DERMOT Moran

"Eriugena, John Scottus
(c. 790/800 – c. 877)

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bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one’) is an interpolation unsupported by authorized sources, he argued (Works, vol. 2, pp. 111–61, 175–220, 223–72).

Emlyn’s appeal for tolerance in A True Narrative, and his rational, anti-metaphysical approach to religious mysteries in Am Humble Inquiry appeared attractive to contemporary radical Lockeans. He remains an important figure in the history of the Unitarian Church.

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ENSOR, George (1769–1843)

George Ensor was born in Dublin and died at Ardress in Co. Armagh on 3 December 1843. He came from a wealthy family whose seat was at Ardress. Educated at the Royal School of Armagh, he then attended Trinity College, Dublin, where he received his BA in 1790. He was called to the Irish Bar in 1792. He published many radical political works, attacking, in particular, the English government of Ireland. He was a friend of Jeremy Bentham, and Francis Place expressed a high opinion of James in their correspondence, and J.M. Robertson praises it in his Short History of Freethought, the work has received little or no attention.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
The Principles of Morality (1801).

Christian Emmanuel, Esq. [pseud.], James on Sion; or Past and to Come (1816).

Further Reading


Robertson, J.M., Short History of Freethought (1906).


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Despite the radical character of the Principles, it seems to have had hardly any impact. It has also received little notice from scholars. However, one prominent historian who did read the book was W.E.H. Lecky, who described it (in his own copy, now in the Trinity College Library) as ‘a very striking book, fanatical but profoundly outspoken [containing] a very high order of original talent’.

Even more interesting as a work of freethought is Ensor’s Janus on Sion (1816); it is a tour de force of irony, rivalling some of Voltaire’s best satires, a virtual textbook of irreligious subversion. Although Bentham and Francis Place expressed a high opinion of James in their correspondence, and J.M. Robertson praises it in his Short History of Freethought, the work has received little or no attention.

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nothing is known about Eriugena’s place or date of birth, or of the circumstances of his early life, but, on the basis of circumstantial evidence and some surviving testimonia (see Bremner, 1836), it is conjectured that he was born around 800 or possibly slightly earlier (c. 790). The most direct and persuasive evidence that Eriugena was Irish comes from his contemporaries, who refer to him as ‘scotius’. In early medieval times the inhabitants of Ireland (‘Scotia Maior’) were known as ‘scoti’. One such scotius appears in dispatches in the ninth century as a philosopher and theologian of some renown, Anastasius the Vatican librarian, for instance, refers to ‘Ioannes Scotigena’ (PL CXXII 1027) and marvels at his ability as a translator. A scattering of Old Irish words explaining difficult or recondite Latin terms found in biblical glosses designated with the abbreviation IOH (possibly ‘Iohannes’) have been associated with him for over 100 years (see the Glossae divinae historiae, edited by Contreni and Ó Néill, 1997), offering further evidence of his Irish provenance and of the presence of Irish students in his audience. Eriugena, following Isidore’s Etymologiae VI.2.1, refers to the Bible as divina historia at Periphysion IV 831c, and many of the glosses echo comments made in his authenticated commentary of Martianus Capella. In particular the glosses show a confident knowledge of Greek, very much an Eriugenan trait.

Eriugena first appears in history as a ‘master’ at the court of Carolus calvus or Charles the Bald (823–77), the grandson of Charlemagne, where he was a distinguished member of Charles’s court, judging by the several references to his erudition (made both by his supporters and his enemies). Bishop Florus calls him ‘solarly and learned’ (scholasticus et eruditus, Patrologia Latina, henceforth: PL CXXIX 103a) and Anastasius, the Vatican librarian of the day, marvelled at the fact that this ‘barbarian’ (vir barbarus) from a remote land
knew Greek. Eriugena was also associated with several ecclesiastical centres, including Reims, Laon, Soissons and Compiègne. He was listed as magister of the cathedral school at Laon, which was also the location of one of Charles’s palaces, and possibly his main residence. Charles the Bald regularly travelled around his kingdom to ensure the loyalty of his subjects and it is likely that Eriugena travelled in his retinue.

Some time in the late 840s Eriugena was commissioned by two French bishops – Archbishop Hinmar of Reims and Bishop Pardulus of Laon – to refute a treatise by a treatise by a Eriugenian who was known widely in the Latin West as Eriugena. Eriugena was also associated with Charles the Bald regularly travelled around his kingdom to ensure the loyalty of his subjects and it is likely that Eriugena travelled in his retinue.

Hincmar was worried that Gottschalk’s side was attracting powerful support, and he engaged Eriugena to write a strong rebuttal. Eriugena’s response, De praedestinatione, is a robust rebuttal of Gottschalk. Eriugena argues in De divina praedestinatione that God, being perfectly good, wants all humans to be saved, and does not predestine souls to damnation. God’s being is his willing and ‘no necessity binds the will of God’. On the contrary, humans damn themselves through their own free choices: ‘sin, death, unhappiness are not from God.’ Since God is outside time, he cannot be said to fore-know or to predestine, terms that involve temporal predicates. Furthermore, if God’s being is his wisdom, God can be said to have but a single knowledge and hence a ‘double’ predestination cannot be ascribed to him. Human nature, on the other hand, was created rational and rationality requires freedom. Human nature is therefore essentially free. For God did not create in man a captive will but a free one, and that freedom remained after sin.

Despite the official ecclesiastical condemnation of On Predestination, for reasons that are not known but are presumed to be political, Eriugena continued to have the protection and patronage of King Charles the Bald, who, possibly around 860, invited him to translate the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. These remarkable mystical writings had a profound and permanent effect on Eriugena’s thinking, which up till his encounter with them had been broadly Augustinian in orientation. His encounter with Dionysius led him to read Augustine in a new light, highlighting Augustine’s commitment to the via negativa; that God is better known by not knowing, his ignorance is true wisdom (qui melius nesciendo situr, causas ignorantiae vera est sapien~a, Periphyseon 1.510b). Here Eriugena is quoting Augustine’s De Ordine XVI.44 (Deus qui melius scitur nesciendo), and he displays an aptitude for finding passages in Augustine that emphasize God’s non-being and transcendence above being and essence.

Eriuqena’s main philosophical work is the dialogue, Periphyseon or De divisione naturae (On the Division of Nature), a work of astonishing scope, amounting to a summa of Christian Neoplatonism. In this work, Eriugena enthusiastically adopted Dionysius the Areopagite’s main ideas, chiefly his distinction between affirmative (kataphatic) and negative (apophatic) theology. However, he immediately weds this distinction to one found in grammar and logic (dialectic) between statements meant literally and those meant in some transferred or metaphorical sense. Indeed, Eriugena links Dionysius’s division with Cicero’s rhetorical contrast between intention and respetulo (Periphyseon 1.461b). Moreover, Eriugena extends the application of affirmation and negation beyond theology to argue that we can grasp statements like ‘man is an animal’ and ‘man is not an animal’ as both true. On the face of it, these statements appear contradictory but in fact there is no contradiction because the statements do not have the same ‘force’ (viribus, Periphyseon IV.758a). He also makes use of biblical imagery to suggest that affirmative statements are a kind of clothing whereas negation is a kind of nakedness. In itself, the divine essence is naked and stripped of all signification (nudum superum omniqne propria significatione reticat divinam essentiam, Periphyseon 1.461c).

Clothing is only needed after the Fall. Eriugena’s thinking is in part the fact that he was a successful translator of Greek Christian texts, playing a role in transmitting this esoteric learning into Northern Europe in advance of the great Greek revivals of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. First and foremost, he was influential in introducing the works of Pseudo-Dionysius into the Latin West. Even if he had accomplished nothing else, he would be justly famous for producing the first complete and comprehensible – even if at times somewhat imperfect and flawed – Latin translation of the Corpus Dionysii, the works of the obscure, possibly Syrian, late fifth or early sixth-century Christian Neoplatonist and follower of Proclus.

Great as was his achievement as a translator, however, Eriugena was never just a translator; he had a unique gift for identifying the underlying intellectual framework – a combination of late post-Platonic Neoplatonism and a deeply Christian spirituality based on biblical commentary – of the writers of the Christian East, whose works he read and translated. Besides assimilating and transforming this intellectual outlook, Eriugena managed, under difficult circumstances, to develop himself as an original philosopher with a bold speculative sense and a capacity for sustained reasoning. While he made extensive use of his translations of Greek works in his own creative writings, most notably, in the dialogue Periphyseon, his speculations always have a distinct air of originality. He had a genius for synthesizing Greek and Latin Christian spirituality into a single outlook. His philosophical achievement is his system: a coherent Christian Neoplatonic cosmology drawn from diverse Christian sources. Obviously he recognized the diversity – indeed incompatibility – of the texts of the Latin and Greek Christian traditions, with their conflicting opinions on central topics of Christian doctrine such as the nature of creation (whether temporal or eternal), the first sin, the origin of the corporeal universe and the relation of soul to body, the nature of salvation, the nature of paradise and hell (whether intellectual or material, or both), and so on.

Eriugena’s masterpiece, Periphyseon, also entitled in some manuscripts De divisione naturae (On the Division of Nature), was probably begun in the early 860s, just after he had completed the Pseudo-Dionysius translation, and finished around 867 (the date Wulstan, to whom the work is dedicated, became bishop, making it unlikely that Eriugena would have referred to him as frater, brother, after his con-
secration as bishop). Thomas Gale produced the first printed edition of the *Periphyseon* in 1681, and it remains the case that the only available edition of Eriugena's collected works is that produced by Heinrich Joseph Floss for Migne's *Patrologia Latina* (vol. 122). It is a long dialogue in five books between an anonymous 'Teacher' (naturor) and his 'Student' (alumni) on the meaning of nature, not only offering a synthesis of Greek and Latin Christian spirituality, but also contributing to the development of the Neoplatonic system. In particular, it integrates nature into an overall Neoplatonic cosmology of the procession and return of all things from the divine One. At the beginning of Book Four Eriugena labels his enterprise a *physiologia*, a 'study of nature', and indeed one manuscript of the *Periphyseon* in the British Library in London calls the whole dialogue 'Liber Physiologye Ioannis Scotigene'. The term *physiologia* is apt in that the term 'nature' for Eriugena spans the whole cosmological domain, including not just created nature but also the Divine Creator, and the dialectical relation between creator and created.

Drawing especially on Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus Confessor, as well as on the more familiar authorities (ancstors) of the Latin West (e.g. Cicero, Martianus Capella, Augustine, Boethius), Eriugena developed a highly original cosmology based on the idea that all things, including God and creation, are to be subsumed under the one category of *universalis natura*, universal nature. All things are one and the highest principle of all things is 'the immovable self-identical one' (*unum et idemum immobile, 1.476b*), another name for God. This principle engenders all things and retrieves them back into itself according to a logical process known as *divisio* and *residues*, division and return. According to Eriugena, the infinite, transcendent and 'unknown' God, who is beyond being and non-being, through a process of self-actualization, procession or 'self-creation' proceeds from his divine 'darkness' or 'non-being' into the light of being, speaking the Word who is understood as Christ, and at the same timeless moment bringing forth the divine Ideas which act as 'primary causes' (*causa primumvales*) of all creation. These causes in turn proceed into their created effects. According to the Neoplatonic principle that the effect is entirely dependent on its cause, the created effects are entirely dependent on, and will ultimately return to, their sources, the Causes or Ideas in God. These Causes may be considered as diverse and infinite, and so they appear to finitude, but in fact they are actually united into one single principle in the divine One. The whole of reality or what Eriugena calls 'nature', then, is involved in a dynamic process of outgoing (*exuits*) and return (*reditus*) to the One. Eriugena characterizes nature as *universitas rerum*, the 'totality of all things' in the *Periphyseon*, including both the things that are (*ex qua sunt*) as well as those that are not (*ex qua non sunt*). This divine nature may be divided into a set of four 'divisions' (*divisiones*), or 'species' or 'forms', which nevertheless retain their unity with their source. These four divisions of nature are: nature which creates and is not created; nature which creates and is not created; nature which is created and does not create; and nature which is neither created nor creates. These divisions express the various aspects of the divine manifestation and also enumerate the stages of the cosmic procession out of and returning to God. Everything takes place within nature.

The fourfold division of nature is both 'from God and in God' (*deus et in deo, Periphyseon III.675a*). God is present in all things and runs through all four divisions. Yet at the same time, God can be understood as a non-being above being, a superessential nothingness dwelling in divine darkness. God is the One or the Good or the highest principle, which transcends all, and which therefore may be said to be 'the non-being that transcends being'. He is also 'the beginning, middle and end of all things'. The point is that everything is contained in the mind of God: 'No philosopher of nature doubts that all things are contained in the divine mind' (Divino animo omnia contineri nullus recte natunas rerum intelligat dubitat, Periphyseon, V.925a).

For Eriugena, all things are in God. Their being is their being cognized by God: 'For what else do we mean by all things than the knowledge of them in the Divine Mind' ('Quod enim alius omnia sunt, nisi eorum in divino animo scientia, Periphyseon, V.925b). This position, consistently argued throughout the *Periphyseon*, amounts to a kind of idealism; all things are in God and God is a wholly intellectual and non-material entity. Materiality and corporeality are not fully real. We shall return to the consequences of this position below.

Eriugena's originality comes out in the way in which he orchestrates his Neoplatonic system within the context of the fourfold division of nature. His philosophy enthusiastically incorporates central Greek Christian theological concepts, chiefly those that emphasize the transcendence and even 'non-being' of God. Eriugena calls God the 'negation of all things' (*negatio omnium*, III.686d). Terms from the created order, including the Aristotelian categories, describe only the created world and do not properly apply to God (1.463d). God cannot 'literally' (*proprite*) be said to be substance or essence (*ousia, essentia*), quantity, quality, relation, place or time. He is 'super-essentials' (*L.459d*); his 'being' is 'beyond being'.

Eriugena's God has all the attributes of the Neoplatonic One, 'the formless principle of all forms and species' (*formatum et specierum omnium informe primum, Periphyseon II.525a*). He claims that God is so incomprehensible infinite and simple that in effect he is better described as non-being than as being. God is 'infinite and more than infinite, for he is the infinity of all infinities' (*infinitas et plus quam infinitas infinitas est, Periphyseon II.525a*). Moreover, God's first act is conceived of as his own self-manifestation or self-revelation. God first manifests himself to himself and in a sense this is the intellectual first move that sets the whole cosmic creative sequence in chain.

Eriugena conceives of the hidden transcendent God as creating himself by manifesting himself in divine outpourings or theophany (*theophaniae, Periphyseon I.446d*). He moves from darkness into the light, from self ignorance to self-knowledge. The divine act of creation or self-manifestation (*I.455b*) is, at the same time (or rather timeless), the expression of the Word and hence the creation of other things, since all things are contained in the Word. The Word enfolds in itself the Ideas. Primary Causes of all things and in that set all things are always already in God: '... Creative nature permits nothing outside in because outside it nothing can be, yet every thing which it has created and creates contains within itself, but in such a way that itself is other, because it is superessential, it that it creates within itself' (*Periphyseon III.675c*). God's transcendent otherness ab creatures is precisely that which allows or tures to be within God and yet other than G Eriugena stresses both the divine transcends above and immanence in creation.

Besides this novel conception of God, Eriugena also has a novel conception of human nature as originally a Platonic idea in the mind of God: human nature is 'a certain intellect concept formed eternally in the divine mind (*)Periphyseon IV.768b*). Hence, in a sense, essence of human nature is to be an idea in mind of God. Moreover, it is an idea that (and hence created) by God in his image and likeness. Human nature is the *im et similitudine Dei*. Somehow this implies latates all those attributes which are found in first instance in God, including eternity, on science, perfect freedom, and so on. Due to Fall, however, humans fail to understand the true origin and nature as image of God in G Their self-knowledge is obscured and they distracted by created, fleeting temporal 'apparances' (*phantasma*), which entrap the human in the shadowy spatio-temporal realm of se However, through true philosophy and i
ERIUGENA

Cappuyens, whose 1953 Jean Scot Erigena: sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensee is still reliable. Many valuable twentieth-century studies (e.g. Contreni, Mareonben, Schmipf, O'Meara) have explored Eriugena's Carolingian background and community with learning. Some systematic studies of his thought (Beierwaltes, Gersh, Moran) have also recognized him as a highly original metaphysician and speculative thinker of the first rank whose work transcends the limitations of his age and mode of expression. Since 1970, the Society for the Promotion of Eriugena Studies (SPES) has been active in developing Eriugena studies at a high scholarly level by hosting international colloquia and publishing the proceedings.

Eriugena is, without doubt, the most formidable intellect of the early Irish monastic period (600-900), a period that produced such figures as Columbanus, Dicuil, Dungal, Sedulius Scortus and Martin Hiberniensis. He is also the most outstanding intellectual figure of the whole Carolingian era (which included such luminaries as Alcuin and Hrabanus Maurus). His exceptional learning in a period that was often known as the 'Dark Ages' would be sufficient to distinguish him in the Carolingian age, but his true and lasting genius lay in his ability to combine elements from his revered authorities or auctories into a new cosmological framework that is rationally argued to the highest degree. Indeed, Eriugena is undoubtedly the most significant philosopher of the whole period of Latin philosophy. Between the late Roman author Boethius and the early monastic St Anselm.

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lectual contemplation (theoria, intellectus) and divine illumination (which is the receiving of a divine self-manifestation, theophanias), humans may again achieve unification (benosion) with God, and then select few will even undergo 'deification' (deficatio, theosis) which Eriugena interprets as complete identity with God. Eriugena often quotes Augustine to the effect that God became man so that humans can become God; inhumanatio leads to deficatio.

The outgoing of all things is creation is balanced by their return (epistrophe, reditus, reversus) to God, drawing heavily on Maximus Confessor and Gregory of Nyssa. There is a general return of all things to God. Corporeal things will return to their incorporeal causes, the temporal to the eternal, the finite will be absorbed in the infinite. The human mind will achieve reunification with the divine, and then the corporeal, temporal, material world will become essentially incorporeal, timeless and intellectual. Human nature will return to its true nature in the mind of God. Humans who refuse to let go of the 'circumstances' remain trapped in their own phantasies, and it is to this mental state that the scriptural term 'hell' applies. Aside from the general return of all things to God, Eriugena claims there is a special return whereby the elect achieve 'deficitation' (deficatio, theosis) whereby they will merge with God completely, as lights blend into the one light, as voices blend in the choir, into the one light, as all things to God, Eriugena claims there is a mutual mirroring. This notion of the twining and merging of minds is at the very core of Eriugena's mysticism and of his understanding of the relation between human and divine natures and their coming together in the person of Christ. Christ is actually what all human beings can be and will be; that, precisely, is the promise of salvation for Eriugena.

Consider the following passage from Book Two:

For if Christ Who understands of all things, (Who) indeed is the understanding of all things, really unified all that He assumed, who doubts then that what first took place in the Head and principal Exemplar of the whole of human nature will eventually happen in the whole? (Periphyseon, II.345a)

This clearly implies that humanity as a whole - that is, resurrected human nature in its perfected state - will be truly illuminated and merged with the divine, for human nature itself in its very essence is the intellectus omnium. There is then, a kind of mystical humanism at the heart of Eriugena's philosophical vision in the Periphyseon.

Eriugena's Periphyseon had immediate influence in France, notably at the schools of Laon, Auxerre and Corbie, but it can hardly be said that it was widely understood or disseminated. His translations of Pseudo-Dionysius were widely used until they were gradually replaced in the thirteenth century by those of John Sarracin. His Homily on the Prologue to John (albeit often attributed to Origen) circulated widely during the Middle Ages. The Periphyseon became particularly popular in the twelfth century, especially when circulated in the 'edition' of William of Malmesbury or in the paraphrase by Honorius Augustodunensis known as Clavis physicae. Hugh of Saint Victor, Alanus of Lille and Sugger of Saint-Denis were among those influenced by Eriugena. In the thirteenth century, however, the Periphyseon was linked with the writings of David of Dinant and Amaury of Bène, two theologians at the University of Paris, and was condemned with them in 1210 and 1225. According to Thomas Aquinas (ST I.38; SCG I.17; 126), Amaury of Bène was condemned for saying that God is the formal principle of all things, an accusation of pantheism, which recalled Eriugena's statement that God is the 'form of all things' (forma omnium). David of Dinant (II.1210), on the other hand, was supposed to have identified God with prime matter and called God the materia omnium. It is likely that Eriugena's discussion of God and matter as 'nothing', and as both transcending sense and intellect according to the first mode of being and non-being contributed to this accusation.

In the later Middle Ages both Meister Eckhart of Hochheim (c. 1260-c. 1328) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64) were sympathetic to Eriugena and familiar with his Periphyseon. Cusanus owned a copy of the Periphyseon. Interest in Eriugena was revived by Thomas Gale's first printed edition of 1687. However, soon after the appearance of that edition, the Periphyseon was listed in the first edition of the Index Librorum Prohibitorum, and remained on it, until the Index itself was abolished in the 1960s. Hegel and his followers saw Eriugena rather uncritically as the father of German idealism. He was seen as "the Prophet of the West" (Hartmann) and the "Father of Speculative Philosophy" (Huber). The first truly scholarly attempt to establish the facts of his life, works and influence was by the Belgian scholar Mauil...
FERRIE, John (d. 1872)

John Ferrie was born in Glasgow, probably in the early 1790s, and died in Holywood, Co. Down on 20 July 1872. He was Professor of Moral Philosophy at the Belfast Academical Institution from 1829 to 1849. He matriculated at Glasgow in 1806 and attended classes over the following five sessions, winning a prize in the logic class of 1809; he did not take a degree. In 1811 he commenced the study of divinity at the same university and was appointed as one of the two chaplains at Glasgow.

In 1822 he was elected as one of the two chaplains at Glasgow and in 1823 he secured his Belfast post. Ferrie succeeded John Young as Professor of Moral Philosophy in June 1829 but his appointment was immediately surrounded by controversy. The appointment was made by the Joint Board of Managers by fifteen votes on 25 July 1829. The Synod of Ulster and Ferrie were not on the same wavelength. Ferrie was elected as one of the two chaplains at Glasgow. His testimonials proved superior to those provided by Carile and included the principal and ten other professors at Glasgow, although not the professor of divinity, a fact and soon made progress. However, from the early 1820s onwards it became embroiled in the controversy within Irish Presbyterianism over the question of subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Institution came under sustained attack from the Revd Henry Cooke, the leader of the conservative faction within Irish Presbyterianism, who accused it of teaching New Light or Arian doctrine and objected to the presence of liberal or non-subscribing professors on the staff. Although it was non-sectarian in character, the hulk of the Institution’s support came from the local Presbyterian population and candidates for the ministry formed a large proportion of the student body.

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