

Kierkegaard's Reception of German Vernacular Mysticism: Johann Tauler's Sermon on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross and *Practice in Christianity*

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Abstract

The role of the image in the third part of *Practice in Christianity* suggests that Kierkegaard was inspired by Meister Eckhart's and Johann Tauler's account of detachment (*Entbildung*). I argue that Kierkegaard was not only indirectly influenced by Tauler through the works of the Pietistic writers, but also *directly* inspired by Tauler's sermons. Particularly striking are similarities to a sermon that was included in the Tauler edition owned by Kierkegaard: the second sermon on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. A comparison of the texts shows how both Tauler and Kierkegaard criticize the mental images their contemporaries hold of Jesus Christ. Both stress the importance of existential kenosis, which they describe as *Entbildung* of the intellect and the will, and which is an essential part of following Christ in his abasement. Furthermore, they analyse inadequate attempts to imitate Christ in a similar manner. Even though Kierkegaard and Tauler differ with regard to the ontological implications of *Entbildung*, the ethical implications are the same: one should not retreat from the world, but rather turn to it with a selfless attitude.

Keywords: Anti-Climacus, *Bildung*, detachment, dying-to, image, *imitatio Christi*, kenosis, Meister Eckhart

The Revival of German Vernacular Mysticism in 19th century Denmark

If taken at face value, the remarks on mysticism in *Either/Or* imply that Kierkegaard did not hold it in high esteem. Judge William accuses mysticism of acosmism, that is, of isolating the individual from the world. From his ethical point of view, mysticism indirectly propagates a freedom from all obligations to others, because “the individual feels his God-relationship so powerfully in all its inwardness that beside it his earthly relationships lose their significance.”¹

Unfortunately, Judge William does not mention any sources by name, and mysticism is a large field, spanning centuries and a wide variety of thinkers.² Also, these negative verdicts need to be taken with a grain of salt. After all, they are the statements of one of many fictive authors in Kierkegaard's cabinet of figures. As this article will show, Kierkegaard himself was deeply inspired by a particular strand of mysticism that was popular in 19th century Denmark: He witnessed a renaissance of German vernacular mysticism, in particular of Meister Eckhart (1260–1328) and Johann Tauler (1300–1361). Their thought, however, was mediated by Pietism and by Hegelianism.³

In the culture of 19th century Denmark, Pietism played an important role. As Barnett notes, this role largely had to do with “the relationship between the state-sponsored Halle Pietism and the more radical Moravian Pietism (or, alternatively, *Herrnhutism*) – a relationship, that, divergences aside, was characterized by cross-pollination between the two movements.”⁴ When he was a boy, Kierkegaard attended the meetings of the Moravian *Brødremenighed* together with his father. Later in life, he studied the writings of Pietists authors like Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705), Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) and Christian Skriver (1629–93), but probably with most zeal the writings of the “father” of Pietism, Johann Arndt (1555–1621). Arndt had published a widely read edition of Tauler's sermons, in which he also quoted Luther's appreciative statements about the Dominican monk.⁵ He dedicated book III of his *True Christianity* to Tauler's theology, and he stressed the importance of detachment and dying-to-oneself. With this, Arndt significantly shaped the reception of Tauler.

Until recently, Arndt has been regarded as the main inspiration for Kierkegaard's concept of detachment. Marie Mikulová Thulstrup stresses the importance of the concept of dying-to (*Afdøen*) for Kierkegaard's understanding of Christianity, and

she claims that Arndt essentially influenced Kierkegaard's use of it.⁶ However, as Peter Šajda argues in his seminal essay on Kierkegaard's reception of Tauler, we need to admit that Arndt "inherited" the idea of dying-to as a metaphor for total detachment from Tauler and that Tauler had a more important influence on Kierkegaard than hitherto acknowledged.⁷

Whereas the renewed interest in Pietism contributed to the eminence of Tauler in the 19th century, Hegel initiated a revival of Meister Eckhart. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, he described Meister Eckhart as an "older theologian", who "had the most thorough grasp of this divine depth", and who embarked on a speculative mission similar to his, that is, to conceptualize the content of the Christian faith.⁸ In 1840, at the height of Danish Hegelianism, the Copenhagen theologian Hans Lassen Martensen published a study on Meister Eckhart, in which he explicitly linked Hegel's and Meister Eckhart's thought: Martensen called Meister Eckhart a "patriarch of German speculation," who speaks with so much "logical enthusiasm" about the eternal reason in God that "one often is involuntarily reminded of Hegel."⁹ Martensen's monograph also includes a selection of Meister Eckhart's sermons and treatises, which he had translated into Danish. As Šajda notes, Martensen's book was "the most extensive account of the German mystic that Kierkegaard ever came in touch with," and it thoroughly determined Kierkegaard's understanding of Meister Eckhart.¹⁰

Perceiving Meister Eckhart under a speculative paradigm led Kierkegaard to form a rather negative view of the Dominican. Thus, instead of the abstract, proto-Hegelian and acosmic mysticism he found in Martensen's Meister Eckhart the scholar (*Lesemeister*), Kierkegaard was more attracted to the practical mysticism of Johann Tauler the master of living (*Lebemeister*).¹¹ However, Tauler had in fact been a pupil

of Meister Eckhart and his spiritual advice built strongly on Meister Eckhart's thought.¹²

This article will show that Meister Eckhart's ontology of the image (*bild*)¹³ is present in Tauler's advice on detachment and as such also in Kierkegaard's account of dying-to. Furthermore, I suggest that Kierkegaard was not only indirectly influenced by Tauler through the works of the Pietistic writers, but also *directly* inspired by Tauler's sermons. A comparative reading of the third part of *Practice in Christianity* and Tauler's second sermon on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, both interpretations of John 12:32, identifies essential similarities. In particular, I show how Tauler's understanding of detachment, images, and imitation of Christ in this sermon are reflected in Kierkegaard's *Practice in Christianity*. I begin by addressing the intricate question of Kierkegaard's familiarity with Tauler's work. Subsequently, I focus on the theme of the image in *Practice in Christianity* and consider Meister Eckhart's role for the eminence of the idea of detachment (*Entbildung*) in German vernacular mysticism. After a short summary of Tauler's sermon, I compare Tauler's and Kierkegaard's expositions of John 12:32 with regard to the mental image of the Crucified, ways of following Him, dying-to-oneself, kenosis and compassion.

Kierkegaard's Reception of Tauler's Thought

If one were to rely on Kierkegaard's published work only, Tauler's influence on Kierkegaard would easily be missed. There is only one explicit reference to the Dominican monk: *On the Concept of Irony* mentions Tauler, but the quotation is slightly inaccurate and furthermore stems from the song "Von der Seligkeit des Seyns in Gott", which according to current scholarship ought to be classified as Pseudo-Taulerian.¹⁴ However, Kierkegaard owned a comprehensive collection of Tauler's sermons which

had been translated by Arndt and Spener and which are regarded as authentic: *Johann Tauler's Predigten auf alle Sonn- und Festtage im Jhr. Zur Beförderung eines christlichen und gottseligen Wandels*.¹⁵ More important, as Šajda shows, the entries in Kierkegaard journals and papers suggest that Kierkegaard was profoundly interested in Tauler's thought.¹⁶ For instance, in 1847 he notes: "NB. Tauler: The one who regards pain like joy / And joy like pain / Should thank God for such indifference."¹⁷

Only recently have scholars started to become aware of the striking thematic similarities between Kierkegaard and Tauler, but until now, no textual comparison has been carried out. Šajda argues that Tauler shaped Kierkegaard's understanding of the Middle Ages, ascetism, the monastery and *imitatio Christi*.¹⁸ M.G. Piety suggests that there are parallels between Kierkegaard's and Tauler's religious epistemology.¹⁹ In his essay on natural desire for God, Lee C. Barrett notes that "Tauler used his metaphysical vocabulary to express a theological vision that exhibited significant formal parallels to Kierkegaard's subversion of Catholic and Lutheran scholastic dichotomies", and he asserts that "these parallels are no accident, for Kierkegaard read Tauler appreciatively."²⁰ Analysing Kierkegaard's understanding of the edifying, Carl S. Hughes stresses that "in Kierkegaard's intellectual context, the most proximate form of apophatic theology was the German mystical tradition led by Meister Eckhart and Johannes Tauler: Kierkegaard was familiar with the work of both figures and was especially influenced by Tauler."²¹ Simon D. Podmore suggests that Kierkegaard's concept of spiritual trial might have been influenced by Tauler's *Anfechtung*,²² but at the same time he maintains that "Kierkegaard's relation to the mystics and the mystical tradition remains a befittingly opaque area of inquiry."²³ The opaqueness is mainly due to the fact that Kierkegaard does not explicitly refer to any of Tauler's sermons. This, however, is not a valid argument against his familiarity with Tauler's thought –

after all, Kierkegaard often indirectly engages with the works of other thinkers without mentioning the source, see for instance his criticism of Hegel and Kant in *Fear and Trembling*.²⁴ Last but not least, Kierkegaard's edition of Tauler's sermons has not been translated into English, which further complicates a thorough engagement with the concrete textual sources for Kierkegaard's reception of Tauler.

In order to bring some clarity to the nebulous question of Tauler's direct impact on Kierkegaard, a detailed consideration of *Johann Tauler's Predigten auf alle Sonn- und Festtage im Jhr. Zur Beförderung eines christlichen und gottseligen Wandels* is needed. In the following, I will therefore concentrate on a comparison of Tauler's and Kierkegaard's expositions of John 12:32.²⁵ The collection of Tauler's sermons that Kierkegaard owned is a fairly close translation of the Middle-High German texts. I will use the same edition and offer the German quotes in the endnotes.²⁶

The Image of Christ in *Practice in Christianity*

In the preface to *Practice in Christianity* we read that "there ought to be no scaling down of the requirement"²⁷ for being a Christian. But according to Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author Anti-Climacus, this is exactly what has happened in the 19th century. It therefore is his designated task "again to introduce Christianity into Christendom."²⁸ Being a Christian means to live a life that is oriented towards imitating Jesus Christ. Thus, how one understands the life of Jesus Christ is essential for how one leads one's own life. According to Anti-Climacus, his contemporaries think of Christ only in his loftiness, and not in his abasement. Like many of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors, Anti-Climacus thus admonishes that Christianity has been reduced to a convenient element of bourgeois life. Christianity in the 19th century does not seem to have anything to do anymore with becoming a follower of Jesus

Christ. The suffering, abased God-man – an offensive sign of contradiction – has been replaced with an attractive, intellectually digestible “fantasy picture of Christ.”²⁹ As a consequence, people in 19th century Copenhagen would not even recognize Christ if he was walking among them. In order to reintroduce Christianity into Christendom, Anti-Climacus therefore tries to correct this fantasy picture. In the three parts of *Practice of Christianity*, he re-addresses neglected aspects of the God-man: Jesus Christ as the inviter, who promises help for all those who labour and are burdened (Matthew 11:28); as an offense and a sign of contradiction (Matthew 11:6); and as the one who draws us to Him not only in His loftiness, but also in His abasement (John 12:32).

The third and last part of *Practice in Christianity* presents a detailed reflection on the biblical verse *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself* (John 12:32). Here, Anti-Climacus is concerned with how the reader perceives Jesus Christ as the Crucified. Repeatedly, he demands us to “look once again at him, the abased one,” enquiring whether this sight moves us.³⁰ And Anti-Climacus also asks his readers to “forget for a moment everything you know about him,” and to approach Jesus Christ “as if it were the first time you heard the story of his abasement.”³¹ But he knows that we are unable to be immediately affected by the image of Jesus on the Cross – after all, scholarly tradition and the culture of established Christendom has turned it into a commodity. Thus, Anti-Climacus resorts to a “didactic trick”³²: instead of him talking about Jesus Christ the abased and tortured God-man, he lets the reader tell the story of Jesus’ life to a child. He asks us to “imagine a child, and then delight this child by showing it some of those artistically insignificant but for children very valuable pictures one buys in the shops.”³³ These pictures depict heroes like William Tell and grand historical figures like Napoleon, but also a portrait of Jesus hanging on the Cross. The child, Anti-Climacus says, “will not immediately, not

even quite simply, understand this picture; he will ask what it means, why is he hanging on such a tree.”³⁴ We are thus put in the difficult situation of imagining how we would explain to the child that crucifixion was once a death penalty for the most abominable crimes.

The story of the betrayal, torture and death of such a loving person only intensifies the impact of the image. The child is so shocked that it cannot process the further development of the story, that is, of Jesus’ ascension: “you will see that at first the child will almost ignore it; the story of his suffering will have made such a deep impression on the child that he will not feel like hearing about the glory that followed.”³⁵ Anti-Climacus uses this thought experiment in order to help us realize that we are “considerably warped and spoiled over many years by having carelessly learned by rote the whole story of his [Jesus Christ’s] abasement, suffering, and death,”³⁶ and therefore we “grasp immediately at the loftiness” and replace the image of the suffering God-man with the glorious Christ.³⁷

In addition to the performative task of provoking the reader to look at the image of the Crucified like a child who is not yet “warped,” Anti-Climacus tells us the story of a child’s development into a follower of Christ. If a child encounters the image of Jesus Christ as described in the thought experiment, the image will play an essential part in the formation of its personality (unfortunately, Anti-Climacus only refers to a little boy). At first, the child might “talk about nothing but weapons and war” and tell everyone that “when he grew up he would slay all those ungodly people who treated this loving person in that way [...] childishly forgetting that it was over eighteen hundred years since those people lived.”³⁸ However, the image continues to exert its power as the child enters adolescence. Now the young man understands his childhood impression differently, but with the same passion. The only thing that has

changed is that “he no longer wished to strike, because, he said, then I am not like him, the abased one, who did not strike, not even when he was struck.” Instead, the young man has only one wish, and that is “to suffer approximately as he suffered in this world.”³⁹

As Garff has pointed out, Anti-Climacus’s description of the child’s development into an adolescent who is eager to follow Christ draws strongly on the German tradition of *Bildung* (education, cultivation, formation) that became eminent in the 18th and 19th century’s *Bildungsroman*. Etymologically, *Bildung* is linked to *Bild* (image, Danish *billede*).⁴⁰ Anti-Climacus takes *Bildung* literally. He describes not only *dannelse*⁴¹, but *billed-dannelse*, that is, a person’s development that happens *via* images: pictorial images turn into mental images. He draws on the whole semantic field of *Bild* and *Bildung*: As mentioned above, he criticizes that his contemporaries worship a “fantasy picture of Christ [*et phantastisk Billede af Christus*],”⁴² and he attacks the hypocrisy and the conceit prevalent in 19th century culture, in which one lets oneself to be “duped by ‘the others’ [*at lade Dig af ‘de Andre’ indbilde*]” into believing that one is a Christian.⁴³ Because of all these wrong mental images, one is unable to receive the image of Christ as “prototype” [Danish *Forbillede*, literally: an image that stands in front of us],⁴⁴ and to subsequently be drawn by this image into the process of imitation.

By taking the *Bild* (image) in *Bildung* literally, Anti-Climacus acknowledges the origins of *Bildung* in German vernacular mysticism.⁴⁵ This implies that he is also embracing the second element of a person’s development that has almost been forgotten in the history of ideas: getting cleansed of images, or *Entbildung* (literally “dis-image-ing”).⁴⁶

***Entbildung* – Meister Eckhart**

Today, we mainly understand *Bildung* as the gradual acquirement of knowledge and the refinement of a personality. The original idea connected to *Bild* that became prominent in German mysticism through Meister Eckhart's sermons and writings, however, aimed at something different: the restoration of oneself as an image (*Bild*) of God.⁴⁷ From the human perspective, it appears as if we receive something in this process – God's imprint or mirror image. These religious aspects of *Bildung* are largely neglected today, but the concept is still laden with the idea of an immense enrichment. Even though Meister Eckhart did not apply the term *Bildung* as we do today, I propose to use *Bildung* as a heuristic. It describes a threefold process of a person's development according to Meister Eckhart: in order to become *ge-bildet* (formed) or *über-bildet* (imprinted or reshaped), one first needs to be *ent-bildet* (literally: “dis-image-ning”, i.e. being cleansed of images) of all the worldly images that have been accumulated in us through our profane existence as sinners. In one of his vernacular sermons, Meister Eckhart explains these dynamics:

“The smallest created image [*daz minneste créatiurlîche bilde*] that forms [*er-bildet*] itself in you, is as ample as God is ample. Why? It bereaves you of a whole God. When the image goes in, God yields with all His Godness. But as soon as the image goes out, God goes in.”⁴⁸

Moreover, we not only need to be cleansed of the images of other created things, but also of the image we have of ourselves. In *The Book of Divine Consolation*, Meister Eckhart says: “A true, wholehearted man has to die to himself, to get rid of his self in God [*sîn selbes entbildet*] and become re-shaped [*überbildet*] in God's will.”⁴⁹

The emptying-out concerns all the powers of the soul. Meister Eckhart usually emphasises the intellect, because according to him it is the purified intellect (*vernünffticheit*) that will be able to break through to the ground where it is one with the divine intellect.⁵⁰ As I have argued elsewhere, Kierkegaard follows Meister Eckhart when he describes the kenotic process of becoming “one who prays aright” in the *Upbuilding Discourse* with the same title from 1844.⁵¹ However, in the 1850s, Kierkegaard increasingly concentrates on the annihilation of the will.⁵² Since Tauler’s concept of *Absterben* (dying-to) mainly focuses on the will, it is very likely that Kierkegaard had Tauler’s sermons in mind when he positively speaks in his notebook about the “old devotional literature”⁵³ which recommends the full annihilation of the selfish will. Moreover, the third part of *Practice in Christianity* that describes *Bildung* and *Entbildung* is an exposition of the same biblical verse that Tauler’s sermon uses in order to illustrate the *Entbildung* necessary to become a follower of Christ.

Tauler: On The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross

Tauler begins his second sermon on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross with a description of the event that the Feast commemorates: how the Emperor Heraclius, who in 629 had rescued Jesus Christ’s cross from Chosroes, King of the Persians, tried to return the cross to Jerusalem with glory and pomp and was stopped at the city wall: “But when he rode up to the city,” Tauler says, “the gate barred his entrance and closed before him, forming a strong and mighty wall.”⁵⁴ An angel appears and reminds Heraclius of the suffering, which the one who died upon that cross had to endure. The emperor immediately “stripped off his shirt and took the Cross on his shoulders, whereupon the gates flew open.”⁵⁵ With this anecdote, Tauler highlights

the human tendency to perceive only the loftiness of Jesus Christ, and not His abasement.

The sermon then continues with an explanation of what it means that the Crucified draws all things to Himself; it is through *suffering* and *trials* that Jesus Christ exerts His attraction. Tauler describes ways of carrying the Cross only superficially and not truly embracing suffering or letting oneself being affected by trials. He then gives a detailed account of what really needs to happen in order to be drawn to Christ: a thorough detachment and *Entbildung*. Total self-denial is necessary. Tauler thus encourages his listeners to “turn into your own nothingness.”⁵⁶ This is not an easy task, as humans have a tendency to “turn to created things in His stead.”⁵⁷ Seeking occasions of sin, i.e., allowing worldly matters to absorb us, we work towards our own condemnation. Discovering this tendency to sin, however, should not make us feel overwhelmed: “For it is to help, not to hurt, that God permits it.”⁵⁸

In the second part of the sermon, Tauler focuses on the aspect of following Christ. Again, it is self-denial that is essential for the *imitatio Christi*. Whereas in the first part, the emphasis is on the mental images we hold, and thus, on the intellect, now it is the will that needs to be annihilated: “Give yourself up to the Lord and die to your own self completely,” which means: “die utterly to your will.”⁵⁹ Tauler supports his description of the stages of *Entbildung* with a short anthropological excursus: “Man is in a certain sense three men: an animal man who lives according to his senses, a rational man, and finally the highest man in the form of God, deiform [*Gott gleichförmigen Menschen*].”⁶⁰ Whereas the first two aspects of man are addressed by the emptying-out of natural reason and the will, the third aspect involves a complete abandonment of selfhood. Here Tauler demonstrates what McGinn calls “the Mysticism of the Ground”⁶¹: “Give yourself entirely to God, enter, and hide the hidden

ground of your spirit, as Augustine calls it, in the hiddenness of the divine abyss. [...] In this hiddenness the created spirit is borne back into the uncreated state in which it dwelt from all eternity.”⁶² Tauler thus ends his sermon praying “may we take up the Cross in such a way that we enter the ground where He has gone before us, He who died for all on the Cross.”⁶³

A Comparative Reading of Tauler’s and Kierkegaard’s Expositions of John 12:32

Inadequate Mental Images

Central to both Kierkegaard’s and Tauler’s exposition of the biblical verse *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself* is the idea that being drawn by Jesus Christ necessitates a prior existential kenosis.⁶⁴ This existential kenosis is depicted as a cleansing of images [Middle High German *Bilder*; Danish *Billeder*], and it regards both the mental image we have of Jesus Christ and the imprints worldly matters leave upon us (e.g. in the form of a desire for material things).

The first part of *Practice in Christianity* illustrates how the attachment to profanities inhibits being receptive to Christ’s message of salvation. Anti-Climacus imagines a jury with representatives of the 19th century culture – a politician, a philosopher, a clergyman and a “solid citizen.” How will they react when they are confronted with the appearance of the historical Jesus in the streets of modern Copenhagen? Like the Emperor Heraclius in Tauler’s sermon, they regard Him only in His loftiness and glory. However, whereas Heraclius quickly understood his mistake and repented, the citizens of Copenhagen are very resistant. Since Jesus does not conform to their idea of how a *God*-man looks and behaves, they provide elaborate justifications as to why He cannot possibly be the Saviour. After all, He does not even fulfil the criteria for a

moderately competent and successful *human*: “What does he do about his future? Nothing. Does he have a permanent job? No? What are his prospects? None.”⁶⁵ For the citizen, Jesus’ social circle is evidence alone that He cannot be the One: only “idle and unemployed people, street loafers and tramps,” follow Jesus, but not respectable “property owners and well-to-do and not a one of the sagacious and reputable people.”⁶⁶

Meanwhile, the clergyman argues that the “expected one will look entirely different, will come as the most glorious flowering and the highest unfolding of the established order.”⁶⁷ And according to the statesman, having no political agenda is sheer madness and another reason why one should not follow Jesus: “Is he fighting for nationality or is he aiming at a communist revolution, does he want a republic or a monarchy, which party will he join [...]? I become involved with him? No, that would be the last thing I would do.”⁶⁸ The philosopher represents common sense and the Hegelian *Zeitgeist* of the 19th century: It is an “incomprehensible mistake, which indeed only betrays little philosophic training, to think that God could reveal himself at all in the form of an individual human being” – after all, everyone knows that the “human race, the universal, the totality, is God.”⁶⁹

The judgments of these jurors show how the social, political and cultural imagery occludes our receptiveness. These are the images of which the adult who shows the image of the Crucified to the child and is asked to “look at him once again”⁷⁰ needs to empty herself. Thus, the jurors are incarnations of the “external business,” the “interior preoccupations and opinions” and “phantasies” [*Einbildungen*] Tauler refers to as the “forces” that keep us from being drawn to Christ.⁷¹

In contrast to Tauler, for whom *Einbildungen* [delusions, literally: inserted images]⁷² are the product of the intellect alone, Anti-Climacus addresses the *Indbild-*

*ninger*⁷³ [Danish calque of *Einbildungen*] as being socially constructed.⁷⁴ He criticises the “deification of the established order” as “the smug invention of the lazy, secular human mentality that wants to settle down and fancy [*bilde sig ind*] that now there is total peace and security, now we have achieved the highest.”⁷⁵ Not only collective values and entities but also the individual’s innermost existence, i.e. one’s faith is obstructed by socially constructed *Indbildninger*: “you really do not have a right to allow yourself,” Anti-Climacus warns his readers, “to be duped by ‘the others’, or to dupe yourself [*at lade Dig af ‘de Andre’ indbilde eller indbilde Dig selv*] into believing that you are a Christian.”⁷⁶

Inadequate Ways of Following Christ

In both texts, and in line with the biblical verse, the emphasis is on following Christ in His suffering, but neighbourly love and selfless acts of virtue are also addressed. Tauler and Kierkegaard discuss wrong attempts to follow Christ, which they trace back to their contemporaries’ wrong ideas about suffering. According to Tauler, even in monasteries, people “carry the Cross outwardly, performing good and pious exercises and having taken upon themselves the burden of monastic life.”⁷⁷ They follow the rules of their convent and lead an ascetic life, but “they do the Lord a minor service because they are only externally involved.”⁷⁸ Thus, Tauler goes on, they “carry the Cross in an outward manner, but they are extremely careful that it does not touch them too closely, and they try to avoid it whenever they can.”⁷⁹ They do not truly embrace suffering, because, as Tauler says, “this suffering must not be merely encountered, it must be lifted up, exalted.”⁸⁰ Such people are impostors, failing to follow Christ even with regard to His external suffering. And this is only the simple phase in the endeavour to imitate Christ. According to Tauler, this first phase concerning the

right attitude towards external suffering is followed by a phase concerning *internal* strife: “Here we must renounce interior delight, all spiritual attachment and joys, even those which are the results of our acts of virtue.”⁸¹ One can thus go astray in the second phase by indulging in the very idea of being a follower of Christ. Therefore, Tauler advises his listeners to “be sober”, and reminds them “to find the Cross in trials and temptations rather than in the full bloom of sentimental emotion.”⁸²

Practice in Christianity also criticises following Christ only outwardly, most prominently demonstrated by the figure of the clergyman who would prefer a ballot to tell him whether or not Jesus Christ is the expected one. The members of the jury are only Christians on paper; they do not truly follow Christ. Like Tauler, Anti-Climacus also addresses the difference between external and internal suffering. He argues that the worst suffering Jesus had to endure was the inward suffering, not the physical torment:

“he was love; he wanted only one thing – to save humankind. He wanted it on any terms [...] – would sacrifice his life for it. [...] One would think that he must have moved everyone, but he moved no one – and yet he did in fact move everyone, he stirred them all against himself. What suffering, what suffering of love!”⁸³

The suffering that consists in being misunderstood, of being unrecognizable as the Saviour, is an “entirely different kind of suffering.”⁸⁴ Thus, even if people are able to acknowledge Jesus’ abasement, they are only picturing to themselves how Christ was “mocked, scourged and crucified”,⁸⁵ and not His internal suffering. In established Christendom, Christ’s most intense suffering “seems to be forgotten, the suffering of inwardness, suffering of soul, or what might be called the secret of the sufferings that

were inseparable from his life in unrecognizability from the time he appeared until the very last.”⁸⁶

Similar to Tauler, Anti-Climacus describes a second false way to follow Christ, an inadequate way to internally imitate Christ. This phenomenon is explained in the second part of the story about the child’s development. Whereas the child fantasized about punishing Christ’s tormentors, the young man “wished only one thing, to suffer approximately as he suffered in this world.”⁸⁷ The adolescent is now under the influence of the *idealized* image of the Crucified. He has a very fixed idea of what suffering is, and he does not account for the fact that it is a continuous, painful progress, not something that one can relate to as a result or even as an achievement:

“To this image [*Billede*] (which, since for the youth it exists only in the imagination [*Indbildningskraft*], that is, in the imagination’s infinite distance from actuality, is the image [*Billede*] of complete perfection, not the image of struggling and suffering perfection) the youth is now drawn by his imagination, or his imagination draws this image to him [*hans Indbildningskraft drager ham dette Billede til sig*].”⁸⁸

This *wrong* understanding of the image of the Crucified still leads to an *imitatio Christi*, albeit not the one pictured by the young man. Whereas “it looks very easy the way the imagination [*Indbildning*] depicts the image [*Billede*],” and one thus “sees only the perfection, sees even the struggling perfection only as finished,”⁸⁹ trying to follow this idealized image is extremely hard. The attempt results in suffering, because the idealized image of Jesus’s passion clashes with life in its actuality. In the beginning, the young man ceases to engage with his surroundings; he is only interested in resembling the image he holds of the Crucified. He does not rest until he actual-

ly is “transformed in likeness to this image [*forvandles i Lighed med dette Billede*], which imprints or impresses itself [*der afpræger eller udpræger sig*] on all his thought and on every utterance by him.” However, “with his eyes directed to this image [*med Øiet rettet mod dette Billede*],” he “has not watched his step, has not paid attention to where he is.”⁹⁰ The young man, before “walking like a dreamer,”⁹¹ wakes up, and “now he suddenly discovers the surrounding world of actuality in which he is standing and the relation of this surrounding world to himself.”⁹²

The young man painfully experiences that suffering does not feel heroic and he also realizes what his love of the image “will cost him, but who knows, he says, after all, better times may come, help will certainly come, and it can still turn out all right.”⁹³ But this is still a *wrong* understanding of what it means to follow Christ. Since the image exerts its power beyond the young man’s expectations – “he cannot persuade himself to abandon the image, he cannot escape the suffering either” –, the transformation continues.⁹⁴ The young man experiences that selfless works of love and suffering will not be rewarded – and *this* is the actual experience of suffering: The realization that one’s expectations are not going to be fulfilled, that one has embarked on an endeavour that one does not control. This kenotic experience is as close as one can get in imitating Christ.⁹⁵

“God“ or “Governance” plays a crucial role in the process of being drawn by the image in a way that is different to what the young man had imagined. God intensifies the suffering slowly, and only in increments that the young man can take: “If existence had done this at the outset, it would have crushed him. Now he is probably able to bear it – yes, he must be able to, since Governance does it with him – Governance, who is indeed love.”⁹⁶

We find a similar thought in Tauler's sermon. Tauler talks about the discouraging experience that against our best intentions, we still find sinful, that is, worldly desires in us. But he soothes his listeners: "Do not let the tendency to sin overwhelm you. For it is to help, not to hurt, that God permits it. It should lead you to the knowledge of your own nothingness."⁹⁷ Since the awareness of one's nothingness is the necessary condition for entering into unity with God, the tendency to sin is a Divine instrument that guides and supports humans on the endeavour to become followers of Christ: It increases humility and ensures that in the attempt to follow Christ, as successful as it might be, one is always aware that one never can truly imitate Him, who was without sin. Anti-Climacus follows a similar line of thought. He stresses that "He uses the most varied things as a way and as a means of drawing to himself [...]. But even though the means he uses are every so many, all the ways still converge at one point: the consciousness of sin."⁹⁸ Thus, in both Kierkegaard's and Tauler's thought, suffering and the painful awareness of one's sinfulness are administered by God, out of His care for humankind.

Selfhood and Dying-To-Oneself

So far, we have focused on the intellect's cleansing of the mental images of the Crucified and from the understanding of what it means to follow Jesus Christ. This intellectual kenosis goes hand in hand with a volitional kenosis, which both Tauler and Kierkegaard describe as dying-to-oneself. According to Tauler, "if a man wishes to surrender himself to God, he should first rid himself, in a spiritual way, of every trace of self-will."⁹⁹ Thus, he urges his listeners: "Give yourself up to the Lord and die to your own self completely."¹⁰⁰ In *Practice in Christianity*, Anti-Climacus stresses that "if from on high He is to be able to draw the Christian to himself, there is [...] much that

must be died to,”¹⁰¹ and these are not simply mental pictures. One’s selfish will has to be replaced or overwritten by the selfless will to follow Christ: “You are not compelled against your will, but blessed are you if your will compels you in such a way that you must say: I cannot do otherwise, for this sight moves me!”¹⁰²

However, in the relation of selfhood and being drawn by Christ, an important difference between Tauler and Kierkegaard emerges. When one asks: *what is the result of being drawn by Christ?*, for both Tauler and Kierkegaard the answer is true selfhood. But what this means, is rather different for them. Let us first listen to Anti-Climacus. He says:

“to draw to itself depends upon the nature of what is to be drawn. If this is in itself a self, then to draw to itself cannot truly mean merely to draw it from being itself, to draw it to itself in such a way that it has now lost all its own existence by being drawn into that which drew it to itself. No, with regard to what is truly a self, to be drawn in this manner would again to be deceived. [...] No, when that which is to be drawn is in itself a self, then truly to draw to itself means first to help it truly to become itself in order then to draw it to itself, or it means in and through drawing it to itself to help it truly become itself.”¹⁰³

Thus, for Anti-Climacus, the self remains itself, albeit in a cleansed form. It now is fully oriented towards Jesus Christ as *Forbilledede*, following Him in His suffering. The *Entbildung* results in a continuous existential kenosis and selfless acts of love; in an *infinite* process the self is drawn by Christ in attitude and behaviour. Thus, according to Anti-Climacus, there is no rest for us in this life. Tauler, however, goes further. Re-

ferring to St. Augustine, he describes how the total kenosis of the self is its divine transformation:

“Give yourself entirely to God, enter, and hide the hidden ground of your spirit, as Augustine calls it, in the hiddenness of the divine abyss. [...] In this hiddenness the created spirit is borne back into the uncreated state in which it dwelt from all eternity. There it knows itself in God, raised to a divine level, and in its creaturehood it sees itself a created being. But in God all things which participate in this ground are God.”¹⁰⁴

As a result, Tauler continues, man “is unaware of anything that may happen to him, be it poverty, sickness, or suffering of any kind.”¹⁰⁵ For Anti-Climacus, *Entbildung* culminates in the *Bildung* of a follower of Christ in His earthly suffering, in His abasement. No one can follow Christ in His ascent and loftiness. Tauler, by contrast, goes one step further: The process of *Entbildung* enables an adequate *imitatio Christi* which leads us beyond earthly suffering. In another sermon, Tauler describes how the Father calls us to His Son in the ground of our soul, so that we realize “that we are brothers and sons by heritage.”¹⁰⁶ Jesus Christ is “the first and the highest among the brothers and has the inborn heritage by nature, and it is through grace that we shall be [His sons] by heritage. And to this he calls us, to follow His example [*bilden nach volgen*; literally to follow His image]; because He is the way that we need to walk and the truth that shall guide us and the life that is our purpose.”¹⁰⁷

Kenosis and Compassion

Both Tauler and Kierkegaard apply the semantics of the image in order to conceptualize the *imitatio Christi*. At the beginning of the third section of *Practice in Christiani-*

ty, Anti-Climacus prays: “our Savior and Redeemer [...] – would that the image [*Billedede*] of you in your abasement might stand before us so vividly, so awakening and persuasive, that we will feel ourselves drawn to you in lowliness, drawn to want to be like you in lowliness.”¹⁰⁸ Again, it is the earthly lowliness that to enter “must be a person’s highest honor”¹⁰⁹ – for Kierkegaard, glory is reserved for God only, and any suggestion of a unity with Him is a sacrilege. As his notes on Martensen’s lecture on speculative dogmatics show, he accuses Meister Eckhart and Tauler of subverting the difference between God and man:

The more the recent times have immersed themselves in the contemplation of the human’s inner being, the more the opposition between God and human has disappeared. This is best noticed [when reading] the mystics, such as Tauler, Jacob Böhme and Meister Eckhart, who always return to the idea that it is the essence of human beings to be in unity with God.¹¹⁰

This is not the right place to discuss the ontological implications of Meister Eckhart’s, Tauler’s and Böhme’s notion of the ground and their understanding of unity, but it is much more complex than Martensen indicates.¹¹¹ It does not necessarily entail a retreat from the world and social relations. Quite to the contrary. When Tauler advocates his understanding of the *imitatio Christi*, he stresses the importance of love, and “in this divine love the passive attitude and the suffering of man is decisive – the true detachment, through which one uninhibitedly surrenders oneself to God. Only then becomes love of neighbour the true external appearance of God’s love.”¹¹² Also in the sermon for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, the *vita activa* is not dismissed. The detachment that Tauler advocates demands a new relation to virtuous deeds, not the retreat from any involvement with the world. But he stresses that we need to re-

nounce “all joys, even those which are the results of our acts of virtue.”¹¹³ Admitting that this is difficult, he advises that we need to habitualize good behaviours and disregard our own agency: “Yet, how can one practice virtue without taking delight in it? What one ought to do is practice it and forget oneself in the process.”¹¹⁴

Practice in Christianity aims at something similar. Being drawn by Jesus Christ does not mean that one should excel at existential kenosis for the sake of it. Rather, one should empty oneself of the *selfish* understanding one has of compassion and love. Anti-Climacus shows how Jesus’ kenotic behaviour is at odds with the bourgeois understanding of neighbourly love: “the unlimited *recklessness* in concerning oneself only with the suffering, not in the least with oneself, and of unconditionally recklessly concerning oneself with *each* sufferer – people can interpret this only as a kind of madness.”¹¹⁵ Thus, in order to become a true follower of Christ, one needs to let go of “the image [*Forestilling*; literally something that stands in front of one’s inner eye] the merely human conception of compassion wanted him [Jesus] to have,”¹¹⁶ and act out of true, selfless love.

Conclusion

Kierkegaard and Tauler are separated by 500 years, and they wrote and preached under different political, social, and cultural conditions. Nevertheless, the similarities of the compared texts suggest that Tauler’s sermon was an important source of inspiration for Kierkegaard. Both religious thinkers are concerned by the fact that their contemporaries hold wrong mental images of the Crucified. They both admonish that it is wrong to solely regard Jesus Christ in His loftiness. Thus, they each stress the importance of existential kenosis, which they describe as *Entbildung* of the intellect and of the will, and which is an essential part of following Christ in his abasement. Both Kierkegaard and Tauler analyse inadequate attempts to imitate Christ, and they distin-

guish thereby between outward and inward suffering. Furthermore, they stress the importance of dying-to one's self and criticize self-indulgent attempts to imitate Christ. Admittedly, Kierkegaard and Tauler differ with regard to the ontological implications of being drawn by the Crucified, and more detailed research needs to be conducted on this aspect. The ethical implications, however, are the same for both religious thinkers: one should not retreat from the world and social interactions, but rather turn to it with a new, that is, selfless attitude and serve others with true compassion and love, willing to suffer without expecting anything in return. Thus, both Tauler and Kierkegaard alias Anti-Climacus refute Judge William's verdict in *Either/Or* against mysticism: to feel one's God-relationship "so powerfully in all its inwardness" does *not* imply that one's earthly relationships lose their significance.¹¹⁷

Kierkegaard creatively uses the concepts of *Bildung* and *Entbildung* in order to illustrate the gravity of his contemporaries' inadequate concentration on Jesus Christ's loftiness, and to highlight a different way to relate to the Crucified. In Tauler's sermon, there is no equivalent to Anti-Climacus's illustration of the child's *Bildung* into a follower of Christ. However, Tauler's description of wrong ways of imitating Christ could be understood as a performative attempt to help the listener be cleansed of wrong images, similar to the *Entbildung* Anti-Climacus tries to initiate in the reader through his invitation to imagine telling the story of Jesus Christ's suffering to a child.

Assuming that Kierkegaard was inspired by Tauler's sermon, it is puzzling that he does not mention him in *Practice in Christianity*. One explanation could be that his main focus is helping his readers restore their receptivity of the suffering God-man, that is, to "forget for a moment everything you know about Jesus Christ."¹¹⁸ *Explicitly* referring to the theological tradition would only add to the problem of ap-

proaching the Crucified in a mediated way that does not move the reader. As Pattison notes, “by avoiding theological elements, Kierkegaard allows the actual cruelty of the scene [of the Crucifixion] to make its proper impact.”¹¹⁹ Kierkegaard thus *indirectly* engages with the mystic tradition of *Entbildung* in order to illustrate what is at stake: our ability to be Christians.

This paper has focused on the *similarities* of Tauler’s and Kierkegaard’s thought, and solely with regard to *Practice in Christianity*, mainly part III. Needless to say, such an investigation is far from comprehensive. There are many differences between Tauler’s and Kierkegaard’s thought, especially with regard to their theological anthropology, as my short remarks about unity and the ground of the soul indicate. For instance, I have neither addressed Tauler’s distinction between the outer and the inner man, nor the implications that the Protestant background might have for Kierkegaard’s reception of vernacular mysticism.¹²⁰

With its approximately 100 pages, the third part of *Practice in Christianity* provides us with a thorough account of existential kenosis, the adequate mental image of Christ, and how to let oneself be drawn by it. Naturally, it is more extensive and detailed than Tauler’s five-page sermon can be. It takes the core themes of the Medieval sermon and develops them into descriptions of the urgency that dying-to-oneself and *imitatio Christi* have in the 19th century. Hence the third part of *Practice in Christianity* is not only an exposition of John 12:32, but also of Tauler’s second sermon on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

Abbreviations

ASKB Rohde, H. P. (ed.). *Auktionsprotokol over Søren Kierkegaards bog-samling* (The auctioneer's sales record of the library of Søren Kierkegaard). København: Det Kongelige Bibliotek, 1967.

JP *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers [JP]*. Translated and edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk. Vols. 1–7, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967–78.

Pap. *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, edited by P. A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr and E. Torsting. Vols 1–11. Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1909–1948.

SKS Kierkegaard, Søren. *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*. Vols. 1–28. Edited by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Johnny Kondrup, Tonny Aagaard Olesen and Steen Tullberg. Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 1998–2013.

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Tauler, Johann. "Fratres, obsecro vos ego vinctus in domino." In *ibid.*, 240–246 (V53).

Tauler, Johann. "Fratres, si spiritu vivimus, spiritu et ambulemus." In *ibid.*, 207–214 (V47).

Tauler, Johann. "Sante Johannes schribet. Die bredie usser sancte Johans evangelio des fritages vor dem palmetage..." In *ibid.*, 65–67 (V 14).

Tauler, Johann. "Sequere me! at ille relictis omnibus secutus est eum." In *ibid.*, 253–258 (V55).

Tauler, Johann. "Si exaltus fuero, omnia traham ad me ipsum." In *ibid.*, 353–358 (V65).

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Notes

¹ *Either/Or* II, 247 / *SKS* 3, 236. I am thankful to the anonymous readers of this article.

² Bernard McGinn's seven-volume history of Christian mysticism in the West testifies to the variety of mystical thought: McGinn, *The Presence of God*, vols. 1–7.

³ See Florin, "Was Kierkegaard Inspired by Medieval Mysticism?"; Mikulová Thulstrup, "Kierkegaard's Encounter with Mysticism," and Mikulová Thulstrup, "Studies of Pietists, Mystics, and Church Fathers."

⁴ Barnett, *Kierkegaard, Pietism and Holiness*, 6f., see *ibid.*, 45–62.

⁵ Cf. Šajda, "Tauler", 268. According to Šajda, "Kierkegaard's main sources of Arndt's reception of Tauler were Arndt's preface to the *Theologia Deutsch* in the Krüger edition, two treatises on *Theologia Deutsch* in Book VI of *True Christianity*, and the Tauler-based Book III of *True Christianity*;" *ibid.*, 269f.

⁶ Mikulová Thulstrup, "The Significance of Mortification."

⁷ Šajda, "Tauler", 281f.

⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 1, 217f. (Hegel, *Werke*, vol. 16, 209). See Šajda, "Does Hegelian Philosophy of Religion Distort Christian Dogmatics and Ethics?", 65–67. On Hegel's reception of Meister Eckhart see Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 23–26, and Šajda, "Meister Eckhart," 237–264.

⁹ Martensen, *Meister Eckhart*, 3, 49.

¹⁰ Šajda, "Meister Eckhart," 243.

¹¹ Šajda, "Meister Eckhart," 251.

¹² On the impact Meister Eckhart had on Tauler see McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism*, 83–86 and Ruh, *Die Mystik des deutschen Predigerordens*, 479.

¹³ Ernst Nündel characterizes *bilde* as characteristic for Meister Eckhart, who established *bilde* as vernacular translation of Latin *imago* and *exemplum*: Nündel, "Ein Kennwort Meister Eckharts: *bilde*".

¹⁴ *SKS* 1, 310. The song is taken from the book *Johann Taulers Nachfolgung des armen Lebens Christi (The Imitation of the Poor Life of Jesus – not to be mistaken for Thomas à Kempis' De imitatione Christi!)* Frankfurt a. M., 1821 [1621] 254. See the commentary to *SKS* 1, 310: 29, 31 and Šajda, "Johannes Tauler," 277. When considering Tauler's influence on Kierkegaard, we need to keep in mind that we are talking about the Dominican monk as he was perceived in the 19th century, which might differ from today's understanding. Kierkegaard and his contemporaries falsely regarded the *Nachfolgung* as written by Tauler. In 1877, Heinrich Seuse Denifle proved this text to be apocryphal: Heinrich Seuse Denifle (ed.), *Das Buch von geistlicher Armuth*. See Šajda, "Tauler," 267. In order not to further complicate matters I will exclusively focus on those works in Kierkegaard's library that from today's perspective are assigned to Tauler.

¹⁵ The three volumes are listed in the auction protocol as ASKB 245–247.

¹⁶ For a detailed analysis see Šajda, "Tauler," 276–281.

¹⁷ *SKS* 20, 142 (NB2:10; my translation).

¹⁸ Šajda, "Tauler," 276.

¹⁹ Piety, "The Stillness of History."

²⁰ Barrett, "Kierkegaard and Johannes Tauler," 26.

²¹ Hughes, *Kierkegaard and the Staging of Desire*, 14.

²² Podmore, *Struggling with God*, 89–95.

²³ Podmore, *Struggling with God*, 77.

²⁴ My approach is inspired by Barrett, who focuses on semantic themes rather than Kierkegaard's explicit discussion of Augustine in order to "identify the points of intersection and divergence between Augustine and Kierkegaard." Barrett, *Eros and Self-Emptying*, 21.

²⁵ Also Barnett notes the "intriguing" fact that the third part of *Practice in Christianity* is based on the same biblical verse as Tauler's sermon; Barnett, *Kierkegaard, Pietism and Holiness*, 70f.

²⁶ For the translation, I will use Johannes Tauler, *Sermons*, translated by Maria Shrady, and I will make modifications of the translation if needed.

- ²⁷ Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity* (in the following: *PC*), 7 / *SKS* 12, 15. For a more detailed account of the role of the image in the third part of *PC*, see Becker-Lindenthal and Guyatt, “Kierkegaard on Existential Kenosis and the Power of the Image”.
- ²⁸ *PC*, 36 / *SKS* 12, 49.
- ²⁹ *PC*, 97 / *SKS* 12, 106; see also *PC*, 99 / *SKS* 12, 107.
- ³⁰ *PC*, 173 / *SKS* 12, 177.
- ³¹ *PC*, 174 / *SKS* 12, 176.
- ³² Fürstenberg, *Entweder ästhetisch – oder religiös*, 196.
- ³³ *PC*, 174 / *SKS* 12, 176.
- ³⁴ *PC*, 175 / *SKS* 12, 177.
- ³⁵ *PC*, 177 / *SKS* 12, 179.
- ³⁶ *PC*, 177 / *SKS* 12, 179.
- ³⁷ *PC*, 177 / *SKS* 12, 179.
- ³⁸ *PC*, 177 / *SKS* 12, 179.
- ³⁹ *PC*, 177f. / *SKS* 12, 179f. On the continuity of the image’s impact throughout a person’s life, see Rocca, “Kierkegaard’s Second Aesthetics,” 284.
- ⁴⁰ Garff, “Kierkegaards billeddannelsesroman,” 11–27.
- ⁴¹ “Dannelse” is the Danish translation of *Bildung*. Even though it is not rooted in the semantics of the image, it is related to production and formation. See Garff, “Kierkegaards billeddannelsesroman,” 15.
- ⁴² *PC*, 97 / *SKS* 12, 106.
- ⁴³ *PC*, 39 / *SKS* 12, 52.
- ⁴⁴ *PC*, 195 / *SKS* 12, 195.
- ⁴⁵ See Hoeninghaus-Schornsheim, *Studien zur Entstehung des Bildungsbegriffs in der deutschen Mystik*, and Lichtenstein, *Zur Entwicklung des Bildungsbegriffs von Meister Eckhart bis Hegel*.
- ⁴⁶ *Entbildung* is not used in contemporary German anymore.
- ⁴⁷ See Haas, *Sermo Mysticus*, 209–237. For the different ways of being an image of God (e.g. being God’s imprint, mirroring God), see also Mieth: *Die Einheit von vita activa und vita contemplativa*, 137.
- ⁴⁸ Meister Eckhart, “In hoc apparuit caritas,” 92f.
- ⁴⁹ Meister Eckhart, *Daz buoch der göttlichen træstunge*, 21.
- ⁵⁰ Meister Eckhart, “Modicum et iam non videbitis me,” 179. See McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 4f., 42.
- ⁵¹ Kierkegaard, “One who prays aright.” See Becker, “Mirroring God.”
- ⁵² See Šajda, “Meister Eckhart,” 249.
- ⁵³ Kierkegaard, *Pap. XI 2 A 132 / JP 4*, 4384 / *SKS* 26, 301.
- ⁵⁴ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 163. *Johann Tauler’s Predigten auf alle Sonn- und Festtage* (i.e. the edition owned by Kierkegaard), vol. 3, 156.
- ⁵⁵ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 163f. *Johann Tauler’s Predigten auf alle Sonn- und Festtage* 3, 156f.
- ⁵⁶ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 165 / *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 159 (“sondern kehre dich alsbald in dein Nichts”).
- ⁵⁷ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 166 / *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 160 (“zu den Creaturen wenden”).
- ⁵⁸ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 166; *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 160: “daß Gott zuläßt, daß du oft fällst, geschiehet nicht zu deinem Schaden, sondern daß du dadurch zur Erkenntnis deines Nichts kommest.”
- ⁵⁹ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 167 / *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 161 (“deinem eigenen Willen zuvor gänzlich absterben”).
- ⁶⁰ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 167 / *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 162.
- ⁶¹ See McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism*, 83–93.
- ⁶² Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 168 / *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 162f. (“sich Gott ganz ergeben, und sein verborgenens Gemüth, wie es Augustinus nennet, in dem verborgenem göttlichen Abgrund verbergen [...]. In diesem verborgenem Wesen wird der erschaffene Geist wieder in seine Unerschaffenheit getragen, wo er von Ewigkeit her gewesen ist”).
- ⁶³ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 168 / *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 163 (“daß wir auch das heilige Kreuz so erheben, daß wir durch dasselbe in den wahren Grund gelangen, und unserm Heilande Jesu Christo, der uns vorangegangen ist, und den Tod am Kreuze für uns gelitten hat [nachfolgen mögen]”).
- ⁶⁴ See Becker-Lindenthal and Guyatt, “Kierkegaard on Existential Kenosis and the Power of the Image” and Westphal, “Kenosis and Offense.” Law coined the term “existential kenoticism”: Law, *Kierkegaard’s Kenotic Christology*, 287.
- ⁶⁵ *PC*, 43 / *SKS* 12, 56.
- ⁶⁶ *PC*, 50 f. / *SKS* 12, 63.
- ⁶⁷ *PC*, 47 / *SKS* 12, 60.

- ⁶⁸ *PC*, 50 / *SKS* 12, 62.
- ⁶⁹ *PC*, 48, 49 / *SKS* 12, 61.
- ⁷⁰ *PC*, 173 / *SKS* 12, 177.
- ⁷¹ Tauler, “Sermon 59”, 164; *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 158.
- ⁷² *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 158. Shradý translates “Einbildungen” as “phantasies” (Tauler, “Sermon 59”, 164), which neglects the ontological implications of “Bild.”
- ⁷³ *SKS* 12, 55, 62.
- ⁷⁴ See Westphal, “Kenosis and Offense,” 34.
- ⁷⁵ *PC*, 88 / *SKS* 12, 97.
- ⁷⁶ *PC*, 39 / *SKS* 12, 52.
- ⁷⁷ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 164 / *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 157 (“Es finden sich auch etliche, die dieses Kreuz wohl äußerlich tragen, daß sie sich in äußerlichen guten Tugenden üben, in einen Orden treten...”).
- ⁷⁸ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 164. Cf. *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 157 (“...und also Gott einigermaßen mit ihrem äußerlichen Menschen dienen”).
- ⁷⁹ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 164. Cf. *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 157 (“Aber der größte Theil der Menschen erhebt solches Kreuz nicht, wendet auch dasselbe nicht so zu seinem Besten an, wie er soll...”).
- ⁸⁰ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 164 / *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 158 (“Es muß aber dieses Kreuz nicht allein gefunden, sondern auch erhoben werden”).
- ⁸¹ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 165; cf. *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 158.
- ⁸² Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 165; cf. *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 159 (“Deswegen soll ein jeder nach wahrer Gelassenheit trachten, und die Bitterkeit des Kreuzes statt der lieblichen Blüthe der Süßigkeit wählen”).
- ⁸³ *PC*, 170f. / *SKS* 12, 173.
- ⁸⁴ *PC*, 136 / *SKS* 12, 140.
- ⁸⁵ *PC*, 136 / *SKS* 12, 140.
- ⁸⁶ *PC*, 136 / *SKS* 12, 140. See Walsh, “Standing at the Crossroads,” 152-153 and Law, *Kierkegaard’s Kenotic Christology*, 231.
- ⁸⁷ *PC*, 177f. / *SKS* 12, 179f.
- ⁸⁸ *PC*, 187 / *SKS* 12, 186. Whereas “Indbildning” is used negatively, “Indbildningskraft” is positively connoted in Kierkegaard’s work – it is the “power that is the first condition for what becomes of a person, for will is the second and in the ultimate sense the decisive condition,” *PC*, 186 / *SKS* 12, 186; see Becker-Lindenthal and Guyatt, “Kierkegaard on Existential Kenosis and the Power of the Image” and Garff, “Kierkegaards billeddannelsesroman,” 16.
- ⁸⁹ *PC*, 187 / *SKS* 12, 186.
- ⁹⁰ *PC*, 189 / *SKS* 12, 188.
- ⁹¹ *PC*, 189 / *SKS* 12, 188.
- ⁹² *PC*, 189 / *SKS* 12, 188.
- ⁹³ *PC*, 190 / *SKS* 12, 190.
- ⁹⁴ *PC*, 191 / *SKS* 12, 190.
- ⁹⁵ No *imitatio Christi* can ever be a complete imitation, after all “no human being has the right to think that his sufferings will be atoning or beneficial for others in the sense that he and God alone are aware of it” (*JP* II, 362 / *Pap.* X5 A 87).
- ⁹⁶ *PC*, 191 / *SKS* 12, 190.
- ⁹⁷ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 166 / *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 160 (“Darüber sollst du dich nicht entsetzen; denn, daß Gott zuläßt, daß du oft fällst, geschiehet nicht zu deinem Schaden, sondern daß du dadurch zur Erkenntnis deines Nichts kommest, und dich in wahrer Gelassenheit dich selbst gering achtest”).
- ⁹⁸ *PC*, 155 / *SKS* 12, 159.
- ⁹⁹ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 167 / cf. *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 162 (“und seinen eigenen Willen allderdings so durchaus aufgeben, daß er gar kein Wollen mehr habe”).
- ¹⁰⁰ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 167 / *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 161 (“ihr müßt euch selbst verlassen, euch selbst verleugnen und von Grund aus tödten, wenn ihr anders Christo nachfolgen wollt”).
- ¹⁰¹ *PC*, 152 / *SKS* 12, 156.
- ¹⁰² *PC*, 171 / *SKS* 12, 193.
- ¹⁰³ *PC*, 159 / *SKS* 12, 163.
- ¹⁰⁴ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 168 / *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 162f. (“sich Gott ganz ergeben, und sein verborgenens Gemüth, wie es Augustinus nennet, in den verborgenens göttlichen Abgrund verbergen

[...]. In diesem verborgenen Wesen wird der erschaffene Geist wieder in seine Unerschaffenheit getragen, wo er von Ewigkeit her gewesen ist, und erkennt sich daselbst als einen Gott in Gott, und ist doch in sich selbst nur eine Creatur und ein erschaffenes Ding. In Gott aber sind alle Dinge Gott, weil sich dieser Grund oder Geist des Menschen in ihm findet.”) For Tauler’s concept of the ground of the soul in the tradition of St. Augustine, Proclus and Albertus Magnus, see Gabriel: *Rückkehr zu Gott*, 363; McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism*, 254–264, and Gnädinger, *Johannes Tauler*, 181–193.

¹⁰⁵ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 168 / *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 163 (“der achtet nicht, was dem äußerlichen Menschen zustehe und begegne, als Armuth, Trübsal, Mangel, oder dergleichen etwas”).

¹⁰⁶ Tauler, “Fratres, obsecro vos ego vincus in domino” (V53), 240 (my translation).

¹⁰⁷ Tauler, “Fratres, obsecro vos ego vincus in domino” (V53), 240 (my translation). Tauler also mentions Jesus Christ as an image and *Vorbild* in these sermons: “Ein ander bredige von dem zwoelften tage...” (V5), 23; “Sante Johannes schribet...” (V 14), 67; “Clarifica me pater claritate...” (V15), 70; “Fratres, si spiritu vivimus...” (V47), 209; “Transite ad me omnes...” (V50), 229; and “Sequere me!” (V55), 254. See Gabriel: *Rückkehr zu Gott*, 413–427.

¹⁰⁸ *PC*, 167 / *SKS* 12, 170.

¹⁰⁹ *PC*, 167 / *SKS* 12, 170.

¹¹⁰ *Pap.* II C 28, in *Pap.* XIII, 67 (my translation). Steven E. Ozment’s explication of Tauler’s ontology of the ground helps to understand why Kierkegaard was opposed to the idea of a unity of God and man: “Historical communion subserves the realization of union on the level of being. And, further, because the ground of the soul is an inalienable residence of God in human being, it gives man a natural, creational claim to salvation, which places God historically in man’s debt.” Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis*, 25.

¹¹¹ The return to the ground and unity does not necessarily mean that God and man are identical. See Mieth, *Die Einheit von vita activa und vita contemplativa*, 137f. Still, Anti-Climacus’s definition of the self in *The Sickness Unto Death* tries to avoid any suggestions of such unity in the ground. He stresses the unilateral dependence of the self on God: “In relating to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests [*grunder*, literally grounds itself] transparently in the power that establishes it.” Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 14.

¹¹² Gabriel, *Rückkehr zu Gott*, 379 (my translation).

¹¹³ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 165.

¹¹⁴ Tauler, “Sermon 59,” 165; cf. *Johann Tauler’s Predigten* 3, 158 (“Diese Dinge mögen zwar nicht wohl ohne Lust seyn, aber ohne Eigenliebe und Selbstbehaben können sie wohl seyn”).

¹¹⁵ *PC*, 58 / *SKS* 12, 70.

¹¹⁶ *PC*, 57 / *SKS* 12, 69.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Either/Or* II, 247 / *SKS* 3, 236.

¹¹⁸ *PC*, 174 / *SKS* 12, 176.

¹¹⁹ Pattison, *Kierkegaard. The Aesthetic and the Religious*, 183.

¹²⁰ For a new perspective on Kierkegaard’s thought in relation to Catholicism and Protestantism, see Barrett, “Kierkegaard and Johannes Tauler”; Evans, “Kierkegaard’s Relation to Catholic Theology” and Furnal, *Catholic Theology after Kierkegaard*.