

Establishing the Being of Images: Master Eckhart and the Concept of Disimagination

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Preliminary Considerations: Amity and Image

What is an image? An image, it might be said, is a kind of amity between the medium and the model it assumes. The purpose of this relationship is to reproduce the model and to become similar to it. Such a definition invites – perhaps in a purely playful way – some preliminary considerations.¹

Although the results of the anagrammatic (or metathetic) equivalence between *imago* and *amigo* (that is, between *ima* and *ami*, Latin: *amicus*) are ultimately fairly humorous, some lexicographers have for a long time insisted on a real philological relationship between the Greek *philos*, that is to say “friend” (French: *ami*) and the Indo-European root **bhilo* (correct proportion, appropriate, good, amicable/friendly), from which the German word for “image” (that is, *Bild*, and the verb *bilden*) derive (this is also where the English verb “to build,” in the sense of to form or assemble, derives).² Although this hypothesis was later challenged, notably by Benveniste, the idea of *Bild* remains no less compatible with the triple meaning of *philos* that Benveniste himself defended: “mark of possession,” “friend,” and, by verbal derivation, “kiss.”³ Indeed, independent of any proof of a direct kinship, and beyond any “amicable” relation, might the image not be perceived as something that “belongs” to the model, perhaps even its “kiss,” that is, its “imprint”?

While leaving unresolved the “puzzle” of the ultimate genealogy of *Bild* (in token of our fear and veneration of the origin of the Word), we should simultaneously mention that this association of the image with the idea of amity would have been welcomed by

Master Eckhart, that great innovator in the terminology of the image. It would indeed be difficult to underestimate the wealth of insights that might result from the association of the idea of the image with those of love, belonging and friendship. Thus, for example, the very definition of the word "philosophy" would acquire an even more profound and unexpected significance were it to be defined not only as "the love of wisdom" but also "the image of wisdom." Moreover, the Neoplatonic concept of a Divine Being emanating as an intermediary between God and the World, or the Stoic theory of *Logos* (or Word-Image, which can also be found in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, in the person of the son) would become explicitly present in the word "philosophy," thanks to the idea of an original connection between the words love and image.

However, turning now to Eckhart's own understanding of the image, it is clear that his approach is the first to be inspired not only by the philosophical and theological implications surrounding the Latin definition of *imago* but also the first to draw from the supernatural, magical and religious context of the West Germanic word *bilidi*. Until the eleventh century this word apparently meant a "magical force," "magically spiritual entity," "a miraculous sign," (*Wunderzeichen*) or an archetype (*Urbild*); it then began to designate a "being," a "form" or a "formed thing," and finally an "image" in the secular sense, such as the representation or copy (*Abbild*) that a painting embodies; and to this semantic sense was added the metaphorical one of an image painted with words.⁴ Master Eckhart's works, which stand at a crossroads between the Latin and German languages, have therefore contributed to the development of the German philosophical language, particularly as it relates to the vocabulary of the image.

In this regard, the creation of the terminological pair, *Bildung-Entbildung*, constitutes one of his most characteristic – and crucial – creations; and yet, as we shall see, it also remains one of the most difficult to translate and interpret.

Humanism's Guiding Concepts

According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, the idea of *Bildung* (formation, education; and the related *Einbildung*, which means imagination) should be included among Humanism's most important guiding concepts. This term, the introduction of which has generally been

attributed to Master Eckhart,⁵ has undergone a continuous and unusually profound development. But what about its opposite, that is, the idea of *Entbildung*?

Literally *Entbildung* means the dissecting or dispossession of an image, its de-representation, or, more simply, disimagination (perhaps even “disymgination”: the medieval spelling here is intended to recall the archaic context of Eckhart’s vocabulary). More recently, some have suggested that it should be translated by disillusion or disalienation, as, for example, in the context of the philosophical discussion of “virtual reality.”⁶ These associations are certainly inventive although one should guard against seeing them as actual translations or even equivalents of *Entbildung*. This is because the notions of disalienation, and especially disillusion, do not imply the same constellation of meanings (a “jubilatory” one, one might say, alluding to René Berger’s article published elsewhere in this volume) as does *Entbildung*, and they especially lack the noetic, ethical, and meditative dimensions of *Entbildung*. Equally, as we shall see later, one should guard against translating *Entbildung* as iconoclasm or deconstruction.

Even if the first appearance of the verb *Entbilden* comes only late in Eckhart’s work, the idea that *Entbilden* expresses clearly antedates it. As the indissociable complement of the verb *Bilden*, *Entbildung* equally embodies an essential stage in the development of Master Eckhart’s thought. Yet it is almost completely absent from both the later development of the German philosophical and theological vocabulary and from the contemporary general language as well. Only Eckhart’s disciples – that is, Suso and Tauler, and then one of Tauler’s later followers, Angelus Silesius⁷ – make use of this word, which is unknown in contemporary German. It is remarkable to note that all three authors emphasize the same semantic displacement between the verbs *bilden* and *entbilden* as it relates to the inherently equivocal notion of the image: for them, *Bildung* cannot be translated by the word “imagination”; nor does the word *entbilden* necessarily mean the opposite of *bilden*. Thus, if we are to avoid becoming entangled in this odd linguistic puzzle, it will be useful to review the genesis of the verb *bilden* as well as its drift in the works of Master Eckhart: this is because both verbs, *bilden* and *entbilden*, in spite of the enormous gulf separating their historical development, should be taken up together, since they are the original and conjoined creation of Master Eckhart.⁸

For Eckhart, the notion of image (*bilde*) contains three semantic

levels. These levels serve to define the entire range of relations between the Divine Being and created being, ranging from the most sacred to the most profane: these include the concept of the Word-Image (the *Logos*, which is the most important element of Trinitarian speculation), the presence of the created person (intelligent and contemplative, in "the image" of the creator), finally the phantasms of inner life and the dissimilar images that make up the exterior world. Thus the first level concerns the Trinity, the second level defines the human being, while the third level concerns the world of perception. The first and third levels thus constitute the two poles of the dialectical being of the image. If the first level constitutes the image, then the third level constitutes the non-image, while the second level constitutes the region of similarity/dissimilarity between the first and third. Inversely, by means of a kind of oscillation of the image's semantic field, if the third level constitutes the image, then the first becomes the non-image, while the second remains the region of similarity /dissimilarity separating the first from the third.

In this way the third level constitutes the dissimilarity of the second level in relation to the first. As a result, the effect of *Entbildung* is felt on this antithetic pole of the image's semantic field. While the verb *bilden* generally emphasizes the first semantic level and the resemblance of the second level to the first, the verb *entbilden* emphasizes the third semantic level and the dissimilarity of the second in relation to the first, that is, it emphasizes the resemblance of the second to the third.

Thus *bilden* is based on a positive evaluation of the image and understands *Bildung* as *paideia*, that is, as the "formation" of what is "similar to the divine" and best in the human being; on the other hand, the verb *entbilden* is the result of a negative evaluation of the image, since it designates a dispossession of what is "non-divine" and "dissimilar" in the human being. However, if we take into account both this positive and negative evaluation of the image simultaneously, then *bilden* and *entbilden* no longer designate separate operations but rather a single process seen from two different points of view.

From Forbidden Resemblance to the Dialectics of the Image

In reflecting on Eckhart's ontology of the image, that is, on his doctrine concerning the relationship between the Divine Being and the

created being, we find ourselves constantly facing the same antinomy, one that was already present in the Neoplatonic categories of abstraction (*aphairesis*) and negation (*apophasis*). Principally under the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius, the category of negation gradually developed into the medieval conception known as negative theology. Eckhart, aware of the “pagan” origin of both philosophy and theology, proposes, in his *Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, “as in all my writings, to use the natural reason of the philosophers in order to explain the articles of the saintly Christian faith and the Holy Writ of the two testaments.”⁹ In this way *Entbildung* (which, as we shall see, derives from the Plotinian *aphairesis*) can be legitimately compared to the famous “forbidding of images” of the Decalogue (Exodus, 20:4): “You shall not make a likeness of anything in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth.”

Taking the word “likeness” in the strict sense of a representation of God created by the hand of man, Eckhart writes: “How indeed can one make a visible likeness of the infinite, of the immense, the invisible, or the form of an uncreated image? Thinking along these same lines, some ancient doctors of the Church admitted that even the blessed could not see God in himself but only in certain theophanies. . . . However, God says in Genesis (1:26): ‘Let us make man in our image and likeness.’ And in first John (3:2): ‘We shall be like him and see him as he is.’”¹⁰ Using as his starting point this confrontation between the forbidding of images on the one hand, and the affirmation of a creation and a knowledge of man “in the image and the likeness” of God on the other, Eckhart turns his commentary into a summary of the entire doctrine of the double perspective, that is, the paradox of an inherent semantic polarity in the very constitution of the image:

It must therefore be known that there is nothing so unlike as God and any creature. Secondly, there is nothing so alike as God and any creature. Finally, there is nothing simultaneously so alike and so unlike to each other, as are God and any creature.¹¹

By means of a three-stage “dialectic” whose synthesis results in the thesis and antithesis coinciding in an inclusive manner, Eckhart perfectly delimits the apparent antinomy between similarity and dissimilarity: “What indeed can be more similar and dissimilar to another thing than that thing whose dissimilarity is similarity itself and whose indistinction is distinction itself?”¹²

This dialectical paradox is then illustrated by three examples: because God is beyond any kind of type or comparison, there can be no resemblance between God and any creature. "God is indistinguishable from any being, just as being itself is indistinguishable from any particular being By contrast, anything created – simply because it is created – is distinct."¹³ In another commentary he writes that "the indistinct differs from the distinct to a greater extent than any two distinct beings differ from each other."¹⁴ Using these arguments, Master Eckhart asserts an absolute dissimilarity between the creator and any creature.

However, "when we speak of the art of a great master, we are speaking of the image that he created; the image reveals the master's art."¹⁵ Thus there must be some similarity between the creator and his creation, even if this similarity is a result of the absolute ontological dependence of the latter on the former: "What indeed could be more like an other than that which receives and maintains its structure by its relation to this other? What indeed could be more like an other than that creature whose entire being is deduced from and imitates this other?"¹⁶ According to this conception, the creature is no longer distinguishable from the creator; nor is it any longer, in a certain sense, distinct from its indistinction, as the image is no longer distinct from its model, the art from the artist, or the grape from the vine. Here Eckhart quotes Boethius who, in a poetic version of Plato's *Timaeus*, speaks of God in the following terms:

Immaculate form of the Good, it is you who directs all things
According to a model from on high, . . .
Governing the world by your spirit and making of it
An image in likeness of yourself.¹⁷

In his commentary, Eckhart begins by asserting the existence of an infinite qualitative distance, an absolute incommensurability, between God and creatures. Then he develops a series of ideas that comes close to pantheism before linking the two points of view in a single phrase: "Therefore, since it is distinguished by its indistinction and assimilated by its dissimilarity, the greater the dissimilarity the greater the similarity. In the same way, the more one speaks of the ineffable, the less one speaks of the ineffable as ineffable, . . . just as he who denies time affirms it, . . . since the negation of time occurs within time."¹⁸ When two points of view collide, and the result is that they can neither be combined nor one point of view

exclude the other, the intellect is left with only one choice: it must try to raise itself to a direct intuition of transcendence.

Dialectical Elevations: *Aufhebung* or *Erhebung*?

Clearly, the “antithetical” character of many of the foregoing assertions is reminiscent of the dialectical manner of discourse. In his article devoted to Master Eckhart’s “dialectic,” Maurice de Gandillac is especially – and justifiably – interested in the verb *ûfheben* (modern *aufheben*), which the Thuringian philosopher adroitly uses in both its meanings; that is, on the one hand, “to raise,” “to lift,” “to assume,” or “to take upon oneself”; and, on the other, “to suppress” or “to put down.”¹⁹ Thus, in his interpretation of the verb *ûfheben* – in the sense of “to take” as it is used in the phrase “to take up the cross” (*tolle crucem*) – Eckhart rejects the usual way in which it is understood, that is as “lift” or “take up,” which would result in the traditional notion of “to carry or bear one’s cross.” Here, on the contrary, and paradoxically, Eckhart understands it as “to suppress” and “to put down.” He writes: “And here lies the real meaning of what our Lord said: He who wants to come to me must take up his cross (*“swer wil komen ze mir . . . sol sîn criuze ûfheben*), that is to say: he must put down and rid himself of his cross and his suffering.”²⁰ This example confirms the idea of a thematic connection between the two meanings of the verb *ûfheben*. The same holds for the Latin verb *tollere*: taken in the sense of unveiling, Eckhart discerns a relation similar to the one found in *Entbildung*:

Or rather say: *the glory will be revealed*, because in beatitude glory itself is revealed. All veils will be lifted (*tollitur*) – because in this lies the source of his glory – ; the veil of the good, under which the will grasps (God); the veil of the true, by which the intellect understands (God); and simultaneously with both, the veil of being itself. As a result, the will first grasps something veiled in the good while the intellect understands it as being alone rather than truth, although truth is part of being. The prominence of the intellect is now revealed and, as a consequence, we can also see that beatitude belongs most appropriately in the intellect. And yet, since all veils will be lifted (*tollitur omne velamen*), it may be that beatitude belongs most appropriately within the naked essence of the soul itself.²¹

Although there exists an obvious relationship between the verbs *ûfheben*, *tolle*, *revelare* and *entbilden*, these words cannot be immedi-

ately associated with Hegel's use of the word *Aufhebung*. Indeed, rather than defining Master Eckhart's "dialectic" on the basis of his use of the word *ûfheben* (a word Eckhart in fact rarely uses), it would be more productive to speak of the concept of elevation (*Erhebung*). *Erhebung* is used to designate the result of just this kind of dialectical movement, that is, how one must "raise (*erheben*) one's intellect above all corporeal things and go beyond the 'furious' inconstancy of ephemeral things." And as he says later in the same text: "It is by a special grace and a remarkable gift that, with the help (*veder*) of knowledge, we can take flight and raise (*erhebe*) our intellect toward God. Thus we are transported from light to light, and with the light in the light."²²

Since we find in Plato a resemblance between his methods of analogy and dialectic,²³ it should come as no surprise that Eckhart's concept of dialectical elevation – the results of which take us well beyond what we might ordinarily expect from synthesis – is itself not unrelated to his own doctrine of analogy. The creature, as a result of its absolute ontological dependence on God, is first defined in terms of a relation of similarity (without which it could not exist). The forms of things preexist in their first case, just as it is affirmed by the principle of the resemblance between cause and effect: "Can grapes be picked from briars, or figs from thistles?"²⁴ It is clear that such a relation between cause and effect cannot be a fixed one. To the extent that we are comparing God to the creature as such, this "resemblance" is in fact a constantly shifting one. Moreover, when we discuss resemblance in terms that alternate between fixed and shifting categories, it can be said that this is equivalent to speaking in terms of similarity and dissimilarity. And is not the purpose of analogy to describe a relationship that oscillates between poles of uni- and multivocality?

It can in fact be argued that the concept of analogy offers the most concise method of grasping the paradox of identity and difference, which joins the divine and created being: "This is the difference between the equivocal, the univocal, and the analogous: the equivocal can be distinguished by the different things (it designates), the univocal by the differences within a single thing; but the analogous, by contrast, is not distinguished in either of those manners; it is distinguished only by the modes of being of one same thing (or of one same type of thing). . . ."²⁵ With the help of the sharp delineations that mark Eckhart's conception of analogy (ranging from the infinite distance of the equivocal to the immedi-

ate proximity of the univocal), we ourselves can identify, on the basis of the creature's "pure nothingness,"²⁶ the plenitude of the divine through which this world exists. By the same token, analogy and dialectic define a single process in two different modes. Finally, this process can be summed up in terms of *Entbildung*. *Entbildung*, as concerns the ethic of the image, becomes the lighting rod for a lived mystical experience, thereby approximating a "spiritual exercise" of a meditative kind; and this is possible because "you must live, you see, just as it was said of the image."²⁷

Between Two Shadows: An Exegesis of the Empty Tomb

In its mode as *Erhebung* and *Entbildung*, that is, as elevation and disimagination, the process of dialectic and analogy can nevertheless not be reduced to mere flight from the world; it does not abandon the world to its own nothingness. On the contrary: the loss and disimagining (*entbilden*) of the world is equivalent to settling oneself inside the Being through which the world exists. Although Eckhart's definition of analogy seems to devalue the world to a status of "pure nothingness," this is only the first step of a dialectic that will ultimately judge the being of the world to be beyond any comparison: "It must be said . . . that in nature and in art, being is the thing that is sought after and desired, the thing for which all thirst and hunger. The aim and cause of the work of art and nature is that their effects be felt and that they possess being; because without being the entire universe isn't worth a fly, the sun is no more valuable than charcoal, and wisdom no more than ignorance."²⁸

The act of detaching the superior powers of the soul from worldly images, the act of divesting oneself altogether from images, does not necessarily imply scorn for the world. Rather: "The more the soul is raised above terrestrial things, the stronger it is. Someone who has known nothing but created beings has no need of a sermon, because each created being is full of God and is himself a book."²⁹ And also: "Man must understand and acknowledge the awesome nobility of being. No creature is so minimal as not to aspire to being. Caterpillars, when they fall from trees, crawl toward the tops of walls in order to maintain their being. Such is the nobility of being."³⁰

The divine being is the light of all creation. As such, it is also the foundation of all knowledge. However, he who seeks to know this being as being sees "nothing" and merely "gropes" in the "shad-

ows."³¹ What are these shadows? Once more the answers seem to contradict each other: because the invisible divine being is also the invisible being of things, there is a kind of oscillation of semantic systems.

On the one hand, creatures are called "pure nothingness," completely dependent on the light of the divine being: "Search as we might, we find only darkness in creatures. This is what I think: all that we can ever find in any creature is shadow and darkness. Even the light of the highest, most sublime angel touches nothing of the soul. All that is not the first light is obscurity and darkness."³²

At the same time he writes that "he who speaks of God by means of comparison speaks improperly of him; but he who expresses his conception of God in terms of nothingness speaks appropriately of him."³³ Also, Master Eckhart takes literally the story of Paul's conversion (Acts 9:8): "'By 'light' Paul means that he saw, with wide open eyes, nothingness itself. Seeing nothing, he was seeing Divine Nothingness."³⁴ This is because "I cannot see what is One. Paul saw Nothingness, which was God. God is a Nothing and God is a Something. That which is Something is also Nothing. What God is, he is absolutely. Writing about God, the inspired Areopagite wrote: 'He is beyond being, he is beyond life, he is beyond light.' Dionysius attributes to God neither this or that quality; he means that God is we-know-not-what, far beyond us."³⁵

Amidst this continuous overturning of metaphorical systems, in this "double darkness" stretching between the opacity that is the nothingness of creatures and the "divine nothingness" of the mysteries of God (*abscondia dei*), lies the human intellect and human love, just as was discovered by Saints Peter and John as they stood before the incomprehensible darkness of the empty tomb.³⁶ John 20:8: "He saw (nothing) and believed." Mary's path, which led beyond the threshold of the tomb (but also: beyond the threshold of faith), seemed to be lost in the dark of night. Beyond any image, indeed imageless, "as full of nothingness as a pregnant woman is full with child, God was born: fruit of nothingness, in this nothingness, in nothingness God was born."³⁷

Aphairctic Methods

"'I am dark but lovely,' it says in *The Song of Songs*. 'Do not look down on me; a little/dark I may be/because I am scorched by the sun.' The sun is the light of this world, which means that the highest

and best thing created and made in this world itself hides and covers the image of God within us."³⁸ The entire concept of *Entbildung* can be summarized on the basis of this extraordinary commentary to *The Song of Solomon* (1:5-6): the "dark but lovely" skin, sun-scorched after a long day in the summer sun, is directly combined with Augustine's theme of vespereal knowledge: "To know a creature in itself is to have 'vesperal' knowledge; here one sees creatures through images that have multiple distinctions. To know a creature in God is to have 'matinal' knowledge; here one contemplates creatures without any distinction, devoid of any image (*aller bilde entbildet*), released from all resemblance, in the One, which is God himself."³⁹ Evening is almost night, the dusky threshold of creaturely nothingness. Now comes the "noble conversion of man," the passage from terrestrial to divine nothingness. It must follow the narrow and steep path of *Entbildung*, which leads from dusk to dawn, that is, from the alienated soul to the depths of the soul.

Turning to St. Augustine once more, Eckhart explores the doctrine of the seven degrees of the new, inner man, which he enriches with metaphors. Eckhart writes that the ultimate (sixth or seventh) degree is reached "when man is separated from images (*entbildet*) and is himself transformed by God's eternity, when he achieves total and perfect forgetfulness of our ephemeral, temporal life and is transformed into a divine seer."⁴⁰ He also quotes the "pagan masters" Tullius (Cicero) and Seneca on the related theme of the "seed of God," as well as the "great master" Origen: "Since it is God himself who spread and planted and germinated this seed, surely it can be covered and hidden without being irrevocably lost or destroyed; this is a fiery seed, it glitters and lights and burns, ever striving toward God . . . as the image of God, the Son of God lies at the bottom of the soul like a living spring."⁴¹

However, the idea of *Entbildung* can also be traced directly back to the Neoplatonic concept of abstraction (*aphairesis*). "When a master creates an image out of wood or stone, he does not insert the image into the material; rather he removes the shavings (in the case of wood) that had hidden and covered the image. He adds nothing to the wood; on the contrary, he strips away and extracts what covers the image, he removes the dross; what shines through is what was hidden beneath it."⁴² Eckhart quotes no one directly here but this comparison – like the one used by Michelangelo – probably comes from the second book of Dionysius the Areopagite's *Mystical Theology*.⁴³ Still earlier Plotinus had spoken of

the sculptor who removes (*aphairei*) the shavings in order to release the exquisite contours held in the marble statue. The "aphairetic" invocation with which third book of the fifth *Ennead* ends can be understood along the same lines: *aphele panta!*⁴⁴

Thus the principal source of Master Eckhart's originality lies in his reformulation and metaphorical enrichment of the teachings of the Church Fathers and of the "pagan masters" of Antiquity. "If there was nothing new, there would be nothing ancient."⁴⁵ It could be said that Eckhart's special "originality" is to be found in his ability to give life to the origin (*origo*). The opposition between the ancient and the new is a natural result of the necessity to regenerate life perpetually: "to make new" does not necessarily mean "to make different"; rather it means "to bring to life" in conformity with the demands of the Master of Life (*Lebemeister*).

But the question here is much larger than the simple translation of philosophical concepts from a dead language to a living one. When we speak of a conceptual reformulation; when it is a question of abstraction and negative theology, that is, of *aphairesis* and *apophasis*; when we are told that we must proceed through the various levels of signification of the concept of the image; when we must abstract from visible images in order to reach the Word-Image; then we are dealing not simply with the conceptual genealogy of *Entbildung* but with the concept of *Entbildung* itself understood as the central pillar of a philosophical doctrine. Also – and above all – it must be understood as the subjective experience that leads directly to this terminological innovation.

It is by this means that abstraction and negative theology, as keys to spiritual experience, become part of a dynamic process that has a real impact on life and consciousness – and it turns out that almost all the important themes in the thought of Master Eckhart can be organized in such a way that the "rare and new" word *ent-bilden* functions as their center. In this way certain doctrines that were developed in the field of physics, or the Aristotelian theory of perception, are transformed into ethical directives or into instructions for spiritual life.

The Ontology of Images

"Now listen to me closely! A true image can be recognized in at least four different ways, perhaps more. An image exists neither by nor for itself; rather it originates in that thing of which it is the

image and belongs to it with all its being. It neither belongs nor originates in anything that is foreign to that thing of which it is the image. An image takes its being directly and solely from that thing of which it is the image: it shares a *single* being with it and is the same being."⁴⁶ This summary of Eckhart's doctrine of the image, which refers only to the model (*Urbild*) of which the image is the copy (*Abbild*), can be directly translated into ontological terms. The definition here is one-sidedly "mimetic" in the sense that it tends to put all the emphasis on the "univocal-transcendental" pole of the analogical relationship between model and image, that is to say, between divine and created being.⁴⁷

Inversely, we ought to be able better to understand his approach to the image by taking up his doctrine of being. This doctrine is expounded in the *Prologue to the Work of Propositions* ("Being is God").⁴⁸ Here the relations between being (*esse*) and a being (*ens*: which means literally "that which is because of being"), between the model and its image, as well the relationship between the semantic poles of the image, are depicted as equivalent and interchangeable. Thus it becomes possible to assert that "the image signifies the model alone" based on the following definition taken from the *Prologue*: "a being signifies being alone" (*ens solum esse significat*).⁴⁹ Eckhart's interpretation of the relationship between being and a being is such that a being is understood as but a sign (or image) of being, just as "the circle [of the barrel or crown hung in front of the window of an inn], although it has no wine in it, signifies wine. In the same way this being or being, or in fact any kind of perfection, especially general, such as the One, the True, the Good, the Light, Justice, Being and other terms of this kind, can be said analogously of God and the creatures."⁵⁰ Thus the concept of analogy (as we have seen before), which stands at the crossroads of the ontology and philosophy of the image, can help us to define the nature of the similar/dissimilar relation between God and creature. Ontologically speaking, this means that we must speak differently "of being taken absolutely and simply, without any adjunction, than of the being of this or that thing."⁵¹

We can therefore compare the four or "perhaps more" propositions on the image, outlined in *16b* (see above) with the four propositions on being rigorously developed in the *Prologue to the Work of Propositions*:

By way of introduction it must first be stated that God alone is a being in the strict sense, that is, one, true and good. Secondly, that it is through

him that all things are one, true, and good. Thirdly, that all things directly owe the fact of their being, their unity, their truth and goodness, to him. Fourthly, when I say "this being here" or "one of these" or "one of those," or when I say "this or that is so," the "this" or "that" (*hoc et istud*, or *hoc et hoc*) adds or affixes absolutely nothing to the essential state of unity, truth, or goodness of the being, of the one, the true, the good.

As a result of this proximity, being (*esse*) or a being as such (*ens inquantum ens*) can be substituted for the model, while the similar/dissimilar image or copy occupies the position of "being-this-or-that" (*ens hoc aut hoc*). The image therefore shares the same essence and resembles its model from the moment that it "is"; and at this point its image-being participates in the being of the model. However, it is also different and differs in its essence from the model to the extent that it is a particular this or that (*hoc aut hoc*), distinct from the model. The first proposition refers to the principal theme of the *Prologue* ("Being is God") and is largely based on *Exodus 3:14* (*ego sum qui sum*). The second and third propositions are designed to show that all things receive their being "directly" from God alone: "How indeed could anything be, if not from being . . . ?" And: "How indeed could a thing be if an intermediary were to slide in between it and being; and if, as a consequence, it existed outside of being, as if to the side of, or exterior to it?"

Eckhart's commentary to the fourth proposition is a crucial step in harmonizing the doctrine of the image with the doctrine of being, that is to say, in creating an ontology of the image:

As for what has just been said, that is to say, that each and every being (or individual) depends on God for his entire being, his unity, truth and goodness, this proposition can also be explained in the following way: it is impossible for any being or any mode or difference of being to be lacking or absent from being. Therefore that which is lacking or absent in being is not or is nothing. But God is being. . . .

It is therefore a universal law that nothing about an entity can be denied about a being itself or about being itself. This is why nothing about the being itself, God, can be denied without negating the negation of all being. . . .

Therefore "this or that being" (*ens hoc aut hoc*), one this or that, the true this or that, the good this or that, in its mode as this or that (*in quantum hoc vel hoc*), adds or confers absolutely no essence, unity, truth, or goodness (onto being, the true, the one, the good). This is the fourth proposition advanced above. This proposition neither takes being away from things nor destroys the being of things: it establishes their being.

The fact that being is not attributed to the being-this-or-that (*ens*

hoc aut hoc), taken as this-or-that (*in quantum hoc vel hoc*), is not equivalent to destroying this being-this-or-that nor even annihilating it conceptually. On the contrary, it is equivalent to establishing being as being (*ens in quantum ens*), the mode by which the diversity of the being-this-or-that of all created things exists in the very being of the Deity. Moreover, by recognizing the directly reciprocal dependence between the definition of being and the definition of the image, it becomes possible to understand why *Entbildung*, as the "negation of the negation" of all images, proves to be any eminently positive negation of the image: by the very act of speaking of the "nothingness" of the image we are led directly to an acknowledgment of the plenitude of being in the model or archetype, or of the ungraspable reality through which these archetypes exist. It is only then that the being of the image, in the mode of being-this-or-that, can be established.

Iconoclasm and Deconstruction

In reflecting upon the contemporary approach to the theme of *Entbildung*, we cannot help but notice its association with several different intellectual constellations.

To begin with, we must face this inescapable question: is *Entbildung* an expression of iconoclastic tendencies or, at the very least, can it be misinterpreted as a matrix of a latent iconoclastic controversy?

As opposed to all other questions we have considered up until now, this one must be judged as somewhat inappropriate and misplaced, since nowhere in the work of Master Eckhart do we find anything to suggest any interest in the question of iconoclasm, especially not in any of the events usually associated with this term: not a single word about Byzantium, while the iconoclasm that surfaced during the Reformation lay in a far distant future (approximately two centuries) from the period in which Eckhart lived. This is why such a question must be treated cautiously, on the margins of our subject. Moreover, we must always remain conscious of the fact that the origin of this question lies far more in our own retrospective interests than in any concerns taken up by Master Eckhart in either his German or Latin works.

It is of course true that the idea of *Entbildung* can give rise – through a somewhat extreme and cryptic reading of the material – to an iconoclastic interpretation. However, as we have seen earlier,

Eckhart's interpretation of the forbidding of images is but the antithetical pole of his ontological approach to the image, and this approach can only be considered iconoclastic if we isolate it, thereby taking out of context certain propositions relating to this pole – but this would be equivalent to reducing the true teaching of Master Eckhart to a “half-dialectic.”⁵² What is important for Eckhart is the subjective experience of the essence of images, which has very little to do with any kind of attack on the physical basis of images or against any form of representation of the image, whether in terms of similarity or dissimilarity. This is why any likening of iconoclasm to *Entbildung* can only be the fruit of a gross misunderstanding.

On the other hand, the idea of an affinity between *Entbildung* and the theory of modern abstract art – such as it developed under the influence of Kandinsky and Worringer – merits more serious attention. This approach too has been associated with certain “iconoclastic” tendencies; but this time, at least in some sense, the association is appropriate. It is generally agreed that the advent of a new kind of artistic “iconoclasm” – we are speaking of the art that developed after 1910 – was at least in part caused by a reaction against the plethora of images that were produced with the help of new techniques of pictorial reproduction. However, it is important to point out immediately that this movement was concerned above all with questions of spiritual abstraction, not iconoclasm per se; indeed one may legitimately speak here of a kind of *aphairesis* in the Neoplatonic sense. Thus an affinity with *Entbildung* seems conceivable.

In spite of their similar intentions, Eckhart's approach must, however, be deemed the more profound, since it bears on the very consciousness of the subject. This is because it is consciousness that gives images their being, even if these images in turn influence consciousness (herein lies the success of abstract art). However, both in its techniques of representation and visual communication, this artistic abstraction is reached indirectly: the image, even if “abstract,” remains an exterior image (*ûzwendig*), that is, a “being” or a “thing,” whether figurative or non-figurative. Even though abstract, once it becomes sensual this image risks hiding what it should be most apt to reveal; and, far from being able to become – as the *Entbildung* can – a kind of indispensable support for complexity (that is to say, far from succeeding in spiritually balancing a situation of visual excess), such an approach can only magnify the

problem. Thus, because of the inertia that is tied to the “concrete” aspect of the supports of the image, it should come as no surprise that the initially “spiritual” aim of pictorial abstraction should have in large measure been lost in a tangle of auto-iconoclastic impasses – and the same probably holds true for the “material” support of the image (even if, here too, there remains a lot of room for admirable achievements). In the meanwhile, trying to update the metaphor – drawn from Greek mythology – of Argus-Panoptes (“who sees all”), we can say that any attempt at reorienting ourselves in the face of the current complexity appears doomed to failure, that is, to be lost amid the “feather broom and iridescent whiskers” of the peacock of telecommunications, with its thousands and thousands of half-closed eyes, lulled to sleep by the magic power of Hermes (in order better to bear witness to the death of Argus!).⁵³ Furthermore – and this in a spirit of mischief – we can assert that the audio-visual media offer us all too often only a simulacrum of a global vision, a merely synchronic and immediate vision of things, an “All you can see!” message bedaubed on the feathers of a bird’s posterior.

In the context of postmodern philosophy it has also been suggested that there is an affinity between *Entbildung* and “deconstruction.”⁵⁴ This association can be immediately attributed to the fact that Heidegger is one of the primary inspirations for deconstruction. Moreover, several recent studies have begun to shed some light on the influence of Master Eckhart’s work on Heidegger (an influence that seems to have been largely hidden by Heidegger, since he rarely quoted Eckhart and, when he did, not always where he should have).⁵⁵ There thus remains much more to be said on this score. In the more narrow context of the present article, it will have to suffice to say, on the question of the relation of *Entbildung* to *Gelassenheit*, that a detailed exposition of Master Eckhart’s doctrine (or of Plotinus for *aphairesis*) can be achieved without any reference to Heidegger – but not the reverse.

On its own merits this association of *Entbildung* with deconstruction is an interesting one and deserves further study. However, discernment is required here as well, because otherwise it may lead to the incorrect conclusion that *entbildung* and deconstruction are one and the same thing. In truth, *entbildung* and deconstruction neither designate the same operation nor have the same object. The former deals with spiritual life and constitutes an activity of an ethical and meditative kind; the latter designates a process that is

sometimes one of analytic “dismantling” (which is of concern to the literary critic), sometimes one of historical deconstruction (as, for example, the celebrated process of dismantling or eroding the Hegelian type of philosophical monism). In brief, to the extent that it is defined by means of a negative relation to some preceding era, postmodern philosophy plays the role of the scrap dealer of modernity. Like this obviously useful and profitable business, the role of postmodernism is to “deconstruct” and salvage separate pieces of intellectual history (unlike the material scrap dealer, who salvages wrecked and/or old cars). Deconstruction has perhaps also – at least since the 1980s – played the role of debunker, overturning idols. As a result we have entered an era that may be more aptly called postmonist or postdualist than postmodern – an era which for this reason may truly constitute the boundary and opening of the “post postmodern” era, and so on and so forth, . . . for those who want to continue in this vein. Postmodernism might also be seen as an atheological variant of iconoclasm. In any case, *Entbildung* cannot legitimately be interpreted as a form of deconstruction – whether analytic, aporetic, cathartic, or or even iconoclastic – since the aim of *Entbildung* is not to disassemble structures but rather to transcend them in hopes of better understanding and assuming them.

The Unrepresentable Essence of Things

Entbildung thus embodies Eckhart’s attempt to establish the being of images on the basis of the beyond that grounds them. The first step in this process is to reach the limit of what language can express, to seek a metaphor for the invisible; that is, to seek a dynamic metaphor which, in order to be invested with meaning, must divest itself of this meaning. Language is viewed here as if it were but a breath covering transparency – like a flower of frost over the unrepresentable essence of all things.

However, this image or metaphor of a beyond of the image – or, as in this case, of a beyond that grounds the image – should not be interpreted merely as relating to the domain of language and its beyond; that is, as a simple “negative metaphor.”⁵⁶ The gulf between the nothingness of the creature and the plenitude of the divine being cannot be overcome by simply transcending the limits of language. Rather it might be more apt here to speak of an *active disimagination*, alluding to the method of *active imagination* that

Jung described.⁵⁷ Or perhaps we should refer to the different Western and Eastern techniques of yoga and meditation.⁵⁸ In fact, only by an ethical and even practical approach to *Entbildung* can abstraction become a lived experience. The aphoretic ascension of the being-this-or-that toward the divine is inseparable from its mystical certainty concerning the subsistence of the essence of the model or of the archetype at the very heart of the being of images – and this must be accomplished without transgressing the metaphysical limits of these images: “I can not attribute more to the image; if I attributed more to it, it would become God himself, but this cannot be the case because then God would not be God.”⁵⁹

In conclusion, and to broaden our perspective so as to include the central contemporary application of the concept, it can be said that *Entbildung* constitutes a way of experiencing a certain detachment from the predominant cultural and mental structures (and without destroying them). Indeed, not only does it not destroy them, the aim of this experience is to protect, integrate and live these structures in all their diversity. Just as – to return to our initial theme of friendship – a certain degree of non-possessiveness and spiritual detachment (we are not speaking here of negligence) in friendship and love can contribute to the improvement of these – and most other – relationships, so too can disimagination, which underpins the diversity of images, help ensure the necessary degree of spiritual serenity and inner freedom that will guarantee the establishment of what can be called, from a trans-cultural point of a view, *ymbiosophy*.⁶⁰

Translated from the French by Thomas Epstein.

Notes

1. This article is a more full treatment of a subject that I made the theme of two earlier discourses. One was given in French, for the Twenty-Second International Congress of L'Association des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française, Dijon, August 29–31, 1988 (cf. *L'espace et le temps. Actes du XXIIe Congrès*, Paris, Vrin, 1991, pp. 149–153. This text was neither reviewed nor corrected by the author.); it was also delivered on the occasion of a colloquy organized by La Société Suisse des Professeurs de Philosophie, held in Chexbres on September 12, 1990. The other, in German, was read at *Forschungsinstitut für Philosophie* in Hanover on January 14, 1991. In this connection see Wolfgang Wackernagel, *Ymagine denudari. Éthique de l'image et métaphysique chez Maître Eckhart* (Études de philosophie médiévale, LXVI-II), Paris, Vrin, 1991.

2. The etymology of the word *Bild* has not yet been fully clarified. Indeed there is a second hypothesis that ascribes a direct relationship between the Greek *philos* and the Sanscrit *priyá* (beloved, dear). On this subject see Manfred Landfester, *Das griechische Nomen "philos" und seine Ableitungen*, Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1966. As for the *Bild* hypothesis, see Friedrich Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, de Gruyter, 1883, 21st edition, Berlin, Walther Mitzka 1975 (article: *Philosoph*). Also, Hermann Paul, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1897, 8th edition, Tübingen, Werner Betz, Niemeyer 1981. In the *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, by Monier-Williams, 1899 (Calcutta, 1976) we find the following entries: *bimba* (reflected image – also: *vimba*) and *prati-mā, prati-mimite* (related to *mimesis?*), *Ved. inf. prati-mai* (to imitate, copy; a creator, maker, framer; an image, likeness, symbol, etc.). The “preliminary joke” with *imago* constitutes a reverential wink at Ferdinand de Saussure’s *anagrams* or *paragrams*. Cf. Jean Starobinski, *Les Mots sous les mots*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971.

3. “There is no immediately satisfactory solution to *philos*.” Émile Benveniste, *Le Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes. I. Économie, parenté, société*. Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1969, pp. 367–340. This article deals for the most part with the Homeric and Mycenaean context of the word. With the exception of certain German proper names (*Bil(i)-frid, Bil-trud, Bili-gard*, etc.), the etymology of the word *Bild* is not even broached. Cf. also Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, tome III, Paris, Klincksieck 1974, p. 1206.

4. In Old Icelandic the word *bild* had a temporal function: the “moment” was also the instant of an image, the time it took to wink; from this meaning the words for intermittence and even breakdown were derived. *Bil-röst* – or *bifröst* – would be the *via tremula*, that is, the rainbow (in French: *arc-en-ciel*). In the Icelandic *Edda, bil-skirmir* designates the celestial home of Thor, because of its relationship to “bolt of light”; while *bil-eygr* (which means unsteady eyes) is one of Odin’s names. See R. Cleasby and G. Vigfusson, *An (Old) Icelandic-English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1874.

5. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Warheit und Methode*, Tübingen, Mohr, 1960, 1975, p. 7. For the history of *Bildung*, see E. Lichtenstein, in J. Ritter and R. Eisler (eds), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. I, Bâle, Schwabe 1971, pp. 921–922.

6. On this subject, see Philippe Quéau, *Le Virtuel, Vertus et vertiges*, Seyssel, Champ Vallon/INA 1993, pp. 81, 89, and 209.

7. Angelus Silesius (Johannes Scheffler) *Cherubinischer Wandersmann II*, 54, Stuttgart, Reclam, 1984, p. 79: “Entbilde dich mein Kind/So wirst du Gotte gleich: Und bist in stiller Ruh/Dir selbst dein Himmelreich.” (Disimagine yourself, my child, and you will become like a God: and in serene stillness you will be your own heavenly kingdom.)

8. This is not the full extent of Master Eckhart’s linguistic inventions. For instance, *entbilden* is often associated with *überbilden*, and there are also the following derivations: *erbilden, inbilden, innerbilden, verbilden*.

9. Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer (in publication since 1936). Lateinische Werke (LW) III, p. 4, no 2 (trans. A. de Libera, F. Brunner, E. Weber, and E. Zum Brun, in *L’Œuvre latine de Maître Eckhart*, vol. I and VI, Paris, Cerf, 1984 and 1989. Here: Cerf, vol. 6, p. 27). On the Greek origin of philosophical reflection, see Werner Jaeger, *Die Theologie der frühnen griechischen Denker*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer 1953 (translated as: *À la naissance de la théologie*, Paris, Cerf, 1966).

10. LW II, p. 109, no 111 (trans. Fernand Brunner, *Maître Eckhart*. Paris, Seghers, 1969, p. 137).

11. *Ibid.*, p. 110, n. 112 (trans. p. 138).

12. *Ibid.*, p. 112, n. 117 (trans. p. 140).

13. *Ibid.* p. 110, n. 112 (trans. p. 138).

14. LW II, p. 489, n. 154 (translation unpublished).

15. *Predigt 20 b*, DW I, p. 346, 11–13 (trans. Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, in *Maître Eckhart, Sermons*, vol. 1-3, Paris, Seuil, 1974, 1978 and 1979. Here: Anc., vol. I, p. 179).

16. LW II, p. 111, n. 115 (trans. Brunner, Seghers, p. 139).
17. *Ibid.*, cf. also LW III, p. 583, n. 670.
18. LW II, p. 112, n. 117 (trans. Brunner, Seghers, p. 139).
19. M. de Gandillac, "'La dialectique' de Maître Eckhart," in *La Mystique rhénane*, Paris, 1963, p. 70 and pp. 89–94.
20. DW V, p. 45, n. 15 (trans. Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, in Maître Eckhart, *Les traités*, Paris, Seuil, 1971. Here: Anc., *Traité*s, p. 124).
21. *Sermo XI*, 2, LW IV, p. 114, n. 120 (the translation is unpublished).
22. *Predigt 23*, DW I, p. 393, 3–6 (trans. Anc., vol. 1, p. 199).
23. Philibert Secrétan, *L'Analogie*, Paris, PUF. Que sais-je? 1984, p. 19.
24. *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 7:16. Cf. LW II, p. 115, n. 122; and LW III, p. 186, n. 222. This reminds one of a phrase from *The Book of Divine Consolation*: "The seed of the pear tree grows in order to become a pear tree; the seed of the walnut tree grows in order to become a walnut tree; the seed of God grows in order to become God." DW V, p. 111, 14–15 (trans. Anc., *Traité*s, p. 146).
25. LW II, p. 60, n. 54 (unpublished translation).
26. "All creatures are pure nothingness." *Predigt 4*, DW I, p. 69, 8 (trans. Anc., vol. 1, p. 65).
27. *Predigt 16 b*, DW I, p. 271, 1–2 (trans. Anc., vol. 1, p. 151).
28. LW II, p. 273, n. 44 (trans. Brunner, Seghers, p. 148).
29. *Predigt 9*, DW I, p. 156, 6–9 (trans. Anc., vol. 1, p. 104).
30. *Predigt 8*, DW I, p. 133, 5, 134, 5 (trans. Anc. vol. 1, p. 94).
31. Inversely, knowledge can be considered the foundation of being. On this subject, see *Question parisienne no 1*, "L'être et le connaitre sont-ils indentiques en Dieu?" LW V, p. 40, n. 4 (trans. in QP n. 2, E. Zum Brunn in Maître Eckhart à Paris. *Une critique médiévale de l'ontothéologie*, Paris, PUF, 1984, p. 179).
32. *Predigt 71*, DW III, p. 219, 10–220, 3 (trans. Anc., vol. 3, pp. 76–77).
33. *Ibid.*, p. 224, 2–3 (trans. p. 78).
34. *Ibid.* p. 228, 8–9 (trans. p. 79).
35. *Ibid.*, p. 222, 11–223 (trans. pp. 77–78).
36. Cf. LW II, pp. 18–19, n. 13, LW III, pp. 608–613, n. 692–698. W. Wackernagel, *Imagine denudari . . .*, op. cit. pp. 134–139 and pp. 150–153.
37. *Predigt 71*, DW III, p. 224, 6–7 (trans. Anc., vol. 3, p. 78). Cf. also *Predigt 72*: "The soul knows only the One. It is beyond any image." DW III, op. 246, 2 (trans. Anc., vol. 3, p. 84). Novalis, in his *Tenth Spiritual Song*, also combines the person of Mary with a certain idea of *Entbildung*: "I see you in a thousand images/Mary, so wonderfully conceived/Yet no one can describe you/When my soul contemplates you/I only know that the noise of the world/Like a dream inside me is carried away/And an unutterably sweet sky/Sleeps eternally in my heart."
38. DW V, p. 114, 11–14 (trans. Anc., *Traité*s, p. 148). To my knowledge, Eckhart's interpretation of *The Song of Solomon* is unique in its kind. Quint gives no information about its origin in his critical apparatus.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 116, 12–17 (trans. p. 150).
40. *Ibid.*, p. 112, 19–21 (trans. p. 147). On this subject, see St. Augustine, *De vera religione*, c. 26, n. 49 – PL 34, 143, s.: "Sextam omnimodae mutationis in aeternam vitam, et usque ad totam oblivionem vitae temporalis transeuntem in perfectam formam, quae facta est ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei."
41. *Ibid.*, p. 111, 18, 133, 5 (trans. p. 146, p. 147).
42. *Ibid.*, p. 113, 18–20 (trans. pp. 147–148).
43. Cf. DW V, note 30, p. 126.
44. Plotin, *Enneade V 3*, 17. In English the phrase has been translated as "Cut away everything!" On this subject, see Pierre Hadot, *Exercices Spirituels et philosophie antique*, Paris, Études Augustiniennes 1987 (second edition), pp. 185–188; also Werner Beierwaltes, *Selbsterkenntnis und Erfahrung der Einheit. Plotins Enneade V 3*, Frankfurt, Klostermann 1991.

45. DW V, p. 61, 1 (trans. Anc., *Traités*, p. 137).
46. *Predigt 16 b*, DW 1, pp. 270–271, 8 (trans. Anc., vol. 1, p. 150). For a more detailed definition of the image, see LW III, pp. 19–33, n. 23–27.
47. See Burkhard Mosisch, *Meister Eckhart. Analogie. Univozität und Einheit*. Hamburg 1983, p. 79.
48. LW I, p. 166, n. 1 (trans. Cerf, vol. 1, p. 71).
49. *Ibid.*, p. 166, n. 2 (trans. 71).
50. LW II, p. 281, n. 52 (trans. Brunner, Seghers, p. 153). For other aspects of the theme of analogy, see the preface of Alain de Libera, in *Eckhart. Traités et sermons*, Paris, Flammarion, note 1, p. 28.
51. LW I, pp. 166–167, n. 3 (trans. Cerf, vol. 1, p. 73).
52. In this regard see Alois Dempf, *Meister Eckhart, Eine Einführung in sein Werk*. Fribourg-en-Brisgau. Bäle. Vienna. Herder 1960.
53. Hegel used the myth of Argus to assert that images are like retrospective eyes. Cf. Gottfried Boehm, "Bildsinn und Sirtnesorgane," in *Anschauung als ästhetische Kategorie*, Neue Hefte für Philosophie 18/19, Göttingen, 1980, p. 120.
54. On this subject, see notably: Peter Koslowski, *Die Prüfungen der Neuzeit. Über Postmodernität, Philosophie der Geschichte, Metaphysik, Gnosis*. Peter Engelmann (ed), Vienna, Passagen 1989, p. 84.
55. See, among others: John D. Caputo, "Heidegger and Meister Eckhart," in *The Mystical Elements in Heidegger's Thought*, Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1978, pp. 140–202. Werner Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz*, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1980, pp. 130–143. A. Charles-Saget, "Apharesis et Gelassenheit, Heidegger et Plotin," in Rémi Brague et Jean-François Courtine (eds), *Herméneutique et ontologie. Hommage à Pierre Aubenque (Épiméthée)*, Paris, PUF, 1990, pp. 323–344.
56. Eckehart A. Marenholtz: *Das glüchnisse Meister Eckharts: Form, Inhalt und Funktion. Kleine Studie zur negativen Metaphorik*, Bern, Peter Lang, 1981.
57. If, with Eckhart, we agree that the soul's deepest experience is first of all *dis-imaginative*, then this obviously changes our assumptions about active imagination. Jung's ideas about active imagination are most fully developed in his memoirs. Cf. Aniela Jaffé (ed), *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken von C. G. Jung*, Olten, Freiburg, Walter-Verlag, 1988 (sixth edition), pp. 182–196.
58. For a summary of the numerous attempts at linking Master Eckhart with Eastern philosophy, see Niklaus Largier, "Master Eckhart und der Osten," in Heinrich Stirnimann and Ruedi Imbach (eds), *Eckhardus Theutonicus, homo doctus et sanctus. Nachweise und Berichte zum Prozess gegen Meister Eckhart*, Freiburg, Universitätsverlag, 1992, pp. 185–204.
59. *Predigt 16 b*, DW 1, S. 268, 12–14 (trans. Anc. Vol. 1, p. 150). The mystic's certainty is, etymologically speaking, a certainty "with closed eyes" (from the verb *myô*, "to close one's eyes," "to be quiet"). On the theme of western mysticism during the Middle Ages, see: Alois Maria Haas, *Sermo Mysticus, Studien zur Theologie und Sprache der deutschen Mystik*, Freiburg, Universitätsverlag, 1979; Alain de Libera, *Introduction à la mystique rhénane. D'Albert le Grand à Maître Eckhart*, Paris, O.E.I.L., 1984; Georgette Épiney-Burgard and Émile Zum Brunn, *Femmes Troubadours de Dieu*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1988; Kurt Ruh, *Geschichter der abendländischen Mystik*, vols. 1 and 2 (vols. 3 and 4 in preparation), Munich, Beck, 1990 and 1993.
60. Symbiosophy – or "the wisdom of living together" – takes up questions connected with new universalist approaches to our contemporary situation. Encompassing numerous disciplines, it stresses all that concerns the preservation and blossoming of the diversity of the human, animal and vegetable kingdoms; this includes the safeguarding of the most elementary creatures, that is, all the interdependent links of "the golden chain of beings" (cf. the *catena aurea* of Macrobe and Homer).