

Selected Writings – Meister Eckhart

In-Depth Study Guide

Meister Eckhart: Radical Mysticism at the Edge of Thought

Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–1328) stands at one of the most extreme and luminous intersections of Western thought: Christian theology, Neoplatonism, mysticism, and direct inner experience.

This book is **not devotional comfort reading**.
It is **metaphysical and existential stripping**.

Eckhart is not trying to improve you.
He is trying to **undo you**—including your idea of God.

Why This Book Matters

Most Christian writing speaks *about* God.

Eckhart speaks from **within** the experience of God.

He asks:

- What if God is not an object?
- What if union with God requires **emptiness**, not belief?
- What if the soul must become **nothing** to receive the divine?

This places him closer to:

- Plotinus

- The Cloud of Unknowing
- Zen Buddhism
- Advaita Vedanta

than to institutional religion.

Core Themes

1. The God Beyond God

Eckhart makes a radical distinction:

- **God** – the named, conceptual, imagined God
- **The Godhead** – formless, attribute-less, unknowable Being

God is God only insofar as creatures speak of Him.

The **Godhead**:

- Has no attributes
- Cannot be named
- Cannot be thought
- Cannot be prayed to

This is **pure being**, beyond subject and object.

This is negative theology taken to its absolute limit.

2. Detachment (*Abgeschiedenheit*)

This is Eckhart's central teaching.

Detachment is **not** renunciation of possessions.

It is renunciation of **attachment to self**.

True detachment means:

- No clinging to pleasure
- No clinging to suffering
- No clinging to spiritual experiences
- No clinging even to God-as-image

The soul must be as free of God as God is free of all things.

This is not metaphorical.

It is existential annihilation.

3. The Birth of God in the Soul

One of Eckhart's most controversial teachings:

God gives birth to His Son in the soul.

This does **not** mean:

- Moral improvement
- Psychological comfort
- Religious emotion

It means:

- When the soul becomes empty
- When images collapse
- When identity dissolves

The same Logos born eternally in God
is born **in you**.

This is why Eckhart was accused of heresy.

4. Nothingness and Emptiness

Eckhart repeatedly returns to paradox:

To be full of God, the soul must be empty.

This emptiness is not nihilism.

It is:

- No self-image
- No narrative identity
- No striving
- No possession of experience

Nothingness is **not absence**.

It is **radical openness**.

5. The Ground of the Soul (*Seelengrund*)

Eckhart teaches that within the soul is something:

- Uncreated
- Eternal
- Beyond time
- Identical with divine being

He calls this the **ground**.

This ground is deeper than:

- Thought
- Emotion
- Will
- Personality

There is something in the soul which is uncreated and uncreatable.

This is among the most radical statements in Western Christian thought.

6. Action Without Why

Eckhart anticipates *wu wei* centuries before Taoism enters Europe.

The just person acts without why.

This means:

- No reward-seeking
- No fear-based morality
- No spiritual ambition

Action flows spontaneously from being.

This is not ethics.
It is ontological alignment.

How to Read This Book

Do **not** read this as a normal book.

Instead:

- Read one sermon or short passage
- Stop
- Sit with it
- Let it unsettle you
- Re-read days later

This is **transformational literature**, not informational text.

You are not meant to *understand* Eckhart.

You are meant to be **undone** by him.

Common Misreadings to Avoid

- “Eckhart denies the self”
→ He denies the **false self**.
 - “This is symbolic theology”
→ He speaks from lived experience.
 - “This contradicts Christianity”
→ It contradicts shallow religion, not mystical Christianity.
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Why Eckhart Matters Today

Modern life is dominated by:

- Identity obsession
- Ego inflation
- Narrative addiction
- Constant self-monitoring

Eckhart offers:

- Silence
- Ground
- Being
- Freedom from self-concern

In a world obsessed with **becoming**,
Eckhart teaches **being**.

Questions for Study

Use these for journaling or contemplation:

- What part of me refuses to let go?
 - What images of God am I clinging to?
 - Can I act without why?
 - What remains when self-concepts fall away?
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Final Reflection

Meister Eckhart does not offer comfort.

He offers **liberation through emptiness**.

Follow him far enough and:

- Theology dissolves
- Philosophy collapses
- Language fails

What remains is **pure presence**.