

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

ASSEMBLING DIVINE SCIENCE: PHILOSOPHICAL AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN  
THE GERMAN DOMINICAN SCHOOL (1200-1361)

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2024

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## Abstract

My dissertation provides an intellectual history of attempts within the German Dominican School between 1200 and 1361 to define and demarcate the relationship between “philosophical” and “Christian” theology, or, rather, the divine science of the philosophers and that of the saints. It thus seeks to explore several interrelated problems: what sorts of theologizing the German Dominicans recognized in their work, how this informed their strategic and selective use of particular texts as authorities for the practice of theology, and how they managed and adjudicated the apparent conflicts which arose between these different theologies and texts. This dissertation begins with Albert the Great, the inaugurator of a scholastic project informed by a specific engagement with the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, as well as the metaphysics, noetics, and ethics of the Peripatetic or Aristotelian tradition. Next, it moves on to an analysis of German Dominicans such as Ulrich of Strasburg, Dietrich of Freiberg, Meister Eckhart, Berthold of Moosburg, and Johannes Tauler. In doing so, I track how each Dominican, building upon and departing from the work of his predecessors, presents non-Christian and Christian theology as separate, if complementary, discourses or regimes of enunciation that provide a comprehensive account of the nature of God and the universe.

Moreover, my dissertation also seeks to demonstrate that by the time of Meister Eckhart and Berthold of Moosburg, the German Dominican understanding of the nature of both divine sciences moved away from a predominantly Peripatetic conception of theology as wisdom toward a more explicitly Platonic understanding of theology as “supersapiential,” which led to the breakdown of the rigid demarcation between non-Christian and Christian divine science that earlier German Dominicans like Albert the Great and Dietrich of Freiberg had attempted to maintain in their writing. Important to this transformation was the way that the members of the German Dominican School conceived of the relationship between nature and grace, as well as

their response to the technical debate in the medieval schools about whether the psychological faculty of the intellect or the will had priority in the beatitude understood to constitute the goal of both philosophical and Christian life. The responses to these debates led members of the German Dominican School to occupy radical positions that sought to subordinate grace to nature, or to insist on the need to overcome both nature and grace through recourse to a radically kenotic and apophatic theology. I ultimately suggest that several, prominent scholarly efforts to comprehend this transformation within the German Dominican School have been hampered by a tactical disregard of the *salvific* and *affective* economies that are central to their medieval Christianity due to a tendency to prioritize the *rationalism* of their project, out of a concern to adjudicate the distinction between so-called mystical and philosophical discourse.

## Acknowledgments

The various economic, intellectual, and affective debts I have accrued over the many years it took to compose this dissertation have been immense. But I must first begin by thanking my advisor Willemien Otten for both her tireless support and endless patience as this project came to fruition. She has modelled for me, both through her own scholarship and her advocacy with the University of Chicago chapter of the American Association of University Professors, what the academic vocation is all about. Without her steady guidance and enthusiasm this dissertation would never have seen the light of day.

Many thanks also to James T. Robinson and Noel Blanco Mourelle, the other readers of this dissertation. Jim taught me what it meant to be a medievalist and an intellectual historian, and I am grateful that he pushed me to take seriously the importance of working with texts in their original language. Noel was a constant source of encouragement during rough moments, and I am thankful for our long conversations about critical theory and continental philosophy at the cafes around Hyde Park.

To my examiners Margaret M. Mitchell and Susan E. Schreiner I offer my gratitude. Both afforded helpful feedback on the earliest stages of this project and showed me what it meant to be a rigorous historian of Christianity willing to take seriously how historical study effects the consciousness of the historian called to interpret the past in the present.

To Aden Kumler, my thanks. I would never have thought seriously about how medieval texts produce rather than represent reality without the introduction to semiotics and post-structuralism she provided in her classes.

The medieval studies faculty at the University of Chicago, past and present, were a constant source of inspiration and assistance throughout my doctorate, whether at the Medieval Studies Workshop or the Lexicon Project Meetings. My deepest thanks to Rachel Fulton Brown,

Daisy Delogu, Tamara Golan, Karin Krause, Jonathan Lyons, Bernard McGinn, David Nirenberg, Julie Orlemanski, Lucy K. Pick, Benjamin Saltzman, and Kris Trujilo.

At the Divinity School I have been fortunate to study under some of the best historians and philosophers of religion in the United States. Special thanks to Ryan Coyne, Alireza Dootstar, Michael Fishbane, Sarah E. Fredericks, Angie Heo, Sarah Hammerschlag, Russell Johnson, Jean-Luc Marion, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Richard E. Rosengarten, Michael Sells, Sofia Torallas Tovar, Anand Venkatkrishnan, and Erin Walsh for their encouragement and their instruction.

To the Divinity School itself I am grateful for the financial support it provided to help me complete this dissertation. Without the Martin Marty Center Dissertation Writing Fellowship and the Divinity School Dissertation Completion Fellowship my dissertation would not have been finished as well as it has been. I benefited also from a Diversity and Inclusion Pedagogical Fellowship and from the Craft of Teaching Program during my time at the Divinity School. Special thanks to Charles Preston for running my critical pedagogy seminar during the 2022-2023 academic year.

To my friends and colleagues in the doctoral program at the University of Chicago: thank you! Miriam Attia, Seth Auster-Rosen, Miriam Bilsker, Ryan S. Bigham, Joel Brown, Olivia Bustion, Derek Buyan, Samuel Catlin, Sean Hannan, Brad Hansen, Nathan Hardy, Anita Jambrek, Owen Joyce-Coughlin, Aslan Cohen Mizrahi, Rachel Katz, Allison Kanner-Botan, Mark Lambert, Michael Le Chevalier, David J. Leitner Cohen, Alex Matthews, Dhruv Nagar, Kristof Oltvai, Daniel Owings, Samantha Pellegrino, Robert Porwoll, Diane Picio, Hector Varela-Rios, Tzvi Schoenberg, Joel Swanson, Sara-Jo Swiatek, Emily Thomassen, M



Vanderpoel, Jonathan Wegner, Bruce Winkelman, Raúl Zegarra—each in their own way made my time at Swift something special.

My thanks also to the many graduate students I encountered at the University beyond the Divinity School! For support and friendship, I offer my gratitude to Jacqueline Dragu, Luke Fidler, Alexa Herlands, Jordan Johansen, David Kretz, Loriane Lafont-Grave, Mary Kemp Thornberry, and Jaqueline Victor.

Thanks, and congratulations also to the departmental organizers, contract action committee, and bargaining committee of Graduate Students United – United Electric Local 1103. It was a true pleasure and a privilege to lead the Divinity School organizing committee during our election campaign in 2022-2023. I am beyond thrilled that graduate worker efforts to secure union representation on campus have been successful and that our first ever official contract with the University of Chicago goes into effect just as I submit this dissertation! Special thanks to Henry Breffka, Guillermo Flores Borda, Christopher Iacovetti, Morgan Kincade, Nick Lorenz, Hannah Ozmun, Rebekah Rosenfeld, Jake Sirota, and Shannon Sheu for all your hard work and passion.

To those friends and colleagues whom I have met online or at conferences, you have my gratitude. Many thanks especially to Amaryah S. Armstrong, Sean Capener, Samuel J. Dubbelman, Michael Hahn, Kevin Hughes, Timothy Snediker, Luke Togni, Lucas Scott Wright, and Erin Risch Zoutendam.

The members of the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute were always excited to learn about my academic work as a medievalist and historian of religion. Thanks are especially due to my fellow psychoanalytic candidates Philip Cooke, Indrany Datta-Barua, Lauren Davis, Jasmin Demarco, Poyesh Ganji, Philip Henry, Devan Hite, Konstantinos Taliouridis, and Sadiq Toffa

for putting up with my desire to historicize psychoanalytic discourse. Thanks also to my instructors Celia Brickman, Suzanne Rosenfeld, and Kate Schechter for allowing me to present work examining connections between medieval affective theology and psychoanalytic theory in their classes. Thanks, finally, to Robert Fajardo for agreeing to read Freud's case studies with me, and for entertaining my interest in the relationship between hypnosis, analytic transference, and medieval astral magic.

I owe a debt of thanks to my family for their love and support. Chris and Pauline Baudinette are everything a son could ask for in his parents. I am grateful to Dave and Mimi Holob for their warm welcome into their family. My sister Kate Baudinette, her partner Keven Ren, and my brother Thomas Baudinette have been quick to share a joke or their love despite the distance between Australia and the United States. Uncle Mike Hogan and Aunt Patricia have always been excited to learn what I am up to next, and Lynne Dowell and my cousin Maddie have listened with eagerness to my tales about life at an American University.

Thanks also to Erasmus, Bruno, and Pip for their loving companionship.

Finally, I owe more than everything to my wife Kelly Holob. Meeting her (again!) at the Divinity School student orientation in 2016 was one of the most important turning points in my life, and I eagerly look forward to the next stage of our life together. If this dissertation is dedicated to anyone, it is dedicated to her.

Needless to say, any infelicities or errors that remain in what follows are entirely my own.

## Abbreviations

- DW Meister Eckhart. *Die deutschen Werke*. Edited by Josef Quint and Georg Steer. 5 volumes. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1958-.
- LW Meister Eckhart. *Die lateinische Werke*. Edited by Josef Koch et al. 6 volumes. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1934-.

### *Opera Omnia Editio Coloniensis*

Albert the Great. *Opera Omnia ad fidem codicum manusscriptorum edenda curavit Institutum Alberti Magni Coloniense*. Edited by Albertus Magnus Institut Köln. 31 volumes. Münster: Aschendorff, 1951-.

## Introduction

What the anthropologist discovers with some anxiety is that the deployment of one value by a robust institution will modify the way all the others are going to be understood and expressed. One tiny mistake in the definition of the religious, and the sciences become incomprehensible, for example... For each mode and for each epoch, and in relation to every other value and to every other institution, there will be a particular way of establishing the relation between “theory” and “practice.”

Bruno Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence*<sup>1</sup>

In the second book of his *De intellectu et intelligibili*, which he refers to elsewhere as a treatise *De perfectione animae*, the German Dominican theologian Albert the Great offers a comprehensive account of the sanctification of the human intellect according to the doctrine of the philosophers. Composed sometime during the late 1250s as part of his monumental paraphrastic commentary on the Aristotelian corpus as it was known to him, the *De intellectu et intelligibili* does so as part of Albert’s argument—following Plato and the Peripatetic philosopher al-Farabi—that the study of philosophy enables the human mind to appropriate itself as an act of understanding and achieve natural contemplative perfection through the realization of all that is potentially intelligible within itself.<sup>2</sup> When this takes place, Albert explains, the human mind is able to overcome its own epistemic habits by assimilating itself to the light of the separate intelligences which flow out of the divine understanding of God. Albert consequently maintains that “it is necessary that there be a certain likeness of everything which is produced by means of the light of the First Cause and that becomes a receptacle of some kind that encircles all things through the fact that it is an image of the First Cause.”<sup>3</sup> Ascertaining itself this way, the

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 45-46.

<sup>2</sup> Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.8, in *Opera Omnia* IX, ed. by August Borgnet, 515: “Et ideo dixit Plato, quod verissima philosophiae diffinitio est suiipsius cognitio: et dixit Alfarabius, quod anima posita est in corpore, ut seipsam inveniatur et cognoscat.” Albert goes on to add that al-Farabi attributes this definition to Aristotle but notes he could not find this claim in Aristotle’s own texts.

<sup>3</sup> Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.8, 515: “et ideo necesse est quod sit similitudo quaedam omnium quae fiunt per lumen primae causae, et ambiens omnia illa, et fit quorundam receptaculum per hoc quod est imago causae primae.”

human intellect is consequently able to relate itself to what is true and what is false insofar as these are the products of understanding and phantasy.<sup>4</sup> Albert therefore concludes that “contemplation of the most wonderful truths is of the greatest delight and most natural and that in these truths, and especially through the contemplation of divine things, that the entire nature of the human flourishes insofar as it is human.”<sup>5</sup> Philosophy, as the natural realization of man’s contemplative end, is thus beatifying and wonderful, since it directs the mind toward the ascertainment of the intelligible existence that alone is divine.

Albert clarifies in the *De intellectu et intelligibili* that a human intellect that knows the divine in this way is also like the divine mind. This is because, through study, it has become a repository of knowledge about all that is intelligible as well as a font of those very intelligible things which it manifests into the world. The philosophers accordingly declare that such minds are able to perform miracles and even prophesy.<sup>6</sup> Yet Albert teaches that is not enough for the human intellect to *know* that divine reality exists by ascertaining intelligible reality. Instead, it must *be* divine. This is accomplished whenever the intelligible forms implanted within the created world are separated or abstracted from matter by a human intellect itself perfected by

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<sup>4</sup> Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.8, 515: “et in utrisque adipiscatur seipsam: hoc etiam quod omne verum consentaneum est intellectui, et falsum contrarium... et ideo similis per aliquem modum omni vero, et dissonans a falso: et haec est causa, quod intellectus semper verorum est: deceptio autem et falsitas ingeruntur phantasticae virtuti.”

<sup>5</sup> Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.8, 515: “Scitur autem ex hoc quod contemplatio verorum admirabilium est summae delectationis et naturalissimum, et quod in ea tota refleret natura hominis in quantum est homo, et praecipue contemplatione divinorum.”

<sup>6</sup> Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.11, 519: “et hoc etiam modo animae excellentium virorum plura ambiunt quam corpora propria, quando animae eorum formis mundi applicantur: et ideo aliquando obediunt eis transmutationes exteriorum, sicut obediunt formis mundi: et hi sunt de quibus, sicut Philosophi dicunt, quod operantur mirabilia in conversionibus hominum et naturarum;” Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.11, ed. Borgnet, 520: “Hujusmodi autem ordinis praescientiam quidam excellentiores Philosophi vocaverunt prophetiam: et quia somnium est praefiguratio quaedam hujus ordinis in imaginationibus et figurativis obumbrantibus claritatem talis ordinis intellectualis, ideo vocaverunt somnium casum a prophetia vel prophetiae lapsum.”

separation, so that these forms can be returned to the divine being that initially thought them.<sup>7</sup>

The human intellect is needed, in other words, because only man may study the actually existing world to demonstrate how it is concretely intelligible as a product of the contemplative activity of God, as well as by coming to know itself as the kind of entity capable of producing such an intelligible account of the world through its own conceptive act of intellection.

Divinity as itself an act of understanding thus requires the human mind to become a fellow worker in the intellectual labor of creation, according to Albert. Like the First Cause itself, Albert consequently teaches, only the human mind which has been perfected has the ability to conceive and constitute a new intelligible world, since only the human intellect possesses the faculties and organs required to abstract the intelligible forms enclosed within matter.<sup>8</sup> For Albert, therefore, the sanctified intellect which results from philosophical study is able to divinize forms by making what is potentially intelligible about the world concretely so through the intellect's work of abstraction.<sup>9</sup> "But a substance having a divine existence and activity," he continues, "requires nothing and a soul reduced to God in this way no longer needs sensible things or the matter of bodies because it received material and instrumental organs according to nature only so that it may be returned to the divine being."<sup>10</sup> In other words, the more the mind comes to know the more it turns inward and meditates upon its own knowledge such that it becomes as self-sufficient and self-reflexive as the divine understanding or separate

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<sup>7</sup> Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.12, 520: "Esse autem divinum et operationem non perficiunt nisi a materia separatae: et scimus quod non separantur nisi ab anima humana perfecta separatione: oportet igitur, quod per separatam a materia intellectum ad esse divinam reducuntur."

<sup>8</sup> Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.12, 520: "fiet ergo necessario per intellectum hominis qui ad hoc habet vires et organa, ut a materia accipiat formas divinas."

<sup>9</sup> Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.12, 520: "Secundum autem omnia quae inducta sunt, forma non est sufficienter facta divina per hoc quod efficitur intellectus qui dicitur in effectu vel adeptus: sed divina fit per intellectum assimilantem, et eum qui vocatur divinus."

<sup>10</sup> Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.12, 520: "substantia autem habens esse divinum et operationem, non indiget aliquo: ergo anima sic reducta de sensibilibus et materia corporum, non indiget, eo quod materialia et instrumentalia organa non accepit secundum naturam nisi ad hoc ut ad esse divinum reduceretur."

intelligences that emanate from it. To possess this contemplative self-sufficiency, according to Albert, is to attain that mode of existence that “the philosophers have called the collapse into another and immortal life through which the immortality of human life is truly proven.”<sup>11</sup> It is the final perfection afforded to that entity, the human intellect, which Albert declares following Hermes Trismegistus is “the tie between God and the world.”<sup>12</sup> The *De intellectu et intelligibili* thus illustrates a philosophical theological account of beatitude grounded in the mind’s natural capacity for divinization that is the product of the necessary relationship between the creative work of the divine intellect and the abstractive and conceptual work of the human.

Why did Albert’s particular conception of the human intellect in the *De intellectu and intelligibili*, with its argument about the self-divinizing goal of philosophical study, matter in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? How and why was it taken up by a generation of German Dominican philosophers and theologians as part of a concerted effort to manage the difference between philosophical and Christian theology and the competing definitions of human beatitude they were understood to afford? This dissertation represents an attempt to answer these questions by showing how a German Dominican School assembled itself between 1200 and 1361 in order to both adopt and adapt the highly optimistic account of the mind’s capacity to sanctify itself through philosophy that Albert seemed to offer in his writing, focusing in particular on the metaphysical and noetic arguments these German Dominicans forwarded in order to police the boundaries between a divine science that is Christian and a divine science that is not. I thus

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<sup>11</sup> Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.12, 520: “et hoc vocaverunt Philosophi caducum alterius et immortalis vitae, per quam vere probatur animae humanae immortalitas.”

<sup>12</sup> Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.9, 517: “Et ideo dicit Hermes Trismegistus in libro de Natura Dei deorum, quod homo nexus est Dei et mundi, quia per hujusmodi intellectum conjungitur Deo, et stramentum hujus intellectus sunt alii intellectus de quibus diximus, qui quidem in quinque sunt per modos applicationum et assimilationum diversarum, et intellectus adepti modos, et ejus qui est in effectu : sed tamen in genere sunt quinque, possibilis videlicet, et formalis et principiorum, et ille qui in effectu, et adeptus, et assimilativus et divinus. His ergo intelligibilibus et intellectibus, ut breviter dicatur, perficitur anima.”

narrate how the German Dominicans of the High Middle Ages developed a normative conception of theology through recourse to the philosophical authorities and doxographies that had become increasingly available in the Latin West, as well as how they read these authorities and doxographies under the influence of their preferred Christian authorities—paradigmatically, Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. My dissertation ultimately aims to situate the so-called “German Dominican School” within a broader intellectual historical analysis of medieval scholasticism, as both a method and a project, which produced specific theological subject positions, by examining the ways that certain German Dominicans in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries attempted to establish and police epistemic boundaries within their work.<sup>13</sup> More specifically, I demonstrate how Albert the Great, Ulrich of Strasburg, Dietrich of Freiberg, Meister Eckhart, Berthold of Moosburg, and Johannes Tauler differentiate a theology of the philosophers from a theology proper to Christians within the context of the specific “problematic” that Albert the Great opened up in his work, and whose legitimacy certain German Dominicans worked to defend.<sup>14</sup>

This dissertation investigates, in other words, how two theological discourses within the German Dominican School construct each other. I therefore contribute to an unfolding scholarly

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<sup>13</sup> In her recent “manifesto,” *The Scholastic Project* (Kalamazoo: ARC Humanities Press, 2017), Clare Monagle argues provocatively that scholasticism must be considered a project analogous to the Enlightenment insofar as it aims to produce through a series of systematic exclusions a universal and hegemonic rational subject that is male, European and Christian. For the classic definition of scholastic theology as a method that applies reason to revelation in order to produce both a systematic account of Christian faith and a defense of that faith against its detractors, see Martin Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der Scholastische Methode*, 2 vols (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1911). For an equally foundational approach to scholastic theology that emphasizes instead the specific practices, techniques, literary forms, and theoretical commitments that make it scientific, see Marie-Dominique Chenu, *La théologie comme science au XIIIe siècle* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1957) and Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. by A.-M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964).

<sup>14</sup> Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005), 253 defines a problematic as the theoretical and ideological framework that give words and concepts their meaning. A problematic is thus related to, although slightly distinct from, the notion of an historical *episteme* developed by Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970), xv-xxiv to describe how a regime of truth and the discursive practices that institute it limit what is conceptually possible for those who live within it.



conversation about how medieval Christians navigated the tension between a “cosmological” and a “divinizing” approach to the discipline of theology—that is, between divine science as a reasoned discourse that provides a comprehensive account of the nature of God and the universe, and divine science as a spiritual exercise that enables the theologian to work on the self in order to become God(-like) in this life or the next.<sup>15</sup> I do so by investigating the self-conscious move within the German Dominican School away from conceptualizing theology as an Aristotelian, “sapiential” discipline toward seeing it as a Platonic, “supersapiential” discipline. This partly occurred because of the growing availability of the works of the fifth-century Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus in the latter half of the thirteenth century, and the subsequent recognition that the Peripatetic *Liber de causis* (“Book of causes”) was not an authentic work of Aristotle but rather represented a series of statements that were partially derived from Proclus.<sup>16</sup> These two authorities, I contend, were important to the German Dominican School because they provided the specific doctrinal and theoretical content for the divine science of the philosophers, which they sought to elaborate and relate to that of the Christians, insofar as they understood them to be similar to Pseudo-Dionysius—perhaps the primary authority for their contemplative understanding of Christian theology as metaphysics and as ethics, given that the *Corpus Dionysiacum* itself had attained something akin to biblical status by the scholastic age, since its author had deliberately and self-consciously presented himself as a disciple of Paul and as an early convert to the apostolic community that formed the nascent Church.

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<sup>15</sup> The various relationships between the “cosmological” and “divinizing” modes of theology in the Middle Ages—and their sometimes fraught relationship to scriptural exegesis and non-Christian philosophy—are nicely laid out by Bernard McGinn, “*Regina quondam...*,” *Speculum* 83.4 (2008): 817-839. For a general history of Christian definitions of theology, see Yves Congar, *A History of Theology*, trans. by Hunter Guthrie (Adelaide: ATF, 2013). For the late antique philosophical conceptions of theology that informed the Christian, see Carlos Steel, “Theology as First Philosophy: The Neoplatonic Concept of Metaphysics,” *Quaestio* 5 (2005): 3-21.

<sup>16</sup> On the role that the availability of Proclus played in scholastic thought generally, see Pasquale Porro, “The University of Paris in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Interpreting Proclus: From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. by Stephen Gersh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 264-298.

My dissertation ultimately interrogates how and why certain German Dominicans in their teaching and preaching present theology—whether philosophical or Christian—as cultivating either an Aristotelian or Platonic habit and which texts and authoritative chains of tradition they employed in order to do so. However, my dissertation also aims to complicate those narratives that understand the German Dominicans to be either “Aristotelian” or “Platonic,” insofar as they adhere to and are influenced by philosophical *ideas*. Instead, I take it as axiomatic that the German Dominicans engaged in a complicated process that repeats, rewrites, and redeploys their immediate authoritative *texts*, since it is doctrinal lineage and the correct interpretation of established authoritative figures that mattered to their conception of Peripateticism and Platonism.<sup>17</sup> This is because the German Dominicans sought to cultivate theology as a habit through the attainment of a particular knowledge that is then embodied or expressed as a truth in some way by that theologian who knows themselves to belong to a philosophical or theological tradition that guarantees that truth. I hope to demonstrate, for this reason, that the German Dominicans, through their engagement with the philosophical texts increasingly available in Latin translation during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries *produce* rather than simply *receive* a two-fold divine science that is philosophical as well as Christian as part of a deliberate attempt to authorize the inclusion of these two theologies within a scholastic curriculum and theological practice at times when Christian pedagogical recourse to the *libri naturales* was frequently threatened by magisterial and institutional sanction.

Because the German Dominicans were members of of an Order of Preachers called to study and defend orthodox religion, moreover, this disciplinary effort is necessarily related to the

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<sup>17</sup> For an approach to medieval Christian theology that emphasizes the practice of writing and rewriting, as well as the need for the generic and rhetorical analysis of theological texts, see Mark D. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas after his Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

“performative” dimension of their pedagogical and pastoral vocation.<sup>18</sup> That is to say, the theological effort to define and manage the distinction between philosophical and Christian divine science within the German Dominican School is partly related to a vocational identity grounded in the Order’s pedagogical mission, which Thomas Aquinas’ implicitly defined in the *Summa theologiae* as an active life, following the example of Christ, where one hands over to others the fruits of contemplation.<sup>19</sup> Although my dissertation adopts an intellectual historical approach that attends primarily to the transmission and transformation of arguments and attitudes within the German Dominican School, I consequently emphasize in what follows how German Dominican theology results from a set of scholastic reading practices and techniques directed toward preaching and teaching meant to habituate theologians to think in specific ways that are comparable to the disciplinary regulation and literary customs that produce monastic life as religious life.<sup>20</sup> The German Dominicans, I argue, precisely because they understand theology to

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<sup>18</sup> David d’Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris before 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) remains the best study to date of the way that the Dominican theory and practice of preaching informed their religious identity. For preaching as a performance that produces the identities of the preacher and of the members of the audience through the repetition and rhetorical staging of doctrine, see Claire M. Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures: Preaching, Performance, and Gender in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). For Dominican vocational and spiritual identity as grounded in their efforts to police orthodoxy, see Christine Caldwell Ames, *Righteous Persecution: Inquisition, Dominicans, and Christianity in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 40, art. 1, ad. 2: “Ad secundum dicendum quod, sicut in secunda parte dictum est, vita contemplativa simpliciter est melior quam activa quae occupatur circa corporales actus, sed vita activa secundum quam aliquis praedicando et docendo contemplata aliis tradit, est perfectior quam vita quae solum contemplatur, quia talis vita praesupponit abundantiam contemplationis. Et ideo Christus talem vitam elegit.” All references to the *Summa Theologiae* in this dissertation make use of the *Corpus Thomisticum* edition, available online at <https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/> (last accessed July 15, 2024).

<sup>20</sup> On monastic formation as a literary practice, see M. B. Pranger, *The Artificiality of Christianity: Essays on the Poetics of Monasticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). On the role that ritualized practice plays in the disciplined production of religious subjectivity within the medieval monastery, see Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 83-167. These analyses of monasticism are respectively grounded in the foundational work of Christine Mohrmann, *Liturgical Latin: Its Origins and Character* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1957) and Jean Leclercq, *Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982). For the disciplined production of thought and its relationship to habituation (or “orthopraxy”) in the Middle Ages more generally, see Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

be beatifying, thus fabricated within their particular scholarly community what Bruno Latour calls a “regime of enunciation,” where scientific reference-making and religious person-making arise simultaneously without ever being fully reconciled.<sup>21</sup> The effort to teach and preach the proper relation between philosophical and Christian theology, or to distinguish between Peripatetic and Platonic theological habits, is thus intimately related to the institution of a form of life directly comparable to those monastic and mendicant efforts to embody a regulated mode of spiritual existence analyzed by Giorgio Agamben in the final volumes of his *Homo Sacer* project.<sup>22</sup>

Such an analysis, I believe, justifies an approach to the German Dominican School that considers their theology through the practice of producing, debating, and preaching a certain set of doctrines and figures recognized as authoritative. To do so requires that one consider how the German Dominicans produce different conceptions of theology that style particular modes of existence, ways of life, or *ethics*.<sup>23</sup> Necessarily, this also entails attending to those moments when certain German Dominicans critique prevailing scholastic modes of theological

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<sup>21</sup> See Bruno Latour, “‘Thou shall not freeze-frame,’ or how not to misunderstand the science and religion debate,” in *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 99-123 and Bruno Latour, “‘Thou shalt not take the Lord’s name in vain’—being a sort of sermon on the hesitations of religious speech,” *Res* 39 (2001): 215-234. Rather than simply chart how science develops through the secularization of theological concepts, as in Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), or how science and religion developed into two, separate warring territories after losing their initial premodern integrity, as in Peter Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), I take it as given, following Latour, that what we now call “science” and “religion” have always structured and de-constructed each other through a mutual interplay that is always already discursive, textual, and institutionally located.

<sup>22</sup> See, especially, Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest of Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, trans. by Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> An approach that is comparable, in many ways, to Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson and trans. by Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1995), whose analysis of the spiritual exercises within the philosophical schools of late antiquity is concerned to show how philosophy produces and disciplines the moods and motivations of those who practice it as a way of life or as form of therapy. Nevertheless, in what follows my emphasis is on doctrinal debate—an emphasis that may confirm Hadot’s general critique of medieval scholasticism as inaugurating the split between spiritual exercise and rational method that he believes produced the philosophical culture of modernity which has abandoned philosophy’s traditional focus on the care of the self.

habituation, such as Dietrich of Freiberg's lament that "chatterboxes" among the doctors fear to accept the authority of the Peripatetics who maintain the existence of separate intelligences which flow out from God, or Johannes Tauler's claim that the masters in the schools are overly attached to the act of disputation, which directs them away from the divine ground out of which they ought to teach and live. It also requires that one takes seriously those moments of rupture within the German Dominican School where the teaching authority of certain figures gets called into question or when specific lines of argumentation attributed to a particular authority within the School are taken to depart from established truth, such as the well-known papal condemnation of Meister Eckhart for heretical depravity and suspect teaching in 1329, or the lesser known debates within the School between the Thomists and the followers of Dietrich over how a correct understanding of Aristotle's conception of the human intellect ought to affect one's understanding of Christian beatitude.

As this last formulation likely suggests, my dissertation also examines the relationship between the German Dominican School and magisterial anxiety over the ostensible subscription among Christian theologians to a relativistic theory of "double truth."<sup>24</sup> The German Dominican School, I show, had to strategically navigate a series of condemnations promulgated by ecclesiastical authorities in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that sought to impose restrictions on the ability of certain masters to philosophize and theologize publicly from texts and in ways whose teaching was seen to be suspect or ambiguous. My dissertation consequently

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<sup>24</sup> On these debates about the "double truth" as a response to the Aristotelian doctrine that the world is eternal in the thirteenth century, see Richard C. Dales, "The Origin of the Doctrine of the Double Truth," *Viator* 15 (1984): 169-179. On their role in the development and 'censorship' of philosophy more generally, see Luca Bianchi, "Censure, liberté et progrès intellectuel à l'Université de Paris au XIIIe siècle," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 63 (1996): 45-93; Luca Bianchi, "1277: A Turning Point in Medieval Philosophy?" in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter?* ed. by Jan Aertsen and Andreas Speer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 90-121; Luca Bianchi, "New Perspectives on the Condemnation of 1277 and its Aftermath," *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 70 (2003): 206-29.

asks how the initial attempts to limit the study of Aristotle at the University of Paris orchestrated by Étienne Tempier in 1270 and 1277 impacted the production and development of German Dominican theology. One important solution adopted by the German Dominicans was the use of the distinction between natural and voluntary providence outlined by Augustine in chapter 9 of his *De genesi ad litteram* VIII, as a means to define the different ways that philosophical and Christian theology handle their shared object of inquiry. Another solution was the assertion by some German Dominicans that the Bible has a parabolic and metaphoric mode of poetic argumentation comparable to the mythologizing and “integumental” approach of Platonic philosophy, as well as their related attempt to identify continuities between philosophical and Christian theology as grounded in a shared hermeneutic practice. The choices individual German Dominicans made when they prioritized certain philosophical authorities and traditions, in other words, were constrained and conditioned by the larger authorizing discourses and institutions that discerned what was or was not acceptable truth. The German Dominicans, therefore, had to cannily navigate these discourses and institutions while identifying apologetic strategies that could be readily accommodated to them.

Finally, although my dissertation takes seriously the effort which arose within the German Dominican School to establish philosophy as an autonomous scholarly discipline that ought to be subordinated to the theology of the Christians, I do not share the methodological assumption of certain historians that the German Dominicans are defined by a shared desire to “philosophically” critique theology or reject the excesses of “mysticism.”<sup>25</sup> In the next section of this introduction, I shall interrogate this assumption and introduce several important critiques and

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<sup>25</sup> Kurt Flasch, “Meister Eckhart und die Deutsche Mystik: Zur Kritik eines historiographischen Schemas,” in *Die Philosophie im 14. Und 15. Jahrhundert: In memoriam Konstany Michalski (1879-1947)*, ed. Olaf Pluta (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1988), 439-63.

alternative approaches forwarded in recent scholarship, demonstrating how it arises out of a contemporary political anxiety over the supposed irrationality of mysticism. By privileging the scholastic and philosophical tradition within the German Dominican School in a way that ignores or downplays the significance of the German Dominicans' distinctly medieval commitments to scripture, as well as by dismissing their pastoral work among the laity, and by refusing to consider the potential influence of the medieval religious women under their care upon their thinking, I suggest that this tradition of scholarship problematically identifies the German Dominicans as enlightened post-Kantian philosophers *avant la lettre*. Those instances where the logic of the German Dominican School's project disrupts the epistemic assumptions that undergird modern subjectivity are thus lost, because the German Dominicans are seen in this particular tradition of scholarship to announce or produce the modern individual self who is capable of autonomous self-reflection through the critique of dogmatic reason and of fanatic enthusiasm.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, many of the arguments that follow in this dissertation about the German Dominican School's attempt to assemble philosophical and Christian theology in different ways are grounded in the findings of these scholars. It will thus be necessary to understand how the label "German Dominican School" functions heuristically as a concept, before moving on to an evaluation of the problems to which it gives rise.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See Ben Morgan, *On Becoming God: Late Medieval Mysticism and the Modern Western Self* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 123 who argues that although the habits of the modern self arise "in contexts in which, as was the case in the Rhineland of the fourteenth century, the individual is under pressure to regulate the desire to 'become God,'" they nevertheless do not do so as individuals who come to occupy subject positions that exist ready-to-hand or because of a reflection upon some proprietary "I" taken to be the proper ground of mentation.

<sup>27</sup> See Niklaus Largier, "'Die deutsche Dominikanerschule: Zur Problematik eines historiographischen Konzepts,'" in *Geistesleben im 13. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 202-213 and Niklaus Largier, "Von Hadewijch, Mechthild und Dietrich zue Eckhart und Seuse? Zur Historiographie der 'deutschen Mystik' und der 'deutschen Dominikanerschule,'" in *Deutsche Mystik in abendländischen Zusammenhang: Neu erschlossene Texte, neue methodische Ansätze, neue theoretische Konzepte* ed. by Walter Haug and Wolfram Schneider-Lastin (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000), 93-112.

*The German Dominican School: On the Significance of a Heuristic Concept*

Much of the scholarly writing about the so-called German Dominican School has been tied to the attempt to establish a medieval German philosophical tradition through the publication of the multi-volume *Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicorum Medii Aevi*.<sup>28</sup> An extensive editorial effort that began in the 1980s under the direction of Kurt Flasch and Loris Sturlese—whose colleagues and students at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum and at the Università del Salento contributed several volumes—the *Corpus* includes editions of major philosophical works by German Dominicans such as Ulrich of Strasburg, Dietrich of Freiberg, Nicholas of Strasburg, John Picardi of Lichtenberg, and Berthold of Moosburg. The *Corpus* itself was conceived as a series of publications that would provide scholars with the specific textual background needed to make the mystical theology of Meister Eckhart philosophically intelligible, while seeking to authorize Flasch and Sturlese’s broader historical claim that the intellectual culture of medieval Germany was dominated by the Dominican commitment to Graeco-Arabic Peripateticism as well as the Neoplatonism of Proclus.<sup>29</sup> In many ways this conception of the German Dominican School reinscribes an understanding of German Dominican theology as a departure from the normative Aristotelian scholasticism that arose in the thirteenth century forwarded by prominent Neo-Thomist historians in the early decades of the twentieth century. Whether one interprets the German recourse to Peripateticism and Neoplatonism following Maurice de Wulf as an attitude that is essentially “anti-scholastic,” or as the result of an apparent freedom to pursue alternative authorities because of Germany’s relative distance from the debates over the legitimacy of

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<sup>28</sup> Jan A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suárez* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 315.

<sup>29</sup> Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart: die Geburt der "Deutschen Mystik" aus dem Geist der arabischen Philosophie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006) and Loris Sturlese, *Homo Divinus: Philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007).



Aristotle at the University of Paris, as Étienne Gilson argued, the overarching assumption here is that the German Dominican School is characterized by its essential difference from—if not its active opposition to—an Aristotelian scholasticism characterized by the “Christian philosophy” of Thomas Aquinas that had purged Christian and non-Christian Peripateticism of its various Platonic errors.<sup>30</sup>

This editorial project is also characterized by its effort to locate the particular philosophical concerns of German Idealism within the work of certain thirteenth- and fourteenth-century German Dominicans. This is especially the case for the work of Kurt Flasch, who contrasted Albert the Great, Dietrich of Freiberg, and Meister Eckhart’s particular epistemic commitments to Peripateticism with the radical Averroists censured in the 1270s, to demonstrate the fundamentally critical attitude toward theology and the practice of reason the German Dominicans appropriated from their Arab sources.<sup>31</sup> In this way, Flasch built upon the argument of Bruno Nardi, who saw Albert the Great as a fundamentally Averroist figure, whose insistence upon the distinction between philosophical and theological truth not only informed the Italian “stilnovisti” Guido Guinizelli, Guido Cavalcanti, and their poetic heir Dante Alighieri, but also influenced the so-called Paduan Averroists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, such as Pietro Pomponazzi.<sup>32</sup> For Flasch, however, what matters more than Albert’s apparent

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<sup>30</sup> Maurice de Wulf, *History of Mediaeval Philosophy: From the Beginnings to Albert the Great*, trans. by Ernest C. Messenger, (New York: Longman’s Green, 1926), 15-26 and Étienne Gilson, *The History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper and Row, 1955), 431-46. For a summary of the movement away from Neo-Thomist approaches to the study of medieval scholastic thought, see Marcia L. Colish, *Remapping Scholasticism* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies Press, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> See Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 46-66; Kurt Flasch, “Kennt die mittelalterliche Philosophie die Konstitutive Funktion des menschlichen Denkens? Eine Untersuchung zu Dietrich von Freiberg,” *Kant-Studien* 63.2 (1972): 182-206.

<sup>32</sup> Bruno Nardi, “La posizione di Alberto Magno di fronte all’averroismo,” *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 2 (1947): 197-220. Nardi’s often problematic presentation of Albert as an Averroist and its legacy within scholarship has been analyzed by Cesare Vasoli, “L’immagine di Alberto Magno in Bruno Nardi,” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 32 (1985): 45-64. For an independent assessment of Albert’s influence upon fifteenth-century Paduan Averroism, see Edward P. Mahoney, “Albert the Great and the *Studio Patavino* in the Late Fifteenth

subscription to Averroism was Dietrich of Freiberg and Meister Eckhart's rejection of the Thomist claim that beatitude requires a light infused by God, as well as Dietrich's general tendency to characterize the Thomist theologians as sophists incapable of philosophical argument.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, according to this tradition of scholarship, the German Dominican School represents an effort to emancipate philosophy from theology. It did so by legitimating a philosophical culture grounded in the effort to attain beatitude through the realization and acquisition of the intellect within man which is their proper subjective ground—an effort understood by Flasch's student Burkhard Mojsisch, especially, as akin to the Fichtean meditation upon the transcendental ego that is given to self-reflection, and which the critique of reason discovers as the epistemological structure that makes subjectivity possible.<sup>34</sup>

For Loris Sturlese it is also the particular doctrine of intellect and the specific practice of philosophical reason that characterizes the German Dominican School. However, Sturlese's understanding of the German Dominican School's philosophical significance is less concerned with the similarities and differences between the German Dominicans and the radical Averroists and much more focused on the Proclian and Hermetic conception of the divinization of the human intellect that Albert the Great bequeathed to his followers—even as he maintains, like Flasch and Mojsisch, that Albert's project is marked by a critical philosophical endeavor to guarantee the autonomy of rational thought as thought.<sup>35</sup> For Sturlese, therefore, the German

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and Early Sixteenth Centuries,” in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays 1980*, ed. by James A. Weisheipl (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), 537-63.

<sup>33</sup> See Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 86-111 and 150-160.

<sup>34</sup> Burkhard Mojsisch, “Dieses Ich. Meister Eckharts Ich-Konzeption: Ein Beitrag zur 'Aufklärung' im Mittelalter,” in *Sein - Reflexion - Freiheit: Aspekte der Philosophie Johann Gottlieb Fichtes*, ed. by Christopher Asmuth (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1997), 239-252. See also Kurt Flasch, “Die Intention Meister Eckharts,” in *Sprache und Begriff: Festschrift für Bruno Liebrucks*, ed. by Heinz Röttges, Brigitte Scheer, and Josef Simon (Meisenham am Glan: Anton Hain, 1974), 292-318.

<sup>35</sup> Loris Sturlese, *Die deutsche Philosophie im Mittelalter: von Bonifatius bis zu Albert dem Grossen 748-1280* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1993), 362-77.

Dominicans are characterized by their conception of the philosopher as a kind of prophet and magician who understands and controls the power of nature and the stars by actively aligning with the divine providence that is revealed to the metaphysician and natural scientist.<sup>36</sup>

Interpreting the German Dominicans as offering a conception of the natural perfection that philosophical inquiry affords in line with Gilson's appraisal of the "Avicennizing Augustinian" tradition within thirteenth-century scholasticism,<sup>37</sup> Sturlese thus characterizes the School's project as an hermetic rather than mystical one, since it is grounded in a Neoplatonic anthropology that positions man as a created reflection of and assistant to the world of heavenly intelligences that flow out of the divine intellect to rule and manage the celestial spheres.<sup>38</sup> For this reason, as David B. Twetten argues, following Sturlese, German Dominicans such as Albert insisted that philosophy cannot accept the Christian theological attempt to identify the separate intelligences and the angelic hierarchies that mediate God's grace to the world.<sup>39</sup> To insist on the possibility of natural prophecy and of natural magic was thus to defend an autonomous natural philosophy from the hegemonic control of a Christian theology that attempted to re-categorize the philosophical freedom to co-operate with God by enacting His providential plan for nature by interpreting it as an philosophical determinism that places necessary limits on the freedom of the

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<sup>36</sup> Loris Sturlese, "Saints et magiciens: Albert le Grand en face d'Hermès Trismégiste," *Archives de Philosophie* 43.4 (1980): 615-34. For a more recent assessment of Albert's conception of the natural philosopher as a magician, as well as how the Dominicans of Cologne responded to it during their failed attempt to seek Albert's canonization in the fifteenth century, see David J. Collins, "Albertus, Magnus or Magus? Magic, Natural Philosophy, and Religious Reform in the Late Middle Ages," *Renaissance Quarterly* 63.1 (2010): 1-44.

<sup>37</sup> Étienne Gilson, "Les Sources gréco-arabes de l'Augustinisme avicennisant," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 4 (1929): 5-149.

<sup>38</sup> Loris Sturlese, *Vernunft und Glück: Die Lehre Vom Intellectus Adeptus Und Die Mentale Glückseligkeit Bei Albert Dem Grossen* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2005); Loris Sturlese, *Die deutsche Philosophie im Mittelalter*, 378-88.

<sup>39</sup> David B. Twetten, "Albert the Great, Double Truth, and Celestial Causality," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 12 (2001): 275-358; Loris Sturlese, *Die deutsche Philosophie im Mittelalter*, 350-62. I thank David for sharing a revised version of his article with me that corrects several errors present in the original published version.

Christian, and which disregards that God who governs the angelic realms that mediate the sacramental order of grace that alone saves the fallen human will.

According to Alain de Libera it is also this recognition that contemplative divinization is both possible and able to be achieved without necessary recourse to Christianity which characterizes the German Dominican School. Although de Libera recognizes that Albert the Great and his disciples saw such hermetic and philosophical perfection as less perfect than the divinization afforded by the beatific vision that is the final goal of Christian life and Christian theology, de Libera insists that what is singular and significant about the German Dominican School was its effort to defend the discontinuities rather than continuities that characterize the relation between reason and faith.<sup>40</sup> It is therefore incumbent upon historians of medieval thought, he maintains, to forget those efforts to define the medieval understanding of the distinction between nature and grace that depend upon the theology of Thomas Aquinas, and to take seriously the alternative account of this relation offered by his teacher Albert. By doing so, importantly, the historian must grant what Jean Gerson, the influential chancellor of Paris and conciliarist reformer, recognized in his fifteenth-century critique of the Albertist Dionysianism to which he originally subscribed—namely, that Albert was a partisan of the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions of the Greek and Arabic Peripatetic philosophers that he had described and praised in his *De intellectu et intelligibili*.<sup>41</sup> Albert's Christian Dionysianism is, for this reason, a Peripatetic Dionysianism.<sup>42</sup> Albert's theological work must be interpreted

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<sup>40</sup> See Alain de Libera, *Raison et Foi: Archéologie d'une crise d'Albert le Grand à Jean-Paul II* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), 299-351, and Alain de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique. Albert le Grand* (Paris: du Cerf, 2005), 53-74.

<sup>41</sup> de Libera, *Raison et Foi*, 47-63. De Libera relies on the account of Gerson's critique of Albert and the Albertists offered by Zenon Kaluza, "Gerson critique d'Albert le Grand," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 45.1-2 (1998): 169-205. I thank M. Vanderpoel for their assistance with Gerson and for first suggesting that I read the work of Kaluza in order to think about the relation between Albert and Gerson.

<sup>42</sup> de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 177-84.

following the philosophy he outlined in his paraphrastic commentaries upon the Aristotelian corpus should one wish to recover a counter-narrative to the Neo-Thomist conception of a High Middle Ages defined by its essentially Christian subordination of nature to grace and of reason to faith. Yet this claim about the structural priority of Albert's philosophical writing and its importance to a proper interpretation of Albert's theological works has received some push back from historians who have argued that it ignores Albert's methodological claim in his own writing that when speaking as a philosopher he is concerned only to explain the suppositions that inform what is true according to philosophy.<sup>43</sup> In other words, according to these critics of de Libera's argument, German Dominican philosophy should not be understood to necessarily establish how one reads or reconstructs their theological positions—even if it is true that several German Dominicans defend philosophical and theological positions that place them at odds with Thomism, or which seem to emphasize the essential similarity between Peripatetic philosophy and the *Corpus Dionysiacum*.

De Libera's arguments align well with Stephen Gersh and Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen's insistence that students of philosophy and theology must adopt a doxographic approach to the invocations of the Platonic and Peripatetic tradition in medieval writing.<sup>44</sup> Insisting that

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<sup>43</sup> Amos Bertolacci, "Albert the Great's Disclaimers in the Aristotelian Paraphrases: A Reconsideration," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 30 (2019): 295-338 and Isabelle Moulin, "Albert the Great Interpreting Aristotle: Intimacy and Independence," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 18 (2006): 158-170.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen Gersh and Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen, eds, *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002). This approach is directly comparable to that of Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Leiden: Brill, 2014), who insists upon the specific Aristotelian doxography that makes Avicenna intelligible as a "rational" philosopher in order to critique those scholars, such as Henri Corbin, who identify a hidden "oriental" Gnosticism or Neoplatonism within Avicenna's writing based upon a Jungian and "theosophical" interpretation of the "illuminationist" school of Islamic philosophy characteristic of Suhrawardi and the sixteenth-century Iranian philosopher Mulla Sadra. See also Dimitri Gutas, "Intellect without Limits: The Absence of Mysticism in Avicenna," in *Orientalism of Avicenna's Philosophy: Essays on his Life, Method, Heritage*, ed. by Dimitri Gutas (London: Routledge, 2014), It is interesting that Henri Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 101-22 mistakenly lists Albert as a Latin Scholastic closer to the theosophical Iranian Avicennism that views the intelligences as angelic forces than to the Averroism that "disenchants" the universe.

historians ought to assess whether medieval figures are Platonists or Aristotelians based on their specific historical understanding of the terms *Platonici* and *Peripatetici*, this approach is critical of efforts to chart general continuities across history based on a decontextualized understanding of the philosophical commitments and positions that characterize these two competing traditions in the Middle Ages. Scholars convinced by this doxographic approach have consequently problematized efforts to characterize the German Dominican School as (Neo-)Platonic rather than as followers of Aristotle informed by a late antique and medieval Arabic conception of what it meant to belong to a Peripatetic School which included Neoplatonic material within its philosophical curriculum, such as the *Liber de causis* or the Plotinian *Theology of Aristotle*.<sup>45</sup> Emphasizing, moreover, that scholastic Platonism is a development within Platonism informed by Arabic attempts to read Plato through Aristotle, rather than a dogmatic return to an essential Platonism that ought to inform how Aristotle should be assimilated into medieval Christian thought, this approach insists that specific Peripatetic critiques of Plato and specific Platonic critiques of Aristotle have more to do with the historical controversies within Christianity than the differences between Plato and Aristotle themselves. German Dominican investment in a particular understanding of what it means to be Peripatetic and Platonist for these scholars is thus the product of their rejection of the increasing authority of Thomas Aquinas within the Order of Preachers. In this way the German Dominicans are comparable to the fifteenth-century Albertists at the universities in Germany and the Lowlands who taught a Peripatetic interpretation of the Aristotelian corpus, following the Greeks and Arabs, in response to a Thomist approach, where Aristotle was interpreted through the lens of a Christian theological critique of Avicenna and

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<sup>45</sup> For the specific understanding of the difference between Platonism and Peripateticism in Albert, and its influence upon his conception of the Peripatetic curriculum, see de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 74-94 and 159-66.

Averroes.<sup>46</sup> It also emphasizes how and why Thomas himself increasingly came to interpret Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite as a Platonist after William of Moerbeke had translated Proclus and other Greek Platonists into Latin, and the effect this had upon efforts like those of the German Dominicans to read the *Corpus Dionysiacum* as if it were Peripatetic and Hermetic.<sup>47</sup>

The “philosophical” conception of the German Dominican School I have discussed so far is partly related to a long scholarly tradition that defines German Dominican thought by way of its “intellectualist” interpretation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. For historians of Christian mysticism, like Bernard McGinn, and for theologians, like Denys Turner, the apophatic approach of the Pseudo-Dionysius, as well as the Areopagite’s metaphysical conception of the emanation and return of all reality from and to God through the mediation of the ecclesiastical and angelic hierarchies, is a formal feature of Christian thought *as such* that received specific emphases within the German Dominican School.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, it is this general commitment to Dionysius in dialogue with Augustine that structures their interpretation of Christian theology, as well as the non-Christian philosophers that the German Dominicans recognized as authoritative. The German Dominicans (especially Meister Eckhart, who is taken to be paradigmatic of the tradition) consequently belong to a particular tradition of contemplative or speculative mysticism grounded in the practice of “learned ignorance” that goes back to the ninth-century Carolingian

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<sup>46</sup> See Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen, “*Via antiqua* and *Via moderna* in the Fifteenth Century: Doctrinal, Institutional, and Church Political Factors in the *Wegestreit*,” in *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400-1700*, ed. by R.L. Friedman and L. O. Nielsen (Amsterdam: Kluwer, 2003), 9-36. For the earlier tradition of Albertism at Paris and their formative debates during the fourteenth century with the Nominalists and Scotists, see Zenon Kaluza, *Les querelles doctrinales à Paris: nominalistes et réalistes aux confins du XIVe et du XVe siècles* (Bergamo: P. Lubrina, 1988), 87-106.

<sup>47</sup> Wayne J. Hankey, “Aquinas and the Platonists,” in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages*, 279-324.

<sup>48</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany* (New York: Crossroads, 2004), 11-47; Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 137-85.

theologian John the Scot Eriugena, and which culminates in the work of the fifteenth-century Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa.<sup>49</sup> In contradistinction to a narrative that sees what is essentially unique about the German Dominican School by way of their distance and departure from the intellectual culture of Paris, moreover, this line of argumentation tends to privilege the emphasis upon a particular Dominican “textbook” edition of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* used by the Dominicans at the University of Paris, as well as the continuities rather than discontinuities between Albertism and Thomism.<sup>50</sup> It is also marked, finally, by the emphasis it places on the difference between Dominican interpretation of the Pseudo-Dionysius and the “affective” approach understood to characterize the monastic and apocalyptic theology associated with the Victorines, Franciscans, and Carthusians.<sup>51</sup>

A tradition of literary study of the members of the German Dominican School likewise situates the School within a genealogy of mystical speculation grounded in the long history of Christian mysticism. Scholars such as Alois M. Haas accordingly compare the writings of select German Dominicans to mystics in the patristic and monastic traditions in order to substantiate interpretations of their thought insofar as they “authentically” express a Christian mysticism characterized by a liturgical and scriptural orientation toward God.<sup>52</sup> Often doing so in explicit

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<sup>49</sup> See Donald F. Duclow, *Masters of Learned Ignorance: Eriugena, Eckhart, Cusanus* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>50</sup> Hyacinthe François Dondaine, *Le corpus dionysien de l’université de Paris au XIIIe siècle* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1953). An annotated translation and study of the glossed edition of the *De mystica theologia*, which highlights its relationship to the Dominicans, is L. Michael Harrington, *A Thirteenth-Century Textbook of Mystical Theology at the University of Paris: The Mystical Theology of Dionysius the Areopagite in Eriugena’s Latin Translation with the Scholia Translated by Anastasius the Librarian and Excerpts from Eriugena’s Periphyseon* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004).

<sup>51</sup> On the intellectual and affective approaches to the *Corpus Dionysiacum* that arose in the Latin West, as well as their relationship to the monastic and scholastic theologies of the various religious orders, see Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>52</sup> See especially Alois M. Haas, *Nim din selbes war: Studien zur Lehre von der Selbsterkenntnis bei Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, und Heinrich Seuse* (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1971) and Alois M. Haas, *Sermo mysticus: Studien zu Theologie und Sprache der deutschen Mystik* (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1979)



dialogue with the theologians of the Catholic renaissance—Haas’s works are marked by their sustained dialogue with the theology of Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar—these scholars have been accused by historians such as Flasch of reading the medieval German Dominican School toward the contemporary concerns of modern Catholicism and its debate with Protestant historians over the significance of ritual and individual mystical experience for the practice of religion.<sup>53</sup> Although this critique is overly dismissive of comparative work that has offered compelling accounts between the arguments of Meister Eckhart and the devotional and speculative currents that emerged within Franciscan and Cistercian monasticism—as well as among the *mulieres religiosae* and beguines under German Dominican pastoral care, whose revelations and asceticism were both admired and criticized within the Order of Preachers—it is certainly true that, for better or worse, such scholarship is sympathetic to the historical and political theological effort to legislate between a Christian mystical theology grounded in the liturgy and the sacraments, and a paganism tied to the mysteries and myths of late antique religion and philosophy.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, the strength of this line of analysis is that it takes seriously the relationship between the theological speculation of the members of the German Dominican and the new religious movements that emerged in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>55</sup> And it does so without dismissing the importance of the schools to the religious culture of the Middle Ages.

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<sup>53</sup> For his critique of the theological assumptions that structure “Germanist” assessments of Eckhart, see Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart: Philosopher of Christianity*, trans. by Anne Schindel and Aaron Vanides (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 155-65. For the structural role that the apologetic and polemic debate between Catholicism and Protestantism has played in the modern history of religion more generally, see Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Louis Bouyer, *The Christian Mystery: From Pagan Myth to Christian Mysticism*, trans. by Illtyd Trethowan (Petersham, Ma: Saint Bede’s Publications, 1989).

<sup>55</sup> Paradigmatically, see Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Steven Rowan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995). More recently, see McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism*

The attempts to locate the German Dominican School within the history of medieval philosophy and Christian mysticism come together in the work of Ruedi Imbach, who has offered an important account of the different theological discourses that emerged in the German Dominican School.<sup>56</sup> Insisting upon the significance of the Proclian and Dionysian background that characterizes the formal scholastic theology of the German Dominicans and its departure from Thomism, as well as the pastoral and devotional writing in the vernacular that emerged in the fourteenth-century, Imbach was perhaps the first to insist upon the heterogeneity rather than homogeneity that defined German Dominican conceptions of correct theological practice.<sup>57</sup> Although Imbach readily concedes that the German Dominican School is generally Proclian in orientation and grants that its intellectual project largely defines the philosophical culture of medieval Germany, he nevertheless maintains that three distinct styles of theologization emerged within it, which frequently entered into conflict. These include Heinrich Seuse's effort after the condemnation of Eckhart to define mystical theology as a Christian philosophy rooted in the asceticism of the Desert Fathers, Dietrich of Freiberg's conception of theology, following Albert the Great, as a divine science grounded in the metaphysics and noetics of the Peripatetic philosophers, and Berthold of Moosburg's definition of mystical theology, following Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius, as a "super-wisdom" that allows one to ecstatically unite with the divine One who exceeds the created being which is ascertained by Aristotelian wisdom. In this way, Imbach builds upon the work of the historian of scholasticism Paul Vignaux, who insisted against Neo-Thomist historians who emphasized the epistemic and spiritual unity of medieval thought, that

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in *Medieval Germany* and Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism, 1200-1350* (New York: Crossroads, 1998).

<sup>56</sup> Ruedi Imbach, "Le (Néo-)Platonisme medieval: Proclus latin et l'Ecole dominicaine allemande," *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 110.4 (1978): 427-448.

<sup>57</sup> Ruedi Imbach, "Die deutsche Dominikanerschule: Drei Modelle einer Theologia Mystica," in *Grundfragen christlicher Mystik: Wissenschaftlicher Studientagung Theologia Mystiker in Weingarten vom 7.-10. November 1985*, ed. by Margot Schmidt and Dieter R. Bauer (Stuttgart: frommann-holzboog, 1987), 157-72.

scholasticism was better characterized by its rebellious diversity, since numerous competing philosophical and theological orientations emerged within it.<sup>58</sup> He also anticipated Olivier Boulnois's recent attempt to critique the reduction of all medieval metaphysics to onto-theology, according to the philosophical genealogy offered by Martin Heidegger, by showing that a "katholou-protological" theo-logic also emerged in the thirteenth-century, that was characterized by its recourse to prayer and a radical openness toward the God who graciously gives Himself to the Christian and who saturates created existence with His uncreated divinity.<sup>59</sup>

However, even this more capacious understanding of the very concept of the German Dominican School has been critiqued by Niklaus Largier in several evaluations he published of trends within Eckhart studies at the end of the 1990s.<sup>60</sup> Pointing toward work that questions how a focus on schools functions heuristically to reduce the study of medieval thought to an evaluation of doxography and doctrinal affiliation,<sup>61</sup> Largier showed in these studies how the very effort to elucidate how the German Dominican School produced and authorized a

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<sup>58</sup> See Paul Vignaux, *Philosophy in the Middle Ages: An Introduction*, trans. by E. C. Hall (New York: Meridian Books, 1959). Vignaux's departures from Gilson especially are marked by his effort to take nominalism seriously as a tradition of medieval thought rather than as a deviation from the Thomist realism that defines Christian philosophy as such. Also important to this view of medieval scholasticism as diverse rather than unified was his interest in the work of Karl Barth and his political commitments to syndicalism as a leading theorist of the French Catholic labor movement. See James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 239-47.

<sup>59</sup> Olivier Boulnois, *Métaphysiques rebelles: Genèse et structures d'une science au Moyen Âge* (Paris: PUF, 2013), 113-164. See also de Libera, *Raison et Foi*, 283-6, and de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 61-7, who shows that a distinction between what Heidegger called "theology" and theology is operative in the German Dominican School.

<sup>60</sup> Niklaus Largier, "Recent Work on Meister Eckhart: Positions, Problems, Perspectives, 1990-1997," *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales* 65.1 (1998): 147-67 and Niklaus Largier, "Meister Eckhart: Perspektiven der Forschung, 1980-1993," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 114 (1995): 29-98. Alois M. Haas, *Mystik als Aussage: Erfahrungs-, Denk- und Redeform christlicher Mystik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), 336-410 offers a comparable critique. Haas's earlier approach to Eckhart grounds much of Largier's own response to Flasch and Sturlese.

<sup>61</sup> For a critical typology that shows how different approaches to conceiving of the existence of distinct "schools of thought" may limit rather than clarify forms of doctrinal and non-doctrinal affiliation in the high and late Middle Ages, see William J. Courtenay, "Was there an Ockhamist School?" in *Philosophy and Learning: Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen, J.H. Josef Schneider and George Wieland (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 263-92.

philosophical culture in medieval Germany was dependant on the abjection of styles of theological and religious reasoning it sought to characterize as irrational. Whatever the value of Flasch, Mojsisch, and Sturlese's argument about the importance of Peripateticism and Platonism to the self-understanding of the German Dominicans' work as philosophers and theologians, Largier argues, their rejection of mysticism as an inappropriate designation for the German Dominican project is grounded in a failure to appreciate the role that scriptural hermeneutics and ethics played in the development of their thought.<sup>62</sup> By emphasizing the influence of Dietrich of Freiberg upon Meister Eckhart to the exclusion of other potential sources of direct and indirect influence—particularly, the vernacular theology of beguines such as Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete—while ignoring significant *differences* between Dietrich and Eckhart, they also failed to adequately contextualize Eckhart within the history of medieval spirituality.<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, Largier suggests that a more capacious analysis of Eckhart (and perhaps the German Dominican School itself) requires one to jettison a polemic against a conception of mystical theology as irrational in order to appreciate how the Meister offers a sophisticated philosophical and theological meditation upon human finitude and the epistemic limits of discursive reason.<sup>64</sup> In this way, scholarship on Eckhart and the German Dominican School should follow the lead of Amy Hollywood, who considers Meister Eckhart's work in dialogue with the mystical theology of medieval women,<sup>65</sup> as well as how their religious effort to discipline or produce a distinctly Christian subjectivity is grounded in a particular medieval understanding of the relationship between temporality and eternity that challenges

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<sup>62</sup> Largier, "Recent Work on Meister Eckhart," 157-8.

<sup>63</sup> Largier, "Recent Work on Meister Eckhart," 160-63.

<sup>64</sup> Largier, "Recent Work on Meister Eckhart," 164.

<sup>65</sup> Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

modern enlightened assumptions about the freedom of a reason that has emancipated itself from its dogmatic slumber.<sup>66</sup>

In later work on the relationship between medieval mystical discourse and modern aesthetic experience, Largier has demonstrated how the attempt to present the German Dominican School as defined by a philosophical critique of religious irrationality is dependant upon a particular *secular* and *secularist* political ideology.<sup>67</sup> That is, by turning to the legacy of Martin Luther's critique of the apocalypticism of the radical reformers, who insisted upon the extra-institutional and antinomian experience of the Holy Spirit, as well as Immanuel Kant's dismissal of those enthusiasts who fail to critically acknowledge how God and the moral law are apprehended speculatively and practically within the limits of reason alone, Largier shows that in modernity the mystical is conceptually de-coupled from the liturgical and scriptural context that institutionally grounded it in the Middle Ages.<sup>68</sup> By doing so, he argues, mysticism emerged as an analytic category that designates the *feeling* that exceeds and destabilizes what is religiously and rationally acceptable according to the epistemic conditions of secular modernity. The heuristic designation "German Dominican School" therefore names more than an attempt to describe how a "secular" or "enlightened" critique of religion tied to a particular philosophical

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<sup>66</sup> Amy Hollywood, "Gender, Agency, and the Divine in Religious Historiography," in *Acute Melancholia and Other Essays: Mysticism, History, and the Study of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 117-127. Hollywood's article is in dialogue with Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), whose discussion of a revolutionary subaltern history where the gods of the oppressed emerge within and disrupt the linear history of Europe's progress helps her think about how the medieval experience of divine eternity may also disrupt the present—either as the return of a past it has never successfully repressed or as an open possibility for the future that it has attempted to foreclose.

<sup>67</sup> Niklaus Largier, "The Rhetoric of Mysticism: From Contemplative Practice to Aesthetic Experiment," in *Mysticism and Reform 1400-1750*, ed. by Sara S. Poor and Nigel Smith (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 353-79 and Niklaus Largier, "Mysticism, Modernity, and the Invention of Aesthetic Experience," *Representations* 105.1 (2009): 37-60. For the secular as an epistemic condition in modernity and secularism as ideology and as statecraft doctrine, see José Casanova, "The Secular and Secularisms," *Social Research* 76.4 (2009): 1049-66.

<sup>68</sup> Largier, "Mysticism, Modernity, and the Invention of Aesthetic Experience," 40-9.

orientation emerged in medieval Germany. It contributes to and participates within a modern secularist discourse that is intimately concerned with political efforts to produce and manage a religiosity and rationality that is *acceptable* to a modern liberal polity, by presenting the German Dominicans as rationalists who abandoned the dogmatism and fanaticism of their medieval contemporaries.<sup>69</sup> The work of Kurt Flasch especially, this critique suggests, might therefore have as much to do with Flasch's recent philosophical declaration that he is not a Christian and critical theoretical study of German nationalist philosophy, as it does with his particular historical reconstruction of what it meant to be a philosopher in the Christian Middle Ages.<sup>70</sup>

Despite Largier's generally convincing critiques, I still consider the concept of a German Dominican School a convenient way to designate the tradition of theological scholarship I analyze in this dissertation. I do, in fact, because I believe that a philosophical and theological analysis of the German Dominican School that takes up the recommendations Largier offers in his response to the tradition of scholarship represented by Flasch and his followers is a desideratum. Although in what follows I do not discuss the parallels between the German Dominicans and the vernacular theology of the *mulieres religiosae* and the monastic theology of the Franciscans and Cistercians that historians of Christian mysticism have conclusively demonstrated, I do take seriously that the members of the German Dominican School were

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<sup>69</sup> As much recent anthropology of secularism as a political project acknowledges, the secular does not simply designate a mentality or worldview where that which is religiously transcendent is reduced to what Charles Taylor refers to as the immanent frame. Rather, it is intimately concerned to determine the difference between good and bad religion based on a particular historical conception of religion as privatized belief. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 1-19 and 539-93, and Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Public Culture* 18:2 (2006): 323-47. As Gil Anidjar, "Secularism," *Critical Inquiry* 33.1 (2006): 52-77 argues, in Derridean fashion, this secularism is the political theology of modern Protestantism that renders all non-Protestant forms of religiosity illegible and threatening. Paradigmatically so-called "political" Islam. But also, medieval Christianity.

<sup>70</sup> Kurt Flasch, *Warum ich bin kein Christ: Bericht und Argumentation* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2013) and Kurt Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung. Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Alexander Fest, 2000).

primarily Christian theologians whose recourse to the Peripatetic and Platonic philosophers was grounded in a Christian theological effort to define the relationship between the beatific divinizing ends that the different divine sciences that arose in the Middle Ages afforded. In what follows I thus take seriously how the German Dominican School defined and managed the relation between grace and nature in dialogue with their Peripatetic and Platonic commitments.

Yet I do so not because I am interested in showing how philosophical reason emancipated itself from theology or was granted a limited autonomy by sympathetic Christian theologians opposed to irrational and dogmatic forces within the ecclesiastical magisterium. Rather, I seek in what follows to correct an overemphasis on the “intellectualism” of the German Dominican School that has everything to do with modern secularist attempts to police what is religiously and rationally acceptable, while also acknowledging the importance of the doxographic attempts among the German Dominicans to justify their recourse to particular philosophical authorities and texts in order to manage the difference between the theology of the philosophers and that of the Christians. Moreover, I am interested in the technical debate over the relationship between the intellect and affect in the German Dominican School and how this mattered to internal debates within the School over the difference between philosophical and Christian beatitude. This is a feature of German Dominican theology that has received very little attention within the literature described above, despite several studies that have re-assessed the positions that the Dominicans adopted in the scholastic debates of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries over the role that understanding and love plays in the Christian experience of beatitude. Taking seriously, as Christian Trottman has done, the fact that several German Dominicans adopted a position in these debates that is often closer to the early Franciscans traditionally viewed as their opponents than it is to the “intellectual” Dionysianism understood to be their particular theological heritage,

I suggest that conceptions of beatitude as affective or not also impact how the German Dominicans defined the difference between philosophical and Christian divine science, as well as their relationship to the distinction between grace and nature.<sup>71</sup> For this reason, also, I cannot accept an “enlightened” account of German Dominican Peripateticism and Platonism as opposed to Christian mystical discourse, even if I still grant that the label “German Dominican School” is heuristically useful for an historical analysis of German Dominican efforts to assemble philosophical and Christian divine science into a particular “regime of enunciation.” This matters especially, if it is true, as Frank Rexroth has recently argued, that medieval scholastic culture from the very beginning is as defined by the discipline of the will and cultivation of a specifically Christian desire, as it is by the dialectical exercise of learned reason and its rejection of feminine piety.<sup>72</sup>

#### *Dissertation Overview*

My dissertation is composed of four chapters, each of which considers a cluster of German Dominican figures, as well as the particular conception of philosophical and Christian divine science that characterized their writing. In the first chapter, I begin my narrative of the German Dominican School by analyzing the lectures and commentaries on the *Corpus Dionysiacum* that Albert the Great delivered in the 1250s at the Dominican friary in Cologne, in order to unpack how Albert defined the different contemplative ends of philosophy and Christianity. Drawing on recent work that has emphasized the critique of philosophical reason and of pagan idolatry that Albert included in his systematic theological writing and in his commentaries on the Bible, I

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<sup>71</sup> Christian Trottman, *Théologie et noétique au XIIIe siècle: à la recherche d'un statut* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1999).

<sup>72</sup> Frank Rexroth, *Knowledge True and Useful: A Cultural History of Early Scholasticism*, trans. John Burden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023). Compare this analysis to Clare Monagle, *Scholastic Affect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).



argue that Albert distinguished between the affective salvific economy of grace that characterizes the experience of the Christian theologian and a philosophical reason fundamentally closed to the truth of the Christian Gospel characterized by its lack of moral discipline and its excessive attachment to debate and poetry. Showing that philosophy is overly attached to the world and reduces the unknowable God to the intelligible existence that is all that reason can grasp when it is not fortified by the light of grace through those pious practices that direct the theologian's desire toward the beatific vision, Albert defines Christian theology as a wondrous science that can never be fully satisfied. For, as Pseudo-Dionysius had taught, the Christian is called to suffer the divine rather than simply ascertain whether God as the First Cause actually exists. The quest for scientific certainty and the contemplative struggle for natural perfection, Albert taught, may even misdirect the Christian away from that God who is their true salvific end—especially when they are divorced from those virtuous and graced habits that are specifically Christian.

The first chapter also offers a consideration of Albert's disciple Ulrich of Strasburg that shows how his *De summo bono* systematizes Albert's theology and re-litigates his argument about the proper relationship between philosophical and Christian divine science. I show, in other words, how Ulrich as a *lector* through the teaching that can be recovered through an analysis of his theological magnum opus established Albert as *the* central authority for German Dominican theology—principally by drawing upon and repeating Albert's Peripatetic interpretation of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Yet it also shows how Ulrich reformulated aspects of Albert's conception of the difference between an autonomous theology of the philosophers that ought to be subordinated to a Christian theology that perfects it into a conception of philosophical theology as a false wisdom that ought to be corrected by the true wisdom of the Christians. Ulrich also emphasized continuities between Christian theology and

Platonism while insisting that Aristotelian metaphysics failed to capture aspects of divinity that the philosophical approach of Plato was better able to grasp. Despite these differences, however, I show that Ulrich subscribed to Albert's conception of Christian theology as a wonderful science of God characterized by faith and piety—reinscribing a conception of the divine science of the Christians grounded in the salvific and affective economy of grace that directs the human will toward God as its ultimate end.

The second chapter of my dissertation turns toward a consideration of Dietrich of Freiberg and endeavors to situate him as a disciple of Albert called to respond to magisterial attempts to censure Peripatetic philosophy and the increasing hegemony of Thomism as an authoritative theological discourse within the Order of Preachers. Beginning with an account of the Parisian Condemnations of 1270 and 1277, before proceeding to describe how they informed scholastic attempts to define the subject of theology as a science, the majority of this chapter represents a close reading of Dietrich's theological and metaphysical writing. In particular, I analyze his brief *Fragmentum de subiecto theologiae* in order to analyze how he draws upon Proclus' conception of proportion and proportionality, as well as Augustine's conception of the natural and voluntary orders of providence, to institute a distinction between a philosophical and Christian theology that studies God and his relation to the Universe. I then demonstrate that this conception is operative in Dietrich's metaphysical and theological works, before considering how it interacts with the epistemology and definition of intellect he appropriated from the Peripatetics in order to define contemplative beatitude as an immanent conjunction with the transcendent divine intellect discovered in the hidden recesses of the human soul. By doing so, I ultimately argue that Dietrich subtly revises Albert's prior argument about the distinction

between philosophical and Christian divine science even as he relies extensively on the epistemological and metaphysical assumptions of Albert to do so.

In the final part of the second chapter, I further compare this conception of intellection and beatitude to the arguments of the German Thomists in order to better understand the apologetic and polemic context of Dietrich's philosophical and theological discourse. Turning to several German Thomist critiques of Dietrich's endeavor to locate beatitude in the active intellect, this part of chapter two examines how the German Dominicans situated Dietrich's claims within an history of Peripatetic philosophical error that speaks back to Dietrich's critique of the Thomist "chatterboxes," whose theological commitments led them to misread both Aristotle and Augustine. Demonstrating that at the beginning of the fourteenth century the German Dominican School was characterized more by the doctrinal conflicts within it than by any intellectual allegiance to Albert or Platonism, I also analyze how the Thomist and Dietrichian debate over which intellectual faculty participates in the contemplative beatitude that is theology's proper end—whether it be philosophical or Christian—related to the real distinction between grace and nature as created lights that emanate from God and which introduce the divine influence into the world below. I do so by analyzing the vernacular *Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft* by Eckhart of Gründig, an otherwise unknown partisan of Dietrich in the debates between Dietrich and the German Thomists, who ultimately radicalized Dietrich's own Christian divine science by not only insisting that the human mind is always already blessed by nature, but by subordinating grace and the angelic hierarchies that bear it into the world to the separate intelligences that flows out essentially from the divine understanding.

Meister Eckhart's revolutionary redescription of the theology of the German Dominican School is the subject of my third chapter. Situating Eckhart within the context of the debates

between the followers of Thomas and the defenders of Dietrich, this chapter describes how the Meister drew upon both German Dominican traditions in order to forward a novel interpretation of theology that emphasized its status as metaphysics and ethics through recourse to arguments that go back to the twelfth-century School of Chartres. Turning to several of Eckhart's early Parisian Questions I also show how his specific interpretation of God as primarily intellectual transformed his operative distinction between created and uncreated being, or concrete and abstract reality, into a theological conception that defined truth, rather than goodness, and understanding, rather than desire, as the goal of Christian theology. This led Meister Eckhart in his subsequent scholastic writing and scriptural commentaries to defend an axiomatic approach to divine science, grounded in dialectical consideration of a set of binary oppositions fundamental to rational reflection, as well as a parabolic hermeneutic that underscored the continuities between the Bible, philosophical fable, and nature as sources for theological instruction. Yet the most original development of the German Dominican School's theological project, I argue, was Eckhart's claim that beatitude is achievable in this life as a joyous suffering of the divine beyond grace and nature in the ground of the soul. A radicalization of both Thomas and Dietrich that is recoverable from the vernacular sermons attributed to the Meister, which his disciples included in the sermon collection known as the *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, I show that by redefining divinization in this way allowed Eckhart to set the stage for subsequent efforts in the German Dominican School to partially collapse those boundaries between philosophical and Christian divine science that Albert and Dietrich had endeavored to establish and maintain in their own writing.

The final chapter examines this partial collapse through an analysis of the explicit turn toward Platonism within the German Dominican School after Eckhart. In this way I not only

show how German Dominicans such as Meister Eckhart, Berthold of Moosburg, and Johannes Tauler re-oriented Christianity toward Plato and Proclus rather than the Peripatetic philosophers. I also explain how they do so in order to insist that the difference between the epistemological habits of the Aristotelians and Platonists matters more to the right practice of theology than the earlier distinction between philosophical and Christian divine science, which had characterized Albert and Dietrich's work. I begin by attending to those moments in his vernacular preaching when Meister Eckhart attributes particular positions to the Aristotelian masters and by offering a brief explanation of how and why he draws upon the vocabulary of the Peripatetics in order to present a particular metaphysical and ethical interpretation of scripture. But the majority of my analysis of Eckhart's preaching in this chapter aims to show how he correlated the apophatic theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite with that philosophy of Plato. I do so to show that the Meister viewed Platonism as a theological approach that exceeded that of the Peripatetics since it better apprehends that God whose uncreated divine existence cannot be captured by the metaphysical and logical categories that Aristotle developed to study created being. For Meister Eckhart, ultimately, Platonist and Christian theologians shared a henological approach to the transcendent Godhead that they just discover to be the very immanent ground of the soul. This necessitated a shared philosophical and Christian practice of self-emptying detachment that called Dietrich of Freiberg's conception of beatitude as the attainment of cognitive self-reflexivity into question. Eckhart's turn to Plato is therefore directly related to the Meister's account of a divinization that overcomes affective grace and the natural perfection of the intellect, which I discuss at length in chapter three.

The remainder of my fourth chapter represents an attempt to unpack how Berthold of Moosburg and Johannes Tauler each respond to this argument of the Meister. By analyzing

Berthold's important commentary on Proclus' *Elementatio theologica* and the vernacular sermons by Tauler that draw upon it, I argue that both figures attempt to defend a conception of divine science grounded in an Albertist and Neoplatonic tradition within the German Dominican School that they themselves attempted to define. Berthold thus re-inscribes Eckhart's henological conception of philosophical and Christian divine science, I show, meant to demonstrate the continuities between their supersapiential and ecstatic habits through a comparison between Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Berthold, moreover, reconfigures the German Dominican School's prior effort to distinguish between philosophical and Christian theology through recourse to the Augustinian understanding of the difference between the natural and voluntary orders of providence in dialogue with the attempt to identify similarities between the metaphysics of the philosophers and the Christians, which he inherited from the *Sapientiale* by the Franciscan Thomas of York. Finally, I show that Tauler in his vernacular sermons drew upon the metaphors that Meister Eckhart had used in his own preaching to characterize theology as kenotic and apophatic, while presenting the Albertist tradition within the German Dominican School and the Platonic philosophers as theological authorities for a speculative and affective "mysticism of the ground" that goes beyond the limited theological horizon of the Thomists. Yet by doing so, I argue, Tauler appropriates Albert the Great's conception of a Christian theology characterized by wonder in order to apply it to Platonism. Although he appears to return to arguments that Albert and Dietrich had developed to distinguish between philosophical and Christian theology—including an emphasis on the distinction between learned reason and the pious experience of grace—he only does so, in the final analysis, to draw an operative distinction between the habits of Aristotelian reason and the lived experience of Platonic ecstasy.

## Chapter One: Albert the Great, Ulrich of Strasburg, and Christian Theology as the Wonderful Science of God

For the Lord delivered arguments through the reason of faith, humiliating the understanding of his listeners and the glorious philosophers of the earth. And he breaks down the gates of bronze when he shatters the eloquence of the orators sounding throughout the world. And he breaks down the iron bars when he subdues the clear syllogisms of dialectics to faith. And then, having been directed to the Lord by these arguments, one is released who before was detained by phantastical reasonings.

Albert the Great, *Super Marcum*<sup>1</sup>

As explained in the introduction, a tradition of scholarship keen to identify the German Dominican School with the philosophical concerns and problems of modern enlightened reason has made much of the fact that Albert the Great insisted in his work upon the relative autonomy of the divine science of the philosophers, especially that of the Peripatetics. That Albert appeared to be incredibly optimistic in his Aristotelian paraphrases and commentaries about the capacity of the human intellect to attain contemplative felicity, and even a form of immortality through philosophical training, suggested to these historians that his work was characterized by a particular emphasis on reason against theological excess. This conception of Albert's work, finally, was justified by Albert's tendency to *critique* those figures he named "theologizing philosophers"—a critique he bequeathed to several students, such as the German Dominican Dietrich of Freiberg whose career can be categorized by his attempt to defend a specific Peripatetic reading of the Aristotelian corpus against Thomism and Augustinianism. For these scholars, ultimately, what is significant about Albert's project was not only that he established the autonomy of philosophical theology or of philosophy itself as something separate from

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<sup>1</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Marcum* 11:2-3, in *Opera Omnia XXI*, ed. by Borgnet, 264: "Dominus enim assignata rationabili ratione fidei, humiliat intellectum audientium, et humiliat gloriosos terrae Philosophos. Et confringit portas aereas, quando frangit Oratorum eloquentiam per orbem sonantem. Et vectes ferreos confringit, quando acutos syllogismos dialecticae fidei subdit. Et tunc dimittitur ab eis adducendus ad Dominum, qui ante rationibus phantasticis detinebatur." Alluding to Is 45:2: "Ego ante te ibo et gloriosos terrae humiliabo portas aereas conteram et vectes ferreos confringam," previously cited.

Christian theology. Albert also set the groundwork for a mid-thirteenth century attempt to emancipate philosophy from Christian theology by establishing them as opposed intellectual traditions. Albert is consequently a theologian who philosophizes, as well as the founder of a Christianity characterized by its departure from the sentimentality and passion that defines the mystical enthusiasm of the monastery and the beguinage.

However, as is evident from his scriptural commentaries, Albert did not only claim that philosophy differs from Christian theology. He also critiqued the philosophers for their inability to attain the end of the latter divine science, understood to be true wisdom. In fact, as Paul D. Hellmeier and Henryk Anzulewicz have recently argued in two important studies, Albert's Peripatetic account of cognition and contemplative felicity in his philosophical writing must be contrasted with his often negative depiction of the philosophers in these more explicitly Christian texts if a full account of his philosophy and theology is to emerge.<sup>2</sup> For, as Hellmeier has demonstrated, Albert in his exegetical works maintains that something like the acquired intellect that he asserted the philosopher is able to attain through study is attained by the Christian contemplative directly from God.<sup>3</sup> In his commentary on the parable of the sower in Luke 8:4-15, for instance, Albert claims that because the disciples understood the hidden truth Christ conveyed through similitudes they possessed an understanding separated from time and space, comparable to but different from the acquired intellect of the philosophers which Albert implies

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<sup>2</sup> Paul D. Hellmeier, "Der *Intellectus Adeptus* und die Torheit der Philosophen: Philosophische Vollendung und Christlicher Glaube in den Bibelkommentaren Albert des Grossen," *Divus Thomas* 122.2 (2019): 144-184; Henryk Anzulewicz, "Albertus Magnus über die *philosophi theologizantes* und die natürlichen Voraussetzungen postmortaler Glückseligkeit: Versuch einer Bestandsaufnahme," in *Paganism in the Middle Ages: Threat and Fascination*, ed. Carlos Steel, John Marenbon and Werner Verbeke (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012), 55-83. For the more general articulation of paganism as a philosophical problem for Christianity that sought to address the nature and limits of knowledge, virtue and salvation, see John Marenbon, *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015). For Marenbon's brief account of Albert's own response to this problem, see *Pagans and Philosophers*, 128-37.

<sup>3</sup> Hellmeier, "Der *Intellectus Adeptus* und die Torheit der Philosophen," 167-73.



the crowd attained through unpacking Christ's parables.<sup>4</sup> Later, commenting on the beatitudes of Luke 10:24, Albert also distinguishes the intellectual vision and felicity that the disciples attained from the civic and ethical happiness that Aristotle claims arises from the cultivation of the moral virtues. Albert even suggests in this discussion that their contemplative beatitude transcends the good attained through the specific moral regime that Christ instituted during the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>5</sup> Such beatitude, Albert concludes while drawing on the authority of Pseudo-Dionysius, entails an intuitive grasp of the most certain and perfect things with an intellect entirely detached from the phantastical and discursive reason operative in philosophy.<sup>6</sup> The context of these references to the separated or "detached" intellect possessed by the disciples, with its similarity to the acquired understanding of the philosophers, demonstrates that Albert argues it is God that makes this beatitude possible, insofar as revelation or Christ's instruction does the work for the Christian contemplative that dialectical syllogism does for the philosopher concerned only with their particular forms of wisdom. It is also why, commenting on Luke 5:4, Albert insists with some venom that "many good philosophers, once captives such as

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<sup>4</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Lucam* 8:4, in *Opera Omnia* XXII, ed. by Borgnet, 527: "Et ideo cum similitudinibus informari, donec seipsum plenius adipiscatur, ex percepto intelligentiae separatae lumine. Adeptus enim seipsum intellectus, intelligit sine similitudine. Et sic intellectus discipulorum, non adeptus autem, sine similitudine et forma continui et temporis, nihil penitus intelligit. Et talis est intellectus turbarum."

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Albert the Great, *Super Lucam* 10:24, 46: "Duae apud morale Philosophum beatitudines determinantur. Una quidem civilis et moralis secundum virtutem activam morale: altera autem contemplativa divina secundum virtutem morale, consistit in perfecta actione regitivae virtutis et ordinativae, cui nihil desit ad regendum et ordinandum in omni operatione vitae civilis: et haec est prudentia... Haec autem beatitudo secundum regimen et ordinem vitae Christianae a Domino adstruitur, Matth. V. 2 et seq."

<sup>6</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Lucam* 10:24, 46-7: "Aliae est beatitudo contemplativa, quae est secundum actum perfectum virtutis intellectualis in summo contemplationis mirabilissimorum, purissimorum et certissimorum: non retracta, et non impedita, retenta in contemplando delectatione non habente contrarium. Et contemplatio quidem est secundum solum intellectum visio, nihil habentem continui et temporis, sive imaginationis et sensus: quia in illo discurrunt rationes phantasticae, ut dicit Dionysius... Non impedita autem est, quae sic claro contemplantur lumine jam adepti per studium intellectus, quod in naturam conversus habitus non sentit difficultatem."

Augustine, Ambrose and others, brought the Church many good things and no one dwells on the banks [of the depths of wisdom] except those who croak like frogs and have no wisdom.”<sup>7</sup>

Albert offers a similar critique of the philosophers’ deviation from true wisdom in his commentary on Baruch. According to Ruth Meyer, the critique of idolatry present in this apocryphal work provided Albert the opportunity to castigate the moral decline of his contemporaries, while the hymn praising the divine figure of Wisdom in Baruch 3:9-4:4 allowed Albert to outline the specific nature of the knowledge of God available to the prophet (and the Christian theologian) as well as its superiority to other forms of knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Albert, developing what he understands to be Baruch’s critique of the study of philosophy, accordingly maintains in his commentary on Baruch 3: 22-3 that the Canaanites who first discovered the liberal arts,<sup>9</sup> the Themanites who developed the mathematical sciences,<sup>10</sup> and the sons of Hagar who studied physics or natural history, all failed to attain the “wisdom and piety of faith.”<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Albert identifies the giants critiqued in Baruch 3:26 with the “earthly philosophers...like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and certain others... who know war, through the composition of disputation and

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<sup>7</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Lucam* 5:4, 363: “Hoc est altum sapientiae, ubi in abditis habitant sapientes, qui Philosophi vocantur; qui aliquando capti, multa bona Ecclesiae contulerunt: sicut Augustinus, et Ambrosius, et alii. Circa littus autem non habitant nisi rana loquacitatem habentes, et nullam sapientiam.”

<sup>8</sup> Ruth Meyer, “‘Disciplina enim est, qua discitur sapientia’: Albertus Magnus uber die *instructio prophetalis* des Baruch,” in *Kirchenbild und Spiritualität: Dominikanische Beiträge zur Ekklesiologie und zum kirchlichen Leben im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Ulrich Horst OP zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. by Thomas Prügl and Maria Schlosser (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2007), 87-113.

<sup>9</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Baruch* 3:22, in *Opera Omnia XVIII*, ed. by Borgnet, 390: “*Non est audita in terra Chanaan*. Chanaan dicitur tota terra circa Aegyptum, et Aegyptus, ubi liberales scientiae, ut dicit Aristoteles, primitus exstiterunt, et quamvis multa invenerint, tamen fidei sapientiam et pietatem invenire non potuerunt.”

<sup>10</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Baruch* 3:22, ed. Borgnet, 390: “*Neque est in Theman*. Theman *auster* interpretatur, et est terra Esau, in qua magnae exquisitiones fuerunt mathematicarum scientiarum, et tamen hanc pietatis cognitionem non invenerunt.”

<sup>11</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Baruch* 3:22, 390: “*Filii quoque Agar*, qui ex Abrahae stirpe descendunt per ancillam, *qui exquirunt prudentiam que de terra est*, hoc est, de terrenis lucris, vel physicam, vel historiam terrenorum.” It is tempting to see Albert’s understanding of the Hagarenes as the purveyors of natural science in light of his reliance on the Arab Peripatetics. However, in this commentary at least there is no reason to conclude that Albert equates the study of natural science with an *Arabica veritas* which challenges the norms of Latin philosophy even if he is generally critical of the latter in his Aristotelian paraphrases.

the mixture of syllogisms.”<sup>12</sup> He therefore concludes, with Baruch 3:27-8, that “God did not elect them, for God does not pour himself into the summit of understanding,”<sup>13</sup> and that “because they do not possess Wisdom (fortified, that is, by the Christian religion) they perished on account of their folly and are thus called the imprudent people, although they spoke high words of human wisdom.”<sup>14</sup> For Albert the divine science of the Prophets (which is, of course, also that of the Christians) differs from the vain and concupiscent wisdom of the philosophers, which Baruch reveals is nothing more than a departure from true discipline and piety.<sup>15</sup> The divine science of the Christians as a wisdom that transcends that of reason ultimately does so because it is informed by the correct religious disposition.

The commentaries on Luke and Baruch ultimately substantiate Andreas Speer’s claim that Albert, closely following Paul, understands philosophical wisdom or theology as a particular way of life that is foolishness when compared to the wisdom made available to the Christians through divine revelation.<sup>16</sup> While the following will not deal explicitly with the biblical and sacramental aspects of Albert’s systematic theological project this chapter highlights how Albert in two commentaries on the *Corpus Dionysiacum* characterizes Christian theology as that which transcends and confounds philosophical reason. It does so to unpack how Albert rhetorically presents the limits of philosophical wisdom and idolatrous religion in these two texts and

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<sup>12</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Baruch* 3:26, 391-392: “*Ibi furunt gigantes, terreni scilicet Philosophi, de sensu terreno multum habentes, nominate illi, hoc est, signanter nominate de altitudine scientiae, ut Socrates, Plato, Aristoteles, et alii quidem... Scientes bellum, compositione disputationum, et complexione syllogismorum.*”

<sup>13</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Baruch* 3:27, 392: “*Et hos non elegit Dominus. Fastigio enim intellectus non infundit se Dominus.*”

<sup>14</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Baruch* 3:27, 392: “*Et quia non habuerunt sapientiam, religione scilicet fidei munitam, interierunt propter suam insipientiam: et ideo vocantur populus imprudens, quamvis alta verba dixerint humanae sapientiae.*”

<sup>15</sup> For Albert’s presentation of the vanity and cupidity of philosophical wisdom according to Baruch, see Albert the Great, *Super Baruch* 3:17-18, 389.

<sup>16</sup> Andreas Speer, »Göttin der Wissenschaften« - »Torheit vor Gott«: *Albertus Magnus über philosophische und biblische Weisheit* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2018), 23-9.

describes how Albert polices the boundaries between the two theological disciplines in order to establish Christian theology as a divine science with its own manner of speaking and set of fundamental principles distinct from those of the philosopher. This chapter ultimately shows that, for Albert, it is the Christian experience of divine illumination and its associated affective economy that separates Christian theology from the philosophical disciplines, which Albert suggests are fragmentary and liable to err because of the moral turpitude of the philosophers whose scientific habits are intellectually and affectively overdetermined by the created world which distances them from God. In a final section I turn to the work of Albert's student Ulrich of Strasburg, to see how he develops and transforms Albert's arguments about the proper relation between philosophical and Christian divine science in order to constitute and promote a particularly Albertist approach to Christian theology for the other members of the German Dominican School.

*Mystical Theology as a Christian Divine Science according to Dionysius*

The lectures *Super Ethica* which Albert delivered in Cologne at the newly founded Dominican *studium* in the early 1250s offers a useful and programmatic point of entry for my argument about the role of Dionysius in Albert's writing. As is well known, Albert's decision to lecture upon this central work of Peripatetic moral philosophy (newly available in a translation from the Greek by Robert Grosseteste) alongside the Dionysian Corpus at Cologne was a radical departure from the course of theological instruction becoming standard at the universities and is representative of Albert's overall commitment to the Aristotelian tradition he would eventually paraphrase and interpret for his Dominican confrères.<sup>17</sup> In the sixth question of the sixteenth lecture dedicated to Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Albert examines whether

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<sup>17</sup> Walter Senner, "Albertus Magnus als Gründungsregens des Kölner *Studium generale* der Dominikaner," in *Geistesleben im 13. Jahrhundert*, 164.

contemplation—the perfect act of the soul which is most felicitous and delightful according to Aristotle—is the same in philosophy and theology. In the initial arguments of this question Albert suggests that philosophical and theological contemplation are the same.<sup>18</sup> Yet Albert offers two key objections to these claims, which are decisive for his ultimate conclusion that philosophical and theological contemplation are not identical but similar. In the first objection, Albert argues that philosophical contemplation involves an acquired habit whereas the theological occurs through an infused light.<sup>19</sup> In the second, Albert asserts that philosophical contemplation is without wonder, due to Aristotle’s claim from the beginning of the *Metaphysics* that one who is not a geometer wonders at those things which the geometer comprehends.<sup>20</sup> “Yet theological contemplation is with the greatest wonder,” Albert continues, “whence Augustine says that he was not satisfied by contemplating the profundity of the divine plan.”<sup>21</sup> This reference to the account of Augustine’s initial delight after his baptism in *Confessions*, which prefaces his extended treatment of the joy he felt and tears he shed during the hymns and songs introduced by Ambrose into the worship of the Milanese Church, signals that Albert takes a certain affective experience to be central to his definition of Christian theology insofar as it is directed toward Christianity’s contemplative end.

Albert’s solution to this question focuses on the significance of these two arguments, even as he begins by asserting what philosophical and Christian theological contemplation have in

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<sup>18</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, in *Opera Omnia Editio Coloniensis* XIV, ed. by Wilhelm Kübel (Münster: Aschendorff, 1968-87), 774.

<sup>19</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, sed contra, 774: “contemplatio est per habitum acquisitum, sed theologica per lumen infusum; ergo non sunt idem.”

<sup>20</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, sed contra 2, 774: “contemplatio philosophica est non cum admiratione; unde dicitur in PRINCIPIO METAPHYSICAE, de quibus admiratur non-geometer, non admirari geometricam,” citing Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 1.2 983a19-20.

<sup>21</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, sed contra 2, 774: “sed theologica est cum maxima admiratione, unde dicit Augustinus, quod non satiebatur contemplari altitudinem consilii divini,” citing AUGUSTINUS *Confessiones* IX 6.14.

common. Theological contemplation, Albert explains, like the philosophical, is thus “an inspection by the intellect of certain spiritual things, which is ordered toward resting in God, who is the height of felicity, without impediment from the passions on the side of the subject and of doubt on the side of belief.”<sup>22</sup> But they differ in habit, end, and object. They differ in habit, as Albert had already asserted in his objections, because the philosopher contemplates through the acquired habit of wisdom while the theologian’s contemplation is the result of a specific light infused into the contemplative by God alone.<sup>23</sup> In end, however, they differ “because the theologian places their final end in the contemplation of God *in patria* but the philosopher places it in the vision through which God is seen to a restricted degree *in via*.”<sup>24</sup> Finally, they differ in their object, Albert argues, “not so much according to substance as according to mode, because philosophers contemplate God according to how they possess him to some extent as a demonstrative conclusion, but the theologian contemplates him as existing above reason and the intellect.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, the philosopher and the Christian theologian contemplate the same entity—the God who is beyond the limits of merely human thought—in different ways. This leads Albert to conclude that “there is a diverse mode of contemplating, since the philosopher has the certainty of demonstration, which he rests upon, but the theologian rests on the First

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<sup>22</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, resp., 774: “Convenit enim in hoc quod etiam in theologica est inspectio per intellectum aliquorum spiritualium sine impedimento passionum ex parte subiecti et dubietatis ex parte fidei ordinata ad quiescendum in deo, quod est summa felicitas.”

<sup>23</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, resp., 774: “In habitu quidem, quia theologica contemplator per lumen infusum a deo, sed philosophus per habitum sapientiae acquisitum.”

<sup>24</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, resp., 774-75: “in fine, quia theologica ponit ultimum finem in contemplatione dei in patria, sed philosophus in visione, qua videtur aliquatenus in via.”

<sup>25</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, resp., 775: “in obiecto etiam non quantum ad substantiam, sed quantum ad modum, quia philosophus contemplatur deum, secundum quod habet ipsum ut quondam conclusionem demonstrativam, sed theologus contemplatur ipsum ut supra rationem et intellectum existentem.”

Truth itself and not according to reason (even if he may have that) and thus the theologian wonders but not the philosopher.”<sup>26</sup>

What exactly does Albert mean here by wonder? In his *Metaphysica* written sometime between 1264 and 1267 Albert provides a late definition of this affect and its relationship to the philosophical enterprise that builds upon Aristotle’s own and which elucidates what is at stake in his earlier lectures *Super Ethica*.<sup>27</sup> In a chapter meant to determine whether metaphysics as wisdom is a practical or speculative science, Albert argues that its contemplative character is evident because all those who are moved to philosophize, both in the past and in the present, were driven by wonder. Wonder is therefore constitutive of the act of contemplation, a feeling that accompanies and motivates thought itself, a mood or affective orientation which arises because of the desire to comprehend something. Wonder, Albert accordingly explains, is “an agony and suspension of the heart in a stupor of great prodigy after the perception of something apparent so that the heart suffers dilation.”<sup>28</sup> In this way wonder is akin to fear, Albert extrapolates, and represents a movement that the heart undergoes because of a cessation of the desire to know the cause of whatever entity appears before the one engaged in speculative contemplation.<sup>29</sup> Yet the one who wonders, Albert concludes, also seems to be ignorant, “for wonder is the movement of one who does not know proceeding toward what must be examined

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<sup>26</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Ethica* X, lectio 16, q. 6, resp., 775: “Et ideo est diversus modus contemplandi, quia philosophus habet certitudinem demonstrationis, cui innititur, sed theologus innititur primae veritati propter se et non propter rationem, etiamsi habeat ipsam, et ideo theologus miratur, sed non philosophus.”

<sup>27</sup> See Caroline Walker Bynum, “Wonder,” *The American Historical Review* 102 (1997): 1-26 and Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150-1750* (Princeton: Zero Books, 1998), 109-133 on the role wonder plays in medieval Christian philosophy and theology, including important discussion of Albert.

<sup>28</sup> Albert the Great, *Metaphysica* I, tr. 2, cap. 6, in *Opera Omnia Editio Coloniensis XVI*, ed. by Bernhard Geyer (Münster: Aschendorff, 1960-64), 23: “Admirationem autem vocamus agoniam et suspensionem cordis in stupore magni prodigii in sensu apparentis, ita quod cor systole patitur.”

<sup>29</sup> Albert the Great, *Metaphysica* I, tr. 2, cap. 6, 23: “Propter quod etiam admiratio aliquid simile habet timori in motu cordis. Huius igitur motus admirationis in agonia et systole cordis est ex suspensione desiderii ad cognoscendam causam eius quod apparet, prodigii.”

in order that they know the cause of that about which they wonder.”<sup>30</sup> This means that the one who wonders categorically does not yet possess any certain or determined knowledge of that which they seek. They are characterized by their movement toward what must be known rather than their satisfaction with an understanding that has been attained. It is a state of incomprehension, but one which calls for explanation and which encourages inquiry. This is demonstrated, Albert argues, by the fact that a lover of fables is a kind of philosopher, who composes poems about those things which generate wonder in order to excite others to seek knowledge, insofar as poetry is a type of argumentation that is comparable to syllogistic reasoning.<sup>31</sup> Although the tales which those dedicated to the poets composed witness their commitment to error rather than truth, Albert’s main point here is to highlight how wonder directs and has directed the mind toward the causes that underlie whatever is perceived and which are not immediately evident to the senses. And because wonder is the motive force that accompanies the desire to know and a feeling of stupefaction before what cannot readily be comprehended, Albert aligns it in his previous lectures on the *Nicomachean Ethics* with Christian contemplation rather than a philosophy that comes to rest in a demonstrated truth about the divine, where the desire to know God has ostensibly ceased.

It was Albert’s commitment to the *Corpus Dionysiacum* which explains his argument about how philosophical and Christian contemplation ought to be conceived through their

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<sup>30</sup> Albert the Great, *Metaphysica* I, tr. 2, cap. 6, 23: “Qui autem dubitat et admiratur, ignorare videtur; est enim admiratio motus ignorantis procedentis ad inquirendum, ut sciat causam eius de quo miratur.”

<sup>31</sup> Albert the Great, *Metaphysica* I, tr. 2, cap. 6, 23: “Cuius signum est, quia ipse philomythos secundum hunc modum philosophus est, quia fabula sua construitur ab ipso ex mirandis. Dico autem philomython poetam amantem fingere fabulas. Mythos enim, prima product, fabulam sonat, et philomython sonat amatorem fabularum, si penultima producat. Sicut enim in ea parte logicae quae poetica est, ostendit ARISTOTELES, poeta fingit fabulam, ut excitet ad admirandum et quod admiratio ulterius excitet ad inquirendum et sic constat philosophia [...] Sed aliae partes logices modum dant probandi propositum argumentatione perfecta vel imperfecta, poesis autem non, sed modum dat admirandi, per quod excitatur inquirens. Licet ergo quoad mensuram metri poetria sit sub grammatica, tamen quoad intentionem logicae est poesis pars quaedam.”



difference rather than their similarity. As Alain de Libera and Henryk Anzulewicz have each argued, in their own way, this is because Dionysius offered Albert the structural principles that governed both his philosophy and theology.<sup>32</sup> Bernhard Blankenhorn, for this reason, rightly insists against those who have overemphasized Albert's optimistic assessment in his explicitly Aristotelian writings of the union with God, which the philosopher is naturally able to attain, that

Albert's constant emphasis on the grace-nature distinction to explain Dionysian union, the explicitly theological character of his Dionysian commentaries, and the centrality of revealed divine names as the ladder toward union demonstrate the impossibility of reducing Albert's early Cologne mysticism to a philosophical ascent of the mind to God or [the] separate substances *in abstraction from* the Christian mediations of Scripture and the sacraments.<sup>33</sup>

James A. Weisheipl and M. Michèle Mulchahey have amply demonstrated, moreover, that Albert had begun his lectures on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in Cologne after he had already completed his courses on the *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* and *De divinis nominibus* of Dionysius so he must have recognized how Dionysius complemented and corrected the former.<sup>34</sup> In the first chapter of his commentary on the *De mystica theologia*, in the Latin translation by John the Saracen produced during the twelfth century, Albert therefore discusses at length the difference he had articulated in his *Super Ethica* between the contemplation proper to the Christian and that which characterizes the philosopher as it related to the account of mystical theology that Dionysius had composed. Whatever argument Albert developed about the difference between philosophical and

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<sup>32</sup> de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 178-84; Henryk Anzulewicz, "Die Rekonstruktion der Denkstruktur des Albertus Magnus. Skizze und Thesen eines Forschungsprojektes," *Theologie und Glaube* 90 (2000): 602-612.

<sup>33</sup> Bernhard Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God. Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 207. Emphasis present.

<sup>34</sup> M. Michèle Mulchahey, "The Use of Philosophy, especially by the Preachers...": *Albert the Great, the Studium at Cologne, and the Dominican Curriculum* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009), 13-17; James A. Weisheipl, "The Life and Works of Albert the Great," in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences*, 28-30. The lectures on the *De mystica theologia* would have been delivered sometime before he left Cologne in 1254, perhaps after he had completed his lectures on the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Christian contemplation in his lectures on Aristotle must accordingly be situated against his subsequent account of philosophy and description of the philosophers in this Dionysian treatise.

Albert opens his commentary on *De mystica theologia* with a short exegesis of Isaiah 45:15, “Truly God of Israel, the Savior, you are a hidden God,” whose four parts, he claims, signify the form, material, audience, and end of the teaching conveyed by the work. Albert first explains that Christian doctrine, like the Scriptures, which is signified by Isaiah’s “truly,” is “established by undoubtable truth” because “it is not grasped by human arguments, which contain many a mixture of doubts and error, but from divine inspiration, which cannot contain what is false.”<sup>35</sup> The student of this Christian doctrine, on the other hand, who is properly signified by the name “Israel” (which Albert takes to denote “someone most straight or a man who sees God”) must have a twofold perfection according to Albert, if they want to learn or receive the mystical knowledge contained in Dionysius’ treatise. That is, the Christian who wants to access the hidden truths of mystical theology ought to possess “clarity of intellect in order to see God and rectitude in works, through which they are to come to this aforesaid clarity or insight.”<sup>36</sup> Finally, Albert demarcates the goal of this divine science from the disciplines of philosophy. Albert accordingly concludes that

the end of this doctrine is not only that we may know, nor that ‘we may become good’ through works, as in ethics, but that, even further, we may come to that eternal salvation, where what is hidden from us now about God is left behind through negations and may be openly exposed to us without any veil.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii I*, in *Opera Omnia Editio Coloniensis XXXVII*, ed. by Paul Simon (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978), 453: “quae quia non rationibus humanis plurimum dubietatis et erroris mixtum habentibus accipitur, sed divina inspiratione, cui non potest subesse falsum, indubitata veritate firmatur.”

<sup>36</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii I*, 453: “‘Israel’, quod interpretatur ‘rectissimus’ et ‘vir videns deum’. Unde ostenditur duplex perfectio, quae requiritur in auditore huius scientiae, scilicet limpeditas intellectus ad videndum deum et rectitudo operis, per quam ad dictam limpeditatem vel acumen devenitur.”

<sup>37</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii I*, 454: “Non enim finis huius doctrinae est tantum, ut sciamus nequae ut solum per opera ‘boni fiamus’, sicut in ethicis, sed ut ulterius ad aeternam salutem perveniamur, in qua quod hic occultum de deo nobis relinquatur per negationes, sine aliquo velamine et aperte nobis obiciatur.”

The parameters that Albert lays out here—that mystical theology’s truth lies beyond a human reason capable of producing error, that the auditor should stand in intellectual and moral rectitude, and that mystical doctrine is directed toward the attainment of eternal salvation and not just the speculative and practical goals of apodictic knowledge and moral perfection—explicitly establish how the ultimate end of Christian mystical theology ought to be differentiated from that of the philosophers. And it is these strictures which I shall attend to in the following analysis to the extent that they relate to Albert’s attempt to specify, following Dionysius, how philosophy differs from Christianity.

Albert also outlines at the outset of his commentary, however, another important way that such mystical doctrine differs from all the other sciences in its fundamental principles. Albert explains that whereas “a science which proceeds from the principles of reason openly lays out the things to which it leads”—i.e, involves a syllogistic or symbolic way of speaking that aims to affirm or disclose demonstrably and rhetorically a truth that is properly hidden—“doctrine of this kind [i.e, the mystical] does not proceed from such principles.” Instead, mystical doctrine ensues “from a certain divine light, which is not an enunciation by which something is positively asserted [i.e, a syllogism], but something that convinces the intellect so that the intellect adheres to it [i.e, the light] above all things.”<sup>38</sup> That which conveys the principles that inform and ground Christian truth, Albert determines, is not a mode of argumentation or even a way of speaking but a real entity or force that enters into the theologian. This divine light, Albert adds, also leaves the intellect in a state quite different from the determined knowledge that demonstrative reasoning

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<sup>38</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 455: “scientia, quae procedit ex principiis rationis, ponit in aperto ea ad quae ducit. Huiusmodi autem doctrina non procedit ex talibus principiis, sed potius ex quodam lumine divino, quod non est enuntiatio, per quam aliquid affirmetur, sed res quaedam convincens intellectum, ut sibi super omnia adhaereatur.”

produces insofar as it lifts the mind up to what lies beyond its grasp.<sup>39</sup> Albert therefore argues that a mystical teaching like that which Dionysius describes is produced by a specific kind of illumination by a real divine light that operates in a way comparable to but different from the demonstrative work a syllogistic procedure is supposed to effect. In other words, this is an understanding of divine things that is given to the knower rather than a knowledge that simply advances toward God by means of an argumentative procedure. This is also why the divine light, Albert ultimately suggests, is more like the material light that enables bodily vision by illuminating all that is sensible, since it cannot produce any determinate knowledge of what is visible because it lacks a proper species or visible form, than it is like the light of reason, which produces a specific understanding of the particular concept it illuminates.<sup>40</sup>

The fact that Christian contemplation is grounded in the reception of and participation in the divine light leads Albert to briefly meditate on the importance of prayer prior to any theological instruction. This is because “divine truth surpasses our reason” and “we are not able to manifest it by ourselves unless it deigns to pour itself out into us.”<sup>41</sup> Key here is Albert’s insistence that without divine help complete theological knowledge is unattainable. Albert thus identifies the divine light that conveys mystical theology with the interior teacher that Augustine had identified in his *De magistro* with Christ, the divine Logos and Wisdom who certifies and authorizes the truth received from any exterior instruction according to the hearer’s capacity to

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<sup>39</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 455: “Et ideo elevat intellectum ad id quod excedit ipsum, propter quod remanet intellectus in quodam non determinate noto.”

<sup>40</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 455: “Et hoc lumen proportionatur lumini, quo corporalis visus confortatur ad videndum, quod tamen non facit alicuius visibilis determinatam cognitionem, cum nullius species propria sit. Lumen autem principiorum rationis assimilatur magis ipsis speciebus propriis rerum visibilium, quibus visus determinate apprehendit hoc vel illud; et ideo ducunt in determinatam cognitionem rei.”

<sup>41</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 456: “et huius ratio est, quia cum divina veritas superesset nostrum rationem, nos ex nobis eam manifestare non possumus, nisi ipsa se dignetur infundere.”

receive him.<sup>42</sup> Yet Albert insists that external instruction itself remains necessary. He defines such teaching as “an instrument,” like the tongue in Psalm 44:2 that is called the pen of a scribe, “which thrusts itself into the soul of the hearer by means of utterances signifying what is true or false.”<sup>43</sup> Exterior instruction by way of speech (i.e, by means of syllogistic demonstration or theological affirmation and negation) ultimately pertains to the relationship between master and student, according to Albert, while entreaty or supplication instead relates to the student’s direct relationship with God and, thus, their individual capacity for holiness as reception of the divine light that certifies the theological truth enunciated in the student’s lesson.<sup>44</sup> Yet one cannot necessarily find here a means to *definitively* distinguish between a prayerful or petitionary mode of speaking proper to Christian theology and a demonstrative divine science that pertains to the philosopher alone, and Albert himself does not seem to imply such an argument here.<sup>45</sup> In fact, Albert acknowledged in his later *De intellectu* that the philosophers purified and perfected their own knowledge through supplications in order to conjoin and assimilate the light of their own intellects to the superior light of the separate intelligences, which introduce the light of divine

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Augustine, *De magistro* 11.38 in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* 29, ed. by W. M. Green and K. D. Daur (Turnhout: Brepols, 1970), 195: “De uniuersis autem, quae intellegimus, non loquentem, qui personat foris, sed intus ipsi menti praesidentem consulimus ueritatem, uerbis fortasse ut consulamus admoniti. Ille autem, qui consulitur, docet, qui in interiore homine habitare dictus est christus, id est incommutabilis dei uirtus atque sempiterna sapientia, quam quidem omnis rationalis anima consulit, sed tantum cuique panditur, quantum capere propter propriam siue malam siue bonam uoluntatem potest.”

<sup>43</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 456: “Nec tamen superflua est doctrina exterior, quae est sicut instrumentum, sicut dicitur in PSALMO (XLIV, 2): Lingua mea calamus scribae’, quae se exserit in anima auditoris per orationes significantes uerum uel falsum.”

<sup>44</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 456: “Et ideo propter utrumque magistrum utrumque necessarium est, et enuntiatio, quae respicit ordinem magistri ad discipulum, et deprecatio”; Albert the Great, *Super mystica theologia* I 456, 13-17: “doctrina debet procedure a magistro in discipulum; sed ueritas per orationem impetrate aequaliter posttest se habere ad magistrum et discipulum, qui non respicit ordinem magisterii, sed magis ordinem sanctitatis.”

<sup>45</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. by Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 129-62 seeks to define Christian mystical theology as described by Dionysius as a prayerful and de-nominative mode of speaking that pragmatically directs the Christian toward God without predicating anything of God and, hence, reducing the divine to the being of Thingness. Although this is a sophisticated and compelling account of the mystical theological operation in the *De mystica theologia* it does not seem to capture Albert’s own understanding of mystical theology, which is more akin to a syllogistic procedure.

understanding into man as microcosm.<sup>46</sup> In other words, the philosophers were equally as religious in their vocations as the Christian theologians, even if their philosophical theology and religion were not as complete or perfect as the latter.

This difference between interior and exterior instruction relates to a further difference that Albert draws in the following section of his commentary, where he attends directly to the supplicatory prayer that opens Dionysius' *De mystica theologia* itself:

Super-substantial Trinity! Both beyond God and the supremely good custodian of the divine wisdom of the Christians! Direct us to the super unknown, the super-resplendent and most sublime peak of the mystical utterances, where the most simple, absolute and unchangeable mysteries of theology have been concealed according to the super-resplendent darkness of a silence that secretly instructs!<sup>47</sup>

In a direct gloss clarifying the precise meaning of Dionysius' words, Albert explains that Dionysius in his prayer had specified "the divine wisdom of the Christians" so as "to differentiate it from the divine science about God that even the philosophers held, which was mixed with many errors on account of the feebleness of human reason."<sup>48</sup> Continuing on to a consideration of the actual instruction that follows this opening prayer, which Dionysius had composed for his disciple Timothy, the companion of Paul, who was the supposed recipient of the *De mystica theologia*, Albert explains that a Christian "ought to rise up to the imitation of the God who is above all being and knowledge, insofar as a mind actually imitates God when the image of God is reformed by the habit of grace or glory."<sup>49</sup> Such an imitation is a union with

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<sup>46</sup> Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.1.9, 516: "Tertius autem est, quo manifestatur in lumine agentis universaliter in ordine minoris mundi. Illi enim conjungitur, non sicut lumen tenebris vel privationi vel potentiae, sed potius sicut lumen lumini inferioris ordinis: et secundum quod plus conjungitur et limpidius ea ponens in intellectum possibilem: et haec est irradiatione de qua multum locuti sunt Philosophi, et ordinaverunt propter illam supplicationes et orationes."

<sup>47</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De mystica theologiae* PL .

<sup>48</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 457: "Et dicit 'Christianorum' ad differentiam scientiae divinae, quam de deo philosophi etiam habuerunt, quae plurimis erroribus mixta fuit propter imbecillitatem rationis humanae."

<sup>49</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 457: "et sic debet consurgere ad imitationem dei, qui est super omnem substantiam et cognitionem, secundum quod mens, in qua est imago reformata per habitum gloriae vel gratiae, actu deum imitatur."

God, as the alternate translation of the *De mystica theologia* by Eriugena confirms, which involves a “rise to unity or simplicity,” where the contemplative “who is conducted up on high according to the ray of divine darkness... unrestrainedly goes out of himself, as if he does not hold himself back among the principles of reason.”<sup>50</sup> The theology of the Christians, which is directed toward complete union with God and not just knowledge about God, “is the total perfection of divine science [and] requires a greater perfection in the hearer,” calls the theologian to “give up the intellectual operations that are connatural to us,” and confirms that “the power [of the mind] can be extended above itself insofar as it is carried over to an object that is elevated above it.”<sup>51</sup> To the extent that Christian contemplatives relinquish everything, according to Albert, they consequently attain God in another way and their mind is both deified and illuminated, even if they actually fail to adequately comprehend the divine majesty.<sup>52</sup>

After clarifying this point Albert proceeds to interpret Dionysius’ instructions to Timothy to keep Christian theological instruction a secret, and hence to explain why not only philosophers but also idolaters must not partake of the mystical instruction proper to Christians alone. Only after Albert has specified the nature of Christian contemplation itself does he work to exclude philosophers and idolaters from the theological community that the divine light assembles. The philosophers, Albert begins, are “unlearned” according to Dionysius since “they believe that

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<sup>50</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 457: “ALIA LITTERA: unionem, ut scilicet deo uniat: et haec concordat ALII TRANSLATIONI, quae habet unitatem, idest simplicitatem –, et sic sursum agatur ad radium divinarum tenebrarum [...] excedendo seipsum irretentibiliter, quasi non retinendo se intra principia rationis.” The force of the “quasi” here is significant as Albert does not claim that Christian ecstasy eliminates the need to deploy syllogisms. Rather, his argument seems to imply that the syllogisms the theologian deploys rationally have been subordinated to a higher disposition the theologian now inhabits *as if* they are no longer necessary.

<sup>51</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458: “Et ideo haec est tota perfectio divinae scientiae; unde requiritur maior perfectio in auditore... monet relinquere intellectuales operationes connaturales nobis... sed virtus sua potest extendi supra ipsum, in quantum fertur in obiectum, quod est elevatum ab ipso.”

<sup>52</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 457: “deficiamus a comprehensione divinae eminentiae, tamen ex hoc quod attingimus aliquantulum ipsam relictis omnibus, mens deificatur et illuminatur.”

nothing exists super-substantially above beings, that is, exist without some proportion to what exists.” This is because they are “affectively and intellectually formed by those things that exist, by which we attain knowledge.”<sup>53</sup> This led the philosophers to assert, Albert continues, “that the first mover is proportioned to the first thing moved” and “to suppose that they are able to know [...] God by that knowledge which is their own, that is, through rational principles.”<sup>54</sup> As Alain de Libera notes, Albert accuses the philosophers here of enframing the divine within being by reducing God to the mere fact of His existence and consequently implies that their speculative approach, as metaphysical or onto-theological, cannot conceive of a transcendent God irreducible to the dictates of reason and radically separate from what He created.<sup>55</sup> The philosophers’ affective and intellectual lives are entirely overdetermined by the world of apparent being and hence they may only correlate what exists with what can be known. This is an error that had even been attributed to Augustine, Albert reports, who supposedly “wanted, while swollen with conceit by an inane philosophy, to comprehend with human reason what a pious mind labors to apprehend with the vigor of faith.”<sup>56</sup> By indicating that Augustine was seen to be guilty of theologizing through reason alone at one point—presumably during the Manichaean or Academic periods prior to his full conversion to Christianity—Albert indicates

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<sup>53</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458: “Dicit enim illos indoctos qui, cum sint informati et secundum affectum et secundum intellectum extentibus, a quibus scientiam accipimus, nihil credunt esse super entia supersubstantialiter, idest sine proportione ad ipsa.”

<sup>54</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458: “Unde etiam PHILOSOPHI dicunt, quod motor primus est proportionatus mobile primo; sed putant se posse scire [...] deum, ea cognitione quae est secundum ipsos, idest per principia rationis.”

<sup>55</sup> de Libera, *Raison et Foi*, 283-86 and de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 61-74. In this regard, it is significant that Albert will open his *Metaphysica* with a digression that argues that God, although the creator and cause of all, is not strictly speaking the subject of first philosophy, which investigates instead being qua being, defined following the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de causis* as the first thing created by God. By onto-theology I refer to that metaphysical orientation diagnosed by Heidegger that reduces being to an object that is ready to hand for technical use or consideration by framing it as some thing.

<sup>56</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458: “sicut dicitur de AUGUSTINO, quod tumens inani philosophia volebat humana ratione comprehendere, quod pia mens vivacitate fidei nititur apprehendere.”



how philosophical speculation divorced from faith and based purely on human reason without divine illumination is by definition “impious.” Evidently Albert, following Dionysius, considers these arguments sufficient grounds to forbid philosophers from partaking of Christian instruction, seeing as they are not adequately prepared to open themselves up to a knowledge that goes beyond their own.

Yet Albert qualifies his criticism of the philosophers by highlighting two difficulties presented by the words of Dionysius. First, Albert asks why these philosophers should not be instructed in the mystical theology of the Christians as this forecloses in advance any attempt to correct their errors.<sup>57</sup> He then acknowledges, following Aristotle, that many people act in ways that contradict their knowledge and that nothing suggests that those whose understanding and affect are shaped solely by existing things should not be instructed how to think otherwise.<sup>58</sup> Albert replies to these difficulties by insisting “that divine things are not received through rational principles but in a certain experience through ‘compassion toward them,’ as Dionysius says about Hierotheus, who acquired knowledge of the divine things ‘by suffering the divine.’”<sup>59</sup> By evoking once again Eriugena’s translation of Dionysius’ text, Albert therefore explicitly identifies the difference between philosophical practice and the experience that founds and grounds Christian contemplation as primarily *affective*. The Christian suffers or is moved by God through the influx of a divine light, Albert declares, and not only by the world of existing things

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<sup>57</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458: “Sed videtur, quod isti qui non sic sunt formati secundum existentia, sint iam docti, et docti non sunt docendi, et ita videtur, quod potius eos qui sunt formati, docere debeat.”

<sup>58</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458: “Praeterea, sicut dicit PHILOSOPHUS, multi sunt scientes et contraria operantes; ergo nihil prohibet aliquos posse scire divina, quamvis sint secundum affectum existentibus formati.”

<sup>59</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458: “Dicendum, quod divina non accipiuntur per principia rationis, sed quodam experimento per ‘compassionem ad ipsa’, sicut de HIEROTHEO dicit DIONYSIUS, quod didicit divina ‘patiendi divina.’” See Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God*, 94-7 and 201-3 who argues that Hierotheus represents the privileged model that the scholastic theologian is called to emulate in Albert’s Dionysian commentaries.

or the discursive reason that affect or drive the philosopher. Just as he had suggested in his lectures *Super Ethica* that the philosopher's contemplation is limited insofar as it lacks the wonder which accompanies the contemplation of the Christian theologian, Albert here emphasizes how the experience of God available to the Christian orients them toward a truth and an affective state beyond the philosopher's grasp.

This brief mention of Hierotheus thus led Albert to an important conclusion that has significant implications for his view of those philosophers who do not share in the fundamentally Christian experience of suffering or receiving God that Dionysius describes. "If the affect is infected by the illicit love of things," Albert argues, "it does not feel the sweetness of divine inspiration."<sup>60</sup> This means, Albert continues, that any knowledge lacking this experience, "although able to form syllogisms and enunciate propositions, does not have the real knowledge which is a part of beatitude."<sup>61</sup> In other words, Christian theology differs from the divine science of the philosophers not only because its subject exceeds metaphysics, but also because it is grounded in and moved by a divinely given experience that conveys beatifying knowledge. The Christians, unlike the "unlearned" philosophers, are consequently those "who are prepared for divine instruction by being affectively and intellectually purged of errors and concupiscence."<sup>62</sup> Paradigmatically, Christians are those who are no longer emotionally and noetically determined by the world or reason alone because they receive that which lies beyond their limits and which cannot be adequately reduced to the experience or knowledge that they enable. Philosophers and

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<sup>60</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458: "Sed affectus infectus illicito rerum amore non sentit dulcedinem divinae inspirationis."

<sup>61</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458: "et ideo deficiente cognitione, quae est per experimentum, potest quidem formare syllogismos et dicere propositiones, sed realem scientiam non habet, quae est pars beatitudinis."

<sup>62</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii*, I, 458: "illi qui sunt praeparati ad divinam doctrinam per purgationem affectus et intellectus ab erroribus et concupiscentiis."

Christians differ not only because of what they know, according to Albert, but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, because of what and how they feel.

*Christian Theology as a Practical Science according to Piety*

Albert had already explained what this affective understanding of Christian theology entailed prior to the delivery of his lectures on the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *De mystica theologia* in his commentary on the first book of Peter Lombard's *Liber Sententiarum* which he began while *magister in actu regens* at the University of Paris in the 1240s. In fact, as Christian Trottman has explained in an important study, attending to Albert's understanding of the beatifying end particular to Christian theology Albert describes in this work clarifies the limits he sought to impose on the philosophical perfection he described elsewhere.<sup>63</sup> In a question that sought to determine whether theology is primarily speculative or practical—comparable to that he had raised in his *Metaphysica* which I discussed above—Albert asserts that the answer to this question must be solved based on the specific end of Christian theology, which he identifies by citing the beginning of the Epistle of Titus, where the Apostle Paul addresses his disciple “in acknowledgment of the truth, which is according to piety, in the hope of everlasting life.”<sup>64</sup> Albert explains, citing the *Glossa Ordinaria*, that the piety mentioned here signifies “the religion of Christ” and is introduced by Paul “because there is truth in the liberal arts, but these do not pertain to the Christian religion.”<sup>65</sup> But the truth which is according to piety, Albert explains, is twofold:

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<sup>63</sup> Christian Trottman, “La théologie comme pieuse science visant la béatitude selon Albert le Grand,” *Revue Thomiste* 98 (1998): 387-410.

<sup>64</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum, Distinctiones 1-3*, dist.1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., in *Opera Omnia Editio Coloniensis XXIX* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2015), 14: “Dico quod ista scientia ex fine determinanda est. Finis autem dicitur ad TIT. 1 (1sq.), ubi dicitur: ‘In agnitionem veritatis, quae secundum pietatem est, in spem vitae aeternae.’”

<sup>65</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum*, dist.1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., 14: “et ibi dicit GLOSSA: ‘secundum pietatem, idest Christi religionem, et hoc ideo dicit, quia ‘est veritatis in liberalibus artibus, sed quae nihil pertinent ad christianam religionem.’”

There is one truth, namely, according to the cult of God in itself and in its members, to which everything advancing that cult pertains, and another that is the end of its intention, and this is to conjoin through intellect, affect and substance with that which is worshiped, insofar as this is the end that beatifies. And, therefore, this science [i.e, Christian theology] strictly speaking is affective, that is, it is of a truth which is not separated from the principle of the good and it thus perfects both the intellect and the affect.<sup>66</sup>

Albert's consideration of piety as religious disposition or habit in his response to this question is accordingly differentiated into a description of its true practice and the true end that this practice is meant to cultivate or realize. He consequently claims that the beatifying end revealed to Christian piety "is not found in created things and thus the philosophers have not discussed science in this way, but divided it into one science directed to the truth which is in things and another which is directed toward the good which is in themselves."<sup>67</sup> Whereas Christian theology in its properly religious orientation holds the aims of metaphysics and ethics together while also going beyond them, Albert argues that the philosophers atomize these into separate disciplines, one that is primarily speculative and another which is ultimately practical, predicated on their belief that being is divine and the good is human. But Christian theology, Albert concludes, not only conjoins the theologian intellectually to what is true, but also orders the intellect toward a specific affect as toward an end, namely desire for eternal life as well as the commitment to seek it, because it recognizes that the divine is the true source of what is good.<sup>68</sup> The philosophers, by

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<sup>66</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum*, dist.1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., 14: "unum scilicet secundum pietatem cultus dei in se et in membris, ad quod pertinent omnia promoventia cultum illum; alterum autem est finis intentionis, et hic est coniungi intellectu et affectu et substantia cum eo qui colitur, prout est finis beatificans; et ideo ista scientia proprie est affectiva, idest veritatis, quae non sequestratur a ratione boni, et ideo perficit et intellectum et affectum."

<sup>67</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum*, dist.1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., 14: "Talis autem finis in rebus creatis non invenitur, et ideo philosophi non tractaverunt huiusmodi scientiam, sed dividerunt unum ad verum, quod est in rebus, aliam autem ad bonum, quod est in ipsis."

<sup>68</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum*, dist.1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad. 2, 14: "quod non quaeritur coniunctio ad veritatem per intellectum tantum, sed etiam per affectum et substantiam; et ideo non est intellectiva sed affectiva, quia intellectus ordinatur ad affectum ut ad finem." On Albert's understanding of the Good see Henryk Anzulewicz, "'Bonum' als Schlüsselbegriff bei Albertus Magnus," in *Albertus Magnus. Zum Gedenken nach 800 Jahren: Neue Zugänge, Aspekte und Perspektiven*, ed. by Walter Senner (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), 113-40.

contrast, separate out the speculative and practical dimension of religion that Christianity unifies and hence their piety is fragmentary and cannot attain the completely beatifying end available to Christians alone. The implication here is that the philosopher can be demonstratively correct while remaining an impious person and that the practical and speculative ends that the philosopher pursues cannot prepare them to reach God even if they do allow one to become virtuous or to understand the world.

This affective definition of Christian theology enables Albert to respond to a number of problems posed by the speculative and practical sciences of the philosophers. First, Albert identifies Christian theology specifically with wisdom insofar as it deals with the highest thing, God, according to the highest way, the principles of faith.<sup>69</sup> However, Albert continues, “the other wisdoms which the philosophers invented, even if these can be called wisdom insofar as they are about the highest things, nevertheless are not according to the highest way [i.e, faith] but rather through principles which are subject to reason.”<sup>70</sup> Albert concludes from this, in an attempt to specify and demarcate the exact role of the liberal arts, that only the Christian religion is properly free or at least freer than the other sciences, because like a person who is free “it is for its own sake and not because of another.”<sup>71</sup> This is so, Albert concludes, because the beatifying end sought in it—“the God whom everyone desires to know”—is desired for itself alone and not because of some other thing.<sup>72</sup> Albert also insists that Christian theology as a practical science is

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<sup>69</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum*, dist.1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad. 1, 14: “dicendum quod ista scientia principalissime dicitur sapientia, eo quod ipsa est de altissimis et altissimo modo, quia de deo et per principia fidei.”

<sup>70</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum*, dist.1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad. 1, 14: “aliae autem sapientiae, quae a philosophis sunt inventae, et si sapientiae dicantur, quia sunt de altis, non tamen sunt altissimo modo, sed potius per principia, quae sub ratione sunt.”

<sup>71</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum*, dist.1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad. 1, 14: “Sic dico etiam quod ipsa sola libera est vel aliis liberior...sicut dicitur homo liber, scilicet quia gratia sui et non propter alterum est,” citing Aristotle, *Metaphysica* L.1.2 (982b25).

<sup>72</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum*, *Distinctiones 1-3*, dist.1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad. 1, 14: “Et hoc est propter scitum, quod quaeritur in illa, quod per se desideratum est. Hoc autem praecipue deus est, quem

not, nor should be subordinated to, moral philosophy, because the habits that ethics produce are not theology's ultimate goal.<sup>73</sup> Hence ethics is one of the many sciences that serve Christian piety, which "has its own principles of faith and its own causes according to its focus on merit."<sup>74</sup> Philosophical metaphysics and ethics can only work beneath a Christian theology that transcends them. They are subalternate sciences in the classically Aristotelian sense, whose goals and principles are used by the superior science that they serve but which cannot attain the end of that science, although they may assume it. Hence, even if they can possess a limited autonomy according to Albert, metaphysics and ethics ultimately lack the capacity to fully articulate the Truth and attain the Good without some correction from the hegemonic force that Christian theology exerts over them, insofar as it is the only divine science that can save.

In one of his final writings, the incomplete *Summa theologiae sive de mirabili scientia Dei* ("On the Wonderful Science of God"), composed in Cologne between 1268 and 1274, with the assistance of his secretary Gottfried of Duisburg,<sup>75</sup> Albert further unpacks how Christian theology as an affective science differs from moral philosophy. By doing so, Albert produces a definition of Christian theology that Burkhard Mojsisch has called "quasi-ethical."<sup>76</sup> Albert argues in his *Summa theologiae* that theology is comparable to ethics because it treats the

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omnes scire scientia beatificante desiderant et ideo libera est, quia hoc scitum non quaeritur propter aliud, sed propter se."

<sup>73</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum, Distinctiones 1-3*, dist.1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad. 3, 15: "Nec tamen sequitur quod ipsa sit moralis philosophia vel illi subalternata; moralis non est, quia mores non sunt ultimus finis in ea, ut HABITUM EST."

<sup>74</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum, Distinctiones 1-3*, dist.1, cap. 1, q. 3, sol., ad. 3, 15: "sed ista scientia non accipit ab aliqua, sed propria habet principia fidei et proprias causas secundum intentionem meriti, et ideo non accipit ab aliis, sed aliae famulantur ei."

<sup>75</sup> The authenticity of this text had for a long time been the subject of scholarly debate, but the attribution of its first book to Albert has been convincingly demonstrated by R. Wielockx, "Zur 'Summa Theologiae' des Albertus Magnus," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanenses* 66 (1990): 78-110. Nevertheless, it is possible that doctrinal positions which had become important in the work of Albert's students may have been introduced into the *Summa theologiae* by Gottfried and the other companions who assisted Albert with his writing during his final days in Cologne. I thank Constant Mews for suggesting this possibility when he drew this issue to my attention.

<sup>76</sup> Burkhard Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity, and Unity*, trans. Orrin F. Summerell (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 2001), 17.

experience of the supernatural virtues outlined in scripture, whereas the other is a practical science that habituates a person to the natural virtues. In consequence, Albert argues in an explicitly Augustinian manner that

in truth holy scripture is practical and consists of the work of either the theological or cardinal virtues, because, even if [theology] seeks the truth in an enjoyable or useful thing, [scripture] itself relates to the affect, so that one delights in the highest Truth through the affect or the affective understanding, either in faith or in those things that follow faith, in the highest Beatifier through hope or by following hope, in the highest Good through love.<sup>77</sup>

If Christian theology investigates the true nature of reality, it only does so, Albert claims, as a means to confirm what has been revealed within scripture so that the theologian may delight in God through the cardinal virtues of faith, hope and love. Albert insists for this reason that theology is distinct from ethics since “the other practical sciences consist in a work completed with the perfection of acquired virtue, but [theology] consists in a work completed with the perfection of virtue infused through grace.”<sup>78</sup> The light that unites the Christian theologian to God in contemplation, according to Albert, subsequently perfects the theologian so that they also delight in the practice of the virtue that is directed toward God as ultimate end by instituting a difference between virtues that are acquired by human effort and those that are granted or infused by God. Just as he had done in his commentary on the *Liber Sententiarum*, Albert in the *Summa theologiae* subordinates the goal of ethics to the higher beatitude that is specifically Christian.

In a question dedicated to whether beatitude is adequately described by Aristotle in his commentary on distinction 49 of Lombard’s *IV Sententiarum*, recently analyzed by Katja Krause,

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<sup>77</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.1.3.3. resp., 13: “in veritate sacra scriptura practica est et stat in opera virtutis vel theologiae vel cardinalis, quia si etiam verum in re fruibili vel utili inquirat, hoc ipsum refert ad affectum, ut scilicet in fide vel in eo quod succedit fidei, fruatur per affectum vel intellectum affectivum summa veritate, per spem vel spei succedens summo beatificante, per caritatem summa bonitate.”

<sup>78</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.1.3.3. resp., 13: “Differt autem ab aliis practicis, quas philosophi considerant; aliae enim practicae stant ad opus perfectum perfectione virtutis acquisitae, ista autem stat ad opus perfectum perfectione virtutis infusae per gratiam.”

Albert aims to further specify this difference or seeming discontinuity between moral philosophy and Christian theology.<sup>79</sup> Likely composed sometime in 1248, it represents a significant moment in the development of Albert's thinking about this issue, as he draws upon the arguments of the *Nicomachean Ethics* for the very first time in order to demonstrate how the felicity granted by philosophical contemplation does not attain the beatitude which alone is properly Christian. Albert accordingly contrasts Aristotle's claim that "felicity or beatitude is an act or activity according to a perfect virtue of the soul" with Boethius' argument from the *De consolatioe philosophiae* that "beatitudo is a state perfected through the gathering together of every good" to establish precisely how the philosophers defined the final goal of contemplation.<sup>80</sup> In his solution Albert insists that beatitude is a state that can be defined in several analogical rather than equivocal ways according to how what is prior relates to what is posterior, as well as according to how it names a state of human perfection either *in via* or *in patria*.<sup>81</sup> Aristotle's definition of beatitude in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Albert therefore explains, concerns moral and intellectual perfection but only refers to the felicity that occurs in this life rather than the one that takes place in heaven.<sup>82</sup> Boethius, on the other hand, offers a definition of beatitude that describes the perfection that takes place after this life, and hence Albert concludes that such beatitude "is to

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<sup>79</sup> Katja Krause, "Albert and Aquinas on the Ultimate End of Humans: Philosophy, Theology, and Beatitude," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 86 (2013): 219-21.

<sup>80</sup> Albert the Great, *Commentarii in IV Sententiarum*, dist. 49, B, a. 6, ad. 1, in *Opera Omnia* XXIX, ed. by August Borgnet, 672: "Primo Aristotelis diffinitio, quae in primo *Ethicorum* continetur sic: "Felicitas sive beatitudo est actus sive operatio secundum perfectam animi;" *Ibid*, dist. 49, B, a. 6, ad. 8, p. 673: "Sed Boetius aliter videtur diffinire dicens, quod "beatitudo est status omnium bonorum aggregation perfectus."

<sup>81</sup> Albert the Great, *Commentarii in IV Sententiarum*, dist. 49, B, a. 6, sol, 674: "Ad haec solvenda praenotandum est, quod beatitudo, dicitur multipliciter, et non aeqivoce, sed secundum prius et posterius. Dicitur autem secundum statum perfectionis viae, et secundum statum perfectionis patriae."

<sup>82</sup> Albert the Great, *Commentarii in IV Sententiarum*, dist. 49, B, a. 6, sol, ad. 1, 675: "Dicendum enim ad primum, quod perfectionem viae contingit habere in via, et ad quaedam, licet non ad omnia, sicut ad felicitatem morale, vel contemplativam, licet non ad felicitatem patriae."



inhere in God and to possess in Him all those things which are sought after.”<sup>83</sup> If Aristotle describes accurately how the philosopher may attain moral and intellectual perfection, Albert therefore concludes that the Christian alone may inhere in God Himself through a heavenly beatitude that transcends and is thus logically prior to the philosophical felicity that lies beneath it. The contemplative beatitude enjoyed by the philosophy on the way to God only provides a felicity that is *not quite* the full enjoyment which awaits the Christian in the life to come even if it is similar to it.

The nature of this divine inherence had been described by Albert much earlier in the second chapter dedicated to the first distinction of Lombard’s *I Sententiarum*, where he insists that beatitude is attained primarily through the love of God.<sup>84</sup> Albert does so in response to Augustine’s claims from the *De doctrina Christiana* that “those things which are to be enjoyed make us blessed” and “to enjoy something for its own sake is to inhere in it by means of love,” which the Lombard had introduced as part of his own account of the relationship between the use and enjoyment of signs and things according to Christian theology. Albert in his solution to this question determines that “it must be said [...] that to enjoy is an act of the affect that follows an act of understanding [...] and I call the will ‘affect’ and this is the highest power of the soul, because the soul’s joy is perfected in it as in what’s completed and the entire affect is quietened.”<sup>85</sup> Such joy, Albert continues, is also not grasped so that one may simply remain in

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<sup>83</sup> Albert the Great, *Commentarii in IV Sententiarum*, dist. 49, B, a. 6, sol, ad. 1, 675: “Dicendum enim ad primum, quod perfectionem viae contingit habere in via, et ad quaedam, licet non ad omnia, sicut ad felicitatem morale, vel contemplativam, licet non ad felicitatem patriae.”

<sup>84</sup> I owe my recognition of the importance of the relationship between Albert’s two discussions of beatitude in his commentary on the *Sententiarum* to Meghan Duke, who demonstrated how they inform each other in a paper titled “Understanding Theology in Light of Beatitude: Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas on Theology, Vision and Beatitude” delivered at the *Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance Studies Conference* held at Villanova University, Oct 15-17, 2021.

<sup>85</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum, Distinctiones 1-3*, dist.1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol, ad. 1, 23: “Dicendum [...] quod frui est actus affectus sequentis actum intellectus [...] Et voco affectum voluntatem, et haec est vis altissima animae, quia in illa ut in completivo perficitur gaudium eius et quietatur totus affectus.”

speculation, which cannot provide the inherence attained in beatitude, since, even if the intellect itself is placed in a higher part of the soul, for the Christian it is accompanied by volition and the perfection of inherence.<sup>86</sup> The Christian who contemplates God must therefore go further than mere speculation and proceed to full enjoyment. This is also why Albert grants that inherence and joy do not belong to the conceptualizing activity of the intellect but must be defined according to the habit of the will insofar as the will perfects the conception of the intellect in enjoyment.<sup>87</sup> Despite Albert's overall commitment to Peripatetic epistemology and the "intellectualist" interpretation of Dionysius which arose from it—a commitment that is often positioned as a characteristically Dominican aspect of his thought—his arguments here are more in line with those of the early Franciscan tradition represented by Alexander of Hales, Eudes Rigaud and Bonaventure.<sup>88</sup> Albert's emphasis on the co-operation between the will and the intellect which is characteristic of beatitude and his insistence that Christian theology is primarily affective and practical may therefore complicate narratives which seek to distinguish sharply between Franciscan and Dominican scholastic approaches to theology, at least in their formative stages, even if it is true that Albert was ultimately much less critical of Aristotelian philosophy than his Franciscan contemporaries.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum, Distinctiones 1-3*, dist.1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol, ad. 1, 23: "Verum enim non accipitur ut tantum in speculatione remaneat, quia speculatio de se non ponit inhaesionem, sed potest esse per distantiam rei a speculante, sed fructus ponit unionem et gustum dulcedinis substantialis interius in rei complexione et natura fundatae, et ideo licet intellectus sit in altiori parte animae, non tamen solus est ibi sed etiam voluntas, et perfectio inhaesionis in fructu est penes actum voluntatis."

<sup>87</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum, Distinctiones 1-3*, dist.1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol, ad. 2, 23: "Ad aliud dicendum quod habitualiter vel actualiter secundum naturam intellectus prius concipit et contemplator, tamen penes concipere illud non est perfectio inhaesionis et gaudii, sed penes actum voluntatis; et ideo per habitum voluntatis diffinitur frui, quia etiam actus voluntatis complet ipsum."

<sup>88</sup> Trottmann, "La théologie comme pieuse science visant la béatitude selon Albert le Grand," 394-98.

<sup>89</sup> This is not to suggest that Albert, like some Franciscans, followed the interpretation of Dionysius offered by Thomas Gallus, who maintained that the goal of mystical theology entailed an affective rapture where the activity of the intellect is suspended. In fact, Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii I*, 462, explicitly refutes this conception of rapture, as Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God*, 144-48 and Declan Lawell, "Ecstasy and the Intellectual Dionysianism of Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great," in *Thomas Aquinas: Teacher and*

In a further question about the nature of the love that provides the inherence and joy characteristic of the Christian beatitude that goes beyond philosophy Albert argues that it ought to be considered a perfected love related to the theological virtue of charity.<sup>90</sup> This is because, unlike the vision of faith, which describes a conversion to a presentiment of God, and the contemplation proceeding toward hope which describes an adherence to God, Albert argues that “love describes inherence, since it is a band drawing tight and a moveable thing made acute that penetrates the beloved, as Dionysius says.”<sup>91</sup> Dionysius accordingly authorizes a definition of Christian theology that in the final analysis is affective and oriented toward love, rather than solely toward understanding. Faith, hope and charity, Albert consequently insists, are all different ways to touch the divine, each more intimate than the last. Whereas the touch afforded by faith is comparable to the astrological conjunctions where higher entities influence the lower and the touch of hope is like the clasping of hands in agreement, Albert describes inherence as a touching “where one thing enters as if it were the other” and love as similar to “the natural touching where the things that touch act and undergo by turns and mutually imprint their own characteristic qualities onto each other.”<sup>92</sup> Christian beatitude *in patria*, insofar as it is an enjoyment of God by

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*Scholar*, ed. by James McEvoy, Michael Dunne and Julia Hynes (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), 172-180 both demonstrate.

<sup>90</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum, Distinctiones 1-3*, dist.1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol, ad. 6, 24: “Sed melius videtur nobis quod amor perfectam ponit amorem caritatis, quia ille solus amor perfectam causat inhaesionem, quia enim ille completivus est fruitionis, ideo ponitur in diffinitione eius.”

<sup>91</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum, Distinctiones 1-3*, dist.1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol, ad. 6, 24: “Visio enim dicit conversionem super praesentiam tantum; comprehensio autem quae succedit spei, dicit adhaerentiam; sed amore o quod est vit<t>a stringens, et acutum mobile, penetrans amatum, ut dicit DIONYSIUS, dicit inhaerentiam.”

<sup>92</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum, Distinctiones 1-3*, dist.1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol, ad. 7, 24: “Est enim duplex coniunctio, scilicet per meritum et per quemdam quasi contactum [...] per contactum tripliciter accedit coniunctio: scilicet secundum praesentiam [...] unde assimilatur quasi tactui mathematico, in quo ultima tangentium sunt simul tantum. Secunda est quasi per adhaerentiam et tentionem et habere, et hic tactus est eius quod succedit spei, et assimilatur quasi tactui compactorum. Tertia est inhaerentiam, quando unum quasi ingreditur alterum, et contrahit impressiones et affectiones a natura eius, et hic est tactus amoris, et assimilatur tactui naturalis, in quo tangentia agunt et patiuntur ad invicem, et imprimunt sibi mutuo suas proprietates.” One cannot help but suspect that Albert’s description of the mutual back and forth between lover and beloved in this text, as well as his earlier description of the movable thing in the lover that is sharpened or hardened in love, is supposed to evoke the erection

means of love, is thus a state of mutual interpenetration, a back and forth between the lover and the beloved that Albert presents in highly eroticized, conjugal terms. And this is why it is a total consummation, “a taste of sweetness that quiets desire,” which is informed by Augustine and Dionysius’ insistence that Christian theology ends in love and not just understanding, because it requires an act of the will that responds to and perfects the intellect.<sup>93</sup>

*Christian Divine Science between the Lights of Grace and Glory*

If the metaphysics and ethics to which the philosopher subscribes remove them from Christian theology because their final goals are secondary to the salvific aim of Christianity, the idolater is further excluded from receiving such mystical instruction by Albert in his commentary on the *De mystica theologia*. “If divine teaching about the mysteries is beyond all those who follow reason,” Albert explains, “it is even more beyond the ‘more uninstructed’ who only follow the senses and suppose there is nothing beyond the sensible.”<sup>94</sup> Because the idolater doesn’t possess the ability to reason beyond the sense world, which Albert implicitly grants here to the philosophers, they instead “fashion images of God out of the lowest things in existence, just as in Romans 1:23 it says that ‘they transform the glory of God into images of birds and serpents.’”<sup>95</sup> If the philosopher lacked the *affect* that grounds Christian theology insofar as it is directed toward salvation, Albert seems to imply here, they can still construct *rationaly* a divinity which more closely approximates the real truth known to and felt by Christians, even if they are as beholden

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of the phallus as well as the erotic play between two partners that takes place in heterosexual coitus (“natural touching”).

<sup>93</sup> Albert the Great, *Super I Librum Sententiarum, Distinctiones 1-3*, dist.1, cap. 2, q. 3, sol. ad. 6, 24: “et hoc patet ex nomine eius quod est fructus, quia hic est gustus dulcedinis quietantis.”

<sup>94</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii I*, 458: “Et dicit, quod si divina doctrina de mysticis est super omnes qui rationem sequuntur, multo magis est super magis indoctos, qui sensum sequuntur tantum, nihil supra sensibilia esse putantes.”

<sup>95</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii I*, 458: “sed figurant deum imaginibus ex postremis in existentiis, sicut dicitur ROM 1 (23), quod ‘mutaverunt gloriam dei in imagines volatilium et serpentium.’”

to the world of being as the idolater is to the world of sense perception. For Albert the idolater is therefore not only divorced from Christian feeling, but even from philosophical understanding, as they lack the capacity and desire to reason beyond the sensual world to the world of being disclosed by metaphysics, wherein the philosopher (albeit mistakenly) places the divine. Albert concludes for this reason that “they do not think that God is anything greater than these ‘impious’ images which they themselves make.”<sup>96</sup> They are consequently twice removed from the divine science of Christianity and even more in thrall to the world than the philosophers, who can at least generate a syllogistic knowledge of divinity that is intellectually closer to Christian truth than that exhibited by those who worship what they produce with their hands rather than demonstrate to be the case according to reason. Albert places the idolater, the philosopher and the Christian theologian on a sliding scale of perfection because of how they produce their respective knowledge of the divine.

Albert then signals a significant problem raised by the idolatrous (and also philosophical) desire to define the nature of the divine by drawing upon the experience of the world. That is, he addresses how the fact that God is the cause of everything and hence can be signified by everything might be offered as a potential argument in defense of idolatry—a position he takes Dionysius to refute in this section of the *De mystica theologia*. This is because Albert believes that Dionysius’s insistence that “affirmations do not contradict negations” is a response to a hypothetical question he had posed indirectly to the idolaters, even though the claim is actually offered by Dionysius to highlight the need for a kataphatic theology that dialectically

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<sup>96</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458: “et non putant, quod deus sit aliquid maius quam illae impiae imagines, quasi psi faciunt.”

complements an apophatic approach that is more appropriate for mystical instruction.<sup>97</sup> The idolatrous argument does not hold, Albert therefore explains, because “God is the cause of all things and nevertheless is essentially beyond all things.”<sup>98</sup> He elaborates:

although affirmations of everything are predicated of him causally, nevertheless they are all removed from him to a far greater extent as he is not one of them. And these negations do not contradict those affirmations because they are not according to the same thing, but it is necessary to place the cause of all things above both negations and affirmations, because the quiddity of God is not comprehended through either of them.<sup>99</sup>

There is thus no real conflict between an affirmative approach based on causation and a negative approach that speaks about the divine in another way as both ultimately fall short of God. Albert therefore states in a series of objections posed to Dionysius’s claim that God does not share at all in what is creaturely, “neither in genus, nor in species, nor in analogy,” and that all predicative assertions about God are strictly speaking impossible.<sup>100</sup> He also concludes that the fact that the names of creatures exist as principles in God does not imply that they can be appropriately employed to name him, just as one does not call the maker of a knife a knife because their production of knives depends upon knowing what a knife is.<sup>101</sup> Christian mystical instruction, as a negative theology, demonstrates the fundamental error that lies at the heart of idolatry *and* the philosophical theologies akin to them. Both, for the different reasons that Albert had outlined,

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<sup>97</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458: “Et quia aliquis defendendo istorum errorem posset dicere, quod de deo, qui est omnium causa, oportet omnia affirmare...respondet huic quaestione, faciens anthyphoram, et dicit...”

<sup>98</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458: “quod deus est causa omnium et tamen multo magis essentialiter est super omnia.”

<sup>99</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 458-459: “Et ideo quamvis causaliter omnium affirmationes ponantur in ipso, tamen multo magis essentialiter omnia removentur ab ipso, et ipse nihil eorum. Et istae *negationes non sunt oppositae illis affirmationibus*, quia non sunt secundum idem, sed oportet causam omnium ponere et super negationes et super affirmationes, quia per neutrum horum comprehenditur quidditas dei.”

<sup>100</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 459: “sed deus in nullo communicat cum aliqua creatura, neque genere, neque specie, neque analogia; ergo affirmationes causatorum non possunt poni in deo.”

<sup>101</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 459: “Praeterea, nos non possumus dicere, quod faber est cultellus, quamvis agat per intentionem cultelli quam habet apud se; ergo videtur, quod quamvis rationes omnium rerum sint apud deum, quod non debeant praedicare de ipso.”

seek to relate the unrelatable through an improper mode of thinking and speaking as they each fail to account for the correction that God's absolute separation from creation offers to thought and speech.

But in his response to this problem Albert does suggest that there are some ways to theologize affirmatively and negatively based on God's partial relationship with what he causes. Acknowledging the force of the arguments he had just introduced, Albert contends that "God nevertheless communicates a certain analogy of imitation, according to which others imitate him as much as they are able."<sup>102</sup> Albert in this way introduces the same concept of analogy or proportionality that he would deploy throughout his writing, which stresses the position of the entities that stand within the causal hierarchy which flows out from the divinity that created them.<sup>103</sup> As such, Albert tempers his prior remarks about the absolute separation between God and creation by granting that there is a *creaturely capacity* for a kind of analogical imitation of the divine (as what is created can relate to what created them insofar as they are like him even if, strictly speaking, this likeness points mainly to their own created nature as a being that can imitate and not to the nature of the creator as such). Albert lays out two different ways this argument about analogies can be understood. In the first way "things imitate him only as they are ideally formed by him, like those things which do not pre-exist in him, such as the ass and the stone in their own forms."<sup>104</sup> These, according to Albert, have no essential relation to the divine

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<sup>102</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 459: "communicat tamen quadam analogia imitationis, secundum quod alia imitantur ipsum, quantum possunt." On the difference between the Aristotelian understanding of analogy as a proportion and the Dionysian sense of analogy that Albert deploys in his writing, where analogy signifies a thing's hierarchical position and state of receptivity as well as its relation to God, see Thérèse Bonin, *Creation as Emulation: The Origin of Diversity in Albert the Great's On the Causes and the Procession of the Universe* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 31-32. Communication is thus a key part of Albert's "metaphysics of flow" and refers to God's formal extension throughout the causal hierarchy rather than God's creative act of efficient causation which set nature in motion.

<sup>103</sup> See chapter 2 for how this doctrine will be taken up and developed by Dietrich.

<sup>104</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 459: "Quaedam tamen imitantur ipsum tantum ut ideate, sicut quae non sunt per prius in ipso, sicut asinus et lapis in formis suis."

and are only predicated of God insofar as he is their cause.<sup>105</sup> In the second way, however, “things imitate him as an image or likeness of him, which do pre-exist in him, like wisdom, goodness, etc.”<sup>106</sup> And these, Albert argues, are predicated of God causally *and* essentially albeit in a way that differs from how one speaks about the idea a knife maker possesses because “God *is* every principle of things which he has because he is whatever he possesses.”<sup>107</sup> Albert thus concludes that affirmative theology speaks about God in the first mode of imitative analogy, which speaks only about what God causes, whereas negative theologies speak about what is like the divine essence. In other words, the two modes of analogical imitation pertain to the two types of names used respectively in symbolic and mystical theology. Symbolic and mystical theology thus each stress how a creature possesses or receives an attribute that is either appropriated to God because he caused it or properly God’s in a transcendent way. To deploy both ways of speaking about God is therefore like noting that the possession of a white tooth doesn’t posit that someone is essentially white.<sup>108</sup> If we follow Albert’s reasoning in this part of his commentary to fall into an error like this is to think like an idolater and a philosopher; it is to take an effect as an essential (formal) attribute that defines and represents what God actually is, whether that be a sensual image or even something conceptual. It is also to take a symbolic name as if it were a mystical one.

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<sup>105</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 459: “et ista non praedicantur de deo essentialiter, sed causaliter tantum.”

<sup>106</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 459: “Quaedam tamen imitantur ipsum ut imago vel similitudo ipsius, quae per prius sunt in ipso, sicut sapientia, bonitas, etc.”

<sup>107</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 459: “et ista dicuntur de ipso essentialiter et causaliter. Et non est simile de fabro, qui non est ratio cultelli, quam habet; sed deus omnes rationes rerum, quashabet, quia est, quicquid habet.” Emphasis added.

<sup>108</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 459: “simpliciter autem negatum et secundum quid affirmatum non contradicunt sibi, sicut album dente et non-album simpliciter.”



In his subsequent gloss on Dionysius' remarks about the definition of scripture that he takes from an "apocrypha" by Bartholomew—namely, "that theology is multiple and minimal and that the Gospel is broad and large and yet concise"—Albert describes how the various modes of contemplation he has discussed until this point are related to each other. In his own explanation of Bartholomew's words, Albert argues, Dionysius asserts that the God which cannot be ascertained rationally "is seen only by those extending themselves to God," who transcend both material and immaterial creatures and "approach beyond every ascent of all the holy boundaries, that is, of the angels."<sup>109</sup> According to Albert, these boundaries signify "that place where an inferior nature touches a superior, in whose lowest point the lower nature attaches itself to the higher."<sup>110</sup> The angels are therefore the mediating link that assists the Christian theologian to ascend beyond their own reason and are comparable to the intellects which flow out from the First Cause which assist the philosopher to fully realize all the knowledge they are able to understand potentially. Yet insofar as God transcends even the angels Albert explains that such boundaries must also be overcome. The Christian theologian must "abandon all divine lights and sounds and celestial words, that is, those insertions into us that are from God which are not God" so as to arrive at the "hiddenness of the deity, which is such because of a defect in us, where the God who is beyond everything truly is."<sup>111</sup> Even the angelic theophanies that God emits to assist

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<sup>109</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 460: "quod videtur solum his qui tendentes in deum transeunt, idest transcendent, immunda, idest materiales creaturas, et munda, idest immateriales, et qui superveniunt omnem, idest veniunt super omnem, ascensum omnium sanctorum extremitatum, idest angelicarum."

<sup>110</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 460: "et dicuntur extremitates illud in quo inferior natura attingit superiorem, in cuius infimo attingit eam inferior natura in summo sui."

<sup>111</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 460: "Et qui derelinquunt etiam omnia divina lumina et sonos et sermones caelestes, idest immissiones ipsas quae sunt a deo, quae non sunt deus, et qui introeunt caliginem, idest occultum deitatis, quae est ex nostro defectu, ubi est vere deus, qui est super omnia." Albert does not seem to imply here that this defect is the result of the Fall or Original Sin, but merely that the divine exceeds the capacity of a fallible human reason.

the Christian in their flight beyond natural reason to the divine, Dionysius suggests, are ultimately a distraction that the theologian must strive to overcome.

Dionysius's conclusion evidently gives Albert pause. He therefore asks whether the author has contradicted his own *De coelestia hierarchia*, which had asserted that all knowledge of God is necessarily veiled by theophanic illumination and that it is impossible for human nature to exceed its own epistemic limits even with angelic assistance.<sup>112</sup> Albert also objects that Dionysius in his *De divinis nominibus* had argued that the theologian, who must first unify their own selves, unites with the divine through the assistance of immaterial intellects, which he understands the angels to be here.<sup>113</sup> In line with this argument, Albert also queries whether union with the angels has to be transcended as it seems one should not abandon whatever facilitates divine union.<sup>114</sup> Albert's solution to these apparent issues is to once again introduce a distinction. "It must be said that contemplation of God can be considered in two ways," he argues, "either with respect to that in which God is contemplated or with respect to the principle of contemplation."<sup>115</sup> It is only according to the latter sense that Dionysius speaks in the *De coelesti*

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<sup>112</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 460: "Sed videtur sibi contradicere in his quae hic dicit. In PRIMO enim CAPITULO CAELESTIS HIERARCHIAE dixit, quod 'impossibile est nobis aliter lucere divinum radium nisi varietate sacrorum velaminum circumvelatum"; Albert the Great, *Super mystica theologia* I 460, 40-46: "Praeterea, in CAELESTI HIERARCHIA dictum est, quod inferior natura in summo sui attingit ultimum superioris naturae; ergo impossibile est, quod pertingat ultra extermitatem ipsius; sed angeli sunt superioris naturae quam nos; ergo videtur, quod sit impossibile, quod nos transcendamus extrimitates angelorum, quod tamen in LITTERA dicit."

<sup>113</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 460: "in libro DE DIVINIS NOMINIBUS in CAPITULO DE PACE dixit, quod oportet animas uniri in seipsas primo et postmodum per immaterialem et simplicem intellectum pervenire ad unionem divinam; ergo videtur, quod non debeamus relinquere angelos, qui sunt intellectus immateriales, sed uniri nos sibi, quantum possumus, ad hoc, ut veniamus in deum."

<sup>114</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 460: "sed non relinquendam eunti in finem illud quod iuvat ascensum in finem; ergo videtur, quod non debeamus relinquere divina lumina ad cognoscendum deum, sed fortiter eis inhaerere."

<sup>115</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 460: "Dicendum ad primum, quod contemplatione dei dupliciter potest considerari: vel quantum ad id in quo contemplamur deum, sive quantum ad principium contemplationis"

*hierarchia* about the knowledge of God that occurs in this life, Albert concludes.<sup>116</sup> A further way of treating contemplation, Albert adds, is “either with respect to the end of contemplation or with respect to that which we seek through contemplation and this is God himself without veil.”<sup>117</sup> The theologian who aims to become a purely intellectual nature must come to such knowledge, according to Albert, otherwise there would be no point even to rational inquiry.<sup>118</sup> Albert thus marks in his response to Dionysius’ argument a qualitative difference between how one contemplates through a medium and how one contemplates the desired object itself without any intermediary. He also introduces a distinction between the speculative work possible while living in this present world and a more complete contemplation that is considered without this restriction in mind, which will also ground some of Albert’s subsequent claims about how the Christian theologian can come to know the divine.

Albert also differentiates here between the two ways one can contemplatively pass away into something. Albert thus argues that one can speak “with respect to the power of contemplation and thus we are unable either to transcend or equal the angels in this life, although through the divine light we are elevated beyond our own natural faculty.”<sup>119</sup> But if one considers instead “the object of contemplation...since we seek that which is above everything, we transcend those angels by contemplating, as it says in the Song of Songs [3:4]: ‘shortly after,

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<sup>116</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 460: “et sic loquitur Dionysius in Caelesti hierarchia, quod non possumus videre divinum radium in hac vita sine velamine signorum et effectuum”

<sup>117</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 460: “vel quantum ad finem contemplationis sive quantum ad id quod per contemplationem quaerimus, et sic est ipse deus non-velatus.”

<sup>118</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 460: “frustra enim esset ratiocinative inquisition, nisi perveniret ad intellectivam unionem” It is strange that after Albert has just gone out of his way to argue that Christian theology transcends ratiocination that he now posits that knowledge of God unveiled demonstrates its necessity. Perhaps Albert means here to suggest that ratiocination can point towards this knowledge even if it cannot ascertain it, and hence is somehow useful just like the angels? This interpretation finds support from Albert’s claim elsewhere that the light of reason is itself a gift from God, discussed below.

<sup>119</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 460: “vel quantum ad vim contemplativam, et sic neque transcendere neque aequare possumus angelos in hac vita, quamvis per lumen divinum elevemur supra facultatem nostrae naturae.”

since I had passed them by, I came to the one who delights my soul.”<sup>120</sup> This is also why Albert argues that the angels and the divine lights they emit, which assist the theologian in their ascent to God, must not be taken as ends in themselves. Speaking of the divine lights, Albert for this reason remarks that “we ought not to fasten on to these as the object [of contemplation], but as if under them the object is seen by their fortifying our understanding, since desire does not abate in them like it does in the highest Good.”<sup>121</sup> Finally, Albert also distinguishes between a contemplation of God that proceeds by discovery—and here we should understand ratiocination—where the intellect ascends up to God through its own power and a mode of contemplation through theophanic signs.<sup>122</sup> These signs, which are experienced or received by the theologian through illumination, are imparted to either the affect or the intellect and hence generate in response inarticulate jubilation or a concept of God that can be expressed verbally.<sup>123</sup> Theophanies accordingly move the theologian to speech, albeit not necessarily to a speech that makes sense. Albert ultimately signals that the theologian’s need to overcome their limited faculties is correlated to their desire for understanding’s final goal. Importantly, for the first time in this commentary Albert suggests that the very operation of the divine light, as mediated by the angels, that separates the Christian theologian from philosophy and idolatry must itself be overcome insofar as even that light separates the contemplator from the end of their

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<sup>120</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 460-461: “vel quantum ad obiectum contemplationis...quia quod quaerimus, super omnia est, ipsos etiam angelos contemplando transimus, sicut in CANTICO dicitur: ‘Paululum cum pertransissem eos, inveni, quem diligit anima mea.’”

<sup>121</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 461: “debemus inhaerere non sicut obiecto, sed sicut his sub quibus videtur obiectum, confortantiibus intellectum nostrum, quia in eis non sistit desiderium sicut in summo bono.”

<sup>122</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 461: “intellectus noster dupliciter elevatur in deum: aut per modum inventionis quasi ex se consurgit in ipsum...aut elevatur in ipsum per quaedam signa immissa ab ipso.”

<sup>123</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 461: “Et hoc signum vel est ad affectum, qui impletur gaudio inexplicabili...vel est ad intellectum, secundum quod concipit aliquid de deo, et quantum hoc dicit sermones, qui sunt voces exprimentes conceptum mentis.”

contemplation. Contemplation of God, Albert implies here, even when assisted by the infusion of the divine light, continually produces a desire for a knowledge of God which it cannot satisfy because it always compensates for the God it fails to attain. The satisfaction the Christian theologian experiences when they are moved by the grace poured out by the divine into their minds, which is admittedly more complete than the theoretical pleasure philosophy affords, is not itself completely sufficient.

This problem is taken up again in the final part of Albert's commentary on the first chapter of the *De mystica theologia*, where he posits a series of questions responding to Dionysius' famous account of the dark cloud of unknowing Moses entered on the summit of Mt. Sinai described in both Exodus 19 and 24. According to his paraphrase of Dionysius' description of this event, Albert argues that Moses' vision demonstrates that "those things which we see of God by the most noble revelations or which we understand by the highest contemplations in this life are not God but certain principles or showings...which are subjected to God...that is, lower than Him, inasmuch as He is in his noblest creatures and effects."<sup>124</sup> Albert further specifies that this means that God is immanent to or present in all his effects in some way, despite his transcendent simplicity, but clarifies that this is so "in a special way in the effects of grace or glory," the latter being the light that infuses the angelic intellects whose own light assists the theologian to contemplate God through them, as Albert had just argued.<sup>125</sup> Albert therefore concludes that Moses, after separating himself from everything visible and from the companions who accompanied him up the mountain—which signify the contemplative and ethical purification

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<sup>124</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 461-462: "ea quae videmus de deo nobilissimis revelationibus aut quae intelligimus altissimis contemplationibus in hac vita, esse non deum, sed quasdam rationes, idest species...quae subiciuntur deo excedenti omnia, subiectas, idest inferioris deo, in quantum in nobilissimis creaturis et effectibus suis est."

<sup>125</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 462: "est enim praesens omnibus suis effectibus et aliquot speciali modo effectibus gratiae vel gloriae."

of the theologian—entered into the divine mystery itself into the darkness of learned ignorance.<sup>126</sup> Passing beyond ratiocination, Albert explains, Moses was entirely converted toward God and united in the best possible way to him “through freedom from all natural knowledge because he is not turned toward what is naturally known, but to God alone, who is known by no natural knowledge.”<sup>127</sup> Moses’ knowing by unknowing is consequently a departure from the natural constraints on knowledge. However, this unknowing that leads beyond the nature of the mind was only made available to Moses, Albert concludes, “through the infusion of the divine light from above, by which the mind is elevated above itself.”<sup>128</sup> The contemplation of God made possible by the divine light is therefore what enables the Christian theologian to move beyond philosophical contemplation. Yet Albert also posits here that during this lifetime an unmediated vision of God is impossible—for the philosopher and the Christian theologian both. Yet Albert does proffer a mode of contemplation that appears to be higher than that of the human. This is the angelic contemplation of the divine which participates in the divine light of glory, which seems to exceed even the light of grace that affectively informs and intellectually discloses the higher, beatifying knowledge imparted to the Christian living in the world below the celestial hierarchies.

After determining a question about the nature of contemplative rapture Albert raises two questions meant to settle the difference between contemplation of God in this life and the next. Here Albert offers his final remarks in his commentary on the *De mystica theologia* about the difference between the knowledge of God available to the philosopher and the Christian

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<sup>126</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 462: “Et sic remotus ab omnibus intrat ad caliginem ignorantiae.”

<sup>127</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 462: “vacatione omnis cognitionis naturalis, quia ad alia non convertitur naturaliter cognita, sed ad solum deum, qui nulla naturali cognitione cognoscitur.”

<sup>128</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 462: “et eo quod, idest inquantum, nihil cognoscit connaturali cognitione, super mentem cognoscens, idest supra naturam suae mentis, lumine divino desuper infuse, quo mens supra se elevator.”

theologian and ties the light of glory directly to the nature of the beatific vision. Like most scholastic authors writing during the middle of the thirteenth century, Albert's ability to define the nature of this vision was constrained by the need to align with the magisterial determination of 1241 in Paris against those theologians who claimed that God can never be seen without some mediation.<sup>129</sup> In his commentary on the *De mystica theologia* Albert thus grants that although contemplation in this life and the next both involve a certain absorption of the mind by the divine light,<sup>130</sup> "each knowledge differs because *in patria* God is seen as such, but for contemplation *in via* he is seen in the effects of grace and the light descending into the contemplator."<sup>131</sup> The beatific vision, Albert continues, is also higher than knowledge on the way to God because it alone liberates the perfect from all misery, which cannot happen in this life.<sup>132</sup> This is because "he will be known there through the habit of glory, but here through the habit of grace."<sup>133</sup> The potential for a more perfect contemplation of the divine than in this life is therefore attendant on the infusion of yet another divinely given virtue that transcends the habit of grace that the theologian has already received. This is the habit of glory, given by the divine light that the angels themselves experience and receive from God. The divinization that Christian theology aims to effect, in other words, is only achieved when the theologian moves beyond the working of the divine light of grace that augments contemplation in this life and is glorified in the next by

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<sup>129</sup> On the general influence of these condemnations on the practice of scholastic theology at Paris, see Deborah Grice, *Church, Society and University: the Paris Condemnation of 1241/4* (New York: Routledge, 2020). On Albert's understanding of the beatific vision, see Jeffrey P. Hergan, *St. Albert the Great's Theory of the Beatific Vision* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

<sup>130</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 462: "Praeterea quaeritur, in quo differat cognitio istarum contemplationum in via a comprehensione veritatis in patria. Et videtur, quod secundum nihil, cum utraque absorbeatur divino lumine."

<sup>131</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 463: "quod differt utraque cognitio, quia in patria videtur deus per se, in contemplatione autem viae videtur in effectibus gratiae et luminis descendentis in ipsam."

<sup>132</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 463: "Iterum in patria visio eius liberabit perfectum ab omni miseria, quod non est hic"

<sup>133</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii* I, 463: "et iterum ibi erit per habitum gloriae, hic autem per habitum gratiae."

the specific habit already infused into the angels. For this reason, Albert concludes, even Moses himself on Mt. Sinai was not able to see God himself but “saw him in his most noble effects, namely those of grace and the theophanies, which are likenesses expressed by the divine Good.”<sup>134</sup>

Yet can Albert’s argument that the beatific vision is informed by the light of glory fully align with the magisterial insistence that one sees God face to face without any intermediary in heaven? For Albert suggests here that the blessed, like the angels, still require theophanic assistance insofar as their knowledge is reinforced by the light of glory rather than the light of grace. Albert even seems to imply that the perfect contemplation of God afforded to the Christian in the next life does not produce a complete knowledge of God nor fully divinizes the Christian subject. After all, Albert insisted at the very outset of his commentary that mystical theology and the unknowing it cultivates can only ever result in an indeterminate understanding of God, apparently even in the life to come. And this necessitates that Albert clarify how such indeterminate knowledge differs from the philosopher’s, whose divine science is also able to naturally attain according to reason an incomplete knowledge that God exists. Both the divine science of the philosophers and Christian theology, in other words, can know in an indirect and indeterminate way “that” God is without ever knowing the divine quiddity, even if the latter does so supernaturally in this life and the next whereas the former only does so naturally without the added promise of a more complete and satisfying vision of God in heaven or the salvation that Christianity promises.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii I*, 464: “Dicendum, quod Moyses non vidit ipsum deum in se, sed in nobilissimis suis effectibus, scilicet gratiae et theophaniarum, quae sunt similitudines expressae divinae bonitatis.”

<sup>135</sup> Albert the Great, *Super mysticam theologiam Dionysii I*, 463-464: “quod de deo nescimus ‘quia’, secundum quod est quidam naturalis modus cognitionis in philosophia determinatus...et neutro modo possumus



In a question raised in the third treatise of the first book of his late *Summa theologiae*, which explicitly discusses the medium by which God is known, Albert articulates this difference between the end of philosophical and Christian knowing in a way that develops his remarks about the divine lights of grace and glory in his earlier commentary.<sup>136</sup> They are, in fact, Albert’s final and definitive remarks on this subject. Albert notes here that “it must be said that in the present life knowledge of God without a medium is not able to be had, which medium is an effect of God in nature or grace, through which God is shown.”<sup>137</sup> But he adds—citing 1 Cor 13:12, “now we see through a mirror in darkness, but then face to face”—that there will be a more direct vision of God in the future.<sup>138</sup> Addressing in a subsequent part of this treatise whether the medium through which God is seen by grace in this life is faith, Albert affirms that this is so insofar as this faith is either formed or unformed.<sup>139</sup> Unformed faith, Albert continues, refers to the testifying medium as such, whereas the other is faith “as testifying and forming and drawing the conscience by that mode from which virtue draws and inclines to those things which are of virtue.”<sup>140</sup> This means, Albert explains, that “faith is the medium both leading toward knowledge of what must be believed and, by completely aiding the believer toward what must be understood, is the medium through which the understanding of what must be believed is sought for and discovered.”<sup>141</sup> Faith

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scire aliquid de deo, et ita nulla cognitione naturali nostus est, neque ‘quia’ neque ‘propter quid’ neque sensu neque ratione neque intellectu; sed cognoscimus eum quadam supernaturali cognitione sub quadam confusionem.”

<sup>136</sup> On this question and its place within Albert’s account of divine illumination, see Markus L Führer, “Albertus Magnus’ Theory of Divine Illumination,” *Albertus Magnus*, 141-155.

<sup>137</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.1. resp., 58: “Dicendum, quod in praesenti vita cognitio dei sine medio non potest haberi; quod medium effectus dei est in natura vel gratia, in qua deus monstratur.”

<sup>138</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.1. resp., 58: “Modo ergo videtur per medium, in futuro autem facie ad faciem. 1 Cor XIII (12): ‘Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate tunc autem facie ad faciem.’”

<sup>139</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.1. resp., 77: “Dicendum, quod fides medium est in cognitione viae, sive sit fides informis sive formata.”

<sup>140</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.1. resp., 77: “Sed in hoc differentia, quod informis non est nisi ut medium testificans, formata autem ut testificans et formans conscientiam et trahens eo modo quo virtus trahit et inclinat ad ea quae sunt virtutis.” Albert here also registers his agreement with Anselm of Canterbury who, in his influential *Proslogion*, had defined his work as an exercise of “faith seeking understanding.”

<sup>141</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.1. resp., 77: “Huius signum est, quod huiusmodi similitudines considerantes sine fide in multis aberrant a veritate.”

is accordingly the necessary medium for theological knowledge in this life. This is signified, Albert concludes, because “those considering likenesses [in sensible and intellectual vision] without faith deviate in many ways from the truth, whence the Apostle, speaking about faith, says in II Cor 10:5 that it ‘reduces into captivity all understanding in obedience to Christ.’”<sup>142</sup>

Following John Damascene, Albert also determines that “man is especially led into the science and knowledge of God through words of divine eloquence, just as it is said in Hebrews 4:2 about certain people that ‘the word heard without the admixture of faith did not profit them.’”<sup>143</sup>

Albert, following this, asks whether natural knowledge and understanding according to faith are comparable. He answers that it seems they are not, for faith infinitely exceeds what is known naturally, especially because it transcends what can be known rationally.<sup>144</sup> Against this Albert contends that “it seems what may be known through natural reason is more certain than something known through faith.” He even suggests that “natural cognition prevails over something known according to faith;” a conclusion that Albert takes to be explicitly harmful.<sup>145</sup> Albert’s solution to these two problems is to define the types of certainty that natural reason and faith are each able to produce. Certainty is either simple or according to us [*quoad nos*], Albert explains, and the latter involves “certainty inclined to act and the certainty of a reason as if

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<sup>142</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.1. resp., 77: “Unde II AD COR. X (5) de fide loquens APOSTOLUS dicit: ‘In captivitatem redigentes omnem intellectum in obsequium Christi.’”

<sup>143</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.1. resp., 77: “et cum maxime, ut dicit DAMASCENUS, per sermonem divinarum eloquiorum ducatur homo in scientiam et cognitionem dei, AD HEBR. IV (2) dicitur de quibusdam: ‘Non profuit eis sermo auditus non admixtus fidei.’”

<sup>144</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.2, 78: “Secundo quaeritur de comparatione cognitionis per gratiam ad comparationem cognitionis per naturam. Videtur autem, quod non sit comparatio, eo quod fides excellat in infinitum;” *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.2. ad.1, 78-79: “Ea enim quae supra rationem sunt, et rationem excellent et incomparabilia sunt his quae sunt sub ratione. Quae autem fidei sunt, supra rationem sunt, ut dicit DIONYSIUS in ECCLESIASTICA HIERARCHIA CAP. DE RESURRECTIONE. Quae de naturali cognitione sunt, sub ratione sunt. Ergo incomparabilis est cognitio per fidem ad cognitionem per naturam.”

<sup>145</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.2. sed contra, 79: “Videtur ergo, quod per naturalem rationem certius cognoscatur aliquid quam per fidem. Ulterius quaeritur, si cognitio naturalis aliquid valet ad fidem. Et videtur, quod nocet.”

argued.”<sup>146</sup> God and divine things alone offer simple certainty itself, he continues, because, as Augustine argues in his *Soliloquia*, “God is himself a sun resplendent and shining through the faith, virtue, knowledge, counsel, understanding and wisdom given into the hearts of the faithful and through illumination according to the knowledge of everything knowable.”<sup>147</sup> This is the certitude that occurs in the face to face knowledge of divine things, Albert concludes, which is (logically) prior to knowledge through faith and more certain than natural knowledge according to reason, as it receives its certainty from God, who is himself the most certain thing.<sup>148</sup> Knowledge of God according to faith, however, is more certain than that of reason because “its mode of understanding is through taste, such as occurs in rapture,” whereas apodictic knowledge arises from natural reasons, “which are not shown to someone except through the mode of persuasion about what must be believed or about the divine.”<sup>149</sup> Albert therefore posits a hierarchy of types of knowledge, each dependent on the outpouring of the divine light, which governs the mode of understanding available to the knowing subject and whose respective approximation to the certainty by which God knows himself governs the certainty that what they view intellectually is so.

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<sup>146</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.2. resp., 79: “Certitudo multiplex est. Est enim certitudo simpliciter et certitudo quoad nos; certitudo quoad nos duplex, scilicet certitudo inclinatis ad actum et certitudo rationis quasi arguentis.”

<sup>147</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.2. resp., 79: “Certitudine ergo simpliciter nihil est adeo certum sicut deus et divina. Ut enim dicit AUGUSTINUS in libro SOLILOQUIUM, deus in seipso sol est fulgens, splendens per fidem virtutem et scientiam, consilium, intellectum et sapientiam dona in cordibus credentium et per illuminationem ad omnium scibilium scientiam,” referring to Augustine, *Solil.* 1.5.12.

<sup>148</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.2. resp., 79: “Hoc modo certissima cognitionum est cognitione divinorum facie ad faciem, et sub illa cognitio per fidem, infima vero cognitio per naturalem rationem; est enim haec cognitio per certissimum secundum seipsum.”

<sup>149</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.2. resp., 79-80: “Iterum certitudine informationis mentis vel conscientiae certior est fides et cognitio, quae per fidem est, quam aliqua cognitio, quae est per naturales rationes, quae non nisi per modum persuasionis aliquid ostendunt de credito sive de divinis. Et hoc modo certissima cognitio est per gustum, sicut fit in raptu; et sub illa cognitio fidei, infima vero per rationem naturalem.”

Albert's final question in this part of the *Summa theologiae* asks whether grace is required for all knowledge of God. He offers several reasons why this seems to be the case drawn primarily from philosophical authorities. Albert's first argument, which deploys the authority of Avicenna and looks back to his own Peripatetic account of intellection in the *De intellectu*, acknowledges the need for an illumination that actualizes potential intelligibles in the understanding for both natural and supernatural knowledge. "It is therefore necessary," Albert argues, "that there be some light descending [from God] during that understanding elevated for the purpose of knowing that which is above itself and thus in all knowledge of the divine there ought to be some light by which the intellect is perfected which, since it is not from nature, seems to be the light of grace."<sup>150</sup> Albert also contends that the spiritual eye, comparable to those birds who possess a vision more united than that of humans and who can therefore gaze upon the sun, should receive a power allowing them to gaze upon what is higher than itself.<sup>151</sup> In a similar way Albert argues that because God is not proportioned to the human mind the intellect must receive an additional power that proportions the understanding to the type of intelligible God is.<sup>152</sup> Origen's explanation of Luke 1:35, "the power of the most high will overshadow you," in the *Peri archon* prompts an argument about how the restriction in the womb of the Virgin of the infinite God into the Christ child, who is "an image small in itself of the greatest things,"

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<sup>150</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.3. ad.1, 80: "Intellectus enim intelligibile non accipit nisi per illustrationem intelligentiae, quae, sicut dicit AVICENNA, illustrat super animas nostras, per cuius illustrationem potentia intelligibilia fiunt actu intelligibilia. Si hoc ergo est in intellectis naturalibus, quae sunt proportionate intellectui, videtur, quod multo magis sit in his quae sunt supra naturam. Oportet ergo aliquod lumen descendens esse per quod elevatur intellectus ad cognoscendum id quod supra se est; et sic in omni cognitione divina aliquod lumen oportet esse quo perficiatur intellectus, quod cum non sit naturae, videtur esse lumen gratiae."

<sup>151</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.3. ad.2, 80: "Adhuc, in dispositione oculorum sic est, quod oculus minus habens abunatum visum solem in rota non respicit. Herodii autem oculus, qui magis adunatum habet visum, respicit. Ergo in oculo spirituali sic est, quod oportet in ipso aliquid recipe quo adunetur visus eius ad videndum, quod supra se est."

<sup>152</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.3. ad.3, 80: "Adhuc, nulla potentia receptiva recipit id quod improportionale est sibi, nisi per aliquid illi proportionetur. Intelligibile, quod est deus, improportionatum est intellectui nostro. Ergo non recipitur ab ipso nisi per aliquid quod intellectum nostrum intelligibili facit proportionalem."

signifies that “because the intellect conceives God by knowing it seems that in every knowledge of the divine some likeness is necessary to what is known, which perfects the intellect in order to conceive the known.”<sup>153</sup> Finally, Albert argues with the support of Aristotle’s claim from the *De anima* that the intellect does not attain knowledge of natural, mathematical and divine things by the same form and that “there ought to be something formal through which the understanding grasps the most divine”—an assertion Albert takes to be reinforced by Psalms 35:10, “in your light we shall see the light.”<sup>154</sup>

In his solution to this particular question Albert states that the problem does not actually present significant difficulties. Albert ties his arguments about the difference between the natural and graced cognition here to his claim in the later *De intellectu* that ratiocination itself is reinforced by the light of reason, here figured as a kind of gift from God that is available to all trained to philosophize demonstrably—and not just to the Christian community—which is comparable to the lights of grace and glory. “It must be conceded,” Albert therefore states, “that without a light illuminating the intellect our possible intellect is receptive of nothing known... and this light is natural for the reception of natural things, but is a free gift according to what is believed and glory for what beatifies.”<sup>155</sup> The light given for the understanding of natural things and the light of grace therefore exist on a spectrum, according to Albert, but the latter is somehow

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<sup>153</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.3. ad.4, 80: “Adhuc, hoc videtur dicere ORIGENES in PERI ARCHON, tractans illud: ‘Virtus altissimi obumbrabit tibi.’ Dicit enim, quod obumbratio illa est imago virtutis altissimi in virgine, sicut umbra formae, quae est in speculo, parva quidem in se imago est maximae rei, cuius illa umbra, et sicut parvus infans secundum omnia lineamenta figurae est patris, etiamsi ponatur esse infinitus. Cum ergo intellectus cognoscendo concipiat deum, videtur, quod in omni cognitione divina necessarium sit aliquid simile cognito, quod perficiat intellectum ad concipiendum cognitum.”

<sup>154</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.3. ad.5, 80-81: “Adhuc, ARISTOTELES in III DE ANIMA vult, quod non ex eodem formali intellectu noster accipit naturalia, mathematica et divina, ex formali tamen aliquot semper accipit. Divinissima autem sunt credenda divina. Formale ergo oportet aliquid esse, per quod intellectus accipiat ea. Hoc etiam videtur dicere PSALMUS (XXV, 10): ‘In lumine tuo videbimus lumen.’”

<sup>155</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.3. resp., 81: “Concedendum enim est, quod sine lumine illustrante intellectum nullius cogniti intellectus noster possibilis receptivus est. Per hoc enim lumen efficitur intellectus possibilis oculus ad videndum; et hoc lumen ad naturalia recipienda naturale est, ad credenda vero gratuitum est, ad beatificantia autem gloria est.”

superadded to nature (without destroying it).<sup>156</sup> Albert concludes, in consequence, that the light of grace

descending in this way does not oppose what is known so that one is able to understand but is a certain assimilation of the knower and the known, just as it is said in 1 John 3:2 that ‘we will be like to him’ and ‘we will see him as he is’ and just as Augustine says in the ninth book of the *De trinitate* that in all knowing, when we recognize God, some likeness to God comes about in us.<sup>157</sup>

This leads Albert to concede all the arguments he had introduced in order to determine this question. Albert implicitly defines even natural knowledge of the divine—and one should perhaps understand here specifically those conclusions that the divine science of the Peripatetics was able to attain, which Albert promoted in his Aristotelian paraphrases—as a kind of divine gift, albeit one attendant upon the necessity of reasoning rather than the free infusion of grace. In fact, Albert suggests that grace co-operates with the light of reason, at least insofar as natural knowledge is not disrupted but becomes more perfect through the additional gift of the divine light God imparts to the Christian theologian. For “such a medium does not oppose nature nor stands between it, since something is not a medium unless it aids and disposes the intellect to what is understood.”<sup>158</sup> Albert’s claim here in his *Summa theologiae* that natural and graced knowledge of the divine are not necessarily opposed even as they differ—at least from the Christian theologian’s perspective—is itself an important aspect of his understanding of the practice of Christian theology.

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<sup>156</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.3. resp., 81: “Totum autem gratuitum est, secundum quod gratia dicitur omne illud quod superaditum est naturae.”

<sup>157</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.3. resp., 81: “Hoc autem lumen sic descendens non est aliquid conferens cognito, ut cognoscibile sit, et est assimilatio quaedam cognoscentis et cogniti sicut dicitur I IOH. III (2): ‘Similes ei erimus’ et ‘videbimus eum sicuti est’, est sicut dicit AUGUSTINUS in IX DE TRINITATE, quod in omni cognitione, cum deum novimus, fit aliqua similitudo dei in nobis.”

<sup>158</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.3.15.3.3. resp. 6, 81: “quod tale medium non obstat naturae nec interstat, quia non est medium nisi coadiuvans et disponens intellectum ad intelligendum.”

*Epistle VII and the Christian Encounter with Philosophical Error*

Albert's commentary on Epistle VII of Dionysius represents a further instance where the German Dominican articulates Christianity's departure from philosophy through the authority of the Areopagite in a way that ties many of the claims I have previously discussed together. Significantly, Albert also offers an extended account of how the philosopher and the Christian ought ideally to engage each other that builds upon Dionysius' own. This letter, which is addressed to a hierarch named Polycarp who Albert understands to be the martyr traditionally recognized as the disciple of John the Evangelist, relates Dionysius' encounter with his former teacher, the sophist and astrologer Apollophanes, who had critiqued his philosophical credentials and who had accused Dionysius of parricide for "using those things which are of the Greeks in an unholy way against the Greeks." Dionysius writes to Polycarp instead that "I am not against the Greeks or against anyone else, and I say that it suffices for holy men to judge if their truth is able to be known and declared as such insofar as it is true." Albert takes these words as an opportunity to gloss the intent of the entire letter by commenting on the closing verses of the first Epistle to Timothy, where the Pauline author advises his protégé to "guard what is deposited with you, avoiding the profane novelties of words and the oppositions of knowledge falsely so-called, which have cut off those who prophesy against the faith."<sup>159</sup> This verse exhorted Timothy to three things, Albert explains: that the faith be preserved and guarded among Christians and others "as much as we are able;" that "quarrelsome disputations" which do not benefit the listener and which are against ecclesiastical custom ought to be avoided; and that one must withstand the

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<sup>159</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas VII*, in *Opera Omnia Editio Coloniensis XXXVII*, ed. by Paul Simon (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978), 501: "O Timothee, depositum custodi, devitans profanes vocum novitates et oppositiones falsi nominis scientiae, quam quidam promittentes circa fidem exciderunt," I AD TIM. ULTIMO."

assaults against the faith forwarded “under the name of science.”<sup>160</sup> Albert concludes from this that Dionysius himself in this letter followed these instructions, “excusing himself from the contention [with Apollophanes] assigned to him [by Polycarp] and inciting him to faith through its proper practice.”<sup>161</sup> That is, Albert concludes, Dionysius did not aim to refute Apollophanes by engaging him in a philosophical argument in order to demonstrate the truth of Christian faith, but tried to convert him by merely presenting the truth to Polycarp as it appears (or is given) to him as a Christian.

Albert accordingly explains why Dionysius in this Epistle insists that struggling to correct the error of a single individual like Apollophanes is not worth the effort. Albert notes that “one must not inquire into the cognition of some matter, except so that the truth may be located and the false be condemned and the appearance of that which is not true may be exposed.”<sup>162</sup> Dionysius consequently insists that demonstration is able to do this when it follows its appropriate method. This is because when principles are ordered to their conclusions a truth is produced that is “purified from all suspicion of contraries” and the false, like an opinion, is shown only to appear true.<sup>163</sup> Given that the demonstration of truth alone is sufficient to make that truth itself properly known, Dionysius consequently suggests that engaging in disputation

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<sup>160</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 501: “In verbis istis hortatur Apostolus discipulum suum ad tria, scilicet ad custodiendam fidem, quae est thesaurus nobis a deo commissus et apud nos depositus, ut quantum possumus, custodiamus eam et in nobis et in allis, et maxime ad quos pertinent ex officio praelationis [...] Secundo hortatur, ut abstinence a contentiosa disputatione, quae ad nihil valet nisi ad subversionem audientium [...] Tertio hortatur, ut eis qui sub nomine scientiae fidem impugnant, resistatur...”

<sup>161</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 501: “Et ideo Dionysius rescribit per hanc epistulam in qua fidem custodire principaliter intendit, excusando se a contentione sibi imposita et invitando illum ad fidem ex propriis disciplinis eius.”

<sup>162</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 501: “In cognitione alicuius rei non sunt inquirenda, nisi ponatur veritas et reprehendatur falsitas et detegatur apparentia eius quod non est verum.”

<sup>163</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 501-502: “Quia si verum demonstratur, quicquid sit illud secundum legem veritatis, idest secundum propria principia, recte, ut principia debito modo ordinentur in conclusiones, et existat purum ab omni suspitione contrarii, qualis est in opinionibus, simul cum hoc reprehendetur omne quod aliter habet, idest falsum, et quod veritatem simulat, idest apparens, esse alterum a vero quantum ad falsum, et esse dissimile et magis apparens illud, scilicet verum, quam existens; similitudo enim ad veritatem causa est apparentiae.”



for the purpose of refuting everyone who errs is superfluous. This is because, according to Albert's interpretation of Dionysius' argument, every demonstration refutes in advance every possible error.<sup>164</sup> Dionysius even offers an illustration of how continuous refutation is not only ineffective, Albert explains, but also potentially damaging as it may confirm the opponent in their error: a confrontation between several people about true and false coinage. A quarrelsome disputation is therefore

like if someone held a true coin, on which there was a royal image, and he wanted to prove this to someone else who held a false coin, on which nevertheless there was a partially true image (for otherwise it would not be a deceptive image), and although he convinced him, yet another person rose up against him who held a different partial image, and it would be necessary to contend again with him, and this would never have an end, until it was made clear to the one to whom this was shown that his coin was true, that all others were false.<sup>165</sup>

In other words, just as in the debate about the coin that Dionysius sketches in his letter, because philosophical errors are enough like the truth known to the Christian theologian and may even be true in their own right, Christian polemic against the philosophers would never end if Christians had to refute every philosopher who appeared to be true. In fact, Albert adds, the philosophers' desire to contradict others by debating their own questions and formulating compelling arguments is one of the main reasons that they fell into error and away from Christianity.<sup>166</sup> The implication here is that it is because of the philosophers' own affection for disputation—their need to refute others rather than their zeal for the truth—that they turn away from the Truth Itself

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<sup>164</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 502: “sed per ostensionem veritatis sufficienter depelluntur omnes errores, ut ostensum est; per contentiones autem ad hoc non potest deveniri.”

<sup>165</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 502: “Sicut si aliquis haberet verum numisma, in quo esset imago regalis, et vellet redarguere aliquem qui haberet falsum numisma, in quo tamen esset aliqua pars verae imaginis, quia aliter non esset imago deceptiva, quamvis eum convinceret, insurgeret alius qui haberet aliquam aliam partem, et oporteret iterum cum eo contendere, et hoc numquam haberet finem, sed ostenso, quod suum numisma verum esset ostenderetur, quod omnia alia falsa essent.”

<sup>166</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 502: “Unde dicit PHILOSOPHUS in II CAELI ET MUNDI, quod hoc fuit causa erroris philosophorum, quod non studebant ad inveniendum veritatem, sed ad contradicendum aliis, et hoc sibi sufficere putabant, si deducebant quaestionem ad hoc quod non posset eis resisti.”

and are captured by a proliferation of partial or apparent truths determined solely by their own arguments. This is even a fault, Albert laments, which persists among several of his contemporaries and its natural conclusion is a deleterious skepticism about the validity of any demonstrative knowledge and a tendency to get caught up in inconsequential debates.<sup>167</sup>

Dionysius' remarks here also prompt Albert to ask whether theology is able to know its truth without refuting the error of others. Moreover, citing Matthew 7:6, where Jesus, delivering the Sermon on the Mount, commands "do not give what is holy to the dogs nor scatter pearls before swine," Albert asks "why the other sciences are communicated to the wicked, since theology is instructed not to be communicated to the wicked?"<sup>168</sup> Albert responds to these questions by reflecting on the significance of this biblical injunction in a way that recalls his argument in the commentaries on the *Liber Sententiarum* and *De mystica theologia* about the difference between Christian theology and the practice of the philosophers, but which introduces some significant reformulations. Unlike in Christian theology, Albert explains, "the truth of the other sciences is delivered syllogistically through conjoining necessary conclusions as it is ordered according to the principles of reason, from which it is deduced."<sup>169</sup> Because of this, moreover, demonstrations "hold the power to force assent and even draw those reluctant who resist to itself."<sup>170</sup> In other words, philosophical sciences exert a force on those who produce them, compelling those who play the game of demonstration, which even includes those who

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<sup>167</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 502: "Et ideo etiam nunc videtur de quibusdam quorum tota intentio est."

<sup>168</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 502: "Praeterea quaeritur, quare aliae scientiae communicantur malis, cum theologia praecipiat non communicari malis, MATTH. VII (6): 'Nolite sanctum dare canibus neque margarita spargere ante porcos.'"

<sup>169</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 502: "Ad hoc ultimum dicendum est, quod veritas aliarum scientiarum traditur per conexiones syllogisticas necessarias, quia habet ordinem ad principia rationis, ex quibus deducitur."

<sup>170</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 502: "et ideo habet virtutem coactivum et etiam resistentes invitos trahit ad se." Albert's authority for this claim is Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.5, 1015b, 6-15.

resist some truth it aims to certify, to align not only with the truth that it concludes according to reason, but also with the very mechanisms that certify it as truth. Albert for this reason will come to articulate in this part of his commentary why philosophical disciplines are ultimately limited by a superior theological truth that is separated from them, but in a way more concerned with the liberty Christianity promises than the proper relationship between subaltern and superior sciences.

This is because, of course, “the truth of Holy Scripture is above the principles of reason.”<sup>171</sup> As such, “it is manifested simply through a divine light, which is something that informs the conscience, so that it may consent to itself.”<sup>172</sup> Here Albert qualifies even further his prior arguments about the role of the divine light he had initially outlined in his *Super I Sententiarum* and will later discuss in his *Summa theologiae*. The divine light which Albert claimed in those texts infuses the supernatural virtues into the theologian’s soul and affectively confirms them in the truth of their knowledge now is also said to set their conscience aright. The divine light thus works on that power of the soul, which Albert elsewhere, following convention, calls *synderesis*, wherein he had placed the principles of moral judgement and which he consequently considered to be the ground for correct action.<sup>173</sup> Therefore the divine light “is not communicated except to those who convert themselves devotedly to it,” that is, who are prepared in advance to receive the Good the light makes available and which also further orders them to that very Good.<sup>174</sup> And it seems that this is an entirely self-sufficient process that does not

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<sup>171</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 502: “Sed veritas sacrae scripturae est supra principia rationis.”

<sup>172</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 502-503: “sed manifestatur quodam simplici lumine divino, quod est quaedam res informans conscientiam, ut sibi consentiatur.”

<sup>173</sup> On Albert’s account of conscience, see Stanley B. Cunningham, “Albertus Magnus on Natural Law,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28.4 (1980): 489-492 and Christian Trottmann, “Le syndérèse selon Albert le Grand,” in *Albertus Magnus*, 255-273.

<sup>174</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 503: “Et ideo non communicatur nisi his qui devote se convertunt ad ipsam.”

depend on philosophical formation (even as it does not necessarily foreclose or contradict such training either) because it is principally made available to a reader of scripture who is moved to embody the piety specific to Christianity Albert describes elsewhere.

At a key moment in his commentary on Epistle VII, however, Albert does concede (as did Dionysius) that the Christian theologian may advocate for the faith by deploying arguments like those of the philosophers, but “it must be said that while asserting the truth of the faith philosophical reasons must not be introduced as the principal ones.”<sup>175</sup> This is because, Albert continues, the truth of Christian faith “is proven *a priori*, as it were, from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit...and *a posteriori*, as it were, from the miracles which manifest the divine power and the truth of prophecy.”<sup>176</sup> Albert means by this that philosophy can be deployed because the very *seconдарiness* of its truth allows it to confirm and augment the truth *primarily* known to and demonstrated by Christians through divine inspiration and the miracles of the prophets without any recourse to reason. Philosophy can function as propaedeutic to and protreptic for Christian truth but, as something secondary, is apparently not necessary for that truth.<sup>177</sup> However, Albert also holds that the use of philosophy is particularly effective against the philosophers themselves who have been habituated to logical investigation of the truths conveyed through disputation because it has the power to generate the requisite state that ought to lead to conversion.<sup>178</sup> Albert consequently concludes, in a fiery aside well known to students of his thought, that philosophy

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<sup>175</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 504: “Dicendum, quod in asserenda fidei veritate non sunt introducendae rationes philosophicae sicut principales.”

<sup>176</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 504: “sed probatur tamquam vero ex priori ex inspiratione spiritus sancti, tamquam vero ex posterior ex miraculis, quae divinam ostendunt potentiam et prophetiae veritatem.”

<sup>177</sup> Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 88-115 offers a similar account of philosophy in its relation to theology according to the *Summa contra gentiles* of Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>178</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 504: “Sed sicut secundariae induci possunt et sunt utiles, maxime contra philosophos, qui propter hoc quod sunt nutriti in verbis perscrutatis, versum est eis quasi in naturam, quod non possunt recipere sine sermone perscrutato. Et ideo sancti utuntur contra eos ad assertionem fidei rationibus propriis ipsorum; et hoc non est inconveniens, et concedimus rationes ad hoc.”

has a role to play in Christian life “although some, because they are ignorant, wish to fight by all means the use of philosophy, and especially among the Preachers, where no one resists them, just as if they were brute animals blaspheming in those things which they do not understand.”<sup>179</sup>

As such, Albert turns to the final part of Epistle VII where Dionysius attempts to affirm the faith against Apollophanes. In particular, Albert explains, Dionysius “shows how Apollophanes through his very own wisdom [...] is able to be led to God.”<sup>180</sup> Turning Apollophanes’ own critique against him, Albert shows, after citing 1 Cor. 1:21 and Rom. 1:21, how Dionysius accuses his accuser of “indecently” using philosophy against the faith and proves that “it was necessary that the true philosophers be driven up on high to knowledge of God.”<sup>181</sup> Albert accordingly concludes with a strong normative judgement that philosophy as the examination of what exists should lead to the Christian knowledge of God “because from existing things someone ought to come to the cause of existing things” and because “one ought from knowledge to come into the giver and cause of knowledge.”<sup>182</sup> Yet this statement presents Albert with a series of problems, which he articulates as objections to Dionysius’ claim about the necessity of this philosophical conversion, because “the principles of divine things are not sufficient for philosophy.” This means, according to Albert, that a cause of knowledge and being like God that is hidden in and through what it causes cannot be ascertained rationally, because

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<sup>179</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 504: “quamvis QUIDAM, quia nesciunt, omnibus modis velint impugnare usum philosophiae, et maxime in praedicatoribus, ubi nullus eis resistit, tamquam bruta Animalia blasphemantes in his quae ignorant.”

<sup>180</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 504: “quomodo Apollophanes per propriam sapientiam [...] in deum duci poterat.”

<sup>181</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 504-505: “et ideo oportebat, quod veri philosophi sursum agerentur in dei cognitionem.”

<sup>182</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 505: “et ex his de quibus est philosophia, quia ex existentibus debet quis venire in causam existentium, et ex ipsa philosophia, quia ex cognitione debet devenire in datorem et causam cognitionis.”

“God infinitely exceeds every creature [and] is not fully manifest in any effect.”<sup>183</sup> If this is so, a philosopher like Apollophanes cannot be driven up on high by philosophy as Dionysius himself had argued!

Albert’s solution to this problem is to isolate the two ways someone may be driven up on high to God and he proceeds by explicitly highlighting how this relates to the limits of ratiocination. Albert accordingly explains that one can be driven into something “either simply as in that which is concluded by demonstration...or through wonder, when something is approved where an account is not able to produce comprehension.”<sup>184</sup> The former way, Albert concludes, can only maintain the philosopher within reason whereas according to the latter “it is necessary that they be driven up on high to divine things.” The philosophers “ought to wonder at, rather than attack” Christian doctrine, Albert continues, for “although philosophy proves nothing against the divine truth which faith hands over, it nevertheless does not reach it, but has some boundary up to which it comes and knows that it cannot comprehend it fully through itself.”<sup>185</sup> Albert’s suggestion is therefore that the philosopher can achieve such wonder when they authentically grant reason’s limits and recognize that some part of the truth known to and felt by the Christian according to divine inspiration cannot be attained or refuted by them through demonstration. What is wonderful about theology, it seems, is that it orients the philosophers toward the real, certain knowledge that will beatify and divinize their minds and which leads to

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<sup>183</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 505: “Ad idem: ad causam, quae non manifestatur tota in effectu, non potest deveniri per suum effectuum; sed deus, cum sit in infinitum excedens omnem creaturam, non manifestatur totus in aliquot effectu; ergo ex effectibus eius, de quibus est philosophia, non potest sursum agi in ipsum.”

<sup>184</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 505: “Dicendum, quod sursum agi in aliquid est dupliciter: aut simpliciter sicut in id quod demonstratione concluditur, et sic philosophi non possunt sursum agi in divina, aut per admirationem, dum probatur aliquid in cuius comprehensionem ratio non potest, et sic oportebat eos sursum agi in divina.”

<sup>185</sup> Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii Epistulas* VII, 505: “Quamvis enim philosophia nihil probet contra divinam veritatem, quam tradit fides, tamen non pertingit ad ipsam, sed habet aliquem terminum, usquequo devenit et scit se tamen non totum comprehendere, et ideo debet admirari, non impugnare.”

actual salvation. Wonder here is therefore not at all the response to the world of existing things that appears before the philosopher, and which calls them to determine the causal structure beneath the confusion that the senses perceive. It is the direct result of the divine light that God imparts to the Christian contemplative alone, irrespective of their ability to reason. The very difference between philosophical and Christian contemplation that Albert introduced in his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* is consequently deployed here to good effect. This is because the reason that drives philosophy and enables it to conceptualize the divine, Albert suggests in all the texts considered above, must give way to a wonder that affectively orients the will and the intellect of the Christian toward true beatitude, where God is enjoyed and loved by a pious mind, not only in this life but also in the next. Whether and how this conception of Christian theology in its relation to the divine science of the philosophers mattered to Albert's disciple Ulrich of Strasburg shall be taken up below.

*Platonis philosophiam... Aristoteli praeferentes: Ulrich of Strasburg and the Systematization of Albert*

Ulrich of Strasburg, likely born around 1220, would have entered the Order of Preachers sometime in 1245, and is perhaps the most important of Albert's many students at the Dominican *studium generale* he helped to establish in Cologne, besides Thomas Aquinas.<sup>186</sup> Elected Prior of the Dominican province of *Teutonia* in 1272, Ulrich was before that an influential lector, most likely at the house of studies in Strasburg, which was the second most important center of learning in Germany after the *studium* in Cologne. During this time he taught John of Freiburg,

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<sup>186</sup> The definitive intellectual biography of Ulrich remains Martin Grabmann, "Studien über Ulrich von Strasburg. Bilder Wissenschaftlichen Lebens und Strebens aus der Schule Alberts des Grossen," in *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben: Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Scholastik und Mystik*, vol. 1 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1984), 147-221. For recent work on Ulrich in English that builds upon Grabmann, see Alessandro Palazzo, "Ulrich of Strasbourg's Philosophical Theology: Textual and Doctrinal remarks on *De summo bono*," in *Meister und Schüler*, ed. by Andreas Speer and Thomas Jeschke (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 205-42 and Alessandro Palazzo, "Philosophy and Theology in the German Dominican *Scholae* in the Late Middle Ages: The Case of Ulrich of Strasbourg and Berthold Wimpfen," in *Philosophy and Theology in the Studia of the Religious Orders and at the Papal and Royal Courts*, ed. by Kent Emery Jr, William J. Courtenay and Steven M. Metzger (Brepols: Turnhout, 2012), 79-90.

the author of the popular *Summa Confessorum*, an incredibly popular and influential pastoral manual that aimed to work penitential theology into a science by drawing on the *Summa de poenitentis* of Raymond of Peñafort, the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas as well as the work of Ulrich himself.<sup>187</sup> Although Ulrich passed away before he was able to successfully complete his theological studies at the University in Paris after the end of his time as prior in 1277 and thus never earned the title of *magister theologiae*, John reports in the prologue to his *Summa* that Ulrich had a reputation as a brilliant teacher whose school produced many distinguished disciples and who was skilled as much in theology as he was learned in philosophy.<sup>188</sup> Ulrich therefore belonged to the illustrious lineage of solemn Dominican masters, John explains, which included Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Peter of Tarantaise, who would become Pope Innocent V.

Ulrich's masterwork is the *De summo bono*, which he likely began between 1268 and 1272 before he was elected prior provincial.<sup>189</sup> The *De summo bono* itself, although incomplete, is important as it represents one of the first sustained attempts to comprehensively systematize

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<sup>187</sup> Albert Fries, "Johannes von Freiburg, Schüler Ulrichs von Strassburg," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 18.2 (1951): 332-340. For Ulrich's juridical thought and its relation to his reputation as a pastoral and moral theologian, see Alessandro Palazzo, "'Ulricus de Argentina... theologus, philosophus, ymmo et iurista.' Le dottrine di teologia morale e di pastorale penitenziale nel VI libro del *De summo bono* e la loro diffusione nel tardo Medioevo," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 55 (2008): 64-97 and Sara Ciancioso, "New Perspectives on Ulrich of Strasbourg's *De summo bono* IV: an Analysis of the Legal Sources," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 63 (2016): 196-215. On the *Summa Confessorum* itself and its influence, see Leonard E. Boyle, "The *Summa Confessorum* of John of Freiburg and the Popularization of the Moral Teaching of St. Thomas and of Some of His Contemporaries," in *St. Thomas Aquinas 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies*, ed. by Armand A. Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical University of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 245-268.

<sup>188</sup> John of Freiburg, *Prologus in priorem libellum quaestionum causalium*, in *Summa Confessorum* (Lyon, 1518), cited in Fries, "Johannes von Freiburg," 333: "Sunt autem haec collecta maxime de libris de horum Doctorum memorati Ordinis, videlicet fratris Alberti quondam Ratisponensis episcopi, fratris Thomae de Aquino, fratris Petri de Tarantasia postmodum summi pontificis Innocentii quinti, magistorum solemnium in theologia. Item fratris Ulrici quondam lectoris Argentinensis eiusdem Ordinis. Qui quamvis magister in theologia non fuerit, scientia tamen magistris inferior non extitit, ut in libro suo, quem tam de theologia quam de philosophia conscripsit, evidenter innotescit et famosorum lectorum de scholis ipsius egressorum numerus protestatur. Une et poster provincialatus Teutoniae laudabiliter administrato officio, Parisius ad legendum directus ante lectionis inceptionem ibidem a Domino est assumptus."

<sup>189</sup> Palazzo, "Philosophy and Theology in the German Dominican *Scholae* in the Late Middle Ages," 82, n. 28.



and promote the thought of Albert and is divided into six books that discuss the essence of God, the divine persons, creation, the incarnation, moral theology.<sup>190</sup> Ulrich's *De summo bono* thus laid the groundwork for the subsequent German Dominican theologians who would make Albert's system the focus of their own philosophical and theological speculation. Alessandro Palazzo for this reason argues that the *De summo bono* is "a reflection of the lessons of Ulrich the lector in the Strasbourg *studium* and of tendencies emerging within the cultural policy of the Dominican Order and the province of *Teutonia*."<sup>191</sup> Ulrich's glowing portrayal of his teacher Albert in the *De summo bono* as "a man divine in all the sciences to such a degree that he is able to be called the wonder and miracle of our times and an expert in the magical arts" also exerted a profound effect on subsequent members of the German Dominican School.<sup>192</sup> Despite this allegiance, however, Ulrich frequently reformulated Albert's central claims and should not be viewed as a mere compiler of Albertist thought even as he often inserted texts abstracted verbatim from Albert's various works directly into his own treatise.<sup>193</sup>

The other central authority present within Ulrich's *De summo bono* is Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, who as both philosopher and theologian represents the principal conceptual

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<sup>190</sup> Loris Sturlese, "Albert der Grosse und die deutsche philosophische Kultur des Mittelalters," in *Homo Divinus: Philosophische projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007), 3-5 and Alain de Libera, *Introduction à la mystique rhénane: D' Albert le Grand à Maître Eckhart* (Paris : O.E.I.L., 1989), 99-100, who speaks of Ulrich for this reason as the co-founder, alongside Albert, of German Dominican theology.

<sup>191</sup> Palazzo, "Philosophy and Theology in the German Dominican *Scholae* in the Late Middle Ages," 83.

<sup>192</sup> Loris Sturlese, "Saints et Magiciens." Ulrich's real admiration for and dependence on Albert are also evident in the letters he sent to his former teacher after he was elected prior provincial against his will. See Epistle 47 and Epistle 50 in Heinrich Finke, *Ungedruckte Dominkanerbriefe des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1891), 80; 82.

<sup>193</sup> Against an earlier tendency to view Ulrich as a "passive" or "docile" compiler of Albert's work, see Alain de Libera, "Ulrich de Strasbourg, lecteur d' Albert le Grand," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 32 (1985): 105-36 and Palazzo, "Ulrich of Strasbourg's Philosophical Theology," which emphasize where Ulrich disagrees with specific positions Albert had formulated or where he systematically develops a philosophical or theological argument as an "autonomous thinker with an individual intellectual profile." Carol Putnam, "Ulrich of Strasbourg and the Aristotelian Causes," in *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, vol. 1, ed. by John K. Ryan (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1961), 139-159 represents a good example of earlier work that framed Ulrich as a rewriter of his teacher who lacked the philosophical originality or speculative daring of Albert's other disciple, Thomas Aquinas.

persona that Ulrich deploys as he articulates his own claims. As Gabriel Théry noted long ago in an important study of the overarching structure of the first two books of Ulrich's *De summo bono*, Ulrich's major systematic work can be viewed as an extensive commentary and paraphrase of Pseudo-Dionysius' *De divinis nominibus* as this had been explained by Albert in Cologne.<sup>194</sup> In the prologue that he attached to the work, while discussing the form of the *De summo bono*, Ulrich consequently maintains that as an author he will imitate the approach of Dionysius, the most divine guide, who had declared in his letter to Polycarp that holy men possess the right to judge the truth and that it is useless to engage in debates about every opinion that conflicts with what they believe.<sup>195</sup> Ulrich also concludes the prologue by citing Dionysius' prayer directed to the Trinity at the beginning of the *De mystica theologia*, noting that according to Scripture it is proper at the beginning of a theological work to invoke God.<sup>196</sup> These two texts, the Letter to Polycarp and the *De mystica theologia*, as we have just seen, were important Dionysian works where Albert the Great had outlined his understanding of the proper relationship between Christian and philosophical theology as contemplative disciplines. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, to see them cited by the philosopher and theologian who sought to develop and promote Albert's intellectual project.

The continuity and discontinuity between Albert and Ulrich's thought is perhaps most evident in the way that Ulrich in *De summo bono* I, 2 defines the nature of Christian theology as

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<sup>194</sup> Gérard Théry, "Originalité du plan de la "Summa de bono" d'Ulrich de Strasbourg," *Revue Thomiste* 27 (1922): 376-97.

<sup>195</sup> Ulrich of Strasbourg, *De summo bono* I, 1, 1, ed. by Burkhard Mojsisch (Hamburg: Felix Mainer, 1987), 6: "et ideo verbis eorum librum hunc non diffundemus nec discussionibus opinionum, sed magnum duces divinum Dionysium imitabitur, qui dicit in *Epistula ad Polycarpum*: 'Sufficere arbitror sanctis viris, si verum ipsum in se ipso possint cognoscere et dicere, secundum quod vere habet...'"

<sup>196</sup> Ulrich of Strasbourg, *De summo bono* I, 1, 1, 6: "Cum autem scriptum sit *Sap.* 7: 'Optavi et datus est mihi sensus; et invocari et venit in me spiritus sapientiae'; 'ego' quoque, qui 'novissimus vigilavi et quasi qui colligit acinos post vindemiatores in benedictione Dei et ipse speravi,' *Eccli.* 33, primo monium ad invocandum eum, in cuius 'manu' sumus 'nos et sermones nostri', totum me convertito dicens: 'Trinitas supersubstantialis et superdea et superbona inspectrix divinae sapientiae Christianorum, etc.'"

divine science.<sup>197</sup> Yet he also presents a few characteristic twists of his own based on the fact that the *De summo bono* is an explicitly theological rather than philosophical work. In chapter two, which attempts to demonstrate that theology is a science and to outline its subject and unity, Ulrich argues that

since theology commends in accordance with its subject, which is God, its own attributes and relative properties through the testimony of the divine truth—which in itself is most valid in the same way that the First Truth is truer than all other truths, although we do not entirely grasp its validity—it is evident that in itself theology is a science and yet in us it does not beget knowledge but begets faith, since this medium is uncertain in us, even though faith is called a science insofar as this medium is the most valid which is possible in these matters given our current capacities.<sup>198</sup>

In other words, Christian theology is received and experienced by humanity in faith, although it is apodictic and intuitive for God as the Truth itself, since theological truth is only known with complete certainty by the divine rather than created mind. Given that Christian theology, for this reason, is the human science of faith, according to Ulrich its subject is the object of faith (*fidei obiectum*) insofar as this informs all subsequent understanding.<sup>199</sup> This entails that Christian theology is not just a metaphysical description of the divine nature. Citing Albert's own description of the nature of Christian theology from his commentary on the *Liber Sententiarum*, therefore, Ulrich concludes that the subject of the theology of the Christians is not God as such (since only God can know Godself) but rather God as He is the beginning and end of all things,

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<sup>197</sup> Christian Trottman, "La theologie des theologiens et celle des philosophes selon Albert le Grand, Siger de Brabant, Thierry de Freiberg et Ulrich de Strasbourg," *Revue thomiste* 98.4 (1998): 531-561, esp. 542-558.

<sup>198</sup> Ulrich of Strasbourg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 2, 30: "Unde cum theologia de subiecto, quod Deus est, probet sua attributa et proprietates relativas per testimonium divinae veritatis, quod est in se firmissimum, sicut prima veritas omnibus aliis verior est, licet nos eius firmitatem non plene capiamus, patet, quod ipsa in se scientia est et tamen in nobis non generat scientiam, sed fidem, quia hoc medium, quia hoc medium in nobis incertum est, quae tamen fides etiam scientia vocatur, in quantum etiam quoad nos est hoc medium firmitus, quod in hac materia esse potest."

<sup>199</sup> Ulrich of Strasbourg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 2, 30: "Cum enim haec scientia sit scientia fidei, per quam ea intelliguntur, quae fide credentur – secundum illud 'nisi credideritis, non intelligetis' –, oportet illud esse eius subiectum, quod est fidei obiectum."

the Alpha and Omega of Rev 1:8.<sup>200</sup> Christian theology will ultimately come to define, for Ulrich, a particular way for the Christian to apprehend and inhabit the world insofar as it is a science of divinity characterized by specific theoretical and practical commitments.

At the level of discursive description, for instance, faith and its science supplement and sublimate philosophical metaphysics by broadening the latter's account of the nature of God and the World and by elevating merely human knowledge to a knowledge that surpasses it. "Since faith perfects the natural intellect according to how it is connatural to it," Ulrich therefore adds, "it produces knowledge of God not only as such and according to His attributes and properties, but also according to how He manifests himself as the Beginning in the works of creation and providential government."<sup>201</sup> That is, Christian theological discourse considers God not just as the ground of reality but as its creator and governor. This means that creation has a purpose, a telos. Ulrich consequently asserts that faith also reveals God "as the specific End which attracts human nature toward itself through the work of restoration and the diffusion of graces and the institution of the sacraments."<sup>202</sup> Like Albert before him, Ulrich therefore insists that it is the particularity of Christian religion, insofar as it is orientated toward the reception of grace, that informs how one ought to apprehend Christian theology as a science informed by the salvific goal of humanity. Faith introduces a normative dimension to the human sciences by directing and regulating human action according to the providential order that God has introduced into

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<sup>200</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 2, 30: "'Subiectum' vero 'huius scientiae est Deus', in quantum 'ipse est Alpha et Omega, principium et finis,'" referencing Albert the Great, I *Sent.* 1, 2.

<sup>201</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 2, 30: "Cum autem fides perficiat naturalem intellectum secundum modum sibi connaturalem, ipsa facit cognoscere Deum non solum in se et in suis attributis et proprietatibus, sed etiam secundum quod se manifestat ut principium in operibus creationis et gubernationis."

<sup>202</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 2, 31: "et in quantum etiam est finis specialiter attrahens sibi humanam naturam per opera redemptionis et diffusionis gratiarum et institutionis sacramentorum." For both claims Ulrich refers to the authority of several articles in the Athanasian Creed.

nature and by establishing the Church as a sacramental community with a specific set of pious obligations that alone guarantee human salvation.

This understanding of Christian theology as the science of faith leads Ulrich to articulate how Christian theology differs from and goes beyond the divine science described by the philosophers. As Alain de Libera has noted, Ulrich does so in the *De summo bono* by redeploying the Peripatetic understanding of wisdom as this was articulated by Albert in order to deny philosophy's claim to this title, just as Albert himself had done in his explicitly theological writings.<sup>203</sup> By doing so Ulrich develops an argument he had already introduced in *De summo bono* I, 1, 7 concerning the natural disposition of the intellect toward the knowledge of God. There, taking up claims from Albert's commentaries on Dionysius as well as his *De intellectu*, Ulrich considers the difference between natural and graced knowledge, concluding that

God is not known through his essence in natural knowledge but through a likeness—which likeness, nevertheless, has not been abstracted from Him... but rather what has been caused by Him and impressed onto every creature in different particular and specific ways has been inserted into our intellect which is an image and likeness of Him.<sup>204</sup>

Ulrich therefore insists, in a move that will be repeated in a different way in Dietrich of Freiberg's subsequent noetics, that the mind does not produce a mental concept of the divine. Rather human understanding itself is structured by the image and likeness of God that God formally bestowed upon it at creation and which it naturally possesses within itself.

The mind through its own effort is therefore naturally capable of a *partial* knowledge of God as He is expressed through the likeness that He imparts to what He has created, and which

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<sup>203</sup> de Libera, *Metaphysique et noétique*, 67-9; *Introduction à la mystique rhénane*, 103-114. Alain de Libera's argument has been developed by Alessandra Beccarisi, "La «scientia divina» dei filosofi nel *De summo bono* di Ulrico di Strasburgo," *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 61 (2006): 137-63.

<sup>204</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 1, 7, 19: "Deus naturali cognitione cognoscitur non per essentiam suam, sed per similitudinem, quae tamen similitudo non est abstracta ab ipso... sed potius illa causata ab ipso et impressa omnibus creaturis diversimode singulis et specialiter nostro intellectui est inserta, qui est eius imago et similitudo."

exists within the human mind which is His image. Even if the light of grace fortifies the human mind and offers a greater conception of God, Ulrich maintains, “superadded grace is nevertheless not required for natural knowledge [of God] through natural things because the intellect as such is sufficient to know Him since it possesses a likeness of Him within itself or is able to grasp Him through the senses.”<sup>205</sup> Ulrich contends that some knowledge of God is hence possible according to the inherent power of the human to reason even if such knowledge does not ascertain God as He truly is but only a likeness of God that Godself embeds in nature. Yet knowledge of God’s essence is supernatural in origin, Ulrich concludes, so the faith that is poured out by God as grace must produce an understanding or awareness of God that is more extensive and intensive than the knowledge of God’s likeness that the human mind can obtain without divine assistance.<sup>206</sup> His optimism about the human capacity to attain some knowledge of God naturally—that is to say, philosophically—is thus tempered by his insistence that the truth that faith imparts transcends and extends it. Ulrich therefore recapitulates Albert’s own argument maintaining the same, suggesting that like his teacher he understood Christian contemplation as a movement beyond discursive ratiocination.

Given the limits he imposes on purely natural knowledge of God, Ulrich in *De summo bono* I, 2, 5 argues that only Christian theology is true wisdom insofar as it agrees with the definition of wisdom the philosophers themselves provided. Ulrich argues, therefore,

that the fact that theological wisdom is different from natural wisdom is shown by the Apostle in 1 Cor 2[:6-7], who says that “we speak wisdom among the perfect but it is not the wisdom of this age,” etc. For, according to the Philosopher, wisdom is

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<sup>205</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 1, 7, 20: “Quamvis autem lumen gratiae superveniens lumini naturae perficiat intellectum nostrum ampliori Dei cognitione... tamen ad ipsam naturalem cognitionem non requiritur gratia superaddita naturalibus, quia intellectus per se sufficit cognoscere illud, cuius in se habet similitudinem vel per sensum accipere potest.”

<sup>206</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 1, 7, 20: “Et ex hoc patet differentia huius cognitionis ad cognitionem fidei, quae est gratia, scilicet fidei cognitio est supernaturalis et a Deo infunditur et maior est cognitione naturali quantitate extensiva, quia plura de Deo cognoscit, et quantitate intensiva, quia divini limpidus videntur in luce divina quam in luce humana.”

the virtue of knowledge; but according to the same authority a virtue is what is greatest according to capacity. Whence, since the greatest thing according to the capacity of all intelligent investigation is the knowledge of the highest object, that is, of God, it is clear that wisdom is principally a science about God, although it is also secondarily knowledge of the other divine things, just as is evident from philosophical wisdom, which is called metaphysics. And among the wisdoms that one is more perfect which pours out more about divine things.<sup>207</sup>

Ulrich's definition of Christian theology as a wisdom in this chapter shifts registers. He accordingly emphasizes its nature as a superior kind of metaphysics, whose account of the divine exceeds the science of being qua being which the wisdom of the philosophers was supposed to constitute. Divine wisdom greatly exceeds the human, according to Ulrich, who states that Paul in 1 Cor 2:7-8 accordingly declared it to be "a wisdom hidden in mystery... which none of the princes of this age has known."<sup>208</sup> For Ulrich this means that the wisdom revealed to the Christians alone is properly wisdom and therefore it alone realizes the truth of its name unlike philosophical metaphysics which does not completely ascertain the divine that it claims to fully grasp.<sup>209</sup> Whereas Albert was willing to concede in some of his non-theological treatises that the philosophers did possess and cultivate a wisdom with its own claims to the truth (which nevertheless ought to be subordinated to the higher wisdom possessed by the Christian theologians), Ulrich instead seems to consign philosophical wisdom almost entirely to the world of error despite his earlier argument in the first treatise of *De summo bono* I that the human intellect can know and attain God to a limited degree without an infusion of grace. God, the

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<sup>207</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 5, 39: "Sapientiam esse theologiam differentem a sapientis naturali ostendit Apostolus, I Cor. 2: 'Sapientiam,' inquit, 'loquimur inter perfectos, sapientiam vero non huius saeculi' et cetera. Sapientia enim secundum Philosophum est 'virtus scientiae'; virtus autem secundum eundem est 'utlimum' de potentia. Unde cum ultimum de potentia omnis intellectivae cognitionis sit cognitio altissimi obiecti, id est, Dei, patet, quod sapientia est scientia de Deo principaliter, licet etiam secundario sit aliorum divinatorum, sicut patet in sapientia philosophica, quae est metaphysica. Et inter sapientias illa est perfectior, quae plus in divinis profundatur."

<sup>208</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 5, 39: "Et ex omnibus supra habitis patet, quod in hoc nimis excedit sapientia divina humana, et ideo Apostolus vocat eam 'sapientiam in mysterio absconditam, quam nemo principium huius saeculi cognovit.'"

<sup>209</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 5, 39: "Unde patet hanc solam veram esse sapientiam, quae sola veritatem sui nominis attingit."

subject of the metaphysics of the philosophers, is more fully and truly known by the Christians through their theology.

As such, Ulrich argues that Christian theology alone cultivates the habit of wisdom which Aristotle had described in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, drawing on Albert's commentary on this text to articulate how it does so.<sup>210</sup> The Philosopher, Ulrich begins, attributed three qualities to the habit of wisdom. He notes first that the habit of wisdom "is what is highest, since it is the perfection of the understanding insofar as it is what is highest and divine in the understanding according to its activity with respect to its highest object."<sup>211</sup> Wisdom also makes one most like God, Ulrich continues, since it perfects what in the human is both most divine and a likeness of the divine.<sup>212</sup> Finally, Ulrich concludes that, by making us most like God, the habit of wisdom "makes us most loveable to God, because, since the wise man loves their own good, God (about whom it is said in Wisdom 11:25 that 'You love all things which exist') by the common love for all things loves someone more where the divine good has been more completed."<sup>213</sup> All this entails, Ulrich argues, that "our wisdom" as an *affective science* that cultivates both desire and desirability is the instruction mentioned in Eccles 6:23 which must be received from the one true teacher that Ulrich identifies following Matt 23:8-10 as the Christ who is himself the Truth of Wisdom.<sup>214</sup> Ulrich accordingly maintains that "the name of wisdom

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<sup>210</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 6, 45: "Habitui etiam sapientiae in *Ethicis* tria attribuit Philosophus."

<sup>211</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 6, 45: "quod altissimus est, cum sit perfectio intellectus secundum id, quod altissimum et divinum in ipso est ad operationem respectu altissimi obiecti."

<sup>212</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 6, 45: "et quod facit Deo simillimum, quia perficit id, quod divinum et divinae similitudinis est in nobis."

<sup>213</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 6, 45: "et per hoc facit Deo amantissimum, quia, cum sapiens diligit bonum suum, Deus illa dilectione communi ad omnia, de qua dicitur *Sap.* 11: 'Diligis omnia, quae sunt,' magis diligit eum, in quo bonum divinum magis completum est."

<sup>214</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 6, 45: "Si autem haec nostra sapientia sumatur secundum modum huic scientiae congruum, quae est scientia affectiva, tunc verum est de ipsa illud *Eccli.* 6: 'Sapientiae ... doctrinae' ab uno solo vero doctore accepta. 'Unus enim est magister vester,' 'Christus', *Matth.* 23. Est veritate rei secundum nomen eius, scilicet sapientiae."



defines the habit of divine knowledge, which is not true knowledge unless it is affective”— particularly since Eccles 1:14, “the love of God is honorable wisdom,” shows that “the affect of charity itself is called wisdom.”<sup>215</sup> The *De summo bono* thus asserts that Christianity properly fulfills the promise of philosophy to cultivate true wisdom in order to become God and does so in keeping with Albert’s insistence that, as an affective science, Christian theology through love directs one toward a knowledge of God that transcends not only the virtues which can be acquired naturally but also those which God infuses in this life through the theological virtues of faith and hope.<sup>216</sup>

It is now possible to briefly summarize Ulrich’s understanding of Christian theology and philosophy insofar as this depends upon and departs from that of Albert. Like Albert before him Ulrich’s approach to Christian theology is informed by Pseudo-Dionysius and the conviction that as a divine science Christian theology transcends and transforms what the created human mind is capable of apprehending rationally. Ulrich’s presentation of the theology of the Christians in *De summo bono* reveals that Ulrich also thought that Christian theology was primarily affective and oriented toward the reception of the infused theological virtues that perfect the human and orient them toward true beatitude, just like his teacher. However, Ulrich insists much more strongly than Albert had on the uncertainty that characterizes Christian theology as a science that takes faith as its object. Ulrich, even more than Albert, was also highly critical of philosophical wisdom and presented Christian theology as that which is truly wisdom rather than as a true wisdom that is higher than a wisdom that partially errs. Perhaps most importantly of all, Ulrich

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<sup>215</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 6, 45-46: “Nomen enim sapientiae dicit habitum cognitionis divinae, quae cognitio vera non est, nisi sit affectiva. Unde ipse affectus caritatis vocatur sapientia, *Eccli.* 1: ‘Dilectio Dei honorabilis sapientia.’”

<sup>216</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 6, 45-46: “Patet ergo, quod sic haec sapientia virtute continet in se omnes habitus speculativos et affectivos et operativos habilitantes nos ad Dei cognitionem; et sic patet, quomodo in praedictis tribus excellit non solum habitus acquisitos, sed etiam omnes infusos habitus excedit.”

insists that Christian theology represents a discourse about God and the world which is predicated on the Christian belief that God is Alpha and Omega, the efficient and final cause of creation. This means that Christian theology is not or not simply the metaphysics that represents the culmination of the Peripatetic curriculum, and the philosophical account of the universe consequently requires some correction. It is to this philosophical account that I now turn.

Ulrich provides a lengthy summary of the nature and activity of God as creator in *De summo bono* IV, 1 that also offers a summary and critique of the cosmology of the philosophers.<sup>217</sup> As Loris Sturlese and Maria Rita Pagnoni-Sturlese have both insisted, this part of the *De summo bono* holds an important place in the German Dominican systematization of Albert's philosophical and theological problematic because of its high concentration of word-for-word extracts from and doctrinal rearticulation and expansion of Albert's *Liber de causis et processu universitatis*.<sup>218</sup> It also represents a significant first attempt by a German Dominican author to explicitly align the School's doctrinal approach with Platonism rather than Peripateticism. Ulrich does so by insisting on the priority of the approach of Plato over Aristotle when assessing the unity of God as First Cause—without necessarily recognizing the Platonic nature of the *Liber de causis* upon which Albert's doctrines about the metaphysics of flow are based. In *De summo bono* II, 2, 2, as Palazzo notes,<sup>219</sup> Ulrich had already noted following Albert that the Peripatetics, when considering God as philosophers according to how he is grasped physically, treat the First Principle as identical to the First Mover that causes through movement whereas, following the Platonists, they are able to hypothesize that the divine as the First

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<sup>217</sup> A comprehensive study of this treatise with a critical edition published before that of the *Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicorum Medii Aevi* can be found in Francis J. Lescoe, *God as First Principle in Ulrich of Strasbourg* (New York: Alba House, 1979). See also de Libera, *Introduction à la mystique rhénane*, 114-32.

<sup>218</sup> Sturlese, *Homo divinus*, 3-5; Maria Rita Pagnoni-Sturlese, "À propos du néoplatonisme d'Albert le Grand: Aventures et mésaventures de quelques textes d'Albert dans le Commentaire sur Proclus de Berthold de Moosburg," *Archives de Philosophie* 43 (1980): 635-654, esp. 649-50.

<sup>219</sup> Palazzo, "Ulrich of Strasbourg's Philosophical Theology," 227.

Efficient Cause is capable of producing *ex nihilo* without movement.<sup>220</sup> In *De summo bono* IV, 1, 1, referring back to this argument, Ulrich consequently asserts that “the fact that this Principle is one we have proved earlier in a philosophical way through a consideration of the First Mover, but now we will prove it again through a description of the First Principle, which we previously called the First Efficient Cause, preferring in this the philosophy of Plato to that of Aristotle.”<sup>221</sup> By insisting that reasoning about God based on his nature as efficient cause (i.e, the method of Aristotelian metaphysics) was to proceed in a restricted philosophical way, Ulrich opened up the possibility for considering the Platonic approach as more akin to Christian theology. As Irene Zavattero rightly concludes, this is because Ulrich came to appreciate that Platonic philosophy was concerned with knowledge of the divine as such, whereas Peripatetic thought focused instead on the empirical observation of the perceptible universe.<sup>222</sup>

Despite the orientation toward Plato and away from Aristotle that characterises this part of the *De summo bono*, however, Ulrich’s recapitulation of Albert’s metaphysics of flow is still incredibly faithful to Albert’s original “Peripatetic” presentation of this doctrine. After a chapter that explains how what is caused flows from its cause, Ulrich in *De summo bono* IV, 1, 5 defines a form as a flow (*fluxus*) and notes that this is so because the primal source of a form is the

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<sup>220</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* II, 2, 2, 2, ed. by Alain de Libera (Hamburg: Felix Mainer, 1987), 31-32: “Propter quod etiam Peripatetici... quando loquuntur ut philosophi, dicunt nullam causam esse primam nisi motorem primum nec aliquid dicunt ipsum causare sine motu... Sed quando coniecturando de divinis loquuntur, secundum quod ratio probabilius dictat, tunc bene ponunt primam causam efficientem sine motu, sicut et Platonici posuerunt.” As evidence for this claim Ulrich, following Albert, cites the Cicero’s discussion of Aristotle in the *De natura deorum*, mistakenly attributing this work to Aristotle himself.

<sup>221</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 1, 2, ed. by Sabina Pieperhoff (Hamburg: Felix Mainer, 1987), 4: “Principium hoc unum esse supra supra probavimus via philosophica per considerationem primi motoris. Nunc autem idem probabimus ex ratione primi principii, quod primam causam efficientem supra vocavimus, Platonis philosophiam in hoc Aristoteli praeferentes.”

<sup>222</sup> Irene Zavattero, “Bonum beatitudinis: felicità e beatitudine nel *De summo bono* di Ulrico di Strasburgo,” *Memorie domincane* 42 (2011): 283-313.

Form of the light of the First Intellect which is universally active.<sup>223</sup> “The source of this form,”

Ulrich consequently explains,

is that which Plato calls the Giver of Forms, because in this way it is the first origin of the forms, which gives or pours out another form to everything, producing these by the power of this source and from this treasure by means of its own loaning, so that what flows from the First Cause to every secondary thing is one according to essence, although it exists [in the secondary things] otherwise insofar as its nature is in different things, just as differences do not multiply the essence of a genus but its existence.<sup>224</sup>

Ulrich thus recapitulates the central teaching about form that Albert had outlined in his *Liber de causis et processu universitatis*. The creative flow of forms extends from the First Cause or Divine Intellect into the rest of creation and the First Cause itself must consequently be understood as existing otherwise within all that it has produced, comparable to the way that a genus is said philosophically to be present in each individual member of a species. It is no surprise, therefore, that Ulrich following Albert also defines flow as “a simple emanation of form from that initial source which is the first original form of all things and that this is different from causation, because equivocal causality does not preserve the unity of form in what flows and in that from which it flows.”<sup>225</sup> The point here is that in equivocal causality or generation the offspring of a tree or an animal is substantially distinct from its parent and hence they are two separate beings. But in productive causality or flow the First Cause remains instead essentially connected to all subsequent being so that the First Cause always exists in each being in some

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<sup>223</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 5, 1, 27: “Quia vero nunc ostendendum est, qualiter causatum fluit a causa, primo exponendum est, quid dicitur per nomen. Sciendum est ergo, quod id, quod fluit, forma est, quia fons primus huius fluxus est forma lucis primi intellectus universaliter agentis.”

<sup>224</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 5, 1, 27: “Fons autem huius fluxus est ipse, quem Plato vocat datorem formarum eo, quod ipse ita est prima origo formarum, quod, quidquid aliud dat sive fundit formam, facit hoc virtute huius fontis et de thesauris ab ipso mutuatis, ita, quod unum est secundum essentiam, quod a primo per omnia secunda fluit, licet esse sit alterum, secundum quod haec natura est in diversis, sicut differentia non multiplicat essentiam generis, sed esse.”

<sup>225</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 5, 2, 27: “Fluxus autem est simplex emanatio formae ab hoc primo fonte, qui omnium est prima originalis forma, et hoc est aliud quam causare, quia causalitas aequivoca non servat unitatem formae in fluente et in eo, a quo fluit.”

way. Such a flow designates the entire procession of a form, Ulrich concludes, so that the form itself in its origin remains unchanged even if it finds itself transmuted because of changes in the matter within which it is received—a process that Ulrich likens to the way that the idea of health within the mind of a doctor remains stable even as a doctor applies it through his medicinal instruments in order to rehabilitate the sick body through the art of medicine.<sup>226</sup> Ulrich's *De summo bono* consequently rearticulates the Albertian account of essential rather than efficient causality abstracted from the *Liber de causis*. But Ulrich represents this as a Platonic rather than Aristotelian metaphysics.

The productive power exerted by the source of essential causality can be conceptualized in two different ways according to Ulrich. “One way is as goodness,” he explains, “which describes the source’s tendency to diffuse its own existence, as Dionysius says.” The other way is according to the source’s communicability, “because of which it not only provides for itself but also for everything else.”<sup>227</sup> This leads Ulrich to claim that because the three transcendentals that follow the good—namely, existence, life and understanding—continually flow from the First Principle into all that is subsequent to it, these activities always exist in accordance with the continual taking place of what is administered by the first being, first life and first understanding which are united in the simple essence of the divine.<sup>228</sup> Should the primal font cease to flow into

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<sup>226</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 5, 2, 27-8: “Fluxus autem dicit tantum processum formae a simplici formali subiecti alteration, illa non est de ratione fluxus nec est propter principium fluxus, sed fit propter materiam ab illis principiis, quae nihil sunt de essential principia fluxus, sicut, cum sanitas animalis fluit a sanitate artis in mente medici, adhibentur instrumenta medicinalia propter habilitationem materia, non propter formam artis, quae fluit, nec propter artem, quae est formale principium fluxus.”

<sup>227</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 5, 4, 28: “Faciens autem fluere hunc fontem duplex est secundum rationem. Unum est bonitas, quae est diffusiva sui et esse, ut dicit Dionysius. Secundum est sua communicabilitas, cum non solum sibi, sed etiam omnibus aliis sufficit.”

<sup>228</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 5, 5, 28: “Ex hoc sequitur quoddam valde notabile, scilicet quod, cum esse, vivere, intelligere sint fluxus huius fontinis in omnia, qui continue actu fluit, ipsa sunt actus continui semper existentes in fieri exerciti a primo ente et a prima vita et a primo intellectu continue eo, quod primum per essentiam suam haec agit.” Despite a whole chapter devoted to the doctrine of the transcendentals in the German Dominican School, Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 172-3 only briefly discusses Ulrich’s account of the beautiful in its relation to the Good and ignores his views on existence, life and understanding.

reality according to its goodness and communicability, therefore, existence, life and understanding will end, “just as there will be no day if the first principle of light also does not emit light for a time.”<sup>229</sup> Flow is accordingly not only the production of all that is but also the maintaining of all that is and Ulrich holds, like Albert before him, that the metaphysics of flow of the philosophers describes how this must be understood. “If the First Cause does not flow forth,” Ulrich concludes, “everything will be reduced to nothing, just as when the sun undergoes an eclipse we see that all colored things lack their proper splendor.”<sup>230</sup> In this way Ulrich reconceptualizes the understanding of the universe which is operative in Peripatetic metaphysics by subordinating it to the theological account of the good which was structural to both his own Christian divine science, as well as that of Albert himself.

Ulrich is consequently quick to point out in *De summo bono* IV, 1, 7 the errors that the philosophical account of the order of the universe represents for a divine science, like that of the Christians, concerned to elaborate how the world is created *ex nihilo* by a single God. In particular, following John Damascene, Ulrich insists that the productivity of God and the productivity of the entities beneath God differ such that only the First Cause can properly be called creative.<sup>231</sup> This entails that there is a potential problem with a philosophical discourse that wants to construe the celestial entities or angels as creators, since “every created thing is a determinate being, before which there is a being simple, universal and indeterminate, and thus no

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<sup>229</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 5, 5, 28: “Omne enim activam per essentiam continue exerit illam actionem, sicut patet in luce et in calore, et ideo, sicut nihil diei erit, si primum principium lucis etiam ad momentum non exserat lucem, sic nihil erit ens vel vivens vel intelligens, si primum vel ad momentum fluxum suum cohibeat.”

<sup>230</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 5, 5, 29: “si primum non effluat, omnia in nihilum redigentur, sicut sole patiente eclipsim omnia colorata videmus destitui proprio decore.”

<sup>231</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 7, 1, 35: “Actus proprius huius primi principia est creare, quod est ex nihilo aliquid facere, ut Damascenus libro I, capitulo 8... Unde subdit Damascenus: ‘Non similiter facit homo et Deus: homo quidem nihil ex non volens solum, sed etiam praecogitans, deinde et minibus operans et laborem sustinens et fatigationem... Deus autem volens solum ex non ente ad esse deduxit universa.’ In quantum ergo Deus per scientiam operativam est principium omnium, ut supra probavimus, sic sua actio est factio.”

creature is able to be its cause, because the posterior is not able to be the cause of a prior.”<sup>232</sup> In the following chapter of the *De summo bono*, Ulrich complains that although the philosophers recognized a single creative God they nevertheless posited a series of creative intelligences and celestial movers subsequent to Him that were responsible for causing multiplicity in the universe and hence failed to adequately glorify God as Creator.<sup>233</sup> Even worse, Ulrich contends, “they assume that those intelligences create the heavens and that the inferior intelligences are created by the higher ones and they suppose that the first intelligence, which is the first mover, is the single first product of the first simple cause from which one thing alone is immediately created.”<sup>234</sup> The divine science of the philosophers, even if it grants that God is creative, places too great a restriction on God’s power. According to Ulrich this theology, which posits that God is simply responsible for the creation of a first intelligence which creates everything beneath it, “spits in the face of the pious faith that confesses that God alone is the creator of every heaven and every celestial spirit.”<sup>235</sup> Despite the fact that the philosophers provide a genuinely convincing account of the nature of God’s creative activity, Ulrich concludes, the cosmology of their metaphysics of flow and belief in a hierarchy of creative celestial intelligences requires correction.

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<sup>232</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 7, 3, 36: “Propter hoc enim damnanum eos, qui dicunt angelos conditores, id est creatores, cuiuscumque substantiae, ut dicit Damascenus II libro, capitulo 3, et rationem subdit dicens: ‘Creaturae enim existentes, non sunt conditores.’ Et ratio fundatur super hoc, quod omne creatum est ens determinatum, ante quod est esse simplex et commune et indeterminatum, et ideo nihil creatum potest esse eius causa, quia posterius non potest esse causa prioris.”

<sup>233</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 8, 3, 46: “Cum ergo philosophi isti Deum cognovissent, non sicut Deum glorifaverunt, cum eius gloriam, quae consistit in opera creationis sibi proprio... aliis etiam attribuerunt: dicunt enim in toto ordine intelligentiarum et caelorum semper priorem intelligentiam esse causam sui orbis et etiam intelligentiae sequentis per diversos modos contemplationis.”

<sup>234</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 8, 3, 46: “patet, quod ipsi ponebant intelligentias creare caelos et inferiores intelligentias creari a superioribus et primam intelligentiam, quae est primus motor, posuerunt esse unum primum effectum primae simplicis causae, a qua non est nisi unum immediate.”

<sup>235</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* IV, 1, 8, 3, 46: “Sed hoc respuit pia fides, quae solum Deum confitetur creatorem omnium caelorum et omnium caelestium spirituum.”

Overall Ulrich's *De summo bono* IV, 1 represents a highly faithful re-presentation of the metaphysics of flow that his master Albert had sought to articulate in his own account of philosophical theology. However, Ulrich shifted his emphasis away from the authority of Aristotle in order to promote the philosophical approach of Plato and the Platonists in his discussion of flow and influence even if, like Albert before him, he still thought that the *Liber de causis* was a Peripatetic source. This is also why Ulrich, although he recognizes that the philosophers knew God as the First Principle to be a Creator, came to critique the divine science of the philosophers. The philosophers failed to glorify God as they should by placing limits on the creative power of God, even as they placed Him at the origin of the causal and providential hierarchy, as well as by granting that the celestial intelligences and especially the the first intelligence which alone was created by God, were themselves creative rather than productive. As we have seen, however, Ulrich defends this philosophical theology when it considers God as the essential cause of the universe—namely, as the Creator who produced the world *ex nihilo* and exists in some way in that which He created—but is critical of it when it reduces God's creative activity to efficient or equivocal causality and reduces the divine to moveable being following the methods of physics and metaphysics. In this way Ulrich re-articulates the arguments of Albert, discussed above, about the difference between a divine science of the philosophers that conceives of God as they apprehend Him under the concept of (moveable) being, and a Christian theology that understands God to exist beyond being and the reason that makes the created world intelligible and a subject for philosophical debate. The *De summo bono*, ultimately, made Albert's articulation of the difference between philosophical and Christian theology available to the Dominican students who were Ulrich's primary audience as a *lector* within the Order's *studium* system within Germany. It is thus an extremely important document for the German



Dominican School's development of a conception of the proper relationship between philosophical inquiry and the pious ends of the "wonderful" Christian science of God.

### *Conclusion*

The analysis of Albert's lectures on the *Corpus Dionysiacum* has laid out the fundamental difference Albert sees between Christian theology and the divine science of the philosophers. It demonstrates that Albert suggests in the texts analyzed above that a philosophical demonstration not only exceeds the one who creates or produces it. Syllogisms also capture philosophers, compelling them to think and feel *as philosophers* who are oriented toward the world of being and the truth partially apparent within it. This is a disposition parallel to, but higher than, that of the idolaters who love the sensual world and the things they produce with their own hands in imitation of it because they are emotionally manipulated by the poets. Only the Christian theologian, Albert argues, who is moved by the Truth to articulate the Truth itself as a counter-truth can disrupt this flow of concepts and the proliferation of errors that compel belief—even as the theologian doesn't explicitly aim to counter every truth which is ascertained and articulated by each philosopher. This is because only Christian theology itself is grounded in and authorized by the divine light that directs them beyond ratiocination toward truly salvific and beatifying knowledge, even if this light, whether of grace or glory, cannot itself produce a fully satisfying knowledge of what God is but only an indeterminate knowledge that God is, both in this life and the next.

At the heart of Albert's account of the difference between Christian and philosophical contemplation, moreover, one uncovers a debate not only about the nature of intellection and the limits of philosophy. One also discovers an account about the production and circulation of conflicting affects, namely about the true object of desire and one's capacity to be directed

toward and by it as well as how this desire conditions one's capacity to receive divine illumination and hence know the (Christian) truth. For this reason, Albert in his commentaries on the writings of Dionysius, as well as in his earlier and later theological treatises the *Super I Sententiarum* and *Summa theologiae sive de mirabili scientia Dei*, posits a conflict between the two modes of agency that underlie a Christian and idolatrous mode of theological production. Both the Christian theologian and the non-Christian metaphysician are *affected* by the operation of something, Albert contends, whether this is the light of grace and glory poured out by God which the Christian "suffers," or the created world which leads the non-Christian to view being itself as God through recourse to syllogistic reasoning or, infinitely worse for Albert, leads them to worship what they create in imitation of that world which is merely apparent to the senses, made enticing by the duplicitous sophistry of the poets. To speak religiously, whether as Christian theologian or as non-Christian philosopher, is thus to let some other work through one—whether that be God himself, natural reason alone, the world of being, the fables of the poets—or at least to let them move one to speech. And yet, perhaps paradoxically, the Christian theologian is truly free because their knowledge and the divine light that infuses them places them within the providential order of God's will that directs them toward salvation. The philosopher and the idolater, on the other hand, can only recognize and submit to the order of natural providence which affects their bodily dispositions no matter how much they try to abstract themselves from the play of the world.

The analysis of this chapter also shows why Albert is so critical of the philosophers in his scriptural commentaries despite his apparently optimistic subscription to Peripatetic epistemology and preference for their metaphysics in his Aristotelian paraphrases. The philosophers, Albert contends, can only err because they lack the piety requisite for the reception

of Christian truth and fail to concede the limits of their own knowledge and scientific habits. This is particularly apparent, Albert suggests, insofar as the philosopher seeks the certain knowledge of God available to human reason which actually forecloses the wonder which is affectively proper to Christian theology as that divine science which conveys fully salvific and beatific knowledge through the informed habit of grace and—in the next life—glory. As a way of life with its own spiritual exercises and divinizing techniques Albert admits that the wisdom of the philosophers offers the highest contemplative felicity naturally available to the human mind. But Albert evidently believes that such philosophical training is not necessary for the reception of divine grace—even if the intellectual and moral perfection that philosophical training provides the philosopher is a secondary aim for the highest aspect of the divine science of the Christians, mystical theology—and can even become a distraction when the Christian theologian becomes entangled in the play of philosophical demonstration and the vain desire to grasp the world that the natural and metaphysical sciences world for them. The Christian theologian, Albert ultimately concludes, just like Jesus Christ who humiliated the glorious philosophers of the earth and gathered them to the Church, must shatter the phantastical arguments of human reason and subordinate them to the divine science of the faith, inculcating in their audience the “detached” understanding of God enjoyed by the prophets and apostles.

Finally, this chapter has shown how Ulrich’s *De summo bono* represents the first sustained attempt to systematize this Albertian conception of philosophical and Christian theology, as well as considered how Ulrich as *lector* helped to establish Albert as the central authority for the German Dominican School. Yet I have also argued that Ulrich’s effort to summarize and repackage Albert led him to modify Albert’s arguments in several ways. Perhaps most importantly, while Ulrich repeated many of Albert’s claims about the distinction between

Christian theology and philosophical wisdom or metaphysics, unlike Albert he sought to promote Christian theology as true philosophical theology rather than as an autonomous divine science with its own higher truths and principles. He also aligned this philosophical theology more with the authority of Plato than with that of Aristotle. Yet Ulrich's presentation of Albert's understanding of the nature of Christian theology was remarkably faithful and he drew repeatedly on the central texts of Albert's oeuvre. This included a commitment to Albert's understanding of Christian theology as a partly speculative, partly practical and affective science that culminated in a loving and salvific union with God rather than a philosophical knowledge of God as the First Cause. Ulrich, finally, also provided a summary of Albert's metaphysics of flow, including his emphasis on essential causality and God's bestowal of form, which he tied to a critique of the recourse to a conception of efficient causality alone characteristic of the metaphysicians and physicists who followed Aristotle. Ulrich in many ways was therefore the German Dominican most responsible for constituting Albertism as a German Dominican project committed to a distinctive set of philosophical and theological positions. This set the groundwork that allowed the German Dominicans who followed him, like Dietrich of Freiberg and Meister Eckhart, to align what they learned from Albert more explicitly with Platonism, even as they remained committed as Christian theologians to Peripateticism and Dionysianism.

## Chapter Two: Dietrich of Freiberg and Divine Science between Nature and Grace

Master Dietrich discusses the power of self-understanding.  
He situates the image of the soul in its selfhood;  
It knows God there in his ipseity.

The Master from Ettelingen helps him to see,  
That every creature emanates through natural intellection,  
And subsists without accident.  
It knows God naturally; this is its proper way.

Anonymous, *Sprüche der zwölf Meister*<sup>1</sup>

The philosopher and natural scientist Dietrich of Freiberg (c.1250-1310) is an important witness to the intellectual concerns of the late 13<sup>th</sup> century—especially as these were shaped by the debates that arose during and after the Parisian condemnations of 1270 and 1277 motivated by the magisterial desire to foreclose the project of the “radical” Aristotelians in the Faculty of Arts. A highly prolific author whose most well-known works include the *De visione beatifica* and the *Tractatus de intellectu et intelligibili*, Dietrich was also one of several German Dominicans at the end of the thirteenth century who were decisively shaped by the fundamental questions first raised by Albert the Great analyzed in the previous chapter. These include a distinctive “metaphysics of flow” and understanding of causality that develops Albert’s theological and metaphysical treatises and an understanding of beatitude grounded in Augustinian theology and the Peripatetic theory of cognition interpreted through the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Finally, Dietrich himself is often granted a key place in the German Dominican School itself in modern scholarship because his own treatment of these two positions is seen to represent the link that ties the philosophy of Albert the Great to the mysticism of Meister Eckhart.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Sprüche der zwölf Meister*, in *Texte aus den deutschen Mystik des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts* ed. by Adolf Spamer (Jena: Diedrichs, 1912), 175: “Maister Dietrich sprichet von sinnekeit./ Er sezt das bild der sele in seines selbeshait;/ da bekennt es got in seiner istichkeit./ Der von Etlingen hilfet im das iehen,/ das sich ergüsset natürlich vernünfteclich/ ain ieclichü creatur, die sunder zŵval stat./ Die bechennet got natürlich; das ist ir eigen art.”

<sup>2</sup> On the relationship between Albert, Dietrich and Eckhart, see Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 86-111.

Dietrich is also important, however, because he represents a key moment of transition in the development of the German Dominican understanding of the nature of Christian theology in its relationship to philosophy. Whereas Albert the Great and his student Ulrich of Strasburg had earlier underscored in their writings the difference between a philosophical theology that contemplates God rationally and a Christian theology that prepares one to affectively unite with God in the beatific vision through piety and love, as discussed in the previous chapters, I analyze here how Dietrich further distinguishes these two theologies by maintaining that they also differ with respect to the way each considers the order and arrangement of the universe. Dietrich does so by tying the difference between what he calls the *scientia divina philosophorum* (“divine science of the philosophers”) and *nostra scientia* (“our science”) to the distinction Augustine draws between natural and voluntary providence in his *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII. I also demonstrate that Dietrich’s understanding of both theologies is related to the notion of proportion he appropriates from the *Elementatio theologica* by the fifth-century Greek Neoplatonist Proclus. I show how Dietrich consequently insisted on the authority of Proclus for both philosophical and Christian theology—especially in his arguments about the four manners of being and the role the separate intelligences play in the causal hierarchy—by maintaining throughout his writings that doing so accords with Augustine’s arguments about attending to the two orders of providence. I then conclude with an account of debates within the German Dominican School over the validity of Dietrich’s doctrine of beatitude and his view of the relationship between nature and grace.

*Communiter loquentes: Dietrich of Freiberg and the Condemnations of 1277*

Of all the German Dominicans after Ulrich of Strasburg, Dietrich is certainly the figure most like Albert in his range of philosophical and theological interests. Initially educated in the Faculty of

Arts at Paris sometime between 1272 and 1274, perhaps as a student of Henry of Ghent, whose Aristotelian approach to Augustine likely informed his own,<sup>3</sup> Dietrich began his theological baccalaureate in Paris between 1282 and 1292, after a brief period of return to his native Germany.<sup>4</sup> Like Ulrich before him, Dietrich then held various administrative positions in the province of *Teutonia* after the conclusion of his studies, serving as the prior of the friary of Würzburg and as Prior Provincial of *Teutonia* in 1293. He eventually occupied the Dominican chair for foreign masters in the faculty of theology at the University of Paris in 1296, teaching there until 1300. Dietrich is last attested in the documentary record as a participant of the General Chapters of 1304 and 1310 held in Toulouse and Piacenza respectively. Dietrich's extant writings, probably composed between 1285 and 1315, tend to represent topical interventions into the various scientific and philosophical disciplines that were his primary concern as a scholastically trained intellectual committed to the Peripatetic philosophy that Albert the Great had attempted to explicate.<sup>5</sup> However, as the vernacular literature produced in the fourteenth century about the German Dominican masters attests, Dietrich was also valued as a moral and spiritual authority who contributed to the theoretical articulation of the "mysticism of the ground" that would eventually find its fullest expression in the work of Meister Eckhart and his many disciples and admirers.<sup>6</sup>

As already mentioned, a significant defining moment of Dietrich's intellectual career was the inquiry into and subsequent condemnation of propositions supposedly held by Christian Peripatetics at the University of Paris orchestrated in the 1270s by the Bishop of Paris Étienne

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<sup>3</sup> William A. Wallace, *The Scientific Methodology of Theoderic of Freiberg: A Case Study of the Relationship between Science and Philosophy* (Fribourg: University Press, 1959), 10-12.

<sup>4</sup> Kurt Flasch, *Dietrich von Freiberg: Philosophi.e, Theologi.e, Naturforschung um 1300* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007), 30.

<sup>5</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 89-90.

<sup>6</sup> McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, 90-93.

Tempier. Indicative of ecclesiastical anxiety about an ostensible subscription among Parisian doctors to a relativistic theory of “double truth,” the inquisitorial process that resulted in the Condemnations of 1277 represented an attempt to limit teaching from the *libri naturales* and a formal effort to dictate how the masters in the Faculty of Arts ought to subordinate themselves to the authority of their colleagues in the Faculty of Theology.<sup>7</sup> Of particular concern to Tempier were the doctrines “that there is no more excellent a state than philosophical freedom;”<sup>8</sup> “that nothing more is known because one knows theology;”<sup>9</sup> “that there are no other possible virtues besides the acquired or the innate;”<sup>10</sup> and “that a person ordered according to the intellect and the will is adequately disposed for eternal felicity insofar as through the intellectual and other moral virtues about which the Philosopher speaks in the *Ethics* they can exist sufficiently.”<sup>11</sup> These doctrines each seemed to entail, according to the commission organized by the former chancellor of the University, that philosophy alone could perfect the human such that the divine grace afforded to the Christian by God were unnecessary. More pertinent to the interests of Dietrich and the German Dominican School, however, the Parisian Condemnations also legislated against many of the doctrines about the nature of intellection and the separate intelligences which informed the Peripatetic metaphysics of flow. Tempier accordingly prohibited several doctrines

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<sup>7</sup> See the introduction for literature on the debates over the doctrine of “double truth.” For the specific juridical and disciplinary mechanisms employed to condemn suspect teaching at the University as a means to reinforce magisterial authority, see J.M.M.H Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris, 1200-1400* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998) and William J. Courtenay, “Inquiry and Inquisition: Academic Freedom in Medieval Universities,” *Church History* 58.2 (1989): 168-181.

<sup>8</sup> Prop. 40: “Quod non est excellentior status quam uacare philosophi.e,” in *La condamnation parisienne de 1277: nouvelle édition du texte latin: traduction, introduction et commentaires*, ed. by David Piché and Claude LaFleur, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1999), 92.

<sup>9</sup> Prop. 153: “Quod nichil plus scitur propter scire theologiam,” in *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*, 132.

<sup>10</sup> Prop. 177: “Quod non sunt possibles alie uirtutes, nisi acquisite uel innate,” in *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*, 132.

<sup>11</sup> Prop. 157: “Quod homo ordinatus quantum ad intellectum et affectum, sicut potest sufficienter esse per uirtutes intellectuales et alias morales de quibus loquitur philosophus in ethicis, est sufficienter dispositus ad felicitatem eternam,” in *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*, 92.



central to this cosmology, such as the propositions “that the separate substances cause things through their own understanding;”<sup>12</sup> “that since the intelligences are full of forms they imprint forms in matter through the celestial bodies just as if through instruments;”<sup>13</sup> “that the human intellect is eternal since it is from a cause that always holds itself in the same way and because it has no matter through which it may be in potential before it is in act;”<sup>14</sup> and “that the intellectual soul knows all other things by knowing itself [since] the species of all things are co-created with it.”<sup>15</sup> Dietrich consequently worked during a period when ecclesiastical and magisterial opposition toward philosophy was hardening. His own writing witnesses his response to this attempt to curtail philosophical autonomy and to reject the authority of the Peripatetic tradition represented by the Greeks and the Arabs.

The *Errores philosophorum* by the Augustinian Giles of Rome provides further witness to this anxiety over the influence of Peripateticism that arose in the 1270s. An attempt to trace the origin of the various condemned articles in the Greek and Arab thought which had become authoritative in scholastic circles, the *Errores philosophorum* is likely one of the early works that Giles produced between 1270 and 1275 while he was lecturing on the *Liber sententiarum* at the University of Paris.<sup>16</sup> At the outset of the treatise, Giles declares that all the errors of the

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<sup>12</sup> Prop. 75: “Quod substantiae separate per suum intellectum causant res,” in *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*, 102.

<sup>13</sup> Prop. 189: “Quod cum intelligentia sit plena formis, imprimit illas formas in materiam per corpora celestia tanquam per instrumenta,” in *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*, 136.

<sup>14</sup> Prop. 31: “Quod intellectus humanus est eternus, quia est a causa eodem modo semper se habente, et quia non habet materiam per quam prius sit in potentia quam in actu,” in *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*, 88. Given the speculative nature that Peripatetic doctrine attributes to the human and separate intelligences it may even be possible to render *habentes* here by “considers” or “thinks” itself rather than “holds” itself.

<sup>15</sup> Prop. 115: “Quod anima intellectiva cognoscendo se cognoscit omnia alia. Species enim omnium rerum sunt sibi concreata,” in *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*, 114.

<sup>16</sup> See Charles F. Briggs, “Life, Works, Legacy” and “The Chronology of the Works of Giles of Rome,” in *A Companion to Giles of Rome*, ed. by Charles F. Briggs and Peter S. Eardley (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 6-33 and 275-276. Giles himself was investigated for heresy during the 1270s and, in a lengthy *Apologia* produced after the Condemnations of 1277 and for the rest of his career, tried to reformulate the teachings of his master Thomas Aquinas about the doctrine of creation in order to grant them a philosophical foundation acceptable to the

philosophers are actually the result of a single false argument that Aristotle had introduced in his philosophy—namely, his claim that “movement never began; because if movement begins, motion is something new. But nothing is new except because of a preceding movement. Therefore there would be another movement before the first movement, which is illogical.”<sup>17</sup> Giles declares this to be untrue “because God is the first agent, yet not an agent as if an instrument, but an agent who will be able to produce things without a preceding motion” and because “creation is not a movement since movement presupposes a moveable thing and creation presupposes nothing nor is it strictly speaking a change.”<sup>18</sup> To argue as Aristotle does against what faith holds, Giles concludes, is thus to engage in total sophistry.<sup>19</sup> Giles’ refutation of Aristotle in the *Errores philosophorum* looks much like the argument that Moses Maimonides had introduced against Aristotle in *Guide of the Perplexed* II: 14 and it is very likely that this is the source for Giles’ own position.<sup>20</sup> Giles himself even notes in his chapter dedicated to the errors of Maimonides that “Rabbi Moses, holding to what is said in the Old Testament according to the surface sense, had disagreed with the Philosopher who had posited the eternity of movement.”<sup>21</sup> Maimonides for this reason is the only philosopher who does not subscribe to the

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ecclesiastical authorities. See Giorgio Pini, “Being and Creation in Giles of Rome,” in *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277. Philosophie und Theologie an der Universität von Paris im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Jan A. Aertsen, Kent Emery Jr., Andreas Speer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 390-409 and J. M. M. Thijssen, “1277 Revisited: A New Interpretation of the Doctrinal Investigations of Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome,” *Vivarium* 35 (1997): 72-101.

<sup>17</sup> Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum* I.1, 2, ed. by Josef Koch (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1944): “concludebat motum nunquam incepisse; quia si motus incepit, motus fuit novus. Sed nihil est novum nisi per motum praecedentem. Ergo ante primum motum fuit aliquis motus. Quod est inconveniens.”

<sup>18</sup> Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum* III, 14: “Cum ergo hoc sit falsum, quia Deus est agens primum, agens non ut instrumentum, poterit res producere absque motu praecedente... Ideo creatio non est motus, quia motus praesupponit mobile; creatio vero nihil praesupponit nec est mutatio proprie.”

<sup>19</sup> Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum* III, 14: “Quiquid ergo contra inceptionem mundi et contra ea quae tenet fies per viam motus arguitur, totum est sophisticam.”

<sup>20</sup> Josef Koch, intro to *Errores philosophorum*, liii.

<sup>21</sup> Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum* XII, 58: “Rabbi autem Moyses, tenens secundum superficiam dicta in Veteri Testamento, discordavit a Philosopho in ponendo aeternitatem motus.”

fundamental Aristotelian error although Giles argues that even he propagates arguments that deviate from an evident truth that is synonymous with the Catholic faith.<sup>22</sup>

Giles' discussion of Averroes in the *Errores philosophorum* demonstrates how the recognition that certain teachings of the philosophers conflicted with the truth ossified into the conviction that the philosophers directly opposed the Christian faith. Giles first notes that “the Commentator reasserts all the errors of the Philosopher, but with even more obstinacy, and spoke with more sophistry than the Philosopher did against those who thought the world began.”<sup>23</sup> Giles insists that Averroes must be more opposed than Aristotle “because he more directly assailed our faith by arguing that what is not able to be treated as false, since the First Truth supports it, is false.”<sup>24</sup> In fact, Giles maintains that Averroes must be contested “because he disparaged every law, as is evident from Book II of the *Metaphysics* and also Book XI, where he reproaches the law of the Christians or our Catholic law and even the law of the Saracens, since these assume the creation of things and that something is able to be made from nothing.”<sup>25</sup> Whereas Aristotle had been presented by Giles as the fundamentally mistaken or sophistic philosopher who proceeded from incorrect premises, Averroes emerges as the fundamentally impious or irreligious philosopher who disrespects the truth toward which he ought to strive.

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<sup>22</sup> Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum* XII, 58: “Non ergo in hoc erravit, sed in aliis multis deviavit a veritate firma et a fide catholica.”

<sup>23</sup> Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum* IV, 14-16: “Commentator autem omnes errores Philosophi asseruit, immo cum maiori pertinacia et magis ironice locutus est contra ponentes mundum incepisse quam Philosophus fecerit.” Very likely the locution “magis ironice” here signals that Averroes' arguments are even more sophistic than those of Aristotle which Giles had already critiqued. Yet, if irony is being evoked here in its overarching technical sense, it is possible that Giles is suggesting that Averroes argues to the opposite effect of where his arguments ought to lead him—i.e, philosophizes against rather than toward the Christian.

<sup>24</sup> Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum* IV, 16: “Immo sine comparatione plus et ipse arguendus quam Philosophus, quia magis directe fidem nostrum impugnavit ostendens esse falsum cui non potest subesse falsitas, eo quod innitatur primae veritati.”

<sup>25</sup> Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum* IV, 1, 16: “Praeter tamen errores Philosophi arguendus est, quia vituperavit legem Christianorum sive legem nostrum Catholicam et etiam legem Sarracenorum, quia ponunt creationem rerum et aliquid posse fieri ex nihilo.”

Giles responds critically to Albert the Great's prior attempt to teach the Latins how to philosophize well following the Greeks and Arabs through his presentation of Aristotle and Averroes in the *Errores philosophorum*. To philosophize as a Greek and as an Arab, Giles suggests, entails arguing around rather than toward the truth as well as reviling not just Christianity but all religion and theology.<sup>26</sup>

The Parisian Condemnations of 1277 famously also forced the masters at the University to re-evaluate their commitment to Aristotelian physics, especially the cosmological doctrines that had come to be associated with it such as the animation of the heavens.<sup>27</sup> Historians who posit continuities between medieval and contemporary science for this reason tend to characterize the period after the Condemnations as a moment when the Avicennian doctrine of impetus and inclination was reworked into a replacement for prior explanations of the nature of celestial movement that depended on the Aristotelian belief in a hierarchy of movers forcefully set into motion by an unmoved mover, which prepared the way for the modern approach to resistance and inertia.<sup>28</sup> In many respects, this tendency represents a return to, and elaboration of, Albert the Great's solution to the problem of action at a distance, with his metaphysical account

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<sup>26</sup> On the broader scholastic tendency to critically reformulate what it means to philosophize as a Greek or Arab after the Parisian Condemnations, including a comparative table that correlates the propositions condemned in the *Errores philosophorum* and Tempier's list, see Dragos Calma, "Du bon usage des grecs et des arabes. Réflexions sur la censure de 1277," in *Christian Readings of Aristotle from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, ed. by Luca Bianchi (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 115-184.

<sup>27</sup> Richard C. Dales, "The De-Animation of the Heavens in the Middle Ages," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41 (1980): 531-550.

<sup>28</sup> See the essays collected in Anneliese Maier, *On the Threshold of Exact Science: Selected Writings of Anneliese Maier on Late Medieval Natural Philosophy*, ed. and trans. by Steven D. Sargent (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982) and Edward Grant, *The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages: Their Religious, Institutional and Intellectual Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 70-126.

of the causal flow of forms in nature partly excised from his physical account of the flow movement.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps just as significantly, however, a debate took place between 1287 and 1292 between Henry of Ghent and Godfrey of Fontaines over how best to understand the scientific status of theology, as the study of Christian scripture, which would determine all subsequent scholastic attempts to approach this problem.<sup>30</sup> Whereas Henry sought to preserve the character of Christian theology as a divine science by arguing that the theologian attains knowledge of the Christian truth through the infusion of a light that is intermediate between the uncertain light of grace possessed by every Christian and the certain light of glory possessed by God and the saints, Godfrey argued instead that Christian theology strictly speaking ought not be considered a science at all.<sup>31</sup> Godfrey consequently maintained that

theology is less properly a science than natural science, not only because of this fact, namely, because it has the evidence which is required for knowledge, but to a lesser degree than in the science of nature, but even more because it does not have the evidence which is required for that knowledge which ought to properly be called science.<sup>32</sup>

This is because, Godfrey argues, the certainty that the theologian possesses as a Christian relies principally on their adhesion to authority rather than the demonstrative knowledge about the

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<sup>29</sup> Peter J. Kovach, "The Enduring Question of Action at a Distance in Saint Albert the Great," in *Albert the Great: Commemorative Essays*, ed. by Francis J. Kovach and Robert W. Shahan (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 161-235, and Ernest J. McCullough, "St. Albert on Motion as *Forma fluens* and *Fluxus formae*," in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences*, 129-53.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen F. Brown, "*Dua Candelabra Parisiensia*: Prosper of Reggio in Emilia's Portrait of the Enduring Presence of Henry of Ghent and Godfrey of Fontaines regarding the Nature of Theological Study," in *Nach der Verurteilung*, 323-328.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet XII*, q. 2, 14-27, ed. by J. Decorte in *Quodlibet XII, questiones 1-30* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1987).

<sup>32</sup> Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodlibet IX*, q. 20, 29 in *Le neuvième Quodlibet de Godefried de Fontaines*, ed. by J. Hoffmans (Louvain: Institut supérieur de philosophie de l'Université, 1928): "Ergo videtur quod theologia sit minus proprie scientia quam naturalis non tantum propter hoc, quia scilicet habet evidentiam quae requiritur ad scientiam, sed minorem quam naturalis, – immo etiam quia nec habet evidentiam quae requiritur ad illam scientiam quae debet dici proprie scientia."

things in themselves that scientific evidence affords.<sup>33</sup> Henry of Ghent and Godfrey of Fontaines thus both promoted a more fideistic approach to Christian theology than the scholastic accounts that preceded them. For both scholastic masters, Christian theology's accord with natural reason was therefore less important than the discipline's orientation toward divine illumination and the authority of tradition. This represented an epistemic clearing of the ground for theology perhaps as important as the contemporary retreat in physics from the Aristotelian account of celestial motion. It also inaugurated a significant attempt to figure Christianity's separation from philosophy that was radically different from that which Albert and his disciples had introduced into their work.

A distinguishing feature of Dietrich of Freiberg's career that has been particularly emphasized by contemporary scholarship is its marked anti-Thomism. This was very likely a response to the attempt among certain of his Dominican confrères to shore up the authority of Thomas Aquinas and his *Summa theologiae* after notable challenges to his work from both within and without the Order, such as those by the French Dominican Durandus of Saint-Pourçain or the Franciscan William de la Mare.<sup>34</sup> In his extant corpus of writings, Dietrich rejects several doctrines that defined the Thomist tradition as it developed in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, even if he did not always directly critique Thomas himself, such as the real distinction between essence and existence and the argument that an accident can subsist separately from its subject if it is preserved by God, which informed the Thomist account

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<sup>33</sup> Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodlibet* VIII, q. 7, 73 in *Le huitième Quodlibet de Godefried de Fontaines*, ed. by J. Hoffmans (Louvain: Institut supérieur de philosophie de l'Université, 1924): "notitia debilis vel imperfecta ad evidentiam, sed firm quantum ad adhaesionem, quia innititur auctoritati solum et non rei in se vel ostensae per rationem evidentiam."

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Lowe, *The Contested Theological Authority of Thomas Aquinas: The Controversies between Hervaeus Natalis and Durandus of St. Pourçain* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

of the transubstantiation of the Eucharistic wafer and wine into the body and blood of Christ.<sup>35</sup> As Anne-Sophie Robin has demonstrated, moreover, Dietrich positions Thomas and the Thomists in his writing as representative of the tendency among the theologians of his day to philosophize poorly and to misinterpret philosophical texts.<sup>36</sup> Dietrich thus describes the theologian qua Thomist as someone who holds intolerably false positions which “destroy and annihilate the entire teaching of the Philosopher,” as well as a foolish and ignorant quibbler who “eradicates the foundations of both nature and science.”<sup>37</sup>

Dietrich’s work thus sits at the confluence of the increasing authority of Thomism in the cultural and pedagogical policy of the Dominican Order and the attempt to limit and condemn Peripatetic philosophy in the name of the truths specific to Christian theology. Recalling in many ways Albert the Great’s prior critique of the theologizing philosopher as a sophist who inappropriately introduces poetic arguments into the strictly rational business of philosophy, Dietrich for this reason states that his opponents improperly turn to the miraculous and the

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<sup>35</sup> Armand Maurer, *Being and Knowing: Studies in Thomas Aquinas and Later Medieval Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 177-199 remains the definitive account of these critiques in English and reworks his earlier “The *De Quidditatibus Entium* of Dietrich of Freiberg and its Criticism of Thomistic Metaphysics,” *Mediaeval Studies* 18 (1956): 173-203. See also Ruedi Imbach “L’antithomisme de Thierry de Freiberg,” *Revue Thomiste* 97:1 (1997): 245-258 and Catherine König-Pralong, “Dietrich de Freiberg: métaphysicien allemande anti-thomiste,” *Revue Thomiste* 108 (2008): 57-79. David Roderick McPike, *Thomas Aquinas on the Separability of Accidents and Dietrich of Freiberg’s Critique*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, the University of Ottawa, 2015 has recently attempted to demonstrate how most scholarly considerations of this debate mispresent Aquinas’ position, as well as the inconsistency of Dietrich’s response to Thomas as well as his essential agreement with the fundamental premises of Aquinas’ arguments if not his specific conclusions. While McPike’s provocative attempt to recuperate Thomas against his critics and to posit the separability of accidents as a valid philosophical question is intriguing, it is clear that his ultimate apologetic goal is Thomist in orientation. His dissertation seeks to direct philosophy toward theological inquiry and to reject the Albertist attempt to constitute an autonomous realm for strictly philosophical argumentation which informs Dietrich’s project.

<sup>36</sup> Anne-Sophie Robin, “L’antithomisme de Dietrich de Freiberg dans le *De visione beatifica*,” in *Recherches sur Dietrich de Freiberg*, ed. by Joël Biard, Dragos Calma and Ruedi Imbach (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 173-76.

<sup>37</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De quidditatibus entium* 10, 113, 2-4 in *Opera Omnia* III, ed. by Ruedi Imbach and Jean-Daniel Caviglioli (Hamburg: Felix Mainer, 1983): “Sed ista position cum hoc, quod intolerabilem falsitatem continent, destruit et annihilat totam doctrinam Philosophi;” Dietrich of Freiberg, *De accidentibus* 22, 84, 21-23 in *Opera Omnia* III, ed. by Maria Rita Pagnoni-Sturlese (Hamburg: Felix Mainer, 1983): “Sed haec cavillatoria instantia, ruditatis et ignorantia filia, eradicate fundamenta et naturae et scientiae: destruit enim propriam rationem substantiarum et accidentium.”

supernatural whenever nature effectively refutes their position, despite the fact that they initially attempt to support their positions with arguments about the natural order.<sup>38</sup> Calling such theologians “common chatter-boxes” Dietrich even maintains that they had forced him to stop writing about difficult philosophical questions.<sup>39</sup> Catherine König-Pralong for this reason provocatively maintains that Dietrich’s work can be called “a war machine against the theology of omnipotence and of miracle,” although she clarifies that Dietrich sought to show that there was no apparent *conflict* between a philosophical and Christian theology that nevertheless must be held to be *different*.<sup>40</sup> Dietrich’s project must therefore be understood to be polemically motivated. It represents a sustained attempt to defend the autonomy of philosophy itself in the face of its perceived denigration by the Thomists as well as the other theologians who were becoming increasingly prominent at Paris and in the Dominican Order. In what follows I outline first how Dietrich defines the difference between philosophical and Christian theology as divine sciences before turning to an account of how this difference impacts his presentation of the metaphysics of flow that he inherited from Albert the Great and Ulrich of Strasburg.

*Nostra scientia: Proclus and the Subject of Theology according to Dietrich of Freiberg*

Like Albert before him, Dietrich developed a theology and metaphysics grounded in the Peripatetic *Liber de causis*, even as his surviving works seem less explicitly interested in the Pseudo-Dionysius than his German Dominican predecessors. Dietrich amplified this with the *Elementatio theologica* by Proclus, available since 1268 in a Latin translation by the Flemish

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<sup>38</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De accidentibus* 23, 90, 144-49: “Ad unam enim partem muniunt suam intentionem per rationes a natura a proprietatibus rerum sumptas; si autem pro alia parte etiam efficacius arguatur, recurrunt ad miraculum, scilicet dicentes, quod miraculose, virtute supernaturali, fiat hoc, quod in sua positione defendant.”

<sup>39</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Prologus generalis in Tractatum de tribus difficilibus quaestionibus* 1, 9, 1-3, in *Opera Omnia* III, ed. by Loris Sturlese: “De tribus articulis de numero difficilium quaestionum importunitate requirentium cogor scriber, a quo supersedere debui propter communiter loquentes.”

<sup>40</sup> Catherine König-Pralong, “Le traité *Des accidents* de Dietrich de Freiberg: Stratégies exégétiques pour un reconduction de l’accidental au par soi,” in *Recherches sur Dietrich de Freiberg*, 126.



Dominican William of Moerbeke, which Dietrich recognized as the source of the former's doctrine.<sup>41</sup> In fact, much of Dietrich's career seems to have been dedicated to an extensive apologia for a specific understanding of the causal role that the separate intelligences play within creation as this was elaborated in both the *Liber* and Proclus—a doctrine that Dietrich in one of his philosophical works claims “with all due respect and thanks to our doctors...is neither jarring nor hostile to reason.”<sup>42</sup> Dietrich's overall reliance on this latter treatise is also indicative of a broader philosophical trend within fourteenth-century Germany noted by Loris Sturlese, where Proclus and the Hermetic literature were increasingly promoted as alternatives to the philosophical authorities popular at the University of Paris, despite the tendency in Albert and Dietrich to adhere closely to the authority of Avicenna and Averroes.<sup>43</sup>

In a short fragment which only survives because it was included in a manuscript containing works by Proclus that once belonged to Berthold of Moosburg, called by its editor the *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* (“Fragment on the Subject of Theology”), Dietrich provides the only systematic attempt to address the nature of this theology.<sup>44</sup> In the following, I provide a

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *De cognitione entium separatorum et maxime animarum separatorum* 8, 174, 33-35, in *Opera Omnia* II, ed. by Hartmut Steffen (Hamburg: Felix Mainer, 1980): “Et hoc habemus manifeste ex Libro de causis et ex libro Procli, under videtur sumptus Liber de causis,” where Dietrich cites these texts as authorities for the claim that the divine intellects, which the philosophers call the intelligences because of their excellence, are substances that possess an understanding more universal and simple the higher and nobler they are. On the significance of Proclus for Dietrich's thought, see Markus L. Führer and Stephen Gersh, “Dietrich of Freiberg and Berthold of Moosburg,” in *Interpreting Proclus: from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. by Stephen Gersh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 299-306. Yet, as Dragos Calma, *Le poids de la citation: Étude sur les sources arabes et grecques dans l'Oeuvre de Dietrich de Freiberg* (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2010), 277-342 convincingly demonstrates Dietrich nevertheless preferred the *Liber de causis* as his central authority for the metaphysics of flow and very likely relied on an incomplete edition of the *Elementatio theologica* which limited his capacity to appropriate Proclus.

<sup>42</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis* 19.1.22-23, 316, in *Opera Omnia* II, ed. by Maria Rita Pagnoni-Sturlese (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1980): “tamen salva pace et gratia doctorum nostrorum non est absonum nec alienum a ratione.”

<sup>43</sup> Loris Sturlese, “Proclo ed Ermete in Germania da Alberto Magno a Bertoldo di Moosburg. Per una prospettiva di ricerca sulla cultura filosofica tedesca nel secolo delle sue origini (1250-1350),” in *Von Meister Dietrich zu Meister Eckhart*, ed. by Kurt Flasch (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1984), 22-33.

<sup>44</sup> The *Fragmentum* is found in MS Cod. Basel. F IV 31, fol. 69 va-vb. A miscellany of Platonic material, the manuscript also contains: Macrobius, *Commentary on the Somnium Scipionis*, fol 1r-44r; Proclus, *On 10*

close reading of this *Fragmentum* in order to draw out the particular arguments Dietrich employs to classify theology as a particular science with a specific subject. The *Fragmentum* is significant because of its explicit reliance on the Proclian understanding of proportion and because it offers a sharp distinction between philosophical and Christian theology that represent two ways of conceiving the universe of beings tied to the Augustinian concept of a twofold providence.

There are two major scholarly analyses of Dietrich's *Fragmentum*, both of which offer competing explanations for the text's overall significance within Dietrich's extant corpus. On the one hand, the Protestant theologian Karl-Hermann Kandler argues that the *Fragmentum* must be understood as a sort of preparatory exercise for the homiletic and exegetical work that would have been Dietrich's main vocational activity as a Dominican friar.<sup>45</sup> Although he grants that the *Fragmentum* seems to promote an explicitly philosophical approach to theology, Kandler nevertheless insists that Dietrich's real concern was to free the theology of revelation from the metaphysical exploration he takes up elsewhere in his scholastic writings, while also speculating about the content of the sermons Dietrich was known to have delivered, but which have not been preserved for posterity.<sup>46</sup> Dietrich does so, Kandler concludes, in order to re-emphasize the salvific effect of faith in Christ's resurrection. On the other hand, the philosopher Kurt Flasch argues that as an incomplete text the *Fragmentum* should not be taken to determine Dietrich's overall conception of theology, and claims that Dietrich sought to defend a methodological synthesis of philosophy and Christian theology as related domains of metaphysical or rational

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*Problems concerning Providence*, fol 46ra-59rb; Proclus, *On Providence* fol 59va-68vb; Proclus, *On the existences of Evils*, fol 70ra-83va; Proclus, *Elements of Physics*, fol 83vb-84ra.

<sup>45</sup> Karl-Hermann Kandler, "Theologie und Philosophie nach Dietrich von Freibergs Traktat *De subiecto theologiae*," in *Dietrich von Freiberg: neue Perspektiven seiner Philosophie, Theologie und Naturwissenschaft*, ed. by Karl-Hermann Kandler, Burkhard Mojsisch and Franz-Bernhard Stammkötter (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1999), 646-7.

<sup>46</sup> Kandler, "Theologische Implikationen der Philosophie Dietrichs von Freiberg," 128.

inquiry.<sup>47</sup> Flasch maintains, therefore, that the *Fragmentum* provides an early instance of Dietrich's lifelong attempt to rationally solve the problems that he saw arising from the confused state of the contemporary debate about matters of faith and hence to articulate—as much as was demonstratively and conjecturally possible given their conceptual complexity—the hidden truths of the Christian religion.<sup>48</sup> Flasch consequently concludes that the *Fragmentum* provides in summary form many of the key points which Dietrich later took to be axiomatic for a chiefly philosophical approach to Christianity that was distinctly polemical and critical in its orientation toward his contemporaries among the theologians.<sup>49</sup> As the following analysis demonstrates, Flasch's assessment of the *Fragmentum* seems to provide a more compelling account of its argument and significance for an understanding of Dietrich's work—even if he is perhaps too polemical in his dismissal of Kandler's attempt to appreciate Dietrich's ultimate commitment to a specifically Christian theology defined according to its eschatological dimension.

The *Fragmentum* opens with the final part of an incomplete question that examines the multiple ways that a subject is grasped within the sciences. Unpacking this incomplete argument is important as it provides several of the major principles that Dietrich invokes in his subsequent discussion of the particular subject of theology itself. Moreover, this section highlights that the definition of the subject assumed throughout the *Fragmentum* is governed by the Aristotelian criteria for scientificity, where a subject is taken to be the common underlying-thing

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<sup>47</sup> Flasch, *Dietrich von Freiberg*, 509-10.

<sup>48</sup> Flasch, *Dietrich von Freiberg*, 583.

<sup>49</sup> This characterization of Dietrich as primarily a Christian philosopher who sought to correct through recourse to reason the speculative excesses of theology is certainly informed by Flasch's own attempt to situate Dietrich's account of the distinction between conceptual and real being within the prehistory of German idealism and to situate Dietrich within the genealogy of the Enlightenment. See Flasch, "Kennt die mittelalterliche Philosophie die Konstitutive Funktion des menschlichen Denkens?" and Flasch, "Zum Ursprung der neuzeitlichen Philosophie im späten Mittelalter," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 85 (1978): 1-18. For a not-entirely compelling critique of this characterization of Dietrich's project see Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 316-323.

[*hypokeimenon*] or reason [*ratio*] operative in scientific discourse, rather than the particular object which a science investigates.<sup>50</sup> A subject, for Dietrich, is thus what unifies the statements of a science rather than the specific object which a science examines.<sup>51</sup> Yet Dietrich argues in this section of the *Fragmentum* that the way that the subject of a science like physics unifies statements is loose and provisional. Dietrich consequently notes that “we find in many things that they are counted in the arrangement of genera more according to a kind of common acceptance and probability than according to the property of the things themselves.”<sup>52</sup> Dietrich maintains that although the corporeal and incorporeal things which are discussed in physics are really of different genera in themselves, “nevertheless they are placed according to logical consideration in the coordination of a single genus.”<sup>53</sup> Dietrich concludes that for the science of physics this is the genus of substance (or essence), the principal category of predication in Aristotelian logic. From the very outset of the *Fragmentum* Dietrich flags that the way that beings are discussed in a science has important implications for a definition of that science’s subject.

The following part of the *Fragmentum* demonstrates that another of Dietrich’s major concerns is the way that a science discusses entities in their specific relationship to their subject. Dietrich argues that “not all things that are considered in this science [i.e, physics] come together

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<sup>50</sup> A subject can also be understood metaphysically as the real substance which underlies accidents. For the logical understanding of the subject, see Aristotle, *Categories* 1a20 and *Metaphysics* 1037b16. For the metaphysical, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983a30.

<sup>51</sup> Flasch, *Dietrich von Freiberg*, 502-3; Kandler, “Theologische Implikationen der Philosophie Dietrichs von Freiberg,” 125.

<sup>52</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 2.1.4-7, 279 in *Opera Omnia* III, ed. by Loris Sturlese (Hamburg: Felix Mainer, 1983): “et sic in pluribus invenimus, quae in coordinatione generum magis secundum quandam famositatem et probabilitatem numerantur quam secundum rerum ipsarum proprietatem et considerationis omnimodam veritatem.”

<sup>53</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 2.1.7-9, 279: “ut corporeum et incorporeum in genere substantiae, quae secundum veritatem et ipsarum rerum proprietatem diversorum generum sunt, tamen secundum logicam considerationem in unius generis coordinatione ponuntur.”

under one univocal aspect of the subject.”<sup>54</sup> Rather, as Aristotle himself demonstrates in Book X of his *Metaphysics*, “celestial bodies and those generable and corruptible bodies of the first genera [i.e, substance] are called bodies equivocally because they differ in their principles and they do not agree because of those same principles.”<sup>55</sup> That is to say, the substance of a celestial body and a terrestrial body radically differs when it is considered in its real existence, but their similarity is emphasized when they are discussed within natural science. Because of their difference, moreover, “such bodies are not arranged in the same genus” and their attributes likewise have “equivocal natures which differ in genus,” even though both celestial and terrestrial bodies are still “led back into the same principles to which they are subject.”<sup>56</sup> If physics speaks of the celestial and terrestrial bodies under the same aspect, therefore, Dietrich maintains that it only does so in an equivocal way according to the categorical strictures of Aristotelian logic, whenever these differences are reduced to the category of substance. This is why Dietrich believes that applying the category of substance to these two types of bodies can only be achieved in an indefinite manner within physics, because strictly speaking there are no similarities between celestial and terrestrial beings apart from the way that they are discussed by the physicist.

A final key point that Dietrich draws out in the opening discussion of the *Fragmentum* is that a certain proportionality emerges whenever what is considered within a science is reduced to

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<sup>54</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 2.2.11-13, 279: “Non enim omnia, quae in hac scientia considerantur, conveniunt in una ratione univocale subiecti.”

<sup>55</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 2.2.13-16, 279: “Manifestum est enim, secundum Philosophum in fine X Metaphysicae, quod corpora caelestia et haec generabilia et corruptibilia sunt diversorum generum et dicuntur corpora aequivoce, quoniam differunt in principiis nec constant ex eisdem principiis, vel propinquis vel remotis.”

<sup>56</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 2.2.16-20, 279: “Et ideo huiusmodi corpora non coordinantur in eodem genere... Et ideo passiones eorum corporum, cum in eadem principia subiectorum suorum reducuntur, habebunt etiam aequivocas et genere differentes naturas.”

its subject.<sup>57</sup> According to Dietrich this is because every science possesses a unity whereby entities reduced to their subject are able to be related to each other, as well as to their subject. Dietrich argues in this part of the *Fragmentum* that a proportionality in a science consists of a fourfold logical correspondence between the entities discussed within that science, where A is proportioned to B in the same way that C is proportioned to D.<sup>58</sup> This is evident from Dietrich’s presentation of the relationship between the terrestrial and celestial bodies as they are taken up within physics. Dietrich maintains that these two types of bodies constitute a proportionality within the science of physics—even though they are really different—because “generable and corruptible bodies (A) are established in their mode of existence from [celestial] principles (B),” in the same way that “the celestial bodies (C) are established in their mode of existence based on principles proper to them (D).”<sup>59</sup> Physics accordingly investigates the terrestrial bodies and their principles in order to extrapolate arguments about the nature of the celestial bodies and their principles, ultimately reducing statements about both types of bodies to the proper subject of the science, which Dietrich identifies in the *Fragmentum* following Albert’s introduction to his *Physica* as “the mobile body or mobile being.”<sup>60</sup> Significantly, Dietrich here presents the unity of proportionality as the principle means whereby the different beings considered by a science can be logically arranged and discussed with regard both to each other as well as to the subject that unifies statements about them.

In the next surviving question of the *Fragmentum*, which directly investigates the unity of the subject of theology, Dietrich proceeds to argue that theology insofar as it is a science also

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<sup>57</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 2.3.21-22, 279: “Ad hoc igitur, quod huiusmodi ad unius scientiae considerationem reducantur, attenditur in eis saltem quaedam proportionalitas.”

<sup>58</sup> Flasch, *Dietrich von Freiberg*, 505.

<sup>59</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 2.3.22-26, 279: “puta sicut ista generabilia et corruptibilia constant suo modo ex talibus principiis, sic et corpora caelestia suo modo ex sibi propriis principiis constant.”

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 2.2.12, 279.

logically arranges statements through proportionalities. Yet Dietrich returns to the earlier discussion of the relationship between terrestrial and celestial bodies in order to contend in this part of the work that “if one of these bodies is considered according to itself—that is, according to its proper reason—they only have the aspect and mode of material with respect to substance, for whose integration they come together.”<sup>61</sup> Dietrich also insists that if a proportionality that considers both kinds of bodies is taken “according to the reason of the whole and insofar as such a thing is a composite,” then that aggregation itself must be considered as “a certain completed thing existing in act that is subjected to an agent and to passions that are either introduced or will be introduced by that agent.”<sup>62</sup> Building upon his prior arguments about proportionality within natural science, Dietrich further contends that a proportionality constitutes an ordered arrangement of beings that are reduced to their absolutely principle cause, not just their respective principles, and thus every proportionality needs to be considered as part of a unified whole. Dietrich for this reason argues that in theology the proportionalities established within physics must be further reduced to their absolutely principal cause.

Dietrich introduces two examples in the *Fragmentum* to explain how such a reduction ought *not* to be understood in theology. First, there is the example of the books themselves which treat theology: the things that are treated within a book are the matter of a science, Dietrich explains, because the things which are written in a book “are the material for consideration [in any science], but the divisions of the book and the passages or treatises in which such things are

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<sup>61</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.2.36-40, 280: “si secundum talium undumquodque secundum se consideretur – id est secundum propriam rationem –, sic solum habent rationem et modum materiae respectu substantiae, ad cuius integrationem concurrunt.”

<sup>62</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.2.40-43, 280: “si vero sic aggregata sumantur secundum rationem totius et in quantum sunt ipsum tale compositum secundum propriam totius rationem, iam sumitur ibi quiddam completum existens in actu secundum unam formalem rationem, quod subicitur agenti et passionibus per agens inductis seu inducendis.”

treated are the matter of the science itself, the parts of which it is composed.”<sup>63</sup> This material, Dietrich clarifies, which is the text itself where scientific arguments are demonstratively articulated in order as well as the logical procedures which structure this presentation, is not the subject itself of the science.<sup>64</sup> Second, Dietrich provides the various traditional definitions of the subject of theology previously considered before him: Christ in head and body, things and signs, the work of creation and restoration, as well as God himself.<sup>65</sup> For Dietrich, while others hold these to be the subject of theology, “properly speaking they are the matter of this science... for the subject wants to be of one reason common to all things that are considered in the science.”<sup>66</sup> This means that Dietrich maintains against the definitions of his contemporaries that such things are really the material that the science of theology considers not the subject itself that unifies theology, and that they are directly comparable to the arguments in the books of theology he had proffered in his first example. Finally, that Dietrich’s *Fragmentum* specifically dismisses the claim that God Himself is the subject of theology in this section suggests that Dietrich’s treatise was not only informed by the debates that raged over this problem in Paris discussed above but also situates Dietrich himself against his Dominican confrère Thomas Aquinas and the various early Thomists like Giles of Rome who defended his arguments about the nature of theology.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.3.48-50, 280: “Res quidem tales sunt considerationis materia, partiales autem libri et passus seu tractatus, in quibus tractantur talia, sunt ipsius scientiae materia seu partes, ex quibus integratur.”

<sup>64</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.3. 50-51, 280: “nondum tamen aliquid istorum secundum iam dictum modum est huius scientiae subiectum.”

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.3. 51-55, 280.

<sup>66</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.3.55-58, 280: “Sunt enim huiusmodi huius scientiae materia proprie loquendo... Subiectum enim vult esse unius totius rationis communis omnibus, quae considerantur in scientia.”

<sup>67</sup> For a cogent summary of this debate, see Andreas Speer, “*Sapientia nostra: Zum Verhältnis von philosophischer und theologischer Weisheit in den Pariser Debatten am Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts,*” in *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*, 248-275. Evan King, “*Sapiens modernus: The Reception of Dietrich of Freiberg in Berthold of Moosburg,*” in *The Renewal of Medieval Metaphysics: Berthold of Moosburg’s Expositio on Proclus’ Elements of Theology*, ed. by Dragos Calma and Evan King (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 263-277 and Kandler, “*Theologie und Philosophie nach Dietrich von Freibergs Traktat De subiecto theologiae,*” 643 maintain that Dietrich’s position is similar to his contemporary Godfrey of Fontaines, discussed above.



After dismissing these contemporary definitions of the subject of theology, Dietrich begins to explain how theology unifies the proportionalities that are established through natural philosophy. Dietrich maintains that in theology “it is necessary to reduce such proportionalities to the unity of proportion that is attended to in the attribution of these to some one.”<sup>68</sup> As Flasch notes, Dietrich here abandons the fourfold rule of proportionality which governs the relationships between beings within physics for the *pros hen* relationship of analogy proper whereby all aspects of a science are reduced to a central concept.<sup>69</sup> The *Fragmentum* consequently asserts that this reduction is necessary for theology because it “is common for every proportionality and universal for every multitude in which some agreement is attended to that it needs to be reduced to some unity which is the root and reason of such an agreement.”<sup>70</sup> This is despite the fact that “for any plurality of things which are treated in this science [ie. theology], a certain agreement is attended to according to proportionality.”<sup>71</sup> At this crucial juncture within the argument of the *Fragmentum*, in other words, Dietrich insists that theology is a science where statements are unified by proportion rather than proportionality and that the analogical relation of proportion is predicated on the unification of several proportionalities (including, for instance, the proportionality constituted by the order of mobile being considered by the physicist discussed in the incomplete, opening question of the *Fragmentum*).

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<sup>68</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.4.62-64, 280: “nihilominus tamen necessarium est huiusmodi proportionalitates reducere ad unitatem proportionis, quae attenditur in attributione ad aliquod unam.”

<sup>69</sup> Flasch, *Dietrich von Freiberg*, 504. Aristotle’s claim about the *pros-hen* unification of meaning is paradigmatically outlined in the discussion of substance in *Metaphysics* IV, 2 1003a33–35. For a summary of the scholastic understanding of this discussion of analogy and its departure from that of Aristotle, see and E. J. Ashworth, “Analogy and Equivocation in Thirteenth-Century Logic: Aquinas in Context,” *Mediaeval Studies* 54 (1992): 94–135 and Alain de Libera, “Les sources greco-arabes de la theorie medieval de l’analogie de l’etre,” *Les etudes philosophiques* 3 (1989): 319-345.

<sup>70</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.4.64-68, 280-281: “Hoc enim commune est omni proportionalitati et universaliter omni multitudini, in qua attenditur aliqua convenientia, quod oportet ipsam reducere ad aliquam unitatem, quae est radix et ratio talis convenientiae.”

<sup>71</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.4.59-61, 280-281: “quamvis in pluribus, quae tractantur in hac scientia, attendatur quaedam convenientia secundum proportionalitatem.”

Dietrich buttresses this claim about the need to consider the proportionalities through the unity of proportion by invoking the authority of Proclus. Dietrich in this part of the *Fragmentum* accordingly cites proposition 21 of the *Elementatio theologica*, which maintains that “every order has its beginning in a monad and proceeds to a manifold co-ordinate therewith; and the manifold in any order may be carried back to a single monad.”<sup>72</sup> As Proclus himself clarifies in his own gloss on this proposition, to the degree that some specific one or monad is the generating principle of the manifold that it orders, “a series or order is a unity, in that the entire sequence derives from the monad its declension into plurality,” while “in the reverse direction the manifold may be carried back to a single common cause of all the co-ordinate terms.”<sup>73</sup> As Proclus indicates, moreover, each entity in a unified manifold in the four hierarchical grades of reality that he had posited earlier in proposition 20 of the *Elementatio theologica*—namely those of body, soul, intelligence and the One—are themselves related both to their own order and then to the order that precedes them.<sup>74</sup> As such, Proclus argues that “there are henads consequent upon the primal One, intelligences consequent on the primal Intelligence, souls consequent on the primal Soul, and a plurality of natures consequent on the universal Nature.”<sup>75</sup> The unity of proportion which Dietrich introduces to define the subject of theology is directly tied to the propositions of Proclus which explicitly outline the way that entities are reduced to their orders and how these orders are then reduced to their principle causes. Dietrich therefore makes explicit that the discursive requirement in theology to reduce every proportionality to a single subject

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<sup>72</sup> Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 21, trans. by E. R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 25.

<sup>73</sup> Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 21, trans. Dodds, 25.

<sup>74</sup> Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 20, trans. Dodds, 23: “Beyond all bodies is the soul’s essence, beyond all souls, the intellective principle, beyond all intellective substances, the One.

<sup>75</sup> Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 21, trans. Dodds, 25.

through proportion depends on an explicit understanding of the nature of causality he appropriates from his Neoplatonic source.

Yet the example which Dietrich provides in the *Fragmentum* to demonstrate how theology reduces proportionalities to their causes through analogy is explicitly Christian and does not draw further from the work of Proclus. Dietrich argues in this section of the *Fragmentum* that a proportionality is constituted through the relationship established between the rewards and punishments respectively owed to the just and the wicked, as well as the relationship between the way that God judges the just and the wicked. Yet this example does not merely suggest an overarching emphasis on salvation history or eschatology in Dietrich's understanding of theology, as Kandler maintains.<sup>76</sup> Instead, Dietrich seems to be providing a theological elaboration of the same understanding of scientific proportionality that he had introduced in his earlier discussion of physics in the incomplete first question of the *Fragmentum*, discussed above.<sup>77</sup> The *Fragmentum* consequently maintains that the subject of theology is that which bears statements about divine rewards and God's judgement considered as a proportionality in the same way that natural science discusses the principles of the terrestrial and celestial bodies reduced to their proper subject, the mobile being. However, as the final section of this chapter demonstrates more fully, Dietrich does articulate elsewhere in his extant writing a conception of a quasi-ethical theology of merit which does consider grace as a particular aspect of God's providential oversight over His creation.

After establishing the necessity of the Proclian understanding of proportion, the *Fragmentum* finally offers a clear and definitive statement about the particular subject of theology. Dietrich maintains that "since the whole university of beings is treated in this science,

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<sup>76</sup> Kandler, "Theologische Implikationen der Philosophie Dietrichs von Freiberg," 128.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 2.3, 279, discussed above.

it is necessary that everything agree in a single reason of the subject, which may be called, just as it truly is, the divine being that primarily and simply and essentially agrees with the first principle of all things.”<sup>78</sup> However, the whole universe of beings must also be conceived, the *Fragmentum* clarifies, “according to their procession from God and according to the order in Him and according to the orderly arrangement of beings and the proper modes introduced into beings by God.”<sup>79</sup> Dietrich thus defines theology as the science that considers the various orders or proportionalities of being qua being insofar as these both emanate from and return to the divine being, in a manner that is explicitly Proclian. Put differently, the *Fragmentum* also argues that theology must attend to the orders of reality insofar as they pre-exist within their absolute cause, which is God, and as they flow forth from this cause that unifies them into a whole, the universe of being. Dietrich explains by way of conclusion that this must also be accomplished “either according to the order of natural providence or voluntary providence, following the distinction of Augustine in Book VIII of his *On Genesis*.”<sup>80</sup> The significance of this clarification and its relationship to Dietrich’s other writings is also discussed in the following section.

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<sup>78</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.5.69, 74-76, 281: “Quia igitur in hac scientia tractatur de tota universitate entium... necesse est omnia convenire in una ratione subiecti, quod vocetur, sicut et vere est, ens divinum, quod primo et simpliciter et essentialiter convenit primo omnium principio.” Note that by defining the divine being as the subject of theology, conceived here as metaphysical, rather than as God Himself, Dietrich follows Albert who had made a similar argument in his *Metaphysica* through recourse to the debate about this question between Avicenna and Averroes. See Amos Bertolacci, “Avicenna and Averroes’ Interpretations and their Influence in Albertus Magnus,” in *A Companion to the Latin Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, ed. by Fabrizio Amerini and Gabriele Galluzzo (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 95-135.

<sup>79</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.5.69-74, 281: “et secundum processum eorum a Deo et secundum ordinem in ipsum et secundum dispositionem entium et proprios modos eorum inditos ipsis entibus a Deo, et haec sive secundum ordinem naturalis providentiae seu secundum ordinem voluntariae providentiae, secundum distinctionem Augustini VIII *Super Genesis*.”

<sup>80</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.5.69-74, 281: “et secundum processum eorum a Deo et secundum ordinem in ipsum et secundum dispositionem entium et proprios modos eorum inditos ipsis entibus a Deo, et haec sive secundum ordinem naturalis providentiae seu secundum ordinem voluntariae providentiae, secundum distinctionem Augustini VIII *Super Genesis*.”

In the remainder of the *Fragmentum* Dietrich draws a boundary between a theology he attributes to the philosophers and a theology that he explicitly calls “our science.” As Dietrich explains:

although in accordance with the consideration of the first Philosopher [i.e, Aristotle] this kind of attribution of beings to the first principle is attended to and on account of this it is more preferably called by the philosophers divine science or theology, than it is called metaphysics... nonetheless, our science, which we call truly and simply theology, is distinguished from the divine science of the philosophers.<sup>81</sup>

According to Dietrich, the divine science of the philosophers, which was originally established by Aristotle and merits the name theology, paradigmatically considers the universe of beings insofar it is reduced to the First Cause, which is the divine being. Dietrich thus maintains like Albert before him that philosophical theology entails the study of the metaphysics of flow. Yet Dietrich goes on to explain that philosophical theology is deficient because it only considers the universe of being according to the order of natural providence and has no higher end directed beyond this consideration.<sup>82</sup> “But our divine science of the saints,” Dietrich argues “is attended to in beings according to how they are established and arranged under the order of voluntary providence.”<sup>83</sup> Both theologies investigate the ordered nature of the universe of being insofar as it is unified by God, but Christian theology exceeds the divine science of the philosophers because it also attends to the voluntary and not just the natural order whereby this unification occurs. This is especially so insofar as voluntary providence, Dietrich explains, considers “where

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<sup>81</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.8.92-95; 98-99, 281: “Quamvis autem quantum ad considerationem primi philosophi talis etiam, quae dicta est, attributio entium ad primum principium attendatur, et propter hoc etiam potius dicitur apud philosophos scientia divina seu theologia, quam dicatur metaphysica... nihilominus tamen nostra scientia, quam vere et simpliciter theologiam dicimus, distinguitur a scientia divina philosophorum.”

<sup>82</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.9.100-104, 281-2: “Scientia enim divina philosophorum considerat universitatem entium secundum ordinem providentiae naturalis, quo videlicet res stant in sui natura et secundum suos modos et proprietates naturales gubernantur per principem universitatis, nec ultra hunc naturae ordinem aliquem ulteriorem finem attendit.”

<sup>83</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.9.104-105, 282: “Nostra autem divina sanctorum scientia attenditur in entibus, secundum quod stant et disponuntur sub ordine voluntariae providentiae.”

the reason of merit and the prize applies and that which is attended to concerning the good and holy life and the acquiring of eternal beatitude and the arrival at the ultimate end—either in good or in evil—even after the end of this world, when the divine science of the wise of this world will be destroyed, according to 1 Cor 13.”<sup>84</sup>

The *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* ultimately insists that theology is beholden to the Proclian understanding of proportion Dietrich extrapolates from the *Elementatio theologica*. But insofar as theology is said to consider the ordered arrangements of the universe of beings as they are proportionally reduced to the divine being which is their principle cause, the *Fragmentum* establishes that the way this is grasped depends on which science of theology one follows. In this respect, Dietrich’s understanding of theology draws a distinction between two divine sciences similar to the difference between philosophical wisdom and Christian theology which Albert the Great and Ulrich of Strasburg had outlined in their own writing. However, whereas Albert had conceived of this difference as one that was primarily grounded in the specific habit of the theologian and Ulrich defined the wisdom of the Christians as the completion of philosophy through recourse to faith, according to the *Fragmentum* philosophical and Christian theology diverge because they conceive and analyze the relationship between the universe of beings and the divine being differently. Dietrich, while staying true to Albert’s original intention, reformulates Albert’s prior distinction between a demonstrative and rational theology of the philosophers and a practical and affective Christian theology comparable to ethics by aligning

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<sup>84</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.9.105-109, 282: “in quo attenditur ratio meriti et praemii et ea, quae attendatur circa bonam et sanctam vitam et adeptionem aeternae beatitudinis et perventionem ad finem ulteriorem sive in bono sive in malo etiam post terminum huius mundi, quando scientia divina sapientium huius mundi destruetur, I Cor., 13.” See especially 1 Cor. 13: 8-10: “caritas numquam excidit sive prophetiae evacuabuntur sive linguae cessabunt sive scientia destruetur ex parte enim cognoscimus et ex parte prophetamus cum autem venerit quod perfectum est evacuabitur quod ex parte est (“Love never dies: whether prophecies will be emptied or tongues will cease or knowledge will be destroyed. Indeed, we know now partially and we prophesy partially. When, however, what is perfected should come, what is partial will be purged.”)

their approach to a bifurcation within theology's subject: the two orders of providence. Despite his distinction however, Dietrich insists that both theologies constitute two ways of accounting for the universe of beings which must be explained in Proclian terms and thus seeks to reduce their difference. In the following section, I turn to other places within Dietrich's surviving oeuvre where these two types of providence are invoked to unpack how Dietrich's presentation of this difference relates to the key positions of his own theology.

*Partim naturalis, partim voluntaria: Dietrich on Providence and the Manners of Being*

As the previous section demonstrated, Dietrich conceived of theology as the science that unifies discourse about the universe of being ordered and arranged by God. In the *Fragmentum* Dietrich further distinguished this theology through recourse to Augustine into a divine science of the philosophers which attends to the order of natural providence and a divine science of the saints which attends to the order of voluntary providence. By doing so, Dietrich reconfigured Albert the Great's own presentation of the difference between these two types of theology even if he basically agreed with Albert's earlier position. As the following shows, Dietrich also cites Augustine's arguments about the twofold order of providence several times in his writings which directly address how to understand the universe of being. In what follows I show that Dietrich consistently includes this Augustinian distinction whenever he contends that theologians must adopt the four domains of reality identified by Proclus in order to describe the universe of beings, as well as Dietrich's own arguments about the role which the separate intelligences play in creation. I ultimately demonstrate that Dietrich's arguments about the relationship between natural and voluntary providence and the manners of being result in a theology that foregrounds the authority of Proclus and Augustine as well as the *Liber de causis* in a way that is consistent with the argument of the *Fragmentum*.

Augustine himself originally introduced the twofold understanding of providence in *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII. 9. 17.<sup>85</sup> Commenting on Gen 2:15, Augustine directs his reader to consider how the world is “like a great tree of things [where] a double work of providence is found that is partly voluntary and partly natural.”<sup>86</sup> He goes on to explain that “the natural, indeed, is found through the hidden administration of God and also his giving growth to trees and plants, but the voluntary is found through the works of the angels and of men.”<sup>87</sup> Whereas divine providence as it relates to the natural order establishes the rules that all creation must follow, Augustine maintains that according to the voluntary order “other signs are given: some are instructed and taught, fields are cultivated, societies are administrated, the arts are practiced, and other things are done, either in the supernal society or in this terrestrial or mortal one, in such a way that the good are looked after, even unknowingly by the wicked.”<sup>88</sup> The two ways of understanding the operation of providence outlined by Augustine describes how God regulates natural processes and also exerts his will for the benefit of angelic and human society. Augustine for this reason claims that “it is the God over all things that composed all things and rules all things, who as Good creates every nature and who as Justice orders every will.”<sup>89</sup> Natural and voluntary providence are therefore not two separate providential orders by means of which God governs creation, but rather two ways of conceiving God’s providential oversight insofar as he

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<sup>85</sup> For a systematic overview of Augustine’s approach to providence throughout his writings, see Goulven Madec, “Thématique augustiniennne de la Providence,” *Revue des études augustiniennes* 41.2 (1995): 291-308.

<sup>86</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII.9.17, 243-4, in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* XXVIII, ed. by Joseph Zycha (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1894): “hinc iam in ipsum mundum uelut in quandam magnam arborem rerum... in ipso quoque gemina operatio prouidentiae reperitur, partim naturalis, partim uoluntaria. Et naturalis quidem per occultam dei administrationem, qua etiam lignis et herbis dat incrementum, uoluntaria uero per angelorum opera et hominum.”

<sup>87</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII.9.17, 243-4: “Et naturalis quidem per occultam dei administrationem, qua etiam lignis et herbis dat incrementum, uoluntaria uero per angelorum opera et hominum.”

<sup>88</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII.9.17, 244: “in hac autem altera signa dari, doceri et disci, agros coli, societates administrari, artes exerceri et quaeque alia siue in superna societate aguntur siue in hac terrena atque mortali, ita ut bonis consulatur et per nescientes malos.”

<sup>89</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII.9.18, 245: “deus itaque super omnia, qui condidit omnia et regit omnia, omnes naturas bonus creat, omnes uoluntates iustus ordinat.”



regulates both nature and history. Augustine makes this clear in *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII. 23. 44, where he argues that “the providence of God rules and administers the entirety of creation, both natures and wills; natures, so that they are, but wills, so that the good are not unfruitful and the wicked are not unpunished.”<sup>90</sup> Augustine also insists in chapter 24 that the activity of divine providence is instrumentally carried out within both orders through the mediation of the angels insofar as they are subject to God and all lower entities are subject to them.<sup>91</sup>

Dietrich himself was not the first German Dominican thinker to evoke this Augustinian doctrine of twofold providence. Both Albert and Ulrich before him had introduced *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII. 9 in their work in order to discuss how to adequately understand the relation between divine providence and fate.<sup>92</sup> For instance, Albert in his *Summa theologiae* cites Augustine in a question that asks whether God’s providence works through a creature, or whether God governs creation directly, as an authority that needs to be reconciled to Boethius, whose account of providence in the *Consolatione Philosophiae* appears to contradict the *De Genesi ad litteram*.<sup>93</sup> Albert ultimately concludes that there is no conflict between their two

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<sup>90</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII.23.44, 262: “ergo dei prouidentia regens atque administrans uniuersam creaturam, et naturas et uoluntates, naturas, ut sint, uoluntates autem, ut nec infructuosae bonae nec inpunitae malae sint, subdit primitus omnia sibi.”

<sup>91</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII.24.45, 263: “ac per hoc sublimibus angelis deo subdite fruentibus et deo beate seruientibus subdita est omnis natura corporea, omnis inrationalis uita, omnis uoluntas uel infirma uel praua, ut hoc de subditis uel cum subditis agant, quod naturae ordo poscit in omnibus iubente illo, cui subiecta sunt omnia.”

<sup>92</sup> The centrality of the problem of fate to the intellectual project of Albert has been well documented. Most importantly on this subject, see Alessandro Palazzo, “Albert the Great’s Doctrine of Fate,” in *Mantik, Schicksal und Freiheit im Mittelalter*, ed. by Loris Sturlese (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011), 65-95; Alessandro Palazzo, “The Scientific Significance of Fate and Celestial Influences in some Mature Works by Albert the Great: *De fato*, *De somno et vigilia*, *De intellectu et intelligibilia*, *Mineralia*,” in *Per perscrutationem philosophicam: Neue Perspektiven der mittelalterlichen Forschung. Loris Sturlese zum 60. Geburtstag gewidmet*, ed. by Alessandra Beccarisi, Ruedi Imnach and Pasquale Porro (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2008), 55-78; Henryk Anzulewicz, “*Fatum*: Das Phänomen des Schicksals und die Freiheit des Menschen nach Albertus Magnus,” in *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*, 507-34. For the doctrine of fate in Ulrich of Strasburg and the twofold order of providence, see Tommaso Ferro, “Berthold of Moosburg, Reader of Ulrich of Strassburg. On Natural Providence,” in *The Renewal of Medieval*, 204-242 and Palazzo, “Ulrich of Strasbourg’s Philosophical Theology,” 219-241.

<sup>93</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I, tr. 17, q. 67, m. 4, a. 4, 690, in *Opera Omnia XXXI*, ed. by Borgnet: “Adhuc, Augustinus in libro VIII *super Genesim ad litteram*: ‘Gemina operatio prouidentiae reperitur,

positions,<sup>94</sup> further declaring in the solution to a subsequent question that fate names “a disposition left in all the orders of cause and effect according to the order of natural and voluntary causes, which the providence and will of God rule.”<sup>95</sup> Similarly, Ulrich draws upon the *De Genesi ad litteram* in *De summo bono* II, 5, 18 to develop the Boethian understanding of fate as the operation of the eternal providence of God as this is unfolded in the universe God governs.<sup>96</sup> Like Albert before him, Ulrich thus concludes that God works his providence through the two orders of providence that Augustine had identified in creation.<sup>97</sup> However, unlike Albert, Ulrich explicitly aligns the theoretical postulate of Augustine that providence has two orders with elements in the universe such that the natural order of providence characterizes the movement of the celestial entities which universally inform particular causes,<sup>98</sup> while the voluntary order characterizes the “divine law” described by Pseudo-Dionysius in his *De coelestia hierarchia*, particularly as this names the process whereby all things are directed to their proper

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partim naturalis, partim voluntaria...” In *Contrarium hujus est quod ex praehabitis verbis Boetii dictum est, scilicet quod providential est divina ratio in summo omnium principe constituta, qua cuncta ordinat et disponit. Talis ratio creaturae convenire non potest. Ergo Deus non potest providere per creaturam.*”

<sup>94</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I, tr. 17, q. 67, m. 4, a. 4, resp. 3 692: “Ad id quod ulterius quaeritur de Boetio, omnino concedendum est ut jacet: et patet ratio ex dictis. Per hoc etiam patet, quod concedendum est dictum Augustini, quod consequenter inducitur. Id quod in contrarium objicitur in principio huius solutionis solutum est: hoc enim dicto modo providential in solo Deo est.”

<sup>95</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I, tr. 17, q. 68, m. 1, resp. 5, 697: “Ad sequens dictum Augustini dicendum, quod ex hoc non sequitur, quod fatum non sit nisi voluntas Dei, sed quod fatum est dispositio relicta in omnibus ordinibus causarum et effectuum secundum ordinem naturalium et voluntarium causarum, in quibus principantur providential Dei et voluntas.” This claim accords well with Albert’s commitment to the Augustinian doctrine of the seminal reasons, briefly discussed by Isabelle Moulin, “Albert the Great,” in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, vol 1, ed. by Karla Pollmann and Willemien Otten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 500-503.

<sup>96</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* II, 5, 18, 1, 137, ed. by Alessandra Beccarisi (Hamburg: Felix Mainer, 2007): “Fatum, cum secundum Boethium sit explication divinae providentiae, cum providential notificandum est.”

<sup>97</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* II, 5, 18, 9, 145-6: “Et quamvis per se principaliter omnia efficiat, tamen, ut dignitas causalitatis et divinae cooperationis non deesset universe, cui communicatae sunt omnes divinae bonitates naturaliter communicabiles, operator etiam per secundas causas. Et illae sunt ordinatae dupliciter secundum duplicem modum providentiae. Dicit enim Augustinus VIII libro *Super Genesim*: ‘Gemina operatio providentiae reperitur: partim naturalis... partim voluntaria...’”

<sup>98</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* II, 5, 18, 9, 146: “Secundum primum actum providentiae est ordo naturalis causarum, quem philosophi determinant, scilicet quod primo sunt causae universales, scilicet caelestia et motus eorum, et sub illis sunt causae particulares.”

end by angels and humans.<sup>99</sup> Neither of these German Dominican invocations of the twofold conception of providence that Augustine had introduced explicitly differentiate a divine science of the philosophers from Christian theology. Ulrich did cite *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII: 9, however, to make an ontological or metaphysical distinction within the universe. In this way he sets the scene for the way that Dietrich came to understand the natural and voluntary order of providence.

The opening section of an apparently late work by Dietrich explicitly takes up this distinction elaborated by Augustine in a way that is similar to Ulrich.<sup>100</sup> This is the *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis*, a self-consciously polemical work that Dietrich describes in the prologue he attached to the treatise as that amongst all his writings most likely to lead to controversy, even as he also insists following Augustine that “it is better to doubt concerning hidden things than to quarrel about uncertainties.”<sup>101</sup> Although the aim of the treatise is to outline the specific modes and properties of spiritual beings and resurrected bodies, the *De substantiis* opens with an extended treatment of the universe of being representative of Dietrich’s overarching concerns as a theologian. Dietrich begins the *De substantiis* by arguing that “including the first of the principles of all beings among the universe of things, and having supposed the position of the philosophers concerning the intelligences, we find four manners

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<sup>99</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* II, 5, 18, 9, 146: “Sed quantum ad secundam operationem providentiae dispositione providentiae divinae, quam Dionysius vocat legem divinitatis, secundum quam ‘ultima reducuntur per media et media per primam et prima reducitur per se ipsum’, et malis et bonis angelis et hominibus utitur ad inducendum finem dispositum ad varios effectus naturae.”

<sup>100</sup> Flasch, *Dietrich von Freiberg*, 571-2.

<sup>101</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis* pro.1.5-10, 299: “Attendere debui verbum Augustini VIII *Super Genesim ad litteram*, quod dicit 7 c. sic ‘Melius est dubitare de occultis quam litigare de incertis,’ maxime quantum ad materiam principalem huius tractatus, in quo agitur de substantiis et corporibus future resurrectionis, qui magis patebit calumniate, inter omnia mea opuscula, sit amen opera vel opuscula dici possunt res tam parvi momenti et valoris.”

(*maneries*) of beings.”<sup>102</sup> These four manners, Dietrich specifies, are that of the First Cause or God, that of the intellectual substances, that of the spiritual beings or bodies, and that of corporeality.<sup>103</sup> In other words, Dietrich here promotes the fourfold division of existence that Proclus outlined in proposition 20 of the *Elementatio theologica* introduced in the previous section.<sup>104</sup> Throughout the *De substantiis*, therefore, Dietrich invokes the authority of Proclus and the *Liber de causis* in order to sanction his hierarchical understanding of the four manners of being as well as the role that the intelligences play within them. In fact, it is precisely because of his preference for the latter doctrine that Dietrich anticipates opposition in his proemium.<sup>105</sup>

Dietrich writes in defense of the claim about the role the separate intelligences play in creation

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<sup>102</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis* 1.1. 2-4, 303: “Connumerando primum omnium entium principium inter rerum universitatem, tolerata etiam positione philosophorum de intelligentiis, secundum hoc invenimus quattuor maneries entium.” On the term *maneries* as a logical and ontological concept in medieval thought that indicates an exemplar that is neither particular nor generic, see Dragos Calma, “Maneries,” in *Mots médiévaux offerts à Ruedi Imbach*, ed. by Iñigo Atucha, Dragos Calma, Catherine König-Pralong and Irene Zavattero (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 433-444. Derived either from the noun *maneria*, manor-house, or the verb *manere*, to persist or endure, Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. by Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 27 suggests *maneries* may take its origin from the verb *manare*, to flow out. The word *maneries* for Agamben thus signifies “a manner of rising forth; not a being that is *in* this or that mode, but a being that is *its* mode of being... such a being is neither accidental nor necessary, but is, so to speak, continually engendered from its own manner.” This speculative account of the meaning of *maneries* certainly accords well with Dietrich’s own use of the term in his Proclian metaphysics of flow; although the meaning conveyed by the term as it was used by earlier Christian Platonists likely informed his choice. Cf. William of Conches, *Glossae super Boethium in Consolationem* V pr. 4, 326, ed. by L. Nauta (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999): “Si aliquis quaerat in hoc loco quid sit species, dicemus quod species est maneries rerum; considerare uero speciem est considerare de aliquo de qua manerie rerum sit” and Bernard of Chartres, *Glosae super Platonem*, 225, ed. by Paul Dutton (Toronto: Pontifical University of Mediaeval Studies Press, 1991): “At uero dixi quod ostendemus quomodo sint inde formata, sed nunc prius *trinum genus*, id est tres maneriae rerum sumendae sunt: *animo*, scilicet res formata, quae est corpus, informis materia, scilicet hyle, et idea, quae semper manet eadem in mente divina.” I have chosen “manner” for my translation insofar as it conveys how *maneries* as a central term in Dietrich’s philosophical theology indicates what Agamben names “the mannerism of being.”

<sup>103</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis* 1.8.34-38, 304: “Sic ergo habemus quattuor maneries entium, videlicet primam causam, quae Deus est, substantias intellectuales secundum substantiam et operationem, substantias spirituales et communicantes proprietates spirituales et universitatem corporalium, quae secundum sensum apparent in hoc visibili.”

<sup>104</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis* 5.2.9-17, 307 directly cites this proposition.

<sup>105</sup> Flasch, *Dietrich von Freiberg*, 572.

later in the *De substantiis* that it can be justified demonstratively while also complaining that “our doctors dread and fear what should not be feared.”<sup>106</sup>

Dietrich qualifies his discussion of the four manners of beings in the opening section of *De substantiis* in two important ways. First, Dietrich notes that a manner is “a certain communication of beings not only according to genus but also insofar as there is some substantial quality of these beings beyond or above genus—and if it is not univocally in all things it is one, at least, through a certain analogy.”<sup>107</sup> Dietrich consequently argues that “it is possible that there are manners of unity which are not genera of unity.”<sup>108</sup> The implication of this claim seems to be that the manners of beings provide a better means to classify beings that cannot be discussed with the categories of Aristotelian logic, although Dietrich here does not pursue this argument explicitly. The second and more important qualification that Dietrich introduces, however, is that “in these manners of things the immense fecundity of divine benevolence overflows and has overflowed according to the double reason of providence, namely the natural and voluntary.”<sup>109</sup> To corroborate this point, Dietrich provides verbatim Augustine’s own explanation of the difference between how providence operates within these orders from *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII: 9 summarized above.<sup>110</sup> Yet the subsequent discussion

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<sup>106</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis* 19.1.22-23, 316: “tamen salva pace et gratia doctorum nostrorum non est absonum nec alienum a ratione”; *De substantiis* 20.1.80, 318: “Sed nostri doctores verentur et timent non timenda.”

<sup>107</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis*, 1.2.5-8, 303: “Dico autem maneriem communicantem quandam entium, non solum secundum genus, sed etiam ultra vel supra genus quantum ad aliquam proprietatem substantialem eorum, etsi non in omnibus univocam, saltem unam secundum quandam analogiam.”

<sup>108</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis* 1.2.8-9, 303: “Et sic possunt esse unius maneriei, quae non sunt unius generis.” He continues that this holds also for the three other manners.

<sup>109</sup> Dietrich von Freiberg, *De substantiis* 2.1.41-43, 304: “In has rerum maneries redundant et redundavit fecunditas immensae bonitatis divinae secundum rationem duplicis providentiae, scilicet naturalis et voluntariae, de quibus agit Augustinus *Super Genesim* VIII l. c. 13.”

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis* 2.2.48-52, 304 and 2.3.53-56.

in the *De substantiis* indicates that Dietrich construes the difference between these two orders in a way that reformulates Augustine's own account of this distinction.

In fact, rather than directly address the two ways that divine providence operates in creation as Augustine had done, Dietrich in the following part of the *De substantiis* distinguishes instead how the manners of being can be discussed really and conceptionally. Dietrich for this reason explains that the fact that real beings are reduced to their manners and their appropriate order "is supposed according to the similitude of proportionality in conceptional beings."<sup>111</sup> That is, Dietrich maintains that a proportional relationship exists between the manners of real being and the manners of conceptual being insofar as both are ordered according to the real rather than logical fourfold correspondence inherent in any proportionality. Dietrich in this part of the *De substantiis* thus follows the methodology he had outlined in the *Fragmentum* and argues that there are four types of conceptional being analogous to the four types of natural being he has already defined, grounded in a Peripatetic account of cognition derived from Alexander of Aphrodisias and al-Fārābī.<sup>112</sup> For Dietrich,

in the universe we have four manners of conceptional beings: the first is entirely corporeal, namely conceptualization through the exterior senses, which is not only corporeal from the part of the corporeal organs but even more from the part of objects that are bodies; another is spiritual, namely the imagination, because things are apprehended and reduced to a certain spiritual being; the third is intellectual, namely by the possible intellect through the proper intrinsic principles of things; the fourth is through the principle of all principles, namely through the active intellect, either according to itself, because things pertain to their own substance in it, or through its formal conjunction to man, whence it becomes the acquired intellect.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis* 4.1.63-66, 305: "Convenienter autem dictae entium realium maneries reducuntur ad hunc numerum, scilicet quaternarium, ut dictum est, et ad eum ordinem, qui praescriptus est. Cuius sufficientiae ratio exemplum sumitur secundum proportionalem similitudinem in entibus conceptionalibus."

<sup>112</sup> For al-Fārābī's theory of cognition and doctrine of the acquired intellect, see Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect: their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 44-73.

<sup>113</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis* 4.8.106-114, 306: "Et sic in universe habemus quattuor maneries entium conceptionalium: unam omnino corporalem, scilicet per sensus exteriores, quae non solum corporalis est ex parte organorum, sed multo magis ex parte obiectorum, quae sunt corpora; aliam spiritualiem, scilicet imaginariam,

Dietrich argues that the manner of body correlates with what is perceived sensually, the manner of spiritual substance with what is imagined, the manner of intellectual substance with the passive intellection of principle causes, and the manner of the First Cause or God with active or acquired intellection. Dietrich maintains for this reason that the reduction of bodies to God as their absolute cause considered in the manners of real being is analogous to the reduction of sensual knowledge to the active intellect considered in the manners of conceptional being. Dietrich concludes for this reason that “the four manners of things... [proceed] from the most exterior or inferior things according to nature toward what is most interior or superior according to nature.”<sup>114</sup> Dietrich in the opening of *De substantiis* thus outlines how intellectual or conceptional being and natural being are related to each other in the causal hierarchy as higher to lower, and even contends that these conceptional beings are the intellectual hypostases posited by Proclus and in the *Liber de causis*, which mediate God’s cognitive and creative overflow to the lower manners of real being.<sup>115</sup> The *De substantiis* presents a twofold argument about the relationship between the real (or natural) and conceptional (or intellectual) worlds, insofar as the former are proportionally connected to the latter.

It is in the first book of the *De intellectu and intelligibili* that we must look to further understand how Dietrich qualifies the metaphysical system of Proclus in view of the two orders of providence. Our key here will be Dietrich’s specification that his approach to the manners of being in *De substantiis* “supposes” the philosophical doctrine of the separate intelligences. At the end of the first book of the *De intellectu*—which like the beginning of the *De substantiis*

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quia res sic apprehensae reductae sunt ad quoddam esse spirituale; tertiam intellectualem, scilicet per intellectum possibilem per rei propria intrinseca principia; quartam per principium talium principiorum, scilicet per intellectum agentem, sive secundum se, quod pertinent ad eius substantiam in se, sive per sui coniunctionem formalem ad hominem, et fiat intellectus adeptus.”

<sup>114</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis* 5.2.15-17, 307: “Manifeste explicat quattuor rerum maneries... procedens ab exterioribus seu ab inferioribus secundam naturam ad interiora sive superiora secundam naturam.”

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Dietrich von Freiberg, *De substantiis* 9, 309-10 and 18, 315-16.

provides an extensive account of Dietrich’s particular understanding of the causal hierarchy represented by the manners of being—Dietrich explains that the “truth” of how being flows out from the First Cause has been adequately “demonstrated” by the philosophers.<sup>116</sup> This doctrine, which can be derived from Aristotle, the first and most important of the philosophers, Plato, Proclus the Platonist, and the author of the *Liber de causis*, Dietrich maintains is most manifest in the *Metaphysics* of Avicenna and from al-Ghazali “who abridged him.”<sup>117</sup> Yet Dietrich, referring to a series of propositions from the *Liber de causis* and the *Elementatio theologica*, in his treatment of the order of the intelligences specifies like Ulrich before him that it is a necessary and productive activity subordinated to God, whereas God’s creative act does not require the reinforcing influence of a more eminent agent like the creativity of the intelligences does.<sup>118</sup> Dietrich also maintains that “these aforesaid philosophers who spoke about intelligences were not discussing the angels about which whom Sacred Scripture speaks.”<sup>119</sup> For unlike the separate intelligences, Dietrich clarifies, the angels were created by God immediately and were not produced according to an emanatory order such that one angel flows out of another.<sup>120</sup> In other words, for Dietrich the angels are not considered within philosophical theology because

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<sup>116</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De intellectu et intelligibili* I.11.1.36-37, 144, in *Opera Omnia* I ed. by Burkhard Mojsisch (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1977): “Signum veritatis istorum, quae hic dicta sunt, est hoc, quod tractaverunt philosophi de profluxu entium a prima causa, quod, quamvis.”

<sup>117</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De intellectu et intelligibili* I.11.1.37-40, 144: “quod, quamvis haberi possit a primis et praecipuis philosophis, Aristotele videlicet et Platone et ex Proclo Platónico et ex *Libro de causis*, tamen manifeste habetur ab Avicenna in *Metaphysica* sua, cuius abbreviator fuit Algazel.”

<sup>118</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De intellectu et intelligibili* I.11.2.47-56, 144: “Istud concordat cum eo, quod habetur in comment propositionis 4 *Libri de causis* et in aliis pluribus locis illius libri, hoc tamen in his omnibus salvo, quod solus Deus creat secundum eos, sicut dicitur in *Libro de causis*. Procedere enim rem a re non est unam creare aliam, sed creare est sic producer, quod non praesupponat aliquod subiectum, unde producat, nec requirat nec praesupponat aliquod superius et prius agens, in cuius virtute agat et a quo habeat virtutem agenda et quod secum agat illud idem, quod agitur ab eadem causa secunda, quia, quidquid agit causa secunda in essentialiter ordinatis, agitur a causa superior, sed eminentiore modo, ut dicitur in *Libro de causis*, et Proclus propositione 54.”

<sup>119</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De intellectu et intelligibili* I.12.1.60, 144 – 61, 145: “Est autem et hoc circa iam dicta tenendum, quod dicti philosophi loquentes de intelligentiis non loquebantur de angelis, de quibus scriptura sacra loquitur.”

<sup>120</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De intellectu et intelligibili* I.11.2.62-64, 145: “de angelis, inquam, quorum multa milia omnipotentia creatoris Dei immediate produxit, id est non secundum ordinem emanationis, ut scilicet unus ab alio et ab isto alius et sic deinceps fluat in esse.”



they are different from the separate intelligences and do not belong to the causal system which the philosophers articulate. Dietrich insists that the angels are unknowable to the metaphysician who engages in a strictly philosophical consideration of the universe. He therefore implies that the angels can only be considered within Christian theology since they are revealed by a Scripture that shows them to act quite differently to the separate intelligences.

Dietrich's *De animatione caeli* further reinforces this conclusion. One of the polemics Dietrich composed against the "common chatterboxes," the *De animatione caeli* primarily introduces the distinction between the two orders of providence to describe how the souls that animate the heavens described by the philosophers and the angels revealed by Scripture constitute two entirely different types of being which proceed from God according to diverse orders.<sup>121</sup> Dietrich accordingly explains that the angels are spiritual beings that "proceed into an order of voluntary providence, through which they are also in turn administered according to distinct hierarchies, orders, and different grades, not only of nature, but also of the grace and acts of the hierarchies whose providence reaches all the way down to us."<sup>122</sup> The other spiritual beings, however, belong to the celestial bodies and "proceed from God in an order of natural providence according to the disposition of nature, of the natural properties and of the natural movement of beings where the natural causal sequence is found to be necessary."<sup>123</sup> Dietrich accordingly conceptualizes the angels and the souls moved by the separate intelligences to be

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<sup>121</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De animatione caeli* 20.1.82-86, 30, ed. by Loris Sturlese in *Opera Omnia* III, ed. by Loris Sturlese (Hamburg: Felix Mainer, 1983): "Huiusmodi autem substantiae spirituales omnino disparatae sunt in suis naturis et essentiis a substantiis corporum caelestium et nullum respectum et habitudinem secundum habent ad ipsa nisi eam, qua ambo ista entium genera procedunt ab uno principio, Deo, sed tamen ordine diverso."

<sup>122</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De animatione caeli* 20.2.87-91, 30: "Unum enim istorum, id est spirituum, de quibus sermo est, procedit in ordine voluntariae providentiae, quo etiam ad invicem disponuntur secundum distinctas hierarchias et ordines et diversos gradus non solum naturae, sed gratiae et actuum hierarchicorum, quorum etiam providential pervenit usque ad nos."

<sup>123</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De animatione caeli* 20.3.92-95, 30: "Aliud autem genus entium, scilicet corpora caelestia, procedunt a Deo in ordine naturalis providentiae secundum dispositionem naturae et naturalium proprietatum et motionum entium naturalium, in quibus naturalem connexionem inveniri necesse est."

subject to and constrained by God in different ways. He thus places the angels beneath both the order that administers divine grace as well as nature and celestial bodies and their intelligences solely beneath the natural order. As Tiziana Suarez-Nani and Loris Sturlese have both convincingly demonstrated, Dietrich in this way re-articulates Albert's argument against the theologizing philosophers that speculation about the angels does not belong to the business of philosophy by tying it to his own novel distinction in the *Fragmentum* between a philosophical divine science concerned with the natural order and a Christian theology that attends to the voluntary.<sup>124</sup> The angels are thus marked by a capacity for freedom and a relationship toward merit that they share with the human whereas the separate intelligences and the heavens they move are determined necessarily by a nature that the angels as instruments of God's will can deploy.<sup>125</sup> Both are responsible for different aspects of the universe of being, administering the two orders of providence that Augustine had described in *De Genesi ad litteram* VIII.

A final argument about the Proclian manners of being is found in Dietrich's magnum opus, the *De visione beatifica*, which also belongs to Dietrich's treatise on the three difficult problems. In this treatise, which as a whole seeks to reconcile the Augustinian doctrine of the *abditum mentis* (secret depth of the soul) with the theory of cognition he appropriates from the Peripatetic tradition, Dietrich argues that the active intellect is the place where the union with

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<sup>124</sup> Tiziana Suarez-Nani, *Les anges et la philosophie: Subjectivité et fonction cosmologique des substances séparées à la fin du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 2002), 143-151; Loris Sturlese, "Il 'De animatione caeli' di Teodorico di Freiberg," in *Xenia medii aevi historiam illustrantia oblate Thomae Kaeppli O.P.*, ed. by Raymond Creytens and Pius Künzle (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1978), 175-247.

<sup>125</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De animatione caeli* 20.6.104, 30-105-110, 31: "Nec obstat iam dictis, quod secundum scripturam veritatis huiusmodi angelici spiritus multas transmutationes efficient in istis rebus naturalibus, quae sunt apud nos, hoc, inquam, non obstat, quia ipsi talia agunt apud nos in istis naturalibus rebus, in quantum ipsi 'sunt administratorii spiritus', et huiusmodi res naturales, quae sunt apud nos, veniunt in usum nostrum, et secundum hoc pertinent ad nos et cadunt in ordinem voluntariae providentiae."

God most approximate to the beatific vision occurs.<sup>126</sup> But the proemium of the *De visione beatifica* opens by emphasizing the centrality of order for any discussion of reality with a rare citation of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, demonstrating that this treatise too contains much that is relevant to Dietrich’s understanding of Christian theology. Dietrich accordingly notes at the outset of the treatise that “we have from the divine Dionysius that the universe of beings insofar as it is arranged according to its order is distinguished into superiors, intermediaries and inferiors.”<sup>127</sup> Dietrich also maintains at the outset of the work that “in this arrangement of order, according to Dionysius, it happens that the inferiors are reduced to the superiors through the intermediaries.”<sup>128</sup> Yet the authority of Dionysius quickly cedes to that of Proclus who will henceforth be one of the principal philosophical interlocutors of the *De visione beatifica*. Dietrich for this reason cites Proclus’s commentary on proposition 147 of the *Elementatio theologica* in order to argue that “if there ought to be continuity in the divine procession and each order ought to be united by the proper medial terms, it is necessary that the highest of the secondary things are united to the ends of the primary. And this joining is through similitude.”<sup>129</sup> The proemium to the *De visione beatifica* in this way rehearses Dietrich’s arguments about the nature of causal flow by emphasizing the connection between the first and second manners of being—that is, between God as First Cause and conceptual or intellectual existence—insofar as the latter connects all that exists to God.

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<sup>126</sup> On Dietrich’s specific equation of the *abditum mentis* with the active intellect, and its relationship to the Parisian debates about this identification, see Kent Emery Jr, “The Image of God Deep in the Mind: The Continuity of Cognition according to Henry of Ghent,” in *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*, 59-124.

<sup>127</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* pro.1, 2-3, 13, in *Opera Omnia* I, ed. by Burkhard Mojsisch (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1977): “Sicut habemus a divo Dionysio, universitas entium quantum ad ordinis sui dispositionem distinguitur in superema, media et infima.”

<sup>128</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* pro.2, 14-15, 13: “Secundum hanc autem ordinis dispositionem contingit secundum Dionysium inferior in superior per media.”

<sup>129</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* pro.2, 23-26, 13: “Commentum: ‘Si enim oportet continuitatem esse divini processus et propriis medietatibus unumquemque ordinem colligari, necesse summitates secundorum copulari finibus primorum. Copulatio autem per similitudinem.’”

The *De visione beatifica* contains a brief discussion of the conceptional manners of being and their role within the causal hierarchy that also extends Dietrich's discussion in *De substantiis*. Dietrich notes in the third part of his treatise that "in its first division into parts being is divided into real being according to nature and conceptional or cognitive being, namely, insofar as being exists in cognition or conception."<sup>130</sup> Dietrich for this reason claims that "cognitive and conceptive being... according to its proper reason brings in the entire universe of being according to another being."<sup>131</sup> Dietrich accordingly contends in a way that is significantly more explicit than the *De substantiis* that the conceptional beings are those separate entities which are qualitatively different from real beings insofar as they are grasped intellectually. Yet, as Richard Tétreau notes, Dietrich also argues later in the *De visione beatifica* that conceptional being includes not only those beings which are attained through intellection but also the act of understanding itself that belongs to those beings.<sup>132</sup> Put differently, Dietrich asserts that all intellects produce their own reality insofar as they are coextensive with what they consider. Dietrich therefore maintains at the opening of the *De visione beatifica* that "in the intellect, which is an intellect essentially and always in act, all beings intellectually shine forth in its essence."<sup>133</sup> The real manner of being pre-exists within the conceptional manner of being and is literally conceived—in the sense of giving birth—by the act of intellection. According to Dietrich, to understand is thus to participate intellectually through abstraction in the very act of understanding that produces the real manners of being, here identified with the order of nature.

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<sup>130</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 3.2.9.6.1, 2-4, 96: "prima divisione in suas partes dividitur ens in ens reale secundum naturam et in ens conceptionale seu cognitivum, in quantum videlicet est in cognitione et conceptione."

<sup>131</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 3.2.9.6.3, 2-4, 96: "cognitivum enim et conceptivum... secundum propriam sui rationem importat totam universitatem entium secundum aliud esse."

<sup>132</sup> Richard Tétreau, *The Agent Intellect in Meister Dietrich of Freiberg: Study and Text*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1996, 69-70. Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 4.3.4.5, 123.

<sup>133</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 1.1.4.4, 22-24, 29: "in intellectu, qui est intellectus per essentiam et semper in actu, omnia entia intellectualiter resplendent in sua essentia."

In the final part of the *De visione beatifica* Dietrich elaborates more explicitly how abstraction and return occurs within the intellectual manner of being. First, Dietrich claims that “conceptional or intellectual beings and their conceptual operations are formal beings and certain forms and are beings themselves within the totality of the universe and consequently have a causal order.”<sup>134</sup> As such, Dietrich maintains that “it is reasonable that the entire disposition of this order is found in some one, and this is a being that participates in the intellect that apprehends the quiddities of things in their proper reasons,” namely, “the separate intellect that thinks through its essence.”<sup>135</sup> Dietrich insists as he had in the *De substantiis* that the manner of intellect is a proportionality or multitude made up of conceptional beings which are unified by that to which it is subject, the highest separate intellect. Moreover, Dietrich continues, because there is “a certain immediacy” or similitude between the active intellect and the intellect which is beneath it, “it is possible, indeed it is reasonable, that this superior [intellect] should become the form of this inferior.”<sup>136</sup> As Dietrich goes on to argue, this is exactly what occurs when someone’s possible intellect is actualized and becomes an acquired intellect.<sup>137</sup> It is possible for the human intellect to acquire its own active intellect as its form, as Dietrich suggests earlier in the *De visione beatifica*, in order to know all beings at once in the same way that the highest

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<sup>134</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 4.3.2.2, 3-6, 114: “entia conceptualia seu intellectualia et eorum operationes conceptionales sunt entia formalia et formae quaedam et sunt entia per se intra totalitatem universi et per consequens habent ordinem causalem per se.”

<sup>135</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 4.3.2.3, 9-13, 114: “rationabile est totam huius ordinis dispositionem inveniri in uno aliquot, et hoc est ens, quod participat intellectu, quo apprehendit quidditates rerum in suis propriis rationibus, quo intellectu secundum genus nihil est superius nisi intellectus separatus, qui intelligit per suam essentiam.”

<sup>136</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 4.3.2.3, 14-15, 114: “Unde possibile, immo rationabile est hunc superiorem fieri formam huius inferioris.”

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 1.1.4.5, 22-28, 114.

separate intelligence contemplates reality within itself. For Dietrich, this is precisely what occurred to Benedict, when “in a certain elevation of the mind he saw the entire universe.”<sup>138</sup>

However, Dietrich qualifies this argument in a way that once more employs the Augustinian distinction between the two orders of providence. Dietrich states that “I say this is reasonable and I do not say it is necessary since this does not happen for these kinds of things by the necessity of order that is found in natural providence, but solely comes to pass by the grace of God and the good merits that pertain to the order of voluntary providence.”<sup>139</sup> In other words, according to Dietrich one’s active intellect only transforms the possible intellect into the acquired intellect when there is an infusion of divine grace into the latter. Moreover, the reference here to merit suggests that Dietrich probably had the same thing in mind when he claimed in the *Fragmentum* that Christian theology considers “where the reason of merit and the prize applies.”<sup>140</sup> Dietrich also declares in the *De visione beatifica* that “in the state of this life we do not think through the active intellect, nor do those who are separated from the blessed life.”<sup>141</sup> As Dietrich explains, referring to the commentary on Aristotle’s *De anima* by Averroes, “to such of those who are alienated from that blessed life, and to those of us who carry on in this life, [the active intellect] is not united to us as form according to how its action is its essence... but is only united to us through intellects in act or intelligible species.”<sup>142</sup> Cognition which is not beatific

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<sup>138</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 4.3.2.5, 27-32, 29: “si intellectus agens... aliquando uniatur nobis ut forma, per ipsum intelligemus omnia entia. Quod videtur aliquo modo concordare cum eo, quod legitur de sancto Benedicto, videlicet quod in quondam mentis elevatione vidit totum universum.” Benedict’s miraculous vision of the universe is described in Gregory the Great, *Dialogus* II.35.

<sup>139</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 4.3.2.4, 16-19, 114: “Et dico rationabile esse hoc et non dico necessarium esse, quia huiusmodi non fit ex necessitate in providentiali naturali, sed contingit ex sola Dei gratia et bonis meritis, quod pertinent ad ordinem voluntariae providentiae.”

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.9.105, 282, discussed above.

<sup>141</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 4.3.3.14, 78-80, 122: “in statu huius vitae non intelligimus per seape dictum intellectum agentem nec hi, qui ab illa beata vita separate sunt.”

<sup>142</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 4.3.3.14, 80-84, 122: “Ipsis enim talibus, qui ab illa beata vita alieni sunt, nobis quoque, qui defimus in hac vita, non unitur ut forma, secundum quod actio eius est essentia eius, ut dicit Commentator *Super III De anima*, sed solum unitur nobis per intellectualia in acta seu species intelligibiles.”

only occurs thanks to the mediation of the conceptional entities which make up the manner of intellect insofar as these are rationally abstracted from the real beings that they produce by one's possible intellect. Intellection analogous to the beatific vision entails instead the total conception of all that is knowable through a contemplation that is informed by how the active intellect conceives of itself. This is why Dietrich ultimately claims in the *De visione beatifica* that voluntary providence is "the completion and consummation of the order of natural providence,"<sup>143</sup> and is probably why in the *Fragmentum* Dietrich contends that the divine science of the saints differs from the divine science of the philosophers insofar as it attends to this fact. This conclusion also informs what is perhaps the most radical aspect of Dietrich's account of beatitude—namely, his insistence against Thomas (and Albert!) that the divine lights of grace and glory are needed to perfect the possible intellect in the next life just as they do in the present.<sup>144</sup> Dietrich therefore concludes that the possible intellect is conjoined in the beatific vision to an always already active intellect deep within us that alone allows the mind to be united to the God which it directly contemplates as the formal principle within itself and from which it emanates.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 4.3.2.4, 19-20, 114: "qui est complementum et consummationem ordinis providentiae naturalis."

<sup>144</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 2.2.2, 55-64, 114: "Cum igitur nec gratia nec gloria destruat naturam et naturae ordinem, sed magis perficiat et consummet, cum etiam intellectus agens naturae ordine magis appropinquet Deo quam possibilis... iterum autem quanto magis appropinquatur ultimo fini, tanto magis necessarium est salvari naturam et naturae ordinem, qui est per se, eo, quod totus ordo causalium entium dependet ab ordine ultimi finis, necessarium est, sicut in praesenti vita se habet suo modo processus et conversio dictorum intellectus in Deum, sic multo amplius et, ut ita dicam, essentialius se habeat in vita illa dictus ordo et sit immediate unio ad Deum per intellectum agentem in illa beata visione potius quam per possibilem." See also the argument in Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 3.2.3, 72-73.

<sup>145</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 3.2.9.10.2, 114-19, 101: "Operatio igitur intelligibilis, qua quis operator circa Deum ex formali principio talis operationis, quod ponunt aliquam speciem in operante, non pertingit ad vivendum Deum per essentialiam, quae incomparabiliter et in infinitum intimior est omni tali principio intellectionis, quod est species creata vel lumen gloriae vel universaliter quidquid posueris creatum, quo quis agit seu operator non per suam essentialiam;" *De visione beatifica* 3.2.9.11.7, 39-41, 102: "Egreditur enim talis operatio ab ipso intellectu secundum eam rationem qua idem intellectus emanate ab eodem suo principio, Deo, intellectualiter videndo et intelligendo ipso, ex quo suam essentialiam capit a Deo;" *De visione beatifica* 3.2.9.11.8, 52, 102-55, 103: "Et sic eadem formalitas et intimitas est ex parte principia emanationis suae, quae fit intellectualiter, et ex parte

Dietrich's other writings show that the major principles he outlines in the *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* are operative in his own theology. Dietrich consequently offers a theological description of the universe of beings that is grounded in the authoritative claims about the manners of being he identified in the *Elementatio theologica* by Proclus in a way that stresses the causal interaction between the conceptual and real domains of being which emanate from and return to God. In this way, Dietrich re-presents aspects of the metaphysics of flow which Albert the Great abstracted from the *Liber de causis* in a manner consistent with the way procession is described by Proclus. Furthermore, Dietrich argues in quite strong terms that theologians must attend to the role that the separate intelligences play in creation by insisting that the manner of intellect which conceives or produces the lower manners of reality is that which mediates between God and his creation. For this reason, Dietrich insists that the relationship between the natural and voluntary order of providence outlined by Augustine agrees with the arguments about the manners of real and conceptual being he derives from Proclus. In consequence, Dietrich provides an account of the way that the acquisition of the active intellect constitutes the beatific experience of God where one attains a total and simultaneous knowledge of all that is.

Yet, insofar as he maintains that beatific intellection can only be achieved through the infusion of grace and is impossible in this life, Dietrich's understanding of theology is as "quasi-ethical" as Albert's. If Dietrich departs from Albert in the *Fragmentum* by understanding the difference between philosophical and Christian theology as two ways of conceiving the universe of beings in accord with Proclus, in his other writings Dietrich nevertheless agrees with the rest of the German Dominican School that Christian theology attains a higher, more total experience of reality than philosophical theology because through the voluntary order of divine grace

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termini suae operationis, immo est omnino idem sua emanatio et in ipsum tentio, et omnino est sibi principium suae emanationis et terminus seu obiectum suae operationis et sub eadem ratione."



mediated by the angels it allows the possible intellect to participate in the intimate and essential relation that exists between the active intellect and God within the hidden recesses of the human soul. As I show in the following section, the radicality of this thesis led to a series of partisan debates in the German Dominican School between Thomists and the followers of Dietrich, which prepared the way for Meister Eckhart's mystical theology.

*The Nature of Intellectual Beatitude: The Disciples of Thomas and Dietrich in Conflict*

The beginning of the fourteenth century for the German Dominican School was marked not only by Dietrich of Freiberg's Proclian revision of the philosophical and Christian theologies outlined by Albert the Great. It was also characterized by the emergence of a tradition of German Thomism. Once the general chapters of the Dominican Order had declared that the theology of Thomas Aquinas was authoritative and needed to be integrated into the philosophical and theological training at the *studia* it is no surprise that a Thomist tradition eventually consolidated in the major pedagogical centers of the Order in Germany. This German Thomism has been especially recognized for the importance of its critique of positions that Dietrich had defended. For instance, the German Thomist Nicholas of Strasburg, who composed a handbook for students titled the *Summa philosophiae*, refuted Dietrich's understanding of time, while also defending Thomas's metaphysical argument about the separability of accidents.<sup>146</sup> Other German Thomists, however, such as the lector and preacher Johannes of Sterngassen, who composed an important commentary in Cologne on Lombard's *Liber sententiarum*, as well as his brother

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<sup>146</sup> See Loris Sturlese, "Eckhart, Teodorico e Picardi nella *Summa philosophiae* di Nicola di Strasburgo: Documenti per una storia della filosofia medievale tedesca," *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 61.1 (1982): 183-206; Ruedi Imbach, "Metaphysik, Theologie und Politik: Zur Diskussion zwischen Nikolaus von Straßburg und Dietrich von Freiberg über die Abtrennbarkeit der Akzidentien," *Theologie und Philosophie* 61(1986): 359-95; Niklaus Largier, "Time and Temporality in the 'German Dominican School: Outlines of a Philosophical Debate between Nicolaus of Strasbourg, Dietrich of Freiberg, Eckhart of Hoheim, and Ioannes Tauler," in *The Medieval Concept of Time: Studies on the Scholastic Debate and its Reception in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. by Pasquale Porro (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 221-53.

Gerhard, author of the *Medela animae languentis* (“Cure for suffering souls”), sought to promote Thomas for systematic and pastoral reasons. They did so, in fact, even as they deviated from certain positions central to Thomist philosophy, like the real distinction between essence and existence,<sup>147</sup> or promoted attenuated versions of Meister Eckhart’s mysticism of the ground, which were divorced from his Platonism and Peripateticism and integrated into Thomas’s account of beatitude.<sup>148</sup> In what follows, I outline another major critique of Dietrich made by the Thomists of the German Dominican School—namely, their response to Dietrich’s account of beatitude and its relation to intellection—before turning to an important vernacular defense of Dietrich that responds to the Thomists, as well as Meister Eckhart, the focus of the next chapter.

One of the major figures in the German Thomist tradition who advanced this critique was Johannes Picardi of Lichtenberg. Johannes Picardi studied in Paris and held significant administrative and teaching positions within the Order in Germany at the beginning of the fourteenth century alongside Dietrich. He is responsible for a set of quodlibetal *quaestiones* from c. 1303, which are likely the earliest surviving collection of such *questiones* disputed at the Dominican *studium* in Cologne. As Alessandra Beccarisi has demonstrated, the purpose of these *quaestiones* was to present a systematic account of Thomist doctrines that were grounded in the contemporary debates taking place outside Germany. He consequently devoted little attention to the problems which were taken up by the German followers of Albert, such as his Peripatetic metaphysics of flow.<sup>149</sup> However, Johannes Picardi in one of his *quaestiones* does explicitly

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<sup>147</sup> Walter Senner, *Johannes von Sterngassen OP und sein Sentenzenkommentar*, 1<sup>st</sup> volume (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001).

<sup>148</sup> McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism*, 326-8; Susanne Kaup, “Gerhard von Sterngassen OP—ein Beitrag zur Rezeption thomasischen Gedankengutes im Kontext pastoral-praktische Theologi.e,” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 57.2 (2010): 369-92.

<sup>149</sup> Alessandra Beccarisi, “Johannes Picardi von Lichtenberg, Dietrich von Freiberg und Meister Eckhart: Eine Debatte in Deutschland um 1308,” in *1308: Eine Topographie historischer Gleichzeitigkeit*, ed. by Andreas Speer and David Wirmer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 516-18.

critique Dietrich's argument against Thomas, which he attributes to Henry of Ghent, that the *abditum mentis* ought to be equated with the active intellect of Peripatetic psychology.<sup>150</sup> Asking where the *imago Dei* ought properly to be located—that is, whether it can be found, somehow, in the human mind—Johannes Picardi's *quaestio* repeats Thomas's response, which had concluded that the human soul is only *ad imaginem Dei*, and thus only exists in the soul potentially due to its capacity to know God.<sup>151</sup> Henry of Ghent's opposing Peripatetic-Augustinian view, that the *imago Dei* exists within the depths of the mind as the actuality of its thinking, however, Johannes Picardi declares to be false, useless, unsupported by arguments, and open to doubt.<sup>152</sup> Implicitly dismissing Dietrich's position as simply a mistaken recapitulation of Henry's original argument, Johannes Picardi therefore offered an organized defense of Thomist doctrine about the relationship between God and the human soul that Beccarisi suggests inspired Dietrich to compose his *De accidentibus* and perhaps also his *De visione beatifica*.<sup>153</sup> If this is so, then Johannes Picardi of Lichtenberg could very well be one of the Thomist "chatter-boxes" against whom Dietrich polemicizes throughout his work.

The Thomist position in the German Dominican debate over the role which the active intellect plays in beatitude can be extensively reconstructed from a critique of Dietrich contained in a thirteenth-century manuscript from Basel. Likely composed sometime between 1308 and 1323, MS Cod. Basel. B III 22 is a scholastic miscellany that preserves several works by

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<sup>150</sup> Beccarisi, "Johannes Picardi von Lichtenberg, Dietrich von Freiberg und Meister Eckhart," 519; Kent Emery, Jr., "The Image of God Deep in the Mind," 64. The question itself is edited in an appendix to Burkhard Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogie, Univocität und Einheit* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983), 147-61. It is not included in the English translation of this work.

<sup>151</sup> Burkhard Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart*, 90.

<sup>152</sup> Johannes Picardi of Lichtenberg, *Quaestio utrum imago* III.7.156-159, ed. Mojsisch, 155: "Sed ista positio est falsa. Item inutilis. Item nec rationes concludunt. Item nec remouent dubium."

<sup>153</sup> Beccarisi, "Johannes Picardi von Lichtenberg, Dietrich von Freiberg und Meister Eckhart," 536-7. Beccarisi also argues that this demonstrates that there are no points of connection between Dietrich and Meister Eckhart's doctrine of accidents, despite their commonalities.

Hervaeus Natalis, a staunch defender of Thomas's work, who would become the fourteenth Master General of the Order of Preachers. The critique of Dietrich itself contained in this miscellany belongs to a short, anonymous treatise included on fol. 60va-71va of this MS, which was edited, translated, and studied by Martin Grabmann.<sup>154</sup> Likely composed by a Dominican, the treatise has been wrongly identified in the catalogue of the Universitätsbibliothek Basel as the *Tractatus de beatitudine* included in the *Opera omnia* of Hervaeus Natalis, which was published in Venice in 1513.<sup>155</sup> As Beccarisi has argued, the treatise itself aims to settle the Parisian debate about interpretations of the *abditum mentis* and beatitude that had become topical in the German Dominican School, just like the *quaestio* of Johannes Picardi of Lichtenberg.<sup>156</sup>

A disputed question that asks whether beatitude takes place in the active intellect, given that beatitude itself is an intellectual act, the treatise provides an extensive and critical summary of the various arguments forwarded about the nature of the intellect, before concluding with a defense of Thomas's claim that beatitude occurs in the possible intellect. Opening with a critique of Plato's doctrine of the ideas,<sup>157</sup> and of the various "theologizers,"<sup>158</sup> who had defended the unicity of an intellect shared by all people following the Arab Peripatetics,<sup>159</sup> the treatise also responds to the various scholastic theologians who had departed from the Thomist account of

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<sup>154</sup> Martin Grabmann, *Mittelalterliche Deutung und Umbildung der aristotelischen Lehre vom ΝΟΤΣ ΠΟΙΗΤΙΚΟΣ nach einer Zusammenstellung im Cod. B III 22 der Universitätsbibliothek Basel: Untersuchung und Textausgabe* (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie des Wissenschaften, 1936). Hereafter *Tractatus de beatitudine*. An English translation is available in *Medieval Philosophy: From St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*, ed. by John F. Wippel and Allan B. Wolter (New York: Free Press, 1969), 421-44.

<sup>155</sup> Gustav Meyer and Max Burckhardt, *Die mittelalterlichen Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Basel. Beschreibendes Verzeichnis, Abteilung B: Theologische Pergamenthandschriften. Erster Band: Signaturen B I I - B VIII 10* (Basel: Verlag der Universitätsbibliothek, 1960), 274.

<sup>156</sup> Beccarisi, "Johannes Picardi von Lichtenberg, Dietrich von Freiberg und Meister Eckhart," 524-6.

<sup>157</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 1, 85.

<sup>158</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 2, 85-6.

<sup>159</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 4-5, 87-9.

intellection, including Henry of Ghent,<sup>160</sup> Godfrey of Fontaines,<sup>161</sup> James of Viterbo,<sup>162</sup> and Durandus of Saint-Pourçain.<sup>163</sup> Yet the attention given to Dietrich of Freiberg's understanding of beatitude in two final chapters shows that the anonymous author of the treatise is not only attempting to articulate an explicitly Thomist account of intellection against the Angelic Doctor's detractors. Rather, Dietrich himself seems to be the primary target of the treatise. In fact, it is likely that the extensive summary of earlier arguments about the intellectual nature of beatitude prior to the chapters dedicated to Dietrich represents an attempt to situate Dietrich at the end of an explicitly anti-Thomist genealogy of philosophical error. The treatise therefore represents a summary statement and defense of the Thomist account of beatitude, which is related to a critique of adherence to the Platonic and Peripatetic tradition that was authoritative among the followers of Albert and Dietrich in the German Dominican School.

The author of the treatise gives a rather fair and accurate summary of the central arguments that make up Dietrich's account of the intellect before they submit his position to a Thomist critique. The author accordingly explains that Dietrich held that the active intellect is a hidden understanding because, according to Augustine in his *De Trinitate*, our understanding is divided into an actual, hidden intellection and one that is open and exposed.<sup>164</sup> The author also explains that Dietrich had taught "that the active intellect in us is a substance and understanding through its essence."<sup>165</sup> This is because, the treatise summarizes, Dietrich held that the active

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<sup>160</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 9, 92.

<sup>161</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 10, 92-3.

<sup>162</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 11, 93.

<sup>163</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 12, 93-4.

<sup>164</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 14, 94-95: "XIV opinio est magistri Theoderici, quod intellectus agens est idem quod intelligere abditum. Dicit enim, quod secundum Augustinum intelligere nostrum distinguitur in intelligere abditum actuale et apertum. Primum probatur per beatum Augustinum 14 De trinitate, c. 7 qui dicit: Hinc monemur esse in nobis in abdito mentis quarumdum rerum quasdam notitias et tunc procedere quodam modo in medium atque in conspectu mentis velut apertius constitui, quando cogitantur."

<sup>165</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 15, 96: "est opinio alia eiusdem dicentis, quod intellectus agens in nobis est substantia et intellectus per essentiam."

intellect is a substantial image of the Trinity, conforming to it essentially rather than accidentally, and hence has a unity of essence like the three divine Persons.<sup>166</sup> Dietrich also found evidence for his claim, according to the author of the treatise, because Augustine had argued that no accident is able to exceed its own subject, whereas the fact that the mind loves and knows other things through the love it has for itself demonstrates that it knows other things by knowing itself.<sup>167</sup> Hence, the active intellect is essentially intellect because it knows itself through its essence and because it also knows all other things, according to Dietrich. Dietrich's position therefore relies on an ontological proportionality between human and divine understanding. It is also reliant on the testimony of Augustine.

However, the treatise determines that none of these arguments stand up to scrutiny. The active intellect cannot be hidden, its author maintains, "because to say that a person knows something actually yet never observes it or is able to observe it lacks reason," just as it is ridiculous to maintain that a vacuum is not vacuous.<sup>168</sup> Aristotle himself, moreover, had argued that it is impossible for us to possess the most noble habit of intellection and for this to be concealed within us.<sup>169</sup> The testimony of Augustine that Dietrich cites to support his argument, the anonymous author adds, also relies on a misunderstanding of the Church Father. For Augustine's reference to a hidden understanding, the author declares, refers to a habit of

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<sup>166</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 15, 96: "Primum probat. Primo illud vere est substantia, in quo vere et proprie invenitur ymago trinitatis. Sed hoc est intellectus agens. Ergo etc. Probant maiorem, quia ymago est conformitas secundum nature consubstantialitatem. Conformitas autem in accidentibus non est ymago, sed in quantitate est equalitas, in qualitate similitudo."

<sup>167</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 15, 97: "Tertio Augustinus 9 De trinitate cap. 6 nullum accidens excedit suum subiectum. Sed eodem amore, quo mens amat se, amat alia et quo cognoscit se cognoscit alia. Ergo idem."

<sup>168</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 14, 95: "Dicere enim, quod homo cognoscat aliquid actualiter nec unquam advertat nec advertere possit, caret ratione. Et ideo sicut operatio de vacuo est vacua, ita ista est abdita et ignota."

<sup>169</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 14, 95: "Tertio impossibile est secundum Philosophum nos habere habitus nobilissimos et nos latere. Ergo multo minus actus nobilissimos possibile est nos latere. Sed intelligere est actus nobilissimus. Ergo impossibile est in nobis esse intelligere actuale abditum."

knowledge rather than something actually existing within the depths of the mind.<sup>170</sup> Nor could the saint have been describing the active intellect in his *De Trinitate*, because Augustine was a Platonist who did not concede, like the Peripatetics, that an active intellect is required to actualize possible knowledge within the mind.<sup>171</sup> The critique of Dietrich thus concludes with an argument that turns Dietrich's own polemic against the Thomists back onto the German Dominican—the claim, namely, that the defenders of Thomas misread their sources because of their mistaken understanding of the philosophical principles and doxographic commitments that underlie their language, and which inform the author's intended meaning. Dietrich's attempt to interpret Augustine as a Peripatetic, in keeping with his commitment to this tradition of philosophy, is shown to be mistaken, since it relies on a mistaken understanding of the Church Father's own philosophical commitments, while also disregarding Augustine's authorial intention.

Finally, Dietrich's argument that the active intellect is an intellect by essence is also mistaken. The treatise concludes, for instance, that if Dietrich had meant that the active intellect exists by its own essence such that its essence is its reason for existing, he would be wrong, “because God alone exists through His essence, but all other things exist through participation, just as it is said in *De anima* II that everything participates in the divine being.”<sup>172</sup> More importantly, to hold Dietrich's view, according to the author, is to reject that the soul is the

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<sup>170</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 14, 96: “Secundo ostendo, quod ista positio non est de mente Augustini. Intelligere enim abditum non vocat Augustinus intelligere abditum actuale sed intelligere abditum habituale. Quod ergo dicit in prima auctoritate: hinc amonemur etc.”

<sup>171</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 14, 96: “Item si esset tale intelligere secundum Augustinum, non esset adhuc idem cum intellectu agente secundum Philosophum, quia secundum Commentatorem in 30 de anima: si universalia ponuntur separata ut intelligentie Platonis, non indiget Aristoteles ponere intellectum agentem. Augustinus autem imbutus doctrina Platonis non posuit intellectum agentem sicut nec Plato.”

<sup>172</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 15, 99: “Primo, quod intellectus agens sit per essentiam ita quod essentia sua sit sibi ratio existendi et nihil aliud secundum quod est, predicatur secundum adjacens. Sic falsum est, quia solus deus est per essentiam, omnia autem alia per participationem ut dicitur Ito De anima, quod omnia divinum esse participant.”

perfection of an individual human being, who are what they are through the union of soul and body.<sup>173</sup> In an explicitly Thomist fashion, the treatise consequently rejects Dietrich's account of the active intellect because it implies that the intellect does not require a body and the phantasms furnished by the senses to know both itself as well as other things.<sup>174</sup> Dietrich's account of the intellect is therefore shown to be false, largely because his reading of Augustine and interpretation of the Peripatetic account of the intellect conflict with positions that Thomas had defended. The danger here, evidently, is that Dietrich's argument is too similar to that of the Averroists and could lead to a defense of the unicity of the intellect.<sup>175</sup>

The treatise ends with a summary defense of a doctrine of beatitude, conceived as a response to the arguments of "certain people like Master Dietrich," which the author attributes to Thomas Aquinas.<sup>176</sup> Dietrich and his followers, according to the treatise, grant that beatitude takes place in the active intellect, because: beatitude pertains immediately to what is most supreme in us;<sup>177</sup> because it exists so that man may attain their most perfect activity, which is intellection, and the possible intellect merely participates in this perfect activity;<sup>178</sup> because every

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<sup>173</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 15, 98: "Quod secundo dicunt, quod est intellectus per essentiam et omnia per essentiam et semper intelligit, non valet. Ratio, quia tota ratio, quare anima unitur corpori, est perfectio anime vel conjuncti, non corporis."

<sup>174</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 15, 98-9: "Sed si anima potest se et alia intelligere per essentiam sine fantasmate, pro nihilo unitur corpori, quia in cognoscendo non sunt sibi necessarii sensus corporis. Sed hoc falsum. Ergo et hoc, quod semper per se intelligat et sine fantasmate."

<sup>175</sup> It is perhaps no surprise, therefore, that the Thomist author of the Basel *Tractatus* in his critique of Dietrich, as well as the Peripatetic interpretations of Aristotle upon which Dietrich relied, adopted the polemical strategies that Thomas himself used in his writings against the unicity of the intellect, such as the emphasis on Aristotle's original intention against the claims of the Arabs and the Latins who followed them. See Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas Against the Averroists: On there Being Only One Intellect* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1993).

<sup>176</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 100: "Respondendum est ad questionem. Circa quam sunt due opiniones. Dicunt quidam ut magister Theodericus quod sic."

<sup>177</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 100: "Ad illud pertinet immediate beatitudo, quod est supremum in nobis. Sed hoc est intellectus agens tum quia intellectus per essentiam, tum quia agens, tum quia semper actu."

<sup>178</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 100-101: "Secundo homo est propter suam operationem et potissime est propter suam perfectissimam quia secundum Philosophum II. De celo et mundo unaqueque res est propter suam operationem potissimam. Sed potissima operatio in nobis intellectualis est operatio intellectus agentis, quia est intellectus per essentiam. Intellectus autem possibilis est quedam intellectualitas participata."



agent is superior to what receives it;<sup>179</sup> because perfect understanding is formally present in the noblest way within the intellect, just as light properly belongs to the sun, whereas heat is only there potentially;<sup>180</sup> and because the activity of the active intellect virtually contains the possible intellect, which is subjected to it.<sup>181</sup> Critiquing these various arguments, the author of the treatise, in a kind of *sed contra*, states that “the opinion of brother Thomas is different,” and argues that beatitude must occur in what is noblest in humankind, which he takes to be the possible intellect rather than the active intellect.<sup>182</sup> By doing so, the anonymous Thomist aims not only to make a theological argument about the nature of the beatific vision, but also seeks to offer a philosophical reading of Aristotle meant to correct the emphases of the Peripatetic tradition, which was structural for Dietrich and certain other members of the German Dominican School.

The author of the anonymous treatise must therefore return, by way of the Angelic Doctor, to the original intention of Aristotle’s arguments. The treatise consequently introduces Thomas’s account of the relationship between active and possible intellect within man as comparable to the relationship between the productive principle, or form, and matter in *De anima* III.<sup>183</sup> Yet it does so to support Thomas’s claim that the possible intellect is the location where beatitude takes place, “because the [act] of the active intellect is to make potential intelligibles actually intelligible and to abstract and illuminate phantasms or, as some say, to separate

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<sup>179</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 101: “Item agens est prestantius patiente.”

<sup>180</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 101: “Item quod simpliciter importat perfectionem, debet esse in causa non solum virtualiter, sed etiam formaliter sicut lux est in sole formaliter, calor et quedam alia virtualiter. Intelligere autem importat perfectionem simpliciter. Ergo est in intellectu formaliter et per consequens nobilissimo modo.”

<sup>181</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 101: “Item agens continet actum virtualiter. Sed virtus est in re secundum modum suum. Ergo intellectualiter. Ergo intelligit.”

<sup>182</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 101: “Alia est opinio fratris Thome, quod beatitudo non consistit in intellectu agente. Quod probatur. In hoc non est beatitudo, quod non est nobilissimum in nobis, sed magis in eo, quod est nobilissimum. Sed intellectus possibilis est nobilior intellectu agente.”

<sup>183</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 100: “Est alia opinio 16. fratris Thome, quod intellectus agens est aliquid ipsius anime realiter differens a possibili, quia secundum Philosophum IIIo De anima in omni natura est aliquid ut causa et effectivum quod in faciendo ut ars ad materiam sustinet. Ex hoc sic. Sicut in omni natura sic et in anima oportet ponere has duas differentias. Hec autem sunt intellectus agens et possibilis. Ergo etc. Actio scilicet intellectus agentis et possibilis est in ipsa anima et convenit homini.”

them.”<sup>184</sup> But the possible intellect is what actually understands whatever intelligible has been abstracted, such that the active intellect exists for its sake and is less noble than it.<sup>185</sup> Hence Thomas had taught “that it is nobler to simply know what has been separated and abstracted rather than to separate and abstract.”<sup>186</sup> Finally, the treatise concludes against those who held Dietrich’s position, that it is the possible intellect which apprehends the quiddity of things, not the active intellect, which knows bodily phantasms insofar as they are subjected to their material conditions.<sup>187</sup> Beatitude is thus an act of the possible intellect, since the product of active intellection ought to be understood as something generated for the work of the possible intellect in much the same way that a sailor makes use of a ship that has been built for him by a ship builder.<sup>188</sup> Thomas’s view of beatitude is therefore presented in the anonymous treatise as the only teaching that makes philosophical sense given the claims of Aristotle. The view of Dietrich, that beatitude takes place in an active intellect, which is hidden deep within the mind, is consequently shown to be untenable.

The anonymous Basel treatise, much like Johannes Picardi of Lichtenberg, aims to demonstrate philosophically the absurdities that apparently follow from Dietrich’s arguments. It also seeks to correct Dietrich’s interpretation of both Aristotle and Augustine by insisting that reading both in accord with the Peripatetics is to misunderstand the intent of their original

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<sup>184</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 101: “Primo ex actu, quia intellectus agentis est facere intelligibilia potentia actu intelligibilia et abstrahere et fantasmata irradiare vel secundum alios separare.”

<sup>185</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 101: “Sed intellectus possibilis habet separata et abstracta intelligere. Unde agens est propter possibilem.”

<sup>186</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 101: “Item nobilius est separata et abstracta solum cognoscere quam separare et abstrahere.”

<sup>187</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 101-2: “Obiectum enim intellectus agentis sunt fantasmata corporalia et sub conditionibus adhuc materialibus, obiectum autem intellectus possibilis est.”

<sup>188</sup> *Tractatus de beatitudine* 17, 102: “Unde sicut superior artifex accipit propter actum ab inferiori, sicut architectonicus scilicet nauta accipit navem omnino preparatam a navifactoro ad suum usum et talem fecit navifactoro navem, qualiter congruit usui superioris, similiter est de intellectu agente respectu possibilis. Ergo beatitudo non consistit in intellectu agente.”

arguments. It is perhaps surprising, however, given the importance Aquinas placed on the role that the infused light of grace plays in both the beatifying process and the beatific vision itself, that this was not a major feature of the German Thomist critique of Dietrich. This is especially remarkable, moreover, since many of the scholars who have highlighted Dietrich's anti-Thomism have noted the centrality of his rejection of the supernatural or miraculous in philosophical theology, as discussed above, even as he had also maintained that grace was required for beatification and differentiated Christian theology from the divine science of the philosophers insofar as it alone considered merit and punishment in the next life. Yet, as Niklaus Largier has demonstrated, it was precisely debates over the role that grace and nature play in beatitude—whether philosophical or Christian—rather than whether beatification occurs in the possible or active intellect, which ultimately structured the doctrinal antagonism between the followers of Thomas and Dietrich in the German Dominican School.<sup>189</sup>

The contours of this conflict within the German Dominican School are perhaps best captured by an analysis of a treatise about the nature of beatitude composed by an otherwise unknown figure, Eckhart of Gründig. Initially discovered by Bernhard Joseph Docen, who published an edition in 1807, the *Tractat von den Wirkenden und Möglichen Vernunft* attributed to Eckhart of Gründig was composed sometime between 1302 and 1322. It was re-edited with an introduction by Wilhelm Preger in 1871,<sup>190</sup> and has attracted occasional attention from historians

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<sup>189</sup> Niklaus Largier, "Vernunft und Seligkeit: Das theologische und philosophische Programm des 'Paradisus intelligentis'", in *Paradisus anime intelligentis: Studien zu einer dominikanischen Predigtsammlung aus dem Umkreis Meister Eckharts*, ed. by Burkhard Hasebrink, Hans-Jochen Schiewer and Nigel F. Palmer (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2009), 1-15; Niklaus Largier, "Intellectus in deum ascensus: Intellekttheoretische Diskussionen in Texten der deutschen Mystik," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 69 (1995): 423-471.

<sup>190</sup> Bernhard Joseph Docen, *Miscellaneen zur Geschichte der deutschen Literatur: Neu-aufgefundene Denkmäler der Sprache, Poesie und Philosophie unserer Vorfahren enthaltend* (Munich: E.A. Fleischmann, 1807), 138-52; Eckhart of Gründig, "Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft," ed. Wilhelm Preger in *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-philogischen und historischen Classe der k. b. Akademie der Wissenschaften* 1 (1871): 176-89. A series of suggestions for corrections to this edition, based on further archival

of medieval German philosophy and mysticism as a text that provides insight into the doctrinal relationship between Dietrich of Freiberg and Meister Eckhart.<sup>191</sup> The *Tractat* itself, however, is rather unique in the archive of German Dominican writing in the vernacular. Unlike texts such as the didactic poems the *Sprüche der zwölf Meister* or *Sprüche der zwölf Meister zu Paris*, for example, which stress the doctrinal uniformity of the Dominican masters of Germany and the progressive elaboration of their “mysticism of the ground,” the *Tractat* is a scholastic homily in the vernacular that stages a disputation which provides important testimony about the real disagreements that characterized the German Dominican School.<sup>192</sup> In fact, Eckhart of Gründig seems to have belonged, like Dietrich, to the faction within the School that rejected the authority of Thomas Aquinas. In this respect, it is quite close to the anonymous Latin treatise on beatitude from Basel edited by Grabmann. Yet, as Norbert Winkler and Loris Sturlese have rightly cautioned, the moral theological orientation of the *Tractat* entails that the debate over beatitude has been abstracted out of its original philosophical context and re-directed toward the devotional and pastoral concerns of the German Dominicans.<sup>193</sup> In this respect, it takes up the “quasi-ethical” theology toward which Dietrich’s *Fragmentum* and *De visione beatifica* gesture, but which they never expressly articulate.

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research, is Philip Strauch, “Handschriftliches zur deutschen Mystik,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 54 (1929): 293-95. A translation into modern German, which I have consulted for my own translations into English below, is Eckhart von Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und der vermögenden Vernunft (Die Lehre von der Seligkeit),” trans. by Norbert Winkler in *Dietrich von Freiberg*, ed. Kandler, Mojsich and Stamkötter, 225-66.

<sup>191</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 154-60; Burkhard Mojsich, *Meister*, 12-13; Largier, “Intellectus in Deum ascensus”: 432-35; Loris Sturlese, “Alle origini della mistici speculativa tedesca: Antichi testi su Teodorico di Freiberg,” *Medioevo* 3 (1977): 48-51.

<sup>192</sup> Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, vol. 3 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1996), 203. For the didactic poems, see McGinn, *Harvest of Mysticism*, 90-3 and Wolfgang Wackernagel, “Some Legendary Aspects of Meister Eckhart: The Aphorisms of the Twelve Masters,” *Eckhart Review* (1998): 30-41.

<sup>193</sup> Norbert Winkler, “Dietrich von Freiberg und Meister Eckhart in der Kontroverse mit Thomas von Aquin: Intellektnatur und Gnade in der Schrift *Von der wirkenden und der vermögenden Vernunft*, die Eckhart von Gründig zugeschrieben wird,” in *Dietrich von Freiberg*, 190.

At the beginning of the *Tractat* Eckhart of Gründig announces that the question how man becomes blessed was raised among the German masters after he introduces the biblical verses which structure their debate: namely, Jesus' words to his disciples in Luke 10:23 that "blessed are the eyes that see what you see," and 1 John 17:3, "this is eternal life, Father, to know you."<sup>194</sup> Immediately, the problem of beatitude is tied by the *Tractat* to the vision of God held to be, in standard Dominican terms, a mode of contemplation or type of cognition. Eckhart of Gründig consequently explains that certain of the masters present at the disputation asserted that beatitude is so great a good that God himself cannot create a creature noble enough that it could receive salvation naturally and hence salvation must be given by a supernatural power which they identify with the lights of grace and glory.<sup>195</sup> These masters also posit that since knowledge is only capable of knowing according to the manner of what is known in time, the intellect, in order to be blessed, must know in a manner different to the knowing that properly belongs to it; namely, the intellect must come to "exist above the images which belong to its way of being," or which furnish it with the material that it conceptualizes.<sup>196</sup> "Therefore," these masters conclude, "the intellect must leave its own work and must keep itself free in an honest suffering so as to receive an impression of the divine form."<sup>197</sup> And "when it understands according to the mode of

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<sup>194</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, "Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft," 176: "Jêsus sprach zuo sînen jungeren: saelec sint diu ougen, diu dâ sehent daz ir dâ sehet. Under den meistern ist ein vrâge, wie der mensch saelec sî? ... Nû sprechent sie noch vort und nement daz wort, daz unser herre sprach: daz ist êwic leben, vater, daz man dich bekenne."

<sup>195</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, "Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft," 176: "Etelich antwürtent dar zuo und sprechent, daz saelicheit sî ein alsô grôz guot, daz got des niht vermüge, daz er einige créatûr sô edel müge geschaffen, der er saelicheit geben müge von nâtûr, ez sî denne daz ez ir werde gegeben in einer übernatûrlicher kraft, und daz, sagent si.e, daz sî daz liht der glorien."

<sup>196</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, "Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft," 176-7: "Waz bekantnisse mac bekennen, daz muoz ez bekennen nach sîner wise. Dar umb hât bekantnisse noch in zît noch in êwicheit niht genuoc, daz ez bekent mit bilde nach der wise sînes eigen werkes, dar umbe sagent si.e, daz ez mûeze sîn über diu bilde sîner eigen wise."

<sup>197</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, "Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft," 177: "Dar umbe muoz ez ûz und ab gân sînes eigen werkes und muoz sich halten ledec in ein lûters lîden ze enpfâhen den îndruc gotelicher forme."

the divine form,” they maintain, “it understands without limits and works according to the manner of an unlimited form.”<sup>198</sup> That is, the intellect acts and knows in a divine rather than created way. This means that the mind is *one with* rather than *united to* God.

The initial positions described by the *Tractat* are thus Thomist and Eckhartian. “Because the intellect in this way must undergo a transformation by God,” Eckhart of Gründig relates, “Meister Eckhart says that beatitude lies in suffering God.”<sup>199</sup> That God is an intellectual activity, moreover, and because his existence is his knowing, for Meister Eckhart only when “a mind is free and robbed of all of its works can it suffer the intellectual work of God.”<sup>200</sup> But this conclusion, as well as the claim introduced by the *Tractat* at this point that grace is a creation of God that is infused into the powers of the soul, leads Meister Eckhart to ask whether God’s intellectual work takes place in these powers.<sup>201</sup> He answers emphatically that “one ought to respond as follows and say: no! For if God worked in these powers he would work in an accident, for that is particular to a creature.”<sup>202</sup> Rather, God works in the essence of the soul, which itself is free, since it does not work (that is, it is purely passive). The soul for this reason does not work with God, but God works with the soul.<sup>203</sup> The soul which has been essentially

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<sup>198</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft,” 177: “Wan ez dan verstet nach der wise gotelicher forme, dar umbe verstêt ez unmezliche, dar umb ist sîn wûrken unmezlich, wan ez wûrket in der wise einer unmezlicher forme.”

<sup>199</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft,” 177-8: “Wan daz verstentnisse alsus muoz liden die überformunge gotes, dar umbe spricht meister Eckhart, daz saelicheit lige an got liden, wan er spricht, daz saelicheit dar an sî, daz man sich mit got vereine.”

<sup>200</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft,” 178: “Wan nû got ist ein vernunftec werc, dar umb ist daz sîn eigen, daz sîn wesen sîn wûrken ist. Wâ nû ist ein leddec geist, der beroubet ist aller werke, der mac liden daz vernunftige werc gotes.”

<sup>201</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft,” 178: “Nû ist ein vrâge, ob diz werc in den kreftenos gescheheoder niht?”

<sup>202</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft,” 178: “sô antwûrtet man alsus dar zuo unde sprichet: nein; wan wôrhte got in den kreften, sô wôrhte er in zuoval, wan daz ist eigen der crêatûr.”

<sup>203</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft,” 178-9: “Niht daz diu grâcie gotes wûrke nâch wise der grâci.e, wan grâcie ist leddec, mêre die krefte wûrkent in kraft der grâcien. Nû enwûrket got in keinen zuoval, mêr er wûrket in wesen, dâ er vindet ledicheit, wan wesen enwûrket niht. Alsus wûrket got nâch sînem vernunftigen werke mit der sêle in einem ledigen wesen.”

rather than accidentally transformed by grace makes the powers of the soul operate in a new way, according to Meister Eckhart. This is the soul's reformation or re-creation by grace: a becoming-God or God-like that makes the soul one with the divine through the mediation or gift of grace as a creation of God.

The *Tractat* now asks whether this account of the graced transformation of the soul can be applied to the common essence of the soul.<sup>204</sup> Answering in the affirmative that it generally can, the *Tractat* adds that

Meister Eckhart now wants to say this better, and he says that there is something in the soul that is so high and so noble that insofar as God is without all names so is it without all names... and he says to you that the soul in this part is a spark of the divine nature.<sup>205</sup>

Paraphrasing the Meister's famous teaching about the uncreated, divine ground of the soul, which I discuss in the next chapter, the *Tractat* concludes this part of the disputation with the determination that "whoever wants to find God should look for him in this spark because in this spark the mind is one with God." This is because "when God perceives himself in this spark then he gives himself to this spark and when this spark perceives itself in God then it perceives itself purely as God."<sup>206</sup> Beatitude for these first masters, according to Eckhart of Gründig, is therefore a passive reception of the intellectual activity of God—either in the powers of the soul, where grace accomplishes its work, following Thomas, or in the very essence of the mind, which is one with the uncreated divine ground where God's intellectual activity ineffably takes place, as

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<sup>204</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, "Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft," 179: "Nû möhte man vür daz vragen, ob diz sî gesprochen von dem gemeinen wesen der sêle?"

<sup>205</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, "Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft," 179: "sô mac man antwürten jâ, wan ez bestêt wol in einergemeiner wâr heit. Nû wil meister Eckhart noch baz sprechen und spricht, daz einz ist in der sêl, daz sô hôch und sô edel sî, alsô als got sunder alle namen ist, alsô ist diz sunder alle namen... dar umbe nennet ez meister Eckhart einen vunken der sêle."

<sup>206</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, "Der altdeutsche Tractat von der wirkenden und der möglichen Vernunft," 179-80: "Wan sich got nimt in disem vunken, sô gibt er sich disem vunken, und wan sich diser vunkte nimt in got, sô nimt er sich lûter got."

Eckhart would come to maintain. These represent two competing accounts of the graced nature of beatific intellection, one that agrees with the Thomist description of the role that the work of the possible intellect plays in this state, and another, attributed to Eckhart, which stresses how grace produces a substantial transformation of the soul, which ends all its activity and results in total passivity or suffering.

However, as the rest of the *Tractat* makes clear, Eckhart of Gründig does not agree with the arguments just elaborated. The treatise accordingly continues after its summary of the opinion of the first Dominican masters “that other masters come and want to speak better about the image of the soul and to ask where that image lies.”<sup>207</sup> At this point the *Tractat* introduces Dietrich of Freiberg for the first time, who arrives at the debate, after Aquinas has once again claimed that beatitude occurs in the powers of the soul. He does so, according to Eckhart of Gründig, to assert that “all that was previously shown by Meister Eckhart and the others, that beatitude is in those whose mind suffers God supernaturally, is not the case.”<sup>208</sup> For, unlike Thomas and Meister Eckhart, Dietrich declares “that there *is* something in the soul which is so noble that its essence is its intellectual activity [and] that it is *naturally* blessed.”<sup>209</sup> This part, Eckhart of Gründig clarifies, Dietrich names the active intellect. “And if one should ask now why man is not always blessed if he is blessed according to his highest part,” the *Tractat* adds, “one should answer in the following way and speak about another intellect which [Dietrich] calls

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<sup>207</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 180: “Nû koment ander meister und wellent baz sprechen von dem bilde der sêl und vrâgent wâ daz bilde lige?”

<sup>208</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 180: “Nû komet meister Dietrîch und widersprichet dise rede, daz daz niht ensî. Nû market, wan er sprichet, daz daz bilde niht lige in den kreften – allez daz diese vor gesprochen hânt, meister Eckhart und die andern, die hânt bewiset, daz saelicheit lige an dem daz der geist got lide übernatürliche.”

<sup>209</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 180: “Diz wil meister Dietrîch, daz daz niht ensî unde sprichet: ‘ich spriche, daz des niht sî und sage, daz etwaz sîn der sêl, daz sô edel sî, daz sîn wesen sîn vernunftec wûrken sî; ich spriche, daz diz saelec sî von nâtûre.’ Daz ist wâr, daz ein iegelich vernunftec wesen muoz saelec sîn von nâtûre.” My emphasis.



the possible intellect, [which] belongs to the mind insofar as it touches time by way of the body.”<sup>210</sup> Eckhart of Gründig’s preferred answer to the question about the nature of beatitude thus draws upon the metaphysical and noetic arguments that Dietrich had forwarded in his *De visione beatifica*, which the *Tractat* positions as correcting the recourse to the supernatural that Thomas and Eckhart had defended. The focus on the proper location and understanding of the image of God in the soul in this part of the *Tractat* also suggests that Eckhart of Gründig, like Dietrich before him, may have been motivated to respond to Johannes Picardi of Lichtenberg’s initial *quaestio* about this very problem.

Adopting the Peripatetic theory of intellection whereby every intellect is distinguished into its potential and active part, Eckhart of Gründig concludes that human beatitude occurs whenever someone knowingly ascertains his proper being according to the manner of the active intellect’s operation. This entails for Eckhart of Gründig, as it apparently had for Dietrich before him, that beatitude is the attainment of a state of *natural* self-knowledge—rather than a graced reformation or annihilation of the self—where God is immanently apprehended within the depths of the mind in a way comparable to how the separate intelligences actively and immediately contemplate God within themselves.<sup>211</sup> “Possibility,” on the other hand, “is a pure nothing that can become all things, [and] whenever an intellect is able to become what it is not then it is

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<sup>210</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 180: “Dar umbe heizet er diz ein würende vernunft. Vråget man nû, sît der mensche hie inne saelec sinâch sinem höhsten teil, warumb er denne alzemâl niht saelec sî? so antwürtet man alsus dar zuo unde sprichet von einer andern vernunft, diu heizet ein mûglich vernunft, diu gemein ist dem geist in der wîse, als er zît berüeret in dem lichname.”

<sup>211</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 180-1: “Möhte nû daz sîn, daz diu mûglichiu vernunft sich einvalteclîche möhte kêren sunder mittel zuo der würenden vernunft, sô waere der mensch hie als saelec als in dem ewigen leben; wan daz ist saelîcheit des menschen, daz er bekennet sîn eigen sîn in der wîse der würenden vernunft. Mêr diz ist hie niht mûglich der mûgelichen vernunft.” Compare to Dietrich of Freiberg, *De visione beatifica* 4.3.3.14, discussed in the previous section.

called a possible intellect.”<sup>212</sup> Such an intellect requires the lights of grace and glory, according to the *Tractat*, which releases it from its own manner of being and enables it to be transformed by the active intellect.<sup>213</sup> This is a fairly accurate representation of Dietrich’s account, summarized above, from the *De visione beatifica*. It reveals both Eckhart of Gründig’s preference for that work’s Peripatetic conception of the divinization that the acquisition of knowledge produces, as well as his recognition that this doctrine’s emphasis on the active intellect means that Dietrich opposes both Thomas and Eckhart.

This understanding of the relationship between possible and active intellection in beatitude, Eckhart of Gründig relates, also has consequences for how one must understand the role that grace plays in this process. “I have often said, and I say it still,” the *Tractat* consequently has Dietrich clarify,

where there is no accident there is also no grace. Therefore, nature is nobler than grace [and] nature is given to the accidental qualities of the powers of my soul so that they may be and become blessed through grace and glory just as I am blessed from nature in the active intellect.<sup>214</sup>

For a mind to be blessed by grace or glory, in other words, requires that something that is accidental, which is to be blessed, must already be blessed by nature. The active intellect itself, however, does not possess grace or glory before, during or after it flows out from God and returns to the same, since, like God, its intellectual activity is essential to it, rather than an accident that

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<sup>212</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 181: “Waz ist mûgelicheit? ein lûter niht alliu dinc ze werden. Wan diu vernunft daz werden mac, daz sie niht enist, dar umbe heizet sie ein mûgelichiu vernunft.”

<sup>213</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 181: “Wan diz ist, dar umbe bedarf sie der genaden unde glòrien, mit der sie abgê ires eigen sîns nach der wîse der mûgelicheit und mûge enpfâhen die überformunge der wûrkenden vernunft.”

<sup>214</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 181: “Ez spricht ouch mêr der selbe meister: Ich hân dicke gesprochen und sprich ez noch, enwaere niht zuoval, sô enwaere ouch kein genade. Dar umb ist nâtûre edeler denne genade; wan genade ist gegeben der zuovallecheit mîner kreft, daz sie saelec sîn und werden über mitz ge nâden unde glòrien alsô als ich saelec bin von nâtûr in der wûrkender vernunft.”

qualifies its substantial mode of existence.<sup>215</sup> Somewhat idiosyncratically, therefore, Eckhart of Gründig concludes in the *Tractat* that the active intellect is that part of the soul, blessed by nature, which requires a possible intellect that is perfected by grace and glory to be beatified, although, in itself, it is already perfect. This is a radical inversion of the argument that the German Thomists made in their own account of beatitude, where the possible intellect was understood to be the psychic faculty that made use of the active intellect in beatitude. It also suggests that grace, which in itself is supernatural, works beneath nature, insofar as grace, which is accidental, operates as a kind of corrective supplement that enables access to an intellectuality that is itself essentially divine and perfect, because it is connected directly to God.

Eckhart of Gründig clarifies how his audience ought to interpret and understand this argument in a question introduced in the following part of his *Tractat*. Asking whether the active intellect is created, he replies emphatically in the affirmative.<sup>216</sup> However, Eckhart of Gründig continues, for this to be so one ought to understand that there are two ways that something can be created.<sup>217</sup> “For we speak about the angels as they are pure substances,” he explains, “and according to this way it would not be possible for God that he could make a single creature blessed according to nature.”<sup>218</sup> This is because the created substance of an angel must be conceived through its accidental qualities because no angel is like another. That is, each angel is an individual, possessing certain characteristics that inhere in their substance, which identify

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<sup>215</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 181: “Als nû gesprochen ist von der wirkenden vernunft, disiu bedarf weder genâde noch glòrien, wan sie enhât vor noch nâch, wan sie vernunftliche ûz got vliuzet und als sie vernunftliche ûz gôt vliuzet, alsô kêrt sie sich wider in daz selbe, und daz ist ir eigen wûrken nâtûrliche und ist ir eigen wesen.”

<sup>216</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 182: “Vrâget man nû ob disiu vernunft sî creatûre? so spricht man jâ.”

<sup>217</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 182: “Sô vrâget man aber, ob einec geschaffen creatûre saelec mûge sîn von nâtûre, sô sprichet man jâ, unde nimt geschaffenheit in zweier hande wise.”

<sup>218</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 182: “als wir sprechen von den engeln als sie lûter substancie sint, und nach der wise sô möhte daz got niht, daz er einige creatûre saelec mûge gemachen von nâtûren.”

them as this or that angel.<sup>219</sup> Turning to the other type of creation which one must consider, however, the *Tractat* maintains that “some masters say that there are other creatures above the angels [and that] these are not substances [and] they have it according to nature that their essence is their activity and their activity is their understanding.”<sup>220</sup> For these intelligences, which are not created substances that accrue accidents like the angels, do not subsist in themselves, and their createdness must be conceived as an essential flowing out from and return to the uncreated, simple substance of God.<sup>221</sup> Here, we see Eckhart of Gründig follow the divine science of those Peripatetic and Platonic philosophers, who, according to Dietrich, in his *De animatione caeli* and *De intellectu et intelligibili*, had demonstrated that a series of separate intelligences flowed out necessarily from God, that cannot be equated with the angels who are discussed by the Christian theologian. By doing so, he subscribes to a conception of the uncreated nature of the intelligences that the anonymous Thomist treatise on beatitude from Basel had singled out as one of Dietrich’s philosophical errors.

The intelligences, the *Tractat* continues, are also “an intellectual image of all the things which flow out from God according to his own natural intellect.”<sup>222</sup> They are consequently “nobler than the angels, if the angel must be blessed according to the manner of its substance,”

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<sup>219</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 182: “daz ist darumbe, wan diu creatür der engel ist begriffen nach der wîse irre zuvallecheit, alsus ist ze nemen iriu substanci.e, unde dar umb ist kein engel glich den andern nach der substantlicher wîse irs eigen zuovalles.”

<sup>220</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 182: “daz ist darumbe, wan diu creatür der engel ist begriffen nach der wîse irre zuvallecheit, alsus ist ze nemen iriu substanci.e, unde dar umb ist kein engel glich den andern nach der substantlicher wîse irs eigen zuovalles.”

<sup>221</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 182: “Die nennet man intelligencien, und dise creatüren sint niht geschaffen substancien; mêr ir geschaffen sîn daz ist, daz sie vliezent vernunfteclîchen ûz got, und als sie vernunfteclîchen ûz got vliezent unde vliezent wider in, sô beliben sie niht stênde in in selber.”

<sup>222</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 187: “wan sie ist ein vernunftec bilde aller der dinge, die ûz got vliezent nâch sîner nâtûrlichen vernunft.” One manuscript has “fürsichtikeit,” or providence, instead of “nâtûrlichen vernunft.”

instead of according to how they flow out from God.<sup>223</sup> The active intellect within the soul must therefore be conceived as an insubstantial intelligence, since it too has been created as an emanation of God in such a way that its natural activity is God's own intellectual work, and because it contains within itself all that God knows. The possible intellect, however, which requires an infusion of grace and glory so that it may become what it is not, is substantial like the angels since it is an intellectual power that subsists in a particular subject. Eckhart of Gründig's *Tractat* therefore maintains a distinction between two separate orders of creation, implying that it recognizes the same ontological division between these manners of existence that Dietrich had defended in his polemics against the theologians of his day.

The *Tractat* therefore reiterates Dietrich's fundamental distinction between the angels and the separate intelligences. Eckhart of Gründig places the latter in the necessary order of conceptional being that flows out of the divine understanding, here equated directly with God's providence. Unlike the angels, the intelligences therefore possess nothing contingent: "for their learning is their essence and their essence is their learning, because they are a just and simple One without any parts or pieces. This is why their knowledge may have nothing accidental. For what they do not understand in their essence they also do not discuss."<sup>224</sup> But, as Boethius had argued, "the angel learns many revelations in the overflowing spring of the resplendent Godhead, and one angel learns from another and its substance is its knowledge, [but] the will which it has

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<sup>223</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, "Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft," 182: "Wan nû diz ir wûrken ist, daz sie alsus vliezent vernunftelichen ûz und in unde diz ir wûrken ir wesen ist, dar umb ist ir geschaffenheit in einem vernunftigen vliezen, und dar umbe sint sie niht substancie, unde dar umbe sint sie edeler denne die engel, wan der engel muoz saelec sîn boben nâtûre nach der wise sîner substancie."

<sup>224</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, "Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft," 186-7: "wan ir vernemen ist ir wesen und ir wesen ir vernemen, wan sie ein gereht einvaltic ein sint an alle teil oder stücke. Hier umbe mûgen sie niht zuoval hân an deheinem bekenntnisse, wan waz sie niht verstên in irem wesen daz enlêrent sie ouch niht."

is not its substance according to the manner of its power of movement.”<sup>225</sup> The angel belongs to another, lower order, in other words; a voluntary order, like that of the soul, where accident and learning is *possible*.<sup>226</sup> Dietrich’s Augustinian account of twofold providence is consequently revealed to be central to the *Tractat*. Yet it is evoked indirectly by Eckhart of Gründig, not simply to differentiate the angels and the separate intelligences, or the two divine sciences, philosophical and Christian, that treat them. The division within providence is cited, instead, to suggest that angels and humans, as substantial individuals, which possess voluntary freedom of movement, as well as the capacity to learn, are less perfect than the higher intellectual or providential nature that necessarily subsumes and sustains both their knowing and their willing. In this respect, the *Tractat* also appears to be close to Ulrich’s theological argument, following Augustine and Dionysius, about the relationship between providence and the angelic order.

As Philip Merlan recognized, Eckhart of Gründig appears to relate this account of beatitude and intellection to the articles that had been condemned at Paris in the 1270s, discussed above.<sup>227</sup> For this reason, Winkler and Merlan also relate the *Tractat* doctrinally to the anti-nomian theology of the Beghards and Beguines, who were being systematically persecuted by the ecclesiastical magisterium at the time Eckhart of Gründig was preaching.<sup>228</sup> It perhaps comes as no surprise, therefore, that one of the questions that Eckhart of Gründig introduces in the

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<sup>225</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 188: “wan der engel lernet vil offenbârung ein dem quellenden brunnen der glenzender gotheit und der ein von dem andern, unde sîn substancie ist sîn bekennen, und der wille, den sie hânt, nâch sîner bewegender kraft ist niht sîn substancie.”

<sup>226</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 188: “Ze glîcher wîs ist ez umbe die sêl, diu vil zuoval hât und in liden istvon den kreften; daz istniht substancie.”

<sup>227</sup> Philip Merlan, “Aristoteles, Averroës und die beiden Eckharts,” in *Autour d’Aristote; recueil d’études de philosophie ancienne et médiévale offert à Monseigneur A. Mansion* (Louvain: Publications universitaires de Louvain, 1955), 543-66. In this way Merlan relates the *Tractat* to the history of monopsychism, which he would subsequently narrate in *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness: Problems of the Soul in the Neoaristotelian and Neoplatonic Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).

<sup>228</sup> Winkler, “Dietrich von Freiberg und Meister Eckhart in der Kontroverse mit Thomas von Aquin,” 217-23; Merlan, “Aristoteles, Averroës und die beiden Eckharts,” 561-2.

*Tractat* touches on a condemned doctrine associated explicitly by the Christian magisterium with the philosophy of the Greeks and the Arabs: namely, the unicity of the intellect. Asking “whether the active intellect is common to all angels and to all humans, to all those who are blessed, and to those who have been damned,” Eckhart of Gründig maintains that “one should answer: yes! and say that it is as noble in the Devil as in the highest angels, and in the souls that have been damned, as in those that have been predestined [for salvation].”<sup>229</sup> This question receives some urgency since, the *Tractat* asserts, those who are in hell are *as blessed* as those in heaven, because “the essence of the active intellect is that it beholds God without a medium [so that] whenever and wherever it is it must be blessed.”<sup>230</sup> When beatitude is naturalized and grace is subordinated to nature, in other words, standard Christian accounts of eternal punishment and sin can no longer suffice. An eschatology which appears to offer Peripateticism as a philosophical correction to theologies of grace and supernature, must necessarily challenge the central governing assumptions of Christian orthodoxy. For Eckhart of Gründig seems to sanction the very de-Christianization that Étienne Tempier and his inquisitorial tribunal had feared would be the ultimate consequence of radical Aristotelianism.

Because the active intellect is possessed naturally and equally by all those entities which are intelligent, Eckhart of Gründig explains, it cannot be taken away or even lost because of sin. This necessitates that “mortal sin cannot take away the possession of an active intellect, but it does rob [one] of the use of the active intellect.”<sup>231</sup> The *Tractat* consequently asks how one ought

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<sup>229</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 183: “Nû ist ein vrâge, ob diu wûrkendiu vernunft sî gemein allen engeln und allen menschen, den die saelec sint und den die vertymmet sint? sô antwûrtet man jâ unde sprichet daz sie sî als edel in dem tiuvel als in dem obersten engel, und in den sêlen die vertymmet sint als in den die behalten sint.”

<sup>230</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 183: “wan der wûrkenden vernunft wesen ist, daz sie got schouwet sunder mittel, dar umbe wa sie ist und in wem sie ist, dâ muoz sie saelec sîn.”

<sup>231</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 184: “wie môhte mir daz benomen werden, daz ich hân von nâtûr? alle menschen hânt doch diz, dar umbe mac mir tûtlich sünde niht benemen die habunge der wûrkenden vernunft, mêr sie beroubet mich der gebrûchunge der wûrkender vernunft.”

to describe the nature of hell and the pain or punishment one experiences there. “One could answer in this way and as it is commonly said,” Eckhart of Gründig begins, “that there is a fire in hell.”<sup>232</sup> However, he clarifies, “this is not true. Yet one must say this to ignorant people who do not know any better.”<sup>233</sup> Rather than a fire that punishes the wicked, Eckhart of Gründig insists that both hell and mortal sin are “an eternal medium that robs one of the vision of God,”<sup>234</sup> and “that this is hell and the pain for those who are damned: that the knowledge of their own intellect remains hidden from them.”<sup>235</sup> This separation from one’s own active intellect, this failure to know what one truly and essentially is, or to ascertain how one truly and essentially knows, produces an anguish and suffering more profound and intense than any pain that one can suffer during one’s lifetime, the *Tractat* concludes.<sup>236</sup>

Hell, as well as sin, are consequently metaphors for the intellectual inability to recognize that the mind is divine. Yet, for Eckhart of Gründig, such ignorance is also an existential reality that is shared by the angels, devils, and humankind, insofar as they all fail, without grace, to apprehend themselves as they truly are—namely, as intelligences, who behold God directly, without any medium, that are naturally blessed.<sup>237</sup> Such pain and anguish, however, cannot touch the active intellect. It belongs instead solely to the possible intellect, which, because of its

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<sup>232</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 183: “Vrâget man danne, waz pîne ist unde waz helle ist? sô antwürtet man aber sus dar zuo und sprichet gemeineclîche, daz viur sî in der helle.”

<sup>233</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 183: “Daz ist niht wâr, man muoz ez sagen groben liuten, die ez niht baz verstân.”

<sup>234</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 183-4: “Sol ich aber sprechen, waz helle sî, sô sprich ich alsus, daz ein iegelich tötlich sünde ist ein ewig mittel, daz beroubet der gesiht gotes unde des gebrüchens gotes, dâ von ich saelec sol.”

<sup>235</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 184: “Diz sprich ich, daz diz ist helle unde pine derer die vertymmet sint, daz in belîbet daz bekanntnisse irre eigen vernunft.”

<sup>236</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 184: “Vrâget man nû, ob disiu pîne grôz sî? sô spricht man jâ; wan der alle die pîne neme, die alle menschen ie geliten oder iemer sulnt liden in der zît, diu ist als ungelich der geistlichen pîne, die der mensch hie ane hât, als diu vernunftgiu vröude von ertrich ist ungelich der meisten pine von ertrich.”

<sup>237</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 184: “Nû sprich ich vür baz, daz diu würendiu vernunft hât hie mit niht ze tuon. Wan disiu vernunft boben zît wücket in irme wesen, und ir wesen ist, daz sie got schouwet sunder mittel, darumb ist sie von nâtûre saelec.”



embodied nature, is full of errors, images, and forms that alienate it from both the active intellect and the God, which the active intellect immediately grasps.<sup>238</sup> Hell, therefore, *is* the possible intellect, and the possible intellect *is* hell, insofar as hell and sin turn one away from God, and do so the more they turn the mind away from saving grace. And if individuals were detached from their possible intellect, the *Tractat* suggests, then grace would be unnecessary and knowledge of God in this life would be naturally beatifying—just as it always already is for those insubstantial intelligences, like the active intellect, which proceed from and return to God through their contemplation of themselves. This is, once again, a definitive rejection of the Thomist insistence that even beatific knowledge is necessarily mediated by the lights of grace and glory, as well as by the phantasms and connection to the body that make such knowledge a cognition that is proprietary (i.e, knowledge that belongs to this or that person). In this way Eckhart of Gründig reveals how Dietrich’s argument about the role that the active intellect plays in beatitude is comparable to Meister Eckhart’s own understanding of union with God, even if the *Tractat* rejects his understanding of this union as a passive suffering brought about through the graced infusion of the uncreated divine work that annihilates the intellection proper to created minds.

Eckhart of Gründig, like Dietrich before him, therefore, concedes that grace is required for beatific intellection. However, he insists that this is a requirement that effects only those powers of the soul, like the possible intellect, which are beneath the active intellect. The *Tractat* concludes, that “this is the intention of God when He gives grace to me, that I go out of my self according to the manner of my natural being, following what is possible for me.”<sup>239</sup> Once the

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<sup>238</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 185: “Wan diu mügelichiu vernunft hât sô vil natürliches bevallens ir selbes und ist sô vil unledec mit bilden unde formen, wan sie ist ein berihterin des geistes in der wîse als er zît berüeret im lichame.”

<sup>239</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 185: “Nû ist daz diu meinunge gotes als er mir gît genâde, daz ich mîn selbes ûz gân in der wîse mînes natürlichen sîns nach der wîse mîner mûgelicheit.”

possible intellect is liberated from all the images which constitute its hell, in other words, “then God elevates the possible intellect and transforms it through the active intellect, and it is free from all its possibility, and it is robbed of its suffering and its works.”<sup>240</sup> What is remarkable about Eckhart of Gründig’s way of formulating this beatific state and the process that leads up to it, here, is that it is the active intellect rather than grace that is the true agent of human divinization. In beatitude contingency falls away such that only what is eternally necessary remains: pure, divine intellection. Created grace thus heals a rift that is opened up by the very need to rely on possible intellection—that is, it responds to exigency itself, that which may lead this or that mind to freely or voluntarily turn itself away from God in order to pursue the error and phantasy that sustain life in the world, with all its potential for psychic pain and torment. Grace, in other words, is that which makes the beatific vision *possible*. But it is no longer *necessary* once the soul has been conjoined to the active intellect so that it may realize deep within itself what it always was and essentially ought to be by nature.

### *Conclusion*

Dietrich’s writings show that the major principles he outlines in the *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* are operative in his own theology. Dietrich consequently offers a theological description of the universe of beings that is grounded in the authoritative claims about the manners of being he identified in the *Elementatio theologica* by Proclus in a way that stresses the causal interaction between the conceptual and real domains of being which emanate from and return to God. Furthermore, Dietrich argues in quite strong terms that theologians must attend to the role that the separate intellects play in creation by insisting that the demesne of intellect

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<sup>240</sup> Eckhart of Gründig, “Von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft,” 185: “unde wenne mîn mûglich vernunft alsus ist quid worden aller dinge über mitz der genâden gotes und bin komen dar zuo daz ich ledec stân von allen bilden: sô überhebt got die mûgliche vernunft und überformet sie von der wûrkenden vernunft, und alsô ist sie ledec aller irre mûgelicheit und wirt beroubet irs lidens und irs wûrkens.”

which conceives or produces the lower manners of reality is that which mediates between God and his creation. For this reason, Dietrich insists that the relationship between the natural and voluntary order of providence outlined by Augustine agrees with the arguments about the manners of real and conceptual being he derives from Proclus. In consequence, Dietrich provides an account of the way that the acquisition of the active intellect constitutes the beatific experience of God where one attains a total and simultaneous knowledge of all that is. Yet, insofar as he maintains that beatific intellection can only be achieved through the infusion of grace and is impossible in this life, Dietrich's understanding of theology is as "quasi-ethical" as Albert's. If Dietrich departs from Albert in the *Fragmentum* by understanding the difference between philosophical and Christian theology as two ways of conceiving the universe of beings in accord with Proclus, in his other writings Dietrich nevertheless agrees with the rest of the German Dominican School that Christian theology attains a higher, more total experience of reality than philosophical theology because it results directly from the voluntary order of divine grace rather than the natural order of causation.

However, as his constant polemics throughout his works against the Thomists suggest, Dietrich's commitment to Proclus and his Peripatetic conception of both the universe of being and Christian beatitude did not go unchallenged. While Dietrich was outlining his conception of the proper relationship between philosophical and Christian divine science following the lead of Albert, a German tradition of Thomism was also emerging within the Dominican Order that challenged the Peripatetic account of intellection that was structural for Dietrich's arguments about conceptual being and the beatific end of contemplation. This was particularly evident from Johannes Picardi of Lichtenberg's critique of Henry of Ghent's doctrine of the *abditum mentis*, which may have led Dietrich to compose his anti-Thomist polemics in the first place, as

well as the anonymous Basel *Tractatus de beatitudine*, which sought to show how Dietrich and his followers deviated from the original doctrinal positions of Aristotle and Augustine. Yet, as the defense of Dietrich penned by Eckhart of Gründig demonstrates, the debate over the role that the possible and active intellect play in beatification was also related to German Dominican interpretations of the relation between grace and nature. This debate is significant as it not only reveals the radical possibility that followers of Dietrich might conceive of beatification as a natural rather than graced process. But it also shows how the German Dominicans understood the radical mystical theology of Meister Eckhart to be *different* to the graced and natural conception of beatitude defended by the disciples Thomas and Dietrich. I will explore this difference in the following chapter, insofar as it informs Meister Eckhart's vision of Christian theology, its various points of continuity and discontinuity with Peripatetic and Platonic divine science, as well as the rupture Eckhart represented within the German Dominican School.

### Chapter Three: Meister Eckhart and the Redescription of German Dominican Theology

Moses, Christ and the Philosopher teach the same thing, differing only in the way they teach, namely as worthy of belief, as probable or likely, and as truth.

Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*.<sup>1</sup>

There is no mistaking the fact that the work of Meister Eckhart represents a decisive rupture in the theory and practice of theology within the German Dominican School, if not within the history of Christian theology itself. A vast scholarly industry has consequently arisen in order to account for just why this is so, and it is perhaps quite fair to say that most, if not all, efforts to narrate the history of the German Dominican School do so in order to assess and explain the Meister's apparent radicality as a Christian theologian. Attempting to account for the Meister's position in the history of medieval scholasticism and Christian mysticism, for instance, Ian P. Wei has identified Eckhart as one of several "anti-intellectual intellectuals," who offered a critique of the authority of scholastic learning and of the intellectual culture of the University which aimed to substantially reform the Christian relation to reason.<sup>2</sup> Alain de Libera, on the other hand, has attempted to place Meister Eckhart within the context of a thirteenth- and fourteenth-century "deprofessionalization" of intellectual life, since his work arose and became authoritative in a context where what it meant to philosophize and theologize as a scholastically trained master—or to be a Christian "intellectual"—depended upon an extension of scholastic culture and its modes of argumentation beyond the institutional university and on a conception of the ideal philosopher, which emerged out of intra-scholastic conflicts like those that erupted after 1277, discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>3</sup> Finally, in keeping with his general polemic against

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<sup>1</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 185, ed. by Koch, in LW III, 155: "Idem ergo est quod docet Moyses, Christus et philosophus, solum quantum ad modum differens, scilicet ut credibile, probabile sive verisimile et veritas."

<sup>2</sup> Ian P. Wei, *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Paris: Theologians and the University, c. 1100-1330* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 392-408.

<sup>3</sup> Alain de Libera, *Penser au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), 24-5. De Libera's thesis arose as a direct challenge to that of Jacques Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Teresa Lavender Fagan (Cambridge,

attempts to characterize Meister Eckhart as a mystic, Kurt Flasch has insisted that the Meister's preaching and teaching must be understood as an attempt to define and defend an explicitly Christian *philosophy*, which was critical of naïve forms of popular religiosity and methodologically and programmatically dependent upon a specific, historical conception of the intellect and of rationality that the German Dominicans had inherited from Graeco-Arab Peripateticism.<sup>4</sup> All three accounts ultimately agree that it is Eckhart's character as a type of intellectual that matters—both to global histories of medieval thought and to the particular position he holds within the history of the German Dominican School. And all three implicitly suggest that it is the Meister's commitment to “the intellectual” that explains how he transforms the practice of theology as this was conceived by those who preceded him, such as Albert the Great, Ulrich of Strasburg and Dietrich of Freiberg.

Yet, as discussed in the introduction, historians of mysticism and the devotional culture of the High Middle Ages have offered a competing view of the Meister that tends to situate his theological intervention in the context of the religious movements of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Eckhart's project thus belongs to a period which Bernard McGinn has famously characterized as the period when a “new mysticism” arose in Latin Europe that is democratic, extra-institutional, urban, vernacular, and informed by an ongoing dialogue between men and women about the relationship between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*.<sup>5</sup>

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MA: Blackwell, 1991), who located the “organic” emergence of medieval intellectual culture within the institutional university and sought to account, in Gramscian terms, for the ways that medieval intellectuals defended their class interests. For an assessment of the relation and difference between Le Goff and de Libera's narratives, see the informative summary of both in Rexroth, *Knowledge True and Useful*, 6-10.

<sup>4</sup> Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 14-30.

<sup>5</sup> McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 12-30; Bernard McGinn, introduction to *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete*, ed. by Bernard McGinn (New York: Continuum, 1997), 1-14. McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, 48-79, however, acknowledges that attempts to police popular piety and magisterial declarations that beguine spirituality and theology was heresy also characterizes this period.

Rather than stress Eckhart's professional status as an intellectual, therefore, McGinn instead highlights how the German Dominican's contemporaries valued him as *Lesemeister* and as *Lebemeister*—that is, as a master of learning trained in the schools and as a preacher with genuine insight into how the Christian ought to conduct themselves in the world.<sup>6</sup> Other historians of mysticism, such as Jeffrey Hamburger and Amy Hollywood, have identified the important contributions to German Dominican thought represented by the devotional, visionary and autohagiographical writing of Dominican women, as well as the way that Meister Eckhart and his disciples appropriated and developed the theology of work and suffering developed by beguines like Mechthild of Magdeburg and Marguerete Porete.<sup>7</sup> Meister Eckhart's novelty and originality is thus much more a result of the multiple ways he sought to communicate the truth as a theologian in explicit dialogue with his spiritual surroundings, rather than because of his explicit commitment to one "academic" style of theologizing.

In this chapter, I take a chronological approach to the Meister's scholastic writing before offering a detailed analysis of a set of vernacular sermons gathered by Eckhart's disciples after his formal condemnation by the papal inquisition as a teacher of heresy. Avoiding the debates, recounted in the introduction and partly recapitulated here, which attempt to legislate why Eckhart as a German Dominican ought to be characterized as a philosopher or as a mystic in order to focus instead on his conception and practice of theology, the following analysis seeks to situate Eckhart in the debates about the proper relationship between philosophical and Christian divine science in the German Dominican School I have described in the last two chapters. In particular, I show how Eckhart drew upon Thomas and Dietrich in order to offer novel answers

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<sup>6</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 1-19.

<sup>7</sup> Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, and Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998).

to what the practice of theology entails, how God ought to be conceived, and what beatitude entails. In what follows, I argue that Meister Eckhart routinely collapses distinctions which had mattered to earlier German Dominicans and formulates radical arguments that seek to go beyond them—such as, by proffering a new doctrine of the relationship between the transcendentals that draws on Dietrich of Freiberg or a new conception of the relationship between philosophical argument and scriptural exegesis that draws upon Albertist and Thomist conceptions of allegorical and parabolic interpretation. Finally, I demonstrate that Eckhart’s preaching offers evidence that the Meister conceived of beatitude as taking place beyond the perfection that the lights of grace and nature afforded in the deepest ground of the soul, suggesting that the end of theology goes beyond the kinds of divinization understood to characterize philosophical and Christian theology.

*Metaphysics as Ethics: Meister Eckhart’s Early Account of the Theological Vocation*

We have seen that Albert the Great, seeking to define theology as a speculative and practical enterprise governed by piety, characterized the divine science of Christians as related to an affective economy of grace in contradistinction to a philosophical divine science where the theoretical aims of metaphysics and the natural aims of ethics had been separated. Albert’s disciple Ulrich of Strasburg continued this line of argumentation, whereas Dietrich of Freiberg, in his polemics against the Thomists, shifted his emphasis more toward the importance of the need to philosophize correctly following Proclus and the Peripatetics, even as he and his followers insisted that the light of grace mediated to the Christian by the angels was necessary for the attainment of an intellectual beatitude that was in some sense always already natural. Meister Eckhart was the heir of these prior arguments. Yet right from the earliest stages of his career as a scholastic theologian Eckhart introduced his own characteristic emphases on the



relationship between metaphysics and ethics in Christian theology that would have important consequences for the German Dominican School's account of the relationship between philosophical and Christian divine science. Importantly, Eckhart offered a vision of the Christian theological vocation characterized by its continuities with, rather than discontinuity from, the metaphysics and ethics of the philosophers. Recognizing that the Bible and philosophical argument taught the same metaphysical truth about the nature of divine existence, Eckhart, in his early scholastic homilies and disputed questions, begins to collapse the distinction between the two divine sciences that had been defended in the German Dominican School, while attempting to build upon certain positions that Dietrich had sought to defend in his debates against the German Thomists.

In the following I analyze two early homilies delivered by Meister Eckhart during his initial years at the University of Paris in order to demonstrate that he conceptualizes Christian theology as requiring philosophy. In doing so, I argue, the Meister not only draws direct comparisons between the method of cognitive abstraction operative in both philosophical and Christian divine science, but also forwards an argument that both theologies constitute a contemplatively grounded ethics, where metaphysical knowledge of the truth conditions what it means to *be* and to *be good*. Adopting an approach to the vocation of the theologian that acknowledges, therefore, the similarities rather than the differences between philosophical and Christian theological speech, Eckhart avoids the rigidity of prior German Dominican approaches to the two divine sciences, since he eschews the tendency prevalent in Albert and Ulrich to see Christianity as providing a fuller cosmological account than that of the philosophers, and as offering a more perfect kind of beatitude or divinization. In many respects, Eckhart thus appears quite like Dietrich. In an analysis of three of the Meister's well-known Parisian Questions,

therefore, where Eckhart's theological novelty is perhaps most fully evident for the first time in his career, I show how his conception of divine existence as intellectual—specifically, his view that God exists because He understands rather than understands because He exists—as well as Eckhart's argument that God's Truth is logically and metaphysically prior to His Goodness, develops certain theological doctrines that Dietrich had defended. I also suggest that this understanding re-articulates and radicalizes the Meister's account of Christian theology as metaphysics and as ethics by way of a distinction between uncreated and created, or abstract and concrete, being.

One of Meister Eckhart's oldest surviving works is a homily, delivered while he was still a bachelor, that introduced his lectures on Peter Lombard's *Liber sententiarum*.<sup>8</sup> Although somewhat conventional and lacking many of the daring theological arguments which would guarantee Eckhart's later fame in his native Germany as a *Lesemeister*, this *Principium Collatio in Libris Sententiarum* is nevertheless significant as one of the only programmatic accounts of the nature of theology which the Meister penned. Delivered sometime in the 1297-98 academic year, Eckhart's *Principium* survives in a single manuscript in Erfurt, which likely belonged to the Dominican Order, where it is preserved alongside other *Principia*, as well as summaries of two *quodlibeta* by the Augustinian theologian James of Viterbo, with critiques by the Dominican Bernard of Auvergne.<sup>9</sup> As Josef Koch notes in his introduction to his edition of the sermon,

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<sup>8</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Principium Collatio in Libris Sententiarum*, ed. by Josef Koch in LW V (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936), 17-26. The Meister's commentary on the *Liber Sententiarum* does not survive, unless Josef Koch was correct to attribute the anonymous commentary in MS Bruges 491 to Eckhart. See Josef Koch, "Ein neuer Eckhart-Fund: der Sentenzenkommentar," in *Kleine Schriften*, vol. 1 (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1973), 239-246. On the debate about the authenticity of this attribution, which remains an open question, see Andreas Speer and Wouter Goris, "Das Meister-Eckhart-Archiv am Thomas-Institut. Kontinuität der Forschungsaufgaben," *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale* 37 (1995): 149-174.

<sup>9</sup> Josef Koch, introduction to *Principium Collatio in Libris Sententiarum*, 5-6. Bernard of Auvergne was also the prior of the Dominican priory of St. Jacques in 1303 and a noted defender and promoter of Thomas Aquinas. See Martin Grabmann, "Bernhard von Alvergne, O.P., ein Interpret und Verteidiger der Lehre des hl. Thomas von Aquin aus alter Zeit," *Divus Thomas* 10 (1932): 23-35.

however, the *Principium* is in reality a report by a student rather than an officially sanctioned publication, and the fact that it is never mentioned by Eckhart in other works suggests that he did not intend that it should be publicly circulated.<sup>10</sup> The homily itself involves a description of the subject of theology as this was organized into four key themes by Peter Lombard: the nature of God, creation, the incarnation and passion of Christ, and the sacraments. Meister Eckhart emphasizes the first topic and expounds at length on the nature of God, committed as he is to the Thomist view that God as necessary and pure existence is the subject of theology. It is therefore appropriate to begin an account of Eckhart's approach to Christian divine science by analyzing this discussion.

Eckhart takes as his biblical text for the *Principium* Eccli 38:4: "The Most High has created medicine from out of the earth," since each element of this verse can be appropriately applied to the topics covered in each book of the *Liber Sententiarum*.<sup>11</sup> Most importantly, Eckhart begins by noting that the name "Most High" properly belongs to God since the divine nature possesses perfect sovereignty both in itself and for itself. This sovereignty, Eckhart explains, characterizes the essential properties of the Trinitarian persons and their relations, as well as the sovereign power which God has as First Cause over creation.<sup>12</sup> Yet the name "Most High" is also appropriate to God, Eckhart adds, because the divine nature is highest in essence,

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph Koch, introduction to *Principium Collatio in Libris Sententiarum*, 8-9. Koch notes also that in form and thematic focus it is similar to the *Principia* lectures of Albert and Thomas, which were incorporated into their respective commentaries on the *Liber sententiarum* as prologues.

<sup>11</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Principium*, n. 1, ed. Koch in LW V, 17: "*Altissimus* creavit de terra medicinam, Eccli. 38. Verba ista pro ingressu Libri sententiarum aptissime assumunt<ur>. Primus siquidem liber loquitur de altissimo; secundus de creatione et creaturis; tertius de terra benedicta, scilicet de humanitate Christi, verbi incarnati; quartus de sacramentis, quae tamquam medicina homini sauciato adhibentur."

<sup>12</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Principium*, n. 2, ed. Koch in LW V, 17: "Circa primum notandum quod hoc nomen *altissimus* proprie deo competit. In ipso est siquidem perfectissima altitudo; est enim in divina natura altitudo in se sive secundum se, est etiam in ipsa altitudo respectu creaturae. In ipsa siquidem est altitudo secundum proprietates tam essentiales quam personales, secundum quas personae comparantur ad se ipsas. Est etiam altitudo in ipso secundum quod ab ipso rerum creaturam universitas."

endurance, power, wisdom, and benevolence, which signify that God possesses immutability, infinity, invincibility, infallibility and mercy.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, according to the Meister, Eccli 1:8 states that “the One is Most High, the Creator of All,” which indicates that the nature of God is simple, sublime, and exerts a universal causality of diffusive goodness over all things.<sup>14</sup> The name “Most High” taken from the biblical verse that Eckhart employs to introduce the thematic structure of the *Liber Sententiarum* therefore provides the Meister with the opportunity to announce his particular understanding of divinity. Key, here, is Eckhart’s stress on the fact that the Trinitarian God is the First Cause which is both unified and simple. He is also the One who benevolently reigns over creation, as indicated by Eccli 1:8.

The discussion of God as the “Most High” which Eckhart introduces in his *Principium* reveals that the Meister conceives divinity in Peripatetic terms quite similar to the German Dominicans who preceded him. But the discussion of God in the opening of the *Principium* also indicates how Eckhart, during his career, will come to advance a metaphysical argument that fundamentally transforms this doctrinal orientation. For Eckhart ends his account of the nature of God by introducing one of his most celebrated ontological claims: the absolute difference between *esse hoc aut hoc* and the *esse divina* that transcends it. “Because everything changeable has a ‘this or that’ it is not simple,” he explains; “everything changeable possesses something loftier in itself, since what acts is always nobler than that which suffers.”<sup>15</sup> The *Principium*,

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<sup>13</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Principium*, n. 3, ed. Koch in LW V, 19: “Est autem deus *altissimus* in essential, in permanentia, in potentia, in sapiential, in misericordia sive benevolentia. Propter primum est incommutabilis, propter secundum interminabilis, propter tertium invincibilis, propter quartum infallibilis, propter quintum exorabilis.”

<sup>14</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Principium*, n. 3, ed. Koch in LW V, 19: “De primo Eccli. 1: ‘unus est altissimus creator omnium’, ubi tria tanguntur circa divinam essentiam, propter quorum unumquodque deus est omniquaque incommutabilis. Tangitur enim ipsius dei simplicitas, sublimitas, diffusivae bonitatis universalis causalitas.”

<sup>15</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Principium*, n. 3, ed. Koch in LW V, 20: “Omne enim habet hoc et hoc, nec est simplex... Item omne mutabile habet aliquid se sublimius, cum ‘semper agens sit nobilium patiente’.” Eckhart cites here Aristotle, *De anima* III Gamma, 5 (430a18).

despite its somewhat pedestrian nature, ultimately introduces one of Meister Eckhart's characteristic concerns as a theologian, namely, God as the Most High and simple One. But it also represents the first recorded instance of a metaphysical position that Eckhart will promote and develop throughout his subsequent career: the difference between created or particular being, and the universal divine being which sustains it. This argument was central for the Meister's revision of the Peripatetic theology characteristic of the German Dominican School.

Another early work by the Meister further clarifies his initial understanding of the discipline of theology by outlining how it ought ideally to relate to the philosophical sciences. This is Eckhart's sermon for the feast day of St Augustine, which he preached in Paris after he had attained the rank of regent master around 1301-2.<sup>16</sup> Similar to the *Principium*, the sermon survives as a transcript by a member of the audience, rather than as an official text published with the Meister's *imprimatur*. It also differs in form to the Latin sermons that Eckhart collated for official circulation. In fact, Bernhard Geyer, the editor of the sermon, finds it to be so stylistically and thematically different from Eckhart's later works that one could even doubt its authenticity, since it seems to lack the elevated rhetoric which characterizes the Meister's preaching, and merely gestures towards metaphysical positions which Eckhart would subsequently develop in his more mature writing.<sup>17</sup> Suggesting that the sermon is significant only because it indicates Eckhart's familiarity with material which he did not draw upon again for the rest of his career—such as the commentary on the *De trinitate* of Boethius by the twelfth-century theologian Clarembald of Arras—Geyer concludes that any interest which the sermon may possess is negligible, since Eckhart's own voice is subsumed by his various authoritative

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<sup>16</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, ed. by Bernhard Geyer in LW V (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936), 89-99.

<sup>17</sup> Bernhard Geyer, introduction to *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, 87.

sources.<sup>18</sup> Yet Andreas Speer has recently argued that the sermon, with its explicitly Boethian and sapiential orientation, represents an important early witness to the Meister's view of the proper relationship between divine and natural science, as well as elucidates Eckhart's initial interpretation of the "quasi-ethical" theology of Albert and Dietrich.<sup>19</sup> Importantly, the sermon demonstrates that Eckhart sought to abandon rigid distinctions between philosophical and Christian wisdom, like those drawn by previous Dominican theologians, such as Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. It is thus worthy of analysis and more significant for our understanding of the Meister's conception of what it means to be a theologian than its editor was willing to grant.

Eckhart takes as his reading for the sermon Eccli 50:10: "like a solid golden vase, adorned with every precious stone."<sup>20</sup> The gold of the vase, Eckhart begins, is appropriate for the praise of Augustine since the preciousness of the material signifies how the totality of wisdom and the sciences had been assembled in him according to their various habits.<sup>21</sup> This was because Augustine, according to Eckhart, "was a good theorist, an outstanding logician and a most excellent ethicist."<sup>22</sup> Eckhart proceeds to explain, citing liberally from Clarembald of Arras, how the masters divide these philosophical sciences into their theoretical, logical and practical parts.<sup>23</sup> Yet he also introduces a significant conflation which is all his own: that the final part of the

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<sup>18</sup> Bernhard Geyer, introduction to *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, 88.

<sup>19</sup> Andreas Speer, "Ethica sive theologia. Wissenschaftseinteilung und Philosophieverständnis bei Meister Eckhart," in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter*, 683-93.

<sup>20</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 1, ed. Geyer in LW V, 89: *Vas auri solidum ornatum omni lapide pretioso*, Eccli. 50. Ad commendationem beati Augustini potest proprie introduce haec auctoritas, et inter cetera commendatur sub vasis metaphora in tribus quae in vase continentur."

<sup>21</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 2, ed. Geyer in LW V, 89: "Primo ergo commendatur a pretiositate materiae, id est multitudine sapientiae et scientiae sub diversis habitibus collectae."

<sup>22</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 2, ed. Geyer in LW V, 89: "Ipse enim erat bonus theoreticus, egregious logicus et excellentissimus ethicus."

<sup>23</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 2, ed. Geyer in LW V, 89: "Sic enim dividunt nobis magistri scientiam philosophiae, scilicet in theoreticam, logicam et ethicam sive practicam." Cf. Clarembald of Arras, *Tractatus Super librum Boetii De Trinitate*, intro, 2, ed. by Nikolaus M. Häring in *Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras: A Twelfth-Century Master of the School of Chartres* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1965), 66: "Quarum facultatum primo loco positam Graeci dixere 'theoricum,' secundo 'practicam' sive 'ethicam,' tercio 'logicam' nuncupavere."

theoretical sciences, which follows mathematics and physics, is not simply theology, but “ethics or theology.”<sup>24</sup> Perhaps looking back to Albert’s definition of theology in his commentary on the *Liber Sententiarum* as an affective science that is partly practical and partly speculative, or toward Avicenna’s concluding account of religion as politics in the final book of his *Metaphysica*, Eckhart suggests that divine science contains a moral philosophy, and that the ethicist ought to be a kind of metaphysician. Hence the Meister concludes, citing again from Clarembald, that while the natural scientist investigates the causes of quality, motion, and quantity, “the ethicist or divine scientist investigates the ideas of things, which are in the divine mind before they spring forth into bodies, admiring in a more subtle way how they exist there intelligibly from eternity.”<sup>25</sup> Augustine, to the extent that he can be described by Eccli 50:10, ultimately embodies this conception of the theologian for Eckhart, given that his wisdom is characterized by theoretical, logical and moral perfection.

Yet in this sermon Eckhart maintains, still following the lead of Clarembald of Arras, that the theologian reasons more from scriptural and revealed authority than from external examples, although they properly deploy both. Most importantly, the theologian contemplates divine being (or *ousia*) without its underlying matter.<sup>26</sup> For this reason, Eckhart explains, Augustine drew

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<sup>24</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 2, ed. Geyer in LW V, 89-90: “Theoricam sive speculativam ulterius partiuntur in mathematicam, physicam et ethicam sive theologiam.” Emphasis added. Cf. Clarembald of Arras, *Tractatus Super librum Boetii De Trinitate*, intro, 3, ed. Häring in *Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras*, 66: “Theoricae igitur sive speculativae partes tres esse dinoscuntur i. e. mathematica, physica, theologia.”

<sup>25</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 2, ed. Geyer in LW V, 90: “Physicus, id est naturalis, causas qualitatum, motuum et quantitatum inquirat. Ethicus sive theologus ideas rerum, quae in mente divina, antequam prodirent in corpora, ab aeterno quo modo ibi intelligibiliter existerent, subtilius intuetur.” Cf. Clarembald of Arras, *Tractatus Super librum Boetii De Trinitate*, intro, 4, ed. Häring in *Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras*, 66-7: “Per physicam vero causas qualitatem corporum, quantitatum etiam atque motuum disquirat. Per theologiam ideas rerum quae in divina mente, antequam in corpora prodirent, intelligibiliter constiterunt contemplatur.”

<sup>26</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 3, ed. Geyer in LW V, 90: “Et de divinis aliquando ratiocinator auctoritatibus maiorum, aliquando exemplis extra quaesitis, aliquando vero ipsam divinam usiam sine subiecta materia contemplatur.” Cf. Clarembald of Arras, *Tractatus Super librum Boetii De Trinitate*, intro, 14, ed. Häring in *Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras*, 70: “Verum theologia de divinitate ratiocinatio sive

upon the authority of Genesis 1:26, “let us make man according to our image and likeness”, when he wanted to make known how there is a Trinity of persons in God with a unity of essence.<sup>27</sup> But according to Eckhart the use of example in theology is shown by Plato, “who, when he thought to speak about the highest principle of things, made use of example in the *Timaeus*, declaring that it is as impossible to say something about God as it is difficult to ascertain Him.”<sup>28</sup> Plato, through necessary recourse to the likenesses of created things, metaphorically called God a sun, and John, when he sought to speak of the uncreated Word, called it a light, because light is the first and universal species of corporeal form and the principle of life in bodily things.<sup>29</sup> Scripture and the *Timaeus*, in other words, taught Augustine that God as Trinity is radically separate from the world. Yet Eckhart concludes from this not that philosophy ought to be subordinated to Christian revelation. Instead, he insists that both revealed and philosophical texts offer the theologian a metaphorical or comparative way of speaking,

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sermo interpretatur. Haec i.e. theologia duos habet propriae considerationis modos. Aliquando enim de divinis ratiocinans exemplis utitur quaesitis extrinsecus. Aliquando vero divinam usiam sine subiecta materia curiose intuetur.”

<sup>27</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 3, ed. Geyer in LW V, 90-1: “Auctoritatibus usus fuit beatus Augustinus, quando trinitatem personarum cum unitate essentiae primo nobis volens insinuare introduxit illud in Genesi: ‘faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram’, et per verbum pluralis numeri trinitatem intelligens et per nomina singularis numeri declarans substantiae unitatem.” Cf. Clarembald of Arras, *Tractatus Super librum Boetii De Trinitate*, intro, 15, ed. Häring in *Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras*, 71: “Hoc modo Beatus Augustinus cum personarum Trinitatem asserere vellet, in firmamentum suae asserttionis induxit quod in Genesi legitur: *faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram*, volens per verbum pluralis numeri insinuatam fuisse personarum pluritatem.”

<sup>28</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 3, ed. Geyer in LW V, 91: “Exemplo etiam usus est Plato in Timaeo, qui dum de principe summon rerum loqui esset animates, dicit: ita <im>possibilis est aliquid de deo profari, sicut difficile est ipsum reperiri.” Cf. Clarembald of Arras, *Tractatus Super librum Boetii De Trinitate*, intro, 16, ed. Häring in *Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras*, 71: “Huic simile Macrobius quoque de Platone testatur qui cum de Deo rerum Principe summon loqui esset animates, tantaque de eo loquendi difficultate teneretur ut diceret Deum universitatis Conditorem tam invenire difficile esse quam inventum digne profari impossibile.”

<sup>29</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 3, ed. Geyer in LW V, 91: “Et ideo idem confugit ad rerum similitudines et exempla et inter omnes res creates solem ei quam simillimum repperit; unde et solem nominavit. Et Iohannes evangelista, dum de verbo increato loqui auderet, lucem ipsum appellavit, quia lux est prima et universalis species formarum corporalium et principium vitae in corporalibus.” Cf. Clarembald of Arras, *Tractatus Super librum Boetii De Trinitate*, intro, 16, ed. Häring in *Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras*, 71: “tandem ad similitudines et exempla confugit et solem ex omnibus naturalibus simillimum ei repperit.”



which enables them to put into words that which is properly indescribable and unknowable. This is so even if Christian revelation, rather than philosophical argumentation or fable, ought to furnish the theologian with their primary source of authoritative testimony. Eckhart therefore stands in continuity with the Christian humanism of the so-called School of Chartres, whose various members developed a distinctly “Boethian” natural theology, like Clarembald, or promoted an allegorical hermeneutic tied to a self-conscious poetics of theological fabulation rooted in Platonism, like William of Conches.<sup>30</sup>

It is therefore significant that in his sermon Eckhart does not claim that scripture provides a fuller or more accurate account than philosophy. The Meister stresses instead the accord between theological and philosophical *speech* as well as the divine scientist or ethicist’s need to employ the testimony of revealed scripture alongside the words of the philosophers, in order to grasp the reality of the divine essence to the extent that this is possible for humankind. Eckhart appropriately concludes, therefore, that “the theologian in this way is enriched by a twofold knowledge in this life: one is ‘through a mirror and in darkness (1 Cor 13:12),’ the other is through a mirror and in light.”<sup>31</sup> In the subsequent discussion of this twofold knowledge, however, Eckhart makes clear that the first knowledge refers not to revealed knowledge as such, but to the three types of theological expression that Pseudo-Dionysius had outlined in his *De divinis nominibus* (namely, what Eckhart, following the tradition of the Latin commentary

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<sup>30</sup> For the different interpretations of *fabula* among the Chartrian theologians, and in contemporaries such as Peter Abelard, see Peter Dronke, *Fabula: Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 13-77. See also the discussion of the Chartrian focus on the *integumenta* of nature and scripture as two intimately related, rather than separated, sources for the contemplation of God as benevolent creator of the universe, in Willemien Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm: A Study of Twelfth-Century Humanism* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 9-81.

<sup>31</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 4, ed. Geyer in LW V, 92: “Et sic contingit theologum duplici ditari cognitione in via: una est ‘per speculum et in aenigmate’, alia est per speculum et in lumine.” Cf. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica* II, 1 q. 512 (ed. Quarrachi II 735a).

tradition, labled the *via ablatione*, *via eminentia*, and *via causa*).<sup>32</sup> The second type of knowledge, however, is ascertained according to Eckhart when the divine light, which raises the intellect up to that which it is unable to ascertain naturally, illuminates the soul's powers of cognition and its means of knowing.<sup>33</sup> Scriptural testimony and philosophical argumentation are thus intertwined in much the same way that theological knowledge itself is reliant on natural and divine perfection. For Eckhart, moreover, this argument is indelibly tied to the recognition that a particular kind of speech is required in theology because God properly exceeds humanity's capacity to understand and describe Him. Here, Eckhart stands in continuity with both Albert and Thomas, who conceived of the relationship between philosophy and revealed knowledge in a similar way.

The second half of Eckhart's sermon introduces how Augustine, ornate like the golden vase of Eccli 50:10, demonstrates how virtue is put to work.<sup>34</sup> This marks the Meister's transition away from theology proper (i.e, discussion of God) toward a consideration of ethics as the science of individual human perfection.<sup>35</sup> Yet even here he maintains his fundamentally metaphysical orientation. Eckhart begins to unpack the significance of Augustine's moral witness by articulating the need to be ontologically grounded in virtue in order to work

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<sup>32</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 4, ed. Geyer in LW V, 92: "Primae fit tripliciter, scilicet ablatione, eminentia et causa."

<sup>33</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 5, ed. Geyer in LW V, 93-4: "Secundo cognoscitur in via per speculum et in lumine, quando scilicet lux divina per effectum suum aliquem specialem irradiat super potentias cognoscentes et super medium in cognitione, elevans intellectum ipsum ad id quod naturaliter non potest."

<sup>34</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 7, ed. Geyer in LW V, 95: "Secundo commendatur beatus Augustinus a dispositione formae in eo quod dicitur *ornatus omni lapide pretioso*. Dispositio autem formae in ipso est exhibition virtutis in operatione."

<sup>35</sup> There is no real textual support for Speer's claim that Eckhart *opposes* Christian theology as a practice to philosophical theology as metaphysics in this part of the sermon. Cf. Speer, "*Ethica sive theologia*," 686-7. It should also be acknowledged that the distinction between "theology proper" and "ethics" is precisely the distinction that Eckhart in this sermon seeks to resist. It is introduced here purely for heuristic purposes—that is, in order to note how the sermon treats the two aspects of divine science that Eckhart attempts to hold together by way of his reading of Clarembald: "theologia sive ethica."

virtuously. Citing Boethius, Eckhart accordingly explains that “virtue freely given is well named ‘form,’ because the being of a thing is derived from form.”<sup>36</sup> Offering a further explanation that points toward Eckhart’s insistence that created being is a kind of nothing in comparison to the purity of divine being, the Meister adds that “it is well said that being is from virtue, because, just as the dead are improperly called humans so evil is improperly said to exist.”<sup>37</sup> Only virtue truly exists, in other words, to the extent that it is given by and from God, and Eckhart cites Boethius and Augustine, who teach that “being is what keeps order and preserves nature,” and that “virtue is order,” namely, “the order of love.”<sup>38</sup> For the Meister right action is dependent on God’s granting of form to created being. Ethics is therefore consequent upon this divine act—the giving of substantial existence. Eckhart thus insists in the second part of his sermon that there is an important relationship between ethics and theology insofar as he emphasizes how the need *to be* good precedes good work. Importantly, Eckhart also argues that virtue is from God and is related to his providential governance over creation insofar as He alone is what grounds created being and benevolently orders nature. This is why a proper metaphysical understanding of God is necessary for the one who seeks, like Augustine, to act virtuously.

The final part of the sermon for the feast day of Augustine discusses how the saint’s wisdom exemplifies a morality that is monastic, political, and theological.<sup>39</sup> Monastic virtue, Eckhart explains, orders a man to himself and subjects the flesh to the spirit. Its fruit is spiritual joy and thus Augustine in his *Confessions* for this reason insists that “there is a joy which is not

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<sup>36</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 7, ed. Geyer in LW V, 95: “Et bene dicitur virtus gratuita forma, quia rem esse est a forma, secundum Boethium De trinitate.”

<sup>37</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 7, ed. Geyer in LW V, 95-6: “Et bene dicitur esse a virtute, quia sicut improprie dicuntur mortui homines, ita malus improprie dicitur esse.”

<sup>38</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 7, ed. Geyer in LW V, 96: “Esse enim est ‘quod ordinem retinet servatque naturans’, secundum Boethium in III Consolationum. Et virtus est ordo, secundum Augustinum, ordo inquam amoris, quia qui virtutem habet, ordinem tenet servatque naturam.”

<sup>39</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 8, ed. Geyer in LW V, 96: “Sapientia igitur beati Augustini fuit sibi pro materia virtutis, virtutis inquam monasticae, politicae et theologicae.”

bestowed on the impious, but is only gracefully given to those who worship You, O Lord, for You Yourself are their joy, and this is the blessed life: to rejoice toward You, and in You and for Your sake.”<sup>40</sup> Political virtue, on the other hand, is the manifest practice of good works that perfects and orders man in the community of fellow citizens and its power consists in doing good work for the friends of God as well as one’s enemies for God’s sake.<sup>41</sup> Finally, Eckhart argues that theological virtue perfects man in his relationship to God, “since it is the integral conversion of the spirit through the subjection of the flesh.”<sup>42</sup> The fruits of theological virtue, which work through faith and desire, are the spiritual effects of grace according to the perfection of justice—one of the major concerns of the mature Eckhart and a concern that he perhaps *brings* to his meditation on the figure of Augustine as theologian more than he *derives it* from a reading of Augustine’s theology.<sup>43</sup>

Arguing, however, that God is only able to be known through his effects, Eckhart lists the seven ways that the advent of grace comes about in a vessel adorned with the theological virtues.<sup>44</sup> Grace thus arrives as 1.) a cooling snow that chills the heat of carnal desire, 2.) as a fertilizing dew which anoints the soul with a desire for eternal things, 3.) as an intoxicating wine which inculcates a total oblivion toward all transitory things, 4.) as an oil that penetrates the

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<sup>40</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 8, ed. Geyer in LW V, 96-7: “Monastica virtus ordinat et perficit hominem in se ipso, quia opus eius est carnis suppeditatio. Actus virtutis monasticaw wat <hic; fructus eius est> spiritualia laetitia... De quo gaudium Augustinus X Confessionum dicit: ‘est Gaudium, quod non impiis, sed eis qui te gratis colunt’, domine, ‘quorum Gaudium tu ipse es. Et ipsa est beata vita: gaudere ad te, in te, propter te, ipsa est vita et non altera.’”

<sup>41</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 9, ed. Geyer in LW V, 97: “Virtus politica est luculenta honorum operum exercitation et perficit hominem et ordinat in civium collegio. Actus virtutis est haec, quae exhibit opera amicis in deo et inimicis propter deum in tantum.”

<sup>42</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 10, ed. Geyer in LW V, 97: “Theologica virtus perficit hominum cum deo, quia est integra spiritus conservation ex carnis subiectione.”

<sup>43</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 10, ed. Geyer in LW V, 97: “Actus virtutis theologicae, id est fidei, dilectionis, est hic. Fructus eius est spiritualis effectus gratiae ad perfectionem iustitiae.”

<sup>44</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 11, ed. Geyer in LW V, 97: “Sed quia non contingit nos de deo aliquid scire nisi per effectus, ideo distinguamus septem modos gratiae adventus in *vas* taliter *ornatum*.”

subject and is an inflammation of the soul by God, 5.) as a purifying fire, 6.) as a light united with its bearer that transforms the soul into the same image of God, and, finally, 7.) as a violently blowing wind that represents the death of the soul's natural life.<sup>45</sup> Andreas Speer, in his analysis of Eckhart's sermon, thus maintains that Eckhart centered the importance of grace to his theology insofar as it grants the habit needed to completely attain theological, as well as ethical and political virtue, in this life. Speer also argues that the second part of the homily privileges the perfection of the practical intellect over the speculative, suggesting that although Eckhart aimed to draw ethics and theology closer together, he still maintained that grace and revelation are needed to overcome a purely natural or philosophical orientation toward God.<sup>46</sup> Yet he rightly concedes that, insofar as Eckhart's theological project is characterized by the ultimate concordance of philosophical and revealed truth—whether that truth be theoretical or practical—Eckhart's emphasis on the necessity of grace and the putting to death of one's own nature in this sermon does not signal a retreat from his overarching concern to situate his moral doctrine within a primarily metaphysical or existential understanding of human perfection and justice.

Meister Eckhart's real importance as a German Dominican theologian, however, is first evident in the so-called Parisian Questions, which date to the period after the *Principium* and the sermon for the feast of St. Augustine were preached. The first three of these questions, which record disputations pertaining to key theological topics such as the nature of God and the angels,

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<sup>45</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Sermo die B. Augustini Parisius habitus*, n. 11, ed. Geyer in LW V, 97-8: "Venit enim primo per modum nivis refrigerantis, et sic reliquitur eius effectus in anima, scilicet, ab aestu carnalium desideriorum refrigeratio. Secundo venit per modum roris impinguantis, et sic relinquitur eius effectus in anima, scilicet aeternorum desideriorum impingatio Tertio venit per modum vini inebriantis, et sic relinquitur eius effectus in anima, scilicet omnimoda rerum mutabilium oblivio. Quarto venit per modum olei subiectum penetrantis, et sic relinquitur eius effectus in anima, scilicet illuminatio dei et inflammatio. Quanto venit per modum ignis depurantis, et sic relinquitur eius effectus in anima, scilicet perfecta purgatio. Sexto venit per modum lucis se cum subiecto unientis, et sic relinquitur eius effectus in anima, scilicet 'in aendem imaginem' cum deo transformatio. Septimo venit per modum spiritus vehementer impellentis, et relinquitur eius effectus in anima, scilicet naturalis vitae defectio."

<sup>46</sup> Speer, "*Ethica sive theologia*," 692.

as well as whether the intellect or the will has priority during the earthly and celestial contemplation of God, were likely delivered during the Meister's first Parisian regency in 1302-1303, whereas the fourth and fifth questions, which treat concerns belonging to the natural sciences from an explicitly theological perspective, likely belong to Eckhart's second stay in Paris between 1311 and 1312. Markus Vinzent, moreover, has recently demonstrated, with the assistance of Loris Sturlese and Walter Senner, that four additional questions, which discuss the omnipotence of God and the difference between His essence and the characteristics of His divine Persons, as well as related epistemological and logical problems, such as whether diversity in God is real or conceptual, ought to be attributed to the Meister's hand.<sup>47</sup> Building upon the fifth of Eckhart's questions, which provides the definition of substantial form operative in the newer questions, as well as to certain sermons the Meister preached in Latin during his second stay in Paris, these four questions likely date to 1311-1312. Significantly, all nine Parisian Questions radically re-articulate certain of the theological positions that Eckhart had initially defended in his introductory prologue to the *Liber Sententiarum* and in the homily for the feast of St. Augustine. But they do so by consciously taking up and transforming philosophical and theological positions that Eckhart's predecessors Thomas Aquinas and Dietrich of Freiberg had previously defended. This is particularly evident in the first and third of the Parisian questions. The Parisian Questions thus represent an attempt to intervene directly in the debates about the nature of Christian theology that had exercised the attention of members of the German Dominican School, as well as those taking place in Paris itself.

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<sup>47</sup> Markus Vinzent, "Questions on the Attributes (of God): Four Rediscovered *Parisian Questions* of Meister Eckhart," *Journal of Theological Studies* 63.1 (2012): 156-186.

Eckhart famously asks in the initial Parisian question whether being and intellect are the same in God.<sup>48</sup> The first Parisian question in this way represents Eckhart's particular version of the account of the divine attributes as this was pursued by the nascent Thomists, and the Meister inscribes his argument explicitly within this increasingly hegemonic tradition in his own Order, and at Paris, by presenting his own response as a kind of supplement to Thomas Aquinas's treatment of the divine intellect in *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, 45 and *Summa theologiae* I.14.4.<sup>49</sup> Yet, as Kurt Flasch has rightly insisted, Eckhart's argument that the divine being and intellect are the same both in reality and thought (i.e, ontologically and conceptually) departs from Thomas, without necessarily critiquing him explicitly, since Eckhart relies on and even radicalizes positions defended by Dietrich of Freiberg.<sup>50</sup> Especially important for the first Parisian question is Dietrich's metaphysical argument that conceptional existence, which includes the divine understanding and the separate intelligences, precedes real or natural existence, and is therefore creative, rather than created.<sup>51</sup> Eckhart in his first Parisian question consequently argues not just for the identity of being and understanding in God, but insists that God also exists because He understands, since "God is an intellect and understanding and His intelligence is the foundation of His very being."<sup>52</sup> This opinion, Eckhart insists, is substantiated by John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word," and John 14:6, "I am the Truth," since words and the truth both relate

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<sup>48</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisienses* I, ed. by Bernhard Geyer in LW V (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936), 37-48.

<sup>49</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisienses* I, n. 1, ed. Geyer in LW V, 37: "Primo induco probationes quas vidi: quinque ponuntur Contra gentiles et sexta in Prima parte et omnes fundantur in hoc quod deus est primum et simplex."

<sup>50</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisienses* I, n. 1, ed. Geyer in LW V, 37: "Utrum in deo sit idem esse et intelligere? Dicendum quod sunt idem re, et forsitan re et ratione." See Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 86-89 and 112-13.

<sup>51</sup> See previous chapter.

<sup>52</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisienses* I, n. 4, ed. Geyer in LW V, 40: "Tertio ostendo quod non ita videtur mihi modo, ut quia sit, ideo intelligat, sed quia intelligit, ideo est, ita quod deus est intellectus et intelligere et est ipsum intelligere fundamentum ipsius esse."

to the intellect.<sup>53</sup> It is also confirmed by the *Liber de causis*, which had taught that “being is the first of the created things.”<sup>54</sup> Meister Eckhart thus maintains that being is related to God, not just insofar as He is the efficient cause of its existence, but also insofar as His divine Wisdom is the exemplary cause which contains the uncreated essence of created things, just as is indicated by a proper interpretation of Eccli. 24:14: “I was created from the beginning and before the world.”<sup>55</sup> Eckhart’s argument that being and understanding are the same in God therefore has radical consequences, since it reverses the metaphysical logic of his contemporaries, which led many theologians, particularly the German Thomists, to argue that the divine intellect depends upon God’s existence.

The position which Eckhart defended in his first Parisian question is significant also because it reformulates and intensifies the metaphysical arguments introduced by the Meister in his *Principium*. In fact, Eckhart’s claim, dependent on Dietrich, that God exists because He understands, radicalizes the account of the difference between created and divine being Eckhart had introduced in this earlier sermon by denying that being can be attributed to God at all insofar as He, as intellect, is the uncreated Creator of all that exists. Eckhart thus argues that “understanding itself and those things which pertain to the intellect possess a different condition

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<sup>53</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisienses* I, n. 4, ed. Geyer in LW V, 40: “Quia dicitur Ioh. 1: ‘in principio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud deum, et deus erat verbum’. Non autem dixit evangelista: ‘in principio era tens et deus erat ens’. Verbum autem se toto est ad intellectum est ibi dicens vel dictum et non esse vel ens comixtum. Item dicit salvator Ioh. 14: ‘ego sum veritas’. Veritas autem ad intellectum pertinent importans vel includens relationem.”

<sup>54</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisienses* I, n. 4, ed. Geyer in LW V, 41: “Et sequitur post verbum assumptum Ioh. 1 ‘omnia per ipsum facta sunt’, ut sic legatur: ‘omnia per ipsum facta sunt’, ut ipsis factis ipsum esse post conveniat. Unde dicit auctor De causis: ‘prima rerum creaturam est esse’.”

<sup>55</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisienses* I, n. 4, ed. Geyer in LW V, 41: “Unde statim cum venimus ad esse, venimus ad creaturam. Esse ergo habet primo rationem creabilis, et ideo dicunt aliqui quod in creatura esse solum respicit deum sub ratione causae efficientis, essential autem respicit ipsum sub ratione causae exemplaris. Sapientia autem, quae pertinent ad intellectum, non habet rationem creabilis. Et si dicatur quod immo, quia Eccli. 24: ‘ab initio ante saecula create sum’, potest exponi ‘creata’, id est genita... Et ideo deus, qui est creator et non creabilis, est intellectus et intelligere et non ens vel esse.”



than existence itself.”<sup>56</sup> This is because, he explains, Aristotle had stated in his *Metaphysics* both that “in mathematics there is neither end nor good, and in consequence there is no being, since being and goodness are the same thing,” and that “good and evil are in things, but truth and falsity are in the soul, whence it is said that truth, which is in the soul, is not a being, just as what exists accidentally has no being, because it lacks a cause.”<sup>57</sup> Reliant again on a metaphysical position that Dietrich and his followers like Eckhart of Gründig had maintained—namely, that accidents lacked substance—Eckhart also radicalizes his claim in the sermon for the feast of St. Augustine that evil can only improperly be said to exist in contrast to the divine virtue that bestows existence, by identifying God as the truth that is prior to good and evil. Existence and being are therefore only present in God insofar as God is their cause, and Eckhart declares that within God there is solely the “purity of existence.”<sup>58</sup> God Himself, consequently, is “something higher than being,”<sup>59</sup> and Eckhart concludes the first Parisian question by declaring “I deny existence itself and related things of God so that He may be the cause of all existence and may precontain all things.”<sup>60</sup> The distinction between created and divine being that Eckhart had introduced in his sermon on the *Liber Sententiarum* in the first Parisian Question consequently grounds a profound apophaticism, justified by Eckhart’s insistence that truth, as uncreated, is higher than what is good or evil.

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<sup>56</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisienses* I, n. 7, ed. Geyer in LW V, 43: “Secundo accipio quod ipsum intelligere et ea quae ad intellectum pertinent, sunt alterius condicionis quam ipsum esse.”

<sup>57</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisienses* I, n. 7, ed. Geyer in LW V, 43: “Dicitur enim III Metaphysicae quod in mathematicis non est finis nec bonum, et ideo per consequens nec ens, quia ens et bonum idem. Dicitur enim VI Metaphysicae: bonum et malum sunt in rebus, et verum et falsum in anima. Unde ibi dicitur quod verum, quod est in anima, non est tens sicut nec ens per accidens, quod non est tens, quia non habet causam, ut ubi dicitur.”

<sup>58</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisienses* I, n. 9, ed. Geyer in LW V, 45: “Et ideo cum esse conveniat creaturis, non est in deo nisi sicut in causa, et ideo in deo non est esse, sed puritas essendi.”

<sup>59</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisienses* I, n. 12, ed. Geyer in LW V, 47: “Sic etiam dico quod deo non convenit esse nec es tens, sed est aliquid altius ente.”

<sup>60</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisienses* I, n. 12, ed. Geyer in LW V, 48: “sic etiam ego <nego> ipsi deo ipsum esse et talia, ut sic causa omnis esse et omnia praebeat.”

While he was defending the priority of understanding over being in God, Eckhart also debated with the Franciscan Gonsalvo of Spain whether beatification takes place primarily through the will or the intellect.<sup>61</sup> Eckhart's position, which is preserved in a disputed question of Gonsalvo's about the praise of God in heaven and the love of God on earth, was characteristically Dominican. Eckhart insisted that both the activity and the habit of the intellect were superior to those of the will,<sup>62</sup> and thus determined that "understanding is a kind of conformity to God or deification, since God is understanding itself and not existence."<sup>63</sup> Drawing the natural consequences of his assertion in the first Parisian question that God is uncreated truth and hence higher than the good, which he had identified with created being, Eckhart apparently maintained, according to Gonsalvo, that the acquired intellectual habits of wisdom, understanding and prudence, are more perfect than the acquired moral virtues.<sup>64</sup> The Meister also insisted that understanding, which is the act of the intellect, proceeds through purification (that is, by way of abstraction) since it grasps the entity of a thing which has been stripped of its being, and is thus superior to the will which is turned toward reality insofar as it takes the good as its object.<sup>65</sup> Finally, the intellect is freer than the will, since it not only is more separated from matter through the abstractive function which enables it to contemplate intelligible reality, as

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<sup>61</sup> Gonsalvo of Spain, *Quaestiones Parisienses* III, ed. by Bernhard Geyer in LW V (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936), 55-71: "Sic etiam dico quod deo non convenit esse nec est ens, sed est aliquid altius ente."

<sup>62</sup> Gonsalvo of Spain, *Quaestiones Parisienses* III, n. 6, ed. Geyer in LW V, 59: "Sed contra istam rationem aliqui sic arguunt ostendentes quod intellectus, actus et habitus ipsius sint quid nobilior voluntate, actu et habitu eius."

<sup>63</sup> Gonsalvo of Spain, *Quaestiones Parisienses* III, n. 9, ed. Geyer in LW V, 60: "ipsum intelligere quaedam deiformitas vel deiformatio, quia ipse deus est ipsum intelligere et non est esse."

<sup>64</sup> Gonsalvo of Spain, *Quaestiones Parisienses* III, n. 7, ed. Geyer in LW V, 60: "illa potentia est nobilior, cuius habitus sunt nobiliores. Sed virtutes intellectuales, scilicet sapientia, intellectus et prudential, acquisitae, quae sunt in intellectu, sunt nobiliores virtutibus moralibus acquisitis appetitivis."

<sup>65</sup> Gonsalvo of Spain, *Quaestiones Parisienses* III, n. 8, ed. Geyer in LW V, 60: "illa potentia est nobilior, cuius actus est nobilior. Sed intelligere quod est actus intellectus, est nobilior actu voluntatis, quia intelligere depurando et pertingit usque ad nudam entitatem rei."

well as itself,<sup>66</sup> but also because the intellect is able to ascertain what is best (conceptional existence) by turning toward the truth, rather than know what is merely good (real or natural existence).<sup>67</sup> Subordinating the good to the true, and hence the will to the intellect, Eckhart in his debate with Gonsalvo thus defended an account of beatification that followed from his noetic and ontological arguments about the nature of God in his first Parisian question.

Jan Aertsen has recently demonstrated the over-riding importance of the Meister's decoupling of the true and the good throughout his work.<sup>68</sup> For Aertsen, this distinction is significant not only because it is characteristic of the Meister's novel doctrine of the convertibility of the transcendentals, but also because it represents a substantial transformation of prior scholastic metaphysics, including that of the German Dominican School, which tended to privilege a conception of God according to the priority of his essential goodness, which names how He is the diffusive and unifying cause of everything created. We have seen, for instance, that Albert the Great had insisted that Christian theology differed from philosophical theology primarily because it oriented the theologian toward the good through faith, hope and love, whereas Ulrich of Strasburg in his *De summo bono* had argued that the fact that God is good explains His providential activity as the First Cause which gives creation existence, life and understanding.<sup>69</sup> Standing in continuity with these German Dominicans, who had also stressed the intellectual or contemplative nature of the union with God, the Meister nevertheless departed

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<sup>66</sup> Gonsalvo of Spain, *Quaestiones Parisienses* III, n. 13, ed. Geyer in LW V, 61: "illa potentia est nobilior in qua principaliter est libertas. Sed est principaliter in intellectu, quia aliquid est liberum, qui immune a materia, ut patet in sensibus. Sed intellectus et intelligere maxime est immune a materia, quia tanto aliquid est minus reflexivum quanto materialibus. Reflexio autem non est in essendo, sed in intelligendo, ut 'idem eidem idem' secundum intelligere ad se reflectitur."

<sup>67</sup> Gonsalvo of Spain, *Quaestiones Parisienses* III, n. 18, ed. Geyer in LW V, 63: "ratio optimi est in intellectu, quia ratio veri in intellectu est. Et ratio veri est ratio optimi. Est enim argentum bonum et optimum, quia verum."

<sup>68</sup> Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 353-58.

<sup>69</sup> As demonstrated in the first chapter.

in the Parisian questions from their affective understanding of theology, which was highly critical of Peripatetic attempts to disentangle the virtuous quest for moral perfection from the search for metaphysical truth. Although the Meister himself was not guilty of asserting the possibility of such a cleavage, by insisting that the intellect had priority over the will Eckhart did conclude that theology as ethics must entail an ontological and contemplative grounding oriented toward the truth of being, which is superior to the willful or desirous striving for the good. By subordinating the good to the true, in other words, Eckhart developed a radicalized conception of the discipline of theology, which not only stressed its essentially contemplative and metaphysical character, but also transformed the account of Christian theology and its difference from the divine science of the philosophers, which had been defended in the German Dominican School. It also highlights the centrality of the doctrine of the transcendentals to Eckhart's work, as Aertsen has stressed, which had real implications for the Meister's desire to rationally systematize his theology.

Ultimately, as the analysis above has demonstrated Eckhart's earliest theological work is characterized by a real desire to collapse the difference between ethics and theology. This entailed both an intensification of Albert and Dietrich's "quasi-ethical" conception of Christian theology, as well as an abandonment of the priority of the Christian conception of God as the Good which was defended by Albert and Ulrich. Like Dietrich, Eckhart by the time of the first set of Parisian Questions had come to insist that God exists primarily as intellect, but reinterpreted Dietrich's distinction between natural and conceptual existence in line with his earlier account in the *Principium* for his lectures on the Sentences about the difference between created and uncreated being. His early sermon on Augustine also shows a recognition of the similarities between revealed scripture and the fables of the Platonists—a recognition that will

become important for the Meister's later theology. The sermon also recognizes the role that grace must play in the search for theological and moral perfection in this life. Yet the overarching concern of the Meister's early conception of theology was to stress the similarities and continuities between philosophical and Christian divine science insofar as both are fundamentally rational and ethical, in a unified way. By doing so, Eckhart even appears to reject Albert's earlier critique of philosophical divine science as an inexcusable decoupling of metaphysics and morality that, for this reason, compares unfavorably with a Christian theology that brings the divine scientist into the realm of wonder by orienting them through love and piety toward the Good. Instead, Eckhart sees Christian divine science as a theological and ethical project as an intellectual attempt to attain the purity of abstract and universal Truth.

*From Axiom to Exegesis: Meister Eckhart's Systematic and Hermeneutic Theologies*

In two important articles Niklaus Largier has insisted that Meister Eckhart's theology was always hermeneutical and became more so late in his theological career. For instance, Largier insists that Eckhart's recourse to allegory and parable is related to the liturgical setting which ultimately grounds his teaching and preaching, since he is always concerned to strip scriptural text of its historicity in order to render it figurative for a Christian audience called to identify its relevance to their present condition.<sup>70</sup> Arguing against scholarship that seeks to present Meister Eckhart's theological anthropology as a medieval precursor to the autonomous, rational subject discovered by post-Cartesian transcendental idealism, therefore, Largier also maintains that Eckhart's account of what it means to consider oneself a thinking being always entailed a conception of the self which arose out of an active dialogue with the lessons scripture imparts to

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<sup>70</sup> Niklaus Largier, "Figurata Locutio: Hermeneutik und Philosophie bei Eckhart von Hocheim und Heinrich Seuse," in *Meister Eckhart: Lebenstationen – Redesituationen*, ed. by Klaus Jacobi (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), 321.

the Christian reader about the nature of human finitude and the limits of human freedom.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, as Jan Aertsen has demonstrated through a philosophical and textual analysis of Eckhart's work, early on in his career the Meister explicitly conceived of his theology in systematic terms and described his own approach to Christian theology as grounded in an axiomatic method related to the dialectical practice of syllogistic demonstration.<sup>72</sup> In what follows, I describe this initial, "systematic" stage of Meister Eckhart's theology before offering an account of his shift toward hermeneutics its relation to prior Dominican conceptions of parabolic and integumental exegesis. I will suggest that Eckhart's movement from axiom to exegesis further troubles the difference between philosophical and Christian theology that Albert and Dietrich had attempted to maintain before him, by showing how the relation between rational demonstration and scriptural interpretation is constantly destabilized in the Meister's middle and late career writing, as he seeks to emphasize continuities rather than discontinuities between philosophical and Christian theological practice.

The desire to systematize evident in Eckhart's early theology can be reconstructed through a reading of the prologues to the Meister's incomplete *Opus Tripartitum* ("Three-part Work"). Once understood to represent a mid-career revision of the position that Eckhart had defended in his Parisian Questions—because of its argument that God *is* being—archival and paleographic investigation of the manuscripts that preserve the different redactions of the *Opus Tripartitum*, undertaken by Loris Sturlese, has definitively proven that the Meister began composing the prologues in the middle of the first decade of the fourteenth century. The

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<sup>71</sup> Niklaus Largier, "Intellekttheorie, Hermeneutik und Allegorie: Subjekt und Subjektivität bei Meister Eckhart," in *Geschichte und Vorgeschichte der modernen Subjektivität*, ed. by Reto Luzius Fetz, Roland Hagenbüchle and Peter Schulz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 460-86.

<sup>72</sup> Jan Aertsen, "Der 'Systematiker' Eckhart," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. by Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 189-230.

prologues of the *Opus Tripartitum* consequently cannot be understood to represent a departure from the radical metaphysical claims about the priority of the intellect over being in God so central to Eckhart's Parisian Questions. Rather, as Bernard McGinn has stressed, the different emphasis on God as being characteristic of the prologues to the *Opus Tripartitum* demonstrates Eckhart's attempt to express his theology "dialectically," by taking into account how one names God differently depending upon whether one adopts a divine viewpoint, which describes God insofar as He is uncreated and radically separate from created existence, or a human viewpoint, which depicts God insofar as his divine nature can be abstractly conceptualized by the intellect or desired by the will.<sup>73</sup> Aertsen has therefore argued that one must consider how the prologues adopt and develop the account of the relationship between the transcendentals outlined in the Parisian Questions, which in the *Opus Tripartitum* is raised to methodological and theoretical prominence. To consider the systematic nature of the theological project which the Meister outlines in the prologues to the *Opus Tripartitum* is therefore to assume its doctrinal continuity with the Parisian Questions, irrespective of whether or not it represents a reformulation of the Meister's earlier arguments.

Importantly, the general prologue to the *Opus Tripartitum*, which introduces the proposed structure of the rest of the work, provides another witness to Eckhart's self-consciousness as a theologian.<sup>74</sup> In particular, the discussion of authorial intent which opens the prologue demonstrates that Eckhart was aware that the *Opus Tripartitum* represented a highly novel and unusual theological undertaking. Eckhart begins his general prologue with an account of the *Opus Tripartitum*'s genesis. "The intention of the author of this three-part work is to satisfy as

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<sup>73</sup> McGinn, *The Harvest of Medieval Mysticism*, 136-42.

<sup>74</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 1, ed. by Konrad Weiss in LW I (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1964), 35: "Prologus iste generalis, qui premittitur, primo docet intentionem, secundo operis distinctionem, 3o ordinem et modum in opera procedendi."

much as possible the desires of certain studious brethren,” Eckhart explains, “who long ago with persistent requests repeatedly pushed and forced him to commit to writing those things which they were accustomed to hear from him, sometimes in lectures or other scholastic activities, at other times in sermons, and even in daily conversations.”<sup>75</sup> The *Opus Tripartitum*, according to Eckhart, represents an attempt to systematize and preserve a record of his activity as a teacher for the use of his students. It therefore covered the three types of lessons which corresponded to the types of activity which characterized Eckhart’s teaching and preaching: general and noteworthy statements or arguments; brief, novel and useful determinations of different questions; and unusual or rare commentaries upon Scripture, which discuss material that the Meister’s students hadn’t encountered before.<sup>76</sup> Noting, in conclusion, that he does so because novel and unusual teaching delightfully excites the soul more than teaching that is useful, even if what is useful might in fact be more valuable and significant, Eckhart ultimately implies in his opening remarks that the *Opus Tripartitum* will offer a *systematic* written response to the petitions of his disciples and colleagues.<sup>77</sup> The general prologue therefore provides an account of Eckhart’s theological novelty, insofar as that novelty had manifested in his teaching and preaching activity. Its primary aim was to reproduce and consolidate Eckhart’s pedagogical originality as an authoritative *Lesemeister*, through a self-conscious rhetorical presentation of the Meister as both scholastic philosopher and homiletic exegete.

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<sup>75</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 2, ed. Weiss in LW I, 35: “Auctoris intentio in hoc opere tripartite est satisfacere pro posse studiosorum fratrum quorundam desiderii, qui iam dudum precibus importunes ipsum impellunt crebro et compellunt, ut ea que ab ipso audire consueuerint, tum in lectionibus et aliis actibus scolasticis, tum in predicationibus, tum in cottidianis collationibus.”

<sup>76</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 2, ed. Weiss in LW I, 35: “Precipue quantum ad 3a, videlicet quantum ad generales et sententiosas propositiones. Item quantum ad diversarum quaestionum nouas et faciles declarationes. Adhuc autem quantum ad auctoritatem plurimarum sacri canonis utriusque testamenti raras expositiones, in his potissime que se legisse alias non recolunt uel audisse.”

<sup>77</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 2, ed. Weiss in LW I, 35: “quia dulcius irritant animum noua et rara quam usitata, quamuis meliora fuerint et maiora.”



The *Opus Tripartitum*, Eckhart explains, was to be divided into three interrelated parts. It would have included a Book of Propositions, a Book of Questions, and a Book of Commentaries on the Old and New Testaments. The first of these, according to Eckhart, would contain one thousand propositions separated into fourteen treatises divided according to the terms which they discuss, as well as what is opposed to those terms.<sup>78</sup> For instance, the first treatise would discuss existence and being, as well as nothing, whereas the second treatise would be about unity and the one, alongside their opposite, multiplicity.<sup>79</sup> The Book of Propositions, consequently, would be explicitly dialectical, insofar as it axiomatically forwards a set of foundational binary oppositions for critical use in theological discussion.<sup>80</sup> The Book of Questions, on the other hand, would determine a series of select questions which followed the order of the questions considered by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa theologiae*.<sup>81</sup> The Book of Commentaries, finally, would represent a collection of model sermons and lectures which emphasized novel interpretation of biblical verses, rather than comprehensive depth.<sup>82</sup> Only excerpts from this final book survive,

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<sup>78</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 3, ed. Weiss in LW I, 35: “Opus autem primum, quia propositiones tenet mille et amplius, in tracratus xiiij distinguitur iuxta numerum terminorum de quibus formantur propositur. Et quia opposita iuxta se posita magis eluscescunt et oppositorum eadem est scientia, quilibet predictorum tractatum bipartibus est. Primo enim ponuntur propositiones de ipso termino, secundo ponuntur propositiones de eiusdem termini opposite.”

<sup>79</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 4, ed. Weiss in LW I, 35: “Primus tractatus agit de esse et ente et eius opposite quod est nichil. 2o de vnitare et vno et eius opposite quod est multum,” etc. The other treatises would cover truth and falsehood; good and evil; love and sin; the virtuous and the vicious; the general and the particular; the superior and the inferior; first and last; the ideal or rational and the unformed and deprived; de quo and quod est; God and non-existence; substance and accident.

<sup>80</sup> Eckhart adopts this axiomatic approach from Proclus, the *Liber de causis*, and Boethius’ *De hebdomadibus*. See J.-L. Solère, “Maître Eckhart, Proclus et Boèce: du statut des prologues dans l’axiomatique néoplatonicienne,” in *Les prologues médiévaux*, ed. by Jacqueline Hamesse (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 535-71. Such an axiomatic approach came to be highly characteristic of followers of Albert the Great, and Eckhart was an early innovator. See Mario Meliadoro, “Axiomatic Wisdom: Boethius’ *De hebdomadibus* and the *Liber de causis* in Late-Medieval Albertism,” *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale* 55 (2013): 71-131.

<sup>81</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 5, ed. Weiss in LW I, 36: “Opus autem secundum, questionum scilicet, distinguitur secundum numerum questionum, de quo agitur ordine quo ponuntur in Summa doctoris egregii venerabilis fratris Thome de Aquino, quamuis non de omnibus sed paucis, prout se offerebat occasio disputandi, legend et conferendi.”

<sup>82</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 6, ed. Weiss in LW I, 36: “Opus uero tertium, scilicet expositionum, in duo diuiditur. Quia enim nonnullas auctoritates utriusque testamenti in sermonibus specialiter diffusius auctor pertractauit et exposuit, placuit ipsi illas seorsum ponere et hoc opus sermonum nominari.

whereas the Book of Propositions and of Questions are not preserved (although they are frequently referenced in the Meister's commentaries). Scholars almost unanimously concede, therefore, that the project which the Meister announces in his general prologue to the *Opus Tripartitum* was likely abandoned at some point in his career as Eckhart came to shift his doctrinal emphasis away from the propositions and questions which would have introduced the *Opus Tripartitum* toward an elaboration of an explicitly hermeneutic theology. But the systematizing stage of Eckhart's theology evident in the prologues to the *Opus Tripartitum* is marked by the Meister's conviction that scriptural exegesis ought to be situated alongside, even subordinated to, a series of axiomatic propositions and disputed questions that would have been determined following the strict dialectical method of the scholastic syllogism—a direct inversion of the argument that Albert the Great had defended in his theological writings, discussed in the first chapter.

To explain how these three proposed books ought to be related by the reader, Eckhart in the general prologue to the *Opus Tripartitum* introduced some methodological clarifications.<sup>83</sup> These clarifications are not only important insofar as they provide insight into Eckhart's understanding of the structure of the *Opus Tripartitum*. They also indicate certain foundational aspects of his early approach to theology itself, insofar as they build upon the positions Eckhart had already introduced in his earliest work. The general prologue to the *Opus Tripartitum* thus shows how arguments that the Meister had provisionally formulated in his *Principium* and sermon for St. Augustine were re-articulated as part of the systematic orientation of his new project. Eckhart first explains to his reader that “general terms, like existence, unity, truth,

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Adhuc autem opus expositionum subdividitur numero et ordine librorum ueteris et noui testamenti, quorum auctoritates in ipso exponuntur.”

<sup>83</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 8, ed. Weiss in LW I, 36: “Ad evidentiam igitur dicendorum tria sunt premittenda.”

wisdom, goodness and similar terms, must not be imagined or considered according to the nature and manner of the accidents, which receive their being in and through a subject, and through that subject's transformation."<sup>84</sup> Advancing an argument about the nature of the accidents which is similar to that which he had defended, following Dietrich of Freiberg, in his Parisian Questions, Eckhart insists that the general terms which he will discuss in the Book of Propositions—that is, the transcendentals—differ from the accidental being which is only able to exist concretely when it inheres in a particular substance. Universals such as existence itself, Eckhart argues, are prior rather than posterior to such substantially existing entities.<sup>85</sup> The Meister consequently insists, citing Avicenna, that, insofar as existence itself is the actuality and perfection of all things, it alone is what is most truly desirable, whereas the accidental existence determined by changeable substance is nothing in comparison.<sup>86</sup> Eckhart re-articulates his distinction between the created and divine being in terms of a difference between substantial and insubstantial, or concrete and universal, existence. The general prologue to the *Opus Tripartitum* represents, therefore, a reframing of the distinction between the two types of being that demonstrates how the distinction itself is a fundamental axiom of the Meister's theology.

This distinction, Eckhart maintains, provides one of the metaphysical doctrines which offer the interpretative keys to the disputed questions and scriptural exegeses elaborated in the

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<sup>84</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 8, ed. Weiss in LW I, 36: "Primum est quod de terminis generalibus, puta esse, vnitatem, veritatem et sapientiam, bonitatem, et similibus nequaquam est ymaginandum vel iudicandum secundum naturam et modum accidentium que accipiunt esse in subiecto et per ipsius transmutationem et sunt posteriora ipso et inherendo esse accipiunt."

<sup>85</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 8, ed. Weiss in LW I, 37: "Ipsum enim esse non accipit quod sit in aliquo nec ab aliquo nec per aliquid, nec aduenit aut superuenit alicui, sed prevenit et prius est omnium."

<sup>86</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 8-9, ed. Weiss in LW I, 37: "Ab ipso igitur esse et per ipsum et in ipso sunt omnia, ipsum non in aliquo nec ab alio. Quo denique aliud est ab esse, nichil est. Ipsum enim esse comparator ad omnia sicut actus et perfectio et ipsa actualitas omnium, etiam formarum, propter quod Avicenna 8 Metaphysicae ca. 6 ait: id quod desiderat omnis res est esse et perfectio esse, in quantum est esse; et subdit: illud ergo quod uere desideratur est esse."

other parts of the *Opus Tripartitum*: namely “that existence is God.”<sup>87</sup> It is accordingly no accident that the methodological clarification Eckhart introduced in his prologue includes a brief determination of the question whether God exists, as well as an extensive interpretation of Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heaven and earth,” meant to show how the proposition should be related to theological interrogation and scriptural hermeneutics.<sup>88</sup> Eckhart determines, for instance, that God does exist and that this itself is demonstrated by the argument he introduced in the treatment of the proposition that God is being which preceded the question.<sup>89</sup> The Meister consequently argues that the fact of God’s existence is necessary for all other beings to exist, a claim Eckhart maintains is evident by nature, as well as to the senses and reason,<sup>90</sup> and that there can be no proposition truer than one where a predicate and what the predicate describes are the same—such as the statement that man is man—alluding, perhaps, not only to his earlier declaration that God is being, but also to Ex 3:14, “I am that I am.”<sup>91</sup> For Eckhart, the proposition that God is being also establishes how Gen 1:1 must be understood to teach four different things: that God is the sole creator of heaven and earth; that He created all things in himself, insofar as He Himself is the beginning; that creation is a continual process, even though God created all things in the past; that God’s act of creation is nevertheless always

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<sup>87</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 12, ed. Weiss in LW I, 38: “Esse est deus. Patet hec propositio,” etc.

<sup>88</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 11, ed. Weiss in LW I, 38: “Ut autem hoc exemplariter sit uidere et habeatur modus precedendi in totali opera tripartite, prohemialiter premittemus primam propositionem, primam questionem et prime auctoritatis expositionem. Prima propositio est: Esse est deus. Prima question de diuinitate: vtrum deus sit. Prima auctoritas sacri canonis est: In principio creauit deus celum et terram. Primo ergo uideamus propositionis declarationem. Secundo ex ipsa questionis solutionem. 3o ex eadem auctoritatis premise expositionem.”

<sup>89</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 13, ed. Weiss in LW I, 39: “Questio prima est: vtrum deus sit. Dicendum quo sic. Ex propositione iam declarata.”

<sup>90</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 13, ed. Weiss in LW I, 39: “Si esse non est, nullum ens est siue nichil est; sicut si albedo non est, nullum album est. Sed esse est deus, uta it propositio. Igitur si deus non est, nichil est. Consequentis falsitatem probat natura, sensus et ratio.”

<sup>91</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 13, ed. Weiss in LW I, 39: “nulla propositio est uerior illa, in qua idem de se ipso predicator, puta homo est homo. Sed esse est deus. Igitur uerum est esse deum.”

perfect and completed, from the very beginning.<sup>92</sup> Eckhart ultimately ends his general prologue to the *Opus Tripartitum* by concluding that “every or almost every question which is asked about God is easily solved through the first proposition introduced above, if they are rightly considered.”<sup>93</sup> This is because, Eckhart concludes, “many of the things written about God—even what is obscure and difficult—are clearly explained by natural reason.”<sup>94</sup> Christian theology, therefore, does not simply make use of philosophy. Theological investigation and scriptural hermeneutics *require* philosophy, insofar as God can only be intelligible to the theologian who understands, following what is rationally and sensibly evident, what it truly means for God to exist, and to be existence itself.

In the prologue Eckhart composed specifically for the Book of Propositions it is possible to see even more clearly how this understanding of the role of the philosophical axiom contributes to the Meister’s theology. In this prologue, which includes further methodological clarification about how the Meister’s propositions ought to guide theological speculation, Eckhart introduces once again how to metaphysically understand the difference between the universal and the particular. Importantly, it is in this prologue that Eckhart ties the difference between absolute existence and “this” or “that” existence, already introduced in his early *Principium*, to the conception of God outlined in the general prologue to the *Opus Tripartitum*. Eckhart consequently argues

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<sup>92</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 15, ed. Weiss in LW I, 39: “Dicamus ergo quod ex propositione declarata supra primo probatur quod deus et ipse solus creavit celum et terram, id est suprema et infima et per consequens omnia. 2o quod creavit in principio, id est in se ipso. 3o quod creavit quidem in preterito, et tamen semper est in principio creationis et creare incipit. 4o quod creatio et omne opus dei in ipso principio creationis simul est perfectum et terminatum.”

<sup>93</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 22, ed. Weiss in LW I, 41: “Postremo notandum quod ex premissa prima propositione, si bene deducantur, omnia aut fere omnia que de deo queruntur, facile soluuntur.”

<sup>94</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 22, ed. Weiss in LW I, 41: “Et que de ipso scribuntur plerumque etiam obscura et difficilia naturali ratione clare exponuntur.”

First, that God alone is properly Being, One, True, and Good. Second, that all things are from Him and are one, true, and good. Third, that all things have from immediately the fact that they are, that they are one, that they are true, and that they are good. Fourth, that whenever I say ‘this’ being, or ‘this’ one, or ‘that’ one, or ‘this’ or ‘that’ true thing, or ‘this’ or ‘that’ good thing, the ‘this’ or ‘that’ adds nothing at all or adds nothing further, which is of entity, unity, truth, or goodness, to existence, unity, truth, or the good.<sup>95</sup>

The Meister, here, is not only concerned to elaborate the proper order of the transcendentals—placing being first, and unity, truth and goodness after.<sup>96</sup> He also wants to show how that which exists concretely, rather than abstractly, as something unified, true, or good, is not only different from the One, the True, and the Good, but is *as if nothing* in comparison to it. God alone, therefore, is being, one, true and good and grants to all other things their existence, their unity, their truth, and their goodness. The prologue to the Book of Propositions thus builds upon Eckhart’s understanding of the convertibility of the transcendentals, as well as his distinction between divine and “this” or “that” being, to raise this distinction into a further methodological postulate for Christian theology.<sup>97</sup> Significantly, it also aims to show not only that there is a radical difference between the existence of God and the existence of all that God creates. Eckhart also suggests that there is a dialectical relationship between the two, insofar as the former both fulfills and negates the existence of the latter, which ought to be considered as nothing given the absolute purity of existence proper to the divine reality.

The general prologue to the *Opus Tripartitum*, finally, also seeks to assert the continuity between metaphysics as a disciplined mode of rational inquiry and Christian theology as a contemplative meditation upon God. In this respect, Eckhart agrees wholeheartedly with Thomas

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<sup>95</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in opus propositionum*, n. 4, ed. Weiss in LW I, 42: “Notandum ergo prohemialiter primo, quod solus deus proprie est ens, vnum, verum et bonum. 2o quod ab ipso omnia sunt unum, vera sunt et bona senut. 3o quod ab ipso omnia immediate habent quod sunt, quod vnum sunt, quod vera sunt, quod bona sunt. 4o quod cum dico hoc ens, aut unum hoc, aut vnum illud, verum hoc et illud, bonum hoc et illud, li hoc et illud nichil prorsus addunt seu addiciunt entitatis, vnitatis, veritatis aut bonitatis super ens, vnum, verum, bonum.”

<sup>96</sup> Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 356-8.

<sup>97</sup> See Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 339-41.

Aquinas, who had defined the existence of God as the proper subject of theology, rather than Albert the Great and Dietrich of Freiberg, who had contended that it is God and His relationship to the World, rather than being qua being, which is the subject of the divine science of the Christians. The Meister consequently argues that, insofar as existence is that which is most truly desired, the metaphysician investigates every thing, although it is moveable and changeable, insofar as it is being, even matter, which is the source of everything corruptible.<sup>98</sup> Such being is eternal, Eckhart continues, and “the intellect, whose object is being, and where being emerges first of all, according to Avicenna, abstracts from the here and now and thus from time.”<sup>99</sup> This is a truth to which Augustine alludes in *De Trinitate* VII.1, according to Eckhart, where he states that “Wisdom is wise and wise on account of itself, and certain souls are made wise by participation in wisdom, but should the soul return to acting foolishly, then wisdom nevertheless remains within itself, nor is it altered, when a soul has been entirely changed into folly.”<sup>100</sup> The soul’s becoming wise through eternal wisdom is therefore equated with the intellect’s abstractive acquisition of being insofar as it is universal, intelligible being. By doing so the Meister suggests that there is no meaningful difference between a conception of the noetic process, whereby the metaphysician comes to know being by stripping away all the concrete accidents that determinate it as a particular being realized in time and space, and Augustine’s Christian meditation upon the

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<sup>98</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 9, ed. Weiss in LW I, 37: “Hinc est quod omnis res quantumvis mobilis et transmutabilis de consideratione est metaphisici, in quantum ens, etiam ipsa materia est, radix rerum corruptibilium.”

<sup>99</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 9, ed. Weiss in LW I, 37: “Et iterum esse rerum omnium, in quantum esse, mensuratur eternitate, nequaquam tempore. Intellectus enim, cuius obiectum est ens et in quo secundum Avicennam ens cadit prius omnium, ab hic et nun abstrahit et per consequens ab tempore.”

<sup>100</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum*, n. 9, ed. Weiss in LW I, 37: “Augustinus 7 De trinitate ca. 1 predictis alludens dicit: sapiential sapiens est et se ipsa sapiens est. Et quaecumque anima participatione sapientie fit sapiens si rursus desipiat, manet tamen in se sapiential. Nec cum fuerit anima in stulticiam commutate, illa mutatur.”

soul's contemplative participation in, and the foolish soul's loss of, that Wisdom which is divine and eternal.

Despite his agreement with Thomas that God's existence is the proper subject of theology, therefore, Eckhart in the general prologue to the *Opus Tripartitum* seems to align his conception of intellection with that of Albert and Dietrich. Moreover, it is significant that at this stage of Eckhart's theological project, Augustine's account appears to be subordinated to the practice of the philosophers, such that Christian theology has been presented as if it were a philosophical theology, or metaphysics. In this way the general prologue can also be viewed as a possible revision of the Meister's remarks about Augustine in his sermon for the feast day of the saint, where Augustine's status as wise man and metaphysician was decisive for Eckhart's vocational conception of Christian theology. In sum, then, the strategy of Meister Eckhart's prologues represents an intensification of tendencies evident in his earlier sermons. For in the *Opus Tripartitum* it was to be the norms of philosophical argumentation, conceived as an attempt to establish syllogistically the propositions that are axiomatic for any investigation that proceeds rationally, that would dictate how Christian theological questions must be determined, as well as how scripture must be interpreted. What is known to and by reason thus takes methodological precedence over what has been disclosed to and for the particular religious community that is Christian. This is a marked departure from prior German Dominican theologies which insisted that Christian divine science represents a pious speech suffused by wonder that refuses to be captured by the being disclosed by the world or the disputatious philosophy tasked with explicating it. But Eckhart's later theological writing, as evident from the only texts that were ever produced out of the project described in the prologues to the *Opus Tripartitum*, show that



Eckhart shifted his theoretical concerns—as well as his own theological practice—away from a “rationalist” conception of Christian theology more explicitly toward exegesis.

In an important study of Eckhart’s *Opus Tripartitum* preserved in manuscripts at the Bibliotheca Amploniana at the University of Erfurt Loris Sturlese was able to identify different recensions of this work that provide evidence for a reconstruction of Eckhart’s compositional process.<sup>101</sup> Through this study, Sturlese demonstrated that the composition of the *Opus Tripartitum* had been incorrectly assigned by prior scholarship to a late stage of the Meister’s career and established that Eckhart had been working on his literal exposition of Genesis and Exodus in Erfurt between 1302 and 1306, after his first regency in Paris. More significantly, however, Sturlese also hypothesized that Eckhart’s parabolic exposition of Genesis likely dated to the later stages of his career, signaling that the Meister had abandoned the Book of Propositions and the Book of Questions that he had announced in his general prologue to the *Opus Tripartitum* in order to compose a new project to be titled the *Liber parabolarum rerum naturalium* (“Book of the Parables of Natural Things”). Attempting to account for this apparent shift toward parable and exegesis, Yossef Schwartz has emphasized the importance of Moses Maimonides’ *Guide of the Perplexed* to the *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, arguing that the metaphysics of unity and the hermeneutic theological project that Meister Eckhart sought to promote for the rest of his career could have derived from his unique commitment to the particular arguments of this Jewish Peripatetic authority.<sup>102</sup> Both Schwartz and Sturlese,

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<sup>101</sup> Loris Sturlese, “Meister Eckhart in der Bibliotheca Amploniana: Neues zur Datierung des ‘Opus Tripartitum,’” in *Homo divinus*, 95-106. See also Loris Sturlese, “Eckhart as Preacher, Administrator, and Master of the Sentences. From Erfurt to Paris and Back: 1294-1313. The Origins of the *Opus Tripartitum*,” in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, ed. by Jeremiah M. Hackett (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 125-35.

<sup>102</sup> Yossef Schwartz, “Zwischen Einheitsmetaphysik und Einheitshermeneutik: Eckharts Maimonides-Lektüre und das Datierungsproblem des ‘Opus Tripartitum,’” in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, 259-79. For the Meister’s philosophical use of Maimonides, see Yossef Schwartz, “Meister Eckhart and Moses Maimonides: From Judaeo-Arabic Rationalism to Christian Mysticism,” in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, 299-414 and Görge K. Hasselhoff,

ultimately, have noted an important change in Eckhart's *practice* as Christian theologian—namely, the shift toward parabolic exegesis and the movement away from the propositional method of the dialectical syllogism. This apparent decision to focus on the practice of exegesis accords well with Niklaus Largier's insistence that Eckhart's theology cannot be properly understood when divorced from the allegorical and liturgical context that makes his Christian theology eschatologically meaningful.<sup>103</sup>

Eckhart's shift toward a more explicitly hermeneutical theology is also related to the Meister's decision as theologian to privilege what Christopher Ocker has designated the "expanded" literal sense of Scripture.<sup>104</sup> For Ocker, this expansion was the product of an exegetical tendency that began in the thirteenth century among scholastic interpreters of the Bible, who sought to move beyond a conception of the literal sense of Scripture as the object of a narrow focus on the natural or historical meaning of the text conceived as a set of verbal signs that stand in explicit relation to the material reality they represent. Instead, these exegetes sought to include metaphor and all figurative expression as part of their consideration of the letter, whereas before exegetes would have approached these features of the scriptural text as belonging to the allegorical, tropological and anagogical sense of Scripture characterized by the *spirit* of the text hidden behind the history and nature the letter mediates. As Alastair J. Minnis has convincingly demonstrated, moreover, this shift in the understanding of the scriptural letter was related to a greater attention to the nature of biblical authorship in the thirteenth century.

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*Dicit Rabbi Moyses: Studien zum Bild von Moses Maimonides im lateinischen Westen vom 13. Bis zum 15. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2004), 205-221.

<sup>103</sup> Largier, "Figurata Locutio," 326-7 also notes the importance of Maimonides to Eckhart's hermeneutic project, which leads him to identify (rather unconvincing) similarities between Eckhart's practice as a mystical exegete and the allegorical approach of the "ecstatic" or "prophetic" kabbalist Abraham Abulafia, following the interpretation of the latter in Moshe Idel, *Language, Torah, Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. Menachem Kallus (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

<sup>104</sup> Christopher Ocker, *Biblical Poetics before Humanism and Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 38.

Especially in the writing of the Dominican Order, Minnis contends, “a more rigorous logical method was being applied to the study of the Bible” that was tied to the conviction that the words of scripture signified a meaning intended by its human authors.<sup>105</sup> This theory of biblical authorship, which was grounded in the application of the medieval *accessus ad auctores* literature to the Bible, as well as the employment of Aristotelian logical categories, viewed the human author as one of the efficient causes of biblical composition.<sup>106</sup> Particularly important, according to Minnis, was Gueric of St Quentin’s description of the “twofold efficient cause” (*duplex causa efficiens*) of scripture, which he outlined in the introduction to his commentary on Isaiah.<sup>107</sup> Gueric, who taught theology at the Dominican *studium generale* in Paris between 1233 and 1242, distinguished for the first time between the human and divine level of authorship, asserting that “the efficient cause is twofold, namely moving and operating. The operating cause is Isaiah... but there is also the cause which is efficient and not operating... the Holy Spirit, which moved Isaiah that he should write.”<sup>108</sup> This distinction between the human and divine author of Scripture, Minnis concludes, “became popular as a useful formula for summary description of the inspired authorship of Biblical texts.”<sup>109</sup> Importantly, this new understanding of biblical authorship and the related conception of an “expanded” literal sense of the text would be maintained by Thomas Aquinas in his own approach to Scripture. And it is the Thomist response to these developments that principally matter for Meister Eckhart’s own hermeneutic theology.

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<sup>105</sup> Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 73. See also Ocker, *Biblical Poetics before Humanism and Reformation*, 31-48.

<sup>106</sup> Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 40-72.

<sup>107</sup> Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 79. Ocker, *Biblical Poetics before Humanism and Reformation*, 123-42.

<sup>108</sup> Smalley, “A Commentary on Isaias.” Cited and trans. by Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 79.

<sup>109</sup> Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 79.

Mark F. Johnson has cogently demonstrated that Thomas in his reflection on the nature of scripture is informed by a particular reading and deployment of Augustine’s claim that the biblical text is multivocal. “Thomas’s teaching of the possibility of the plurality of the literal sense of Scripture,” Johnson writes, “is to his mind a faithful application of the teaching of Augustine.”<sup>110</sup> In a discussion of the relationship between the four levels of Scripture in his *Summa theologiae* Ia.1.10, Thomas for this reason claims that “since, in truth, the literal sense is what the author intends, and since, moreover, the author of the sacred writings is God, who comprehends everything in his own intellect at once, it is not unsuitable, as Augustine says in *Confessiones* XII, if, even following the literal sense, there should be many meanings within one letter.”<sup>111</sup> Thomas maintains, furthermore, that “the multiplicity of these senses [of Scripture] does not cause equivocation or any other species of multiplicity... because those things signified through expressions (*voces*) can be signs of other things.”<sup>112</sup> By elevating “biblical speech as the bearer of theological argument,” Ocker notes, Thomas designated scriptural discourse as fundamentally parabolic and metaphorical, since he grounded Scripture’s figurative meaning primarily in the letter insofar as this represented the voice of the Holy Spirit that works through

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<sup>110</sup> Mark F. Johnson, “Another Look at the Plurality of the Literal Sense,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 2 (1992): 141. For further analysis of Thomas’ conception and practice of scriptural interpretation, see Thomas Prügl, “Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. by Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2005), 386-415. However, Prügl is more inclined to see Thomas’s approach to the literal sense of scripture as an *unfolding* of Augustine’s own understanding rather than as the product of a *selective appropriation* of Augustine that puts the Church Father’s exegetical theory to work in a new hermeneutic and scholastic context, as Jordan does.

<sup>111</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia, q. 10, art. 1, resp: “quia vero sensus litteralis est, quem auctor intendit, auctor autem sacrae Scripturae Deus est, qui omnia simul suo intellectu comprehendit, non est inconveniens, ut dicit Augustinus XII confessionum, si etiam secundum litteralem sensum in una littera Scripturae plures sint sensus.”

<sup>112</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia, q. 10, art. 1, ad. 1: “multiplicitas horum sensuum non facit aequivocationem, aut aliam speciem multiplicatis... quia ipsae res significatae per voces, aliarum rerum possunt esse signa.”

the human author such that the latter's authorial intent is conditioned by and revelatory of whatever meaning God intended to communicate through the writing.<sup>113</sup>

This led Thomas to conclude that “the parabolic sense [of scripture] is contained beneath the literal, for through vocal expressions some things are signified properly (*proprie*), others figuratively (*figurative*).”<sup>114</sup> Although this distinction between what is proper and what is figurative is developed by Augustine, it is most likely that Thomas appropriated this designation of the scriptural text as parabolic from Maimonides.<sup>115</sup> In fact, the very example which Thomas employs to explain the parabolic and metaphoric nature of the letter in the *Summa theologiae*—God's arm as signifying His operative power—can be found in the discussion in *Dux neutrorum* I:46 of the figurative meaning of the bodily organs ascribed to God in the Bible, which are intended to signify a perfection in God that is comparable to, but radically different from, those perfections which humans possess as embodied and ensouled creatures.<sup>116</sup> However, in an early question in the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas relates the metaphorical character of biblical figures explicitly to the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. As such, Thomas follows Dionysius by claiming that “it is suitable that the sacred writings hand over divine and spiritual things under the likeness of bodies. For, indeed, God provides for everything as far as it agrees with their nature. And it is, moreover, natural to humankind that it comes to intelligibles through

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<sup>113</sup> Ocker, *Biblical Poetics before Humanism and Reformation*, 41.

<sup>114</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia, q. 10, art. 1, ad. 3: “sensus parabolicus sub litterali continetur, nam per voces significatur aliquid propri.e, et aliquid figurative.”

<sup>115</sup> See Hasselhoff, *Dicit Rabbi Moses*, 80-8 for a discussion of Aquinas's reception of Maimonides as exegete. For Maimonides's philosophical influence on Aquinas, see *Dicit Rabbi Moses*, 163-88. For Augustine's conception of the distinction between figurative and “proper” language and for his argument that the interpreter must avoid taking figurative language literally and literal language figuratively, see Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* III.10.14. Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapter in the Ancient Legacy and Its Humanist Reception* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 59-60 notes that this has much more to do with Augustine's recognition that there is a stylistic difference between figurative and proper expressions in the Bible rather than because of some commitment to the Bible as possessing several distinct layers of meaning like his medieval followers.

<sup>116</sup> Moses Maimonides, *Dux neutrorum vel dubiorum, Pars I*, cap. 45, ed. by Diana di Segni (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 122-9.

sensible things, because our understanding of everything has its beginning from experience.”<sup>117</sup>

In this way, Thomas repurposes the interpretative strategy of Albert the Great, which reconciled the epistemology of Dionysius with that of Aristotle, by emphasizing Christian theology’s experiential character.

The Meister expands upon these arguments of Thomas to formulate his own vision of the hermeneutic concerns of the biblical exegete in the prologue to the *Liber parabolarum genesis*. For instance, Eckhart notes at a key moment of his description of the task of scriptural interpretation that “the literal sense is that which the author of a writing intends, and since God is the author of the sacred writings, then every sense which is true is the literal sense.”<sup>118</sup> This is because, Eckhart adds, “it is known that every truth is from Truth itself; it is included in it and is derived and intended by it.”<sup>119</sup> Eckhart subsequently cites Augustine’s *Confessiones* XII, in order to authorize all possible interpretations forwarded in faith, because “God, Truth itself, the author of scripture, comprehends, inspires and intends every truth at once in his own intellect.”<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, Eckhart contends that “because of this, as Augustine says, God made that writing so fruitful, that he had sprinkled and sealed within it everything that any intellect is able to elicit.”<sup>121</sup> “For this reason also,” the Meister continues “the philosophers of the Academy posited that all the intellectual sciences, the divine and natural ones unmixed, and also the virtues, as

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<sup>117</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia, q. 9, art. 1, resp: “conueniens est sacra scripturae divina et spiritualia sub similitudine corporalium trader. Deus enim omnibus providet secundum quod competit eorum naturae. Est autem natural homini ut per sensibilia ad intelligibilia veniat, quia omnis nostra cognition a sensu initium habet.”

<sup>118</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, prologus, n. 2, ed. by Weiss, LW 1, 449: “Cum ergo sit sensus etiam litteralis, quem auctor scripturae intendit, deus autem sit auctor sacrae scripturae... omnis sensus qui verus est sensus litteralis est.”

<sup>119</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, prologus, n. 2, ed. by Weiss, LW 1, 449: “Constat enim quod omne verum ab ipsa veritate est, in ipsa includitur, ab ipsa derivatur et intenditur.”

<sup>120</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, prologus, n. 2, ed. by Weiss, LW 1, 450: “Deus enim, veritas ipsa, auctor scripturae, omne quod verum est simul suo intellectu comprehendit, inspirat et intendit.”

<sup>121</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, prologus, n. 2, ed. by Weiss, LW 1, 450: “Propter quod, ut ait Augustinus, ipsam scripturam sic fecundavit, ut in ipsa sparserit et impressum sigillaverit omne quod intellectus omnium elicere potest.”

they relate to the moral sciences, were created with the soul.”<sup>122</sup> In this way the Meister re-articulates the similarity between Christian and philosophical divine science which he had introduced in his early sermon for the feast day of St. Augustine—including, importantly, that homily’s emphasis on the necessary relation between metaphysics and ethics, as well as its parallel between Christian and philosophical approaches to the Truth. Yet in the prologues to the commentaries on Genesis this is introduced primarily as a means to describe the plurivocal nature of the letter, following the hermeneutic strategy of Thomas. Eckhart’s prior claim that there is continuity between the knowledge which the light of reason and the infusion of grace are both able to disclose has been maintained. But Eckhart’s emphasis has shifted away from demonstrative argumentation based on syllogistic reasoning more explicitly toward the need to interpret the text of scripture in order to apprehend the many theological truths—metaphysical as well as ethical—it makes available to the interpreter.

Eckhart also maintains like Thomas before him “that what we prove and claim about divine, ethical and natural things agrees with what the truth of holy scripture gestures toward parabolically as if secretly.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, the Bible as a text comparable to poetry discloses, when interpreted parabolically, the theological, natural and moral truths knowable through reason. Eckhart thus maintains, citing Maimonides, that “the entirety of the writing of the Old Testament is either natural science or spiritual wisdom.”<sup>124</sup> It is because of this claim that Schwartz maintains that Eckhart’s late hermeneutic project is not only informed by Maimonides, but is essentially Maimonidean, since it is the arguments of the *Guide* which now authorize the

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<sup>122</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, prologus, n. 2, ed. by Weiss, LW 1, 450-1: “Propter quod etiam academici ponebant omnes scientias intellectivas, puta divinas et naturales, et iterum virtutes, quantum ad scientias morales, esse animae concreatas.”

<sup>123</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, prologus, n. 4 ed. by Weiss, LW 1, 454: “sed potius hoc ostendere intendimus, quod his, quae probamus et dicimus de divinis, moralibus et naturalibus.

<sup>124</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, prologus, n. 1, ed. by Weiss, LW 1, 447: “Nam, sicut dicit Rabbi Moyses, tota scriptura veteris testamenti vel est ‘scientia naturalis’ vel ‘sapientia spiritualis.’”

relation in theology between metaphysics and ethics that for Eckhart was previously authorized by the figure of Augustine.<sup>125</sup> Following the Jewish Peripatetic, Eckhart consequently declares that the Bible resembles the golden apples covered in silver filigree mentioned in Proverbs 25:11, a description that Maimonides himself had employed as a justification for his own particular method of parabolic interpretation and argumentation.<sup>126</sup> Eckhart consequently argues, following Maimonides, that “there are two kinds of parables; the first kind or mode of parable is when every, or almost every, word of the parable separately stands for something [while] the second mode is when the whole parable is the likeness and expression of the entire matter of which it is a parable.”<sup>127</sup> Eckhart ultimately develops an allegorical approach to the biblical text which atomizes it into decontextualized pieces that reveal particular metaphysical and ethical truths. Maimonides’ parabolic hermeneutic thus becomes the methodological warrant for the Meister’s strategy of chaining his metaphysical and ethical interpretation of select biblical verses together in his scriptural commentaries and vernacular homilies. Hence Largier can speak of Eckhart’s *figurata locutio*: his specifically Christian desire as a preacher to make the figures and parables of scripture existentially and anagogically meaningful for an audience called to identify with and respond to the Bible’s lessons about the possibility of eternal salvation and how one realizes it, always, in the present moment.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Yosef Schwartz, “Meister Eckharts Schriftauslegung als maimonidisches Projekt,” in *Moses Maimonides (1138-1204) - His Religious, Scientific, and Philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in Different Cultural Contexts*, ed. by Görge K. Hasselhoff and Otfried Fraisse (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004), 173-208.

<sup>126</sup> Moses Maimonides, *Dux neutrorum*, pars 1, prologus, ed. by di Segni, 13: “Dixit sapiens Salomon: ‘Mala aurea cum sculpturis vel picturis argenteis verbum prolatum in ratione sua,’” etc.

<sup>127</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, prologus, n. 5, ed. by Weiss, LW 1, 454-5: “Secundum est, quod parabolarum duplex est genus, sicut docet Rabbi Moyses in prooemio Ducis neutrorum. Unum genus sive modus parabolarum est, quando ‘quodlibet verbum’ aut quasi parabola ‘demonstrat aliquid super aliquo separatim. Secundus modus est,’ quando parabola se tota est ‘similitudo’ et expression ‘rei’ totius cuius est parabola.”

<sup>128</sup> Largier, “*Figurata Locutio*,” 322.



However, the Meister also supplements his Thomist and Maimonidean hermeneutics in one significant respect: his explicit comparison between theology and poetry. In this way Eckhart re-introduces the Chartrian conception of theological fabulation which had also featured in the sermon for the feast of St. Augustine. Eckhart consequently maintains in the prologue to the *Liber parabolarum genesis*, that

Plato himself and all the ancients, whether theologians or poets, generally taught divine, natural and moral things within parables. For the poets said nothing in vain or fabulously, but under the metaphors of fables they purposefully taught most sweetly and properly about the nature of things divine, natural and moral, as appears manifestly to those inspecting and considering the stories of the poets. Whence the poet Horace himself says in his *Ars poetica* that “poets want either to be useful or to delight.” And later: “he has won every point, who combines the useful and the delightful.”<sup>129</sup>

For Meister Eckhart, the poetic nature of theology reveals the theological nature of poetry. To a certain extent this conception of the poetic nature of theology is decidedly Eriugenan, although Eckhart had limited direct knowledge of the Carolingian theologian’s work.<sup>130</sup> The recourse to Horace also places Eckhart squarely in a tradition of rhetorical and poetic reflection upon the similarity between pagan myth and Christian scripture which featured prominently in the

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<sup>129</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, prologus, n. 2, ed. by Weiss, LW 1, 451: “Plato ipse et omnes antiqui communiter sive theologizantes sive poematizantes docebant in parabolis divina, naturalia. Nihil enim frustra poetae fabulose locuti sunt, sed sub metaphora fabularum dulciter valde et proprie naturas rerum divinarum, naturalium et moralium ex intentione docuerunt, sicut manifeste apparet inspicienti et consideranti fabulas poetarum. Unde et ipse poeta Horatius in Poetria ait: aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae. Et infra: omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utlie dulci,” citing *Ars poetica* v. 333 and v. 343.

<sup>130</sup> For this aspect of Eriugena’s theology, see Peter Dronke, “‘Theologi veluti quaedam poetria’: Quelques observations sur la fonction des images poétiques chez Jean Scot,” in *Jean Scot Érigène et l’histoire de la philosophie*, ed. by René Rocques (Paris: CNRS, 1979), 243-52. For Meister Eckhart’s access to Eriugena and the impact of anonymized German translations of Eriugena’s work in the fourteenth century, see Jeffrey F. Hamburger, “*Johannes Scotus Eriugena deutsch redivivus*: Translations of the ‘Vox spiritualis aquilae’ in Relation to Art and Mysticism at the Time of Meister Eckhart,” in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, 473-537. For a comparison between Eriugena and Eckhart that seeks to characterize whether or not Eriugena is a mystic and how his theology may be related to Eckhart’s own, see Alois M. Haas, “Eriugena und die Mystik,” in *Gottleiden – Gottlieben: Zur volkssprachlichen Mystik im Mittelalter* (Nördlingen: Insel, 1989), 241-62. For a comparison between Eckhart and Eriugena as exegetes, see Bernard McGinn, “Exegesis as Metaphysics: Eriugena and Eckhart on Reading Genesis 1-3),” in *Eriugena and Creation: Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference on Eriugenian Studies, held in honor of Edouard Jeauneau, Chicago, 9-12 November 2011*, ed. by Willemien Otten and Michael I. Allen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 463-99.

“Christianized” commentaries on the *Ars Poetica* from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which have been studied by Karin Margareta Fredborg.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, what is important about the Meister’s argument here is that he attempts to tie his new hermeneutic emphasis upon the “parable of the letter” to the authority of Plato, seen to embody a theological method and pedagogical practice which is grounded in the dissemination of fables and an analysis of the truths they communicate in a veiled manner. The early “Chartrian” emphasis on the theological recourse to metaphor which Christian scripture and Platonic philosophy shares, evident in the Meister’s sermon for the feast of St. Augustine, has given way to a new conception of such argumentation which Eckhart relates to a conception of theology which is poetic in some significant manner.

This emphasis on the poetic nature of theology, it must be said, was common to the German Dominican theologians who preceded Eckhart. Albert had argued in his *Summa theologiae*, for instance, that “the poetic mode is the weakest among the modes of philosophy, because it consists of fables, which are composed out of human fictions... and are therefore deceptive and mendacious.”<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, Albert also maintained that “the holy scriptures make use of poetic expressions formed and shaped according to divine wisdom, in which figures reverberate with what is unfigurative and immaterial according to the proportion of likenesses.”<sup>133</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, also acknowledged that theology “has a poetic mode, when it places the truth beneath coverings [*integumenta*] as in *Proverbs* and in the other books of

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<sup>131</sup> Karin Margareta Fredborg, “The *Ars Poetica* in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries: From the *Vienna Scholia* to the *Materia* Commentary,” *Aevum* 88.2 (2014): 437-8.

<sup>132</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.1.5.2.resp, 18, 17-20: “In poesi autem philosophorum mira, ex quibus fabula componitur, ex fictione humana oriuntur et propter repraesentationem ad humana dirigunt, et ideo deceptorum sunt et mendosa.”

<sup>133</sup> Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* I.1.5.2.resp, 18, 11-14: “Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod sacra scriptura poeticis utitur ex divina sapientia formatis et figuratis, in quorum figuris secundum proportionem similitudinem resultant infigurabilia et immaterialia.” We have seen in the first chapter that Albert is highly critical of the poetic theology of paganism.

Solomon and in Ecclesiasticus and in all the parables of sacred scripture.”<sup>134</sup> Ulrich accordingly cites Albert’s *Metaphysica* and argues that the poet is a philosopher “because the poet invents a story in such a way that he excites to wonder and by wonder he further excites to inquiry, and thus knowledge is established.”<sup>135</sup> He continues, however, that “it is clear that [poetry] gives the mode of knowing through the mode of wondering, just as the other parts of logic give [knowledge] with respect to the mode of arguing, because... ‘poēsis’ is a part of logic with respect to intention, although with respect to the measurement of meter it is under grammar.”<sup>136</sup> In other words, Ulrich grants a less ambivalent role than Albert to poetry, while making use of Albert’s own argument, by claiming that poetry acts analogously to demonstrative argumentation, insofar as poetry belongs to the science of logic. Nevertheless, like Albert before him, Ulrich concedes that “scripture [itself] must not be judged to have anything fabulous and false, since, as Augustine says, ‘in order for a parable to be true it is not required that the literal sense is true, but it is sufficient that the second [spiritual] sense is true,’ since speech is true or false from this: that the thing signified by it is true or false.”<sup>137</sup>

Ulrich’s attention to the role of *integumenta* also leads him to insist on the Dionysian category of “dissimilar similarities” in theological discourse. For this reason, he claims that “in these *integumenta* not only are the most noble creatures employed to represent divine things...

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<sup>134</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 9, 52: “Habet secundo modum poeticum, quando veritatem ‘sub integumentis’ ponit, ut in parabolis et in aliis libris Salomonis et in Ecclesiastico et in omnibus parabolis sacrae scripturae.”

<sup>135</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 9, 52: “et hic modus enim etiam convenit scientiae, quia, ut dicitur I *Metaphysicae*, philomythos, id est poeta amans ‘fingere fabulas’, philosophus est eo, quod ‘poeta’ ad hoc ‘fingit fabulam, ut excitet ad admirandum et admiration ulterius excitet ad inquirendum et sic constet’ scientia.”

<sup>136</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 9, 52: “Unde patet, quod ipsa dat modum sciendi per modum admirandi, sicut aliae partes logicae dant eum quantum ad modum arguendo, propter quod etiam ‘poesis’ est ‘pars’ ‘logicae’ quantum ad intentionem, ‘licet’ quantum ad ‘mensuram metri’ ‘sit sub grammatica.’”

<sup>137</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 9, 52: “sed tamen non propter hoc aestimandum est scripturam hanc aliquid habere fabulosam et falsum, quia, ut dicit Augustinus, “ad veritatem parabola non requiritur, quod sensus litteralis verus sit, sed sufficit, quod secundum sensus sit verus,’ quia oratio est vera vel falsa ex hoc, quod res per ipsam significate est vel non est.” The editor of Ulrich was unable to trace this citation which does not seem to belong to Augustine’s authentic work.

but also the most inferior and ignoble creatures are employed, since from their excessive distance from God, God is more certain to be named by their names symbolically and not properly.”<sup>138</sup> Ulrich consequently maintains that “[God’s] essence is not seen through itself or through likenesses, except through those which are more dissimilar than similar to him,”<sup>139</sup> and in the first tractate of book one of the *De summo bono* argues with Pseudo-Dionysius that God can be known by negation as in symbolic theology,<sup>140</sup> by causation as in the theology of signification,<sup>141</sup> and by the way of eminence as in mystical theology.<sup>142</sup> Through the dialectical and meditative interplay between negation and affirmation that these theological procedures imply, Ulrich concludes that it is possible “to let go of all the senses and the intellect as far as all things are known to oneself through created things,” and thus transcend all beings, “not only the material things, but also the intellectual things.”<sup>143</sup> This necessarily leads the intellect to become united to God, “just as the intellect and the thing understood are one.”<sup>144</sup> For Ulrich, moreover, this is ultimately what is signified by the ascent up Mount Sinai in Exodus 19, “where Moses seeing God in darkness—that is the excellence of light inaccessible, which to us is darkness—was made separate from the unclean and from the tumult of the people and also from imperfections, namely

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<sup>138</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 2, 9, 52: “In his integumentis ad repraesentationem divinatorum non solum adhibentur nobiliores creaturae... sed etiam adhibentur creaturae inferiores, ignobiliores, quia ex nimia earum distantia a Deo magis certum est Deum horum nominibus nominari symbolice et non proprie.”

<sup>139</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 1,1, 7: “Deum etiam, sicuti est, hac via non possumus scire, quia, cuius essential non videtur per se nec per similitudinem, nisi quae magis est ei dissimilis quam similis, illud magis videtur, sicuti non est, quam sicuti est.”

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 1, 4.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 1, 5.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 1, 6.

<sup>143</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 1, 6, 17: “sed in negationibus oportet dimittere sensum et intellectum quantum ad omnia sibi in rebus creatis nota et oportet transcendere omnia entia, non solum materialia, sed etiam intellectualia.”

<sup>144</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 1, 6, 17: “et sic excedendo se ipsum oportet intellectum uniri Deo, sicut intellectus et intellectum sunt unum.”

the priests, and entered the dark cloud by means of the aforesaid union with God.”<sup>145</sup> Scripture in its poetic and symbolic mode not only excites that wonder, which leads to knowledge of theological truth, but also lays the theological groundwork for the contemplative return to the One beyond being.

One final, significant instance of Meister Eckhart’s own late recourse to the parables and figures of scripture is his *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*. In the preface remarks that open this work, the Meister once again explains his approach as an exegete: “in the interpretation of this [Word] and of all the other things which follow, the intention of the author, just as it was in all his other publications, is to explain through the natural arguments of the philosophers those things which the holy Christian faith and both Testaments assert.”<sup>146</sup> Eckhart also notes, just as he had done in his sermon for the Feast of St. Augustine, that in his *Confessions* the Church Father had noted and insisted upon the doctrinal and textual similarities between the opening of John and the works of Plato—a claim that has added significance in this context given Eckhart’s remarks about poetry and parable in his prologue to the *Liber paraboliarum Genesis*.<sup>147</sup> Hence, the Meister explains that “the intention of this work, furthermore, is to demonstrate how the truths of the principles, conclusions and properties of natural things are clearly indicated—‘to whoever has ears to hear’—by these words of holy

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<sup>145</sup> Ulrich of Strasburg, *De summo bono* I, 1, 6, 17-18: “Quod significatum est *Exod.* 19, ubi Moses visurus Deum in caligine, id est excellentia lucis inaccessibilis, quae nobis est caligo, separatus fuit ab immundis et a tumultu populi et etiam ab imperfectioribus, scilicet sacerdotibus, et intravit in caliginem per praedictam unionem cum Deo.”

<sup>146</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 2, ed. by Koch, LW III, 4: “In cuius verbi expositione et aliorum quae sequuntur, intentio est auctoris, sicut in omnibus suis editionibus, ea quae sacra asserit fides christiana et utriusque testamenti scriptura, exponere per rationes naturales philosophorum.” The Word to which Eckhart refers here is the Word of John 1:1: *In principio erat verbum et verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat Verbum*.

<sup>147</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 2, ed. by Koch, LW III, 4: “Et Augustinus I.VII Confessionum dicit se in libris Platonis legisse in principio erat verbum et magnam partem huius primi capitula Iohannis.”

scripture, which are interpreted through these natural things.”<sup>148</sup> For Burkhard Mojsisch this indicates that Eckhart aims to bring two philosophical realms into dialogue, the metaphysical and the natural, in order to assert a shared theological and moral truth,<sup>149</sup> whereas Kurt Flasch insists that Eckhart’s goal is to first prove the truth of scripture in a philosophical manner before demonstrating that scripture itself declares the metaphysical and moral truths that the study of nature alone can afford.<sup>150</sup> However, as Largier explains, it is the specifically Christian encounter with the Bible that matters for Eckhart here, insofar it is only the Christian who has adopted the right attitude toward scripture (or who has ears to hear) that will be able to follow the Meister’s interpretations of the biblical parables.<sup>151</sup> Regardless, what matters in this text is that Eckhart has not simply asserted that there is a similarity between the poetic and parabolic mode of argumentation which the philosopher and Christian share. Rather, there is some truth that their respective approaches ought to access. Just as he had done in his *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, in other words, Eckhart has insisted on an important continuity between Christianity and philosophy as theological, rather than sought to identify and demarcate their difference.

This matters, ultimately, because it informs how one must interpret the most radical statement Eckhart makes about the relationship between the divine science of the philosophers and the Christians. This is Eckhart’s claim that “Moses, Christ and the Philosopher teach the same thing, differing only in the way they teach, namely as worthy of belief, as probable or

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<sup>148</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 2, ed. by Koch, LW III, 4: “Rursus intentio operis est ostendere, quomodo veritates principiorum et conclusionum et proprietatum naturalium innuuntur luculenter - 'qui habet aures audiendi!' - in ipsis verbis sacrae scripturae, quae per illa naturalia exponuntur,” citing Matthew 13:43.

<sup>149</sup> Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart*, 8-9.

<sup>150</sup> Flasch, *Meister Eckhart*, 41.

<sup>151</sup> Largier, “*Figurata Locutio*,” 316.

likely, and as truth.”<sup>152</sup> As Mojsisch explains,<sup>153</sup> this cannot be divorced from Eckhart’s later claim that “the Gospel contemplates being insofar as it is being,”<sup>154</sup> as well as the Meister’s argument that “the truth and doctrine of theology, of natural and moral philosophy, of the productive and speculative arts, and even of positive law descend from the same vein.”<sup>155</sup> Eckhart’s intention here is to assert that beyond all the truths of the different disciplines, the Gospel *as metaphysics* unifies all potential knowledge in an utterly transcendent divinity which Moses, Christ and Aristotle knew and discussed in more or less perfect ways.<sup>156</sup> But it is the Gospel alone which ultimately shows them to be unified and which calls humanity to seek unification through the practice of theology, which Meister Eckhart still conceives as metaphysical and ethical. Hence the hermeneutic encounter with scripture becomes paramount, irrespective of the dialectical practice of syllogistic reasoning that is called upon to guide it. This, in the final analysis, is why there must be a movement from axiom to exegesis.

The preceding analysis of the Meister’s prologues to the *Opus Tripartitum* and to his scriptural commentaries have shown how a desire to systematize theology following an axiomatic and dialectical method gave way to a self-consciously hermeneutic and poetic conception of theological practice. Whereas the axiomatic recourse to the philosophical defence of propositions was grounded in a specific doctrine of the transcendentals, which stood in

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<sup>152</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 185, ed. by Koch, LW III, 155: “Idem ergo est quod docet Moyses, Christus et philosophus, solum quantum ad modum differens, scilicet ut credibile, probabile sive verisimile et veritas.”

<sup>153</sup> Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart*, 10-11.

<sup>154</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 445, ed. by Koch, LW III, 380: “Evangelium contemplator ens in quantum ens.”

<sup>155</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 445, ed. by Koch, LW III, 381: “ex eadem vena descendit veritas et doctrina theologiae, philosophiae naturalis, moralis, artis factibilium et speculabilium et etiam iuris positivi.”

<sup>156</sup> Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart*, 11-12, adds that Eckhart’s statement here that the Philosopher teaches what has a verisimilitude to the truth that scripture reveals and his categorization of Aristotelian argument as what is likely rather than worthy of belief refers to Maimonides’ critique of Aristotle. Cf. Moses Maimonides, *Dux neutrorum*, Liber II, cap. 23, ed. by Agostino Justinianus (Paris: 1520), f. 54r.

continuity with Eckhart's claims about the relationship between the true and the good even as they emphasized the difference between created and uncreated, concrete and abstract being, the latter hermeneutical and poetic conception of theology returned to the allegorical method he had defended in the earliest, "Chartrian" stage of his career, insofar as it sought to emphasize continuities between the philosophical and the scriptural recourse to metaphor. Yet, as the analysis of the *Liber parabolarum Genesis* and the *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem* above has shown, the Meister was more interested in defending the continuities rather than discontinuities between philosophical and Christian theology. This was because of the particular conception of parabolic interpretation he had appropriated from Thomas Aquinas and Moses Maimonides, as well as because of his claim that scripture expressed the same metaphysical and moral truths made available by the divine science of the philosophers—a transformation of his earlier argument, and of the argument of the German Dominican theologians who preceded him, like Albert and Ulrich, that philosophical fables and Christian scripture used poetic argumentation in the same way.

However, these prologues are all remarkably silent about an aspect of the German Dominican debates about the difference between philosophical and Christian theology that mattered significantly to prior attempts to distinguish between the two. That is, the prologues to the *Opus Tripartitum* and to the *Liber parabolarum Genesis* and the *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem* have little if anything to say about the salvific and affective economy of grace and its difference from the intellectual mode of existence that the natural light of reason is meant to afford. Despite the fact that Eckhart gestured toward the importance of the theological virtues, and the infused light of grace, in his early sermon for the feast day of St. Augustine, and polemicized in his Parisian Questions against those who located beatitude in the will rather than



the intellect and sought to correct a widespread tendency that subordinated the True to the Good! However, the debates about the relationship between grace and nature that we have seen featured prominently in Albert and Ulrich's account of the proper relation between philosophical and Christian theology, or the role that the possible and active intellect play in beatification and divinization which mattered to the accounts of the German Thomists and the followers of Dietrich do structure the Meister's vernacular preaching. It is to these debates, and Meister Eckhart's attempt to defend a radical conception of beatitude concerned with the passive reception of God in joyous suffering that takes place beyond nature and grace, which I now turn. In doing so, I suggest that Meister Eckhart does away with the rigid distinction between philosophical and Christian theology by emphasizing a divinized perfection that goes beyond the beatitude that these two divine sciences produce through the infusion of the created lights of nature and grace.

*Suffering God: The Paradisus Anime Intelligentis and Eckhart's Movement Beyond Nature and Grace*

At several moments throughout his career Meister Eckhart drew upon the authority of Thomas Aquinas to explain how his theology ought to be understood, despite his preference for certain positions defended by Dietrich. For instance, we have seen that in his first Parisian Question he presented his own argument as a kind of supplement to (or, perhaps, as a correction of) Thomas' argument about how to understand the nature or essence of God. In his general prologue to his Book of Expositions, moreover, Eckhart explains that he adopts an abbreviated and arbitrary approach to scripture "lest it seems that the better and more useful interpretations concerning things of this kind have been neglected, which the saints or venerable doctors and, especially,

brother Thomas wrote.”<sup>157</sup> During his defense, finally, Eckhart maintained that he was being unfairly persecuted, just as Albert and Thomas had been when their own works were investigated for potential error and heresy, even though the sanctity of Thomas’s life and teaching had been subsequently determined by the University of Paris, the Pope and the Roman curia.<sup>158</sup> At his trial the Meister was also supported by several prominent German Thomists, such as Nicholas of Strasburg,<sup>159</sup> who had cleared Eckhart of heretical charges during a visitation as general vicar to Cologne in 1325, despite the fact that Nicholas was critical of several of Eckhart’s doctrinal positions, such as his departure from a Thomist conception of analogy.<sup>160</sup> All this might explain why Eckhart of Gründig, in his *Tractat von den Wirkenden und Möglichen Vernunft*, would have associated Eckhart’s teaching with that of Thomas. However, a closer examination of Eckhart’s arguments about the nature of beatitude in his vernacular preaching indicates that the Meister’s actual response to the debate over this matter taking place in the German Dominican School was highly original. In fact, he established and defended a new conception of beatitude that would directly inform major figures in the next generation, such as Berthold of Moosberg and Johannes Tauler.

Eckhart’s position in the debates between the Thomists and the followers of Dietrich can be reconstructed by analyzing the sermons attributed to the Meister preserved in the *Paradisus*

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<sup>157</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus Expositionum* I, ed. Weiss in LW I, 183: “Prolix tam tamen vitans plurima breviare curavi aut penitus omittere, sane ne meliora et utiliora circa expositiones huiusmodi, vel sancti vel venerabiles doctors, praecipue frater Thomas scripsit, neglecta viderentur.”

<sup>158</sup> *Processus contra magister Echardum* I, n. 77, ed. by Sturlese in LW V, 276: “Maxime cum iam pridem magistri theologiae Parisius nostris temporibus mandatum habuerint superioris de examinandis libris praeclassimorum virorum sancti Thomae de Aquino et domini fratris Alberti tamquam suspectis et erroneis. Et contra ipsum sanctum Thomam frequenter a multis scriptum est, dictum et publice praedicatum quod errores et haereses scripserit et docuerit. Sed favente domino tam Parisius quam per ipsum summum pontificem et Romanam curiam ipsius vita et doctrina partier sunt approbata.”

<sup>159</sup> For Nicholas of Strasburg’s support of Eckhart during the inquisitorial investigation of his teaching, see Walter Senner, “Meister Eckhart’s Life, Training, Career, and Trial,” in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, 47-73. Nicholas himself would be declared a *fautor heresiae* (favorer of heresy) for his defense of Eckhart and for his official condemnation of certain of his accusers.

<sup>160</sup> Sturlese, “Eckhart, Teodorico e Picardi nella *Summa philosophiae* di Nicola di Strasburgo,” 195-8.

*anime intelligentis* (PAI).<sup>161</sup> By analyzing these sermons it is possible to identify not only how Eckhart's own disciples presented his radical theology as a solution to the conflict over the nature of intellectual beatitude which preoccupied these two warring factions within the fourteenth-century German Dominican School, but also how Eckhart himself approached the problem insofar as it related to debates over the nature of grace. Likely produced sometime during the 1340s, either in Cologne or Erfurt, the PAI is unique in the textual archive of Eckhart's vernacular writing since it not only preserves 32 authentic sermons by the Meister, but also provides an important witness to the attempt by his followers and colleagues to articulate and further the theological program that characterized Eckhart's activity as a teacher and preacher.<sup>162</sup> For this reason, scholars have understood the PAI to represent both a model sermon collection produced for the didactic use of the Dominican brethren in medieval Germany who sought to advance Eckhart's radical mysticism of the ground, as well as a quasi-systematic attempt to defend a theology characterized by a conception of the intellectual union between God and man.<sup>163</sup> The sermons elaborate upon this conception through recourse to Eckhart's master metaphor of the birth of God in the soul, taken to characterize a specific account of beatitude.

The PAI is also important as a testament to the self-understanding and self-presentation of Eckhart's students as Dominican theologians committed to an approach to theology taken to define the proper identity of the Order of Preachers itself. The register of sermons appended to

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<sup>161</sup> *Paradisus anime intelligentis* ('Paradis der fornunftigen sele). Aus der *Oxford Handschrift Cod. Laud Misc. 479 nach E. Sievers Abschrift*, ed. by Philipp Strauch, reprint with afterword by Niklaus Largier and Gilbert Fournier (Hildesheim: Olms, 1998).

<sup>162</sup> For an account of the PAI, including an overview of scholarship on its two manuscript recensions, see Niklaus Largier and Gilbert Fournier, afterword to *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, 171-202. See also Freimut Löser, "Bodleian Library, MS. Laud Misc. 479. The *Paradisus anime intelligentis* as a Paradise for Editors?" *Oxford German Studies* 46.2 (2017): 221-29 and Bernhard Hasebrink, "Studies on the Redaction and Use of the *Paradisus anime intelligentis*," in *De l'homélie au sermon: histoire de la predication médiévale*, ed. by Jacqueline Hamesse and Xavier Hermand (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1993), 143-58.

<sup>163</sup> Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart: Theologer, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1998), 61-2.

the beginning of the PAI collection, for instance, demonstrates that whoever compiled the text was eager to promote the Dominican account of the priority of the intellect over the will in beatitude against the claims of the Franciscan theologians who, like Gonsalvo of Spain, emphasized the centrality of love and affect instead. The entry for sermon PAI 41 on John 17:3, “This is eternal life, that they know you, the only True God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent,” attributed to Giselher von Slatheim, who taught at both Cologne and Erfurt, is thus described as an attempt to prove that the work of the intellect is nobler than the will against the claims of the barefoot masters.<sup>164</sup> The sermon itself reveals that Giselher took issue with those theologians who failed to comprehend that the nature of eternal beatitude lies in the work of the intellect, and that the work of the will exists accidentally and thus remains accidental in the beatific vision, since it does not exist naturally.<sup>165</sup> Yet there is no indication from Giselher’s homily that those who hold this error are Franciscans, even as he associates the correct position with “our highest masters, the *predicatores*” and with “this master, whom I love above all other masters,” who is quite possibly Eckhart himself.<sup>166</sup> So it is evident that it was the compiler of the PAI who sought to present Giselher’s teaching as a rebuttal of the Franciscan doctrine. This likely also explains why the PAI contains a homily by an anonymous Franciscan master who

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<sup>164</sup> *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, register, ed. Strauch, 5: “Hec est vita eterna ut cognoscant te solum verum deum et quem misisti Ihesum Christum. in disir predigade dispitirit brudir Giselher von Slatheim, der lesimeister was zu Kolne und zu Ertforte, widir di barfuzin und bewisit daz diz werc der fornunft edilir ist dan diz werc dez willen in deme weigin lebene, und brichit di bant der barfuzin is *est* argumenta meisterliche.”

<sup>165</sup> Giselher von Slatheim, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 41, ed. Strauch, 91: “Di krischen meistere gemenliche und unse groisten meistere, den ich geleube und volge, di sprechin daz di nature und der kerne und diz wesin der ewigin selikeit in deme werke der fornunft lige. Alleine daz werc des willin ist ein zuval und ein eigen zuhalt, ez inist sin nature nicht... also ist des willin werc ein eigin zuval in der seligkeit.”

<sup>166</sup> Giselher von Slatheim, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 41, ed. Strauch, 91: “Nu cumit hude disir meistir, deme ich geleube uber alle meisters...;” Giselher von Slatheim, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 41, ed. Strauch, 92: “unse hohisten meistere, s. predicatores, sprechin...” Cf. Maarten J.F.M Hoenen, “Scholastik und Seelsorge in den Predigten der Sammlung *Paradisus anime intelligentis*: ein Beitrag zur Wissensvermittlung im Mittelalter,” *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 73.1 (2006): 73-74.

defends an affective interpretation of theology characterized by wonder and love.<sup>167</sup> The index to the PAI is quick to establish the polemical reasoning behind the inclusion of this sermon, adding after a summary of the master's argument about the priority of the will, that "the brethren and preachers of the Order of Preachers do not believe a word of what he says here."<sup>168</sup> As Kurt Ruh and Bernhard Hasebrink insist, therefore, the PAI aims to promote the arguments which were especially associated with Eckhart's initial regency in Paris, when he disputed the first three of his Parisian Questions.<sup>169</sup> And it does so conscious that Eckhart's theology at that time was characterized partly by his opposition to the Franciscans.

Yet it is also significant that the PAI was produced after the condemnation of Eckhart for heretical and suspect teaching and that several editorial decisions by the compiler have resulted in a German Dominican theology that is slightly less radical and original than the Meister's own. This may have been due to a desire to depict Eckhart's work as orthodox—although it is telling that the selection of Eckhart's sermons does not avoid including positions that were explicitly highlighted as erroneous during the inquisitorial trial against the Meister. As Bernard Hasebrink has shown, moreover, the compiler of the PAI has altered the many sermons included in the collection in order to reduce them to their basic doctrinal content and simplest lines of argumentation, as well as removed all situational references which identify the personality of the

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<sup>167</sup> *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 62, ed. Strauch, 131-33. It is interesting that the Franciscan master defends an understanding of theology with which certain earlier German Dominicans, like Albert the Great and Ulrich of Strasburg, would have agreed.

<sup>168</sup> *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, register, ed. Strauch, 6-7: "Ecce nova facio omnia. hi an disime sermon lerit ein barfuzzin lesemeister wis ich di sele haldin sal di ein glich nochvolgin wil habin der di in deme ewigen lebene sin. abir di brudere und lesemeister in predigere ordine inhaldin nicht einis wortis daz her sezzit und sprichit daz daz allir hohiste werc und diz groiste der seligin in himmilriche daz si minne. ez ist bekentnisse, sprechin di predigere, und habin wor, wan Christus sprichit: 'hec est vita eterna ut cognoscant te solum verum deum et quem misisti Ihesum Christum'." The final lines here tie this sermon back to that of Giselher's.

<sup>169</sup> Ruh, *Meister Eckhart*, 63; Hasebrink, "Studies on the Redaction and Use of the *Paradisus anime intelligentis*," 157.

preacher or the location and time of their initial delivery.<sup>170</sup> Several of the sermons by Eckhart which have been included in the PAI also show evidence of textual alteration, often in order to align Eckhart's theology more explicitly with the doctrine of intellectual beatitude found in sermons attributed to other Dominican masters. The compiler of the PAI thus appears to have been motivated also to present Eckhart as doctrinally continuous with the theology of his fellow brethren in the Order. Hasebrink therefore concludes that the PAI not only aims to transmit Eckhart's theological authority. It also sought to place Eckhart alongside those who Hasebrink calls "representatives of centrist Dominican doctrine."<sup>171</sup> Eckhart's novel theology is therefore partly subordinated in the PAI to the description of the orthodox Dominican understanding of intellectual beatitude that the compiler and redactor of the PAI sought to promote, even if the sermon collection aimed also to defend the Meister's reputation as a theologian against his detractors.<sup>172</sup>

Although the sermons themselves have been redacted, it is evident that the selection and placement of the homilies is far from arbitrary, and that the PAI unfolds a progressive account of the intellectual nature of beatitude. The sermons themselves are organized into two parts which generally follow the order of the liturgy. According to Loris Sturlese, the overarching liturgical framework of the PAI, as well as its selective and abbreviated nature, likely meant that the compiler of the collection drew upon an already extant collection of Eckhart's sermons, potentially published by the Meister himself, which would have also been organized following

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<sup>170</sup> Hasebrink, "Studies on the Redaction and Use of the *Paradisus anime intelligentis*," 152-6.

<sup>171</sup> Hasebrink, "Studies on the Redaction and Use of the *Paradisus anime intelligentis*," 156.

<sup>172</sup> Largier and Fournier, afterword to *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, 186, cautions against the assumption that the PAI aims to represent an "orthodox" or "young" Eckhart based on the positions he defended in the Parisian Questions. In fact, rather than merely defend the equation between intellect and being the PAI instead "in a Neoplatonic and Dionysian manner" stresses the purity and incomprehensibility of the divine.

the liturgy.<sup>173</sup> The PAI for this reason provides the theoretical warrant for Loris Sturlese's subsequent attempt to re-edit and order Eckhart's extant vernacular homilies according to the Dominican liturgy.<sup>174</sup> More importantly, however, Niklaus Largier has shown how the compiler of the PAI deliberately selected homilies by German Dominican theologians which elaborated upon each other in order to present an unfolding theological argument tied to the Meister's own doctrinal project.<sup>175</sup> The PAI thus progressively describes how the birth of God in the soul is experienced as an anticipation of future beatitude, how the priority of the intellect in this beatitude is dependent upon the supernatural light of grace, how the soul is the place of God's self-communication, how the soul only finds stability and joy in God rather than creatures, and how the soul must stand silent and empty before God so that God's eternity can become apparent to it. The PAI also includes sermons that remark upon the foundational importance of the sacraments and Christ's incarnation for a proper understanding of this theology, concluding with a consideration of saintliness that forefronts the proper relationship between virtue and grace, as well as a Dionysian account of the relationship between illumination and deification.

For Largier, moreover, what is most significant about the PAI is not its attempt to defend a general Dominican account of the priority of the intellect over the will in Christian beatitude against the Franciscan masters. Rather, the sermons gathered in the collection attempt to articulate a specific understanding of intellectual beatitude as the birth of God in the soul insofar as this represented a particular theological development of the German Dominican followers of

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<sup>173</sup> Loris Sturlese, "Hat es ein Corpus der deutschen Predigten Meister Eckharts gegeben? Liturgische Beobachtungen zu aktuellen philosophiehistorischen Fragen," in *Homo divinus*, 79-94.

<sup>174</sup> For the new liturgical order of the Meister's sermons, see Loris Sturlese and Markus Vinzent, *Meister Eckhart, the German Works: 64 Homilies for the Liturgical Year 1. "De Tempore." Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Leuven: Peeters, 2019) and Loris Sturlese and Markus Vinzent, *Meister Eckhart, the German Works: 56 Homilies for the Liturgical Year 2. "De Sanctis." Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Leuven: Peeters, 2020).

<sup>175</sup> Largier and Fournier, afterword to *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, 172-8.

Albert the Great.<sup>176</sup> Largier maintains, moreover, that the emphasis upon the supernatural light of grace and its relationship to natural perfection in many of the sermons—including several ascribed to Meister Eckhart himself—demonstrate that the PAI does not follow Dietrich of Freiberg’s interpretation of Albert’s theology and philosophy, often expressing its understanding of intellection and beatitude in more Thomist language.<sup>177</sup> The PAI is thus characterized by “a concept of intellect that stands against the model of the constitutive self-activity of the intellect, as encountered in Dietrich of Freiberg, and which was particularly important in the Averroist tradition of interpreting Aristotle.”<sup>178</sup> Yet the account of grace in the PAI is also not fully reconcilable with the arguments of Thomas, since, as Largier notes, “it is the Dionysian idea of the deification of man to which grace is subordinated.”<sup>179</sup> Like the work of Eckhart himself—especially the Parisian Questions discussed above—the entire PAI must therefore be understood to be an attempt to mediate between Thomas and Dietrich. In fact, the PAI is ultimately a transitional document, according to Largier, that develops aspects of Meister Eckhart’s position that look toward the henology which characterizes Berthold of Moosburg and Johannes Tauler’s turn to Plato and Proclus, which I discuss in the following chapter.

In what follows I analyze several sermons by Eckhart included in the PAI in order to describe how he builds upon Thomas and Dietrich to forward his own particular argument about the role that nature and grace plays in beatitude. By doing so, I take seriously the fact that the redactors of the PAI—whether or not they be “centrist Dominicans”—identified this as a significant feature of the Meister’s conception of Christian theology insofar as it is directed

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<sup>176</sup> Largier and Fournier, afterword to *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, 182.

<sup>177</sup> Largier and Fournier, afterword to *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, 183. On the specific debate about the role that grace plays in the programmatic argument of the PAI, see Largier, “Vernunft und Seligkeit.”

<sup>178</sup> Largier, “Vernunft und Seligkeit,” 14.

<sup>179</sup> Largier, “Vernunft und Seligkeit,” 11.



toward beatitude. In my analysis I also demonstrate that throughout the homilies incorporated into the PAI Eckhart engages with the Peripatetic conceptions of beatitude that had figured prominently in the debates between the German Thomists and the followers of Dietrich, while showing that the Meister subscribed to a metaphysics of flow attentive to the two orders of providence described by Augustine drawn upon by both Ulrich and Dietrich to determine the boundaries between philosophical and Christian divine science. Yet the following analysis shows that policing this boundary was less important to Eckhart and the redactors of the PAI than the Meister's attempt to situate true blessedness or deification beyond nature *and* grace. By interpreting an important sermon not included in the PAI, which is nevertheless an important intervention into German Dominican debates about beatitude, I demonstrate, finally, that Meister Eckhart rejected Thomas and Dietrich's claim that beatitude occurs in either the possible or active intellect, situating instead in passivity in a way that returns to Albert's Eriugenan and Dionysian conception of the Christian theologian who "suffers God."

PAI 4 (Q 38) is the first sermon in the collection attributed to Meister Eckhart which deals with grace in a sustained manner while also introducing key aspects of Eckhart's account of the intellect.<sup>180</sup> After summarizing the doctrine of the best masters about the nature of the angels and describing how they take delight whenever God is born in the soul without contributing actively to that birth,<sup>181</sup> Eckhart asserts that "the least work of grace is loftier than all the angels in their nature."<sup>182</sup> As Augustine teaches, in fact, God's work of grace when he

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<sup>180</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 4, ed. Strauch, 14-18. For the critical edition of this sermon, see Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 38, ed. by Josef Quint in DW II, 224-45. This sermon is given as Homily 6\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 6\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De tempore*, 135-149.

<sup>181</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 4, ed. Strauch, 15: "Der engil ist ouch so hoch. di beisten meistere sprechin daz iclich engil habe eine ganze nature... alle dise menige der engile, wi hoch si sint, di habin ein midewirken und helfin da zu da Got geborin wirdit in der sele. Daz ist si habin lust und freude und wonne in der geburt, si in wirkin nicht."

<sup>182</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 4, ed. Strauch, 17: "daz minniste werc der gnadin ist hohir alle engile in der nature."

converts a sinner is a greater act for God than the creation of a new world.<sup>183</sup> Grace, like God, works no work, Eckhart explains, and it consequently differs from the work of the angels which, although active in God in an essentially unknowable manner, is nevertheless ascertainable by humankind as a “flash of lightning,” where the lowest part of the angel touches heaven, just as a small flake of wood may peel away from a house that is being constructed.<sup>184</sup> It is from this flash that all the things in the world blossom, flourish and live.<sup>185</sup> As will become apparent from an analysis of further homilies collected in the PAI, this sermon, in a characteristically Thomist manner, conflates the angels with the separate intelligences that both move the heavens and mediate the creative overflow of God. PAI 4 thus reveals the affinity between Eckhart and Thomas’s understanding of grace through its relationship to the angels, conceived as the separate intelligences who co-operate with God’s creative activity. This is already a marked departure from the teaching of Dietrich, who had distinguished between the separate intelligences and the angels by aligning the former with natural and the latter with voluntary providence.

This analysis is confirmed by a reading of PAI 15 (S 90), which is the second homily attributed to Eckhart in the collection where the nature of grace and the intellect is discussed.<sup>186</sup> Associated liturgically with one of the sermons which form part of the Meister’s well-known *Gottesgeburtscyklus*, PAI 15 is a homily on Luke 2:46 that takes as its theme the child Jesus

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<sup>183</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 4, ed. Strauch, 17: “sente Augustinus sprichit daz ein gnaidinwerc daz God wirkit, also daz her einen sundere bekerit und zu eime gudin menschin machit, daz ist grozir dan daz Got eine nuwe werlint geschuffe.”

<sup>184</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 4, ed. Strauch, 17: “gnade enwirkit nicht... daz werc das der engil in Gode hait, daz ist so hoch daz nî kein meistir noch sin darzu mochte kumen daz si daz werc begrifin mochten. Aber von dem werke vellit ein spon, also da ein spon abe vellit von eime huis, den man abehauwit. Eyn blichin daz ist da da der engil mit sime nidersten den himmil berurit.”

<sup>185</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 4, ed. Strauch, 17: “da fon grunit und bluwit und lebit alliz das in dirre werlinde ist.”

<sup>186</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 37-9. For the critical edition of this sermon, see Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 90, ed. by Georg Steer in DW IV, 43-71. This sermon is given as Homily 14\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 14\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De tempore*, 243-253.

sitting and teaching in the Temple. According to Eckhart, the fact that Jesus was sitting signifies that the soul must be at rest “in a remote humility below all creatures” so that she may be enlightened in a restful peace and stillness.<sup>187</sup> The Gospel reading also teaches that Christ sat in the soul in order to teach the understanding how it should act, since Christ is himself “an understanding.”<sup>188</sup> Eckhart forwards here a strong ontological claim with epistemological consequences—that the soul must *be* understanding in some way in order to receive the understanding that *is* Christ—and he draws upon Thomas Aquinas’ *STh* III, q. 10 to unpack how Christ possesses four kinds of art or wisdom, which explains how His instruction as understanding affects our own.<sup>189</sup> “The first [art] is divine,” Eckhart begins; “with this [Christ] knew what is there according to eternal providence: not only what is there and will be; rather also all that God could do, if He wished to.”<sup>190</sup> Eckhart stresses here that divine wisdom is characterized by a knowledge of what is *possible*, in keeping with his insistence that being within God is *virtual* rather than actual. The second aspect of Christ’s wisdom, however, Eckhart states is supernatural and created.<sup>191</sup> It is to be contrasted with the third kind of wisdom that Christ possesses, which Eckhart explains Jesus shares with the angels, who, according to Pseudo-Dionysius, naturally have within themselves an image of all things, which was implanted in them

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<sup>187</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 37: “‘Sedebat Ihesus docens in templo’. daz ewangelium sprichit daz Christus saiz in deme temple und lârte. daz he saiz, daz meinit ruwe... hirurgme sal di sele sitzin, daz ist einir fordruckiter othmudikeit under alle creature, dan cumit si in einen gerastiten vride.”

<sup>188</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 37: “Daz andere stücke ist daz he lârte. waz lerit he? He larte unse forstentnisse wi daz wirkin solde; wan waz lerin sal, daz lerit noch deme daz ez selbir ist. hirurgme wan Christus ein forstentnisse ist, so lerit he unse forstentnisse.”

<sup>189</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 37: “Christus hatte vierlege kunst und wisheit.”

<sup>190</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 37: “di erste was gotlich, da mide kante he daz da ist an der ewigin forsichtikeit, nicht alleine daz da ist und werdin sal, mer ouch alliz daz daz Got formochte, ob he wolde.”

<sup>191</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 37: “di andere kunst Christ di ist creature, daz ist di kunst di sinir sele ingegozzin wart, du si geschaffin wart, und di ist ubernatürlich.”

when they were created by God.<sup>192</sup> Eckhart once again equates the angels with the separate intelligences and characterizes their knowledge, in contrast to what God alone ascertains, as knowledge of the past and the present, but not of the future.<sup>193</sup> That is, the angels *actively* know what *was* and *is*, but not what *possibly will* or *could be*, as God does. Finally, Eckhart notes that Christ in his wisdom has sensibility insofar as what the senses grasp from outside is carried into the fantasy or imagination.<sup>194</sup> PAI 15 therefore offers an account of the four kinds of wisdom that Christ offers the soul. The divine, supernatural, angelic and sensible arts he describes further clarify how he understands grace to relate to nature. For, just as he had done in PAI 4, Eckhart places grace above the angels which flow out from God as the separate intelligences.

Eckhart's fourfold metaphysical framework is thus closer to that of Thomas than it is to that of Dietrich. Whereas Dietrich, following Proclus and the *Liber de causis*, insisted upon a Proclian account of the four manners of being (namely, the One, intelligence, soul, and matter) where grace and angelic activity were partly mediated by the activity of the separate intelligences (or totally subordinated to them, according to Eckhart of Gründig), Eckhart instead introduces in PAI 15 a fourfold outpouring of wisdom from God, where the supernatural light of grace and the natural light of angelic intellection, which is subalternate to it, both creatively flow out from an uncreated divine wisdom in order to influence imagination and sensibility. Eckhart consequently ends PAI 15 by attending to the work that Christ teaches the soul to do with these four aspects of

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<sup>192</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 38: "di dritte kunst ist di hait mit den engilen in un habint bilde allir dinge. Dionysius: 'du Got di engle geschuf, du gab he un bilde allir dinge, daz habin si naturlichen.'"

<sup>193</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 38: "hi mide formochte si daz si fornam alle geschehine dinc und nicht di geschehin sullen, alse der engil nicht bekennit zukunfftige dinc."

<sup>194</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 38: "die vierde kunst di he hatte, di was an der sinlichkeit, wan waz di sinne begrifin fon buzin, daz wirdit geistliche getragin in di bilderinnen, und da so vazzit ez das inblickin des forstentnisses."

His wisdom.<sup>195</sup> Divine wisdom, Eckhart begins, teaches “how we should come back to arrange all things into their first origin,” through the union of the soul and God.<sup>196</sup> Supernatural wisdom, however, teaches the necessity of overcoming everything natural, and the Meister explains that this entails not only going out of our own natural senses, but also overcoming “thinking and assuming.”<sup>197</sup> Such an overcoming is possible only when the noble soul, according to Eckhart, puts on its “walking boots,” namely, understanding and love, so that it can use them to go beyond its natural powers.<sup>198</sup> The natural art which Jesus shared with the angels, which Eckhart explains by referring to a teaching derived from Aristotle’s *De anima* III, teaches us that “the soul has the capacity to grasp all things.”<sup>199</sup> This is why it must reside in itself, as all truth is inside rather than from without. Eckhart accordingly cites with approval Augustine’s *De vera religione*, which declares that those who have gone out of themselves in search of God did not discover the truth, since God is the intimate inner being found within the soul.<sup>200</sup> This emphasis on self-knowledge and turning inward is further taught by Christ, Eckhart concludes, through his sensibility. For one learns from Christ’s practical wisdom, or prudence, how to order the external

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<sup>195</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 38: “Nu sal man mirkin waz he uns lerit mit disin kunstin.”

<sup>196</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 38: “di erste kunst di Got ist, uz der geflozzin sint alle dinc, mit der larte he uns wi wir widirkerin soldin und sullen und ordenen alle dinc in urin erstin orsprunc, daz Got ist. wan der mensche da zu cumit daz he sich ein mit Gode vindit, dan allir erst kerit der mensche alle dinc zu urin ersten sachin.”

<sup>197</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 38: “waz lerit he un smit der kunst di ubernaturlich ist? daz wir ubergein alliz daz naturlich ist. zu den erstin sullen wir ubergein unse eginne sinne und dar noch dunkin un wenin.”

<sup>198</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 38: “nu schrit, edile sele, zuch an dine schritschuwe! Daz ist forstentnisse und minne, da mide schrit uber di werc dinir crefte... und sprinc in daz herze Godis.”

<sup>199</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 38: “waz lerit he un smit der ubernaturlichin kunst di he hait mit den engilen, di allir dinge bilde in un habin? also hait di sele eine muglich keit alle dinc zu begrifine.”

<sup>200</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 38: “hirumme solde si wonen in ir selbir, wan di worheit ist fon binnen und nicht von busin. hir umme sprach sente Augustinus: ‘o here, wi vi list der di uz unselber gegangin habin zu suchine di worheit, di noch ni zu un selbin inquamen! hiramme inhont si di worheit nicht fundin, wan Got ist der sele innirste innekeit’. dit lerit he uns mit der naturlichin kunstin.”

man by knowing oneself rather than by knowing creatures.<sup>201</sup> The fourfold metaphysical hierarchy that Eckhart derives from Thomas therefore offers important moral instruction. In PAI 15 the Meister ultimately shows how union with God is the result of supernatural grace, perfect understanding, and the discipline of the senses.

Sermons 20 (Q 19) and 21 (Q 37) in the PAI continue this emphasis upon the lights which flow out from God. Part of an important cycle of homilies, which includes the Meister's famous vernacular sermon on *Matt* 5:3, "blessed are the poor in spirit," these two sermons were possibly delivered in Cologne towards the end of Eckhart's career as part of a spirited defense of his radical theology against the critiques of his opponents. PAI 20 and PAI 21, moreover, represent important witnesses to Eckhart's understanding of the nature of the intellect and its relationship to the angelic and divine lights. PAI 20, for instance, is a sermon that offers an exegesis of *Jer* 7:2, "stand in the gate of the house of the Lord and speak the word," which focuses on the posture the soul ought to take toward the unity of God's being.<sup>202</sup> After asserting that *Jer* 7: 2 instructs that the highest part of the soul must "stand upright," Eckhart explains that creatures only please God when their natural light, where one receives or conceives being intellectually, is illuminated by the angelic light which shines above it and prepares the way for the divine light.<sup>203</sup> Eschewing the fourfold account of emanation, which he had introduced in

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<sup>201</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 15, ed. Strauch, 38-9: "waz lerit he un saber mit der zuneminden cunst? Daz ist wi wir unse uzerin menscheit ordenen sullen di ordenunge wirdit vollenbracht mit prufine der mensche sines selbis; wan daz sich der mensche selbir bekenne, daz ist bezzir dan bekennisse allir geschaffiner dinge."

<sup>202</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 20, ed. Strauch, 48-50. For the critical edition of this sermon, see Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 19, ed. by Josef Quint in DW I, 308-20. This sermon is given as Homily 24\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 24\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De tempore*, 397-407.

<sup>203</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 20, ed. Strauch, 48-9: "Nu steit 'in der phortin'. Wer da steit, des lide sint geordinit. he wil daz sprechin daz daz ubirste teil der sele stein sal ufgerichtit stedeliche. Alliz daz geordint ist, daz muz geordinit sin under daz daz uber yme ist. alle creature gevallin Gode nicht, daz naturliche licht der sele uberschine si dan, da si ir wesin inne nemin (daz licht ist Got selber), und des englis licht uberscvhine daz licht der sele und berede si und fuge si, daz daz gotliche licht dar inne gewirkin muge."

PAI 15, Eckhart in this sermon instead relates the natural, angelic and divine light to the two fountains he had introduced in PAI 4. This is because the unity of God, which is indicated in Jer 7:2 by the house of the Lord, teaches that God “sits in what is closest to Him, which is everywhere in Him, nowhere outside Him.”<sup>204</sup> Versions of this sermon which are not preserved in the PAI make it explicit that the Meister, here, is referring to the unity of God’s being, His *esse*.<sup>205</sup> “Yet when He melts, He melts away,” Eckhart adds, “and His melting away is His Goodness.”<sup>206</sup> PAI 20 for this reason reduces the fourfold metaphysical hierarchy Eckhart had outlined in PAI 15 back to the *bullitio* and *ebullitio* of God. To do so he sets aside the supernatural light of grace in order to consider solely how the divine light may be *naturally* related to the human intellect by the angels.

It is significant that PAI 20 insists upon the intellectual nature of beatitude. His re-articulation of his doctrine of the *bullitio* and *ebullitio*, is here understood to signify that understanding supersedes love just as divine being transcends divine goodness.<sup>207</sup> This is because understanding is better than love, and because the intellect bears love within it. PAI 20 thus takes up the argument about the priority of the intellect over the will that Eckhart had defended in Paris against Gonsalvo and is representative of his general tendency to subordinate the good to the true. To orient oneself solely toward the divine goodness, Eckhart explains, is to look toward the gate of the house of the Lord, and the love which results from such an

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<sup>204</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 20, ed. Strauch, 49: “Nu steit in der phortin in deme huis godis’. daz eine ist, daz eine ist, daz heldit sich allirbeist alleine. darumme di einikeit in Gode ist, so heldit Got zusamene und inlegit nicht zu. da sitzet he in sime neiste. allis in sich, nigrin uz sich.”

<sup>205</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 19, ed. Quint in DW I, 314: “Nû ‘stant in der porte in dem hûse gotes’. Daz hûs gotes ist diu einicheit *sînes wesens!* Daz ein ist, daz heltet sich aller beste al ein. Dar umbe diu einicheit stât bî gote und heltet got zesanen und enleget niergen ûz im. Dâ sitzet in sînem nachsten, *in sînem esse*, allez in im, niergen ûz im” (my emphasis).

<sup>206</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 20, ed. Strauch, 49: “aber da he smeckinde ist, da smeckit he uz sich. sin uzmeckin daz ist sin gude.”

<sup>207</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 20, ed. Strauch, 49: “daz bekenntnisse losit abe, wan daz bekenntnisse ist bezzir dan di minne. abir zvei sint bezzir dan ein, wan daz bekenntnisse treit di minne in ume.”

orientation, if it is not furnished with the knowledge of God's being, is blind.<sup>208</sup> For the intellect, Eckhart declares, “detaches, separates, runs ahead, touches the naked God, and conceives Him in His being.”<sup>209</sup> The intellect has priority over the will because it is the site where metaphysical abstraction takes place, where God is ascertained under the concept of being—that is, where the soul gives birth to God by understanding His essential nature. This is why Eckhart ends his sermon by defining prayer as an intellectual ascent into God, and cites with approval the Philosopher, who maintained that “where there is spirit, unity and eternity, there God wishes to act.”<sup>210</sup> He who desires to praise God, Eckhart concludes, must therefore be holy, united, spiritual and near to Him; “even more, he must be entirely the same as all the things carried up above everything in eternal eternity.”<sup>211</sup> Eckhart specifies that the natural, angelic and divine lights which he introduced at the start of PAI 20, are the morning, midmorning and midday knowledge Augustine had described in *De genesi ad litteram* IV. 23.<sup>212</sup> Looking back to the beginning of his homily, Eckhart makes it clear that despite the reference to prayer he is describing in this sermon the process of *natural* intellection which results in the *metaphysical* knowledge that conceptually unites the soul to God and reveals him to be the existential ground of creation.

Although it is liturgically prior to the previous homily and was historically preached by Eckhart before it as well, sermon 21 in the PAI follows PAI 20 and provides the account of grace

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<sup>208</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 20, ed. Strauch, 49: “di minne fortort und behangit in der gude, und behange ich in der phortin. Und di minne were blint, inwere bekenntnisse nicht.”

<sup>209</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 20, ed. Strauch, 49: “einen eigen gedanc inlidit daz bekenntnisse nicht. Zu dem erstin losit ez abe und leufit fore und rurit Got bloz und begrifit yn eine in sime wesine.”

<sup>210</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 20, ed. Strauch, 50: “waz ist gebeit? Dyonisius: ‘ein fornuftic ufclimmin in Got’. Philosophus: ‘wo geist ist und einkeit und ewikeit, da wil Got wirkin.’ Eckhart attributes this definition of prayer to Dionysius, although he is citing Damascene’s *De fide orthodoxa*.

<sup>211</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 20, ed. Strauch, 50: “der Got lobin wil, der muiz helic sin und gesaminit und ein geist sin und nigrin uz sin, mer alliz glichis ufgetragin in di ewigin einikeit.”

<sup>212</sup> This section makes one think that Eckhart has Dietrich’s recourse to Augustine’s metaphor of morning and evening knowledge in mind. This is confirmed by Eckhart’s citation of it in PAI 21, discussed below.



that was lacking in that sermon. A complicated homily which interprets the servant of the prophet Elisha, whose widow declared in 4 Kings 4:1 “my husband, your servant, has died,” as a figure for the intellect, PAI 21 also provides an exegesis of the account of the Samaritan woman at the well (also a widow), who sought a gift from Jesus according to John 4:15-18.<sup>213</sup> Eckhart notes that the living water that Christ gave to the Samaritan woman signifies “grace and light and it arises in the soul, springing up within and pushing out, and leaps into eternity.”<sup>214</sup> Yet the Meister begins the sermon itself by explaining how the divine image has been imprinted into the intellect and argues, following Augustine, that the servant of the widow is equated with the five prior husbands of the Samaritan woman, as well as her current husband, who “is not yours,” which symbolize respectively the five senses that influence the passions of the soul and the intellect which one refuses to follow.<sup>215</sup> Eckhart therefore warns that “when the husband is dead, you stand in evil,” explaining how a soul which is detached from God suffers a pain even greater than the suffering which accompanies the separation of the soul from the body (i.e., death).<sup>216</sup> This is because “just as the soul gives life to the body, so also God gives life to the soul,” and because “just as the soul itself gushes into all the members [of the body], so also God flows into all the powers of the soul and gushes through them so that they fully pour Him out with goodness

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<sup>213</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 50-52. For the critical edition of this sermon, see Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 37*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW II, 205-23. This sermon is given as Homily 22\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 22\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De tempore*, 369-79.

<sup>214</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 51: “wir lesin von einir frauwin, di bait gabe von Christo. di erste gabe di Got gibit, daz ist der heilige geist, in deme gibit he alle sine gabe. Daz ist daz lebindige wazzir. weme Christus daz gibit, den ingedorstet nummir. daz wazzir ist licht und gnade und inspringit in der sele und inspringit inne und tregit uf und springit in di ewikeit.”

<sup>215</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 51: “nu sprach di vrouwe: ‘herre gip mir daz wazzir’. Christus: ‘brenge mir dinen man!’. Ipsa: ‘ich inhabe keinen’. Christus: ‘du hâis wôr, du inhâis keinen, du hais abir funfe gehait, und den du nu hais, der inist din nicht’. Augustinus: ‘warumme sprach unser herre: du hais wôr? He wil daz sprechin: dine funf sinne hon dich in dinir jugint gehait noch allin iren willen, nu haist du einen, deme involgis du nicht.’”

<sup>216</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 51: “wan der man toit ist, so steit ez ubile. daz di sele von deme libe scheidit, daz tuit we. abir das sich Got von der sele scheidit, daz tuit michil wirs.”

and love over all things that are with them, so that it becomes entirely aware of Him.”<sup>217</sup> This giving life, Eckart concludes, is the living water that Christ declares will allow one to live in eternal life should one drink from it. The living water, which is grace, provides access to the eternity that is God’s flowing above time.<sup>218</sup> The Meister in this sermon offers an account of the work grace accomplishes in the soul, which is essentially the soul’s alignment with God’s beneficent, outflowing love, and fleshes out its relationship to the process of metaphysical abstraction and intellectual perfection he had given in PAI 20.

The intellect, Eckhart continues is also appropriately described as a “vassal” since it is the intellect alone, rather than the will, that receives and holds God.<sup>219</sup> As he had taught in PAI 20, the Meister preaches in PAI 21 that the will and love only fall upon God insofar as He is good and would take no notice of Him if he ceased to be so.<sup>220</sup> The intellect, however, “penetrates up into being before it thinks of goodness or power or wisdom or anything that it accidentally is.”<sup>221</sup> It does not acknowledge God according to what is attributed to Him, but takes Him in Himself by sinking into His (divine) being.<sup>222</sup> The intellect is therefore comparable to the highest lordship of the angels, which contains the Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim since, like them, it keeps God in itself and because, with their assistance, it brings God naked into the

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<sup>217</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 51: “alse di sele deme liebe daz lebin gibit, also ist Got der sele lebin. also sich di sele guzit in alle glide, also fluzit Got in alle di crefte der sele, daz si ez fortgizin, mit gude und mit minnen uff alle daz daz bi y mist, daz si eze alle gewar werdin.”

<sup>218</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 51: “also fluzit he alle zit, daz ist pobin zit und in deme lebine da alle dinc inne lebin. darumme sprach unse herre: ‘ich gebin daz lebindige wazzir, wer des trinket, der lebit des ewigin lebinis’.”

<sup>219</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 51: “nu sprichit di vrowe: ‘herre, min man, din knecht, der ist toit’. ‘knecht’ sprichit also vil also einer der da inphehit und beheldit sime herrin... fornuftikeit ist eiginlicher knecht geheizin dan wille oder minne.”

<sup>220</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 51: “wille und minne vallin uff Got, also he guit ist, und inwere he nicht guit, si inachtin sin nicht.”

<sup>221</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 51: “fornuftikeit tridit uf in daz wesin, er si bedenkit gude oder wisheit oder was des ist das zuvellic ist.”

<sup>222</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 51: “daz man Gode zu legit; dar ane inkerit sis ich nicht: si forsinkit in daz wesin.”

dressing room insofar as He is simple, without distinction.<sup>223</sup> If PAI 21 introduces the account of grace that was lacking in PAI 20, therefore, it is nevertheless clear that Eckhart's main preoccupation in this sermon is to once again describe how the natural light of the soul, fortified by the angelic intelligences, can strip God bare and conceive Him as an intelligible being. And the Meister does so conscious of his argument that the intellect transcends the will insofar as it is concerned with the fruits of metaphysical rather than moral inquiry, just as he had argued in PAI 20.

Yet PAI 21 is also significant because it includes a sustained engagement with the arguments and terminology employed by Dietrich of Freiberg. In the final part of the homily the Meister returns to the original Gospel reading of his sermon in order to explain how the two sons of the widow in 4 Kings 4 refer to the two faces of the soul described by Augustine.<sup>224</sup> Eckhart does so to teach how the dead intellect is alive in the highest spark of the intellect where God's eternal birth takes place. The first of the faces, according to Eckhart, is turned to the world and virtue, whereas the second is solely oriented toward God.<sup>225</sup> They signify, he explains, not only the will and reason, but also, and more importantly, the possibility and actuality of the intellect.<sup>226</sup> Hence Eckhart states that the Philosopher declares that the soul in its possible power

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<sup>223</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 51: "hi glichit sich fornuftikeit der uberstin herschaft der engel. der dritte chor sint Troni, di nemint Got in sich. Got ruwit an Cherubin, di bekennen Got und blibint an. Seraphin daz ist der brant. disin glichit sich fornuftikeit und nimit Got in sich. mit disin englin nimit fornuftikeit Got bloz also he ist ein on undirscheit." This nuptial imagery is well worth comparing to Mechthild of Magdeburg's *Flowing Light of the Godhead*, where the disrobed soul joins and plays with Christ as the beloved Bridegroom on his marital bed. Eckhart, making use of similar conjugal metaphors, has nevertheless reversed Mechthild's emphasis on love's triumph over understanding in the union with the divine.

<sup>224</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 51: "Nu sprichit di wrowe: 'si cumen den wir shuldic sin, und nemen mine zvene sune'. Waz sin di zuene sune der sele? Augustinus sprichit von zvein antlitzen der sele."

<sup>225</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 51: "daz eine ist gekort in dise werlint und zue deme libe, und in deme wirkit es tugint. Daz andere ist gekerit di richte in Got."

<sup>226</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 52: "Nu spreche wir in eime anderen sinne fon den zvein sunen. Daz eine ist forstentnisse, daz andere wille forstentnisse brichit zu dem erstin uz, aber wille und minne geint dar noch – nu spreche wir in eime anderin sinne fon den zvein anderen sunen der fornuftikeit. Daz eine ist di muglichkeit, daz andere ist di wirclichkeit."

has the capacity to spiritually become all things by working all things into a new being, just like the Father does when he gives birth to creatures.<sup>227</sup> Eckhart here is almost certainly referring to Dietrich's *De origine rerum praedicamentalium*, which also describes how the intellect by conceiving the quiddity of an entity within itself gives a new mode of being to it. Eckhart further explains in PAI 21 how the angels possess within themselves a twofold manner of reasoning, which he names "morning" and "evening" knowledge, just as Dietrich had done when attempting to define the nature of active and possible intellect in Augustinian language.<sup>228</sup> Like Dietrich in his *De visione beatifica*, Eckhart consequently describes a possible intellect which, through the fortification of grace, is able to conjoin with an always already beatific active intellect. For Eckhart argues in this sermon that it is the active power of the intellect which makes one able to see all things in God, just as it is the intellect rather than the will which properly conceives and unites with the eternal being of God, rather than with his Goodness.<sup>229</sup> Eckhart thus situates himself somewhere between Dietrich and Thomas, agreeing and disagreeing with both, in order to forward his own unique interpretation of intellection and divine union.

The following homily in the sermon collection, PAI 22 (Q 43), further unpacks the Meister's position and clarifies how Eckhart's particular understanding of the relationship between nature and grace in the beatific process differs from that of his Dominican

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<sup>227</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 52: "Philosophus: 'di sele hait in dirre craft muglichkeit alle dinc zu werdine geistliche'. In der wirkinden craft glichit sis ich deme vadere und wirkit alle dinc in eime nuwin wesine."

<sup>228</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 52: "der engil hait zvei forstentnisse. daz eine ist ein morgin licht, daz andere ist ein abintlicht."

<sup>229</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 21, ed. Strauch, 52: "das morginlicht ist daz he alle dinc sihit in Gode. daz abintlicht ist daz he di dinc sihit in sime naturlichen lichte... nu glichit sich fornuftikeit in der muglichin craft deme naturlichin lichte der engle, daz da ist daz abintlicht. in der wirkinden craft treit si alle dinc in deme morginlichte."

predecessors.<sup>230</sup> Like the previous sermon, in PAI 22 Eckhart focuses on the significance of a widow and her connection to a departed relative through an interpretation of Jesus' resurrection of the dead youth narrated in Luke 7:12-15. Eckhart begins by re-articulating a Thomist theme, encountered several times now in the PAI, namely, that the son of the widow signifies the intellect and that the intellect and the angel share the same nature.<sup>231</sup> "The intellect is the highest part of the soul," Eckhart explains, "where she has a being-with and an attachment to the angels and the angelic nature."<sup>232</sup> The Meister adds that when one fails to live in this angelic nature, which is above time, then the 'son' or intellect is dead, just like that of the widow.<sup>233</sup> The widow herself, however, teaches that one must detach oneself from all creatures and let them be, according to Eckhart, since the word widow names someone who has been abandoned as well as someone who abandons.<sup>234</sup> Eckhart also notes that the son who has perished is said to be young since to be young is to be close to one's origin and a young intellect is therefore both closer to its own generation and works within it.<sup>235</sup> This is why Eckhart stresses that "God works all His might in His giving birth and it belongs to [the giving birth] that the soul comes back to God."<sup>236</sup> This is because the soul is brought back to life through this birth which, as God's eternal

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<sup>230</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 52-54. For the critical edition of this sermon, see Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 43, ed. by Josef Quint in DW II, 310-30. This sermon is given as Homily 29\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 29\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De tempore*, 455-65.

<sup>231</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 52: "bi deme sone neme wir di fornuftikeit. da der man ist in der sele."

<sup>232</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 52: "fornuftikeit ist daz ubirte teil der sele, da si hait ein mide sîn und ein ingelozzinheit mit den englin in englisher nature."

<sup>233</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 52-3: "di englische nature inrurit keine zeit. also inberurit fornuftikeit, di der man ist in der sele, nicht zit. wanne man dar inne nicht inlebit, so stirbit der son darumme was si widewe."

<sup>234</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 53: "'Widewe' sprichit auch in eime anderen sinne also vil also daz forlazin ist und forlazin hât. also muze wir alle creature laz in und abschedin."

<sup>235</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 53: "darumme: 'jungelinc'. ein meister sprichit: 'daz ist junc daz sime beginner nahe ist'. fornuftikeit in der ist man me wirkinde, und ie man me wirkit in der craft, ie nehirt man siner geburt ist. daz ist junc daz siner geburt nahe ist."

<sup>236</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 53: "Got wirkit alle sine macht in sinir geburt, und horit da zu daz di sele widercume zu Gode."

speaking, is also how God speaks His Son into the soul.<sup>237</sup> The figures of the departed son and the widow therefore represent, according to Eckhart, how the intellect ought to be resurrected through detachment and by participating in the eternal birth God works for the soul. PAI 22 thus develops further the doctrine Eckhart had preached in PAI 20 and 21 by outlining its moral significance.

The second half of PAI 22, which introduces Eckhart's understanding of the role that grace plays in this process, returns to several claims which were already articulated in PAI 4. Now, however, the Meister relates them more explicitly to the description of intellection and divine union that was forwarded in PAI 20 and 21. Eckhart begins that Jesus's command to the dead son, "young man, arise," teaches that one must rise up out of works and into oneself.<sup>238</sup> This is because "a single work that God works in the simple light of the soul, that is more beautiful than all of the world and is more pleasing to God than all that he has worked in every creature."<sup>239</sup> Yet Eckhart adds that grace exists above this simple light of the soul and that it never enters the intellect or the will unless they are first elevated beyond themselves.<sup>240</sup> This is only possible, according to Eckhart, when the will is perfected by divine love and the intellect, which is above the will, is perfected by the divine truth.<sup>241</sup> Whereas in PAI 20 and 21 Eckhart

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<sup>237</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 53: "Got machit alle creature in eime spruce, aber daz di sele lebindic werde, daz sprach Got alle sine macht in sime sone... in der geburt wirdit si lebindic, und Got gebirit sinen son in di sele daz si lebindic werde."

<sup>238</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 53: "nu sprichit he: 'jungelinc, stant uf!' von deme werke und stant uf du sele in sich selber."

<sup>239</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 53-4: "ein einvaldic werc, daz Got wirkit in deme einvaldigen lichte der sele, daz ist schonir dan alle di werlint und ist Gode lustlicher dan alliz daz he ie geworchte an allin creaturen."

<sup>240</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 54: "Boben deme lichte ist gnade, di incumit numir in fornuftikeit noch in willin. Sal gnade in fornuftikeit cumen, so muz fornuftikeit und wille uber sich selbir cumen."

<sup>241</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 54: "des inmac nicht sin, wan der wille ist also edile an ume selber daz he nicht vollinbracht mac werdin dan mit gotlicher minne... noch ist ein teil da in pobin, daz ist fornuftikeit, di ist also edile an ur selber daz si nicht vollinbracht mac werdin dan mit gotlicher worheit."

had focused on the way that the intellect receives and conceives God as divine being—that is, considers the natural process of intellection and the role the soul plays in the return to God—the Meister’s focus in this sermon is far more on the agency of the divine and the effect it has upon the soul in that power where the soul and God are perfectly united. True union between the soul and God ultimately occurs in that place which is beyond both the good and the true, and which is made available through the virtue of grace.<sup>242</sup> For grace, Eckhart maintains, as he had done in PAI 4, never worked a good work nor does it take part in any work. Instead, “grace is a living in and a living with of the soul in God.”<sup>243</sup> Eckhart therefore concludes his sermon, perhaps thinking of his Dominican colleagues Thomas and Dietrich, that while some masters search for blessedness in the intellect, he argues that beatitude is found beyond the intellect, “where blessedness exists as blessedness, not as intellect, and God exists as God and the soul exists as it is an image of God.”<sup>244</sup> By reintroducing arguments he had first made in PAI 4, Eckhart in PAI 22 thus describes how grace is required for the union with God. He also shows how it is the agency of God rather than man that matters most in this union, arguing that not only the will, but the intellect also, cannot achieve this through their own nature.

Yet, because to possess even graced knowledge of God is to ascertain God in a mediated fashion, Eckhart in two other homilies included in the PAI, sermons 47 (Q 96) and 48 (Q82), indicates that complete union with the divine takes place *beyond* the supernatural light of grace. Preached to celebrate the feast of John the Baptist, both sermons explicitly discuss the soul’s need for grace insofar as John’s name signifies one who is in grace. PAI 47 and 48 explain how

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<sup>242</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 54: “gnade inworchte ni kein wer. Si fluzit wo luz an ubunge einir tugint.”

<sup>243</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 54: “gnade einit nicht keinen werke. Gnade ist ein wonen und ein midewonen der sele in Got”

<sup>244</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 22, ed. Strauch, 54: “etliche meistere suchin selekeit in fornuftikeit. selikeit lit noch an fornuftikeit noch an willin, mer da inpobin: da lit selikeit an, da selikeit lit also selikeit, nicht also fornuftikeit, und Got lit also Got, und di sele lit also si Godis bilde ist.”

grace is *created* and why its supernatural light is no longer needed when unmediated union with the divine is attained. The first sermon, which takes as its reading the angel's declaration to Zechariah in Luke 1:1 that "Elizabeth will give birth to a son and he will be called John," affords Eckhart the opportunity to introduce, once again, a meditation on the work of the angels.<sup>245</sup> An angel can reveal itself in two ways, the Meister begins: first, it may take on a body made from the elements and, working through nature, can miraculously make a tree fully grow out of a seed in one hour; second, the angel may manifest itself through a likeness of the divine light in order to demonstrate the will of God and imprint this will into the human soul.<sup>246</sup> Here, it is evident that Eckhart is drawing on the Augustinian notion of a twofold providence, one that is natural and another that is voluntary, which Dietrich of Freiberg had introduced in his writing to demarcate the subjects of philosophical and Christian theology. In fact, it is only after he has drawn this distinction and related it to the two works which the angel performs that Eckhart introduces his account of grace by relating it to the "triple birth" that John's growth in Elizabeth's womb signifies. The fact that John will be a child indicates not only that he will be in grace, the Meister preaches, but also that he should become great and be born holy.<sup>247</sup> The implication here is that such growth in grace and such becoming holy is revealed and perhaps even given by the angels, who flow out from God by intervening directly in the work of nature and by revealing God's providential will by taking on a likeness of His divine light. It is as if the

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<sup>245</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 47, ed. Strauch, 106-7. For the critical edition of this sermon, see Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 96, ed. by Georg Steer in DW IV, 202-19. This sermon is given as Homily 75\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 75\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De sanctis*, 156-63.

<sup>246</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 47, ed. Strauch, 106: "zwegirhande wis offenbarit sich der engil, also an eime lichamen den he nimit fon den elementin. der engil formac daz fon nature daz he mache einen baum in einir stunde zu bewisine, der manic jar wesit fon eime kernen... zu dem anderin male offenbarit sich der engil an eime glichnisse gotlichis lichtis, Godis willin zu bewisine der sele, und bindit Godis willin in daz licht und druckit den in di sele."

<sup>247</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 47, ed. Strauch, 106: "Johannes tudit sich also vil also 'in deme di gnade ist'. daz kint sal groiz werdin und helic geborn. darumme begeit man digerleige geburt, daz si gereinigt wordin in urre mudir libe."



distinction between the natural and voluntary order of providence, which was so significant to his German Dominican predecessors, is not as important to Eckhart as the fact that the supernatural light of grace is a providential and deliberate extension of the divine nature made available to the soul through angelic mediation. Yet this becomes the grounds for Eckhart's subsequent argument in this sermon that grace, insofar as it is something created, must give way before full divinizing union with God can take place.

Having specified the significance of John's childhood and explained the nature of angelic revelation, Eckhart in PAI 47 describes the three things that allow one to recognize the presence of grace in the soul. The Meister relates (1) that a soul possesses grace when she derives her being from God and has become divine; (2) when she has become similar to God and consequently manifests as a god to the devils; (3) when she is unsatisfied by the lack of total perfection.<sup>248</sup> This is why a heathen master—possibly Avicenna, or a comparable Peripatetic philosopher—maintains that “every perfection of the soul relates to the fact that she has a likeness of God, of the angels and of all creatures... [and] that the likeness and perfection of all creatures is a spiritual creation in the angels before they become created in creatures.”<sup>249</sup> Returning again to his frequent claim that the natural light of the intellect attains the divine light by participating in the angelic light of intellection, where the intelligible forms that flow forth from God are stored, Eckhart declares that “the soul, now, should be like the angels in the kingdom of heaven,” because “what the angels have possessed, is vowed to the soul,” and “what

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<sup>248</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 47, ed. Strauch, 107: “Bi drin dingin muge wir mirkin ob di gnade in der sele si. Daz erste, daz di sele gotvar si, wan si fon eime gotlichen wesine hercumit. daz andere, daz di sele machit Gode glich und druckit Godis glichesse in di sele und machit si gotvar, daz sis ich den tufilin irbudit for einen Got, daz ist fon der edikeit der gnade. daz dritte, daz der sele nicht ingnuge, si inhabe alle volincumenheit zumale.”

<sup>249</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 47, ed. Strauch, 107: “wan ein hedenisch meister spricht: ‘alle vollincumenheit der sele lit dar ane daz si habe glichnisse Godis, engle und allir creature’. glichnisse und vollincuminheit allir creature is geschaffen an den englin geistliche, er si geschaffin wordin an den creaturen.”

the angels have received, that should be given to her.”<sup>250</sup> The Meister consequently explains, in a manner that is rather close to the radical formulations of Eckhart of Gründig, how grace itself works in the soul to make this possible. Likening grace to a hatchet, Eckhart argues that “this hatchet directs the wishes of the worker toward their end,” since, “grace brings the soul into God and brings her above her very self and robs her of herself, and of all those things which are a creature, and unites the soul with God.”<sup>251</sup> But Eckhart concludes that grace works with the soul only until she has to make room for God, because grace itself is also a creature, and nothing created can be present to a soul united directly to God.<sup>252</sup> Eckhart’s argument here implies that grace, insofar as it is simply a tool that the workman uses to accomplish their desire, is discarded when the work itself is completed. Not only does this clarify that grace is related in some way to the natural and voluntary orders of providence that the angels mediate, just as Dietrich of Freiberg had argued, but it also suggests that Eckhart, like his German Dominican colleague, views grace as something created that must pass away once divinization has been achieved and the soul and God are one.

PAI 48 further develops the argument of the homily that preceded it in the sermon collection, taking as its reading Luke 1:66, which Eckhart translates into German as “what wonders will come from this child? The hand of God is with him!”<sup>253</sup> This verse signifies three

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<sup>250</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 47, ed. Strauch, 107: “nu sal di sele den englin glich sin in deme himmilriche. Waz di engle besezzin habin, daz ist der sele gelobit; waz di engle inphangin habin, daz sal ur werdin gegeben.”

<sup>251</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 47, ed. Strauch, 107: “Zu dem anderen male sulle wir mirkin wilche wis di gnade wirkit in der sele, also man prufin mac bi glichime, also bi eime bihile... diz bihil wirke des wercmannis gerunge uf daz ende. also brenget di gnade di sele in Got und brenget di sele uber sich selber und beraubt si uris selbis und allis des daz creature ist, und foreinit di sele mit Gode.”

<sup>252</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 47, ed. Strauch, 107: “also lange wirkit di gnade mit der sele daz si ez selber rumin muiz, daz da nicht inne blibet dand Got und di sele.” It is only the original version of Eckhart’s homily that insists explicitly upon the created nature of grace, while also stressing that the union between God and soul is “sunder mittel.” See Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 96, ed. Steer in DW IV, 219.

<sup>253</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 108-10. For the critical edition of this sermon, see Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 82, ed. by Josef Quint in DW III, 417-31. This sermon is given as Homily 77\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 77\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De sanctis*, 181-91.

things, Eckhart preaches.<sup>254</sup> First, the hand of God indicates the dignity of the master craftsman and refers to the Holy Spirit as well as the relationship between the members of the Trinity, where the Father works with the Holy Spirit in the same way that the heart works with the hand and animates the body.<sup>255</sup> The second, more important, thing that the verse signifies is the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul itself, and the Meister explains that since people either voluntarily or reluctantly follow God, this work is experienced either as pleasure or as suffering.<sup>256</sup>

“Therefore,” according to Eckhart, “God has out of the favor he has for the soul given her a divine light from the time when she was created, so that He in a likeness of Himself may be able to work with pleasure.”<sup>257</sup> Eckhart seems to be describing here the image of God given into the soul at her birth, which he elsewhere describes as the intellect, rather than the gift of grace as one might expect given his earlier reference to the Holy Spirit. The Meister for this reason notes, through recourse to nuptial imagery, that because no creature is able to work beyond what it possesses within itself, God has given a light to the soul, which is her own possession, and a “morning gift” that resides in her highest power.<sup>258</sup> “And although this is a likeness of God,”

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<sup>254</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 108: ‘Quis putas puer iste erit? etenim manus domini cum ipso est. an disin wortin sulle mirkin dru dinc.’”

<sup>255</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 108: “daz erste di wirdikeit des meisteris, da her sprichit: ‘Godis hant ist mit ume’. Di hant Godis bedudit den heligen geist durch zwei dinc daz erste, daz man mit der hant wirkit di werc, daz andere, daz si ein ist mit deme lichamen und mit deme arme. wan alle werc di der mensche wirkit mit der hant, di inspringint in deme herzin und tredint furbaz in di gelide und werdin vollenbracht an der hant. darumme mac man an disin wortin mirkin di helige drivaldikeit. den vader bi deme herzin und bi deme lichamen... also ist der vade rein aneenge und ein gesprinc allir gottlichin werke. abir der son ist bezeichint bi dem arme... also tridit di gotliche craft furbaz fon dem lichamin und arme in di hant, da der heilige geist bi bezeichint ist.”

<sup>256</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 108: “daz andere, daz wir mirkin di wirkunge des heiligen geistes... solde ich einen menschin leiden, he nicht min glichnisse in sich, he involgite mir nummir lüstliche, wan nummir kein bewegunge noch werc wirdit lüstliche geworcht one glichnisse. also ist ez umme di volge. wan alle lude muzin volgin, si wollin oder inwollin. volgin si ume willeliche, so ist ez un lüstlich.”

<sup>257</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 108-9: “darumme hait Got fon der gunst, di he zu der sele hait – so hait he ur gegeben ein gotlich licht fon der zit daz si geschaffin wart, uf daz he si in sines selbis glichnisse lüstliche gewirkin mochte.”

<sup>258</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 109: “Nu inmac kein creature furbaz gewirkin dan si in ur hat. darumme inmac di sele uber sich selbin nicht gewirkin wan mit dem lichte daz ir Got gegeben hait. wan ez ir eigin ist und ez ir Got gegeben hait zu einir morgingabe in di ubersten craft der sele.”

Eckhart declares, “it is still created by God, because the Creator is One and the light is something else and is a creature.”<sup>259</sup> To be raised above this light, which is evidently the natural light of the intellect rather than the divine spark of the soul, the mind requires the love of God. And this is the activity of the Holy Spirit, which burns within the soul the more like God the soul becomes.<sup>260</sup> In PAI 48 Eckhart therefore insinuates, unlike in PAI 47, and in a manner that seems to contradict a general tendency—on display in the entire sermon collection—to devalue the importance of love and divine goodness, that the intellect in its own nature requires an infusion from God’s loving will. And this infusion, the rest of the homily confirms, is the grace that lets the soul go beyond herself and into God.

Yet, just as he had in PAI 47, the Meister in this sermon is at pains to stress that such grace is not God, but a creature that must be dispensed with if complete, unmediated union with the divine nature is to occur. Noting that Luke 1:66 signifies how God performs a wonderful work in the soul, Eckhart again stresses how not only grace, but the person also, is like a tool wielded by God. “Because man is an instrument of God,” Eckhart accordingly explains, “and the instrument works according to the nobility of the master craftsman, therefore it is not enough for the soul that the Holy Spirit works in her, because He is not of her nature.”<sup>261</sup> Instead, the soul desires the divine light that God has given into her nature, which works beatitude in people, and which is made available to the soul through grace, insofar as grace “raises the soul up to God,

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<sup>259</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 109: “wi daz licht Godis glichnisse si, so ist ez doch geschaffin von Gode.”

<sup>260</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 109: “darumme cumit Got mit der libe zu der sele, uff daz her di libe sele irhebe, daz si uber sich selber gewirkin muge... darumme neme wir di libe uf bi dem fuire und den heligen geist bi dem winde durch daz wirkin des heligen geistes in der sele. ie der wint, der heilige geist, me wêit, ie daz fuir vollincumenir ist.”

<sup>261</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 109: “daz muiz sin fon noit daz ein ichelich gezauwe also verre reche alse der werzman wirkit, ob daz werc vollincumin sin sal, wan der mensche ist ein gezauwe Godis, und noch der edilkeit des meistris wirkit daz gezauwe. darumme ingnugit der sele nicht daz der helige geist in ur wirkit, daz he urre nature inist.”

unites her with Him and makes her divine.”<sup>262</sup> Yet grace qua grace, Eckhart maintains, does not satisfy the soul, since it is a creature and the soul desires to arrive “there, where God works in His own nature, where the master craftsman works in the nobility of the instrument, namely, in his own nature, where the work is as noble as the master craftsman, where He who shapes Himself and what has been shaped are all One.”<sup>263</sup> The soul in this way can become united with God such that “grace sloughs off from her, so that she no longer works with grace, but rather works in a divine way in God.”<sup>264</sup> Such a soul is “wonderfully enchanted and emerges out of herself, just as if a drop of water were poured into a barrel full of wine, so that she knows and is aware of nothing of herself.”<sup>265</sup> Gesturing toward Avicenna’s description of the sanctified intellect to describe how the soul is divinized by going beyond the supernatural light of grace, the Meister ends PAI 48—rather appropriately, given his earlier reference to the love of God—by citing Bernard of Clairvaux’s advice to Pope Eugenius III in *De diligendo Deo* that to love God is to love Him “without a way” and insofar as God is the beingless being, or “nothing,” that grounds this or that created being.<sup>266</sup> The soul therefore returns to her divine nature, by grasping that which is most like God within her, to such an extent that she forgets herself and insofar as

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<sup>262</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 109-110: “und also ez auch me gesprochin ist daz he ur gegeben hait ein licht, ein gotlich licht, daz ume glich ist und also mer also sin nature, und daz ist der sele also eginlich gegeben daz ez ein stücke ist der sele, daz da wirkit he luistliche muge in ur wirkin... an dem menschin wirkit ez selikeit, daz cumit fon der gnade Godis, di irhebit di sele uf zu Gode und foreinit si mit ume und machit si gotvar.”

<sup>263</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 110: “noch ignugit der sele nicht an der gnadin werke, wan si ein creature ist, si incume da zu da Got wirkit in sin selbes nature, da der wermeister noch der edilkeit des gezauwis, daz ist sines selbis nature, da daz werc also edile ist also der wermeister und der sich intgusit und di intgizunge alliz ein sin.”

<sup>264</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 110: “also wirdit di sele foreinit mit Gode und beslozin und da intglidet ir di gnade, daz si mit der gnade nicht me inwirkit, sunder in Got gotliche.”

<sup>265</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 110: “da wirdit di sele wondirliche bezorbirit und cumit fon ir selber, also der einin trophin wazzeris guze in eine budin vol winis, daz si fon ur selber nicht enweiz und wenit daz si Got si.”

<sup>266</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 48, ed. Strauch, 110: “ein cardenal fragite sente Bernhardin: ‘warumme sal man Got minnen und wilche wis’? Bernhart: ‘Got ist di sache, darum man un sal lip habin. di wise ist one wise, wan Got inist noch diz noch daz, daz man gesprechin mac, he ist ein wesin pobin alle wesin; darumme sal di wise wiselois sin, da mide man un lip sal hon, daz ist also lip also man ummir mac: daz ist ane wise’.”

grace is no longer required to work within her, since grace, like the soul, is a created rather than divine being.

These last two homilies in the PAI may give the impression that, as far as grace is concerned, Meister Eckhart agrees with Dietrich of Freiberg's argument that human beatitude and union with God consists in the soul's reclamation of the active intellect which flows out of the divine understanding. Yet, turning to one of Eckhart's most famous sermons, the final homily he preached as part of his *Gottesgeburtszyklus*, which was not included in the PAI, demonstrates that this is not the case.<sup>267</sup> In fact, sermon S 104 clarifies why the *Traktat* by Eckhart of Gründig insists that Dietrich rejected Eckhart's understanding of beatification despite their agreement, against Thomas, that it does not take place through an infusion of the supernatural light of grace. Taking as its reading Luke 2:49, "it is necessary that I be in the things which are of my Father," S 104 is a complicated sermon notable for its recourse to Peripatetic language and for its insistence that the eternal birth of the Word only takes place in a soul that is entirely receptive and suffering. This eternal birth, the Meister argues, takes place daily within the hidden depths of the soul, and is only accessible when all its various faculties submit to the power of God and detach themselves from their work, just as Christ taught in Matthew 11:12, according to Eckhart's translation, that "the violence of the heavenly kingdom and the violent seize it and tear it away."<sup>268</sup> To convey this understanding of detachment and union with the divine, S 104, like

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<sup>267</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. by Georg Steer in DW IV, 493-610. This sermon is given as Homily 16\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 16\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De tempore*, 273-99.

<sup>268</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 567: "Der mensche enmac niht komen se dirre geburt, er entziehe sich dinne aller sîner sinne in allen dingen. Und daz muoz geschehen mit grözem gewalt, daz alle krefte ze rücke suln getriben warden und irs werkes abegân. Disem allem muoz gewalt geschehen, ez engât anders niht zuo dan mit gewalt. Her umbe sprichit Kristus: 'das himelriche gewalt und di gewaltigen begrîfent ez und zuckent ez'." Eckhart translates the original Latin text of Matthew 11:12, which can be rendered such that it is heaven that suffers or undergoes violence, because the violent seize it, into German in a way that emphasizes the active power of heaven as a force that works with the violent. The point seems to be that the detached, by becoming violent with the violence of heaven, have submitted to God's power in order to put it into effect.

many of the other sermons which make up the *Gottesgeburtszylus*, rhetorically unfolds as a series of questions and answers between Eckhart and an imaginary interlocutor in his audience. The sophisticated philosophical content of the homily, as well as the nature of the questions that the imagined audience are called upon to propose, indicate that the Meister very probably delivered S 104 to a community of learned religious, possibly fellow members of the Dominican Order.<sup>269</sup> It is therefore quite appropriate to consider it in the context of Eckhart's debate with Dietrich over the role that understanding and grace play in the beatifying and divinizing process.<sup>270</sup>

The first rhetorical question the Meister poses allows him to introduce his explicitly Peripatetic account of intellection. "Someone comes to ask now concerning this birth about which we have been speaking," Eckhart begins, "whether it never stops or takes place in a single moment, provided that man goes and does everything without his powers so as to forget everything and know himself alone in [this birth]."<sup>271</sup> Eckhart answers that "man has an active, a passive and a possible intellect," which, as Alessandra Beccarisi and Alessandro Palazzo have convincingly argued, demonstrates the direct influence of Averroes' long commentary on the *De anima* upon the Meister's thinking.<sup>272</sup> Eckhart consequently explains that "the active intellect in

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<sup>269</sup> This is not to suggest that the pious laity weren't also present when this homily was delivered, nor that the Meister did not envision them as part of his potential audience.

<sup>270</sup> This assumption is perhaps further confirmed by the fact that Eckhart responds to questions about the priority of the contemplative or active life by evoking the authority of Thomas Aquinas in this sermon, and also provides guidance about what it truly means to follow Paul's command in II Tim 4:2 to "preach the word!"

<sup>271</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 568: "Nû vellet ein vrâge in von der geburt, dâ wir von gesprochen hân, ob si geschehe âne underlâz oder under wilen, sô sich der mensche dar zuo vûeget und alle sine math dar zuo tuot, daz er aller dinge vergezze und sich aleine hie inne wizze."

<sup>272</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 568: "Nû nim den underscheit. Der mensche hât eine wûrkende vernunft und eine lîdende vernunft und eine mûgelîche vernunft." Alessandra Beccarisi, "Zwischen Averroes, Avicenna und Avicbron. Meister Eckhart und die Noetik im Islam und Judentum," in *Meister Eckhart – interreligiös*, ed. by Christine Büchner, Markus Enders und Dietmar Mieth (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 223-40 and Alessandro Palazzo, "Eckhart's Islamic and Jewish Sources: Avicenna, Avicbron, and Averroes," in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, 281-97

all ways stands present, forever ready to work on what is in God or in creation.”<sup>273</sup> In a creature, for instance, it exercises itself intellectually by ordering the creature and returning it back into its origin, or by carrying itself up toward divine honor and praise.<sup>274</sup> Eckhart argues that when God undertakes his works, however, the mind must hold itself in receptivity, and it is implied that this is how his audience ought to conceive of the passive intellect.<sup>275</sup> The possible intellect, finally, emerges in both. “What God wishes to act and the mind to receive,” Eckhart concludes, “this will take place in possibility.”<sup>276</sup> The created human intellect acts, therefore, when the mind itself maintains its works, whereas it is passive whenever God Himself undertakes the work. And the possible intellect precedes both, since it is simply the capacity in the mind that natural and divine understanding can occur. This is why when the mind works according to its own power and in righteous faith, Eckhart determines, the Spirit of God maintains it and its works so that the mind may contemplate and receive, or suffer, God—an act so troubling to the mind, especially insofar as it is embodied, that it only experiences God for a brief moment.<sup>277</sup> The answer to the first rhetorical question proposed by Eckhart in S 104 therefore reveals how a Peripatetic description of the intellect, such as that provided by Averroes, is needed if one wishes to properly comprehend how God is born within the soul. Most importantly, perhaps, by introducing the notion of a passive intellect alongside the active and possible intellects, Eckhart alters the terms

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<sup>273</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 568-70: “Diu würcende vernunft stât alwege gegenwartic iemer etwaz ze würcenne, ez sî in gote oder in der creature.”

<sup>274</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 570: “Swenne sî sîch vernünfftliche üebet in der créature als in einer ordenunge und widertragenne der créature wider in im ursprunc oder sich selber üftreget ze götlicher êre und ze götlichem lobe, daz stât noch allez wol in ir math und in im gewalt und heizet noch würcende.”

<sup>275</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104 ed. Steer in DW IV, 570: “Sô sich aber got des werkes underwindet, sô muoz der geist sich halten in einer lîdelicheit.”

<sup>276</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 570-71: “Aber diu mûgeliche vernunft diu longet ze in beiden: swaz got gewürken mûge und der geist gelîden, daz daz ervolget werde nâch mûgelicheit.”

<sup>277</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 572-73: “Sô sich aber der geist üebet nâch sîner math in rehten triuwen, sô schouwet und lîdet der geist got. Wan aber daz lîden und daz schouwen gotes dem geiste überlestic ist sunderlîche in disem lîbe, dar umbe underziuhet sich got dem geiste underwîlen.”



of the dispute about the intellect that took place in the German Dominican School by introducing a third type of understanding, which the defenders of Thomas and Dietrich had not considered.

In fact, Meister Eckhart in S 104 ultimately argues that beatitude and union with God takes place in the passive intellect, not in the active intellect, as Dietrich of Freiberg had argued, nor in the possible intellect, as Thomas Aquinas had maintained. This interpretation of Eckhart's homily is confirmed in a latter part of the sermon when the Meister responds to yet another rhetorical question: "Ah, my Lord, what should it mean, then, to be in the still silence about which you speak to us at such length!?"<sup>278</sup> Eckhart raises this question because he had just explained to his audience how God's eternal Word, as a hidden word born deep inside the soul, "should be in your thoughts, in your intellect and in the will, and it has to shine out in works,"<sup>279</sup> which implies that the silent stillness the Meister advocates "has many images, since each work must happen in its own proper image, whether it is an internal or an external work."<sup>280</sup> Eckhart responds to his own question by reminding his audience about the distinction between the active and passive intellect he had previously drawn.<sup>281</sup> "The active intellect," he explains, "cleaves images off external things and undresses them of matter and of accidents and puts them in the passive intellect and conceives therein their spiritual image in her."<sup>282</sup> In this way, according to Eckhart, the active intellect impregnates the passive intellect, and the latter is unable to maintain these images as knowledge unless it is enlightened (i.e, impregnated) in some manner by the

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<sup>278</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 584: "Nû mohtest dû sprechen: Ach, herre, waz sol ez denne sîn mit dem stilleswîgenne, von dem ir uns sô vil gesaget hât?"

<sup>279</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 583: "Ez sol in dir sîn in dem gedanke, in der vernunft und in dem willen, un sol ouch ûzliuhten an den werken."

<sup>280</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 584-85: "Wan hie zuo gehoerent vil bilde, wan ein ieglich werk muoz geschehen in sînem eigenen bilde, ez sn inwendigiu oder ûzwendigiu werk."

<sup>281</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 585: "Nû merket! Wir hân dâ vor gesprochen von einer wûrkender vernunft und von einer lîdender vernunft."

<sup>282</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 585-86: "Diu wûrkende vernunft houwet diu bilde abe von den ûzern dîngen und entkleidet sie von materie und von zuovalle und setzet sie in die lîdende vernunft, und diu gebirt ir geistlîchiu bilde in sie."

active intellect.<sup>283</sup> The passive intellect is thus defined as that part of the intellect which receives and stores images. This passage in the homily makes clear that the passive intellect to which Eckhart refers is the phantasmatic or imaginative power described by Averroes which, as the material intellect, is the individuating principle which defines an intellect as the intellect of this or that particular person. That the passive intellect, where beatific union with God's eternal birth occurs, is the imaginative power of the soul shows that Eckhart's rhetorical interlocutor had good cause to be concerned that the silent stillness the Meister defended could be characterized by a continual production of images. In order to demonstrate that beatitude takes place in the passive intellect, Eckhart had to show in S 104 why that was not actually a problem.

Eckhart does so by insisting that "all that the active intellect does in a natural man, God does the same and even more in a detached man."<sup>284</sup> For God removes the active intellect from the detached man and takes its place in order to undertake the work that is proper to it, namely, He furnishes the passive intellect with spiritual images and enlightens it so that it may hold these images within itself as knowledge.<sup>285</sup> "Eyâ! When man is especially quiet and the active intellect in him has been silenced," the Meister consequently exclaims, "then God must by necessity undertake its work, be Himself the master craftsman, and give Himself into the passive intellect!"<sup>286</sup> Beatific detachment is therefore neither a reclamation of the active intellect within the deepest recesses of the soul, as Dietrich had taught, nor is it the possible intellect's becoming conscious of God through an infused light of grace, as Thomas contended. Rather it occurs when

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<sup>283</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 586: "Und sô diu lîdende vernunft von der wûrkenden swanger worden ist, sô behebet und bekennet si diu dinc mit helfe der wûrkenden vernunft."

<sup>284</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 587: "Sehet, allez daz diu wûrkende vernunft tuot an einem natûrlîchen menschen, daz selbe und verre mê tuot got an einem abegescheiden menschen."

<sup>285</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 587: "Er nimet im abe die wûrkende vernunft und setzet sich selber an ir stat wider und wûrket selber dâ allez daz, daz diu wûrkende vernunft solte wûrken."

<sup>286</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 587-89: "Eyâ, swenne sich der mensche zemâle mûeziget und diu wûrkende vernunft an im gesîget, sô muoz sich got von nôt des werkes underwinden und muoz selber dâ werkmeister sîn und sich selber gebern in die lîdende vernunft."

God Himself works in a passive soul, where divine images, rather than images conceptually abstracted from created things, are impregnated directly into the intellect that silently (but joyfully) suffers God alone. For this reason, “God gives birth to many images altogether in a single point,” and “what good is bequeathed to you, it forms itself and gives itself there altogether and in a single glance and in one moment.”<sup>287</sup> The Meister preaches, therefore, that Paul in Phil 4:13 had announced “I am able to do all things in He who strengthens me,” because, when God takes over the role of the active intellect in the soul, “I can do not only this or that but also all things unseparated from Him,” and “these images of these works are neither in you nor in your nature; instead, they are of the master craftsman of nature who has situated the work and image within it.”<sup>288</sup> This is why what is properly eternal and takes place without images is received and conceived in time and through created images. S 104 thus explains how God Himself enters into the mind by replacing the active intellect—or, more precisely, it shows how the intellect must become totally passive in order to receive images directly from God through an unmediated union where there is no longer any difference between the eternal birth of the Word and the soul’s intellection.<sup>289</sup>

One final rhetorical question inserted by Eckhart into S 104 clarifies the nature of this passive suffering of God and how it is experienced in this life. The Meister’s imaginary

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<sup>287</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 590: “Aber sô got wûrket an der stat der wûrkenden vernunft, sô gebirt er manigiu bilde mit einander in einem puncten. Wan also got dich beweget ze einem guoten werke, zerhant sô erbietent sich alle dîne krefte ze allen guoten werken: dîn gemüete gât mit der vart ûf allez guot.”

<sup>288</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 590-91: “Alsô sprach der edel Paulus: ‘ich vermac aliu dinc in dem, der mich sterket’. In im vermac ich niht aleine diz oder daz, sunder alliu dinc und in im ungescheiden. Hie bi solt dû wizzen, daz disiu bilde dirre werke niht dîn ensint noch der natûre, mêr: sies int des werkmeisters der nature der daz werk und daz bilde darîn geleget hât.”

<sup>289</sup> We see also the extent to which Eckhart in this sermon, by conceiving the soul as passively receiving and conceiving images directly from God, rather than as they are mediated by the sensible and intelligible world accessed through the possible and active intellect, frustrates a common reading of his mystical theology: namely, as a rejection of visionary experience and as suspicious of theophanies. A representative account of this reading, which argues that the Meister’s theology entails an “anti-experiential mysticism,” as well as a critical rejection of the imagination, can be found in Turner, *The Darkness of God*, 168-85.

interlocutor, after the account of how passive intellection participates in the eternal birth of the Word, asks “since the moment that my intellect has robbed itself of its natural work and in this way no longer has its proper image or work, upon what, then, does it hold fast? For it must always hold itself fast to something!”<sup>290</sup> This is because, the rhetorical interlocutor contends, the powers of the soul need something which underlies them as a substrate, whether this be the memory, intellect or the will.<sup>291</sup> Eckhart’s response is to insist, as he had done in several of the homilies collected in the PAI, that a “deprived” intellect grasps “naked being” stripped of accidents, because “when the intellect knows the truth of a being, it bends itself at once towards it, places itself there to rest, and speaks there intellectually its word about the object which it has there.”<sup>292</sup> Describing once again how the intellect abstracts intelligible forms from created being in order to know the truth underlying what the senses perceive, Eckhart in response to the question he has been posed determines that an intellect, unless it comes to rest in such truth, must continuously search for the ground of the entity it seeks to know.<sup>293</sup> This is why, he concludes, one can study for years until one gains an adequate hold upon a natural truth, as well as why “the intellect in this life never arrives at the ground of the supernatural truth which is God.”<sup>294</sup>

Eckhart’s description of the passive conception of God must therefore account for the intellect’s

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<sup>290</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 591: “Nû möhtest dû vrâgen: Sît dem mâle daz sich mîn vernunft hât beroubet irs natiurlîchen werkes und daz si kein eigen bilde noch werk niht enhât, war ûf ist denne ir enthalten? Wan si muoz sich iemer ûf etwaz enthalten.”

<sup>291</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 591-92: “Die krefte wellent sich iemer etwâ anhaften und dar inne wûrken, ez sî gehugnisse, vernunft und wille.”

<sup>292</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 592-93: “Nû merket dise berihtunge. Der vernunft vûrwurf und ir entalt ist wesen und niht zuoval, sunder daz blôz lûter wesen in im selber. Swenne diu vernunft bekennet ein wârheit eines wesens, zehant sô neiget si sich dar ûf und lât sich dâ sprichet si ir wort vernünftliche von dem vûrwurfe, den si dâ hât.”

<sup>293</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 593: “Mêr: alsô lange diu vernunft des wesens wârheit eigenliche niht envindet... alsô lange stât si alles in einem suoche und in einem beitenne und enneiget sich niht noch enruowet niht, mêr: si arbeitet noch alles und leget abe allez suoche in einem beitenne.”

<sup>294</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 594: “Und alsô ist si etwenne ein jâr oder mê in einem arbeitenne in einer natiurlîchen wârheit... Dar umbe gerüeret diu vernunft niemer in disem lebene den grunt der übernatiurlîchen wârheit, diu got ist.”

natural desire to know, as well as clarify how the intellect in this life continually strives to grasp the true ground of all existence as truth.

In characteristically apophatic fashion, therefore, the Meister insists in S 104 that the human intellect is always working toward a knowledge of everything in God that one should more properly describe as a kind of “not knowing” than as knowing.<sup>295</sup> This is because, Eckhart explains, in this life God reveals himself primarily through that which is most unlike Himself, perhaps thinking of Pseudo-Dionysius’ argument that symbolic theology names God by employing “dissimilar similarities.”<sup>296</sup> This leads Eckhart to argue that insofar as the truth of God is present in this life only in the ground of the soul, which is hidden from it, the intellect, which may only rest in the immutability of God, strives continuously toward that which it can never adequately know.<sup>297</sup> Man, therefore, may only know what God is *not*, and Eckhart argues that it is precisely from this desire to know that the intellectual man must detach himself.<sup>298</sup> “By doing without this for a time,” the Meister explains, “the intellect is not at all subjected to an essential object, but rather it waits for all things just as matter awaits form.”<sup>299</sup> As Beccarisi has shown, following the suggestion of Nadia Bray, Eckhart draws here upon the *Fons vitae* of ibn Gabirol to define precisely how detachment is a kind of receptive expectation characterized as much by restlessness as it is by Stoic apathy, where the soul, unable to fully ascertain God,

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<sup>295</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 595: “Alsô enmac der mensche zemâle niht wizzen, waz got ist, mêt: etwaz weiz er wol, waz got niht enist.”

<sup>296</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 594: “Got offenbâret sich niemer sô sêre in disem lebene, ez ensî nochdenne ein niht gegen dem, daz er ist.”

<sup>297</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 594-95: “Wie daz diu wârheit sî in dem grunde, si ist aber bedeckt und verborgen der vernunft. Und alle die wîle sô daz ist, sô entwirt diu vernunft niht enthalten, daz si niht ruowe enhave als in einem unwandellîchen vürwurfe. Si enrouwet noch niht, mêt: si beitet und bereitet sich noch ze einem, daz noch bekant sol warden und noch verborgen ist.”

<sup>298</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 595: “Und daz selbe scheidet der vernünftic mensche allez abe.”

<sup>299</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 595: “Die wîle entwirt diu vernunft niht enthalten in keinem wesenlîchen vürwurfe, mêt: si beitet alles als diu materie der forme.”

nevertheless accepts that what will be will be.<sup>300</sup> The Meister therefore concludes that “just as matter does not rest unless it is filled with all forms, so the intellect does not rest, unless it is in the essential truth which seals away all things within itself.”<sup>301</sup> And this is the divine rather than created being that alone satisfies the intellect and toward which God continuously draws it—to such an extent, Eckhart declares, evoking ibn Gabirol’s poetic description of hell, that “the soul exists as all torment and grief toward the Almighty.”<sup>302</sup> The passive intellection which Eckhart has defended throughout S 104, in the final analysis, is consequently a real and even painful suffering. And despite his frequent description in this sermon, as well as the homilies included in the PAI, that beatific union with God is experienced, through grace, as an ecstatic joy, or in the ground of the soul as yielded equanimity, the Meister makes clear, through recourse to the Peripatetic philosophers, that the contemplative search for God can also be quite harrowing, even if exceedingly desirable.

### *Conclusion*

Meister Eckhart’s conception of divine science and beatitude reinterprets the argument of Albert the Great even as it is situated between the warring approaches of the followers of Thomas Aquinas and Dietrich of Freiberg within the German Dominican School. Attempting to move

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<sup>300</sup> Beccarisi, “Zwischen Averroes, Avicenna und Avicébron,” 237-8. In an earlier study Fernand Brunner highlights the use Eckhart made of Neoplatonic themes from ibn Gabirol and conjectures, based on anonymous references to the *Fons vitae* in two vernacular sermons by the Meister, that the Jewish philosopher could have furnished Eckhart with his description of the soul’s entrance into the divine world, where the soul is described as comparable to a naked substance that lacks a body—a description which goes back to Plotinus’ *Enneads* 8:1, and which would have been accessible to ibn Gabirol in the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle*. Cf. Fernand Brunner, “Maitre Eckhart et Avicébron,” in *Lectionum varietates: hommage a Paul Vignaux (1904-1987)*, ed. by Jean Jolivet, Zenon Kaluza and Alain de Libera (Paris: J. Vrin, 1991), 133-54.

<sup>301</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 595-96: “Wan als diu materie niht enrouwet, si enwerde denne ervüllet mit allen formen, alsô enrouwet diu vernunft niht dan aleine in der wesentflichen wârheit, diu alliu dinc in ir beslozen hât.”

<sup>302</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 104, ed. Steer in DW IV, 596: “Des wesens benüeget sie aleine. Und daz ziuhet ir got vürbaz und vürbaz, umbe daz er irn vlîz erwecke, und reizet si.e, ie vürbaz ze gânnne und mê ze ervolgenne und ze begrîfenne daz gewâre gruntlôse guot, und daz si ir niht enlâze benüegen mit keinen dingen, mer: alles queln und jâmern nâch dem allerhoehsten.”

beyond the perfection that the created lights of nature and grace afford to the philosophical and Christian theologian, in the vernacular sermons that his disciples collected in the *Paradisus anime intelligentis* Eckhart argues for a beatification characterized by the negation of the will and the intellect which produces a joyous suffering receptive to the eternal work of the uncreated Godhead. This argument entailed not only a re-interpretation of the relationship between the two providential orders that had mattered to Dietrich of Freiberg's account of the difference between philosophical and Christian theology—not only because the Meister, following Thomas, rejected the distinction between the separate intelligences and the angels operative in Dietrich's metaphysics and radicalized by Eckhart of Gründig, but also because Eckhart rejected his view that beatitude occurs when the active intellect conjoins with the divine intellect. Instead, Eckhart argued that God takes the place of the active intellect and impregnates the passive intellect with divine images, drawing on arguments from Averroes and ibn Gabirol to characterize detachment as a kind of joyous suffering, while also rejecting the Thomist claim that in beatitude the possible intellect always requires a supernatural infusion of grace to apprehend the divine.

Yet the Meister's conception of the practice of theology and the vocation of the theologian, as we have seen, is marked by the continuities rather than the discontinuities he identified between the divine science of the philosophers and that of the Christians. For instance, in his inaugural sermon for the feast of St. Augustine he insisted that both theologies were grounded in a shared metaphysical and ethical approach that rejected Albert's claim that philosophical theology is characterized by its tendency to separate metaphysics and ethics. Moreover, following Dietrich of Freiberg, Eckhart argued for the priority of the divine truth over divine goodness and defended a view of God as existing because he understands rather than as understanding because he exists, rejecting Albert and Ulrich's conception of Christian theology

as an affective divine science characterized by its piety and faith in that God who is fundamentally Good. Whether he conceived of theology as tied to an axiomatic method grounded in a distinct doctrine of the transcendentals and the practice of dialectical syllogism, or as a parabolic hermeneutic that approaches the scriptural text as a poetic text comparable to the fables used by the philosophers to teach divine, natural and ethical truths, Eckhart maintained that it was similarity rather than difference that characterized the two theologies whose relation the German Dominicans had been intimately concerned to define. How this Eckhartian preference for the similarities and continuities rather than the differences and discontinuities relates to the Meister's partiality toward Plato and Platonism, and how this preference informed the subsequent conception of philosophical and Christian theology in the work of the German Dominicans Berthold of Moosburg and Johannes Tauler, will be discussed in the following chapter. There, we will see that the distinction between the divine science of the philosophers and that of the saints was replaced by a conception of Platonic theology as a supersapiential divine science that goes beyond and corrects the metaphysics and epistemology of the Aristotelians.



## Chapter Four: Platonism in the German Dominican School after Meister Eckhart

The ground of the soul was familiar to the heathens and as they searched for this ground they came to hate transitory things. Great masters such as Proclus and Plato come and give a clear definition of it, and this definition is for those who are far from it who cannot find it... My children, this came to them in the inmost ground, which they experienced and beheld!

Johannes Tauler, Sermon V 61.<sup>1</sup>

Several times in the last chapter I indicated moments where the similarity between Plato and scripture mattered to Meister Eckhart's conception of the practice and goal of theology. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the common assumption in scholarship that German Dominican scholasticism and mysticism is characterized by a Platonism that departs from the "normative" Aristotelian orientation of thirteenth-century philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Although it would be overly presumptuous to ignore or dismiss the significance of Eckhart's many engagements with Peripatetic philosophers and concepts in his scholastic writing and vernacular preaching, there is some truth to the claim that Eckhart at significant moments in his career emphasized affinities between Christian theology and Platonism.<sup>3</sup> This is a marked departure from the practice of Albert, who had routinely criticized the followers of Plato for their departure from the Peripatetic truth—even as his own understanding of Aristotle was decidedly Neoplatonized—and brings the

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<sup>1</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. by Ferdinand Vetter in *Die Predigten Taulers* (Zürich: Weidmann, 1968), 332: "Disem grunde woren die heiden heimlich und versmochten ze mole zergengkliche ding und giengen disem grunde nach. Aber so kamen die grossen meister als Proculus und Plato und gabent des ein klor underscheit den die dis underscheit als verre nüt vinden enkonden... Kinder, dis kam alles us disem inwendigen grunde: dem lebtent si und wartent des."

<sup>2</sup> Paradigmatically, this assumption has been forwarded by the Neo-Thomist historians Maurice de Wulf and Étienne Gilson, who characterize the German Dominicans as "deviating" from the scholastic norm by way of an essentially mystical and Augustinian (Neo-)platonism. See de Wulf, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, 15-26 and Gilson, *The History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 431-46. Ruedi Imbach, "Le-Néo-Platonisme medieval," offers a less critical evaluation of the German Dominican recourse to Plato, which nevertheless reinscribes several of de Wulf and Gilson's assumptions. It was to correct this characterization of the German Dominican School led Kurt Flasch and Alain de Libera to demonstrate the doxographically Peripatetic orientation of Albert and his followers, as discussed in the introduction.

<sup>3</sup> Compare to Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: Crossroads, 2001), 169-7 whose quantitative comparison of Eckhart's references to Aristotle and Plato leads him to designate Eckhart more a follower of the Stagirite than a disciple of Plato.

Meister closer to Ulrich of Straburg, who emphasized the important similarities rather than differences between Platonic metaphysics and Christian theology. Examining why Meister Eckhart emphasized the authority of Plato, as well as how this emphasis affected and relates to subsequent German Dominican engagements with Platonism, forms the substance of the investigation of this chapter.

In this chapter, I thus conclude my history of the German Dominican School by examining Meister Eckhart's argument in his vernacular preaching that the Platonists approach God in a more appropriate manner than the Peripatetics, showing how his turn to Plato entailed a critique of Aristotelian metaphysics and noetics. I then show how this turn to Plato prepared the way for the subsequent turn to Proclus which characterizes the theology of Berthold of Moosburg and Johannes Tauler, who reassemble divine science by setting aside prior German Dominican attempts to demarcate philosophical and Christian theology. Instead, they posit that the central distinction that ought to matter to a proper conception of theology and its practice is the difference they identify between the supersapiential divine science of the Platonists and the Peripatetic wisdom that not only reduces the divine to the epistemic categories developed to apprehend created being, but also directs the theologian away from the divine ground out of which they ought to teach and live. I argue, in other words, that German Dominican theology in the period after Meister Eckhart's career becomes distinctly Platonic since it is Plato and Proclus, rather than Aristotle and the Peripatetic philosophers, who are seen to be the appropriate philosophical models for Christian theology conceived as a spiritual practice of detachment that is grounded in a self-emptying unity with the God beyond being.

*Meister Eckhart: Platonism and the Limits of Aristotelianism*

The previous chapter has demonstrated that Eckhart's conception of beatitude was marked by a unique and radical understanding of the Peripatetic account of the intellect that departed from the positions of both Thomas and Dietrich. In the following, however, I show how the Meister drew upon the Platonic conception of theology as both metaphysics and ethics he had developed in his scholastic writing. I do so to demonstrate how for Eckhart the preacher Plato and the Platonists not only represented explicit models for Christian piety, but also offered an approach to the God as One that accorded remarkably well with the approach of the Christian authorities he also cited in his sermons, such as Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Concerned to demonstrate that Peripatetic noetics had specific limits and that the followers of Aristotle in the schools inappropriately reduced the transcendent One to a conceptual vocabulary developed to logically comprehend created rather than uncreated being, Eckhart ultimately saw the Platonists as offering a theology characterized by detachment and annihilation of the self. For this reason, as the following demonstrates, his vernacular theology constitutes yet another instance of the destabilization of the rigid boundaries between philosophical and Christian divine science that had characterized the work of the German Dominicans who were active prior to Meister Eckhart. It also establishes the theological horizon that explains the more radical turn to Plato and Proclus which characterized the theology of the German Dominicans active after the Meister had been condemned for suspect teaching and heretical depravity.

In the last chapter we have seen that the Meister, like Dietrich before him, subscribed to a version of Albert the Great's metaphysics of flow, modified by Thomas Aquinas' angelology. Eckhart's vernacular sermon Q 80, however, shows that the Meister places this metaphysics consciously within a doctrinal context marked by a recognition that Albert is a Peripatetic

authority.<sup>4</sup> Including an extensive summary of key arguments from the *Liber de causis*, which Eckhart cites under the name *The Light of Lights*, and which he attributes to “a heathen master,”<sup>5</sup> sermon Q 80 takes as its reading Luke 16:19, which the Meister translates into German as “there lived a rich man, who was adorned with fur and velvet and ate food all day and who had no name.”<sup>6</sup> Interpreting the rich man with no name as a figure for God as the First Cause, which is rich in itself, and thus the flowing ground of all created existence, Eckhart also cites “Bishop Albert” several times alongside the *Liber de causis* in order to express how God is paradoxically the being that is most secret and hidden, as well as that being which communicates itself and is, for this reason, the most desirable.<sup>7</sup> Although some commentators have understood these citations to demonstrate the Meister’s familiarity with, and favorable opinion of, Albert’s *Liber de causis et processu universitatis a prima causa*, as Alessandra Beccarisi has convincingly argued, Eckhart’s references to his German Dominican predecessor in this sermon show that it was more probably Albert’s scriptural commentaries, especially the *Super Matthaem*, that furnished Eckhart with his knowledge of Albert’s Peripatetic metaphysics of flow.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>4</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 80*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW III, 378-88. See also Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis 59*, ed. Strauch, 125-27. This sermon is given as Homily 55\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 55\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De tempore*, 724-33.

<sup>5</sup> In the Meister’s vernacular oeuvre, the heathen (heiden) master is a hybrid figure, a stereotypical pagan sage or sorcerer that emerges out of an explicitly European Christian imaginary, where the Greek or Indian polytheist and the Arab Muslim are conflated. This figure of the heathen is ultimately a product not only of the broader orientalist and racist discourse of medieval Christianity, but is also, importantly, a prominent feature in medieval German lyric—most famously and ambivalently in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival* and *Willehalm*. See Timothy R. Jackson, “‘cristen, ketzer, heiden, jüden’: Questions of Identity in the Middle Ages,” in *Encounters with Islam in German Literature and Culture*, ed. by James Hodkinson and Jeffrey Morrison (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 19-35.

<sup>6</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 80*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW III, 378: “‘Homo quidam erat dives.’ ‘Ez was ein richer mensche, der was gezieret mit pfelle und mit samite und az alle tage verwenete spîse und enhâte niht namen.’”

<sup>7</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 80*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW III, 385-86: “Daz dritte: daz er ursprunlich ist, dar umbe ist er üzvliezende in alliu dinc. Hie von spricht bischof Albrecht: drierhande wîs vliuzet er ûz in allieu dinc gemeinliche: mit wesene und mit lebene und mit liehte und sunderliche in die vernünftigen sêle an mûgentheit alle dinge und an einem widerrucker der crêatûren in irn êrsten ursprung: dis ist lieht der liehte, wan ‘alle gâbe und volkommenheit vliezent von dem vater der liehte’, als sant Jâcobus spricht.”

<sup>8</sup> See Alessandra Beccarisi, “*Sicut Albertus saepe dicebat: Albertus Magnus und Meister Eckhart im Lichte neuerer Forschungen* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2019), 36-41.

Q 80 evinces some important doctrinal continuities between Albert and Eckhart's theology. It shows that, insofar as Eckhart subscribes to Peripatetic metaphysics, he does so in accord with the understanding of this philosophical theology which characterized the other members of the German Dominican School.

In keeping with his general tendency, Eckhart begins Q 80 with the assertion that the heathen masters teach that "man" signifies the intellect, and the fact that this term in Scripture refers to God teaches that the intellect is the noblest thing in God.<sup>9</sup> This is because the divine intellect is where God is revealed to Himself, flows into Himself, and emanates into all created things.<sup>10</sup> In other words, as Eckhart often argues, without the divine intellect there would be no Trinity and no creative emanation could take place.<sup>11</sup> Yet the fact that the man which signifies the intellect in Luke 16:19 has no name teaches, according to Eckhart, that "the groundless God is without names, because all the names that the soul gives to Him, she takes from her own understanding."<sup>12</sup> Adding that he refers here not to graced but to natural knowledge, since he concedes in this sermon that the sort of knowledge which was granted to Paul could have afforded knowledge of God's proper names, Eckhart argues that *The Light of Lights* confirms his interpretation of the scriptural text, since it teaches that "God is superessential, beyond speech, and beyond knowledge, that is, [beyond] the natural understanding."<sup>13</sup> God is unknowable,

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<sup>9</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 80, ed. by Josef Quint in DW III, 379: "Mensche' sprichet als vil as ein verstandic dinc, daz sprichit ein heidenischer meister. Bî dem menschen verstât man got in der geschrift. Sant Grêgôrius sprichet: waere an gote iht edeler einz dan da zander, ob man daz gesprechen möhte, daz waere verstantnisse." The editor of this sermon has not been able to trace Eckhart's reference to Gregory the Great here.

<sup>10</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 80, ed. by Josef Quint in DW III, 379: "wan an verstantnisse ist got im selben offenbaere, an verstantnisse vervliuzet ist got in sich selber, an verstantnisse vliuzet got ûz in alliu dinc, an verstantnisse schuof got alliu dinc."

<sup>11</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 80, ed. by Josef Quint in DW III, 379: "Und enwaere an got niht verstantnisse, sô enmöhte diu drîvalticheit niht gesîn; sô enwaere ouch nie créature ûzgevlossen."

<sup>12</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 80, ed. by Josef Quint in DW III, 380: "Er enhâte niht namen. Alsô ist der gruntlôse got sunder namen; wan alle die namen, die im diu sêle gibet, die nimit si in ir selbes verstantnisse."

<sup>13</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 80, ed. by Josef Quint in DW III, 380-81: "got ist überwesenlich und überredelich und überverstentlich, daz natiurliche verstân ist. Ich enspriche niht von gnaediclichem verstantne, wan

Eckhart declares, because He has no cause, lacks a reason for existing, and does not work.<sup>14</sup> The philosophical account of man as a figure for the intellect thus provides Eckhart the opportunity to introduce his characteristic emphasis on the divine understanding as the transcendent and groundless Godhead. The Peripatetic *Light of Lights* and Christian theology agree, the Meister concludes, that this Godhead is ineffable as well as inaccessible to natural (i.e., rational) understanding.

Yet Peripatetic divine science also allows the theologian to glean some positive knowledge of the creative activity of God, if not the Godhead, insofar as this is revealed parabolically by Luke 16:19. Eckhart argues that the wealth of the anonymous man, for instance, signifies the extent to which God is rich in Himself and in all things.<sup>15</sup> This entails, Eckhart explains, citing five propositions derived from the *Liber de causis*: that God is the First Cause which flows into all things; that God is simple in his being, because He is the inwardness of all things; that God is original, since He is in community with all things; that God is immutable, since He is the most self-sustaining; that God is perfect, because He is what is most desirable.<sup>16</sup> Q 80, through its exegesis of the significance of the anonymous rich man, ultimately concludes in a characteristically Peripatetic fashion, that the divine intellect possessed by God is the unknowable First Cause, which flows forth and abundantly gives itself to creatures as the very ground of their existence. The Peripatetic doctrine of the *Liber de causis*, interpreted following

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ein mensche möhte als verre gezogen warden gnâden, daz er verstüende, als sant Paulus verstuont, der in den dritten himel gezucket wart.”

<sup>14</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 80, ed. by Josef Quint in DW III, 381: “Her umbe blîbet got unverstanden, wan er von niemanne gesachet enist, wan er is tie daz êrste.”

<sup>15</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 80, ed. by Josef Quint in DW III, 382: “Der mensche was ouch ‘rîche’. Alsô ist got rîche in im selber und in allen dingen.”

<sup>16</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 80, ed. by Josef Quint in DW III, 382-83: “Nû merket! Diu rîcheit gotes diu liget an vûnf dingen. Daz êrste: daz er diu êrste sache ist, her umbe ist er ûzgiezende sich in alliu dinc. – Daz ander: daz er einvaltich ist an sînem wesene, her umbe ist er diu innerkeit aller dinge. – Daz dritte: daz er ursprungelich ist, her umbe ist er gemeinende sich allen dingen. – Daz vierde: daz er unwandelhaftich ist, her umbe ist er daz behaldelîcheste. – Das vûnfte: daz er volkomen ist, her umbe ist er daz begerlîcheste.”

Albert's example, is therefore an important aspect of the Meister's own theological teaching and preaching.

Although we have seen that Eckhart rejected Dietrich's view of divinization as tied to the attainment of the active intellect, the fact that the Meister's vernacular theology was in general conversation with Peripatetic noetics is demonstrated by sermon Q 17, an extended interpretation of John 12:25 that strategically cites from the heathen masters in order to describe how one ought to hate the soul to attain beatitude.<sup>17</sup> The argument of Q 17 establishes Eckhart's clear preference for certain psychological claims forwarded by the Peripatetics, in keeping with the Meister's tendency to describe the state of natural perfection using the conceptual language he derived from the arguments of the Greek and Arab philosophers. Eckhart accordingly maintains that "the word 'soul' means the ground and that the nature of the soul does not touch it," because the physicist who studies moveable things is unable to grasp it as it is, and because whoever desires to attribute a name to the soul, insofar as it is properly simple, pure and naked, will be unable to do so.<sup>18</sup> These arguments, which parallel those Avicenna had made in his *De anima*, lead the Meister to assert that "in her highest and clearest part the soul is beyond the world," since "as little as the eye has to do with sound and as the ear with color, as little has the soul in her nature has to do with all that which is in the world."<sup>19</sup> For this reason, Eckhart states—gesturing toward Avicenna's argument in his *Metaphysica* IX—that the soul's goal is "to become an intellectual

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<sup>17</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 17, ed. by Josef Quint in DW I, 279-93. This sermon is given as Homily 100\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 100\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De sanctis*, 478-87.

<sup>18</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 17, ed. Quint in DW I, 281-82: "Ez sprichit ein meister: daz wort sêle daz enmeinet den grunt und die natûre der sêle enrûeret ez niht. Dâ von sprichit ein meister: swer die schribet von bewegelichen dingen, der enrûeret die natûre noch den grunt der sêle niht. Swer nâch der einvalticheit und lûterkeit und blôzheit die sêle, als si in ir selber ist, nennen sol, der enkan ir enkeinen namen vinden."

<sup>19</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 17, ed. by Josef Quint in DW I, 287-88: "Ein meister sprichet, daz diu sêle in irm hoehsten und lûtersten sî ob der werlt... Ein meister sprichet: als wênic daz ouge ze tuonne hât mit dem gesange und daz ôre mit der varwe, als wênic hât diu sêle in ir natûre ze tuonne mit allem dem, daz in dirre werlt ist."

world, where God has given into her an image of everything.”<sup>20</sup> Yet this becoming-intellectual, the Meister argues, is really the soul’s return to its bare nature as this exists transcendentally within God, and immanently in the depths of the mind. Eckhart therefore determines that this transformation into an intellectual world refers to the intellect’s conception of the purity of things, not as they exist in their own natural perfection, but insofar as they are purely simple in God.<sup>21</sup> Q 17 shows that the Meister theorizes the soul’s perfection with reference to the Peripatetic understanding of the mind. Peripatetic noetics are therefore just as key to Eckhart’s formulation of his own theology as the metaphysics of flow.

Yet other vernacular sermons by the Meister demonstrate that, whatever affinity he had with Peripateticism, Eckhart also maintained that Aristotelian philosophy ran up against epistemic limits that Plato and his followers had overcome. In this respect, Eckhart is quite close to Ulrich of Strasburg, who had aligned Christian theology more with Plato than with Aristotle in his *De summo bono*, as well as Thomas Aquinas, who had insisted upon the specifically Platonic character of both the *Liber de causis* and the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. In sermon Q 20b, for instance, which takes as its reading Luke 14:16, “a certain man made a great dinner,” Eckhart briefly narrates a debate between two anonymous masters who represent Aristotelian and Platonic psychology and epistemology.<sup>22</sup> The first master, the Aristotelian, begins by stating

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<sup>20</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 17*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW I, 288-89: “Ein meister sprichet: der sêle natûre und natiurlîchiu volkommenheit ist, daz si in ir werde ein vernünfftigiu werlt, dâ in sie get hât aller dinge bilde.” Cf. Avicenna, *Metaphysica* IX c. 7, ed. Van Riet, 510: “Dico, igitur, quod sua perfectio animae rationalis es tut fiat saeculum intelligibile.”

<sup>21</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 17*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW I, 289: “Swer dâ sprichet, daz er ze sîner natûre komen sî, der sol alliu dinc in im gebildet vinden in der lûterkeit, als sie in gote sint, niht als sies int in ir natûre, mêr: als sie sint in gote.” It is quite worth comparing Eckhart’s account of becoming-intellectual here, where the soul’s images are perceived in their original divine purity, with his description in S 104 of God’s taking the place of the active intellect in order to impregnate the soul directly with divine images, discussed in the previous chapter. It seems that in Q 17 Eckhart is describing this process from the perspective of the intellect rather than God’s activity or nature, in keeping with his overarching “perspectival” approach to theology.

<sup>22</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 20b*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW I, 340-52. This sermon is given as Homily 57\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 57\*, trans. Sturlese and Vincent in *De tempore*, 751-63.



“that a power of the soul lies above the eyes, which is wider than all the world and wider than heaven,” and “that this power takes all that is carried into the eyes and conveys it up into the soul.”<sup>23</sup> Speaking of the abstractive power of the mind, which conceives intelligible entities through images taken into the soul by the senses, this first master describes the intellect, insofar as it is directed outward, and knowledge, insofar as it is a product of empirical investigation. This view of intellection is close to the Peripatetic account that the Meister had cited favorably in Q 17, as well as the Avicennian and Augustinian account of abstraction that he had briefly summarized in his general prologue to the *Opus Tripartitum* as part of his description of the proper relationship between universals and particulars, or uncreated and created existence.

But the second master, the Platonist, contradicts the first, and it is clear that the Meister sympathizes with his objection. Crucially, this Platonist does not necessarily represent an alternative to Aristotelianism, but a position that goes further by critiquing the latter’s core psychological assumptions. For the second master responds that “all that has been carried in through the senses in this power, that does not come into the soul; instead, [this power] refines and readies and gains the soul, so that she, naked, might receive the light of the angels and the divine light.”<sup>24</sup> A description of the intellect as stripped bare so as to accept God, with a characteristic Eckhartian emphasis on passivity and receptivity, Alessandro Palazzo has shown how this objection by the second master reproduces the account of Plato’s view of the soul

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<sup>23</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 20b*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW I, 349: “Nû sprichit ein meister, daz ein kraft der sêle liget über dem ougen, diu ist wîter dan alliu diu werlt und wîter dan der himmel. Diu kraft nimet allez, daz ze den ougen wirt înetragen, und treget ez allez ûf in die sêle.”

<sup>24</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 20b*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW I, 349-50: Daz widersprichet ein ander meister und sprichit: nein, brooder, im enist niht alsô. Allez, daz înetragen wirt ze den sinnen in die kraft, daz enkumet in die sêle niht; mêr: ez liutert und bereitet und gewinnet di sêle, daz si blôz enpfâhen mac des engels licht und daz götlîche licht.” The relation between the angelic and divine light in Eckhart’s theology was discussed in more detail in the previous chapter.

summarized by Thomas Aquinas.<sup>25</sup> Eckhart subscribes to this latter, Platonic view, and consequently maintains that the earlier, Aristotelian account of the acquisition of knowledge is incomplete, and relates to a different kind of knowledge than the one he aims to inculcate in his audience. Any account of the Meister's theology which centers his subscription to the Peripateticism of his German Dominican predecessors must reckon with the arguments, like the disputation narrated in Q 20b, which propose that Platonic conceptions of the intellect are preferable to the largely empirical epistemology of the Aristotelians. In fact, Eckhart's attempt to differentiate between Aristotelianism and Platonism in this sermon, while also suggesting that Peripatetic psychological arguments had to give way to the epistemology of the Platonists, is characteristic of the position Eckhart defends in many of his vernacular sermons.

Another important attempt to distinguish between the Aristotelian and Platonic approach is found in sermon Q 9 on Eccli 50:5-6: "Like a morning star within the mist, and like a full moon in its days, and like a sun that reflects its light, so has He shone in the Temple of God."<sup>26</sup> Famous among students of the Meister's work for its argument, grounded in a modist conception of grammar, that one must become an adverb or an "around-word" (*bîwort*) to the Word, which is God,<sup>27</sup> Q 9 is a philosophically sophisticated homily that draws upon key arguments that Eckhart had defended in his Parisian questions, while also defending three definitions of God offered by the various heathen masters who participated in the disputation narrated in the Hermetic *Liber XXIV philosophorum*. These are the claims that "God is something, against which all changeable and temporal things are nothing, and all that possesses being, is small

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<sup>25</sup> Alessandro Palazzo, "'Plâtô, der grôze pfaffe': Eckhart e Platone," in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart*, ed. by Loris Sturlese (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2012), 199-200.

<sup>26</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 9*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW I, 138-58. It is also included in the PAI. See Meister Eckhart, *Paradisus anime intelligentis* 33, ed. Strauch, 73-7. This sermon is given as Homily 86\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 86\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De sanctis*, 303-19.

<sup>27</sup> Claire Taylor Jones, "The Trouble with Verbs: Meister Eckhart and the Tropology of Modistic Grammar," *Mystics Quarterly* 35 (2009): 99-126.

before Him;” that “God is something, which is necessarily beyond being, Who in Himself requires nobody, and who each thing needs;” and that “God is an intellect, that lives alone, there, in His understanding.”<sup>28</sup> As the *Acta Eckhardi* and the Meister’s own defense of his teaching demonstrate, moreover, it was Q 9 which furnished Eckhart’s opponents with several of the most controversial propositions that would ultimately be condemned during the Meister’s inquisitorial trial—including the passage where the Meister defends a radically apophatic understanding of the divine against the limited concept of God afforded by the Aristotelian metaphysics of his contemporaries.<sup>29</sup> Q 9 is thus an important vernacular witness to the Meister’s attempt to demonstrate the superiority of the Platonists over the Aristotelians insofar as their philosophy, rather than that of Aristotle, was closest to the radical theology of detachment and negation, which he preached to his audience.

Furthermore, the differentiation between the Platonic and Aristotelian approaches to God in Q 9 is also related to Eckhart’s attempt to clarify his departure from the contemporary masters in the schools, including members of his own Order in Germany. To the extent that his arguments replicate the positions he defended in his Parisian questions, therefore, it is fair to view his argument about Platonism as a critique of other scholastic theologians, particularly the Franciscan Gonsalvo of Spain, and the followers of Thomas Aquinas, who appeared to Eckhart

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<sup>28</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 9*, ed. Quint in DW I, 142: “Vierundzweinzic meister kâmen zesamen und woltern sprechen, waz got waere. Sie kâmen ze rehter zît und ir ieglicher brâhte sîn wort, der nime ich nû zwei oder drî. Der eine sprach: got ist etwas, gegen dem allie wandelbaeriu und zîtlichiu dinc niht entsint, und allez, daz wesen hât, daz ist vor im kleine. Der ander sprach: got ist etwaz, daz dâ ist über wesene von nôt, daz in im selber niemannes bedarf und daz alliu dinc bedürfen. Der dritte sprach: ‘got ist ein vernünfticheit, diu dâ lebet in sîn aleines bekanntnisse’.”

<sup>29</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 9*, ed. Quint in DW I, 148: “Got enist niht wesen noch güete. Güete klebet an wesene an wesene und enist niht breiter dan wesen; wan enwaere niht wesen, sô enwaere niht güete, und wesen ist noch lûterer dan güete. Got enist guot noch bezzer noch allerbeste. Wer dâ spraeche, daz got guot waere, der taete im als unrehte, also ob er die sunnen swarz hieze.” Cf. *Acta Echardi* n. 65, ed. by Loris Sturlese in LW V, 599: “Obiectum preterea extitit dicto Ekardo, quod predicaverat alios duos articulos sub his verbis: ... Secundus articulus: ‘deus non est bonus nec melior nec optimus. Ita male dico quondocumque deum voco bonum, ac si ergo album vocarem nigrum.’” Eckhart’s position here is dependent on the decoupling of truth, being and goodness which he had defended in his Parisian Questions, discussed above.

to be committed to an onto-theological metaphysics which failed to consider the intellectual ground of the Godhead that precedes God's being, insofar as they reduce God to a thing that exists (albeit the highest and most perfect thing). The Meister accordingly maintains toward the beginning of his sermon, while still discussing the Hermetic definitions of God drawn from the *Liber XXIV philosophorum*, that "God works above being in the wideness, where He can move Himself, where He works in non-being; for before there was being, God wrought it; He wrought being, where no being was."<sup>30</sup> God is thus posited to exist as a nothing prior to being, insofar as He is the very creator of being. For this reason, the Meister continues, "great masters say that God is a pure being; He is as high over being as the highest angel is above a gnat."<sup>31</sup> Reiterating the argument he had outlined in his early Parisian writings through recourse to the radically negative language of apophatic theology, Eckhart corroborates his position in Q 9 by citing Pseudo-Dionysius's assertion that "whoever assumes that he has known God, and has known something, he does not in this way know God," alongside Augustine's argument that "God is wise, without wisdom, good without goodness, powerful without power."<sup>32</sup> God in Q 9 is therefore defined as what He essentially is not, being, insofar as He is the nothing from which created being emerges. God is thus not simply the purest existence, according to Eckhart. He is the very purity from which all that is receives its being.

The Meister ultimately suggests in Q 9 that the metaphysical approach to God characteristic of Peripatetic divine science cannot grasp Him as He is. The negative theological conception of the divine, according to Eckhart, ought therefore to be favorably contrasted with

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<sup>30</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 9*, ed. Quint in DW I, 145: "Got wûrket über wesene in der wîte, dâ er sich geregen mac, er wûrket in unwesene; ê denne wesen waere, dô worhte got; er worhte wesen, dô niht wesen enwas."

<sup>31</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 9*, ed. Quint in DW I, 145-46: "Grôze meister sprechent, got si ein lûter wesen; er ist als hôch über wesene, als der oberste engel ist über einer mûcken."

<sup>32</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 9*, ed. Quint in DW I, 146-47: "Und sprichit ein meister: swer dâ waenet, daz er got bekant habe, und bekante er iht, sô enbekante er got niht... Sant Augustinus sprichet: got ist wîse âne wîsheit, guot âne gûete, gewaltic âne gewalt."

that of the “little masters,” who in the schools teach that all being is divided into ten modes, beginning with *substantia* and concluding with *relatio*.<sup>33</sup> Referring to the ten categories which Aristotelians used to classify and define this or that being, Eckhart argues that each should properly be denied of God. Granting that even the little masters do not reduce God to the categories operative in Aristotelian metaphysics, Eckhart in Q 9 nevertheless differentiates the ultimately Platonic approach of Pseudo-Dionysius and Augustine from the logical method favored by his contemporaries. He agrees with Dietrich of Freiberg, who had argued against the Thomists in his *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis*, following Proclus, that God’s manner of being transcends the natural being which can be ascertained logically through Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>34</sup> Despite his recourse to the language of “pure being” in Q 9—which recalls the divine *puritas essendi* the Meister had described in his first Parisian Question—it is evident that Eckhart’s apophatic approach to that God who exists in a way that is neither substantial nor related to created being is more Platonic than Aristotelian, since he stresses that the divine nature is beyond the being that philosophical metaphysics takes as its principal object of study. Q 9 concludes that negative theology is preferable to the conception of God held by the “little masters,” who, in their theological immaturity, are overly reliant on the conceptual vocabulary of Aristotle. Unlike the great masters, these metaphysicians inappropriately submit God to a theological discourse which, through its deployment of the categories, had been developed to understand created rather than divine being. Eckhart, like

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<sup>33</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 9*, ed. Quint in DW I, 147: “Kleine meister lesent in der schuole, daz alliu wesen sin geteilet in zehen wise, und die selben sprechent sie gote zemåle abe. Dirre wîsen enberüeret got keiniu, und er enbirt ir ouch keener. Diu êrste, diu wesens allermeist hât, dâ alliu dinc wesen inne nement, daz ist substancie, und daz leste, daz des wesens aller minnest treit, daz heizet relation.”

<sup>34</sup> See previous chapter.

Dietrich before him, critically distinguished his theology from the logical and metaphysical approach practiced by his contemporaries.

That Eckhart defended the explicitly Platonic nature of the apophatic theology he identified in the work of his preferred Christian authorities, Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius, is further established by sermon Q 57.<sup>35</sup> A homily which interprets the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem revealed to John in Rev 21:2 as a figure for the human intellect, Q 57 teaches how a soul, like a harmonious and well-fortified city,<sup>36</sup> ought to be at peace,<sup>37</sup> be holy,<sup>38</sup> and new.<sup>39</sup> Relying frequently on the testimony of Pseudo-Dionysius to interpret the significance of the holiness of the soul, Eckhart also preaches that the heavenly Jerusalem signifies the soul's common nature "under the shadow of the angel."<sup>40</sup> Yet Eckhart also explains that this figure shows how the soul is close to its origin in God, just as the body, as a created being, is far from Him. God cannot be ascertained as He is by a soul that is attached to its body, since God only enters a soul when the body is ready to receive Him.<sup>41</sup> This is why, the Meister preaches, "Plato

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<sup>35</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 57*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW II, 591-606. This sermon is given as Homily 112\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 112\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De sanctis*, 632-43.

<sup>36</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 57*, ed. Quint in DW II, 594-95: "Sant Johannes sach 'eine stat'. Ein 'stat' bezeichent zwei dinc: daz eine, daz si veste ist, daz ir nieman geschaden enmac; ze dem andern mâle die eintrechticheit der liute... Disiu 'stat' bezeichent eine iegliche geistliche sêle."

<sup>37</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 57*, ed. Quint in DW II, 595: "Ze dem êrsten sol man merken den vride, der in der sêle sîn sol. Dar umbe ist si genant 'Jêrusalem'. Sant Dionysius sprichet: 'der götliche vride durchvert und ordent und endet allie dinc; und entaete der vride des niht, sô zervlûzzen alliu dinc und enhaeten keine ordenunge'." Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, c. 11 (PG 3 948-49).

<sup>38</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 57*, ed. Quint in DW II, 596: "Daz ander: daz er sprichet, daz diu 'stat' 'heilic' ist. Sant Dionysius sprichet, 'daz heilicheit ist ganziu lûterkeit, vriheit und vollkommenheit'." Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, c. 12 (PG 3 969).

<sup>39</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 57*, ed. Quint in DW II, 600: "Ze dem dritten mâle sprichet er, daz disiu 'stat' 'niuwe' sî. 'Niuwe' heizet daz, daz ungeüebet ist oder daz sînem anvange nâhe ist. Got ist unser anvanc. Swanner wir mit im vereinet sîn, sô werden wir 'niuwe'."

<sup>40</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 57*, ed. Quint in DW II, 597-8: "Ze dem andern mâle sprichet 'heilicheit' als vil als 'daz der erde genomen ist.' Got ist iht und ein lûter wesen... Got geschuof die engel und die sêle bî ihte daz ist: bî Got. Diu sêle geschaffen als mê als under dem schaten des engels, und hânt doch eine gemeine natûre." This metaphor of overshadowing is a commonplace of the Albertinian metaphysics of flow.

<sup>41</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 57*, ed. Quint in DW II, 598: "alliu libhaftigi dinc sint geschaffen bî nihte und verre von gote. Dar umbe, daz sich diu sêle giuzet ûf den lîchamen, sô wirt si verinstert und muoz wider ûfgetragen werden mut dem lîchamen ze gote. Sô diu sêle âne irdischiu din cist, sô ist si 'heilic'."

says: what God is, I do not know – and he wants to say: while the soul is bound to the body, she cannot know God – but what He is not, I know that well!”<sup>42</sup> The very fact of embodiment reveals why negative theology is necessary, Eckhart concludes, as well as why Plato’s words are theologically authoritative. For Plato’s teaching accords well with Pseudo-Dionysius’s assertion that should the divine light shine in the soul, it must be bound or reduced to the corporeal nature of the lower entity which receives it.<sup>43</sup> Sermon Q 57 therefore demonstrates that Eckhart appreciated how the negative and divinizing theology of Pseudo-Dionysius agreed with Plato’s understanding of the soul. For both Plato and Pseudo-Dionysius, the truth that is God, insofar as He is God, is totally inaccessible to a soul attached to the body, which can only perceive divine things as they are received (or conceived) within it. Plato is consequently as important an authority as Augustine and the Areopagite for Eckhart’s conception of the epistemic failures which make negative theology and the divinization of the soul necessary in this life.

Sermon Q 28 on John 15:16, “I have elected you,” represents another significant instance where the Meister cites Plato by name as an authority for the radical theology he sought to teach.<sup>44</sup> A homily preached for the feast day of Saint Barnabas, Q 28 is an extended meditation on the nature of sainthood, and the holy works that saints perform, which Eckhart describes through the kenotic language of self-emptying subjection to the divine.<sup>45</sup> The sermon, for this

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<sup>42</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 57*, ed. Quint in DW II, 602: “Plâtô sprichet: waz got ist, des enweiz ich niht – und wil sprechen: die wîle diu sêle bewunden ist in dem lîbe, sô enmac si got ni bekennen –, aber waz er niht enist, daz weis ich wol.” Eckhart’s source is Macrobius, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* I.2.15, ed. by Willis (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 7: “loqui esset animatis, dicere quid sit non ausus est, hoc solum de eo sciens, quod sciri quale sit ab homine non possit.”

<sup>43</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 57*, ed. Quint in DW II, 603: “Sant Dionysius sprichet: ‘ist daz daz götliche licht in mich schînet, sô muoz ez bewunden sîn, als mîn sêle bewunden ist.’” Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De caelesti hierarchia*, 1 (PG 3 121B).

<sup>44</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 28* ed. by Josef Quint in DW II, 56-69. This sermon is given as Homily 73\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 73\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De sanctis*, 131-43.

<sup>45</sup> The best recent account of Eckhart’s kenotic orientation, as well as its theoretical and political afterlife in modern continental philosophy, is Alex Dubilet, *The Self-Emptying Subject: Kenosis and Immanence, Medieval to Modern* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018). Sturlese and Vinzent, introduction to *De sanctis*, 5-12 offers

reason, is an attempt to preach the conception of justice that Eckhart had outlined in his Latin commentary on John, and the Meister even notes that “I once wrote in my book: the just man does not serve God or creatures, because he is free, and the nearer he is to justice, the nearer he is freedom itself, and the more he is freedom.”<sup>46</sup> What is significant about this interest in justice, however, is the relation to the fruit that the just are called upon to realize in the world by dwelling in God’s love, according to Christ’s teaching in John 15:12-17,<sup>47</sup> and the importance that Eckhart attributes to the abnegation of the individual will which serving both the divine will and one’s neighbor requires.<sup>48</sup> As Charlotte C. Radler has insisted, moments such as these demonstrate that the love of God and the discipline of the will remain central concerns of the Meister, despite his general tendency, analyzed in the previous chapter, to subordinate volition to intellection.<sup>49</sup> Hence, the Meister can assert that “he who loves justice, justice submits itself to him, and he will be seized by justice and he is justice.”<sup>50</sup> The freedom of the just and the love of justice, which entails a grasping of and becoming justice, are therefore one and the same, whereas Eckhart characterizes the unjust and unfree man as one who serves the truth,

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a compelling account of how Eckhart offers in his sermons a discourse about how saints become saints and how his audience may become equal to the saints in his sermons devoted to particular saints.

<sup>46</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 28 ed. Quint in DW II, 62: “Ich schreip einest in mîn buoch: der gerehte mensche endienet weder gote noch den crêatûren, wan er ist vrî; und ie er der gerehticheit naeher ist, ie mê er diu vrîheit selber ist und ie mê er diu vrîheit ist.”

<sup>47</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 28 ed. Quint in DW II, 58-9: “daz ist gar lustlich, daz dâ vruht bringet und im diu vruht blîbet, und dem blîbet diu vruht, der dâ wonet in der minne. An dem ende dises êwangeliums sprichet unser herre: ‘minnet iuch under einander, als ich iuch êwiclîche geminnet hân; und als mich mîn vater êwiclîche geminnet hât, alsô hân ich iuch geminnet; haltet ir mîniu gebot, sô blîbet ir in mîner minne.”

<sup>48</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 28 ed. Quint in DW II, 61: “Nû sprichet unser herre: ‘der iht laezet durch mînen willen und umbe mînen namen, dem wil ich ez hundertveltlicliche widergelten und dar zuo geben daz êwige leben.”

<sup>49</sup> Charlotte C. Radler, “‘In Love I am more God’: The Centrality of Love in Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism,” *Journal of Religion* 90.2 (2010): 171-98. Yet the claim Eckhart makes in *Predigt* 5a, ed. Quint in DW I, 80: “daz helt wunderlich, daz der mensch also mag got zu werden in der liebe; doch so ist es in der êwigen wârheit war,” which is key to Radler’s argument about the *centrality* of love to Eckhart’s thought, might also be read as implying that what *is wonderful* in love *is so* in eternal truth. This not only maintains the priority of the true over the good the Meister defended in his scholastic writing, but also suggests that for Eckhart there may be a subtle difference between *becoming God* through love and *being God* in eternal truth.

<sup>50</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 28 ed. Quint in DW II, 62: “swer dâ minnet die gerehticheit, des underwindet sich diu gerehticheit und wirt begriffen von der gerehticheit und er ist diu gerehticheit.”



irrespective of how they feel about it, or who serves all the world and all that is created, becoming a “bondsman of sin” in the process.<sup>51</sup> While this appears to be a rejection of the metaphysics of the *Parisian Questions*, that had emphasized a divine truth prior to goodness, the account of saintly justification that the Meister preaches in Q 28 ultimately entails the rejection of both understanding *and* love, since these weigh one down and are not God Himself.<sup>52</sup> It is this final teaching about justice and sainthood that Eckhart will call upon Plato to explain.

For it is Platonic philosophy, once again, which provides Eckhart with the authoritative language required to describe the end point of a kenosis which is properly beyond description. In an argument that appears decidedly egoist, if the overarching explanation about the need to deny the self through union with the divine is not taken into account, Eckhart suggests, that, whereas he shares with others the fact of his humanity, “the fact that I exist, this is in no person but is mine alone, it is neither in other people, nor in the angels, nor in God, except as I am one with Him; [my existence] is a brightness and unity.”<sup>53</sup> That this is so, the Meister implies, entails that everything created, like human nature, contains no truth, since there exists something which “I” truly “am” above all created things, which is uncreated. And although many clerics limp on, struggling to perceive how in this state the soul exists in an ineffable and unknowable exile or

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<sup>51</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 28* ed. Quint in DW II, 63: “Der ungerichte mensche der dienet der wârheit, ez sî im liep oder leit, und diene taller der werlt und allen crêatûren und ist ein kneht der sünde.”

<sup>52</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 28* ed. Quint in DW II, 62-3: “Allez daz, daz geschaffen ist, daz enist niht vrî. Die wîle ihtes iht ober mir ist, daz got selber niht enist, daz drûcket mich, swie Kleine ez joch ist oder, swear. Ez ist, und waere ez joch vernunft und minne, als verre als si geschaffen ist und got selber niht enist, daz drûcket mich, wan ex ist unvrî.”

<sup>53</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 28* ed. Quint in DW II, 63: “aber daz ich bin, daz enist keines menschen mê dan mîn aleine, weder menschen noch engels noch gotes, dan als verre als ich ein mit im bin; ez ist ein lûterkeit und ein einicheit.” The apparent accord between Eckhart’s theology and the idealist egoism of J. G Fichte has been noted by Burkhard Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart*, 160-62. For an attempt to trace the influence of mystical theology upon Fichte himself, including that of Eckhart, see W. Ezekiel Goggin and Sean Hannan, *Mysticism and Materialism in the Wake of German Idealism* (London: Routledge, 2022), 23-30.

wasteland, which nevertheless possesses all that God is in Himself,<sup>54</sup> “Plato, the great scholar,”<sup>55</sup> according to Eckhart, “speaks of a brightness...that exists neither in or without the world, neither in time nor in eternity, with neither exterior nor interior, out of which God, the eternal Father, presses forth the fullness and abyss of His entire Godhead.”<sup>56</sup> The “I” of John 15:16 thus properly belongs to God, and only belongs to the soul when the intellect is one with the divine as the “you” God elects, in the immanent ground where the Son is given birth by the Father.<sup>57</sup> This self-denial of the “I” of the soul and its subsequent participation in God’s ecstatic positing of His own “I” in the desert of the Godhead, Eckhart concludes, was recognized solely by Plato. Kenotic subjection to the divine in the abyssal ground, where it is one with God, thus characterizes the freedom of the just man, in accordance with Plato’s recognition that this occurs in the abyss which is prior to all created existence—even that of God!

As many scholars have insisted, Meister Eckhart’s recourse to Plato in these sermons means that his theology is primarily henological, unlike the onto-theological approach of his Thomist colleagues in the Dominican Order.<sup>58</sup> This is because Eckhart shared the understanding

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<sup>54</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 28 ed. Quint in DW II, 66: “Ez ist etwaz, daz über daz geschaffen wesen der sêle ist, daz kein geschaffenheit enrüeret, daz niht ist... Ez ist ein sippeschaft götlicher art, ez ist in im selben ein, ez enhât mit niht gemeine. Hie hinkent manife grôze pfaffen ane. Ez ist ein ellende und ist ein wüestenunge und ist mê ungenennt, dan ez namen habe, und ist mê unbekant, dan ez bekant si.”

<sup>55</sup> Plato is called here “ein pfaffe,” which not only means priest, but also signifies a learned master, mechanic or artist. It thus seems appropriate, given the context, to render “ein grosse pfaffe” as “the great scholar.”

<sup>56</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 28 ed. Quint in DW II, 67-8: “Nû sprichet Plâtô, der grôse pfaffe, der vachet ane und wil sprechen von grozen dingen. Er sprichet von einer lûterkeit...; si enist niht in der werlt noch ûzer der werlt, ez enist weder in zît noch in êwicheit, ez enhât ûzerlich noch innerlich. Her ûz drücket im got, der êwige vater, die vüllede und den abgrunt aller sîner gotheit.”

<sup>57</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 28 ed. Quint in DW II, 68-9: “Daz gebirt er hie in sînem eingebornen sune und daz wir selbe sun sîn, und sîn gebern daz ist sîn inneblîben, und sîn inneblîben ist sîn ûzgebern. Er blîbet allez daz eine, daz in im selben quellende ist. ‘Ego’, daz wort ‘ich’, enist niemen eigen dan gote aleine in sîner einicheit. ‘Vos’, daz wort daz sprichet als vil als ‘ir’, daz ire in sît in der einicheit, daz ist: daz wort ‘ego’ und ‘vos’, ‘ich’ und ‘ir’, daz meinet die einicheit.”

<sup>58</sup> A compelling case for a reading of Eckhart’s theology as fundamentally henological has been put forward by Reiner Schürmann, “Neoplatonic Henology as an Overcoming of Metaphysics,” *Research in Phenomenology* 13 (1983): 25-41. For a critique of this tendency in Eckhart scholarship, that aims to show how Eckhart synthesizes onto-theological and henological approaches, see Jan A. Aertsen, “Ontology and Henology in Medieval Philosophy (Thomas Aquinas, Master Eckhart, Berthold of Moosburg),” in *On Proclus and his Influence on Medieval Philosophy*, ed. by E. P. Bos and P. A. Meijer (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 120-40. Yet Aertsen, *Medieval*

of God as the One beyond being that Albert the Great had defended in his work, and which Dietrich of Freiberg had further developed by drawing on Proclus. It is therefore unsurprising to discover several Proclian themes in the Meister's work as well. One of the most important of these Proclian themes, which is directly related to the account of self-denial and union with the abyssal ground of the Godhead that makes justice possible, can be identified in sermon Q 2, a homily that Eckhart preached for the feast of the Assumption of Mary.<sup>59</sup> Taking as its reading Luke 10:38, "Jesus entered into a castle and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house," Q 2 is well known for Eckhart's interpretation of the soul as a virgin that must be a wife. Frequently interpreted by scholars as evidence for the Meister's appropriation and transformation of the erotic theology of work and suffering developed by the *mulieres religiosae* of Germany and the Low Countries,<sup>60</sup> or as an attempt by the Meister to performatively "unsay" or "trouble" gender in concert with the "queer" theology of the beguines,<sup>61</sup> this Marian sermon is important because it also witnesses Eckhart's desire to introduce the Proclian account of the One into his vernacular preaching. It thus provides an important example of Eckhart's henological and Platonic, rather than metaphysical and Aristotelian, conception of Christian theology.

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*Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 350-53 appears to have retreated somewhat from this view, since he acknowledges there that the Meister insists upon the ontological and conceptual priority of the One over the other transcendentals unified within God, including Being.

<sup>59</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 2*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW I, 21-45. This sermon is given as Homily 83\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 83\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De sanctis*, 251-65.

<sup>60</sup> See Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, 173-206. The learned German Dominican appropriation and de-eroticization of Mechthild of Magdeburg's work, and its consequences for their view of women's theological authority, has been examined by Sara S. Poor. See especially, *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book: Gender and the Making of Textual Authority* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 85-9.

<sup>61</sup> Michael Sells, "The Pseudo-Woman and the Meister: 'Unsayings' and Essentialism," in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, 114-46 and Amy Hollywood, "Sexual Desire, Divine Desire; or, Queering the Beguines," in *Acute Melancholia and Other Essays*, 149-62. For a critique of these arguments that demonstrates how the Meister ultimately reinscribes rather than deconstructs the gender binary, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Patriarchy and the Motherhood of God in Zoharic Kabbalah and Meister Eckhart," in *Envisioning Judaism: Essays in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. by Ra'anana S. Boustani, Klaus Herrmann, Reimund Leicht, Annette Yoshiko Reed, and Giuseppe Veltri, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1047-88.

The virgin who is a wife of the Gospel reading, who Eckhart declares is both free and unbound from ownership or attachment, is the principal figure for the liberated spirit in sermon Q 2. And it is when he turns to discuss where and how such a soul is free that he makes use of a concept that is potentially derived from Proclus, the *unum animae*, or “one of the soul,” which belongs to the same manner of being as God, insofar as He is the One Itself.<sup>62</sup> In the second half of his homily, the Meister therefore explains how a soul, which is a virgin and a wife, works with God, giving birth daily to His eternal Word through her receptive conception of His only-begotten Son, such that “this Jesus is united with her and she with Him, and she lights up and shines with Him as a single One and as a bright, clear light in the Fatherly heart.”<sup>63</sup> This union, fittingly expressed in henological and kenotic language similar to that which Eckhart deployed in Q 28, takes place in the power in the soul where God exists in His “eternal now,”<sup>64</sup> and where someone is stripped of wonder and, standing in truth, possesses all that is within them essentially.<sup>65</sup> The Meister, in the final moments of Q 2, consequently describes this “spark” in the soul, not as it is the solely free power in the mind or as the guard or light of the mind, by which Eckhart means the intellect, but insofar as it is both “neither this nor that,” and “so one and

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<sup>62</sup> Alessandra Beccarisi, “Proclus and the *Liber de causis* in Meister Eckhart’s Works,” in *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*, ed. by Dragos Calma, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 340-75 has demonstrated that Eckhart is much less directly familiar with Proclus than prior scholarship has generally assumed, since most of his remarks about the One in his scholastic writing derive from the *Liber de causis* and many of the claims about the One in his vernacular works are attributed to other Platonic philosophers. Nevertheless, if one keeps Proclus’ doctrine of the *unum animae* in mind and concedes that Proclus had informed the theology of Dietrich, as the previous chapter demonstrated, then it seems fair to identify a parallel between Eckhart and Proclus’ teaching about the one in the soul in this sermon, even if direct use of Proclus by the Meister cannot be established definitively. A more optimistic assessment of Eckhart’s knowledge of Proclus is Fiorella Restucci, “Her ûf sprichet ein heidenischer meister in dem buoche, daz dâ heizet daz licht der lichte’: Eckhart, il *Liber der causis* e Proclo,” in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart*, ed. by Loris Sturlese, vol. 1 (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2008), 135-66.

<sup>63</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 2*, ed. Quint in DW I, 31: “dirre Jêsus ist mit ir vereinet und si mit im, und si liuhtet und schînet mit im al sein einic ein und al sein lûter klâr licht in dem veterlîchen herzen.” Eckhart refers here to Heb 1:3: “qui sum sit splendor gloriae et figura substantiae eius.”

<sup>64</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 2*, ed. Quint in DW I, 34: “wan got ist in dirre kraft als in dem êwigen nû.”

<sup>65</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 2*, ed. Quint in DW I, 34: “Disem menschen ist in der wârheit wunder abegenomen, und alliu dinct stânt weselîche in im.”

simple, as God is one and simple, that one cannot look into it with their eyes in any way.”<sup>66</sup>

Under the figure of the castle which Jesus entered, described in Luke 10:38, Eckhart thus identifies the One itself, which the noblest power of the intellect cannot perceive, and where God Himself never for a single moment glances, insofar as He possesses or is attached to His divine persons.<sup>67</sup> Eckhart consequently declares “this is worth noting: that this single One is without a way and without property; and, therefore, should God ever look at it, that would cost Him all His divine names and his personal properties.”<sup>68</sup> Described in terms reminiscent of Proclus’ concept of the *unum animae*, sermon Q 2 represents another henological account of the Meister’s theology that further confirms the Platonic nature of Eckhart’s radical theology of apophatic detachment. For the “spark” or “castle” described in the second half of the Meister’s sermon is both the womb-like one of the soul, where the virgin who is also a wife receives and conceives the Son with the Father in an eternal now, and the simple unity prior to God, where He is neither Father, nor Son, nor Holy Spirit.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 2*, ed. Quint in DW I, 39-40: “Ich hân underwîlen gesprochen, ez sî ein kraft in der geiste, diu sî aleine vrî. Underwîlen hân ich gesprochen, ez sî ein huote des geistes; underwîlen hân ich gesprochen, ez sî ein licht des geistes; underwîlen hân ich gesprochen, ez sî ein vûnkeln. Ich spriche aber nû: ez enist weder diz noch daz... Ez ist sô gar ein und einvaltic, als got ein und einvaltic ist, daz man mit dekeiner wise dar zuo gelougen mac.” What Eckhart in this sermon describes as a spark of the soul is related to his particular understanding of the *synderesis* in his Latin works, which had been named the *scintilla animae* by Bonaventure. Unlike Thomas and Albert, who described *synderesis*, following Peripatetic ethics, as the virtue of prudence or as the moral wisdom that is realized through the exercise of practical reason, for Eckhart it names that highest part of the soul, which is properly nameless and divine, that is only attained and put into practice whenever one, through detachment, ascertains, asserts, and acts as that One which one truly is. See Norbert Winkler, “Thomas von Aquin und Meister Eckhart: Klugheits- oder Gewissensethik,” *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 8 (2003): 63-85.

<sup>67</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 2*, ed. Quint in DW I, 42-43: “sô rehte ein und einvaltic ist diz bürgeln, und sô enboben alle wîse und alle krefte ist diz einic ein, daz im niemer kraft noch wîse zuo gelougen mac noch got selber. Mit guoter wârheit und alsô waerlicher, als daz got lebet! Got selber luoget dâr im niemer in einen ougenblick und gelougete noch nie dar in, als verre als er sich habende ist nâch wîse und ûf eigenschaft sîner persônen.”

<sup>68</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 2*, ed. Quint in DW I, 43: “Diz ist guot ze merkenne, wan diz einic ein ist sunder wîse und sunder eigenschaft. Und dar umbe: sol got iemer dar in gelougen, ez muoz in kosten alle sîne götliche namen und sîne persônliche eigenschaft.”

<sup>69</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 2*, ed. Quint in DW I, 43-44: “Sunder als er ist einvaltic ein, âne alle wîse und eigenschaft: dâ enist er vater noch sun noch heiliger geist in disem sinne und ist doch ein waz, daz enist noch diz noch daz.”

This henological emphasis on the One, which Eckhart had derived from Plato and Proclus, is explicitly revealed as a correction to the metaphysics of Aristotle in two homilies on Luke 19:12, “a certain noble man went into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return.” In sermon Q 15, which was possibly delivered to celebrate the feast of Pope Mark the confessor,<sup>70</sup> and in the homiletic treatise *Von dem edeln Menschen* (“On the Nobleman”),<sup>71</sup> which the Meister included in the *Liber Benedictus* of c. 1310 as a kind of appendix to his *Buch der göttlichen Trostung* (“Book of Divine Consolation”), Eckhart’s attempt to demonstrate the departure of his own theology from that of the Aristotelians perhaps receives its most definitive articulation. For these two sermons critique Aristotle by name and show that Eckhart self-consciously understood how his Platonic doctrine of the One set him at odds with his colleagues in the Dominican Order. Q 15 and *Von dem edlen Menschen* therefore bring together many of the Platonic themes analyzed in the sermons discussed above, while also revealing the unique place that Eckhart holds within the history of the German Dominican School, insofar as he prepared the way for subsequent members of his Order to conceive the divine science of the Christians as Platonic rather than Peripatetic. In fact, both show just how responsible the Meister was for the later tendency among the German Dominicans to define their Christian theology of the One in Platonic and Proclian terms, undermining, in the process, earlier German Dominican attempts to keep philosophical and Christian theology separate.

Sermon Q 15 opens by recapitulating many of the arguments from the Meister’s preaching already analyzed extensively above—especially his claim that one must abandon oneself in order to go out and return to the noble state the soul inhabits in the Godhead through

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<sup>70</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 15, ed. by Josef Quint in DW I, 242-56. This sermon is given as Homily 114\* in the new liturgical ordering of Sturlese. See Homily 114\*, trans. Sturlese and Vinzent in *De sanctis*, 652-63.

<sup>71</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Von dem edeln Menschen*, ed. by Josef Quint in DW V, 109-19.

the kenotic practice of existential humility. Arguing that such a liberated, humble man and God are “in every way one and not two, because when God works, he works too, what God wants, he wants it too, and what God is, he is too,”<sup>72</sup> the Meister, in a daring statement that approaches the argument of Eckhart of Gründig, even exclaims that “were this man in hell, God would need to join him in hell, and hell would need to become a heavenly kingdom for him!”<sup>73</sup> Yet the second half of the sermon is less interested in providing a summary of the humility and union that self-denial affords but focuses instead on what the “man” mentioned in Luke 19:12 signifies by turning to the works of Aristotle. Eckhart accordingly states that “Aristotle began writing a book and wanted to discuss all things,” and asks his audience to note that Aristotle understands the word *homo* to signify “a man, who has been fitted out with a form, which gives being and life to him, with all creatures, both rational and irrational.”<sup>74</sup> Q 15 once again reiterates one of Eckhart’s favorite Peripatetic doctrines—namely, the equation of the nature of humanity with the act of understanding. In fact, the Meister defines man here both insofar as man is a particular substantial being, that lives and knows, and insofar as man, generally and generically, is an intellectual being defined by the human capacity to know both itself and all other things.<sup>75</sup> He therefore determines that “the more he is detached from all things and turned into his very self, and the more he knows things clearly and intellectually within himself without turning to what is

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<sup>72</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 15, ed. Quint in DW I, 246: “Ja, der demuetig mensch bedarf dar umb nit bitten, sunder er mag im wol gebieten. Wan die hoehi der gohait kan es anders nit an gesehen den in der tieffen der demuetikait; wán der demuetig mensch vnd got sin ain vnd nit zwai.”

<sup>73</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 15, ed. Quint in DW I, 246: “Ja bi got: waer dirre mensch in der hell, got muest zuo im in die hell, vnd hell muest im ain himelrich sin.”

<sup>74</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 15, ed. Quint in DW I, 249: “Vnd sprach: ‘ain mensch gieng us’. Aristotiles nam ain buoch für sich vnd wolt sprechen von allen dingen. Nun merket, was aristotiles spricht von disem menschen. Homo das ist als vil gesprochen als ain mensch, dem forme zuo gefueget ist, vnd git im wesen vnd leben mit allen creaturen, mit redlichin vnd mit vnredlichen.” This emphasis on the gift of form recalls Eckhart’s “Boethian” argument from the *Principium*, discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>75</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 15, ed. Quint in DW I, 250: “Nun wil ich och wisen, was ain mensch si. Homo sprichet als vil als ain mensch, dem substance zuo geworfen ist, vnd git im wesen vnd leben vnd ain vernúfteklichen verstát vnd in im selber abgeschaiden ist von allen materien vn formen.”

exterior to him, the more he is a man.”<sup>76</sup> Whereas Eckhart had begun sermon Q 15 by outlining a conception of radical humility and self-denial, where the union with God is so strong that it transforms the suffering of hell into the joy of paradise, he concludes, following Aristotle, that to be a man is to become as intellectual as possible. And this state, he explains, is to know the self as it truly is: a detached intelligence.

Eckhart thus appears in Q 15 to defend an explicitly Peripatetic conception of detachment characterized by the contemplative aim of realizing the intellect by denying all that the intellect is not and through the apprehension of all that is potentially intelligible. However, as the final sections of his homily demonstrate, while the Meister does affirm the truth of the Aristotelian definition of man he has just laid out, and even appears to approve of the understanding of the separate intelligences that Dietrich of Freiberg had defended against Thomas Aquinas, Eckhart aims in Q 15 to explain the limits of the position he explicitly attributes to Aristotle. Eckhart for this reason raises the question “how is it possible that the detachment of a knowing without form and images understands all things in itself without going outside?”<sup>77</sup> He answers that such knowledge is a product of the simplicity the detached intellect shares with God and where it grasps the naked divine being “without a medium” and joyfully receives (or conceives!) it just like the angels do.<sup>78</sup> Eckhart accordingly asks his audience to once again attend to what Aristotle has to say about such detached spirits, declaring that “the greatest among the masters who ever discussed the natural sciences” described in his *Metaphysics* how they flow in and out of God

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<sup>76</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 15, ed. Quint in DW I, 250: “ie me er abgeschaiden ist von allen dingen vnd in sich selber gekeret, ie me er aellü ding clarlich vnd vernünfteklich berkennet in im selber sunder uskeren: ie me es ain mensch ist.”

<sup>77</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 15, ed. Quint in DW I, 250: “Nun sprich ich: wie mag das gesin, das abgeschaidenheit des verstantniss under form vnd bild in im selber aellü ding verstát sunder uskeren vnd verwandlung sin selbes?”

<sup>78</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 15, ed. Quint in DW I, 250-51: “Ich sprich, es kum von siner ainualtikait... Ain ainualtig verstantniss ist so luter in im selber, das es begriffert das luter blos goetlich wesen sunder mittel. Vnd in dem influss enpfahet es goetlich natur glich den engeln, dar an die engel enpfahend gross froed.”



and behold the naked being of God without distinction.<sup>79</sup> However, lest Eckhart once again be understood to be defending the Peripatetic metaphysics of flow, the Meister after his account of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, announces instead "that the being that the angels grasp in a formless way and upon which they depend without medium is not enough for the noble man."<sup>80</sup> The only knowledge that suffices for the detached spirit, Eckhart determines, is knowledge of the simple One. He therefore concludes, in an explicitly apophatic manner, that "the final end of being is the darkness or unknowability of the hidden Godhead."<sup>81</sup> The Peripatetic account of intellection and metaphysics described by Eckhart in sermon Q 15 thus gives way to the Platonic theology of the One that the Meister had described elsewhere in his homilies. This is perhaps unsurprising given the fact, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, that Eckhart conceived of the passive intellect, rather than the possible and active intellect, as the site where God is joyfully suffered in this life.

Yet the Meister's henological departure from the Peripatetic focus on intellection is even more evident in the version of the argument that Eckhart offers in the homiletic treatise *Von dem edeln Menschen*. Arguing that every medium is alien to God and that God lacks distinction in both His divine nature, and in His Persons, due to His essential unity, Eckhart maintains that "man finds God in the One, and he who wants to find God must become one."<sup>82</sup> For this reason,

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<sup>79</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 15*, ed. Quint in DW I, 251: "Nun merket mit flisse, das Aristotiles sprich von den abgeschaidnen gaisten in dem buoch, das da haisset metaphysica. Der hoest vnder den maistern, der von natürlichen künsten ie gesprach, der nemet dis abgeschaiden gaist vnd sprichet, das si enkainer ding form sien, vnd si nemend ir wesen sunder mittel von got usflissend; fliessend si och wider in vn enpfahend den usfluss von got sunder mittel obwendig den engel, vn showent das bloss wesen gottes sunder vnderscheid."

<sup>80</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 15*, ed. Quint in DW I, 251: "Nun sprich ich, das disem edlen mentschen genueget nit an dem wesen, das die engel begriffent vnformlichen vnd dar an hanget sunder mittel; im begnueget nit <dan> an dem ainigen ain."

<sup>81</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 15*, ed. Quint in DW I, 252-3: "<Das leste ende> des wesens ist das vinsterniss oder das vnbekantniss der verborgenen gothait."

<sup>82</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Von dem edeln Menschen*, ed. Quint in DW V, 115: "in dem einen vindet man got, und ein muoz er werden, der got vinden sol."

Eckhart continues, a heathen master (Macrobius) had taught that the highest God gives birth to the One, since to be one with One is the particular property of God.<sup>83</sup> He also taught that this One is uniquely a friend of virgins and young maidens, just as Paul had stated in 2 Cor 11:2 (according to the translation of this biblical verse given by the Meister) that “I have betrothed and praised you as chaste virgins to the One.”<sup>84</sup> The emphasis on the union without distinction, which occurs between man and God in the One, that Eckhart attributes to the philosophers thus accords with the words of Paul, and both the heathen master and Paul are revealed to be key authorities for the relationship between virginity and henology that Eckhart had described in decidedly Proclian terms in sermon Q 2. *Von dem edeln Menschen* consequently concludes, just as Eckhart had in the other sermon that he preached on Luke 19:12, that Jesus’s parable of the noble man, who left and returned to his own land in order to gain a kingdom, reveals that, in order to behold God, a soul that has become one by searching for the One within itself and within God, must receive Him in that One.<sup>85</sup> True nobility and virginity consist in the unification with God in the One which the divine science of the Platonists and the Christians agree is the definition of the just life.

The discussion of the One in Eckhart’s *Von dem edeln Menschen* also shows that the Meister’s critique of Aristotle in sermon Q 15 was very likely motivated by his disagreement with Dietrich of Freiberg’s account of beatitude. The Meister’s argument throughout all the sermons analyzed in this section, namely, that divinization did not simply result from the kind of

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<sup>83</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Von dem edeln Menschen*, ed. Quint in DW V, 115: “Ez sprichet ein heidenischer meister, daz daz ein ist geborn ûz dem obersten got. Sîn eigenschaft ist wesen ein mit einem. Swer ez suochet under gote, der triuget sich selber.” Cf. Macrobius, *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis* I.6.7-10, ed. by Willis, xx.

<sup>84</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Von dem edeln Menschen*, ed. Quint in DW V, 115: “Ouch sprichet der selbe meister ze dem vierden mâle, daz di zein mit nihte eingenlicher vriuntschaft enhât dan mit juncvrouwen oder megeden, als sant Paulus sprichet: ich hân iuch kiuschen juncvrouwen getriuwet und gelobet dem einen.”

<sup>85</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Von dem edeln Menschen*, ed. Quint in DW V, 118: “Dar umbe sprichet unser herre gar wol, daz ‘ein edel mensche vuor ûz in ein verrez lant enpfâhen im ein rîche und wider kam’. Wan der mensche muoz in im selber ein sîn und muoz daz suochen in im und in einem und nemen in einem: daz ist schouwen got aleine.”

beatitude and intellectualization afforded by natural and metaphysical inquiry, but required a radical self-emptying subjection to and union with the One itself of the kind he described through recourse to the language of the Platonic philosophers, in *Von dem edeln Menschen*. Eckhart thus inserts himself into the debate among the German Dominicans over beatitude and its relationship to the intellect, just as his own disciples had done when they compiled the *Paradisus anime intelligentis*.<sup>86</sup> Eckhart, for this reason, when discussing the significance of the noble man mentioned by Jesus in his parable, explains that the person who knows the naked God also gains knowledge of created things within themselves, as this or that particular being, which certain masters drawing on the language of Augustine’s *De genesi ad litteram* call “evening knowledge.”<sup>87</sup> Yet Eckhart defines “morning knowledge” as the cognition of creatures as they exist without distinction within the One that is God, referring to Dietrich’s invocation of Augustine to explain the difference between possible and active intellection.<sup>88</sup> Hence the noble man that Jesus describes, according to Eckhart, is noble because he himself is one and knows God and creatures in this higher manner of being—knows both, that is, in and as the One. Eckhart once again suggests, in other words, that his henological theology provides the best account of this state. He therefore unfolds his own teaching using the conceptual vocabulary of Dietrich in a manner that is decidedly more Platonic than Aristotelian. This suggests that the Meister intends to respond to the Peripatetic understanding of beatitude that Dietrich had forwarded, and that the henology of *Von dem edeln Menschen* is partly a response to the debates about the blessed life currently taking place among the German Dominicans.

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<sup>86</sup> Discussed in more detail in the previous chapter.

<sup>87</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Von dem edeln Menschen*, ed. Quint in DW V, 116: “Nû sprechent die meister, daz, sô man bekennet die créature in ir selber, daz heizet ein âbentbekantnisse, und dâ sihet man die créature in bilden etlicher underscheide.”

<sup>88</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Von dem edeln Menschen*, ed. Quint in DW V, 116: “sô man aber die créature in gote bekennet, daz heizet und ist ein morgenbekantnisse, und alsô schouwet man die créature âne underscheide und aller bilde entbildet und aller glîcheit entglîchet in dem einen, daz got selber ist.”

This is further confirmed in a later discussion of the significance of the nobleman in Eckhart's treatise, where the Meister attempts to account for the difference between reflexive and direct knowledge of the divine.<sup>89</sup> Recognizing, importantly, that reflexive knowledge always reintroduces the subject who knows into the process of intellection—and thus introduces a medium between God and the intellect—Eckhart nevertheless grants that all reflexive knowledge produces direct knowledge of that which is known. He thus asserts that “insofar as man, the soul, the mind beholds God, he also knows and knows himself knowing, that is, he recognizes that he beholds and knows God.”<sup>90</sup> This is a problem for Eckhart, who, throughout his entire corpus, insists that union with God is unmediated and that beatific knowledge of God is a product of the soul's passive reception of God's work rather than a product of the intellect's own essential activity. That Eckhart is motivated also to respond critically to Dietrich's solution to this problem is revealed by the Meister's admission “that many people have thought (and this appears to be credible) that the flower and core of the blessed life lies in a knowledge, where the mind knows that it knows God,”<sup>91</sup> as well as his response that “I say that this is certainly not so! This alone is true, that without [such knowledge] the soul would not be blessed; but beatitude does not lie at all in this, because the principal thing that beatitude lies in is that the soul beholds God naked.”<sup>92</sup> The conjunction of the possible with the active intellect, which is naturally conjoined

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<sup>89</sup> My understanding of the significance of the following part of Eckhart's argument has benefited greatly from conversations with Bernard McGinn and Bernhard Blankenhorn during a seminar held in summer 2020 organized by the Lumen Christi Institute. I thank both Profs. McGinn and Blankenhorn for their assistance and generosity.

<sup>90</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Von dem edeln Menschen*, ed. Quint in DW V, 116: “Ich spriche: sô der mensche, diu sêle, der geist schouwet got, sô weiz er ouch und bekennet sich bekennende, daz ist: er bekennet, daz er shouwet und bekennet got.”

<sup>91</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Von dem edeln Menschen*, ed. Quint in DW V, 116: “Nû hat gedunket etlîche liute und schînet gar gelouplîch, daz bluome und kerne der saelicheit lige in bekantnisse, dâ der geist bekennet, daz er got bekennet.”

<sup>92</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Von dem edeln Menschen*, ed. Quint in DW V, 116: “Doch enspriche ich sicherlîche des niht. Aleine ist daz wâr, daz diu sêle âne daz doch niht saelic waere, doch enliget diu saelicheit dar ane niht; wan daz êrste, dâ saelicheit ane geliget, daz ist, sô diu sêle schouwet got bloz.”

to the divine understanding, which Dietrich claimed defined the beatific vision in a decidedly Averroist manner, according to Meister Eckhart is simply a preparatory stage prior to the direct union between God and the soul which characterizes true beatitude.<sup>93</sup> Eckhart therefore concludes *Von dem edeln Menschen* by rhetorically asking “who, then, is nobler than he who, on the one hand, is born of the highest and best that creation has, and, on the other hand, [is born] from the innermost ground of the divine nature and its solitary wilderness?”<sup>94</sup> Insisting that the One beyond intellect is where the soul is truly beatified, Eckhart substitutes his own henology for Dietrich’s Peripateticism. *Von dem edeln Menschen*, by turning to the problem of reflexive and direct knowledge of God, thus recasts the theology of the German Dominicans into Platonic terms. This was a significant transformation that decisively affected the next generation of theologians in the German Dominican School, such as Berthold of Moosburg and Johannes Tauler.

We have seen that Eckhart’s vernacular preaching provides evidence for the Meister’s commitment to and particular understanding of Platonic henology. Suggesting that the Platonists apprehended something important that escapes the Peripatetic metaphysics, noetics and logic that had captivated his scholastic contemporaries, the Meister consequently combined an openness toward Proclus with a particular conception of Plato as an authoritative figure that fundamentally reconfigured and redeployed the Peripatetic conceptual vocabulary he introduced into his preaching. Eckhart, moreover, not only inherited this conceptual vocabulary from the Dominican theologians who had preceded him at the University at Paris and who had become uniquely

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<sup>93</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Von dem edeln Menschen*, ed. Quint in DW V, 118: “Alsô spriche ich, daz saelicheit enist âne daz niht, der mensche enbekenne und wizze sol, daz er got schouwet und bekennet, doch enwelle got des nih, daz mîn saelicheit dar ane lige!”

<sup>94</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Von dem edeln Menschen*, ed. Quint in DW V, 119: “Wer is danne edeler wan der einhalb geborn ist von dem hoehsten und von dem besten, daz crêatûre hât, under anderhalb von dem innigsten grunde götlicher natûre und des einode?”

authoritative among the members of his own Order in Germany, namely, Albert, Thomas and Dietrich. He also transformed the significance of this vocabulary by entering into the polemical debates raging among the German Dominicans—just as his disciples and followers did a generation later with the *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, as I discussed in the last chapter—about the nature of beatitude. Perhaps most importantly, Eckhart identified in Plato, and in the Platonic philosophers of the non-Christian world, evidence for the detachment, virginity and self-abnegating union with the One beyond being in the silent desert of the Godhead beyond the Trinity, which was profoundly similar to the groundless existence without a why that Christian apophatic theology tries to describe and that just and divinized Christians actively embody in the world. Meister Eckhart therefore sets the stage for a significant development in the subsequent generation of the German Dominican School, where it is no longer the distinction between rational and graced knowledge in their relation to natural and voluntary providence which defines the difference between the divine science of the philosophers and “our” divine science of the saints. Rather, an argument about the limits of Peripatetic or Aristotelian wisdom and a conception of a Platonic wisdom that supersedes it will continue to make all the difference, even as a desire to reinscribe the operative distinction between philosophical and Christian theology will become manifest.

*Berthold of Moosburg: Proclus and “Supersapiential” Divine Science*

Berthold of Moosburg has attracted much scholarly attention recently, largely due to Ezequiel Ludueña and Evan King’s monograph-length studies of his *Expositio super Elementationem Theologicam*, although the German Dominican lector has long been the focus of scholarship on the continuities between late antique and medieval Platonism.<sup>95</sup> This scholarship has culminated

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<sup>95</sup> Evan King, *Supersapientia: Berthold of Moosburg and the Divine Science of the Platonists* (Leiden: Brill, 2021) and Ezequiel Ludueña, *La recepción de Eriúgena en Bertoldo de Moosburg: Un aporte sobre la*

in a vision of Berthold's project as a "renewal of medieval metaphysics," as the title of one recent edited collection dedicated to his work normatively puts it, since he returns medieval theology to the Platonism from which it had departed under the influence of scholasticism and Aristotelianism.<sup>96</sup> Perhaps just as importantly, Berthold's particular recourse to the authority of Proclus and his systematic attempt to recover the divine science of the Platonists in his *Expositio* has been presented as the philosophical and theological culmination of the Albertist tradition within the German Dominican School. Alain de Libera, for this reason, not only speaks of Berthold's *Expositio* as a "summa" of the theology of the Rhineland, but also designates Berthold the belated "founder" of the German Dominican School itself, since he is particularly responsible for drawing together and synthesizing the philosophical currents of Neoplatonism and the main theological claims of the disciples of Albert.<sup>97</sup> As Loris Sturlese has argued, moreover, Berthold does so primarily as part of a concerted effort among the German Dominicans to develop a normative conception of and practice of theology after the condemnation of Meister Eckhart for heresy, while nevertheless attending to the movement toward an explicitly Platonic theology that the Meister himself had introduced into the German Dominican School.<sup>98</sup> The following section of this chapter attends to this aspect of Berthold's work, while taking advantage of the more recent findings of Berthold scholarship, in order to briefly demonstrate how he transforms the German Dominican distinction between philosophical and Christian theology into a distinction between a limited Aristotelian wisdom and the

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*Escuela de Colonia* (Saarbrücken: Publicia, 2013), which both attempt to situate Berthold's interpretation of Proclus within an Eriugenan tradition developed by the German Dominicans.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Dragos Calma and Evan King, introduction to *The Renewal of Medieval Metaphysics*, 9-11. According to King, *Supersapientia*, 40-59, Berthold's effort to renew metaphysics by returning it to its original Platonic ground was a direct response to the influence of the *Liber de causis* as a reduction of Proclean philosophy to a Peripatetic conception of theology.

<sup>97</sup> de Libera, *Introduction a la Mystique Rhénane*, 325.

<sup>98</sup> Loris Sturlese, "Der Prokloskommentar Bertholds von Moosburg und die philosophischen Probleme der nachekhartischen Zeit," in *Homo Divinus*, 137-54.

supersapiential divine science that Proclus and the Platonsits share with Christian theologians like Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.

Berthold was likely born sometime between 1290 and 1300, possibly entering the Dominican Order sometime around 1310.<sup>99</sup> In 1315 he was sent to study philosophy and theology in Oxford, and could have encountered there the “classizing friar” Nicholas Trevet, who at this stage of his career had just composed his influential commentary on Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*.<sup>100</sup> In this text, which may have influenced Berthold’s own turn to Platonism, Trevet sought to explain the various Platonic expressions in that work following the earlier effort of William of Conches, while also demonstrating their fundamental concordance with the Peripatetic philosophy that had come to be hegemonic within the Dominican Order of the fourteenth-century.<sup>101</sup> After his stay in Oxford, Berthold was active as a teacher of natural philosophy somewhere in Germany, before he headed to the Dominican friary in Regensburg in 1327, and before travelling to Cologne to teach at their *studium generalium* sometime after 1335.<sup>102</sup> He would remain in Cologne until his death in 1361, despite being briefly expelled from the city between 1346 and 1351 with the rest of his community for political reasons.<sup>103</sup> It was likely while in Cologne that Berthold completed his *Expositio*, although King has argued that there is no reason to expect that Berthold would have begun this fundamentally philosophical

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<sup>99</sup> For Berthold’s life, see King, *Supersapientia*, 1-14, which draws upon Loris Sturlese, introduction to Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli. 184-211*, ed. by Loris Sturlese (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1974), xv-xxii.

<sup>100</sup> King, *Supersapientia*, 4-5.

<sup>101</sup> For Nicholas Trevet as a “classicizing friar,” see Beryl Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), 58-66. For Trevet’s commentary on Boethius and his attempt to interpret the Platonic arguments of the *Consolatio* in a manner concordant with Peripateticism, see Lodi Nauta, “The Scholastic Context of the Boethius Commentary by Nicholas Trevet,” in *Boethius in the Middle Ages: Latin and Vernacular Traditions of the "Consolatio Philosophiae"*, ed. by Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen and Lodi Nauta (Brill: Leiden 1997), 41-67 and Alastair Minnis and Lodi Nauta, “More Platonico loquitur: What Nicholas Trevet really did to William of Conches,” in *Chaucer’s 'Boece' and the Medieval Tradition of Boethius*, ed. by Alastair Minnis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), 1-33.

<sup>102</sup> King, *Supersapientia*, 5-6.

<sup>103</sup> King, *Supersapientia*, 7-8.



work during a period when he was primarily responsible for the theological instruction of the members of the studium there.<sup>104</sup> Finally, evidence indicates that while in Cologne Berthold was busy with the pastoral care of local beguine communities that were associated with the Dominican friary, as well as with the instruction and visitation of the nearby Dominican nunnery at Engelthal, where the visionary Adelheid Langmann claimed to have beheld the presence of Christ in 1344 during a mass celebrated by a preacher from Moosburg who is almost certainly Berthold.<sup>105</sup> Despite this aspect of his life, however, Berthold's career establishes him as primarily a learned teacher of philosophy and theology, much like Eckhart, and the *Expositio* is almost definitely a result of the work that Berthold undertook as lector at Regensburg and Cologne, as well as the training he received in England.

Berthold's turn to Proclus seems to have begun in the period before he composed the *Expositio*, based on the reconstruction of his library and the scholarly attention that has been paid to his glosses upon the manuscripts in his possession.<sup>106</sup> In particular, scholars have noted the remarks Berthold included in the margins of his copy of Macrobius' *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis*, which is included in MS Cod. Basel. F IV 31, the same manuscript belonging to Berthold that contains works by Proclus, and which preserves the *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* attributed to Dietrich of Freiberg.<sup>107</sup> Drawing on the longer version of William of Conches's own gloss on this text—Berthold cites and adapts the *accessus ad auctorem* that William composed for Macrobius' work—Proclus is mentioned at least ten times in Berthold's

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<sup>104</sup> King, *Supersapientia*, 9.

<sup>105</sup> King, *Supersapientia*, 11-14. For the Dominican sisters of Engelthal, see Leonard P. Hindsley, *The Mystics of Engelthal: Writings from a Medieval Monastery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). For an account of the vision, see Susanne Bürkle, *Literatur im Kloster: Historische Funktion und rhetorisches Legitimation frauenmystischer Texte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Francke, 1999), 123-7.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. King, *Supersapientia*, 14-40.

<sup>107</sup> Irene Caiazza, "Mains célèbres dans les marges des *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* de Macrobe," in *Scientia in margine: Études sur les marginalia dans les manuscrits scientifiques du Moyen Âge à la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2005), 171-89.

own marginal commentary, although most of the glosses are concerned to demonstrate the continuity between Proclus and standard Peripatetic authorities like Avicenna and the *Liber de causis*.<sup>108</sup> As Evan King notes, moreover, most of Berthold's references to Proclus in these glosses occur alongside Macrobius' argument in *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis* I.14, where Macrobius attempts to explain what it means that humans have received their minds from the fire of the stars, which leads Berthold to describe how the various levels of intellect flow out from and participate in the divine intellect.<sup>109</sup> Yet Berthold also aimed in these glosses to uphold important differences between Christian theology and philosophical metaphysics, arguing that attempts to identify the God, Intellect, and Soul which Macrobius describes as separate intelligences ought not be read as a philosophical description of the Trinity.<sup>110</sup> In this way, he stands in continuity with Dietrich, whose own attempt to police the boundaries between philosophical and Christian theology relied on a particular "Proclian" definition of separate intelligence, as well as on the Peripatetic supposition that an order of separate intelligences emanated naturally out of the First Cause.<sup>111</sup>

This tendency to reproduce the concerns of Dietrich by turning to Proclus is also evident in Berthold's *Expositio* itself, although recent scholarship has demonstrated that Berthold's work does not just draw upon the conception of philosophical theology operative in the German Dominican School. One of the most important developments in the study of Berthold's *Expositio*, for instance, has been Fiorella Retucci's discovery that Berthold draws frequently and often on the *Sapientiale* composed sometime between 1250 and 1260 by the Franciscan

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<sup>108</sup> King, *Supersapientia*, 16-17 provides a table summarizing these ten references to Proclus. It is curious that Berthold does not gloss or appear to acknowledge the significance of Macrobius's discussion of the One, which Meister Eckhart had drawn upon in the vernacular sermons discussed above.

<sup>109</sup> King, *Supersapientia*, 18.

<sup>110</sup> King, *Supersapientia*, 18-19.

<sup>111</sup> See the discussion of Dietrich above in chapter two.

theologian Thomas of York.<sup>112</sup> An encyclopedic treatise that offers a systematization of the philosophical metaphysics available to the scholastic theologians of the thirteenth-century in three-parts that predates but stands in continuity with the approach of the “classicizing” friars of England, the *Sapientiale* is characterized by its attempt to synthesize the teaching of those scholars Thomas names the *sapientes mundi* and of those he calls the *sapientes Dei*.<sup>113</sup> Yet, just as the German Dominicans had done, Thomas of York emphasized the methodological difference between the philosophers who rely on rational demonstration and the theologians who rely on the testimony of scripture, even as the *Sapientiale* maintains that these two different approaches result in the same state of beatitude, defined in Averroist terms as an intellectual conjunction with the divine intellect.<sup>114</sup> Most importantly, as David Porreca has demonstrated, the *Sapientiale* is an explicitly hermetic work, since it draws extensively on the major writings which the thirteenth-century philosophers and theologians attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.<sup>115</sup> Almost all of Berthold’s references to this figure in the *Expositio* rely on the *Sapientiale*.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, as Retucci has demonstrated, the prologues that Berthold appended to his *Expositio* are made up of implicit borrowings from the *Sapientiale* alongside extensive reference to the works of Albert, Ulrich and Dietrich. In a very real way, therefore, Berthold’s *Expositio*

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<sup>112</sup> Fiorella Retucci, “Between Cologne and Oxford: Berthold of Moosburg and Thomas of York’s *Sapientiale*,” in *The Renewal of Medieval Metaphysics*, 84-121.

<sup>113</sup> Fiorella Retucci, “The *Sapientiale* of Thomas of York, OFM. The Fortunes and Misfortunes of a Critical Edition,” *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale* 52 (2010): 146-50.

<sup>114</sup> He does so, as Retucci shows, through recourse to the arguments of Maimonides’ *Guide*, which he names the *Mater philosophiae*. Cf. Retucci, “The *Sapientiale* of Thomas of York, OFM,” 147, where she reproduces Thomas’s own summary in *Sapientiale* I:3 of the parable of the palace that Maimonides includes in *Guide* III:52 in order to describe the different degrees of the apprehension of God. In *Sapientiale* I: 6, moreover, Thomas declares that the laborious investigation into God and the direct vision of God afforded by revelation produce the same knowledge of God.

<sup>115</sup> David Porreca, “Hermes Trismegistus in Thomas of York: a 13<sup>th</sup>-century Witness to the Prominence of an Ancient Sage,” *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 72.1 (2005): 147-275.

<sup>116</sup> For these references, see Antonella Sannino, “Berthold of Moosburg’s Hermetic Sources,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 63 (2000): 243-258. Because it was published before Retucci’s discoveries were made public, Sannino does not acknowledge the mediation of the *Sapientiale* in her article.

represents an attempt to interpret Proclus through the competing lenses of Thomas of York's concordance approach to philosophical and Christian theology, and the German Dominican effort to distinguish and police the boundaries between these two divine sciences through recourse to Peripateticism and Dionysian mystical theology.

The influence of Thomas of York upon Berthold's conception of Proclus is perhaps most evident in the *expositio tituli* he attached to the beginning of his commentary. An attempt to explain the meaning of the title attached to Proclus' work, the *expositio tituli* functions as an *accessus ad auctorem* to the *Elementatio*, and unpacks in standard scholastic terms the material, efficient, formal and final cause of the work.<sup>117</sup> Although the *expositio tituli* is primarily concerned to explain the organizational structure of the *Elementatio* and Proclus' philosophical method, Berthold briefly reconstructs the history of philosophy in order to demonstrate that Proclus' great contribution was to distil into theoretical axioms or propositions the doctrines that prior philosophers had deliberately obscured under the cover of integuments.<sup>118</sup> Yet it is in this context that Berthold writes that the author of the *Elementatio* "was one of the most excellent disciples of Plato" and was therefore "called by the presaged name Proclus as if from *procul cluens*, which means having fame, or eminence and influence, that extends far."<sup>119</sup> Drawing upon

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<sup>117</sup> King, *Supersapientia*, 103-4.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli*, tit. A, 37, ed. by Maria Rita Pagnoni-Sturlese and Loris Sturlese (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1984). This commitment to the mathematization of theological and philosophical method in Berthold's theory, if not practice, has been described by Wouter Goris, "Metaphysik und Einheitswissenschaft bei Berthold von Moosburg," *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales* 85.1 (2018): 239-258. Catherine König-Pralong, "Expérience et sciences de la nature chez Dietrich de Freiberg et Berthold de Moosburg," in *Forme e oggetti della conoscenza nel XIV secolo: Studi in ricordo di Maria Elena Reina*, ed. by Luca Bianchi and Chiara Crisciani (Florence, SISMEL, 2014), 107-33, ties it not only to Berthold's exegesis of Proclus but also to Dietrich's prior attempt to establish a method for the natural sciences, suggesting that Dietrich and Berthold share a Platonic mathematization of nature tied to an experimental conception of science that precedes the "modern" conception of the relation between nature and mathematics that Alexandre Koyré famously attributed to Galileo Galilei's "break" with Aristotelianism. Cf. Alexandre Koyré, *Metaphysics and Measurement: Essays in Scientific Revolution* (London: Chapman Hall, 1968), 16-43

<sup>119</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli*, tit. A, 37: "Proclus namque philosophus fuit auctor istius libri, unus de excellentissimis Platonis discipulis, unde et praesago nomine dictus est Proclus quasi procul cluens..., id est excellens sive pollens."

a complex of passages from the third Book of Augustine’s *Contra Academicos*, Berthold adds that Proclus is also comparable to Plotinus, “‘that mouth of Plato... who is in philosophy the most purified and clear from the clouds of error’ and all the integuments, within which the first Platonists and especially the Academics wrapped up their own wisdom.”<sup>120</sup> Later in the prologue, while weaving together citations taken from Augustine and Cicero, Berthold will clarify that Platonic philosophy had its origin in the teaching of the Pythagoreans, and places Proclus at the end of a genealogy that extends from Pythagoras, through the Ionian physicists, to Socrates and Plato himself.<sup>121</sup> In this way, Berthold undoes the movement from proposition to exegesis that had characterized Meister Eckhart’s conception of the practice of theology, because of his commitment to Proclus’ own *mathematization* of theology, even if it is true that his own approach to Proclus is hermeneutic and historicizing. This attempt to situate Proclus as a Platonist within the context of ancient philosophy and the unfolding of a Platonic school has led Stephen Gersh to characterize Berthold as an important medieval historian of philosophy—one who prepared the way for subsequent attempts to historically recover an “authentic” Platonism from the witness of the past, such as that of Nicholas of Cusa or of Marsilio Ficino.<sup>122</sup> Its purpose, ultimately, is to establish the kind of knowledge that Proclus attained as a Platonic philosopher.

More interesting for our purposes, however, is Berthold’s claim that Proclus’ philosophical greatness can be recognized through the threefold mode of knowing that Pseudo-Dionysius in the fourth chapter of his *De divinis nominibus* ascribes to both angels and human

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<sup>120</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli*, tit. A, 37: “in Plotino os illud Platonis quod- sicut testitur Augustinus III libro *Contra Academicos* – in philosophia purgatissimum est et lucidissimum demotis nubibus erroris et integumentis omnibus, quibus Platonici primi et maxime Academici suam sapientiam obvolvebant.”

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli*, tit. G-H, 43-5.

<sup>122</sup> Stephen Gersh, “Berthold of Moosburg, Nicholas of Cusa, and Marsilio Ficino as Historians of Philosophy,” in *The Renewal of Medieval Metaphysics*, 453-502.

souls. This characterization of Proclus, which relies explicitly on the *Sapientiale* by Thomas of York, explains that Proclus's knowledge was characterized by the circular, rectilinear and oblique motions of the mind that Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite had originally employed to characterize the activity of the intellect, sensuality, and reason.<sup>123</sup> But as the series of subjunctive verbs employed to describe Proclus' various means of intellectual ascent indicate, Berthold only hypothesizes that the Neoplatonic philosopher *might* have experienced this threefold mode of knowing based on his own description of the degrees of knowledge. Berthold subsequently culls extracts from one of Proclus' three minor works, the *De providentia* in order to infer from Proclus' theoretical discussion of the two types of soul and various ways someone may attain knowledge of reality, that the philosopher's account indicates his own familiarity with the intellectual movements Dionysius had described. Berthold understands Proclus (in concert with the Pseudo-Dionysius) to have *authored* an epistemological discourse that established a series of particular subject positions, and consequently ought to be understood as occupying them. Furthermore, as Stephen Gersh has rightly acknowledged, Berthold's comparison between the modes of knowledge described by Proclus in the *De providentia* and those catalogued by Pseudo-Dionysius also enabled him to recategorize the schema outlined in *De divinis nominibus* itself, so that the circular, rectilinear and oblique motions of the mind are now equated with understanding that transcends intellection, intellection itself, and reason.<sup>124</sup> In other words, Berthold's reading of Proclus structures his presentation of Pseudo-Dionysius to the same extent that his reading of Pseudo-Dionysius structures his presentation of Proclus. In this way, Berthold

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<sup>123</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli*, tit. A, 37-8, extensively citing *De divinis nominibus* 704D-705B. For the influence of Thomas of York here, see King, *Supersapientia*, 108.

<sup>124</sup> Stephen Gersh, "Berthold von Moosburg on Platonic Philosophy," in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter*, 497.

comes to articulate a specifically Platonic approach to theology that he will differentiate from the Aristotelian.

Hence, in the *expositio tituli*, Berthold argues that Proclus “through the first movement, namely circularity, might have ascended [to knowledge of God]” because in the *De providentia* “he shows that a reason moved is like a reason looking back toward inward reasons and ‘thus evidently withdraws itself from the senses, away from what it senses, and is separated from delights and sorrows.’”<sup>125</sup> Berthold explains, for this reason, that the mind “recalls to itself that it is a rational world, the image indeed of those things which are before it, from which it has gone out, but the exemplar of those things which are after it, over which it stands.”<sup>126</sup> In other words, Berthold characterizes this mode of knowledge as a turning inward that leads to the classically Platonic recognition that man is an intellectual microcosm of the macrocosm—a position Berthold equates elsewhere in his commentary with a hermetic principle he adopts from Albert the Great’s *Metaphysica*, namely, that “man is the tie between God and the world above the world, existing through a twofold investigation, namely physical and mathematical, each of which is perfected by the power of human reason.”<sup>127</sup> By meditating on the principles or reasons of physics and mathematics that are present within the mind, and which pre-eminently exist as the seminal causes contained within the divine understanding itself, Berthold suggests that Proclus would have experienced that circular motion that Pseudo-Dionysius had suggested

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<sup>125</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologiam Procli*, tit. B, 38: “Quod autem Proclus per primum motum, scilicet circularem, sicut dictum est, patet in libro suo *De fato et providentia* 6 cap., ubi ostendit, quod ratio mota ut ratio respiciens est ad intrinsecas rationes et sic ‘elongat se ipsam evidenter a sensibus, contra quos sentiat, et a delectationibus et tristitiis sequestrator.’”

<sup>126</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologiam Procli*, tit. B, 38: “et reminiscit se ipsam esse mundum rationale, imaginem quidem eorum, qui ante ipsam, a quibus egressa est, exemplar autem eorum, quae post ipsam, quibus superstat.”

<sup>127</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologiam Procli*, prol. 14, 23: “Homo est nexus Dei et mundi super mundum per duplicem indagacionem existens, physicam videlicet et doctrinalem, quorum utrumque virtute rationis humanae perficitur.” Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.9.

“causes [the soul] to return from the multiplicity of externals, to gather in upon itself” and proceed to the Beautiful and the Good by ascending through the divine intelligences “who are themselves in a powerful union.”<sup>128</sup> In this way, Berthold concludes, Proclus introduces how one can conceive of God rationally through a meditation upon the principal causes of existant things.

Proclus’ *De providentia*, according to Berthold, also indicates that the philosopher might have ascended directly to knowledge of God by way of the rectilinear motion of understanding, “neither retreating into himself nor progressing by means of those entities that are beyond through ratiocination.”<sup>129</sup> Berthold, following Proclus, describes this as a kind of immediate intuition or unitive knowledge of God that arises after discursive reason, akin to the providential knowledge that Pseudo-Dionysius in the *De divinis nominibus* insists the human soul attains “whenever [it] receives, in accordance with its capacities, the enlightenment of divine knowledge... and proceeds to things around it [and] to the simple and united contemplations.”<sup>130</sup> Such direct knowledge—which is only attained after the transient opinion that arises through sense perception and the science established apodictically by discursive reason—is described as a kind of divine mania by the theologians before Plato, and takes place in the faculty that Proclus called the “one of the soul,” where the mind is completely silenced.<sup>131</sup> To authenticate Proclus’

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<sup>128</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus* PG 3, 705A, trans. by Colm Luibheid in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 78.

<sup>129</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli*, tit. C, 39: “Sed quod per directum motum ascenderit in Dei nec ad se regrediendo nec ab his, quae extra sunt, per rationationem progrediendo, sed a creaturis tamquam quibusdam exemplis imaginibus et signis in se variatis et multiplicatis ad unitivas speculations non intelligibiliter, sed intellectualiter, non digressive, sed unitive.”

<sup>130</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* PG 3, 705A.

<sup>131</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli*, tit. C, 103-7, 40: “Et breviter infra prosequitur de cognition, quae est supra intellectum, quam theologi etiam ante Platonem divulgant vocantes eam ut vere divinam maniam: Ipsam etiam aiunt unum animae, non adhuc intellectum excitantem, sed coaptantem ipsum unum uni summo, cui adiacens le unum quitem amat, clausa cognitionibus, muta facta et silens intrinseco silentio.” Citing Proclus, *De prov.* 8, n. 31. For competing accounts about how to understand the *unum animae* in Berthold’s theology, and its relationship to German Dominican conceptions of the *abditum mentis*, see Paul D. Hellmeier, “Der Intellekt ist nicht genug: Das proklische 'unum in nobis' bei Berthold von Moosburg,” *Philosophische Jahrbuch* 126.2 (2019): 202-226 and Evan King, “Berthold of Moosburg on Intellect and the One of



account in *De providentia* of this “one” that enables the ecstatic flight of the soul into God, Berthold equates it with the “unity” that Pseudo-Dionysius mentions in the seventh chapter of the *De divinis nominibus*, which “transcends the nature of the mind,” and which must be dialectically affirmed and negated like God because of its ineffability, which and allows the soul to “[unite] to things beyond itself” and “become wholly of God.”<sup>132</sup> This “one” or “unity” is also that aforementioned “tie” between man and God uncovered by contemplating the mind, which Berthold notes Proclus has called “a certain secret trace of the One in us . . . , because it is more divine than that which is intellect.”<sup>133</sup> The human microcosm accordingly mirrors and participates within the hierarchical emanation of creation itself, which shines forth from the simple and united First Cause that is God into the triadic realms of the henads, intelligences, souls and matter that are joined to each other by way of “likenesses,” and whose order Proclus described in propositions 20 and 21 of the *Elementatio*. Berthold thus re-inscribes the Proclian conception of the manners of being which Dietrich had described throughout his metaphysical treatises. By doing so, Berthold also relates the divine mania experienced within the one of the soul to the perfect, divinized knowledge of the universe in the *abditum mentis* that Dietrich in his *De visione beatifica* had attributed to St. Benedict.

Finally, Berthold’s *expositio tituli* suggests that Proclus might have ascended to God by way of the third type of intellectual movement—namely, the oblique. As Berthold explains, this “was the particular way of the philosophers and was through the laborious investigation of the first principles of every existing thing by dividing, defining and employing common

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the Soul,” *Dionysius* 36 (2018): 184-99. I follow King, *Supersapientia*, 113-116, which attempts to revise his original argument in response to Hellmeier’s work.

<sup>132</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* PG 3, 865C-868A, trans. Luibheid, 106.

<sup>133</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologiam Procli*, prol. 15, 85-7, 23: “Et enim nobis (scilicet hominibus) iniacet aliquod secretum unius vestigium, quod et eo, qui intellectus, est divinus.”

principles...by the progression of syllogism from the known to the unknown [and] by ascending from sensible things to the intelligibles... until an end might be simply arrived at.”<sup>134</sup> The *Elementatio theologica* themselves demonstrate that this is the case, Berthold concludes, because the propositions that Proclus compiled show that he recognized and demonstrated how the world was put together from diverse parts and governed by a divinity. If it is the case that Proclus recognized and may have experienced an intuitive and ecstatic knowledge of God, therefore, Berthold takes the *Elementatio* themselves to indicate that Proclus also experienced that discursive mode of knowing which according to Pseudo-Dionysius “spirals” around the Good by means of “variegated symbols” without actually attaining it.<sup>135</sup> This is also why he describes the *Elementatio* as a book that investigates its subject according to natural providence—a characterization of the method of philosophical theology originally introduced by the German Dominican Dietrich of Freiberg in a *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* cited elsewhere in Berthold’s *expositio tituli* and preserved in the very annotated manuscript that Berthold possessed which also included the *De providentia* of Proclus.<sup>136</sup>

But how did his description of Proclus in the *Expositio* inform Berthold’s understanding of theology itself? In his *Fragmentum* Dietrich of Freiberg had earlier distinguished the philosophical approach from “our divine science of the saints” which investigated what Augustine had called “the order of voluntary providence,” namely, salvation history and the way that the Bible cultivated the moral habits that would enable the Christian to attain eternal

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<sup>134</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologiam Procli*, tit. D, 110-17, 40: “Verum, quod per motum obliquam, qui proprius erat philosophorum et erat per laboriosam investigationem primi omnium existentium principia dividendo, definiendo, communibus principis utendo, a notis ad ignota per ratiocinationem progrediendo, a sensibilibus ad intelligibilia ascendendo... quousque ad simpliciter ultimum perveniatur, ascenderit ipse Proclus in summi boni notitiam, apparet in praesenti libro.” This is a citation of Thomas of York’s *Sapientiale*.

<sup>135</sup> *De divinis nominibus* 705A, trans. Luibheid, 78.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologiam Procli*, tit. I, 319-32, 46.

beatitude.<sup>137</sup> Berthold also evokes the distinction between philosophical and Christian theology according to their investigation of the natural and voluntary orders of providence at the beginning of the third prologue to his *Expositio*, a *Praeambulum libri* that aims to demonstrate that Proclus' philosophy "is most true and proper, having the aspect of truthful science, is most certain and, from this, the most profound."<sup>138</sup> Unlike Albert and Dietrich before him, however, Berthold does so in order to stress that Proclus' philosophy and Christian theology are *similar*. He therefore explains that the propositions or axioms in the *Elementatio theologica* rest upon assumptions that Proclus *believes to be true* just as Christian theology is founded upon the articles of faith.<sup>139</sup> His purpose, in other words, is to establish that Christian theology and Platonic divine science share a deductive rather than inductive method and inculcate comparable levels of certainty. Berthold's conception of theology as a science, whether it be philosophical or Christian, thus look back to Ulrich's conception of theology as a science of faith in a manner that, in its rejection, seems conscious of Godfrey of Fontaines suggestion that this science cannot be characterized as a science in a Peripatetic sense. In this way, as Evan King has shown, Berthold builds upon Dietrich—although there is no reason to accept King's decidedly speculative suggestion that Berthold's *Praeambulum libri* is derived from Dietrich's lost *De theologia*.<sup>140</sup>

Rather than exacerbate the differences between non-Christian and Christian theology, however, Berthold's third prologue is far more interested in explaining the distinction between a "sapiential" and "supersapiential" divine science. This for Berthold is ultimately a contrast

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<sup>137</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *Fragmentum de subiecto theologia* 3.8-9., 281-2, discussed at length in chapter two.

<sup>138</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologiam Procli*, praecamb. 3-4, 53: "quod ista philosophia sit verissime et propriissime habens rationem scientiae veridicae, certissimae et ex hoc altissimae.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologiam Procli*, praecamb. 13-20, 53.

<sup>140</sup> King, "Sapiens modernus," 265-77.

between an Aristotelian and Platonic knowledge of God related to the difference between the “direct” and “oblique” movements of the soul he had identified in Proclus by way of Pseudo-Dionysius. It is because the one of the soul is able to achieve an intuitive and unitive cognition of the One itself, in fact, that Berthold suggests the epistemic habit represented by Platonism transcends that of the Aristotelians. Berthold argues for this reason that

the cognitive principle [of the Platonists]...is of such eminence that the soul itself standing in itself is made to be like God according to Dionysius and [Proclus]. Therefore the habit of this, our divine super-wisdom, exceeds all other habits; not only those of the sciences, but also the habit of the intellect, that is, wisdom, through which Aristotle in his first philosophy, which is solely of being insofar as it is being, grasps his principles.<sup>141</sup>

Regardless of whether one is a Christian or not, therefore, Berthold concludes that Platonism—our supersapiential divine science that transcends *their* wisdom—represents a divinized understanding of reality that stands in explicit contrast to the rational, metaphysical approach of the Aristotelians. It is the Platonists who directly proceed to and may become God, whilst the Aristotelians, who investigate being itself, remain at the level of the intellect and merely “spiral” around the divine who is the First Cause of creation.

In fact, as many scholars have recognized, the *Expositio* attempts to fix the epistemic limits of Aristotelian metaphysics and to assert instead the superiority of a Platonic theology of the One beyond being. Most recently, Ruedi Imbach has argued that the *Expositio* demonstrates a sophisticated late-medieval attempt to move beyond metaphysics conceived as a rationalizing ontotheology, even as Berthold continues to insist on the scientific status of theology by

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<sup>141</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologiam Procli*, praecamb. C, 452-458, 65-6: “Est etiam dictum cognitivum... talis eminentiae, ut anima se totam in ipso statuens efficiatur quasi Deus secundum et auctorem ubi supra. Igitur habitus istius nostrae divinalis supersapientiae excedit omnem alium habitum, non solum scientiarum, sed etiam habitum intellectus, scilicet sapientiam, per quem Aristoteles in sua prima philosophia, quae solum est entium, quia entis in eo, quod ens, accipit sua principia.”

proposing Platonism as an alternate epistemological framework to that of Aristotle.<sup>142</sup> Berthold is significant, Imbach also insists, because he demonstrates the continuity of a certain Platonic tradition which persisted alongside, while partially accommodating itself to, the prevailing Aristotelianism of the scholastic theologians.<sup>143</sup> For Loris Sturlese this is because Berthold epitomizes a trend within thirteenth and fourteenth-century German philosophy that increasingly sought to promote Proclus as necessary alternatives to the philosophical authorities popular at the University of Paris.<sup>144</sup> Berthold for this reason describes Proclus as a “divinized man,” who, “ascending, arrived at knowledge of the highest Good as far as it was possible for a mortal man led by the light of the natural intellect,”<sup>145</sup> and claims that the *Elementatio* itself is a book concerned with “the divine Good according to the order of natural providence.”<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, there are moments in the *Expositio* when Berthold appears to attribute knowledge of the voluntary order of providence to Proclus. This suggests that Berthold was willing to attribute a kind of prophetic knowledge to Proclus, even as he acknowledges the difference between the intellectual beatitude enjoyed by the philosophers and that granted to the Christians by the lights of grace and glory.<sup>147</sup>

Berthold of Moosburg’s *Expositio super Elementationem Theologicam Procli* ultimately represents a return to Dietrich of Freiberg’s conception of the importance of Proclian

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<sup>142</sup> Ruedi Imbach, “Au-delà de la métaphysique: Notule sur l’importance du Commentaire de Berthold de Moosburg OP sur les Éléments de théologi.e,” in *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*, ed. by Dragos Calma, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 376-393.

<sup>143</sup> Imbach, “Au-delà de la métaphysique,” 390.

<sup>144</sup> Sturlese, “Proclo e Ermete in Germania da Alberto Magno a Bertoldo di Moosburg.”

<sup>145</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli*, tit. B, 32-34, 38: “ascendendo pervenit, quantum fuit possibile homini mortali ductu luminis naturalis intellectus, in notitiam summi boni.”

<sup>146</sup> Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli*, tit. I, 340-41, 47: “quod bonum divinum secundum ordinem providentiae naturalis est subiectum huius libri.”

<sup>147</sup> See, Paul D. Hellmeier, “The Meaning of the Biblical Citations in the *Expositio* of Berthold of Moosburg,” in *The Renewal of Medieval Metaphysics*, 41-5, who cites Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli*, 202 F, 223-23, 188.

metaphysics to a correct understanding of philosophical and Christian theology. Not only does Berthold reproduce Dietrich's own distinction between the natural and voluntary orders of providence in order to characterize the kind of theology that the *Elementatio* constitutes, he also adopts and adapts Dietrich's conception of contemplative beatitude by reading his account of the *abditum mentis* toward Proclus' concept of the "one of the soul." This means that Berthold's conception of Platonic theology is slightly different from the one that Eckhart had defended in his vernacular preaching. However, because of his reliance on the *Sapientiale* of Thomas of York and tendency to read Proclus through the lens of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Berthold did blur the boundaries between philosophical and Christian divine science in a manner reminiscent of the Meister. Most importantly, by establishing points of continuity between the Platonic approach to theology characteristic of Proclus' *De providentia* and the description of the circular, rectilinear and oblique motions of the mind that were described in the *De divinis nominibus*, Berthold recharacterized the distinction that Dietrich had instituted, following Albert, between the divine science of the philosophers and that of the saints in his *Fragementum de subiecto theologiae* into an operative distinction between an Aristotelian science of being qua being and a supersapiential Platonic theology of the One. Like Eckhart, therefore, he was more concerned with the continuities between the philosophers and the Christians than he was with the discontinuities. Offering a conception of Proclus as an almost prophetic figure whose ecstatic union with the one confirmed philosophically what Christians come to know through faith, Berthold set the scene for the final German Dominican theologian considered in this chapter: Johannes Tauler.

*Johannes Tauler: Platonism as the Wonderful Divine Science of the Ground*

Active as a preacher in Strassburg, where he had entered the Dominican Order sometime around 1300, Johannes Tauler was one of the most influential pastoral theologians and popular devotional writers of the fourteenth-century.<sup>148</sup> Belonging, like Berthold, to the generation of German Dominicans who were active in the period after the condemnation of Meister Eckhart, Tauler likely came into contact with his illustrious confrere in Strassburg when Eckhart was present in the city between 1313-1326, although it is not clear whether Tauler ever formally trained under the Meister as one of his disciples. From 1330 until 1328 or 1329, Tauler would have preached to the members of the many communities of Dominican women and of unaffiliated beguines who resided in Strasburg, before he was exiled with the rest of the Dominicans during the conflict between Pope John XXII and Ludwig II of Bavaria that erupted due to the Emperor's support of the spiritual Franciscans and because of the Emperor's installation of the Antipope Nicholas V. During this period Tauler travelled extensively throughout the Rhineland—going as far as Cologne and even potentially into the Netherlands—although he spent most of his exile in Basel, where he became acquainted with the community of devout clerics and laity who called themselves the *Gotesfründ* (“Friends of God”).<sup>149</sup> After the death of Ludwig II in 1343, Tauler returned to Strassburg and resided there until his death in 1361.

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<sup>148</sup> For a comprehensive biography of Tauler, see Louise Gnädinger, *Johannes Tauler: Lebenswelt und mystische Lehre* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1993), 9-86. The following paragraph draws substantially upon the brief summary of Tauler's life in McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, 241-3.

<sup>149</sup> Regina D. Schiewer, “‘*Vos amici Dei estis*’: Die ‘Gottesfreunde’ des 14. Jahrhunderts bei Seuse, Tauler und in den ‘Engelberger Predigten’: Religiöse Elite, Verein oder Literaturzirkel?” *Oxford German Studies* 36 (2007): 227-46 offers an important assessment of this group that not only corrects several mistaken assumptions about who actually belonged to this loose epistolary network, but also emphasizes how *Gotesfründ* was more a regulative ideal which reform-minded clerics and laity drew upon in their writing than it was a self-designation of a particular community.

Tauler's theology has generally been characterized by its emphasis on practice rather than speculation. In an influential early study, for instance, the Catholic theologian Dietmar Mieth has argued that Tauler appropriated the speculative theology of Meister Eckhart and united it to a pastoral emphasis upon pious devotion, producing an early and influential "theology of life."<sup>150</sup> Bernard McGinn, likewise, maintains that Tauler was fundamentally uninterested in the disputations about the conception and practice of theology that had so exercised the minds of the learned Dominicans who preceded him, turning to Tauler's sermon V 45 in order to characterize the Meister as more of a *Lebemeister* than a learned *Lesemeister*.<sup>151</sup> It has frequently been asserted in the history of Christian mysticism, moreover, that Tauler adopted this stance because of his intimate involvement in the *cura monialium*. Because he also preached during a tumultuous period which was characterized by the fervent apocalypticism of the flagellants, as well as renewed anxiety within the ecclesiastical magisterium over the so-called heresy of the free spirit, historians of mysticism tend to assume that Tauler's focus on pastoral matters was due to his desire as theologian to discipline the Dominican nuns and sisters under his care, whose embodied spirituality and severe asceticism could have led them into error.<sup>152</sup> Yet, as Claire Taylor Jones has demonstrated, Tauler and the Dominican sisters shared a commitment to a spirituality grounded in a conception of what it means to be a well-ordered Dominican intimately

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<sup>150</sup> Dietmar Mieth, *Die Einheit von Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1969), 282-306. Generally convincing, Mieth's emphasis upon "vocation" betrays his apologetic intention to combat Lutheran interpretations of Tauler's work.

<sup>151</sup> McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, 241. Cf. Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 45*, 196-7: "Lieben Kinder, die grossen pfaffen und die lesmeister die tsipitieren weder bekentnisse mere und edeler si oder die minne. Aber wir wellen nu al hie sagen von den lebmeistern."

<sup>152</sup> Stefan Zekorn, *Gelassenheit und Einkehr: Zu grundlage und Gestalt geistlichen Lebens bei Johannes Tauler* (Würzburg: Echter, 1993), 203-18. For an analysis of Tauler's pastoral emphasis upon discernment in the context of anxiety in medieval Germany over the so-called heresy of the free spirit, see Wendy Love Anderson, *Discernment of Spirits: Assessing Visions and Visionaries in the Late Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 101-6.



connected to the proper observance of the Divine Office.<sup>153</sup> The conception of Tauler as *Lebemeister* concerned to police the piety of potentially unruly women might have as much to do with contemporary assessments of medieval women's essential irrationality, she suggests, as they do with a belief that Tauler's conception of theology as primarily pastoral marks a departure from the "speculative" orientation proper to German Dominican theology.<sup>154</sup> Yet it is certainly the case that Tauler's theology is marked by its attention to how the theological doctrine of the German Dominicans must orient one devotionally and affectively.

Despite his over-arching pastoral orientation and the fact that he very likely did not receive theological training at a University, Tauler's preaching and teaching is characterized by its adherence to the specific philosophical and theological problematic of the German Dominican School. Tauler's general recourse to German Dominican scholasticism was established in 1961, when Ephrem Filtaut and P. Dietrich Schlüter offered a thematic comparison to the work of Albert the Great, Ulrich of Strasburg, Dietrich of Freiberg, Johannes Picardi of Lichtenberg, and Johannes of Sterngassen—although Schlüter's analysis is marred by a dogmatic attempt to read Tauler as a (Neo-)Thomist.<sup>155</sup> More significant to the argument of this chapter, however, is Loris Sturlese's demonstration that Tauler knew the *Expositio super Elementationem Theologicam Procli* of Berthold and drew upon it explicitly whenever he cites Proclus in his sermons or refers to positions that Filtaut had attributed in his study to Dietrich of Freiberg.<sup>156</sup> This indicates, according to Sturlese, that Tauler subscribes to the particular conception of Platonic theology as

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<sup>153</sup> Claire Taylor Jones, *Ruling the Spirit: Women, Liturgy, and Dominican Reform in Late Medieval Germany* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 57-9.

<sup>154</sup> Jones, *Ruling the Spirit*, 27-9.

<sup>155</sup> Ephrem Filtaut, "Johannes Tauler und die deutsche Dominikanerscholastik des XIII/XIV. Jahrhunderts," in *Johannes Tauler, ein Deutscher Mystiker: Gedenkschrift zum 600. Todestag*, ed. by Ephrem Filtaut (Essen: Hans Driewer, 1961), 94-121 and P. Dietrich Schlüter, "Philosophische Grundlagen der Lehren Johannes Taulers," in *Johannes Tauler, ein Deutscher Mystiker*, 122-61.

<sup>156</sup> Loris Sturlese, "Tauler im Kontext: Die philosophischen Voraussetzungen des 'Seelengrundes' in der Lehre des deutschen Neuplatonikers Berthold von Moosburg," in *Homo Divinus*, 169-97.

a supersapiential divine science and is thus more aligned with Berthold than Eckhart. In what follows, I analyze several sermons preached by Tauler in order to test this claim. While doing so, I attend to those moments where Tauler draws upon the metaphors and apophatic conception of theology which the Meister had defended in order to show how he read them explicitly toward Dietrich and Berthold. In doing so, I argue, he unites the ethical and kenotic conception of Eckhart to the vision of Proclus as a “prophetic” philosopher that Dietrich and Berthold defended.

Just like in Meister Eckhart’s homilies Q 80 and Q 17, there are moments in Tauler’s homiletic corpus when the German *Lebemeister* appears distinctly Peripatetic. This aspect of Tauler’s preaching is perhaps most evident in sermon V 60, an extended interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:14, “Hear, O Israel, your God is one God, solely God, a simple God.” Tauler’s sermon aims to demonstrate how the Christian must not only meditate upon the temporal birth, work and life of Christ, but also should raise up their mind in order to establish themselves beyond temporality in eternity.<sup>157</sup> He consequently maintains that “humans can reflect upon their own mind through these [temporal] attributes of God in an active way, so that they may see that God is a pure being, the being of all beings, and yet does not exist in anything in any way.”<sup>158</sup> For, Tauler continues, “God is there within all that exists, is being, has being, and is good.”<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60*, ed. Vetter, 276: “Moyses der sprach: ‘O Israel hoere. Din Got ist ein Got, alleine Gott, ein einvaltig Got’... Wan, als ich han gesprochen, als der mensche hie vormals alles dachte nach der zitlichen wise, als nach unserten herren geburt und werken und leben und wise, also sol er nu alles uf ziehen und sol leren sich erswingen über die zit in die ewigen wise und wesen.”

<sup>158</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60*, ed. Vetter, 277: “Nu mag der mensche in disen eigenscheften sin gemuete erspiegelen in würlklicher wise, das er an sehe das Got ist ein luter wesen, das aller wesen wesen ist, und doch exist er aller dinge in keines.” Although it does not discuss Tauler in a substantial way, Jeffrey F. Hamburger, “Speculations on Speculation: Vision and Perception in the Theory and Practice of Mystical Devotion,” in *Deutsche Mystik im abendländischen Zusammenhang*, 353–408 provides a cogent summary of scholastic and medieval German conceptions of speculation relevant to Tauler’s argument about the act of reflecting upon the mind here.

<sup>159</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60*, ed. Vetter, 277: “Alles das ist und das wesen ist und wesen hat und guot ist, da inne Got.” Sant Augustinus sprach: ‘sist du ein guot mensche, ein guot engel, ein guot himel: tuo ab mensche, tuo ab engel und himel, und was do blibet, das ist wesen

This is why Augustine explains that one ought to separate the essence of the good from a good man, a good angel, or a good heaven, to apprehend the being of God, which is all within all things and also far beyond each thing.<sup>160</sup> An account of the philosophical mode of metaphysical abstraction, derived from Avicenna and Augustine, that Eckhart has defended in his Parisian Questions and in his vernacular preaching, Tauler's recourse to Peripatetic metaphysics and noetics in sermon V 60 is meant to show how the Christian ought to come to recognize, by passing beyond the contemplation of the life of Christ, that the one God is the simple divine being that unifies all created multiplicity.<sup>161</sup> And this, as the title appended to the homily in manuscript reveals, is a good teaching.<sup>162</sup>

Yet Tauler shows in the rest of sermon V 60 that his concerns are not simply about how best to ascertain what God is metaphysically. Rather, because God alone is the being of the good, "man should turn himself toward Him and sink himself into Him with all his powers in an active, affective, and contemplative manner, so that man's nothingness might be conceived, renewed, and come to exist within the divine essence, which alone is the being and the life and the activity within all things."<sup>163</sup> This demonstrates that Tauler is not only invested in the metaphysical distinction between the true and the good that had been introduced by Meister Eckhart in his scholastic works and his vernacular homilies. It also shows that Tauler's concern, much like Eckhart's, was to preach a kenotic theology of detachment, whereby a meditation upon God's

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<sup>160</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60*, ed. Vetter, 277: "Sant Augustinus sprach: 'sist du ein guot mensche, ein guot engel, ein guot himel: tuo ab mensche, tuo ab engel und himel, und was do blibet, das ist wesen der guoten: das ist Got; wan er ist al in allen dingen und doch verre über die ding'."

<sup>161</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60*, ed. Vetter, 277: "Denne sehe der mensche an die eigenschaft der einiger einikeit des wesens, wan Got ist an dem lesten ende der einvaltikeit und in ime wirt alle manigvaltikeit geeinigt und einvaltig in dem einigen ein wesende."

<sup>162</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60*, ed. Vetter, 276: "Dis ist ein guote lere."

<sup>163</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60*, ed. Vetter, 277: "Dar engegen sol der mensche sich tragen und dar in versenken mit allen sinen kreften in wüklicher gefoelliger an schówelicher wise, das sine vernütkeite ze mole werde enphangen und vernúwet und gewesen in dem goetlichen wesende, das allein wesen und leben und wúrken ist in allen dingen."

immanent transcendence empties out the human subject of all within them that is created rather than uncreated. Hence, according to Tauler, it is incumbent upon mankind to consider the unspeakable hiddenness of God announced in Isaiah 45:15, a favorite biblical verse of Tauler's, which we have seen was interpreted by Albert the Great in the prologue to his commentary on the *De mystica theologia*.<sup>164</sup> For God is far more hidden within all things than anything that hides itself within the ground of the soul," Tauler explains, "which is hidden from all the senses and totally unknown within the ground."<sup>165</sup> Just as Eckhart had argued in Q 17, in Peripatetic terms, that the essence of the soul exists transcendentally within God and immanently within the depths of the mind that the soul itself cannot ascertain, so Tauler suggests in V 60 that God's radical nothingness cannot be known to humankind until they come to apprehend that divine hiddenness, which is more radically occulted than the ground of the soul.

Tauler therefore ends his "good teaching" in sermon V 60 by evoking the loneliness of God in the silent wasteland, which Eckhart had also described, where the purity of the Godhead exists separated from all created being. In doing so, Tauler calls upon his audience "to push yourselves there with all your powers, far above your thoughts, your external exteriority, which is so alien, so far from itself and from all internal interiority... and to hide yourselves in this hiddenness, hide yourselves from all creatures and from everything that is alien and unequal to the [divine] being."<sup>166</sup> It is only after they have done this—in an essential and active rather than imaginative and intellectual way, above the senses and phantasy—that Tauler argues that man can behold how God stands in exile in the silent wasteland of his Oneness, "where no word was

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<sup>164</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60*, ed. Vetter, 277: "Denne an sehe der mensche die unsprechliche verborgenheit Gotz, als Moyses [sic] sprach: 'werlichen, herre, du bist ein verborgennen Gott.'"

<sup>165</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60*, ed. Vetter, 277: "Und er ist verborgenlichen in allen dingen verre me wan dehein ding im selber si in dem grunde der selen, verborgen allen sinnen und unbekant ze mole inne in dem grunde."

<sup>166</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60*, ed. Vetter, 277: "Dar in tring mit allen kreften verre über den gedank dine usserliche uswendikeit, die so verre, so froemde ir selber ist und aller innerlicher inwendikeit... verbirg dich in der verborgenheit vor allen creaturen und vor allem dem das dem wesende froemde und ungelich ist."

ever spoken in an essential or existential manner, where no work has been undertaken, because it is so silent there, so secret and empty.”<sup>167</sup> Drawing upon the Eckhartian metaphor of the silent wasteland, which the Meister had deployed to describe the apophatic goal of his Platonic theology of detachment, Tauler concludes sermon V 60 with a henological theology of his own.

But Tauler’s language is even more kenotic than Eckhart’s, insofar as he transforms the Meister’s call to empty out the self in order to prepare the way for God into a powerful denigration and denial of the human mind and its own hidden ground. Tauler accordingly declares to his audience that one must “drag your own useless ground into the silent, empty wasteland of the Godhead; drag into the wasteland of God, your true ground, that which is fully overgrown with weeds, devoid of all good, and full of wild animals (that is, your beastly and animal sensuality and powers)”<sup>168</sup> Tauler’s theology, in other words, radicalizes Eckhart’s lesson about how one must hate one’s soul in order to become truly blessed, by emphasizing how and why the soul is hateful, while distinguishing between the divine and the created ground of the soul in the process. Rather than an invocation of the silent wasteland of the Godhead, where ultimate perfection beyond being lies and the essence of the human mind and God are found to be One, Tauler teaches that the divine ground is instead that which annihilates the ground of the soul in this sermon, because it violently forces the ground of the soul to become more than it is by giving itself over to the One.

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<sup>167</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60*, ed. Vetter, 277: “Dis alles ensol nüt sin in biltlicher oder allein in gedenklicher wise, sunder in weselicher, würllicher wise mit allen kreften und begerungen úber die sinne in bevintlicher wise. Denne mag der mensche an sehen die eigenschaft der goetliche wuestenunge in der stillen einsamkeit, do nie wort in dem wesende nach weselicher wise inne gesprochen enwart noch werk gewúrt enwart; denne do ist es so stille, so heimelich und so wuest.”

<sup>168</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60*, ed. Vetter, 278: “Und in die wuesten stillen lidigen gotheit trag dinen italen wuesten grunt, in die wueste Gotz den grunt der da ist vol verwachsems unkrutz und lidig alles guotz und vol wilder tier diner vichlicher tierlicher sinne und krefte.”

If sermon V 60 suggests anything, it is that Tauler's theology is not only characterized by a Christian Platonic rejection of Peripatetic metaphysics and noetics. For Tauler also seeks to radicalize the Platonic theology that had arisen within the German Dominican School in a manner that is deeply conscious of his position as *Lebemeister* in the newly established theological tradition that Eckhart and Berthold authorized through recourse to Platonism. This is especially evident in several sermons that reference the teaching of Proclus. Perhaps just as importantly, they also witness Tauler's awareness of the debates within the German Dominican School among the followers of Thomas, Dietrich and Eckhart about the nature of contemplative beatitude and attempt to uphold Berthold's own conception of an authoritative German Dominican tradition grounded in the work of Albert, Ulrich and Dietrich. Two sermons in particular, V 60d and 64, have attracted scholarly attention because of Tauler's narrative account in both about how to properly understand the nature of the soul as *imago Dei*, as well as for his particular recourse to the term *gemuete*—the word for the mind which Bernard McGinn has suggested ought to be translated into English as the “essential inclination” of the soul toward God.<sup>169</sup> In what follows I analyze these two sermons by Tauler sequentially, in order to describe not only how he draws upon Proclus, but also how he does so as part of a defense of a certain tradition within the German Dominican School.

One of several sermons Tauler preached for the feast of the blessed Trinity, V 60d takes as its reading John 3:11, where Christ declares to the man sent by the Pharisees to test him “that we know about what we speak, and about what we have seen we give witness; but you have not

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<sup>169</sup> McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, 253. For systematic studies of the *gemuete* and its importance to Tauler's mystical anthropology, see Gnädinger, *Johannes Tauler*, 181-91; Steven E. Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis: A Comparative Study of the Anthropology of Johannes Tauler, Jean Gerson and Martin Luther (1509-16) in the Context of their Theological Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 13-26; Paul Wyser, “Der Seelengrund in Taulers Predigten,” in *Altdeutsche und altniederländische Mystik*, ed. by Kurt Ruh (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), 324-52; Claire Champollion, “La place des termes ‘gemüte’ et ‘grunt’ dans le vocabulaire Tauler,” in *Le mystique rhénane* (Paris: P.U.F., 1963), 179-92.

accepted our testimony.”<sup>170</sup> In the opening preamble to this sermon, Tauler explains that every holiday observed by Christians are consummated in this feast, and in these words, just as all creatures, particularly the intellectual ones, take the Trinity as their beginning and their end.<sup>171</sup> In other words, the sermon and Christian religion itself takes its orientation from the sublime mystery of the Trinity, according to Tauler, as well as from Christ’s declaration that his knowledge and testimony confronts the worldly wisdom of the Pharisees. For this reason, Tauler continues, “when we arrive at the most praiseworthy Trinity, we cannot find a single word for speaking about it, even though we must talk about this supersubstantial and unknowable Trinity.”<sup>172</sup> For this reason, Tauler concludes, it is better to *feel* the Trinity than it is to speak about it.<sup>173</sup> One must therefore leave discourse about the Trinity to the great masters, who defend the Faith in the books they write, Tauler suggests, whereas we should worship the divine unity in simplicity.<sup>174</sup> Sermon V 60d thus re-articulates the Eckhartian emphasis on apophasis, while returning to the Albertist conception of mystical theology as an affective science open to the simple laity and distinct from the learned practice of the professional theologian.<sup>175</sup>

It is only after this suggestion that the mystery of the Trinity and its unity ought to be experienced affectively, rather than debated in a learned manner, that Tauler introduces the

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<sup>170</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60d*, ed. Vetter, 298: “Sprach unser Lieber herre: ‘das wir wissen, das sprechen wir, und das wir sehen, das zügen wir, und unser gezúgnisse hant’ ir nüt genomen.”

<sup>171</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60d*, ed. Vetter, 298: “Und alle die hochgezeit die durch dis jar sint gewesen, weler kúnne die woren, die hant alle ir zil und ir ende genomen, und alle sint si her uf gericht; und aller creaturen lof und sunderlichen vernúnftigen creaturen, der zil und ende ist die heilige drivalentikeit.”

<sup>172</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60d*, ed. Vetter, 298: “Von diser hochgelobter drivalentikeit so enkúnnen wir enkein eigenlich wort vinden die wir hinnan ab múgen gesprechen, und muessent doch wort sin von diser über weselicher unbekentlicher drivalentikeit.”

<sup>173</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60d*, ed. Vetter, 299: “Hinnan ab ist besser ze bevindende wan ze sprechende.” Emphasis added.

<sup>174</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 60d*, ed. Vetter, 299: “Und wir bevelhen dis den grossen phaffen; die muessent doch hinnan ab etwas worte haben ze beschirmende den geloben, und die hant grosse buoch hinnan ab. Aber wir sullen einveltlich geloben.”

<sup>175</sup> Alois M. Haas, *Nim din selbes war*, 81-3 draws upon the work of several ressourcement theologians in order to clarify that Tauler’s theology can only be characterized as experiential in the precise way that Albert and the affective Dionysian tradition understands mystical theology to be an experiential science of faith.

debates about the Trinity taking place in the German Dominican School. Tauler does so not because of a concern to arbitrate the correct doctrine, but rather out of a pastoral desire to inculcate the right kenotic and apophatic attitude into his audience, so that they too might experience the blessedness of the Trinity. He begins by turning to Thomas Aquinas, who had taught that “no one should go beyond the borders that the learned have described, whose lives experienced them, and who pursued them, insofar as they were given by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>176</sup> Tauler then directly critiques the disputatious theologians of the schools, suggesting that the subtlety of their reasoning has become too excessive, before calling his audience to “see to it that [the Trinity] be born in us in the ground: not in an intellectual way, but in an essential way in the Truth; not in speech, but in essence.”<sup>177</sup> His purpose, once again, is to stress the importance of experience and of receptivity toward the mystery of the Trinity. For Tauler, significantly, this is “because one finds this divine image in the natural soul authentically, essentially and nakedly, but not as noble as it is in itself.”<sup>178</sup> We must draw close to this lovable image beyond all things that we discover within ourselves, Tauler concludes, because God dwells within this image and is Himself this image in an imageless way.<sup>179</sup> And this, finally, is why one must not transgress the boundaries revealed by the Holy Spirit, which the learned have experienced, and which the disputatious theologians have begun to ignore.

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<sup>176</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 299: “Sant Thoman sprach och: ‘nieman ensol och dar über griffen das die lerer gesprochen hant, die es mit lebende ervolget hant und disem nach gegangen sint das si es von demn heiligen geiste habent.’”

<sup>177</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 299: “Die phaffen was hant si anders ze tuonde? Und die enwurden och nie also subtil als ietz in der vernunft. Aber sehent das es in úch geborn werde in dem grunde, nüt in vernünftiger wise, sunder in weselicher wise, in der worheit, nüt in redende, sunder in wesende.”

<sup>178</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 300: “Diser drivaltikeit der súllen wir war nemen in uns, wie wir nach der gebildet sin in der worheit; wan man vindet dies goetliche bilde eigenlichen und werlichen und bloesklich in der selen natürlich, mer doch nüt also adellich als es an im selber ist.”

<sup>179</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 300: “Nu ist unser fúrgang das wir des minneklichen bildes in uns war nemen vor allen dingen... wan Got ist in disem bilde und ist dis bilde selber unbiltlichen.”



Tauler in V 60d then proceeds to discuss the various attempts among the learned masters to describe the nature of the divine image in the soul in a natural manner.<sup>180</sup> And it is here that Tauler directly intervenes into the debates taking place in the German Dominican School. Tauler begins by noting that “all the masters maintain that the image belongs in the highest powers of the soul, the memory, the intellect, and the will,” referring to the Trinitarian account of the mind outlined by Augustine in *De Trinitate* XIV.<sup>181</sup> However, while Tauler concedes that in these powers we authentically receive and avail ourselves of an image of the Holy Trinity, he nevertheless maintains that this is the least acceptable way to do so, since it reduces the Trinity to the natural order.<sup>182</sup> This leads to a direct critique of Thomas—the very figure who earlier in the sermon had authorized Tauler’s rejection of the excessive rationality of scholastic theology—since “Thomas says that the perfection of the divine image lies in the work of this image, in the exercise of the powers; namely, in active memory, active understanding, and in an active love.”<sup>183</sup> “But another master maintains,” Tauler preaches, “that the image lies in the most interior, most hidden, deepest ground of the soul, in which ground God belongs essentially, actively and in His ipseity; for this is where God works, subsists, and rejoices in Himself.”<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 300: “Von disem sprechent die meister gar vil und suochent dis bilde in maniger natúlichen wisen und wesenlichen.”

<sup>181</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 300: “so jehent alle meister das es eigenlichen ist in den obersten kreften, gehugnisse und verstentnisse und wille.”

<sup>182</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 300: “mit den kreften sin wir eigenlichen enpfenglichen und gebruchlichen der heiligen drivalentikeit; dis ist wor in dem aller nidersten grote, wan dis ist in der nature ein nochrede.”

<sup>183</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 300: “Meister Thomas sprach daz vollkomenheit dis bildes lige an der wúrglicheit dis bildes, an der uebung der krefte, also an gehugnisse gegenwúrklich und wúrklich verstentnisse und an minnen wúrklich; do lat er das ligen in disem sinne.” For Tauler’s distinction between the substance and powers of the soul, here, as well as his critique not only of Thomist psychology, but also of the Augustinian psychology associated with the Franciscans, see Haas, *Nim din selbes war*, 140, n. 179.

<sup>184</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 300: “Nu sprechent ander meister.” Sturlese, “Tauler im Kontext,” 184-5 has established that this is a reference to Dietrich, as he was interpreted by Berthold. McGinn, *The Harvest of Medieval Mysticism*, 245-6 maintains that it refers to Dietrich and Eckhart, but this cannot be correct given Tauler’s subsequent account of the relation between nature and grace in the ground of the soul, which departs considerably from Eckhart’s own.

This anonymous master is almost certainly Dietrich or Berthold.<sup>185</sup> Rather than situate the image of God in the exercise of the powers of the soul as the Thomists had done, therefore, Tauler instead describes the image of God as the *abditum mentis*, where God is always already active and blessed. In other words, Tauler sides with the partisans of Dietrich in the debates about Christian beatitude that had arisen among the German Dominicans.

Tauler concludes his discussion of this matter in V 60d that it is God's eternal command that He will not and cannot separate Himself from the ground of the soul, which has by grace everything that God possesses in his nature.<sup>186</sup> "For as long as man gives himself up and turns toward this ground," Tauler declares, "grace is born there in the highest way and not in a way different from its own manner."<sup>187</sup> This means that while Tauler endorses Dietrich's position in the debates about the image of God in the soul within the German Dominican School, he did not subscribe to the radical position of Eckhart of Gründig, who maintained that Dietrich's doctrine showed that grace is subordinated to nature and the separate intelligences that essentially flow out from God. Rather, Tauler's position is closer to that of Berthold. This is evident from Tauler's recourse to the authority of Proclus. For Tauler cites at length Proclus's argument in the *De providentia et fato* VIII that "if you want to feel the ground within, you must give up multiplicity and consider this one within you with an intellectual insight; and if you want to go higher, you must give up intellectual insight and that consideration, because the intellect is beneath you, since you have become one with the One."<sup>188</sup> Yet Tauler's intention in doing so is

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<sup>185</sup> Sturlese, "Tauler im Kontext," 180

<sup>186</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 300: "daz ist von siner ewigen ordenunge, das er es also geordent hat das er sich nüt gescheiden enmag noch wil, und do in dem grunde so hat diser grunt alles von genaden daz Got von nature hat."

<sup>187</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 300: "Also verre sich der mesche in den grunt Liesse und kerte, do würt die die genode geborn und anders nüt eigentlich in der hoesten wisen."

<sup>188</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 300: "sprach er, "wiltu daz bevinden das ez si, so la alle manigvaltekeit und sich dis an mit eime verstentlichen gesichte dis ein; wiltu nu noch hoher kummen, so la das vernünftige gesichte und daz ansehen, wan die vernunft ist under dir unde wurt eins mit dem einen." Sturlese, "Tauler

not simply to suggest that the Platonic philosophers of the golden age had prophetic or providential insight into the immanent transcendence of the One, as Berthold had done. Tauler aims instead to castigate the Christians of his day for failing to apprehend the presence of this One in the depths of the human soul. “That a heathen understood and attained this, while we are so far from it and unlike it,” Tauler therefore opines, “is a lasting and great shame for us!”<sup>189</sup>

Tauler’s sermon V 64 is also intimately concerned to demarcate a tradition within the German Dominican School which correctly apprehends the nature of the image of the Trinity within the ground of the soul. This sermon takes as its text Luke 10:23, “blessed are the eyes that see what you have seen,” the same biblical verse that Eckhart of Gründig had cited at the beginning of his *Tractat von den Wirkenden und Möglichen Vernunft*.<sup>190</sup> After a summary account of the Gospel context of the verse—namely, Christ’s response to another expert of the Law who wanted to test and tempt him—Tauler explains that the biblical verse has two different meanings. “The first meaning,” Tauler explains, “concerns the inner spiritual insight into the great, wonderful nobility where the particular kinship with God lies, and which God has placed into the ground of the soul.”<sup>191</sup> Tauler continues that many teachers, both old and new, have spoken about this inner nobility hidden in the ground, naming in particular “Bishop Albert, Master Dietrich, and Meister Eckhart.”<sup>192</sup> In doing so, Tauler aims to establish continuities within

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im Kontext,” 184-5 draws attention to the way that this Proclus citation represents the endpoint of a sequence that began with a critique of Thomas, and which shows how Proclus stands in continuity with Dietrich.

<sup>189</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 60d, ed. Vetter, 301: “Kinder, das ein heiden dis verstunt und darzue kam, das wir dem also verre und also ungelich sint, das ist uns laster und grosse schande.”

<sup>190</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 346: “In disem ewangelio von der wuchen ist die luterste worheit, do die oberste selikeit an gelit, von dem do ich dise tage alhie ab sprach, das unser herre sprach zuo sinen jungern: ‘selig sint di ogen die do sehent das ir sehent.’”

<sup>191</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 347: “Der erste sin ist von dem inwendigen geistlichen angesichte des grossen wunderlichen adels; do die sunderliche sibschaft ist die Gott in den grunt der selen geleit hat.”

<sup>192</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 347: “Von disem inwendigen adel der in dem grunde lit verborgen, hant vil meister gesprochen beide alter unde núwe: bischof Albrecht, meister Dietrich, meister Eghart.”

an Albertist doxography that emphasizes similarities, rather than differences, between Dietrich and Eckhart, just as vernacular poems like the *Sprüche der Zwolfe Meister* had done.<sup>193</sup> Sermon V 64 is thus more than just an homiletic effort to draw on the different understandings of the *imago Dei* which had arisen in the German Dominican School. It constitutes a deliberate attempt to establish “Albertism” as the particular doctrinal tradition within the German Dominican School which teaches the “mysticism of the ground.”

Yet it is not only the Albertist conception of this mysticism that matters to sermon V 64, even as Tauler stresses the various ways that Albert, Dietrich and Eckhart have described the inner nobility of the soul. For the *Lebemeister* from Strasburg also aims to show how their teaching is related to that of the saints and the philosophers. Tauler thus explains that each German Dominican theologian has their preferred name for the inner nobility about which Christ teaches, including the spark of the soul, the summit, the bloom, the origin, and (as Bishop Albert teaches) the image in which the Holy Trinity has been depicted.<sup>194</sup> Those Dominicans who speak about it, moreover, only do so thanks to their way of life and due to their affective understanding of it.<sup>195</sup> “They have felt it now in the truth and have received it,” Tauler preaches, “from the saints and doctors of the Holy Church.”<sup>196</sup> However, Tauler adds, “even before the birth of God many masters spoke about this, such as Plato, Aristotle, and Proclus.”<sup>197</sup> In other words, Tauler relates Albert, Dietrich, and Eckhart to a further *philosophical* doxography, one that is distinctly

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<sup>193</sup> Cf. Gnädinger, *Johannes Tauler*, 374-6; McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, 245-48.

<sup>194</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 347: “Der eine heisset es ein funke der selen, der ander einen boden oder ein tolden, einer erstekeit, und bischof Albrecht nemmet es ein bilde in dem die heilige drivalentikeit gebildet hat.”

<sup>195</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 347: “Dise meister di hinnan ab gesprochen hant, die hant es mit lebende und mit vernunft erfolget.”

<sup>196</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 347: “und si hant es nu in der worheit befunden, und dise hant es genomen us den grossen heiligen und leren der heiligen kilchen die hinnan ab gesprochen hant.”

<sup>197</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 347: “und vor Gotz geburt vil meister die hinnan ab sprachen: Plato und Aristoteles und Proculus.”

Platonist rather than Peripatetic, showing that the German Dominican masters speak of the inner nobility of the soul and the image of God through recourse not only to the divine science of the Christians, but also to that of the philosophers. In this way, Tauler calls to mind the two lists of non-Christian and Christian authorities that Berthold had appended to his *Expositio* on the *Elementatio theologica*, and stresses, as Eckhart had done, that the Platonists and the better Christian theologians shared a henological discourse about the ground of the soul wherein the One Itself resides. He thus concludes that the image of the Trinity hidden within the mind stimulates all good people to turn toward that highest nobility which is kinship with God, while the wicked inflict eternal suffering upon themselves, without in any way suggesting that this moral distinction necessarily relates to any essential difference between Christinity and paganism.<sup>198</sup>

Later in the homily, Tauler returns to the philosophical and Christian conception of the mysticism of the ground in order to explain what it means that the blessedness described in Luke 10:23 requires one to exert oneself “with all your mind.” It is here that Tauler offers the important definition of *gemuete* that has been the focus of a number of important studies of Tauler’s mystical anthropology. Tauler does so, however, to clarify further his claim from earlier in the sermon that “the mind is the highest part of the soul,” since it is the “third man” about which we speak whenever we consider the nature of human subjectivity, because it transcends “the first man, which is exterior, beastly, and sensuous, as well as the second, which is the intellectual man with his intellectual powers.”<sup>199</sup> Everything else that precedes the mind in the

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<sup>198</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 347: “Und also als dis die guoten groeslich reisset und tuont einen swinden in ker und zuo ker von disem hohen adel in der naher sibschaft: also tuont die valschen iren ewigen schaden hie mitte.”

<sup>199</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 348: “der mensche ist rechte als ob er drú menschen si und is doch ein mensche. Das eine das ist der uswendig vihelich sinneliche mensche; der ander das ist der vernúnftige mensch emit sinen vernúnftige kreften; der dritte mensche das ist das gemuete, das oberste teil der selen. Dis alle sist ein mensche.”

soul, therefore, is included within it and named by it, Tauler explains; and for this reason it is called a “measure,” since it measures everything else in the soul, and gives to the lower powers its form, shape and weight.<sup>200</sup> Tauler thus defines the mind as the *habitus mentis*,<sup>201</sup> and cites Augustine’s claim “that no good work produces virtue in the proper sense, unless it has become a formal habit and is so familiar, easy, and enjoyable to a man that it has become his nature.”<sup>202</sup> Yet Tauler also offers a further definition of the mind itself, calling it that which stands higher and more immanently within the soul than every other faculty, such that it gives to them their very capacity to work while nevertheless separated from them.<sup>203</sup> Not just the habit of mind, therefore, which the exercise of thought establishes within us as virtuous and natural, the mind is also that part of the soul which is most simple, formal and essential to it. It is that part of the soul which directs and transforms the sensuality and intellectuality that both flow out from it and seek to return to it.<sup>204</sup>

To best to understand this last aspect of the mind or *gemuete*, Tauler preaches, one must turn to the explanations of Dietrich and Proclus. He thus asserts one final time the necessity of his Albertist and Platonic doxographies for a correct understanding of the mysticism of the ground, blurring and blending the boundaries between philosophical and Christian theology while doing so. Tauler begins by noting, without specifying exactly to whom he refers once

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<sup>200</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 350: “in dem ist das ander alles beslossen, das ist und heisert das gemuete. Es wirt genant ein mosse, wan es misset das ander alles. Es git im sine forme, sine swere, sin gewicht.”

<sup>201</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 350: “Habitus mentis.”

<sup>202</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 350: “Sant Augustinus sprichet: ‘enkein guot werk enmachtet nüt eigentlich ein tugent, es ensi das es ein formlich habit gewinne und einem menschem als gewöhnlich und als licht und lustlich si als ob es sine nature si worden.’”

<sup>203</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 350: “Nú wir alhie merken was dis gemuete si. Das ist verre hoher und innerlicher wan die krefte; wan die krefte nement al ir vermúgen dannan us und sint do inne und dannan us geflossen und ist in allen doc hob sunder mosse.”

<sup>204</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 350: “Es ist gar einvaltig und weselich und formelich.”

again, that “one master speaks about this and even more than the other masters.”<sup>205</sup> This is almost certainly a reference to Dietrich, since Tauler goes on to explain that these masters claim that “the mind of the soul is so noble, and is always active, whether man sleeps or is awake, whether he knows about it or not, because it has a God-shaped, steady, and eternal inclination toward God.”<sup>206</sup> In other words, they conceive of the mind as the active intellect, which is the highest cognitive faculty within the human soul, and always already conjoined to (rather than one with) God, just as Dietrich had argued. However, Tauler adds that “a heathen master, Proclus, calls it a sleep, a silence, a divine rest, and says that through it we seek in a hidden way the One that stands far beyond the intellect and understanding.”<sup>207</sup> Tauler thus follows Berthold in identifying Proclus’ *unum animae* as the *abditum mentis* described by Dietrich, maintaining that “whenever the soul turns to the One, it becomes divine and leads a divine life.”<sup>208</sup> By turning to the mind in this way, Tauler explains, people can detach themselves from all the lower faculties of the soul, insofar as their being is alien to that of the ground, such that sorrow and suffering also become alien to them.<sup>209</sup> By recognizing itself as an intelligible image of the One from which it has flowed out, ultimately, the mind of such people comes to possess the eyes with blessed vision described by Christ in John 10:23, since people with these eyes attach themselves to and sink

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<sup>205</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 64*, ed. Vetter, 350: “Ein meister spricht von disem und och me denne die meister.”

<sup>206</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 64*, ed. Vetter, 350: “Die meister sprechent das dis gemuete der selen das si als edel, es si alwegent würent, der mensche slaffe oder wache, er wise es oder enwisse es nüt; es hat ein gotformig unzellich ewig wider kaffen in Got.”

<sup>207</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 64*, ed. Vetter, 350: “Proculus, ein heidenscher meister, nemt es ein slaf und ein stille und ein goetlich rasen und spricht: ‘uns ist ein verborgen suochen des einen, das ist verre über die vernunft und verstentnisse’.”

<sup>208</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 64*, ed. Vetter, 350: “So wenne das sich die sele dar in kert, so wirt si goetlich und lebet eins goetlichen lebendes.”

<sup>209</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 64*, ed. Vetter, 350-1: “Als der mensche sich nu kert in sin redelicheit die berichtet und corrigiert alle die nidersten, und betwinget die nidersten, und alle die gelüste und berunge der unredelicheit die offenbart si und leit ab alles das ein heischen hat zuo dem nidersten, un loeset sich selber ab von allen disen als von froemdem wesende und Verret sich von den sinnen und wirt froemde allem betruenisse.”

into God simply and actually.<sup>210</sup> Tauler's view of beatification within the ground of the soul is thus explicitly Dietrichian and Proclian, in keeping with the interpretation of Dietrich and Proclus forwarded by Berthold in his *Expositio*.

It is Albert, however, who is the final German Dominican authority in this sermon who gets to determine what it means to achieve eternal beatitude by turning inward toward the ground of the soul where the image of God lies hidden. And Tauler does so because he is concerned with the kinds of will and desire that must be denied and the kind of love that must be cultivated if one wants to unite with God.<sup>211</sup> Tauler for this reason refers directly at one point in sermon V 64 to the debates in the schools—within which Eckhart actively participated—about whether understanding is higher than love, ultimately determining that “there is no doubt that here on earth love is much more praiseworthy and useful than knowledge, because love enters in where knowledge must remain outside.”<sup>212</sup> This is certainly a departure from Dietrich and Eckhart, who both tended to prioritize the intellect over the will. But it is more aligned with Berthold's tendency to interpret Proclus' remarks about the *unum animae* as a kind of affective providential knowledge of the One and Good. Tauler thus cites Richard of St. Victor and his different degrees of charity, which Berthold had also cited in his discussion of divine mania in the *Expositio*,

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<sup>210</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 64*, ed. Vetter, 351: “Und als dise ding alle gestalt sint, so sicht die sele ir selbes wesen und alle ir krefte und bekent sich ein vernünftig bilde des us dem si geflossen ist. Dise ogen múgent vom dem gesichte wol selig heissen die her in recht koment und disem mit dem edelen gemuete einvelteklich und weselich anhangend und in das versinken.”

<sup>211</sup> In fact, when Tauler had discussed the “three men” which make up the human subject, he did so because he was concerned primarily with the kinds of self-will they inculcate in the heart of a “worldly” and “spiritual” person. Cf. Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 64*, ed. Vetter, 348: “Der wille hat vil varwen in dem weltlichen herzen; do ist der wille grob und uswendig; mer in den geistlichen do hat er swine varwe...”

<sup>212</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt 64*, ed. Vetter, 349: “Von diser minne hant die meister vil tisputaci.e, weder bekentnissin hoher si oder die minne. Das lossen wir nu ligen. Aber do enist kein zwivel an, die minne ensi hie vil verdienlicher und nützer wan bekentnisse. Wan die minne die get do in do das bekentnisse muos husse bliben.” Tauler is citing Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae, q.27, a.4, ad.1: “Et ideo ubi desinit cognitio, scilicet in ipsa re quae per aliam cognoscitur, ibi statim dilectio incipere potest.”



although he concludes that this is not the love with which he is concerned.<sup>213</sup> Instead, turning to Albert's interpretation of Luke 10:27 in his *Super Lucam*, Tauler concludes that to love God "with all your heart" means to love God "with a well-ordered and free will that is put to work with all one's heart, soul and strength."<sup>214</sup> It is to be directed toward God with all one's might, just as if one was drawing a bow prepared to fire at a target some distance away.<sup>215</sup>

In fact, the importance for Tauler of turning toward the mind as the *imago Dei* is that it is by becoming conscious of this image within the ground of the soul that one's will is not only oriented toward God, but also divinized through the satisfaction of its desire for God. For Tauler describes the experience of the turning inward toward the mind, following Albert, as "the most wonderful thing of all, because above and beyond this there is no wonder, and whoever has it in sight, they are unable to be filled anymore with wonder, for it is the Most High beyond which nothing can reach."<sup>216</sup> Still drawing on Albert, Tauler clarifies that this is the case because in this state "man finds himself in the clearest light, which he has now deliberately grasped, which has now become his nature, so that he no longer finds any suffering in it and it has become a habit for him."<sup>217</sup> It is for this reason called eternal beatitude, according to Tauler, since "it is totally divine and an image of God in man; also, because it is entirely absorbed in God; and, in the third

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<sup>213</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 349: "Nu git Richardus ein underscheidt von diser minne und spricht: 'minne in dem nidersten grate das ist von dem herzen, das ist in dem gedanke; von der selen das ist von gunst und gnuoglicheit; mer von den kreften das ist ein undertruken allem dem das der minne wider ist, und diser minne ist kain voin al.'" For Berthold's own recourse to Richard and its relationship to his interpretation of Proclus and Dionysius, see King, *Supersapientia*, 152-6.

<sup>214</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 349: "Nu schribet bischof Albrecht von disem allem uf dis ewangelium und spricht: 'von allen herzen', das ist mit eime beraten frijen willen sich ueben mit allem herzen und selen und krefte." Cf. Albertus Magnus, *Commentum super Lucam* 10.24, ed. Borgnet in *Opera Omnia* XXIII, 46-7.

<sup>215</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 349: "recht alle die krefte uf spannen, als der einen bogen harte spannet als er verre schiessen wil und ein recht zil treffen wil."

<sup>216</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 351: "Nu leit bischof Albrecht dise sechs stúke us und spricht: 'es ist dar umbe aller wunderlichest; wan ob disem und uswendig disem enist kein wunder, und der har in sicht, in dem enmag enkein wunder me gevallen, und es ist das aller oberste úber das enkein ding enist.'"

<sup>217</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 351: "wan bis bevint sich in dem aller klaresten liechte, das es ietz begriffen hat von flisse, das ime ietz ist worden als sine nature, das in keinre sworheit nút enbevint, und ist in ein habit worden."

place, because God Himself rejoices in this work.”<sup>218</sup> Tauler also adds that the mind or ground “is a divine substance, and is called divine because it has taken a part of itself from God.”<sup>219</sup> The use of Albert in sermon V 64, as well as Tauler’s constant emphasis, following Berthold, that the turn toward the ground of the soul produces an experiential knowledge of God, demonstrates that Tauler conceives of theology as an affective science characterized by wonder, just as Albert had done.<sup>220</sup> It remains to be seen in what follows whether Tauler also subscribes to Albert’s rigid distinction between a philosophical theology characterized by natural perfection and a Christian theology characterized by the influx into the theologian of the divine lights of grace and glory.

In a homily he preached for the Monday before Palm Sunday, which takes as its text John 7:37, “if you thirst, then come to me and drink,” Tauler draws upon the Albertian conception of theology as wondrous once again while also introducing important clarifications about the difference between nature and grace.<sup>221</sup> He does so as part of an elaborate parable, based upon Psalms 42:1-2, that describes how beginners and novices approach God through trials and tribulations, just as a hart is chased through the woods by hounds during a hunt, and are refreshed by God, just as the hart is allowed to refresh himself with water once it has escaped the assault of the hounds who chase him.<sup>222</sup> When the beginner finally comes to drink of God,

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<sup>218</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 351: “Und dis ist genant die ewige slikeit umbe drijer sachen willen; wan es ze mole goetlich ist und ein bilde Gotz in den menschen. Och ist es goetlich was es in Got ze mole gesunken ist. Die dritte sache ist: wan dis werk diser uebunger gebruchet Got selber.”

<sup>219</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 64, ed. Vetter, 351: “und goetlich substancie die dar umbe goetlich heisset, von dem.”

<sup>220</sup> Sturlese, “Tauler im Kontext,” 192-3 is surely wrong to claim that Tauler reads Albert here under the influence of Berthold in order to “correct” the Albertists—perhaps because Sturlese fails to acknowledge that Berthold’s own understanding of Proclus is shaped by his commitment to Albert’s *affective* Dionysianism.

<sup>221</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 50: “An dem lesten tage eins grossen hochgezites rief unser herre mit einre grossen luten stimme also: ‘wen do dürste, der kumme zuo mir und trinke!’”

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 51: “Der heilige David der sprach in dem selter: ‘reht also den hirtz túrstet zuo dem burnen des wassers, also, herre, túrstet min sele zuo dir, Got...’ rehte also der hirtz wurt gejaget von den hunden, rehte also wurt der anbehende mensche gejaget von den bekorungen;” and Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 53: “Wane so der hirtz dise hunde alle úberwunden hat und zuo wasser kummet, so lat er sich mit volleclichem munde in daz wasser und trincket mit ganzer genuede, wie er mag; also tuot der mensche, also er

according to Tauler, “he draws himself fully in and drinks with an entirely full mouth, so that he is fully drunk and full of God; but he is so full of joy and has so forgotten himself in this fullness, that it seems he is capable of wonders.”<sup>223</sup> Tauler describes this state as one of *jubilation*, and it marks the transition from the uncertainty of the beginners’ search for God, into the ecstatic inebriation that characterizes the state of the initiate who is more established on their way toward God.<sup>224</sup> And this jubilation, Tauler concludes, is dismissed as ridiculous by those overly intellectual people who have not known the wonders of the Holy Spirit and who cannot recognize anything that exists beyond nature.<sup>225</sup> In this way, he seems to uphold Albert’s argument about the prideful philosophers, whose attachment to endless philosophical debate and to the metaphysical inquiry into the existence of God, had closed them off entirely to the wonder of the Christian truth.

Yet there is a third, more perfect state beyond both the wondrous jubilation and the rationalism that seeks to deny it which Tauler describes in sermon V 11. This is the state of the perfect, and it is characterized, Tauler explains, by a broken-hearted dereliction, where all the joy that God had infused into the heart of the initiate has given way to the violent work of God which is all suffering and akin to death.<sup>226</sup> God allows this dereliction to take place, according to Tauler, because he observes how people attach themselves to the wonder of jubilation too much

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sich mit der helffe unseres herren lidig gemacht alles dis gezoges der grossen und der kleinen hunde unde entruwen mit diseme turste kummet zuo Gotte.

<sup>223</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 53: “Waz wil er dan tuon? Er ziehe als vil in sich und trincke mit allem vollen munde, das er wol trunken wurt und wurt Gotz also vol das er in wunnen und in volle sin selbes vergisset, daz in duncket daz er wunder vermüge.”

<sup>224</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 53: “Daz ist des schult das sú trunken sint worden, dis heisset jubiliere.”

<sup>225</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 53: “Denne kummet die vernúftigen die hievon nüt entwissent was der heilige geist wonders und werkes hat mit den sinen, wan sú enhant noch entwissent nüt danne in den nature git. Dise sprechent: ‘Got segen, wie sint ir aber also ungesast und also ungestueme?’”

<sup>226</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 53: “Die dirten die sterbent, den brichet ir hertze entzwei das sú die grossen werg Gottes nüt liden enkunnet, das so starg in in ist und so gros.”

and have become too intoxicated by it, just as the head of the family punishes his children when he discovers that they have broken into the wine cellar and drank too much of his best wine, while also giving them clean water to drink so that they can sober up.<sup>227</sup> Through the violent removal of the initiate's joy, Tauler consequently preaches, "the initiates have become fully tempered and settled and now see themselves as they are, as well as what they are capable of doing."<sup>228</sup> Unable to accomplish their work with ease and now sensitive to criticism, Tauler concludes, those in the third state are now essentially well-ordered, faithful, and silent.<sup>229</sup> If it is true, therefore, that Tauler agrees with Albert that an affective orientation toward God best characterizes that piety which is more appropriate than a theology preoccupied with the acquisition of knowledge alone, he nevertheless insists upon the need for the moderation of that desire which corrects against the barrenness of a disproportionate recourse to natural reason in theological matters.

In keeping with his argument in sermons V 60d and V 64, however, Tauler concludes his account of the beginner, the initiate, and the perfect by acknowledging that all that he has preached about so far pertains to the lower powers of the soul.<sup>230</sup> This matters, Tauler explains, because "God will in no way dwell in these powers, nor is it proper for Him to do so, since it is always too narrow and too small for Him there, nor can He move about there or perform His

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<sup>227</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 53-4: "Also unser lieber herre dos siht das sú alsus dis dinges zuo vil wellent machen und sich alsus ertrenckent, so tuo er rehte also ein guot biderbe husman, der vil edelen guoten win het bi im stoned und leit sich nider und sloffet, und gant denne sine kint dar und trincket des edeln wines also vil das sú wol trunknen werdent; so der guote man ufstet und daz sihet, er machet eine guote route und zerslecht sú wol, das sú also trurig werdent alsu sú ie fro werdent, und git in des wassers also vil daz sú also nuechtern werdent also sú ie truncken wurdent."

<sup>228</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 54: "Dan werdent sú also wol getempert und alle gesast und sehent nu wer sú sint und waz sú vermúgent."

<sup>229</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 54: "Die wile sú in irre eigenre math stont, so kúnnet sú kume ein Kleine wrg tuon one grosse swerheit und ein kleine woertelin kume getragen; in diseme so sehent sú wer sú selber sint und waz sú vermúgent mit irre kost und mit irre eigenen kraft, und in diseme so werdent sú denne also gesast, also wesenlich geloeibig und also stille."

<sup>230</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 54: "Und daz ist noch alles in den nidersten kreften gewesen, alle dise wisen ynd gesturme und dis werg."

works.”<sup>231</sup> Rather, Tauler continues, “God wants and must dwell in the higher powers of the soul, where He will perform His proper divine work, where He will stand alone, finding His own image and likeness.”<sup>232</sup> The ultimate state that Tauler describes in sermon V 11 thus sounds remarkably like the nature of detachment described by Eckhart, and Tauler returns to the henological and kenotic vocabulary derived from the Meister which he had used in sermon V 60 in order to describe it. “Whoever comes here,” Tauler preaches, “finds what he has been searching for far and wide; for his spirit will be led up above all the powers into a wild wasteland, about which no one can speak, into the hidden darkness of the Goodness without any manner.”<sup>233</sup> Even more, Tauler continues, “the spirit will be led further into the unity of the simple, divine Oneness, where it loses all its base and experiential differences, since in unity one loses all multiplicity and this unity unites all difference.”<sup>234</sup> A darkness that is actually the brightest light, Tauler concludes that this unity is far beyond the comprehension of created reason and that it is a wild wasteland because nature cannot lead one there at all.<sup>235</sup> Once again Tauler describes beatification and detachment in stark Platonic terms. Yet he does not discuss how the One stands beyond nature in relation to the lights of grace and glory, giving the impression that like Eckhart and Berthold he believes that the divine Oneness and Goodness may

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<sup>231</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 54: “und in denen enwil Got keine wise nüt wonen, noch sine stat enist do mit nûte, es is time do zuo enge und zuo Kleine, er enkan sich do nüt bekeren, er kan sines werkes do nüt bekommen.”

<sup>232</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 54: “er wil unde muos wonen in den obersten kreften und do wûrcken goetliche und eigenliche, do alleine ist sine stat, do vint er sin eigen bilde und sine gelichnisse.”

<sup>233</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 54: “Der dar kummet, der vindet daz er verre und lange umbewege gesuochet hat. Do wurt denne der geist gezogen über alle die krefte in eine wueste wilde, do nieman kan von gesprochen, in daz verborgen vinsternisse des wiselosen guotes.”

<sup>234</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 54: “do wurt der geist also nohe gefuert in die einleit in der simpelen wiselosen einikeit, daz sù verlust alle underscheid, sunder fürwürflichen und bevtintlichen, wan in einikeit verlúret man alle manigvaltekeit, und die einikeit die einiget alle manigvaltekeit.”

<sup>235</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 11, ed. Vetter, 55: “dis heisset und ist ein unsprechendliche vinsternisse, und ist doch das wesentliche licht und ist unde heisset ein unbegriffenliche wilde wueste, do nieman vindet weg noch wise, wan es ist über alle wise... Es ist ein licht do enkein geschaffen verstantnisse zuogelanhgen noch verston enmag von nature, und ist darumb wilde wanne es enkeinen zuogang enhat.”

transcend both. Whether this is Tauler's actual conception of the unity and simplicity he describes in sermon V 11 must be discovered elsewhere.

Tauler offers his answer in sermon V 61, a homily preached to celebrate the feast of John the Baptist with many thematic parallels to Eckhart's sermons celebrating the same figure.<sup>236</sup> Taking as his text John 1:7, "this man came to give testimony about this light,"<sup>237</sup> Tauler opens by noting "that this light is an essential, most outstanding light beyond comprehension... a light that illuminates through itself the most interior thing of all, all that is deepest in the ground of man."<sup>238</sup> And just as Eckhart had done, Tauler argues that we fail to receive it or recognize it because we are caught up in our exterior activities, although Tauler goes beyond Eckhart when he maintains that this also occurs because those obsessed with what is exterior are directly opposed to the ground, possessing worldly hearts and behaving like the Pharisees that Tauler critiques throughout his homiletic corpus.<sup>239</sup> Tauler consequently maintains that "the nature [of man] is sick and absolutely unwell, which is why our merciful God assists us with supernatural aid and supernatural power."<sup>240</sup> This supernatural aid is the created light of grace, Tauler

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<sup>236</sup> For these sermons, included in the PAI, see the previous chapter.

<sup>237</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 328: "'Diser ist komen das er gezúgnisse gebe von deme liechte.' Unser muoter die heilige kilche die beget dise wuche das hochgezit des hohen wirdigen heiligen mins herren S. Johans Baptisten."

<sup>238</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 329: "Das liecht ist ein weselich, ein úber bekentlich úbertreflich liecht, des er ein gezúg was. Dis liecht das lúchtet in das aller inwendigoste, in das tiefste des menschen grunt."

<sup>239</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 329: "Und wenne dis liecht und dis gezúgnisse den menschen an kumet und beginnet rueren, so des der mensche warten solte do es ist, so kert sich der mensche von dem grunde und kert den orden umbe und wil us loffen gegen Triele und neiswo hin und enphahet des gezúges nút, umbe ir uswúrklicheit... Si sint von weltlichen herzen und sint als S. Johannes sprach zuo den pharisen." Tauler's critique of the Pharisees is well worth comparing to Eckhart's more positive assessment of the Pharisees as figures for the detached soul in Meister Eckhart, *Predigt* 7, ed. Quint in DW I, 119-20: "Pharisêus sprichet als vil als einer, der abegescheiden ist und umbe kein ende enweiz." For a comparison between Eckhart and Tauler's view of the Jews, see Regina D. Schiewer, "Sub Iudaica Infirmate—'Under the Jewish Weakness': Jews in Medieval German Sermons," in *The Jewish-Christian Encounter in Medieval Preaching*, ed. by Jonathan Adams and Jussi Hanska (London: Routledge, 2015), 66-9

<sup>240</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 329: "'ie nature die ist krank und envermag zemole nút; des hat ir der barmherzig Got gegeben ze helfe ein úbernatúrlích helfe und ein úbernatúrlích kraft.'"

clarifies, and it elevates human nature above itself so that it can live a new life.<sup>241</sup> However, Tauler also explains that beyond this there is an uncreated light of glory, which is God Himself, and that it is this light which humanity needs if it is ever to know God as God.<sup>242</sup> And this uncreated light of glory, Tauler concludes, shines upon the wicked and the good equally, just as the sun illuminates and casts shade upon every creature.<sup>243</sup> Tauler therefore situates the blessedness of the ground in relation to the created light of grace and the created light of glory, forwarding a position remarkably similar to that of Eckhart. Moreover, Tauler's suggestion that the light of glory shines upon everyone, irrespective of their merit, seems to imply that this light is related to the natural order of providence discussed by Ulrich, Dietrich and Berthold, which stands above the voluntary order of providence. Sermon V 61 thus appears to situate his mysticism of the ground squarely within the context of the Augustinian account of providence that the German Dominicans discussed when seeking to legislate the divide between different types of theology.

This is why Tauler maintains that the witness of John the Baptist about this light strikes people in different ways. "Men must detach themselves from all that is temporal and changeable," therefore, "because this witness is given to the lowest and the highest powers of the soul."<sup>244</sup> Referring to the movement from wonder and jubilation that characterizes the experience of the initiate toward the moderation which characterizes the experience of the perfect, which he

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<sup>241</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 329: "das ist der liecht der gnaden. Das ist ein geschaffen liecht; das über hebet die nature verre über sich, und das bringet alle die kost mit im der die nature bedarf in der wise."

<sup>242</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 329: "Dar über denne ein ungeschaffen liecht: das heisset man das liecht der glorien. Das ist ein goetlich liecht und das is Got selber. Wan sullen wir Got bekennen, das muos sin durch Got, mit Gotte, in Goit, Got durch Got."

<sup>243</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 329: "Dis ist ein ein über swenklich liecht; das liecht erluchtet einen ieklichen menschen die do comment in diese welt. Das liecht übersicht alle menschen boes und guot, also als die sunne schinet über alle creaturen: sint sib lint, der schade si ir."

<sup>244</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 329-30: "Das ist der mensche sich ab scheidet von allem dem das zitlich und zergenglich ist; wan dis gezügnisse wirt geben in die nidersten und obersten krefte."

had described in V 11, Tauler explains in this sermon that because the testimony reaches the appetitive and irascible faculties first, one must let God draw one away from all that is gratifying, into the wilderness of spiritual detachment,<sup>245</sup> where they can bear steadfastly the critique of all those who seek to dismiss them.<sup>246</sup> Yet in the higher faculties of the intellect, Tauler continues, this testimony is prophecy, because like a prophet the testimony beholds what is far off, just like the intellect is wondrously able to do.<sup>247</sup> “And for an enlightened man who has not yet come to this point,” Tauler explains, “his intellect in the ground would give witness and announce ‘this is so,’ should that man hear about the things that are hidden.”<sup>248</sup> For Tauler, accordingly, the light of God effects people in different ways according to their different degrees, and is characterized by a movement from desire to a wondering reason that once again calls to mind Albert’s conception of Christian divine science in its difference from philosophical wisdom. Yet is is significant that Tauler does not necessarily draw the same distinction here, since he appears more interested in the difference in existential and affective orientation toward the light that he had also discussed in sermon V 11.

After his discussion of the experience of the light of God in the lower and higher faculties of the soul, Tauler proceeds to discuss this light’s relation to the ground. In doing so, Tauler like Eckhart before him, aims to explain how detachment and union with God in the ground of the

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<sup>245</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 330: “Die niederste das ist die begirliche kraft und die zürnende kraft: das ist die lustheit die do das gezúgnisse nemen sol; die sol sich abscheiden von lustlicheit der nature und der sinne... Dis ist wol ein wuestunge do die stimme Gotz in ruffet, und dis heisset ein abgescheiden leben, dise abgescheidenheit von aller lust geistes und nature inwendig und uswendig.”

<sup>246</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 330: “Zuo dem andern mole so wirt dis gezúgnisse in die zúrdende kraft: do wirt der mensche geleret stetekeit und starkheit, das der mensche als unbeweglich wirt recht al sein stehelin berg.”

<sup>247</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 330: “Nu wirt dis gezúg och gegeben in die obersten krefte... In der vernunft ist es ein prophete. Propheta spricht als vil als verre sicht: *videns*. Die vernunft die sicht verre, so verre das es ein wunder ist wie verre si sicht.”

<sup>248</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 330: “do ein erlúchtet mensche were der noch denne nút in disem enwere, als er horte verborgene ding, so git im sin grunt des ein gezúg und spricht: es is recht also.” Very likely Tauler has Romans 1:20 in mind here.



soul are characterized by the movement beyond the created light of grace into the uncreated divine ground that Tauler identifies in this homily with the light of glory. Hence, Tauler explains that when Christ described John the Baptist, he declared that he was more than a prophet, signifying that “in the ground, which the intellect cannot enter, man beholds the light in the light; for in the inward light one sees and understands divine things through a creaturely light, that is, through the light of grace.”<sup>249</sup> Furthermore, Tauler argues, just as Eckhart had done before him, that no created light is able to penetrate into the ground at all, including the light of grace, since only God is able to fill it up and work there. Hence, Tauler declares, citing a favorite verse from Psalms 42:7, “the abyss of the soul belongs to the divine abyss alone, *Abyssus abyssum invocat*, and this divine ground, if we perceive it flowing within us, illuminates the faculties beneath it, bending and marching both the higher and lower powers into their beginning and back to their origin.”<sup>250</sup> Yet, Tauler explains, one must be liberated from the possessiveness and natural inclination that belong to the will insofar as it is a creature in order to recognize this flowing back and forth between the created and uncreated abysses within the ground of the soul.<sup>251</sup> This can only occur, Tauler concludes, when the spirit is transformed and fully perfected by the light

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<sup>249</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 330: “Nu sprach er: ‘er ist me denne ein prophete’, das ist: in disem grunde do die vernunft nüt gelangen enkan, do sicht man das liecht in dem liechte, das ist: in denem inwendigen liechte do sicht man, in dem creaturlichen liechte do sicht man, do verstet mand das goettelich, das ist in dem liechte der gnaden.”

<sup>250</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 331: “In disem grunt enmag kein geschaffen liecht nüt reichen noch gelüchten, wan allein Gotz wonunge und sin stat ist hie. Dis abgründe das enmügent mit nüte erfüllen noch gegründen alle creature; si enmügent mit nüte begnuegen noch gefriden, noch nieman wan Got mi taller siner unmosse. In dis abgründe gehoert allen das goetteliche abgründe. *Abyssus abyssum invocat*. Diser grunt, der des mit flisse war neme, der lüchtet in die krefte under sich und neiget und reisset beide die obersten und die nidersten zuo irem beginner und zuo irem ursprunge.” McGinn, *The Harvest of Medieval Mysticism*, 262 notes the importance of Psalms 42:7 to Cistercian spirituality and compares this to the metaphor of abyss to employed by religious women like Hadewijch and Angela Foligno. See also, Bernard McGinn, “*Vere tu es Deus absconditus*: the hidden God in Luther and some mystics,” in *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, ed. by Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94-114.

<sup>251</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 332: “und alles das der mensch emit lust ie besas willeklich in geist oder in nature, das ist unordenunge ie in in geviel und wissendes und wellendes enphieng, das enwerde als gantz abgetilgget als er us im flos, so enkumet er niemer wider in den ursprung.”

of grace which turns man toward their ground by re-ordering their nature.<sup>252</sup> Tauler's conception of detachment thus builds upon that of Eckhart, who had argued that the created light of grace is required to prepare the way for the union with God that occurs in the ground of the soul, since it allows one to perceive how the uncreated divine abyss always already flows within the deepest recesses of the mind.

Finally, in sermon V 61 Tauler introduces once again the conception of the ground of the soul which the Platonic philosophers share with the Christians. In this way, Tauler follows Eckhart and Berthold, who understood the difference between a Peripatetic theology and a Platonic theology to matter more than the difference between a philosophical theology characterized by reason and a Christian theology characterized by desirous wonder. "The ground of the soul was familiar to the heathens," Tauler explains, "and as they searched for this ground they came to hate transitory things."<sup>253</sup> Plato and Proclus both provide a clear definition of it, he continues, and did so in order to lead those far from the ground to experience it.<sup>254</sup> Explaining, just as Eckhart had done in his scholastic writing, that Augustine for this reason had taught that Plato had predicted the first part of the Gospel of John, Tauler also maintains that an account of the Holy Trinity is hidden within Platonic theology, because the Platonists gained a partial understanding of it "in this inmost ground, which they experienced and beheld."<sup>255</sup> Tauler thus concedes to the Platonists a kind of natural prophetic understanding of God, just as Berthold had

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<sup>252</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 332: "Und do mit enist der luterkeit nüt genuog, der geist enwerde über formet mit dem liechte der gnaden zem ersten. Und der der überformunge nu voelklichen volgete und ein in gekert mensche were in sinen innigen grunt in rechter ordenunge."

<sup>253</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 332: "Disem grunde woren die heiden heimlich und versmochten ze mole zergengkliche ding und giengen disem grunde nach."

<sup>254</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 332: "Aber so kamen die grossen meister als Proculus und Plato und gabent des ein klar underscheit den die dis underscheit als verre nüt vinden enkonden."

<sup>255</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 332: "Sant Augustinus sprach das Plato das ewangelium *In principio* als zemole hette vor gesprochen bis an das wort: '*fuit homo missus a Deo*', und das was doch mit verborgen bedekten worten, und dise fundent underscheit von der heiligen drivalentikeit. Kinder, dis kam alles us disem inwendigen grunde: dem lebent si und wartent des."

done, which was made available to them through their affective experience of the *unum animae*. In other words, like those German Dominican theologians who turned to Plato and Proclus in order to understand the nature of theology, as well as the existential orientation and ethical practice that theology requires, Tauler is less interested in the difference between philosophical and Christian theology—even as he maintains the importance of the distinction between grace and nature that had mattered to German Dominican theologians like Albert the Great.

Yet Tauler's reason for introducing this similarity between Platonic philosophy and Christian prophecy is pastoral, just as it had been in sermon V 60. For he concludes his reflection upon the heathen knowledge of the ground that "it is a great and lasting disgrace that we poor, remaining folk who are Christian, who possess the assistance of the grace of God, holy worship, the holy sacraments, and many other aids, run about like blind chickens, ignorant of our selves and of what lies within us!"<sup>256</sup> This is because Christendom has become disordered and distracted by the many pious practices and sensuous experiences which abound in the present day, Tauler complains, such that Christians no longer heed the warning of the philosophers to disregard what is transitory in order to turn inward toward the divine abyss.<sup>257</sup> Once again the purpose of Tauler's remarks here is not necessarily to suggest that the Platonists could not apprehend God because they lacked the light of grace, although Tauler certainly does not argue here that they possessed this light. Rather, Tauler castigates the existential and affective orientation of his contemporaries, who have abandoned themselves to the transitory pleasures of the world and their own pious activities as if this matters, failing to live out of the ground like the blessed do—

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<sup>256</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 332: "Das ist ein gros laster und schande das wir armen verbliben volk, die cristen sint und als grosse helfe hant, die gnade Gotz und den heiligen globen und das heilig sacrament und als manig grosse helfe, unt gont recht umbe als blinde huonr und erkennent unser selbes nüt das in uns ist."

<sup>257</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Predigt* 61, ed. Vetter, 332: "das machet unser grosse manigvaltikeit und uswendigkeit, und das wir als vil mit den sinnen wúrken, und unser ufsetze, die vigilien und die selter und die des gelich die uns uf haltent, das wir in uns selber niergent enkúnnen komen."

irrespective of whether they be Christian saints or pagan philosophers. Plato and Proclus are thus introduced in sermon V 61 more because they represent authoritative moral examples of how to live a detached life than because of their teaching. That doing so led them to their philosophical insight into the nature of the ground of the soul and to practice the kind of kenotic and apophatic theology that recognition of the ground requires is less important to Tauler the *Lebemeister*.

Johannes Tauler's preaching is ultimately characterized by his commitment to the Albertist tradition of the German Dominican School and the Platonic tradition of philosophy insofar as these were defined by Dietrich and Berthold. Yet, because of his overarching pastoral concerns and emphasis on practical rather than speculative theology, Tauler also draws upon the kenotic and apophatic conception of theology that Eckhart in his vernacular sermons had attributed to the Platonists and important Christian theologians like Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Tauler thus deploys many of the metaphors and tropes that Eckhart had used—such as the silent wasteland where God's uncreated Oneness resides, as well as the Meister's account of the ground or spark of the soul. Nevertheless, it is evident that Tauler's Augustinian conception of the *abditum mentis* was more in line with that of Dietrich, and he generally privileged the distinction between natural and voluntary providence that Dietrich and Berthold both introduced into their work to characterize the difference between the knowledge apprehended by a philosophical and an ecstatic approach to theology. The most significant difference between Tauler and the German Dominicans who preceded him, however, was his tendency to prioritize affect over intellect, since the former better characterized how God ought to be experienced and sought in this life. This led Tauler to return to Albert's conception of theology as a wondrous divine science of piety. However, in keeping with his commitment to Platonism as a theological orientation that exceeds the metaphysics of the Aristotelians that is

concerned with being insofar as it is being, following Eckhart and Berthold, Tauler did not subscribe to Albert's claim that this wondrous theology was specifically *Christian*, since he maintained that the Platonists—to the lasting shame of his contemporaries—lived and taught out of the uncreated ground of the soul where they were united affectively to the One itself.

### *Conclusion*

I have shown in this chapter that Meister Eckhart re-situates prior debates in the German Dominican School about the difference between philosophical and Christian theology through the specific conception of Platonism he offered in his vernacular preaching. Although Eckhart continued to deploy the philosophical authorities that Albert and Dietrich employed in their own writing (i.e, the “Peripatetic tradition” constellated around the *Liber de causis*), the Meister in his sermons recognizes that there is a “Platonic” approach to theology, distinct from the Aristotelian approach, which seem to agree with his own theological ethics of detachment tied to the apophatic and kenotic discovery in the spark of the soul of one's immanent, uncreated nature within the abyssal ground of the Godhead. The Meister re-defines “proper” divine science, whether it be philosophical or Christian, as Platonic, moreover, because its kenotic and apophatic orientation corrects and goes beyond Peripatetic metaphysics and noetics, which he claims reduces the ineffable and unknowable God to the categories which the schoolmen draw upon in order to comprehend created rather than uncreated existence. In this way, Eckhart moves beyond the attempt in his scholastic writing to posit methodological similarities between Plato and scripture. In his vernacular sermons, rather, Eckhart collapsed the boundaries between philosophical and Christian theology that German Dominicans such as Albert, Ulrich and Dietrich had attempted to demarcate, suggesting that it is the difference between Aristotelianism and Platonism that actually matters.

Berthold followed Eckhart in this project. Not only did his extensive commentary on the *Elementatio theologica* of Proclus represent an attempt to concretize the German Dominican School's approach to divine science. By drawing upon all the philosophical and theological resources that had informed the German Dominican School, Berthold also described a "supersapiential" divine science represented by the theologies of Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius, whose subject and epistemic habits transcend those of the "sapiential" divine science of the Aristotelians. Solidifying the collapse of Christian theology into Platonic theology represented in vernacular preaching of Eckhart by outlining how the divine science of Proclus culminates in an ecstatic union with the One through the "one of the soul" that is higher than the active intellect and the contemplative beatitude attained through Aristotelian wisdom, Berthold nevertheless deploys Dietrich of Freiberg's Augustinian distinction between natural and voluntary providence in order to maintain some boundaries between philosophical and Christian theology. But just as was the case in Meister Eckhart's vernacular sermons, for Berthold it is the difference between Aristotelianism and Platonism as theological practices that matters. He thus pushes Eckhart's partial collapse of the boundaries between philosophical and Christian wisdom further, following the example of Thomas of York, whose *Sapientiale* introduced a tendency toward theological concordance into Berthold's German Dominican orientation toward theological difference.

Eckhart and Berthold's turn to Plato and Proclus and departure from Peripateticism culminates in the pastoral and affective theology of Johannes Tauler. A preacher primarily who sought to articulate a practical theology of the mixed life for the pious laity under his charge, rather than a scholastically trained master invested in the subtleties of theological speculation, Tauler defended a distinctly "Albertist" conception of the mysticism of the Ground which had emerged in the German Dominican School. Yet, as I have shown in the analysis above, this was

a conception of the proper practice of theology intimately concerned to defend the Platonic conception of theology defended by Eckhart in his vernacular preaching, as well as Dietrich and Berthold's turn to Proclian metaphysics and noetics in order to understand the beatitude offered to the philosopher and the Christian alike who turn to the hidden ground of the soul in order to unite with the silent wasteland of the One. Yet Tauler's theology is also marked by an explicit return to Albert the Great's conception of theology as a divine science characterized by affective wonder and desire, even as he follows Eckhart and Berthold in his characterization of this wonder as Platonic rather than graced—that is, conceives of it as potentially philosophical as it is Christian. In this way Tauler cements the breakdown of the boundaries between philosophical and Christian theology that had begun with Eckhart. Even in those moments when he castigates his Christian contemporaries for their failure to live up to the ideal of Plato and Proclus in his sermons, and suggests that it is a shame that the heathen philosophers could attain through nature what the simple Christian ought to attain through grace, he does not assert that it is the lights of grace and glory that make all the difference to the theology. With Tauler, in other words, theology has become fully Platonic since, like Eckhart, beatitude and perfection takes place beyond grace in the uncreated glory that the self-emptying turn inward taught by the pagan Platonists and Christian saints leads one to experience.

## Conclusion

Plato and Aristotle! These names represent not only two systems, but also models of two different human types, which, since time immemorial, have been in more or less openly hostile conflict with each other, whatever the costume. This battle was fought especially throughout the Middle Ages and continues to the present day. It is the basic content of the history of the Christian Church.

Heinrich Heine, *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*<sup>1</sup>

The first chapter of this dissertation analyzed the discursive and rhetorical strategies that Albert the Great and Ulrich of Strasburg employed to establish a division between a philosophical and Christian approach to theology conceived of as a divine science that is partly practical, partly speculative. I showed that by comparing the practice of philosophy to the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Albert insisted that Christian theology differs from that of the philosophers insofar as it lifts the theologian beyond reason and enables a more total contact with and enjoyment of God than that achieved through philosophical demonstration alone. Albert accordingly maintains that the singular privilege of Christian theology in contradistinction to the wisdom of the philosophers is that it provides (primarily through the Bible) the teaching necessary for one to receive and experience the divine light which wondrously lifts the theologian into God, even as he concedes that it is also possible to apprehend and enjoy the divine rationally as the philosophers do. Yet despite the apparent optimism of his Peripatetic writings, which seem to suggest that the human mind can be miraculously sanctified through philosophical study alone, Albert in his commentaries on the *Corpus Dionysiacum* and in his systematic theological writings insisted that philosophical wisdom was foolishness in comparison to the truth “suffered” by the Christian theologian who remains desirous in this life of a beatific vision of God that is always already deferred. This conception of the relationship

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<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Heine, *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany and Other Writings*, ed. by Terry Pinkard and trans. by Howard Pollack-Milgate (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 49-50.



between philosophical and Christian theology, I concluded, was systematized and promoted by Albert's major disciple Ulrich, who concretized "Albertism" into a specific theological orientation open to the German Dominican students he was pedagogically responsible to as a lector. He did so, moreover, by defining the subject of theological inquiry as the Highest Good while insisting that the practice of Christian divine science was the "true wisdom" about God and the universe, which corrected the vagaries of philosophical error.

In the following chapter, I discussed the work of Dietrich of Freiberg in order to demonstrate how it reframed the distinction between philosophical and Christian theology introduced by Albert. In particular, I analyzed how Dietrich's writing restructures Albert's account of the difference between philosophical and Christian theology through recourse to the newly available work of Proclus and by responding to the debates between Henry of Ghent and Godefroy of Fontaines about the scientific status of theology which arose after the Parisian Condemnations of 1277. In his *Tractatus de subiecto theologiae*, for instance, Dietrich described how philosophical and Christian divine science are structured by the overarching logic of proportion and proportionality that he appropriates from the *Elementatio theologica*, whereas in his other philosophical theological writings the four manners of being Dietrich found in Proclus was married to the Augustinian distinction between the natural and voluntary orders of providence so as to distinguish between the conceptual and natural being that the two divine sciences take as their proper object of inquiry. Yet Dietrich's overarching Peripateticism and general commitment to Albert the Great's "quasi-ethical" theology led him, I demonstrated, to conceive of divine science more explicitly as a speculative and rational discipline, which culminated in the beatific conjunction between the intellect and the divine understanding in the *abditum mentis*. Although for Dietrich this conjunction required grace, we have seen that for at

least one German Dominican, Eckhart of Gründig, Dietrich's arguments about how conceptual existence and the separate intelligences flow out of God meant that grace ought to be subordinated to nature, since grace simply allows the mind in this life to acquire that always already beatified intelligence that the created lights of grace and glory allow us to attain *in patria*.

Meister Eckhart represented a major turning point in the German Dominican debate over the nature of theology. Seeking to mediate between the position of the Thomists and the followers of Dietrich, as I showed in my third chapter, Eckhart emphasized similarities rather than differences between philosophical and Christian theology while rejecting important conclusions that had been normative within the German Dominican School before him, such as Albert and Ulrich's conception of the divine Good as the beatific end of divine science. In his earliest scholastic work, including his famous Parisian Questions determined in the early years of the fourteenth century, the Meister insisted that it was the distinction between created and uncreated being that mattered to any theological pursuit of the truth, whereas in his *Opus Tripartitum* he introduced a particular axiomatic approach to the practice of theology that nevertheless gave way to a parabolic hermeneutic informed by the Jewish Peripatetic Moses Maimonides that sought to demonstrate how the fables of the philosophers and the Christian scriptures poetically demonstrated the same metaphysical, natural and ethical truths with different degrees of apodictic certainty. Finally, as the analysis of the *Paradisus anime intelligentis* sermon collection put together by the Meister's disciples after his condemnation for heretical teaching demonstrates, the Meister sought to move beyond the Thomist and Dietrichian conception of beatitude within the possible and active intellect respectively in order to characterize theology as a direct reception and conception of God where God is joyously

suffered in the passive intellect or imagination. In doing so, I concluded, Eckhart suggested that the Christian theologian as metaphysician and as ethicist is called to go beyond the intelligible light that naturally flows out of the divine understanding *and* the affective economy of grace which infuses the habit of faith in order to unite with the transcendent One that immanently resides in the ground of the soul.

As I demonstrated in my final chapter, this radical reconception of the proper beatific end of theology led Meister Eckhart to align Christian divine science with the kenotic and apophatic theology of the Platonists. In doing so, Eckhart collapsed the boundaries between philosophical and Christian theology that Dietrich had attempted to maintain through recourse to the Augustinian distinction between natural and voluntary providence, suggesting instead that the difference that matters to the practice of divine science is the one between the Aristotelian and Platonic habits of knowledge. This enabled Eckhart, in his vernacular preaching, to offer the Platonic theologians as models for the radical self-emptying detachment that the Meister considered the proper existential orientation of the Christian, insofar as divine science as metaphysics and as ethics ought to be constituted by an henological rather than onto-theological approach to God. The German Dominican lector Berthold of Moosburg and the pastoral theologian and preacher Johannes Tauler each developed this Eckhartian re-definition of the practice of theology by turning to the authority of Proclus. Yet both sought to return to Dietrich of Freiberg's conception of beatitude as taking place ecstatically within the *abditum mentis*—now reconceived as union with the One in the faculty beyond the intellect which Proclus named the “one of the soul” and which Tauler called the mind or *gemuete*—while seeking to reinstitute the operative distinction between grace and nature that Eckhart had both relativized and partially abandoned. Perhaps most significantly, these two German Dominican theologians also

reintroduced the Albertian conception of theology as an affective science of wonder. However, they did so in order to characterize the kind of knowledge afforded by the supersapiential theology of the Platonists, rather than the pious theology of the Christians defined by its essential difference from the scientific habits of philosophical argumentation.

This history of the assemblage of divine science in the German Dominican School has thus established two major conclusions. The first conclusion, well-known to prior scholarship, is that the German Dominicans, beginning with Albert the Great, initially sought to establish and manage the difference between a philosophical and Christian theology conceived in Peripatetic terms before abandoning this effort after turning to a conception of proper or authentic theology as supersapiential and Platonic due to Meister Eckhart, Berthold of Moosburg and Johannes Tauler's recourse to the fifth-century Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus. The second conclusion, which has received less attention in existing scholarship due to that scholarship's general tendency to view the German Dominican School as "rationalist" rather than "mystical," is that this movement from Peripateticism to Platonism took place within the context of a debate over how best to understand the distinction between the salvific economy of grace and the natural light of intellection. For this reason, the German Dominican discourse about the relation between what Dietrich of Freiberg called "the divine science of the philosophers" and "our divine science of the saints" had everything to do with the styles of life and regimes of enunciation that faith and understanding afforded as existential habits. The two theologies discussed by the German Dominicans ultimately took their ontological and epistemic orientation from the separate intelligences and angelic hierarchies that were understood to mediate the created lights of nature and grace into the world, giving rise to an active debate over the role these lights play in the beatifying process *in via* and *in patria*.

Distinguishing between the natural and voluntary orders of providence, as well as the Aristotelian and Platonic habits of thought, the members of the German Dominican School also assembled divine science in response to Albert the Great's "affective" interpretation of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, which sought to define Christian theology as a "pious" science where the aims of metaphysics and ethics were held together. We have seen that they did so in response to ecclesiastical attempts to censure recourse to the *libri naturales* in the schools in the 1270s, necessitating a defense of the Peripatetic conception of the sanctified intellect which Albert had introduced in his *De intellectu et intelligibili*, as well as the Peripatetic doctrine of the separate intelligences that certain German Dominicans considered a philosophical hypothesis necessary for any account of the human mind's beatifying acquisition of itself within the hidden depths of the soul. Other German Dominicans, however, like Eckhart of Gründig and Meister Eckhart, did so as part of a deliberate and radical effort to minimize the role that the infused lights of grace and glory played in the contemplative conjunction or union with the uncreated divine intellect or transcendental One taken to exist beyond the divine goodness which is the proper object of human volition and conscience. This effort, finally, led Meister Eckhart, Berthold of Moosburg, and Johannes Tauler to turn to the Platonists as authorities for the kind of kenotic and apophatic theology necessary to live affectively out of the uncreated divine ground in radical detachment—a state which these Dominicans described variously as a joyous suffering, a divine mania, or as a wondrous dereliction where the limits of human intellection are overcome and all that is proprietary about the self falls away.

However one chooses to categorize the members of the German Dominican School, therefore, one must concede that it is the German Dominicans' evolving and constantly relitigated debate about the nature of divine science and human beatitude that best captures the

originality and significance of their philosophical and mystical discourse. Attending to their various “regimes of enunciation,” to recall the words of Bruno Latour from the introduction to this dissertation, as well as the way that new concepts and authorities re-configured their understanding of the proper relationship between religion and reason, shows that the members of the German Dominican School not only defined the subject of theology itself in different ways, but also sought to establish and police *what it meant to be subject to a theology*. They thus assembled themselves as they defined and managed the ideal relation between philosophical and Christian theology, as well as between Aristotelian wisdom and supersapiential Platonism. And this assemblage of divine science matters because the German Dominican School had a lasting impact upon subsequent attempts to demarcate the normative distinction between the proper and improper practice of theology in the late Middle Ages. Whether in the form of Nicholas of Cusa’s recourse to Albert, Eckhart and Berthold as part of his effort to defend a learned ignorance where the mind exceeds the limits of mere reason through its meditation upon the maximal mystery of the Trinity and the Incarnation, or Martin Luther’s recourse to the radical detachment and affective piety that Eckhart and Tauler had defended in their vernacular sermons as part of his reformist critique of scholastic culture and promotion of a theology of *Anfechtung*, the German Dominican School assembled a powerful, attractive, and *heterogeneous* vision of what it meant to theologize as a philosopher and as a Christian.

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