The Consummate Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, J. M. Steward, and H. S. Harris, vol. III of *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter Hodgson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

———, *The Philosophy of History*, tran. J. Sibree, Mineola: Dover Publishing, INC., 1956.

———, *The Philosophy of Right*, tran. T. M. Knox, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1962.

———, *Being and Time*, tran. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.

———, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tran. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 141-159.

———, *Country Path Conversations*, tran. Brett Davis, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

———, *Gelassenheit,* Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2008.

———, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

———, *Identity and Difference*, tran. Joan Stambaugh, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

———, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th ed., Richard Taft, tran. Richard Taft, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

———, "Language" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tran. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 185-208.

———, *Mindfulness*, trans. Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006.

———, *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, tran. John van Buren, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

———, ""… Poetically Man Dwells …"" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tran. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 1-14.

———*, Seminare*, Band 15 of *Gesamtausgabe*, Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1986.

———, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, tran. Albert Hofstadter, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.

———, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1995.

———, "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tran. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 15-86.

———, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

———, "The Thing" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tran. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 161-180.

———, "The Thinker as Poet" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tran. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 1-14.

———, "What Are Poets For?" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tran. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 87-139.

Hemming, Laurence Paul, *Heidegger's Atheism*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.

———, "Nihilism: Heidegger and the grounds of redemption" in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* ,eds. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), 91-108.

Henry, Michel, "La signifaction ontologique de la critique de la connaissance chez Maître Eckhart" in *Voici Maître Eckhart*, ed. Emilie Zum Brunn (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1994), 175-185.

———, *The Essence of Manifestation*, tram. Girard Etzkorn, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*, London: Rider, 2012.

Hitch, Sarah, "From Birth to Death: Life-Change Rituals" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, eds. Esther Eidinow and Julia Kindt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 521-536.

Hodgson, Peter C., *Hegel & Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

———, "Hegel's Philosophy of Religion" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 230-252.

Hoffman, Piotr, "Death, time, history: Division II of *Being and Time*" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 222-240.

Hollywood, Amy, "Introduction" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1-33.

———, "Love Speaks Here: Michel de Certeau's *Mystic Fable*" in *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Fall 2012), 198-206.

———, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

———, "Suffering Transformed: Marguerite Porete, Meister Eckhart, and the Problem of Women's Spirituality" in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994), 87-113.

———, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995.

Hick, John, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, 2nd ed, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

———, "Mystical Experience as Cognition" in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods, (Garden City: Image Books, 1980), 422-437.

Honneth, Axel, "The other of justice: Habermas and the ethical challenge of postmodernism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen K. White (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 289-323.

Houlgate, Stephen, "Hegel's Logic" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 111-134.

Houston, James M., "Modernity and Spirituality" in *Faith and Modernity*, eds. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden, (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994), 182-207.

Hoy, David Couzens, "Heidegger and the hermeneutic turn" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 177-201.

———, "Splitting Difference: Habermas's Critique of Derrida" in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, eds. Maurizio Passerin d'Entréves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 124-146.

Hunter, James D., "What is modernity? Historical roots and contemporary features" in *Faith and Modernity*, eds. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden, (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994), 12-28.

Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman, "Contested Secularism in Turkey and Iran" in *Contesting Secularism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Anders Berg-Sørensen (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), 181-206.

Husserl, Edmund, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book*, tran. F. Kersten, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982.

Huxley, Aldous, *The Perennial Philosophy: An Interpretation of Great Mystics, East and West*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1945.

Inge, William Ralph, Ch*ristian Mysticism*, London: Methuen & Co., 1899.

Irigary, Luce, *Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1993.

James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Jantzen, Grace, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Jeanrond, Werner, *A Theology of Love*, London: T & T Clark International, 2010.

———, "Ecclesia semper reformanda: Protestant Principle and Church Renewal" in *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 73. (årg., 2010), 271-281.

———, *The Concept of God in Global Dialogue (Faith meets Faith)*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005.

———, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1994.

Jenkins, Richard, "Disenchantment, Enchantment and Re-Enchantment: Max Weber at the Millennium" in *Max Weber Studies*, Vol 1. No. 1 (November 2000), 11-32.

Johansson, Lars, "New Age – a synthesis of the premodern, modern, and postmodern" in *Faith and Modernity*, eds. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden, (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994), 208-251.

Jostes, Franz, *Meister Eckhart und seine Jünger: ungedruckte Texte zur Geschichte der deutschen Mystik*, Freiburg (Schweiz): Commisionsverlag der Universiaetbuchhandlung, 1895.

Joy, Morny, "Conclusion: Divine Reservations" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 255-282.

Jungkeit, Steven R., *Spaces of Modern Theology: Geography and Power in Schleiermacher's World*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Kant, Immanuel, "An answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment" in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. and tran. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 15-22.

———, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Mathews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

———, "Critique of Practical Reason" in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. and tran. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 137-271.

———, *Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

———, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and tran. Mary Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

———, "Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion" in *Religion and Rational Theology*, tran. Allen W. Wood, eds. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 335-451.

———, "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy" in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, ed. and tran. Peter Fenves (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 51-81.

———, *Opus Postumum*, ed. Eckhart Forster, trans. Eckhart Forster and Michael Rosen, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

———, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, ed. Lewis Beck, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1950.

———, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, eds. and trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

———, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, tran. Ian Johnston, Arlington: Richer Resources Publications, 2008.

Karrer, Otto, *Meister Eckhart: Das System seiner religiösen Lehre und Lebensweisheit*, München: Josef Müller, 1926.

Katz, Steven T., *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Kelley, C. F., *Meister Eckhart on Divine Knowledge*, Cobb: Dharma Café Books, 2009.

Kelley, Thomas M., *Theology at the Void: The Retrieval of Experience*, Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.

Kennedy, Philip, *A Modern Introduction to Theology: New Questions for Old Beliefs*, London, I.B. Tarius & Co. Ltd, 2006.

Kenny, Anthony, *The Unknown God*, Agnostic Essays, New York: Continuum, 2004.

Kessler, Michael, and Sheppard, Christian, "Preface" in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, eds. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), vii-xvi.

Kieckhefer, Richard, "Meister Eckhart's Conception of Union with God." *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 71, No. 2/4 (Jul-Oct. 1978), 203-225.

———, *Repression of Heresy in Medieval Germany*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1979.

Kierkegaard, Søren, *The Last Years: Journal Entries 1853-55*, ed. and tran. Ronald Gregor Smith, London: Collins, 1965.

———, *The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, eds. and trans. Howard V. Hong, Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Kikuchi, Satoshi, *From Eckhart to Ruusbroec: A Critical Inheritance of Mystical Themes in the Fourteenth Century*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014.

Kitcher, Patricia, "Kant on Self-Identity." *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 1

(Jan.1982), pp. 41-72.

Kolb, David, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Krieger, Gerhard, "Mystik und Scholastik: Zur Diskussion um Meister Eckhart im Blick auf seine Quaestiones parisienses" in *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift*, No. 107 (1998), 123-47.

Kuehn, Manfred, *Kant: A Biography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Küng, Hans, *Christianity: Essence, History, and Future*, tran. John Bowden, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 1995.

Langer, Otto, *Christliche Mystik im Mittelalter: Wissenschaft, Ökonomie und Gotteserfahrung*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004.

Lanzetta, Beverly J., "Three Categories of Nothingness in Eckhart." *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (Apr., 1992), 248-268.

Largier, Nicklaus, *Bibliographie zu Meister Eckhart*, Freiburg (Schweiz): Univeritätsverlag, 1989.

———, "Mysticism, Modernity, and the Invention of Aesthetic Experience" in *Representations*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (Winter 2009), 37-60.

Lasson, Adolf, *Meister Eckhart, Der Mystiker: Zur Geschichte der Religiösen Speculation in Deutschland*, Berlin: Verlag von Wilhem Hetz, 1868.

Lawrence, Fred, "Gadamer, the Hermeneutic Revolution, and Theology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 167-200.

Lehmann, Hartmut, *Die Entzauberung der Welt: Studien zu Themen von Max Weber*, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2009.

Lerner, Robert E., "New Evidence for the Condemnation of Meister Eckhart." *Speculum*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (April 1997), 347-366.

———, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972.

Lichtmann, Maria, "*Maguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart: The Mirror for Simple Souls Mirrored*" in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994), 17-30.

Lindbeck, George A., "Toward a Postliberal Theology" in *Theology after Liberalism: A Reader*, eds. John Webster and George P Schner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000), 361-386.

———, *The Church in Postliberal Age*, ed. James J. Buckley, London: SCM Press, 2002.

———, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984.

Linge, David E., "Mysticism, Poverty and Reason in the Thought of Meister Eckhart." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Dec., 1978), 465-488.

Louth, Andrew, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.

Loy, David, "The Deconstruction of Buddhism" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 227-254.

Luther, Martin, *The Freedom of the Christian*, tran. Mark D. Tranvik, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

———, *The Theologica Germanica of Martin Luther*, ed. and tran. Bengt Hoffman, Mahwah: The Paulist Press, 1980.

Lyotard, Jean-François, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.

Macintyre, Alice and Ricoeur, Paul, *The Religious Significance of Atheism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1969.

Macquarrie, John, *20th Centurty Religious Thought*, London: SCM Press, 1989.

———, *An Existentialist Theology: A Comparison of Heidegger and Bultmann*, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1973.

_____, *Existentialism*, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1973.

———, *God and Secularity*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967.

———, *Heidegger and Christianity*, London: SCM Press LTD, 1994.

———, *In Search of Humanity: A Theological and Philosophical Approach*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1982.

———, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought*, London: SCM Press, 1990.

———, *Martin Heidegger*, London: Lutterworth Press, 1968.

———, *Paths in Spirituality*, Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1992.

———, *Studies in Christian Existentialism*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965.

Magee, Glenn Alexander, "Hegel and Mysticism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 253-280.

Marion, Gordon D., "Anxiety in *The Concept of Anxiety*" in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, eds. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 308-328.

Marion, Jean-Luc, "Descartes and onto-theology" in *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between philosophy and theology*, ed. Phillip Blond (New York: Routledge, 1998), 67-106.

———, *Givenness & Hermeneutics*, tran. Jean-Pierre LaFouge, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2012.

——— "Introduction: What Do We Mean by 'Mystic'?" in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, eds. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard, tran. Gareth Gollard (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 1-7.

Marsden, John, "The Political Theology of Johannes Baptist Metz" in *The Heythrop Journal*, LIII (2012), 440-452.

Martensen, Hans L., *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997.

Matter, E. Ann, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity*, Philadelphia: The University of Philadelphia Press, 1990.

Maximilian Sandæi, *Maria flos mysticus*, Mainz: Schönwetter, 1629.

———, *Pro Theologia mystica clavis*, Cologne: Ex Officinâ Gualterinâ, 1640.

McGinn, Bernard, "Eckhart's Condemnation Reconsidered" in *Thomist; a Speculative Quarterly Review*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (July 1980), 390-414.

———, ""Evil Sounding, Rash, and Suspect of Heresy": Tensions between Mysticism and Magisterium in the History of the Church" in *The Catholic Historical Review*,

Vol. 90, No. 2 (April 2004), 193-212.

———, "Introduction: Meister Eckhart and the Beguines in the Context of Vernacular Theology" in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994), 1-14.

———, "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries." *Church History*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Mar., 1987), 7-24.

———, "Mystical Consciousness: A Modest Proposal" in *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2001), 156-171.

———, "Spirituality Confronts its Future 1" in *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, Vol. 5, (Spring 2005), 88-96.

———, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998.

———, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1992.

———, "The God beyond God: Theology and Mysticism in the Thought of Meister Eckhart." *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Jan., 1981), 1-19.

———, *The Growth of Mysticism*, London: SCM Press Ltd. 1994.

———, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005.

———, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man From Whom God Hid Nothing*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001.

———, "The 'Trakat von der Minne': A Chapter in the Reception of Meister Eckhart's Reception" in *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (April 2006), 177-192.

———, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism (1350-1550)*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2012.

———, "Vere tu es Deus absconditus: the hidden God in Luther and some mystics" in *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, eds. Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94-114.

McIntosh, Mark A., *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998.

Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, tran. Frank Tobin,

Mahwah: Paulist Press: 1998.

Merrill, Clark A., "Leo Strauss's Indictment of Christian Philosophy" in *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 62, No. 1, Christianity and Politics: Millennial Issue II, (Winter 2000), 77-105.

Metz, Johann-Baptist, *Theology of the World*, tran. William Glen-Doepel, London: Burns & Oats Limited, 1969.

Metz, Johann-Baptist and Moltmann, Jürgen, *Faith and the Future: Essays on Theology, Solidarity, and Modernity*, New York: Orbis Books, 1995.

Michalson, Carl, "Theology as Ontology and as History" in *The Later Heidegger and Theology*, eds. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963), 136-156.

Michalson, Gordon E., Jr., *Fallen Freedom: Kant on Radical Evil and Moral Regeneration*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

———, *Kant and the Problem of God*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999.

Mieth, Dietmar, *Einheit im Sein und Wirken*, München: Piper, 1986.

———, *Meister Eckhart: Gottserfahrung und Weg in die Welt*, Olten: Walter-Verlag AG, 1984.

———, *Meister Eckhart*, Olten: Walter-Verlag AG, 1984.

Mikulová, Marie, "Kierkegaard's Encounter with Mysticism through Speculative Idealism" in *Liber Acadamiæ Kierkegaardeniensis*, Tom. V, ed. Niels Tholstrup, (København: C. A. Reitzels Forlag A/S, 1984), 31-91.

Milbank, John, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and pardon*, New York: Routledge, 2003.

———, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997.

Milem, Bruce, *The Unspoken Word: Negative Theology In Meister Eckhart's German Sermons*, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002.

Modood, Tariq, "Muslims, Religious Equality and Secularism" in *Contesting Secularism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Anders Berg-Sørensen (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), 69-86.

Moran, Dermot, "Meister Eckhart in 20th-Century Philosophy" in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, ed. Jeremiah M. Hacket, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 669-698.

Morgan, Ben, "Eckhart and Incarnation: Some Practical Details" in *Eckhart Review*, No. 13 (Spring 2004), 37-50.

———, *On Becoming God: Late Medieval Mysticism and the Modern Western Self*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2012.

Murk-Jansen, Saskia, "Hadewijch and Eckhart: Amor intellegere est" in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994), 17-30.

Nelstrop, Louise and Magill, Kevin and Onishi, Bradley B., *Christian Mysticism: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Approaches*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2009.

Newbigin, Lesslie, "Truth and authority in modernity" in *Faith and Modernity*, eds. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden, (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994), 60-88.

Newman, Barbara, "Latin and the Vernaculars" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 225-239.

Nicolin, Günther, *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1970.

Niebuhr, Richard H., *Christ and Culture*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001.

Norris, Christopher, "Deconstruction, Postmodernism and Philosophy" in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, eds. Maurizio Passerin d'Entréves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 97-123.

Olthuis, James H., "Crossing the Threshold: Sojourning Together in the Wild Spaces of Love" in *Knowing Other-Wise: Philosophy at the Threshold of Spirituality*, ed. James H. Olthuis, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 235-258.

Oppen, Dietrich von, "Man in the Open Situation" in *Translating Theology into the Modern Age: Historical, Systematic and Pastoral Reflections on Theology and the Church in the Contemporary Situation*, tran. Robert W. Funk, Vol. 2 of *Journal for Theology and Church*, ed. Robert W. Fund, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. 1965), 130-158.

O'Regan, Cyril, "Eckhart Reception in the 19th Century" in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, ed. Jeremiah M. Hacket, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 629-667.

———, *The Heterodox Hegel*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Origen of Alexandria [*Origenes*], *Jeremiahomilien, Klageliedkommentar, Erklärung der Samuel- und Königsbücher*, Dritte Band of *Origenes Werke*, ed. Erich Klostermann, Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1901.

———, *Origenes Vier Bücher von den* Prinzipien, 3rd ed., eds. and trans. Herwig Görgemanns and Heinrich Karpp, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992.

———, *The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies*, tran. R. P. Lawson, Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1957.

Otto, Rudolf, *West-östliche Mystik: Vergleich und Unterscheidung zur Wesensdeutung*, Gotha: L. Klotz, 1926.

Ozment, Steven, "Eckhart and Tauler: German Mysticism and Protestantism" in *Thomist; a Speculative Quarterly Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (April 1978), 259-280.

Palmer, Richard, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969.

Panzig, Erik A., *Gelâzenheit und abegescheidenheit: Eine Einführung in das theologische Denken des Meister Eckhart*, Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005.

Pattison, George, "After Transubstantiation: Blessing, Memory, Solidarity, and Hope" in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric, and Truth*, eds. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 149-160.

———, *Agnosis: Theology in the Void*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996.

———, "Existence, Anxiety and the Moment of Vision: Fundamental Ontology and Existential Faith Revisited" in *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011),128-149.

———, *God & Being: An Inquiry*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

———, "Kirkestormen, neo-Gnosticism and Secular Christianity" in *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 73. (årg., 2010), 282-295.

———, *The End of Theology – And the Task of Thinking about God*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1998.

———, *The Late Heidegger*, Routlege: New York, 2000.

———, Thinking About God in an Age of Technology, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Peacocke, John, "Heidegger and the problem of onto-theology" in *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between philosophy and theology*, ed. Phillip Blond (New York: Routledge, 1998), 177-194.

Penksy, Max, "Universalism and the situated critic" in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen K. White (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 67-94.

Pilvousek, Josef, Speer, Andreas, Springer, Klaus Bernward, and Kern, Udo, *Wer ist Meister Eckhart?: homo doctus – homo sanctus*, Erfurt: Druck Repro und Verlag OHG, 2005.

Pinkard, Terry, *Hegel: A Biography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Pippin, Robert B., "Gadamer's Hegel" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 225-246.

Podmore, Simon D. "Mysterium Horrendum: Mystical Theology and the Negative Numinous" in *Exploring Lost Dimensions in Christian Mysticism: Opening to the Mystical*, eds. Louise Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 93-116.

———, "Transforming Presence: Incarnation between Transcendence and Immanence" in *Christian Mysticism and Incarnational Theology: Between Transcendence and Immanence*, eds. Louise Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 1-12.

Pomeroy, Richard M., *Paul Tillich: A Theology for the 21st Century*, New York: Writer's Showcase, 2002.

Poor, Sara S., "Transmission" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 240-251.

Porette, Margaret, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, tran. Edmund Colledge, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999.

Prodhomme, Jeff Owen, *Heidegger's Relation to Theology*, New York: Humanity Books, 1997.

Proudfoot, Wayne, *Religious Experience*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, tran. Colm Luibheid, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987.

Quint, Josef, *Die Überlieferung der deutschen Predigten Meister Eckharts und anderer Mystiktexte*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969.

Radler, Charlotte, "'In love I am more God': The Centrality of Love in Meister Eckhart's Mysticism" in *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 90, No. 2 (April 2010), 171-198.

———, "Losing the Self: Detachment in Meister Eckhart and Its Significance for Buddhist-Christian Dialogue" in *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Vol. 26 (2006), 111-117.

Rahner, Karl, *Theological Investigations: Volume VI Concerns for the Church*, tran. Edward Quinn, London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1982.

———, *Theological Investigations: Volume XX Concerns for the Church*, tran. Edward Quinn, London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1982.

Ratzinger, Joseph, *Christian Meditation: Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some Aspects of Christian Meditation*, London: The Ludo Press Ltd, 1990.

Ratzinger, Joseph, (Pope Benedict XVI), "That Which Holds the World Together: The Pre-political Moral Foundations of a Free State" in *Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, ed. Florain Schuller, tran. Brian McNeil, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 53-80.

Redding, Paul, "The Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: The Dialectic of Lord and Bondsman in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 94-110.

Rescher, Nicholas, *Kant and the Reach of Reason: Studies in Kant's Theory of Rational Systemization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Ricoeur, Paul, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, ed. Mark I. Wallace, tran. David Pellauer, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

———, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976.

———, The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language, trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin, and John Costello, New York: Routledge, 2003.

Ritschil, Albrecht, *Theologie und Metaphysik : zur Verständigung und Abwehr*, Bonn: A. Marcus, 1881.

Robinson, James, M., "The German Discussion of the Later Heidegger" in *The Later Heidegger and Theology*, eds. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963), 3-76.

Robertson, Neil G., "Milbank and Modern Secularity" in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric, and Truth*, eds. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 81-98.

Rorty, Richard, "Anticlericalism and Atheism" in *The Future of Religion*, ed. Santiago Zabala (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 29-54.

———, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

———, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, London: Penguin Books, 1999.

Rosenberg, Alfred, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit*, München: Hoheneichen – Verlag, 1934.

Rückert, Hanns, "The Reformation – Medieval or Modern" in *Translating Theology into the Modern Age: Historical, Systematic and Pastoral Reflections on Theology and the Church in the Contemporary Situation*, tran. Robert W. Funk, Vol. 2 of *Journal for Theology and Church*, ed. Robert W. Fund, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. 1965), 1-19.

Ruh, Kurt, *Frauenmystik und Franziskanische Mystik*, Zweite Band von *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, München: C.H. Beck, 1993.

———, *Die Grundlegung durch die Kirchenväter und die Mönchstheologie des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Erster Band von *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, München: C.H. Beck, 1990.

———, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker,* München, C. H. Back, 1985.

———, *Die Mystik des deutschen Predigerordens und ihre Grundlegung durch die Hochscholastik*, Dritte Band von *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, München: C.H. Beck, 1996.

———, *Die niederländische Mystik des 14. Bis 16. Jahrhunderts*, Vierte Band von *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, München: C.H. Beck, 1999.

Scharf, Robert H., "Experience" in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 94-116.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, tran. John Oman, Louisville: Westminster John Knows Press, 1994.

———, *The Christian Faith* (2nd Edition), eds. H.R. Mackintosh, J.S. Stewart, Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1989.

Schmidt, Carl, "Meister Eckhart: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Theologie und Philosophie des Mittelalters" in *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, Vol. 12 (1839), 663-744.

Schmidt, Leigh Eric, "The Making of Modern 'Mysticism'" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (June 2003), 273-302.

Schner, George P., "Metaphors for Theology" in *Theology after Liberalism: A Reader*, eds. John Webster and George P Schner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000), 3-51.

Scholem, Gershom, *On the Kabbalah And Its Symbolism*, tran. Ralph Manheim, New York: Schocken Books, 1996.

Schopenhauer, Arthur, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. I, trans E.F.J. Payne, New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1969.

———, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. II, trans E.F.J. Payne, New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1969.

Schurmann, Reiner, "The Loss of the Origin in Soto Zen and Meister Eckhart" in *Thomist; a Speculative Quarterly Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (April 1978), 281-312.

Schüssler, Werner, "Gott — Sein oder Denken? Zur Problematik der Bestimmung göttlicher Wirklichkeit in den Quaestiones parisienses Meister Eckharts von 1302/03" in *Transzendenz - Zu einem Grundwort der klassischen Metaphysik: Festschrift für Klaus Kremer*, eds. Ludger Honnefelder and Werner Schüssler (München: Paderborn, 1992), 163-181.

Schweitzer, Albert, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus; Reich Gottes und Christentum*, Band 4 in *Gesammelte Werke in fünf Bänden*, München, C. H. Beck Verlag, 1993.

Sells, Michael A., *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

———, "The Pseudo-Woman and the Meister: "Unsaying" and Essentialism" in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994),114-146.

Shakespeare, Steven, *Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Introduction*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007.

Shaw, Christopher David, *On Exceeding Determination and the Ideal of Reason: Immanuel Kant, William Desmond, and the Noumenological Principle*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.

Sheehan, Thomas, "Reading a Life: Heidegger and Hard Times" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 70-96.

Sikka, Sonya, *Forms of Transcendence: Heidegger and Medieval Mystical Theology*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.

Simpson, Christopher Ben, *Deleuze and Theology*, London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012.

Slenczka, Notger, "Die Christologie als Reflex des frommen Selbstbewusstseins" in *Jesus Christus*, ed. Jens Schröter, Band 9 of *Themen der Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 181-241.

Smith, Anthony Paul, "What can be done with Religion? Non-Philosophy and the Future of Philosophy of Religion" in *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 280-299.

Smith, Anthony Paul and Whistler, Daniel, "What is Continental Philosophy of Religion Now?" in *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 1-24.

Smith, Cyprian, *The Way of Paradox: Spiritual Life as Taught by Meister Eckhart*, London: Longman and Todd Ltd, 2004.

Smith, James K. A., "How to Avoid Not Speaking: Attestations" in *Knowing Other-Wise: Philosophy at the Threshold of Spirituality*, ed. James H. Olthuis, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 217-234.

———, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Smith, Jonathan Z., "Religion, Religions, Religious" in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269-284.

Smith, Wilferd Cantwell, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Spiro, Melford E., "Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation" in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton (London: Tavistock Publications, 1966), 85-126.

Steinbock, Anthony J., Phenomenology & Mysticism: The Verticality of Religious Experience, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

Stern, Robert, "Hegel's Idealism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 135-173.

Stiver, Daniel, R., *Ricoeur and Theology*, London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012.

Suso, Henry, *Henry Suso: The Exemplar, with Two German Sermons*, tran. Frank Tobin, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989.

Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, New York: Routledge, 2006.

Tanner, Kathryn, "Self-Critical Cultures and Divine Transcendence" in *Theology after Liberalism: A Reader*, eds. John Webster and George P Schner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000), 223-256.

Tauler, Johannes, *Johannes Tauler: Sermons*, tran. Maria Shrady, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985.

Taylor, Charles, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

———, *Hegel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

———, *The Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

———, "Why we need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism" in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan Vanantwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 34-59.

Taylor, Mark C., *After God,* Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2007.

———, "Introduction" in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1-20.

———, "nO nOt nO" in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 167-198.

Taylor, Victor E., "Theography: Signs of God in a Postmodern Age" in *Secular Theology: American Radical Theological Thought*, ed. Clayton Crocket (New York: Routledge, 2001), 187-211.

Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1979.

———, *The Life of Teresa of Jesus: The Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila*, ed. and tran. E Allison Peers, New York: Doubleday Image Books, 1960.

Tillich, Paul, *A History of Christian Thought: From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. Carl E. Braaten, New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc. 1967.

———, *Dynamics of Faith*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1957.

———, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948.

———, *The Courage to Be*, 2nd ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

———, *The Future of Religions*, ed. Jerald C. Brauer, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966.

———, *The New Being*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955.

Tobin, Frank, "Mechthild of Magdeburg and Meister Eckhart: Points of Comparison" in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994), 44-43.

———, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language*, Philadelphia: University or Philadelphia Press, 1986.

Tracy, David, "Afterword: A Reflection on Mystics: Presence and Aporia" in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, eds. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 239-244.

———, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975.

———, *The Analogical Imagination*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981.

———, "The Uneasy Alliance Reconceived: Catholic Theological Method, Modernity and Postmodernity" in *Theology after Liberalism: A Reader*, eds. John Webster

and George P Schner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000), 335-357.

Troeltsch, Ernst, *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, I Band of *Gesammelte Schriften*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck GmbH & Co., 1994.

Tsopurashvili, Tamar, "The Theory of Transcendentals in Meister Eckhart" in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, ed. Jeremiah M. Hacket, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 185-204.

Turner, Denys, "Apophaticism, idolatry and the claims of reason" in *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, eds. Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11-34.

———, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Underhill, Evelyn, *The Essentials of Mysticism and other Essays*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920.

Urubshurow, Victoria, "Love is God: A Buddhist Interreligious Response to the Vatican Instruction on 'Some Aspects of Christian Meditation'" in *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Vol. 11 (1991), 149-172.

Vahanian, Gabriel, "Theology and the Secular" in *Secular Theology: American Radical Theological Thought*, ed. Clayton Crocket (New York: Routledge, 2001), 10-25.

Van Gennep, Arnold, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

Vattimo, Gianni, *A Farewell to Truth*, tran. William McCuaig, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

———, *After Christianity*, tran. Luca D'Isanto, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

———, "The Age of Interpretation" in *The Future of Religion*, ed. Santiago Zabala (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 43-54.

Vinzent, Markus, *Meister Eckhart, On the Lard's Prayer (De oration Dominica): Introduction, Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Leuven: Peeters, 2012.

———, "Questions on the Attributes (of God): Four Rediscovered Parisian Questions of Meister Eckhart" in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (April 2012), 156-186.

———, *The Art of Detachment*, Leuven: Peeters, 2011.

Wachterhauser, Brice, "Getting it Right: Relativism, Realism and Truth" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 52-78.

Ward, Graham, *Christ and Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

———, *Cities of God*, New York: Routledge, 2000.

———, "The theological project of Jean-Luc Marion" in *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between philosophy and theology*, ed. Phillip Blond (New York: Routledge, 1998), 229-239.

———, *True Religion*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Warnke, Georgia, "Communicative rationality and cultural values" in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen K. White (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 97-119.

Wartenberg, Thomas E., "Hegel's idealism: The Logic of conceptuality" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Fredrick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 102-129.

Weber, Max, *The Sociology of Religion*, tran. Ephraim Fischhoff, Boston: Beacon Press, 1971.

Webster, John, "Metaphors for Theology" in *Theology after Liberalism: A Reader*, eds. John Webster and George P Schner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000), 52-61.

Weil, Simone, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr, New York: Routledge, 2002.

Wells, David F., "Modernity and theology: the doctrine of God" in *Faith and Modernity*, eds. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden, (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994), 116-135.

Welte, Bernard, "Meister Eckhart als Aristoteliker" in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch der Göres Gesellschaft* 69 (1961), 64-74.

Westphal, Kenneth R., "Noumenal Causality Reconsidered: Affection, Agency, and Meaning in Kant" in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (June 1997), pp. 209-245.

White, Stephen K., "Reason, modernity, and democracy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen K. White (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3-16.

Williams, Rowan, "Logic and spirit in Hegel" in *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between philosophy and theology*, ed. Phillip Blond (New York: Routledge, 1998), 116-130.

Windelband, Wihlem, "Das Heilege. Skizze zur Religionsphilosophie" in *Präludien*, Vol. II (1914), 295-332.

Winquist, Charles E., *Secular Theology: American Radical Theological Thought*, ed. Clayton Crocket (New York: Routledge, 2001), 26-36.

Wood, Allen W., *Kant*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

———, *Kant's Rational Theology*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.

Woods, Richard, *Eckhart's Way*, Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1986.

———, "Meister Eckhart and the Neoplatonic Heritage: the Thinker's Way to God" in *Thomist; a Speculative Quarterly Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (October 1990), 690-699.

———, *Meister Eckhart: Master of Mystics*, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011.

———, "Women and Men in the Development of Late Medieval Mysticism" in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994), 147-164.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., tran. G.E.M. Anscombe, New York: Macmillan, 1958.

———, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuiness, New York: Routledge, 2014.

Wrathal, Mark A., *Heidegger and Unconcealment: Truth, Language, and History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

———, "Truth and the essence of truth in Heidegger's thought" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 241-267.

Young, Julian, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

———, “The fourfold” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 373-392.

Žižek, Slavoj, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.