

## THE POSSIBILITY OF KNOWING GOD: APHAERESIS IN THE THOUGHT OF MEISTER ECKHART

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**Abstract.** The author investigates the foundation of Meister Eckhart's view on the best way and method to become oneself and to discover God. The study attempts to show that Eckhart's philosophical and mystical perspective is grounded on the concepts of aphaeresis and apofasis and, also, on their functional relation.

**Keywords:** aphaeresis, inner God, Meister Eckhart, mystical knowledge

Our communication tries to bring to light the foundation of certain striking similarities in thinking recognizable in the doctrine of master Eckhart's and Chan Buddhism in the forward path and method for human self-accomplishment and achievement of enlightenment or discovery of inner God. This foundation consists of a concept (common) subtended by the principle of aphaeresis, referring to the idea of preexistence potential within the individual, a real, pure (image of God, Buddha-nature) to be disclosed.

Circumscribing the role of negation in speech about God is achievable in the conceptual framework provided by the conditions of (im)possibility of a discursive knowledge about an object that transcends strictly cognitive and comprehensive skills and also human language. Strengths of apofasis are detectable by putting it in an interdependent relationship with aphaeresis method, since both aim to remove the veil of ignorance or illusory knowledge in order to reveal the hidden truth.

Confessing (also) about the influence of the Areopagite thinking, Meister Eckhart turns out to be, in his sermons and treatises, a follower of the path in the process of achieving apofatic knowledge of God: "If I call on God being, is such as I would call as the sun pale or white. God is neither this nor that.", "If I say that God is good, it adds something, but one is the negation of negation and deprivation of deprivation."<sup>1</sup> In Eckhart's conception, God is always inside the

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<sup>1</sup> Meister Eckhart, *The Soul Citadel*, translation, afterword and notes by S. Maxim, Iasi, Edit. Polirom, 2003, p. 72; *Benedictus Deus* (spiritual teachings), translated by D. Dumbrăveanu, Victoria Comnea (treatises) and Stela Tinney (sermons), Bucharest, Edit. Herald, 2004, p. 206.