



Meister Eckhart

Listener Questions: Part 2
with James Finley and Kirsten Oates

**Turning
to the
Mystics**

Jim Finley: Greetings. I'm Jim Finley.

Kirsten Oates: And I'm Kirsten Oates.

Jim Finley: Welcome to Turning to the Mystics.

Kirsten Oates: Welcome everyone to season seven of Turning to the Mystics where we've been turning to the German Mystic, Meister Eckhart. And this is part two of our question and response session. We had so many questions come in this season, more than we've ever had. And we're so grateful for that. We've read all the questions and we've put them into themes and unfortunately, we won't be able to address every question, but we have read every question and they're such a helpful grounding for us as we continue forward with the podcast. So I'm here with Jim, Corey in the background. And Jim, we are going to ask you to respond to some more questions.

Jim Finley: Yes, of course.

Kirsten Oates: So we're going to start with a theme of the ground and the powers. And so the first question is from Rebecca and she asks, how did the powers become exiled from the ground, or is that part of the mystery that we will only understand once the powers are fully reunited with the ground?

Jim Finley: Yes, here's the classic Christian way of understanding this mystery about where did the estrangement come from? How did this happen? And Eckhart goes into this and looks at this. He said that God's ground is our ground. Our ground is God's ground. The mystery of the unit, the mystery of the person, this trans objective mystery of the person. Then we're given a human nature as empowered by God to realize that, which is the soul or the interiority of the self. And the powers of the soul, the intellect, the memory, and the will, the higher powers. So the thinking self and all that it thinks, remembering self, all that remembers, the desiring self and all that desires, and then the feelings itself and all that it feels. And then the somatic self, the bodily self, and so on. So these are the powers of the soul.

So in the mythic story of the Garden of Eden is a mythic poetic story that... And for Adam and Eve, their nature, the powers of their soul were translucent to the ground and as it shined out through they saw the divinity in the earth in each other and God and so on. And so they were created by God in the image and likeness of God and it shined out through the powers translucent to the ground. But the whole mystery of the fall is trying to be like God without God is like an estranged state that we find ourself in and it's almost... It isn't as if there was some kind of sin and we're carried on our original parents like some blight that we deal with that, it's like a poetic way of understanding what our situation is.

And our situation is where we start, is that our powers are estranged on the ground. That is to say not just are our powers estranged at the psychological level of psychological symptoms like depression, anxiety, addiction, there's all that healing of the ego in the ego, but rather the powers of the soul are living in an exile, traumatized state of living in an underlying habitual state of the ground, shining out through the powers, empowering them to say yes to that and so on. So that's the poetry or the poetics of the origin.

And so Eckhart would say really is that the issue here is not how do we understand it, but rather since this is our situation, what's our response to it? Which are the teachings. You know Karl Barth, the great evangelical Protestant theologian, said once that he was being interviewed by somewhat cynical interviewer questioning him about scripture. And she asked Karl Barth, you don't honestly think, do you, that a snake talked to Eve in the garden? And Karl Barth says, well, I don't know if the deep question is whether or not the snake actually talked. I think what matters is what the snake said. See, that's the point because it's a poetic metaphorical way of getting at the condition of where we find ourselves, strangely exiled from the very foundations of ourself. And our response with God's grace is to be liberated from it, which is the walk, faith through Jesus and through faith.

Kirsten Oates: Next question is from Cheryl and she asks in session three, Jim says that our powers are estranged from the ground. I don't understand how that is possible. If the ground of God permeates all of us and the powers are part of who we are as human beings, would you please explain what that means?

Jim Finley: Yes, I think that the tradition would put it this way, Eckhart would say it this way. We're not estranged from the ground in the order of God's generosity being poured out and giving itself to us unexplainably forever. Also, we're not estranged from the ground ontologically in our being. We're not estranged from the ground. The issue is the estrangement has to do with the extent to which we're aware of that or not, and that's what's estranged. And it is a mystery of evil. The mystery of the origins of evil is one way of saying, and again, it's a mystery of people understanding in different ways, it's where we are. Is that here we are in this manifestation of God's love, so God gives us the capacity to recognize it, which is religious experience. We're awakened. Then in being awakened to it, then we're given the freedom to say yes or no to it because love is always offered. It's never imposed.

See if there's no estrangement from the ground, everything is all preset from the beginning. It's just nothing but the ground in all directions and we're just living out the motions of something. But we have a life to live. And the life is lived in the mystery of the precariousness of a certain kind of autonomy. But hidden down in the depths of the exile is the invincible ground sustaining us in the exile and guiding us and illuminating us and inspiring us to be liberated from its hold on us, which is the path. Jesus is like metanoia, conversion to this deep response, this deep yes to God's yes to us. Live day by day.

Kirsten Oates: A question from Nancy. My question is, does Meister Eckhart, distinguish what is the soul from the ground, from the person experiencing the powers? To clarify, I understand the ground to be God in the person, but what is the soul? Who is the person who is so affected by the powers? I wondered about the exchange of God or ground with the soul, with the person under the influence of the powers.

Jim Finley: You have to prayerfully just keep sitting with this and little by little you can see how the subtlety of it, how Eckhart sorts out like the figure out ability of it all, to we have to poetically sit with it. This would be one way again of understanding that... Let's say, and I said this in the talks by the way, that the ground of this God is a ground. Our ground is God's ground. In the way I was trained in the monastery is that that oneness in the ground is the person that we are, as a capax Dei, as a capacity for God. Because that ground needs to be actualized by living it. And so our soul is the human nature through which we're

empowered to live it because the soul is the interiority of ourself.

Now, another traditional insight about this is that the soul has two faces. One face of the soul faces outward, which is the ways we interrelate to the world, nature, other people and so on. And the other face of the soul faces God. So the soul that faces outward it internalizes the outer world and responds to it. So the outer layers of the soul are our internalized patterns that we've internalized through our parents, through our past, through our assumptions and all of it. But then we realized that if we're living at that level, we're just living kind of at the surface of ourself, there's something deeper. So then we have to go more into the interiority of ourself, to find that place of the soul that opens out upon the person that we are on the ground, of the oneness of the... And then realizing it as an insight.

We listen to Eckhart and it's beautiful and we're touched by the beauty of it, which is the intuitive resonance with it. This is beautiful and I can't explain it, but something tells me this is true. This is true. So then I say in realizing that it is true, how can I free myself from what hinders me from living in an habitual state of oneness with what we know is true? Which is detachment. I know it's true, but there are patterns in my mind and heart where I'm attached to conditioned states as having the final say in who I am. I'm attached to my conclusions, my belief systems, my assumptions, my whatever. So what is the path of being delivered from being so enveloped in these internalized patterns?

This something of this light can shine through which you means by the birth of the word and the soul, that as I start to be unraveled from the claim that these internalized conditions states make on me, the ground of me and the ground of God is one, the person that starts shining through the powers of my soul as a state of clarity or a state of joy or a state of gratitude or a state of spiritual understanding and so on. That'd be one way to sit with it.

Kirsten Oates: So this next question is from Rosalie and she says, the question I have is about infinite generosity that completely permeates cause and effect. I'm trying to learn how to apply this beautiful thought to my life. Here is a story of cause and effect from my life recently. I drove eight hours with my husband to visit my sister who was dying. After three days I needed to return home as I had a medical appointment which I'd been waiting to have for months. When I went home for the appointment, I was told that there was nothing they could do for me. Two days later, my sister passed and I was not there. How can I view the infinite generosity permeating this event of cause and effect?

Jim Finley: This is one way that helps me to understand it. See, if we look at your story, this person's story and the actual experience, what it's like, it's hard to find the generosity. Her sister's dying, had to turn back to go so to see her own doctor, the doctor can't help her. Where's the generosity? So there's another way of looking at it. It could be... Yes, life comes in waves of difficulties and disappointments because of death. It's a temporary arrangement, but very, very soon now, we won't even be here. They say the only downside about heaven is only the dead need to apply. And so we're here kind of in the upheavals and unforeseeably of conditioned states and as we get older,

illness and death and so on. But here's the thing, the very fact you wanted to go see your sister, the very fact your husband was with you, the very fact you're touched by the teachings of Eckhart, by the very fact there's a certain... This is why I say God is a presence that protects us from nothing.

Even as God unexplainably sustains us in all things, it's sensing that trustworthy. It's trustworthy. And a matter of fact, when we're in the throes of hardship, it's hard to see it. But when we look back at our life of what we know today about patience or humility or gratitude, at least for me, I think a lot of people I would see in therapy, a lot of it was given to us in moments of difficulty. A lot of it came to us when we had lost our way. A lot of it came to us when we didn't know how to move on.

And in providential unfoldings there was a granting of a taste of something. It's always there. So it's challenging when we're shooting the rapids and we're in the midst of hardship. It's hard to see this because we're just human. But if we trust and just this idea of detachment, just breathing into it like the spaciousness of it all like this, then we can start to see this benevolence that permeates unforeseeably and ragged edges and the pieces surpasses understanding. Because it's the peace of God that isn't dependent on how anything turns out, but rather it is the peace on which everything depends and we can learn to live by it like this.

Kirsten Oates: Yeah. Thank you Jim. Yeah, it's hard to feel that in circumstances that sounds so exhausting and challenging and sad. But yes.

Jim Finley: Another thing that I think too, when we're on this path and we're in the midst, let's say we're being overwhelmed by... Say we're on this path, we're learning the way and we realize we're getting very reactive and upset in a sense we can get to a place we know we're having an episode. This too shall pass and this really is satisfying to scream or cry or walk around or pound on the table or do what I need to do. This too shall pass. But I know in my heart... I can't feel it, but I know I'm being unexplainably sustained in the midst of the hurting things, and that's the way we can be at peace in the midst.

See what Jesus says, my peace I give you not as the world gives to you, do I give to you. So the peace that the world gives is the ability to live in conditions conducive to peace. The peace of Jesus gives is a peace is not dependent on conditions conducive to peace, which is the mystery of the cross. And I think this is where Eckhart is trying to help us find our way.

Kirsten Oates: Another question along those lines comes from Cheryl. When you say that God is the ground of everything, how can that be? Is God the ground of the cancer cell that kills the 20-year-old woman on the verge of starting out her own life? Is God the ground of the genetic anomaly that creates terrible problems for some people? Would you be able to help me wrap my mind around this or let me know how you see it?

Jim Finley: First of all, we could say that in some sense, God is the ground of phenomena, the unfolding of phenomena. Like animals right now, all over the world right now are being born. They're living their life. And all over the world right now, animals are

dying and God's the ground. Someone once said... Jesus said, look at the birds of the air. They neither gather into barns and so on and so on, but God, the Father takes care of them. And someone said yes, but many birds freeze to death and many birds starve to death. And says that's true because God's unexplainably taking care of them as they freeze to death and as they starve to death. So God is the ground of the unfolding of phenomena.

As to the suffering that comes with it is that God is not the ground of the suffering that comes with it because the suffering that comes with it is not the suffering of the disease. See, that's pain. The suffering is the devastation of these things and the devastation comes from being exiled from God sustaining us in the midst of the devastating thing. So it's not like an answer system. It isn't like, hey, look God, all... Then how could God ever... Like you can't get there from here. You have to drop down into... It's like someone asking you to explain what love is, asks you to explain what beauty is. You can't define it. Beauty's not reducible to the sum total of the techniques by which artists make beautiful paintings, which is crafts. So the transcendence of beauty is the shining out through the details, but it's not reducible to the details. It's a certain... I think it's an awareness like that.

Kirsten Oates: Yeah. Thank you Jim. Yet again, hard to say when you're in the midst of it.

Jim Finley: Yeah, I'm going to say something else too. If Eckhart was listening to us right now, I think Eckhart would say... I'll be Eckhart for a minute. Eckhart would say, these questions are so great. Do you know why? These are path questions. These are the kinds of questions that people ask that are on the path. How can I figure out this? How can I figure out? That's fine, it's really good, but I want you to consider something. What if what you're looking for is not figure outable? And what if you could get an answer to all your questions? It doesn't mean you even found what you're looking for. You just have a lot of answers to a lot of questions. And so how can I be delivered? Here's another question, but it's another different kind of question. How can I be... See, Thomas Merton, the understanding the spiritual order is to know that we're infinitely understood.

He said, how do we begin to pray? We begin to pray by reminding ourselves we belong to God. And so it isn't figuring out anything at all. It's rather stepping into being touched by the beauty of what Eckhart's saying and opening ourselves, asking God to help us to let that beauty have its way with us. Then at a secondary level, we ask these questions. And along the way, by the way, we do connect the dots. It does happen by the way, and this is how we start also quoting Thomas Merton on Eckhart. He says, in the beginning, seekers on starting this way have many questions, which are questions, and therefore they seek answers to their questions, which they should by the way, like this. He said, you get to a certain point in the search for answers to your questions you realize that here all along God's the one asking the question. And not only do you not know the answer to God's question, you don't even understand the question.

That's the detachment for Eckhart. See, that's the detachment. See the reins fall from our hands. And if we don't panic and run away and sit with openness, we're graced with something not explainable. And I think that's Eckhart. But by the way, look how clearly he responds to these questions. He was an intellectual. He wasn't disparaging questions, he was just trying to... There's another subtle distinction in Eckhart.

Kirsten Oates: Amazing. I like that you can be God and you can be Eckhart.

Jim Finley: It's just like falling off a log, it's so easy. But then again, what do I know? Because making this up as I go along, seriously. But here's the thing, I do think it's true of the spirit of what Eckhart is saying. I do believe that and convince it. That's my sense that it's true. Turning to the Mystics will continue in a moment.

Kirsten Oates: Question from Lynn in Germany actually, and she asks, how would sadness be connected with the powers?

Jim Finley: I would say that affect, the affect feeling, like affect as being happy, sad, whatever. Thich Nhat Hahn talks about the river of feelings that flow through us. So sadness is an aspect of the powers. It's the capacity to feel sad when something sad happens. It's to feel afraid when something scary happens. It's the interconnectedness with reality because that motivates us. What can I do about this? How can I understand this? But then what Eckhart would say, well, that's true. What you're trying to discover is what's really sad is the extent the real sadness which motivates you to be freed from it. Is it the sad thing has the final say in who you are and what you're about? But only love has the final say in who you are and what you're about.

So there's different kinds of sad. There's the gift of sadness, of a kind of grieving over absolutizing the relative and relativizing the absolute. And so we're to acknowledge the relative as relative. If it's sad, it's sad, which it is sad, be sad. But also everything that happens has lessons in it, to be liberated from the sadness of being caught and imagining that the final say is the close horizon we can't get past. And how through detachment can I be released from that closed horizon and be kind of free from the tyranny of my sadness in my sadness.

Kirsten Oates: So Jim, just following on from that, what is the place of personality and experience in terms of what we bring to our ministry and others when our aim is to become more empty of self? And that's a question from Liz.

Jim Finley: Merton called personality, our exterior self. And it's real, but it's contingent. It's dependent on a series of predispositions, attitudes, nature, nurture. Some of them are innate and some of them are in response to how we were formed. And so when we know someone well, we have a sense of their personality, but we also know to the extent we love them, that they're not reducible to their personality, that there's a certain depth in them, that the deeper your love for them is the more you're empowered to go past their personality to see that depth is not reducible to it.

Then you see something else too. There's a certain charm to their personality because it's the configurations and the patterns of the depth of who they are. That's why I think when someone dies, we'd love very, very much, what do we miss the most? We miss maybe the way they laughed, with a certain way that they did things like the patterns of the personality were configurations of the mystery of who they are. So the problem is... The flip side is we're nothing more to ourselves than our personality. And that reductionistic sense, there's nothing more to me than that. And so Eckhart would say it's an aspect of who you are and it's the medium through which you discover in your personality what transcends your personality

through awakenings, through quickenings, through however. But it's infinitely more than the manifestations of those patterns.

Kirsten Oates: And then Liz is asking in terms of vocation. So when we go back to that idea of vocation as the place of manifesting this path of detachment, I guess the personality is the vehicle.

Jim Finley: Yes. In other words, let's say there's a calling. It could be any sense of a calling, whether it be marriage of a child or being a teaching grade school or being a therapist or an artist or a poet or a solitary, whatever it is, is that you're living out fidelity to the calling and the configurations of your personality. And it's people that I've worked with for a long time in therapy too. Not only do I already know in advance kind of what they're going to say, I also know how they're going to say it because it's their personality. But I also know and the very act of saying it's something shining through that's not reducible to that pattern like that. And so along the lines it helps me to see that, yes.

Kirsten Oates: And that idea of bringing that aspect of ourselves, trying to let that flow through us when we find that thing we are passionate about, that vocation that the people that we love or the people we want to serve or that.

Jim Finley: That's exactly right. And there's another way to look at this too, I think. There are all these endless personalities like this, but the insight and this also out of all the millions and millions and millions of people on this earth right now, not a single one of them is you. And of all the people that have ever lived, not a single one of those people is you. And all the people you have to come, not a single one of them... You're the only you there is. And even though your personality clearly has residences with personalities that are similar to yours, because you can see patterns. But only your personality is your personality, the uniqueness of who you are, shining out through those patterns.

And I concretizes this, the mystery of the person. I think you also get a feeling, I'm sure Eckhart was just... If we would've met him, like I knew Merton, you would've met him in his personality. He had a personality. But you also were sitting with him was very clear, he was not reducible to his personality. That was so... And you would've known that Eckhart was clear about it too. He would also know that you're not reducible to it either. And the whole path he's trying to help you on is to discover that and live by it and live through it.

Kirsten Oates: Brings us back around to what you talked about in the first session where the illuminant personality like Meister Eckhart can just stay in integrity to the truth. Okay, so there's a couple of questions that came in on the theme of the Godhead. So we'll start with one of those from Denise. I always thought that the Godhead was just another term for the Trinity, but in your last podcast you indicated they are different. Can you comment on that?

Jim Finley: Again, there's another very subtle point in Eckhart and it's also has to do with... There's the apathetic dimensions, which is the unknowability of God and the cataphatic dimensions, which are the manifestations of God. And so the Godhead is a dimension of the unknowability of God because the Godhead is... It's like a boundary-less abyss. There is within no distinctions. That's why the Trinity's not in the Godhead. Likewise, he says there's no intentionality in the Godhead. The Godhead isn't a will in anything. The Trinity does, will and so on. And so really it's a mystery of infinite emptiness and being infinite is

boundary-less and beyond anything we can know about it. Because it has no content, there's no content to it, but it's fertile and pregnant. So he says it's an infinite eternal stillness, but the stillness is eternally in motion and the motion of the stillness of the Godhead is the Trinity.

See, that's another paradox. The stillness of the Godhead is welling up and manifesting itself as divine relations of knowledge and love. So the Trinity is God as divine relations and the Godhead is God as beyond relations, beyond intention, beyond... Be giving itself in and as intention, in and as. And then likewise in the Trinity from all eternity, God the Father, God is mother, God is origin, is eternally speaking himself, as logos is the word. And as speaking himself as the word, the word then contemplates. He contemplates, God contemplates himself in the word and the word contemplates... And the Father and in the oneness of their contemplation, the love that emerges out of it is the Holy Spirit. So you get this inter divine, interplay of love and knowledge as the intimacy of manifested emptiness of the Godhead. Then from all eternity, God the Father contemplates in the word, the eternal possibility of you.

So from all eternity, God the Father, eternally, eternally, eternally knew the possibility of you and the generosity of the infinite is infinite. He created you as one to whom God could infinitely give the infinity, not just of the Trinity, but God could give the infinity of the ground to, by making God's own ground to be your ground. This is why not only Eckhart says, to have one glimpse of God would mean you lined up on a stage and everyone's bringing by you elegant things, beautiful things. And you're looking for the thing that will be enough for you. A few centuries later, Eckhart says, I don't know what else you have back there to save you the trouble. I don't think it's going to do it. Because nothing is infinitely less than the infinity of the Godhead is enough. It's a setup. God made us this way that it won't be enough like this.

This then is through the Trinity. That is through our faith. God, the Father, Jesus, through the Trinity, devotional sincerity. And then for some people efficacious under holiness, the God is Trinity, Jesus who lived by the life of devotional sincerity, shared with others and into eternity. For some people, their grace are touched by the quickening of the Godhead. They're touched by this enigmatic paradoxical sense that anything less than the infinite, nothingness of the Godhead will ever be enough for them like that.

And that touch, Eckhart's sermons are invited to speak to people whose hearts are stirring with that touch. And when you hear him talking, you can tell you're not crazy because you know that he's talking about what's happening to you. And then he offers guidance in how to consummate. It's like a longing you can't explain, for a union you can't explain, but you know that it's true. Saint John of the cross says, it's like a flame, have no light to guide you except the one that burns in your heart that you can't explain. That's what all these mystics are saying. And so I think that's what Eckhart... That it's a way of sitting with Eckhart.

Kirsten Oates: It's a big concept to get your head around that.

Jim Finley: I want to say bigger. It's trans conceptual. And let me put it in another way that helps me to say it. Let's say we're in a moment of oneness like awe in the midst of the beloved or a sunset or art or silent, but it's one of these moments where we're being awakened in oneness. Like

this is unexplainably self-evident, this oneness. That no matter how big you would draw a circle around what you're experiencing, no matter how big you'd make the circle, even if you made it infinite, the joy of what you're experiencing would breach the circumference of that circle and would do so effortlessly and playfully. It's what it delights to do, because it's delightfully uncircumscribable and anything you're even capable of circumscribing, will never put to rest the restless longings of your heart. And that's the tone of Eckhart teaches all these mystic, I think.

Kirsten Oates: Just a follow-up question from Carolyn, can you distinguish between the Godhead and the Holy Spirit? Because this idea that we listen to, we have an experience of the Holy Spirit.

Jim Finley: Let's say first of all, in this Christian schema, this Christian mandala of God, the Holy Spirit pertains to the Trinity like we were saying before, it's the love. I love this saying by Thomas Merton that God the Father is a Holy Spirit named Father. God the Son is a Holy Spirit named Son. But is it possible that when God unexplainably takes us to himself, to ourself forever, the name of the Holy Spirit is our name and the name of the Father, the Son and James Finley. Amen. And that's the Holy Spirit, the spirit with an honorable groanings, see groans, we might yield and give ourself over to the love that gives itself to us.

And that's true in the devotional love of discipleship, is really true. Come follow me, Jesus says. But what Eckhart is saying, the spirit is groaning, that nothing less than the Godhead will be enough for you. And it's the call to the detachment or being liberated for the boundaries of anything explainable, anything with distinctions in it, anything that... So in that sense, it's the spirit, but it's the spirit calling us beyond itself and beyond the Trinity because it is manifested anyway. It's manifested emptiness.

Kirsten Oates: Yeah. Wonderful. Gosh, who could we go to for these responses? Seriously, Jim, this is really helpful to be able to ask these very complicated questions and get some kind of sense of it.

Jim Finley: They're such great questions. We could take each question and I could respond, then we could all sit together in silence for five minutes. Then I would invite everyone in this circle to say what comes to them, what that question evokes in them. And I would respond. We'd respond to each other and an hour later, we still wouldn't do justice to the question. And then we'd say, next question, you'd ask it, we'd all sit for 10 minutes. And that's why it's an arc. I think that's the tone of it really.

Kirsten Oates: Yeah, taking us deeper and deeper.

Jim Finley: And that's why people have been listening to this series from the beginning. They can feel the cumulative effect of being in this neighborhood. It grows on you as you go along. It does.

Kirsten Oates: And now I think we have a voicemail question on the Godhead and Corey who's always here supporting us, is going to play that for us.

John: Hello, this is a question for Turning to the Mystics. Thank you so much James and Kirsten. I've really enjoyed this last season on Meister Eckhart. My question is, in the Christian mystical tradition, there seems to be a shared understanding through the doctrine of the Trinity as opposed to monism that there is in fact a not one, not two nature to reality.

Reality is one and many. The unity is the distinction and the distinction is the unity. So although I am not you, I'm not other than you, although I am not the tree, I'm not other than the tree, although I am not God, I'm not other than God.

My question is about the Godhead experience of consciousness. If this level of consciousness is beyond the Trinity and there are no distinctions in the Godhead, does that mean when we reach this state, we look out at each other in the world and we are no longer able to say, although I am not you, I'm not other than you? Or do we retain the intimate knowledge of our unity and distinction through love, the not one, not two? How does it not fall into monism is my question? Thank you.

Jim Finley: Here's how I would look at it. See, in the Trinity trans objectively, not one, not two. In not all one, not two God's one. Because Merton says his infinite simplicity admits no distinction and no division. So it isn't as if not one, not two. God's not one. It's an infinite oneness in which not two, not one as the oneness itself. So there's the paradox of the Trinity. There's a story of St. Augustine. He was one of the fathers of the church who kind of forged this understanding of God is Trinity. Like Raimon Panikkar, he said, the Trinity is Christ's mind. That sometimes God speaks of God as abba, father. He speaks of himself. He who sees me, sees the Father, and I'm sending the Holy Spirit. So the Trinity is Christ's mind, Trinity. And so St. Augustine started forging the sense of the Trinity in the church.

And the story is that he's having a hard time with the Trinity. He can't quite get it. And he's walking along the beach and he sees a child has a little hole in the sand and he has a teaspoon. The child's going down and getting a teaspoon full of ocean water coming up, pouring it in the hole. And he goes, gets another teaspoon of water and pours... He's watching him for quite a while, and he asks the child, what are you doing? He said, I'm trying to get the ocean in this hole. And the child says... Augustine laughs, he says, you won't do it. And the child said, well neither will you ever figure out the Trinity and disappeared. And so the Trinity, it's an impasse. It's meant to be an impasse, but in the impasse, the light shines through. And so Eckhart says... Sherman [inaudible 00:39:28], Sherman says Eckhart's talking about what happens to a person when they encounter the same, that everything's the same.

And so it's not the one that says monism. It's not an ism. It's not an ism is how do we de-ism ourselves, turning things into isms? We need to do that when we form theological patterns, but it's not even one, it's beyond one. You might think of it as an infinite zero beyond with no distinctions in it. And then from that arises the distinction and just of the Trinity. So it's like that. It's very, very close to the Buddhist notion of emptiness. Actually very close to it. Anyway that's my sense of it.

Kirsten Oates: Jim, thank you so much for being with us today and for all your responses to the wonderful questions that have come through about Meister Eckhart. It's just very gratifying to hear the way people are processing and responding to the podcast. So Jim, thank you for today. Corey, thank you for today. And we'll be back for part three in our final session, question and response, and look forward to being with you then.

Thank you for listening to this episode of Turning to the Mystics, a podcast created by the Center for Action and Contemplation. We'll see you again soon.