



## THE CONCEPT OF TRINITY IN THE MYSTICISM OF ECKHART'S PHILOSOPHY AND IN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

**Ph.D. Associate Professor Habil. George Daniel PETROV,**

Ovidius" University of Constanta,  
ROMANIA,  
Email: [petrovgeorgedaniel@gmail.com](mailto:petrovgeorgedaniel@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*Philosophy has often sought to speak of God, attempting to express of the knowledge of His transitory being through reason only. One theologian and philosopher who has done this is Meister Eckhart, who, in his philosophy, sought to demonstrate the capacity of the pure intellect to raise itself to a form of knowledge of God in His being, a form that contradicts the limitations of the rationality of the created nature. In contrast to these philosophical views, Orthodox doctrine emphasizes the reality of the capacity of human nature to know God, not in His being, but only through His uncreated energies. The acceptance of Eckhart's mysticism as correct would place the created intellect of human nature on an equal footing with the infinity of the nature of the One God, triune in Persons, and this is defined as heresy.*

**Keywords:** *God; person; hypostasis; being; grace;*

### INTRODUCTION

Meister Eckhart, a theologian and philosopher of the late Middle Ages, highlights in his writings the desire to remove the human being from the sacramental environment of the Church, through theological-philosophical formulas that bring to the fore the relationship that can be established between the Divine and the human, outside ecclesial communion. The foundation of his doctrine is based upon the existence of a possibility of unity between the human being and the Divine Being through the intellect, the only reality that can conceive the Logos in His essence<sup>1</sup>. The influence of the Aristotelian writings expresses another form of logic, which aims to raise human rationality to the foreground, while faith remains in the background. Starting from the premise that God Himself can only be known through reason, the scholasticism of Eckhart's time makes a constant effort to succeed such a demonstration.

The main characteristic of Middle Ages mysticism can be defined as a direct opposition against the danger of rationalization of the world, the purpose of mysticism being the union of man with God through grace, as a created divine energy, which the Divinity offers to man in order to raise him to the state of knowledge. At the same time, the mysticism specific to the Middle Ages in which Eckhart writes his work is divided into two sections. Thus, on the one hand we can emphasize the irrational mysticism as being founded upon the

<sup>1</sup> Alain de Libera - *Rhenish mysticism. From Albert the Great to Meister Eckhart*, Amarcord Publishing House, Timișoara, 1997, p. 5.



revelation, and the speculative mysticism, in which the rationality of the human person comes to the fore, having God as its object of study<sup>2</sup>.

Meister Eckhart combines the two forms of mysticism, in the sense that, although he uses reason in the process of demonstrating his ideas, he nevertheless seeks through the rationality of the human nature the first cause of things. The main demonstration that the German philosopher wanted to express as the crowning achievement of his work refers to the possibility of the human soul to perceive God through itself, without any other intercession. The philosophical procedure proposed by Meister Eckhart is the one by which rationality, limited by the analysis of concrete elements, is raised to a potential analysis of what is indeterminate.

## **1. TRINITY OF PERSONS IN THE MYSTICISM OF ECKHART'S PHILOSOPHY**

### **1.1. The knowledge of God through the Purity of Reason in Eckhart's Vision about Philosophy**

This form of knowledge, although intended to be based upon the model of the mystics, it is nevertheless based upon human rationality, the intellect being considered by Eckhart as the determinant element of the soul. Through his rationality, the human being is understood and expressed by the German philosopher as constitutive of the created world and yet different from it, for "in the soul there are not only feelings, affections, but also the intellect, as an uncreated part. The higher human intellect is the same as the divine intellect."<sup>3</sup>

The world, as a medium for the manifestation of rationality, is expressed as two realities characterized by unity and diversity. The analysis of the world as diversity implies the insertion of the human person in a material space detached from the presence of God, a space favorable only to the intellect and its conclusions, subjected to materiality. Through the analysis of the world as unity, one necessarily comes to the conclusion of its superiority over that of diversity, the world of unity being the one that provides the necessary foundation for the world of diversity. From the contact of the two realities results the unity of differences, expressed in a single unity – God "about whom nothing can be denied, because he possesses beforehand and includes the whole being".<sup>4</sup>

In Eckhart's view, the human person has the goal of becoming one with God. This ineffable union presupposes that man gives up upon what he is, his finitude, in order to unite with the Divine. "In the soul of man God must be born, the soul must therefore be both a virgin and a woman, pure but at the same time to give birth in itself, in the uncreated part, to Jesus, the Son of God".<sup>5</sup>

### **1.2. The Concept of Trinity in Eckhart's Vision about Philosophy**

If I'm not mistaken, the analysis of the concept of trinity in the writings of the German philosopher appears to open up two possible avenues for research. The first possibility refers to the existential unity of God, and the second requires the expression of the Trinity of Persons. With regard to the unity of God's being, Eckhart states: "Moreover, as He

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Copleston, *The History of Philosophy. Vol. III Medieval Philosophy*, All Publishing House, Bucharest, 2009, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> Büchner Christine, *Die Transformation des Einheitsdenken Meister Eckharts*, bei Heinrich Seuse und Johannes Tauler, W. Kohlhammer Publishing House, 2007, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Parisian Questions and Other Writings*, translated from Latin by Daniel Farcaș, Polirom Publishing House, 2013, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Deutsche Predigten und Traktate*, Diogenes Verlag AG, Berlin, 1963, p. 158.



is a simple One, without any way or determination, then He is neither Father, nor Son, nor the Holy Spirit, and yet there is something that is neither this, nor that. Behold, as it is one and simple, so it enters into that One which I have called the little fortress of the soul and does not enter it in any other way; but only in this way does it enter and is inside".<sup>6</sup>

The dogmatic doctrine expresses God, the One in Being, in a different way, that emphasizes that the Father gives birth to the Son, the love between the two Persons being the cause of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the German philosopher explains: "I once have been asked what the Father is doing in heaven. I answered, 'He conceive His Son, and this act is so delightful to Him, and it pleases Him so much, that He does nothing but conceive His Son, and both make the Holy Spirit bloom.'"<sup>7</sup>

From a theological perspective, God in His being cannot be perceived through the intellect. Unlike the philosophy and even theology of his time, Eckhart does not consider the concept of Trinity as being a mystery, thus incomprehensible to human rationality, but on the contrary, based upon the premise of the existence of a pure rationality, capable of communion with God, he expresses its intelligible character, the fact that what theology defines as incomprehensible is accessible to the intellect of the human person.

To support his ideas, the German philosopher appeals to the theory of the unity of the soul with the Absolute. In order for Jesus to be born in the human soul, the person must be related to the historical act of His birth, although for Eckhart the historical presence of Jesus in the world has the sole value of offering the possibility of human nature to unite with God. Through man's pure reason, he can participate in the trinity, says Eckhart, in the sense that human rationality, relating itself to the First Cause, reaches the state of contemplation that goes beyond the trinity, which would naturally presuppose a form of determination. Thus, "God is an intellect that lives forever in the knowledge of Himself, remaining alone in Himself, where nothing has ever touched Him, for there He is, alone in His silence. In His knowledge of Himself, God knows Himself."<sup>8</sup>

God is knowledge because, " God reveals Himself in knowledge, in knowledge God flows in Himself, in knowledge God flows in all things, in knowledge God created all things".<sup>9</sup> Therefore the conclusion that man, through pure reason, knows God, by elevating himself above every form of knowledge.

The intra-Trinitarian relationship is considered by the German philosopher as a Deity who has in Herself a creator Father, a Son who is continually born and Who, through His incarnation, brings the whole of creation back into God, Jesus being the premise of all created things that existed in the divine plan before being created.

As for the Person of the Holy Spirit, Eckhart, although he calls Her a Trinitarian person, he understands Her only as the "flowering of the Father and the Son",<sup>10</sup> the emphasis of his writings focusing especially on the relationship between the Father and the Son. The conclusion of his works on the trinity is that the Divine Persons are only modes of manifestation of the divine being and not independent Persons.

<sup>6</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Deutsche Predigten und Traktate...*, p. 164.

<sup>7</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Benedictus Deus Treatises and Sermons*, translated by Dan Dumbraveanu, Stela Ghetie Tinney, Victoria Comnea, Herald Publishing House, 2019, p. 152.

<sup>8</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Benedictus Deus Treatises...*, p. 167.

<sup>9</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Die Deutschen Weke*, vol. 3, Kohlhammer Publishing House, Stuttgart, 1973, p.374.

<sup>10</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Benedictus Deus Treatises...*, p. 188.



## 2. THE DOGMA OF THE HOLY TRINITY IN THE DOCTRINE OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

### 2.1. The Holy Trinity - One Being, Three Hypostases

From the outset, it must be specified that the Holy Trinity is not a philosophical concept, a concept resulting from the rationality of the human person, but is a reality that can be experienced by the human being through uncreated divine grace. This experience in grace does not raise the human person to the knowledge of God in His being, since this knowledge exceeds the capacity of the created nature to know God, but to a knowledge of the three distinct Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, through uncreated divine grace. God in His being is unknowable to creation, but man, the crown of creation, experiences the knowledge of the Holy Trinity, through the Person of the Son of God, born from eternity by the Father. This is highlighted by St. John the Evangelist when he says: "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known" (John 1:18). Moreover, the Son of God incarnated "in the fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4) Himself emphasizes that eternal life for man is based on the knowledge of God One in Being, triune in Persons: "And this is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). The Incarnation of the Son of God brings to humanity the revelation by which the rationality of the created nature knows the Father through the Son, Himself as the Son of the Father, born forever of the Father, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds forever from the Father (John 15:26).

The Persons of the Holy Trinity are not manifestations of the one divine being, as Eckhart's philosophy stipulated, but real modes of existence of the One God, triune in Persons. Although the Holy Trinity is revealed to the extent of the rational capacity for knowledge, the mystery of the Trinity is never exhausted and remains transcendental. This transcendental mystery pushes human nature towards a deepening, through experience, of the triune God in Persons, through uncreated divine grace, an experience imperatively necessary for the human being, without which "we would drown in the indefinite that gives us no certainty about anything, therefore not even the certainty of eternal existence, through communion with the divine personal reality, whether we remain with the formula of an impersonal or monopersonal God, who does not have in himself the spirit of communion and, therefore, would not be able or disposed to communion with created persons".<sup>11</sup>

According to Revelation, God is both transcendent and immanent. He, out of love for man, comes closest to our nature through the incarnation of Christ the Savior, in order to give us the possibility of knowing the Holy Trinity and to make us participate in, through grace, the love of God triune in Persons. The communion of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, who possess the one essence of the Divinity, is the foundation of our communion with God<sup>12</sup>.

The interpersonal relationship of the Holy Trinity is revealed to humanity through Christ, the Son of God. Thus, Christ, being the Image of the Father, is inseparable from Him, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9), and the Person of the Father and the Person of the Son are revealed to humanity through the distinct work of the Holy Spirit. In the act of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon each individual Apostle and upon the

<sup>11</sup> Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. I, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1978, p. 283.

<sup>12</sup> Fr. Dumitru Radu, *Missionary Guidance*, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1986, pp. 107-108.



Council of the Apostles expresses the model of the communion of the Holy Trinity, emphasizing the unity of nature in the diversity of persons<sup>13</sup>.

## 2.2. Trinitarian Terminology and its Meaning

The life of the human person by uncreated divine grace in the love of the Holy Trinity has never required a rational expression of the different works of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. However, because of the inability of nature to rationally express the experience of living in God, it was imperative that a Trinitarian terminology be formulated, in order to preserve revealed truth in its pure form, unaltered by any heresy.

The rational expression of what the Saints of God experienced by grace required borrowing terms from the philosophical environment, terms adapted to the needs of expressing the experience that already existed. Thus, terms such as being, nature, essence, substance, nature, hypostasis, person have acquired a theological meaning that expresses the revealed truth, experienced by the Saints in their lives. Thus, the term *being* defines the Deity, the common substance of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. By *nature*, we define the reality that constitutes a being, and the term person defines the subject who has the being in himself<sup>14</sup>.

Although there is the same unique Being or divinity in the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, They are not confused because of the particularities of each Person. Thus, St. Basil the Great emphasizes: "The personal properties contemplated in the being differentiate the common ones through seals and forms. For this is the nature of personal properties, that the identity of being shows distinction, and the properties themselves, often opposing each other, do not break the unity of being."<sup>15</sup> By this we understand that the entire divine nature subsists in the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, Persons who are not confused, each having distinct properties.

The unmistakability of the Persons of the Holy Trinity can also be defined by the act of intra-Trinitarian love, an act that takes place in a continuous present, between distinct divine Persons who possess, each in part, the entire divine nature. Moreover, intra-Trinitarian love is also experienced by the human person, who is called to the likeness of God through divine uncreated grace, in order to share in the personal love of the Holy Trinity.

The unity of the being in the three divine Persons is expressed by St. Gregory the Theologian in the words: "God is One, because the Godhead is one, and all that is in Him refers to this unity, even though it is believed to be threefold. For there is not One more God and the Other less God. None One first and the Other later. It is neither cut by will, nor is it divided in power, nor is there anything in God that is proper to those divided, but the Godhead is undivided into the particular, if we wish to speak briefly, it is like a single and indistinct light in three suns, in a reciprocal interiority. When we look to the Godhead and to the first cause and to the one principle, we reflect on the One. If we fix our gaze on Him in Whom the Godhead is, and on Those Who are of the first cause in a timeless manner and of

<sup>13</sup> Fr. Dumitru Radu, *Missionary Guidelines...*, p. 109.

<sup>14</sup> Fr. Ion Bria, *Dictionary of Orthodox Theology*, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 305-306.

<sup>15</sup> Saint Basil the Great, *Adversus Eunomium*, II, in PG 29, col. 637 in Fr. Dumitru Popescu, *Theology and Culture*, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1993, p. 13.





equal glory, there are three Those who are worshipped."<sup>16</sup> From this it follows that the one being of God is complete in the three distinct Persons, who are not, as expressed by Aristotelian philosophy, three manifestations or three faces of God.

The divine being is constitutive of each divine Person in its way, fully, thus, intra-Trinitarian communion is absolute in the sense that each Person of the Holy Trinity is fully transparent to the others. "To say of the Son that He could and could not be, is an impiety and a boldness that touches the Father's being; for could it not be what is proper to it? This is like saying: the Father could not be good. But as the Father is eternally good by nature, so He is eternally begotten by nature. And to say, "The Father wills the Son, and the Word wills the Father," does not show an antecedent will, but indicates the authenticity of the same nature and the quality and identity of the being."<sup>17</sup>

The nature or supra-essence of God is unknowable to the rationality of the human person, being known on the basis of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, through the revelation offered to humanity through the Person of Christ, in the Holy Spirit. The intra-Trinitarian distinction is evidenced by "the way of possessing the divine Being. The First Person, God the Father, possesses the divine Being in Himself, not from anyone else. The second Person, the Son, receives His Being by birth, from the first Person, that is, from the Father, and the third Person, the Holy Spirit, receives it by procession also from the first, that is, from the Father. Therefore, the first Person is called the Father, the second the Son, and the third the Holy Spirit."<sup>18</sup>

### 2.3. Intersubjectivity of the Persons of the Holy Trinity

There is only one God with one being, unknowable to human rationality, a rationality that expresses its inability to define, in human words, the divine supra-essence. The expression of the communion that is accomplished intra-Trinitarian is based upon the unity of nature and personal attributes. God the Father is the eternal Mother of the Son and the eternal Procession of the Holy Spirit, imparting to the Son and the Holy Spirit, through the act of birth and procession, the divine being. Having in Himself the one divine being, the three Persons retain their personal attributes, on the basis of which the communion between Them is absolute.

The intra-Trinitarian interpenetration is perfect, each Person of the Holy Trinity comprising within Himself the other two. The Biblical account expresses this mutual interpenetration in the words of Christ the Savior who says: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father. I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me. The words that I speak to you do not speak of Me, but the Father, Who abides in Me, does His works. Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me" (John 14:9-11).

The interpenetration that takes place between the Persons of the Holy Trinity is expressed by St. John of Damascus as follows: "The hypostases dwell and stand in each other, for they are not distant and inseparable from each other, and have the interpenetration of one in the other, not in the sense that they contract or mix, but in the sense that they are

<sup>16</sup> Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Discourses. Five Utterances on God*, Herald Publishing House, 2022, p. 103.

<sup>17</sup> Saint Athanasius the Great, *Three Words Against the Arians*, in col. Church Fathers and Writers, vol. 15, translated by Fr. D. Stăniloae, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1987, in *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, Coordinator: Rev. Prof. Dr. Ștefan Buchiu, Basilica Publishing House, 2017, p. 325.

<sup>18</sup> Fr. Prof. Dr. Ștefan Buchiu, (Coordinator) *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology...*, p. 326.



united with each other: The Son is in the Father and in the Spirit; The Spirit, in the Father and in the Son, and the Father, in the Son and in the Spirit, without being contracted, confused or interfered".<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the divine supra-essence, common to the Persons of the Holy Trinity, is the foundation of the Trinitarian interpenetration. The fact that the Persons of the Holy Trinity are "One in the Other" does not mean that they are confused, but only that they possess, undivided, the same one divine being.

The intersubjectivity of the Persons of the Holy Trinity perfectly expresses the communion that has as its foundation the one divine being, common to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. In it, the three divine Persons express themselves as distinct persons, each Person seeing Himself in the Other two. "The Father sees himself only as the Subject of the Son's love. But the Father's ego is not lost by this, for it is affirmed by the Son, who in turn knows himself only as the Son of the Father. But in this very way the sense of fatherhood is intensified in the Father, and in the Son the quality of sonship.

The Father, who embodies all "fatherhood", living himself as Father, lives as Father all the filial subjectivity of the Son; the subjectivity of the Son is interior to him, but like a Father. And just as the Father lives the subjectivity of the Son in His fatherly subjectivity, without mixing them, but intensifying them, so the Son lives the fatherly subjectivity of the Father in His filial subjectivity, as the Son who embodies all sonship. Everything is common and perihoretic in the Holy Trinity, without, in this common movement of the subjectivity of One in the Other, confusing the distinct ways of living this subjectivity together."<sup>20</sup>

#### 2.4. The Work of the Persons of the Holy Trinity

Although in God there is only one being, unknowable to human nature, it is fully contained in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The uncreated divine energies, proper to the works of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, spring from the One divine being, common to the three Persons. The unity in Being and the distinction in work of the Holy Trinity is highlighted by St. Gregory Palamas who says: "He believes in the same God, divided and inseparable, united in communion and distinct in union, not going out of Himself in going out and always moving motionless, dividing Himself undivided and partaking whole, in the image of the sun's ray."<sup>21</sup>

The relationship between the Uncreated and the created, between God and man, is not accomplished through the relationship of man with the being of God, but through the experience of the uncreated divine energies, through which the one God is shared with humanity. Although the uncreated divine energies spring from the One divine supra-essence, they can be experienced by human nature, the uncreated divine grace being the means of humanity's ascension to its Creator. In other words, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit descend to humanity, out of love, through the uncreated divine energies, so that man can ascend by grace to deification.

The intra-Trinitarian life pertaining to the divine being is unknowable to human nature, but the works proper to the Persons of the Holy Trinity can be known by the rationality of our nature. Thus, in the plan of creation, the Father is the Creator, but He does not create alone, but through the divine Logos, that is, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit,

<sup>19</sup> Saint John of Damascus, *Dogmatics*, Apologeticum Publishing House, 2004, p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Fr. Prof. Dr. Ștefan Buchiu, (Coordinator) *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*..., p. 334.

<sup>21</sup> Saint Gregory Palamas, *On Divine Communion*, in *Philokalia*, vol. VII, translated by Fr. D. Stăniloae, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1977, p. 409.



Who "was hovering over the waters" (Genesis 1:2), resulting in a joint work of the Holy Trinity. Then we see the work of the Son of God, Who, "in the fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4), descends to our nature and becomes man in order to raise human nature to the state of living in uncreated divine grace. "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Although the Incarnation is proper to the Person of the Son of God, it is accomplished in full unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The incarnation of the Logos was accomplished through the descent of the Holy Spirit, by grace, upon the Blessed Virgin Mary, from whom the divine Logos takes human flesh, being in all things alike us, except sin. Then, after the work of salvation of humanity has been accomplished through the work of the incarnate Son of God, with the act of ascension, the Holy Spirit descends into the world, to make humanity a partaker of the body of Christ in His Church. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, humanity is called to partake of the body and blood of Christ, this communion being the pledge of eternal life.

Intra-Trinitarian love, perfectly expressed in the *ad intra* life of the Holy Trinity, is brought into the plan for humanity, so that human nature may experience it through divine uncreated grace and participate in it, as much as possible for a creature. As a consequence, the love that the Father manifests in a continuous present towards the Son and the Holy Spirit becomes, through the incarnation of the Son, a love addressed to all human persons, persons who are called to respond to this love, becoming through the appropriation of uncreated divine grace, children of God, not according to being as Christ is, but according to grace. God the Father, by perfectly loving the Son, descends His love to the human nature assumed by Christ through the act of the Incarnation.

Thus, through the incarnate Son, humanity has the possibility of participating freely and consciously in the love of the Holy Trinity, and through the work of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost, man, tasting grace, becomes bolder towards the Father.

Through uncreated divine grace, man experiences the work of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, not as an external help, but ontologically, grace working within man, making him in complete freedom, according to the divine will and able to respond to the love of God the three in Persons. Collaboration with grace belongs to the freedom of man with whom he has been endowed by creation. The human person, although he has the capacity to collaborate with grace, this collaboration is not binding on God's part, for man chooses fully consciously whether or not he wants to appropriate divine uncreated grace in the Church through the Holy Mysteries. "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make a dwelling in him" (John 14:23).

Unity in the work of the Persons of the Holy Trinity is perfect. Each Person has his own work, but he is never a stranger to the Other divine Persons. In order to express the work of the Holy Trinity in relation to the world, the Holy Fathers show that everything is made by the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit, and St. Basil the Great emphasizes: "There is only one source of all that exists, Who creates through the Son and perfects through the Spirit."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Saint Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, XVI, in col. Church Fathers and Writers, vol. 12, Basilica Publishing House, 2014, p. 53.





## CONCLUSIONS

According to what has been previously highlighted, the mysticism of Eckhart's philosophy turns out to be limited to rationality, and therefore cannot rise beyond the limitations imposed by the capacity of human nature to perceive the unknowable of God's being. One of the heresies that he formulated and expressed refers to the ability of the human intellect to penetrate the transcendence of God. Eckhart supports the possibility of knowing through the intellect the divine supra-essence. According to the Orthodox doctrine, which is founded upon the Holy Scripture and the life in grace of the Holy Fathers, the divine supra-essence will remain an absolute mystery for humanity, because rationality, by its limitation, cannot encompass the infinity of God's nature. At the same time, Eckhart affirms the existence of a created grace, defined as divine created help, through which God would help man to reach a knowledge of God. Of course, the German philosopher remains tributary to the Catholic doctrine of grace, which differs from Orthodox doctrine precisely in that it is created. Basically, between God and man there is, according to Catholic doctrines, another created power, which would help man as a superadded divine gift. In contrast to this heresy, Orthodox doctrine emphasizes that divine grace is uncreated, having its source in the common being of the Holy Trinity. Moreover, grace acts on the ontological man, not as a superadded gift, through him, the human person, in full freedom and conscience, willing to work according to God's will, thereby experiencing living in grace.

Another major mistake that the German philosopher makes is that he equates the human intellect with the divine intellect, precisely in order to argue the possibility of knowing God in His being, through the intellect. Equating the infinity of God with the intellect of the creature is meaningless. Nothing in the rationality of the created world and implicitly of man can rise to the knowledge of God in His being.

The last heresy on which we have dwelt in this study refers to the Persons of the Holy Trinity, Who, according to Eckhart, are not equal and consubstantial, the Father being the One Who gives birth to the Son, so that later, from this act of absolute love "the Holy Spirit may flourish".<sup>23</sup> According to Orthodox doctrine, the three Persons of the Holy Trinity are equal and consubstantial. The Father gives birth to the Son from eternity and proceeds the Holy Spirit from eternity, which is in no way a causal effect of the love between the Father and the Son.

In concluding what has been expressed, we see that the rationality of human nature cannot encompass the mystery of the Being of God, as Meister Eckhart tried to determine it, since the experience and knowledge of God is possible for human nature only through the uncreated divine grace, which works ontologically in man and through which he is called to reach the state of deification according to grace.

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<sup>23</sup> Meister Eckhart, *Benedictus Deus Treatises and Sermons...*, p. 152.



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