

The Priority of *Iustitia* for Meister Eckhart¹

Evan King

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

*I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
Christ—for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.²*

The exemplary priority of *iustitia* for Meister Eckhart figures into the central features of his sermons and Scriptural commentaries, which date mostly from the first two decades of the fourteenth century and comprise the majority of his extant work.³ It is his favoured illustration of how a participant (*iustus*), when understood in a particular sense, is identical with its cause (*iustitia*) insofar as it shares in that quality (*inquantum iustus*).⁴ He tells us plainly that this one relation is at the centre of his entire work, announcing in a vernacular sermon that “anyone who has discernment in justice and in just men, he understands everything I am saying.”⁵ This key is provided in

1. This paper was presented to a Colloquium on the Self in the Dalhousie Classics Department in May 2011, as part of the annual Canadian Association of Classics conference.

2. Gerard Manley Hopkins, “As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame,” lines 9–14.

3. All translations of the Middle-High German are by B. McGinn and E. Colledge, O.S.A., while the translations of the Latin are my own. Citations refer, in the case of the Scriptural commentaries, to work name, paragraph numbers and page number and, for sermons, to sermon number and page number (vernacular sermons ‘*Predigt*’ [Pr.] and Latin sermons ‘*Sermo*’). Where available, page numbers refer either to *Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defence* [EE] (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1981) or to *Teacher and Preacher* [TP] (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986). For the Latin text, see Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke* [LW], eds. J. Koch et al. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1936–1964), references by volume, page and line number. I have made occasional use of the commentary in Maître Eckhart, *Le Commentaire de l'Évangile selon Jean, Le Prologue (chap. 1, 1–18)*, texte Latin, avant-propos, traduction et notes par Alain de Libera, Édouard Wéber O.P., Émilie Zum Brunn (Paris: Cerf, 1989) [henceforth OLMEVI, *L'oeuvre latine de Maître Eckhart*, vol.6]. Paragraph numbers agree in all editions.

4. According to Eckhart himself, his accusers either failed to understand the extent of the *inquantum* or missed it altogether, thereby bringing against him their charges of pantheism and heresy. See McGinn's introduction and Eckhart's own defense in EE 52–54 and 72–73.

5. *Predigt* 6, EE 186.

a discussion of soul's relation to its final and formal causes, which locates soul's essence in an instant of self-surpassing love for what it knows, beyond its activity of animating a body:

For just men, the pursuit of justice is so imperative that if God were not just, they would not give a fig for God; and they stand fast by justice, and they have gone out of themselves so completely that they have no regard for the pains of hell or the joys of heaven or for any other thing. [...] Nothing is more painful or hard for a just man than what is contrary to justice. In what way? If one thing gives them joy and another sorrow, they are not just; but if on one occasion they are joyful, then they are always joyful; and if on one occasion they are more joyful and on others less, then they are wrong. Whosoever loves justice stands so fast by it that whatever he loves, that is his being. [...] St. Augustine [St. Bernard] says: "When the soul loves (*amat*), it is more properly itself than when it gives life (*animat*)." This sounds simple and commonplace, and yet few understand what it means, and still it is true.⁶

Combining this with another passage from his commentary on the Wisdom of Solomon, we come to a unexpected reversal.

Therefore one who is seeking some such single good, especially justice, equally and at the same time finds wisdom and [all] the other gifts, which he had neither sought, reckoned or intended, according to Isaiah and Romans, "They found me who did not seek after me" [Is. 65.1; Rm. 10.20]. [...] Thus in any one thing he finds all things and all things come to him. [...] Anyone seeking justice intends and seeks nothing, and neither desires anything of wisdom; he does not know that justice in herself is the perfection of wisdom herself and the mother of wisdom. And so the one still seeking justice, in an imperfect state, says, "I did not know" that justice in her perfection is one with all good things, until she led "me into the wine cellar, in her mother's house." [Sg. 2.4, 3.4]⁷

As final cause—and from the soul's perspective, crucially—Justice is more properly its end than God himself. We shall see why it is through this projected, virtual end that the soul comes to the One wherein all things are found, insofar as Eckhart understands Justice as in a sense both the cause of and the very order of creation itself, and thus understand how this informs both his overall method provided in his commentary on John and the intention of his preaching. In knowing and loving this virtual end, the rational soul

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Expositio libri Sapientiae* [*In Sap.*], nn.106.108, *TP* 160–61 (LW II, 442, 8–12; 444, 4–8): "Sic ergo quaerens tantum unum quodlibet bonum, praecipue iustitiam, invenit aequae sive pariter sapientiam et cetera dona, quae non quaesivit nec cogitavit, nec intendit, secundum illud Is. 64 et Rom. 10: invenerunt qui non quaesierunt me. [...] Sic ergo in uno quolibet invenit omnia et veniunt sibi omnia [...]. Quaerens enim iustitiam nihil intendit nec quaerit nec appetit de sapientia nec scit quod iustitia in sui perfecto sit ipsa sapientia aut sit mater sapientiae. 'Ignorabam', inquit, adhuc quaerens iustitiam, in sui imperfecto constitutus, quod ipsa in sui perfecto esset unum cum omnibus bonis, quousque introduceret 'me in cellam vinariam', Cant.2, 'in cubiculum genitricis' suae, Cant.3."

manifests and constitutes Justice through its activity, and in this respect is taken up into the triune work of God.

The Father gives birth to his Son the just and the just his Son. All the virtues of the just and every work that has been performed by the virtue of the just is nothing else but the Son being born of the Father. This is why the Father never rests but spends his time urging and prodding, so that the Son be born in me.⁸

Eckhart's view of the human, particularly the 'humble man,' as integral to the divine self-expression involves an encounter of Augustine with a tradition stemming from Averroes, whose proximate representatives are Albertus Magnus and Dietrich of Freiberg.⁹ In this encounter, Eckhart sees himself as developing Augustine's own intentions while correcting his judgments of Platonic philosophy, insofar as the Averroist side provides the basic framework within which Eckhart reads Augustine.

Eckhart's teaching of *humilitas*, as it principally belongs to his dialogue with Augustine, equally informs his methodology, and this must be held in mind straight away. Beginning his commentary on John's Gospel, Eckhart introduces the method or *intentio* guiding his entire work (*in omnibus suis editionibus*): that the three spheres of divinity, physics and ethics should coincide, and mutually illumine one another, such that each can be explained through natural truths [*per illa naturalia exponuntur*], for those who have ears to hear.¹⁰ This is the first of many appearances of an epistemological-ethical humility which in Eckhart is the basis of a reinterpretation and development of Augustine's own notion of the *iustitia fidei* which strengthens the mind beyond its natural capacity.¹¹ Such a method sets Eckhart apart from other fourteenth-century standpoints, which tend either to assert the superiority of sophisticated theological learning against the mere appearance of scientific precision or, adversely, the disjunction of genuine piety and Scholasticism (Petrarch); as with his preaching more generally, Eckhart is here engaged in making the "summits of scientific theology" accessible to simple faith.¹²

8. Pr. 39, TP 297. This is one of Eckhart's most important meditations on *iustitia* and the *iustus*.

9. K. Flasch, *D'Averroès à Maître Eckhart*, adaptation et traduction par J. Schmutz (Paris: Vrin, 2008).

10. *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem [In Iohannem]*, nn.2–3, EE 122–23 (LW III, 4, 4–17). See also *Ibid.* nn.6, 125, 137, 142, 185–86, 361, 441, 486, 509.

11. Augustine, *De trinitate*, I.2.4 (CCSL 50: 31, 8–11): "... a se propterea cerni comprehendique non posse quia mentis humanae acies inualida in tam excellenti luce non figitur nisi per iustitiam fidei nutrita uegetetur."

12. A. de Libera, "L'Un ou la Trinité? Sur un aspect trop connu de la théologie eckhartienne," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 70.1 (1996): 31–47 at 33–34. On the importance of Eckhart's encounter with the Beguines during his period as spiritual director, having left the Parisian

Humility thus becomes a feature of the overlap of natural, divine and moral orders, understood causally as a station of passivity and abandon on the way to its actuality in Justice, and so is fundamental not only to the content of Eckhart's exposition of the Gospel but also its interpretation.¹³ That the Evangelist is engaged in the science of "being *qua* being" or of causation and emanation which, "in the proper, prior and preeminent sense takes place in generation" or begetting,¹⁴ not only is a feature of the identity of the *iustus* and *iustitia*, but furthermore enables this very 'de-professionalization' of the intellectual life.¹⁵ Already within the Hellenic tradition, with Plato and Philo of Alexandria, Justice provides a coherence to divine, human and cosmic orders which also enables a correspondence of philosophical and revealed truths.¹⁶ These Hellenic sources in turn are decisive for the role of justice in Augustine, as Robert Crouse has argued, and of this conception Eckhart is heir. The natural desire for union with the First for Eckhart occurs by way of and beyond soul's progressive and self-surpassing intellectual conformity to the universe of beings, which are nothing else than the self-expression of the *scientia* of God.¹⁷ In this conformity one is able to employ the Augustinian language of *iustitia*: this is to simply know that as the thing *ought* to be so it *is*,¹⁸ to will that it be so, and thus be transformed into that right relation. What is noteworthy with Eckhart is the extent to which the harmony of philosophical and revealed truth is enabled and developed by a doctrine of causation that is unavailable to Augustine and that uncovers in the Aristotelian language of causation an explicitly Trinitarian structure which unifies the natural, divine and moral realms. Whereas Augustine's criticism of the Platonists had been often an authority in Eckhart's time for positing the separation of natural and mystical knowledge,¹⁹ in at least three passages in

schools for a second time, in Strasbourg in 1313, see *Idem, Penser aux Moyen Âge* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1991), 304–08.

13. Likewise humility is required for being affected by the Augustinian definition of Justice—*rectitudo qua redditur unicuique quod suum est*—and thereby transformed into it (*afficitur*). See *In Ioh.*, nn.45–50, *EE* 137–39 (LW III, 37, 8–41, 6).

14. *In Ioh.* nn. 444 and 8, *EE* 124 (LW III, 380, 13–14 and 8, 10–13).

15. See *De Libera, Penser...*, 12–13; 334–47. *Iustitia* in Eckhart's commentaries accomplishes a similar role as *Gelassenheit* (serenity, detachment) in his vernacular sermons, although is ultimately subordinate to it.

16. R. Crouse, "The Augustinian Background of St. Anselm's Concept of *Justitia*," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 4 (1958): 111–19 at 115.

17. Flasch, 52–53.

18. Cf. *Expositio libri Genesis [In Genesim]*, n.5, *EE* 84 (LW I, 188, 9–189, 6).

19. B. Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity, Unity*, trans. O. Summerell (Philadelphia: B.R. Gruner, 2001), 7–8, note 17. Albertus Magnus had employed *Confessiones* VII.9 to emphasize the discontinuity of the two kinds of knowing in Dionysius. See Albertus Magnus, *Super Dion. myst. theo.*, ed. Coloniense, XXXVII/2, cap.1, 454, 13–455, 64.

the commentary on John Eckhart corrects Augustine's judgment, insisting that the causality of incarnate reason is accessible to the philosophers.²⁰ This correction is decisive for Eckhart's project, for it is through the agreement of Augustinian *iustitia* and, fundamentally, Averroes' Aristotle, that he explains how the divine beatitude achieves itself in and through every soul becoming identical to the *principium*, or Son.

Since it is only once Eckhart produces his doctrine of generation or begetting in his commentary of the first two verses of John's Prologue that he turns to Justice and the *iustus inquantum iustus* as its purest expression, I want to follow this order and begin by considering Eckhart's doctrine of causation which provides a place, in section II, for Augustine's doctrine of *iustitia* in *De trinitate* and of *humilitas* as it is used in his infamous criticism of Platonism in Book VII of the *Confessions*.

CAUSATION

Beginning his commentary on Genesis, Eckhart explains that the *principium* in which God made heaven and earth is the Word, or "ideal reason [*ratio idealis*]". He immediately advances from this fairly commonplace interpretation to approve of Averroes' teaching that a thing's *quiditas*, *difinitio* or *ratio*, and not God "as many erroneously think", has rightly been sought by the philosophers as the First Cause of a thing.²¹ An essence can be called First Cause or *principium* inasmuch as it causes the specific determinations and characteristics of its subject. And of those it is, furthermore, their final cause or 'why', which the concrete being of matter and form seeks to achieve as its natural perfection. Keeping with the correspondence of moral and natural science, this echoes Eckhart's well-known teaching in his vernacular sermons of living 'without a why,' beyond the deficient nothingness of any created final cause. That Justice should nevertheless function as the ideal *projected* final cause or 'why' of the soul fits perfectly within his understanding of essence as the timeless end of a temporal progression.²² Eckhart accepts an Avicennian view of the soul's essence, wherein the word 'soul' itself, as the form of a body potentially possessing life, designates an office, or activity, and not strictly her essence: *non est nomen naturae, sed officii*. Essentially, soul is rather "le passage actif dans le monde intellectuel ...

20. *In Iob.*, nn.2–3.96.124–25, *EE* 123, 158, 171 (*LW* III, 4, 9; 83, 5–7; 108, 3–109, 2).

21. *In Gen.*, n.3, *EE* 83 (*LW* I, 186, 13–14); *In Iob.*, n.32, *EE* 132 (*LW* III, 26, 1–11). See Averroes, *In VII Met.*, comm.5 and Aristotle, *Met.* VII.1, 1028b11. For translations of Averroes' commentary on Book XII of the *Metaphysics*, I refer to *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics*, trans. C. Genequand (Leiden: Brill, 1986). For any references to the Latin Averroes, I have relied on Kurt Flasch's selections, *op. cit.*, and on the notes in the McGinn and Colledge editions.

22. See *Pr.* 70, *TP* 318; *OLME* VI, 366–69.

[dans la mesure où elle] se dépasse elle-même en vue d'atteindre le monde intellectuel, en tant qu'elle dessine en elle-même l'ordre essentiel du monde et qu'elle saisit ainsi son origine.²³ That essence is both presupposed as the perfection of the rational nature and present through its discursive activity. When this notion of a distended, providential order is combined with the identity of essence, *ratio* and *principium*, *iustitia* emerges as the unity of the ordering principle with its effects, the efficient and final cause or medium that takes the rational soul to a union prior to all media.²⁴ It is thus by way of this identity of *ratio* and *principium* that Eckhart establishes his correction of Augustine. This, however, demands a closer inspection of the *ratio*, which yields internal division that fundamentally corresponds to the difference of ordering principle and its distended order.

A cornerstone of the Averroist reading of Aristotle is an uncompromising emphasis on the inexistence of all accidental categories in their dependence on substance. All qualities, quantities and so on are ordered intrinsically and essentially to substance for their existence. From this standpoint, it is inconceivable that one should know an essence apart from its actual existence—the position generally ascribed by its proponents to Avicenna and Aquinas.²⁵ *Esse* and *essentia* form two distinct ways of apprehending a being: either as a dynamic activity (verbally) or a static disposition (nominally).²⁶ The verbal, actual expression of an essence is necessary to its being known by us: for Eckhart, “if Justice did not justify, no one would know it, but would be known to itself alone.”²⁷ That is, in other words, for the *ratio* to

23. Flasch, 158–59. Citing Eckhart, *In Iob.*, n.528 (LW III, 459, 8–9); Avicenna, *De anima* I, c.1. See Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de anima seu sextus de naturalibus*, ed. S. Van Reit, 2 vols (Louvain-Leiden: Brill, 1968–1970), 15–17; 26–27. Also Avicenna, *Metaphysics* IX, c.7, l.73–83. See Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, ed. S. Van Reit, 2 vols (Louvain: Brill, 1977–1980), 510–11: “Dico igitur, quod sua perfectio animae rationalis est ut fiat saeculum intelligibile, et describatur in ea forma totius et ordo intellectus in toto, et bonitas fluens in omne, et ut incipiens a principio totius procedat ad substantias excellentiores spirituales absolute, et deinde ad spirituales pendentes aliquo modo ex corporibus, et deinde ad animas moventes corpora, et postea ad corpora caelestia, et ut haec omnia sint descripta in anima secundum dispositiones et vires eorum, quousque perficiatur in ea dispositio esse universitatis et sic transeat in saeculum intellectum instar esse totius mundi, cernens id quod est pulchritudo absolute et bonitas absolute, et decor verus, fiat unum cum ea.” This appears in *In Gen.*, n.115 (LW I, 270, 13–15).

24. *Pr.* 69, *TP* 313–14.

25. Flasch, 26–29 and 131–33.

26. A.A. Maurer, “The *De Quidditatibus Entium* of Dietrich of Freiberg and its Criticism of Thomistic Metaphysics,” in *Being and Knowing: Studies in Thomas Aquinas and Later Medieval Philosophers*, Papers in Mediaeval Studies 10 (Toronto: PIMS, 1990), 177–99 at 178–79.

27. *In Iob.*, n.15, *EE* 126–27 (LW III 13, 9–11): “Nisi enim iustitia iustificaret, nemo ipsam cognosceret, sed sibi soli esset cognita, secundum illud: *deum nemo vidit unquam: unigenitus, qui est in sinu patris, ipse enarravit* [Jn 1:18].”

become incarnate in the concrete, composite relation of form and matter. Although it depends on its formal manifestation *quoad nos*, the idea (*ratio*), *quiddity*, or definition—the *lux in tenebris lucet*—nevertheless abides in the composite as the basis of its intelligibility and coherence.²⁸ But for Eckhart it does not simply follow that the form of the concrete substance is entirely identical with *ratio* and therefore with the *principium* itself. Considered in relation to its ‘embodiment,’ the *ratio*, *verbum* or *logos* exists simultaneously both entirely within and entirely outside the particular, much as God, as Eckhart repeats, is distinguished by his indistinction;²⁹ the idea shines in the darkness, but the darkness does not comprehend it. A difference emerges, then, between the *ratio* or *principium* considered causally or ideally (*virtualiter*) and formally (*formaliter*): the latter is the *ratio* as abstracted from a composite; the former is “prior to things, their cause and their *ratio*, which the definition indicates and intellect receives in their intrinsic principles.”³⁰ The basis for the constitutive role of human intellection and the overlap of *divina*, *naturalia* and *moralia* unfolds from this difference which corresponds to a division of modes of knowing.

This difference of *form* and *idea* (as terms to preserve the two senses of *ratio*) takes up from Averroes for whom metaphysics relates strictly to substance in itself, *ens ut ens*, as it is stripped of the externality of temporality and efficient and final relations, whereas physics regards the same being in its relation to the otherness of motion and alteration;³¹ Eckhart accepts this and limits efficient and final causation to the domain of natural science.³² In generation, unity comes by way of form.³³ Yet form is to be distinguished from idea insofar as the very unity of form implies otherness and distinction.³⁴ Thus the *ratio* or *quidditas* which is indicated by the definition does not, *contra* Aquinas, require any reference to the composite.³⁵ Rather intellect apprehends in the idea (*ratio*) the ordering intrinsic principles by which a composite

28. *In Iob.*, n.11, *EE* 126 (LW III 11, 1–5).

29. *In Iob.*, n.12, *EE* 126 (LW III 11, 14–16): “sic est in ipsis et se tota in singulis, quod nihilominus est se tota extra singulum quodlibet ipsorum, tota intus, tota deforis.” For Eckhart’s dialectic of the distinct and indistinct see, for example, *In Exod.*, nn.112–22, *TP* 81–84 (LW II, 110, 3–115, 8). Also Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart* ..., 80.

30. *In Iob.*, n.29, *EE* 131 (LW III, 23, 1–2): “... est et ratio rebus prior, causa rerum et ratio, quam diffinitio indicat et intellectus accipit in ipsis principiis intrinsicis.”

31. Flasch, 30.

32. *In Gen.*, n.4, *EE* 83 (LW I, 187, 14–188, 1). See Averroes, *In III Met.*, comm.41.

33. Eckhart, *Liber paraboliarum Genesis* [*Parab. Gen.*], n.123 (LW I, 588, 7–8): “unum autem per formam, ut ait Philosophus et Commentator eius.”

34. Unity is second to *esse* in Eckhart’s deduction of the transcendentals since it “points to distinction” by way of negation. See *In Iob.*, n.562, *TP* 187 (LW III, 489, 1–491, 3) *passim* and *In Sap.*, n.144, *TP* 166 (LW II, 481, 4) *seqq.*

35. Maurer, 187–89.

is directed toward its form as end. In the concrete physical substance this end, to be realized in generation or begetting, is projected within itself as its own final cause. Eckhart calls this the memory that compels nature: “all of nature behaves as if it were reminded [*tamquam rememorata*] of the higher causes.”³⁶ *Ratio* as form is therefore distinguished from itself as idea insofar as it implies a relation of otherness. The fire which is capable of generating another fire equal to itself “has the form of the fire that is begotten, but not its idea” since “corporeal nature does not distinguish between thing and idea [*rem et ratio*].”³⁷

From the inner division of *ratio* or *principium*, Eckhart develops a theory of causation which encompasses the transition of the virtual or causal to the formal, wherein the causal features of the idea (*virtualiter*) are constituted in the composite (*formaliter*) in being known, as the locus for the encounter of universal and particular in their distinction. Form, not idea, gives the name and species in the concrete, whereas “nothing is as equally similar and dissimilar as the idea [*ratio*] of something and the thing itself.”³⁸ A *ratio* cannot exist *formaliter* in God since it would thereby inform him and suggest that he is inherently definable.³⁹ The idea is more interior to the thing than the thing is to itself, in virtue of its preeminent intellectual existence. Despite a creature’s radical dissimilarity to God *formaliter*, “the idea [*ratio*] of likeness is [found] in its inner depths.”⁴⁰ This simultaneous likeness and difference agrees with the inner division of *ratio*. The act of in-forming, however, requires the operation of intellect. The fundamental features of Eckhart’s doctrine here

36. *In Ioh.*, n.518 (LW III, 447, 12–448, 9). Flasch, 133. Eckhart establishes here the priority of the *ratio veri* to the *ratio boni*, insofar as the good toward which providential intellect directs its effect is contained within intellect, not as other or as final cause, but simply as *ratio*: “Patet et hoc eo quod ratio veri prior est et simplicior quam ratio boni, quin immo et ipsa ratio boni in intellectu est, non in rebus nec ipsa est bona, sed potius est ratio, logos scilicet, verbum, principium scilicet et causa boni.” This is consistent with his theory of the transcendentals, where *verum* is the inner agreement of intellect and its object (*viz. ratio* as idea), while *bonum* follows it by virtue of its inherent externality and greater multiplicity of efficiency and finality. See *In Ioh.*, n.562, TP 187 (LW III, 489, 1–491, 3).

37. *In Ioh.*, n.31, EE 31 (LW III, 24, 9–12): “... habet quidem formam ignis generati, sed non habet rationem ignis. Natura enim corporalis ut sic non distinguit inter rem et rationem, quia non novit rationem, quam solum accipit et novit rationale sive intellectivum.” Cf. *Pr.* 22, EE 194.

38. *In Exod.*, nn.120–21, TP 83 (LW II, 113, 9–114, 9): “Nihil autem tam simile pariter et dissimile sicut ratio rei et res ipsa. [...] Formae autem rerum, quae dant rebus speciem et nomen, sunt in rebus ipsis formaliter et nullo modo in deo. E converso nullo modo formae rerum sunt in deo formaliter, rationes autem rerum et formarum sunt in deo causaliter et virtualiter.”

39. *In Exod.*, n.175, TP 99 (LW II, 151, 10–11): “In deo autem nequaquam formaliter, sed virtute, propter quod ipsum non informat.”

40. *In Exod.*, n.120, TP 83 (LW II, 113, 15–114, 2): “Nec tamen esset simile quippiam, nisi in ipso secundum intima sui esset ratio similis. Patet ergo quod pariter et coniunctum similis et dissimilis.”

are inherited from Averroes and transformed by Eckhart's confrere, Dietrich of Freiberg. Dissatisfied with doctrines of emanation which construe the law of the philosophers, 'From a simple one only a one can arise,' in terms of efficient causation, Averroes produces a theory of the essential-intellectual cause, known elsewhere as a cause *per se*.⁴¹ He finds the standpoint of necessary and mediated causation inappropriate where intellectual substances are concerned. An essential cause properly speaking contains the diversity of its effects in a unified and pre-eminent fashion, and intellectual substance in particular has the capacity to contain a diversity of ideas or forms. It is the diversification of those ideas and substances which is at issue. Unlike composite substances, there is no real difference between such a separate essence and its activity; each intellect becomes what it is by its intellection of the First Principle. In thinking itself as an idea in the First it proceeds into being. Averroes compares the rank and dependence of separate intellects on the First to the many specific productive arts, such as horseshoe- and bridle-making, which contribute to their end in the single art of horse-riding, which orders them all according to their own forms, and about which they situate themselves and perfect one another through mutually deriving their respective techniques from that first cause.⁴² This theory is fundamental for both Dietrich and Eckhart. Dietrich himself, opposing any separation of intellect from its essential perfection, likewise insists on the simultaneity of intellect and its activity, not only for separate substance but, in a certain fashion, for all rational creatures.⁴³ Though it is certainly impossible here to sufficiently outline his position in itself, his Augustinian use of this unity of intellectual essence and operation is necessary for understanding Eckhart's division of *ratio* and intellect's both constitutive and passive relation to it.

According to Dietrich, Aquinas' division of being into *ens naturae* and *ens rationis* leaves no place for beings whose existence consists in being simultaneously intellectual and intellected, whose thinking of the First Principle is their very procession from it. As decidedly not various forms of direct self-awareness, these beings know their own act of intellection and return upon themselves in thinking the First who thereby is understood as other, but who is also the very act of intellection itself.⁴⁴ These beings of a third kind, *ens conceptionale*, are therefore neither natural nor fictive, and

41. Averroes, *In XII Met.*, comm.44. See Genequand, 172–74.

42. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

43. Flasch, 94 and especially 120–22. Strictly speaking, the agent intellect alone is intellectual in essence, while the rational soul, as we have seen with Avicenna, must by conjunction or union achieve its perfection as intellectual. See Alain de Libera, *La mystique rhénane. D'Albert le Grand à Maître Eckhart* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994), 200.

44. De Libera, *La mystique ...*, 167ff.

are differentiated according to modes of interiority and externality.⁴⁵ The ground of all intellectual procession is the agent intellect, whose self-relation is expressed at various levels of the conceptional hierarchy according to each mode of intellectual passivity/activity, as various kinds of conversion. The agent intellect is in a sense the *quo est*, according to which all forms of knowing articulate themselves.⁴⁶ Next, the possible intellect is responsible for the externalization and diversification (“quiddifying”) of what is implicitly contained in the agent intellect, and thereby produces a “universal conception”; the activated possible intellect constitutes for itself the objectivity, the simultaneous intelligibility and externality, of what it knows, which ‘quiddity’ denotes abstractly.⁴⁷ This is accomplished by knowing the ‘parts of the form’ or principles indicated by the definition,⁴⁸ which are only potentially existent, and depend on the actualized possible intellect for their constitution as a universal whole. Nature, for Dietrich, produces only individuals in succession, and therefore depends on the actualized possible intellect for the actuality of the individual in its attainment of its quiddity or universality. In the third rank, as distinguished from the idea or universal *ante rem*, the otherness of formal existence (Dietrich’s third rank of *ens conceptionale*) corresponds to discursive and divisive *cogitativum nostrum* or *vis cogitativa*, inherited from Averroes, which abstracts the form from the various “idols” of sensation, and there apprehends the form as particular.⁴⁹ Like the two aspects of *ratio* in Eckhart, these middle ranks coincide insofar as both modes of *ens conceptionale* “purify the concept of a substance, so that it remains bare of all

45. *Ibid.*, 210–14.

46. The mark of Averroes here is clear. Unlike for Albert the agent intellect as *quo est* is not understood by Dietrich as a part of the soul’s essence. It is rather the interiority of that essence or its Ground which does not, however, deny its individuation from the standpoint of “la pensée extérieure.” See De Libera, *La mystique ...*, 204–6 and 69, note 85.

47. B. Mojsisch, “The Theory of Intellectual Construction in Theodor of Freiberg,” *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 2 (1997): 69–79 at 74, citing *De origine rerum praedicamentarium*, cap. V, 26, 232–36 and 244: “Est autem et aliud genus apprehensionis, cuius ratio non consistit in moveri ab aliquo obiecto, sed in essendo aliquam formam simplicem, quae sit cognitionis principium in eo, quod determinantur propria principia ipsi obiecto, ex quibus constituatur secundum propriam rationem obiecti et quo cognoscibile sit. [...] sed potius in cognoscendo incipit habere obiectum propriam rationem obiecti.” The Latin text is provided in *ibid.*, 129–56. Cf. De Libera, *La mystique ...*, 203 and 227–28: “C’est grâce à l’activité de l’intellect possible que le monde contient des objets et non pas seulement des choses ou, si l’on préfère, qu’il contient des objets *in ratione obiecti*”; cf. R. Imbach, “Prétendue primauté de l’être sur le connaître. Perspectives cavalières sur Thomas d’Aquin et l’école dominicaine allemande,” in *Lectionum varietates. Hommage à Paul Vignaux (1904–1987)*, ed. J. Jolivet, Z. Kaluza, A. de Libera (Paris: Vrin, 1991), 121–32.

48. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Z 10, 1035b34–1036a1.

49. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum, Commissio Leonina: vol. 22, pars 1,2,3 (Rome: 1972–1975), q.14, a.1, ad.9.

sensible images,⁵⁰ and differ according to ideal, causal interiority and formal, external otherness. And finally, the fourth, most exterior rank is cognition according to sensation, which merely apprehends the “extrinsic dispositions” or accidental properties of a thing.

The inner division of *ratio*, now understood in terms of the intellectual constitution of the universality of a particular, natural form, corresponds to the main division in Eckhart’s theory of formal causation: namely into analogical and univocal categories. The Trinitarian interpretation of Aristotelian causation depends on this difference. Put simply, analogy expresses the relation of ‘vertical’ dependence of an analogate (creature) on its primary referent (God), while univocity corresponds to a ‘horizontal’ relation of equality.⁵¹ Along the division of *ratio*, univocity *formaliter*, around which all accidental alteration occurs, stands in analogical relation to intellectual, *virtualiter* univocity. We have seen how the composite substance is related to its form as an external end, and relies on the efficiency or guidance of intellect for its attainment. When that concrete being (*id quod est*) and essence (*quod quid est*) meet, at their most intimate unity “their conversing is the truest and sweetest of natural [utterances]” of which “exterior discourse and speech is a mere vestige and imperfection and is made like it according to a kind of analogy.”⁵² Only intellect receives and reflects, or echoes, this utterance as it is in itself, and in this passivity is the *principium*.⁵³ That is to say it apprehends the universality of the *ratio* in its unity, as idea, wholly present in both agent and patient alike, and denuded of the accidental alterations which accompany formal difference. It is characteristic of all univocal relations that the patient receives the *ratio* as eternal, as an inheritance which cannot be taken away; the patient receives the entirety of its agent so that, even in the absence of the latter, the patient retains causal power.⁵⁴ In this sense the patient or Word,

50. Dietrich, *De origine*, cap.V, 26, 250–54: “alioquin non differret intellectus a virtute cogitativa, quae etiam sic intentionem substantiae denudare potest, ut nuda apud ipsam maneat denudata ab omnibus imaginibus, ut Averroes loquitur, et appendicitis accidentalibus.”

51. B. Mojsich provides a similar structure, against interpretations which one-sidedly stress Eckhart’s doctrine of analogy (*Meister Eckhart ...*, 67–69).

52. *Parab. Gen.*, n.148, *EE* 114 (LW I, 617, 6–12): “Haec autem locutio et collocutio, qua id quod est et quod quid est, rerum quiditates, sibi loquuntur, se osculantur et uniuntur suis intimis et intime, verissima, naturalis et dulcissima locutio est [...]. Loquela enim et sermo exterior vestigium quoddam solum est et imperfectio et qualiscumque assimilatio analogice tantum illius verae locutionis et allocutionis.”

53. *Parab. Gen.*, n.151, *EE* 115 (LW I, 621, 9–11): “Suprema vero in entibus ipsum audiunt deum non solum per esse et in esse, aut per vivere et in vivere, sed per intelligere et in ipso intelligere. Intellectio enim <et> locutio illic idem.”

54. *In Iob.*, n.129, *EE* 172 (LW III, 111, 15–112, 1): “... in silentio omnis motus, temporis et dissimilitudinis, ut iam manente forma calor et gaudium naturale de calore non possit auferri.”

through proceeding, also remains in its cause.⁵⁵ In the absence of formal otherness, intellection is thus understood as the efficient and final cause of that informing activity inasmuch as the art by which a thing is made is identical with the living artificer,⁵⁶ remaining wholly within and wholly without the composite as its idea and universality.

The derivative status of all formal difference will lead Eckhart to develop a doctrine of analogy the explicit aim of which is to display the “nothingness of creatures in themselves.”⁵⁷ Analogy centres on the determined and restricted character of all creatures where, again, existence *formaliter* supplies a determinate name and species. God, indistinct and unrestricted, is absolute *esse*. Thus a determinate being receives its particular limit, by which it is a *hoc aut hoc*, through its form, and *qua* determinate, is incapable of bestowing existence, but only further determinations, either analogical or univocal.⁵⁸ Yet for Eckhart as for Averroes and Dietrich, this does not amount to a theory of serial analogical causation. By assigning to form strictly the bestowal of unity and determinacy, Eckhart is able to locate within the form, wholly similar and dissimilar, the existence by which a creature is immediately related to God.⁵⁹ The inner division of *ratio* instead provides a kind of mediation and diversifies that immediacy, for “the idea [*ratio*] pertains to intellect whose property it is to receive the one under various aspects.”⁶⁰ Ideas are *formed* by intellection and are nothing else than intellection.⁶¹ Thus it is not in virtue of finitude itself that every creature is said to be nothing, but rather in view of their creaturely dependency on the divine intellectual self-determination; every mode of the One-Goodness is an expression of the First.⁶² As with

55. *In Iob.*, nn.5–6, *EE* 124 (LW III, 7, 1–8, 6).

56. *In Iob.*, n.6, *EE* 124 (LW III, 8, 1–2): “Arca enim in mente artificis non est arca, sed est vita et intelligere artificis, ipsius conceptio actualis.”

57. *Sermones et lectiones super Ecclesiastici* [*In Ecc.*], n.61, *TP* 181 (LW II 290, 7): “... docent creaturarum infirmitatem respectu dei aut potius in se ipsis nullem.”

58. *Prologus in opus propositionum* [*Prol. op. prop.*], n.21 (LW I, 178, 12f.): “Igitur nihil ens hoc vel hoc dat esse, quamvis formae dent esse hoc aut hoc, in quantum hoc aut hoc, non autem in quantum esse.”

59. *Prol. op. prop.*, n.13 (LW I, 172, 15–173, 4): “scilicet quod omne ens et singulum non solum habet, sed et immediate, absque omni prorsus medio, habet a deo totum esse [...]. Quomodo enim esset, inter quod et esse medium caderet, et per consequens staret foris, quasi a laterne, extra ipsum esse?” Cf. *In Iob.*, n.34, *EE* 133 (LW III, 28, 10–29, 1): “intimum enim et primum uniuscuiusque ratio est.”

60. *In Iob.*, n.33, *EE* 133 (LW III, 27, 8–11): “Ratio ad intellectum pertinent, cuius est accipere unum sub alia et alia ratione, et distinguere ea, quae unum sunt in natura et in esse, et ordinem accipere quomodolibet ...”

61. *In Iob.*, n.38, *EE* 135 (LW III, 33, 2–3): “ratio in intellectu est, intelligendo formatur, nihil praeter intellegere est.”

62. *In Ecc.*, n.52, *TP* 178 (LW II, 280, 7–9): “analogia vero non distinguuntur per res, sed nec per rerum differentias, sed per modos unius eiusdemque rei simpliciter.”

Aquinas, we have in Eckhart the production of divine ideas occurring in the self-relation of God who, in knowing himself, knows the various degrees by which he can be imitated. For Eckhart, however, the human is taken up into that self-relation through the nothingness, or humility, of potential mind within which the various ideal principles of things are received. In humility that divine self-relation accomplishes itself.⁶³

IUSTITIA

Augustine's denunciation of the Platonists' pride as their stumbling block to the *patria* in *Confessiones* VII is well-known. What the Christian revelation provides for Augustine, however, is more than a moral purification of the sinful heart, as Robert Crouse insists repeatedly in his articles; the Incarnation involves a restructuring of philosophical method from the ground up, but one which answers to the yearnings of pagan philosophy for the homeland. This restructuring coincides with the recognition that the *patria* must be allowed to do its own work within the soul *in viam*—and this is humility. That work cannot be other than God himself. Thus the Trinity becomes the principle of that restructuring; Crouse writes: "the way of intellectus, which moves from *fides, per scientiam ad sapientiam* requires the mediation of the Incarnate Word, who is at once the *scientia* and the *sapientia* of God."⁶⁴ This method therefore centres not on the dialogue of a pagan philosophy with the Christian revelation regarded as external to it, such that faith would somehow be isolated from *scientia* or *sapientia*, but on the interchange of the Word spoken in the *foris* and the inner (*intus*) word, "the abiding *Principium* of human reflection."⁶⁵

With Eckhart this relation of *intus* and *foris* is framed according to the division of *ratio*, in the essence understood as form and idea, which is nothing else than the intelligible light that shines in all things without being comprehended by them. Eckhart's correction of Augustine's criticism of the Platonists thus centers on the immediacy of existence according to which all creatures are united to God.⁶⁶ But in the unity of *ratio* and *principium*, immediacy only occurs according to the determined mode of the idea, constituted in the *principium* or passive intellect, and for composite creatures in the most interior unity or kiss of the *id quod est* and *quod quid est*. In the

63. *Pr.* 15, *EE* 190: "I said in Paris in the schools that all things would be perfected in the truly humble man."

64. R.D. Crouse, "St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method," *Studia Patristica* XVI (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985): 501–10 at 505–6.

65. *Ibid.*, citing *Conf.* XI.8.10. For Eckhart as well it is the implicit Justice within the soul that "bears witness to justice and its properties." See *In Iob.*, n.85 *EE* 154 (LW III, 73, 15–17).

66. *In Iob.*, n.96, *EE* 158–159 (LW III, 83, 8–11): "Potest tamen dici probabiliter, quia ad ista verba *in propria venit* et cetera in rebus naturalibus exemplariter manifeste convincit ratio naturalis. Notandum ergo quod nihil tam proprium quam ens ipsi esse et creatura creatori."

Augustinian tradition, justice is a certain rectitude according to which “each person is given his due,”⁶⁷ which Anselm will reformulate: “whatever ought to be, rightly and justly is.”⁶⁸ Now the human is the subjective unity of both aspects of *ratio*, of the possible intellect and the *vis cogitativa*, apprehending the ideal principles of a form and their right arrangement *formaliter*. As with Augustine, the word *intus* abides as the condition for the apprehending of the Word or *ratio* in the *foris*. Thus when introducing Augustine’s definition of *iustitia*, Eckhart repeats the hermeneutic of humility which discerns the unity of divine, natural and moral truths: this definition exercises an affective power on those ‘with ears to hear,’ who no longer stand in the *foris* and the “*regio dissimilitudinis*.”⁶⁹ The unity of both powers, and the perfection of soul, will consist in overcoming the “*quasi foris*” within which justice appears before it is known and loved.⁷⁰ Therefore it is not simply the definition of *iustitia* in Eckhart that is Augustinian, but its very function; as in book VIII of the *De trinitate*, *iustitia* inaugurates the inward turn through which the true image of the Trinity is sought, enabled by its *quasi*-immediacy.

Humility is the ground planted in divinity and the basis of all subsequent virtue,⁷¹ and justice, “in its highest and full point, is every virtue.”⁷² Likewise humility is the basis for apprehending the *ratio* as *principium*, which in its perfection is able to regard all things as an ordered expression of the divine self-knowing. These form the two poles in the final passage I want to consider (*In Ioh.*, nn.47–51) where Eckhart traces the journey of the soul as she is affected by the definition of justice uttered in the *foris*, and in seeking to know it, unexpectedly arrives at the detachment and freedom of the divine essence.

There are, Eckhart writes, four questions we ask in proportion to the things we truly know: “whether they are, what sort they are, what they are, and why.”⁷³ These form a progression from the exterior to the interior: from

67. *In Ioh.*, n.48, *EE* 138 (LW III, 39, 9–10). Citing Augustine, *De trinitate* VIII.6.9 (CCSL 50: 282, 94–95): “Iustus est animus qui scientia atque ratione in uita ac moribus sua cuique distribuit.”

68. Anselm, *De veritate*, cap. XII. See S. Anselmi, *Opera omnia*, ed. F. Schmitt, v.1 (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1940), 192: “Nam si quidquid debet esse recte et iuste est.”

69. *In Ioh.*, n.48, *EE* 138 (LW III, 39, 10–11).

70. *In Ioh.*, n.46, *EE* 138 (LW III, 39, 7–9): “Videtur quidem in animo ut praesens quoddam in animo, sed tamen quasi foris stans ab ipsa iustitia, apud ipsam, similis quidem utcumque, nondum ipsam attingens.” He is roughly citing Augustine, *De trin.*, VIII.6.9.

71. *Pr.* 15, *EE* 190; *In Ioh.*, n.90, *EE* 156 (LW III, 78, 2–3): “humilitas scala est per quam deus venit ad homines et homines ad deum.”

72. *In Sap.*, n.105, *TP* 160 (LW II, 442, 2). Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* V.1, 1129b25.

73. *In Ioh.*, n.47, *EE* 138 (LW III, 39, 3): “an sint, quales sint, quid sint, et quare.” Each question for Eckhart receives its answer consecutively: “In principio erat verbum; et verbum erat apud deum; deus erat verbum; hoc erat in principio apud deum.” These questions and their precise order Eckhart attributes (incorrectly) here to Aristotle.

idolatry, through humility and justice, to detachment. Those who stand in the *regio dissimilitudinis* do not get beyond the mere ‘that’ of justice, and do not consider its meaning, having ears to hear but hear not. But whoever carefully ponders what he hears is “drawn [*afficitur*] to justice” and knows “what sort the *ratio* [*verbum*] is,” namely its effects and qualities.⁷⁴ This corresponds to the *vis cogitativa* in Dietrich which abstracts the concept from various sensible idols, and therefore has an abstract understanding of the thing. Here the soul is inclined to stay with the word or truth, to increasingly know and love it, but does not yet know what it is (*quid sit*), and so enquires further.⁷⁵ In the third stage Eckhart cites both Augustine and Hugh of St. Victor, each narrating an indescribable and unexpected transformation undergone by the soul as it is taken up beyond any external relation of knower and known; it is rather an “internal affection [*affectum multum introrsus*]” which is held by “the embrace of love” yet not known.⁷⁶ And there, says Eckhart, is where the soul having been transformed by justice finds that is itself the answer to its question, *quid est*: ‘*Iustus enim, verbum iustitiae, est ipsa iustitia.*’ That is the identity of the passive and active intellects, the perfect echo of the utterance by which all things are created. Intellect itself is the *quid est* and the *principium*.

The correlation and equality of being, knowing and willing enables the correspondence of the *divina, naturalia* and *moralia* in Eckhart insofar as the passivity of *humilitas* brings the *iustus inquantum iustus* into the Trinity as the Son or *principium*, in his progressive conformity to the universe of beings, aware of and enacting the eternal reconciliation of universal and particular; the human must relate to any *ratio* within those three realms, always beginning with the self-denial of humility which puts aside all idolatry and finitude (*hoc aut hoc*), as Eckhart repeats in his vernacular sermons. With the fourth and final question, *quare*, Eckhart explains how the *iustus* no longer has any particular end as the object of his action. The *principium* is itself the why of all created things, and has no end outside of itself. Divine action can only have itself as end.⁷⁷ This brings us to the frontier in Eckhart of detachment and the Ground of divinity from which the Trinity, and the human taken up into it, work. It is higher than humility and therefore *iustitia* also, since

74. *In Iob.*, n.48, *EE* 138 (LW III, 40, 1–2): “Et alius qui auditum mente pertractans afficitur ad iustitiam, dulcescit cordi ipsius. Iam novit quale sit verbum, quoniam verbum bonum et suave.”

75. *In Iob.*, n.48, *EE* 138–39 (LW III, 40, 5–10): “*Apud* ait, utpote propinquum et afficiens [...] Sed affectus verbo, quod est veritas, novit quidem quale est, quoniam dulce est, sed nondum quid sit, sed adhuc quaerit quid sit.”

76. *In Iob.*, n.49, *EE* 139 (LW III, 40, 11–41, 5): “... iamque alibi, nescio ubi, me esse video et quasi quiddam amoris amplexibus intus teneo, et nescio quid illud sit.” Cf. *In Iob.*, n.15 (LW III, 13, 12–14): “Universaliter enim perfectionem divinam nemo novit, ‘nisi qui accipit,’ puta iustitia sibi soli nota est et iusto assumpto ab ipsa iustitia.”

77. *In Iob.*, nn.50–51, *EE* 139 (LW III, 41, 6–42, 3).

it implies no relation to externality.⁷⁸ For Eckhart this is something more simple than the distinction of persons or the powers of memory, intellect and will in the *imago*. This concerns the relation of God and Godhead or Deity, or the structure of existence and essence in God and the self-constitution of the former through the intellectual reflexivity proceeding from Deity. Of this I cannot say more; it has rather been my intention to set out the priority of *iustitia* as it forms the professed centre of the method and content of Eckhart's work, as it enables the unity of truths divine, moral and natural, and as the projected 'why' of the soul which brings it beyond every 'why.'

In every virtue of the just man God is born, and he is filled with joy by every virtue of the just man. But not just by every virtue, rather, by every work of the just man, however small it may be, if it is performed by the just man in justice, it fills God with joy. He is delighted through and through because nothing remains in his ground that is not animated by joy. This fact is for the less discerning to believe and for the enlightened to know.⁷⁹

78. See *On Detachment*, EE 286: "The second reason why I praise detachment above humility is that perfect humility is always abasing itself below all created things, and in this abasement man goes out of himself toward created things, but detachment remains within itself."

79. *Pr.* 39, *TP* 296.