“Reality is what we take to be true. 
What we take to be true is what we believe. 
What we believe is based on our perceptions. 
What we perceive depends on what we look for. 
What we look for depends on what we think. 
What we think depends on what we perceive. 
What we perceive determines what we believe. 
What we believe determines what we take to be true. 
What we take to be true is our reality.”

- David Bohm
"He who wants to understand my teaching of releasement must himself be perfectly released."
- Meister Eckhart

"There is an unborn, unmade, uncreated. Were it not for this unborn, unmade, uncreated, there would be no release from the born, the made, the created."
- Buddha

I

Ken Wilber was once asked why it was that the East has had such a rich tradition of transcendent spirituality over the centuries, while one has to look much harder to find it in the Western traditions: "How could a whole civilization miss the point for so long...?"

Wilber responded,
"Imagine if, the very day the Buddha attained his enlightenment, he was taken out and hanged precisely because of that realization. And if any of his followers claimed to have the same realization, they were also hanged. Speaking for myself, I would find this something of a disincentive...

"As soon as any spiritual practitioner began to get too close to the realization... that one's own mind is intrinsically one with primordial Spirit – then frighteningly severe repercussions usually followed."

All the more amazing, then, that the teachings and writings of medieval European mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen, Mechtilde of Magdebourg, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, Henry Suso, John Tauler, and the anonymous English author of The Cloud of Unknowing, among others, should have survived at all.

Meister Eckhart, a German friar of the Order of Preachers of St. Dominic, lived and taught in the years 1260 to 1327. Just how he came to the Understanding which he espoused (or which espoused him) has not been recorded: however, his writings and sermons speak of the same truth of radical non-duality that mystics and sages, East and West, have always pointed toward.

Eckhart spoke of something he called "releasement," an ultimate letting-go which amounts to a total negation and annihilation of the individual self. This releasement opens into the "breakthrough beyond God," which for all intents and purposes corresponds with what is referred to in other traditions as awakening, enlightenment, or the Understanding. What he saw, he insisted could not be understood unless and until this releasement and breakthrough occurred, when all would become obvious.
Epilogue: An Eckhartian Ontology

What Eckhart taught, what his releasement is a letting-go into, is a unity which dramatically transcended medieval Christian belief. The human and the divine, he saw, are "one unique unity without difference," because "prior to distinction into substances... the acting of God and the becoming of man join both God and man into one identical event."

Being, for Eckhart, is Presence – which is one, universal. Western philosophers from Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas had seen separate beings as entities separate from the Creator. For Eckhart this is not so: Being is God; and inasmuch as anything is, it is God, having "the identical being and the identical substance and nature... If God's nature is my nature, then the divine being is my being. Thus God is more intimately present to all creatures than the creature is to itself."

"There is a power in the mind," he said, "which touches neither time nor flesh; it emanates from spirit and remains in spirit..." Again, "There is something in the mind of such a kind that, if the mind were entirely thus, it would be uncreated."

"When I still stood in the ground, the soil, the river, and the source of the Godhead, no one asked me where I was going and what I was doing. There was no one there to question me. But when I went out, all creatures cried out, 'God.'"

Needless to say, this sort of talk got him into very serious trouble with the Inquisition from Rome, before whose tribunal he was required to defend himself against charges of heresy – charges which, as Wilber alluded to, carried penalties of exquisitely medieval forms of torture and execution. But it is clear that Eckhart could not not see
what he saw, and could not not speak of it even though it is also clear that there was more than a little frustra-
tion that none of his listeners appeared able to understand.
He sometimes called those who followed the external reli-
gious practices of his time “ignorant asses;” and when the
Inquisition tribunal incorrectly paraphrased his teaching he somewhat curtly replied that the statement as phrased was “insane.”

At times his sermons, in the language of his day, begin to sound remarkably like the sayings of Ramana Maharshi or Nisargadatta Maharaj:

“I beseech you for the love of God that you under-
stand this truth if you can. But should you not un-
derstand it, do not worry yourselves because of it, for the truth I want to speak of is of such a kind that only a few good people will understand it...

“My essential being is above God insofar as we comprehend God as the principle of creatures. Indeed, in God’s own being, where God is raised above all being and distinctions, I was myself, I willed myself, and I knew myself to create this man that I am. Therefore I am cause of myself according to my being which is eternal, but not according to my becoming which is temporal. Therefore also I am unborn, and according to my unborn being I can never die. According to my unborn being I have always been, I am now, and shall eternally remain... In my eternal birth all things were born, and I was cause of myself as well as of all things... And if I myself were not, God would not be either: that God is God, of this I am a cause. If I were not, God would not be God. There is, however, no need to under-
stand this...

“In the breakthrough... I am above all created kind and am neither God nor creature. Rather, I am what I was and what I shall remain now and forever...
Epilogue: An Eckhartian Ontology

For in this breakthrough it is bestowed upon me that I and God are one. There I am what I was, and I neither diminish nor grow, for there I am an immovable cause that moves all things...

"Those who cannot understand this speech should not trouble their hearts about it. For as long as man does not equal this truth, he will not understand this speech. For this is an unhidden truth that has come immediately from the heart of God."

In short: Eckhart knew, in a way beyond experience and concepts, that there was 'something' beyond 'God;' and that that 'something' is 'I.' This he was compelled to express in concepts and in a manner that would allow him – barely – to escape being killed for his trouble.

II

Thus:

1.
Being is.
Being lets beingness be.
Beingness is presence, the experiencing of being.
Being 'gives' presence, lets presence, beingness, be.

"Being lets ‘beings’ be present and lets beingness be their presence." (Reiner Schurmann)

Being is ‘ising’: Being is all that is.
Thus, anything which is,
inasmuch as it is, is Being.

Being is Presence, capital ‘P.’
Perfect Brilliant Stillness

Being has been called God, All That Is, Sat Chit Ananda; Being, Consciousness, Outpouring. Perfect. Brilliant. Stillness.

2.
It can be asked, What is prior to Being? ‘What’ lets Being be? As it is prior to Being, this ‘what’ is not. Here is Void, Nothingness, no-thing-ness. Prior to Being, ‘it’ lets Being be: That in which Being is, Plenum, the fullness of no-thing-ness out of which, in which, as which Being (and hence all beingness) arises.

The paths of mysticism, bhakti, and jnana join here and end here. All paths can lead this far and no further.

‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’ are the last concepts, and the last experiences, available to us.

From here there is only the open door, darkness beyond; stepping through, falling beyond emptiness.

3.
Prior to Being and Nothingness, which lets both Being and Nothingness be, is inexpressible, ineffable.

Conceptually, the question can be asked; but here thought and concepts reach a wall, an abyss.
The mind cannot make the leap to an answer conceptually or experientially. However: it can be known, apperceived, inseen (inheard, infelt, intasted.) Does exist. Cannot be expressed. Here, words and ideas can only point in the general direction.

‘Godhead:’ that from which God comes; Parabrahman: that from which Brahman arises; but these words mean nothing, are only superlatives added to existing concepts.

The words try to point not only beyond themselves but beyond beyond; beyond any ultimate that can be thought of, conceived, by the human mind or heart.

Yet it can be known (in a way beyond knowledge) in silence, in stillness in the heart: (in complete letting-go: the breakthrough, the crushing flash which incinerates all sense of separation.) Tat tvam asi: I am that. That is what ‘I’ is. Outpouring in Itself Being and non-being, beingness and nothingness, What-Is and Void. Unborn. Eternal. I.