Poiesis:  An Eriugenian Interpretation
of
Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde

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## Abstract

This thesis deals with the interpretation of art, set against the background of the medieval Christian Neoplatonism of John Scotus Eriugena. For him, art and philosophy are regarded as the handmaidens of meaning. Therefore, although this thesis begins with a consideration of Eriugena's _Periphyseon_, it develops into a discussion on aesthetic theory, and ultimately into one on poetic theory. The object of this discussion is to account for meaning in Chaucer's _Troilus and Criseyde_ according to Eriugenian poetics.

The essence of art will thus be pursued within the parameters of the Neoplatonic _scala natura_. In this way, the whole poetic interpretation of Chaucer's poem is grasped as a mirror of the ontological _exitus-reditus_ pattern. In understanding the poem this way, this thesis comes to immediate terms with the medieval concept of the _imago Dei_, and understands the likeness of mankind to God to be primarily one made by virtue of language.

## Résumé

Cette thèse examine l'interprétation de l'art, auprès de l'arrière-plan du néoplatonisme médiéval chrétien de John Scotus Eriugena. D'après lui, l'art et la philosophie sont présumés être les serviteurs de la signification. Donc, bien que cette thèse débute avec une considération envers Periphyseon de Eriugena, elle se développe néanmoins de ce point à une discussion esthétique, et finalement en une théorie poétique. L'objet de cette discussion est de nous efforcer de clarifier la signication de Troilus and Criseyde de Chaucer d'après cette poèsie ériugénienne.

L'essence de l'art sera donc poursuivie à l'interieur des paramètres de la scala natura du néoplatonique. Ainsi, l'entière interprétation poétique du poème de Chaucer est conçue en un miroir du modèle ontologique exitus-reditus. En interprétant le poème de cette façon, cette thèse vient à terme immédiat avec le concept médiéval du imago Dei, et démontre que l'image de l'homme à Dieu provient principalemet en vertu de la langue.

## Introduction

Who has not contemplated the meaning of a work of art? To seek for meaning is to be human. In ancient times, the Greeks understood this, and defined the human quest for meaning in their word "poiesis". For them, and subsequently during the Middle Ages, art and philosophy were regarded as the handmaidens of poiesis.

To grasp meaning in art, it is first necessary to grasp meaning in philosophy. This is a characteristic presupposition of Platonic and Neoplatonic thought. Moreover, if art is an imitation, a mimesis, of nature, it is there, in nature, that philosophical meaning must be sought. During the Middle Ages, there is no finer Christian Neoplatonic account of nature than that developed by John Scotus Eriugena.[1]

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[1] Etienne Gilson notes that the personality of Eriugena dominates his era, and occupies a unique place in the history of Western thought. "He offered to the Latins the possibility, one might almost say the temptation, of entering once and for all the way initiated by the Greek theologians, Denis and Maximus the Confessor. Had this invitation been accepted, a neoplatonist philosophy would no doubt have prevailed in Western Europe up to the end of the Middle Ages." See the work by Etienne Gilson, The History of Christian Philosophy, (New York: Random House, 1955) 113. Nor did Eriugena feel that there was any conflict between philosophy and religion. On the contrary, his uniqueness resides in his very willingness to assert that true philosophy was true religion, and vice versa. Thus, Jaroslav Pelikan writes that Eriugena was "the theologian who decisively raised, for the first time in the Middle Ages, the theological question of the claims of reason in the formulation of Christian doctrine, especially in the interpretation of the relation of God and the world." Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300), The

As his name suggests, Eriugena was an Irishman--his name means literally 'John the Scot born of the people of Erin'. While that much may be said with assurance, as John O'Meara explains, "one can hardly as yet essay with any confidence to describe his life, so much in connection with him is legend or slender hypothesis."[2] Certain facts are nevertheless known. He lived and worked during much of the third quarter of the ninth century in Laon, north-east of Paris, in the court of Charles the Bald (823-877). It has been suggested that Eriugena may have fled to France from the Viking raids, which so plagued Ireland throughout much of the ninth century. At the same time, it is true to say that there was clearly an established academic tradition of migration from Ireland to France. Zimmer refers to "the long list of Irish scholars who laboured under Charlemagne, his son, and grandson, on French and German soil. A knowledge of Christianity and secular science emanated at that time from Ireland alone of the whole western world, and established itself at many different points: Clement,

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Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, vol. 3, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) 97. To say the very least, John Scotus Eriugena was, as Haureau calls him, "a very free thinker (Gilson 113)."

[2] John J. O'Meara, Eriugena, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989) vii. One of the many legends which surround Eriugena has it that he took up residence at Malmesbury, where he became abbot, after being recalled to England by Alfred the Great. There, he is said to have been stabbed to death by the styles of the children whom he was teaching, although J.F. Wippel suggests that this legend and its connection with Eriugena may be based on a confusion of similar names. Cf. J.F. Wippel and Allan B. Wolter, eds., Medieval Philosophy: From St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa, (New York: Free Press, 1969) 109.

Dicuil, Johannes, and Scotus Eriugena, at the court school, Dungall at Pavia, Sedulius Scotus at Liege, Virgil at Salsburg, and Moenagal at St. Gall."[3]   In any event, Eriugena appears to have gone to France about 848, and by about 850, he clearly emerges as a member of the palace school of Charles.

Initially, it is thought that Eriugena occupied the position of a teacher of the liberal arts while at the palace school.  At the invitation of Hincmar, he composed his De praedestinatione in 850, subsequently plunging himself into a controversy with Gottschalk, and ultimately resulting in his own views on the subject being condemmed by the Synod of Valence in 855, and again by the Synod of Langres in 877.   Charles himself seems to have commisioned Eriugena to begin a translation of the works ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite, as well as a translation of the Ambigua of  Maximus the Confessor, which was undertaken in the years between 865-870.   However, after that date, Eriugena soon drops from sight.

Scotus Eriugena's masterpiece, the Periphyseon, was composed between the years of 862 and 866, and eventually published in 867. It is remarkable for being the only systematic philosophy written since the time of Aristotle.  In many ways, Eriugena's Periphyseon is a medieval summation, accounting for all things in nature.  For John, nature is understood to include all that both "is" and "is

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[3]   Cited in the work by Seumas MacManus, The Story of the Irish Race, revd. edition, (Greenwich:  Devin-Adair Company, 1986) 258.

not". His sense of creation from the very start is of a whole which contains all that can be thought. There s nothing outside of thought which is not included in nature.

In this thesis, the correspondence between thought and nature is taken subsequently as the point of departure for an aesthetic theory. Certainly, Eriugena's philosophy in the Periphyseon is highly aesthetic to begin with. One is in the position throughout his arguments of desiring to know nature in order to come to a knowledge of what creation indicates. However, inasmuch as there exists a certain relation between nature and thought, a correspondence is further established between creation and language. The ability on the part of language to act as a signifier for thought in many ways emulates creation's capacity to signify the Creator. To put it another way, the laws of the cosmos which define nature are those which define language too. Herein lies the substance of poiesis.

The last of the three-part movement in this thesis is one which takes up the natural extension from aesthetics to poetics. A interpretation of Geoffrey Chaucer's medieval masterpiece, Troilus and Criseyde is undertaken as a practical explication of the aesthetic theory. This interpretation, or poetics, strives to discern the anagogical character of poetry. Where it finds the cosmic laws of creation to be the essence of poetry, there too it discovers poiesis.

Chapter One

Eriugenian Philosophy


John Scotus Eriugena's <u>Periphyseon</u> is recognized as an important work both in terms of its historical significance and its philosophical content. It is regarded as the first great systematic work of Christian doctrine, and as such it was preceded by a number of works devoted to more particular concerns. In this respect, the <u>Periphyseon</u> thus stands as a remarkable synthesis of a number of different sources.

To begin with, we may speak of what is clearly a legacy of Greek philosophy in the <u>Periphyseon</u>. Eriugena mentions Plato by name and his dialogue the <u>Timaeus</u>, and also knew the logical works of Aristotle, the so-called <u>Organon</u>, through the translations made by Boethius. One of the truly remarkable characteristics of this treatise is that the systematic nature of Eriugena's philosophy takes into itself the conclusion of the whole Greek tradition, as it was represented in the late Neoplatonists and particularly Proclus.

For Eriugena, the Proclan Neoplatonism becomes understandable in terms of the work of Pseudo-Dionysius, the early sixth century Syrian, who drew so heavily from the Alexandrian school. After

Dionysius, this tradition was further extended by the commentaries of Maximus the Confessor on the <u>Corpus Areopagiticum</u>. Eventually, Eriugena himself translated both Maximus and Dionysius and thus, at the very least, was indirectly familiar with this strain of Proclan Neoplatonism and its subsequent Christianization.[4]

Such a system of thought as that espoused by Proclus and his Christian successors we may regard as being one half of the tradition which so influenced Eriugena, issuing as it does from the Greek East. Naturally enough, we must turn to the Latin West in order to discover the other half of his influence. There, the predominant spokesman of the Neoplatonic tradition was found in St. Augustine. Throughout the <u>Periphyseon</u>, Eriugena shows a particular familiarity with Augustine's works <u>De civitate Dei</u> (especially Books XI and XII), <u>De Trinitate</u>, and also <u>De Genesi ad litteram</u>. Notwithstanding the apparent Augustinian topics recounted in these works which so evidently directly inform Eriugena's thought, he shows additional familiarity with the doctrines of St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, and St. Hilary.

Concerning this profound diversity of thought which served to influence Eriugena, Etienne Gilson remarks, "No man has more

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[4] Of the sources and authorities which influenced Eriugena, Henry Brett writes, "The general affinity of Eriugena's thought, and indeed the main outline of it, may be traced back through Dionysius, Maximus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine, to Proclus, Plotinus, and thence, in its germ, to Plato. But it is certain that Eriugena knew nothing of Plato except the <u>Timaeus</u>, and that only in the Latin translation of Chalcidius." See the work by Henry Brett, <u>Johannes Scotus Erigena</u>, (Cambridge, 1925) 166.

constantly resorted to theological authorities in order to justify his own positions."[5] The breadth of Eriugena's familiarity with these various authors serves not only as a mark of his extraordinary erudition, but of his historical importance as well. For the first time, in the _Periphyseon_, there emerges an important synthesis of these several streams of Patristic thought which had experienced a divergence at the time of late antiquity.

Eriugena begins the reconciliation of these divergent Patristic traditions in the _Periphyseon_ with his remarks concerning dialectic. Dialectic is considered by him to be an appropriate philosophical point of departure inasmuch as he understands it to hold an epistemological and metaphysical primacy. At length, this will become apparent; however, to begin with, we shall understand the Eriugenian dialectic to be one of the seven liberal arts, which were viewed to be innate in the soul, cohering eternally and inseparably with it.[6] More particularly, dialectic itself is a branch of philosophy which is said to investigate the rational common concepts of the mind, and in this, it is characterized by

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[5] Gilson 114.

[6] Note the informative treatment on the relation between the liberal arts and the soul by C.A. Conway. In principle, the seven arts exist in a hierarchy in which the _trivium_ was thought to inform the more abstract _quadrivium_. Conway notes, "the quadrivium is not a random or arbitrary set of disciplines (they are called the 'mathematical arts' from the Greek _mathematikos_, 'fond of learning'). Rather, it provides a precise and systematic way of perceiving within visible objects the nature of the Prime Essence." See the work by Charles Abbott Conway, "Boethius and Medieval Political Theory," _Literature and Ethics_, eds. Gary Wihl and David Williams, (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1988) 98.

two fundamental and corresponding movements. "Division (cataphasis) starts from the unity of the highest genera and progressively distinguishes their less and less general species, until it arrives at individuals, which are the terms of division. Analysis (apophasis) follows the opposite course. Starting from individuals, and going back up the steps division came down, it gathers them up on its way and reinstates them into the unity of the supreme genera."[7] These two operations are complementary moments of the one dialectical method. Gilson observes that "in fact, they may be considered as a single movement which, after descending from the unity of the highest genus to the multiplicity of individuals, reascends to the original unity from which they came."[8]

Dialectic is the fundamental method of inquiry throughout all of Eriugena's writings, but in the Periphyseon it plays an especially critical role. This is so because, in essence, the Periphyseon is to be an account of reality from the standpoint of dialectical logic. We witness its implicit importance in the opening remarks made by Eriugena in this work.

> Saepe mihi cogitanti, diligentiusque quantum
> vires suppetunt inquirenti, rerum omnium, quae
> vel animo percipi possunt, vel intentionem ejus
> superant, primam summamque divisionem esse in ea
> quae sunt, et in ea quae non sunt, horum omnium
> generale vocabulum occurrit, quod graece φύσις    ,

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[7]  Gilson 115.

[8]  Gilson 115.

latine vero <u>natura</u> vocitatur.[9]

In his first statement, Eriugena established <u>physis</u> or <u>natura</u> as including being and non-being. Gilson brings to our attention one potentially confusing aspect of this passage when he remarks that the Greeks had often used the name for nature (<u>physis</u>) as a synonym for being (<u>ousia</u>).[10] However, there is an important distinction to be made between these terms. Eriugena will later note,

> Horum siquidem nominum proprietas est, ούσίαν, id est essentiam, de eo, quod nec corrumpi, nec augeri, nec minui in omni creatura sive visibili sive intelligibili potest, praedicari; φύσιν vero, hoc est, naturam de generatione essentiae per loca et tempora aliqua materia, quae et corrumpi, et augeri, et minui potest, diversisque accidentibus affici.[11]

Thus while being refers to the essence of that which can neither be said to increase, or decrease in any being, nature designates

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[9]     John Scotus Eriugena, <u>De divisione natura</u> (=<u>Peri.</u>), in Migne's <u>Patralogia Latina</u> (=PL.), (vol.122, col.441A): "As I frequently ponder and, so far as my talents allow, ever more carefully investigate the fact that the first and fundamental division of all things which either can be grasped by the mind or lie beyond its grasp is into those that are and those that are not, there comes to mind as a general term for them all what in Greek is called <u>Physis</u> and in Latin <u>Natura</u>.

Much use is made throughout this thesis of the translation by I.P. Sheldon-Williams, which was later revised and edited by J.J. O'Meara in the text, <u>Periphyseon</u>, (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1987). Note that the linear numbers throughout O'Meara's revision follow those of Migne's <u>Patralogia Latina</u>.

[10]     Gilson 116.

[11]     <u>Peri.</u>, (PL. 122, 867A): "The proper use of these words is <u>ousia</u>, essence, for that which in every creature, visible and invisible, can neither be corrupted nor increased nor diminished-<br>-<u>physis</u> "nature," for the bringing to birth of essence in space and time into some material which an be corrupted and increased and diminished and affected by different accidents."

being insofar as it can be begotten in place and time. In this way, the Eriugenian point of departure will be to regard nature as a starting point which includes the very possibility of the distinction between being and non-being. In other words, Eriugena will regard nature as a unity in thought in which the opposites of being and non-being are reconciled.[12]

It is important to understand that we begin the _Periphyseon_ with a statement concerning the unity of nature, within which Eriugena conceives the very ground of distinction. In making such a comment, we note that from the start he is concerned with the matter of logical principles for thought. In his terms, one does not encounter what "is not", yet at the same time, in order to define what "is" requires what "is not". One may thus say of Eriugena that from the outset, his whole position is seen as contained within this principle of thought. This is the importance of _natura_. Conceived as it is as a unity, it becomes the point of departure for all logical differentiation.[13]  In other words,

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[12]  The first Platonic division is between the One and the infinite Dyad. The Dyad is not simply what "is not", but rather refers to what is becoming. Involved in the conception of the One and the Dyad is the problem of whether there can be anything other than the One. Eriugena is profoundly conscious of the Platonic difficulties centering around matter, and its nature and status. Traditionally, it is the infinite Dyad and matter which makes possible the conception of anything other than the One. From Plotinus to Proclus, this is a problem of the greatest difficulty and, one which remained from them, far from solution. Generally with the successors of Plotinus, especially Iamblichus and Proclus, there is a tendency to speak of matter as a divine creation.

[13]  Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus too start from the point of unity and move outward. For them, there is a One which includes from the very outset all that is derived. In other words, there

natura is implicitly suggested as the genus, and the problem before

Eriugena then becomes one of a method for differentiating that

genus into species.[14]  This method of differentiation will be the

Eriugenian logic, or dialectic.[15]

The distinctions dialectic makes out of natura are expressed

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must be a One before there is a Trinity.  It is the Dionysian
manner for explaining this matter, that is, the derivation of all
from the One, which allows this tenuous assertion.  One cannot
imagine Dionysius beginning with a concept of nature including all
that "is" and "is not", which turns out to include in itself also
God.

Rather, in the Periphyseon, one starts from the unity and
distinction of thought itself, which has both that oneness and that
reasoning, or discursiveness.  In a certain way, the manifest
contradictions between thought and will in Augustine emphasize this
same notion.  One might also think of Boethius, and his Consolation
of Philosophy, for whom reason has its place in the hierarchy of
Being below intellectus, and is conceived as the process of
division and distinction of what is held as a unity for
intellegentia.  In the Periphyseon too, we have this Boethian
distinction in which ratio is within the intellectus.

[14]  The primary unity of thought expressed here is one known
through the process of reasoning.  We do not begin, as it were, on
the Boethian level of intellectus, but rather enter upon the path
of reasoning.  For the Neoplatonist, the basis of the reasoning
process is to be found in the soul's access to a knowledge of the
forms.  In other words, the rationes eternales are found in the
divine mind.  For Plotinus, the divine mind is derivative from the
One and inferior.  Neither Plato nor any Neoplatonist would ever
specify that episteme is the divine knowing.  Rather, Nous must be
the second derivative hypostasis, as it implies division.  Voiced
against this tradition is the doctrine of St. Augustine who
identifies the divine thinking as the divine being.

[15]  Note the remarks made by Socrates, "I am myself a lover of
these divisions and collections, that I may gain the power to speak
and to think, and whenever I deem another man able to discern an
objective unity and plurality, I follow 'in his footsteps where he
leadeth as a god.'  Furthermore--whether I am right or wrong in
doing so, God alone knows--it is those that have this ability whom
for the present I call dialecticians." (Phaedrus, 266B).  Thus in
the Platonic tradition, dialectic is the proper disciple of
analysis and synthesis.

by Eriugena as follows:

> Videtur mihi divisio naturae per quattuor dif-
> ferentias quattuor species recipere: quarum
> prima est in eam, quae creat et non creatur;
> secunda in eam, quae creatur et creat; tertia
> in eam, quae creatur et non creat; quarta, quae
> nec creat nec creatur.[16]

Here, it becomes evident that a strictly logical process is occuring from genus to species by means of differentiation. What is most important to note is that for Eriugena, there is no distance, as it were, between logic and nature. Dialectic is regarded by John as being the adequate means to account for reality because it is found in the logic of things themselves.[17] For this reason, we may note, as Donald Ducklow does, that "Dialectic is thus the human discovery of the pattern created within nature itself."[18] Eriugena would argue that if logic were a system imposed, and not itself identical with nature, a knowledge of anything would not be possible, but only a form of isolated knowing

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[16] Peri., (PL. 122, 441B): "It is my opinion that the division of Nature by means of four differences results in four species, (being divided) first into that which creates and is not created, secondly into that which is created and also creates, thirdly into that while is created and does not create, while the fourth neither creates nor is created."

[17] Peri., 749A: "...that art which concerns itself with the division of genera into species and the resolution of species into genera, which is called διαλεκτική did not arise from human contrivances, but was first implanted in nature by the originator of all arts that are properly so called, and was later discovered therein by the sages who make use of it in their subtle investigations of reality."

[18] Donald F. Ducklow, "Dialectic and Christology in Eriugena's Periphyseon," Dionysius IV (1980): 100.

or subjective particularism.[19]   At the outset then, we must accept this Eriugenian equation of nature and logic and in this we seem to follow Plato most immediately.

Recalling the _Timaeus_, and the sentiment that in creation the Demi-Urge imposed reason upon matter, Eriugena maintains that there is nothing in nature which is outside of thought.   As we have already noted, his is to be an account of reality from the standpoint of logic.   Now, inasmuch as the reality of nature, _physis_, embraces both that which "is", and "is not", the dialectic too of this primary differentiation is logically complementary to _physis_ in its own two-fold encompassing of that which "is" and "is not".   The whole effect of such divisions is one which perfectly emulates _natura_.   To attempt to maintain a distinction between dialectic and the actual possibility of things within the logically exhaustive division of these four categories is to suggest a distinction between the level of language and actuality.   However, for Eriugena, there can be no getting behind the logic of language.

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[19]    It should be noted as well, that this is the whole emphasis to the medieval notion which regards dialectic as one of the seven liberal arts, cohering, as we have noted, eternally within the soul.   Each of the arts is an expression of some one power of the soul, and is thus conceived of as being a natural extension of the soul rather than an artificial disciple.   Thus C.A. Conway writes, "The arts are all interconnected.   What the mind perceives through arithmetic, the eye sees through geometry and astronomy and the ear hears through music.   In a way the differences among the arts are marked by nothing more than the fact that they represent the manner in which various senses apprehend essential reality.   The nature of the subject depends upon the sense (the information given depends upon the nature of the observation), but the mind is in all (99)."

To say that this system is incomplete is still to use the judgement of that same logic. In other words, the dialectical divisions are as exhaustive as the unity of being and non-being in nature. We understand of both equally that there is nothing which either "is" or "is not" which is not included here, and note moreover that the classification of both is circular.

Thus, dialectic is the natural means by which Eriugena differentiates the genus of nature into four different subjects, or species.[20]   We may notice that, as is consistent with our reading, within this four-fold division of natura are the two pairs of contraries, being and non-being, expressed as uncreated and created. By the first category, 'that which is uncreated and creates' is meant God. In an apaphatic, negative movement, neither the divine being nor any creature is recognized as comprehensible in itself. God is said not to exist, that is, to be uncreated, in the sense that finite knowledge cannot comprehend the divine being, or for that matter any individual essence. "God is the productive and self-diffusive cause whose hidden essence comes to self-consciousness in the Trinity, and then begins to manifest itself throughout the remaining divisions."[21]   In this, both Creator and

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[20]   Henry Bett remarks that "these divisions are not to be understood as separated in the nature of God. They are not forms of God, but forms of our thought, because we are compelled by the very constitution of our minds, to think of a beginning and an end."   See his work, Johannes Scotus Erigena, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1925) 21.   Note in this statement the essentially subjective nature of Eriugena's doctrine.

[21]   Ducklow 102.

created are represented here as the species of a genus. Insofar as they are divided and discussed, they do not exactly go on to include each other; although ultimately, both the first and fourth categories come to be identified as the same, and in their reciprocity, as all-inclusive.

In the second category, Eriugena refers to the primordial causes, or divine ideas. 'That which is created and creates' contains the powers midway which relate the Godhead above with nature's third division below. In this second category, Eriugena speaks of finite things which are thought to become insofar as they participate in their ideal forms. Moreover, he introduces the theory of light as an activity of creation. For the Neoplatonists, the form is conceived of being creative itself. Again there is the reference to Plato's Demi-Urge in the Timaeus, and its striving to impose the forms on recalcitrant matter. The Neoplatonists will say that the light of this activity is cast upon the chaos of matter and brings about the formation of creatures in their beholding of that light. It is in this sense that Eriugena speaks of these primordial forms as being both created and creating.

In the third category, 'that which is created and does not create', includes the material universe as it is further defined by the ten Aristotelian Categories. Thus far, from the first to the third category, we may speak of our logical movement as one of differentiation and descent. However, having reached the particularity of the Aristotelian categories, no further

differentiation is possible; rather, the movement reverses and begins to ascend by way of analysis back towards the final division, 'that which is uncreated and does not create'.

This last category is also understood to be God, but God conceived more fully as Non-Being. This apophatic return to the One fulfills the Neoplatonic ontology as it coincides with the first category. Indeed such a circular return, or exitus-reditus pattern is suggested etymologically by the very name for God, theos. Eriugena explains this as follows:

> Hujus itaque nominis etymologia a Graecis assumpta est. Aut enim a verbo, quod est θεωρῶ, hoc est, video, derivatur; aut ex verbo θεω, hoc est, curro; aut, quod probabilius est, quia unus idemque intellectus inest, ab utroque derivari recte dicitur.[22]

As the word "God" is derived from theoreo on the one hand, it is understood that God sees all that exists within Himself, and on the other hand, as it is derived from theo, God is likened to the Unmoved Mover of Aristotle. God is said to see all things and also to run throughout all things, but these two activities are not understood to be exclusive or separate. Rather, as John O'Meara confirms, "in God, to run through all things is not something other than to see all things, but as by his seeing, so too by his

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[22]   Peri., (PL. 122, 452B-C):   "Of this name [then] an etymology has been taken over from the Greeks:   for it is derived from the verb theoreo, that is, "I see"; or from the verb theo, that is, "I run"; or--which is more likely [since] the meaning of both is [one and] the same--it is correctly held to be derived from both."

running, all things are made."[23]   In this apparent coincidence of opposites--between activity and passivity, subject and object--the first principle is revealed as being not only the beginning of creation, but also the middle, from whom all things derive their essence, and equally the end, towards whom all seek their perfection.

We may speak then, of a logical movement in the _Periphyseon_ which ultimately resembles the Neoplatonic _exitus-reditus_ pattern. Initially, division proceeds from the One to the Many; that is, what once lay in unity begins to unfold into multiplicity with the distinction of general and species.   The limit towards which division tends is realized at the moment in which multiplicity is radically differentiated into individuality.   In the end, we return to our point of departure, passing back through species and genera to unity in the resolution of what was complex to what is simple.

Such a cosmic dialect as this, is discovered by Eriugena in the opening verse of the Johannine Gospel, "en arche ein ho logos." Here, the _logos_ is understood to be the utterance of the _arche_. The importance of this moment for Christian Neoplatonic philosophy becomes clearer with the explanation of the original syllogism.

Following Augustine, Eriugena felt that to understand the Book of Genesis was to know nature.   With this in mind, he came to regard the _arche_ and the _logos_ of the Johannine Gospel as being

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[23]   John J. O'Meara, _Eriugena_,   (Oxford:   Oxford University Press, 1988) 83.

coextensive with each other. This discovery, in turn, led Eriugena to a radical Christian reinterpretation of the opening verse of Genesis. There, in the expression, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," the logos could be substituted synonymously for the arche, resulting in the understanding that "In the Word God created the heaven and the earth." In this way, the logos becomes the expression of the arche. The principle of reason which informs the cosmos is found to be identical with the logic of thought and speech, for Christ dwells in the universe around us as the Cosmic Word, as well as within each of us, as the inner Word described by Augustine in his Confessions.[24] Such is the dialectic of the universe which, by nature, embraces all things, and in doing so, expresses a fully Neoplatonic ontology, since the logical movement of division and analysis reflects the creative procession from divine unity to created natures, and their return to God. Strictly speaking, as Etienne Gilson points out, "Eriugena's doctrine is not a logic. It is a physics, or rather,

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[24] Concerning the Inner Word, Augustine writes, "Thou hast given this hour to my memory, to reside in it...Sure I am that in it Thou dwellest, since I have remembered Thee, ever since I learnt Thee, and there I find Thee when I call Thee to remembrance." (Confessions, X.xxv). On the other hand, Augustine takes up the corresponding external side to this claim, when he remarks of Christ's cosmic nature, "Where then did I find Thee, that I might learn Thee, but in Thee above me? ...Everywhere, O Truth, dost Thou give audience to all who ask counsel of Thee." (Confessions, X,26).

as he [Eriugena] himself says, a 'physiology'.[25]

We see in this a clear dependence of dialectic on the logos. Having identified dialectic, or logic, with natura, and recognizing in turn that natura is the creation of the logos, dialectic then exists in a relation to logos of effect to cause. It is in this sense that dialectical logic is recognized by Eriugena as being an adequate means to return to the logos deductively, and thus to the Godhead. Yet in this, we must further realize the essential Christological nature of Eriugena's doctrine.[26] As the mediator between God and mankind, Christ shares a function coincidental to the role played by the analogy of human thought to divine thought. This comes about in the two-fold activity of the Word.

Donald Ducklow expresses this succinctly when he writes, "the movement from the second category of nature to the third, marks an incarnation of the Word, and so prepares it for becoming man. Moreover, the third category itself is the result of God's pre-vision of mankind's fall, while the Word's Incarnation serves to redeem man from the consequences of this division."[27] Thus, in the incarnation from the second to the third category, there is marked a terminus to nature's descending dialectic, while simultaneously

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[25] Gilson 115. Cp. Peri. IV.741C. Also note Eriugena's remark that to understand the Book of Genesis is to know Nature. (Peri. III.705B).

[26] See Donald F. Ducklow's informative treatment of this subject for a full account, in his article listed above.

[27] Ducklow 109.

His Incarnation as man initiates the return to the divine unity of the fourth category. In this moment, mankind who stands at the limits of the intelligible and the sensible knows itself to be the imago Dei, the image of God, and is redeemed by Christ's death on the Cross.

Recalling the Augustinian sign theory of the De Trinitate, Eriugena describes mankind as an image of God, created in the Word, and participating fully in its transcendence and creative knowledge.[28] Furthermore, by virtue of being such an image, man is bound not only to the first but also to the second category of nature. Unique amongst the creatures, humanity embraces all creation in its being and in its knowing power. As Eriugena writes,

> Quapropter et res, quarum notitiae humanae naturae

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[28] We may speak of humanity as being in the image of God especially with the recognition of its essential Eriugenian triune nature. Henry Bett notes, "The interior of man is triune, for it consists of the soul, which rules all that is below itself, and contemplates that which is above itself, that is, the Divine Nature; and reason, which seeks to investigate the grounds of all things that can be known or felt; and interior sense, which receives, discerns, and judges the impressions presented by the bodily senses.

"The exterior nature of man is also triune, for it comprises sense, and the vital motion, and the material body. So that the human nature is sixfold; it exits, and lives, and feels through the body, and feels apart from the body, and reasons, and knows. Est enim, et vivit, et sensit per corpus, sensit extra corpus, ratiocinatur, intelligit (825B) (Bett 62)."

Eriugena remarks of this notion "...His image, which is man, is created by Him, and does not subsist through, by or in itself, but, at the hands of Him Whose image it is, it has received being in accordance with its nature, and being God in accordance with His Grace. But all other things which are predicated of God may be predicated of His image also: but of God essentially, of the image by participation." (Peri., 778A-B).

> insunt, in suis notionibus subsistere non incongrue
> intelliguntur. Ubi enim melius cognitionem suam
> patiuntur, ibi verius existere judicandae sunt.
> Porro si res ipsae in notionibus suis verius quam
> in seipsis subsistunt, notitiae autem earum homini
> naturaliter insunt, in homine igitur universaliter
> creatae sunt.[29]

As image, humanity knows the primordial causes and is said to create as it participates in the effect of the Word's creative wisdom.[30] No substance exists which is not also understood to be in humanity's thought. In this, mankind is understood both to participate in the Neoplatonic _exitus-reditus_ pattern, and further to mirror that categorical pattern within its own intellect.

We may note here that the whole emphasis in Eriugena's doctrine of the first principle is placed firmly on the idea of the divine will and its activity in creation. What may perhaps seem difficult about this thinking is that Eriugena's perspective throughout the first book is always in terms of God, and not in terms of man. Thus, in speaking about the first principle, he will talk in terms of creation and say that "God does not move beyond himself, but from himself in himself towards himself. The motion

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[29] _Peri._, (PL. 122, 774A): "Wherefore, it is rightly understood that the things of which the knowledge is innate in human nature have their substance in the knowledge of themselves. For where they have the better knowledge of themselves, there they must be considered to enjoy the truer existence. Furthermore, if the things themselves subsist more truly in the notions of them than in themselves, and the notions of them are naturally present to man, therefore in man are they universally created."

[30] Ducklow 110.

in him is that of his will, by which he wills all things to be."[31]

The demanding and problematic character of such thinking leads Eriugena to propose an analogy of thinking to _theos_. Nothing in thought except activity is substantial, and thus by nature it is characterized paradoxically by both unity and distinction. There can be no thought except where there is subject and object; however, unless subject and object are united as one, there is no thought. In this same way, the proper form of predication for _theos_ is both affirmative and negative at once; that is to say, it is the peculiarity of the divine nature to be defined by the coincidence of opposites, being neither yet affirming both, and so rising above predication. The first principle is then best understood not as a being, but rather as Being--the activity in which opposites coincide in a manner analogous to the activity of thought.

In order to examine this four-fold division of nature properly, Eriugena turns to a discussion of his five modes of difference which he regards as necessary as a means to separate all things into being and non-being.

> Quarum primus videtur esse ipse, per quem ratio
> suadet, omnia, quae corporeo sensui, vel intel-
> ligentiae perceptioni succumbunt, posse ration-
> abiliter dici esse; ea ver, quae per excellentiam
> suae naturae non solum ὑλιον , id est omnem sensum,
> sed etiam intellectum rationemque fugiunt, jure

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[31] O'Meara 83.

videri non esse.[32]

Here, the first mode concerns those things which fall into the realm of perception, and can be said to be, while those which elude perception may be said not to be.[33] God, matter, the reasons, and essences of all things are thus said not to be. The sense here is that though the divine existence may be known, the divine essence may not. In other words, to know that something exists is regarded as an indirect knowledge known by vestiges. Eriugena's thoughts concerning matter follow in this same logic. Since matter, per se, cannot be corporeal but is without form, thus as pure potentiality it cannot be known by sense or intellect. Consequently, whatever is perceived in the creature is to be regarded as merely being some accident to its essence. Again we can only know that it is, but not what it is.[34] In other words, a creature can be known by quality or quantity or form or matter or some difference or by

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[32] Peri., (PL. 122, 443A): "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 of their nature elude not only all sense but also all intellect and reason rightly seem not to be."

[33] Note the remarks made by Pseudo-Dionysius of this notion, that "the 'to be' of all things is the Divinity above Being itself." (Celestial Hierarchy IV.1)

[34] Proclus finds that within the context of the Plotinian doctrine concerning matter, conceived of as being inherently evil, there exists a contradiction in the nature of things. Both Proclus and Iamblichus over-come this contradiction through the notion of divinely created matter, and in this we are correct to see a mirror of the Augustinian position.

place or time not as to what it is, but as to that it is. Evidently, Eriugena is proposing a thinking which sees the combination of affirmation and negation throughout the whole of nature. In this way, the "is" and the "is not" belong to nature on every level.

The second mode of difference, Eriugena describes as follows:

> Fiat secundus modus essendi et non essendi, qui in naturarum creatarum ordinibus atque differentiis con-sideratur, qui ab excelsissma et circa Deum proxime constituta intellectuali virtute inchoans, usque ad extremitatem rationalis irrationalisque creaturae descendit.[35]

Here, the differences which distinguish one species from another are based on an ordering. Thus, whatever is affirmed of the higher order is negated of the lower, and vice versa. Within such a context, affirming that this is "x" would correspondingly negate that it might be "y". In other words, any affirmation necessarily implies a negation. To use Eriugena's example, the affirmation that man is "rational, mortal, risible animal" is at the same time, the negation that an angel is any of these things. On the other hand, if an angel is affirmed to be "an essential intellectual motion about God and the causes of things"[36] then this is negated of man. In this second mode, Eriugena speaks of a process of

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[35] Peri., (PL. 122, 444A): "Let then the second mode of being and non-being be that which is seen in the orders and differences of created natures, which beginning from the intellectual power, which is the highest and is constituted nearest to God, descends to the furthermost (degree) of the rational [and irrational] creature."

[36] Peri., 444B.

descent and return as well. The implication here is that since our knowledge cannot embrace all things perfectly, the "is" and the "is not" are divided for us.

Such an implication leads very straightforwardly to the third mode. Eriugena writes,

> Tertius modus non incongrue inspicitur in his, quibus hujus mundi visibilis plentitudo perficitur, et in suis causis praecedentibus in secretissimis naturae sinibus.[37]

Here, Eriugena maintains that what is latent or potential in things is said not to be. In this he most immediately recalls the Augustinian doctrine of the <u>rationes seminales</u> which occupies must of <u>De Genesi ad litteram</u>. The sense of this third mode is that all things are said to be created at once, but in such a way that there is a latency to them which unfolds in time. Thus, all men were established by God at the same time, yet He did not bring them all at the same time into this visible world, "but brings the nature which He considers all at one time into visible essence at certain times and places according to a certain sequence which He Himself knows."[38]

The final two modes of difference, we shall summarize briefly. Of the fourth mode, Eriugena writes,

> Quartus modus est, qui secundum philosophos non improbabiliter ea solummodo, quae solo comprehenduntur

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[37] <u>Peri.</u>, (PL. 122, 444C): "The third mode can suitably be seen in those things of which the visible plenitude of this world is made up, and in their causes in the most secret folds of nature, which precede them."

[38] <u>Peri.</u>, 445B.

> intellectu, dicit vere esse; quae vero per generat-
> ionem, materiae distentionibus seu detractionibus,
> locorum quoque spatiis temporumque motibus variantur,
> colliguntur, solvuntur, vere dicuntur non esse, ut
> sunt omnia corpora, quae nasci et corrumpi possunt.[39]

Thus, sensible things per se are said not to exist because from this perspective, only those things which can be grasped intellectually are said to exist. On the contrary, those things which are in any way changed or brought together (as, for example is the case with bodies) are said not to exist.

Lastly, in the fifth mode, Eriugena takes up the final mode of difference between being and non-being. Concerning this last mode, he writes,

> Quintus modus est, quem in sola humana natura ratio
> intuetur. Quae cum divinae imaginis dignitatem, in
> qua proprie substitit, peccando deseruit, merito
> esse suum perdidit, et ideo dicitur non esse. Dum
> vero unigentiti Dei filii gratia restaurata ad pris-
> tinum suae substantiae statum, in qua secundum imag-
> inem Dei condita est, reducitur, incipit esse.[40]

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[39] Peri., (PL. 122, 445B): "The fourth mode is that which, not improbably according to the philosophers, declares that only those things which are contemplated by the intellect alone truly are, while those things which in generation, through the expansions or contractions of matter, and the intervals of places and motions of times are changed, brought together, or dissolved, are said not to be truly, as is the case with all bodies which can come into being and pass away."

[40] Peri., (PL. 122, 445C): "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, deservedly lost its being and therefore is said not to be; but when, restored by the grace of the only-begotten Son of God, it is brought back to the former condition of its substance in which it was made after the image of God, it begins to be."

In this last sense, something is said not to be inasmuch as it has fallen away from what it truly is said to be. Thus, fallen man may be said not to be. While thinking of the third mode, O'Meara notes that this final mode "may apply also to those whom God calls forth from the secret folds of nature (where they are said not to be) to become manifest in form and matter and so on."[41]

These five modes of difference are not exhaustive, but rather demonstrate widely ranging implications to which more could be

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[41]   O'Meara 81.

added.[42]    What is of chief importance to note however, is that the dialectical opposition of "is" and "is not" runs throughout the whole range of nature.  In the creation and return of man, returns also the division of nature to unity; that is to say, creation's way of return is through man, whose own way of return is through sensible things.  Ultimately, the conclusion of such a movement will be through the contemplation of God, but not as He is in His essence.

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[42]    Further consideration of being and non-being is raised by Eriugena over a question of the doctrine of St. Augustine. Eriugena brings into the Augustinian doctrine the philosophy of Dionysius and Maximus.  It is interesting to note the relationship of these within this doctrine.

Augustine's Hexameron raises the question:  what of the creation of the angels?  Certainly, the angels are mentioned by Eriugena, but must be understood in the creation of light, as being taken up in the things which are not corporeal inasmuch as they precede the creation of the luminaries of the sky.  Moreover, the distinction of the six days of creation is conceived of as being logical rather than temporal.  Angelic nature as such then is created in dignity and not in time.

Here, we must have in mind Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus.  The angels are thought to be pure, intellectual substances and the highest created beings corresponding to what are the intelligences. It would not seem that the Proclan doctrine of the Hennads could be related to the angels insofar as one recalls the eternal divine character of that doctrine.  Rather, with Proclus, the intelligences exist in a hierarchical descent which according to that theology are conceived as being the movers of the spheres. As in Eriugena, the first intelligence contemplating its source in turn constitutes itself.  One ought to notice this three-fold knowledge of the angels as united to its source, knowing itself, and knowing what comes after, as effect.

The essential point here is to consider in what sense this angelic knowledge is knowledge of what is above it.  In this, we recall that the mode of what is above and unknowable is said not to be.  Thus, in Eriugena, the angels contemplate the eternal reasons, not by themselves, but by way of theophanies.

The logical consequences of this Neoplatonic standpoint are many.  In a sense, Eriugena maintains that to know the divine essence would be to become the divine essence.  Thus, he is very careful to guard against that kind of monistic conclusion.  Rather, the final destiny of redeemed man is a perfectly preserved individuality.  This is the meaning of his passage which begins,

> Non unusquisque enim secundum suae sanctitatis atque sapientiae celsitudinem ab una eademque forma, quam omnia appetunt, Dei Verbum dico, formabitur?  Ipsa namque de seipsa loquitur in Evangelio:  'In domo Patris mei mansiones multae sunt'; seipsam domum Patris appelans, quae cum sit una eademque, incommutabilisque permaneat, multiplex tamen videbitur his, quibus in se habitare largietur.[43]

In this passage, Eriugena wrestles with the great problem of Neoplatonic theology, which is, that with regard to its end, the relation of knowledge tends to become a relation of identity. There remains the ominous threat in such thinking of a disappearance of any distinction, or a swallowing-up of any individuality in the end.[44]  Eriugena corrects this tendency by saying that the contemplation of God, which is the final happiness of man, is not done in essence, but rather as God is manifest to

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[43]  Peri., (PL. 122, 448C):  "For from the one and the same Form which all things desire [I mean the Word of God] each shall receive a form according to the degree of his own sanctity and wisdom.  For (the Form) itself says of itself in the Gospel:  "In my Father's house are many mansions," calling itself the house of its Father because while it is one and the same (Form) and remains unchanging, it will be multiple to the sight of those to whom it shall be given to dwell in it."

[44]  Note the words of Maximus, who Eriugena quotes as saying, "that whatever the intellect shall have been able to comprehend, that it itself becomes."  (Peri. I:449C).

each individual by way of theophany.[45] This he regards to be the content of the poetic expression in the Gospel, that there are as many mansions as saints.

This concept of theosis is more characteristic of Greek Christian Neoplatonism than any Western response to this dilemma.[46] Theophany is brought about on the one hand, by the downward motion of the Word, and on the other hand, by the upward motion of human nature through desire. In this double transaction of the descent of grace which is also an ascent of amor, a theophany is said to come about. In this, Eriugena quotes Maximus as saying, "as far as the human intellect ascends through charity, so far does the Divine Wisdom descend through compassion."[47] The concern here is one implicitly again of knowledge. As Alice Gardner writes, "here Scotus strikes more distinctly the notes of subjectivity which marks all his system by making the theophany proportionate to the capacity and the character of each mind, whether angelic or

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[45] Peri., 487B: "For even the Cause of all things, which is God, is only known to be from the things created by Him, but by no inference from creatures can we understand what He is, and therefore only this definition can be predicated of God: that He is He Who is More-than-being."

[46] We must think here of Pseudo-Dionysius who writes, "The divine theology, in the fullness of its wisdom, very rightly applies the name theophany to that beholding of God which shows the Divine Likeness, figured in Itself as a likeness in form of That which is formless, through the uplifting of those who contemplate to the Divine; inasmuch as a Divine Light is shed upon the seers thought it, and they are initiated into some participation of divine things." (Celestial Hierarchies, IV.I).

[47] Peri., 449C.

human."[48]  Each contemplating soul is regarded as being an individual, and as the Gospel says, there are again as many mansions as individuals. Thus, a knowledge of God is said to be given according to the capacity of the knower. One might say that the good know the Good according to their own goodness. That is to say, insofar as they are confirmed to virtue, they know how that virtue exists absolutely, but at the same time, they are not that virtue absolutely. Eriugena has provided a safeguard which assures individuality by virtue of the very fact of the different modes of knowing.

Inasmuch as knowledge takes on such a direct relation with theophany, we must note that the emphasis in Eriugena's thought is on the sensible aspect of creation. Ultimately, his convictions about sensible reality will mean that for those who follow this direction, there will be a primary interest in creation and the world of nature. Moreover, a profound symbolic dimension to nature is established in the sense that one is always in the position of knowing nature in order to know what lies beyond it. Creation becomes not so much important in itself as an end, but rather as a means to an end. Thus, nature, the arts, and architecture are all pursued for this theophanic character.[49]  This, the

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[48]  Alice Gardner, Studies in John the Scot, (London:  Henry Frowde, 1900) 35.

[49]  This notion has been demonstrated in detail in research on the history of art, especially by Erwin Panofsky, and Otto von Simson.  They also refer respectively to Pseudo-Dionysius and Eriugena.  Cf. E. Panofsky, Abbot Suger, On the Abby Church of Saint-Denis and its Art Treasures, (Princeton:  Princeton UP,

Neoplatonists regard as being the mystical theophanic significance of light.[50] We may further note that inasmuch as the importance of nature is established in its role as a means to an end, Eriugena conceives of the character of that means as one of a return. Thus he says that the point of return in nature is found in man inasmuch as man is the final degree of descent possible, from which point the return begins. As man is a body, he belongs to the sensible world, but as man is a soul, he belongs to the intelligible world. Thus, in its complex nature, humanity takes up, as it were, both sides of nature, sensible and intelligible. In this way, Eriugena understands human nature to be the microcosm of creation. The return of mankind to God then, involves the return of all of creation to God.

Eriugena's interpretation of theophany while solving certain issues, nevertheless has in turn raised other dilemmas concerning the divine substance. These he proceeds to take up by way of the affirmative and negative theology. From this point onwards, Book I of the Periphyseon is involved in a powerful interpretation of Dionysius' Divine Names. Eriugena has begun with the question, how

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1946).--Otto v. Simson, The Gothic Cathedral, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1956).

[50] Alice Gardner notes that "the fiat lux means the procession of the primordial causes into form and species such as are capable of recognition by the intelligence. The ,athering together of land and water is the imparting of form to unstable matter. The creation of man, though placed last, has the priority over all, and is implied in the fiat lux, since all things are created in man, who is the image of God, by the identification of the Logos with human nature (41)."

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is it that that which is above us may be known at all? Although
it is impossible that we should know the essence of God, yet there
is a way suggested by Eriugena that a certain knowledge of God is
possible through theophanies. The divine names are the fruit of
this revelation.

Dionysius, for his part, considers only the names of God
revealed in Scripture; however, Eriugena will depart from the
Syrian in this thinking. In the remainder of Book I, the
Periphyseon takes up the Scriptural names which also belong in
general to the philosophical consideration of finite things.
Unlike Dionysius, there is no formal division made by Eriugena
between the two disciplines of theology and philosophy. Rather, in
his thinking, everything has become a mixture of human ascent and
divine descent, by which he has already characterized theophany.

So, we must at the outset consider the divine names beginning
with the name 'God' itself.[51] We have seen that Eriugena makes his
beginning with the notion of a unity in natura. His first division
of Creator however, does not itself begin with unity, but with
terms such as "I see" and "I run". In this, as we have said,
Eriugena is clearly thinking of theos as activity; that is to say,
as the motion of God's will in which the divine nature is nothing

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[51] Pseudo-Dionysius considers in his Divine Names only those
names of God which are revealed in Scripture. Like Proclus and
Iamblichus before him, Dionysius takes 'God' as given, and proceeds
from the perspective of the One and unity. The difficulty with
this position is that unity takes pride of place to such an extent
in Dionysius' thought that it has been argued his is not a truly
trinitarian theology.

other than the divine will.

With such a point of departure then, we begin not with God as One, but as activity in which somehow distinction is already involved. Hence Eriugena can speak of God as being created; and certainly, in this, he recognizes that there is a telling comparison between the created God and the activity of our own intellect.[52]   O'Meara writes that "when one hears that God is created one knows that that means that he is created by himself, that is, he creates the natures of things."[53]   It is the divine

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[52]   Peri., 454B:   "For our intellect also, before it enters upon thought and memory, in not unreasonably said <not> to be. For in itself it is invisible and known only to God and ourselves; but when it enters up thoughts and takes shape to certain phantasies it is not inappropriately said to come into being...By this analogy, far removed as it is from the Divine Nature, I think it can be shown all the same how that Nature, although it creates all things and cannot be created by anything, is in an admirable manner created in all things which take their being from it; so that, as the intelligence of the mind or its purpose or its intention or however this first and innermost motion of ours may be called, having, as we said, entered upon thought and received the forms of certain phantasies, and having then proceeded into the symbols of sounds or the signs of sensible motions, is not inappropriately said to become--for, being in itself without any sensible form, it becomes formed in fantasies--, so the Divine Essence which when it subsists by itself surpasses every intellect is correctly said to be created in those things which are made by itself and through itself and in itself [and for itself], so that in them either by the intellect, if they are only intelligible, or by the sense, if they are sensible, it comes to be known by those who investigate it in the right spirit."
Note the way in which our own intellect is said not to be until it thinks.   It is the very nature of intellect to be the activity of thinking. Without thought, the intellect is properly speaking, only potential intellect.   In the same way, the divine will, in the passivity of its so-called 'seeing' is said not to be.

[53]   O'Meara 84.

will or activity which is the starting point in Eriugena's consideration of the divine names.

It is the case that the consideration of the divine nature is so involved in the procession ad extra that Eriugena does not even begin to consider the divine unity and trinity before creation. We may reasonably judge that this is so since it is at just this point that the most problematic elements of the Proclan philosophy arise, namely, the question of how creation arises out of the divine natures.

In a sense, Eriugena's starting point by-passes all of the difficulty of such thinking from the beginning. In his thinking, one cannot ask if creation is necessary, or indeed, whether there is a diffusion of divinity. Remarkably, in his emphasis on the conception of God as an activity, Eriugena illuminates the most problematic aspect of Proclan theology. Inasmuch as the Periphyseon simply does not have all the hierarchy of mediation so necessary to Proclus, creation appears as within the divine nature in such a way that it is, in no way, distinguishable from it.[54] Creation is thus understood to be the explication of the divine nature. It is, in a very real sense, immediately implicated in God, and is said to be the expression of his will. For this

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[54] It is at this point, that accusations against Eriugena of pantheism usually arise. For a brief critical account of these charges brought against the Eriugenian doctrine, see the work by Arthur Cushman McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933) 173 ff.

reason, Eriugena regards nature to be essentially theophanic.[55]

At the very outset of this treatment, we do well to recall the question of Eriugena's thinking about the particular nature of the Godhead. One can see a logical procession from the name God through his creative activity to the three moments of Being, Knowing, and Willing. In this sense then, the Trinity is seen by Eriugena as three distinctions within the unity of that activity.[56] It is important to be aware that when we are speaking of the Persons of the Trinity, conceived of as being three moments of activity, we are not talking of Persons in relation to one another. Rather, Eriugena is careful to maintain, the Persons are the relations, and the condition is called Father, Son, and Spirit. In other words, the relations are conceived of as being within the unity of an activity. Eriugena seems to identify these two categories as though condition and relation were somehow identical.

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[55] This emphasis on theophanic creation can be perceived as a fundamental point of departure for Eriugena from the tradition of Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus. Eriugena is chiefly concerned with the affirmative and negative theologies and the theophanic fashion in which their dialectical logic accounts for creation. He does not seem at all inclined to work out the argument in terms of Neoplatonic 'participation'; on the contrary, he seems to be closest to Boethius' doctrinal criticism of participatory theology found in quomodo substantiae.

[56] These distinctions immediately raise to mind the trinitarian doctrine of the three substances and one essence formulated by Augustine: "I say essence, which in Greek is called ousia, and which we call more usually substance. They indeed use also the word hypostasis; but they intend to put a difference, I know not what, between ousia and hypostasis: so that most of ourselves who treat these things in the Greek language, are accustomed to say, mian ousian, treis hypostaseis, or, in Latin, one essence, three substances. (De Trinitate, V.ix.10)

The point of this argument seems to be exactly for the benefit
of the developing conception of the divine being as activity.
Eriugena writes,

> divinam bonitatem in unius essentiae tribus
> substantiis esse constitutam. Et nec hoc abusque
> spiritualis intelligentiae rationabilisque invest-
> igationis contuitu inventum est. Unam enim inef-
> fabilem omnium causam, unumque principium, simplex
> atque individuum, universalesque, quantum divino
> spiritu illuminati sunt, contemplantes, unitatem
> dixerunt. Iterum ipsam unitatem non in singular-
> itate quadam et sterilitate, sed mirabili fertilisque
> multiplicitate contuentes, tres substantias unitatis
> intellexerunt; ingentiam scilicet, gentiamque, et
> procedentem.[57]

Evidently, Eriugena is speaking of the kind of activity in which
the apparent contradictions between the "is" and the "is not" are
all contained in a kind of dialectic. Thus, what is most crucial
to understand is that this unity which he refers to, is the unity
of an activity and not of a One or a being.[58]

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[57]   Peri., (PL. 122, 456B):   "The Divine Goodness is
constituted in Three Substances of One Essence. And even this
(truth) was discovered only in the light of spiritual understanding
and rational investigation:  for in contemplating, as far as the
enlightenment of the Spirit of God would take them, the one and
ineffable Cause of all things and the one simple and indivisible
Principle they affirmed the Unity; and then by observing that this
Unity did not consist in any singularity of barrenness they gained
an understanding of the Three Substances of the Unity, namely the
Unbegotten and the Begotten and the Proceeding.

[58]   In such thinking, the argument of the Parmenides may be
recognized as being most influential.  In the dialogue itself,
Plato is conscious of the problem of reconciling multiplicity with
unity in the doctrine of the forms. This same issue is again later
raised in the whole Proclean doctrine of the Hennads.

Some maintain that the Parmenides is merely a vast joke.
There is, at any rate, the recognition of the problem anticipating
the Aristotelian criticism of the forms.

Having implicitly introduced the question of predication in his consideration of the divine nature, Eriugena then proceeds, as does Dionysius, by affirming certain Scriptural predicates of God. In this treatment, affirmative theology confirms that God is goodness, light, truth, justice, and so on. On the other hand, negative theology denies that God can properly be called any of these things, since each predicate admits to a contrary, and in God there can be no contrariety.[59] Rather, as O'Meara concludes, "Since terms like goodness and justice have opposites such as evil and injustice, and since no principle can exist in opposition to God, terms like essence and goodness cannot, except metaphorically and improperly, be used of God."[60] However, we have already noted that affirmative and negative theologies are not contraries of one another as they are applied to God. Thus, affirmative theology does not properly affirm that, for example, 'God is essence', but does so in a metaphorical transference from creature to Creator. Negative theology, in turn, denies that God can properly be affirmed as essence. Lastly, in a moment of affirmation and negation together, God is again affirmed as being superessential.[61]

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[59] Peri., 459C: God is that "to Whom nothing is opposed, and with Whom nothing is found to be co-eternal which differs from Him by nature."

[60] O'Meara 84.

[61] Peri., 460C: "Did we not say that, strictly speaking, the ineffable Nature can be signified by no verb, by no noun, and by no other audible sound, by no signified thing? And to this you agreed. For it is not properly but metaphorically that it is called Essence, Truth, Wisdom, and other names of this sort. Rather, it is called superessential, more-than-truth, more-than-

With the addition of the particle super- or more-than-, the predicates express, as it were, outwardly the form of affirmation, but inwardly the force of negation. In other words, the ultimate unity of affirmative and negative theology is asserted here.

The conclusion to Book I is taken up with a treatise on the Categories of Aristotle, and its relation to the first division of nature which 'creates and is not created'. One might well ask at this point, why should this first book turn into a discussion on the categories?

Book I of the Periphyseon is not primarily about our knowledge of God, but rather about what can be meant about an uncreated creator. The logical movement is thus one consistent with Eriugena's thinking on the nature of theophany, taking up the two corresponding moments of a downward descent of revelation coupled with an upward ascent of human thought. And so it is that from the Scriptural account of the divine names, he turns to consider a more philosophical treatment of divine predication, as such, according to the ten Aristotelian categories.[62] Typically, Eriugena offers a radical interpretation of the categories. As John Marenbon has written, "No early medieval treatment of the Categories and the problems connected with them is as wide-ranging or as original as that which John Scottus provided in his masterpiece the

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wisdom."

[62] Aristotle identifies the ten universal categories in his treatise, the Categories, as substance, quantity, relation, quality, place, time, condition, situation, action, passion.

<u>Periphyseon</u>."[63]

The argument of the <u>Periphyseon</u> does not consider the categories in their traditional manner; on the contrary, an extraordinary emphasis is placed on the exploration of what creating means and how creating can belong to the uncreated. In particular, Eriugena will consider the category of place, and the fashion in which this treatment will devolve into one of matter and bodies. Thus, we may take this conclusion of Book I to be a treatise about creation and on how the division and multiplicity of the categories are contained within an essential unity, and moreover, are in that sense understood not to be outside God. In this, one cannot but be struck by how Eriugena very carefully avoids the kinds of difficulties endemic to Platonic theology when it talks about matter and materiality, and their absolute reduction to incorporeality.

The treatment of the <u>Categories</u> is a particularly difficult and most abstract aspect of philosophy. In considering their purpose, Eriugena writes,

> Aristoteles acutissimus apud Graecos, ut ainut,
> naturalium rerum discretionis repertor, omnium
> rerum, quae post Deum sunt, et ab eo creatae,
> innumerabiles varietates in decem categorias,
> id est, praedicamenta vocavit.[64]

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[63] John Marenbon, <u>From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre</u>, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981) 67.

[64] <u>Peri</u>., (PL. 122, 463A): "Aristotle, the shrewdest among the Greeks, as they say, in discovering natural things, included the innumerable variety of all things which come after God and are created by Him in ten universal genera which he called the ten categories, that is, predicables."

In other words, the categories are taken to be the universal and logically exhaustive divisions of thought and being.[65] In the same fundamental way as we have discovered with natura, nothing which can be said or thought is not contained within these categories.[66]

The categories thus, are in the first place the forms of division for thought. They are, as it were, the intelligible divisions of things evident only to thought. Of the ten categories, we shall say that there are nine which pertain to substance, and in that sense are said to be accidental, while the primary category of substance, or being, allows the principal of definition, inherent in the others, to apply to something. As Eriugena sees it, the distinctions of thought are themselves the distinctions of things. If we say, as a result, that the categories are the intelligible distinctions, we must also say in accord with dialectic, that they are the intelligible unity as

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[65] In understanding the Categories in this way, Eriugena follows an interpretation which is closer to that of Plotinus than Porphyry. Plotinus' criticism in his Enneads of the ten Aristotelian categories is one which identifies the categories as genera of being. In contrast to such an ontological interpretation, Porphyry regards the Categories to be a treatise on articulate and significant vocal sounds, which are used in discourse to signify the entities which constitute the subject matter of such discourse.

[66] Peri., 463A: For, as he [Aristotle] holds, nothing can be found in the multitude of created things and in the various motions of minds which cannot be included in one of these genera."

well, inasmuch as they both divide and unite.[67] Hence, we may speak of the immanent influence of the affirmative and negative theologies.

Eriugena begins by observing that the nine accidental categories can never be, except in a relation to substance. We may regard this characteristic as the inter-penetration of the categories, in the sense that while the nine tend towards diversity, they are themselves held in the unity of substance. Developed from this opposition is just how the divisions and distinctions characteristic of finitude, even at the level of creation, are shown to have their distinctions only within an essential unity. The review of the categories begins with the words,

> Horum decem generum quattuor in statu sunt, id
> est, _ousia_, quantitas, situs, locus; sex vero
> in motu, qualitas, relatio, habitus, tempus,
> agere, pati.[68]

Thus the ten genera themselves are said by Eriugena to be encompassed by the two higher genera of motion and stability, and in turn, these two genera are ultimately collected under the most

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[67] _Peri_., 463B: "It is the function of that branch of philosophy which is called dialectic to break down these genera into their subdivisions from the most general to the most specific, and to collect them together again from the most specific to the most general."

[68] _Peri_., (PL. 122, 469A): "Of these ten genera four are at rest, that is, _ousia_, quantity, situation, place; [while] six are in motion, quality, relation, condition, time, action, and passion."

general genus of <u>to pan</u>, or <u>universitas</u>.[69]  <u>Universitas</u>, we shall

distinguish as the whole of the created order, and as something

different than <u>natura</u>, which we have regarded as the absolute whole

of all that can be thought to be and not to be.  Initially, using

the logic of affirmative and negative theology, Eriugena concludes

that none of the categories can rightly be predicated of God.[70]

Indeed, he holds this to be so for the same reasons that none of

the divine names are rightly so applied.[71]  On the contrary, Scotus

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[69]  <u>Peri.</u>, 469B:  "That you should plainly understand that the
ten genera already mentioned are comprised within two higher and
more general genera, namely motion and rest, which again are
gathered into that most general genus which is usually called by
the Greeks <u>to pan</u>, but by our writers, Vniuersitas."

[70]  John Marenbon notes that "the inapplicability of the ten
Categories to God is an epitome of apophatic theology (73)."  Just
as in Scotus' treatment of the divine names, each category may only
be cataphatically predicated of God, with a corresponding apophatic
denial.  The result of this position is that Eriugena, unlike
Augustine, will deny that <u>ousia</u> can be predicated of God.  Much of
the remainder of his treatment of the categories will be an attempt
to surmount the difficulties which this statement raises.

[71]  Alice Gardner responds to the implicit dilemma which
arises when the categories cannot be applied to God.  The question
is, how can Dionysius or Scotus believe in anything approximating
to a divine revelation?  To this query she finds a response in the
emphasis of Eriugena's doctrine, writing, "Here we may lay stress
on the clearness gained by removing our questions from the sphere
of the objective into that of the subjective.  We have no longer
to  puzzle ourselves with efforts to prove that God <u>is</u> this or
that, but to inquire whether <u>we</u> are justified in thinking of Him
under such and such attributes, and denoting Him by such and such
names (89)."  The whole direction, as it were, of the categories
thus changes.  It alters from one in which it is our effort to
think God in terms of the categories, to one in which we realize
that it is in terms of the categories that God thinks us, and all
reality.  Thus Eriugena will cease in his application of the
categories to God, and turn his attention instead to their
application in the sensible world as a means of return to God.

introduces the categories into the _Periphyseon_ in order to affirm God's transcendence over them.[72] However, by leading back to the inter-penetrative unity of the categories, placed within two more general categories, and those within _universitas_, one comes to speak of the created order as a fundamental unity.

The result of such a consideration of the categories is to regard them as being more closely united. Indeed, this is Eriugena's own conclusion as he writes,

> Et quoniam video, omnes fere categorias inter
> se invicem certa concatenatas, ut vix a se
> invicem certa ratione discerni possint; omnes
> enim omnibus, ut video, insertae sunt.[73]

In this observation, Eriugena implicitly notes that it is the activity of thought to at once divide and unite. Although the system of the categories appears first as division, and only later as a kind of unity, grounded as it were, in the sort of inter-penetration in which the nine accidents must be related to substance, we nevertheless recognize that the dividing and the uniting are simultaneous. One cannot begin a process of division unless, at the same time, one is holding those divisions in the

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[72] John Marenbon notes "the inapplicability of the Categories to God is made into a particularly firm assertion of divine transcendence by another view which John takes from Augustine and also from other late antique interpreters of the Categories: the ten categories are seen as embracing all things that can be discovered in created nature or imagined by the mind (72)."

[73] _Peri._, (PL. 122, 472B-C): "I see that almost all the Categories are so interrelated that they can scarcely be distinguished from one another in a definite way--for they all, as it seems to me, appear to be involved in one another."

unity of thought. Without such unity, division becomes unintelligible. However, in this, a difficult question is raised as to the nature of the externality of things themselves. In other words, how is it that the multiplicity of corporeality can be led back to an accidental collaboration of categories, themselves incorporeal?[74]

The answer to this dilemma lies in Eriugena's treatment of matter, and its relation to the categories. Firstly, there is the important distinction between a body, and a place. On the one hand, place is distinguished in the following way,

> Nil enim aliud est locus, nisi ambitus, quo unum-
> quodque certis terminis concluditur.[75]

As such, Eriugena regards place as constituted in the definitions of things that can be defined. O'Meara writes of this notion,

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[74] By the traditional Neoplatonic language of reflection, one understands a particular way of speaking about unity and difference. One might say that the language of reflection involves the language of distance, and remoteness, and continuity, taking for example the classical Neoplatonic illustration of a beam of light from a source, in order to account for difference. In this example, it is understood that difference lies in terms of distance and diminution. However, such a theory raises many problems. One may well be concerned with a question of continuity which the Neoplatonists attempted to resolve in two ways, both of which have their own difficulties. On the one hand, the descent could be conceived of as a progressive diminution of the source, while, on the other, it could be mediated by introducing multiple hierarchies of intermediate gods.

What is most striking is how Eriugena, for all his obvious Platonism, cuts through these problematic alternatives in a very decisive fashion. With his treatment of matter, the necessity for the whole mechanism of mediation, developed in late Neoplatonism, is gone.

[75] Peri., (PL. 122, 474B): "For place is nothing else but the boundary by which each [thing] is enclosed within fixed terms."

"there are as many places as there are things which can be bounded, whether these be corporeal or incorporeal. Body, for example, is a compound welded together of the qualities of the four elements under a single species; by this definition all bodies which consist of matter and form are included."[76] Place is therefore, the definition of body which is comprehended in the rational soul. Evidently, body is thus distinguished from place inasmuch as quantity is distinguished from locality. However, we would be right to say quantity is not bodily, for all the categories are understood by Eriugena to be intelligible in nature.[77] In this way then, he concludes that matter, in the sense of corporeality, must be a concourse of accidental categories which are themselves in their natures purely intelligible.[78] In other words, we shall regard bodies as first accidents, having existence only in substance. Marenbon confirms our view when he notes, "Bodies are formed by the concourse of things themselves incorporeal: usia, quality and quantity. Usia remains perpetually invisible, and quality and quantity, too, are contained invisibly by it. But when these three come together to form a sensible body, quantity brings

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[76] O'Meara 87.

[77] Peri., 478C: "You are aware, I think, of the fact that none of the aforesaid ten categories which Aristotle defined, when thought of by itself, that is, in its own nature, in the light of reason, is accessible to the bodily senses."

[78] Peri., 479A: "Therefore, all the Categories are incorporeal when considered in themselves. [Some] of them, however, by a certain marvelous commingling with one another, as Gregory says, produce visible matter."

forth a perceptible _quantum_ and quality a perceptible _quale_."[79]

Most important in this consideration is that form, or species, on the one hand, and the individuals on the other are not things apart existing only in the species, and the species in individuals. Rather, Eriugena would say that the species man has its actuality in individuals, an actuality involving a relationship of form and matter.[80] On a purely formal level, the form is humanity held in common by the species. Accidental categories, in the end, have everything to do with mutable matter, inasmuch as they become the principle of individuation.[81] Thus, mutability in finite things can be said to be knowable, but matter, _per se_, can not.

The problem of the first book is in the opposition apparent in the very notion of uncreated creating. The persistent question before Eriugena is always, how one can think of finitude, dividedness, distinction, and so on, in such a way that it is intelligible as a unity, and as being, in a sense, not outside but within the divine essence. The categories show that finite things are the divine thinking seen in its dividedness, but they are

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[79] Marenbon 80.

[80] We note that for Aristotle matter is said in the _Metaphysics_ to be the principle of individuality.

[81] In so far as this argument is concerned, one must not think of prime matter as something, that is, an element of any sort to be brought into conjunction with another. Here, matter is conceived of as pure potentiality. To say form is attached to prime matter is to say forms in creation are given a bounded and mutable character.

really nothing other than a kind of explication of that thought.

The first book of the _Periphyseon_ is clearly about the first division of nature. One might say that the whole tendency of this book is an attempt on the part of Eriugena to show how one can understand there to be, in this first division, a unity which includes and contains division. Throughout this book, Eriugena speaks from the standpoint of effects, which is the most complete way there is to speak of the universal categories. In his thinking, to speak of the Cause is to speak in terms of the effects, and to speak of those effects in the most complete way is to speak of the categories. Creation is, as Eriugena understands it, an outgoing to division, and then a return to unity. Inasmuch as division is prior by nature, through its study one comes to see the unity which lies above division.

Chapter Two

Eriugenian Aesthetics


In the previous chapter, the properties of the first division of nature were explored. To recapitulate for a moment, it is Eriugena's intent in the first book of the Periphyseon to come to an understanding of the First Cause by speaking from the standpoint of effects. In doing so, he is evidently advocating what became a characteristically medieval principle first expressed by Aristotle in the Physics as follows: "what is to us plain and obvious at first is rather confused masses, the elements and principles of which become known later to us by analysis."[82] One might say, it is the argument of the Periphyseon to proceed from what is less intelligible in character, although immediately better known to us, to what is most intelligible in reality, although less known to us initially. One cannot begin with a simplicity which does not exist in the first place. Ultimately, what Eriugena seems to suggest is most immediately known to us is language.

We shall recall that it is John's conviction that the principle of reason (logos) in the universe is the logic of thought


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[82] Aristotle, Physics, The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon, (New York: Random House, 1941) I,1,184a22-24. Cf. Post. Anal., I,1-2,71a-72b4; Metaph., VII,3,1029b1-7.

and speech.  For Eriugena, there is no distinction in principle between that which exists in the mind and that which exists in nature.  Indeed, unless both are in some way united, nothing can be thought.  It is by virtue of this relation that language is seen to stand in a directly analogous relation to _physis_.  Thus, the return for humanity through nature to the First Cause is as much a return through language.

Nothing more profoundly influences a philosopher's thinking on aesthetics than his views on reason.  Indeed, it is the very character of reason which will determine the role nature is given in his consideration.  This difficult idea is the subject of this second chapter.  Or, to put it another way, the subject of this present chapter is aesthetics, conceived as the relation between what is thought and what is.  Where thinking and being are both intimately grounded in creation, as in the Eriugenian doctrine, such an interpretation of aesthetics necessarily arises.

To begin with, Eriugena perceives the relation between Creator and created to be defined by his second division of nature, 'that which is created and creates.'  He begins the representation of this division in the second book of the _Periphyseon_, wherein he accounts for the divine ideas and volitions in which the immutable reasons of those things which are to be created are first made. The whole interpretation which Eriugena brings to this second division of nature is again, as it was with the first division, fundamentally grounded in the analogy of the _imago Dei_.  In his

explication of the first division, the implication is that the _intellectus_ of the soul is held as analogous to God's super-essential _ousia_. In the interpretation of the second division of nature, the fundamental subjective grounding developed is that the _ratio_ of the soul, characterized by its expression in language, stands in an analogy to _physis_. Accordingly, whereas the emphasis previously had been on the First Cause _per se_, now the emphasis is on the relation between the Cause and its effects.

There are many elements to the interpretation of the second division which must be comprehended. To begin with, Eriugena's explication of this division of nature is taken up as part of his interpretation of Genesis. We have previously noted that it belongs to the tradition of medieval exegesis to regard the Book of Genesis as a prophetic depiction of nature, and the manner in which God made the universe. As far as a developing medieval aesthetic theory is concerned, Genesis is the sublime account of the creative act, and must be regarded as demonstrating the essential truth of the Eriugenian analogy of the _imago_ _Dei_.

At the same time, in terms of the inner-logic and immediate continuation of argument from the first chapter, it belongs to the categories to define the analogous relation between language and _physis_. It is certainly true that there exists a tradition of predication which belongs to the successors of Plotinus. To the extent that Eriugena is involved in the distinction of predication, his treatment belongs very much to that tradition. Appropriately,

the whole emphasis of this legacy of thinking is one which privileges the relation of cause to effect. Consequently, the more this relation is understood and simplified, the more forceful will be the analogy whereby predication can take place.

Initially, it is important to note that it would seem that Eriugena regards the impulse for the kind of knowledge predication yields to be part of human nature itself.

> Ipsa quoque divinae naturae in omnia, quae in ea
> et ab ea sunt, diffusio omnia amare dicitur, non
> quia ullo modo diffundatur, quod omni motu caret,
> omnique simul implet, sed quia rationabilis mentis
> contuitum per omnia diffundit et movet, dum dif-
> fusionis et motus animi causa sit, ad eum inquir-
> endum et inveniendum et, quantum possibile est,
> intelligendum, quia omnia implet, ut sint, et un-
> inversalis veluti amoris pacifica copulatione in
> unitatem inseparabilem, quae est, quod ipse est,
> universa colligit et inseparabiliter comprehendit.[83]

Here, Scotus sees in term of eros, the contuition or affinity of the rational mind seeking God in all things, as it runs through all things. Contuition is a term having to do with perception, or understanding. In terms of Eriugenian thinking, we may consider it to be the natural knowledge possessed by the rational creature. In other words, it is the rational mind's natural perception of

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[83] Peri., (PL. 122, 520A): "...this diffusion of the Divine Nature into all things which are in it and from it is aid to be the love [of all things], not that what lacks all motion and fills all things at once is diffused in any way, but because it diffuses through all things the rational mind's way of regarding (them) [and moves it, for it is the Cause of the diffusion and motion of the mind] to seek Him and to find Him and to understand Him, as far as they may be, and in the pacific embrace of universal love gathers all things together into the indivisible Unity which is what He Himself is, and holds them inseparably together."

those created things amongst which it belongs. Thus, as Aristotle might have put it, contuition is what is most divine in human nature.[84]

Unquestionably, natural desire is the _eros_ of which Eriugena speaks. Moreover, he argues that albeit there are many levels or forms of _eros_, this natural and rational desire is the fundamental form of _eros_ as it appears in human nature. And so it is that the predication which arises from this form of natural desire, John certainly insists to be true. In other words, the forms of religious language which may speak of God as suffering, for example, are found by Eriugena to be valid, in a sense. He maintains that these are recognized ways of speaking which have a truth and importance not to be denied. Yet, at the same time, Eriugena contends that they are not proper predicates which could be said to encapsulate and define their object. In fact, were this to be the case, such thinking would make of God a creature. It follows then, that to speak of God as personal is not to speak of Him as a personality.

On the contrary, it is Eriugena's position that the categories are primarily adequate not so much as a means for humanity to think God, but rather for God to think humanity. Now, just as the categories are themselves intelligible and not corporeal things, John holds that the character of creatures is likewise

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[84]    Recall the Aristotelian point of departure in the _Metaphysics_, "All men by nature desire to know." (_Metaph._, I,1,980a1).

intelligible. Indeed, the true character of creatures belongs to a knowledge which is prior to their character considered as external effects. The genuine nature of the body is certainly spiritual, manifesting the truth of what body is according to its cause. In contrast with this, one might say that the externality of the creature is the final stage of its descent from its Creator.[85]

The return from this corporeality is brought about by thought, which redeems the creature from its externality and returns it to intelligible reality. Hence, by virtue of the categories, mankind is given an adequate way to know the sensible dominion around it.[86] It is therefore evident that the essential importance of the categories is their very ability to grasp and define objective reality. In doing so, thought and language transform the corporeal into the intelligible.

Eriugena judges the problem of corporeality--a standpoint immanently grounded in externality--to be the consequence of

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[85] Peri., 555C: "...you will find that the divine goodness, surpassing by the height of its cleency the dark that from the hidden and unknown recesses of their nature they might issue forth into the faculty of knowledge through generation, and through the multiple procession into genera and forms and proper species of sensible and intellectual substances into their various and innumerable effects, is intended by these words: 'And the Spirit of God fermented the waters.'"

[86] Plotinus too had found the categories inapplicable to the intelligible realm of real Being. From Aristotle's De Anima, he understands them to be alluded to in the phrase, "We are in the habit of recognizing, as one determinate kind of what it, substance, and that in several senses." (De Anima, II.1,412a6).

mankind's fallen perspective. From this fallen attitude, it is as though a veil were cast over each thing so that its substantial truth does not appear, but remains hidden. Thus, the nature of fallenness in Eriugena's view is essentially one resulting in empiricism. Only in turning back towards the creating Cause are natures again formed in their integrity; and in itself, this return may only be brought about by way of the categories. To turn the other way, towards externality, is the deformation of nature.

Not only is mankind responsible for its own fall, but indeed all of creation is correspondingly dragged from the purity of its causes as a result. Since all things are created in humankind, it then exists as a sort of link, or agent of continuity.[87] Eriugena, with Maximus, speaks of man as being a "workshop" in the sense that in his understanding he divides and unites all things in their species and genera, returning them to the causes from which they arise. Mankind's fall has the effect of obscuring the return of thought, and thus of all creatures to their principle, with the immediate prominence of corporeality.

Nevertheless, the process of mediation which the human intelligence originally provided is not entirely concluded by the fall. Rather, as Eriugena writes,

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[87] _Peri._, 531A-B: "For man [as we have said and shall <very often> say again] was created with a nature of so high a status that there is no creature, whether visible or intelligible, that cannot be found in him. For he is composed of the two universal parts of created nature by way of a wonderful union. For he is the conjunction of the sensible and the intelligible, that is, the extremities of all creation."

> Non ergo etiam in languoribus nostris Deum penitus
> deserimus, nec ab ipso deserti sumus, dum inter
> mentem nostram et illum nulla interposita natura
> est.  Lepra siquidem animae vel corporis non aufert
> aciem mentis, qua illum intelligentimus, et in qua
> maxime imago Creatoris condita est.[88]

Here, Eriugena finds mankind's refuge in the Augustinian _acies_
_mentis_.  He speaks, in other words, of the point of the mind at
which the divine truth, not possessed by the mind, is nonetheless
present to the mind.  Man's fall does not deprive him of this
mental sanctuary by which an image of God is established.  On the
contrary, in the _acies_ _mentis_ the sensible is conjoined with the
intelligible, and returned to its principle both through and in
human thought, where it is united.  Therefore, just as the fall of
creation is held by Eriugena to be within the fall of man, likewise
its restoration is held to be within mankind's own cognitive act
of restoration.

Evidently, Eriugena's point is that humanity's post-lapsarian
condition must not be seen simply as punishment, but rather as a
correction or teaching.  For fallen man, this division between
subsistent reality and human perception serves, in fact, a positive
role and purpose in moving categorical thought towards its return.
In other words, this division compels mankind towards a resolution
of the contradictions of sensible reality.  Therefore, the way for

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[88]  _Peri._, (PL. 122, 531B-C):  "So not even now in our feeble
condition have we wholly abandoned God nor have been abandoned by
Him, for still between our mind and Him no nature intervenes.  For
the leprosy of the soul or of the body does not deprive us of the
mental vision by which we have an understanding of Him and in which
the image of our Creator is preeminently established."

humanity to the intelligible, from the standpoint of the sensible, becomes itself a return back through the sensible.

The relation between the purely intelligible and the purely sensible, we have noted, is the substance of the second division of nature. Eriugena's doctrine of 'that which is created and creates,' or the primordial causes, is grounded in his observation that God's creation is a spoken creation.[89] He states his position most clearly in the <u>Homilia in prologum S. Evangelii secundum Joannem</u>, where he writes:

> Et quae est consequentia verbi, quod locutum est
> os Altissimi? Non enim in vanum locutus est Pater,
> non interfructose, non sine magno effectu; nam et
> homines [inter] se ipsos loquentes aliquid in
> auribus audientiem efficiunt. Tria itaque credere
> et intelligere debemus, loquentem Patrem, pro-
> nunciatum Verbum, ea quae efficiuntur per Verbum.
> Pater loquitur, Verbum gignitur, omnia efficiuntur.[90]

Certainly, in this, Eriugena is most immediately influenced by Augustine, and his interpretation of Genesis in the <u>Confessions</u>.[91]

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[89] Cf. Augustine, <u>Confessions</u>, XI,9: "In this Beginning, O God, hast thou made heaven and earth, namely, in thy Word, in thy Son, in thy Power, in thy Wisdom, in thy Truth; after a wonderful manner of speaking, and after a wonderful manner making."

[90] <u>Hom.</u>, (PL. 122, 287): "And what is the result of the word which the mouth of the Highest spoke? For the Father did not speak in vain, not without fruit, not without great effect; for even men speaking among themselves effect something in the ears of those who are listening. Three things, therefore, we ought to believe and understand: the Father speaking, the Word pronounced, and the things that are made through the Word. The Father speaks, the Word is generated, and all things are made." Translated by J.J. O'Meara, in <u>Eriugena</u>, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 163-4.

[91] Genesis was fundamental to the writers of the Middle Ages, right up to the thirteenth century and the time of Bonaventure's <u>Hexameron</u>. There is then, a long history which precedes the medieval use of the text. The first in this legacy of

Eriugena's treatment of the primordial causes begins with his interpretation of the expression "In the beginning." In this moment, the primordial causes of the whole creation are created in the beginning which is identified as the Son. Eriugena is conscious of both Greek and Latin forms of beginning--principium and arche--and consequently finds heaven to be a reference to the intelligible causes, and earth a reference to the sensible causes.[92]

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interpretation was Philo, whose commentary was written in the first century. Already, with this first interpretation Genesis is understood as an allegorical, philosophical text. It was Philo's ambition to translate the Scriptures into the philosophical language of the Middle Platonists. This tradition is in turn taken up by Clement and Origen, and indeed becomes the norm of interpretation. Generally, Antioch rejected the undue allegorization of Alexandria, but it did not deny the essential allegorical nature. Thus, one finds a change of emphasis with Basil of Caesarea's fourth century literal interpretation of the creation story. Later, Gregory of Nissa wrote an apologia, making allowances for the simple literalism of Basil, who he found to have adapted his words to his simple audience. The Latin Ambrose's Hexameron is crucial to the West, and draws heavily on Philo as well. Basil's work also came west, and was used in translation by Augustine, who at the same time drew heavily from Ambrose. Ultimately, Eriugena inherits this whole tradition, but most importantly is the works of Augustine, Confesssions, De civitate Dei, and De Genesi ad Litteram.

[92] Peri,. 546A-B: "But as for myself, when I consider the interpretations of the many commentators, I think none is more acceptable, nothing more likely to be true than that in the afore-mentioned words of Holy Scripture, that is, by the choice of the terms 'heaven' and 'earth', we should understand the primordial causes of the whole creature, which the Father had created in His only begotten Son, Who is given the name of 'Beginning', before all things which have been created, and that we should accept that under the name of heaven the principal causes of the intelligible and celestial essences have been signified, and under the appellation of earth those of the sensible things by which the universe of this corporeal world is made up."

The first dilemma Eriugena confronts is a question concerning the sense in which the primordial causes are formless, and how that formlessness ought to be distinguished from the formlessness of created things.

> Nam, ut mihi videtur, aut parva nulla differentia est inter eorum intellectum, qui dicunt, inform-itatem utriusque naturae, inteligibilis dico atque sensibilis, et eorum, qui primordiales causas intel-ligibilium et sensibilium praedictis Scripturae verbis descriptas esse judicant.[93]

It is the principle character of the primordial causes that they have their complete perfection all at once, and together. Their formless state in places and times is an imperfection and a privation which all their motion strives to overcome.

> Nil enim est aliud rerum informitas nisi motus quidam, non esse omnino deserens, et statum suum in eo, quod vere est, appetens. Primordiales vero causae ita in principio, hoc est, Dei Verbo, quod vere dicitur esse et est, conditae sunt, ut nullo motu perfectionem suam in aliquo appetant, nisi in eo, in quo sunt immutabiliter, perfecteque formatae sunt.[94]

On the other hand, all creatures created in the primordial causes

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[93] Peri., (PL. 122, 546B): "For, as it seems to me, there is little or no difference between the interpretation of those who consider that these words of Scripture describe the formlessness of both natures, I mean the intelligible and the sensible and those who consider that they describe the primordial causes of the intelligible and the sensible."

[94] Peri., (PL. 122, 547B-C): "For the formlessness of things is nothing else but a certain motion which is departing from absolute not-being and seeking its rest in that which truly is; the primordial causes, on the other hand, are so created in the Beginning, that is, in the Word of God which is truly said to be and is, that they do not by any motion seek their perfection in anything but that in which they immutably are, and (in which they) are perfectly formed."

are outside those causes in an intermediate state between
formlessness and form which they have, and in which they subsist
in their causes.  In other words, all finite things in place and
time are moveable, changeable things which fall short of the true
form.  They exist in a continual procession between being and non-
being.  The main point here then, has nothing to do with the
relative formlessness of creatures, but has been introduced to
clear up the distinction between the perfect formlessness of the
primordial causes and the formlessness of the later creation.
Thus, Eriugena may conclude without contradiction that the unformed
matter of things also is believed to flow from no other source than
the primordial causes.[95]

Now, it would seem, by virtue of the analogy of language and
physis, that the primordial causes are like the mind which hold its
conception within itself at the same time as it expresses itself
outwardly.

> Et exemplo nostrae naturae illud possumus conji-
> cere.  Nam quod intellectus noster in seipso primum
> rationabiliter concipit, et ad habitum purae per-
> fectaeque intellegentiae perducit, semper et in se
> obtinet, et quibusdam signis extrinsecus profert.
> Verbi gratia, si veram congnitionem de aliquo
> sensibili vel intelligibili sapiens animus percep-
> erit, ipsa congitio in eo fixa permanet, et phan-
> tasias primo in cognitionem, deinde in sensus, de-
> inde in vecum signa, aliosque nutus, quibus animus
> secreta sua molimina gradatim descendentia solet
> aperire, inque aliorum animorum notitiam natural-
> ibus artificialibusque progressionibus proferre

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[95]  Peri., 548A:  "...what wonder if, as we believe and
confirm with sure reason that unformed matter is in the number of
those things which are created after and through the primordial
causes."

non re:ardat.[96]

Eriugena holds the divine wisdom to be one and undivided. In an critical sense, when one speaks of the primordial causes in the divine wisdom, the distinctions are already present and can themselves emerge through being uttered. In this same way, while the intellect of the human mind is said to have an essential unity, there may be within that unity certain distinctions of concept.

Such thinking is taken to be precisely analogous to the thinking mind which comes to its own rational self-consciousness through language. As the divine mind is self-aware and the distinctions participate within this awareness, and correspond to its effects, so too the thinking mind is aware of itself by virtue of external signs. Moreover, in the same way the primordial causes and their operation cannot be understood apart from the Trinity, this creative operation is reflected in the trinitarian character of humanity. Therefore, the most precise expression of human creativity is articulated in the inter-relation of the Augustinian formula of intellect, reason, and sense.

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[96] Peri., (PL 122, 551C-D): "And we can make [that] conjecture from the example of our own nature. For that which our intellect once rationally conceives in itself [and brings to the condition of pure and perfect understanding] it always retains in itself at the same time as it expresses it outwardly by certain signs. For instance, if the wise man has grasped the true knowledge of some sensible or intelligible thing, that knowledge remains fixed in it at the same time as it does not hesitate to express it first by means of phantasies to the thought, then to the senses, [then in verbal signs and other indications by which the mind is wont to reveal its secret undertakings so that step by step they descend into] the knowledge of other minds by natural and artificial progressions."

Each of these three moments represents one of the three motions of the soul. Eriugena seeks to define the soul's tripartite nature, beginning with the first motion, when he writes,

> Tres universales motus animae sunt. Quorum primus
> est secundum animum, secundus secundu rationem,
> tertius secundum sensum. Et primus quidem simplex
> est, et supra ipsius animae naturam, et inter-
> pretatione caret, hoc est, cognitione ipsius circa
> quod movetur; per quem circa Deum incognitum mota,
> nullo modo ex ullo eorum, quae sunt, ipsum propter
> sui excellentiam cognoscit secundum quod, quid sit
> hoc est, in nulla essentia seu substantia, vel in
> aliquo, quod dici vel intelligi valeat, eum reperire
> potest. Superat enim omne, quod est et quod non
> est, et nullo modo definire potest, quid sit.[97]

Here, intellect is described as the surpassing nature of the soul itself. It is the unity within which, and only within which, the other two motions of the soul can be said to have any existence. To say this is to recognize that there is necessarily a unity to thought which alone is found in the simplicity of intellect. In this sense, it is the necessary ground of all the motions of the soul; however, at the same time, one might say that there is nothing to this motion itself which can be uttered, and so

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[97] Peri., (PL. 122, 572C-D): "There are three universal motions of the soul, of which the first is of the mind, the second of reason, the third of sense. And the first is simple and surpasses the nature of the soul herself and cannot be interpreted [that is, it cannot have knowledge of that about which it moves]; by this motion the soul moves about the unknown God, but, because of His excellence, she has no kind of knowledge of Him from the things that are as to what He is [that is to say, she cannot find Him in any essence or substance or in anything which can be uttered or understood; for He surpasses everything that is and that is not, and there is no way in which He can be defined as to what he is."

understood.[98]    Intellect is that aspect of the soul wherein the soul is under divine illumination.  It is, as it were, a point of divine presence in the soul.  This is neither to suggest that God is part of the soul, or that the soul is part of God, but rather that at the soul's _acies_ _mentis_, it has contact with the divine above it.  The soul is said to know, but cannot define the absolute being itself at this point.   Rather, what is simply one and immediate for intellect, is known in distinction by reason.

This underlying difference between these two modes of knowing forms the second part of Eriugena's definition of the soul's nature.

> Secundus vero motus est, quo incognitum Deum definit
> secundum quod causa omnium sit.  Definit vero Deum
> causam omnium esse, et est motus iste intra animae
> naturam, per quem ipsa naturaliter mota omnes nat-
> urales rationes omnium formatrices, quae in ipso
> cognito solummodo per causam--cognoscitur enim, quia
> causa est--aeternaliter factae subsistunt, oper-
> atione scientiae sibi ipsi imponit, hoc est, in se
> ipsa per earum cognitionem exprimit, ipsaque cognitio
> a primo motu nascitur in secundo.[99]

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[98]    This theory is not unlike what is written by either Augustine or Boethius, and later found in the writings of their English successors.  Augustine speaks in the _Confessions_ and the _De Trinitate_ of the _acies_ _mentis_, and Boethius goes to great lengths in his _Consolation of Philosophy_ to distinguish _intelligentia_ from _ratio_.  Bonaventure too speaks of a _primum cognitum_ of absolute being which cannot be defined, and thus known.

[99]    _Peri_., (PL. 122, 573A):   "The second motion is that by which she defines the unknown God as Cause of all.  For she defines God as being Cause of all things; and this motion is within the nature of the soul, and by it she moves naturally and takes upon herself by the operation of her science all the natural reasons (which are) formative of all things, which subsist as having been eternally made in Him Who is known only as Cause [for He is known because He is Cause], that is, she expresses (them) in herself through her knowledge of them, and the knowledge itself is begotten

The activity of reason is the most difficult motion of the soul to define. It may perhaps be most easily understood as the necessary mid-point between the first motion and the third motion. Leaving its explication for the moment, let us turn instead to the description of the third and final motion of the soul.

> Tertius motus est compositus, per quem, quae extra sunt, anima tangens, veluti ex quibusdam signis apud seipsam visibilium rationes reformat, qui compositus dicitur, non quod in seipso simplex non sit, quemadmodum primus et secundus simplices sixit, sed quod non per seipsas sensibilium rerum rationes incipit cognoscere...Praedictus quippe tertius motus ex phantasiis rerum exteriorum per exteriorem sensum sibi nunciatis noveri incipit.[100]

In all, the activity of the soul is firstly one of a unity in intellect, then a defining motion of reason, and thirdly an activity of assigning and molding the forms or reasons of visible things. Within this overall operation, reason's definition's are somewhere between the unity of intellect and the divided forms of visible things. In this way, reason mediates between the unity of thought and the dividedness of the forms of visible things. It perceives the general and universal concepts, forms, and patterns distributed throughout visible things. Consequently, it falls to

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by the first motion in the second."

[100] Peri., (PL. 122, 573A-B): "The third motion is composite, (and is that) by which the soul comes into contact with that which is outside her as though by certain signs and re-forms within herself the reason of visible things. It is called composite not because its first knowledge of the reason of sensible things does not come from (the things) themselves...For this third motion begins to move as a consequence of being informed of the phantasies of exterior things by means of the exterior sense."

reason to perceive the Cause of all things, and principle of all things by way of those created things within the Cause, and distributed by it.

In his interpretation of Genesis, Eriugena clearly cannot conceive of creation outside of the activity of the Trinity. In just this same way, the trinitarian aspect of human nature is immanently involved in the creative process.[101]

> Sicut enim quidam sapiens artifex artem suam de seipso in seipso efficit, et in ipsa, quae sibi facienda sunt, praenoscit, eorumque causas ri et potestate, priusquam appareant actu et opere, universaliter atque causaliter creat; sic intellectus de se et in se suam rationem genuit, in qua omnia, quae vult facere, praecognoscit, causaliterque praecreat. Nam non aliud dicimus esse consilium, praeter artificiosae mentis conceptum.[102]

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[101] Dorothy Sayers developes this same idea of artistic creation as an expression of the human trinity. See the work by Dorothy L. Sayers, The Mind of the Maker, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941). Her trinity of Idea, Energy, and Power is derived from the Augustinian trinitarian formula of Essence, Operation, and Power. Note that Eriugena understands this trinity to be identical (Peri., 570B) with the trinity of Intellect, Reason, and Sense which he himself expounds. In the first instance, the trinitarian formula is one conceived in terms of being, and in the second in terms of thought. Where thinking and being are synonymous with the Creator, these two trinities are one.

[102] Peri., (PL. 122, 577A-B): "For just as a wise artist produces his art from himself in himself and foresees in it the things he is to make, and in a general and causal sense potentially creates their causes before they actually appear, so the intellect brought forth from itself and in itself its reason, in which it foreknows and causally pre-creates all things which it desires to make. For we say that a plan is nothing else but a concept in the mind of the artist."

As the artist produces his art, the intellect produces, from and in itself, reason.[103] Everything the artist makes is foreknown or pre-created, not substantially but as theophanies or divine appearances.[104] Here, theophany acts as the way in which reason grasps primordial nature of intellect. Thus, the power of ratio's knowing has, on the one hand, the images of sensible things, and on the other, it has the cognitions of the primordial causes. Its knowing is a unity of those two things.

The third motion of the soul, that of sense, comes into contact with that which lies outside of the soul by means of certain signs. Certainly, to speak of signs and images as the proper object of the sensitive motion of the soul is to make

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[103] While this idea is first given its explicit expression by Eriugena in the ninth century, it continued to be regarded as a fundamental way by which to understand the Creator. Indeed, as Abbot Conway notes, as late as the fourteenth century with Ludolf of Saxony, the trinity of creative human nature was grasped as the point of departure towards a conception of the true trinitarian nature. Ludolf writes, "Creaturae enim producuntur a Deo sicut artificiata per artificem. Omnium enim est artifex, cum sit agens per intellectum; quod autem producitur per artem, seu in intellectu, producitur per artis, seu intellectus conceptum: sicut domus in re extra, producitur a domo quae est in anima, Verbum autem in divinis, idem est quod conceptus intellectus divini ut supra dictum est: ergo omnia producta per ipsum producta sunt, tam spirituales quam corporales creaturae." Cited in the work by Charles Abbott Conway, The Vita Christi of Ludolf of Saxony, Analecta Cartusiana 34, (Salzburg, 1976) 69-70.

[104] Peri., 577B: "[For just as the Cause of all other things cannot in itself be discovered as to what it is either by itself or by anyone else, but somehow comes to be known in its theophanies, so the intellect, which ever revolves about it and is created wholly in its image, cannot be understood as to what it is either by itself or by anyone else, but in the reason which is born of it begins to become manifest."

language its proper object too. By virtue of the relation between the third and second motions of the soul, the function of language becomes clear. Language transforms the world into its universal form, and presents it as a proper object to the rational faculties.[105] Separated, as humanity is, from an immediate apprehension of subsistent reality, it is subsequently moved as a result to its own rational self-consciousness.

The significance of such an effect as self-consciousness is important to consider. Language, as a sort of rationally-informed sound, suggests an initial likeness of mankind to God. Our words, expressed as an image of rational thought, are analogous to the expression by the Father of the divine Word, the Logos, through Whom all things are created. The essential point here is that the creature with the faculty of language can only ever participate in this notion of image, or likeness, as a result of its prior participation in the idea of image. To speak of participation in this Eriugenian sense, is to recognize that the very causedness of things is their participation. As Gilson points out, "Here, as in many other cases, Eriugena speaks Latin, but he thinks in Greek. The notion which, in his mind, answers the word participatio, is the Greek notion of metousia, which does not means 'to share being in common with,' but, rather, 'to have being after,' and as a

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[105] The Neoplatonists understood, for example, Adam's naming of the animals to be profound in its implications. Adam acquires dominion over the animals of the natural order as a result of his ability to name them. He alone apprehends the world according to a universal determinism.

consequence of, another being."[106]   Thus, a word spoken is caused by its participation in the word thought, and is nothing other than the manifestation of that thought.

The rational order which mankind first came to apprehend by way of language is organized according to the divine ideas present in the mind of God.   All things can be said to participate in a resemblance to God because they participate in the idea of resemblance, which in the image of God, the Son.   Consequently, the hierarchy of essences existing in the universe is founded upon the different possible participations of being, and each of these finds a corresponding idea in the mind of God.   To some extent then, all beings imitate these divine ideas, and so each creature is like God to a certain degree.   However, none is in any sense a perfect imitation, which alone is the Logos.

In the final analysis, the situation of mankind, with its rational faculty of language, is special in the sense that it is able to apprehend itself as a image of God.   It is by virtue of the Logos that the universe is given a rational order, and it is by virtue of language that mankind knows and imitates that order. If we say that human thought is analogous to physis, we must recognize the sense in which self-manifestation means self-creation.   A.H. Armstrong concludes, "the mind, which has no being outside its thought, creates itself in thinking, and God, who

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[106]   Gilson 121.

transcends being, creates himself in the Primordial Causes."[107] Consequently, just as words and other signs are the explication of the invisible intellect, so all the forms of creation are an explication, or a making apparent, of the invisible movement of the divine goodness. In the same way that the universal Cause only becomes contemplable in its divisions, language is most immediate to mankind because the intellect only becomes thinkable in its manifestations. In either case, it is as true to say that the character of physis is theophanic, as much as the character of language is theophanic.

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[107] A.H. Armstrong, The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1967) 527.

## Chapter Three

## Eriugenian Poetics

One of the most original aspects of Eriugena's doctrine is the striking manner in which thought and language are taken to be related to each other and to reality, both in their structure and in their elements. In many ways, Eriugena was far ahead of the typical speculative concerns of his own day. He was involved in issues concerning language and grammar which would not achieve prominence until the mid-eleventh century in the School of Chartres, a century and a half after his own time.

Not least amongst these issues is the sense in which Eriugena grasps _natura_ as a spoken creation. In a way that is found in the thought of neither Augustine nor Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena pursues the logical consequences of his position. Ultimately, as we have said, he anticipates the later thinking at Chartres, inasmuch as he regards thought, language, and reality all to be identical in principle. Certainly for Eriugena, language, as such, becomes important not only as vehicle for thought, but also as a source of information about reality itself. As L.M. De Rijk points out, "In medieval thought, logico-semantic and metaphysical points of view are, as a result of their perceived interdependence, entirely

interwoven."[108]

During the Middle Ages, scholars who sought to understand the nature of language itself were grammarians. Grammar was one of the disciplines of the trivium, and was regarded as a science, both speculative and auxiliary in character. As a speculative science, its goal was not so much to teach language, as it was to explain the nature and organization of language. At the same time, as an auxiliary science, grammar was concerned more with the reflection of the world in our own descriptions, than it was with the world per se.[109] It comes as no surprise that Eriugena distinguished himself as the preeminent teacher of grammar in the court of Charles the Bald.

Eriugena's whole philosophical principle of nature is ultimately one which can be understood, as well, in terms of grammar. In other words, the consequence of understanding language, thought, and reality each to be identical in principle, as he does, is that the discipline of dialectic, which accounts for the structure of reality, becomes interdependent with the discipline of grammar, which accounts for the structure of language. Therefore, the dialectical doctrine of the Periphyseon

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[108] L.M. De Rijk, "The Origins of the Theory of the Properties of Terms," The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy, Eds. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988) 161.

[109] Cf. Jan Pinborg, "Speculative Grammar," The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy, eds. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988) 255-6.

itself conforms to grammar's two-fold characterization. On the one hand, Eriugena's speculative divisions of _physis_ seek as their end the organization or order of nature itself. On the other hand, and in sympathy with this _telos_, his auxiliary approach takes as its point of departure the natural affinity of _eros_ within mankind to seek such an end, and moreover to understand that end in a self-reflexive sense. In the final analysis, where Eriugena finds that nature is theophanic, the implicit position that language is theophanic, as well, seems axiomatic.

Nature's theophanic character arises not so much from what the creature is, but rather from a true understanding that the creature is. In a similar manner, language's theophanic nature arises from grammatical, or linguistic, categories which inform not what a language says, but rather that a language says.[110] To be more particular, one might say that any theophany of language arises more as a result of linguistic essence than quiddity.

As well as being the science concerned with the investigation of language, grammar was also held by medieval scholars to be the discipline which accounted for poetry. O.B. Hardison explains that

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[110] In their applicability to the notion of a theophany of language, we use the terms grammatical and linguistic synonymously to refer to this science which investigates the logical principle of language. Strictly speaking, as has been pointed out, the science was properly understood to belong to the trivium, and the medieval discipline of grammar; however, the common modern conception of grammar is to regard it as a set of rules for speech, for a particular language. In an effort to avoid such a practical interpretation of grammar, we have introduced as a synonym the modern and more theoretical notion of linguistics, which deals with the language _per_ _se_ in the abstract.

this association was originally suggested by Quintilian, who "provided the basic formula relating poetic to grammar in his definition of grammar as 'the science of correct speaking and the reading of the poets.'"[111] Evidently, Eriugena was much involved in this association between poetry and grammar in his office as a teacher of grammar, as his commentaries on the De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii of Martianus Capella would indicate.[112]

In his commentary, Eriugena interprets the De nuptiis, in a way which we may by now regard as characteristic of his thought on the whole. O'Meara explains that he understood this poem as "symbolizing the return of the soul (Philology) to its source through a process of reflection and self-recognition which is achieved by the employment of the liberal arts...These ideas were enlarged later in the fourth and fifth books of the Periphyseon, but it is already apparent in his Annotationes in Martianum that he is seeking to combine, as we said, the teaching of the Church on such things as original sin with philosophical doctrines emanating from Neoplatonism."[113] Evidently, Eriugena himself had understood his treatise, the Periphyseon, to be as much an interpretation of poetics and language, as one of physis.

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[111] O.B. Hardison, Jr., ed., Medieval Literary Criticism: Translations and Interpretations, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1974) 6-7.

[112] O'Meara suggests that Martianus' own background was also likely one in which grammar and rhetoric were important elements. Cf. O'Meara 21-31.

[113] O'Meara 29-30.

Notwithstanding the evident fact that the <u>Periphyseon</u> is foremost an account of reality from the standpoint of dialectical logic, nevertheless, that logic is also simultaneously grammatical, and thus the <u>Periphyseon</u> also offers a unique and systematic account of poetics.

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If we may concur with Gilson and Armstrong that Eriugena was the most distinguished philosopher of his own time, no less should we esteem the writing of Geoffrey Chaucer as the foremost expression of medieval English poetry. Certainly, it was not for nothing that contemporary French poets referred to Chaucer as a moral philosopher. Indeed, by the fifteenth century, he would still be regarded as the noble, philosophical poet.[114] As with Dante and Boccaccio before him, whose works it was the task of his apprenticeship to translate, Chaucer's mind revolved around the chief speculative problems of his day. Tragically, unlike those men who were so to influence him from the time of his apprenticeship onwards, Chaucer never wrote any treatises on poetics outside of those taken up implicitly within his poetry. Such was the form of utterance he gave to his tenets; and so it is that inasmuch as his works are usually considered to be the culmination of English medieval poetry, that poetry exists as the

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[114] Donald R. Howard, <u>Chaucer: His Life, His Works, His World</u>, (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1987) 345.

highest reflection of a mind probing the philosophical nature of language and poetry.

From amongst his writings, Chaucer's <u>Troilus and Criseyde</u> stands out as his most brilliant achievement. Of all his poems, it alone exists as a finished work on so grand a scale that critics such as Dieter Mehl feel compelled to write of it that "There is no English poem before Chaucer of equal size which is comparable to <u>Troilus and Criseyde</u> in its careful construction, its variety and wealth of stylistic devices and its intellectual stature."[115] As the foremost example of English medieval poetry, this poem is an outstanding forum with which to demonstrate Eriugenian poetics.

Certainly, the very richness of the poem has already given an ample ground for critical debate, and in light of the vast number of critical studies, one is tempted to conclude with Mehl that most of the basic problems of interpretation have been formulated.[116] However, it is of course characteristic of most critical interpretation to emphasize more what Chaucer says in the <u>Troilus</u> than how it is said. Our principle course of explication will be one which involves less a consideration of grammatical, or linguistic quiddity in <u>Troilus and Criseyde</u>, as it will the greater issue of grammatical essence in the poem.

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[115]  Dieter Mehl, <u>Geoffrey Chaucer:  An Introduction To His Narrative Poetry</u>, (Cambridge:  Cambridge UP, 1986) 65.

[116]  Mehl 66.

To begin with, as in the _Periphyseon_, the point of departure for such an interpretation of _Troilus and Criseyde_ is necessarily one of dialectical grammar. Previously, Eriugena had found dialectic to be the essential representation of being and non-being, or _physis_. However, in the same sense that dialectic holds this metaphysical primacy, Eriugena also maintains that it bears an epistemological primacy. Therefore, in its representation of the rational concepts of the mind, dialectic is the appropriate discipline to uncover the logical structure of grammar. As with _natura_, this grammatical structure is one which is discovered and natural rather than invented and artificial. Indeed, in such a dialectical account of poetics, grammar is identical w'th _physis_ as including both all that is and is not thought. Or, to put it another way, grammar is the genus from which dialectic shall seek to differentiate species.

Beginning with the unity and integrity of the highest genera of grammar, the first cataphatic division which unfolds is 'that which authors and is not authored.' Now by this division what is clearly meant is Chaucer, conceived as the author of _Troilus and Criseyde_. But as author, what is comprehended here is the initial epistemological relation between Chaucer and his creation. The simple unity of this first moment is one of an undifferentiated character between author and creation, subject and object, and being and thinking. In this, its special character is analogously identical to that of the first division of nature. Therefore, just as the consideration of the First Principle in the _Periphyseon_ is

undertaken in terms of predication, so too is this first grammatical division.

In principle, what is true for the interpretation of God in His creative role, is nonetheless true of Chaucer in his. In other words, the same logic which applies to God, applies also to Chaucer as an *imago Dei*. However, the categories which properly define and encapsulate each subject are very different. Indeed, on the one hand, with God, we have seen that Eriugena finds the categories an insufficient form of knowledge, which, in fact, can be applied to the First Creator only metaphorically. On the other hand, Eriugena is very clear as to which categories define human created nature: place is the definition of body which is comprehended in the rational soul; and, as O'Meara points out, with place, "time is always and in every way simultaneously understood."[117]

Evidently, 'that which authors and is not authored' is most immediately comprehended in its relation to time and place. In other words, as far as the first division of grammar is concerned, it is defined by history. One might say that what differentiates this first division from all subsequent divisions is its logical priority. In its historical reality, this first antecedent moment is necessarily logically prior to all subsequent degrees of

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[117] O'Meara 89. Cf. *Peri.*, 489A: "For no creature can be without its own definite and unchangeable place and its own fixed duration and limits of time, whether it be corporeal or incorporeal; and that is why, as we have often said, these two, namely, place and time, are called by the philosophers ὦν ἄνευ, that is, 'without which'; for without these no creature which has it beginning by generation and subsists after some manner can exist."

fiction. Created fiction thus proceeds out of a nature which is both uncreated, in the sense of being unauthored, and unfictional, in the sense of being the point of reference for absolute reality.

This fundamental distinction between the historical reality of the first division, and the essential fictitiousness of subsequent divisions is the whole logical point of departure for Eriugena's second mode of difference. Scotus had defined this mode of difference as one which accounted for "the orders and differences of created natures." In such thinking then, we must regard the distinction between historical reality and contemplated fiction as a difference in hierarchical order. With respect to the Troilus, Chaucer is most clearly said to exist, whereas his created characters in the poem are said not to exist. In this sense, time and place on the one hand define Chaucer's existence, while on the other, fiction serves to negate the existence of the characters. Certainly, fiction imitates the categories of time and place, or history, but it is truer to say it is their negation. Fiction is that which "is not". Of course, at the same time, with respect to universitas, God alone is said to exist, while Chaucer and all creatures proper to the third division of nature are said not to exist.

In each case, the established conceptual point of reality is determined by the first division. Mankind's own analogical ability to occupy the first grammatical division emphasizes the propriety of regarding it as an imago Dei. While God alone is properly the unity of thinking and being, yet Chaucer mirrors this unity in his

initial, creative moment of unauthored authorship. God, who properly transcends being, subsequently creates himself in the primordial causes. Correspondingly, in his own limited way, Chaucer historically transcends the fictitiousness of his creation, yet at the same time creates himself in thinking.

There is nevertheless an essential difference between human creation and divine creation. As Armstrong points out, "whereas the divisions which the human mind discovers in universal nature are in the Mind of God, the definitions and localizations of the intelligible and sensible worlds are in the mind of man."[118] In other words, Chaucer must be regarded as a kind of affiliate creator, whose "thought is the spatio-temporal becoming of nature as the Divine Wisdom is its eternal essence."[119]

Where each respective true ontology is defined by the first division, in turn, each of the subsequent divisions expresses an ensuing hierarchy, which to lesser degrees approximates the subsistent reality of the first division. This hierarchical illumination is a theophany which, as Gilson suggests, "signifies the distribution of the graces and of the natures which enter the structure of the universe.[120] The hierarchy which Eriugena treats throughout the Periphyseon is one which descends from God, through angelic primordial causes, to created universe and man. A

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[118] Armstrong 527.

[119] Armstrong 528.

[120] Gilson 121.

corresponding grammatical hierarchy unfolds from Chaucer/author, through his primordial role of Chaucer/narrator, and ultimately to the created and fictitious level of plot. One might say that Chaucer is similar to God just as the hierarchy of his fictional creation is to the divine hierarchical illumination.

This hierarchy of fictional creation begins to be elaborated with the next division of grammar. 'That which authors and is authored' is comprehended by Chaucer in his role as narrator. It is a recognized feature of the Troilus that Chaucer seeks to differentiate himself in his respective roles of author and narrator. As Howard writes, "This clerkish narrator is swayed by emotion as he tells his story--he is like a member of the audience inside the poem, and he reacts as Chaucer himself could not possibly have reacted, even at one point (3:1319) wishing enviously that he had bought such joy with his soul! That we know the narrator is not Chaucer, or, if you prefer, that he is Chaucer playing a role, makes us aware of the living poet behind this mask, whom we always sense and who will emerge at the end."[121]

It is of fundamental importance to realize that the narrative voice which we read throughout the Troilus is indeed distinct from Chaucer himself, as author. The descent from Chaucer/author to Chaucer/narrator is the first movement from what is initially

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[121] Howard 350. The idea of Chaucer in a role as the narrator is not particular to Troilus and Criseyde. On the contrary, throughout the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer presents himself as a pilgrim and fellow-traveller within the general fiction of the poem.

purely actual, and a part of subsistent reality, to what is partially actual and partially fictional. To put it another way, Chaucer's actuality as a medieval poet standing before the court of Richard and Anne is ontologically compromised by his involvement within the poem itself.

Clearly, the first fifty-seven lines of the Troilus are an attempt on the part of Chaucer/author to distinguish and define the role of the narrator, and indeed, the audience itself. To begin with, Chaucer/narrator is presented as an instrument of love who mediates between the audience and the text. He is fictionalized himself in the early lines,

> For I, that God of Loves servantz serve
> Ne dar to Love, for myn unliklynesse.[122]

The religious implication of these lines cannot be overlooked. Chaucer appropriates the title of the Pope, servus servorum Dei, and creates himself anew as a sort of narrative pontiff of love. At the same time, this narrator apostrophizes his audience in the verses,

> But ye loveres, that bathen in gladness,
> If any drope of pyte in yow be,
> Remembreth yow on passed hevynesse
> That ye han felt, and on the adversite
> Of othere folk, and thynketh how that ye
> Han felt that Love dorste yow displese,
> Or ye han wonne hym with to gret an ese.[123]

The audience too is fictionalized here, and takes on the role presumably of the servi amoris, in reaction to the narrator's

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[122] Troi., I:15-16.

[123] Troi., I:22-28.

stated role as _servus servorum amoris_. The whole effect achieved is as Howard suggests, to place both the narrator and the audience in contact with one another _within_ the poem.

This contact, or direct interaction between narrator and audience, is emphasized with the appeal that the audience approach the poem "with a good entencioun."[124] Evidently, Chaucer would seem to maintain that the unfolding of the poem will depend as much on his ability as a narrator, as it will on the audience in their capacity as interpreters. This is the grounding of what David Williams refers to as the "_ratio_ of reasonable poetry."[125] As he explains, "The rationality of poetry, then, like any other use of reason to discover the truth, has certain limitations including the poet's skill and good intention and the audience's intelligence and good intention."[126] In other words, at this moment of mutual contact, what is suggested is the limitation of language as an appropriate _via_ for communicating the relationship between appearance and reality. Here, Chaucer appears to be in sympathy with Eriugena, inasmuch as the suggested linguistic limitation is surely its unreliable and arbitrary quiddity.

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[124] _Troi._, I:52

[125] "The _ratio_ of reasonable poetry, then, would seem to depend on the intellectual condition of the poet himself, on his ability to know, and so the audience has every right to inquire into it." David Williams, _The Canterbury Tales: A Literary Pilgrimage_, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987) 30.

[126] Williams 30.

The distancing of narrator from author continues throughout the Troilus, although it perhaps is most clearly developed in the passages where the narrator undermines his own authority. Chaucer/narrator began the poem by confessing his "unliklynesse" in love, and thus purports to relate the tale of Troilus and Criseyde according to what authorities before him have said. So, initially the narrator invites the audience's confidence in him as he appeals directly to the authors of the Trojan war, Homer, Dictys, and Dares (I:146). Indeed, to such an extent are these authorities evoked that Chaucer's contemporary, John Lydgate, remarked that the Troilus was "a translaccioun/Off a book, which callid is Trophe,/ In Lumbard tunge."[127] However, any initial confidence in the narrator is quickly eroded by his comments which contradict these same authorities. This erosion begins early in Book I, with the introduction of Criseyde.

> Criseyde was this lady name al right.
> As to my doom, in al Troies cite
> Nas non so fair, forpassynge every wight,
> So aungelik was hir natif beaute,
> That lik a thing immortal semed she,
> As doth an hevenyssh perfit creature,
> That down were sent in scornynge of nature.[128]

The narrator's judgement, that Criseyde was the fairest woman in Troy, is truly problematic since in each one of his sources, Helen is regarded as the fairest. Indeed, so famous is the beauty of Helen of Troy that Robert Graves writes, quoting from the ancient

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[127] Benson 1022 (my own emphasis).

[128] Troi., I:99-105.

authors, that "the Trojans welcomed her, entranced by such divine beauty...What was more, all Troy, not Paris only, fell in love with her."[129]

Shortly after this mistake, but in the same description of Criseyde, the narrator commits another glaring error when he explains,

> But wheither that she children hadde or noon,
> I rede it naught, therfore I late it goon.[130]

Again, in each of his sources, the answer to this question is evident:  Criseyde had no children.  Consequently, when the narrator claims not to know a point which his avowed sources are certain of, it is clear that he must not know his sources.  On the other hand, a medieval audience would be certain to know many of the myths surrounding the siege of Trcy, and the personages involved.  Their "good entencioun" must then necessarily lead them to a position wherein they search for a new authority.  In other words, the fictionalization of the narrator directs the object of thought toward the real author, who resides trans-textually above the poem's recitation.

This emphasized distance between narrator and author suggests much about the creative mind.  To begin with, there is a clear distinction maintained by Chaucer between the conceptual unity of the poem within the author's mind, and its more discursive nature

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[129] Robert Graves, The Greek Myths, Complete and Unabridged Edition in One Volume, (New York:  Moyer Bell Limited, 1988) 274.

[130] Troi., I:132-3.

expressed by the narrator. Strictly speaking, what the narrator is, of course, is the utterance of the poem's plan, initially held in a state of simple unity in Chaucer's mind. Like the divine wisdom, this cognitive plan is one and undivided. However, in being uttered, Chaucer's ideas are given form and distinction. In other words, the apparent difference between Chaucer/author and Chaucer/narrator emulates the motion of the mind as its seeks its own rational self-consciousness in language.

In the guise of unexpressed author, Chaucer analogously emulates the soul's first silent and undifferentiated motion of intellectus. In turn, in the guise of narrator, Chaucer emulates the soul's motion of ratio as it perceives the ideas held in the unity of intellectus. To put it another way, the generation of the narrator from the author is the soul's movement wherein the principle of reason is brought forth from the intellect.

Certainly, Chaucer's ability to differentiate between the roles of author and narrator arises from his own rational self-consciousness. Just as Eriugena suggests, Chaucer produces his art from himself and in himself, and foresees in it the things he is to make.[131] Thus, it is only in his own trinitarian action of self-reflexive thought that the author fore-knows and causally pre-creates all things within his own mind.

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[131] Dorothy Sayers notes that "although the book--that is, the activity of writing the book--is a process in space and time, it is known to the writer as also a complete and timeless whole, 'the end in the beginning,' and this knowledge of it is with him always, while writing it and after it is finished, just as it was at the beginning (39)."

The third division of grammar concerns the plot of the poem itself, understood as the interaction played out in the roles of each of the characters. Now twice removed from the subsistent reality defined in the first division, this third category is expressed by the narrator, and as such is yet more fictional than he. As far as the Troilus is concerned, the descent from the level of pure intelligibility to that of language per se is one of increasing degrees of fiction. Certainly, the poem's plot is a purely fictional level, determined causally, as it ought to be, according to its first principle. As such, it expresses the limit towards which the linguistic/fictional descent may tend. That is to say, the essence of the plot is purely fictional, and thus distinct from the quasi-fictional narrator and the purely actual author.

In the Periphyseon, Eriugena had suggested that matter represented the limit towards which thought could tend. And indeed, there was a sense in which matter was said to constrain thought as it deprived it of directly contemplating subsistent reality. In perhaps one his boldest statements regarding the analogy of grammar to physis, Eriugena states that words are a kind

of airy matter.[132] As is true of physical matter, the spoken word is also a veil over subsistent reality. Its own arbitrariness of quiddity obscures the subsistent essence of thought in language.

In this third grammatical division, at the absolute level of fiction, Chaucer explores the breakdown of language as a vehicle for truth and the acquisition of knowledge. Here, it is the norm for characters to speak in "amphibologies (I:305)" as Criseyde says, to the confusion of the bewildered reader who desperately searches for some objective criteria of judgement. Indeed, as Philip Pulsiano expresses it, "the more a character makes protestations of truth, the further away from truth we are left; 'by my trouthe' and 'have here my trouth' become Chaucerian signposts that something is amiss, that what we have in actuality is a rift between word and thought."[133] This rift is the essential element which works to produce the tragic, pagan character of the Troilus, a pronounced echo of the Trojan human dilemma.

In a sense, this rift developed in the third category is not without its own propriety. Chaucer is describing the world of

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[132] Peri., 633B-C: "For our own intellect too, although it in itself is invisible and incomprehensible, yet becomes [both] manifest and comprehensible by certain [signs] when it is materialized in sounds and letters and also indications as though in some bodies...and '  omes embodied at will in sounds and letters, and while it    ng embodied it subsists bodiless in itself; and when it make     r itself out of airy matter or out of sensible figures certain vehicles, as it were, by means of which it can convey itself to the senses."

[133] Philip Pulsiano, "Redeemed Language and the Ending of Troilus and Criseyde," Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature, eds. Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney, (New York: Syracuse UP, 1989) 154.

pagan Troy, and the importance of this, with respect to any philosophical theory concerning language, cannot be overlooked. The established pagan position, expressed by both Criseyde and Pandarus in the poem, is one which regards itself as being cut off from any higher principle. Pandarus and Criseyde each deny the existence of God, as something unknowable.

It is within this context that the linguistic turmoil of pagan Troy is defined by Pandarus:

> By his contrarie is every thyng declared...
> Eke whit by black, by shame ek worthinesse,
> Ech set by other, more for other semeth,
> As men may se, and so the wyse it demeth.[134]

The relation between signified and signifier is dissolved in this Pandaran literary theory, leaving a world of confusion, devoid of objective criteria. Indeed, these lines are a parody of the classical Christian conception of an ordered universe, expressed by Lady Philosophy in Boethius' Consolation.[135] Pandarus thus becomes a kind of anti-Lady Philosophy, expressing her contrariety.

The task of Lady Philosophy in the Consolation is to assist Boethius in his ascent from the mutable world of sensible things to the unchangeable world of intelligible things. With her guidance, Boethius learns to interpret the signs of the sensible world as they indicate a higher substantial reality. In more

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[134] Troi., I:637-44.

[135] In his Boece, Chaucer translated Boethius' Christian concept of an ordered universe as follows, "For contrarious thynges ne ben nat wont to ben ifelaschiped togydre. Nature refuseth that contrarious thynges ben ijoygned." (Boece, II.6.I.80).

Eriugenian terms, Lady Philosophy is _intellectus_, who seeks to inform Boethius as _ratio_. The movement of _ratio_ towards _intellectus_ is one through the sensible to the intelligible. Therefore, in this theory, one seeks to know nature in order to understand what nature signifies; that is, a thing is prior by nature to a sign.

In the Pandaran literary theory, signs are prior to things. Although Pandarus will consistently use the language of Lady Philosophy, he nevertheless employs it to its opposite end. He seeks to make the unreasonable seem reasonable.

Essentially, the development of this sophistic rhetoric is taken up in the interaction between Troilus and Pandarus in their discussion of Troilus' love for Criseyde. Initially, Troilus objects to any involvement by Pandarus, owing to Pandarus' own inexperience in love. However, quick comes the clever reply,

> "Ye, Troilus, now herke," quod Pandare;
> "Though I be nyce, it happeth often so,
> That oon that excesse doth ful yvele fare
> By good counseil kan kepe his frend therfro.
> I have myself ek seyn a blynd man goo
> Ther as he fel that couthe loken wide;
> A fool may ek a wis-man ofte gide.[136]

Blindness functions as a metaphor in this passage for guidance. Ironically, Pandarus will be Troilus' blind guide in love, or the fool who counsels the wise. Rhetorically, Pandarus suggests that it is somehow better to be blind or a fool. In other words, it is his position that to lack a virtue is somehow better than to

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[136]  _Troi._, I:624-30.

possess one.

Later, Pandarus is delighted to hear that the object of Troilus' love is none other than his own niece, Criseyde.

> And whan that Pandare herde hire name nevene,
> Lord, he was glad, and seyde, "Frend so deere,
> Now far aright, for Joves name in hevene.
> Love hath byset the wel; be of good cheere!
> For of good name and wisdom and manere
> She hath ynough, and ek of gentilesse.
> If she be fayr, thow woost thyself, I gesse,
>
> "Ne nevere saugh a more bountevous
> Of hire estat, n'a gladder, ne of speche
> A frendlyer, n'a more gracious
> For to do wel, ne lasse hadde nede to seche
> What for to don; and al this bet to eche,
> In honour, to as fer as she may strecche,
> A kynges herte semeth by hyrs a wrecche.[137]

Indeed, Pandarus is most happy to find that Troilus' love is Criseyde, since she is full of benevolent qualities. For, it is these same virtuous qualities that he intends to prey upon in order to bring Criseyde to love.

> "And also thynk, and therwith glad the,
> That sith thy lady vertuous is al,
> So foloweth it that there is some pitee
> Amonges alle thise other in general;
> And forthi se that thow, in special,
> Requere naught that is ayeyns hyre name;
> For vertu streccheth naught hymself to shame.[138]

All the virtuous possess the virtue of pity or mercy. Therefore, Pandarus intends to bring Criseyde to Troilus in love through her pity. In other words, he will stretch virtue until it includes shame, as he extends pity's role as a _via_ to lascivious love.

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[137]   Troi., I:876-89.

[138]   Troi., I:886-903.

Certainly, while there are many other examples, the essence of Pandarus' view of language is clear. What is prior for him are his own intentions; that is to say, the sign has become prior to the thing. Pandarus fictionalizes Troilus and Criseyde as he creates an illusion, which obscures their own reality. There are frequent references throughout the poem to Pandarus and his desire to interpret texts. In much the same way, Troilus and Criseyde are for him, a text which he delights in interpreting.

The rift between word and thought is only overcome by Troilus in his death, as he transcends the category of amphibologies. It is at this point that the narrator delivers his two most crucial stanzas to the audience, offering a sort of Christian consolation.

> O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she,
> In which that love up groweth with youre age,
> And of youre herte up casteth the visage
> To thilke god that after his ymage
> Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire
> This world, that passeth soone a floures faire.
>
> And loveth hym, the which that right for love
> Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,
> First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene above;
> For he nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye,
> That wol his herte al holly on hym leye.
> And syn he best to love is, and most meke
> What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?[139]

The two points which Chaucer stresses here, namely that man is created in the image of God, and that Christ died on the Cross for the redemption of mankind, are also as we have seen, the two principle points of Eriugena's own doctrine. Implicit in the logic of both is the Neoplatonic recognition that the Incarnation

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[139] *Troi.*, V:1835-48.

transforms the visible world. In the divisive movement of Christ's Incarnation from the Godhead to humanity, from simplicity to complexity, a _via_ is established between the hyper-verbal and the verbal. God gave an expression of Himself to mankind through language--the Word--and in doing so, opened the way for communication with the divine. As Christ was man, He spoke using external words to remind humanity that He was God, and that He dwelled within us. The Incarnation's redemption of mankind is more specifically the redemption of language, which when grounded in Christ in His role as _via_, becomes an accurate, if not complete, signifier of God.

And so it is that Chaucer concludes _Troilus and Criseyde_ with a description of the Trinity--the highest vision available to mankind.

> Thou oon, and two, and three, eterne on-lyve,
> That reignest ay in three and two and oon,
> Uncircumscript, and all may'st circumscryve,
> Us from visible and invisible foon
> Defend; and to Thy mercy, everichoon,
> So make us, Jesus, for Thy grace, digne
> For love of Maid and Mother thy begigne.[140]

This is the ultimate moment in which language functions with a perfect purity and true correspondence between outward sign and _significata_. The outward sound, as Augustine explains in his _De Trinitate_ is "a sign of the word which shines within."[141] And when

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[140] _Troi._, V:1863-9.

[141] Augustine, _On Holy Trinity_ (=_De Trin._), _The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers_, vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff, (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1980) 15.11.20.

the inward sign and the outward sound are in harmony, "then there is a true word, and truth such as is looked for by man."[142] Like the stability of the poetic categories which are born from the natural participation of language in the dialectic of _physis_, there is a stability to this overture to the Trinity, provided by its grounding in the Incarnation, which allows the divine image in man to be expressed in correspondingly concrete terms. In his beatific ascent, Troilus discovers the second division of grammar where, from a perspective shared by the audience and the narrator, he can participate knowingly in the Christian consolation.

The final division of grammar to be considered is ·that which neither authors, nor is authored.' This division has a two-fold nature in simultaneously referring to both that which is impossible, as well as that which is the contrary to the first division. With respect to _Troilus and Criseyde_, this final division must be identified with Lollius.

Certainly, Lollius seems at first to exist as an unknown cipher, or impossible figure, yet at the same time, in a way, he is responsible for the text of _Troilus and Criseyde_. We are told by the narrator that Lollius is the principle authority followed throughout the poem. For example, Troilus' lament, the _Canticus Troili_ is claimed to have been taken directly from Lollius.

> And of his song naught only the sentence
> As writ myn auctour called Lollius,
> But pleinly, save oure tonges difference,
> I dare wel seyn, in al, that Troilus
> Seyde in his song, loo, every word right thus

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[142] _De Trin._, 15.11.20.

>As I shal seyn; and whoso list it here,
>Loo, next this vers he may it fynden here.[143]

Howard identifies the narrator with the reader, deeply involved in the translation of an old book by Lollius. Rather than a code for Boccaccio, Lollius is a deliberate fiction on Chaucer's part. "There seems to have been a legend during the Middle Ages—it was based on a misreading of a line from Horace—of a lost writer, Lollius, the greatest of those who wrote about the Trojan War. Chaucer's narrator claims to <u>possess</u> <u>this</u> <u>lost</u> <u>book</u>."[144] Thus, Lollius is both an impossible figure of fiction, and identified with the first division. With Chaucer, Lollius shares the title of author, but as a negation. As Chaucer's fictionalized author, Lollius is <u>within</u> the poem as an intellect at rest within its own creation. As such, he is a metaphor for the expressed logic or working out of the poem. In turn, the thought which grasps Lollius' two-fold nature is compelled to return again to the first category, as it identifies him with authorship.

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[143]  <u>Troi</u>., I:393-9.

[144]  Howard 350. As Howard notes, "the misreading about Lollius resulted from a misspelling in <u>Epistles</u> I:2,1, 'Troiani belli scriptorem, Maxime Lolli,/Dum tu declamas Romae, Praenesti relegi.' Horace was addressing an actor: 'While you, Maximus Lollius, are declaiming in Rome, I have been rereading the writer of the Trojan War [i.e., Homer] here in Praeneste." Medieval readers, not realizing that Maximus was Lollius's first name, too it for an adjective, 'the greatest.' In some manuscripts <u>scriptorem</u> ('writer') was incorrectly copied <u>scriptorum</u> ('of the writers'). Hence they thought it meant 'You, Lollius, the greatest of the writers of the Trojan War...'" (Howard 350).

The return of thought to the first division simultaneously marks the completion of the <u>exitus</u>-<u>reditus</u> pattern in the poetic hierarchy. Like its macrocosmic counterpart, this poetic hierarchy depicts the structural moments of being presupposed in the notion that creation as a whole is a theophany. Indeed, more than that, poetry is revealed as nothing less than the imitation of an ineffable truth. As Eriugena might have said, poetry's own principle of hierarchical order is the perceptible light shining forth from the intelligible light. Thus, the metaphysics of light, grasped as both the universal pattern for understanding and a statement of ontology, makes clear the meaning of theophany.[145] As Werner Beierwaltes notes, theophany is not a manifestation which remains in itself, but an active referal into whose movement thought must adapt its movement.[146] Thus, all created things induce thought towards the contemplation of their own intelligible structure. In other words, by virtue of their created existence, each thing gives rise to the question of its own origin, and consequently, it own nature. With this in mind, Otto von Simson writes, "All creatures are 'lights' that by their existence bear testimony to the Divine Light and thereby enable the human intellect to perceive it."[147]

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[145] See the work by Werner Beierwaltes, "Negati Affirmatio," <u>Dionysius</u> I (1977), esp. pp. 142 ff.

[146] Beierwaltes 146.

[147] Otto von Simson, <u>The Gothic Cathedral</u>, Bollingen Series, third edition, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988) 53.

Created poetry does not merely depict the hierarchical order. Rather, the poetic divisions which articulate man'r thought are the divisions of the created universe because they are foremost the divisions created by God, and into which He articulates His thought.[148] On this basis then, poetry is theophany, and its whole end is one grasped by Abbot Suger in his interpretation of art: "the understanding mind must return from the material or sensible to the immaterial and spiritual (intelligible); it must return from the 'material lights' to the actual and true light into which it must ascend, or 'transfer' what appears as an image or puzzle over to the cause of appearance."[149] In this way, it is poetry's telos to transcendentally refer thought to its true and first Creator.

It is true to say as well that the creative aspect of poetry is actually only ever one of mimesis, or imitation of the natural world. However, as Beierwaltes goes on to say, "the imitation of nature as an axiom of artistic creation would be the imitation, that is, [the] portrayal, of the theophanic structure of being. In Eriugena's conception, the resulting 'imitatio in imagine' is not a limitation but rather a distinction and obligation of the artist."[150] In poetry, where that nature is found to express the theophanic character of physis, this in turn is understood to be so only in light of the fullest expression of mankind's own

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[148] Cf. A.H. Armstrong 531.

[149] Beierwaltes 147.

[150] Beierwaltes 158.

trinitarian character. In the final analysis, _poiesis_ is grasped in the most noble expression of humanity's nature, as the _imago Dei_.

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