Whitehead and Eckhart a comparative study.

Claire A. Roy-Weber

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WHITEHEAD AND ECKHART:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

by

Claire A. Roy-Weber

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of
Religious Studies in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

WHITEHEAD AND ECKHART: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

by

Claire A. Roy-Weber

This thesis compares the God-concepts of Alfred North Whitehead and Meister Eckhart of Hochheim. It is written in support of the insights of some process scholars that Eckhart's vision of a supreme entity is comparable to their own. Part I of the study is expository in nature. Chapters One and Two briefly outline the essential tenets of Whitehead's and Eckhart's theisms, respectively. Part Two deals directly with the significant similarities that exist between the two thinkers' understandings of the divine essence. Chapter Three discusses three similarities related strictly to the deity as an entity. It examines first of all the two metaphysicians' epistemologies, both of which accept intuitive knowledge as valid. Secondly, their dipolar God-concept is demonstrated. Thirdly, the understanding of the divine entity in Whitehead and Eckhart are examined in light of Charles Hartshorne's doctrine of panentheism. Chapter Four of this study presents the similarities between the Eckhartian and Whiteheadian understanding of God's relationship to the created world. The largest part of the study is devoted to this important
issue. It analyses, first, the doctrines of divine creation in Whitehead and Eckhart, then their respective views of the nature of divine immanence and transcendence. Thirdly, it investigates the contentions of both metaphysicians that the deity needs and is affected by the world. This section focuses primarily on Eckhart's works since there are few descriptions of divine relativity as he understands it in contemporary scholarship. Finally, this chapter discusses the striking similarity between Eckhart's central doctrine of "detachment" and Whitehead's understanding of "Peace," conceived as the apex of human existence.
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and support throughout the frequent ups and downs that are a part of writing a thesis. To her I owe my sanity. Special thanks go to Mrs. Ethel Smith for her quiet calm in the face of many seeming disasters and to Ms. Shirley Fields for all the time she spent talking and laughing with me when she should have been doing something else!

Finally, and most importantly, I must thank my husband, Tim Weber, though "thank you" seems a very small word in proportion to everything he has done for me. Indeed, I am indebted to him for "everything."
To my Father

who instilled in me the love of learning

and

to my Husband

who sustains it.
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INTRODUCTION

In the works of certain process scholars, it has been noted that many teachings of the Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart of Hochheim (c.1260-1328) bear striking resemblance to contemporary process theism. This study will show precisely what significant similarities do exist between the theisms of process thought—as exemplified by Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947)—and of Meister Eckhart. The reasons for doing this are twofold: first, it is to validate, with proper scholarship, what my own initial research had indicated in this regard. Secondly, and more importantly, it is to affirm that the insights of some process scholars that Eckhart's vision of a supreme entity is comparable to their own are legitimate.

I had first suspected that Whitehead and Eckhart possibly shared some similar theological views in the course of my study on "dipolarity" in process thought. In previous studies, I encountered several passages in Meister Eckhart's treatises dealing with the dynamics of "God" and "Godhead." It seemed even then that this dual depiction of the divine essence was similar to the one expressed in Whitehead's description of God as consisting of "primordial" and "consequent" natures.

It soon became obvious, however, that others had noticed this particular similarity. A process scholar,
Diana Culbertson, in one article notes the extent to which certain mystics, especially Meister Eckhart and Ruysbroeck, reflected in their writings the concept of a God moved, and immutable; detached, non-contingent, and suffering. What is remarkable is the clarity and insistence of the Rhineland mystics on this twofold aspect of God.(1)

Still other process thinkers find even more and greater similarities between their perception of God and Eckhart's theology. John Loeschen dedicates an entire article to the comparison of Eckhart's and process thought's teachings on divine relativity.(2) Most notable among thinkers sympathetic to an Eckhart/process comparison is Charles Hartshorne, the world's foremost living process thinker, who wrote the following: "Among Western mystics Eckhart seems the nearest to neoclassical theism."(3) To this date, however, including the material mentioned above, no complete and systematic study has been made to vindicate such observations. In my view, such statements are valid. It is for this reason that I wish to undertake a systematic study of their comparison myself. It is also because of the significant influence of neoclassical theism today and the renewed interest in the Dominican master that I deem it necessary to pursue this research.

Today, both Whiteheadian and Eckhartian studies are popular: Whitehead's teachings form a good part of the basis of contemporary process thought, a subject currently much in discussion. Reliable translations of Eckhart's
works are more readily available now than ever before, making his theology more accessible. These studies, however, are not merely popular, they are highly significant. Ideally, it is possible that neoclassical theism will provide the twentieth century and beyond with a new spirituality. The present day disillusionment of many, particularly with the traditional interpretation of Judeo-Christian faith, provides process thought with fertile ground for the planting of new approaches to spirituality. Many have looked to the East for fresh ideas; but it remains a reality that Western civilization must find within its own intellectual and spiritual history the needed components for its spiritual rejuvenation. This is what process philosophy provides. Its views, though they clearly reflect many traditionally Eastern perspectives, are distinctly Western in many respects. It is, for example, androcentric in that its tenets begin with the essential elements of human experience, not by first positing an ultimately inexplicable divine being.

Meister Eckhart's theological legacy forms part of our historical resources for rebuilding a waning faith tradition. His thought, though difficult, is relatively systematic and, like Whitehead's, centres around the human search for meaning and fulfillment in the world. It is a perfect subject for examination by process thinkers. In bringing Whiteheadian and Eckhartian scholarship together,
both profit. Whitehead--and process thought in general--finds, possibly among others, a medieval thinker in line with process thought in significant respects; Eckhart's teachings are viewed from yet another perspective--this time Western rather than Eastern--thus further enhancing our understanding of them. Ultimately, comparing the Meister's popular and image-laden theology with process thought is a step towards the enrichment of contemporary religious and secular life.

This study of similarities between Whiteheadian and Eckhartian thought is organized as follows: Part One is strictly expository in nature. Chapter One briefly outlines essential tenets of Whitehead's discussion of God. Chapter Two provides an introduction to the Dominican mystic's God-concept. Part Two deals directly with the similarities that exist between the two thinkers' understanding of the divine essence. Chapter Three discusses three similarities related strictly to the deity as an entity. Chapter Four describes four areas of agreement associated with God and its relationship to the world as we know it. The concluding chapter will briefly review the significant points examined and present a few musings on the overall significance of the material.
INTRODUCTION: ENDNOTES


(3) Charles Hartshorne, Insight and Oversights of Great Thinkers (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), note 2, 92. "Neoclassical theism," an expression introduced by Charles Hartshorne, is the term Hartshorne prefers for what is generally known as "process theism."
PART ONE
WHITEHEADIAN AND ECKHARTIAN GOD-CONCEPTS

In order for there to be a clear understanding of the similarities discussed in this study, it is prudent to begin with a brief overview of each of the two thinkers’ theisms. This is meant to set the tone and scope of the study. Whitehead’s concept of the deity is presented first. Chapter One, therefore, includes a discussion of the reasoning behind the introduction of a God-concept in Whiteheadian philosophy. After this brief section, the most significant characteristics of Whitehead’s deity are listed and described. The chapter concludes with an introductory description of God’s interaction with the physical universe, a topic taken up in more detail later in this study.

Chapter Two deals specifically with the divine entity as Meister Eckhart perceives it. The first topics of discussion are the components of Eckhart’s epistemology. Secondly, as in Chapter One, specific characteristics associated with the Eckhartian deity are listed. A particularly Eckhartian view of God by way of the via negativa is treated in a separate section. Chapter Two also concludes with a description of how God is perceived as relating to the universe. Included in this chapter is an examination of two doctrines very specific to Eckhartian theology: detachment and the Birth of the Word in the Soul.
CHAPTER ONE
THE GOD OF ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD

As indicated earlier, Alfred North Whitehead will be the representative for process thought in this study; therefore, a brief introduction to his theism is in order. The first two elements of Whitehead's theism considered in this chapter relate to the significance of deity in his philosophy ("the philosophy of organism") and to the reasons he deems it necessary to posit deity at all. A detailed description of the main characteristics of Whitehead's God-concept follows. The chapter concludes with a brief introduction to the nature of God's relationship to the physical universe. It is unfortunate that only these elements of the complicated Whiteheadian metaphysics can be presented within the scope of this study; it is for this reason that each term specific to the philosophy of organism is briefly defined in the endnotes pertaining to this chapter. It is hoped, however, that even this short introduction will serve as a catalyst to more in-depth research by future scholars.

(1) Deity in the Philosophy of Organism

It is not in any way difficult to discover the position the concept of God holds in Whitehead's philosophy: God is woven into its very fabric. In other words, there is no way of studying Whitehead's deity apart
from the framework of the philosophy of organism:

[I]t is clear that Whitehead intended that his ingredients could not be jettisoned without doing violence to the whole scheme; and this was applicable even more especially to the element introduced as God. (1)

The reason for this lies in the fact that Whitehead's God exemplifies all the categories developed within the system. This God is not a deus ex machina stepping in to fill some logical void. Whitehead himself is emphatic on this issue:

God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification. (2)

Whitehead insists that God necessarily is part of his metaphysics for two reasons in particular. Firstly, in Whitehead's view the world exhibits "order" (3) and this, he contends, implies the need for an ordering principle.

Order is an essential tenet in Whiteheadian philosophy:

For the organic doctrine the problem of order assumes primary importance. No actual entity can rise beyond what the actual world as a datum from its standpoint--its actual world--allows it to be. (4)

The philosophy of organism teaches that the "actual entities" (5) that comprise the universe interact with each other in an astoundingly harmonious manner; when one considers that there is an incomprehensibly vast number of these entities, one would expect otherwise. For Whitehead, this order and harmony necessarily implies the existence of an ordering or limiting principle, one he chooses to call "God:"
Deity is precisely that eminent form of creativity which, by virtue of its unique excellence, can influence all other forms and inspire in them the necessary minimum of mutual adaptation without which there could be no universe, no cosmos in which coherent experiences, even painful ones, would be possible.(6)

Whitehead's insistence upon positing some sort of deity involves another issue, one of which he considers to be as significant as the one previously noted. It involves human experience: he contends that all human experience, extraordinary or otherwise, has a noetic quality. Indeed, it is human experience which supplies the necessary groundwork for his metaphysical scheme, as Charles Hartshorne has noted:

It is Whitehead's contention that "metaphysics is a descriptive science," that direct experience, intuition, is basic and proof is secondary. The groundwork of all existence is present in all instances of existence, hence in all experience, and the task is to see it there.(7)

Whitehead maintains, therefore, that even religious intuition is authoritative and that for the most part, the history of thought has ignored this exceptional human experience. If not ignored, it has been treated as being either insignificant or, in some cases, even imaginary. This is unwise, according to Whitehead: "One of the reasons of the thinness of so much modern metaphysics is its neglect of this wealth of expression of ultimate feeling."(8) As one example of this "ultimate feeling," Whitehead focuses upon the abiding human "apprehension of
character permanently inherent in the nature of things...It is a character of permanent rightness."(9). This intuition into the nature of reality Whitehead takes seriously; he contends it is one facet of the divine essence. For the philosophy of organism, therefore, God is a more or less strongly perceived element in the workings of the universe, hence is included as one of its major tenets.

(ii) Divine Characteristics

What is the nature of this God? For one thing, Whitehead's own understanding of the various religions, though limited,(10) nevertheless indicates to him that the deity experienced by humankind "does not include any direct intuition of a definite person, or individual."(11) It is Whitehead's belief that rationalization of human religious experience was a later influence which led to the qualification of God as personal. This is particularly so of the Christian faith, as Whitehead declares:

It [Christianity] maintains the doctrine of the existence of a personal God as a truth, but holds that our belief in it is based upon inference. Most theologians hold that this inference is sufficiently obvious to be made by all men upon the basis of their individual personal experience. But, be this as it may, it is an inference and not a direct intuition.(12)

Whitehead, accordingly, contends that God is an impersonal entity.(13)

Whitehead's "impersonal" God is primarily understood as an "actual entity." God as actual entity is like the
other entities which comprise the living matter of the universe: "'Actual entities'—also termed 'actual occasions'—are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real."(14) There is, however, "a specific difference between the nature of God and that of any occasion."(15) God is the supreme instance of an actual entity. One difference between God and all other entities lies in the completeness of God's vision.

To be able to proceed with a full description of the nature of this vision, it is necessary to abstract from the unity that is God and discuss one aspect of it at a time. Below, the "primordial nature" of God is discussed first; secondly, the "consequent nature" of God is studied. This is done only for the sake of simplicity; it must never be forgotten that these are abstractions from the whole. In reality, neither the primordial nor the consequent nature operate independently of each other. At times, therefore, the description of one will spill over into the other.

The deity's "conceptual pole," known as its "primordial nature," "is the unconditioned conceptual valuation of the entire multiplicity of eternal objects."(16) Without this abiding vision, "eternal objects"(17) would have no relevance to anything. As Whitehead writes, "[a]part from God, eternal objects unrealized in the actual world would be relatively
non-existent for the concrescence in question."(18) God's envisagement of eternal objects, therefore, makes what would otherwise be abstractions available to becoming entities. Secondly, God's primordial nature, as separated from the whole, dipolar reality (that is, having a mental and physical pole), is static and devoid of feeling:

He, in his primordial nature, is unmoved by love for this particular, or that particular;...In the foundations of his being, God is indifferent alike to preservation and to novelty. He cares not whether an immediate occasion be old or new.(19)

God as primordial is also non-temporal, infinite and without consciousness, since in this mode God "lack[s] the fulness of actuality."(20)

The deity, in its primordial nature, is characterized, furthermore, as omniscient. In one sense, it knows of all the possibilities that could be actualized in the universe. In a second sense, and when coupled with the consequent nature, it also knows "of each thing as it is, of the actual as actual, of the merely possible as merely possible, of the future as future, of the past as past."(21) Consequently, the perfect vision of pure potentials held in the primordial nature of God (when duly informed by the physical feelings of the consequent nature) allows the primordial nature to provide each actual entity with a "subjective aim:"(22)

He [God] is the lure for feeling, the eternal urge of desire. His particular relevance to each creative act, as it arises from its own
conditioned standpoint in the world, constitutes him the initial "object of desire" establishing the initial phase of each subjective aim.(23)

The existence and ongoing activity of the primordial nature is, as frequently mentioned, inextricably tied to its interaction with the "consequent nature" of God. The consequent nature of God is similar to other actual entities' "physical poles." It is the divine entity's active and concrete aspect. God's consequent nature is constituted by his physicalprehensions of the actual entities in the temporal world."(24) The deity is perpetually prehending the data of all "becoming" actual entities; God is "in unison of becoming with every other creative act."(25) This all-encompassing vision enables God to supply each entity with a subjective aim that would, if followed, lead it to its greatest satisfaction. The divine entity, however, does not only take each individual entity's satisfaction into account; it also considers how each particular satisfaction can be harmonized with the aspirations of other entities. This activity is of a coordinating nature (this brings us back to the concept of God as an ordering principle). Because of this perpetual evaluation and ordering of the worldly situation, the deity's consequent nature is in constant flux. It is, in this sense, temporal, i.e., "[exhibiting] growth", not coming to be and passing away."(26)

The complete reality that God is, is enhanced by the
flux and fluency of its existence; "God's purpose in the creative advance," Whitehead writes, "is the evocation of intensities."(27) This "evocation of intensities" is not an action relegated to the present. It influences the future. This aspect of God's activity is termed the "superject nature" and is defined by Whitehead as being "the character of the pragmatic value of [God's] specific satisfaction qualifying the transcendent creativity in the various temporal instances."(28) This particular aspect of God's influence is not clearly developed by Whitehead and there is much debate regarding its precise nature and importance. For the most part, I consider it more as an extension of the role of the consequent nature of God, following Lansing and others.(29) Before proceeding, it is necessary to reaffirm the point that these "natures" of God have been described in abstraction from the dipolar whole; they are not a description of different "gods," but of "The One" Whiteheadian deity. As Lansing notes:

The "natures" of God can be better understood, not as distinguishable parts, but as ways of indicating various interdependent modes of functioning by the whole actual entity, God.(30) In considering these natures, we have been examining the more technical facets of Whitehead's God-concept. These characteristics come directly from an understanding of the details of his overall metaphysics. To stay at this level of understanding, however, would not do justice to
the depth and richness of the Whiteheadian deity. It is necessary, accordingly, to present a broader perspective, one which focuses upon the dynamics of God's influence upon, and relationship to, the world. This analysis is essential for the thesis presented in later chapters.

(iii) Deity's Interaction With the World

In the philosophy of organism, God participates fully in the world by unceasingly apprehending each moment of its progress. The deity's primary aim is to enrich its own nature by seeking out ever greater depths of novelty and intensity. "The primordial appetitions which jointly constitute God's purpose are seeking intensity."(31) It is because of this particular tenet in Whitehead's theism that God is misunderstood by some to be selfish; however, this fulfillment of the divinity's own nature is ultimately a fulfillment of each entity's own desire for novelty. No actuality of Whitehead's system lives in isolation from other actualities for, "[t]here is no entity; not even God, which requires nothing but itself to exist"."(32) Everything is inextricably related to all other things. The deity, then, in its search for ever more valuable experiences, places before each entity a subjective aim which will, if followed, lead to that entity's greatest satisfaction at any and every particular moment in its creative advance. Even the most despairing situation can
be redeemed by God's ability to seek out and provide the best possible course of action to be followed. Hence, far from being a selfish, self-seeking, God, this God of Whitehead's is perfectly selfless, as Charles Hartshorne has contended:

God, who perfectly "prehends" all events as (or just after) they occur, always fully and identically possesses (and ever remembers) our happiness, as an element in his own. Hence in him, and only in him, it is literally true that altruism and self-interest coincide. His altruism toward me is a part of his self-interest, without being any the less altruism.(33)

This is a portrait of a good and benevolent deity.

The God of Whitehead's metaphysics is also very "necessary." By "necessary," Whitehead implies that God is the ground from which all order flows: "Apart from God, the ingredients of the universe would be in confusion."(34) And while other world orders could possibly have existed prior to ours and may come to be after ours,(35) God has, according to Whitehead, chosen to limit the infinite realm of potential worlds to this present one. God is the "principle of limitation" whereby the world, as we know it, is as it is.

The immanence of the divine entity within the world results from this maintenance of order; in its primordial nature, the deity envisages the realm of possibilities and renders these available to all entities by means of a subjective aim. "Apart from him," Whitehead writes, "there could be no world, because there could be no adjustment of
individuality"(36) by which all individual appetition is coordinated into the one harmony of the creative advance. The divinity's ability to do this is one indication of it's immanence. "The notion of God...is that of an actual entity immanent in the actual world."(37) Furthermore, by the very fact that the deity is perfectly immanent, it is transcendent:

He [God] transcends the temporal world, because He is an actual fact in the nature of things. He is not there as derivative from the world; He is the actual fact from which the other formative elements cannot be torn apart...(38)

Even with this much influence, however, Whitehead's God does not wield absolute power. The entities of the universe have the last word on the nature of their "becoming." They are in the end causa sui:

To be causa sui means that the process of concrescence is its own reason for the decision in respect to the qualitative clothing of feelings. It is finally responsible for the decision by which any lure for feeling is admitted to efficiency. The freedom inherent in the universe is constituted by this element of self- causation...(39)

Actual entities are free, more or less, to accept or reject the influences of their past and of their present. God's subjective aim.(40) When an entity chooses to ignore the path towards the greatest value, not only is the entity the lesser for it, but God is as well. God shares most intimately in the successes and failures of the world, in its goods and evils:

God has in his nature the knowledge of evil, of
pain, and of degradation, but it is there as overcome with what is good. Every fact is what it is, a fact of pleasure, of joy, of pain, or of suffering. In its union with God that fact is not a total loss, but on its finer side is an element to be woven immortally into the rhythm of mortal things. Its very evil becomes a stepping stone in the all-embracing ideals of God. (41)

The interrelated doctrines of evil and salvation are two more elements relative to the nature of God's relationship with the world. Whitehead understands evil primarily as lost "aesthetic value." (42) In one respect it is inherent in the nature of process:

The nature of evil is that the characters of things are mutually obstructive. Thus the depths of life require a process of selection. But the selection is elimination as the first step towards another temporal order seeking to minimize obstructive modes. Selection is at once the measure of evil, and the process of its evasion. It means discarding the element of obstructiveness in fact. (43)

It is impossible to avoid some clash of interest among entities because they have free choice. For Whitehead, however, the ultimate evil in the world is that of loss in general. "It lies in the fact that the past fades, that time is a 'perpetual perishing'." (44) Intensities are lost and entities fade into the past. To some extent, the past is preserved in each concreting entity; but the initial vividness of the past entity's satisfaction is not there to be experienced by the concreting one. Subjective immediacy is lost. This is the inescapable reality of actual existence.

God, however, is an exception to this situation and
with this exception, Whitehead introduces what can be understood as the salvific function of the deity. The entities of the universe that form God's satisfaction are objectified in God. As A.H. Johnson declares:

Whitehead emphasized that in God's consequent nature the various actual entities do not retain their individuality as such, but the distinctness of elements of these actual entities is immortal in God's consequent nature...[T]he elements which were present in our experience are more vivid in God's, for he evaluates them more accurately. His experience is richer. The individuality of elements in our experience is enhanced in God. This is what Whitehead means by immortality。(45)

Since the deity's immediacy does not die, the elements that were felt and included in its nature to form its satisfaction(46) are eternally valuable. Without this "objective immortality"(47) of entities, loss would be the primary characteristic of existence; evil, therefore, would reign。(48) The admission of an entity into God's subjective immediacy increases its value not only by the mere fact of this admission. It also becomes necessary data for the divine being, enabling it to provide each entity with an ideal subjective aim. What this implies is that each actual entity is responsible for both the future course which the world will take at any given moment, and for God's enjoyment of that world。(49) This is only possible because God "saves" everything that can be saved(50) and passes it back into the world by way of individual subjective aims. "What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in
heaven passes back into the world."(51) We see then, that evil is overcome by good:

The kingdom of heaven is not the isolation of good from evil. It is the overcoming of evil by good. This transmutation of evil into good enters into the actual world by reason of the inclusion of the nature of God, which includes the ideal vision of each actual evil so met with a novel consequent as to issue in the restoration of goodness.(52)

This concludes our brief examination of Alfred North Whitehead's God-concept. The narrow scope of this chapter does not allow for more to be said, except, of course, by the master himself. Below, from his *Modes of Thought*, Whitehead summarizes the entire spectrum of his system's God from its origin and purpose to its dipolar nature and activity in the world to which it is inextricably related:

The notion of a supreme being must apply to an actuality in process of composition, an actuality not confined to the data of any special epoch in the historic field. Its actuality is founded on the infinitude of its conceptual appetition, and its form of process is derived from the fusion of this appetition with the data received from the world-process. Its function in the world is to sustain the aim at vivid experience. It is the reservoir of potentiality and the coordination of achievement. The form of its process is relevant to the data from which the process is initiated. The issue is the unified composition which assumes its function as a datum operative in the future historic world.(53)
CHAPTER ONE: ENDNOTES

(1) Deity in the Philosophy of Organism


(3) "Order" has a specific, technical meaning in Whitehead's system. "Order (understood as endless repetition of some pre-established pattern) is not sufficient. What is required is something much more complex. It is order entering upon novelty; so that the massiveness of order does not degenerate into mere repetition; and so that the novelty is always reflected upon a background of system." From Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality Corrected Edition, David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne eds. (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 339.


(5) See Whitehead, Process and Reality, 18: "'Actual
entities'--also termed 'actual occasions'--are the final real things of which the world is made up...and these actual entities are drops of experience, complex and interdependent."


(8) Sherburne, *Key*, 173.

(11) Divine Characteristics


(13) The issue of the "personal" or "impersonal" nature of the Whiteheadian deity is contentious. On the one hand,
there is this specific quote in *Religion in the Making* regarding the "impersonal" nature of God. On the other hand, there is the reality that Whitehead's God appears to act in a very personal manner; presenting each entity with a subjective aim, and "saving" these entities in its consequent nature. I hold that, ultimately, it is impersonal in nature. Since the deity is directing the creative advance in a fashion best suited to its own satisfaction and not according to the satisfaction of others (although others benefit from God's own search for satisfaction), does this not make it impersonal?

(14) Sherburne, *Key*, 7.


(17) See Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 44: "Any entity whose conceptual recognition does not involve a necessary reference to any definite actual entities of the temporal world is called an 'eternal object'; "It [eternal object] is a pure potential...contributing to the definiteness of [an] actual entity" (*Process and Reality*, 23).


(22) See Sherburne, *Key*, 244: "The subjective aim of an actual entity is the ideal of what that subject could become, which shapes the very nature of the becoming subject.... This subjective aim arises in the primary phase of each actual entity as a result of its hybrid physical feeling of God."


(29) See, John W. Lansing, "The 'Natures' of Whitehead's God," *Process Studies* 3 (1973), 144. Lansing states: "...God can be better understood, not as distinguishable parts, but as ways of indicating various interdependent modes of functioning by the whole actual entity....They should be treated as adjectives describing the character of how God as a whole functions in relation to the world..." Later, after stating that the role of the superjective nature is "unclear," he concludes that "[a]t any rate,...God conditions temporal actuality as a result of his prehension and harmonization of the antecedent world" which is clearly one role of the consequent nature (146).

(30) Lansing, "Natures," 144.

(iii) Deity's Interaction With the World


(35) See Hartshorne's *Whitehead's Philosophy*, 101, where he states: "has anyone proved that Genesis, for example, derives its religious view from the assumption, hardly explicit in the text, that God's forming of the cosmos as we know it was not preceded and influenced by earlier creative acts, each resulting in its own temporary universe—and so on without beginning?" See also Lewis Ford, "Can Freedom be Created?*, *Horizons* (1977), 184, where he states: "Whitehead...following his own independent analysis of the ceaseless rhythm of the many and the one generating a dynamic flow of temporality holds both the world and time to be without beginning or end."


(40) See Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 27, "The Category of Freedom and Determination. The concrescence of each individual actual entity is internally determined and is externally free."

(42) Aesthetics play a very important role in Whiteheadian metaphysics. One aspect of his understanding of the concept is as follows: "In the greatest examples of any form of art, a miraculous balance is achieved. The whole displays its component parts, each with its own value enhanced; and the parts lead up to a whole, which is beyond themselves, and yet not destructive of themselves." Whitehead's *Modes of Thought* (New York: The Free Press, 1938), 62.

(43) Sherburne, *Key*, 176.

(44) Sherburne, *Key*, 176.


(46) Let me point out here that God's satisfaction is not like that of other actual entities since God does not perish. "God retains immediacy and creative advance...God is never complete in the sense that he 'perishes'" (Johnson, "Some Conversations with Whitehead," 9).

(47) See Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 223, "[The]
attainment of a peculiar definiteness is the final cause which animates a particular process; and its attainment halts its process, so that by transcendence it passes into its objective immortality as a new objective condition added to the riches of definiteness attainable, the 'real potentiality' of the universe."

(48) It seems logical to conclude that if all past activities were forgotten and not saved, there would be a tremendous loss of value, which would be an evil in itself. Furthermore, God's ability to provide an effective subjective aim to entities would be impaired and the world would eventually slip into a trivial existence, if not total chaos.

(49) It may be difficult to imagine that the activities of one actual entity could have such responsibility. One must consider, however, that God's vision of, and adjusting of subjective aims for the entire universe relies on exactly what a specific entity will do next. Should an entity decide to reject God's subjective aim, furthermore, this would lessen God's enjoyment of the world.

(50) "Save" is to be understood as "objectifies," as in "objective immortality." According to Whitehead, God does not save everything, as some imagine. "There is no
elimination in God's nature as such. There is, of course, elimination of some of the data presented for inclusion in God's nature." Johnson, "Some Conversations With Whitehead," 6. See also Johnson's Whitehead's Theory of Reality (New York: Dover Publishers Inc., 1962), 6ff., where he insists that "the transfer [of entities into the consequent nature] involves some loss of content," and where he cites several quotes of Whitehead's to support his observation.

(51) Sherburne, Key, 190.


CHAPTER TWO

THE GOD OF MEISTER ECKHART

It is time now to proceed with an overview of the Eckhartian conception of the deity, similar to that just completed with respect to Whitehead. I propose, first, to examine Eckhart's epistemology and then describe his God-concept. Thirdly, the chapter touches upon the "via negativa" in Meister Eckhart's theology. It concludes with a discussion as to how he perceives the interaction between God and the created world.

Few would argue against the fact that it is a difficult task to write about the God of Meister Eckhart. In the master's own writings many complicated themes sometimes are developed unclearly and the lack of reliable translations makes documentation of these themes challenging at best. Nevertheless, with regard to the multifaceted view of the deity presented by Eckhart, it is appropriate to note Bernard McGinn's astute observation:

"The task of theology for Eckhart was not so much to reveal a set of truths about God as it was to frame the appropriate paradoxes that would serve to highlight the inherent limitations of our minds and to mark off in some way the boundaries of the unknown territory where God dwells."(1)

This chapter, therefore, seeks merely to delineate the main elements of these boundaries.
(1) Epistemology

To more clearly understand the various tenets of Eckhart's theology one must have some acquaintance with his epistemology. In this vein, Eckhart describes an "inner" and an "outer" knowledge. The outer knowledge is "directed towards external things, namely the knowledge through the senses and through reason." (2) Eckhart teaches that the world surrounding the human creature reflects God at every turn and that it is by examining this creation that one may deduce certain divine characteristics: "The Father speaks the Son from his entire power and he speaks him in all things. All creatures are words of God." (3) To experience the world and to find God within it, therefore, is the purpose of the outer knowledge.

It alone is not sufficient, however, to fully apprehend God. There is yet "that other way of knowing:" (4)

The mind encloses something within itself, a spark of the intellectual power, which is never quenched. This spark is the higher part of the spirit; in it is located the image of the mind. (5)

What Eckhart calls the "inner" knowledge provides humanity with living contact with God. In my view, in talking about inner knowledge, Eckhart is referring to what is labelled intuitive or "mystical" knowledge today. Eckhart's own words attest to this even though the term "mystical" is not used:
The inner knowledge is of an intellectual kind and is grounded in the being of our mind. Yet, it does not coincide with the being of the mind. It only takes root there, and it is something of the life of the mind. When we say that this knowledge is something of the life of the mind, we are referring to its intelligible life. It is in this life that man is begotten as the Son of God and that he is born to eternal life. Also this knowledge is without time and without space, without any here and any now. In this life all things are one, they are all together all in all, and all united to all. (6)

Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this study to go into depth regarding the definition of mysticism. Nevertheless, I maintain that the two preceding quotations clearly allude to the knowledge gained in a manner which goes beyond ordinary rational and conscious thinking. This lies at the very heart of the mystical phenomenon along with the perception that "[i]n this life all things are one" and "without any here and any now." (7) Despite the many forms and descriptions that mysticism has taken through the years, to deny altogether some mystical element of Eckhart's theology (8) is to render it meaningless; the validity of Eckhart's theological claims, in my view, is almost entirely dependent upon his mystical vision. This vision is also the grounding of his interpretation of the divine characteristics.

(ii) Divine Characteristics

The Master's mystical vision tells us that the divine principle is characterized by at least three qualities:
God is first and foremost unum or "absolute unity." Secondly, God is described as pure Intellect, and thirdly, as Creator. Even though he teaches that God is absolutely one, Eckhart, however, makes a distinction between "God" and "Godhead;" this distinction is discussed later in detail. For now it is sufficient to state that "Godhead" is the primordial, inactive facet of the divine reality, whereas "God" represents its active, creative side. For the sake of simplicity and clarity of expression, however, I will use the term "God" to express the divinity in its unity, unless otherwise noted. I must stress that, regardless of this distinction, Eckhart always conceives of the deity as being "one:"

Since God is one, the Godhead of God is perfect. I say that God could never beget his only begotten Son unless he were one. Inasmuch as God is one, he knows everything that he works in the creatures and in the Godhead. I will say more: God alone has unity. Unity is peculiar to God. From this fact it follows that God is God.(9)

Within God there are no distinctions. This is the deity's primary defining characteristic; it is what clearly makes the deity transcend all creation. McGinn paraphrases Eckhart as follows:

Since indistinction is the distinguishing mark of unum, what sets it off from everything else, to conceive of God as unum, or Absolute Unity, is to conceive of him as simultaneously distinct and indistinct, indeed, the more distinct insofar as he is indistinct.(10)

The deity's oneness is also indicative of its omnipotence. As Eckhart asserts, "insofar as a thing is
simpler and more unified, it is stronger and more powerful, able to do many things."(11) The power of oneness lies in its "negation of negation," an expression Eckhart uses to say that in the One, there is no room for defect; we find, rather, that the fullness of being is affirmed there.

God as unum is the defining category from which all the other attributes outlined above derive their meaning. This becomes evident in Eckhart's discussion of God as pure intellect. Whereas Thomas Aquinas defined God as "esse" or existence, Eckhart held fast to the doctrine of God as intellect:

I declare that it is not my present opinion that God understands because he exists, but rather that he exists because he understands. God is an intellect and understanding, and his understanding itself is the ground of his existence.(12)

It is beyond being to be intellect, the Meister argues, since being can only derive its existence from without; this argument can be traced back to the analysis of the concept of "existence" ("ex" and "sistere") by St. Albert, one of Eckhart's intellectual predecessors.(13) According to this argument, a being has a first cause and this is not true of God. God's intellection is God's being.

The deity as pure intellect retains its unique characteristic of being absolutely one. From Eckhart's perspective, the divine principle's knowledge binds together all aspects of the universe to itself:

God makes us know himself, and he makes us know
himself by his act of knowing, and his being is his knowledge. For him to make me know and for me to know are one and the same thing. Hence his knowledge is mine, quite as it is one and same in the master who teaches and in the disciple who is taught. Since his knowledge is mine, and since his substance is his knowledge, his nature, and his being, it follows that his being, his substance, and his nature are mine. Thus since his substance, his being, and his nature are mine, I am the Son of God. (14)

Since the deity is understood by Eckhart as intellect, its being is its knowledge. What is peculiar to God about his knowledge, however, is that "[h]is knowledge is the cause of things." (15) Therefore, humanity and all of creation are united to God because they owe their existence entirely to God's knowledge of them. Nothing, consequently, can exist outside of the One; if God does not know about it, it cannot exist. Reiner Schürmann maintains that Eckhart's logic in this passage is a fusion of "Aristotelian identity of the knower and the known and Platonic participation of an inferior in a superior quality." (16) The end result is the unification of God and the human creature in the act of knowing. Schürmann uses the analogy of the relationship between the teacher and pupil to clarify this point:

The teacher and the pupil are one in the act of learning. The master teaches and the disciple is taught; one speaks, the other listens; one possesses knowledge and the other acquires it....But then, in the diligence and the zeal of learning, the face-to-face encounter between teacher and student is abolished. Properly speaking, only the coming forth, the hatching of knowledge "is"; in other words, a process is, rather than a duality of substances. An event gathers together the teacher and the pupil which abolishes the one's superiority and the other's
Inferiority. (17)

God as Intellect is the second of the divine qualities listed earlier. Closely associated with this particular characterization is a third: God as creator. This is perhaps one of the most interesting descriptions of God put forth by Eckhart. In it we see the tremendous life force which Eckhart's God embodies. The creator God is the God of life:

Life means a sort of overflow by which a thing, welling up within itself, completely floods itself, each part of it interpenetrating every other part, until at last it pours itself out and boils over into something external. (18)

The Godhead "flooding itself" brings forth the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are one in nature and wholly within the eternal Godhead. The divine "overflowing" in the Godhead begets creation which is temporal and related to this Godhead in the most intimate way. Note once again that at no time is the deity's oneness ever threatened; the Godhead never reaches outside of itself for the materials that constitute the cosmos.

According to Rudolf Otto,

God is, in Himself, tremendous life movement. Out of undifferentiated unity He enters into the multiplicity of personal life and persons, in whom the world and therewith the multiplicity of the world is contained. (19)

Divine overflowing is but one of Eckhart's metaphors for the act of creating. A second popular theme is that of God engendering the world through speech. Eckhart derives
this theme from his interpretation of the biblical Psalm 61:12, which states: "God has spoken once and for all, and I have heard two things." Eckhart is an upholder of the neoplatonic teaching that in Godhead (Intellect) there exist ideas after which the various things of the universe are patterned. God then "speaks" these ideas and two things occur simultaneously. McGinn writes:

God's speaking once and for all is the utterance of his Only-Begotten Word, but the two things that are simultaneously heard are the emanation of the divine Persons in the Trinity and the creation of the whole universe, whose exemplary principle is the Eternal Word.(20)

The act of creating, furthermore, is a perpetual activity, carried on throughout eternity. It is not an event relegated to a particular moment in history. Below, the Meister elucidates:

So when someone once asked me why God had not created the world earlier, I answered that he could not because he did not exist. He did not exist before the world did. Furthermore, how could he have created earlier when he had already created the world in the very now in which he was God? It is false to picture God as if he were waiting around for some future moment in which to create the world. In the one and the same time in which he was God and in which he begot his coeternal Son as God equal to himself in all things, he also created the world.(21)

In the "very now" in which the divine essence is, it continues to bestow life upon the world and humanity.

(iii) Eckhart's Via Negativa

Up to this point, the divine essence has been
exemplified primarily as active and involved. This, however, is not the only perspective from which Eckhart sees God. The other perspective involves the "via negativa," a traditional method of describing God in apophatic language. According to Eckhart, God has a second, but prior, nature which he calls the "Godhead." God creates, thinks, speaks and bestows life. In the Godhead, conversely, there is no activity:

Everything within the Godhead is unity, and we cannot speak about it. God accomplishes, but the Godhead does not do so and there is no deed within the Godhead. The Godhead never goes searching for a deed. God and the Godhead are distinguished through deeds and a lack of deeds. (22)

The Godhead is simple silence, the indistinct, immovable ground of all being. In keeping with the apophatic tradition, one purpose for Eckhart's language of Godhead is to re-establish the transcendence and ineffability of the deity in the face of humanity's pride in its capabilities. The vast conceptual envisagement that is Godhead is beyond human understanding. Reiner Schürmann concludes the following:

[S]ince "God" signifies for us primarily the Other whom man reflects and whom he invokes, loves or "puts to death", it is preferable to speak of the Godhead, in which there is neither reflection nor invocation, neither love nor death. This word "Godhead" designates the exclusion from the origin of all relations, be it the external relation of creation or the internal relation of the Trinity. (23)

There is for Eckhart, therefore, a difference between
God and Godhead, although in his own writings he does not always make a clear distinction between the two. Nevertheless, this understanding of the deity as bipolar escapes traditional apophatic theology. In the customary usage, negative attributes describe the one nature of God. Eckhart maintains that the Divine has two natures: one active, the other passive. Whether the deity is understood as active or passive depends primarily upon human the perspective. From the perspective of Godhead there is nothing but itself; but if one moves out of Godhead into the created state where dualisms prevail, one finds God. Eckhart writes:

When I still stood in my first cause, I had no God, I was cause of myself. There I willed nothing and desired nothing, for I was a pure being and a knower of myself in full enjoyment of the truth. There I willed myself and willed nothing else. What I willed, I was, and what I was, that I willed. There I stood, clear of God and of all things. But when by free will I went out and received my created being, then I had a God. Indeed, before there were creatures, God was not yet God, but he was what he was. (24)

Such a bipolar understanding of the deity implies that "God" undergoes the same fate as things; that is, they both perish." (25) Godhead remains, however, as the primordial first cause to which all things must return. For humanity to reach beyond God to return to the Godhead, it must first undergo a transformation.

According to Eckhart, returning to Godhead, humanity's first cause, is not impossible. As a matter of fact, his
position, in this regard, is unusual for a medieval, Dominican theologian. Many of the propositions condemned by the Church after Eckhart's death dealt directly with the importance he accorded to a very intimate God-human relationship.

We will now leave this discussion which, so far, has centered primarily upon the attributes of God; it is now time to examine the nature of the divine entity in relation to its most complex creation: humanity.

(iv) Deity's Relationship With Humanity

There are two significant doctrines associated with Eckhart's teachings on the nature of the relationship between God and humanity. The first is "detachment," and the second is termed "the Birth of the Word in the Soul." Eckhart describes the former concept, "detachment," as the highest virtue, surpassing even love. But what exactly is detachment?

Here you should know that true detachment is nothing else than for the spirit to stand as immovable against whatever may chance to it of joy and sorrow, honor, shame and disgrace, as a mountain of lead stands before a little breath of wind. This immovable detachment brings a man into the greatest equality with God, because God has it from his immovable detachment that he is God...(26)

Detachment enables a person to live in the world with equanimity. In detachment, the intellect becomes emptied of all images and attachments to things, thus likening it
to God. Eckhart explains this as follows:

And if man is to become equal with God, insofar as a creature can have equality with God, that must happen through detachment. It then draws a man into purity, and from purity into simplicity, and from simplicity into unchangeability, and these things produce an equality between God and the man; and the equality must come about in grace, for it is grace that draws a man away from all temporal things, and makes him pure of all transient things. (27)

It is because Christ took human nature upon himself that a human can receive the necessary grace to become detached and return to the Godhead. Once detached, a person experiences this grace through the "Birth of the Word in the Soul." This is one among Eckhart's more controversial doctrines; it is a description of the most intimate contact between creation and its Creator. In a place Eckhart calls "the highest part of the soul," a place beyond time and space, God "gives birth" to the Word who is Christ, thus elevating that person to the level of divinity.

In order to more clearly understand this doctrine, it is necessary to refer to all of the Eckhartian God-images introduced so far. First, within the oneness of pure intellect that is Godhead, the deity contemplates itself and knows itself. Karl Kertz writes:

"...God knowing Himself from all eternity, brought forth the full knowledge of Himself. This knowledge of Himself was not a mere passing idea, such as we have, but His own Image, His own very Substance, a Living Person. (28)

This living person is Christ. Secondly, within this Image
the divine intellect apprehends all eternal archetypes or forms which are the elements of creation: "it may be said that the whole creation exists in the Divine mind, not as a finished product, but as an idea or prototype."(29) Finally, when God the creator speaks the Word which is Christ, these forms receive their temporal existence, yet remain within the Godhead as images. God speaks in eternity; it is an utterance in the eternal now of the present. Thus, when a person becomes detached he or she is able to receive, in the highest part of the soul, the eternally spoken or begotten Word. These are the primary elements which consist in the doctrine of the Birth of the Word.

Eckhart's understanding of this mystical union leads to two conclusions. First, by virtue of humanity's presence in the Godhead as an image, Eckhart can speak in terms of the "pre-existence" of humanity:

The first kind of love which God has and which we should learn is that which compelled his natural goodness to form all of creation, for in the images contained in his foreknowledge, God was pregnant with every creature from all eternity so that all creatures might enjoy with him his goodness.(30)

Secondly, by virtue of their eidetic pre-existence, all things are equal in the Godhead. 'Pre-existence, and the virtue of detachment, make Christ's birth in the soul possible; this implies "not merely a moral and juridical relationship between ourselves and God, much less a purely
mystical, allegorical or figurative connotation, but, above all, a real, physical elevation of our nature."(31)

One must conclude from these examples that Eckhart believes in a deity who is intimately associated with its creation. Rudolf Otto clearly states the force with which Eckhart maintains this:

[C]reation and creature are as necessary for God, as God for the creature. Only in the being of the creature does God himself come to His own goal and purpose. That is to say, only as the eternal and ceaselessly creating God, is He God. This is the Christian God, who is not like the God of the ancient world, sufficient unto Himself, blessed in Himself.(32)

Eckhart's God is at once the perfect repose and transcendence of the Godhead, and the vibrant, absolutely immanent presence of the loving Creator. The divine essence is transcendent in as much as it is fully immanent to all creatures as their being. This firm belief in God's immanence is why Eckhart does not shy away from describing God as joyous over the spiritual progress of its creation—"God has sheer delight and laughter over a good deed"(33)—or as grieving along with it over its trials and tribulations: "It is as if he had nothing to do except what he does with me, so that he gives me everything that might console me."(34) From the perspective of the modeless Godhead there is nothing but a unified, undifferentiated whole wherein humanity is an essential element:

Also it is a sure truth and a necessary truth that God has such a need to seek us out—exactly as if all his Godhead depended on it, as in fact
it does. God can no more dispense with us than
we can dispense with him. (35)

The mainstay of Eckhartian theology is a vibrant, powerful
deity. Its greatness is not only exhibited in its broad
roles as "Oneness", "Intellect" and "Creator," but as the
mystically apprehended, ultimately relational source of
human existence.
CHAPTER TWO: ENDNOTES


(1) Epistemology


(4) Schürmann, Meister Eckhart, 132.

(5) Schürmann, Meister Eckhart, 132.

(6) Schürmann, Meister Eckhart, 132.

(7) An experience of the oneness of the universe and a sense of timelessness are two common characteristics of what can be called the mystical experience. Walter Stace defines mysticism along similar lines. For a brief overview of Stace's definition, see Harvey d. Egan, S.J., What are
they saying about mysticism? (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 14-17.


(11) Divine Characteristics

(9) Fox, Breakthrough, 191.

(10) Colledge and McGinn, Meister Eckhart, 34.


(13) Support for this statement can be found in Maurer, Parisian Questions and Proloques, 17. He traces Eckhart's understanding of being and existence to St. Albert who derives the definition of "existence", from "ex" and "sister", "which means 'to stand out.' In this
interpretation, to say that something exists means that it stands outside of its cause...Against this background," according to Maurer, "it is clearly improper to say that God "exists", for he has no cause."

(14) Schürmann, Meister Eckhart, 133.

(15) Maurer, Master Eckhart, 48.

(16) Schürmann, Meister Eckhart, 162.

(17) Schürmann, Meister Eckhart, 162.

(18) Fox, Breakthrough, 204.


(20) Colledge and McGinn, Meister Eckhart, 39.

(21) Colledge and McGinn, Meister Eckhart, 85.

(111) Eckhart's Via Negativa

(22) Fox, Breakthrough, 77.

(23) Schürmann, Meister Eckhart, 119.


(iv) Deity's Relationship With Humanity


(30) Fox, *Breakthrough*, 91.


PART TWO
SIMILARITIES BETWEEN WHITEHEADIAN AND ECKHARTIAN THEISMS

The previous two chapters provided an overview of the relevant aspects of the respective theisms of Meister Eckhart and Alfred North Whitehead. Many of the points briefly discussed in those chapters now come under greater scrutiny, for in this portion of the study, the similarities between the God-concepts of the two metaphysicians are specified and analysed. Since there is a good deal of material to investigate, the comparison will be divided into two chapters. Chapter Three discusses those similarities which refer specifically to the nature of God: It examines first of all the two thinkers' epistemologies and secondly their dipolar God-concepts. Thirdly, the understanding of the divine entity in Whitehead and Eckhart are examined in light of Charles Hartshorne's doctrine of panentheism. Chapter Four of this study presents the similarities between the Eckhartian and Whiteheadian understanding of God's relationship to the created world. It analyses, first, the doctrines of divine creation in Whitehead and Eckhart, then their respective views of the nature of divine immanence and transcendence. Thirdly, it investigates the contentions of both metaphysicians that the deity needs and is affected by the world. Finally, it discusses the similarity between Eckhart's doctrine of "detachment" and Whitehead's understanding of "Peace." These similarities, I contend,
are significant and demonstrate how close in spirit are the doctrines of God in Whitehead and Eckhart.
CHAPTER THREE
THE NATURE OF THE DEITY

(1) Epistemology

The first striking similarity that exists between the two metaphysicians' theisms is epistemological in nature. When Whitehead and Eckhart describe how human entities gain knowledge of reality, both abstract specific modes from the whole experience of perception. Sense perception is called "presentational immediacy" in the philosophy of organism. "Presentational immediacy is our perception of the contemporary world by means of the senses. It is a physical feeling."(1) This mode of perception is clear and distinct, the one most associated with conscious cognition. Eckhart defines sense perception similarly and calls it "external" or "outer knowledge." This knowledge, as previously mentioned, is "directed towards external things; namely, the knowledge through the senses and through reason."(2) Neither Eckhart nor Whitehead consider sense perception to be the most significant mode of apprehending the fullness of reality.

The truly important perceptive mode is one which lies deep in the human psyche. Julius Seelye Bixler emphasizes its significance:

The prominent facts of consciousness are the superficial facts; those that are important are on the fringe....Art and poetry offer nearer analogies (than the scientific method) since,
like religion, they direct us to the inarticulate and incommunicable quality of the vivid flash of insight. (3)

The "fringe" of perception as defined by Eckhart and Whitehead, though less obvious to us consciously, has greater effect upon our actions particularly because it involves how God is cognized. Whitehead calls this type of perception "causal efficacy:",

Perception in the mode of causal efficacy is the primitive, ubiquitous feature of all reality....It is the basic mode of inheritance of feeling from past data, and the feelings it transmits are vague, massive, inarticulate, and felt as the efficaciousness of the past. (4)

Along with the "past data," perception in the mode of causal efficacy apprehends the deity (though not fully consciously), particularly in its primordial nature as the subjective or initial aim. (5) The significance of this experience of God is tremendous because, as Whitehead tells us, "[a]part from the intervention of God, there could be nothing new in the world, and no order in the world." (6)

To summarize, God, in the philosophy of organism, is sensed intuitively as the source of order, novelty, and permanent rightness in the universe. Intuitive cognition, or causal efficacy, is, therefore, the more significant mode of perception; it is how God is apprehended as a reality in the universe.

For Meister Eckhart the mode of perception labelled the "inner knowledge," "that other way of knowing" (7), discussed earlier in Chapter Two, contains the element of
the intuition of deity found in Whitehead's causal efficacy. In the highest part of the mind, beyond the fully conscious state, is a place where God and the human person can intimately relate to each other. In reality, Godhead "resides" in this "place;" as the Dominican mystic says, "God is in all things. But insofar as God is divine and insofar as he is intelligible, he is nowhere more appropriately than in the mind... He is in the innermost and the most sublime part of the mind." (8) The presence of the deity is not a conscious apprehension in the usual sense; it is, like Whitehead's causal efficacy, intuitive. It is also the most important mode of perception, because here is where a detached person (9) "possesses simultaneously in a unique act of intellection, God, things, and himself," as Schürmann contends. (10) It is, in part, because of this mode of perception that many, including myself, call Eckhart a mystic. It is interesting to note, however, that the emphasis on intuitive knowledge in Whitehead's works are only infrequently acknowledged. What is the justification for this discrepancy?

The best answer to this query is as follows: the difference between Eckhart's "inner knowledge" and Whitehead's "causal efficacy" is that Eckhart maintains that in detachment the person can fully and directly apprehend the reality and influence of the divine essence. Whitehead, on the other hand, has never taken the extra
step in his elaboration of intuitive experience, i.e., implying that God, in a particular state of consciousness, can be so apprehended. The closest he comes to doing so is in his concept of "Peace" which is discussed in detail in the latter part of Chapter Four.

In my view, nevertheless, it is clear that one of Whitehead's contributions to epistemological theory is in his making intuitive knowledge a legitimate cognitive experience by including it as a fundamental mode of perception in his philosophy. Since the role of a metaphysical system—in this case, the philosophy of organism—is to "frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted," (11) it would be incoherent to ignore the many examples of knowledge gained through intuitive experience.

The manner in which Whitehead writes and his philosophy indicate that he is definitely sympathetic to the mystical way of knowing. (12) What I intend to make clear is that in basing his epistemology on all of the information that human experience provides, Whitehead has touched upon a very basic, universal intuition of deity that Eckhart (and other mystics) had long ago more or less fully apprehended. Whitehead and Eckhart are both clearly in agreement as to the reality and relevance of the role of intuitive discernment in knowledge. In my view, Whitehead
has definitely made the beleaguered mystical tradition more appealing to the twentieth century mind-set. "The best rendering of integral experience, expressing its general form divested of irrelevant details," Whitehead insists, "is often to be found in the utterances of religious aspiration."(13)

(11) Dipolarity

Eckhart and Whitehead agree upon how God can be apprehended; but does this shared view of intuition also lead to a common description of the deity's nature? The evidence indicates this is so. The two men consistently describe God as an entity exhibiting both a conceptual or primordial nature and a physical or consequent nature. Charles Hartshorne insists that

[1]t is worth noting that the equivalent of the contrast between primordial and consequent natures is inevitable in any theology, the question being only whether it shall be a temporal distinction.(14)

The validity of this statement is affirmed most strongly in both Eckhartian and Whiteheadian theism; they do indeed share a similarly dipolar understanding of God. In brief, the concept of dipolarity depicts a dual-natured deity consisting of an active aspect and a passive aspect. These natures, however, when described separately are to be understood as abstractions from the one deity, i.e., as adjectives qualifying God, not as nouns. To clarify the
doctrine, let us first examine divine dipolarity so evident within Whitehead's philosophy of organism.

The primordial nature of Whitehead's God, as mentioned earlier, effects the complete conceptual valuation or ordering of eternal objects. Without this primordial envisagement, the eternal objects would not be available forprehension by, or inclusion in, any actual entity. The primordial nature also supplies a subjective aim to each occasion, therefore perpetuating the general order of the universe. This aspect of God, taken in abstraction, lacks consciousness and is unaffected by specific details; its goal is towards self-fulfillment: "God's "primordial nature" is abstracted from his commerce with "particulars,"...It is God in abstraction, alone with himself. As such it is a mere factor in God, deficient in actuality.(15) The deity's primordial nature is the permanence amid the flux of existence and, in distinction from all other entities, Hartshorne tells us that

"Only God has an absolutely fixed and ungenerated general style—or self-identical character, an abstract element of strict invariance individual to him. The PN [primordial nature] is this element of mere identity, apart from all differences in the Divine Life.(16)

The primordial nature of God is of utmost significance to reality. It orders and directs the endless realm of potentialities to form the as we know it. It is comparable to "intellect" as the defining characteristic of the universe without which there would be total chaos. As
purely primordial in nature, however, the deity would be merely contemplating its own existence and it would have no relation to anything other than itself. It would not progress or change; it would be deficient, according to Whitehead's philosophy.

It is the deity's consequent nature which gives it its relational and concrete aspect. The consequent natureprehends the living entities of the world and provides the primordial nature with the necessary information that enables it to give each entity an appropriate subjective aim. The consequent nature is perpetually active in the world, prehending the world and changing itself accordingly. In Whitehead's words, "[t]he consequent nature is determined, incomplete, consequent, "everlasting," fully actual, and conscious."(17) This side of God cannot exist without the world, since, essentially, it is the world; "[t]hus," Whitehead writes, "the actuality of God [the consequent nature] must also be understood as a multiplicity of actual components in process of creation [the actual entities of the universe]."(18) The consequent nature represents most clearly God's perfect immanence; the primordial nature is the main depiction of God's transcendent quality.(19) Summarily, "God is to be conceived as originated by conceptual experience with his process of completion motivated by consequent, physical experience, initially derived from the temporal world."(20)
A careful analysis of Eckhart's bipolar God-concept makes it evident that it coincides with the Whiteheadian interpretation. The following descriptions of Eckhart's "God" and "Godhead" by Schürmann come surprisingly close to Whiteheadian God-related language and intent:

The distinction between God and Godhead is that between antecedent and consequent. God acts, but to the Godhead every operation is foreign. Operation is of the order of consequences. (21)

One may say that the distinction between God and Godhead concerns two aspects—exterior and interior, active and inactive, knowable and unknowable—of the same origin (italics mine). (22)

As the primordial nature in Whitehead's theism is prior to the consequent nature, in that God's activity is originated by conceptual rather than physical experience, so is Godhead prior to "God." Prior to the act of creation, Godhead holds within it "ideas" after which creation is patterned. For Eckhart (as for Whitehead) Godhead knows and creatures emanate from that knowledge, for, "things themselves take their origin from and depend upon God's knowledge." (23) Secondly, as the Whiteheadian deity's consequent nature is relational and active and the primordial nature is neither, so is "God" the active, creative element of the divine essence. "God becomes and ceases to become, God waxes and wanes," (24) writes Eckhart, whereas, "[t]he Godhead never goes searching for a deed." (25)
Can an even more daring comparison be made, however, between Eckhart and Whitehead? Whitehead equates the consequent nature of God with the existing universe; does the Dominican believe the same? In a particularly shocking—but not unusual—statement, Eckhart seems to answer in the affirmative:

The Father gives birth to his Son in eternity, equal to himself...Yet I say more: He has given birth to him in my soul...The Father gives birth to his Son without ceasing; and I say more: He gives me birth, me, his Son and the same Son. I say more: He gives birth not only to me, his Son, but he gives birth to me as himself and himself as me and to me as his being and nature.(26)

InterPREters of Eckhart's theology are consistently astounded by this and similar passages and always warn against liberal interpretations of them. Colledge and McGinn are a prime example: "[t]o the unwary" they insist, "such expressions—and they are frequent in Eckhart—may look like a species of pantheism, but such is not the case."(27) Yet, in my view, no satisfactory explanation of "such expressions" has been put forward. I will venture to say, however, that I find Eckhart's words compatible with Whitehead's understanding of the deity's active or consequent nature. The Godhead of Eckhartian theology can in no way be construed to be "the same as" the existing universe, just as the Whiteheadian primordial nature is not the universe. The "God" of the Master's theology, on the other hand, is so intimately related to the world as its being that it is almost out of the question to interpret
Eckhart's words to mean anything other than what they appear to be saying in the passage quoted above.

I contend that the inability of certain of Eckhart's interpreters to accept at face value these words stems from their strictly Christian orthodox perspective. In their fear of avoiding anything that sounds even slightly "pantheistic," there is a tendency to explain away the Dominican mystic's more controversial expressions. The fact remains, however, that Eckhart is a mystic and, this being the case, it is possible that his vision of the divine essence does not always comply with what is deemed "correct" by orthodox theologians.

My conclusions on this issue, therefore, are as follows: Eckhart, the mystic, experiences the deity as a dipolar entity as does Whitehead. It has a passive, conceptual nature which he calls the Godhead. It also exhibits an active, relational, physical nature which Eckhart deems to be so intimately related to the existing universe that he dares to equate "God"—only one aspect of the divine reality—with the universe. The one difference between Eckhart and Whitehead on this issue is that Eckhart will not posit the possibility of another universe coming to be after the present one, a possibility Whitehead finds feasible. The Meister believes that there will come an end time where all the universe will be fulfilled in the Godhead. This point becomes clearer in Chapter Four in the
section entitled "Creation."

Although Whitehead and Eckhart describe God as dipolar, the immutable, contemplative aspect of the deity holds a special appeal for both of them. Colledge and McGinn insist that Eckhart gives priority to the Godhead and that "[i]t would be foolish to deny that Eckhart holds to such a priority." (28) In describing the natures of Whitehead's God, Lansing writes that "[t]he primordial nature of God receives the greatest attention from Whitehead." (29) I can only speculate as to the significance of such an emphasis. Perhaps it indicates a preference for the wholly transcendent aspect of the divinity. It may also be an indication of a deeply rooted belief in the supremacy of the "intellect" over the "body," even though both men place a great value upon the concrete aspect of existence. Since the conceptual aspect of God represents peace and stability for both thinkers, however, it may be that they, like all of us, seek the stability of the immutable in the eternal flux of human existence.

(iii) Panentheism

The understanding of God as dipolar is a necessarily prior step to embracing the concept of "panentheism," (30) a concept most clearly elaborated by Charles Hartshorne. This doctrine was conceived as a means of avoiding the two extremes of a "pantheistic" and an "absolutistic"
God-concept. In the former doctrine, God and the universe are one and the same. As commonly understood, it posits an absolutely relative and immanent deity, but denies it any transcendence or individuality. The absolutistic doctrine, on the other hand, posits the extreme opposite, where God is absolutely independent and transcendent and in no need of anything other than itself to exist. It denies God the ability to change and to relate to its own creation. Both positions harbour logical inconsistencies. Morris Cohen's Law of Polarity, as paraphrased by Hartshorne makes this amply clear:

According to this law, ultimate contraries are correlative mutually interdependent, so that nothing real can be described by the wholly one-sided assertion of simplicity, being, actuality, and the like, each in a "pure" form, devoid and independent of complexity, becoming, potentiality, and related contraries. (31)

Panentheism, therefore, takes a middle road in accordance with this law.

Panentheism teaches that the deity's greatness and perfection lies in the breadth of its experience: in certain respects it is immutable and self-interested; in others, it is relational and capable of change (though this is by no means an arbitrary division). (32) Hartshorne writes, for instance:

God in his essence is independent of any world in particular, though not of the world as such: God in his concrete total being at a given moment...contains just the actual world that then exists or at least has existed. (33)
A panentheistic conception of the divinity also holds that the deity is abstract and unchanging in one aspect and at the same time perfectly relational and subject to change in another. Hartshorne contends that, when conceived in this fashion, the deity's perfection is enhanced by virtue of its all-inclusive nature. Are these characterizations of the divine essence exemplified in Whitehead and Eckhart? The answer is clearly in the affirmative.

The Whiteheadian deity's primordial nature exemplifies the element of God that is transcendent, independent and immutable. It is the complete envisagement of all potentialities and the standard of order that makes these potentialities relevant to the world. This envisagement does not change and is independent of what is being actualized at any given moment. It is the enduring aspect of the divine entity.

This, however, is not the entirety of God's being, according to Whitehead. The changeable, relational aspect of God is its consequent nature: "Thus the consequent nature of God is composed of a multiplicity of elements with individual self-realization." (34) In this mode, God prehends the becoming of all its component entities and retains them, upon their satisfaction, as facts capable of influencing the future of the universe. Whitehead summarizes the perfect completeness of the divine entity in this way:
Thus the universe is to be conceived as attaining the active self-expression of its own variety of opposites—of its own freedom and its own necessity, of its own multiplicity and its own unity, of its own perfection and its own imperfection. All the 'opposites' are elements in the nature of things, and are incorrigibly there. The concept of 'God' is the way in which we understand this incredible fact—that what cannot be, yet is. (35)

The doctrine of panentheism is also exemplified by the Eckhartian deity. As a matter of fact, Matthew Fox uses the very term to describe Eckhart's God-concept, although he focuses primarily on its specific understanding of immanence: "God is in us and we are in God." (36) I shall go as far to say, however, that Eckhart's vision of the deity is consistent with both Hartshorne's and Whitehead's interpretation of the concept. Let us consider this passage by Eckhart as an example indicative of this position:

The builder of a house builds a house outside of himself, both because there are other things outside of him, and because wood and stones, in which the house exists and out of which it is made, do not have existence from the builder or in him but from another and in another. So we should not falsely imagine that God has, as it were, hurled or created creatures outside of himself in some infinite space or void;...So God created all things not like other craftsmen, so that they stand outside of himself, or beside himself, or apart from himself. (37)

What Eckhart describes above is pure panentheism, as represented in the passage quoted, one aspect of the divine entity, "God", is necessarily fluent, temporal and immanent. Without its creation, this aspect of the deity
would cease to exist. Eckhart expresses this truth in the following way: "God becomes God where all creatures express God: There he becomes 'God.'" (38)

This is not, however, the full extent of the deity as Eckhart understands it. He also teaches that "[w]hen I come into the core, the soil, the stream, and the source of the Godhead, no one asks me where I'm coming from or where I've been. No one has missed me in the place where "God" ceases to become" (1taclics mine). (39) Where "God" ceases to become is in the "Godhead." Godhead is the primordial intellect wherein the "ideas" of the universe reside. It is the fully transcendent and independent aspect of the divine essence. It is prior to all of the created universe in that the ideas of the universe necessarily precede the actualization of those ideas as a physical universe. Godhead and God (hence the world), however, remain inconceivable one without the other. Chapter Four addresses this issue in more detail.

What is clear now is that both Eckhart and Whitehead can be legitimately labelled panentheists, given their vision of the deity. Both thinkers are aware of extending the power and perfection of God to include not only transcendence, immutability and independence but immanence, fluency and relationality as well. As Hartshorne has made eminently clear, positing one extreme or the other is not only logically incoherent but limits the divine entity
unnecessarily.
CHAPTER THREE: ENDNOTES

(1) Epistemology


(7) Schürmann, Meister Eckhart, 132.
(8) Schürmann, Meister Eckhart, 181.

(9) I will discuss the doctrine of "the detached person" later in this study.

(10) Schürmann, Meister Eckhart, 145.


(12) In Ernest L. Simmons, Jr., "Mystical Consciousness in a Process Perspective," Process Studies 14 (1984), 2, he asserts that "this particular type of experience [i.e., the mystical one as represented by Sri Aurobindo in this particular case] can be affirmed within a Whiteheadian framework. As to its general application, that must wait for further tests with other mystical articulations."

(13) Sherburne, Key, 173.

(11) Dipolarity


(15) Whitehead, Process and Reality, 34.

(16) Charles Hartshorne, Whitehead's Philosophy
(Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 75.


(19) It must be noted that the primordial and consequent natures are both transcendent and immanent in certain respects. The primordial nature transcends other actual entities in its all-encompassing envisagement of potentialities; yet it is immanent by way of the subjective aim. The consequent nature is immanent by virtue of its physical prehension of all actual entities as they become. It also transcends them, however, by its "saving" activity, the objectification of entities within it.


(24) Matthew Fox, Breakthrough (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1980), 76.

(25) Fox, Breakthrough, 77.


(27) Colledge and McGinn, Meister Eckhart, 33.

(28) Colledge and McGinn, Meister Eckhart, 35.


(iii) Panentheism

(30) See Hartshorne and Wm. L. Reese, Whitehead's Philosophy, 190: "[p]anentheism] posits an eternal absolute abstract essence in a God who, in his full concrete actuality or process of experience, includes all contingent things, as inessential but not, for all that, unreal properties—in other words, accidents." See also, Hartshorne's "The Logic of Panentheism" in Charles Hartshorne and Wm. L. Reese, Philosophers Speak of God (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), Epilogue.

(31) Hartshorne and Reese, Philosophers, 2.
(32) See Hartshorne and Reese, *Philosophers*, 9ff where an excellent discussion of "perfection" and what it means is carried out.


(36) Fox, *Breakthrough*, 44.


(38) Fox, *Breakthrough*, 77.

(39) Fox, *Breakthrough*, 77.
CHAPTER FOUR

GOD'S INTERRELATIONSHIP WITH CREATION

The discussion of the similarities to be found within the theisms of Alfred North Whitehead and Meister Eckhart of Hochheim continues in this chapter, albeit with a slightly different focus. I will proceed with an examination of the concept of God as relational, i.e., with a discussion of how the two thinkers understand the nature of God's interaction with the world. This section includes a discussion of the concept of "creation" and of the nature of the divine entity's immanence and transcendence in relation to the created world. Another point of comparison focuses upon how both Eckhart and Whitehead contend that the divine entity needs the physical world and is thereby affected by it. The final point of discussion centres around how closely related are Eckhart's doctrine of "detachment" and Whitehead's concept of "Peace."

(1) Creation

The first significant point of agreement between Eckhart and Whitehead regarding creation is that neither supports the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo. Both perceive the deity to have brought about a change within itself from one mode of existence to another.

Let us consider first the Eckhartian exposition of creation. The Dominican belonged to the neoplatonic
tradition which teaches the eidetic preexistence of all of creation in the mind of the Godhead. All of the elements of creation exist as "ideas" in the Godhead, understood by Eckhart as Intellect: "in the images contained in his foreknowledge, God was pregnant with every creature from all eternity..."(1) The act of creating, therefore, is described not as a conferring of existence to some "nothingness" but as a "boiling over" of the divine essence so that these ideas become living, temporal creatures. Creation shares the same ground with Godhead, "as roots bring forth a tree."(2)

The ability of an idea to obtain a physical existence is, for Eckhart, intimately associated with Christ. Eckhartian Christology, consequently, does not focus on the incarnate, historical Christ-Jesus. Rather, Christ becomes the Word or medium through which the ideas of the Godhead pass and through which they are transformed into temporal creatures. There cannot be one without the other, for "[i]In the one and the same time in which he was God and in which he begot his coeternal Son as God equal to himself in all things, he also created the world."(3) God's creative activity through Christ is also a perpetual one since, as Eckhart contends, it is achieved in eternity. "It is false," he teaches, "to picture God as if he were waiting around for some future moment in which to create the world,"(4) since, "...God is creating this entire world
full and entire in this present now."(5)

In Whitehead's philosophy of organism a similar, though distinct, doctrine of the divine creative activity is expounded. In general terms, it is a more radical expression of the former. Creation, in part, involves a transformation of God's consequent nature, i.e., the world, from one form to another; through time, different potentialities envisaged within the primordial nature are actualized, thereby bringing about, first, a different moment or stage in the present epoch and, ultimately, a new world order. Charles Hartshorne correctly interprets Whitehead when he writes that

"[t]he world"...is not everlasting but a created product. It is created, to be sure, not out of nothing--whatever that would mean--but out of an earlier world and its potentialities for transformation. This earlier world was similarly created.(6)

This is not to say, however, that God and the world are coeval entities. God's consequent nature is the world; God's primordial nature is the enduring aspect of deity that provides the perpetual lure for the consequent nature to move from one actualization of possibilities envisaged by the primordial nature to another. Hartshorne elucidates this as follows:

God is the self-identical individuality of the world somewhat as a man is the self-identical individuality of his ever changing system of atoms. The only everlasting (and primordial) entity upon which God acts in creation is himself; all individuals, other than himself, which are influenced by his actions are less than
everlasting, or at least less than primordial. (7)

Whitehead's philosophy of organism also holds that there is a "medium" through which the primordial nature of the deity operates to create the universe: it does so via the subjective aim. The subjective aim is a lure for each entity, supplying it with the best path toward fulfillment available at any given moment. "In this sense," writes Whitehead, God can be termed the creator of each temporal actual entity." (8) Without this perpetual lure, the activity of the consequent nature would degenerate into an unfocused chaos and the creative advance would cease. This of course, is an impossible scenario given the dynamic interrelationship between the primordial and consequent natures of the divine essence.

Clearly, Eckhartian and Whiteheadian doctrines of creation share some significant characteristics. In the first place, both deny creation out of nothing, contending rather that creation involves a change in some aspect of the deity into what is known as "the world." Secondly, both Eckhart and Whitehead agree that a medium is involved in creative activity: for Eckhart it is Christ, for Whitehead it is the subjective aim. Thirdly, creation is understood by both thinkers as a perpetual activity. Eckhart, however, understands the perpetual nature of the creative urge to be "out of time," in eternity. This need not be a stumbling block to the comparison. This issue of
"in" time or "out of" time becomes no more than a verbal distinction when carefully considered. Some might object that this point weakens my argument for the similarity between Whitehead and Eckhart since, unlike, Eckhart posits a "beginning" in time wherein both creation and time are initiated. Whitehead's philosophy of organism posits, rather, an infinite regress of worlds (i.e., some actualization of possibilities in God's consequent nature).

Nevertheless, Eckhart explicitly states that it is "wrong" to imagine that there was a time when God did not create since the divine creative activity is done "in eternity." What is the difference between Whitehead's and Eckhart's positions? Is it not simply that one admits to God acting in time and the other hesitates to subject the divinity to time? The issue at stake, I believe, has been formulated clearly by Charles Hartshorne as one which concerns the coherence of the notion of a beginning in time:

Even a beginning is a change, and all change requires something changing that does not come to exist through that same change. The beginning of the world would have to happen to something other than the world, something which as the subject of happening would be in a time that did not begin with the world. God as changing furnishes such a subject...(9)

Seen in this light, is not the notion of a beginning in time self-contradictory?

Much more can be said regarding this issue, but it is beyond the scope of this study to elaborate any further. I
merely wish to point out that the distinction of time between Eckhartian and Whiteheadian creation concepts is not on a scale that can destroy the validity of the argument claiming their compatibility.

(11) Divine Transcendence and Immanence

Whether it be "in" or "out of" time, creative activity as taught by these two thinkers has direct implications for their respective understandings of the nature of divine transcendence and immanence. The former divine quality, transcendence, is understood in three ways by Whitehead and Eckhart. The first has to do with the conceptual nature of the deity. For Eckhart, this is the Godhead; for Whitehead, it is the primordial nature of God. It is this conceptual actuality wherein potentialities are envisaged or ideas are contemplated. God's transcendence, therefore, is expressed as the vastness of this vision which far surpasses the puny intellectual or conceptual capabilities of the ordinary entities of the world. Whitehead writes that, "[God] is the actual entity in virtue of which the entire multiplicity of eternal objects obtains its graded relevance to each state of concrescence."(10) Similarly, Eckhart teaches that "[all] creatures are in God and are his own Godhead, and that means abundance."(11)

The greatness of the primordial envisagement, however, is not the sole exemplification of God's transcendence.
For both metaphysicians, the ability of the divine essence to embrace multiplicity, i.e., the world, and yet remain as one is a second mode of divine transcendence. The Dominican theologian is particularly captivated by this superlative capability and expends a good deal of ink on its explanation:

I say that it is true that only one thing always proceeds immediately from a single thing that is uniform in relation to itself [i.e. God]. But this one thing is the whole universe itself, which proceeds from God as one whole thing, though in many parts just as God himself the producer is one or the simple One...although he is quite diverse according to the ideal reasons.(12)

Whitehead's discussion about the nature of God's oneness and multiplicity falls under the theme of "the one and the many." Unlike Eckhart, however, he does not attribute this ability only to the deity. It is also a quality shared by all entities: "The organic philosophy interprets experience as meaning the 'self-enjoyment of being one among many, and of being one arising out of the composition of many.'"(13) God is a single, albeit the preeminent, entity. For any single entity to concresce and obtain satisfaction, however, data from many past entities is required: "the novel entity is at once the togetherness of the 'many' which it finds, and also it is one among the disjunctive 'many' which it leaves."(14) Thus, "[e]very actual entity, in virtue of its novelty, transcends its universe, God included" (italics mine).(15) In sum,
although both Eckhart and Whitehead concede that the divine essence is transcendent by virtue of its ability to encompass a multiplicity of actualities and yet remain as one individual, the philosophy of organism extends this ability to include all entities.

There is yet a third theme of divine transcendence in the two scholars' theisms. It is directly related to their respective concepts of divine immanence. The deity's perfect immanence within the world is also an expression of its transcendence. Consider, for example, how Eckhart uses the dialectic of "distinction" and "indistinction" and the language of God as "one" to express this reality. Colledge and McGinn interpret him as follows:

Since indistinction is the distinguishing mark of unum...to conceive of God as unum or Absolute Unity, is to conceive of him as simultaneously distinct and indistinct, indeed, the more distinct insofar as he is indistinct....we see better what the Meister was after--a way of speaking about God as simultaneously totally immanent to creatures as their real existence and by that very fact absolutely transcendent to them as esse simpliciter or esse absolutum.(16)

Whitehead uses no such dialectic but he puts forth a similar understanding of transcendence in his theism. The perfect immanence of the subjective aim and of the consequent nature within the physical universe transcends the ability of other entities to be present within the deity. In simple terms, God's ability to be perfectly immanent to all of the universe in all of its aspects all of the time far transcends the ability of any other entity
to be immanent within the universe.

One of the most appealing aspects of Whiteheadian and Eckhartian theisms is the importance each vision confers upon the notion of divine immanence. In the medieval period, when the power of the Church kept salvation in its grip—and on many occasions charged for it—Eckhart preached about a God and a salvation that lay within creation. It was there for all to grasp. Whitehead, in his time, fought both philosophical atheism and what he felt to be the stagnant doctrines of the Judeo-Christian tradition as it was presented at the time. He was sensitive to the deepest intuitions of humankind which pointed to something greater than, but intimately involved with, the spiritual and physical progress of the world. Yet, at the same time, he stood against dogmatic religious statements which stressed divine transcendence over divine immanence. Both men championed the sense of 'goodness and worthiness of creation and of the human person.

This affirmation of the physical universe is possible because of how Eckhart and Whitehead understand God's presence within it. Immanence is understood in two ways in their theisms. First, the inner presence of the deity acts as a lure toward greater heights of actualization. Secondly, stressing God's immanence is another way of expressing the understanding that the deity is the source from which all entities ultimately derive their being. Let
us consider the first form. The primordial nature of God in the philosophy of organism, for instance, is immanent through the subjective aim; it is the lure apprehended by all becoming actual entities which, by reason of its perfect relevance to every universal situation, perpetuates the progress and the balance of intensity in the creative advance. It is present within the pure mode of perception known as "causal efficacy." Though not consciously perceived, the power of the subjective aim is no less efficacious. Below, Whitehead clarifies the matter as follows:

This subjective aim is not primarily intellectual; it is the lure for feeling. This lure for feeling is the germ of mind. Here I am using the term "mind" to mean the complex of mental operations involved in the constitution of an actual entity. Mental operations do not necessarily involve consciousness. (17)

The Godhead of Eckhartian theology is immanent to every human creature in the soul as the divine "spark" wherein the birth of the Word can take place. Its presence within the human person also acts as a lure toward the highest spiritual and physical achievement: detachment. In detachment, the person can fully experience the immanence of the divine essence in himself or herself and in the universe. This concept, therefore, goes one step further than Whitehead's because it contends that a full experience of and adherence to God's immanent lure can occur:

On this account, the more you are able to bring all your powers to a unity and a forgetfulness of
all the objects and images you have absorbed, and the more you depart from creatures and their images, the nearer and more receptive are you to the secret Word. (18)

Divine immanence, as understood in the latter of the two senses mentioned above, posits that God is the ultimate source of being for all creatures. In the philosophy of organism, God's consequent nature is (as noted earlier) the world: the world is "merely" an actualization of some of the possibilities envisaged by the primordial nature and thus exists within the divine essence. Although each actual entity has free will and "makes itself" to a certain extent, God remains the sine qua non of the creative advance. Without the deity's perpetual fusing of actual entities, without its immanence within them, they would cease to "become;" in other words, the consequent nature would cease actualizing potentialities and the entire creative process would come to a halt. Without the aim toward which the becoming of an entity is drawn, no advance would be possible. Ultimately, there can be no separation of God from the world. Ivor Leclerc makes this point clear:

The full coherence of the metaphysical categories is exemplified in the mutual interdependence of God and the World. None is independent, 'requiring nothing but itself in order to exist'. On the contrary, each requires the other as a metaphysical necessity of its 'being'. Thus the world cannot be fully and adequately understood unless God be taken into account; and conversely. (19)

God and the world sharing the same being is a theme
also clearly evident in the Eckhartian doctrine of immanence. He frequently states that "outside God there is absolutely nothing but nothing...God has all things in himself in abundance." (20) When the deity "speaks" the Word, the divine ideas emanate from it and gain temporal existence. This is a flowing out of one aspect of the contemplative Godhead into an actualizing creation, not a separation of the two. This, therefore, leads to a dynamic sharing of being between the deity and its creatures. Once again, Eckhart takes this reality one step further by insisting that humans can consciously come to terms with this sharing of being if they seek full detachment:

In the breakthrough...where I stand free of my own will and of the will of God and of all his works and of God himself, there I am above all creatures and am neither God nor creature...For in this breakthrough I discover that I and God are one. (21)

It is from this explication of divine immanence in particular, i.e., the sharing of being between God and creatures, that both Eckhart and Whitehead can speak of God as responding to, and even needing the world.

(iii) God as Relational

The two thinkers' doctrines of divine immanence, when carefully studied, depict a divine entity that is supremely relational. Their God responds to the world and both thinkers insist that God needs the world. Creation, as we know, forms an essential part of the deity's nature and
must, therefore, affect how it responds. There are many, however, who would object to this apparent limiting of God. Hartshorne counters this objection by explaining that even though the deity needs the world for its fulfillment, it remains, nevertheless, the chief exemplification of immanence and transcendence; God remains perfect in responsiveness and in the immutable envisagement of reality, actual and potential. The world does not limit God; on the contrary, it fulfills God. It is the actualization of what might otherwise remain stagnant and unable to respond or react. In commenting on this issue in Whitehead's theism, Hartshorne finds it appropriate to imagine the world as God's body:

For the body is simply that much of the world with which the mind, or personal society, has effective immediate interactions of mutual inheritance, and over which its influence is dominant. Such is God's relation to all of the world, and therefore all of it is his body. This has none of the degrading effects that giving God a body is supposed to have; indeed, it is only a way of saying that God's social relations with all things are uniquely adequate, that he really and fully loves all of them, and that they all, however inadequately or unconsciously, love him. (23)

Although relationality obviously characterizes Whitehead's God-concept, there are few detailed expositions of this quality in Eckhart's God in contemporary scholarship. In order to highlight this theme, I will begin with a brief description of the Whiteheadian deity's mode of interaction with the world. Then the significant
parallels in Eckhartian theology will be considered. What I seek to illustrate is specifically how and the extent to which Eckhart and Whitehead attribute relationality to God.

The actual entities of the world form an essential part of God's nature in the philosophy of organism (and vice versa), as we have already seen. Since God and other entities draw the basis for their experiences from each other in a mutual fashion, they have co-existed and will co-exist ad infinitum. Consequently, Barry Whitney concludes:

It is hardly surprising, accordingly, that process thinkers reject the doctrine of creation ex nihilo. They refuse to speculate about a first divine creative act, taken in a temporal sense, for it is inconsistent with God's dipolarity to conceive of a time when God existed without some "other."(24)

According to Whitehead, God has progressively drawn the other entities—its consequent nature—into an ever greater complexity of experience. Humans are the providers of the most intense experiences for God and they are the most capable of interacting with God in the current epoch. This briefly summarizes in general how God and the world relate to each other.

In more specific terms, the primordial nature of God envisages eternal objects for the sole purpose of making these available for the actual entities of the world. It also provides the subjective aims for all entities. Exactly how these eternal objects are envisaged and what
aims are provided depends upon the information the primordial nature receives from the consequent nature of God, its physical pole. Without this physical pole and the entities that comprise its nature, the deity would ultimately be deficient. In actuality, static and purposeless, a pure abstraction, like the eternal objects it envisages. A similar breakdown in the creative advance would occur if God were removed from the world of actual entities. As we have seen over and over again, Whitehead's system is characterized by relational "becomings", where nothing can exist fully, if at all, without any other thing.

In Eckhartian theology, an equally vital interrelationship exists between God and creation. The doctrine of the eidetic pre-existence of creation in the mind of God exemplifies just how integral creation is to God's nature. God the Intellect holds within it the images of creation. These images have a virtual existence in God's mind, according to Eckhart. Karl Kertz explains:

This [is the quite Platonic] view of the double existential form of things and their correlation with one another—the real, eternal, imperishable, unchangeable existence of things in the mind of God, with whom they are absolutely identified as Divine Ideas, and the unreal-like, shadowy, ever-changing, perishable existence of the things of this world.(25)

Since Godhead is eternal, it can be assumed that these images of creation are an essential part of Godhead. Schürmann insists upon this:
The divine ideas, which are the sum of the images of everything creatable, preexist and subsist beyond "God." Their life, their "bubbling" or "boiling" (bullitio), precedes emanation, that is, the "ebullition" (ebullitio) outside the divine ground. In other words, it precedes the constitution of creatures and their distinction with God. Intradivine "bubbling" and productive "ebullition," therefore symbolize from the viewpoint of created beings what "God" and "Godhead" symbolized from the viewpoint of God: namely the overcoming of the opposition between the creator and the creature.(26)

Eckhart's deity "is" with these images as part of itself. This doctrine parallels, but is admittedly not identical with, Whitehead's premise that God and the other entities that form the world have co-existed throughout eternity. "In the one and the same time in which he was God and in which he begot his coeternal Son as God equal to himself in all things, he also created the world," writes Eckhart.(27)

One difference between Eckhart and Whitehead, with respect to this particular doctrine, is the element of time once again. According to Eckhart, the divine essence created the world and "begot" its Son in eternity, beyond time. In Whitehead's theism, God and some "other" have existed as essential parts of each other throughout time. "This implies, to be sure, an "infinite regress" of matter created by God;" yet as Whitney points out, "in Hartshorne's opinion, while this may be 'unimaginable,' it is not demonstratively incoherent."(28) As I mentioned above, the concept of "beyond time" is incoherent to average human intellectual capabilities. There seems to
be, in any case, little difference in the effect produced: the deity does not exist without its ideas (potentials) and right now its ideas are being actualized as the universe that we know. Whitehead essentially supports the same premise.

Regardless of this time-related distinction, there are many significant parallels that exist between the Eckhartian and Whiteheadian God-concepts with respect to the issue of divine relationality. Consider, for example, this interesting passage from one of Eckhart's sermons:

When God created all creatures, they were so petty and so narrow that he could not move in them. Then he created the mind so equal to him and so much in his image that he could give himself to the mind. (29)

This passage suggests a gradual progression in creation from simplicity to greater complexity. Eckhart repeats the theme elsewhere with a different emphasis: "God is no destroyer of any good thing, but rather he brings it to perfection." (30) The idea that divine creative activity is a luring from simplicity to complexity or from mediocrity to perfection is also to be found in Whiteheadian philosophy.

Eckhart also contends, as does Whitehead, that "God works according as he finds willingness. He works in one way in men, and another in stones." (31) Furthermore, and more surprisingly, this implies that God can act only according to the willingness of the creature, indicating
they possess genuine free will. The extent of God's power to influence is limited accordingly. Suggesting a limit to God's power is an unusual position for a Dominican to uphold because it would be interpreted as heretical in his time and probably even by the majority of Christian theologies of our time.

According to Eckhart, God's ability to interact with humanity was truly affected by a devastating event. After the divine ideas "went out" from God and gained a physical existence, there was "the fall." Eckhart's understanding of the results of this fall is conferred in the following passage:

"This was," and is, "man's correct condition," when the sensitive faculty obeys, looks to and is ordered to the inferior reason, and the inferior reason cleaves and adheres to the superior reason as it in turn does to God,...When the bond and order of the height of the soul to God was dissolved through the injury of sundering sin...It followed that all the powers of the soul, inferior reason and the sensitive faculty as well, were separated from contact with the rule of the superior reason.(32)

Eckhart's doctrine of the fall of humanity also teaches that there was a loss of awareness among humans of the divine origin of their existence. Subsequently, the Godhead desires its creation to return to it, "I because he wants himself to be, solely and wholly, what we possess."(33) The fullness of Unity that existed before the fall is adversely affected. After the fall, God was no longer able to "give himself to the mind" since it was
cluttered with worldly images and concepts. "Divine initiative was called for to reintegrate the universe and bring the soul back to conscious realization of its divine ground." (34) The "divine initiative" consists in the incarnation of Christ.

Before I enter into a more detailed discussion of Eckhart's Christ, it may be well to note a relevant point: the fact that deity responded to the fall because its nature was adversely affected in some respect is a curious position for a medieval theologian to hold. Nevertheless, Eckhart does hold this view. That God suffered adversely from a human action sounds much more like Whitehead and contemporary process theism, even though Whitehead's writings contain neither a Christology nor a doctrine of "fall" from grace. The redemption from the fall in traditional theology generally is understood as benefitting the creature, not God. For Eckhart, however, the fulfillment of both God and humanity lies in the return to the fullness of the Absolute Unity that is Godhead. God needs creation to do this and responds in the most appropriate way:

See how dearly God loves us, how he implores us. God is impatient for the mind to turn away and scale off from the creatures. Also it is a sure truth and a necessary truth that God has such a need to seek us out—exactly as if all his Godhead depended on it, as in fact it does. God can no more dispense with us than we can dispense with him. Even if it were possible that we might turn away from God, God could never turn away from us. (35)
We must return now to Eckhart's Christology for further elaboration of God's relational qualities. Eckhart's understanding of Jesus Christ takes on many different tones throughout his writings. Sometimes he refers to the historical Jesus, sometimes to Jesus as the Son of God. The dominant Christ-theme, however, is that of (what I will loosely call) the "spiritual" Christ, as opposed to the "incarnate" Christ. This Christ is part of the Godhead, of the same nature, the "Word" through which creation poured forth. This is the Christ of the "Birth of the Word in the Soul" doctrine. It is in this birthing process that God interacts most intimately with humanity, and, as John Loeschen writes:

The arresting feature of the initial development of the birthing motif is Eckhart's introduction of necessity in connection with the relation of God and the World. (36)

The theme of "necessity" in the interaction between God and the world is pervasive throughout Whitehead's philosophy of organism as well.

The complete doctrine of why God must give birth to the Son in the human soul includes the concept of detachment. This was discussed in detail in Chapter Two, but I must emphasize the pertinent points here, briefly. After the fall, the human person lost the awareness of his or her divine roots. In order to regain this lost contact with God, one must strip oneself of all images, empty the
soul and mind in order that God can indeed enter through the Son. With the mind in its highest part clear of images and free of influences from the senses, the human person is most like he or she was before receiving temporal existence. "A man disengaged from all attachment to images and to works," writes Schurmann, "necessarily receives Jesus, to whom his new freedom likens him." (37) When detached, therefore, the mind is equal to the spiritual Christ of the Godhead and so the Godhead must pour itself into this mind. In Eckhart's own words:

[The best thing about love is that it compels me to love God, yet detachment compels God to love me. Now it is far greater for me to compel God to come to me than to compel myself to come to God; and that is because God is able to conform himself far better and with more suppleness, and to unite himself with me than I could unite myself with God. And I prove that detachment compels God to come to me in this way; it is because everything longs to achieve its own natural place. Now God's own natural place is unity and purity, and that comes from detachment. Therefore God must of necessity give himself to a heart that has detachment.(38)

This passage not only vividly expresses God's having to respond to the detached person, it also hints that the deity is "longing to achieve its own natural place."

This strongly resembles, once again, the dependency Whitehead's God has upon individual entities and how God's own fulfillment is affected by their actions. Schurmann puts this into perspective:

The necessity that binds God to man is absolute, a necessity of nature. It transcends the relationship of Creator to creature and refers to.
the energetic identity in the birth of the Son. If we follow Meister Eckhart's thought to the bottom, we find that there is no God without man. God is placed in dependence on man, to the point of receiving his being and his life from him. (39)

Again, we are shown that the deity faces limits to its power. But, this is not to be misconstrued as weakness on God's behalf. To be affected by others is merely a fact of truly relational experience. God's omnipotence is rooted in the ability to respond to all entities perfectly at all times. Below, Eckhart's talent for using the mundane to exemplify the exalted speaks to this issue most eloquently:

If someone heats a baker's oven, and puts in one loaf of oats and another of barley and another of rye and another of wheat, there is only one temperature in the oven, but it does not have the same effect upon the different doughs, because one turns into fine bread, another is coarse and a third even coarser. And that is not the fault of the temperature but of the materials, which are not the same. In the same way, God does not work alike in every man's heart; he works as he finds willingness and receptivity. There may be one thing or another in some heart, on which one thing or another God cannot work to bring it up to the highest place. (40)

Because God and humanity share the same ground, the same being, there must be mutual interaction between them. One cannot exist without the other. Creation is an integral part of God's nature. When creation is not receptive to the deity in its constant pursuit of perfect oneness with this creation, God is the lesser for it. Schürmann insists that "God is nothing as long as man lacks the breakthrough to the Godhead. If you do not consent to detachment, God will miss his Godhead, and man will miss himself." (41)
Should there come a time when all of creation does return to God, Godhead alone will exist and all multiplicity will be melded into Absolute Unity. God will be perfectly complete once again.

Because of this vital interrelationship between God and humanity, it is reasonable to assume that God would experience humanity's sufferings and joys in some respect. This is a key theme in Whiteheadian theism, wherein God is described as "the fellow sufferer who understands." Passages relating to this do indeed appear quite frequently in Eckhart's writings as well:

Be as certain of this as God lives. All the saints in heaven and on earth as well as all the angels rejoice with such joy over the smallest good deed or the smallest good will or the smallest good desire that his whole world could not offer a joy like it! And the higher each saint is, the greater is his joy. And all this joy together is quite as small as an eye's lens in comparison with the joy God has in this deed. For God has sheer delight and laughter over a good deed. (42)

However great suffering is, if it comes through God, God suffers from it first. Indeed, by the truth which is God, however slight the suffering that befalls a person may be,...provided that one places it in God, it would affect God immeasurably more than the person and it would be more obnoxious to him, insofar as it is obnoxious to the person. (43)

God experiences human joy and suffering but does not enact it. This is the case with Whitehead's references to a suffering God as well. There is a difference of course, as Diana Culbertson discloses:
The union in suffering Eckhart describes derives from God's "involvement" with the believer and the believer's faith in the divine goodness. It is comparable in many ways to the process theologian's concept of the suffering God, but the two concepts are not identical. Eckhart's God suffers with those who love, and their suffering prepares them for union. The "suffering God" of process theology not only suffers with those who love, but is afflicted by the resistance of his creation to the call forward.(44)

1 (iv) Peace and Detachment

We have examined, so far, similarities between Eckhart's and Whitehead's God-concepts pertaining to creation, transcendence and immanence, and relationality. In my view, however, one of the most interesting points of similarity between these two thinkers appears when one carefully examines the respective doctrines of "detachment" and "Peace." Both doctrines have moral connotations which are ultimately rooted in the metaphysicians' doctrines of how God relates to the world. Let us examine Eckhart's "detachment" first.

The truly detached person, according to Eckhart, is able to be active within the world and yet not be "moved" by it. "A detached man lives in the instant,"(45) aware of all things but not limited by attachment to them. Schürmann elaborates:

Eckhart, in speaking of "this present now," indicates not any departure from time, but its acceptance with equanimity. He points towards a type of communion with things: what he says here of the instant, opposed to duration, describes a
manner of moving in this world, not of evading it. Detachment carries a mark of "worldliness," since it designates a being among things, without restraint. [italics mine](46)

What characterizes the "non-detached" person "is [a] tendency to grab, to control, to dictate, to possess, to cling."(47) The moral dimension of detachment—or "letting be" as the German "Gelassenheit" is often translated—begins with the attitude inherent within it:

It [detachment] designates the attitude of a human who no longer regards objects and events according to their usefulness, but who accepts them in their autonomy....He who has learned how "to let be" restores all things to their primitive freedom; he leaves all things to themselves. He has learned not to subject them to his projects; he has rid himself of any self-affirmation in which mixed curiosity and ambition inhabit him.(48)

The detached person is, therefore, compassionate, humble and truly loving because things and people are not seen as either potential limits to personal goals or as potential means to personal ends. This occurs because it is in the state of perfect detachment that a person can fully apprehend God and, accordingly, follow God's will. All moral decision-making is free from the taint of self-aggrandizement; only in detachment, according to Eckhart, can there be altruistic action, divine action. Only in detachment does God's will come to pass through the actions of a human person. Positive moral behavior in Eckhartian ethics points to a strong affirmation of creation in its entirety, since creation shares its being
with Godhead. Ultimately, this is what detachment obtains: a breakthrough beyond God to the Godhead where there is stillness. Overall, Eckhartian "ethics" would include ideas like compassion and patience and forgiveness based on the immovable serenity of the Godhead that, ideally, should exist within the human person.

Whitehead's account of the concept, "Peace", in Adventure of Ideas, ties in closely with the Eckhartian doctrine. The introductory section on "Peace" is strongly reminiscent of "detachment." Below are a few lines from this section:

\[ \text{It is a positive feeling which crowns the 'life and motion' of the soul... It is not a hope for the future, nor is it an interest in present details. It is a broadening of feeling due to the emergence of some deep metaphysical insight, unverbalized and yet momentous in its coordination of values. Its first effect is the removal of the stress of acquisitive feeling arising from the soul's preoccupation with itself...} \] (49)

Whiteheadian "Peace" provides the softening of the pursuit of "Truth, Beauty, Adventure, Art" which "can be ruthless, hard, cruel; and thus... lacking in some essential quality of civilization." (50) It involves the sense of permanence in a world characterized as being perpetually in flux:

Peace is the ideal subjective form according to which one affirms as worthwhile individual creative effort in the face of the seeming transience of all achieved perfections. Transcendence of the actuality of immediate experience is achieved, in human beings, by the passing on of experiences to the subsequent members of the personal order comprising the self through time. (51)
The consequent nature of God is also highly involved in the objectifying and "saving" of all experience so that it can indeed be passed on to "subsequent members" of the entire universe.

As in Eckhart's detachment, there is a moral dimension to be considered in Peace. Peace involves a move away from a self-seeking, opportunistic view of things and people. Peace is "where the 'self' has been lost, and interest has been transferred to coordinations wider than personality." (52) This view also strongly affirms the goodness of all of "creation." With Peace, as with detachment, things are seen as valuable in themselves without the interference of an adumbrated notion of self. The person who has internalized Peace is also more likely to participate in the creative advance with greater awareness of his or her role in the harmonization of satisfactions; in other words, he or she can better follow the subjective aim or, as Eckhart would call it, "God's will." This can occur because this person no longer seeks to satisfy selfish ends but to actualize his or her greatest potential which is intimately associated with the potential of others. As is the case with the detached person of Eckhartian theology, the "Peaceful" person of the philosophy of organism can act altruistically, as does the deity. Ultimately, for both men, the actualization of such a concept in each individual's life leads to the sought for
sense of permanence which otherwise proves so elusive. How much closer can a person be to God than to emulate the serenity and steadfastness with which God operates in the universe?
CHAPTER FOUR: ENDNOTES

(1) Creation


(2) Fox, *Breakthrough*, 114.


(ii) *Divine Transcendence and Immanence*


(11) Fox, *Breakthrough*, 190.


(18) Fox, *Breakthrough*, 297.


(20) Fox, *Breakthrough*, 188.
(21) Fox, *Breakthrough*, 218.

(iii) God as Relational


(42) Fox, *Breakthrough*, 151.


(iv) Peace and Detachment


(47) Fox, *Breakthrough*, 45.


CONCLUSION

In this study, I have sought to demonstrate that there are significant similarities between the theisms of process thought, as exemplified by the works of Alfred North Whitehead, and the thought of Meister Eckhart of Hochheim. Those process thinkers who have already made perfunctory note of these likenesses, therefore, were not misguided in their observations. Whitehead and Eckhart have similar epistemological views and describe God as being a "dipolar" entity. The term "panentheism," furthermore, is the most accurate title for both their fundamental theological perspectives. More striking areas of compatibility, moreover, lie in Whitehead's and Eckhart's understanding of God's relationship to the physical universe, in particular their respective doctrines of creation and of divine transcendence and immanence. They agree that God needs, and is affected by, the world. Both agree, ultimately, upon a similar view of "being in the world,"--detachment for Eckhart, Peace for Whitehead--two concepts referring to humanity experiencing the stability that the divine entity represents within the universe.

If time and space allowed for it, additional similarities could be delineated and examined. This is true particularly in the case of Christology; had John Cobb's writings, for example, been examined along side Eckhart's,
there would have been a strong basis for comparison in this area. As we have seen, this significant doctrine is missing from Whitehead's philosophy of organism. I leave it to other interested students of Eckhart and process thought to pursue this and other related issues.

Over and above having systematically validated previous research on the process-Eckhart comparison, my hope is that this study will foster greater understanding of both Whitehead and Eckhart. Of particular interest to me personally was to identify what can be labelled as mystical elements in Whitehead's epistemology. I deem it very important to reinforce such affirmations of human religious experience, to offset the outright rejections of its validity. It is also important to maintain the credibility of such ancient thinkers as Eckhart, whose theologies are predominantly rooted in their personal intuition of the divine essence. Whitehead's authoritative works and his acceptance (for the most part) by contemporary scholars serve well to renew interest in mystical epistemology.
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