

Oratio Placabilis Deo
Eriugena's Fragmentary Eucharistic Teaching
in light of the Doctrine of the *Periphyseon**

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No treatise of John Scotus Eriugena on the Holy Eucharist has come down to us. What teaching on the Eucharist he has left us is scattered here and there throughout his extant works. It is therefore very difficult, and perhaps finally impossible, to understand exactly what he thought about the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ.

To be sure, at the Council of Vercellae in 1050 a work on the Eucharist, thought to be by Eriugena, was condemned; but scholars are now agreed that this was actually Ratramnus's work *De corpore et sanguine Domini*.¹ Some scholars have argued that there also existed a work by Eriugena of the same title, but it appears that there is no evidence for this, although the notion itself is not implausible.² The difficulty of believing that Eriugena did not have anything at all to do with the eucharistic controversy of his own day has led one scholar to conjecture that Eriugena formulated the questions on the Eucharist which Charles the Bald "invited Ratramnus to answer"; but again, there is no evidence.³

The principal question regarding Eriugena's eucharistic doctrine which has vexed scholars concerns the manner in which he understands the Eucharist as a sign or symbol. Josef Bach argued that the modern disregard of Eriugena's idiom (*Sprache*) had caused

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1. I.P. Sheldon-Williams, "A List of the Works doubtfully or wrongly attributed to Johannes Scottus Eriugena", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 15 (1964), pp. 77-79.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 79f. Cf. Henry Bett, *Johannes Scotus Erigena, A Study in Mediaeval Philosophy* (Westport, Conn., repr. 1979; orig. pub. Cambridge, 1925), p. 10, who thought it not only plausible, but certain.

3. G.S.M. Walker, "Erigena's Conception of the Sacraments", in *Studies in Church History*, vol. 3, ed. G.J. Cuming (Leiden, 1966), p. 150f. Cf. Gary Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period, A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament according to the Theologians c. 1080-c. 1220* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 21-24, on the extent of this conflict, — a vexed question.

some scholars to attribute to him "eine bloss symbolische, spiritualistische Anschauung".⁴ Bach reminds us that Eriugena's idealism presupposes the spiritual corporeality of Christ, the Head, and the Church as his actual body. The Eucharist is, therefore, "das wesenhafte Abbild der körperlichen und geistigen Theilnahme an dem Leibe Christi".⁵ So, when Eriugena, in his criticism of the materialist position, calls the Eucharist a sign, copy, or symbol, Bach continues,⁶

so sagt er nirgends, dass sie blosses Zeichen, blosses Symbol ist, sondern das Gegentheil, nämlich dies, dass ihre sinnlich Erscheinung das Wesen derselben, d.h. die Substanz des himmlischen Leibes Christi repräsentire.

And so, the Eucharist, though not coarsely material, is essentially "die geistige Leiblichkeit, die Substanz des Leibes Christi, die wir leiblich empfangen".⁷ Thus, Bach tries to make Eriugena's position appear Catholic by connecting the presence of Christ to the consecrated elements.

F. Vernet argues that the affinity of Eriugena's eucharistic teaching to the teaching of the Pseudo-Dionysius — *pace* S.M. Deutsch in the *Realencyklopädie*, he notes — "montre que Scot voit dans l'eucharistie plus qu'un mémorial, plus qu'un symbol. . ."⁸ Moreover,⁹

l'ubiquité même que Jean Scot prête au corps glorifié du Christ . . . ne serait pas un obstacle absolu à la présence réelle, puisqu'il admet que . . . le corps glorifié du Christ, non plus matériel mais spirituel, put apparaître véritablement aux apôtres après la résurrection. . .

However, Vernet concludes, the numerous controversies involving his doctrines "obligent à admettre que l'enseignement de Scot sur l'eucharistie ne fut pas irréprochable et que, tout au moins, il se servit de formules ambiguës et dangereuses".¹⁰

Josef Geiselman seems to have made the first serious attempt to get beyond confessional boundaries by interpreting Eriugena's

4. Josef Bach, *Die Dogmengeschichte des Mittelalters vom Christologischen Standpunkte*, vol. 1 (repr. Frankfurt-am-Main, 1966; orig. pub. Vienna, 1873), p. 310.

5. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

6. *Ibid.*, p. 310f.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 311.

8. F. Vernet, "Érigène", in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 5, pt. 1 (Paris, 1924), col. 419.

9. *Ibid.*, col. 419f.

10. *Ibid.*, col. 420.

eucharistic doctrine in light of his neoplatonic philosophy.¹¹ As he says,¹²

Ein ungewöhnliches Mass systematischen und spekulativen Könnens sein eigen nennend, arbeitet er ein streng geschlossenes System auf der Grundlage des Neuplatonismus heraus. . . Für uns hat die strenge Geschlossenheit seiner Gedanken insofern Wert, als seine Auslassungen über die Eucharistie offenbar ein Opfer des berengarschen Streites geworden sind. . . Wir dürfen so aus dem System heraus eine Rekonstruktion seiner eucharistischen Theologie versuchen.

In his reconstruction, Geiselmann first briefly considers Eriugena's teaching on the nature of sacraments in general, which leads him to the conclusion that, for this viewpoint, the Eucharist is a symbol of a particular kind, i.e., a mystery, "eine Wirklichkeit, aber nicht eine schlechthinige, vielmehr eine mit wesentlich symbolische Funktion".¹³ The second stage of Geiselmann's reconstruction is a consideration of the mystical meaning of the sacraments. First, he relates Eriugena's conception of a sacrament to his teaching on the mediating role of the Church in the divine economy of salvation, sharing sensuous reality with the Old Testament and intelligible reality with the coming kingdom. "Sie 'erklären' nicht bloss, sondern bringen ein mystisches Erfahren".¹⁴ Then he discusses the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, since Eriugena mentions it more frequently than the Eucharist, and shows that Baptism has a double nature. "Man empfängt das Element. . . Man empfängt aber auch das durch das Symbol angedeutete Geistige".¹⁵ Next Geiselmann shows that the Eucharist has this double nature, too.

11. This must be what Walker means in saying, *art. cit.*, p. 150: "the only adequate account of his ideas is that provided by Geiselmann; and even this suffers from a failure to apprehend the full significance of the philosophical background to Eriugena's thought."

12. Josef Geiselmann, *Die Eucharistielehre der Vorscholastik*, in *Forschungen zur Christlichen Literatur- und Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 15, pts. 1-3 (Paderborn, 1926), p. 135.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137. Walker, *art. cit.*, p. 150, n. 3, notes that the references to Eriugena on pp. 136 & 138 of Geiselmann's text are "inaccurate". There are, it would seem, two inaccurate references on these pages. On p. 136 in n. 1, the reference to 347 should read 345. On p. 138, the reference in the first paragraph to 317 should read 316. One should perhaps note in passing that while Geiselmann refers to a commentary by Eriugena on the Pseudo-Dionysius's *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 122:265-268), it is now held that there was never any such commentary. Sheldon-Williams, *art. cit.*, p. 92f., says that PL 122:265D-267A, from which Geiselmann quotes, contains excerpts from Eriugena's preface to his translation of the Pseudo-Dionysius's works (=PL 122:1033C-1034C).

15. Geiselmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-138.

“Wir unterscheiden daher auch bei der Eucharistie ein Doppeltes, eine sinnlich wahrnehmbare und eine geistige Seite”. But it is wrong to remain with the sensuously perceptible side.¹⁶ So, he concludes, “Wir haben hier einen ausgeprägten Symbolismus, freilich nicht im modernen Sinn, wonach das Sakrament ausschliesslich subjektiven Wert hätte”.¹⁷

Now Geiselman begins to tie Eriugena’s specific teaching on the Eucharist into his philosophical system. First, he tries to show that the mystical experience to be found in the sacrament is a kind of theophany, in which man and God are united in Christ. Thus, Eriugena’s remark that we feed on Christ inwardly refers to the spiritual content of the sacrament, considering the fact that Christ’s body is now beyond time and place.¹⁸ Moreover, considering that the end of all things is to return into the intelligible, as Christ has done, it would be a retrogression — despite what Bach says, Geiselman notes — for Christ to become sensuous again in the sacrament. “Was vergeistigt ist, soll nicht mehr sinnlich werden”. The sacrament has rather the function of leading the human soul to the intelligible.¹⁹ “Dazu kommt,” he finishes,²⁰

dass er in seiner Christologie durch die Lehre der Vergöttlichung des Fleisches und der Ubiquität des verklärten Leibes, ja in seiner ganzen Weltanschauung dieser spiritualistischen Eucharistielehre einen einheitlichen, gedanklich streng geschlossenen Hintergrund gebaut hatte.

G.S.M. Walker tries to supplement Geiselman’s work in an article of his own, in which he seeks to fill in more completely the philosophical background of Eriugena’s sacramental theology.²¹ Walker does this by trying to draw in more fully Eriugena’s doctrine on substance,²² on participation, theophany and unification,²³ and on sin, the Incarnation and deification.²⁴ He argues that Eriugena could have conceived neither of a change of substance in the Eucharist, as Paschasius seems to have done, nor of any corporeal presence of the body and blood of Christ: and so, his eucharistic doctrine was unorthodox.²⁵

Therefore, amongst the scholars who have treated of Eriugena’s eucharistic doctrine, there seems to have been a movement away

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 141 & n. 1.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

21. See above, nn. 3 & 11.

22. Walker, *art. cit.*, p. 152f.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 153-155.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-158.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 152f., 157, 158.

from a defense of Eriugena's orthodoxy²⁶ as well as a movement towards a more historical appreciation of his doctrine. In this critical movement, it has become clear that a reconstruction of Eriugena's eucharistic doctrine depends on an appreciation of certain fundamental parts of his philosophy, principally, his doctrines of theophany, of the human soul, as the locus of the sacramental reality, and of deification, doctrines which can be examined at large in the *Periphyseon*. Therefore, the following consideration of Eriugena's eucharistic doctrine will try to answer the following three questions: what is the relation of the sensuous and the intelligible in the Holy Eucharist? what is the role of *memoria* in the Eucharist? and, how does the Eucharist contribute to our deification in Christ?

I

Geiselman, in his treatment of Eriugena's conception of the allegorical and medial nature of the sacraments, made use of Eriugena's *Commentarius in evangelium Iohannis* and of excerpts from the preface to his translation of the works of the Pseudo-Dionysius.²⁷ Since the answer to our first question must be sought initially in an examination of Eriugena's view of the nature of the sacraments, let us re-examine the *Commentarius*, which presents Eriugena's view fully, if diffusely.

In his interpretation of John 1:28, "Haec in Bethania facta sunt trans Iordanen, ubi erat Iohannes baptizans", Eriugena develops his conception of three hierarchies or priesthoods (*sacerdotia*), corresponding to Bethany beyond Jordan, Bethany in Judea, and Jerusalem (*Comm.* 1.30, PL 307C-309A).²⁸ These three places stand first of all for human nature under the Old Testament, under the New Testament, and perfected in the coming kingdom. Under the New Testament, human nature is free through the Incarnation and the outpouring of grace, first distributed through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. That is, human nature has been granted a true confession of faith, action, and science, and has been incorporated into the unity of the Church, obedient to the divine law (308A). Therefore, it is not far from the heavenly kingdom.

26. But cf. Maïeul Cappuyns, *Jean Scot Érigène, sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée* (Brussels, 1964), p. 369: "Implique-t-il chez Érigène la négation de la présence réelle? Pas plus, semble-t-il, que chez Ratramne; encore que la conception érigénienne du Christ glorieux soit singulièrement contraire au réalisme d'un Paschase."

27. See n. 14 above.

28. *Commentaire sur l'évangile de Jean*, ed. & tr. Édouard Jeuneau, Sources Chrétiennes 180 (Paris, 1972); also in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 122:297-348 & 1241-1244; but see Jeuneau, p. 82f., on its limits.

Ex parte enim ueritatem cognoscit, sui redemptoris gratia inluminata; ex parte prophetat, in uisibilibus simbolis mysticisque doctrinis ea quae ad purum non intelligit significans (*Comm.* 308A-B).

These three states of human nature therefore correspond to the three *sacerdotia*. The first *sacerdotium* is far removed from the heavenly kingdom, "propter obscura sui mysteria et ad intelligendum difficillima, propterque mandatorum eius densissimas caligines, et a luce ueritatis ualde remotas". The second *sacerdotium* is the New Testament, which "partim lucet clarissima ueritatis cognitione, partim obscuratur in simbolis". Moreover,

Simbola . . . noui testamenti principalia tres TEΛΕΤΑΙ sunt, hoc est, tres mysticae hostiae, quarum una baptismatis est, altera CΥΝΑΞΕΩC, hoc est, communionis corporis domini et sanguinis, tertia in mysterio chrismatis (*Comm.* 308C).

The third *sacerdotium* will be celebrated in the future life, "in qua nulla simbola, nulla figurarum obscuritas, sed tota apparebit clarissima ueritas" (*Comm.* 308C).

Therefore, the priesthood of the new covenant occupies a kind of middle ground (*medietatem*) between the darkness and obscurity of the old covenant and the blessed light of the future life. "In some things it considers the truth, as the future priesthood. In other things, i.e., in its cultic functions,²⁹ it celebrates the truth, as the priesthood which is past" (308C). And so, in the priesthood of the new covenant, human nature "is illuminated under Christ, educated under the law of grace, and made perfect, as if a neighbour of the future priesthood", "illuminata quidem per fidem, educata uero per spem, et proxima facta diuinae uisioni per caritatem" (*Comm.* 308D-309A).

What Eriugena seems to be getting at here is this. There are three stages in God's redemptive work: the old covenant, the new covenant, and the perfection of life in heaven. Under the first, human nature is far removed from the divine blessings and wisdom which are bestowed by the grace of the Incarnation of the Word. Under the second, it is free through the bestowal of that grace, and brought near to the kingdom, though still in the flesh. Therefore, it partly sees the truth, which was far removed from it under the old covenant, and partly prophesies as under a veil in visible symbols and mystical teachings. In part, it sees clearly by grace; in part, its vision is obscured and the truth can only come to it under a veil. But in the celestial city, when humanity shall have been united perfectly to Christ, all shall be light and nothing obscure.

29. Cf. Jeaneau's translation (*ibid.*, p. 165): "dans le service du culte".

Moreover, the three priesthoods, corresponding to the three covenants or stages of the history of salvation, represent three orders of ministry. The first has only dark and obscure mysteries. But the second partly shines with the very clear light of truth, and partly is veiled in symbols. These symbols are chiefly three: Baptism, the Eucharist, and Chrism; and they do not themselves shine with light, but are part of the shadowy and obscure cultic ministry of the New Testament *sacerdotium*. But under this *sacerdotium*, by means both of its clarity and of its obscurity, beginning in faith and moving through hope and love to the divine vision, human nature dwells not far distant from the heavenly Jerusalem. The sacraments of the priesthood of the new covenant, mediating the truth entirely under a veil, are therefore part of the obscurity of that ministry, in which it resembles the priesthood of the old covenant, but not the priesthood of the heavenly kingdom, in which the truth will shine without any mediation at all.

What, then, is the nature of a sacrament? Eriugena discusses this question at some length in his comments on John 6:14, "Homines ergo uidentes quod fecit signum Iesus, dicebant: Quia ipse est uere propheta qui uenit in mundum" (*Comm.* 6.5&6, *PL* 344B-348B). However, Eriugena's whole argument on the sixth chapter of St. John is of great interest and must be discussed first.

In his commentary on John 6:1-13, the miracle of the loaves and fishes, Eriugena argues that the miracle is really about the elevation of the eyes of the mind to the light of the truth through the disciplines of action, science, and theology or contemplation. He says,

Leuare etiam oculos nostri cordis exemplo Christi admonemur ut, si forte, eo nos docente et interius inluminante, altitudinem actionis et scientiae necnon et theologiae ascendere permittamur, turba sequentium carnalium cogitationum nos non perturbet et a contemplationis altitudine deiciat, sed eas spiritalibus escis, quantum possunt capere, satisfaciendo pascere procuremus (*Comm.* 6.1, *PL* 340B).

Philip's question to our Lord regarding the amount of bread needed to serve the multitude — two hundred pennyworth — is interpreted as a sign,

pulchre perfectionem bonae actionis et rationabilis scientiae typum gerens, quae pascendis, hoc est, erudiendis in fide non sufficiunt, nisi eis altitudo theologiae addatur. Actio quippe uirtutum fidelium animas solummodo purgat, scientia uero rerum creatarum inluminat. Sed illa purgatio atque illuminatio eis non sufficit, nisi habitus perfectae contemplationis

addatur, qui solus animas ad consummatam spiritualium refectio-
 tionum plenitudinem perducit (*Comm.* 6.2, *PL* 341A).

That is to say, the Christian life begins in faith, and rises to perfection through the disciplines of action, rational thought, and theological contemplation. As Eriugena says in the *Periphyseon*,³⁰ quoting Maximus the Confessor on the earth which Adam must cultivate by the sweat of his brow,

An magis terra est Adam cor maledictum, per praevaricationem accipiens caelestium bonorum ablationem? Quam terram per practicam philosophiam multis comedit tribulationibus, purgatam per conscientiam maledictione operum turpitudinis, et iterum germinatas in ea instar spinarum cogitationes circa corporum generationem, ac veluti tribulos, circa incorporalium providentiam iudiciumque, scatentes opiniones ratione purgans, physicam veluti foenum carpit spiritualiter theoriam. Et sic quasi in sudore vultus scibili intelligentiae secundum scientiam vultu incorruptibilem theologiae comedit panem, solum vere vitalem et comendentium se conservantem ad incorruptibilitatem generationem (*Peri.* 857C-D).

Thus, action, science, and contemplation are seen to correspond to ethics, physics, and theology (see also *Peri.* 705B29 & 700B), which are therefore the sciences by which the soul is purged, illuminated and consummated. But physics and theology themselves correspond to *scientia* and *sapientia* (*Peri.* 629A-B). Thus, we are not far here from the Augustinian conception of the movement from faith through science to wisdom elaborated in the *De Trinitate*.³¹

This discussion arises because Eriugena interprets the five barley loaves of the miracle as meaning both the five books of the Mosaic law and the five senses. Thus, the loaves represent those who live according to the letter of the law, but do not feed upon its spirit, and also those among the faithful who remain with the sensuous.

Quanto siquidem quis fidelium in his, quae per quinquepertitum corporis sensum accipiuntur, delectatur, tanto inter bruta

30. Iohannis Scotti Eriugena *Periphyseon* (*De Diuisione Naturae*), books 1-3, ed. I.P. Sheldon-Williams, coll. Ludwig Bieler, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, vols. 7, 9 & 11 (Dublin, 1968, 1972, 1981). All references to *Periphyseon* 1-3 will be to these volumes. References to *Periphyseon* 4-5 will be to the edition of H.J. Floss in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 122:439-1022. I have also used the translation of the entire work by Sheldon-Williams as revised by J.J. O'Meara, *Periphyseon* (*The Division of Nature*) (Montreal & Washington, D.C., 1987).

31. See esp. *De Trinitate* 13.19.24: "tendimus per scientiam ad sapientiam". Cf. Robert D. Crouse, "St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method", in E.A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica*, vol. 16 (Berlin, 1985), p. 504f.

animalia ordeo uescentia computabitur. Dum uero eos, sensus dico, actionis et scientiae incremento deserens, spirituali esca uescitur, non iam inter bruta, sed inter rationabilia animalia reputetur (*Comm.* 6.2, *PL* 341D).

However, though one must not delight in the sensuous for its own sake, nevertheless “nemo ad altitudinem uirtutum et contemplationum sinitur ascendere, nisi prius sensibilibus rerum significationibus nutriatur” (*Comm.* 342A). But the sensuous can have this nutritive power because everything that is has its being and its well-being, its gift and its grace, from God through the hierarchy of causality stretching throughout creation from the primordial causes to terrestrial bodies. As Eriugena says in the *Periphyseon*,

Sicut enim numerorum concordia proportionis, proportionum uero collatio proportionalitatis, sic ordinum naturalium distributio participationis nomen, distributionum uero copulatio amoris generalis accepit, qui omnia ineffabili quadam amicitia in unum colligit (630D-631A; see also 630A-633A *passim*).

If, then, all things thus participate in God through the outpouring of himself as cause, they are also God’s theophanies. As Eriugena says, again in the *Periphyseon*,

Omne enim quod intelligitur et sentitur nihil aliud est nisi non apparentis apparitio, occulti manifestatio, negati affirmatio, incomprehensibilis comprehensio, ineffabilis fatus, inaccessibleis accessus, inintelligibilis intellectus, incorporalis corpus, superessentialis essentia, informis forma, immensurabilis mensura, innumerabilis numerus, carentis pondere pondus, spiritualis incrassatio, inuisibilis uisibilitas, illocalis localitas, carentis tempore temporalitas, infiniti diffinitio, incircumscripti circumscriptio et caetera quae puro intellectu et cogitantur et perspiciuntur et quae memoriae sinibus capi nesciunt et mentis aciem fugiunt (633A-B).

That is to say, every created thing manifests its Creator. Thus, although the Creator is beyond every motion of the soul but the highest, nevertheless he can be known to some extent through the things he has created. Thus, a certain kind of knowledge of him enters the soul through the senses, and is impressed upon the memory, where the *acies mentis* may regard it, and the soul thus reminded of him may ascend to him in intellection. Again, we are very close to the doctrine of St. Augustine, who develops just such a theory of the relation of the memory and the *acies mentis* in the ascent from sensation to wisdom in books 11-14 of the *De Trinitate*.³²

32. See esp. *De Trinitate* 11.9.16, 12.14.23, 13.20.26, & 14.12.15.

But the letter of Scripture is of the same sensuous nature. Therefore, Eriugena continues,

Primus quippe gradus est, ad ascendendam altitudinem uirtutum, sanctae scripturae littera rerumque uisibilium species, ut, prius lecta littera seu creatura inspecta, in spiritum litterae et in rationem creaturae, rectae rationis gressibus, ascendant (*Comm.* 6.3, *PL* 342B).

And so, the multitude of the five thousand men represents those who live under the letter and are subject to the senses. Then, our Lord takes the bread and the two fishes, blesses them, and distributes them to the disciples to give to the multitude. But,

Cui gratias egit, nisi patri qui "sic dilexit mundum, ut filium suum daret", per quem pasceret mundum uisibilibus sacramentis et sensibilibus creaturis, ut per haec ad se cognoscendum perduceret atque nutrirer? (*Comm.* 342D).

Thus, the notion of the sacraments is introduced into the discussion here, meaning, it would seem, — (and notice that here "duo pisces duo testamenta, quantum ad sensibilia symbola pertinent, insinuant") — every kind of mystery and symbol contained in Scripture.³³

In his comments on John 6:12-13 (*Comm.* 6.4, *PL* 343A-344B), Eriugena argues that the food consumed by the multitude represents the literal sense of the scriptural sacraments and the sensuous aspect of visible creatures, which is all that the multitude is able to comprehend. But the fragments of bread collected after the meal by the Apostles represent the "subtiles ac difficiles intellectus sanctae scripturae et sensibilibus sacramentorum, quos doctores ecclesiae in unum colligunt" (643B). But this presents a problem (*Comm.* 6.5, *PL* 344B). Why does John report that fragments only of bread, but not of the fishes, were collected?

The answer to this question, Eriugena says, must be sought in a closer examination of the distinction between *mysteria* and *symbola* (*Comm.* 344D-345C).³⁴

33. See Jean Pépin, "Mysteria et Symbola dans le commentaire de Jean Scot sur l'évangile de Saint Jean", in *The Mind of Eriugena*, ed. J.J. O'Meara & L. Bieler (Dublin, 1973), p. 18: "le sacramentum a l'air d'être le genre dont les mysteria et les symbola seraient deux espèces".

34. On the historical background to Eriugena's use of these terms, see the article by Pépin cited in the previous note, and Jauneau's edition of the *Comm.* (above, n. 28), *Appendice III, Allegoria, Mysterium, Sacramentum, Symbolum*, pp. 397-402. For other relevant literature see the articles to which Jauneau refers, p. 400, n. 1. Jauneau shows that Eriugena's distinction of *allegoria facti et dicti* (=mysterium, sacramentum) from *allegoria dicti et non facti* (=symbolum) was suggested by passages in Augustine,

Mysteria itaque proprie sunt quae iuxta allegoriam et facti et dicti traduntur, hoc est, et secundum res gestas facta sunt, et dicta quia narrantur (344D).

Examples of such allegories, which are constituted both of historical events or institutions and of portions of the narrative of the Bible, can be found in both Testaments: the tabernacle, circumci-

but that his use of the term *symbolum* in this sense was not (p. 399). He then argues that Eriugena's special use of the term came from his reading of the Pseudo-Dionysius (pp. 400-402). His argument is based partly upon the increasing frequency with which Eriugena used the word as he became familiar with the Pseudo-Dionysius's work, and partly upon the fact that he found in the Pseudo-Dionysius some precedent for taking *symbolum* as something more *dictum* than *factum*. Pépin's argument is more complex. He asserts that the essential distinction for Eriugena between *mysteria* and *symbola* "réside bien dans la dualité des *facta* et des *dicta*" (p. 18). He shows, as did Jeauneau, that this distinction rests upon Augustine, but that the special sense of the term *symbolum* must have another source (p. 18f.). He then traces the history of the *facta/dicta* distinction in the Apologists and in Origen, showing that the remote source of the distinction lay in them (pp. 19-21). Next he argues that the Augustinian distinction of *sacramentum/mysterium*, meaning the sign and the thing signified, is equal to the Greek distinction σύμβολον/μυστήριον. Augustine would have used the Greek term *symbolum* instead of the Latin term *sacramentum*, Pépin claims, had he not found it so restricted by custom to the phrase *symbolum fidei*. Eriugena, however, felt himself free of this restriction, and therefore employed the actual Greek term (pp. 22-23). This hypothesis becomes certain, Pépin continues, when one observes that Augustine sometimes used the *sacramentum/mysterium* distinction as signifying a *dictum/factum* distinction (p. 23). But the final impetus for Eriugena's use of the term *symbolum* came from the Pseudo-Dionysius, Pépin concludes, who, although he used the *symbolum/mysterium* distinction in the sign/thing-signified sense, nevertheless warned against taking symbols as purely historical or *facta* (pp. 24-25). To make this last point, Pépin quotes from the same passage (p. 29, n. 77) as Jeauneau did (p. 401) in making the same point. The present writer would not disagree with the idea that the distinction of verbal and actual allegories stems from Augustine or that Eriugena's peculiar use of the term *symbolum* arises somehow (at least partly) from his acquaintance with the Pseudo-Dionysius. However, he would point out the fact that the duality in Eriugena's mind here is not that of *facta/dicta*, but of *facta-dicta/dicta*. That is to say, the essential point to Eriugena is that mysteries are both sensible and intelligible, while symbols are only intelligible, though, of course, they must be seen or heard (see Pépin, p. 17). But if this is the case, then the division of *sacramentum/mysterium* or of σύμβολον/μυστήριον does not underlie Eriugena's whole division of *mysterium/symbolum* but only his notion of *mysterium* as composed both of sensible and intelligible. This would then make a considerable part of Pépin's argument beside the point. One might also add that the best place to look for the source of Eriugena's use of the term *symbolum* is still the most obvious: *symbolum fidei*. For the creed is the primary example for Christians of something heard and seen, but not done, of something that can only be appropriated by understanding.

sion, and the *sacramenta legalium hostiarum* in the Old; and in the New, the mysteries of Baptism, the Communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and Chrism, "iuxta res gestas conficiuntur, et litteris traduntur et dicuntur" (345A). But a symbol is an

allegoria dicti, non autem facti . . . quoniam in dictis solummodo spiritualis doctrinae, non autem in factis sensibilibus constituitur (345A).

Examples of such allegories, with an intelligible content only, are our Lord's parables. Thus we see that the sacrament of the Eucharist is a mystery, strictly speaking.

Upon reflection, therefore, Eriugena continues (*Comm.* 6.6, *PL* 345C-347A), the five loaves represent mysteries in the strict sense. That bread which was consumed represents the sensuous side of the mysteries, beyond which many of the faithful cannot penetrate. The remaining fragments collected by the Apostles represent the intelligible content of the mysteries, which not all can comprehend. And thus there is a distinction between carnal and spiritual man.

Fragmenta, quae comedunt carnales et saturantur, res gestae; fragmenta, quae comedunt spirituales, diuini intellectus rerum gestarum sunt (346B).

On the other hand, the two fishes represent symbols, strictly speaking. Therefore, there are no fragments left over, i.e., there is no division in them, for

totum memoriae carnalium fidelium commendatur, ut credant sensum spiritualementem his uerbis inesse, quamuis non intelligant; totum ab his qui spiritualiter spiritualia cognoscunt colligitur (347A).

Eriugena then adduces examples from the New Testament to illustrate this distinction (*Comm.* 347A-348B). He chooses the Holy Eucharist to illustrate the notion of *mysterium*.³⁵

. . . corpus et sanguis domini nostri et sensibiliter secundum res gestas conficitur mysterium, et secundum spiritualis intellectus inuestigatur cerebrum. Quod extrinsecus sentitur et percipitur carnalibus hominibus, quinquepartito corporeo sensui subditis, ordeaceus panis est quia altitudinem spiritualis intelligentiae non ualent ascendere, ac ueluti quoddam fragmentum est, quibus carnalis illorum cogitatio satiatur. Fragmentum spirituale est his qui altitudinem diuinorum ipsius mysterii intellectu ualent cognoscere, ideoque ab eis colligitur ne pereat. Nam mysterium ex littera et spiritu confectum

35. The text which follows is the one reconstructed by Jeaneau. See his p. 364, n. 9. *Cerebrum* has the sense here, he says, of "sens caché".

partim perit, partim aeternaliter manet. Perit quod uidetur, quia sensibile est et temporale; manet quod non uidetur, quia spirituale est et aeternale (347A-348A).

Therefore, the Holy Eucharist, as a mystery, is partly of a sensuous, perishable nature, beyond which the carnal-minded cannot reach, and is partly of an imperishable, intelligible nature, which only the spiritual-minded can perceive.

There are other significant passages in another work of Eriugena's to be considered regarding our present question on the relation of the sensuous and intelligible in the Holy Eucharist. But before considering them, let us summarize what we have already found. First, we saw how human nature under grace, and the priesthood of the New Testament are both caught in a division between the sensible and the intelligible. They have the truth partly under a veil, and partly clearly. The Holy Eucharist, however, falls on the obscure side, the sensible side of this division. The New Testament priesthood administers it to New Testament man as a dark and obscure mystery of the truth. Next we saw how the essential movement of the Christian life is from one side of that division to the other, from sensible to intelligible, by means of the disciplines of action, science, and contemplation, or ethics, physics, and theology. It is a movement out of faith by the practice of the virtues through science to the contemplation of the divine wisdom. Finally, we saw how the Holy Eucharist, as a mystery, can help in the movement out of the sensible to the intelligible. For its very sensuousness has a kind of nutritive power for the soul. As a visible thing, it is a kind of theophany, which moves the mind beyond it as it recollects what it signifies. It is indeed confected of the letter and of the spirit, of the sensible and of the intelligible, and to those who can perceive it will lead to the truth itself.

The notion of the nutritive power of the sensible underlies quite expressly Eriugena's sacramental doctrine in the *Expositiones in ierarchiam coelestem*.³⁶

Dum arbitratur (sc. Dionysius) et incunctanter iudicat, uisibiles formas, siue quas in natura rerum, siue quas in sanctissimis diuine scripture sacramentis contemplatur, non propter seipsas factas, nec propter seipsas appetendas seu nobis promulgatas, sed inuisibilis pulchritudinis imaginationes esse, per quas diuina prouidentia in ipsam puram et inuisibilem pulchritudinem ipsius ueritatis quam amat et ad quam tendit omne

36. *Expositiones in ierarchiam coelestem*, ed. Jeanne Barbet, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis 31 (Turnhout, 1975); also in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 122:126-266, partially (Barbet, p. xiiif.).

quod amat, siue sciens siue nesciens, humanos animos reuocat (Exp. 1.510-518, PL 138-139).

That is, the visible forms both of the scriptural sacraments and of nature are nothing else than — nothing in themselves but — images of the truth, through which the Father calls back human souls to the truth, which he loves as his Son, and to which everything tends by the very weight of its nature.³⁷ By these sensible images we begin again to love the truth which is the essence of all things. As Eriugena says in the *Periphyseon*,³⁸

Merito ergo amor deus dicitur quia omnis amoris causa est et per omnia diffunditur et in unum colligit omnia et ad se ipsum ineffabili regressu reuoluitur totiusque creaturae amatorios motus in se ipso terminat. Ipsa quoque diuinae naturae in omnia quae in ea et ab ea sunt diffusio omnia amare dicitur non quia ullo modo diffundatur quod omni motu caret omniaque simul implet, sed quia rationabilis mentis contuitum per omnia diffundit et mouet dum diffusionis et motus animi causa sit ad eum inquirendum et inueniendum et quantum possibile est intelligendum qui omnia implet ut sint et uniuersalis amoris pacifica copulatione in unitatem inseparabilem quae est quod ipse est uniuersa colligit et inseparabiliter comprehendit (519D-520A).

That is, God's very presence to creation as its cause and as its end, as dividing all things and as unifying all things, as *solutio* and as *reditus* (*Peri.* 526B),³⁹ moves the mind by its love of the truth to return all individuals to their species and all species to their genera and so on until it has returned all things into their principle, which is the truth, the only-begotten Son of God. This is the love, the nature, the weight of the soul or mind, and the reason why sensible particulars have this crucial significative power in the return of all things into their causes. Consequently, Eriugena can say,

Ipsa igitur sancta Trinitas nostra ΘΕΩCIC est, hoc est deificatio; deificat enim nostram naturam, reducendo eam per sensibilia symbola in altitudinem angelice nature, et deificans eam in his qui ultra omnia in ipsum Deum transeunt. Ipsa est nostra TEΛETAPXIA, hoc est perfectissime nostre purificationis et sanctificationis exordium. Ipsa est prima et summa

37. The notion of love as the weight or *pondus* of the soul or mind is found in Augustine, *Confessions* 13.9.10.

38. He is drawing into his argument here the teaching of the Pseudo-Dionysius on God's eros as the cause of all things. See Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* 4.15-17 (Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 3:713A-D), in *The Complete Works*, tr. Colm Luibheid, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, 1987), p. 83f.

39. Cf. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 8.3.4-5.

ierarchia. . . Ipsa nobis manifestat uirtutes celestes in figuris ac formis nostre infirmitati congruentibus, ut per eas, ueluti per quosdam gradus quos in diuinis construxit eloquiis: facta, dico, patriarcharum antique legis, uisiones prophetarum, mysteria euangelice parabole omnesque uirtutes quas Dominus in carne peregit, uisibilia sacramenta noue legis que ab ipso Domino et inchoata et sanctificata sunt, et a sanctis apostolis frequentata et celebrata et aucta, conscendamus actionis et scientie gressibus, diuina gratia nos ducente, adiuuante, cooperante, donec perueniamus equaliter cum angelis in simplicissimam purissimamque incommutabilis ueritatis speculationem (*Exp.* 1.639-661, *PL* 142).

The Trinity itself, therefore, is the principle of our deification, leading us out of sensible figures and forms by the steps of action and science, ethics and physics, to the contemplation of the celestial virtues themselves, indeed, to their likeness, which is theology. Moreover, the Holy Eucharist, as one of the dominical sacraments, begun and sanctified by Christ, by the Apostles frequented, celebrated and augmented, is one of those sensible institutions by which we are moved towards the truth itself.

The one danger in these visible mysteries, however, is that the carnal-minded will cling to them. Eriugena warns us against this.

Talis siquidem error multos ac pene omnes inuasit et adhuc inuadit, existimantes sensibilia sacramenta nil altius significare preter seipsa, ac per hoc approbantes falsa pro ueris; et seipsos fallunt et simpliciores se decipiunt, remanentes in figuris, in earum uero mysticum intellectum mentis aciem infigere negligentes. De talibus ait Apostolus: "Littera occidit, spiritus autem uiuificat" (*Exp.* 2.1162-1168, *PL* 170-171).

The error, that is to say, lies precisely in fixing the *acies mentis* on the sensible images in the memory and in not shifting it to behold the truth they were meant to signify.

Forewarned, let us now examine the principal passage on the Eucharist in this work, and indeed in any extant work of Eriugena's (*Exp.* 1.569-594, *PL* 140-141). It was this passage which led Bach to conclude that the Eucharist was to Eriugena "das wesenhafte Abbild der körperlichen und geistigen Theilnahme an dem Leibe Christi".⁴⁰ It also led Vernet to assert that the Eucharist is, on this view, "plus qu'un mémorial, plus qu'un symbole".⁴¹ Geiselman had perhaps a more critical view of the passage in mind when he based this statement upon it: "Wir unterscheiden daher

40. Bach, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 310 & n. 177.

41. Vernet, *art. cit.*, col. 419.

auch bei der Eucharistie ein Doppeltes, eine sinnlich wahrnehmbare und eine geistige Seite (spiritualis participatio Jesu)".⁴²

Eriugena begins by quoting the Pseudo-Dionysius, and then proceeds with his commentary.

Sequitur: ET IESV PARTICIPATIONIS IPSAM DIVINISIME EVCHARISTIE ASSVMPTIONEM. Intuere quam pulchre, quam expresse asserit uisibilem hanc eucharistiam, quam quotidie sacerdotes Ecclesie in altari conficiunt ex sensibili materia panis et uini, quamque confectam et sanctificatam corporaliter accipiunt, typicam esse similitudinem spiritualis participationis Iesu. . . (Exp. 1.569-575, PL 140).

We notice here the sharp division between the visible Eucharist as a typical similitude and the spiritual participation of Jesus of which it is the similitude. The two sides of this division can be nothing else than the two parts of a mystery discussed above: the letter and the spirit. We also notice, however, the role of the priesthood, the cult, and the Church in confecting and sanctifying the visible Eucharist out of the material bread and wine. *Conficere* is a characteristic term in Eriugena's discussion of the sacraments. It is used both by Ratramnus and Paschasius as well.⁴³ Here it seems to mean no more than that these ordinary creatures of bread and wine, which are theophanies in their own right, are set apart and made into the unique similitude of our spiritual participation in Christ by the ministry of the Church. It does not seem to imply any power in the priestly ministry to effect a change in the substance of bread and wine. Eriugena continues,

. . . quem fideliter solo intellectu gustamus, hoc est intelligimus, inque nostre nature interiora uiscera sumimus ad nostram salutem et spirituale incrementum et ineffabilem deificationem (Exp. 1.575-578, PL 140).

It is now emphasized clearly that our participation of Jesus is in the soul alone and in no way corporeal: "solo intellectu gustamus". As he says elsewhere, "spiritualiter eum immolamus et intellectualiter, mente non dente, comedimus" (*Comm.* 1.31, PL 311B), a thought typical of Augustine as well.⁴⁴ Yet the spiritual

42. Geiselmann, *op. cit.*, p. 138 & n. 2. Cf. Walker, *art. cit.*, p. 155 & n. 8.

43. See above pp. 95 & 96 and below p. 112. Cf. Ratramnus, *De corpore et sanguine Domini*, ed. J.N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, 2nd edition (Amsterdam & London, 1974), para. 9, p. 44f.; and Paschasius, *De corpore et sanguine Domini*, *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis* 16, ed. Bede Paulus (Turnhout, 1969), chap. 15, p. 92.

44. Jeuneau's n. 12, p. 178, gives references to similar teaching in Augustine, and to some scholarly discussion of the matter.

participation of Christ is of vital effect. It bestows salvation, spiritual growth, and deification, which is beyond speech. That is to say, the spiritual participation of Christ, which is the effect of the Eucharist in the faithful, is precisely that process of growth from action through science to contemplation, which we have noticed before. Therefore, the similitude, which we set apart and make by dominical and apostolic example, when it enters the memory through our senses — “corporaliter accipiunt” — does somehow effect our spiritual participation of Christ. We have already suggested that it does this by reminding the soul of the presence of God’s truth and love to it immediately as the cause of its own being and well-being. But we shall explore this more fully below. Eriugena proceeds,

Oportet ergo, inquit (sc. Dionysius), humanum animum, ex sensibilibus rebus in celestium uirtutum similitudinem et equalitatem ascendentem, arbitrari diuinissimam eucharistiam uisibilem in Ecclesia conformatam, maximum typum esse participationis ipsius, qua et nunc participamus Iesum per fidem, et in futuro participabimus per speciem, eique adunabimur per caritatem (*Exp.* 1.578-584, *PL* 140).

Eriugena here emphasizes how fitting it is that the human soul, which naturally ascends by theophany the hierarchy of participated and participating causes to God, should regard the most divine Eucharist, a visible thing, a kind of theophany made in the Church, as the greatest type of the participation we have now of Christ by the grace of faith, and shall have in the future by the gift and grace of resurrection (cf. *Peri.* 906C). But Eriugena now admonishes us.

Quid ergo ad hanc magni theologi Dionysii preclarissimam tubam respondent, qui uisibilem eucharistiam nil aliud significare preter seipsam uolunt asserere, dum clarissime tuba prefata clamat, non illa sacramenta uisibilia colenda neque pro ueritate amplexanda, quia significatiua ueritatis sunt, neque propter seipsa inuenta, quoniam in ipsis finis intelligentie non est, sed propter incomprehensibilem ueritatis uirtutem que Christus est in unitate humane diuineque sue substantie, ultra omne quod sensu sentitur corporeo, super omne quod uirtute percipitur intelligentie. Deus inuisibilis in utraque sua natura (*Exp.* 1.584-594, *PL* 140-141).

Yes, Eriugena is saying, it is fitting that we should regard the visible Eucharist as the greatest type of the spiritual participation of Christ; but we should never treat it as an end in itself, worshipping (*colenda*) it and embracing it instead of the truth. Understanding does not rest in it, but in Christ, in the unity of his two natures,

both now invisible, beyond time and place, and therefore ubiquitous (*Peri.* 539A-D, 894A-895B).

And so, in this single passage from the *Expositiones* we find a summary of all the doctrine we have discussed so far. Briefly it is this. All created things are arranged in causal hierarchies. Each thing therefore participates its own cause and is participated by what it causes. Even the most remote created thing, terrestrial body, though unparticipated, yet participates its own causes. All these things therefore are theophanies of their first cause, which is God, and can each one help to bring the mind to the knowledge and understanding of God. Because of his fall from grace, man is wrapped up in the sensuous nature of the world. Under the old law, God nourished man's spiritual life, such as it was, with the truth entirely veiled under visible mysteries and symbols. Under the new law, however, man, though still enfleshed, has been illuminated by grace. Therefore, he is caught in the division between the sensible and the intelligible. Thus, Christ has provided him with a visible mystery in the Eucharist which is meant to point beyond itself, beyond the division, to the unification of sensible and intelligible in the resurrected Christ. By partaking of the Eucharist faithfully, man can rise to that which it signifies through action, science, and contemplation. But if he worships the Eucharist as an end in itself, then he will remain on the wrong side of the division amongst the shadows and unreality of visible things. Yet these visible bodies, though shadowy and unreal, nevertheless have something glorious about them.

Nouissime autem mundi partes sunt que terrene molis complent constitutionem. Que, quamuis in natura uisibilium nouissimum ac ueluti uilissimum optinent locum, uirtute tamen diuinarum rerum significationis non sunt nouissima, sed excelsa et incomprehensibilia, et maxime utriusque nature unigeniti filii Dei, domini et saluatoris nostri Iesu Christi, significatiua (*Exp.* 2.999-1005, *PL* 166-167).

II

It has become abundantly clear that we must explore more fully the question of how the sensible and the intelligible are related in the human soul. The question takes the specific form of what role *memoria* plays in the Eucharist, but Eriugena's whole doctrine of human subjectivity must be discussed.

So far it has begun to appear that the consecrated elements of the visible Eucharist are taken into the memory of man, the rational animal, by means of the senses. In the memory, the sensible images of the elements of the visible Eucharist are examined by

the *acies mentis*, the eye or power of the mind. By faith the mind knows that these elements, perceived in sensible images in the memory, are types of the spiritual participation of Christ granted to man, the rational animal, by the grace of God's redemptive work in Christ. If, then, the mind turns its eye or power above the type to that union which is typified — turning because love is its *pondus*,⁴⁵ and certifying its faith by means of action, science, and contemplation — it will indeed participate Jesus Christ by grace, as it already participates him as Word or *Principium* naturally.

In other words, it appears so far that Eriugena is thinking in terms of the psychology Augustine developed in the *De Trinitate*. In that work, Augustine sought to understand the Holy Trinity through its created image in human subjectivity. To Augustine, everything external and visible, every sensible particular — and not just the redemptive work of the incarnate Lord — is the object of faith. The senses of the body, actuated by some desire, grasp these sensible objects and pass them along to the memory, where they are stored as phantasies. The *acies mentis* can then consider these phantasies, when moved to do so by the will. But it is only able to understand what they are because it has some prior knowledge of the forms of the sensible particulars immediately present to it within. Thus, one first believes the external, mediated object, and only then comes to know it by considering its form, known inwardly and immediately. For example, we believe that St. Paul possessed a just and righteous mind. We know he possessed a mind because he exhibited all the signs of it, signs which we know from our consideration of our own mental activity. But we believe he was just, not because we are necessarily just, but because we have the form of justice present immediately to our minds by which we can determine that he was just (*De Trin.* 8.6.9).⁴⁶ Moreover, not only does the phantasy of the sensible particular, perceived by corporeal light, reside in the memory. Even our perceptions of the intelligible reasons or natures of things, which the *acies mentis* perceives by an incorporeal light, are stored up in the memory, where they can be pondered by the mind, when moved to do so by the will (*ibid.*, 12.14.23-15.24). And so, we find that the mind, though one, has a double activity: partly and properly contemplating the intelligible reasons of things; partly and secondarily considering sensible particulars. This is the division of wisdom and science, which reflects the division of the inner and the outer man (*ibid.*, 12.1.1-4.4 & *passim*). Moreover, science itself most properly begins in our faith in the incarnate Lord, "in whom

45. Cf. the reference to Augustine's *Confessions* in n. 37 above.

46. Cf. the passages noted in n. 32 above.

are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge", from which faith the mind can then move to wisdom and understanding (*ibid.*, 13.19.24 & *passim*).⁴⁷

It seems clear enough that this is what Eriugena had in mind in a general sort of way. But what specifically was his doctrine on memory and phantasy? The following is a concise statement of it.

Phantasia vero est imago quaedam et apparitio de visibili vel invisibili specie memoriae impressa. Dum enim nulla res corporea vel incorporea per seipsam mortalibus adhuc sensibus conspicua sit, natura rerum constituit, ut in sensu exteriori sensibilium rerum imagines, in interiori vero intelligibilium exprimantur; ac deinde veluti ex duobus fontibus, sensibilibus dico et intelligibilibus, duo quaedam flumina in memoriam confluunt, et unum quidem flumen ex inferioribus per sensum corporeum, alterum vero superioribus per eum sensum, qui solius animae est, meatum trahit. Et omne, quod ex his memoriae infigitur, phantasia proprie nominatur, hoc est apparitio (*Peri.* 962C-D).

That is to say, the memory has the capacity to contain images both of sensible and of intelligible things, the one kind from exterior, corporeal sense, the other from the interior sense of the soul. These images, when fixed in the memory, are called phantasies or appearances. Somehow, therefore, the memory stands at the very dividing line between the sensible world and the intelligible world. It is partly animal and partly divine. As Eriugena says,

tota humana natura, in quantum communicat animalibus, merito animal est. Communicat autem eis, in quantum corpus est, et vita corpus regitans, et sensus, et memoria rerum sensibilium phantasias tractans: in quantum vero divinae caelestisque essentiae particeps est, non est animal, ratione autem et intellectu aeternorumque memoria caelestem participat essentiam (*Peri.* 755B-C).

So far as it retains the sensations of sensible things, the memory is a faculty we share with the other animals; but so far as it retains the the knowledge of eternal things, bestowed upon it by the motions of intellect and reason, it is a partaker of celestial being. As in Augustine, the soul is able to perceive the eternal reasons of things and retain some knowledge of them in the memory along with the phantasies of sensible things.

47. The scriptural quotation here, which Augustine also quotes in the passage referred to in the text, is Col. 2:3. Eriugena quotes it at *Peri.* 864C to show how the Word is always present to human nature. See also *Peri.* 603A-C for Eriugena's own brief summary of the doctrine of the *De Trinitate*.

In this way, therefore, is memory able to receive the phantasies both of intelligible and of sensible things. The latter enter by way of exterior sense; but the former descend into the memory from the soul's intellectual contemplation of the ineffable and undivided Trinity through its rational contemplation of the primordial causes of all things begotten by the Father in the Word (*Peri.* 658B-D & cf. 570B). As Eriugena says of the numbers, —

Conaris . . . suadere omnes numeros ex monade ueluti ex quodam fonte manantes instar duorum fluminum ex una uena surgentium profluere inque duos alueos segregatos, quorum unus per interiores poros naturae, hoc est per intellectum et rationem, alter uero per exteriores uisibilium rerum species decurrit et per sensus, donec simul in memoriam confluant in qua multipliciter formantur (*Peri.* 661B-C), —

so can it be said of every cause and of every essence: its phantasy or theophany comes to the memory from without through the exterior sense, and from within through the operations of intellect and reason (*Peri.* 661B).⁴⁸

But before we continue, there is one problem to be considered. In the passage just quoted, Eriugena says that the phantasies descend from God through intellect and reason. But in the passage quoted above on page 104 (*Peri.* 962C-D), he says that they descend through interior sense. To be sure, intellect, reason, and interior sense are the three essential motions of the soul. They constitute the image of God in man, according to Eriugena, corresponding to the trinity of essence, power, and operation (*Peri.* 569B-570C & 490A-B). But what is their exact relation to each other in the bestowal upon memory of the theophanies of intelligible things, and in their reception from memory of the theophanies of sensible things? Of these three motions of the soul Eriugena says,

Tres uniuersales motus animae sunt quorum primus est secundum animum secundus secundum rationem tertius secundum sensum. Et primus quidem simplex est et supra ipsius animae naturam et interpretatione caret hoc est cognitione ipsius circa quod mouetur, 'per quem circa deum incognitum mota. . .' Secundus uero motus est quo 'incognitum' deum 'diffinit secundum quod causa' omnium sit. Diffinit enim deum causam omnium esse et est motus iste intra animae naturam 'per quem ipsa naturaliter mota omnes naturales rationes omnium formatrices . . . operatione scientiae sibi ipsi imponit,' hoc est in se ipsa per earum cognitionem exprimit ipsaque cognitio a primo motu nascitur in secundo. Tertius motus est 'compositus, per quem quae extra sunt' anima 'tangens ueluti ex quibusdam

48. Eriugena equates phantasies and theophanies in the passage to which reference is made in the text.

signis apud se ipsam uisibilium rationes reformat' (*Peri.* 572C-573B).

What we have here, then, are the three substantial motions of soul united in one essence (*Peri.* 574B).⁴⁹ One motion contemplates God in an operation which is actually above and beyond the proper nature of the soul. It is the motion which knows God as above everything that can be affirmed or denied (*Peri.* 574A). The second motion of the soul is that in which the first motion begets a knowledge of the primordial causes by way of theophany or appearance ("diuinae apparitiones", 577A). This motion "rerum (sc. sensibilibus), ultra omnem corporeum sensum, naturam et rationem tractat, discernit, coniungit, diiudicat" (754C). The third motion relates sensible particulars to their forms and causes, and forms and causes to those particulars which participate them (577C-D).

But if *animus*, *ratio*, and *sensus* constitute God's image in man, what then becomes of that other image of the Trinity — *memoria*, *intelligentia*, and *voluntas* — which Eriugena had so clearly in mind, when he discussed how the sensible and the intelligible are brought together in memory?⁵⁰ Or rather, what is the relation between the trinitarian images he draws, on the one hand, from Augustine, and on the other, from the Pseudo-Dionysius?

First, it must be remarked that the notion of human subjectivity indicated by *animus*, *ratio*, and *sensus* is, in fact, based partly upon Augustine. For in his *De libero arbitrio*⁵¹ Augustine compares *corporis sensus*, *interior sensus*, and *ratio* to the causal degrees of being: *esse*, *vivere*, *intelligere* (2.3.7-6.13). To be sure, *interior sensus* here is something human beings share with the animals, while for Eriugena it is a motion of the rational soul alone (*Peri.* 752D). But elsewhere Augustine speaks of the "interioris hominis sensum . . . quo iusta et iniusta sentimus" (*De civ. Dei* 11.27.2).⁵² This entirely rational sense could have given Eriugena the notion of interior

49. This conception of the faculties of the soul as motions is taken, of course, from the Pseudo-Dionysius. For in the *Divine Names* we find that all spiritual motion is divided into the categories of circular, spiral, and straight or, in the case of human subjectivity, contemplative, discursive, and sensitive. On angelic and human subjectivity, see the *Divine Names* 4.8-9 (PG 704D-705B) & 7.2 (PG 868B-C). On the motions of the divine subjectivity, see 9.9 (PG 916C-D). This latter passage is quoted by Eriugena at *Peri.* 523B.

50. See above, p. 103.

51. In the *Bibliothèque Augustinienne, Oeuvres de Saint Augustin* 6, 3rd ed., intro., tr. & notes by Goulven Madec (Desclée de Brouwer, 1976).

52. Quoted by Madec in his discussion of interior sense at *ibid.*, p. 567. Madec points out the distinction between *interior sensus* in the *De lib. arb.* and *interioris hominis sensus* in the *De civ. Dei*.

sense as a rational spiritual motion.

However, Eriugena's inspiration must have been drawn also partly from Boethius, who was himself a profound Augustinian. For in the *Consolation of Philosophy*,⁵³ Boethius speaks of the following four moments of human subjectivity: sense, imagination, reason, and understanding.

Sensus enim figuram in subiecta materia constitutam, imaginatio vero solam sine materia iudicat figuram. Ratio vero hanc quoque transcendit speciemque ipsam quae singularibus inest universali consideratione perpendit. Intelligentiae vero celsior oculus existit; supergressa namque universitatis ambitum ipsam illam simplicem formam pura mentis acie contuetur. In quo illud maxime considerandum est: nam superior comprehendendi vis amplectitur inferiorem, inferior vero ad superiorem nullo modo consurgit. Neque enim sensus aliquid extra materiam valet vel universales species imaginatio contuetur vel ratio capit simplicem formam, sed intelligentia quasi desuper spectans concepta forma quae subsunt etiam cuncta diiudicat, sed eo modo quo formam ipsam, quae nulli alii nota esse poterat, comprehendit (*Consolatio* 5, pr. 4).

Sensus, imaginatio, ratio, intelligentia: that which perceives the sensible particular, that which mediates between the sensible particular and its form, that which ponders all the causes systematically, that which contemplates the cause of causes: *sensus exterior, sensus interior, ratio, animus*: — despite the differences in terminology, the correspondence is clear (cf. *Peri.* 754C-D).

There is not, then, a simple opposition in Eriugena between the Augustinian and the pseudo-Dionysian subjective trinities. In fact, Eriugena quite deliberately identifies certain Augustinian images of the Trinity — implicitly, *mens, notitia, amor* or *esse, nosse, amare* (Eriugena considers these equivalents, *Peri.* 610C); explicitly, *esse, velle, scire* (*ibid.*, 942A)⁵⁴ — with the pseudo-Dionysian triad. By

53. *Tractates, De consolatione philosophiae*, tr. H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand, & S.J. Tester, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., & London, 1978).

54. Eriugena here (and I must take this opportunity of thanking Prof. R.D. Crouse for reminding me of this passage) changes the order of the terms found in Augustine, *Confessions* 13.11.12 (reference in Gouven Madec, "Le dossier augustinienn du *Periphyseon* de Jean Scot (livres III-V)", *Recherches augustiniennes* 18 (1983), p. 216). This change appears as extraordinary as the change Eriugena makes at 455C in the usual neoplatonic causal triad (*esse, vivere, intelligere*), where he speaks of the Trinity as *essentia, sapientia, vita*. But is it so extraordinary? The latter change is made in speaking of God as that species of nature "quae creat et non creatur", while the former is made in speaking of God as that species "quae nec creat nec creatur" (441B, 527C). The one is used in speaking of nature's *solutio*, the other of its *reditus* (526B). Nature, however, as it

doing so, he shows more clearly than the Pseudo-Dionysius that the divine is cause as subjectivity.

It is possible, however, and even necessary, to consider the divine Persons simply as terms in an abstract, logical relation among themselves, indeed, as pure relations. And so, Eriugena finds it necessary to distinguish between the Persons of God known as subsistent relations and the divine Persons known as a causal hierarchy.

Maior quippe pater est filio non secundum naturam sed secundum causam. Pater nanque causa est filii, non autem filius causa est patris. Neque hic reciprocam nominum relationem sed substantiarum uirtutem consideramus. Aliter enim inspicimus in substantiis uel personis relationum habitudinem, aliter ex ingenito generationem uel processionem. Illic quidem quomodo ad se inuicem denominentur, hic uero quomodo inter se inuicem differuntur (*Peri.* 600B-C).

That is to say, the Persons can be considered, on the one hand, simply as *nomina* or terms according to the science of logic, as Eriugena does in the first book of the *Periphyseon* (456A-457C). On the other hand, the Persons can be considered according to the science of theology, which treats of God as cause (*ibid.*, 705B). And here the problem becomes one of understanding which of the different attributes or powers of the one divine essence are most properly predicated of each Person, so as to account for the procession and return of creation. The problem is, in other words, to understand the *solutio* and *reditus* of nature as expressions of the powers of the divine subjectivity.

Such a distinction is, of course, Augustinian. For the whole

unfolds itself within understanding, is first apprehended as proceeding from incomprehensible unity into simple being, then as containing intelligible division, and finally as having within itself the principle of its own movement (455C). But the return of nature into unity is accomplished by the power of understanding to resolve being and life into intelligible categories and those categories into unity (526B-C). Thus, Eriugena's deliberate inversion of the third and fourth terms of these two triads may simply reflect the angle, so to speak, from which the Trinity in Unity is regarded as cause: whether as Beginning or as End. It is not, of course, a difficulty that the Son and Holy Spirit should exchange attributes or powers in this way. For Augustine demonstrates that the powers of the divine subjectivity are substantial, not relative. In human subjectivity, we can speak of separate faculties. The mind is wise through its understanding and loves by means its will. But in God, the Father does not understand through the Son and love by means of the Holy Spirit. The Father himself remembers and understands and wills, as does the Son and as does the Holy Spirit (*De Trin.* 15.7.12). Thus, depending on one's viewpoint, the Son might at one time be considered properly as Wisdom, at another time as Life; and likewise with the Holy Spirit.

force of Augustine's argument in the *De Trinitate* rests on the distinction between what is said of the Persons "ad aliquid relative", as when they are considered as *memoria*, *intelligentia*, and *voluntas*; and what is said of them "ad se ipsam", as when one realizes that each Person possesses *essentia*, *vita*, and *mens* (*De Trin.* 10.11.18).⁵⁵ But while Augustine is trying to understand the Trinity as subjective self-relation, Eriugena is trying to understand it as cause. In his theology, therefore, Eriugena concentrates on the essential attributes of the divine subjectivity (*essentia*, *vita*, *sapientia* or, as he prefers it, *essentia*, *virtus*, *operatio*), though in his ethics, which is the science of the purification of human subjectivity (*Peri.* 700B, 705B, 857C-D), he has to speak of the faculties of memory and will, as well as the degrees of rational perception. Thus, in the *Periphyseon* his complete anthropology shows not only the vertical movement, so to speak, from exterior sense to interior sense, reason, and understanding; but also the division along a horizontal line between the memory of sensible things and of intelligible things, between the perception of sensible particulars and their forms, and between the irrational passions and the virtues, which direct the will towards God (752C-D). Therefore, in the human soul these two ways of regarding subjectivity — as self-relation and as causal hierarchy — are held together quite clearly by Eriugena, as they really are held together by him in the divine subjectivity as well.

It should be possible now to see what role memory plays in the relation of the sensible and the intelligible for Eriugena. Memory contains the phantasies, appearances, or theophanies of things both sensible and intelligible. The images of sensible things — theophanies themselves, since they participate their causes — enter by way of exterior sense. The images of intelligible things descend through the various motions of the soul, and are contained in memory as well. The essential activity of the soul, however, lies in stripping away the sensuousness and particularity from these images, so that they may be united ever more universally in their causes, until they are brought into one in God. And so, the movement is still essentially Augustinian. We begin in faith, believing this sensible particular or that to be of a certain sort, and then only move gradually to understanding, where we can see how this or that sensible particular fits into the whole scheme of the divine economy. Thus, it is essentially a movement out of memory, where the two streams of theophanies meet, where interior sense begins the work of sorting out the phantasies of the sensible particulars according to the phantasies of the forms and causes also stored up there. It is a movement native to the soul, to be sure.

55. Cf. the previous note, *ad fin.*

But it can receive its consummation only if purged by action, illuminated by science, and perfected by theology. Indeed, Eriugena even says of the first motion of the soul,⁵⁶

Animae igitur purgatae per actionem, illuminatae per scientiam, perfectae per theologiam motus . . . et substantialiter est et principalis pars animae esse intelligitur (*Peri.* 574A-B).

That is to say, that motion of the soul which is essentially above and beyond it by nature is bestowed upon it by grace through purification and illumination. And this purification, illumination, and perfection can only come through Christ — in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge — because in him human nature is not only made equal to the angels, but also “carried up beyond every creature into God” (*Peri.* 575A-D; Sheldon-Williams’ translation).

The function of the memory in the Eucharist therefore must be of this sort. The soul, purged, illuminated and perfected to some extent already in Christ, since it knows Christ in God and all his redemptive works, receives the phantasy, appearance or theophany of the visible Eucharist into the memory by means of exterior sense. There the interior sense refers these particular phantasies to their form, that is, to Christ and his redemptive work, also retained there in the memory. Aroused by love of the truth, therefore, interior sense is carried up into reason and reason into mind, which is fixed by its perfection in Christ, and there the soul finds bliss. “Perit quod uidetur, quia sensibile est et temporale; manet quod non uidetur, quia spirituale est et aeternale” (*Comm.* 6.6, *PL* 348A).

III

It seems clear now that the Eucharist to Eriugena was far from being an empty sign and abstract memorial. It was rather, as Geiselmann puts it, “ein mystisches Erfahren”.⁵⁷ But it is crucial to grasp that for Eriugena the mystical knowledge of the intelligible forms of sensible things was more real — truer — than the sensible things themselves (*Peri.* 773D-774B). Our feeling is much different. For us the sensible particular is the primary reality. But for

56. One must note here the direct correspondence between: purification, illumination, and perfection; action, science, and contemplation; ethics, physics, and theology, and interior sense, reason, and intellect, which are the straight, spiral, and circular motions of the soul. That is to say, the moments of the soul’s ascent to God and the sciences of that ascent are in direct relation to the faculties of the soul, which are themselves the substantial motions of the soul’s one essence.

57. See above, n. 14.

Eriugena, when the sensible elements of the Eucharist perished, it was simply the stripping away of the sensuous unreality of the theophany, so that the intelligible reality — our salvation through Christ's sacrifice — might be actually and truly tasted. This should become clearer as we consider our final question: how does the Eucharist contribute to the return of all things into God?

According to Eriugena, man, participating as he does in both the sensible and the intelligible realms, is a sort of *officina* or workshop in which all of creation is made and contained. What therefore is divided in him will also be united in him. Beginning from the fundamental division of male and female, each division will be resolved into the higher unity from which it descended: the inhabited globe into paradise, earth into heaven, sensible into intelligible, created into uncreated (*Peri.* 530Aff. & 893Bff.). But man by his own sin had fallen into these divisions from a higher unity. Since he could not raise himself out of division, God sent his only Son to accomplish the unification in his own humanity (*Peri.* 532Dff. & 894A). Having accomplished the unification, Christ now is beyond all place and time, indeed beyond all carnal corporeality (*Peri.* 539Bff. & 894Bff.). Man's return into his causes is partly natural and partly the result of God's grace, partly a gift and partly a grace. Therefore all men will return into their causes, regardless of their moral condition, simply because their indestructible substance, i.e., human nature, will so return. But only those who have loved God and have been purged, illuminated and perfected by action, science, and contemplation will find true blessedness (*Peri.* 902D-906C). As Eriugena says,

Siquidem sancti, qui adhuc in carne constituti, virtute actionis et scientiae carnem et mundum seque ipsos superantes usque ad ipsum Deum altitudine contemplationis ascenderunt, non in phantasiis rerum sensibilibus, sed in theophaniis divinarum virtutum laboris sui mercedem, insuper etiam deificationis gratiam accipient (*Peri.* 977D-978A).

This, then, is the end of man: deification, the gift of grace. But the ascent itself through action, science, and contemplation, this overcoming and surmounting of the flesh and the world and even oneself, occurs nowhere else than in the Church, the intellectual body of the perfect and intellectual Head (*Peri.* 994C).

Vide initium aedificationis, unitatem quidem fidei; aedificationis perfectionem cognosce, unitatem videlicet cognitionis Filii Dei. Hic igitur incrementa corporis Christi incipiunt, illic perficientur, quando Christus cum toto et in toto suo corpore quidam perfectus et unus vir, caput in membris et membra in capite, apparebit, quando mensura et plenitudo aetatis Christi

non corporalibus oculis, sed virtute contemplationis in omnibus sanctis suo capiti adunatis clarissime videbitur, quando spiritualis aetas, hoc est virtutum plenitudo, quae in Christo et Ecclesia sua constituta est, consummabitur, et cetera, quae de aeterna felicitate et perfectione beatitudinis in Dei Filio intelligi possunt (*Peri.* 995A-B).

It is precisely in that fulness of virtues, which is constituted in Christ and his Church, that men will come by grace to contemplation incrementally through faith, action, and science. Yet the Church is formed out of the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. For in speaking of the first and second Adams, Eriugena says,

Dormienti Adam fit Eva de latere, mortuo Christo percutitur latus, ut profluant sacramenta, quibus formatur Ecclesia. Sanguis enim est in consecrationem calicis, aqua vero in consecrationem baptismatis. In primo homine humana natura tunicas induitur pelliceas, hoc est mortalia corpora, relicta naturali nuditate, videlicet sinceritate et simplicitate: in secundo eadem tunicas spoliatur pelliceas, omni imbecillitate mortalium corporum perempta, et nuditate, id est simplicitate pristinae naturae, recepta (*Peri.* 836D-837A).

That is to say, out of that body, in which all the unifications were first to occur, in which all division not only of sensible and intelligible, but even of created and uncreated, was first to be overcome and surmounted, — out of that body poured blood and water, that that intelligible body, in which the saints were finally to ascend into the unity of their principle, might be formed. So, out of these two sacraments, containing in themselves the division of letter and spirit, came the Church, containing within itself the division between obscure sacraments and clear truth. Yet these divided mysteries and this divided *sacerdotium* were to be the means by which man might surmount the division in himself of flesh and spirit. So, far from having a peripheral place in his systematic theology,⁵⁸ the sacraments are seen to have a place of central importance. In fact, just as the whole hierarchy of intelligible causes descends from the Word of God, so the whole cultic movement ascends to God from the unique sacrifice of his Son, and its type in the Holy Eucharist:

ut enim diuinitas totius ierarchie scientie principium est, ita totius diuini cultus gratiarumque actionis prefatrix, omniumque hostiarum que sibi sacrificantur principale exemplum.

58. Cf. Cappuyns, *op. cit.*, p. 369: "Si l'Église et les sacrements sont à peine représentés dans le *De divisione naturae*, — en raison de son caractère spéculatif . . ."

Notandum etiam quod EYXAPICTEIA a grecis omnis hostia omneque sacrificium uocitetur, cuius notam fere omnibus interpretationem in hoc loco posuimus, gratiarum uidelicet actionem. Potest tamen expressius interpretari eucharistia, quasi EYXH APICTOC, hoc est oratio placabilis, Deo uidelicet; omnis enim qui religiose diuina conficit et participat sacramenta, profecto placabilem orationem omnium bonorum cause sacrificat (*Exp.* 4.1.38-49).

That is to say, every one who properly celebrates the Holy Eucharist and partakes of the visible elements makes a true sacrifice of pleasing prayer to God, the cause of all good things, participating in God's own self-offering upon the Cross and in the work of returning all things into God through his body, the Church.

Let us now summarize. The object of Christ's self-sacrifice was the deification of man. To that end he established the Church, that all men, beginning in faith, but moving through the further stages of action, science, and contemplation, might share in the fulness of its intellectual perfection at the end of time, when all things shall be returned into their intelligible causes and into God. Towards the accomplishment of this deification, the priesthood and the sacraments of the Church are made to share in the divided nature of man in this life. The priesthood, that is, ministers partly in shadow and obscurity and partly in the light. Its sacraments, moreover, are part of its ministry of obscurity, but are themselves partly dark and partly light. Set apart and made according to the initiative and example of Christ and his Apostles, the sacraments move men themselves from darkness into light. For if men perceive that the visible sacrament perishes, but that the intelligible content of the sacrament is eternal, then their souls can rise above themselves to the spiritual participation of Christ, of which the Eucharist in particular is the type. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

While Holy Baptism is the beginning of this movement (*Peri.* 611C-D, 892A, 1002D-1003A), the Holy Eucharist is its daily ground. As the chief type of the spiritual participation of Christ, which begins here in faith and will be perfected in blissful contemplation in the eternal city, the Eucharist bestows salvation, spiritual growth, and deification. Visible on one side of the division in man, but intelligible on the other, it moves man out of darkness into light, out of the shadowy unreality of the sensuous into the pure light of the intelligible and the true.

The ground of this activity, moreover, is the memory. In the memory the two streams of theophanies converge, one coming down through the motions of the soul from God, the other coming in from sensible things, themselves participating their causes

and thus revealing God to us. Therefore, in the memory the phantasies of the visible Eucharist converge with the phantasies of the redemptive work of Christ, and by the motion of interior sense the intelligible content is discerned and the soul then rises through reason and intellect to the pure and essential contemplative participation of Christ. That is, it rises from that which is least real and true — the sensible particular — to that which is most true — human nature redeemed in Christ and at one with God. Therefore, as a memorial the Eucharist is brimful of reality and truth, on this view. For the memory is the ground of all that spiritual activity by which the unification of all things in man shall be accomplished. Indeed, it is the ground of reward and punishment even in eternity itself (*Peri.* 977C-978A).

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