

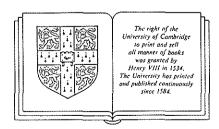
Eriugena's four divisions of nature (God, the primary causes, effects, and unformed matter) as depicted by Honorius Augustodunensis in his *Clavis physicae*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin 6734, 3 verso. (Photograph by permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale)

# The philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena

A STUDY OF IDEALISM IN THE MIDDLE AGES

DERMOT MORAN

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## IN MEMORY OF MY FATHER PATRICK MORAN

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#### PREFACE

This book is a study of the philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena, the ninth-century Irish philosopher who lived from roughly A.D. 800 to about 877. The whole area of early mediaeval philosophy, in the period stretching from Boethius to Anselm, is still underresearched and poorly understood, except among a few specialists. Nevertheless, it is impossible to understand the great philosophical systems of the High Middle Ages without a detailed knowledge of the tremendous struggle that went on in northern Europe to preserve philosophical and scientific wisdom after the collapse of the Roman administration until the revival of Aristotle in the middle of the twelfth century.

Moreover, the imaginative, speculative system of John Scottus Eriugena is worthy of serious scrutiny in its own right, as a daring and innovative synthesis of Latin logical procedure with the mystical outlook of the Greek Christian Platonists.

Eriugena is a significant figure in many respects. He was a close associate of Charles the Bald, grandson of Charlemagne, a young and shrewd monarch who was an enthusiastic promoter of learning in his kingdom, under whose direction the Carolingian renaissance reached its zenith. Eriugena frequented Charles's court, where he mingled with some of the most important people of his time - the powerful prelate Hincmar, the lover of classics Lupus of Ferrières, the poet and fellow Irishman Sedulius Scottus - and where he became renowned as a magister of the liberal arts. Eriugena's contribution to the commentary on the liberal arts classic of Martianus Capella the De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii (Marriage of Philology and Mercury) began a new style of line-by-line literal commentary on non-scriptural texts, which would become one of the standard methods of the schools of the High Middle Ages. Eriugena was an innovator, being among the first (along with his rival Gottschalk of Orbais) to use the Opuscula sacra of Boethius to develop theological argument based on grammatical niceties, which again would become standard in the Scholastic period. Eriugena made some significant contributions to the understanding of liberal arts themselves, by showing a deeper understanding of musical theory than his contemporaries, and by articulating a view of the movement of the planets which may have anticipated the system of Tycho Brahe.

Eriugena was, of course, an expert on the writings of Isidore and of Augustine, as was to be expected of a philosopher of his time. But most important, it was he who introduced late Greek Platonism into the West with his translation of the works of the mysterious Dionysius the Areopagite (the Pseudo-Dionysius), a translation which was unrivalled for three centuries, and which deeply influenced the course of mediaeval theology as well as mediaeval mysticism. Eriugena went on to read and translate authors who even today, it is to be regretted, are scarcely known among philosophers - men such as Gregory of Nyssa (c. 332-c. 395) and Maximus Confessor (c. 580-662). Maximus's philosophical anthropology was used by Eriugena as a basis for a new articulation of the place of human nature in the cosmos, in a manner which celebrated the centrality of human being in the revelation of all being, and expressed a view of the absoluteness of human freedom and intellectual insight, so as to make man the equal of God Himself. Indeed, in his glorification of human nature Eriugena is close to Pico della Mirandola (1483-94) and Marsilio Ficino (1433-99), two leading figures of Renaissance humanism.

Eriugena initiates the Scholastic tradition in the West, but he is also – through his translations of, and commentary on, Dionysius – the first great European mystic. His true successors are men like Meister Eckhart of Hochheim (c. 1260–1327) and Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (Cusanus) (1401–64), both of whom combined a radical mystical outlook with a careful Scholastic philosophical training. His paradoxical understanding of God as both immanent and transcendent anticipated and influenced the concepts of coincidentia oppositorum and docta ignorantia of Nicholas of Cusa.

In this book I seek not only to expound Eriugena's philosophy in its historical and cultural context in ninth-century France but also to evaluate the enduring significance of his philosophical system as a whole. This will, I believe, show Eriugena at his most original and most brilliant. The Western philosophical tradition has been characterised, in a somewhat misleading and overgeneralised manner, as centring on the concept of being from the time of the earliest Greek thinkers. Eriugena, inspired by Dionysius, departs from this tradition and regards non-being as equally as important as being in the study of the nature of reality as a whole. For Eriugena ontology is not the most fundamental or universal discipline; in fact, he develops a negative dialectic which counterbalances ontological affirmations and constructions with a radical meontology, giving the most detailed analysis of non-being since Plato's Sophist and Parmenides.

But Eriugena goes farther and anticipates many of the features of the modernist turn in philosophy begun by Descartes (1596–1650). Eriugena begins with a typical Carolingian psychology but is stimulated by Saint Augustine to develop an understanding of the cogito and a deep appreciation of inwardness, which was enriched by his encounter with the anthropology of the Greeks, especially Gregory of Nyssa. He does not stop there, however, but goes on to articulate, in his own terms, what might be called a philosophy of subjectivity. Eriugena sees the human subject as essentially mind. Everything is a product of mind - material reality, spatiotemporal existence, the body itself. In this sense, Eriugena is a thoroughgoing idealist. Matter is a commingling of incorporeal qualities which the mind mistakenly takes to be corporeal; spatiotemporal reality is a consequence of the seduction of the mind by the senses, which is the true Fall of Adam; the body itself is an externalisation of the secret desires of the mind. But more than that, the true being of all things is their being in the mind. Eriugena takes this to be a consequence of the scriptural revelation that the human mind is an image of the divine mind, and that the divine mind contains in itself the ideal exemplars of all things.

Eriugena inserts this radical view of the human mind and of human nature into his account of the cosmos, his fourfold division of nature. The whole of nature, which includes God, proceeds or externalises itself in its multifarious forms through the operation of the human mind, which is pursuing its own course of intellectual development or enlightenment. In the four divisions of nature, we have not only a typical mediaeval cosmology of a hierarchy of being but also a dynamic process of subjectivity becoming objective, of the infinite becoming finite, the drama of God's and of human self-

externalisation in the world, which anticipates the idealist systems of Schelling and Hegel.

In this book, therefore, I shall discuss Eriugena's philosophy both in terms of its mediaeval origins and in terms of the manner in which it appears to anticipate the turn towards the subject and towards idealism which is found in the modern philosophies of Descartes and Hegel.

In interpreting Eriugena's philosophy, I have concentrated almost exclusively on the *Periphyseon*, with the result that Eriugena's later theological works, including his homily and his commentary on Dionysius, receive scant mention. I hope this book will contribute to the revival of interest in Eriugena which has taken place in this century, by offering a *philosophical* interpretation of his most important dialogue, the *Periphyseon*.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This book was inspired by a desire to understand the kind of philosophy which guided the monks of the early monastic period in Ireland, whose monuments in stone are visible in places like Glendalough and Clonmacnoise, and whose manuscript illuminations are a continual source of wonder. I hope I have shown that the philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena is as important and enduring as the stone and parchment monuments of that golden age. In all aspects the book was guided by Professor Karsten Harries and encouraged by Professors Rulon Wells and Robert Brumbaugh, all of Yale University. I wish also to thank Professor James McEvoy of the Queen's University of Belfast, Professor Werner Beierwaltes of Munich, and Professor John J. O'Meara of University College, Dublin, who offered helpful advice and criticism at various stages of the project. I would like to thank the staff of the Sterling Library and Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale, and Mary Brennan, Secretary of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugena Studies, who provided me with invaluable biographical and bibliographical information. I would like to thank the Reverend Professor Matthew O'Donnell, and the Publication Fund of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, which provided assistance towards the preparation of the typescript. I would also like to thank John O'Connell and Paddy Pender of the Computer Center, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, for their assistance. I am grateful to the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, for permission to reproduce the manuscript page of the Clavis physicae, and to Jim Keenan, of the Cartography Department, Maynooth College, for help in preparing the map of ninth-century France. Finally, I thank my mother and my brothers, Ciarán and Aidan, and my sister, Patricia, for their patience and forbearance.

### Chronology

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c. 395 410 430 c. 480 c. 490 524 526 532 548 c. 560 c. 580 c. 583 612 615 622 632 636 662 730 c. 750 782 784 787 789 795 800 c. 800	Death of Gregory of Nyssa Sack of Rome by Alaric the Goth Death of Augustine Birth of Boethius Birth of Cassiodorus Death of Boethius Death of Theodoric First recorded reference to Dionysius Areopagiticus Cassiodorus founds Vivarium Birth of Isidore of Seville Birth of Maximus Confessor Death of Cassiodorus. Columbanus founds Bobbio Death of Columbanus at Bobbio Flight of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina Death of Muhammad Death of Isidore Death of Maximus Confessor Edict issued by Emperor Leo III forbidding images Death of John Damascene Alcuin of York joins Charlemagne's court Birth of Hrabanus Maurus at Mainz Council of Nicaea Admonitio generalis of Charlemagne First Norse raid on Ireland Coronation of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III (25 December) Birth of Al-Kindi Death of Alcuin Death of Charlemagne Division of western empire among Lothair, Pepin, and Louis
817	
823	Birth of Charles the Bald
•	De mensura orbis terrae of Dicuil
825	De mensura orois terrae of Dicuit

CHRONOLOGY

827	Death of Dungal
	Louis the Pious receives a copy of the Corpus Areopagiticum
83 I	Hilduin begins translation of Corpus Areopagiticum
834	Louis the Pious restored to power
840	Death of Louis the Pious
	Coronation of Charles the Bald
843	Treaty of Verdun divides Frankish Empire
	Council of Constantinople ends iconoclasm
c. 844	De universo of Hrabanus Maurus
845	Hincmar becomes abbot of Rheims
c. 845	Eriugena joins the Carolingian court
846	Muslim pirates sack St. Peter's, Rome
848	Sedulius Scottus founds monastery at Liège
849	Death of Walafrid Strabo
85 I	De praedestinatione completed
853	Synod of Quierzy
855	Synod of Valence condemns Eriugena
	Death of Lothair I
856	Norse raiders burn Paris
	Death of Hrabanus Maurus
858	Norse raids on Chartres and Bayeux
	Photius made patriarch of Constantinople
	Election of Pope Nicholas I
859	Synod of Langres condemns Eriugena on predestination
c. 860	Eriugena begins translation of the Corpus Areopagiticum
862	Death of Lupus of Ferrières
867	Wulfad made bishop of Bourges
c. 867	Periphyseon completed
867-9	Photian schism
868	Death of Gottschalk
875	Coronation of Charles as emperor
Í	Death of Martin of Laon
877	Death of Charles the Bald
c. 877	
882	Death of Hincmar
887	Collapse of Carolingian Empire

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

ANNOT. Annotationes in Marcianum

Bibl. Nat. Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris

CCCM Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis

CCSL Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CH Pseudo-Dionysius, De coelesti hierarchia

Comm. Commentarius Johannis Scotti in Evangelium Johannis

De civ. Dei Augustine, De civitate Dei

De praed.

De divina praedestinatione Johannis Scotti

DN Pseudo-Dionysius, De divinis nominibus

DW Eckhart, Die Deutschen Werke, ed. J. Quint

EH Pseudo-Dionysius, De ecclesiastica hierarchia

Instit. Cassiodorus, Institutiones

LW Eckhart, Die Lateinischen Werke, ed. J. Quint

MGH Monumenta Germaniae Historica

PG Patrologia Graeca
PL Patrologia Latina
SC Sources Chrétiennes

SCG Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles ST Aquinas, Summa theologica

### EUROPEAN INTELLECTUAL CULTURE IN THE NINTH CENTURY

Eriugena, an early mediaeval author, wrote during a period of cultural instability when much of the wealth of Greek philosophy had been lost or forgotten. Furthermore, he came from an island off the European mainland, isolated from many of the educational and intellectual developments of the Roman Empire. To have risen from that isolated context to become one of the greatest minds of the ninth century was an extraordinary feat. To have achieved a fairly sophisticated mastery of Greek was itself unusual – in that century Eriugena, Hilduin, and Anastasius Bibliothecarius were among the few who produced translations from the Greek. Eriugena's achievement went deeper in that he was able to enter into the subtleties and complexities of the Greek mind itself, and to produce a remarkable synthesis of two different cultures and two essentially different world-views. What was the intellectual climate of the age into which Eriugena was born?

The rise of mediaeval philosophy in the West took place against the turbulent background of the breakup of the Roman Empire, the expansion of the German peoples in the North and of Islam in the South. Various dates have been suggested for the beginning of the mediaeval period, but for our purposes the most suitable date is A.D. 524, the year of the death of Boethius (born c. 480), the last great scholar of antiquity, who knew both Greek and Latin. Already by Boethius's time the empire was ruled from Ravenna by the Ostrogoth Theodoric, who had the position of governor of Italy; the emperor lived in the East.

The empire was split between a Greek East extending from Constantinople to Lombard Italy (which for a time included Sicily), and a Latin West, which at the beginning of the ninth century came under the control of the Frankish king Charlemagne, who was crowned head of the Holy Roman Empire in 800. The Mediterranean south and most of Spain were in Arab hands, and there seems

to have been little contact between these regions and the Carolingian Empire.

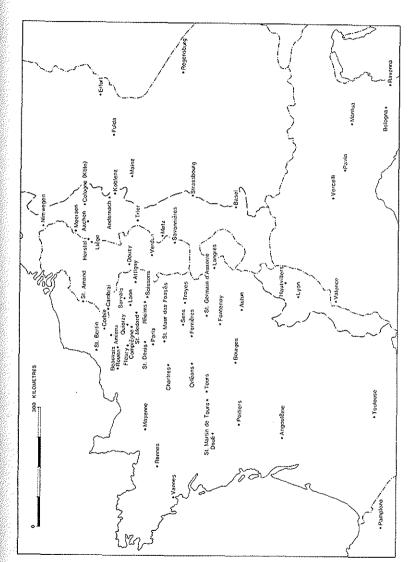
In broader cultural terms, the ninth century in fact marks the beginning of several centuries of Islamic dominance in the fields of philosophy and science. The centres of intellectual learning and the heritage of Greek thought moved from Alexandria to Baghdad, where Al-Kindi (c. 800-70) developed the first major Neoplatonic metaphysics, adapted to Islam. The Byzantine Empire was struggling to maintain itself against the Islamic onslaught in Egypt and Syria. Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem fell to Islam, throwing Rome and Constantinople into relief as the centres of Christendom. The Eastern Church was undergoing a period of renewal and reform under the powerful patriarch Photius (c. 820-91).2 Photius (patriarch from 858) was an important classical scholar in the East whose Bibliotheca was a summary of the Christian and classical works he had read. In the late eighth and early ninth centuries the Franks were struggling with the Byzantines for political control over Great Moravia. But in contrast with the East, little intellectual development had taken place in northern Europe during the seventh and eighth centuries. Their educational development was nourished in the main by the steady flow of scholars and monks from Ireland to the monastic schools, from Laon to Reichenau and Fulda.

### The monastic age in Ireland

Ireland, outside the domain of the collapsing Roman administration, had developed its own tradition of Christianity, which, be-

I On Al-Kindi see A. L. Ivry (ed.), Al-Kindi's Metaphysics (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1974). It would be interesting to compare the two Neoplatonic systems of Eriugena and Al-Kindi, as they were almost exact contemporaries. In Islamic countries philosophy was not seen as identical with religion, as it was for Augustine and Eriugena, and was free to pursue its own course. Thus it is noteworthy that Al-Kindi produced texts on music, mathematics, astronomy, and alchemy as well as philosophy. Al-Kindi was anxious, however, to argue for ex nihilo creation and for the resurrection of the body, while otherwise accepting Greek ideas.

2 On Photius see Richard Haugh, Photius and the Carolingians: The Trinitarian Controversy (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1975), and F. Dvornik, The Photian Schism: History and Legend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). On Photius as a humanist, see P. Lemerle, Le premier humanisme byzantin: Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle (Paris: PUF, 1971), and W. Treadgold, The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius (Dumbarton Oaks: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1980). On Byzantium in general see R. Jenkis, Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries A.D. 610-1071 (London: Widenfeld & Nicholson, 1966), and the bibliography in D. J. Geanakoplos, Byzantine East and Latin West (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1976). See also J. M. Hussey, The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 69-101.



Places of intellectual and historical importance in northwestern Europe at the time of Charles the Bald

tween the sixth and the ninth century, was to maintain a high cul-

tural level, permeated by austere spirituality and culture.3 Ireland

produced the earliest vernacular literature in Europe, as well as sending a steady stream of missionaries to the Continent. The country had

a sufficiently developed social and economic structure that it could

support large monastic communities, highly developed metal-work,

4

European intellectual culture

5)

manuscript illumination, as well as stone building and stone sculpture.

John Scottus Eriugena (c. 800–c. 877), an Irish scholar living in France and an enthusiastic student of Byzantine Christianity, was the most extraordinary thinker of the century. His work provides a link between Ireland and France, Rome and Byzantium; between Latin and Greek learning; and between the Church fathers and the thinkers of the High Middle Ages.

After the death of Boethius, Latin philosophy and learning were

After the death of Boethius, Latin philosophy and learning were preserved in the West mainly in encyclopaedic compendia of knowledge such as the *Institutiones* of Cassiodorus, the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville, and the writings of the Anglo-Saxon monk Bede. Cassiodorus (c. 490–c. 580), an adviser to Theodoric, was at the court during Boethius's time there, but later retired to a private estate in Calabria, where he developed a monastery. Between 543 and 555 he wrote the *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum* as a programme of study for his monks. This work contained a few brief sections on philosophy. Isidore (c. 560–636) wrote the most important work of the period, the *Etymologiae*, which was a favourite of the monks in Ireland; from it they drew the etymological explanations of technical terms, as well as an understanding of the

4 See M. L. W. Laistner, Thought and Letters in Western Europe A.D. 500-900 (London: Metheun, 1957), and the classic study of M. Roger, L'Enseignement des lettres classiques d'Ausone à Alcuin: Introduction à l'histoire des écoles carolingiennes (Paris: Picard, 1905). See also J. Leclercq, L'Amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu: Initiation aux auteurs monastiques du Moyen Age (Paris: CERF, 1957). The best recent study is P. Riché, Les Ecoles et l'enseignement dans l'Occident chrétien de la fin du Ve siècle au milieu du XI siècle (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1970)

In the Latin West from the sixth to the ninth century, there was, for various reasons, little scope for genuine philosophical development, and a lack of scholars sufficiently educated to undertake the task. Even in Ireland, which had a high tradition of writing and illumination, the evidence for a flourishing philosophical tradition is slight, with few signs of developed abstract speculation.<sup>5</sup> Despite the wonderful manuscript illumination as evidenced by the early ninth-century Book of Kells and the Book of Armagh, or the earlier Book of Durrow (described as "one of the high points of insular book illumination"), the beautiful poetry which indicated an understanding of classical prosody, the mythological annals, the metallurgy of the Tara Brooch or Ardagh Chalice, and the rich tradition of biblical commentary and eschatology, there is little evidence of the development of abstract speculation or systematic reasoning of a philosophical kind, though some of this kind of activity may have been practised under the guise of grammatical, poetic, and especially legal studies, which were of a most advanced nature.6

It is hard to assess how much of the intellectual inheritance of ancient Greece and Rome was preserved in these Irish monastic centres. A high level of scholarship, very early on, is witnessed by the activities of Columbanus, who founded the monastery of Bobbio in Lombard Italy in 612. During the seventh and eighth centuries, however, there seems to have been a lessening of interest in classical texts, partly to be explained by the rising interest in the vernacular. What exactly was available to the Irish? At one stage it

6 On Irish grammar, see L. Holtz, "Grammairiens irlandais au temps de Jean Scot: quelques aspects de leur pédagogie," in R. Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS, 1977), pp. 69-78. On Irish learning in general see K. Hughes, "The Distribution of Irish Scriptoria and Centres of Learning from 730-1111," in N. Chadwick (ed.), Studies in the Early British Church (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 243-72.

<sup>3</sup> On Irish Christianity see the classic studies of J. Ryan, Irish Monasticism: Origins and Early Development (Dublin, 1931; reprinted with new intro. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972); L. Gougaud, Christianity in Celtic Lands (London: Sheed & Ward, 1932), and L. Bieler, Ireland: Harbinger of the Middle Ages (London: Oxford University Press, 1966). For more recent studies see K. Hughes, Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to the Sources (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) and "The Early Irish Church from the Coming of Christianity to the End of the Viking Era," in B. de Breffiny (ed.), The Irish World (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977), pp. 47-70. See also the excellent essays in H. Löwe (ed.), Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), and P. Ní Catháin and M. Richter (eds.), Ireland and Europe: The Early Church (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> For a review of Irish educational practice, see F. McGrath, Education in Ancient and Medieval Ireland (Dublin: Studies Special Publication, 1979), pp. 72-119. The impact of philosophical thought, expressed in Latin, on a conservative tribal society dominated by native traditions of poetic learning and a warrior ethos has been the subject of recent studies by anthropologists. See, e.g., P. MacCana, "Early Irish Ideology and the Concept of Unity," in R. Kearney (ed.), The Irish Mind (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1984), pp. 56-78. Even though prose forms developed very early in Irish history, they were not used for abstract or speculative reasoning.

was claimed that the Irish monks had access to many classical texts in Greek and Latin, and were well versed in classical languages. Surveys of the extant literature, however, show a much more modest picture. The Irish certainly had a strong interest in learning and wrung as much knowledge as they could from the texts available. No full study of classical references in Irish literature has yet been made, but there exist summaries of classical tales in Old Irish, for example, the stories of Aeneas, Jason, and Hercules, as well as a strong interest in grammar and natural science. In grammar, the Irish knew Donatus, Priscian's Institutiones grammaticae, Eutyches's Ars de verbo, Macrobius's De differentiis et societatibus graeci latinique verbi (a work of which Eriugena may have made a florilegium, according to E. Jeauneau), and Isidore's De differentiis verborum.7 Isidore's Etymologiae was especially popular, 8 as was Pliny's Natural History, Virgil's Georgics, and Macrobius's Saturnalia, which Eriugena may have used in an Irish recension. On the other hand, Cassiodorus's Institutiones does not appear to have been read by the Irish and was not widely available in ninth-century Francia either. The Irish were the first mediaevals to use-Macrobius, and the three earliest commentators on Martianus Capella - including Martin Hiberniensis and Eriugena - were Irish. They read Origen with great enthusiasm and also Eusebius and John Chrysostom. There is no doubt that the Irish in France and Germany commanded great respect for their learning, as evidenced by many Continental testimonia, although they seem also to have evoked a certain amount of humorous puzzlement at their extraordinary manners and fantastical style of argument.9 Recent research has shown that there was a considerable amount of scientific activity in the early Irish monastic centres, with extant works on meteorology, eclipses, and other natural phenomena. The Irish were deeply involved in the calculation of the date of Easter, and these *Computistica* reveal some sophistication in mathematics as well as in astronomy (especially the cycles of the sun and moon). Much of this work depended heavily on classical sources, as does Dicuil's geography, for example.

It is almost impossible to say how much of this intellectual activity was carried out in Ireland and how much on the Continent. The Irish travelled widely in Europe, and the Irish manuscripts preserved in European libraries could have been produced in Ireland or while travelling, rather than in the Continental centres with which they are now associated (for example, Bobbio or Saint Gall).

Given this brief summary of the learning of the Irish monastic age, it may in general be concluded that despite Ireland's rich Christian heritage, the actual revival of *philosophical* learning (especially the commenting on logical texts or on the pseudo-augustinian *Categoriae decem*) took place in Europe. Furthermore, the great figures of Irish intellectual development such as Dungal, John Scottus, Sedulius, and Michael Scottus lived and worked on the European mainland.

### The Carolingian renovatio

It was Charlemagne (742–814) who initiated the revival of learning in the part of the empire under his control in the late eighth century. He issued letters decreeing that every cathedral and monastery was to open a school which taught the basic liberal arts (arithmetic, grammar, and music). In his Admonitio generalis (789) and in the De litteris colendis (written between 780 and 800), composed with the help of Alcuin (c. 735–804), he asked for the teaching of reading and writing, and for the careful correction of the Psalms, the calendar, and grammar books (psalmos, notas, cantus, compotum, grammaticum).

From the mid-770s Charlemagne began to attract scholars to his palace from all over Europe – Lombards, Visigoths, Anglo-Saxons, Franks, and Irish.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See M. Herren, "Classical and Secular Learning among the Irish before the Carolingian Renaissance," Florilegium 3 (1981), pp. 118-51, and for Irish knowledge of physics see W. M. Stevens, "Scientific Instruction in Early Insular Schools," in M. Herren (ed.), Insular Latin Studies: Latin Texts and Manuscripts of the British Isles 550-1066 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981), pp. 83-112. On Irish law see D. O Corráin, Ireland before the Normans (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1972). On Irish contributions in manuscript illumination, metal, and stone work, see M. Ryan (ed.), Ireland and Insular Art A.D. 500-1200 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> See M. Herren, "On the Earliest Irish Acquaintance with Isidore of Seville," in E. James (ed.), Visigothic Spain: New Approaches (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), pp. 243-50.

<sup>9</sup> For a recent review of Irish achievements in France see P. Riché, "Les Irlandais et les princes carolingiens aux VIIIe et IXe siècles," in Löwe (ed.), Die Iren und Europa, pp. 735-45. See also E. Coccia, "La cultura irlandese precarolingia: Miracolo o mito?" Studi Medievali ser. 3a, 8 (1967), pp. 264-9.

<sup>10</sup> H. Fichtenau, The Carolingian Empire, trans. P. Munz (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957); R. Folz, The Coronation of Charlemagne 25 December 800, trans. J. E. Anderson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974); J. Hubert, The Carolingian Renaissance (New York: Braziller, 1970); R. McKitterick, The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789-895 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977) and The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians (London: Longman, 1983), pp. 140-68. See also Laistner, Thought and Letters in Western Europe, pp. 189-224. On Carolingian kingship, see W. Ullmann, The Carolingian Renaissance and the Idea of Kingship (London: Methuen, 1969).

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While returning from his first Italian campaign in 774 he recruited the grammarian Peter of Pisa; then another Lombard, Paul the Deacon, in 782. In 776 Paulinus of Aquileia arrived at the court as a grammar teacher. Besides these Italians, Charlemagne attracted Irishmen such as Dungal (d. 827) and Dicuil (c. 770–c. 827), a geographer. Dungal was an important figure who wrote to Charlemagne regarding his queries concerning an eclipse of the sun which took place in 810. Dungal's information was based on Macrobius's commentary on the Somnium Scipionis. Dicuil was the author of the De mensura orbis terrae (825), a work of geography relying heavily on classical sources, especially Pliny. From Christian Spain came the Goth Theodulf (later bishop of Orléans and possibly author of the Libri Carolini) and Agobard (later bishop of Lyon); and from York came Alcuin, who became Charlemagne's closest adviser, joining the court in 782. 13

Alcuin was at the head of this new revival of letters, which has been called a renaissance, though more properly it was a smaller renovatio, not so much a complete rebirth as a renewal, the first renewal of learning in continental Europe since the efforts of Theodoric.<sup>14</sup> Alcuin and the court school referred to themselves using classical and biblical titles (Charlemagne was known as King David) and saw their court as a new Jerusalem, Athens, or Rome. Although there has been much talk of a "palace school," this assembly of scholars at the court had rather loose links. Alcuin was in many

11 At that time Dungal was living in the Abbey of Saint-Denis, but in 825 (although some scholars have suggested this is a different Dungal) he became master of the school at Pavia. At that time he wrote an important tract defending the use of images in worship against the iconoclastic views of the *Apologeticum* of Bishop Claudius of Turin. When he died in 827 he left his library to the monastery of Bobbio.

12 For Dicuil see J. J. Tierney (ed.), Dicuili liber de mensura orbis terrae (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1967). In his introduction Tierney talks of the Dungal of Saint-Denis and of Pavia as two different persons. Esposito, however, in 1932 argued for their identity; see Tierney, p. 6.

13 See P. Delhaye, Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, trans. S. J. Tester (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), pp. 41-52. On Alcuin, see A. Kleinclausz, Alcuin (Paris, 1948); L. Wallach, Alcuin and Charlemagne: Studies in Carolingian History and Literature (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1959), S. Allott, Alcuin of York, A.D. 732-804: His Life and Letters (York: Ebot Press, 1974), and the classic study by A. F. West, Alcuin and the Rise of the Christian Schools (1892; reprint New York: Greenwood, 1969).

14 On the Carolingian renovatio, see P. Lehmann, "Das Problem der karolingischen Renaissance," I Problemi della civiltà carolingia 26 Mar-Aprile 1953, Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, vol. 1 (Spoleto: Presso la sede del Centro, 1954), and G. W. Trompf, "The Concept of the Carolingian Renaissance," Journal of the History of Ideas 34 (1973), pp. 3-26.

respects the architect of the Carolingian renovatio and was deeply involved in planning the new educational programme. In his writings on the development of Christian education, he laid great stress on the importance of the liberal arts as the seven pillars of wisdom. seeing wisdom as necessary for the development of spiritual knowledge and expanding the concept of Christian wisdom found in Augustine. 15 Like Saint Augustine, Alcuin was not in favour of secular learning for its own sake. He wrote several theological tracts including a De Trinitate, a work on the place of the soul in Christian life, De animae ratione, and a philosophical dialogue, Disputatio de vera philosophia, as well as a collection of arguments. De rhetorica et virtutibus. He appears to have had few classical sources available to him, and knew little even of Boethius. He did know the Consolatio, which he referred to in his De vera philosophia, but he does not appear to have used the Opuscula sacra. He did receive a copy of the Categoriae decem, which he presented to Charlemagne. He contributed in his De dialectica to Carolingian knowledge of dialectic, and divided philosophy (as Eriugena later does) into three parts - physics, ethics, and logic (see De dialectica, PL CI.952c). He based his logic largely on the Categoriae decem and his wider philosophy on Boethius's Consolatio. Towards the end of his life, while in voluntary retreat at Tours, he wrote the De fide Sanctae Trinitatis.

Alcuin is not considered a great innovator in philosophy, being mainly concerned to develop a firm foundation of knowledge as a step on the road to spiritual wisdom. Indeed, the remark of Philippe Delhaye is apt, namely that the philosophers of the Carolingian *renovatio* were not like the men of the twelfth century, who saw themselves as dwarfs on the shoulders of giants; rather they were content to remain dwarfs looking up at the height of their ancestors.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, some recent claims have been made for a more original philosophical tradition stemming from Alcuin and the palace school. John Marenbon, in a recent study, has argued that the

<sup>15</sup> See M.-Th. d'Alverny, "La Sagesse et ses sept filles: Recherches sur les allégories de la philosophie et des arts libéraux du IXe au XIIe siècle," Mélanges dédiés à la mémoire de Félix Grat I (Paris: Pecqueur-Grat, 1949), pp. 245-78. See also G. Schrimpf, Das Werk des Johannes Scottus Eriugena im Rahmen des Wissenschaftverständnisses seiner Zeit. Eine Hinführung zu Periphyseon (Münster: Aschendorff, 1982), pp. 23-35; and J. Marenbon, From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre: Logic, Theology and Philosophy in the Early Middle Ages. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 30-66.
16 Delhaye, Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, p. 43.

Munich Passages, which include the Dicta Albini and the Dicta Candidi, represent a genuine attempt at philosophical reasoning concerning the nature of essence, the existence of God, and the categories, as well as furthering theological speculation on the relation of man to God in the imago Dei. 17 Whether or not Albinus is to be identified with Alcuin, as has frequently been argued, it is clear that these texts illustrate the kind of philosophical argumentation being undertaken among Alcuin's associates. The Dicta Albini consists of a commentary on Genesis 1.26, on Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram, which makes use of Augustine and Ambrose. Albinus distinguishes between imago and similitudo: Each of us is an image of the Trinity (intellect, will, and memoria), but we achieve similitudo through goodness. The subject-matter of these passages is unexceptional, but the passages provide a good summary of early Carolingian anthropology (as it will later be expressed also in the Libri Carolini) and are to be contrasted with Eriugena's developed theory of human nature, which was inspired by his reading of Gregory of Nyssa's De hominis opificio, a work not available to the first generation of Carolingian intellectuals.

Candidus is thought by Marenbon to have been a student of Alcuin's from England, although Delhaye considers him to have been a student of Hrabanus Maurus's. The Dicta Candidi offers a dialectical proof for God's existence, based on the hierarchy of perfection, which differs significantly from Augustine's formulation in the De libero arbitrio II. Indeed, Marenbon considers Candidus to have been the outstanding philosopher of his generation, on the basis of the understanding of the categories and the logical argumentation found in these passages. Indeed, it is true that these passages do possess a crisp logical form, as is clearly demonstrated in the treatment of the question Si possit verum esse sine veritate? This argues that truths depend on Truth. Truth is a body, corpus, and God is Truth; therefore God is a body: Deus veritas est, ergo Deus corpus est. This dialectical argument is countered by an argument which shows that the body does not possess truth and that truth is not a body. The

argument is to be found in a more abbreviated form in Augustine's Soliloquia II.15.28 (PL XXXII.898). The definitions of substance, time, place, and body in Candidus's work rely on the definitions in the Categoriae decem, but they are used in a manner which indicates original philosophical thought. Van de Vyver points out that there was a growth of interest in logic in the ninth century. The library of Reichenau, for example, had a copy of three treatises of the logica vetus among its 420 manuscripts. These were listed among the works of Bede, but had possibly been extracted from Boethian commentaries. Boethius himself, however, was known at that time mainly for his work on arithmetic.<sup>20</sup>

Another important figure from the first generation of revivers of philosophy was Fredegisus (d. 834), an Anglo-Saxon student of Alcuin's at York who succeeded him as abbot of Saint Martin of Tours in 804. Later he served as chancellor to Louis the Pious. His letter on nothing and darkness, *Epistola de nihilo et tenebris*, argued that the term "nothing" actually refers to something, since every name signifies something.<sup>21</sup> Obviously this thesis is a development of the views of Augustine in the *De magistro* I.2 (PL XXXII.1196) and instituted a discussion of the meaning of non-being which culminated in Carolingian times with the elaborate treatise on the meaning of nothing in John Scottus Eriugena. We know almost nothing else about Fredegisus.

Agobard of Lyon accused Fredegisus of believing in the pre-existence of the soul because of a certain phrase Fredegisus used, and indeed there is some evidence that Fredegisus went on to defend himself in a manner which substantiated that accusation.<sup>22</sup>

The controversy over the pre-existence of the soul was of particular interest to ninth-century philosophers and theologians. The whole debate was, of course, couched in the language of the problematic left by Augustine, who was unsure as to the exact relation of soul to body and often seemed to espouse the position that the

<sup>17</sup> Marenbon, From the Circle of Alcuin, pp. 33-62 and 144-69. These passages are contained in Munich Codex Latinus Monachensis 6407, and partially in Bibl. Nat. 13953. They have been edited by Marenbon in his book, pp. 151-70.

<sup>18</sup> Marenbon, From the Circle of Alcuin, p. 59.

<sup>19</sup> See Marenbon, pp. 164-5.

<sup>20</sup> See A. Van de Vyver, "Les Etapes du développement philosophique du haut moyen âge," Revue belge de philològie et d'histoire 8 (1929), p. 432.

<sup>21</sup> Marenbon, From the Circle of Alcuin, pp. 62ff. Fredegisus's letter is edited by E. Dümmler in MGH Epistolae 4 (Epistolae Karolini Aevi II) (Berlin, 1895), pp. 552-5, and translated in J. F. Wippel and A. B. Wolter (eds.), Medieval Philosophy from Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1969), pp. 103-8.

<sup>22</sup> Delhaye, Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, p. 47. Agobard's letter is found in MGH Epistolae 5, pp. 210-1. Of course, the whole problem of the pre-existence of the soul was raised and left unsatisfactorily resolved by Augustine.

soul had a pre-existence in heaven before it was created in this world (see, for example, *De libero arbitrio* III.XXI.59.200 [CCSL XXIX, p. 309]). Augustine later offered a solution to his problem by using the idea of the *seminal reasons*. Gottschalk and others focussed on this problem in Augustine, and various positions on it were taken during the Carolingian period. Both Ratramnus of Corbie and Eriugena developed fairly sophisticated responses to the problem.

As the Carolingian renovatio spread, more and more monastic centres were able to produce men of learning; places such as Corbie, Tours, and Rheims produced scholars in large numbers. Many manuscripts were produced at Corbie, where Ratramnus, one of the greatest intellects of the ninth century, lived and worked; Saint Gall also grew in importance, while Lyon developed under Agobard, Remigius, and Florus (who has left copious annotations of Saint Augustine in his own handwriting). Hrabanus Maurus (c. 780–856) of Mainz studied with Alcuin at Aachen in the 790s and then went to Fulda, where he was made a deacon in 801. In 819 he became master of the abbey school at Mainz. In 822 he was made abbot of Fulda. He produced some fascinating works, for example, the De laudibus Sanctae Crucis in 810, the De institutione clericorum, modelled on Saint Augustine's De doctrina Christiana, and a Computus (c. 819, edited in CCCM XLIV, pp. 205–321).

Hrabanus composed an elaborate encyclopaedia of the knowledge considered necessary for the understanding of Scripture, entitled De universo or De rerum naturis, around 840. He gave a high place to the liberal arts and to dialectic in particular, which he defines as "the rational discipline concerned with definitions and explanations, and able even to separate truth from falsehood." It is not only an art of reasoning; it is capable of yielding true knowledge both about things and about the self. Hrabanus was a well-read scholar who invented some interesting poetic forms, but his knowledge of philosophy tended towards the encyclopaedic mentality of Cassiodorus

and Isidore and did not blossom forth into systematic speculation. It is to be noted that Cassiodorus himself did not have a great circulation at this time; the librarian of Reichenau, Reginbert, was able to lay his hands on a copy only after a long search (c. 835–842).

The Carolingian period is best known intellectually for theological controversy, which took many forms and involved kings as well as ecclesiastical authorities. It was a lively period, with reasonable tolerance towards religious speculation, and was not at all the narrow-minded "dark age" some have called it. The major theological struggles of the first generation of Carolingians were concerned with adoptionism and iconoclasm, with lesser disputes on the filioque question (Ratramnus's Contra Graecorum opposita) and the processions of the Trinity.

In the early ninth century there was a revival of adoptionism (the heresy that Christ is not the true Son of God, but is, as it were, an "adopted" son) among the Spanish bishops led by Elipandus of Toledo and Felix of Urgel. It was attacked by Alcuin, who wrote tracts against Felix and Elipandus, and by Hrabanus Maurus and Agobard among others. This dispute is typical of the earliest stages of the Carolingian revival in that the polemicists are content for the most part to quote Scripture in support of their claims and do not indulge in much independent dialectical reasoning, unlike the later disputes involving Gottschalk and Eriugena, who were inspired by the methodological procedure of Boethius in his Opuscula sacra.

One such theological debate, which involved kings and emperors as well as theologians, was the Iconoclastic controversy, which had its origins in the late eighth century, and was as much a political as a theological dispute. The debate on the use of images in worship was precipitated by the attempt of the Byzantine emperor Leo III to convert his subjects to his view on images in 724–6. Possibly Leo was responding to Islamic pressure, which scorned Christian "idolatry." Possibly he was also trying to replace the worship of all other images with his own.

Leo issued a formal edict in 730 forbidding images, without consulting Pope Gregory II, and the oppression of iconophiles began at that time. It was continued under the reign of his son, Constan-

Hrabanus Maurus, De institutione clericorum III.xx (PL CVII.397c): "dialectica est disciplina rationalis quaerendi, diffiniendi et disserendi, etiam vera a falsis discernendo potens." See West, Alcuin, p. 140; Delhayc, p. 45. Hrabanus (776–856) badly needs to be studied from the point of view of the development of mediaeval philosophy. I have not had a chance to read the dissertation of Luke Wenger, "Hrabanus Maurus, Fulda, and Carolingian Spirituality," Harvard, 1973. From my own cursory examination, he does not appear to have been more than an encyclopaedist, except in his devotional speculations on the nature of the cross in De laudibus Sanctae Crucis (PL CVII).

<sup>24</sup> See G. B. Ladner, "Origin and Significance of the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy," in *Images and Ideas of the Middle Ages: Selected Studies in History and Art* (Rome: Edizione de Storia e Letteratura, 1983), vol. 1, pp. 35-72.

tine V (741-75). The empress Irene reversed the situation during her reign from 780-802, and the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 787 formally restored images. Under subsequent emperors Leo V (813-20), Michael II (820-9), and Theophilus (829-42), however, the iconoclasts again had the upper hand. The problem was finally solved at the Council of 843 under the empress Theodora. The history of the dispute is complex, but it continued in the Frankish church in the latter part of the eighth century and into the ninth. The Byzantines argued about images in terms suggested by Saint Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. Is the image identical with the prototype, or is it merely a likeness? Iconophiles used Saint Basil's remark that "the honour of the image is transferred to the prototype" to justify their position, as well as a text from Dionysius, Ecclesiastical Hierarchy IV.3 (PG III.473c), which argues that an artist who looks at the archetypal form, without distraction, will produce an image which can be taken for the original ("the one in the other"), while differing from the original in essence or nature. For the iconoclasts, the Son was the only true Image of God, and they argued for the identity in substance of image and archetype.

Pope Leo III sent a translation of the Nicene decision to Charlemagne. Charlemagne was outraged at not having been consulted during the Nicene sessions, and on hearing of their decision, which seemed to support the wholesale "adoration" of images (owing to a poor Latin translation of the Nicene judgment), he commissioned the theologians of his court to reply. The Byzantines distinguished between latreia (λατρεία) and proskunesis (προσκύνησις; literally, bending the knee), but the Latin translation rendered proskinesis as adoratio. Charlemagne commissioned his own theologians to examine the matter in detail. This produced the Libri Carolini written possibly by Theodulf of Orleans or perhaps even by Alcuin himself. The Libri Carolini argue against the power of the Byzantine Empire and in favour of the proper headship of the Church in Rome.

The Nicene decision is criticised, and a moderate position is put forward, arguing that images should be neither worshipped nor destroyed. Worship is due to God alone. Religious murals are to be allowed in churches for didactic purposes, but classical figures, including nudes or representations of pagan gods, are to be forbidden. The *Libri* attempt to define the nature of an image, which has repercussions on the Carolingian debate on the nature of man as *imago Dei*, a theme central to Eriugena's anthropology. The debate on images continues in the ninth century, with Agobard favouring the iconoclasts and Dungal opposing them.

The Libri Carolini also addressed the filioque question, which separated the Byzantine from the Western Church, siding with the Western version. Eriugena himself carefully develops his own concept of procession and tries to steer a neutral path between the Greek and Latin formulations of the filioque doctrine in his Periphyseon (II.612a-b). After examining various formulations, the Magister of the dialogue allows that per filium (through the Son) is as acceptable as filio (by the Son) in describing the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father. Eriugena interprets the Nicene judgment that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone (the Greek view) in a tolerant fashion. He says it may have been expressed to prevent the doctrine being discussed openly (ventilaretur, 611d28), suggesting that they may have held a different doctrine in private! Eriugena examines various texts and remarks that the issue needs further discussion. The main thing, however, is to believe that the Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father (II.613a).

After the death of Charlemagne, the revival of learning waned somewhat under Louis I (Louis the Pious) as Lupus of Ferrières (805–62), a close adviser of Charles the Bald's, later lamented.<sup>27</sup> but still

<sup>25</sup> Folz, Coronation of Charlemagne, pp. 90-6. See also S. Gero, "The Libri Carolini and the Image Controversy," Greek Orthodox Theological Review 18 (1973), pp. 7-34, I.-P. Sheldon-Williams, "The Philosophy of Icons," in A. H. Armstrong (ed.), The Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 506-17. Charlemagne was against Irene and wanted to become emperor himself

<sup>26</sup> On the disputed authorship of the Libri Carolini, see A. Freeman, "Theodulf of Orleans and the Libri Carolini," Speculum 32 (1957), pp. 663-705, and "Further Studies in the Libri Carolini 1 and 2," Speculum 40 (1965), pp. 203-89, which argue for Theodulf as author. This is challenged by L. Wallach, who argues for Alcuin as the author. See L. Wallach,

<sup>&</sup>quot;The Unknown Author of the Libri Carolini," in Didascaliae: Studies in Honour of Anselm A. Albareda (New York: Rosenthal, 1961), pp. 469-515. For a more recent appraisal, see P. Meyvaert, "The Authorship of the Libri Carolini: Observations Prompted by a Recent Book," Revue Bénédictine 89 (1979), pp. 29-57. See also Marenbon, From the Circle of Alcuin, pp. 35-6.

<sup>27</sup> It has recently been argued that Lupus's view is exaggerated and that, in fact, there was a steady growth in learning and scholarship right through the ninth century. See Riché, "Les Irlandais et les princes carolingiens aux VIIIe et IXe siècles," in Löwe (ed.), Die Iren und Europa, p. 739. Also see F. L. Ganshof, "Louis the Pious Reconsidered." History 42 (1957), pp. 171-80. Lupus studied under Hrabanus Maurus at Fulda, compiled a summary of Germanic law for Count Eberhard of Friuli, wrote many letters which have survived, became abbot of Ferrières in 840, and served as a diplomat for Charles the Bald. He was a learned classicist and a quintessential Carolingian figure. He was also a friend of Gottschalk's and corresponded with him on theological matters. Lupus's letters offer a very good picture of the time.

managed to attract educated men such as Dicuil (who dedicated his work to Louis)28 and Hilduin, who translated the Dionysiaca around 831, and thus was extremely influential on Eriugena. 29 In 815 Hilduin became abbot of Saint-Denis, where Hincmar was one of his pupils. He became a chaplain to Louis the Pious in 822 but supported Louis's sons in a plot against their father in 830, for which he was deposed and banished. He returned to Saint-Denis in 831, however. Louis was in continual power struggles with his own sons. He was ousted by Lothair in 833 but regained power in 834 with the help of his son Louis the German. In 838 he gave his youngest son, Charles the Bald, a kingdom in the north-west of Francia and included in it Aquitaine, which was under the actual control of another of his sons, Pepin I (and later his grandson Pepin II). Louis died in 840, and Lothair (who had been in Italy since the failure of his attempt to overthrow Louis) returned to fight Charles the Bald and Louis the German. In 842 he was defeated at Fontenoy, and in 843 the Treaty of Verdun divided the Frankish lands among the three brothers, with Charles the Bald retaining the western territory; Lothair controlling the middle part, including Aachen; and Louis the German controlling the easternmost portion, including Mainz. There followed a period in which Lothair attempted to undermine the power of his brothers, using his position as emperor, and also using the Church. Charles the Bald, being the youngest, and also having no blood ties with the area he controlled, was in a most vulnerable position. Nevertheless, he displayed considerable military and diplomatic skill, managing to protect himself, fight off new incursions from another enemy - the Vikings - and promote the highest levels of achievement in scholarship and learning which the Carolingian period had seen.

### The patronage of Charles the Bald

A new impetus was given to the Carolingian programme of reform when Charles the Bald (823-77) assumed the throne in a smaller

28 On Dicuil, see Tierney (ed.), Dicuili liber de mensura orbis terrae.

Frankish realm, at the age of seventeen. He immediately took an active interest in the renaissance of letters going on around him.30 His first tutor was Walafrid Strabo, and Charles took as his advisers the powerful churchman Hincmar (806-82), bishop of Rheims, 31 and the letter-writer Lupus of Ferrières.

Through the 840s and 850s Charles the Bald manoeuvred with his brothers, forming alliances now with Louis the German, now with Lothair, in order to stabilise his position. In 858, while Charles was besieging Vikings on the Seine, Louis invaded his territory, invited in by the Bretons and some nobles from Neustria. Hincmar was able to get Louis's intervention declared illegal. Charles could only operate with the support of the nobles and the church. He therefore gave grants of lands to the monasteries, and granted them the right to mint coins, to charge tolls, to gain financial support from the operation of hospices for travellers (for example at Saint Josse, a hospice administered by Lupus's abbey at Ferrières), or to hold markets.32 Charles had to make various settlements also with Pepin in Aquitaine, and with the Vikings, whose raids were increasing since the 840s. In all of these affairs Charles proved a powerful and able monarch.

Under his patronage, many new works were begun - he had an interest in mathematics and theology - and poems were dedicated to him. Eriugena, for example, has a poem, Auribus Aebraicis, imploring Christ to help Charles force the barbarians to submit to him. In this poem, Charles is praised as a patron of churches and gold

with the cases of nouns governed by, for example, a Greek verb which takes a genitive case, while the Latin equivalent would require an accusative case. Here he carries the genitive into the Latin, thereby making his meaning quite obscure.

30 See the excellent studies in M. Gibson and J. Nelson (eds.), Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom, British Archeological Reprints ser. 101 (Oxford: BAR 1981), especially J. Nelson, pp. 51-70, and R. McKitterick, pp. 385-400. See also R. McKitterick, "Charles the Bald (823-877) and His Library: The Patronage of Learning," English Historical Review

95 (January 1980), pp. 28-47.

32 See R. McKitterick, The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians (London: Longman, 1983), p. 181.

<sup>29</sup> On Hilduin, see G. Théry, Etudes dionysiennes. Vol. 1, Hilduin traducteur de Denys. (Paris: Etudes de philosophie médiévale, 1932). Hilduin's translation is not valued highly by Théry, who believes it fundamentally misunderstands Dionysius's thought. Eriugena, on the other hand, goes to great pains to find new words to render Dionysius's non-classical Greek into a Latin equivalent; however, he has great difficulty with the Greek syntax, especially

<sup>31</sup> On Hincmar see J. Devisse, Hincmar: Archevêque de Reims 845-882, 2 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1975), and P. R. McKeon, Hinemar of Laon and Carolingian Politics (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1978). Hincmar had been brought up in the abbey of Saint-Denis and had been educated by Hilduin. He had spent time at Louis the Pious's court in Aachen during the 830s and was consecrated bishop of Rheims in 845. He wrote a number of important treatises on the nature of kingship (De ordine palatii and De regia persona). He did not always support Charles - as, for example, in the question of the appointment to the see of Bourges, where Charles supported Wulfad against Hincmar.

ornaments. Many illuminated manuscripts, richly decorated, were produced and often dedicated to him. There may in fact have been a court school of manuscript illumination, which was responsible for the richly decorated Codex aureus, for example, or the Compiègne Antiphonary (Bibl. Nat. lat. 17436) or the Gospel of Charles the Bald (Bibl. Nat. lat. 323).

Charles is frequently depicted in these manuscripts: For example, in the Psalter (Bibl. Nat. lat. 1152) he is compared to Theodosius; in the Codex aureus he is depicted enthroned;<sup>33</sup> and a work of the Tours school shows him being presented with a Bible.<sup>34</sup> The Codex aureus contains portraits of the four evangelists, Charles, and a painting of the adoration of the Lamb. Some of the portraits contain tituli which were excerpted from verses originally attributed to Alcuin. There is a partial copy of these verses in a Paris manuscript (Bibl. Nat. lat. 5577) which Jeauneau has examined. He has concluded that these verses were squeezed onto a manuscript containing Alcuinian texts but that the verses themselves are not by Alcuin. Jeauneau believes some of the verses show a similarity with John Eriugena's Carmina and might even have been written by him, showing a connection between Eriugena as court scholar and the most important illuminated manuscript of the Carolingian period.

One of the most beautiful illuminations of the period is of a secular work - the De institutione arithmeticae of Boethius - which was decorated with silver and gold. Eriugena's poems actually celebrate this new golden age. One poem, Aulae sidereae, refers to a church Charles built in honour of Mary. This church has been identified as Saint Mary's at Compiègne, and the occasion is thought to have been the dedication of the church on 5 May 877. This church may have been modelled on one Charlemagne built earlier at Aachen, and it perhaps marked Charles the Bald's accession as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

The uncertain political climate hardly offered the best conditions for the pursuit of scholarship. To complicate matters, Charles ruled from a peripatetic court, which travelled across mainly the Isle-de-

34 See H. Kessler, The Illustrated Bibles from Tours (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977).

France region, stopping at various monasteries and settlements, depending on the time of year. Centres visited by the court include Compiègne, Quierzy, and Rheims. 35 In later years he is thought to have settled chiefly at Compiègne.<sup>36</sup>

Given the conditions of this travelling court, it is difficult to speak of a palace school, meaning an institution such as Charlemagne had at Aachen. Nevertheless there are several references to such an institution, chiefly, Heiric of Auxerre's remark (in the preface to his Vita Sancti Germani) that Charles's palatium deserved the name scola because of its scholarly as well as military discipline.<sup>37</sup> There is no evidence of the site of this school, however.

Many scholars have suggested that the site of the palace school was at Laon, a fortified settlement on a hill near Quierzy, which maintained a high renown in scholarship and learning throughout the ninth and tenth centuries. John Contreni has pointed out that the importance of Laon was a function of its proximity to the Carolingian court, as well as of the involvement in politics of Laon's bishops, men such as Pardulus (consecrated bishop in 848) and Hincmar of Laon. Hincmar (c. 835-877), a nephew of Hincmar of Rheims, became bishop of Laon in 858 and supported Charles the Bald against Louis the German's invasion that year. He amassed a large fortune for himself, however, and was deposed in 871. He sided with Charles's son Carloman in a revolt against Charles and was imprisoned in 873.38 Laon had both a cathedral and a chapel,

37 Hrabanus Maurus had written extolling the virtues of military training to Lothair II in his De anima; see Delhaye, Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, p. 45; on Heiric's reference to the palace see McKitterick, "The Palace School of Charles the Bald," p. 385. Heiric refers to Charles as a wise Solomon.

38 See the brilliant study by J. J. Contreni, The Cathedral School of Laon from 850 to 930: Its Manuscripts and Masters (Munich: Arbeo-Gesellschaft, 1978), and S. Martinet, "Aspect de la ville de Laon sous Charles le Chauve," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 23-36. On the town's library, see J. Contreni, "The Formation of Laon's Cathedral Library in the Ninth Century," Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 13 (1972), pp. 919-39. On Hincmar of Laon, see McKitterick, The Frankish Kingdoms, p. 189.

<sup>33</sup> On the Codex Aureus see the beautiful edition by G. Leidinger, Der Codex Aureus (Munich: Hugo Schmidt Verlag, 1921-5), and the study by P. Dutton and E. Jeauneau, "The Verses of the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram," Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 24 (1983), pp. 75-120. Charles's portrait appears on 5 verso, the Adoration on 6 recto. I am grateful to the Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale for allowing me to see their copy of Leidinger.

<sup>35</sup> R. McKitterick, "The Palace School of Charles the Bald," in Gibson and Nelson, Charles the Bald, pp. 385-400. See the important study of C. Bruhl, Fodrum, gistum, servitum regis: Studien zu den wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen des Königstums im Frankenreich und in den fränkischen Nachfolgestaaten Deutschland, Frankreich und Italien, von 6 bis zur Mitte des 14 Jahrhunderts (Cologne: Böchlau Verlag, 1968), pp. 39-48, which gives detailed maps of Charles's itineraries.

<sup>36</sup> On the importance of Compiègne see P. Riché, "Les Représentations du palais dans les textes littéraires du haut moyen âge," Francia 4 (1976), pp. 161-71. On the poem of Eriugena see M. Foussard, "Aulae sidereae. Vers de Jean Scot au roi Charles," Cahiers Archéologiques 21 (1971), pp. 78-88; and Y. Christe, "Saint-Marie de Compiègne et le temple d'Hézéchiel," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 477-81.

an important library and scriptorium, and connections with other monasteries – notably Auxerre. It was also noted for its large "Irish colony." Charles the Bald had presided over the installation of Pardulus as bishop there in 848. According to Edouard Jeauneau, Laon had something of a reputation for Greek studies, which was also fashionable at the royal court. Some of Eriugena's poems use Greek words to refer to the king – basileus (βασιλεύς), archos (ἀρχός), kurios (κύριος). Laon, then, was one of the intellectual centres of Charles's kingdom, and it was certainly one of the places where Eriugena wrote and taught, although it is not in fact possible to make the identification between the so-called palace school and the cathedral school at Laon because concrete evidence is lacking. But it is helpful to us to have some idea of the physical setting, historical background, and social context from which the major philosophical work of Eriugena emerged.

It is clear that Eriugena spent time at the court, but he is also listed as one of the masters of the cathedral school of Laon. After him there stretched a line of masters of the school, who may be seen as students and perhaps followers of Scottus's – beginning with his contemporary and fellow-Irishman Martin Hiberniensis (819–75), a liberal arts teacher who commented on the *Annotationes* of Martianus and left behind a compilation of Greek and Latin terms which drew on Eriugena's work, 41 and including Manno (born 843). The last master was Adelelm in the tenth century. These masters were scriptural experts, but they were also all liberal arts teachers who relied heavily on the liberal arts handbook written by Martianus Capella.

Evidence of the reading resources of these Carolingians comes to us in the form of a number of book lists. The evidence of Charles

39 See J. Contreni, "The Irish 'Colony' at Laon during the time of John Scottus," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 59-68, and B. Bischoff, "Irische Schreiber im Karolingsreich," ibid., pp. 47-58.

41 On Martin, see J. Contreni, "John Scottus, Martin Hiberniensis, the Liberal Arts and Teaching," in M. Herren (ed.), Insular Latin Studies. Papers on Latin Texts and Manuscripts of the British Isles: 550-1066 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981), pp. 23-44. Also Contreni, The Cathedral School at Laon, pp. 95-134.

the Bald's own library would suggest that he did not use it as a school library, as it lacks manuals and handbooks.<sup>42</sup> Charles's library contains Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*, Lupus of Ferrières's *De tribus quaestionibus*, Hincmar on the soul, and Ratramnus and Paschasius Radbertus on the Eucharist, as well as some works of Augustine. Presumably it also contained the manuscript of Dionysius (now at Paris) from which Eriugena made his translation.

Wulfad, a companion of Eriugena's to whom the *Periphyseon* is dedicated, was an abbot of Saint-Medard at Soissons and later became archbishop of Bourges in 866. His library, the list of which is extant, gives a good picture of the reading resources of Charles's scholars. This short list contains works by Bede, Isidore, Ambrose, Jerome, and others and is a fairly typical guide to the intellectual resources of the age. It also contains, however, several references to Eriugenian works, namely, his translations of Maximus and "Libri Periphyseon I.I," which may mean Wulfad possessed two copies of the book or two of the five books which make up the dialogue.

As we have seen, Charles was an energetic monarch. He was also an intellectual and displayed considerable interest in the theological disputes of his time. He commissioned a martyrology from Usuard of Saint-German-des-Près in 865, and was presented with Heiric's life of Saint Germanus. As has already been mentioned with reference to Fredegisus, there was a long-standing debate on the nature of the soul, its relation to other souls and the world soul, and the time of its initial connection with the body. Augustine had raised all of these questions in De quantitate animae, Chapter xxxii, in De libero arbitrio, Book III, and elsewhere in his voluminous writings. In De quantitate animae xxxii.69, Augustine had put forward three hypotheses: that all souls are one, that all souls are individuals, or that all souls are both one and many. Augustine could not satisfactorily resolve the issue. Alcuin had touched on the problem in his De animae ratione but left it undecided. Hincmar, one of the most powerful prelates of Charles the Bald's time, also wrote a De ratione

42 McKitterick, "Charles the Bald (823-877) and His Library," pp. 28-47.

<sup>40</sup> É. Jeauncau, "Jean Scot Érigène et le grec," Archivium Latinitatis Medii Aevi, Bulletin du Cange 41 (1979), pp. 5-50. On the school at Laon see Jeauncau, "Les Écoles de Laon et d'Auxerre au IXe siècle," in La Scuola nell'Occident Latino dell'alto Medioevo, Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, vol. 19 (Spoleto: Presso la sede del Centro, 1972), pp. 495-522.

<sup>43</sup> On Wulfad, see J. Marenbon, "Wulfad, John Scottus Eriugena and Charles the Bald," in Gibson and Nelson, Charles the Bald, pp. 375-83. On Wulfad's book-list see M. Cappuyns, "Les Bibli vulfadi et Jean Scot Erigène," Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale 33 (1966), pp. 137-9.

animae, and the Saxon monk Gottschalk made important remarks on the problem in his *De diversis quaestionibus*. All of these contributions interested Charles. But the most famous of all is the discussion by Ratramnus of Corbie in his *Liber de anima*, which was roughly contemporaneous with the *Periphyseon*.<sup>44</sup>

Ratramnus had already written several theological works either commissioned by or dedicated to Charles, among them the *De corpore et sanguine Domini* (PL CXXI.126–170) in 843, and a *De praedestinatione* (PL CXXI.12–80) in 849–50,<sup>45</sup> which displayed his considerable powers as a polemicist. But it was on the question of the nature of the soul that he made a significant philosophical contribution. Ratramnus wrote two treatises on the soul, the first a short tract entitled *De anima*, written in 853. Ratramnus was interested in exploring the relationship of the soul, which is incorporeal, to space, which encloses corporeal bodies, using citations from the authorities, chiefly Augustine. The first tract did little more than assemble a number of traditional texts and demonstrate that the opinion that the soul is corporeal holds no weight with the great authorities.

Ratramnus's second *De anima*, written in 863, is a much more substantial work on the relation between individual souls and the world soul, written at the request of Odo, bishop of Beauvais. Odo wanted Ratramnus to reply to a work of a monk at Fleury, a disciple of the Irish monk Macarius, who had argued for the existence of a world soul, using Augustine's *De quantitate animae*. Ratramnus opposes this view and argues that the universal soul is only an abstraction, since universals are themselves merely concepts in the mind. The debate therefore was not just about the soul but initiated the debate on universals which was to reach a climax in the twelfth century. Ratramnus held that universals, species, and genera did not exist in things themselves (*in rebus*), unlike Macarius or indeed Eriugena, for whom species and genera were more real than *atoma* 

(ἄτομα) or individuals. For Ratramnus the only true substances are individuals. It is false to say all men are one man and to say that all souls are one soul. To explain his point, Ratramnus makes use of Boethius's Contra Eutychen et Nestorium, noting that the monk of Fleury is misinterpreting this text. Ratramnus notes that the monk uses an argument from Boethius which states that whatever is the subject of predication is a substance, including "nothing" (nihil), since even "nothing" must signify something (aliquid). Ratramnus agrees but makes a distinction between substantia and natura, and also, following Boethius, between substantia and subsistentia (Eriugena appears to use these terms indiscriminately). Every predication involves a nature, Ratramnus argues, but not every nature is a substance. Furthermore, the individual things are substances but genera and species are more truly called subsistentia.<sup>46</sup>

This work seems to have brought to an end a controversy over the soul which had raged since Alcuin's time, and it marks a new and higher stage of intellectual debate. The influence of Boethius's careful grammatical approach to theology is evident as is a new rationalism.

Carolingians (from Alcuin and Hrabanus to Hincmar and Ratramnus) were fascinated by the psychology and anthropology of human nature, developing scriptural comments on man's image and likeness to God, with the aid of Saint Augustine's writings. Indeed, we shall see that Eriugena brings this interest in psychology to a new philosophical peak with his complex theory of the levels of the human mind, its self-knowledge, and its fundamental indivisibility and incorporeality.

Eriugena has rarely been mentioned in connection with this controversy on the soul, although in the tenth century another of Ratramnus's works on the Eucharist, the *De corpore et sanguine Domini,* circulated under the name of John Scottus and played a significant role in the controversy surrounding Berengar of Tours: It was condemned at the Council of Vercelli in 1050.<sup>47</sup>

The Eucharist controversy in the time of Charles the Bald had

<sup>44</sup> On Ratramnus, see J.-P. Bouhot, Ratramne de Corbie: Histoire littéraire et controverses doctrinales (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1976); P. Delhaye, Une Controverse sur l'âme universelle au IXe siècle (Namur: Centre d'Etudes Médiévales, 1950); D. C. Lambot, Ratramne de Corbie: Liber de anima ad Odonem Bellovacensem (Namur: Godenne 1952), and A. Wilmart, "L'Opuscule de Ratramne sur la nature de l'âme," Revue Bénédictine 43 (1931), pp. 207-33.

<sup>45</sup> On predestination see Bouhot, Ratramne de Corbie, pp. 35-41, and M. Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène: Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée (Louvain: Abbaye de Mont César, 1933), pp. 110-11. The debate on predestination was one of the most important theological controversies of the ninth century and involved not only theologians: Charles the Bald himself took an active interest in the dispute.

<sup>46</sup> See Lambot (ed.), Ratramne de Corbie, pp. 52-67. Eriugena develops another word to render the Greek idea of underlying subsistence — Substitutio — which has the sense of bringing into being, and hence, of creation; see De praed. 386b, Periphyseon II.559b, IV.772a.

<sup>47</sup> See Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 86-91; R. Heurtevent, Durand de Troam et les origines de l'hérésie bérengarienne (Paris: Beauchesne, 1912), pp. 253-67. See also Bouhot, Ratramnie de Corbie, pp. 135-7, and Jean de Montelos, Lanfranc et Bérenger: La Controverse eucharistique du XIe siècle (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1971).

been initiated by Paschasius Radbertus, abbot of Corbie (d. 860), with his De corpore et sanguine Christi. Ratramnus then wrote his treatise on the subject. Scholars originally assumed that Ratramnus was replying to Radbertus, but more recently Bouhot has argued that the works were written independently.<sup>48</sup> In answer to Charles's inquiry as to whether the body of Christ was present in the Eucharist in truth or in mystery (veritas or mysterium), 49 that is, symbolically, Ratramnus argues for a spiritualist position. The body of Christ is present spiritually not physically, but although it is thus present in figura, this does not mean it is not present in truth (veritas). Ratramnus thus prefers the word figura to Charles's mysterium, because figura suggests that while the truth is revealed to humans, it is also veiled in a certain way. Ratramnus further distinguishes between Christ's historical body and his Eucharistic presence. Eriugena will later follow a similar "spiritualist" position in his Homily, as does Gottschalk. Like Ratramnus, Eriugena argued that the Eucharist was a symbol, and as he says in his Commentarius in Evangelium Johannis I.xxxi.311b, we consume Christ in the Eucharist mente non dente. As a matter of fact, the Carolingians were here relying on texts in Saint Augustine, for example, his In Iohannis Evangelium tract xxvi.12 (PL XXXV.1612 CCSL XXXVI, p. 266) or his Enarrationes in Psalmos (PL XXXVII.1265 and CCSL XXXIX, p. 1386), and this position was not considered unorthodox until much later.

Other theological controversies of the time, which have a bearing on the philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena and in which Charles took an interest, include the argument on the nature of hell, which Eriugena discussed in the *De praedestinatione* and in Book V of the *Periphyseon*, arguing against the idea of hell as a particular place (rather it is the experience of the absence of God), and the problem of the

48 Bouhot, Ratramnie de Corbie, pp. 77-88.

vision of God. 50 This latter problem arose from the attempt to interpret Augustine's De civitate Dei xxii.29 and his Epistola ad Italicam, in which the question of the possibility of seeing God with the corporeal eyes is discussed. Many Latin writers held that the elect will see God with their actual physical eyes, after the general resurrection of the dead, whereas the Greek authors denied that humans will ever be able to see God as He is. The problem was argued in Germany, where De videndo Deum, thought to be by Hrabanus Maurus, was produced. Gottschalk became involved in the debate while imprisoned in Hautvillers and wrote letters to Lupus and to Ratramnus on the subject, arguing that our physical eyes will be transmuted into spiritual eyes. This attracted the attention of Hincmar. Whether or not John Scottus wrote his own De visione Dei (there are references to such a work in library entries), he certainly contributed to the debate by introducing the Greek view of the beatific vision in the Periphyseon (I.447b) where he argued that no-one can see God as He is. Augustine, on the other hand, did not believe that humans would be satisfied with less than a full vision of God, although he was unable to explain how that vision of God took place. He specifically denied that we will see only an aspect or apparition of God. For Eriugena, God is seen only in His theophanies, which is the true meaning of "face to face" in the Pauline words (1 Corinthians 13.12). In other words, neither with corporeal nor spiritual eyes will man be able to see God as He is; man will only be able to see manifestations of God. This argument continued on in the thirteenth century and was referred to in the Condemnation of 1277.

In summary, then, the Carolingian era was a period of intellectual revival which produced a number of significant scholars interested in the classics and in Augustine, and capable of independent intellectual comment. It is also noteworthy that the Carolingian intellectuals all seem to have known and interacted with one another, as is evident by their letters and tracts. In terms of the raging theological disputes, Eriugena had opinions relating to the subjectmatter in all of these debates, but he offered his views mainly in

<sup>49</sup> Bouhot, ibid., pp. 147-53. The term mysterium as used by Charles seemed to imply that Christ's presence was secret, hidden, and could not be grasped by the human mind. Ratramnus sets out to give exact definitions to the meanings of the words figura and mysterium. He sees the divine presence as revealed in the Eucharist but in a veiled manner (figura est obumbratio quaedam, quibusdam uelaminibus quod intendit ostendens; PL CXXI.130). The idea of truth appearing in a figure, which reveals and obscures at the same time, is at the centre of Eriugena's concept of theophania. Ratramnus contrasts truths revealed in a figura with truths which are revealed purely, openly, and bare, e.g. the virgin birth, crucifixion, and death of Christ (PL CXXI.130). On Eriugena's use of the terms sacramentum and symbolum see E. Jeauneau, appendix III of Jean Scot: Commentaire sur l'Évangile de Jean, 180 (Paris: CERF, 1972), pp. 397-402. See also P. Dronke, Fabula: Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

<sup>50</sup> On the vision of God, see M. Cappuyns, "Note sur le problème de la vision béatifique au IXe siècle," Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale 1 (1929), pp. 98–107. See also Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 94–9.

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the context of his own summa theologica, the dialogue Periphyseon. He seems to have intervened directly in only one dispute – the dispute on predestination – and it is this which marks his first appearance in the extant historical record. Before discussing Eriugena's life and writings, we must first examine the dispute which catapulted him onto the world stage. Eriugena, however, was not a polemicist, and after he wrote his De praedestinatione he appears to have taken no further interest in the matter.

### THE PREDESTINATION DEBATE

At the time of the beginning of the predestination controversy, in the 840s, Eriugena was a teacher of the liberal arts at Charles's court. We can infer this from a letter written around 851-2 by Bishop Pardulus of Laon to the church at Lyon. Pardulus mentions Eriugena in the letter as scotum illum qui est in palatio regis, Joannem nomine, and says that John was requested to write a work clarifying the problem after the views of a number of people (including Lupus of Ferrières, Hrabanus Maurus, Prudentius, Amalarius, and Ratramnus) regarding Gottschalk's tract had been solicited. In fact, Ratramnus was a friend of Gottschalk's, as was Lupus. So it is not surprising that their answers were unsatisfactory and that Pardulus and Hincmar searched elsewhere for a champion to oppose Gottschalk. This letter represents the first recorded mention of Eriugena.

Gottschalk (805-68) was a Saxon monk of noble birth and rebellious spirit who had studied with the brilliant but eclectic Hrabanus Maurus at the monastery of Fulda into which he had been given as an oblate by his father, before managing to be transferred to Orbais and later to Corbie.<sup>2</sup> Gottschalk left the monastery without permission, and his extensive travels included a visit to Rome,

<sup>1</sup> This letter, now lost, is cited in Prudentius's De tribus epistolis liber (PL CXXI. 1052a).

The text and translation are given in M. Brennan, "Materials for the Biography of Johannes Scottus Eriugena," Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 27 (1986), pp. 413-60, especially p. 427.

<sup>2</sup> On Gottschalk, see Jean Jolivet, Godescalc d'Orbais et la Trinité, (Paris: Vtin, 1958), and "L'Enjeu de la grammaire pour Godescalc," in R. Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Érigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS, 1977), pp. 79-88; D. C. Lambot (ed.), Oeuvres théologiques et grammaticales de Godescalc d'Orbais (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1945). E. Aegerter, "Gottschalk et le problème de la prédestination au IXe siècle," Revue de l'histoire des religions 116 (1937), pp. 186-233. Gottschalk had been placed in the monastery of Fulda as an oblate by his father. At that time the abbot was Eigil. In 829 his petition to leave was refused and he was allowed to change monasteries instead by the new abbot, Hrabanus Maurus, who followed his subsequent career with concern. Gottschalk went to Orbais, where he began the intensive study of the Church fathers, especially Augustine. His patron was Bishop Ebbo, a longtime rival of Hincmar's.

where he taught his view of predestination at the court of Count Eberhard of Friuli (who was connected by marriage with Charles the Bald) in 845–6. He returned to a fierce controversy in France.<sup>3</sup> As early as 840, Hrabanus had attacked Gottschalk for his views on predestination (PL CXII.1530–53), and had written to Eberhard denouncing him. Hrabanus challenged Gottschalk at a council in Mainz in 848, and Gottschalk was condemned. Hrabanus wrote to Hincmar the same year, asking that he imprison Gottschalk, since Gottschalk was a priest of the diocese of Soissons and therefore under Hincmar's jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup> Hincmar delayed until 849, when Gottschalk was again condemned at Quierzy, by a a synod presided over by the young King Charles, and his writings burned.<sup>5</sup> Gottschalk was whipped, imprisoned, and ordered to keep perpetual silence on religious matters.

Gottschalk, however, had powerful friends including Bishop Ebbo and, while confined at Hautvillers, he continued his theological endeavours and seemed to have had a fair measure of liberty. At this time Gottschalk became involved in a controversy on the vision of God, commenting possibly on Saint Augustine's *De civitate Dei* XXII.29 or else on the *Epistola ad Italicam* on whether God will be seen with the corporeal eyes. Gottschalk wrote to Ratramnus setting out his view that the physical eyes will be spiritually transformed, a position with which Eriugena would later agree. (Eriugena comments on Augustine's *De civitate Dei* XXII.29 at *Periphyseon* I.447b.)

Hincmar was disturbed by his writings and consulted other bishops, notably Prudentius of Troyes, whose reply in late 849 supporting Gottschalk gave Hincmar further cause for concern. In his Epistola ad Hincmarum et Pardulum (PL CXV.971-1010), Prudentius argued that Augustine did actually teach a double predestination. Furthermore, Lupus of Ferrières, a former student with Gottschalk

at Fulda, also sided with Gottschalk's interpretation of Augustine. In 850 Lupus wrote his Liber de tribus quaestionibus, and the influential Ratramnus of Corbie assembled a selection of quotations from Augustine which he sent to Gottschalk for his use and wrote his own work on predestination. Florus, a humanist and the powerful bishop of Lyon, also supported Gottschalk and made use of Cicero's arguments concerning free-will (which are also cited in Augustine's De civitate Dei); Hincmar attacked Gottschalk in his pastoral Ad simplices, making use of Alcuin and Hrabanus as authorities. He sought to warn his flock of the heresy of the monk of Orbais, and argued there was only a single predestination - that of the just, which depends on God's grace. Feeling threatened, he decided to bring in expert advice. Pardulus of Laon, Hincmar's loyal friend, or possibly Charles himself recommended John Scottus, the dialectician, and the result was Scottus's work, De divina praedestinatione,6 written around 850-1. This work, however, was not altogether pleasing to Hincmar because, although it attacked Gottschalk in the most vicious terms, its extreme interpretation of Augustine was itself heretical and contrary to traditional Christian teaching as far as Hincmar was concerned.

The roots of the predestination controversy go back to Augustine's *De libero arbitrio* (A.D. 395), his quarrel with the Donatists, and his attack on Pelagius (who was himself called Irish – Scottus). There is no doubt that Augustine's views were coloured by his fierce opposition to the Pelagians and that he tended to overemphasise the total human dependence on God's grace, thus supporting the view that we are predestined by God and are not free to act otherwise. In *De libero arbitrio* II.xx.54 (CCSL XXIX, pp. 272–3) Augustine

<sup>3</sup> See D. Ganz, "The Debate on Predestination," in M. Gibson and J. Nelson (eds.), Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom (Oxford: BAR, 1981), pp. 353-73. Aegerter gives slightly later dates for his pilgrimage to Rome and sojourn at Eberhard's court. J. Devisse in his monumental study, Hinemar: Archevêque de Reims 845-882 (Geneva: Droz, 1975), gives a detailed account of the controversy. See also H. Liebeschütz, "A Philosopher's Reinterpretation of Augustine," in A. H. Armstrong (ed.), The Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 579-86; and G. Schrimpf, Das Werk des Johannes Scottus Eriugena in Rahmen des Wissenschaftverständnisse seiner Zeit (Münster: Aschendorff, 1982), pp. 72-108.

<sup>4</sup> Acgerter, "Gottschalk et le problème de la prédestination au IXe siècle," p. 197.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>6</sup> The text edited by H. J. Floss, Joannis Scoti opera quae supersunt omnia, is in J.-P. Migne, Patrologia Latina CXXII (Paris, 1853), 355-439. The critical edition is G. Madec (ed.), Iohannis Scotti De divina praedestinatione, CCCM, Scries Latina L (Turnholti: Brepols, 1978). See also J.-P. Bouhot, "Le De divina praedestinatione de Jean Scot," Revne des Etudes Augustiniennes 25 (1979), pp. 256-63. A translation by Mary Brennan is in preparation.

Aegerter, "Gottschalk et le problème de la prédestination au IXe siècle," pp. 192ff. Pelagius was possibly British, but his theological commentaries were always popular among Irish scriptural exceptes, who even cited him by name along with Augustine, obviously unconcerned about his reputation as a heretic. See J. F. Kelly, "Pelagius, Pelagianism and the Early Christian Irish," Mediaevalia 4 (1978), pp. 99–124. Eriugena was accused of having produced rubbish, pultes scottorum, by the Council at Valence in 855, recalling Jerome's jeer against Pelagius. See also Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 102–27. For the discussion in Augustine, see Sancti Aurelii Augustini Opera II.2, CCSL 29 (Turnholti: Brepols, 1970), for the text of De libero arbitrio.

had argued that human will can choose either higher or lower things. Owing, however, to the weakness of fallen nature, it generally tends towards lower things, that is, towards the pleasures of the body rather than the goods of the soul. Augustine in De libero arbitrio III.i.1 (CCSL XXIX, p. 274) is unsure whether this tendency towards lower things is natural, like a stone falling, and hence inevitable, or whether it is voluntary. He argues that it is both - our characters form in such a way that following pleasure becomes natural, even though it is voluntary. In later writings, Augustine introduces divine grace as an aid to the free-will to choose the good. However, gradually he moved to the more extreme position that human beings were totally dependent on divine grace for every action and decision. In this sense, some are predestined by God's will to be saved, others are predestined to be damned. The individual cannot save himself, since his nature is essentially flawed (due, ultimately, to its ex nihilo origin). Augustine's remarks are complex and varied, and the ninth-century interpretations reflect this. Gottschalk presents his views simply as an explication of the African father. He argues that predestination is in fact twofold: It is a gemina praedestinatio, borrowing a phrase found in the authoritative Sententiae of Isidore allowing for predestination ad vitam and ad mortem.8 This means that God's mind or will, which is unchanging, has been decided since before Creation: Human beings are predestined to either hell or heaven, and there is nothing they can do to change this.9 Humanity, then, is divided into two groups, civitates: the elect, led by Christ, and the damned, led by the Devil. Gottschalk's case, based on his careful grammatical method in theology, was bravely and powerfully stated, and does indeed offer a viable interpretation of Augustine's position.

Eriugena's response is flamboyant. He sees Gottschalk's position as stultissima crudelissimaque insania; Gottschalk should be burned in

oil and pitch, in oleo atque pice (PL CXXII.369d), and his misunderstanding of the authorities is due to his lack of education in the liberal arts. Eriugena proceeds to demonstrate, using his own citations from Augustine, that there is no predestination towards evil. because in the strictest sense God could not be said to know evil at all. Eriugena is aware of the novelty of his method<sup>10</sup> and apologises in advance to those who think he is being heretical by denying God's knowledge in this area. His argument is based on the metaphysical premiss that God is una substantia. Although Eriugena relies heavily on patristic interpretation and frequently cites Augustine, his method is more self-consciously dialectical and rationalistic. Eriugena argues from a set of propositions, for example, that God is summa essentia (366b, 414c, 416b, etc.), and is the opposite of non-being (365c); but evil is non-being, and therefore God does not know evil and could not predestine people to evil. This self-conscious use of dialectical argumentation (356a, 358a-b) calling on readers to attend to his argument and not to his style, and invoking the divisions of dialectic, provoked Prudentius to declare it sophistry (PL CXV.104ac). It is clear that Eriugena's own intention was to solve the apparent contradictions in Augustine's own account, thus demonstrating that his theological skills were more considerable than those of Gottschalk. Any trace of dualism such as a dual predestination theory is basically in error about God's nature. God is a substance who is all good; therefore, He can in no sense be said to be able even to entertain the knowledge of evil. God is one, His being is His knowing, and His knowing is His acting. It is in this sense that God can be said to predestine - scire hoc est destinare; His knowing causes things and thus destines them. Since God is good, God's foreknowledge (praescientia) can only be good in itself, and it does not predestine the human will at all. Furthermore, God's knowing is eternal and the concept of a "predetermining" or "foreknowledge" in a temporal sense cannot be attributed to Him. In fact, the only sense in which we can speak of predestination is in the sense that God must be God. There is no double destination or two destinations or one divided into two parts, Eriugena says in the Epilogue.

Furthermore, we must realise that we cannot use language liter-

<sup>8</sup> Isidore, Sententiae II.6.x. Eriugena quotes Isidore in De praedestinatione PL CXXII.366d. For Isidore's text see F. Arevalo (ed.), Sancti Isidori Opera Omnia, in PL 83.606a: "Gemina est praedestinatio, sive electorum ad requiem, sive reproborum ad mortem."

<sup>9</sup> Strictly speaking, according to Gottschalk the damned are not predestined to sin, but only to punishment because God foresees their sin. See Aegerter, pp. 194-5. Many passages in Augustine support this view, and Eriugena acknowledged this, though he cited other texts to the effect that God only foreknows the evil of the wicked and does not predestine it. See J. M. Rist, "Augustine on Free Will and Predestination," Journal of Theological Studies, n.s. 20, part 2 (1969), pp. 420-47. God does not "will" the punishment of the damned; He lets it happen.

<sup>10</sup> Eriugena's method is fully discussed by Schrimpf in Das Werk des Johannes Scottus Eriugena, pp. 84-100. See also Madec, "L'Augustinisme de Jean Scot dans le De praedestinatione," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 183-90.

ally when we speak of God because He is incorporeal and corporeal signs cannot adequately express His nature, which is best referred to by the single word *esse* (390c). God *is* existence; evil, by contrast, does not exist (394c). There is no death of the soul, as Eriugena alleges that Gottschalk was teaching; God does not predestine anyone to death, since God is life, and the source of life in all living things.

Eriugena makes a further careful distinction between human nature before the Fall, which possesses true *voluntas*, and the imperfect fallen *arbitrium*, which sometimes chooses evil (378–82), using quotations from Augustine's *De libero arbitrio*. Augustine frequently distinguishes between the spiritual liberty (*libertas*) of the blessed, and the free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) of the present human condition. When the imperfect judgment chooses sin, it consigns itself to darkness, and the punishment for sin is nothing other than the sin itself. No nature, for Eriugena, has the power to punish another nature. Punishment is simply the absence of beatitude, and the sinful soul remains trapped after death in the region of fire, the fourth element of the material world. The good soul also dwells in this realm, but it does not feel the fire as painful, because to the healthy eye the sun is cheerful whereas to the unhealthy eye it is dazzling and painful.

In this whole treatise Eriugena deals very much with the themes which preoccupied the Carolingian philosophers, and sees himself as merely interpreting the words of Augustine, whom he acknowledges as a master of the arts. But there are quite a number of remarkable and unusual features in Eriugena's tract, worth noting at this point. First of all, his argument is based on careful metaphysical and dialectical reasoning about the nature of God, good and evil. Second, he argues that the superiority of his own position is based on his more thorough understanding of the liberal arts, which gives him a better basis for the correct interpretation of the authorities. Third, Eriugena's position offers an assessment of the human place in the universe, seeing this world as an opportunity given to human nature to perfect itself. Eriugena's vision is extremely optimistic: Salvation is available to all. Even if our flawed moral judgment fails us grace is available. Furthermore, Eriugena's God does not merely not know evil, He did not create hell. Human sinfulness is responsible for creating its own hell. In all this Eriugena shows himself to be not only a skilful dialectician but also a learned and subtle expositor of Augustine. The view of the relation between religion and philosophy is Augustinian. There are also traces of Origen in his work, and a reference to Gregory of Nyssa shows that Eriugena had already, by this stage, some familiarity with Greek theology.

Hincmar was unhappy with this intervention on his behalf and was quick to disown it. Others - Prudentius and Florus - attacked Eriugena severely. Florus, in his Adversus Joannis Scotti erroneas definitiones liber (PL CXIX), based his attack solely on excerpts from Eriugena's work, which Prudentius had sent him, and he makes obvious errors, accusing Eriugena of not citing texts from Augustine, for example. Prudentius also calls him a vaniloguus et garrulus homo (PL CXIX.101), though he was once a friend, and sneers at him for being held in admiration as an intellectual (scolasticus et eruditus). Prudentius also attacks Scottus for devising a novel way of reading the Scriptures, based on the quadrivium of the liberal arts (PL CXV.1020d). He remarks on his Celtic eloquence (celtica eloquentia) in De praedestinatione contra Joannem Scotum (PL CXV.1194a), but says that Eriugena is distinguished by no rank of dignity within the Church. Prudentius uses scriptural quotations against Eriugena and argues that human reason is insufficient to understand the world. Furthermore, history is full of cases of men being punished by God, which Eriugena had declared impossible, and Prudentius also asserts the reality of hell. Eriugena was also accused of Pelagianism, although he himself had disowned this position in his tract, and his works were condemned by Florus, using the old sneer of Jerome against Pelagius, as pultes Scottorum. (This phrase reappeared in the two councils which condemned Eriugena in the 850s - first at Valence in 855 and then at Langres in 859.) The dispute raged on through the 850s with various councils being held. In part, the predestination issue was a pretext for a political power struggle between Hincmar and the northern bishops, against Florus and the southern bishops of Gaul. Quierzy was in the north and Valence in the south, near Lyon. Savonnières was neutral ground. Charles the Bald called a synod at Quierzy in 853; only a few bishops attended, however, and its declarations were overturned by the Synod of Valence in January 855. Hincmar wrote a second treatise on predestination attacking Gottschalk as well as Prudentius and Ratramnus. In 859 meetings were held at Langres and at Savonnières which issued decrees explicitly attacking Eriugena, and Hincmar wrote his third

treatise. Gottschalk continued to be persecuted until his death in 868.

Devisse in his careful study of this controversy claims that Eriugena had no impact at all on his contemporaries because his arguments were so removed from them as to be incomprehensible. Florus also complained that, unlike Gottschalk, Eriugena had not been ordered into silence but instead was being accorded great honours.

It is from the surviving texts of the predestination debate that we gain the most *testimonia* concerning Eriugena, and the overall picture emerges of a rationalist scholar, well equipped in the liberal arts and also in Scripture, willing to follow his own mind on the great theological problems of the day.

11 Devisse, Hincmar, vol. 1, pp. 150-1.

### ERIUGENA'S LIFE AND EARLY WRITINGS

The predestination controversy marks the first written evidence we have of Eriugena's life and activities. We do not know when or where he was born, but modern scholarship, beginning with Cappuyns's monumental study of 1933, has agreed that he was born in Ireland near the beginning of the ninth century, probably around 800–810. Eriugena is not mentioned in the Annals of St. Bertin, which list events from 830 and were a continuation of the Royal Frankish Annals, the official record of events in the Carolingian realm. Pardulus's letter indicates that by the time of the De praedestinatione (c. 850–1), Eriugena was already attached to the Carolingian palace and was well known as a teacher of the arts. He undoubtedly enjoyed royal favour, because, unlike Gottschalk, he was not persecuted for his beliefs, as Florus lamented, and continued to work for Charles in the early 860s, as his translations of Dionysius testify.

Aside from what I have said about Irish and Carolingian culture in general, we have very little evidence of Eriugena's educational background and training. We have no evidence of his Irish schooling or of the reasons which brought him to the court of Charles.<sup>2</sup>

2 The usual reason given (by William of Malmesbury, for example) for his travel was the disturbance caused by war in Ireland. The Norse invasions of Ireland began in 795 and continued all through the ninth century. Eriugena, however, never makes any reference to local events.

<sup>1</sup> The best biography is still M. Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène: Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée (Louvain: Abbaye de Mont César, 1933). Mary Brennan has assembled and translated the sources for the biography in her "Materials for the Biography of Johannes Scottus Eriugena," Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 27 (1986), pp. 413-460. Earlier biographies include T. Christlieb, Leben und Lehre des Johannes Scottus Erigena in ihrem Zusammenhang mit des vorhergehenden und unter Angabe ihrer Berührungspunkte mit der neueren Philosophie und Theologie (Gotha, 1860); J. Huber, Johannes Scotus Erigena: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie im Mittelalter (Munich, 1861), and O. Hermens, Das Leben des Johannes Skotus Erigena (Jena, 1868). Earlier biographies relied on William of Malmesbury. Staudenmaier sees Eriugena as a youthful genius like Schelling and thus sets his birth as 828 in his Johannes Scotus Erigena und die Wissenschast seiner Zeit, part 1 (1834; reprint Frankfurt, 1966), p. 127 n. 2.

Although some have disputed it, we do know that John was Irish, from the remark of Prudentius that John was sent to France from Hibernia, that is, Ireland: "You alone, most sagacious of all men, Ireland sent across to Gaul in order that she might through your instruction possess knowledge such as none but you could master."3 Contreni has suggested that he was the "Johannes medicus" mentioned in a charter of 845, and has further suggested that Eriugena may have lived for a while in the Rhine valley.4 He is associated with Strasbourg, through a letter he wrote to a Winibertus, thought to be the abbot of Schüttern Abbey in the diocese of Strasbourg. There is also a suggestion that he was at Saint-Medard, with his friend Wulfad, and possibly at Rheims. There is definite evidence in the form of notes and florilegia that he had Irish scribes and students in his circle, or "colony," as Contreni calls it, and several Irish word-lists are extant. 5 Some biblical glosses existing from that circle which may in fact have been written by John Scottus (they are signed IOH) contain Irish words and suggest that Eriugena may have had to explain some of his Latin terms in Irish to his students. These glosses are names for plants, fish, insects, and so forth, and do not reveal any philosophical intent.

We do not know if Eriugena was a priest or monk. Although he wrote scriptural commentaries and the Vox spiritualis, which is un-

3 PL CXXV.1194a. See Mary Brennan, "Materials," p. 426.

4 J. Contreni, "Masters and Medicine in Northern France during the Reign of Charles the Bald," in M. Gibson and J. Nelson (eds.), Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom (Oxford: BAR, 1981), pp. 333-50. Contreni suggests Eriugena's connection with the Rhine valley in his study. The Cathedral School of Laon from 850 to 930: Its Manuscripts and Masters

(Munich: Arbeo-Gesellschaft, 1978), p. 86.

doubtedly a Christmas homily, he is referred to disparagingly by Prudentius as having no distinguished rank within the Church (PL CXV.1043a). This of course could mean that he did not hold a high rank in the Church. It is also possible that he became a cleric in later life. There is some evidence that he had a brother called Aldelmus.

It was not until the twelfth century that accounts of Eriugena's life began to be written - chiefly the three separate versions given by William of Malmesbury in his chronicles, De gestis regum anglorum and De gestis pontificum anglorum. Here Eriugena is confused with another John who lived in England at the time of King Alfred. His time at the Carolingian court is recorded, and he is said to have then tired of controversies and returned to England, where he settled at Malmesbury. According to William's version, Eriugena was something of a humourist, and two jokes are recorded which indicate Eriugena's cordial relationships with the king. William also relates how Eriugena met his end. He was stabbed to death by his pupils in a manner which earned him a martyr status. Most later accounts of Eriugena's life are based on William's version. Sheldon-Williams sees no reason for disbelieving William's account, and it is possible that Eriugena may have spent time in England, but given the lack of confirming evidence, the account must be treated with caution.

Aulae sidereae, the poem Eriugena wrote to commemorate the consecration of Saint Mary's Church at Compiègne, indicates that he was still alive in 877, if the identification of the church mentioned in the poem with Saint Mary's is accepted. We therefore know the rough dates of Eriugena's life. But he is most properly remembered by his writings, the earliest of which are the De praedestinatione and the Annotationes in Marcianum, to the second of which we will now turn.

Eriugena had a reputation at the court as a grammaticus or liberal arts teacher. There exist references to his learned commentaries on the De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii of the late Latin writer Martianus Capella, and Cora Lutz and others have thought that they have

<sup>5</sup> J. J. Contreni, "The Irish Colony at Laon during the Time of Charles the Bald," in R. Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS, 1977), pp. 59-67. There is no direct evidence that Eriugena wrote in Irish, and his prose style shows few links with Hiberno-Latin. See L. Bieler, "Remarks on Eriugena's Original Latin Prose," in J. J. O'Meara and L. Bieler (eds.), The Mind of Eriugena (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973), pp. 140-6. Some manuscripts of biblical glosses containing Old Irish words survive which are connected with the Irish colony at Laon. Some of these glosses are marked IOH, signifying to some scholars that they were the work of Johannes (= IOH) Scottus. However, the word-list itself is mainly of everyday items and contains no philosophical or technical terms. See J. J. Contreni, "The Biblical Glosses of Haimo of Auxerre and Johannes Scottus Eriugena," Speculum 51 (1976), pp. 411-34. See also P. Ó Néill, "The Old-Irish Words in Eriugena's Biblical Glosses," in G.-H. Allard (ed.), Jean Scot écrivain (Montreal: Institut d'Etudes Médiévales, 1986), pp. 287-97. Ó Néill seems to assume too readily that IOH is to be identified with Eriugena.

<sup>6</sup> Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 234-6, has argued against the identification; he believes the poem may be referring to the church at Rheims built in 862. Cappuyns believes Eriugena died around 870.

identified these manuscripts.<sup>7</sup> One manuscript now at Oxford, but originating from Metz, is believed by Liebeschütz to illustrate a phase of Eriugena's career, which predates the *De praedestinatione* controversy; whereas he believes the other manuscript, at Paris (Bibl. Nat. lat. 12960), the basis of Lutz's edition, to be later. According to Liebeschütz the Oxford glosses are more characteristically Eriugenian than those printed by Lutz in her edition, and correspond to Eriugena's views as reported by Prudentius.<sup>8</sup>

Neither Leonardi nor Schrimpf accepts Liebeschütz's hypothesis of two versions, an earlier and a later. They suggest that Eriugena never composed a formal "commentary" as such, but that he wrote glosses in the margins and between the lines of a copy of Martianus's work. These glosses, it is theorised, were then copied out again, by different copyists who emphasised different aspects of the works, the result being the two manuscripts we now know. To

7 Cora Lutz has edited one manuscript – the Paris MS 12960 (which also contains the commentaries of Remigius and the Pseudo-Dunchad) – in her Iohannis Scotti Annotationes in Marcianum (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1939). This edition has been criticised on various counts including that of containing non-Eriugenian glosses. In fact, Rand thinks only Books I and II are Eriugena's own work. See E. K. Rand, "How Much of the Annotationes in Marcianum Is the Work of John the Scot?" Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association 71 (1940), pp. 501–23. See also L. Labowsky, "A New Version of Scotus Eriugena's Commentary on Martianus Capella," Medieval and Renaissance Studies 1 (1943), pp. 187–93; H. Liebeschütz, "Zur Geschichte der Erklärung des Martianus Capella bei Eriugena," Philologus 104 (1960), pp. 127–37; C. Leonardi, "Glosse eriugeniane a Marziano Capella in un codice leidense," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 171–82. See also W. H. Stahl, "To a Better Understanding of Martianus Capella," Speculum 40 (1965), pp. 102–15, and W. H. Stahl, R. Johnson, and E. L. Burge (eds.), Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 63 n. 41.

8 H. Liebeschütz, "The Place of the Martianus Glossae in the Development of Eriugena's Thought," in J. J. O'Meara and L. Bieler, The Mind of Eriugena, pp. 49-58, places the Oxford MS in the first half of the 840s, during Eriugena's grammatical phase. He bases this on remarks made by Prudentius; see esp. pp. 51-52. For a fuller discussion of the place of Martianus in Eriugena's development, see G. Schrimpf, Das Werk des Johannes Scottus Eriugena (Münster: Aschendorff, 1982), pp. 35-71, and "Johannes Scottus Eriugena und die Rezeption des Martianus Capella im karolingischen Bildungswesen," in W. Beierwaltes (ed.), Eriugena: Studien zu seinen Quellen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1980), pp. 135-48. See also J. Préaux, "Jean Scot et Martin de Laon en face du De Nuptiis de Martianus Capella," in R. Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 161-70, and his recent "Les Manuscrits principaux du De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii de Martianus Capella," in G. Cambier, C. Deroux, and J. Preaux (eds.), Lettres latines du moyen âge et de la renaissance, Collection Latomus 158 (Brussels: Latomus 1978), pp. 88-90; M. L. W. Laistner, "Martianus Capella and his Ninth Century Commentators," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 9 (1925), pp. 130-8, is still useful. See the recent article by C. Leonardi, "Martianus Capella et Jean Scot: nouvelle présentation d'un vieux problème," in Allard, Jean Scot écrivain, pp. 187-207.

complicate the matter further, Silvestre does not believe that the Metz glosses are by Eriugena at all.9 Herren disagrees with Leonardi and Schrimpf. He believes that some of the glosses are too developed and too long to have been marginal or interlinear comments, and furthermore they are too strikingly different to have been culled from the one exemplar. He therefore suggests that they represent two stages of a commentary on Martianus which may in fact have been written on two separate copies of Martianus's text. This whole discussion has greatly clouded the attribution of the existing Martianus Glossae to Eriugena, and greater certainty will not be achieved until Leonardi completes his announced task of editing all the extant manuscripts separately. For our purposes, however, we can be content to say that Eriugena certainly did write a commentary or commentaries on Martianus, and was closely associated with Martianus studies by his contemporaries in the ninth century. Thus Prudentius says in his book attacking Scottus (PL. CXV.1294a): "Your Capella has led you into a labyrinth, because you have tied yourself more to the meditation of his work than to the truth of the Gospel."" Furthermore, echoes of the Martianus commentary are found in Eriugena's other writings - the account of the planets in the Oxford manuscript being close to the version in the Periphyseon, and the accounts of the liberal arts in the Paris manuscript also having echoes in the Periphyseon. Other manuscripts contain portions of the commentary - notably Leiden BPL 88, which contains Book 9, Berne 331 and Paris Bibl. Nat. 8675, which contains Books 6-9, as well as some manuscripts at Cambridge. What influence did Martianus exert on Eriugena?

Although the *De nuptiis* is an obscure work, Eriugena adopted many aspects of his philosophy from Martianus. Martianus's work is by no means a systematic philosophical treatise, but Eriugena took from it his conception of the movement of the planets, the harmonisation of the whole cosmos through the force of love, the re-

<sup>9</sup> See H. Silvestre, Notice of C. Leonardi, "Remegio d'Auxerre e l'eredità della scuola carolingia," I Classici nel Medioevo e nell' Humanism: Miscellanea filologia 42, pp. 271-88. in Bulletin de théologie ancienne et médiévale 12 (1976-80), p. 595. For Leonardi's views see lean Scot écrivain, pp. 187-207.

<sup>10</sup> See M. Herren, "The Commentary on Martianus Attributed to John Scottus: Its Hiberno-Latin Background," in Allard, Jean Scot écrivain, pp. 265-86.

<sup>11</sup> See PL CXV.1294a: ille tuus Capella . . . te in hunc labyrinthum induxisse creditur, cuius meditationi magis quam veritati evangeliae animum appulisti.

lationships of the four elements to each other, the nature of space, the concept of dialectic and the understanding of the liberal arts as actually conferring immortality on the human soul, the concept of the world soul, and the idea of salvation through philosophy.

Martianus's allegorical work was undoubtedly the most popular compendium of the liberal arts in the Middle Ages, although it seldom rises above an elementary school-book level in its exposition of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, in the absence of first-hand works on Greek science and philosophy, it was an indispensable aid until the recovery of Aristotle in the twelfth century. For the Carolingians it represented their most complete source of secular knowledge.

Little is known of Martianus except that he was probably an African from Carthage who flourished in the period after Alaric's sack of Rome in 410, though some editors have given earlier dates. <sup>13</sup> In his ornate and singularly bombastic allegory, Mercury is advised by his brother Apollo to marry Philology, a learned woman. Philology is carefully prepared for the wedding. Since she is human, she is worried that she will be consumed by fire on her journey to heaven, so her mother, Phronesis, gives her a cloak to protect her, and Lady Anastasia gives her a potion to make her immortal; she is then raised up to the heavens, during which journey she passes through the planets until she reaches Jupiter's palace in the Milky Way. The wedding takes place before a council of gods and philosophers. The seven arts are Philology's bridesmaids (or dowries), who come forward to give speeches on their respective arts. <sup>14</sup>

The work testifies to the importance of the union between *eloquentia* and *sapientia*, between the *verba* of the trivium and the *res* of the quadrivium, as indeed the Carolingian commentators clearly understood. It belongs to a late antique attempt to celebrate the

values of traditional pagan culture – the culture of rhetoric and eloquence – over against the newer Christian values of humility, suffering, and the renunciation of worldly knowledge. The work is influenced by Apuleius's Golden Ass, especially the episode of Cupid and Psyche, and by Varro's Disciplinarum libri IX, and includes many Pythagorean, Stoic, and Hermetic elements within a broad Neoplatonic framework. Curiously, the author appears to have little respect for philosophers and represents them in obscure ways; for example, Heraclitus appears at the wedding in a ring of fire. The marriage symbolises the union of humanity and divinity, learning and eloquence, and the return of the soul to its proper celestial home.

The many neologisms in the work undoubtedly helped to create a style for unusual words in the Carolingian period, and the many glosses it generated attest to the difficulty of the text. Although Eriugena was not the first to write a commentary, his glosses are a clear indication of the extent of his learning in the liberal arts and his method of line-by-line commentary was new. Schrimpf, for example, claims that Eriugena began a new movement of literal commentary on secular texts, which was to have a profound impact on the learning of the High Middle Ages, since it became the preferred method of the universities. Several other Carolingians also wrote commentaries – notably Martin of Laon and Remigius of Auxerre. Indeed, as we have seen, the exact contribution of Eriugena to this corpus of glosses is still a matter of dispute, but all the evidence supports the view that Eriugena was indeed capable of writing them – in that his learning and knowledge of classical mythology and of

<sup>12</sup> See Stahl et al., Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts, vol. 1 (1971), vol. 2 (1978), esp. vol. 1, pp. 230-43. Stahl compares Martianus's section on each art to a high school essay which gives a neat survey of the area with the appearance of comprehension, or a science text-book written by a humanities scholar with no scientific training. See also W. H. Stahl, "The Quadrivium of Martianus Capella: Its Place in the Intellectual History of Western Europe," Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge. Actes du IVe Congrès international de philosophie médiévale (Montreal Paris, 1969), pp. 959-67.

<sup>13</sup> Stahl et al., Martianus Capella, vol. 1, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 24. The bridesmaids (feminae dotales) are in fact "ladies constituting a dowry." The philosophers present include Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, and Democritus.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-71.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 85-90. Martianus appears not to have known much philosophy at first hand, and in his account philosophy is really secondary to rhetoric. Nevertheless there are Neoplatonic elements, including the concept of an unknown One behind all things, and of an ascending hierarchy of being. In all of this the *De nuptiis* is similar to Macrobius's Commentary on the Dream of Scipio. The sections on Dialectic contain an account of Aristotle's categories, logic of terms, the syllogism, and the square of opposition. Dialectic is portrayed in rather ambiguous terms – as grave and stately but also carrying a snake in her hand and having a dangerous sharpness of wit.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 61-4; see also J. J. Contreni, "John Scottus, Martin Hiberniensis, the Liberal Arts and Teaching," in M. Herren (ed.), Insular Latin Studies: Latin Texts and Manuscripts of the British Isles 550-1066 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981), pp. 23-44. Contreni argues that John reworked his commentary several times at various stages in his career. He further says that Eriugena was concerned to get a good text of Martianus and worked with an Abbot Winibertus to achieve this. Schrimpf in Das Werk des Johannes Scottus Eriugena, p. 39, says that Eriugena and Martin were the first to comment on Martianus in a word-for-word manner, thus attempting a genuinely critical interpretation and assessment.

Greek, as demonstrated in his other writings, do measure up to that displayed in the commentaries attributed to him. For our purposes we shall simply cite those glosses which do not conflict with Eriugena's philosophy as found in the *Periphyseon*.

These glosses demonstrate both Eriugena's wide breadth of learning and his precise analytic mind. Eriugena articulates his clear view which correctly identifies Martianus's "religion of culture," namely, that the arts are a part of wisdom itself and are necessary for the saving knowledge of humankind: nemo intrat in celum nisi per philosophiam.<sup>18</sup>

Many of these glosses are simply attempts to clarify and rationalise the meaning of this rich allegory, but Eriugena's original mind breaks through at various points - notably in the section on dialectic, 19 in his view of the arts as making the soul eternal, and most controversially in his attempt to offer an account of the universe.20 This last item has led some interpreters, especially Duhem and Lutz, to think that Eriugena was propounding a cosmology quite at variance with the accepted Ptolemaic one and leaning more towards that of Tycho Brahe. The theory of planetary movement occurs in Book VIII of Martianus in the section on astronomy. This was one of the most popular sections of the work for mediaeval readers. Copernicus later singled out Martianus for praise in connection with his theory that Mercury and Venus orbit the sun instead of the earth. This was in fact a traditional Greek theory argued by Heraclides of Pontus, who may have held that all the planets travel around the sun. Eriugena displays considerable interest in this thesis and in one gloss sees it as reflecting the Platonic view that the sun was at the centre of all things.21 In commenting on Martianus's description of the flight of Mercury to the celestial sphere, Eriugena speculates on the nature of the planets the god will meet with, and he seems to speak as if the sun and not the earth were at the centre of the universe. Duhem suggests that Eriugena could have discovered the Heraclidean theory in Calcidius's Commentary on the Timaeus. According to Duhem, Eriugena went further than the ancient theorists by placing Mars and Jupiter in orbit around the sun (p. 62). This Eriugena does in the Periphyseon III.698a. Lutz supports Duhem in the introduction to her edition of the Annotationes, where (on p. 22) there is a gloss which says that all the planets go around the sun. But Erika von Erhardt-Siebold and Rudolf von Erhardt in two short works, The Astronomy of Johannes Scotus Erigena and Cosmology in the "Annotationes in Marcianum," have argued powerfully that Eriugena's notes by no means add up to a cosmological theory with heliocentric leanings. They point out that ancient writers frequently spoke of Mercury and Venus as merely "companions" of the sun rather than circling it. Furthermore it is argued that commitment to a Neoplatonic theory does not necessarily displace the earth as the physical centre of the universe. Von Erhardt-Siebold and von Erhardt have shown that Eriugena's text can be understood within the context of classical astronomy and the authority of Pliny's Natural History, and that his discussion of the role of the sun is based not on astronomical theories but on his Neoplatonic elevation of the sun to a quasi-divine principle of being.22 Eriugena's astronomical interests continue in Book III of the Periphyseon, where he discusses the size of the heavens in his Genesis commentary on the Fourth Day of Creation. In discussing the size of the sun, he says that both Pliny and Saint Basil refuse to give a fixed size, since it casts no shadow, unlike the moon. He goes on, however, to say that it is of infinite size (III.721c) and that the sun's orbit is at the centre of the space (in medio totius spatii, 722b) which extends from the earth to the highest sphere. He then talks of the sun as being in

<sup>18</sup> Lutz, Iohannis Scotti Annotationes in Marcianum, p. 64 (57.15). Eriugena is commenting on a word in Martianus, and adds that "all philosophers are hairy." See Stahl et al., Martianus Capella, p. 88. On the religion of culture in antiquity, see H.-I. Marrou, A History of Education in Antiquity, trans. G. Lamb (New York: Mentor Books, 1956), pp. 100-1. In ancient Greek and Roman belief, immortality was something which could be earned through paideia rather than something pertaining to human nature as such. Eriugena, while Christianising the arts and giving them a proper role in Christian development, still expresses himself in terms of the traditional understanding of the arts as leading the mind to immortality. Contreni calls Eriugena's the most complete defense of the role of the arts in Christian education.

<sup>19</sup> Stahl et al., Martianus Capella, vol. 2, pp. 106-54. See also Schrimpf, Das Werk, pp. 21-71.

<sup>20</sup> See H. Liebeschütz, "The Place of the Martianus Glossae in the Development of Eriugena's Thought," in O'Meara and Bieler, The Mind of Eriugena, pp. 55-6.

<sup>21</sup> See P. Duhem, Le Système du monde: Histoire des doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic, vol. 3 (1915; reprint Paris: Hermann, 1958), pp. 44-62.

<sup>22</sup> E. von Erhardt-Siebold and R. von Erhardt, Cosmology in the Annotationes in Marcianum: More Light on Erigena's Astronomy (Baltimore, Md.: Williams & Wilkins, 1940), pp. 15-17.

the middle place, and gives a size for its orbit. The whole account is unclear and could be interpreted in different ways.

Eriugena, aware of this problem, says he is giving an account of the philosophical arguments which should not be taken as conflicting with Sacred Scripture. Indeed Scripture offers no definite guidance as to the astronomical distances at all. It is unreasonable, therefore, to make claims of a radical nature for Eriugena's expertise in astronomy and cosmology, as some commentators have done. Of greater interest is Eriugena's attitude towards secular learning in general. He justifies it in terms of Romans 1.20, which teaches that we can learn of invisible things through the visible things God has made.

The real originality of the Annotationes is not that it gives a new astronomical theory of the heavens, but that it follows a rationalist demythologisation of the allegory of Martianus in order to distil general scientific knowledge. Eriugena regards some of Martianus's mythologies as poetica deliramenta, but his explanations of the Muses as the armonia omnium rerum and of Mercury as deriving from medius currens (since Mercury is a messenger and words flow between men) are of particular interest. The glosses show that Eriugena is still heavily indebted to Isidore's etymological explanations; but they already display a knowledge of Greek, and a reference to Gregory of Nyssa in the Oxford Manuscript indicates that Eriugena may have already embarked on his reading of Greek authors at this time (assuming that the glosses were written in the 840s-850s). 23 Of particular interest in terms of Eriugena's later translation of the Greek word atechnös (ἀτεχνῶς) is his recognition that the Greek prefix "α" is not always privative but can signify an excess, augmenting the sense. Thus he explains ania (anoia, ἀνοια) as a higher form of knowing rather than as mindlessness.24 Eriugena is able to comment on the concept of the anima mundi in a manner which indicates neither approval nor disapproval.25

The Lutz edition displays considerable knowledge of the Categoriae decem in the section of the commentary on dialectic. Ousia

 $(O\dot{v}\sigma(\alpha))$  is said to be the highest genus and the unity of many forms (at Lutz, p. 84 [157, 17]), and it contains all things below it reaching down to the lowest species and individuals (atoma  $\alpha \tau \omega$ ). This view is repeated by Eriugena in the Periphyseon. Eriugena offers definitions of form and species (p. 84) and explains the difference between an accident and a proprium.

Eriugena's commentary was reworked by Martin of Laon and extracts from it appear in Laon manuscript 444, which served as a kind of Greek-Latin lexicon. It was also referred to by Remigius of Auxerre in his commentary. Eriugena's work shows the extent of the Carolingian rethinking of classical sources. It is also important evidence of one of the primary sources of Eriugena's Neoplatonism.

To conclude our discussion of Eriugena's early writings, it has been suggested by Silvestre that Eriugena wrote a partial commentary on Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae* around this time. Several sets of glosses survive from the ninth century, but Eriugena's authorship of any of these has been disputed by Courcelle and others. <sup>26</sup> Silk published another commentary on the *Consolatio* in 1935 which he attributed to Eriugena, but Courcelle rejected this in his review of Silk in *Le Moyen Age* in 1937, although he admitted that it has an Eriugenian flavour. There are references to such a commentary by John Scottus, for example, in a Florentine manuscript which mentions Eriugena in a prologue to the *Consolatio*, verba Iohannis Scoti incipiunt, and it is entirely probable that Eriugena did write such a commentary, although he does not refer to the *Consolatio* in the *Periphyseon*. <sup>27</sup>

Glosses on the Opuscula sacra of Boethius, originally attributed to Eriugena by Rand, do "display a certain familiarity with Eriugena's

<sup>23</sup> See Jeauneau's edition of Book I of the Oxford Glossae in his Quatre thèmes érigéniens (Montreal: Institut d'Etudes Médiévales de l'Université de Montréal, 1978), p. 122, [line 24], for the reference to Gregory of Nyssa.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 112, lines 18-20.

<sup>25</sup> See his reference to Varro in Jeauneau, Quatre thèmes érigéniens, p. 149, lines 15-16, and his other reference to the anima mundi on p. 121, line 24.

<sup>26</sup> H. Silvestre, "Le Commentaire inédit de Jean Scot Erigène au Mètre IX du Livre III du De consolatione philosophiae de Boèce," Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique 47 (1952), pp. 44-122. See also N. Haring, "Four Commentaries on De consolatione philosophiae in MS Heiligen-kreuz 130," Medieval Studies 31 (1969), pp. 287-336. Cappuyns, Notice of H. Silvestre, "Jean Scot Erigène, Commentateur de Prudence," Scriptorium 10 (1956), pp. 90-2, in Bulletin de théologie ancienne et médiévale 7 (1954-7), p. 657, and P. Courcelle in La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire: Antécédents et postérité de Boèce (Paris, 1967), pp. 252-3, both deny that Eriugena is the author of this commentary. See also Marenbon, Early Medieval Philosophy (480-1150): An Introduction (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 74. See also J. C. Frakes, "The Knowledge of Greek in the Early Middle Ages: The Commentaries on Boethius' Consolatio," Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 27 (1986), pp. 23-43. About 16 MSS of the Consolation survive from the ninth century with two or three commentaries.

<sup>27</sup> Courcelle, La Consolation, p. 253.

thought but nothing to justify the opinion . . . that John himself wrote them," as Marenbon has recently noted. 28 Rand discovered a Carolingian commentary on Boethius's Opuscula sacra in two redactions, one of which he suggested was written by Eriugena, the other by Remigius. Cappuyns, however, has argued that Remigius was the author of one and a disciple of his was the author of the other. Courcelle agrees with Cappuyns against Rand. Eriugena does refer to the Contra Eutychen at Periphyseon V.877b, although he calls it the De Trinitate.

It is possible that he wrote the commentary on the Boethian translation of the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, which is contained in the famous Paris manuscript 12949. He may have known the *De institutione musicae* of Boethius, since he uses in the *Periphyseon* a number of music examples which have their origin in Boethius.<sup>29</sup>

Up to the late 840s or perhaps 850s, then, Eriugena was a grammaticus, well read in Augustine, Boethius, Martianus Capella, Pliny, Isidore, Macrobius, and other Latin writers (including possibly Marius Victorinus, an extremely important source of Neoplatonic thought), but it was his reading of Greek theology which provoked him to a new reading of the Latin tradition and ultimately to the first attempt at a mediaeval synthesis of Christian wisdom.

It is worth remembering, however, that we should not try to make too strong a contrast between Eriugena the liberal arts master and Eriugena the follower of Greek Platonism. From his earliest writings, Eriugena displays a considerable knowledge of Greek technical terms, even if these were drawn from glossaries such as that preserved in manuscript 7651 of the Bibliothèque Nationale, or

29 H. Chadwick, Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 297 n. 11. There are also important musical glosses in the Annotationes. possibly from other, now lost, glossaries. Moreover, Eriugena has considerable sensitivity to Greek philosophical terms, and he introduces technical Latin terms as equivalents. Most important for our purposes is Eriugena's use of the term substitutio in De praedestinatione (386b), before his attempt at translating Dionysius and Maximus, where it features prominently. Eriugena wants to use a term which conveys the sense of coming-into-being by an effort akin to making or constructing. It is different from substantia in that it seems to include in its concept the idea of an act of making or creating. Thus, already as a grammaticus, Eriugena was developing a consciousness of metaphysical structures which would finally result in the complex four divisions of nature.

<sup>28</sup> Marenbon, Early Medieval Philosophy, p. 75. Marenbon, however, points out that the author of these glosses does explain a line of Boethius in an Eriugenian manner. Thus Boethius's remark, that being is not yet, is explained in terms of a thing being hidden in the primordial causes before it is manifested in genera and species. On Rand's attribution of the glosses, see E. K. Rand, "The Supposed Commentary of John the Scot on the Opuscula sacra of Boethius," Revue néoscolastique de philosophie 36 (1934), pp. 67-77; P. Courcelle, La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire, pp. 248-54; and M. Cappuyns, "Le plus ancien commentaire des Opuscula sacra et son origine," Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale 3 (1931), pp. 237-72. See also G. d'Onofrio, "Dialectic and Theology: Boethius' Opuscula sacra and Their Early Medieval Readers," Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 27 (1986), pp. 45-67, and M. Gibson, "The Opuscula sacra in the Middle Ages," in her Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 214-34.

#### 4

### THE GREEK AWAKENING

The works of an elusive, possibly Syrian mystic of the sixth century who wrote under the pseudonym Dionysius Areopagiticus, thus portraying himself as the first of Paul's Greek converts mentioned in Acts 17.34, were venerated in the early Greek Church as if they were in fact as sacred as the Acts of the Apostles themselves. The Byzantine emperor Michael the Stammerer presented a copy of these writings to Louis the Pious in 827. At that time, they were further confused with the writings of Saint Denis, patron of the Franks. Louis's court chaplain, Hilduin, set about translating them between 827 and 834. In his Passio Sanctissimi Dionysii, Hilduin recounts that Dionysius became bishop of Athens and then travelled to France, where he became bishop of Paris and was later martyred. Hilduin's literal rendering was a reasonable attempt to translate a difficult text, but it seems not to have had any impact on the Carolingian intellectual tradition of the 830s and 840s.<sup>2</sup>

1 On Dionysius see R. Roques, L'Univers dionysien: Structure hièrarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys (Paris: Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1954); I.-P. Sheldon-Williams, "The Pseudo-Dionysius," in A. H. Armstrong (ed.), The Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 457-72. The complete works of Dionysius have been edited and translated into French by M. de Gandillac, Oeuvres complètes du Pseudo-Denys L'Aréopagite (Paris: Aubier, 1943). A recent English translation is Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works, trans. C. Luibhéid, forcword by P. Rorem, preface by R. Roques, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1987). The carliest reference to Dionysius was in 532. See also G. Théry, "L'Entrée du Pseudo-Dionysius en Occident," Mélanges Mandonnet 2 (Bibliothèque Thomiste 14) (Paris, 1930), pp. 23-30; J. M. Hornus, "Les Recherches dionysiennes de 1955 à 1960," Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse 41 (1961), pp. 27-31; and the excellent article of J. Pépin, "Univers dionysien et univers augustinien," Recherches de philosophie 2 (1956), pp. 179-224. It is thought that Dionysius was a Christian follower (or reader) of Proclus. See H.-D. Saffrey, "New Objective Links between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus," in D. O'Meara (ed.), Neoplatonism and Christian Thought (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1982), pp. 64-74.

2 G. Théry, Etudes dionysiennes, Vol. 1, Hilduin traducteur de Denys (Paris, 1932); Vol. 2 (Paris, 1937). Théry says of Hilduin's translation that it was "certes très méritoire, mais exécutée à la hâte par des hommes unexpérimentés, était d'une lecture extrêmement difficile; la pensée de Denys y était souvent méconnaissable, et ce travail n'aurait pu servir de base aux spéculations théologiques" (p. 189). One curious aspect of Eriugena's use of

Charles the Bald asked Eriugena to undertake a new translation, which Eriugena did in the years 860–2, making use of Hilduin's first attempt as well as the one manuscript (Graecus 437) of Dionysius which Louis had acquired and which today survives in Paris.<sup>3</sup> In the epistolary dedication to this translation, the author signs himself "Eriugena," while singing the praises of Charles.<sup>4</sup> Presumably Charles had protected him during his theological controversies and condemnations. It is also possible that the political situation was sufficiently confused to prevent any agreement among the Frankish bishops in relation to the condemnation of Eriugena, and that Charles was able to take advantage of this to promote his court magister. He had certainly regarded Eriugena sufficiently highly to entrust him with the translation of the supposed writings of the patron saint of the Franks.

Eriugena remarks in his *Praefatio* on the difficulty of Dionysius's text, due not only to its antiquity but also to the obscurity of the sacred mysteries Dionysius is expounding. Eriugena never questions the authenticity of these writings as stemming from a disciple of Saint Paul's, but he does remark in the *Praefatio* that the tradition of Dionysius coming to Rome and to Paris is not testified by the ancient writers. In fact, the authenticity of Dionysius was questioned for the first time by Nicholas of Cusa. Grosseteste, for example, took the works to be genuine. Eriugena also remarks in the

Hilduin's translation is that he does not use Hilduin's words, even when they are more accurate than his own. See J. Pépin, "Jean Scot traducteur de Denys: L'Exemple de la lettre IX," in Jean Scot écrivain, pp. 129-41.

3 G. Théry, "Scot Erigène: Traducteur de Denys," Archivium Latinitatis Medii Aevi, Bulletin du Cange 6 (1931), pp. 185-278; M. Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène: Sa vie, son ocuvre, sa pensée (Louvain: Abbaye de Mont César, 1933), 150-61. The manuscript given to Louis in 827 was deposited in the abbey of Saint-Denis, and is now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Greek MS no. 437.

4 This is the only place where Eriugena signs himself thus; the name comes from the Old Irish Eruí," and means "of the Irish race." In one of his poems Eriugena uses the term "Graiugena" (PL CXXII.1236a), which may have been the inspiration for his own name. Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, p. 145, calls Eriugena's tone in his preface to the Dionysius translation, "péremptoire, un peu hautain," noting Eriugena's challenge to readers who doubt the accuracy of the translation to consult the Greek original (PL CXXII.1032c). Roques says that Eriugena came to Dionysius not simply as a translator but as an established philosopher and theologian who even "corrected" Dionysius's thought at several points. See R. Roques, "Traduction ou interpretation? Brèves remarques sur Jean Scot traducteur de Denys," in his Libres sentiers vers l'érigénisme (Rome: Atenco, 1975), pp. 99–130.

5 See J. J. McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 91. Of course, Aquinas also regarded the works as genuine. Lorenzo Valla in 1457, in his *Encomium Sancti Thomae Aquinatis*, noted that none of the early Church fathers knew Dionysius, and thus raised doubts about the historical dating of the works.

preface that he was little suited for the task of translator when Charles appointed him, since he was only a novice in Greek studies.

Eriugena reworked these translations between 865 and 875. He also wrote a commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy*, which develops some of the central themes of the *Periphyseon* and is thought to be later than it. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this study to explore in detail Eriugena's commentary on Dionysius and its influence on the later mediaeval commentaries of Hugh of Saint Victor and Grosseteste.<sup>6</sup>

It was this translation of Dionysius which brought Eriugena to the attention of Pope Nicholas I, who complained in 861 that Eriugena had not submitted this book to his office for inspection – if his letter is genuine. Nicholas was aware that Eriugena was not always prudent in his views, although he is said by many to be a man of multa scientia. Anastasius, the papal librarian (c. 810–80), also became aware of the work at that time. He wrote to Charles that he wondered at (admiror) the learning of this vir barbarus and that he appreciated that the verbatim style of translation was done in order to remain true to the difficult thought of Dionysius. Anastasius sent his own translation and emendations of Eriugena's text to Charles the Bald.

Eriugena translated the whole Dionysian corpus, including the De divinis nominibus, the De mystica theologia, De coelesti hierarchia, and the De ecclesiastica hierarchia, as well as Dionysius's letters. We shall return to the influence of Dionysius on Eriugena in later chapters;

8 Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 154-7. Anastasius marvels at the learning and sanctity of this vir barbarus who comes from the edge of the world. See Brennan, "Materials," p. 431, for the text and translation of Anastasius's letter.

here we shall simply state that Dionysius represents a form of late Platonism of the school of Proclus which has been adapted to express a Christian theological world-view. Dionysius stresses the transcendence of the divine above the grasp of human understanding, and develops a hierarchical cosmology which orders all reality in a series of outflowing from this unknowable Godhead down into sensible and material reality. This outflowing from the One proceeds in a triadic manner, showing the immanence of the Trinity in all created things.

This Greek theological outlook to which Eriugena was exposed seemed to fit well with his own Neoplatonic outlook inherited from Augustine, Martianus, and Boethius. He threw himself into the task of translating as much of this Greek tradition as he could lay his hands on - especially the Cappadocian fathers, notably the important short treatise of Gregory of Nyssa, Peri cataskeues anthropou (Περί Κατασκευής ἀνθρώπου) or De hominis opificio (on the making of Man), which Eriugena entitled De imagine (On the image; translated c. 863). Gregory's text, which seeks to reconcile the conflicting accounts of the making of man in Genesis, is one of the most concise and powerful statements in patristic literature, of the place and function of human nature in the cosmos. For Gregory, man is part of the great chain of being which stretches through the universe, but man has a central place and contains all things in himself in a special way. Gregory produces an anthropology which foreshadows the great Renaissance treatises on man of Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and Paracelsus. Unfortunately, many writers discussing the theme of microcosm rely on Renaissance formulations, which in fact are rather different from Gregory's who, for example, does not want to call humanity a "microcosm" as this would downplay its true importance as imago Dei.

Gregory of Nyssa was an earlier contemporary of Saint Augustine's, strongly influenced by Plotinian and Stoic ideas. His view that corporeal matter (earth, air, fire, and water) really consists of

<sup>6</sup> Eriugena's Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy of Dionysius is thought to be a late work which shows that Eriugena had deeply rethought the nature of the Dionysian philosophy. It has been edited by J. Barbet as Iohannis Scoti Eriugenae Expositiones in Ierarchiam Coelestem, CCCM 31 (Turnholti: Brepols, 1975). An earlier edition by H. Dondaine was published in the Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge 18 (1950–1), pp. 245–302. See also M. de Gandillac, "Anges et hommes dans le Commentaire de Jean Scot sur la Hierarchie céleste," in R. Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS, 1977), pp. 393–404, which shows that Eriugena tried carefully to distinguish the angelic and human natures in terms of their place in the celestial hierarchy and their ability to reflect and contain all things. A full study of the relationship between the Periphyseon and the Expositiones is called for.

<sup>7</sup> See Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, p. 60. The letter is reproduced by William of Malmesbury in his account of Eriugena's life. See M. Brennan, "Materials for the Biography of Johannes Scottus Eriugena," Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 27 (1986), p. 430. The letter's authenticity has been questioned; Brennan gives a version from an eleventh-century MS.

<sup>9</sup> M. Cappuyns, "Le De imagine de Grégoire de Nysse traduit par Jean Scot Erigène," Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale 32 (1965), pp. 205-62. The translation has no preface or dedication and may have been made by Eriugena as a working translation for his own use. It is quoted frequently in the Periphyseon. See Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 172-8. On Eriugena's use of Gregory see E. Jeauneau, "La Division des sexes chez Grégoire de Nysse et chez Jean Scot Erigène," in W. Beierwaltes (ed.), Eriugena: Studien zu seinen Quellen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1980), pp. 33-54.

a commingling of incorporeal qualities (hot, moist, dry, cold) known only to the mind had a strong impact on Eriugena. Actually, this view was already expressed by Aristotle in *Parts of Animals* II.1.646a15, in his discussion of varying levels of composition. Eriugena also took from Gregory the account of the Fall of Man, and the nature of human intellection or *theoria* ( $\theta \in \omega \rho i\alpha$ ).

Eriugena also discovered a work that is still relatively unstudied in the West, the Ambigua of the Byzantine Christian martyr, Maximus Confessor (translated c. 862-4), on and his Ad Thalassium (recently edited by Carlos Steel). The Ambigua of Maximus in fact consist of two works written several years apart. Eriugena refers to the Ad Thalassium (which he calls Scolia) much more rarely than to the Ambigua, although he makes use of it in his Commentary on the Gospel of John.

The Ambigua are extremely long and complex notes on problems in Gregory of Nazianzus's theology, and Eriugena's achievement is

10 Maximus was originally thought to have been born in Constantinople c. 580, but since the publication of an ancient Syriac hagiography, it is now thought that he was born in Tiberias. He was a strong opponent of monothelism, the doctrine that Christ had only one will, and he engaged in a number of important Christological controversics before being persecuted as a heretic, exiled, and martyred in 662. His position was declared orthodox in 680. He is important for his attempt to express Cappadocian and Dionysian Neoplatonic Christianity in terms of Aristotelian categories, such as dynamis and energeia. See P. Sherwood, "Notes on the Life and Doctrine of Maximus the Confessor," American Benedictine Review 1 (1950), pp. 347-56; "Survey of Recent Work on St. Maximus the Confessor," Traditio 20 (1964), pp. 428-37; and "Saint Maxime le Confesseur," Dictionnaire de spiritualité, vol. 3 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1932-), pp. 295-300. On Maximus's doctrine, the classic studies are H. Von Balthasar, Liturgie cosmique (Paris: Aubier, 1947), and the excellent study of L. Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor (Lund: Glecrup, 1965). See also A. Riou, Le Monde et l'église selon Maxime le Confesseur (Paris: Beauchesne, 1973), and Armstrong (ed.), Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy, pp. 492-505. See P. Sherwood, The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus Confessor and His Refutation of Origenism, Collection Studia Anselmiana 36 (Rome, 1955), who argues against Balthasar's view of Maximus as strongly influenced by Origen. See also E. Jeauneau, "La Traduction érigénienne des Ambigua de Maxime le Confesseur: Thomas Gale (1936-1702) et le Codex Ramensis," in Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Érigène, pp. 135-44. See also L. Thunberg, Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of Maximus Confessor (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1085).

II For P. Meyvaert's discovery of the Ad Thalassium translation see his "The Exegetical Treatises of Peter the Deacon and Eriugena's Latin Rendering of the Ad Thalassium of Maximus the Confessor," Sacris Erudiri 14 (1963), pp. 130-48, and his "Eriugena's Translation of the Ad Thalassium of Maximus: Preliminaries to an Edition of This Work," in J. J. O'Meara and L. Bieler (eds.), The Mind of Eriugena (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973), pp. 77-88. A critical edition has been edited by C. Steel and C. Laga (eds.), in Maximus Confessor, Quaestiones ad Thalassium I (QU.I-IV, una cum latina interpretatione Iohannis Scotti Eriugenae), CCCM, Ser. Graeca 7 (1980). Laga is now preparing an edition

of the Ambigua.

all the more remarkable in that he did not have an earlier translation to aid him, as had been the case for the Dionysian translations. The importance of Eriugena's translation of Maximus is shown by the fact that manuscripts of his work actually predate the earliest known manuscripts of the Greek text. Eriugena adopted not only Maximus's technical vocabulary but also his vision of human nature as originally sexless (as also in Gregory of Nyssa); Christ as the Logos which runs through all things and is the being of all things; and the five stages of the return of all things to the One, which include the reuniting of earth and heaven, and the transmutation of everything corporeal into incorporeal realities. Maximus is a devoted follower of Dionysius, but expands Dionysius's cosmology to give a greater place to Christ as Logos, and thus inserts a powerful anthropology into the heart of the hierarchial cosmology. Furthermore, his terminology is philosophically more precise than that of Dionysius, displaying some neo-Aristotelian and possibly Stoic influences.

Charles the Bald had asked Eriugena to undertake the translation of Maximus in order "to clarify the Catholic faith for all," as Eriugena says in his preface (PL CXXII.1196b-c). Such favouritism angered Bishop Florus, who complained that this "enemy of truth" was receiving great honours.

As well as translating Dionysius, Gregory, and Maximus, Eriugena may also have translated the *De fide* of Epiphanius, <sup>12</sup> and the *Hexaëmeron* of Saint Basil, long quotations from which appear in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*.

Eriugena read the works of the Cappadocian fathers – Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus (whom he seems to have known through Maximus's commentary on him) during the 860s, and he assimilated this new theology into his own system in the *Periphyseon* written between 860 and 867. Since Eriugena frequently calls Gregory of Nyssa the "theologian," it has been argued that he thought Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus were the same person. Cappuyns has contended that a passage in the *Periphyseon* II.586a shows that Eriugena could distinguish them;<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> P. Meyvaert, in O'Meara and Bieler, The Mind of Eriugena, pp. 77-88, suggests that long quotations from Greek writers in the Periphyseon, e.g. from Basil's Hexaëmeron and Epiphanius's De fide (which is referred to mainly in Books IV and V), are indications that Eriugena may have translated these works in full.
13 Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 177-8.

Sheldon-Williams, on the other hand, has offered a different reading of the passage in his edition, and the question has not been satisfactorily resolved.

In the *Praefatio* to this translation of Dionysius, Eriugena says he was a novice in Greek studies when he began that work (1031c); however, he speaks admiringly of the "sacred nectar of the Greeks" (1029a) and sees himself as a faithful interpreter. Cappuyns sees Eriugena as offering this last remark as a challenge to critics to compare his translation with the original text, knowing that few in his day would be equipped for the task.

As we have seen from Anastasius's letter, Eriugena translated with the verbatim method of his contemporaries. The manuscript of Dionysius, furthermore, lacked word breaks and almost all accents. All this produced an awkwardness of style and syntax, but, philosophically speaking, Eriugena was forced to develop an original Latin technical vocabulary, and his awkward sentences are often philosophically more correct. Eriugena had to develop terms like superbonitas and superessentialis to translate Dionysian superlatives, and here he had no dictionaries or glossaries to help him. He had to find terms for Dionysian words such as noeros (voépos) and noēsis (νοήσις), and in this respect he was largely on his own. He frequently varies his terminology, however, and thus will translate nous sometimes as mens, sometimes as animus. He translates epistēmē (ἐπιστήμη) as scientia or as disciplina; θευεγία he sometimes translates as divina operatio but sometimes he merely transliterates as theurgia. In the Carolingian period many of Eriugena's Latin translations of Greek technical terms found their way into word-lists and florilegia. The Laon manuscript 444, for example, contains Greek definitions culled from Eriugena, and obviously served as a glossary in the later ninth century.

Little is known of the hermeneutical principles of the time, but René Roques has shown that Eriugena does not separate the task of interpres, or literal translator, from that of expositor, or philosophical commentator. <sup>14</sup> Eriugena's grasp of Greek was imperfect, but in ability to seek out the motivating spirit of the text, he was far su-

perior to Hilduin. 15 Thus, unlike Hilduin, Eriugena mistranslates the Greek adverb oukoun (οὐκοῦν, therefore) as non ergo or nonne ergo (for example, at Celestial Hierarchy, Chapter III [PG III. 168a], translated by Eriugena at PL CXXII.1046a), yet he does so in a manner which allows him to interpret Dionysius correctly, when, in the Expositiones in coelestem hierarchiam, Eriugena corrects his earlier misreading. 16 Eriugena realizes that his translation makes sense only if nonne ergo is taken in the interrogative sense with an affirmative answer implied. In a recent article John J. O'Meara has defended Eriugena's translation on this point. O'Meara says that Eriugena is translating oukoun as non ergo or non igitur since he is using non in the sense of nonne, "which preserves the sense 'therefore' and is a legitimate usage."17 In any event, Roques shows that Eriugena often deliberately misread Dionysius in order to make the latter more compatible with Eriugena's own understanding of philosophy. Thus, for example, he translates the Greek atechnos (artlessly) as its opposite, "artfully," although Hilduin before him had correctly rendered it as inartificose. As we have seen, in the Annotationes Eriugena says that the Greek prefix à can signify an excess of the quality as well as a privation. Eriugena uses his phrase valde artificialiter in order to express more clearly the Dionysian philosophy of the expression of theological statements in terms of imagery. 18 In general, Eriugena's translation shows a more careful concern for the metaphysical nuances of technical terms than Hilduin's version, which is often more accurate on the literal or commonsense level. In the Expositiones, for example, Eriugena translates the Greek demiourgos (δημιουργός) of Dionysius as creator, not as opifex, which was Hilduin's term. Although Hilduin is literally more correct, Eriugena's

<sup>14</sup> See R. Roques, "Traduction ou interpretation? Brèves remarques sur Jean Scot traducteur de Denys," in Libres sentiers vers l'érigénisme (Rome, 1975), pp. 99–130. Eriugena himself distinguishes between interpres and expositor at Praefatio 1032b-c.

<sup>15</sup> Théry is less enthusiastic than Roques about Eriugena's ability as a translator. Eriugena, according to Théry, "lacks life." See Théry, Etudes dionysiennes, vol. 1, Hilduin, pp. 166-7.

<sup>16</sup> See Théry, "Scot Erigène: Traducteur de Denys," Bulletin du Cange 6 (1931), p. 238, and Roques, Libres sentiers vers l'érigénisme (Rome: Ateneo, 1975), p. 105 n. 9. Hilduin correctly translated (οὖκοῦν) as ergo or igitur (see Théry, Études dionysiennes, vol. 2, p. 470). Since Eriugena's text of Dionysius lacked diacritics it is easy to see why he confused οὖκοῦν with οὖκουν.

<sup>17</sup> See J. J. O'Meara, in G.-H. Allard (ed.), Jean Scot écrivain (Montreal: Institut d'Etudes Médiévales, 1986), p. 121. O'Meara cites similar usages at Periphyseon IV.742c, IV.788d, IV.797a, IV.819d, and V.923a.

<sup>18</sup> See R. Roques, "Valde artificialiter: Le Sens d'un contresens," in Annuaire de l'Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes, 1969-70, 77 (1969), pp. 31-72.

translation shows his concern to preserve the Christian philosophy at the heart of Dionysius.

It was the richness and complexity of Eriugena's "Greek" spirit which set him apart completely from his Carolingian contemporaries. Efforts to explain this uniqueness have led to legends that Eriugena travelled to Greece, Arabia, and even the Orient. 19 None of this can be substantiated, but these tales indicate the intellectual distance which separated him from his peers.

It has often been argued that Eriugena must have learned Greek in the monastic schools of Ireland, but, as I said in Chapter 1, recent scholars have maintained that the Irish did not in fact possess a deep knowledge of Greek beyond a modest lexical and grammatical understanding as displayed in their reading of Priscian, for example, and that it is more likely that Eriugena learned the language on the Continent, either at a centre known for its Greek studies – like Lérins – or else from Greek monks who we know had taken refuge in France at this time. <sup>20</sup> Jeauneau recently argued that knowledge of

19 John Bale in his account of famous British writers in 1548 mentions that John had undertaken a pilgrimage as far as Athens, and for many years had "sweated over Greek and Chaldaean and Arabic letters"; he also visited every philosopher's shrine, including the Oracle of the Sun (oraculum solis), which Aesculapius had built. For a critical comment on Eriugena's supposed voyages see R. L. Poole, "Note on the Origin of the Legend Respecting John Scotus' Travels in Greece," appendix 1 in Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought and Learning (1884; reprint New York: Barnes & Noble, 1960), pp. 271-73. See also Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, 12-13, 146-7.

20 The problem of the source of Eriugena's knowledge of Greek is one of the most controversial in Eriugena scholarship. Cappuyns (Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 28-9) believed that he learned Greek on the Continent, possibly from Greeks attached to Charles's court. Bieler, however, believes he learned it in the monastic schools of Ireland. On the general state of Greek in early mediaeval Europe, see G. Stephens, The Knowledge of Greek in England in the Middle Ages (1931; reprinted Norwood, N.J.: Norwood Editions, 1978); Laistner, Thought and Letters in Western Europe A.D. 500-900 (London: Methuen, 1957), pp. 238-50; P. Courcelle, Les Lettres grecques en Occident de Macrobe à Cassiodore (Paris: Boccard, 1948). On Greek studies in Ireland see M. Esposito, "Greek in Ireland during the Middle Ages," Studies 1 (1912), pp. 665-83; W. G. Hanson, The Early Monastic Schools of Ireland: Their Missionaries, Saints and Scholars (Cambridge: Heffer, 1927); L. Bieler, Ireland: Harbinger of the Middle Ages (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), and "The Classics in Ancient Ireland," in R. R. Bolgar (ed.), Classical Influences in European Culture A.D. 500-1500 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 27-47; E. Coccia, "La cultura irlandese precarolingia. Miraculo o mito?" Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 8 (1967), pp. 257-420, which seriously questions the alleged Irish knowledge of Greek; W. B. Stanford, Ireland and the Classical Tradition (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1976); Stanford takes the legend of Eriugena's travels in Greece more seriously. See also J. J. O'Meara, Eriugena (Cork, 1969), pp. 4-13, and M. Herren, "The Commentary on Martianus attributed to John Scottus: Its Hiberno-Latin Background," in Allard, Jean Scot écrivain, pp. 265-86. For an interesting review of the level of Greek on the Continent in the ninth century, see J. C. Frakes, "The Knowledge of Greek in the Early Middle Ages: The Commentaries on Boethius' Consolatio," Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 27 (1986), pp. 23-43.

Greek was always associated with Irish colonies in Europe (e.g., at Saint Gall, Liège, and Laon), that the Irish were especially enthusiastic about Greek studies, and that there are good grounds for assuming a tradition of Greek in Irish monasteries. One of the reasons for the popularity of Greek was undoubtedly the fact that Latin never became the official language in Ireland, since the country was never part of the Roman Empire. The Wherever he learned the language, Greek not only opened up a new world for Eriugena but gave him a more precise philosophical vocabulary – terms like nous, logos, ousia, physis, and so on, which he freely imported into his Latin writings. The Periphyseon with its Greek title and long quotations from the Greek fathers is the culmination of this self-conscious attempt to integrate the world of Latin learning with Greek spiritual and philosophical wisdom.

<sup>21</sup> See E. Jeauneau, "Jean Scot Erigène et le gree," in Archivium Latinitatis Medii Aevi (Bulletin du Cange) 41 (1979), pp. 5-50. Théry believes that Eriugena began his training in Greek in Ireland, but perfected it on the Continent.

# 5 THE PERIPHYSEON

In the 860s John Scottus Eriugena wrote the *Periphyseon* (later entitled *De divisione naturae*, that is, "On the Division of Nature").

The *Periphyseon* is a long work, filling nearly six hundred columns of the Patrologia Latina volume and containing approximately 217,450 words,<sup>2</sup> written in the form of an extended dialogue between two anonymous philosophers who are known only as Nutritor and Alumnus or, in the twelfth-century manuscript edited by William of Malmesbury, as "M" (Magister) and "D" (Discipulus). The work is divided into five books, and in some later manuscripts these books are divided into chapters, though this was never completely achieved.

Little is known about the occasion and circumstances which gave rise to the composition of the *Periphyseon*. Roughly, it has been dated as written between 860 and 866. As the dialogue contains many quotations and excerpts from Greek authors, including Dionysius and Maximus, and it is known that Eriugena did not begin translating Dionysius until 860, it is postulated that he began the work in the early 860s.<sup>3</sup> In his critical edition, Sheldon-Williams contends

that the work developed from an earlier book on logic or dialectic, a *De dialectica*. It is indeed true that Eriugena's contemporaries saw the work in this light, especially as the chief philosophical work of the day was the *Categoriae decem*, but there is no other evidence to support Sheldon-Williams's claim, and in fact his analysis seems to distort the structure of Book I of the *Periphyseon*. Sheldon-Williams appears to have based his decision on the long discussion of the applicability of the Aristotelian categories to God in Book I. This is, however, less a treatise on dialectic than a typical Neoplatonic (both Plotinian and Dionysian) proof that God is beyond being and beyond the grasp of the human mind. Sheldon-Williams is correct in seeing Eriugena's concern with dialectic as fundamental, but it would be a distortion of the *Periphyseon* to say that it grew from an initial study of the *Categories*.

As the dialogue is dedicated to Wulfad and addresses him as frater in Christo, the work is thought to have been completed by 866 – the year Wulfad was appointed archbishop of Bourges by Charles the Bald – on the grounds that Eriugena would have been unlikely to address an archbishop as frater. The dialogue was revised continually over a number of years, as is shown by the various glosses which were gradually incorporated in the text.

The dialogue begins abruptly, with no setting or introductory remarks. It makes no reference to local events or to any living writers or contemporary disputes. Neither King Charles nor Gottschalk nor Ratramnus is mentioned. Eriugena had deliberately set out to write a timeless philosophical and theological treatise, associating himself only with the great Christian authorities – Augustine, Boethius, Dionysius, Maximus. The only living person mentioned is Wulfad, whom Eriugena credits as the instigator of the work and

The Rheims MS bears the title Peri Physeos Merismou, whereas the Paris MSS bear the title Peri Physeon. Ninth-century catalogue entries refer to it as perifision and twelfth-century references such as Honorius Augustodunensis speak of Perifiseon or Periphyseon (in the mysterious "Icpa" – possibly Israel the Grammarian). In the Trinity College (Cambridge) MS, thought to have been edited by William of Malmesbury, the Greek versions Peri Physeos Merismou and Peri Physeon are given, with a Latin explanation "de divisione naturae." When Gale made use of this MS in his printed edition, he transferred the Latin title De Divisione Naturae to the work. See I. P. Sheldon-Williams, "The Title of Eriugena's Periphyseon," Studia Patristica 3 (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des altchristlichen Literatur 78) (Leipzig, 1961), pp. 297–302, and Iohannis Scotti Eriugenae Periphyseon, vol. 1 (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1968), pp. 5–10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> For the word-count, see G. H. Allard (ed.), Johannis Scoti Eriugenae Periphyseon: Indices générales (Montreal: Institut d'études médiévales, 1983), p. vi.

<sup>3</sup> M. Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène: Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée (Louvain: Abbaye de Mont César, 1933), p. 189.

<sup>4</sup> See Sheldon-Williams, Periphyseon, vol. 1, p. 5. Guy Allard sees the discussion of the categories not as digression but as an introductory question which must be treated first. See his essay in R. Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS, 1977), p. 224.

<sup>5</sup> Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, p. 189. This argument is particularly weak, given that we know so little about the relations between Eriugena and Wulfad. The only real date for the completion of the Periphyseon is indicated by the Expositiones, written possibly in the 870s, which refers to the Periphyseon by name (PL CXII.230b, Barbet [ed.], p. 160) and says that the doctrine of essence, power, and operation, as understood in the soul is explained there in a satisfactory manner. The Expositiones is referring to Periphyseon II.568d-570a.

The Periphyseon

his cooperator in studiis (V.1022a), and whom he asks to correct and edit the work.<sup>6</sup>

Only one complete manuscript of the dialogue survives, and it is from the twelfth century. A number of earlier manuscripts are incomplete copies. The work was edited and corrected several times. Cappuyns distinguished three stages of the development of the text, basing his division on the earlier, more complex scheme of five stages proposed by E. K. Rand.7 The five stages for Rand were: (1) an earlier version of Rheims 875; (2) a version of Rheims with the marginal additions integrated in the text; (3) Bamberg; (4) Bamberg with its marginal notes included in the text; and (5) Paris 12964 and 12965, which were printed by Floss. Cappuyns simplified this, roughly to: (1) Rheims, (2) Bamberg, and (3) Paris. Most scholars agree that the oldest surviving manuscript is Rheims 875, which is incomplete and contains many marginal additions in different hands.8 Rand postulates that a second copy was made which incorporated the marginal additions of Rheims and which has not survived. This missing copy became the basis for the Bamberg manuscript, which contains the Rheims marginalia and more, and this in turn was incorporated into the Paris manuscript (Bibl. Nat. lat. 12965), along with the marginalia of the Bamberg version. The Rand-Cappuyns account of the manuscript transmission was accepted with modifications by Sheldon-Williams in his edition.9 These earlier manu-

7 See Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 194-6. For Rand's five stages see his appendix to L. Traube, "Palaeographische Forschungen, V. Autographa des Iohannes Scottus," Abhandlungen der philosophisch-philologischen. Klasse der königlich bayernischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 26 (1912), p. 11.

8 For a description of Rheims 875 (discovered in 1904), see Sheldon-Williams, *Periphyseon*, vol. 1, pp. 5–6. Rheims is an imperfect copy in Carolingian miniscule of an early state of the text. Bamberg was discovered in 1899. Bischoff believes both were made at a *scriptorium* in Soissons.

9 This edition was criticised by P. Lucentini in "La nuova edizione del De divisione naturae (Periphyseon) di Giovanni Scoto Eriugena," Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 17 (1976), pp. 393–414. Sheldon-Williams distinguished three stages of the text, which he designated as A, B, and C (A = Rheims; B = Bamberg Ph2/1; C = Paris 12964 and 12965). Actually the two Paris MSS, while integrating the additions found in Rheims and Bamberg, also contain additions thought to be of dubious authenticity. So C can be divided into C and D. Rheims 875 is itself not a first version, but seems to include glosses. See E. Jeauneau, "Guillaume de Malmesbury, premier editeur anglais du Periphyseon," Sapientiae Doctrina: Mélanges de théologie et de littérature médiévales offerts au Dom H. Bascour O.S.B., Recherches

scripts generally lack Books IV and V, and thus these latter books contain fewer revisions and marginal additions. These manuscript revisions are evidence of the care with which Eriugena's work was read and studied in the ninth century.

For many years scholars have argued over the authorship of these marginal additions and interlinear notes and comments. In particular, Traube suggested that some of the additions to Rheims and all of the additions to Bamberg were in the hand of an Irish writer – possibly Eriugena himself. In fact, he claimed to have found this Irish hand in four different manuscripts. Rand disputed the identification of this Irish hand with Eriugena's, and said that there were in fact two different hands at work – i¹ and i², whose work was purely scribal and not authoritative, and hence neither was the hand of Eriugena. Bischoff and more recently Marenbon, Jeauneau, and Bishop have discussed the problem in detail, and all are willing to acknowledge Eriugena's guiding presence in many of these enlargements and corrections, if not his actual hand. For our purposes,

de Théologie ancienne et médiévale. Numéro Spécial 1 (Louvain: Abbaye de Mont César, 1980), p. 158 n. 39. The problem of the recensions is compounded by the fact that Books IV and V of the *Periphyseon* generally survive in a different set of MSS.

Traube announced his discovery of Eriugena's hand in 1906, and the evidence he used was later published by Rand in the appendix to Traube's "Palaeographische Forschungen V." Autographa des Iohannes Scottus. Traube examined Rheims 875, Bamberg Ph2/1, and the Laon MSS. He thought the same hand wrote the marginal comments in Rheims; he also thought he found the hand in the glosses added to a work of Marius Victorinus in a Bamberg MS (Patr 46.[Q.VI.32]), and also in the authorial corrections in MS Laon 81, which contains Eriugena's commentary on John's gospel. Rand, however, later dissented in his "The Supposed Autographa of John the Scot," University of California Publications in Classical Philology, 5 (1920), pp. 135-41, plates 1-11. Rand found two insular hands, which he designated as i' and i'; he ascribed neither to Scottus.

Hand i' is characterised by Rand as "loose, pointed, flowing, with few abbreviations or ligatures characteristic of Irish script" ("Supposed Autographa," p. 140). Hand i', however, is "at once more compact and regular, more cursive, with more of the specifically Irish traits." Rand concluded that neither i' nor i' was John's, but that both were "scribes employed by him" (p. 140). J. J. O'Meara, "Eriugena's Immediate Influence," in W. Beierwaltes (ed.), Eriugena Redivivus (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1987). p. 15, says that "it is precisely i' who manifests the ability to think like Eriugena."

Jeauneau discusses Rand's conclusions concerning the Laon 81 MS in his edition of Jean Scot, Commentaire sur l'Evangile de Jean (Paris: CERF, 1972), pp. 70-80. Jeauneau agrees with Traube that the emendations to Laon 81 are "une écriture d'auteur personelle et originale" (p. 75). However, Bischoff's arguments, discussed by Jeauneau, pp. 76-77, impressed him sufficiently to make him dissent from Rand and accept i' as Eriugena's hand. Bischoff argued that i' was Eriugena's hand, and that Rand was correct to distinguish i' and i'. The notes to Laon 81, according to Bischoff are in i'. On the other hand, T. A. M. Bishop, "Autographa of John the Scot," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 89-94, characterises i' and i' as having in their Greek script "a stylistic likeness to some of the Greek script written in the middle and third quarter of the ninth century at Laon, a

<sup>6</sup> On Wulfad see J. Marenbon, From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 111ff. Marenbon theorises that Wulfad may have been the author of some glosses of an Eriugenian nature that appear on Mazarine 561 which was made at Saint Medard and owned by Wulfad (p. 113).

the discussion has a bearing on understanding the process of composition of a ninth-century philosophical work. The work was undoubtedly read and commented on by a group of dedicated disciples, and many of the glosses aim for clarity, precision, and completeness, as Marenbon demonstrated. Marenbon divided the additions and corrections in Rheims into six classes: (1) brief corrections and additions of words accidentally omitted; (2) short additions which have the character of glosses; (3) reference forward to subjects discussed later in the book; (4) clarifications of an argument "often of a legalistically precise nature"; (5) elaboration of a train of thought which depends on discussions later in the book; and (6) rarely, fresh development of an argument, for example, I.493c17–494a30.

The revisions to Bamberg are less extensive, and Marenbon preferred to see it more as an edition, since there are "very few additions of any substance." The Paris additions were described by Marenbon as rather meagre and philosophically unsophisticated. They are not thought to have been written by Eriugena, according to Sheldon-Williams (vol. 1, p. 223 n. 14).

At least one of the glosses appears to confuse his thinking, for example, I.443a, where materiaque is added to God – as an example of something which eludes the sense and the mind through its ex-

centre of Greek studies and of Irish scholars." Bishop notes that i' appears in more MSS, and he sees it as a "rapid, serious, dispersed, sometimes rather disorderly hand" (p. 93). Bishop inclines towards i' as more Eriugenian, calling it the hand of an "Irish-cosmopolitan intellectual" (p. 93), and he explains the predominance of i as an accident of survival. Marenbon has discussed the question in his Circle of Alcuin, pp. 89-109; Marenbon agrees with Rand and is critical of Sheldon-Williams's conclusions in his edition. He criticises Bishop for concluding that it is Eriugena on the "old assumption that if one of the i's is not John, then the other must be" (p. 91). Marenbon finds it inconceivable that i' could be Eriugena, but he also accepts Bishop's arguments against i'. Marenbon argues against rapidity and nervousness as signs of an intellectual hand, pointing out that the authenticated hands of Martin of Laon and Heiric of Auxerre are "slow, deliberate, somewhat clumsy" (p. 92). Marenbon points out that i' and i' are found together only on the one MS (Rheims). They were, he concludes, obviously scribes working under the author's direction. Marenbon goes on to discuss other MSS in which i' and i' appear. In two MSS i2 adds notes on the lives of Church fathers possibly under his own choice. Hand i' appearances are mainly editorial - adding lemmata to Rheims. "Altogether the notes of it and it reflect the interest which might be expected of two of Eriugena's closest associates" (Marenbon, p. 96).

cellence. According to Sheldon-Williams, this is not Eriugena's intention in that he distinguishes materia informis as a privation from nihil per excellentiam of God in Book III. However, at Book III.68rc Eriugena does talk about the primordial causes being identical with the materia informis of Scripture. Since the causes cannot be grasped in themselves but only in their theophanies, according to Eriugena, then it is possible to say that materia can be counted among the things which escape the grasp of the mind due to the excellence of their nature. Sheldon-Williams's analysis then is unconvincing, and a further study of the additions on the Paris manuscript is necessary.

A gloss to the Rheims manuscript at I.443c-d discusses whether privations and absences might not have some form of being. This is one of the most interesting glosses as it raises doubts about the first mode of the division of things which have being and non-being, and modifies the overall scheme of the five divisions of being and non-being, thus representing a philosophically important revision of Eriugena's first draft.

Sheldon-Williams included the glosses and additions contained in the Bamberg, Rheims, and Paris manuscripts in his edition of the work, and saw the final product as the version "with which Eriugena finally came to be satisfied." This seems to be going a little too far; there is no reason for assuming that the *Periphyseon* ever reached a completely satisfactory final form (given that it was almost certainly worked over by a lively intellectual circle presided over by Eriugena). Indeed, some of the additions to the Paris manuscript, originating from Corbie and which Sheldon-Williams included in his edition, may possibly date from a period in the late 870s or 880s, after Eriugena's death. To seek such a final form would in fact be a distortion of the early mediaeval process of philosophical production, since the work does not seem to have been a *livre d'occasion* written to meet some particular request or deadline.

What the additions indicate is the gradual evolution of a philosophical position associated with and championed by Eriugena. It is an open-ended speculation. This is shown, for example, by the addition to the Rheims manuscript at I.443c-d, where the first mode of being and non-being is discussed. This mode distinguishes beings

<sup>13</sup> Marenbon, Circle of Alcuin, p. 97-8.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 98. See the appendix to Sheldon-Williams, Periphyseon, vol. 1, pp. 247-69, for examples of the additions to Rheims, Bamberg, and Paris.

<sup>15</sup> Sheldon-Williams, Periphyseon, vol. 1, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Marchbon, Circle of Alcuin, pp. 99-100.

as those things which can be grasped by the senses or the mind, and excludes as non-being "things" which escape their grasp – including God and unformed matter. Privations and absences therefore belong to non-being. But the addition to the Rheims manuscript at this point raises a doubt: Possibly absences and privations can be said to have some limited form of being in virtue of their association with those things of which they are the privations and absences. I shall discuss this question in detail in Chapter 11. This doubt would, in fact, undercut the whole scheme that Eriugena is proposing, and indeed he may have grown dissatisfied with it. But it is certainly not the kind of comment one would leave in a "finished" book.

As we have said, although the revisions of the Paris manuscript are not sophisticated, they exhibit a desire to develop Eriugena's thinking. For example, the addition in the Paris manuscript to Book I.444b glosses the term homo to mean "man in his mortal state," whereas "angel" is defined in the addition to the manuscript as an "essential intellectual motion about God." Another addition gives the nine orders of angels, most likely drawing on Eriugena's commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy of Dionysius. 19

Some of the additions do seem to speak with clear authorial intention. For example, at Book I.513d, the addition qualifies the meaning of the "motion" (motus) Nutritor is talking about. This gloss, added to the Rheims manuscript, states that the "motion" is not the general one from non-being to being, which every creature experiences, but the more particular motion from matter to (accidental) form. The gloss reads: "I am not now speaking of that general motion (motus generalis) that is common to all creatures, by which all things are moved from nothing into being, but of the usual mo-

tion in time by which every day mutable matter, moved either by nature or by art, receives qualitative forms." Sheldon-Williams assumed this gloss to be Eriugena's – written in his own hand. Whatever view we take on the question of Eriugena's handwriting, it is certainly not a mere scribal addition, and its technical complexity and the enrichment of meaning it brings to the discussion surely mark it as a product of Eriugena's own mind or at least of a highly sophisticated close colleague's. The many different kinds of marginalia and additions need to be studied in greater detail, but all give the impression of careful attention to and development of Eriugena's thought, often with considerable technical detail. <sup>21</sup>

Several florilegia of the Periphyseon have recently been discovered, showing the popularity of Eriugena's work, <sup>22</sup> but the real interest in the Periphyseon flowered in the twelfth century with William of Malmesbury's "edition" and Honorius Augustodunensis's liber excerptus, the Clavis physicae. <sup>23</sup> William of Malmesbury's edition survives as the manuscript of Cambridge, Trinity College 0.5.20 (1301), a complete text which originally contained a prefatory letter written by William of Malmesbury himself and now in the British Mu-

<sup>17</sup> The addition reads: "unless perhaps someone should say that the absences and privations of things that exist are themselves not altogether nothing, but are implied by some strange natural virtue of those things of which they are the privations and absences and oppositions, so as to have some kind of existence" (Sheldon-Williams, Periphyseon, vol. 1, p. 41).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-43.
19 See Sheldon-Williams, ibid., p. 42 n. 26, and Marenbon, Circle of Alcuin, p. 99. Dionysius lists the nine orders of angels at Celestial Hierarchy, Chapter VI.2 (PG III.200d-205b), claiming to have got this knowledge from Hierotheus. The triadic ordering of these biblical names has no basis in Scripture.

<sup>20</sup> Sheldon-Williams, Periphyseon, vol. 1, p. 199.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, 1.493c, where a discussion of the kind of existence of geometrical bodies has been inserted into an analysis of the category of quantity. See also 1.503b, which discusses what Boethius means by the "variable things" (variabilis res). Both these additions are found in the Rheims MS.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., J. Marenbon, "A Florilegium from the Periphyseon," Recherches de théologic ancienne et médiévale 47 (1980), pp. 271-7, and his Circle of Alcuin, appendix 2, pp. 171-2 and 103-5. See also G. Mathon, "Un Florilège érigénien à l'abbaye de Saint-Amand au temps d'Hucbald," Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale 20 (1953), pp. 302-11. These date from the end of the ninth and beginning of the tenth century, from northern France, possibly Auxerre. These florilegia excerpt a great many definitions or explanations of Greek theological terms, but do not show a sophisticated understanding of Eriugena's negative theology.

<sup>23</sup> On the Clavis physicae see P. Lucentini, "La Clavis physicae di Honorius Augustodunensis e la tradizione eriugeniana nel secolo XII," in R. Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 405–14, and M.-Th. d'Alverny, "Le Cosmos symbolique du XIIe siècle," Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge 28 (1953), pp. 31–81. According to d'Alverny, Honorius did not properly understand Eriugena's negative theology or his concept of theophany (p. 33 n. 2) – again bearing out the view that Eriugena's deepest thought was far in advance of his time. Honorius does, however, use the definition of nature as including all things which are and are not, as well as the fourfold division of nature. Honorius reduces and paraphrases the citations from the Greek authorities; however, he keeps Maximus's scheme of the five categories of being and of the exitus and reditus. See P. Lucentini (ed.), Honorii Augustodunensis Clavis physicae, Temi e Testi 21 (Rome. Storia e Litteratura, 1974). See my discussion of Eriugena's influence in Chapter 13 below.

tions of the nature of space and time, and the meaning of essence. In so doing Eriugena offers a new metaphysical framework for understanding the relation between God and the world, far beyond anything available to the Carolingian scholars of the time.

Furthermore, the Periphyseon provides a bold interpretion of Genesis which attempts to reconcile the Augustinian account of the Six Days, as given chiefly in the De Genesi ad litteram, with the Genesis commentaries of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. Books III-V are in effect a Hexaëmeron. Indeed, in Book V, Eriugena inserts a prayer (V.1010b-1011a) in which he asserts that his sole desire is to have a proper insight into the words of Scripture, which are, as he says elsewhere, "the secret dwelling-place of truth," even if Scripture does not always use nouns and verbs in the right order (I.509a). At Book III.690b he says that the Holy Spirit has put an infinity of meanings (infiniti intellectus) in the Bible, since He is an infinitus conditor, and all through the dialogue, Eriugena emphasises the need to recognise the multiplicity of interpretations that can be put on Scripture, and hence the multitude of philosophical interpretations of the nature of the world which are possible. Yet notwithstanding Eriugena's seriousness in attempting to understand the secret of Scripture, the impression the dialogue leaves is that Eriugena is reading Scripture from the viewpoint of his own metaphysics. The placing of the discussion of the meaning of nature, being and non-being, the categories and essence, at the start of the book forces us to conclude that Eriugena's Hexaëmeron is really a vindication of his own independently arrived at metaphysical insights, albeit stimulated by the suggestiveness of the Greek mystics he translated.

Furthermore, it is clear that the dialogue is written not merely to instruct and impart knowledge, but also to provide a vehicle for travelling on the road towards spiritual enlightenment, and ultimately gaining unity with the Truth itself, which is God. It is an inquisitio veritatis (IV.784a, IV.858b, V.864b); it aims to culminate in a radical intellectus, to arrive at the banquet of knowledge (V.1010c).

This orientation places the *Periphyseon* on a different scale in relation to other dialogues of the period. The dialogue form was especially popular in the early Middle Ages<sup>30</sup> until it was finally re-

placed by the summas, tracts, and quodlibetal questions of the Scholastic tradition. Augustine, Boethius, Martianus, and Alcuin all wrote dialogues. Eriugena's form has been compared to the early dialogues of Augustine, though the opening is Ciceronian.31 Indeed, it has similarities with the kind of philosophical discussion found in Augustine's De quantitate animae, De libero arbitrio, and De magistro. The dialogue is not merely a device for conveying dogmatic propositions, as it would later become; it proceeds in a spirit of genuine inquiry, where theses are proposed and then discussed at length. Difficulties are not glossed over but are clearly articulated, and indeed this penchant for facing up to the paradoxes, difficulties, and even contradictions of the Catholic faith sets Eriugena's work apart from most other Christian catechetical literature; for example, he is genuinely speculative with regard to the filioque question, and even allows Alumnus to speculate that the Son may proceed from the Holy Spirit and the Father, just as the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (II.611b-613a).

Eriugena was conscious of the intellectual challenge posed by his translations of the Greek fathers to the rather inflexible minds of students schooled in the simplicities and practicalities of the Latin Church. He is anxious therefore to introduce the Greeks within the framework of the Latin authorities, notably Augustine, and to show how the two interpretations enrich and complement each other. He clearly prefers the Greek to the Latin, 32 spiritual idealism to practical realism. The dialogue allows for choice in the matter of theories concerning the physical world, as Augustine also allows in his De Genesi ad litteram; each reader may choose the interpretation which suits him best, as long as it does not conflict with Scripture. The dialogue combines sense of speculative adventure with a firm grounding in tradition, and promotes a genuine tolerance of opposing views that was quite unusual in that polemical age, especially

<sup>30</sup> Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, p. 197, says that the dialogue form was much in vogue during the Carolingian period and that, in using it, Eriugena conformed to the best literary tradition available.

<sup>31</sup> On the Ciceronian opening line Saepe mihi cogitanti, see P. d'Hérouville, "Une Formule cicéronienne qui a fait fortune," Revue de philologie 3 (1927), pp. 81-3, and Sheldon-Williams, Periphyseon, vol. 1, p. 222 n. 4.

<sup>32</sup> He says as much at V.955a. No-one has expressed Eriugena's "Greek mind" better than Sheldon-Williams. See especially his articles in A. H. Armstrong (ed.), The Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 518-37, esp. p. 520, where he says Eriugena was brought "wholly within the Greek tradition as if he had been a Byzantine writing in Greek." Occasionally Eriugena favors a Latin – as when he sides with Ambrose against Epiphanius (IV.832d); however, Ambrose, given his interest in Plotinus, is surely an "honorary Greek."

given Eriugena's experience some years earlier in the controversy with Gottschalk.<sup>33</sup> Eriugena consciously and carefully avoids theological disputes, emphasising the provisional character of all theological utterances in this life.<sup>34</sup> Truth for humans is only a hope – an intimation of things to come. It can never have the finality of eternal truth, which will be gained only after mortals have rid themselves of the fleshly constraints of the body.<sup>35</sup>

But although Eriugena is anxious to promote harmony and avoid dispute, under no circumstances is he willing to merely repeat timeworn platitudes or stock answers culled from the best-known authorities. The freshness of the Periphyseon stems in part from the manner in which even the most traditional Christian concepts - the Fall or Creation or Redemption – are given a completely new and thorough rereading. Eriugena's readers could not have been novices, but were obviously skilled theologians and philosophers. The overall message of the Periphyseon is at once both the simplicity and the complexity of the Christian understanding of the world. The goal of all human activity is unity with the One, with the absolute simplicity of God, but there are multitudinous paths in this essentially pathless land. It is therefore up to the students to choose the interpretations which satisfy their own reasons and their own stage in life; in the end each will be illuminated according to his own measure. Speaking of the return of all humans to the One, Eriugena savs in Book V:

Hence it may be seen that while all men participate in one and the same nature, which is redeemed in Christ and free from that servitude under which in this life is still groaned and suffered, so that in it all are made One; the qualities and quantities of their deserts, . . . are infinitely large and manifold. But all these things are in due order comprehended in that one spacious house in which the state of the universe created in and by God is displayed in many mansions, that is, many degrees of merit and grace. And that house is Christ. (V.984a-b; Sheldon-Williams's translation)<sup>36</sup>

The image of one house and many mansions (from John 14.2), one truth but many revelations and understanding, is recurrent in the dialogue (e.g. I.448c-d). This appreciation of multiplicity is a singular aspect of Eriugena's outlook and style, exceedingly rare in the tradition of mediaeval philosophy. At Book IV.816d, in a discussion of the nature of paradise – whether it is a corporeal place or a spiritual state – Eriugena opposes the Greek to the Latin interpretation but then says:

Whether there be two paradises, the one corporeal and other spiritual, we neither deny nor affirm. We are merely comparing the opinions of the Holy Fathers: it is not ours to say which should be followed rather than another. Let each abound in his sense and let him choose which he will follow, avoiding all controversy.<sup>37</sup>

Part of the function of the dialogue is to unfold these multifarious interpretations of the world and also of Scripture. Indeed, we are told several times that the number of interpretations of Scripture is infinite, and as varied as the colours in a peacock's tail.<sup>38</sup> Elsewhere (e.g. V.1010b) we are told that Scripture is a labyrinth "worthy of Daedalus."

<sup>33</sup> This tolerance of opposing viewpoints is frequently expressed in the dialogue, especially in matters connected with the interpretation of Scripture. This tolerance is in sharp contrast to the often violent polemical tone of the *De praedestinatione* (e.g. 369d, where he recommends that Gottschalk be burned). At *Periphyseon I.475c* he advocates that those who persist in their errors be left alone. He also makes allowances for those who misunderstand through stupidity and lack of intellectual power. But he has plenty of harsh things to say about the false wisdom espoused by the "perifidious Jews and venomous heretics" (IV.850b) who follow the letter of Scripture and not the spirit. One humorous interpretation of Scripture, which should be mentioned here, occurs at IV.839c, where Eriugena interprets the fig-leaves used by fallen man to cover his shame as "perhaps certain empty and obscure treatises" which veil his intellectual nudity.

<sup>34</sup> Eriugena even has Nutritor say at III.649d-650b that he himself had once been deceived by "false reasonings of human opinions that are far from the truth," and now he sets down his retraction (obviously influenced by Augustine's example).

<sup>35</sup> This is clearly expressed at V.1021b, where Eriugena says that human intelligence, while still in the body, can never hope to have unrestricted access to the whole truth. Carnal thoughts are a frequent cause of error for Eriugena – in that they deceive the mind into believing that this sensible world is the most real. Compare the very similar remarks of Augustine in *De doctrina Christiana* Book III, Chapter V, where he laments the bad habit of mistaking signs for things.

<sup>36</sup> This translation is Sheldon-Williams's version, currently in press with the Institut d'Etudes Médiévales of Montreal. I am grateful to Professor J. O'Meara for allowing me to see this version. See also I.448c-d, where the image of many mansions (John 14.2) is again used.

<sup>37</sup> Sheldon-Williams's translation. See also Eriugena's similar remarks at IV.804c, IV.814a, V.860a, V.889a, and V.1001a.

<sup>38 &</sup>quot;The understanding of God's words is manifold and infinite. Why, in one and the same feather of a peacock, a remarkable, beautiful variety of countless colours is seen in one and the same spot of a small part of the same feather. And indeed the very nature of things attracts us to such an understanding" (John the Scot, Periphyseon. On the Division of Nature. trans. M. L. Uhlfelder, with summaries by J. A. Potter [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976], p. 216). The image of the peacock's tail is traditional – it occurs in Boethius De consolatione philosophiae. See H. de Lubac, Exégèse médiévale: Les Quatre Sens de l'écriture, vol. 1 (Paris, 1959), p. 119, for a general discussion of the commonplace that Scripture and the world have infinitely varied meanings.

But the dialogue has another function than that of revealing different and contrary ways of viewing reality. It is cast metaphorically in the form of a journey, a difficult sea voyage, a navigatio. 39 The journey proceeds through many dangerous places in order to lay hold of the truth, and to arrive at that crucial Neoplatonic and Augustinian point of self-understanding. The aim of dialogue must be to produce a unity of minds and self-integration which Eriugena sees as fundamental to both philosophy and to Christian salvation. Thus Nutritor says at II.587d, "Do not be troubled but rather be of good heart. For this discussion (consideratio) is drawing us towards an understanding of ourselves, and teaching us the things which it is right to think and to understand and declare about our God, He being our Guide" (Sheldon-Williams's translation, vol. 2, p. 141). On this road towards unity, however, many diverse difficulties are encountered. The pupil, Alumnus, sees himself as cast about on seas of doubt; he is often bewildered and at a loss where to turn. 40 In the face of this turmoil and confusion, a guide is needed, and an orderly discipline must be followed. For Eriugena, the guide in the dialogue is God Himself, the light of minds (lux mentium).41 The participants in the dialogue can only proceed as far as "the ray of divine power shall permit the keenness of our minds to ascend into the Divine Mysteries" (III.678a);42 indeed, it is always crucial to recognise the human limitations to grasping the truth of the divine

39 Sec D. Moran, "Wandering from the Path: Navigatio in the Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena," The Crane Bag, vol 2, no. 2 (1978), pp. 96–102, reprinted in The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1982), pp. 244–50. See also Jeauneau, "Le Symbolisme de la mer chez Jean Scot Erigène," in Le Néoplatonisme, Colloque international du CNRS, Royaumont, 1969 (Paris: CNRS, 1971), pp. 385–94, and E. Jeauneau, Quatre thèmes érigéniennes (Montreal: Institut d'Etudes Médiévales, 1978).

40 See, e.g., V.923d, which uses images of a ship buffeted in a storm and threatened with crashing on dangerous rocks, and V.924c, where the image is of a battle to force a way through a heavily guarded pass. See also III.636a, where the image of a boat in a storm is used as a symbol of confusion and bewilderment; and IV.743d-744a. The image is also found in Augustine.

41 On God as lux mentium see I.442b, I.527a, II.572b, II.601c. Also De praedestinatione 438c, and Epistola ad Carolum 1031c, where he says that the light of minds guided his translation of Dionysius. It is a favourite phrase of Eriugena's. At IV.744a God is called the captain and helmsman of the dialogue. See Uhlfelder's translation, p. 209.

42 Sheldon-Williams, *Periphyseon*, vol. 3, p. 161. The image is strongly Dionysian. Eriugena is adept at blending the balanced dialogue style of the Latins (and Augustine in particular) with the more gnomic utterances associated with the Pseudo-Dionysius. Eriugena's light metaphor continues the light metaphysics of both Dionysius and Augustine.

mystery, and to remember the warning "Seek not after high things but be afraid."43

Given this recognition of the impenetrable darkness of the Divinity, and the utter reliance of human intellects on the divine power and illuminating grace,44 the participants firmly place their trust in true reason (recta ratio) to steer their course. It is astonishing how often both participants acknowledge the need to submit everything to the rigorous measure of recta ratio. 45 Both seem skilled in rhetoric and dialectics and know how to lay out an argument and follow the twists of the discussion in an orderly and comprehensive manner. Alumnus, in particular, is anxious to see that the inquiry follows the natural order of matters (ordo rerum, II.525c) and keeps to the ordained pattern (disputationis series, II.525a, III.710c) of the argument. 46 Both participants set a high value on patience and caution (IV.814b) and warn against hurried judgments (III.690c). They recognise that this manner of proceeding must be open to following the many subdivisions of the questions: "For there is no main problem, I think, which does not involve incidental problems when it

44 See, e.g., the prayer in Book III.650b, which prays God to shatter the clouds of fantasies (nubes vanarum fantasiarum) which bind the mind, and open it up to receive the grace of theophany.

45 Recta ratio or vera ratio favourite phrases of Augustine's, appear extremely frequently in the dialogue: G.-H. Allard even goes so far as to claim that Reason is the third participant in the dialogue; see his "Quelques remarques sur la disputationis series," in R. Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 211-24. Recta ratio or vera ratio appears at 1.452b, 456a-b. 456d, 459c, 522b, etc., and frequently there are expressions such as "reason forces me to admit" (1.504a, 507b, 507c, III.673b). At IV.744a there is a stirring encomium of the power of reason to struggle bravely or in different terrain. "It [reason] does not fear any threats of waves or bends or Syrtes or rocks. It takes greater delight in exercising its power in the hidden waters of the divine ocean than in resting at ease in smooth and open waters, where it cannot reveal its force" (Uhfelder's translation, p. 209). For a discussion of the balance between reason and illumination, see R. Roques, "Remarques sur la signification de Jean Scot Erigène," Miscellanea André Combes, vol. 1, esp. pp. 265-70.

46 Several scholars have attempted to give an account of the dialectical method utilised by Eriugena in setting out the argument of the *Periphyseon*. Some have referred to the chapter headings or the scheme of topics selected by Honorius Augustodunensis in his paraphrase. Not enough is known about Eriugena's dialectical training or about the methodology of philosophical argumentation of the time to give a convincing account. Suffice to say that both participants in the dialogue are quite sure that they are following a set order of topics.

<sup>43</sup> III.627c. This is a quotation from Paul, Romans II.21. Sheldon-Williams, vol. 3, p. 46: Noli altum sapere sed time. I have tried to give a literal rendering of this phrase; it is more usually translated: "do not be proud but be afraid." Here the master says that since the highest illuminations are denied him, it is necessary to use the inner light (intima lux, 627b) to gain "whatever seems to us most like the truth." See also the balance struck at III.638c-d between rational inquiry and respectful silence.

is being investigated by a diligent mind" (III.619).<sup>47</sup> Although Alumnus is good at bringing the discussion back from a digression (690a-b), Nutritor argues the need for copious repetition and recapitulation,<sup>48</sup> even to the point of worrying whether perhaps the readers of the dialogue are being bored by the constant reiterations of the same point. He decides, however, that

. . . when a subject is complicated and has many different aspects, it is necessary that the explanation be complicated and repetitive. And perhaps there are not a few who would prefer to hear the explanation repeated many times than a brief and cursory summary of so difficult a matter, which would be more likely to pass over the difficulties than resolve them, and increase ambiguity instead of removing it. (V.978c; Sheldon-Williams's translation)<sup>49</sup>

Of course recapitulation is itself a form of recollectio or return of all things to the One. In gathering everything together, the participants are themselves participating in the cosmic cycle of nature.

The structure of the *Periphyseon* is announced by the participants themselves, who state that they are going to give an account of the four divisions of nature which are proposed in the opening paragraphs, and that each division will be dealt with separately. The first three books attempt to deal with one division each. <sup>50</sup> After a long digression on the nature of "nothing" in Book III, however, a discussion of the Six Days of Creation overflows into Book IV, and

47 Digressions are a standard feature of mediaeval philosophical discussions. In fact, Jeauneau compares this discursive style to Plato in his Jean Scot: L'Homélie sur le Prologue de Jean (Paris: CERF 1969), p. 45, and says that the Periphyseon follows une trajectoire hélicoïdale.

49 Each time a subject is repeated, it is drawn up to a new level of the synthesis Eriugena is completing

Nutritor is forced to announce that these complex matters will require a fifth book (IV.744a). The disputants recognise that their books are too long (III.715d), but feel that this is necessary to do justice to the complexity of the task. The dialogue, however, also follows the familiar Neoplatonic cycle of unity-diversity-reunification or the Christian pattern of Creation-Fall-Redemption. This pattern is clearly followed from the beginning, and it is unnecessary to postulate a primitive form of text, dealing with dialectic, as Sheldon-Williams argued for in his edition.<sup>51</sup>

Previous commentators have not noticed any distinguishing features of the master and pupil such that the two might be seen as genuine individuals. Generally speaking the pupil is thought to be merely a foil for the master, who is Eriugena. Some points of difference between the two participants can be noted, however, and these do have a bearing on the movement of the dialogue itself.

Nutritor is an austere figure, learned, wise, and patient (V.923c, II.572b). He is marked by his knowledge of, and reverence for, the Greek patristic writers. At Book V.955a, for example, Nutritor says that the Greeks, as usual (solito more), display a greater sharpness of intellect and a more subtle accuracy in their choice of technical terms. He introduces and explains these new terms to Alumnus. He sets himself up as an authority not only on philosophical theology but also on biblical exegesis and interpretation, making use of several levels of exegesis. 53 He also gives the impression that he speaks as

52 See, e.g., O'Meara, Eriugena, p. 33. D. Desrosiers-Bonin, "Études des radicaux et de leur repartition dans le dialogue du Periphyseon," in Allard (ed.), Jean Scot écrivain, p. 312, argues that some words are mainly used by the master and some by the pupil; the master uses terms like "apophatic" and "katophatic." This is in general agreement with my observations.

53 Eriugena's use of the four levels of interpretation of Scripture is most complex (see, e.g., V.1008b-c) and quite individual. See H. de Lubac, Exégèse médiévale, vol. 2, p. 38 n. 4, and E. Jeauneau, appendix 3 of Jean Scot: L'Homélie sur le Prologue de Jean, pp. 327-8. Most original in Eriugena's formulation is his use of the "historical" level of interpretation. Augustine in De utilitate credendi distinguishes four series – historia, aetiologia, analogia,

<sup>48</sup> Recapitulation (recapitulatio, anacephalaiosis) is an important feature of Eringena's style which he remarks on several times (II.554c, III.684d, III.688a, IV.829b, V.1019a). The term has a long history in Greek and Latin theology. Paul used it to signify the collection of all things in Christ. Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Ambrose all made use of the concept. See J. Daniélou, From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers (London: Burns & Oats, 1960). Recapitulatio means taking a topic up from one level to another. Theologically it means, for example, the manner in which Christ takes up (recapitulates) Adam (II.541b). Eringena found the term in Maximus. Recapitulatio is closely connected with recollectio. See J. Trouillard, "La Notion d'analyse chez Jean Scot," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 343-56.

<sup>50</sup> Sheldon-Williams, in the Cambridge History, p. 521, assumes that the Periphyseon follows the four-fold division of nature, and O'Meara, in Eriugena (Cork, 1969), sees the first three books as dealing with one level of nature each and the last two as dealing with the return of all things to God. Sheldon-Williams qualified his remark in Mind of Eriugena, p. 157, where he says there are four, three, or two divisions in Periphyseon, depending on one's starting-point.

<sup>51</sup> Sheldon-Williams's argument for a primitive *De dialectica* seems to have been influenced by his appreciation of Eriugena's considerable skills as a dialectician, and he believes that fourfold scheme of nature is a metaphysical counterpart of the "dialectician's table of contraries and contradictions" (*Cambridge History*, p. 521). Allard, on the other hand, in his "La Structure littéraire de la composition du *De divisione naturae*," in O'Meara and Bieler, *The Mind of Eriugena*, pp. 147–57, has suggested that the scheme of the *Periphyseon* is not that of the fourfold division as given by Sheldon-Williams, O'Meara, and others; rather the *Periphyseon* has the structure of a *Hexaëmeron* (Allard, p. 147) and is articulating the meaning of the first three chapters of Genesis.

one who has been illuminated by a theophany, a divine revelation, and that this is the inspiration behind his pronouncements. He says to Alumnus in Book III:

You have a high opinion of me, as I see, since you assign to me the things that are harder to seek and find and demonstrate. However it is my part to seek, but to find is His alone Who illumines the hidden places of darkness. His also is the demonstration because He [alone] can open the sense of those who seek and the intellect. For of what use is a demonstration from without (exterior suasio) if there is not illumination within (interior illuminatio)? (III.656d-657a)<sup>54</sup>

Since he goes on to expound the doctrine, he must have had a revelation of its truth. Elsewhere in the texts he prays God to grant him continued theophanies of the truth (e.g. III.650b). But he is also more than happy to defend his conclusions with powerful argument, and he makes full (and often ostentatious, e.g. I.498c, 491c) use of the dialectician's tools, enthymemes, syllogistic reasoning, dilemmas, and so on. He is also well versed in the figures of rhetoric (e.g., metonymy, I.480b). Yet he rather modestly describes himself as scarcely holding "a place among the least of the followers of the great philosophers" (III.627a) and refuses to make any rash promises about how far he will be able to ascend along the steps of contemplation. In Neoplatonic and Gnostic terms he describes the steps which bring the philosopher's contemplation to the "most sacred"

and allegoria. The first three series belong to the literal level and the fourth is spiritual. See de Lubac vol. 1, pp. 178–9. Sheldon-Williams says that Eriugena's system owes more to Dionysius (vol. 3, p. 317 nn. 43 and 44). However, Alumnus appears more unfamiliar with the literal type of interpretation; see for example III.693c, where Alumnus says he knows enough about the allegorical (or moral) level of interpretations of the Six Days. At V.996a–b, Nutritor argues against those who accept the allegorical interpretation only and neglect the literal. At III.705c, Eriugena adds the "historical account of the establishment of things" to the fourfold division of wisdom. For the concept of historical interpretation see III.705b, 723b, IV.818a, 856c, 859b, V.935b–c, V.990c. For Eriugena, there is nothing wrong with the historical interpretation as long as it is placed in proper context and is not debased by carnal minds, who take place and time literally. Eriugena's use of the four levels of theoria needs to be examined in greater detail.

54 Sheldon-Williams, vol. 3, p. 113.

shrines of the celestial mysteries."<sup>56</sup> Yet he regards the entrance into this state as belonging only to the most enlightened and does not seem to expect this illumination while he is still in the mortal frame.

Alumnus for his part is not the characterless pupil or novice that many commentators have seen in him. He is a practising philosopher (III. 735c)<sup>57</sup> and skilled in the arts (peritus artium, I.508b), having studied them from infancy (II.604c). In particular he has a special knowledge of natural cosmology and the working of the four elements, as well as considerable understanding of mathematics (II.604c. III.654a, III.713c, 715d). 58 He displays a broad familiarity with Latin theological authorities and with some of the more subtle points of the doctrine of the Trinity. Alumnus is, however, ignorant of the Greek authorities, whose ideas deeply shock and disturb him. 59 For example, at Book III.646c, he says that he is "bewildered and struck dumb as a dead man with stupefaction"; at 647b, he says he hears things which "disturb me greatly and turn me reluctantly from what I hitherto firmly held"; at 661a, he says he is like a "sleeper awakened" (expergefactus). He has difficulty accepting that there will be a general return of all beings to God and not just the return of the elect (V.921b-c), and in general he finds the teacher's immaterialism and denial of physical reality hard to understand. 60 But he does recognise the superiority of the intellect to sense-knowledge and can

57 At III.735c he includes himself among those who "practise philosophy or read the philosophers."

<sup>55</sup> His modesty is less significant here than the fact that he is ranking himself in a long line of great philosophers – from Plato to the Church fathers. He is not placing himself below the level of contemporary thinkers. This is similar to A. J. Ayer, who in a recent interview on Irish radio (1985) said that he would place himself in the second rank of modern philosophers. However, when asked who he thought was of first-rank status, he could not think of any!

<sup>56</sup> III.627b, "sacratissima caelestium mysteriorum adyta"; Sheldon-Williams vol. 3, p. 45. Eriugena sees philosophy as aiming to attain unity with the One, not just reason about it. Here he is in agreement with Plotinus and Proclus.

<sup>58</sup> Alumnus takes special interest in discussions of cosmology in Book III and shows considerable knowledge in this field. At III.654a Nutritor remarks to him: "I see you are not ignorant of the art of arithmetic (arithmeticae disciplina)." Alumnus gives a long account of the relation of numbers to the monad at III.652c-656d. At II.604b-c he shows knowledge of what the sapientes mundi have to say about fire and the other elements, and he develops this account at III.713c as a true fysicus (714b). At 715d he asks Nutritor for an account of the orbits of the celestial bodies, and makes knowledgeable comments of his own.

<sup>59</sup> For example he knows that "all or almost all of the masters of the Latin tongue" (II.543b) are opposed to the Greek idea that the resurrected body will be without sexual differentiation. Alumnus's knowledge of the Latin account of the Trinity is seen at II.610b ff., where he gives an Augustinian version of the reflection of the Trinity in human nature. See also II.613b.

<sup>60</sup> At I.489b Alumnus is cast in the role of spokesperson for those who believe in corporeal substances, which Nutritor sees as stupidity (489c). In general Alumnus has difficulty with all the specifically Greek theses, e.g., on differentiation of the series, on the inaccessibility of God, the meaning of theophany, and the nature of paradisc.

be persuaded by rational demonstration. Part of his function seems to be to voice the difficulties the ordinary Latin theologian will have with these new Greek ideas. At I.499a he explicitly says that he is raising the objections others will have. He sees his own role as that of criticising and at III.690c he sets forth his aim as that of following and learning the interpretations of others and of the master himself, and to choose from them what reason recommends. Clearly, no blind subservience to the master is involved here, and most of the time the discussion proceeds as if between two equals in philosophical rank.

The interplay between the personalities of the Magister and the Discipulus provides a dramatic tension which gives dynamism to the work, so that it is certainly a genuine essay in dialectic, an authentic dialogue. Given the stress Eriugena places on the role of the arts in the development of the understanding, and the necessity of philosophy for salvation (or at least for entry into the higher realms), it is important not to ignore the dialectical development produced by the drama of the dialogue itself. There is a recurrent emphasis on the need for a move from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge, away from sense-knowledge towards intellectual illumination, from the lower to the higher. 62 Eriugena is particularly scathing of those who cannot scale the lofty heights of his contemplation, but who remain caught up in carnal thoughts (carnales cogitationes, V.1015b).63 What is called for in the dialogue and what gradually takes place in Alumnus and in the reader are a genuine shift in viewpoint, away from the limitations of the senses towards an appreciation of the true nature of things, and their ultimate unity in the Inaccessible One. Those who refuse to grasp this must be refuted or ignored. In the end the philosopher's way will be justified by the coming of the genuine illumination of God: "Let every man be lavishly endowed with his own interpretation, until the coming of that Light which converts to darkness the light of false philosophers and changes into light the darkness of those who rightly know" (Uhlfelder's translation, p. 360).

After the *Periphyseon*, Eriugena wrote a *Homilia* on the Prologue to the Gospel of John. This work ranks as one of the greatest homilies of mediaeval spiritual literature and was widely disseminated in the Middle Ages, circulating, however, under the name of Origen or John Chrysostom. <sup>64</sup>

Modern commentators since Cappuyns have seen it as closely complementing the Periphyseon, especially on the theme of the ascent from darkness to light, from lower to higher, from carnal understanding to spiritual contemplation. The Homilia of Eriugena was of course influenced by Augustine's tract on the Gospel of John. but it contains a number of particularly Eriugenian themes - including the concept of transcending all that is and all that is not. the idea of theophany and theosis (θέωσις), and the idea that the procession of the Word from the Father is identical with the creation of all things by God. Eriugena explains that outside God there is nothing. John is seen as a mystic and is symbolised by the eagle, which can soar above the whole world. John is able to surpass the created intellect and gain an insight into the nature of the divine plan itself. John thus symbolises theology, which is the highest form of contemplation, or theoria, and can penetrate into the highest darkness of the spiritual mysteries (284b).

In the *Homilia*, Eriugena continues the *Periphyseon* theme that faith is necessary but is merely preparatory to the work of intellection and of contemplation, which must be carried out by the pure detached *mens* or *animus*. John symbolises this intellect, whereas Peter signifies faith and action (284b).

The Homilia develops its rich spirituality until it reaches the highest point in the recognition that the Word runs through all things, and that all things radiate out from the Word, like the innumerable radii of a circle (289a). God is the Light which illuminates Itself, Lux itaque est et seipsum illuminat (289c), as well as the whole world.

<sup>61</sup> The master therefore does not just assemble the interpretations of the great philosophers and authorities but offers some new interpretations himself. Eriugena is conscious of his own originality and seeks to call attention to it. This is extremely unusual in a mediaeval work.

<sup>62</sup> The images of light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance are deeply Dionysian; Eriugena, however, also uses many typically Augustinian images – for example the general movement from lower to higher things (ex inferioribus ad superiora rationis ita, I.504a). For light/darkness images, see V.924d.

<sup>63</sup> Like Augustine, Eriugena frequently contrasts those who have fleshly and material understanding with those who have true spiritual insight. The imagery and terms are Pauline. See, e.g., IV.841b-c, 843c.

<sup>64</sup> The Homilia has been edited by Jeauneau, Jean Scot: Homélie sur le Prologue de Jean. A beautiful translation into English in contained in O'Meara, Eriugena (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

Through the Word, however, we, who are no longer the Light, can once more participate in the Light. The Light comes to us in Scrip-

ture but also through the lights of created natures (289c). Our nature is at present a tenebrosa substantia, but it is capable of the Light (capax lucis, 290c). The Light itself is so bright that to us it is an impenetrable darkness. The whole theology of light and darkness is Dionysian, but as we shall see Eriugena incorporates the dialectic of light and dark into his metaphysics of creation. In the Homilia Eriugena succeeded in conveying his key ideas, without invoking

philosophical theories, and the *Homilia* represents the best short introduction to Eriugena's distinctive cast of mind. We shall not be

able to investigate it more fully in this book, as we must now turn

to a more detailed investigation of Eriugena's philosophy.

#### ERIUGENA AS PHILOSOPHER

How are we to interpret Eriugena's philosophy?

He made use of the logical and dialectical material available to the ninth century in his metaphysical discussions of the nature of essence, substance, accident, and the categories, but he stands above his contemporaries in offering a unique metaphysical system – the four divisions of nature – which introduced to the West not only a new cosmology but also the first important meontology, or study of non-being –  $m\bar{e}$  on  $(\mu\tilde{\eta}\ \tilde{o}\nu)$ .

In the following chapters I shall argue that Eriugena's system, while seeming to provide an *objective* hierarchical metaphysics of order, actually presents a *subjectivist* and *idealist* philosophy, in the sense that all spatiotemporal reality is understood as immaterial, mind dependent, and lacking in independent existence; and also in the Hegelian sense, whereby all finite reality is understood to require infinite reality for its full intelligibility and completion.' For Eriugena the hierarchical order of nature is in fact a product of mind, and is absorbed and transcended by the mind of the spiritually liberated

I For Hegel's discussion of idealism, see his Science of Logic, trans. by A. V. Miller (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969), pp. 154-5. It is in the latter sense that W. Windelband, in his History of Philosophy, vol. 2 (1901; reprinted New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 569, defines idealism as "the dissolution or resolution (Auflösung) of the world of experience in the process of consciousness." In a recent study, M. Burnyeat has argued against the existence or even the possibility of idealism in ancient philosophy; see his "Idealism in Greek philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed," in G. Vesey (ed.), Idealism: Past and Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 19-50: "Idealism, whether we mean by that Berkeley's own doctrine that esse est percipi or a more vaguely conceived thesis to the effect that everything is in some substantial sense mental or spiritual, is one of the very few major philosophical positions which did not receive its first formulation in antiquity." R. Sorabji, in his Time, Creation and Continuum (London: Duckworth, 1983), p. 288, has convincingly argued against Burnycat, citing as his example the immaterialist teaching of Gregory of Nyssa. Idealism does not just arise as an answer to scepticism; in Gregory's case it was an attempt to deal with the difficult problem of how an immaterial being could create matter, especially as the effect must resemble its cause. What is true for Gregory of Nyssa is even truer for Eriugena, who is an idealist both in the immaterialist and in the Hegelian/Windelbandian meaning.

person, the Pauline homo spiritualis (1 Corinthians 2.15). Of course, it is difficult to use the term "idealist" without a thoroughgoing examination of Eriugena's doctrines. In some respects Eriugena is a realist. Thus, for example, unlike Ratramnus of Corbie, Eriugena is committed to a realistic theory of universals. For him, genera and species are two ontological grades of reality and not just two logical categories. Furthermore genus and species have a higher kind of being than individuals (which Eriugena terms atoma). The greatest reality is ousia which is infinite and One, but it proceeds outwards through genera and species into the individuals such that everything can be said to partake of ousia. Ousia itself, however, remains in itself during this procession and "is not less in the most specified species than in the most general genus" (I.492a). Eriugena's realism with regard to the universals cannot be simply translated in the terms of debate which occupied twelfth-century thinkers such as Abelard. Although he regards genera and species as real, the manner in which they partake of the reality of ousia is of crucial importance. Ousia both transcends everything and can alone be said to be real; it is also present everywhere, though Eriugena says that "it is not greater in all men than in one man" (I.492a). It is not always clear that Eriugena sees genera and species in an ontologically realist manner, because for him, they can be resolved back into ousia. What is truly real for Eriugena is the ousia, which is incorporeal, invisible, and transcends the whole material spatiotemporal universe. Ousia is ideal reality, in its eternal, unchanging, immaterial nature, and in this sense Eriugena is an idealist. He is an idealist in his belief that matter is a combination of immaterial qualities, and also in his identification of objects of knowledge with the mind which grasps them, a difficult doctrine that he found in Dionysius and Maximus. For Eriugena, the human mind, as evidenced by the perfect human nature of Christ, has the capacity to contain all things in itself; it contains them as ideas, which of course is their full reality.

This idealist system is consistently the most radical in ancient or mediaeval philosophy, even more radical than that of Gregory of Nyssa, and can be compared to the immaterialism of George Berkeley (1685–1753), or more recently to the systems of the German absolute idealists of the nineteenth century, especially G. W. F. Hegel. Eriugena's idealism is, as we shall see, not simply a version of German idealism, as many of the German nineteenth-century com-

mentators assumed, but is a more difficult and problematic formulation of idealism, which struggles with the ultimate reduction of everything to infinite subjectivity without wishing to let go of difference. Eriugena frequently speaks of God as unum multiplex (e.g., III.674c), as a complex unity, like the Plotinian reference to nous as hen polla, the One-many, at Ennead V.3.15. This doctrine will later be systematised by Nicholas of Cusa as the doctrine of coincidentia oppositorum and the non aliud.

As we shall see, the doctrine that everything is a *phantasia*  $(\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma(\alpha))$  and a *theophania*  $(\theta \varepsilon o \phi \alpha \nu \iota \alpha)$  is part of Eriugena's answer to this problem of how the One can remain in itself and also partake in the created order, which it creates, and which is fundamentally other than the One (see Chapter 12).

Before we can properly interpret Eriugena, it will be instructive to examine briefly how he has been understood in the history of philosophy.

#### Eriugena's fate in the history of philosophy

Following the condemnations of the *Periphyseon* in 1210 and 1225, Eriugena's writings became almost unknown in mediaeval philosophy, and references to him are rare from the thirteenth century onward. He seems to have attracted little or no interest until the seventeenth century, except among a few scholars such as Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa (who advised his readers to study the *Periphyseon*), and Giordano Bruno. In the seventeenth century, the religious conflicts arising from the Protestant Reformation and Catholic reaction once again focussed attention on some of the topics discussed by Eriugena – the issues of the relations of reason and authority, nature and grace, and, above all, free-will and predestination. His works first appeared in book form in the seventeenth century, beginning with the *De praedestinatione*, published in Paris in 1650 and occasioned by the Jansenist controversy raging at the time. The *De divisione naturae* was printed by Thomas Gale in Oxford in 1681. One

<sup>2</sup> See the introduction to G. Madec (ed.), Iohannis Scotti de divina praedestinatione. CCCM, Scries Latina L (Turnholti: Brepols, 1978), p. xiv.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Gale was an English Hellenist who believed Scottus to be English. See E. Jeauneau, "La Traduction érigénienne des Ambigua de Maxime le Confesseur: Thomas Gale (1636–1702) et le Codex remensis," in R. Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS, 1977), pp. 136–40. The Periphyseon was one of the first books to be printed at the press in Oxford.

of the first scholars to exhibit an interest in Eriugena was the classicist and Church of Ireland bishop, James Ussher, who gave him the name "Scotus Erigena" in his *Veterum epistolarum Hibernicarum sylloge* (Dublin [1632], p. 57) and saw him as an early opponent of the Roman Church.

He was almost totally ignored until the nineteenth century, when the first histories of philosophy - and especially of Scholastic philosophy - began to appear in France and Germany. A Danish scholar, Hjort, first brought Eriugena's philosophy to the attention of Hegel with his 1823 study. 4 Schopenhauer and Hegel and his followers reacted to him with considerable enthusiasm. In 1831, Kreuzhage claimed him as the source of "modern" ideas, and in 1838 a Catholic writer, Schlüter, published in Germany an edition of the De divisione naturae which contributed significantly to the dissemination of Eriugena's ideas. 5 By 1844, however, a reaction had set in, and Möller published a work listing the errors and heresies of John Scottus. 6 In France, meanwhile, the first serious consideration of Eriugena was by Taillandier in 1843, who championed Eriugena as a corrective to the stale and outmoded philosophy of Scholasticism.<sup>7</sup> Eriugena was generally seen as an outsider to the main currents of his time, a challenger of orthodoxy, and a champion of independent thought. His ideas were also thought to be somewhat reckless and dangerous, and in particular, he was accused of pantheism.

#### Eriugena and the charge of pantheism

Most of the main nineteenth- and twentieth-century commentators - Hauréau, Windelband, Copleston, and others - agree with what

has become the standard interpretation of Eriugena as a Christian Neoplatonist with mystical and pantheistic tendencies. Hauréau called him "another Proclus, scarcely Christian," indicating his disapproval of Eriugena's apparent emanationism; and Windelband, in his Geschichte der Philosophie (1892), saw the main point of Eriugena's philosophy as the "identification of the different grades of abstraction with the stages of metaphysical reality," which Ueberweg characterised as the hypostasisation of the tabula logica.9 In other words they regard Eriugena as collapsing the ontological and logical orders together in an indefensible manner. The general thrust of this widely held interpretation is that Eriugena maintains a hierarchical metaphysical system under the guise of "divisions" of nature, but that he goes further than most Christian Neoplatonists in arguing for the final conflation of these divisions (which include God and nature, uncreated and created being) into one pantheistic concept of nature as both God and creation. Eriugena is accused of identifying God and nature.

Many writers have interpreted him as a pantheist (not all of whom consider pantheism a defect; indeed, some – like Jäsche – considered it a subtle and profound philosophical and theological insight). They were led to this interpretation by Eriugena's many statements asserting that God and the creature must be considered as one, notably in the *Periphyseon:* "It follows that we ought not to understand God and the creature as two things distinct from one another, but as one and the same. For both the creature, by subsisting, is in God; and God, by manifesting Himself . . . creates Himself in the Crea-

<sup>4</sup> P. Hjort, Johan Scotus Erigena oder von dem Ursprung einer christlichen Philosophie und ihrem heiligen Beruf (Copenhagen, 1823). Hegel refers to Hjort in his History of Philosophy, vol. 3, trans. by E. S. Haldane (London, 1896), p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> C. B. Schlüter, ed., Johannis Scoti Erigenae De Divisione Naturae Libri Quinque (Münster, 1838). Schlüter saw Eriugena as a rationalist, see PL CXXII. 101ff. For A. Kreuzhage see his Mitteilungen über den Einfluss der Philosophie auf die Entwicklung des inneren Lebens (Münster, 1831), p. 216.

<sup>6</sup> See N. Möller, Johannes Scotus Erigena und seine Irrtümer (Mainz, 1844).

<sup>7</sup> See the important remark of Saint-René Taillandier in his doctoral dissertation, "Scot Erigène et la philosophie scolastique" (Strasbourg, 1843), pp. 264-5: "Ce fût d'abord le catholicisme mystique du midi de l'Allemagne qui tira de l'oubli sa [Eriugena's] mémoire. Fréderic Schlegel regrettait pour la scolastique qu'elle ne se fût pas attachée à suivre de plus près les enseignements de Jean Scot. Sur les traces de ce penseur libre et fécond, elle cût pu, disait-il, éviter la sécheresse et les subtilités où elle est allée se perdre. M. Franz Baader pensait de même et maintes fois il appela l'attention de la philosophie sur les spéculations de Scot Erigène." (Baader was an enthusiastic disciple of Eriugena, comparing him to Schelling and idealism.)

<sup>8</sup> See M. Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène: Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée (Louvain: Abbaye de Mont César, 1933), p. 264.

<sup>9</sup> See F. Ueberweg, A History of Philosophy, vol. 1 (New York and London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1872), pp. 358-60. Ueberweg is referring to the account of ousia, genus, and species discussed earlier.

<sup>10</sup> Möller, Johannes Scotus Erigena; G. B. Jäsche, Der Pantheismus nach seinen verschiedenen Hauptformen, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1828); Jundt, Histoire de panthéisme (1875); C. E. Plumtre, History of Pantheism (1882), A. Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. 6, trans. by W. Mc-Gilchrist (London, 1899), p. 179; J. E. Sandys, A History of Classical Scholarship from the Sixth Century B.C. to the End of the Middle Ages, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), vol. 1, p. 148; M. De Wulf, History of Medieval Philosophy (London: Longmans, Green, 1909), p. 215; B. Bosnjak, "Dialektik der Theophanic über den Begriff der Natur bei J. S. Eriugena," in La Filosofia della Natura nel Medioevo (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1966), pp. 264-71. A. McIntyre lists Eriugena as a pantheist in the entry on "Pantheism," in P. Edwards (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, vol. 6 (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1967), p. 32. J. Gracia calls Eriugena a "metaphysical monist" in his "Ontological Characterisation of the Relation between Man and Created Nature in Eriugena," Journal of the History of Philosophy 16 (1978), pp. 155-66.

ture" (III.678c)." Eriugena was condemned by the Church long after his death. The events surrounding his condemnation are unclear. He was associated with two Aristotelian scholars who were teaching at Paris - David of Dinant and Amaury of Bène. In 1210, according to the Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, 12 the archbishop of Sens, Peter Corbelius, and the council of bishops at Paris condemned the quaternuli of David of Dinant and ordered it to be burned. At the same time, they forbade both the public and the private reading of Aristotle's works on natural philosophy (libri Aristotelis de naturali philosophia). The text of the condemnation does not mention the Periphyseon; the 1225 condemnation, however, refers to the Periphyseon as having already been banned by the "Synod of Sens," presumably referring to the judgment of 1210. In 1215 the works of Amaury were banned, and in 1225 Pope Honorius III, in a letter to the bishops of France, condemned the liber periphysis titulatur and ordered that all copies be sent to Rome for burning, since the work was "teeming with the worms of heretical perversity." Actually, Amaury was already dead by the time of the condemnation in 1210, so it was ordered that his remains be exhumed and ejected from the cemetery; nothing is known of the time or circumstances of David's death, but he is not mentioned in the decree of 1215. Eriugena was condemned by association with these heretics, as were the writings of Aristotle. Eriugena's condemnation in 1225 linked him with the followers of Amaury of Bène. Both David and Amaury were denounced by Thomas Aquinas as pantheists.

Aquinas discusses David and Amaury's doctrine in the Summa contra Gentiles Book I, Chapter 26; the Summa theologica I.3.8; and the De veritate XXI.q.4. Aquinas distinguished between the doctrine that God is the form of all things ("formal pantheism," as Théry calls it), which he associated with Amaury, and the doctrine that God is the matter of all things ("material pantheism"), which he associated with David of Dinant. Aquinas speaks of the Amauricians as holding that God was the principium formale omnium rerum,

11 I.-P. Sheldon-Williams (trans.), Periphyseon (Dublin, 1980), III.160-3.

13 Chartularium, pp. 106-7. Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, p. 248 n 2. For the doctrine of Amaury of Bène, see G. C. Capelle, Autour du décret de 1210. 3. Amaury de Bène. Etude sur son panthéisme formel (Paris: Vrin, 1932).

whereas he accuses David of believing God the prime matter of all things: Deum esse materiam primam (ST 1.q.3.a.8).

Amaury's pantheism asserts that God is the principium formale omnium rerum, according to Aquinas. 14 Eriugena does not use the term "formal principle," but he does use the formula forma omnium to describe God on several occasions (e.g. I.500a). He also says that God is the essentia and subsistentia omnium. From what is known about the Amauricians, they held that God is the form in the sense of the Ideal Exemplar or Primordial Cause of all things, as is reported by Martin of Poland (i.e., of Troppau) in his Chronicon pontificum et imperatorum and by Henry of Susa in his Lectura in quinque libros decretalium (1270). Henry reported that Amaury had found his teachings in the writings of Eriugena and listed three principal errors: (1) that all things are God, (2) that the ideas both create and are created lauod primordiales causae quae vocantur ideae, id est forma seu exemplar, creant et creantur), and (3) that there will be an adunatio of the sexes at the end of time. 15 Martin (d. 1279) reported around 1271-2 that the Amauricians held that God was both the creative cause of all things and created in all things, an idea indeed found in Eriugena. 16 Bernard Gui reports that these errors are to be found in a book called Pision, 17 and Franciscus Pipinus (d. 1320), in his Chronicon, says these ideas are to be found in the "Peri Physeon" and were condemned at Paris. 18 Other sources of Amaury's doctrines and their condemnation are Garnier of Rochefort's Contra Amauricanos (1223), which associates the phrase Deus est omnia with Amaury, and Caesar of Heisterbach's Dialogus miraculorum (c. 1223).

Apart from references in these writers, there is little evidence (none of his works survive) that Amaury's doctrines were in fact influ-

14 Sec Capelle, Autour du décret de 1210. 3. Amaury de Bène.

<sup>12</sup> See the Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, ed. H. Denifle and A. Chatelain (Paris, 1889), vol. 1, p. 70, and also G. Théry, Autour du décret de 1210, 1. David de Dinant. Etude sur son panthéisme matérialiste (Paris: Bibliothèque Thomiste, 1925), p. 7 and passim.

<sup>15</sup> For the text of Henry of Susa, see P. Lucentini, "L'Eresia de Amalrico," in W. Beierwaltes (ed.), Eriugena Redivivus (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1987), pp. 174-5 n. 2. See also the appendix to Capelle, Autour du décret de 1210. 3. Amaury de Bène.

<sup>16</sup> The text of Martin's Chronicon relating to Amaury is printed in the appendix to Capelle, Autour du décret de 1210. 3. Amaury de Bène, p. 105: "Qui Amalericus asservit ydeas, que sunt in mente divina, et creare et creari." Martin also accuses Amaury of believing that God is the essentia omnium creaturarum and the esse omnium. He also says that Amaury asserted that God cannot be seen as He is, either by angels or men, and that there will be a reuniting of the sexes in the resurrection. All these ideas are clearly to be found in Eriugena's Periphyseon. The reference to Amalericus is absent from the first recension of the Chronicon of 1268-71.

<sup>17</sup> The text is reproduced in Capelle, ibid., p. 108.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

enced by Eriugena, and there is even less evidence of a connection between Eriugena and David of Dinant, a portion of whose *De tomis* is extant. None the less, since the thirteenth century it has become a commonplace that Eriugena was a pantheist, although strictly speaking the term "pantheist" was not used until the seventeenth century.

How is this phrase forma omnium to be interpreted? Of course, Eriugena links it to scriptural pronouncements, such as I Corinthians 15.28 that God will be all in all (Deus erit omnia in omnibus), or John 1.3-4, that all things are in God as life (quod factum est in eo ipso vita erat, a phrase that appears frequently in Eriugena; see Chapter 12). Here he had the support of Dionysius who refers to God as the formless cause of all forms at Divine Names (PG III. Chapter II.648c), and similar ideas are expressed in Augustine. He associates the phrase with Dionysius at V.910c, and with Gregory of Nyssa at V.987c: God will be all in all. All things will be God, the Amauricians and Eckhart will later assert. Amaury is alleged to have said that Deus est omnia in omnibus and that, for example, God is lapis in lapido, "stone in stone." The phrase forma omnium returns in Thierry of Chartres, Lectiones II.38, and also in Robert Grosseteste, especially in his tract De unica forma omnium, written in the form of a letter, probably shortly after Eriugena's condemnation. 19 Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa will frequently say that God is in all things and that all things are God. The phrase can, of course, be interpreted purely devotionally to mean that God is omnipresent and that all things depend totally for their being on God; otherwise they would be nothing at all. But Eriugena was accused of teaching the identity of the created world with God, which does not give any room for the divine transcendence. This, of course, is only one side of Eriugena's doctrine; his Dionysian negative theology also asserted the absolute transcendence of God.

Eriugena frequently calls God the genus and the creatures species (III.677c), thus seeming to assert that God's being is a genus in which all creatures participate; thus each creature is itself God, just as each

man is an animal. This can be construed as pantheistic. The consequences of such an interpretation horrify Eriugena, and he firmly rejects such a view at the very opening of Book II (523d). This rejection is amplified in the addition to the Rheims manuscript inserted at this point:

For God is not a genus of the creature nor the creature a species of God any more than the creature is the genus of God nor God a species of the creature. The same can be said of the whole and its parts, for God is not the whole of the creature, nor the creature a part of God any more than the creature is the whole of God or God a part of the creature, although . . . in a metaphorical sense (metaforice) God is said to be both genus and whole and species and part since everything which is in Him and (comes) from Him can honestly and reasonably be predicated of Him. (II.523d–4d; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

This addition shows that there were worries about some of Eriugena's balder statements, even in the ninth century, but that Eriugena (if he wrote the addition) or one of his immediate followers was anxious to rebut any charge of heresy made against the work. A further addition says that we can say that God is a genus using the "loftier contemplation" (altior theoria) of Gregory the Theologian. Eriugena could have found a similar careful expression both of God's immanence in things and his transcendence of them in Maximus's Ambigua I.iii (PG XCI.1081c).

Eriugena is not a pantheist, and his strong monistic statements concerning the identity of divinity and creation are always counterbalanced by assertions of the absolute difference between God and creation. We shall show that Eriugena expanded Dionysian and Cappadocian negative theology into a general negative dialectic, which continues to assert difference even at the heart of identity, transcendence and immanence being thought together in the one intellectual concept.

#### Eriugena and German idealism

Some nineteenth-century commentators – mainly in Germany, but see also Alice Gardner's study written in Cambridge, England, in 1900 – saw Eriugena in a radically different light. They were much more impressed with his rationalism and radical subjectivism, so they saw him as forerunner to the *idealist* philosophers Fichte,

<sup>19</sup> See J. J. McEvoy, "Johannes Scottus Eriugena and Robert Grosseteste: An Ambiguous Influence," in Beierwaltes, *Eriugena Redivivus*, p. 194. Grosseteste in his letter is responding to a question put to him by Adam Rufus. McEvoy dates the letter between 1226 and 1229, thus suggesting that Grosseteste was seeking to defend himself in advance against accusations that he was identifying God with the world.

Schelling, and Hegel.20 Franz von Baader, for example, says of Eriugena that he "stands way beyond our newer critical philosophy." These writers saw Eriugena as developing a speculative rationalist system, which identified substance with subject, merging all things in the Absolute Spirit. According to them, Eriugena made being secondary to thought and gathered all things into the essence of infinite subjectivity.22 Christlieb in 1860 compared Eriugena's theory of knowledge with that of Kant, his theory of intellectual intuition with Schelling's, and his use of negation with that of Hegel. Hegel himself, thinking of Eriugena's identification of philosophy and religion, said that with Eriugena, "true philosophy first begins, and his philosophy in the main coincides with the idealism of the Neoplatonists."23 Hegel believed that Eriugena was teaching the idealist doctrine that the real is the rational and the rational is the real, and was defending the freedom of intellect over the narrower realism of understanding. These writers were struck by Eriugena's remarks that auctoritas is nothing other than vera ratio (I.511b), that the force of authority lies solely in its agreement with what is rationally correct, an idea that Hegel associated with the Lutheran reformers. Eriugena frequently says that faith comes first, only in that it prepares the way; true reason must be the first to penetrate the Truth itself. This aspect of Eriugena's rationalism has been overemphasised and distorted by commentators eager to make him into an early Christian reformer, but Eriugena can be understood as a rationalist, in a different sense, in that he believes that the world will be resolved back through reason to its source in the One. Although the nineteenth-century commentators were interesting and

adventurous in their attempts to revitalise the thought of Eriugena for modern philosophy, their hermeneutical methods were somewhat simplistic, and we must therefore be very careful in our attempt to analyse Eriugena's idealism and rationalism to take due account of the philosophical conditions and cast of mind of the ninth century. Beierwaltes has justly remarked, "It is, however, impossible from any hermeneutic standpoint simply to add Eriugena's ideas to all kinds of idealism without critical inspection and mediating reasoning." I shall attempt to provide the mediating reasoning between the close exegetical scrutiny of Eriugena's texts and the more far-reaching philosophical interpretation of their significance.

### Eriugena in the context of early mediaeval Latin philosophy

As I have said, the nineteenth-century commentators were struggling with the fairly unreliable texts available to them. It was not until the twentieth century that Eriugena's works began to be more scientifically studied and edited, with some new manuscripts of the *Periphyseon* coming to light (Bamberg was discovered in 1899 and the Rheims manuscript in 1904).

Since Cappuyns's monumental study of 1933,<sup>25</sup> scholars have begun to study Eriugena more critically from the point of view of texts, sources, and traditions – and most particularly with respect to the traditions of the Carolingian age itself. Marenbon,<sup>26</sup> Schrimpf,<sup>27</sup> and Contreni<sup>28</sup> have argued, in important recent studies, that Eriugena is to be understood primarily in terms of the Carolingian renovatio. These writers have reacted against interpreting Eriugena as a rationalist or idealist in anything like the modern philosophical sense. In fact, Marenbon makes a sharp distinction between what is genuinely of philosophical interest in Eriugena and what he considers to be theological apologetics. Marenbon believes that what is genuinely philosophical for Eriugena is the set of themes he pursued

<sup>20</sup> See especially the study of J. Huber, Johannes Scotus Eriugena: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie im Mittelalter (1861; reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1960), and also W. Beierwaltes, "The Revaluation of John Scottus Eriugena in German Idealism," in J. J. O'Meara and L. Bieler (eds.), The Mind of Eriugena (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973), pp. 190-8. For Gardner see her Studies in John the Scot: A Philosopher of the Dark Ages (New York: Oxford University Press, 1900), esp. pp. 115-32, which still makes for interesting reading.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in T. O'Meara, Romantic Idealism and Romantic Catholicism: Schelling and the Theologians (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), p. 82.

<sup>22</sup> See Huber, Johannes Scottus Eriugena, pp. 179-80. See also T. Christlieb, Leben und Lehre des Johannes Scotus Erigena. . . (Gotha, 1860), and F. A. Staudenmaier, Johannes Scotus Eriugena und die Wissenschaft seiner Zeit . . . (1834; reprint, Frankfurt, 1966).

<sup>23</sup> See Hegel, History of Philosophy, trans. Haldane, p. 59. See also W. Beierwaltes, Platonismus und Idealismus (Frankfurt: Klostermann 1972), esp. pp. 188-201. More recently, L. Kolakowski, in his Main Currents of Marxism, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 17-30, sees Eriugena as a forerunner to the Hegelian dialectic.

<sup>24</sup> See Beierwaltes's article in O'Meara and Bieler, The Mind of Eriugena, pp. 190-8.

<sup>25</sup> Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène.
26 J. Marenbon, From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), and also his Early Medieval Philosophy (480-1150): An Introduction (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983).

<sup>27</sup> G. Schrimpf, Das Werk des Johannes Scottus Eriugena im Rahmen des Wissenschaftverständnisses seiner Zeit: Eine Hinführung zu Periphyseon (Münster: Aschendorff, 1982).

<sup>28</sup> J. Contreni, The Cathedral School of Laon from 850 to 930: Its Manuscripts and Masters (Munich: Arbeo Gesellschaft, 1978).

in common with earlier and later Latin philosophy - the problem of universals and the nature of logical classification. Eriugena is seen as a philosopher in the tradition of the commentators on the Categoriae decem, the most important philosophical text that circulated in the Latin West until Eriugena translated Dionysius. In particular, Marenbon emphasises Eriugena's treatment of the Categories as the high point of his metaphysics and his originality, and as his lasting contribution to the development of philosophy, rather than his mystical negative theology or his fourfold system of nature (whose brilliance he acknowledges while arguing that this system has no philosophical relevance or, worse, produces considerable conceptual confusion).29 The tendency of critics like Marenbon and Schrimpf (who places considerable emphasis on the Latin tradition of dialectic and the liberal arts inherited from Alcuin) is to see Eriugena with the Augustinian vision, which he undoubtedly inherited, and to reclaim Eriugena as an early mediaeval Latin philosopher, interested mainly in logical or dialectical problems in relation to the categories or the status of universals.30 I shall argue that although Eriugena indeed begins within the intellectual framework of Carolingian and Latin philosophical traditions, he totally transformed and transcended the limits of that system such that he was no longer even comprehensible to the philosophers of the age in which he lived.

#### Eriugena and the Greek tradition of negative theology

Not all scholarly critics have restricted themselves to interpreting Eriugena from the standpoint of the Latin metaphysical or dialectical tradition. Others, beginning with Brilliantoff (writing in Russian in 1898), and followed by Sheldon-Williams, Gersh, Roques, and Jeauneau, see Eriugena in terms of Greek Neoplatonism and Byzantine Christianity. Indeed, it is to be noted also that, whereas Eriugena was seen by his contemporaries as a dialectician in the tradition of the commentators on the Categoriae decem, he was seen by later mediaevals, such as Grosseteste and Nicholas of Cusa, as the man who first rendered Dionysius into Latin, and thus initiated Greek Christian Platonism in the West.<sup>31</sup> They argued that Eriugena's originality lay in his skilful adaptation of Greek philosophical and religious concepts to the Augustinian Latin tradition of Christian philosophy, and that in general he was trying to expand the horizons of Latin language and thought to accommodate the subtler, more complex, and richer thought of the Alexandrine and Byzantine tradition.

Although it is clear that Eriugena is most strongly influenced by the Greeks, I argue that, philosophically speaking, he transcends the boundaries of even this complex thought-world of late Neoplatonism and offers a radically different philosophy which can stand comparison with recent philosophical thought, especially the attempt to break out of the tradition of ontology and develop a meontology and hyperontology. Although Eriugena is a Neoplatonist, his whole philosophical élan is to discover the fundamental infinity at the ground of the finite, and to think this in terms of both difference and identity. He will arrive at infinite "subjectivity," but think of it in terms of an intersubjective dialectics, which is not really to be found in classical Neoplatonism seen as a hierarchical system of being.

#### Eriugena and the metaphysics of hierarchy

Both Greek and Latin Neoplatonism are usually thought to have been combined in mediaeval thought into a coherent system which explains being in terms of an objective hierarchical chain of realities,

<sup>29</sup> Marenbon acknowledges his debt to B. Hauréau, who in his Histoire de la philosophie scolastique, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Paris, 1872), recognised the problem of universals as the main philosophical problem of the Middle Ages. Marenbon situates this problem of universals within the problematic of the categories (Circle of Alcuin, p. 5). On Eriugena's alleged conceptual confusion, see J. Marenbon, "John Scottus and the Categoriae Decem," in W. Beierwaltes (ed.), Eriugena: Studien zu seinen Quellen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1980), esp. pp. 133ff.

<sup>30</sup> For a criticism of the narrowness of Marenbon's definition of philosophy in the early mediaeval period, see J. J. McEvoy's review of J. Marenbon, Early Medieval Philosophy, in Bulletin de théologie ancienne et médiévale 13 (Jan.-Dec. 1984), pp. 556-9. There is no doubt that Eriugena's framework is Augustinian, especially in terms of his cosmology, but for this very reason it does not seem correct to classify Latin philosophy in terms of its interest in the categories. Augustine did not devote much attention to the problems of substance or of the categories. His main concern was to explain the relation of the temporal to the timeless.

<sup>31</sup> M. Brennan gives the English translation of Brilliantoff's title as "The Influence of Eastern Theology on Western in the Works of Johannes Scottus Eriugena" (Saint Petersburg, 1898); see also L. Vietorisz, "Greek Sources in the Periphyseon of John Scotus, called Eriugena" (dissertation presented to the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, 1966). For I.-P. Sheldon-Williams, see A. H. Armstrong (ed.), The Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967; reprinted with corrections, 1970), pp. 425-537. For R. Roques, see his Libres sentiers vers l'érigénisme (Rome: Ateneo, 1975) and for S. Gersh, see his From Iamblichus to Eriugena (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

extending from highest to lowest, from God to formless matter, a chain which replicates the logical and epistemological layers of knowledge and the mind. 32 The mediaevals thought of these hierarchies as running through all the orders - logical, epistemological, social, metaphysical, cosmological, and theological - of created being. Thus, for Augustine, a stray horse is better than a stone (De libero arbitrio III.v.15.56, and a drunkard is better than wine (III.v.15.57)! Superficially, Eriugena's system resembles this kind of Neoplatonic hierarchical system, with its four divisions of nature extending from God, through the causes and effects, down to formless matter. It was Dionysius who gave the term hierarchia, the sacred principles, rules, or "sacred order" (τάξις ἱερά) (taxis hiera), CH, Chapter III: PG III.164d), to the West, and who devoted two books, the Celestial Hierarchy and the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, to an elaboration of cosmic and human hierarchies.33 Eriugena's philosophy in fact contains many hierarchies, derived both from Dionysius and from Augustine (see, for example, De libero arbitrio III.v.13). There is an epistemological hierarchy extending from the highest mystical unity between mind and God, through intellect, reason, and memory to the external senses and the life-force; there is also a logical hierarchy extending from the highest ousia through all the widest genera down to the lowest species and individuals. There is a cosmological hierarchy of God, the Causes/Light/Word, the theophanies of those causes, angels, human beings, animals, and all living things, matter and the void. But Eriugena's philosophy of nature cannot in fact be understood simply in hierarchical terms. His thought is not adequately summarised in the standard interpretation of the four levels of nature as four hierarchies or hypostases.34

We argue that this seemingly objective hierarchical scheme of nature is counterbalanced by an antihierarchical subjectivist tendency, which may indeed be termed "idealist" in nature, in the sense that these hierarchies are understood as mind dependent, or coming about through the activity of the mind. The hierarchies are actually theophanies, that is, revelations of God understood in the perceiving mind.

For Dionysius and even at times for Augustine, as Pépin has shown, 35 the hierarchies appear to stand as objective intermediaries between the human self and God; and God's grace is seen to be channelled down these hierarchical rungs of the ladder of being. Augustine normally places angels above humans (at, e.g., De libero arbitrio III.v.14.53-5, where angels, who have no desire to sin, are ranked higher than humans). Eriugena, on the other hand, wants to safeguard the human ability to have direct access to the divine, and in fact to become divine. He argues that there is no intermediary between the human being and God (III.668b), citing a scriptural phrase which Augustine (e.g., De vera religione 113, PL XXXIV.172) and Dionysius also use. Eriugena says angels are called eggigi in Greek because they are "next after" (iuxta) God; however, they do not stand between man and God. Man has a direct access to the divine (III.668c-d). Even though humans are placed halfway down the ladder of being, nevertheless they also transcend and contain the entire ladder of being in themselves, and as a kind of transcendent non-being are able to merge with God. God reveals Himself directly to man in theophanies, and mankind is able to have direct vision of Him. The orders of created being cease to be barriers to the intercommunication between human and divine subjectivity, and in fact the human subject is seen to be infinite in its own absolute nature.

<sup>32</sup> The classic study of mediaeval hierarchy is A. O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976); On Neoplatonic hierarchy in particular see R. Roques, L'Univers dionysien. Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys (Paris, 1954); J. Pépin, "Univers dionysien et univers augustinien," Recherches de Philosophie (Aspects de la dialectique), 2 (1956), pp. 179-224; and R. F. Hathaway, Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969). For the later development of hierarchical ideas, see A. Koyré, From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957), and E. A. Burtt, The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science (New York: Doubleday, 1954), pp. 17-24.

<sup>33</sup> See especially Roques, L'Univers dionysien, pp. 68-91. It is not clear that taxis and seira are equivalent notions in Proclus and Dionysius.

<sup>34</sup> On the idea of hypostasis as understood by Plotinus see J. Anton, "Some Logical Aspects of the Concept of Hypostasis in Plotinus," Review of Metaphysics 3 (Dec. 1977), pp. 258-71. See also J. M. Rist, Plotinus: The Road to Reality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); D. O'Meara, Structures hiérarchiques dans la philosophie de Plotin (Leiden: Brill.

<sup>1975),</sup> and A. H. Armstrong, The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus (1940; reprint, Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1967). Plotinus refers to the three "principal" hypostases in Ennead V. 1. Rist claims there are only three hypostases in Plotinus, whereas Armstrong claims there are five (the One, Nous, Psyche, Logos, and Physis). It is not always clear that the One is a hypostasis at all. Later Neoplatonists such as Proclus and Dionysius prefer to talk about orders and hierarchies and operate with a large number of different levels of reality. Dionysius uses the term hypostatēs to refer to that which supports the principles of being, life, intellect, etc. Eriugena does not see his four divisions as four hypostases in these terms. Although he does talk about the highest genus ousia as being divided into hypostases, he actually understands them as theoriae.

<sup>35</sup> J. Pépin, "Univers dionysien et univers augustinien," pp. 179-224. On the contrast between Augustinian and Dionysian Neoplatonism see also J. Koch, "Augustinischer und dionysischer Neuplatonismus und das Mittelalter," Kant-Studien 48 (1956-7), pp. 117-33.

The transcendence of the hierarchies of the created world, and the absorption of the human mind back to God, involves also the transcendence of all idea of place. Traditionally, mediaeval Neoplatonism did not allow any creature to move from its allotted place in the hierarchy of being. Eriugena is doing something very radical by separating the concept of human subjectivity from the concept of location in a fixed place. He is, as I shall argue, attempting to think through the meaning of consciousness in terms which have been purified of spatial bias, thus allowing for closer comparison of the human with the divine mind. God is the locus omnium (I.453a) and man is the officina omnium.

Eriugena's system of nature not only liberates the human mind from incarceration in a fixed place and time but also develops the powerful thought that nature itself undergoes a reconstruction and a reformation which is carried out by the human mind. This reconstruction of nature is effected by the human use of a transcending negative dialectics: Human nature can negate all finitude and restore all limited beings to their true timeless and infinite natures, until all natures find the infinite nature of God, which Eriugena (as Eckhart also does) characterises as *Nothingness*. In other words, Eriugena allows the mind to reallocate beings in the order of nature and therefore to subordinate ontological to intellectual or mental structures.

Eriugena develops a philosophy in which the human mind has powers to interfere with the ontological process itself and both produce new levels of being and play a role in reconciling all being with the One. The mind is therefore higher than being itself, and it is productive of being to such an extent that Eriugena's philosophy can be genuinely called an *idealist* system, as nineteenth-century German commentators correctly interpreted. Eriugena's philosophy in consequence offers a radical new "ontology" of the human subject. He breaks with the standard mediaeval assessment of the limited role of human reason and the lowly place of human nature in the hierarchical order of creation, <sup>36</sup> and instead invests the

human subject with an extraordinary set of properties. As we shall see, human nature has an infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal nature equal even to God himself, if not actually identical with Him. This glorified picture of the human subject certainly prefigures the Renaissance (indeed, Eriugena is consistently more radical than Pico della Mirandola) and Cartesian return to the human subject as the centre of all being and meaning. It is often said that Descartes based his anthropology at least in one part on Scholastic angelology in making of the human mind a separate immaterial being whose nature is its ability to think. Eriugena, however, is more radical in that he goes farther in basing his anthropology on his conception of God Himself, and in fact makes human beings higher than angels in several important respects. The human being is explicitly imago Dei, whereas the Bible does not say that the angel is imago Dei. Furthermore, God appears to people and angels in human form and not in the form of an angel.

Developing Augustinian and Greek Christian anthropology – as expressed by the Cappadocian fathers (especially Gregory of Nyssa) and by Maximus Confessor - Eriugena gives the human being a crucial role in the mirroring and extension of the divine creative process. For Eriugena it is no exaggeration to say that the human being contains all beings (an example of a dignity not accorded to angelic natures) and that the divine creative process is one with the process of dialectical reason of the human mind with its progressions and reversions. The human subject is the chosen vehicle for the divine creative process and for the articulation of the hierarchy of being itself. Thus the human subject is central to the progression of effects from causes in this world, and in the creation, manifestation, and preservation of the material corporeal domain. This is in radical opposition to the Latin realist tradition. Ontological orders in Eriugena's system can depend for their existence on movements and decisions of the human subject itself - in fact, the material order itself is dependent on a human error of judgment (symbolised theologically as the Fall). Thus, for Eriugena, the human power of explicating, negating, and identifying (in judgments) assumes ontological roles in the outgoing and return of the One. Eriugena is ambiguous on the question of whether humans actually created the material world or whether the world was created by God because He "foreknew" that men would fall. In any event, there would have been no material, temporal world if human beings had

<sup>36</sup> The classic study of mediaeval hierarchy is A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, reprinted 1976) but in relation to Eriugena see the authoritative work of Roques, *L'Univers dionysien*. Eriugena always objects to human nature being understood primarily in a mortal and corruptible sense. He goes further than Augustine in emphasising the timeless essence of the human subject in its fullest sense, thereby holding out a vision of a human nature which transcends the hierarchy of increasing limitation and definition.

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not sinned; the world would have been purely immaterial and eternal.

#### Infinity and the relativisation of ontology

The effect of this intrusion of human subjectivity into objective hierarchies is to relativise the scheme of nature. Eriugena is saying that being never is an unchanging absolute but, rather, has formlessness and lack of fixity, which means that it can never be the absolute first principle of philosophy. As with Nicholas of Cusa, there is no comparison or relation (nulla proportio) between finite and infinite. What is real or has being at the level of finite reality may be overcome at the level of the infinite. The first principle of philosophy for Eriugena is God as transcendent non-being, an ungrounded and infinite formlessness whose richness can only be symbolised by the infinite variability of being. Positing such an absolute relativises and temporalises all human attempts at a final and complete knowing.

Thus Eriugena's aim is not so much to locate the first principle of all being as to show the absolute groundlessness or lack of principle of the truly infinite - both human and divine. Both human being and divine being may be termed anarchos (ἄναρχος); that is, both are without beginning or end.<sup>37</sup> Anarchic also means without origin, without principle, groundless, anaitios (ἀναίτιος), hoc est sine principio et sine causa (III.688c). Of course, Eriugena asserts that the divine nature is self-grounding, causa sui, and by implication it can even be said of human nature in its perfection that it, too, is selfgrounding, a term which Eckhart will later explicitly apply to human nature, but which Eriugena implies less boldly.<sup>38</sup> But to be grounded in itself the self must be grounded in nothing. Thus, to interpret this in modern philosophical terms, Eriugena, like Sartre, sees the human self as having an essentially negative character and

as being a kind of non-being.<sup>39</sup> If the human subject is self-grounding and infinite, its actual present state is really subordinate to its perfect and "non-existent" possible state. Eriugena talks about Adamic man in paradise not as representing some perfection which existed in the past but as a possibility. For Eriugena, as later for Nicholas of Cusa (who terms God possest)40 and for Martin Heidegger in Being and Time, possibility stands higher than actuality. Eriugena's philosophy therefore offers a major deconstruction of the central principle of the Western metaphysical tradition.

Eriugena as philosopher

#### Eriugena and the deconstruction of ontotheology

Eriugena's philosophy therefore cannot be said to belong squarely in the classical Western tradition understood either in terms of ontotheology (Heidegger) or in terms of being interpreted as esse, as Gilson and the neo-Thomists have characterised it. The highest concept in Eriugena's philosophy is not being or substance (as it was for Augustine), but non-being or what he terms "non-substance" or "more-than-substance" (hyperousia, superessentia).

Eriugena in fact can be said to be offering a deconstruction of the Latin ontological tradition of Augustine and his followers. He resists the Latin orthodoxy of the primacy of substantial being and the equation of the "I Am Who I Am" of Exodus 3.14 with esse as made by Augustine in the De Trinitate, and in the De Genesi ad litteram V.xvi.34, where Augustine speaks of God's being as an ineffabilis substantia, or the Confessions VII.10.16, where the divine ego sum qui sum is contrasted with the regio dissimilitudinis of fallen human nature. He equally resists a simplistic interpretation of being

<sup>37</sup> Anarches is a traditional name for God in patristic writing, especially in the tradition of negative theology. Eriugena found it in Dionysius and Maximus. For Eriugena's use of the term, see Periphyseon I.451d, 516a; II.562a, 585a; III.625d (where it is also implied that the human mind can be termed anarchos, since it partakes of an infinite motion around God, which is without beginning or end and is symbolized by circularity), 688c; IV.741c;

<sup>38</sup> See R. Schürmann, Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 116.

<sup>39</sup> On this philosophical tradition which describes the intellect as a "nothingness," see Eckhart's Parisian Questions. 1. in A. A. Maurer (ed.), Master Eckhart: Parisian Questions and Prologues, Medieval Sources in Translation 15 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1974; reprinted 1981), p. 47: "Whatever has to do with intellect belongs to a different order than existence." See also J. D. Caputo, "The Nothingness of the Intellect in Meister Eckhart's Parisian Questions," Thomist 39 (1975), pp. 85-119.

<sup>40</sup> See Nicholas of Cusa, Trialogus de Possest, translated by J. Hopkins, in A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), pp. 62-153. Eriugena does not have a system for comparing possibility and actuality, as does Nicholas; however; he is attempting to resolve all differences into a unity which does not annihilate the difference, in a manner very similar to Nicholas's idea of coincidentia oppositorum.

as pure existence, the *ipsum esse subsistens* of Aquinas.<sup>41</sup> Nor is Eriugena offering a simple monism or *Einheitsmetaphysik* as it has been characterised by Gregory,<sup>42</sup> which places all the emphasis on the self-identity of the highest principle (another way in which the "I Am Who Am" may be interpreted). Although Eriugena frequently asserts that *ousia* alone is real, he always stresses the negative and incomplete nature of even the highest self-identity; it always includes a negative and distancing element which safeguards the true transcendence of the Godhead.

In fact, Eriugena's placing of the Godhead or One beyond being and non-being, outside of all discursive thought and beyond every logical framework, in the realm of identity within which difference is preserved in a non-alienated way, opens up a new perspective in Western thought which is later to be followed in a similarly dialectical way by Eckhart, <sup>43</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, <sup>44</sup> Bruno, <sup>45</sup> and more recently by the German absolute idealists and by some contemporary Process theologians. Indeed, Eriugena's philosophy is more properly called *meontology* (from the Greek words  $m\bar{e}$  on, meaning "non-being"), *metaontology*, or *hyperontology* (the study "after" or "beyond" the study of being), and truly belongs to the tradition of

41 See J. Caputo, Heidegger and Aquinas (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982). Eckhart similarly interpreted "I Am Who Am" to communicate purity of existence, an unknown nature in his First Parisian Question. For Augustine's use of Exodus 3.14, see the Confessions.

42 See Gregory's essay in Beierwaltes (ed.), Platonismus in der Philosophie des Mittelalters, Wege der Forschung 197 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlich Buchgesellschaft, 1969), p. 343.

43 Sec, e.g., E. Zum Brunn and A. de Libera, Maître Eckhart: Métaphysique du verbe et théologie négative (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), and R. Schürmann, Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher. On Eckhart's use of dialectic see M. de Gandillac, "La Dialectique du Maître Eckhart," in La mystique rhénane (Paris, 1963), pp. 59-94. It is necessary to bear in mind that Plotinus and Proclus did not directly affect the mediaeval metaphysical tradition in the West until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

44 Sce, e.g., J. Hopkins, Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-Other (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979). Nicholas calls God non aliud in an attempt to provide a term which indicates both identity and difference and their transcendence. As immanent, God is "not-other" than any created thing; as transcendent, He is the unqualified not-other (Hopkins p. 7). According to B. McGinn's interpretation of Eckhart, Eckhart argues that God transcends creatures precisely by being immanent in them; see B. McGinn, "Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity," in D. O'Meara (ed.), Neoplatonism and Christian Thought (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1982), p. 133.

45 On Bruno see W. Beierwaltes, "Absolute Identity: Neoplatonic Implications in Schelling's Bruno," in Contemporary German Philosophy, ed. D. E. Christensen, M. Riedel, et al., vol. 2 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983), pp. 73-99. Beierwaltes interprets Nicholas and Bruno as thinkers engaged in the problem of identity and difference. See also S. Greenberg, The Infinite in Giordano Bruno: With a Translation of His Dialogue Concerning the Cause, Principle and One (New York: King's Cross Press, 1950).

Plato's Parmenides. Although it has recently been argued that Eckhart's privileging of intellect over being in his Parisian Questions marks him as the first major writer to break with Latin ontotheology, 46 I argue that Eriugena's discussion of the nature of human intellect (his "nousology") is in fact the first serious attempt to provide an alternative to ontotheology in the Latin West. Indeed, without Eriugena's groundwork it is difficult to see how later mediaeval developments such as those of Eckhart could have taken place at all (although, strictly speaking, we cannot say exactly whether Eckhart knew Eriugena otherwise than through the Clavis physicae).

Furthermore, by making non-being a more important term than being, both for the understanding of the concept of creation ex nihilo and for the description of the natures of both God and humanity, Eriugena is making a radical reassessment of the concept of non-being itself, which shall be explored in the course of this study. For him true non-being is the darkest, most inaccessible, and yet also the richest concept. It contains being and non-being in all their relative forms, but it is also pure infinite possibility and absolute ground of both unity and identity. It is also, as we shall argue, the nature of the mind before self-conscious thought, and the true nature of human existence for Eriugena.

To say that Eriugena is best understood in the context of the modern subjectivist and idealist turn in philosophy is not at all to say that he believes in an isolated Fichtean Ego as the source of all meaning and being. It would be completely anachronistic to speak of a developed concept of subjectivity in the modern sense in Eriugena. He is thinking of subject as a higher hypostasis upon which objective reality depends; it is characterised by formlessness and freedom and expresses itself by forming itself endlessly into different states of mind. The return to the subject for Eriugena is not a retreat or a reduction to an isolated solipsistic ego, no matter how infinitely conceived; it is a return to an infinite spiritual and intersubjective domain, a world of communicating intelligences whose inner intimacy is well signified by the dwelling together of the members of the Trinity. As Henry Bett remarked very accurately, Eriugena's emphasis on a triadic formulation of ousia and on the

<sup>46</sup> See Maître Eckhart à Paris. Une critique médiévale de l'ontothéologie. Les Questions Parisiennes No. 1 et No. 2 d'Eckhart, ed. and trans. Emilie Zum Brunn, Z. Kaluiza, A. de Libera, P. Vignaux, and E. Weber (Paris: PUF, 1984).

Trinity saves his philosophy from the "chill sterility which besets the Neoplatonist conception of God as superessential unity."47 It is hard even to find a language in which to describe this aspect of Eriugena's system, and indeed he himself had to resort to metaphors and analogies in order to express it. The discovery of subjectivity is one of the fundamental characteristics of modern philosophy inaugurated by Descartes. Eriugena does not have a modern understanding of the self-enclosed isolated subject. Rather, he has the idea of a nous which has a "circular" motion around God, and can come into a unity with Him. In order to understand this philosophically we have to try to give a name to this mind-God relation. "Intersubjectivity" is useful if we remember that subject is to be understood as subjectum. Eriugena's philosophy at its highest level is really a play of subjectivities moving on a timeless and eternal horizon, where the "real" world of material and sensible things occupying space and time is no more than a set of signs, figures, and symbols by which this multiple subjectivity (God, Man, and the Man-God) comes to communicate with itself and becomes self-conscious.<sup>48</sup> All sensible things are fantasies to the earthly mind, but they are mysterious theophanies to the divine mind, and to the wise ones who have learned to see these theophanies by long study of philosophy. The result of this interplay is the structure known to most students as Eriugena's fourfold division of nature.

This book then supports, in general terms, the validity of the approach first taken by the German idealist critics in the last century. Eriugena is best understood philosophically, in terms of the sophisticated dialectic of being and non-being, which was recovered by the German absolute idealists and by contemporary European philosophy. To say this is not to deny that Eriugena must first be understood as a ninth-century thinker with the serious limitation of sources that entails.

## ERIUGENA'S SOURCES

It is impossible to understand Eriugena's philosophy unless it is seen in the context of the world-picture he absorbed from his extensive reading of ancient authors. This world-picture was essentially Neoplatonic in inspiration, as Aristotle's works were in general almost unknown to the early mediaeval Latin West, except through the paraphrase of the *Categories*, known as the *Categoriae decem*, and also through the commentaries of Boethius. In this chapter I shall begin by giving some details of Eriugena's borrowings from Neoplatonic authors, as a first step towards understanding his own philosophical contribution and originality.

What form of Neoplatonism most strongly influenced John Scottus? What are the principal Neoplatonic elements of his system? Eriugena espouses both Neoplatonism and Christianity, and for him, the two never come into contrast or opposition. Thus in the Homilia, Eriugena is able to say in a Platonic manner that man gets his body from this world but his soul from another world. He does not reflect Augustine's worries about the possibility of conflict between Neoplatonic doctrine and Christian teaching on such matters as the pre-existence of the soul, the nature of creation and salvation, or the meaning of nature and grace. Eriugena's main concern is in fact to integrate into a single coherent system the diverse Neoplatonisms he received from Greek and Latin authorities (see, e.g., IV.804c–805b) and to communicate this integrated system as the truth of Christianity and the meaning of nature itself. He frequently cites Augustine and Dionysius together, showing that they agree

<sup>47</sup> H. Bett, Johannes Scotus Erigena: A Study in Medieval Philosophy (1925; reprinted, New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 102.

<sup>48</sup> See the essay of W. Beierwaltes, "Negati Affirmatio: Welt als Metapher," Philosophisches Jahrbuch 83 (1976), pp. 237-65. Reprinted in R. Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène.

I Eriugena knew nothing of Aristotle's own writing but was familiar with the theory of the categories, which was available to him through a number of sources, including the pseudo-Augustinian Categoriae decem, and through Martianus Capella. See J. Marenbon, Early Medieval Philosophy (480-1150): An Introduction (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 48ff. He also came across Aristotelian principles such as dynamis and energeia in the philosophy of Maximus Confessor, though they are interpreted in a Neoplatonic manner.

(V.976a). Of course, it is necessary to remember that "Neoplatonism" is a term developed by German historians of philosophy in the nineteenth century to apply to the revival and systematisation of certain Platonic doctrines of Plotinus, Porphyry, and Proclus. Eriugena could not have thought of himself - or of Augustine - as a "Neoplatonist"; rather, they understood themselves as practitioners of vera philosophia, true philosophy, the truth as given to reason.

#### The influence of Plato

Although earlier commentators frequently referred to Eriugena as a proponent of Alexandrian philosophy and as a keen student of Plato, in fact his Platonism is almost entirely derived from Christian sources. He knew nothing of the actual writings of Plato; it is no longer thought that he knew the Greek text of the Timaeus as Hauréau suggested in 1872.2 It is now even doubted whether he had access to the Latin translations of Plato made by Calcidius or Cicero.<sup>3</sup>

Eriugena rarely cites Plato (fifteen citations in the Periphyseon), and although he treats him with respect, his citations are frequently inaccurate. His only certain contact with Plato was through Calcidius's Commentary on the Timaeus (cited by Eriugena in his Annotationes in Marcianum at Lutz, p. 10 [7, 10] and p. 22 [13, 23] which, however, he misunderstood on certain key points, as Sheldon-Williams has shown.4 He took from the Timaeus (or possibly from a report of Platonic doctrine in Augustine, for example) the teaching that the cosmos is a living animal with a body and soul (I.476c), as well as Plato's description of the nature of formless matter (I.500c). He attributes to Plato the idea that all sensible things are contained within the principle of life, vital motion (III.735), which was really a scriptural concept to be found in John 1.3-4. He falsely ascribes to Plato the view that all the planets revolve around the sun (III.698a).5

Although Eriugena credits Plato with being the only philosopher in antiquity to infer the existence of a Creator from the creature

(III.724b), nevertheless, unlike Plotinus (Ennead V.1.8, for example), he does not see himself as explicating Plato, and at III.732d, he even says he does not want to be mistaken for a member of the Platonic sect (de Platone sileo, ne videar sectam illius sequi). Eriugena is not beyond rejecting certain aspects of what he thought to be Platonic doctrine, when, for example, he rejects the supposed Platonic definition of angels as "rational and immortal animals" (Periphyseon III.732d and IV.762c), which, in fact, is to be found in Calcidius. Eriugena also rejects a doctrine of Plato's Timaeus - referring only to "pagan philosophers" without explicitly citing Plato - when he rejects the idea that the world was formed from pre-existent matter (III.664c), though Eriugena obviously also read this in Augustine and elsewhere.

#### The influence of Plotinus and Proclus

The extent of Eriugena's contact with pagan Platonism in general is less easy to describe with any certainty. In the Annotationes (Lutz, p. 22 [13.1]) he rejects as absurd the pagan doctrine of a cycle of existence. Recently, d'Alverny argued that Eriugena had access to the Latin version of the Solutiones ad Chosroem of Priscianus Lydus (which contains a passage commenting on Aristotle's De anima describing the soul in Neoplatonic terms), which might provide a tenuous link between Eriugena and the later Platonic school.6 One Greek formulation of the four parts of dialectic, used by Eriugena in the De praedestinatione (358a), is in fact a formulation found in writers such as the Pseudo-Elias, David, and other late followers of Proclus (410-85).7 It is of course notoriously difficult to pinpoint

6. M.-Th. d'Alverny, "Les Solutiones ad Chosroem de Priscianus Lydus et Jean Scot," in R. Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS, 1977), pp. 145-60. D'Alverny is arguing against the view of M. Esposito in his "Priscianus Lydus and John Scottus," Classical Review 32 (1918), pp. 21-23, which rejects Eriugena as the translator on the grounds that the Latin style is too barbarous. See also M. Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène: Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée (Louvain: Abbayc de Mont César, 1933), pp. 148-9. For a more detailed account of Priscianus's text see C. Steel, The Changing Self. A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1978), pp. 121-41.

Scc A. Busse (ed.), Pseudo-Elias and David, In Porphyrii Isagogen: Commentarii in Aristotelis Graeca, vol. 18 part 2 (Berlin, 1904). See also L. G. Westerink (ed.), Pseudo-Elias (Pseudo-David): Lectures on Porphyry's Isagoge (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1967). Eriugena's source for this fourfold division of dialectic is unknown, but see P. G. Théry, "Scot Erigène traducteur de Denys," Bulletin de Cange 6 (1931), especially pp. 221-4, where he suggests an anonymous work preserved in a manuscript of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Coislin 387, which contains this division and belongs to the school of commentators of Porphyry

- possibly David.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Haurćau, Histoire de la philosophie scolastique, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1872), p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> Suggested by P. Duhem, Système du monde: Histoire des doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic Vol. 3 (1915; reprinted, Paris: Hermann, 1958), p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> See I.-P. Sheldon-Williams, "Eriugena's Greek Sources," in J. J. O'Meara and L. Bieler (eds.), The Mind of Eriugena (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973), pp. 1-15. Eriugena cites Calcidius on the meaning of entelecheia (ἐντελεχεια).

<sup>5</sup> See Sheldon-Williams (ed.), Periphyseon, vol. 3, p. 207 n. 52.

the sources of Eriugena's many Neoplatonic beliefs, just as it is exceedingly difficult to say with precision whether it was Plotinus or Porphyry or some handbook of philosophical ideas which first influenced the views of Augustine.<sup>8</sup>

Several writers have argued for the direct influence of Plotinus and/ or Proclus on Eriugena. In 1927 Techert thought she had found evidence for the direct influence of Plotinus, based on central metaphysical doctrines and a series of verbal parallels. These parallels include a belief in a transcendent yet omnipresent One, the relationship between the *Logos* and the intelligible world, the descent of the soul and its yearning to return, and so on. None of these parallels or correspondences of doctrine is sufficiently narrow to provide an adequate basis for Techert's conclusion, and her argument has been rejected both by Cappuyns and by Paul Henry.

Eriugena's Plotinian echoes and tendencies are explained by his knowledge of Greek patristic writers – especially Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus, who had some contact with Plotinus's thought – as well as by his reading of Latin Neoplatonists such as Ambrose and Augustine. In fact, Eriugena relies most heavily on the forms of Neoplatonism found in Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius, and Maximus in particular. As Trouillard put it in a recent article, it is as if Eriugena were reinventing the theses and themes of a Neoplatonism which had been lost and forgotten, and were able through fragments and commentaries to retrieve the "authentic spirit" of Neoplatonism.

Some of Eriugena's concepts are not to be paralleled with Plotinus's but are nearer to Proclus's, Porphyry's and Iamblichus's versions of Platonism. For example, Eriugena's understanding of the torment of the damned souls in hell, as the souls being haunted by phantasiae, or delusory visions, is close to that of Porphyry. Stephen Gersh, in his excellent study From Iamblichus to Eriugena, has shown much more clearly the close links between Eriugena and the later Platonic writers (such as Iamblichus, Syrianus, and Damascius) es-

pecially in the understanding of the nature of the hypostases and the sequence of emanation or procession and return. Eriugena seems close to Porphyry and Iamblichus in his talk of a Non-Being beyond both being and non-being, beyond the One. 12

In terms of his understanding of causation, Eriugena is particularly close to Proclus, especially regarding the idea of the selfreversion of the cause, 13 and some critics (such as Théry) have suggested that Eriugena read Proclus in the original, which is highly unlikely. It is much more probable that echoes of Proclus in Eriugena derive from the latter's reading of Dionysius, who is now firmly linked with the school of Proclus. Dionysius's treatment of angels as henads is also to be found in Eriugena and could give his work the appearance of having been directly influenced by Proclus. 14 Eriugena's understanding of the central Platonic doctrines of the forms and of participation is not that of Plotinus but seems to be inspired mostly by Dionysius. Thus, he does not seem to worry about the number, self-identity, or distinctness of the forms; rather, they are divine ideas or volitions, both one and many at the same time. Similarly Eriugena's concept of participation in the forms comes directly from his translations of the works of Dionysius, where he translates the term methexis ( $\mu \in \theta \in \xi \cup s$ ) as participatio (III.644a).

#### The influence of Origen

Eriugena also had contact with writers of the so-called Middle Platonic period. The Alexandrian philosopher Origen was known to Eriugena – possibly in the Latin translation of Rufinus<sup>15</sup> and also through such writers as Ambrose and Epiphanius (e.g., IV.818c, 832d). Origen is referred to chiefly in Books IV and V (IV.815c,

<sup>8</sup> See R. J. O'Connell, St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 1-28, for an excellent discussion of the problems of source identification. See also P. Hadot, Porphyre et Victorinus (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1968).

<sup>9</sup> See M. Techert, "Le Plotinisme dans le système de Jean Scot Erigène," Revue néoscolastique de philosophie 28 (1927), pp. 28-68.

<sup>10</sup> See P. Henry, Plotin et l'Occident (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1934), pp. 246-8.

<sup>11</sup> See S. Gersh, From Iamblichus to Eriugena (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

<sup>12</sup> See Hadot, Porphyre et Victorinus, vol. 1, pp. 167-78. His formulation is, however, directly from Dionysius.

<sup>13</sup> See S. Gersh, "Per Se Ipsum: The Problem of Immediate and Mediate Causation in Eriugena and his Neoplatonic Predecessors," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 367-77.

<sup>14</sup> See H.-D. Saffrey, "New Objective Links between The Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus," in D. O'Meara (ed.), Neoplatonism and Christian Thought (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1982), pp. 64-74, and Saffrey, "Un Lien objectif entre le Pseudo-Denys et Proclus," Studia Patristica, vol. 9 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1966), pp. 98-105; see also L-P. Sheldon-Williams, "Henads and Angels: Proclus and the Pseudo-Dionysius," in Studia Patristica, vol. 11 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1972), pp. 65-71.

<sup>15</sup> See H. Bett, Johannes Scotus Erigena: A Study in Medieval Philosophy (1925; reprinted, New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 160 n. 2.

818b-d, 832d; V.922c, 929a, 930d). Eriugena appears to have known Origen's commentary on Genesis; he also cites Origen's De principiis (Peri Archon) at Periphyseon V. 929c. Origen's ideas (e.g., the notion that paradise is to be identified with the human nous) also influenced Eriugena through the writings of Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus, and indeed Meyendorff has pointed out that Origen remained a strong influence on Greek Christian writing until the sixth and seventh centuries. 16 Eriugena has even been called the "Origen of the West" (by Huber), and undeniably there are strong similarities between some of the central doctrinal teachings and especially the cast of mind of these authors. In fact, owing to the similarity of their names, Eriugena was often confused with Origen, especially when the Vox spiritualis was circulated in the later Middle Ages as a text of Origen's. 17 In his own day, critics of Eriugena the powerful Hincmar, for example - accused Eriugena of Origenism. One of the major points of Origen's De principiis is that creation is an eternal, not temporal, act of God, and of course Eriugena reproduces a version of this argumentation. Furthermore, Origen holds a theory of the original creation as involving only the creation of a sphere of intelligible beings, not matter. 18 Eriugena could also have found this teaching - an eternal act of creation, and a spiritual world as the product of that creation - in Book I of the De Genesi ad litteram of Saint Augustine, and indeed Augustine is most likely to be his actual source. For Origen, as for Eriugena, it is the soul's fall which produces the material world and the body of the soul itself. Origen, like Eriugena, argues that all spiritual beings or intellects are one with God in ousia, and of course this is one of the main points Eriugena steadfastly argues in the Periphyseon.

#### Eriugena's Latin sources

Latin sources also provided Eriugena with a wide if eclectic sampling of Neoplatonic concepts and beliefs, although, in general, Latin

thought represented a simplification and a reduction of the complex and subtle theories of the Greek writers. Undoubtedly, Augustine, to whom we shall return, is Eriugena's greatest single source, cited more often than any other in the *Periphyseon*; but Eriugena could also draw on many popular Latin classics for Neoplatonic ideas. He certainly read and cited Boethius's *Theological Tractates*, or *Opuscula sacra*, and was among the first in the ninth century to use them; but curiously, he makes no reference to the *Consolation of Philosophy*, which he could hardly have avoided reading, given its popularity in early mediaeval times. <sup>19</sup> He does, however, cite the *De institutione arithmeticae* of Boethius, at I.498 and III.655, and may also have known the *De musica*. <sup>20</sup>

Other Latin Neoplatonic sources available to Eriugena include Macrobius's commentary on the Somnium Scipionis, which gives a vivid account of the Neoplatonic doctrine of the wandering of the soul, and of the levels of being in the universe. Eriugena was among the earliest mediaevals to make use of Macrobius. Most important for Eriugena was the Marriage of Philology and Mercury of Martianus Capella, which contains many Neoplatonic concepts as well as giving a précis of Aristotle's logical teaching and a brief account of his theory of the categories. Bede's De rerum natura has also been cited as a source of Eriugena's fourfold division of nature and his concept of the primordial causes. 22

More recently, especially since the excellent studies by Hadot, attention has turned to Marius Victorinus, the fourth-century rhetor and convert to Christianity, as an important Latin source of Eriu-

20 See H. Chadwick, Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 297 n. 11: "In ideas the kinship is obvious, and ignorance is unlikely."

22 See the articles of G. Madec and B. Stock in W. Beierwaltes (ed.), Eriugena: Studien zu seinen Quellen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1980). Eriugena cites Bede under the name of Augustine at III.640b.

<sup>16</sup> See J. Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), pp. 26-27.

<sup>17</sup> See E. Jeauneau, Jean Scot: Homélie sur le Prologue de Jean (Paris: Sources Chrétiennes, 1969), pp. 151-60.

<sup>18</sup> See the discussion in R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and Continuum* (London: Duckworth, 1983), pp. 194-7.

<sup>19</sup> On Boethius's mediaeval influence see P. Courcelle, La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire: Antécédents et postérité de Boèce (Paris, 1967). Alcuin was instrumental in introducing the Consolatio into the Latin West.

<sup>21</sup> See W. H. Stahl (ed.), Macrobius: Commentary on the Dream of Scipio (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952). On Macrobius's transmission of Platonism see Henry, Plotin et l'occident, pp. 146–92, and E. Jeauneau, "Macrobe, source du platonisme chartrain," in Lectio Philosophorum: Recherches sur l'école de Chartres (Amsterdam;, Hakkert, 1973), pp. 279–300. See also H. Silvestre, "Note sur la survie de Macrobe au moyen âge," Classica et Mediaevalia. Revue danoise de philologie et d'histoire 24 (1963), pp. 170–80; and P. Courcelle, "La postérité chrétienne du Songe de Scipion," Revue des Etudes Latines 36 (1958), pp. 205–34. Macrobius is cited in the Annotationes and once in the Expositiones.

gena's Neoplatonism.<sup>23</sup> Marius Victorinus (fl. 350) was known to Carolingian writers, and some recent studies have suggested a close parallel between his idea of four levels of being (true being, not truly being, not truly non-being, and truly non-being) and Eriugena's description of the four divisions of nature (see, e.g., *Periphyseon* II.546d).<sup>24</sup> Among Carolingian writers, Eriugena was probably influenced by Alcuin, Hrabanus Maurus, Fredegisus, and others, as we have seen, but in fact he rarely if ever cites them and seems to have had little interest in entering into dialogue with contemporary writers. Ratramnus's theories on the world soul, for example, though similar to Eriugena's views, are never mentioned by him.

#### The influence of Augustine

No writer of the ninth century could escape being deeply formed and influenced by the system of Augustine, and Eriugena seems thoroughly Augustinian in many of his ideas and attitudes. For Eriugena, Augustine is the summae ac sanctae auctoritatis magister (I.446b7–8). Bett<sup>25</sup> and O'Meara,<sup>26</sup> among others, have shown how great Eriugena's debt to Augustine is, not only in the overall outline of his thought but also in precise details. Bett, for example, has suggested (p. 21) that the origin of the scheme of the fourfold division of nature is to be found in De civitate Dei V.9 (though others find closer parallels for this scheme in the writings of Bede). Eriugena also took from Augustine the theory of rationes aeternae and causae primordiales which is found expressed in Augustine's commentary on Genesis, the De Genesi ad litteram.<sup>27</sup> Augustine is the major au-

27 See B. Stock, "In Search of Eriugena's Augustine," in Beierwaltes, Eriugena, pp. 86ff. Also see P. Agaësse and A. Solignac, (eds.), La Genèse au sens littéral en douze livres (Paris:

thority in the *De praedestinatione* partly because Eriugena wished to equal and surpass Gottschalk's ability to cite Augustine in support of his argument, but also presumably because Eriugena was not yet well acquainted with the Greek writers who would later become his most important authorities.<sup>28</sup> Eriugena cites Augustine's *De vera religione*, that early work on the identity of true religion and true philosophy, in a passage which inspired Hegel and later readers, who drew a quite different interpretation from Eriugena's version than from Augustine's text.

In the Periphyseon, Eriugena takes from Augustine the contrast between scientia and sapientia: the distinction between the many who believe and the few who truly understand (I.511c-d contrasts the rudes with the instructed and the wise, sapientes, an analysis also found in Augustine's De vera religione). Eriugena also invokes the distinction between true reason and authority as two paths to wisdom (found in Augustine's De ordine), as well as the general assessment of the role of the arts in the return of the mind from lower to higher things. and the general aspects of the theory of illumination and the concept of God as lux mentium, as well as the metaphysics of light.29 Eriugena makes use of Augustine's account of definition in the De quantitate animae, Chapter XXV, paragraph 47, where definitions are said to err when they include too much (e.g., man is a mortal animal) or too little (e.g., man is a mortal, rational, grammarian animal). Of course this general discussion of definition is also found in Martianus.

Of particular interest to philosophers is Eriugena's reinterpretation of Augustine's so-called *cogito*, which he could have found in the *Confessions* XIII.11, *The City of God* XI.26, the *De libero arbitrio* 

<sup>23</sup> Scc P. Hadot, Porphyre et Victorinus, 2 vols. (Paris, 1968). See also P. Henry, "The Adversus Arianum of Marius Victorinus," in Journal of Theological Studies n.s., 1 (1950), pp. 42-55. For an edition of Marius's writings, see P. Hadot and P. Henry (eds.), Marius Victorinus: Traités théologiques sur la Trinité, 2 vols. SC nos. 68 and 69. (Paris: CERF, 1960).

<sup>24</sup> On Eriugena's relation to Marius Victorinus, see M. T. d'Alverny, "Le Cosmos symbolique du XIIe siècle," Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge 28 (1953), pp. 35-42. See also Hadot, Porphyre et Victorinus, vol. 1, pp. 147-78, and G. Piemonte in G. -H. Allard (ed.), Jean Scot écrivain (Montreal: Institut d'Etudes médiévales, 1986).

<sup>25</sup> Sec H. Bett, Johannes Scotus Erigena, pp. 157-8.

<sup>26</sup> See J. J. O'Meara, "Eriugena's Use of Augustine in his Teaching on the Return of the Soul and the Vision of God," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 191-201, and "Magnorum virorum quendam consensum velimus machinarii (804b): Eriugena's Use of Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram in the Periphyseon," in Beierwaltes, Eriugena, pp. 105-17. See the carefully qualified remarks on Eriugena's relation to the authorities in G. Madec, "Jean Scot et ses auteurs," in Allard, Jean Scot écrivain, pp. 143-86.

Desclée de Brouwer, 1972), on the nature of the eternal reasons and causes (especially Book VI).

<sup>28</sup> See G. Madec, "L'Augustinisme de Jean Scot dans le De praedestinatione," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 183-90; and G. Mathon, "L'Utilisation des textes de Saint Augustin par Jean Scot Erigène dans son De praedestinatione," in Augustinus Magister 3 (Paris, 1954), pp. 419-28. See also the older study of M. Jacquin, "Le Néoplatonisme de Jean Scot Erigène," Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques 1 (1907), pp. 674-85, which argues that Eriugena drew his knowledge in De praed. from Latin writers and did not make use of Dionysius at that time (contrary to Christlieb). Eriugena does appear to have known Gregory of Nyssa from an early date, since he is cited in the Annotationes.

<sup>29</sup> See R. Russell, "Some Augustinian Influences in Eriugena's *De divisione naturae*," in O'Meara and Bieler, *The Mind of Eriugena*, pp. 31–40; and G. Madec, "Observations sur le dossier augustinien du *Periphyseon*," in Beierwaltes, *Eriugena*, pp. 75–84. Eriugena of course also found the theory of illumination and the metaphysics of light in Dionysius, but he was concerned to develop it in Augustine's vocabulary, as he does in *Homilia*.

II.3.7, the *De Trinitate* XV.12.21, or in the *De vera religione* XXXIX.73, or the *Soliloquies* II.1.1.30 Eriugena does not use Augustine's formula of *si fallor, sum,* but is interested in the idea expressed in the *De diversis quaestionibus* q.15 that the mind, which has immediate self-knowledge, limits itself and thus is finite.

From Augustine's De Trinitate Eriugena took many aspects of Augustine's teaching on the Trinity and especially on the structures of the human soul, which mirror the triadic patterns of the Trinity (e.g., esse – scire [ or nosse] – velle, etc.). Eriugena in particular adopts Augustine's triads of being, well-being, and eternal being, or being, life, and intellect (esse, vivere, intelligere; De libero arbitrio), in order to differentiate some of the stages of the mind's road to God. Of course, Eriugena is never limited to one source and could also have found these triads in the writings of Maximus the Confessor – the triad of einai ( $\widehat{\epsilon t} v \alpha \iota$ ), eu einai ( $\widehat{\epsilon t} v \alpha \iota$ ), aei einai  $\widehat{\alpha} \widehat{\epsilon t} \widehat{\epsilon t} v \alpha \iota$ ) appears in the Ambigua (9.1116b), for example. Furthermore, Eriugena developed Augustine's understanding of the operation of the Word in the human soul in a manner which foreshadows its use by Eckhart in the fourteenth century.<sup>31</sup>

Eriugena read Augustine through ninth-century eyes, and many aspects of what is now regarded as peculiarly Augustinian (such as Augustine's psychological "existentialism" and his detailed analysis of human willing and *memoria*) would not have been as apparent to Eriugena. Conversely, Eriugena emphasises aspects of Augustine which are uncongenial to our times, strongly influenced and moulded as we are by the Scholastic reading of Augustine, seeing him through the purifying eyes of Thomas Aquinas, who "corrected" many of Augustine's statements to conform with the new mataphysics of Aristotle. 32 Thus modern scholars are inclined to see Eriugena's ide-

alism as due mainly to the influence of the Greek Christian writers, although Augustine himself can be interpreted in a strongly idealist and intellectualist light, especially in some of his remarks in the De diversis quaestionibus and the De Genesi ad litteram. Thus at Periphyseon IV.766a, Eriugena quotes a passage from Augustine's De Trinitate in support of his argument that sensible things are lower than ideas, even lower than the phantasiae which come into our mind from without, whereas Augustine was committed not totally to this idealist thesis that mental images have ontological primacy over sensible reality but, generally speaking, only to the much less idealist view that unchanging, immaterial, eternal truths are higher than shifting, changing things, and that spiritual things are higher than material things.

Furthermore, some recent scholars wish to distance Augustine's God from the Neoplatonic One and emphasise - with Gilson - Augustine's commitment to God as a Being, thus playing down Augustine's hierarchical metaphysics and emphasising the theme of the absence of intermediaries between man and God. 33 Eriugena accepts that there is nothing between man and God (which was Augustine's quarrel with Porphyry and the pagan Neoplatonists); nevertheless, he interprets the theophanies described in Dionysius as a kind of intermediary between God and man. Eriugena accepts both authorities: Theophanies are between man and God; they are not entities, however, but divine willings, and hence they are a glimpse of God Himself. Thus Eriugena interprets the statement that we shall see God face to face as meaning that we shall have access to the highest theophanies. Eriugena reads Augustine and Dionysius not as contrasting and opposing authorities, but as proponents of the one vera philosophia; hence he is normally at pains to show their inner agreement. Thus at Periphyseon II.597d, he cites both on the subject of the divine ignorance (divina ignorantia): "Augustine 'that He is better known by not knowing,' Dionysius that His ignorance is true wisdom" (Sheldon-Williams's translation, p. 163).

Eriugena in general plays up Augustine's occasional references to negative theology and to deification; he extends Augustine by sug-

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 10, this volume. See also B. Stock, "Intelligo me esse: Eriugena's Cogito," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 327-37, and Sorabji, Time, Creation and Continuum, pp. 289ff.

<sup>31</sup> See J. Moreau, "Le Verbe et la création selon s. Augustin et Jean Scot Erigène," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 201-10. On Eckhart's development of the concept see K. G. Kertz, "Meister Eckhart's Teaching on the Birth of the Divine Word in the Soul," Traditio 15 (1959), pp. 327-63.

<sup>32</sup> On Augustine's metaphysics see the formative study of E. Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine (London: Gollancz, 1961), and J. F. Anderson, Augustine and Being: A Metaphysical Essay (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1965). For a critique of the interpretation of Augustine as an ontotheologist see J. S. O'Leary, "Dieu-Espirit et Dieu-Substance chez Saint Augustin," in Recherches de Science Religieuse 69 (July 1981), pp. 357-90.

<sup>33</sup> See Periphyseon II.531b-c, where Eriugena cites Augustine's De vera religione in support of his view that there are no intermediaries between man and God. On the place of intermediaries in Augustine, see J. Pépin, "Univers dionysien et univers augustinien," Recherches de Philosophie 2 (1956), pp. 179-224.

gesting definite answers to certain questions regarding which Augustine had not in fact made up his mind, such as the nature of existence in paradise.

Eriugena elsewhere explicitly notes that Augustine opposes the transformation of corporeal and material bodies into pure intellectual entities and in general wants to remain fairly faithful to a realist outlook. Nevertheless, Eriugena quickly absorbs Augustine's objections by quoting Augustine's mentor Ambrose, a proponent of the idealist absorption of matter into mind. Augustine frequently argued that incorporeals are "better" than corporeal things, that any soul was better than any body, and Eriugena agrees with this general Neoplatonic principle.

Stock has convincingly argued that Eriugena certainly understood Augustine better than his contemporaries on such matters as predestination towards evil, and the original fall of the Devil, but he suggests that in overall terms Eriugena had to resort to sophistries to harmonise Augustine with his own intention.<sup>35</sup> Both Augustine and Eriugena agree that the Devil did not have foreknowledge of his own fall when he was in paradise, but that he was falling from the beginning. Eriugena explicitly says that the Devil was never an angel in paradise; he was created "falling," as it were. Neoplatonism in general has great difficulty explaining why there should be movement from the One in the first place, and Augustine likewise had difficulty locating the origin of the initial rupture, especially given the non-temporal nature of this exitus. Eriugena, more than Augustine, is able to give a "process"-type explanation by invoking his cosmological scheme of the four divisions of nature. Of course, Eriugena is more appreciative of the allegorical and metaphorical nature of talk about the "Devil."

Mathon and Russell furthermore have shown that Eriugena in general subordinated Augustine's teachings to his own hermeneutics

and dialectical scheme, in keeping with his own general attitude to the interpretation of the *auctores*.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, at several important points, Eriugena denies that Augustine *means* what he explicitly says – in the discussion of the existence of sexuality and gender in paradise before the Fall, for example – and Eriugena follows Gregory of Nyssa, who, he wants to argue, is not in disagreement with Augustine.<sup>37</sup>

To sum up the vexed question of Augustinian influence, it is necessary to note that Eriugena's understanding of time and place, of the divine transcendence and omnipresence, and of the hierarchy of the orders of being is actually quite distinct from that of Augustine, and that whenever Eriugena does adopt something from Augustine he usually modifies it, especially emphasising the *immaterialist* and *intellectualist* tendency which pervades his own work. Furthermore, Eriugena is more confident than Augustine of the human being's inherent ability to attain *gnōsis* and deification in the form of producing absolute *identity* of features between man as image and God as archetype. Augustine's preoccupation with the body and with heresy hardly finds an echo in Eriugena. Unlike Augustine, Eriugena never discusses sexual desire. Similarly, Eriugena does not use Augustine's definition of the soul in the *De quantitate animae*.

Eriugena's entire philosophical commitment is a grand attempt to show the underlying deep unity and agreement between the Christian systems of Greek East and Latin West, systems which seemed so disparate to the Latin mind of that age. In particular, he wants to show the inner harmony between the writings of Augustine, on the one hand, and the Pseudo-Dionysius, the Cappadocian fathers, and Maximus, on the other. For him they are two revelations or theophanies of the one infinite truth. Eriugena is aware that to achieve this aim he will have to apply a hermeneutic method which will seem to distort Augustine. Sheldon-Williams has stated the matter boldly: "The plain fact is that Eriugena constantly misinterprets St. Augustine, for whereas St. Augustine's thought is always moving

37 See E. Jeauncau, "La Division des sexes chez Grégoire de Nysse et chez Jean Scot Erigène," in Beierwaltes, *Eriugena*, pp. 33-54.

<sup>34</sup> On another aspect of Augustine's intellectualism, see J. Pépin, "Une Curieuse Déclaration idéaliste du De Genesi ad litteram (XII.10.21) de Saint Augustin et ses origines plotiniennes (Ennéade V.3.1-9 et V.5.1-2)," Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses 34 (1954), pp. 373-400.

<sup>35</sup> See B. Stock, "The Philosophical Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena," Studi Medievali, Ser. 3a, 8 (1967), pp. 1-57, esp. p. 30, where the passage (IV.804c ff.) of Eriugena is discussed in which Eriugena says the authority of Augustine must be followed, but that there is no harm in citing the opinions of other authors with different ideas that Augustine himself had not thought about.

<sup>36</sup> Russell, "Some Augustinian Influences," in O'Meara and Bieler, The Mind of Eriugena. For G. Mathon see, "L'Utilisation des textes de Saint Augustine par Jean Scot Erigène dans son De praedestinatione," pp. 419-428. See also J. J. O'Meara, "Eriugena's Use of Augustine," Augustinian Studies 2 (1980), pp. 21-34.

away from Neoplatonism, Eriugena's thought is moving into it, and St. Augustine is made to approximate to the Pseudo-Dionysius rather than the opposite."<sup>38</sup> We must turn therefore to the impact of the Greek writers on Eriugena.

#### The influence of the Greek Christian Platonists

Scholars - notably, Brilliantoff, Cappuyns, Sheldon-Williams, 39 Roques, and Gersh - have argued for the overriding importance of the Greek Christian influence on Eriugena - in particular the impact of Dionysius, the Cappadocians (especially Gregory of Nyssa and Basil), and Maximus. 40 These writers gave Eriugena a new understanding of the meaning of creation, the nature of time, and the relation between the divine ideas and their created effects. Eriugena also took from the Greeks a new anthropology and a new, more radical concept of infinite nature, as well as a complicated method of theological and philosophical negative dialectics. Eriugena furthermore read all these authors as confirming one another's views and hence runs together the diverse systems of Maximus, the Cappadocians, and Dionysius into one massive system of thought. Gregory of Nyssa in particular helped to form Eriugena's views of the nature of man and his relation to God. Indeed, Eriugena attributes to Gregory the highest status among the Greek authorities, comparable to that of Augustine among the Latins (see Periphyseon IV.804c-d). Almost one-quarter of the whole of Gregory's De hominis opificio is quoted in translation in the Periphyseon.41 Eriugena took

38 Sheldon-Williams, "Eriugena's Greek Sources," in O'Meara and Bieler, The Mind of Eriugena, p. 5.

from Gregory of Nyssa the idea of matter as a commingling of incorporeal qualities, the concept of the infinite progression of the soul in the after-life, and of course the idea of the post-lapsarian division of the soul into two sexes.

Eriugena, however, also translated and commented on Basil's Hexaëmeron, from which he took an idealist account of time, which also may have influenced Augustine. 42 In fact, if the views of Plotinus are to be found in Eriugena, they are almost certainly a consequence of the latter's reading of Saint Basil, who was a close reader of the Enneads. Eriugena sees Basil and Gregory as teaching the same kind of theory concerning the divine ideas and the participation of sensible things in them. It would be an impossible task to sift through Eriugena's work trying to detect the individual influences of each of the Cappadocians, especially when Gregory of Nyssa's De hominis opificio was written to supplement Basil's Hexaëmeron and Eriugena relied most heavily on these two related works. 43 Furthermore, Eriugena merged the two Gregories and saw Maximus as a commentator on them. Hence he thought of these diverse sources as one body of thought. Eriugena read and translated all of Dionysius's works including the letters. From Dionysius, he learned that God is One (DN I.iv.589d) but that He is also "beyond the One" (II.ii.649c), beyond being and essence (I.i.588b). He remains wholly in Himself (XI.ii.952a) while being the cause of all (XIII.ii.977c). The Dionysian imagery of light was absorbed by Eriugena. God is

<sup>39</sup> See I.-P. Sheldon-Williams, "The Greek Platonist Tradition from the Cappadocians to Maximus and Eriugena," in A. H. Armstrong (ed.), The Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 425-501. Also Sheldon-Williams, "Eriugena's Greek Sources," in O'Meara and Bieler, The Mind of Eriugena, pp. 1-15. See the dissertation of L. Vietorisz, "Greek Sources in the Periphyseon of John Scotus, called Eriugena," (presented to the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, 1966).

<sup>40</sup> See Sorabji, who discusses Gregory of Nyssa and Basil in his Time, Creation and Continuum.

<sup>41</sup> On the influence of Gregory of Nyssa see J. Dräseke, "Gregorius von Nyssa in den Anführungen des Johannes Scotus Erigena," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 82 (1909), pp. 530–76; and E. Jeauneau, "La Division des sexes," in Beierwaltes, *Eriugena*, pp. 34–54. It is not clear that Eriugena was consistently able to distinguish Gregory of Nyssa from Gregory Nazianzus (see II.586a), but see also III.735d and IV.860a, where the two are confounded.

<sup>42</sup> On Basil's influence on Augustine see J. F. Callahan, "Basil of Caesarea: A New Source for St. Augustine's Theory of Time," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 63 (1958), pp. 437–54. A full study of Basil's influence on Eriugena has not yet been made. See also B. Otis, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocian Conception of Time," *Studia Patristica*, vol. 14, part 3 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976), pp. 327–57.

<sup>43</sup> On Gregory of Nyssa's Platonism, see the classic study by H. F. Cherniss, The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1930), and the opposing views of A. Weiswurm, The Nature of Human Knowledge According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1952). Weiswurm argues against Cherniss that Gregory was not a Platonist, that he rejected the theory of ideas, the doctrine of recollection, and the pre-existence of the soul. Weiswurm emphasises the influence of Stoic teaching on Gregory, but in my view adopts an overnarrow concept of Platonism, which neglects the major developments of Neoplatonic thought. See also J. Danićlou, Platonisme et théologie mystique: Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse (Paris: Aubier, Editions Montaine, 1944), and his more recent L'Etre et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse (Leiden: Brill, 1970). On Gregory's sources see P. Courcelle, "Grégoire de Nysse, lecteur de Porphyre," Revue des Etides Grecques 80 (1967), pp. 402-6. On Basil's lesserknown Neoplatonism see J. M. Rist, "Basil's 'Neoplatonism': Its Background and Nature," in P. Fedwick (ed.), Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981), pp. 137-220.

a source of light, from whom innumerable rays spread out, forming as they go the Dionysian paradeigmata (παράδειγματα) of to auto einai (τὸ ἀυτὸ εἶναι, being itself), life itself, and so on. At De divinis nominibus V.iv.817c, Dionysius says that God is the source or mainstay (ὑποστάτης, hypostatēs) of being itself. Dionysius's text is unclear as to whether the divine rays or paradigms are creatures of God or are of God's essence, and he resorts to describing their nature adverbially. Thus the rays or powers are God (ἀρχιμώς, archimos), "causally," or "principally," or "sourcely," if we may use such a word). Eriugena clarifies this by referring to them as "created," a word Dionysius does not use; nor as a matter of fact does Maximus, who otherwise is quite clear in his interpretation of Dionysius. For Maximus creation involves entrance into the world of time, and since the causes are eternal they are not strictly created in Maximus's scheme. Eriugena in his translation makes it clear that God is supra omnia quae sunt et quae primo sunt, above all things which are and which primarily are, that is, above the primary causes. This is a typical instance where Eriugena's Latin translation of Dionysius resolves an ambiguity of the Greek text.

Commentators on these writers usually see them all as teaching that God is not known in Himself but is known in His activities or energies. Their philosophy is seen then to be an account of the processions (acolouthia, ἀκολουθία, rule, order) of the divine will, and of the restoration of all things to God in apocatastasis (ἀποcαταστασις). Eriugena follows this general pattern. He is much impressed by the Greek frame of mind and by the superiority of the Greek technical philosophical vocabulary, but he also adopts new ideas from his Greek readings. In particular, he borrows and transliterates the concepts of theophania (divine appearances, manifestations, or willings) and theösis (deification), the description of God as a superessential being or as non-being (mē on, nihil), and the concepts of affirmative, negative, and mystical theology. Furthermore, Eriugena takes from the Greeks the terms of the general dynamics of spiritual reality, namely, the structure of monē (μονή), proodos (πρόοδος), and epistrophe (ἐπιστροφή), which he employs to describe the outgoing from (exitus, processio, progressio, III.681c), and the return to (reditus), the One. But his interpretation of these concepts is his own, and his overall scheme or system is also individualistic and unique. For example, he reduces the fairly complex

scheme of theologies of Dionysius (kataphatic, apophatic, symbolic, and mystical theologies) to just two – affirmative and negative – and makes a more radical claim for the essentially negative character of all terms for God, including "Trinity," "Father," and "Son." Eriugena reduces the number of theologies to two in order to make them parallel more precisely the positive and negative aspects of his concept of dialectic, which he adopted from Maximus. Ultimately for Eriugena, the dialectic of philosophy and the dialectic of theological understanding are one and the same. He interfaces nature between human and divine being, however, in a manner not found in Dionysius at all but present in Maximus. Indeed, these two aspects of dialectic and of theology ultimately reduce to one, all affirmative statements have a negative dimension, and vice versa; Eriugena never stratifies a living dialectic into a rigid system.

Eriugena remains close to the Dionysian terms for the distinction between eternity and time. Dionysius uses the terms aion (aἰων) and chronos (xpóvos), which Eriugena translates as aeternum and tempus. Unlike later metaphysicians such as Aquinas, Eriugena does not make use of the term aevum, which was available to Latin writers of that time. Besides the Cappadocians and Dionysius, then, Eriugena came to inherit another complex Greek system - that of Maximus the Confessor (the monk from Constantinople who was to play a large part in the monothelite controversy), especially Maximus's so-called Ambigua, commentaries on difficulties and complexities in Gregory of Nazianzus's writings. Maximus mingled the philosophical tradition of the Cappadocians and Dionysius with the Aristotelian and Stoic terminology and outlook of late Greek commentators on Aristotle. In his preface to the translation of Maximus, Eriugena says that he has learned from him how God is one and also multiple, the nature of the outgoing and return of all things, and the manner in which God can be said to be immovable and also to move all things. Maximus, in his Ambigua, does say that God is to auto einai (1073c), being itself; but he also says God is above all ousia (1180c). He does speak about the creature's being part (moira, μοῖρα) of God

<sup>44</sup> See the excellent study of R. Roques, "Tératologie et théologie chez Jean Scot Erigène," in his Libres sentiers vers l'érigénisme (Rome, 1975), pp. 13-43, and also L-P. Sheldon-Williams's chapter on Dionysius in The Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy, pp. 457-72. In his dedicatory epistle to King Charles on his completion of the Versio Dionysii, Eriugena is able to say that he has translated the terms καταφατική (Kataphatikē) and ἀποφατική (apophatikē) as theologia (PL CXXII.1196b).

(1080b-c) and call Dionysius's theia thelēmata (θεῖα θελήματα) by the name logoi, possibly displaying a Stoic influence. Maximus also uses the image of the radii of a circle to describe God's infinite omnipresence at Ambigua 1081c. Maximus gave Eriugena a clear statement of the manner in which the Logos runs through all things.

Maximus influenced Eriugena's development of the concept of dialectic, as well as specifically giving him the idea of a special ecstasis of the soul which is one with the contemplation of physis, resulting in the physica theoria found frequently in the Periphyseon. 45

#### Eriugena as a Neoplatonist

Given the enormous impact of the mystical and highly spiritual ideas of the Greek Christian writers on Eriugena, there had to be a major overhaul of his Latin intellectual outlook and a transformation of his position as a Carolingian liberal arts magister into a major philosopher with a radical and systematic negative dialectics. Eriugena produced an unusual synthesis of the outlook of Greek East and Latin West, but it cannot be denied that one of his greatest achievements was his ability to identify many of the common elements of these two traditions and to distil from them a powerful philosophical idealism. But his philosophy is still a Neoplatonism if we may use this term in a general sense. Thus, in particular, he maintained the Platonic concept of a separation between an unchanging eternal world of ideas and the dependent, changing, not fully real world of space, time, and corporeality. Furthermore, Eriugena organised his philosophical concepts into a structure of division or succession and return or recollection, which renewed the tradition of Neoplatonic hierarchy. Thus, as Stephen Gersh has shown in his excellent study From Iamblichus to Eriugena, Eriugena's philosophy is permeated by the quite unusual outlook of late antiquity and subtly adapts Neoplatonic ideas into a system which was his own but which would have been quite recognisable to a late Greek author, although it would

have been almost incomprehensible to a reader schooled in the Latin tradition alone.

According to Gersh, the late Greek writers understand the structure of reality as a "continuous series of causes and effects in which each term is related dynamically to the previous one: it 'remains' in its prior (manifests an element of identity with it), it 'proceeds' (manifests an element of difference), and it 'reverts' (strives to reestablish the identity)."46 Furthermore, this system results in a plurality of orders or a series of hypostases (ὑπόστασες), termed by Greeks taxis (τάξις), seira (σειρά), or hierarchia (ἱεραρχία), which mediate between the One and the multiplicity of individual entities (including sensations and feelings) on the lowest rung of this order. Both Augustine and Dionysius make much use of the concept of a chain of being, a hierarchical order extending through the cosmos from God to unformed matter, which they found in Plotinus and the Greek Neoplatonists. 47 Following Dionysius, Eriugena does not see this order or hierarchy as getting in the way of the immediate relation between the One and the human soul, although it is not always clear how there can be both a firm order of being and at the same time nothing standing between man and God - not even the angels or world soul or other intelligences. To achieve this he uses Dionysius's method of redescribing these hierarchies as divine volitions (theia thelēmata, II.529b; II.616a) or divine thoughts (since for God willing and thinking are one), so that in the final analysis they are either identical with God or acts of God, which do not serve to distance the human creature farther from God. In other words, the hierarchical orders which stand between man and God are to be understood not as beings or substances but as minds or theophanies, which are really a kind of "non-being" in that they are, as it were, "transparent" and allow the human mind to pass through them to grasp God directly.

As with Augustine, of course, Eriugena does not simply copy Dionysius. In fact, he reinterprets many Dionysian concepts, for

<sup>45</sup> The best account of Maximus's philosophy in terms of his influence on Eriugena is still L. Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor (Lund: Glecrup, 1965), which, however, perhaps overstresses the influence of Origen. See also H. U. von Balthasar, Liturgie cosmique (Paris: Aubier, 1947), and the chapter by Sheldon-Williams in The Cambridge History, pp. 492-505. See also L. Thunberg, Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of Maximus Confessor (Crestwood, N.J.: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1985).

<sup>46</sup> Gersh, From Iamblichus to Eriugena, p. 125.

<sup>47</sup> J. Pépin, "Univers dionysien et univers augustinien," especially pp. 195-7, where texts from the De Trinitate and the De Genesi ad litteram VIII.21.40 are cited in which Augustine suggests that the soul is an intermediary between God and the world. Eriugena, in common with Ratramnus, had an interest in the idea of the world soul, especially in the Annotationes. This soul would form a separate hierarchy between God and the lower world as in Plotinus.

example, the Dionysian hierarchy of the lifeless (azoa), living things (zonta), and the rational (logica), into a hierarchy of living things and intellect on the scriptural grounds that all things are contained by life. All things including the lifeless have form, and form is the first sign of life. Thus all ideas and ontological orders are absorbed into the being of consciousness and the intellectual life. 48 We are interested in Eriugena's conception of a hierarchical metaphysical order with stages of procession and return in order to show that he does not remain trapped in a reified ontological scheme but in fact constantly emphasises the manner in which all ontological categories are dependent on the mind (misinterpreting Dionysius and Augustine in a highly intellectualist light as we have seen) and can be resolved back into the mind when it performs correct acts of contemplation or theoria. Eriugena's philosophy is best understood as a kind of idealism and as a deconstruction of the metaphysics of substance. But first we must understand how he develops a dialectics of outgoing and return.

# DIALECTIC, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

#### Dialectic as the life of the mind

One of the main features of Eriugena's philosophy which impressed Hegel and the German idealists was his use of a sophisticated dialectic with moments of progression and recollection, which the idealists took to be identical with their own dialectical method. We must therefore examine Eriugena's conception of dialectic to see whether it does conform to the idealist pattern. Since Eriugena is separated from German philosophy by a gap of a thousand years, we must recover his method of dialectic through a careful hermeneutic of the historical meanings of philosophy (and dialectica) in the early mediaeval period.

In this chapter we shall explore Eriugena's understanding of the nature of dialectic (which was contained within philosophy) to see whether he remains within the boundaries of the Carolingian worldview or whether his concept transcends the intellectual limits of that time to achieve transhistorical status as a universal method of philosophy. I shall argue that his exposure to Byzantine Christian culture led him to develop a new conception of the nature of philosophy which is more radically *intellectualist* and *idealist* than any conception of philosophy to be found in the Latin West in his time. Through the Greeks he came to modify his understanding of dialectic to include a *negative* dimension, developed from the extension of the Eastern method of negative theology (where it is applied

<sup>48</sup> See I.-P. Sheldon-Williams, "Eriugena's Interpretation of the Pseudo-Dionysius," Studia Patristica, vol. 12. Papers presented to the Sixth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 1971 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1975), pp. 151-4.

non Hegel's dialectic and its relation to classical philosophy see H.-G. Gadamer, "Hegel and the Dialectic of Ancient Philosophers," in *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1976). On the meaning of dialectic in general, see the entry "Dialectic," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 2 (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1967), pp. 385-9, which unfortunately neglects the crucial phase in dialectic of Plotinus, Proclus, and later Neoplatonism. For Neoplatonic dialectic see A. C. Lloyd, "Neoplatonic Logic and Aristotelian Logic," *Phronesis* 1 (1955-6), pp. 58-72, 146-60.

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to God) to apply to human nature and to the world.<sup>2</sup> He therefore combined the traditional Western Latin concept of dialectic (as the discipline of logic) with Greek Neoplatonist negative dialectics, to produce a new understanding of dialectic which indeed is comparable to the method of dialectic of the later idealists.

Furthermore, he understood dialectic to represent the life, or natural activity, of the mind (*intellectus* or *nous*) itself, with its outgoing and returning movements, its affirmative and negative capabilities. The mind's operations are dialectical operations, so that in describing dialectic, Eriugena is talking not just about a logical art or method but about the nature and workings of the mind itself. He would have agreed with Plotinus's account of dialectic in *Ennead* I.iii.4:

We must not think of it as the mere tool of the metaphysican: Dialectic does not consist of bare theories and rules: it deals with verities; Existences are, as it were, Matter to it, or at least it proceeds methodically towards Existences, and possesses itself, at the one step, of the notions and of the realities.<sup>3</sup>

Philosophy becomes for Eriugena the vehicle of the mind itself, expressing the life of the human mind in its dialectical movements of outgoing and return, unfolding and enfolding in perfect correspondence with the movements of the cosmos itself. Moreover, he sees the work of philosophy as intimately related to the activity of the soul's return to God; the soul is restored to God *through* philosophy.

#### The Carolingian understanding of dialectic

The Latin understanding of dialectic stems largely from Cicero's Topica and Boethius's De topicis differentiis, which are commentaries on Aristotle. Aristotle saw dialectic as systematising arguments which are in conflict. Dialectic deals with endoxa ( $\tilde{\epsilon}\nu\delta$ o $\xi\alpha$ ), the probable or believable, as opposed to the certain. Dialectic did not provide arguments deriving from fixed principles, and hence was seen by Ar-

3 Stephen McKenna (trans.), *Plotinus. The Enneads* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), p. 39. This view of dialectic goes back ultimately to Plato's *Sophist* 253d. For Plato's use of dialectic, see also *Phaedrus* 266b, where divisions and collections are considered to be the essence of dialectic. See also *Republic* 531c-535a.

istotle as capable of assessing reasoning in the different sciences, such that dialectic is a method for investigating the first principles of any science. Cicero and Boethius, however, did not use dialectic to investigate first principles but coupled it with logic as two parts of the ars disserendi, the art of discourse. It thus became part of a general method of proceeding in philosophical reasoning.

As we have seen, recent interpretations of Eriugena have sought to place him squarely within the Latin dialectical tradition of early mediaeval Europe and have sought to deny his radical isolation, and often to diminish his standing as an original thinker in philosophy. Marenbon and Contreni have argued, for example, that Eriugena's work is best understood within the intellectual tradition of Alcuin and his immediate followers, a group of Carolingian thinkers who revived and continued the philosophical concerns of Cicero, Augustine, and Boethius after several relatively barren centuries.4 For Marenbon, Eriugena is of interest as a commentator on the Categoriae decem and is to be interpreted as continuing the dialectical tradition represented by Alcuin and by the pseudo-Augustinian De dialectica. This tradition saw dialectic as an amalgam of logical interests, which includes divisio, division into genera, species, and individuals; partitio, partition into whole and parts; diffinitio, the nature of definition; substance and the categories; the relation between what is found in a subject and what is said of a subject (in subjecto et de subjecto), as well as the nature of the syllogism and the square of opposition; and also logical argument and the fallacies. Eriugena had a good summary of this tradition available to him, in Book IV of

5 For Augustine's understanding of dialectic, see B. Darrell Jackson, Augustine: De dialectica (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1975). This pseudo-Augustinian work was known in the ninth century (with copies found in Reichenau, Auxerre, Corbie, and elsewhere). It is cited in the Libri Carolini. For the ninth century Dialectica of Saint Gall, see Marenbon, Early Medieval Philosophy (480–1150): An Introduction (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), pp.

76-7.

<sup>2</sup> We shall argue that Eriugena expands negative dialectics to include a negative anthropology and a negative cosmology. On the claim that Nicholas of Cusa is the first to take terms (such as infinity) which applied primarily to God and apply them to describe the world, see A. Koyré, From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957), p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> J. Marenbon, From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre: Logic, Theology and Philosophy in the Early Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). See also E. Jeauneau, "L'Héritage de la philosophie antique durant le haut moyen âge," La cultura antica nell'Occidente latino dal VII all' XI secolo, Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, vol. 22 (Spoleto: Presso la sede del Centro, 1975), p. 31, where Jeauneau speaks of le grand vide concerning philosophy in the seventh and eighth centuries. For mediaeval dialectic in general, see the excellent introduction of E. Stump to her Boethius: De topicis differentiis (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 18–26, and also O. Bird, "The Tradition of the Logical Topics: Aristotle to Ockham," Journal of the History of Ideas 23 (1962), pp. 307–23.

Martianus Capella's Marriage of Philology and Mercury. It does appear that Eriugena was familiar with Boethius's De topicis differentiis, and indeed, his definition of enthymēma (ἐνθύμημα), which Boethius and Cassiodorus (PL LXX.149d) define as an imperfect syllogism and conceptio mentis, is similar: For Eriugena, enthymema is a "common concept of the mind," as he says in the Annotationes, the De Praedestinatione (391b), and the Periphyseon. The connection between dialectic and truth was already to be found in Isidore's Etymologiae II.1.1 and was a familiar way of characterising dialectic in the ninth century. Thus, Hrabanus Maurus, almost a contemporary of Eriugena's, defines dialectic as "the rational discipline concerned with definitions and explanations, and able even to separate truth from falsehood." For the Carolingians, dialectic was the rational art of defining, arguing, and distinguishing truth from falsity.

I wish to argue that Eriugena develops the meaning of philosophy and of dialectic (which ultimately are one and the same for him) beyond this interpretation of these disciplines, as articulated by Augustine, Boethius, Cassiodorus, Isidore, Alcuin, and others, and in fact gives the term an idealist interpretation. For Eriugena, philosophy is the study by which the mind comes to a self-knowledge and self-understanding concerning its own awesome power and secret nature – the mind is a *quasi creator* of the universe itself, and it is due to movements of the mind that the ontological orders come to be formed.

#### Philosophy as encyclopaedic knowledge

First let us briefly examine the traditional conception of philosophia which Eriugena inherited from his Latin sources. The Latin tradition of philosophy as understood by Varro, Cicero, and their read-

6 See W. H. Stahl, R. Johnson, and E. Burge (cds.), Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 106–54. In this allegory Martianus portrays Dialectic as a rather dangerous and ambiguous character, full of knowledge but with a cold demeanour and a deadliness which can easily ensnare others. She is portrayed as holding a snake in her left hand. Eriugena, on the other hand, always sees Dialectic in a positive light.

7 Isidore's remarks were repeated by the ninth-century commentators on the Categoriae decem, a work thought to be by Augustine, but which originated in the circle of Themistius (c. 317–88). It was, according to Marenbon, Early Medieval Philosophy, p. 76, "the most intently studied logical work in the ninth and tenth centuries." See also the remarks made by Remigius of Auxerre in his glosses on the Augustinian De dialectica, Paris MS 12949. Remigius defines dialectic as: disciplina rationalis diffiniendi, disserendi, ac vera a falsis discernendi potens. Compare Hrabanus Maurus, De clericorum institutione III.xx (PL CVII.397c): "Dialectica est disciplina rationalis quaerendi, diffiniendi et disserendi, etiam vera a falsis

ers linked philosophy to the practice of education (paideia, παιδεία) in a broad sense; philosophy signified a universal wisdom, a rounded comprehension of things, enkyklios paideia (ἐνκύκλιος παιδεία). 8 Cicero saw philosophy as the ars vitae (De finibus bonorum et malorum III.2.4) and as the omnium mater artium (Tusculanae I.26.64). Boethius saw it as the wisdom of all those things which are true, united into a cohesive understanding (sapientia eorum verum quae verae sunt et integra comprehensio), in his De institutione arithmeticae I, which was widely read in Carolingian times. Philosophy was closely associated with the liberal arts, 9 and its express aim was the attainment of an overall understanding of all things. Philosophy, therefore, simply meant the summary of the knowledge of all things in the fullest possible sense; it included all known branches of learning, and was for the early mediaeval period generally contained in encyclopaedias and compendia such as those of Isidore, Martianus Capella, Macrobius, and Cassiodorus. Isidore, for example, defined philosophy as "the science of all things divine and human," including in it not just the arts and sciences but also religion and theology. 10 The Carolin-

discernendi potens." Apart from Eriugena, the Carolingians did not develop the science of dialectics beyond these general inherited remarks.

8 On the meaning of philosophy see the excellent study by A.-M. Malingrey, Philosophia: Etude d'un groupe de mots dans la littérature grecque, des Présocratiques au IV siècle après J.-C. (Paris: Klincksieck, 1961), and the short summary of philosophical development in F. Van Steenberghen, Introduction à l'étude de la philosophie médiévale (Louvain: Institut supérieur de Philosophie, 1974). On education in the Latin world see H.-I. Marrou, A History of Education in Antiquity, trans. by G. Lamb (New York: Mentor Books, 1956), and his Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique (Paris: Bibliothèque des Ecoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, fasc. 145, 1949). To a certain extent Augustine opposed himself to the classical tradition of paideia and was directed away from mere curiosity about the world by his Pauline readings; see Marrou, Saint Augustin.

9 Cicero, for example, calls philosophy procreatrix and quasi-parens of the arts. See De oratore I.9-11. Gregory of Nazianzus includes philosophy as one of the arts; see H.-l. Marrou, "Les Arts libéraux dans l'antiquité classique," in Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge (Paris, 1969), p. 24. For Augustine's inclusion of philosophy into the disciplinarum libri, see Retractions I.6. See also Thierry of Chartres's views in the twelfth century as reported in E. Jeauneau, Lectio Philosophorum: Recherches sur l'Ecole de Chartres (Amsterdam: Hak-

kert, 1973).

10 Isidore, Differentiae II.xxxix (PL LXXXIII.93d). Sce J. Fontaine, Isidore de Séville et la culture classique dans l'espagne wisigothique (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1983), p. 217. This definition is ultimately of Stoic origin; see J. von Arnim, Stoicorum veterum fragmenta II (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1923), p. 15, for the definitions of Aetius (Pseudo-Plutarch) and Sextus Empiricus. Eriugena could also have found the definition in the Greek Christian writers, e.g. Gregory of Nazianzus (Migne, PL XXXV.460a; XXXVI.129a), but it is common in Philo, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. For its appearance in Latin writers, see Cicero, Tusculanae disputationes IV.xxvi.27; Cassiodorus, Instit. II.iii.5; Augustine, Contra Academicos I.V.16; Alcuin, De dialectica I (PL CI.952a); and Hrabanus Maurus, De universo XV.i (PL CXI.416a), where the usual division of philosophy into ethics, logic, and physics is repeated (416b). In general, Hrabanus's knowledge is drawn from Isidore, Cassiodorus, and other typical encyclopaedic resources.

gians were especially concerned to classify and collate existing knowledge rather than fundamentally to alter the traditional structure and generally reproduced the classical divisions of knowledge in terms of the liberal arts." This standard view was of philosophy as one of the arts, namely, logica and/or dialectica, and also as encompassing the knowledge contained in all the liberal arts. Contreni published an example of a ninth-century teaching manual on the arts which offers a division of philosophy into physics, ethics, and logic, and goes on to divide "physics" into the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. The manual defines logic as having two parts - rhetoric and dialectic. 12 Carolingian writers (Alcuin, Hrabanus Maurus) more or less equated philosophy with dialectic and understood it as the science of the most general principles of the other disciplines and hence conveying the widest and deepest knowledge of all things. Stemming from Isidore's Etymologiae (PL LXXXII.140b), the Carolingians explained dialectic as de dictis, about words, deriving from the Greek lecton (λεκτόν). This definition is also found in Augustine's De dialectica, and is repeated by Eriugena, if he is the author, in the Annotationes Book IV (Lutz, p. 88 [174,11]), where he says, "dialectica interpretatur de dictione."

So whether philosophy was identified with the arts as a whole or with dialectic, it was still understood within the general conception of encyclopaedic wisdom. Alcuin, for example, saw the arts as the seven pillars of wisdom, and of course, since philosophy is the study of wisdom, philosophy must study the arts. <sup>13</sup> It was not until the Aristotelian revival in the thirteenth century that the intimate re-

11 For Isidore's account of the arts, see M. C. Diaz y Diaz, "Les Arts libéraux d'après les écrivains espagnols et insulaires au VIIe et VIIIe siècles," in Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge, pp. 37-46.

13 See M.-Th. d'Alverny, "La Sagesse et ses sept filles: Recherches sur les allégories de la philosophie et des arts libéraux du IXe au XIIe siècle," Mélanges dédiés à la mémoire de Félix Grat 1 (Paris: Pecqueur-Grat, 1949-50), pp. 245-78. See also some of the studies

lation between the liberal arts and philosophy began to be questioned. Gottschalk and Eriugena broadened the Carolingian understanding of philosophy by developing its connection with grammar, on the one hand, and with religion, on the other, thus utilising Boethius and Augustine. Eriugena advanced considerably the understanding of dialectic and was quoted by Carolingians such as Remigius as an expert in the area. Remigius comments at one point that "according to John Scottus, dialectic is outgoing and a following up" (secundum Iohannem Scottum est dialectica quaedam fuga et insecutio), a recognition of division and recollection.

#### The arts and dialectic

The tendency of Carolingian thinkers was to maintain that nothing new could be added to philosophy, since it contained the arts, which were themselves perfect exemplars of knowledge and could neither be added to nor changed in any way. The Carolingians followed Augustine in holding that the arts were perfect, eternal, unchanging archetypes of knowledge. As Cassiodorus puts it, "They are neither increased by expansion nor diminished by contraction nor modified by any changes, but abide in their own proper nature and observe their own rules with indisputable constancy." The arts were seen as an aid to humans to restore their cognitive powers, which the Fall had weakened and tarnished, as Hugh of Saint Victor stated in the twelfth century: "For the mind, stupefied by bodily sensations and enticed out of itself by sensuous forms, has forgotten what it was, and, because it does not remember that it was anything different, believes that it is nothing except what is seen. But we are restored through instruction." This restorative instruction comes

in Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge. For the development of this view of the arts in the twelfth century see J. Taylor, The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

15 Cassiodorus, Instit. II.iii.22. See Taylor, The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor, p. 195 n. 2. As Taylor points out, Remigius of Auxerre said that the arts would never pass away because the knowable always exists. This mediaeval understanding of the arts involves a misinterpretation and reification of Aristotle's concept of technē.

16 See Taylor, Didascalicon, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> See J. Contreni, "John Scottus, Martin Hiberniensis, the Liberal Arts and Teaching," in M. Herren (ed.), Insular Latin Studies, vol. 1 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981), pp. 32-6. In fact, the tendency to equate philosophy with dialectic is as old as Plato (e.g. Sophist 253c-e) and is affirmed by Proclus in his commentary on Euclid, Procli Diadochi in primum Euclidis Elementorum librum Commentarii, ed. G. Friedlein (Leipzig, 1873), p. 42, 15-16, who calls dialectic the "purest" part of philosophy. For Aristotle's account see J. D. G. Evans, Aristotle on Dialectic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). According to Macrobius Saturnalia VII. 15.14, "Philosophy is the art of arts and the discipline of disciplines"; Cassiodorus repeats this in Instit. II.iii.5, as does Isidore, Etymologiae II.xxiv.9. It is later echoed by Hrabanus Maurus; cf. De institutione clericorum III.xx. (PL CVII.397c). See H. de Lubac, Exégèse médiévale: Les Quatre Sens de l'écriture (Paris: Aubier, 1959), l, pp. 67-8. This definition allows philosophy both to be its own discipline and to include the knowledge of all the other disciplines.

<sup>14</sup> Saint Thomas in his commentary on Boethius (Expositio super librum Boethii de Trinitate V.1, objection 3 and reply) answers the charge that the arts are an adequate basis for the divisions of philosophy, by denying that they are essential classifications corresponding to real divisions of knowledge, and asserts instead that they are mere pedagogical steps in the study of wisdom. Aquinas refers to Hugh of Saint Victor's Didascalicon, which was deeply influenced by Eriugena.

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from the arts. The arts were seen as a series of steps which lead to wisdom, moving from the moral and practical to the intellectual and contemplative visio Dei.

Eriugena does not deny the importance of the arts in relation to philosophy; indeed, no writer of his time placed such enormous emphasis on the importance of the arts for philosophy and for human life in general. Eriugena sees the arts as internal in the mind, and thus they provide the mind with an innate knowledge it has to rediscover, and recollect back to itself, thus assuring the soul of its immortality, since it will be dwelling in the region of unchanging truth. 17 As we have seen, for him, as for Augustine, Boethius, and the other Carolingian writers, the arts are eternal archetypes of knowledge; they stand above the shifting activity of the mind, while somehow being part of the mind, and guide it. 18 But the arts are also proper to the mind, are integrated into its essence, and in fact are natural to it. Even in the Annotationes in Marcianum the arts are said to make the soul immortal (since the arts are immortal, the mind which contemplates them unceasingly will itself be made immortal), and in the De praedestinatione, ignorance of the arts can be seen to lead to the gravest dangers including heresy and eternal damnation. It is in this context that Eriugena can say, commenting on Martianus, that "no one enters heaven except through philosophy"; that is, the arts and study of knowledge bring about the immortal happiness of the soul. The liberal arts, in the Periphyseon, are actually understood as the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit conferring wisdom and grace on those contemplating them, but more important, as we shall see, the liberal arts and dialectic are seen to be one with the Logos, Christ Himself.

The framework is Augustinian, but Eriugena goes on to integrate the arts into the mind itself so that it is not so much that the arts are eternal, do not change, and transcend the mind, but that the mind is co-eternal with the arts (e.g., I.486c), and through the arts the mind comes to realise its true transcendent nature. Thus mind and arts are actually co-eternal, and both partake in the infinite, unchanging wisdom of God. Eriugena's placing of the arts in the mind makes them into faculties or habits or powers of the mind. They actually fulfil the role of epistemological categories of the mind itself.

Dialectic, philosophy, the life of the mind

When the Carolingians did make separate reference to philosophy, they stuck fairly rigidly to the tripartite division of philosophy into ethics, logic, and physics, as found in classical writers and in Augustine and Isidore. Such a division actually cuts across the classification of philosophy as one of the arts (i.e., dialectic) and indicates some confusion as to the place of ethics (as a practical rather than "liberal" art) and physics in relation to the structure of knowledge in general. 19 These traditional classifications of philosophy severely limited the possibility of developing new sciences or a genuinely metaphysical science of being until the revival of Aristotle finally shattered this rigid framework.

Eriugena uses these standard classifications of philosophy (i.e., philosophy as one of the liberal arts, or philosophy as based on a division into ethics, physics, and logic), but he never simply adopts them without giving them a new interpretation, and he offers a different organisation of knowledge which, however, would not be developed by his successors. Thus he makes the threefold classification into a fourfold one by integrating theologia (theology) into the discipline of philosophy. He furthermore actually invents his own science, referred to in the Periphyseon as physiologia (IV.741c), which studies the reasons of nature (see III.700b, where physica is said to study the "substantial reasons" of nature). 20 Thus Eriugena links physics, which he defines as knowledge (scientia) of causes and

<sup>17</sup> For Eriugena's understanding of the liberal arts see G. Mathon, "Les Formes et la signification de la pédagogie des arts libéraux au milieu du IXe siècle. L'Enseignement palatin de Jean Scot Erigène," in Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge, pp. 47-64. This theory is a development of Augustine's views in the De libero arbitrio and in the De ordine.

<sup>18</sup> For Augustine's understanding of the arts as Platonic archetypes see R. J. O'Connell, Art and the Christian Intelligence in St. Augustine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 28-40. Eriugena was strongly influenced by Augustine's De libero arbitrio.

<sup>19</sup> Augustine refers to the tripartite division of philosophy in De civ. Dei Xr.25 (PL XLI.338). This division can be found in Aristotle, Topics I.14. 105b and Isidore, Differentiae II.xxxix (PL LXXXIII.93d). Alcuin refers to it in his De dialectica (PL CI.952c). Eriugena uses the division in an unconventional way at III. 705b where he extends the tripartite division into a fourfold (quadriformis) division to include theology, using terms found in Proclus (see Sheldon-Williams, vol. 3, p. 319 n.57). Eriugena gives a different distinction of ethics and physics at III.700. Eriugena draws on the Greeks to enlarge the meaning of physics to include his "physiology." Hugh of Saint Victor is credited by Gilson with initiating the distinction between theology and philosophy which came to be so important for the thirteenth century.

<sup>20</sup> Eriugena could have found the term in Dionysius, De divinis nominibus 648a; see M. de Gandillac, Oeuvres complètes de Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite (Paris: Aubier, 1943), p. 86. However, he broadens the meaning considerably; see R. Roques, Structures théologiques de la Gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor (Paris, 1962), p. 138. See also D. Moran, "Natura quadriformata and the Beginnings of Physiologia in the Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena," Bulletin de philosophie médiévale 21 (1979), pp. 41-6. For another definition of physica sec III.629a. Eriugena is deeply influenced by Maximus's concept of physica theoria.

effects, to theology as wisdom (sapientia) and as the contemplation of God, and further mentions moral practice as the means of attaining to physics at III.629a. All forms of knowing flow together in contemplation, whether it is contemplation of nature or of God. Eriugena is expanding the meaning of these intellectual disciplines such that they all study the movement and return of universal nature (which includes both God and the creature) and can be all thought of as a complicated contemplation, a multiplex theoria.

This outgoing and returning are measured by dialectic. Eriugena vastly extended and modified the meaning of dialectic beyond the limits of a purely logical or classificatory discipline, until it occupied a methodological role in his system, which can be reasonably compared to the use made of dialectic by Hegel and the German idealists of the nineteenth century. Eriugena's concept of philosophy is as a contemplation of the created world which changes the fantasies of this world into divine theophanies. He calls this contemplation physica theoria (e.g., III.712b, IV.763c); it is his universitatis contemplatio, which achieves a state of being for the viewer such that he is absorbed, as we shall see, into a timeless and locationless anarchistic infinity.

# The categories and dialectic

Marenbon has convincingly argued (as we have already seen) that in fact some progress in the understanding of *philosophia* beyond the mere repetition of existing concepts was made in the early Carolingian period – in the theory of the categories, as witnessed by the *Munich Passages* and the glosses on the *Categoriae decem* – but he argues that, in general, the Carolingians were content to pay lipservice to the importance of philosophy in its relation to the arts, without giving any new direction to philosophical thinking.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, according to Marenbon, Eriugena makes a considerable

number of basic mistakes in philosophy because he is not primarily motivated by philosophical considerations but is driven by a poetic-theological concern for synthesis at all costs. Thus Eriugena confuses *ousia* as a metaphysical concept with the logical notion of the highest genus.<sup>22</sup>

This is not completely fair. Eriugena accepts the Aristotelian classification of the categories which he found in the pseudo-Augustinian Categoriae decem as a useful system for classifying predicates. He sees them in the Porphyrian manner as the widest categories under which all genera, species, and individuals in this world can be ranged, but he does not attribute to the classification the absoluteness or the completeness which later mediaeval writers will give it. In fact, Eriugena spends most of Book I of the Periphyseon arguing that none of the categories applies to God (Augustine had denied that the categories applied to God, except for ousia, which he thought was a fitting term for God). 23 Nor do the categories apply to the human mind, which through its limitlessness transcends all categorical determination. Eriugena here is stating a doctrine which will be reworked by Hegel in his criticism of Kant. In his Logic, for example, Hegel says that "the categories, as they meet us prima facie and in isolation, are finite forms. But truth is always infinite and cannot be expressed or presented to consciousness in finite terms. The phrase 'infinite thought' may excite surprise, if we adhere to the modern notion that thought is always limited. But it is, speaking rightly, the very essence of thought to be infinite."24

24 G. W. F. Hegel, Logic, Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, vol. 1, trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 62.

<sup>21</sup> See Marenbon, Circle of Alcuin pp. 67–87. On the stages of development of categorial thinking in philosophy in the Latin West, the classic study is A. Van de Vyver, "Les Etapes du développement philosophique du haut moyen âge," Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire 8 (1929), pp. 425–52. For a criticism of Marenbon's narrow definition of philosophy, see J. J. McEvoy's review of Marenbon's Early Medieval Philosophy in the Bulletin de théologie ancienne et médiévale 13 (Jan.–Dec. 1984), pp. 556–9.

<sup>22</sup> See J. Marenbon, "John Scottus and the Categoriae decem," in W. Beierwaltes (ed.), Eriugena: Studien zu seinen Quellen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1980), pp. 117-34. Marenbon says that Eriugena is mainly interested in the categories of ousia, time, and place, and he sees Eriugena's discussion as providing insights into his theory of universals. The issue of universals had already been a source of dispute between Macarius and Ratramnus in the ninth century. Eriugena has been called both a nominalist (by Mandonnet) and a realist with regard to the understanding of the being of universals. Marenbon, Early Medieval Philosophy, pp. 65-70, says that Eriugena saw the hierarchy of genera and species as real rather than simply as classes, as his Latin predecessors had interpreted them. Marenbon is, however, ignoring the influence of the Greek Platonic meaning of dialectic on Eriugena.

<sup>23</sup> See De Trinitate V.1.2ff. especially V.1.3: "But God is without doubt a substance, or perhaps essence would be a better term, which the Greeks call ousia"; trans. S. McKenna, Saint Augustine. The Trinity, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 45 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1963), p. 177.

Not only do the categories not apply to God<sup>25</sup> or to the mind for Eriugena; they are not even an *exhaustive* classification of the kinds of being in this world. Eriugena declares at several points that substance and accident do not comprehend all of being and that other categories could be discovered. Thus he says in the *Periphyseon*:

Now the reason why I said that a closer inquiry could discover certain things in nature in addition to those which are comprehended within the Ten Categories . . . was that no one of the less able (*minus capacium*) should suppose that a thorough investigation of things could (not) get further than the above mentioned quantity of categories. (II.597a; Sheldon-Williams's translation, p. 161)

Eriugena also moves in the direction of Plotinus and ultimately of Plato's Sophist by arguing that all the categories can be included under the wider categories of rest and motion.<sup>26</sup> Although Eriugena does pay considerable attention to the categories and does indeed add to their interpretation, in the Periphyseon he is not interested in them for their own sake but uses them to demonstrate some important aspects of immanence and transcendence.<sup>27</sup> He will exclude not only God and the human mind from the categories; he will go on to argue, as we shall see, that the primary causes or eternal reasons of things are beyond the sphere of the categories. Eriugena therefore really rejects the domain of the categories as the dialectician's main concern. He moves the meaning of dialectic far beyond the categories to apply to the processes of God, the universe, and the mind as a whole.

# Philosophy as the imitation of Christ

I began by showing how Eriugena reinterprets the philosophical idiom of his time and reorients dialectic to his new concerns. I must now show how he reinterprets the relationship of philosophy to Christ, who was understood to be the Wisdom which philosophia seeks, in an intellectualist and idealist manner, such that Christ becomes for Eriugena, as for the later German mystics such as Eckhart, the name of both the true infinite understanding of all things (intellectus omnium, II.545a) and the totality of things understood. "For Christ who understands all things, is the understanding of all things" (Christus qui omnia intelligit, immo est omnium intellectus, II.545a). Christ is the unity of knower and known ("for to the human intellect which Christ assumed all the intellectual essences adhere") and is the name of the kind of intellectual state of being and knowing which all men seek.28 To pursue dialectic is to enter into the intellect of Christ Himself, for Christ's knowledge of things is the very being of things (cognitio enim eorum quae sunt ea quae sunt est, II.559b).

Philosophy was not only defined in terms of its content in classical philosophy; it was also understood in terms of its telos, or goal. Philosophy aims at the realisation of wisdom.<sup>29</sup> For Christian philosophers like Alcuin, of course, wisdom was not to be understood solely in terms of the accumulation of secular knowledge about the world, but had to include the attempts of the human soul to become one with Christ, who is Wisdom itself. For Christians from the earliest period the wisdom which philosophy seeks had been identified with the Christ of the New Testament, based on pronouncements such as I Corinthians I.30, and the Carolingian writers also developed this theme. Thus, for Eriugena as for Augustine and

<sup>25</sup> Boethius in his De Trinitate, Chapter 4, also discusses the relationship of the categories to God, and he is careful not to attribute substantia to God in the normal manner, since God is more truly ultra substantia; however, Boethius is prepared to say that God is a substance, if substance is understood in a unified and undivided way. Similarly he believes that quality can be attributed to God so long as we understand that substance and quality form a complete unity (e.g. "God is just," where God and justice are identical). But for Boethius none of the other categories apply to God.

<sup>26</sup> For Plotinus's criticism of the Aristotelian categories see J. P. Anton, "Plotinus' Approach to Categorical Theory," in R. Baine Harris (ed.), The Significance of Neoplatonism (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 83-100. For Eriugena's discussion of things under the categories of rest (status) and motion (motus), see Periphyseon II.597a. See Plato, Sophist 255d ff

<sup>27</sup> For further discussion of the categories see J. F. Courtine, "La Dimension spatiotemporelle dans la problématique catégoriale du De divisione naturae de Jean Scot Erigène," Les études philosophiques 3 (1980), pp. 343-67.

<sup>28 &</sup>quot;Humano enim intellectui quem Christus assumpsit omnes intellectuales essentiae inseparabiliter adhaerent"; II.542a. See Eckhart's sermon, Videte qualem caritatem (Schürmann, Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978], p. 131): "It should be understood that to know God and to be known by God, to see God and to be seen by God, are one according to the reality of things." Nicholas of Cusa likewise sees Christ as "the center and the circumference of intellectual nature" (De docta ignorantia III.8.232, Hopkins, Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Docta Ignorantia, 2nd ed. [Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985], p. 144).

<sup>29</sup> The distinction between defining philosophy in terms of its subject-matter and its goal was made by the late Neoplatonic commentators on Porphyry's Isagoge – Ammonius, David, and Elias. For them the aim of philosophy was to attain likeness to God.

Dionysius, Christ is wisdom (Periphyseon II.545a, 552a, 557c, 559b, etc.). Christ is the thesaurus scientiae et sapientiae (I.545b), <sup>30</sup> and since philosophy is for Eriugena, quoting Augustine, De vera religione 5, the studium sapientiae (De praedestinatione 357c), then philosophy in particular seeks Christ. As an eleventh-century writer would express it, ipsa philosophia Christus: Dialectic itself is Christ. <sup>31</sup>

The philosopher's desire to gain knowledge and wisdom unites with the Christian's desire to follow and imitate the life of Christ. This equation, fundamental to the Middle Ages, had been made as early as Justin Martyr and found systematic expression in writers such as Clement of Alexandria and Augustine. Eriugena, however, interprets the equation of his own peculiarly intellectualist way.<sup>32</sup>

In line with Augustine's use of Saint Paul, Eriugena interprets the seeking of Christian wisdom as shedding the outer man (IV.753a-b), the old man (*vetus homo*) symbolised as Adam, and abandoning mere vain curiosity concerning the workings of this world, in favour of putting on the new man, the inner man (2 Corinthians 4.16), the superior man who will think spiritual rather than carnal thoughts (II.544b; IV.756b) and will develop a new self which will be a perfect image of Christ Himself.<sup>33</sup> Eriugena interprets this change of viewpoint in the Platonic manner as a shifting from temporal to eternal values. Let us illustrate this with a quote from Book IV (753b-c):

For whoever lives perfectly not only utterly despises his body and the life by which it is administered and all the corporeal senses along with the things which he apprehends through them, and all the irrational motions which he perceives in himself, along with the memory of all changeable things (memoria mutabilium); he even crushes and destroys them, insofar as he can, lest they prevail in him in any way. He strives wholly to die to them and to have them die to him; but insofar as he participates in celestial Essence (inquantum caelestis essentiae particeps est), he renews himself, rising from day to day, i.e. from virtue to virtue, with divine grace moving him, working with him, guiding him, and bringing fulfilment. The nature shared by man with animals is called *flesh*, but that which participates in celestial Essence is mind (mens vel animus) or intellect.<sup>34</sup>

This is a boldly Platonic and idealistic assessment of the life of philosophy, comparable, for example, to Iamblichus's view of philosophy, which Carlos Steel says means "to lead a pure life without contamination by matter, and at the same time to acquire insight, without error, into true being." 35

Philosophy then is the vehicle for the renewal (renovatio) or recovery<sup>36</sup> of the human perfect self, and will restore human nature to itself. Eriugena expresses this in a radical and theologically ambiguous manner: For him, homo perfectus Christus est, the perfect man is Christ (II.541c and IV.743c). This comes dangerously close to saying that Christ is, as it were, the name given to universal human nature when it has perfected itself through the practice of philosophy, not so much the name of an actual historical person. Indeed, Eriugena operates quite consciously with this assumption: Philosophy is not just the imitation of Christ, but is the actual business of reuniting completely with Him, by gaining the point of view He represents. For Eriugena, Christ represents the power of perfect knowing as well as the "form of all intelligible life" (forma omnis intellectualis vitae, II.548c), or indeed the unformed form of all (informalis forma omnium). The Homilia is an elaboration on this theme of reuniting with the Word.

In a phrase taken from Dionysius, Eriugena states that Christ, who understands all things, is the understanding of all things. Christ then is the *intellectus omnium* (II.545b), as well as containing in Himself the *rationes* of all things. Philosophy then arrives at Christ's un-

<sup>30</sup> At Periphyseon IV.743c Eriugena acknowledges that wisdom flows from the Trinity as a whole, not just from Christ. In Neoplatonism in general, however, the One is regarded as beyond mind and hence beyond knowledge and wisdom. Thus, in Christian Neoplatonism, wisdom belongs to the second person of the Trinity.

<sup>31</sup> See M.-M. Davy, Initiation médiévale: La Philosophie au douzième siècle (Paris: A. Michel,

<sup>32</sup> For later discussions see R. Baron, Science et sagesse chez Hugues de Saint-Victor (Paris: Lethiclleux, 1957), and Taylor, The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor.

<sup>33</sup> This theme becomes very important in the new spiritual movements of the fifteenth century; see S. Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis* (Leiden: Brill, 1969). Eckhart speaks of the outer man like a door and the inner man as the hinge in his treatise on *Gelassenheit*; i.e. the outer man is always active, while the inner man is calm and free and immovable.

<sup>34</sup> Uhlfelder's translation, pp. 220-1. Yet, as we shall see, this thoroughgoing spirituality does not lead to ignorance concerning the working of nature for Eriugena. Eriugena adapts Augustine's argument that Christians should make use of the arts like the Jews used the "spoils of the Egyptians," and he firmly believes, as we shall see, that philosophers must inquire into the causes of things, moving gradually from the outward appearances to the inner reasons of things (see *Periphyseon III.*723b).

<sup>35</sup> See Steel, The Changing Self. A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius, and Priscianus (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1978), p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> On the meaning of recovery see G. B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967). Anselm will speak of God as formator et reformator meus in M. J. Charlesworth (ed.), St. Anselm's Proslogion (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1979), p. 134.

derstanding of things, and this brings about the return of human nature to itself. True philosophy restores the *imago Dei* until there is no separation between image and exemplar, between man and God. In the following chapter, on human nature, I shall develop this theme; here I note only that Eriugena conceives of philosophy and Christian faith as having the same goal, namely, to lead the mind back to its perfect nature by the practice of intellectual knowing.

# Philosophy as dialectic

How does philosophy proceed? It proceeds by means of dialectic, as we have seen. Eriugena sees the reform of the mind being carried out by the progressive realisation of the human being's intellectual potential. There must therefore be a gradual development away from the senses with their fantasies through reason and ratiocination to achieve the heights of intellectual contemplation. This is in fact only one aspect of the dialectic.<sup>37</sup> Eriugena sees the mind dialectically extending itself outwards into reason and sense, moving from universality to particularity, from non-being to being, from unknown to known, from unknowing to knowing.

Eriugena took this understanding of the dialectical movement of the mind from Maximus and Dionysius. He uses a description of dialectic found in Proclus and his followers which divides dialectic into four parts – dialectic, horistic, apodictic, and analytic (*De praedestinatione*, 358a).<sup>38</sup> But more usually Eriugena speaks of only two branches of dialectic – division and resolution (or return):

The discipline of dialectic is divided into two parts: diairetike (διαιρετική), and analytike (ἀναλυτική). Diairetike presides over the division, it divides the unity of the superior genera from above downwards to the individuals which end the division. Analytike, on the other hand, beginning with the individuals which it recollects and reunites, mounts up the same stages that diairetike has descended, returning everything to the unity of the higher genera.  $^{39}$ 

38 See L.-P. Sheldon-Williams's article in J. O'Meara and L. Bieber (eds.), The Mind of Eriugena (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973), p. 3.

Eriugena associates both movements together and frequently says that the return takes place through the same steps as the exitus. (See II.532a and Expositiones 184c–185b.) Dialectic is not just how the mind proceeds, it is also the way the hierarchy of reality itself is ordered. Sheldon-Williams has commented that "the thoroughness with which Eriugena applies the principles of dialectic to the whole of reality finds no parallel in the system of any predecessor." There is an isomorphism between thought and being, and Eriugena tends to see reason as the method by which the infinite and nameless One is gradually expanded into its hierarchy of descending orders. Not only is the mind active in processing this order, its own nature is similarly ordered. He seems to speak of this order in two ways — as a vertically descending order and as a horizontal expansion where there is no diminution of being as it flows outwards.

Eriugena speaks as if it is the dialectical movement of the mind which brings about the orders of reality, and this is indeed his inner intention. But he occasionally slips into a more realist position, at IV.749a, for example, where he says that the dialectical processes are actually placed in reality by God and are afterwards discovered there by the human mind. While this is strictly true, it must be understood that he is talking here of the processes as they occur outside the fallen human condition. Eriugena is in no doubt that the fallen human mind is responsible for the distorted orders of reality it itself produces. Furthermore, he actually associates the human and divine minds, the analytic of dialectic with the process of deification of human nature, as he says at *Expositiones* 184c. By performing the reductions of dialectic, we humans can become deified and share in the dialectical procession of realities!<sup>41</sup>

## The nature of the mind

In fact, Eriugena conceives of the mind in terms of a tripartite and hierarchically ordered division of intellect (nous), reason, (logos), and inner sense (dianoia, διάνοια II.569b). In its purest state the mind is pure intellect; human nature is a pure, immaterial, intellectual spirit.

41 See also his preface to the Versio Maximi PL CXXII.1195c-1196a: ἀναλυτική (ānalytike); hoc est resolutio, reversio vero Θ€ωδις, hoc est deificatio.

<sup>37</sup> On the concept of dialectic see J. Trouillard, "La Notion d'analyse chez Erigène," in R. Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS, 1977), pp. 349-56.

<sup>39</sup> See J. Barbet (cd.), Johannis Scotti Eriugenae Expositiones in Ierarchiam Coelestem, CCCM 31 (Turnholti: Brepols, 1975), VII.184c-d. On Eriugena's definition of analysis and analytics see 1.472b and II.526b. He uses a variety of terms for analysis, including reductio, reditus, restauratio, and resolutio. Remigius uses the terms fuga et insecutio, which he says came from Eriugena.

<sup>40</sup> Sheldon-Williams, Periphyseon, vol. 2, p. 215 n.11. In fact, Eriugena's Carolingian contemporaries rarely applied dialectic at all. They were content to reproduce the views of Isidore or Cassiodorus and then move on to other matters.

This nous is spoken of metaphorically as being in an eternal or timeless motion around its cause, which is God, and in fact Eriugena says that, as with God, the human mind is not different from its acts or motions: "For as you understand it is not one thing for our nature to be and another thing for it to move" (II.570a-b).

Eriugena goes on to say that the human being is identical with its intellect: "For we are not other (non aliud) than our understandings; for our true and ultimate essence is understanding shaped (specificatus) by the contemplation of truth" (IV.78oc). 42 This mind has what might be termed a "horizontal" expansion of ousia, dynamis, and energeia, but this expansion is dragged downwards to form a "vertical" hierarchy by the attachment of the mind to the things of sense; which sensible things ultimately act to obscure from the mind its knowledge of its true nature as immaterial and self-creating.

## The motions of the mind

Let us examine the action of the mind in a little more detail. Eriugena portrays the activity of the mind in metaphorical terms as a series of movements. The idea that the soul is perpetually moving is found in Plato's Phraedrus 245c-e, where the soul is defined as self-motion, and as a self-motion which never ends or begins and hence is immortal. Gradually, the Neoplatonists established a number of movements of the soul, normally three. These movements are one with the soul itself, "for the essential being (essentialiter esse) of the soul is not other (non aliud) than its being moved substantially (substantialiter moveri)" (II.574b). 43 The highest motions of the mind (i.e., those which move around the Godhead) are circular and timeless, but the mind has a slightly different motion around the primary causes and yet another around the effects of those causes (II.570b). Nevertheless all of these intellectual motions have a defined path, a notion which Eriugena found in Maximus, but which has a long history in Greek thought. 44 This highest motion is called nous or ousia; its essence is "a stable motion and a mobile stability" (II.570a). Eriugena calls this highest motion of the soul "simple" and says that it "surpasses the nature of the soul itself and cannot be interpreted" (II.572c). This movement of the soul is unknowable and ineffable. In fact, Eriugena speaks of the mind's circular motion as anarchos, indicating that he understands the human mind to operate in a boundless and limitless free-play. As we shall see in discussing the primordial causes in Chapter 12, the mind has the power to circle endlessly – and, more important, at random and without any preconceived order – through all of the causes which themselves are like the radii of a circle, which can be determined as having an order beginning from any point (an image Eriugena found in Dionysius and Maximus).

Nevertheless, the mind does externalise itself in a particularly ordered and hierarchical way. Eriugena conceives of the intellect as proceeding or emanating outwards into reason and sense, which give the mind two further motions – straight and spiral.

The second motion of the mind is the motion of reason (logos or ratio), which is linked to intellect as essence is to power, ousia to dynamis. This motion of the soul is called "natural" (II.573a), since it belongs within the limits of the soul itself, and in this motion, God is seen as Cause and the soul operates with its own knowledge (scientia). This is a "straight" movement, a reasoning from causes to effects, from premisses to conclusion.

Eriugena sees reason as a motion "born" of intellect:

The second motion of the soul, then, is the reason, which is understood as a kind of substantial seeing in the mind (veluti quidam obtutus substantialis in animo) and a kind of art begotten of it and in it, in which it foreknows and pre-creates (praecondit) the things which it wishes to make; and therefore it is not unreasonably named its form (forma), for (the intellect) in itself is unknown but begins to become manifest both to itself and to others in its form, which is reason. (Periphyseon II.577b)

Mouvements directs, en spirale, circulaires de l'âme et les oraisons mystiques," Revue Thomiste 30 (Paris, 1925), pp. 321–40. See also E. Hugueny, "Circulaire, rectiligne, hélicoïdal, les trois degrés de la contemplation," Revue de sciences philosophiques et théologiques 8 (1924), pp. 327–31. For the motions of the soul in Dionysius see DN IV.10 (PG III.705b–c, and 916c–d), and for Maximus see, I Ambigua VI.3 (PG XCI.1112d). For ancient doctrine see Aristotle, Physics 261b. See also S. Gersh, From Iamblichus to Eriugena (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 72–6, who finds the doctrine in Hermias, In Phaedrum 20.27ff.

<sup>42</sup> Sheldon-Williams's unpublished translation. Uhlfelder's translation of this passage, non Enim aliud sumus, aliud noster intellectus, (p. 255) loses the sense of the non aliud, which is crucial for the philosophical interpretation of the passage dealing with difference and identity at the level of intellect. See De li non aliud, translated by J. Hopkins in Nicholas of Casa on God as Not-Other (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979).

<sup>43</sup> I have altered Sheldon-Williams's translation here (vol. 2, p. 111) in order to bring out the philosophical identity of being and movement expressed in this passage.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, L. Ballew, Straight and Circular: A Study of Imagery in Greek Philosophy (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1979). For the theme in mystic writers, see A. Gardeil, "Les

This is a crucial passage. Eriugena understands reason as the form of the intellect which itself is formless. It is, however, also born of the intellect and is the creation of the intellect, since creation for Eriugena is self-manifestation. But reason as the manifest being of intellect (understood here as non-being) is also the self-knowledge of intellect:

For the human mind begets (gignit) from itself as a kind of offspring of itself (veluti quandam prolem sui) the knowledge by which it knows itself, and the knowledge of itself (notitia sui) is equal to itself because it knows itself as a whole, in the likeness of God the Father Who begets (gignit) from Himself His Son Who is His Wisdom by which He knows Himself, and His Son is equal to Him because He understands Him as a whole, and is co-essential with the Father because Whom the Father begets (gignit) He begets from Himself. (II.603b)

Here intellect is understood to be a kind of One which exists above even its own self-knowledge (notitia sui), and this self-knowledge is treated as a created essence which emanates from itself in the manner in which the Father begets the Son in the Trinitarian relationship. Eriugena is giving here his own version of the concept of the birth of the Son in the soul, which will emerge as a major theme in Eckhart. 45 For Eriugena, the birth of the Son in the soul is the epistemological event by which reason comes to know itself as the intellect becomes self-conscious and thus reunites with it. But reason comes to self-awareness of its function by proceeding through the arts, which are its own energeia or actuality.

The third movement of the soul is "mixed" (compositus) and represents the manner in which the soul processes the data of sense, the phantasiae, and relates them to their divine causes (see II.573b).

These outward movements of the human nous constitute the dialectic of the human mind. They are balanced by a reditus, a return or recollection of all these aspects of the mind back into intellect. It is this epistemological movement of exitus and reditus that constitutes dialectic and the meaning of the practice of philosophy itself for Eriugena. There is in this respect an isomorphism between thought and reality. The mind creates or produces its own hierarchical struc-

ture of functions and retains them all within its unchanging unity. It is the business of philosophy to trace this *exitus* and *reditus* of the human mind, and in so doing to reform mind to its true nature. Philosophy must begin with the senses, but it must learn to understand them in the light of reason and gradually progress towards intellectual insights or intuitions which take the mind into a timeless realm where knower and known are one.

## The identity of knower and known

So far I have shown that Eriugena identifies the nature of the philosophical practice of dialectic with the nature of the mind itself. Furthermore, we have seen that philosophy aims to achieve the wisdom of Christ, who Himself is understood as the intellection and understanding of all things. I shall now go on to show that Eriugena identifies the essence of the divine mind with the essence of the human mind, and in both cases sees their intellection as productive of their being, rather than vice versa. In this respect Eriugena is articulating an *idealist* thesis of the dependence of being on mind, and he is also foreshadowing the interpretation of the relation of esse to intellectus later developed in Eckhart's Parisian Questions.

Eriugena holds a very curious theory concerning the relationship of the human mind to being. At the level of reason there is a separation of knower and known, subject and object, such that the mind has to reason towards the essence of the thing known. At the level of intellect, however, Eriugena accepts the standard Neoplatonic view that knower and known are one. His immediate source for this doctrine is Dionysius, but it also appears in Maximus. As Eriugena frequently states, "The intellection of all things is the being of all things (e.g., II.559ab)." At first sight, he appears to mean that the being of things is their being known in the divine mind. He frequently asserts that the Word contains all things, and that, for God, the knowledge of things is their being.

However, since the human mind is originally one with the divine, the being of things is also their being known by the human mind. Thus at II.542a, Eriugena says that it is to the human mind (humanus intellectus) of Christ that all the intellectual essences, or forms of things, adhere. Christ is omniscient, not just in His divinity, but specifically in His humanity, and Eriugena will go on to say that

<sup>45</sup> The classic study is K. G. Kertz, "Meister Eckhart's Teaching on the Birth of the Divine Word in the Soul," *Traditio* 15 (1959), pp. 327-63. For a more detailed discussion of Eriugena's theory of human self-knowledge see Chapter 10 of the present volume. Eriugena uses the same term (gignit) both for the begetting of the Son from the Father in the Trinity and for the formation and production of self-knowledge by the mind.

the restored soul can also become omniscient (as we shall see in the next chapter), and contain the forms of all things in itself.

René Roques has pointed out that in fact Dionysius means something quite different, namely that things are known in so far as they have being, which is a realist position. Eriugena deliberately distorts Dionysius to fit his own idealist framework, however. 46 At this level the mind has immediate non-discursive knowledge of its objects, 47 and furthermore the being of these objects is not other than their being grasped by the mind. At many points in the Periphyseon Eriugena interprets Dionysius's remark as meaning that the being of things is their being known in an intellectualist and idealist manner. The mind produces the world which it knows through intellect. (Intellect, of course, is infallible for Eriugena, as is reason so long as it allows itself to be guided by intellect [II.578b]. It is only at the lower level that error enters.) Not only are knower and known one, but, Eriugena says, we are not other than our power of knowing. Hence not only are we one with our objects, but in self-knowledge we know ourselves and in fact this knowing is productive or creative of our own being.

# Knowledge and ignorance, difference and identity

Eriugena complicates this Neoplatonic intellectualist understanding of the relationship of knower and known by introducing at this stage

the idea of docta ignorantia (a term he does not in fact use, but which could have been available to him through Augustine, who uses the phrase in a letter, Epistola 130, Chapter XV.28, PL XXXIII.505). Although knower and known are one at the level of intellect, Eriugena also wants to argue that a knower can never encompass or circumscribe or completely envelop the object, when the object is infinite. Thus although the human mind can know ousia as it is, this does not mean that it can know precisely what it is - only that it is. Eriugena believes that the mind perpetually fails to have complete knowledge of its object and must instead settle for an infinite series of perspectival viewings or theoriae of its object. Thus although theoria is one with its intellectual object, this unity does not exclude a certain internal difference between the object and the knower. Eriugena defends the idea of difference-within-unity, of theoriae which achieve unity but still have to progress towards achieving identity with the object. Strictly speaking, at this level there is no longer any object at all; there is only the increasing self-understanding of subjectivity blossoming into the negative dialectic of encounter with intersubjectivity, or the Other-as-itself. Philosophy is the attempt to achieve theoriae concerning nature and God as nature in its infinite aspect, but philosophy must also recognise that its theoriae are really divine fantasies or theophaniae. 48 Thus Eriugena will deny that the human or angelic mind can see the primary causes in themselves; all that humans can grasp are theophanies of these causes. This suggests that there is in Eriugena, as in Plotinus, a difference between the logoi in the mind or soul, and the highest forms. Eriugena does not go on to develop this distinction except in his definition of man as a certain intellectual notio in the divine mind.

<sup>46</sup> II.559ab. Intellectus enim omnium essentia omnium est. See also 559b31-2, where Eriugena associates this idea with Dionysius. See also II.535c-d; 596b; III.632d; and IV.768b. See R. Roques, "Remarques sur la signification de Jean Scot Erigène," Divinitas 2 (1967), p. 285 n. 130, where he claims this phrase is not in Dionysius. The Latin phrase does appear in the Versio Dionysii, where Eriugena translates Dionysius at PL CXXII.1073a, Ecclesiastical Hierarchy I.3, commenting on the achievement of unification with God. Dionysius says this requires a knowledge of things as they are in themselves, which Eriugena renders as cognitio eorum, quae sunt, quae ea, quae sunt est. This is a distortion of Dionysius's phrase he gnōsis tōn ontōn he onta estin (ἡ γνῶσις τῶν ὄντων ἡ ὅντα ἐστων) (EH I.3, PG III.376a).

<sup>47</sup> A. C. Lloyd has written the classic studies of the nature of this non-discursive intellectual knowing; see his "Non-Discursive Thought - An Enigma of Greck Philosophy," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 70 (1969-70), pp. 261-75. R. Sorabji has recently attempted to reinterpret this notion; see his "Myths about Non-Propositional Thought," in M. Schofield and M. Nussbaum (eds.), Language and Logos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 294-314. I agree with Lloyd's interpretation. Sorabji denics that non-propositional thought is to be found in Plotinus, which I see as interpreting the activity of intellect through the eyes of rational understanding, which Hegel and others have criticised, I think, correctly.

<sup>48</sup> For Eriugena all appearances are phantasiae, but those which are manifestations of the divine are more properly called theophaniae. On Eriugena's concept of phantasia see J.-C. Foussard, "Apparence et apparition: La Notion de phantasia chez Jean Scot," in Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie, pp. 337-48. On the concept of theophany see T. Gregory, "Note sulla dottrina delle teofanie in Giovanni Scoto Eriugena," Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 4 (1963), pp. 75-91; and J. M. Alonso, "Teofania y visión beata en Escoto Eriugena," Revista Española de Teologia 10 (1950), pp. 361-89, and 11 (1951), pp. 255-81. For Eriugena's use of theophanies see III.681a; III.689c; III.624d; II.557b; I.448b; V.983a, 1000c. Also Commentarius in Evangelium Iohannis 302a-b. On the distinction between phantasiae which come from outside and are communicated through the senses and those which are copies of those in the mind, see Periphyseon II.573c. Augustine's De musica is a possible source here.

# Dialectic and deification

Eriugena inherited not only this Latin or Alexandrine encyclopaedic definition of philosophy and the Christian interretation of philosophy as the vehicle for restoring fallen human nature to its true self, but also a more mystical understanding of philosophy through his reading of the Greek Eastern writers, especially Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus Confessor. Following on the Aristotelian elevation of the man of theoria, the contemplative man, to the top of the hierarchy of human types, the Greek patristic authors had equated philosophical theoria with religious vision and transfiguration. In the Life of Moses, for example, Gregory of Nyssa explicitly identifies Moses' vision of the truth with the philosophical insight that true being is permanent, while illusory being or non-being is everything transitory. Gregory of Nyssa was himself adapting the terminology of Plotinus and pagan Neoplatonism.49 Dionysius the Areopagite, Eriugena's mentor, uses a formula found in the school of Proclus to talk of the stages of enlightenment through which the human soul must pass before it gains unity with the One - purgation, illumination, and perfection, leading to a spiritual contemplation (theoria), which will possibly be transformed into deification (theosis), the Christian equivalent of the Neoplatonic unity with the One (henosis).50

In this infusion of Greek spiritual wisdom into the Latin understanding of philosophy lies Eriugena's true uniqueness and radicalness in the history of philosophy.

Philosophy for Eriugena involves a gradual ascent through stages from mere sense understanding and simple moral behaviour to a more spiritual awareness which needs to be purified, illuminated, and perfected until it brings human knowing into unity with the divine. Moral behaviour is merely the opening level of this spiritual journey, and Eriugena quite emphatically stresses the need for a higher, more sophisticated vision - altior theoria - to bring the human mind into proximity with the divine. Eriugena frequently speaks of the gnostica theoria (III.683a) or gnostica contemplatio (II.579c) which philosophy can bring. 51 Furthermore, he is often apt to describe human beings in terms of their capacity for contemplation, or theoria. and in Book V he explains that man is in fact called anthropos (ἄνθρωπος) because in Greek this means "holding the gaze aloft." "a turning towards what is above" (V.941c-d), an etymology which goes back to Plato's Cratylus (399c). Similarly God is called theos. Eriugena explains, because he sees (theoro, I.452b-c) all things. In his De quaerendo deum, Nicholas of Cusa repeats this etymological explanation. Both human and divine natures are defined in terms of theoria.52

The terms of this spiritual journey are Neoplatonic, and the first step on the way to knowledge of God is a conversion towards the self, as Augustine himself frequently asserted. Thus in keeping with the traditional philosophical aim of self-knowledge, Eriugena's concept of philosophy is based on a radical idea of self-understanding as the first step towards spiritual enlightenment.<sup>53</sup>

Self-knowledge is itself a turning from the outer to the inner self, from lower to higher things, as Augustine put it, but it is in Eri-

<sup>49</sup> See A. J. Malherbe and E. Ferguson (trans.), Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*. Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

<sup>50</sup> On the concept of deification see M. Lot-Borodine, La Déification de l'homme selon la doctrine des pères grecs (Paris, CERF, 1970); J. Gross, La Divinisation du chrétien d'après les pères grecs: Contribution historique à la doctrine de la grâce (Paxis: J. Gabalda, 1938). Sce also the excellent encyclopaedia article, "Divinisation," in Dictionnaire de spiritualité, vol. 3 (Paris, 1957), pp. 1370-1459. Although Eriugena admits that it is rarely found in Latin authors, it occurs in Augustine. See V. Capanaga, "La Deification en la soteriologia augustiniana," Augustinus Magister, vol. 2 (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1954), pp. 745-57, and E. H. Kantorowicz, "Deus per naturam. Deus per gratiam," Harvard Theological Review 45 (1952), pp. 253ff. See Augustine Epistola X.2 (PL XXXIII.74) where he uses the term deificari; Sermo 166.4 (PL XXXVIII.909); Sermo 192.1.1012; Enarrationes in Psalmos, Psalm 49, CCSL XXXVIII, p. 575, where he speaks of men deified by grace, not on account of their own substance. (PL XXXIII.565); De civitate Dei XIX.xxiii.4. Augustine generally says that God became man so that man could become God. He does, however, also say that God is Himself per naturam, while man is God per gratiam. Eriugena found the concept of deification fully worked out in the Greek writers Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius, and Maximus. See Dionysius Ecclesiastical hierarchy II.1 (PL III.392a), and Roques, L'Univers dionysien, pp. 88-93. For Eriugena's use, see Comm. 300a, 319d, 339a; Homilia 285c, 294c;

Peri. I.482d, II.595a, IV.743b, 760d, V.876b, 880a, 978ab, 983a, 998a, etc. Saint Thomas accepts deification but interprets it in a more modified manner, signifying similarity rather than identity with God. See ST 1a.13.9. See also Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 377-81, and "Note sur le problème de la vision béatifique au IXe siecle," Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale 1 (1929), pp. 98-107.

<sup>51</sup> Stöckl is correct to call Eriugena a Gnostic; see his History of Scholastic Philosophy, trans. T. A. Finlay (Dublin, 1903), vol. 2, p. 325. See also Roques, Structures théologiques de la gnose à Richard de saint Victor. Eriugena simply adopted the Greek term by transliterating it; γνωστική (CH IX, PG 111.321a) becomes gnostica (PL CXXII.321a). In general, Eriugena translates the term gnōsis (γνῶσις) as scientia (1041a) or cognitio (1052c).

<sup>52</sup> On the meaning of contemplation (theoria), see the article "Contemplation," in the Dictionnaire de spiritualité. See also V. Lossky, Vision of God (London: Faith Press, 1963). Eriugena uses the terms contemplatio, speculatio, theoria, and consideratio interchangeably. See Expositiones 176c.

<sup>53</sup> On self-knowledge and philosophy, see P. Courcelle, "Nosce teipsum du Bas-Empire au haut moyen âge. L'héritage profane et les développements chrétiens," in Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo (Spoleto, 1962), pp. 265-95.

ugena accompanied by the assertion of the radical infinity and bound-lessness of the human soul, such that true self-knowledge involves recognition of the limitations of all human knowledge. Self-ignorance is even "higher" in Eriugena's terms than self-knowledge; admission of ignorance is in fact the highest wisdom (II.594a).

Eriugena's philosophy is imbued with the spirit and terms of the negative theology he so eagerly absorbed from the Greek patristic writers<sup>54</sup> and which he so confidently emphasised in Augustine, who occasionally made theological statements in terms of negative theology, such as melius scitur nesciendi, which Eriugena quotes in the De praedestinatione and in the Periphyseon II.597d. Thus the highest wisdom for him is not the positive possession of encyclopaedic knowledge, as the tradition of Isidore and Alcuin seemed to imply, but the deep recognition of human ignorance and non-being, which very ignorance is itself a mirror of the process of infinite divine knowing. It is the recognition of its own unlimited nature which permits the human mind to transcend itself and gain unity with the Godhead in theosis. This negative knowing, inspired by Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa, and other Greek Christian writers, acts as a counterbalance to the positive dimension of knowing. The positive and negative elements of knowing are continually in dialectical tension in Eriugena's philosophy, and neglect of this important point can lead to considerable misunderstanding of the nature of the highest theoria.

For example, theōria, or "spiritual contemplation," is a key term in Eriugena's conception of philosophy. But it does not mean simply intellectual non-discursive intuition where subject and object are one. This is indeed the standard Neoplatonic view derived from Aristotle's discussion of the intellect. But Eriugena is also concerned to emphasise both the infinity of the number of theoriae (I.501c) and the radical one-sidedness of every theōria when it is applied to an infinite or divine object. No one contemplation can do full justice to the infinite richness of the divine. In fact, every contemplation (theōria) falls short of grasping or comprehending the infinite nature

of the Godhead. Thus every contemplation is only an incomplete view of its object, although in fact it has no separation from its object. The problems of giving a proper epistemological account of the role of theoria are clear, but Eriugena himself partially solves the problem of how a contemplation can both be at one with its object and necessarily fail in totally comprehending its object, by introducing the concept of theophania or divine manifestation or revelation. Every theoria of the Godhead grasps not the Godhead Itself. since this nature transcends everything which can be said or thought. but a revealed manifestation of the Godhead, a theophania. In fact, for Eriugena the theologian or philosopher arrives at the point where every creature appears as a theophany (III.681a-b), and there is no longer any separation between God and creature. Eriugena's concept of the highest contemplations sounds very like the Schellingian notion of intellectual intuition. But Eriugena safeguards the absolute infinite transcendence of the divine by arguing for an infinite progress in the human mind's grasping of higher and higher theophanies or intuitions of the divine nature.

# Philosophy as infinite anarchic activity

Philosophy therefore is not just a matter of intellectual cognitions or intuitions in purely epistemological terms; it is in fact for Eriugena a many-sided viewing of the infinite, a multiplex theoria as Eriugena calls it in the Commentary (VI.ii.29–30), or as he calls it elsewhere, a universitatis contemplatio.<sup>56</sup> Philosophy does ascend from mere individual sense-knowledge to a majestic understanding of the whole; philosophy has oneness with the universal system of nature, but it does not comprehend this whole under one theoria only. Rather, philosophy must be content with continually experiencing ever more complete intellectual visions of the One, increasingly spiritual and

<sup>54</sup> On negative theology see the work of Lossky and also J. Hochstaffl, Negative Theologie: Ein Versuch zur Vermittlung des patristischen Begriffs (Munich: Metz, 1976).

<sup>55</sup> Eriugena took from Maximus (who in turn had found it in Evagrius Pontus) the idea that there are five levels of contemplation. See L. Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor (Lund: Gleerup, 1965), p. 424.

<sup>56</sup> At II.527d Eriugena speaks of viewing God under two aspects as Beginning, and as End of all things, as a duplex consideratio. He sees the four divisions of nature as a fourfold contemplation, but in general prefers the idea of an infinite number of contemplations. Eriugena refers not only to the multiple ways of contemplating nature but also to the infinite number of meanings in the understanding (theoria) of Scripture. In the twelfth century Eriugena's populariser, Honorius Augustodunensis, will speak of philosophy as multiplex sapientia in his De animae exilio et patria (PL CLXXII.1241-1246). As in Dionysius, the whole universe can be conceived of as consisting of the contemplations of angels, humans, and other minds, as they are focussed on the One source of all contemplation. Difficult as this may be for the modern mind, this is the meaning of a spiritual world for mediaeval authors.

totalising theophaniae, or divine contemplations. Eriugena invokes an image to explain how these contemplations are one with the object, and yet each contemplator sees it from a different viewpoint. He says it is like many people looking at a golden ball on top of a temple: Each sees the ball, but no-one's vision interferes with that of any other (V.883a). Each will experience it in his own way (V.945c).

Thus the human mind must be prepared to undertake a spiritual journey by engaging in philosophy, a journey which is infinite and endless: "For even in the most purified minds, the infinite is formed infinitely" (Infinitus enim infinite, etiam in purgatissimis mentibus, formatur). The philosophical journey is an unending quest. This is clearly expressed in Greek writers, especially in Gregory of Nyssa's Life of Moses and in Basil's Contra Eunomium (1.5.11). The path of philosophy does not end with death, but carries on infinitely. There is therefore no stasis even in the divine world of intelligible being. Rather, there is continuous development and evolution where, in a kind of paradox, the end is reached and not reached at the same time:

Although the search is unending, by some miraculous means it [the soul] finds what it is looking for, but also it does not find it for it cannot be found. It finds it through theophanies but it does not find it through the contemplations of the divine nature itself. (Periphyseon V.919c; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

The human soul cannot rest satisfied with less than the infinite, and its intellectual desire has an infinite capacity which must, according to Eriugena, be satisfied infinitely. As Eriugena says, God is infinite and more than infinite, and beyond both finite and infinite (super omne finitum et infinitum) (II.589b). From Him all infinities proceed and to Him they return. Eriugena expresses this enormous capacity of the human soul or mind, in terms which he also applies to God Himself. Thus just as God is said to be both at rest and in motion, and to have a moving rest and a stable motion (mobilis status et sta-

bilis motus, I.452c, II.522d), so also the human mind is said to be a moving rest and a stable motion.<sup>58</sup>

Nous and ousia, that is, intellect and essence, denote the highest part of our nature, or rather its highest motion. For as you understand yourself, it is not one thing for our nature to be and another for it to move. For its essence is its motion-in-rest and its rest-in-motion about God. (II.570a-b; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Eriugena refers to God's procession and return to Himself as not involving any alienation or remotion (quoting Dionysius; see I.523b). The human dialectic involves alienation in this life, but in the infinite progress of the intellect there is no longer any alienation once the limitations of this spatiotemporal existence have been overcome by being recognised for what they truly are.

Motion and rest are the metaphors Eriugena applies to the action of the soul in its attempt to gain unity with the One. These metaphors also stand for the moments of identity and difference in human knowledge. The identity of the intellect and its object is symbolised as the *stasis* of the mind; the inability of the mind to frame a comprehensive concept adequate to its object is symbolised as the *motus* of the mind.

The main purpose of this chapter has been to show how Eriugena emerges from the traditional philosophical and cultural framework of the Carolingian age (whose main intellectual concerns centred on the problems of the pedagogical importance of the liberal arts, the nature of the reformatio of the image of God in man, and the concept of dialectic as an analytic method which considers all things in terms of substance and the other categories, and orders everything under a hierarchy of genera, species, and individuals) and develops a much more intellectualist understanding of philosophy as the means to human self-transcendence. Eriugena argues that philosophy, the "discipline of disciplines," is also, in fact, the means by which the mind is able to comprehend and transform the reality it itself produces. For Eriugena philosophy describes the procedure by which

<sup>57</sup> Commentary on the Gospel of John 312b (my translation). See E. Jeauneau, Commentaire sur l'Evangile de Jean, SC no. 151 (Paris: CERF, 1972), p. 183. Jeauneau links this phrase with Gregory of Nyssa's De hominis opificio.

<sup>58</sup> On the concept of spiritual motion and rest see the excellent study by S. Gersh, *KINHΣIΣ* AKINHTOΣ: A study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus (Leiden: Brill, 1973). The phrase is common in Dionysius and Maximus.

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the mind operates, and for the wise, things are not other than their being conceived by the mind; in fact, things have their being in their being perceived by the mind.

Furthermore, Eriugena's elevation of the human mind and its powers of knowing does not neglect the radical limitations of positive knowing. Eriugena balances knowledge with the infinite, formless, perfect understanding through negation which is achieved by a learned ignorance. The human soul even transcends its identity with its own objects, even where it is their cause, and breaks free of all engagement with created being as such. For Eriugena, the soul is infinite and in a strong sense unformed. It is driven by the love of wisdom (philosophy) which is also an infinite desire (eros) to become divine and to attain oneness with divinity. Thus in its merging with the infinite all restrictions and barriers dissolve, knowledge blends with ignorance, finite with infinite, being with non-being, human self with the Godhead. It is clear that such an understanding derived in the main from Eriugena's brilliant - and, philosophically speaking, surprisingly accurate - interpretation of the Greek writers, Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius, and Maximus, and that it goes far outside the boundaries of what the educated person in the Carolingian age - or indeed the twelfth century - could grasp and comprehend.

Even more unusual is Eriugena's overall vision of the human mind as engaged in a purposeless, anarchic, and infinite play of possibilities, <sup>59</sup> in a multidimensional contemplative activity which seems to increase reality itself. <sup>60</sup> This philosophical activity transcends causal linear thinking and moves to a kind of living which is *anarchos*, without principle, or *ohne warum*, a living without the why, as Eckhart will later term it. <sup>61</sup> Later thinkers who show a similar appreciation of the reformative power of thought to comprehend and re-

61 See R. Schürmann, Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 63-4.

solve a divided and decentred reality in the main will repeat rather than significantly add to Eriugena's thought in this area. Furthermore, his stress on knowledge as a  $gn\bar{o}sis$  ( $\gamma\nu\bar{\omega}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ) separates him from the more imaginative mystical thinkers in a similar vein such as Boehme or Lull.

In the next chapter I shall examine how Eriugena fleshes out his doctrine of the reform of the mind in his fairly comprehensive anthropology, which asserts that the different ontological conditions of human nature actually resolve into different perspectival contemplations or *theoriae*, which human nature has in its power to perform.

<sup>59</sup> On the development of this concept of the anarchy of intellect see R. Schürmann, "The Loss of Origin in Soto Zen and Meister Eckhart," Thomist 42 (April 1978), pp. 281-312.

<sup>60</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to develop the connection between this multiplex theōria and the method of experiencing perspective in order to overcome the limitations of perspective advocated by Nicholas of Cusa in his De visione Dei. The comparison would be helpful to understand the transition between Eriugena's negative dialectic and Nicholas's contemplative method which uses artistic or scientific exempla. On the later idea of perspective, see K. Harries, "Descartes, Perspective and the Angelic Eye," in Yale French Studies 49 (1973), pp. 28–42.

### THE MEANING OF HUMAN NATURE

Instead of beginning directly with a discussion of the meaning of the four divisions of nature, as most commentators have done, I began with Eriugena's concept of philosophy and dialectic in order to show the strong intellectualist and idealist meaning he gives to the understanding of the practice of philosophy and the interpretation of human nature primarily as mind. We must now examine his theory of human nature more closely. In this chapter I shall argue that Eriugena seems to be giving a dualistic account of human nature, in terms of perfect and fallen human states, but in fact he does not conceive of these states as ontological entities; rather they will be two different points of view for human beings. Perfect human nature exists only as possibility; fallen human nature exists only as illusion. True human nature is the multiplex theoria we discussed in the preceding chapter. These human states therefore are states of mind and result from different human theoriae, different human contemplations or perspectives on the one ideal reality. In fact, as we shall see, we cannot strictly speak of an "ideal reality," since Eriugena's uniqueness lies in his concept of an ideal non-reality or nothingness which is the true ground of all being and all actuality. Later in the Homilia Eriugena talks of three worlds - the material, the spiritual, and the world where spirit and matter are joined. Man belongs to this last world, and represents the medietas between matter and spirit (Homilia XIX.204a). In gathering all things together, human nature participates in the unfolding and enfolding of the cosmos. Its wholeness, universality, and integrity are absolutely real in the timeless cosmic sense, but from the point of view of time, this human nature appears as dispersed, scattered, and purely immanent in the material world. Eriugena sets out to show that this temporal view is not a full understanding of the essence of human nature.

# Augustine's anthropology

The starting-point of Eriugena's anthropology is Pauline and Augustinian in the widest sense. Like Augustine, he is most concerned

to define or situate human nature with respect to divine nature primarily, rather than in relation to the rest of the created cosmos. His anthropology, like that of all the Carolingian writers (as exhibited, e.g., in the Munich Passages), owes much to Augustine in that humanity is understood in terms of the nature of the human proximity to the imago Dei. Eriugena is influenced also by Augustine's conception, especially in his earlier writings, of an ideal ratio of human nature, which is almost an "undescended" part of the soul, and by his concept of human introspective self-awareness, a cogito.2 Eriugena, however, takes the co-ordinates of this relationship between God and humanity not directly from Augustine but rather from the Greek Neoplatonic Christian writers, in particular from Gregory of Nyssa's De hominis opificio (from whom Eriugena took the idea of man as mediator between the sensible and the intelligible realms, and the idea of the originally sexless and perfect nature of humanity)3 and from Maximus Confessor's Ambigua, where the link between human nature and the divine Logos is strongly emphasised.4

The idea of man understood in the rationes aeternae is developed in Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram, esp. VI.vi.9-11. Augustine struggles with the idea and argues against understanding these seminal reasons as visible seeds, embryos, or any other kind of physical thing. On Augustine's anthropology see R. J. O'Connell, St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968). Plotinus believed in an undescended part of the soul. Proclus, on the other hand, believed that the soul as a whole descended; see Dodds (ed.), Elements of Theology, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 184-5, Proposition 211, and Cousin (ed.), In Parmenidem (Paris, 1864), 134a. Eriugena is closer to the later Neoplatonists than to Plotinus. See A. H. Armstrong, "Platonic eros and Christian agape," Downside Review 255 (Spring 1961), pp. 115-21.

2 On Eriugena's version of the cogito, see B. Stock, "Intelligo me esse: Eriugena's cogito," in R. Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS 1977), pp. 327-36. The classic study of Augustine's version of the cogito is E. Gilson, "Le cogito et la tradition augustinienne," Etudes sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien (1930; reprinted Paris: Vrin, 1951), pp. 190-201. For the analysis of Eriugena's

concept of self-knowledge, see Chapter 10, this volume.

3 For Gregory of Nyssa's philosophy of man see J. P. Cavarnos, "The Relation of Body and Soul in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa," in H. Dörrie, M. Altenburger, and U. Schramm (eds.), Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp. 61-78; E. Corsini, "L'Harmonie du monde et de l'homme microcosme dans le De hominis opificio," in Epektasis: Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou, ed. J. Fontaine and C. Kannengiesser (Paris: Beauchesne, 1971), pp. 455-62. For an edition and translation of Gregory's De hominis opificio see J. LaPlace and J. Daniélou (eds.), Grégoire de Nysse, La Création d'homme, SC 6 (Paris: CERF, 1944).

4 For Maximus see the excellent study of L. Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator (Lund: Gleerup, 1965), pp. 150ff., and E. Jeauneau, "Jean l'Erigène et les Ambigua ad Johannem de Maxime le Confesseur," in F. Heinzer and C. Schönborn (eds.), Maximus Confessor: Actes du symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1982), pp. 343-

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Drawing on the two accounts of the creation of man in Genesis, and following in a rich tradition of biblical commentary stemming from Philo and Origen (especially Origen's commentary on Genesis, which was available in Rufinus's translation), Eriugena's theory of human nature understands humanity under two aspects: (I) perfect human nature as it might be thought of before the Fall and (2) present-day fallen human nature.<sup>5</sup> This tradition is neatly summed up in the following quote from Philo (c. 25 B.C. – A.D. c. 45) which could just as easily have come from the pen of Eriugena:

For man as formed now is perceptible to the external senses, partaking of qualities, consisting of body and soul, man or woman, by nature mortal. But man, made according to the image of God, was an idea, or a genus, or a seal, perceptible only by the intellect, incorporeal, neither male nor female, imperishable by nature.<sup>6</sup>

In fact, at Book IV.817a, Eriugena asserts that the Greeks maintain that there are two creations of man: an indivisible and universal humanity, very similar to the angelic nature and lacking sexual differentiation; and a secondary nature, "which was added to the rational nature as a result of the foreknowledge of the Fall" and which is sexually differentiated. Eriugena's concept of perfect human nature is based largely on his Christology (as is the case with almost all Christian writers up to and including Nicholas of Cusa). Eriugena consistently sees the original humanity as at least equal to if not greater than angels, and in so far as they are imago Dei they are special, since the Bible never says that angels are made in the image of God. His concept of fallen human nature, on the other hand, is based largely on Neoplatonic epistemology and psychology as he could have found it in many late Greek writers.<sup>7</sup>

### Human nature in paradise

"The limits of human nature are the limits of paradise" (IV.825c). Eriugena's starting-point is perfect human nature, exemplified by the person of Christ. If human beings had not departed from paradise, they would enjoy the kind of being which Christ Himself enjoys. Indeed, Eriugena believes that "paradise" itself is merely an allegorical way of expressing what human nature might have been. Paradise is the Jerusalem of the parable, whereas Jericho is this world (IV.810). Eriugena begins by saying that man fell from paradise, but he moves to a more subtle position, using a careful analysis of tensed statements in the Bible, to argue that, strictly speaking, human beings have never been in paradise, and that paradise is actually a future state and a possibility:

Therefore that praise of the life of man in paradise must refer rather to the life that would have been his if he had remained obedient than to that which he only began to spend and in which he did not continue. For if he had continued in it even for a brief interval he must necessarily have achieved some degree of perfection, and in that case perhaps his master would not have said, "He began to live," but "He lived," or "He had lived": although if he had used the preterite and the pluperfect in this way, or if he used them elsewhere, I should rather think that he was using the preterite for the future than that he meant that man had continued for a space of time in the blessedness of paradise before the Fall, for the following reason, that he was expressing the predestined and foredetermined blessedness which was to be man's if he had not sinned as though it had already occurred, when in fact, that is, in the effects of the completed predestination, it was still among those things which were destined to be created at some future time. Now I say this because often when he is writing about Paradise he does use the preterite and pluperfect . . . nor is this surprising, since very often the Divine Authority speaks of the future as though it had already happened. (Periphyseon IV.809b-d; Sheldon-Williams's translation)8

Eriugena explicitly says paradise is perfect human nature. Following the Greek tradition of Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus, and invoking sympathetic Latin authorities such as Ambrose, he is

<sup>5</sup> In Genesis 1.26 man is made in the image and likeness of God and hence is a spiritual being; in Genesis 2.7 man is made from the slime of the earth and is a corporeal being. This dual account had already been commented on by Philo in his *De opificio mundi*. See Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, pp. 155ff. It is central to Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* Books III and IV. Augustine speculates whether the two accounts represent a timeless and a temporal version.

<sup>6</sup> Philo, De opificio mundi XLVI, in N. N. Glatzer (cd.), The Essential Philo (New York: Schocken, 1971), p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, C. Steel, The Changing Self. A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën 1978), esp. pp. 132-41. See also P. Merlan, Monopsychism, Mysticism and Metaconsciousness: Problems of the Soul in the Neo-Aristotelian and Neoplatonic Tradition, 2nd ed. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969).

<sup>8</sup> This view of perfect nature is derived from Gregory of Nyssa; see J. Gaith, La Conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse (Paris: Vrin, 1953), pp. 52ff. Eriugena frequently explains temporal terms in a non-temporal sense; see the Homilia, where he explains that erat in In principio erat verbum does not simply refer to the past. With Eckhart, Eriugena believes that creation is an ongoing event, and not something which occurred in the past.

spiritualising the concept of paradise, 9 denying that it is to be understood in local or temporal terms as an actual place (as Augustine and most mediaeval writers believed); 10 rather, paradise symbolises what human nature could be or could have been. It expresses human possibility rather than some actual being.

Augustine had discussed the nature of paradise in some detail in various writings, and had not quite made up his mind, but certainly tended towards seeing paradise as an actual place from which the first humans were expelled. At *De civitate Dei* XIV.26, he says that man lived in paradise for a period of time and had a body there, and might have copulated in a rational and deliberate manner without irrational lust. However, at *De civitate Dei* XXII.29, he admits that he does not know what eternal life will be like. Nevertheless Eriugena read Augustine to be saying that there will be no sex in paradise (IV.809a). In *De Genesi ad litteram* III.xxi.33, commenting on the expression "increase and multiply," Augustine says that mortal bodies must propagate through carnal intercourse, but he is not sure if immortal bodies would need to do this – or at least he is certain that it would be done without earthly passion.

In the De Genesi VIII.I.1.229 Augustine notes that there are three possible interpretations of the nature of paradise: (1) It is terrestial, (2) it is spiritual, or (3) it signifies both a corporeal and a spiritual reality. In this text Augustine adopts the third position, and it is in

9 See E. F. Sutcliffe, "St. Gregory of Nyssa and Paradise: Was It Terrestrial?" American Ecclesiastical Review 4 (1931), pp. 337-50. For Eriugena's account see T. Gregory, "L'Eschatologie de Jean Scot," in Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, pp. 377-92. Eckhart later explains paradise as meaning "delight and pleasure"; see E. Colledge and B. McGinn (eds.), Meister Eckhart. The Essential Sermons Commentaries, Treatises, and Defence (Ramsey, N. J.: Paulist Press 1981), p. 116.

10 See, for example, the account of paradise as located in the East and surrounded by an impenetrable fiery wall, given by the twelfth-century writer Honorius Augustodunensis in his De imagine mundi, translated in J. F. Wippel and A. B. Wolter (eds.), Medieval Philosophy from St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa (New York: Free Press; London-Colher-Macmillan, 1969). pp. 177-86. The fact that Honorius was an eager student of Eriugena's shows all the more clearly how much Eriugena was misunderstood by even his own followers in the Middle Ages. For a late mediaeval account, see P. Dronke, "Dante's Earthly Paradise," Romanische Forschungen 82 (1970), pp. 467-87.

II See Augustine, The City of God, trans. G. Walsh, D. Zema, et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1958), pp. 317-19: "Merely because we have no present experience to prove it, we have no right to reject the possibility that, at a time when there was no unruly lust to excite the organs of generation and when all that was needed was done by deliberate choice, the seminal flow could have reached the womb with as little rupture of the hymen and by the same vaginal ducts as is at present the case, in reverse, with the menstrual flux."

this light that Eriugena reads and interprets him. <sup>12</sup> Eriugena does not rule out Augustine's literal interpretation of paradise; rather, he shows that the historical interpretation can be understood in a deeper sense (IV.823a). Eriugena contrasts Augustine's *De Genesi* Book VIII with *De civitate Dei* XIV.11 and with the *De vera religione*, at *Periphyseon* IV.814b. He interprets *De vera religione* to mean that paradise will be purely spiritual. He introduces at this point Ambrose's speculation that there may be two paradises (IV.815b) but concludes that paradise for Ambrose means nothing other than man himself. Eriugena examines other authorities: Origen and Gregory of Nyssa support a spiritual interpretation of paradise, but Epiphanius believes that paradise is local (IV.818c). The whole passage is a good example of Eriugena's careful consideration of the positions of the authorities, alongside his presentation of his own view of the matter.

In any case, Eriugena is not interested in paradise as a place, since place for him is something which is mind-dependent and has no external corporeal reality; he is interested in paradise because it symbolises perfect human nature. Thus at Book V.862 he adduces further arguments against the literal interpretation, saying that if paradise were a local place, all God had to do was to fence off the forbidden tree rather than expel man from the whole of paradise!

Eriugena follows Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus in interpreting paradise as meaning not just a perfect possible state but also the kind of being which is actually enjoyed by Christ. In this perfect state human nature is not restricted by place, time, or corporeality. Christ's humanity is not just something which happened in this world at a particular place and moment in historical time; it pertains to Him outside all place and time. Humanity in general, then, in its essence is independent of spatiotemporal and corporeal restrictions (see Periphyseon II.539c-d; "divinitas Christi in loco non est; igitur neque eius humanitas"); paradise is at once enjoyed by Christ and desired by man as the perfection of human nature. But Eriugena also gives this

<sup>12</sup> Sec De Genesi ad litteram VIII.I.1–II.5, and the excellent note in P. Agaësse and A. Solignac (eds.), La Genèse au sens littéral en douze livres (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1972), vol 2., pp. 497–9. B. Stock, "The Philosophical Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena," Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 8 (1967), pp. 28–9, gives a skilful account of the differences between Eriugena and Augustine on the meaning of paradise: "The historical reality of Augustine's ideas is not denied, it is merely bypassed" (p. 32). Eriugena cites this passage of Augustine at IV.814b.

a highly intellectualist and idealist slant by stating that paradise implies a particular epistemic meaning. Eriugena explains that the cherubim which guards the gate of paradise is to be understood to symbolise the fullness of human knowledge and wisdom. <sup>13</sup> Paradise is really a special form of knowing, and gaining this knowledge gives the seeker entrance to this spiritual domain. Eriugena strongly stresses the intellectual rather than the moral aspects of this gnostica virtus; for him, it is practice of the arts and dialectic, and especially the negative dialectic learned from apophatic theology and its applications, which give humans entrance into the paradise of their true nature.

### Perfect human nature

What are the essential characteristics of this perfect human nature? Eriugena argues that human nature is essentially immaterial, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, and a being which enjoys total transcendence above all created being, while also immanent in all being. At present it is, paradoxically, a pure possibility, but it will become "actualised possibility" in Nicholas of Cusa's terms, although Eriugena himself does not elaborate on the type of possibility which human nature presents. <sup>14</sup> Human nature will move to a state beyond being and non-being, as we shall see. In fact, human nature in its perfection is not merely eternal in the sense of having no end; it is more accurately timeless, as Plotinus also argued. Eckhart will later

assert in his sermon *Beati pauperes spiritu* that when man stood in his first cause, he was cause of himself and lacked nothing, but was a totally empty being (*ledic sîn*) whose sole truth was its knowledge of itself.<sup>15</sup>

As we have just stated, perfect human nature is contained neither by space nor by time nor by any of the other categories which limit human existence in the created realm. Thus, just as God by His nature transcends all the Aristotelian categories of quantity, quality, place, time, position, and so on, so also human nature is not bound within these limits (II.539c-d). "Thus, just as Divine Essence is infinite, so human substance (humana substitutio) made in Its image is bounded by no definite limit" (Periphyseon IV.772a; Uhlfelder's translation, p. 244). Eriugena understands this unlimited nature of humanity in terms of a full spiritual freedom from all laws and restraints. There are no ontological or spiritual barriers imposed on the march of the spirit. But Eriugena goes much further than merely asserting the incorporeality and unboundedness of perfect unfallen human nature.

Following Maximus, Eriugena states that "man and God are paradigms of each other." He goes on to show that all of God's at-

15 On the complex relation of the human soul to time in Neoplatonism see the study by R. Sorabji *Time, Creation and Continum* (London: Duckworth, 1983). pp. 253ff. For Eckhart, see Colledge and McGinn *Meister Eckhart*, p. 200.

<sup>13</sup> The Cherubim for Dionysius, as Eriugena reports, signifies multitudo scientiae vel fusio sapientiae (V.865c) (see Uhlfelder's translation, p. 275) or full knowledge (plena cognitio) or knowledge of many (cognitio multorum). In other words, philosophy is the gate to heaven.

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas of Cusa refers to God as possest, which he explains as a combination of posse and esse, cutting across the Aristotelian distinction of act and potency. God is the summation of all possibility, and He therefore actualises all these possibilities in Himself, even if they are not actualised in the ordinary world. For Nicholas of Cusa, God is both all that can be (i.e., every conceivable possible) and also all that He can be (i.e., He has fully actualised His potential). This dual understanding of God has caused a great deal of misunderstanding among commentators. Eriugena, on the other hand, says that God is beyond possibility and impossibility, and he does not employ the Aristotelian terminology except in the triadic manner of essence-power-operation, which he found in Maximus. To the extent that God is a manifest Trinity, He is both dynamis and energeia; but He is also a hidden unity underlying both. Man, on the other hand, for Eriugena exists as possibility from the point of view of this life, but as actuality from the point of view of the unchanging world of the causes. For Nicholas see Trialogus de Possest, in J. Hopkins, A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), esp. pp. 93-7. Actually Nicholas of Cusa also affirmed that God was beyond all possibility and actuality, since He is beyond even the coincidence of opposites (coincidentia oppositorum).

<sup>16</sup> The text of IV.772 reads: "Itaque sicut divina essentia, ad cujus imaginem facta est, infinita est, ita illa humana substitutio nullo certo fine terminatur." Uhlfelder reads the text as humana substantia, whereas Sheldon-Williams accepts the words humana substitutio and translates them as "human replica." The term substitutio is not found in classical Latin, but is frequently used by Eriugena as early as the De praedestinatione to render the Greek term hyparchis (ὕπαρξιs). Jeauneau claims that the term refers to "the act by which God leads creatures into being"; Homélie sur le prologue de Jean, SC no. 151 (Paris: CERF, 1969), p. 334. Eriugena uses it literally to mean "a placing under," a more active term than substantia, which literally means "standing under" (sub - sto). Eriugena is trying to convey the metaphysical conception of a being which is given to things, i.e., created being. Substitio, therefore, applies to entities which come after true substances – thus human nature is a being created after God, "a replica" of God in Sheldon-Williams's sense. Eriugena is struggling for Latin equivalents to Dionysius's complex terminology – hypostasis and hypostates are two different terms for him; he translates hypostasis as substantia and hypostates as subsistentia.

<sup>17</sup> Dicunt enim inter se invicem paradigmata Deum et hominem in Versio Ambiguorum S. Maximi, Chapter 8, PL CXXII.1220a. On the meaning of paradigma in Eriugena see R. Roques, "Remarques sur la signification de Jean Scot Erigène," Divinitas 2 (1967), p. 273. Eriugena found the term paradigma in Dionysius (DN V.8 III.824c), which Eriugena translated in his Versio Dionysii PL CXXII.1150c-d: "paradigmata autem dicimus esse ipsas in Dee existentium substantificas et uniformiter praetextas rationes, quas theologia praedestinationes vocat, et divinas et optimas voluntates, existentium discretivas et factivas, secundum quas ipse superessentialis existentia omnia et praedestinavit et adduxit." See also Periphyseon II.615d-a; and 559a-b. The term stands for the Dionysian concepts of Being Itself (to auto einai), Life Itself, etc.

tributes can also be found in human nature. Like Nicholas of Cusa he is asserting that human nature is divine in a certain sense. Nicholas says human nature is divine but not in an unqualified way. Eriugena agrees, but he does not spell out clearly the qualification, except to say that God is Himself per essentiam, whereas man is God per participationem. 18 Eriugena's formulation is quite radical: Not only is man a paradigm of God, but God is made into a paradigm of man. Man and God are mutually self-defining, such that Eriugena is close to Eckhart's powerful statement "If I were not, God would not be God."19 Thus Eriugena states that just as God is incorporeal and spiritual, so also human nature is incorporeal and spiritual. Like God, human nature is an incorporeal essence (ousia), which can be identified with pure intellect (nous); and the human body is interpreted by Eriugena to be, in its essence, an incorporeal spirit. As such the human self is essentially neither male nor female but is, in fact, sexless. Eriugena sees this as the true meaning of Saint Paul's teaching that in Christ "there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3.28). Eriugena took this notion from Gregory of Nyssa, from whom he also took the idea that human nature originally would have reproduced itself in the angelic manner by an intellectual process alone, without recourse to the body, in contrast to Augustine's view that sexual reproduction might continue to take place but in a totally rational manner.

God is *omnipotent* and *omniscient*; so also is perfect humanity in Eriugena's view. Eriugena spells this out clearly:

For if human nature has not sinned and had clung without change to Him who had created it, it would certainly be omnipotent (omnipotens). What-

19 Eckhart, sermon Beati pauperes spiritu, in Schürmann, p. 219. For Eckhart the original mind stands naked, like Adam and Eve; it is unmixed and separate. See Colledge and McGinn, Meister Eckhart, p. 105.

ever in the universe it wished done would necessarily be done, since it would not wish anything to be done except what it understood that its Creator wished. (*Periphyseon IV.778b*; Uhlfelder's translation, p. 252-3)

Witness a similar stance concerning omniscience at Book IV.777c-778a:

NUTRITOR: There was then in human nature the potency of possessing the fullest knowledge of itself (potentia perfectissimam sui cognitionem habendi) if it had not sinned.

ALUMNUS: Nothing is more likely. For most mighty and most wretched was that Fall in which our nature lost the knowledge and wisdom which had been planted in her, and lapsed into a profound ignorance concerning herself and her Creator. . . .

NUTRITOR: So the fullest knowledge (perfectissima cognitio) both of herself and her Creator was planted in her as part of her nature before the Fall, in so far as the knowledge of a creature can comprehend itself and its cause. (Sheldon-Williams's translation, cf. Uhlfelder, p. 252).

Here the soul is said to have had perfect knowledge of itself and its Creator. In the course of this discussion it is made clear that this self-knowledge also includes knowledge of all things, since the human soul contains in itself the principles and reasons of all things.

Not only is perfect human nature omnipotent and omniscient, but it is also omnipresent and yet at the same time transcends the created universe. Eriugena stresses the divine omnipresence repeatedly: God is all in all (III.683c-684d); He is all things everywhere (omnia ubique deum esse, III.677c). Eriugena frequently expresses the idea of human omnipresence. The human being is whole in the whole and whole in every part, he says at Book IV.752a-b; and at 759a-b he states that human nature is whole throughout all the parts of its nature, which in fact encompass all the parts of created being—the mineral, vegetative, living, and rational and intellectual domains. "Man is in all animals and all animals are in him, and yet he transcends them all" (752b).<sup>20</sup>

# Human nature as absolute freedom

Eriugena also gives to perfect human nature the quality of absolute freedom from all limitations, along with the attribute of perfect goodness:

<sup>18</sup> See D. F. Duclow, "Gregory of Nyssa and Nicholas of Cusa: Infinity, Anthropology and the Via Negativa," Downside Review 92 (1974), pp. 102-8. Nicholas differs considerably from Eriugena in terms of his theory of human nature. Nicholas likes to emphasise the finitude of human nature and the inseparable gap between finitude and infinity. Furthermore, he calls man a microcosm and places him a little lower than the angels, whereas Eriugena rejects the idea of microcosm and places man on the same level with (and in some respects superior to) the angels. See De docta ignorantia III.iii,198, in J. Hopkins, Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance: A Translation and Appraisal of De Docta Ignorantia 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985), p. 131. "Human nature is that [nature] which, though created a little lower than the angels, is elevated above all the [other] works of God; it enfolds intellectual and sensible nature and encloses all things within itself, so that the ancients were right in calling it a microcosm, or a small world." For Nicholas only a single man can attain to the Maximum – that is, Christ Himself.

<sup>20</sup> On omnipresence see S. Gersh, "Omnipresence in Eriugena: Some Reflections on Augustino-Maximian Elements in the Periphyseon," in W. Beierwaltes (ed.), Eriugena: Studien zu seinen Quellen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1980), pp. 55-74.

For if God is the plenitude of good things (plenitudo bonorum) and man is an image of God, the image must resemble the Primal Exemplar in this respect also, that it is the plenitude of all good. . . . In this respect also it is the image, in that it is free from all necessity (liberum omnium necessitate), and is subject to no natural or material authority but possesses in itself a will (voluntas) which is capable of obtaining its desires. (Periphyseon IV.796a, Sheldon-Williams's translation)

This is a crucial passage. Here human nature is given absolute goodness in the sense that it can always achieve its desires, which are assumed to be naturally good. Absolute freedom of the will is itself a perfect good. Eriugena's claims are most radical. Human nature is free of all necessity. It is not even limited by nature itself. Although the framework is Augustinian, Eriugena emphasises the voluntaristic side of human nature, rather than its strong attraction to the good. In this sense Eriugena interprets Saint Paul's statement (at I Cor. 3.15-16) that the spiritual man is subject to no law but gives the law to himself (like Kant's rational moral being): "Spiritual man judges all things but is judged by none" (IV.753a-b). Eriugena could be understood to mean that the superior man is free to give himself any law or, more precisely, operates according to no fixed law, since there are no fixed limits on his nature and conduct. The conception of a fully free human nature in paradise derives from Augustine's discussion in De libero arbitrio where Augustine distinguishes between the fully free liberated soul and our present experience of a free-will prone to evil, a distinction between libertas and liberum arbitrium. For Augustine, the good will is completely free in willing only the good. It does what it likes, only because what it likes is good. Anselm interprets the scriptural phrase in a similar manner in his Proslogion, Chapter XXV, where he says that for the spiritual man, "whatever he wishes will be his and whatever he does not wish will not be his." It was in the more radical sense that later mediaeval spiritual and social movements interpreted this scriptural passage.21 Pico della Mirandola (1464-94) expresses a similar view

of man's absolute freedom in his Oratio de hominis dignitate, where he is drawing on a passage in the Hermetic Asclepius, Chapter 6. Eriugena is possibly more radical, however, as Pico's optimism concerning human nature is not echoed in his other writings.

Eriugena took this notion of spiritual freedom from Maximus, for whom Adam before the Fall enjoyed complete freedom because he had apatheia, a Stoic detachment from all things.22 Eckhart would later develop this idea of spiritual freedom in terms of detachment or releasement (Abgeschiedenheit) and letting-be (Gelassenheit; Middle German, Gelâzenheit).23 Eriugena is less interested in developing the meaning of spiritual freedom in terms of moral or existential conduct and prefers to express this infinite freedom in more intellectualist terms, as the freedom to adopt any theoria concerning God and nature one wishes, to start anywhere in the chain of causation, which the superior man understands as a seamless web, or as the infinite radii of a circle. This is the meaning of the anarchic nature of man. Just as God and the causes are without origin and obey no fixed law or order, so also human nature, when it contemplates God and the causes need obey no fixed order or progression. Eriugena says the causes have no fixed order or pattern:

And be it noted that this sequence of the primordial causes which you asked me to set out distinctly in a definite order of precedence is constituted not in themselves but in the aspects (non in ipsis sed in theoria), that is in the concept of the mind which investigates them. . . . For in themselves these first causes are one and simple and none knows the order in which they are placed. (III.624a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

The causes are ordered by the mind, which can proceed any way it likes:

Therefore the order of the primordial causes is constituted in the judgement (arbitrium) of the mind which contemplates them. . . . For a devout and pure-minded philosopher may start from any one of them at will and

<sup>21</sup> Such as the Cathars and the Brethren of the Free Spirit. See N. Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), and for a more balanced account see R. E. Lerner, The Heresy of the Free Spirit (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). See also W. Fraenger, The Millennium of Hieronymous Bosch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), for an account of the role of this theory in mediaeval art. See E. Colledge, "Liberty of the Spirit: The Mirror of Simple Souls," in L. K. Shook (ed.), Congress on the Theology of Renewal in the Church 2 (Montreal: Palm, 1968), pp. 100-17. See also G. Leff, Heresy in the Later Middle Ages (Manchester: Manchester University Press,

<sup>1967).</sup> For the movements that took the freedom of spirit seriously see M. Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976). On Augustine's complex understanding of free-will see M. T. Clark, *Augustine: Philosopher of Freedom* (New York: Desclée, 1959).

<sup>22</sup> See Maximus Ambigua 42 (PG XCI.1316d). See Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator, p. 153.
23 See R. Schürmann, "Trois Penseurs du délaissement: Mâitre Eckhart, Heidegger, Suzuki," Journal of the History of Philosophy 12 (1974), pp. 455-77; 13 (1975), pp. 43-60; Schürmann, "Heidegger and Meister Eckhart on Releasement," Research in Phenomenology 3 (1973), pp. 95-119.

let his mind's eye (oculum mentis), which is true reason, [embrace] the others in any order of contemplation. (III.624c-d; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Man can enjoy a free play of infinite contemplations, which in fact produce human self-transcendence in *theōsis*. Its nature then is a kind of non-nature, a formlessness which transcends all form, as Eriugena himself says at several points. At III.620c he says it cannot even be bounded by itself. As Karl Rahner puts it in his *Theological Investigations*; "Man is 'by nature' and by his very being the possibility of transcendence become conscious of itself – the self-conscious reference to the absolute and the knowledge about the infinite possibility." Man is boundless, anarchic, self-transcending contemplation or subjectivity.

#### Human nature as causa sui

The most important and difficult question concerning this theory which Eriugena is concerned to address is the difficult problem of the relation of this perfect human nature to creation. If human nature is omnipotent and eternal, then in what sense can it be said to be created? Eriugena's answer to this question is subtle but also shocking to the mind schooled in Augustinian philosophical attitudes. He maintains that perfect human nature resembles its God in this respect too; namely, it can be said to be uncreated. As uncreated, human nature has always dwelt in the Godhead. As Christ, of course, this human nature is inseparable from the Trinity and must be thought of as part of it. But Eriugena is giving to human nature the power – as an omnipotent uncreated being – to create itself. Eckhart also says that man is causa sui, and is thus similar to God. Strictly speaking both Anselm and Aquinas reject the idea that God is causa sui. In the Monologion, Chapter VI, Anselm says that God did not create

Himself, and Aquinas also maintains that it is more true to say that God is "uncaused" than to say that He is causa sui.

Eriugena arrives at this position as a consequence of his application of negative theology to human nature. God is better approached by ignorance than by knowledge, Eriugena learned from Dionysius and the Cappadocians. It is more proper to deny things than to affirm them concerning both God and human nature. Thus human nature is better described as "non-being" than as "being." Furthermore, when thought of as co-existing with God, human nature is part of the divine infinite nothingness, which Eckhart later calls by the name "desert." Thus human nature can be called nothing or non-being. Eriugena then says that God creates by manifesting Himself (see, for example, Periphyseon III.689a, where Eriugena says that the divine nature "creates itself, that is, allows itself to appear in its theophanies") from His own nothingness. Just as God shows Himself as something from nothing, so also human being creates itself by manifesting itself. This, of course, follows the old Neoplatonic principle, well expressed by Proclus: Everything which is perfect, is productive.<sup>27</sup> Not only can human nature be said to be uncreated, but it can also be said to be self-creating. For Eriugena the human mind creates itself when it becomes manifest in words and signs, but also when it moves from intellect through reason to create a sensible body for itself (the soul, which is an image of God, makes the body as an image of itself, II.585d). We shall return to this shortly. Eckhart, as we have already pointed out, also boldly proclaims that humanity is causa sui, although he qualified this in his sermon given in his own defence on 13 February 1327, when he affirms that "there is something in the mind of such a kind that, if the mind were entirely thus, it would be uncreated," while denying that this uncreated part is "of the mind." Eckhart, however, frequently asserts in less guarded moments that human beings have

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> See K. Rahner, "Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World." in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, trans. K.-H. Kruger (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), pp. 157-92, csp. p. 179.

<sup>25</sup> Eckhart also sees human nature as integral to the divine nature. See his sermon Sankt Paulus spricht (DW 1, no. 24): "For your human nature and that of the Divine Word are no different – it is one and the same"; see M. Fox, Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality (New York: Image Books, 1980), p. 104.

<sup>26</sup> For Eckhart on God as "desert" or "wasteland," see his sermon In diebus suis (DW 1. p. 171), and R. Schürmann, Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p 114.

<sup>27</sup> See Proclus, Institutio Theologica 27, trans. E. R. Dodds in Select Passages Illustrating Neoplatonism (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1960), pp. 26–7. Eckhart himself frequently makes use of this principle, which he found in the Liber de causis as well as directly in Proclus. It is, of course, also expressed in Plotinus, Ennead V.1, and elsewhere.

<sup>28</sup> See Schürmann, Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher, p. 29.

an uncreated essence at the heart of them, recalling Plotinus's conception of an undescended part of the soul. <sup>29</sup> Eriugena never actually uses this formulation, but does, as we shall see, understand the soul as the form of itself, and as forming itself while remaining formless and outside all determinations. Eckhart says something very similar: "It is free of all names and devoid of all forms, entirely bare and free, as void and free as God is in Himself."<sup>30</sup> For Eriugena, one can also speak of an uncreated part of the human soul, or, more correctly, one can recognise that it is possible to view the soul under the aspect of its uncreated eternity in God. As we shall see in discussing the four divisions of nature in Chapter 12, Eriugena views the human mind as able to float freely through all of these divisions and to be placed in the category of that which is neither created nor creates, as well as in the category of that which is uncreated and creates.

Eriugena is quite clear that the perfect human nature belongs to God and is fully contained in Him, without any difference or distinction of attribute or quality. It is true that Eriugena does allow for one kind of difference only between God and perfect human nature; namely, they differ in subject, or as he says, in number; that is God is one being, and human nature is another, perfectly equal, and even identical being. Eriugena believes "equal in all respects" means "identical." Two things are identical if they are in all respects equal, and yet they retain their difference in number. This paradox of identity will reappear in the work of German idealists, and in Heidegger's essay *Identity and Difference*. We must now discuss the manner in which human and divine nature reflect one another.

## The identity of image and archetype

It is clear that Eriugena develops this view of the interchangeability of God and perfect human nature based on his interpretation of Greek

30 Eckhart, Intravit Jesus in quoddam eastellum, in Schürmann, Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher, p. 7.

Christology (which affirmed the cosmic humanity of Jesus) and on the implications of accepting the concept of deification or theosis. Deification is usually interpreted in the Latin Church as involving only the increasing similarity between human nature and God, a polishing of the image, as it were, until human nature attains likeness to God. They stop short of claiming that this image can become perfectly identical with the archetype in all respects.<sup>31</sup> Eriugena, however, has no qualms about defining a perfect image as one which has all features in common with the archetype – to the same degree of perfection as is found in the archetype (e.g., IV.822a). He believes an image can be an image only if it possesses total similarity or likeness. If there is any otherness then it is not a true image. This is in line with Eriugena's understanding of an identity which includes difference without thereby becoming non-identical. He understands image and archetype as manifest and hidden aspects of the one identical nature.

Eckhart believes something quite similar about the identity of image and its exemplar, though he uses a more sophisticated language of being-in-itself and being-for-itself: "An image is not of itself; nor is it for itself. It has its origin in that of which it is the image. . . . An image receives its being immediately from that of which it is the image. It is one being with it and it is the same being" (DW 1, p. 269, 2–7 translated in Schürmann, Meister Eckhart, p. 94). For Eckhart there is no distinction between man and God "before ever God created things," but now it is only through grace that man can become what God is by nature.

Eriugena agrees that an image and archetype are one in all characteristics of their essence (remember that essence includes both the hidden and unhidden aspects of the thing). He does, however, also

<sup>29</sup> Eckhart calls this the interior castle, or the spark of the soul, relating it to the mediaeval mystical idea of the scintilla animae. Nicholas of Cusa also suggests that human nature is self-created and creates its own world; see M. Alvarez-Gomez, "Der Mensch als Schöpfer seiner Welt: Ueberlegungen zu De Coniecturis," Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft 13 (1978), pp. 160-6.

<sup>31</sup> On the doctrine of image and resemblance in Christian Neoplatonism see J. E. Sullivan, The Image of God: The Doctrine of St. Augustine and Its Influence (Dubuque, Iowa: The Priory Press, 1963) and the brilliant study of R. Javelet, Image et ressemblance au douzième siècle, de Saint Anselme à Alain de Lille. 2 vols. (Strasbourg: Université de Strasbourg, 1967). The thinking stems from a combination of Genesis 1.26 with the Platonic discussion of human nature as striving to achieve homoiosis theo. For Augustine's position on the difference between the image and its likeness, see R. A. Markus, "Image and Similitude in Augustine," Revue des études augustiniennes 10 (1964), pp. 123-43. Augustine locates the image of God in the interior man, in the mind, but he does not make much of the distinction between image and resemblance; see La Genèse au sens littéral, vol. 1, pp. 622-33. Some later writers argue that man is image by nature, but only perfects the likeness through grace.

say that they have the same being but differ in number or subject. Eriugena found this doctrine in Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis opificio*, which is frequently quoted at length in the *Periphyseon*.<sup>32</sup> It was a position which was much debated during the Iconoclastic controversy in the East.

Alumnus articulates this doctrine in an important passage in Book IV:

For how would she [the soul] be an image if in some aspect she differed from that of which she is the image? Except of course in relation of the subject (excepta subjecti ratione), about which we spoke in earlier books when we were discussing the Prototype or Principal exemplar and its image. (IV.778a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Eriugena does qualify his remarks in two ways. First, he says that the exemplar is being per se, through itself, whereas the image is being only per participationem (778a); and second, he says that the Creator is uncreated while the Image is created. Similarly, later in the Homilia he states that human nature is not the Light but only participates in the Light. God alone is the Light per se; we are light per participationem.

But these distinctions are allowed to slide when Eriugena talks about deification in its highest form where human nature actually becomes merged with God's nature. At this point Eriugena no longer has a means of distinguishing one nature from another. The usual mediaeval metaphysical position was that all natures are distinguished or individuated through matter, as expressed in standard Aristotelian philosophy. But in Eriugena there must also be an individuation which takes place at the level of mind or spirit, which in fact for Eriugena is individuated by the Holy Spirit. (See II.563c, where he interprets the biblical idea of the Spirit fertilising the waters as the differentiating of genera into their species and individuals.)

Augustine had already floated the idea of a spiritual or intelligible matter in his De Genesi ad litteram, 33 but Eriugena never clarifies this

32 J. T. Muckle, "The Doctrine of St. Gregory of Nyssa on Man as the Image of God,"

Medieval Studies 7 (1948), pp. 55-84; and R. Leys, L'Image de Dieu chez s. Grégoire de

Nysse: Esquisse d'une doctrine (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1951).

point beyond insisting that spirits are individuated even after the return of all things to the One. At times he talks as if in fact it is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, which is responsible for the diffusion of principles as individuals. The identification of the Platonic anima mundi with the Holy Spirit was tentatively made in the twelfth century by William of Conches and by Thierry. It was condemned in Abelard by the council of Sens in 1140.

Most of the time Eriugena is content to use stock metaphors to explain how the many and the One are related in the spiritual realm. Thus all souls and God are one, just as different lights all merge in the one light (e.g., I.488a) while each remains its own light; or all sounds in the one note, or all drops of water in the one ocean (see, e.g., Periphyseon V.883a).34 In a similar manner in God there is nothing else than God and everything there is equally divine, Eriugena maintains. Thus all souls merge with the One, while somehow maintaining their individual number (their subject). 35 Two humans have the same ousia and are distinguished only through their accidental qualities, and especially through temporal and spatial location. Eriugena sees individuation as normally occurring through external characteristics, coagulating around the inner universal essence. Thus there is one primary cause of humanity, but individual humans are differentiated by their appearance in space and time. However, Eriugena does seem to need another principle of individuation, which he never spells out. This is an epistemic or idealist concept of individuation. Each mind is different because its perspective on the totality is different.

Perfect human nature thus is a single unity which is nevertheless distributed through all human individuals. It is in fact a kind of cosmic humanity which in every respect is not at all different from the divine. Indeed, this is exactly as Eriugena wishes it, since he wants to maintain that Christ is both perfectly human and also God. It must therefore be possible for human nature to co-exist with divinity, to be equal to it as it were. We may illustrate Eriugena's

<sup>33</sup> For Augustine's account of intelligible matter, see A. H. Armstrong, "Spiritual or Intelligible Matter in Plotinus and Augustine," in *Augustinus Magister*, Congrès international Augustinien (Paris, 21–24 September 1954), vol. 1 (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1954), pp. 277–83.

<sup>34</sup> On the history of these images see J. Pépin, "Stilla aquae modica multo infusa vino. Ferro ignitum, luce perfusus aer. L'Origine de trois comparaisons familières à la théologie mystique médiévale," Divinitas 2 (1967), pp. 331-75.

<sup>35</sup> For a general discussion of the problem of individuation in early mediaeval philosophy and in Eriugena see J. J. Gracia, Introduction to the Problem of Individuation in the Early Middle Ages 500-1200 A.D. (Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 1984), pp. 123-35. Eriugena says image and archetype differ in respect of subject (IV.822a).

The meaning of human nature

view of the relation between human nature and God with the following diagram:

Homo	Imago	Deus
Human nature	Paradeigma	Divine nature
Mind	Verbum (logos)	Divine mind
Thought	Idea (notio)	Divine will

Humanity and divinity are correlative terms. They are the opposite poles of a dialectic of creation/manifestation, which is mediated by nature or thought or image or word. Man and God are one in that they are dialectically united in the concealing/revealing dynamic of the Word. This is the meaning of Eriugena's bold statement that God and the creature are to be understood as one and the same: "We ought not to understand God and the creature as two things distinct from one another, but as one and the same (sed unum et id ipsum)" (III.678c; Sheldon-Williams's translation). The normal gap which separates Creator from creature is elided in the personage of Christ and therefore also in the case of perfect humanity. Eriugena makes clear that he is not just referring to the Incarnation (which he calls inhumanatio) as the historical event in which this coalescence of divinity and humanity occur; it is a property of the eternal world itself. Eriugena is scarcely interested in the historical Christ, merely reassuring people, in a manner clearly influenced by Maximus, that the Crucifixion was not just a phantasia.36 He wants Christ to be understood not only carnaliter, as a flesh-and-blood human, but also spiritualiter, as the bond and meaning of the whole universe. Christ represents true infinity in that he bonds both the finite and the infinite and does not leave them standing side by side, which Hegel justly criticises as poor theological thinking.<sup>37</sup>

### Officina omnium

As part of this sharing in the divine nature, perfect human nature can be said to run through all things and in a way to contain all

things. Eriugena found this doctrine in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa and of Maximus, and never abandoned it, since it appears also in the Homilia XIX.294b. Man, for these writers, contains all things; man is the officina omnium (II.530d; IV.755b; V.893c, etc.), the "workshop" of all things. Eriugena explains it at II.53od: "For there is no creature, from the highest to the lowest, which is not found in man, and that is why he is rightly called officina omnium" (Sheldon-Williams's translation). This doctrine is based on the Aristotelian view that the soul is in a certain way all things, and is usually understood to mean that man shares in the nature of other things in some way, as Nicholas of Cusa, for example, interprets it at De docta ignorantia III.iv.206, where he says, "The intellect is potentially all things."38 But it is here taken fairly literally to mean that human nature "contains" or "circumscribes" all things by possessing the reasons, principles, and causes of those things in itself. Thus just as the divine mind contains in itself the knowledge of all things, so the human mind contains within itself the principles and reasons (or notions) or seeds of all things.39

This doctrine is normally understood in terms of human nature as a microcosm which mirrors the macrocosm, a philosophy which derives from Plato and reached high expression in the Renaissances of the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. 40 Eriugena, however, intentionally avoids the term "microcosm" at IV.793c, following Gregory of Nyssa (whose De hominis opificio he quotes), since he believes this word expresses human nature in lowly terms, suggesting that man contains all material and lower things. The concept of microcosm yields a horrendous monster, a human who is an unregulated mixture of all things. Furthermore, the term seems to have been understood in a limited way to suggest that man is made out of the four elements which he shares with all other material beings. Eriugena prefers his own formulations; for him, as later for Pico

38 See J. Hopkins, Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance p. 135.

40 The classic study of the concept of microcosm is R. Allers, "Microcosmos from Anaximandros to Paracelsus," Traditio 2 (1944), pp. 319-407. See also G. P. Conger, Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms in the History of Philosophy (New York: Columbia University

Press, 1922).

<sup>36</sup> On Eriugena's rejection of docetism see Homily XI.290a in Jeauneau (ed.), Jean Scot. Homélie sur le Prologue de Jean, SC no. 151 (Paris: CERF, 1969), pp. 256-8, and esp. 258 n.1. Eriugena is following Maximus, who strongly defended this point.

<sup>37</sup> In the Commentary of the Gospel of John (312c) Eriugena talks of a contemplation or theoria which transcends the carnal understanding and grasps the spiritual meaning of Christ; see E. Jeauneau (ed.), Commentaire sur l'Evangile de Jean, SC no. 180 (Paris: CERF, 1972), p. 185. Sec also Periphyseon V.993b: carnem Christi versam iam in spiritum.

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of Eriugena's use of the idea of containment, see J. Gracia, "Ontological Characterisation of the Relation between Man and Created Nature," Journal of the History of Philosphy 16 (1978), pp. 155-66. On the concept of containment in general see S. J. Grabowski, "God Contains the Universe: A Study in Patristic Theology," Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa 26 (1956), pp. 93-113 and 165-87.

della Mirandola, man is medietas, intermediary between heaven and earth (V.893c), and contains all things by transcending them.

I have so far described the attributes of perfect human nature in Eriugena's system, and noted that he speaks of this perfect human nature as a timeless essence, which is best understood as a possible state (and also a future state) of humankind. We shall now turn to the other pole of Eriugena's dialectical analysis of human nature, namely, his decription of human nature in its present corporeal, spatiotemporal state.

#### Fallen human nature

As perfect human nature, human existence is thoroughly spiritual, timeless, and incorporeal. It is a pure mind or spirit. Eriugena variously uses the terms mens, spiritus, animus, and nous (IV.753c) to describe this condition. At the spiritual level humanity is pure mind, pure intellect. This is similar to the Buddhist notion of man's "original nature," a nothingness which is one with the cosmic way, or in the Western tradition to the interpretation of "virgin" given by Eckhart in his sermon, Intravit Jesus in quoddam castellum. Furthermore, perfect human nature is not differentiated by sex; maleness or femaleness is not an essential attribute of human nature, Eriugena says, following Maximus and Gregory (IV.812b-c). In order to link this perfect essence of human nature with its present condition, we need therefore to introduce a new element - the metaphysical act of separation known to Christians as the Fall. The Fall occurs through human free-will which is distracted from spiritual to carnal pleasure (as in Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa), but it is also due to too much self-love (philautia) or self-preoccupation ("pride") and a turning to self instead of to God. 41 As in Augustine, however, the Fall is also in a sense man's self-exteriorisation and self-externalisation. It is a *felix culpa* and can be celebrated as the moment of the birth of reason from intellect and the emergence of temporal, self-conscious awareness, the first step in the history of Spirit (as it is for Hegel). The scriptural account of the Fall is actually a symbolic or allegorical account, which is really pointing out that perfect human nature does not in fact exist in this world. Instead, humans are sexually differentiated, corporeal animals, no longer pure spirit. The Fall is a symbol of the descent of intellect into reason and sense, the descent of the soul into the body, the shift from a timeless world to a world governed by space and time and corporeality.

Although Eriugena speaks of human beings as creating their bodies (II.580a-b), as I shall discuss later, he also speaks of the body being created because God foresaw that man would sin. For this reason the body itself is not evil. The body is the result of sin, but it is not thereby evil (IV.793-99b and IV.846d-847a). Did Adam and Eve exist for a time before they fell? If sexual differentiation is a result of the Fall, it would seem not. Eriugena gets around this problem, however, by denying that humans spent any time in paradise. As soon as he was created, man was already descending from paradise "under the impulse of his irrational will" (IV.811c). We thus encounter humans as always already male and female. It is interesting that Eriugena denies that woman was created after man in time.

Eriugena sees this as a splitting of the original unity of nous and its becoming enveloped in a "female" aesthesis, (IV.813b), which cloaks its original nature. This idea comes from Philo, from Origen (whom he cites at IV.815c), and perhaps ultimately from Aristophanes' speech in Plato's Symposium.

When the human mind in its perfection resided with God, it was a formless non-being. But when it appears in this world, it does so only clothed in the garb of reason and sense. Eriugena interprets the "garments of skin" of Genesis 3.21, put on by humans after the Fall, as the sensible material bodies humans now possess.<sup>42</sup>

In this world there is no instantaneous unity of intellect with the object of thought. Rather, thinking takes place through the medium of reasoning and ratiocinative calculation, which is distended in time.

<sup>41</sup> On the Fall of the soul in Augustine see O'Connell, St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man, pp. 152-83, and W. M. Green, "initium omnis peccati superbia. Augustine on Pride as the First Sin," University of California Publications in Classical Philology 13 (1949), pp. 407-31. Plotinus explains human descent from the one in terms of tolma (τόλμα), "audacity," a semitraditional term of the Pythagoreans' and Gnostics', which Plotinus uses at Ennead V.1.1 and 2.9.11 and which does carry overtones of wilfulness; it is not identical, however, with Augustine's superbia. Plotinus paints a picture of a growing restlessness of the soul and a kind of audacity by which it overreaches itself, but in some of his Enneads he emphasises more the involuntary and necessary nature of this movement (e.g., Ennead IV.3.13).

<sup>42</sup> See Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator, pp. 159ff. This interpretation is also found in Gregory of Nazianzus; see J. S. Plagnieux, S. Grégoire de Nazianze théologien: Etudes de science religieuse, no. 7 (Paris: Etudes Franciscaines, 1952), p. 426.

The unformed and formless perfect mind was "known only to God and ourselves" (I.454b); the mind now knows itself only through the images of sense and memory, which Eriugena calls collectively phantasiae. The mind now has form and is formed by the act of thinking and expressing itself in sound and writing. Eckhart will later speak, in his sermon Ave, Gratia Plena, of the manner in which the mind gives birth to the word and pronounces it while it remains in the mind and the mind "rests on its image." Eriugena speaks of the mind producing reason and sense as "making" or "creating," or as the mind exteriorising itself.

## The mind creates the body

The mind externalised itself and in so doing was clothed in reason and sense. Pure intellect can no longer operate on its own in a timeless way, but must proceed through the distended temporal processes of reason and sensation and also becomes enveloped in irrational passions. Whereas pure intellects possess spiritual bodies, which Eriugena at V.994a calls "true bodies," fallen humanity possesses a body which appears real and corporeal, but which is in fact an illusion created by the fantasies of sense. It is an illusion produced by the mind itself. In this sense, then, Eriugena can speak of the human body as created by the mind. As we have said, it is the "image of an image," as Plotinus also understood.

But Eriugena can also speak of the human mind *creating* its external physical body in the sense that this body is its own self-manifestation, and as we have seen, he defines creation in terms of self-manifestation. The mind expresses itself through the motions of the body, and thus the body is something the mind makes. Eriugena actually talks of the body's being created by the mind:

We do not doubt but that the trinity of our nature, which is not the image of God but is made in the image of God (ad imaginem Dei). . . is not only created out of nothing but also creates (creat) the senses which are subjoined to it, and the instruments of the senses, and the whole of its body – I mean this mortal (body). For (the created trinity) is made from God in the image of God out of nothing, but the body it creates (creat) [itself], though not out of nothing but out of something. For, by the action of the soul . . . it creates for itself a body in which it may openly display its hidden actions

(which) in themselves (are) invisible, and bring (them) forth into sensible knowledge. (II.580a-b)

Eriugena is using the word "create" here to signify a kind of making. Like Augustine, Eriugena uses the terms facere, "make," and creare, "create," interchangeably, a confusion not cleared up until Aquinas (ST 1.45.5). It is not strictly a making from nothing for Eriugena, but it is a self-manifestation and a moving from the incorporeal to the corporeal, and therefore signifies a part of the cosmic process of creation.

Eruigena explains that the soul creates the body by gathering together immaterial qualities and by adhering them to quantity, which acts as a kind of substrate for the qualities (II.580b). This is a remarkable doctrine, developed from the account given by Gregory of Nyssa of the soul's creation of the body and unlike anything found in Latin authors. Eriugena blends Gregory's account with the account of matter he found in Dionysius's Divine Names IV.28 (PG III.729a), as he shows at Periphyseon I.500c-501a, and with an account in Augustine's Confessions XII.VI.6. Eriugena is invoking his theory that the categories - substance, quantity, quality, place, etc. - are in fact incorporeal, and blends this with his view that the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water) are also incorporeal and are really a combination of elemental qualities (hot, cold, dry, moist) which themselves are incorporeal and invisible. Matter for Eriugena, as he says at I.488b, is itself not circumscribed by any place or form and can only be defined by the via negativa:

For I think you are suggesting nothing else than that we should recognise that it is from the concourse (concursus) and commingling (contemperantia) of the four elements of this world that the matter of bodies is made. . . Nor is this strange, for they do not know that the elements of this world are composed of nothing but the concourse of the aforesaid accidents of ovoca. For fire is produced by the conjunction of heat and dryness, air by that of heat and moisture, water by that of moisture and cold, earth by that of cold and dryness. And since these qualities which come together cannot by themselves become manifest, quantity supplies them with a quantum (quantum) in which they can make a sensible appearance. (I.495d–496a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

The human mind therefore produces the impression of corporeal matter by mingling together the incorporeal qualities into which the four elements resolve.

### The return of human nature

Eriugena describes two conditions of humanity - spiritual eternal nature and his temporal material nature. Despite the fact that he keeps these two orders so radically distinct, there is in fact a way of mediating between the two and of returning from the temporal to the eternal. Eriugena is not a dualist, in the later Cartesian sense, and does not see these two conditions as two orders of being, thought of in an absolutist manner. He applies his dialectical method to mediate between these two human states. Thus Eriugena posits not two states but one, seen under two aspects - causaliter and effectualiter. He distinguishes between them adverbially, as it were, rather than giving them the ontological status of substances or nouns. Just as we can say that God is a Being and also that God is not a Being, using affirmative and negative theology, we can also generate a negative dialectic of the human condition so that we are able to say, "Man is a rational animal" and "Man is not a rational animal" (IV.758a-b). This can be extended until we can state that man is and also is not a mortal corporeal body. In fact, Eriugena is concerned to show that these two descriptions do not indicate two permanent types of being, but rather two ways of looking at the one reality. He is at great pains to emphasise the original total unity of humanity, a unity which in fact is never destroyed, even by the Fall. Although the Fall seems to shatter the integrity and unity of human nature, it is more accurate to say that it cloaks and hides our true nature from our own understanding, but in fact does not destroy the ontological work of creation, which is timeless and perfect, and cannot suffer destruction or corruption from any source.

Eriugena is anxious to assert that human nature is a unity and a whole. At IV.754b-c, he says that we are wholly intellect, wholly reason, wholly sense, and so forth:

ALUMNUS: Are we to say, then, that the human soul is a simple nature free from all compound, or must we believe that it is joined by some parts into a unity?

NUTRITOR: I maintain the former alternative very firmly – namely, that it is simple and free from all linking of parts. . . . All of it is everywhere present in it throughout the whole. As a whole it is life, intellect, reason, sense, and memory; as a whole it endows the body with life, nourishes it, holds it together, and causes it to grow; as a whole, with all the senses it perceives the appearances (species) of sensible things; as a whole, beyond

any corporeal sense it treats, discerns, joins, and distinguishes the nature and reason of things; as a whole, outside and above all creation and itself (for it is included in the number of creatures) it revolves around its Creator in an intelligible and eternal motion which is cleansed of all vices and *phantasiae*. (Uhlfelder's translation, p. 222)

Although this passage treats of the unity and simplicity of the soul, a doctrine Christians from Augustine on defended with vigour, Eriugena actually extends this unity to include the body. In the original condition man had a spiritual body which was totally united with his soul, such that the whole person was simple and whole. Even now, the earthly body is not a real body. The animal body man has put on is merely a result of free choice; it is a commingling of fantasies and hence is not truly real. This is argued at some length, especially in the important passage at IV.759a ff.:

God is both above everything and in everything, since He, who alone truly is, is the Essence of everything (essentia omnium); and although He is whole in everything, He does not cease being whole outside (extra) of everything; whole in the world, whole around the world, whole in sensible creation; whole in intelligible creation; whole He makes the universe; whole He is made in the universe, whole in the whole of the universe, whole in its parts, because He Himself is both whole and part, and neither whole nor part. In the same way human nature is whole in itself in its world, in its universe, in its visible and invisible parts, whole in its whole, and whole in its parts; and its parts are whole in themselves, and whole in the whole. (Uhlfelder's translation, p. 228)

This panegyric on the absolutely unified, omnipresent, and transcendent nature of man includes the unity of the body, and of the body with the soul, for the passage concludes:

Even its lowest and meanest part, the body, according to its reasons, is whole in the whole man, since body in so far as it truly is body, subsists in its reasons, which were made at the first creation; and although human nature is such in itself, it exceeds its whole. It could not cling to its Creator without exceeding both everything under it and itself. (IV.759b-c; Uhlfelder's translation, p. 228)

A little later Eriugena hastens to assure his student that he is referring not to the mortal and corruptible body but to the eternal body (Uhlfelder, p. 229). How, then, does he propose to reunite these two aspects – the temporal and the eternal?

Eriugena reunites fallen human nature with its perfect self through his account of the return, which leans heavily on the writings of

Maximus Confessor. Maximus sets out the stages of the return as something which proceeds naturally. It is part of the divine plan, an ontological feature of cosmic existence itself. For every outgoing there is return. (See V.893a-d.) Eriugena uses Epiphanius (V.899c ff.) to provide him with many natural images of return - the sun returns every day; the seasons return; seeds turn into plants which flower and produce seeds and die; the phoenix, after living five hundred years, builds a pyre and consumes itself with fire only to rise again (V. 900b-c). The return is a natural stage of the dialectic. In fact, this return and outgoing are eternal and timeless in God (V.890c-d). Thought of from the side of human nature, however, this return actually takes place through human temporal activity; although what it really involves is a turning around of the human point of view from one of temporality to one of timelessness and eternity. In fact, the return actually is seen from the human side to go farther than the outgoing and through grace (V.98oc-d) is able to transcend itself and enter the Divinity. 43 Eriugena distinguishes between the return which equals the exitus (which he calls restauratio at V.979c and recursio at 979d) and the return which goes beyond it as a distinction between general and special. The general return is the return of all effects to their causes, a return to paradise (V.979a), but the special return (deificatio) is a return through the causes into the Godhead itself (symbolised by eating of the tree of life: "For it is one thing to return to paradise, another to eat of the tree of life"; V.979a).

All of us men, without exception, shall rise again in spiritual bodies and with the wholeness of natural goods, and shall return to the ancient condition in which we were first created; but not all will be transformed into the glory of deification, which surpasses all nature and paradise. Therefore just as general resurrection (generaliter resurgere) is one thing and special transformation (specialiter immutari) another, so return to paradise is one thing and eating of the tree of life is another. (V.979b; Uhlfelder's translation, p. 335)

The return is divided into different stages in different texts. Eriugena is not too worried about the details so long as it is clearly

understood that the general return is a part of nature itself. In fact, he is quite aware of differences in interpretation, as he notes at V.876c. In Maximus there are five stages to the return: the reuniting of body and soul, of male and female, of the earth with paradise (II.553c), of the sensible with the intelligible world (II.535a), and finally of created and uncreated.

According to Eriugena, the resolution of human nature back to God takes place through the following stages: First the body is resolved into the four elements of which it is composed, a stage Eriugena says no authority disputes. Then this body is resurrected with its four elements somehow purified into their eternal ideas (Eriugena's thought is quite unclear on this point); this will involve the transformation of human nature into something completely spiritual, and human nature will become one with God. This point is contested by Latin authorities such as Augustine and Boethius, Eriugena notes at V.877a. He quotes arguments from Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram X.iv.7 and from Boethius's Contra Eutychen et Nestorium IV.74-83 (mistakenly referred to by Eriugena as De Trinitate Book II) that body can never be transmuted into soul and that soul can never be transmuted into God. This is an important objection to Eriugena's idealism, but he glosses over it, saying he welcomes these words but pointing out that many Greeks thought otherwise and indeed also some Latins, specifically Ambrose (V.878a). In order to reinforce his idealist interpretation, Eriugena again points out that the corporeal is in fact a conglomeration in the mind of incorporeal qualities. Human nature will blend totally with its perfect Idea in the mind of God. It will become one with its primary causes and then will transcend itself to become one with God Himself so that God will be all in all and everything will be God, says Eriugena, quoting Scripture (V.876a-b).

In a later passage Eriugena outlines the return as taking place through another series of stages (again found originally in Maximus) which represent the gradual transformation of the material into the psychological and into the mental, for "nothing exists in human nature which is not spiritual and intelligible" (V.878d). These represent an upward movement along the hierarchy of human nature. First, body will be absorbed by the vital motion (vis activa), next the senses (sensus) will absorb the vital motion, and then the external sense will be absorbed by the inner sense (sensus interior); this will

<sup>43</sup> This is similar to Eckhart's notion of the "breakthrough" (Durchbruch); see Schürmann, Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher, pp. 67-9.

in turn be absorbed by reason (ratio), which will be absorbed by the intellect (nous or intellectus or animus). This intellect will then become one with its universal cause and be transformed into wisdom, and wisdom will be transformed into the ineffable Godhead (V.1020c–1021b). There is an absorption of body into soul. At V.987 Eriugena clarifies the meaning of the transition from an earthly to a heavenly body by explaining that this does not mean (as the carnally minded have construed it) that the earthly elements are somehow transmuted into lighter and more ethereal bodies. Rather it means that bodies will become pure spirits (V.987b).

At V.990b Eriugena talks of body and soul together being transformed into nous, and nous into God Himself. All humans will become a single nous (875b) and will be "one soul, one mind, one God" (V.884a), a theory which is to be developed in detail by the Latin Averroists in the thirteenth century and condemned in 1277.

Eriugena sees the human mind as active in the return, not only of itself, but of all things. On his understanding, when human nature returns, it brings with it not merely its own bodies and senses but the entire sensible creation. This doctrine of the universal return of all things (apocatastasis) is common in the Eastern writers from Origen, and Eriugena found it both in Gregory of Nyssa and in Maximus. It is part of Eriugena's idealist assessment of the human mind which transcends and absorbs all nature into itself.<sup>44</sup>

Just as Eriugena had spiritualised the original paradise from which human nature fell as identical with perfect human nature itself, understood as nous and as the perfect imago Dei, so he explains that in the return of all things, both heaven and hell are to be conceived of purely spiritually as being states of mind rather than places. There is not a "new heaven" and a "new earth" in any physical sense, but only a transformation of everything corporeal into spirit (V.989c). This spiritual human nature is of course non-local and also transcends all time.

Moreover, there are as many states of mind as there are human beings. Each person will ascend on clouds of contemplations (in nubibus theoriae, V.876b) and will attain to the level of intellection and

contemplation which befits his moral level (V.988a: "The degree of brightness of each will correspond to the worthiness of his earthly life"). At V.081b Eriugena says that all men will be placed according to their degree in that natural paradise "as though within a temple, but only those who have been sanctified in Christ, shall enter into its inner parts." Thus each will occupy a rung on the endless ladder of intellectual contemplation and will be one with the things they contemplate. Each will have his or her own vision (phantasia), but the visions of the damned will be cruel and terrifying nightmares, a true hell, while the visions of the blessed will be theophaniae or divine revelations, befitting their moral and intellectual development. Thus the glory of the elect will not be in some especially bright body but, rather, in the "purity of the contemplation in which he shall see God face to face" (988b), while the damned do not suffer deformation and ugliness of body but deprivation of the vision of God (989a): "For I hold that the deprivation of Christ and His absence are the sole torment for every rational creature, and that there is no other" (989a). Eriugena says that the damned shall have the fantasies of those things they desire before their eyes; but it shall be useless to them, as these fantasies are empty imaginings and a mere nothing (977a). He goes on to explain that in this world and in the next the fantasies of sensible things are arranged in a "perfect order" (977c) and that the good will experience good fantasies and the bad horrible nightmares of wild beasts, and so forth. The saints, however, do not receive fantasies at all but, rather, divine theophaniae (978a) until they receive deification itself.

Eriugena makes some extraordinary remarks in the final stages of Book V when he is describing the return of all things. As we have seen, he identifies paradise with human nature and the tree of life at the centre of paradise with Christ or perfect human nature (982a). Now he points out that God dwells nowhere else but in the heart of human and angelic being. God is literally nowhere, but human nature is the place of His lighting or His theophania. Human nature, however, is on par with angelic nature in that both are the place of God's appearing. They are the site of being itself understood as unhiddenness and manifestation. But even more important, Eriugena ultimately resolves angelic and human being into one. Although God appears to both angels and humans, Eriugena believes that it was as a human that God chose to appear to both angels and men, thus

<sup>44</sup> See also Eckhart's sermon Nolite timere eos, where he says: "All creatures are brought into my understanding in that they are spiritually within me. I alone bring all creatures back to God" (Fox, Breakthrough, p. 76). German text in J. Quint, Meister Eckhart: Deutsche Predigten und Traktate (Munich: Hanser, 1959, reprinted 1963), no. 26.

giving human nature an ontological privilege. They are not two beings but two different intellectual ways of looking at the divine being:

For God dwells nowhere but in the nature of men and angels, to whom alone it is given to contemplate the Truth. But we should not think of these two natures as two separate houses: they are one and the same house built of two intelligible materials (ex duabus intelligibilibus materiis). It is of this house that the Lord seems to be speaking when He says: "In My Father's House are many mansions." (V.982c; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

### Summary

In this chapter I have given an account of the meaning of human nature for Eriugena and have argued that he is not – as first appears - propounding a dualist theory of human nature but is, in fact, arguing for a duplex theoria, that is, for an idealist understanding of human nature as mind and for an understanding of man as sensible animal. But this mind has an infinite capacity for understanding things in different ways, and this is its real essence. The human mind then is a set of ways of viewing, which proposes objects to itself and generates a world in which it comes to an understanding of its own inner nature as both causa sui and as the perfect paradigm of God's own infinite, anarchic nature. Eriugena's doctrine has relevance for modern philosophical anthropology. Heidegger, for example, states in Being and Time that the being of man as imago Dei has never been given proper ontological analysis in Western philosophy. 45 He ignores Eriugena's complex anthropology, which works out a detailed analysis of the being of human nature to the extent of emphasising its perfect possible nature over and above its actual "everyday" being. Heidegger seeks to express the nature of just such a contemplation of human possibility in his Letter on Humanism, where he speaks of the "quiet power of the possible" and opposes all forms of metaphysical humanism, which have reduced human nature to animality and thought of it in too lowly a fashion.46 Eriugena's evaluation of human nature places it higher than every being, and

equal to God Himself. Given this high estimation of humanity in Eriugena, Heidegger's critique of ontotheology and metaphysics would need to be substantially revised. For this reason Eriugena's anthropology is an important chapter in Western metaphysics. His development of the dialectical relation between man and God also prefigures the later dialectical systems of Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx, all of whom attempt to reinterpret the meaning of the idea that God expresses Himself through man, and man can perfect himself only by becoming God. For Eriugena the very knowledge of the true human essence is itself the secret of human self-transcendence. The meaning of this knowledge is the means of salvation itself. It is part of his meaning of philosophy and of the soul's self-understanding in dialectic, that its knowing is itself productive of its state of being, or state of viewing (theōria). We will examine the consequences of this concept of the self for self-knowledge in the next chapter.

<sup>45</sup> Sec M. Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 74.

<sup>46</sup> M. Heidegger, Letter on Humanism, in D. F. Krell (ed.), Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 196.

# SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-DEFINITION: THE NATURE OF HUMAN KNOWING

Idealist philosophy (e.g., that of Fichte, Schelling, or Hegel) develops from the expansion of the concept of Cartesian self-aware subjectivity into the concept of an infinite and free, self-positing Absolute Subject. Eriugena's relationship to idealism, therefore, must be examined from the point of view of his understanding of the meaning of infinite subjectivity as the essential nature of both God and man. For Eriugena, God's self-knowledge is expressed through human knowledge, and human self-knowledge is possible only because humans can become one with their idea in God's knowledge.

In the preceding chapter we examined human nature from two points of view: under the aspect of its ideal nature and under the aspect of its present dimension in space-time (e.g., IV.776c-d). We saw how the ideal nature can be said to be omniscient, that is, to know all things and to know itself perfectly; while the soul, in its present state in space-time and in the body, has an imperfect knowledge of its surroundings and of itself, that is, of its true nature.

In this chapter we shall examine Eriugena's own complicated discussion of the relation between the knowledge of the self as it now presents itself and the ideal knowledge of the perfect self. In particular, we shall be examining this from the point of view of self-knowledge: That is, what happens when the self's object of knowledge is the human self? We shall examine Eriugena's claims concerning the nature and extent of human self-knowledge and in particular, his startling and seemingly contradictory claim that humans have perfect self-knowledge when they do not know who or what they are (I.487a-b). At the summit of knowing, for Eriugena,

knowledge is indistinguishable from ignorance and both combine into a *negative dialectic*, which is productive of the nature of the intellect itself.

As Hegel notes, when the self becomes an object to itself in the cogito, it is, strictly speaking, no longer an object but turns into a subject.2 It is this process of the unifying of subject and object in the self-identity of subjectivity which Eriugena seeks to express. We must remember that he is operating throughout with inadequate terminology to express the nature of consciousness and its reflexive self-awareness. He has to stretch considerably the terminology available to him from his readings in Greek and Latin philosophy. Thus he talks of the intellect's self-awareness in terms of its ability to understand or know (intelligere, cognoscere, scire) or define (diffinire, definire) itself, although he talks of its unlimited existential awareness or consciousness of itself as a kind of not-knowing (nescire). In the eleventh century, Gaunilo in his reply to Anselm will attempt to distinguish between cogitare and intelligere, but the two terms never received a final technical differentiation. We shall now turn to the sources of Eriugena's concept of knowing.

# Augustine's concept of self-knowing

The importance of Eriugena's discussion of self-knowledge for philosophy is clearly seen when we realise that he is radically modifying the Augustinian doctrine of the cogito, which Eriugena had found in many places in Augustine, for instance, the Confessions XIII.xi.; Soliloquies II.i.1; De libero arbitrio II.iii.7; De civitate Dei XI.26; De vera religione XXXIX, Chapter 73; Contra Academicos III.xi.26; De Trinitate X.10.13–16, XV.12.21; and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> In the cogito,

Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS, 1977), pp. 315-25. McGinn calls attention to the claim of Eriugena that man does not know God, nor does God know God, nor does man know man. However, he neglects the important claim that God does not know man, which Eriugena also makes.

<sup>1</sup> See the excellent study by W. Beierwaltes, "Das Problem des absoluten Selbst-Bewusstseins bei Johannes Scotus Eriugena," in his Platonismus in der Philosophie des Mittelalters (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), pp. 484-516. "Sich-Wissen Gottes also ist Gottes Selbstbewusstsein. Gottes Selbstbewusstsein aber weiss sich im Wissen des Menschen" (p. 508). I shall be developing a slightly different interpretation. See also B. McGinn, "The Negative Element in the Anthropology of John the Scot," in R.

<sup>2</sup> See G. W. F. Hegel, Logic. Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, vol. 1., trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 60-75. Fichte also grappled with the problem of how the ego could posit and know the non-ego as object without thereby limiting its own infinite essence. See J. G. Fichte, Science of Knowledge with the First and Second Introductions, trans. P. Heath and J. Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> See É. Gilson, Etudes sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien (1930; reprinted Paris: Vrin, 1951), pp. 191-201. It was Arnauld who in 1648 drew attention to the similarity between the Cartesian argument and Augustine's De Trinitate X.10.12. Descartes always claimed Augustine put the cogito to a different use. He says it

Augustine had found an argument to overcome scepticism, when he discovered that even when I am doubting, and even doubting that I am doubting, I cannot deny that I am. But the cogito also gave Augustine an insight into the nature of the imago Dei, in that, for him, the mind's powers of being, knowing, and willing or, being, knowing, and loving (II.610b), mirror the nature of the divine Trinity.<sup>4</sup> Augustine explores the inner dynamic of the soul's faculties and their relation to the Trinity:

I should like men to consider three aspects of their own selves. These three are something very different from the Trinity; I only make the suggestion as a mental exercise which will allow people to find out and to feel how far distant they are from it. The three things I mean are existence, knowledge and will. For I am, and I know, and I will. I am a being that knows and wills. I know that I am, and I know that I will. I will to be and I will to know.<sup>5</sup>

The mind's triadic nature is a paradigm of the Trinity for Augustine, as well as for Eriugena. But this triadic nature also reveals an inner dialectical life between the powers and functions of the mind, which Eriugena develops considerably.<sup>6</sup>

Augustine asserts that truth and infallible certitude combine in the

gives him access to the res cogitans, whereas Augustine was interested in the image Dei. See J. Weinberg's chapter, "The Sources and Nature of Descartes' Cogito," in his Ockham, Descartes and Hume (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977). Augustine uses the cogito as a step in the proof of God's existence in De libero arbitrio, but he also uses it to argue for the immateriality of the mind. In Contra Academicos he argues that all conscious experiences are self-validating; e.g., I cannot deny that I taste a sweet taste even if the object eaten is not sweet.

4 Descartes later develops the relationship between the notion of the cogito and the theological concept of man as imago Dei in Meditation III; see E. S. Haldane and G. R. Ross (eds.), The Philosophical Works of Descartes, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 170. Descartes claims he sees the imago "by the same faculty by which I perceive myself." He denies, however, that the cogito means that he is the author of his own being, on the grounds that, if he were, he would no longer have doubts. See Eriugena's remarks on the trinity of the cogito at Periphyseon I.490b: I know that I am (ousia), I can understand that I am (dynamis), and I do understand that I am (energeia). At I.505c-d, Eriugena calls this "the inseparable and incorruptible trinity of our nature" (trinitas inseparabilis incorruptibilisque nostrae naturae). See also II.610b, and IV.776c.

5 See Confessions XIII.11, trans. R. Warner, intro. V. J. Bourke (New York: Mentor 1963), p. 323. Augustine's early philosophy of the Trinity has been intensively analysed by O. Du Roy, L'Intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon Saint Augustin: Genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391 (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1966). See also M. Schmaus, Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des heiligen Augustinus (Münster: Aschendorff, 1967).

6 On Augustine's understanding of the inner life of the mind in relation to Thomas Aquinas's philosophy, see B. Lonergan's Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas, ed., D. B. Burrell (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1968), esp. pp. 183-220.

mind's knowledge of its own existence. In the *De quantitate animae* and the *Confessions*, for example, he also says that the mind's knowledge of itself can be analysed to show that the mind is not a *corporeal* substance like air or light, but is an *incorporeal* substance.

Augustine goes on to define the mind in terms of its dynamic seeking of itself in knowledge. In Question 15 ("On the Intellect") of the *De diversis quaestionibus* (PL XL.15) he says that whatever knows itself comprehends itself, and that whatever comprehends itself in this manner is finite. This argument later surfaces in Aquinas in the *Summa theologica* I.q.14.3 where it is applied to God. Aquinas has to deal with an objection that God is finite because He understands Himself perfectly and thus is limited, the authority for which is this passage in Augustine. Aquinas says that God may be called finite in this narrow sense but in reality is infinite. Eriugena will also make a connection between self-comprehension and finitude, and thus will deny that the mind (of God or man) can comprehend itself, in order to safeguard the infinity of the mind.

Augustine uses the same terms as Eriugena in his De Trinitate IX.12.18, where he says that in knowing, "the mind begets a knowledge of itself, equal to itself." In the De Trinitate Book X.3.5 Augustine argues that the mind seeks itself and seeks knowledge of itself. He explores various models of this self-knowledge. Does the mind seek an image of itself, which it has itself made? Or does it grasp itself through knowing others? Or does it know what a self is in a universal sense, but not know its own particularity? Or is it like the eye which cannot see itself? Augustine answers that in seeking to know, and knowing that it does not know, the mind in fact discovers its own nature: "When the mind seeks to know itself, it is aware of itself as seeking; that is to say, it knows itself, for as long as it recognises this ignorance, it certainly knows itself." The mind knows itself in its act of seeking itself (De Trinitate X.10.13-16), and "when the mind knows itself, it knows its own substance."8

8 See Howie, Augustine on Education, p. 268. Also S. McKenna, Saint Augustine: The Trinity, pp. 307-10. Augustine insists that the mind knows itself as a whole and knows itself as a substance, even when it is not thinking about itself.

<sup>7</sup> De Trinitate X.3.5. See G. Howie (ed.), Augustine on Education (Chicago: Regnery, 1969), p. 263. See also Saint Augustine: The Trinity, trans. by S. McKenna, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 45 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1963), pp. 297–9. The problem first arises in Plotinus, Ennead V.3.1.

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Augustine's discussion raises deep problems which will resurface in the Averroist arguments of the thirteenth century and will underlie the problems of Descartes and the rationalists in formulating an adequate concept of self-knowledge. Despite his idealist tendency, Augustine more usually developed his concept of the nature of the soul and its self-knowledge in terms of substance or being. The soul is an intellectual and rational substance, the inner nature of the human being, which has an existence more or less independent of the body.9

# The Greek concept of negative knowing

Eriugena develops his theory of the soul and its self-knowledge based on Augustine's concepts, but with much more emphasis on the negative nature of the human soul and its powers of knowing. This he took from Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus, especially the idea that the soul cannot and does not know itself as it is; it cannot frame an adequate concept of itself or define its own essence. The soul for Eriugena, following Maximus, does not know what it is; it merely knows that it is. 10 Thus Eriugena modifies the Augustinian triads of being, knowing, and willing, to include a negative component. For example, in the Periphyseon, IV.776c, he writes of the image of the Trinity given by the triad of my being, my knowledge that I am, and my ignorance as to what I am.

For Maximus and Eriugena, ousia in itself is one and infinite. It is, therefore, not circumscribed by anything or any category or limit of any kind whatsoever. Ousia, as infinite, is not like the quiddities (or substances), which are discoverable in the spatiotemporal world of effects and can be delimited and defined by their "circumstances" (circumstantiae). All that can be said of infinite ousia is that it is - it exists. Furthermore, infinite ousia or infinite substance is, at the same

10 Maximus took this idea from Gregory of Nazianzus, and Eriugena found it in Maximus's Ambigua. See J. J. O'Meara and L. Bieler (eds.), The Mind of Eriugena (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973), pp. 42-5.

time, infinite subject (subjectum), and therefore it is both conscious and self-conscious.11 It cannot even delimit its own nature. It cannot form a concept of its nature because it cannot objectify itself, or encompass itself in a proper comprehension. It knows itself in its formless existence, in a knowing which is itself formless. In order to understand this, we must see how Eriugena discusses the problematic of intellectual knowing in terms of the paradigmatic structuring of knowledge provided by the liberal arts.

Self-knowledge and self-definition

# The arts as the structure of knowing

In order to understand self-knowing, we must look at the function of the arts as mediators of the mind's knowledge to itself. Eriugena conceives of knowledge as ordered within the encompassing framework of the liberal arts. 12 As we have seen, he tends to talk about the liberal arts as if they represented faculties of the soul and a categorial description of the knowing function, rather than a purely "external" educational classification system. Thus he is less interested in the traditional question of the ordering of the arts, their pedagogic importance, and their number than in their epistemological and metaphysical status. Eriugena understands the arts as powers or habits of the human mind; indeed, these are the only specific powers of the mind he mentions. They are essential to the mind and form part of the mind's essence, since they both confer eternity on the mind's activities and provide the mind with its skill and discipline. They play an important role in the way in which the mind comes to think about itself. Eriugena, however, never allows a faculty psychology to develop, which would interfere with his strong conviction of the unity and wholeness of the psychic domain.

Let us briefly consider the nature of the liberal arts for Eriugena. For him they are naturally present in every human mind, although

<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the soul has two modes of knowing or viewing. It can look up to higher unchanging things or it can look down to lower sensible things. It has a ratio inferior and a ratio superior. See, for example, Confessions VII.17 and De Trinitate X.7.9. See R. H. Nash, The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge (Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 1969), p. 5. In De quantitate animae XIII.22, Augustine offers a definition of the soul "as a certain substance participating in reason adapted to the ruling of the body." But see De Genesi ad litteram VII.21.

<sup>11</sup> Hegel in his Logic, pp. 274-5, criticises Spinoza for being unable fully to think through this transformation of infinite substance into subject. He says that rather than being a pantheist, Spinoza denied the existence of the world, a position Hegel terms "acosmism." Eriugena speaks of the soul as a kind of subject (subjectum) in relation to its powers of knowing, but is, of course, unable to express the "subjectivity" of the knowing subject in a fully modern sense; all he can say is that, as subject, it knows that it is, but not what

<sup>12</sup> In fact, all knowledge about the world is contained in the book of nature, and this book is read with the aid of the liberal arts. See D. F. Duclow, "Nature as Speech and Book in John Scottus Eriugena," Mediaevalia 3 (1977), pp. 131-40.

only some use and cultivate them, while others ignore them. <sup>13</sup> They are called liberal arts because they play a powerful role in *liberating* the mind from its attachment to its lower functions such as exterior sense and its fantasies and images; instead they lead the mind by steps to contemplate more rational and intellectual domains. The contemplation of the eternal truths contained in the arts contributes to the self-transcendence of the soul and, in Eriugena's view, makes the soul immortal. Already in the *Annotationes in Marcianum*, he had this lofty view of the arts:<sup>14</sup>

The study of philosophy makes the soul immortal, and if anyone should say to this that stupid souls are without experience in the pursuit of wisdom, and are consequently mortal, one must answer that all the arts which the rational soul employs are naturally present in all men whether they make good use of them, whether they badly misuse them, or whether they are completely without the practice of these arts, and for this reason every soul is immortal by the pursuit of wisdom inherent in itself. (My translation)

In this early account Eriugena says that the soul is made immortal by the pursuit of wisdom (i.e., the arts) which is inherent in itself. <sup>15</sup> In the *Periphyseon* he retains the link between the arts and the immortality of the soul, but is no longer sure which causes which. As we shall see, he opts for a relationship between the soul and the arts, which means that they create and receive one another in a dialectical interplay:

For it has been rightly sought out and found by the philosophers that the arts are eternal and are immutably attached to the soul forever, in such a way that they seem to be not some kind of accidents of it, but natural powers (naturales virtutes) (and actions) which do not and could not withdraw from it, and which do not come from anywhere but are innate in it as part of its nature, so that it is doubtful whether it is the arts which confer eternity upon it because they are eternal and eternally associated with it so that it may be eternal, or whether it is by reason of the subject (ratione subjecti), which is the soul, that eternity is supplied to the arts . . . Or

13 Compare Descartes in his Discourse on Method, in Haldane and Ross, Philosophical Works, vol. 1, pp. 81-2, where he says that common sense and reason are naturally equal in all men. It is for this reason, Eriugena says, that the arts are called "natural" (naturales, 1.486b).

14 See W. H. Stahl, R. Johnson, and R. Burge (eds.), Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 88. See also G. Mathon, "Les Formes et la signification de la pédagogie des arts libéraux au milieu du IXe siècle," in Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge (Paris, 1969), pp. 47-70.

15 Wisdom is developed, as Eriugena says, per studium et naturam. The manner in which pursuit of wisdom confers immortality sheds light on Eriugena's claim in the Annotationes that no-one enters heaven except through philosophy, since philosophy is a general name for the pursuit of wisdom.

whether they coinhere in each other, all being eternal, in such a way that they cannot be separated from one another. (I.486c-d; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

We should understand the arts here as signifying the knowledge of all things, and knowledge is to be understood under two aspects: It includes the ideas or forms or reasons of all things, and also the power (dynamis) of knowing. The two aspects are united in the being (or mind) of Christ, since for Him the knowing of things is their being, as Eriugena learned from Dionysius: Cognitio enim, ut ait sanctus Dionysius, eorum quae sunt ea quae sunt est (II.559b).

Thus, in the Expositiones, Eriugena says that the arts all lead back to Christ:

Just as many waters from diverse sources flow together and run down into the bed of the one river, so the natural and the liberal arts are returned into one and the same meaning of interior contemplation, which the highest source of all wisdom, who is Christ, insinuates from all sides through the diverse speculations of theology. (I.550; my translation)<sup>16</sup>

For our present purposes, the arts must be understood as both the system of knowledge organised into a stable, unchanging structure and the mind's power of cognising and knowing. But we have already seen that dialectic is the "mother of the arts" (V.870b) and that the structure of knowledge in the arts is one with the structure of dialectic. Thus the arts encapsulate the movements of the dialectic (and of the mind) in its exitus and reditus, in its positive and negative dialectical movements. Eriugena is in fact using a concept of dialectic which includes a branch dealing specifically with definitions - the branch he terms horistike (οριστική) in the De praedestinatione (368a). As the arts are the knowledge of all things and the knowledge of things is, for Eriugena, given in definitions, the structure of dialectic really organises all things into their definitional classes, which is to say, into their "containing" categories, genera, species, and forms. Dialectic reaches down to the individuals (or atoma, as Eriugena calls them at I.479c). That is to say, the arts contain the definitions of all things ordered in dialectical series. The arts, as it were, "parcel" out reality into the preordained levels produced by

<sup>16 &</sup>quot;Ut enim multe aque ex diversis fontibus in unius fluminis alucum confluunt atque decurrent, ita naturales et liberales discipline in unam eamdemque interne contemplationis significationem adunantur, qua summus fons totius sapientie, qui est Christus, undique per diversas theologic speculationes insinuatur." See J. Barbet (ed.), Expositiones in Ierarchiam Coelestem, CCCM 31 (Turnholti: Brepols, 1975), p. 16.

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the outflowing of dialectic into its genera and species (see II.526ac or IV.748c, for example). Thus after defining dialectic as the "art which studies the common concepts of the mind" (I.475a),17 Eriugena asks:

What hinders us from placing the method of defining among the arts, attaching it to the art of Dialectic, whose property is to divide and combine and distinguish the natures of all things which can be understood, and to allot each to its proper place, and therefore is usually called by the wise the true contemplation of things (vera rerum contemplatio)? (I.486b; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Eriugena will now argue that the concept of place (locus) must be understood to mean the place a thing has in the dialectical scheme of definitions. Things which appear to exist externally in places actually derive their being from the mind's dialectic, which locates and situates them in relation to the highest genus of ousia. All things have their being through being known and defined by the mind. The arts then are the dynamic power of the mind, the mind in movement, as it were, and these arts establish things in their place in the dialectical scheme of nature and provide the definitions of all things. We shall examine this in some detail, in order to be able to understand what happens when the mind sets out to define (i.e., place) itself. If the mind places and defines itself, it must be the cause of itself, because it is the being known of things which causes their being, as we have already seen.

# The arts, definition, and the meaning of place

All things are circumscribed and contained in their definitions, and these definitions are ordered in dialectic. 18 Definition is connected

18 Eriugena's range of terms for "containment" is wide. He uses circumscribere, circumcludere, ambire, circumponere, and terminare - all indicating the same idea of enclosing something within its natural boundaries or limit (peras).

with place. In Book I the arts are introduced into a discussion of the nature of place (locus), and the main aim of the argument is to show that all the arts involve definitions and that these definitions can be thought of as the places of the things defined. 19 Eriugena defines place several times. At I.474b he says that "place is nothing else but the boundary (ambitus) by which each (thing) is enclosed within fixed terms (certis terminis)," and a little later on (at I.478b) he essentially repeats this definition. 20 A similar definition of place which links it to incorporeality is found in the Munich Passages, where place is described as an incorporea capacitas qua extremitates corporum ambiantur et qua corpus a corpore seiungitur; it is an incorporeal capacity by which the extremities of bodies are enclosed and by which one body is separated from another. It is still uncertain whether this definition may have been influenced by Eriugena.

Self-knowledge and self-definition

Eriugena views definition as an immaterial and intellectual notion which expresses the ousia of every thing; he therefore concludes that place is itself something immaterial and intellectual:

For who among the truly wise would put place, or limit, or definition, or any kind of circumscription within which each substance is confined, among the things which are accessible to the bodily senses, when he sees that the limits of the line or triangle or any plane or solid figure are incorporeal? . And similarly in the case of natural bodies; whether they are sensible by the proper mixing of the elements of which they consist or elude mortal powers of perception by their fineness, the limits of their nature are perceived by the intellect alone. (I.484b-c; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Even the universe as a whole has for a place only its boundaries: "The place of the universe then is its outer limit" (I.481d); and Eriugena will go on to develop the idea that there is, strictly speaking,

20 This definition sounds very Aristotelian. Compare Aristotle, Physics IV.4.212a, and see E. Grant, Much Ado about Nothing: Theories of Space and Vacuum from the Middle Ages to the Scientific Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 5. See also O'Meara and Bicler, The Mind of Eriugena, p. 48, where Eriugena's discussion of time

understood as motion (V.1001a ff.) is said to have Aristotelian echoes.

<sup>17</sup> Eriugena refers to common concepts of the mind (conceptio mentis) also at I.491c. See also Annotationes in Marcianum, ed. C. Lutz (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1939), p. 103 [203, 9]; De praed. 391b, 415c. He defines enthymemes as common concepts. This definition is also found in Boethius and Cassiodorus; see G. Théry, "Scot Erigène: traducteur de Denys," Archivium Latinitatis Medii Aevi, Bulletin du Cange 6 (1931), pp. 215-6. Eriugena confuses what are essentially two different notions. Aristotle discusses enthymemes (animated moves from premisses to conclusion) in Rhetoric 1.2.1356b and 2.22.1395b. He treats of common concepts in the Topics. Eriugena calls the syllogism a "common concept" and understood that the enthymeme is a form of syllogistic reasoning. What is important here is that Eriugena thought of the art of dealing with syllogisms and enthymemes as part of the topic of dialectic, as Aristotle also did in the

<sup>19</sup> Compare Cusanus's discussion of definition in his De li non aliud, translated by J. Hopkins, in Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-Other (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), pp. 30-1, where he follows Eriugena in seeing definition as involving essential definition in its truest form. Furthermore, definition defines (i.e., circumscribes within the natural limits of the thing). Nicholas goes on to state that every definition defines itself and therefore that "the definition which defines everything is not other than what is defined." This goes in a somewhat different direction from Eriugena, who wants to argue that the highest beings escape being defined. For Nicholas, not other is a definition which defines itself and everything. Eriugena, on the other hand, would not allow the highest concept to be defined. See also ibid., pp. 164-67.

no up or down and no direction in the universe as a whole. The world, he says, is not a place (I.478c).<sup>21</sup> Commenting on the terms "higher," "lower," and "intermediate" as applied to the world, Eriugena says, in an addition to the text of the Rheims manuscript:

For these names do not proceed out of the nature of things but from the point of view of one who observes them part by part. For there is no up and down in the universe, and therefore in the universe, there is nothing either higher or lower or intermediate. The (notions) are rejected by a consideration of the whole (universitatis consideratio). (I.467a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

He goes on to argue that place cannot be thought of separately from time and hence all things are contained within space and time. But both of these are in turn contained by the mind through the definitions which exist only in the mind.<sup>22</sup> He is here viewing the arts as a kind of encyclopaedia of the definitions of all things, and using "place" as the position of these definitions in an argument – in the same sense as Aristotle's concept of place (topos) in the Topics.<sup>23</sup> All

21 Compare Nicholas's remarks on the dimensions of the universe in his De docta ignorantia II.xi.x56-61, where he says the earth is neither at the centre nor at the circumference of the world and that this world is neither finite nor infinite. Nicholas is credited with having applied the concept on infinity and boundlessness to the universe, but in fact Eriugena and his Greek mentors had already adopted this position. See K. Harries, "The Infinite Sphere: Comments on the History of a Metaphor," Journal of the History of Philosophy 13 (1975), pp. 5-15. See also A. Koyré, From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957), and P. Duhem, Système du monde: Histoire des doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic (1915; reprint, Paris: Hermann, 1958). Anselm in his Proslogion Chapter XIII distinguishes three kinds of beings: those which are totally limited (omnino circumscriptus), those which are totally unlimited (i.e., God), and those which are both limited and unlimited at the same time (circumscriptus autem simul et incircumscriptus), for which he gives the example of souls, which are whole in the whole body, and yet also are in bodies. Eriugena would probably accept this classification.

22 Eriugena, following the Grecks as he says, sees place and time as always essentially linked and inseparable at 1.481c and V.1000d-1001a. Space and time "contain" or "circumscribe" all things, and indeed things can only be known through their spatial and temporal "circumstances" (I.487a-b). As with Proclus, space and time form a kind of intermediary between the eternal causes and the effects. In the order of being, then, time and place are higher than what they contain and precede beings under space and time - Eriugena evokes the authority of Augustine De musica VI for this idea (I.482b). To this extent he sees time and space as a priori, and his views bear resemblance to those of Kant. Eriugena also speaks, however, of space and time as having their own rationes or reasons, which are contained in the causes. As in later Platonism, there are forms or ideas of space and time. Either way, the mind itself is beyond both space and time in its essence or ousia. On the atemporal form of time, see also Nicholas of Cusa, De li non aliud, Chapter XVI.76, in Hopkins, Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-Other, p. 103.

23 See Aristotle, Topics, trans. W. A. Pickard-Cambridge, in The Works of Aristotle Translated into English, ed. W. D. Ross, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928). Topoi were commonplaces of argument or the "seat" of the argument. They had a well-established place

things are located in their definitions in the mind and derive their being from the mind's knowing them.

Eriugena now examines the dialectical meaning of definition itself. He makes a distinction between genuine definitions, which truly "contain" the quiddity of what is defined, and other types of more "nominal" or ostensive definition:

Among the liberal arts also very many definitions are found: for there is no art without its definitions, as there are the dialectical definitions from genus, from species, from name, a priori, a posteriori, from contraries, and other definitions of this kind, which there is no time to discuss now. For the dialectical definitions extend over so wide a field that from wherever in the nature of things the dialectical mind (dialecticus animus) finds an argument which establishes a doubtful matter it describes the esse of the argument [or the seat of the argument] as a place. (I.474c-d; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Eriugena has strict rules on the kinds of definition and their strength. Following Augustine, he says the only real definition is essential definition, which defines neither too much nor too little, but tells what a thing is and distinguishes it from all other things:<sup>24</sup>

And although some think there are many kinds of definition, that alone and truly is to be named definition which is usually called by the Greeks ousiodes but by our writers essentialis for others are either enumerations of the [intelligible] parts of the ousia, or corollaries drawn from outside by means of its accidents, or any kind of opinion about it whatsoever. But only the ousiodes admits for purposes of definition that alone which fully completes the perfection of the nature it defines. For a definition, as Augustine says, admits nothing more and nothing less than that which it has undertaken to define. (I.483d-484a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Eriugena alters the concept of essential definition, as he inherited it from Latin dialectical tradition, and modifies it in line with his understanding of his negative theology, which, as we have seen, holds that an infinite essence cannot be circumscribed or defined and,

in dialectic. See D. Ross, Aristotle (London: Methuen, 1964), pp. 56–8, and the excellent study of J. D. G. Evans, Aristotle on Dialectic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). I am grateful to Prof. David Evans for his information on dialectic in Aristotle and his successors.

<sup>24</sup> Eriugena found a long discussion of the manner in which definitions apply to the definiendum in Martianus Capella's Marriage of Philology and Mercury Book IV, where various examples of both broad and narrow definitions are given by Lady Dialectic. See Stahl et al., Martianus Capella, vol. 2, p. 114, where definition is discussed as one of the five predicables.

therefore, can only be indicated. Here Eriugena is interested in definitions in so far as they locate or place the thing defined. In fact, he operates normally with three different kinds of definition: (1) definition per species et differentiam, which he calls substantial definition (this is definition arrived at by proceeding through the genera and species as they are given by "Porphyry's Tree"; for example, man is a rational animal); (2) definition which locates the thing by enumerating the circumstances which surround it (IV.772b), which is the way all beings in space-time are defined (see I.468c, where space and time are said to be that without which nothing in this universe can exist); and (3) the negative definition, which says that something is, but not what it is.25 Eriugena does not clearly indicate which form of definition he is using at different times, and this allows him to say that man can both be defined (as a rational animal) and also escapes all definition, because of his infinite and essentially negative nature. We shall examine this shortly.

By means of this argument concerning the nature of the arts Eriugena is able to argue the *idealist* position that *place* is in the mind (animus):

ALUMNUS: By these arguments I am forced to confess that place exists in the mind (animus) alone. For if every definition is in art and every art is in mind, every place, since place is definition, will necessarily be nowhere else but in the mind. (I.475b; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

It is clear from the discussion in Book I that Eriugena is interpreting the arts in an idealist and intellectualist manner. He is interested in them as a purely mental region, a region of ideal propositional meanings, whose truth-values are fixed and unchanging. The arts are a series of intellectual and eternal truths. They are intelligible entities, which have their being only in the mind. Moreover, the universe as such, whose place is defined as its outer circumference or limit (I.481d), is said to be contained in its natural definition, as all other things are (see I.480a: "All things are contained within their natural definitions") and therefore is in fact in the divine mind (for "the definitions of all things subsist in Him as places," I.468c). This

is an extraordinary theory, reminiscent of Berkeley's immaterialism.<sup>26</sup> Yet Eriugena will go further and, by applying his teaching of the identity of image and archetype, will argue that the definitions of all things are also contained in the human mind and that therefore the human mind is actually the *place* of the universe itself.

Eriugena speaks of the mind as giving birth to the arts – like a birth in the soul – yet at the same time the intellect is only the discoverer of the arts, not their creator (III.658b). At I.521b, he speaks of the arts as eternal, unchanging, and complete. They can be thought, in an Augustinian manner, to be above the mind in that they are unchanging realities which the mind can contemplate. Like the concept of number in Augustine's De libero arbitrio, these arts would be on a par with the Platonic ideas and identical with the ideas in the divine mind. In fact, Eriugena generally thinks of the arts as contained in the mind of God. They are God's ideas or His willings. Eriugena refers to them as rationes or notiones or ideae. Initially he distinguishes ideas of this kind from the notitiae of the human mind.<sup>27</sup>

# The arts and self-knowledge

What then is the place of the arts themselves in the hierarchy of things? Since the arts place all other things, do they also place themselves? Is the mind below the arts, or does it transcend the arts, since it knows them? Since the arts contain the ideas, are they really in the divine mind? In the human mind? Or in an in-between realm of intelligibles, as some of the Platonists have held? Is the mind the cause of the arts and their knowledge, or do the arts produce the knowledge which is in the mind? Eriugena sees the arts as intermediaries: They contain the ideas of all things and can be said to organise them and "understand" them, in Eriugena's peculiar parlance. Thus they can be said to both understand and also be understood. Eriugena comes to speak of them as if they had a mind and

<sup>25</sup> Eriugena refers to negative definition at I.488b, where matter is negatively defined as not being any of the things that are. All his definitions must be subject to negative dialectic. Thus positive definitions, like "Man is a rational animal," or "Man is an idea in the mind of God," in fact turn out to be negative or at best relatively true. See Chapter 11, where these definitions are subjected to the dialectic of being and non-being.

<sup>26</sup> See Berkeley's Principles of Human Knowledge (Dublin, 1710). Berkeley was a Greek scholar and his notebooks make reference to Maximus Confessor, so it is quite possible that his immaterialism was influenced by late Greek philosophy. It is not known whether he was aware of Eriugena, but he could have read about him in Bishop Ussher's works.

<sup>27</sup> Eriugena sometimes uses notio for the divine ideas and notitia for human ideas. His terminology is inconsistent, however. Thus at IV.779a he uses notitia to refer to the divine ideas and cognitio to refer to human knowledge. Christ's knowledge is also normally called a cognitio. Due to this terminological flexibility Eriugena is able to assimilate human knowing to divine wisdom.

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consciousness of their own – which indeed they do, if they are thought of as inseparable from the divine *Logos* which contains them.

Are the arts, then, above the mind or contained by the mind? In Book I, Eriugena gives one answer: "The liberal arts which are constituted in the soul are different from the soul itself, which is a kind of subject (subiectum) of the arts, while the arts seem to be a kind of accidents which are inseparable from, and natural to, the soul" (I.486b; Sheldon-Williams's translation). This account would make the arts into accidents of a substance (the mind or soul). Later in Book I Eriugena connects the arts with the triad of essence, power, and operation (ousia, dynamis, and energeia). The arts are either powers or operations of the soul; they belong to either dynamis or energeia. In this book, Eriugena does not attempt to explain further the relation of the arts to the mind or to their position in the hierarchy of being and knowing.

In Book IV Eriugena faces squarely the problem of the relation of the arts to the soul. The whole discussion is crucial to his theory of knowledge and his understanding of human self-knowledge. We must therefore examine it in some detail.28 In Book IV Eriugena has been discussing the general problem of how man can both be made in the image of God and be a mortal animal (since both are in effect definitions of man), and it has been argued that the mortal, corruptible nature of man is a result of the Fall and of sin (IV.761b ff.), as we discussed in Chapter 9. In order to clarify the question, Eriugena decides to contrast the human and the angelic mode of knowing, since it is clear that man would have been an angel had he not fallen into his present mortal state. The meaning of man as officina omnium is discussed in the context of this comparison. Alumnus asks how all things are contained in man. Nutritor answers by arguing that all things are contained in nous. Nous contains all the other epistemological and ontological levels in itself, as well as the knowledge and definitions of all things. Commenting on this concept of the mind's knowledge, Alumnus says he is aware of the process by which knowledge and inner concepts are built up in his

mind and how in fact they form a kind of unity in the mind. Some of these come from external fantasies, but some – the liberal arts, for example – seem to be innate in the mind itself. Alumnus admits, however, that he does not understand the relations between these intellectual concepts in his mind (the arts) and the things themselves. In other words, human beings do have the power of intellectual contemplation, and knowledge through the arts is a good example of this intellectual knowing. Through the arts man knows not only sensible things but also intellectual things. He is indeed a true officina omnium. But does the mind contain the things themselves or only their concepts and definitions?

Nutritor asks a question which is of crucial importance for our interpretation of Eriugena's philosophy. Are the concepts (notitiae) of things contained in the mind of the same nature as those things (res) of which they are the concepts (IV.765d)?<sup>29</sup> Alumnus says that the concepts and the things are different, asking indeed how a particular tree or plant could be of the same nature as the knowledge of it produced in an incorporeal nature! Alumnus, as usual, is a spokesperson for Latin realism and Augustinian metaphysics.

For the moment, Nutritor accepts this line of argument but asks, If the concept of the thing is different from the thing, which of these two is of a higher nature (IV.766a)? Alumnus begins by admitting that he would have adopted a realist position, that the things are "of a better nature" (melior, excelsior, superior, IV.766b) than the concepts, were it not for a statement in Augustine's De Trinitate at IX.11-16 to the effect that even the internal phantasia of a body in the mind is better than the body of which it is a phantasia. Moreover, since the knowledge of all things exists in God's mind, it follows that the knowledge itself must be greater than the things which

<sup>28</sup> This section (Book IV, Chapters 7-9) has been discussed in detail by J. Gracia, in his "Ontological Characterisation of the Relation between Man and Created Nature in Eriugena," Journal of the History of Philosophy 16 (1978), pp. 155-166. I follow much of what Gracia says, but disagree with his overall conclusion. I believe there is a need to introduce the concept of negative dialectic to explain the relationship of the two definitions of man to each other.

<sup>29</sup> Eriugena operates with a similar theory of the relationship between words of things as is given by Anselm in his *Proslogion*, Chapter IV. See M. J. Charlesworth (ed.), St. Anselm's Proslogion (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), p. 121. The relationship between Anselm and Eriugena has yet to be definitively examined.

<sup>30</sup> Eriugena gives Augustine's passage as follows: "melior est tamen imaginatio corporis in animo, quam illa species corporis, in quantum haec in meliore natura est, id est in substantia vitali, sicuti est animus" (IV.766a). This is a very good example of Eriugena's isolation of intellectualist passages in Augustine. Augustine is here applying a typical Neoplatonic hierarchical metaphysics. Other passages in Augustine are more realist. See De libero arbitrio III.5, however, where Augustine maintains that any soul is better than any body; thus, in terms of the relative dignity of their natures, a drunkard is better than wine. See also De immortalitate animae VIII.13; XIII.20.

merely have real external existence.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, Alumnus argues, the concepts of things are greater than the things themselves, as "reason teaches us that what understands is better than what is understood."32 Nutritor now begins to show the problems in Alumnus's reply. Alumnus's argument might be valid, Nutritor replies, if "what is formed is greater than what forms." For the knowledge (notitiae) of things seems to be formed in the mind by the arts themselves. Alumnus would need to show that the arts are in fact formed by the notitiae rather than the other way round (766c).

Alumnus sees the dilemma he is in. For both agree that what understands is greater than what is understood (quod intelligit melius esse quam quod intelligitur, IV.766b), that the intellectual agent or mind is of a higher order than the intelligible object. 33 Eriugena knew of this distinction between what intelligises and what is intelligised from Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram, and this principle is also debated in Augustine's De libero arbitrio Book II. Boethius also distinguishes between intelligibilia and intellectibilia; the intelligibles are created spirits like human souls, whereas the intellectibles are the pure forms outside matter. The problem of the relation of intellectibles (or intellectuals) and intelligibles goes back to the Platonic problem of the relation of the soul to the Forms. Augustine usually uses the qualification intellectualis to refer to the mind which knows, translating the Greek νοερός (noeros); whereas the word intelligibilis refers to the object known, and translates the Greek νοητός (noētos). (See, for example, Augustine, Contra Academicos III.xvii.37.) The distinction

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was not always maintained, however. Augustine believes that all intellectuals are intelligible, but he is not sure if the inverse is true. In his translation of Dionysius, Hilduin translates νοερός as intelligibilis, which he also uses for νοητός. Eriugena corrected this translation and opted for intellectualis for voepos and intelligibilis for vontos. This distinction was later retained by John Saracenus in his translation of Dionysius. Eriugena considers the question only in one place in the Periphyseon, which we shall examine shortly.

Self-knowledge and self-definition

To return to the discussion, Alumnus has argued that what knows is greater than what is known. He now continues: What defines is greater than what is defined (I.485b). But the mind forms and the object is formed; therefore, what forms must be greater than what is formed. In fact, Eriugena, as we shall see, will go on to argue that the arts and the mind form each other. In Book I, he classifies "invisible" or intellectual natures into three kinds, and this classification (which in general has been ignored by commentators) is crucial for his idealism. At Periphyseon I.484d, he says that the "genus of invisibles" (genus invisibilium) (by which he means intellects and their objects) can be divided as follows:

Those things which are understood and understand (quae intelliguntur et intelligunt)

Those things which are understood and do not understand (quae intelliguntur et non intelligunt)

Those things which are neither understood nor understand (quaedam neque intelliguntur neque intelligunt)

No mention is made here of the missing fourth category – those things which understand and are not understood (quae intelligunt et non intelliguntur). Eriugena has not completely thought through his map of the realm of intelligibles and intellectuals. But his account does echo several Neoplatonic sources. His theory of intellectuals and intelligibles comes ultimately from a fairly idealist passage in Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram. 34 Eriugena, as we have seen, ac-

<sup>31</sup> Eriugena quotes Augustine as saying that, while he thinks the ideal form or phantasm of the body in the mind is greater than that form as present in matter, he does not "dare" to judge whether the idea or form of the thing in the mind is greater than intelligible things in themselves (Uhlfelder's translation, p. 236). Here it is obvious that Augustine thinks of intelligible things as having a real existence external to the mind which thinks or intelligises them. As Augustine normally opposes the transformation of matter into spirit, his views are somewhat confused.

<sup>32</sup> Ühlfelder's translation, p. 236.

<sup>33</sup> The distinction between intelligibles and intellectuals is found in Porphyry and Victorinus. On the nature of the soul (psyche) as intellectual (noeros) since it comes from intellect (nous), see Plotinus, Ennead V.1.3, in M. Atkinson, Plotinus. Ennead V.1: On the Three Principal Hypostases (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. xxxvi. Eriugena would have known it from Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram XII.x.21; see P. Agaësse and A. Solignac (eds.), La Genèse au sens littéral en douze livres (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1972), p. 360. Augustine is discussing the nature of intellectual vision. For him intelligibles are things (res) grasped by the mind. Intellectuals are themselves minds (mentes). Augustine wonders whether there exist intelligibles which are not at the same time intellectuals. He is following Plotinus in absorbing the intellectual objects into the intellect itself. Eriugena's approach is slightly different, though the conclusion is roughly the same.

<sup>34</sup> See the study of J. Pépin, "Eléments pour une histoire de la relation entre l'intelligence et l'intelligible chez Platon et dans le néoplatonisme," Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger 81 (1956), pp. 55-60, and "Une Curieuse Déclaration idéaliste du De Genesi ad litteram (XII.x.21) et ses origines Plotiniennes (Enn 5.3.1-9 et Enn 5.5.1-2)," in Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses 34 (1954), pp. 373-400. See also notes to Agaësse and Solignac, La Genèse, pp. 566-8. Plotinus is dealing with the question of whether intellect (nous) can know itself in the same way as it knows its contents, the intelligibles. The intellect is a one-many (hen polla), and its objects are both distinct and identical (V.3.10); it therefore knows itself both as self-identity and as object.

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cepts the unity of knower and known. Every intelligible thing is one with the intelligence (or intellectual being) which grasps it. Furthermore, for Eriugena, every intelligible or knowable thing is ultimately a thing which intelligises or knows. There should be, therefore, no known things which are not also knowers. Thus the arts should actually have the power of knowing and be really mind. In fact, everything is mind. In this classification in Book I, however, Eriugena does allow for things which "are understood but do not understand" – in other words, intelligibles which are not also intellectual beings, which seems to answer Augustine's query in the De Genesi.

We can understand the intelligibles which are not intellectuals as specifically human concepts (notitiae) of things, which do not themselves "understand" or contain anything else. They are pure mental objects and are the elements of knowledge as they are contained in the definitions of the arts. Understood in this way, these intelligibles are in fact the created things themselves. Are there also beings which understand but are not understood (the missing fourth category)? These would be minds which are themselves unintelligible. Eriugena does not mention whether such beings exist, but he does assert that no being which does not know that it itself exists can define either itself or another, so it is to be assumed that he does not allow for the possibility of an unintelligible intellectual. Intellectuals, however, do not know themselves in the same way as they know other things. They cannot intelligise themselves completely; rather intellectuals know intellectuals by a kind of not-knowing. Augustine would have been in agreement here. For him, minds can only be known by other minds. Eriugena will only be able to resolve this complexity by applying his method of negative dialectic, as we shall see.

To return to the main argument, Alumnus wants to hold that concepts are greater than the things of which they are the concepts, and he also wants to hold with the general Neoplatonic principle that the cause is greater than the effect and contains it. What then is the relation of the intellect to the arts which contain the intellectual concepts of things? Alumnus decides to become more precise about the relation of the liberal arts to the mind. He introduced the idea of a triad of mind-skill-discipline (mens, peritia, disciplina, IV.766c). The distinction between ars and disciplina echoes the Greek distinc-

tion between technē and epistēmē. Cassiodorus had already discussed the distinction in his Institutiones II.3.20, and it is also to be found in Isidore's Etymologiae I.i.1–3. Eriugena had already made the distinction in the Annotationes (Lutz, p. 65 [60.3]), where he said that the term ars, "art," derives from Greek work aretē, meaning virtue. The arts then are virtues (virtus) or powers of the mind. Alumnus asks, Is the art contained in the skill or the discipline of the human mind a potency or faculty of the mind, or is it an activity of the mind?

Although the mind is essentially simple, it does naturally contain a skill and a discipline which are one with it. These are not like accidents in a substance, but are more like a trinity – three substances in one essence. Even though Alumnus says that a soul can at one time be skilled and another time be unskilled, he finally admits that skill and discipline are innate in the mind, and it is through skill and discipline that the mind is reformed (reformata) and brought back to unity with God:

For although the mind seems to be born unskilled and unwise, an accidental state resulting from transgression against the divine command by forgetting itself and its Creator, yet by the rules of learning it is formed again (reformata) and can find (potest reperire) in itself its God, itself, its skill and discipline, and everything which naturally subsists in it, for it is enlightened (illuminata) by the grace of its Redeemer. (IV.767c; Uhlfelder's translation, pp. 238–9)

Thus, instead of being like accidents related to a substance, as the arts had earlier been understood in Book I, they are now thought of as substances (*hypostases*) in one essence (*ousia*), and as all standing on the same epistemological and ontological levels.

The related problems of (1) whether the mind understands the arts or is understood by them and (2) which is higher, the mind, its faculties, or its objects are resolved along trinitarian lines (IV.767c-d). The mind, skill, and the arts form a trinity in which each aspect is co-natural and co-eternal with the others. They are three hypostases in one essence. Therefore, although Eriugena normally talks of the functions of the mind in terms of a descending hierarchy, he now recognises that the mind should more correctly be viewed as having a horizontal expansion through its skill and discipline and that all three express the intellect in its highest form. Furthermore,

the mind, skill, and discipline know that they are but not what they are; otherwise they would contain or circumscribe each other.

Do the arts then form the mind or are they formed by the mind? Eriugena - in the personage of Alumnus - would originally have said that the arts (since they are known by the mind but are not, he assumes, in themselves intelligences) are below the mind. Augustine, however, had placed the arts higher than the mind. Now Eriugena argues that they are one with the mind and co-natural with it, neither above nor below. Furthermore, the arts themselves are made into intellectual agents, not just passive intelligible objects. This is an extraordinary concept, based on Eriugena's idea of the meaning of comprehension or containment. Since the arts contain the knowledge of all things, they can be said to comprehend that knowledge. The arts are like minds in that they are able to comprehend and organise knowledge. Now Eriugena makes these arts co-natural with the mind itself, and argues that just as the human mind understands the arts so also the arts understand the mind! (Though he is careful here to take the word "understand" in a less circumscriptive manner.) "Then mind intellectually comprehends (intelligit) both its skill and the arts, and is intellectually comprehended (intelligitur) both by the one and by the other, though not as to what it is, but as to the fact that it is (non quid, sed quia est). For otherwise the Trinity would not be co-essential and co-equal" (IV.767d; Sheldon-Williams's translation; see also Uhlfelder, p. 239). Eriugena goes on to ask whether this trinity of mind, skill, and arts forms itself or is itself formed by another higher being. The answer is important:

If the Catholic faith did not persuade me that there is a Higher Nature by which this trinity is established, formed (formatur), and understood, and if truth did not confirm the teaching, perhaps I would not be rash in answering that it is formed by itself (a seipsa formari) or surely that it is an archetypal form (forma principalis). But now since there is a Higher Nature from which all things are formed and begin to be formed (ex qua omnia formantur, incipiunt formari), and turning to which all things that are or can be turned toward it are formed, I do not doubt that the trinity of mind is formed by that same Nature. (IV.768a; Uhlfelder's translation, p. 239; my emphasis)

Eriugena always maintains that only the divine mind has true knowledge of the human mind. In fact, as we shall see, he later modifies even this to say that God knows human minds in the same way as God knows Himself, or as human minds know each other, namely, as existences only, knowing that they are, not what they are. But Eriugena is saying here that he would accept that the human mind forms itself – if we take no account of the reference to God – that is, that the human mind by coming to know itself, creates itself. Intellect for Eriugena always precedes being; self-knowing is always higher than knowing simpliciter.

The arts are conceived of by Eriugena as ultimately identical with the unchanging ideas in the divine mind, but they are also habits, faculties, or powers of the human mind, so they provide a kind of intermediary between the human mind and God, and also between the mind and its own self-knowledge. The mind, when it knows the arts, knows itself in the kind of intellectual recognition by which minds know each other.35 In knowing the arts, the human mind is able to have access to the divine ideas and through them comes to know its own true (i.e., ideal) nature. As this process continues, the human mind is able to grasp itself as an idea in God's mind just like the other ideas. In fact, it can see itself in any or all of the divine ideas. For it itself is both an idea in the divine mind and one with all the ideas of all things, since man is the officina omnium, and, what amounts to the same thing, perfect man is Christ, who is the idea of all things. Eriugena then abandons the idea that man's ideas, in the human, limited sense (notitiae), are in any way different from the eternal ideas (notiones) of the arts. Furthermore, things themselves are not different from their being known, so ultimately there is no difference among, for example, the real individual man, that man's idea of himself, and God's idea of that man.

Eriugena has now clarified the meaning of man's self-knowledge. His concept of self-knowledge is closer to Hegel's than to that of Descartes. It involves not just immediate self-certainty of its own existence but also mediated *intersubjective* self-definition, whereby

<sup>35</sup> Like Hegel's "reciprocal recognition" which emerges from the master-slave relation; see the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 112: "Each is for the other the middle term, through which each mediates itself with itself and unites with itself, and each is for itself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They recognise themselves as mutually recognising one another (sie anerkennen sich als gegenseitig sich anerkennend)." See also G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975), p. 147.

the mind grasps its essential relation with the Trinity, and also its own infinite nature in a knowing which is essentially negative in kind. The strict separation between human and divine mind which appears in Augustine and Aquinas has been overcome. What matters for Eriugena is the infinite dimension of what is intelligible and the fact that this intelligibility is not other than the intellectual motion itself.

To have knowledge of anything is to be able to circumscribe it or contain it, and this is done through knowing the definition or boundaries of the thing. Man can define all things and as a result he must be able to define himself. Since he contains all things and himself, however, he is infinite and unlimited and, strictly speaking, has no boundaries. Therefore, man is uncircumscribed, and it must also be true that he therefore cannot be defined. This opens up Eriugena's negative dialectic. Man can be said to both know himself and not know himself. By knowing himself, he produces or creates the idea of himself, but higher than that is the not-knowing by which he remains in an undisturbed infinity above the mind and its manifestations.

The mind can see itself as perfect, although it sees itself not in itself but in another (God). By seeing itself in the Other, it is also able to grasp the other of itself, as well as the otherness of its own self. This is the complicated dialectical message of self-knowledge and ignorance which Eriugena is trying to portray in the limited language of the liberal arts tradition. If the mind produced the arts, then the mind would be productive of its own idea of itself and thus would be causa sui. This would also mean, however, that the truth of the mind was immanent in itself, and this in turn would immanentise the human mind. But the human mind is self-transcendent. Man must be able then to say that his idea is really above himself in the mind of God. Eriugena cannot satisfactorily resolve this problematic play of immanence and transcendence without importing the tradition of negative theology.

#### The definition of human being

On the basis of the understanding of the arts and the manner in which they are enfolded in dialectic, Eriugena is able to say that dialectic contains the knowledge of all things and especially their definitions. As we have seen, dialectic is, after all, the science which collects and arranges definitions according to a definite order. It therefore must contain the definition of human nature, which is one of the entities in creation. At this point in Book IV (768b), Eriugena offers the definition that human nature is an idea, eternally made, in the mind of God:

NUTRITOR: Do you think that the human mind is one thing and that the idea of it in the mind of the One who forms and knows it is something else?

ALUMNUS: Far from it. I rather understand that the substance of man as a whole is simply the idea of him in the mind of the Artificer who knew all things in Himself before they were made. The knowledge itself is the true and only substance of things known, since in it they subsist perfectly made, eternally and changelessly.

NUTRITOR: We can therefore define man as follows: Man is a certain intellectual idea eternally made in the Divine Mind. (Uhlfelder's translation, pp. 239-40)

At other points, however, Eriugena denies that human nature can define itself or the nature of angelic being. In fact, no self-consciousness can define itself, for then it would be able to circumscribe and transcend itself.

In Book I Eriugena says, "My opinion is that they can neither define themselves nor each other. For if man defines himself or the angel, he is greater (maior) than himself or the angel. For that which defines is greater than that which is defined (maius enim est auod diffinit quam quod diffinitur)" (I.485a-b; Sheldon-Williams's translation). He repeats this in several places: What defines is greater than what is defined and encompasses it. Having said that humans can define neither each other nor angels (nor God), however, he goes on in Book IV to offer two definitions of human nature. The first is the standard one by which man is defined as a rational animal. But he gives a second, based on the imago Dei notion: "We can therefore define man as follows: Man is a certain intellectual idea (notio) eternally made in the Divine Mind" (IV.768b; Uhlfelder's translation, p. 240). How can these conflicting statements be reconciled? Eriugena regards as absolute his principle that what defines is greater than what is defined. Furthermore, what understands is greater than what is understood. But he also believes that what understands is productive or creative of what is understood. Thus he speaks in Book II of the mind, begetting its self-knowledge from itself:

For the mind begets the knowledge of itself (notitia sui) and from it proceeds the love of itself and of the knowledge of itself, by which itself and its knowledge of itself are united. And although the love itself proceeds from the mind through (the mind's) knowledge of itself, yet (it is) not the knowledge itself (which is) the cause of the love, but the mind itself, from which the love begins to be even before the mind itself arrives at perfect knowledge of itself. For the mind already loves to know itself (se ipsam cognoscere) before it brings forth from itself like an offspring (veluti prolem suam) the knowledge of itself. (II.610b-c; Sheldon-Williams's translation)<sup>36</sup>

In terms of the concept of self-knowledge, then, he would accept the idealist reading of ergo in the cogito ergo sum as having inferential and causal force. The consciousness of self is the cause of the self's existence. Mind or absolute freedom stands higher than existence. In so far as this is true, it is possible to say that the mind defines itself. But in reality it is its oneness with the divine mind which is the cause of itself, and this oneness is an impenetrable darkness and infinite non-being, which in no way can be defined or circumscribed. Therefore man cannot be defined in terms of this quiddity, since strictly speaking, he has no essence or he is all essences. The only kind of knowledge the mind can have of itself is the kind of knowing whereby the mind, its skill, and discipline contemplate each other and realise that they are all one. Eriugena's understanding of self-knowledge then involves a harmonious dwelling together and mutual intellectual recognition of the self in its dual moments of infinite darkness and manifest nature.

Eriugena does not see the mind knowing itself in some form of private introspection. Rather it knows itself as idea, as a universal, and knows all beings as itself.<sup>37</sup> The meaning of self-knowing is multiple. Man knows himself and can define himself as he appears in the effects, and in space-time, but he does not know himself except by a form of non-knowing as he appears in the causes and in God Himself. At this highest level, individuals are not other than

each other. Human minds come together when they do not seek to impose definitions on each other, but understand each other's existence in a mutual form of non-dominating knowing or ignorance, which leads to the highest wisdom and deification. Human minds have their ground and origin and their highest dwelling in the formless non-being before being. This is clearly similar to Eckhart's view that the mind in its purest form is unmixed with anything and is separate from all the things it knows, such that it can be said to be nothing: "If the intellect therefore, in so far as it is intellect, is nothing, it follows that neither is understanding an existence." In this chapter I have clearly demonstrated how Eriugena makes use of the arts and dialectic to develop a complicated idealist theory of self-knowledge. We must now go on to examine more thoroughly his understanding of the meaning of non-being.

<sup>36</sup> The terms of this discussion are Augustinian (see the first section of this chapter) and ultimately Platonic, since Socrates in the Symposium understands man's nature as eros. For Eriugena, the mind is seen as a dynamic drive or eros which brings itself from non-being into being, from ignorance to self-knowledge.

<sup>37</sup> Hegel similarly understands the relationship between particular and universal in man's knowledge of himself as Absolute Spirit. Eriugena's concept of self-knowledge is very similar to that found in German idealism, as Huber and Christlieb correctly maintained. Thus at IV.776d Eriugena says there is one general knowledge of all men in the causes, whereas in the effects each knows his own private self.

<sup>38</sup> See A. Maurer, Meister Eckhart: Parisian Questions and Prologues (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1974), p. 51. See also, LW, vol. I, pp. 270, 313-14.

#### THE MEANING OF NON-BEING

In this chapter we shall examine Eriugena's complicated doctrine of the meaning of non-being (non esse) or nothingness (nihil) in order to prepare the way for an understanding of the meaning of nature. Eriugena extends the concept of non-being to include God, man, and cosmos in their pure (or "uncreated") state, and views this nonbeing as the infinite nothingness, which is more primordial than the procession of creatures into their causes and effects. Eriugena's philosophy is not being-centred, but has a complicated theory of the relativity of all being and non-being, and of an Ultimate which lies beyond both being and non-being. Eriugena makes the being of creatures subordinate to their being known or intelligised in the theoriae of infinite subjectivity. But he goes further in arguing that infinite subjectivity is itself to be understood as non-being. The four forms of nature can only be understood when their relationship to this non-being is explained.

### The Latin background to the concept of non-being

Eriugena first discussed non-being in De praedestinatione (395a ff.), where he argued that evil is to be understood as non-being and therefore it is neither created by God nor known to Him. He develops this argument further in the Periphyseon at II.596a-b, for example, where he argues that God's nature is simple and does not know evil; or at V.926a, where he says that God cannot be said to know the wickedness of angels or men. Of course, the Latin source of this assessment of evil is undoubtedly Augustinian. For Augus-

tine evil cannot be a substance,2 but implies a tendency towards non-being in creatures, a falling away from the Supreme Being due to mutability. (See, for example, Contra Julianum I Chapter 9, 43; PL XLIV.671.) Augustine also regards creatures in their being as creatures as mere nothingness, as Eriugena and later Eckhart also hold. Thus Eriugena says at III.646b that every creature considered in itself is nothing, and he cites a passage from Augustine's Confessions (VII.11) which states that creatures are neither entirely being (nec omnino esse) nor entirely non-being (nec omnino non esse).3 In the De immortalitate animae VII.12, Augustine says that every defect is a tendency towards nothing. In general, Augustine sees the corruptibility of all creatures as due to their genesis from nothing, and he believes all creatures have an innate "desire" to return to nothing, unless they are sustained by their Creator. Thus, in the Confessions XII. 11.14, he says that bodies may get small but will never fall away into nothingness, on their own. It is not hard to find other references to nonbeing in the work of Augustine.4 For example, in De magistro, Chapter 7, Augustine discusses the meaning of nihil and is uncertain as to whether it signifies something or nothing. He wants to say that all signs signify objective realities, but that nothing does not signify an objective reality. Perhaps, Augustine suggests, it signifies a state of mind, for example, when the mind does not find what it wants.

Another important source of Augustine's thought about non-being is found in his writings on matter. At Periphyseon II.546d Eriugena quotes Augustine's statement that the "formless is next (prope) to

he says that evil is "unfounded, uncaused, indeterminate, unborn, inert, powerless, disordered. It is errant, indefinite, dark, insubstantial, never in itself possessed of any existence" (Luibhéid trans., p. 94). Anselm later will argue that evil is not a reality; see also Aguinas's discussion of the question whether God knows evil in ST I.q.14. Aguinas (in contrast to Eriugena) says that God does know evil but that He knows it through the good "just as darkness is known through knowing light."

2 See Confessions V. 10 and VII.5, where he argues against the Manichaean view that evil is a reality by invoking Neoplatonic arguments.

3 Augustine's reference to the creature as a mere nothingness has not been given sufficient attention by his commentators, though it is obviously a less radical formulation than that of Eriugena or Eckhart. On Eckhart's teaching that the creature is nothingness, see R. Schürmann, Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 85-6, and the sermon Omne datum optimum (DW 1) and also the Parisian Questions. See also the Bull condemning Eckhart, In agro Dominico article 26, which singles out this teaching for explicit condemnation. For a discussion of Eckhart's meaning, see E. Colledge and B. McGinn (eds.), Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries. Treatises, and Defence (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 33.

4 See E. Zum Brunn, Le Dilemme de l'être et du non être chez saint Augustin (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1969).

<sup>1</sup> See G. Evans, Augustine on Evil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Eriugena also found this view of evil as non-being in the writings of Dionysius, (e.g., Divine Names IV.19.716d and IV.32.732d), whom he cites in this regard at V.934b. Dionysius actually removes evil from the realm of being and non-being: "It has a greater nonexistence and otherness from the Good than nonbeing has" (716d, Luibhéid translation, Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works [New York: Paulist Press, 1987], p.85). At IV.32.732d,

nothing." Augustine also discusses non-being in his account of the nature of creation. Augustine was most concerned to defend the Christian concept of *ex nihilo* creation against the attacks of the Manichaeans and others and frequently explains what is meant by "nothing" in this phrase.<sup>5</sup>

Eriugena, therefore, could already have found the basis for his speculations on non-being in Augustine, although he needed to turn to the Greeks for the hermeneutical principles he required in order to read these Augustinian passages in the light of his own philosophical interest in developing a comprehensive meontology.

Eriugena may also have had contact with other Latin discussions of non-being – notably, Boethius's Opuscula sacra and the remarkable works of Marius Victorinus, his Ad Candidum Arrianum (c. A.D. 359) in particular. Eriugena had read the Contra Eutychen et Nestorium of Boethius and had found there a discussion of nature in which it is remarked that "nothing" signifies something, but it does not stand for a "nature." This passage had already been utilised by Ratramnus in his controversy on the nature of the soul, and Eriugena must have been influenced by it.

Like the later Greek Platonists, Marius Victorinus has a remarkably complicated hierarchy of meanings of non-being and distinguishes between genuine and relative non-being.<sup>6</sup> There are close

verbal parallels between his esse, non vere esse, non vere non esse, and non esse (which he in turn had found in Porphyry, in a text which is now lost but which may have been Porphyry's commentary on Plato's Sophist) and Eriugena's similar arrangement in Periphyseon II.546c-d. Victorinus does speak of ea quae sunt et ea quae non sunt, he says that the Son comes from those things which are not (ab his quae non sunt) and goes on to explain four ways in which a thing can be said not to be. Things are not, according to (1) iuxta negationem, which includes privation; (2) iuxta alterius ad aliud naturam; (3) iuxta nondum esse, quod futurum est et potest esse; and (4) iuxta quod supra omnia quae sunt, est esse or iuxta super omnia (Ad Candidum Arrianum 4.1-5 [1021c-1022a]). These divisions of non-being are very close to Eriugena's fivefold classification, and it is extremely likely that Eriugena took his system from the late Roman senator and convert to Christianity, Marius Victorinus.

With regard to Carolingian authors, it is possible that Eriugena knew the ninth-century Latin work of Fredegisus entitled *Epistola de nihilo et tenebris*, which argued that the term "nothing" must actually stand for something, since all meaningful terms signify something, as we know Augustine also believed. Since, furthermore, all created things are said to be made from nothing, Fredegisus argued, nothing must signify something great indeed. Fredegisus concludes his letter without actually identifying this "great" non-being with God Himself, as Eriugena explicitly does, but there is no doubt that his work is pointing in that direction. It is clear from this text from Alcuin's Circle that the problem of non-being was a living issue in Carolingian philosophical and theological debates.

#### The Greek Neoplatonist view of non-being

Eriugena discussed non-being in the *De praedestinatione*, as we have seen, but his interest in non-being increased markedly after his reading of Dionysius and the Greeks. The topic was given such detailed treatment in the *Periphyseon* (III.634a-690b) that one leading critic

York: Doubleday, 1971), pp. 268-303, and the essay in the same volume by G. E. Owen, pp. 223-67. Eriugena reproduces Marius's categorisation of non-being without indicating his source; an extant MS of the *Ad Candidum* (Bamberg Patr. 46 [Q.VI.32]) circulated in the ninth century, and may have Eriugena's handwriting on it.

<sup>5</sup> On Augustine's discussion of non-being in relation to creation, see the excellent dissertation by Christopher J. O'Toole, The Philosophy of Creation in the Writings of Augustine (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1944). O'Toole explores the consequences of Augustine's view that all created beings exhibit their createdness, or cry out, as Augustine says, Deus me fecit (Ennarrationes in Psalmos XXVI PL XXXVI.205-6, and also in the Confessions).

<sup>6</sup> P. Hadot and P. Henry (eds.), Marius Victorinus. Traités théologiques sur la Trinité, 2 vols., SC nos. 68, 69 (Paris: CERF, 1960), vol. 1, p. 136. On Marius Victorinus's concept of non-being, see P. Hadot, Porphyre et Victorinus (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1968), pp. 167–175. See also G. Piemonte, "L'Expression quae sunt et quae non sunt: Jean Scot et Marius Victorinus," in G. H. Allard (ed.), Jean Scot écrivain (Montreal: Institut d'Etudes Médiévales, 1986), pp. 81–113. Marius sees non-being divided according to four modes: negation, the nature of the other (secundum naturam alterius), as potential being, and as transcendent non-being. The opposition between absolute non-being and relative non-being goes back to the Sophist 236e ff. and to Aristotle's Physics I.3.187a. The problem in the Sophist is the problem of the being of non-being (to mē on einai, τὸ μὴ ὄν εἶναι). The text talks about medamōs on (μηδαμῶς ὄν, by no means being), which Hadot takes to be equivalent to the haplōs mē on (ἀπλῶς μὴ ὄν, simply non-being) of Aristotle, which is contrasted with particular non-being (me on ti, μὴ ὄν τι). For a different account of non-being in Plato see D. Wiggins, "Sentence Meaning, Negation and Plato's Problem of Non-Being," in G. Vlastos (ed.), Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays, vol. 1 (New

of Neoplatonism, Trouillard, even suggested that Eriugena reinvented Plato's Parmenides!7

Although Augustine and the Latins discussed the topic at some length, as we have seen, they were not nearly as adventurous as the Greek Platonists, who made it a major point of analysis. The concept of non-being, for them, was a way of gaining access to transcendence and specifically to the transcendence of God or the One. As Wolfson has shown, the tradition of negative theology, which prefers negative to affirmative terms for the divine being, was firmly established by the fourth century, when the Cappadocians in their writings had already recognised that *non-being* was one of the names of God.<sup>8</sup>

Nowhere did this receive a more emphatic treatment than in *The Divine Names*, Chapter V, and *Mystical Theology* of Dionysius, large sections of which are devoted to discussion of the applicability of the term "being" to God. Dionysius denies that affirmations and negations apply to God. God is beyond being, beyond non-being, beyond existence (*Mystical Theology* V.1048a): "It is beyond assertion and denial." God's transcendence above all speech is affirmed; He is the non-being beyond being. Furthermore, the Cappadocian Gregory of Nyssa identifies the *nihil* out of which this world is created with God Himself in His superessential non-being, and Eriugena enthusiastically accepted this view. Augustine, on the other hand, was careful to distinguish God from creation, such that he could talk about the world as made from God (*a Deo*), which for him did not mean made out of God (*de Deo*), a position Aquinas later took also.

9 For Augustine creatures are from God but not of God (ab illo sed non de illo). See, for example, the Contra secundium Manichaeum I.7 (PL XLII.583), and O'Toole, The Philosophy of Creation in the Writings of Augustine.

Eriugena was obviously well read in both the Greek and Latin discussions of the concept of non-being and nothingness. The Latin tradition generally emphasised the privative interpretation of nonbeing, stressing that non-being implies absence and a lack of being, but the Greeks in general were more affirmative in their concept of non-being and preferred to think of it in terms of superessentiality, that is, transcendence of being and knowing. To As usual, Eriugena seeks to mediate between these two positions, not by finding a middle ground but by vigorously arguing for both interpretations: Nonbeing can be understood either privatively or in a supereminent manner. Nihil means either nihil per privationem or nihil per excellentiam. In fact, Eriugena will go so far as to argue that all things can be thought of as nothingness in one form or another: God, the primary causes, corporeal things, matter, are all species of non-being. depending on the viewpoint of the inquirer, as we shall see. 11 Eriugena develops a most radical and complex meontology out of this discussion of non-being, which we must now examine in detail.

#### The five modes of being and non-being

The Periphyseon begins with a radical claim (I.441a): Nature can be defined to include all things which are (ea quae sunt) and all things which are not (ea quae non sunt) – being and non-being. Eriugena states this frequently in the Periphyseon, but he repeats it in the Expositiones, the Homilia, and also his later florilegia, so it is one of the key notions identifying his influence on later thinkers. As we have already seen, the phrase ea quae sunt et ea quae non sunt appeared earlier in Marius Victorinus. The Greek phrase kai panta ouk onta kai onta (καὶ πάντα οὖκ ὄντα καὶ ὄντα), all things that are and are

<sup>7</sup> See J. Trouillard, "Le Parmenide de Platon et son interprétation néoplatonicienne," in Revue de théologie et de philosophie 23 (1973), pp. 83-100. Of course, Plato's Parmenides may actually have been the source of some of Dionysius's speculations in this regard. See E. Corsini, Il trattato De divinis nominibus dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide (Turin: Giappichelli, 1962), which argues that Dionysius is applying terms to God which are found in the dialogue Parmenides. S. Gersh has a similar analysis in his From Iamblichus to Eriugena (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> See H. A. Wolfson, "The Identification of ex nihilo with Emanation in Gregory of Nyssa," reprinted in his Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 199-221. As early as the second century A.D. Albinus had said that the attributes of God do not define His nature but are mere names. Albinus developed a form of negative theology by the removal of attributes (kat'aphairesin) from God. See J. Dillon, The Middle Platonists (London: Duckworth, 1977), pp. 284-5.

<sup>10</sup> The concept of non-being above being is said by P. Hadot in *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1968) to be traceable to Speusippus and is found in lamblichus and Porphyry as to hyper to on mē on.

Compare Aristotle's statement in *Metaphysics* XIV.2.1089a26: "For non-being too has many senses just as being has." It can signify what is false, what is potential, non-being in the sense of any of the categories, or absolute non-being. See also Aristotle, *Physics* I.3.186b—7a. The concept of non-being as above being may have come from Speusippus, but it is found clearly stated in Porphyry; see P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, p. 168. Proclus (*Commentarius in Parmenidem: pars ultima adhuc inedita, interprete Guillelmo de Moerbeke*, ed. R. Klibansky, C. Labowsky, and E. Anscombe [London: Waring Institute, 1973], p. 44.14–19) lists four levels of non-being: absolute non-being, engendered non-being, non-being according to the nature of the other, and the One considered as non-being—a categorization similar to that of Porphyry and Marius and which is also in Eriugena.

not, appears in Dionysius's Mystical Theology I (PG III.997b), and is an obvious source for Eriugena's conception of a totality of things which are and are not. Eriugena translates this phrase as et omne non ens et ens (PL CXXII, 1173a), "both every being and non-being." Eriugena goes on in the Periphyseon to divide nature in terms of its relation to the concept of creation, producing the fourfold division of nature (which we shall examine in Chapter 12). But then he returns to discussing the manner in which the concepts of being and non-being can be interpreted. Eriugena's remarks here are original and radical and are deeply subversive of the metaphysical tenet of the primacy of being. Rather than take substantial being as the fundamental and absolute bedrock of nature, he argues that being must be understood in perspectival or relative terms; sometimes being comes out as greater than non-being, and sometimes it is the other way round. It all depends on the viewpoint of the inquirer and his position on the scale of being. The relative ways of understanding being and non-being are in fact Eriugena's attempt to work out the "analogy" of being in a non-Aristotelian manner. But to think of them as merely an unsuccessful Platonic theory of analogy is to reduce Eriugena's structures to Aristotelian categories, whereas our interpretation seeks to understand Eriugena in his own terms and to show the originality and coherence of his own intention.

Eriugena offers a number of ways of reading the relationship between being and non-being, which he entitles *modi*, modes of being and non-being. He initially outlines *five* (quinque) modes, but says that there are others which could be found with deeper research (I.446a). The word quinque may in fact be an addition or emendation to the manuscript, possibly in Eriugena's hand. In any event the exact number of modes is not especially significant.

The first mode. The first mode is given special priority; called primus and summus (I.443c), it is perhaps the most commonly found mode in the Periphyseon. This mode separates things which are comprehensible to sense and intellect from those which are beyond all human understanding and elude the grasp of the mind:

Of these modes the first seems to be that by means of which reason convinces us that all things which fall within the perception of bodily sense or (within the grasp of) intelligence are truly and reasonably said to be, but that those which because of the excellence (per excellentiam) of their

nature elude not only all sense but also all intellect and reason rightly seem not to be. (*Periphyseon I.443a*; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Eriugena is here giving ontological primacy to that which is grasped by the human mind. Whatever the human mind determines as existent has being, and whatever it does not grasp is non-being. In other words, being is determined by epistemological criteria. It is clear that this could be interpreted in an idealist manner to mean that the mind is the arbiter of being, but in this case Eriugena claims that those things which in this classification are called non-being are in fact higher than being, by reason of their excellence (per excellentiam suae naturae, I.443a). Thus God and the reasons and essences of all things are among the non-beings. (To this list is added "matter" by a later scribe - possibly completely altering the meaning of the passage, as I have already discussed in Chapter 5). In fact, in this first division, Eriugena quotes Dionysius's Celestial Hierarchy IV.1 (PG. III.177d) on the superessential nature of God, τὸ γὰρ εἶναι πάντων  $\dot{\epsilon}$ στὶν  $\dot{\eta}$   $\dot{\upsilon}$ π $\dot{\epsilon}$ ρ τὸ  $\dot{\epsilon}$   $\dot{\iota}$ ναι  $\dot{\theta}$ εότης (to gar einai panton estin he hyper to einai theotēs). This is a favourite phrase of Eriugena's, which he translates as esse enim omnium est superesse divinitas (I.443b), "the being of all things is the divinity above being." He excludes absolute nonbeing (haplos mē on) from the division of things in this mode: "For how can that which absolutely is not, and cannot be, and which does not surpass the intellect because of the pre-eminence of its existence, be included in the division of things" (Periphyseon I.443c; Sheldon-Williams's translation).

This first mode is completely in line with the normal Greek negative theological understanding. In this mode God is not any of the things that are. The things that are, are graspable by the mind; God is not intelligible to the mind and hence is not. Eriugena, of course, emphasises that it is the mind which gives things their being, but it cannot give God being because God transcends the mind. We are here dealing with God as *nihil per excellentiam*, but Eriugena has some things to say about privation in this mode also. Let us briefly examine his understanding of this concept.

The meaning of privation. In an addition to the Rheims manuscript, Eriugena has added a qualification to this first mode of being and non-being by introducing the concepts of absence (absentia) and privation (privatio). Eriugena is aware of the logical concept of pri-

vation, but he does not distinguish it from absence simpliciter or from opposition (oppositio). <sup>12</sup> Eriugena was aware of the meaning of privation from his readings in Latin logic (and refers to it in De praedestinatione), but he goes farther than his sources and at times attempts to give privative forms some ontological foundation, or rather, he gives these forms a place in his complex "meontology." Although privation indicates non-being, it does not indicate complete non-being: Concepts like hell, the visions of the damned, and the evil will are all forms of nothingness. Privation can mean total absence of form, quality, or characteristic, or it can mean privation or "remotion" (remotio) in the sense of missing something which is normally or essentially there. Eriugena considers the possibility that some people will give some intermediate form of relative being to privation:

Unless perhaps someone should say that the absences and privations of things that exist are themselves not altogether nothing, but are implied by some strange natural virtue (virtus) of those things of which they are the privations (privatio) and absences (absentia) and opposites (oppositio), so as to have some kind of existence. (Periphyseon I.443c-d; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Eriugena is satisfied to allow this as a possibility, and it does not seem to worry him unduly. Later at Book III.686b, he says that privations presuppose existence and therefore the world cannot have come into being from privation. (He will use this to argue that ex nihilo does not mean "from privation.") In an addition to the Rheims manuscript in Eriugena's supposed handwriting at III.634d, Nutritor asks, "How could there be privation before there is possession

(habitus)? For there was no possession before all things that are received the possession of subsistence (habitus subsistentiae)." Eriugena cannot quite clear up his mind about privation. Normally he says that it implies an antecedent existence, yet he feels that privatives may have a kind of non-being – like possibilities – which is at the same time not absolutely nothing (omnino nihil). Nihil per privationem is not the omnino nihil, though at times it can be reduced to it.

The second mode. The second mode of being and non-being is seen "in the orders and differences of created natures" (I.444a), from the intellectual powers or angels down to the lowest level of the irrational creature, whereby if a level is said to be, then the levels above and below it are said not to be:

For an affirmation concerning the lower (order) is a negation concerning the higher, and so too a negation concerning the lower (order) is an affirmation concerning the higher. . . . This however terminates [in] the highest negation [upward]; for its negation confirms the existence of no higher creature. . . . Downward on the other hand, the last (order) merely [denies or confirms the one above it, because it has nothing below it which it might either take away or establish] since it is preceded by all the orders higher than itself but precedes none that is lower than itself. (I.444a-c; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

This mode of division applies only to created being. Being and non-being here are only to be applied within the framework of the hierarchical orders of the created cosmos. Thus God and omnino nihil are completely excluded from this division. It is in this sense that God, under the rules of this mode, can be shown to be beyond being and non-being. One very peculiar result is that, under the rules of this mode, true non-being (omnino nihil) can also be said to be beyond being and non-being – since it is outside the created universe as such – but Eriugena does not exploit this intriguing possibility here.

The main interest in this division at first sight appears typically Neoplatonic. Eriugena seems to want to use it to establish an order or *hierarchy* of being from highest to lowest, including the nine orders of angels as well as all the rational levels of the soul, and its irrational motions also (e.g., nutritive and reproductive powers). But in fact, the normal Neoplatonic hierarchy is different. In typical Neoplatonic terms each level "contains" and also produces the level

<sup>12</sup> See Sheldon-Williams, Periphyseon, vol. 1, pp. 223-4 n. 21. In Book III Eriugena talks of death as the privation of life. See also H. A. Wolfson, "The Identification of ex nihilo with Emanation in Gregory of Nyssa." Aristotle has two accounts of privation (steresis): one in the Physics, and another in the Metaphysics, which do not fully agree with one another. Aristotle - like Eriugena - uses steresis to mean absence of all form (Metaphysics V.27.1022b31) as well as absence of something which is normally there. Aristotle actually has two terms: sterēsis and apophasis (negation). Eriugena translates sterēsis (στέρησις) as negatio, but more often as privatio (e.g., PL CXXII.1173b). He also translates apophasis (ἀπόφασις) as negatio - or even as repulsio (PL CXXII.461b) or depulsio, e.g., PL CXXII. 1041c. Eriugena translates aphairesis (ἀφαιρήσις) as ablatio (PL CXXII. 1174b). At times for Aristotle privation means that the opposite can be predicated of something, while negation implies that the opposite cannot be predicated. The distinction is not always clear; see H. A. Wolfson, "Negative Attributes in the Church Fathers and in the Gnostic Basilides," in Harvard Theological Review 45 (1952), pp. 115-30. Plotinus later introduced a new term - remotion (aphairesis). Eriugena appears to use all three terms indistinguishably.

which is below it, in a manner which need not be strictly causal; Dionysius, for example, uses the term hypostatēs (in the sense of "that which gives rise to" or, more literally, "that which is placed below"; Eriugena translates this as subsistentia) for the level which is higher, but certainly the higher is somehow responsible for the lower. But in Eriugena's version, when the lower world is affirmed, the higher world in negated. Instead of being said to be more real, the higher world is said not to be at all, if the lower world is asserted. Eriugena is applying the fruits of negative theology well beyond the restricted sphere it had in Dionysius and is extending it to apply not only to God but also to created natures! In this scheme every order or level of being can be said to both be and not be, depending on which level of the order the viewer is on. This is a crucially important mode of being and non-being, which is intimately wrapped up in Eriugena's concept of negative dialectic and which, when applied to the four divisions of nature, yields us the truth about the metaphysical status of that division and overturns the hierarchy of four levels.

The hierarchy of being and non-being, then, is not a straightforward chain of being from higher to lower, but actually is a kind of "highlighting" or affirming of a particular entity as possessing being to the exclusion of all other claimants:

Thus, the affirmation of "man" (I mean man while still in his mortal state) is the negation of "angel," while the negation of "man" is the affirmation of "angel" (and vice versa). For if man is a rational, mortal, risible animal, then an angel is certainly neither a rational animal nor mortal nor risible: likewise, if an angel is an essential intellectual motion about God and the causes of things, then man is certainly not an essential intellectual motion about God and the causes of things. (I.444b; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

This is a strong statement of the *perspectival* approach to being and non-being and in fact places at risk the affirmative definition of man as an intellectual idea in the mind of God, which we have already discussed in detail in the preceding chapter. It is clear that this definition is now seen to need a negative counterbalancing statement, which denies the whole truth of the affirmative claim. As Eriugena says:

It is also on these grounds that every order or intellectual creature is said to be and not to be: it is in so far as it is known by the orders above it

and by itself; but it is not in so far as it does not permit itself to be comprehended by the orders that are below it. (I.444c; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Thus once more in this mode, being is relative to being known; ontology is made to depend on the epistemological framework.

The third mode. The third mode of being and non-being is based on distinguishing actual from merely potential things. If things which exist are said to be, then those things which are not yet in existence are said not to be. Eriugena remarks that this is by human convention (humana consuetudine), and of course he could have found it in Augustine or in Greek writers like Maximus. Things which are still caught up in the primary causes or, in one of Eriugena's favourite phrases, in the secret folds of nature (in secretis sinibus naturae) are said not to be, while those things which exist are said to be. Eriugena's terminology for act and potency is variable (potestas, vis, dynamis), and here he speaks of potency as virtus (445b):<sup>13</sup>

Thus, since God in that first and one man whom He made in His image established (constituerit) all men at the same time, yet did not bring them all at the same time into this visible world... those who already (are becoming or) have become visibly manifest in the world are said to be, while those who are as yet hidden, though destined to be, are said not to be. (I.445a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

This asserts that whereas in the primary causes things are not, they do have being in the effects. It is clear that Eriugena is using this mode to apply to created nature only (or those things which exist in the visible world, as he says at I.444c). He further wants to distinguish this mode of division from the first one:

Between the first and third (mode) there is this difference: the first (is found) generically (generaliter) in all things which at the same time and once for all have been made in (their) causes and effects; the third specifically (specialiter) in those which partly are still hidden in their causes, partly are manifest in (their) effects, of which in particular the fabric of this world is woven (contexitur). (I.445a-b; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Periphyseon III.657c, where Eriugena makes a distinction between vis and potestas (or virtus). Talking about the intellectual numbers, he says that they have a vis, whereby they exist in the monad, and a virtus, by which they are able to come forth from it. He makes a similar distinction between actus and opus. See Sheldon-Williams's introduction to vol. 3, pp. 6-7. Eriugena also uses the term habitus for potency.

This seems to make the third mode a species of the first (considered as genus). In the first mode all created things accessible to the mind and senses exist; in the third only created things, which have already proceeded into their effects, are said to be. A curious result of this classification is that the primary causes themselves, along with their rationes and essentiae, do not exist on this criterion, since the only existent things are those which have been carried through into the effects and into space and time. This, in fact, makes the third mode the opposite of the fifth. In the third mode the universal human nature which has not proceeded into causes and effects is said not to be, whereas in the fifth mode perfect human nature is said to be, and the human nature which is conceived through sin in this world is said not to be. Thus human nature can both be and not be, and perfect human nature has an existence as possibility in the third mode, but is an actuality according to the fifth. This is akin to Nicholas of Cusa's concept of God as actualised possibility (as discussed in Chapter 9).14

The fourth mode. The fourth mode is more Platonic in form, and Eriugena indeed associates it with those he calls the philosophi. It declares that only those things which are intellectual or intelligible truly are, whereas things which involve change and mutation (or perhaps are accessible only to the senses) are not. Thus any body involved in generation, change, or the temporal world does not have being in this mode. It is thus the opposite of the third mode. The unchanging intelligible world, on the other hand, is truly real. The framework is thoroughly Augustinian in its total separation of the timeless world from the temporal world. At Book II.561a, for example, Eriugena develops this contrast between eternal true being and temporal non-being, and explains that the temporal world "is called new because it is not eternal and is therefore nothing." This mode is actually the opposite of the first mode, since in the first mode both sensible and intellectual things truly are, while God and the causes (or eternal changeless forms) are not, whereas in the fourth mode these causes truly are and the sensible and sublunary world is not. This fourth mode is also very idealist. In this mode those things are which are called *ideae* and are contemplated by the intellect. And Eriugena can be read as saying that in this mode the being of things is their being known by the mind.

The fifth mode. The fifth mode stands apart from the others at first reading, since it appears to refer to theological or moral rather than ontological or metaphysical criteria. But – as with the fourth mode – the framework is Augustinian and Eriugena is following his mentor in arguing that only well-being or being in the state of grace can really be said to be, whereas fallen nature and entities stained by sin are not. Of course, for Eriugena, this division applies only to human beings (and to angels):

The fifth mode is that which reason observes only in human nature, which, when through sin it renounced the honour of the divine image in which it was properly substantiated (substetit), deservedly lost its being and therefore is said not to be; but when, restored (restaurata) by the grace of the only-begotten Son of God, it is brought back (reducitur) to the former condition of its substance (ad pristinum suae substantiae statum) in which it was made after the image of God, it begins to be, and in him who has been made in the image of God begins to live. It is to this mode, it seems, that the Apostle's saying refers: "and He calls the things that are not as the things that are." (Periphyseon I.445c-d; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Eriugena can find a scriptural basis for his language of being and non-being. He frequently quotes Romans 4.17, for example, at I.445c-d, and later, in his *Commentarius* on Saint John at 304d. Marius Victorinus also quotes this line of Paul's in his *Adversus Arrianum* I.17, 12–5 (ed. P. Henry and P. Hadot, vol. 1, p. 226). In the High Middle Ages, the phrase continued to be linked with the concept of non-existent beings. Thus Aquinas uses it in his *Summa theologica* I.14.9, sed contra, as evidence that God has knowledge of non-beings.

To return to Eriugena, in this mode, therefore, the whole of this created world, which has fallen with man, can be said not to be or to be nothing, while the risen Christ and God are said to be. This division is thus based on a contrast between the distinction between perfect and present nature or between grace and nature. Eriugena then goes on to link this fifth mode with the third mode. Perfect human nature is a possible or potential state. In the third mode it is said not to exist when it is still caught up in the causes; in the fifth mode, it is said to be genuinely existent in that perfect human

<sup>14</sup> See J. Hopkins, A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), pp. 62-153.

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nature exists in God and can be said to be truly real, whereas fallen nature is not genuinely real. It is in this mode, therefore, that the life in paradise can be said to be most real even though it never took place at any time and appears now only as a possibility (and hence as a form of non-being). This mode, of course, also declares the present human world to be partaking in non-being.

## The meaning of the modes of non-being

Many commentators have been struck by this forceful attempt to schematise the meanings of being and non-being. They appear so early in Book I that the reader expects that they will feature in a major way in the course of the whole dialogue. Instead, however, the levels are rarely adverted to, and commentators have been inclined to accept the traditional view that the modes of being and non-being are a dialectical exercise, which Eriugena abandons almost as soon as he has engaged on it. In fact, he does not stick closely to the fivefold modes of being and non-being, but uses several more modes. He had said that these five modes were provisional and that many more could be found by more subtle reasoning. Thus he makes use of a sixth mode of being, whereby God is said to possess all being and the creature to be a mere nothingness (III.646b). This, like the fourth mode, is really the opposite of the first mode. But Eriugena also employs an Aristotelian concept of being and non-being when he says that substance alone exists and those things which are accidents or relations do not have being (IV.764c). This would be a seventh mode.

He is often curiously unresponsive to the demands of his own logic and quite liberal in dispensing being to all kinds of unlikely candidates. He even goes so far at one point as actually to give a kind of being to those things which are impossible. That which is absolutely non-being and does not exist is in fact said to be among the impossibles, since it can never be. He goes on, however, to attribute some strange vague kind of Meinongian being to those things which actually are impossible:

That the possibles and the impossibles are reckoned in the number of things none of those who practice philosophy aright will dispute; and these are said to be for no other reason than that the possibles can come into being even though they are not, while the impossibles are contained in the virtue (virtus) of their impossibility alone. For their being (esse) consists in the impossibility of their appearing (apparere) in any intelligible or sensible thing. (II.597b-c; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

This eighth mode is actually the opposite of the third. Instead of the possible being considered not to be, it is now considered to be. Indeed, in this form both the possible and the impossible, which together constitute the most universal domain of objects, are said to have being. This mode would hardly allow any non-being, unless it is the non-being so dearly beloved of the later Neoplatonists - that which is beyond possibility and necessity itself.

We cannot expect Eriugena to have a completely systematic and logical classification for so difficult and perplexing a topic. For one thing, the Platonic tradition stemming from the Parmenides is too entangled and Eriugena's sources were too diverse. But second, we must not attempt to fit Eriugena's discussion into the narrow boundaries of predicate logic. He is developing the logic of Dionysius, where affirmations and denials are not necessarily contradictions. In relation to God or to infinite being in general, the negation of a false statement is not necessarily a true statement. Eriugena is using a dialectic which operates at the level of infinite nous and transcends the limitations of finite reason. Like Plato or, indeed, Hegel and Heidegger, Eriugena is breaking from the domain of ontologic, a logic founded on being and predication, and trying to think infinity through the concept of negation and otherness, identity and difference. Compare, for example, Heidegger's remark in his essay "What Is Metaphysics?": "For thinking, which is always thinking about something, must act in a way contrary to its own essence when it thinks of nothing."15 Although we cannot reduce Eriugena's system to a logical form without distortion, we can grasp his main intention and recognise the validity of his attempt to produce a meontology which parallels classical metaphysics and at the same time transcends it. In his sermon Beati pauperes spiritu, Eckhart will also express God in terms of non-being: "The authorities say that God is a being. . . . I say that God is neither a being nor rational . . . therefore God is free of all things and is all things." In another sermon (no. 83 Renovamini spiritu), he says that it is not true that God

<sup>15</sup> See "What Is Metaphysics?" in D. F. Krell (ed.), Heidegger: Basic Writings (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 99.

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is a being; rather, he transcends being and is a "transcending nothingness." (See Colledge and McGinn, Meister Eckhart, pp. 201, 207.)

In fact, the modes which distinguish between being and non-being are crucial to the interpretation of Eriugena's meaning, however difficult it may be to analyse them adequately, given his limited terminology and the fact that he undoubtedly is operating under different modes at different times. Probably because he found his initial discriminations overcomplex and practically unwieldy, he usually resorts to a simpler classification, which in fact cuts across his larger scheme of five modes. This simpler division turns out to fit neatly into the fourfold division of nature: Non-being is God, and non-being is the region of unformed matter; but both the causes and the effects also share in non-being, depending on how the relationship of the act of creation is understood. I shall now turn to this problem.

#### The Tractatus de nihilo

Eriugena operates with different modes of division between being and non-being throughout the *Periphyseon*, but he does make one major attempt to clear up the confusion of meanings of the term "nothing" (nihil) in Book III. This analysis forms an almost perfect subtreatise in its own right and has been given excellent analysis by several critics. <sup>16</sup> It is undoubtedly the most sophisticated treatment of the concept of non-being in early mediaeval philosophy. Influenced possibly by Eriugena, Anselm discusses the meaning of *ex nihilo* in his *Monologion*, Chapter VIII, and offers three different ways of understanding non-being. Later Aquinas will deal with non-being, in relation to God's knowledge of non-existent future or possible things in the *Summa theologica* I.14.9–3. Eriugena here develops themes which will not be discussed again in detail until the Renaissance and the emergence of the concept of the void and of infinite empty space. <sup>17</sup>

The treatise begins with an inquiry into the meaning of the Christian doctrine of creation from nothing. Alumnus is puzzled:

But when I hear or say that the Divine Goodness created all things out of nothing I do not understand what is signified by that name, "Nothing" (nihil), whether the privation of all essence or substance or accident, or the excellence of the divine superessentiality. (III.634b; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Nutritor answers this by arguing, first, that God's superessential nature cannot mean nothing in the traditional sense:

I would not easily concede that the divine superessentiality was nothing [or could be called by so privative a name]. For although it is said by theologians not to be (non esse), they do not mean that it is nothing (nihil esse) but that it is more than being (plus quam esse). (III.634b; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

When not-being is predicated of the superessential, Nutritor continues, it does not signifiy nothing, but signifies a nature beyond being and non-being (super omnia quae sunt et quae non sunt, III.634c), which suggests that Eriugena's initial division of nature into all things that are and all things that are not was in fact provisional and incomplete and must now be expanded to include that which is beyond the things that are and are not. The phrase is Dionysian but is also found in this Latin form in Marius Victorinus, Ad Candidum Arrianum II.19–20 (1021a; ed. Henry and Hadot, vol. 1, p. 134): Putamus Deum esse supra omnia et quae sunt et quae non sunt. Alumnus continues to be puzzled because he still does not understand what "nothing" means in the phrase, "created from nothing." Nutritor then begins a subtler – if somewhat elliptical – analysis of the meanings of being and non-being. He starts with the concept of creation itself.

## The non-being of creation is privation

At first Alumnus wants to argue that ex nihilo creation means creation from nothing, understood in a privative sense as the negation

dently existing space to the idea of a "separate" nothing and an extracosmic void (influenced by John Philoponus's criticism of Aristotle, which was preserved in Arabic commentators), which laid the groundwork for the Newtonian concept of infinite empty space. See Eriugena's description of God as the space of spaces or "place of places" (locus locorum) at III.643c. For Eriugena, spaces are immaterial and mental, but they are also infinite, since space is really contained within the primary causes, which themselves are contained in the Word.

<sup>16</sup> See the excellent study of G. A. Piemonte, "Notas sobre la Creatio de nihilo en Juan Escoto Eriugena," part 1, Sapientia 23 (1968), pp. 37-58; and also L.-P. Sheldon-Williams's introduction to Periphyseon, vol. 3, pp. 5-10. See also D. Duclow, "Divine Nothingness and Self-Creation in John Scotus Eriugena," Journal of Religion 57 (April 1977), pp. 109-23.

<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, we cannot explore here the relationship between the concept of nothing and the related concepts of vacuum and empty space. For an excellent discussion of these ideas in later mediaeval philosophy see E. Grant, Much Ado about Nothing: Theories of Space and Vacuum from the Middle Ages to the Scientific Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Grant examines the shift from the Aristotelian denial of indepen-

of the totality of created being. Creation means that beings appeared and were made. "Nothing" must not be understood to signify some essence or matter or even a cause. It is to be understood as neither in God nor outside Him nor standing apart from Him in any way. Initially Nutritor agrees with this meaning:

For that word "Nothing" is taken to mean not some matter, not a certain cause of existing things (causa quaedam existentium), not anything that went before or occurred of which the establishment of things was a consequence, not something coessential or coeternal with God, nor something apart from God subsisting on its own or on another from which God took as it were a kind of material from which to construct the world; but it is the name for the total privation (privatio) of the whole of essence and, to speak more accurately, it is the word for the absence (absentia) of the whole of essence (totius essentiae); for privation means the removal of possession (Privatio enim habitudinis est ablatio). (III.634c-d; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

"Nothing" simply means that before things came into being, they were not. This is an Augustinian answer, and Eriugena notes that almost all scriptural commentators agree with this reading (III.635a). But in fact, even this initial clarification contains the hint that Eriugena is not fully satisfied with this version of the explanation and his own vocabulary shows this quite explicitly:

Understand that the things that exist (existentia) have been made from the things that do not exist (ex non existentibus) by the power of the Divine Goodness; for the things that were not (ea quae non erant) received being (esse). For they were made from nothing because they were not before they came into being. (Periphyseon III.634c; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Here Eriugena is actually implying not only that beings were created, but also that, in creation, non-existent things received existence. At III.682c, he quotes Dionysius (Divine Names V.4-5 [PG III.817c-820a]) as holding that being (esse) comes from the non-existent (ex ante-existente), and that God is not Himself being (to on,  $\tau \tilde{o} \tilde{o} \nu$ ) but is a personal pre-being (ante  $\bar{o} n$ ,  $\tilde{\omega} \nu$  – a term also found in Victorinus), for which Dionysius and Eriugena use the masculine form ho  $\bar{o} n$  ( $\tilde{o} \tilde{\omega} \nu$ ) instead of the neuter to on ( $\tau \tilde{o} \tilde{o} \nu$ ). God is the source of being, but is Himself not a being. The first principle of Eriugena's system is not being but, rather, the concept of a person or consciousness, who is above and before all beings of which it is the cause. At III.634c, Eriugena uses existence (existentia), subsist-

ence (subsistentia), and being (esse) interchangeably, and he attributes reality to things that do not exist. <sup>18</sup> This signals that he will now move on to find another meaning for non-being, which will give it more reality than is possessed by nihil per privationem. He will therefore reject the view that creation takes place from nothing, understood as privation, in favour of a new reading of non-being.

For the present, Nutritor assures Alumnus that "nothing" means privation of all essence or substance. Yet Alumnus is immediately thrown into confusion, and feels himself threatened on all sides by the dark clouds of misunderstanding and obscurity. What is at the source of his confusion? The master and pupil had earlier been discussing the nature of the primary causes and had decided that it had been proved beyond reasonable doubt that whatever is created by God (e.g., the primary causes) is eternal and in fact co-eternal and co-essential with Him. But now the discussion centers on creation, and Alumnus has a problem: "How can that be eternal which before it was made was not?" How can something created eternally be meaningfully said to be created from nothing, which would imply that the eternal created entity had an origin? This question radically alters Eriugena's approach to non-being.

#### Everything created is both eternal and made from nothing

The problem arises out of a consideration of the Augustinian solution to the problem of the nature of creation. Augustine had argued that while we conceive of creation as a temporal act with a beginning in time, this in fact is merely our mode of viewing; in

<sup>18</sup> Eriugena, following Dionysius, is casual in his terminology for existence. See G. Allard, "The Primacy of Existence in Eriugena," in D. O'Meara (ed.), Neoplatonism and Christian Thought (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1982), pp. 89-96. Eriugena talks not just of esse and existentia, but also of subsistentia and the essentia existentium (III.671bc). As we saw in the preceding chapter, he does not think that existence can be defined; in fact, it is "nonbeing" in so far as it is outside the grasp of all ousiology. These terms are taken from Dionysius's De divinis nominibus V.4.817c, where God is said to be the source of all beings, existence, subsistences, etc. God is hypostatis aitia, kai demiourgos ontos, hyporcheos, hypostaseos, ousias, physeos. (ὑποστάτις αἰτία, καὶ δημιουργός οντος, ὑπάρξεως, ὑποστάσεως, ονσίας, φύσεως). Eriugena translates this as subsistens causa et creator existentis subsistentiae, substantiae, essentiae, naturae: God is the subsisting cause and creator of the existing, subsisting, of substance, essence, and nature. Eriugena's vocabulary remains tied to its Dionysian source. Gottschalk distinguishes between substantia and subsistentia in his Responsa de diversis, Chapter I, in C. D. Lambot (ed.), Oeuvres, pp. 132-4. Boethius in the Opuscula sacra had made a careful distinction between existentia and subsistentia, but Eriugena appears to have ignored it.

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reality, since God is not separate from His acts, the act of creation must be considered as part of God's timeless (or eternal) essence. In other words, creation is eternal. Friugena is somewhat more specific in making the products of the creative act one with the act itself; therefore, created things, though made (*facta*), are eternal. Alumnus, who has accepted all this, now cannot understand how something which is eternal can *come from* nothing. There is an apparent contradiction:

For how can these things be reconciled with one another? For if all things that are, are eternal in the creative Wisdom, how are they made out of nothing? For how can that be eternal which before it was made was not, or how can that which begins to be in time (and with time) be in eternity? . . . Therefore I cannot discover how these opinions do not contradict each other. (III.636a-b; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Alumnus offers one possible solution of the dilemma. He suggests that the primary causes are contained in God and are eternal with Him, but that when they proceed into their effects, they mingle with matter, which is not eternal.<sup>20</sup>

The pupil, however, immediately sees his own error. Holding this position would entail that unformed matter is itself not one of the causes, and is itself therefore uncaused and consequently would exist wholly *outside* God. But God created all things, including matter. Since matter is included among the causes of the universe, its own cause must be included among the primary causes (636c). Nutritor denies various interpretations which would involve separating matter from the causes. He denies that matter is uncreated:

This is in fact the position taken by Thierry of Chartres – the work of creation is simultaneous, but is distended in time through the commingling of the four elements. See Gross, "Twelfth Century Concepts of Time," pp. 325–38.

"For He Who made the world from unformed matter also made unformed matter out of nothing at all" (III.636d; Sheldon-Williams's translation). Nor is matter created by another principle apart from God. All things have their origin in the same One. But the greatest error concerning matter is to believe that matter is coeternal with God and exists alongside Him:

For in this especially the error of the pagan philosophers who have dared to treat of the making of this world is principally condemned: that they said that unformed matter is coeternal with God, and that from it, as though it subsisted apart from Himself and coeternal with Him, God took the raw material for His works. (III.637a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Matter is indeed created by God. But Eriugena does not want us to think of creation as a kind of filling up of the hierarchies between God and unformed matter; rather, we are to think of matter as itself enfolded in God, belonging to the causes and therefore part of the infinite nothingness. This infinity is infinitely complex and contains all opposites. God created not only things like Himself but also things dissimilar and unlike, and that is an even greater measure of His glory, Nutritor argues. God therefore is the co-incidence of opposites, and even opposites like matter are contained in Him without difficulty or disruption of the originary unity.21 He explains, recapitulating material from earlier books, and relying on Gregory of Nyssa, that matter is in fact contained within the four elements and these are incorporeal (III.663a). These, in turn, are contained by the causes (III.664a). Unformed matter, then, which can be understood as privation, is not itself the non-being from which the world is created.

Eriugena goes on to argue that there is in fact no separation between Creator and creature. Creation itself is not an act or accident, which can be thought of as added to God's essence, but is God through and through (III.639a-b). The whole of creation is not an adjunct to God but is eternal in Him. Eriugena will use this argument to show that all created things are eternal and also made. All things are eternal because creation is an eternal aspect of the divine

<sup>19</sup> See Confessions XI.vii.9 and XII.xxix.40. See also De Genesi ad litteram Book I.ix.16. Augustine believed God first created an immaterial, intellectual world which was timeless and unchanging. Eriugena accepts the Augustinian view that creation is eternal, but he also understands from the De Genesi ad litteram that the procession of causes into effects takes place in time. That, for Eriugena, does not mean that there are eternal causes and separate temporal effects; rather there is only the one set of essences, which is viewed subspecie aeternitatis and subspecie temporis, in a manner which prefigures Spinoza. On the development of this idea in the twelfth century see C. Gross, "Twelfth Century Concepts of Time: Three Reinterpretations of Augustine's Doctrine of Creation Simul," Journal of the History of Philosophy 23 (July 1985), pp. 325–38, where the views of Hugh of Saint Victor, Thierry of Chartres, and William of Conches on creation are given. All three significantly modified Augustine's doctrine of simultaneous creation by introducing a temporal element. Unfortunately, Gross does not explore Eriugena as a possible source of twelfth-century ideas.

<sup>21</sup> At III.637c Eriugena explains that perfection and imperfection are both contained in God, as are all diametrically opposed pairs. These do not disrupt the simplicity of God's being, but they are essential to provide the richness and harmony of the created universe – just as musical harmony requires counterpoint (638a). Eriugena could have found these examples in Augustine's Confessions and elsewhere. Eriugena uses many phrases to indicate that God is the coincidence of opposites.

nature; all things are made because everything which is not God is created. There is only one creation, but there are two modes of viewing it – either eternally in the causes, or temporally in the effects. In God they are one; it is man who possesses the possibility of viewing them in different modes.

Nutritor proceeds to convince Alumnus that all things which are eternal are made. First he says that God as the source of all things runs through all things, and is the Beginning, Middle, and End of all things. All things therefore have their being totally in God. The being of created things is contained in the Word of God. In fact, their being in God (or in the Word) is their genuine being:

And lest anyone should suppose that we are one thing and our reasons are another (aliud nos esse et aliud nostras rationes), He did not say, In Whom our reasons (rationes) live and move and have their being, but He said: "In Whom we live and move and have our being." For in so far as we are, we are nothing else (nihil aliud) but those reasons of ours which subsist eternally (aeternaliter substitutae) in God. (III.640a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)<sup>22</sup>

This Word, which is a unity in itself, is the exemplar of all things (640d), and the created world is an infinite complication of this Word. In fact, the Word itself is both simple and infinitely complex (simplex et infinite multiplex, 642c) and thus enfolds all things in itself: "For its multiple and infinite course through all things is the subsistence (subsistentia) of all things" (III.642d; Sheldon-Williams's translation). Eriugena says that things are not only in the Word, but in fact they are the Word (641a), and Christ is also called idea because He is the principal exemplar of all things (642bc).

Eriugena explains how all things participate in God and outlines a theory of participation which shows that all things are one with God's eternity, while made in it.<sup>23</sup>

Eriugena's method here is most instructive and indicative of his concern to explain faith through reason. He begins by quoting Saint Paul; then he repeats a passage from Augustine to confirm that all things are created in the Word of God.<sup>24</sup> He then quotes Dionysius (*Divine Names* XIII.1 [PG III.997b]) to show that the One contains the species of all things. He also quotes Maximus (III.641b) to show that the Word of God contains the reasons of all things. He does not, however, proceed by argument from patristic authority (or from Scripture) alone. He also invokes a series of arguments based on *vera ratio* (641d), and on his knowledge of the liberal arts, to show that all things are eternal and made.

#### Numbers are eternal and created

Eriugena cites the example of mathematics, and relying heavily on Boethius (III.655b), he argues that the monad is eternal and yet contains all the other numbers that are found in it.25 He argues that the order of numbers is eternal and unshakable and is not merely a product of the mind, nor are numbers to be conceived of as existing outside the mind. Numbers are eternal realities, but they are found in the mind because they have been put there by God (III.658b ff.). Numbers are one in the monad, but the intellect, by a dialectical operation, is able to draw out numbers from the monad in their natural order, and therefore numbers are said to be created or made in the mind. The descent of numbers from the monad is carried out through and in the mind. They receive a "second birth" (661b) in reason and the senses. Thus numbers are eternal, but they are also made in the intellect (661a-b); however, they are not made from matter until they reach the fantasies of sense. This analogy from the liberal arts is used to explain how all things are contained in the Word yet

<sup>22</sup> This is the same as the idea expressed in the definition of man as an intellectual idea eternally made in the mind of God, which I discussed in Chapter 10. Here, being is awarded according to the fourth and fifth modes.

<sup>23</sup> Following Proclus and later Neoplatonism, Eriugena develops a fourfold division of participation: that which participates, that which is participated in, the relation of participation itself, and that which both participates and is participated in (630a-631a). Eriugena prefers the Greek term metousia (μετουσία) to participatio, since it indicates the sense of order whereby what participates has being after what has being in the first instance. Although Eriugena spends a great deal of time developing the Platonic concept of participation (whereby, for example, an image is said to participate in its exemplar), in fact his more complex relations of being and non-being make the concept of participation less relevant.

<sup>24</sup> From De Genesi ad litteram II.vi.12 The passage says that in one way things are in God and in another way they are outside Him. Eriugena interprets this in his usual perspectival manner to mean that there are two modes of viewing the creature.

<sup>25</sup> Eriugena took his number theory from Boethius, who in turn got it from Nicomachus of Gerasa and other neo-Pythagorean sources. Eriugena says, at III.652a, that Pythagoras is right in conceiving all things to be made of numbers and believes that Scripture supports this by saying that God made all things in measure, number, and weight. Eriugena actually believes there are several different orders of number. The view that things are made of numbers resurfaces in Grosseteste and in the Renaissance. This Pythagoreanism stimulated the mathematical investigation of nature of the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

proceed through the causes into the created effects, without being made from some pre-existent matter. All mathematical entities are both eternal and made; and now, by analogy, it can be argued that all intellectual essences are both eternal and made. But all things are not other than their intellectual essences; therefore, all things are both eternal and also created or made.

#### Ex nihilo creation really means ex Deo

Eriugena can now explain the true meaning of "nothing." God makes all things in the Word, and all things are not other than their being in the Word. All things, then, are made from God. "Nothing" is another name for God, and in fact Eriugena believes it is often used as such in the Scriptures (685a). He announces this theory as a great triumph but connects it immediately with the fourfold division of nature (quadripertita naturae divisio). Thus God is all in all, and creature and Creator are said to be one. Eriugena has at last been able to give a full account of the meaning of creation. Creation ex nihilo means God's own self-creation, His self-manifestation in theophanies, His movement from darkness to light. The process of creation is, at the same time, the process of the begetting of the Word, or the simple exclamation of the word in divine speech (clamor Dei). There is no "other" to God, although God can be considered as "other" than the world. God is really "not other" than the world, and creation is "not other" than God.

#### The meaning of the not-other

Eriugena inserts into this discussion a brief but important analysis of the meaning of the not-other that prefigures Nicholas of Cusa's account in his De li non aliud and confirms our interpretation that Eriugena is seeking to argue for difference-in-identity, or for the Hegelian notion of an identity of difference and identity. There is some evidence that Nicholas's use of non aliud as a term for God was stimulated by Eriugena. In his marginal comments on the text of Periphyseon Book I at 518d (where Eriugena uses the phrase non aliud to describe the identity of being, willing, and making in God), Nicholas has written: "in Deo non est aliud et diversum." But he uses the concept of non aliud in a more technical manner, associated with

the coincidentia oppositorum, defining it as "The not-other is not other than the not-other," and arguing that it thus defines itself.

Eriugena has been discussing God's knowledge of, and participation in, His creation (III.672c ff.). If God is the being of all things, does He know these things as they are in themselves or as they are in Him? If He knows them as Himself, has the creature not been annihilated? If God knows them as creatures, is He not limiting His own infinite being by positing something not Him, an object opposite Himself.<sup>26</sup> If God is all in all, as Scripture says, and if He is the being of creation, then in what possible sense is He other than the creature? Since God creates by willing, is He other than His willings? Or more correctly, are the things God wills different from His willings (673c)? The answer is complex. If God sees all things as His willings, then He sees them not as multiple things but as a single willing, since all things are one in Him. How then could God be other than (aliud) His will? Alumnus says he cannot say that God is other than His will (III.673c). But if God is not other than (non aliud) His will, then it will appear that God created Himself, which at this stage Alumnus still finds incredible. His answer at this point, therefore, is that of course God makes things in Himself, but they are other than Him. Nutritor sums up Alumnus's position as follows:

For when you said of the Divine Nature, that outside it there is nothing, so you understand, as I think, that [while] the Creative Nature permits nothing outside itself because outside it nothing can [be], yet everything which it has created and creates it contains within itself, but in such a way that it itself is other (aliud), because it is superessential, than what it creates within itself. For that it should create itself does not seem to you likely to be probable. (III.675c-d; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Nutritor immediately attacks this understanding, which is still thinking of difference instead of identity. He shows Alumnus that what he cannot grasp is in fact true, namely that God creates Himself. The things God sees in Himself are not other than the things

<sup>26</sup> Fichte struggled with a similar problem. If the ego is infinite substance, how can it posit the non-ego as an object? If it does posit this object, then it limits its own infinity and ceases to be infinite. If it does not posit the object, then there is no external to itself and the being of the world collapses. Neither Fichte nor Hegel was willing to surrender the obvious experience of the oppositeness of this world to consciousness. See J. Esposito, Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Press, 1977).

He makes (677b). Nutritor is not just imposing identity; he is asserting the identity of identity and difference by using the double negation of the not-other: The not-other is not other than itself.

#### Conclusion

What, then, is Eriugena's conclusion concerning the meanings of "nothing" and of "non-being"? He has gone through a deep and thorough investigation of the meaning of "creation ex nihilo" in order to show that this really means "creation from or out of God." He has shown that Creator and creature are really two aspects of the one infinite "reality," and can be understood in the dialectic of affirmation and negation, appearing and concealing, which is the meaning of the truth itself. God is this appearing and concealing, and this is the meaning of His self-creation in His willings or theophanies. God therefore can be said both to be and to be nothing:

Therefore the Divine Goodness, regarded as above all things, is said not to be, and to be absolutely nothing, but in all things it both is and is said to be, because it is the Essence of the whole universe and its substance and its genus and its species and its quantity and its quality and the bond (copula) between all things . . . and everything whatsoever that can be understood by whatever sort of intellect in every creature and about every creature. (III.681d-682a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

God is in no essence (in nulla essentia, III.681c); He is beyond all that is and is not (ultra omnia quae sunt et quae non sunt, III.681c). <sup>28</sup> The creature similarly is both being and also (considered in itself alone) non-being. There is a symmetry between Creator and creature. Just as the act of creation is the mediation between God and Himself, so also human nature is the mediator between nothing and being.

27 On the meaning of theophanies and creation as hiddenness (occultum) and manifestation (apparitio, manifestatio), see III.633a, where everything is said to be non apparentis apparitio, occulti manifestatio, negati affirmatio. See also W. Beierwaltes, "Negati Affirmatio. Welt als Metapher," in R. Roques. (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS, 1977), pp. 263-76. There are close parallels between Eriugena's concept of physis and Heidegger's concept of alëtheia, as we shall see in the next chapter.

28 Hegel makes non-being to be the same as being at one stage in the Lesser Logic, because, thought abstractly and without further determination, they are equal and in fact there is no concept of a difference between them. However, Hegel wants to go on to argue that "nothing" in this conception is an abstraction, which must be gone beyond in the higher unity of the true concrete Absolute. For Eriugena, on the other hand, this "nothing" is never a mere abstraction but is itself the most concrete and infinite reality. He thus goes beyond the idealists in interpreting non-being as infinite richness.

But in traditional metaphysics, creature and Creator are said to be separated by an enormous and indeed infinite gulf - the gulf signified by creation itself. Eriugena is anxious that "nothing" be said to interpose between God and the creature. The difference between Creator and creature is the nothingness which is also the origin of them both.29 This "nothing," which is between God and creature, is identical with God's own willings, his theophanies. These theophanies do not constitute a formal ontological order between God and creation. They are intermediaries between non-being and being; they are God's manifestations. All things, then, are theophanies of God and "proceed as it were out of non-being into being" (III.6812). There is an intimate link between theophanies and human theoria. Both are intermediaries and, indeed, are the identical act of mediation. God, creatures, and creation all partake in non-being. But the theophanies are also human contemplations of the divine, theoriae, and their revealing/concealing nature is also the ground of both human nature and the divine. 30 What, then, is non-being? It is to be understood as the infinite richness of God before He manifests Himself, or the infinite richness of the Word before it is spoken, or the infinite power of the Cause before it acts, or the infinite being of the mind before thought. Eckhart similarly calls God an "equal to nothing" in his sermon number 6, Justi vivent in aeternum (Colledge and McGinn, Meister Eckhart, p. 187), and also calls the detached soul a "naked nothingness."

But this non-being would be mere nothingness (omnino nihil) were it not for the revealing dimension of theophania, of the lighting of the divine darkness, which is one with the contemplations of the human mind in the Word. We can never think just one side of the dialectic; indeed, our own immanent and transcendent nature prevents us from such a one-sided understanding of the meaning of nature.

30 This is the truth of the relation of mind to the Absolute. As in Schelling's philosophy, there is not only the transcendent unity of identity and difference, but also the possibility of a transcendental faculty of viewing this Absolute – a faculty which has its roots in the finite order itself. This is, for Schelling, intellektuelle Anschauung, but for Eriugena it is the multiple theoriae that lead ultimately to theösis.

<sup>29</sup> Eriugena would agree with Heidegger's account of non-being in What Is Metaphysics? where nothingness is said to lie behind negation, rather than being hypostatised from the mental or logical act of negation. See S. Rosen, "Thinking About Nothing," in M. Murray (ed.), Heidegger and Modern Philosophy (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 116-37.

At one point Eriugena remarks that he has never considered that

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any being but God was anarchos, hoc est sine principio, without beginning or cause (I.451d). This tractatus on the meaning of nothing shows that all beings can be said to be without beginning and without cause, and hence are also to be called anarchos. It is the uncaused, anarchic non-being of humanity which is the vehicle for the articulation of the divine darkness into the light of being. Eriugena's whole philosophical impetus was to create a dialectic which could properly express this cosmic process of revelation and concealment. He feels he has discovered this dialectic, not just in denying attributes of God, but in affirming and denying things also of man and creation in general.

Eriugena applies this negative dialectic to all things. At III.665a, for example, he says that all things can be said to be both eternal

Eriugena applies this negative dialectic to all things. At III.665a, for example, he says that all things can be said to be both eternal and not eternal. They can also be said not to be made or to be made, not to be or to be. The manner in which this dialectic is applied is not just a matter of a mental game or conceit. It is a spiritual means of transcending the temporal and created condition and gaining a timeless participation in the oneness of God's infinite nothingness. The dialectic liberates the mind from attachment to the being of creatures, considered as substances in their own right, and frees it to consider all things as non-beings or as theophanies. The dialectic must also proceed outwards, however, from the eternal into space and time, in order for the essential dynamic of the "in-between" nature itself to be fulfilled. In order that all these aspects be understood in their correct dialectical moments, Eriugena introduces the dialectical and cosmic scheme of the four divisions of nature, to which we must now turn.

Having examined Eriugena's concepts of human nature, mind, selfknowledge, and non-being, we are now in a position to interpret his most famous doctrine: the fourfold division of nature. This is the high point of Eriugena's physiologia (IV.741c), his science of nature, which has intrigued commentators and yet has remained essentially uninterpreted. Eriugena is responding to a problem posed by his Neoplatonic sources, especially Dionysius and Maximus. The problem is the relation between God and His creation. Are God's ideas and willings part of Him and hence uncreated, or do they belong to the structure of created nature? Since there are no intermediaries between God and creation, according to Scripture, how can a Christian Neoplatonist resolve this problem? Eriugena's answer is to propose a fourfold division of nature, which includes a category of things which are both created and active in creating. This category is not a fixed ontological level or intermediary between God and creation. as we shall see.

In this chapter I shall argue that Eriugena's hierarchical scheme of nature is to be understood not as a fixed set of metaphysical levels or degrees of reality but, rather, as a set of theoriae, or mental acts of intellectual contemplation, which allow human subjectivity to enter into the infinite divine subjectivity and nothingness. The four divisions of nature exist only in so far as they are viewed by the mind and are resolved by the mind into acts of intellect. Eriugena is interested in these divisions of nature because they offer a structure or paradigm by which the mind can enter into and grasp the anarchic play of infinite nature in its multiple manifestations, which continue eternally and, in fact, constitute the real meaning of eternal life. The fourfold division of nature is a pattern or an icon, which transmits divine infinite theophanies to human minds, which in turn enter into and celebrate that infinite multiplicity. Since self-manifestation is creation, the four divisions of nature are really forms

of the self-manifestation and creation of subjectivity, understood as the common ground of both humanity and divinity.

At its highest level, Eriugena's philosophy ceases being about external things and turns everything into the restless and unceasing unfolding of divine apparitions, that is, theophanies. Eriugena's physical world, the common world of nature, is transformed into a world of symbol, image, exemplar, sign, or, to use a word which for him had a similar meaning, mystery (mysterium) or sacrament. Eriugena understands the four divisions of nature as a series of mysteries, symbols, or sacramental epiphanies. They are stages in the infinite dialectical adventure of the mind's reunification with God. Nature does not simply mean the external, objective existent world, and Eriugena's science of nature is not merely a physics in that sense. Rather his concept of nature is to be understood as the site of the meeting of minds, the location of the play of infinite subjectivity. All nature is resolved into mind.

I can illustrate the thesis that nature is absorbed into intellect by quoting a similar idea from a later mediaeval writer, Eckhart. In his Commentary on Genesis, Eckhart says that the principle (archē, principium) in which God created heaven and earth is intellect:

Note that the "principle" in which "God created heaven and earth" is the nature of the intellect. "He made the heavens in the intellect" (Ps. 135:5). Intellect is the principle of the whole of nature, as it says in the comment on the ninth proposition of the *Book of Causes* with the words "Understanding rules nature through divine power."

Nature, then, can be understood only through the concept of mind. For Eriugena, mind itself must be understood in terms of the dialectic of knowledge and ignorance, being and non-being. We must see how the ordered hierarchies of nature are subsumed into the contemplations of the mind.

#### The historical background to the meaning of nature

What is the meaning of the term physis or natura ("nature") in Eriugena's Periphyseon? I shall argue that his account of nature is one of the most detailed, systematic, and comprehensive discussions of the subject in the whole of mediaeval philosophy and that he does develop a system of nature, contrary to Cappuyns, who argued that la conception tant vantée de la physis is almost completely forgotten after the first few lines of the work.<sup>3</sup> Although we cannot discuss it in this study, Eriugena had considerable influence on the formulations of the concept of nature in twelfth-century writers – mainly through the dissemination of his ideas by Honorius Augustodunensis with his paraphrase of the Periphyseon entitled the Clavis physicae.<sup>4</sup>

Eriugena understands the term *physis* in a remarkably rich way, which, as we shall see, is a major advance over the fairly reified understanding of the term in Latin metaphysics (which, for example, saw a firm distinction between nature and divine operation, i.e., grace). Eriugena inherited a deeper understanding of nature from the Greek Christian Neoplatonists, who preserve the meaning of nature found in ancient Greek philosophy as it would be expounded by Heidegger.<sup>5</sup> Heidegger says that the ancient Greeks understood nature not as the limited idea of a substance or essence, or as related to birth (as the Latins did when they translated *physis* as *natura*, which comes from the verb for being born, *nascor*), but as the process of

3 See M. Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène: Sa vie, son ocuvre, sa pensée (Louvain: Abbaye de Mont César, 1933), p. 311.

I See J. Pépin, "Mysteria et symbola dans le commentaire de Jean Scot sur l'Évangile de s. Jean," in J. J. O'Meara and L. Bieler (eds.), The Mind of Eriugena (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973), pp. 16–30. Eriugena found the term symbolon in Dionysius and translated it as symbolum, whereas Hilduin had used indicium. In the Expositiones 132c—d Eriugena says that sensible things are symbols of intellectual realities. For him, everything in this world is a symbol or sign of the divine.

<sup>2</sup> For Eckhart's views on this see E. Colledge and B. McGinn (eds.), Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defence (Ramsey, N.S.: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 84. Augustine interpreted Genesis to mean that the first light that was created was the angelic intellect. Eriugena agrees with this interpretation, but also sees this light as intellect in general.

<sup>4</sup> On Honorius Augustodunensis see P. Lucentini (ed.), Honorii Augustodunensis Clavis physicae, Temi e testa 23 (Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 1974), and P. Lucentini, "La Clavis physicae di Honorius Augustodunensis e la tradizione eriugeniana nel secolo XII," in R. Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS, 1977), pp. 405–14. Also S. Gersh, "Honorius Augustodunensis and Eriugena: Remarks on the Method and Content of the Clavis physicae," in W. Beierwaltes (ed.), Eriugena Redivivus (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1987), pp. 162–73. Both Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa had read this work.

<sup>5</sup> See Heidegger's many references to physis, especially An Introduction to Metaphysics (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959). For Heidegger the translation of physis as natura marked "the first stage of the process by which we cut ourselves off and alienated ourselves from the original essence of Greek philosophy." In his later years he read Gregory of Nyssa and admitted that the Greek Christian tradition might not suffer from the forgetfulness of being to the same extent as Latin Christian metaphysics did (personal communication from Bishop Kallistos Ware). For a more classical study of the meaning of nature in Greek philosophy, see E. Hardy, Der Begriff der Physis in der griechischen Philosophie (Berlin, 1884).

concealing and appearing, hiddenness and manifestness, which is one with the nature of truth ( $al\bar{e}theia$ ,  $\mathring{\alpha}\lambda\mathring{\eta}\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$ ) itself. According to Heidegger, the Greeks were able to think both manifest nature and its hidden ground or earth in the single concept of *physis*. We shall see that Eriugena also understands *physis* as a structure of concealing and revealing, hiddenness and manifestation, which is one with the nature of truth itself. The difference between the ancient Greeks and Eriugena is that the Greeks thought of *physis* in terms of *peras* ("limit") and time (*chronos*), whereas Eriugena understands the play of nature as infinite (*apeiron*) and timeless. In order to appreciate the radically original manner of approaching nature in Eriugena, we must briefly look at the history of the concept.

#### The meaning of nature in ancient authors

Although physis, or nature, was an important topic for discussion in ancient writers from the Pre-Socratics to Lucretius, with many works devoted to an analysis of the nature of the cosmos, the concept of nature itself was never really clarified in any consistent manner in classical philosophy. Pellicer, in his important study of the meaning of the term natura, shows that nature had many meanings in antiquity: It can mean the material or vital principle of a thing, its innate character and qualities, its being; or it can mean the natural, universal or moral law, a creative power or force, the order of things, or even the universe itself understood as a totality. It can also mean the principle of growth and nutrition or, as Boethius says, "that which can act or be acted upon" (natura est vel quod facere vel quod pati possit) (Contra Eutychen et Nestorium I.25–26).

Christian thought added new meanings to the complex cluster of significations already attached to the concept of nature, for example, the idea of perfect versus fallen nature, or the contrast between nature and grace (developed in Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings, for example), or the definition of divine nature and its relationship to

the idea of a person. Christianity did not systematically order and relate the many meanings of nature in a more thorough metaphysical manner, until the disputes over the meaning of the Trinity forced the Latin Church to devise a means of distinguishing the various "natures" of God.

Many writers have seen this lack of serious systematic analysis of nature as implied by the very "otherworldly" attitude of both Christianity and Platonism in the early mediaeval period. It has been pointed out that Augustine, for example, as he himself indicates in the *Soliloquies*, is not interested in anything outside of God and the soul. Of course the absence of Aristotle's *Physics* was also influential in depriving the early Middle Ages of an adequate framework for discussing nature.

Ferdinand Van Steenberghen, moreover, has pointed out that the traditional educational curriculum of the liberal arts left no place for the study of nature as such. Indeed, there is little evidence of any advanced speculation on physics or cosmology in the early mediaeval period.<sup>10</sup>

Although Augustine did not claim to be much interested in the principles of nature, he did allow room in his educational programme for the theoretical study of nature, especially the study of patterns and forms of this world, which might serve to increase our knowledge of the Creator. In the *De doctrina Christiana* II.XVI.24, for example, he defends the importance of a knowledge of the natural world for the correct understanding of Scripture. Indeed, his several commentaries on Genesis provide him with the perfect opportunity to enter into some speculations on the nature of heaven and earth. In fact, all early Christian writers looked to Genesis as a survey of natural philosophy, and mediaeval commentaries on the

<sup>6</sup> Eriugena also recognises that the word for nature derives etymologically from the word for being born. At V.867ab, he says that physis comes from phuomai, which means nascor, plantor, or generor.

<sup>7</sup> See A. Pellicer, Natura: Etude sémantique et historique du mot latin (Paris: PUF, 1966). See also the entry, "Nature," in A. Lalande, Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie, 8th ed. (Paris: PUF, 1960), pp. 667-73.

<sup>8</sup> See F. J. Thonnard, "La Notion de nature chez s. Augustin: ses progrès dans la polémique anti-pélagienne," Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes 9 (1965), pp. 239-65.

<sup>9</sup> For a classical statement of this view, see E. R. Dodds, Pagan and Christian in the Age of Anxiety (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> F. Van Steenberghen, "La Philosophie de la nature au XIIIe siècle," in La Filosofia della Nature nel Medioevo, Atti del terzo Congresso internazionale di Filosofia medioevale (Milan: Societa Editrice Vita e Pensiero, 1966), pp. 114-32. In Chapter 8 we discussed the problem of integrating the study of nature into the framework of knowledge given by the liberal arts. Eriugena fuses physics and theology under the terms scientia and sapientia and sees the philosopher as the person who studies both. Thus he tends to use philosophus, sapiens mundi, theologus, and physiologus as synonyms. Eriugena refers to physici at III.714b and to mundana philosophia at 713a. In general, however, he defines physics as relating to the study of the world of change, while his physiologia studies the unchanging causes and God Himself.

work of the Six Days (Hexaëmera) contain large amounts of cosmological and scientific information and theorising. Moreover, Eriugena could easily have found passages in Augustine which treated physics as a kind of meditation on God through His created works. For example, in De civitate Dei, Book VIII, Chapter 4, Augustine refers to the threefold division of philosophy into ethics, logic, and physics, and talks of "natural philosophy whose purpose is contemplation." In general, however, it is indeed true that Augustine's temperament was not disposed towards abstract intellectual speculation, and he was content with the many probabilities and conjectures available to him, as long as they were not in flagrant contradiction of the Bible and his Christian faith. He could, of course, have fully justified himself in this stance by his understanding of Plato's Timaeus 29d, which argued that we can only know probabilities or likenesses of the truth concerning the lower sensible world.12 Augustine does allow for arguments from the created world as a means of understanding the nature of the invisible world, based on his interpretation of Romans 1.20, which states that God's invisible nature can be grasped from the visible things He has made. 13 Eriugena likewise, also quoting Paul, accepts that we can and should argue from the created world to the Creator and that we should investigate the reasons and causes of nature in so far as it is in our power. On the other hand, he asserts that we can never know all the causes for the myriad individual happenings in this world. We can never understand the true rationale of the effects that appear. All we can grasp are the universal principles of nature. Although he gives a detailed account of the nature of the world in Book III, following the cosmographers known to him, he nevertheless denies that this is his main aim, and at III.688a he says that one is free to adopt or teach whatever theory of the world one likes. 14

14 See also III.723ab. Eriugena constantly emphasises the freedom of speculative thought and the need to choose theories according to one's personal preference. He points out

Nature was discussed by other Neoplatonic writers in addition to Augustine. His mentor Plotinus also gave nature considerable emphasis in his writings, although it is unclear how far the domain of nature extends in his system. Is nature to be considered as a hypostasis alongside nous and psyche? In Ennead III.8 Plotinus saw nature almost on the level of the three major hypostases of One; Nous, and Psyche. He calls nature a "quasi hypostasis" and gives it the status of a contemplative producer (i.e., something whose perfection and intellectuality are such that it produces a likeness of itself from itself, simply by being in possession of itself, without entering into the material realm). Nature, for Plotinus, was both part of the domain of the intelligible world and a creative principle in its own right. Yet he denied that nature has the full self-consciousness and knowledge of the three primary hypostases, and, in places, he seems to imply that nature acts in an unconscious manner. 15

Later writers, such as Martianus Capella and Boethius, also operate with a fairly complex concept of nature. Martianus, for example, called nature *generationum omnium mater*, and Boethius, especially in his theological writings, gave considerable clarification to the concept, when he used it to distinguish the concept of person in the Trinity. In *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium*, written to refute heretical suggestions concerning Christ's two natures, Boethius listed several meanings of nature, some of which prefigure Eriugena's distinctions. For instance, he defined nature thus at *Contra Eutychen* I.1–4:

Nature, then, may be predicated either of bodies alone or of substances alone, that is, of corporeals and incorporeals, or of all things which are said to exist in any way at all. (Natura igitur aut de solis corporibus dici potest aut de solis substantiis, id est corporeis atque incorporeis aut de omnibus rebus quae quocumque modo esse dicuntur.)<sup>16</sup>

Eriugena knew the *Contra Eutychen*, and it is quite obviously a source of his inclusion of the domain of the incorporeals into the realm of nature. This has not been noticed by most commentators. Boethius

<sup>11</sup> See G. G. Walsh, D. B. Zema, et al., Augustine, The City of God (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 149.

<sup>12</sup> Eriugena has a similar attitude towards the kinds of truths which can be discovered in the natural world. Twelfth-century cosmologists similarly thought that the mutability of the sensible world made true knowledge of it an impossibility. See P. Dronke, Fabula: Explorations into the Use of Myth in Medieval Platonism (Leiden: Brill, 1974), p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> This passage of Paul is a great favourite of Augustine's. See, for example, De doctrina Christiana I.4. It is also found in Gregory of Nyssa. For Eriugena's use of Romans 1.20, see III.670b, 690a, 723b, V.864c, 1005b. See R. A. Markus, "Augustine: God and Nature," in A. H. Armstrong (ed.), The Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 395-405.

that no theory can in fact be either fully confirmed or denied, and the Scriptures themselves do not provide adequate information to found a certain science of nature.

<sup>15</sup> See J. Deck, Nature, Contemplation, and the One: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), pp. 64-72. See also P. Hadot, "L'Apport du néoplatonisme à la philosophie de la nature en Occident," Eranos Jahrbuch 37 (1968), pp. 91-132.

<sup>16</sup> See Boethius, Tractates, De consolatione philosophiae, trans. H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 77.

gave a number of definitions of nature in this passage: "Nature" may be said only (1) of bodies (I.1); or (2) of substances alone (I.2), including here both corporeal and incorporeal substances; or (3) of anything which may be said to exist (esse) in any manner whatever (I.3-4). Depending on which things "nature" is said of, it may be defined either as (1) that which belongs to anything which may be grasped by the intellect (intellectus) in any way (I.8-10); (2) that which acts and is acted upon (I.25-26); (3) containing all things including God (I.5-9); (4) the principle of movement in living things, in line with the Aristotelian definition (I.40-43); or (5) the specific difference which gives form to anything (I.57-58). It was in these last two ways that Boethius was interested in distinguishing the human from the divine nature in Christ. This account is perplexing and occasioned much debate in mediaeval commentary, including the early remarks of Ratramnus of Corbie. Heiric of Auxerre, a student and younger contemporary of Eriugena's, gives a typical definition of "nature" in his commentary on the Categoriae decem, which includes all things, whether they are visible or invisible, sensible or intelligible, creating or created. This last designation betrays an Eriugenian influence, and Heiric ends his definition by saying that "nature" is the general name for all things which are and are not. 17

Eriugena knew these Latin meanings of nature from Augustine and Boethius, but he took his own understanding in large measure from Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus. <sup>18</sup> Maximus, following Augustine, who sharply distinguished God and creature, laid enormous emphasis on the absolute separation (chasma) between uncreated and created nature. Eriugena's meditations on nature are strongly influenced by this contrast, which underlies the fourfold division of nature. From Maximus also, Eriugena took the notion of nature as involving an outgoing or proodos from ousia, through stages which Maximus named (in Aristotelian terms) dynamis and energeia, until it reaches individual entities and then is collected in an epistrophē (ἐπιστροφή) or return into ousia. <sup>19</sup> Eriugena adopted

17 Marenbon, From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 185-6.

the Greek understanding of nature as a dynamic process which emerges from God's infinite darkness into the multiplicity of creatures and forms, and returns to that darkness, after passing a period in the dimension of space and time.

#### The meaning of nature for Eriugena

What does Eriugena mean by the term "nature"? For him, as for Latin philosophy in general, it has a wide application. He uses it to refer to the ineffabilis natura of God (e.g., I.46oc); His creative nature (natura creatrix); the realm of incorporeals (V.993b); the natural order (ordo, III.663d) of the cosmic hierarchies; the individual things found in this spatiotemporal world, which are subject to the necessity of natural law (e.g., V.867a-b), and the natural law itself. More individualistically and idiosyncratically, Eriugena uses the term to refer to the universitas rerum, the totality of all things which are and are not. Thus at the opening of the Periphyseon (I.441a) Eriugena states that nature can be divided into ea quae sunt (those things which are) and ea quae non sunt (those things which are not). As we saw in Chapter 11, he suggests many different ways of distinguishing between being and non-being, and these in turn generate different meanings of nature. Thus, in some modes, nature is taken to mean the divine nature, while in other modes Eriugena means created nature alone. In Book I he defines nature to include both God and the creature. And in Book III.621a he explains that "by that name, 'Nature,' is usually signified not only the created universe (creata universitas) but also that which creates it (ipsius creatrix)." But Eriugena also frequently states that God is both a nature and not a nature, for He is not any of the things that are, and is a kind of hyper physis, which translates as supernaturalis, supernatural. This allows Eriugena to follow the Greeks in uniting nature and grace, which Latin philosophy had so sharply distinguished. Thus at III.684c and V.906b he links nature and grace as complementary data and dona. God gives everything a nature, which establishes it as a substance, but He also gives it grace, which perfects the nature. Furthermore, Eriugena distinguishes between ousia and physis at V.867a-b, by saying that ousia refers to something as it exists in the primary causes, whereas physis refers to its generation in space and time. Given this broad range of meanings for nature and the general flexibility in termi-

<sup>18</sup> For an account of nature in Greek writers (which unfortunately ignores Maximus) see D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, The Greek Patristic View of Nature (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968).

<sup>19</sup> See L. Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor (Lund: Gleerup, 1965), p. 53.

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nology, does Eriugena develop a genuine and consistent theory of nature?

#### The four divisions of nature

Immediately following his definition of "nature" as encompassing all things that are and are not, including God and creation, Eriugena develops his famous doctrine of the four divisions or *species* of nature. This division is based on the inter-relation between nature and creation:

The division of nature (divisio naturae) seems to me to admit of four species through four differentiae. The first is the division into what creates and is not created; the second into what is created and creates; the third, into that which is created and does not create; the fourth, into what neither creates nor is created. (Periphyseon I.441b-442a; Uhlfelder's translation, p. 2)

We must remember that, as we have seen, Eriugena defines creation as self-manifestation (e.g., I.455b), self-externalisation, revelation. This dynamic idea underlies the fourfold division. But first let us examine the division itself.

This division is not found in this precise form in any previous author, though several vague sources have been suggested, including Boethius, Augustine, Bede, and Marius Victorinus. Most recent scholarship favours Bede's *De rerum natura*, which Eriugena quotes without naming at several points. Bede makes use of the idea of quadriformity in a rather different manner than Eriugena, and does not exhaustively classify the options available for linking

20 Augustine operates with a threefold distinction in *De civitate Dei* V.9 (PL XLI.151) between those things which make (*facit*) and are not made (i.e., God), those things which make and are made (i.e., the primary causes), and those things which are made but do not make (i.e., the effects). In order to turn this into a fourfold distinction, Eriugena needed to bring in the Greek idea of God as a non-being who transcends both making and being made. Eriugena was aware of four types of non-being, possibly through Marius Victorinus's *Ad Candidum*, which did circulate in the ninth century. Indeed one MS appears to have marginalia in Eriugena's own hand. See I.-P. Sheldon-Williams's article in Armstrong. *Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, p. 523. See also the discussion in Chapter 11, this volume.

21 Eriugena quotes Bede at III.640b although he thinks he is referring to one of Augustine's minor works. This is in fact part of the opening chapter of Bede's De rerum natura (123a). It says that the divina operatio is governed by a fourfold principle (quadriformis ratio). This principle is divided into cause and effect, eternal and temporal, which is also Eriugena's preferred way of dividing nature. Eriugena refers to this quadriformis ratio also in De praed. 369bc. See B. Stock, "In Search of Eriugena's Augustine," in W. Beierwaltes (ed.), Eriugena: Studien zu seinen Quellen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1980), pp. 87ff.

nature and the act of creation. Eriugena, on the other hand, wants the division to appear *logical*, systematic, and exhaustive, so he goes into some detail to make it appear ordered like the Aristotelian Square of Opposition, which he knew from Martianus Capella and elsewhere:

Of these four [divisions], two pairs consist of opposites. The third is the opposite of the first, the fourth of the second. But the fourth is among the things which are impossible, and its differentia is its inability to be. (I.442a; Uhlfelder's translation, p. 2)

Here he talks generally of opposition within the four divisions. He uses several terms to express the relations of contrariety, contradiction, and containment between the four divisions of nature. In Book II he expresses the relation in terms of similarity and dissimilarity:

The second form is similar to the first in that it creates, but dissimilar in that it is created. . . . The third takes on a likeness of the second in that it is created, but differs from it in that it creates nothing. . . . The third is similar to the fourth in that it does not create, but is dissimilar in that it is created. . . . Furthermore the fourth is similar to the first because it is not created, but appears to be remote from it because it does not create. (II.525c-526a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

The four divisions then are a logical articulation of the relationship between creation and the act of creating. Eriugena is intent on working out all the logical relations between his four forms, which he seems to treat like a schematism of nature.<sup>22</sup>

Eriugena immediately goes on to talk of the division of nature as matched by a recollection of nature. It is clear that he sees himself as engaged in the art of dialectic. The four divisions of nature are discovered by dialectic. They also instantiate and exemplify the movement of the dialectic, with its moments of exitus and reditus. The four levels of nature proceed outwards and multiply into the effects through the mechanism of likeness and similarity as in other Neoplatonic systems. In fact, as we shall shortly see, Eriugena, like Dionysius, understands hierarchies as related through likeness and finally through their likeness to God.

For Eriugena the universe unfolds by logical division, but he also partitions the world, that is, gives an account of the relationship between parts and the whole. Thus the four divisions can also be

<sup>22</sup> Stock, in his "In Search of Eriugena's Augustine," p. 96, relates the four divisions of nature to the fourfold classification of predicates as in a subject, of a subject, etc.

understood as the fourfold partition of nature (quadripertita totius naturae discretio, III.688a), though he runs the two concepts together at III.690a, where he talks of the quadripertita divisio. Furthermore, at V.1019a, he refers to the universal division of nature as being four-formed, quadriformata; and at II.524d, he speaks of the quadriformis divisio, the four-form division.

From this account, we see that Eriugena uses various terms (forms, species, differentiae) to describe the exact nature of these four divisions of nature. He speaks of them as four species under one genus. It was this assertion that led to the allegation that Eriugena was articulating a form of pantheism. The divisions are also considered to be a species separated by four differentiae (I.441b), in a manner which has been compared with the way in which the four elements are distinguished by the four qualities (i.e., cold, hot, dry, moist) in Eriugena's own philosophy.23 Eriugena calls these divisions parts (partes) at II.526a, and even forms (formae) at II.524d. Furthermore, God is called the forma omnium, and thus would appear to be present in all the forms of nature. Eriugena frequently uses form as equivalent to species, although he distinguishes them in his commentary on Book IV of Martianus's De nuptiis. Eriugena is using the term "form" in a Platonic sense, which he never further clarifies. But the four forms of nature are in fact four primary causes (which are also called forms and species) and must therefore organise the multitude of causes in a higher classification. This gives us a hint as to their ultimate nature. The primary causes are divine theophanies, and therefore the four divisions of nature must be understood as theophanies: They are from God, but they are also in Him and are Him. At III.690a Eriugena says this universal division is "both from God (de Deo) and in God (in Deo)." The four forms of nature are also aspects of Christ, who has been called "Form" by Eriugena, as we saw.

#### The four divisions as hierarchy

Eriugena lays out the divisions as a descending order (ordo, 620c) or hierarchy in the manner of Dionysius's hierarchies. It is in this way that they have most commonly been understood by philosophers. Eriugena translated both the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and *Ce-*

lestial Hierarchy of Dionysius, where he found the notion of hierarchy. Translating Dionysius, Eriugena defines hierarchy as follows: "A hierarchy for me is a divine order, science (or knowledge), and practice, made similar, in so far as possible, to the divine idea, ascending in proportion to likeness to God, according to the illuminations given to it by God" (CH iii.164d; my translation).<sup>24</sup> Thus hierarchy means not just a series of ontological levels, but also a mental science and moral practice of attempting to increase likeness to God. Eriugena's four levels of nature are related by likeness to the first and fourth levels, which signify God Himself.

Eriugena operates with several distinct kinds of hierarchy, as we have already seen. He has a general hierarchy of all things into being, life, intellect, and One, an ascending order he could have found in Augustine or in many other Neoplatonic sources. He also has an epistemological hierarchy of sense, imagination, memory, inner sense, reason, intellect, and an ecstatic union with the One (in contemplations which produce theosis). Moreover, he has a cosmic hierarchy which extends downwards from God and the angels, through the first principles, down through the sun and the planets, until it reaches the world soul (anima mundi, I.476c), space and time, and the various corporeal realities. But he also conceives of this hierarchy as the logical tree of genera, species, and individuals, which extends, as he often says, "from highest to lowest." This is perhaps his most common way of talking about the hierarchies, as they are expressed in the division of nature, and it is this which gave rise to the comment that he "hypostasises the tabula logica."

A division is both a logical and an ontological process, following the standard Neoplatonic recognition of an isomorphism between intellectual structures and the structures of the real, a mirroring of reality in thought. Division moves from highest to lowest, and the return is called recollection, analysis, resolution (analytikē), or epistrophē. Moreover, the way up and the way down are the same:<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See Sheldon-Williams in Armstrong, Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy, pp. 520-1.

<sup>24</sup> See Eriugena's translation of Dionysius's Celestial Hierarchy III.164d, in PL CXXII.1044c: "Est quidem Ierarchia secundum me ordo divinus et scientia, et actio, deiformi quantum possibile, simulata, juxta, inditas ei divinitus illuminationes proportionaliter in Dei similitudinem ascendens."

This principle of the identity between division and recollection is found in Proclus, in E. R. Dodds (ed.), Elements of Theology, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), proposition 38, for example, where Proclus states: "All that proceeds from a plurality of causes passes through as many terms in its reversion as in its procession; and all reversion is through the same terms as the corresponding procession."

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For there is no rational division (rationabilis divisio), whether it be of essence into genera, or of genus into species and individuals or of the whole into its parts – for which the proper name is partition (partitio) – or of the universe into those divisions which right reason contemplates therein, that cannot be brought back again by the same stages through which the division has previously ramified into multiplicity, until it arrives at that One which remains inseparably in itself (and) from which that division took its origin. (II.526a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Clearly then the four divisions of nature can be understood as four stages or terms in the logical/ontological process of procession from the One into multiplicity. Understood in this way we have to interpret the four levels as a descending order of causation in typically Neoplatonic terms, where there is a gradual limitation in the power and range of the cause as we descend. (See, e.g., Plotinus, *Ennead* V. 1.6, where the principle is clearly stated that even an eternal and perfect producer produces something inferior to itself.) Thus the four divisions of nature are named by Eriugena as follows:

Uncreated and creating Created and creating Created and not creating Uncreated and not creating

God
Primary causes
Created effects (this world)
Materia informis
Non-being

Although the initial intention is to show that the four divisions can be ranked in descending order, Eriugena's main efforts will be expended in subverting and deconstructing this original Neoplatonic scheme. He wants to argue that all four divisions are on the same ontological level and do not represent a gradually diminishing causal power. Rather, the divisions are an outpouring or expansion from the One, which in no way diminishes the One, who remains omnipresent throughout the whole order. Eriugena appears here to be affirming a Dionysian modification of a principle of Plotinus's and Proclus's, namely, that what is produced is necessarily inferior. Dionysius is aware that an infinite being produces infinitely, and hence what is produced cannot be limited. In the Homilia he expressly states that the generation of the Son from the Father is one with the creation of all things, and he names this as one of the highest mysteries. Eriugena has many terms for this expansion or em-

anation and does not at all see it as contradicting or threatening God's free act of creating.<sup>26</sup>

Certainly the logical structuring of the divisions gives the impression (as in Plotinus) of an eternal and necessary outflowing of the effects from the causes, of the created world from God. For this reason also Eriugena was condemned as a pantheist, as we have seen. One of the charges levelled against the Amauricians in the thirteenth century was that they taught that the divine ideas were both created and creating. Moreover, besides calling God a genus of which the natural orders are species, and seeing their creation as a natural and necessary emanation, Eriugena also invites the charge of pantheism by explicitly reducing the four forms of nature to one single ousia, thus conflating God and the creature. Before attempting to defend Eriugena on this charge, let us examine the resolution of the four orders of nature into one.

Hidden in this fourfold scheme is the triadic scheme of emanation from, and return to, an unchanging One. Thus in Book II Eriugena explains how the four divisions of nature may be understood as three: God in His aspects of Beginning, Middle, and End (II.527b; see also I.451d-452a, 453b; III.621d, 675a, 688b). The four divisions of God are really only God: God is the genus of which the forms of nature are species.

Eriugena then goes on to show that these four divisions are not static categories but, rather, a series of relative beings, which may be thought together as one nature. The four divisions show nature in its initial stage, in its expansion (for Nicholas of Cusa: explicatio) and also in its contraction and return (complicatio, contractio, to use Nicholas's terminology). But Eriugena believes that the four divisions can be further reduced (reductio – led back or recollected or recovered by the mind) to two levels and finally back to one.

<sup>26</sup> On Eriugena's concept of emanation and its relation to later Neoplatonism, see S. Gersh, From Iamblichus to Eriugena (Leiden: Brill, 1978), esp. pp. 17-26. Eriugena actually uses the term emanatio at I.506c, and elsewhere he translates Maximus's image as fluere (flowing forth) or fluere desursum. For emanation in Dionysius, see R. Roques, L'Univers dionysien (Paris: Aubier, 1954), pp. 101-2. For a general discussion of emanation and creation, see J. H. Gay, "Four Medieval Views of Creation," Harvard Theological Review 56 (1963), pp. 253-8. Gersh claims that Dionysius was vague about the manner in which the Divine Exemplars flow forth from the One. Maximus was more rigorous in emphasising that, strictly speaking, they did not flow forth but were created.

#### The reduction of the four divisions to one

In Book II, Eriugena demonstrates a reduction of the levels of nature, which is modelled on Maximus's account of the return of the creature to God. He begins by bringing together the primary causes and the effects, that is, the second and third divisions of nature.

His argument is as follows: First, every cause has its effect and every effect its proper causes, so the two terms are mutually dependent and inseparable. Thus cause and effect for Eriugena co-exist on the same ontological level, and one cannot strictly speak of diminishing power when one moves from cause to effect. In traditional Neoplatonic systems, the cause is usually considered to be more perfect and to have more reality than the effect, 27 and Eriugena also speaks in these terms. (See, e.g., III.663c.) But a cause may also be understood to be equal to its effect and to have the same amount of reality except that by definition, the cause is always prior to the effect, and since it is cause, it is distinguished from the effect, which is not called "cause" for the same reason. Therefore, one cannot strictly speak of the identity of cause and effect. Eriugena prefers to think of the relation of primary causes to created effects, since in fact for him creation is nothing more than manifestation or progression from hiddenness into openness, which does not necessarily involve decline or diminution. Thus at III.693a-b he says that the creature conceived of as cause is not other than the creature conceived of as effect. Here Eriugena says that cause and effect have the same meaning (intellectus, 693a), and that they are to be considered not as two different beings but as one and the same (una eademque, 693b). They are separated in so far as the cause is in the darkness of divine wisdom and the effect is manifested (manifestata, 693b) in perfect knowledge. At III.646c he says:

I do not see why what is predicated of the cause cannot also be predicated of what participates in the cause. (Quod enim de causa praedicatur qua ratione non etiam de causativis praedicari non invenio.) (Uhlfelder's translation)

This movement from cause to effect, then, need be thought of not only as downward diminution but also as horizontal expansion, and thus at least two of the divisions of nature can be seen to imply one another. The effects "remain" in the causes (II.517a) and thus can

be thought of as one with them. Eriugena argues that although cause and effect are really distinct and separate and are actually found in the nature of things (in ipsa rerum natura, II.528a), they can be thought of as One, since all things are nothing but their participation in God (528b) and have no being outside Him. Thus the second and third divisions of nature can both be thought under the one category – created being or created ousia.

# The reduction of the first and fourth divisions

Eriugena next reduces the first and fourth divisions to a single ontological domain:

The first, then, [and] fourth are one since they are understood of God [alone]. For He is the Principle of all things which have been created by Him and the end of all things which seek him so that in Him they may find their eternal and immutable rest. (II.526c; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

These two divisions apply to God because, by negative theological reasoning, God can just as well be said not to create as to create. Since both the first and the fourth divisions refer to uncreated being, or uncreated ousia, it is clear that they both refer to the divine Godhead. Eriugena, of course, sees non-being as higher than being (as we saw in Chapter 11); so this reduction of the first and fourth actually is more like a return to the fourth. Moreover, Eriugena states clearly at several points that the distinction between the first and the fourth is not a real distinction but only a mental distinction, based on the perspective or point of view of our contemplations:

For these two forms (formae) are discerned not in God but in our contemplation (of Him) and are not forms of God but of our reason, resulting from our double consideration (duplicem considerationem) of (Him as) Beginning and End, nor is it in God that they are reduced to one form but in our contemplation which, in considering the beginning and the end, creates in itself, as it were, two forms of contemplation (duas formas contemplationis), and these, again, it would seem, it reduces into a single form of contemplation (in unam formam theoriae) when it begins to consider the simple unity of the Divine Nature. (II.527d-528a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

# The unity of creator and created nature

Having reduced the first and the fourth to one (God), and the second and the third to one (the creature), Eriugena then sets about

the final reduction of both these divisions to the One. Since the first and the fourth reduce to one, which is God, and the second and third together comprise created being, then both together can be thought of as God and the creature. But God and the creature can themselves be thought of as one (i.e., as God), since there is nothing outside God and therefore creation is "contained" in Him. Anselm will say, in the eleventh century, in his *Proslogion* that all things are in God (Chapter XIX), and that God "permeates and embraces all things" (*Tu ergo imples et complecteris omnia*, Chapter XX), while at the same time being before (ante) and beyond (ultra) all things. Eriugena writes:

NUTRITOR: But suppose you join the creature to the Creator so as to understand that there is nothing in the former save Him who alone truly is – for nothing apart from Him is truly called essential since all things that are are nothing else, in so far as they are, but the participation in Him who alone subsists from and through Himself – will you deny that Creator and creature are one?

ALUMNUS: It would not be easy for me to deny it. For it seems to me ridiculous to resist that deduction.

NUTRITOR: So the universe (universitas), comprising God and the creature, which was first divided as it were into four forms, is reduced again to an indivisible One, being Principle as well as Cause and End. (II.528b; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

This is usually taken as the most explicit statement of Eriugena's pantheism. He has taken the two forms, Creator and the creature, which Augustine had held so firmly and completely separate and has united them into a single whole or totality, which he terms universitas.

## Universitas and multiplex theoria

This unity of God and the creature receives several names in Eriugena. It is universalis natura (II.529a9) or to pan, which he translates as universitas. In an important study, M.-D. Chenu has pointed out the importance of the term universitas in the later philosophical developments of the twelfth century. He sees it as a genuine cosmological intuition, a new development in Western thinking about the world.<sup>28</sup> Eriugena is actually the first person to use the term in

this new sense. For him it is a concept (or Begriff in Hegelian terminology) which thinks together the dialectical unity of finite and infinite, divine and created nature. It unites all the hierarchies of nature and includes the exitus and reditus of the cosmos. Eriugena uses universitas as a substantive and defines it at II.524d as including God and the creature. His meaning, however, is not wholly consistent, and sometimes he refers to universitas to signify only created nature, for example at III.621a, where he speaks of an infinite series of created wholes (universitates), for which his more usual term is totum (II.523d). Eriugena himself is well aware of this shifting of meaning within the term itself and raises the matter for clarification in the form of a question between pupil and master. Alumnus asks:

I should like to know why you chose to posit as the first part of the universe itself (*ipsius universitatis*) that Nature which is removed from the universe of all natures (*ab omnium naturarum universitate*) by Its excellence and Its infinity. (III.620b; Uhlfelder's translation, p. 124)

Nutritor answers at III.621a that universitas cannot be grasped in one way only, but must be admitted to have a multiplicity of meanings (non uno sed multiplici rationis intuitu). As with all Eriugena's central concepts, there is a dialectical flux in the meaning of the term, which cannot be understood by a univocal approach to theoretical language. Universitas, therefore, is grasped by the multiplex theoria, the anarchic multiple contemplation of the human mind. Universitas does not mean being but signifies the dialectical interplay of being and non-being. Nutritor goes on to say that universitas signifies not only the created nature but also the Creator, whereas the terms "whole" (totum) and "everything" (omnia) are normally kept for referring to created being. Although Eriugena often uses ousia for the being of all things, universitas includes not just all ousiai but also all those things which transcend ousia. It is Eriugena's profound contribution to philosophy to have discovered a term which refers both to immanent and transcendent natures. Eriugena's universitas actually prefigures later Renaissance speculation on the infinity of worlds in the universe, for example, in Giordano Bruno's On the Cause, Principle and the One.

Thus, in Book III, Eriugena says that the first division of nature is so primary and fundamental that it is found in all the universes (universitates): "For this division of nature persists uniformly

<sup>28</sup> M.-D. Chenu, La Théologie au XIIe siècle (Paris, 1957), translated as Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 5-8.

throughout all the universes to infinity" (III.621a). Eriugena here is signalling his commitment to a belief in an infinity of universes an idea normally associated with Giordano Bruno.29 Eriugena is indeed committed to the infinity of universes and to the multiplicity of nature, although they are all contained in the divine ousia. To make sense of this idea, we need to put aside neo-Aristotelian meanings of ousia and try to enter into the complex structure of Eriugena. As I have said, he believes that the world is seen as a universe, not in one way but in many. The variability of viewing depends on the perspective of the viewer. In fact, the four divisions of nature are themselves most properly to be understood as perspectives, points of view, contemplations, rather than as substances. Eriugena, as we have seen, has talked of the four divisions as contemplations. Thus besides being quadriformata and quadripertita, universal nature is also a fourfold contemplatio. This is in fact his highest understanding of the meanings of nature. They are four considerationes (II.527a), intentiones (II.527b), and theoriae (II.527b). Eriugena does not simply believe in one monistic and reified universal substance, of which all things are modifications; rather he sees universal nature as a dynamic process of different manifestations or revelations, depending on the point of view of the viewer, his location in time, space, history, and also, like all true Platonism and mysticism, on his moral and spiritual development. There is not a single unity of God and creation for the ordinary, everyday knower (the fallen man in Eriugena's terminology). This knower sees things as multiple. But there is a single unity for the highest theoretical contemplations of the wise and enlightened person. The spiritually enlightened person sees no division or opposition anywhere. Thus to see the world as one is not to proclaim pantheism: It is to assert the absence of difference of the highest theoria. Eriugena (in an addition to the Rheims manuscript, at the beginning of Book II) explicitly refutes the accusation of pantheism. God is not a genus or a species; rather, He transcends all things:

For God is not a genus of the creature nor the creature a species of God any more than the creature is the genus of God nor God a species of the

creature. The same can be said of the whole and its parts, for God is not the whole of the creature nor the creature a part of God any more than the creature is the whole of God or God a part of the creature . . . although in a metaphorical sense God is said to be both genus and whole and species and part. (II.523d-524d; Sheldon-Williams's translation)<sup>30</sup>

In Book II Eriugena, moreover, refers to the levels of the hierarchy as *formae*, because they are formed by our minds, rather than because they exist as ontological realities *per se*:

Now, the reason why we say that the universal nature possesses forms is that it is from her that our intelligence is in a manner formed (formata) when it attempts to treat of her; for in herself the universal nature does not everywhere admit forms. It certainly is not improper for us to say that she comprises God and creature, and therefore in so far as she is creative (creatrix) she admits no form in herself, but gives multiformity (multiformitas) to the nature formed by her. (II.525b-c; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Eriugena says that God can be thought as one with the creature by an intellectual contemplation (*universitatis contemplatio*, 524d), thus indicating that conceiving of God and the creature as one is in fact a *theōria*, a contemplation, rather than an ontological feature of the world-in-itself.

To sum up then, Eriugena does talk of the relations between the divisions as if they are parts of a whole, species of a genus, or forms of a descending order of hierarchy, but these are only ways of speaking. What he really intends to show is that the four divisions are four ways of talking about or viewing the divine reality.

Eriugena had already conceded that the first and fourth divisions of nature do not in fact exist separately in re, in reality, but actually have only intentional or mental existence. There is no real distinction between the first and fourth, although there appears to our minds to be a difference between them. Part of Eriugena's own task as a philosopher is to make us aware of the gulf which separates our rationalistic understanding from the unity of Truth itself. Eriugena is on much more difficult terrain when he goes farther and collapses cause and effect together, because he had agreed that these two divisions exist not only in our minds but in reality itself. Nevertheless, these two belong together, since the cause contains the effect and the effect participates totally in the cause, as I have already shown,

<sup>29</sup> On Bruno, see A. Koyré, From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957), pp. 44-54. See also E. Cassirer, An Essay on Man (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 15: "In Bruno's doctrine infinity no longer means a mere negation or limitation. On the contrary it means the immeasurable and inexhaustible abundance of reality and the unrestricted power of the human intellect."

<sup>30</sup> E. Gilson, who also denies that Eriugena is a pantheist, cites this passage in support of his interpretation in Being and Some Philosophers, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952), pp. 35-36.

and Eriugena is content to say that were it not for the Fall of human nature, effects and causes would dwell together much more closely than they do now. But in bringing all the divisions back to a single unity, he has to change his definition of creation, so that it is to be understood as self-manifestation, and thus both causes and effects are really theophanies of God.

His problem now is: What kinds of beings have the primary causes? If they are real beings they would seem to impose an intermediate ontological level between God and the created effects; if they are not fully real and are merely divine appearances, then they belong solely to God, and it is difficult to speak of creation at all. Eriugena will answer that the causes are really theophanies, aspects of God's self-manifestation (that is they appear to us as revelations of God); no-one knows the primary causes in themselves (I.446a) except God. Thus they are part of the outflowing from the One into difference, which nevertheless does not destroy the unity but is merely an expression or articulation of it. No level of reality is interposed between God and creation, because the intermediaries are in fact God's willings or self-manifestations, and they have reality only in the minds which view them. They are both self-manifestations of God and perspectives or aspects of the human mind. In God they are identical with God; in humans they are objects of theoria.

Let us examine this in more detail, to see how the second division of nature (the primary causes) does not in fact constitute a hierarchy which separates God (the first and fourth divisions) from the created effects (the third division), but resolves all difference into difference of perspective or points of view, and dissolves all hierarchy into the self-expression of subjectivity.

#### The primary causes as theoriae

In developing the doctrine of the primary causes, Eriugena is at his most syncretic. He is deliberately conflating theories of causation from many different sources and philosophical traditions, including the Platonic, the Greek Eastern, and the Augustinian conceptions. Thus in Book II Eriugena defines the primary causes:

Now these primordial causes of things are what the Greeks call prototypa (πρωτότυπα), that is, primordial exemplars, or proorismata (προορίσματα), that is, predestinations or predefinitions. They are also called by them theia thelēmata (θεῖα θελήματα), that is, divine volitions. They are commonly

called ideai (ίδέαι) also, that is, species or forms (species vel formae). (II.529b; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

But these are not the only terms Eriugena uses. At II.562b he calls them occasiones, at II.528d he calls them primordial essentiae, and at II.548a he explains "primordial" as fundamenta or again at II.553a as principia. They are also variously called exempla, definitiones, divinae volitiones (616a), and participationes (II.616b).31 In his translations of Dionysius, he uses the term paradeigmata.

Almost the whole of Book II is devoted to a thorough investigation of the nature of the divine causes. They are similar to Platonic forms in that they are the primary and immutable exemplars of the things in this world, and as in the middle Platonic (e.g., Numenius) and Neoplatonic interpretation (e.g., Plotinus), these ideas do not so much exist independently of God as they are contained in Him as His ideas. Thus Eriugena says in Book II that the Greeks called them ideas (ideai).

. . . that is, the eternal species, or forms, and immutable reasons after which and in which the visible and invisible world is formed and governed (formatur et regitur); and therefore they were appropriately named by the wise men of the Greeks, prototypa (πρωτότυπα), that is, the principal exemplars which the Father made in the Son and divides and multiplies into their effects through the Holy Spirit. (II.615d-616a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)32

Thus, like the Platonic forms, they are eternal, immutable, supremely intelligible in themselves, existing through themselves (per se esse, II.616b), and causes to all other things, which thereby participate in them. Eriugena does not actually say that the term idea derives from Plato, but Honorius Augustodunensis does in his Clavis physicae. For Eriugena, however, there are an infinite number of these ideas, which goes beyond the Platonic scheme.33 In fact, Eriugena's

32 They are individualised by their being subjects, i.e. by their subjectivity. Aquinas later

individuated immaterial beings such as angels by their potency.

<sup>31</sup> S. Gersh, in From Iamblichus to Eriugena, reminds us of the extreme broadening of the Platonic forms or causes in late Neoplatonism; see esp. p. 160 n. 156. See also J. I. Saranyana, "Las 'ideas' en Escoto Eriugena," Actas del V Congreso Internacional de Filosofia Medieval 2 (1979), pp. 1207-13.

<sup>33</sup> On the later Neoplatonic development of the forms, see A. H. Armstrong, "The Background of the Doctrine That the Intelligibles Are Not Outside the Intellect," Entretiens Hardt 5 (1960), pp. 393-425. See also A. Rich, "The Platonic Ideas as the Thoughts of God," Mnemosyne, 4th ser., 7 (1954), pp. 123-33, and H. J. Blumenthal, "Did Plotinus Believe in Ideas of Individuals?" Phronesis 11 (1966), pp. 61-80. For Augustine's discussion of the multiplicity of the divine ideas and their unity in the Word, see De diversis quaestionibus 83.

doctrine contains not only Neoplatonic teaching on the ideas but also the Stoic-Plotinian and Augustinian thoughts concerning the logoi spermatikoi, or rationes seminales, along with the Dionysian teaching on the archai. Augustine is the major mediaeval source of the Platonic doctrine of ideas, especially his De ideis, that is, Ouestion 46 of the De diversis quaestionibus, frequently cited by mediaeval authors, including Aquinas. Eriugena's major Augustinian source, however, appears to be Augustine's commentary on Genesis, the De Genesi ad litteram, which is also the source of Eriugena's favourite term for the ideas, namely, primordiales causae.34 It is noteworthy that Dionysius rarely uses the term idea or eidos, preferring his own proorismos (προορισμός), which derives from a Pauline use of the verb proorechein (προορίζειν), "to mark out providentially" (e.g., Romans 8.29; I Corinthians 2.7). Augustine used the idea of eternal or seminal reasons as a means of explaining how creation can occur simultaneously and yet only unroll or reveal itself over a period of time. For Augustine, for example, all trees were created simultaneously in the logos, even though they only appear and grow at successive intervals and times. Augustine emphasises that these seminal reasons are themselves eternal and unchanging, even though they are manifest in a changing manner over time. He in fact calls them primordial causes (primordiales causae) and says that they exist in the Word.

Augustine was uncertain of the exact status of the primordial causes and seminal reasons. If these causes are always in God in some eternal way, then God did not create them. If they exist only in the creature, then in what sense are they eternal? Furthermore, do they exist in the incorporeal or the corporeal creature? At De Genesi ad litteram VII.xxii.32, Augustine distinguishes the causales rationes of a thing from its nature or substance. Eriugena sometimes uses a similar distinction, but mostly he resolves the individual rationes of something into the more universal primary causes. Augustine had four levels of seminal reasons (in the Word of God, in the elements of the world, in the first individuals of every class, and in the seeds

produced by man or animal). Augustine understands the primary causes as having a potential existence in matter. This is something Eriugena occasionally refers to, and the notion reappears in an illustration in the Clavis physicae. For Eriugena the waste or void mentioned in Genesis really signifies materia informis, and this emerged first as the primordial causes, thus appearing to identify unformed matter and the causes. For Eriugena this is possible because both unformed matter and the causes are themselves immaterial and graspable only by the intellect, though strictly speaking the causes are grasped only in their theophanies and not in themselves (see I.446b-c and III.681c).

Eriugena goes much farther than Augustine in that he understands the primary causes to be ultimately divine ideas or willings or divine manifestations. As such they are infinite and infinitely complex, like the meanings of Scripture or the colours of a peacock's tail. In the divine Word, the Verbum, all the causes are one and simple, unum, simplex atque individuum (III.624b), a doctrine Eriugena found explicitly stated in Maximus's Ambigua. In the Word the causes are a complex unity, unum multiplex (III.674c), a term which prefigures some of Nicholas of Cusa's formulations of the coincidentia oppositorum. We may note in passing that Descartes follows Eriugena in seeing the ideas or eternal truths as both eternal and created; this appears in the replies to the Fifth Set of Objections to the Meditations.

Eriugena initially speaks of the causes as having a natural order (naturalis ordo, III.622b), as if they indeed exhibited a hierarchical arrangement. Thus in Book III, he takes an order of causes he has found in Dionysius and lists them: (1) goodness, (2) essence, (3) life, (4) reason, (5) intellect, (6) wisdom, (7) power, (8) blessedness, (9) truth, and (10) eternity. He also mentions other ideas – magnitude, love, peace, perfection. Eriugena is aware of their hierarchical function in Dionysius. He also sees these causes not so much as Platonic forms but as conveying the essence of scriptural statements about God. Thus, in the Homilia, Eriugena comments on the scriptural statements that all things are in the Word as life (John 1.3-4), quod factum est in ipso vita erat, and says that the phrase can be understood in two ways, depending on how it is punctuated. The first way is hierarchical: The genera, species, forms, and individuals in space and time are all contained in Him, and in Him are life (288b-c; see

<sup>34</sup> See Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram VI.10.17. See also the notes in P. Agaësse and A. Solignac (eds.), La Genèse au sens littéral en douze livres, Bibliothèque de S. Augustine, 48 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1972), pp. 657-68. See also F. J. Thonnard, "Les Raisons séminales selon saint Augustin" Actes du XIe Congrès International de Philosophie, vol. 12 (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1953), pp. 146-52.

also *Periphyseon III.*667a); or it can mean that all things made in Him, *are* life itself. Eriugena accepts both interpretations, one of which is rather pantheistic. He frequently quotes this passage of Scripture, for example, in *Periphyseon II.*559a; III.641a, 666d, 685d; and V.908a. It is because of this phrase that Eriugena (following Dionysius) frequently puts life first among the forms.

Eriugena does not insist on a fixed *ordo* of the causes. He subverts this hierarchical arrangement and argues that there is no fixed order to the causes and that they can in fact be understood starting anywhere in the system and moving in any direction. The causes are ordered by the power of contemplating intellect, as he says in Book III:

And be it noted that this sequence of the primordial causes which you ask me to set out distinctly in a definite order of precedence is constituted not in themselves but in the aspects (non in ipsis sed in theoria), that is, in the concept of the mind which investigates them. (III.624a; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

Taking an image from the liberal arts, he says that the primary causes are infinite and form a continuous reality like a circle. One can begin anywhere on a circle and move in either direction, and for that reason circular movement is called *anarchos*, or "lacking in origin or principle" (*principio carens*, III.625d). Similarly, all the numbers are contained in the monad (625c). They reside in an anarchic, infinite, formless state. They receive form only by being contemplated. This is the true nature of the four divisions of nature. They are not substances or realities but are manifestations which appear to the perceiving mind. "Therefore the order of the primordial causes is constituted in the judgement of the mind which contemplates them in so far as knowledge of them is granted to those who discourse on the divine causes" (III.624c; Sheldon-Williams's translation).

The order of the causes, and of the fourfold division of nature, is thus a product of the mind of the perceiver. Eriugena then allows the philosopher and the theologian the freedom to absorb themselves completely in this anarchic play of possibilities (like the Heideggerian *Spiegelspiel* of being) and divine manifestations:

We should see more clearly than light that the greatest theologians and their successors can . . . both make a start of their contemplations of the primordial causes from any one of them at all and set the term of their

contemplation in any one of them as each may wish so that as many as there are of the primordial causes, or rather, to speak more cautiously, as many as they are formed in whatever way they are or can be formed in the intellects of those who contemplate them, so many are the ways of ordering and numbering them that offer themselves of their own accord by a wonderful dispension (dispositio) of the Divine Providence to those who practice philosophy rightly in accordance with their capacity for contemplation and in accordance with the inclination of each. (III.626a-b; Sheldon-Williams's translation)

The mind has the power to order infinite reality according to its own free inclination and also in accordance with divine theophany and illumination. Ultimately both divine theophanies (divine willings) and human willings (free-will) are one and the same for the wise man. The true philosopher allows his will to be one with God's so that the whole necessity of order and structure in this world is overcome and he enters into the free anarchic play of infinite presence and absence, hiddenness and manifestation.

Eriugena's entire philosophy of nature is really a light metaphysics of manifestation and concealment, darkness and illumination. Eriugena thus brings the tradition of the light metaphysics of Dionysius to the Latin West, where it will be continued, in one manner in some of Aquinas's statements about esse, and in another way in Robert Grosseteste's De luce, where it will provide the impetus for the investigation of the physical phenomenon of light, which will be among the first concerns of seventeenth-century empirical science. In the history of light metaphysics, we must not forget Augustine's commentary on "Let there be Light" in the Confessions and particularly in the De Genesi ad litteram. Another important mediaeval discussion of light occurs in Anselm's Monologion, Chapter VI.

The four divisions are four examples the mind may contemplate, but the mind is perfectly free to discard this structure and proceed along any other path in the revelation of being. Higher than all revelations, which by their nature must be one-sided and self-concealing, is the hidden non-being, the abyss or *Urgrund* of being. Eriugena, then, cannot be said to be setting forth a science of nature such as seventeenth-century physicists developed. He is an idealist who is offering his fourfold system of nature as a means of entering into the infinite play of order and disorder, darkness and light, being and non-being, *phantasia* and *theophania*, which is both the meaning

of the concept of creation and the meaning of the ground of God and human nature.

Eriugena's massive hierarchical system of nature is easily misunderstood unless we realise the negative dialectics at the heart of it, which preserves the absolute transcendence of the non-being before being. All manifestations are limited and point to the infinite darkness which is their origin and ground. By negating every fixed idea and every static order, and allowing itself to become one with the non-being above being, to become one with its own highest self, to achieve perfect self-identity from which all manifestation and creation springs, the human mind can learn to cast aside its own limitations and enter into infinite darkness.

# ERIUGENA'S INFLUENCE ON LATER MEDIAEVAL PHILOSOPHY

How influential was Eriugena in the development of philosophy in the High Middle Ages?

It is notoriously difficult to measure the exact influence of one author on another in the mediaeval tradition. The main intention of mediaeval authors was to represent the truth as they saw it, and they frequently used ideas without crediting them or showing any awareness that they were in fact borrowing from a different (and sometimes conflicting) intellectual system. In the case of Eriugena, his *Periphyseon, Homilia*, and Dionysius translations seem to have followed different paths and to have been sufficiently separated that no sense of an "Eriugenian" tradition developed in the Middle Ages.

Eriugena's complex and difficult system was not easy to grasp. Furthermore, it is clear that his work may have provided inspiration with individual thoughts and ideas, but there seems to have been no recognition that his thought constituted a "system" (of course, I do not mean a rigid deductive system of the kind which was popular in the seventeenth century) and that the ideas could not be simply separated out at random.

It is clear that Eriugena was widely read by a circle of followers in the ninth century, although the names of most of his immediate followers would not strike a chord of recognition among present-day philosophers. We know little of Eriugena's cooperator in studiis Wulfad, other than that he was a cleric at the monastery of Saint-Medard in Soissons, and that Eriugena may have spent some time there in 856–7. He later was made archbishop of Bourges by Charles the Bald over the head of Hincmar, who objected to him as a monk who had been ordained by the rebel, deposed Bishop Ebbo. Nothing remains of Wulfad's works other than a well-known list of manuscripts in his library, which includes the *Periphyseon*. Marenbon suggests that a manuscript at the monastery of Saint-Medard, Mazarine 561, which was owned by Wulfad, contains annotations

which may have been made by him. Another close associate of Eriugena's at one time was Winibertus, who worked with Eriugena on the Annotationes, according to a letter contained in Laon manuscript 24. Contreni has identified this Winibertus as abbot of Schüttern in the diocese of Strasbourg. We think that Eriugena had a brother named Aldelmus, who is recorded as having at least copied a page of the Periphyseon. But we do not know of the intellectual labours of these associates of Eriugena's. On the other hand, we do have a wealth of anonymous ninth-century commentary on him, in the form of the additions and glosses to the Rheims, Bamberg, and Paris manuscripts of the Periphyseon. I discussed the nature of these additions in Chapter 5.

In the ninth century Eriugena's influence was regional – at Laon, Auxerre, and Corbie. The first person to follow him at Laon was Martin Hiberniensis, who used John's explanations of Greek terminology and quoted from his poetry, in a manuscript, Laon 444. Scottus also knew Sedulius Scottus, the poet and classicist, who was at the court of Charles and at Liège. Eriugena is known to have taught a certain Wicbald, who became bishop of Auxerre in 879, and to have educated him in the liberal arts. Another student of Eriugena's was Elias the Irishman, who became bishop of Angoulême. Other names associated with Eriugena are Almannus of Hautvillers and Hucbald of Saint-Amand, who made a *florilegium* of Eriugena's ideas.

Eriugena influenced (even if he did not directly teach) Heiric of Auxerre (841–c. 876), a younger contemporary of his who may have been a master at Laon, and Heiric's student Remigius of Auxerre, an Irishman (c. 840–c. 908). Heiric's De vita Sancti Germani owes a great deal to Eriugena, as does his Homiliary, which leans on Eriugena's Homilia. Heiric also comments on the pseudo-Aristotelian Categoriae decem and uses Eriugena's explanations and terminological elucidations. Thus Heiric adopts Eriugena's definition of nature as including all that is and all that is not.<sup>2</sup> He takes Eriugena's terms

usia, dinamis, energia (Heiric's spelling) and sees usia as the highest category, which transcends everything else. Cappuyns says that Heiric was using Eriugena's Versio Dionysii in his life of Saint Germanus (PL CXXIV 1131–1208) before 873.<sup>3</sup>

Remigius of Auxerre incorporates Eriugena's concepts of dialectic in his commentary on Augustine's *De dialectica*. He also contrasts affirmative and negative propositions, and speaks of dialectic as a fuga et insecutio.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, he identifies enthymema with the conceptio mentis, as Eriugena does in Periphyseon I.491c and De praedestinatione 391b.<sup>5</sup> This originally is developed from Boethius's In Topica Ciceronis V (PL LXIV.1142a–1143c, especially 1142d, where Boethius says enthymema namque est mentis conceptio).

Eriugena had an influence on the circle of philosophers at Saint Gall in the late ninth century, especially concerning Latin translations of Greek terms. He also influenced the mysterious "Icpa," who has now been tentatively identified as Israel the Grammarian. Icpa wrote glosses on Porphyry's Isagoge, in one of which he counselled lege Peri Physeon. It is clear that the kind of influence Eriugena had in the late ninth and tenth centuries was in the area of the Latin philosophical tradition of commentary, explication, and analysis of the meaning of dialectic as understood from the Categoriae decem. Eriugena was seen as a master-dialectician, well versed in the meanings of abstruse terms in Martianus, the Categoriae decem, and in Boethius. Eriugena's influence at this time consisted in providing technical terms, explanations, and a Greek-Latin glossary. (See Martin Hiberniensis in Laon 444, for example.) Eriugena's negative dialectics, his understanding of mystical theology, and his overall

I See J. Marenbon, From the Circle of Altuin to the School of Auxerre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 113. E. Jeauneau, on the other hand, in his article "Quisquiliac e Mazarinaeo codice 561 depromptae," Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale 45 (1978), pp. 79–129, thinks the annotations may be by Eriugena himself.

<sup>2</sup> See J. Marenbon, Circle of Altuin, who has given a partial edition of these glosses on pp. 185-6. Marenbon believes glosses on the Categoriae decem contained in a MS (Milan Ambrosiana B 71 sup.) may have been done under Heiric's direction, rather than by Heiric

himself (p. 175). Heiric's commentary on the Categoriae decem is contained in the Paris MS 12949. See W. Beierwaltes (ed.), Eriugena Redivivus (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1987), p. 57 n. 37.

<sup>3</sup> See Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène: Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée (Louvain: Abbaye de Mont César, 1933), p. 240.

<sup>4</sup> See G. d'Onofrio, "Die Ueberlieferung der dialektischen Lehre Eriugenas in den hochmittelalterlichen Schulen 9-11 Jh.," in Beierwaltes, Eriugena Redivivus, p. 57. 5 Ibid., p. 58 n. 43.

<sup>6</sup> See Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, p. 241, and C. Jeudi, "Israel le grammarien et la tradition manuscrite du commentaire de Remi d'Auxerre à l'Ars Minor de Donat," Studi Medievali, ser. 3a, 18 (1977), pp. 185–248. Also E. Jeauneau, "Pour le dossier d'Israel Scot," Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge 52 (1985), pp. 7–72.

<sup>7</sup> See the excellent article by G. d'Onofrio, "Die Ueberlieferung der dialektischen Lehre Eriugenas in den hochmittelalterlichen Schulen 9-11 Jh.," in Beierwaltes, Eriugena Redivivus, pp. 47-76.

speculative division of nature seem to have been generally ignored or misunderstood. There are thus some grounds for believing that the *Periphyseon* was seen in those early years as a dialectical treatise on the categories – as some of the library catalogue entries seem to indicate. (See Chapter 5.)

In the eleventh century Fulbert of Chartres (d. 1028) wrote a letter to Abbo of Fleury in which he commented on Eriugena's concept of those things which are and those things which are not, esse and non esse. Fulbert realises that the things which are not can signify superessential reality, that is, God Himself. Thus the opening definition of nature in Eriugena's Periphyseon, which was excerpted in various florilegia, seems to have circulated quite freely in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Little more about Eriugena seems to have been known at that time.

The eleventh century produced some great philosophers, such as Lanfranc (c. 1010–89), Peter Damian (1007–72), and one of the greatest minds of the century, Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109). There is no evidence directly linking Eriugena with Anselm, although d'Onofrio suggests that Eriugena was known to Anselm's circle. Thus we have Gilbert of Nugent (d. 1124) using an Eriugenian gloss on Genesis 1.2 in his Moralia in Genesin I (PL CLVI.34d), which explains that the words inanis et vacua in the Latin translation of Genesis may originally have been invisibilis et incomposita. This is a reference to Eriugena's Periphyseon II.550b, where he uses exactly those terms to discuss inanis et vacua, explaining that these terms signify the primordial causes from which this world proceeds.

Despite the absence of evidence for direct influence, there is a striking similarity of ideas at some points between Eriugena and Anselm. Anselm uses a dialectical method of affirmation and negation, which Eriugena also uses, although this would have been a standard method of proceeding. In *Monologion* Chapter XV, Anselm argues that at times non-being may be better than being. Thus not to be gold is better for a man than to be gold. We know from Eriugena that dialectic employs precisely those instances where two

sentences directly negate each other (e.g., "Socrates is a man" and "Socrates is not a man") and seeks to find a mediating path. Anselm offers a mediation between being and non-being, by carefully qualifying his statements. He frequently discusses the relation between being and non-being in a manner which suggests an Eriugenian source. In his tract De Conceptu Virginali et de Originali Peccato, Chapter V, Anselm argues that evil is nothing at all and that man is punished in his will alone, which are ideas to be found in Eriugena's De praedestinatione (although there is no evidence that this was in circulation during the Middle Ages) and in the Periphyseon Book V. 10 In the Monologion, Chapter XV, also, Anselm considers what kinds of things can be said of the supreme nature. Terms like "highest" do not directly describe its substance, since these are relative terms and, if no other substance existed, then the divine nature would still be there, although it would not be "highest or "better," and so forth. In the Monologion, Chapter VIII, Anselm explains the various meanings of "nothing," in order to explain the phrase ex nihilo. He distinguishes three ways of talking about "nothing," which are highly reminiscent of Eriugena's Periphyseon Book III.

Also in the vein of the concept of being and non-being, an entry dating from the twelfth century in the library catalogue at Cluny refers to Dialogus Johannis Scoti de hiis que sunt et que non sunt, de distinctionibus, divisionibus et differentiis et ceteriis ratiocinationibus. This indicates that Eriugena's primary division of nature into all things that are and all things that are not continued to be seen as a peculiarly Eriugenian doctrine, and to have fundamental significance for the science of dialectic.

In the middle of the eleventh century, a work by Ratramnus on the Eucharist, the *De corpore et sanguine Domini*, which took a spiritualist position on the Real Presence, circulated under the name of John Scottus (who actually held similar views; see Chapter 1) and was condemned at the Council of Vercelli in 1050.

The twelfth century was a great period of revival for John Scottus. He was still seen, in the traditional way, as a dialectician and liberal arts master by Hugh of Saint Victor (d. 1141), who mentions

<sup>8</sup> Sce Fulbert, Epistolae 2 (PL CXLI.190bc). See also A. Clerval, Les Ecoles de Chartres au moyen âge (Paris, 1895), pp. 118-9.

<sup>9</sup> G. d'Onofrio's article in Eriugena Redivivus, p. 75 n. 110. See also A. Koyré, L'Idée de Dieu dans la philosophie de saint Anselm (Paris: Leroux, 1923), pp. 139-66.

<sup>10</sup> See J. Hopkins and H. W. Richardson (eds.), Anselm of Canterbury. Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption: Theological Treatises. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 45-6.

<sup>11</sup> See Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, p. 187, and d'Onofrio in Beierwaltes, Eriugena Redivivus, p. 51.

in his Didascalicon III.2 (PL CLXXVI.765c) written around 1125, the De decem categoriis in Deum of John Scottus, in a list of the great works on the liberal arts which includes Varro, Nicomachus of Gerasa, Boethius, and Pythagoras. 12 Hugh may also have been influenced by Eriugena's concept of nature and most certainly by the idea of primordial causes, for example, at Didascalicon I.6, where all things of nature are said to have a primordial cause and a perpetual subsistence. 13 Hugh's statement that the word "nature" primarily signifies "that archetypal Exemplar of all things which exists in the divine mind"14 has Eriugenian echoes, although the remaining explanations of nature owe more to classical authors. Hugh also wrote a commentary, Expositio in Hierarchiam Coelestem Sancti Dionysii, which was influenced by Eriugena, although Hugh frequently criticised Eriugena's translations and his theological interpretations. Hugh, of course, would have used Eriugena's translation of Dionysius's text also.15 Hugh had read the Vox spiritualis, but again he found it full of theological errors, although he was using an anonymous manuscript and did not know he was reading Eriugena. 16

In the twelfth century Eriugena also influenced Alain of Lille; William of Malmesbury, who edited the *Periphyseon* (see the discussion in Chapter 5); Suger of Saint-Denis, who adopted Eriugena's aesthetic concepts; and Honorius Augustodunensis, who wrote a summary of the *Periphyseon* called the *Clavis physicae*.

The Clavis physicae summarises Books I-IV of the Periphyseon and then gives a literal transcription of Book V. This work survives in nine manuscripts, four of which date from the twelfth century. Nicholas of Cusa possessed a copy of one of these manuscripts, which he annotated. Jeauneau says that although the number of manuscripts appears small, nevertheless it is a difficult work and would

have been of interest only to philosophical spirits. We should not take the small number of manuscripts as an indication of lack of influence. The Paris Manuscript (Bibl. Nat. lat. 6734), which contains the Clavis, has some beautiful illustrations, especially folio 3v (see frontispiece), where a hierarchical ordering is given, starting with figures representing the primordial causes, Bonitas, Virtus, Ratio, Essentia, Vita, Sapientia, Veritas, Iustitia, and below them is a set of three figures representing Locus, Tempus, and Materia informis, which are entitled Effectus causarum; below them are four portraits of the men, birds, fishes, and so on, which are entitled natura creata non creans. At the bottom, God is depicted as drawing all together in the Finis. This is a figurative rendering of Eriugena's cosmological scheme.

The Clavis was written around 1125-30, with the aim of presenting the true meaning of Physica. As Stephen Gersh has stated, Honorius follows Eriugena faithfully in the description of the four divisions of nature, but omits some of the more complex aspects of the five modes of being and non-being. 19 Gersh sees this omission as "relatively insignificant." I believe, however, that it is central to the misunderstanding of Eriugena's philosophy current through the Middle Ages. There is no appreciation of him as a meontologist. Gersh says that Honorius did not understand the more complex dynamic relations between the four divisions of nature or the way in which they interweave subjectivity and objectivity (p. 166). Honorius also does not show an understanding of the Greek terminology of theological tradition, but contents himself with emphasising the aspects of Eriugena that are in line with Latin traditional dialectical themes. Honorius is especially interested in the doctrine of the primordial causes and also in the account of human nature that is set forth in Book II. Honorius's work lacks sophisticated metaphysical awareness; Gersh says it is almost a "bowdlerization" (p. 172). Honorius – unlike Nicholas of Cusa – avoids Eriugena's paradoxical formulations of the relations between Creator and created. Gersh points to a passage in Book III of the Clavis which discusses the manner in which God can be said not to be among the things that

<sup>12</sup> See J. Chatillon, "Hugues de Saint-Victor critique de Jean Scot," and P. Vignaux, "Jean de Ripa, Hugues de Saint-Victor et Jean Scot sur les théophanies," both in R. Roques (ed.), Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: CNRS, 1977), pp. 415-432 and 433-440, respectively.

<sup>13</sup> Sec J. Taylor (ed.), The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> See Didascalicon I.10, in Taylor, p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> See H. Weisheiler, "Die Ps. Dionysiuskommentare 'In Coelestem Hierarchiam' des Skotus Eriugena und Hugos von St. Viktor," Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale 19 (1952), DD. 27-47.

<sup>16</sup> See E. Jeauneau, "Le Renouveau érigénien du XIIe siècle," in Beierwaltes, Eriugena Redivivus, p. 45. In the margin of the Vox spiritualis Hugh of Saint Victor wrote, Hoc in omni lingua est arrianae perfidiae, and hoc catholici doctores reprobant.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> This page is reproduced in Beierwaltes, Eriugena Redivivus, p. 129.

<sup>19</sup> See S. Gersh, "Honorius Augustodunensis and Eriugena: Remarks on the Method and Content of the Clavis physicae," in Beierwaltes, Eriugena Redivivus, pp. 162-73.

are created. Honorius comments on not-to-be and says not to be something is not the same as saying something does not exist. This is also found in Anselm's *Monologion*, as we have seen, and some scholars have suggested that Honorius may have been a student of Anselm's.

The twelfth century, in contrast to the darkness of the tenth and eleventh centuries, was a time of intellectual renewal and expansion. Many manuscripts of the *Periphyseon* date from the twelfth century, indicating a wide readership. But many of these manuscripts contain only Book I (e.g., Admont 678, Cologne, Stadtarchiv W. 40.225, Escorial P.II.4). Berne Burgerbibliothek 469 contains Book I and part of Book II. Avranches 230, on the other hand, contains the remaining part of the Periphyseon (Books II-V) missing from Berne.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the Periphyseon is mentioned in library catalogues at Cluny, Saint-Bertin, and Lobbes. In fact, at the time of Pope Honorius III's condemnation of the Periphyseon in 1225, he attests that the book "is being read by monks and students in many monasteries and other places" ("in nonnullis monestariis et aliis locis habetur" by "nonnulli claustrales et viri scolastici").21 According to Jeauneau, the doctrine of the Periphyseon also received circulation through a compilation of excerpts from the work contained in the so-called Corpus Dionysii of Paris, a twelfth-century collection of translations of, and commentary on, Dionysius. These excerpts appear as glosses on the Dionysian text - including the discussion of reason and authority, the return of all things, and the nature of dialectic.22 One of the philosophers who used this collection was Albertus Magnus, whose work contains many of Eriugena's ideas on the nature of the angels, the primary causes, and the purpose of dialectic. Albertus seems to have been the source of Aquinas's knowledge of Dionysius.<sup>23</sup>

According to Jeauneau the evidence is too meagre to suggest that Eriugena influenced Isaac of Stella (d. 1169), except that he knew Eriugena's definition of theophania, which, however, was fairly

widespread by that time. Furthermore, Jeauneau denies that Eriugena influenced the Platonism of the philosophers associated with Chartres. There is no textual basis for a connection between Eriugena and Chartres. It was Jacquin who, in 1910, had suggested this influence, on the basis of a common "pantheism" to be found in these writers. There are no references to Eriugena in the writings of Thierry of Chartres, Gilbert of Poitiers, or Clarembald of Arras, and it is not clear that Chartres actually possessed a copy of the *Periphyseon*.

In the early thirteenth century Eriugena was associated with the heresy of the followers of Amaury of Bène, who sought to defend their leader with references to the work of John Scottus. According to contemporary writers such as Martin of Troppau and Henry of Susa, Eriugena's *Periphyseon* was the source of Amaury's ideas (as we saw in Chapter 6); none of Amaury's writings are extant, however, and it is uncertain whether any such influence existed. It is even more unlikely that Eriugena influenced David of Dinant. Piemonte has argued that Eriugena also had an influence on the Cathars, and Gersom Scholem has argued that Eriugena may have also influenced the founders of the Jewish Cabala.<sup>25</sup>

It is difficult to find persons who after the condemnation of 1225, openly acknowledged their debt to Eriugena. J. J. McEvoy has made a convincing argument for the influence of Eriugena on the first chancellor of Oxford, Robert Grosseteste (1168?–1253), a theologian who resisted Aristotle for a time and held fast to the older Parisian school of theology. Grosseteste's De luce (c. 1225–30) puts forth a cosmology based on the expansion of light, which has Dionysian imagery and concepts, and which could well have been influenced by Eriugena's Vox spiritualis. It must be remembered that

<sup>20</sup> See E. Jeauneau, "Le Renouveau érigénien du XIIe siècle," in Beierwaltes, Eriugena Redivivus, pp. 26-46. For the manuscript tradition of the Periphyseon, see Chapter 5 of this volume.

<sup>21</sup> Sce Cappuyns, Jean Scot Erigène, p. 247.

<sup>22</sup> See H.-F. Dondaine, Le Corpus dionysien de l'Université de Paris au XIIIe siècle (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1953).

<sup>23</sup> See H.-F. Dondaine, "S. Thomas et Scot Erigène," in Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques 35 (1951), pp. 31-3.

<sup>24</sup> M. Jacquin, "L'Influence doctrinale de Jean Scot au début du XIIIe siècle," Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques 4 (1910), pp. 104-6. See also J.-M. Parent, La Doctrine de la création dans l'école de Chartres (Paris: Vrin, 1938), pp. 84-90. The actual concept of a Chartres school, so powerfully argued by Clerval in his Ecoles de Chartres au moyen âge in 1895, has been challenged by R. W. Southern in his collection of essays, Medieval Humanism and Other Studies (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), pp. 61-85.

<sup>25</sup> See G. Piemonte, "Jean Scot et un opuscule hébreu pseudépigraphique," in Beierwaltes, Eriugena Redivivus, p. 280. See also G. Scholem, "Jüdische Mystik in West-Europa im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert," Miscellanea Mediaevalia 4, Judentum im Mittelalter (Berlin, 1966), pp. 27-54.

<sup>26</sup> On Grosseteste in general, see the excellent study of J. J. McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). On p. 448, McEvoy says that Grosseteste resisted Aristotle until his mid-fifties, when be began the serious study of the Stagirite.

this latter work circulated in the Middle Ages under the name of Origen or sometimes John Chrysostom. Grosseteste's temperament aligned him with Christian Platonism. He translated and commented on the Pseudo-Dionysius, and may well have used Eriugena's Expositiones. Grossesteste designated God with the term forma omnium or essentia omnium, a terminology found in Eriugena and later echoed by Nicholas of Cusa.

Grossesteste wrote a short tract in the form of a letter entitled De unica forma omnium (c. 1226-9) which explains the term forma omnium in Augustinian terms.<sup>27</sup> In support of his interpretation he quotes from the De libero arbitrio II.16-17, in which the phrase does not occur, however. The phrase does appear in the Periphyseon I.520a, where the Word, which is forma and fons of all things, is itself described as formlessness, informitas (502a32). In discussing the phrase, the letter-writer and Grosseteste must have been thinking of Eriugena, who had been condemned only a year previously, in 1225, for being the source of this very heretical formula in Amaury of Bène. Nicholas of Cusa will later use the same phrase, and also write it in a margin of his copy of Book I of the Periphyseon, where he will note forma omnium Deus beside 501d.

Grosseteste corrects Eriugena's translation of Dionysius including his mistranslation of the adverb *oukoun* as *non ergo*, as John Saracenus had also done. He provides an explanation for why the older translator (Eriugena) made the mistake.<sup>28</sup>

Aquinas refers to Eriugena directly only once, in connection with the controversy over the vision of God sicuti est, in his Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. He reports that Eriugena believes that we do not see God as He is. This he considers heretical. Eriugena indeed argued, as did Gottschalk, that man will not see God with his corporeal eyes, and that he will see Him spiritually only in theophanies. (See, e.g., I.448b-c.) Moreover, angels also will grasp God only through theophanies. This view that neither man nor angel will grasp God directly as He is was condemned at the University of Paris in 1241.<sup>29</sup> Aquinas was also aware of Eri-

ugena's Vox spiritualis under the authorship of Origen, as he thought.

As I have argued in this book, Eriugena's closest intellectual followers come at the close of the mediaeval period and the birth of the modern age. Thus Meister Eckhart of Hochheim (c. 1260 – c. 1329) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64) are true followers of Eriugena's philosophy.

Eckhart knew of Eriugena's work at least through the Clavis physicae and possibly through the Corpus Dionysii of the University of Paris, as well as through the Homilia. Whether or not there is direct influence, however, Eckhart's interest in the Neoplatonic theme of exitus and reditus of cosmic reality has many Eriugenian echoes. It is true that many other Neoplatonic sources were available to Eckhart, including the Liber de causis; nevertheless, his articulation of the original hiddenness and transcendence of the Godhead, the concept of creation as divine self-manifestation, the original dwelling of the highest part of the soul with the Godhead, the fact that the soul can be spoken of as both created and uncreated, the term nonbeing applying to God, the original nothingness of the intellect, and the birth of the Word in the soul, offer a range of doctrines with which Eriugena would be in agreement. Eckhart was also accused of pantheism in his trial. More precise influence than that cannot be maintained given the present state of research in the area.

With Cusanus the situation is different, since we know that he owned a copy of the *Periphyseon* Book I and a copy of the *Clavis physicae*, and we also possess his annotations on these books.<sup>30</sup>

Cusanus also refers directly to Eriugena at several places in his writings. In his Apologia doctae ignorantiae (1449), he refers to "Johannes Scotigena" along with Maximus Confessor, Hugh of Saint Victor, and Grosseteste as commentators on Dionysius. He cites these figures in defence of his teaching of the coincidentia oppositorum. In addition, Cusanus refers to "Johannes Scotigena" in a letter to Bernhard von Waging dated 9 September 1454, citing Eriugena as the person who first translated Dionysius in the time of Charles the Great (!): qui primo transtulit Dionysium tempore Karoli magni. 31

<sup>27</sup> See J. J. McEvoy, "John Scottus Eriugena and Robert Grosseteste: An Ambiguous Influence," in Beierwaltes, Eriugena Redivivus, pp. 192–213.

<sup>29</sup> See D. O'Meara, "Eriugena and Aquinas on the Beatific Vision," in Beierwaltes, Eriugena Redivivus, pp. 224-36.

<sup>30</sup> Cusanus's annotations on the Clavis physicae are contained in Paris MS Bibl. Nat. lat. 6734ff. 6r-189v, and have been published by P. Lucentini in his Platonismo medievale: Contributi per la storia dell'eriugenismo (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1980), pp. 83-109. The annotations on the Periphyseon have been edited and published in Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft 3 (1963), pp. 84-100.

<sup>31</sup> See Beierwaltes, "Eriugena und Cusanus," in his Eriugena Redivivus, p. 313 n. 5.

Cusanus also knew the Homilia under the authorship of Origen, and cited it in his sermon Verbum caro factum est (1437-8).32 Cusanus and Eriugena accept the Dionysian view that God both transcends all things and is present in all things. Thus Cusanus cites the etymological explanation of the term Theos as deriving from theo and theoro, to run and to see, because God runs through all things and sees all things. This etymology is found in Eriugena in Book I.452c, and in Cusanus's De quaerendo Deum. 33 In the De coniecturis he calls God the entitas omnium and the quidditas quidditatum; in De visione Dei 9 God is the essentia essentiarum, and elsewhere Nicholas uses the term forma formarum. All these phrases echo Eriugena's view of God as the essence, form, and subsistence of all things (e.g., I.499a, I.502a) and are Latin formulations of Dionysius's remarks in De divinis nominibus (977c). As I mentioned earlier, Cusanus actually wrote the phrase forma omnium Deus in a margin of his copy of the Periphyseon at I.501d.

Like Eriugena, Cusanus sees God as the essence of all things, the Beginning, Middle, End, and principle of all things. But God is also absolutely above all things (e.g., De sapientia I). This also comes from Dionysius. Moreover, God is above all things that are and are not, which again derives from Dionysius (De divinis nominibus V.816b). For Cusanus, God is the coincidence of opposites, and he finds this doctrine in Eriugena since he notes deus contrariorum contrarietas at Periphyseon I.517b-c. But God is also above the coincidence of opposites; He is infinitas absoluta (De visione Dei 13). God is inattingibilis for Cusanus as for Eriugena and Dionysius. Cusanus does develop an original set of names for God to express the uniqueness of the divine nature, for example, Idem, Aequalitas, and of course the Non Aliud; but the basis for this kind of naming is found in Eriugena and in Dionysius.

Cusanus also agrees with Eriugena in seeing creation as a theophany or self-manifestation of God. Furthermore, created beings, considered in themselves, are nothing. This is expressed in *De* docta ignorantia II.3, for example. The being of the creature then is solely the being it receives from God, which is God's own self-externalisation. In the marginal comments on the *Periphyseon*, Cusanus writes *quomodo Deus dicitur fieri* beside an expression of this doctrine at I.516c. He took his concept of theophany from Eriugena, and also his view of the absolute unity of God.

Cusanus's general philosophy of explicatio and implicatio, of infinity and finitude, expresses in a different technical terminology some of the central insights of Eriugena's system. Of course, it is almost impossible to separate the Dionysian influence from what is purely Eriugenian, but we can say that Cusanus was Eriugena's greatest disciple, and that it was through Cusanus (and his admirers Bruno and Descartes) that Eriugena's thought came to affect the formation of the modern mind.

<sup>32</sup> See E. Jeauneau, Jean Scot. L'Homélie sur le Prologue de Jean, SL no. 151. (Paris: CERF, 1969), pp. 146-8.

<sup>33</sup> Sec C. Riccati, Processio et Explicatio: La Doctrine de la création chez Jean Scot et Nicolas de Cues (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1983), p. 36 n. 84. Cusanus says: theos dicitur a theoro sive theo, quod est video et curro.

# 14 CONCLUSION

In this book I have argued that Eriugena's philosophy should not be interpreted solely as a hierarchical metaphysics of order, but in fact is an idealist system in which the diversity of nature is understood to be produced by the multiplicity of perspectives of the viewing subject. I trust that my use of the term "idealist" has become clear over the course of this book.

The results of this investigation have a bearing on the manner in which the writings of John Scottus Eriugena must be interpreted. They are also important for the wider interpretation of the history of mediaeval philosophy in general.

Eriugena's philosophy is a daring attempt to express in dialectical terms the meaning of the relations between human and divine nature. As we have seen, he conceives of these relations as an interplay between non-being and being, finite and infinite, particular and universal, uncreated and created. The fourfold division of nature, then, is a schematic representation of what is essentially a dynamic dialectical process. The traditional interpretation of the four divisions as four levels of a hierarchy of being is misleading in that it neglects the dynamic negative dialectic, which Eriugena applies to all affirmative ontotheological statements. The rigid hierarchy of beings must be understood from a different perspective, namely, as an example of four interrelated ways of viewing what is essentially the formless and infinite unity of divine nature. Eriugena associates the ontological expansions of nature with the epistemological layers of human contemplation. His philosophy of nature is a form of perspectivism.

I have also shown that Eriugena develops this extraordinarily modernistic philosophy of human nature in terms which are rooted in the historical, cultural, and intellectual context of the ninth century. He developed a relatively sophisticated way of dealing with Latin and Greek metaphysical and logical terminology, so that it became, in his hands, a tool for expressing the dynamism of uni-

versal infinite nature. This was a remarkable achievement, which inevitably led to Eriugena's being completely misunderstood by his contemporaries and by many of his later followers.

I indicated how this extraordinary dialectic can be seen as a forerunner of the negative dialectics of Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa. Eckhart, for example, uses the phrase the "negation of the negation" in his sermons, and frequently refers to the hidden darkness of God, for example, in his sermon Ave, Gratia Plena, where he speaks of the "hidden darkness of the eternal divinity." But, more important, Eriugena is expressing a view of the cosmos which serves as a philosophical link between late Greek Neoplatonism and later rationalism in general (e.g., Descartes and Spinoza) and nineteenthcentury German idealism in particular. He holds that all things are resolvable into their ideas, that the being of things is their being known. But he also holds more important idealist theses: that the finite must be resolved into the infinite, that matter is only a stage in the self-alienation of spirit, that substance is essentially subject, and that spatiotemporal reality is itself an essentially incomplete and dependent mode of being, requiring completion by the timeless and eternal.

Eriugena is not simply a forerunner of German idealism, although he undoubtedly prefigures the central tenets of that rich philosophical movement. He must be understood not only as expanding Latin and Greek philosophical terminology to cope with concepts involving the infinite, as the idealists did, but also as developing a philosophy of nature which is *original* in many respects. Eriugena's problematic of the meaning of nature cannot be simply integrated into the Western problem of the meaning of being, without its being seen to depart significantly from ontotheology.

Both neo-Thomist and Heideggerian interpreters of the history of philosophy have placed considerable emphasis on the centrality of the inquiry into being, as the matter (die Sache) of philosophy from Augustine, through the Arabs, to Aquinas and Suarez. Books like Etienne Gilson's Being and Some Philosophers and Jacques Maritain's Existence and the Existent attempt to rehabilitate Scholastic thinking in the light of Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics as ontotheology, that is, as a metaphysics which identifies together God, Reason, and Being. Whether one agrees with the Heideggerians or with the neo-Thomists, both sets of commentators are in agreement

that being is the central problem of the Western metaphysical tradition.

What our investigation has shown is that both the Heideggerian and the Scholastic accounts of the history of mediaeval philosophy are seriously deficient in that they considerably underestimate the far-reaching consequences of the Neoplatonic legacy, inherited and enriched by mediaeval writers such as John Scottus Eriugena. As we have seen, Eriugena's philosophy simply cannot be understood if it is approached solely from the point of view of being or essence/ existence or the eternal and unchanging nature of divine being. Eriugena's philosophy is best read in terms of the irrelevance to his problematic of the central metaphysical desire for being. His philosophy is indeed a mediaeval rewriting of Plato's Parmenides, which takes seriously the problematic of non-being, difference, and otherness. Eriugena's attempt to classify the numbers of ways in which something can be said either to be or not to be opens up into a fullscale inquiry into the meaning of non-being. As we have seen, God is non-being, matter is non-being, evil is non-being, the creature in itself is non-being - even God's willings or theophanies are nonbeing in that they do not erect an ontological barrier between the human soul and the vision of the divine nature. As Findlay states in his Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines, Eriugena is probably the purest Platonic philosopher to be found in the Middle Ages. The full implications of his intellectualist and idealist version of that Neoplatonic system have not been completely understood. Moreover, Eriugena stands at the start of a tradition in the West which runs counter to the ontological tradition, and which resurfaces in the late German mystics like Eckhart, the Renaissance humanists like Pico, and such adventurous thinkers as Lull, Cusanus, and Bruno.

Furthermore, Eriugena is not a monist or pantheist through and through. Although he reduces everything finally to ousia or to natura comprehended as containing both God and the creature, he understands both essence and nature in terms of their true infinity. He takes seriously the notions that the finite depends on the infinite for its existence and that the true infinite is one, which is not simply standing outside and alongside of the finite, but one which has enfolded and encompassed the finite within itself. This is the cornerstone of idealism, as Hegel defines the term. Furthermore, Eriugena does not reduce everything to a simple identity. Although for him all being is grounded in the original identity of the One, he gives

this identity a trinitarian or triadic nature, and thus introduces difference into the heart of identity. Eriugena's philosophy argues not that identity just proceeds into difference and returns again to itself in the familiar Neoplatonic process of outgoing and return, but that this cosmic dialectic concludes with an identity which has been enriched by difference so that difference continues – no longer as alienated difference, but as Otherness as the heart of the One itself. Therefore, we can apply to Eriugena Reiner Schürmann's remark about Eckhart in *Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher* (p. 109): "The identity of the totality is here neither transcendence made immanence (metaphysical identity) nor universal ontic homogeneity (pantheistic identity), but playful presence (symbolic identity)." Eriugena gives us the understanding of the timeless and infinite play of difference within identity.

Eriugena's striking and majestic attempt to think through the consequences of difference-in-identity has been examined here. He cannot think of being without thinking also of non-being, cannot conceive of creation without acknowledging the uncreated, cannot conceive of nature without recognising its infinite and unlimited aspects, which make it unknown except in terms of its existence. Eriugena wants to involve the human mind in the play of difference which is the infinite nature of God, and this he does in terms of his complicated concept of negative dialectics. His philosophy is a challenge to traditional ontotheology. It is best understood in terms of the dialectic of infinite and finite, unlimited and limited (peras and apeiron), and the resolution of the relation of similarity or likeness and dissimilarity or difference, which has been at the centre of Western categorial and classificatory understanding since Plato. But besides offering a new metaphysics or a new ousiology or physiology, Eriugena's philosophy gives an extraordinary account of knowledge and of the mind. For him, subject and object are overcome, all being is contained in self-consciousness, and self-consciousness is the inner meaning of the play of presence and absence, being and non-being. Eriugena lacks the full epistemological vocabulary of the Scholastics or the post-Cartesian critical philosophers, and hence his articulation of discoveries in this area is all the more remarkable. He first recognises that all entities are not other than their being known by the mind (in its timeless essence, rather than its temporal incarnation). He then argues that the being of the mind is itself its being known, so that its self-consciousness is more original and more fundamental than its being. Self-consciousness, however, can also be construed as self-creation, given that creation is self-manifestation. Eriugena's system, therefore, assumes that self-consciousness is at first a kind of unconsciousness or non-consciousness, which then gives expression to itself, thereby creating itself as manifest or revealed self-consciousness. It is mind before thought or a hidden inner unknowing, which is really the highest mind and which can be legitimately called "non-being." This is a kind of possible intellect (although the terminology is unknown to Eriugena and will only be developed when Aristotle's *De anima* arrives in the West), and it is similar to the uncreated part of the soul (*Grunt der Sêle*) in Eckhart. It is not surprising that Eriugena's work has been confused with some of the Latin Averroist interpretations of Aristotle which circulated in the thirteenth century.

In this book I have not argued that Eriugena is a modernist simply by isolating some of his more modern sounding statements and translating them into the vocabulary of recent critical philosophy. Instead, I proceeded by a historical hermeneutics, which started by locating Eriugena squarely within the Carolingian tradition of the Latin West in the ninth century. But I argued that Eriugena's philosophy is not to be restricted within the intellectual boundaries of that age. He was an innovator (a term which is most difficult to apply to any mediaeval writer) and conscious of the new tradition he was inaugurating. Through a variety of historical circumstances, that new tradition was subsequently effaced during the formation of modern philosophy and only re-emerged in its full philosophical significance in the idealist commentary of nineteenth-century German philosophers and theologians. I have shown that their interpretation of Eriugena is in fact a valid starting-point for reading him, although I have been careful to mediate their claims by returning them to the tradition whence they sprang. But we read Eriugena not only to enter his world but also to gain another perspective on our own. To subjugate his claims to the criticism of a narrowly conceived logic would be a simple, shallow, and sophistic exercise. For this reason I have refrained from engaging in a narrow criticism of Eriugena's formulations. In dealing with an early mediaeval thinker, it scarcely profits to show that he is confused or makes logical mistakes or misinterprets his sources. It is much more

important to try to come to terms with the strangeness of the world-view he is presenting, and to try to understand that world-view by a sympathetic hermeneutics. I hope to have shown that Eriugena's novel understanding of nature contains deep and important philosophical insights, worthy of serious consideration by the contemporary philosopher.

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