

Divine Consolation

Tanrı'nın Tesellisi

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to examine the approach of Meister Eckhart, who interprets the divine texts that are expressed in the Bible, “*the God of all consolation*” and “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*” Eckhart emphasizes two different types of consolation, especially the consolation from the creatures themselves and the consolation from God. According to him, the consolation of human beings is incomplete and not perfect. However, the divine consolation is pure and perfect, since it is not mixed with anything else. In this context, Eckhart believes that God supports his creations by never forgetting or failing and it is God that protects, cheers, suffers, blesses, and consoles, from whom all happiness flows.

Keywords: God, Jesus, suffering, consolation, happiness

ÖZ

Bu yazının amacı, kutsal kitap İncil’de dile getirilen ‘Tanrı insanları teselli eder’ ve ‘Ben dünyanın ışığıyım. Benim ardımdan gelen, asla karanlıkta yürümez, yaşam ışığına sahip olur’ ilahi metinleri yorumlayan Meister Eckhart’ın, bu konuya yaklaşımını incelemek ve irdelemektir. Eckhart özellikle yaratılanların kendisinden gelen teselli ve Tanrı’dan gelen teselli olmak üzere iki farklı teselli çeşidi üzerinde durmaktadır. Ona göre yaratılanların tesellisi eksik ve mükemmel değildir. Buna karşın Tanrı’nın tesellisi içine hiçbir şey karıştırılmamış olduğundan saf ve mükemmeldir. Bu bağlamda Eckhart açısından yarattıklarını hiçbir zaman unutmuyarak ve aksatmayarak destek veren Tanrı; koruyan, neşelenen, acı çeken, kutsayan ve tüm mutluluğun kendisinden aktığı, teselli eden bir Tanrı’dır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tanrı, İsa, ıstırap, teselli, mutluluk

Introduction

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, the best expression of mysticism was given by Eckhart Von Hochheim (1260–1327/28), a Christian mystic who was one of the outstanding figures in theology. Eckhart joined the Dominican Order at the age of 15 and became the most authoritative Dominican clergyman at the age of 35 (Kieckhefer 1978, p. 20). Eckhart, who understood the value and importance of man very well and tried to express his thoughts on this subject in a mystical and symbolic language, was undoubtedly one of the leading spiritual theologians of his time. Eckhart earned a respectable place among the public and in academic circles because he took great care to explain the deepest secrets of divine love in words that everyone could understand. At the same time, he gained a place in the hearts of people from all strata by reflecting what he said to his own life (Sena 1975, p. 7). Saying that God’s being and nature are my being and nature, and God and I are one, Eckhart, like all mystics, had the idea of destroying God in the soul and the soul in God. The most basic idea of Eckhart’s mysticism is to give up on oneself and get caught up in God. When the soul reaches this state by discarding everything that separates it from God, it becomes equal to God (Guénon 2005, p. 65). It is a renunciation of worldly things, and finally of our own flesh and will, and joining God’s will (Politella 1965, p. 127).

Eckhart is actually a theologian who tends toward indoctrination and counsel rather than teaching. Eckhart’s thought is dialectical, and so his language is paradoxical, sometimes even surprising. In his discourses, Eckhart seeks to give life to God beyond God, to values beyond the forgotten values of culture, to thought beyond academia, and to images beyond what the world reveals. Throughout his life, he never prayed for anything, but stated that he only prayed to God to save him from God (Radler, 2005, p. 3).

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One of the most obvious and influential aspects of reading and understanding Eckhart is understanding the turbulent times he experienced during his adult years. In the tumultuous times of Eckhart's life, the few rich became richer, while the many poor became poorer. At the same time, the poor were caught up in a despairing and rebellious zeal with a sense of injustice (Fox, 1980, p. 11).

In this period when people were in great anxiety as a result of cultural upheaval and social fragmentation, one of the biggest problems was the rapid loss of credibility of various institutions. As the gap between thought and reality widened, the system broke down and collapsed. In this period of institutional greed, insensitivity, and corruption abound, the fear of God was pushed aside and replaced by a bottomless bag of money (Fox, 1980, p. 11).

In the face of violence, torture, bewilderment, pain, and disunity, people began to think of this period as a period in which the devil has triumphed. People were afflicted with disappointment and a sense of hopelessness and helplessness that took over part of their souls (McGinn, 1981, p. 6). Therefore, Eckhart lived in the midst of all this turmoil. This situation is the pillar of the bad period Eckhart lived in and tried to make its impact felt. In this context, it is clear that the people of this period were in great need of consolation.

Divine Consolation

Eckhart begins his commentary on the subject with two quotes from the Bible: The first one is: "In the time of my favor I will answer you. On the day of salvation I will help you, I will protect you. I will make you to be a covenant for the people. So that you will restore the land. You will make them inherit the desolate inheritance You will say to the captives and those in the dark 'Come out'. They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill. They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them. For he who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water. I will turn all my mountains into roads, and my highways will be raised up. See, they will come from afar! some from the north, some from the west, some from the region of Aswan. Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth! Burst into song, you mountains for the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. But Zion said, the Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me. But the Lord says, can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you" (Isaiah, 49:8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15).

The second one is: "I am the light of the world. He who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John, 8:12). Eckhart discusses the different kinds of consolation offered by a merciful God for creatures through his interpretation of these divine texts. Since, for Eckhart, God supports His creations by never forgetting or neglecting them.

For Eckhart, we need to be happy in the happiness of all creatures. Happiness is the result of living like a saint on earth or in heaven. Happiness is the fruit of love, and our existence is bathed in such love, whether we are aware of it or not. At the same time, as the happiness of creatures increases, so does God's happiness (Field, 1909, p. 110). The God that the mystic Eckhart is trying to explain and tell is a God who is happy, who laughs, who can be pleased. God has total pleasure and joy over something good. All

good things that are not in God's praise are completely like ashes in God's eyes (Kahveci, 2014, p. 166). In this context, when God laughs at the spirit and the spirit laughs at God, the persons of the Trinity are caused. If it is exaggerated when the Father laughs at his Son and the Son laughs at his Father, that smile gives satisfaction, happiness in contentment, and love in that happiness (Davies, 2004, p. 123). According to Eckhart, God is most happy with just things, no matter how small. In short, God is happy in all the deeds of the just person. God does not allow anything, except happiness, that does not delight Him to take place in His own court. Ignorant people have to believe it; but wise men must not only believe but also know (Davies, 2004, p. 123).

Elsewhere, Eckhart mentions God's extreme joy over creatures. God finds happiness through total self-transcendence, and people who dwell in God's love and knowledge become nothing but God Himself. All creatures that dwell in God give God eternal satisfaction. God is so happy in this equation that He fully reveals His environment and His being of Himself. This is a happiness for him. In the same way, if one allows a horse to run in a green meadow that is rugged, it is the nature of that horse to bring out all its strength while running in the rather flat and green meadow. This becomes a happiness for him and related to his own temperament. In the same way, equality becomes a happiness and satisfaction for God. It is a joy for Him to fully reveal His temperament and being in His own image, for He is His own image (Fox, 1980, p. 120).

Eckhart says God is completely lush and blooming in the center of souls, and all happiness is in Himself. There reigns such joyful and beautiful happiness that it is an incomprehensible happiness, and no one can fully describe it. That is why sacred happiness is as indescribable as sacredness itself. God wishes to be the one and only certain thing we have. His greatest happiness depends on it. The more magnificently and understandably He can be like this, the more wonderful his happiness will be (Fox, 1980, p. 120).

According to Eckhart, true happiness in the court of God is the happiness of bestowing. Because God loves to bestow sacred gifts. God does not bestow anything happily like such great gifts. That is the way that delicacy continues with gifts and virtues. However great the gifts are, God bestows them with more happiness. Because it is His temperament to give these great gifts. Therefore, the more valuable the gifts, the more happiness He bestows.

In fact, God takes such delight in giving the best gift that is His own that he forgets the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of earth, all His happiness, and all His divinity and is impatient with His desire to bestow. Bestowal to you is so real to Him that He looks forward to giving Himself to you as His first gift. It's like He has nothing to do but what He does with me. He gives me that (the true gift, pleasure, peace, success, and all happiness) all the time and in a glorious way in its purest form to all creatures (Fox, 1980, p. 120).

At the same time, it is God's bestowal of grace and not only of Himself but of His consolation, as Isaiah says: "The Lord consoles his people and will have pity on those who suffer" (Isaiah, 49:10). However, the consolation given by the biblical God is not the kind of consolation that is graded. This is the consolation of true pity, which means that before God gives a feeling of pity, He will be the first to suffer. For Eckhart, no matter how great a person's suffering is, it passes through God and God will suffer first. If one places suffering in God, that suffering affects God immeasurably and is

more disturbing to Him than it disturbs a person. God suffers in the name of some good that He makes His way toward you in that sense (Eckhart, 1994, p. 57.)

In this context, God's suffering means turning our suffering into happiness. If it's about me suffering before God suffers, and I suffer in God's way, then in fact, no matter how great and varied my suffering is, it will easily turn into comfort and happiness. Only when God is so happy with us does He share our pain with us and suffer more than us. God suffers with mankind. In fact, He suffers first in His own way and suffers more than the ones suffering for him. God gladly suffers with us, and it is for our benefit. If we suffer for God alone, He suffers without suffering. For him, suffering is not suffering. In short, God suffers with me and suffers in the name of His love for me (Eckhart, 1994, p. 57). In this case, God is a God who protects, is passionate, and at the same time suffers and is happy with humanity.

Eckhart thinks that God's suffering is directed especially toward the poor. The poor in Isaiah are called, as Eckhart points out, His poor. The poor belong to God in a special sense. They are left to God because no one takes care of them. We do not accept the poor, whom we are ashamed of, but the better off as our friends. The first of the pure happiness is this: 'The poor are blessed' (Matthew, 5:3). That's the way it is. Because wherever they are, they find God and have Him everywhere. When Eckhart comments that if we are hungry we comfort each other only with a loaf of bread, and if someone is cold, we comfort them with clothing; he seems to have the opinion of the Torah. He also seems to connect with the story of Jesus, where there were also people praying for bread and acquiring stones (Matthew, 7:7,11).

So there are two different consolations for creatures:

1. Consolation from the creatures themselves.
2. Consolation from God (Kahveci, 2014, p. 166).

For Eckhart, creatures lack their own consolation. As mentioned earlier, creatures give bread when a person is dehydrated or clothes when he is cold. In this respect, the consolation of the creatures is not perfect. God's consolation, however, is pure and nothing is mixed into it; it is complete and perfect (Kahveci, 2014, p. 166).

What makes God's consolation so complete and perfect? For Eckhart, only God has this and can fully console mankind. First, the kingdom of heaven is believed to exist. God alone says "I" in order to be able to have more or less patience with God within Himself. The life and being of all creatures depends on the life and being of God, who alone consoles them. The real consolation is to exist. Therefore, it is God who exists alone who is completely comforting. No one except God can say the word "I" in its true sense. God alone is existence itself and has the power of complete consolation. Eckhart concentrates on the word "I," commenting on the sentence, "I am the light of the world" (John, 8:12). Eckhart sees Jesus's expression "I" and the connection between that name and the God who named him (in Exodus, 3:14). When we apply Eckhart's rules to Jesus's words, we have to say that Jesus explains himself by associating himself with the declaration of "I" in its pure and clear statement. But Eckhart still sees more of the "I" in divine affirmation. This is what has not been said to be over-affirmed and denied. All denial rejects God. The repetition of the "I" in the phrase "I am the being" reveals the purity of the affirmation that keeps every denial away from God. Moreover, it shows a

definite turn and a turn to his being beyond and within himself, his tolerance or hiding within himself, also a kind of boiling or self-birth, light within light and completely penetrating oneself into light, turning to oneself from all sides and reflecting it (Fox, 1980, p. 122).

Here Eckhart relates the "I" and the light, relating unequivocally to the Exodus and John's biblical declaration "I am the light of the world." Light is the first of all created by the creator (Genesis, 1:3). The light reveals the hidden God. The light is the symbol of the Festival of the Shavout, where Jesus spoke these words. Light is a symbol for wisdom, and in a passage in the Gospel of John, Jesus will give sight to blind people (John, 9:1). His action will follow his announcement of who he is. Therefore, a person does not walk in darkness when walking after this light, since God is the light of existence and of being. An inner glow in and within oneself, melting and boiling, is a light within light. Every person needs to walk with a light in sadness. The light is also a symbol for the Age of Christ and the joy and life that this age guides with it. God is a light of emotion and passion that smiles, is happy, suffers, and is fully at ease. Such comfort cannot be granted because it is the birth of divine suffering in which passion comes directly before pity, only this divine light gives the world the light of true consolation (Fox, 1980, p. 123).

Since God's consolation in this context is so sweet, all creatures seek and follow it. That is, the life and existence of all creatures depend on their search and pursuit of God. God's presence and light keep all denial at bay. God is all-consoling; for He despises denials with all His being and light. God denies even denials, the most perfect example of denial is the doubling of purity and righteousness, "I am God" (Exodus, 3:14). That is why it is often said: Show us the Father—This is Him—and that is enough for us. The oneness of God excludes all denial. Unity is the denial of denial and the negation of negation. What does unity mean? It is to be one to which nothing is added as a contribution. God is one. It is the denial of denial (Koterski, 2003, p. 879).

Only this state of complete oneness can truly be consoled by all the suffering, integrity, and healing. As it has been said before, God's consolation is pure and nothing is mixed into it; it is complete and perfect. The consolation of creatures will be insufficient for a complete cure, for all creatures carry within them a denial; one denies the other. Creatures are subject to separation and division. Only God is one; and therefore, the ultimate good is capable of holiness. If God is the denial of denial, then God is the denial of darkness—God is light; God is the denial of distinction—God is freedom; God is the denial of ugliness—God is beauty; God is the denial of sorrow—God is consolation; God is the denial of names—God is silent anonymity. Now you may ask: Where is this God whom all creatures follow, from whom they attain their lives and existence? (Koterski, 2003, p. 879).

The father says, "Know that the Lord is God. He is the One who created us. And we belong to Him" (Psalms, 110:3). Where is this God? In eternity. Where is this God? In Father. Where is this God? In the integrity of the saints by whom I am accepted (Book of Sirach, 24:16). No one has ever discovered God as the saint says. "Truly you are a God who disguises himself" (Isaiah, 45:15).

For Eckhart, God is beyond God until the divinity through which all happiness flows. He proclaims that God can be found in the integrity of the saints, in the Father and eternity. But that is not enough. Because God hides a hidden God. God, you are a hidden

God, and no one has ever discovered God, and now an incredible revelation has come to light. God revealed Himself like a human being clearing his throat while hiding, though he remained hidden. No one has ever discovered God. But now He reveals Himself. God has revealed Himself and therefore our search after our source is not in vain (Kahveci, 2014, p. 168).

The place where God can certainly be found is where His hiding place is the ultimate revelation, the happiness in God blessing His creation. Where happiness is, God is there. The creatures themselves—their existence and life—are the first of divine blessings. All the good that exists in the creatures is gathered together in God. Like all angels in heaven and on earth, all saints rejoice happily. All this pleasure is actually as small as the lens of the eye compared to the happiness that God has. But it must be the happiness of conscious creatures, that is, the happiness of angels and human beings, which is received from their blessing by virtue of what is in their hands. These concern the poor, who actually belong to God. Because people are not blessed equally. The poor are blessed more than others. God takes care of them because they were handed over to Him (Kahveci, 2014, p. 166).

On the other hand, the prayer of God, which means the return of creatures to God, is the return of good for good. The prayer of kindness is the work of the human spirit, the masterpiece of creatures. The soul is seen as indicating the whole state of man's being in life. The soul is a whole filled with power. This power allows the soul to grow and develop. So that it can protect itself and fulfill its duty in the world.

This important power, without which no being can live, is the blessing, which is called berachah by the Israelites (Smith, 2008, p. 43).

Goodness is the talent of the soul; it is the power that lives in a tribe and its members. God, in His name, is the force that brings good. Man, who is the conscious part of the creatures, is also responsible for creatures and goodness. Blessing is for prayer. To sink in the creatures' prayer of gratitude is to not pray to others. God is one; there is a blessed soul. The name given to the power of the soul, which is very similar to God, is 'prayer'; for it is the image of God. Prayer is the center of life; it is life itself, and it encompasses all phases of life (Smith, 2008, p. 43).

A person's entire soul encompasses everything around him and in the turn of life. If his spirit is strong, he should leave a mark on all his deeds. Blessing is the power of the soul that produces all progress. This means that it is associated with wisdom. Berachah, the act of blessing, means giving important power to another person. The person who blesses gives something to another person from his own soul (Kahveci, 2014, p. 169).

Eckhart depicts the human psyche as an anaphor or vortex, as we have seen, thus suggesting that our depth of psyche is an abundance of blessings. Everything from the world, from the soul to the innermost spark of the soul, is a blessing. Our spiritual journey is to the innermost depths of a vortex, which is a blessing, a sinking into the innermost depths; for it is the true house of God. It is suitable for God and all that is holy. -As long as they are holy, in and in the most inner.-For all things are bestowed holy, holy revealed. This is why Eckhart's theology, and especially the subject of the first way, referred to as the creature, is the theology of blessing, because the creatures and the human creature are actually a blessing of blessings (Kahveci, 2014, p. 169).

Conclusion

For Eckhart, all happiness is in God Himself. This is an incomprehensible happiness and no one can fully describe it. That is why sacred happiness is as indescribable as sacredness itself. God wishes to be the one and only certain thing we have. His greatest happiness depends on it. But according to Eckhart, true happiness in the sight of God is the happiness of bestowing. God does not allow anything that does not delight him except happiness to take place in His sight. It is also God's bestowal and offering of Himself alone, but a consolation, as Isaiah says.

There are two types of consolation for creatures: The first is the consolation that comes from the creatures themselves and the other is the consolation that comes from God. For Eckhart creatures lack in giving their own consolation and the consolation of creatures is not perfect. The consolation of creatures will be insufficient for a complete cure, for all creatures carry within them a denial; one denies the other. Creatures are subject to separation and division. God's consolation, however, is pure and nothing is mixed into it; it is complete and perfect.

For Eckhart, the real consolation is existence. God alone is existence itself and has the power of complete consolation. Because God's consolation is so sweet, all creatures seek and follow it. That is, the life and existence of all creatures depend on their search and pursuit of God. God's presence and light keep all denial at bay. God is completely consoling because He despises denial with all His being and light.

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