

Chapter 1 : Meister Eckhart - Wikipedia

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Sep 02, Robin Friedman rated it it was amazing Note: It is erroneously listed as volume 1 here on Goodreads. The works of the great medieval philosopher and mystic, Meister Eckhart, -- have entered modern culture through a popular spiritual writer who has adopted his name and through composers such as John Adams who titles a movement "Eckhart and Quackie" in his "Harmonielehre. Eckhart is a profoundly moving and difficult thinker. His works are difficult to categorize. He is within the Christian tradition but also appeals to readers with strong interests in Buddhism as well as to spiritually inclined readers who do not practice a specific religion. The condemnation may have recently been tacitly lifted or markedly softened. Many introductions to Eckhart are available. For readers with a serious interest, among the best ways to study Eckhart is through the two volumes of his writings published by Paulist Press in its "Classics of Western Spirituality" series. Both volumes include introductions and translations by Bernard McGinn, probably the leading contemporary scholar of the Meister. Most readers come to Eckhart primarily through his vernacular sermons written in Medieval High German. The Latin treatises are drier, more scholarly and more difficult; but they are invaluable for a fuller understanding of this difficult thinker. The first of the two volumes was published in as "Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense" while the second volume, which I am reviewing here, was published in as "Meister Eckhart: I have known the first volume for a long time but I have only recently read the second with readings of the vernacular sermons and studies in between. I had trouble with the scholasticism of the Latin texts. They also show, if there is any doubt, that Eckhart begins deeply emeshed in medieval Christianity and in particular in the works of St. His Latin works begin in scholasticism but in their subtlety and originality do not end there. It was rewarding to read the Latin works in this volume, particularly the lengthy Exodus commentary which is given in full. Eckhart does not comment on every verse in Exodus. He begins with the text and works in his philosophical and theological positions. Portions of the text also involve rather traditional Biblical commentary. Eckhart does not argue for a position as much as he tries to redirect the reader to understand the relationship between God and the individual soul. Maimonides is at least as enigmatic a thinker as is Eckhart. Their languages and goals are different, but they may be closer to one another than I had thought. Eckhart also quotes from another Jewish medieval writer, the Neoplatonistically inclined Ibn Gabirol who wrote a work called "The Fountain of Life" which Eckhart knew. At the time, it was unknown that "The Fountain of Life" had been written by a Jewish author. Among the sermons included is no. The volume concludes with a long appendix, the "Sister Catherine Treatise" which is not by Eckhart but which was greatly influenced by him. It is a curious work which I thought mixed Eckhartian with non-Eckhartian themes. When she attains it, she returns to teach her former mentor. This volume has no other intention beyond that of helping to spread the invitation. Since his rediscovery in the early nineteenth century, [Eckhart] has inspired and influenced thousands, both famous philosophers and theologians and humble, holy seekers known only to God. Perhaps no Western mystic has appealed so strongly or offered so fruitful a conversation to the great mystical traditions of Asia. This volume and its companion volume in the "Classics of Western Spirituality" series offer an extended way to get to know this great spiritual thinker.

**Chapter 2 : Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher by Meister Eckhart**

*Eckhart von Hochheim, commonly known as Meister Eckhart, was a German theologian, philosopher and mystic, born near Gotha, in Thuringia. Meister is German for "Master", referring to the academic title Magister in theologia he obtained in Paris.*

He was also unjustly condemned as a heretic by the papacy after an impressive career of writing, teaching, preaching, directing souls and serving as a high-level administrator of the Dominican Order. His influence is greater now than at any time since the 14th century. Furthermore, Eckhart courageously braved the charges of heresy by affirming that in every soul is the Divine Spirit ItSelf as its true Identity. A startling, shocking truth that elated the many mystics of his time who flocked to hear his electric sermons, and, predictably, angered the non-mystics whose stunted intuition could not resonate with what the Meister so beautifully spoke. The Dominicans were founded in southern France in by St. Eckhart was sent to Cologne in western Germany in for initial studies, including five years of philosophy and then three years of theology. Between study periods, he would have chanted the Divine Office for three hours each day and the regular mental prayer, *Orationes Secretae*, and had long periods of silence. By , Eckhart had been fully ordained as a priest. The University of Paris was the center of medieval academia, a place where Eckhart had access to all noteworthy worksâ€”and he evidently read most of them. Here he wrote his *Talks of Instruction* and likely some sermons still extant. Eckhart was back in Paris in to finish his studies; in he was granted the title *Magister in Theologia*, the highest academic honor of that age. He also held the Dominican chair in theology. During this time he likely wrote many of his extensive scriptural commentaries in Latin e. In , he was given the added office, *Vicar of Bohemia*, to reform Dominican houses in that southeast region of Germany. In he founded three new communities. His duties also required extensive travelâ€”along slow-going, bad roads. In Eckhart came to lively Strasburg near the French border, where again he served as theology professor, spiritual director and preacher. In he was made Dominican *Vicar-General*. His duties featured a special work performed earlier in Thuringia, Saxony and Bohemia: *Beguines* had been accused of heresy since at least , when *Marguerite Porete* was burnt at the stake in Paris for her book *Mirror of Simple Souls*. Judging from his sermons, his own chief interest seems to have been to invite any already advanced, pious souls into a profound state of *God-realization* in this very lifetime, and he found many such persons among the women and men of the region. What attracted them and large numbers of other devout, well-educated women to the Dominicans in the late 13th and early 14th centuries was, it appears, the emphasis placed on study in the order together with the mystical character of its spirituality. The encounter between dynamic preachers [like Eckhart] and these *God-centered* women produced one of the most spectacular upsurges of mystical spirituality in the history of Europe. This mysticism is suggested in the works of *Albertus Magnus* and *Thomas Aquinas*, but expressed most vividly in a line of *via negativa* or *apophatic* mystics featuring *John Scotus Eriugena* c. *Gregory of Nyssa* c. After the *Crusades* re-exposed Christianity to the ancient Greeks â€”Muslims preserved many of their worksâ€”*Aquinas* made use of the newly-translated *Aristotle* to infuse Christianity with novel ideas. For *God* knows that he alone is completely real; real in every senseâ€”all else is only partially so. Thus from the divine perspective a sublime continuity reigns. In , Eckhart, now the most famous preacher of his era, was moved by the Dominicans to Cologne, where he uttered some of his most memorable sermons. His teachings were laced with fresh imagery from the vernacular style of chivalrous courtly love-talk, and even more rich with an extremely sublime, lofty mysticism often featuring riveting aphorisms that jolted one into some degree of spiritual awakeningâ€”e. *God is free of everything and therefore He is everything*. By adopting the role of *trickster*, Eckhart irritated the official guardians of pious sobriety and cautious expressionâ€”! Yet he was also ahead of his time, psychologically quite free, it seems, of that morbid penitential religiosity that weighed so heavily upon the West during the Middle Ages. In this, he was actually like *Jesus* 2, years ago, who taught the simple *Our Father* prayer, not a complex regimen of penance-practices. This is because whatever *God* does he does completely, like the cup running over. Whom he forgives, he forgives utterly and at once. Eckhart was the first theologian of major rank ever to face this charge. He then trudged miles to face the papal court at

Avignon, France where the papacy dwelt in exile from Rome. For over a year he defended his views; he wrote his Defense to show that his more controversial teachings were rooted in Scripture and the writings of eminent Church Fathers like Paul and Augustine. Other factors were at play in this debacle. Since he was a reformer, disgruntled friars sought revenge. Finally, his association with the Beguines, increasingly coming in for censure by the Church their non-institutional status made them hard to control, made him suspect as well. It seems, too, that some people were irresponsible in applying his teachings. The papal bull of condemnation intended to taint his good name and stamp out his writings. The same Eckhart affirms that, on the contrary, the mystic is marvelously present to them on the only level where he can truly reach them, that is, in God. His works in Middle High German begin with four treatises: Meister Eckhart wanted everyone, high or low, learned or unlettered, to intimately know and love God the way he himself was blessed to enjoy. God is not distant, a matter for rarified theology. No two are identical. Out of such spiritual contemplation flows loving action. In an era and society that saw nearly everything in religious terms, Eckhart delighted in taking God-talk to ever-higher levels. This is not uninterested apathy or withdrawal from the world, but seeing the world only in the oneness of God. For the following four works by Eckhart, we excerpt from Raymond B. For greater readability and reverence, I capitalize all pronouns referring to God's. True and perfect obedience is a virtue above all virtues. Being obedient, if a man purifies himself, God will come into him in course; for when he has no will of his own, then God will command for him what God would command for Himself. How is man to work together with God? Still, this annihilation or diminution of self never gets so far that if God did not finish it in Himself, it would be imperfect. The highest heights of [spiritual] exaltation lie precisely in the lowest depths of humiliation. Therefore, the more humble a man may be, the more exalted he will be. Therefore, if God is to give us Himself and everything else, freely to be our own, He must first take all we have away. If, therefore, I deny myself, God will be mine much more than any thing could be; He shall be mine as much as His own. Nothing was ever owned to the degree that God may be my own, together with all that is His. A pure heart is capable of anything. A pure heart is one that is unencumbered, unworried, uncommitted, and which does not want its own way about anything but which, rather, is submerged in the loving will of God, having denied self. In this way, and no other, is true peace to be found. Then whatever God brings about, take it as direct from Him—the best as he sees it—and be completely satisfied. To learn from God gladly in all things, and to follow after Him only, is to be on the right track. Spiritually a man must conform to our Lord Jesus Christ in all things. In all you do, keep in yourself as perfect a likeness of Him as possible. In the second place, his will must point only to God and he must so concentrate on God that he can take pleasure in nothing but God. This is the test by which one may prove how far away from God one is—or how near—according as one is less or more this way. For we are to be changed into Him and made One with Him, so that what is His shall be ours and what is ours, His: So, too, it shall be with our senses, wills, thoughts, faculties, and members: His is the only treasure with which you will be contented or satisfied. He is concerned only that we shall love Him in all things. If you are just, your actions will be just too. Do not think that saintliness comes from occupation; it depends rather on what one is. Thus take care that your emphasis is laid on being good and not on the number or kind of thing to be done. Because he has only God and thinks only God and everything is nothing but God to him. He discloses God in every act, in every place. If we mean God and only God, then it is He who does what we do and nothing can disturb him [the man devoted to God]. He thinks of nothing, is looking for nothing and relishes nothing but God, who is one with him by perfect devotion. Furthermore, since God cannot be distracted by the number of things, neither can the person, for he is one in One, in which all divided things are gathered up to unity and there undifferentiated. Let no one think that! For let a man go away or come back: What we want is rather the reality of God, exalted far above any human thought or creature. When one takes God as He is divine, having the reality of God within him, God sheds light on everything. Everything will taste like God and reflect Him. The more he regards everything as divine—more divine than it is of itself—the more God will be pleased with him. It is not to be learned by world-flight, running away from things. Rather, one must learn an inner solitude. He must learn to penetrate things and find God there. To acquire this art, one must practice much. He should get the essence out of things and let the things themselves alone. It

requires great diligence. Expert attention is necessary. To be aware of God at all times and to be enlightened by Him equally under all circumstances, there are two special requirements: This viewpoint is only possible through discipline and the training of the intellect [attention] to the ways of God and, doing this, a man will become, in time, divine within<sup>1</sup>. However natural and native God is to the mind, once the mind has digressed, taken root in creatures, and been perverted by them and become accustomed to them, it is proportionately infected and enfeebled, handicapped for its nobler functions<sup>2</sup>. We must learn to look through every gift and every event to God<sup>3</sup>. There is no stopping place in this life<sup>4</sup>. Therefore it is not enough to surrender self and all that goes with it once.

*Note: Citations are based on reference standards. However, formatting rules can vary widely between applications and fields of interest or study. The specific requirements or preferences of your reviewing publisher, classroom teacher, institution or organization should be applied.*

Eckhart the teacher is represented by the Commentary on Exodus and by selections from six other commentaries, including the Commentary on Wisdom 7: What emerges is a comprehensive picture of the works of this great speculative theologian. Together with Meister Eckhart: Eckhart was certainly one of the most interesting thinkers of the medieval period. Associated with the Rhineland mystical movement in Germany, Eckhart appears to describe in many of his sermons powerful mystical experiences of various kinds, and at times his language seems to indicate he and God are united in essence. For this Eckhart was formally condemned for the heresy of pantheism, the only theologian to have been condemned this way in the medieval period. No other Catholic Christian mystic so strongly developed this theme, except perhaps for St John of the Cross. Yet he also draws strongly on the Aristotelian mindset of Aquinas, and views human life as an opportunity to become divinised into a divine life of peace, contentment and happiness. Because Eckhart is such a creative thinker, it is hard to pin him down to any particular theological or philosophical school of thought. It is better to say he is a genius, both theological and philosophical, whose complex thought is articulated using the theological and philosophical jargon of his time in creative and innovative new ways. In a time when many theologians and philosophers are grasping for new ideas, language and concepts to articulate our human experience of the Absolute or God, Eckhart offers an interesting, unique and fruitful approach to which we might re-commence the task of searching for the hidden God and in doing so, find the meaning of Being and existence. A Customer on Apr 29, This book supplements the first volume on Eckhart from the Classics of Western Spirituality series with great reading. The sermons alone are worth the expense as they are chalk full of Eckhartian charm and challenge. Meister Eckhart in the Classics of Western Spirituality Series -- 2 By Robin Friedman on Feb 03, The works of the great medieval philosopher and mystic, Meister Eckhart, -- have entered modern culture through a popular spiritual writer who has adopted his name and through composers such as John Adams who titles a movement "Eckhart and Quackie" in his "Harmonielehre. Eckhart is a profoundly moving and difficult thinker. His works are difficult to categorize. He is within the Christian tradition but also appeals to readers with strong interests in Buddhism as well as to spiritually inclined readers who do not practice a specific religion. The condemnation may have recently been tacitly lifted or markedly softened. Many introductions to Eckhart are available. For readers with a serious interest, among the best ways to study Eckhart is through the two volumes of his writings published by Paulist Press in its "Classics of Western Spirituality" series. Both volumes include introductions and translations by Bernard McGinn, probably the leading contemporary scholar of the Meister. Most readers come to Eckhart primarily through his vernacular sermons written in Medieval High German. The Latin treatises are drier, more scholarly and more difficult; but they are invaluable for a fuller understanding of this difficult thinker. The first of the two volumes was published in as "Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense" while the second volume, which I am reviewing here, was published in as "Meister Eckhart: I have known the first volume for a long time but I have only recently read the second with readings of the vernacular sermons and studies in between. I had trouble with the scholasticism of the Latin texts. They also show, if there is any doubt, that Eckhart begins deeply emeshed in medieval Christianity and in particular in the works of St. His Latin works begin in scholasticism but in their subtlety and originality do not end there. It was rewarding to read the Latin works in this volume, particularly the lengthy Exodus commentary which is given in full. Eckhart does not comment on every verse in Exodus. He begins with the text and works in his philosophical and theological positions. Portions of the text also involve rather traditional Biblical commentary. Eckhart does not argue for a position as much as he tries to redirect the reader to understand the relationship between God and the individual soul. Maimonides is at least as enigmatic a thinker as is Eckhart. Their languages and goals are different, but they may be closer to one another than I had thought. Eckhart also

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