

# Negati Affirmatio

## Or the World as Metaphor

A foundation for medieval aesthetics from the writings of  
John Scotus Eriugena

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### I

St. Denis, the prototype of gothic cathedrals, is a unique testimony to the fact that an implicitly philosophical and decidedly theological idea thoroughly determines the formal character of architecture and thus clearly marks the beginning of a new epoch. The idea or metaphysical intention is not a supplementary, superfluous, or even misleading accident; on the contrary, it is the moving and creative principle in art.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Abbot Suger, the designer and builder of St. Denis, himself confirms this proposition. Suger expressed his own views, which led to, and were realized in, the reconstruction of the abbey church, clearly enough in two writings; "*De rebus in administratione sua gestis*" is a detailed account of his activities as abbot (a post which he had held since 1122) that reaches far beyond the factual; "*De consecratione*" describes the religious as well as secular implications of the consecration of the new structure in 1144.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout these writings Suger maintains a fundamental theory. The material and artistic form in which the structure as a whole appears, as well as the sensible beauty and imagery of individual details, are the starting point for a thoughtful perception which apprehends in the visual its intelligible ground, that is, in terms of the true nature of that which is made manifest in the form of art. In several inscriptions on the formerly gilded portals, on the glass windows, and in the descriptive interpretation of liturgical vessels, Suger expresses the thought that created beauty, or in fact the material world as a whole (art in an all-inclusive sense) has an analogical purpose, a purpose which leads thought beyond itself.

As Suger says in a poem on the central west portal,

A noble work shines, but the work which shines nobly should  
enlighten the spirit, so that it may be led by true lights to the

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1. For the general extent of this question in the context of concrete forms of meaning cf. G. Bandmann, *Mittelalterliche Architektur als Bedeutungsträger*, Berlin 1951, esp. 70 ff.

2. Both works are edited, translated and annotated by E. Panofsky, *Abbot Suger, On the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis and its Art Treasures*, Princeton 1946. (Quotations refer to the page numbering of this edition).

true Light, to which Christ is the true door. The portal shows how strongly the true Light shines in these lights — the dull spirit lifts itself toward the Truth by means of the material, and having been submerged, it now stands up in the sight of this Light.<sup>3</sup>

The stained glass windows, which primarily depict scenes from the Old Testament and point typologically to the coming of Christ, have an anagogical function as do, for example, the beauty and wealth of the stones in Suger's Great Cross. In the sight of them the contemplative mind transcends the materiality of that which it sees and moves to its spiritual causes: "*de materialibus ad immaterialia transferendo . . . anagogico more.*"<sup>4</sup>

The anagogical movement of perceptive thinking has its strongest expression in the metaphysics of light already hinted at by the inscription on the portals. The metaphysics of light is also the basis of the ability to use metaphors in both language and architecture. The metaphysical intention, that conceives the divine ground to be the true (actual) Light and understands all things in relation to their luminous and intelligible nature as emanating from and directed toward this ground, has come to determine the *aesthetic* principle of light which is realized in the structure of the choir. The double ambulatory with its ring of side-chapels creates, in Suger's words, "*lux mirabilis et continua*",<sup>5</sup> an uninterrupted stream of light. Moreover, in an inscription concerning the consecration, Suger speaks of the "*lux nova*", the "new light", with which the whole church will shine forth as soon as the west end has been connected to the choir. "For what is clearly united with something bright shines brightly and brightly shines the noble work which is flooded with the new light."<sup>6</sup> The ambiguity of the "new light" is obvious — on the one hand it refers to the new illumination of the new structure; on the other however, in accord with Suger's typological way of thinking, to the true light which is Christ (over and against the preparatory darkness of the Old Testament).<sup>7</sup> Thus the metaphysics and theology of light —

3. *De administratione* 46, 27-48, 4.

4. *Ibid.* 74, 1f. on a window. 62, 28 ff. on *gemmarum speciositas*. On the great golden cross: *De admin.* XXXII, esp. p. 56,23 ff. Ph. Verdier "La grande croix de l'abbé Suger à Saint-Denis", in: *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale IX<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, 13, 1970, 1-31.

5. *De consecratione* 100,20.

6. *De administratione* 50,9 f.

7. The window in which Moses' face is "revealed" is particularly appropriate here: *vitrea, ubi aufertur velamen de facie Moysi:*

*Quod Moyses velat, Christi doctrina revelat.*

the rose-window in Suger's west choir is also a symbol of Christ, the sun of justice — correspond to the "diaphanous structure" (H. Jantzen) of the interior. They together achieve a sublimation and spiritualization of the material; the presence of light in the interior represents Christ incarnate in the form of a finite and historical presence which is intended to lead both thought and action back to the actual "source" of this light.

Suger's theory, which was fundamental to the development of Gothic architecture, arose from his contact with the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and the commentaries of Eriugena. Dionysius was of special significance for St. Denis. An "author of the highest rank after the apostles",<sup>8</sup> during the Middle Ages, he was confused with the Athenian Dionysius who was converted by Paul. "*Discipulus atque adiutor Pauli apostoli*," as Eriugena describes him in the preface to his translation of Dionysius, was considered to be one and the same as St. Dionysius, the apostle and patron saint of France, whose relics were kept in St. Denis. As a sort of spiritual testament to this association the abbey of St. Denis had in its possession the "*Corpus Dionysiacum*", which came to France as a gift from Pope Paul I to Pippin the Short and was translated into Latin by Abbot Hilduin of St. Denis at the request of the emperor Louis the Pious. Later Charles the Bald commissioned Eriugena to do an additional translation. With his great understanding of the subject, Eriugena was able to complete the task more satisfactorily because he comes closer to the structure of Dionysius' thought than does Hilduin.<sup>9</sup>

What has been said so far has been demonstrated in detail in research on the history of art, especially by Erwin Panofsky, Hans Sedlmayr, Marcel Aubert and Otto von Simson.<sup>10</sup> They also refer

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*Denudant legem qui spoliant Moysen.*

(*De admin.* 74,9-12). Cf. the New Testament reminiscence: 2Cor. 3,18: *nos vero omnes, revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes, in eandem imaginem transformamur a claritate in claritatem.*

8. John Sarracenus, in the Introduction to his "*Explanatio*" of the *Hierarchia Caelestis*, after Clm. 23456, fol.2<sup>v</sup>, quoted in M. Grabmann, "*Die Mittelalterlichen lateinischen Übersetzungen der Schriften des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*" in: *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben*, München I (1926) p.459.

9. R. Roques, "*Traduction ou interprétation? Brèves remarques sur Jean Scot traducteur de Denys*", in *The Mind of Eriugena*, ed. by J. J. O'Meara and L. Bieler, Dublin, 1973, 61.

10. E. Panofsky, Cf. Note 2 op.cit. Further: "*Note on a controversial passage in Suger's De Consecratione Ecclesiae S. Dionysii*", in: *Gazette des Beaux Arts* XXVI (1944), pp.95-114. Partial translation of Abbot Suger: "*Zur Philosophie des Abtes Suger von St. Denis*", in: *Platonismus in der*

respectively to Dionysius and Eriugena. However, the extensive discussion of this subject in the history of ideas and in the history of architecture does not do away with the necessity of understanding the philosophical-theological basis of the subject from a purely philosophical standpoint, including however a consideration of the relevant specific presuppositions and consequences. By regarding both Abbot Suger, and with him a form of aesthetic theory which continued as a pattern for the Middle Ages, in the context of this inquiry our understanding of them becomes clearer and richer.

## II

The philosophical and theological basis of such a conception makes possible intensive and concrete thought about the anagogical function of art. In the philosophical theology of the medieval world this is realized primarily in the thought of Eriugena, fundamental to which are several important aspects of Neoplatonic philosophy. Eriugena's translations of passages from the writings of Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, as well as the use of Dionysian theology in his principle work "*De divisione naturae*", but especially his translation of and commentary on the works of Dionysius the Areopagite (which were mentioned previously) brought about the essential return of western theology to the philosophical tradition in a way that only the writings of Augustine had done before him. At the same time he is an influential figure in the highly differentiated history of the influence of "Platonic theology". It extends, to mention only a few aspects, from the cosmological Platonism of Chartres to the mystic theology of the Victorine school. (Hugh of St. Victor, who wrote commentaries on Dionysius, was a contemporary of Abbot Suger). Furthermore, this theology ranges from the contemplative and spiritual elements in the primarily scientific thinking of Robert Grosseteste, to the concept of the ontological *participatio* — the reflective and emotional ascent to God whose "Being" transcends being in every sense of the word — as it is worked out in the writings of Albertus Magnus, Thomas, and from an especially Dionysian position in the writings of Bonaventure. The tradition of Platonic theology also encompasses the great "*Sermo de pulchritudine*" of Cusanus, which

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*Philosophie des Mittelalters, Wege der Forschung*, ed. W. Beierwaltes, Darmstadt, CXCVII (1969) pp.109-120. — Hans Sedlmayr, *Die Entstehung der Kathedrale*, Zürich, 1950, *passim* (mostly a repetition of Panofsky on this point). — Marcel Aubert, *Suger, Abbaye S. Wandrille*, 1950. — Otto v. Simson, *Die gotische Kathedrale*, Darmstadt, 1972, 93ff. On St. Denis before Suger: S. McKnight Crosby, *The Abbey of St. Denis I*, New Haven, 1942.

originated in Dionysian thought. Cusanus understands "absolute beauty" (*pulchritudo absoluta*) to be the self-thinking envelopment (*complicatio*) of all finite beauty; furthermore, in the "*De non aliud*", Cusanus develops from Dionysius and Proclus the unity of that which is absolutely different from all things, and is free from any immanent difference. Finally Schelling must not be omitted as one who stands under the influence of Dionysian theology. His concept of the absolute divine is conceived and explained in the "Ages of the World" as well as in the "Philosophy of Mythology" in terms of precisely this tradition, transmitted to him in Johannes Gerhard's "*Loci Theologici*". Characteristic of this tradition is the "original concept" of God as "He who is distinct from all else",<sup>1</sup> the "super-substantial Being",<sup>2</sup> the "above-being", the "truly highest over all being, because of which many have called Him the super-essential, the super-reality (*ὑπερούσιον, ὑπερόν*)".<sup>3</sup> Thus, with Augustine and Marius Victorinus, Eriugena's interpretation of Dionysian thought marks a new beginning of philosophical theology or theological philosophy — ("*vera philosophia est vera religio conversimque vera religio est vera philosophia*")<sup>4</sup> — which encircles the incommensurability of its highest thought with the greatest contemplative effort.

1. But — to return to the origin of this idea — how does Eriugena establish the philosophical and theological foundation of the anagogical function of art? The most general, all-encompassing scope of this question is marked out in the following statement: being as a whole; that is, not simply the "world" in the sense of the Greek cosmos, is a *theophany*. To clarify the concept of theophany: being as a whole is the appearance of God who is not apparent

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1. "Philosophie der Mythologie", *Werke*, (1857), XII, 100.

2. *Ibid.*, 58. cf. W. Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus*, Frankfurt, (1972), 71, 80, 112, 128, on this point.

3. *Weltalter* (Schröter) 226.

4. *De praedestinatione* I 1, 358A. The texts taken from Eriugena are quoted after the following editions: *De praedestione: Joannis Scoti Opera* ed. H. J. Floss, PL 122. *Periphyseon* or *De divisione naturae* (=DN): book 1 and 2 after the edition of I. P. Sheldon-Williams, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* vol. VII/IX (Dublin 1968/72); books 3-5 according to PL 122. *Expositiones super ierarchiam caelestem* (=IC): chapter I-II, VII-XV after PL 122; passages which are lacking there are quoted after H. Dondaine, *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 18(1950-51), 252ff. (=IC (Do)). *Omelia Joannis Scoti Translatoris Hierarchiae Dionysii* (In prol. Jn.) after É. Jeaneau, *Jean Scot, Homélie sur le prologue de Jean* (Paris 1969, *Sources chrétiennes* 151). *Commentarius in Evangelium Johannis* (In Jn.) after É. Jeaneau, *Jean Scot, Commentaire sur l'évangile de Jean* (Paris 1972, *Sources chrétiennes* 180). *Praefatio in versionem Ambiguorum S. Maximi*: PL 122.

himself. In this statement both God and appearance are to be understood emphatically. On the one hand being is that in which God *appears* or makes himself *manifest*, but in which He is not what He is *in himself*. On the other hand being is that in which, or indeed as which, God appears, and without whose procession from Himself into the Other, "nothing", that is to say only He, would exist. Eriugena develops this idea as the dialectical relation between concealment (*occultum*) and appearance (*apparitio, manifestatio*)<sup>5</sup>. It is the becoming accessible of that which is in itself inaccessible, the active mediation of that which cannot be mediated, and the intelligible, visible light of an actually over-bright (blinding in the sense of not revealing itself to the understanding) obscurity. Finally it is the procession (*progressio, processio*) of the absolute unity and original likeness into a diverse plurality of being and into the unlikeness of beings to each other and to their origin. The respective negative and affirmative moments of these statements indicate the complex unity of the procession, as well as the structure of being as a whole. "*Omne namque, quod intelligitur et sentitur, nihil aliud est, nisi non apparentis apparitio, occulti manifestatio, negati affirmatio, incomprehensibilis comprehensio, ineffabilis fatus, inaccessibleis accessus, inintelligibilis intellectus, incorporealis corpus, superessentialis essentia, informis forma, immensurabilis mensura, innumerabilis numerus, carentis pondere pondus, spiritualis incrassatio, invisibilis visibilitas, illocalis localitas, carentis tempore temporalitas, infiniti definitio, incircumscripti circumscriptio.*"<sup>6</sup> If this is a statement about the structure of what can be attained by the mind and senses, that is of being as a whole, and if this being is understood as the result of a procession (appearance, self-revelation, self-affirmation, self-explanation, or self-interpretability of that which as being-in-itself negates all of

5. DN III 4, 633A; 17, 678C;

IC IV 12, 267; VI 2, 280 (Do); XIII 4, 246C.

6. DN III 4, 633AB, — On the concept of "theophany" in Eriugena with references to his patristic background, cf. J. M. Alonso, "Teofanía y visión beata en Escoto Erigena", in: *Revista Española de Teología* X, (1950), pp. 361-389; XI (1951) pp. 255-282 (the history of its influence) T. Gregory, "Note sulla dottrina delle teofanie in Giovanni Scoto Eriugena", in: *Studi Medievali*, 3 ser. IV (1963), 75-91. Jean Trouillard, "Erigène et la théophanie créatrice" in: *The Mind of Eriugena* 98-113. — The presuppositions of the investigation of the concept and problem of theophany should (despite the articles mentioned) be further discussed (especially Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor). Except for a few references to Neoplatonic philosophical aspects, this discussion can contribute nothing to the problem, even though it developed out of a consciousness that it is to be carried back to the circle of problems about identity and difference.

this), then theophany is the most general and at the same time most precise explication of the relation of being to its cause. The negativity of this cause is a presupposition of the theophany; however, the theophany is completed in the self-revelation, self-negation (*inanitio*) or self-affirmation of this negativity in creation and incarnation.

a). Over and against affirmation, Eriugena, following the Neoplatonic tradition, sees negation to be essentially more revealing as a means by which the finite reaches the infinite (*absolutus ab omnibus*)<sup>7</sup>. This is based upon the fact that it establishes the absolute difference of the divine origin over and against all being with greater certainty than the affirmative method was able to do by itself. The affirmative, taken by itself, suggests in a certain sense that the infinite is rather the highest within the *same* order as all other being. But just this is denied by negation, which radically denies the infinite or absolute all that which may be meaningful and enlightening as a statement about the finite. The exclusion of all that is categorically comprehensible and definable from the infinite itself leads in the end to the most general and at the same time highest statement about the reality of the divine nature: it is indeed nothingness, *per excellentiam nihil*, being neither empty nothingness (*omnino nihil*) — for this reason I speak of the “reality” of the divine nature — nor the “*nihil privativum*”, which presupposes a difference in God between having, of which He could be deprived, and being.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, “God is nothing” means the “negation and absence of every being and every substance” in Him.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, “God is nothing” implies that He cannot be a definite circumscribable being, nor can He be any definable “something”. As the super-substantial or super-being (“*superessentialis*”)<sup>10</sup> he is nothing but Himself; he is the identity which distinguishes itself from all being, but which at the same time is related to being as the basis of all opposition (*oppositorum oppositio*) although itself above all opposition. Consequently

7. DN II 108,31. *Infinitus*: II 152,15 ff.

8. Further references are to be found in: W. Beierwaltes, “Das Problem des absoluten Selbstbewußtseins bei Johannes Scotus Eriugena,” in: *Platonismus in der Philosophie des Mittelalters, Wege der Forschung* 197, Darmstadt 1969, 497.

9. DN *ibid.* D: *absentia totius substantiae*.

10. e.g. IC IV 3,262 (Do). *In prol. Jn.* I 19,208. DN I 34,7 ff. 12 f.: “. . . deum non esse *aliquid* eorum quae sunt sed plus quam ea quae sunt esse.” Analogous to the not being something of “*superessentialitas*” is its not being a determinate individual: *non aliquid unum est, sed universaliter et infinite unum, et super omne unum, quod dici vel intelligi potest* (DN III 22, 687 D).

“nothingness”, or the negativity established by negation, is clearly identical to the statement, “I am that which I am.”<sup>11</sup> In this identity the convergence of the two methods of thought, negation and affirmation, becomes apparent. When negation denies what the affirmative process has ascribed to the divine origin, such as Being, Life, Thought, Truth or Light, negation does not simply destroy the meaning of such a statement but makes the statement relative to itself. Nothing positive can be asserted in its proper sense of God (in whom the law of contradiction ceases to be valid — God is, and at the same time is not,<sup>12</sup> Being and Truth, but only in the sense of a reference to the “infinite nothingness” (*nihil per infinitatem*).<sup>13</sup> Compared with affirmation, which must be presupposed, since for finite thought it is the first and main way of approaching being and its cause, negation proves to be the second level of reflection. In the sphere of finite being and thought negation marks out the respective otherness of one being to the other and thus affirms and emphasizes its proper identity. In relation to the absolute ground, however, negation is severed from all those acts of negation which are equivalent to affirmation, and is sublated by the ground itself.

In view of the limitation that, in a statement about the divine principle, affirmation must be understood to be a *metaphor*, the consequence of the conception that being as a whole is a theophany is revealed. From the as yet unexplained concept of creation the following sentence becomes evident: the world is a metaphor truly existing, a divine metaphor (*divina metaphora*)<sup>14</sup>. For this reason the highest entity conceivable and utterable within being can be transferred affirmably to the divine origin, because it is the “manifestation” of the origin expressed in metaphorical speech. However, in view of its end the metaphor by means of, or in spite of, affirmation, admits that it is not real. In so doing the metaphor marks the transition from affirmation to negation, or reveals its own immanently negative moment. For thought and speech the affirmative and comprehensible appearance of what is not appearing in itself, *negati affirmatio*, becomes the moving stimulation to return to the non-apparent as the *implicatum* in appearance. Consequently, as the second level of reflection, negation denies the affirmation which takes the form of a

11. *praed.* IX 4, 391 C. DN II 164,17: *divina natura deus est excelentia essentiae. In prol. Jn. XI 22 f., 256.*

12. DN IV 5,757 D: *utrumque igitur verum est, Deus veritas est, Deus veritas non est.*

13. IC IV 3,262 (Do).

14. DN I 62,13. Cf. also 74,20; 82,3; IV 5,757 D; IC II 5,171 B.



metaphor, and yet destroys neither its informative meaning nor the identity of nothingness and being implied by it. Thus both are forms that reduce — in the full sense of the word — the appearing to its divine origin, which in itself can only be uttered by way of exclusion.

b). If the negativity (as fullness of being) of the divine cause is a presupposition of theophany, then the self-negation or self-affirmation of this negativity through creation and incarnation must be understood as the generation and actual fulfillment of theophany.

*Creation* is the procession of the first cause out of itself (*principalissimus fons*);<sup>15</sup> thus all being, the ideas and the world, are constituted. Creation is the appearance (*apparitio, manifestatio*) of this very cause in the Other or as the Other; creation is the coming forth of causes from their "obscurity" into the "light" of effects; creation is the development; that is, descent (*descensio*)<sup>16</sup> or extension (*extensio*)<sup>17</sup> of unity into the plurality of being like the extension of the central point into its circumference. Unity or "*monas*" is the unifying centre which opens up into the plurality of the radii (rays) but remains itself in spite of this self-differentiation.<sup>18</sup> In constituting a plurality or developing this immanently real possibility, it does not leave its own being; rather, movement and rest are the dialectical self-relation of a self-identical being (*status mobilis, substitutio et permansio*).

The first sphere of being which is created in the procession of the original unity is the *causae primordiales* or ideas. The originating unity creates these in the *verbum*<sup>19</sup> (and therefore "in the

15. DN II 64,23-25: *una ac sola praecedens et superexcellens causa est et principalissimus fons omnium quae a se in infinitum profluunt et in se recurrunt.*

16. DN III 20,683 A; 684 B; 23,689 C. *praef. in vers. Amb. S. Max.* 1195 B. On the "*condensio*" *divini verbi* (συνκατάβασις) in the sense of incarnation cf. Gregory, *loc. cit.* (Note 1) 83 f.

17. DN III 9,643 B: *extendit se in omnia, et ipsa extensio est omnia.*

18. *Ibid.*, 643 A ff. III 25,692 CD: *Et facta est lux, Deo videlicet volente et dicente, obscuritas primordialium causarum in formas ac species processit apertas . . . discretio*, IV 9,781 BC. — The centre of the circle and of the radii which reach their limit in the circumference are metaphors for the implicative unity of the origin (*principium, fons*) in which difference is superseded, and for the multiplicity unfolding itself out of that "in which everything is One" i.e., in which the lines are united in the point as not yet being a multiplicity which remains bent back to its point of origin. As for circular motion, it is real determination of the principle: it is ἀναρχος. — *totus sibimet in toto et principium est et finis subsistit.* The "radii" are the theophanies of the point of origin. Circle: DN III 1,624 D ff. *Monas — numeri*: III 5,637 A. 11, 652 B ff.

19. DN II 66, 30 ff. R. Roques, "Genèse 1,1-3 chez Jean Scot Érigène", in:

beginning" [*in principio*] and in the "wisdom",<sup>20</sup> that is, from a reflective ground) "at the same time, at once, and eternally". This act of the creative procession (*simul, semel, aeternaliter*)<sup>21</sup> out of itself and yet within itself is to be regarded as timeless in God. That is to say, the temporal meaning of "make" and "create" which is current in everyday speech must be done away with in regard to the procession within the divine, and in this perspective *aeternum* and *factum* do not contradict each other. For this reason the following assertion frequently reappears in the writings of Eriugena: "*omnia, quae ex Deo sunt (or omnia in Verbo Dei) et aeterna simul esse et facta.*"<sup>22</sup> Because the terms he has used to describe procession have a temporal nature, Eriugena consistently distinguishes between "*tempora saeculi*", the "world time", and "*tempora aeterna*", in which the establishment of the *causae primordiales* is completed.<sup>23</sup> Analogously to timelessness, in the act of the creative procession (in spite of the "plurality" of *causae* or ideas) it is not multiplicity in the actual sense of the word which prevails in the divine. In this perspective plurality is much more an undivided unity, "*in ipso unum individuum sunt (scil. rationes rerum)*"<sup>24</sup> and accordingly God's substance is both simple and multiple.<sup>25</sup> It is a unity in a simultaneously resolved multiplicity, or unity despite the differentiation of procession.

Whether the divine cause, as father, creates ideas in the world or whether it creates them identical to the word and so creates the word is a question whose answer, to be sure, remains ambiguous. The distinction between "*creare*", which refers to ideas, and "*generare*", which describes the timeless procession within the trinity, suggests the former of these possibilities. "*Ab ipso enim est filius per ineffabilem generationem, in quo ut in principio fecit omnia; ab ipso est Spiritus sanctus per processionem, qui fertur super omnia. Pater siquidem vult, Filius facit, Spiritus sanctus perficit.*"<sup>26</sup> If "*creatio*" applies to ideas, and "*generatio*" on the other hand to the word, and yet both are to be understood as an act of procession from the

IN PRINCIPIO, *Interprétations des premiers versets de la Genèse*, Paris 1973, 173 ff.

20. DN II 72,8 ff.

21. *Ibid.* 64,9. 76,11 f: *facta . . . aeternaliter in verbo iuxta primordialium causarum conditionem.*

22. DN III 15,666 B f.

23. DN II 74,31 ff.

24. DN II 152,37. Non-difference (*non discrepare*) or absolute "similarity" to self is what constitutes the being of eternity: *Nam aeternitas sui similis est ac tota per totum in seipsa una simplex individuaque subsistit* (DN I 76,7-9).

25. DN III 9,642 C. *praef. in vers. Amb. S. Max.* 1195 C.

26. DN II 64,26-29.

"*principalissimus fons*", then the equal eternity of the two acts, which although proceeding from the same cause differ from each other, must be accepted.<sup>27</sup>

I do not think that it can be established from the writings of Eriugena that the "*creatio*" as a whole could possibly be considered purely as an act within God which would relegate the reality of the world to a Docetism or to a construction of "subjectivity".<sup>28</sup> Insofar as everything is created *in* the word, it is true that nothing is created *outside of* (*extra*) it; as the *ambitus omnium*<sup>29</sup> the word encompasses and fills everything. However, the timeless creation of ideas in the word — "in one moment"<sup>30</sup> — is a prerequisite for the appearance of ideas, finite and determined by opposition, in the form of sensible being. Ideas, in themselves, are the ideal (timeless) models of a world of space and time which can be known by the senses; yet the world is the sensible outward shape of the *causae primordiales*. Consequently, the temporal beginning of the created can only be ascertained in being which is outside of, but nevertheless dependent on, the *causae primordiales*. "*Inchoat ergo quodammodo esse (creatura), non in quantum in causis primordialibus subsistit, sed in quantum ex causis temporalibus incipit apparere.*"<sup>31</sup> But time is an undeniable reality which determines the structure of the appearing world. Yet if the world-constituting time of the appearing world distinguishes itself from the timeless procession in God, then the creative function of the divine must also "step beyond itself". But in so doing the divine must neither lose this "outward manifestation" nor lose itself in the external; even as an

27. DN II 70,23 ff.

28. This is the intention of C.F. Baur and Th. Christlieb's exposition (*Die Christliche Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes*, II, Tübingen 1842,283 ff. *et passim*. — *Leben und Lehre des Johannes Scotus Erigena*, Gotha 1860, 247).

29. *In prol. Jn.* VIII 15 ff, 238. DN III 16,666 C. 18,675 D. For "*ambitus*", "*ambire*" and their Greek counterparts, cf. Jeauneau's Notes, *Prol.* p.238,3. Dionysius' immediate model seems to be Proclus: *In Parm.* 1098,32 (Cousin): 1118,22f. in *Alc.* 38,5 (Westerink). περτοχή as a technical term for being enclosed within a divine origin: *Elem. theol.* 152; 134,11 (Dodds). For the cosmological aspect: *In Tim.* I 160,9 and 247, 30 (Diehl).

30. DN III 27,699 C: *in momento oculi facta*.

31. DN III 15,665 D. 17,677 AB: *creaturam fuisse in Deo, priusquam fieret in se ipsa*. Concept of a "double creation" (*duplex creatura*): in the eternity of divine knowledge and in a temporal manner (temporalis). This is seen as *veluti extra Deum in se ipsa*. The "*veluti*" already indicates that just because of the encompassing actuality of God the '*nihil extra Deum*' has primary force. For the inner "gradation" of the act of creation cf. DN III 19,681 CD: *prima . . . progressio in primordiales causas . . . dum descendit in diversas visibilium et invisibilium formas, ad se ipsam veluti ad formationem suam respicit*.

“outward manifestation” the creative function is and remains “in” the word by virtue of its origin.

Speech (“in the word”),<sup>32</sup> thought (or contemplation, insight, “wisdom”), and sight are the medium of the creative act which establishes the world as idea and as a reality which is in itself (that is, the world not as God Himself but as his manifestation). These three forms of constituting being are different aspects of one action which is, moreover, identical to the divine will as the purpose which encompasses and governs all manner of action. Consequently to the question of why and how God creates, we might equally well reply that He does so by articulating being (and thus establishing it as self-articulate being), by conceiving ideas and with them the world (to think is to create<sup>33</sup> — the conception of being in the divine mind is the “substance” of being), or because, due to the fact that in Him everything is Himself, he is able to “perceive” that which exists in him (idea-world) by beholding himself.<sup>34</sup> The horizon which encompasses and makes this idea

32. DN II 66,12 ff. 124,5 ff. (*vocare, clamare*). In *Jn.I*, XXVII, 92 ff. 142: *Clamat itaque verbum Dei in remotissimis divinae bonitatis solitudine. Clamor eius naturarum omnium conditio est. Ipse enim vocat ea quae sunt tanquam quae non sunt . . .* (Reversal of Rom. 4,17).

33. DN II 76,21 f: *Intellectus enim omnium in deo essentia omnium est*. 29f: *Nil enim est aliud omnium essentia nisi omnium in divina sapientia cognitio*. 23f: *Cognoscere ergo et facere dei unum est*. IV 9,779 A: *ipsa notitia sapientiae creatricis prima causalisque totius creaturae essentia recte intelligitur esse*. B: *intellectus omnium . . . essentia eorum*. Identity of will and being: DN I 62,37 f. — This thought is thought in the context of the Neoplatonic tradition: being, thought, word and will as cause, manner and medium of the demiurgical creation — as involved with the Good cf. W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos, Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik*, Frankfurt 1965, 143 ff.

34. DN III 28,704 C: *Non enim Deus vidit nisi seipsum, quia extra ipsum nihil est, et omne, quod in ipso est, ipse est, simplexque visio ipsius est, et a nullo alio formatur nisi a seipso*. III 17,673 CD: *divina visio* is identical with *voluntas*. 675 B: *Fit enim . . . quod videt faciendum . . . voluntas illius et visio et essentia unum est*. 676 CD. 678 B: *ipsius visio est operatio. Videt enim operando et videndo operatur*. IV 9, 773 D. In *Jn*. III, IV 22-24, 218: *Ipse est visio quae omnia, priusquam fierent, vidit; et ipsa visio substantia est eorum quae visa sunt*. From this thought originates the etymological explanation of “*deus*” (θεός) = *videns* (θεωρῶν). *Ipse enim omnia, quae sunt, in seipso videt* (converges with the meaning of the derivation of θεώ (*deus currens*): *movet autem seipsum per omnia*), DN I 60,16 ff. For the origin and history of the influence of this etymology see W. Beierwaltes *Selbstbewusstsein* (Note 8) 489. — Augustine already understands God’s creation as a seeing constitutive of being . . . e.g. *Conf. XIII 38: tu . . . quia vides ea, sunt*. In *Jn. tract.* 21,5. Cusanus differentiates this complex of thoughts in that from the act of seeing he tries to explain the essence of God and of man (*De Visione Dei*). The Neoplatonic point of convergence is Plotinus, e.g. III 8,3,20-23: ἡ ποίησις

possible is the word; because the word is, creation takes place: "*essendo enim ipsum fiunt omnia.*"<sup>35</sup>

The identification of speech, thought, sight, being, and will with the reality of God (the sight, thought, and being are God Himself) enables us to make an especially pregnant interpretation, already prepared by Augustine, of the formula "*creatio ex or de nihilo*".<sup>36</sup> The nothingness out of which or from which God creates is God himself; it is the absolute negativity which has already been defined as a fullness of being or as a reality above being. "*Ac sic de nihilo facit omnia, de sua videlicet superessentialitate producit essentias, de supervitalitate vitas, de superintellectualitate intellectus, de negatione omnium, quae sunt et quae non sunt, affirmationes omnium, quae sunt et quae non sunt.*"<sup>37</sup> According to this "*Creatio de nihilo*" is a transition, constituting being as a whole, from not being (in the sense of the actual possibility, which already is what can come forth from it) to being. Thus it is a transition from the universality or identity and unity of the (above-) being into difference and particularity, or from absolute negativity into affirmation. With this, the consideration that being as a whole is a theophany returns to our minds. In so far as theophany is understood as the manifestation of that which in itself is not manifest, nothingness becomes definitely accessible or comprehensible in the created. The "*divine [creating] Good*", which is referred to as the "*sublime nothingness*", "*begins to appear in its theophanies and it is said that this good proceeds from nothingness into something. In a peculiar way this good is considered to be above all substance and is also recognized in all substance. For this reason every visible and invisible creature may be called a theophany; i.e., the manifestation of God.*"<sup>38</sup>

From the standpoint of this difficulty the following statement also becomes meaningful: by forming ideas as well as the being which originates through them, God "*makes*" himself or is "*created*" by himself. Such a thought may be misunderstood

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ἄρα θεωρία ἡμῖν ἀναπέφανται· ἔστι γὰρ ἀποτέλεσμα θεωρίας μενούσης οὐκ ἄλλο τι πραξάσης, ἀλλὰ τῷ εἶναι θεωρία ποιησάσης.

35. DN III 21, 685 C.

36. Especially *Conf.* XI, 5 ff.

37. DN III 20, 683 B. Cf. also III 14, 664 B ff. G. A. Piemonte "*Notas sobre la Creatio de nihilo en Juan Escoto Eriugena*", in: *Sapientia* 23, 1968 especially 41 ff.

38. DN III 19, 681 A: *At vero in suis theophaniis incipiens apparere, veluti ex nihilo in aliquid dicitur procedere et quae proprie supra omnem essentiam existimatur, proprie quoque in omni essentia cognoscitur, ideoque omnis visibilis et invisibilis creatur theophania, id est, divina apparitio potest appellari. ['divina' = "dei" apparitio DN I 46, 28. IC IV 12, 267 (Do)].*

unless one considers the pertinent context in the sense of a God who is becoming, who produces and fulfils himself only in his creatures. To say that God creates himself through that which is created in him evidently means that he realizes himself as the creative principle of the Other. It means that he reveals himself from his negativity or obscurity, "*seipsum manifestans, invisibilis visibilem se faciens, et incomprehensibilis comprehensibilem, et occultus apertum, et incognitus cognitum, et forma et specie carens formosum ac speciosum, et superessentialis essentialem.*"<sup>39</sup> Therefore God's self-creation emphasizes the concept that in the created, which is nothing in itself, God becomes the cause of the created (*essentia omnium*), and because he is the universal cause, becomes and is all in all. However this idea is not intended to pantheistically demolish the transcendence of the creating principle. "He becomes all in all and returns to Himself by recalling all into Himself, but while he is becoming in all he does not cease to be above all."<sup>40</sup> The transcendence and immanence of the cause are poles of one sphere which in itself is differentiated and moved dialectically.

Up to this point the following connection has been explained: the divine principle is the exclusion of all categorically comprehensible being and consequently can only be thought of as the nothing of all things. Furthermore, nothingness can be grasped in the affirmation (theophany) which it itself has made (created). This relation is the theological transformation of a fundamental philosophic, or more precisely, Neoplatonic thought, which Dionysius, who was in his turn influenced by the thought of Proclus and Plotinus, conveyed to Eriugena. To summarize this concept: the One is in itself pure, relationless identity and consequently it is an absolutely transcendent super-existent

39. DN III 17,678 C.

40. DN III 20,683 B: *fit in omnibus omnia, et in se ipsum redit revocans in se omnia, et dum in omnibus fit, super omnia esse non desinit.* IV 5,759 A: *cum in omnibus totus sit, extra omnia totus esse non desinit . . . quia ipse est et totum et pars, et neque totum neque pars.* DN II 142,18 ff. CH XIII, 245 C: *Dominus, quum sit super omnia, diffunditur in omnia, et ubique est, sine quo nihil esse potest, quoniam eorum, quae sunt, essentia et substantia ipse est, cum sit superessentialis et supersubstantialis.* On the dialectic of immanence and transcendence see W. Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus* 62; also Plot. VI 4, 1,11 ff. VI 5,1 ff. Bonaventura, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* V 8: *intra omnia, non inclusum, extra omnia, non exclusum, supra omnia, non elatum, infra omnia, non prostratum* [said of simplicissimum et maximum esse, which is totum intra omnia and totum extra and is thus thought of as an "intelligible sphere" whose centre is everywhere, whose circumference is nowhere.']. On "*ubique totus*" from Augustine cf. O. du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon Saint Augustin*, Paris 1966, 469 f.

otherness over and against all which has being. It can therefore only be defined by negative dialectic. Affirmatively it can first be described as a One which has being; i.e., as that which has proceeded into otherness or diversity, and which returns to its origin by self-contemplation. In Christian thought the One is disclosed into a self-reflecting trinity, so that the first and only (universal) principle of the divine trinity occupies the position of ἕν and νοῦς in the system. The philosophical implication of the theological concept of theophany is also evident in the terms ἐκφαίνειν or ἐκφανσις -to "become manifest" or "manifestation" — which constantly reoccur in Neoplatonic thought. Among other things they describe the procession or development of ideas from a more intense form of contemplative unity (νοῦς): understanding as creative alienation. In this way they characterize in a general sense the transition from unity into plurality; i.e., from a more latent in-itself into an "open" and, because "visibly" articulated, recognizable plurality; from a pure or actually dynamical identity into difference; from a real possibility into a broader yet weaker reality.<sup>40a</sup>

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40a. Cf. e.g. Proclus *In Parm.* 952,6 (Cousin) said of the ideas; *ibid.* 23: ποίησις - γνῶσις *In Tim.* III 101,7 (of the νοῦς νοητός which unfolds itself into the νοερά 105,34: Explication of the numbers as explication of δύναμις of the unity. The νοητός as πρωτίστη ἐκφανσις: *Theol. Plat.* I,26; 117 17 (Saffrey-Westerink), *In Tim.* III 2,15: ἀθρόα πάντων ἐκφανσις, the δημιουργία occurring in the timeless moment. Damascius, *Dub.* I, 244, 15-17 (Ruelle): ἡ πρόοδος τῶν δευτέρων ἀπὸ τῶν προτέρων οὐκ ἔστι γέννησις, ἀλλ' ἐκφανσις μόνον καὶ διάκρισις, ὡς φαμεν, τῶν ἄνω κεκρυμμένων καὶ συνηρημένων: (formulated as a question). The general philosophical horizon is this: that which is to be caused is *in* the cause in a "hidden manner" (κρυφίως) *eminentiori modo* —, the act, however, is the appearance or the revelation of the source, cf. e.g. Proclus *Elem. theol.* 152; 134,10 ff. 65; 62,13 ff. (Dodds). See also Notes below ... On the Theological aspect see Proclus *In Tim.* III 54,7 ff: ὁ θεὸς λόγος . . . διαίρων τὴν ἔνωσιν εἰς πλῆθος . . . ἐκφαίνων ἑαυτόν. *In Parm.* 952,12. *Theol. Plat.* III 9; 136,17 (Portus). For this context the demiurgical function of Φάνης (ἐκφαίνειν) is instructive, cf e.g. *In Tim.* I 428, 1 ff. 22. — On the "appearance" (φάσματα and θεάματα) of the gods Iamblichus says in *Myst.* II 4; 77, 2: λαμπρῶς ἐκφαίνεται. The dialectical relationship of the hidden in-itself and the self revealing which permits knowledge leads, in Plotinus' description of the act of "Illumination" in which the one becomes present to the non-thinking thought, to paradoxical formulations: φαίνεται τε καὶ οὐ φαίνεται· διὸ οὐ χρὴ διώκειν, ἀλλ' ἡσυχῇ μένειν, ἕως ἂν φανῇ' (V 5,8,2-4). — For a specially Christian theology one should discuss the concept of θεοφάνεια in Gregory of Nissa for example, or Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite or Maximus the Confessor, in whose technical and historical context Eriugena stands. However one should just as much, because of the complex philosophical (=Neoplatonic) presuppositions, think about

2. In order to determine the possible function of *art* from this outline of Eriugena's thought, we must consider those structural moments of being which have been presupposed in the statement that being as a whole or the created world is a theophany and a metaphor. Several things previously referred to should now become more clearly established.

a). The essential meaning of theophany is made particularly clear in the metaphysics of light which Eriugena intended to be both the universal pattern for understanding and an ontological statement. Being as a whole, and therefore the world as well, is a shadowy explication of the absolute (pure) light. The origin is light in itself and thus at the same time the cause of all light in being and thought. Light is the absolute metaphor; i.e., the content which becomes visible in it cannot be fully translated by any direct manner of speech. For this reason "like" ("being or the cause thereof is *like* light") is less adequate than the identification, "being or the cause thereof is light". This sentence implies that its subjects are light in the very structure of their being, which is to say that they are clear in themselves; that they are integrated within themselves as a reflection without insurmountable opposition; and that they are intelligible, accessible to finite thought, and capable of being expressed through language. It is true that, following the mystic theology of Dionysius, Eriugena conceives of the divine origin as darkness (*caligo, tenebrositas*)<sup>41</sup> — an analogy to the fact that the end of negation revealed itself as the paradoxical unity of being and nothingness, or even better, that being revealed itself as the "sublime nothingness". Just as this is not to be understood as the destruction of reality, but on the contrary as being in the only true, and that means incomparable, sense, which is as above-being; so "darkness" is not irrational and unidentifiable, but rather the absolute and incommensurable mode of thinking which can only be defined as the negative but therefore no less real cause of finite thought. This nothingness is darkness by virtue of its most intense and highest light; "*altitudo claritatis, lux per excellentiam,*

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the relationship of identity and difference unfolding itself as a timeless self reflection in Marius Victorinus under the aspect of "*occultum*" and "*manifestatio*". See my dissertation "Andersheit" in *Arch. f. Begriffsgeschichte* 16, 1972, 194, note 139.

41. DN III 19,681 AB (*inaccessibilis claritas . . . nominatur tenebrositas*). 25,692 C. V 26,919 CD. 920 B. V 39,1021 A: *inaccessibilis lucis tenebrae*. In *prol. Jn. XIII*, 36,268: *Cuius lux per excellentiam tenebrae nominatur*. For the conceptual historical origin of this idea cf. E. Jeuneau *Prol.* 269, Note 4 and W. Beierwaltes, *Selbstbewusstsein* 501, note 84. — "Abyssus" is equivalent to "*tenebrositas*" etc: DN II 58,23 ff. 62,30 and means simply the hidden, in itself conceptually unattainable, creative (=active) potentiality.



*excessus luminis*."<sup>42</sup> God in his being-in-himself is neither comprehensible nor definable, *ineffabilis lux*<sup>43</sup>, precisely because of his absolute contemplation and not because of any disordered thought without or against contemplation. The biblical words, "God dwells in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6,16) and "no man has seen God at any time" (John 1,18 and Ex. 30,20)<sup>44</sup> substantiate and reinforce the negative theology. The "desert" (*desertum*) in which the voice of the crying man (John) becomes discernible as the proclamation of the WORD is — allegorically speaking — the "distance" or "sublimity" of the divine nature. That is to say, the desert is its "nothingness" — an anticipation of the mystic song "*Granum Sinapsis*", in which the 'super-substantial' is considered to be neither "this nor that" — not any existing thing. Consequently God can only be defined negatively as "nothingness" and as a "desert":

"dī wūste hat  
noch zeit noch stat" . . .  
genk āne wek  
den smalen stek,  
sō kums du an der wūste spōr"

(the desert has  
neither time nor place . . .  
walk without direction  
the narrow path  
then you will reach the vestige of the desert).

But since the desert is God's fullness precisely because of its distinctness the soul can surrender to this desert as its end:

"sink al mīn icht  
in gotis nicht,  
sink in dī grundelōze vlūt"<sup>45</sup>

(let all my being be drowned  
into God's nothingness,  
be drowned in the unfathomable flood).

42. III 1,623 D: *In prol. Jn. loc. cit.* (note 41). Quite in Eriugena's sense in the Dionysius commentary not deriving from him, in *Myst. Theol.* PL 122, 270 C.

43. III 16,668 C.

44. Cf. Note 41 and DN I 50, 32-25: *Solus . . . habet immortalitatum et lucem habitat inaccessibleem, sed quasdam factas ab eo in nobis theophanias contemplabimur.* II 60,19. 72,23. III 19,681 B. V 23,905 C. IC IV 15,269; VI 2,280 (Do) (occultum).

45. *In Jn.* I XXVII, 80 ff. 140. See the critical text of "*Granum Sinapsis*" in K.Ruh, "Textkritik zum Mystikerlied '*Granum Sinapsis*'", in: *Festschrift für Josef Quint*, Bonn 1964 169 ff; 183-185.

However the darkness, distance and obscurity which have been established through negativity also imply the turning point. The most intense, over-bright light appears due to its own free spontaneity, as accessible, comprehensible light because in itself it proceeds creatively into the ideas, and also proceeds into the world, which has been created by the alienation of the ideas. Darkness reveals itself (*occulti manifestatio*)<sup>46</sup> because it is at the same time the hidden cause of every *illuminatio* (*lux mentium*)<sup>47</sup>; it is the "father of lights". In the act of revelation it becomes the intelligible "articulate" light *in* being itself.

Within the general context of the idea that the self-revealing, or the manifest, *shines* ("*omne quod apparet luces*"),<sup>48</sup> the procession of the divine cause within itself (trinitarian) and into the whole of worldly being is to be understood as becoming light ("*Fiat lux*") or as the development of the original light. The "*processio*" is designated as *claritas* or as *declaratio*<sup>49</sup>, that is, as a self-illumination of the cause in the created ("*divina claritas ex secretis suis erumpit, or ab occultis suis erumpit*").<sup>50</sup> The word proceeds from the inaccessible light of the divine as if it were the "brightest beam"<sup>51</sup>, so that in the effects; i.e., ideas, the super-contemplative nature of God immediately determines its progression to a contemplative existence. In this way the creative procession in itself becomes an essential condition of the divine self-thinking, as well as of comprehension by finite reflection. If the procession of the hidden from itself into itself is the first theophany, while manifestation is the only access to that which is not manifest in itself — "*ad lucem inaccessibilem conceditur accessus per theophanias*"<sup>52</sup> — then the finite and historical manifestation of God in Christ must also be understood in this manner. "As the incarnate (as opposed to what is "distant" [*remotum*] and "hidden" within itself [*secretum*]) the Word descended by means of a marvellous theophany . . . and came forth to the knowledge of angelic and human nature . . . the inaccessible light offered an access to all intellectual and rational being."<sup>53</sup>

46. DN III 4,633 A. Cf. also III 1,623 D ff. 19,681 A. IC IV 12,267 (Do).

47. DN II 104,30. *In Jn.* VI, V, 25, 350.

48. IC IV 17,271 (Do), in connection with the etymological derivation of theophany (*Dei apparitio vel Dei illuminatio*) from φαίνο.

49. DN III 25,692 CD. 693 AB: *obscuritas causarum — claritas effectuum*. The problem of the active potentiality (*illud unum multiplex virtute est*; 22,687 D).

50. IC XIII 247 A.

51. *Ibid.* 246 C.

52. DN II 72,23 f. I, 54, 31 ff.

53. DN V 24,912 D: *incarnatum vero quodammodo descendens mirabili quadam theophania et ineffabili et multiplici sine fine in cognitionem angelicae humanaeque*

The explanation of the “threefold light” (*lux trina*: the father being *lumen primum* and *intimum* the son *lumen verum* [the self-revealing light of the origin] and the Holy Spirit light which “divides” the unity of ideas; i.e., mediates them to the sphere of plurality) has a universal ontological significance. For the one, or three-in-one, light establishes all being as light in itself. “A light flowing into all which is, so that it may subsist; a light shining in all which is, so that all may be directed to the love and contemplation of his beauty.”<sup>54</sup> Because the created being is light in itself and therefore intelligible (“*omnia, quae sunt, lumina sunt*”)<sup>55</sup>, it is able to become “the light” for thought. The intelligible lightness of being provokes and becomes instructive for thought bringing about the “illumination” or certainty thereof. In existents, the “*lumina*”, the “*principium illuminandi*”<sup>56</sup> is effective as the founding principle itself — even in that sphere which is most distant from the cause because it is least existent.<sup>57</sup> Even “this stone or this wood is a light for me.”<sup>58</sup> Their illuminating purpose (“*lumen illuminans; animum meum illuminant*”)<sup>59</sup> consists in the fact that they introduce thought to the knowledge of their intelligible structure — because they exist they are good and beautiful and defined by their identity, number, and differing intensities of being. They give rise to the question of their own origin and consequently the question of their nature (*essentia*). This enables Eriugena to declare that from every created being there is a “light which leads” to the origin of its existence (*introductiva lux*) and that “the structure of this world is the greatest light. It is united from many parts and many rays, for the discovery and contemplation of the pure forms of intelligible things by the highest level of mind — divine mercy and the efforts of reason

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*naturae processit . . . mundum sensibilem et intelligibilem in seipso incomprehensibili harmonia adunans. Et lux inaccessibleis omni creaturae intellectuali et rationali praebuit accessum.*

54. IC I 1,128 B: *unum lumen diffusum in omnia, quae sunt, ut essentialiter subsistant, splendens in omnibus, quae sunt, ut in amorem et cognitionem pulchritudinis suae convertantur omnia.* DN III 16,668 C: *lux ineffabilis . . . per omnia diffusa in infinitum, et fit in omnibus omnia et in nullo nullum.* The omnipresence of physical light is a model for the omnipresence of the creative (intelligible = true) light, DN I 214,16-19: *lux . . . totum mundum radiorum suorum immensurabili diffusionem perfundit ut nullum locum relinquat quo se moveat, manetque semper immobilis.*

55. IC I 1,128 C.

56. IC XIII 3,240 B: *Deus . . . principium illuminandi . . . quia ipsius essentia lux est.* 241 A: *divina illuminatio.*

57. IC IV 12,267 (Do). DN III 19,681 B: *ideoque formae ac species rerum sensibilibus manifestissimarum theophaniarum nomen accipiunt.*

58. IC I 1,129 B: *Lapis iste vel hoc lignum mihi lumen est.*

59. 129 B.C: *lumina mihi fiunt, hoc est, me illuminant.*

work together in the heart of the believing philosopher."<sup>60</sup>

3. Existence as a whole — "*a summo usque ad deorsum*"<sup>61</sup> — therefore has, precisely because of its quality of light, a reducing or anagogical function; it *directs* from plurality to the one absolute light as the ground for its own structure. Theophany (as the luminous self-revelation of God in being) is thus not a manifestation which remains within itself, but an active referral into whose movement thought must adapt its movement. This referring nature of being as a whole I have called its *symbolic* character — in contrast to Eriugena a more general use of the word symbol. Symbolic being implies that being is created as an *image* which is like and at the same time unlike the original; an image in which the original or the cause reveals itself as a *sign*, a *trace*, or at least a *shadow*.<sup>62</sup> It furthermore suggests that the existent is not primarily itself, nor truth in the actual sense of the word, but rather *veritatis theophaniae*.<sup>63</sup> As a statement about the theophanical structure of being "symbol" is closely related to "metaphor". Because "symbol" implies the referring image-being of the existent, it corresponds to the unlike likeness which expresses itself in the metaphor primarily as likeness, while at the same time suggesting the negativity or incommensurability of that which it implies. The statements that the "world (as the total of all being established by *creatio*) is a theophany" that "the world is a symbol", and that "the world is a metaphor", all reveal different aspects of the same content.

Formulated with the metaphysics of light in mind, this means that all created being and consequently everything which exists as a symbol, image, or sign is not a light which subsists by its own

60. 129 CD: *Hinc est, quod universalis huius mundi fabrica maximum lumen fit, ex multis partibus veluti ex multis lucernis compactum, ad intelligibilium rerum puras species revelandas et contuendas mentis acie, divina gratia et rationis ope in corde fidelium sapientium cooperantibus.*

61. 129 C.

62. The beauty in the image (*imago*); *theophanies* as *imagines*: IC VIII 208 A. DN I 50.20 ff. IC I 3,141 B: (*veritatem nobis apparere*) *per sensibilia symbola*. *Symbolum* is used as a synonym for *imago*: IC XV 44,300 C(Do). God as *omnium formarum infinitum exemplar*: DN III 19,681 C. *Nihil visibilium rerum est quod non incorporale quid et intelligibile significet* DN III 23,689 C: *Atque ideo omnis creatura corporalis atque visibilis sensibusque succumbens extremum divinae naturae vestigium non incongrue solet in Scripturis appellari*. V 24, 914 A (*umbrae*). On Eriugena's special concept of symbol (*symbolum* = *allegoria dicti* as against *mysterium* = *allegoria facti*) see É. Jeuneau, Com. Appendix III, p. 397-402 and J. Pépin, "Mysteria et Symbola dans le commentaire de Jean Scot sur l'évangile de Saint Jean," in: *The Mind of Eriugena* 16-30 (A discussion of the previous history of the problem.)

63. DN II 200,28 f.

means, but a light which exists only "by participation in a true, substantial light, which shines intelligibly everywhere and in all things."<sup>64</sup> Because the divine principle, which is light in itself, is able to achieve and maintain the likeness in spite of the concealing unlikeness, being as a whole becomes a symbol which directs thought backwards; i.e., that which leads thought to this very principle. At this point the following tenet, central for Eriugena — it also determined the nature of Abbot Suger's interpretation of art — becomes obvious: 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"<sup>65</sup> what appears as an image or puzzle over to the *cause* of appearance. In this way we can discover the true purpose of that which reveals itself either in an implicative likeness or perhaps even more emphatically and provokingly by distant analogy or unlike likeness.<sup>66</sup> The thought, well substantiated by Eriugena, that the otherness set up by the creative act, or the plurality of appearance (world) might meaningfully be identified with the *one* being of this very act, must also be regarded as the speculative development of the philosophical and theological implications of Romans 1, 20 — "*Invisibilia enim ipsius, a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur.*"<sup>67</sup>

The realization of the symbolic, referring purpose of being now becomes a necessary condition for the understanding of the intelligible sphere and in the end of the divine ground. By "aid through the material" (*materialis manu ductio*, the *ὕλαία χειραγωγία* of Dionysius)<sup>68</sup> or the introduction (*introductio*) to the "contemplation of the highest principle" through material mediation, Eriugena, again following Dionysius, understands the consciousness that, "visual forms, whether in the nature of things or in the holy sacraments ("symbols") of the Holy Scriptures, are not

64. *In prol. Jn.* XVI 23 f, 280: *participatione unius ac veri luminis substantialis quod ubique in omnibusque intelligibiliter lucet.*

65. IC I 3, 138 B ff. 139 B. 141 B. II 3, 159 A ff. B: *Naturaliter quippe materialia omnia in spiritualia transferri appetunt.* II 4, 160 B. 5, 173 A.

66. IC II 1, 143 A (*dissimilia symbola*). 3, 157 B. 5, 170 BC. On this point cf. R. Roques, "Tératologie et théologie chez Jean Scot Erigène", in: *Mélanges M.-D. Chenu*, Paris (1967), 419-437. Op.cit., in: *The Mind of Eriugena* 66ff.

67. On the function of this passage in Eriugena cf. e.g. DN III 23, 690 35, 723 BC: . . . *magnus et valde utilis sensibilibus rerum notitia ad intelligibilem intelligentiam . . . per creaturam reditur ad deum.* On the philosophical context (φυσιολογία as θεολογία) S. Gnomon 41, 1969, 131.

68. IC I 3, 138 C. Ps.-Dion. Aerop., *De cael. hier.* I 3, PG 3, 121 D.

revealed to us for their own sake, but are rather the embodiment (*imaginatio*) of invisible beauty. By means of these forms divine providence recalls the human mind to the pure and invisible beauty of the Truth itself, which loves all, and toward which all that loves moves, whether consciously or unconsciously."<sup>69</sup>

Of the various methods of symbolic reference which Eriugena's thought determines, such as the *illuminatio* through the scriptures, the representative significance of the church, and the figurative structure of the created, the sensible, shaped components of the last aspect are particularly relevant in our context. The darkness which blinds by its over-brightness "reveals itself more clearly to the observer's view" ("*manifestans se aperit*")<sup>70</sup> precisely in the *outermost* sphere of the "*ordo rerum*" and consequently the form and structure of sensible things may be called the "most obvious theophanies". Furthermore, because of the intelligible aspect of the sensible the latter may be symbolically related to the former and reveals its meaning.<sup>71</sup> In this context elements of the sensible world, or living beings, but also lifeless nature, possess a symbolic significance, partially instanced by, or intensified through, the scriptures. This significance is not merely acquired accidentally but claims to express the relative nature of the symbolizing object to its origin, such as the significance which transcends the visible, of light, sun, fire, wind, cloud, wood, stone, river, wheel and vehicle, or eagle, wing, lion, man, and heart.

The symbolic structure of the world becomes clearest in the consideration that sensible forms and structures are the embodiment of the invisible *beauty*. This idea implies that that which exists as an image has been established by the absolute or highest beauty and that only for this reason is the image itself also beautiful.<sup>72</sup>

69. IC I 3,138 C: . . . *visibiles formas, sive quas in natura rerum, sive quas in sanctissimis divinae Scripturae sacramentis contemplatur, nec propter se ipsas factas, nec propter se ipsas appetendas seu nobis promulgatas, sed invisibilis pulchritudinis imaginationes esse, per quas divina providentia in ipsam puram et invisibilem pulchritudinem ipsius veritatis, quam amat, et ad quam tendit omne quod amat, sive sciens, sive nesciens, humanos animos revocat.* Cf. also note 72.

70. III 19,681 B.

71. IC XV 28,291 (Do). VII 182 A ff. Cf. also the context of note 85.

72. DN I 212,27 f: *solus summa ac vera bonitas et pulchritudo.* IV 16,823 D: *Ipsae siquidem pulchrum et pulchritudo totius pulchri, et pulchritudinis causa et plenitudo.* 827 D.V 35, 954 C: *summa pulchritudo.* IC III 4,254 (Do). VII 4,287 (Do): . . . *cuius munere pulchra sunt atque decora.* VII 2,178 C, on being hierarchically from the source: *originem ducit ex similitudine divinae formositatis.* For this reason *ordo* and *pulchritudo* are also in the theophany. Absolute beauty is similarly the basis of the brightness or lightlikeness of beings: Ps.-Dion. Aereop. *De div. nom.* IV 7; PG 3, 701 C: τὸ δὲ ὑπερούσιον

Because *bonitas* and *pulchritudino* are two aspects of the same thing, identical in God, Eriugena is able to explain the two terms etymologically from *καλεῖν* (or *βοᾶν*). The creative cause “calls” the non-existent into being (by means of an “intelligible call”, that is by means of the contemplative strength of the word) — “*in essentiam vocat.*”<sup>73</sup> However, at the same time, as beauty, it calls being back into itself by means of the images it has created; and as the absolute end of all loving effort it “attracts” being like a magnet, or “leads” it “back” into itself without moving, (changing), “but solely by the strength of its beauty.”<sup>74</sup> Thus in

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καλὸν κάλλος μὲν λέγεται . . . ὡς τῆς πάντων εὐαρμοστίας καὶ ἀγλαίας αἴτιον (*claritatis causale* [Eriugena]) φωτοδοσία. Ps.-Dion. Aereop. *De div. nom.* IV 6; PG3,701 A: ἀκτίς πηγαία καὶ ὑπερβλύξουσα φωτοχυσία. Eriugena’s thought that the beauty which appears as image is grounded in absolute beauty — beauty, therefore as element of theophany — has its last metaphysical resonance in Hegel’s *Asthetik*. “Das Schöne bestimmt sich als das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee” (*Asthetik*, ed. F. Bassenge 1965 2nd. Ed. I 117). “Idea” is however, in the Hegelian context, which also as aesthetic continues to be determined by the “Logic”, to be understood not as a fictitious conception, but as the self-reflection of a consciousness which has become absolute. Since the reality of the idea corresponds completely with the concept, i.e. it is conceived completely through itself, it is true. In accordance with its immanently active negativity the Idea should moreover externalize itself, “realize itself externally”. This external appearance or showing of it is beautiful, and does not presuppose a separation from the concept but, the preservation of immediate unity with it. Art can in this way become intelligible and effective as “das erste versöhnende Mittelglied zwischen dem Bloss Äusserlichen, Sinnlichen und Vergänglichlichen und zwischen dem reinen Gedanken, zwischen der Natur und endlichen Wirklichkeit und der unendlichen Freiheit des begreifenden Denkens” (*ibid.* 19).

73. Cf. note above 32, and further DN III 2,627 C: *Divinae siquidem bonitatis proprium est, quae non erant, in essentiam vocare.* IC IV 4,262 (Do) (*causa omnium*) *vocat a non esse per excellentiam, non per privationem, ad esse substitutionem.*

74. IC I 3,138 BC. DN I 212,24 ff: *Amari item dicitur ab omnibus quae ab eo facta sunt . . . quia eum omnia appetunt ipsiusque pulchritudo omnia ad se attrahit . . . 31f: lapis magnetes . . . ad se ipsam reducit . . . sola suae pulchritudinis virtute.* IC I 3,139 A: *revocare.* The idea that the first principle of all being moves towards itself as goal is Aristotelian despite its Neoplatonic implications and consequences (identity of source and goal, as in Plotinus): God moves as loved. (*Met.* 1072b 3: *κινεῖ δὲ ὡς ἐρόμενον.* Proclus and, following him, Dionysius have developed “more etymologically” the idea that the beautiful “recalls”, i.e. is “alluring” after Plat. *Crat.* 416 c f (*καλόν* - *καλεῖν*), cf. note 32 and note 73 above: *Theol. Plat.* I 24; 108,6 ff (Saffrey-Westerink) in *Alc.* 328,12 f (Westerink); To this call corresponds the “returning Eros”: in *Alc.* 53,6. The demiurge has a *ἀνακλητικὴ δύναμις*, in *Tim.* III 2,6 (Diehl). — Dionysius characterises the teleological attraction of God as based on beauty, *De div. nom.* IV 7; PG

every realm of being, beauty becomes the first and most important starting point for the purification (*purgatio*) of thought and life, passing over into illumination; i.e., into an understanding of the more intense being, unity, and beauty of the cause. "*Purgatio ab omni dissimilitudine*,"<sup>75</sup> is therefore the adjustment of thought and life to the original beauty of the cause by means of an increasingly clearer manifestation of that which is similar to it. Absolute beauty, however, as an indicator of its unity and trinitarian self-identity, is free of every unlikeness and is thus "supersubstantial harmony":<sup>76</sup> "*Pura quidem . . . est et omnino omni dissimilitudine munda et absoluta divina pulchritudo: nec immerito, quia simpla est, quia optima, quia perfectionum et illuminationum principalis.*"<sup>77</sup> For this reason the end of this movement is to attain an ever greater intensity of being and unity.

If the absolute beauty, which is free of all unlikeness, creatively establishes being, while this being however, receives its beauty from the forming and structuring beauty itself, and if *in spite* of the otherness of the created over and against the origin, an analogy exists between the two, then *this* likeness *in* unlikeness should be understood to be the harmony, order or unity of opposites — harmony and unity in so far as they are possible as forms of identity through and in spite of the difference creation sets up. Yet harmony, i.e., the unity or co-existence of opposites toward a unity, as well as the order of opposites, differentiated and at the same time interrelated by their varying intensity of being and of being one, are essential elements in the determination of beauty. In fact these elements had already been variously developed by Augustine and in the Neopythagorean tradition which grew out of Plato's *Philebus*. God as the creating cause of like *and* unlike<sup>78</sup> in being as a whole and therefore in the being of the world as well, establishes the harmonious or peaceable co-existence (*concordia*) of like and unlike, and with it of opposites in general, as the beauty of the world: *proinde pulchritudo totius universitatis conditae, similium et dissimilium, mirabili quadam harmonia constituta est, ex diversis generibus variisque formis, differentibus quoque substantiarum et accidentium ordinibus, in unitatem quandam ineffabilem compacta*. The

3,701 C: πάντα πρὸς ἑαυτὸ καλοῦν. This chapter has become the starting point of a far-reaching "aesthetic theory": for example in Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Ulrich von Strassburg and Cusanus ("*Tota pulchra es*").

75. IC III 12,259 (Do).

76. IC X 2,225 B: *superessentialis harmonia*.

77. IC III 3,253 (Do).

78. DN I 192,10 ff.



beauty of the world reassembles a many-voiced melody (*organicum melos*) in which distant and apparently dissonant voices are nevertheless able to produce a harmony (*dulcedo*) because of the rational rules of music.<sup>79</sup> Through the prevalence of unity in the universe and on the basis of the essential presupposition that beauty can only be conceived of as the "*compaginatio*" of like and unlike, of the contradictory and opposite, the very "*malum*" can be sublated and integrated even as a possibly independent substance.<sup>80</sup>

In fact it has a certain necessary function, because in contrast to it the universal beauty shows itself more clearly<sup>81</sup> — an anticipation of the romantic levelling of sin which is derived from the postulated necessity of the bad. For Eriugena at any rate theophany, or the world as theophany, itself becomes a theodicy. For in beauty, which is the outward form of rationally founded unity and order, the world refers to absolute beauty as its creative, ordering and at the same time re-*ducing* cause.<sup>82</sup>

The reference to the original model of images, symbols and beauty is comprehensible in the concept, fundamental to Eriugena's thought, that being as a whole *returns* to its origin — *conversio, congregatio, reditio, resolutio, restauratio, transmutatio, deificatio* — the theological differentiation of the Neoplatonic ἐπιστροφή -concept which constitutes absolute and temporal thought as well as asceticism and cosmology. This return does not only apply to the temporal world but to "the whole" of being.<sup>83</sup>

79. DN III 6,637 D/38 A. IC IX 2,212 B: *ordo, harmonia, pulchritudo (universitatis naturae conditae)*. In *Jn.* VI IV 37,346 and Jeaneau's Note 5.

Augustine interprets the structure of the cosmos with the same categories and the same goal, cf. e.g. *De ordine* I, II 3. *De div. quaest.* LXXXIII 45,1. *De vera rel.* 40,76. ep. 138;1,5: *saeculi pulchritudo magnum carmen*. The mathematical nature of the world is the basis of beauty. cf. *De lib. arb.* II 11,30 f. *De musica* VI 13,38; 17,56. A discussion of the area of this problem can be found in my essay "*Aequalitas numerosa*" on Augustine's concept of the beautiful in: *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 38 (1975). The idea of a world hierarchically ordered in itself and therefore beautiful is in the form of a theater metaphor, Plotinian and Stoic: Plotinus e.g. III 2,16, 34 ff; 17,1 ff. — Hans Urs von Balthasar understands this metaphor as an element of a "Theodramatik". (Bd. I Einsiedeln 1974).

80. DN V 36,982 CD.

81. DN V 35,953 D: *Nam quod deforme per seipsum in parte aliqua universitatis existimatur, in toto non solum pulchrum, quoniam pulchre ordinatum est, verum etiam generalis pulchritudinis causa efficitur.*

82. DN IV 16,823 C: *. . . totamque ipsius pulchritudinem, sive interius in rationibus, sive exterius in formis sensibilibus, ad laudem creatoris referre. In prol. Jn.* XI 17 f, 254: *Sensu corporeo formas ac pulchritudines rerum perspice sensibilibus, et in eis intelliges dei verbum.*

83. DN V 3,866 CD. The stages of the return: DN V 8,876 AB. V 39,1020 C

The effects which proceeded from the first cause collectively turn back to this very cause as their end, as the place where all motion is calmed — *finis enim totius motus est principium sui* — “*finis*” in the sense of the fulfilling end of all motion (*requies*).<sup>84</sup> The return has a cosmological as well as a soteriological aspect. That which proceeded from the first things returns by a natural compulsion (*naturaliter cogitur*) to its origin and consequently to the universal cause. Thus an isolation or complete separation from the cause is inconceivable.<sup>85</sup> Established ontologically, this return is constituted by the “attractive strength” of the cause itself and is possible since even corporeal being is constituted of immaterial qualities.<sup>86</sup> The last work of the creative act, man, is at the same time the beginning of the return, because by purification and illumination he ascends to God, who is the beginning (principle) of all division and the final end of all union.<sup>87</sup> Christ is the mediator of the return of man and humanity; by means of the *incarnatio* or *inhumanatio* of

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-21 B. On this problem see R. Roques, “Remarques sur la signification de Jean Scot Erigène.” in: *Divinitas* 11, (1967) 299 ff. Y. Christe has put forward a number of noteworthy arguments for the possibility that the unusual form of the tympany of Charlieu and Moissac is determined by contact with Eriugena’s fundamental idea: the four creatures proceed from the resting Christ and turn around towards him at the same time in a remarkable, visible movement. They embody “*progressio*” and “*reditus*”, so to speak, in one. (cf. Christe, in: *The Mind of Eriugena* 182-189).

84. DN V 3, 866C. — To be the rest which brings all movement to rest is identical with the idea that God is the placeless — in the sense of a category place of everything (*locus omnium communis, locus locorum nullo loco capitur*, III 9, 643 C). On the Augustinian and Neoplatonic context cf. *Rev. Aug.* 15, 1969, 51 ff, esp. 60f. This idea goes back to the Aristotelian doctrine of natural place and to Plato’s conception of an ἀγαθόν which is the unhypothetical goal of the dialectical movement of thought.

85. DN V 36,965 B: *et tunc post universalis creaturae in suas causas reditum inque ipsum deum ordinandum fore, quando totius universitatis conditae plenissima perficietur pulchritudo*. Ibid. 970 CD. 972 B: *universitatis conditae plenitudinem in causas suas inque ipsum deum, in quo omnia subsistunt, reversuram*. 973 A. The return of the whole of being as the dissolution of the world: V 34,952 B. The return is contrary to destruction which would necessarily occur through the release of being from its “source”. Thus it is the preserving supersession (Erhöhung, *exaltatio*, DN I 72,32. IC I 3,138 C; *In Jn.* I XXI 17,98: *exaltari*; this corresponding to the ontological “being-exaltatus” of God and the “*exaltari*” of Christ *In cruce*. cf. e.g. DN V 38,994 B; *In Jn.* III,X 53,260).

86. DN V 13,885 AB.

87. As the turning about of the explication which proceeds from God . . . *iam nunc substantiarum omnium adunatam collectionem ab homine inchoantem et per hominem ascendentem usque ad ipsum deum qui est totius divisionis principium totiusque adunationis finis* (DN II 20,8-11). V 7,874 B ff: The return as “*purgatio naturae humanae*”.

the Word, salvation becomes possible as a fulfillment of the beginning, as a return of the world and man to the original condition, and as a reconciling restoration of the original state of integrity. "*Tota itaque humanitas in ipso, qui eam totam assumpsit, in pristinum reversura est statum, in Verbo Dei videlicet incarnato.*"<sup>88</sup> Consequently the death of Christ is the medium for his own and human resurrection and fulfillment. His death is "*mors mortis*"<sup>89</sup>, the death of death, that is, the death of humanity which has died in sin, and therefore the necessary condition for humanity to transform (*transmutatio*) itself into its *pristina gloria*, to attain its own "*deificatio*".<sup>90</sup>

Cosmologically, the universal return is the return of effects back to their causes and to the one origin, the return of the phenomena into the idea. Consequently it is the dissolution of space and time<sup>91</sup> as well as the dissolution of all the sensible into the intelligible; that is to say it is the "spiritualization" of the world.<sup>92</sup> From a soteriological point of view it is the restoration of the original state of integrity which was destroyed or disturbed by sin. This universal return — the new heaven and the new earth<sup>93</sup> — is included in the most general philosophical (and especially Neoplatonic) concept which is that of a resolution or at least correlation of the plurality of being into the One. Furthermore, it is the resolution or correlation of the established difference of that which has alienated itself from the origin and therefore from itself by "falling away", back into the original identity. Finally it is the *reversio* or *congregatio* of the divine good, which has made itself outward, "*per eosdem gradus ab infinita eorum, quae sunt, variaque multiplicatione usque ad simplicissimam omnium unitatem, quae in Deo est et Deus est; ita ut et Deus omnia sit et omnia Deus sint.*"<sup>94</sup> This

88. DN V 36,978 D. V 24,911 A ff. (*salvare, restaurare*, Christ as the theophany which leads back, 912 D). In *Jn.* III, V 28-30.

89. DN V 7,875 C.

90. In *Jn.* IV I 77,284. On deification: V 9,980 A ff. V 23, 904 A f. V 36,979 A ff. In *prol. Jn.* XXIII 9 ff.310: *In ipso . . . homo efficitur deus, ipse est.* Grace as movens in the deifying ascent: IC I 3,142 C. R. Roques, Jean Scot Erigène, in *Dict. de Spiritualité* p.752 f. 224: *Magna quidem et inexplicabilis (scil. epes), quoniam omnes, quos salvavit, in ipso ascendunt, nunc per fidem in spe, in fine vero per speciem in re.* On Eriugena's starting-point in the doctrine of "apokatastasis" Jeaneau, *Prof.* 310, Note 2/3. Com.230, Note 1. T. Gregory, "Giovanni Scoto Eriugena," *Tre Studi*, Firenze (1963) 53 ff.

91. DN V 36,970 D.

92. DN V 19,894 A. 23,906 A ff. 37,987 C.

93. DN V 37,989 B ff.

94. *Praef. in vers. Amb. S. Max.* 1195 C. 1Cor. 15,28: ". . . ut sit omnia in omnibus", is the central sentence of scripture from which the completion of the return is interpreted, cf. e.g. DN V 8,876 B. 37,987 C.

movement abolishes all unlikeness between man and his origin so that the original beauty (*pristina formositas*) is restored;<sup>95</sup> in fact it abolishes all that is contradictory or opposite in the world. The world now attains a harmony, which is of higher or even of the highest intensity over and against the world as created (alienated). "*Omniū visibilium et invisibilium consona absque ulla dissonante harmonia, totius universitatis conditae plenissima pulchritudo.*"<sup>96</sup> So beauty is not only the starting point for purification and illumination, but also the principle and medium of its fulfillment (*perfectio*). Since God is both creating without being created and neither creating nor being created (Eriugena's fourth "*natura*") the originative ground of all relative, i.e. created, beauty is identical with its final end: absolute beauty.

4. It was necessary to cover a relatively wide area in order to justify a relatively short conclusion, which certainly is of fundamental concern to our subject. The possible and actual analogical function of art and the works of art can only be understood from their ontological presupposition within the described context. This means that if being as a whole is a theophany, but as such (*qua* image, metaphor or symbol) refers to its intelligible cause, and if moreover, the beauty of earthly being is a manifestation of absolute beauty and at the same time recalls and leads back to it, thus mediating in a twofold manner what actually cannot be mediated, then art as a whole, or even a single work of art, has an analogical function. Beginning with the general presupposition *per materialia ad immaterialia, per sensibilia ad intellectualia*, Abbot Suger was able to come to the same conclusion for the design and interpretation of art. Over and against this Eriugena discloses the relation of the concept which has been interpreted to the phenomenon of art less in a concrete sense, that is, less as the interpretation of specific objects of art, although the factors which lead to the outlined result are all present. Nevertheless important aspects may be established from Eriugena's texts.

a). To begin with Eriugena also sees works of art as images or signs of the intelligible. In, or precisely through, its material form (music and poetry more intensely than the so-called visual arts) art is able to become the "*manuductio*" to the intelligible and to that which is apparently immediately communicated in form. "*Materialia lumina, sive quae naturaliter in caelestibus spatiis ordinata sunt, sive quae in terris humano artificio efficiuntur, imagines sunt*

95. DN V 6,871 C ff; 872 A.

96. DN V 36,965 B.

*intelligibilium, super omnia ipsius verae lucis.*"<sup>97</sup> "The material lights, whether arranged in the heavenly sphere by nature, or whether produced on earth by human art, are images of intelligible lights. Above all, however, they are images of the true light itself." Seen in terms of the concept of theophany, a work of art as an "image" renders comprehensible the incomprehensible and visible the invisible and brings to light the inaccessible true light within the concrete shape. With Plotinus and Augustine, but in opposition to Plato and Aristotle, Eriugena assumes that works of art are constituted primarily by beauty, and thus by harmony, proportion and order. Consequently they are to be interpreted in terms of the categories of beauty. If beauty is the principle of art and of the universe, then that character of a work of art which refers to absolute beauty is also implied by its being an image of the intelligible and of the "*vera lux*". In fact it is only in regard to absolute beauty that a work of art can be justified. Just as the world is a theophany, so a work of art might be called a callophany — the finite created form of the beautiful, which as a theophany strives to lead to the cause of its own appearance.

The verses "*Aulae Sidereae*" are most probably the poem Eriugena wrote for the consecration of the imperial chapel of Charles the Bald in Compiègne (877).<sup>98</sup> It is an intense interpretation, explicable in terms of Eriugena's fundamental principles, of the symbolism of octagonal architecture (the chapel was a successor of the Palatine chapel in Aachen). The interpretation elucidates how the significance which the number eight had for cosmology and the history of salvation is realised in the structure of the church.<sup>99</sup> As the house of Wisdom (Christ) it becomes, as does the entire universe, a symbolic expression of the cosmological and Christian "*processio*" and "*descensio*", as well as a sign of the reconciling return, the elevation to the final end, the new earth (v.43 f.).<sup>100</sup> The structure of the church represents the theophany in Christ, in whom that which is in itself inaccessible becomes accessible ("*quem nullus novit sensus nec mentis*

97. ICI 3,139 B.

98. I am taking as a basis the text as M. Foussard has published it in the *Cahiers Archéologiques* 21,1971,79-88. The consequences for Eriugena's length of life, of the assumption, established by Foussard (according to him the verses refer to the dedication of Notre Dame in Compiègne in the year 877) are considered acceptable also by Jauneau. On Compiègne (concerning preeminently historical questions with a glance at Eriugena): M. Vieillard-Troiekousoff, in: *Cahiers Archéologiques* 21,1971,89-108.

99. v.10 ff.

100. On the significance of the number eight as the completion of the *reditio*: DN V 39,1021 A In Jn. IV 1,79 ff, 283.

*acumen/Mandra boum vidit tenero velamine carnis*" 65 f.); in addition it is "Bethlehem" and therefore the site of the Eucharist, which is the highest sensible expression of participation in Jesus (*deificatio*)<sup>101</sup>

In the reference made in the poem to those things which are exhibited in the interior of church (*praeclara aedes*, v.85; *alta domus*, v.87) — marble columns, arches, paintings, candlesticks and wreaths of light, gems and gold — Suger's description of the choir of St. Denis is anticipated: "(*Aspice*) . . . *Intus picturas, lapidum pavimenta gradusque, / Circum quaque stoas, armaria, pastaforia, / Sursum deorsum populos altaria circum, / Lampadibus plenas faros altasque coronas. Omnia collucent gemmis auroque coruscant*" (v. 92-96).

b). In relation to the question of the anagogical purpose of art, it is also necessary to inquire into the ability and function of the artist. Eriugena understands his role, in accordance with the universal Platonic-Aristotelian *techne*-model which does not only apply to art in its proper sense. Eriugena understands the artist's activity to be production on the basis of or from ideas. He distinguishes between *ars* and *artifex*. The "understanding mind" of the artist precedes (*praecedit*) the "concept" of art, in the same way as cause precedes effect. However, art in the sense of a rational skill (ability) based on the recognition and establishment of ideas precedes that which is made (produced or created) in and through it — the product of art.<sup>102</sup> Accordingly, the process of production or creation must be grasped as a causal relation, whose material and temporal movement is established by reflection. The ideas which are formed or perceived in the mind of the artist<sup>103</sup> are the measure of creation. Thought, then, which itself is already

101. IC I 3, 140 BC, said of *animus humanus ex sensibilibus rebus in caelestium virtutum similitudinem et aequalitatem ascendens*.

102. DN III 5,635 D: *artifex siquidem causa suae artis est*. II 82,30: *ars artificis eas rationes quae in ea ab artifice conduntur praecedit*.

103. This is also true of the *creata sapientia* IV 9,778 D. The idea is explained by Augustine as analogous to (and different from) the *artifex divinus*, cf. J. Tscholl, *Gott und das Schöne beim Hl. Augustinus*, Heverlee-Leuven 1967, 132 ff. As an index to pre-Neoplatonic school tradition in this matter, W. Theiler has brought to attention Seneca's letters 58 (19 ff) and 65 (3 and 7), through which the differentiated horizon of creation corresponding to the idea or to the "original" becomes particularly clear. (*Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus*, Berlin, 1934, part one). Since the idea-guided creation of the artist in Eriugena, even when it is thought of as a beholding (creation) of ideas, cannot be separated from the time-free (absolute) Ideas, this view is connected with Plotinus: the work of art, the product of creation, does not imitate the *artist's* idea in the sense of a fictitious construction, but rather the idea or the *logoi* in themselves (an sich) V8,1,36). Thus the sensibly appearing work of art becomes the image of the intelligible:  $\mu\acute{\iota}\mu\eta\mu\alpha$   $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$   $\tau\acute{\omega}$   $\acute{\alpha}\iota\sigma\theta\eta\tau\acute{\omega}$   $\tau\acute{\omega}$   $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$   $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\epsilon\iota$   $\kappa\epsilon\upsilon\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\upsilon$ . (II 9,16,46). Only for this

understood to be an internal creativity (*creare per cognitionem*)<sup>104</sup> expresses itself and takes an outward shape. What is one and the same in the "art" of the "artist" becomes particular or singular.<sup>105</sup> Consequently, in analogy to theophany the created may be considered as an appearance which would have remained unknown without this expression. The created is one of the sensible "signs" (*signa*) or "figures" (*figurae sensibus comprehensibiles*), in which mind is embodied (*incorporatur*) and in which it makes itself visible and communicable. And yet it remains in itself as the intelligible undivided ground of all its many particular appearances and is thus analogous to the absolute: *status mobilis et motus stabilis*, it "is silent and calls" at the same time.<sup>106</sup>

The statements concerning the function of the artist are found in Eriugena, as in Augustine, in the context of the description of the divine creator<sup>107</sup> — he is *artifex omnium*; he is *ars ipsa*. His ideas are the preconception of the world and the world is his work of art (*artificiatum*), characterized by harmony, unity of opposites and beauty. The *techne*-model as it is to be found within the world is thus carried over to the absolute act of creation. In order to paraphrase the possibility and function of contingent artistic creation (in the narrower, aesthetic sense) per conclusionem from that which has been said about the purpose of art and about the function of the artist, it is necessary to retranscribe the *techne*-model. This means that man can be an artist only by analogy, representation and imitation. Just as the divine (absolute) artist disposes of the divine (absolute) art of universal creation which establishes being from and through ideas, so man as artist depicts in his works of art those ideas which are immanent to him and which he conceives according to the measure of transcendental being ("the symbolization of thought"). At the same time he works out as a visible or audible image the ideas immanent to being and established by the absolute creative act.<sup>108</sup> If art makes

reason can it lead to a recollection of the true: εἰς ἀνάμνησιν . . . τοῦ ἀληθοῦς (*ibid.* 47).

104. DN II 120,26-30: . . . *ita etiam humanus intellectus quodcumque de deo deque omnium rerum principiis purissime incunctanterque percipit veluti in quadam arte sua, in ratione dico, mirabili quadam operatione scientiae creat per cognitionem inque secretissimis ipsius sinibus recondit per memoriam.* On ratio as *ars* cf. also III 12,658 B f.

105. DN III 31,708 D.

106. DN III 4,633 B-D. IV 8,774 D: the triangle in the idea (*in arte*) and in the appearance.

107. Cf. the places mentioned in notes 33f. and 104 and *De praedestinatione* V,373 A: *Ars igitur ipsa, per quam facta sunt omnia, quae est summa incommutabilisque dei sapientia.*

108. The activity of the sculptor characterised by "*ablatio*" (abstraction) (it

manifest the symbolical potential of being manifest particularly by means of concrete artistic forms, and the artist, precisely by means of sensible appearances, as reminder of the origin, furthers the act of transcending then art and the artist realize to an exceptional degree what every consciousness discovers as the structure of being as a whole — its symbolical and referring character as the expression and outward appearance of the absolute divine cause itself. Thus the general ontological theophany becomes a callophany in a particular form through art and the artist. In opposition to a modern concept of creativity, based on an autonomously projecting subjectivity, the artist in the ontological presuppositions of Eriugena's thought can never be more than an *imitator* of divine art and what has been created by it. So in this sense the imitation of nature as an axiom of artistic creation would be the imitation, that is portrayal, of the theophanic structure of being. In Eriugena's conception the resulting "*imitatio in imagine*"<sup>109</sup> is not a limitation but rather a distinction and obligation of the artist. In beauty which can be grasped by the senses as an artistic form callophany,) the artist "repeats" and condenses or intensifies the order and consequently the beauty of material being, no doubt more effectively than being is able to do in itself.<sup>110</sup> Because in a work of art, the call to a returning, remembering transcendence of the sensible into the intelligible is transmitted more precisely and directly, since it is formulated as an image or as speech. With this functionalism, art is clearly also made *relative*. Its basic reference to universal knowledge shows that (also as the end of a work of art) this knowledge is of a higher dignity than art.

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functions in the *Pseudo-Expositiones in myst. theol.* PL 12,276 C as analogous to the procedure of negative theology) reminds one of the *ethical* context in Plotinus (I 6,9,11 ff.): the form which is "*naturaliter* and *potentialiter*" immanent in the material or the hidden beauty is freed out of it to itself. Certainly, so far as this idea is immediately related to artistic creation, it cannot be taken as specifically Plotinian, cf. V 8,1,15: τοῦτο . . . τὸ εἶδος οὐκ εἶχεν ἢ ὕλη, ἀλλ' ἦν ἐν τῷ ἐννοήσαντι καὶ πρὶν ἔλθεῖν εἰς τὸν λίθον. Time and again this concept is determinative for Michelangelo in dealing with language and with the block of marble: "to do away with the superfluous". On this question H.Friedrich, *Epochen der italienischen Lyrik*, Frankfurt 1964, 337 f.

109. IC III 7,256 (Do), here though not used for artistic creations but generally for the act of human nature (*in imitationem Dei ascendere*), is found its exact characterization in Eriugena's sense.

110. "*Techne*" generally completes nature or makes it more precise: Aristotle *Phys.* 199a 15 ff: ὅπως τε ἡ τέχνη τὰ μὲν ἐπιτελεῖ, ἃ ἡ φύσις ἀδυνατεῖ ἀπεργάσασθαι, τὰ δὲ μιμεῖται. Procl. *In Tim.* I 401, 6: πολλὰ γὰρ ἡ τέχνη μᾶλλον ἀκριβοῖ (the human form of the sculptor as against that ἐκ φύσεως.).



*Intellectus artificis* and *intellectus artis* "precede" the *artificiatum* and at the same time are the *telos* of the representation.<sup>111</sup>

At this point the discussion merges with the beginning which made it objectively possible, in Plotinus' assimilation of the *mimesis* ("representation") vindicated by Aristotle, into a Platonic context. If *mimesis* does not imitate the external appearance of nature but rather portrays its inner, constituting λόγοι<sup>112</sup> — the elements of Nature which fulfils itself as θεωρία — then it does not allow the work of art to autonomously remain itself, but shapes and understands it only with reference to that which appears comprehensible within it, yet without becoming a mere copy thereof. Here — before Hegel — contemplation had already "outflanked" art, which is not to say that art "in terms of its highest purpose" is either "bygone"<sup>113</sup> or even completely insignificant. On the contrary, art is the symbolic mediation of philosophical and theological thought. For it is here that art has its truth in that it makes appear the non-apparent in sensible appearances as the reflection at least and at most of true being. And as such art is absolutely essential for a mode of existence which begins to fulfil itself already in the dimension of its rationally permeated sensuous nature.

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111. DN III 5,635 CD.

112. See Plotinus V 8,1,32 ff. and the discussion cited in Note 79.

113. Hegel, *Asthetik* (ed. Bassenge, 1965, 2nd ed.) I 21 f.