A theopoetic reflection on Thomas Traherne, Meister Eckhart and Mother Julian of Norwich

by

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the School of Philosophy of the University of Tasmania Hobart Tasmania Australia

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Acknowledgements

Professor Wayne Hudson’s multifarious assistance has been indispensable; I am also indebted to Dr. Lucy Tatman and to Dr. Anna Alomes for vital criticisms and suggestions. Thanks is also extended to Dr. Antony Bellette for sharing his expertise on Traherne and for allowing unrestrained access to a private collection of manuscripts and books.
Abstract

A theopoetic reflection on Thomas Traherne, Meister Eckhart and Mother Julian of Norwich

This study provides a poet’s readings of the non-dualism of Thomas Traherne, Meister Eckhart and Mother Julian of Norwich. Traherne, Eckhart and Julian are interpreted as theopoets of the body/soul who share what might be described as moderate non-dualism. They also share a concern for unitive spiritual experience, expressed in their attempts to balance an absolute level of truth with a conventional level of truth. Separate chapters on Traherne, Eckhart and Julian focus on their differing - yet commensurate - non-dual registers. On their view, the conditio sine qua non of ‘being human’ is participation in the divine. Two additional chapters link the so-called mysticism of Traherne, Eckhart and Julian with construals of both ‘the Self’ and spiritual awakening, as enunciated by Advaita Vedānta. My own poems are integrated into the text. Many issues explored in the text are contested and aporetical and my own readings may not always be shared by others. Although aware of the usefulness of dualism, and of the subject/object distinction in particular, I seek to provide a countervailing perspective to the general Western over-emphasis on the separateness of the human and the divine. In so doing, I hope to show that Traherne, Eckhart and Julian can be read in consonance and even at times in innovative ways.
Abbreviations

BgG (or Gītā): Bhagavad Gītā

Gk: Greek

KJV: King James Version

L: Latin

LT: Julian’s Long Text

MHG: Middle High German

NJB: New Jerusalem Bible

NT: New Testament

NRSV: New Revised Standard Version

REB: Revised English Bible

Skt: Sanskrit

ST: Julian’s Short Text

Up: Upanishad
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Bibliography
Meister Eckhart, Mother Julian of Norwich and Thomas Traherne are interpreted as 'theopoets' of the body/soul who share a moderate non-dualism. Their work is brought within the ambit of non-dual Hinduism. Specifically, their passion for unitive spiritual experience is linked to construals of both 'the Self' and 'Awakening', as enunciated by Advaita Vedanta. The subtitle of the book, "A Theopoetic Reflection" indicates Charlton’s wonderful imaginative method for dealing with the parallels between Western and Eastern views of non-dualism, that conundrum beyond concepts. This book is a joy for those readers who have had the experience of trying to express the ineffable, invisible, full emptiness of the Divine. Mother Julian of Norwich. In 1373, when she was 30 years old, an Englishwoman had a visionary experience during a serious illness. After she had thought about it perhaps soon after the experience, perhaps as much as fifteen years later, she wrote a relatively brief account of the visions and what they meant to her. But in 1393, she was still meditating on her experience and perhaps had begun to write a longer, more theologically-centered analysis. Julian’s emphasis on God’s love and desire for human salvation becomes more significant when one thinks of the period in which she wrote. The Black Death came not only in 1349; it came again and again for over a century. The Church on whose faith Julian relied was in schism, with two or more popes claiming authority, from 1378 to 1417. Meister Eckhart, Mother Julian of Norwich and Thomas Traherne are interpreted as theopoets of the body/soul who share a moderate non-dualism. Their work is brought within the ambit of non-dual Hinduism. Specifically, their passion for unitive spiritual experience is linked to construals of both ‘the Self’ and ‘Awakening’, as enunciated by Advaita Vedanta. Charlton draws on poetry, theology and philosophy to perceive fresh connections. A commonality of interest is proposed between the three Europeans and Ramana Maharshi. The concept of non-duality is basic to much of Asian religi Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait by Turner, Denys. Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait by Turner, Denys (pp. 399-401). Review by: Willemien Otten. https://doi.org/10.1086/681147. Non-dualism in Eckhart, Julian of Norwich and Traherne: A Theopoetic Reflection by Charlton, James. Non-dualism in Eckhart, Julian of Norwich and Traherne: A Theopoetic Reflection by Charlton, James (pp. 404-406). Review by: Rachel Smith. https://doi.org/10.1086/681150. In his book on Julian of Norwich, Denys Turner makes an extraordinary claim: the long text of Julian’s Showings ranks as one of the great works of medieval theology in any language, standing alongside the contributions of St Anselm, St Bernard of Clairvaux, St Bonaventure, and St Thomas Aquinas ( Julian of Norwich, Theologian , p. x). An extraordinary claim indeed! Dame Julian has become a favorite among those who read the mystics, yet even today she is rarely referenced in the theological literature. But Turner is a respected theologian in his own right. Not only is he well-acquainted with the Western mystical tradition (see, e.g., The Darkness of God), but he is also knowledgeable in the theology of the Angelic Doctor (see, e.g., Thomas Aquinas ).