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## ALAIN DE LIBERA'S SUBJECTIVITY BETWEEN MAN AND CHRIST\*\*

REFLECTIONS ON THE BOOK BY A. DE LIBERA

LIBERA, A. 2021. *LE SUJET DE LA PASSION: COURS DU COLLÈGE DE FRANCE 2015–16* [IN FRENCH]. PARIS: VRIN

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...nous sautons de Pierre Lombard, évoqué la semaine dernière, autrement dit du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle, au XVI<sup>e</sup>, du Moyen Âge à la modernité (Libera, 2021: 345).

Prominent scholars ordinary have a distinctive style one cannot confuse: Libera is not an exception. Developing his method and approach for almost 40 years he presents a brilliant example of non-narrative academic research in his his final recorded lectures<sup>1</sup> present a brilliant example of non-narrative academic research. What Libera as in the epigraph above jumps from one issue to another makes his thought difficult to follow, decipher, and completely comprehend.<sup>2</sup> I do not have a right to blame Libera: he delivered a course that imposes limitations on the coherency of the written text based on the orally performed lectures. Nevertheless, Libera seems to intentionally avoid the logical and temporal sequence of the history necessary to deepen the understanding of the main researcher's finding — an alternative to Aristotle-Descartes-Heidegger's line of subjectivity to perform actions and suffer passions. The topic itself is not covered in a volume promised by the author since Libera tends to make significant and yet non-related to passions digressions devouring a reader with supplementary information. The most

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<sup>1</sup>Collège de France has his lectures recently uploaded on their YouTube channel (Libera, 2022).

<sup>2</sup>One time Libera called his method "dadadaïsme" but did not cut the history as he proceeded in the present course (Libera, 1999: 9).

vivid example clarifying Libera's approach is the striking juxtaposition of the first and last talks: whereas the speaker begins with a full table of different meanings of what passions are (Libera, 2021: 14–16), finishing the course he briefly mentions Christological disputes transmitted through Peter Lombard to the Latin West (*ibid.*: 493–495). Only a few times Libera returns to his primal definitions reduced solely to Christ's passions.

After a small part devoted to the analysis of Libera's methodological innovations applied via the course I will settle down the essential contribution: first, reconstruction of the archeology Libera has not collected into consistent and consecutive series of chronologically placed arguments, then a demonstration of possible fallacies stemming from Libera's method and history through a small investigation conducted over Eckhart's theory of passions and love compared with author's perspective. I do not want to downplay Libera's profound study; contrary, elucidate how the research initiated by the French medievalist could obtain a new life if a germane consideration would be given to summarizing and deepening contours and ramifications Libera abandons himself.

To name the course given at Collège de France "Le sujet" and propose to archeologically excavate the history makes a tricky and evasive step towards Foucault's project before he started teaching at the same Collège (*ibid.*: 14). However, in every text Libera highlights his method oscillates between analytical and continental tradition including Foucault (Libera, 1996: 229). To stress the interdisciplinary<sup>3</sup> he claims Collingwood to be his methodological spiring. Collingwood is an English historian who has coined the notion of structural complexes which become "complexe questions-réponses, un CQR" for Libera (Libera, 2014: 28; Libera, 1999: 625). In a nutshell, English structuralism enables Libera to construct from multiple authors historical entities which do not necessarily compose a unified series (Libera, 2021: 67). Though, Libera could not manage to deceive his audience by referencing an analytical philosopher. The French professor remains highly indebted to 2 intellectuals referenced a lot more than Collingwood — Heidegger and Foucault. Criticizing Heidegger for a historically inaccurate opinion regarding the roots of Cartesian subjectivity, Libera takes at simul his core idea of the historical deconstruction (*Abbauen* or *Destruktion*) (*ibid.*: 66, 131). As a discipline history is a critical survey penetrating the a priori

<sup>3</sup>Certainly remarkable in his books on universals and short introduction to the philosophy where an "analytical" approach to scholastic logic occupies a substantial place (Libera, 1999; Libera, 2001).

rooted concepts. Hence, Libera attempts to decolonize the Middle Ages by reestablishing Greek Eastern Fathers' (Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, and John of Damascus)<sup>4</sup> view on subjectivity tied with Christ's twofold natures and wills that Libera reckons as taken into oblivion by European medievalists (Libera, 2021: 7, 219). Decolonization is only reassured by the author speculating about the importance of the translation made not ad verbum and citing all his sources in original language ad sensum (ibid.: 28, 68–71) that I can only praise as a brilliant and astonishing toil. Overall, his methodology determines the issue at stake with lectures' exposition: when the history which may revolutionize the field of intellectual medieval milieu is cut into pieces, the duty calls to restore an appropriate structure of the narrative.

The variety of sources from the Bible to Zwingli Libera chooses represents French medievalist's tradition of "longue durée"<sup>5</sup> by which Middle Ages could be extended as long as to the XIX century (ibid.: 9, 493). "Longue durée" perfectly fits with Libera's excursions exploited to have an opportunity for speculations about Heidegger, Lacan, or Balthasar instead of medieval sources themselves (ibid.: 130–131). In the following exposition, I will omit all of them and rather discuss at length primal sources sometimes underestimated by Libera.

Libera believes the modern subject of Charron, Descartes, and Leibniz was given birth by Greek theologians who created the subject of action and passion instead of Aristotle's "ὑποκείμενον" as a vessel for "συμβεβηκότι". Greeks had attempted to unite in one subject two natures and wills that led to the theory of mutual immanence containing "ὑπόστασις" and "περίφρασις", whereas Libera found a link by which Christology had been transmitted into anthropology that opened a new realm of subjectivity humanity took for granted in the modernity.

<sup>4</sup>Greek fathers signify an additional line of thought to Libera's texts on the role Arabic philosophy played in the Latin West. Libera became famous for his critique of Sylvain Gouguenheim who had claimed Greek translations of Aristotle are more important than Arabic (Libera, 2009). As in his bestseller "Penser au Moyen Âge", the author believes medieval philosophy as a way of thinking was born in the East (Libera, 1991: 99–105). Furthermore, Libera always tries to bring to attention different traditions: e. g., in discussing the pre-history of the quarrel over universals he intentionally uses Alexander of Aphrodisias, Boethius, and Avicenna who represent three religions and languages (Libera, 1999: 12).

<sup>5</sup>French historiography not acknowledged by Libera in the work I am reviewing plays a decisive role in the discontinuous approach to the history of the Middle Ages. Paul Vignaux, Georges Duby, and Jacques Le Goff were acclaimed by Libera as sources inspiring him to of to study history in its rebellious diversity (Libera, 2014: 20).

The story begins with the Bible presenting Jesus' passions and the first ambiguities of the crucifixion. Lk. 22:42 and Mt. 26:39 tell the same story of Christ questioning the father's will and providence via the metaphor of chalice in the Gethsemane garden (Libera, 2021: 134), whereas Jn. 3:15 and 1 Cor. 2:18 respectively state that Son of Man and Lord of Glory were raptured. This CQR activates the search for Christ's unique subjectivity between human and divine. Who was crucified: man (god), (man) god, or man-god (ibid.: 251)? Simultaneously, "πάθος" as a term was regarded to signify vice and sexual depravity in Col. 3:5 (ibid.: 77, 85, 104). The Bible leaves a gap to tie subjectivity with passions through Christology. Cappadocians think that passions indicate the tendency to sin designating man's post-Adamic will that came from Neo-Platonists' ethical approach to the problem of evil (ibid.: 105–106). Sin could not be applied to Christ: thus, for Gregory of Nyssa and Basil of Caesarea Christ is a man who suffered and yet did not sin (ibid.: 111–113). He took a share in human nature and experience (temptation, prosecution, death) without what Latins translated as "fornicatio". At this point, historical paths split up into Latin and Greek versions which will be united in Peter Lombard's *Sententiarum libri quattuor*. Though, this division results in the identical explanation of how two natures unite in Christ and humans that were created independently.<sup>6</sup>

In the Latin West, Augustine and Boethius represent a new theory of Christ's compositional nature. Libera tersely exposes Augustine's exegesis of Christ's nature. Divine and human forms are not idem since the people did not know Christ was God when they crucified him (ibid.: 256). Consequently, Christ died as a man being God: God appeared in the lower form of a slave to be killed and resurrected. Identically, the son will judge on the day of Parousia under divine power (ibid.: 259). Libera believes Augustine illuminates the issue via the so-called "le chiese des proprietes" which permits two different natures to communicate without total unification. Divine and human remain distinct to prevent impassible God from suffering and inferior human from judging (ibid.: 263). For Libera, the same model is applied to Augustine to body-soul (corpus-anima) division where two entities compose the unity but a man could be named either by his soul,

<sup>6</sup>Unfortunately, Libera does not elucidate what essentially distinguishes the East from the Western point of view summed up by Peter Lombard. Course's decolonization strikes a reader who is familiar with previous texts of Libera: his story is Europocentric and almost deprived of Arabic and Jewish concepts. Moreover, most of the time the author elaborates on Western accounts of the passions.

body, or the unity. The mutual relationship opens the dimension for the subject's suffering and acting continued by Boethius.

Deliberating Latin philosopher Libera points out that Boethius has the second notion for subjectivity besides his well-known "persona" defined as "naturae rationalis individua substantia" by which he translated "πρόσωπον" (Libera, 2021: 238). "Substantia" contains an explicit reference to Aristotle's "οὐσία" which Libera tries to avoid in the search for alternative subjectivity. Nevertheless, Boethius uses "subsistentia" (ὑπόστασις) to convey the sense of subjective performance (ibid.: 240). What contrary to Augustine's step Boethius does not apply it to Christ or humanity is omitted by Libera who stresses the transition from Boethius to Thomas who is credited to unite two meanings of "substantia" and "subsistentia" in one formula representing modern subjectivity (ibid.: 241). I may suppose that Augustine and Boethius determine two facets of the subjectivity composed of chiasmus of properties that enables one to descend from Christ to a human and "subsistentia" being a process of sustaining oneself.

In the Greek East, Maximus the Confessor fought against Sergius, the emperor, and Monothelitism (heresy of one will) till his death in torture for what will become a Christian dogma (ibid.: 163). Following Gregory of Nyssa's<sup>7</sup> concept according to which the suffering is accomplished through humanity, Sergius I avoids the paradox of willing two opposite things by claiming the sole divine will has the Son suffer (ibid.: 136, 176–177). Defending 2 wills concept Maximus exploits several new concepts rooted in languages regarding Christ's will: "περιχώρησις" as mutual immanence of Christ's wills, "ὑπόστασις" designating the mutual dependency of the whole and parts in Christ, and "γνώμη" standing for a human weak will to sin that Christ does not have (ibid.: 179, 208). "Περιχώρησις" makes possible two distinct natures to communicate (ibid.: 210):

Son's will cannot disobey Father since the Word is deprived of "γνώμη" which people use to choose actions based on uncertain means and ends after the Fall (ibid.: 208).

Ergo, regarding Maximus' theory, Christ will divinely with a human voluntas.

<sup>7</sup>The author highlights the astonishing archeology of Sergius' sources whom the patriarch himself hardly knew: Aristotle and Porphyry. Via the introduction to Categories latter pagan philosopher fixed the determination of the subject as "ὑποκείμενον" without acting and suffering (Libera, 2021: 252). Monothelitism is rooted in ontological subjectivity transmitted to the most pious Cappadocians from the precarious rival of the Christianity.

Maximus' opinion was taken and elucidated by John of Damascus (Libera, 2021: 213). John remains loyal to the paradox of the New Testament that leads to the necessity of communication between two natures: man must be raptured and God should undergo passions (ibid.: 253). He upholds that two natures communicate (ἀντίδοσις) by the means of mutual idiomatic language (ibid.: 252). What John maintains as an exchange between being in heaven and being crucified is called relationship “d'immanence mutuelle” by Libera (ibid.: 254–255). Furthermore, to sustain this mutual communication of two natures John believes Christ's persona is not an individual located at the bottom of Porphyry's tree<sup>8</sup> (ibid.: 287). Christ is everything (ἅλος/totus) but not everything in its nature (ὅλων/totum) (ibid.: 384–386). The first statement makes Christ an ideal subject for any person because he suffers from being a human person (totus) and remains impassive by the majesty of the divine (totum). Christology becomes the sample for anthropology that will be elaborated on at length in the Latin West.

Libera proceeds to Peter Lombard to argue that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> book of the *Sententiarum libri quattuor* one of the opinions on the incarnation was taken from the Latin translation of John's writing (ibid.: 316). Peter enumerates 3 theories of divine embodiment: 1) assumed theory; 2) 2 natures and 3 substances; 3) extrinsic theory (ibid.: 311). For Hugh of Saint Victor who represents the first auctoritas man turns into God by grace in a new union after the incarnation, while for John of Damascus—a possible defender of the 2<sup>nd</sup> concept—Christ is a compound substance from the divine and human supplemented with body, spirit, and soul (ibid.: 311–312, 316). However, the 3<sup>rd</sup> theory supported by Augustine and Abelard is cardinal to Libera's narrative. According to them human soul and body are of accidental use implemented to appear before people. God became man through wearing a garment (habitus) that saves divine impassibility (ibid.: 317–320). What we believe to be passions are illusions exploited by God's camouflage. Returning for the last time to Augustine Libera reassures that Christology is parallel to anthropology: God incarnates in a human form like a soul has a body (*Filius Dei habendo hominem tamquam anima corpus*) (ibid.: 323). Though, the relationship between John and Augustine begs the question: how to unite “ἅλος-ὅλων” with “habitus”? Unfortunately, Libera does not provide an answer and abandons John's concept for further consideration

<sup>8</sup>In my view, Libera does not provide enough textual proof regarding the critique of Porphyry in John's “De fide Catholica”. Libera's history would look more consistent if a proponent of “ὑπόστασις” attacks an advocate of “ὑποκείμενον”.

of Francis, Eckhart, Suso, Luther, and Zwingli. This shift falls in danger of a massive “re-colonization” of the passions that Libera brings to the established realm of Western theology. Maximus and John’s CQR await necessary consideration.

Francis is a figure one could not expect in the course of personalities elected before: Libera tries to decipher the invention of the stigmatization with divine-human suffering. Francis was believed by OFM to receive the vision of the crucifixion carried by the seraphim that left 5 marks (stigmata) on his body per Christ’s 5 wounds on the cross. One facet of the number of wings mentioned (per senas alas) enriches Libera’s mind (Libera, 2021: 449). Libera is adamant 6 wings correspond to 6 digress of the divine illumination that structures communication of the idioms between Christ and human bodies (ibid.: 451–454). The model of the transmission between *verbum et homo* goes without questioning for Libera. As in the case of John of Damascus, it resembles broad strokes future researchers should complete themselves. Quickly switching to his beloved Eckhart Libera does not attempt to identify Francis and Bonaventure’s sources or link the concept with Eastern Greek fathers.

Libera favors making binary distinctions: Eckhart is juxtaposed with his famous disciple Suso as in “Penser au Moyen Âge” (Libera, 1991: 341–343). While Suso’s path is centered on “πάθος”, Eckhart’s one is “ἀπάθεια” that I will question in the final part of the review (Libera, 2021: 417). Postulating divine internal inhabitation Eckhart transcends previous theologians who reserved themselves to the mere analogy between anthropology and Christology as Augustine does (ibid.: 413). Christ’s incarnation results in divine humiliation that admits a soul to be possessed by God. The state of such divinity is reached through the detachment (*Abgeschiedenheit*) in Libera’s opinion on Eckhart’s corpus (ibid.: 414). The soul rejects being attached to anything besides God himself. Grace is a negation and detachment since God did not suffer and man should stay the same (ibid.: 417). Libera does not claim explicitly that Eckhart takes the theory of Augustine-Peter’s habitus to guarantee an ethical ideal based on Christ’s detachment from sorrow and joy (ibid.: 421). Eckhart even goes so far as to reference Augustine’s theory of “*homo exterior et inferior*”: whereas the former moves and suffers, the latter remains dispassionate (ibid.: 420). Eckhart merges the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> stages of happiness in seeing God directly during this life that is derived from Augustine’s “*De vera religione*” where the bishop claims the final stage is post-mortal (ibid.: 465, 468). Without a proper justification, Libera finds the same idea of idioms’ chiasmus about which Eckhart does not

say a word (Libera, 2021: 396, 469). I would suggest Christ's nature is irrelevant to Ekchart's theology being extremely mystical and founded on the idea of ubiquitous and omnipresent divinity. The analogy between John of Damascus and Meister Eckhart may sound legitimate but the claim of proven direct reception seems controversial and pends an appropriate elaboration as Libera's research on Maximus and John himself.

Opening the path to suffering and compassion Suso wrote a book to defend Eckhart after posthumous accusations brought by John XXII (ibid.: 414–415). Analyzing images by which Suso's manuscript (Strasbourg, BNU, 1998–2022) was illuminated Libera claims that for Suso suffering and compassion are better than mortification, undergoing passions establishes spiritual chivalry, and eternal formless deity bows people in their compassion (Libera, 2021: 423–425). Further on, Suso in the text advises meditating on Christ's sufferings in *silentio* to improve the skill of compassion (ibid.: 465). However, the question of the potential backlash between Suso and the illuminator's intentions goes unnoticed. Transmitting Christ's model into humanity Suso makes a reverse step to claim people need to suffer and sympathize with Christ.

Jumping from XIV to XVI century Libera shifts to the last set of issues surrounding the Eucharist among protestants. At first glance, having reduced 7 sacramenta to 2, Luther articulates the idem to the Fourth Council of the Lateran formula against a figurative reading of the Eucharist: “transsubstantiat pane in corpus, et vino in sanquinem potestate divine” (ibid.: 346, 350). Even so, Luther differs from the catholic dogma since he upholds the substance of bread remains with the substance of Christ's body added, whereas Catholics believe the substance is replaced by *corpus Christi* (ibid.: 351). For Luther, Christ's *modus essendi* is “l'ubiquisme” for he is present simultaneously in Heaven and among terrestrial substances during Eucharist (ibid.: 352–353). Libera once again finds in Luther the idea of “*communicatio idiomatum*” which justifies the concept of omnipresent Christ (ibid.: 391). If Christ is united with bread, people consuming the body take communion with Christ on the verge of Christology and anthropology.

Zwingli who rejects ubiquity and theopaschism proposed by Luther goes in the opposite direction by excluding Christ's passions (ibid.: 353, 360). Zwingli argues as Eucharistic bread signifies symbolically *corpus Christi* did not suffer and die on the cross (ibid.: 351, 355; 358). Divine sufferings are only a sign of human passion (ibid.: 361). Consequently, Zwingli rigidly

opposes any transmission of the subjectivity contra Luther<sup>9</sup>. Luther was not only supported and got approved at the Montbéliard Colloquium but also followed by Chemnitz who believed divine nature is hidden in Christ (Libera, 2021: 346; 391). Identifying 4 genera of how to speak about Jesus Chemnitz as Luther excludes the possibility of the transmission of the sufferings from human nature to the divine since God remains impassive (ibid.: 394–395). Idiomatic language Damascus, Luther, and Chemnitz employ prohibits divine passions by allowing only unidirectional influence from human to divine (ibid.: 394). To what extent Lutherans were acquainted with John's tractate and might have referenced him is put down by Libera<sup>10</sup>.

All in all, through the centuries theologians have produced groups of questions pretending to define how divine and human convey. As an offspring of their reflections disjunctive to Aristotle-Porphry-Gregory of Nyssa-Sergius subjectivity has been coined and bowed with Christ's model. 4 structures of the non-linear history could be discerned after a brief exposition of Libera's achievements: (1) Augustine, Boethius, and Abelard (Peter Lombard?<sup>11</sup>) consider Christ's humanity to be a garment used by God to appear before people and suffer in a form of a human, this trick enables Augustine to make an analogy with the soul-body relationship; (2) Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus speak of Christ with mutual idioms which make possible divine passions and human rapture, nevertheless, divinity itself is impassible; (3) saving divine impassibility Eckhart and Suso maintain a divine presence in the soul by reinforcing the level of the proximity between Christology and anthropology; (4) Luther and Chemnitz utilizing Eucharist translate divine ubiquity and omnipresence of the idiomatic Son. Libera is right regarding the core henotic all auctoritates quoted — different attempts to establish a human identity on Christ's model. Surprisingly, he does not mark the differences and outcomes for modern subjectivity established by Thomas, Descartes, and Leibniz in the conclusion (ibid.: 237, 241, 282). In my view, gradual humanization

<sup>9</sup>Of course, Libera does not formulate a concise conclusion of the present comparison.

<sup>10</sup>To be honest, Libera finishes his analysis with some small remarks about the sin and moral modality in Post-Tridentine Scholasticism. Jesuits argue men can avoid all sins physically or logically but remains morally guilty that Libera seems to regard as the prolongation of the ethical model of Christ and “γνώμη” (Libera, 2021: 505). Symptomatically, the theory was attacked by Arnauld who could be called the proponent of the pure logical Port-Royal “subiectum-ύποκειµενον” beyond doubt. I hope Libera will advance the topic since Post-Tridentine Scholasticism is terra incognita and thesaurus for a historian loyal to “longue durée”.

<sup>11</sup>His own opinion is lurking among authorities cited.

of the divine would be the best solution uncovering the secularized modern subjectivity of actions and passions. The secularization is evident in the case of the abrasion of the demarcation between divine and human that reaches its focal point in the writings of Rhenish mystics among 4 “les complexes”.

A reader may notice that Libera does not exhaust all the ramifications of the amazing discoveries he elegantly produces and makes spurious assumptions. This untidiness stemming from a non-linear narrative fashion which resembles a post-structuralist approach might perturb Libera’s findings and their demonstrability. I would rather concentrate on one topic related with an essential complex of Libera’s history of subjectivity<sup>12</sup> — Eckhartian negativity. Libera has been long ago adamant Eckhart unambiguously gives preference to nothing and emptiness over passions and love (Libera, 1991: 318–322). I do believe Libera unintentionally chooses the sources he finds germane: e.g., contested by modern scholarship<sup>13</sup> “Von Abgescheidenheit” where “nicht” replaces everything else (Libera, 2021: 415). Though, he ignores a vast part of what Eckhart has written positively describing love and passions uniting with the divine. The step towards nothing reduces the complex of problems for Libera: I want to doubt what he states that the movement from anthropology to Christology was not accomplished (ibid.: 394). For Eckhart, as I will be striving to demonstrate even the divine could suffer due to the complexity of mutual dependence Libera has not discovered in this course of lectures.

In what follows I will provide a twofold argument reclaiming Eckhart’s theory of love expressed in his German sermons, then restoring his concept of passions formulated in “Das Buch der Göttliche Tröstung”. Both ideas contradict Libera confided presentation of an apathetic and lethargic philosopher and demand further study of the subjectivity Libera found. From the beginning of his pastoral care in Germany Dominican friar exclaims “God is love” (daß Gott die Liebe sei) since the divine love (minne) constitutes every being in its existence (wesene)<sup>14</sup>. Eckhart transforms rigid scholastic notions applied to God into mystical language of love. God’s “minne” is not

<sup>12</sup>In “La philosophie médiévale”, the French historian pinpoints that Eckhart is a central point of his search for medieval philosophy consolidating logic, metaphysics, and psychology in one system (Libera, 2001: 113). Eckhart is not an author picked by random choice: he is crucial for Libera’s presentation of the Middle Ages.

<sup>13</sup>Libera says he does not understand why scholarship distrusts the spurious work without validation of his opposite opinion (Libera, 2021: 417).

<sup>14</sup>“...therefore all beings (alle Kreaturen) are kept in existence (wesene) by love (minne) which is God (von der minne, diu got ist)” (Meister Eckhart, 1993a: Pf 5, Q 65).

equivalent to “Liebe” which appears at the beginning of the paragraph: both terms are related to the divine differently<sup>15</sup>. “Liebe” designates a human being loving God because he is enormously appealing (liebens) (Meister Eckhart, 1993b: II). Eckhart even speaks with a strong modal verb to denote that everyone must (muß) love him<sup>16</sup>. Accordingly, “Liebe” and “minne” connected with God signify the order of nature: creatures love (Liebe) God since the mere act of creation and participation contains love (minne) as a signature of the supreme creator.

Love excludes the particularity so essential for humans who place terrestrial goods above celestial ones and restores the original condition when a person is closer to the divine instead of their personality (Meister Eckhart, 1993a: Q 5a): splitting two kinds of love belongs to the realm of rational

<sup>15</sup>It seems highly probable that Eckhart occupied with exegesis while preaching divides the biblical notion of the highest love (ἀγάπη/caritas) into these two categories to support his concept of a mutual active-passive relationship between a creature and God. Libera omits the second side I want to explore. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> question of *Quaestiones Parisienses*, German mystic writes “delectio” is born in beatitude (dilectio est principalior in beatitudine) that may be caused by Eckhart’s desire to sacralize profane language rather than interpret the Holy Scripture (Meister Eckhart, 1993b: *Quaestiones Parisienses*, III). This notion appears in the Vulgate when Paul prescribes to love your neighbor fulfilling the law (dilectio proximo malum non operatur plenitudo ergo legis est dilectio) (Rom 13:10). Strangely enough, in the Latin translation of the Bible which the philosopher has read the key passage “God is love” was rendered as “Deus caritas est” (1 Jn. 4:8–16), while Augustine blending these notions writes “Deus dilicetio est” (Aurelius Augustinus, 1968: 8.8.10). What Eckhart prefers Augustine over the Bible might be the key solving the problem.

<sup>16</sup>Delivering the 3<sup>rd</sup> gospel he gives two hints: first, the theologian amplifies the theory of love with the scholastic notion of supreme good (guot) which a soul obtains and cannot resist apprehending with all epistemological powers accumulated (diu sêle alzemâle) besides love (Meister Eckhart, 1993a: Pf 3, Q 104). Having referenced the scholastic philosophy of the intellect Eckhart fills the preaching with other scholastic terms: I point not only to “guot” which is a German translation for “summum bonum” but also to powers of the soul which scholastics name “vis animae”. He incorporates the terminology into the theory based on the rejection of scholastic (primarily Thomistic) concepts of God as “esse” and the supremacy of “intellectus agens”. Second, he uses “minne” for love: I assume Eckhart supports his concept of the passive intellectual union with God by implicating that since the good has been grasped by “Liebe” the divine intervenes in loving a creature (minne). Furthermore, I can provide a shred of supporting evidence for such reading because God is good (got ist ain gut) who persecutes (iaget) creatures to guarantee that a human being could search for him in response (ibid.: Q 63, Jundt 7). The path starts with “minne” encrypted in a creature by the act of creation, continues when one discovers the good being God and reaches the climax at the stage of “Liebe”. Contrary to Libera, Eckhart believes in the possibility of human actions changing God.

distinction<sup>17</sup>. The mystic goes so far as approaching the boundary which distinguishes heretic from orthodox theologian to preach that love (Liebe) permits becoming more God than oneself (in der liebe bin ich me got, dann ich in mir selber bin) (Meister Eckhart, 1993b: *Das Buch der Göttliche Tröstung*, II). Employing the same language of detachment, the philosopher recommends avoiding willing (selbst entäußert<sup>18</sup>) to free the space for God (der Wille... in den Willen Gottes... geformt ist) (ibid.: Pf 24). Surprisingly, such a will allows us to do everything (vermagst du alles) including love (es sei Liebe oder as du willst) that Eckhart underscores at the end of the sentence (ibid.: *Die Rede der Unterscheidung*, X). Libera errs that Eckhartian negation necessarily excludes all the passions important for Suso.

In “*Das Buch der Göttliche Tröstung*” Eckhart presents the second aspect of the passive unification with God through suffering (lîden) that undermines Libera’s confidence in what Eckhart rejects all passions (Meister Eckhart, 1993a: *Das Buch der Göttliche Tröstung*, II). The beatitude is a personal experience of undergoing passions for God (lîden durch got und durch woltât) that corresponds to God who consolidates with humanity in suffering (in lîdenne)<sup>19</sup>. Eckhart apparently alludes to Christ whose sufferings have atoned people from the original sin: what deserves attention is the mutual influence of the divine and human resembling the idiomatic chiasmus into both sides all theologians denied according to Libera. Love asks for a Son-like pilgrimage without affection and desire. In God human suffering (Eden) ceases to be painful since God becomes my suffering (mîn leit got ist) in total passivity of the divine controlling a subject. God absolves the pain (leit) symphonizing (mitlîdet) with creatures who are open to his participation. Unhappiness, misery, and sorrow (untrôst und leit und enleget) are the attributes of all who attempt to abandon God (Was nicht Gott ist) and refuse to embrace his love that guarantees a felicity bestowed by the divine (süezicheit, wunne und trôst, den got gibet) (ibid.: I). The ontological division is again structural for emotional: one obtains benevolent passions via God’s grace, whereas a person who rejects the help from the divine is destined to remain wretched. On top of that, Eckhart reinforces that human activity results in the deterioration of creatures’ conditions because

<sup>17</sup>In “*Das Buch der Göttliche Tröstung*” Eckhart presents what the relationship of two amalgamated in one (zwei als ein) creates love (Meister Eckhart, 1993b: *Das Buch der Göttliche Tröstung*, II).

<sup>18</sup>The phrase literally means “to leave/abandon” the will (der Wille).

<sup>19</sup>“...that God is with us in suffering (in lîdenne) means that He Himself suffers with us (lîdet selbe)” (Meister Eckhart, 1993a: *Das Buch der Göttliche Tröstung*, II).

only God could make life better by his actions that are already hidden in every individual. The polarization resembles famous Augustine's division between two types of love (*caritas*) (Aurelius Augustinus, 1899: 5 12–5. 18): either love is bound to the order of created (*niht ledic der créature*) making a human being indifferent and cold to divine love (*kalt an götlicher minne*) or love is directed to divine good transforming negative affections and securing the salvation (Meister Eckhart, 1993b: *Das Buch der Göttliche Tröstung*, II). Depicting the former kind of attachment Eckhart introduces another emotional dimension for love which is the coldness of a human being refusing to become divine. The German mystic does not assume God would turn away from somebody he has created: a human arrogance presented via love language obstructs the unification. Finally, privation of the divine receives its emotional dimension in mirthless and naked nothingness (*ein bloßes Nichts, unerfreulich, wertlos und hassenswert*) (*ibid.*: *Das Buch der Göttliche Tröstung*, II). Nothingness is bound with the absence of God bringing joy and bliss since humanity is nil without grace and apprehension of divine love (*minne*). The subjective agency is so extended that God needs his people to believe and trust him by accepting the proposal, whereas Libera does not recognize the universality of Eckhart's offer: not only love is essential for amalgamating with the divine that Libera might have fended off by alluding to the apophatic language akin to Saint Dionisius' theology of love and nothingness but God also requires people to participate in the passions crucial for the beatific experience. In light of reconsidered Eckhart, the way of reuniting "nicht" with "Liebe-minne" is sophisticated: either Eckhart purposefully speaks in aporias or his sources — probably Albert and Thomas' two different theories of passions — might have caused the contradiction he was not aware of. Even so, Rhinish mystics could not be distinguished between ascetic Eckhart and compassionate Suso who was evidentially influenced by Eckhart's positive program.

In conclusion, despite my critical claims on the methodology and consistency Libera unveils through his lecture the world of yet not explored medieval intellectual culture linked with our present society and mentality. His general proofs and complexes of authors with germane questions and answers sound strong in their heart: essential for modern subjectivity idea of suffering and acting originates in the concept of "ὑποκειμένον" implanted by various theologians from Christology into anthropology and excluded by the dominant Heideggerian point of view. I hope that the remarks and reservations expressed in my review will make a tiny contribution that advances the amazing research Libera started 10 years ago.

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