

Heroines in Dependence: A Quest for Humility in Meister Eckhart, Hadewijch and Kierkegaard's Writings

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1 Introduction

1.1 Winston and Julia in George Orwell's *1984*

At the end of his book *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity (CIS)*, Richard Rorty demonstrates the importance of being aware of one's dependence on others but also other people's dependence on oneself by interpreting George Orwell's *1984*. Published in 1949, the dystopian novel follows the life of Winston Smith, a citizen of Oceania. Oceania is ruled by "the Party" and its leader "Big Brother." The party controls and observes everything and everyone in Oceania. *1984* portrays the consequences of truth and history as constructions as the history of Oceania and its citizens is controlled and constantly rewritten by the Party. The Party uses the power to construct and rewrite truth to oppress its citizens. "Big Brother is Watching You"¹ is a banner that occupies all areas of life. The Party develops and implements a purely functional language called Newspeak that aims to eliminate any ambiguity in words and thereby suppress any thought of freedom, liberation or rebellion. In this world, Winston Smith works for the Party in a department that alters historical reports. He meets Julia at work. Talking to each other is impossible, but Julia slips him a scrap of paper on which she wrote: "I love you".² From this point on, they have a secret affair until the Party arrests them. Rorty's analysis of *1984* focuses on the scenes that happen after the arrest. Winston is tortured by a party member called O'Brien. After a long time of imprisonment and torture, O'Brien makes use of Winston's fear of rats. To finally break Winston's personality, the Party designed a cage that is filled with rats and installed around Winston's head. In fear of being eaten up by the rats Winston cries out "Do it to Julia!"³ For Rorty, this marks a point of no return for Winston. Rorty identifies this point as the ultimate limitation for Winston to tell his own story. He is ripped off his ability to create and relate to his own story.⁴ Because of his betrayal, Winston loses his ability to relate

¹ Orwell, *1984*, 1.

² Orwell, *1984*, 144.

³ *1984*, 391.

⁴ *CIS*, 179. Voparil points out this development in Rorty's thought: "In a very early essay cited above, Rorty similarly held that "one does not simply 'find oneself' propounding philosophical arguments; on the contrary, these arguments are part and parcel of what, at the moment of propounding them, one essentially is." Voparil, "Rorty and James on Irony, Moral Commitment, and the Ethics of Belief", 13.

to himself as the man who loved Julia. It means the end of relating to himself as Julia's lover and someone who can be loved by Julia. Rorty gives this reading an interesting twist when he highlights that the aim of the text is not to feel sympathy for Winston. Instead, the lesson to be learned is that in speaking *we* ourselves take on the position of Winston's torturers.⁵

Unfolding different ways of relating to dependence in humility, the thesis will show a change in perspective on the relationships depicted in *1984*. Consequently, the conclusion will return to Rorty's reading of *1984* and through the analysis of humility enable the reader to take on a different point of view on the story and its characters.

1.2 Outline of the Argument

The thesis is framed by Rorty's characterization of the liberal ironist as the experience of human life in postmodern Western society. Rorty's liberal irony serves as a starting point because it raises the questions of how to relate to one's dependence on others and how to act in full awareness of this dependence. These questions will guide the investigation. However, this thesis suggests humility as an alternative on this path of relating to dependence. The change in perspective that results from this analysis will be demonstrated in a different reading of Rorty's interpretation of Winston's story in *1984*.

To explain the move from irony to humility, the analysis first turns to Rorty and Kierkegaard's texts. Following Kierkegaard's thesis on irony, it is argued that irony is the beginning but not the end of a human life. Irony marks becoming aware of one's ability to create and form a self for oneself in language. Humility, in contrast, describes the task to form a self for oneself in life, being fully aware of one's freedom and responsibility as well as dependence on others in doing so. Consequently, the examined Christian texts show humility as a task of humanity. For all the Christian authors, the ascent in humility is a movement towards inwardness. This is captured in the metaphor of the ground or the abyss. Becoming humble is the task of

⁵ Cf. *CIS*, 180.

humanity in ascending through descending. This vertical movement of low and high in humility is different from the horizontal movement that irony describes.⁶ To understand why this thesis combines Richard Rorty's liberal irony with humility in three Christian authors from very different historical periods, it is necessary to elaborate on Rorty's approach to irony in more detail. Section 2 and 3 give a thorough analysis and explanation of why this thesis uses Richard Rorty's irony as a frame for this investigation of humility.

The greatest divergence of the concepts of humility in the three Christian authors lies in the understanding of union or relation of the humble person and God in the abyss. Eckhart highlights the oneness of the humble soul with God's being in human receiving in the ground of humility. Hadewijch depicts the soul's turning into an abyss through humility and consequently, describes a oneness of two abysses that long for and please each other. Kierkegaard's abyss describes the experience of anxiety in the face of the ambiguity of one's freedom before God.

For all three authors, the inward dynamics of the humble soul and divine being lead to a form of outward living from within. In humility, there is a strong connection between the humble person's freedom and love. Love unites the lovers' will and leads to a life without why in humility. This means the humble person's works are works of Love: they are out of love and for Love.

The analysis of Eckhart's concept of humility will first establish Eckhart's connection of the Latin words "*homo*," "*humus*" and "*humilitas*." Eckhart describes the humble person as the ideal of humanity. The connection of *humilitas* and *humus* already indicates the movement towards the ground as a form of returning to humankind's nature as receiving being from God. Eckhart's concept of humility then leads to an annihilation of the self as turning towards the ground of humility. In the ground of humility, the soul is receptive to God and becomes one with God's being. However, Eckhart's concept of God as a union in distinction captured in the dynamics of the

⁶ As Rorty points out himself: "It is not a contest between a view that corresponds to reality and one that does not. It is between two visionary poems. One offers a vision of vertical ascent toward something greater than the merely human; the other offers a vision of horizontal progress toward a planetwide cooperative commonwealth." Richard Rorty, *The Ethics of Today*, 29.

Trinity means that the humble person in oneness with God's being enters into this dynamics. So, the humble person as the son in receiving in the ground only bears fruit in giving birth as the father. Eckhart's idea of fruitfulness means that the soul does not only receive but gives back. Moreover, the oneness in distinction is a freely willed unity in love. This changes humility from submission to a work of love that is freely willed for God's sake. Love also changes the perspective on the dynamics of the Trinity. For it is not a deterministic mechanism as Eckhart points out by highlighting the difference of tasting love or not. The unity of the humble person and God means that the humble soul is no longer a servant but friend. As a servant, the soul receives God's orders from outside, as a friend, the humble soul works God's works out of Love. Humility is a form of *received activity*. Fruitfulness shows not in what one does but in how one does it. Martha's joy in *Sermon 86* represents this. Sharing God's being then means not an ascetic withdrawal from the world but through humility, a return to life with love as care for the world.

Like Eckhart, Hadewijch sets out with a close connection between humility and human nature. In Vision 1, humility follows self-knowledge as knowing of human nature's weakness and lacking. Growing in humility in the progress of Hadewijch's *Visions* describes a process of gaining self-knowledge as being human and God in Love. Humility in Vision 7 is depicted as Christ's humanity as a man. Christ's humility is that of a servant in submission. It is in Christ's humanity through his humility that Christ and Hadewijch melt into each other. Hadewijch's concept of union then describes becoming like Christ in his humility as humanity. This is paralleled with a movement of approaching the abyss. Vision 11 introduces a change from servant to lover by stressing Hadewijch's awareness of her own freedom as a human being, but also the joy that lies in forming her will according to Love's will. Vision 11 furthermore suggests a new relation to Love: "pride / strength" (*fierheit*). This idea is underlined by the change of how Hadewijch is prepared for receiving Love in Vision 12. Standing rather than kneeling as the bride of Love, Hadewijch in Vision 12 is swallowed up by Love's abyss. Vision 13 describes the peak of Hadewijch's growing into Love and becoming like Christ in his humanity. The lowest and highest point of humanity is mistrust of Love. Mistrust is the highest and lowest point

incorporated in the moment of Christ's cry on the cross: "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Being a lover of Love means to be torn between longing for and enjoying of Love. It is to be certain of Love's absence and yet to demand Love's presence. Hadewijch's concept of the Trinity mirrors this as a movement of demanding and owing within the Trinity. In mistrust, Hadewijch herself turns into the abyss and engulfs Love. As mother of Love, Hadewijch is one with Love. In this union, she knows God in his humanity and his divinity and, therefore, proudly stands speaking in the voice of Love. Vision 14 marks Hadewijch's return to her loved ones, i.e. her listeners. She addresses them and from Love returns to love through works of Love.

The analysis of Kierkegaard's "humble courage" embarks with an analysis of Adam's fall depicted as Adam's dizziness in sight of the abyss in the *Concept of Anxiety (CA)*. Kierkegaard's pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis describes Adam's fall as a transgression from innocence to anxiety. Anxiety is becoming aware of freedom as possibility. The dizziness of the abyss, therefore, is one that is marked by the ambiguity of anxiety. In this ambiguity lies the existential task to become a self. Haufniensis stresses that this task lies in the contradiction of Adam knowing himself to be Adam and at the same time, a specimen of humanity. This ambiguity of being an individual and at the same time nothing but a human being is revoked at the beginning of *Fear and Trembling. Dialectical Lyric (FT)*. In the "Eulogy to Abraham", the pseudonymous author and poet Johannes de Silentio highlights the importance of Abraham as his hero tackling a perception of the world as an ongoing process of one generation to another. Johannes parallels this contingent world with an approach to life as "*quid pro quo*" or as a "real sale" ("*wirklicher Ausverkauf*"⁷). This clear and rational approach to humanity is the opposite of the ambiguity of anxiety that upholds the contradiction of being a single individual as well as a specimen of the human race. With the retelling of Abraham's ordeal, de Silentio reintroduces this ambiguity in the movement of humble courage. *FT* is, therefore, interpreted as a return to the abyss of anxiety in fear and trembling. Kierkegaard's humble courage leads back to ambiguity. But in humble courage, it is a chosen ambiguity in

⁷ *FT*, 5 / *SKS* 4, 101.

responsibility. Before turning to the rise from the abyss in humble courage, the reading turns to “infinite resignation” as depicted in the knight of infinite resignation. This shows infinite resignation as a form of pride. De Silentio brings his philosophical concepts to life by describing them in various love stories. The countermovement to the pride of the knight of infinite resignation is, first, a movement of humility before another, which de Silentio portrays as the love story of Sarah and Tobias of the book Tobit, then Abraham’s humble courage. The contradiction of being a single individual and the human race becomes a paradox in Abraham’s journey to Mount Moria. Abraham’s humble courage describes a constant movement of being conscious of himself in loving Isaac and the demand that lies in the ordeal. This continuing contradiction describes a movement towards inwardness. This is marked by Abraham’s silence. In the paradoxical silence, Abraham is in contradiction of being the single individual before God as the absolute and at the same time a specimen of the whole race. His taking on of responsibility in remaining silent describes a return to being in anxiety. Abraham’s silence thereby reintroduces ambiguity. Abraham chooses to re-enter the dizziness of anxiety in responsibility. Humble courage is defined by the ability to still rejoice in Isaac, just as the knight of faith’s care for the world is expressed in his rejoicing in mundane things like a Sunday roast. In the image of Abraham, humble courage is to walk on steadily. It is to relate to the reality of a world where one generation follows the other and yet in humble courage actually care about the concrete single individual.

Approaching Rorty’s reading of *1984* from a perspective of humility concludes that Winston Churchill could return to life not by his own means but by claiming his need for another and embracing his dependence on others. Only then can he move on.

2 Rorty's Liberal Irony as a Way to Relate to Dependence

The following paragraphs do not aim to give a cohesive or complete comparison of Rorty and Kierkegaard's concepts of irony⁸ but to explain why this thesis moves from irony to humility. Rorty's text raises the questions that will guide this thesis. Understanding Rorty's endeavour provides the context and the philosophical aim of the reading of the other authors' texts. Rorty's liberal ironist is a personification of the ongoing struggle between knowing oneself as dependent and at the same time striving for autonomy. Rorty puts this struggle in the experience of being torn between the creative freedom that lies in the act of speaking and writing and the dependence of the speaker in communication with others. The thesis will shed light on this dichotomy of freedom and dependence in all the discussed texts. Moreover, the focus will lie on experiencing this dichotomy rather than finding a solution to it.

2.1 Why begin a Quest for Humility with Irony?

The following section will give an introduction to Richard Rorty's concept of liberal irony. We begin this inquiry of humility with liberal irony because it raises questions that will guide the analysis of humility. Analysing liberal irony in Rorty's texts brings to light Rorty's insistence on the experience of freedom in dependence. With this Rorty's figure of the liberal ironist represents questions that can also be found in the texts of the other authors analysed in this thesis. However, as the below will show even if Rorty's text raises the leading questions, the answers it provides do not satisfy. Kierkegaard's concept of irony is introduced because it can, on the one hand, translate this question of postmodernity into a vocabulary of Christian thinking.⁹ On the other hand, because Kierkegaard himself dealt with irony to a vast extent, his concept of irony can be used to criticize Rorty's liberal

⁸ For an extensive comparison and analysis of irony in Kierkegaard and Rorty's writings see: Frazier, *Rorty and Kierkegaard on Moral Commitment: Philosophical and Theological Connections*; Schaper, *Ironie und Absurdität als philosophische Standpunkte*.

⁹ For an analysis of Kierkegaard and potential connections to postmodernism see, Shakespeare, "Kierkegaard and Postmodernism".

irony. It might seem peculiar, but instead of discarding irony, this thesis takes it as its method and context for reading and interpreting the presented texts. The sections on irony consequently frame the analysis. The below will demonstrate that irony is a method to capture a mood and human experience that concepts do not exhaust. Liberal irony evokes a sense of instability¹⁰ when it highlights the task to relate to the experience of freedom and autonomy despite contingency and the awareness of dependence on others. Kierkegaard's pseudonym Haufniensis phrases this instability as dizziness in the face of the abyss in the book *The Concept of Anxiety (CA)*. In Kierkegaard's texts, irony is only the beginning of human life, not the end. Irony raises the awareness of freedom and being in relation to a divine other, but it does not respond to it. The dizziness of anxiety portrayed as the abyss leads to an alternative response to Rorty's questions that is continued in the interpretation of the medieval texts. With the analysis of the abyss, the quest for humility therefore does not go *beyond* postmodernity.¹¹ Instead, it turns to the past and similar figures in humility to address the question of how to relate to freedom in knowing oneself to be dependent upon another.

2.2 Richard Rorty's Liberal Ironist and her Struggle for Independence in Dependence

In 1989, Rorty published the book *CIS*. *CIS* is the attempt to uphold a perspective on human beings as moral agents despite their awareness of contingency and loss of universal truth.¹² To do so, Rorty wants to familiarize the reader with different ways of speaking, "vocabularies"¹³ as he calls it. It is a utopian book¹⁴ with the liberal ironist as its heroine. At the core of *CIS* lies a different perspective on language, namely that language is made rather

¹⁰ Shakespeare phrases this in terms of the abyss, cf. Shakespeare, "Kierkegaard and Postmodernism," 466: "Always lurking in the background is the spiralling vortex, the nothingness and abyss that stand in place of any foundation."

¹¹ Cf. Shakespeare, "Kierkegaard and Postmodernism," 477-480.

¹² *MoN*, 382.

¹³ *CIS*, 6.

¹⁴ *CIS*, XV.

than found. Rorty calls this “the contingency of language.”¹⁵ Contingency means a clear distinction between what the world is and how we describe it:

But if we could ever become reconciled to the idea that most of reality is indifferent to our descriptions of it, and that the human self is created by the use of a vocabulary rather than being adequately or inadequately expressed in a vocabulary, then we should, at last, have assimilated what was true in the Romantic idea that truth is made rather than found. What is true about this claim is just that *languages* are made rather than found, and that truth is a property of linguistic entities, of sentences. What was glimpsed at the end of the eighteenth century was that anything could be made to look good or bad, important or unimportant, useful or useless, by being redescribed.¹⁶

Rorty’s focus therefore moves from finding a truth that is “out there” to a truth that is made by the use of language.¹⁷

2.3 A Change in Methodology: Philosophy as Therapeutic rather than Constructive in Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (*MoN*)

To understand Richard Rorty’s approach to irony in *CIS*, one needs to look back to his earlier book *MoN*. When Rorty wrote *MoN*, he was a successful professor in analytic philosophy.¹⁸ In *MoN*, Rorty draws on Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Dewey and marks a shared development in their thinking:

Each of the three, in his later work, broke free of the Kantian concept of philosophy as foundational, and spent his time warning us against those very temptations to which he himself had once succumbed. Thus, their later work is *therapeutic rather than constructive, edifying rather than systematic, designed to make the reader question his own motives for philosophizing rather than to supply him with a new philosophical program*.¹⁹

It is these categories of “therapeutic vs. constructive”, “edifying vs. systematic” and “questioning vs. supplying” that Rorty explores in *MoN*. Consequently, Rorty aims to question - rather than find - the foundation of philosophical concepts such as “the mind” in *MoN*.²⁰ The method is to make the language that captures philosophical discussions visible as a manner of

¹⁵ *CIS*, 3.

¹⁶ *CIS*, 7.

¹⁷ *CIS*, 4.

¹⁸ Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 26-27.

¹⁹ *MoN*, 5-6, emphasis mine.

²⁰ *MoN*, 7.

speaking and images rather than just as a vehicle for philosophical content.²¹ Rorty thereby shifts the emphasis from looking at the accuracy of the representations of nature in the mind to the representations themselves. Rorty defines language as a means to communicate with others and to allow us to be part of a language community.²² Language is not a representation of truth but a context of justification within a community.²³ Knowledge is considered a “matter of conversation and of social practice”²⁴ replacing an understanding of knowledge as a “quest for certainty.”²⁵ In this way of thinking, there are no grades of being closer to “what people are ‘really talking about’”²⁶. This highlights that Rorty’s philosophy shifted to questioning, rather than constructing even before *CIS*. Furthermore, it explains the context of Rorty’s shift from an extensive analysis of arguments within analytic philosophy to a focus on language and its different uses for communities. This change also had an impact on Rorty’s own life: Rorty resigned from a highly acknowledged professorship in philosophy at Princeton and took on a professorship of humanities at the University of Virginia in 1982.²⁷

Rorty’s inquiries into epistemology and language lead him to a differentiation between “systemic” and “edifying” philosophy.²⁸ “Systemic philosophers” construct a school of thought and a system of understanding and thereby overcome institutionalized philosophical systems before them and thereby bring them to an end.²⁹ Important for this thesis is Rorty’s approach to philosophy as “edifying philosophy”. Edifying philosophy aims to continue the conversation rather than end it.³⁰ This shift for Rorty also

²¹ *MoN*, 12: “I hope that what I have been saying has made clear why I chose “Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature” as a title. It is pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine most of our philosophical convictions. The picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations - some accurate, some not - and capable of being studied by pure, nonempirical methods.”

²² *MoN*, 185; according to Rorty this draws on Sellars, see *MoN*, 186.

²³ Drawing on the history of philosophy, this marks a change from turning inward to turning outward towards social context, see *MoN*, 210.

²⁴ *MoN*, 171.

²⁵ *MoN*, 171.

²⁶ *MoN*, 293.

²⁷ Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 27.

²⁸ *MoN*, 366.

²⁹ Cf. *MoN*, 369.

³⁰ *MoN*, 377: “[...] the point of edifying philosophy is to keep the conversation going rather than to find objective truth.” see also *MoN*, 372; *MoN*, 369; This reading means to look at

changes the view that philosophy takes on human beings; from human beings as “empirical selves” to “moral agents”.³¹ *MoN* ends with phrasing the threat of reducing human life to an objective fact:

The fear of science, of “scientism,” of “naturalism,” of self-objectification, of being turned by too much knowledge into a thing rather than a person, is the fear that all discourse will become normal discourse. That is, it is the fear that there will be objectively true or false answers to every question we ask, so that human worth will consist in knowing truths, and human virtue will be merely justified true belief. This is frightening because it cuts off the possibility of something new under the sun, of human life as poetic rather than merely contemplative.³²

This fear of reducing human virtue to one-sided “justified true belief” foreshadows Rorty’s search for a multiplicity of perspectives that irony and poetry can offer. This thesis follows Rorty’s suggestion to take a perspective on life as poetic seriously, and it therefore examines the texts as therapeutic rather than constructive; as edifying rather than systematic. In other words, it approaches the examined texts with the question of how they can contribute to looking at humanity as moral agents and life as poetic rather than a summary of justified true belief.³³

The struggle for humankind as moral agents is continued in *CIS* as Rorty wrote *CIS* with a very clear ethical premise:

The fundamental premise of this book is that a belief can still regulate action, can still be thought worth dying for, among people who are quite aware that this belief is caused by nothing deeper than contingent historical circumstance.³⁴

CIS offers a role model for the moral agent as a liberal ironist. Before Rorty turns to the ironist, he first has to set the mood and context for his utopia in the chapter “Contingency of Selfhood”.

human beings as “generators of new descriptions rather than beings one hopes to be able to describe accurately.” *MoN*, 378.

³¹ *MoN*, 382; *MoN*, 382: “The main aim of philosophy, therefore, is to show any possible self-deception: [...] thus that the cultural role of the edifying philosopher is to help us avoid the self-deception which comes from believing that we know ourselves by knowing a set of objective facts.”

³² *MoN*, 388-389.

³³ *MoN*, 388-389.

³⁴ *CIS*, 189; on irony and its importance for human life in Rorty’s writings see Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 119-120.

2.4 Striving for Forming a Self for Oneself despite Dependence in *CIS*

2.4.1 *The Contingency of Selfhood and Dependence on Other Speakers*

In line with the importance of language and its use in Rorty's thinking, Rorty turns to the tradition of those creating language: poets. The idea of truth as made rather than found is paralleled with the concept of the "the strong poet, the maker, as humanity's hero"³⁵ rather than the scientist or discoverer of truth.³⁶ These paragraphs highlight how the contingency of selfhood leads to a form of knowing oneself as dependent on others in one's endeavour for self-creation.

Rorty sets the mood with a poem by Philip Larkin entitled "Continuing to live".³⁷ The poem describes life as a game of chess, having to move in determined steps and yet having to choose one's own moves rather than leaving them to mere chance like in a game of poker³⁸:

And once you have walked the length of your mind, what
You command is as clear as a lading-list
Anything else must not, for you, be thought
To exit.

And what's the profit? Only that, in time
We half-identify the blind impress
All our behaviors bear, may trace it home.
But to confess,

On that green evening when our death begins,
Just what it was, is hardly satisfying,
Since it applied only to one man once,
And that man dying.³⁹

Using this poem as an example, Rorty examines the fear that can follow the awareness of a contingency of language: the fear that – even a poet – can only leave a "blind impress" and not "a novel answer".⁴⁰ As Rorty continues, it is not only the fear of one's works being lost but also that "nobody will find

³⁵ *CIS*, 26.

³⁶ *CIS*, 26.

³⁷ Larkin, *The Complete Poems of Philip Larkin*.

³⁸ Larkin, *The Complete Poems of Philip Larkin*: "Continuing to live/ Continuing to live — that is, repeat/ A habit formed to get necessities —/ Is nearly always losing, or going without. / It varies. / This loss of interest, hair, and enterprise — / Ah, if the game were poker, yes, / You might discard them, draw a full house! / But it's chess."

³⁹ Philip Larkin, "Continuing to live" quoted in *CIS*, 23.

⁴⁰ *CIS*, 23.

anything distinctive in them.”⁴¹ The fear is to repeat rather than create meaning.⁴² The contingency of selfhood, in line with the contingency of language, brings about the realization that one cannot find or describe one’s self originally and in one’s own individual words. Being human means that one is taught language by others and that one’s own words are interpreted by others.⁴³ Moreover, unlike the Romantics, Rorty does not only see the need for self-description for the poet but for everyone. He draws this conclusion by looking at Freud’s dream analysis, which turns every human consciousness into a poem and the dreamer into a poet. Freud shows in his dream analysis that we are all capable of creating metaphors and caught up in them.⁴⁴ Moreover, for Rorty, Freud’s analysis of the human psyche argued that every human life could be seen as a poem and every person as a poet.⁴⁵ A person can read themselves and can be read by others. The language of the self and the self are the same. Using Freud’s analysis of the unconscious, Rorty consequently points out the ability and need for self-description for everyone. The hero is no longer the genius that can create language and transcend the contingency of death, but *every human being* is heroic in struggling for their own use of language in full awareness of their dependence on others.

In conclusion Rorty describes everyone’s task as: “the need to come to terms with the blind impress which chance has given him, to make a self

⁴¹ CIS, 24.

⁴² CIS, 24: “One will not have impressed one’s mark on the language but, rather, will have spent one’s life shoving about already coined pieces. So one will not really have had an I at all. One’s creations, and one’s self, will just be better or worse instances of familiar types. This is what Harold Bloom calls ‘the strong poet’s anxiety of influence,’ his “horror of finding himself to be only a copy or a replica.” For Rorty, Larkin suggests that it is more satisfactory to find “a ‘blind impress’ which applied not only to ‘one man once’ but, rather to all human beings.” CIS, 26.

⁴³ CIS, 94; CIS, 42.

⁴⁴ CIS, 35-36: “Freud shows us that if we look inside the *bien-pensant* conformist, if we get him on the couch, we will find that he was only dull on the surface. For Freud, nobody is dull through and through, for there is no such thing as a dull unconscious. What makes Freud more useful and more plausible than Nietzsche is that he does not relegate the vast majority of humanity to the status of dying animals. For Freud’s account of unconscious fantasy shows us how to see every human life as a poem – or, more exactly, every human life not so racked by pain as to be unable to learn a language nor so immersed in toil as to have no leisure in which to generate a self-description. He sees every such life as an attempt to clothe itself in its own metaphors.”

⁴⁵ Cf. Müller, *Private Romantik, öffentlicher Pragmatismus? Richard Rortys transformative Neubeschreibung des Liberalismus*, 643: “Die Figur des starken Dichters wird quasi domestiziert.”

for himself by redescribing that impress in terms which are, if only marginally, his own.”⁴⁶ Through his analysis of language, Rorty describes the setting of the liberal ironist as one where there is no universal truth or meaning to be found. The framework of objective truth is questioned. In their attempt of self-description, the speaker cannot escape being parasitic on past language and speakers. Language for Rorty is not an expression of the self, not a medium to express something, but it is a medium and tool. As such, language always ties a speaker up with other speakers.⁴⁷ Only in relation to others’ uses of words, do metaphors and new combinations of words make sense. This is also why Rorty uses the term “redescription”.⁴⁸ Redescription, in contrast to creation, implies that one cannot escape referring to other peoples’ uses of the same words and “original thought” cannot escape a reference to and interpretation by others. In conclusion, the first part of *CIS* deals with the opposing tasks of recognizing contingency and yet trying to leave one’s traces behind. It describes a struggle between being dependent on others and attempting to make a self for oneself in this context. Consequently, what Rorty is looking for is a way to liberate oneself from the “blind impress”. The personification of this endeavour is the “liberal ironist”.

2.4.2 *Rorty’s Heroine: the Ironist*

Before we can turn to the liberal ironist, it is important to explain Rorty’s term “final vocabularies”, which describe a person’s choice and use of language. A person’s “final vocabulary” contains “the words in which [they] tell, [...] the story of [their] lives.”⁴⁹

Somebody who is aware of their vocabularies and, moreover, the contingency of their words is an ironist. Rorty defines three characteristics of an ironist:

⁴⁶ *CIS*, 43.

⁴⁷ *CIS*, 41: “Metaphors are unfamiliar uses of old words, but such uses are possible only against the background of other old words being used in old familiar ways. A language which was “all metaphor” would be a language which had no use, hence not a language but just babble. For even if we agree that languages are not media of representation or expression, they will remain media of communication, tools for social interaction, ways of tying oneself up with other human beings.”

⁴⁸ *CIS*, 9; 39.

⁴⁹ *CIS*, 73.

I shall define an “ironist” as someone who fulfils three conditions: 1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses because she has been impressed by other vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; 2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; 3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself. Ironists who are inclined to philosophize see the choice between vocabularies as made neither within a neutral and universal metavocabulary nor by an attempt to fight one’s way past appearances to the real, but simply by playing the new off against the old.⁵⁰

Following up on this description, we can highlight three points about Rorty’s ironist:

- 1) The ironist is constantly moving towards other final vocabularies. This is due to her former experience of vocabularies taken as final by others. Moreover, she is aware of other people’s impress on her.
- 2) She knows herself to be constantly remaining in this process.
- 3) She is aware that her vocabulary is as good as anyone else’s.⁵¹

The Ironists live in ambiguity. They are “never quite able to take themselves seriously because always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of their selves.”⁵² Irony, therefore, is the reaction to recognizing the ability to redescribe rather than create.⁵³ Ironists constant strive for redescribing and doubting in full awareness of the contingency of their endeavour to do so. Rorty’s understanding of “self” then is one of constantly being in doubt of oneself.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ CIS, 73.

⁵¹ For an extended analysis of the liberal ironist see, e.g. Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 14-54; Müller, *Private Romantik, öffentlicher Pragmatismus?: Richard Rortys transformative Neubeschreibung des Liberalismus*, 637-706; Schaper, *Ironie und Absurdität als philosophische Standpunkte*, 122-129.

⁵² CIS, 73-74; Rorty calls the state of the ironist “meta-stable” because she is constantly aware that “anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed” CIS 73-74. On seriousness and Rorty; see Schwaabe, “Zwischen Ironie und Ernsthaftigkeit. Rortys bewusst ‘leichtfertige’ Aneignung eines heroischen Motives im Denken Max Webers”; see also: Müller, *Private Romantik, öffentlicher Pragmatismus? Richard Rortys transformative Neubeschreibung des Liberalismus*, 640.

⁵³ CIS, 89.

⁵⁴ See Müller, *Private Romantik, öffentlicher Pragmatismus? Richard Rortys transformative Neubeschreibung des Liberalismus*, 662: “Rortys dezentriertes Ich besteht aus einer Vielzahl von unterschiedlichen Glaubens- und Wunschemen und strebt nicht mehr eine überwältigende Einheit dieser Mengen an. Als eine Art homöostatischer Mechanismus zielt es allein auf eine gewisse Mindestkohärenz. Diese Mindestkohärenz des Selbst - so lässt sich jetzt hinzufügen - versucht Rorty durch die Ideen einer instrumentalistischen Koexistenz und eines immer wieder aufs Neue herzustellenden Gleichgewichts zwischen den Teilen des Selbst zu plausibilisieren.”

However, in the face of contingency, ironists react to their awareness of the limitedness of that power. They make use of their power to redescribe. They try to break away from the description they find themselves in. The ironist's doubts lead her to worry that she will fall into habit, into following someone else's final vocabulary:

The ironist spends her time worrying about the possibility that she has been initiated into the wrong tribe, taught to play the wrong language game. She worries that the process of socialization which turned her into a human being by giving her a language, may have given her the wrong language, and so turned her into a wrong kind of human being. But she cannot give a criterion of wrongness. So, the more she is driven to articulate her situation in philosophical terms, the more she reminds herself of her rootlessness by constantly using terms like "Weltanschauung," "perspective," "dialectic," "conceptual framework," "historical epoch," "language game," "redescription," "vocabulary," and "irony."⁵⁵

The ironist stands for the attempt of making a self for oneself in full awareness of contingency and one's dependence on others.

2.5 Reading as a Method for a Poetic Life and Moral Agents

2.5.1 *Freedom as Responsibility for Inflicting Pain and Suffering on*

Others

The characterisation of the ironist gains an ethical dimension when Rorty speaks of the "liberal ironist". Liberalism introduces a shift from being humiliated by the blind impress of others to humiliating others through a desensitisation for the humiliation of others.⁵⁶ Rorty draws attention to the fact that ignorance of alternative vocabularies can cause pain and suffering and that the ability to form a final vocabulary comes with the responsibility

⁵⁵ *CIS*, 75; consequently, ironists also see books differently to the metaphysician, *CIS*, 75-76: "Metaphysicians see libraries as divided according to disciplines, corresponding to different objects of knowledge. Ironists see them as divided according to traditions, each member of which partially adopts and partially modifies the vocabulary of the writers whom he has read." Rorty also names Kierkegaard among the "original minds who had a talent for redescription" *CIS*, 76.

⁵⁶ *CIS*, 91-92: "My private purposes, and the part of my final vocabulary, which is not relevant to my public actions, are none of your business. But as I am a liberal, the part of my final vocabulary which is relevant to such actions requires me to become aware of all the various ways in which other human beings whom I might act upon can be humiliated."; *CIS*, 78-79. The extensive discussion of the terms "public" and "private" in *CIS* goes beyond the scope of this thesis, see, e.g. Müller, *Private Romantik, öffentlicher Pragmatismus?: Richard Rortys transformative Neubeschreibung des Liberalismus*, 401-464; Gascoigne, *Richard Rorty: Liberalism, Irony and the Ends of Philosophy*, 176-177, Rorty himself was aware of the difficulty of these terms, see his discussion of Foucault and Habermas, cf. *CIS*, 61-69.

to be aware of this. Consequently, the liberal ironist aims to be sensitive to pain that her vocabulary might cause others:

What matters for the liberal ironist is [...] making sure that *she notices suffering when it occurs*. Her hope is that she will not be limited by her own final vocabulary when faced with the possibility of humiliation someone with a quite different final vocabulary.⁵⁷

Novels teach us other people's story. They offer room for "imaginative identification"⁵⁸ with others, getting to know them and being sensitive to a change in their vocabularies.⁵⁹ Literature plays an important role in gaining "imaginative acquaintance"⁶⁰ with vocabularies that we are unfamiliar with:

In particular, novels and ethnographies which sensitize one to the pain of those who do not speak our language must do the job which demonstrations of a common human nature were supposed to do.⁶¹

Rather than referring to one common inner being,⁶² one learns to read the other's final vocabularies in order to sense their pain and humiliation.⁶³ The ability to read and see the other person's story becomes a vital aspect for seeing them as moral agents but also for being one oneself. Rorty's philosophical claim for a belief worth dying for needs a method that mirrors this awareness of the contradiction between striving for one's own final vocabulary and causing pain for others in doing so. Rorty's liberal ironist does not only strive for freedom in dependence of others. She also sees herself in relation to the other who might be hurt by her own struggle. She does not care for the other because she understands that it is immoral not to care, but because in her ongoing doubt, she remains sensitive to the other's pain. For Rorty, upholding the sensitivity that enables a relationship between two people requires a philosophical method that he finds in reading literature. As a liberal, the liberal ironist constantly practices "imaginative identification". Something that Rorty demonstrates in his reading of *1984*.

⁵⁷ *CIS*, 92-93, emphasis mine; see Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 118-19.

⁵⁸ *CIS*, 93, also 16; 91.

⁵⁹ *CIS*, 80.

⁶⁰ *CIS*, 91-92.

⁶¹ *CIS*, 94.

⁶² *CIS*, 84.

⁶³ *CIS*, 91: "The liberal ironist just wants our chances of being kind, of avoiding humiliation of others, to be expanded by redescription. She thinks that recognition of common susceptibility to humiliation is the only social bond that is needed."

2.5.2 *Reading as a Philosophical Method Presented in Rorty's*

Interpretation of 1984

Rorty's interpretation of Orwell's *1984*, brings to light how "our attempts at autonomy, our private obsessions with the achievement of a certain sort of perfection, may make us oblivious to the pain and humiliation we are causing."⁶⁴ Reading literature presents a method to approach the question of how to relate to freedom⁶⁵ and dependence in the face of another person.

Rorty's interpretation focuses on the importance of the following sentence for Winston's personhood: "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows."⁶⁶ As long as Winston can hold on to this belief, he can make sense of himself. But the quote also highlights the importance of freedom: being able to tell a particular story about oneself defines personhood. It is not the truth that allows Winston to be himself but the freedom to think, belief and write this truth. It is this belief that the party takes away from Winston in the torture scene when O'Brien forces Winston to admit that two plus two is five.⁶⁷ Winston's truth of two plus two is four becomes a symbol for his freedom to say so and for himself as a person, who identifies with this statement. Rorty sees O'Brien's effort to convince Winston that two plus two is five, not as an effort to prove him wrong but to break him mentally. By denying the statement, that means so much to Winston, Winston denies himself:

The *only* point in making Winston believe that two and two equals five is to break him. Getting somebody to deny a belief for no reason is a first step toward making her incapable of having a self because she becomes incapable of weaving a coherent web of belief and desire. It makes her irrational, in a quite precise sense: She is unable to give a reason for her belief that fits together with her other beliefs. She becomes irrational not in the sense that she has lost contact with reality but in the sense that she can no longer rationalize – no longer justify herself to herself.⁶⁸

Being able to tell yourself a coherent story about yourself is vital in this understanding of personhood and making sense of oneself. There are two

⁶⁴ *CIS*, 141; also 144; 171.

⁶⁵ Freedom for Rorty is to be able to speak freely without fear of oppression, *CIS*, 176: "All that matters is that if you do believe it, you can say it without getting hurt. In other words, what matters is your ability to talk to other people about what seems to you true, not what is in fact true. If we take care of freedom, truth can take care of itself."

⁶⁶ *CIS*, 172.

⁶⁷ Orwell, *1984*, 339-343.

⁶⁸ *CIS*, 178; Rorty states that he follows Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Cf. *CIS*, 177; see Müller, *Private Romantik, öffentlicher Pragmatismus? Richard Rortys transformative Neubeschreibung des Liberalismus*, 678.

steps to breaking Winston: first, making him proclaim an irrationality that makes it impossible to justify himself to himself. Second, Winston's speaking out against Julia and betraying her, which manifests Winston's breaking by O'Brien. For Rorty, this is the point of no return. Winston might be able to form a story in which he could believe an untruth, but once he has betrayed Julia, he cannot return of weaving a story of himself.⁶⁹ In Rorty's reading, to be a person is to speak a particular language and to speak to a particular sort of people.⁷⁰ It is this ability that O'Brien wants to take away from Winston, as Rorty writes "he is no longer able to use a language or be a self."⁷¹ This forced inability to make sense of oneself, Rorty defines as humiliation and the cruellest thing people can do to each other.⁷² The focus does not lie on convincing the victim of the falsehood of their belief but by changing what the words mean to them and thus destroying the victim's ability to take them as their own:

So nobody can be humiliated at the moment of believing a falsehood, or by the mere fact of having done so. But people can, their torturers hope, experience the ultimate humiliation of saying to themselves, in retrospect, "Now that I have believed or desired *this*, I can never be what I hoped to be, what I thought I was. The story I have been telling myself about myself – my picture of myself as honest, or loyal, or devout – no longer makes sense. I no longer have a self to make sense of. There is no world in which I can picture myself as living because there is no vocabulary in which I can tell a coherent story about myself."⁷³

With his analysis, Rorty puts the spotlight on two points: first, the importance of being able to put one's story in one's own words, even if the words are not the result of one's own creation. It shows the threat of being dependent on others as a speaker for making sense of oneself. Two plus two is four frames Winston's understanding of himself. What breaks Winston is not that two plus two is four is no longer true but that he cannot make sense of it any more. Secondly, and more importantly, for Rorty, the torture scene puts the reader in O'Brien's position, not in Winston's. This shifts the focus to the reader as a speaker and potential torturer. The focus does not lie on the victim. Instead, the torture scene is about O'Brien, just as "the last third of *1984* is about

⁶⁹ *CIS*, 178.

⁷⁰ *CIS*, 177.

⁷¹ *CIS*, 179.

⁷² Rorty's definition follows Judith Shklar, *CIS*, 74, Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, 43-44; Chapter 1 quoted in *CIS*, 146.

⁷³ *CIS*, 179.

O'Brien, not about Winston – about torturing, not about being tortured.”⁷⁴ Rorty's analysis of *1984*, highlights the extent of cruelty that forcing one's own vocabulary on others can take by taking away their ability to make sense of their own story. Torturing Winston shows the epitome of humiliation that people can do to each other in language by knowing their victims' vocabulary and thereby dependence on other speakers. The ironist as a specialist on language and other vocabularies is highly aware of this circumstance. Rorty's interpretation of humiliation phrased in the torture scene, mirrors an experience that he wants to sensitise to: the awareness that in speaking one humiliates others and causes them pain. Rorty's point is that everyone can be an O'Brien. Sensitisation through literature aims to raise awareness that everyone is a torturer in redescribing others. “Imaginative identification” by means of familiarising oneself with different vocabularies, therefore, is a necessary step to relate to the other person as a moral agent. The philosophical search for finding a way to relate to freedom in dependence requires a sensitivity for the other that is enabled by carefully reading them as well as oneself. To find a way to relate to the experience of striving for freedom and being dependent on other people it is important to sensitise to this experience. In short, one cannot be a moral agent without a constant doubt and questioning of one's own position in relation to another, one cannot be a moral agent.

The interpretation of *1984* enacts a contradiction between the urge for autonomy in language and the dependence of speakers on each other. Rorty's analysis sensitises for the cost that one's own autonomy causes.⁷⁵ It highlights the conflict between striving for autonomy and the awareness of responsibility for others. The first part of *CIS* depicts the other as a threat to one's attempt for making a self for oneself and the need to trust the goodwill of other people.⁷⁶ Dependence in this perspective is a threat. As soon as the “liberal ironist” enters the stage, however, the focus turns on how any attempt for self-creation becomes a threat to others. The text tries to *sensitise*, *not*

⁷⁴ *CIS*, 180; by understanding that we torture Orwell and Nabokov help “[...] us to get inside cruelty, and thereby [help] articulate the dimly felt connection between art and torture.” *CIS*, 146.

⁷⁵ For Rorty searches for autonomy inherently have tendencies to cruelty, cf. *CIS*, 144.

⁷⁶ *CIS*, 42.

convince, the reader of their own ability to be a threat to others by the same means that others can be a threat to them, namely, language. The realisation that the meaning of language is dependent on the usage of language by others interweaves the need and threat of and for others for all speakers. The contingency of language points to dependence on others. We are not connected to others via a medium like a universal truth but by the mere fact that we relate to them through language. This is why language and learning other vocabularies is so important in Rorty's writings.⁷⁷ The potential cruelty that the ironist can impose on others can be turned from threatening and humiliating the other to being aware of the other's need for them. Rorty's final phrasing of solidarity reflects his focus on language: he puts the change of perspective into words by changing looking at others as "them" to "us".⁷⁸ Through identification, speaking of others in the vocabulary of "them" can be changed to a vocabulary of "us."⁷⁹ The liberal ironist would therefore base solidarity on the question of "Are you suffering" rather than "Do you believe and desire what we believe and desire?"⁸⁰

2.6 Kierkegaard's Ironist between Postmodern Irony and Medieval Humility

To investigate the kind of relationship that Rorty's liberal ironist has with other people, this thesis will now turn to Søren Kierkegaard's interpretation and use of irony. On the one hand, this will highlight some similarities, such as the importance of poetry and imagination for the ironist and human life. On the other hand, Kierkegaard's criticism of irony brings to light a different interpretation of the liberal ironist's relation to dependence and other speakers.

In Kierkegaard's writings, irony is a necessary step in every human life. But irony is only the beginning, not the end of human life. In emphasizing the importance of the ability of poetic imagination as well as its limits,

⁷⁷ *CIS*, 86.

⁷⁸ *CIS*, 192.

⁷⁹ *CIS*, 190.

⁸⁰ *CIS*, 198.

Kierkegaard's criticism of irony leads to medieval humility and beyond it to the concept of humble courage. As the analysis will present, this connection lies in the descriptions of the lived experience of dependence and freedom. The ambiguity of this experience is reflected in language, and the thesis sets out to investigate this in the humble person's love stories and vocabularies. On the journey, the following conclusions drawn from reading *CIS* will function as the background for the interpretation of humility in Eckhart, Hadewijch and Kierkegaard's texts.

Firstly, the ambiguity of language is vital for living a human life. Rorty's use of literature and stories reflects that in order to appeal to the experienced insecurity and uncertainty of life, philosophy as therapy needs to capture this experience of ambiguity. In 1984, Newspeak, the language of the party, aims to reduce language and life to one unambiguous meaning so that no other thought but Big Brother is possible:

The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible.⁸¹

At the end of the book, Winston is an alcoholic, deprived of his love for Julia and filled with memories of the party's torture. He is numbed and unable to connect to his current self. Body and mind are in contradiction when Winston's body mourns for him, as he proclaims victory over himself:

He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right [sic], the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.⁸²

This depiction is missing all the erotic longing that Winston felt for O'Brien. It shows the importance of coherence in body and mind for forming a belief worth dying for. The liberal ironist's solidarity with others assumes that she does not only understand their meaning but also feels their pain. This is why Rorty turns from argumentation to literature. Reading implies a willingness to lend one's ear. Moreover, as the discussion of Kierkegaard's texts will reinforce, identification and sensitivity require being open to a certain mood

⁸¹ Orwell, 1984, 407.

⁸² Orwell, 1984, 407-408.

and sensitive to emotional life. The allusions to vocabularies of love in *CIS* highlight that in order to form beliefs worth dying, a text needs to touch and address the whole person. This gives reading literature an ethical implication: literature enables a perspective of moral agency. The sensitivity for the other person's pain is evoked by reading literature and encountering the ambiguity of literary texts rather than understanding the logical consistency or rational coherence of a philosophical argument. The importance of this ability for sensitivity and evoking this ability plays a major role in the understanding of humility in the following texts.

Secondly, following first the strong poet, then the liberal ironist, and finally, Winston's character emphasizes the contrast between individual and universal meaning. The poet tries to leave his mark in language and yet knows language only to make sense in a community. Focusing on the protagonist, *CIS* questions how a single person can relate to universal ethics and general standards so that they mean something to them. *CIS* stresses that attempts for and claims to universality overshadow the experience of a single moral agent. Following the story of heroic characters in opposition to generality, the readings of the following texts highlight the importance of being able to identify with individual vocabularies and stories in contrast to claims of universality.

Finally, *CIS* puts into words the liberal ironist's struggle to relate to dependence. Reading the liberal ironist's endeavour to make a self for herself in the face of contingency, describes the awareness of limited freedom. The contingency of language highlights not only being limited by the world but by other people. *CIS* envisions a possible relation to knowing oneself dependent but also responsible for others. The liberal ironist is Rorty's attempt to depict the experience and life of a moral agent in the full awareness of limited freedom in contingency. To investigate this struggle from a different perspective, the thesis now turns to the poets and ironists in Søren Kierkegaard's works.

3 Kierkegaard's Concept of Irony

3.1 Irony in *The Concept of Irony*

Rorty's analysis of irony begins with the Romantic idea of self-creation rather than finding one's true self.⁸³ The theologian, philosopher, and writer Søren Kierkegaard investigated and criticized the Romantic concept of irony. Kierkegaard dedicated his first work entitled *The Concept of Irony with continual Reference to Socrates (CI)* to the topic of irony.

The following paragraphs on Kierkegaard's concept of irony will not give a full analysis of irony but highlight some connecting points between Rorty and Kierkegaard's understanding of irony and their approach to it.⁸⁴ The comparison of Rorty and Kierkegaard's concept of irony can explain why Kierkegaard develops a movement from irony, as the beginning of human life, to humble courage, as the mature way of life in his works after *CI*.⁸⁵ Furthermore, Kierkegaard's criticism of Romantic irony can highlight some weaknesses of Rorty's idea of the liberal ironist. Taking irony as a starting point, this thesis will then follow a way of dealing with the awareness of dependence on others represented in humility. Constructing this notion of humility will be the major focus of this thesis.

The first part of *CI* is dedicated to Socrates and how he is depicted as incorporating and practising irony in the texts of ancient philosophy. In the second part of the book "Irony after Fichte", Kierkegaard turns to ironists⁸⁶ such as Schlegel, Tieck and Solger⁸⁷ and contrasts their understanding of irony with the concept of controlled irony.⁸⁸ For all discussions of Kierkegaard's concept of irony, it is important to keep in mind that irony represents a life-view or an existential attitude throughout Kierkegaard's works and is not a rhetorical trope.⁸⁹ Like Rorty, Kierkegaard discusses irony

⁸³ *CIS*, 23-43.

⁸⁴ For a thorough analysis, see Söderquist, *The isolated self: Irony as truth and untruth in Søren Kierkegaard's On the Concept of Irony*; "Irony"; Schaper, *Ironie und Absurdität als philosophische Standpunkte*; Lippitt, *Humour and irony in Kierkegaard's thought*.

⁸⁵ Cf. Söderquist, "The Religious 'Suspension of the Ethical' and the Ironic 'Suspension of the Ethical'", 267.

⁸⁶ Kierkegaard identifies ironists as romanticists, see note 2, *CI*, 275 / *SKS* 1, 312.

⁸⁷ *CI*, 272-323 / *SKS*, 308-352.

⁸⁸ *CI*, 324-329 / *SKS*, 153-157.

⁸⁹ Cf. Söderquist, "The Religious 'Suspension of the Ethical' and the Ironic 'Suspension of the Ethical'", 260.

in the context of self-creation of the poet.⁹⁰ For Kierkegaard, too, irony has a liberating aspect. The liberation is from what Kierkegaard refers to as “historical actuality.”⁹¹ The ironist breaks away from these given circumstances.⁹² Irony thereby is the way and beginning of freedom.⁹³ The following paragraphs explore why irony is only the beginning of human life, and not the end.

3.2 Kierkegaard’s Criticism of Irony: The Ironist as Narcissus

3.2.1 *The Ironist as a Poet Living in Possibility: Kierkegaard’s Critique on Romantic Irony*

After an extensive discussion of Socrates’ irony in ancient writings in *CI*, Kierkegaard discusses romantic irony; he even identifies the romanticist and ironists.⁹⁴ Irony describes not a literary style but a way of life. He describes the romantic ironist as a poetic shapeshifter, never settling for one particular self but trying on different attires:

At times he walks around with the proud air of a Roman patrician wrapped in a bordered toga, or he sits in the *sella curulis* with imposing Roman earnestness; at times he conceals himself in the humble costume of a penitent pilgrim; then again he sits with his legs crossed like a Turkish pasha in his harem; at times he flutters about as light and free as a bird in the role of an amorous zither player. This is what the ironist means when he says that one should live poetically; this is what he achieves by poetically composing himself.⁹⁵

The ironist represents a way of living poetically. Living poetically, the ironist “composes” himself and his environment.⁹⁶ For Kierkegaard, this has severe consequences:

As the ironist poetically composes himself and his environment with the greatest possible poetic license, as he lives in this totally hypothetical and subjective way, his life loses all continuity.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ Cf. Söderquist, “Irony,” 357: The Romantic ironists are said to presume that the power to ‘create’ a fictional work can be employed in the creation of an actual self (SKS1: 311/*CI*: 274).”

⁹¹ Actuality in this context means historical actuality “[...] that is, the given actuality at a certain time and in a certain situation.” *CI*, 259 / *SKS* 1, 297.

⁹² *CI*, 259 / *SKS* 1, 297.

⁹³ *CI*, 327 / *SKS* 1, 356.

⁹⁴ *CI*, 275 / *SKS* 1, 312.

⁹⁵ *CI*, 282 / *SKS* 1, 318.

⁹⁶ I am following Kierkegaard in representing the ironist in the pronouns “he/him/his”.

⁹⁷ *CI*, 284 / *SKS* 1, 319.

Losing continuity, the ironist floats above the ground rather than standing with both feet on it.⁹⁸ In poetically composing the present, the ironist loses touch with the past. The ironist's poetic freedom to take on any form of life that he chooses comes with a giving up on historical actuality and his past.⁹⁹ Kierkegaard uses this comparison of floating above to describe irony. The ironist is constantly composing himself and consequently is not anchored in anything but his own creation. For Kierkegaard, individual actuality is a task, the task to place oneself in the context of historical actuality.¹⁰⁰ In choosing all possible selves, the ironist gives up on this task and therefore his actual self. Kierkegaard concludes that the ironist's actuality is possibility.¹⁰¹

In choosing possibility over actuality, the ironist is free from all restraints of actuality, which means he is free from all responsibility and consequences that actuality imposes.¹⁰² Kierkegaard calls this negative freedom.¹⁰³ The ironist is negatively free because the story he tells himself or his environment is not constrained by historical actuality. Irony's negative freedom, therefore, entails that the ironist can and must start all over again:¹⁰⁴

[Irony] knows it has the power to start all over again if it so pleases; anything that happened before is not binding, and just as irony in infinite freedom enjoys its critical gratification in the theoretical realm, so it enjoys in the realm of practice a similar divine freedom that knows no bonds, no chains, but plays with abandon and unrestraint, gambols like a leviathan in the sea.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ Cf. *CI*, 324 / *SKS* 1, 353; Cf. Söderquist, "Irony", 355.

⁹⁹ *CI*, 277 / *SKS* 1, 313.

¹⁰⁰ *CI*, 279; see also Grøn, "Time and History".

¹⁰¹ *CI*, 279 / *SKS* 1, 315.

¹⁰² *CI*, 279-280 / *SKS* 1, 315-316.

¹⁰³ Cf. *CI*, 262 / *SKS* 1, 299-300: "Irony is a qualification of subjectivity. In irony, the subject is negatively free, since the actuality that is supposed to give the subject content is not there. He is free from the constraint in which the given actuality holds the subject, but he is negatively free and as such is suspended, because there is nothing that holds him. But this freedom, this suspension, gives the ironist a certain enthusiasm, because he becomes intoxicated, so to speak, in the infinity of possibilities, and if he needs any consolation for everything that is destroyed, he can have recourse to the enormous reserve fund of possibility. He does not, however, abandon himself to this enthusiasm; it simply inspires and feeds his enthusiasm for destroying." See also *CI*, 271 / *SKS* 1, 307 on irony as "infinite absolute negativity".

¹⁰⁴ Söderquist, "Irony", 359.

¹⁰⁵ *CI*, 279, see also Söderquist, "Irony", 358: "Once Romantic irony is aware of the power to interpret and reinterpret the past, it is in a position to start over any time it likes: 'If it posited something, it knew it had the authority to annul it, knew it at the very same moment it posited it. It knew that in general, it had the absolute power to bind and to unbind' (*SKS*1: 312/*CI* : 275-6). Instead of feeling obligated to the consequences of the past, the Romantic consciousness knows it has 'the power to start all over again if it so pleases, nothing that happened before is binding...it enjoys a divine freedom that knows no bonds, no chains' (*SKS*1: 315/*CI* : 279)."

The negative freedom gives the ironist the ability to reinvent and recreate himself over and over again. But in the process, he is caught up in watching over his own creation, which makes it impossible to do anything but creating himself.¹⁰⁶ This leaves the ironist to preserve rather than create himself:

But the ironist continually preserves his poetic freedom, and when he notices that he is becoming nothing, he includes that in his poetizing; and, as is well known, it is part and parcel of the poetic poses and positions in life that irony promoted - indeed, to become nothing at all is the most superior of them all.¹⁰⁷

Kierkegaard's criticism of living poetically is that life becomes a poem, a stage play and the ironist plays the role of the author, the narrator and the characters all at the same time.¹⁰⁸ Emancipating himself from historical actuality, the ironist lives poetically.¹⁰⁹ However, as Kierkegaard argues, he is not only free from restraints of actuality but also from its merits:

Irony is indeed free, free from the sorrows of actuality, but also free from its joys, free from its blessing, for inasmuch as it has nothing higher than itself, it can receive no blessing, since it is always the lesser that is blessed by the greater. This is the freedom that irony craves. Therefore it watches over itself and fears nothing more than that some impression or other might overwhelm it, because not until one is free in that way does one live poetically, and, as is well known, irony's great requirement was to live poetically.¹¹⁰

In celebrating his freedom to poetically create himself, the ironist loses everything but this. Hovering above himself, the ironist loses all connection to actuality and therefore also the ability to move and see something beyond himself.¹¹¹

Kierkegaard's major criticism of romantic irony is then that the romantic ironist has become alienated from actuality by constantly reinventing and recreating a self for himself.¹¹² In denying the validity of historical actuality for himself, the ironist is negatively free and loses all

¹⁰⁶ *CI*, 281 / *SKS* 1, 317.

¹⁰⁷ *CI*, 281 / *SKS* 1, 317.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Söderquist, "Irony", 358.

¹⁰⁹ *CI*, 261 / *SKS* 1, 299: "The ironist, however, has stepped out of line with his age, has turned around and faced it." Also *CI*, 263 / *SKS* 1, 301-302.

¹¹⁰ *CI*, 279-280 / *SKS* 1, 315-16; also Söderquist, "Irony", 359.

¹¹¹ Söderquist, "Irony", 354-55; For an elaborate unfolding of this see Söderquist, *The Isolated Self*, see also Schaper, *Ironie und Absurdität als philosophische Standpunkte*, 31.

¹¹² *CI*, 259 / *SKS* 1, 297: "[T]he whole of existence has become alien to the ironic subject and the ironic subject in turn alien to existence, that as actuality has lost its validity for the ironic subject, he himself has to a certain degree become unactual. The word 'actuality,' however, must here primarily be understood as historical actuality – that is, the given actuality at a certain time and in a certain situation."

restrains of past selves. He also loses continuity and hovers¹¹³ above his self and his creation rather than being grounded in it.¹¹⁴

3.2.2 *Looking at Rorty's Liberal Ironist from a Kierkegaardian Perspective*

Rorty's history of self-creation starts from the romantic idea that "everything could be made to look good or bad."¹¹⁵ Despite the broadening of the concept of self-creation not only as of the genius' privilege but as of an ability of every human consciousness, some of the romantic traits that Kierkegaard criticizes remain. Relating Rorty and Kierkegaard's description of the ironist, two aspects of Rorty's ironist come to light when looking at his liberal ironist in *CIS* in comparison with Kierkegaard's criticism of the romantic ironist. This movement of constantly describing herself, evokes the image of the liberal ironist in constant instability and continuous doubt redescribing herself. Rorty highlights the importance of instability and awareness of the fallibility of the ironist.¹¹⁶

Nonetheless, Rorty claims his aim in writing *CIS* is to show that despite the loss of universal meaning and truth, belief "can still be thought worth dying for"¹¹⁷. The image that Kierkegaard paints of the ironist as his own observer and spectator can be related to the liberal ironist who constantly redescribes herself. At the end of *CI*, Kierkegaard turns to actuality. "Irony as a controlled element manifests itself in its truth precisely by teaching how to actualize actuality, by placing the appropriate emphasis on actuality.[...] Actuality, therefore, will not be rejected, and longing will be a sound and healthy love, not a weak and sentimental sneaking out of the world. [...] Therefore, actuality acquires its validity through action."¹¹⁸ The question is, how does the ironist form beliefs worth dying for? Maybe seriousness is not necessary to take action, but what motivates dying for something then? What

¹¹³ Cf. Söderquist, "Irony", 354-55.

¹¹⁴ *CI*, 261-64 / SKS 1, 298-302.

¹¹⁵ *CIS*, 7.

¹¹⁶ *CIS*, 73-74: "[...] never quite able to take themselves seriously because always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of their selves."

¹¹⁷ *CIS*, 189.

¹¹⁸ *CI*, 328-329 / SKS 1, 356-357.

are the qualifications for a belief to be “worth dying for”?¹¹⁹ How can Rorty’s liberal ironist leave the stage and take action? Does the sensitivity of other people’s pain and suffering allow for action? Some interpreters see Rorty as a philosopher of agency.¹²⁰ However, this interpretation understands agency as recognition of contingency and construction of what is right or wrong.¹²¹ Following Kierkegaard’s criticism of romantic irony, one can ask whether this is enough to motivate following one’s beliefs? Does the phrase “belief that can still be thought worth dying for”¹²² not imply that one moves from acceptance of contingency and forming of beliefs to action? Does liberal irony enable one to do so?

3.3 Irony as a Refusal of Dependence on Others and a Claim for Self-Sufficiency

3.3.1 *Irony as a Refusal of Dependence and a Form of Self-Sufficiency*

CI shows irony as a way of dealing with the recognition of one’s given historical actuality as represented in values and the social context of one’s time.¹²³ The next paragraphs will show irony as a refusal of dependence on others and a claim to self-sufficiency. This is a theme that Kierkegaard continues to explore in his later work *Fear and Trembling*,¹²⁴ which will lead to a differentiation of self-sufficiency as characteristic of pride, on the one hand, and acknowledged need of the divine and other people as a characteristic of humility, on the other hand.¹²⁵

As the above has shown, the ironist is depicted as elevating himself from his cultural context and, therefore, also from the values and morality that he makes out in his environment. In recognizing the relativity of laws and

¹¹⁹ *CIS*, 189.

¹²⁰ e.g. Voparil, “Rorty and James on Irony, Moral commitment, and the Ethics of Belief”, 3.

¹²¹ Voparil, “Rorty and James on Irony, Moral commitment, and the Ethics of Belief”, 3; 13.

¹²² *CIS*, 189.

¹²³ Evans links Kierkegaard and Richard Rorty’s understanding of irony as a “cultural critique” in this point, cf. Evans, “Kierkegaard’s Ethic of Love. Divine Commands and Moral Obligations”, 79-80.

¹²⁴ Söderquist, “The Religious ‘Suspension of the Ethical’ and the Ironic ‘Suspension of the Ethical’”, 267; 274.

¹²⁵ On pride, irony and resignation in relation to self-sufficiency see Söderquist, “The Religious ‘Suspension of the Ethical’ and the Ironic ‘Suspension of the Ethical’”, particularly 273-74.

customs of public life, the ironist recognizes that these laws and customs do not have “binding ethical authority”¹²⁶. Seeing the value system of his time as not binding the ironist creates his own by employing creativity. The ironist is poet, actor and spectator all in one:

For him, life is a drama, and what absorbs him is the ingenious complication of this drama. He himself is a spectator, even when he himself is the one acting. Thus he infinitizes his I, volatilizes it metaphysically and esthetically, and while his I sometimes contracts as egoistically and narrowly as possible, at other times it flaps about so loosely and disintegratedly that the whole world can be encompassed in it. He is inspired by self-sacrificing virtue the way a spectator is inspired by it in a theater; he is a severe critic who knows very well when this virtue becomes insipid and inauthentic. He himself repents, but he repents esthetically, not ethically.¹²⁷

As creator and spectator of his own play, he does not need others. Just as the ironist distances himself from historical actuality, he distances himself from the judgement and influence of others on his own life.¹²⁸ Moving only within his own poetic creation in this process of self-creation and liberation, the ironist loses contact with others.¹²⁹ Instead of interacting with others in his historical actuality, he observes their life and historical circumstances from a distance: “The ironist stands proudly inclosed within himself, and just as Adam had the animals pass by, he lets people pass before him and finds no fellowship for himself.”¹³⁰ In the ironist’s refusal of dependence on others lies a claim for self-sufficiency. Irony describes the first category of self-sufficiency, which is marked by the separation of the “individual who saves himself, and the individual who is saved by another.”¹³¹

3.3.2 *Can the Liberal Ironist see Others as more than Reflections of Herself?*

Taking into account this depiction of self-sufficiency in irony, we turn back to the liberal ironist. The image that Rorty draws of the ironist is that of a constantly redescribing person who is continually aware of the instability of

¹²⁶ Söderquist, “The Religious ‘Suspension of the Ethical’ and the Ironic ‘Suspension of the Ethical’”, 261-62.

¹²⁷ *CI*, 283-84 / *SKS* 1, 319.

¹²⁸ *CI*, 324 / *SKS* 1, 353.

¹²⁹ Söderquist, “The Religious ‘Suspension of the Ethical’ and the Ironic ‘Suspension of the Ethical’”, 262.

¹³⁰ *CI*, 283 / *SKS* 1, 318.

¹³¹ Söderquist, “The Religious ‘Suspension of the Ethical’ and the Ironic ‘Suspension of the Ethical’”, 268; also 274.

her own language and believes. Willing herself, she never reaches a result but continues a project:

Even if we drop the philosophical ideal of seeing ourselves steadily and whole against a permanent backdrop of “literal” unchangeable fact, and substitute the ideal of seeing ourselves in our own terms, of redemption through saying to the past, “Thus I willed it,” it will remain true that this willing will always be a project rather than a result, a project which life does not last long enough to complete.¹³²

This project of ironically living one’s life in constant doubt of one’s own redescription raises the question of how much the liberal ironist can look beyond herself. The image that comes to mind is that of Narcissus looking at himself and being lost in the reflection and rephrased by Kierkegaard as the ironist watching over himself.¹³³ For the liberal ironist, even the motivation for avoiding cruelty for others is grounded in the idea that it could be done to the liberal ironist herself. She is the beginning and end of all considerations and motivations. This makes it questionable whether needing others in one’s description of one’s own life-view is strong enough to allow for the other person to be more than a reflection of oneself. The liberal ironist’s sensitization to the suffering of others is sensitization for avoiding suffering for herself.¹³⁴ This reduces all other vocabularies to images or costumes that the ironist tries on, seeing them as a means for herself rather than another person’s. Hence, one could ask to what extent does the liberal ironist allow for others to be anything but yet another redescription of herself. Revisiting Rorty’s analysis of Orwell’s *1984* highlights this:

So I read the passage from Winston’s diary about the need to insist that two and two equals four not as Orwell’s view about how to keep the O’Briens at bay but, rather, as a description of how to keep ourselves going when things get tight. *We do so by talking to other people* – trying to get reconfirmation of our own identities by articulating these in the presence of others. We hope that these others will say something to help us keep our web of beliefs and desires coherent.¹³⁵

Despite Rorty’s claim that the ironist needs other speakers to reassure her in her language and believes, the liberal ironists still aim for “keeping ourselves going.”¹³⁶ The liberal ironist sees her need for others to gain self-sufficiency as far as possible within the limits that others impose on her. Liberal irony means striving towards self-sufficiency despite one’s awareness of

¹³² *CIS*, 40.

¹³³ *CI*, 283 / *SKS* 1, 318.

¹³⁴ *CIS*, 92.

¹³⁵ *CIS*, 185.

¹³⁶ *CIS*, 185.

dependence on others. Despite the recognized limits, it is still a claim and striving towards self-sufficiency when Rorty describes the aim “to make a self for himself by redescribing that impress in terms which are, if only marginally, his own.”¹³⁷ To put it differently: the liberal ironist’s need is to *speak* to others, not to listen to them.¹³⁸

3.4 Irony as the Beginning of a Life that May be Called Human

3.4.1 *The Awakening of Possibility: Irony as the Way*

Despite Kierkegaard’s criticism of Romantic irony, irony is vital for his idea of human life. He highlights this already at the outset of his dissertation as he states in his “Theses”¹³⁹:

XV. Ut a dubitatione philosophia sic ab ironia vita digna, quae humana vocetur, incipit.
[... XV. Just as philosophy begins with doubt, so also a life that may be called human begins with irony].¹⁴⁰

An example of how to live this human life through irony is Socrates. His life symbolizes the first step towards human life through irony.¹⁴¹ However, at the end of *CI*, Kierkegaard highlights that irony as the beginning of human life is not only the irony of the poet but irony in line with actuality. Goethe’s life is an example of this kind of ironic poet-existence:

The reason Goethe’s poet-existence was so great, was that he was able to make his poet-life congruous with his actuality. But that, in turn, takes irony, but, please note, controlled irony.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ *CIS*, 43.

¹³⁸ Clare Carlisle highlights the importance of being able to listen in her reading of “humble courage”, see Carlisle, “Humble Courage: Kierkegaard on Abraham and Mary,” 5. This argumentation was a major motivation for this thesis.

¹³⁹ Bernstein highlights this in his analysis of Kierkegaard’s concept of irony, cf. Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 79.

¹⁴⁰ *CI*, 5-6 / *SKS* 1, 65; see also *CI*, 326 / *SKS* 1, 354: “To be controlled in this way, to be halted in the wild infinity into which it rushes ravenously, by no means indicates that irony should not lose its meaning or be totally discarded. On the contrary, when the individual is properly situated - and this he is through the curtailment of irony - only then does irony have its proper meaning, its true validity. In our age there has been much talk about the importance of doubt for science and scholarship, but what doubt is to science, irony is to personal life. Just as scientists maintain that there is no true science without doubt, so it may be maintained with the same right that no genuinely human life is possible without irony.”

¹⁴¹ Cf. *CI*, 264 / *SKS* 1, 302, Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 90; Söderquist, “The Religious ‘Suspension of the Ethical’ and the Ironic ‘Suspension of the Ethical’”, 262.

¹⁴² *CI*, 325 / *SKS* 1, 353.

“Controlled irony” offers the awareness of one’s poetic abilities and as such one’s ability to see possibility. Moreover, in its creations above actuality, irony highlights the ability to emancipate oneself from actuality and to form oneself independent of it. Irony, therefore, points towards more than finitude:

Irony limits, finitizes, and circumscribes and thereby yields truth, actuality, content; it disciplines and punishes and thereby yields balance and consistency. Irony is a disciplinarian feared only by those who do not know it but loved by those who do. Anyone who does not understand irony at all, who has no ear for its whispering, lacks *eo ipso* [precisely thereby] what could be called the absolute beginning of personal life; he lacks what momentarily is indispensable for personal life; he lacks the bath of regeneration and rejuvenation, irony’s baptism of purification that rescues the soul from having its life in finitude even though it is living energetically and robustly in it.¹⁴³

Irony in this sense is not only a matter of the poet-existence, but its scope is widened to “every single individual’s life.”¹⁴⁴ Irony is vital to personal life because its constant questioning and reframing emancipates from actuality and awakens one’s awareness to emancipate oneself from social context and values. Irony can therefore point to the possibility of freedom.¹⁴⁵ Irony is liberating because *it makes the given context visible and concrete*.¹⁴⁶ Irony makes possibility and one’s ability to form it, visible, and this is a vital step in personal human life for Kierkegaard.¹⁴⁷ In pointing to possibility, irony also reveals one’s ability to shape it ourselves: “In our joy over the achievement in our age, we have forgotten that an achievement is worthless if it is not made one’s own.”¹⁴⁸ Irony can free the individual from their historical actuality; it liberates from norms, traditions and believes of their time and points towards the possibility of shaping it according to one’s own values and actuality.

¹⁴³ *CI*, 326 / *SKS* 1, 355.

¹⁴⁴ *CI*, 326 / *SKS* 1, 355.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Söderquist, “Irony,” 355: “As [Kierkegaard] sees it, the initial result of an ironic consciousness is a new sense of liberation. Irony frees the individual from the unwarranted authority of inherited laws, customs, habits, beliefs, and norms. It creates an open space, unencumbered by the demands of human tradition, and the individual is at least initially forced back into him or herself.”; see also Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 92.

¹⁴⁶ *CI*, 267 / *SKS* 1, 304: “Socrates’ undertaking was not to make the abstract concrete, but to let the abstract become visible through the immediate concrete.”

¹⁴⁷ Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 78.

¹⁴⁸ *CI*, 327 / *SKS* 1, 356; see also Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 92–93.

3.4.2 *The Pseudonyms: Irony in Kierkegaard's Writing*

Before we can move on to other writings by Kierkegaard, the way that irony influenced his writing needs to be addressed. Irony left its traces in Kierkegaard's authorship and needs to be included in approaching his works after *CI*. What was important for the emerging writer Søren Kierkegaard was his conclusion in *CI* that irony is a deeply ambiguous phenomenon.¹⁴⁹ Irony's negativity does not offer "one right" path but rather opens up different possibilities. Irony is the way but not the end.¹⁵⁰ It does not offer any stability or direction.¹⁵¹ This leaves it to be both: a seducer and a guide:

It takes courage when sorrow would delude one, when it would reduce all joy to sadness, all longing to privation, ever hope to recollection - it takes courage to will to be happy; but this does not necessarily mean that every full-grown adult infant with his sweet, sentimental smile, his joy-intoxicated eyes, has more courage than the person who yielded to grief and forgot to smile. So it is also with irony. Even though one must warn against irony as against a seducer, so must one also commend it as a guide.¹⁵²

Irony has a seducing and guiding function in Kierkegaard's thinking because it marks a person's awareness of their own standing out as a self, literally existing. As such, irony is a necessary component of any human life.¹⁵³ On a textual, poetic level, irony carries the possibility to awaken this awareness of the possibility to become a self in the reader. Kierkegaard's texts leave it to the readers how to interpret the text for themselves. This implies the approach this thesis takes on for analyzing the following texts and consequently needs to be unfolded before turning to readings of humility.

Even if Kierkegaard criticizes irony, figures of the romantic aestheticist and ironists presented by some of his pseudonyms are some of the most dominant in his writing after *CI*.¹⁵⁴ The reader encounters them in Kierkegaard's writings as the pseudonymous authors, editors and heroes in a universe of characters.¹⁵⁵ Pseudonyms such as Victor Emerita (*Either / Or*), Constantin Constantius (*Repetition*), Johannes de Silentio (*Fear and*

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Söderquist, "Irony", 350.

¹⁵⁰ *CI*, 327 / *SKS* 1, 356: "Irony as the negative is the way; it is not the truth but the way."; Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 99.

¹⁵¹ Bernstein discusses this ambiguity of irony at length, see Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 89-90; see also Söderquist, "Irony", 356.

¹⁵² *CI*, 327 / *SKS* 1, 355.

¹⁵³ *CI*, 6 / *SKS* 1, 65, Bernstein highlights this in his reading of Kierkegaard's irony, cf. Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 74-102.

¹⁵⁴ Söderquist, "Irony", 357.

¹⁵⁵ Söderquist, "Irony", 357; 348-350.

Trembling), Johannes Climacus (*Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*) or Vigilius Haufniensis (*The Concept of Anxiety*) in Kierkegaard's early works, transfer the idea of irony as the way to an individual, meaningful life. These authors and editors refer to each other by name or even contradict each other.¹⁵⁶ They make it impossible to pin down "Kierkegaard's position." In *CUP*, Kierkegaard refers to himself as a "souffleur"¹⁵⁷ for these pseudonymous authors.¹⁵⁸ He claims only to "have occasioned the audibility of the production"¹⁵⁹ and asks that if one is to cite a passage from the pseudonymous works one should quote the "respective pseudonymous author's name"¹⁶⁰ and not his own name.¹⁶¹ Consequently, irony remains a feature of Kierkegaard's writing. In Kierkegaard's works, this means that with every passage that one reads, one has to ironically question it.

By use of the pseudonyms, Kierkegaard refuses any understanding or interpretation of his texts as finding "what Kierkegaard really, truly means." The pseudonyms break with the idea of a "truthful, authentic" author and with the concept that the pseudonyms' truth is equivalent to Kierkegaard's truth and meaning. Anyone looking for "Kierkegaard's concept of xyz" will fall prey to the contradictions of the pseudonyms. The pseudonyms, therefore, continue the tradition of the Socratic midwife by visibly framing Kierkegaard's books as an artistic creation even if the respective book presents itself as a scientific report or philosophical argument.¹⁶² Consequently, reading about freedom in Kierkegaard's texts does not only give an argument for freedom but in the process of reading the readers can become aware of their own freedom. Through irony, the self can become aware of the possibility of freedom.¹⁶³ Hence, irony and the communication

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Söderquist, "Irony", 349-350.

¹⁵⁷ *CUP*, [625] / *SKS* 7, 570.

¹⁵⁸ *CUP*, [626] / *SKS* 7, 570.

¹⁵⁹ *CUP*, [627] / *SKS* 7, 571.

¹⁶⁰ *CUP*, [627] / *SKS* 7, 571.

¹⁶¹ This thesis will follow this request and therefore cite the respective "author" and not "Kierkegaard" when quoting the pseudonymous works; Cf. *CUP*, [626-630] / *SKS* 7, 569-573.

¹⁶² For a more elaborate analysis of irony with a focus on Socrates, Kierkegaard and Rorty see, Tautz, "Klassiker der Ironie als Lebensform".

¹⁶³ Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 96: "Freedom is manifested in existential choice. It is existential because one is literally choosing how one is to exist, how one is to relate to oneself, to others,

of the pseudonyms “[...] pushes interpretive responsibility back to the reader.”¹⁶⁴ In the contradiction of Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms lies a warning not to take “Søren Kierkegaard’s” understanding of freedom or existence for granted. Instead, the readers are challenged to relate to their own understanding of freedom or existence. As Kierkegaard writes, an author “must always express that he himself is not a master teacher but an apprentice, [...] because ethically the task is precisely this, that every man comes to stand alone.”¹⁶⁵ This standing alone is the task that can be evoked by irony in human life.¹⁶⁶ Through the pseudonyms, irony continues as the path and as a seducer and guide.¹⁶⁷

Moreover, the telling names of the pseudonymous authors and editors *perform* Kierkegaard’s thought just as much as they present his philosophical arguments.¹⁶⁸ Kierkegaard sets the stage and lets his characters perform ideas.¹⁶⁹ It is a form of enacted and staged philosophy. Constantin Constantius, for instance, approaches the question of whether and how repetition is possible.¹⁷⁰ To do so, he continually reflects on the question presented in different literary genres. Constantin Constantius’ book *on repetition* is a continuing repetition of his argument in the form of a report, a treaty or an exchange of letters. *Repetition* is not only the title and the topic of the book; it is also the method. The literary form mirrors the thought that it contains. As is the case with irony, the pseudonyms are not a decorative element but express a fundamental philosophical approach ingrained in Kierkegaard’s thought: namely, that the form of a philosophical argument is

and to the world. Such choice is never just a single decisive event. It is a *task* that must be constantly repeated.”

¹⁶⁴ Söderquist, “Irony”, 349. Westfall also highlights this, cf. Westfall, *The Kierkegaardian author*, Vol. 15, 17.

¹⁶⁵ JP 1: 649 quoted in Berthold, “Kierkegaard’s Seductions: The Ethics of Authorship,” 1054.

¹⁶⁶ CI, 5-6 / SKS 1, 65

¹⁶⁷ CI, 327 / SKS 1, 355; Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 99.

¹⁶⁸ See Mooney, “Pseudonyms and ‘Style’”; Mackey, *Kierkegaard: a kind of poet*; Tautz, *Portraits of Guilt: Art and Life in Kierkegaard’s Repetition and Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

¹⁶⁹ A theme that is explored by George Pattison, see, e.g. George Pattison, *Kierkegaard: The aesthetic and the religious from the magic theatre to the crucifixion of the image*; Pattison, “Art in the age of reflection”; Pattison, “Kierkegaard and Genre”; Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the quest for unambiguous life: Between Romanticism and Modernism selected essays*.

¹⁷⁰ *Repetition*, 171 / SKS 4, 44-45.

not additional to Kierkegaard's philosophy;¹⁷¹ form is part of the content and the content cannot be described, let alone understood, without the form. So the idea of the ironist as raising awareness to possibility is continued in the form of the pseudonyms in Kierkegaard's texts.¹⁷² Even before the reader has read the first page of the book, the authority "Kierkegaard" as the author is questioned. It is the reader, who has to make up their mind about what they read rather than a given truth vouched for by the author.

This strong connection of reading and its consequences in the reader's life is a theme that accompanies the quest for humility. The following readings emphasize that in line with Rorty's approach to philosophy as therapy, the examined texts are approached as encouraging a way of life and motivating the reader to move from reflection to action.

3.5 Conclusion: Irony in Rorty and Kierkegaard's Writings

3.5.1 *Irony as Liberation*

Even though Rorty does not refer to Kierkegaard in *CIS*, there are a few similarities that one can point out in both approaches to irony.

The first contribution of irony for both authors is that by questioningly reflecting the historical norms and values of their time, the ironists make these norms and values visible. Irony describes becoming aware of the given reality as a historical context for meaning and value. Moreover, irony reveals the contingency of these contexts and values. By doing so, it allows ironists to distance themselves from the current historical circumstances of their time. Consequently, the ironist stands out and in opposition to "common sense".¹⁷³

Additionally, irony highlights the ability to liberate oneself from this context and therefore, also describes a process of becoming aware of one's

¹⁷¹ Luis Mackey highlights the link of content and form: "Content must find and merge with its proper form, language must become gesture and symbolic action; where subjectivity is truth, truth like subjectivity must be plotted and dramatically enacted." Mackey, "Philosophy and Poetry in Kierkegaard," 326.

¹⁷² Söderquist, "Irony", 351: "Indeed, for a host of twentieth-century readers of Kierkegaard, the most vital aspect of his writing has to do with his sensitivity to the philosophical limitations of clear and distinct discourse and, alternatively, the possibilities opened by his poetic discourse."

¹⁷³ *CIS*, 74; Voparil, "Rorty and James on Irony, Moral commitment, and the Ethics of Belief", 13.

responsibility to do so. Irony describes the first step of liberating oneself from the descriptions of others and struggling for one's own descriptions. For both authors, this is a constant movement and marked by instability. The ironists uphold the distancing in continual questioning and redefining themselves.

For Rorty, irony is a way of life. It contains describing oneself and one's beliefs in full awareness of the need for others and their acceptance of one's way to speak in the process of doing so. For Kierkegaard, irony is the first step towards subjectivity and the beginning of any human life. However, remaining in irony singles one out only as an attempt to be self-sufficient. The liberation from one's dependence on context and others results in self-isolation and closes one off from others.¹⁷⁴ Irony for both authors is a step towards liberation from dependence on others and describes a way of life that follows from this ongoing existential struggle for liberation. However, this also shows a vital difference between Rorty and Kierkegaard's way of irony: for Rorty, irony is the main endeavour and aim of human life. For Kierkegaard, irony is the first step towards life and existence as a human being.

3.5.2 *Universal Truth in Opposition to Personal Life*

The topic of truth shows the historical and philosophical distance between Rorty and Kierkegaard. For Rorty, truth is not something that is out there but something that lies in a matter of speaking and language. He sees no reason for speaking about truths in hierarchical orders. Instead, he suggests choosing and relating to them as we do to friends or heroes.¹⁷⁵ The relation to values thereby keeps its importance but does not claim universality.¹⁷⁶

Kierkegaard's writings, on the other hand, describe a search for the one truth. However, it is also a search for one's relation to the truth that matters.¹⁷⁷ Becoming an individual means upholding this relation and giving

¹⁷⁴ *CI*, 283 / *SKS* 1, 318; Söderquist, "The Religious 'Suspension of the Ethical' and the Ironic 'Suspension of the Ethical'", 268; also 274.

¹⁷⁵ *CIS*, 54.

¹⁷⁶ *CIS*, 54.

¹⁷⁷ *CUP*, 278 / *SKS* 7, 255; cf. Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, 58: "Instead of subjectivity automatically deciding what is the truth, subjectivity itself is defined. The subjectivity that is the truth is inwardness, appropriation, or passion. Thus the question

it true meaning in one's life. Truth for the individual in Kierkegaard's writings only has meaning if it means something to them.

Moreover, Rorty and Kierkegaard have in common that they do not rigorously refute the existence of a universal truth but rather show that speaking, arguing for and claiming a universal truth disregards and misses out on noticing the pain and suffering of other people and another person.¹⁷⁸ They highlight that a universal understanding of morality based on truth cannot capture the struggle, pain and nuances of individual stories and experiences. Morality for both lies in the meaning of one's values for oneself and cannot be deducted from universal rules. Rorty and Kierkegaard, therefore, both bring to light the limits of universalistic ethics.¹⁷⁹ Rather than moving from the universal to the individual / personal life of a person, they observe and follow the story of one hero or heroine. This approach leads to a kind of philosophy that is concerned with questions of human existence rather than philosophical debates;¹⁸⁰ for both authors draw on literature to explore human existence.¹⁸¹

3.5.3 *The Importance of Language and Literature*

The emphasis of literature as a means for sensitization for the other's struggle and suffering rather than reasoning for a common truth connects both authors. They share an attempt to dissolve the strict line between literature and philosophy. Both authors point to the dangers, potential cruelty and dehumanization that general reasoning means for moral actions.¹⁸²

is more about the way we relate to what is to be considered as the truth. We can only speak about truth when the truth becomes the truth for us as single individuals. It is only true when it is true for me." See also, 52; 57.

¹⁷⁸ Rorty does not use the word "individual" but rather "people", or "human being" (e.g. *CIS*, 10; 94; 189)

¹⁷⁹ *CIS*, 77-78; 92-93, see Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 118-19; cf. This argumentation runs through Derrida's reading of *Fear and Trembling* in *The Gift of Death*, see, e.g. 74.

¹⁸⁰ Voparil highlights this "existential" aspect of Rorty's writing, see Voparil, "Rorty and James on Irony, Moral commitment, and the Ethics of Belief", 5; similarly Curtis, *Defending Rorty*, 27: "Nevertheless, I must confess that the reason Rorty has a draw for me is that his work embodies the right balance of the paradoxes of human experience."; see also Rorty in Richard Rorty, Jeffrey W. Robbins, and Gianni Vattimo, *An Ethics for Today: Finding Common Ground Between Philosophy and Religion*, 30.

¹⁸¹ Cf. *CIS*, 133; *FT*, 7 / *SKS*, 4, 102-103.

¹⁸² *CIS*, 77-78; 92-93, see Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 118-119; Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 74.

Consequently, one of the major aims of their writings is to sensitize the reader to notice and see other people's suffering.

Rorty suggests encountering as many vocabularies as possible by reading literature. This acquaintance with different life-views aims to "notice suffering"¹⁸³, not to understand reasoning. Unlike a universal truth, this sensitivity needs to evolve and be kept alive with every story; every vocabulary one encounters. The liberal ironist's meta-stability means that it is a continuing effort to remain sensitive to the suffering of others. In contrast to Kierkegaard's ironist, Rorty's liberal ironist unites self-creation and awareness of responsibility. Rorty's ironist is not a poet but an ethical person because the awareness and ability for irony come at the price of becoming aware of vulnerability, dependence and responsibility. Rorty's ironist is bound by language, which is the only reality and influence he has on the world. Rorty's ironist does not live in possibility but in necessity.

Kierkegaard's writings portray a need for literature to set one in the right mood to be able to notice rather than understand someone else's suffering.

Fear and Trembling. Dialectical Lyric (FT) by Johannes de Silentio is an example of this. The book revisits the story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac on Mount Moria.¹⁸⁴ The title already indicates that it is not the ethical decision that defines Abraham's journey, but his fear and trembling.¹⁸⁵ Instead of explaining Abraham's reasons for sacrificing his son, the text sets a mood to allow the reader to share Abraham's experience during the journey. The opening of *FT* highlights this and shows that anyone approaching *FT* and looking for arguments will not be satisfied as the author Johannes de Silentio announces "The present author is by no means a philosopher."¹⁸⁶ in the *Preface*. These declarations are followed by a section entitled *Exordium*, in Danish "*stemning*".¹⁸⁷ It presents an old man remembering the story of Abraham from his childhood.

¹⁸³ *CIS*, 93.

¹⁸⁴ On literary and biblical references, see Nagy, "The Mount and the Abyss. The Literary Reading of *Fear and Trembling*".

¹⁸⁵ *FT*, 7 / *SKS*, 4, 102-103.

¹⁸⁶ *FT*, 7 / *SKS*, 4, 103.

¹⁸⁷ I am indebted to René Rosfort and numerous discussions for understanding the importance of this aspect.

His craving was to go along the three-day journey when Abraham rode with sorrow before him and Isaac beside him. His wish was to be present in that hour when Abraham raised his eyes and saw Mount Moriah in the distance, the hour when he left the asses behind and went up the mountain alone with Isaac – for what occupied him was not the beautiful tapestry of imagination but the shudder of the idea.¹⁸⁸

The approach is not thinking but imagining.¹⁸⁹ Later in the section “Eulogy to Abraham”, Johannes highlights that what makes Abraham a knight of faith is his ability to not forget the fear and trembling. This first statement about going along with Abraham highlights that the way to do so is not by imagination but by the “shudder of the idea”¹⁹⁰; by revoking not only Abraham’s fear and trembling but the reader’s ability to go along with it. Before Johannes begins with his discussion of the later sections *Problemata I-III*, this section sets the mood for returning to fear and trembling. This foreshadows the importance of trying to make the reader follow Abraham’s story as an experience. What Kierkegaard is interested in is not whether Abraham is a hero or a murderer but who Abraham is and what it is like to be Abraham. To portray this, he draws on poetic forms such as eulogies, love stories and fairy tales.¹⁹¹

Both authors refuse to reinforce the existential certainty that universal truth can offer. Their arguments are unfolded through interpretations of stories. The ambiguity of literary texts and their interpretation enables both thinkers to emphasize the limitedness of their own interpretations, and at the same time, allow for other interpretations.¹⁹² Both use literature to enable moral agency.¹⁹³ Firstly, their use of literature enables and challenges a dialogue between the reader and the author of the text. Moral values only gain

¹⁸⁸ *FT*, 9 / *SKS*, 4, 105.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. *FT*, 9 / *SKS*, 4, 106.

¹⁹⁰ *FT*, 9 / *SKS*, 4, 105.

¹⁹¹ To be unfolded in the analysis below.

¹⁹² *CIS*, 135: “What is the good of writing that way? If one wants arguments which reach conclusions, it is no good at all. As I have said already, there is nothing propositional to be taken away from the experience of reading it — any more than from the writings of the later Heidegger. So is it to be judged by ‘literary’ rather than ‘philosophical’ criteria? No, because, as in the cases of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Remembrance of Things Past*, and *Finnegans Wake*, there are no antecedently available criteria of *either* sort. The more original a book or a kind of writing is, the more unprecedented, the less likely we are to have criteria in hand, and the less point there is in trying to assign it to a genre. We have to see whether we can find a use for it. If we can, then there will be time enough to stretch the borders of some genre or other far enough to slip it in, and to draw up criteria according to which it is a good kind of writing to have invented. Only metaphysicians think that our present genres and criteria exhaust the realm of possibility. Ironists continue to expand that realm.”

¹⁹³ Cf. Voparil, “Rorty and James on Irony, Moral commitment, and the Ethics of Belief”, 3.

value if they mean something to the reader. Secondly, their use of different kinds of texts evokes moral agency by the sensitizing for other peoples' suffering and pain.¹⁹⁴

3.5.4 *Why start an Investigation of Medieval, Christian Concepts of Humility with a Postmodern Idea of Irony?*

The obvious question to a thesis that deals to a large extent with Christian medieval "mystic" thinkers is why begin with Richard Rorty's irony?

The answer is: First, Rorty's text raises the questions that guide this thesis. Second, because Richard Rorty's text can serve as a translation of the old question of what freedom means to human life to a postmodern audience. Third, his approach to the questions explains why this thesis explores the concept of humility as an alternative vocabulary to irony as a description of the relation to dependence and a personal other.

Rorty's text is useful for this thesis because it offers a description of what it is like to know oneself as dependent on other people. His narration of contingency breaks with the Romantic idea of self-sufficient self-creation. His heroine's story is framed by this awareness of having to trust the "goodwill"¹⁹⁵ of others. The first questions we can take from Rorty's deliberations consequently are: how do I relate to knowing myself as dependent on others?

Despite this awareness of unavoidable dependence, the figure of the liberal ironist is a personification for the task to relate to dependence and at the same time make a self for oneself in full awareness of it. The liberal ironist presents a way of life that manages to form one's own final vocabulary – if only to take it apart in the next moment. This highlights two aspects of human

¹⁹⁴ CIS, 53: "This appreciation is summed up in the vague, misleading, but pregnant and inspiring thought that truth is made rather than found. I also said that literature and politics are the spheres to which contemporary intellectuals look when they worry *about ends rather than about means*. I can now add the corollary that these are the areas to which we should look for the charter of a liberal society. We need a redescription of liberalism as the hope that culture as a whole can be 'poeticized' rather than as the Enlightenment hope that it can be 'rationalized' or 'scientized.' That is, we need to substitute the hope that chances for fulfilment of idiosyncratic fantasies will be equalized for the hope that everyone will replace 'passion' or fantasy with 'reason.'" (emphasis mine)

¹⁹⁵ CIS, 42.

life. First, the awareness of dependence; second, consciously relating to dependence one strives for independence and autonomy. One makes a self for oneself in the face of knowing oneself as dependent on another. Freedom is therefore seen in relation to dependence on other speakers. The liberal ironist captures this contradictory experience of dependence and freedom in human life. This adds to the next questions in the context of freedom and dependence: how does one relate to those that, one is dependent on? What kind of relation can one form when one cannot escape depending on another person? How do I live in awareness of dependence on a personal other?

More than just addressing a need for autonomy, Rorty's irony captures freedom as responsibility when the author turns to the analysis of Orsen Wells' 1984. Rorty's interpretation draws attention to others being dependent on oneself. Consequently, dependence is not only an outwardly imposed limit to one's own freedom, but freedom in relation to dependence becomes a responsibility for those dependent on oneself. The liberal ironist represents a chosen limitation of her own urge for a free description of herself. She does not take on a limitation of her own freedom because she is told to do so. She does so because she herself wants to avoid causing other people pain.

This is another aspect of irony that this thesis will take into account: Because the liberal ironist is sensitive to other people's stories and vocabularies, she is able to notice the suffering that her own descriptions cause others. The ability to imaginatively identify¹⁹⁶ with another person is vital for the kind of relationship to the other that irony describes. In fact, it is this sensitivity that establishes the relationship to the other. A relation to the other is only possible if one is sensitive to their experience of pain and suffering and also relates this pain and suffering to one's own free actions. In phrasing freedom as our ability to speak freely, Rorty introduces an approach to philosophical questions of how to relate to dependence and to those upon whom, is dependent. His focus lies on how this question is staged and performed in language. He turns from looking for arguments to descriptions of experiences that enable ways to relate to dependence. Rorty's concern is to familiarize oneself with as many vocabularies as possible and see whether

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *CIS*, 93.

they can be of use to approach the question in life. This is what this thesis intends to do: to examine the Christian authors' texts with respect to the question and experience of struggling with freedom in creating a self for oneself in dependence of a personal other.¹⁹⁷ It shows how the authors display the experience of relating to oneself as free and dependent on personal other. The question that guides the reading of the texts is: to which extent do they offer vocabularies that describe a relation of dependence and the existential problem of experiencing ourselves as dependent on another?

The thesis presents the experience of dependence and autonomy in a constellation of figures of humility and humble courage. With their concepts of humility, Hadewijch and Eckhart's texts offer different dynamics of thinking freedom in dependence. They also suggest a different perspective on what it means to be a human being: Not a self-sufficient being striving for freedom but a human being in need of a divine being whose freedom is expressed in owning and claiming this dependence. For Hadewijch and Eckhart, freedom lies in dependence. The presented reading is therefore meant to contribute to the question of how to describe and live an interpersonal free relationship in dependence of each other.

This thesis does not set out or claim to be a contribution to a specific historical field of study of each of the individual author that it deals with. Instead, it uses their texts to answer Rorty's question of how to deal with being caught up between freedom and dependence and how to relate to it.

There is an undeniable difference between Rorty's response to the awareness of dependence with irony and the Christian author's way to relate to dependence in humility. Along with Kierkegaard's criticism of irony, the thesis will suggest humility as an alternative approach to dependence. Unlike irony, humility enables action as a moral agent through and because of one's relation to dependence. Rorty and the Christian authors *share the question* but not the answer.

Nonetheless, Rorty's liberal ironist will be the setting for the heroes and heroines of humility and humble courage. So that even if the thesis does not agree with Rorty's irony as a response to dependence, it takes its approach

¹⁹⁷ *CIS*, 135.

and its argument for the importance of literary texts for moral agency as vital for the remainder of the investigation. It does so because the ability to be sensitive to other people's pain through imaginative identification is considered an appropriate response to the experience of contingency by the author.

The aim of the thesis is not to end the conversation with Rorty's ironist but to take her characterisation as a starting point and present alternative vocabularies. To put it in Rorty's terms: the point is not a vertical depiction of what is wrong or right about the ironist but a horizontal presentation of different perspectives on the question of freedom in dependence.¹⁹⁸ In the utopian surroundings of the liberal ironist, this thesis adds more figures to the story, such as Maria, Martha, and knights of love and faith.¹⁹⁹ So that the hope of the author is that even non-Christian liberal ironists can familiarise themselves with different descriptions of humility and learn alternative vocabularies to describe themselves in relating to another person.

3.6 Moving towards the Abyss: from Irony to Humility

After examining the ironist's relation to dependence, I will now turn to humility as a possible alternative to approaching the task of striving for independence in dependence. Following the criticism on irony, I will investigate how humility enables action and a perspective on activity that is not based on self-sufficiency. The thesis will present movements and the relations that portray different understandings and aspects of humility. This will show a significant difference between irony and humility: In humility, it is not *despite* the need and dependence on others but *because of* it that we can

¹⁹⁸ *CIS*, 92-93, emphasis mine; see Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 118-119: "When Rorty introduces his figure of the 'liberal ironist,' he shows that irony is *not* a form of complete detachment from worldly affairs. On the contrary, irony is compatible with a *passionate* liberal commitment to diminishing cruelty and humiliation; indeed, it enables this commitment. It releases us from the hopeless task of providing a 'solid' vertical justification for the liberalism that Rorty advocates and opens the possibility for horizontal justification."

¹⁹⁹ See *CIS*, 9: "Conforming to my own precepts, I am not going to offer arguments against the vocabulary I want to replace. Instead, I am going to try to make the vocabulary I favor look attractive by showing how it may be used to describe a variety of topics."

form and even become ourselves.²⁰⁰ The humble person *wills* to be in need of another.

To explain the connection between the experience that Rorty describes in metastability and the experience that Kierkegaard and the mystical authors depict, the analysis first turns to Kierkegaard's concept of anxiety and its depiction as the abyss. Kierkegaard's language reveals the awareness of one's own possibility for freedom despite – and because of – dependence as a continuous human existential struggle. This experience and contradiction can be found in the relationship that Christian mystic writers phrase in the imagery of the abyss. The metaphor of the abyss describes experiencing the contradicting notions of free will and knowing oneself as dependent on a personal other. The imagery of the abyss offers a vocabulary for relating to dependence and freedom at the same time. Kierkegaard's language of the abyss serves as a connection between the postmodern language of continuous doubt in the face of freedom and responsibility and the premodern metaphor of the “abyss” or “ground”, which expresses the contradicting experience of freedom and absolute dependence. Moreover, the abyss in mystical writings shows a way to relate to this contradiction and the other.

For Kierkegaard, anxiety means being transfixed by seeing oneself as being able to be free and guilty in the abyss. Rorty's “meta-stable”²⁰¹ ironist sees herself as striving to form herself and yet causing pain for others in doing so. The experience of anxiety links the postmodern experience of uncertainty in Rorty's characterization of “metastability” to the instability of the experience described in the “master metaphor”²⁰² of the *ground* or *abyss* in the mystical Christian writers. Despite the difference between guilt and pain as the respective consequence, these depictions share that they highlight the ambiguity of experiencing oneself as a free and responsible for the consequences of one's freedom.

Nonetheless, there is also an undeniable shift from Rorty's language of love and relation to another person to the believer's relation to the Christian

²⁰⁰ Carlisle, *Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling: A Reader's Guide*, 8: “Kierkegaard was clearly fascinated by the idea that one only is what one is, and has what one has, by virtue of a gift - and that what is thus given can also be taken away.”

²⁰¹ *CIS*, 73.

²⁰² McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 41.

divine personhood. With anxiety, we move to a vocabulary of freedom, sin and guilt, in contrast, to freedom in the sense of autonomy and pain as an awareness of the consequences of one's actions. When the Christian authors speak of "the other", it is the divine other.²⁰³ Consequently, the dynamics explored in the concepts of humility describe the relationship of two unequal parts in an equal relationship. This relationship will reveal some aspects of thinking and experiencing divine love that are reflected in the relationship with other people in life. In the end, it is the portrayal of love in humility that enables a different reading of *1984*. So that we return from the language of divine love to a language of love between two people when looking for an alternative ending to Winston and Julia's love story.

The reason for choosing these texts is that in exploring the struggle of relating to the divine can serve as a redescription of the human experience of freedom in the face of a personal other and knowing oneself as dependent on them. The selected Christian texts put into words the struggle of knowing oneself as free and dependent on another. The focus of the texts lies in exploring how to relate to this other in humility. In Eckhart's case, this takes the form of thinking oneness in difference and an ongoing dynamic of freedom and dependence in the ground. Humility for Eckhart means to learn how to be in dependence. Hadewijch phrases this relationship as the experience of the known presence and absence of the other. The abyss describes a spiral of demanding and needing the other in love. Humility teaches her to speak out of and because of dependence on the other. In Kierkegaard's text, finally, the poet Johannes de Silentio shows how Abraham is able to act in humble courage and return to the abyss of anxiety.

This endeavor to relate to another in full awareness of one's dependence to them presents dependence not as a burden but as something to be embraced as part of human life. From this perspective, Christian poetic and literary texts can introduce hope to the bleak reality of *1984*. Affirming and embracing dependence on a loving other gives joy in life rather than causing resignation in reflection. The readings of humility and the love stories

²⁰³ For a more indepth analysis of "the other" in postmodern interpretations, see Shakespeare, "Kierkegaard and Postmodernism," 474-476.

that they contain offer ways of how to change the perspective on human life and values to something more than “justified true belief”²⁰⁴.

The journey begins with a moment of uncertainty: Kierkegaard’s *Concept of Anxiety*.

3.6.1 Kierkegaard’s Concept of Anxiety

Kierkegaard characterizes anxiety as the abyss in a narrative of the fall of humankind in *The Concept of Anxiety*. Retelling the fall of humankind, Kierkegaard’s pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis phrases anxiety as the experience of the ambiguity of freedom. As we will see, Haufniensis puts the change from innocence to sin in a shift in understanding words and their meaning. Before this change takes place, language evokes an inkling of his ability to choose in Adam. This sensing of freedom induces anxiety. In contrast to fear, anxiety does not have a specified object. Anxiety captures the moment of becoming aware of freedom’s possibility.²⁰⁵ Haufniensis chooses the metaphor of a swallowing abyss (*svælgende Dyb*) to describe this emerging consciousness. In this abyss, he sees himself and sees himself as being seen by others. The abyss connects the experience of instability and the beginning of one’s awareness of (limited) freedom. Moreover, it highlights two sides of freedom as freedom for oneself and one’s freedom seen by others. Through the language of the abyss, the reader can learn about the instability induced and phrased by language as a part of humanity in texts written long before postmodernity. The abyss describes the dynamics of being dependent upon another and struggling with that other. Nonetheless, turning to the abyss offers a different path than irony. The experience of the abyss, consequently, sets the mood for moving from irony to humility.

²⁰⁴ *MoN*, 388-389.

²⁰⁵ *CA*, 61 / *SKS* 4, 366-67.

3.6.2 *The Abyss of Anxiety: Adam's Fall*

In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Haufniensis rewrites the fall of the human being in Genesis 3 in terms of language. For Haufniensis, the story of Adam and Eve tells about how God spoke to humankind for the first time. He marks the change of innocence to guilt by a change in the understanding of language. This change marks language as the place of awakening responsibility expressed in anxiety. The ambiguity of language mirrors the ambiguity of possibility and freedom. It is not the snake that symbolizes the possibility of freedom, but freedom given by God is evoked in the human being through God's word.

The communication between God and Adam begins with God's words evoking freedom's possibility in Adam. Innocence is marked not only as a state of being but as a lack of understanding when Haufniensis notes that in innocence, Adam cannot understand the meaning of good and evil:

When it is stated in the Genesis that God said to Adam, "Only from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you must not eat," it follows as a matter of course that Adam really has not understood this word, for how could he understand the difference between good and evil when this distinction would follow as a consequence of the enjoyment of the fruit?²⁰⁶

Because Adam does not understand the meaning of good and evil, the prohibition evokes not fear but an experience of ambiguity.²⁰⁷ With the awareness of possibility comes the awareness of other possibilities. This becoming aware of the "possibility of being able to" is anxiety:

The prohibition induces in him anxiety [*Forbudet ængster ham*], for the prohibition awakens in him freedom's possibility [*Frihedens Mulighed*]. What passed by innocence as the nothing of anxiety has now entered into [*kommet ind*] Adam, and here again it is a nothing - the anxious possibility of *being able*. He has no conception of what he is able to do [...].²⁰⁸

Freedom's possibility is experienced in and through anxiety, indicating the fall of man as a change from innocence to anxiety, not to guilt.²⁰⁹ Anxiety is ambiguous because it is not yet anything other than the possibility of being able to.

²⁰⁶ CA, 44 / SKS 4, 350.

²⁰⁷ CA, 45 / SKS 4, 350: "Because Adam has not understood what was spoken, there is nothing but the ambiguity of anxiety. The infinite possibility of being able that was awakened by the prohibition now draws closer, because this possibility points to a possibility as its sequence."

²⁰⁸ CA, 44 / SKS 4, 350.

²⁰⁹ As Paul Ricoeur states: "[...] we do not know innocence. We only know its loss." Ricoeur, "Two Encounters with Kierkegaard: Kierkegaard and evil. Doing Philosophy after Kierkegaard," 316.

Anxiety is a moment of nothingness because so far, one has not become anything.²¹⁰ Haufniensis chooses the metaphor of the abyss to describe this ambiguity of nothingness:

Anxiety may be compared with dizziness. He whose eye happens to look down into the yawning abyss [*svælgende Dyb*] becomes dizzy. But what is the reason for this? It is just as much in his own eye as in the abyss, for suppose he had not looked down. Hence anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when the spirit wants to posit the synthesis and freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself. Freedom succumbs in this dizziness.²¹¹

The Danish words “*svælgende Dyb*”²¹² for yawning abyss captures the pull towards the abyss.²¹³ The dizziness implies a spinning between seeing and being seen, dizziness lies in the eye and the abyss.²¹⁴ Haufniensis continues

²¹⁰ Cf. CA, 52 / SKS 4, 358: “Herein lies the more or less of anxiety in the subsequent individual. Nevertheless, his [Adam’s] anxiety is not anxiety about sin, for as yet the distinction between good and evil is not, because this distinction first comes about with the actuality of freedom.” Also CA, 44 / SKS 4, 350.

²¹¹ CA, 61 / SKS 4, 366-367: “Angest kan man sammenligne med Svimmelhed. Den, hvis Øie kommer til at skue ned i et svælgende Dyb, han bliver svimmel. Men hvad er Grunden, det er ligesaa meget hans Øie som Afgrunden; thi hvis han ikke havde stirret ned. Saaledes er Angest den Frihedens Svimlen, der opkommer, idet Aanden vil sætte Synthesen, og Friheden | nu skuer ned i sin egen Mulighed, og da griber Endeligheden at holde sig ved. I denne Svimlen segner Friheden. Videre kan Psychologien ikke komme og vil det ikke. I samme Øieblik er Alt forandret, og idet Friheden igjen reiser sig op, seer den, at den er skyldig.” In comparison with Eckhart and Hadewijch the metaphor of the eye here shows, how the relation between the abyss and God is expressed differently: in Eckhart’s concept of union God’s eye and the soul’s eye are one eye, in Hadewijch it is the soul’s eye and God’s eye, whereas in Kierkegaard it is only the individual eye that is the abyss and sees it at the same time.

²¹² Podmore explains: “[...] the English word “abyss” translates both the Danish Dyb and also the more horrifying Afgrund (literally ‘without ground’) in Kierkegaard’s writings. While *Dyb* often denotes empty space or depth, *Afgrund* evokes the intangible and paradoxical presence of something exceeding mere “emptiness” (*Tomhed*). As such, “abyss” can refer not only to spatial separation but also to that which is dramatically groundless, bottomless, fathomless, inscrutable (*uudgrundelige*) - hence Johannes Climacus’s invocation of the word when describing, in *Philosophical Fragments*, how “humanly speaking, consequences built upon a paradox are built upon the abyss [*Afgrund*]” (PF, 98) Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self before God*, 3.

²¹³ Cf. Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self before God*, 5: “‘There is an infinite, radical, qualitative difference [*uendelig svælgende kvalitativ Forskjel*] between God and man’ (JP 2: 1383 / Pap. X¹ A 59). Added here is an instance of another deeply evocative adjective for this difference: ‘radical’ (*svælgende*). The translation as ‘radical’ does not fully convey the evocation of this word which, one might say, is decidedly abyssal. As the Danish word *slugt* - which denotes a ‘gorge’ - is close to the verb *sluge*, ‘to swallow,’ so too can *svælg* denote ‘abyss’ in a manner close to the verb *svælge* - also a verb for ‘swallowing.’ Hence, it might be more apt to talk about ‘an infinite, swallowing/yawning, qualitative difference’ which threatens to devour the self.”

²¹⁴ Podmore compares this to vertigo, see Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self before God*, 152: “In visual terms, the gaze of the sinner becomes lost in this infinite distance between the Holy and the unholy, as if, analogously, the sinner were gazing into the darkness of the abyss. The amorphous gloom of the abyss is seen by the gaze; but it is essentially an *excess of nothingness* for it. There is nothing on which the eye can rest, and so the gaze is unable to ground itself in the abyss, in which it encounters the vertigo of the infinite.”

“Freedom succumbs [*segner*] in this dizziness.”²¹⁵ Freedom falls or sinks into this dizziness. This is a movement of falling and raising as Haufniensis continues: “In that very moment everything is changed, and freedom, when it again rises [*reiser sig op*], sees that it is guilty.”²¹⁶ In the moment of anxiety, the self sees itself and at the same time loses itself in the manifested freedom as guilt. Haufniensis captures this in the image of freedom staring at itself.

The relation of freedom to guilt is anxiety, because freedom and guilt are still only possibilities. However, as freedom with all its passion [*med al sin Lidenskab*] wishfully stares at itself and would keep guilt at a distance so that not a single particle of it might be found in freedom, it cannot refrain from staring at guilt, and this staring is the ambiguous staring of anxiety, just as renunciation within the possibility is itself a coveting.²¹⁷

Anxiety means being transfixed by staring at oneself in the possibility of freedom and guilt. It is a moment of self-absorption of seeing one’s possible, ambiguous selves. As possibilities, they mirror the self in its possibilities.

3.6.3 *Sinking and Rising from the Abyss: the Shift from Possibility to One Concrete Self*

As a rising movement, anxiety shows the possibility of every concrete self,²¹⁸ which is why Haufniensis writes that “anxiety is of all things the most selfish, and no concrete expression of freedom is as selfish as the possibility of every concretion.”²¹⁹ The coveting of possibility is linked to this. “In anxiety there is the selfish infinity of possibility, which does not tempt like a choice but ensnaringly disquiets [*ængster*] with its sweet anxiousness.”²²⁰ The movement away from being transfixed in anxiety is what Haufniensis calls a “qualitative leap”.

The qualitative leap stands outside of all ambiguity [*al Tvetydighed*]. But he who becomes guilty through anxiety is indeed innocent, for it was not he himself but anxiety, a foreign power, that laid hold of him, a power that he did not love but about

²¹⁵ CA, 61 / SKS 4, 367.

²¹⁶ CA, 61 / SKS 4, 366. Grøn captures this movement of lowering and rising when he relates the abyss with an individual’s history, cf. Grøn, “Time and History,” 280.

²¹⁷ CA, 109 / SKS 4, 411.

²¹⁸ For Grøn, anxiety therefore implies the task of becoming one self, see Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, 46: “In short, anxiety (meaning that a person can be anxious and referring to the experience that he has in anxiety) reveals that an individual is a self that is not automatically himself, but first has to become himself.”

²¹⁹ CA, 61 / SKS 4, 366.

²²⁰ CA, 61 / SKS 4, 366.

which he was anxious. And yet he is guilty for he sank in anxiety, which he nevertheless loved even as he feared it.²²¹

Anxiety is a foreign power, and yet in being anxious a person themselves sinks in anxiety. Anxiety captures the experience of a self as determined by something outer and at the same time, by something that lies within oneself.²²² As such, anxiety has a passive and active component. Anxiety introduces ambiguity because it always captures the self as self (in possibility) and in guilt. In anxiety, freedom becomes entangled with itself.²²³

The abyss is a whirlwind of contradictions: of spinning from being pulled to giving in, of love and anxiety; between anxiety as the other and one's own. The individual crystalises some possibilities more clearly than others, but still is in possibility.²²⁴ "All of this *is* only for freedom, and it *is* only as the single individual himself posits sin by the qualitative leap."²²⁵ It is in this process of something emerging in reflectiveness that the self posits itself:

However, the real 'self' [*egentlige "Selv"*] is posited only by the qualitative leap. Therefore, when sin is explained by selfishness, one becomes entangled in indistinctness, because, on the contrary, it is by sin and in sin that selfishness comes into being.²²⁶

Sin means that one particular self emerges from the abyss and manifests itself as self. Rather than seeing many possible selves, in the qualitative leap freedom sees itself in one single reflection. What is decisive about the reflection is not *what* is reflected but that *something* is reflected rather than nothing:

The reflectiveness is a predisposition that, before the individual becomes guilty, signifies essentially nothing; whereas when by the qualitative leap he becomes guilty, it is the presupposition by which he goes beyond himself, because sin presupposes itself, obviously not before it is posited (which is predestination), but in that it is posited [*men forudsætter sig, idet den er sat*].²²⁷

²²¹ CA, 43 / SKS 4, 349.

²²² Cf. Grøn, *Angst bei Søren Kierkegaard*, 105; Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 43, 46, 47, 108.

²²³ Cf. SUD, 49 / SKS 4, 354: "Anxiety is neither a category of necessity nor a category of freedom; it is entangled freedom, where freedom is not free in itself but entangled, not by necessity, but in itself."

²²⁴ CA, 61 / SKS 4, 366: "[...] more and more a something [...]."

²²⁵ CA, 61 / SKS 4, 366.

²²⁶ CA, 79 / SKS 4, 382.

²²⁷ CA, 62 / SKS 4, 366.

The presupposing in anxiety then creates the relation of the possible self to the posited self.²²⁸ In positing the self, in passing over from anxiety into guilt²²⁹, one *becomes*. One posits oneself in the moment²³⁰ and thereby creates one's past and future. The sinking into the dizziness and change that is symbolised in the rising as guilty shows the becoming of *one* self (in opposition to infinite selves). In the something that is only "for freedom", a self emerges. In the reflectiveness of guilt, freedom stares at this self.²³¹ This is marked as the continuity of past, present and future. In becoming a self by positing one self, the individual loses "infinite possibility" and has a past, a story that defines them.²³² Hence Haufniensis' anthropology takes anxiety as the basic human condition that cannot be avoided.

In one of the Grimm's fairy tales there is a story of a young man who goes in search of adventure in order to learn what it is to be in anxiety. We will let the adventurer pursue his journey without concerning ourselves about whether he encountered the terrible on his way. However, I will say that this is an adventure that every human being must go through – to learn to be anxious in order that he may not perish either by never having been in anxiety or by succumbing to anxiety. Whoever has learned to be anxious in the right way [*retteligen*] has learned the ultimate [*Høieste*].²³³

²²⁸ Grøn calls this a reaction to ourselves "ahead of time", Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, 6: "[I]n anxiety we relate to our situation, but in anxiety the situation manifests itself as indeterminate. [...] In anxiety it is as if we have lost our footing, since the world we know loses its dependability. It seems that we are destroyed along with this world, and at the same time it seems that we are separated from it. The indetermined nature of the situation that we discover in anxiety leads us back to ourselves; since the situation is indeterminate or unsettled, we must ourselves relate to it. In a sense, we relate to ourselves in anxiety because the question put before us is how we relate to the situation. In anxiety we can react to ourselves, so to speak, ahead of time. We relate to how we will relate."

²²⁹ Cf. CA, 60 / SKS 4, 365.

²³⁰ Grøn highlights this link of immediacy in the moment and anxiety, cf. Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, 30.

²³¹ Cf. Pap. V B 56:4 n.d., 1844, CA, 201, annotations: "After sin has been posited, the object of anxiety is sin. The posited sin is a cancelled possibility, but although posited, it is also unwarranted."

²³² As Grøn puts it: "Both the moment before and the moment after concern time as reflected in the act of seeing: succumbing in *looking down into* the abyss of one's possibility (future) and rising, *seeing* that one is guilty. What comes in between is the leap which 'stands outside of all ambiguity' (SKS 4: 349 / CA: 43). One stands out as the one having failed. Whether others have also failed is in that moment not one's concern. The one who is becoming guilty is oneself—and no other. This is not just part of a common history (of sinfulness), but marks the beginning of one's own history." Grøn, "Time and History," 280; Podmore makes a similar point: "This task of 'becoming oneself' situates its struggle in the gap between the 'perceiving self' and the 'future self.' In this sense, one could describe selfhood as truly abyssal insofar as it is severed from itself and falling into 'groundlessness.'" Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self before God*, 20.

²³³ CA, 155 / SKS 4, 454; Haufniensis highlights this duality of anxiety, see CA, 64 / SKS 4, 368: "[T]he greatness of anxiety is a prophecy of the greatness of the perfection [*Fuldkommenhedens*]." Like for Eckhart and Hadewijch the movement toward the abyss holds the potential of self-knowledge as privation but also the potential for perfection.

Anxiety, and thereby freedom, is not something Adam has to overcome but it is something he has to learn to relate to. As Haufniensis points out: “Anxiety, however, is an expression of the perfection of human nature.”²³⁴ The abyss of anxiety is the task of the individual. In and through it, the individual becomes him- or herself.²³⁵ Similarly, the anxiety of sin is the individual’s anxiety. Sin is something that each individual experiences by themselves: “How sin came into the world, each man understands solely by himself.”²³⁶

3.6.4 *Language as an Expression of the Individual and a Link to the Universal*

However, Haufniensis also points out that anxiety is universal. God’s words address Adam as an individual and yet in a universally understood language. Haufniensis continues by reading anxiety as expressing the individual experience of freedom and at the same time freedom as a universal human condition. Anxiety raises the contrast of the possibility of individual meaning and universal understanding. This leads to a contradiction of individual meaning and universal ethics that, as we will see, is portrayed in Johannes de Silentio’s portrayal of humble courage.

The story of Adam’s fall is also the story of humanity’s fall. For Haufniensis, Adam is himself and the human race at the same time. Consequently, he does not only have to relate to himself as an individual self but also to himself as a specimen of humanity.

And no explanation that explains Adam but not hereditary sin, or explains hereditary sin but not Adam, is of any help. The most profound reason for this is what is essential to human existence: that man is individuum and as such simultaneously himself and the whole race, and in such a way that the whole race participates in the individual and the individual in the whole race.²³⁷

²³⁴ CA, 72 / SKS 4, 376: “Therefore the spirit trembles, for in this moment it does not have its task, it is as if it were suspended. Anxiety, however, is an expression of the perfection of human nature [*et Udtryk for den menneskelige Naturs Fuldkommenhed*].”

²³⁵ As Grøn sums up: “In short, anxiety (meaning that a person can be anxious and referring to the experience that he has in anxiety) reveals that an individual is a self that is not automatically himself, but first has to become himself.” Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, 46.

²³⁶ CA, 51 / SKS 4, 356: “*forstaaer ethvert Menneske ene og alene ved sig selv*”.

²³⁷ CA, 28 / SKS 4, 334-335.

Haufniensis links this simultaneousness of being an individual and the whole race to language: God's words speak to Adam as an individual and as the whole human race.²³⁸ Relating to this contradiction is the task of the individual as a human being:

At every moment, the individual is both himself and the race [*sig selv og Slægten*]. This is man's perfection viewed as a state. It is also a contradiction, but a contradiction is always the expression of a task, and a task is a movement, but a movement that as a task is the same as that to which the task is directed is a historical movement. Hence the individual has a history.²³⁹

It is this tension of being an individual and the race that Johannes de Silentio picks up in *Fear and Trembling*. The task that de Silentio narrates and struggles with is that of relating to both: the individual meaning of the sacrifice for Abraham and the ethical demands that the sacrifice implies. His discussion of giving individual meaning in the suspension of the universal is an attempt to understand and at the same time, uphold Abraham's anxiety. Fear and trembling means contrasting an outspoken universally understandable ethical problem with Abraham's silence while acting out the divine demand of the sacrifice. This silence evokes the ambiguity that will reintroduce anxiety.

3.6.5 *Anxiety in FT: Moving Towards the Ambiguity of the Ground*

In *FT*, Johannes de Silentio portrays Abraham's ascent to Mount Moria as a return to the abyss of anxiety in faith. The path is marked as a reawakening of ambiguity in anxiety. Johannes quest is to understand Abraham,²⁴⁰ and *FT* aims for an education in and towards *anxiety and trembling*, as de Silentio writes:

When the tried and tested oldster approached his end, had fought the good fight and kept the faith, his heart was still young enough not to have forgotten the anxiety and trembling that disciplined the youth, that the adult learned to control, but that no

²³⁸ Ricoeur puts this in the contrast of singularity and discourse: "With Kierkegaard, we must always return to this confession: I am not absolute discourse. Singularity is always reborn at the margin of discourse. Therefore, another discourse is required, one that takes into account and speaks of it." (Ricoeur, "Two Encounters with Kierkegaard: Kierkegaard and evil. Doing Philosophy after Kierkegaard," 339)

²³⁹ *CA*, 28 / *SKS* 4, 335.

²⁴⁰ *FT*, 14 / *SKS* 4, 111.

man outgrows – except to the extent that he succeeds in going further as early as possible.²⁴¹

What de Silentio strives against is forgetting the “fear and trembling”. Language becomes an expression for the task to be oneself and the race. Language and freedom are linked because like God’s words to Adam, the ambiguity of language evokes the ambiguity of freedom. Consequently, de Silentio, the poet, attempts to write about his hero, Abraham, and thereby keep alive the contradiction between individuality and the universal that is the task to become a self:

Or, rather, does it not need an honest earnestness [*redelig Alvor*] that fearlessly and incorruptibly points to the tasks [*Opgaverne*], an honest earnestness that lovingly maintains the tasks, that does not disquiet [*ængster*] people into wanting to attain the highest too hastily but keeps the tasks young and beautiful and lovely to look at, inviting to all and yet also difficult and inspiring to the noble-minded (for the noble nature is inspired only by the difficult)?²⁴²

The subtitle of *FT* is “Dialectical lyric” indicating that dialectics and poetry do not give the solution but are the *method*. Through dialectics, the contradiction will be conjured up, but it will only come alive in anxiety. The poetry in *FT* evokes anxiety by the ambiguity of language. It is in anxiety - not in reflection - that these poetic individualities bring something to light. As de Silentio says:

Before proceeding to the story of Abraham, I shall summon a pair of poetic individualities. With the power of dialectics, I shall hold them at the apex, and by disciplining them with despair, I may prevent them from standing still, so that in their anxiety they may possibly be able to bring something or other to light.²⁴³

Following de Silentio, this analysis will look at the depiction of the humble person to bring to light the path towards humility as a return to the ambiguity of freedom in the abyss.

²⁴¹ *FT*, 7 / *SKS*, 4, 102-103. Note that de Silentio speaks of anxiety and trembling” not of “fear”. “Fear” as a form of being afraid of something concrete does not have the ambiguity of anxiety, as Haufniensis points out himself, see *CA*, 42 / *SKS* 4, 347-348: “The concept of anxiety is almost never treated in psychology. Therefore, I must point out that it is altogether different from fear and similar concept that refer to something definite, whereas anxiety is freedom’s actuality as the possibility of possibility. For this reason, anxiety is not found in the beast, precisely because by nature the beast is not qualified as spirit.”

²⁴² *FT*, 121 / *SKS* 4, 208.

²⁴³ *FT*, 88 / *SKS* 4, 178.

4 Humility in Meister Eckhart's German Works

4.1 Introducing Humility as Received Activity

The first figure that we will look at is Meister Eckhart's depiction of the humble person as the truly human being. The analysis of Eckhart's concept of humility will introduce the idea of being and becoming in and through dependence on another. The focus shifts from humiliation through another to humility as receiving from another. So that Eckhart's humble person shows how to be in dependence and the dynamical relationship in humility between God and the humble soul describes how to be in movement while depending on another. Dependence in this concept of humility is not a hindering aspect but an enabling one, instead of passivity in dependence, Eckhart speaks of receptivity in humility.

Written in 13th and beginning of 14th century Eckhart's concept of humility is interesting because it combines the debate about activity and passivity in the theoretical discussions conducted in Latin at the universities with the practice of preaching in German to an audience of varied background. This already marks the importance of humility as a union of theory and practice. In his sermons, Eckhart elaborates his idea of the union of the soul and God. He understands this union to be oneness of being. The theological gravity of this understanding of unity comes to light if one considers Eckhart's conclusion from this unity: he claims that the humble soul and God are one being and thus are the same. Consequently, the humble soul is not only son of God, but also the father. Investigating Eckhart's concept of humility, therefore, is not only an investigation of human humility but also of God's being in the unity with the humble soul.

Before unfolding the consequences for this union, the following will consider Eckhart's understanding of humility as a way of receiving God's being in the soul. Humility in Eckhart's understanding has little to do with a belittling of oneself. Rather, humility describes an annihilation of self in the understanding of "releasement" ("*Gelassenheit*"), that Eckhart is famous for, which means a letting go of self and anything of one's own. Eckhart's path of letting go of the outer is a way of turning towards the inner. This highlights another aspect of Eckhart's ontology: the innermost part of the soul is not

only created by God but receives God's being. A human being's true being is God's being. This is what Eckhart sometimes calls the "soul's spark" ("*Seelenfünklein*"). God's being is, therefore, in every human being. When Eckhart claims that the human being has to turn inward, this means that the human being in inwardness is his or her true being in God's being.

However, following Augustine, Eckhart argues that humankind is not only an inner human being but also an outer. The outer for Eckhart is anything that is not God's being. This includes not only mundane distractions like success or material gain but also perceptions, images and ambitions. Most importantly, it is the human will that makes the human person turn away from God and towards the outer. Eckhart's drastic view on inwardness is not that one needs to turn one's will towards God but that one has to give up on one's will altogether. This is what Eckhart describes with the notion of detachment ("*abgescheidenheit*"). When Eckhart writes that one is to become nothing, he means one is to be no-thing. This nothingness in detachment in Eckhart's thinking connects back to God's being. As no-thing one is *nothing other* than God's being. Humility describes this way of becoming nothing. Moreover, humility is a way of becoming nothing and receiving everything because in humility the human being receives God's being. Eckhart phrases this in the image of humanity as humus as the soil that receives from God in humility. This idea of humanity refers to the idea of the human being as receiving God's being. To be truly human means to receive God's being as *humus* in humility. For Eckhart to return to true humanity is to receive God's being in humility. However, Eckhart does not stop at the idea of humility as *humus*. As a human being, the humble person has free will. This ability is not lost in humility. Humility describes not an ascetic renouncing but a willful receiving which means that the humble person not only receives as "humus" but in humility brings forth God's works. This is phrased in Eckhart's term of fruitfulness. Fruitfulness expresses the difference between passivity and receptivity. This difference lies in the human ability to choose. Another metaphor that Eckhart uses to express this is that of a servant and a friend. The servant receives God's will as an order. The friend works God's works not for an outward reason but freely out of love for God. Humility thus connects love with human freedom in receptivity. Receiving God's being in humility means that the

humble person's works are God's works. The difference between humus and fruitfulness is one of God's potential being in the humble soul and God's working through the soul in humility. Humility is received activity.

Eckhart's concept of humility can show the potential that lies in accepting dependence on another and thereby receiving from another. To begin, this investigation will turn towards the importance of humility for Eckhart's anthropology. This will show that the task of humanity in humility is not to be active but to be receptive. In receiving God's being in the ground of humility, Eckhart describes a union of the humble soul and God. This is a unity without distinction, characterized by oneness. Receiving being in God, the humble person enters the dynamics of love in the Trinity. In love, the humble person's works are God's works. Moreover, this will show humility to describe a form of inward being and outward becoming. This will lead to the concept of received activity in Eckhart's concept of humility.

4.2 Humility as the Task of Humanity

In his anthropology, Eckhart uses humility to describe humanity. In his commentary on John, Eckhart states a connection of the Latin words *homo*, *humus* and *humilitas*: "Mind: man is called 'homo' in accordance to 'humus,' *humilitas* is also deducted from this."²⁴⁴ This shows how important humility is for Eckhart's understanding of humanity and its relation to God. In *The Nobleman*, he writes:

'Man' [*Mensche*] in the proper meaning of his name in Latin means in one sense one who bows and submits himself wholly to God, all that he is and all that is his, looking upward to God, and not his possessions which he knows to be behind him, below him, and beside him. This is perfect and genuine humility [*demüeticheit*]: the name comes from the earth [*erden*].²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ "*Homo*. Nota: homo ab humo dicitur et ab humo humilitas." In Ioh, n.318 (LW 3: 265. 4-5), translation mine, cf. Kern, "Der Demütige ist der Vernünftige," 328; Eckhart follows a tradition of representing humility in relation to humus, cf. Negri, "Zur Demut beim Lehren und Lernen," 107.

²⁴⁵ *Nobleman*, 561, DW 5:115.20-24. This interpretation will rely heavily on this statement. The translation of "Mensch" into English the gender neutral "human being" does not convey the connotation of "mankind." This analysis tries to avoid gender bias and will, therefore, try to keep the neutral meaning of "Mensch." However, sometimes the meaning of Eckhart's statements gets blurred, if one replaces "Mensch" with the English "person" or "human being." Therefore, it is unavoidable at times to use the term "man" in order to keep the connotation of one specimen of mankind. In those occasions, this is only due to meaning and not meant to limit "Mensch" to "man."

In addition, Eckhart continues his commentary on John “[...], whoever wants to come to God, must be humble.”²⁴⁶ Freimut Löser concludes that to become humble is the most important task of human existence. In fact, to be human in the true sense means to *be* humble.²⁴⁷ Nonetheless, in *On Detachment*²⁴⁸ Eckhart considers detachment, not humility, the highest virtue. He argues as follows:

The masters also extol humility above many other virtues. But I extol detachment above humility for this reason: humility can exist without detachment, but perfect detachment cannot exist without perfect humility, for perfect humility ends in the destruction of self [*vernichten sîn selbes*]. Now detachment comes so close to nothing, that between perfect detachment and nothing no thing can exist. Therefore, perfect detachment cannot be without humility. But two virtues are always better than one.²⁴⁹

This already indicates the difference between humility and detachment. Detachment stands higher than humility because it includes humility. But detachment cannot exist without humility. In stating that “humility ends in the destruction of self,” Eckhart implies that it has a direction and an end, which means humility, in contrast to detachment, is a movement. Detachment does not relate to anything. Humility relates to God and the creatures. Humility means relating to others and putting oneself below them.²⁵⁰ This movement down ends with self-destruction. Only this self-destruction can enable detachment. Humility, therefore, is the way to detachment.²⁵¹ The earthliness of man as humility is brought up in the “master metaphor”²⁵² of the “ground”.

²⁴⁶ “[...] Debet ergo humilis esse qui ad deum vult venire.” In Ioh, n.318 (LW 3: 265. 4-5), translation mine. cf. Kern, “Der Demütige ist der Vernünftige,” 328.

²⁴⁷ Löser, “Maître Eckhart et l’humilité,” 41-62, 54.

²⁴⁸ I follow Enders in assuming the authenticity of *On Detachment*, cf. Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*, 99–100. On the question of authenticity of *On Detachment* see also Waldschütz, *Meister Eckhart*, Bd. 71, 196-97; Quint, DW 5, 392-399.

²⁴⁹ *On Detachment*, 567, DW 5:404.8-405.6.

²⁵⁰ “Ein vollkommen demütiger Mensch geht aus sich selbst heraus auf die Kreaturen zu, denn er neigt oder beugt sich selbst unter alle Kreaturen, während die Abgeschiedenheit vollkommen in sich selbst, d.h. beziehungslos bleibt zu allen Kreaturen.” Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*, 113; see also Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*, 114–15.

²⁵¹ Cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 87–99. Schoeller Reisch claims that there is no clear line between the end of humility and the beginning of detachment. Furthermore, she sees detachment rather than emphasizing humility as a movement as the here presented reading does. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 94; for an elaborate analysis of detachment, see Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*.

²⁵² McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 41.

“He raised his eyes up from below,” from the true ground [*rehtem grunde*] of profoundest humility [*nidersten dêmout*]. Just as the power of heaven works never so effectively, and in no element, as in the ground of earth, although it is the lowest, for here it has the greatest opportunity to work, so too God works most in a humble heart, for He has the greatest opportunity to work therein, and finds His like most therein. He thus teaches us to enter into the ground of true humility [*in unsern grunt rehter dêmüeticheit*] and true nakedness [*rehter blôzheit*], to cast off everything that we do not have by nature (which is sin and defect), and also whatever we have by nature that is born of attachment [*an aller eigenschaft*].²⁵³

This quote explicitly names humility as a “casting off” of everything that is not the “true nature.” The true nature of man is in the ground of true humility. In humility, the ground is always in relation to another, either in casting off or in receiving from. Eckhart’s understanding of man as earth, therefore, entails an active and a passive side of “homo.”²⁵⁴ Consequently, there are two movements in humility: first, the casting off of anything creaturely or self-ish; second, knowing oneself in the ground, in which one receives God and is worked on by God.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Sermon 54b, 250, DW 2:565.6-13.

²⁵⁴ Sermon 44, 145, DW 2: 345.4-347.5: “Homo means as much as ‘what is perfect,’ and ‘lacking nothing.’ Homo ‘a man’ means ‘he who is of earth,’ and signifies humility. The earth is the basest element and lies in the middle, and is entirely surrounded by heaven and is fully exposed to the influence of heaven. Whatever heaven performs and pours forth is received in the middle, in the ground of earth. [...] If a man were one like this and would cast himself into the ground of humility [*grunt der dêmüeticheit*], he would there be watered with grace”; Sermon 49, 439, DW 2: 450.5-451.1.: “That is true humility, that a man [*mensche*] should concern himself with nothing of that which he is - being by nature something created out of nothing-whether by doing or leaving undone, but wait upon the light of grace. The knowing what to do and to leave undone is true humility of nature. Humility of spirit consists of this, that a man no more accepts nor lays claim to all the good that God ever does to him than he did when he was not.” Cf. Kern, “Der Demütige ist der Vernünftige,” 339: “Eckhart unterscheidet zwischen Demut der Natur und Demut der Gnade. Jene ist durch Besonnenheit im Tun und Lassen gekennzeichnet. Die Demut der Natur beinhaltet die Einsicht des Menschen, sich selbst als ein aus dem Nichts geschaffenes Wesen zu verstehen, das sich naturhaft nicht selbst propriiert, und dazu der Erkenntnis der Hilfe und Hoffnung der Gnade bedarf.”

²⁵⁵ There have been a few recent publications on Eckhart and humility. Wojtulewicz (Wojtulewicz, “Humility and the power of God in the Parisian Questions of Meister Eckhart,”) and Löser (Löser, “Maître Eckhart et l’humilité”) focus on humility as a form of self-abandonment which will be the starting point of this analysis. Wojtulewicz thereby focuses on the Parisian Questions, Löser on the German works. This thesis will include Eckhart’s Latin works but will focus on the German works. This is mostly due to the broader theme of the complete thesis that is a comparison of the vernacular works of Hadewijch and Kierkegaard who both made strong points on writing in the vernacular. Kern (Kern, “Der Demütige ist der Vernünftige,”) focuses on the Latin works and the epistemological consequences of Eckhart’s understanding of the humble person as the rational person. His emphasis lies more on the humble person’s ability to know herself through humility. Finally, Schoeller Reisch (Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*) has written the most in depth analysis of humility in Eckhart in relation to Jakob Böhme and Friedrich Nietzsche. Since the number of quotes on humility in Eckhart’s writings are limited, the present thesis refers to the same or similar quotations from Eckhart’s texts. Some conclusions from these quotations are consequently similar. However, the structure of the here presented thesis and Schoeller Reisch’s work is different and therefore, the theses come to different conclusions

4.3 Becoming Nothing in Humility

The first step of humility is self-destruction.²⁵⁶ This means that humility is stripping off of anything that does not belong to the true nature of man. The self-destruction in humility shares the process of self-annihilation and detachment that Eckhart describes in his concept of poverty in Sermon 52. In Sermon 74, he links poverty to humility. Eckhart names poverty as the first virtue of man. The second virtue is humility as a “naughting and rejecting of self”²⁵⁷ The process of naughting and Eckhart’s term of “self-destruction” do not mean a negation of self but an annihilation.²⁵⁸ Humility as a letting go of attachment.²⁵⁹ Eckhart introduces the metaphor of the “ground of

and stress different aspects of Eckhart’s concept of humility. Schoeller Reisch takes receptivity as presented in Eckhart’s imagery of high and low as a starting point. This thesis starts with humility as self-destruction and then turns to receptivity in the ground of humility. Furthermore, Schoeller Reisch draws on Eckhart’s concept of God as a God of revelation and Eckhart’s Parisian questions (*deus intellectus est*). Consequently, her reading concentrates on humility as a way of receiving understanding in union with God. She highlights suffering as the humble person’s way to be within the Trinity. The present reading, in contrast, even though not contradicting Schoeller Reisch’s analysis of God as being and intellect, highlights the importance of love in the dynamics of the Trinity. It is, then, freedom and love in humility that enable the unity of the soul and God. From this emphasis, this reading can bring out a different conclusion than the one Schoeller Reisch arrives at, namely that humility describes a disposition to live without a why. This interpretation then draws a clearer line between detachment and humility, because it is exactly for humility’s ability to link the inner and the outer through love that this analysis turns to Eckhart’s concept of humility. Even though Schoeller Reisch also points out the importance of love, she stresses the importance of suffering more, cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 104–14.

²⁵⁶ Schoeller-Reisch first approaches humility as a unifying concept, which she then relates to humility as receptivity and the concept of God as giving, then she turns to humility as a path to “Selbstlosigkeit.” Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 46-87. This reading, however, takes the path as a starting point.

²⁵⁷ Sermon 74, 374, DW 1,3: 275.7: “vernichtigkeit vnd verworffenheit sein selbs”; Schoeller Reisch consequently draws a connection between detachment and Eckhart’s concept of poverty, cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 96.

²⁵⁸ Cf. Wojtulewicz, “Humility and the power of God in the Parisian Questions of Meister Eckhart,” 107; Sermon 12, 298, DW 1: 201.9-202.2: “That man who is established thus in God’s love must be dead to self and all created things, paying as little regard to himself as to one who is a thousand miles away. That man abides in likeness and abides in unity in full equality, and no unlikeness enters into him. This man must have abandoned self and all this world.” Löser, therefore, sees humility as the incarnation of self-abandonment, cf. Löser, “Maître Eckhart et l’humilité.” 41-62, 51.

²⁵⁹ Sermon 4, 227, DW 1:73.6-12: “Now consider the words ‘They come from above.’ As I have clearly stated before, whoever would receive from above must be below in true humility [*muz von nôt unden sîn in rehter dêmüeticheit*]. Know this truly: he who is not fully below obtains and receives nothing, however small. If you have an eye to yourself or to any thing or person, you are not right under and will get nothing, but if you are right under, you will receive fully and perfectly.” Schoeller-Reisch relates to this more in her discussion of humility in relation to hierarchies and structures of “lower” and “higher”. She highlights that Eckhart’s understanding of “down” and “under” does not refer to a divine superiority or hierarchy. Instead, she stresses that the bending down of the humble person is not bending before and under God but bending and leaving behind of one’s own self, cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 57. Furthermore, Schoeller-Reisch phrases this more in

humility.”²⁶⁰ One enters into the ground of humility as letting go of anything that is not “humus.” Entering is not a step forward but a *return* to human nature without fault. It is stripping off anything attached to self. In this nakedness, the true nature of “homo” can emerge: “The more nakedness there is, the more capacity and humility, and the more union of matter and form, of the active and passive, and to the more essential act, which is being,”²⁶¹ Eckhart writes in his commentary on Genesis. Self-destruction then leads to a way of being. In becoming nothing, “homo” is in the “ground of humility”. Humility is a way of *being*, not doing:

[...] therefore our Lord said, “He who desires to be the greatest, let him be the least among you” (Mark 9:34). He who would become this must become that [*Wer dāz wil wesen, der sol dīz werden*]. This being [*wesen*] is found only in that becoming [*werdenne*]. He who becomes least is truly the greatest; but he who has become least is truly now the very greatest. Thus the word of the evangelist is made true and fulfilled: “He that humbles [*wer sich nidert*] himself shall be exalted.” For our whole being depends on nothing but a becoming-nothing [*niht-werdenne*].²⁶²

Rather than becoming something, Eckhart aims at becoming nothing. “Destruction is not ‘something,’ but is a privation - an absence of something. [accidens as privation],” as Wojtulewicz says.²⁶³ In becoming nothing through going out of itself, the soul gains the possibility to gain everything:²⁶⁴

Now we read in one Gospel that Christ said, “None can be my disciple unless he follows after me” (Luke 14:27) and unless he has abandoned self and kept nothing for himself [*sich selber gelassen vnd hab im niht behalten*]; and he has all things, for to have nothing is to have all things. But with one’s desire and one’s heart [*mit begerung vnd mit hertzen*] to through oneself under God, and to place one’s will entirely in God’s will and to have no regard for created things. Whoever has gone out of himself thus, will truly be given back to himself again [*der alsus us gegangen war sin selbes, der sol im selber eigenlich wider geben werden*].²⁶⁵

terms of “Ownership” and “Ownership of one self”, cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 89.

²⁶⁰ Sermon 54b, 250; DW 2:565.6-13: “He thus teaches us to enter into the ground of true humility [*in unsern grunt rehter dēmüeticheit*] and true nakedness [*rehter blözheit*], to cast off everything that we do not have by nature (which is sin and defect), and also whatever we have by nature that is born of attachment [*an aller eigenschaft*].”

²⁶¹ “Unde quanto maior est nuditas, tanto maior est capacitas et humilitas, et maior unio materiae et formae, activi et passivi, et ad essentialiorem actum, qui est esse.” In Gen. nn. 124 (LW I, 589,9-11), translation mine. On *nuditas* as a condition for receptivity in the Latin works of Eckhart, see Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel*, Bd. 59, 348; 348–352.

²⁶² Instructions, 518, DW 5: 294. 3-8.

²⁶³ Wojtulewicz, “Humility and the power of God in the Parisian Questions of Meister Eckhart,” 107.

²⁶⁴ cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 90–91: “Daraus entsteht die buchstäbliche Relevanz der Ent-äusserung: das Selbst muss, um sich in den Grundbezug mit dem so gearteten ‘zuinnersten’ Göttlichen stellen zu können, seine Beziehungsweise ent-äussern.”

²⁶⁵ Sermon 15, 270, DW 1: 244.5-11, translation modified; “Dic quod humilitas propriissima est dispositio omnis gratiae.” Sermon XXII n.206 (LW IV: 191. 10-11).

4.4 Humility as a Movement of Ascent through Descent

The metaphor of the “ground of humility” emphasizes a descending movement in humility. Following the tradition of Dionysius and Bernhard of Clairvaux, humility is a heavenly ladder, *scala caelestis*, in a double meaning: In humility, God came down to man, but in humility, man can also come to God.²⁶⁶ This shows the duality of the movement of descent as an ascent in humility.²⁶⁷ More precisely, it is a movement of lowering down and rising up. So that the “highest height of the highness lies in the deepest ground of humility [*hoehste hoehe der hôcheit liget in dem tiefen grunde der dêmüeticheit*],” as Eckhart writes.²⁶⁸ But the idea of lowliness and submission is only a starting point for Eckhart’s concept of humility.²⁶⁹ As he turns lowliness into the highest point, the soul turns inward:

God’s height lies in my lowliness: when I humbled myself [*mych nederde*], God would be exalted. Jerusalem shall be exalted, says scripture and the prophet. But I thought last night that God should be brought down, not absolutely but inwardly. This phrase of ‘God brought down’ pleased me so much that I wrote it in my book. This means God is brought down, not absolutely but inwardly [*neit ey ale meir ey in*], that we may be raised up. What was above has become inward [*dat ouen was, dat wart in*]. You must be internalized [*geinneget*], from yourself and within yourself, so that He is in you. It is not that we should take anything from what is above us, but we should take it into ourselves, and take it from ourselves, and take it from ourselves into ourselves.²⁷⁰

For Eckhart, the movement of humility is not only a way up but also a way inwards. Humility is not only a moment of letting go of self, but also of bringing God down as bringing him inwards. God is brought down *into* the soul in humility.²⁷¹ Moreover, in the soul’s ground lies God’s highest, so that turning inward is a movement towards one’s own ground and God’s ground:

²⁶⁶ In Ioh, n.318 (LW 3: 265. 4-5); cf. Kern, “Der Demütige ist der Vernünftige”, 357; For a general introduction of how humility is depicted as an ascent in the middle ages, see Schneider, “Humilitas in mystagogischen Diagrammen des Mittelalters;” Bernhard of Clairvaux uses a similar structure: Bernhard von Clairvaux, “De Gradibus Humilitatis et Superbiae,” in *Sämtliche Werke: lateinisch-deutsch*, ed. Gerhard B. Winkler II (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1992).

²⁶⁷ Schoeller Reisch points out that Eckhart’s imagery in comparison with the traditional hierarchy of humility between God and man is dynamic fluent one, cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 67.

²⁶⁸ Instructions, 517, DW 5:293.6; cf. Kern, “Der Demütige ist der Vernünftige,” 337.

²⁶⁹ Sermon 54b, 250, DW 2: 564.8-11: “Thus he instructs us that when we would pray, we should first descend in true downcast humility [*verworfener dêmüeticheit*] beneath all creatures. Only then should we ascend before the throne of wisdom, and as far as we have descended, so far shall we be granted what we have prayed for.”

²⁷⁰ Sermon 14, 268, DW 1:233.5-11.

²⁷¹ Instructions, 517-518, DW 5: 292.12-294.1; cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 64: “D. h. Gott holt den Demütigen nicht aus sich heraus zu sich aus einem

For whoever would enter God's ground [*grunt*], His inmost part [*innerste*], must first enter his own ground [*sinen eigenen grunt*], his inmost part, for none can know God who does not first know himself [*sich selbst erkennen*]. He must enter into his lowest and into God's inmost part, and must enter into his first and his highest, for there everything comes together that God can perform. Whatever is highest in the soul is in the lowest, for it is the innermost, just as if one were to squeeze some round object, so that the highest became the lowest.²⁷²

Through turning towards the inmost and entering one's own ground, one enters God's ground. Consequently, humility is a form of gaining self-knowledge, but also a form of gaining knowledge of God.²⁷³ So that in the lowest ground of the soul lies the highest in the innermost of the soul. For God is in the ground of the soul:²⁷⁴

God is in all things; but as God is divine and intelligible, so God is nowhere so truly as in the soul, [...], in the inmost soul, in the summit of the soul. And when I say the inmost, I mean the highest, and when I say the highest, I mean the inmost part of the soul. In the inmost and the highest part of the soul - there I mean them both together in one.²⁷⁵

In returning to human nature by becoming nothing as "homo," the ground of humility as the inmost part of the soul becomes the ground of the soul. In the ground of the soul, the soul's inmost being is God's being. God is not above but *in* the soul's ground. In the deepest part of the soul, becoming "homo" means a turning inward. Turning inward, the humble person discovers the true nature of "homo," that is God's being in the ground of the soul.²⁷⁶

demütigen 'Unten' in ein göttliches 'oben', sondern in der Demut ist der Mensch aus sich heraus in Gott gesetzt, zugleich aber auch Gott aus seiner unendlichen Entfernung heraus in den Menschen." see also: Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 68.

²⁷² Sermon 54b, 250, DW 1: 565.13-566.6.

²⁷³ cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 79.

²⁷⁴ cf. Kobusch, "Mystik als Metaphysik des Inneren," 32-33; Sermon 14, DW 1: 237.9-12: "What was above has become inward. You must be internalized [*geinneget*], from yourself and within yourself, so that He is in you. It is not that we should take anything from what is above us, but we should take it into ourselves, and take it from ourselves, and take it from ourselves into ourselves."

²⁷⁵ Sermon 30, 133, DW 2: 94.9 - 95.5.

²⁷⁶ As Eckhart writes, "*Homo* means a man [*mentsch*] to whom substance has been added, giving him being, life, and rational being. A rational man is one who understands himself rationally, and is, in himself, detached from all matter and form. The more he is detached from all things and turned in on himself, the more clearly and rationally he knows all things within himself without turning outward, the more he is a man." Sermon 15, 272, DW 1: 250.4-10; See Speer, "Weisheit bei Augustinus und Meister Eckhart," 14-15: "Stärker noch als Augustinus bindet Eckhart diese epistemische Grundannahme in ein umfassendes *studium sapientiae* ein, das dem inneren Menschen gilt, der in der Rückwendung auf sich selbst das finden soll, was er seiner Natur nach ist."

4.5 Humility and the Unity of God and the Soul in the Ground

The next sections will focus on the relationship between the humble soul and the divine being. They will highlight the important difference between passivity and receptivity in humility. Moreover, they will explore a concept of love in a union that presents a way of thinking equality in dependence and the dynamics of continuous movement in oneness. Meister Eckhart's concept of humility depicts a way of being dependent and yet free in love, which marks a change of perspective on knowing oneself as dependent. Love also leads the way to be active through another in humility.

4.5.1 *Receiving in the Ground of Humility*

The idea that the soul can bring down God could imply that humility is a human virtue disconnected from God. Eckhart stresses, however, that perfect humility is only to be reached through God:

[...] one work yet truly and genuinely belongs to him [man], and that is the destruction of self. But this naughting and shrinking of self is never so great but it lacks something unless God Himself completes it in us. Only then is humility sufficient, when God humbles a man with that man, and only then is that man, and the virtue, perfected, and not before [*Danne ist diu dêmüeticheit allerêrst genuoc volkomen, als got den menschen dêmüetiget mit dem menschen selber, und dâ aleine genüeget den menschen und ouch der tugent und niht ê*].²⁷⁷

Perfection is only in the unity of the self-humbling man and being humbled by God. This highlights an active and passive component in humility. Self-annihilation is the beginning, but only perfected by God. So that the self-annihilation introduces being humbled by God in the ground. This implies a transformation through humility:

How does God destroy a man with himself [*mit im selber vernichten*]? It would seem that the destruction of man would be his exaltation by God, for the Gospel says, "He that humbles himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23: 12, Luke 14: 11). Answer: Yes and no. He must humble himself, and this cannot be done sufficiently unless God does it: and he shall be exalted, not that the humbling is one thing and the exalting another, but the highest height of exaltation lies in the deep ground of humility [*grunde der dêmüeticheit*]. For the deeper and lower the ground, the higher and more immeasurable the exaltation and the height. The deeper the well, the higher it is; height and depth are one.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Instructions, 517, DW 5: 292. 6-11.

²⁷⁸ Instructions, 517-518, DW 5: 292.12-294.1; Kern refers to the humiliation of the soul by God. He sees in the work of God a perfection of annihilating the soul: "Ein Werk ist 'eovernichten sin selbes'. Durch das Werk der ausgebrochenen Innerlichkeit wird mein eigenes, in sich selbst verrannt, in sich bleibende, faule und unfruchtbare Selbst vernichtet. Jeder Akt der aus der Innerlichkeit herausbrechenden Wirklichkeit, der Liebe ist

Through humility Eckhart, therefore, introduces the idea of oneness as a union of opposing poles. Height and depth are not expressions of distance, but a process of widening and expansion of *one* ground. The humility of the humble person is a preparation of being humbled by God. Humility then is not only submission on the human side, but also a giving or flowing out on God's side.²⁷⁹ This highlights the importance of humility as an ability of receptivity through self-annihilation. As Eckhart writes in Sermon 81:

[...] he pours himself into the soul in perfect measure, as she has broken through [*ûzgebrochen*] in humility and expanded [*sich gewîtet hât*] her receptivity [*ze enpfâhene*]. I am sure of this: if my soul were as prepared, and if God could find as much room therein as in the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ. He would fill her as perfectly with "this flood": for the Holy Ghost cannot hold back, but must flow in everywhere where he finds room, and to the extent that he finds room.²⁸⁰

Humility is a preparation of receptiveness and openness for God. Eckhart's use of humility as humanity, "homo" and "humus," emphasizes the ability of the humble man to receive God as the earth receives from heaven:

Homo in yet another sense means 'moisture,' [*viuhticheit*] and signifies 'he who is watered with grace,' meaning that the humble man [*dêmüetige mensche*] receives at once the influx of grace. In this inflowing of grace the light of intellect [*vernünffticheit*] climbs up straightway, and there God shines with unquenchable light.²⁸¹

The movement of receiving in the depth is a rising up. The metaphor of God flowing out implies the humble person's ability to take in. Humility turns "humus" into "grunt." Eckhart draws on the imagery of a vessel that is filled in his description of humility:

Vernichten dieses verrannten und gefährlichen Selbst." Kern, *Die Anthropologie des Meister Eckhart*, 108–9. Kern's limitation of God's Love to annihilation does not capture the notion of freedom on the soul's side nor does it refer to the idea of flowing out that is essential to Eckhart's imagery of giving birth in the oneness as will be shown below.

²⁷⁹ Schoeller Reisch comments: "Wenn die Demut nämlich ein Grundgeschehen offenbart, in dem Mensch und Gott nicht gesondert sind, so ergibt sich das volle Bild - auch von der Situation dessen, der im undemütigen Zustand noch in vermeintlicher Trennung zum Gottesgeschehen lebt - dennoch erst im Verlauf auf den "Blickwinkel der Ewigkeit", in der menschliches und göttliches Sein im Zusammenhang stehen. Das Dilemma, das sich für den Menschen in seinem Unterfangen, demütig zu werden, ergibt, ist demnach in einen weiteren Kontext zu stellen, nämlich in den Kontext eines Gesamtgeschehens, in dem der Mensch je schon eingebunden ist. In einfachen Worten gesagt: Das Projekt, demütig zu werden, lastet sozusagen nicht auf menschlichen Schultern allein. [...] [D]as Projekt der Demut [muss] explizit durch Gott vollendet sein." Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 103.

²⁸⁰ Sermon 81, 322, DW 3: 395.10-396.1-2.

²⁸¹ Sermon 44, 145. DW 2:346.2-6. In his Latin works, Eckhart also links heaven and earth with activity and passivity, cf. *Liber Parabolarum* Genesis n.26 (LW I, II: 355. 14-18); this goes in line with Eckhart's choice of "homo" as "humus."

I have sometimes said that a man standing up is more receptive [*enpfenclîcher*] to God. But now I say something different: that when seated one can receive with more true humility than standing, just as I said the day before yesterday that heaven can only work in the ground of the earth [*erde*]. Thus, God cannot work except in the ground of humility [*grunde der dêmuot*], for the deeper we are in humility, the more receptive to God. Our masters say if a man took a cup and put it under the ground, it could hold more than if it stood on the ground: even if it were so little that one could scarcely notice it, yet it would be something. The more a man is sunk in the ground of true humility, the more he is sunk in the ground of divine being.²⁸²

This quote evokes Eckhart's Sermon 52 and drawing on Sermon 52 can illuminate this imagery.²⁸³ Man is not to become a vessel for divine being, but to *sink into* the ground, into divine being and thereby be nothing but divine being.²⁸⁴ The movement is not to form oneself in the image of the "grunt," it is one of letting go in order to *be* the "grunt." The naughting of humility is not a process of emptying in order to be filled. Humility is to be nothing *but* receiving from God.²⁸⁵ The task of humanity is not to be active but to be receptive.²⁸⁶ Receptivity means actively and willfully allowing passivity on

²⁸² Sermon 55, 204, DW 2:581.2-582.4; Sermon 14, 267, DW 1: 233.4-5: "If you are below and if I were above you, I would have to come down to you, and that is what God does: when you humble yourself [*du dich oitmoedeges*], God comes down from above and enters you."

²⁸³ See Sermon 52, 423, DW 2: 499.9-501.5: "I have often said, and eminent authorities say it too, that a man should be so free of all things and all works, both inward and outward, that he may be a proper abode for God where God can work. Now we shall say something else. If it is the case that a man is free of all creatures, of God and of self, and if it is still the case that God finds a place in him to work, then we declare that as long as this is in that man, he is not poor with the strictest poverty. For it is not God's intention in His works that a man should have a place within himself for God to work in: for poverty of spirit means being so free of God and all His works, that God, if He wishes to work in the soul, is Himself the place where He works - and this He gladly does. For, if he finds a man so poor, then God performs His own work, and the man is passive to God within him, and God is His own place of work, being a worker in Himself. It is just here, in this poverty, that man enters into that eternal essence that once he was, that he is now and evermore shall remain." This also recaptures the image of Mary from the story of Martha and Mary (dealt with in Eckhart's Sermon 86), the humble person is seated and ready to receive.

²⁸⁴ Sermon 28, 131, DW 2: 66.7-11: "If you could naught yourself for an instant, indeed I say less than an instant, you would possess all that this is in itself. But as long as you mind yourself or any thing at all, you know no more of God than my mouth knows of color or my eye of taste: so little do you know or discern what God is."

²⁸⁵ Schoeller Reisch also points this out but stresses that the humble person needs to know himself as receiving from God. "Langsam beginnt zu dämmern, dass wahrscheinlich die Fragestellung eine falsche ist, dass es gar nicht darauf ankommt, was der Demütige empfängt, sondern *dass* er empfängt. D.h. dass der Demütige derjenige ist, der um sein Empfangen weiss, der empfangend *ist*. Der darum weiss, dass alles, was (er) ist, empfangen ist. Dass er sich selbst nichts zuschreiben kann und dass in diesem Sich-selbst-nichts-Zuschreiben zugleich die Möglichkeit liegt, alles, was er dennoch ist, als empfangen zu betrachten." Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 71.

²⁸⁶ Schoeller Reisch highlights the double meaning of the German word "Aufgabe" in the context of humility (meaning giving up and a task), cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 99, see also Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 120.

the human side.²⁸⁷ The task is not to do something in order to become something. The task is to become nothing and receive everything.

This changes the dynamics between the humble soul and God. As Sermon 56 shows, the humble person brings God down. For as the metaphors of fluidity implies, God must give himself to the humble soul:

If I were up here, and said to someone, 'Come up here,' that would be hard for him, but if I said, 'Sit down here,' that would be easy. This is what God does. Whenever a man humbles himself, God is unable to withhold His own goodness; He is obliged to sink Himself, to pour Himself out into that humble man, and to the meanest of all He gives Himself most and gives Himself wholly. What God gives is His being, and His being is His goodness, and His goodness is his love [*minne*].²⁸⁸

In being nothing and receiving God, the soul is nothing but God's being. This is not because the soul becomes like God, but because in the ground of humility, God's ground and the soul's ground become one. As Eckhart writes in Sermon 14:

[...] the humble person [*oitmoedege mynsche*] and God, that is One; [...] that which God works, the humble person works, and that which God is, that is he: one life and one being [*eyn leuen inde eyn wessen*].²⁸⁹

Humility leads to the union of the soul and God in the ground. In humility, man's ground *is* God's ground.²⁹⁰ "[...] in the ground of the soul where God's

²⁸⁷ Connolly phrases this in terms of *intellectus agens* and *possibilis*, Connolly, *Living without Why*, 149. See also: Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 106: "Der Anspruch, welchen der Begriff der Demut an den einzelnen stellt, verändert sich dadurch gravierend: Es kann nun nicht mehr darum gehen, sozusagen von selbst das Selbst aus der Eigenständigkeit in die Gottdurchlässigkeit zu bringen, welcher Ansatz auch für obiges Dilemma verantwortlich zeichnete. Wenn der Demutsbegriff überhaupt noch einen Anspruch an den Menschen stellt, so wäre er wie folgt zu umschreiben: dass der Mensch dem Geschehen, welches Demut bedeutet, Folge leistet - nämlich der als Gottes Werk ausgewiesenen 'Versetzung in Gott.' Der Demutsanspruch würde dann schlussendlich nur auf eines hinauslaufen: dass der Mensch Demut *zulässt*."; Mieth: "Entsprechend der Spiegelontologie strahlt Gott nicht nur in die Seele ein, sondern die Seele wirft die göttlichen Strahlen zurück und hält so den dynamischen Kreislauf der ontologischen Struktur in Bewegung. In Eckharts Lebenslehre heißt das, daß der Mensch die Chance der Empfängnis nutzen muß, um selbst Gott zu Gott wiederzugebären." Mieth, *Die Einheit von Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler*, 154–55;

²⁸⁸ Sermon 22, DW 1: 385.5–11; Sermon 14, 267, DW 1: 233.9–234.1: "He drives her into one corner, and presses his power into her and makes her fruitful. Why? The highest flows into the lowest."; see also Sermon 15, 271, DW 1: 246.17–247.4.

²⁸⁹ Sermon 14, 267–268, DW 1: 235.10–13.

²⁹⁰ Cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 63–64: "Die Demut ist nicht Mittel zum Zweck oder Durchgangsstation zu einer anschließenden Veränderung in oben angedeuteter Weise, sondern in der Demut geschieht ein Identitätswechsel, der im vor-demütigen Zustand unvorstellbar, vor allem maßlos undemütig erschiene: nämlich, dass Menschliches und Göttliches zusammenfällt - Gottes 'Eigen' wird des demütigen Menschen 'Eigen'. D.h. Gott holt den Demütigen nicht aus sich heraus zu sich aus einem demütigen 'Unten' in ein göttliches 'Oben', sondern *in* der Demut ist der Mensch aus sich heraus in Gott gesetzt, zugleich aber auch Gott aus seiner unendlichen Entfernung heraus in den Menschen."

ground and the soul's ground are one ground."²⁹¹ In the ground of humility, man and God become one.²⁹² The soul's inwardness then becomes an inwardness in God:

So is it with the soul that is in right order in the ground of humility [*grunde der dêmiüeticheit*] and that so ascends and is pulled up in the divine power: it never rests, it directly comes to God and touches him unconcealedly, and it stays inward constantly and does not seek the outward and it does neither stand next to God nor by God, but always directly in God in the sincerity of being.²⁹³

In receiving in the ground of humility, the soul stands *in* God. The soul's internalizing of God is God's being in the soul. Humility then is no longer the path towards God but a form of being in God.²⁹⁴

4.5.2 *Equal Love in the Oneness of the Union*

With a comparison of virgin and wife, Eckhart introduces how receptivity enables activity through another in fruitfulness as the following paragraphs will show.

In German Sermon 2, Eckhart uses the imagery of giving birth and pregnancy to portray the union of God and the soul. He differentiates between "virgin" and "wife". Comparing virgin with the state of complete emptiness (nakedness) to receive God,²⁹⁵ he states that a wife stands higher than a virgin with the following reasoning:

If a man were to be ever virginal, he would bear no fruit. If he is to be fruitful, he must be a wife. 'Wife' is the noblest title one can bestow on the soul - far nobler

²⁹¹ Sermon 15, 273, DW 1: 253.6.

²⁹² However, as Speer points out the soul remains dependent on God's being in the unity. Speer, therefore, argues that there is always a difference between the soul and God. "Zwar kann der Seelengrund Gottes Wesen unvermittelt empfangen und sich vollkommen mit ihm vereinen, der Ursprung dieser Vereinigung und die Macht, durch die sie besteht, wurzeln jedoch nicht in der Seele, sondern allein in Gott und seinem Wirken. Somit bleibt im Grunde ein unüberbrückbarer Unterschied zwischen Gott und dem Seelengrund, da dieses Vermögen niemals durch sich selbst seiner Vervollkommenung erreichen kann. Dieses Vermögen kann nur durch Gott mit Gott vereinigt werden, in sich selbst, ohne Gott, vermag es nicht in den Zustand der Vollkommenheit zu gelangen." Speer, "Abditum mentis." 470 cf. Largier, "intellectus in deum ascensus", 442; Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*, 81.

²⁹³ Sermon 54a, DW 2: 553.6-10, my translation; Büchner calls this a "wegloser Weg": "[...] zusammengekommen können wir daher von einem existentiellen oder inkarnatorischen Erkennen sprechen: es führt zur Verkörperung der Wirklichkeit Gottes in der Schöpfung, indem es die Beziehung zu ihm aufnimmt. Die Einung des Menschen mit Gott geschieht also in einem Dreischritt vom unbewußten Sein in Gott über das Bewußtsein hin zum wirklichen Sein in Gott. [...] 'wegloser' Weg." Büchner, *Büchner, Transformation*, Vol. 1, 30.

²⁹⁴ Cf. Sermon 10, 334, DW 1: 162. 4-6.

²⁹⁵ Cf. Mieth, *Die Einheit von Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler*, 152.

than 'virgin.' For a man to receive God within him is good, and in receiving he is virgin. But for God to be fruitful in him is better, for only the fruitfulness [*vruhtbærkeit*] of the gift is the thanks rendered for that gift, and herein the spirit is a wife, whose gratitude is fecundity, bearing Jesus again in God's paternal heart.²⁹⁶

Receptivity is the first step, but from receptivity, fruitfulness is to follow. The imagery of virgin and wife is no coincidence since Eckhart uses the metaphor of giving birth to describe the dynamics of the Trinity.²⁹⁷ This also explains what Eckhart refers to, when he speaks of humbling "man through man." It is through the humility of Christ that man is humbled. The consequence of receiving is that the soul is given the possibility to enter the trinitarian circularity of giving birth.²⁹⁸ The oneness of soul and God does not end at receiving being, but true union means that the soul enters the dynamics of giving birth. Being one with God does not only mean to receive but also to bring forth and enter the Trinity. This shows a different relationship between the soul and God in contrast to the relationship between servant and master:

Whatever pleases God is pleasing to Him in His only-begotten Son: whatever God loves [*minnet*], He loves in His only-begotten Son. So it behooves a man so to live that he is one with the only-begotten Son and he is the only-begotten Son. Between the only-begotten Son and the soul there is no difference [*kein unterscheid*]. Between the servant and his master there can never be equal love [*enwirt niemer minne glîch*]. As long as I am a servant, I am far from the only-begotten Son and unlike him.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Sermon 2, 78, DW 1: 27.3-9.

²⁹⁷ See, e.g.: Sermon 28, 131-132, DW 2:67.1-69; Schoeller Reisch summarizes: "Von wo auch immer man sich Eckharts Gottesbegriff nähert, wird man in ein beziehungshaftes Geschehen gezogen, schlägt die allumfassende göttliche Einheit in (Selbst-)Unterscheidung (in Sohn und Wort) oder die (Selbst-)Unterscheidung in Einheit (Gottesgeburt) um." Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 123; cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 123-24.

²⁹⁸ Sermon 30, 134, DW 2: 96.6-97.3. "All that God works in all the saints, that He works in the inmost part of the soul. The Father bears His son in the inmost part of the soul, and bears you with his only-begotten Son, no less. If I am to be the Son, then I must be Son in the same essence as that in which he is Son, and not otherwise. If I am to be a man, I cannot be a man in the essence of an animal. But if I am to be this man, then I must be this man in this essence." Sermon 10, 338, DW 1: 171.8-11: "If a soul stands in an immediate now [*in einem gegenwertigen nû*], the Father bears in her His only-begotten Son, and in that same birth [*der selben geburt*] the soul is born back into God. It is one birth: as often as she is born back into God, the Father begets His only-begotten Son in her." translation modified. Enders states that the aim of the son's birth is the "Überformung" of mankind: "Diese habituelle Überformung der menschlichen Seele mit den göttlichen Eigenschaften des Sohnes aber ist das von Gott für die vernunftbegabten Geschöpfe intendierte Ziel der Geburt des Sohnes [...]" Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*, 91; Mieth and Kobusch point out the relevance of this ontological circularity for action, cf. Mieth, *Die Einheit von Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler*, 154-55; Kobusch, "Mystik als Metaphysik des Inneren," 33.

²⁹⁹ Sermon 10, 337, DW 1: 168.12-169.6.

Love demands sameness.³⁰⁰ The oneness of the ground does not end at receiving being but demands sameness (“*Gleichheit*”).³⁰¹ Sameness in this sense means that the humble person is fully within the dynamics of the loving Trinity not only as of the son but also as the father.³⁰² “Equal love” means a change from servant to son.³⁰³ Receiving in humility is taking part in the dynamics of God’s works [*wirken*]. Consequently, in the ground of humility, the soul desires this:

And yet the noble and humble man is not satisfied to be born as the only-begotten Son whom the Father has eternally borne, but he wants to be also the Father and to enter into the same equality of eternal paternity and to bear him, from whom I am eternally born. As I said at St. Margaret’s, then God comes into His own [*syne eygen*]. Make yourself over to God [*Eygen dich gode*], then God is your own, as He is His own. What is inborn in me, remains: God never departs from that man, wherever that man turns.³⁰⁴

The humble person has made himself over to God and therefore is God’s own. He no longer is virgin but wife entering the dynamics of the Trinity. The oneness of the union, therefore, changes the relation of the soul and God. Eckhart emphasizes that God cannot refuse himself to the humble man:

Indeed the humble man has no need to pray [*bitten*] for it, for he can command [*gebieten*] Him. For the height of the Godhead [*gothait*] cannot regard it otherwise than in the depths [*tieffen*] of humility, since the humble man and God are one and not two. This humble man has as much power [*also gewaltig*] over God as he has over himself, and all the good that is in all the angels and all the saints is as much his own [*aigen*] as it is God’s own [*aigen*].³⁰⁵

³⁰⁰ Radler points out that love - like knowledge - thereby establishes unity: “Elaborating on an Augustinian theme, Eckhart holds that one becomes what one loves; pure love engenders pure being. In German sermon 38, Eckhart claims that love, like intellect, generates likeness. Thus, if human beings love fragmented and earthly things, they become fragmented and earthly; however, if they love God, they become God.” Radler, “In love I am more God”, 182; see also Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*, 78–79.

³⁰¹ Sermon 10, 339, DW 1: 174.4-5: “Glicheit wirt geminnet. Minne minnet alwege glich; dar umbe sô minnet got den rerechten menschen im selber glich.”

³⁰² Enders describes the dynamics of the Trinity in terms of love: “Vollkommene Gleichheit wie die des innertrinitarischen Sohnes zum Vater führt daher zur vollkommenen Vereinigung beider und damit zur Geburt einer dritten innergöttlichen Person, des Hl. Geistes, der - als die vollkommene Vereinigung von Vater und Sohn - daher die Liebe selbst ist.” Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*, 79. See also Radler, “In love I am more God”, 185; Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 126.

³⁰³ Cf. Steer: “Alle Aussagen der deutschen Predigten laufen darauf hinaus, daß der Sohn Gottes (filius dei) Gott gleich sein kann, sonst niemand. Will der Mensch Gott gleich sein, muß er unweigerlich das Sohnsein Gottes haben.” Steer, “Über die Liebe,” 234.

³⁰⁴ Sermon 14, 268, DW 1: 239.4-9.

³⁰⁵ Sermon 15, 271, DW 1:246.13-16; He also uses the metaphor of light in Sermon 14, 267, DW 1:234. 9-235.3: “This star does not only shine into the sun, it flows through the sun and through all the stars and flows into the earth and makes it fruitful. And it is just the same with a truly humble person who has subjected all creatures to himself and subjects himself to God: God in His goodness does not hold back, but pours Himself out fully into that man: He is compelled to do this and must do it. Now if you want to be high and exalted, then you must be lowly, far from the flow of blood and the flesh, for one root of all sins and defects is

The union changes the position of the humble man. In the humble soul's being nothing but receiving of God, the oneness of God means there is no difference between the two. And yet God and the humble man are not the same, just as the Trinity is one and not the same. It is a unity in distinction.³⁰⁶

It is this understanding of unity in distinction that introduces the difference between servant and master and the union of the humble soul and God by describing the dynamics between the two in terms of love.

4.5.3 *Unity in Distinction: Love and Fruitfulness*

Eckhart phrases the unity in distinction in his concept of love:³⁰⁷

It is the nature of love to arise and flow out of two as a one. One as one is not love; two as two is not love; but two as one must produce natural, willing [*willicliche*], ardent love.³⁰⁸

Eckhart brings together two contradicting aspects: two in one, brings forth love necessarily but this oneness in love is freely willed. This link between love and freedom changes receptivity to fruitfulness.

Fruitfulness is to work [*wirken*] the possibility of equal love in returning God's being in the dynamics of giving birth. Unlike a union of being, the unity of the loving Trinity is not satisfied with the soul's receptivity. With receiving God's love, the soul receives God's will that is to return love.³⁰⁹

concealed and hidden pride, and this leads to nothing but sorrow and woe. But humility is a root of all good, [...]."

³⁰⁶ Sermon 10, 338, DW 1:173.3-7: "The unity is the distinction [*einicheit ist der underscheit*], and the distinction is the unity. The greater the distinction, the greater the unity, for that is distinction without distinction. If there were a thousand Persons, there would still not be more than one unity. When God sees a creature He gives it its being when the soul sees God, it takes its being [*nimet si ir wesen*][...]", translation modified; Sermon 10, 338, DW 1:172, 4-173.1: "Now it is said that there is no greater union than that of the three Persons being one God. Next to this, it is said, there is no greater union than that of God and the soul. When the soul receives a kiss from the Godhead, then she stands in absolute perfection and bliss: then she is embraced by unity. In the first touch with which God touched the soul and continues to touch her as uncreated and uncreatable, there, through God's touch, the soul is as noble as God Himself is."

³⁰⁷ On love in Eckhart see: Radler, "In love I am more God"; Steer, "Über die Liebe,"; on love and the Trinity see Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*, 78-97; cf. Kern, *Die Anthropologie des Meister Eckhart*, 105-11; on the Latin works and love, especially Latin Sermon VI, 1, see Kern, "Gottes Sein ist mein Leben", Vol. 121, 98-116.

³⁰⁸ Divine Comfort, 535, DW 5: 30.15-18.

³⁰⁹ As Schönberger phrases it: "The unity of human beings with God is thus an ontological fact and at the same time a norm. Now it is first and foremost from this fact that the peculiar

Therefore I say, "God is Love," for He loves me with the love with which He loves Himself: and if anyone deprived Him of that, they would deprive Him of His entire Godhead. Though it is true that He loves me with His love, yet I cannot become blessed through that: but I would be blessed by loving Him and be blessed in His love.³¹⁰

The unity of the humble man and God in love, therefore, expresses a change of will. The received oneness in the ground transforms soil into "humus," but only the fruitful ground brings forth God.³¹¹ The potential implied in humus has to be actualized in fruitfulness as freely working in the loving dynamics of the trinity. It is this oneness that explains the unity of God's works and the humble person's works:

For what God performs he too performs, and what God wills he too wills, and what God is he too is- one life and one being. In God's name - if that man were in hell, God would have to come to him in hell, and hell would need to be heaven for him. He would have to do this, He would be compelled to do it: for then this man is divine being and divine being is this man, for here the kiss occurs between God's unity and the humble man. For that virtue which is called humility is a root in the ground of the Godhead [*grund der gottheit*], where it is so implanted that it has its being solely in the eternal One, and nowhere else.³¹²

Being one with God does not only mean to receive but be within the dynamics of the trinity. God works through the ground of humility.³¹³ In the oneness of the ground the soul and God are truly one: "The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me: my eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing and one love."³¹⁴

To sum up, humility describes a relationship between equals. Yet Eckhart emphasizes oneness not sameness: the humble soul and God are of and in the same oneness but not the same. The unity in distinction is phrased

structure of what one calls 'mystical ethics' results ... the 'should' [of ethics] follows not from man's "goal-determined being," that is, from his final cause (as in Aristotle), but instead from his inner nature or *formal* cause, which is his emptiness and freedom as the image of God." Schönberger, "Secundum rationem esse: Zur Ontologisierung der Ethik bei Meister Eckhart," 262, quoted and translated by Connolly, cf. Connolly, *Living without Why*, 186.

³¹⁰ Sermon 63, 390, DW 3: 81.8-82.2; see Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*, 97; Sermon 10, 337 / DW 1:167.9.

³¹¹ Speer emphasizes the practical dimension of this, cf. Speer, "Weisheit bei Augustinus und Meister Eckhart," 9.

³¹² Sermon 15, 271, DW 1: 246.17-247.4; with the expression "kiss" Eckhart might be following Gregor of Nyssa, see Kobusch, "Metaphysik als Lebensform," 52.

³¹³ Sermon 31, 260, DW 2: 125. 1-4: "Now she has come home and is at one with Him, and is a fellow worker [*mitewürkerin*]. No creature works anything but for the Father, who works alone. The soul should never cease until she works as powerfully as God. Then she works all His works with the Father, working as one with Him, in wisdom and love [*si würket mit im einvalticliche und wisliche und minnicliche*]."

³¹⁴ Sermon 12, 298, DW 1: 201. 5-8; cf. Radler, "In love I am more God", 18: "The metaphor of the eye conveys the disintegration of the Godcreature, subject-object, and self-other distinctions."

in terms of love bearing fruit in the ground of humility. From the oneness of God and the humble soul in humility, grows the ability to act not by virtue of oneself but by virtue of another.

4.5.4 *Humility as Oneness in Life and Being*

This introduces a new function of humility: humility is not only inwardness, but it is also the root from which God's works grow. When Eckhart states that humility is the root of the soul in the Godhead, this raises the question of the difference between God and Godhead. Godhead and God express the creaturely difference of eternal and temporal; of being and being active in the world, as Eckhart stresses in Sermon 56:

That is how all creatures speak of God. And why do they not speak of the Godhead? Everything that is in the Godhead is one, and of that, there is nothing to be said. God works, the Godhead does no work: there is nothing for it to do, there is no activity in it. It never peeped at any work. God and Godhead are distinguished by working and not-working.³¹⁵

"Godhead" is oneness and being whereas "God" becomes when the creature says "God."³¹⁶ "God" refers to the creaturely relation to the union. It is the flowing out of God into man as being turning into the temporal form in becoming. "Godhead", in contrast, stands for oneness without movement and becoming. The "Godhead" is unrelated being, "God" is in relation to the world.

Eckhart parallels the duality of Godhead and God with the duality of inner and outer man: "God and Godhead are as different as heaven and earth. I say further: the inner and the outer man are as different as heaven and earth.

³¹⁵ Sermon 109, 294, DW 4,2.

³¹⁶ In sermon 109 he stresses that "God" is how creatures speak of God: "I take a bowl of water and put a mirror in it and set it under the disc of the sun. Then the sun sends forth its light-rays both from the disc and from the sun's depth, and yet suffers no diminution. The reflection of the mirror in the sun is a sun, and yet it is what it is. So it is with God. God is in the soul with His nature, with His being and with His Godhead, and yet He is not the soul. The reflection of the soul in God is God, and yet she is what she is. God becomes when all creatures say 'God'-then God comes to be." Sermon 109, 293, DW 4,2; Sermon 40, 319, DW 2: 277.7-9: "As this image is revealed in a man, so that man grows in likeness to God, for in that image the man is like the image of God as He is according to His naked essence. And the more a man lays himself bare, the more like he becomes to God, and the more like he becomes to God, the more he is made one with Him. Thus a man's being ever born in God is to be understood to mean that that man is refulgent with his image in God's image, which is God in his bare essence, with which that man is one. Thus this oneness of man and God is to be understood as a likeness of image, for man is Godlike in his image."

[...] God becomes and unbecomes.”³¹⁷ This is what Eckhart calls the difference of the Godhead as not working and God as working.³¹⁸ The oneness of the Godhead rests, whereas God is a circular movement of becoming and unbecoming.³¹⁹

In *On Detachment*, Eckhart tries to explain how this duality of becoming and unbecoming, of inner and outer, can be brought together. He phrases this in the two virtues of detachment and humility. Eckhart claims that detachment is higher than humility because it is the state of pure being: unmoved oneness (Godhead in other words). He continues:

You should know that it was loving humility [*minnebære*] that led God to stoop [*sich neigete*] to enter human nature, while detachment stood immovable within itself when he became man, just as it did when He created heaven and earth, [...].³²⁰

God’s detachment then can be seen as paralleling God’s being, whereas humility is marked as God’s outflowing into the world and therefore, God’s becoming. It is humility that makes God move towards nature.³²¹ The German “*minnebære*” carries the imagery of being pregnant with love, of bearing love. In a parallel movement, Eckhart claims that Mary referred to her own humility rather than her detachment because it is humility, not detachment, that is asked of her in bringing forth the son of God. It is her humility that brings forth and is moved, not her detachment.

Detachment and humility explain how one can be and become at the same time.³²² In the metaphor of the inner and outer man, this shows how

³¹⁷ Sermon 109, 293, DW 4,2.

³¹⁸ As Mieth points out there is also a difference between “deed” and “work”: “Eckhart unterscheidet dabei zwischen Tat und Werk. ‘Tat’ (mhd. ‘werc’) ist jedes Tun ohne das Zusatzmotiv Gott; ‘Werk’ (mhd. ‘gewerbe’) ist die aus Gott gewirkte Tat, [...]” Mieth, *Die Einheit von Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler*, 155.

³¹⁹ Linge defines Godhead as “Godhead is the One, the negation of all multiplicity, preceding even the Persons of the Trinity which, in the second perspective, flow from it and manifest it.” Whereas “God” is: “the divine nature in its activity and relatedness.” Linge, “Linge, Mysticism,” 473; see also Manstetten, *Esse est Deus*, 583–90.

³²⁰ On Detachment, 567-568, DW 5: 407.9-408.7.

³²¹ Enders emphasizes that humility is a movement and therefore draws a clear line between humility and detachment: “Ein vollkommen demütiger Mensch geht aus sich selbst heraus auf die Kreaturen zu, denn er neigt oder beugt sich selbst unter alle Kreaturen, während die Abgeschlossenheit vollkommen in sich selbst, d.h. beziehungslos bleibt zu allen Kreaturen.” Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschlossenheit*, 113. Whereas Schoeller-Reisch follows Erwin Waldschütz in arguing that humility can be another name for detachment and that detachment is the purest form of humility, cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 94; Waldschütz, *Meister Eckhart*, 212; 212-215.

³²² Eckhart highlights this with an analogy: “Here is an analogy: a door swings open and shuts on its hinge. I would compare the outer woodwork of the door to the outer man, and the hinge

outward activity can be paralleled with the passivity of an inward unmoved being.³²³

You should know that the outer man can be active while the inner man is completely free of this activity and unmoved. Now Christ too had an outer man and an inner man, and so did our Lady, and whatever Christ and our Lady ever said about external things, they did so according to the outer man, but the inner man remained in unmoved detachment.³²⁴

The duality of “one life and one being”³²⁵ shows in the relatedness of humility as moving outward and detachment as being inward. Humility describes a form of *received activity*. Receiving God’s being in the ground of humility, the humble soul becomes and works God’s works. There is not a strict divide between inward and outward, like the sun, the inward shines outwards.³²⁶ Inward being leads to outward becoming. And it is humility that enables this working from within without losing inwardness:

So, if you want God to be your own thus, you must make yourself His own and bear in mind nothing but Him: then he will be the beginning and the end of all your activity, just as His Godhead depends on His being God. To that man who thus in all his actions means and loves nothing but God, God gives His Godhead. Whatever that man performs, God performs, for my humility gives to God His Godhead. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it” (John 1: 5). This means that God is not only a beginning of all our acts and our being, He is also an end and a repose to all being.³²⁷

to the inner man. When the door opens and shuts, the boards move back and forth, but the hinge stays in the same place and is never moved thereby. It is the same in this case, if you understand it rightly.” On Detachment, 571, DW 5: 422.7-12; Sermon 6, 332, DW 1: 113.8-114.5: “Through knowledge I take God into myself, through love I enter into God. Some say blessedness lies not in knowledge but only in the will. They are wrong, for if it lay in the will, it would not be one. The work and the coming to be are one. If the carpenter does not work, the house does not come into existence. When the axe rests, the process stops. God and I are one in this operation: He works, and I come into being.”

³²³ This marks the greatest difference between Schoeller Reisch’s reading of humility and the one presented here. For Schoeller Reisch, humility describes the union but is not a way of life or a disposition to act. In the presented reading, humility is the connecting part of inner contemplation and outer action as a unity of possibility and actuality in receiving and giving.

³²⁴ On Detachment, 571, DW 5: 421.8-422.4.

³²⁵ Sermon 14, 268, DW 1: 235.13.

³²⁶ The divide that Eckhart seems to put forward here is not as strong as one could think because he also claims that the outer man works by the power of the soul, cf. On Detachment 571, DW 5: 421.2-3. As Mieth claims: “Die Willenseinheit mit Gott muß also in der Wirkeinheit mit Gott vollzogen, sie darf nicht nur im affektiven Aufschwung genossen werden; das Werk ist gleichsam die Inkarnation der Liebe.” Mieth, *Die Einheit von Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler*, 172; 172–73.

³²⁷ Sermon 14, 269, DW 1: 240.4-13; Sermon 41, 239, DW 2: 289.4-6: “In the same way as God acts [*würket*], so the just man acts [*würket*] without why; and just as life lives for its own sake and asks for no why for which to live, so the just man has no why for which to act.”; Sermon 15, 271, DW 1: 246.17-247.4.

This again links love and humility. In love, God gives his Godhead but in humility, the humble person gives God his Godhead.³²⁸ Humility and love, therefore, close the circle of beginning and end. Humility is a movement of the inner and outer man in which he finds rest in the circularity of divine love. This inward activity bears fruit in works of love: “[...] that which God works, the humble person works, and that which God is, that is he: one life and one being.”³²⁹

4.6 Love and Living Without a Why in Humility

The next paragraphs will show how the humble person works God’s works in life by connecting a life grounded in humility with Eckhart’s interpretation of *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* in Sermon 86. Investigating the importance of love this shows that fruitfulness from the ground of humility does not show in what one brings forth but *how* one does so. The example of Martha will show how humility leads to a joyful life without why and how the humble person can act in life through owning being dependent on another.

The imagery of fruitfulness is not only used for the relationship of the humble soul and God but also for human virtue as a way to work God’s works in man’s life. Eckhart writes: “Therefore, note that the soil, or the earth is fruitful and why.”³³⁰ In receiving, the ground can be fruitful. In the image of God flowing out, the humble person in union with God flows out. God works through the soul, and the soul works with God.³³¹ Eckhart marks this oneness of soul and God by using the imagery of flowing out regarding the virtues:

³²⁸ Sermon 4, 227, DW 1:73.12-74.5: “It is God’s nature to give, and His being depends on His giving to us when we are under. If we are not, and receive nothing, we do Him violence and kill Him. If we cannot do this to Him, then we do it to ourselves, as far as in us lies. If you would truly give Him all, see to it that you put yourself in true humility under God, raising up God in your heart and your understanding.”

³²⁹ Sermon 14, 268, DW 1: 235.12-13.

³³⁰ “Item quod humus sive terra est fructifera, et quare.” Sermon XXII, n.214 (LW IV: 200.1), translation mine.

³³¹ Enders shows how in the union of love man works God’s works and his own: “Was er in dieser göttlichen Selbstliebe liebt, das ist der ungeborene Vater; und er liebt ihn nicht mit seiner natürlich-kreatürlichen Seelenkraft, sondern mit der absoluten, vollkommenen Liebe des geborenen Sohnes, der das logische Subjekt, das Bewegungsprinzip, das ‘Wer’ dieser Liebe zum Vater, wie Eckhart unmissverständlich sagt, ist. Nun sind aber die göttlichen Personen auf Grund ihrer Wesenidentität ineinander, was die traditionelle Lehre von ihrer Perichorese oder Zirkumincessio besagt. Daher ist ‘der Vater im Sohn und der Sohn im Vater. Vater und Sohn sind Eins.’ Also liebt und wirkt der Sohn gewordene Mensch auch sich selbst

You should be firm and steadfast; that is, you should be the same in weal and woe, in fortune and misfortune, having the noble nature of precious stones; that is, all virtues should be enclosed in you and flow out of you in their true being. You should traverse [*durchgân*] and transcend [*übergân*] all the virtues, drawing virtue solely from that ground where it is one with the divine nature.³³²

The outflowing of the virtues mirrors the imagery of giving birth in the trinity. It rephrases the dynamic and puts it into the context of living life from the ground of humility. The idea of being in the ground of humility and bringing forth God's works is demonstrated in Eckhart's interpretation of *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* in Sermon 86.³³³ Sermon 86 interprets the story of the sisters Martha and Mary and their reaction to hearing Jesus preach in their home. While Mary sits down to listen to Jesus' words, Martha takes care of their guests. For Eckhart, the defining characteristic of Martha is that she is standing "in her essence [*wesentlich*]" inwardly,³³⁴ while outwardly busying herself with taking care of her guests. Martha is characterized by three things: her "well-exercised ground [*wol geüebeter grunt*]"³³⁵ which makes her feel more able to work than anyone else. Furthermore, it is her "wise understanding [*wîsiu verstantnisse*]"³³⁶ that allows her to form her work as love demands. Her motivation was the high honour of the "beloved guest [*lieben gastes*]."³³⁷

It is not a coincidence, that Eckhart stresses the importance of love in a Sermon addressing the relation of *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*. Just as in God, being and love fall together, in man, being virtuous and loving virtue coincide: "For none loves virtue but he who is virtue itself."³³⁸ In

und wirkt um seiner selbst willen, denn er ist ja im Vater, ist eins mit ihm, wenn auch - im Unterschied zum göttlichen Sein - nicht in seinem Sein, nicht naturhaft, sondern vollzugsmäßig, bzw. gnadenhaft." Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*, 86.

³³² Sermon 16b, 117, DW 1: 276.1-5, translation modified.

³³³ Leppin analyzes the structure of the sermon, see Leppin, "Die Komposition von Meister Eckharts Maria-Martha-Predigt."

³³⁴ translation mine, Sermon 86, 89, DW 3: 491.12: "But Martha stood there in her essence, and hence she said [...];" "Aber Martha stuont so weseliche, dâ von sprach sie [...]."

³³⁵ "[...] the ground of her being that was so fully trained that she thought none could do the work as well as she." Sermon 86, 83, DW 3: 481.11.

³³⁶ Translation mine, Sermon 86, 83, DW 3: 481.12-482.1.

³³⁷ Translation mine, Sermon 86, 83, DW 3: 482.2.

³³⁸ Sermon 29, 125, DW 2: 79. 11-80.1. quoted in Steer, "Über die Liebe," 231; Steer, "Über die Liebe," 228; Radler highlights this connectedness between being, love and knowledge: "In Eckhart's writings, love contains an expansive range of meanings that includes God as love and the loving relationship between God and humanity. However, since Eckhart's fluid mysticism precludes stasis and stratification, love is intimately associated with the other signifiers, especially being and intellect. For Eckhart, the interplay between the terms cannot be broken apart in God and in detached human existence and experience. This interplay

Sermon 29, Eckhart writes “[...] we cannot call any work a good work, or any virtue a virtue unless it is performed in love.”³³⁹ Eckhart goes as far as pointing out that any virtue without love is vice:

In opposition to this, it results that pride is the direct opposite to grace and itself the beginning, the root and in considerably the universal form of all vices, just like love can be considered the universal form of all virtues. It is thus, that virtue without love almost becomes vice and equally, in reverse, pride with true humility cannot be sin.³⁴⁰

Virtue without love is vice, and pride with true humility is no longer sin. Eckhart implies that with true humility sin can no longer be sin, because in humility, the humble person’s works are God’s works. The parallel movement of love and a lack of love as sin can be explained, if one takes into account the following statement about love:

Now, whoever dwells in the goodness of his nature, dwells in God’s love [*minne*]: but love is without Why. If I had a friend and loved him for benefits received and because of getting my own way, I should not be loving my friend, but myself. I ought to love my friend for his own goodness, for his virtues and for all that he is in himself. Only then would I love my friend aright, if I loved him as I have said. It is just the same with the man abiding in God’s love, seeking not his own in God or in himself or in any thing, but loving God solely for His goodness and for the goodness of His nature, and for all that He is in Himself. That is genuine love.³⁴¹

In love, there is nothing of one’s own. Love expresses leaving behind any reason based on oneself and is only for another. In love, the soul loses itself in and for the other. This is why Eckhart writes that “love is without a why.”³⁴² As such, love is the end of all ends and linked to Eckhart’s concept of freedom.³⁴³ This is because as freedom from self and outward motivation in

prompts Eckhart to move beyond Franciscan and Dominican positions on salvation (favoring love or knowledge, respectively, as the central mechanism) and state, ‘The perfection of blessedness lies in both: in understanding and in love.’ Hence, Eckhart’s mystical theology defies easy categorization.” Radler, “In love I am more God”, 174.

³³⁹ Sermon 27, 99-100, DW 2: 44.1-2.

³⁴⁰ Sermon XX, n. 207 (LW IV: 192. 4-13), my translation.

³⁴¹ Sermon 28, 129-130, DW 2: 59.6-60.2.

³⁴² Sermon 28, 129, DW 2: 59.6; cf. Mandrella, “Wille und Freiheit in Mystik und Voluntarismus,” 152–53; Mieth even identifies love with union of will, cf. “Die dritte göttliche Tugend, die Liebe, ist für Eckhart nicht eine Gefühlsbewegung, sondern eine Ausrichtung des Willens [...]” Mieth, *Die Einheit von Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler*, 167.

³⁴³ For Eckhart, this union of God’s will and human will defines freedom: “Now the masters declare that the will is so free that none can bind it except God alone. God does not bind the will; He sets it free in such a fashion that it wills naught that is not God Himself, and that is real freedom [*daz diu vriheit selber ist*]. And the spirit cannot will otherwise than as God will, and that is not its bondage but his very one freedom [*sîn eigen vriheit*].” Sermon 29, 125, DW 2: 78.1-4. translation modified. On Eckhart’s concept of freedom see, e.g. Mandrella, “Wille und Freiheit in Mystik und Voluntarismus,” on freedom and intellect see Goris, “Die Freiheit des Denkens.” On Augustine’s connection of will and love in relation to Eckhart, see Connolly, *Living without Why*, 51.

love, the soul returns to its “own freedom.”³⁴⁴ Through love, the soul is free in dependence on another as Eckhart says: “He sets it free in such a fashion that it wills naught that is not God Himself, and that which freedom itself is [*daz diu vrîtheit selber ist*].”³⁴⁵ Humility enables living without a why because it expresses willingly giving up one’s own will and bringing forth God’s will.³⁴⁶ It is acting not for oneself but for and with another.³⁴⁷ In sharing God’s being and life, the humble man lives a life without why:

If a man asked life for a thousand years, ‘Why do you live?’ if it could answer it would only say, ‘I live because I live.’ That is because life lives from its own ground, and gushes forth from its own. Therefore it lives without Why, because it lives for itself. And so, if you were to ask a genuine man who acted from his own ground, ‘Why do you work [*würkest dû dîniu werk*]?’ if he were to answer properly he would simply say, ‘I work [*würke*] because I work [*würke*].’³⁴⁸

Living and working from the ground means flowing out of love without reasons. Work without a why can only be from within.³⁴⁹

Not that one should give up or neglect or reject one’s inner life, but in it and with it and from it [*sunder in dem und mit dem und ûz dem*] one should learn to act in such

³⁴⁴ Divine Comfort, 543, DW 5: 44.21-27: “Again, in the third place, I declare that a good man, so far as he is good, has God’s nature not only in loving all he loves and doing all he does for the sake of God whom he loves therein and for whom he works, but he loves and works also for himself, for Him who loves; for what he loves is God-Father-Unborn, and He who loves is God-Son-Born. Now the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father. Father and Son are One.” Cf. Büchner: “Ganz ähnlich besteht die Freiheit des Menschen (als Seele) darin, so wie Gott nicht in allem das Eigene suchen zu müssen, sondern das Empfangene immerfort wieder zurückgeben zu können. Darin, in der Rückführung der Eigenaktivität auf das Wirken Gottes, erreicht der Mensch höchste Selbstbestimmtheit, die Selbstbestimmtheit des vertrauenden Sich-Gebens. Dem entspricht Eckharts Lob des demütigen Menschen [...].” Büchner, “Sein-Geben.” 378. Similarly, Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschlossenheit*, 88.

³⁴⁵ Sermon 29, 125, DW 2: 78.2-4, translation modified.

³⁴⁶ As Schoeller Reisch points out this means that man still takes part in the union in humility: “Darum lässt sich folgern, dass obwohl der Mensch durch den metaphysischen Rutsch, in welchen der Demutsbegriff geraten ist, als sozusagen aktiver Agent des Demutsprojekts entmächtigt erscheint, er gemäss Eckhart an ihrer Verwirklichung dennoch beteiligt bleibt.” Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 106.

³⁴⁷ Through freedom in love, God’s works are also the humble person’s works, see Mieth: “In der Fruchtbarkeit hält der Mensch die Richtung der göttlichen Wirksamkeit ein und zieht dabei die ganze Schöpfung mit sich. Da dieses Wirken mit Gott gleichgerichtet ist, wird es von der Dynamik Gottes mitgetragen, so daß es seinem Ursprung und seinem Ziel nach ebenso göttlich wie menschliches Wirken heißen kann.” Mieth, *Die Einheit von Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler*, 157.

³⁴⁸ Sermon 5b, 110, DW 1: 91.10-92.6, translation modified.

³⁴⁹ Connolly investigates Eckhart’s “Living without a why” in relation to Aristotle: “Eckhart, for all his distance from Aristotle on the question of the nature of our blessedness, avoids Aquinas’s instrumentalisation of virtuous action. Indeed, his idea that the just person qua just acts justly for its own sake, and not for some goal from it, is Aristotelian through and through.” Connolly, *Living without Why*, 191; see also Steer: “Wenn es Gott eigentümlich ist, kein Warum zu haben, wenn die Liebe selbst kein Warum kennt, dann zeichnet es den göttlichen, den gottliebenden, den *tugendhaften* Menschen aus, ohne Warum zu leben, interesse- und intentionslos, unbesorgt um das eigene Ich und die Dinge dieser Welt zu leben, frei und spontan, nur dem Antrieb der Liebe folgend.” Steer, “Über die Liebe,” 231.

a way as to let the inward break into actuality [*würklichkeit*] and draw the actuality [*würklichkeit*] into inwardness [*innicheit*], and thereby work one's thus won freedom [*gewone ledicliche ze wükenne*]. For one should turn one's eyes to this inner [*inwendigen*] work and act therefrom, whether it be in reading, praying, or - on occasion - outward work [*ûzwendigiu werk*]. But if the outward work tends to destroy the inward, one should follow the inward. But if both can be in one, that is best, then one is works with God [*Möhten sie aber beidiu sîn in einem, daz wære daz beste, daz man ein mitewürken hæte mit gote*].³⁵⁰

Working with God means that inward and outward works as one.

It is this inwardness and way of life that Martha represents.

Consequently, in Sermon 86, Eckhart states:

But this much can be attained: that when it is observed with insight, a rational God-conformed will submits to the insight and bids the will stand back from it, and the will answers, 'I will, gladly.' [*ich tuon ez gerne*] Lo and behold, then strife changes to joy [*luste*]. For what a man has ventured for in hard work [*mit grôzer arbeit muoz erstrîten*], brings him heart's delight [*herzenvröude*], and then it bears fruit [*vruchtbare*].³⁵¹

Eckhart concludes that for the person standing in God's will and love, it is joyful to do so. One of the defining characteristics of Martha is that she is still moved and is full of care for the world. The link of humility and freedom in love then has another consequence: *humility enables actions that one cares*

³⁵⁰ Instructions, 517, DW 5: 291.3-11; Instructions, 514, DW 5: 281.17-282.10: "For it is not enough to perform works of virtue, or practice obedience or endure poverty and disgrace, or humble and abandon ourselves in some other way-we must strive and never cease until we have gained the virtue in its essence and ground [*in irm wesene und in irm grunde*]. And the test of the matter is this: if we feel inclined to virtue above all else, and perform virtuous deeds without preparation of the will, and carry them through without the special spur of a just or important cause, when in fact virtue performs itself more by itself and for love of virtue [*durch die minne der tugent*] without any why [*umbe kein warumbe*] - then one has the perfection of virtue, and not before." Translation modified. Cf. Mieth, *Die Einheit von Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler*, 154: "Nicht ein Stufenaufstieg zur Kontemplation, wie er bisher gelehrt wurde, sondern der lebendige Vollzug des Handelns Gottes im Leben, das Wirken aus der Wirklichkeit mit Gott ist das Hauptziel eckhartscher Mystik. Aktivität und Energie bestimmen Eckharts Gerechten, Eckharts Liebenden. Der relational in Gott wirkende Mensch ist nicht tatenlos, sondern Energie, Drängen, Werden. Er verdankt sich Gott, der 'kochend', auffallend, durchdringend, liebend gestaltend mit höchster 'Energie' 'brausend' handelt." Kern, *Die Anthropologie des Meister Eckhart*, 111; "Thus the 'inner act' is a (complex) disposition, a form, for Eckhart, while in this tradition an intention is an 'act of will.'" Connolly, *Living without Why*, 194.

³⁵¹ Sermon 86, 89, DW 3: 491.20-492.4, translation modified; see also Sermon 29, 125, DW 2: 79. 2-6: "So long as you are capable of doing anything that is against God and His commandment, you have not the love of God, though you may deceive the world into thinking you have. The man who is in God's will and in God's love enjoys [*ist lustlich*] to do whatever is pleasing to God and to leave undone whatever is opposed to God."; Sermon 86, 88, DW 3: 490.7-13: "Now our good people declare that we must be so perfect that no joy can move us, we must be untouched by weal and woe. They are wrong in this. I say never was there a saint so great but he could be moved. Yet, on the other hand, I hold that it is possible for a saint, even in this life, to be so that nothing can move him to turn from God. You may think that as long as words can move you to joy or sorrow you are imperfect. That is not so. Christ was not so, as he showed when he cried, 'My soul is sorrowful even unto death' (Matt. 26:38)."

for but does not do for one self but for another. Love makes the difference between indifference and care. It is not *what* Martha does, but *how* she does it.³⁵² Martha is “careful [*sorcsam*].”³⁵³ Martha stands “among things [*bî den dingen*]” but things “are not in you [*diu dinc enstânt niht in dir*].”³⁵⁴ Inwardly she is unmoved by them, but outwardly she is active and full of care for her guests. Acting out of love means to care without a why. In Sermon 22, Eckhart points out that divine love is the salt that gives taste to the mere mechanism of giving and receiving.³⁵⁵ Fruitfulness is not a mere mechanism of flowing out and being filled. The humble man is not a servant but a friend by bearing love. Loving humility then does not only allow for a life without a why but also a joyful life from within bearing fruit:

Love of virtue is a flower, an ornament, the mother of all virtue, of all perfection, of all blessedness, for it is God; for God is the fruit of virtues (God begets all virtues and is a fruit of the virtues), and it is this fruit that remains to man.³⁵⁶

³⁵² Cf. Mieth: “Nicht die Weise, sondern die Freiheit ist also entscheidend. Das heißt jedoch in zweiter Linie, daß auch die Weise von Bedeutung ist, denn die Freiheit muß sich jeweils die Weise suche, in der sie frei sein kann.” Mieth, *Die Einheit von Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler*, 152–53.

³⁵³ Walshe translates “careful,” this also carries the connotation of “full of care,” Sermon 86, 85, DW 3: 485.2; see also Leppin, “Die Komposition von Meister Eckharts Maria-Martha-Predigt,” 79.

³⁵⁴ “You are among things, but they are not in you [...]” Sermon 86, 85, DW 3: 485. 2-3.

³⁵⁵ In Sermon 22, referring to the image of earth and heaven, Eckhart states that the soul cannot flee God, just as the earth cannot sink low enough to flee heaven: Sermon 22, 282, DW 1:386.4-387.4: “The earth can never flee so low but heaven flows into her and impresses his power on her and fructifies her, whether she wishes it or not. It is just the same with a man: he thinks he can get away from God, but he cannot escape Him, for every nook and cranny reveals Him. He thinks he is fleeing from God, and runs into His arms. God gives birth to His only-begotten Son in you whether you like it or not; whether you are asleep or awake, God does His work.” This drastic image of God, forcing himself on the soul, mirrors the idea of God’s creation being dependent on God. All being is nothing but God’s being. It implies no freedom on the person’s side. In a deterministic manner, God flows out, and the soul cannot escape. However, Eckhart continues with the difference between an automated circle and man’s perception of it: “I was speaking recently about whose fault it was if a man could not taste that, and I said it was because his tongue was coated with extraneous filth, that is to say, with creatures, just like a man to whom all food seems bitter and not to his taste. Why don’t we like this food? The reason is for lack of salt. The salt is divine love. If we had divine love we should savor God, and all the works God ever performed, we should receive all things from God, and do all the works that He does. In this sameness we are all His only Son.” Sermon 22, 282, DW 1: 387.4-12.

³⁵⁶ Sermon 28, 129-130, DW 2: 60.2-5.

4.7 Summary and Conclusion of Eckhart's Concept of Humility

The above interpretation has shown how humility describes the soul's ascent through a descent into the ground of humility. The metaphor of the human being as "humus" links humanity to humility. In turning inward, the human being dis-covers their true humanity as receiving God's being in humility. In receiving in the ground of humility, the humble soul is no longer below, and God is above, but the soul and God are one being. In this unity, the soul enters the dynamics of the Trinity. The soul receives as the son but being nothing but God's being the soul also gives birth as the father. This process of flowing out is paralleled with God's "love bearing humility." Unlike detachment, humility describes a relation between the inner and the outer, between Godhead and God. Rooted in the Godhead, the soul in humility can relate to God. It, therefore, describes a movement of inner being and outer becoming as the image of God. Furthermore, Eckhart stresses the importance of love in humility. The above reading highlights that in loving humility, Eckhart describes a disposition of being inwardly and working outwardly. In humility, God's works are the humble person's works. The difference between working God's works in humility and a deterministic outflowing of being is the freedom in the Trinitarian dynamics of love. Humility is not mere passivity but received activity. The humble soul works God's works out of love, which in Eckhart's terms means "without why." Love unites *freedom from* outward reasoning and the *freedom to* receive God willingly. The imagery of "humus" receiving as the ground and fruitfulness as a realisation of God's works through the humble soul depicts this dynamics. Eckhart's concept of humility shows how one can know and be willingly in dependence on another and joyfully be so in love.

5 Humility in Hadewijch's *Visions*

The investigation of humility will now turn to humility in the *Visions* of Hadewijch of Brabant. The tone and atmosphere of Hadewijch's *Visions* already highlight a great difference between Eckhart and Hadewijch's writings. Eckhart uses language and style to mirror his idea of oneness in the union. His use of paradox, climax and negation create a mood of striving towards oneness. Reading Eckhart's sermons, one catches a glimpse of the tranquillity that lies in the unity of the oneness in being. Hadewijch's texts, on the other hand, create paradoxical, disturbing images like an uprooted tree or a spiralling emptiness. Reading Hadewijch's texts, one experiences what she writes about - being torn between longing and enjoying Love. The atmosphere, expressed in contradicting images, is one of instability. This indicates a significant difference between Eckhart's concept of a union in oneness and Hadewijch's understanding of a union in Love. It is a union of two lovers in Love, not oneness in being.³⁵⁷ For Eckhart, the humble person and God are one in God's being. For Hadewijch, humility is to be "God with God".³⁵⁸ Humility is an ascent to becoming a lover of Love in Love. Where Eckhart finds rest in oneness, Hadewijch struggles for and with Love in constant unrest and dissatisfaction. To capture this experience of the lover, Hadewijch draws on literary traditions of courtly love and the image of a knight of love.³⁵⁹ In a quest for and but also against Love,³⁶⁰ humility goes hand in hand with "*fierheit*",³⁶¹ which is translated as "pride" by Hart in the

³⁵⁷ See Mommaers, *The Riddle of Christian Mystical Experience*, Vol. 29: "The core of Hadewijch's literary work consists of what might be called a phenomenology of the 'being-one' of two personal entities." (170)

³⁵⁸ V 7, CW, 280 / VII, 19-33.

³⁵⁹ Cf. Newman, *God and the Goddesses. Vision, Poetry and Belief in the Middle Ages*, esp. 153-56; 172-181, Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 43-47.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Newman, *God and the Goddesses. Vision, Poetry and Belief in the Middle Ages*, 180.

³⁶¹ V 11, CW, 292 / XI, 170-180. On the term "*Fierheit*" see, Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, 173. Van Baest, *Poetry of Hadewijch*, 3-41; esp. 39: "Hadewijch does not only reinterpret the motives and themes of the minne lyrics and the ideal of knighthood, she also redefines the virtues that are connected to this idea. 'Minne is the mother of all virtue (SP 2:20); but through the union with minne, the understanding of minne she redefines the order of the virtues: after the union fierceness (proper pride) is the first virtue.'" Fraeters also pointed out van Baest, "*Fiere herte doelt na minnen gronde': de fierheid als kernmoment in het zelfverstaan van Hadewijch*"; see also Suydam, "The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp," 23; I am indebted to Veerle Fraeters who highlighted the importance of the difference between pride as superbia and "*fierheit*" as a knightly virtue to me. Fraeters also pointed me to Reynaert, *De beeldspraak van Hadewijch*; see also Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 22-26.

English Complete Works.³⁶² In line with the image of knighthood “fierheit” can also be understood as “fierceness”, “fortitude” and “confidence”.³⁶³ These contrasting notions in the knight’s quest offer a vocabulary to think independence in dependence.³⁶⁴ Humility in Hadewijch’s texts is not only receiving from Love but also demanding Love. The union with Love only takes place if the heroine actively claims her passivity in dependence on and before Love. Hence the focus will shift from *received activity* in Eckhart to *activity in passivity* in Hadewijch. Hadewijch’s concept of humility highlights another way of being dependent on another. It reveals the power that lies in claiming one’s dependence on another. Where Eckhart describes the humble person as sitting below to allow God to come down to her, Hadewijch stands proudly demanding Love as a lover.³⁶⁵

5.1 The Finding of Hadewijch

Maybe the history of the rediscovery of Hadewijch’s manuscripts is more telling of what Hadewijch, the writer, has been made to be than what she, as a woman, was.³⁶⁶ Her writings were rediscovered in 1838 in Brussels. The

³⁶² Hereafter CW.

³⁶³ “Fierheit” Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, 173; cf. van Baest, *Poetry of Hadewijch*, 39

³⁶⁴ Van Baest, *Hadewijch’s Poetry*: “With her attitude of fierceness, of justified pride, Hadewijch does justice to the free gentility of human beings. The proper pride of fierceness is an attitude of unconditional surrender upholding the total identity of the human self.”(40)

³⁶⁵ Van Baest, *Hadewijch’s Poetry*, 41: “The components of mutuality and symmetry in the love between God and humanity - contained in Minne and acts of loving - give Hadewijch the possibility to stand up to God with her minne, to woo God with unabashed human desire, to refuse to give way and to continue to appealing to reciprocally keeping of faith in the teeth of grief and pain.” According to van Baest fierheid “is the qualifier of well-understood human condition.”(*Hadewijch’s Poetry*, 41)

³⁶⁶ Very little is known of the life of Hadewijch of Brabant. All that can be known about her life and character has to be deduced from her writings. It seems like Hadewijch was part of the beguine movement and in a leading role in her community (on the beguine movement and Hadewijch see Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality*; Wehrli-Johns, “Das mittelalterliche Beginntum - Religiöse Frauenbewegung oder Sozialidee der Scholastik?”) Hadewijch probably wrote from the first half to the middle of the 13th century. For a summary of what is known about the person Hadewijch see, e.g. Hart, CW, 2–7, Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 18; Hadewijch’s elaborate knowledge of French love poetry, Latin and the Bible proves that she must have had a very elaborate education that enabled her to at least know of some of the theological writings of her time. This can be seen in her allusions to and reinterpretations of Augustine, the Victorines and potentially Abelard. For comparison of Hadewijch and Augustine, Bernhard of Clairvaux, William of Saint-Thierry and Richard of St. Victor see Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 58–80; particularly on Wiliam of St. Thierry and Hadewijch see: Fraeters, “Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch’s Book of Visions,”; for an

first edition of her complete works was published in two volumes in 1875 and 1895. The first critical editions were composed by Josef van Mierlo between 1908 and 1952.³⁶⁷ In 1981 Hadewijch's *Complete Works* were translated into English by Mother Columba Hart, O.S.B.³⁶⁸ Hart's translation enabled an English-speaking audience to approach the dense and complicated works of Hadewijch. Because of that, Hadewijch's writings were more widely read and interpreted. Especially, feminist theology and theory found that this medieval writer expressed female thought through her use of erotic and physical spirituality.³⁶⁹ Some interpreters of the texts have highlighted how Hart's translation also mirrors Hart's own time and theological tradition. So that the number of theological readings of Hadewijch's works can - at least to a certain extent - be traced back to Hart's interpretation and translation.³⁷⁰ Some people considered Hadewijch's texts as a different (feminine) way to convey theology or approaching spirituality.³⁷¹ Recent interpretations of Hadewijch's

elaborated analysis of Hadewijch's knowledge and reinterpretation of the bible see: Reynaert, "Mystische Bibelinterpretation bei Hadewijch,"; Milhaven takes Bernhard of Clairvaux into account, even if he mostly stresses Hadewijch's divergence from Bernhard, e.g. Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 23. Kurt Ruh reads the fact that there is no information (in form of a vita or the like) on the outcome of her life as proof of her aristocracy. He argues that the family prevented any kind of spread of her works or glorification of her life, Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, Vol. 2, 225.

³⁶⁷ Hadewijch/ van Mierlo, Jozef. *De visioenen van Hadewych*. Leuven, 1925; Hadewijch/ van Mierlo, Jozef. *Strophische gedichten*. Antwerpen, 1942; Hadewijch, *Brieven*; Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten*, Vol. 15. For an elaborate analysis and summary of the history of the discovery and edition of Hadewijch's manuscripts see Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 15–26.

³⁶⁸ Hadewijch, *The Complete Works*.

³⁶⁹ On the interpretations and readings of "mystic" writings on French intellectuals (Bataille, Beauvoir, Lacan, Irigaray) of the last century see Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, on women and spirituality in the context of Hadewijch see, e.g.: Bouyer, *Women Mystics*; Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality*; Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, Vol. 1; Dickens, *The Female Mystic*, Vol. 60; Hamilton, "Vision and Revision,"; Neal, "Wounding and healing: Reciprocity in Divine and Human Narratives,"; Newman, *From virile woman to womanChrist*; Ranft, *A woman's way*; Shahan, "Women and Marian Devotion in the Thirteenth Century,"; Shea, *Medieval Women on Sin and Salvation*, Vol. 304; Unger, *Die Beginen*, Vol. 56, 43; Wiethaus, *Maps of Flesh and Light*; Dreyer, *Passionate Spirituality*.

³⁷⁰ See Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 19; Murk Jansen comments: "The polemical arguments seeking to prove Hadewijch completely orthodox, not only in thirteenth-century terms but also in terms of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Catholic theology, have been a significant strand in Hadewijch criticism this century." Murk Jansen, Saskia M., "Hadewijch and Eckhart: Amor intellegere est," 20.

³⁷¹ This has led to some interpretations of Hadewijch as a voice of women, which politicized the discussion on female "mystics" see, e.g.: Jantzen, "Eros and the Abyss: Reading Medieval Mystics in Postmodernity"; Jantzen, "Feminists, Philosophers, and Mystics". Furthermore, there has been the tendency to split "mystical" writings into women and men writings (or rather differentiating between writings and women's writings, see. E.g. Stölting, *Christliche Frauenmystik im Mittelalter*, 20). Out of the extensive list of Hadewijch research with a focus on femininity see, e.g.: Holmes, *Flesh Made Word*; Newman, *From virile woman to womanChrist*; Newman, *God and the Goddesses*.

works focus less on the “feminine” aspect of Hadewijch’s writings and approach the texts more systematically and in context with other philosophical and theological thinking of the time.³⁷²

5.2 The Works of Hadewijch

Hadewijch wrote poetry, visions, letters and the “list of the perfect”.³⁷³ Even if Hadewijch barely quotes her sources, the way that she intertwines her knowledge of the church fathers and the courtly literature of her time in her own literary creations shows that she must have been widely read and familiar with the theological and philosophical school of thoughts as well as other writings of her time (and beyond).³⁷⁴ She probably was in a leading position and used her writings to teach her fellow beguines.³⁷⁵ Therefore, one should always keep the didactical and pedagogical function of all her writings in mind.³⁷⁶ The topic of all of Hadewijch’s works is Love (*Minne*).³⁷⁷ As Mommaers points out, the different genres that Hadewijch uses highlight the

³⁷² E.g. Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*; Fraeters, “The Appearance of Queen Reason,” Faesen, “Pleasure in Medieval Christian Mystical Literature: The Analysis of John of Ruusbroec (1281-1381) and Hadewijch (Thirteenth Century),” Dailey, *Promised Bodies*; for a Hadewijch in a theological and philosophical context see, e.g.: Kobusch, “Die Philosophie des Hoch- und Spätmittelalters,” V; Faesen, *Begeerte in het werk van Hadewijch*, Vol. 4; Fraeters, “Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch’s Book of Visions,” Fraeters, “The Appearance of Queen Reason,”; Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, Mandrella, “Meisterinnen ohne Schüler: Philosophierende Frauen im Mittelalter.”

³⁷³ Following Hart’s reasoning, this will be omitted from this thesis, cf. CW, 2.

³⁷⁴ Cf. Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 20.

³⁷⁵ Cf. Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 20-22. Despite the leading position in her community, Hadewijch’s writings were not directed at people outside her community. This differentiates her from other beguine writers like Mechthild of Magdeburg and Marguirete Porete, cf. Fraeters, “Mi smelten mine sinne in minnen oerewoede. Reflecties over genre en subjectiviteit in de *Liederen* van Hadewijch”, 428.

³⁷⁶ Cf. Holmes, *Flesh Made Word*, 54; Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 125; Fraeters highlights the importance of the apostle Paul’s letters as a context of the teaching tradition, see Fraeters, “‘Mi smeltene mine sinne in minnen oerewoede’. Reflecties over genre en subjectiviteit in de *Liederen* van Hadewijch.”, 444.

³⁷⁷ “Minne” can be translated as: 1) memento, 2) spiritual love, friendship, 3) love between persons of different sex, also forbidden love, 4) love, desire, longing, 5) beloved, love, 6) peace, harmony, unity, 7) love, for what everone does, warmth, cf. Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, 360; Mommaers highlights the complexity of Hadewijch’s concept of “minne”, cf. Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 6-7; the vast meanings of Hadewijch’s “minne” become apparent in Fraeters following statement: “Die Minne ist für sie kein Besitz, sondern ein Auftrag; keine Sättigung, sondern Hunger; keine Erfüllung, sondern Dienst; kein Genuss, sondern Verlangen.” Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 38. A summary of the academic discussion of the term between van Mierlo and De Paepe can be found in Guest, *Some Aspects of Hadewijch’s Poetic Form in the ‘Strofische Gedichten’*, 2-3.

ambiguity and various aspects of Love and the lover's relationship with her.³⁷⁸ Hadewijch's texts reflect her visionary insights but also teaches a way to a virtuous life.³⁷⁹ By making use of many genres, Hadewijch's writings present Love from different perspectives and offer various points of connection in her fellow beguines' life.³⁸⁰ The *Visions* become a spiritual guidebook. The *Letters*, contrived of seemingly more personal letters³⁸¹ and tractates, focus on the philosophical and theological explanation of the *Visions* and the personal practical instructions for those who seek Love. Hadewijch's poetry is split up in the poems in stanzas (PS, *Liederen*) and the poems in couplets (PC, *Mengeldichten*).³⁸² In the poems in stanzas,

³⁷⁸ See Mommaers, *The Riddle of Christian Mystical Experience*, Vol. 29, 168: "She was creative enough to launch a new literary genre: the mystical love lyric. But this does not mean that her main aim as a writer was to give expression to her own emotional life as such, or to present her mystical experience as something highly individual. Recent research has shown convincingly that the Poems in Stanzas were meant to support and uplift a 'group'; the *Visions* were intended as guidelines for the 'friends'; and the *Letters* were to convey the leader's teaching and sympathy."

³⁷⁹ Cf. Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 64; Dailey makes the intertwining of the ability to read and interpret and living a spiritual way of life one of her main theses, see, e.g. "Like Gregory's *Moralia in Job*, the songs prompt the speaker to read and interpret her experience of absence according to a divine paradigm, that is, as a test in which one seeks to conquer weakness and in turn be conquered by the divine; like a psalm, the formal qualities of the song simultaneously incite and order the passions so that they are understood in relation to their greater promised work of salvation. Once again, the interaction between text and the life it intends to script is of central concern, and the ability to *read* the world and embodiment as part of the symbolic economy of spiritual life is part of the text's pedagogic project." Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 127; 134; on the mulieres religiosae as schools of virtue and a virtuous life see Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 19-22.

³⁸⁰ Cf. Ruh: "Aber ihre Schriften verbieten eine solche Verwendung, das sie ingeniös selbst ihre Sehweise wiederholt wechselt und auch Widersprüche nicht scheut. Vor allem muß man beachten, daß 'Visionen' und 'Brieven' nicht nur verschiedene literarische Gattungen angehören, sondern durchaus unterschiedlichen Sehweisen verpflichtet sind. Dort vergegenwärtigt Hadewijch ihre ekstatischen Begnadigungen und Erhöhungen, hier steht sie in der Wirklichkeit ihres Beginendaseins, im 'Elend', das ihr gerade wegen ihrer Auserwähltheit auferlegt worden ist. Die Spannung zwischen diesen beiden Erfahrungsformen ist wohl die einige umgreifende Konstante ihrer Lebenswirklichkeit." Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, Vol. 2, 224.

³⁸¹ Willaert und Mommaers propose that Hadewijch edited the *Mengeldichten* and the *Letters* for publication, Mommaers and Willaert, "Mystisches Erlebnis und sprachliche Vermittlung in den Briefen Hadewijchs," 125; furthermore they argue that Hadewijch chose the genre of the private letter in order to create a personal atmosphere: "Der Brief gestattet Hadewijch also, eine intime und affektive Kommunikationsgemeinschaft zwischen ihren Leserinnen und sich selbst herzustellen." (26); see also Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 51. McGinn points out: "With the genre 'letter' Hadewijch holds on to the tradition of didactic ephistolography going back Paul [...]," McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, Vol. 3, 201.

³⁸² Cf. Mommaers, *The Riddle of Christian Mystical Experience*, Vol. 29, 168; "The tradition that Hadewijch follows in her love poetry is that of the prophet Isaiah and Solomon's song.", van Baest, *Poetry of Hadewijch*, Vol. 3, 7; there is a debate about the authenticity of the *Mengeldichten* 17-29, see, e.g. Stölting and Fraeters argue that 17-29 are not by Hadewijch, cf. Stölting, *Christliche Frauenmystik im Mittelalter*, 124; Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 27;

Hadewijch uses troubadour and the trouvère tradition in combination with the theological ideas on Love of the Latin-speaking world.³⁸³ The poems mirror the reality and experience of beguine life in the figure of the knight who, like the beguines, lives in the world and yet is bound to his vow to Love and God.³⁸⁴ This brings forth different aspects of Love and how the lover and – in teaching function of the texts – the reader can conform to Love.³⁸⁵ Creating a court of Love, Hadewijch takes on different roles among this court.³⁸⁶ Moving through the literary genres of poetry, treatises, letters and visionary literature, Hadewijch undergoes the change from child to mother, servant to knight or student to teacher.³⁸⁷ Through this variation of genres, Hadewijch's role is not strictly defined: She is the visionary in the visions, which gives her the authority to lead and guide. She is the worried and loving friend in the letters, or the suffering soul in the privation of Love in the poems. The use of different genres offers her audience many points of connections. This reflects the multiplicity of aspects in which Hadewijch's texts are instructions for leading a virtuous life. Hadewijch as "Magistra" offers herself as a role model in the striving for Love.³⁸⁸ At the same time, her writings guide her followers in this continuous struggle.³⁸⁹ In the variety of genres the texts open up the

see also van den Berg, "Eckhart en pseudo-Hadewijch: stem en tegenstem,"; this reading will not rely on the *Mengeldichten* 17-29 and therefore excludes this discussion.

³⁸³ Cf. Guest, *Some Aspects of Hadewijch's Poetic Form in the 'Strofische Gedichten'*, 245; Dickens, *The Female Mystic*, Vol. 60, 63; Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 37-41.

³⁸⁴ Cf. Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 30; Newman stresses the familiarity of the beguines with this tradition: "Hadewijch's listeners and followers would be able to relate to the imagery of courtly love because the didactic rule for beguines the 'Règle des Fins Amans' was also structured as a court of love and Jesus Christ as the abbot." Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 155; for an analysis of the musicality of Hadewijch's works see Daróczy, *Groet gheruchte van dien wondere*, Vol. 14; Louis P. Grijp, "Zur Rekonstruktion der Melodien," 48-67.

³⁸⁵ Cf. Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality*; Stölting, *Christliche Frauenmystik im Mittelalter*; Kobusch, "Die Philosophie des Hoch- und Spätmittelalters," V, 361; Dickens, *The Female Mystic*, Vol. 60; for a thorough analysis of the *Mengeldichten* see: Murk Jansen, Saskia M., *The Measure of Mystic Thought*, Vol. 536.

³⁸⁶ According to Heszler Hadewijch expands the register of this genre, cf. Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 144; on change for the recipient introduced by this technique, see Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 172.

³⁸⁷ See Mommaers, *The Riddle of Christian Mystical Experience*, Vol. 29, 168; for an analysis of "motherhood" in Hadewijch's writing see Holmes, *Flesh made Word. Medieval Women Mystics, Writing, and the Incarnation*, 49-85.

³⁸⁸ Cf. Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 21-22.

³⁸⁹ Cf. Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 41-42; Fraeters and Willaert point out that this is marked in the poems in stanzas by the use of the pronouns "I" in the teaching and "we" in the guiding context, see *Hadewijch*, 42; see also Fraeters, "'Mi smeltene mine sinne in minnen oerewoede'. Reflecties over genre en subjectiviteit in de *Liederen* van Hadewijch.", 443-44; for a more indepth analysis of a "functional distinction within the 'I'" and its consequences for either a poetical or narratological reading see, Fraeters, "'Mi smeltene mine

possibility for the readers to “read and understand” themselves from various perspectives.³⁹⁰ Reading has a performative and transformative potential.³⁹¹ The reader is to follow Hadewijch’s path and “adventure” in reading her works³⁹² with the aim of becoming a lover themselves.³⁹³

5.3 Visions: A Literary Genre

Keeping this intertwining of motives in Hadewijch’s works in mind,³⁹⁴ this reading will focus on the *Visions*, drawing on the letters and poetry occasionally.

For the reader to follow this reading, it is necessary to explain how and what Hadewijch describes in her *Visions*. It is possible that Hadewijch experienced something like ecstatic visions. Her representation of these experiences, however, is very well structured and a literary construction.³⁹⁵

sinne in minnen oerewoede’. Reflecties over genre en subjectiviteit in de *Liederen* van Hadewijch.”; there Fraeters refers to the “exemplary character” of Hadewijch in her writings (429) and highlights the spiritual perspective in contrast to a reading focused on the historical figure Hadewijch: “Daar is geen individualiteit, geen historiciteit, geen onderscheid tussen magistra en geestelijke leerling. Daar is alleen een eeuwigdurende *communitas* van godgelijke zielen die puur minne zijn.” 446; also see 447.

³⁹⁰ Cf. Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 174; Largier, “Von Hadewijch, Mechthild und Dietrich zu Eckhart und Seuse?” Bd. 9, 103–4; Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 7, 126–27; 132.

³⁹¹ Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 126–127: “In this fashion, the poetics operative in the text becomes a performative means for enacting, remembering, and finding the significance of lived experience. One is asked to live poetically - to use a Heideggerian motif - and this ‘living’ is in part guided and performed through the relation of life to words and speech. Actively tracing the figure of the divine in life allows the speaker of the son to recognize her way of living as her divinely sanctioned way of loving.” Also Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 70; on the tradition of striving towards and transforming in Love, see Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 19–26.

³⁹² Cf. Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 47–48.

³⁹³ Zimbalist phrases this in “Bakhtinian terms” as follows: “Within the visionary context, Christ’s speech obligates both the author and the reader to respond: the author through textual production, and the reader through interpretation and understanding.” “Quotation and Imitation in Hadewijch’s *Visioenen*,” 219.

³⁹⁴ Murk Jansen argues for an intertwining of Hadewijch’s writings, (e.g. Murk Jansen, Saskia M., “Hadewijch,” 664); Suydam comments: “I propose that scholars drop their hierarchical and developmental approach and examine the *Visions*, together with Hadewijch’s other works, as the products of a mature author. Unfortunately, this hierarchical approach, which has dominated modern scholarship, is reinforced by assumptions that entail the denigration of visionary religious literature.” Suydam, “The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp,” 8.

³⁹⁵ Fraeters argues for a process of ascending in the visions drawing on the development of a growth form child to Mother of love, the type of angelic guides as well as a rising level of abstraction in the idea of Christ, cf. Fraeters, “Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch’s Book of Visions,” 63; see also, Mommaers, *The Riddle of Christian Mystical Experience*, Vol. 29, 168.

The *Visions* follow a string of narration and the rules of a literary genre.³⁹⁶ Framed by a Christian holiday,³⁹⁷ Hadewijch comes out of her spirit³⁹⁸ and then encounters Love in her visions.³⁹⁹ The imagery she uses would have been well known to her audience so that her reinterpretation of it would be the most striking for her readers (something that is inaccessible to most modern readers).⁴⁰⁰ As Suydam puts it, however, this shows how “carefully crafted” each vision is. Consequently, the *Visions* should be analyzed as a work of literature, not as confessions of ecstasy.⁴⁰¹ Moreover, it can be argued that the structure and order of Hadewijch’s *Visions* follow the tradition of the ascent towards God.⁴⁰² Following this reading, the *Visions* describe a mystical process.⁴⁰³ The first vision serves as an introduction and summary of the ascent to God. There are two breaking points within the structure of the *Visions*. These are Vision 7 and Vision 13. In Vision 7, Hadewijch finds herself embraced by Christ, the man. This marks the first vital change on the way to become “God with God” (to be discussed below). The central Visions

³⁹⁶ Mommaers explains that the *Visions* were first received as an expression of Hadewijch’s personal experience. “This gave a new view of both the audience and the purpose of the Visions. This refined literary work was neither to remind Hadewijch of her visions, nor to enable her spiritual director to examine them; addressed to a friend she calls ‘dear child’, and to other kindred spirits, the Book of Visions was to offer some guidance to those on their way to Love.” Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 47; see also Suydam: “There is compelling evidence that Hadewijch’s written Visions are indeed works of literature (and, I would add, performance art), carefully crafted in several stages.” Suydam, “The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp,” 11; on visions as a literary genre also see, Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 63–66.

³⁹⁷ For distribution of the holidays to the individual visions, see Fraeters, “Gedoopt in Gods diepte. Liturgie en mystiek in het zesde visioen van Hadewijch”, 104-105.

³⁹⁸ As Fraeters points out this “excessus mentis”, already implies a passivity on Hadewijch’s side as a preparation of receiving. Hadewijch’s visions are granted to her but she experiences them passively, cf. Fraeters, “Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch’s Book of Visions,” 68.

³⁹⁹ Fraeters makes the distinction between ecstatic and non-ecstatic visions, see Fraeters, “The mystic’s *sensorium*”

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 46.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. Stölting on the history of visions as a theological and philosophical method: “Schon diese frühen Schilderungen [Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts] sind ganz eindeutig nicht auf *Berichte* über Visionen zurückzuführen; es handelt sich bei ihnen um *literarische Konstruktionen*, in denen Visionen bestimmten theologischen oder moralischen Argumentationen zusätzliches Gewicht, eine Art von göttlicher Bestätigung, verleihen sollen. So bleibt es auch in der weiteren Tradition.” Stölting, *Christliche Frauenmystik im Mittelalter*, 54; nonetheless, Fraeters points out: “the medieval vision was a well-defined phenomenon rather than a well-defined literary genre. As a phenomenon, the vision was considered, in the Middle Ages, a normal cognitive experience which leads to insight.” Fraeters, “Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch’s Book of Visions,” 59.

⁴⁰² For an elaborate analysis of this tradition see: Newman, “What Did It Mean to Say ‘I Saw’? The Clash between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture,” 13.

⁴⁰³ As demonstrated by Heszler, see Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*.

7 and 13 are followed by visions that resemble explanations and continuations of the previous vision (after Vision 7, for instance, the narration continues straight into Vision 8). Vision 13 symbolizes the full knowledge of God and Love and Vision 14 turns to the reader and is the only one that addresses the reader directly.⁴⁰⁴

Fraeters argues that Hadewijch does not only formally show her awareness of the tradition of the mystical ascent but that there is an increase of abstraction in the development of the *Visions*. She points out that Hadewijch grows from a child into becoming the mother of Love. This is mirrored in a growing complexity and abstraction in the progress of the *Visions*. Furthermore, the perception of Christ first as a Child then as a man with curly hair moves towards an abstract knowledge of Christ as the abyss “through which Hadewijch sees herself flowing.”⁴⁰⁵

Chávez Alvarez has shown the philosophical implications of the vision as genre in his thorough analysis of Hildegard of Bingen’s visions.⁴⁰⁶ Like Hildegard, Hadewijch follows Augustine in her portrayal of the *Visions*.⁴⁰⁷ Augustine differentiates between of *visio corporalis*, *visio spiritualis* and *visio intellectualis*.⁴⁰⁸ Fraeters shows that Hadewijch makes a point of marking her visions as *visio intellectualis*:

The *visio spiritualis* was fallible, the *visio intellectualis* infallible. It is therefore probably no coincidence that Hadewijch painstakingly explains that each of her

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. Fraeters following van Mierlo, Fraeters, “Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch’s Book of Visions,” 62.

⁴⁰⁵ Fraeters, “Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch’s Book of Visions,” 63.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Chávez Álvarez, “*Die brennende Vernunft*”, Vol. 8, 222–50; for a general analysis of the vision as a literary genre see: Dinzelsbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter*, Bd. 23.

⁴⁰⁷ For a close analysis of Hadewijch’s use of *visio intellectualis* see: Fraeters, “Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch’s Book of Visions,” also Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 34.

⁴⁰⁸ See Augustine, *De genesi ad litteram* XII 6, 15; 11, 23; 26, 54, quoted in Fraeters, “The Appearance of Queen Reason,” 66; Chávez Álvarez, “*Die brennende Vernunft*”, Vol. 8, 224: “Beide, die ‘visio corporalis’ und die ‘visio spiritualis’, sind zwei verschiedene Weisen des Gegenwärtig-Seins eines geschaffenen Objektes für den erkennenden Geist. Die dritte und höchste Weise, die ‘visio intellectualis’, ist die unbedingte Gegenwart der Wahrheit selbst als ungeschaffene Wirklichkeit. [...] Sie ereignet sich nicht mehr in der Vermittlung von körperhaften oder geistigen Visionen, sondern in der Unmittelbarkeit der göttlichen Präsenz, in welcher der Mensch Gott ‘os ad os’, mit dem Mund seiner erleuchteten ‘mens’, ansprechen kann. Er tritt in einen Dialog mit Gott ein. Deshalb vollzieht sich die ‘visio intellectualis’ in der Prophetie als Wort, das sich dem Schauenden in seiner Bedeutung erschließt. Sie ist in diesem Sinne kein reines Schauen, sondern grundsätzlich die Wortwerdung des Geheimnisses, ein aktives Verstehen, das unausweichlich in prophetische Rede mündet. Augustinus versteht die ‘visio intellectualis’ als ein nicht nur die Wahrheit erkennendes, sondern auch zur Wahrheit verpflichtendes Geschenk Gottes.” See also, Fraeters, “Visio/Vision”, 178-179.

'spiritual visions' - for which she uses the medieval Dutch term *ghelikenisse*, similitude - has led to intellectual vision: true insight in the essence of things and true contemplation of God's will and plan.⁴⁰⁹

Reporting the vision then becomes a form of telling truth.⁴¹⁰ This explains the authority of the visionary: they do not only speak the truth, they speak a truth known in union with God.⁴¹¹ Considering this, the present interpretation will see Hadwijch's *Visions* as a means to describe a way of understanding and knowing God.⁴¹² This is not to say that one can reduce Hadewijch's *Visions* to a theory of understanding: Experiencing and knowing God in the union,⁴¹³ the visionary is not only a witness but also becomes a role model for how to live one's life in accordance to what they have seen and experienced.⁴¹⁴ This

⁴⁰⁹ Fraeters, "Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch's Book of Visions," 70.

⁴¹⁰ As Chávez Álvarez shows with Hildegard, see Chávez Álvarez, "*Die brennende Vernunft*", Vol. 8, 241: "Was in ihr [Hildegard] redet, ist nicht das menschliche Ich, sondern die wortgewordene Wahrheit, das Licht, das sich im Schatten ereignet. Deshalb ist die Visio als die Wortwerdung der Wahrheit das Ereignis des Verbum Dei selbst, das sich unmittelbar als das offenbart, was es von Anbeginn ist, Wissen Gottes, in höchster Weise wahres und ewiges Wissen, ja göttliche Präsenz, in der sich das 'apud Deum' des Logos ankündigt."; Chávez Álvarez focuses on the concept of rationalitas in his analysis of Hildegard and phrases very well that the genre vision is an expression of rationality rather than being opposed to it: "Die Schau Gottes ist ein Erlebnis, bei dem der Mensch auch mit seiner Vernunft aufs äußerste beansprucht wird, denn ohne die willentliche Mitarbeit des Menschen, das heißt ohne seine wache und klare Teilnahme an der offenbreitenden Präsenz Gottes, kann die Wahrheit nicht vermittelt werden. Deshalb ist diese Vermittlung der Wahrheit für Hildegard stets eine von der Vernunft nachvollziehbare und durch sie zu verkündigende Offenbarung. [...] Die Visio ist demnach ein unmittelbares, vom menschlichen Geist nicht erzeugtes, sondern ihm gegebenes und trotzdem nicht sinnliches Erkennen, das sich dem Erkennenden als eine faktische Evidenz unerschütterlicher Gewißheit offenbart." Chávez Álvarez, "*Die brennende Vernunft*", Vol. 8, 232; see also Mommaers, *The Riddle of Christian Mystical Experience*, Vol. 29, 79; Zimbalist, "Quotation and Imitation in Hadewijch's *Visioenen*," 219.

⁴¹¹ Chávez Álvarez, "*Die brennende Vernunft*", Vol. 8, 242; This also explains why Foucault sees the "mystics" as the successors of the Greek tradition of *parrhesia*, cf. Foucault, *Der Mut zur Wahrheit*, 434.

⁴¹² Even if the *Visions* were meant as directly received from God and not a "conscious exegetical process" it is a process of "understanding (thus interpreting)" as Dailey states, Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 63; Dailey therefore describes Hadewijch's visions as "experiential hermeneutics", cf. Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 93. Fraeters emphasizes that it is not only knowledge of God but self-knowledge that the visionary understands: "Imaging therefore functions for the visionary as the expression of a divine nature in which one's soul is reflected. It is a heuristic tool with which the visionary can recognize this divine nature in herself." Fraeters, "The Appearance of Queen Reason," 84–85.

⁴¹³ This is why Ruh is right in pointing out that Hadewijch describes more of a deificatio than an imitation, cf. Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, Vol. 2, 218; also Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 35, 78; Chávez Álvarez, "*Die brennende Vernunft*", Vol. 8, 242: "Die Visio ist streng genommen der Vollzug der 'deificatio', der Gottwerdung, oder im Geiste Hildegards, der Logoswerdung."

⁴¹⁴ Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 121: "Visions unite in more ways than one, that is: not only do they illustrate or perform a union immanent for all humans (namely that of the union with the divine), but they provide a model, a poetics of embodiment, for uniting the outer body with the inner and show how the visionary or mystic can enact perfection in the world of life to create an exemplary vita through works."; similarly Kobusch states: "Was in Hadewijchs

explains the pedagogic and didactic understanding of visions and the importance to speak for the visionary: the visionary returns to mundane life to teach others (as Hadewijch herself points out in Vision 14).⁴¹⁵ This is the reason why her works expand to a practice of life. As Amy Hollywood points out, the emphasis on a union of *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*, often portrayed in the characters of Mary and Martha in visionary writings,⁴¹⁶ contains ethical demands.⁴¹⁷ This then makes out the philosophical importance of the vision as a genre: seeing the truth one has to speak the truth and act according to it.

5.4 The Experience of Dependence: Writing about Love

With their depiction of Love (*minne*), Hadewijch's writings add a different perspective of dependence and passivity to this thesis. They offer a vocabulary for the experience and knowledge of being dependent and relating to this dependence. Moreover, Hadewijch's idea of a lover as acknowledging and affirming passivity reflects the contradiction of free will and being bound to and by Love.⁴¹⁸ Reading Hadewijch's works consequently can teach the

Briefen und Visionen darüber hinaus ganz neu ist - soweit ein Rückgriff auf die Gedankenwelt des Origines neu genannt werden kann - ist der in Andeutung stets präsente, bisweilen aber auch deutlich ausgesprochene Gedanke von der dem Menschen in seiner idealen, präexistenten Form auferlegten Bestimmung, von der er sich im Erdenleben entfernt hat und der er nur durch die Liebe gerecht werden kann." Kobusch, "Die Philosophie des Hoch- und Spätmittelalters," V, 361.

⁴¹⁵ V 14, CW, 304 / XIV, 96-109; Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 46.

⁴¹⁶ Cf. Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*: "This conflict is consistently interpreted in terms of the contrast between Mary and Martha (or the typologically related one between Rachel and Leah), and so between contemplation and action. Insofar as they aspired to a life of action, the beguines stood with Martha." (10); As Aris points out this combination of intellectual learning and ethical implications of a good life is a major aspect of the school of the Victorines, see Aris in Richardus, *Contemplatio*, Vol. 6, 4: "Die Verschränkung von Wissenschaft und Lebensform, die aus Hugos Bemerkungen ersichtlich wird, muß als ein Proprium des viktorinischen Wissenschaftsbegriffs verstanden werden. In ihr wird die wissenschaftliche Forschung in den Prozeß der Vervollkommenung des Menschen als eines sittlichen Subjekts integriert und umgekehrt die spirituell konnotierte religiöse Praxis als eine Form von Rationalität erkennbar gemacht. Das kann insbesondere am Begriff der *contemplatio* deutlich werden." Investigating Hadewijch's connection to the Victorines, especially Godfrey of Saint Victor, would be a fruitful continuation of research but cannot be elaborated here, see, e.g. Godfrey's depiction and concept of love, cf. Feiss, *On Love*, Vol. 2, 94-99.

⁴¹⁷ Amy Hollywood claims that this importance of ethics in "mysticism" has often been ignored by critics, cf. Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, 11.

⁴¹⁸ Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 33: "Hadewijch, on the contrary, affirms emphatically both the compelling desire and the supreme freedom of ideal lovers. She seems

modern reader a way to speak about a relationship that is defined by actively seeking and even demanding passivity in Love.

The term “Minne” contains various meanings that are captured in and alluded to in the translation as “Love”: the term is related to the Latin “memini” (to remember) and “mens” (spirit / mind). One therefore literally keeps the beloved in mind or “present in one’s consciousness.”⁴¹⁹ Minne can refer to “friendship” and “affection” as well as “desire”.⁴²⁰ It is a way to address the loved one.⁴²¹ At the same time, it can stand for “peace” and “concord”.⁴²² In the context of Hadewijch’s use of “Minne”, one also has to keep in mind the interpretation of the *Songs of Songs* by Bernhard of Clairvaux and the writings of William of Thierry, which Hadewijch was familiar with.⁴²³ The female lover in the song searches for her groom and longs for him. This imagery is applied to the soul in search of God. Moreover, courtly love lyric also depicted the noble knight’s adventures to gain his beloved benevolence and love. All of these uses of Love find their way into Hadewijch’s writings. Her understanding of Love describes the Trinitarian dynamic within the divine being as well as the relationship between the soul⁴²⁴ as lover and God as Love and the loved one.⁴²⁵ As Dailey writes: “Minne is both the means (through love) and the end (unity), the teleological (and theological) pursuit and goal.”⁴²⁶ The lover is continuously striving

to me to affirm here a certain ‘passivity’ of the lover to himself or herself, a passivity that will be integrated, mastered perhaps, by freedom of will. But the passivity itself, the rising, nature and force of the pressing desire, is not subject to will but given to it to carry out or deny.”

⁴¹⁹ Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 4.

⁴²⁰ Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, 360.

⁴²¹ Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, 360.

⁴²² Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, 360.

⁴²³ Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 22-26.

⁴²⁴ In the sense of the Latin word “anima”, see Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 23.

⁴²⁵ Cf. Boon, “Trinitarian Love Mysticism: Ruusbroec, Hadewijch, and the Gendered Experience of the Divine”, 493: “For Hadewijch, only Minne, referring at once to God as lady, the soul as knight, and to the loving relationships within God and between lover and God, can capture in one many-layered phrase the multiplicity of the experience of simple union with a God beyond descriptors.”

⁴²⁶ Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 145: “Given Hadewijch’s interest in becoming Minne, the way the Trinity manifests itself in life, and the way in which it is ultimately united in the three persons and united with humans, the insistence on Minne as a final term is understandable as it is the ultimate figure of unit for all. Minne is both the means (through love) and the end (unity), the teleological (and theological) pursuit and goal. What is perhaps different about Hadewijch’s mysticism is precisely that the figure of the ‘all,’ of Minne, of absolute unity makes its appearance at every stage, performatively imitating the immanent plenitude that is promised at every hour and secretly (and poetically) underlies all creaturely life.”

towards a union in and with Love.⁴²⁷ Christ as human and God becomes a role model.⁴²⁸ In fully experiencing Christ's suffering as a human being, Christ's humanity is the experience of humankind after the fall and in sin. The fall is a distance from God as a consequence of free choice. The Christian lover as a human being longs for a return to divine being in Love.⁴²⁹ Hadewijch briefly glimpses this union and is torn between longing and pleasure in Love from this moment onwards. Her writings depict the struggle and pain as well as hope and enjoyment of this relation to Love. To express this experience,⁴³⁰ Hadewijch combines the imagery of courtly love poetry and theological and philosophical concepts of divine Love of her time. The philosophical background of this concept of Love is the Aristotelian understanding of *telos* and love as the striving and desire of all beings as a return to their origin. Neoplatonic thinkers like Augustine emphasized the importance of man as the image of God (*imago dei*). The fall of man polluted this image and true nature of humankind. The mind henceforth seeks to return to this true nature.⁴³¹ Hadewijch phrases this striving in terms of a knight's *queste*.⁴³² The lover, as a knight of Love finds the first encounter with Love as a moment of joyous connection and is henceforth bound to the loved one.

⁴²⁷ On how this fits in with the context of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic thought see Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 22-26.

⁴²⁸ Mommaers, *The Riddle of Christian mystical experience*, 173; Zimablist, "Quotation and Imitation in Hadewijch's *Visioenen*," 216; see the below analysis of vision 7 and the references there.

⁴²⁹ Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, on *imitatio*, see 25-26; on the fall see, 21, 22, 25; Heszler points out that God always loves the soul and that the separation from him is only due to human limitedness, see Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 172.

⁴³⁰ On the importance of experience, see Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 6-7: "Hadewijch has a unique capacity to put the pleasure and pain of love into precise perspective. It is vitally important to her that the reader recognizes how the personal experience leads to the objective God - that what one perceives as happening in oneself is the presence of the One who is also outside and opposite oneself. Experiencing Love (*minne*) is meeting the Beloved (*beminde*). The divine Object is found in personal experience."; also Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 5: "Apparently Hadewijch originally experienced something disconcerting - the real presence of a force that seized her and which was active everywhere and in everything. She was touched bodily by something unprecedented, something which could not be named, even with the most exalted and precious words - God, Christ - of her own tradition. This reality was so omnipresent and at once so elusive that Hadewijch sought a new term. Not that it was an indefinite, amorphous reality: it is beyond doubt that to Hadewijch the new force was the God of Christianity, but it was the God she came to know through experience. God is not just an object of contact and impact - this truth Hadewijch illuminates by calling him by a new name, a name that sounds more lively: *minne* (Love)."

⁴³¹ Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 24-26; on Augustine and Hadewijch's see Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 81.

⁴³² Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 40.

In the next phase, this connection to Love becomes imprisonment in longing for Love as Love withdraws.⁴³³ Hadewijch's works rephrase Christ's cry from the cross: "Why hast thou forsaken me".⁴³⁴ This expression of experiencing oneself as wilfully submitting to passivity and yet suffering from it in feeling abandoned describe an existential human experience.⁴³⁵ Rather than finding a solution to it, Hadewijch's writings explore this experience. The writings thereby give an extensive description of what it means to know oneself absolutely dependent on a personal other.

The doubt and uncertainty of this existential struggle with and for Love are reflected in Hadewijch's style and use of language. Hadewijch's writings destabilize meaning by unifying opposing concepts in her descriptions, such as pride in humility⁴³⁶ as well as paradoxical imagery.⁴³⁷ Whatever Hadewijch says she "unsays" it at the same time.⁴³⁸ The texts evoke the unrest and doubt she describes.⁴³⁹ Just as her experience of Love, her writings evoke an instability that mirrors a presence and absence of Love.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³³ Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 39. This is phrased as the "bant van minne" that the lover upholds, see PS 39, cf. Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 46; for more information see also Reynaert, *De beeldspraak van Hadewijch*, Vol. 21, 41-50.

⁴³⁴ Murk Jansen, Saskia M., "Hadewijch," 674.

⁴³⁵ For readings of Hadewijch's works along this line see, e.g. Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 123; Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 43; Shea, *Medieval women on sin and salvation*, 108.

⁴³⁶ Cf. Suydam: "Hadewijch's writings thus destabilize the meaning of the virtues (humility, faith, hope, and love/God) by paradoxically locating their opposites within them (pride, unfaith, despair, and bitterness/Hell) and elevating (lowering?) those qualities. The written version of Vision 13 is a carefully crafted work of art which uses familiar symbols in a context that completely 'unsays' them." Suydam, "The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp," 26; I am indebted to Gerhard Hofmann for the conversations we have had on Hadewijch's imagery and his repeated emphasis on the innovative space construction in Hadewijch's *Visions*.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, 158: "Ultimately, to Hadewijch, love is most closely approached in paradox. Thus her central food images are images of an eating that leaves one hungry, of an unfulfilled craving that nevertheless is the only food. "

⁴³⁸ Cf. Suydam, "The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp," 26.

⁴³⁹ As Suydam writes: "Thus, Hadewijch's vivid depictions of humility and pride in Vision 13, far from being 'juvenile,' are part of a consistent philosophy that is integrated throughout her other works. Once again Hadewijch's writings destabilize a traditional dichotomy - in this case, pride and humility." Suydam, "The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp," 23-24.

⁴⁴⁰ Dailey highlights the aspect of affection and emotion in this process of understanding and imitation: "When we are able to *read* embodiment, immediacy, and experience as responding to and performing various discursive and hermeneutic functions, another textual medium becomes perceptible, its language able to be heard and understood beyond merely being 'embodied.' Understanding this embodied responsiveness as representing an affective or emotional literacy - that is, one that correlates affective responses with textual identifications

Hadewijch's texts contribute to this thesis in virtue of their capacity to put the struggle of making sense of this existential experience of instability into words.

As the reading will show, humility is a way that enables the lover to own their passivity in Love and even demand Love because of their dependence.

5.5 The Concept of Humility in Hadewijch's *Visions*

The following paragraphs summarize the section on Hadewijch before unfolding the reading in detail.

Humility in Hadewijch's *Visions* describes how human nature grows in humility towards the humanity of Christ. The inward movement of humility is not a letting go of humanity but a movement of fully becoming human like Christ. Hadewijch's ascent in humility thus is *through* her humanity. In humility, Hadewijch has to embrace suffering because of her humanity and as a human being. Being human describes the greatest distance between God and Hadewijch but Christ's humanity is also the place of a union with God. Thus, being human is being the furthest away and, at the same time, being the closest to a union with God.⁴⁴¹ This turns Hadewijch's descent in humility into an ascent to the humanity of Christ. Hadewijch's descent in humility is an inward movement, and the likeness to Christ is reached through what she calls "mistrust" (*ontrouwe*). The highest and deepest point of humanity is mistrusting Love as expressed by Christ's cry from the cross.⁴⁴² It is being torn between knowing the presence of Love and simultaneously experiencing the absence of Love. Reaching this depth introduces a change in the dynamics of Love. For, Hadewijch in her longing for Love demands Love. Hadewijch's notion of mistrust introduces the idea that in Love passivity can be activity. Hadewijch's concept of humility, therefore, highlights that activity is not only

- is a first step in discerning the larger textual role of the body, the long historical chain of associations that condition the body's interpolation with textual forms." *Promised Bodies*, 7.

⁴⁴¹ As Mommaers comments on Vision 1: "Hadewijch has indeed been mystically united with God through being raised to enjoy the Divinity and the glorified Humanity, but she still has to realize this high gift at the lowly level of human existence." *The Riddle of Christian Mystical Experience*, Vol. 29, 178; Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 56-60.

⁴⁴² Murk Jansen, Saskia M., "Hadewijch," 674.

giving but also receiving. Unlike the idea of a self-sufficient being flowing out, Hadewijch's image of the two abysses engulfing each other implies a union of two equals, who take as well as give. Hadewijch's concept of humility then can turn around the understanding of passivity as taking and activity as giving. This is connected to her understanding of Love: Love dissolves the hierarchy of the active one who gives and the passive one who receives. In passively longing for Love, Hadewijch actively takes in Love. This reveals a power that lies in claiming one's dependence on another in humility, which we will see developed as action before God in Kierkegaard's humble courage.

5.6 Humility in Hadewijch's Visions

The Hadewijch's Visions describe a process of understanding Love, starting with the question "What is love?" in Vision 2 and ending with knowing Love at the end of Vision 14.⁴⁴³ The following interpretation will analyse Hadewijch's understanding of humility. The first part will follow the visions 1-6 and show how self-knowledge and humility are connected. The second step will show humility as the humanity of Christ. Finally, the thesis will turn to the change of humility in the union with God.

5.6.1 *Vision 1: The Garden of Perfect Virtues*

The first part of this analysis will focus on Vision 1 and the understanding of humility that it presents. Vision 1 fulfils the function of an introduction to Hadewijch's *Visions*. It is the longest vision and already indicates motives that Hadewijch will unfold in the following visions. The vision is set in a garden, invoking paradise.⁴⁴⁴ In it, Hadewijch is led to a circle of trees. An

⁴⁴³ Heszler expands this in calling the visions 2 and 3 a "Welterklärungsmodell", Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 34.

⁴⁴⁴ See Reynaert, *De beeldspraak van Hadewijch*, 278-293. For a closer examination of the depiction of paradise as a garden, see Frühe, *Das Paradies ein Garten - der Garten ein Paradies*, Vol. 103; Kosmer explains the use of a garden as an image for the soul, cf. Kosmer, "Gardens of Virtue in the Middle Ages," 302.

angel explains the meaning of each tree to her. In the centre of the circle, she encounters Christ.⁴⁴⁵

This reading will only briefly mention the first four trees to use their description as a way to introduce non-Hadewijch scholars to Hadewijch's imagery and thinking.⁴⁴⁶

5.6.1.1 *The Tree of Self-Knowledge*

The first tree that Hadewijch sees is described as follows:

The first tree had a rotten root, which was very brittle, but a very solid trunk. And above this bloomed a charming, very beautiful flower; but it was so frail that if a storm had ever blown up, this flower would have fallen and faded.⁴⁴⁷

Hadewijch's ascent to Love starts with a revelation of human nature as the vision continues with the angel who guides Hadewijch telling her:

“Human nature, understand and know what this tree is!” And I understood, just as he revealed it to me, that the tree was the knowledge of ourselves [*kinnesse ons selfs*]. The rotten root was our brittle nature; the solid trunk, the eternal soul; and the beautiful flower, the beautiful human shape, which becomes corrupt so quickly, in an instant (cf. James 1:11).⁴⁴⁸

This is how Hadewijch depicts her idea of human nature.⁴⁴⁹ The idea of a flower that has to grow and be well-grounded will become her dominant symbol for the soul's growth to perfection.⁴⁵⁰ As Hofmann remarks, this

⁴⁴⁵ Heszler points out that in her emphasis of the cognitive act Hadewijch breaks with the tradition: “Auch die zentralen Strukturelemente weichen vom sonstigen Kompositionsmuster ab: keine überirdischen Wesen sind die Agierenden, sondern Personifikationen; denn die dargestellte Form der Selbsterkenntnis erfolgt nicht über das absolute Erkennen Gottes, im Einswerden von erkennendem Subjekt und erkanntem Objekt, sondern als kognitiver Akt, den das visionäre Ich verbal und im symbolischen Gestus bekräftigt. Funktion und Struktur der Vernunft sollen sozusagen in möglichst enger Relation zum Erkenntnisvermögen des Publikums einsichtig gemacht werden.” Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 70.

⁴⁴⁶ After the first four trees there is a caesura and the trees have multiple branches and meanings. Ruh also sees a caesura here and points out that the first four trees symbolize Hadewijch's current state, see Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, Vol. 2, 195.

⁴⁴⁷ V 1, CW, 263 / I, 21-25.

⁴⁴⁸ V 1, CW, 263 / I, 31-37; the depiction of the tree of self-knowledge and humility can also be found in Gregorianum and in Garnerus. The symbol of the flower is probably taken from the bible: Job 14:2; Ps. 89:6; Petr. 1:24; Jak. 1:10; Ps. 102: 15-16, Jes. 40:6, cf. Reynaert, *De beeldspraak van Hadewijch*, Vol. 21, 284.

⁴⁴⁹ Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 10.

⁴⁵⁰ As Heszler points out “[d]iese Erkenntnis [...] [ist] die Voraussetzung dafür, daß sich der Mensch von der Schönheit des Vergänglichen abzuwenden und dem Unvergänglichen zuzuwenden vermag, dessen Schönheit die folgenden Bäume versinnbildlichen.” Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 10. Because of her indepth interest in self-knowledge Mommaers counts Hadewijch among the movement of “twelfth century humanism” (introduced by Southern), cf. Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 59–60.

already points towards the potential of human nature to grow into the image of God.⁴⁵¹ Humankind is not only the image of God in and through the soul, but the *similitudo* is also echoed in the trinitarian structure of this idea of human nature.⁴⁵²

Nonetheless, the imagery of the “rotten roots” and the “frail flower” reveal imperfection and decay. In being asked to know herself, Hadewijch sees her own fragility and weakness. Moreover, it shows her limitedness and privation. This can also be found in the *Letters*: “Sometimes Love so enlightens me that I know what is wanting in me [...].”⁴⁵³ Firstly, self-knowledge, therefore, is knowing, what is wanting in oneself.⁴⁵⁴ Secondly, self-knowledge is bound to revelation in the *Visions*. Only in the light of Love does one really know oneself. As Hofmann points out, the general meaning of self-knowledge is supplemented with the individual self-knowledge in the process of spiritual growth.⁴⁵⁵ This highlights that Hadewijch does not give way to mere revelation in self-knowledge. A human being has to see and thereby know themselves in what they are but they can only know themselves as the image of God through revelation. Self-knowledge means to know one’s limitations as a human being and to see one’s potential as the image of God.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵¹ Hofmann emphasizes the importance of this Trinitarian concept in Hadewijch’s anthropology: “Unabhängig davon ist es aber wichtig zu wissen, daß mit der dem Menschen von Gott verliehenen Seele hier der anthropologische Anknüpfungspunkt für die zu realisierende Gottförmigkeit des Menschen genannt wird. Die Seele ist der Teil des Menschen, der nach Gottes Ebenbild, Gen 1,26, geschaffen ist. Hier findet sich die ‘imago Trinitatis’, die in Analogie zur göttlichen Dreifaltigkeit verstandene Anlage der Seelenkräfte – wie ‘memoria-ratio-voluntas’, so bei Wilhelm von St. Thierry, [...] -, ja wie Hadewijch, Br. 22, 137, sagt, Gottes Natur selbst.” Hofmann, *Hadewijch: Das Buch der Visionen*, Vis. 13, 18–19.

⁴⁵² Hofmann, *Hadewijch: Das Buch der Visionen*, Vis. 13, 18–19. On the term “nature” in Hadewijch’s writing, see Vanneste, “Over de betekenis van enkele abstracta in de taal van Hadewijch,” 26–34.

⁴⁵³ L 11, CW, 69 / L 11, 40–43.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Hofmann, *Hadewijch: Das Buch der Visionen*, Vis. 13, 18–19; L 27, CW, 107: “God be with you and make known to you all the hidden ways (cf. Job 3:23) you are under obligation to follow and live by in veritable love, so that he may make known to you the unspeakable, vast sweetness of his ardent sweet Nature, which is so deep and so unfathomable that in wondrousness and unknowableness he is deeper and darker than the abyss. May God grant you yourself to know in all things what you are in want of, and may you thus attain to a knowledge of the sublime Love that he himself, our great God, is (cf. 1 John 4: 16).” Hezler highlights the importance of self-knowledge as a starting point of the ascent, cf. Hezler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 10.

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Hofmann, *Hadewijch: Das Buch der Visionen*, Vol. 13, 18–19, see also L 14, CW, 77 / L 14, 43–54.

⁴⁵⁶ Cf. Fraeters: “A vision is, therefore, an instrument of self-knowledge for her, a medium in which her soul mirrors itself in God by means of images, and can then convey to what

5.6.1.2 *The Tree of Humility*

What follows is Hadewijch's description of the tree of humility:

Then he led me further to where a tree stood that was very low and had beautiful leaves, graceful and multicolored, that were pleasing to the sight. And above all these beautiful leaves hung withered leaves that concealed all the beautiful leaves. And then the Angel said again: "Chosen soul of high aspirations, you have been drawn from such ignobility to such loftiness, from such dark ignorance to such light (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9), and from such great poverty to the greatest wealth – understand what this is!" And he showed me, and I understood that it was humility that had recognized God's greatness and its own unworthiness, and now with wise fear hid all the virtues by which it was truly adorned, because it felt and knew that it lacked fruition of its Beloved, and that it did not know how to remedy this lack. This is pure humility [*puer oetmoet*].⁴⁵⁷

Humility follows directly after self-knowledge and is named before will and reason. This shows the importance of the virtues, and humility in particular, in Hadewijch's thinking. Humility and self-knowledge are strongly linked, and humility is a precondition of any life of loving God as Hofmann points out.⁴⁵⁸ So, there are two meanings of humility in connection to self-knowledge. Humility as a practice and disposition as well as humility as a form of recognizing one's own deficiency.⁴⁵⁹ Humility, therefore, is the consequence of humankind knowing itself as lacking and this leads to the task of practising humility as a constant realization of this self-knowledge.⁴⁶⁰

extent she mirrors Him. In other words, it is a question of seeing to what extent her soul is already a spotless *imago Dei*." Fraeters, "The Appearance of Queen Reason," 84.

⁴⁵⁷ V I, CW, 264 / I, 37-52.

⁴⁵⁸ Hadewijch, *Buch der Briefe*, 246–47.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Hofmann in Hadewijch, *Buch der Briefe*, 246–47; also Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 11: "Nur eine Seele, die sich selbst für gering achtet, kann sich uneingeschränkt dem Willen Gottes unterwerfen. Deshalb sind die beiden unmittelbar folgenden Tugenden, die 'cracht van volcomenen wille' (68) und die 'onderscedechheit' (78), die exemplarisch die Seelenvermögen 'voluntas' und 'ratio' repräsentieren, von ihr als Grundposition unterfangen." This is not something unique and has been investigated in the writings of other authors, see, e.g. on Thomas Aquinas: "[...] humility, in essence, calls us to look beyond ourselves, to know our place by the practice of othercenteredness. I will explore humility in two basic aspects: the quality of humility as self-knowledge, and the practice by which we acquire humility." Fullam, *The Virtue of Humility*, 15.

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 11. At the beginning of this analysis of humility, it is important to point out that Hadewijch rejects any form of "outward" humility. She explicitly warns against a mere showing of humility, see, e.g. L 23, CW, 103 / L 23, 16-21: "Always and in every way be humble, yet not so humble that you become foolish and neglect truth and justice wherever you can put them into practice. For verily I say to you: he who tells a lie for the sake of humility shall be punished for it." See also Duclow: "Hadewijch's obvious learning and literary virtuosity distinguish her from Bynum's 'virtually illiterate' religious women and bring her closer to Eckhart. Hadewijch thoroughly mastered courtly literature, and her works reflect knowledge of Augustine, William of St. Thierry, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Richard of St. Victor. Further, instead of claiming to be a weak, barely literate woman—a role that Hildegard, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and others embraced—Hadewijch justifiably boasts of her literary skills. When describing experiences of union with God, she writes, 'Earth cannot understand heavenly wisdom. Words enough and Dutch enough can be found

5.6.1.3 *The Intertwining Trees of Will and Discernment*

The tree of will and discernment are intertwining so that the close connection of the two is emphasized.⁴⁶¹ The fact that Hadewijch gives these concepts such a dominant position in her *Visions* shows that Hadewijch does not follow the whims of her “affections”⁴⁶² despite a genre and choice of imagery that might imply this for a modern reader. On will Hadewijch is told:

After that he led me farther to where a tall tree stood, a strong tree adorned with big, wide leaves. And then the Angel said again to me: “O powerful and strong one, you have conquered the powerful and strong God, from the origin of his Being, which was without beginning; and with him you shall wield power over eternity in eternity! Read, and understand!” And I read and understood [*ic las ende verstont*]. On each leaf was written: “I am the power of the perfect will; nothing can escape me.”⁴⁶³

It is not a coincidence that Hadewijch’s words “I read and understood” recall Augustine’s “Tolle, lege!” from the *Confessions*.⁴⁶⁴ Hadewijch’s concept of freedom is very much indebted to Augustine.⁴⁶⁵ It is noteworthy that Hadewijch is asked to “read and understand”. In referring to Augustine’s words and expanding their meaning, Hadewijch puts herself in this tradition but also emphasizes the power of reading, specifically *her* reading.

for all things on earth, but I do not know any Dutch or any words that answer my purpose. Although I can express everything insofar as this is possible for a human being, no Dutch can be found for all I have said to you, since none exists to express these things, so far as I know.” Duclo, “The Hungers of Hadewijch and Eckhart,” 439.

⁴⁶¹ Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 11; Hofmann, *Hadewijch: Das Buch der Visionen*, Vol. 13, 23; Reynaert, *De beeldspraak van Hadewijch*, Vol. 21, 386; for a comparison with Bernhard of Clairvaux, see Bernhard von Clairvaux, *De Gratia et Libero arbitrio*, Vol. 1, 179/ II.3. 2-5.

⁴⁶² See Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 81. Even if Hadewijch emphasizes the importance of affections for her ascent (e.g. Vision 8), reason is at least equally important to her as Jahae comments on the poetry, see Jahae, *Sich begnügen mit dem Ungenügen*, Vol. 21, 239.

⁴⁶³ V 1, CW, 264 / I, 52-60.

⁴⁶⁴ “As I was saying this and weeping in the bitter agony of my heart, suddenly I heard a voice from the nearby house chanting as if it might be a boy or a girl (I do not know which), saying and repeating over and over again ‘Pick up and read, pick up and read.’ [...] I interpreted it solely as a divine command to me to open the book and read the first chapter I might find. [...] I seized it, opened it and in silence read the first passage on which my eyes lit.” Book VIII, xi, 27-30 in Augustine, *Confessions*, 152-53.

⁴⁶⁵ Hadewijch describes her understanding of freedom in Vision 11 and Letter 18. She herself points out her indebtedness to Augustine when she “encounters” Augustine in Vision 11. However, the vision ends: “[...] then I remained free. No doubt I continued to belong to God alone while being united in Love to this creature. But my liberty I gained then was given me moreover for reasons of my own, which neither Augustine nor many others had.” V 11, CW, 290-291 / XI, 83-88. On freedom in Hadewijch see: Hofmann, *Hadewijch. Das Buch der Visionen*, 209; Reynaert, *De beeldspraak van Hadewijch*, Vol. 21, 381-391.

Hadewijch's concept of freedom is directly linked to her concept of humility for true humility is to subjugate one's own will to God's will.⁴⁶⁶ But the experience of freedom as dependence also humbles the soul.

Next to the tree of the will, Hadewijch finds the tree of discernment.⁴⁶⁷ The strong connection of willing and understanding is also highlighted by the intertwining branches of the trees.

And nearby stood a tree with many branches; it was tall and extended all its branches through those of another tree. And the Angel said to me again: 'O wise one, instructed by reason [*vander redenen berecht*], even by the reason [*redennen*] of the great God, read and understand the wise and longsighted lesson that teaches those who row up through one another!' And I understood that it could be read on each leaf: 'I am discernment [*onderscedechheit*]: without me you can do nothing'⁴⁶⁸

There is a hierarchy of reason in this quote: first, Hadewijch is called "*vander redenen berecht*"⁴⁶⁹ then "*redene*" is divine reason; finally, Hadewijch comes to understand the tree as the tree of "*onderscedechheit*"⁴⁷⁰ without which one

⁴⁶⁶ "You, who are disposed to be meek and free./ If you want all of love/ Wholly, as love lives in her self,/I counsel you: with faithfulness, even if you suffer woe, /Renounce everthing and let go of it;/ Then your hearts will grow wide and deep, / And then the conduit flowing out/ Into Mary without measure, will flood you./Pray high faithfulness that she let it flow to you. [...]/ To where Mary is one with love in all." PS 29, ll.111-124 / PS 29, 209.

⁴⁶⁷ As Fraeters has pointed out to me this is not a thorough analysis of the understanding of "reason" in Hadewijch's works. This section merely points to different aspects and lexicons but cannot give a full analysis. It mentions this aspect of Hadewijch's thinking for non-Hadewijch scholars and not as a summary or contribution to Hadewijch scholarship. As such it cannot reflect the full depth of terms like "*redene*" or "*onderscedechheit*." Fraeters pointed me to Vanneste, "Over de betekenis van enkele abstracta in de taal van Hadewijch," 9-95; Reynaert, *De beeldspraak van Hadewijch*, Vol. 21; Willaert, *De poëtica van Hadewijch in de Strofische Gedichten* for a thorough analysis of reason in Hadewijch's texts.

⁴⁶⁸ V I, CW, 264 / I, 60-68.

⁴⁶⁹ V I, 64, cf. Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 79; on the indebtedness of the concept of "ratio" and reason to Augustine see Hofmann, *Hadewijch. Buch der Briefe*, 202-3.

⁴⁷⁰ V I, 64. This might be a link to Richard of St. Victor and his concept of "discretio" and virtue: "Die Unterscheidung ist nach Richard die geistige Instanz im Menschen, die, allen anderen Tugenden vorgelagert, diese durch Scharfsinn und kluge Mäßigung vor dem Abgleiten zur Untugend oder zum Laster bewahrt. 'Discretio' unterscheidet zwischen Gut und Böse; vgl. die ausführliche Analyse bei Richard, Benjamin Minor 66-70, (PL 196) 47-51; [...] Die 'redene' ist zwar der 'onderscedechheit' logisch übergeordnet, kann aber, wenn die moralisch-ethische Seite des Menschen im Blickpunkt steht, dieser praktisch synonym verwendet werden." Hofmann, *Hadewijch: Das Buch der Visionen*, Vol. 13, 24; Hofmann also points to Bernhard who also sees reason as leader and guide of virtue, cf. Hofmann, *Hadewijch: Das Buch der Visionen*, Vol. 13, 24-25; Heszler explains the differentiation of "*onderscedechheit*", "*redene*" and "*wijsheit*": "Die Tugenden des Intellekts werden als 'onderscedechheit' (85), 'redene' (98) und 'wijsheit' (105) differenziert. Sie bezeichnen das diskursive und synthetische Erkenntnisvermögen, das einerseits zum geordneten, zielstrebigem Handeln in der 'vita activa', andererseits zur intuitiven Schau in der Kontemplation befähigt. Eine übergeordnete Bedeutung kommt dabei der 'wijsheit' zu, die aktives Tugendwirdken 'die tonese beint in allen heerscape van elker volcomenleker doegt' (105-106) und höchste kontemplative Fähigkeit 'Si toense oec bekint dore elken persoan der driuoldicheit' (108-109) vereint. Obgleich der Intellekt Gott immer nur in 'figueren' (Br. XII, 33), d.h. in Bildern und Begriffen, wahrnimmt, wird der problematische Aspekt dieser

“can do nothing”. This passage highlights various aspects of reason for Hadewijch. Reason guides the will as well as action.⁴⁷¹ Reason draws out the self in two complementary directions: firstly, in a guiding manner showing a person’s possibilities and powers; secondly, the limits of those possibilities.⁴⁷² This is why in her *Letters* Hadewijch demands that one bow down to one’s reason.⁴⁷³ Reason enables self-knowledge as an understanding of oneself.⁴⁷⁴ As such, it is the instrument for examining and reflecting oneself:

You must examine yourselves as to how you can endure everything disagreeable that happens to you, and how you can bear the loss of what gives you pleasure;[...] It is truly fitting that everyone contemplates God’s grace and goodness with wisdom and prudence: for God has given us our beautiful faculty of reason, which instructs man in all his ways and enlightens him in all works. If man would follow reason, he would never be deceived.⁴⁷⁵

5.6.2 *Approaching the Abyss: from Servant to Lover*

5.6.2.1 *Vision 6: Spiritual Union with God*

Vision 2-5 describe Hadewijch’s search for Love and the tasks she is given on this search. Hadewijch is characterized as questioning and doubting she asks: “What is Love? And who is Love?”⁴⁷⁶ In Vision 3, she is told to “bring me yourself, as pure humanity in myself, through all the ways of perfect Love, [...] Until that day you shall love what I, Love, am.”⁴⁷⁷ The first visions are

Tugendgruppe, die ‘vordert in die dinc die god es Bi dier dinc die god niet en es’ (Br. XVIII, 82-83), an dieser Stelle nicht aufzeigt; denn mit der IX. Vision gilt er als überwunden.” Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 108; for a thorough analysis of “onderscedechheit” and “discretio”, see Vanneste, “Over de betekenis van enkele abstracta in de taal van Hadewijch,” 64-69.

⁴⁷¹ See, e.g. L 14, CW, 77; Ruh points out that what Hadewijch refers to in the fourth tree is the use of reason, which shows the instrumental importance of *redene* for Hadewijch, cf. Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, Vol. 2, 195. She, therefore, makes quite clear that in her thinking the difference of “intellectus” and “ratio” is upheld. The discussion of which would go far beyond the limits of this investigation. Therefore, I would only like to point to Chávez Álvarez discussion of this point, which can be related to Hadewijch’s concept of reason and a possible connection to Augustine, Chávez Álvarez, “*Die brennende Vernunft*”, Vol. 8, 49–50.

⁴⁷² Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 11–12, 61.

⁴⁷³ L 13, CW, 75 / L 13, 17-21: “He who wishes all things to be subject to him must himself be subject to reason, above whatever he wills or whatever anyone else wills of him. For no one can become perfect in Love unless he is subject to his reason.”

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. Hofmann, Hadewijch, *Buch der Briefe*, 25.

⁴⁷⁵ L 14, CW, 77 / L 14, 43-54; see also: “Then Reason did me an injury./ I thought it a feud./ That she took from me the attire/ Love herself had given me./ I thought it a feud;/ Yet Reason taught me to live the truth.” PS 30, CW, 214; v. Baest translates “redene” with “mind”, PS 30, ll. 61-66/ PS 30, 213.

⁴⁷⁶ V 2, CW, 271 / II, 18.

⁴⁷⁷ V 3, CW, 272 / III, 13-19.

marked by instructions and describe a way to Love. In Vision 6, Hadewijch's search in doubt and love finds a momentary satisfaction.⁴⁷⁸ It is her longing that moves her in love:

It was on a certain feast of Epiphany: I was then nineteen years old, as was mentioned to me that day. Then it was my will to go to our Lord; for at this time I experienced desires and an exceedingly strong longing [...] On this day, because of my longing, I was again strongly moved in Love [*in minnen beruert*].⁴⁷⁹

Hadewijch's desire raises the question of how to be according to God's will [*die hem als in allen na sinen will sijn*].⁴⁸⁰ It is important to note that this process shows how Hadewijch's desire moves her to a philosophical notion about God's will. In the following, she sees a seat with a crown.⁴⁸¹ An angel approaches. He speaks for Hadewijch and praises God on her behalf. Hadewijch is described as:

And it is she, Lord, who comes to seek you in the spirit – who you are, in your incomprehensibility. For that mysterious life, which you with burning charity have aroused in her, has led her to this place. Now reveal to her that you have drawn her here, and transport her wholly within yourself.⁴⁸²

Hadewijch is granted to find what she was looking for. "And I saw him whom I sought."⁴⁸³ But the seen transgresses language:⁴⁸⁴

I saw his greatness oppressed under all. I saw his littleness exalted above all. I saw his hiddenness embracing and flowing through all things: I saw his breadth enclosed in all. I heard his reasoned understanding and perceived all reason with reason. I saw in his breast the entire fruition of his Nature in Love. In everything else I saw, I could understand that in the spirit.⁴⁸⁵

The paradoxical structure of this statement brings to light the limits of reason and language. Next Hadewijch comes out of herself through wonder

⁴⁷⁸ I am indebted to Veerle Fraeters for her comments on my talk at the conference "Medieval Mystical Theology in Dialogue with Contemporary Thought" at KU Leuven 30 May-2 June 2018 to point out the connection of Vision 6 and Vision 7; see also Fraeters, "The mystic's *sensorium*," 30-33.

⁴⁷⁹ V 6, CW, 278 / VI, 1-9.

⁴⁸⁰ V VI, 7-8.

⁴⁸¹ Vision 6 is a retelling of the seat of justice, cf. Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 512.

⁴⁸² V 6, CW, 278 / VI, 30-35.

⁴⁸³ V 6, CW, 278 / VI, 38.

⁴⁸⁴ Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 51: "An der Grenze des Eben-Noch-Sagbaren evoziert das Gegeneinanderausspielen von Abstrakta die Immanenz und Transzendenz Gottes, um dem Leser jede personhaft gebundene, anthropomorphe Gottesvorstellung zu entziehen, ja selbst das Unzureichende von Begriffen zu demonstrieren. Eine Aussage ermöglicht nur noch die Dialektik von Affirmation und Negation, wobei das Verb stets den im Nomen gesetzten Begriff negiert. Doch stellt sich für das entrückte Ich selbst das fast Undenkbare, Gottes Omnipräsenz, als ein Geschautes, d.h. gnadenhaftes Erfäßbares, dar, indem sich Gott als das Viele und Eine zugleich gibt."

⁴⁸⁵ V 6, CW, 279 / VI, 59-67.

[*wonderde*]. Out of herself, she sinks into the nature of Love and experiences oneness in nothing other than oneness of knowing, seeing and grasping God:⁴⁸⁶

[...] and, wholly lost, [I] fell upon the breast, the fruition, of his Nature, which is Love. There I remained, engulfed and lost, without any comprehension of other knowledge, or sight, or spiritual understanding, except to be one with him [*dan I te wesene met hem*] and to have fruition of this union.⁴⁸⁷

Love is revealed as a union of understanding and pleasure/fruition (*ghebrukene*). Furthermore, it is revealed to Hadewijch how the union in the nature of Love is granted. The task of seeking Love by longing and doubting Love is turned into the task of contenting (*ghenoech*) God's will:

This is what I am, in fruition and in knowledge, and in entrancement for those who wish to content me according to my will. I direct you – to live in conformity with my Divinity and my Humanity [*mensche*] – back again into the cruel world, where you must taste every kind of death – until you return hither in the full name of my fruition, in which you are baptized in my depths [*in mine diepheit*].⁴⁸⁸

Hadewijch is told that she will be led back as God and man to the world until she returns to the nature of God's fruition. It is the first time in the visions that Hadewijch enters the momentary now of divine being. The time change marks this. The task of the following will be how to content God in his will.

Furthermore, it is not a coincidence that Hadewijch mentions the depths of God in relation to baptism. This first connection is one of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁸⁹ In being moved in Love, Hadewijch shares being in the Holy Spirit. As the *Visions* evolve, Hadewijch will take on all the roles of the Trinity. In Vision 6, however, she is still spoken for by the angel, implying that she is granted the union through revelation and grace. From this Hadewijch grows more and more in Love, which is marked by the fact that she is less and less spoken for. She is gradually first spoken to and finally will speak herself out of Love.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁶ Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 52: "Die 'unio' ist zugleich transpersonale und personale Gotteserfahrung - und das letztere ermöglicht auch dem Leser wieder, in die Bildebene einzusteigen."

⁴⁸⁷ V 6, CW, 279 / VI, 85-88; Fraeters, "The mystic's sensorium," 33.

⁴⁸⁸ V 6, CW, 279-280 / VI, 85-91; for a thorough analysis of this see Zimbalist, "Quotation and Imitation in Hadewijch's *Visioenen*," 223-224.

⁴⁸⁹ Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 52: "Denn in der Transzendenzerfahrung wurde der Visionärin das Geschaute im wahrsten Sinne 'einverseelt', so daß momenthaft keine Differenz, ja nicht einmal eine Zweiheit von göttlichem und menschlichem Wollen bestand."

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. Zimbalist, "Quotation and Imitation in Hadewijch's *Visioenen*". Zimbalist points out that "Christ's voice grows increasingly abstract and distanced from any visual and imagistic

5.6.2.2 Vision 7: Humility as Subsistence in Christ

While Vision 2-6 are dedicated to the difference between Christ and the lover, a structure of “seeing and seen I in God”⁴⁹¹ as Heszler puts it. This is overcome when the lover and Christ are united in Vision 7.⁴⁹² In this vision, Hadewijch encounters Christ in his humanity and is embraced by him.⁴⁹³ Humility is no longer expressed as hiding oneself but as a becoming one “who wholly belongs to another”, which is exemplified by Christ. Hadewijch points out a new ideal:⁴⁹⁴ “to be God with God.”⁴⁹⁵ To be this, she has to become like Christ in his humanity, namely humble as someone who “wholly belongs to another”. Two points are emphasized in connection to humility: First, Christ is the ideal of humility in that he wholly belongs to another; second he fulfils this ideal in his humanity (*menschlikeheit*).⁴⁹⁶ So that to be truly human like Christ, one needs to become humble, i.e. to be like “someone who

component.” “Quotation and Imitation in Hadewijch’s *Visioenen*,” 222; also see 223: “As the visions progress, the tendency to conceptualize the verbal as the preferred mode of interaction with Christ emerges more clearly.”; also 233; I am indebted to Veerle Fraeters for pointing out this reference.

⁴⁹¹ “[...] schauendem Ich und erschautem Ich in Gott,” Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 36.

⁴⁹² Vision 7 is one of the most analyzed texts by Hadewijch. A lot of the interpretations stress the physicality and “eroticism” of the vision (e.g. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, Vol. 1, 263–64; Jantzen, “Eros and the Abyss: Reading Medieval Mystics in Postmodernity,” 250; Murk Jansen, Saskia M., *The Measure of Mystic Thought*, Vol. 536, 111; Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 19) But Dailey is right in pointing out: “Yet if we read the body in the vision as fleshy and corporeal, as part of the external person, we miss a fundamental element. In the mystic’s vision, an inner body appears that is markedly different from the body-as-flesh. This inner body only becomes visible or tangible with the vision’s entry into language, that is, it only becomes palpable when the mystic places enough faith in her vision to utter what she saw. In this way, the inner body is strangely co-substantial with language and necessitates faith in order to be granted substance. Its materiality is inextricable from these elements.” Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 40; However, Suydam rightly states: “There is absolutely no indication, either here or anywhere else in her writings, that this embodied experience represents a ‘lower’ stage of religious experience.” Suydam, “The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp,” 16.

⁴⁹³ As Fraeters points out along with Dinzelbacher the seventh vision is an exception the Visions because of this “corporeal encounter” with the divine in a “non-ecstatic context”, cf. Fraeters, *The mystic’s sensorium*, 29; on Hadewijch’s portrayal of Christ in her poetry see Dreyer, *Passionate women*, Vol. 1989, 51–55;

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. Carney, “Exemplarism in Hadewijch: The Quest for Full-Grownness.”

⁴⁹⁵ Following Theo Kobusch this Vision could be seen as laying out Hadewijch’s “affective metaphysics” in the words of *Song of Songs*, see Kobusch, “Metaphysik als Lebensform,” 55.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. Faesen also highlights this aspect of “servitude”: “Ten volle één zijn met Christus impliceert volledig ontdaan worden van zichzelf en van elke troost, en volledig in de wil van de Ander leven [...]” Faesen, *Begeerte in het werk van Hadewijch*, Vol. 4, 39.

belongs to someone else”.⁴⁹⁷ The fact that Hadewijch shows this process as an embrace of humanity rather than a rejection of humanity shows that it is *through* one’s humanity that one becomes “God with God”, not without it.⁴⁹⁸

The introduction of Vision 7 already emphasizes the humanity of Christ:

I desired to have full fruition of my Beloved, and to understand and taste him to the full. I desired that his Humanity [*Sine menscheit*] should to the fullest extent be one in fruition with my humanity, and that mine then should hold its stand and be strong enough to enter into perfection until I content him, who is perfection itself, by purity and unity, and in all things to content him fully in every virtue. [...] For above all the gifts that I ever longed for, I chose this gift: that I should give satisfaction in all great sufferings. For that is the most perfect satisfaction: to grow up in order to be God with God [*god met gode*].⁴⁹⁹

The question is no longer: “What is Love? And Who is Love?” as in Vision 2. The aim here is to grow to be “God with God”.⁵⁰⁰ It is in fear and by kneeling down – an outward symbol of humility – that Hadewijch sees and

⁴⁹⁷ Milhaven thinks that Vision 7 and Christ’s “as one who wholly belonged to another” is a form of Christ fully belonging to Hadewijch, therefore dependence of Christ on Hadewijch. Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 19. This also coincides with Reynaert’s analysis of freedom: “Intussen blijkt uit de laatste aanhalingen toch wel dat Hadewijchs “vrijheid” ook een element van vrijmoedigheid tegenover God bevat. Erg verwonderlijk is dit trouwens niet: het uitzuiveren van de ziel door ascese en ontlediging is in feite slechts de negatieve aanloop tot het herstellen van de vriheit, die anderzijds immer, zoals wie hierboven zagen, met begrippen als werdecheit en edelheit wordt gelijkgesteld. Door het herwinnen van haar oorspronkelijke “adel” krijgt de ziele het recht om fier en zonder schroom voor haar schepper te staan.” Reynaert, *De beeldspraak van Hadewijch*, Vol. 21, 389.

⁴⁹⁸ Holmes comments on this form of imitatio: “Hadewijch’s spiritual life was transformed when she came to understand *ghebreken* (failing) as an integral part of union as enjoyment (*ghebruken*). When she began to associate failing with the Humanity of Jesus Christ, the one who suffered complete failure, she transformed *ghebreken* into *gheliken* - that is, becoming like Jesus’ Humanity in imitation of Christ. Union with God then takes place on the model of the incarnation: enjoying God’s divinity by becoming like the Humanity of Jesus.” Holmes, *Flesh Made Word*, 81, Milhaven draws conclusions for Hadewijch’s understanding of humanity: “Recall the areligious, ethical concern of the present study. As such, it does not concern our inquiry that Hadewijch breaks from theological tradition in describing a full human relationship *with* God. What concerns us is that in so describing she breaks from theological tradition in identifying what characterizes the full loving and knowing, the full *living possible to human on earth*. For Hadewijch, full human life is preeminently mutual loving and knowing an other.” Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 16.

⁴⁹⁹ V 7, CW, 280 / VII, 19-33 (emphasis mine); Brown Tomus points to a similarity between Ruusbroec and Hadewijch in this point, cf. Brown Tomus, “Spiritual Property and the Right of Action in Hadewijch,” 60.

⁵⁰⁰ V 7, CW, 280 / VII, 32. There are two important aspects, that Hadewijch stresses here. First, “doghene”, “sufferings” and second, “doghet” virtue. These will become the major instruments on her path to Love. Affection through suffering and practice, control and growth through virtue. Hadewijch plays with the words “doghen” and “doghet” which can mean “suffering/ to suffer” and “virtue/ to suit” (German “taugen”). This already implies the suffering that is connected to living a virtuous life. But it also implies that in living a virtuous life one “taugt” something, one becomes worthy of Christ. For the virtues are what makes one suitable (tauglich) for growing towards God, cf. Hofmann, *Hadewijch: Das Buch der Visionen*, Vol. 13, 114.

hears the eagle that proclaims the coming of Christ.⁵⁰¹ What follows is an enacted explanation and visualisation of transubstantiation.⁵⁰² At first, Hadewijch sees Christ as small child.⁵⁰³ Then she encounters Christ, the man, “that he was” (“*dat hi was*”) and as a human being (“*mensche*”).

With that he came in the form and clothing of a Man, as he was on the day when he gave us his Body for the first time; looking like a Human Being and a Man [*mensche ende man*], wonderful, and beautiful, and with glorious face, he came to me as humbly as anyone who wholly belongs to another [*ende als onderdanechleke te mi comende Alse een die eens anders al es*].⁵⁰⁴

The physical images of this vision emphasize a union with Christ, the man (quite literally).⁵⁰⁵ The movement of humility expressed in “*onderdanechleke*” is no longer hiding and belittling of oneself. “*Onderdanechleke*” is translated by Hofmann and Hart as “in humility/humble”. The word implies also “following, subservient, to be subject to.”⁵⁰⁶ This invokes the knight imagery that plays an important role in her poetry. The word “*onderdanechleke*” implies the serving role of Christ,⁵⁰⁷ which Hadewijch has to follow outwardly and inwardly in order to become

⁵⁰¹ Jahae, *Sich begnügen mit dem Ungenügen*, Vol. 21, 236: “Typisch ist, daß wie Heszlér sagt, die Demut die Vorbedingung dafür ist, daß der Mensch in die göttlichen Dimensionen eintritt. In der Vereinigung zwischen Gott/der minne ist der Unterschied zwischen beiden vorausgesetzt. Er ist nicht zunichte gemacht, sondern sorgfältig bewahrt und dem Menschen sogar bewußt. Letzterer sieht ihn jedoch nicht (mehr) aus eng menschlicher Perspektive, sondern als von Gott bejaht, und erfährt ihn deswegen nicht als schmerzhaft, sondern als ‘gut’.”

⁵⁰² Cf. Heszlér, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 55: “Wenn der Visionärin die Erscheinung Chrsiti gleichwohl oder gerade deshalb zuteil wird, so ist dies einerseits als einmaliges, außergewöhnliches Gnadengeschenk zu verstehen, andererseits aber auch als Visualisierung der Transsubstantiation. Die hier wiedergegebene Erfahrung läßt sich somit letztlich auch als das Sichtbarwerden dessen verstehen, was sich unsichtbar für jeden Gläubigen beim Empfang des Sakraments vollzieht, weshalb Hadewijch dezidiert die normale sinnliche Wahrnehmung mit einbezieht.”

⁵⁰³ Vision 7 is a good example of Hadewijch’s “religious humanism”; see Paepe: “God zelf is niet langer alleen de *Deus tremendus*, de Huiveringwekkende, de benauwende God; Hij wordt nu ervaren als de Godmens, in de armoe van de kribbe of, en vooral, in Zijn zeer menselijke angst voor het lijden en Zijn als een menselijke tragiek ervaren dood aan het kruis.” Paepe, *Hadewijch*, xvii; Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 59–60.

⁵⁰⁴ V 7, CW, 281 / VII, 57–63.

⁵⁰⁵ This is not to say that Hadewijch’s Vision 7 can be reduced to erotic bridal mysticism. For a not only physical reading see, e.g. Heszlér, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 55; Faesen, *Begeerte in het werk van Hadewijch*, Vol. 4, 227–39.

⁵⁰⁶ “Onderdanich, -denich; Onderdanicheit, -like” Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, 399.

⁵⁰⁷ Faesen comments similarly on the letters: “De eenheid met het mens-zijn van Christus [...] bestaat in het kruisdragen. De norm voor de volledige minnedienst is de Gekruisigde. Het kruis met Hem dragen betekent *scone dienst in allen doechdeleken werken ende ellendich leuen in alre gehorsamheit*.” Faesen, *Begeerte in het werk van Hadewijch*, Vol. 4, 35.

“God with God”.⁵⁰⁸ Finally, Hadewijch’s wish to be united with Christ in her “*menscheit*” is granted:

After that he came himself to me, took me entirely in his arms, and pressed me to him; and all my members felt his in full felicity, in accordance with the desire of my heart and my humanity [*menscheit*]. So I was outwardly [*van buten*] satisfied and fully transported.⁵⁰⁹

This vision breaks with the object-subject relation (looking at and being looked at) as Heszlér puts it.⁵¹⁰ The union is described as a dissolving of differences:⁵¹¹

Also then, for a short while, I had the strength to bear this; but soon, after a short time, I lost that manly beauty outwardly in the sight of his form [*dien sconen man van buten in seine in vormen*]. I saw him completely come to nought and so fade and all at once dissolve [*ende al smelten in een*] that I could no longer recognize or perceive him outside me, and I could no longer distinguish him within me. Then it was to me as if we were one without difference [*een waren sonder differentie*]. It was thus: outwardly, to see, to taste, and feel, as one can outwardly taste, see, and feel in the reception of the outward Sacrament. So can the Beloved, with the loved one, each wholly receive the other in all full satisfaction of the sight, the hearing, and the passing away of the one in the other [*deen inden anderen*].⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁸ Nothingness see Letter 8: “For if you love, you are bound to renounce everything and despise yourself as the last of all, in order to content Love according to her dignity. He who loves gladly lets himself be condemned without excusing himself, because he wishes to be freer in Love. And for Love’s sake, he will gladly endure much. He who loves gladly lets himself be beaten in order to be formed. He who loves is glad to be rejected in order to be utterly free. He who loves gladly remains in aloneness, in order to love and to possess Love.” CW, 65-66 / L 8, 59-66. Ruh argues that Hadewijch describes more of a *deificatio* than an *imitation*, see Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, Vol. 2, 218.

⁵⁰⁹ V 7, CW, 281 / VII, 66-71.

⁵¹⁰ Cf. Heszlér, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 36.

⁵¹¹ This is not to say that she melts into her emotions and pleasure: “Gleichsein mit Christus in seiner Menschheit ist für Hadewijch keine memoria Christi, wie sie uns in der Nachfolge Bernhards von Clairvaux immer wieder begegnet. Die Verweigerung der spezifischen Braut-Bräutigam-Thematik wird dieselben Gründe haben wie der Verzicht auf emotionale Leidensmystik: Hadewijch mißtraut “süßen” Empfindungen, Empfindungen überhaupt.” Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, Vol. 2, 216; see also McGinn: “The ‘without difference’ (sonder differentie) qualification suggests that this mystical union goes beyond the erotic model in which two persons become one in flesh without losing their personal being. Her visionary account fuses the corporeal and imaginative realms, and yet also involves an intellectual conviction of oneness with the divine nature. This kind of mingling of aspects scarcely fits the Augustinian model of vision.” McGinn, “Visions and Visualizations in the Here and Hereafter,” 239.

⁵¹² V 7, CW, 281-82 / VII, 72-84. The melting into each other is uncommon before or during Hadewijch’s time, cf. Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 17, Ruh also points this out, Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, Vol. 2, 222; as Jahae points out, it is important to note that Hadewijch writes: “as if” they would be one; the union is not a complete one. Jahae, *Sich begnügen mit dem Ungenügen*, Vol. 21, 231: “Er ist aber nicht einfach ‘Gott’, i.e. mit Gott identisch (Gott schlechthin gleichförmig: *gode ghenoech*). Das zeigt sich in der Formulierung, daß es dem Menschen auf dem Gipfel der Erfahrung der unio so vorkommt, ‘als ob’ (*ochte*) er ohne Differenz eins sei mit Christus (und durch ihn mit Gott). Auch auf dem Höhepunkt der mystischen Erfahrung bleibt eine Differenz zwischen Gott und dem Menschen bestehen. Denn in diesem Moment ist der Mensch zwar aus Gott und für Gott, aber nicht in sich Gott. Alles, was der Mensch ist, ist Gott, aber Gott ist mehr als das, was der Mensch von Gott hat und ist. [...] demzufolge der Mensch, der es anstrebt, so zu werden, ‘wie es sich Gott gegenüber gebührt’ (*gode ghenoech te sine*), ein “Ort Gottes” zu werden

In the very short while of the union, the affirmation of Hadewijch's humanity is the link to Christ.⁵¹³ This shows a link between *imitatio* and *similitudo*: following Christ in his humanity is to become Christ.⁵¹⁴ Hadewijch uses the language of the cross to express what she means as an *imitatio Christi*:

We all indeed wish to be God with God [*god met gode wesen*], but God knows there are few of us who want to live as men with his Humanity [*siere minscheit*], or want to carry his cross with him, or want to hang on the cross with him and pay humanity's debt to the full.⁵¹⁵

For Hadewijch to carry the cross with Christ is "as someone who wholly belongs to another"⁵¹⁶. In Letter 6, Hadewijch highlights the importance of subordinating one's will to Love's will. She emphasizes:

To live sincerely according to the will of Love is to be so perfectly one in the will of veritable Love, in order to content her, that – even if one had another wish – one would choose or wish nothing except to desire above all what Love wills, no matter who is condemned or blessed by it.⁵¹⁷

hat, und nicht einfachhin 'Gott'." However, I disagree with Jahae in the status man can achieve in being god. Hadewijch herself states that what she desires, and the highest goal is to "be God with God". It will be shown that in vision XIII Hadewijch actually is "God with God" but not in union but in fruition. This is closer to what Heszler points out: "Eingeflochten in die Beschreibung ist selbstverständlich auch das Ziel, auf das sich der übergroße Affekt richtet. Es ist nämlich gerade nicht - wie eigentlich zu erwarten gewesen wäre - die beseligende Umarmung des Bräutigams im 'raptus', sondern die Gnade der vollkommenen 'imitatio' in reiner Willenseinheit. Und dies soll - entgegen der gefallen menschlichen Natur - gleich einer liebenden Umarmung erfahren werden." Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 54–55, Hofmann also speaks of "identity": "Nicht von 'Analogie', [...], zum Leben und Leiden Jesu ist bei Hadewijch die Rede, sondern wohl von einer buchstäblichen Identität damit. Natürlich darf die Funktion dieser Darstellung nicht übersehen werden: Das Extrem dient der Vermittlung der Intensität der existentiellen Angleichung an das gottmenschliche Ideal. [siehe auch Brief 6 und 15]" Hofmann, *Hadewijch: Das Buch der Visionen*, Vol. 13, 181; L 27, CW, 108 / L 27, 37–44: "I spoke of the Beloved's kiss: that means, to be united with him apart from all creatures, and to accept no appeasement except what one receives in the delight of unity within him. And for the embrace: that means the support he gives to our disinterested abandonment to him in charity unfeigned (2 Cor. 6:6)."

⁵¹³ Cf. Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, Vol. 2, 199.

⁵¹⁴ Jahae uses the term "Selbstübereignung" in this context, which reevokes the idea of making oneself over to God in Eckhart: "Die verbleibende ontologische Differenz wird jetzt allerdings nicht mehr (nagend) gespürt. Die Vernunft - jenes 'Organ', das dem Gott anstrebbenden Menschen die genannte Differenz peinlich deutlich macht und ihn als 'nicht gebührend' verurteilt - ist überwunden, d.h. zu ihrer letzten Wahrheit geführt: Die nicht aufzuhebende ontologische Differenz zwischen dem Menschen und Gott gilt nicht länger primär als unüberwindbares Hindernis auf dem Weg zu Gott, sondern als von Gott gesetzte Möglichkeitsbedingung einer sich ständig vertiefenden Selbstübereignung des Menschen an Gott und damit einer stetig anschwellenden, nie abgeschlossenen Erfüllung durch Gott." Jahae, *Sich begnügen mit dem Ungenügen*, Vol. 21, 263.

⁵¹⁵ L 6, CW, 61 / L 6, 230–235.

⁵¹⁶ V 7, CW, 281 / VII, 62–63: "*Alse een die eens anders al es.*"

⁵¹⁷ L 6, CW, 58 / L 6, 76–82.

Faesen puts this as “fully live in the will of the other.”⁵¹⁸

Consequently, the next paragraphs show how humility and freedom are connected. As Hadewijch continues in Letter 6:

And since you are still young and as yet have had nothing to suffer, you must make the strongest efforts to grow as if out of nothing, like one who has nothing and who can attain nothing unless he struggles from the depths [*gronde*] of his being. And whatever works you are able to accomplish, always fall back into the abyss of humility [*afgront der omoedicheit*].⁵¹⁹

This will culminate in the depth of the abyss. So the ascent to Love is shown as a descent into the soul’s own depth. Vision 8, which is seen as an addition to and further explanation of Vision 7, confirms this with demanding “[...] be yourself the highest way [...]”.⁵²⁰

On the way, Hadewijch has to master her reason, will and virtues. So even though the next visions focus on how to serve Love in humanity, the process also shows an empowerment of the soul. It is a movement of gaining everything in losing everything in humility.

5.6.2.3 Vision 11: Humility and Freedom

In Vision 11, the focus lies on forming one’s will towards Love’s will.⁵²¹ As Letter 6 implies, humility leads to the soul’s own abyss.⁵²² This reflects two things: the abyss of Love and the depth of the soul. It will be shown that approaching one’s own depths is also an approach to the depths of Love.⁵²³ There is a development from seeing the abyss in Vision 11 to becoming the abyss in Vision 12. Moreover, Vision 11 introduces a process of turning from a servant to a lover of Love.⁵²⁴ The development is also a move from bending

⁵¹⁸ “[...] volledig in de wil van de Ander leven [...]”, Faesen, *Begeerte in het werk van Hadewijch*, Vol. 4, 39.

⁵¹⁹ L 6, CW, 60 / L 6, 178-184.

⁵²⁰ V 8, CW, 283, cf. Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 59; Vision 7 and 8 can be read together, because Hadewijch herself does not break up the visions but speaks of staying in one state of ecstasy, cf. Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 53–54.

⁵²¹ Vision 9 shows Hadewijch’s victory over her reason. Vision 10 recaptures the image of Hadewijch as a bride and the city of God.

⁵²² L 6, CW, 60 / L 6, 178-184.

⁵²³ Cf. Murk Jansen, Saskia M., “Hadewijch,” 676.

⁵²⁴ For an analysis of the discourse and verbal encounter with Christ in Vision 11, see Zimbalist, “Quotation and Imitation in Hadewijch’s *Visioenen*,” 225-228; particularly 227-228: “Vision eleven thus represents a crucial turning point in the text’s understanding of its representational responsibility: it seeks to instruct others in the mode of, and through the

and kneeling to standing up and seeing through the abyss. At the end of this process, Hadewijch will open the closeness of Love and actively speak and demand in Love as the conqueress of Love.

Vision 11 opens with the description of a wheel:

There I saw a very deep whirlpool [*wiel*], wide and exceedingly dark; in this abyss all beings were included, crowded together, and compressed. The darkness illuminated and penetrated everything. The unfathomable depth of the abyss [*ongrondeleke diepheit vanden wiele*] was so high that no one could reach it.⁵²⁵

The theme of depth is continued with the image of the eagle flying through the “*diepheit*”. Afterwards, Hadewich sees herself and St. Augustine as eagles that are ravished by a phoenix.⁵²⁶ St. Augustine marks the theme and question of free will in her writing.⁵²⁷

Vision 11 is extraordinary among the *Visions* because the narration of the vision is interrupted by Hadewijch’s reflections on the satisfaction she found in this union.⁵²⁸ Considering that this vision shows Hadewijch her power of will, this is not surprising: she finds the power to cut herself free from the union and reflect upon it. She is dissatisfied with the union in Love with Augustine and distinctly says she wants to be alone with her love in his deepest “*afgronde*”.⁵²⁹ Hadewijch gives a reason why she wants to remain alone in the union with God: She does not want any sweetness, relief or certainty in the oneness with Augustine.

For I am a free human creature [*Want ic vri mensche ben*], and also pure as to one part, and I can desire freely with my will, and I can will as highly as I wish, and seize and receive from God all that he is, without objection or anger on his part – what no saint can do. For the saints have their will perfectly according to their pleasure; and they can no longer will beyond what they have.⁵³⁰

ongoing word of, Christ, and demonstrates Hadewijch’s evolving understanding of Christ’s true nature as simultaneous humanity and divinity. Vision eleven, which most completely expresses Hadewijch’s understanding of her own role in that process, is thus necessarily the last appearance of Christ’s directly quoted speech; when we next hear the Word of God, the nature of that speech has changed and the voice represents not only Christ, but the Visionary author’s imitating voice as well.”

⁵²⁵ V 11, CW, 289 / XI, 2-8.

⁵²⁶ V 11, CW, 290.

⁵²⁷ For ways to connect Augustine’s and Hadewijch’s thinking, see Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 28-62; Vanneste, “Over de betekenis van enkele abstracta in de taal van Hadewijch,” 74-76.

⁵²⁸ V 11, CW, 290 / XI, 72.

⁵²⁹ V 11, CW, 290 / XI, 87. For an analysis of Hadewijch’s use of “*afgront*” as a metaphor for God’s inscrutable being, see Vanneste, “Over de betekenis van enkele abstracta in de taal van Hadewijch,” 39.

⁵³⁰ V 11, CW, 291 / XI, 95-102; on will in the sense of “*voluntas*” and “*propria voluntas*”, see Vanneste, “Over de betekenis van enkele abstracta in de taal van Hadewijch,” 87-90.

Unlike the saints, Hadewijch's will can go beyond its pleasure she can want more than she receives. For Hadewijch there is a discrepancy between will and pleasure. Hadewijch considers her free will the instrument to ask and want more than what she has. This brings with it an unsettledness that the saints cannot experience. It is the image of "*diepheit*" that reoccurs. She reflects on her experience again and compares the state in the vision and her state when she has returned to herself:

When I could thus turn myself against him, it was a beautiful and free expression of life as a human being. Then I could desire what I wished. But when I did the opposite, I was more beautiful and taken up into a fuller participation in the Divine Nature.⁵³¹

Hadewijch realizes two forms of freedom here: freedom in her choice against God and freedom in being closer to the divine nature in the giving up her own will.⁵³² She grasps that she lives freely as a human being in beautiful form ("*scoene mensche*")⁵³³, when she turns away. This revokes the first vision's description of man as a beautiful flower in his form.⁵³⁴ Furthermore, it echoes the image of Christ as a beautiful man in Vision 7.⁵³⁵ But as Dailey has pointed out even then, this was a description of the "outer" man in contrast to the "inner" man.⁵³⁶ In willing and being what she wants, she is further away from the divine nature. So that, Hadewijch lives "*buten minnen in minne*"

⁵³¹ V 11, CW, 292 / XI, 183-187.

⁵³² Even if there is no prove that Hadewijch had access to Augustine's "*De libero arbitrio*", it cannot be a coincidence that the distinction of *libertas* and *liberum arbitrium* comes up in a vision that is so dominated by Augustine, see Hofmann, *Hadewijch: Das Buch der Visionen*, Vol. 13, 209: "Die Äußerungen in der elften Vision zeige ein von vorliegender Stelle abweichendes anthropologisch-kreatürliches Freiheitsverständnis, das in seiner Radikalität zuletzt auch von Augustinus abweicht."; on freedom in Hadewijch's works see Reynaert: "Kort samenvattend kunnen we zeggen dat Hadewijch het woord vriheit in een viertal nauw met elkaar verwante betekenissen gebruikt. Een eerste is van psychologische aard: *vri* ein *vriheit* wijzen o.m. op een toestand van onbekommerdheid, van innerlijke rust en veiligheid. De drie overige behoren tot het louter religieuze domein en geven een gradatie in de mystieke groei weer: 1. onafhankelijkheid van de ziel t.o.v. alles wat niet God of Minne is, en daardoor: 2. herstel van de eerste vrijheid waarin de ziel geschapen werd, waarme ze ook haar oorspronkelijke *adel* en *waardigheid* herkrijgt, zodat ze kan toegelaten worden tot 3. het hoogtepunt van vrijheid in het éénzijn met God." Reynaert, *De beeldspraak van Hadewijch*, Vol. 21, 389, 381-391.

⁵³³ V 11, CW, 292 / XI, 184.

⁵³⁴ V 1, CW, 263 / I, 21-25.

⁵³⁵ V 7, CW, 281 / VII, 57-63.

⁵³⁶ Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 40.

(“out of love in love”).⁵³⁷ But when she does not uphold her will, she is closer to the divine nature.⁵³⁸

And yet this vision has a surprising ending:

And so I have lived in misery without love, in love of God and of those who are his; and while I do not receive from him what is mine, and what God does not yet give me – I have it nonetheless, and it shall remain mine! Hence I never felt love, unless as an ever-new death – until the time of my consolation came, and God granted me to know the perfect pride [*volcomene fierheit*] of love; to know how we shall love the Humanity in order to come to the Divinity, and rightly know it in one single Nature [*menscheyt ter godheit sal minnen ende rechte bekinnen in eenre naturen*].⁵³⁹

The vision that shows how to become truly “humble” in giving up on one’s own will ends with a new attitude towards Love: “*fierheit*”. *Fierheit* is translated by Hart as “pride.” As such, it could be read as the opposing vice to the virtue humility.⁵⁴⁰ However, it can also mean “fierceness”, “fortitude” and “confidence”⁵⁴¹ evoking the virtues of courtly love poetry and the virtues of a knight.⁵⁴² In this use, it plays a major part in Hadewijch’s poems.⁵⁴³ In Vision 11, Hadewijch describes *fierheit* as a kind of knowledge of Love.⁵⁴⁴ It is this *fierheit* that will lead to Hadewijch’s final victory. Until then, however, Hadewijch first needs to learn how to love her humanity (in order to love towards the divinity).⁵⁴⁵ This process starts with learning that Hadewijch

⁵³⁷ Dailey highlights this differentiation throughout her interpretation of Hadewijch’s works, see *Promised Bodies*.

⁵³⁸ L 22, CW, 102 / L 22, 385-392: “The interior soul, which is to be an eagle, must fly above itself in God, as we read of the four living creatures that the fourth flew the highest of the four – just what Saint John did when he said: *in principio*, etc. (John 1:1). The eagle fixes its eyes on the sun without turning from it, and the interior soul does the same; it does not turn its eyes from God.”

⁵³⁹ V 11, CW, 292 / XI, 170-180.

⁵⁴⁰ Suydam, “The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp,” 23.

⁵⁴¹ “Fierheit” Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, 173.

⁵⁴² “Fierheit” Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, 173. I am indebted to remarks by Veerle Fraeters on the importance of the difference between pride as *superbia* and “*fierheit*” as a knightly virtue; on the intertwining of courtly love poetry and mysticism see Newman, “*La mystique courtoise*: Thirteenth-Century Beguines and the Art of Love” in *From virile woman to womanChrist*, 137-181; for a thorough analysis of “Fierheit” see, van Baest, *Poetry of Hadewijch*, 3-41; van Baest, “*Fiere herte doelt na minnen gronde*”: *de fierheid als kernmoment in het zelfverstaan van Hadewijch*; I am indebted to Veerle Fraeters for pointing me to these titles.

⁵⁴³ See van Baest, *Poetry of Hadewijch*, 3-41; Fraeter / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 31-41.

⁵⁴⁴ V 11, CW, 292 / XI, 170-180, for how this knowledge changes the verbal encounter with Christ and Love see, Zimbalist, “Quotation and Imitation in Hadewijch’s *Visioenen*,” 225-226; on Hadewijch’s understanding of “*bekinnessen*”, see Vanneste, “Over de betekenis van enkele abstracta in de taal van Hadewijch,” 56-60.

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 135: “The visions develop one idea: ‘that having fruition of the Divinity should go hand in hand with being like the Humanity.’”

needs to be standing and not bowing to receive God. This is what Vision 12 will show us.

5.6.2.4 Vision 12: Approaching the Abyss of Humility

It is not the object of this thesis to show Hadewijch's "mystical process".⁵⁴⁶ Nonetheless, there is another major movement in the development of Visions 9-12 that needs to be mentioned here, because it gives an insight to Hadewijch's concept of humility: Hadewijch's approach towards the abyss.

In Vision 12, Hadewijch's ascent is depicted as a movement towards a spinning disk. It begins with the image of a wheel or disk ("*sciue*") Outwards it appears to be calm, inwards there is constant movement:

And in the midst of it there sat Someone upon a round disk [*sciue*], which continually opened and closed itself again upon hidden mysteries. And he who sat there above the disk [*sciuen*] was sitting in constant stillness; but in the disk his Being circled about in unspeakable swiftness without stopping. And the abyss [*wiel*] in which the disk ran as it circled about was of such unheard-of depth and so dark [*diep ende os doncker*] that no horror can be compared to it. And the disk [*sciue*], seen from above, was set with all kinds of precious stones and in the color of pure gold; but on the darkest side, where it ran so fearfully, it was like fearful flames, which devoured heaven and earth and in which all things perished and were swallowed [*verswolghen*] up.⁵⁴⁷

In this disk, everything is revealed and enclosed at the same time. Shocked by seeing the countenance, Hadewijch throws herself on the ground. An eagle tells Hadewijch that she has not yet gained full knowledge of her way and the kingdom she is to receive as a bride of Christ. In other words, she does not yet know herself:

'Now see through the Countenance, and become the veritable [*gherechte*] bride of the great Bridegroom, and behold yourself in this state!' And in that very instant I saw myself received in union by the One who sat there in the abyss upon the circling disk [*die daer sat in dien wiel op die lopende sciue*], and there I became one with him in the certainty of unity [*in sekerheiden der eneeheit*].⁵⁴⁸

Hadewijch is asked to see herself as the just ("*gherechte*") bride of the celestial groom.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁶ As has been done by Hesler, cf. Hesler, "Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs." Cranenburgh even sees Vision 12 as the highest grace ("höchste Begnadung"), Cranenburgh van, "Hadewychs zwölfte Vision und neuntes strophisches Gedicht." 152.

⁵⁴⁷ V 11, CW, 293 / XII, 4-18.

⁵⁴⁸ V 12, CW, 296/ XII, 134-139.

⁵⁴⁹ In this she follows the tradition of the song of songs. Kobusch links the commentaries on the songs of songs to neoplatonic metaphysics but also marks them as a new kind of metaphysics: "Ganz ohne Zweifel ist die Metaphysik des Hoheliedes der Metaphysik des

In this unity, Hadewijch is received as the bride of Love. The “certainty of unity” counterposes the former insecurity of Love. This also marks the process of receiving unity as a process of gaining knowledge. The eagle says:

Now behold, all powerful one, whom I previously called the loved one, that you did not know all you should become, and what your highest way was, and what the great kingdom was that you as bride should receive from your Bridegroom. When previously you fell down before the Countenance, you, like an ordinary soul, confessed [*bekinne*]. When you stood up and contemplated it, you saw yourself perfect, together with us, a veritable bride, sealed with love.⁵⁵⁰

As bride Hadewijch is standing⁵⁵¹ and sees herself as the just bride.⁵⁵² Keeping in mind that in Vision 11 perfect pride was defined as to know how to love the humanity towards the divinity, this change of attitude cannot be overlooked. Hadewijch is no longer bowing to the countenance and therefore sees herself in her just position as a bride. It is at this point that she is swallowed up into the “*diepheit*”⁵⁵³:

In that abyss I saw myself swallowed up [*In die diepheit saghic mi verswolghen*]. Then I received the certainty of being received, in this form, in my Beloved, and my Beloved also in me [*in mijn lief ende mien lief also in mi*].⁵⁵⁴

This theme of standing up and seeing herself as the lover of God reaches its peak in the 13th Vision. The process in the Visions 9-12 shows how by forming her own will towards Love’s will it culminates in Hadewijch’s being swallowed up by the “*diepheit*”. In Vision 13, Hadewijch’s process of

Subjekts im Sinne Plotins oder des Proklos sehr verwandt, nicht zuletzt auch deswegen, weil die christliche Metaphysik viele Einzelmotive und Begriffe von der neuplatonischen Metaphysik rezipiert hat. Gleichwohl repräsentiert die Kommentierung des Hoheliedes einen Typ der Metaphysik, der ganz eigener Art ist. Das ist auch schon äußerlich erkennbar an der literarischen Form. Durch Origines entsteht nämlich das Bewußtsein, daß das Lied der Lieder göttliches, pastorales Drama ist, an dem verschiedene Personen beteiligt sind. Die Metaphysik der christlichen Philosophie ist somit ursprünglich in die Form des Dramas gekleidet und unterscheidet sich so von der Metaphysik in Abhandlungsform, aber auch in Bezug auf den Gehalt.” Kobusch, “Metaphysik als Lebensform,” 50. Hadewijch’s theatrical reinterpretation of the songs of songs can therefore, count as this kind of drama, see also Largier, “Von Hadewijch, Mechthild und Dietrich zu Eckhart und Seuse?” Bd. 9, 102-104.

⁵⁵⁰ V 12, CW, 296 / XII, 140-148.

⁵⁵¹ “They who fall down before the Countenance and adore receive grace; they who contemplate the Countenance standing receive justice and are enabled to fathom the deep abysses [*diepte afgronde*] that for those unacquainted with them are so terrifying to know.” V 12, CW, 294/ XII, 39-43.

⁵⁵² Cf. Cranenburgh van, “Hadewychs zwölfte Vision und neuntes strophisches Gedicht.” 154.

⁵⁵³ Heszlér recalls Ps,41,8: “Abyssus abyssum invocat,” cf, Heszlér, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 121; see also Vanneste, “Over de betekenis van enkele abstracta in de taal van Hadewijch,” 34-40.

⁵⁵⁴ V 12, CW, 296 / XII, 150-152.

becoming a lover will end in Love being swallowed up in the depths of Hadewijch.

5.6.3 *Humility and Fierheit in Vision 13*

In Vision 13, Hadewijch recaptures her concepts of humility. It is in this vision that Hadewijch through humility opens and learns how to love humanity towards the divinity and know them in one nature.⁵⁵⁵

In Vision 13, Hadewijch is shown the countenance of God, which is covered by three pairs of wings. These represent three different kinds of relating to Love, first as humility then as mistrust (*ontrouwe*).

The first seal symbolizes those, who, in humility, see themselves as unable to fulfil a service to Love:

When he opened the two highest seals, these spirits came out who had been wholly annihilated in humility [*oetmoedicheden*] and could nevermore believe they would be able by any service to attain Love's affection; so they considered themselves at every hour to be most unblessed in love. But the beauty they brought with them was more inexpressible than anything anyone ever read of or saw in our times. It was these beings who had crowned Love and adorned her countenance.⁵⁵⁶

These are the humble, who are annihilated in humility and believe that they cannot attain Love's affection by any service. This is the image of humility as being conscious of one's unworthiness. Then the seraph opens the lowest seals:

These were they who, in the liberty of love between them and their Beloved, had cast off humility [*oetmoedecheit*] and had placed knowledge between them and their God, how he is constituted in his power where reason is concerned, and in his kingdom, his goodness, his sweetness, and his whole Being, in which he himself holds sway. They had learned to know these attributes through the seven gifts, of which I have just related that Love had them under her feet. But when they served because of the gifts, they had the humility of Mary and of those who come forth from the highest seal and disavowed their love out of humility; but they realized they were so near the truth of Love and so high above themselves that they knew nothing else of themselves except that they were annihilated in Love.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁵ Humility then describes a process of growing towards Love, in which the humble person has to pass through certain stages, see Heszler: "Zwar kann in der 'unio' die im Bild mitgeteilte Differenz zwischen Seele und Gott aufgehoben werden, doch setzt diese Gnade eines unabdingbar voraus: der Mensch muß zuvor die Antinomien, welche die Minne-Erfahrung im Diesseits konstituieren, in aller Schärfe erkannt und empfunden haben [...]." Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 159.

⁵⁵⁶ V 13, CW, 299 / XIII, 114-123.

⁵⁵⁷ V 13, CW, 300 / XIII, 144-159.

These humble ones, who move beyond the first kind of humility, symbolize Mary's humility. They know themselves to be close to the truth of love and that they are nothing else but annihilated in Love. This then is a closer relation to Love but also a form of self-knowledge in relation to Love. In Mary's humility lies the awareness of being annihilated by love. But unlike the first kind of humility, this is not related to unworthiness or putting oneself below Love. Instead, it is seen as a particular closeness to Love. Before the analysis turns to how to open the third seal, we will take a closer look at Mary's humility.

5.6.3.1 *Passivity and Activity in Mary's Humility*

Hadewijch links Mary (and woman) to humility⁵⁵⁸ in PS 29:

Oetmoedeghe vrie sinne	You, who are disposed to be meek and free,
Wildi gheheel al minne	If you want all of love
Also minne hare selven levet	Wholly, as love lives in her self,
Ic rade u dore trouwe	I counsel you: with faithfulness,
Al lidi rouwe	even if you suffer woe,
Vertijt alles ende beghevet	Renounce everything and let go of it;
So wert u herte wijt ende diep	Then your hearts will grow wide and deep,
So sal u comen dat conduit dat liep	And then the conduit flowing out
Marien sonder mate	Into Mary without measure, will flood you.
Bidt der hogher trouwen dat sijt u vloyen late	Pray high faithfulness that she let it flow
[...]	to you. [...]
Daer maria es met minnen een in al	To where Mary is one with love in all. ⁵⁵⁹

This echoes the understanding of humility as a widening of the soul and recaptures the image of growing into the depths. Mary conceived God (as man and youth, l. 79) because “she wanted nothing else and nothing else

⁵⁵⁸ On a close and extensive analysis of Hadewijch's use of the metaphor “motherhood”, see: Holmes, *Flesh Made Word*. Holmes also links this to modern feminist theorists such as Kristeva: “The soul as poet-knight dominates the voice of the courtly love lyric adopted for Hadewijch's stanzaic poems. This genre demands a masculine first-person narrator, who sings of his lady, the object and frustration of his desire, from afar. Much more subtle is the correspondence between the maternal model of spiritual life and Hadewijch's innovative poetic language. Hadewijch works with the semiotic, material, and rhythmic dimension of language in ways that deepen and enrich her description of the spiritual life and incarnation. Her focus on Mary as the mother of love parallels Julia Kristeva's twentieth-century psychoanalytic and literary fascination with the mother as *fons amoris*, the source of love.” Holmes, *Flesh Made Word*, 66; see also Hofmann, *Hadewijch: Das Buch der Visionen*, Vol. 13, 187–88.

⁵⁵⁹ PS 29, ll. 111-124 / PS 29, 209.

existed for her”⁵⁶⁰. She is ready with a “humble heart” (*oetmoedegher herten*”, l. 90).

PC 14 opens with Mary’s humility and therefore shall explain more clearly, what Hadewijch means when she speaks of Mary’s humility.⁵⁶¹

In the beginning, humility, here too, is a process of sinking low:

So neder sal men in oetmoedicheit sinken,	Provided anyone sinks low enough in humility
Ja bouen alre menschen ghedincken	Lower by far than the thought of all men
Die ter werelt gheboren sijn,	Who are born into the world –
Sal groetheit der minnen comen daer in.	Greatness of love will come by this means.
Wildi dus vallen ende in allen nighen,	If you were willing to fall thus
So suldi volmaecte minne ghecrighen.	and to bow in all things,
	You would obtain perfect Love.
Want dat haelde gode neer in marien,	For that brought God down into Mary,
Ende mettien seluen soude hi noch lien,	And he would yet acknowledge the same in one
Die hem so neder in minne const hebben :	Who could hold himself so humble in love:
Hine mocht hem sine hoecheit niet ontsegghen,	He could not refuse his sublimity to him,
Hi soudenne ontfaen ende draghen tghetal	But such a one would receive him
	and carry him for as long
Als een kin in zijne moeder volwassen sal.	As a child grows within its mother. ⁵⁶²

PC 14 depicts the change from “being born into the world” to giving birth. Hadewijch divides the time spans within the pregnancy into nine months, four weeks and seven days.⁵⁶³ The different months represent the steps towards humility, the weeks the gaining of certain abilities and the days the seven gifts. The nine months of pregnancy are paralleled with characteristics one has to achieve in order to sink low in humility. Among them is confidence in the sixth month followed by justice and wisdom to culminate in the birth of the child in humility:

Die neghende meant es also wijsheit slint	The ninth month is as if wisdom engulfs
Al dat si in minnen mint.	All that it loves in love.
Dan comt ter minnen gheweldeghe tijt	Then Love’s moment of power comes
Ende stormt all vren op wijsheit.	And continually assaults wisdom.
Als men met allen dat men es	As man with all that man is
Ghenoech es der minnen ende ghetes	Contents Love and is conformed to Love,
So werdt ter neghender maent gheboren	So in the ninth month is born
Dat kint dat oetmoet hadde vercoren.	The Child that lowliness had chosen.
Dan heeft oetmoedicheit haer gheuoech	Then humility has its wish
Daer si hare seluen es mede ghenoech.	By which it satisfies itself. ⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶⁰ “Want si el ne woude noch haerre el ne was” SP 29, l. 87/ PS29, 206 86.

⁵⁶¹ Hadewijch names seven gifts in one of her poems in couplets (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, holy fear). PC 14, 179-186 / PC 14, CW, 350; these also appear in Vision 13.

⁵⁶² PC 14, 35-46 / PC 14, CW, 346.

⁵⁶³ Cf. Hofmann, *Hadewijch: Das Buch der Visionen*, Vol. 13, 188.

⁵⁶⁴ PC 14, 133-142 / PC 14, CW, 349.

There is a very subtle shift from the passivity of receiving to the activity of giving birth through humility. See how it continues:

Hi sal ons meten metter seluer maten Daer wij hem mede meten.	<i>He shall measure to us with the same measure With which we measure to him.</i>
Die dan aldus van minnen beseten Sijn in wille, in werke, bouen den sinnen Te al haren wille ghenoech der minnen, Sal hi dan also meter weder,	To them who in this manner, filled with love, In will and in work above thought, Content Love according to her whole will, He shall then, if he wills, measure it the same measure;
So moet hi hen dat hoghe gheuen neder Te haren wille, also sij hen gheuen,	So must he give them that loftiness, According to their will, as they themselves give,
Sal hi hen in een al leuen ;	If he really will live wholly in union with them;
Anders ware loghenne die orsate,	Otherwise the compensation would be falsehood,
Sone mate hi niet die selue mate.	If he did not measure the same measure. ⁵⁶⁵

Taking measure for measure, Love must give love to those who humble themselves like this. So that Mary's humility is, on the one hand, the deepest depth, but on the other, Mary brings Christ into the world through her humility. This makes her not only the mother of Christ but for Hadewijch she is also the capturer of Love:⁵⁶⁶

Wat so ons god ye onste En wardt nieman die conste Gherechte minne verstaen Eer dat maria die goede Met diepen oetmeode Die minne hadde ghevaen Tierst was si wilt doen wardt si tam Si gaf ons vore den leeu een lam Si maecte die deemsterheit claer Die hadde gheweest doncker wel menich jaer	Whatsoever God favoured us with, There was nobody capable of understanding righteous love, Before Mary, the good, Had captured love with the Depth of her meekness [<i>humility</i>]. At first she was wild, then she turned tame. She gave us a lamb instead of the lion. She made bright the darkness That had been dim for so many years. ⁵⁶⁷
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It is Mary, who captures Love and tames her through her humility.⁵⁶⁸ Mary transforms Love. She discloses the father with her deep humility (l. 46). The

⁵⁶⁵ PC 14, 152-162 / PC 14, CW, 349-350.

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. Holmes: "According to Hadewijch's extended metaphor, pregnancy begins in humility but leads to a 'moment of power' in the birth of love. The growth of love within the soul satisfies divine Love, unleashing a power that surpasses even the engulfing maternal wisdom (*wijsheit*). The growth of this power leads to divinization. That is, becoming the mother of love makes the soul increasingly divine." Holmes, *Flesh Made Word*, 64.

⁵⁶⁷ PS 29, ll. 31-40 / PS 29, 205.

⁵⁶⁸ Hadewijch's depiction of virtue and victory therefore plays with gender roles in her poetry. Berns et. al. comment on courage in war as typical for men and marriage as as the comparable situation: "Le mariage est en somme à la femme ce que la guerre est à l'homme: ce qui leur permet de réaliser leur caractère sexué. Le courage manifeste la virilité de l'homme et la guerre est donc la condition pour l'homme de la réalisation de soi, de la même manière que le mariage est pour la femme la seule manière de se montrer femme et de se réaliser en tant que telle. Celle qui renonce au mariage se trouve naturellement rejetée du côté des guerriers,

castle is won through her (l. 49). She conceived him “As God, as man and as youth. / There for the first time one may recognize / The clear work of love.” (ll. 78-80) Thereby, Mary becomes a figure of transgression from passivity to activity.⁵⁶⁹ Listen how Hadewijch turns Mary⁵⁷⁰ into the strongest:⁵⁷¹

Die derde eest wijf die starcst es.
Die derde meester vermat hem des,
Om dat sie den coninc ende alle man
Verwinnen mach ende wale can.

Dit wijf es oetmoedicheit,
Die hare so hout in nederheit
Dat si hare seluen niene verhoghet :
Al mochte si werken alle die doghet
Die alle menschen moghen die
leuen,
En soude hare ghene raste gheuen.
Ghene sake en gheraect haren gront.
Ghewareghe oetmoedicheit en
verstont
Al dat minne gheleisten mochte,
Dat hare niet ghenoech en dochte.
Dit es die starcste wel met rechte :
Si maect van heerscape knechte ;
Die alre fierst was inden hemel,
Dien maecte de[n] diepe[n] gront so
temel
Dat hi vte sijnre hoecheit viel
Jn dien grondelose wiel.
Want hare oetmoet was so groet
Dat si den coninc te hare gheboet.
Si was starcst, dat sceen hare wale.
Die noch woude wonen inden dale
Van oetmoede, hi soude verwinnen
Alle die crachte der groter minnen.

The third is woman, who is the strongest.
The reason, which the third master ventured
to explain,
Is that she is truly able
To conquer the king and all men.
This woman is humility,
And she so keeps herself in lowliness
That she never exaltes herself.
Even if she could practice all the virtues
That all men living could practice,

It would give her no repose.
Nothing touches her depths.
True humility did not understand

All that Love could accomplish,
For to humility it seemed
not to give perfect fulfilment.
Woman indeed is rightly the strongest:
She made the Lord a slave;
Although he was the noblest in heaven
Her deep humility made him so submissive
That he fell from his sublimity
into this unfathomable chasm.
For her humility was so great
That she summoned the King to come to her.
She was the strongest, that is undeniable.
Anyone then who wishes to live in the valley
Of humility must conquer
All the power of great Love.⁵⁷²

ainsi des Amazone ou d’Athéna, qui, guerrières, sont vouées à la virginité.” Berns, Blésin, and Jeanmart, *Du courage*, 31.

⁵⁶⁹ See also PC 2 where Hadewijch marks woman as “the strongest”; cf. Holmes: “Hadewijch crucially reinterprets humility in ways conducive to the spiritual progress of her beguines. Instead of indicating passivity or self-abasement, according to Ulrike Wiethaus, humility indicates a transition that is ultimately empowering, especially for women: ‘Humility, because it is explored in a way that is saturated with feminine metaphors of strength, paradoxically affirms the female identity and self-worth of both teacher and audience, and yet functions as a way of separating the neophytes from their previous identity (humility as a necessary letting go of social identities and norms).’” Holmes, *Flesh Made Word*, 64.

⁵⁷⁰ “wijf” can also be read as “woman”, see “wijf” Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, 796. This emphasis on “woman” links Hadewijch to Eckhart, as the above has shown.

⁵⁷¹ This poem speaks of four masters who discuss the question of who is the strongest before a king. Axters “Hadewijch en de Scholastiek” (pp. 107-108) has shown that Hadewijch uses the form of the *disputatio* in PC 2, cf. Hart, CW, 386. The fact that she writes about a heroic virtue in this form and with the mention of four masters (Hart highlights that Hadewijch turned the four bodyguards from the original legend in the vulgate into university masters, CW, 385-6) might mean that she was familiar with the discussion around the “heroic virtue.” On the Masters of Arts, see Costa, “Heroic Virtue in the Commentary Tradition on the Nicomachean Ethics in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century,” 172.

⁵⁷² PC 2, 47-72 / PC 2, CW, 320.

In the “depths” (“*gront*”) Hadewijch makes the Lord (“*heerscape*”) the slave (“*knechte*”). The King falls into woman’s “unfathomable chasm” (“*grondelose wiel*”), and those who want to wander in the “valley of humility” have to conquer Love. This already shows that Hadewijch’s concept of humility does not end in subservience or obedience. Her knight-imagery implies what Vision 13 will show: how to conquer Love in the abyss. It will show how the relationship of Love and her servant changes to a relationship of Love and her lover.

5.6.3.2 *To be like Christ in Mistrust*

The change in humility that was already alluded to in comparison with Mary’s humility reaches its peak in the description of humility in Vision 13. It leads us to two major insights into Hadewijch’s thinking: firstly, the highest or rather deepest form of humanity is mistrust (*ontrouwe*)⁵⁷³ of Love. To follow Christ in his humanity is to follow him into the deepest despair of mistrusting Love.⁵⁷⁴ Secondly, in mistrust, there is a shift in humility from focusing on one’s own littleness to one’s own greatness as a lover of Love. The lover’s activity thereby lies in claiming passivity and dependence on another.⁵⁷⁵

Mistrust is a change from being a servant to being a lover. In demanding from Love, the servant claims his position as the lover. The third

⁵⁷³ Hart translates “*ontrouwe*” as unfaith, “*ontrouwe*” has both meanings, by choosing “unfaith” Hart emphasizes the religious connotation of “trust” as “faith” in the meaning of the English faithfulness, cf. “*Ontrouwe*” Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, 426. This reading follows the translation by Hofmann as the German “*Mißtrauen*” (Hofmann, 151) because it captures the free choice of passionately suffering from the experienced distance of Love and the union with Love. Mistrust brings out the two elements of freedom and passion that are important to the way the lover relates to love and suffers from it, cf. Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 61-65. Moreover, it highlights the aspect of Love as the most longed for and the most feared.

⁵⁷⁴ Humility then describes a process of growing towards Love, in which the humble person has to pass through certain stages, see Heszler: “Zwar kann in der ‘unio’ die im Bild mitgeteilte Differenz zwischen Seele und Gott aufgehoben werden, doch setzt diese Gnade eines unabdingbar voraus: der Mensch muß zuvor die Antinomien, welche die Minne-Erfahrung im Diesseits konstituieren, in aller Schärfe erkannt und empfunden haben [...]” Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 159.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 67: “Hadewijch also follows traditional Christian theology in her understanding that the greatest active self-involvement for humans is a fusion of passion and free will. [...] My present point is that what conquers God is the freely willed passion of Hadewijch. The value of this love lies in its being both passionate and willed.”

seal that is opened by Hadewijch in Vision 13 is described as the “Divine touch, giving fruition”.⁵⁷⁶ Hadewijch continues after describing those who have the seven gifts with the eighth:

[...] but the eighth is the Divine Touch, giving fruition, which does away with everything that pertains to reason, so that the loved one becomes one with the Beloved. But because they had the seven gifts and made progress toward the knowledge of the eighth, and Love demanded this of them, they called continually for fruition and did not believe in the love of their Beloved; it rather appeared to them that they alone were loving and that Love did not help them.⁵⁷⁷

The humble at this level are already making process in getting to know the eighth gift. This is a paradoxical moment of calling for fruition and at the same time not believing in a return of one’s love. It is the contradiction of the two that makes her mistrust abysmal.⁵⁷⁸ In Letter 8, Hadewijch differentiates two fears: the first one correlates with the first seal, which is the fear of being unworthy. The second one is phrased as mistrust:

The second fear is, we fear that Love does not love us enough, because she binds us so painfully that we think Love continually oppresses us and helps us little, and that all the love is on our side. This mistrust [*ontrouwe*] is higher than any fidelity that is not abysmal, I mean, than a fidelity that allows itself to rest peacefully without full possession of Love, or than a fidelity that takes pleasure in what it has in the hand. This noble mistrust [*ontrouwe*] greatly enlarges consciousness. Even though anyone loves so violently that he fears he will lose his mind, and his heart feels oppression, and his veins continually stretch and rupture, and his soul melts - even if anyone loves Love so violently, nevertheless this noble mistrust can neither feel nor trust Love, so much does mistrust enlarge desire. And mistrust never allows desire any rest in any fidelity but, in the fear of not being loved enough, continually distrusts desire. So high is mistrust that it continually fears either that it does not love enough, or that it is not enough loved.⁵⁷⁹

In the contradiction of loving and therefore longing for the other and at the same time knowing the other to be absent, mistrust enlarges consciousness. The deepest form of suffering is expressed in the paradox experience of being

⁵⁷⁶ V 13, CW, 300 / XIII, 160-161.

⁵⁷⁷ V 13, CW 300, XIII, 160-167.

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. Hesler, who also links Letter 8 and Vision 13: “Die Wortanklänge an die Einleitung der VII. Vision sind offensichtlich. Doch gerade aus der unerbitterlich zunehmenden Spannung zwischen Affekt und Intellekt leitet Hadewijch ihr eigenes Normkonzept her. Erst in der qualvollen Erfahrung dieser Aporie kann das Geschöpf über sich hinauswachsen. Der Affekt, der nach der Einung mit Gott strebt, weitet die Seele selbst zum Abgrund ‘Dese ontouwe es hoghere dan der trouwen gront’ (31) und bereitet sie für die entgegenkommende Gnade Gottes vor. Was der Brief nur andeutet, nimmt die XIII. Vision an entscheidender Stelle klärend und verklärend wieder auf.” Hesler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 79.

⁵⁷⁹ L 8, CW, 65 / L 8, 27-44, translation modified; cf. Murk Jansen: “Hadewijch’s use of the word ‘abyss’ here [letter 8] is significant for her understanding of the mystic process and of the fundamental role of ‘unfaith’ within it. The use of the language of the abyss in a mystical context was developed by the Cistercians, but Hadewijch uses the imagery to express the mutuality of the relationship between God and the soul, describing both as bottomless abysses.” Murk Jansen, Saskia M., “Hadewijch,” 675.

deserted and mistrusting the one whose absence (and therefore former presence) is felt so strongly.⁵⁸⁰

This is the deepest the soul can sink. Thereby Hadewijch's concept of mistrust expresses the absurdity of demanding what one knows is not there and yet claiming its existence.⁵⁸¹ It is the true carrying of the cross in asking God: "Father why hast thou forsaken me?"⁵⁸² It expresses the absurdness of the situation. Christ's question demands an answer. The highest and lowest point of humanity is to mistrust Love and yet to demand its existence.⁵⁸³ It is to speak despite the full knowledge of the meaninglessness of what one is saying. It is to speak even if one never knows whether there is going to be an answer. Mistrust is so convinced of the absence of the other that there is no meaning in what Hadewijch says.⁵⁸⁴ At this point, Hadewijch's demand does not even make sense: "I leave the rhyme: there is no sense."⁵⁸⁵ As she phrases

⁵⁸⁰ Fraeters points out something similar in her analysis of Vision 9, cf. Fraeters, "The Appearance of Queen Reason," 84.

⁵⁸¹ Milhaven, who sees Hadewijch as criticizing any idea of self-sufficiency not only of man but also of God, points out God's dependence on Hadewijch: "But what contents and satisfies God in that exceptional moment of supreme union is simply the person's present loving union with God. [...] Traditional theologians would fault Hadewijch for her illogicality. If God suffices for himself, satisfies himself, then nothing else, no one else, can be said to suffice for him or satisfy him. But the issue, I suggest, is not one of logic. The issue - yes, the *rational* issue - is of rock-bottom judgments on which all one's intellectual structure is built. Aristotle calls such judgments *archai*. Thomas Aquinas calls them *prima principia*. Moderns call them, faiths, intuitions, categorical imperatives, constructions, or other terms." Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 30-31.

⁵⁸² Murk-Jansen comes to a similar conclusion: "Their position [Letters, 25 and 29], surrounding the astonishing evocative description of union with God in *Letter* 28 illustrates Hadewijch's understanding that the only possible point of union between the creature and God the Son is at the moment of the cry from the Cross 'Father why hast thou forsaken me?'" Murk Jansen, Saskia M., "Hadewijch," 674. Murk-Jansen does not link this to demanding or a loss of meaning but to the *imitatio* in suffering; Murk Jansen, Saskia M., "Hadewijch," 674.

⁵⁸³ Cf. Mommaers and Willaert, "Mystisches Erlebnis und sprachliche Vermittlung in den Briefen Hadewijchs," 138-51.

⁵⁸⁴ Mommaers and Willaert, "Mystisches Erlebnis und sprachliche Vermittlung in den Briefen Hadewijchs," 141: "Was die Stimme bewirkt, unterscheidet sich nicht von dem, was sie selbst ist. Das Wort, das hier gehört wird, ist kein Zeichen, sondern es ist der Sprecher selbst. [...] Dieser Bräutigam läßt sich bei der Braut nicht mittels eines Zeichens repräsentieren. [...] Sie kennt ihn, nicht indem sie seine Zeichen versteht, sondern indem sie ihn erfährt. In ihrer eigenen Veränderung weiß sie, wer er selbst ist: *sed de seipso operans in ipsa, ut ipsa in ipso sit*. Der fundamentale Grund, warum das Wort, das der Mystiker hört, Stille ist - *in silentio secreto auditur* - und warum es sich nicht in Worten ausdrücken läßt, sollte jetzt deutlich sein. Wo keine Zeichen gegeben werden, da ist nichts Verständliches zu vernehmen. Und wer eine Veränderung seines eigenen Seins erfährt, kann nicht zu gleicher Zeit einen Abstand zu diesem Prozeß gewinnen, den Abstand, den man braucht, damit man ihn ausdrücken kann."

⁵⁸⁵ L 19, CW, 89 / L 19, 26: "*Jc late den rijm: hiers vte den sen*", translation modified. Mommaers and Willaert elaborate on this poem at the beginning of Letter 19: "*Sin* deutet in diesen Werken auf die Geisteskräfte des Autors hin; dank seinem *sin* kann der Dichter den *sin*, der in seiner materie verborgen ist, finden und zum Ausdruck bringen. Hadewijch

it in letter 19. Hadewijch's understanding of the passion of Christ then is an internal state of mistrust in Love. To follow Christ is to know this depth: to long and demand for the fruition of Love and yet to be utterly alone with the cross.⁵⁸⁶ *Imitatio* is Christ's passion in the mistrust of Love as man.

5.6.4 *The Trinity as a Dynamics of Demanding and Owing*

At the deepest point in mistrust to Love, Hadewijch becomes Love.⁵⁸⁷ The restlessness of mistrust as a spiral of passionately loving and intellectually doubting evokes the whirlwind or the wheel.⁵⁸⁸ Hadewijch's spinning wheel

übernimmt diese Konzeption des Schreibens aber nicht, sie widersetzt sich ihr. [...] Dem Sprechen, das aus der Vernunft hervorgeht, steht das Sprechen 'mit der Seele' gegenüber, das die Mystikerin hier im Auge hat. Hadewijchs Verse sowohl als auch ihre Prosa scheitern angesichts des Minneerlebnisses, das ihr geschieht. Warum läßt sie den Reim fallen? Weil die Vernunft diese Wirklichkeit nicht im Griff hat (*Want redene en mach begripen niet*) und dieses vernünftige Sprechen also keinen Inhalt, keine Bedeutung mehr hat: *hiers ute den sen*. Ihr poetisches Sprechen hört auf aus Mangel an einem adäquaten, der Vernunft gefügigen Gegenstand." Mommaers and Willaert, "Mystisches Erlebnis und sprachliche Vermittlung in den Briefen Hadewijchs," 143; this understanding of speaking links Hadewijch to William of St. Thierry, cf. Mommaers and Willaert, "Mystisches Erlebnis und sprachliche Vermittlung in den Briefen Hadewijchs," 140 and could be linked to Augustine's understanding of "logos/verbum", cf. Chávez Álvarez, "*Die brennende Vernunft*", Vol. 8, 44–45.

⁵⁸⁶ Mommaers puts this understanding of *imitatio* in terms of "feeling certain" and "being certain": "Christ says in Vision 1 'I was certain of my Father' Remarkably this certainty is called 'consolation.' But how could Jesus, who has been represented as 'exiled' from the realm of religious consolation, have a consoling experience? Was he capable of tasting the oneness with the Father without enjoying it? [...] This is a subtle distinction between being certain and feeling certain. That of what Jesus was deprived is the religious satisfaction par excellence, feeling one with God in a self-conscious way. However, Hadewijch is far from suggesting that Jesus remained in "exile" because he rejected the experience. If he chose to be so abandoned, the reason was that precisely in this desolation the human being is enabled to experience more than 'feeling certain', namely 'being certain.'" Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 126.

⁵⁸⁷ This reading, therefore, takes a different approach to experience than Faesen, who writes: "Her reflection begins from divine enjoyment, which consists in the complete mutual possession of the divine Persons in *minne*. Human participation in this enjoyment is based in the radical gratuitousness of love - *minne sonder waeromme* [a phrase taken from Beatrijs van Nazareth, footnote 47] - that is proper to God's own life. Hadewijch underscores this gratuitousness and illustrates her concern with reference to the lack of experience in her own life. This results in the paradoxical situation that according to her, the most fundamental participation in the divine enjoyment consists of being stripped of all 'experience'." Faesen, "Pleasure in Medieval Christian Mystical Literature: The Analysis of John of Ruusbroec (1281-1381) and Hadewijch (Thirteenth Century)," 373. In contrast, this reading stresses that Hadewijch's ascent leads to nothing but being Love through mistrust.

⁵⁸⁸ See Vision 1, one could also relate this to Hadewijch's concept of *orewoet* in Hadewijch's poetry, see Fraeters: "Der Schmerz des Liebenden, der sich von der Minne verlassen fühlt, ist unerträglich und stürzt ihn in ein rasendes Verlangen (*orewoet*) nach seiner Geliebten. Diese *orewoet* ("Sturmwut") ist existentiell. Die Anwesenheit der Geliebten ist darum eine Angelegenheit auf Leben und Tod, denn alles andere wurde aufgegeben (Lied 7, Strophe 4)" Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 44; see also Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 172 "Without

is an expression of the abyss as being nothing but the image of Love's abyss. The nothingness of Hadewijch is a moment of fully being herself in Love by being nothing but love.⁵⁸⁹ Mistrust extinguishes any particularity. And yet, this means to follow the demand of Love to "be always great like her."⁵⁹⁰ Mistrust expresses the awareness of one's own claim and demand in Love. Thus, the *imitatio Christi* reaches its peak in absolute despair in Love and the silence of Love.⁵⁹¹ Hadewijch's understanding of the demand of Love on humanity can be better understood if we look at how she defines the Trinity:

I mean the demand that the Father demands [*meant*] in eternal fruition from the Unity [*in eweleken ghebrukene van enicheiden*] of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the debt that the Son and the Holy Spirit demand of the Father in the fruition of the Holy Trinity [*manen in ghebrukene der heylegher drieheit*]. And that demand is eternally new in one possession and one Being [*enen wesene*]; and from the need to satisfy the demand of the Father's Unity, the justice of all judgment is derived. By the demand of the Father's omnipotence, through the wisdom of the Son and the goodness of the Holy Spirit, in the Trinity, man was created. But because man did not answer the demand of the Unity, he fell.⁵⁹²

Hadewijch's understanding of the Trinity is a dynamics of demanding and being indebted. This understanding of the Trinity explains why the human

orewoet or 'love's fierce fury', there can be no union; without violent conflict, no embrace." One could investigate to what extent this is related to Hadewijch's understanding of affect and reason. For Hadewijch a mere intellectual understanding of the self is not enough. In her exploration of the human self she includes affection as a way to know yourself. See the champion's speech in V 8, CW, 284 / V 8, 104-109.

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. Murk Jansen, Saskia M., "Hadewijch and Eckhart: Amor intellegere est," 24; Milhaven puts this as a fusion of passion and free will: "The value of this love lies in its being both passionate and willed." Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 67.

⁵⁹⁰ Willaert and Mommaers call this the voice of the soul: "Diesem Sprechen mit den *sinnen*, das *sen* hervorbringt - einem Sprechen das sie übrigens schätzt und selbst vorzüglich beherrscht - , stellt Hadewijch eine andere Sprechweise gegenüber. Sie erklärt, es gebe eine gerechte Redeweise, die keine Bedeutung habe. Oder besser: die nicht im Wiedergeben von Sinn bestehe. In dieser Redeweise stehen die Worte in Verbindung mit einem Bereich innerhalb des Menschen, der tiefer liegt als die Ebene, auf der Sinn hervorgebracht wird, tiefer also als die rede ('die Vernunft') und die sinnen. In diesem Fall kommen die Worte - dieselben menschlichen Worte - aus der Seele: Sie enthalten dann keine sinnvollen Erkenntnisse, sondern sie verweisen auf einen wesentlichen Zustand, worin man schaut, indem man ist (Br. XXII, 406)." Mommaers and Willaert, "Mystisches Erlebnis und sprachliche Vermittlung in den Briefen Hadewijchs," 144.

⁵⁹¹ Hezler points out the innovation in Hadewijch's integration of doubt and despair in the ascent of the soul: "Es geht auch darum, Zweifel und Verzweiflung zu würdigen und geradezu programmatisch in das Aufstiegssystem zu integrieren. Daß sich die Mystikerin des Neuartigen ihres eigenen Weges wohl bewußt war, dafür sprechen die nachdrücklichen Legitimations-bestrebungen: die direkte Rückbindung an den göttlichen Auftrag selbst und die Gestalt des anonymen Seelengeleiters, in dessen Schönheit und Macht der hohe Wert des von ihm verwirklichten intellektzentrierten Gottesbezugs gewürdigt wird; doch macht Hadewijch auch die Begrenztheit dieser Erfahrung sichtbar. Das von ihr propagierte Konzept stellt nicht den Affekt über den Intellekt, aber es setzt ein ganzheitliches Ergriffensein des Menschen voraus - für die Berührung Gottes, 'die al af doet datter redenen behoert, ende lief in lief een valt' (VIII, 181-82)." Hezler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 68.

⁵⁹² L 30, CW, 117 / Letter 30, 49-71.

being - as the image of God – finds themselves in a similar constellation of demanding and owing:

We are now under Love's demand [*inde maninghe van Minnen*] toward the Holy Trinity. Therefore, we ourselves must make a demand on Love [*ter Minnen manen*], and we must do this with all ardor; and we must demand nothing else but the Unity [*manen dan sine enicheit*]. And we must live according to the pleasure of Love, who at all hours has demanded this Unity, and has adorned unexalted humility [*oetmoedicheit*] with just works; and according to the demand of the Holy Trinity, which always demands perfect virtues according to its pleasure, by which one grows, here, and becomes perfect in a life in accordance with the Trinity and in accordance with the Unity.⁵⁹³

It is, therefore, in her demanding of Love that Hadewijch satisfies Love and is in unity with Love. Being in unity with the Trinity means entering the dynamics of owing and demanding. To love perfectly in the way of the Trinity is to not only to become aware of the debt to Love but also to *demand* Love. To truly love and follow Christ, one has to break the silence: for mistrust is the expression of not accepting Love's silence. It means to continue the conversation when there is no more meaning in one's words. At the lowest point of despair and uncertainty of Love, one still asks for Love and thereby demands Love's presence.⁵⁹⁴ In the full expression of absolute dependence also lies the upholding of what one depends on. In claiming her full dependence on Love, Hadewijch also *claims* Love.

Consequently, to follow Christ does not mean to bow down to Love but to stand up proudly. It is demanding despite the unpayable debt, faith without hope and fortitude in an unconquerable battle. Mistrust is not to be submissive and give in to the deepest despair; it is to stand up despite

⁵⁹³ L 30, CW, 118 / Letter 30, 95-107.

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 71: "As Hadewijch tells it, she and other elite lovers in their time *turn the battle by thus voicing their unbelieving desire for Love*. In Western thought down through Hadewijch's time, the 'word' (*logos* or *verbum*) has always been crucial in humans' attaining the final goal. But it has been God's own word, either as uttered by him or repeated by the human mind and voice. I know of no other Western thinker up through Hadewijch's time for whom the final, decisive step to supreme loving union with God is a *word, proper to the human* Godseeker, a word that God or Love or Jesus Christ does not say and could not say. (A God-Man could not say to God: "I do not believe you!") When the human lover speaks this kind of word to Love, she engages in real dialogue. Her interpersonal speech is what opens the totality of God to her. She only speaks and offers no promise or account of deeds as a knight might to his lady love."; "In dieser Weise gibt Hadewijch schon am Anfang ihrer Briefe zu erkennen, daß die Wirksamkeit ihres Sprechens, jedes menschlichen Sprechens, nur relativ sein kann. Trotzdem schreibt sie." Mommaers and Willaert, "Mystisches Erlebnis und sprachliche Vermittlung in den Briefen Hadewijchs," 119.

hopelessness.⁵⁹⁵ The lowest point of humility is to be nothing. The highest point of Love is to speak into the depths of nothingness. Humility leads into silence in Love, but mistrust in its demand for Love speaks and is the sweetest and final voice of Love:

But the noise of the highest mistrust [*ontrowen*] is the most delightful voice of Love; in this she can no longer keep herself at a distance and depart.⁵⁹⁶

Love returns only if one speaks out of nothing into nothing. But then, she cannot retreat for it is the full demand from Love. Furthermore, to fulfil her Love Hadewijch must be humble and confident,⁵⁹⁷ she must be fully aware of her debt to Love but also her right to demand Love.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁵ This idea of confidence is also highlighted in Hadewijch's letters, see, e.g. "[...] and so in all hardihood and pride you must neglect nothing, but you should valiantly lay hold on the best part – I mean, the great totality of God – as your own good. And so must you also give generously, according to your wealth, and make all the poor rich: for veritable Charity never fails to prevail over those who began with the pride of their whole will; so that she gives truly what she wishes to give, overcomes what she wishes to overcome, and maintains what she wishes to maintain." L 6, CW, 60; L 4, CW, 54; Suydam links humility and pride as confidence: "Like other medieval writers, Hadewijch exalts the virtue of humility. However, in her works humility engenders pride and confidence. This pride allows the mystic to seek depths of religious experience that are too frightening for ordinary humans. There is an intertwined relationship between pride, 'high confidence' and humility." Suydam, "The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp," 23.

⁵⁹⁶ V 13, CW, 301 / XIII, 208-211; translation modified; Milhaven expresses the contradiction that lies in speaking out of mistrust: "The pieces of the picture fit together. Unfaith arises out of frustrated desire. In the fury of unsatisfied desire, the lover will have nothing of humility and trusting reason and their resigned acceptance. Flaming desire turns then to bitterness against Love as well as to unfaith in Love's pledges Unfaith, however, is still a voice of love because it spurs on, or indeed is, love's desire for Love." Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 61.

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. Suydam: "Hadewijch's statements in Vision 13 are more comprehensible (and less 'juvenile') if one considers Hadewijch's coupling of her unique concept of pride (*fierheit*) with the virtue of humility. In the Middle Ages pride was universally condemned as one of the deadliest of sins. Hadewijch acknowledges the medieval opposition of pride to humility, but proposes another kind of pride which is entirely positive." Suydam, "The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp," 23.

⁵⁹⁸ This is also why reason sometimes errs for Hadewijch: "Reason well knows that God must be feared, and that God is great and man is small. But if reason fears God's greatness because of its littleness, and fails to stand up to his greatness, and begins to doubt that it can ever become God's dearest child, and thinks that such a great Being is out of its reach – the result is that many people fail to stand up to the great Being. Reason errs in this." L 4, CW, 54 / L 4, 39-48.

5.6.5 *Turning into the Abyss: A Oneness of Demanding and Owing*

The narrative of the *Visions*, shows a change in the role of passivity and activity as the lover becomes the abyss through mistrust:⁵⁹⁹

Mistrust [*ontrouwe*] made them so deep [*diep*] that they wholly engulfed [*verwielen*] Love and dared to fight her with sweet and bitter. That which Love gives turns bitter and is consumed and devoured. That which Love holds back is enriched by great strength to follow Love's demand [*dies manens der minnen*] that they be always great like her, so that all God's artifice may not separate them from Love.⁶⁰⁰

This time it is the lover who engulfs ("verwielen") Love in the depth. Mistrust makes the lover so deep that she turns into an abyss.⁶⁰¹ Hadewijch has become so much *like* Love that she has *become* Love. At this stage, she can take what Love gives (whether it is sweet or sour) and devour it. The passive-active relation between the lovers is reversed. A relation that Hadewijch describes in more detail in Letter 18:

Now understand in the deepest essence [*die innicheit*] of your soul, what "soul" is. Soul is a being that can be beheld by God and by which, again, God can be beheld. Soul is also a being that wishes to content God; it maintains a worthy state of being as long as it has not fallen beneath anything that is alien to it and less than the soul's own dignity. If it maintains this worthy state, the soul is a bottomless abyss [*grondeloosheit*] in which God suffices to himself; and his own self-sufficiency ever finds fruition to the full in this soul, as the soul, for its part, ever does in him. Soul is a way for the passage of God from his depths into his freedom [*in sine vriheit van sinen diepsten*]; and God is a way for the passage of the soul into freedom [*vriheit*], that is, into his inmost depths [*in sinen gront*], which cannot be touched except by the soul's abyss [*diepheit*]. And as long as God does not belong to the soul in his totality, he does not truly satisfy [*ghenoech*] it.⁶⁰²

The soul and God find fruition in each other. The soul does not only receive but also leads God into his freedom as it is the passage of God into his freedom and vice versa.⁶⁰³ This is the language of two lovers in Love; two

⁵⁹⁹ Milhaven also points out the mutuality of lover and Love, cf. Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 37. His focus, however, lies more on the consequences of Hadewijch's thinking on the concept of God. He points out Hadewijch's attack on the traditional concept of God as self-sufficient and man as self-sufficient in his image: "The self-sufficiency of God is also a model for the consequent human self-sufficiency. If God be not wholly self-sufficient, then the foundation and model of good human life collapses. The self-sufficiency of the human individual would collapse with it. Hadewijch's idea of her affecting God is profoundly threatening. It is incomprehensible, perverse, or obscene within Christian thought. The supreme model of human life includes vulnerability, divine as well as human!" Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 41. He goes on to explain how this affects traditional thought of causality, Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 42. This will be discussed at length at the end of this thesis.

⁶⁰⁰ V 13, CW, 300 / XIII, 167-175, translation modified.

⁶⁰¹ Cf. Hesler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 79.

⁶⁰² L 18, CW, 86 / L 18, 63-79.

⁶⁰³ For Milhaven this differentiates Hadewijch from Bernhard of Clairvaux: "In substantial aspects, therefore, the description by Hadewijch of supreme mutuality of divine and human persons breaks from the traditional account of that union, even from the account by Bernard of Clairvaux. Bernard made similar comparisons of God and the soul to lover, but he did not

abysses in one.⁶⁰⁴ God's depth is touched by the soul's depth.⁶⁰⁵ Hadewijch explains her understanding of oneness with the imagery of the abyss in Letter 9:

Where the abyss [*diepheit*] of his wisdom is, he will teach you what he is, and with what wondrous sweetness the loved one and the Beloved dwell one in the other, and how they penetrate each other in such a way that neither of the two distinguishes himself from the other. But they abide in one another in fruition, mouth in mouth, heart in heart, body in body, and soul in soul, while one sweet *divine Nature* flows through them both (2 Pet. 1:4), and they are both one thing through each other, but at the same time remain two different selves - yes, and remain so forever.⁶⁰⁶

Love and the beloved are one through the other. They are one being in two abysses in the constant movement of flowing. In Vision 13, the two abysses turn into one when a great flood swallows up everything in one being.⁶⁰⁷ At this stage, Hadewijch and Love are one and Hadewijch is in the position to speak out of Love: "You Seraphim, whose function it is to minister to our wonder, stand firm and watch over our glory! We all shall become one; and one, all!"⁶⁰⁸ This message is crucial to Hadewijch, because she reaffirms it in words spoken by Mary:

Behold, everything is fulfilled! Penetrate all these attributes and fully taste Love. For you cherished Love with humility [*in oetmoedecheiden*]; you adorned and led Love with loyal reason [*ghetrouwer redenen*]; and, with this lofty fidelity and this entire power, you vanquished Love and made Love one [*ende een makets*].⁶⁰⁹

say that the soul "contented" discontented Divine Love nor that the soul 'satisfied' God. [...] For Bernard, God desires the soul not that God may get anything from the soul. God desires the soul simply so that he may give love to it. For Hadewijch, God wants the soul, yes, so that he may give love to it, but also so that he may get something from it. He wants to have fruition of the loving soul. He wants to satisfy his desire for the soul. He wants to obtain therein a new liberty for himself." Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 33.

⁶⁰⁴ As Faesen puts it: "Indeed, the reader is encouraged to see what love actually is - namely, 'the one for the other', or in other words, total mutual belonging." Faesen, "Pleasure in Medieval Christian Mystical Literature: The Analysis of John of Ruusbroec (1281-1381) and Hadewijch (Thirteenth Century)," 368.

⁶⁰⁵ Milhaven points out that despite the union Hadewijch and the beloved remain two distinct selves, cf. Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 17.

⁶⁰⁶ L 9, CW, 66 / L 9, 4-12. This is, in contrast, to Eckhart's understanding of unity, see Sermon 12: "The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me: my eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing and one love." Sermon 12, 298, DW 1: 201, 5-8.

⁶⁰⁷ See V 13, CW, 301 / XIII, 189-195.

⁶⁰⁸ V 13, CW, 301 / XIII, 195: "[...] *wi selen alle een warden ende een al*".

⁶⁰⁹ V 13, CW, 301 / XIII, 196- 201.

Hadewijch vanquishes Love and makes it one.⁶¹⁰ Through her power (“*ghewour*”)⁶¹¹, Hadewijch gains knowledge of a “secret heaven” (“*verborghen hemel*”).⁶¹² In her demand of Love, she wins Love which in turn makes her able to reach full knowledge of Love as man and God. In Letter 30, Hadewijch further defines this oneness. It is at this point that in lightning and thunder the true unity is reached:

When therefore the soul is brought to union out of the multiplicity of gifts, it becomes all that is. And then the Unity [*enicheit*] for the first time obtains what it has demanded [*ghemaent heuet*], and only then the demanding [*manen*] has begun, and then the soul can have, through the Trinity, the fruition that until now had been withheld. Then shall the Three Persons forever demand and eternally render – at one and the same time [*met ere vren manen Ende ghelden enen wesene*] – their Unity in one will, one possession, and one fruition [*enen ghebrukene*].⁶¹³

In the union, when the soul has gained the position to engulf Love, the true union in demanding and owing really begins.

This also highlights the ongoing struggle with Love. The process of demanding and owing will continue and is portrayed as the contrast of humility and *fierheit* in Hadewijch’s poetry.⁶¹⁴ The defining feature is conquering and fighting with Love: “For he who has never fought against

⁶¹⁰ Kobusch highlights the philosophical content of this: “Diese Botschaft ist eine philosophische, die das Wesen der Liebe betrifft. Sie kündigt davon, daß die Vereinigung der Seele mit Gott nichts anderes denn als die Verbindung zweier unendlicher Abgründe zu einem gedacht werden kann.“, Kobusch, “Die Philosophie des Hoch- und Spätmittelalters,” V, 361; Fraeters phrases this in terms of minne poetry: “Der Sieg des mystischen Minnenden besteht darin, dass die Minne völlig Besitz von ihm ergreift. Dann werden Minnender und Minne eins. Hadewijch transportiert auf diese Weise ein höfisches Motiv in einen religiös-mystischen Kontext. Sie verwebt das Motiv des weltlichen höfischen Ritterkampfes mit dem des Jakobskampfes (Genesis 32,24–33): Jakob bleibt nach dem Kampf mit Gottes Engel lahm zurück. Dennoch sagt der Engel zu ihm, dass er, Jakob, gewonnen habe: Im Kampf durfte er nämlich dem ungreifbaren Gott begegnen.” Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 40.

⁶¹¹ V 13, CW, 301 / XIII, 202.

⁶¹² V 13, CW, 301 / XIII, 202.

⁶¹³ L. 30, CW, 119 / L. 30, 167-176, translation modified; Hart changes the sentence structure slightly, so that in her translation it is only the three persons that are in the process of demanding and rendering. This is an interpretation as Hofmann’s translation shows in comparison: “Wenn diese (Geschehen) dann aus der Vielzahl der Gaben heraus vereinigt wird, dann wird man ganz genau dasselbe, was das (große Licht) ist. Und erst dann hat die Einheit, was sie gefordert hat, und dann hat das Fordern erst eigentlich einen Anfang. Und dann kann man sie aus der Dreiheit heraus genießen, die über sie bislang die Oberhand behalten hatte. Dann sollen sie auf ewig zur gleichen Zeit ein und dasselbe Wesen auffordern und Ihm (die Forderung) begleichen, in einem Willen, in einem Besitzen, in einem Genießen.” Hofmann, *Briefe*, 183; The knowledge she presents is not mere intellectual understanding but affectuous. As she points out in Letter 8 mere intellectual understanding of God is not sufficient.

⁶¹⁴ On “*fierheit*” and humility, see Suydam, “The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp,” 23; van Baest, *Poetry of Hadewijch*, Vol. 3, 39-41; Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 180. On a similar approach to humility in Godfrey of St. Victor’s writings see Feiss, *On Love*, Vol. 2, 94-99.

Love/ Has never lived a free day.”⁶¹⁵ and “The valiant lover himself strikes before Love strikes: / Thus he comes bravely to the combat”⁶¹⁶. As Murk-Jansen points out the lovers in Love fight as equals.⁶¹⁷ Like her concept of Love, her concept of the lover contains various roles and perspectives. Consequently, Newman is right when she states:

Hadewijch’s unique quest as a knight of love was more complex than that of the secular poets, for she was obligated not only to do battle *for* Love (like a romance knight), but also *as* Love [...], and most crucially *against* Love [...].⁶¹⁸

5.6.6 Vision 14: To be God with God and Live the Trinity

In Vision 14, Hadewijch portrays the consequences of her concept of union with God. Hadewijch has gained the strength to be God with her human suffering:

But the new power he then gave me, which I did not possess previously, was the strength of his own Being [*sijn selues wesene*], to be God with my suffering according to his example and in union with him, as he was for me when he lived for me as Man [*mensche*].⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁵ “[...] Want die minne nie en vervacht, / Hine leefde nie vrie daghe.” SP 21, CW, 184 / SP 21, 44-45.

⁶¹⁶ “Die[n] fiere gheve slaghe, eer minne sla: / So comt hi scone ten stride.” SP 39, CW, 242 / SP 39, 86-87.

⁶¹⁷ Murk Jansen, Saskia M., “Hadewijch,” 676: “But unfaith is not satisfied with engulfing Love. Those lovers who have been given this highest gift of Love, fight her as equals. Hadewijch often uses imagery of chivalry and combat to describe the conduct appropriate for the lovers of Love. She compares them with valiant knights who perform great deeds with their lances [...]” Milhaven comments: “Hadewijch’s account of her conquest of God differs from anything I know of in Christian writing up to or during the Middle Ages. I have not found the like in, for instance, the writings of Gueric, Bernard, or Richard of Saint Victor nor in Hildegard of Bingen or Beatrice of Nazareth, who probably lived a generation later than Hadewijch. Decisive in Hadewijch’s triumph over Love is her lack of faith, her refusal to trust in God’s Love. More accurately, it is not her unfaith as such that triumphs over Love. It is her unfaith *qua* rising from and in desperation increasing her desire or longing for God. It is her resultant desire/longing that engulfs Love, and Love cannot stay away from such sweet, mighty love.” Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 61–62.

⁶¹⁸ Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 180; see also Newman, “*La mystique courtoise: Thirteenth-Century Beguines and the Art of Love*” in *From virile woman to womanChrist*, 137-181; Hofmann suggests that Hadewijch took the knight imagery from Bernard (Sermones super Cantica Canticorum LXI, 7f. *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. VI, hrsg. Winkler, 1994, S. 321. Hadewijch, *Buch der Briefe*, 203; this seems unlikely considering how elaborately Hadewijch reinterprets the troubadour poetry, which seems to have had far more influence, cf. Guest, *Some Aspects of Hadewijch’s Poetic Form in the ‘Strofische Gedichten’*, 244–45; see also Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, Vol. 2, 217: “Endlich sei zur Abgrenzung Hadewijchs von der Frauenmystik ihrer Zeit darauf hingewiesen, daß es der Minnesang gewesen ist, der ihre Liebesvorstellungen von Anfang an sprachlich bestimmte, und dieser ist weit entfernt vom Geist des Hoheliedes.”

⁶¹⁹ V 14, CW, 302 / XIV, 11-15.

In union with Christ, Hadewijch received to be God with her suffering. She lives for Love as Christ lived for her as a human being. This is the peak of the ascent as Hadewijch perceives herself differently. At this point, she sees herself and her will “freely and proudly in him.”⁶²⁰ She has learned how to love the humanity in order to gain the divinity. Hadewijch’s union is a union in the humanity with God. As she phrases it in terms of humanity:

But they abide in one another in fruition, mouth in mouth, heart in heart, body in body, and soul in soul, while one sweet divine nature flows through both and they are both one thing through each other, but at the same time remain two different selves – yes, and remain so forever [*Ende si beide een dore hen seluen, Ende al eens beide bliuen, Ja ende bliuende*].⁶²¹

Hadewijch is one with God. But she is so in her humanity which is Christ’s humanity. The two selves are one in and through each other but different. In what she speaks, feels, does and is Hadewijch abides with God. And yet: it remains her mouth, her heart, her body and soul. In differentiating the life of the Trinity in Letter 30, Hadewijch concludes every paragraph with a summarizing phrase. To follow reason in search of Love is to live “[...] the Son of God.”⁶²² To give up one’s will to Love’s will is to live the Holy Spirit.⁶²³ But to reach full-growth in the father is to ardently grow as lover in the beloved in everything.⁶²⁴

[...] by ardently striving to grow up as loved one in the Beloved in every respect: to work with his hands; to walk with his feet; to hear with his ears where the voice of the Godhead never ceases to speak through the mouth of the Beloved, in all truth of counsel, of justice, of sweet sweetness, of consolation for everyone according to each person’s need, and of caution against sin; to appear like the Beloved, unadorned and without beauty (cf. Isa. 53:2), live for no one else but for the Beloved in love

⁶²⁰ V 14, CW, 303 / XIV, 46-47: “vrileke. ende fierleke in hem;” In his analysis of pride and humility, Boyd points out that pride is rooted in the irascible appetite and the will and therefore located in the desires, not in the intellect. Boyd, “Pride and Humility: Tempering the Desire for Excellence,” 256; Hadewijch turns this evaluation of pride around by highlighting pride as *fierheit* as a virtue that is a result of union with Christ. Furthermore, she shows that desire leads her to this union. It is the timing of pride and humility, that is important to Hadewijch: in the ascent humble desire for the other is the base, in the union pride as a confidence (*fierheit*) out of Love for the other in the humble person is the ideal.

⁶²¹ L 9, CW, 66 / L 9, 3-14.

⁶²² L 30, CW, 118 / L 30, 113: “*Daer met leuet men den sone gods.*”

⁶²³ L 30, CW, 118 / L 30, 122: “*leuet men den heileghen gheest.*”

⁶²⁴ Hadewijch repeats the formula of “in all” here: “[...] by ardently striving to grow up as loved one in the Beloved in every respect [*Ende euen nidech lief in lief dore wasse in al*]” L 30, CW, 118 / L 30, 123-127; One could also translate: “love in love” since Hadewijch deliberately chooses the words “lief in lief”. Milhaven criticizes Hart’s translation for hiding the mutuality of Christ and Hadewijch in translating “the loved one” as “The Beloved” where Hadewijch only wrote “lief” or *lieue*, cf. Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 19.

alone, live in him as the loved one in the Beloved, with the same way of acting, with one spirit, and with one heart [...]⁶²⁵

Thus, at the highest point of becoming one is to live with, in and out of the Trinity. One is one in all. Perfect pride (“*fierheit*”) as “to gain full knowledge of how to love the humanity towards the divinity” in Vision 11 is reached here⁶²⁶ because the final step for a human being towards God is to love the humanity as Christ did.⁶²⁷ This means to embrace it like it was described in Vision 7. Christ embraces Hadewijch in her humanity so that in order to become one with God, Hadewijch has to embrace her humanity. One has gained the knowledge of how God is God and Man. *Fierheit* is the form of loving the humanity towards the divinity. Like Christ, Hadewijch has to embrace her humanity instead of denying it. She does not have to let go of it but has to become one *with* it.

The narration of the union in Vision 14 is interrupted when Hadewijch turns back to her addressee. At the point of being Love, her love makes her return to her loved ones. So that she then returns to her life as woman and through Love can endure everything with equanimity.⁶²⁸ Love is not only the

⁶²⁵ L 30, CW, 118 / L 30, 126-137; Dailey comments: “She will let *werke* operate through her in an active sense by aligning her will with God, working his will, and by becoming what she does, or being who she already is, that is, the *imago* within.” Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 93.

⁶²⁶ V 14, CW, 303 / XIV, 44-49: “That I saw through all things in the throne means all my works in God, and my will, freely [*vrileke*] and proudly [*fierleke*] in him, with all the madness of love by which I was overwhelmed in his regard in such great horror as I continually was from Love and still continually am.”

⁶²⁷ Cf. Mommaers: “Through her [Hadewijch’s] tangible working and suffering the mystics shares in fact, like any other human being, the outer life of the Man, while through her feeling the ‘want’ that comes with such an existence, she shares his inner life. It further appears that this factual and spiritual union with Jesus is actually the point at which the different forms of the mystic’s ‘wanting’ (*ghebreken*) come together.” Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 123–24; Carney, “Exemplarism in Hadewijch: The Quest for Full-Grownness,” 280; McGinn calls Hadewijch’s theology “exemplaristic Christian Platonism” McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, Vol. 3, 211; see also Holmes, *Flesh Made Word*, 81; on the figure of Christ as an ideal of the virtues in the Thirteenth Century generally, see Costa, “Heroic Virtue in the Commentary Tradition on the Nicomachean Ethics in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century,” 165.

⁶²⁸ Compare Ruusbroec to this: “For this just person has established a true life in the spirit-in rest and in activity-which shall abide eternally; but after this life, it shall pass over into a higher state. Thus, the person is just and goes to God with inner love by eternal activity; and he goes into God with enjoyable inclination, by eternal rest; and he abides in God and yet, he goes out to all creatures in common love, in virtues, and in justice. And this is the summit of the inner life.” Ruusbroec, *Spiritual Espousals*, lines b 1955-60, pages 534-36, quoted in Boon, “Trinitarian Love Mysticism: Ruusbroec, Hadewijch, and the Gendered Experience of the Divine,” 496.

link to God but also to her followers. In the overwhelming unity with Love, Hadewijch turns into Love and out of Love, she speaks to her followers:

I am continuing this too long, because you are glad to hear in what the happiness consisted which was so beautiful, or so beyond human nature, and so conformed to the Humanity of God; but since that day I have remained unwavering in all things. I did as God did, who delivered back all his works to his Father, from whom he had them; [...] I am sorry, nevertheless, because I desire to do your will. And since you wish to know all that concerns me, I am very sorry that you do not know everything you wish to know.⁶²⁹

It is striking how Hadewijch returns to the notion of knowing at this point. For what she gains in her visions is understanding.⁶³⁰ The journey in the garden of Vision 1 comes to an end in the “taste [of] Man and God in one knowledge”⁶³¹ and a heroine whose will is “freely and proudly in him”⁶³². At the end of the visions stands victory as perfect knowledge of God as God and man:

The Voice said to me: “O strongest of all warriors! You have conquered everything and opened the closed totality, which never was opened by creatures who did not know, with painfully won and distressed Love, how I am God and Man [*god ende mensche*]! O heroine [*coene*], since you are so heroic, and since you never yield, you are called the greatest heroine! It is right, therefore, that you should know me perfectly [*mi te vollen kins*].⁶³³

⁶²⁹ V 14, CW, 304 / XIV, 96-109; see L 6, CW, 57 / L 6, 40-53: “And, also, do not be so self-willed in yourself at any unpleasantness that you ever let yourself doubt, in future, that anything less than the great God totally shall be yours in the being of love, so that doubt or self-will makes you neglect any good action. For if you abandon yourself to Love, you will soon attain full growth. And if you remain in doubt, you will become slothful and unwilling, so that everything you ought to do will be unwelcome to you. Do not be anxious about anything; and amid the tasks that lead to your goal, do not think there is anything so high that you cannot surely surmount it, or so remote that you cannot surely reach it. So you must be ardent and persistent, with ever new strength.”

⁶³⁰ V 14, CW, 304 / XIV, 117-126: “So was it with other revelations in great number, with the spirit of prophecy (Apoc. 19:10), and with the vision of the things – heaven, earth, purgatory, and hell: with the understanding of various reasons that pertain to these four things; and with the understanding of Love, how he is our Love in himself, and outside himself he is Love in us; and that Love at one time slays and at another time heals, and why Love chooses the lowlier ones and rejects the greater ones. I pass over, besides, other kinds of understanding.”

⁶³¹ V 14, CW, 305 / XIV, 164-165.

⁶³² V 14, CW, 303 / XIV, 46-47.

⁶³³ V 14, CW, 305 / XIV, 147-157.

5.7 From Christ's Humility in Hadewijch to Abraham's Humble Courage in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*

As Dailey shows, Hadewijch's concept of union in Love leads to a life of works of Love.⁶³⁴ Hadewijch's union of two abysses upholds "Love without a why" because her motivations do not show in her works of Love.⁶³⁵ As Dailey points out, it is Love that works through Hadewijch: "She will let *werke* operate through her in an active sense by aligning her will with God, working his will, and by becoming what she does, or being who she already is, that is, the *imago* within."⁶³⁶

⁶³⁴ Cf. Dailey: "The emphasis I am placing here on *werke* (one of the twelve virtues celebrated in Vision 12) does not exclude the other significant virtues portrayed in Hadewijch's visions; rather, emphasizing the role of *werke* produces an understanding of the way in which inner and outer bodies are crafted to correlate with visions, text, and virtue in general. It also allows for an illustration of how *werke* make Minne substantial in a performative and spiritual sense by living as one reads, allowing for the spiritual *imago* to become enacted in life." Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 92; She is right in warning against a "modern" approach to Hadewijch's union of two selves: "As one would expect, *werke* does not glorify the actor: [...] Her consistent advice to not desire anything in particular - that is, not to desire any specific types of work, lest the devotee overidentify with a goal and let her 'self' be too involved - indicates that the very performance of work is not attributable to the 'self' in the conventional sense. If, as contemporary readers, we associate women's performance of works with a Cartesian subject or ego, we risk thinking anachronistically and missing the main point of selflessness and the exercise of divine will. If we posit identification with Christ as a female attribute because of women's 'embodied nature,' for example, we miss the nonidentification that makes *work* possible. A mystic like Hadewijch would read and interpret her actions in other ways than as issuing from 'her' will and reflecting her 'self.'" Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 94-95; see also Faesen: "This life is constituted by enjoyment (*ghebruken*) and glory. Clearly Hadewijch does not conceive of this life as a chronological sequence of action and contemplation, in the way one might conceive of the Benedictine *ora et labora*. On the contrary, this life consists of virtues and righteous works, but works which are practised in such a way that their enduring source is in the absolute love that is God." Faesen, "Pleasure in Medieval Christian Mystical Literature: The Analysis of John of Ruusbroec (1281-1381) and Hadewijch (Thirteenth Century)," 368, commenting on Letter 18 Hofmann speaks of "[...] paradoxalen Gleichzeitigkeit von Aktivität und Passivität im Leben in und aus der göttlichen Einheit." Hadewijch, *Buch der Briefe*, 228.

according to Boon Ruusbroec took over Hadewijch's concept of virtue, rest and activity in life, cf. Boon, "Trinitarian Love Mysticism: Ruusbroec, Hadewijch, and the Gendered Experience of the Divine," 496.

⁶³⁵ Cf. Hofmann: "Etwas Angenehmes erwächst dem Liebenden aus seirn Liebebemühen erst sozusagen auf einer zweiten Ebene, nämlich wenn er irgndewo bei sich selbst oder bei anderen Menschen die Liebe am Werke erkennt." Hadewijch, *Buch der Briefe*, 220; Mommaers comments on Letter 18: "Furthermore, according to Hadewijch, who is faithful to tradition on this point, the 'particular' Persons as such never disappear, not even while being 'engulfed' into Unity. This already clarifies the prohibition to be active 'in a particular way': it is not the works as such which are prohibited, for these are as integral to the human being as the divine activity to the Persons. Consequently, that which the mystic has to abandon is not his or her performance of works nor, obviously, the particular attention this requires." Mommaers, *Hadewijch*, 140-41.

⁶³⁶ Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 93; see Letter 16: "Now consider how to live, and the saints who remained here below after him, as well as the good people now alive who wish to practice that great Love which God is (1 John 4: 16); they live constantly in humility of heart and the unremitting pursuit of good works." L 16, CW, 81 / L 16, 41-46.

The analysis of humility in Hadewijch's works has shown how Hadewijch grows from knowing herself as a human being to a union with Christ's humanity through his humility. In a movement of turning from servant to lover, Hadewijch learns to consider herself as the bride of Christ standing before the Countenance. Approaching the abyss in humility, Hadewijch *becomes* the abyss in mistrust. In her longing for Love Hadewijch engulfs Love. In Love, humility thus turns into a form of strength and power in the sense of *fierheit*.

What Hadewijch sees in the *Visions* makes her humble, because she sees her own littleness in relation to Love. But it also makes her fight passionately and courageously because she understands the potential that lies within herself as the image of the Trinitarian unity. Hadewijch's works describe the existence of understanding one's own contingency and debt to Love in the face of Love and yet fighting for Love. Humanity as the image of the Trinity, such as Hadewijch describes it in Letter 30, implies that one lives the constant struggle of debt and demand. Vision 14 highlights her role as a teacher and guide.⁶³⁷ Hadewijch uses various techniques to show her understanding of the Trinity, Love and a virtuous life. Drawing on the conventions of courtly love poetry,⁶³⁸ Hadewijch portrays this attitude in the image of a knight.⁶³⁹ Her poems on Love fulfil the function of affectively bringing the idea of Love and what it is like to be the lover closer to the

⁶³⁷ On the importance of Hadewijch's role as a guide, see Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 21-22.

⁶³⁸ Heszler analyzed the philological potential and innovation of Hadewijch's reinterpretation of the artus-novel and love poetry, see Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 170; on a general introduction of this genre and its relation to transcendence, see Haug, "Transzendenz und Utopie,"

⁶³⁹ Cf. Baest: "Fierheid is a major theme in her portrayal of man (or the knight) in the fight for, in and against Love." van Baest, *Poetry of Hadewijch*, Vol. 3, 39-41; Heszler: "Charakteristisch für ihre Reflexion epischer Elemente ist jedoch, daß sie die für den Roman zentrale Opposition von Hof und 'avontuere'-Welt in der Personifikation der Minne zusammenfallen läßt. Die Minne ist sowohl Herrin als auch Kampfgegnerin." Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 145; Newman: "The attitude championed by Hadewijch - a fierce determination to 'stand up to' infinite Being, demanding all of Love's love for all of one's own - is the ultimate hohe Minne, supremely embodied in the Minneritter. The knight of love is long-suffering, but never self-deprecating; patient perforce, but never passive. To the same measure that he is awed by Love's greatness, he is confident of his own worth as Love's image and likeness. No discourse that had yet been created by or for women upheld such a proud ideal; and that is why Hadewijch had to become a minnesinger. It was not enough for her to be a mulier virilis, for what she wanted to vanquish was not merely her 'female nature,' but God. In this she stood peerless." Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 181.

reader.⁶⁴⁰ As a guide and role model, she presents what she knows in a way that makes following for her audience not only a result of understanding but also a performed and lived possibility.

Relating Hadewijch's concept of humility to Eckhart indicates some changes that will become even more apparent in Kierkegaard's understanding of humility. Whereas Eckhart's humble soul works God's works in the way of outflowing and, therefore, participates in God's perfect being, Hadewijch stresses the potential that lies in lacking God's Love. Hadewijch's emphasis on humility as a need to demand Love in longing represents an ideal of humanity that is not self-sufficient but defines humanity as being and claiming itself dependent on another. Hadewijch, therefore, criticises the idea of self-sufficiency. This shows in her idea of *fierheit* as a consequence of humility. The *fierheit* that grows out of humility is a result of seeing oneself in relation to another. Hadewijch is strong through dependence on Love rather than in opposition to it. *Fierheit* is not a claim of self-sufficiency, but confidence drawn from claiming one's dependence on another. This idea of humility as strength through another reappears in the concept of humility presented in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*. Kierkegaard's pseudonym Johannes de Silentio highlights the heroism and courage that lies in daring to let oneself be dependent on another without being able to give anything back. It highlights the activity that lies in passionately loving another by longing for them in passivity.

Hadewijch's concept of a union of demanding and owing articulates a relation of activity and passivity that marks a different challenge to the humble person than the one we find in Eckhart's understanding of the received activity involved in humility. The emphasis on Christ's humanity and the idea of being "God with God", rather than being one *in* God, creates a distance between God and Hadewijch that is not found in Eckhart's concept of union. The abyss lies between Hadewijch and Love and is not the point of identity as in Eckhart. Hadewijch mirrors the dynamics of the Trinity within herself and not in God's being as the humble person does in Eckhart's work. Even though the humble soul in Eckhart also demands fully taking part in the

⁶⁴⁰ Cf. Hesler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 66–67.

dynamics of the Trinity, the demand of Love for Hadewijch is to demand Love knowing the humanity and not only the divinity of Love. The effort of becoming a human being like Christ lies in her hands. Hadewijch's concept of humility is not received activity but unites activity and passivity within herself in her relating as demanding from and owing to Love. Mistrust expresses this doubtfulness and uncertainty of Love. The beguine has to throw herself into despair and desertedness by Love before she reaches full satisfaction from Love. This venturing out without certainty of Love will reappear in Kierkegaard's concept of humble courage. Instead of the image of Jacob, Kierkegaard chooses the story of Abraham and Job. Nonetheless, Kierkegaard's pseudonym de Silentio will also highlight the importance of passivity as activity in humble courage.

A point of connection and at the same time differentiation between the three authors is the relationship between God and the soul. Hadewijch's *Visions* focus on the experience of Love's presence and absence rather than the humble soul's being in God as Eckhart's sermons do. This shift to the human experience of being with God links Hadewijch's approach to Kierkegaard's works. For Hadewijch, Christ's humanity is the point of connection between the divine and herself and yet the point that she is the furthest away from her loved one. For Kierkegaard, humanity is also ambiguous. Humanity as outwardness is opposed to the inwardness of the single individual before God. As a human, the human being stands out (*existere*). Humanity is outwardness because it describes a self that does not relate to itself before God. As such, humanity is selfishness. Becoming a self before God for Kierkegaard, consequently, means to turn inward as a stripping off the selfishness of humanity. One significant difference between Hadewijch and Kierkegaard is thus the shift from a unity of Lovers in Hadewijch to an unbridgeable distance between God and the single individual in Kierkegaard's humble courage. The distance between God and the human being in Kierkegaard's thought is that of an absolute other. The abyss, therefore, lies between the single individual and God and is no longer a point of connection between two lovers. Relating to God as the absolute is only possible in relating to a human other, the Christian "neighbour". Kierkegaard's humble courage will, therefore, stress how the single

individual Abraham relates to Isaac. The distance between God and the individual brings out even more uncertainty and unrest in the ambiguity that Kierkegaard highlights in Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac.

This brings forth a change of conceptual motive: Hadewijch's texts are dominated by a *contradiction* of longing and enjoying, in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* the relation to God as faith is encountered as a *paradox*. Faith is the paradoxical movement of humble courage. The world that Kierkegaard's pseudonym Johannes de Silentio depicts in *FT* is one where the idea of God as the absolute good and meaning of life is questioned. God is no longer an experienced reality. Abraham, in de Silentio's words, finds himself in a contradiction of reason as a way of universally understood truth and faith as the single individual's absolute relation to the absolute. This paradoxical situation shows Abraham's humble courage in every step he takes towards Mount Moria. Thus, the investigation turns from receiving God in being in Eckhart's texts and standing proudly with Love in Hadewijch to moving forward in action through Abraham's humble courage in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*.

6 “Humble Courage” in Kierkegaard’s Pseudonymous Writings

The thesis analyses Johannes de Silentio’s concept of humble courage in *Fear and Trembling*. The full title of the book is *Fear and Trembling. Dialectical Lyric* by Johannes de Silentio (hereafter *FT*), published shortly after *Either/Or* in 1843.⁶⁴¹ *FT* deals more explicitly with the conflict between ethics and faith rather than aesthetics and ethics as *Either/Or* does.⁶⁴² Johannes de Silentio investigates Abraham’s faith as the father of faith in contrast to the figures of the tragic hero and the knight of infinite resignation. Faith in *FT* depicts a way of standing before God as a single individual. It does so by reinterpreting and retelling the story of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac. The defining characteristic of Abraham is humble courage. If irony marks the beginning of every human life in Kierkegaard’s thought, faith is the way to become a single individual before God. In Kierkegaard’s thought, this coincides with truly becoming oneself. Humble courage in this interpretation defines a way of the single individual Abraham to stand humbly before God and act courageously in the world.

The role models in *FT* are the knight of infinite resignation and the knight of faith. Their characterization defines a difference between pride as resignation and renouncing and humble courage as a movement of faith by receiving. This interpretation will first focus on infinite resignation as a form of pride. Then it will investigate de Silentio’s interpretation of humility before another as chosen passivity and receptivity. This will, finally, lead to

⁶⁴¹ Similarly, Claire Carlisle comments on the “author” of *FT* Johannes de Silentio: “Indeed, these remarks help to indicate the significance of the text’s pseudonymity. *Fear and Trembling* by S. Kierkegaard and *Fear and Trembling* by Johannes de Silentio are substantially the same book – that is, they consist of the same words – and yet while the latter text has Abraham as its hero and Johannes as its poet, the former text has two protagonists, Abraham and Johannes, and Kierkegaard as its poet. The manner, in which Abraham qualifies as a hero remains problematic in both versions (unlike in Luther’s *Lectures on Genesis*), whereas Johannes de Silentio is Kierkegaard’s hero insofar as he understands not only the difficulty of faith’s movements but also his inability to accomplish them. If Abraham was extraordinary among his contemporaries, Johannes is exceptional in his own age in realizing that he lacks faith, while all around him are under the illusion of possessing it. He is thus a Socratic figure within the text, questioning Christian identity not just through a theoretical discussion of what faith consists in, but also through his refusal to claim this identity for himself.” Carlisle, “Johannes de Silentio’s Dilemma,” 60.

⁶⁴² Johannes Climacus defines irony as the confinium between the aesthetic and the ethical, cf. *CUP*, 501-2 / *SKS* 7, 455.

Abraham's humble courage as the single individual's way of taking action in the world before God.

6.1 Aesthetics and Ethics: Heroes in Ancient and Modern Drama

Johannes de Silentio explores different settings for his heroic characters. To understand terms like "esthetic", "ethical" and "religious" in *FT*, one has to turn to the context in which Johannes de Silentio and other pseudonyms phrase them: ancient and modern drama. In ancient drama, the esthetic as a first immediacy⁶⁴³ brings back the first moment of freedom that we first encountered in irony. With the analysis of modern drama, de Silentio and *A* in *E/O* introduce guilt and responsibility which set the stage for the knights of resignation and faith as a second immediacy.

Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author *A* in *Either/Or*'s "The Tragic in Ancient Drama Reflected in the Tragic in Modern Drama. A Venture in Fragmentary Endeavor"⁶⁴⁴ differentiates between ancient and modern tragedy⁶⁴⁵ by the categories fate and sin, guilt and repentance, and aesthetics and ethics. *A* marks the transition from ancient drama to modern drama as a transition from fate to freedom.⁶⁴⁶ In Greek tragedy, it is not so much the single individual's decisions than their position that turns the heroes and heroines into tragic figures.⁶⁴⁷ The framework of the Greek tragedy is clear and on the reader's side has to be kept in mind. *A* continues stating that in ancient tragedy, one has to think oneself into Greek consciousness (not one's own). This additional reflective layer causes sorrow.⁶⁴⁸ Sorrow, in contrast to pain, implies that there can be no change to what is already set in stone. In addition, certain determinants cannot be changed. The framework of the story already sets the outcome so ancient tragedy evokes sorrow over what is lost and cannot be changed: it already belongs to the past.⁶⁴⁹ *A* uses Antigone as

⁶⁴³ *FT*, 82 / *SKS* 4, 172.

⁶⁴⁴ Cf. *E/O I*, 139-163 / *SKS* 2, 137-162.

⁶⁴⁵ When I am speaking of "modern" here, I follow Kierkegaard's wording and meaning.

⁶⁴⁶ Cf. *E/O I*, 143-44 / *SKS* 2, 142-143.

⁶⁴⁷ *FT*, 84: "Greek tragedy is blind. Therefore it takes a certain abstraction if one is to be influenced by it properly."

⁶⁴⁸ Cf. *E/O I*, 148 / *SKS* 2, 147.

⁶⁴⁹ Cf. *E/O I*, 156 / *SKS* 2, 154-155.

an example of ancient tragedy. What is at stake is not the individual's life but the future of the defined world:

This totality makes the spectator's sorrow so very profound. It is not the individual who goes under, but a little world; it is the objective grief, unloosed, that now strides ahead, like a force of nature, in its own terrible consistency, and Antigone's sad fate is like the echo of her father's, an intensified sorrow.⁶⁵⁰

What happens is on the level of destiny and therefore necessity. Antigone fulfils her role. According to A, Antigone already inherits a tragic fate. It is an outward order that decides her destiny:

Therefore, when Antigone, in defiance of the king's injunction, decides to bury her brother, we see in this not so much a free act as a fateful necessity, which visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.⁶⁵¹

In Greek tragedy, there is no possibility, no way of doing things differently because with birth the way is already laid out. There is no ambiguity; everything is disclosed and out in the open. The tragic lies in this position and this fate can only be mourned for, not changed. Therefore, guilt is not linked to the decision but to fate. The structure of the drama builds the setting for the tragedy.⁶⁵² Thus in ancient drama, the rules of aesthetics determine the action: fate is responsible and determines the hero or heroine's action and circumstances within the dramatic structure disclose the hero's secret. As Johannes de Silencio describes in his analysis of Iphigenia in Aulis: esthetics demand silence from Agamemnon but an old servant discloses everything to Clytemnestra.⁶⁵³ The dominating feeling is sorrow; tragedy happens *to* the hero or heroine and not because of them.

The means by which A analyzes modern tragedy are: the hero's deed, responsibility, guilt and evil:

We want to know nothing about the hero's past; we load his whole life upon his shoulders as his own deed, make him accountable for everything, but in so doing we also transform his esthetic guilt into ethical guilt. In this way, the tragic hero becomes bad, evil actually becomes the tragic subject, but evil has no esthetic interest, and sin is not an esthetic element.⁶⁵⁴

This describes a change from aesthetics to ethics and a change from sorrow to pain. Pain is an immediate reaction, referring to something that could be or could have been different: "The most bitter pain is obviously repentance, but

⁶⁵⁰ *E/O I*, 156 / *SKS 2*, 155.

⁶⁵¹ *E/O I*, 156 / *SKS 2*, 155.

⁶⁵² Cf. *FT*, 87 / *SKS 4*, 176-177.

⁶⁵³ Cf. *FT*, 87 / *SKS 4*, 176-177.

⁶⁵⁴ *E/O I*, 144 / *SKS 2*, 144.

repentance has ethical, not esthetical, reality [*Realitet*].”⁶⁵⁵ Repentance implies that one would have had the power to change fate. This understanding of freedom sets the stage for modern tragedy. The hero’s responsibility replaces the former determinants of ancient tragedy.⁶⁵⁶ This changes the perspective on the hero, instead of compassion, the hero stands alone with guilt:

Our age has lost all the substantial categories of family, state, kindred; it must turn the single individual over to himself completely in such a way that, strictly speaking, he becomes his own creator. Consequently, his guilt is sin, his pain repentance, but thereby the tragic is canceled. [...] the spectator has lost compassion.⁶⁵⁷

It is no longer fate that discloses and dissolves the action; it is the hero’s action. This implies that with a stronger emphasis on the hero’s choice, there also comes a stronger understanding of what is right and wrong, or rather clearer lines:

But just as the action in Greek tragedy is something intermediate between action and the suffering, so also is guilt, and therein lies the tragic collision. But the more the subjectivity is reflective, the more Pelagianly one sees the individual thrown solely upon himself, the more ethical guilt becomes.⁶⁵⁸

The individual is isolated because of the ethical. Introducing the ethical means an increase of reflectivity and a loss of compassion. Out of the emphasis on the ethical grows the danger of the individual to be reduced to his choice and freedom. The ethical puts external contexts in the background and the individual and their deeds in the foreground. The change from fate to freedom means that the unavoidable tragic is in danger to become nothing but chosen evil.⁶⁵⁹ As Haufiensus expresses it “ethics is an ideal science”:

Now ethics should be a science in which sin might be expected to find a place. But here there is a great difficulty. Ethics is still an ideal science, and not only in the sense that every science is ideal. Ethics proposes to bring ideality into actuality. On the other hand, it is not the nature of its movement to raise actuality up into ideality. Ethics points to ideality as a task and assumes that every man possesses the requisite conditions. Thus ethics develops a contradiction, inasmuch as it makes clear both the difficulty and the impossibility.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁵ *E/O I*, 145 / *SKS 2*, 144: “Consequently, if the individual succumbs, this is not tragic, but it is bad.”

⁶⁵⁶ *FT*, 86 / *SKS 4*, 176: “Ethics has no room for coincidence; consequently, there is no eventual explanation. It does not trifle with dignities, it places a heavy responsibility on the hero’s frail shoulders, it denounces as arrogant his wanting to play providence with his suffering. It enjoins believing in actuality and having courage to do battle with all the sufferings of an actuality, especially those anemic tribulations that he on his own responsibility has brought upon himself.”

⁶⁵⁷ *E/O I*, 149 / *SKS 2*, 148.

⁶⁵⁸ *E/O I*, 144 / *SKS 2*, 143.

⁶⁵⁹ Cf. *E/O I*, 160 / *SKS 2*, 158-159.

⁶⁶⁰ *CA*, 16 / *SKS 4*, 323-324.

Ethics put reflections of ideality as the reference point for the characterization of the modern hero. Ethics demands the same from everyone and as an ideal science implies that this demand can be understood by everyone. The ethical is universal that is accessible to everyone in language.⁶⁶¹ The individual is measured by a universal standard of ideality. Another way to phrase this measurement of the ethical is in terms of sale and money. From the very first paragraph of *FT* de Silentio tackles the idea of *quid pro quo* as a “wirkliche Ausverkauf [a real sale].”⁶⁶² Again and again, de Silentio recurs to the idea of finance, exchange and bargain that he uses as an image for universally understandable calculation. This clarity, decisiveness and *quid pro quo* of ethics opposes the ambiguity of anxiety and faith,⁶⁶³ and de Silentio’s retelling of Abraham’s story is an attempt to reinvoke anxiety by bringing back ambiguity:

What is omitted from Abraham’s story is the anxiety, because to money I have no ethical obligation, but to the son the father has the highest and holiest. We forget it and yet want to talk about Abraham.⁶⁶⁴

He chooses the figure of the knight as the model of the hero because - according to him - knights are no financiers, who act to gain some and lose some.⁶⁶⁵ De Silentio describes two kinds of knights: the knight of infinite resignation and the knight of faith. A knight is someone who can concentrate on one thing,⁶⁶⁶ and does not bargain and calculate one for the other. A knight goes out on a quest without knowing or calculating the result.⁶⁶⁷ In *FT*, this

⁶⁶¹ *FT*, 54 / *SKS* 4, 148. “The ethical as such is the universal, and as the universal, it applies to everyone, which from another angle means that it applies at all times.” As Arne Grøn puts it, the single individual loses himself in the universal expressed in language, cf. Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, 121–22

⁶⁶² *FT*, 5 / *SKS* 4, 101.

⁶⁶³ Kierkegaard wrote in a draft: “[...] Abraham would have been a doubter. But then he would not have been out in the stream but would have waded; he would not have given up human calculation but would have been noble according to human calculation” Pap. IV B 72 n.d., 1843, Annotations *FT*, 248–9.

⁶⁶⁴ *FT*, 28 / *SKS* 4, 125.

⁶⁶⁵ *FT*, 43 / *SKS* 4, 137–138.

⁶⁶⁶ *FT*, 43 / *SKS* 4, 138: “In the first place, the knight will then have the power to concentrate the whole substance of his life and the meaning of actuality [*Virkelighedens*] into one single desire.”

⁶⁶⁷ Cf. Nagy, “The Mount and the Abyss. The Literary Reading of Fear and Trembling,” 234. On possible intertextual references, see Nagy, “The Mount and the Abyss. The Literary Reading of Fear and Trembling,” 234; As Haug’s characterization of the medieval knight shows, de Silentio’s knights share having to turn away from society with their medieval counterparts, see Haug, “Transzendenz und Utopie,” 15.

continuing quest is faith. The analysis of *FT*, therefore, follows the knights in their quest for a way to freedom in dependence through anxiety.

6.2 Knights, Passions and Movements

6.2.1 *Resignation, Self-Sufficiency and Pride*

It is in connection with the discussion of resignation that irony explicitly reappears in *FT*. De Silentio himself claims to know a thing or two about irony.⁶⁶⁸ He compares infinite resignation and the resigned distance, which accompanies an ironic world-view. Moreover, he sees irony as a form of infinite resignation.⁶⁶⁹ De Silentio builds up to his depiction of infinite resignation with various love stories. The different love stories allow him to describe how different characters relate to their loved one and their mutual dependence. The figures of the knights emphasise that this relation is a task and venture and therefore an expression of their choice. In the below paragraphs, de Silentio approaches the question of how to relate to the loved one. Moreover, love stories highlight this as a task of the individual.

To explain the movement of resignation, De Silentio gives an example of a young man who falls in love with a princess and “yet the relation is such that it cannot possibly be realized [*realisere*], cannot possibly translated from ideality [*Idealiteten*] into reality [*Realiteten*].”⁶⁷⁰ A relationship between the young man and the princess is not really possible. However, the knight of resignation does not give up because of the impossibility of his love. Instead, he ventures to prove his love in various steps. First, the knight of resignation assures himself that his love is serious enough and worthy of his choosing.⁶⁷¹ He makes sure to know that his love is not mere flirtation but worthy of his

⁶⁶⁸ Cf. *FT*, 51 / *SKS* 4, 145.

⁶⁶⁹ Cf. Söderquist, “The Religious ‘Suspension of the Ethical’ and the Ironic ‘Suspension of the Ethical’: The Problem of Actuality in Fear and Trembling,” 269.

⁶⁷⁰ *FT*, 41 / *SKS* 4, 136; This links resignation to irony, see *CI*, 285-86 / *SKS* 1, 321: “We perceive here how irony continues to be totally negative in that in the realm of theory it establishes a misrelation between idea and actuality, between actuality and idea, and in the realm of practice between possibility and actuality, between actuality and possibility.”

⁶⁷¹ *FT*, 42 / *SKS* 4, 137-138: “First of all he assures himself that it actually is the substance of his life, and his soul is too healthy and too proud to waste the least of it in an intoxication. He is not cowardly; he is not afraid to let it seal into his most secret, his most remote thoughts, to let it twist and entwine itself intricate around every ligament of his consciousness – if his love comes to grief, he will never be able to wrench himself out of it.”

full dedication. What follows is the concentration of “the whole substance of his life and the meaning of actuality into one single desire.”⁶⁷² By renouncing this desire, he keeps it alive within himself:

The knight, however, makes this impossibility possible by expressing it spiritually, but he expresses it spiritually by renouncing it. The desire that would lead him out into actuality but has been stranded on impossibility is now turned inward, but it is not therefore lost, nor is it forgotten.⁶⁷³

In renouncing his love, the knight of resignation has turned the possibility of his love into an impossibility by turning it inward. He lives the impossibility of his love. His reflection has turned love and passion into reflected love and passion. Since he keeps his love for and within himself, he does no longer care for the object of his love, the princess:⁶⁷⁴

He has grasped the deep secret that even in loving another person, one ought to be sufficient to oneself. He is no longer finitely concerned about what the princess does, and precisely this proves that he has made the movement infinitely. [...] for one who has resigned infinitely is sufficient to oneself [*han er sig selv nok*]. The knight does not cancel his resignation, he keeps his love just as young as it was in the first moment; he never loses it simply because he has made the movement infinitely.⁶⁷⁵

The knight of resignation preserves his love and convictions. He stays within himself. The knight of resignation is a hero of self-sufficiency.⁶⁷⁶ He does not need the other to keep his love young. He does not see the princess anymore. “What the princess does cannot disturb him.”⁶⁷⁷ In fact, he can recall his love and passion for the princess at any time he wills. The power over his love stays within himself; he remains self-sufficient. It is not his love that moves him but his recollection of love. Passion thereby loses its immediacy. The knight of resignation works by reflection or rather recollection. He preserves his love just as he preserves the possibility of it. Furthermore, *he* moves love

⁶⁷² *FT*, 43 / *SKS* 4, 138.

⁶⁷³ *FT*, 44 / *SKS* 4, 138.

⁶⁷⁴ Mackey states something similar on despair, which regard to the link of despair and resignation to be developed below, Mackey, “The Loss of the World in Kierkegaard’s Ethics,” 618: “But now, from the passages just quoted from *The Concept of Dread*, with their apotheosis of freedom, the same conclusion follows. To the man educated in possibility by dread, nothing that happens in reality matters. Against a background of infinite possibility, every actuality is a matter of indifference. The man educated by dread has so prepared himself for any reality that no reality can overtake him and surprise him either with terror or with joy. [...] Both absolute freedom and total determinism render actuality superfluous.”

⁶⁷⁵ *FT*, 44 / *SKS* 4, 139.

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. Söderquist, “The Religious ‘Suspension of the Ethical’ and the Ironic ‘Suspension of the Ethical’: The Problem of Actuality in Fear and Trembling,” 275: “He emphasizes repeatedly that he - like other knights of resignation - makes the movement of renunciation *by his own human strength*. A knight of infinite resignation is self-sufficient [...]”

⁶⁷⁷ *FT*, 44 / *SKS* 4, 139.

and not the other way around.⁶⁷⁸ He *chooses* not to disclose his love to his loved one. In renouncing, he is active and yet enclosed. For the knight of infinite resignation, the princess will always exist, but in *his* recollection of her, not in reality. In this reflection of love, his love becomes something of the past. In turning his love inward, he keeps it under control within himself. The knight of infinite resignation renounces possibility by his own power:

Through resignation I renounce everything. I make this movement all by myself [ved mig selv], and if I do not make it, it is because I am too cowardly and soft and devoid of enthusiasm and do not feel the significance of the high dignity assigned to every human being, to be his own censor, which is far more exalted than to be the censor general of the whole Roman republic. This movement I make all by myself, and what I gain thereby is my eternal consciousness in blessed harmony with my love for the eternal being.⁶⁷⁹

The knight of resignation preserves possibility within himself in recollection; he places himself in respect to eternity. The knight of infinite resignation is courageous in his resolution to use his freedom. He does not hold on to unposited possibility but upholds possibility in recollection and reflection. He preserves himself and the other in recollection. However, as de Silentio shows in the image of the ballet dancer: The knight of resignation lifts himself up but stumbles when he comes down:

It is supposed to be the most difficult feat for a ballet dancer to leap into a specific posture in such a way that he never once strains for the posture but in the very leap assumes the posture. Perhaps there is no ballet dancer who can do it – but this knight does it. [...] The knights of infinity are ballet dancers and have elevation. [...] But every time they come down, they are unable to assume the posture immediately, they waver for a moment, and this wavering shows that they are aliens in the world.⁶⁸⁰

As the metaphor of the ballet dancer shows the knight of infinite resignation gains rest in the height of possibility. He commits himself to one self and his lover as an impossibility. The knight of resignation makes impossibility his actuality.⁶⁸¹ In short, he chooses himself in the abstract and impossible but leaves the concrete possibility behind. The knight of resignation's actuality is

⁶⁷⁸ This self-sufficiency in reflection links knights of resignations with the ironist, cf. Söderquist, "The Religious 'Suspension of the Ethical' and the Ironic 'Suspension of the Ethical': The Problem of Actuality in Fear and Trembling," 275: "Anyone can inoculate him- or herself from actuality with the pain of disappointment or disillusionment. Anyone can build up a defense against the arbitrariness of finitude. Everyone can understand this move. On this note, *de silentio* knows that despite his ethical seriousness, he shares something essential with the Romantic ironist: self-sufficiency. The ironist takes control of his own life when he recognizes that conventional ethical systems, are questionable."

⁶⁷⁹ *FT*, 48 / *SKS* 4, 142-143.

⁶⁸⁰ *FT*, 41 / *SKS* 4, 135-136.

⁶⁸¹ Cf. *FT*, 44 / *SKS* 4, 138.

pure impossibility.⁶⁸² But he cannot move on to actuality because he claims self-sufficiency and reflects himself and not the other in reflection and recollection. The knight of infinite resignation remains on the level of reflection; he thinks possibility and preserves love in reflection. In reflection, he cannot break away from himself and is caught up in himself.⁶⁸³ He does not see the other but only himself, which brings him close to the despaired enclosed reserve that Anti-Climacus describes as the highest form of despair: “The continuity that enclosed reserve [*Indesluttetheden*] has can best be compared with the dizziness a spinning top must have, which constantly resolves upon its own pivot.”⁶⁸⁴ Moreover, the title of the book “The Sickness unto Death” implies a movement or direction. Anti-Climacus echoes the abyss when he phrases the relation of “to be” and “being able to” with despair:

[...] in other words, to be is like an ascent when compared with being able to be. With respect to despair, however, to be is like a descent when compared with being able to be; the descent is as infinitely low as the excellence of possibility is high. Consequently, in relation to despair, not to be in despair is the ascending scale.⁶⁸⁵

In despair, one tries to be one particular self or not to be it. In either case, despair describes freedom as choosing oneself or renouncing oneself. Enclosed reserve as a self spinning around itself expresses exactly this. In renouncing the knight of resignation only gains the freedom to be *something* and not the freedom “to be able to”.⁶⁸⁶ Thereby he can only make one

⁶⁸² Just as the ironist’s actuality is pure possibility, cf. *CI*, 279, *SKS* 1, 315: “*Dens Virkelighed er blot Mulighed.*”

⁶⁸³ De Silentio as the knight of infinite resignation only reflects himself: “[...] for he who loves God without faith reflects upon himself; he who loves God in faith reflects upon God.” *FT*, 36-37 / *SKS* 4, 131-132; also *SUD*, 68 / *SKS* 11, 182: “[...] he does not want to put on his own self, does not want to see his given self as his task – he himself wants to compose his self by means of being the infinite form.” In *SUD*, this is called “inclosed reserve”: “Behind it sits the self, so to speak, watching itself, preoccupied with or filling up time with not willing to be itself and yet being self enough to love itself. This is called inclosing reserve [...]” *SUD*, 63 / *SKS* 11, 177; Söderquist links self-sufficiency with enclosed reserve, cf. Söderquist, “The Religious ‘Suspension of the Ethical’ and the Ironic ‘Suspension of the Ethical’: The Problem of Actuality in Fear and Trembling,” 261

⁶⁸⁴ *CA*, 130 / *SKS* 4, 431. see *SUD*, 68-69 / *SKS* 11, 182-183: “If the self in despair is an acting self, it constantly relates itself to itself only by way of imaginary constructions, no matter what it undertakes, however vast, however amazing, however perseveringly pursued. It recognizes no power over itself; therefore, it basically lacks earnestness [*alvor*] even when it gives its utmost attention to its imaginary constructions. This is a simulated earnestness. Like Prometheus stealing fire from the gods, this is stealing from God the thought – which is earnestness – that God pays attention to one; instead, the self in despair is satisfied with paying attention to itself, which is supposed to bestow infinite interest and significance upon his enterprises, but it is precisely this that makes them imaginary constructions.”

⁶⁸⁵ *SUD*, 15 / *SKS* 11, 131.

⁶⁸⁶ The ironist lives for an unsettled future, whereas the knight of infinite resignation lives for and in an unchanging past.

movement, one option, one outcome.⁶⁸⁷ When de Silentio points to the infinitely low as the excellence of high, he means that the tighter the knight of resignation in renouncing holds on to himself, the more he elevates possibility and the deeper he, therefore, sinks: “In the next moment, he thinks, it will be possible, and this is quite true, but with such observations one will never come to make the movement but with their help will sink deeper and deeper into the mire.”⁶⁸⁸

In resignation, one is enclosed in a reflection of one possible self. Seeing nothing other than the reflection of one self. It is one self that circles around itself, holding on to itself.⁶⁸⁹ Proudly relating to itself in reflection, it, therefore, describes a circular turning around one self.⁶⁹⁰ One moves within oneself but loses the other.⁶⁹¹ The knight of infinite resignation negates one possible self and thereby lives in impossibility. He keeps himself and the other as a personal other within himself in recollection. He lives the idea of a past self. The knight of infinite resignation concentrates his passion and chosen self in “one consciousness” by thought. He recollects himself and the personal other within his own reflections. The knight of resignation circles around a past self, desire and relation to another in constant recollection of it.

⁶⁸⁷ Anti-Climacus writes: “you must go through the despair of the self to the self.” *SUD*, 65 / *SKS* 11, 179. This going through despair is a process of lowering down by willing to be oneself or not to be oneself (in contrast to knowing oneself). The decisive process is not one of understanding, but of becoming through consciously willing and suffering, as Anti-Climacus writes: “This form of despair is: in despair not to will to be oneself. Or even lower: in despair not to will to be a self. Or lowest of all: in despair to will to be someone else, to wish for a new self.” *SUD*, 52-53 / *SKS* 11, 168.

⁶⁸⁸ *FT*, 43 / *SKS* 4, 138.

⁶⁸⁹ *SUD*, 16 / *SKS* 11, 132: “And because the relation is spirit, is the self, upon it rests the responsibility for all despair at every moment of its existence, however much the despairing person speaks of his despair as a misfortune and however ingeniously he deceives himself and others, confusing it with the previously mentioned case of dizziness [*Svimmelhed*], with which despair, although qualitatively different, has much in common, since dizziness corresponds, in the category of the psychical, to what despair is in the category of the spirit, and it lends itself to numerous analogies to despair.” As Podmore states despair is an “existential act” Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self before God*, 21; Theunissen interprets despair as a constant process of negating the possibility of despair, cf. Theunissen, “Kierkegaard’s Negativistic Method,” 400.

⁶⁹⁰ Kierkegaard describes the proud’s person’s solitariness as self-sufficiency, see, *EUD*, 354 / *SKS* 5, 341: “The proud person always wants to do it with his own power; he does not want to sneak out of something - no, what he wants is to set the task as high as possible and then to finish it by himself, satisfied with his own consciousness and his own approval. Therefore, even the falsely proud person must be able to be proud in solitariness, must be able to renounce and reject all reward in the world, the favor of people, and not a living soul, not the defiance of the proudest, not the pleas of the most lovable, may disturb him.”

⁶⁹¹ Cf. Söderquist, “The Religious ‘Suspension of the Ethical’ and the Ironic ‘Suspension of the Ethical’: The Problem of Actuality in Fear and Trembling,” 265.

In his performance of self-sufficiency, he does not move beyond himself. In his reflection of desire and passion, he loses the present.

6.2.2 *The Knight of Infinite Resignation's Pain*

In the *Preliminary Expectoration*, de Silentio differentiates the knight of resignation and the knight of faith by their ability to renounce and receive everything. In his description of infinite resignation, de Silentio uses the contrast of higher and lower. The knight of infinite resignation after knowing the heights of possibility returns with the pain of his recollection:

Will he forget it all, for this, too, constitutes a kind of concentration? No, for the knight does not contradict himself, and it is a contradiction to forget the whole substance of his life and yet remain the same. [...] Only the lower natures forget themselves and become something new. [...] The deeper natures never forget themselves and never become anything other than what they were. The knight, then, will recollect everything, but this recollection is precisely the pain, and yet in infinite resignation, he is reconciled with existence.⁶⁹²

In the unity within his existence of recollection and pain, the knight of infinite resignation makes a philosophical movement:

The act of resignation does not require faith, for what I gain in resignation is my eternal consciousness [*evige Bevidshed*]. This is a purely philosophical movement that I venture to make when it is demanded and can discipline myself to make, because every time some finitude will take power over me, I starve myself into submission until I make the movement, for my eternal consciousness is my love for God, and for me that is the highest of all.⁶⁹³

From this, we can draw two conclusions about the movement of infinite resignation. First, for the knight of infinite resignation, there is no contradiction between ethics and the knight's relation to it. "He becomes solitary [*ene*]."⁶⁹⁴ He holds on to his version of the story. He moves within his recollection and the established normative structure of the society in which he is embedded. This marks him as a figure of ethics. Ethics frames the normative structure of society. Staying within the realm of ethics, makes him and his actions understandable because they can be put in language.⁶⁹⁵ Infinite resignation means taking the given as given and submitting to it. As de Silentio concludes: "In infinite resignation there is peace and rest and comfort

⁶⁹² *FT*, 43 / *SKS* 4, 138.

⁶⁹³ *FT*, 48, *SKS* 4, 142.

⁶⁹⁴ *FT*, 42 / *SKS* 4, 137: "*han bliver ene*".

⁶⁹⁵ *FT*, 33 / *SKS* 4, 128: "*I think myself into the hero; I cannot think myself into Abraham*".

in the pain, that is, when the movement is made normatively.”⁶⁹⁶ He, therefore, can rest assured that he has done the right thing. It is a painful reconciliation with existence.⁶⁹⁷

Second, in the process of starving oneself into submission lies the idea that the relationship is only possible in negating and renouncing. The knight of resignation’s love is a love of submission. By renouncing the knight of resignation subordinates, himself below God but also upholds his will in keeping the control in renouncing. Renouncing, he reduces himself to something too small to be worthy of God’s love – and yet does so by his own power. As de Silentio states himself:

Faith is convinced that God is concerned about the smallest things [*Gud bekymrer sig om det Mindste*]. I am satisfied with a left-handed marriage in this life; faith is humble [*ydmyg*] enough to insist on the right hand, for I do not deny that this is humility [*Ydmyghed*] and will never deny it.⁶⁹⁸

The ability to care about the smallest things is a characteristic of faith as the next section will demonstrate.

6.2.3 Cowardliness and Pride

In *Against Cowardliness*, the ability to be concerned with the smallest things is described as resolution:

In other words, it is the meaning of resolution for human life that it wants to give it coherence, an even and calm progress. For this, resolution has the winsome faculty of concerning itself with little things, so that one neither disregards them nor is lost

⁶⁹⁶ *FT*, 45 / *SKS* 4, 140. Tebbutt phrases this in terms of temporality, cf. Tebbutt, “Kierkegaard,” 144.

⁶⁹⁷ Cf. *FT*, 43 / *SKS* 4, 138; also *FT*, 35 / *SKS* 4, 130: “What was the easiest for Abraham would have been difficult for me – once again to be happy in Isaac! – for he who with all the infinity of his soul, *proprio motu et propriis auspiciis* [of his own accord and on his own responsibility], has made the infinite movement and cannot do more, he keeps Isaac only with pain.”

⁶⁹⁸ *FT*, 34 / *SKS* 4, 129; cf. Söderquist highlights the importance of humility in this quote: “Faith demands the ‘right hand,’ he writes. That is, faith demands a transformation of the actual world so that finite relationships become meaningful. But this ‘demand’ is at the same time the most profound expression of humility. *De silentio* is not humble enough to accept the offer of a world endowed with meaning. When it comes to the final movement of faith, *de silentio* is as closed and self-reliant as the Romantic ironist. He is not open to faith, and he admits it.” Söderquist, “The Religious ‘Suspension of the Ethical’ and the Ironic ‘Suspension of the Ethical’: The Problem of Actuality in Fear and Trembling,” 276; on this littleness also see Anti-Climacus deliberations on the day laborer’s humble courage, *SUD*, 84-86 / *SKS* 11, 197-199.

in them; so that life goes forward in the resolution, strengthened, refreshed, and invigorated by the resolution.⁶⁹⁹

In resolution and with the ability to be concerned in the right measure with the little things, life moves forward.

The inability to move unites cowardliness and pride,⁷⁰⁰ because cowardliness and pride both tempt by appealing to the littleness of things. De Silentio refers to Luke 14:26: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple,”⁷⁰¹ and comments:

The words are terrible, but I dare say that they can be understood without the necessary consequence that the one who has understood them has the courage [*Mod*] to do what he has understood. One ought to be sufficiently honest, however, to admit what it says, to admit that it is great even though one himself lacks the courage [*Mod*] to do it. Anyone who acts thus will not exclude himself from participation in this beautiful story, for in a way it does indeed have a kind of comfort for the person who does not have the courage [*Mod*] to begin construction of the tower. But honest he must be, and he must not speak of this lack of courage as humility, since on the contrary, it is pride [*Stolthed*], whereas the courage of faith is the one and only humble courage [*ydmyge Mod*].⁷⁰²

The building of the tower refers to the lines following Luke 14:26.⁷⁰³ De Silentio reads them as a self-estimation in terms of judging oneself by calculating the probabilities of success before beginning to construct. In this

⁶⁹⁹ *EUD*, 364 / *SKS* 5, 349-350; Roberts sees a strong connection between passion and the power of resolution, cf. Roberts, “Passion and Reflection,” 93.

⁷⁰⁰ *EUD*, 354 / *SKS* 5, 341: “Pride and cowardliness are one and the same.” Carlisle phrases pride and cowardliness in terms of freedom, Carlisle, “Humble Courage: Kierkegaard on Abraham and Mary,” 13: “Kierkegaard’s view that human sinfulness is constituted by a synthesis of pride and cowardice is underpinned by the analysis of selfhood in *The Sickness Unto Death*. In this text, the pseudonym Anti-Climacus claims that as ‘spirit’ the human self is a synthesis of opposing elements, and one of the key syntheses he identifies is between the finite and the infinite: between the determinate or limited, and the indeterminate or unlimited. The combined sin of pride and cowardice is a response to this condition; more precisely, it signifies an evasive refusal to be this synthesis. Insofar as she is finite, a person rebels against her limitations, asserting herself in opposition to the God on whom she depends: this is pride. Insofar as she is infinite, she shrinks in anxiety from the chasm of indeterminate possibility: this is cowardice. On the other hand, finitude breeds fear of loss as well as rebellion against limitation, while infinitude fosters delusions of omnipotence as well as fear of freedom’s abyss. Pride and cowardice are so deeply intertwined because they both arise in each element of the synthesis that makes up the self. They are two aspects of the singular fact of human freedom.”

⁷⁰¹ *FT*, 72 / *SKS*, 163-164; Meister Eckhart refers to the same passage in Sermon 15, 270, DW 1: 244.5-11.

⁷⁰² *FT*, 73 / *SKS*, 164. Kierkegaard also refers to the tower, *EUD*, 361-363 / *SKS* 5, 347-349.

⁷⁰³ Kierkegaard, like Eckhart, alludes to the ground as the base of an upbuilding in faith, *WL*, 216 / *SKS* 9, 219: “This is because, spiritually, love is the ground [*Grunden*], and to build up means to erect from *the ground up*.” see also the Danish text of the self relating to itself and to God as the power that established it, *SUD*, 14 / *SKS* 11, 130: “Dette er nemlig formelen, som beskriver selvets tilstand, når frotdvivlelsen ganske er udryddet: i at forholde sig til sig selv og i at ville være sig selv grunder selvet gennemsigtigt i den magt, som satte det.”

reflection lies the danger of giving up the endeavour if the likelihood is too small:

Then cowardliness says, "This is too little to begin with." It is very fatuous, indeed, even foolish, to say this, because if one does not have more, to begin with, it must indeed always be enough, and the less one begins with, the greater one becomes; but cowardliness, you see has won sagacity over to its side, and sagacity declares that this is absolutely right, because the person who begins nothing does not lose anything either.⁷⁰⁴

Another aspect of cowardliness is the postponing of action in opposition to the courage to act in the moment. There is then also a temporal aspect to pride and cowardliness:

What cowardliness fears most is the making of a resolution, because a resolution always disperses the vapor for a moment. The power cowardliness prefers to conspire with is time because neither time nor cowardliness finds that there is any reason to hurry. Is it not curious that it is God and the eternal and not time that say: this very day. This is resolution's ceaseless refrain, its most ceremonious and its most everyday request, its first and last word, that which it wants every day to signify and wants to give significance to every day: this very day.⁷⁰⁵

All these temptations stop the individual from *caring* enough to act. Consequently, the true danger of the universal to the individual is indifference.⁷⁰⁶ The power of the good is to be able to *care*.⁷⁰⁷ Consequently, the greater danger to love is not hatred, but indifference. This is an understanding of virtue as an ability to care.

The defining category of the knight of faith is his receiving, not renouncing everything: "By faith I do not renounce anything; on the contrary, by faith I receive everything exactly in the sense in which it is said that one who has faith like a mustard seed can move mountains."⁷⁰⁸ Receiving in this littleness moves mountains, not by itself, but through another as the following paragraphs will show.

⁷⁰⁴ EUD, 359 / SKS 5, 345.

⁷⁰⁵ EUD, 356 / SKS 5, 343.

⁷⁰⁶ Cf. EUD, 357 / SKS 5, 343; EUD, 359 / SKS 5, 345-346: "Besides all its other good qualities, the good, the truly great and noble, has the quality of not allowing the observer to be indifferent. It elicits a pledge, as it were, from the person who has once caught a vision of it. [...] Now it is extremely important for cowardliness to prevent this loving understanding, resolution's solemn agreement with the good on such humiliating terms."

⁷⁰⁷ FT, 73 / SKS 4, 165: "Anyone who in demanding a person's love believes that this love is demonstrated by his becoming indifferent to what he otherwise cherished is not merely an egotist but is also stupid [...]"

⁷⁰⁸ FT, 48-49 / SKS 4, 143.

6.2.4 Sarah's Humility before Another

FT is a collection of love stories that illuminate human existence as a paradox in the language of love. As de Silentio himself says, these love stories are to “illuminate their relation to actuality.”⁷⁰⁹ One of the love stories is de Silentio's interpretation of Sarah and Tobias' tale in the book *Tobit*. Sarah is to be married to Tobias. She has been married seven times already, and all her grooms were killed by a demon in the wedding night. “Sarah will always be the poor girl,”⁷¹⁰ de Silentio writes. Sarah is the poor girl because she did nothing to deserve her fate. Everyone will pity her for it, and she has always been that girl:

Many a girl has become unhappy in love, but she, nevertheless did *become* that; Sarah *was* that before she became that. It is grievous not to find the person to whom one can give oneself, but it is *unspeakably* grievous not to be able to give oneself.⁷¹¹

Sarah is thrown into this situation without her doing. She “was never free, and yet she had never given herself.”⁷¹² De Silentio's reading of the story stresses that Sarah, not Tobias, is the heroic character.⁷¹³ De Silentio's twist on heroism is that Sarah knowingly permits Tobias to love her. It is not Sarah's activity, but her actively chosen passivity that makes her a heroine. She knows that allowing Tobias to love her is to risk another's death. However, she accepts the given fate and yet believes that it is possible to change it with and in reliance on Tobias.

What ethical maturity to take upon oneself the responsibility of permitting the beloved to do something so hazardous! What humility before another person [*Ydmyghed ligeoverfor et andet Menneske*]! What faith in God that she would not in the very next moment hate the man to whom she owed everything!⁷¹⁴

Sarah's maturity shows in her humility before another person.⁷¹⁵

There are two indications of this understanding of humility. Firstly, what makes Sarah stand out is that she takes Tobias serious as an individual.⁷¹⁶

⁷⁰⁹ *FT*, 41 / *SKS* 4, 136: “*Forhold til Virkeligheden*”.

⁷¹⁰ *FT*, 104 / *SKS* 4, 193.

⁷¹¹ *FT*, 103 / *SKS* 4, 192.

⁷¹² *FT*, 103 / *SKS* 4, 192.

⁷¹³ Boldt points out that Sara could be read as a knight of faith as much as Abraham, see Boldt, “Kierkegaards ‘Furcht und Zittern’ als Bild seines ethischen Erkenntnisbegriffs,” 174.

⁷¹⁴ *FT*, 104 / *SKS* 4, 193.

⁷¹⁵ Grøn emphasizes the importance of growing up in Kierkegaard, see Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, 46.

⁷¹⁶ Grøn highlights this way of seeing the other in his or her actuality as defined in *Works of Love*: “One way of specifying what immeasurability signifies is to say that *in* what we see - the visible human figure - we are to see the other human being. This does not mean, however,

Sarah's humility before another person means allowing Tobias to be Tobias, as an independent, free individual and not merely a person who fulfils a suitor's role in Sarah's story. If she were a tragic heroine, ethics would expect her to stop Tobias from sacrificing himself. As de Silentio points out, the story would then focus on Tobias' courage to risk his life.⁷¹⁷ In her decision to accept Tobias' choice and take on responsibility for allowing him to love her, she does not do the ethical but takes Tobias' individual decision seriously.⁷¹⁸ With this, she contradicts an ethical understanding of what would be right, namely, to refuse to marry Tobias in order to protect him.⁷¹⁹ Consequently, Sarah's decision to let Tobias love her values his individual decision more than the universal understanding of what is right. Kierkegaard's pseudonym Anti-Climacus says people are not judged *en masse*.⁷²⁰ It is easy to condemn somebody *en masse* but, just as guilt singles one out,⁷²¹ love does.⁷²²

De Silentio's statement, that faith is that the individual is higher than the universal,⁷²³ consequently, does not mean that the individual has to put themselves higher than the universal by themselves. Sarah is in a spiritual trial, not because she puts *herself* as a single individual above the universal, but because she accepts *Tobias* as a single individual above the universal.⁷²⁴

that we see a common humanity behind the other we see. Indeed, 'really seeing' implies seeing the other human being in her or his actuality." Grøn, "Ethics of Vision," 118.

⁷¹⁷ *FT*, 104-105 / *SKS* 4, 193-194.

⁷¹⁸ *Works of Love* takes this thought further, *WL*, 172-173 / *SKS* 9, 172-173: "Ordinarily we think that if a person has essentially changed for the worse, he is then so changed that we are exempt from loving, as if it were a compulsory matter, a burden one wished to cast off! But Christianity asks: Can you because of this change no longer see him? The answer to that must be: Certainly, I can see him; I see that he is no longer worth loving. But if you see *this*, then you do not really see him [...], you see only the unworthiness and the imperfection and thereby admit that when you loved him you did not see *him* in another sense but merely saw his excellence and perfections, which you loved. The Christian point of view, however, is that to love is to love precisely the person one sees."

⁷¹⁹ As is shown in another example of love stories from Aristotle's *Politics*, see *FT*, 89-94 / *SKS* 4, 178-183.

⁷²⁰ *SUD*, 123 / *SKS* 11, 234.

⁷²¹ Cf. Theunissen, *Der Begriff Ernst bei Søren Kierkegaard*, Vol. 1, 125.

⁷²² Furtak relates this to ancient philosophers, see Furtak, *Wisdom in Love*, 104; 105.

⁷²³ Cf. *FT*, 70 / *SKS* 4, 162.

⁷²⁴ My reading of humility in Kierkegaard, therefore, differs from Tebbutt's focus on surrendering to God in faith, see Tebbutt, "Kierkegaard," 142: "The ability to shares [sic] a *telos* with the absolute (for Davenport, a specifically ethical one) is the result of one's willingness to dispense with one's own particular desires and adopt those of the absolute, eternal ground of all temporality. This is the sense in which one loves God, and why, as in *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard can say that love 'connects the temporal and eternity.' In loving God, one humbly surrenders one's whole world, future, familiarity, and particularity and invites God as eternal to be the ground of each."

It is through seeing *the other* as an individual that the individual can see themselves as an individual. Through him, Sarah herself is seen as an individual. One can only be an individual in dependence on another. Individuality is given, not self-created.

Secondly, Sarah's humility allows for a different ending of her story. Sarah receives the possibility to be an individual because she allows Tobias to see beyond her fate.⁷²⁵ The story moves on because of Sarah's humility before another. Sarah's actions show that she chooses not to be self-sufficient. She claims dependence on Tobias. Unlike the knight of resignation, she does not keep love to herself. She still believes that Tobias loves her and therefore does not lose him in resignation. Tobias does not become an abstract thought but remains the concrete individual, just as Sarah's individuality remains concrete in passion.⁷²⁶ Sarah is willing to take on suffering for herself and Tobias.

Thirdly, the Sarah's example demonstrates a willingness of knowing oneself as a human being and an individual. De Silentio praises Sarah's love for God, despite her being marked as "a damaged specimen of a human being"⁷²⁷ from the very beginning. This touches on the "essential of human existence" that Haufniensis states, namely that: "[...] man is individuum and as such simultaneously himself and the whole race, and in such a way that the whole race participates in the individual and the individual in the whole race."⁷²⁸ Sarah's humility means that she allows herself to be the whole race and the individual before Tobias. She sees herself as a damaged specimen of a human being, *and* as Sarah, the individual loved by Tobias. Sarah's humility then represents a new form of self-knowledge. It is not: *knowing* oneself in relation to another but *willing* to be in relation to another. Irony and

⁷²⁵ Boldt reads Sarah's trust as a trust in God not so much as a trust in Tobias, cf. Boldt, "Kierkegaards 'Furcht und Zittern' als Bild seines ethischen Erkenntnisbegriffs," 172.

⁷²⁶ In taking on the responsibility for her love, Sarah takes on the humiliation of suffering before others. Responsibility is to be willing to suffer for and before another as a consequence of one's own choice. Cf. Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 68: "As soon as I enter into a relation with the absolute other, my singularity enters into relation with his on the level of obligation and duty. I am responsible before the other as other; I answer to him and I answer for what I do before him." also "Duty or responsibility binds me to the other, to the other as other, and binds me in my absolute singularity to the other as other." (68)

⁷²⁷ *FT*, 104 / *SKS* 4, 193

⁷²⁸ *CA*, 28 / *SKS* 4, 334-335; Grøn also draws attention to this duality in his understanding of Kierkegaard's self, cf. Grøn, "The Embodied Self," 35.

resignation can be rephrased: If a person does not see the universal, if they deny themselves as a human being, they live in irony. If they only live by their own standard (if they only see themselves), they live in resignation. What makes one an individual, is to relate to both, individuality and humanity; ethics and religion, reason and will. Humility then is the paradox of knowing oneself and yet insisting on love in willing oneself in relation to another, as de Silentio expressed it in terms of insisting on the right hand in marriage.⁷²⁹ It is the difference between addressing and perceiving the other as “you” rather than “they.” This separates the knight of faith from the knight of infinite resignation and the tragic hero:

Having perceived this and made sure that he does not have the courage to understand it, he may then have an intimation of the wondrous glory the knight attains in becoming God’s confidant, the Lord’s friend, if I may speak purely humanly, in saying “You” to God in heaven, whereas even the tragic hero addresses him only in the third person.⁷³⁰

Unlike the bride in the Roman story, who follows social customs of being a modest bride and therefore does not look her groom in the face,⁷³¹ Sarah sees Tobias. Humility is to see the other as other and to perceive oneself as other for another. Humility then is the countermovement to enclosed reserve. It breaks open possibility through another in receiving⁷³² and being able to receive rather than resigning.

6.2.5 *The Paradox of Loving Isaac*

Abraham, as a knight of faith, is concerned with his love for God.⁷³³ However, as the following paragraphs will highlight the knight of faith’s love for God shows in his love for the concrete individual. Abraham’s faith becomes apparent in his love for Isaac. Abraham’s ability to keep his anxiety young

⁷²⁹ *FT*, 34 / *SKS* 4, 129.

⁷³⁰ *FT*, 77 / *SKS* 4, 169.

⁷³¹ Cf. *FT*, 90 / *SKS* 4, 180.

⁷³² Carlisle discusses humble courage as receptivity, cf. Carlisle, “Humble Courage: Kierkegaard on Abraham and Mary,” particularly, 2.

⁷³³ As Furak points out in this Kierkegaard’s concept of love is platonic. For Kierkegaard, earthly love is not just another step on the ascent to god but “[t]he secret of earthly love is that it bears the imprint of divine love, Kierkegaard claims, and this idea of the beloved as the stimulus for the lover’s spiritual ascent is certainly reminiscent of Plato’s Symposium. [...earthly love] is the sacred process by which contingent existence is infused with divinity.” (Furtak, *Wisdom in Love*, 103)

and his passion mark the difference between the knight of resignation and the knight of faith. Faith is a passion.⁷³⁴

De Silentio describes Abraham's relation to Isaac in terms of a paradoxical contradiction of ethics and faith, of hate and love:

In the moment [Abraham] is about to sacrifice Isaac, the ethical expression for what he is doing is: he hates Isaac. But if he actually [*virkelig*] hates Isaac, he can rest assured that God does not demand this of him, for Cain and Abraham are not identical. He must love Isaac with his whole soul. Since God claims Isaac, he must, if possible, love him even more, and only then can he sacrifice him, for it is indeed this love for Isaac that makes his act a sacrifice by its paradoxical contrast to his love for God.⁷³⁵

The decisive difference between Abraham and Cain is that Abraham never stops loving.⁷³⁶ He does not hate Isaac. Otherwise, the word "sacrifice" has no meaning.⁷³⁷ Without passion, there is no sacrifice. Only because Abraham acts contradictory to his feelings is he in a paradoxical position. Only his love for Isaac and the suffering involved in the contradiction makes the murder a sacrifice:

But the distress and the anxiety [*Nøden og Angesten*] in the paradox is that he, humanly speaking, is thoroughly incapable of making himself understandable. Only in the moment when his act is in absolute contradiction to his feelings, only then does he sacrifice Isaac, but the reality [*Realitet*] of his act is that by which he belongs to the universal, and there he is and remains a murderer.⁷³⁸

Abraham's love for God is real for him when his action becomes a sacrifice through his love for Isaac. Passion means that for Abraham, his actions really are a sacrifice. Outwardly, and therefore, ethically and universally understandably, he will always remain a murderer. This paradox means to be in constant vigilance⁷³⁹:

The knight of faith is kept in a state of sleeplessness, for he is constantly being tested, and at every moment there is the possibility of his returning penitently to the universal, and this possibility may be a spiritual trial as well as the truth. He cannot get any information on that from any man, for, in that case, he is outside the paradox.⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁴ Cf. *FT*, 67 / *SKS* 4, 159.

⁷³⁵ *FT*, 74 / *SKS* 4, 165.

⁷³⁶ *FT*, 74 / *SKS* 4, 165.

⁷³⁷ *FT*, 74 / *SKS* 4, 165-166.

⁷³⁸ *FT*, 74 / *SKS* 4, 165-166.

⁷³⁹ According to Kobusch this constant vigilance is a typical characteristic of the "mystical" tradition such as Origenes or Gregor of Nyssa, cf. Kobusch, "Metaphysik als Lebensform," 51-52.

⁷⁴⁰ *FT*, 78 / *SKS*, 169; de Silentio emphasizes this continuous struggle of "sleeplessness" on various occasions, see *FT*, 115 / *SKS*, 202; *FT*, 115 / *SKS*, 202; in CUP Climacus phrases this sleeplessness as "hovering": "As soon as uncertainty [*Uvisheden*] is not the form of certitude [*Vishedens Form*], as soon as uncertainty does not continually keep the religious person hovering [*holder den Religiøse svævende*] in order continually to grasp certitude, as soon as

Faith mirrors despair in the constant movement of the relation.⁷⁴¹ But Abraham upholds this sleeplessness by his passion in loving Isaac;⁷⁴² not in resigning and upholding his own reflections on his love. It is in this paradoxical, inward passion that Abraham cannot learn from anyone else and in which he becomes essentially human.⁷⁴³ Passion is the decisive movement for Abraham to “actually love” Isaac.⁷⁴⁴ There is a difference here, between the reality of the murder and the actuality of Abraham’s love for Isaac.⁷⁴⁵ The reality of ethics demands resignation, the actuality of Abraham’s love for him shows in passion.⁷⁴⁶ What defines Abraham in contrast to the tragic hero is that he stays young in anxiety.⁷⁴⁷ He does not keep his passion young in

certainty seals with lead, as it were, the religious person – well, then he is naturally about to become part of the mass.” *CUP*, 507 / *SKS* 7, 460.

⁷⁴¹ *FT*, 79 / *SKS* 4, 177: “the knight of faith is constantly kept in tension.” This follows Theunissen’s definition of being a self as a constant annihilation of the possibility of despair, see Theunissen, *Das Selbst auf dem Grunde der Verzweiflung*, 55: “Mithin gelingt Selbstsein - und darin liegt ja seine Negativität - ausschließlich im ständigen Vollzug des Zunichtemachens der Möglichkeit von Verzweiflung. Erst mit dieser Einsicht holt Kierkegaard seinen Vorentwurf reiner Prozessualität ein. Seine scheinbar traditionalistische Deutung des Selbst als Tathandlung basiert in Wahrheit auf der Erfahrung, daß die Verzweiflung in jedem Augenblick aufbrechen kann. Sie formuliert nur eine notwendige Bedingung, die der Mensch erfüllen muß, will er der Verzweiflung nicht anheim fallen.”

⁷⁴² Furtak marks passion and emotion with conviction, cf. Furtak, “On Being Moved and Hearing Voices,” 145.

⁷⁴³ *FT*, 121 / *SKS* 4, 208.

⁷⁴⁴ As Theunissen points out the given for Kierkegaard needs to be actualized (“verwirklicht”), cf. Theunissen, *Der Begriff Ernst bei Søren Kierkegaard*, Vol. 1, 32-35.

⁷⁴⁵ The difference being that of outer and inner, universal and individual, a change from objective to subjective in Abraham’s relation to Isaac as actually Isaac. This is not mere receiving but returning, as Theunissen phrases it: “Das Gegebene muß, um wahrhafte Wirklichkeit zu erlangen, gleichsam nochmals vom Menschen verwirklicht, muß aufgefangen, wiedergegeben und zurückgespiegelt werden.” Theunissen, *Der Begriff Ernst bei Søren Kierkegaard*, Vol. 1, 32; on the importance of imagination for the Kierkegaardian understanding of reality, see Rosfort, “Concrete Infinity Imagination and the Question of Reality,” 197: “Being a self is not merely to imaginatively represent who we think we are or want to be, but also to know what we are, i. e., the concrete being that we are together with the context and circumstances that make us into the particular being that we are. We exist as a subject that is also object (genstand) existing in a world of objects that object to (genstand, i. e., står over for/imod) our imaginative representations of ourselves. Existing as a self means to live in a world that challenges our imaginative reproductions of who we think or want to be. Our understanding of ourselves is therefore, inextricably entangled in our understanding of the world as a world of objects that put into question our self. The task of being a self is to become a self in and through the reality in which a person finds herself as both a present object and an absent subject.” Also 210

⁷⁴⁶ This reading relies on the duality of the Danish word “virkelighed”. Similar to the German “Wirklichkeit” virkelighed refers both to something out there (as in res in reality) and something that I work (Danish: “virke”). Virkelighed, therefore, has a passive and an active element. I am indebted to René Rosfort for point out this out to me, see also Rosfort, “Concrete Infinity Imagination and the Question of Reality.” As the below will show, Theunissen also uses this ambiguity of virkelighed in his reading of Kierkegaard’s works.

⁷⁴⁷ *FT*, 7 / *SKS*, 4, 102-103.

focusing on himself or a memory of himself like the ironist or the knight of resignation; he does so in loving another. His passion is not directed at himself but at another.

6.2.6 *Self-Consciousness in Contradiction*

In the paradoxical contradiction of faith, de Silentio describes a form of self-knowledge as self-consciousness in passion. Passion is essential for Abraham because only through passion do Abraham's actions mean a sacrifice and not a murder to him. Abraham is fully aware of himself in the paradoxical situation he upholds.⁷⁴⁸ Passion enables a form of self-knowledge as a consciously chosen relation to another. As de Silentio points out, the knight of faith has to be fully conscious of his feelings in contradiction to his action:

First and foremost, then, the knight of faith has the passion to concentrate in one single point the whole of the ethical that he violates, in order that he may give himself the assurance that he actually [*virkelig*] loves Isaac with his whole soul. If he cannot, he is undergoing spiritual trial. Next, he has the passion to produce this assurance [*Forvisning*] instantaneously [*til i et Nu*] and in such a way that it is fully valid as in the first moment.⁷⁴⁹

In the concreteness of his love of Isaac, not as recollection but in passion, Abraham is fully conscious of himself in his love for Isaac. For Abraham, there is no vague possibility of self. He is fully aware of himself in his passion that proves his love for Isaac. In loving the other person, this love is a concrete love. However, this is a chosen tension upheld by relating to himself through his love for Isaac. He does not resign it, and through it, he is concretely conscious of himself as Abraham, the father of Isaac.⁷⁵⁰ The concrete self-

⁷⁴⁸ This holding together is "Wirklichkeit" for Theunissen, see Theunissen, *Der Begriff Ernst bei Søren Kierkegaard*, Vol. 1, 43.

⁷⁴⁹ *FT*, 78 / *SKS* 4, 169.

⁷⁵⁰ In *CUP*, Johannes Climacus speaks of "absolute passion": "Beyond ethical, normative moves: Absolute passion cannot be understood by a third party; this holds for the relation of other to him and for his to others. In absolute passion, the passionate person is at the peak of his concrete subjectivity by having reflected himself out of every external relativity, but a third party is definitely a relativity." *CUP*, 509 / *SKS* 7, 461. As Haufniensis argues in *CA* this moment is not accessible through language: "The most concrete content that consciousness can have is consciousness of itself [*Bevidstheden om sig selv*], of the individual himself- not the pure self-consciousness, but the self-consciousness that is so concrete that no author, not even the one with the greatest power of description, has ever been able to describe a single such self-consciousness, although every single human being is such a one. This self-consciousness is not contemplation, for he who believes this has not understood himself, because he sees that meanwhile he himself is in the process of becoming and consequently cannot be something completely for contemplation. This self-consciousness,

consciousness is a form of becoming in actuality, not a possibility in contemplation. It is not an eternal consciousness, but a “passionate concentration” and “intense consciousness”.⁷⁵¹ It’s a passionate self-consciousness in relation to another.

6.2.7 *Ambiguity and Responsibility: Reencountering the Abyss*

In this passionate self-consciousness, Abraham returns to the description of the abyss. First, because Abraham cannot convey his meaning. He remains silent. Second, the ambiguity of his silence becomes the abyss and paradox for others.

Unlike the tragic hero or the knight of resignation, Abraham does not speak. Abraham’s silence is a form of inwardness⁷⁵² and of letting go of outward understanding of himself and his actions: “If he remains silent, he takes responsibility upon himself as the single individual, inasmuch as he disregards any argument that may come from outside.”⁷⁵³ In this interiority, Abraham turns away from the universal as relief and rest and enters anxiety and passion.⁷⁵⁴ Moreover, not expressing himself in language, his actions remain ambivalent, which differentiates him from the intellectual hero Socrates:

Thus, if Socrates had been silent in the crisis of death, he would have diminished the effect of his life and aroused a suspicion that the elasticity of irony in him was not a world power but a game, the resilience of which had to be used on an inverted scale in order to sustain him in pathos at the crucial moment.⁷⁵⁵

The intellectual hero ensures that there is only one meaning of his action. Abraham is ambivalent in his silence. Not only is he unable to express himself

therefore, is action [*Gjerning*], and this action is in turn inwardness [*Inderligheden*] [...]” CA, 143 / SKS 4, 443; cf. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, 116–17; see also CUP, 304 / SKS 7, 277: “But to act [*at handle*] in the eminent sense belongs essentially to existing *qua* human being [*qva Menneske*].”

⁷⁵¹ FT, 78–79 / SKS 4, 170.

⁷⁵² FT, 88 / SKS 4, 177. Carlisle highlights the importance of silence for the ability to listen and as a sign of Abraham’s receptivity, Carlisle, “Humble Courage: Kierkegaard on Abraham and Mary,” 5.

⁷⁵³ FT, 87 / SKS 4, 177; as this quote from Kierkegaard’s Journals shows: “What temptation [*Fristelse*] is outwardly, spiritual trial is inwardly” JP 1:634, quoted in Podmore, *Struggling with God*, 176.

⁷⁵⁴ This makes it “inaccessible for anyone else”, cf. Rudd, “Narrative Unity and the Moment of Crisis in *Fear and Trembling*,” 202.

⁷⁵⁵ FT, 117 / SKS 4, 204–205.

in the universal, but he is also not understandable from a universal perspective.

Abraham remains silent – but he *cannot* speak. Therein lie the distress and anxiety. Even though I go on talking night and day without interruption, if I cannot make myself understood when I speak, then I am not speaking. This is the case with Abraham.⁷⁵⁶

This is the loneliness that Abraham finds himself in. In contrast to the tragic hero, Abraham remains in ambiguity through his silent actions.⁷⁵⁷ Derrida rephrases this as a moment of freedom as responsibility.⁷⁵⁸ Abraham's silence expresses that he takes on responsibility. But this is not a responsibility in an ethical sense before the universal but in a religious sense before another.⁷⁵⁹ There is no justification or argumentation possible to a general audience.

The return to freedom and yet to concrete freedom in responsibility before another means a consciousness of freedom not as a first immediacy but as “a later immediacy”.⁷⁶⁰ Only if Abraham knows that he loves Isaac, does it open the immediacy that is the consciousness of freedom. But the second immediacy, it is not a blind inkling of possibility. This time it is the awareness of concrete freedom as responsibility. That is why Abraham's chosen silence expresses his acceptance of responsibility. In anxiety, passion reinvokes the immediacy of the abyss, a moment of full self-consciousness in

⁷⁵⁶ *FT*, 113 / *SKS* 4, 201.

⁷⁵⁷ In other words, Abraham continues the conversation, “[t]he tragic hero, however, comes to the end of the story.” (*FT*, 115 / *SKS*, 203)

⁷⁵⁸ Cf. Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 61: “To the extent that, in not saying the essential thing, namely the secret between God and him, Abraham doesn't speak, he assumes the responsibility that consists in always being alone, retrenched in one's own singularity at the moment of decision. Just as no one can die in my place, no one can make a decision, what we call ‘a decision,’ in my place. But as soon as I speak, as soon as one enters the medium of language, one loses that very singularity. One, therefore, loses the possibility or the right to decide. Thus, every decision would, fundamentally, remain at the same time solitary, secret, and silent. Speaking relieves us, Kierkegaard notes, for it ‘translates’ into the general.” Bernstein similarly comments on *CUP*, see Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, 115: “How, then, does a man become a Christian? Johannes Climacus – ‘John the Climber’ – cannot vouch for the reality. His name and his testimony reveal that he himself is only on the way up, not yet arrived. But the condition – the possibility – of becoming a Christian is well within his bailiwick: First, become a man, and when you are driven by this exertion into the narrows of despair, when you have become spirit by the recognition that absolute freedom is identical with absolute dependence, when you are alone in fear and trembling, without sustenance of nature, knowledge, or community, with no recourse but God – then and only then may the threat and promise of Christianity surge redemptively from the abyss.”

⁷⁵⁹ Cf. Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 68-74.

⁷⁶⁰ *FT*, 82 / *SKS* 4, 172: “Faith is not the first immediacy [*Umiddelbarhed*] but a later immediacy.”

freedom.⁷⁶¹ Responsibility means returning to this immediacy and consciously remaining in it.⁷⁶² The later immediacy is a state of chosen anxiety. Abraham's passion means he is in constant movement and facing the abyss.⁷⁶³ He chooses to be the paradox, to return to dizziness and ambiguity. Through the ambiguity of his silence, Abraham faces the paradox. The anxiety of this later immediacy is expressed in the either/or of Abraham's existence:

Now we are face to face with the paradox [*Nu staae vi da vel Paradoxet*]. Either the single individual as the single individual [*den Enkelte som den Enkelte*] can stand in an absolute relation to the absolute, and consequently the ethical is not the highest, or Abraham is lost: he is neither a tragic hero nor an esthetic hero.⁷⁶⁴

The single individual has to let go of the universal and thus of the relief that it could find in it. However, in letting go of the universal Abraham stands in "an absolute relation to the absolute." He chooses this absolute relation over the universally understandable ethical and therefore makes himself absolutely dependent on this relation.⁷⁶⁵ This relation cannot be explained and marks Abraham as nothing but being a single individual who cannot mediate choosing this relation: "This paradox cannot be mediated, for it depends specifically on this: that the single individual is only the single individual."⁷⁶⁶

When Johannes de Silentio continually repeats that he cannot understand Abraham, his depiction of Abraham as someone whose

⁷⁶¹ CA, 108 / SKS 4, 410: "In turning inward, he discovers freedom. He does not fear fate, for he lays hold of no outward task, and freedom is for him his bliss, not freedom to do this or that in the world, to become king and emperor or an abusive street corner orator, but freedom to know himself that he is freedom."

⁷⁶² FT, 18 / SKS 4, 115: "[...] the wonder of faith is that Abraham and Sarah were young enough to desire and that faith had preserved their desire and thereby their youth."

⁷⁶³ This is earnestness as a return to the abyss as "acquired originality of disposition, its originality preserved in the *responsibility of freedom* [*Frihedens Ansvarlighed*] and its originality affirmed in the enjoyment of blessedness." (CA, 148-9 / SKS 4, 448)

⁷⁶⁴ FT, 113 / SKS 4, 201.

⁷⁶⁵ This does not, however, mean that one can automatically reintroduce ethics if God is used to justify and return to ethics this brings back the telos and therefore threatens to reduce God to a "vanishing point" ("*usynligt, forsvindende Punkt*"), cf. FT, 68 / SKS 4, 160. See also Evans, *Kierkegaard's Ethic of Love*, 77: "The second *Problema* clarifies what is at stake by characterizing the issue in terms of the relation between 'the absolute' and 'the universal'. The universal is specifically identified with the ethical, and it is clear that the absolute is God. The question posed is whether or not there is such a thing as an absolute duty towards God. The proponent of *Sittlichkeit* may say that all duties are duties toward God, but if God is identified with the social order, then God as a transcendent reality disappears; his reality is exhausted by my social duties [...]." Even though Tubbett emphasizes this danger in his reading of Davenport's interpretation of FT, his analysis falls prey to it, see Tubbett, "Kierkegaard," 136.

⁷⁶⁶ FT, 70 / SKS 4, 162.

experience cannot be pictured in language, de Silentio's story turns Abraham into a potential moment of anxiety for the reader. Either one allows for Abraham's passion and anxiety and therefore sees him as an individual, or he is a murderer.⁷⁶⁷ In this way, Abraham's journey leads to the abyss and at the same time he himself becomes the abyss as the reader follows him.

6.2.8 *Humble Courage: Faith, Love and Belonging to the World*

The return to the immediacy of anxiety that we first found in the depiction of the abyss leads to taking on responsibility and yet in the absolute relation to the absolute leaves the outcome of one's choice to another.⁷⁶⁸ Nonetheless, humble courage describes the ability to care for the individual and the little things in life.

An absolute relation to the absolute means that the ethical becomes relative.⁷⁶⁹ Being the single individual means relating differently to the universal:

The paradox of faith, then is this: that the single individual is higher than the universal [*den Enkelte er højere end det Almene*], that the single individual – to recall a distinction in dogmatics rather rare these days – determines his relation to the universal by his relation to the absolute, not his relation to the absolute by his relation to the universal. The paradox may also be expressed in this way: that there is an absolute duty to God, for in this relationship of duty the individual relates himself as the single individual absolutely to the absolute. In this connection, to say that it is a duty to love God means something different from the above, for if this duty is absolute, then the ethical is reduced to the relative [*Relative*]. From this it does not follow that the ethical should be invalidated; rather, the ethical receives a completely different expression [*Udtryk*], a paradoxical expression, such as, for example, that love to God may bring the knight of faith to give his love to the neighbor – an expression opposite to that which, ethically speaking, is duty.⁷⁷⁰

⁷⁶⁷ *FT*, 70 / *SKS* 4, 162.

⁷⁶⁸ This brings out more similarities with the “mystic” writers, see *FT*, 114 / *SKS* 4, 201: “[...] to fight against the whole world is a consolation, to fight against oneself is frightful.”; also Stokes, “The problem of spontaneous goodness,” 154: “The Kierkegaardian subject is called to become ‘nothing before God,’ but in this nothingness, it is able to mirror God; the task of imitatio Christi is as much to empty oneself of everything non-Christlike as to build up Christlike attributes. Kierkegaard's via purgativa involves a recognition that a human being is capable of achieving nothing by their own efforts—including becoming the sort of self that God nonetheless requires us to become. Any such achievement is ultimately an achievement of God, not humans.”

⁷⁶⁹ Cf. Dunning, *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Inwardness*, 192.

⁷⁷⁰ *FT*, 70 / *SKS* 4, 162.

In setting the individual other as absolute, the universal becomes relative to the absolute.⁷⁷¹ The duty to love God is set by the single individual, not by the universal.⁷⁷² It is not because of a universal rule of loving God that one follows it but in loving God, one decides to love one's neighbor. The knight of faith acts from within; he draws from his absolute relation to the absolute, not from an outward measurement.⁷⁷³ The knight of faith does not love God because of a universal truth, but because he loves God, he is able to act out a truth which stands in relation to God. This, however, cannot be judged from outside. One can never understand Abraham. One can never know what it is like to be Abraham. Judged from outside Abraham will always attempt murder. But as de Silentio points out, one does not become like Abraham by murder but by faith.⁷⁷⁴

What then is faith?

De Silentio states: "Faith is a marvel, and yet no human being is excluded from it; for that which unites all human life is passion, and faith is a passion."⁷⁷⁵ What turns the murder to sacrifice is Abraham's passionate relation to Isaac and his relation to God. Moreover, de Silentio writes: "No one who was great in the world will be forgotten, but everyone was great in

⁷⁷¹ Derrida phrases this more negatively as a sacrifice of the general: "I can respond to the one (or to the One), that is to say to the other, only by sacrificing to that one the other. I am responsible to any one (that is to say to the other) only by failing in my responsibilities to all the others, to the ethical or political generality. And I can never justify this sacrifice, I must always hold my peace about it." Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 71. Boldt comes to a similar conclusion in his analysis of *Fragments* and *CUP*. Boldt does not, however, stress the importance of the other as singular other for the single individual, Boldt, "Kierkegaards 'Furcht und Zittern' als Bild seines ethischen Erkenntnisbegriffs," 68–69: "Aus der Erkenntnisrelation, in der der Erkennende der göttlichen Forderung begegnet, folgt das ethische Handeln, in dem andere als ebenso angewiesen und damit ebenbürtig begriffen werden. Die Beziehung des Einzelnen zu Gott ist in diesem Sinn vorrangig vor der ethischen Beziehung zu den Mitmenschen, aber richtig vollzogen, ist die Gottesbeziehung die ethische Beziehung zu anderen, so dass dieser Vorrang nicht impliziert, man könne möglicherweise oder im Zweifelsfall auf das ethische Handeln verzichten."

⁷⁷² Cf. *FT*, 59 / *SKS* 4, 153: "Why, then, does Abraham do it? For God's sake [*Skylld*] and - the two are wholly identical - for his own sake [*Skylld*]. He does it for God's sake because God demands this proof of his faith; he does it for his own sake so that he can prove it. The unity of the two is altogether correctly expressed in the word already used to describe this relationship. It is an ordeal, a temptation. A temptation - but what does that mean? As a rule, what tempts a person is something that will hold him back from doing his duty, but here the temptation is the ethical itself, which would hold him back from doing God's will. But what is duty? Duty is simply the expression for God's will [*Villie*]."

⁷⁷³ Arne Grøn sees this in *Works of Love*: "Die zweite Ethik nimmt das Nicht-Meßbare zu ihrem Maßstab." Grøn, "Kierkegaards 'zweite' Ethik," 367.

⁷⁷⁴ Cf. *FT*, 31 / *SKS* 4, 126.

⁷⁷⁵ *FT*, 67 / *SKS* 4, 159.

his own way, and everyone in proportion to the greatness of that which he loved.”⁷⁷⁶ Abraham remains true to his love for God *through* his love for Isaac.⁷⁷⁷ It is in relation to Isaac that Abraham shows humble courage. He does not resign the joy that Isaac gives him:

Outwardly, the wonder of it is that it happened according to their expectancy; in the more profound sense, the wonder of faith is that Abraham and Sarah were young enough to desire and that faith had preserved their desire and thereby their youth.⁷⁷⁸

De Silentio phrases this as Abraham’s humble courage:

It takes purely human courage to renounce the whole temporal realm in order to gain eternity, but this I do not gain and in all eternity can never renounce - it is a self-contradiction. But it takes a paradoxical and humble courage to grasp the whole temporal realm now by virtue of the absurd, and this is the courage of faith. By faith Abraham did not renounce Isaac, but by faith, Abraham received Isaac.⁷⁷⁹

Faith means receiving.⁷⁸⁰ The term “grasping” captures that the knight of faith does not renounce but embrace. In full awareness of himself he takes the given as given.⁷⁸¹ Unlike the knight of resignation, the knight of faith as the hero of Christianity still cares:

It is Christian heroism - a rarity, to be sure - to venture wholly to become oneself, an individual human being, this specific individual human being, alone before God, alone in this prodigious strenuousness and this prodigious responsibility; but it is not Christian heroism to be taken in by the idea of man in the abstract or to play the wonder game with world history. All Christian knowing, however rigorous its form, ought to be *concerned* [*bekymret*], but this concern [*Bekymring*] is precisely the upbuilding.⁷⁸²

⁷⁷⁶ FT, 16 / SKS, 113.

⁷⁷⁷ FT, 120 / SKS 4, “And yet what did he achieve? He remained true to his love [*At han blev sin Kjærlighed tro*]. But anyone who loves God needs no tears, no admiration; he forgets the suffering in the love. Indeed, so completely has he forgotten it that there would not be the slightest trace of his suffering left if God himself did not remember it, for he sees in secret and recognizes distress and counts the tears and forgets nothing.”

⁷⁷⁸ FT, 18 / SKS 4, 115.

⁷⁷⁹ FT, 49 / SKS, 142-143.

⁷⁸⁰ This emphasis on receptivity in humble courage and faith is indebted to Carlisle, cf. “Humble Courage: Kierkegaard on Abraham and Mary.”

⁷⁸¹ WL, 187 / SKS 9, 187: “When it is a duty to remain in the debt of love to one another, *then to remain in debt is not a fanatical expression, is not an idea about love, but is action* [*Handling*]; *thus love, with the help of duty, continues Christianly in action, in the momentum of action, and thereby in the infinite debt.*” see Grøn, “Kierkegaards ‘zweite’ Ethik,” 368: “Die Liebe ist schon im voraus gegeben, als Liebe Gottes. Auch die Liebe, welche man fühlt und gibt, ist einem gegeben. Man schafft diese Liebe nicht selbst, sie ist immer schon “im Grunde”. Die zweite Ethik, die wir aus *Der Liebe Tun* herauslesen können, kann deshalb auch eine Ethik der Gabe genannt werden. Derjenige, der angesprochen wird, soll das Tun der Liebe vollziehen, und kann doch die Liebe nicht selbst schaffen.”

⁷⁸² SUD, 5 / SKS 11, 117, my emphasis.

The ability to be concerned means to take on the task and to walk to Mount Moriah, not in despair and resignation but with joy and hope.⁷⁸³ The knight of faith does not resign but acts out of love in humble courage.⁷⁸⁴ What matters is not *what* Abraham does but *how* he does it.⁷⁸⁵ Abraham is still young at heart. In the courage of humble courage means to remain open for the world.⁷⁸⁶ It is the ability to be concerned out of love for the little things, not for their sake but for the sake of them as a given. Johannes de Silentio elaborates his idea of a knight of faith in his own time in his depiction of a man whose life resembles that of a tax collector:

I examine his figure from top to toe to see if there may not be a crack through which the infinite would peek. No! He is solid all the way through. His stance? It is vigorous, belongs entirely to finitude; [...] He belongs entirely to the world; [...] He finds pleasure in everything, takes part in everything, and every time one sees him participating in something particular, he does it with an assiduousness that marks the worldly man who is attached to such things. He attends to his job. [...] Sunday is for him a holiday. He goes to church. No heavenly gaze or any sign of the incommensurable betrays him; if one did not know him, it would be impossible to distinguish him from the rest of the crowd, for at most his hearty and powerful singing of the hymns proves that he has good lungs. In the afternoon, he takes a walk to the woods. He enjoys everything he sees, the swarms of people, the new omnibuses, the Sound. He finds pleasure in this way, for he is no poet, and I have tried in vain to lure the poetic incommensurability out of him. Toward evening, he goes home, and his gait is as steady as a postman's. On the way, he thinks that his wife surely will have a special hot meal for him when he comes home – for example, roast lamb's head with vegetables.⁷⁸⁷

⁷⁸³ *FT*, 19 / *SKS* 4, 115: "So there was joy in Abraham's house when Sarah stood as bride on their golden wedding day."

⁷⁸⁴ Ferreira deals with this notion of action in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*, see Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 65–97; see Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 66: "[...] Kierkegaard is walking a fine line - presenting a notion of action that is not simply external, as well as presenting a notion of the role of conscience that is not simply inner."

⁷⁸⁵ Cf. Carlisle, *Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling*, 15. In this reading *FT* foreshadows what Arne Grøn calls "second ethics" and places mostly in *Works of Love*: "Die zweite Ethik rückt die Aufmerksamkeit weiter zurück: Ich habe nicht nur verschiedene Handlungsmöglichkeiten vor mir. Die Frage ist, wie ich mich mit dem, was ich tue, zu mir selbst und zu dem anderen stelle. Man könnte dies eine Gesinnungsethik nennen, aber es handelt sich wohlgemerkt um die Gesinnung, die sich darin zeigt, wie man handelt." Grøn, "Kierkegaards 'zweite' Ethik," 367; Grøn also highlights two different ways of understanding works of love in the opening prayer of *Works of Love*, see Grøn, "Ethics of Vision," 112: "There are indeed only some works that human language specifically and narrowly calls works of love [*Kjerlighedsgjærninger*], but in heaven no work can be pleasing unless it is a work of love [*en Kjerlighedens Gjerning*]."

⁷⁸⁶ Cf. Tebbutt, "Kierkegaard," 141: "Faith, as Kierkegaard writes, is not simply a human power directed *toward* the eternal in her attempt to escape the world, but is rather the 'eternal power in a human being' that sustains her very engagement in worldly affairs." Lippitt differentiates between being free from worries and being free from care, see Lippitt, "Kierkegaard's Virtues: Humility and Gratitude as the Grounds of Contentment, Patience and Hope in Kierkegaard's Moral Psychology," 13.

⁷⁸⁷ *FT*, 39 / *SKS* 4, 133–134.

This description highlights that faith means to live in the world and find joy in every little detail of it. Receiving the world as given by another, the tax collector finds joy in it. His humble courage means that he can live a steady life and is grounded in actuality.⁷⁸⁸ In humble courage, he takes up the little things and joyfully takes on action. It is the return to one's care for the little things but not for their own sake but for one's own and God's sake, which are the same.⁷⁸⁹ Humble courage is Abraham's ability to leave the outcome of the story to another and yet still care.

6.3 Conclusion: to be like Abraham not by Murder but by Faith

Humble courage in *FT* is a return to anxiety. From the fall of Adam, in the moment of becoming aware of freedom in anxiety grows the task to become anxious in the right way. Resignation and despair recapture the image of the abyss in a spiral movement of the self reflecting itself. In his claim of self-sufficiency, the knight of infinite resignation cannot move beyond himself. He is enclosed within himself. This also means that he keeps his love within himself in reflection and recollection. The other is a reflection of himself. De Silentio continues his lyrical dialectics with the story of Sarah and Tobias. Sarah represents humility before another. Humility is, therefore, a countermovement to despair and enclosed reserve. In humility, Sarah allows Tobias to love her. Thereby, she considers him not as another suitor but as the single individual Tobias whose decision to love her, she holds higher than the universal. Unlike all the other brides in *FT*, Sarah sees Tobias and his love for her. It is in humility before Tobias, and through his love, that Sarah becomes a single individual, not by her own doing. Furthermore, Sarah consciously chooses to suffer from taking on responsibility for Tobias. In

⁷⁸⁸ See Theunissen, *Der Begriff Ernst bei Søren Kierkegaard*, Vol. 1, 45: "Die von der abstrakten unterschiedene konkrete Ewigkeit wird nicht im denkenden oder wissenden Absehen von der Wirklichkeit des Zeitlichen erfahren, sondern ausschließlich im existierend-bewegten Verhalten zur eigenen Wirklichkeit als dem Ort des Aufgangs von Wirklichkeit überhaupt; nicht in der Gleichgültigkeit der Abstraktion, sondern in der unendlich am Gelingen der eigenen Existenz interessierten Leidenschaft der Intensität: '... eine abstrakte Ewigkeit ist außerhalb der Bewegung, und eine konkrete Ewigkeit im Existierenden ist das Maximum der Leidenschaft.' [S. V. VII 300 - Jen. VII 12]"

⁷⁸⁹ Cf. *FT*, 59 / *SKS* 4, 153.

Sarah's willingness to suffer for and before Tobias, Tobias does not become a reflection or recollection but remains a concrete individual. Moreover, in Sarah's humility before another, *de Silentio* marks a change from self-knowledge to self-willing. Sarah chooses to relate to herself as a "damaged specimen of humankind"⁷⁹⁰ and as the single individual Sarah before Tobias. What differentiates Sarah from Abraham is that Sarah receives but does not act. The movement of faith in Abraham is the ability to receive and relate to actuality even in the little things. He does so in humble courage. It is Abraham's love for Isaac that differentiates murder from sacrifice. Abraham is in a contradictory state of his love for Isaac and the ordeal. This paradoxical position brings back anxiety. But it is a second immediacy because Abraham does not only encounter the ambiguity of anxiety; he chooses it in responsibility for another. In the concreteness of his love for Isaac, Abraham upholds the tension of the sacrifice. He leaves behind the rest and peace of resignation. In his silence, Abraham allows for ambiguity. He gives up on the control of a universal understanding of himself. This leaves behind any understanding of *quid pro quo*. Abraham then does not act because of an outward measurement but from within. This inward action gives Abraham joy and youth. Humble courage is to dare to give value even to the little things as a consequence of absolutely relating to the absolute.

⁷⁹⁰ *FT*, 104 / *SKS* 4, 193.

7 Growing in Humility: Reflecting and Summarizing Thoughts

The following will summarize the above analyses and relate their results. The major points of connections are humility as a form of self-understanding or self-knowledge;⁷⁹¹ humility as a movement and humility as a unity of activity and passivity. This part will draw more extensively and directly on the recent relevant secondary literature to situate the presented results of this thesis within the respective field of research.

7.1 Humility as Self-Knowledge in Dependence

Saskia Wendel defines mysticism by a form of self-knowledge in knowing oneself in God as the other.⁷⁹² The presented authors share the view of a form of self-knowledge that is dependent on another. True self-knowledge is only possible in the face of another. They even go further: not only is it in the face of another, but it is also in knowing and willing oneself as being in relation to and dependent on another. Self-knowledge is not self-created, it is received in or through another. Moreover, humility shows a process of self-knowledge as a human being, to willing to be a human being in relation to God. Humility is a return to essential humanity as created in the image of God. And thereby a return to true being or self received from God. Humility then is a process of moving from self-knowledge to a form of freedom of self. In Eckhart, this is a process of dis-covering in turning inward. Hadewijch's texts describe an ascent from knowing the privation of humanity to knowing herself as a human being with Love. For Kierkegaard, it is a self before God that "in relating

⁷⁹¹ The analysis will work with the term "self-knowledge" as the English equivalent of the German "Selbsterkenntnis." However, each of the concepts of self-knowledge moves towards a way of self-understanding in willfully putting oneself in relation, implying more than mere "knowledge" but an active component that is captured more in the German "Selbsterkenntnis," Danish "*selvinsigt*" or Hadewijch's middle dutch "*kinnesse ons selfs*".

⁷⁹² Cf. Wendel: "Mystik ist eine besondere Form der Erkenntnis meiner selbst und darin zugleich des Anderen meiner selbst, insbesondere des absolut Anderen meiner selbst. Dieses absolut Andere meiner selbst wird jedoch zugleich als das Innerste meiner selbst und damit als das Nicht-Andere meiner selbst erlebt. Jenes 'nicht-andere Andere' bzw. 'andere Nicht-Andere' trägt im monotheistischen Kontext den Namen 'Gott'." Wendel, *Christliche Mystik*, Bd. 527, 14; Kobusch also highlights self-knowledge as a mark of all mysticism, see Kobusch, "Mystik als Metaphysik des Inneren," 24.

itself to itself and in willing to be itself, [...] rests transparently in the power that established it.”⁷⁹³ Humility then sets out at self-knowledge and describes a process of gaining a deeper understanding of oneself so that the humble person in relating to another knows himself and herself differently.⁷⁹⁴ All of the authors use the metaphor of growing to describe this development. There is, however, a different understanding of “the other” for each author. This is mirrored in a growing concreteness of the other. The relation to “the other” also describes a different path to growth as the following will show. In Eckhart it is self-knowledge through the other, in Hadewijch in relation to another and in Kierkegaard in knowing oneself before another.

7.1.1 *Knowing Oneself in Another for Meister Eckhart*

The secondary literature agrees on a remaining dependence of the soul in the union for Eckhart.⁷⁹⁵ Eckhart emphasizes the essential embeddedness of the ground in God. The dependence is not on another person, but it is on being. There is one ground that is God’s being. The soul receives from this ground its being and as imago in the received oneness is God’s being.⁷⁹⁶ In humility, the soul knows itself to be nothing but God’s image. As Schoeller-Reisch points out: “[...] das demütige Ich wird auf Gott hin transparent.”⁷⁹⁷ The soul

⁷⁹³ *SUD*, 14 / *SKS* 11, 130.

⁷⁹⁴ One underlining reference for the link of humility and self-knowledge for all authors could be Augustine. Baumann claims that for Augustine humility is self-knowledge, cf. Baumann, *Die Demut als Grundlage aller Tugenden bei Augustinus*, Vol. 21, 15. To investigate this lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁷⁹⁵ On the passivity in respect to intellect in Eckhart see Largier, “intellectus in deum ascensus”, 441; Largier, “Intellekttheorie, Hermeneutik und Allegorie: Subjekt und Subjektivität bei Meister Eckhart.”

⁷⁹⁶ Cf. Speer: “Wahre Selbsterkenntnis führt mithin über den Selbstverlust, über den Verlust aller erkenntnisvermittelnden Bilder und Vorstellungen. Denn wahre Selbsterkenntnis ist unmittelbar. Befreit von den Erkenntnisbildern erkennt der Mensch sich so, wie er von Gott erkannt wird, erkennt er schließlich Gott selbst und sich, insofern er Bild Gottes ist.” Speer, “Abditum mentis.” 469; see also Kern, “Der Demütige ist der Vernünftige,” 336.

⁷⁹⁷ Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 64.

knows itself when it sees itself in God as God without any “*aigenheit*”.⁷⁹⁸

Humility is a return to the original being in God as Connolly points out:⁷⁹⁹

The special mark of the Eckhartian path is that it transcends the level on which we are analogously related to God, i.e., as creatures of the Creator, beings - from the perspective of both Augustine and Aquinas - whose highest aspirations seem to depend entirely on a transformation of our human nature through God's grace. For Eckhart, too, grace is absolutely necessary, but it does not so much transform our true nature as reveal it and make it once again accessible to us: it restores our *original* (i.e. pre-Fall) rectitude.⁸⁰⁰

Humility leads to a nothingness of the soul that is an openness for God. It leads to a loss of “self” in the union with God:

Es geht letztlich, in der vollkommenen Negativität, nicht mehr um die Vernunft und um das Sein. Deshalb ist die Figur, die dieses Erscheinen und gleichzeitig das Moment unvermittelter Gegenwart von Einzelem und Allgemeinem kennzeichnet, der Tod des Selbst und die Geburt Gottes im Menschen.⁸⁰¹

The self-knowledge gained in the oneness with God is to know oneself as receiving. As Schoeller-Reisch points out, it is not knowing, what one receives from God, but that one receives.⁸⁰² In receiving God, the humble person knows himself in God and in himself knows God:

Demut impliziert insofern auch den Zusammenfall von Selbsterkenntnis und Gotteserkenntnis: in ihr hat sich der Mensch in seiner unhintergehbaren, buchstäblichen Gegebenheit durchschaut.⁸⁰³

In the concept of the oneness of the trinity, in receiving God's being the soul returns to its ground and is God's ground, as such, there is no difference between God and the soul. The other that the soul sees itself in is no personal other but God's being of giving birth. Consequently, the soul does not know itself as other. In the oneness, of the union there is no self, as Eckhart states in reference to Augustine:⁸⁰⁴

⁷⁹⁸ Schoeller-Reisch is right in pointing out that it is knowing oneself in God not knowing oneself *as* God: “Denn in seiner universalen Offenbarung ist Gott nirgends in der Weise des gewöhnlichen - d. h. nach aussen auf Bestimmtes gerichteten - Erkennens wahrzunehmen, sondern nur, indem der Mensch sich selbst in Gott erkennt oder Gott in sich (jedenfalls nicht sich allein als Gott!).” Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 118.

⁷⁹⁹ On how this might be related to Augustine's understanding of self-knowledge in relation to memory, see Speer, “Abditum mentis.” 449–52.

⁸⁰⁰ Connolly, *Living without Why*, 149.

⁸⁰¹ Largier, “Intellekttheorie, Hermeneutik und Allegorie: Subjekt und Subjektivität bei Meister Eckhart,” 481.

⁸⁰² Cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 71; 89.

⁸⁰³ Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 79.

⁸⁰⁴ This is why, Largier does not speak of a concept of subjectivity as singularity in Eckhart, cf. Largier, “Intellekttheorie, Hermeneutik und Allegorie: Subjekt und Subjektivität bei Meister Eckhart.”

As St. Augustine says, 'God is nearer to the soul than she is to herself.' The nearness of God and the soul makes no distinction in truth. The same knowing in which God knows Himself is the knowing of every detached spirit, and no other.⁸⁰⁵

The destruction of "*eigenheit*" in Eckhart's concept of humility leads to a dissolution of "otherness". In the oneness, the soul receives itself in God and is, therefore, fully dependent on God's being. The concept of God as being, therefore, has consequences for man as the image of God. Because for Eckhart the union is oneness, not likeness, it leaves behind the differentiation of reason or intellect in oneness. The Union is not achieved by the self but by death of the self. So that being one with God, the soul also knows God:

Now see: God the Father has a perfect insight into Himself, profound and thorough knowledge of Himself by Himself, and not through any image. And thus God the Father gives birth to His Son in the true unity of the divine nature. See, it is like this and in no other way that God the Father gives birth to the Son in the ground and essence of the soul, and thus unites Himself with her. For if any image were present, there would be no real union, and in that real union lies the soul's whole beatitude.⁸⁰⁶

7.1.2 *Knowing and Willing to be in Relation with Another in Hadewijch*

The importance of self-knowledge and humility for Hadewijch is already emphasized in her first vision when the first tree she is shown is self-knowledge and the second tree is humility. Humility in the meaning of diminishing of self is a consequence of knowing oneself as imperfect.⁸⁰⁷ Throughout the *Visions*, Hadewijch is shown her potential self in Christ. There is a growth in Hadewijch's self-knowledge from seeing herself in Vision 5 as another third person to knowing herself and Love as human and God. She highlights this on a narrative level in moving from an outward perspective on her possible self to a first-person-narration in the moment of oneness. Hadewijch grows towards god-knowledge by growing towards self-knowledge. As Fraeters says:

A vision is, therefore, an instrument of self-knowledge for her, a medium in which her soul mirrors itself in God by means of images, and can then convey to what

⁸⁰⁵ Sermon 10, 334, DW 1: 161.8-162.4.

⁸⁰⁶ Sermon 101, 32, DW 1,4,1. 350.87-352.92.

⁸⁰⁷ As Ruh points out self-knowledge is the beginning of any ascent: "Die 'Visionen' halten zwar geistliche und mystische Erfahrungen einer großen Visionärin fest, aber es sind keine eigentlichen Konfessionen oder Selbstgespräche niedergeschrieben, um über sich selbst, das heißt über ihre Entrückungen und deren Inhalte, Klarheit zu gewinnen - Selbsterkenntnis gehört zur Vorschule ihres Aufstiegs, ist nicht Endzweck - , sondern Einweisungen in ein Leben der Gottesliebe, wie sie sie selber erfahren hat." Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, Vol. 2, 202.

extent she mirrors Him. In other words, it is a question of seeing to what extent her soul is already a spotless *imago Dei*.⁸⁰⁸

The *Visions* express that self-knowledge and knowledge of love are received.⁸⁰⁹ As Hadewijch writes: “May God grant you yourself to know in all things what you are in want of, and may you thus attain a knowledge of the sublime Love that he himself, our great God, is (cf. 1 John 4:16).”⁸¹⁰ At the end of the *Visions* stands knowledge of how Love is “God and man”.⁸¹¹ Hadewijch knows God with her humanity, which in humility is his humanity. Hadewijch has to grow as Hadewijch through her humanity. Hadewijch’s image of God then is in the image of Christ as man, not in God as being. Consequently, her idea of imago and self-knowledge is not a mere intellectual

⁸⁰⁸ Fraeters, “The Appearance of Queen Reason,” 84; see also Murk Jansen, Saskia M., *The Measure of Mystic Thought*, Vol. 536, 93–96 and Carney: “Hadewijch’s exemplarism concerns itself with the restoration of God’s image in us. This journey by which the soul returns to God constitutes the whole of the spiritual life.” Carney, “Exemplarism in Hadewijch: The Quest for Full-Grownness,” 280. On the relation of Augustine’s idea of *imago dei* and Hadewijch see: Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 36–38; Dailey sees Hadewijch’s understanding of self-knowledge as a process of self-reading in the light of divinity: “Although unity cannot be ‘seen’ with the outer eye, the inner eye and mind can guide the body and soul to the unity promised. Reason, understanding, contemplation, and *operatio* (work) allow Hadewijch to understand and live accordingly. While this is not exactly a form of Renaissance ‘self-fashioning,’ it is a kind of ‘self-reading’ (or reading-of-divine-in-self) that sees promised unity there where the outer eye cannot and seeks to fashion the inner and outer persons and embodiments in a divine likeness.” Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 107.

⁸⁰⁹ On a literary level, Hadewijch is always spoken to, the first person narration is not interrupted.

⁸¹⁰ L 27, CW, 107 / L 27, 8–11. Hofmann comments: “Dieser Brief verbindet einen lebendigen Ausblick auf die wunderbaren Seiten des göttlichen Wesens, auf die Art der Begegnung und Vereinigung des entwickelten menschlichen und des göttlichen Geliebten mit einer Aufforderung zur Demut als Voraussetzung zur ‘Erkenntnis der erhabenen Liebe’. Im Zusammenhang erscheint dieser Ausblick als das didaktische Element, um beim Adressaten die Motivation zu erzeugen, sich auf die von Hadewijch geforderte Haltungsänderung bzw. -formung im Verhältnis zu Gott einzulassen. Die Demut ist nämlich, wie Hadewijch immer wieder herausstellt, als wesentliche Voraussetzung eines Lebens der Gottesliebe und überhaupt eines glaubwürdigen christlichen Lebens eine grundlegende unverzichtbare Tugend, die sich aus der Erkenntnis des Menschen als einen unzulänglichen Mängelwesens ergibt, was insbesondere im Verhältnis zur göttlichen Vollendung eine tragende Rolle spielt. Zwei Seiten kennzeichnen nun die Bedeutung der Demut für den Menschen. Zum einen ist die Aneignung der Tugend als einer unverlierbaren Haltung, die gleichsam zu einem Teil der Persönlichkeit geworden ist, ein Prozess fortwährender Vergegenwärtigung und der Übung. Auf der anderen Seite kann dieser Prozess nur angeregt und getragen werden, indem das eigene Dasein immer wieder in einem bewussten Erkenntnisakt auf die genannten konstitutiven Faktoren des eigenen Menschseins zurückbezogen wird, d.h. dass die gelebte Demut aus der und mit der Selbsterkenntnis entsteht. Nicht zufällig finden sich deshalb auch im ersten und im letzten Abschnitt des vorliegenden Briefs Aufforderungen zur Selbsterkenntnis, die über die Einsicht ihrer Notwendigkeit zur Demut führen soll.” Hadewijch, *Buch der Briefe*, 246–47; Hart also elaborates how Hadewijch’s understanding of self-knowledge is different to other concepts of self-knowledge of her time, see Hart, CW, 16; 263.

⁸¹¹ V 14, CW, 305 / XIV, 154.

understanding but requires affections. When Hadewijch describes the ascent to knowing God, she presents five ways. The first four are intellectual; the last is through affection [*affectien*].⁸¹² As the champion in Vision VIII admits:

For when I lived as a man, I had too little love with affection, and followed the strict counsel of the intellect. For this reason, I could not be set on fire with the love that creates such a great oneness, for I did the noble Humanity great wrong in that I withheld from it this affection. [...] Return again into your material being, and let your works blossom forth. The blows of enmity are drawing near you. But you return as victor over all, for you have conquered all.⁸¹³

Knowing herself in the image of God as man, Hadewijch does not negate her humanity.⁸¹⁴ It is *through* it, that she knows herself as the image of Christ. As Milhaven points out, this changes her understanding of knowing oneself in relation to another:

Recall the areligious, ethical concern of the present study. As such, it does not concern our inquiry that Hadewijch breaks from theological tradition in describing a full human relationship *with* God. What concerns us is that in so describing she breaks from theological tradition in identifying what characterizes the full loving and knowing, the full *living possible to human on earth*. For Hadewijch, full human life is preeminently mutual loving and knowing another.⁸¹⁵

In her concept of knowing in loving Hadewijch introduces a concept of equality in love, that demands the other not as being but as loving other. The difference between love and being is that love demands likeness and difference as another.⁸¹⁶ Hadewijch sees herself in the face of Love (quite literally in the countenance). Love singles her out. Hadewijch grows as herself towards Love and knows herself in relation with Love.

⁸¹² Hadewijch uses the word “*affectien*” for affections. Hadewijch’s general indebtedness to Augustine raises the question to what extent she refers to Augustine’s concept of “*affectus*”. I am indebted to Nadine Popst for drawing my attention to Augustine’s concept of affection, emotion and passion. This is not to say that Hadewijch does not value reason or argue for blind passion, as Dreyer points out: “[Hadewijch] knows that even though it has a separate function, passionate love is incomplete without Reason. Reason makes it possible to receive the completion or the fruition of Love, and also *to know* how this is in fact so (30.14).” Dreyer, *Passionate women*, 48.

⁸¹³ V 8, CW, 284 / V 8, 104-109; Mommers reads this passage as Hadewijch entering into the discussion of whether a union with God is possible or not that went on between William of Saint-Thierry and Bernhard of Clairvaux, on the one hand, and Abelard on the other, cf. Mommaers, *The Riddle of Christian Mystical Experience*, Vol. 29, 167.

⁸¹⁴ Cf. Hesler: “Die Bindung an den Leib mag den Menschen wohl vom Verkosten der ‘visio beatifica’ trennen, aber sie verbindet mit der Menschheit Christi. Dies dürfte die unmittelbar folgende Umarmung signalisieren, die das menschliche Bedürfnis nach sinnlicher Empfindung nicht negiert [...]” Hesler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 55.

⁸¹⁵ Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 16.

⁸¹⁶ This links Hadewijch and Eckhart’s understanding of Love and Trinity.

7.1.3 *Knowing and Willing Oneself before Another for Kierkegaard*

For Kierkegaard, humble courage opposes the idea of self-sufficient self-creation.⁸¹⁷ Humble courage is knowing and willing oneself before the absolute. Humility is the acknowledgement of self before another. Self-knowledge then is a self-relation, which means that in Kierkegaard's writing, knowing and willing fall together in being oneself. Humility is a way of relating to oneself through another and before the other. Self-knowledge is a movement of not only knowing oneself but wanting oneself as self, which describes a way of relating oneself to oneself as self. Humble courage describes the "how" of this relation.

Considering that Podmore points out that Kierkegaard's concept of God is one of the complete other and sin is the process of the self to become complete other to oneself, it is love that is the relation that enables self-knowledge.⁸¹⁸ Like Hadewijch and Eckhart Kierkegaard's anthropology is one of *imago dei*:

Paganism required: Know yourself. Christianity declares: No, that is provisional - know yourself- and look at yourself in the mirror of the Word in order to know yourself properly. No true self knowledge without God knowledge or before God. To stand before the mirror means to stand before God.⁸¹⁹

Self-knowledge is knowing oneself as self before God. For Kierkegaard, this requires humble courage. Anti-Climacus mentions humble courage in the context of a story about a poor day laborer and an emperor. The emperor offers his daughter's hand in marriage to the laborer:

Now suppose, however, that the plan dealt not with an external reality but an internal one, so that facticity could not provide the laborer with certainty but that faith itself was the only facticity, and thus everything was left up to faith, whether he had sufficient humble courage to dare to believe it (for barsh courage cannot help unto *faith*). How many day laborers are there who would have this courage? The person lacking this courage would be offended; to him the extraordinary would sound like a gibe at him. He would then perhaps honestly and forthrightly confess: Such a thing is too high for me, I cannot grasp it; to be perfectly blunt, to me it is a piece of folly.⁸²⁰

⁸¹⁷ Since this summary and conclusions refer to a broader field of Kierkegaard's works the following paragraphs will, when referring to a broader scope of Kierkegaard's works and addressing a general theme in the works, name Kierkegaard as the author and not the pseudonyms.

⁸¹⁸ Cf. Podmore: "From Kierkegaardian perspective, God is Wholly Other for me, a stranger to myself as I also become a stranger to myself, due to *sin*." Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self before God*, 45.

⁸¹⁹ JP 4:3902 / Pap. X 4 A 412, quoted in Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self before God*, 15.

⁸²⁰ *SUD*, 85 / *SKS* 11, 199.

Anti-Climacus admits that it would be easier for the day laborer to believe this, if he would only be granted a little favor. The day laborer in humble courage would know himself as a day laborer unworthy of a princess and yet believe that as an individual man, he would be worthy of the princess. It is this knowledge of one's own littleness as worthy of standing before God that is described in humble courage. As Johannes in the *Preliminary Expectoration* explains that for him God's love has "a primal lyrical validity"⁸²¹: "When it is present to me, I am unspeakably happy; when it is absent, I long for it more vehemently than the lover for the object of his love."⁸²² Even though de Silentio has the courage to think a thought completely, he does not have the courage that is faith:

To me, God's love, in both the direct and the converse sense, is incommensurable with the whole of actuality. [...] I do not trouble God with my little troubles, details do not concern me; I gaze only at my love and keep its virgin flame pure and clear. Faith is convinced that God is concerned about the smallest things. I am satisfied with a left-handed marriage in this life; faith is humble enough to insist on the right hand, for I do not deny that this is humility and will never deny it.⁸²³

Self-willing as self-knowledge then has consequences for how one can see the other. Only if I allow myself to be an individual person in the image of God can I allow the other to be an individual like myself. It shows Kierkegaard's insight into the human psyche that from self-knowledge before the absolute other grows the ability to see the other as personal other, not as an ethical other. As ideal science, ethics loses sympathy for the individual.⁸²⁴

⁸²¹ *FT*, 34 / *SKS* 4, 129.

⁸²² *FT*, 34 / *SKS* 4, 129.

⁸²³ *FT*, 34 / *SKS* 4, 129.

⁸²⁴ *CA*, 16 / *SKS* 4, 323-324: "Now ethics should be a science in which sin might be expected to find a place. But here there is a great difficulty. Ethics is still an ideal science, and not only in the sense that every science is ideal. Ethics proposes to bring ideality into actuality. On the other hand, it is not the nature of its movement to raise actuality up into ideality. Ethics points to ideality as a task and assumes that every man possesses the requisite conditions. Thus, ethics develops a contradiction, inasmuch as it makes clear both the difficulty and the impossibility." Roberts in line with this sees humility as the ability to stand outside comparison and measurement: "This implicit and inarticulate sense of his own worth, if carried into adulthood by becoming articulated in a definite life view, would be the radical self-confidence that Christians call humility: a self-confidence so deep, a personal integration so strong that all comparison with the other people, both advantageous and disadvantageous, slides right off him." Roberts, *Spiritual emotions*, 90; Lippitt makes a similar point: "The 1847 discourses on the lilies and the birds invite us to be contented with being a human being: here – if not always elsewhere – our common humanity is judged more important than the diversity between us, and the 'silence' the lilies and birds teach has been read as silencing the ceaseless demands of the comparative and competitive ego. But this is not the same thing as teaching that we are 'insignificant', a view the discourses explicitly reject." Lippitt, "Kierkegaard's Virtues: Humility and Gratitude as the Grounds of Contentment, Patience and Hope in Kierkegaard's Moral Psychology," 20. Grøn grounds this in Kierkegaard's concept of

This is the major difference between faith and ethics. It also explains that ethical passion is not enough to allow for a single individual. Richard Bernstein stresses the importance of ethical passion for becoming an individual self.⁸²⁵ But ethical passion still generalizes the other as universal other, not as individual other (such as Abraham or Sarah). It is a vital step, but the other is still a type, not an individual. The perfection of seeing the other completely and yet love them is in the mirror of divine love, not ethical passion. This implies that *FT* already foreshadows what Grøn calls “second ethics”. As Grøn points out the ethical is always judging and for Kierkegaard, this does not allow for the other to be an individual single self, it is seen through the ethical and not as an absolute.⁸²⁶ It is still measured by an ideal and not by itself. “What we see *in* the other (e.g. unworthiness) implies seeing the other *as* (e.g. as unworthy and imperfect).”⁸²⁷

Consequently, humble courage describes a way of relating to oneself in relating to and in view of another. It is the ability to see oneself and the

humanity as being eternally equal before God: “If the concept of God is man-made, it is natural to understand the other (in relation to which a human being is a self) as other people or humanity in general. Kierkegaard touches on this possibility implicitly, since he tries to explain the meaning of the God-relationship. The point of departure is that social relations between people can become stunted by the individuals’ evaluation of and comparison to each other. The mutual differences are the occasion for such an evaluation, for instance, the difference in social position. The solidarity can even depend on an evaluation that excludes certain other people. If there is no other authority, the individual in the evaluation of himself is left to the common evaluation that prevails. In contrast to this, Kierkegaard proposes what he calls ‘the equality of the eternal’: that every individual is a single individual vis-à-vis God. This means that the single individual escapes others in the mutual relationship. This is so by virtue of the fundamental equality where each individual is posed in the same way: as an individual. The equality of the eternal means, therefore, a universal likeness of all people, a human-equality or humanity (*menneske-lighed*) that precedes and can be contrary to the mutual evaluations that mark important changes.” Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, 153–54.

⁸²⁵ “What we learn from Climacus is that there are *two* dynamic interrelated moments in becoming human. The first is that moment of absolute infinite negativity in which we distance ourselves from the historical actuality (the *Sittlichkeit*) in which we find ourselves. This is exemplified by Socrates, who did this in a more thorough and consistent manner than anyone before him. But what we learn from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is that if the ironist does not move beyond this initial stage, then his irony becomes self-defeating, and even self-destructive. [...] The first stage of irony is the *beginning* of subjectivity and inwardness, but this subjectivity and inwardness is empty unless there is the second moment of *ethical passion*.” Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 97.

⁸²⁶ Cf. Grøn, “Kierkegaard’s ‘zweite’ Ethik,” 361–362.

⁸²⁷ Grøn, “Ethics of Vision,” 114; In respect to Rorty’s understanding of solidarity this highlights that claiming a universal truth always undermines solidarity to the single individual: “The implication is that one avoids seeing the latter by gazing at the former. What one looks fixedly at is the dissimilarity between oneself and the other, thereby not seeing the equality or the kinship with the other human being.” Grøn, “Ethics of Vision,” 117.

other in the mirror of the word. Unlike offense, it is knowing oneself not through oneself but through another. In willing to know the other as individual other, one gains self-knowledge of oneself as an individual for and before the other individual. But that means full dependence on the other. Without the other, one cannot be an individual, only if the other allows for it, can one be a single individual.⁸²⁸ This means in losing the other as an individual self; one also loses oneself as an individual self. Kierkegaard's understanding of self-knowledge in humble courage is one, not only of actively loving the other (the direction that Bernstein is going), but of receiving and knowing oneself as receiving. Arne Grøn sees this relation in *Works of Love*:

When guilty of misperception in fastening one's eye on the dissimilarity, one damages one's soul. This means that one's relation to oneself is at stake in one's relation to others - in the way one relates to others.⁸²⁹

The other that Kierkegaard describes is no longer a divine form of being in union as for Eckhart, or of Christ as man in Hadewijch, but it is the personal, individual (human) other. As Grøn states:

One way of specifying what immeasurability signifies is to say that *in* what we see - the visible human figure - we are to see the other human being. This does not mean, however, that we see a common humanity behind the other we see. Indeed, "really seeing" implies seeing the other human being in her or his actuality.⁸³⁰

To sum up, humility as a form of self-knowledge and relation to being a creature receiving from the other is a common aspect of all the concepts of humility presented in this thesis. Moreover, humility describes knowing oneself in relation to another. However, this relation just as the understanding of the "other" takes on different forms in each of the authors. For Eckhart, the humble person is not in relation to God but in receiving his being from God is in God. There is no difference, the humble person knows themselves as being no-thing other than receiving in God. In the union, the other is no other but the humble person and God are one being. Hadewijch describes a growth into knowing God as a growth of knowing herself as Hadewijch in relation to

⁸²⁸ Derrida phrases this as "Every other (one) is every (bit) other [*tout autre est tout autre*]; everyone else is completely or wholly other. The simple concepts of alterity and of singularity constitute the concepts of duty as much as that of responsibility." Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 68–69 Podmore comments: "The Kierkegaardian infinite qualitative difference is ultimately reduced to (human) *alterity*." Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self before God*, 44.

⁸²⁹ Grøn, "Ethics of Vision," 117.

⁸³⁰ Grøn, "Ethics of Vision," 118.

Love. It is through her humanity that Hadewijch gains knowledge of herself as being God with God. The oneness of relation, however, for Hadewijch is ongoing devouring of each other. Hadewijch does not lose herself in relation with Love and Love singles her out. For Kierkegaard, finally, self-knowledge is seeing oneself in relation with another before another. Becoming a single individual is not possible without seeing the other as a single individual. In losing the other single individual, the Kierkegaardian self loses its own individual self. All three authors, therefore, argue for an anthropology of dependence and criticise the idea of self-sufficiency.

7.2 Humility as a Movement towards Immediacy

For the presented authors, humility describes a movement. In the ascent as a descent, it is a movement towards inwardness.⁸³¹ Humility describes a continuous movement. Not a movement towards something, but an inward movement without why. The moment of unity in constant movement phrases a moment of immediacy for all authors. This moment of immediacy in humility expresses a stark difference between Eckhart, on the one side, and Hadewijch and Kierkegaard on the other. For Eckhart, immediacy is the moment of the perfect union when the soul receives immediately from God. Hadewijch, in contrast, describes an experience of immediacy in the moment of contradiction expressed in mistrust. Similarly, Johannes de Silentio emphasises the tension and sleeplessness in Abraham. In the importance of passion expressed and evoked by contradiction and paradox, one can link Hadewijch's mistrust with Kierkegaard's humble courage.

⁸³¹ Kobusch highlights this in connection to the *Song of Songs*: "Denn die im Anschluß an das Hohelied entfaltete Metaphysik, die sinnvollerweise auch Brautmystik genannt wird, führt - im Unterschied zum plotinischen Aufstieg - zu einer Einheit von Seele und Gott, die nicht substantieller Natur ist, in der also die konstitutiven Teile als solche erhalten bleiben. Die jeweils erreichte Einheit ist im Falle des Typs der Subjektsmetaphysik indistinkter, im Falle der Hoheliedmetaphysik aber distinkter Natur. Die so verstandene Einheit im Geiste wird nur durch eine Hinkehr zu sich selbst, durch eine bestimmte Art der Selbsterkenntnis erreicht. Sich wahrhaft zu erkennen bedeutet aber auch - um die Topoi dieses Metaphysiktyps zu gebrauchen - die Zerstreuung des Herzens (*dispersio cordis*) abzulegen und sich zu sammeln, sich auf Eines zu konzentrieren, in sich zu gehen. Wirklich in sein eigenes Inneres zurückzugehen bedeutet dieser Tradition gemäß aber zugleich, über sich hinauszugehen." Kobusch, "Metaphysik als Lebensform," 53–54.

7.2.1 *Humility as a Movement of Inwardness in Eckhart's Writings*

Humility in Eckhart's case is a movement towards the inner. A movement of letting go of outer to dis-cover the inner.⁸³² In humility, man brings forth God and receives his being from God. The union is a union in being. The idea of God giving birth to the soul and the soul receiving and giving birth to God in the ground of humility is the image of this unity.⁸³³ With Augustine, Eckhart argues that God is closer to the soul than the soul is to itself:

The soul takes her being immediately from God: therefore, God is nearer to the soul than she is to herself, and therefore God is in the ground of the soul with all His Godhead.⁸³⁴

There is no difference between the soul and God because the soul receives God's being.⁸³⁵ In humility lies received union,⁸³⁶ the humble person receives God's being in immediacy.⁸³⁷ It is in this oneness of being that the soul gives birth to Father as the Son:

Since this is spoken by the Father, then what is Jesus saying in the soul? As I have said, the Father speaks the Word; He speaks in this Word and not otherwise, and Jesus speaks in the soul. His manner of speaking is to reveal himself and what the Father said in him, according to the manner in which the spirit is able to receive it. He reveals the Father's authority in the spirit in an equal, immeasurable power. Receiving this power in the Son and through the Son, the spirit waxes mighty in

⁸³² Schoeller Reisch highlights the simultaneousness of letting go of outer and moving inner: "Entäusserung ist demnach als Komplementärbegriff der Innigung zu verstehen: für den in Demut an die Gottesmitteilung Angeschlossenen gibt es kein Aussen mehr." Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 91–92.

⁸³³ Cf. Sermon 12, 296–297, DW 1: 197.5–9: "He never gave God anything, nor did he receive anything from God: it is a single oneness and a pure union. befalls the divine essence: as I have said before, there is something in the soul that is so near akin to God that it is one and not united."

⁸³⁴ Sermon 10, 334, DW 1: 162.4–5.

⁸³⁵ Cf. Sermon 10, 337, DW 1: 169. 2–6: "So it behooves a man so to live that he is one with the only-begotten Son and he is the only-begotten Son. Between the only-begotten Son and the soul there is no difference [*kein unterscheid*]. Between the servant and his master there can never be equal love [*enwirt niemer minne glîch*]. As long as I am a servant, I am far from the only-begotten Son and unlike him."

⁸³⁶ Speer deduces an ongoing dependence of the soul in the union: "Zwar kann der Seelengrund Gottes Wesen unvermittelt empfangen und sich vollkommen mit ihm vereinen, der Ursprung dieser Vereinigung und die Macht, durch die sie besteht, wurzeln jedoch nicht in der Seele, sondern allein in Gott und seinem Wirken. Somit bleibt im Grunde ein unüberbrückbarer Unterschied zwischen Gott und dem Seelengrund, da dieses Vermögen niemals durch sich selbst seiner Vervollkommenung erreichen kann. Dieses Vermögen kann nur durch Gott mit Gott vereinigt werden, in sich selbst, ohne Gott, vermag es nicht in den Zustand der Vollkommenheit zu gelangen." Speer, "Abditum mentis." 470.

⁸³⁷ In Gen. (LW 1: 618.149): "Loquela enim et sermo exterior vestigium quoddam solum est et imperfectio et qualis cumque assimilatio analogice tantum illius verae locutionis et allocutionis, qua sibi loquuntur et colloquuntur superius et inferius *immediate sicut amans et amatum* et intellectus et intellectum et etiam sensus et sensibile in actu, quorum unus est actus, amplius quam formae et materiae, ut ait commentator." See also Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel*, Bd. 59, 354; Mieth, *Die Einheit von Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler*, 166.

everything it undertakes, so that it becomes equal and mighty in all virtues and in perfect purity, so that neither joy nor sorrow, nor anything God has created in time, can destroy that man, but he stands mightily there as if with divine power, in face of which all things are puny and futile.⁸³⁸

In Eckhart, the abyss symbolizes a union of oneness, one being, one love. The ground of humility is not to be like God but to receive God's being. And in the reception in the ground of humility to be one in God in returning God's being in the son giving birth in God through the Holy Spirit:

What does the Son hear from his Father? The Father can only give birth; the Son can only be born. All that the Father has and is, the profundity of the divine being and the divine nature, He brings forth all at once in His only-begotten Son. That is what the Son "hears" from the Father, that is what he has revealed, that we may be the same Son. All that the Son has he has from his Father: essence and nature, that we may be the same only-begotten Son. No one has the Holy Ghost unless he is the only-begotten Son.⁸³⁹

In the union of humility for Eckhart therefore lies an on-going dynamic of the humble soul receiving God's being and in the oneness of being breaking through to God.⁸⁴⁰ The receptivity of humility as willful passivity, therefore, allows for received activity. The humble person's works are God's works. Out of this union follows that God works through the soul, other than Kierkegaard where the soul works in relation to God but not out of union with him.

7.2.2 *Moving in Contradiction in Hadewijch's Visions*

Hadewijch's ascent to knowing Love in humility describes a movement upwards and towards Love. Simultaneously, Hadewijch emphasizes her own growth from a young woman to mother of Love.⁸⁴¹ The *Visions* begin with the question of "how to know love?" and end with Hadewijch knowing God perfectly "in his humanity and divinity". Similarly, her concept of humility

⁸³⁸ Sermon 1, 69-70, DW 1: 17.1-12.

⁸³⁹ Sermon 29, 126, DW 2: 84.5-11.

⁸⁴⁰ Schoeller Reisch stresses this dynamic aspect in the relationship of the humble person and God: "Diese Bilder zeichnen einen Hintergrund, welcher das Gefälle zwischen Gott und Mensch, das sich im herkömmlichen Demutsbegriff statisch niederschlagen pflegt, dynamisiert. Dieser Hintergrund erhellt auch die Möglichkeit eine Bewegung der Er- bzw. Enthöhung oder Einung, in die der Demütige, wie bemerkt worden ist, gerät. Die hintergründige Ordnung, die das Verhältnis zwischen Gott und Mensch bei Meister Eckhart trägt, ist demnach sozusagen eine flüssige." Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 67.

⁸⁴¹ cf. Fraeters, "Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch's Book of Visions," 62-63.

changes from knowing one's own littleness in humility, to humility as Christ's humility and humility as preparing the abyss. The epitome of Hadewijch's ascent is an idea of *imitatio Christi* in the moment of Christ on the cross, at the extreme point of his humanity.⁸⁴² This *imitatio* is not an outward position but an inward.⁸⁴³ As the above has shown, this is the moment of abysmal contradiction in mistrust. The dynamics of father and son in Hadewijch are moved to a movement within Hadewijch as a lover. In the light of this contradiction lies the union:

Oh, he is God, whom none of us can know by any sort of effort unless veritable Love comes to our aid! Love brings him down to us and makes us feel so tenderly who he is; in this way we can know from him who he is. This is unspeakably delightful bliss but, God knows, in the bliss, there always remains woe.⁸⁴⁴

In the immediate presence of Love lies endless joy and pain.⁸⁴⁵ Unlike Eckhart, Hadewijch stresses the importance of her humanity to be like Christ's humanity in the suffering of mistrust. Hadewijch's ascent is not one of becoming nothing but of growing in Love. It is a process of concentration on one moment of passionate loving. A moment of being nothing but love. Her will becomes God's will in focusing on Love. This does imply letting go

⁸⁴² As Murk Jansen argues for in Hadewijch's *Letters*, cf. Murk Jansen, Saskia M., "Hadewijch," 674.

⁸⁴³ Heszler highlights the innovation in Hadewijch's contradiction of affection and intellect: "Wie Bernhard setzt auch Hadewijch eine affektzentrierte psychische Disposition für den Überstieg voraus, doch werden bei ihr Intellekt und Affekt nicht nur als sich ergänzende, sondern auch als konfliktgeladene Gegensätze erfahren. Im Seelengeleiter der VIII. Vision und der Personifikation der 'redene' in der IX. nimmt dieser Konflikt im wahrsten Sinne paradigmatische 'Gestalt' an, und zwar in einer Schärfe, die der Mystik des 12. Jahrhunderts wohl nicht eignen dürfte." Heszler, *Der mystische Prozeß im Werk Hadewijchs*, 60.

⁸⁴⁴ L 12, CW, 71 / L 12, 63-69; See also L 12, CW, 73 / L 12, 163-167: "In other words, God himself commands that we nevermore forget Love, either sleeping or waking, in any manner, with all that we are, with heart, with soul, with mind, with strength, and with our thoughts."

⁸⁴⁵ This analysis has focused on "mistrust" and not drawn on Hadewijch's terms "*ghebruken*" and "*ghebreken*" even though these concepts also highlight the struggle with Love. Fraeters defines the two concepts as follows: "Hadewijch betont in ihren Liedern wieder und wieder, dass die wahre Einheit mit Minne nicht in dem seligen Jubilieren liegt, das so viele Frauen in ihrer Zeit mit allerlei Techniken – fasten, tanzen, beten – ausübten. Das süße, momentgebundene *gebruken*, das Hadewijch in den Liedern ab und zu auf beeindruckende Weise anspricht (z. B. in Lied 40, Strophe 6), ist nicht das wahre *gebruken*. *Gerecht gebreken* besteht in der völligen Hingabe an die unergründliche Minne in ihrer unbegreiflichen An- und Abwesenheit. Wahrhaftes Eins-Sein besteht in der fortwährenden Verbundenheit mit Minne in Freude und in Trauer. Trauer wegen der Abwesenheit der Geliebten bedrückt dann nicht länger. Trauer wird dann zur Freude, da der Minnende sich gerade in der Trauer mit der Minne verbunden fühlt, so, wie er sie in dem Moment erfährt, nämlich als Abwesenheit. Der exemplarische Minnende hört nicht auf, das *bant van minne* ('Band der Minne'), unter welchen Umständen auch immer, zu pflegen (Lied 39, V. 82–85)", Fraeters / Willaert Fraeters / Willaert, *Hadewijch*, 46, see also Jahae, *Sich begnügen mit dem Ungenügen*, Vol. 21, 231. This thesis is restricted to "mistrust", because within it the spiral and abysmal movement is incorporated in one notion.

of her own will, but the emphasis is more on embracing God's will and Love rather than giving up on herself. In fact, Hadewijch cannot lose herself because it is only in the contradiction within herself, that she can know God's humanity. Hadewijch cannot lose her humanity; she has to know it to the extreme of utter loneliness and desertedness by Love in contradiction to her own longing and desire for Love.⁸⁴⁶ As Mommaers points out this is more a union of two personal entities than a union of transparency: "The core of Hadewijch's literary work consists of what might be called a phenomenology of the 'being-one' of two personal entities."⁸⁴⁷ Humility then also leads to Hadewijch standing as the bride of Love, instead of sitting and receiving like in Eckhart's concept of humility. As Murk-Jansen points out, it is the union of two abysses swallowing each other up.⁸⁴⁸ This movement of the soul as an abyss in Love's abyss is a moment of immediacy and leaving behind human knowledge, reason and understanding as Mommaers and Willaert stress in their analysis of Hadewijch's *Letters*:

Das Berührtwerden der Seele durch Gott enthält eine Art von Bewußtsein, das "ganz macht" (*gheheelect*) ist: *Ik hebbe al mine bescedelecheit gheheelect*. Hier ist eine unmittelbare Erkenntnis - das typisch mystische "Hören" - möglich: durch die göttliche Berührung in der Seele verläßt das Bewußtsein dieses Menschen die Ebene, auf der die Vernunft die normale menschliche Kenntnis produziert, indem sie in der Wirklichkeit Unterscheidungen macht.⁸⁴⁹

The abysmal contradiction of mistrust prepares this moment of freedom from difference. The struggle with Love is a struggle within Hadewijch herself expressed in the contradiction of mistrust. Mistrust is a moment of depth, of *imitatio* of the inward passion of Christ. The analysis of humility shows that being in a state of contradiction draws in Love. In becoming the abyss, Hadewijch makes love in longing and enjoyment one in a constant spiral movement of descent. It is not a moment of letting go of oneself but being

⁸⁴⁶ Murk Jansen consequently stresses: "For Hadewijch, suffering is not just the means of union, it is the locus of union itself. The suffering inherent in the sense of having been forsaken by God, of living in exile from him, is the very experience that is itself union with the God-man Christ." Murk Jansen, Saskia M., "Hadewijch," 673; see also Murk Jansen, Saskia M., "Hadewijch and Eckhart: Amor intellegere est," 24.

⁸⁴⁷ Mommaers, *The Riddle of Christian Mystical Experience*, Vol. 29, 170; see also Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 17.

⁸⁴⁸ Cf. Murk Jansen, Saskia M., "Hadewijch," 675.

⁸⁴⁹ Mommaers and Willaert, "Mystisches Erlebnis und sprachliche Vermittlung in den Briefen Hadewijchs," 148-49.

nothing but love in the contradiction of mistrust.⁸⁵⁰ Rob Faesen highlights the moment of self-abandonment in Hadewijch's understanding of "*ghebruken*" (enjoyment) in the likeness to Christ's "*consummatum est*".⁸⁵¹ Faesen stresses the diminishing of self in the participation of the Love in the Trinity:

The use of the term enjoyment (*ghebruken*) in Hadewijch's oeuvre is thus complex. This refers, on the one hand, to the enjoyment that belongs to God's own Trinitarian life - namely the total, mutual possession of the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit - and, on the other hand, to the human person's complete participation in this love. The latter is only fully the case when the human person belongs to God in an equally radical manner and abandons him/herself to God in the same way as the Persons of Trinity do to one another. This implies that the human person is prepared ultimately to relinquish enjoyment. One might say that Hadewijch refers to an enjoyment (*ghebruken*) that has no pleasure, that is, an enjoyment on the level of 'being' rather than the level of 'experiencing'.⁸⁵²

In this analysis, Faesen likens Hadewijch to Eckhart's detachment. The analysis of humility in Hadewijch, however, highlights the moment of "Why hast thou forsaken me?" as the deepest point of Christ's and Hadewijch's humanity. Only then can Hadewijch receive Love in the union and say "*consummatum est*". "*Consummatum est*" is received, not achieved in letting go. Humility as a movement of first approaching and then becoming the abyss, therefore, sees the highest point of *imitatio* in the lowest point of humanity. The lowest point of Hadewijch's ascent is in the highest point of her mistrust, and relation to Love as Love in suffering and joy.⁸⁵³ Then Love gives her rest and receives her and Hadewijch receives from her. For Hadewijch being with Love is a union of contradicting notion: striving and suffering. In this process, Hadewijch in her longing and suffering for Love becomes no-thing but this striving and suffering for Love. This is expressed in the contradiction of pride and humility at the end of Hadewijch's *Visions*.

⁸⁵⁰ This is, therefore, not a movement of feeling or experience, it is a grasping of the whole person as a human being.

⁸⁵¹ Cf. Faesen: "[...] those who feel sweet love are wounded by the wounds of love. Hadewijch does not specify what exactly these wounds of love are, but they presumably refer to the wounds of Christ. In his humanity, the abandonment of his love only became absolute when he spoke the words *consummatum est*, that is, on the cross. The external, physical wounds in his humanity are externalizations of his complete personal, interior abandonment." Faesen, "Pleasure in Medieval Christian Mystical Literature: The Analysis of John of Ruusbroec (1281-1381) and Hadewijch (Thirteenth Century)," 372.

⁸⁵² Faesen, "Pleasure in Medieval Christian Mystical Literature: The Analysis of John of Ruusbroec (1281-1381) and Hadewijch (Thirteenth Century)," 371.

⁸⁵³ Murk Jansen phrases this in terms of deepening desire for Love: "Rejecting the consolation of Love experienced in this life as no more than a shadow of what Love is, the desire for Love becomes ever deeper as it remains unsatisfied until the desire becomes as great and unfathomable as Love itself and union can take place." Murk Jansen, Saskia M., "Hadewijch," 676.

The union is removed, Hadewijch's writings are defined by contradiction that mirrors her broken relationship with God (mis-trust). In this swallowing, Hadewijch is in Love, but the emphasis on Hadewijch as a lover already shows the constant struggle that is the consequence of this striving towards Love.⁸⁵⁴ Passion, as a relation to oneself and the other, is a movement towards likeness.

Decisive in Hadewijch's triumph over Love is her lack of faith, her refusal to trust in God's Love. More accurately, it is not her unfaith as such that triumphs over Love. It is her unfaith *qua* rising from and in desperation increasing her desire or longing for God. It is her resultant desire/longing that engulfs Love, and Love cannot stay away from such sweet, mighty love.⁸⁵⁵

This is very different from Eckhart's detachment and the concept of humility as a way of being one. Eckhart's movement of humility leads to a union in oneness, Hadewijch's path of humility leads to Christ's passion as a moment of unity in contradiction. Being in Love for Hadewijch means at the same time to long for Love. It is simultaneously gaining and losing. Hadewijch stresses the duality of man and God within a person more than Eckhart. Rest is only in unrest, trust only expressed in mistrust; humility only in pride; satisfaction only in unsatisfaction; activity only in passivity as suffering and passivity only in activity in longing for Love.⁸⁵⁶

⁸⁵⁴ This reinvokes Jacob's wrestling with God, cf. Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 53; L 6, CW, 59 / L 6, 128-135: "Do not, then, undertake anything else. But serve the Humanity with prompt and faithful hands and with a will courageous in all virtues. Love the Divinity not merely with devotion but with unspeakable desires, always standing with new ardor before the terrible and wonderful countenance in which Love reveals herself and engulfs all works." Also, L 12, CW, 73-74 / L 12, 193-203: "He then to whom anything is more than God, and who is not united with God in his one sweet blessing, stands on two feet and remains unconquered, and he tastes no blessing. You must leave all for all so exclusively, and burn so ardently in your soul, and in your being, and in all your works, that nothing else exists for you any more but God alone – no pleasure and no pain, nothing easy and nothing difficult."

⁸⁵⁵ Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 61–62.

⁸⁵⁶ Fraeters comments this active and passive part of suffering in Vision 9: "The fiery quality, then, expresses Hadewijch's experience of the unity of actively striving love, while the crystalline quality expresses her experience of unity in suffering, in passive submission. The verbs *vervaren* (pass into something else), *versterven* (die), and *doghen* (suffer/submit) occur frequently in her work in the context of mystical union. This can only be experienced when the human soul lets go of all activity, including reason, and thus practises *doghen* (in the sense of passive and suffering submission). Only then can the soul be taken up into something bigger than itself. The self *vervaart* (is transformed) at that point and is taken up into the Beloved." Fraeters, "The Appearance of Queen Reason," 84.

7.2.3 *Immediacy and Inwardness through the Paradox in Fear and Trembling*

The story of Abraham is a story of ascending Mount Moria.⁸⁵⁷ Like Hadewijch, de Silentio evokes moods through poetry and at the same time appeals to reason and understanding in his dialectical analysis. With Hadewijch, de Silentio also shares that these elements lead to contradiction rather than a clear philosophical statement.⁸⁵⁸ In the progress of the book, humility becomes humble courage, just as types and characters become single individuals. Abraham's silence is marked as inwardness. As such, it is not accessible to the poet de Silentio and turns the reader towards himself. Following Kierkegaard's understanding of self-knowledge through and before another, the ideal of humility is put forward in single individuals like Abraham, Sarah and Mary and not in an understanding of *imitatio Christi*. It is through the witnessing (in both ways: them giving witness and us witnessing them) of these characters that one can become a single individual before God. It is by faith, the way of relating absolutely to the absolute that one can be like Abraham, not by action: "It is only by faith that one achieves any resemblance to Abraham, not by murder."⁸⁵⁹ de Silentio uses the contrast of contradiction and paradox to describe this relation.

It takes purely human courage to renounce [*giver Afkald paa*] the whole temporal realm in order to gain eternity, but this I do not gain and in all eternity can never renounce - it is a *selfcontradiction* [*Selfmodsigelse*]. But it takes a paradoxical and humble courage *to grasp* [*at gribe*] the whole temporal realm *now* by virtue of the absurd, and this is the courage of faith. By faith Abraham did not renounce Isaac, but by faith Abraham received Isaac.⁸⁶⁰

The expression of "grasping" and the emphasis of the moment ("now") emphasize the momentous power of humble courage. The self-contradiction is a moment of immediacy. In humble courage, the self is a relation that relates itself in grasping the temporal and eternal. This relation is shown in the paradoxical position of knowing ethics, passionately loving Isaac and yet earnestly meaning to fulfil God's will. The difference between Abraham and de Silentio half-hearted imagined sacrifice is that he moves from reflection to

⁸⁵⁷ For a thorough analysis of the literary implications of this, see Nagy, "The Mount and the Abyss. The Literary Reading of Fear and Trembling."

⁸⁵⁸ This also marks the performativity of both texts.

⁸⁵⁹ *FT*, 31 / *SKS* 4, 126.

⁸⁶⁰ *FT*, 49 / *SKS*, 142-143.

passion *now*. Passion does not let Abraham resign.⁸⁶¹ This implies that in humble courage the self has to relate to the absolute (as a lover) without knowing or experiencing the absolute other (because it is ab-solute). Unlike Hadewijch, who expresses being God with God in contradiction, for de Silentio faith is paradoxical. Union with God or similarity to God is no longer an ontological but a relational one. It implies not a similarity of the will, not of the essence. The individual's efforts uphold the relation. This describes an inward movement.⁸⁶² But as Rudd points out, this makes faith inaccessible to a third party.⁸⁶³ Derrida elaborates this thought:

Such is the secret truth of faith as absolute responsibility and as absolute passion, the "highest passion" as Kierkegaard will say; it is a passion that, sworn to secrecy, cannot be transmitted from generation to generation. In this sense, it has no history. This untransmissibility of the highest passion, the normal condition of a faith which is thus bound to secrecy, nevertheless dictates to us the following: we must always start over.⁸⁶⁴

Hadewijch and Kierkegaard share the emphasis on the power of ambiguity. Ambiguity is the challenge of love. They do not dissolve ambiguity; on the contrary, they uphold it.

To summarize, the moment of immediacy in the abyss is a moment of inwardness. For Eckhart, this lies in oneness, for Hadewijch in contradiction

⁸⁶¹ Furak shows the importance of passion for convictions in Kierkegaard's thinking, see Furtak, "On Being Moved and Hearing Voices," 149; Furak's reading of emotion, passion and love in Kierkegaard's works would be another way to relate Kierkegaard and Hadewijch, which cannot be elaborated here; see Furtak, *Wisdom in Love*.

⁸⁶² Humble courage is a circular movement within the self. A paradoxical movement in the moment expressing passivity and activity. It expresses the movement of the self before God within the self. By this, Kierkegaard removes the union of the soul with God in a movement of inward flowing and breaking through to a movement within the self. He thereby removes the true experience of union with God and makes it a matter of faith and belief on the individual's side. Kierkegaard thereby cuts away God as an experienced reality. The union can only be struggled for but never experienced. And if it is experienced, it is only in the self not in God. So unlike pride in Hadewijch which comes from the experience of being one /being God, courage cannot come from the experience of knowing oneself in God but has to be made within the self in reliance on God.

⁸⁶³ Cf. Rudd: "What Johannes is really getting at with his talk of 'absurdity' has, I think, to do with the irreducible particularity of Abraham's situation. Abraham's faith is a matter of his singular personal relationship with God, not simply as a philosophical absolute, but as one with whom it is possible to enter an I-Thou relationship. Johannes talks of "the wonderful glory that knight [of faith] attains in becoming God's confidant, the Lord's friend, and, to speak very humanly, in saying 'You' [Du] to God in heaven, whereas even the tragic hero addresses him only in the third person" (FT 68/SKS 4, 168). Hence, his faith and trust in God are not based on general propositions about God's trustworthiness, but on his personal history of relating to God. But while this may make his faith reasonable to him, it also makes it inaccessible to anyone else." Rudd, "Narrative Unity and the Moment of Crisis in *Fear and Trembling*," 202.

⁸⁶⁴ Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 80.

and for Kierkegaard's pseudonym de Silentio in the paradox. Hadewijch and Kierkegaard share a disposition that is marked by passion and in constant movement within itself. This differentiates them from Eckhart, whose concept of detachment is a concept of unity in oneness.⁸⁶⁵ Eckhart's writings aim for a form of forgetting oneself in letting go of "ownership" (*"eigenheit"*). His language mirrors this in its emphasis on oneness in contrast to multitude. Hadewijch and Kierkegaard's language, on the other hand, tries to evoke affections and emotion through contradiction and paradox.⁸⁶⁶ Hadewijch's ascent leads to being one with Love. Immediacy lies in being in a state of contradiction between longing and enjoyment of Love. Hence Hadewijch stands proudly in Love. De Silentio describes Abraham as the single individual in absolute relation to the absolute. In contradiction to the universal, the single individual sets the other as absolute and therefore beyond comparison. The single individual does this before God not in or with God. This constant struggle is carried out in passion for the other and before the absolute. In Hadewijch and Kierkegaard's texts, contradiction and paradox are not means or ways but forms of love; the immediacy of being and living in contradiction and paradox is being singled out by Love. Humility as a movement towards immediacy describes different dispositions of inwardness. Humility in Eckhart leads to rest within the unity of the Trinity. For Hadewijch, humility leads to standing proudly in Love by being in mistrust. Abraham in de Silentio's interpretation is in the moment by the passion of paradoxical humble courage.

7.3 The Unity of Activity and Passivity in Humility

This analysis of humility in Eckhart, Hadewijch and Kierkegaard's writings has touched on the relation of activity and passivity. Analyzing Eckhart's concept of humility shows a difference between passivity and receptivity as

⁸⁶⁵ Niklaus Largier repeatedly stressed the importance of desire in Eckhart at the conference "Meister Eckhart in Köln" in Cologne in 2018. Relating Eckhart to Hadewijch and Kierkegaard, one could hint at some aspects that indicate that further research in this area would be fruitful, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁸⁶⁶ See, e.g. Roberts, "Existence, emotion, and virtue: Classical themes in Kierkegaard," Roberts, "Passion and Reflection," Roberts, "Emotions among the Virtues of the Christian Life," Roberts, *Emotions*.

received activity in the humble person's works. Hadewijch, on the other hand, highlights proud activity through humble passivity. Kierkegaard finally presents humble courage as a concrete action before God. The following will examine and sum up the analysis of activity and passivity in the concept of humility of all three authors in dialogue with the relevant secondary literature.

7.3.1 Humility as a Change of Passivity to Receptivity

Eckhart's concept of humility unites activity and passivity in the humble man's receptivity.⁸⁶⁷ Largier and Schoeller-Reisch emphasize the importance of suffering as receptivity in Eckhart.⁸⁶⁸ Largier sees in the "God formed" ("*gotfoermig*") soul a suffering soul in the passivity and receptivity without own activity.⁸⁶⁹ Eckhart chooses the imagery of heaven and earth in combination with high and low, to express this receptivity:

Now consider the words "They come from above." As I have clearly stated before, Whoever would receive from above must be below in true humility. Know this truly: he who is not fully below obtains and receives nothing, however small. If you have an eye to yourself or to any thing or person, you are not right under and will get nothing, but if you are right under, you will receive fully and perfectly.⁸⁷⁰

For Eckhart, the concept of humility in relation to activity and passivity is, therefore, one of receptivity of the ground.⁸⁷¹ Passivity as receptivity enables oneness and "indistinction"⁸⁷²:

⁸⁶⁷ Schoeller-Reisch states that receptivity ("*Empfänglichkeit*") is at the core of the human relation to God. She sees it as a condition to receive. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 66.

⁸⁶⁸ Largier includes an analysis of *interllectus agens* and *intellectus possibilis* in his analysis, if this thesis was focusing on the Latin Works this would be an interesting addition to the discussion of activity and passivity, since the focus is on humility, however, this extends the scope of this thesis, see Largier, "intellectus in deum ascensus," 440.

⁸⁶⁹ Largier, "intellectus in deum ascensus," 432.

⁸⁷⁰ Sermon 4, 227, DW 1:73.6-12.

⁸⁷¹ On Detachment, 572, DW 5: 424.9-425.5: "In the same way God does not work alike in all our hearts: He works as He finds readiness [*bereitschaft*] and receptivity [*enpfenclichkeit*]. Now in whatever heart there is this or that, there may be something in 'this' or 'that' which God cannot bring to the highest peak. And so, if the heart is to be ready to receive the highest, it must rest on absolutely nothing, and in that lies the greatest possibility [*mügelicheit*] which can exist. For when the detached heart rests on the highest, that can only be on nothing, since that has the greatest receptivity." Translation modified.

⁸⁷² Schoeller Reisch highlights how this differentiates Eckhart's concept of humility from other interpretations of humility: "Denn während üblicherweise der demütige Bezug auf – sogar – 'unendlichen Abstand' verweist, hebt Eckharts Demut diesen gegenteilig völlig auf." Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 59.

[...] every soul and every creature relates to God in every perfection purely passively; it lies in the nature of passivity to be naked and indistinct.⁸⁷³

In the ground of humility, there is a “Überformung”⁸⁷⁴ through God’s grace that man receives in passivity. Then the soul is nothing but a receiver of God:⁸⁷⁵

[...] the soul’s every external act is effected by some means. But in the soul’s essence there is no activity, for the powers she works with, emanate from the ground of being. Yet in that ground is the silent ‘middle’: here nothing but rest and celebration for this birth, this act, that God the Father may speak His word there, for this part is by nature receptive to nothing save only the divine essence, without mediation⁸⁷⁶

As Enders points out “In dieser Vereinigung verliert allerdings die menschliche Seele nicht [...] ihre eigene, kreatürliche Natur, wohl aber die ihr natürlicherweise eigene Wirksamkeit.”⁸⁷⁷ In the passivity, the soul receives God’s being and returns as God’s image.⁸⁷⁸ God’s nature is giving, often presented in the metaphor of flowing out.⁸⁷⁹ Quoting John, Eckhart writes: “All that belongs to the Father is mine, and all that is mine and pertains to mine is the Father’s: His in the giving and mine in the receiving (John 17: 10)”⁸⁸⁰ God is giving and the soul is taking.⁸⁸¹ The union is one of activity

⁸⁷³ In Ioh, n.318 (LW 3: 337. 396): “[...] omnis anima et monis creatura se habet ad deum in omni perfectione pure passive; de natura autem passivi est esse nudum et indistinctum.”

⁸⁷⁴ Largier uses this term to describe the dynamics of divine birth in the soul: “Diese Geburt Gottes meint bei Eckhart nie die Verwirklichung eines naturhaften Vermögens, sondern immer die gnadenhafte, vom Menschen passiv erfahrene Überformung durch Gott.” Largier, “intellectus in deum ascensus”, 442; see also Enders: “Der Mensch wird nicht zu Gott, sondern durch Gott überformt.” Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*, 81.

⁸⁷⁵ Cf. “Indem der Mensch ist, ist er im Hinblick auf die Grundlage seiner Existenz nichts anderes als ein Empfangender. Was er braucht, braucht er nicht von ‘wo anders her’, sondern empfängt, findet und hat aus dem, woraus er ist.” Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 81.

⁸⁷⁶ Sermon 101, 30-31, DW 4,1: 344.43-346.54.

⁸⁷⁷ Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit*, 82.

⁸⁷⁸ Goris highlights this aspect of reciprocity of Love and knowledge in Eckhart’s concept of oneness in the Latin works: “Ebenso ist nämlich auch dieselbe Liebe der Heilige Geist, womit der Vater den Sohn liebt und der Sohn den Vater, womit Gott uns liebt und wir Gott lieben.” (In Ioh. n.506 [LW II, 438,1-3]) Sowohl in Liebe als Erkenntnis begründet das *unum in actu* ein wechselseitiges Bezugsverhältnis zwischen Gott und dem Menschen. Dieser Aspekt der Wechselseitigkeit ist vor allem deswegen wichtig, da der Mensch in der Liebe und der Erkenntnis Zugang zur Universalität des göttlichen Erkennens bzw. Liebens erhält. Im gleichen Bild, in welchem Gott uns sieht und wir ihn, sehen wir eben alles, so wie Gott es sieht.” Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel*, Bd. 59, 352.

⁸⁷⁹ Cf. Sermon 81, 322, DW 3: 395.10-396.1-2; Schoeller Reisch’s reading emphasizes the importance of God’s being as revelation and therefore flowing out, cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 77-84.

⁸⁸⁰ Divine Comfort, 525, DW 5: 10.1-2: “daz des vaters ist, daz ist min, und allez, daz min und mines ist, daz ist mines vaters: sin gebende und min nemende.”

⁸⁸¹ cf. Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 68: “Das demütige Sein unterscheidet sich vom göttlichen darin, dass es das *empfangende* ist, wobei dieser

and passivity in the form of giving and taking. However, as Goris comments on the *Latin Works*, this union of activity and passivity as a union in oneness brings forth a new being.⁸⁸² In giving up on activity and turning it into receptivity, the soul receives divine being. And in fact, in this oneness activity and passivity become one as reciprocity:

It is God's nature to give, and His being depends on His giving to us when we are under. If we are not, and receive nothing, we do Him violence and kill Him. If we cannot do this to Him, then we do it to ourselves, as far as in us lies. If you would truly give Him all, see to it that you put yourself in true humility under God, raising up God in your heart and your understanding.⁸⁸³

In this imagery, the humble soul becomes the *scala caelestis* for God. The humble soul lifts God up. Eckhart changes the perspective on pure activity by highlighting the dependence of the one giving on the one taking.⁸⁸⁴ This is, therefore, not a relation of servant and master, but a relation of friendship and love. In receptivity, the humble person receives activity. "Just as little as I can do anything without Him, so He can do nothing without me."⁸⁸⁵ Furthermore, inward receptivity does not take the form of outward passivity.⁸⁸⁶ On the contrary, as Sermon 86 shows, it enables a form of activity from within in

Unterschied nur aus dem Bezug lebt, in dem der Demütige zum Göttlichen als dem Gebenden steht - und vice versa. Dieser aufeinander abgestimmte Bezug könnte gemäss Eckharts Metaphern direkter und unmittelbarer nicht sein, indem das Empfangen des Demütigen zum Geben Gottes im Verhältnis von Tiefe zu Höhe steht."

⁸⁸² Cf. Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel*, Bd. 59, 356: "Im Zusammentreffen eines aktiven und passiven Prinzips bildet sich ein neues Sein heraus, in dem beide Prinzipien der Wirkung nach eine Einheit erreichen, welche von der *nuditas* des aufnehmenden Prinzips ermöglicht wird. Der Mensch, der Gott erkennen will, muß sich demnach von allem Geschaffenen entblößen, damit er Gott in sich empfangen kann; in dieser Erkenntnis erreicht er eine aktuelle Einheit mit Gott."

⁸⁸³ Sermon 4, 227, DW 1: 73.6-11; Mieth limits this power of mankind over God: "Der freie Mensch 'zwingt' Gott zu sich. Diese Notwendigkeit liegt nicht an der Macht des Menschen über Gott, sondern am Wesen Gottes: 'Daß Gott geben muß, das liegt an seiner Geberfreudigkeit, die sein Sein ist.'" Mieth, *Die Einheit von Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler*, 153.

⁸⁸⁴ Schoeller Reisch sees this as part of the dynamic of revelation, "Im Offenbarungsgeschehen verändert sich Gott demnach so drastisch wie seine Kreatur. Seine Entwicklung erscheint parallel zur Aufgabe, die dem Menschen durch den Demutsbegriff gesetzt ist. Denn wie die Kreatur aus sich selbst heraus geht in Gott, so geht Gott aus sich selbst heraus in die Kreatur, - und darin durch die Demut wieder in sich. Das Konzept der Demut wird somit zum Kernelement im Denken einer solchen Offenbarungsbewegung, deren Ursprung und Ziel als Einung zu bezeichnen ist. Aufgrund dessen wird Gott - analog dem Menschen - erst zu dem, was er eigentlich ist, wenn er 'entwird'." Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 127.

⁸⁸⁵ Sermon 14, 268, DW 1:240.3-4.

⁸⁸⁶ For Murk Jansen this is one of the strong links between Eckhart and Hadewijch: "Both Hadewijch and Eckhart, however, insist that the mystic continue to do good, simply relinquishing any sense of personal involvement in the outcome." Murk Jansen, Saskia M., "Hadewijch and Eckhart: Amor intellegere est," 26.

receptivity. In humility, activity is from God. Any activity in humility is God's activity. It is God who works through the humble person.⁸⁸⁷ Humility means received activity. This reading emphasized the importance of fruitfulness as the actualisation⁸⁸⁸ of receptivity. The humble person returns to the world with care.⁸⁸⁹ In passivity and receptivity, man gains the ability to open up to the world. This changes the evaluation of passivity: it is not weak but strong. Receptivity enables openness. The fact that Eckhart chooses the word "nehmende" in order to describe the receiving shows how in receiving lies the potential of activity.

Eckhart's contribution, therefore, is a change in the perception of passivity. As the image of God, man is not only passive but receptive, receptivity meaning to be able to be formed by another. Only in humility does one become receptive. Passivity and receptivity are not the same. Passivity is being a servant; receptivity is being a friend. Receptivity allows for another to work through me without losing myself. Receptivity is taking, rather than being taken. In receptivity the soul gains, in passivity, the soul remains the same. The image is one of stretching out one's hand and looking up, rather than not seeing. In receptivity through humility, there is a movement within and through the soul; in passivity things happen to it. In relation to God the image that Eckhart uses is that of sitting down to receive God in humility. From receiving the humble person can work God's works in the world like Martha. So Eckhart's concept of humility unites *vita contemplativa* as represented by Maria and *vita activa* as described in Martha in received activity.

⁸⁸⁷ According to Largier, God has to take on the position of intellectus agens so that creation can be fulfilled in incarnation, cf. Largier, "intellectus in deum ascensus," 442.

⁸⁸⁸ in the sense of "actus": "Loquela enim et sermo exterior vestigium quoddam solum est et imperfectio et qualis cumque assimilatio analogice tantum illius verae locutionis et allocutionis, qua sibi loquuntur et colloquuntur superius et inferius *immediate sicut amans et amatum* et intellectus et intellectum et etiam sensus et sensibile in actu, quorum unus est actus, amplius quam formae et materiae, ut ait commentator." In Gen. (LW 1: 618.149).

⁸⁸⁹ Büchner comments: "Die Selbstmitteilung Gottes, die immanent in Gott stets geschieht, geschieht ebenfalls stets in der Welt. Sie entfaltet ihre Wirkung besonders dann, wenn Menschen im Vertrauen auf dieses permanente Gehaltensein durch Gottes Sich-Geben das aktive Sich-Abgrenzen aufgeben und sich in Solidarität den Mitgeschöpfen öffnen können." Büchner, "Sein-Geben," 371.

7.3.2 *Standing Proudly: Hadewijch's Understanding of Humility as Activity through Passivity*

In his interpretation of Hadewijch, John Milhaven highlights the importance of activity and passivity. For Milhaven activity in traditional Western philosophy and theology is closely connected to the idea of God's self-sufficiency:

I have found no other Western Christian theologian contemporary with Hadewijch or before who affirms that human beings satisfy or in any way affect God in their supreme union with him. I want to say "actively affect" God, but "active" is a traditional western word expressing a traditional Western concept and the concept does not fit Hadewijch's "satisfying" of God. In traditional Western philosophy and the theology, i.e., one "acts" on, "does" something to another, only in giving what one already has.⁸⁹⁰

"Giving what one already has" implies, that in giving one does not lose and one is in a position of "flowing out" which for Milhaven indicates self-sufficiency. For Milhaven, Hadewijch's concept of God, in contrast, opens the possibility of an ideal of dependence on another and changes the perspective on activity and passivity as giving and taking:

Hadewijch does not already have the satisfying pleasure and liberty God gains in the embrace but rather gains her own at the same time as God gains his. Indeed, what of Hadewijch we translate as "satisfy" or "content" is usually, literally, not "do enough" (*ghenoech doghene*) to each other but "be enough" (*ghenoech sine*) for each other.⁸⁹¹

Similar to Eckhart, Milhaven sees in Hadewijch's "being enough" a way of activity. He argues that Hadewijch's idea of minne among equals introduces a new perspective on activity:

[Hadewijch's] account of supreme fulfilment calls in question not only the tradition's account of human good but also the traditional account of the nature of all *activity and causality, human as well as divine*. [...] A being is active to the degree to which it self-sufficiently acts, i.e., *gives of what it has*. It is more active to the extent that it *gives without losing what it gives*. Activity par excellence is overflow. God's creating is paradigmatic activity for he gives being to all else while he loses nothing at all. [...] Moreover, to the degree to which one is active, ergo, self-sufficiently active, overflowing, one *gives without gaining anything*. Giving is not getting.⁸⁹²

Milhaven criticizes the idea that activity is a way of flowing out, which introduces a hierarchy of those who give and those who take. By linking causality and activity, Milhaven draws attention to an underlining concept of activity: as flowing out, it is one-sided because in self-sufficiency one does

⁸⁹⁰ Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 34.

⁸⁹¹ Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 34.

⁸⁹² Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 42.

not gain or lose anything in giving. Milhaven stresses in Western culture the idea of humankind as the image of God consequently leads to an ideal of self-sufficiency:

What then is this norm for human life affirmed by traditional Christian theologians by their description of supreme union with God? If the theologians are right about this union, what characterizes the best human life? For them, the best human life is not interactivity or any mutual affecting. *It is self-sufficiency through total dependence on the Self-Sufficient.* The bliss, fulfilment, achievement, worth of the individual is to become as self-sufficient as he or she can. Who is more self-sufficient than the believing, faithful martyr or virgin? Or for that matter, the humorous, serene Socrates going to his death in obedience to divine call? Or Mother Teresa giving herself completely to the dying poor of Calcutta?⁸⁹³

The idea of a virgin or Socrates who stands above needing others and through faith gives relentlessly mirrors the concept of God as flowing out. To be active is to be in a position to give, and not in a position of need. This is how he links activity to causality and teleology:

In the higher activity, the attraction or final causality of the agent plays a greater role. The agent is also, or contains also, the final cause. One acts on another by bringing him to imitate oneself. Models deeply influencing Western thinkers from the beginning were activities such as teaching, sculpting, and ruling. The teacher becomes neither more nor less wise when the pupil learns wisdom from him. [...] The ideal is to be as active as possible and as little passive as possible, which means being as little receptive as possible. Modern atheistic versions are similar.⁸⁹⁴

Milhaven's reading of Hadewijch changes the perspective on causality as well as on a concept of God as self-sufficient. According to Milhaven, Hadewijch's concept of Love emphasizes the notion of longing for the other in God. Milhaven goes as far as stating that Love needs Hadewijch as much as Hadewijch needs Love.⁸⁹⁵ He builds his argument on the concept of "ghebruken". True mutuality in Love is only possible in Love desiring Hadewijch as much as Hadewijch desires Love. Milhaven even argues that without Hadewijch's Love, God is lacking and therefore not independently self-sufficient.⁸⁹⁶ This means that God as *Minne* is not only giving but also

⁸⁹³ Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 40.

⁸⁹⁴ Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 42.

⁸⁹⁵ Milhaven calls this need "real *receptivity*": "I would call this desire 'need' and argue its trueness to experience of good mutuality though 'need' is not a popular word with contemporary champions of mutuality whom I have read." Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 32.

⁸⁹⁶ L 16, CW, 80 / L 16, 14-27: "In contenting him with that love, all the denizens of heaven are and shall be eternally engaged. This is their occupation, which never comes to an end; and the incompleteness of this blissful fruition is yet the sweetest fruition. According to this, men on earth must strive for it with humble hearts and realize that, as regards such great love, and such sublime love, and this never contented Beloved, they are too small to content him with love. Oh, this never completed work must stir every noble soul like a storm, causing it

receiving. God's wanting to love Hadewijch, makes him as dependent on Hadewijch as much as Hadewijch is dependent on him. Hadewijch's depiction of giving implies longing. Hadewijch's writings, therefore, remove the strong connection of activity and self-sufficiency and even link activity to dependence. In giving lies the need to receive just as much as in receiving lies the need to give. Activity is no longer a privilege of the one who is self-sufficient and whose activity flows out.⁸⁹⁷ Hadewijch's concept of Love is not only to receive but also to give. Love is to receive and to demand expressed in enjoyment and longing. Hadewijch mirrors Love in being active and passive, in demanding to give and take Love. Hadewijch's concept of humility leads to demanding her rightful place through Love. The union of activity and passivity, therefore, takes place in Hadewijch's love as an image of Love at the point of two lovers who demand and receive each other. Hadewijch's image of humility changes from bending down and kneeling to standing proudly in Love because she is fully aware of her lack of love and yet claims her right to love. This means the union of activity and passivity is not in man's receptivity and God's activity but in the image of the abyss Hadewijch unites activity in passivity within herself in relating to Love. In longing and enjoying Love, Hadewijch gives and takes Love. To claim dependence is a form of being active. Hadewijch's concept of Love introduces a union of two lacking and dependent lovers, rather than two self-sufficient ones.⁸⁹⁸ This means Hadewijch turns a weakness into a strength. She claims the power of acknowledging one's longing for the other and demanding and claiming dependence on another. Hadewijch acts in the striving and longing for Love. Hadewijch shows the activity in claiming one's own passivity. Hadewijch's Visions depict claiming love in one's need for love from the other. In demanding Love, she takes on the position of being

to cast aside all superfluity and all that is either unlike or less than that which can content Love."

⁸⁹⁷ Milhaven states this as a change of understanding causality: "A giant standing on the shoulders of dwarfs, Hadewijch rose on the thought of preceding theologians and saw beyond their intellectual struggle. She thought out a unified, consistent kind of causality that is verified in erotic experience." Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 44.

⁸⁹⁸ Milhaven also addresses the gender issue in this: "Perhaps still burning from the traditional male identification of woman with overpowering desire, contemporary feminists hesitate to stress the reality and force of spontaneous desire in mutuality and do not fully resist the temptation to center the heart of mutuality in two relating but absolutely self-sufficient selves." Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters*, 32.

fully passive and submitting, but she actively does so. Loving then means to be active in passivity. For Hadewijch, giving implies the need for the other to whom one wants to give. Giving and activity are not signs of self-sufficiency, but of lacking the other. Similarly, love is not only longing for Love. Submission and mere passivity do not open the seals to Love. Hadewijch has to stand as bride and demand Love to claim equal love. In this, unlike Eckhart, Hadewijch does not only fight herself but also Love. Hadewijch's concept of humility contains both aspects as a struggle for Love. The movement from humility to pride enables Hadewijch to love in longing and demanding as part of the Trinity. In humility, she draws in Love and speaks out of Love standing proudly in Love.

7.3.3 *Courageous Action and Humility before Another*

In her reading of humble courage, Claire Carlisle emphasizes Kierkegaard's humble courage as a virtue of openness towards God and God's word.⁸⁹⁹ Referring to the lexicographical meaning of the Danish "*mod*" and "courage," she defines it as openness of the heart.⁹⁰⁰ She characterizes it by Abraham's ability to be silent and listen. The receptivity that can be found in the concept of humility in Hadewijch and Eckhart thus is repeated in Carlisle's reading of Kierkegaard's humble courage. She identifies Abraham's silence as his ability to receive.⁹⁰¹ Her understanding of pride and cowardice as stopping mankind from loving⁹⁰² and, consequently, humility as a constant struggle for remaining open and receptive to God. Humble courage is the disposition of the one who receives from God. Carlisle also points out the unity of activity and passivity in humble courage.⁹⁰³ Following a quote from Kierkegaard's

⁸⁹⁹ Tubbut's article on humble courage but his analysis deals mostly with Davenport's understanding of ethics and eschatology and therefore does not contribute much to the discussion of activity and passivity in humble courage, see Tebbutt, "Kierkegaard."

⁹⁰⁰ Carlisle, "Humble Courage: Kierkegaard on Abraham and Mary," 11: "Courage is traditionally understood as strength of heart, but Kierkegaard's emphasis on humble courage suggests that true courage is the heart's openness (to both love and suffering) as well as its strength. If it is in fear that hearts are hardened, then it is in courage that they become fleshy, receptive."

⁹⁰¹ Cf. Carlisle, "Humble Courage: Kierkegaard on Abraham and Mary," 5, 8, 9.

⁹⁰² Cf. Carlisle, "Humble Courage: Kierkegaard on Abraham and Mary," 13.

⁹⁰³ Cf. Carlisle, "Humble Courage: Kierkegaard on Abraham and Mary," 13: "Read alongside *Fear and Trembling* and the various upbuilding discourses considered above, these passages

Journals, Carlisle sees patience as the courage to willingly take on suffering “that cannot be avoided”.⁹⁰⁴ She draws on the connection of the Danish “*Taalmod*” (“patience”) for patience that contains “*Mod*” (“courage”).⁹⁰⁵ Moreover, Carlisle points to the connection of freedom and courage, when she says that the courage of Mary and Abraham is highlighted by the fact that they could have done otherwise. Nonetheless, Carlisle criticizes “existential readings” of *FT* for putting too much emphasis on freedom. The reading presented in this thesis goes along with understanding humility as an ability to be receptive. However, it highlights what it means to love and the importance of humble courage for this in Kierkegaard’s *FT*. Humble courage is not only receiving love but loving. Moreover, humble courage is a way to care even for the little things in life, not for their own sake, but because they make love real. Humble courage, therefore, is looked at as a way of relating to actuality. The importance of actuality and action for Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms shows in the fact that Abraham receives Isaac double in walking to Mount Moria and lifting the knife. Humility as receptivity in Eckhart then leads to humble courage as activity.

The ethical as the universal has a much stronger pull and appeal for Kierkegaard’s heroes than for Hadewijch and Eckhart. The measurement of ethics in Hadewijch and Eckhart is reason and God as the essentially good being. In Kierkegaard’s world, the universal in Hegel’s understanding of morality (“*Sittlichkeit*”) are the standards of normativity that the individual and its actions are measured by.⁹⁰⁶ The difference in the concept of union as the self before God shows its consequences. The pride (*fierheit*) that Hadewijch takes from the experience of the union turns into courage in

help to explain why the virtue that counters sinfulness is precisely the compound, at once active and passive, of courage and humility: *Taalmod* and *Sagtmodlighed*.”

⁹⁰⁴ Carlisle, “Humble Courage: Kierkegaard on Abraham and Mary,” 10.

⁹⁰⁵ This also shows the similarity of Schoeller-Reisch’s reading of Eckhart’s concept of humility with an emphasis on suffering and Carlisle’s reading of Kierkegaard’s humble courage.

⁹⁰⁶ Evans analyzes Kant’s and Hegel’s understanding of morality in context of *FT*: “To summarize, for Kant individuals are subject to moral duties simply because as human persons they are rational agents. Moral duties hold not only for all human beings but for all ‘rational agents’ who do not have a ‘holy will’ that conforms perfectly and spontaneously to the requirements of duty. For Hegel, however, individuals have the ethical duties they have by virtue of the concrete social relations in which they participate.” Evans, *Kierkegaard’s Ethic of Love*, 69.

Kierkegaard's concept of humble courage before God. Courage implies that one has to break through the universal and venture out into the unknown. It is a change from humility in God to being humbly courageous before God.

It is, in contrast, to Schoeller-Reisch's reading of Eckhart's concept of God, that Kierkegaard's understanding of activity and passivity in humble courage can be best understood. According to Schoeller-Reisch, the humble soul receives its being from being (that is God).⁹⁰⁷ The humble soul knows not only that it is receiving, but also that it is to receive. "So notwendig das Dasein des Demütigen als seins-, d.h. gottesabhängig transparent wird, so sehr weiss er zugleich das Sein bzw. Gott *in* sich oder sich *in* ihm. Mit anderen Worten: Sein Da-sein löst sich auf das Göttliche hin auf, indem es sich aus diesem konstituiert weiss."⁹⁰⁸ This relation is very different in Kierkegaard's understanding of God and the self. Anti-Climacus defines faith as follows:

And what infinite reality the self gains by being conscious of existing before God [*at være til for Gud*], by becoming a human self whose criterion [*Maalestok*] is God!⁹⁰⁹

Unlike Eckhart's "Gegebenheit" as the core knowledge of the humble person,⁹¹⁰ Kierkegaard's self always stands before God,⁹¹¹ and therefore does not share God's being. Kierkegaard's idea of the self resting transparently in God means that God's grace returns the immediacy of possibility. Kierkegaard describes the absolute in terms of possibility: "For God

⁹⁰⁷ Schoeller Reisch mentions Kierkegaard's "humble courage" briefly in relation to the difficulties the not humble person faces in becoming humble, see Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 99–100.

⁹⁰⁸ Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 81.

⁹⁰⁹ *SUD*, 79 / *SKS* 11, 193: "*at være til for Gud*" this is only after receiving from God: "in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it." *SUD*, 14 / *SKS* 11, 130.

⁹¹⁰ Schoeller Reisch highlights the difference between "Gegebenheit" and "Geworfenheit": "Erst im Wissen um die eigene Gegebenheit - und zwar nicht im Sinn von Heideggers Geworfenheit, welcher Begriff offensichtlich eine ganze [sic] andere Implikation suggeriert - kann sich nach Eckhart der eigentliche Gottesbezug, damit auch der angemessene Gottesbegriff bilden. Denn der demütige Mensch erkennt sich mit jeder Faser auf Gott gestellt, weil die Vorstellung Gottes als ausserhalb oder oberhalb in sich zusammenfällt." Schoeller Reisch, *Enthöhter Gott - vertiefter Mensch*, 79. Jantzen also uses Heidegger's term "geworfen" but in order to describe what Hadewijch's writings are not, cf. Jantzen, "Eros and the Abyss: Reading Medieval Mystics in Postmodernity," 260; this reading of Hadewijch, however, stresses Hadewijch's struggle with finding herself in constant combat with Love. So, even though there is a relation of giving and receiving in Hadewijch's writing her description of it brings her closer to Kierkegaard's existential struggle with freedom.

⁹¹¹ "Against Cowardliness", *EUD*, 369 / *SKS* 5, 354: "Venture it, you who once humbled yourself under God in the good resolution but made a mistake and in your own eyes and in the eyes of other became so very important to the good; venture it again in order to become nothing before God - he will surely give you a spirit of power, of love, and of self-control!"

everything is possible.”⁹¹² Kierkegaard’s self is not given being, but freedom. As Grøn says: “Self is not a centre or a ground (this would already imply a self taking itself as centre or ground), but self-relation.”⁹¹³ Kierkegaard’s self receives possibility.⁹¹⁴ In the ambiguity of this “Geworfenheit”⁹¹⁵ the task is to become oneself in relation to the power that established it *as* the power that established it.⁹¹⁶ Freedom is given but, what matters is, how one relates to this freedom. The relation cannot be abolished as Kierkegaard’s concepts of

⁹¹² *SUD*, 39 / *SKS* 11, 154: “And so that struggle goes on. Whether or not the embattled one collapses depends solely upon whether he obtains possibility, that is, whether he will believe. And yet he understands that, humanly speaking, his collapse is altogether certain. This is the dialectic of believing. As a rule, a person knows only that this and that probably, most likely, etc. will not happen to him. If it does happen, it will be his downfall. The foolhardy person rushes headlong into a danger with this or that possibility, and if it happens, he despairs and collapses. The believer sees and understands his downfall, humanly speaking (in what has happened to him, or in what he has ventured), but he believes. For this reason he does not collapse. He leaves it entirely to God how he is to be helped, but he believes that *for God everything is possible*. To *believe* his downfall is impossible. To understand that humanly it is his downfall and nevertheless to believe in possibility is to believe.” My emphasis; *SUD*, 38 / *SKS* 11, 154: “At this point, then, salvation is, humanly speaking, utterly impossible; but *for God everything is possible!* This is the battle of *faith*, battling, madly, if you will, for possibility, because possibility is the only salvation.” my emphasis, possibility is also used to describe the knights: *FT*, 44 / *SKS* 4, 138: “Fools and young people say that everything is possible for a human being. But that is a gross error. Spiritually speaking, everything is possible, but in the finite world there is much that is not possible. The knight, however, makes this impossibility possible by expressing it spiritually, but he expresses it spiritually by renouncing it. The desire that would lead him out into actuality but has been stranded on impossibility is now turned inward, but it is not therefore lost, nor is it forgotten.”

⁹¹³ Grøn, “The Embodied Self,” 28.

⁹¹⁴ In faith it is no longer “for God” but “*with* God everything is possible”: “What is decisive is that with God everything is possible. This is eternally true and consequently true at every moment. This is indeed a generally recognized truth, which is commonly expressed in this way, but the critical decision does not come until a person is brought to his extremity, when, humanly speaking, there is no possibility. Then the question is whether he will believe that for God everything is possible, that is, whether he will *believe*. But this is the very formula for losing the understanding; to believe is indeed to lose the understanding in order to gain God.” *SUD*, 38 / *SKS* 11, 153-154.

⁹¹⁵ This attention to “Geworfenheit” is indebted to Theunissen: “Als Synthese von Notwendigkeit und Möglichkeit denkt Kierkegaard mit anderen Worten, was die existentielle Ontologie Heideggers und Sartres im Anschluß an in als Konstituiertheit des menschlichen Daseins durch Geworfenheit und Entwurf oder durch Faktizität und Transzendenz begreift. Als Notwendigkeit und Möglichkeit sind *peras* und *apeiron* mithin wesentlich temporal aufzufassen: Auf seine Schranke stößt der Mensch insbesondere dadurch, daß sein vorgegebenes Dasein und seine Lebensgeschichte ihn festlegen, und als schrankenlos erlebt er sich vornehmlich vor seiner offenen Zukunft.” Theunissen, *Das Selbst auf dem Grunde der Verzweiflung*, 43.

⁹¹⁶ I thereby disagree with Rudd that in *Fear and Trembling* the existence of God can be taken for granted, even though Rudd is right in pointing out that it is more about *how* one relates to God rather than *that* one relates to God, see Rudd: “It should be remembered that faith in *Fear and Trembling* is not a matter of believing that God exists – that is pretty much taken for granted throughout the book. It is, rather, a way of relating to God – personally, intensely, trustingly – that itself makes possible a radically transformed way of relating to the world of temporality and finitude.” Rudd, “Narrative Unity and the Moment of Crisis in *Fear and Trembling*,” 197.

anxiety and despair show. The self in its “Geworfenheit” can become before God, but the relation to be before God first needs to be established. Only if Abraham sees himself in relation to God, *is* he in relation to God. This is not to say, that the self can save itself in a Pelagian way, but that the distance between the self and God is far more remote. It means, that God only matters if he matters to me. Kierkegaard’s heroes have to work works of Love in trusting, but not knowing God. Courage is to actualize the received, that is why in humble courage, action is not received but an expression of the single individual relating absolutely to the absolute. This is highlighted by the strong connection between inwardness and action. In *CA* Haufiensius rephrases the terms activity-passivity as an absence of inwardness and in relation to the concrete:

Every form of absence of inwardness is, therefore, either activity-passivity or passivity-activity, and whether it is the one or the other, it is in the sphere of self-reflection. [...] There is an old saying that to understand and to understand are two things, and so they are. Inwardness is an understanding, but in *concreto* the important thing is how this understanding is to be understood. To understand a speech is one thing, and to understand what it refers to, namely, the personal, is something else. The more concrete the content of consciousness is, the more concrete the understanding becomes, and when this understanding is absent to consciousness, we have a phenomenon of unfreedom that wants to close off against freedom.⁹¹⁷

The concrete content of consciousness marks becoming. Concreteness in this context means to relate to understanding something not only universally but personally. Concreteness is, therefore, linked to relating to something as having meaning for oneself. This concreteness is not limiting but liberating. It is in deciding for one concrete self that one acts, as Bernstein points out:

We have seen how the threads of Kierkegaard’s thought leads to a heightened significance of human action as inward decisiveness. This is the basic human existential problem, a problem that confronts a man at every moment of his existence. [...] Action here is a form of inwardness.⁹¹⁸

Bernstein can only claim this because for Kierkegaard inwardness is only inwardness if it is concrete self’s action.⁹¹⁹ As Haufiensius writes inwardness

⁹¹⁷ *CA*, 142 / *SKS* 4, 442.

⁹¹⁸ Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, 116–17.

⁹¹⁹ Boldt consequently interprets humility in *CUP* as relentless questioning: “[...] die Beziehung des Einzelnen zu Gott [ist] der hier vorgetragenen Interpretation zufolge keine Unterwerfung und selbstauslöschende Demut, sondern sie besteht im offenen Fragen, das sich in der Existenz ausdrückt. Versteht man die in der Subjektivität angelegte Ungewissheit als Forderung und Aufgabe, dann ist auch Gott gegenüber nicht Unterwerfung die Konsequenz, sondern ein Fragen, das sich angewiesen weiß, sich aber als Fragen seiner sicher sein kann. Darin liegt Demut, aber nicht Selbstauslöschung, weil man weiß, dass man als Geforderter

and certitude can “be attained only by and in action.”⁹²⁰ Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms stress the importance of concreteness because it is in concreteness that one becomes oneself.⁹²¹ Theunissen draws on the etymological root “*concrecere*” to capture the notion of concreteness in Kierkegaard’s writings. It is “the growing together of elements that separately would be abstract.”⁹²² Kierkegaard’s understanding of the concrete self means that, in contrast to Hadewijch, in humble courage, one embraces oneself and dares to be embraced by another as a single individual singled out by sin and love.⁹²³ Sin recaptures the task that lies in the contradiction of being the single individual and the race.⁹²⁴ It points towards the individual’s freedom, but it

und von Gott Angesprochener bestehen bleiben und diese Eigenschaften nicht zugunsten einer vermeintlich von Gott übergebenen, endgültig verständlichen Einsicht aufgeben soll. Ungewissheit ist Forderung zum Fragen, nicht faktisches Unwissen. Boldt, “Kierkegaards ‘Furcht und Zittern’ als Bild seines ethischen Erkenntnisbegriffs,” 69.

⁹²⁰ CA, 138 / SKS 4, 439; also, CA, 143 / SKS 4, 443.

⁹²¹ SUD, 29-30 / SKS 11, 146: “The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude that relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, which can be done only through the relationship to God. To become oneself is to become *concrete*. But to become concrete is neither to become finite nor to become infinite, for that which is to become concrete is indeed a synthesis. Consequently, the progress of the becoming must be an infinite moving away from itself in the infinitizing of the self, and an infinite coming back to itself in the finitizing process. But if the self does not become itself, it is in despair, whether it knows that or not.” Theunissen, *Das Selbst auf dem Grunde der Verzweiflung*, 49; cf. Rosfort: “Being a self is not merely to imaginatively represent who we think we are or want to be, but also to know what we are, i. e., the concrete being that we are together with the context and circumstances that make us into the particular being that we are. We exist as a subject that is also object (genstand) existing in a world of objects that object to (genstand, i. e., stå over for/imod) our imaginative representations of ourselves. Existing as a self means to live in a world that challenges our imaginative reproductions of who we think or want to be. Our understanding of ourselves is therefore, inextricably entangled in our understanding of the world as a world of objects that put into question our self. The task of being a self is to become a self in and through the reality in which a person finds herself as both a present object and an absent subject.” Rosfort, “Concrete Infinity Imagination and the Question of Reality,” 197; it is this concreteness that humility is not only a religious attitude but gains ethical importance, as Barth states: “[...] rather an engagement with, or losing oneself in, concrete responsibility. Only in this sense would humility also be an ethical and not just a religious attitude.” Barth, “The Rationality of Humility,” 115.

⁹²² Cf. Theunissen, “Kierkegaard’s Negativistic Method,” 411–12; Bernstein sees Kierkegaard’s emphasis on concreteness in opposition to Hegel: “What is it that Hegel misses?[according to Kierkegaard] It is the concrete *personality* of Socrates with all his complexities and contradictions.” Bernstein, *Ironie Life*, 84.

⁹²³ SUD, 120 / SKS 11, 231: “The earnestness of sin is its actuality [*Virkelighed*] in the single individual, be it you or I.”

⁹²⁴ CA, 28 / SKS 4, 335: “At every moment, the individual is both himself and the race. This is man’s perfection viewed as a state. It is also a contradiction, but a contradiction is always the expression of a task, and a task is movement, but a movement that as a task is the same as that to which the task is directed is a historical movement. Hence the individual has a history.” As Grøn highlights quoting Kierkegaard: “Now he discovers that the self he chooses has a boundless multiplicity within itself inasmuch as it has a history, a history in which he acknowledges identity with himself. This history is of a different kind, for in this history he stands in relation to other individuals in the race and to the whole race, and this history

also highlights the dependence on the other in need for forgiveness. It is the way of relating to the other that humble courage describes. Alone, the single individual can only reach a point of continually negating despair. Then the self is manifest. Love, on the other hand, enables movement. For Kierkegaard, it is the concrete self before the concrete other, that shows how one relates to actuality. With the other, one can be open to being loved and therefore love oneself. It is an encounter of concretely understanding oneself and yet allowing the concrete other to love one's self as self. This means that the single individual first needs to be willing to be loved before it can love.⁹²⁵ One suffers as the concrete single individual from the sympathy of the other single individual.⁹²⁶ In humility before another and trusting, rather than knowing, that the other loves oneself as an individual, the single individual can venture out to love the other.⁹²⁷ Insofar, Kierkegaard contradicts a widespread assumption, that one can only love the other if one loves oneself. As the above has shown this would take a self-sufficient self as a starting point. On the contrary, Kierkegaard's heroes can only love if they allow the other to love them. Becoming a self means relating to oneself in relation to another. The introducing impressions of the weaning of the child underline

contains painful things, and yet he is the person he is only through this history. That is why it takes courage to choose oneself, for at the same time as he seems to be isolating himself most radically, he is most radically sinking himself into the root by which he is bound up with the whole (Kierkegaard, 1843/1987, p. 216)." Grøn, "The Embodied Self," 35.

⁹²⁵ Lippitt refers to this as a difference between "seeing" and "looking": "[...] this allows for a view of emotion-virtues as, *inter alia*, certain ways of seeing that can be encouraged by cultivating certain ways of looking." Lippitt, "Kierkegaard's Virtues? Humility and Gratitude as the Grounds of Contentment, Patience, and Hope in Kierkegaard's Moral Psychology," 97; 103; this is the basis of Grøn's "second ethics": "Die zweite Ethik, sowie wir sie im Text *Der Liebe Tun* finden, ist eine Ethik des Sehens. Bereits auf der ersten Seite von *Der Liebe Tun* wird dieses Thema angeschlagen: Wie nämlich derjenige, welcher handelt, sieht - den anderen und sich selbst. Die Welt, welche Kierkegaard in *Der Liebe Tun* beschreibt, ist eine Welt des Sehens. Es ist eine Welt, in der wir einander beurteilen: In welchen Augen gilt wer am meisten? Die ethische Bedeutung des Sehens liegt in der doppelten Möglichkeit: sehen und doch nicht sehen. Es ist möglich, den anderen Menschen zu sehen, ohne diesen zu sehen." Grøn, "Kierkegaards 'zweite' Ethik," 365–66; see also Grøn, "Ethics of Vision," 114.

⁹²⁶ Rosfort stresses that suffering "[...] is one of the most concrete aspects of our existence, and yet the causes of our suffering are unimaginably infinite, as are also our ways of dealing with our suffering. We do not suffer merely from what is present. Human suffering is, as mentioned, saturated with absence. In fact, the absence of explainable causes of suffering is part of what makes human suffering human." Rosfort, "Concrete Infinity Imagination and the Question of Reality," 213.

⁹²⁷ See Grøn: "Love's trust is not merely a trust placed in the future, but is placed in the actual other person, which means that in the eyes of trust the other is already her- or himself. Accordingly, the other is not to be measured, not even by reference to future possibilities." Grøn, "Ethics of Vision," 119.

this: being weaned is (ideally) the first time of feeling the other willfully withdrawing. One thereby feels one's full dependence on the other. In humble courage, individuality is not made but received from another.⁹²⁸ But the single individual as a single individual has to venture out to establish this relation as his or her own actuality.

The openness and receptivity that Eckhart and Hadewijch received from God in humility has to be fought for before God in Kierkegaard. The difference between Eckhart's and Hadewijch's works of love and Kierkegaard's understanding of works of love is, that the self has to act in inwardness before God but not out of God's being or in knowing God. The actuality of love is made by the single individual relating absolutely to the absolute. In humble courage, Abraham acts concretely before God.⁹²⁹ In constant movement, Abraham walks to Mount Moria and draws the knife to receive Isaac again.

7.4 Summary: Being, Demanding and Acting in Humility

Summarizing this investigation of humility in Eckhart, Hadewijch and Kierkegaard's writings has led to three major conclusions. First, humility is a task of humanity. In humility, human nature regains humanity as created by God. This links humility to self-knowledge. Humility presents self-knowledge in relation to another. Moreover, humility expresses self-knowledge and even willful submission to knowing oneself as dependent on another. The thesis highlighted the differences between the notions of humble self-knowledge as worked out by the three authors. For Eckhart, the humble soul knows itself in God and in receiving from God in humility. Hadewijch's development of knowing oneself as a human being to knowing oneself as the

⁹²⁸ Cf. Söderquist: "For de silentio, a reconciliation with actuality is a personal and subjective matter, as it is for the ironist. But unlike the ironist, the power to bring about that reconciliation is not within the subject's creative capacities. The individual is not in a position to self-sufficiently make a home in the actual world; it must be given as a gift." Söderquist, "The Religious 'Suspension of the Ethical' and the Ironic 'Suspension of the Ethical': The Problem of Actuality in Fear and Trembling," 276.

⁹²⁹ For Bernstein this is action: "The real action is not the external act, but an internal decision in which the individual puts an end to mere possibility and identifies himself with the content of his thought in order to exist in it. This is the action." Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, 115.

bride of Love introduces the notion of choosing oneself as dependent on Love. Hadewijch knows and wills herself to be “God with God.” This shift of self-knowledge to choosing oneself is heightened in Johannes de Silentio’s understanding of humble courage as a form of self-relation in relating to another. As the reading of Sarah’s humility demonstrates, for de Silentio one can only become an individual self in allowing oneself to be dependent on another. Knowing and choosing his self in relation to Isaac before God, Abraham has to relate absolutely to the absolute in humble courage. All three authors are united in considering humility as a way of growing towards true humanity.

Second, humility is a movement of inwardness expressed in an emphasis on immediacy. For all three authors, the countermovement of ascending through descending is a way of moving inward. The means of this movement shows in the different concepts of the relation between the humble person and God. Eckhart’s understanding of oneness in the union of the humble soul and God expresses an immediate union of being. God and the humble soul are one and the same. Hadewijch’s emphasis on a union of two abysses through the deepest point of humanity expresses a union of two beings equal in Love. The moment of immediacy lies in the contradicting, spinning experience of mistrust. Being in a complete contradiction between the presence and absence of Love, Hadewijch engulfs Love. Johannes de Silentio articulates this similarly in the tension and sleeplessness of the knight of faith. Abraham is in the paradoxical situation of relating to normativity, his love for Isaac and faith. Hadewijch shows how humility results in pride. For de Silentio, it is no longer contradiction, but paradoxical humble courage, that expresses the immediacy of the self before God. Any form of making sense of the self before God is made impossible by the paradox. In his silence, Abraham willfully upholds the paradox and re-enters the ambiguity of anxiety as a second immediacy. In taking on responsibility, Abraham stands alone before God.

Third, the presented concepts of humility contribute to the debate about the relation of activity and passivity. Eckhart’s concept of humility highlights the difference between passivity and receptivity. For Eckhart, the humble soul receives being in the oneness with God. In receiving in God, the

humble soul is the son of God. It, therefore, becomes part of the dynamics of the Trinity. In unity with the Trinity, the humble soul does not only receive as the son but also gives birth as the father. Eckhart expresses this in the difference between the virgin and the wife. The virgin receives, but the wife receives and in turn gives birth. The soul then does not remain in receptivity but through receiving gives back God's being. These dynamics explain why the humble person's works are God's works. God works *through* the humble soul. Eckhart's concept of humility is a concept of received activity. Humility also highlights that God's works as the humble person's works are not a deterministic outflowing because humility enables the humble person to work God's works with joy. In humility, the humble person works as a friend, not as a servant of God.

Hadewijch's concept of humility shows how passivity can be activity. Hadewijch's understanding of Love changes the perspective on Love as a dynamics of two self-sufficient beings. In her concept of mistrust, Hadewijch articulates how in claiming one's dependence on another and being fully passive is a necessary element of love. She, thereby, questions the hierarchy of activity as giving without the need for the other and passivity as the need for the other. In Hadewijch's thinking, activity means to be in need of the other. She highlights that Love is *both*: owing and demanding. In claiming and longing for Love, Hadewijch engulfs Love and becomes Love. Activity is not a result of flowing out and self-sufficiency but of lacking Love and claiming one's dependence on another. In short, taking is as important as giving in Hadewijch's concept of love.

Activity and passivity are also expressed in de Silentio's understanding of humility before another, represented by Sarah. Sarah's humility shows humility as a shift from focusing on one's own activity to one's passivity before another. De Silentio's interpretation of Sarah claims humility as a way to become an individual not by one's own doing but through another. Sarah's humility before another consequently expresses criticism of self-sufficiency. Humility before another means to first take the other seriously in their individuality and then becoming an individual in relation to another, not by oneself. It is through Tobias' love that Sarah becomes more than a poor girl. Humility before another highlights that love singles a person

out, as much as sin does. But being singled out by love happens through another, and not by one's own doing. Sarah takes on responsibility for the outcome of her story by being passive. The outline of Sarah's story is set from the start in the figure of the demon. Abraham, on the other hand, only makes the ordeal an ordeal by taking it seriously. Whereas Sarah's humility is before Tobias as the concrete other, Abraham acts in humble courage before the absolute other. In humble courage, the single individual relates to itself in dependence on the concrete other and acts as the concrete self before God. Humble courage upholds Abraham's love for Isaac, and yet in humble courage, Abraham acts in contradiction to this love. Only if Abraham loves Isaac and acts in faith is there a paradox. When Hadewijch demands Love in mistrust, Abraham upholds and makes his absolute relation to the absolute real for himself in his concrete action. In humble courage, therefore, Abraham relates to Isaac and acts before God.

This investigation of humility in Eckhart, Hadewijch and Kierkegaard's writings followed the movement between activity and passivity as received activity in Eckhart, activity in passivity in Hadewijch and concrete action as being passive before another in Kierkegaard.

8 Conclusion: Loving Julia

8.1 Humility as a Response to Richard Rorty's Liberal Irony

This analysis takes Richard Rorty's liberal irony as a framework for investigating humility. Rorty's book *CIS* raises the question of how to relate to knowing oneself as dependent on other people and at the same time strive to make a self for oneself in the face of contingency. He explores the consequences of the experience of freedom and dependence as two contradicting but existentially fundamental aspects of human life. To relate to this experience, Rorty suggests the liberal ironist as a way to form beliefs that "can still regulate action, can still be thought worth dying for."⁹³⁰ Rorty investigates and offers alternative vocabularies and descriptions of how to relate to dependence and act despite of it. The thesis follows Rorty's lines in this approach but suggests different descriptions and concepts of humility as alternative responses to the question of how to relate to dependence.

8.2 Irony and Humility as Ways of Life

In this thesis, irony and humility are approached as ways of life. Irony as well as humility link beliefs with how one acts in life.⁹³¹ Neither of them describe a style or singular behaviors but propose a consistent striving for a way to exist in the world, as Kierkegaard's pseudonym Johannes Climacus puts it:

Irony is an existence-qualification, and thus nothing is more ludicrous than regarding it as a style of speaking or an author's counting himself lucky to express himself ironically once in a while. The person who has essential irony has it all day long and is not bound to any style, because it is the infinite within him.⁹³²

The description and stories of the liberal ironist, the ironist or the humble person are read as attempts to live life in the awareness of one's own contingency as well as the contingency of one's own description of the world in dependence on others. The texts evoke contrasting notions of experiencing

⁹³⁰ *CIS*, 189.

⁹³¹ On interpretations the discussed authors' texts as guidance for a way of life, see Bernstein, *Ironie Life*; Voparil, "Rorty and James on Irony, Moral Commitment, and the Ethics of Belief"; Podmore, *Struggling with God*, 182; Dailey, *Promised Bodies*, 105; 135; Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*; Connolly, *Living without a why. Meister Eckhart's Critique of the Medieval Concept of Will*.

⁹³² *CUP*, 503-504 / *SKS* 7,456.

oneself as a responsible, free moral agent and at the same time in full dependence on another for the outcome of one's existence.⁹³³ The lived experience of this contradiction of freedom and unfreedom is alluded to in Rorty's concept of meta-stability⁹³⁴, Kierkegaard's concept of anxiety and phrased as a simultaneous absence and presence in Eckhart and Hadewijch's writings.⁹³⁵ This shifts the focus from theoretical philosophical problems to the existence of human beings.⁹³⁶ The examined texts therefore present different ways of describing the experience of living a human life in the awareness of other's dependence on one self and one self as dependent on others. To make this experience accessible all the discussed authors do not only describe what liberal irony or humility is, but narrate a story of someone who is the personification of the respective concept. They share that they tell a story of a heroic character who demonstrates how to enact the concept in life. As the personifications of liberal irony and humility, they become alternatives to the "strongman". The heroes and heroines guide the reader as a role model. The imagery of heroic adventures allows for capturing the experiences on the way: the loneliness that comes with setting out, the frustration with getting lost and the despair of trying without knowing whether one will be successful. In their narrative structures, the texts continue the story of one human being who stands out as an example and takes on the challenge of venturing out to fight. But where the strongman fights others, the heroines of liberal irony and humility fight themselves to lead the way to living life in relation to dependence on another.

There is a fundamental difference between Rorty's liberal ironist and the heroines of humility: the liberal ironist sees herself in dependence on other people. The vocabulary of the other authors describes the experience of dependence on a divine personal other. Nonetheless, this thesis demonstrates that the language which these authors explore, offers ways to inquire the

⁹³³ Cf. Bernstein, *Ironic Life*, 113.

⁹³⁴ *CIS* 73-74.

⁹³⁵ Cf. McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200 - 1350)*, 220; Mommaers, *The Riddle of Christian Mystical Experience*, Vol. 29, 178; Milhaven, Hadewijch and her Sisters, 6.

⁹³⁶ Voparil, "Rorty and James on Irony, Moral commitment, and the Ethics of Belief", 5.

experience and meaning of dependence for human life that can be fruitful for thinking and describing of a postmodern heroine such as the liberal ironist.

8.2.1 *Poetisizing Contingency*

Another aspect that unites Rorty and Kierkegaard and that is used to explore the language and writings of Eckhart and Hadewijch is the importance of countering contingency with the ability of imagination. The experienced clarity and one-sidedness of contingency are opposed to the ambiguity of poetic writing. This ambiguity opens up the possibility for different descriptions and perspectives. Furthermore, language is used to create a certain atmosphere and to instil a certain mood - this use of literary writing influences how the texts are interpreted and analyzed in the presented thesis. Rorty's concept of irony is presented by the liberal ironist as his heroine in a utopian text. Similarly, the analyzed texts by Kierkegaard, Meister Eckhart and Hadewijch are read as heroic stories of a quest for humility. The criteria that Rorty chooses for reading different texts is "We have to see whether we can find a use for [them]."⁹³⁷ The question that guides the analysis of all the texts is to which extent familiarizing oneself with their language and descriptions suggests alternative ways of how to relate to dependence and enable action in the face of it. This means the readings do not aim for conclusions but unfold and explore different vocabularies and descriptions. In line with Rorty's approach, the analysis of humility leads to a different interpretation of Rorty's reading of 1984. In a way, the method of the thesis is to put oneself in the shoes of the liberal ironist and familiarize oneself with different vocabularies and ways of speaking about humility as a way to relate to dependence. This means irony is used as an approach to explore writings on humility. Thus, irony shows the way to humility as an alternative perspective on dependence.

⁹³⁷ CIS, 135.

8.2.2 *The Importance of Love and Love Stories*

Rorty concludes his characterization of the liberal ironist with an analysis of the language of love.⁹³⁸ Language and metaphors of love play an important role in *CIS* because they present a way to relate to beliefs that one is willing to die for without grounding these beliefs in knowing a universal truth.⁹³⁹ Knowledge, values, heroes and people are important for us because we *choose* them to be important in our life rather than knowing them to be so.⁹⁴⁰ The metaphors and love stories help to describe *how* to relate to dependence rather than arguing *why* one needs to do so. The narratives of love can therefore capture the feeling of being bound to someone and yet experiencing this connection as self-chosen. So just as Rorty ends with an analysis of vocabularies of love, the other texts draw on descriptions of love as a way to relate to dependence in humility. Consequently, the thesis investigates Eckhart's concept and metaphors of Trinitarian love and continues with Hadewijch's struggle for and against Love to show the dynamics between the humble soul and God. The analysis of *Fear and Trembling* explores humble courage by interpreting the love story of Sarah and Tobias as much as Abraham's love for God and Isaac. In conclusion, a different interpretation of Winston and Julia's love will show the change of perspective that humility can offer in contrast to irony.

8.3 A Different Kind of Heroism?

In 1998, Richard Rorty published a book called *Achieving our Country*. It is a collection of essays and lectures that explored the political, social and economic situation of the United States at the time. From this, Rorty makes out the need for a new way to speak and imagine a hero, or rather heroine or else society will turn to a "strongman" who leads against the liberal left elite. Rorty describes a threat for society if the gap between the social classes cannot be bridged. After the US elections in 2016, the following passage from this book went "viral" in Germany:

⁹³⁸ *CIS*, 185-188.

⁹³⁹ *CIS*, 189.

⁹⁴⁰ *CIS*, 54.

[S]omething will crack. The nonsuburban electorate will decide that the system has failed and start looking around for a strongman to vote for – someone willing to assure them that, once he is elected, the smug bureaucrats, tricky lawyers, overpaid bond salesmen, and postmodern professors will no longer be calling the shots. [...] One thing that is very likely to happen is that the gains made in the past forty years by black and brown Americans, and by homosexuals, will be wiped out. Jocular contempt for women will come back into fashion. The words “nigger” and “kike” will once again be heard in the workplace. All the sadism which the academic Left has tried to make unacceptable to its students will come flooding back. All the resentment which badly educated Americans feel about having their manners dictated to them by college graduates will find an outlet.⁹⁴¹

Rorty’s warning and criticism grew out of his former philosophical works. This thesis interprets Rorty’s liberal ironist as his attempt to develop and suggest an alternative to the ideal of a “strongman”. Rorty’s project is that of an ethical demeanour that is not bound up with a set of universal truths but in seeing the other person aims to avoid being cruel to them. It is the awareness of susceptibility to pain - not a framework of moral ideas or truths - that forms solidarity among people.⁹⁴² In *CIS*, Rorty wants to sensitise the reader to the possibility of hurting another person in the use of language.⁹⁴³ For Rorty, one defines oneself but also the other person in one’s use of language. One’s language and vocabulary are not mere expressions of oneself but also potential cruelty to another person. This sensitisation shows responsibility to be the other side of self-creation.⁹⁴⁴ Speaking as an ironist, consequently, demands to take on responsibility for one’s own words and their consequences.

This conflict of contingency and autonomy causes the insecurity and anxiety that the liberal left faces and induces in others. In his analysis of the liberal ironist, Rorty draws a convincing picture of the struggle for ethical orientation in contemporary Western society.⁹⁴⁵ In his description of contingency, he describes the loss of orientation of a post-war, post-colonialist and post-feminist society in the Western world. Liberal irony is his attempt to develop a disposition that is aware of one’s own epistemic and

⁹⁴¹ Rorty, *Achieving our Country*, 90.

⁹⁴² Cf. *CIS*, 92.

⁹⁴³ *CIS*, 89.

⁹⁴⁴ Following Henry James, Voparil calls this “sensitive responsiveness”, cf. Voparil, “Rorty and James on Irony, Moral Commitment, and the Ethics of Belief,” 2; also 15; this is why, Curtis refers to Rorty as a “proponent of liberal virtue ethics”, cf. Curtis, *Defending Rorty*, 4.

⁹⁴⁵ Gascoigne contradicts this see Gascoigne, *Richard Rorty*, 181.

historically shaped limitedness and yet able to find meaning and relate to oneself as oneself and to other people in this world.

Moreover, Rorty tries to find a way of life that is politically active and at the same time not suppressive towards others. His emphasis on noticing cruelty involves taking the realisation that one's language and speech acts cause pain and suffering for others seriously. In this sense Rorty can be read as an existentialist: he tries to describe the situation of the self that has to find a way to live with the contingencies, limited autonomy and responsibilities it finds itself in.⁹⁴⁶

Using humility, instead of irony, brings out a different kind of heroism. Highlighting a different relation to the other, it defines a way of life that is capable of taking action in depending on and through another. Humility enables action, not *despite* knowing oneself to be dependent on the other, but *because of* demanding oneself to be dependent on another.

8.4 Humility as an Alternative to Rorty's Interpretation of 1984

To conclude, we return to Rorty's interpretation of 1984. This will show the liberal ironist's need for others.⁹⁴⁷ Rorty phrases this need for others in the words of an erotic love relationship. Rorty's interpretation does not only highlight the destructiveness of O'Brien. Winston also has a strong need to talk to O'Brien:

Notice that when Winston wrote in his diary that "everything follows" from the freedom to say that two and two equals four, he had "the feeling that he was speaking to O'Brien." He describes himself as "writing the diary for O'Brien – *to* O'Brien; it was like an interminable letter which no one would ever read, but which was addressed to a particular person and took its color from that fact" (1984, p. 790). Notice also that when he is arrested O'Brien tells him that he has "always known" that O'Brien was not on his side, and Winston agrees (p. 880).⁹⁴⁸

This brings to light the ambiguity of Winston's relation to O'Brien. O'Brien changes from being a threat to enabling coherence. To make sense of one's

⁹⁴⁶ Cf. e.g. Gascoigne, *Richard Rorty*, 180; Voparil, "Rorty and James on Irony, Moral Commitment, and the Ethics of Belief," 13; Schaper, *Ironie und Absurdität als philosophische Standpunkte*, Vol. 159, 125.

⁹⁴⁷ Cf. also "The Inspirational Value of Great Works of Literature" in *Achieving our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*, 125-141; see Áine Mahon, *The Ironist and the Romantic Reading Richard Rorty and Stanley Cavell*, 71-81.

⁹⁴⁸ *CIS*, 185; emphasis mine.

story, one needs to tell it to someone else. One's identity is affirmed in conversation with others. The need to speak with O'Brien is expressed in erotic, physical attraction as Rorty points out with the following quote from 1984:

[...] [Winston] felt deeply drawn to him, and not solely because he was intrigued by the contrast between O'Brien's urbane manner and his prize-fighter's physique. Much more it was because of a secretly held belief – or perhaps not even a belief, merely a hope – that O'Brien's political orthodoxy was not perfect. Something in his face suggested it irresistibly. And again, perhaps it was not even unorthodoxy that was written in his face, but simply intelligence. (1984, p. 748; see also p. 757)⁹⁴⁹

As Rorty states earlier in his chapter on Derrida's *The Post Card*: "Everything, in a love affair or a love letter, depends upon shared private associations [...]"⁹⁵⁰ Unlike the Romantic poet or genius, the ironist in her constant doubt about herself is dependent on talking to others to make her story coherent:

It is tempting to say that this passage, like Winston's abiding and constant love for O'Brien, merely exhibits Winston's masochism, the other side of his sadism. But that would dismiss such love too easily. What the passage does is to remind us that the ironist – the person who has doubts about his final vocabulary, his own moral identity, and perhaps his own sanity – desperately needs to talk to other people, needs this with the same urgency as people need to make love. He needs to do so because only conversation enables him to handle these doubts, to keep himself together, to keep his web of beliefs and desires coherent enough to enable him to act. [...] So, like Socrates and Proust, he is continually entering into erotic relationships with conversational interlocutors.⁹⁵¹

The ironist's ability to act depends on her ability to relate to others in conversation. It is interesting that Winston has two lovers: O'Brien and Julia. But in Rorty's reading, Winston seems to only be in conversation with O'Brien. Julia is reduced to a point of reference in Winston's story of himself and yet breaking this point of reference is strong enough to break Winston.

This raises the question of why the conversation with O'Brien continues, and the conversation with Julia does not. Rorty highlights that even when O'Brien is not present, Winston makes sense of himself in reference to him.⁹⁵² Rorty repeatedly emphasizes the inability to create oneself by oneself because in communicating in language one is dependent on other speakers who understand one's story. And yet, he describes his heroine in terms of activity;

⁹⁴⁹ *CIS*, 186.

⁹⁵⁰ *CIS*, 126.

⁹⁵¹ *CIS*, 187.

⁹⁵² *CIS*, 186-187.

in loving not in being loved. Despite Rorty's continuous emphasis on contingency, the liberal ironist still describes an ideal of activity, autonomy and – even if limited – self-sufficiency. Despite knowing that one is dependent on the goodwill of others,⁹⁵³ the ideal is to become as independent as possible from it. The need for others means that the others – not the liberal ironist – listen.

The above readings of humility offer a different outcome of Winston's story, not by his own means but by letting somebody else tell his story. Rorty's concept of liberal irony highlights the dependence of the individual on the other as a human condition and existential challenge. Winston cannot repair his story by himself. The torture scene is the epitome of the other forcing their way into my story. It underlines Winston's exposure to the other. But what he really meets in his torturer is the limit of his self-creation. Rorty's reading of Winston shows that his lover still assumes that his love is his story of himself giving love to Julia. However, in his torturer, Winston meets the limit of his ability to give. He is violently forced into the highest form of passivity. For an understanding of passivity as the limit of humanity and as the end of one's own story, this means that Winston cannot recover from this situation. He has no more power or scope for action within himself. This shows that despite his emphasis on contingency and dependence, Rorty's heroine still stands for a fight for self-sufficiency, even if only limited self-sufficiency. Not being able to tell his own story as the lover of Julia, Winston is conquered.

Humility, on the other hand, is a way of relating differently to this dependence. Humility enables us to see this dependence not as a weakness or loss but as a natural and given part of humanity. In humility, a person, therefore, does not only see their dependence on another but incorporates this dependence into their idea of themselves. Humility introduces valuing passivity as much as activity. It is a movement of embracing rather than renouncing dependence on another. Understanding humility thus can open up a new perspective on Rorty's interpretation of *1984*, and the torture scene in particular.

⁹⁵³ *CIS*, 42.

Humility suggests that there is a way for Winston to continue his story but he cannot achieve it himself. It is Julia, who can give it to him. In Rorty's vocabulary: sometimes we cannot write our own story, sometimes we have to allow others to write our story. The ability to see this not as a humiliation, but as an opening up of the possibility, that I am given in return, requires courage. It demands to allow for the possibility that the other approaches me with as much "sensitive responsiveness" as I approach them. Moreover, it requires me to see my need for the other to approach me like that. Rorty only looks at the story from Winston's point of view. He thus still assumes a self-sufficient self that can give to others, but who in the moment of needing others loses himself.⁹⁵⁴ This shows in the fact that Rorty does not see Julia in any other role than constituting Winston's story of himself. His analysis focuses on the torturer and Winston in relation to him. Rorty's reading does not allow for Julia to be involved in the story. And yet, Winston's love for Julia is a constituting and destructive part of his identity and his story, because Winston identifies as Julia's lover. Reading the scene alongside the concepts of humility presented in this thesis enables us to take a different perspective on Winston and Julia.⁹⁵⁵ What Winston must face is not only the possibility of Julia's hatred, but also her love. Instead of assuming the end of his love and, more importantly, the end of her love for him, he would have to bear the possibility that she might continue loving him. Winston cannot continue his story as an unconditional lover of Julia. At some point, every lover is dependent on the other. Humility, however, would claim that their love could still be possible. Winston would define himself in relation to Julia instead of his torturer. Humility does not mean being humble before his torturer, but courageously relating to Julia. Julia and Winston's love would still be

⁹⁵⁴ Gascoigne points to the fact that Rorty in his attempt to free the intellectual loses the single individual out of sight: "CIS is thus an apologia for the resentful, self-absorbed quest of the post-philosophical intellectual to find a role for herself. The quest is redeemed because in describing its own nature it allows it to be privatized while discovering therein a connection with others, a connection that can form the basis of a (public) political commitment. The scope of 'irony' is unstable because while at times it appeals to 'we' questing intellectuals, it also takes in our shared predicament. And herein I think the problem lies. Ultimately, public and private commitments are united in a lived life. Rorty knows this, of course: that's where the relaxed 'inside' view of the general 'we' comes in. But in trying to ward off the temptation of that single vision, he adopts an 'outside' view, aiming to give a narrative of intellectual life that might serve as a model for all." Gascoigne, *Richard Rorty*, 181.

⁹⁵⁵ Just as Johannes de Silentio reminds the reader to see Isaac at the beginning of *FT*.

possible: However, not in Winston *giving* love but in him *receiving* love from Julia. Although Winston himself cannot tell another story in relation to his torturer, Julia can reform the broken vocabulary and pick up *their* story.⁹⁵⁶ This means to love is not only to give, but to dare to demand love even if one does not expect or deserve it. Humility describes a way to stand as oneself in the extreme situation of knowing one's own depth and despair as a human being and yet to dare to see oneself as possibly being loved by another. Unlike liberal irony, humility suggests a way in first receiving being, then demanding love from another and finally receiving freedom and moving on.

⁹⁵⁶ This also implies that even before Winston wrote his story by himself. The torture scene just brings to light the extreme of lacking self-sufficiency.

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Abbreviations

Richard Rorty

MoN

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CIS

Richard Rorty. 1989. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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The Nobleman	<i>The Nobleman (Von dem edeln menschen)</i> translated by Maurice O.'C. Walshe. 2009. Meister Eckhart. <i>The complete mystical works of Meister Eckhart</i> . Ed. Maurice O.'C. Walshe. New York: Crossroad.
DW	<i>Deutsche und Lateinische Werke. Die deutschen Werke.</i> Vol. 1-5. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
LW	<i>Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke. Die lateinischen Werke.</i> Ed. Konrad Weiß, et al. Vol. 1-5. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, translation mine
Hadewijch	
CW	Hadewijch. 1981. <i>The Complete Works</i> . Ed. Columba Hart. <i>The Classics of Western Spirituality</i> . London: SPCK.
V	Visions according to the numbering in CW, Middledutch text referring to Hadewijch. 1979. <i>De visioenen van Hadewijch</i> . Ed. Paul Mommaers. <i>Spiritualiteit</i> . Nijmegen enz: Gottmer enz, given in Roman numbers

- PS Poems in stanzas, in the translation by Mareike van Baest, in Mareike van Baest. 1998. *Poetry of Hadewijch*. Leuven: Peeters.
- PC Poems in Couplets, English translation by Hart in CW, Middle Dutch edition, Hadewych, *Mengeldichten*. Ed. J. van Mierlo. Leuven: Standaard-Boekhandel.
- Letters English translation by Hart in CW, Middle Dutch edition, Hadewych. *Brieven*: Ed. J. van Mierlo. Leuven: Standaard-Boekhandel.

Kierkegaard

- CA* Kierkegaard, Søren. 1983. *The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*. Ed. Howard V. Hong und Edna H. Hong. Kierkegaard's Writings 19. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- CI* Kierkegaard, Søren. 1989. *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*. Ed. Edna H. Hong und Howard V. Hong. Kierkegaard's Writings 2. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- WL* Kierkegaard, Søren. 1995. *Works of Love*. Ed. Edna H. Hong und Howard V. Hong. Kierkegaard's Writings 16. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- FT* Kierkegaard, Søren. 2004. *Fear and Trembling. Repetition*. Ed. Howard V. Hong und Edna H. Hong. Kierkegaard's Writings 6. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- CUP* Kierkegaard, Søren. 2013. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. Ed. Howard V. Hong und Edna H. Hong. Kierkegaard's Writings 12. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- SKS* Kierkegaard, Søren. 2012. *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*. Elektronisk version 1.7. Ed. N. J.

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