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Some Perspectives in Eriugenian Studies

Three Recent Publications*

(Review article)

Ever since M. Cappuyns published his extensive biography of Johannes Scottus Eriugena¹, this ninth century author has been the subject of intensive study alongside great speculation. The date of Cappuyns' book was 1933, which was more than 700 years after the condemnation of Eriugena by pope Honorius III in 1225². It was even more than 1100 years after the period in which Eriugena actually flourished, which can roughly be dated between the years 845 and 870³. After such a long period of enforced silence⁴, it now seemed as if, with the publication of Cappuyns' book, the door to a rich treasure chamber had become suddenly unbolted.

Following the publication of Cappuyns' book an endless flow of books and articles started to come out, dealing with various aspects of Eriugena's works

*1. Edouard JEAUNEAU: *Études érigéniennes*. – Paris 1987. 749 pp. (Études augustiniennes).

2. Goulven MADEC: *Jean Scot et ses auteurs. Annotations érigéniennes*. – Paris 1988. 192 pp. (Études augustiniennes).

3. Mary BRENNAN: *Guides des études érigéniennes. Bibliographie commentée des publications 1930–1987 / A Guide to Eriugenian Studies. A Survey of Publications 1930–1987*. – Fribourg: Editions universitaires; Paris: Editions du Cerf 1989. 341 pp.

¹ M. CAPPUYNS, *Jean Scot Erigène. Sa vie, son œuvre, sa pensée*, Louvain-Paris 1933, repr. Brussels 1964.

² On this condemnation, see Cappuyns, op. cit., 247–249.

³ For the latest update on Eriugena's life and times, one should consult J.J. O'MEARA, *Eriugena*, Oxford 1989, esp. chs. 1, 2, 3, 11.

⁴ From this period of enforced silence, the nineteenth century should actually be excluded, as in it Eriugena's ideas were valued as revealing affinity with the movement of German idealism. See W. BEIERWALTES, «The Revaluation of John Scottus Eriugena in German Idealism», in: J.J. O'MEARA; L. BIELER, *The Mind of Eriugena*, Dublin 1973, 190–198.

and ideas. Unfortunately not much information could be added to the biographical portrait sketched by Cappuyns, for there simply was not much to be revealed about his obscure life, apart from a few untrustworthy legends⁵. Be that as it may, through an intensive reading of his works the intellectual profile of this forceful ninth century thinker has become rather clear. This in itself I take to be a most remarkable fact, which compensates in a way for what could be felt as <injustice> on the part of history.

In most analyses of Eriugena's work some surprise emerges at the wealth of philosophical and theological ideas that had hitherto been rather successfully repressed. After the publication of Cappuyns' book it became rapidly clear that Eriugena should be considered the greatest philosopher between Boethius and Anselm⁶. Moreover, the profundity of Eriugena's thought could now be demonstrated in front of a larger audience. It became finally possible to assign him a place in the long history of theology and philosophy in the Middle Ages. It was also revealed why his overall mastery of the liberal arts should still be admired, even by a present day generation of students.

The above remarks are intended to introduce the body of this article, which will be devoted to a discussion of three recent publications in the field of Eriugenian studies. The works that I would like to discuss here have all come out during the past two years. However, since they deal with various aspects of Eriugena's work and doctrine, it might be relevant to give a brief overview of the general development of Eriugenian research since Cappuyns, before reviewing them individually. Thus we will be able to judge these recent publications in their proper scholarly context.

If one tries to categorize the studies that have been brought out by the generation of scholars following in Cappuyns' footsteps, I think one can distinguish three categories of Eriugenian studies, *viz.* a historical, a philosophical and a literary one. I will try to describe each of them, as they seem to indicate the various directions in which the modern view of Eriugena has developed during the past fifty years.

⁵ A famous legend about Eriugena travelling to England towards the end of his life and dying a martyr there was told in the 12th century by William of Malmesbury, who was also the first English editor of Eriugena's works. According to this legend Eriugena was stabbed by his students who were irritated by his overclever teaching. For a description and critical evaluation of the legend, see CAPPUYNS, *op. cit.*, 252–254, 256–260.

⁶ A. MAURER, in his *Medieval Philosophy*, Toronto 1962, ²1982, inserts a chapter on Eriugena between those on Boethius and Anselm (35–46). R. Roques, when opening the 1975 Eriugena conference in Laon, formulated the following opinion on Eriugena's works, saying: «L'œuvre personnelle d'Erigène, le *De divisione naturae* surtout, présente, en matières littéraires, philosophiques, exégétiques et théologiques, le système le plus complet, le plus rigoureux et le plus original de la pensée latine entre le V^e et le XII^e siècle.» See R. ROQUES, *Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie*, Paris 1977, 15.

In the past fifty years considerable attention has been paid to refining and possibly renewing our historical view of Eriugena's position. Until this century Eriugena had often been seen as an independent, individual thinker whose ideas, although traceable from his Greek sources, were not shared by any of his contemporaries. Though Cappuyens slightly modified this view, he still portrayed him as such an isolated thinker that it seemed altogether impossible for any one to match his understanding of things, not to mention his sophisticated manner of presentation. However, after John Marenbon in 1981 published his important study *From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre*⁷, this opinion underwent considerable nuancing. Marenbon has made a successful attempt to place Eriugena within the context where he actually belongs, namely that of the ninth century Frankish Empire under the sovereignty of Charles the Bald. Whether Charles successfully emulated his grandfather's ideals or not leaves uncontested the fact that Eriugena was regularly in touch with a circle of relatively close friends, with whom he was able to discuss at least some of his ideas. The degree to which Eriugena's friends were really acquainted with his views remains unclear, although it has been established that he shared his knowledge of Greek with some of his fellow countrymen like Martinus Hiberniensis, who worked at the Cathedral School in Laon⁸. Through Marenbon's research Eriugena has gradually become less of an isolated figure. This gives his originality, which remains unsurpassed in view of the primitive times he lived in, a kind of piquant touch. Just recently J.J. O'Meara has corroborated the evidence collected by Marenbon. In his book *Eriugena*, which was published by Oxford University Press in 1988, he has supplied various details so as to make Marenbon's views in this matter only more convincing⁹.

Intended to emphasize the historical setting of Eriugena's ideas, both these works by Marenbon and O'Meara have not altogether discarded the view of Eriugena as an individual and independent thinker. But they have put this view into a fitting context. They back it up with adequate historical evidence, without letting their historical perspective degrade the intellectual power of the author under review. Thus these works may help us to define in what Eriugena's originality really consisted. It is only after Marenbon demonstrated how Eriugena shared an interest in logic with his contemporaries that it became relevant

⁷ J. MARENBO, *From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre. Logic, Theology and Philosophy in the Early Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1981.

⁸ See J.J. CONTRENI, *The Cathedral School of Laon from 850 to 930: Its Manuscripts and Masters*, München 1978.

⁹ See ch. 11 (Eriugena's Immediate Influence) 198–212. This chapter is an updated version of an earlier article by the same author: see J.J. O'MEARA, «Eriugena's Immediate Influence» in: W. BEIERWALTES (ed.), *Eriugena Redivivus. Zur Wirkungsgeschichte seines Denkens im Mittelalter und im Übergang zur Neuzeit*, 13–25.

¹⁰ See MARENBO, op. cit., chs. 1, 2, 3.

to see where he differed from them, so as to set in relief his particular logical intentions¹⁰. The same can be said about O'Meara's findings when focusing on Eriugena's Augustinianism, which was found exemplified in the *De praedestinatione*. While understood by his contemporaries, Eriugena's understanding of Augustine was different from theirs, which for them underlined his distance from Augustine as a dogmatic authority. In modern views we can still trace some Eriugenian loyalty towards Augustine¹¹.

Next to a historical approach various philosophical approaches to Eriugena's works have been undertaken. These approaches were mainly intended to facilitate our analysis of Eriugena's doctrine, so as finally to reach a coherent evaluation of it. A good example is found in G. Schrimpf, *Das Werk des Johannes Scottus Eriugena im Rahmen des Wissenschaftsverständnisses seiner Zeit* (Münster 1982). In his book Schrimpf gives an analysis of Eriugena's works which is designed to prove to a high degree the consistency of Eriugena's thought. Before, it had often been the case that, through lack of interpretive models, the various strands of Eriugena's thought were found impossible to put together. This often led to harsh and unjustified opinions, whereby Eriugena was put down as a sophist, arguing only for the sake of arguing and without any substantial basis for the argument. Schrimpf took his starting-point in the Carolingian educational system, which was based upon the liberal arts. He showed how for Eriugena these arts, among which he assigned a central role to the art of dialectics, became the primary tools for his analysis of the universe. In his analysis he not only pointed to their instrumental function, but he also made it clear how the instruments used by Eriugena could affect and shape the contents of his arguments¹².

A somewhat different approach was followed by C. Riccati, who analyzed the fundamental notion of *processio* in Eriugena and in Nicholas of Cues, where it is named *explicatio*¹³. With his analysis of *processio*, Riccati indicates that Eriugena has a theophanic view of creation. The contrary notions of *processio* and *reditus*, by which Eriugena describes the continuous process of creation and its return to God, function as the directional principles in the *Periphyseon*. In this his main work Eriugena attempted to analyze *natura*, a term which he used to indicate the totality of all things, both the things that can be understood by the mind and the things that surpass the mind's grasp. Because such a vastly con-

¹¹ For an account of Eriugena's dealing with Augustine in his *De praedestinatione*, see J.J. O'MEARA, *Eriugena*, ch. 3 (The «Controversialist») 32–50.

¹² See esp. chapters 2 and 3, 21–131, which deal with Eriugena's intellectual and methodological development from the *Annotationes in Marcianum* to his *De praedestinatione*.

¹³ C. RICCATI, «*Processio*» et «*Explicatio*». *La doctrine de la création chez Jean Scot et Nicolas de Cues*, Napoli 1983. For a good review of this book, see W. BEIERWALTES, in: *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 17 (1986) 272–277.

ceived universe would rightly seem uncontrollable for the human mind which designed it, it is to the principles of procession and return that Eriugena sticks as his dialectical guidelines; they guarantee that one can still trace the development of nature.

With the observation of close parallels between the philosophical and the Christian-theological aspects of Eriugena's doctrine, a real basis for comparing the two methods was brought to light. The more such parallels between theology and philosophy became clear, the more it was revealed that the discrepancies were far fewer than might have been expected when looked at from afar. In fact, it may not be good to deal with theology and philosophy as very different in Eriugena, as he himself has brought out the maxim: *Conficitur veram religionem veram philosophiam esse, veram philosophiam veram religionem*¹⁴. By stating his view on this matter so clearly, Eriugena gives a pointed formulation to a thought which actually underlies most early medieval systems of reflection.

A third possible approach to Eriugena's ideas has been tried out by scholars like E. Jeauneau and B. Stock; it may be labelled the literary approach to Eriugena's texts. It involves a circumspect textual analysis of his works, in which the organization of themes and variation of literary styles are studied in order to gauge and measure the original depth of the author's ideas. The text of Eriugena's works forms the starting-point from which this approach takes off, but it also forms the final goal to which this approach in a way leads us back. For aiming at a careful and prudent clarification of Eriugena's ideas, it proceeds by answering such questions as how he has phrased them and why he has chosen this particular method of presentation.

From this short description it can perhaps be understood that the integrity of the texts is of foremost importance in this approach. B. Stock has demonstrated this in his article on Eriugena's anthropology, where he subjected a longer Eriugenian text, namely Book IV of the *Periphyseon*, to a thorough process of close reading¹⁵. Thus, by following closely the flexibility of the original text, he was able to nuance some opinions presenting too schematic a portrait of Eriugena's doctrine, such as his preference for the Greeks in his interpretation of paradise, which does not thereby entail the disparagement of all Augustine's views, but results instead in a very complicated allegory of paradise¹⁶.

Given the importance of the integral text, it should cause little surprise that another scholar with a notably literary approach, *viz.* E. Jeauneau, has also been responsible for many of the critical editions that were brought out of Eriugena's

¹⁴ *De praed.* I, 1.

¹⁵ B. STOCK, «The Philosophical Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena», in *Studi medievali* 3a ser. 8, 1–57. Despite its «philosophical» title, I prefer to consider this publication as a textual study.

¹⁶ See STOCK, art. cit., 27–46.

works¹⁷. At the moment he is preparing the edition of the two remaining books of the *Periphyseon*, Books IV and V, after I.P. Sheldon-Williams, with the assistance of L. Bieler and J.J. O'Meara, had brought out the first three volumes¹⁸. Because of Jeauneau's renown as an editor, it is often forgotten that he has also a long career in terms of <creative writing> on Eriugena, as a result of which he has produced a great number of articles and lectures dealing with various aspects of Eriugena. Among these his «Quatre thèmes érigéniens» deserve perhaps the most praise, since they give us a very subtle and rather unmatched insight in the complexity of Eriugena's literary style¹⁹. By tracing Eriugena's metaphors back to their original source, Jeauneau reveals their function in Eriugena's discourse, elevating them above the level of ornamental value²⁰.

After this exposition of the variety of present day methods in dealing with Eriugenian thought, I should like to discuss the three books under review here. Two of the three books to be dealt with in this article clearly fall under what I have defined as the literary category. The first is a book by E. Jeauneau, entitled *Etudes érigéniennes*. It involves the collection of all the essays written by this author during the past twenty years, from 1969 to 1987. In this volume Jeauneau's far-reaching interest in and knowledge of Eriugena's works is adequately reflected. Of the twenty-two essays that have been gathered in it the earlier ones have been updated by the author. The book is divided into five parts. The first deals with <Jean Scot et son milieu> (9–210): in it we find articles about Eriugena's knowledge of Greek and about the ninth century schools of Laon and Auxerre. The second part focuses on specific Eriugenian themes, containing among other essays a reprint of the above mentioned «Quatre thèmes érigéniens» (211–338). The third part deals with the structure of Eriugena's thought. While Eriugena's doctrine is unmistakably dominated by the Neoplatonic scheme of procession and return, Jeauneau cleverly shows how this scheme underwent sufficient modification from its integration with biblical themes (339–394). The fourth part deals with various Eriugenian manuscripts (395–522) and the fifth finally with Eriugena's so-called <Nachleben> (523–706).

¹⁷ E. JEAUNEAU (ed.), *Jean Scot. Homélie sur le prologue de Jean*, Paris 1969, SC 169 and *Jean Scot. Commentaire sur l'évangile de Jean*, Paris 1972, SC 180.

¹⁸ I.P. SHELDON-WILLIAMS; L. BIELER, *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena, Periphyseon (De Divisione Naturae. Liber primus, secundus, tertius)*, Dublin 1968–81. *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, vol. VII, IX, XI.

¹⁹ E. JEAUNEAU, *Quatre thèmes érigéniens*. Conférences Albert-le-Grand, Institut d'Etudes médiévales Albert-le-Grand, Montréal–Paris 1974.

²⁰ I would like particularly to point to the third of the four Eriugenian themes: «le plaisir de l'esprit», as Jeauneau proves that Eriugena's imagery concerning the role of reason is full of philosophical meaning. See op. cit., 60–78 (= *Etudes érigéniennes*, 256–274).

In my discussion of Jeaneau's collection of essays I would here like to concentrate on the first three parts, for in my view these demonstrate particularly Jeaneau's literary strength in his research on this topic, the later parts being linked more closely to his editorial activities. In the first part of the book Jeaneau not only demonstrates his capacity as a learned expert on late Carolingian culture as well as on the philosophical and patristic legacy to be found in Eriugena, but moreover he proves to be able to link his technical expertise to a profound insight into the concerns of the culture under review. In the same way his articles on Eriugena's knowledge of Greek never degenerate into a dry and factual account of Eriugena's flaws – a tempting possibility, since the latter's knowledge would by modern standards be judged as rather poor – but always keep an open eye for his intentions. Despite the flaws in his translations, Eriugena has a sophisticated understanding of the philosophical notions expressed by the Greek authors he translated²¹.

Of the Greek authors studied by Eriugena, Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, Jeaneau reveals a particular fondness for Maximus. He has recently edited the *Ambigua ad Iohannem* in Eriugena's Latin version²². To a certain extent Eriugena himself revealed the same fondness for Maximus, because he claimed that it was through the medium of Maximus that he had gained his understanding of Pseudo-Dionysius, and thus in fact of the whole Neoplatonic legacy²³. With his fondness for Maximus, Jeaneau, directly and indirectly, advises us always to consult the works of Maximus when our reading of Eriugena may leave certain problems unsolved. It is by going back to Maximus that Jeaneau managed to clarify certain problems in Eriugena. Thus he has traced Eriugena's idea of a double return of man to God (*a reditus generalis* by which all men will return to their pristine paradisiacal state alongside a *reditus specialis* by which the elect will return beyond that state to God himself), back to Maximus²⁴. The question of the double return, mentioned in *Periphyseon* V 1001 A–B, had so far been strikingly puzzling.

²¹ See *Etudes érigéniennes*, Part I, ch. 3: «Jean Scot Erigène et le grec», 85–132. In this article Jeaneau investigates Eriugena's motives for translating from the Greek. He also takes a look at the technical aids he could make use of. On the basis of his analyses he develops a fresh eye for the socio-cultural atmosphere in which Eriugena's translations were made, see esp. 122–132.

²² *Maximi Confessoris Ambigua ad Iohannem iuxta Iohannis Scotti Eriugenaë latinam interpretationem*, Turnhout 1988, CCSG 18.

²³ See PL 122, 1195A–B: «*Fortassis autem qualicunque apologia defensus, non tam densas subierim caligines, nisi viderem praefatum beatissimum Maximum saepissime in processu sui operis obscurissimas sanctissimi theologi Dionysii Areopagitae sententias, cuius symbolicos theologicosque sensus nuper Vobis similiter iubentibus transtuli, introduxisse mirabilique modo dilucidasse, ...*»

²⁴ See *Etudes érigéniennes*, 375–394 on the theme of *reditus*. The source for the distinction between *reditus generalis* and *reditus specialis* is to be found in Maximus Confessor's *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* LIV, scholion 18 (22), CCG 7, 474–475.

This issue of the double return brings us to the third part of Jauneau's book, for it is in this part that he analyzes it extensively. It is in an essay exclusively devoted to the theme of nature's return that we can find many references to Maximus. In this essay he gives a detailed analysis of the latter part of Book V. In a magnificent overview he creates order in the seemingly random sequence of parables used by Eriugena towards the end of Book V. Moreover, these biblical parables seem to be rich with philosophical meaning, which gives the ending of the *Periphyseon* an electrifying touch, as one of Eriugena's motives, the unity of reason and authority, seems now to have been put into effective practice. The first essay in this third part of the book, the one on the division of the sexes in Eriugena and Gregory of Nyssa, has not lost any of its significance since it first came out in 1980²⁵.

The second part of the book contains some valuable contributions to our knowledge of Eriugena's handling of literary themes. I already mentioned the «Quatre thèmes érigéniens», but apart from these, there are noteworthy essays on the symbolic meaning of the sea²⁶, often used as a metaphor in Eriugena's thought, and of fire²⁷. It is especially the one on fire which should draw our attention here, for it has not been published before. Fire and light-metaphysics are themes of great importance in the ancient and medieval world. Despite their «pre-scientific» character, they seem to have regained much of their original esteem in modern times, as in a study by Bachelard²⁸. Thus Jauneau's essay here is in fact a valuable suggestion to re-open this field of investigation; it could perhaps be the starting-point for more approaches to the richness of physical symbolism in Eriugena as well as in other medieval writers²⁹. Apart from these physical metaphors, Jauneau also pays attention to Eriugena's figures of speech, such as his handling of irony as a rhetorical motif. The same judgement of Jauneau skilfully integrating the formal aspects of a problem with its material contents holds true here. Eriugena's use of irony is even applied to the Bible itself, as God's decision to create woman next to man in Genesis 2:18 («*Dixit quoque Dominus Deus: Non est bonum esse hominem solum: faciamus ei adiutorium*

²⁵ *Etudes érigéniennes*, 341–364. This essay was first published in W. Beierwaltes (ed.), *Eriugena. Studien zu seinen Quellen*, Heidelberg 1980, 33–54.

²⁶ «Le symbolisme de la mer chez Jean Scot Erigène», *Etudes érigéniennes*, 287–296.

²⁷ «Jean Scot et la métaphysique du feu», *Etudes érigéniennes*, 297–319.

²⁸ G. BACHELARD, *La psychanalyse du feu*. Collection «Idées» 73, Paris 1968.

²⁹ In her important study of Gregory of Tours, G. de Nie has devoted a chapter to the metaphoric power of fire and light in early medieval texts. See G. DE NIE, *Views from a Many-Windowed Tower. Studies of Imagination in the Works of Gregory of Tours*, Amsterdam 1987, esp. ch. 3 (Light and fire in a «dark world»: metaphors and reality), 133–211. In the forthcoming proceedings of the 1989 Bad Homburg colloquium on Eriugena, J. McEvoy will publish an article on light-metaphysics in Eriugena and Grosseteste.

simile sibi») is interpreted as an example of <divine irony>³⁰. Jeauneau demonstrates how Eriugena has to resort to this metaphorical interpretation of the biblical text, as for him the division of the sexes was a result of man's fall.

I would like to end my discussion of Jeauneau's book by pointing to his essay on William of Malmesbury, Eriugena's first English editor and biographer. Although not very reliable as a biographer, Jeauneau still has a lot of sympathy for William, for he has preserved a valuable text tradition of the *Periphyseon* (ms. Cambridge, Trinity College 0.5.20)³¹. Alongside the *Clavis physicae* of Honorius Augustodunensis, William's edition is our only witness to the second redaction of the *Periphyseon* (Periphyseon) for some parts of Book IV and all of Book V, which are not to be found in the Carolingian manuscripts. With Maximus as Eriugena's favourite predecessor, and William as his favourite admirer, Jeauneau has considerably broadened our perspective on Eriugena, who has been at the heart of his research efforts for more than twenty years. Next to Cappuyns, as the initiator of all the efforts in this field, it is almost impossible to think of anyone during this century to match Jeauneau's subtle understanding of his topic as well his remarkable interest in it.

The next book I would like to review is that by G. Madec. It is entitled *Jean Scot et ses auteurs. Annotations érigéniennes*, and by this literary title it already reveals that it should be located in the same category as Jeauneau's work. It also contains some speculative theory. Like Jeauneau, Madec is an eminent editor who has proven his great scholarship by providing us with a critical edition of Eriugena's *De praedestinatione*³². Despite this important contribution Madec's greatest renown is not in the field of Eriugenian studies, but in the field of Augustinian studies. However, his work on Eriugena has close links to that on Augustine because he endeavours to clarify the doctrinal and literary links between these two thinkers. As each of them is a giant in his own way, that has of course not been an easy task. Eriugena's doctrine is so permeated with Augustinian issues and quotations that it is almost impossible to isolate them. Madec is very aware of this problem. He has taken the necessary precautions not to fall into the trap of overschematizing Eriugena's adherence to Augustine in too positive or too negative a way. The crux of his view seems to be that we should keep a fresh eye for the presence of Augustine in Eriugena's text, instead of

³⁰ See «Jean Scot et l'ironie», *Etudes érigéniennes*, 321–337. For the <divine irony> passage in Genesis 2:18, see 325–327.

³¹ On William of Malmesbury, see also E. JEAUNEAU, «Le renouveau érigénien du XII^e siècle» in: W. BEIERWALTES (ed.), *Eriugena Redivivus*, Heidelberg 1987, 26–46. For the role of William in editing and transmitting the *Periphyseon*, see 32–33.

³² G. MADEC (ed.), *Iohannis Scotti de divina praedestinatione liber*. Turnhout 1978, CCCM 50.

establishing rigid criteria to measure the extent of Eriugena's doctrinal Augustinianism³³.

In the last essay of this volume, called «La notion d'augustinisme philosophique, Essai de clarification», Madec argues that there is no single concept of philosophical Augustinianism. For him Augustine's philosophy and his theology prove to be ultimately one, as they are unbreakably united in his «intelligence de la foi»³⁴. Instead of trying to distill a body of true Augustinianism underneath Augustine's wide-ranging thoughts, we should cherish the multitude and variety of Augustine's opinions, which Madec claims not to lack coherence despite their broad scope³⁵. Though this last essay of Madec's is without apparent links to the works of Eriugena, as the author himself admits in the prologue to this volume, it is therefore not without relevance for the study of Eriugena. Firstly, it can give us a clear indication of the setting of Madec's scholarly enterprises, thus making it clear to us at what he aims: a true understanding of Augustine. Secondly, by being intentionally undogmatic about what can be defined as true Augustinianism, Madec can widen the circle of Augustine's followers so as to make room for some of his less likely students. Thus on p. 160 he sees Eriugena, next to Anselm, as a thinker following some Augustinian ideas, elaborating them not in a docile but in an independent and creative way.

Because of his broad knowledge of Augustine, which is nowhere dogmatically confined, Madec is also able to nuance our view of the *Periphyseon*, which scholarship has often claimed to be anti-Augustinian. As in this work Eriugena seems clearly to prefer the Greeks to Augustine, it is particularly tempting to deny Augustinian influence here. Rather than taking this at face value and proclaiming Eriugena an unloyal follower of Augustine, Madec scrutinizes Eriugena's handling of Augustine very carefully, coming up with a much more nuanced opinion. In his article «Le dossier augustinien du *Periphyseon* de Jean Scot» he adds valuable information to the critical apparatus of the Sheldon-Williams editions of Books I, II and III of the *Periphyseon*, while he also gives information on Books IV and V as found in PL 122³⁶. From his listings it can be seen that there is much more Augustinian influence in the *Periphyseon* than one would expect, given the accepted view that Eriugena would prefer any of the Greeks to Augustine.

³³ See «Observations sur le dossier augustinien du *Periphyseon*», 63–72. See esp. 70: Je ne renonce pas pour autant à comprendre, autant qu'il m'est possible, la doctrine de Jean Scot et, comme partie intégrante de sa doctrine, son comportement à l'égard d'Augustin et des autres. J'estime, au contraire, que l'observation patiente des détails, d'un bout à l'autre du *Periphyseon*, oblige à considérer le «phénomène» augustinien dans son ensemble, sous ses divers aspects, et en rapport avec les autres «phénomènes» patristiques.

³⁴ Op. cit., 147–161, esp. 160.

³⁵ Op. cit., 150.

³⁶ Op. cit., 73–137.

He gives a theoretical foundation for his views on this matter in his article «Observations sur le dossier augustinien du *Periphyseon*», in which he speaks about Eriugena's Augustinian inspiration³⁷. He reveals that it is hard, if not altogether impossible, to come up with incontestable evidence for Eriugena's consultation of Augustine. Some Augustinian elements may just have been part of his «outillage mental». Yet he thinks Eriugena definitely retains some fundamental Augustinian themes: such as the coupling of *ratio* and *auctoritas*, of *intelligere* and *credere*, though he gives his own elaboration of it³⁸. His critical remarks about modern editorial practice, which sometimes informs its readers better about the provenance of certain terms in a text than the author himself may have known at the time, touch at the very heart of medieval theological writing³⁹.

Madec explores the same theme of how to define Eriugena's sources (Augustine as well as other patristic writers) in his first essay, entitled «Jean Scot et ses auteurs»⁴⁰. Apart from a theoretical exposition, this essay also contains a valuable, albeit inexhaustive, list of Eriugena's sources. It is advisable to take Madec's introductory remarks at heart before using this list.

Through his broad knowledge of Augustine, which is remarkably detailed, Madec nuances the relationship between Augustine and Eriugena by putting both authors in a much more realistic perspective. Thus he can resist the simplistic view of making the originality of the one an affront to the other, with Eriugena as the headstrong thinker who does not cherish the fundamental theology of Augustine. Rather, he sees them both as individual thinkers belonging to the same dynamic tradition, in which philosophy and theology are thoroughly and indissolubly united. Together with the indexes, among which there is a very useful one on Eriugenian passages, this book is indispensable as a handbook to analyze Eriugena's use of Augustine. Since it explores the latter almost as much as the former, I would have preferred the subtitle «Annotations érigéniennes et augustinienes».

Though I have chosen to list Madec's book in the category of literary approaches to Eriugena's works, it is also a very useful reference book. In fact, during the past decade or so, various reference works concerning Eriugena have come to light. We should think e.g. of Allard's *Indices generales* (Paris-Montréal 1983), which is a kind of concordance of Eriugena's vocabulary. Though of a somewhat different nature – we are dealing with a bibliography here – Mary Brennan's *Guide des études érigéniennes* is also a new and most welcome reference work in the field of Eriugenian studies. It should be used next to her *Bibliography*

³⁷ Op. cit., 63–72.

³⁸ Op. cit., 68.

³⁹ Op. cit., 67.

⁴⁰ Op. cit., 9–52.

of *Publication in the Field of Eriugenian Studies 1800–1975* (Spoleto 1977), to which it forms a valuable addition.

Compared with this earlier bibliography, the now published guide to Eriugenian studies reveals a slightly different set-up. It deals with a different period, from 1930–1987. The year 1930 coincides more or less with the publication of Cappuyns' seminal work, which summarized and replaced most of the study that had been done before in this field. Further, Brennan's *Guide* has a different approach in that; it not only lists the publications that have since come out, but also summarizes them. For students who are unfamiliar with Eriugena this is extremely helpful, since in general Eriugena's thinking is considered not very accessible.

The work is divided into various sections, dealing with Eriugenian studies, Eriugena's life, his works and his thought. Since after Cappuyns the study of Eriugena has developed in many directions, as I have tried to explain, this seems a wise policy. In the various conferences devoted to Eriugena, many aspects of him have been studied, which justifies such a division of topics. The summaries given by Brennan do not give any judgements. In view of the user's needs this can only be applauded, for it warrants the scholar's freedom of interpretation. On the whole, Ms Brennan's work is very thorough, her summaries precisely formulated. With the publication of her guide she puts all students of Eriugena in a privileged position, for there seem to be very few medieval authors for whom there is such a detailed bibliography available.

If I am allowed to end this review with a final conclusion, it should perhaps be the following. Though much research on Eriugena appears to have been done since Cappuyns, it seems in a way as if scholars have avoided giving larger interpretations of his work. After sixty years of carefully following in Cappuyns' footsteps and with almost all editorial work now completed, it is perhaps time to embark on a broader view of his thought. J.J. O'Meara (*Eriugena*, Oxford, 1988) and D. Moran (*The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, Cambridge 1989), which both came out after Brennan's bibliography, seem to go in this direction. Perhaps there are more attempts to follow.