Radical Freedom and a Missed Opportunity of Silence with God

Indentations of footprints left behind by a presence no longer present, is an indication of *steps* from the past. All of the leftover remnants from past histories reemerge, providing the receiving party an option as one stands in the crossroad of adversity and a moral dilemma; a decision must be made in this binary structure. In *Broken Hegemonies*, there are three linguistic epochs that are ruled by three hegemonic fantasms: Greek = the one, Latin = nature, Modern = the subject. Broken down, a hegemonic fantasm is defined by Reiner Schurmann as the dominating authority or ghostly figure of an epoch ruling in the background of our thinking of ontology. Schürmann states, "[a] hegemonic fantasm decides what can be [thought] for an era" (437). This paper focuses on the hegemonic fantasm of Nature, which is located in the Latin epoch. Although transcendent 'Nature' is presented in this epoch by Cicero and Angustine, there is also an anarchic way of thinking immanent 'nature' which is presented by Eckhart as the destitution of transcendent/hegemonic 'Nature.' In this sense, nature is interpreted as anarchic, considering the concept 'nature' is still lingering but it is immanent and no longer transcendent, no longer a disappearance that is covered up.

Each epoch has a beginning and an end known as the institution and the destitution of an epoch denoted by its language. The Latin epoch credits Cicero and Augustine as philosophers of the hegemonic construct of Nature and Meister Eckhart as the philosopher for the destitution of the hegemonic fantasm of Nature. While recognizing the importance of Eckhart's work, this paper further examines Schürmann's analysis of Mesiter Eckhart's exhortation (a speech that is made urging someone to do something) and how it excludes the importance of "silence with God" as a missed opportunity that would further his insights on how nature gives one the freedom to detach oneself, re-image oneself, elevate oneself, and articulate oneself. While

Schürmann's analysis of Eckhart covers freedom, detachment, re-imagining, elevating and articulating, this project highlights how it is that the inclusion of 'silence' in these processes would further articulate the processes, adding another dimension to his thinking. Thus, Schürmann overlooks information about the destitution of the hegemonic fantasm of Nature, which still has its Footprints in the Sand. Footprints in the Sand is a poem from the 1900's that is oftentimes associated with an Unknown author (there is a dispute over the authorship of the poem therefore for clarity purposes of this essay the authorship is left *Unknown*). Excerpts from Footprints in the Sand, are used throughout this essay to give supporting evidence to our thesis that Meister Eckhart's exhortation is to explicate the importance of silence with God, further validating this conjecture by Schürmann of a missed opportunity regarding Eckhart's exhortation.

To explain our inclusion of 'silence' in Eckhart's thinking we will analyze pieces of the modern epoch in Schürmann's work as well as the Latin. Schürmann suggests that the modern hegemonic fantasm (Self-consciousness, or, the 'subject') is now in a place of diremption from the formation of all further articulations of hegemonic fantasms. Like Schürmann, this paper acknowledges that the concept of nature has not gone away completely, unlike Schürmann, this paper plays with the assumption that the transcendent and hegemonic concept of 'Nature' has problematically re-emerged and is still "lurking" in the background ruling from the ground. Our thesis is that this is due to the unexplored reading of silence into the destitution of Nature. According to Schürmann, "nature lays down the law by ranking the ends that preside over our cognitive and moral activities" (273). Schürmann's definition of Eckhart's notion of nature is used to outline how the hegemonic law of 'Nature' has come to its "end."

Additionally, we will use Schürmann's illustration of exaiphnes (the split between the veil and unveil) to present an idea of 'becoming.' Eckhart's exhortation engenders the idea of "becoming free" and helps to substantiate that in search for absolute freedom one 'becomes' one with an immanent understanding of the godhead, the godhead is Eckhart's immanent and anarchic understanding of God as realized in the self (Schürmann 274). This concept of immanence resonates in Henri Bergson's book, Creative Evolution, as well, describing 'becoming' as a "moving zone which comprises all that we feel or think or will . . . which in reality makes up our state" in terms of duration (Bergson 5). Furthermore, there are biblical references used from The New King James Version Bible (NKJV) as well as The Psalms, Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, to demonstrate how King David's (as Philosopher) radical freedom moves him to have an immanent experience as he 'becomes' one with God. Similar to Eckhart's exhortation, are fragments from Doris Salcedo's *Interview with Charles* Merewether, that are explored throughout this essay to support the idea of finding solitude with God in the silence and in a way, is in line with Ekhart's radical understanding of anarchic nature.

In order to move toward the destitution of the Latin epoch, we must talk about its institution. The NKJV starts out with the lines "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (*The New King James Version Bible* Genesis 1:1). Similarly, Schürmann writes, long before the linguistic turn from Greek to Latin. . . In Greek, 'phusis' [rising, arrival] generally signifies two things: on the one hand, a certain region of phenomena, and on the other, a principle of production. It refers to that region of beings that are not made by the hands of men, as well as to the principle by which these natural beings, plants and animals, come to be (Schürmann 191). Although these lines are explained in the footnotes of *Broken Hegemonies*, let us suppose that Schürmann's writing along with this scripture from Genesis are interpreted as follows: 'A certain region of phenomena' possibly refers to 'God' and 'a principle of production' perhaps indicates that if God created the heavens and the earth, inquiry leads one to question, is this a representation of the institution of nature which has been a part of the earth and everything in it since the beginning of time? Similarly, we find Cicero and Augustine's contributions to the institution of a transcendent Nature from the beginning of the Latin epoch. Schürmann asserts:

There is another way of contextualizing beings—namely, the city which is an artifact of man. This fact will be decisive for grasping how a force is transmuted into a fantasm when, with the Latins, the natural measure will be identified with this or that singular being, gleaned from and lifted above all other singular beings and then universalized. (198)

Schürmann's text indicates that transcendent 'Nature' is a singular "city of power" and one centralized language (Latin). In Cicero's city of Rome, he is the important political figure who declares "a Rome from the past". Seemingly, Cicero's intent is to encourage individuals to do what is in accordance with one's own nature. Augustine on the other hand, is an important religious figure in Rome who professes Jerusalem as the "natural city of the future." Augustine's discernment comes from his perception of Rome's violent and unstable foundation. Although Schürmann subscribes to both cities and their declarations, the "tragic denial (one of two laws in conflict)" occurs here because there can only be one *singular*. Thus, Schürmann uses this rivalry, a tale of two cities to establish Eckhart as the *insurgent* to destitute the transcendent/hegemonic 'Nature.'

Eckhart is a philosopher and a popular religious figure from the 13th century. Schürmann says "[i]f it is a matter of seeing how an ontology relies on nature through and through, and in

doing so splinters nature through and through, it is Meister Eckhart one has to read (Schürmann 272). Taking Schürmann's suggestion into consideration, we explore how Eckhart's ontological thinking leads to the hegemonic fantasm of Nature. According to Schürmann, "Eckhart in no way contends that 'God's will is above his intellect'" (298). This statement gives a sense that Eckhart's "overstanding" of God in his ontological thinking, liberates him from feeling as if he is less than God. Schürmann's analysis of Eckhart's exhortation breaks down Eckhart's four points to suggest the "dissolving of the Latin epoch" (273). Eckhart states,

[w]hen I preach it is my wont to speak about non-attachment, and of how man should become free of himself and all things. Secondly, that one should be re-imaged back into the simple good that is God. Thirdly, that one should remember the great nobility that God has put into the soul, so that man may thereby come marvelously to God. Fourthly, I speak of the purity of the divine nature, for the brilliance of God's nature is unspeakable.

It is here that the tragic double bind, which Schürmann tells us (the choice between two situations where both decisions have an undesirable outcome) is articulated as of origin and principle that shows up at the end of the hegemonic fantasm of Nature particularly when Schürmann deconstructs Eckhart's exhortation.

God is a word, a word unspoken outside. (Schürmann 319)

Eckhart uses this exhortation to make an appeal to the nuns of the convent to which he is speaking; not only does he urge them to take heed, but he suggests acting upon his advice will in a sense, set them free. Schürmann states that "Eckhart outlines as many strategies for thinking otherwise than in the name of nature. The group is obviously less than systematic. But on each point, the principle of continuous integration loses its power of univocal legislation, a loss due to the intrusion of an occurrent sense of being" (319). From the outset, Schürmann demonstrates his agreeance with Eckhart's exhortation in his assertion that Eckhart's strategies are unsystematic and he suggests that they still hold the same weight as they always have, using words such as "obviously" and "intrusion" to make his point. It appears that Schürmann highlights these sentiments perhaps to suggest that Eckhart provides a new sense of hope to individuals who are outside of a convent (or disciplined vocation) are able to achieve. Schürmann further denotes his understanding of Eckhart in his query, "[w]hat does it mean to "let" particular properties "go"? And what does it mean to "let" specific and generic properties "go"? (284). Even in Schürmann's missed opportunity to introduce the importance of silence, it becomes more apparent that his intention is to give his readers a better understanding of what Ekhart means by detachment and letting go of one's own "nature." Silence as understood in this paper is a necessary part of this detachment as it refers to the inclusion of ideas found in Salcedo's work and the poem, *Footprints in the Sand*.

Schürmann's reference to silence throughout Broken Hegemonies speaks to the more universally accepted meaning of the word. For example, Schürmann defines silence through Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Nietzsche in the Modern epoch in terms of speech and conversation, as in void of sound. Alternatively, we find silence present in Eckhart's speech when he purports, detachment "[t]his already amounts to thinking differently and elsewhere. In order to question position, opposition, and all positivity, one has to detach oneself from the thetic gesture and hence from arguing claims 'in the name of some noun'" (315). Detaching oneself allows man to liberate himself from the psychological and physiological locks that subsumes his ontological thinking. Conversely, Eckhart says, "but as long as I do not cling to this mental wealth 'with its before and its after'—with the bedazzlement into which I anticipate stunning an audience before opening my mouth in public and fondly recalled long thereafter—and so, if I

cultivate my refinement 'without the shackles of any images' it may stir in me, I would nevertheless be detached" (Schürmann 315). In this way, non-attachment or detaching oneself is similar to the idea of rebellion in which the individual should resist the control that anyone or anything has over them including their own ontological thinking. The beginning of the poem Footprints in the Sand draws the audience's attention to an example of Eckhart's writing along with Schürmann's first missed opportunity to mention the importance of silence, "Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. / For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, / One belonging to me and one to my Lord" (Unknown 3-5). Silence enters into the frame as soft indented footprints that show up in the sand. As the poet uses the interpretation of a dream to depict what is happening between man and nature it is similar to scenes that occur in Doris Salcedo's work, in her *Interview with Charles Merewether*. Salcedo is a Colombian born, visual artist and sculptor whose work "concentrates around the themes of death and mourning" i.e. themes of silence (Salcedo 1180). Death and mourning is a part of nature that is experienced differently in every 'mortal' the difference is unarticulated and therefore silent in its understanding.

Oftentimes, death is observed by the non-participant of death, the 'mortal' left behind so to speak, during a time of silence giving one an opportunity to grieve and reflect on the memory of those who are deceased. In line with both Schürmann and Eckhart's thinking, Salcedo states, "in art, silence is already a language – a language prior to language – of the unexpressed and the inexpressible" (Salcedo 1181). As viewers who encounter Salcedo's work where no words are spoken but an indescribable exchange takes place, the viewer realizes that they are experiencing silence as a language understanding *every* word. The silence in Salcedo's work can be considered somewhat of a repetition just like the two sets of footprints that show up in the sand.

Schürmann says "[i]n order to describe nature, it is first of all necessary for Eckhart to step outside of that construct but rather to let nature become a phenomenon. This activity of letting-be (lâzen), which alone permits one to see, is what Eckhart calls 'non-attachment'" (314). Like footprints left in the sand once the anarchic nature has painted its picture it is comparable to the absence of what used to be that causes nature to become a part of the phenomenon of nonattachment.

Stepping out of attachment, through the process of detachment, leads "inquisitors" to the next set of "footprints" also known as the second point to deconstructing Eckhart's exhortation: Re-imaging Oneself. The opening lines from Footprints in the Sand begins, "One night I dreamed a dream /As I was walking along the beach with my Lord" (1-2). These lines are significant to "re-imaging oneself" because it paints a picture that allows the person to be both empty (the experience is a dream, not real) and poured into simultaneously as they experience the "becoming" one with God such as the flash that happens in exaiphnes. Schürmann lays down the groundwork of what Eckhart says about re-imaging oneself by listing a number of intersecting examples such as:

The visible world, the image of the intelligible; man, the image of God; the concept, the specular image of the thing; the multiple, the composite image of the simple; fiction, the twisted image of the true; evil, the exhausted image of the good' to introduce how 'reimaging' runs against the grain of a program of imaging. (Schürmann 324)

As Schürmann formats the intersecting examples of Eckhart's list he again unawarely avoids the importance of silence.

In the same way an "ah ha moment," the epiphany, is captured in a movie still the reimaging happens where one ascends to the uppermost point of understanding and then

descends back to human nature. Once one is detached and reimaged, in that moment there is a paradigm shift that takes place gradually moving one toward the matter of 'becoming'. In the chapter entitled, The Evolution of Life-Mechanism and Teleology, Bergson characterizes becoming in terms of duration, "[t]his amounts to saying that there is no essential difference between passing from one state to another and persisting in the same state. If the state which 'remains the same' is more varied than we think, on the other hand the passing from one state to another resembles, more than we imagine, a single state being prolonged" (Mitchell 4). Bergson gives his readers a visual of becoming by using the passing of time in terms of duration, to demonstrate that although we cannot see every second of a production of movement a realization is still happening. This illustrates that once an individual understands that re-imaging is not an instant process the transformation of thinking allows becoming to occur, which is a process of a continuous movement. To conclude Schürmann's second point of the program (re-imaging oneself), he gives an account of what Eckhart states we 'should' do, '[r]e-imaging' signifies detaching oneself from images—no longer to find their plenitude, but to suffer, he says, 'naked being,' the 'pure nature' that, as we saw, are not the being and nature of anything. . . . and thus, literally, death: death plain and simple—the knowledge that wrenches us out of nature" (330). In Schürmann's evaluation, death is the ideal way through which to re-image oneself because of detachment from prescribed identity, this idea connects in a non-sequential way Eckhart's first point of detaching oneself to his second of re-imaging.

The transposition that emerges from footprints in the sand, from one step to another, is analogous to Eckhart's exhortation and his idea of transitioning from re-imaging oneself to the next concept of elevating oneself. The last lines of Footprints in the Sand present the personification of God walking with man which in this essay is used as a prelude to what

Eckhart's third point entails. The Unknown author writes "When you saw only one set of footprints, / It was then that I carried you" (19-20). As the poem indicates from the beginning, this person has been walking on the beach with their Lord noticing two sets of footprints until it becomes apparent that the second set of footprints disappeared. Schürmann questions Eckhart's third point of elevating oneself when he states, 'the most elevated part of the soul is the will. In the end, the soul hoists itself—is hoisted—up until it reaches 'its highest freedom'. . . . Having tasted his freedom and pure nature, the soul cannot bear anything above it, not even God. Freedom and pure nature—did Eckhart get the century wrong? The whole nineteenth century will struggle with this opposition" (Schürmann 331). Schürmann's question to Eckhart's slippage into the nineteenth century demonstrates a thinking that exists in the Hegemonic Fantasm of modernity whereby an individual's ontological thinking presents a freedom they obtain only once they become unbound from thinking self-certain and self-contained subject. In Schürmann's analysis of Eckhart's point of elevating oneself, he questions whether or not one can truly reach freedom in the way that Eckhart describes it and perhaps confirms that 'Nature' is still lurking in the background in his mention of the nineteenth century. Schürmann's thoughts on freedom and pure nature suggests that once an individual reaches this level of elevation his understanding of freedom and pure nature is likened to that of the godhead God and he becomes absolutely free, including from God.

While Shurman deconstructs institutions, we find throughout biblical scriptures that King David reaches out to God as he exemplifies the "radical" or absolute freedom that Eckhart mentions when David danced before the Lord. From various readings we come to see that King David is a king from the 1000 century who is said to have 'written some of the psalms and played the harp as it is found in the bible" (Clifford 40). Is it possible that King David is

considered an artist-philosopher? In II Samuel, there is an account of King David's "radical freedom" from whence he danced as a form of praise before the Lord. The scripture tells us that "David danced with all his might until he became shamelessly uncovered" (II Sam 6:14-20). Perhaps King David's radical freedom exemplifies Eckhart's absolute freedom, which requires one to have a radical perspective. To make the point, Eckhart's exhortation demonstrates that it is through detachment, re-imaging, and the piercing through (absolute freedom) is found in becoming one with God. Eckhart's "radical faith" leads to his radical teaching, which is an unorthodox doctrine in that century, similar to King David's "radical undignified" praise due to his uncovering. "Plotinus obliges us to think of the trait of mortality as a trait of glory. He sees the originary flash spreading throughout what we know only as the strategy of death—a flash which he describes as the audacity and free will of the one. Literally a "flash," for union is always made suddenly [exaiphnes] (emphasis added)" (Schürmann 184). Conceivably, exaiphnes is the moment when King David's ontological thinking gives him the freedom to know that in humbling oneself, one becomes one with God thus, qualifying his immanent understanding of the godhead God. King David's uncovering connects Eckhart's points of re-imaging and elevating oneself when he becomes the "naked being," the 'pure nature' that, as we saw, are not the being and nature of anything." Both men are considered too "radical" for their time, and perhaps before their time, which leads back to Schürmann's question "did Eckhart get the century wrong?"

As with the steady movement of time, we have arrived on the scene to the last point of Eckhart's exhortation. Throughout the duration of this paper, we have been a witness to ways in which Schürmann challenges some aspects of Eckhart's point(s); although silence slips through Schürmann fingers like the grains of fine sand, he shows some endorsement of silence when he

states, "[w]hat one must bear in mind about this perplexity is that to speak of God by name, we silence the originary actuality. Hence the interest in verbs such as 'detaching,' 'working,' 'being born,' 'piercing through,' 'casting a gaze,' and 'seeing' . . . to which is added another that expresses the process par excellence where being is event: 'listening'" (Schürmann 336). Here, Schürmann demonstrates that 'letting go' allows one to detach oneself from everything in the referent including to speak of God by name. In *A Journal of Mormon Thought*, the article states, "[w]e know that the psalms were not recited silently, for Hebrew verbs of emotion used in them can refer to outward expression as well as inner feeling; 'to rejoice' can mean to shout joyously; 'to meditate' can mean to recite aloud" (Clifford 41). It is not necessarily the word silence that holds 'meaning' but rather, one's relationship to the word (silence) in context. In this way silence can have different meanings depending on the context (one's relationship to God).

Consequently, Schürmann's analysis of articulating oneself at last, connects "silence with God" that would give more insight on how nature gives one the freedom to detach oneself, reimage oneself, elevate oneself, and articulate oneself. In this regard, Eckhart's "articulating oneself" is like the silent contemplation Salcedo mentions when she states, "each viewer permits the life seen in the work to reappear. Change takes place, as if the experience of the victim were reaching out, beyond, as if making a bridge over the space between one person and another. To make this connection possible is the important thing" (Salcedo 1181). Salcedo's use of *silence* as language allows one to feel connected to the "unseen," whereby the connecting point, although silent in its transformation, allows a change to occur within the individual and their relationship to the immanent God. While Schürmann's reference to silence demonstrates he recognizes the importance in becoming, he misses the importance of silence in context as this essay emphasizes that "silence with God" allows one to experience absolute freedom. As in the Unknown author's

poem, the "silence of God" referred to in this project is in accordance with Eckhart's "articulating oneself" event, when the individual from the poem suddenly realizes that one set of footprints has disappeared from the sand. The Unknown author writes "But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, / there was only one set of footprints / I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me" (14-16). The mortal in the poem fails to see that they were *never* alone, and that it is through the silence (the disappearance of the other set of footprints) that the immanent God (their Lord) has been within them the entire time.

After Schürmann's analysis of Eckhart's last point of the program: articulating oneself, Schürmann gives context to how the hegemony of transcendent Latin 'Nature' is destituted by the anarchy of radical 'nature,' yet still has its *Footprints in the Sand*. Schürmann's analysis of Eckhart's exhortation results in the following breakdown of Eckhart's four points of the program:

For Eckhart the continuous network of ends depends on one primary being that disposes it (principial condition). But in its turn, this first in the order of nature is "uttered" or "stated"—it is the "fruit of nothingness," it "becomes," "pours itself out," "issues from," "is born from" another source and in a provenance that is other whereby the principial regime deposits itself [(this is the difference between originary condition (anarchic condition) and the positing of identity (hegemonic structure)]. Hence the incongruity of principle and origin. In differing they put man, here again, in the tragic double bind (Schürmann 274).

Schürmann's thorough dissection of Eckhart's exhortation, leaves a lasting impression on acceptors as we conceive why Eckhart uncertainty of principial and origin leads the Latin epoch to the tragic double bind.

Consequently, this essay urges individuals to read the book, *Broken Hegemonies* to have a groundbreaking experience with Schürmann's hermeneutical analysis of the history of philosophy with emphasis on the destitution of the Latin epoch that is out of this world. Schürmann introduces Eckhart as the "spokesperson" responsible for deconstructing Cicero and Augustine's transcendent/hegemonic "Nature," in contrast to Eckhart's anarchic way of thinking, immanent 'nature.' This paper challenges its readers to examine how the inclusion of "silence" furthers Schürmann's insights on how nature gives one the freedom to detach oneself, re-image oneself, elevate oneself, and articulate oneself. As identified throughout this essay, detachment is the process of letting go of one's own "nature;" re-imaging signifies detaching oneself from images; elevating oneself includes reaching absolute freedom as illuminated in King David's praise; and articulating oneself, because of the challenge of the Word being unspoken can not itself be articulated. Revisiting Schürmann's analysis to the four points of Meister Eckhart's exhortation, we get a comprehensive review of how the destitution of the Latin epoch has come to an end. Although Schürmann's analysis of Eckhart's exhortation explains the events that lead to the destitution of a hegemonic nature, this paper approaches Nature as an immanent/anarchic 'nature.' Specifically, this paper highlights how Schürmann's oversight of the importance concerning "silence with God" becomes a missed opportunity for providing the reader with an additional step into understanding the destitution of the hegemonic fantasm of Nature, which still has its Footprints in the Sand. Moving like the impressions of Footprints in the sand, in Bergson's book Creative Evolution 'becoming' flows like the sound of ocean waves in empty

seashells and is comparable to the silence apparent in Salcedo's work, an unspoken language. Silence is parallel to nature whereas the concept of 'Nature' may be understood hegemonically or anarchically, it is not necessarily the word silence that holds 'meaning' but rather, one's relationship to the word. With one foot in the ocean and one foot in the sand, the double bind is the rock in a hard place that determines the ultimate unknown articulation, which is found in "silence with God". Despite Schürmann's claim that the modern hegemony is in the state of diremption one could argue, if history repeats itself as it often does, is the modern hegemonic fantasm "really" in a place of diremption or is its destitution near and awaiting the next hegemonic fantasm to appear like "Footprints in the Sand"?

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Appendix

Exhortation -Meister Eckhart

"When I preach it is my wont to speak about non-attachment, and of how man should become free of himself and all things.

Secondly, that one should be re-imaged back into the simple good that is God.

Thirdly, that one should remember the great nobility that God has put into the soul, so that man may thereby come marvelously to God. Fourthly, I speak of the purity of the divine nature, for the brilliance of God's nature is unspeakable.

God is a word, a word unspoken outside."

Footprints in the Sand

One night I dreamed a dream. 1

As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.2

Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.3

For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,4

One belonging to me and one to my Lord.5

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,6

I looked back at the footprints in the sand.7

I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,8

especially at the very lowest and saddest times,9

there was only one set of footprints.10

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.11

"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,12

You'd walk with me all the way.13

But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,14

there was only one set of footprints.15

I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."16

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you17

Never, ever, during your trials and testings.18

When you saw only one set of footprints,19

It was then that I carried you."20