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ERUGENA'S *DE PRAEDESTINATIONE*:  
THE PROJECT OF RATIONALISATION OF FAITH  
AND ITS CRITICS\*

The *De praedestinatione* of John Scottus Eriugena was intended as a contribution to a controversy sparked off by Gottschalk of Orbais concerning predestination. This work met with trenchant criticism and condemnation even though it firmly rejected Gottschalk's views on double predestination. One of the reasons for this hostile reception was undoubtedly Eriugena's singular conception of the freedom of will, a subject I intend to discuss elsewhere. In the present text, however, I would like to focus on another important cause of the rejection of Eriugena's treatise. In my opinion, this second reason was a pre-scholastic project of rationalization of the faith in the spirit of St. Augustine and using the method of Boethius and Martianus Capella. It would appear that Eriugena's contemporaries were not ready for the favorable reception of his idea of the *vera philosophia* that was the same as the *vera religio*. Yet, as Goulven Madec once rightly observed, the *vera ratio* of Scotus was closely bound up with the *lux mentium* which is nothing else than God revealing himself in the human language of the Scriptures. Eriugena's masters and models were the Church Fathers and his intention was to continue their efforts to achieve an understanding of the faith in his own, personal way.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Goulven MADEC, "L'augustinisme de Jean Scot dans le *De praedestinatione*," in *Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie: Actes du Colloque, Laon, 7–12 juillet 1975*, ed. René Roques (Paris: Éditions du C.N.R.S., 1977), 185.

## 1. THE HISTORICAL AND DOCTRINAL CONTEXT OF THE ORIGIN OF ERIUGENA'S WORK

In the year 848 Hrabanus Maurus, the then-bishop of Mainz, sent off a monk by the name of Gottschalk of Orbais to Hincmar, the then-archbishop of Reims, in order that the archbishop might seclude Gottschalk in a monastery, thus stopping him from spreading his dangerous views on predestination.<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the year 849 Hincmar called a synod to Quierzy and there he examined Gottschalk in the presence of King Charles the Bald; Gottschalk was judged a heretic, condemned to silence, and sent off to the monastery of Hautvillers.

Despite these measures Gottschalk succeeded in making widely known his teaching on the *Trina deitas*, on the Eucharist and, above all, on double predestination.<sup>3</sup> Hincmar allied with Pardulus of Laon and Hrabanus Maurus against Gottschalk to prevent further spreading of his influence and in 849 addressed a letter to the "simple faithful" of his diocese, warning against the leprosy generated by the teaching of that proponent of double predestination.<sup>4</sup> Yet why should Gottschalk's views provoke so strong a reaction?

The teaching of the recalcitrant monk was briefly summarized by Hrabanus Maurus in a letter to Hincmar. The bishop of Mainz related in it that a new prejudice had not long before arrived in Mainz from Italy, according to which God's predestination concerns both the good and the wicked and there are men in the world who, because of God's predestination, must die eternally and cannot rise from their errors.<sup>5</sup> One could say that, according to

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Maïeul CAPPUYNS, *Jean Scot Erigène. Sa vie, son œuvre, sa pensée* (Louvain: Culture et civilisation, 1933), 102 ff.; Dermot MORAN, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of the Idealism in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 27 ff. Cf. HRABANUS MAURUS, *Epistola VIII synodalis ad Hincmarum*, PL 112, 1575A.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Dom Cyrille LAMBOT, *Introduction*, in *Œuvres théologiques et grammaticales de Godescalc d'Orbais*, ed. Dom Cyrille Lambot (Leuven: Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense, 1945), XXIII.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. HINCMARUS, "Epistola ad simplices suae dioeceseos," in *Œuvres théologiques et grammaticales de Godescalc*, 8: "...ut videbatur religioso se quasi honestum auribus et aspectibus vestris commendans, pravitatem sui cordis [zelo] pallians, venena pessima auditibus simul et cordibus vestris infudit, confundens praescientiam et praedestinationem dei, docens praedestinos ad poenam quam nullus praedestinos quicquid libet uel quantum libet boni agat potest evadere." Cf. M. CAPPUYNS, *Jean Scot Erigène*, 104 ff.

<sup>5</sup> C. David GANZ, "The Debate on Predestination," in Margaret GIBSON and Janet NELSON, eds. *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom* (Oxford: BAR, 1981), 355–6; Cf. HRABANUS, "Epistola ad Hincmarum," in *Œuvres théologiques et grammaticales de Godescalc d'Orbais*, 6: "...de

Gottschalk, God's double predestination issues in a twofold result: eternal life is predestined for the elect and the elect are predestined for eternal life. In the same way God's judgment has for its effect both that punishment is predestined for the reprobate and that the reprobate are predestined for eternal punishment.<sup>6</sup> This second effect of predestination and judgment, namely the pre-selection of the elect for eternal life and the reprobate for eternal punishment is particularly pernicious: it introduces theological determinism (God's providence forces man to act in a determined way) and denies freedom and, in consequence, moral responsibility to man. Moreover, this view makes God responsible for evil in the world and excludes those predestined for damnation from the salvific effects of Christ's work of salvation. The consequences of such a position are grave: the effort of reformation and moral improvement appears to be pointless, as also does sacramental life: baptism is no longer held to obliterate original sin in those predestined for eternal damnation.<sup>7</sup>

These are by no means all the pernicious consequences of Gottschalk's position on double predestination, I will not discuss this view and what follows from it in more detail; I have just pointed out the most salient consequences by way of explanation why his standpoint provoked so vigorous a reaction and why the foremost authorities of the Frankish realm engaged in the effort to suppress his views.

Hincmar and Hrabanus developed their own view of divine predestination, intended to counter the impact of Gottschalk's theory; as the following summary of their position by John Marenbon shows, it still left some problems unsolved:

Hrabanus and Hincmar in this way claimed that those who will be damned sin not because of any positive action by God which predestines the wicked to damnation, but by an omission to act: he simply predestines his people to

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Italia venit ad nos Moguntiam novas superstitiones et noxiam doctrinam de praedestinatione dei introducens...dicens quod praedestinatio dei sicut in bono sit ita et in malo, et tales sint in hoc mundo quidam qui propter praedestinationem dei quae eos cogat in mortem ire non possint ab errore et peccato se corrigere..."

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Andrzej P. Stefańczyk's paper "Doctrinal Controversies of the Carolingian Renaissance: Gottschalk of Orbais' Teachings on Predestination" in this volume pp. 53–70.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. HINCMARUS, "Epistola ad simplices suae dioeceseos," in *Œuvres théologiques et grammaticales de Godescalc*, 8: "Docet etiam quod passio Christi non pro totius mundi salute fuerit celebrata et per baptismi gratiam peccatum originale non praedestinantis non sit ablatum quia nec de massa peccati et perditionis sint segregati." Cf. Marta CRISTIANI, "La notion de loi dans le *De praedestinatione* de Jean Scot," in *Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie*, 279.

salvation. It is questionable whether this strategy is successful. [...] Maybe Hincmar, if not Hrabanus, noticed this insufficiency, since at times he makes suggestions that would diminish the absolute gratuity of grace and link its being granted to free human choice.<sup>8</sup>

The seriousness of the controversy over the nature and scope of divine predestination led to King Charles the Bald's intervening in the debate; the king turned first to Loup of Ferrières, and then to Ratramnus of Corbie for their opinion.<sup>9</sup> Archbishop Hincmar decided, with the king's approval, to draw into the debate another person of considerable intellectual standing, namely John Scottus Eriugena, the then-superior of the palace school at Charles's court. The last-named responded to the invitation with his treatise *De divina praedestinatione Liber* written in 850/851.

In the opening passages of this treatise Eriugena explains that he has been commissioned

to reply to a certain lover-of-the-putrid (*saprophilius*) called Gottschalk, author as well as advocate of his own heresy, together with his supporters [...]. And we are constrained to reply specifically on the instructions of the vigilant pastors of the Catholic Church within whose sheepfold such poison is striving to creep. We have, too, the particular approval of the most orthodox prince and venerable lord, Charles, whose greatest concern is to harbour devout and proper sentiments towards God, to refute the distorted teachings of heretics by true reasonings and the authority of the holy Fathers, and to root them out utterly to the last one.<sup>10</sup>

However, Eriugena's treatise, far from having offered the definitive solution to the problem, only contributed to the confusion in the theological

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<sup>8</sup> John MARENBNON, "Eriugena on Damnation," in *De praedestinatione*, in *Philosophie et théologie chez Jean Scot Erigène*, ed. Isabelle Moulin (Paris: Vrin, 2016), 163–64.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Rosamond MCKITTERICK, "Charles the Bald (823-877) and His Library: The Patronage of Learning," *The English Historical Review* 95 (1980), 374: 32.

<sup>10</sup> John Scottus ERIUGENA, *Treatise on Divine Predestination* [further: *De praed.*], I, 2, trans. by Mary Brennan (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 8. Cf. ERIUGENA, *De praedestinatione liber. Dialettica e teologia all'apogeo della rinascenza carolingia*, ed. Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi (Firenze: Edizioni del Galuzzo, 2003), 8 [further: Mainoldi]: "...dum adversus quondam saprophilium, nomine gotescalcum suae hereseos et inventorem simul et assertorem, fautoresque eius—si tamen sunt nescio atque utinam ne sint!—respondere compellimur, iubentibus videlicet chatholicae ecclesiae vigilantissimis pastoribus, in quorum ovili tale venenum serpere molitur, annuente praesertim orthodoxissimo principe, domino venerabili karolo, cuius maximum studium est pie recteque de deo sentire, prava hereticorum dogmata veris rationibus sanctorumque partum auctoritate refellere, ad ultimum penitus eradicare."

milieu of the Frankish world. For he tried to prove that divine foreknowledge (*praescientia*) is not identical with His predestination (*praedestinatio*) and the divine predestination is inevitably single for it issues from Divine Will which is His very simple Being.<sup>11</sup> Divine predestination does not impose any sort of necessity upon human will, so man, even after original sin, preserves his free choice and, as a consequence, responsibility for his actions.<sup>12</sup> However the problematic aspect of Eriugena's contribution was not only his view on predestination, but also his views on some related issues, such as his conception of freedom of will, and also the form he gave to the exposition of his teaching.<sup>13</sup>

The form which he chose for the articulation of his position on predestination, resulted, in my view, from his original conception of knowledge shaped on the basis of his reading of the classical philosophical texts available in his milieu. This integral conception of knowledge accorded a privileged place to philosophy, whose innermost part was theology, as Boethius pointed out.<sup>14</sup> This kind of integral approach was indeed novel in Eriugena's time and remained without response at least until the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2. CAROLINGIAN MODELS OF SCHOLARSHIP

Sita Steckel in her paper "Between Censorship and Patronage: Interaction between Bishops and Scholars in Carolingian Book Dedications,"<sup>15</sup> subjects to analysis dedicatory prefaces of various texts from the 9th century and draws interesting conclusions from her discussion. The appeals to Church authority frequently found in these dedicatory texts, accompanied by requests for an *examinatio* and a *correctio*, were not so much acts of sub-

<sup>11</sup> Cf. ERIUGENA, *De praed.*, 4,1 f. (p. 36 f.)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 5,9 (p. 62).

<sup>13</sup> John Marenbon rightly observes: "Although in his manner of approach, with its emphasis on the importance of reason and the liberal arts, Eriugena could hardly have been more different from Hrabanus and Hincmar, he shared their predicament in trying to counter Gottschalk, and he tried to escape from it in the same way. Eriugena attaches great importance to human freedom of the will." J. MARENBO, "Eriugena on Damnation," 164.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Agnieszka KIJEWSKA, "Mathematics as a Preparation for Theology: Boethius, Eriugena, Thierry of Chartres," in *Boèce ou la chaîne des savoirs*, ed. Alain Galonnier (Louvain, Paris: Peeters, 2003), 628 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Sita STECKEL, "Between Censorship and Patronage: Interaction between Bishops and Scholars in Carolingian Book Dedications," in *Envisioning the Bishops: Images and the Episcopacy*, ed. Sigrid Danielson and Evan A. Gatti (Turnholti: Brepols, 2014), 103–26.

mission to ecclesiastical censorship as they were attempts to gain the favor and support of a mighty patron. The request for examination and correction, in the absence of a clearly defined notion of knowledge (*scientia*), meant an attempt to share the responsibility for the deposit of truth:

If a scholar handled divine truth and Christian doctrine, he was in fact exercising a kind of *magisterium* himself—or herself, as the case might be. And since Carolingian thought did not possess a concept of ‘learning’ approximating the later sense of *scientia*, expertise on doctrinal matters could not be seen as province of experts. In theory, episcopal authority over doctrine was a cornerstone of ecclesiastical order—even if lowly monks or clerics sometimes surpassed bishops as biblical scholars.<sup>16</sup>

Sita Steckel analyses those dedications in the light of epistemological categories and distinctions. She points out the distinction Hrabanus Maurus makes in the dedicatory preface to his *De institutione clericorum*. There the learned bishop draws a distinction between two kinds of knowledge: knowledge derived from human cognition, subject to mistakes and hence always in need of correction, and the God-given truth which, however, can be known and recognized by humans only with the aid of grace.<sup>17</sup>

These two kinds of knowledge and the corresponding ways of knowing can be related to the two scholarly traditions running through the 9th century distinguished by Calvin Bower. One intellectual tradition he called quadrivial reasoning; this was the type of intellectual culture that was based mainly on Boethius’s liberal arts manuals. The other tradition and type of intellectual culture Bower named allegorical revelation, its model and point of departure being Martianus Capella’s *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. Although these two traditions were essentially different, “they existed side by side on the scholar’s desk as indispensable accesses to higher learning during the ninth and tenth centuries.”<sup>18</sup>

The intellectual approach called by Bower quadrivial reasoning started from the methods proper to each of the four arts of the quadrivium and tended towards the knowledge of incorporeal essences, that is, to truth that the soul can apprehend independently of the corporeal senses. Mathematical

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 113.

<sup>18</sup> Calvin M. BOWER, “Quadrivial Reasoning and Allegorical Revelation: ‘Meta-Knowledge’ and Carolingian Approaches to Knowing,” in *Carolingian Scholarship and Martianus Capella. Ninth-Century Commentary Traditions on ‘De Nuptiis’ in Context*, ed. Mariken Teeuwen and Sinéad O’Sullivan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 57.

cognition, which separates from the concrete matter of sense objects, forms the indispensable preparation of human mind to the kind and level of cognition that Boethius designated with the name of theology.

Boethius wrote in the introduction to his *Institutio arithmetica*:

This, therefore is the *quadrivium* by which we bring a superior mind from knowledge offered by the senses to the more certain things of the intellect. There are various steps and certain dimensions of progressing by which the mind is able to ascend so that by means of the eye of the mind, which (as Plato says) is composed of many corporeal eyes and is of higher dignity than they, truth can be investigated and beheld. This eye, I say, submerged and surrounded by the corporeal senses, is in turn illuminated by the disciplines of quadrivium.<sup>19</sup>

The level of insight to which each of the arts leads the mind with its own specific methods is the level of dialectic. The importance and scope of dialectic by far exceed the level of the arts of the trivium; dialectic itself can be defined as the art of discussion.<sup>20</sup> This (far from being a merely modest trivial art) is the *stricte* philosophical method, as Plato defined it: the art of connecting and dividing concepts. Its objective is, starting from what is particular, to reach to the most general categories by means of which reality can be conceived—in particular, in this context, the concept of being.<sup>21</sup>

In the true Neoplatonic fashion Boethius completed this conception of dialectic with Aristotelian logical precision. In his treatise *De topicis differentiis* he expounds the method of discovering and appreciating the appropriate means of arguing. In the introduction he writes:

The whole science of discourse (*ratio disserendi*), which the ancient Peripatetics called *logike*, is divided into two parts: one of discovering, the other of judging. The part which purges and instructs judgment, called *analytike* by them, we can name 'analytical.' The part which aids competence (*facultatem*) in discovering, called *topike* by the Greeks, is called 'Topical' (*localis*) by us.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Michael MASI, *Boethian Number Theory: A Translation of the De Institutione Arithmetica* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1983), 73; Cf. BOËCE, *Institution arithmétique*, I,1, ed. Jean-Yves Guillaumin (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995), 1; Cf. C. BOWER, *Quadrivial Reasoning*, 59.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Giulio D'ONOFRIO, "'Disputandi disciplina.' Procédés dialectiques et 'logica vetus' dans le langage philosophiques de Jean Scot," in *Jean Scot — écrivain. Actes du IV<sup>e</sup> Colloque international, Montréal, 28 août – 2 septembre 1983*, ed. Guy H. Allard (Montréal, Paris: Bellarmin, Vrin, 1986), 230–31.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Anneli LUHTALA, "On Early Medieval Divisions of Knowledge," in *Carolingian Scholarship and Martianus Capella*, 75.

<sup>22</sup> BOETHIUS, *De topicis differentiis*, I, 1173, trans. Eleonore Stump (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 29.

A clear reference to Boethius can be found in Eriugena's *De praedestinatione*, where he writes that philosophy can be divided into two main parts, each of which itself is twofold: a divisory-and-defining part on the one hand and a demonstrative and resolutionary part on the other.<sup>23</sup>

The other of the two scholarly traditions and (at the same time) intellectual attitudes distinguished by Calvin Bower, the one called by him allegorical revelation, derived from the text of Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. This was a work composed as a Menippean satire and it presented an exposition of the matters of the seven liberal arts woven into a narrative of an allegorical journey to heaven of Philology, an inhabitant of earth, with the intention of marrying the god Mercury. The liberal arts are depicted as servant maidens, the spouse's gifts to Philology, that are instrumental in divinizing the last-named. Bower briefly characterizes this second of the distinguished intellectual attitudes:

*Allegorical revelation* implies that more mystical—on the surface somewhat less rational—process of learning that begins with sense experience in this world, always compromised by corporeal senses and desires, that nevertheless can lead through sign and signification to higher truths which in turn again lead to meta-knowledge—but hardly graspable in this mortal existence. In another study I have termed this way of coming to know 'Pauline Platonism.'<sup>24</sup>

Different as these two approaches to matters of intellect (namely quadrivial reasoning and allegorical revelation) are among themselves, they should not be separated from each other in the Carolingian epoch, for, as Calvin Bower rightly points out, both approaches coexisted side by side and influenced and drew from each other. The works of Martianus Capella and Boethius stood alongside each other in episcopal and monasterial libraries.<sup>25</sup>

The way described as allegorical revelation could have received significant support from widespread study of Boethius's work *De Consolatione philosophiae*. Reading of this text appears to have been particularly intense in the 9th century, as borne out by the preserved glosses from that period, and the favorite object of commentaries was in particular the ninth metrum of Book 3. *De consolatione* was studied in the circle of Alcuin and in the abbey of Fleury.<sup>26</sup> The figure of Lady Philosophy was interpreted as a per-

<sup>23</sup> Cf. ERIUGENA, *De praed.*, pref. (p. 7–8).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. C.M. BOWER, "Quadrivial Reasoning," 57–8.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 69–70.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Rosalind C. LOVE, "The Latin Commentaries on Boethius's *De Consolatione Philo-*

sonification of transcendent knowledge, the ultimate object of striving of the philosophical mind, the Socratic “swan song” taught by philosophical therapy.<sup>27</sup> It also appears that it was at that time that the attitude of Christian scholars to Boethius began to show marks of ambivalence: Boethius attracted much following and admiration as the author of theological treatises and manuals for the liberal arts; on the other hand he provoked suspicion as the author of the *De consolatione philosophiae*, which many considered “pagan” in its meaning.<sup>28</sup>

Calvin Bower asks what attracted Carolingian scholars to the texts like Martianus's *De nuptiis*. He states:

I believe their attraction to these texts lay within scholars' spirituality shaped by a Christian faith with deep roots in a philosophical and theological soil greatly influenced by Platonism. Clerical scholars were inextricably drawn toward meta-knowledge, and these texts somehow resonated with their search. I have likewise asked myself why Carolingian clerics and scholars were so fascinated with *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, with an allegory that was essentially pagan in content [...]. In this case I believe the allegorical ascent of the human intellect into a union with the divine intellect was even more attractive than ‘quadrivial reasoning’; for allegory, broadly speaking, had been established as a fundamental method of biblical exegesis by Augustine in *De doctrina christiana*.<sup>29</sup>

In my opinion reasons of the same kind guided also Eriugena's reading of Boethius, Martianus, and Augustine. What turned out problematic, however, was his intention to apply his intellectual fascinations to a discussion of a very sensitive and delicate theological matter. Why should this result in problems with the ecclesiastical authorities? After all, it could be argued, he was doing nothing different from what his model Boethius did when writing his *opuscula sacra*. However, even Boethius took into account the possibility of being misunderstood and misinterpreted, which is why he preferred to

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*sophiae* from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” in *A Companion to Boethius in the Middle Ages*, ed. Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr., and Philip Edward Phillips (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), 124.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Agnieszka KIJEWSKA, “Divine Logos in the Heart of Boethius's Path toward Summum Bonum,” *Revista Española de Filosofía Medieval* 21 (2014): 46.

<sup>28</sup> The doubts as to the Christian or pagan identity of Boethius were only articulated a century later in the text by Bovo of Corvey in which the abbot of Corvey wonders why the author of the *opuscula sacra* should seek consolation in philosophy (rather than in faith) when faced by inescapable death. Cf. Robert Burchard Constantyn HUYGENS, *Mittelalterliche Kommentare zum “O qui perpetua,” Sacris Erudiri* 6 (1954): 384.

<sup>29</sup> C.M. BOWER, “Quadrivial Reasoning,” 72–3.

couch his ideas in a concise (and therefore opaque) manner of writing: *idcirco stilum brevitare contraho*.<sup>30</sup>

By contrast, Eriugena threw himself headlong into a very subtle theological controversy, laden with far reaching consequences.

### 3. ERIUGENA'S PROJECT OF *RATIO STUDIORUM*: MARTIANUS CAPELLA AND BOETHIUS

When joining the debate on predestination, Eriugena already had an established position as a teacher of liberal arts and it seems that he also had to his credit one significant literary accomplishment, the commentary on Martianus Capella's work known as *Annotationes in Martianum*. At any rate, it was possible to ascribe the authorship of that work to Eriugena when Prudentius bishop of Troyes addressed him, after the latter's response to Gottschalk became public, levelling some accusations against him. According to the bishop, it was "his Capella" who seduced Eriugena into the labyrinth of error, so that he had shown more application in considering Martianus's work than in attending to the truth of the Gospel. Moreover, far from heeding Augustine's warnings against pagan philosophy, he adopted that very philosophy through the intermediary of Martianus's work.<sup>31</sup>

Another allegedly "pagan" author that was frequently referred to by Eriugena, even if not directly quoted, throughout his *De praedestinatione* was Boethius. However, Boethius's works had already been adopted for study and discussed in the royal palace school, and as early as about 845 Eriugena's patron, King Charles the Bald, received a beautifully illuminated manuscript of Boethius's *De institutione arithmetica* from the scriptorium in Troyes.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Cf. BOETHIUS, *De Trinitate*, proem., in *The Theological Tractates*, ed. Edward Kennard Rand and Hugh Fraser Stewart (London, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 4.

<sup>31</sup> PRUDENTIUS TRECENSIS, *De praedestinatione*, PL 115, 1294 B: "Nam ille tuus Capella, exceptis aliis, vel maxime te in hunc labyrinthum induxisse creditur, cuius meditatione magis quam veritati evangelicae animum appulisti. Quin etiam cum legeres beati Augustini libros quos *De civitate Dei* adversus paganorum fallacissimas falsissimasque opiniones mirabili affluentia digessit, ivenisti eum possuisse ac destruxisse quaedam ex libris Varronis, quibus, quoniam Capellae tuo consona videbantur, potius assentiri quam veridici Augustini allegationibus fidem adhibere delegisti ». Cf. Ilaria RAMELLI, *Saggio introduttivo*, in *Tutti i commenti a Marziano Capella* (Milano: Bompiani, 2006), 23.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Laura E. COCHRANE, "Secular Learning and Sacred Purpose in a Carolingian Copy of Boethius's *De Institutione Arithmetica* (Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Msc. Class 5)," *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 5(1) (2015): 7.

Probably one year earlier, in 844, the king received, also from Troyes, a copy of the Bible—the so-called Vivian Bible—which held pride of place in king Charles's library.<sup>33</sup> As Laura Cochrane has shown, both texts played a crucial role in the educational reform effected under the king's auspices. The miniatures from the *Institutio arithmetica*, representing allegorical personifications of the arts of the quadrivium, were to remind students that the liberal arts were an indispensable preparation for the study of the Bible. The study of the liberal arts leads along the path to heaven, for it is about numbers and numbers are coeternal with God as patterns of the whole creation.<sup>34</sup> No wonder that, firmly rooted in the context formed by such assumptions, Eriugena, in his commentary on Martianus, ventures to make his famous affirmation, *Nemo intrat in caelum nisi per philosophiam*<sup>35</sup> (No one enters heaven except through philosophy), and in *De praedestinatione*, following Augustine, he will state that *veram esse philosophiam veram religionem conversimque veram religionem esse veram philosophiam*<sup>36</sup> (true philosophy is true religion and conversely true religion is philosophy).

Boethius's text, alongside Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis*, played a significant role in the Carolingian reform of education. John Scottus Eriugena, the head of the palace school, was very active in carrying out the reform and promoting definite standards of teaching philosophy, based on liberal, and in particular, the quadrivial arts. In its essence, such an attitude was far from novel in the Carolingian epoch, for, as Stephen Jaeger has pointed out, "The liberal arts were part and parcel of his ecclesiastical education. [...] In Carolingian sources hints of a conflict between secular and divine studies are uncommon."<sup>37</sup> Yet there was a certain novelty, something that had not been found in the earlier context, namely assigning to the arts, and in particular to the art of dialectic, a decisive voice also in matters of faith. As he entered the debate on predestination, Eriugena followed the path already traced out by Boethius in his *opuscula sacra*: in order to solve intricate theological questions, the first thing to do is to make the language involved in the debate

<sup>33</sup> Cf. R. MCKITTERICK, "Charles the Bald," 28. Cf. Paul E. DUTTON and Herbert L. KESSLER, *The Poetry and Paintings of the First Bible of Charles the Bald* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 1 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. L.E. CROCHANE, "Secular Learning," 10–14.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. ERIUGENA, *Annotazioni a Marziano*, II, 57, 15 (p. 207).

<sup>36</sup> ERIUGENA, *De praed.* I, 1 (p. 7).

<sup>37</sup> C. Stephen JAEGER, *The Envy of Angels. Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe 950-1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 23.

sufficiently precise and to determine the method of our proceeding. To this purpose philosophy is an indispensable instrument.

This methodical approach to the treatment of theological questions must have been unfamiliar to Carolingian ecclesiastics. In my opinion, it was this relatively novel approach in Eriugena's treatise that provoked the violent reaction of other participants of the controversy, who were not ready to accept such novelties. Referring to Sita Steckel's assertion that in the absence in Carolingian times of a precisely defined conception of *scientia*, authors of theological works felt bound to appeal to ecclesiastical authority for support and correction, I believe that Eriugena and his work formed a *sui generis*, yet notable, exception to that rule. Eriugena, hoping for protection from the king, strove to set up new standards of scholarly debate based on 'quadrivial reasoning.' The widespread condemnation of his work on predestination shows that his efforts were defeated. The declarations of submission to authorities did not help, although he claimed that what he did in his treatise was humbly fulfil the injunction of his illustrious superiors:

For, just as the greatest and brightest lights of the world do not despise the nightly shining of the stars but make use of their rays to perfect their own brilliance so as to drive away all the gloom of darkness, so you, most reverend fathers, although the renown of your eloquence is sufficient to guard against, to overcome, and to destroy all the subtlety of newly hatched heresies, yet you have not scorned to strengthen your perfect definition of the faith of predestination by the affirmation of our reasoning, so that the noble vigour of your piety may be evident to all and the not despicable lowliness of our obedience may be manifest.<sup>38</sup>

In short, it must be stated that already in his earliest literary productions John Scottus Eriugena was concerned with reforming the educational standards of his time by presenting a definite conception of knowledge or, more precisely, philosophy. The essential part of this reform was the reassertion of the fundamental role of liberal arts, after which it followed the way delineated by the Boethian methodology of the *De Trinitate*. The central

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<sup>38</sup> ERIUGENA, *De praed.* Praef. (p. 3–4); Mainoldi, 2–3: "Ut enim maxima clarissimaque mundi luminari stellarum lucubrationes non despciunt, sed as expellendas omnium tenebrarum caliginis earum radiis ad perfectionem sui splendoris utuntur, sic vos, religiosissimi patres, cum vestrae nobilitas eloquentiae ad omnes novellarum heresium versutias cavendas, convincendas, destruendas sufficiat; nostrae tamen ratiocinationis astipulationibus vestram perfectissimam de fide praedestinationis diffinitionem roborare non sprevistis, ita vestrae pietatis pulcherrima virtus omnibus pateat et nostrae oboedientiae non spernenda humilitas clarescat."

place in this reform was accorded to the art of dialectic, which was no longer narrowly conceived as a humble art of the *trivium*, but as the *stricte* philosophical method, whose task is to unveil the dialectical structure of reality determined by the creator of that reality, God Himself.<sup>39</sup>

This new ideal of knowledge required that all examination of the nature of reality should be conducted along the path of rational investigations, since this is the only way of gaining insight into the rational structure of reality itself and thus of arriving at pure contemplation. Such an attitude called for a new apprehension of the relationships of philosophy and religion and reason and authority, as well as a new definition of the objective of rational investigation. Eriugena did not give up his authorities and the habit of frequently referring to them, yet he enlarged the number of quoted authors by including new texts in his treasury, as e. g. the works of Martianus Capella and Boethius. Moreover, the texts which were already well known and often quoted, as for instance works of Augustine, he was able to read in a new way, arriving at a personal and original understanding of the *magisterium*.

#### 4. ERIUGENA'S NEW PARADIGM OF SCIENCE

Eriugena's novel approach is evident already in the opening declarations of the *De praedestinatione*:

Every true and complete doctrinal system by which the theory of all things is most assiduously inquired into and most clearly ascertained is established within that discipline which the Greek usually call *philosophia*. We have, therefore, considered it necessary to discuss briefly its divisions or constituent parts. If, indeed, as Saint Augustine says, it is believed and taught as the fundamental principle of man's salvation that philosophy, that is the study of wisdom, is not one thing and religion another—for they whose teaching we do not favour do not in fact participate with us in the sacraments—what else is the exercise of philosophy but the exposition of the rules of true religion by which the supreme and principal cause of all things, God, is worshipped with humility and rationally searched for? It follows then that true philosophy is true religion and conversely that true religion is true philosophy.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Iohannis Scotti seu ERIUGENAE *Periphyseon. Liber Quartus*, 749 A, ed. Édouard Jeuneau (Turnholti: Brepols, 2000), 12.

<sup>40</sup> ERIUGENA, *De praed.* I, 1 (p. 7); Mainoldi, 6: "Cum omnis piae perfectęque doctrinae modus, quo omnium rerum ratio et studiosissime quaeritur et apertissime invenitur, in ea disciplina, quae a grecis philosophia solet vocari, sit constitutus, de eius divisionibus seu particionibus quae-

This quoted text stands firmly in the line of Christian Platonism; its radical message is by no means impaired by the reference to St. Augustine's authority.<sup>41</sup> Following Boethius, Eriugena conceives of philosophy as the *studium sapientiae*<sup>42</sup> and assigns to it the task of looking for the primary, and at the same time ultimate, cause of all things, that cause being identical with God.<sup>43</sup> This identity of the ultimate objects of philosophy and religion results in the fact that the scope of philosophical investigations and that of religious quest are the same. This authorizes us to apply the methods of philosophy to problems that are strictly theological. Eriugena distinguishes four parts of philosophy (from the point of view of the method):

These the Greeks have been pleased to name DIAIRETIKE, ORISTIKE, APODIKTIKE, ANALITYKE, and in Latin we can call these *divisoria* (divisory), *diffinitiva* (defining), *demonstrativa* (demonstrative), *resolutiva* (resolutionary). Of these, the first by dividing one into many, separates; the second, by determining one from among many, concludes; the third, by indicating what is hidden through what is manifest, reveals; the truth, by separating compound into simple, resolves.<sup>44</sup>

Eriugena follows here in Boethius's footsteps, and not only those indicated in the *Institutio arithmetica*, but even more those left in his logical writings and in the *opuscula sacra*. It is in the introduction to his *De Trinitate* that Boethius refers to divine enlightenment as the ultimate ground of intellectual insight before expounding on the divisions of philosophy and the corresponding methods of philosophical inquiry. Here the reference to divine

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dam breviter disserere necessarium duximus. *Si enim*, ut ait sanctus augustinus, *creditur et docentur, quo est humane salutis caput, non aliam esse philosophiam, id est sapientiae studium, et aliam religionem, cum hi quorum doctrinam non approbamus nec Sacramento nobiscum communicat, quid est aliud de philosophia tractare, nisi verę religionis, qua summa et principalis omnium rerum causa, deus, et humiliter colitur et rationabiliter investigatur, regulas exponere? Conficitur inde veram esse philosophiam veram religionem conversimque veram religionem esse veram philosophiam.*"

<sup>41</sup> Cf. I. RAMELLI, *Saggio Introduttivo*, 26 f.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. BOETHIUS, *Institutio arithmetica*, I, 1 (p. 1); Masi, 71–72: "Wisdom gives name to a science in terms of these things, that is, things which properly exist, whatever their essences may be."

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Iohannis Scotti seu ERIUGENAE *Periphyseon. Liber primus* (further PP I), 444A–445C, ed. Édouard Jeuneau (Turnholti: Brepols, 1996), 6–7.

<sup>44</sup> ERIUGENA, *De praed.* I, 1 (p. 8); Mainoldi, 6–8: "Quae, dum multifariam diversisque modis dividatur, bis binas tamen partes principales ad omnem quaestionem solvendam necessarias habere dinoscitur, quas grecis placuit nominare DIAIRETIKE, ORISTIKE, APODIKTIKE, ANALITIKE, easdemque latialiter possumus dicere divisoriā, diffinitivā, demonstrativā, resolutivā; quarum enim prima unum in multa dividendo segregat, secunda unum de multis diffiniendo colligit, tertia per manifesta occulta demonstrando aperit, quarta composita in simplicia separando resolvit."

light is more than just a literary commonplace, in fact it epitomizes Platonic epistemology filtered through Augustine's texts. This Platonic union of epistemology and metaphysics is *expressis verbis* referred to in Eriugena's commentary on Martianus, where it is affirmed that the study of wisdom makes the soul immortal, while souls that lack wisdom also lack immortality. The arts at the disposal of intelligent souls are innate in all men and thus bring immortality to them regardless whether humans make right or wrong use of those arts.<sup>45</sup> The idea of the innate character of the arts will be further developed by Eriugena in his *Periphyseon*, where he constructs an argument for the immortality of the soul starting from the innate nature of the arts.<sup>46</sup>

The invocation of divine light at the start of all inquiries, however, serves yet another purpose: in the wholly Augustinian spirit, it points to the assumed primacy of faith, both chronological and causal. As Jeremy C. Thompson observes:

By the ingenious use of distinctions and antiphrasis, Eriugena succeeded in upholding the *recta fides* of single predestination, and at the same time confronted it so boldly with his own mark of *recta ratio* that it turned the debate from its course.<sup>47</sup>

*Recta/sana fides* was the exclusive basis for Hrabanus Maurus's affirmation of single predestination<sup>48</sup>; however, this was not enough for Eriugena, who, far from depreciating faith, saw in it above all a necessary and ineliminable introductory stage, leading to more advanced investigations. As he expressly states in the *De praedestinatione*: "our salvation [...] takes its beginning from faith." The faith, whose unity the devil strives to destroy and which therefore needs our effort to strengthen it.<sup>49</sup> The temporal primacy of

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<sup>45</sup> ERIUGENA, *Annotationes* 17, 12 (p. 135): "Hic aperte docet studia sapientiae inmortalem animam facere et si quis ad haec dixerit stultas animas sapientiae studiis carere, ac per hoc et mortales esse, respondendum omnes artes quibus rationalis anima utitur naturaliter omnibus hominibus inesse, sive eis bene utantur sive male abutantur, sive omnino illarum exercitatione caruerint, ac per hoc omnem humanam animam propter insita sibi sapientiae studia inmortalem conficitur esse."

<sup>46</sup> Cf. PP I, 486B-D (p. 62).

<sup>47</sup> Jeremy C. THOMPSON, "God's Own Dwelling Place: Oppositions of Nature in the Ninth-Century Predestination Debate," in *Eriugena and Creation*, ed. Michael I. Allen and Willemien Otten (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 86.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. HRABANUS MAURUS, *Epistolae*, PL 112, 1539D: "Quomodo isti vaniloqui garriunt quod nihil prosit hominum recta fides et bona operatio, quoniam si non sit praedestinatus quis nihil aliud sit nisi vitae donatio, non perditionis damnatio?"

<sup>49</sup> ERIUGENA, *De praed.* 1, 4 (p. 9).

faith with respect to intellectual comprehension will find its most complete articulation in one of the last works of Eriugena's: the *Sermon on the Prologue to St. John's Gospel*. Here, in a typical example of allegorical reading of a Gospel passage, we find John the Apostle taken to represent intelligence (or intellectual comprehension) and Peter, faith. Although John comes running first to the Tomb of Christ (which represents the Scriptures), yet he refuses to enter inside the grave, waiting instead for Peter to do so, and only then follows him inside. The underlying meaning of this scene is that faith must penetrate first into the mysteries of the Scriptures and only then understanding can follow. For as it is said in the Scriptures: *Nisi credideritis non intelligetis* (Is 7:9 according to the Septuagint).<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, granted the temporal primacy of faith, the effort of understanding the content of faith should be undertaken. This last point, according to Eriugena, is proved in another Gospel scene, which he subjects to allegorical interpretation in another of his homilies on St. John's Gospel. In the scene with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:4–26), Jesus asks the Samaritan woman, representing the Church, to give him a drink: a drink of faith first, followed by a drink of reason.<sup>51</sup>

In the *De praedestinatione* yet another role of the factor of rationality is highlighted: the art of dialectic, which is the art of disputation, serves as a weapon in the contention against falsehood. Whereas the weapon of rhetoric can be used by defenders of both truth and falsehood, the truly efficient vindication of truth can be achieved with the aid of the art of dialectic. Thus, referring to St. Augustine, Eriugena states:

Therefore, lest we defenders of the truth appear to contend without weapons with the advocates of falsehood, it will be appropriate for us to observe the rules of the art of disputation. For, since, through the art of rhetoric both the true and the false are urged, who would dare to say that in its defenders truth must stand unarmed against falsehood?<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Iohannis SCOTTI ERIUGENAE *Homilia* III, 284D–285A, in *Homilia super 'In principio erat verbum' et Commentarius in Evangelium Iohannis*, ed. Édouard Jeuneau (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 7: “Veruntamen primo intrat Petrus in monumentum, deinde Iohannes. Ac si ambo currunt, ambo intrant. Petrus siquidem fidei est symbolum, Iohannes significant intellectum. Ac per hoc, quoniam scriptum est: *Nisi credideritis, non intelligetis*, necessario praecedit fides in monumentum sanctae scripturae, deinde sequens intrat intellectus, cui per fidem praeparatur aditus.”

<sup>51</sup> Cf. ERIUGENAE *Commentarius* IV, III, in *Homilia super 'In principio erat verbum' et Commentarius in Evangelium Iohannis*, 111: “Iesus super fontem sedens petit ab ecclesia primitiva, quam ex gentibus elegerat, potum fidei, qua in eum creditur; petit a natura potum rationis, qua conditor atque redemptor suus investigatur.”

<sup>52</sup> ERIUGENA, *De praed.* I, 3 (p. 8); Mainoldi, 8: “Ne igitur defensores veritatis inermes cum assertoribus falsitatis confligere videamur, non incongrue regulis disputatoriae artis utemur. *Cum*

When refuting Gottschalk's views on double predestination, Eriugena invokes the authority of God in the first place and only secondly correct reasoning. According to him, divine authority opposes "that absurdity" which is then also contradicted by "rules of true reasoning."<sup>53</sup>

Thus it is clear that in his discussion of predestination Eriugena was not satisfied to remain on the level of traditional faith and quoting patristic authorities, although these authorities played a paramount role in his thought. Rather, taking faith as the starting point, he directed his effort towards creating a "true and complete doctrinal system."

He appears to have been convinced that only such a system allows one to gain a properly comprehending insight into the reality of the First Cause, which is the only source of truth. However, building a complete system not only requires that the starting point and the final objective of that system be defined, it also calls for a determinate method of conducting inquiries and passing from one stage of investigative procedure to another.

## 5. THE FOURFOLD WAY OF INQUIRY

In his *Institutio arithmetica* Boethius mentions the "fourfold way" which elevates spirit to knowledge of wisdom.<sup>54</sup> The role of the arts is to purify the eye of the soul and divert the mind from corporeal reality (I, 7, s. 8). The complete knowledge of what truly exists and yet is inaccessible to sense cognition is none other than philosophy, the love of wisdom (I, 5). The guides directly leading up to this perfect knowledge are the four "sciences of quantity", namely arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy.

This doctrine could be found in Boethius. It was also part of an Augustinian tradition whose proponent, closest in time to Eriugena, was Alcuin.<sup>55</sup> His dialogue, *De dialectica*, represents Alcuin himself in conversation with King Charles the Great discussing the introductory notions and matters related to philosophy and its role in theology. The king opens the exchange by asking what philosophy is; this is answered by Alcuin with the help of etymological explication of the word "philosophy" as "love of wisdom," but also a number of ancient definitions of philosophy are quoted: philosophy is

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*enim per artem rethoricam et vera suadeantur et falsa, quis audeat dicere adversus mendacium in defensoribus suis inermem debere consistere veritatem?"*

<sup>53</sup> ERIUGENA, *De praed.* I, 4 (p. 10).

<sup>54</sup> BOËCE, *Institution arithmétique*, I, 1 (p. 6).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Deirdre CARABINE, *John Scottus Eriugena* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7–8.

inquiry into the nature of things; it is knowledge, insofar as this is given to man, of things human and divine.<sup>56</sup>

The discourse then proceeds towards the division of philosophy and its role in theology. Philosophy is cognition that is certain, in contrast to mere opinion, which is merely probable. Philosophy comprises four parts: logic encompasses rhetoric and dialectic, then comes ethics, and finally there is physics, itself comprising four parts which are the four arts of the *quadrivium*. These parts of philosophy, (the total number of relevant parts being seven) have application in matters related to God, they are the seven pillars supporting the sanctuary of divine wisdom. Theology is conceived by Alcuin in a twofold way: it is contemplation which exceeds things visible and ascends to a comprehension of things invisible with the eye of the mind; it is also exercise in practicing virtues. In this way God is loved and venerated through faith and hope; no wise person would wish to be separated from this philosophy.<sup>57</sup>

The imagery of Alcuin's dialogue, making use of architectural features, tends to affirm the propaedeutic role of the liberal arts in human ascent towards Wisdom.<sup>58</sup> The function of the arts is twofold; it has both a theoretical and a practical aspect. The theoretical aspect concerns the study of numbers,<sup>59</sup> whereas the practical aspect is related to the acquisition and exercise of virtues.

In Eriugena, too, we find a reflection of this twofold role of arts; in his commentary on Martianus Capella he explains what is meant by the twofold denomination of arts, which are sometimes referred to as "disciplines (*disciplinae*) and sometimes as "arts" (*artes*). They are disciplines insofar as

<sup>56</sup> Cf. ALCUINUS, *De dialectica*, PL 101, 952A: "Primo omnium dic unde dicta sit philosophia? [A] Ab amore sapientiae. [Nam philosophia amor est sapientiae]. Graeci *philon* amorem, *sophiam* sapientiam vocant. [C]: Dic eius quoque definitionem.—[A] Philosophia est naturarum inquisitio, rerum humanarum divinarumque cognitio, quantum homini possibile est aestimare"; Cf. Agnieszka KIJEWSKA, "Edukacja karolińska," in *Czasy katedr — czasy uniwersytetów. Źródła jedności narodów Europy*, ed. Wiesława Sajdek (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2005), 173–4.

<sup>57</sup> ALCUINUS, *De dialectica*, PL 101, 952A-D: "[C] Ex qua materia constat?—[A] Scientia et opinione.—[...] [C] In quot partes dividitur philosophia?—[A]. In tres: physicam, ethicam, logicam [...]—[A]. In physica igitur causa quaerendi, in ethica ordo vivendi, in logica ratio intelligendi versatur. [C] In quot species physica dividitur?—[A]. In quattuor: arithmetica, geometrica, musica, astronomia. [...] Theologica quid est? [A] theologica est, quae Latine inspectiva dicitur, quia supergressi visibilia de divinis et coelestibus aliquid mente solum contemplamur. [...] [C]. Quis est, qui philosophiae detrahere audeat.—[A.]. Nullus sapiens."

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Mary CARRUTHERS, *The Craft of Thought. Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 16 f.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. ALCUINUS, *Epistola* 81, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Epistolarum vol. IV: Karolini aevi II*, ed. Ernst Dümmler (München: Weidmann, 1978), 123.

they are objects of learning; they are arts insofar as they are perfect dispositions in the mind which they help to perfect.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, the liberal arts are so many paths towards wisdom and virtue, yet wisdom is almost impossible to achieve in the present condition of turmoil and controversy. So Eriugena addresses his patrons:

Your attention is partly drawn upwards in contemplation towards the exploration of the truth and partly faced downwards in the activity of governing the church. We, on the other hand, tossed around, as it were, like some small boat with waves on many sides, in the midst of the surging sail-winged sea of the rule of our master, namely the glorious lord Charles, even when stabilized in the haven of his fair weather are scarcely ever allowed even the shortest interval of time to scan the records of wisdom.<sup>61</sup>

The contemplation of truth is hardly attainable when we are tossed on the “rough sea of controversy”; in the present situation another role of the arts comes to the fore, and in particular of the art of disputation, namely, the role of distinguishing truth from falsehood. The paramount role in this task falls to dialectic, and we see Eriugena emphasising the role of a dialectical approach in defending truth against falsehood in a controversy. In the Platonic and Augustinian tradition dialectic was usually defined as the art of disputation<sup>62</sup> and disputation was the sure means of extricating the truth from false appearances. This aspect of dialectic, namely being a sure instrument of distinguishing what is true from what merely appears to be so, was also appreciated by Alcuin, who in the dialogue *De dialectica* gives a definition of dialectic as “rational discipline serving to inquire, to define, and to expound, which is able to distinguish that which is true from that which is false.”<sup>63</sup> Dialectic thus appears to be the art that perfectly fulfils the tasks Eriugena

<sup>60</sup> Cf. ERIUGENA, *Annotationes in Martianum*, 60, 3 (p. 209): “SUBINDE frequenter inter artem et disciplinam hoc interest, quod quando discitur, disciplina vocatur, quando perfecta in habitu mentis est, ars nuncupatur. Ars dicta est *apo tes aretes*, hoc est a virtute.”

<sup>61</sup> ERIUGENA, *De praed.*, pref. (p. 3); Mainoldi, 2: “Studium quippe vestrum partim sursum versus contemplative erigitur ad speculandam veritatem, partim vero deorsum versus active reprimatur ad regendam ecclesiam. Nos vero e diverso inter undosum velivolumque pelagus imperii senioris nostri, domini videlicet gloriosissimi Karoli quasi quedam navicula diversis fluctibus agitati, quandoque tamen in portu serenitatis eius stabilitanda occupati, vix aliquando ad vestigia sapientiae intuenda brevissimo temporis sinimur intervallo.”

<sup>62</sup> Cf. AUGUSTINUS HIPONENSIS, *Contra Cresconium grammaticum Donastiam*, PL 43, 455: “Qui est enim aliud dialectica quam peritia disputandi?”

<sup>63</sup> ALCUINUS, *De dialectica*, PL 101, 952D–953A: “Et primum dic, quid sit dialectica? Dialectica est disciplina rationalis quaerendi, diffiniendi et disserendi, etiam et vera a falsis discernendi potens.”

set before philosophical inquiry, namely dividing a complex matter into simple elements, defining the component parts, demonstrating theses, and solving problems.

## 6. *ITER RATIONIS*

The fullest description of these four functions of theological inquiry (namely: division, definition, demonstration, solution) is found in Book One of the *Periphyseon*. Here we start with the most comprehensive and the most fundamental concept, namely the concept of nature undergoing division into parts. The parts obtained as a result of that division correspond to the four possible combinations of the four terms: *creata/non creata* and *creans/non creans*.<sup>64</sup> The procedure of beginning one's inquiry from the most general concept and then proceeding by division to more particular notions echoes the methodology of Boethius, who recommended in his work *Quomodo substantiae* to begin an inquiry by establishing the "common conceptions" (*conceptiones communes*) by which he meant principles that are immediately evident to everyone comprehending them.<sup>65</sup> Division of those primary conceptions is the task of dialectic, as Eriugena himself affirmed in his commentary on Book Four of Martianus's work containing an exposition of dialectic. In his commentary Eriugena stated that the most universal generic notion of all is that of *ousia*, rendered into Latin as *essentia*. No other notion can exceed the extension of *ousia*, which encompasses the natures of all things that exist, and which exist thanks to participation in *ousia*. Since it comprehends all other natures, *ousia* is the most general genus (*genus generalissimum*).

This most general nature is the beginning of the process of division which proceeds via all successive genera and species to the most particular form which the Greeks call *atomon*, and the Latins *individuum*, which is a concrete individual being, as for instance this man or this ox.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> PP I, 444A–445C (pp. 6–7).

<sup>65</sup> Cf. BOETHIUS, *Quomodo substantiae*, I, in *The Theological Tractates*, 41; cf. Agnieszka KIJEWSKA, "Eriugena and the Twelfth Century: The Concept of Ratio," in *Eriugena and Creation*, 397–398.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. ERIUGENA, *Annotationes in Martianum*, 157, 17 (p. 269): "GENUS est multarum formarum substantialis unitas. Sursum est generalissimum genus quod a Graecis *ousia*, a nobis *essentia* vocatur, ultra quod nullus potest ascendere. Est enim quaedam essentialis quae comprehendit omnem naturam cuius participatione subsistit omne quod est, etideo dicitur generalissimum genus. Descendit autem per divisiones per genera per species usque ad specialissimam speciem quae a Grecis *atomos* dicitur, hoc est individuum, ut est unus homo vel unus bos."

Traces of this dialectical procedure of division can also be discovered in the *De praedestinatione*, especially in the passage where the author attempts to define the notions of predestination and foreknowledge and their mutual relations:

For although all predestination is called foreknowledge but not all foreknowledge is called predestination, nevertheless we do not say that all predestination is foreknowledge and that not all foreknowledge is predestination in the same way as we are accustomed to speak of the genera and their forms.<sup>67</sup>

The examination of these concepts is, according to Eriugena, the task of dialectics, that is of “the art which diligently investigates the rational common concepts of the mind.”<sup>68</sup> Thus he begins by differentiating (*praenotio*) the notions of foreknowledge and predestination in order to arrive at a more precise grasp of their meaning. He then proceeds “by necessary argument” (*argumentum necessitatis*) to prove that there cannot be two coexisting predestinations, as that would contradict Divine Nature:

Then if it is irreverent to teach that there are two essences in God, or two wisdoms, knowledges, virtues, and that all the other qualities attributed to God are double or trebled or heaped in some kind of multiple fashion, anyone who is proved to have stated that there are two predestinations in God is involved in the charge of ungodliness.<sup>69</sup>

In general *iter rationis* proceeds from more elementary to more nuanced matters, from “lower” to more elevated realities, from what is simple to what is complex; each move along this path ought to be suitably justified, supported with an appropriate “reason.”<sup>70</sup>

Eriugena's arguments against the double predestination thesis maintained by Gottschalk have been analysed in detail by Monika Michałowska, who pointed out the novelty and the originality of his method of arguing based on

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<sup>67</sup> ERIUGENA, *De praed.*, II, 2 (p. 9); Mainoldi, 16: “Cum enim omnis praedestinatio praescientia, non autem omnis praescientia praedestinatio dicatur, non tamen eo modo dicimus omnem praedestinationem esse praescientiam, non omnem vero praescientiam esse praedestinationem, quo solemus dicere in generibus eorumque formis.”

<sup>68</sup> PP I, 475A (p. 65).

<sup>69</sup> ERIUGENA, *De praed.* II, 6 (p. 15); Mainoldi, 22: “Deinde si impium est duas essentias in deo doceri, vel duas sapientias, scientias, virtutes, ceteraque omnia quae de deo dicuntur, geminari vel triplicari vel quacunquē multiplici specie cumulari, quicunquē duas in deo praedestinationes asserere convincitur, reatu impietatis ligatur.”

<sup>70</sup> PP I, 479B, 484A, 486D.

grammar and rhetoric (i.e., the arts of the *trivium*, which together with the *quadrivium* comprised the whole of what in the Carolingian milieu was referred to as philosophy).<sup>71</sup>

As already noted, it was this tendency to introduce philosophical methodology into the discussion of eminently theological matters that provoked a violent and negative reaction to Eriugena's treatise.

## 7. CRITICS OF ERIUGENA

Among those who responded to Eriugena's treatise were bishop Prudentius of Troyes and Florus. The former, in his own *De praedestinatione*, accused John Scottus Eriugena of Pelagianism in the style of Julian of Eclanum—vain erudition, sophisticated madness, verbalism.<sup>72</sup> He took the trouble of discussing each of the theses contained in Eriugena's treatise, quoting copiously from the text, and marking each offending thesis with the Greek letter theta (the sign of those condemned to death).

Some eminent Eriugenian scholars, notably Maïeul Cappuyns and John J. O'Meara, took the view that Eriugena's opponents simply failed properly to understand the view they criticised, because of the novelty of its presentation and a new style of discussion. However, John Marenbon adopted an altogether different view of the matter. In his opinion, both Prudentius and Florus were thoroughly trained in logic and thus eminently capable of comprehending Eriugena's discourse; their criticisms were very apt in many cases.<sup>73</sup> Marenbon believes that under the influence of their criticism, Eriugena modified some of his positions in the later, most important work of his life, the *Periphyseon*.

There is, however, room for disagreement with Marenbon's view of the matter: if the critics had a complete understanding of the message contained in Eriugena's treatise, then what sense can we make of Prudentius's fulminations contained in one of his polemical texts? The solicitous bishop believes

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Monika MICHAŁOWSKA, "Grammar and Theology in Eriugena's Philosophy," *Philosophy* 7 (2007), p. 276-278.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. PRUDENTIUS, *De praedestinatione*, PL 115, 1011B, D, 1013A, 1015C, 1016C, 1036B.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. John MAREN BON, "John Scottus and Carolingian Theology: From the *De Praedestinatione*, its background and its critics, to the *Periphyseon*," in: *Aristotelian Logic, Platonism and the Context of Early Medieval Philosophy in the West*, ed. John Marenbon (Aldershot, Burlington, VT: Variorum, Ashgate, 2000), 311 ff.

that, having read and diligently studied the writings of his opponent, he has found in them “the venom of Pelagian perfidy, the madness of Origen and the fury of the Collyridian heretics.”<sup>74</sup> A bit further on the outraged bishop claims that one spirit inspired Eriugena and Julian of Eclanum: both of them deny the gratuitousness of divine grace and reject original sin's being contracted by every human being at the instant of birth. In arguing for all these abominable falsehoods Eriugena resorted to the vanity of dialectical arguments and to distorting the meaning of quoted passages from Holy Scripture and the Fathers, in particular St. Augustine.<sup>75</sup> For that reason, Prudentius declares his will to mark quotes from Eriugena with the Greek letter theta (the first letter in the Greek word “thanatos” meaning death).<sup>76</sup>

The advocacy of the fourfold way to truth in the first chapter of Eriugena's treatise again incites the bishop to vigorous opposition: the Fathers appeal to simple faith rather than quadrivial erudition; they defend the faith not by means of sophisticated illusions but by invoking the authority of the Scriptures. Prudentius ends his polemical tract by appealing to Eriugena to abandon his quadrivium of vanity, through which he found himself exiled from the way of truth. The four-horse chariot of this life are the four Gospels, which spring from a fountainhead in the heavenly paradise and are our way of salvation. Another quadruple chariot (*quadriga*) are the four cardinal virtues: prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice, which adorn the noble manner of life. Still another fourfold way are the four kinds of divine eloquies: history, ethics, allegory, and anagogy, which guide us, with the assistance of divine grace, to the comprehension of God's words.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> PRUDENTIUS, *De praedestinatione*, PL 115, 1011A.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. PRUDENTIUS, *De praedestinatione*, PL 115, 1011C: “Animatus itaque meritis rogantis, orationumque instantissima puritate scribentis, visum est librum eundem, si qua forte inveniri posset, diligenti curiositate perquirere, cuius serie salebrosas tantorum errorum torsiones valerem facilius intueri: quo gratia Dei, sine qua nihil sum et nihil possum, ut optaveram assecuto, deprehendi quantum divinitus inspiratus potui, Pelagii, Caelestii, eorumque sequacis ac defensoris acerrimi Iuliani, per omnia sectatorem Ioannem videlicet SCOTUM tanta impudentia orthodoxae fidei Patribusque catholicis oblatrantem, ac si unus spiritus Iulianm Ioannemque docuerit. [...] Rectissimum etiam sanctarum Scripturarum intellectum, Patrumque catholicorum sensum sanissimum tam concinna varicositate pervertunt ac si nunquam adversus eorum errores quidpiam fuerit actitatum.”

<sup>76</sup> Cf. PRUDENTIUS, *De praedestinatione*, PL 115, 1012B: “Verba quoque eiusdem Ioannis ut ab eo digesta sunt pluribus locis inserui, praeposito etiam nomine ipsius cum praecedente illud nota quae Graece dicitur *theta* quam sententiis capitalibus damnandorum aliqui praescribere solebant.”

<sup>77</sup> Cf. PRUDENTIUS, *De praedestinatione*, PL 115, 1052B-C: “Relinque quadrivium vanitatis, quo sequens extorris viae factus es veritatis. Quanto melius, quantoque salubrius ageres, si uni verae sempiternae viae innitens, quadriga illius humilis vehi, quam quadrivii tui inflatus typho

Also Hincmar of Rheims, in his own *De praedestinatione*, put great emphasis on the assertion that neither the quadrivium nor any other secular wisdom would suffice to the solution of all problems: what is needed above all is divine grace and study of Holy Scripture.<sup>78</sup>

These two voices show marked reserve with regard to the secular learning of the quadrivium and its usefulness for theology, which seems to suggest that Eriugena's project of introducing quadrivial reasoning into theological discourse was on the whole correctly interpreted, yet found no sympathetic reception. The Christian spirit of Carolingian times was cautious not to attribute too much to secular learning. Laura Cochrane, in her very interesting analysis of the two manuscripts mentioned above (namely the Bible of Charles the Bald and Boethius's *Institutio arithmetica*), offered as gifts to King Charles the Bald, captured this reserved attitude of the times. She wrote:

On the surface, the Bamberg Boethius appears to be an elegant gift for a learned king. Yet, the manuscript's underlying purpose may not have been simply to glorify secular educational pursuits. Rather, when read with the texts and imaginary of the First Bible in mind, the Bamberg Boethius can also be understood to have admonished the young king that, although the study of the liberal arts was preparation for the intellectual rigors of Bible study and theology, a secular education should not be an end in itself. As a path to Christian wisdom, the secular arts could only take the student so far in order to show that it was the Bible, and not the secular arts, that had to be his primary guide to Christian wisdom.<sup>79</sup>

During the whole predestination controversy, Eriugena remained close to the king and on the king's side. Although it was archbishop Hincmar who invited Eriugena to take part in the debate and although it was to Hincmar and bishop Pardulus that he addressed the preface of his treatise, he dedicated the treatise itself to his patron, King Charles. Eriugena always

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raptum ire in diversa diligeres! Quadriga huius viae sunt quattuor Evangelia, uno paradisi fonte manantia, quibus nobis via panditur salutaris. Quadriga huius viae quatuor sunt virtutes, prudentia, temperantia, fortitudo, iustitia, quibus omnis morum probitas venustatur. Quadriga huius viae sunt quatuor divinorum eloquiorum species historica, ethica, allegorica, anagogica, quibus ad omnem sacrarum litterarum intellectum, illuminante gratia eius, inducimur: quae si humiliter fideliterque sectari studuisses, nunquam in tanta errorum atque abominationum, imo blasphemiarum praecipitia incidisses."

<sup>78</sup> Cf. HINCMARUS REMENSIS, *De praedestinatione*, XXXI, PL 125, 296B: "Respondemus nec illud quadrivium, nec ulla mundanae sapientiae sententias, ad omnem quaestionem solvenda sufficere absque gratia Dei et fide, quae per dilectionem operatur, ac veraci studio et sanctarum scientia Scripturarum."

<sup>79</sup> COCHRANE, "Secular Learning," 9–10.

remained the king's man, a poet in the service of Charles, the head of the royal palace school, a devoted servant of his royal patron.<sup>80</sup> It should be observed that Charles did not disappoint Eriugena's hopes and generously repaid the philosopher's trust. When Eriugena's treatise was officially condemned at the councils of Valence (855) and Langres (859), the king did not abandon his protégé and gave him another commission. This time the task was to translate the works of Dionysius the Areopagite, an author of particular importance for Carolingians, from the original Greek into Latin. As is well known, the work on this translation opened a new intellectual chapter in Eriugena's life—one that was to become the greatest intellectual adventure of his life.

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. Paul E. DUTTON, “Eriugena, the Royal Poet,” in *Jean Scot—écrivain*, 51 ff.

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ERIUGENY DE PRAEDESTINATIONE —  
PROJEKT RACJONALIZACJI WIARY I JEGO KRYTYCY

Streszczenie

*De praedestinatione* Eriugeny miało być jego głosem w kontrowersji wywołanej przez Gottschalka z Orbais wokół predestynacji. Dzieło to, choć odrzucało poglądy Gottschalka na temat podwójnej predestynacji, spotkało się z ostrą krytyką i potępieniem. Jednym z powodów takiego stanu rzeczy było niewątpliwie Eriugeny specyficzne rozumienie wolności woli, czemu przyjrzyć się w innym tekście. Tutaj chciałabym się skupić na drugiej, istotnej przyczynie odrzucenia dzieła Eriugeny, którą był — jak sądzę — jego prescholastyczny projekt racjonalizacji wiary w duchu św. Augustyna, ale z zastosowaniem „metody” Boecjusza i Capelli. Wydaje się, że współcześni Eriugeny nie byli jeszcze gotowi na przyjęcie jego idei *vera philosophia*, która zarazem jest *vera religio*. Mistrzami Eriugeny byli tutaj Ojcowie Kościoła i jego intencją było kontynuowanie na swój własny sposób ich drogi zrozumienia wiary.

ERIUGENA'S *DE PRAEDESTINATIONE*:  
THE PROJECT OF RATIONALISATION OF FAITH AND ITS CRITICS

S u m m a r y

The *De praedestinatione* of John Scottus Eriugena was intended as a contribution to a controversy sparked off by Gottschalk of Orbais concerning predestination. This work met with trenchant criticism and condemnation even though it firmly rejected Gottschalk's views on double predestination. One of the reasons for this hostile reception was undoubtedly Eriugena's singular conception of the freedom of will, a subject I intend to discuss elsewhere. In the present text, however, I would like to focus on another important cause of the rejection of Eriugena's treatise. In my opinion, this second reason was a pre-scholastic project of rationalization of the faith in the spirit of St. Augustine and using the method of Boethius and Martianus Capella. It would appear that Eriugena's contemporaries were not ready for the favorable reception of his idea of the *vera philosophia* that was the same as the *vera religio*. Yet, as Goulven Madec once rightly observed, the *vera ratio* of Scotus was closely bound up with the *lux mentium* which is nothing else than God revealing himself in the human language of the Scriptures. Eriugena's masters and models were the Church Fathers and his intention was to continue their efforts to achieve an understanding of the faith in his own, personal way.

**Słowa kluczowe:** predestynacja; wolna wola; racjonalizacja wiary; *vera philosophia*; *vera religio*; Eriugena; Gottschalk z Orbais; Boethius; Martianus Capella.

**Key words:** predestination; free will; rationalization of the faith; *vera philosophia*; *vera religio*; Eriugena; Gottschalk of Orbais; Boethius; Martianus Capella.

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