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Towards Enhanced Divine-Human-Earth Relations: A Christian-Buddhist Contribution

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National University of Ireland, Cork

Department of Philosophy

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Supervisor: Professor Graham Parkes

Abstract:

The central claim of the dissertation is that lesser known and somewhat neglected, yet influential thinkers, within classical religious traditions have something worthwhile to contribute to the kind of ethos we should adopt in the face of the world's various environmental crises. Moreover an exploration of such perspectives is best done in dialogue, particularly between Eastern and Western thought.

I examine this claim primarily through a dialogue between the Christian philosopher John Scottus Eriugena and the Japanese Buddhist philosopher Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi). This dialogue, framed by the triad of divine-human-earth relations, primarily emphasises the oneness of all reality, and it finds expression in Eriugena's concept of *natura* or *phusis* and Kūkai's central teaching that the phenomenal world *is* the cosmic Buddha *Dainichi*. By highlighting this focus, I contribute to the existing academic field of ecology and religion on the subject of holism.

However, I go beyond the materialist focus that generally marks such ecological holism within that field, offering instead a more metaphysical approach. This is indicated through my use of the concept of 'immanental transcendence' to describe Eriugena's and Kūkai's dynamic, numinous and mysterious notion of reality, as well as my exploration of Eriugena's concept of *theophany* and Kūkai's notion of *kaji*. I further explore how both philosophers highlight the human role in the process of reaching enlightenment—understood as attaining union with the whole. In that regard, I note significant differences in their positions: in particular, I note that Kūkai's emphasis on bodily practices contrasts with Eriugena's more conceptual approach.

Finally to bolster my claim, I examine some ecologically oriented understandings of contemporary phenomenological approaches found particularly in the work of Jean-Luc Marion and to a lesser extent Merleau-Ponty, arguing that these reflect notions of reality and of the human role similar to those of the medieval philosophers.

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Declaration:

I confirm that no part of the material contained in this thesis has been previously submitted for any degree either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All the material is the author's own work, except for quotations and paraphrases which have been suitably indicated.

Margaret Twomey

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Introduction

I. The Context

It can be argued that an understanding of the human person as being radically separate from all other life-forms and the earth itself, what Anna Peterson calls human exceptionalism, is deeply rooted in Western culture. She traces the idea within what might be considered mainstream tradition, claiming that it reflects an ongoing effort to establish an almost complete separation between humans and the rest of the natural world.[1] This sense of separation has been a feature of classical religious and philosophical thinking, particularly classical Christianity, as well as modern science. It reflects what J. Baird Callicott (quoting Francis Cook) refers to as 'the discontinuous and object centred ontology of externally related entities traditional to western thought'. Such a worldview has been marked by an understanding of the world as created, teleological, hierarchical and anthropocentric.[2] Moreover, the focus on scientific and technological advancement has resulted in a tendency to ignore aspects of reality that cannot be measured and quantified. According to Philipp Rosemann, Heidegger saw this as an effort by Western metaphysics to eliminate the mysterious element in reality.[3]

Many argue that these understandings have facilitated a largely derogatory attitude towards the natural world, resulting in environmentally destructive behaviour that has left the planet in crises not witnessed previously by humankind.[4] This is often

[1] Anna L. Peterson, *Being Human: Ethics, Environment & Our place in the world*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001, p. 28. There are many traditions within Western thought which we can refer to as minor ones. Not all such traditions take the view of human exceptionalism—in fact the core of this dissertation is the need to explore and highlight such lesser known approaches to understanding humanity in the face of the natural world.

[2] J. Baird Callicott, *Earth Insights: Multicultural Survey of Ecological Ethics from the Mediterranean Basin to the Australian Outback*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994, paperback edition 1997, p. 88

[3] Philipp W. Rosemann, 'Causality as Concealing revelation in Eriugena: A Heideggerian Interpretation' *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 79, no. 4, 2005, p. 653

[4] Roger S. Gottlieb outlines eight major dimensions to the crisis: Global climate change, an accumulation of waste, loss of topsoil, loss of biodiversity, loss of wilderness, devastation of indigenous peoples, unsustainable lifestyles, and genetic engineering. See Roger S. Gottlieb,

described as the ecological crisis, and it is the expression I mostly use in this dissertation. Such a crisis is manifesting itself today in a critical manner in human induced global warming and climate change, the effects of which have been devastatingly obvious in many of the poorer parts of the world for some time, and now increasingly in more 'developed' parts.[5] In many ways global climate change can be understood as an umbrella term for the various dimensions of the ecological crisis.

The American author and activist Thomas Berry has over the course of his lifetime demonstrated concern for this crisis. Yet, in line with many other cultural theorists he claims it to be a symptom of a much larger cultural problem. For instance, John

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'Introduction', in Roger S. Gottlieb, (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 4—5

[5] One of the most comprehensive sources of information on human induced climate change and global warming is the Intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC). Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.ipcc.ch/ > (Accessed 29 August 2013). Established in 1988 to assess available information on the science as well as the impacts of climate change, it has since produced a series of Assessment reports as well as technical papers that are widely used by policy makers and other experts. It received the Nobel Peace Prize for its fourth Assessment report released in 2007. Its fifth report is currently being worked on and is due to be released at the end of 2014. There exists a whole host of other material on climate change but here I wish simply to make reference to three. The climate scientist Dr. James Hansen, while providing detail on different facets of climate science, points out that 'there is a social matter that contributes equally to the crisis: government greenwash.' There is considerable disparity between what governments such as the US say and what they actually do. Hansen recounts his experience as a scientist interacting with policy makers. Politicians have not been able to connect policy with what the science has been saying, particularly with regard to acceptable levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. We have gone from 280 parts per million (ppm) in 1750 to 387 ppm in 2009—a dangerously high level. Hansen points out the need to reduce to and maintain a 350 parts per million so that most life forms (including humans) will be able to live comfortably on the planet. See James Hansen, *Storms of my Grandchildren: The truth about the coming climate catastrophe and our last chance to save humanity*, London: Bloomsbury, 2009. Based on research provided primarily by the 2007 *IPCC Fourth Assessment Report* as well as the 2006 *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change* but written more like a scary novel is Gwynne Dyer's *Climate Wars*. This is concerned with the political and economic consequences of climate change. Dyer offers a number of scenarios about how countries will possibly respond to the pressures and effects of global warming as the twenty first century progresses. See Gwynne Dyer, *Climate Wars: The fight for survival as the world overheats*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008, (this edition 2010). Finally, a recent article by David Barker and David Bearce on public attitudes in the US regarding global climate change claims that believers in 'Christian end-times theology' seem less likely than others to support policy that would curb global warming. See David. C. Barker and David H. Bearce, 'End-Times Theology, the Shadow of the Future, and Public Resistance to Addressing Global Climate Change', *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 66:2, 2013, pp. 267-279, Online, Available HTTP: <http://prq.sagepub.com/cont/66/2/267>

Livingston notes that disasters are often portrayed as a series of separate incidents. Yet such incidents are 'analogous to the tip of an iceberg, [in that] they are simply the visible portion of a much larger entity, most of which lies beneath the surface, beyond our daily inspection.'[6] In summary then, we could describe the crisis that is manifesting itself in the natural world as a cultural crisis: a crisis in human self-perception vis-à-vis the other than human world, as well as a crisis in understanding the nature of that world. This dissertation is concerned with perceptions of ourselves and perceptions of the nature of reality itself.

Instead of using these more derogatory attitudes (with roots deep in Christian thought and in the Western philosophical and religious mainstream traditions) as a reason for dismissing the entire Christian tradition when it comes to dealing with the ecological crisis, this project argues instead for probing more deeply into the tradition and for recognising within it a variety of attitudes and shades of opinion, since Christianity like all the major world religions is not a monolithic reality. Moreover, as Rosemann further points out in contrast to what he terms Heidegger's one-sided critique of Western metaphysics: within the history of the 'metaphysics of presence' are counter currents that take account of the nature of reality as being mysterious—hidden as well as revealed.[7] Thus we can say with regard to understandings of the natural world there exists a certain level of ambiguity towards it. Such ambiguity is expressed in many of the world's religious traditions. Yet such ambiguity has not led to the abandonment of religion as a party in dealing with environmental concerns. Rather there has been recognition of the validity and value of religion in the search for adequate responses. Moreover this recognition has been made not just from within the various traditions but also from outside.

In making such claims about the value of religious responses religions are conscious of the need to retrieve their own sources of wisdom. This has been one of the key

[6] John Livingston, *Arctic Oil*, CBC Merchandising for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1981, p. 24

[7] Rosemann 'Causality as Concealing revelation in Eriugena' p. 654

reactions to Lynn White Junior's famous 1967 publication.[8] In fact the article itself pointed to the teachings of Francis of Assisi within the Christian tradition as having valuable insights for an ethic of care towards the natural world. Mary-Evelyn Tucker suggests the need for careful retrieval of selected scriptures and commentaries, symbols and myths, rituals and prayers as well as a 're-evaluation of particular beliefs and practices.'[9] Others, particularly those coming from a feminist context, claim that fundamental change in foundational theological understandings is required.[10] Since the publication of White's article a considerable body of literature has emerged on this work of deconstructing and retrieving material and methodologies in religious traditions, in the light of the environmental crisis. Such work belongs in the broad academic field of ecology and religion, the field of research to which this dissertation belongs.[11]

This area, which began informally in the late 1960s by endeavouring to offer scholarly responses to issues and concerns emerging from the ecological crisis, became more formalised in the early 1990s through its association with the *American Academy of Religions*. While it has focused almost exclusively on concerns about Christianity's relationship with the natural world, the last few decades have seen increasing interest in how the other world religions relate to nature. These decades have also been marked by interest from other disciplines concerned with the role of religion in human earth relations. In spite of this wide interest resulting in a

[8] Lynn White Jr., 'The *Historical Roots* of Our Ecologic Crisis', *Science*, Vol. 155:3767, 1967, pp. 1203—07

[9] Mary-Evelyn Tucker, *Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase*, Chicago & La Salle: Open Court, 2003, p. 36. This is the second Master Hsüan Hua Memorial Lecture given by her in Berkeley California in 2002.

[10] The Brazilian ecofeminist theologian Ivone Gebara speaks of the need to 'rethink Christian theology not on the basis of preset dogma but of the concrete lived experience of group that find their inspiration in the very same fountainhead of wisdom that inspired Jesus of Nazareth'. Moreover, instead of speaking about non-Christian religions, Christian thinkers need to talk more about dialogue among religious traditions, so that there is a labouring together 'in exploring new ways of sharing life among humans in the context of our earth systems.' Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999, p. 54.

[11] Bron Taylor more recently refers to this area of study as the field of religion, nature and culture—a title that is associated with the publication of Bron Taylor (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, London and New York: Thoemmes, Continuum, 2005, (this edition, 2008).

burgeoning field of research, one can point to a common theme across all the literature: how we understand the relationships between human cultures, religious expressions and the natural world itself.[12] While some of the earlier material tended to denigrate Christianity and praise the ecological credentials of religious traditions such as Buddhism, closer inspection reveals that much of the material highlights the complex nature of attitudes towards the natural world within world religions generally.

As well as noting the complexity and variety within the area of research efforts have also been made to critically reflect on the field itself. Bron Taylor has been particularly vocal in this regard, highlighting how certain assumptions underlying much of the field of research themselves require critical appraisal. For Taylor the concept of religion itself needs to be analysed rather than engaged with as such. Also, in order to understand better the issues and concerns being explored in the material, a number of review essays, such as the work of Willis Jenkins, have tried to organise and classify the literature. Jenkins recognises the necessary criticism of Taylor while pointing out more nuanced positions in other contemporary anthologies.

II. Probing the traditions

All of this points to the fact that religious discourse cannot remain aloof from environmental concerns. This is so because the very nature of the crisis in which we are immersed raises issues that revolve around the question of divine-human-earth relations, such as the nature of nature and of human nature, the issue of belonging to the natural world, the nature of being itself. These are precisely the kinds of issues that concern religious discourse, particularly religious discourse of a philosophical nature—the type of discourse that is explored in this dissertation.

[12] I shall refer to this triadic structure for short as the divine-human-earth relations

Essentially, my claim is that there are neglected but important streams within Christian thought that reflect more positive attitudes towards the natural world, and these need to be reinterpreted within the context of the ecological crisis. Moreover, the global and unprecedented nature of ecological concerns requires responses not just from individual traditions but also on a global scale from conversations among the various traditions. In particular, such conversations regarding the natural world and our place in it need to take place between western and eastern traditions as the contrasts here offer rich possibilities for new insights. In that regard this dissertation is concerned with what a comparative study of the apophatic tradition in Christianity and Japanese esoteric Buddhism might contribute to an understanding of humanity in the context of the natural world and in the light of current planetary devastation. My choice of these traditions reflects my claim that it is worthwhile engaging lesser known but influential streams within the mainstream in responding to the ecological crisis.

The apophatic or meontological tradition in the West can be understood as holding back on the more dominant ontological tradition. Jaroslav Pelikan has described it as placing a check, 'one that was often necessary, on the pretensions of theologians.'[13] It arose as a critique of what might be termed theological presumption—that there must always be a reaching beyond the language used to describe the divine.[14] This effort to recognise the inadequacy of divine imagery was first formalised by Pseudo-Dionysius with his apophatic/kataphatic distinction. The apophatic ensured that the kataphatic, with its generous use of imagery, was held up for scrutiny. Yet often those associated with the movement were seen in a less than favourable light, in part because the Christian theological tradition, wherever possible, sought certainty. Thus the apophatic tradition has held a marginal position in Western thought.

[13] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Melodies of Theology*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 7

[14] Apophasis means beyond (*apo*) the image (*phasis*) and kataphatic means according to (*kata*) the image (*phasis*). See Belden C. Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: exploring desert and mountain spirituality*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 62—5, for a concise but informative exposition on the emergence and development of the tradition.

The Greek Orthodox theologian Christos Yannaras claims that the understanding of apophaticism as a check on, or correction of, kataphatic theology is the Western understanding (as distinct from the Eastern orthodox), at least from the scholastic period, and is too limited an understanding. Rather, apophaticism is a way of acknowledging the experience of the God beyond all human concepts. The 'scholastic apophaticism' Yannaras argues 'does not oppose another kind of knowledge to the rationalist assumption' of the notion of God. It simply 'underlines the limited character of rational definitions' of God. This *apophaticism of essence* he contrasts with what he terms the Greek *apophaticism of the person*: where knowledge is understood as 'the experienced immediacy of *relatedness*, of the identity of *truthfulness* and *participation*.' The apophaticism resides in the fact that this kind of knowledge can never be exhausted in formulation. What we are about then is an acknowledgement of the experience of the God beyond any human conceptual grasp—either positive or negative—since this God is beyond being.[15]

There has been a resurgence of interest in the apophatic tradition in recent decades. Much of this late twentieth century interest draws its inspiration from the hermeneutical approach of postmodernist deconstruction such as the work of Jacques Derrida or from the fundamental ontology of Martin Heidegger. While it can be framed in the narrow sense pointed out by Yannaras, it also reflects the tendency of

[15] C. Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unavailability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite*, edited and with Introduction Andrew Louth, Trans. Haralambos Ventis, London & New York: T and T Clark International, 2005, pp. 28—9. In his writings Yannaras displays a sharp antipathy towards the West, and tends to endorse Heidegger's comprehensive condemnation of the entire western philosophical tradition since Plato. However there is more than an anti-western bias at work. In fact his overarching aim has been to preserve the insights and culture of the Greek East, which he saw as being choked by the West particularly since the Renaissance. Along with distinguishing the notions of the apophatic in the Latin and Greek, he also highlights the distinction between person and individual, and between essence and activity or energy. See Andrew Louth's Introduction, pp. 1—14, for an insightful and concise exposition of Yannaras' thought. Louth further points out that some of Yannaras' interpretation of Western theology sounds outdated, since such theology has broadened considerably from the scholastic theology in vogue when Yannaras first wrote this book. In fact many contemporary western theologians would find themselves in agreement with his thought and would find his insights are highly relevant.

the West's 'post-Enlightenment stripping away of fixed, rational structures by which meaning can be measured'.[16]

Buddhism had existed in Japan for 300 years by the time the esoteric tradition arrived in the ninth century. Over the course of that time several schools came from China. Like Confucianism, Buddhism had been accommodated by, and had accommodated, the existing indigenous tradition of Japan: Shinto. It helped preserve Shinto values and practices. The esoteric tradition itself had behind it a thousand years of development in terms of philosophical understanding and ritual expression, and the brand to be developed in Japan, Shingon, would also be influenced by Shinto. This form of Buddhism is generally known as *mikkyo* which can be translated as 'secret teaching.' Briefly this suggests that phenomena that may or may not have a religious value 'are revealed to contain a dimension that reflects a more profound, a more "true" reality.' All elements of existence have 'both a mundane, exoteric meaning...and a religious, esoteric meaning.' The latter may need 'esoteric decoding formulas' but these are available only to initiates.[17] Parallels between western apophatic thought and Mahayana Buddhism in particular have been the subject of academic study for the past few decades.[18]

In order to attain a manageable focus for a conversation between these traditions, and in endeavouring to engage a philosophical religious discourse, I develop a dialogue between two thinkers from the ninth century: John Scottus Eriugena, the Irish philosopher credited with introducing the first comprehensive apophatic tradition in

[16] Lane, *Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, p. 66. See also Martin Laird, 2001, ''Whereof We Speak': Gregory of Nyssa, Jean-Luc Marion and the Current Apophatic Rage', *Heythrop Journal*, 42:1, p. 1-12, Online, Available HTTP: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-2265.00151> (accessed 20 May 2013). Laird claims that the debate is too narrowly focused, framed in the apophatic-kataphatic dialectic, resulting in an impoverished sense of the concept.

[17]James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis, John C. Maraldo (eds.) *Japanese Philosophy : a sourcebook*, Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 2011, p. 47

[18] The publications of *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* by Daisetz T. Suzuki in 1957, and *Die Gottesgeburt in der Seele,* by Shizuteru Ueda in 1965 highlighted these parallels. In particular, Suzuki, in his efforts to link Meister Eckhart with Zen Buddhism, explores Eckhart's teachings on detachment and the "pure Nothing," pointing out the parallels with the concept of emptiness or *śūnyatā* in Buddhism.

the West, and Kūkai (or Kōbō Daishi), the founder of the Shingon school of esoteric Buddhism in Japan.[19] In fact, Kūkai is the beginning of a long history in Japan of fascination with the 'esoteric perspective.'

Although I have been speaking of a mainly religious discourse, this dissertation is primarily a philosophical enterprise. I highlight this distinction because the separation of philosophical and religious discourse is and has been a matter of course in academia. However this is not the whole picture, and in fact it is only a reality since the birth of modernity. Older pre-modern traditions in the West always kept religious and philosophical speculation together. Moreover, eastern traditions have never made such definitive distinctions. For instance, in Buddhist philosophy this is seen in the reflection of modern thinkers on the tradition. Hans Waldenfels says of Nagarjuna: 'Whatever he has to say philosophically all has to do with clearing the way for enlightenment and with the radical liberation of man from all false attachments that obstruct that way.'[20] With regard to Zen, Heinrich Dumoulin holds that 'metaphysical speculation, religious practice, and mystical experience come very near each other and form a unity.'[21]

While I highlight the fact that pre-modern traditions in the west hold together philosophy and religion, there are differences between east and west. Both developed speculative philosophical traditions, yet the east developed more fully in unison with religious objectives and practices: what is referred to as "intrinsically religious." In speaking of Buddhist philosophy we need to understand it as 'a mode of speculation that takes as its radical point of departure the Buddhist religious experience of reality as expressed in the Four Holy Truths', and 'provides a systematic explanation of that

[19] Such a possible comparison was suggested by Graham Parkes. See Graham Parkes, 'Mountain Brushes, Ink of Ocean: Nature as Sacred in Japanese Buddhism', in Herausgegeben von Hannelore Eisenhofer-Halim, (ed.) *Wandel zwischen den Welten: Festschrift fur Johannes Laube*, Berlin: Peter Lang, 2003, p. 562

[20] Cited in Jan Van Bragt, 'Translator's Introduction' in Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, Trans. Jan Van Bragt, Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1983, p. xxvii

[21] Cited in Van Bragt, 'Translator's Introduction', p. xxvii

religious doctrine and its attitude, and constructs for it an appropriate logic.'[22] However in the West, by holding onto the Greek heritage with the emergence of Christianity, the development of both philosophy and religion is in a context 'laden with tensions.' For instance the individual tends to assume one world view when reading spiritual material and another in moments of rational analysis. It is different with Buddhist philosophy, where the unity of the religious and the speculative had never been severed. Having said this, such tension does not mean that comparisons are impossible; rather they serve merely to highlight the unique contributions of both. With regard specifically to Eriugena (and perhaps again as expression of his unique contribution), he is very emphatic in stating that true religion is true philosophy and vice versa. Furthermore, he claims that the pursuit of truth is more than purely academic - it is intellectual contemplation for the ultimate purpose of union with the divine.[23]

A brief biographical note as well as overview of the cultural and historical context of Eriugena and Kūkai reveals how part of their strengths is that they stand out as being innovative and creative for their time. Yet they remain undeniably within their respective traditions. These criteria make them candidates for the focus of this dissertation. In a comparison of Aquinas and Kūkai, Brinkman highlights how both thinkers, belonged in traditions 'that emphatically held to a wholly transcendent and absolutely other sense of God and of the *Dharmakāya* vís-a-vís this realm of our experience and knowledge.' As counter to such traditions both offered new ways 'of perceiving the intimacy of the infinite and absolute to our finite and relative realm of experience', claiming that what was considered to be 'beyond all discursive thought and description per se is known by its effects.' The power to make known the sacred is best understood as the numinous in all elements of reality. Thus both philosophers represent a certain 'threshold in and transformation of their respective traditions.' Moreover Brinkman claims these novel insights and 'the new integration with which they informed their respective traditions' have given us a 'basis for reflection on themes relevant to Buddhist-Christian studies and central to contemporary

[22] Van Bragt, 'Translator's Introduction', p. xxvi

[23] Van Bragt 'Translator's Introduction', p. xxvi

concerns.'[24] While Aquinas may be groundbreaking in this regard, my contention is that a similar contribution from the Christian side was made by Eriugena some three centuries prior to the more widely known Aquinas. Furthermore, Kūkai's writings have been described as a 'rich source of philosophical inquiry' yet they always remain within the context of 'Mahayana' Buddhist doctrine.'[25]

Eriugena's philosophical thought validates Phillip Rosemann's claim that he (Eriugena) stands out in Western metaphysics as being an example of the kind of countercurrent that exists within Heidegger's 'metaphysics of presence.' Eriugena formulated a philosophy where 'the interplay of revelation and concealment stands at the very core of reality.'[26] Dermot Moran suggests that Eriugena's aim was to achieve salvation by *gnostica scientia*—secret, hidden knowledge. Reality is understood to be a 'dynamic process of self-manifestation, at once manifesting itself as Creator and created, and in the same dialectical process withdrawing into its nameless origin.'[27] Likewise Kūkai's focus is to make known the esoteric wisdom—that which is more truly real but at some level mysterious—in order to achieve enlightenment, while also recognising the exoteric aspect of reality. Moreover, Eriugena's strongly positive attitude towards human beings stands out against the overwhelming focus on humankind's sinful nature, which characterised the age. Similarly, Kūkai's understanding of the Buddha *Dainichi* 'communicating' as the cosmos itself (*Dainichi* is understood by Kūkai to both express itself and to do so as the phenomenal world), as well as his focus on the possibility of attaining enlightenment in this very existence, marked a departure within Buddhist understandings of his time. His insistence on the possibility of attaining enlightenment in this very body emphasises his affirmative attitude towards the

[24] John Brinkman, 'Harmony, Attribute of the Sacred and Phenomenal in Aquinas and Kūkai' in *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Vol. 15, 1995, p. 107

[25] Heisig et al, *Japanese Philosophy: a sourcebook*, p. 47

[26] Rosemann 'Causality as Concealing revelation in Eriugena, p. 654

[27] Dermot Moran, Time, Space and Matter in the *Periphyseon*: an Examination of Eriugena's understanding of the physical world' in F. O'Rourke (ed.) *At the Heart of the Real*, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992, p. 67—8.

phenomenal world as the realm where the highest enlightenment is attained, as well as emphasising his belief in the human potential to achieve that enlightenment.

A cursory glance at Eriugena's life and context reveals that his knowledge of Greek was unusual for a time when the links between the Latin West and Greek East were weak. Moreover, his ability in this regard gave him intellectual status particularly through his translations of the works of pseudo-Dionysius—the originator of the apophatic tradition. His almost total pursuit of a rational explanation for the nature of things, through the use of a dialectical method of reasoning, expresses his courage in an age where submission to authority and tradition was uppermost. His desire to bring together the two intellectual worlds of Greek and Latin into a coherent schema is what we find expressed throughout his writings. This reflects the influence of a range of Church fathers on his thought as well as his ability to be a great synthesiser. In this regard Eriugena is not afraid to contradict accepted tradition. His Irish background is seen in his awareness of the need to balance the notion of immanence with the hidden mystery of God, a dynamic understanding that differed markedly from Augustine. Having said this, Eriugena is anxious to reflect received wisdom, frequently citing Augustine in a manner that portrays great deference. Moreover his speculative schema, which can be described as Neoplatonic, can equally be described in terms of the traditional Creation-Fall-Redemption framework. Eriugena in many respects epitomises the tension between pagan Neoplatonic philosophy and Christian religious beliefs spoken of earlier.

Kūkai also balanced between a life of seclusion in his remote centre Mt. Kōya and a life of participation in the busy world of administration and study in Kyoto. In that regard he leaves us with a philosophical system that is both encyclopaedic and critical. Yet he needs to be understood as someone immersed in the indigenous culture of Shinto, and who managed to achieve an acceptable synthesis of the traditions of Shinto and esoteric Buddhism through identifying elements of overlap. Key among them, through the notion of *kami* and the principle of *hosshin seppō*, is the idea that all phenomena express the sacred. Kūkai's efforts at balance are seen in

his overriding wish to hold together theory and practice and, in that regard, he emphasises the *sanmitsu*—the three mysteries of *mudra, mantra,* and *mandala*.

While standard approaches to understanding Kūkai suggest that he was only interested in demonstrating the superiority of esoteric teaching—emphasising his creation of a new school of thought, a new form of Buddhism—more recent research indicates that his overwhelming emphasis was on a different approach to Buddhist thought. He saw the possibility of esoteric readings of exoteric as well as esoteric texts. Thus Kūkai's originality is not so much associated with his introduction of a new form of Buddhism, but with a new and refreshing approach to the traditions of Buddhist thought.

Eriugena's concept of *natura,* which is presented in the opening sentence of his main work the *Periphyseon,* provides the metaphysical framework for his entire philosophical enterprise, using it as his term for describing the whole of reality. Within that context Eriugena explores the various aspects of reality in terms of a two-fold and a four-fold division. Such divisions are not real or fixed: rather they are a way of expressing the view that reality is the continuous restless unfolding of what is hidden—the eternal manifesting of the unmanifest. For Eriugena the human mind is the leading principle of this process, but at the same time humanity is to be understood as embedded in the larger reality of *natura*.

Kūkai's conception of the Buddha underpins his entire philosophical enterprise and gives rise to his two central doctrines that the Buddha's reality embodiment expounds the true teachings, and that the achievement of Buddha nature is in, through, and with one's body. At the heart of Kūkai's teaching is the concept of embodiment. Moreover this notion highlights the very close connection in Kūkai's philosophy between theory and practice. It is very evident in Kūkai that enlightenment is achieved only through engagement in esoteric practices.

III. The Dialogue

The central question that I pursue in the dissertation is how a dialogue between these two medieval philosophers can contribute to the task of thinking and acting ecologically—of thinking and acting in a more sensitive manner towards the phenomenal world as a whole. In responding to such a question I firstly focus on ecologically oriented themes that connect the insights of both Eriugena and Kūkai, and secondly I explore some ecologically oriented understandings of more contemporary thought that reflect notions of reality similar to the two thinkers. The triadic structure of the nature of divine-human-earth relationships provides the ecological themes. This is an appropriate framework to use firstly because it frames the field of ecology and religion. More pertinently it offers a comprehensive approach to human earth relationships, and the place of religion within them. Thus I explore concepts of ultimate reality, the phenomenal world, and the human in relation to these.

In exploring a concept like the divine we are immediately in difficulty since such a concept tends to be associated with the monotheistic religions of the west. In contrast, East-Asian traditions tend not to have the idea of God. At the same time notions of an ultimate principle do exist, and in order to convey what both Eriugena and Kūkai mean by such a principle some kind of common ground or commonly acceptable terminology needs to be established. Therefore I mostly use the more neutral term ultimate reality, particularly in referring to what might be considered Kūkai's notion of 'divinity.'[28]

Neither philosopher focuses on a reality elsewhere in the sense of a separate ontological realm that suggests a kind of dualism. Overwhelmingly they wish to maintain a sense of one reality. At the same time this reality has a depth-dimension—a hidden numinous aspect to it—that 'prevents' its exploitation because

[28]In a related sense it is important to note that the tradition of negative theology highlights the difficulty of notions of divinity in the west also. See the prologue in Gordan D. Kaufman, *In the beginning...Creativity*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004, pp. 1—32. Kaufman argues that the term God is one of the most complex in the English language, with 'layers and dimensions of meaning', one that is 'full of problems and difficulties.'

it is more than a simple resource. Thus both Eriugena and Kūkai offer what we might term transcendent and immanent senses of ultimate reality but to varying degrees. While immanence is a central feature of their thought, an emphasis on a notion of absolute transcendence, which is a central feature of Eriugena, is not to be found in Kūkai. I argue that the concept of immanent transcendence can be applied to both. Because of the paradox inherent in such a concept it is possible to use it to talk about the kind of equivocation found in Kūkai's position. Moreover this concept would more accurately describe Eriugena's position than would an over emphasis on absolute transcendence. In grappling to communicate their notions of ultimate reality the question of language is raised. For Kūkai, this concerns the fact that the usual forms of expression need to be supplemented by others such as ritual practices. More discursive forms of expression need the symbolic language associated with the *sanmitsu*, which are in all phenomena, and together they convey in different ways the Dharma—*Dainichi's* self-expression. Eriugena highlights the need to resort to the two branches of theology—the kataphatic and apophatic—to express the divine most accurately. He relates his apophatic language for the divine mystery to the notion of theophany: there is a movement from the 'nothingness' of God (understood in the sense of 'more-than' or 'excess') to creation understood as theophanic expression.

Both philosophers express a dynamic sense of the phenomenal world and view it in a positive light. Kūkai's background and the influence of Shinto meant that he was influenced by an environment where human and natural were intimately related. Moreover the influence of his constant returning to his mountain retreat to meditate is reflected in his writings, giving expression to a sense of nature taming the human mind rather than culture controlling nature. This contrasted with court writings of the time where poetry was used to capture and transform natural beauty. Eriugena's dynamic sense of the phenomenal world can be attributed to his Irish-Celtic background and his Neoplatonism. This dynamic understanding is a departure from the more static standard version of creation associated with Augustine, and it gives to creation a more active role as the manifestation of the divine mystery. In spite of the dynamism inherent in both accounts of the phenomenal world, Eriugena maintains the traditional Christian concepts of creator and creation, but more as a kind of

'dualistic' oneness. Kūkai's account, on the other hand, suggests a type of 'monistic' oneness. The six Great Elements are both creating and created. Unlike Eriugena where God is ultimate cause of all things, there is no true cause to reality other than the causeless cause, which in effect is the absence of cause. Yet, Eriugena's divine mystery, being the nothingness beyond being (seen only in its effects), means that ultimate causality is also a nothingness, best understood via Umberto Eco's image of an onion.

Eriugena and Kūkai in different ways suggest that the phenomenal world both points to the numinous and is that numinous or ultimate truth expressing itself. The use of the interaction of concepts like text and world helps us understand this. Esoteric texts and esoteric readings of texts reflect the world not in the sense of representing but in a more material sense, leading to the understanding of the text as the world and the world as the text. As manifestation of God, the world can be seen as the text or word of God in Eriugena. God, as the meaning expressed by the text, not only grounds the text but can only be found in it.

In a sense the grappling with such understandings is not just an intellectual exercise for either philosopher; rather it is in the service of reaching enlightenment, which is the true identity of the human. A transformed vision is being sought. Enlightenment consists of seeing the world differently—seeing it as sacred—and it is achieved for Eriugena through the notion of theophany. While theophany is God's initiative, human cooperation is required in order to reach enlightenment. Kūkai offers a similar notion in the term *kaji* —the grace of the three mysteries—to indicate how the human reaches enlightenment, and is best expressed in the idea of the interpenetration of the Buddha and the one seeking enlightenment: I am in the Buddha and the Buddha is in me.

Engaging in the practices associated with the *sanmitsu* is central to reaching true reality for Kūkai, making the body (rather than mind) central to the process. The notion of a body and mind duality, as in the west, is not a part of Eastern thinking. However the concept of bodymind has been coined to indicate the lack of duality.

Kūkai gives priority to the body aspect. The mudra, mantra and mandala practices enable the practitioner to align his or her behaviour with that of the Buddha's self-expression. Ultimately it concerns a coming to an awareness of what already is true reality: the phenomenal world is *Dainichi* expressing himself. For Eriugena, the soul creates the body to express itself just as the divine creates the world as its self-expression. The mind creates the body and the entire sensible universe is what is suggested. Overall there is much greater ambiguity towards the body in Eriugena, which reflects the general western attitude toward corporeality. This is most clearly seen in his reflections on sin: while sin is related to human existence rather than human nature, the consequence of turning in on oneself (what sin effectively is for Eriugena) is the creation of the body. At the same time the body is also an aspect of coming to enlightenment. So the body (material reality) on the one hand offers possibility and on the other is seen as a source of danger. While Eriugena does not develop an understanding of praxis, like Kūkai, it can be argued that his notion of the Latin *contemplatio* or the Greek *theoria* is concerned less with thinking about reality: rather it refers directly to perceiving reality. This meant a kind of mental perception that was concerned with self-observation in relation to how one engaged with reality.[29] It was aided by a process of experiential mindfulness akin to Nishitani's notion of 'the real self-awareness of reality'.[30]

While human nature contains elements from the corporeal and intelligible worlds, Eriugena tends to emphasise its exalted role as mediator for all things. This mediator role can be contrasted with the notion found in Kūkai of the human as microcosmic expression of the macrocosmos. The emphasis here in Kūkai is on unity and on expressing what is, while in Eriugena it is about all things coming back to the One via the human, giving the human a very central role in his schema.

[29] There are here intimations of contemporary phenomenological approaches, which are concerned not just with the direct perceiving of reality but also with how that is done.

[30] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, p. 5

IV. The contemporary scene

In turning to more contemporary ecologically oriented understandings with which to link the dialogue I focus firstly on the overall nature of reality as posited in Eriugena and Kūkai, in order to ascertain how it might contribute to an ecological ethic relevant for today. A common point emerging in their thinking is the notion of alterity or the sense of the numinous in all things, which gives to reality a depth-dimension. However, this needs to be understood in the context of their strong emphasis on one ontological realm. I argue that the depth-dimension finds parallels today in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of the *il y a* and also in Jean-Luc Marion's espousal of givenness being the essence of reality. The interest in such ideas emerged from the turn in French phenomenology that began to, more seriously, take account of phenomena that lay outside of direct sensory experience. These understandings provide a basis for an ecological response appropriate to religious traditions.

Secondly, in exploring the nature and role of the human person I argue that human identity is found in responding to, or engaging with, the reality as it expresses itself in a variety of forms. This reality is most truly characterised as sacred, and humans are called out into it. It is interesting to note that this sense of reality—the really real—is what Nishitani refers to as true religion. This invitation or call outwards can also be understood as a response to the giving of the other. In that regard Marion's efforts to make the subject entirely passive are shown to be in need of critical appraisal. Moreover, the claim is that such an appraisal emerges from within Marion's work itself. On the one hand, in his efforts to remain faithful to the phenomenological tradition of Husserl he wishes to transmute the autonomous constituting subject of modernity into a passive receptor of givenness. On the other hand, he wishes to maintain an active role for such a subject.

In line with the work of Shane Mackinlay I argue for a 'middle-voiced' description of the role for the subject—that of active receptor. Rather than phenomena being understood as pure givens, they are understood within a hermeneutical space opened by the subject's active reception of the phenomena in the first place. Such a role,

which suggests a kind of passive-active dialectic, reflects the sense of the human subject found in Eriugena and Kūkai, as demonstrated by the ideas of theophany in Eriugena and *kaji* linked with the praxis of the three mysteries in Kūkai.

Finally, in fleshing out what an understanding of the human as active receptor might mean in terms of practical ecological living, I engage the work of Mark Manolopoulos. In exploring how one might comport oneself towards the phenomenal world, Manolopoulos talks of creating an ethos built on the idea of oscillational thinking on the gift—in particular a reworked notion of Marion's. There is recognition, on the one hand, of the sheer givenness of reality and, on the other, of a subject that could be described as an active receptor. In that context I explore a number of elements of such comportment towards the world. Firstly, the idea of silence as a response can be seen as exemplary since it recognises the primordial silence that marks the reception of phenomena. It honours a version of reality that is not about having all the answers or about seeing the world as resource. Moreover it is reflected in the apophatic emphasis of Eriugena and in the experience of emptiness that characterises the Buddhist tradition. As Kūkai points out true perception can only happen when we let go of the ordinary language of the everyday. Then we are able to recognise the silent boiling up of this primordial reality. A second element explored concerns our way of knowing. We engage in a kind of knowing that involves its opposite not-knowing. This is the recognition that engaging with reality as it really is means accepting that it can never be fully grasped and as such be in danger of being exploited. More interventionist type responses are then explored through the notion of violence and finally, our comportment also needs to be marked by elements such as playfulness and enjoyment. Here again is a form of oscillation: there is the danger of using nature for our own enjoyment, yet when done with an attitude of letting be, it gives rise to a gentler kind of recreation. Such elements of how one might engage as an active receptor reflect the more primordial notion of unity inherent in the positions of Eriugena and Kūkai. Thus we are part of a larger whole on which we depend and within which we play a particular role.

V. Chapter outlines

This study recognises the ambiguity and at the same time value of religious responses to the ecological crisis. Such recognition is explored at the beginning of Chapter One. Moreover, because it is concerned with a philosophical exploration of questions about human self-understandings vis-à-vis the natural world, as well as an exploration of philosophical religious approaches concerned with a more immanental understanding of ultimate reality, it contributes to the broad field of religion and ecology. Thus it is helpful to offer a cursory overview of the literature in the field. This is the subject matter of the remainder of Chapter One, making this chapter the first of two contextual chapters. Since both Eriugena and Kūkai predate contemporary reality by more than a thousand years, and in order to create as rich a dialogue as possible, a second contextual chapter (Chapter Two) is necessary to give us a sense of their worlds. This consists of a brief outline of the historical and cultural contexts of these philosophers. In the case of Eriugena I offer a brief sketch of his Irish background, of Carolingian life and culture, and of the Latin and Greek Patristic influences on his thought. Exploring Kūkai's context also entails a brief sketch of his life, as well as brief comment on the origin and arrival in Japan of esoteric Buddhism, and reference to the Shinto-Buddhist syncretism that forms the backdrop of his thought.

I conclude Chapter Two by offering a brief note on some of the main portrayals of the respective philosophical positions of Eriugena and Kūkai and outline the central concepts in their thought: the notion of *natura* in Eriugena and the idea of the embodiment of all reality in Kūkai. This leads into a very long chapter Three, which concerns the first exploration of the central question of the dissertation, and involves a comparison of the thought of Eriugena and Kūkai. There are three main areas of dialogue and these mirror my initial concern regarding the value of exploring philosophical understandings of divine-human-earth relations, as responses to current ecological destruction, as well as the value of a focus on lesser known thinkers within mainstream religious traditions.

Firstly, I approach the sense of the divine or ultimate reality found in their respective philosophies using the concepts of transcendence and immanence, noting how strongly immanental is the idea of mystery in both; secondly, I look at how the actual universe is understood in both their cosmologies, noting how the phenomenal world is understood to be the expression of what might be termed mystery for both Eriugena and Kūkai; and thirdly, I explore how the role of the human person vis-à-vis the natural world is understood in their respective schemes. This is a pivotal yet non-exploitative role. In other words, I approach the overall visions of Eriugena and Kūkai from three perspectives, that of notions of the divine or ultimate reality, of the cosmos or the phenomenal world, and that of the human as having a particular role within their overall schemes.

The second aspect of the central question is about linking the dialogue with contemporary ecological writings. This is the subject matter of Chapter Four. I take a two-fold approach here: firstly, I consider the overall nature of reality as it emerges in Eriugena and Kūkai and how that might contribute to an ecological ethic relevant for this time. Ultimately, what is at issue here is the notion of cultivating a way of life. Secondly, I focus on the kind of human subjectivity that such an ethic would suggest. This involves a notion of subjectivity different from the modern autonomous subject and more reflective of the human as part of a larger reality, found in both Eriugena and Kūkai. This understanding sees the human as neither completely passive nor absolutely autonomous. I finish by briefly exploring aspects of how such a human subject might engage with the phenomenal world. The conclusion offers brief comment on possible future study.

VI. Methodology

While the methodology underpinning this project can be described as an exercise in comparative philosophy, I focus primarily on the use of dialogue rather than simple comparison. I do so firstly because dialogue is generally richer and more engaging than comparison, which can often involve a kind of rigidity. In that regard dialogue makes possible a broader kind of engagement between the philosophies being compared. It also allows for the engagement of difference to a much greater degree

than does comparison, which tends to focus on like-for-like. Furthermore, where quite different traditions are in dialogue a conversational approach reduces the possibility of favouring the insights of one tradition over another. At the same time conversation makes real the possibility of seeing either tradition in a new light because it aims at a 'value-free' non-judgmental engagement. This is because at the heart of a conversational or dialogical approach is the desire to understand the other rather than simply to compare different points of view.

The conversational approach also reflects the physicist David Bohm's notion that dialogue should not be confused with discussion or debate, both of which are concerned with reaching a decision. Instead, dialogue is aimed simply at exploring and learning, and so allows for the emergence of something new. Often, comparing East-West religious and philosophical traditions, particularly from the vantage point of Western Christian thought, has tended to be 'thinking about' the other tradition rather than 'thinking with' them on an equal footing. The former has tended to be little more than an exercise in allowing for religious or philosophical diversity, while the latter strongly suggests a grappling together for deeper insights into ultimate questions of concern. Moreover, the former approach has often tended to hold the Christian perspective as primary, against which the other has been measured.[31] Thus my comparison of Eriugena and Kūkai with its emphasis on dialogue, in the context of a project that is primarily an exercise in applied philosophy, will promote the emergence of new insights that are more relevant to today's reality.

[31] Lewis Lancaster offers an interesting example of this scenario in terms of Christianity and Buddhism. The practice of giving to the poor has been held up as a good thing to do in the West. Various confraternities such as Lions and Masons, aid projects, and a whole host of other organisations have grown up over time. The call for Buddhism to do likewise can be seen as Christianity's approach being superior and Buddhism needing to emulate the West. This becomes especially problematic when the full circumstances of such practices are taken into account. While such aid is laudable it has its dark side. Studies suggest that such giving can sometimes be patronising, in that those without are in some sense inferior. To project western practices, then, on another tradition carries with it the danger of also transferring the difficulties with them. See Lewis Lancaster,' Buddhism and Ecology: Collective Cultural Perceptions', in Mary-Evelyn Tucker & Duncan R. Williams (eds.) *Buddhism & Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma & Deeds,* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Uni. Press, 1997, pp. 5—6

A second method touched on is that of phenomenology. I am not so much doing phenomenology in this dissertation as engaging with and highlighting the value of the approach. This I do primarily via the work of Jean Luc Marion and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. I also draw from a number of others who reflect on their work particularly from an ecological perspective. Contemporary phenomenologists such as Ted Toadvine and Charles Brown claim that phenomenology, as a method in philosophy, can play an important role in developing a new relationship with the natural world.[32] They suggest that the contribution of philosophy will most likely be about the 'steady and insightful clarification of our ethical and metaphysical assumptions about ourselves and the world around us.' Similarly, Simon James has pointed out that inattention to 'nature-as-experienced' not only makes environmental philosophy as a discipline appear abstract, it also makes for 'bad philosophy.'[33]

Many of our assumptions are no longer adequate in responding to the questions raised by climate change, loss of biodiversity, or global pollution. Brown and Toadvine argue for bringing a phenomenological approach to ecological issues in what is being termed ecophenomenology, while James suggests that taking a phenomenological approach consists in 'attending to and reflecting on one's experience' of the natural world, a task that takes much "time and effort."[34] Phenomenology's emphasis, through the work of Husserl on a return to the things themselves and on a critique of scientific naturalism, parallels contemporary environmental thinking. In other words we begin with our experience of the world, something largely forgotten by the scientific method which has succeeded in providing us with a highly abstract and reductionist conception of nature. The value then of a phenomenological approach is that it keeps our experience of the natural world as the basis from which we begin to understand ourselves and the world in which we find ourselves.

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[32] Charles S. Brown and Ted Toadvine, 'Eco-Phenomenology: An Introduction' In Brown and Toadvine (ed.), *Ecophenomenology: Back to the earth itself*, (SUNY Series in Environmental Philosophy and Ethics), New York: State University of New York, 2003, pp. ix—xxi

[33] Simon P. James, *The Presence of Nature: A Study in Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy*, Basingstoke [England], New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 1

[34] James, *The Presence of Nature*, pp. 2—3

Phenomenological approaches also parallel in some ways the ancient and early medieval understanding of philosophy as a way of life. Both focus on a practical approach to philosophy though in somewhat different ways. In understanding ancient philosophy as a way of life, Pierre Hadot highlights its very practical nature. It was not, as is often the case in philosophical discourse today, the 'construction of a technical jargon reserved for specialists.' Rather philosophy was an 'art of living' for humankind, 'a mode-of-existing-in-the-world,' something had to be continually practiced, with the goal of transforming one's whole life.[35] The activity of philosophy was 'an all embracing activity requiring total engagement' by the philosopher.[36] The name philosophy, originally meaning love of wisdom, encapsulates both the goal and approach of ancient philosophy, because 'real wisdom does not merely cause us to know: it makes us "be" in a different way.' Hadot further highlights that it is through the practice of spiritual exercises such as meditative practices and the contemplation of nature that this way of engaging philosophy happens. Kūkai very explicitly and Eriugena more implicitly not only advocates praxis but clearly show that theory and praxis are bound together in the efforts to reach enlightenment. [37]

[35] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a way of life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, p. 265

[36] Arthur H. Armstrong, 'Philosophy Theology and Interpretation: the Interpretation of Interpreters' in Werner Beierwaltes (ed.), *Eriugena: Studien Zu Seinen Quellen* (Vortrage des Iii. Internationalen Eriugena-Colloquiums Freiburg Im Breisgau, 1979), Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1980, p. 7

[37]Peter Sárkány, in highlighting a parallel with phenomenology, suggests that such practices are the means by which the soul and character of the philosopher is formed. See Péter Sárkány 'An Outline of the Philosophical Care of the Soul: Phenomenology, Existential-Analytic Logotherapy and Philosophical Counselling', Online, Available HTTP: < http://www.koed.hu/vocation/peter.pdf > (Accessed 28 May 2010)

Chapter 1: The Context

I. Ambiguity in the Traditions

The ambiguity within religious traditions, particularly Christianity, towards nature exists at the level of popular cultural understanding, and is also highlighted in academic work in this area. In terms of everyday understandings, while there exists a general recognition of the goodness of creation (stemming from the Genesis proclamation that God saw all that he made as good), the tendency to emphasise the other-worldliness of humanity's true home (in some heavenly realm—often thought of in a spatial sense) is undoubtedly a more popular hallmark of the tradition's thinking. This is reinforced by ritual practices that largely focus on some future oriented afterlife as a better place, and on how one can get there.[38] One can argue that this has contributed to the flourishing of a disregard for nature rather than an enhancement of it, in Western Christian culture. This disregard has not been deliberate, but the result is a failure in the general mindset to posit any obvious correlation between Christian belief and concern for the natural world. Therefore, it has long been the practice to confine understandings of divine relations with the world to the human realm. In the past this has not been overly problematic, now however in the context of the ecological crisis, such understandings prove to be lacking and less than helpful in terms of formulating appropriate human-earth relations.

In more scholarly contexts the ambiguity is a point asserted by the theologian H. Paul Santmire with regard to Christianity in his aptly subtitled 1985 volume investigating Western Christianity's attitudes towards nature. Santmire attempted to show that the tradition is inherently ambiguous, being neither 'ecologically bankrupt' nor obviously ecological in its outlook. As such it contains possibilities for 'a rich theology of nature'. However, the process of unearthing these possibilities requires great care and caution so that positive elements can be separated from

[38] One can see an interesting contrast here with Eastern traditions such as Daoism and Confucianism where there is a basic focus on an enhanced sense of this world and where practices such as meditation are used to reinforce this. See Parkes 'Mountain Brushes, Ink of Oceans', p. 558.

numerous less positive and antithetical ones. Thus Santmire concludes we can talk of 'the ambiguous ecological promise of Christian theology.'[39]

An aspect of this ambiguity which is of relevance in the context of this dissertation concerns the body of literature known as Celtic Studies.[40] Much recent literature on Celtic Christianity suggests that this branch of the tradition had a strong positive awareness of the natural world. Many writers, interested in nurturing a care for creation, cite early Celtic Christian society as being exemplary and somewhat unique in this regard. However, others argue that such writers 'may be promoting an artificial construct, developed from a selective reading of the literature' and from 'a romantic nostalgia and a wishful projection of how things were and ought to be today'. While there is clear evidence that Celtic Christians had an affinity for nature, a more nuanced investigation of the literature reveals that this is not the entire picture. Nearer the truth is that Celtic Christianity displayed an ambivalent attitude towards the natural world, on the one hand, speaking about it in glowing terms while, on the other, describing it as 'menacing, chaotic and hostile.' [41]

While Buddhism's track record in terms of its attitude towards the natural world is popularly understood as being considerably more sympathetic in its outlook, this view needs to be critically analysed as ambiguity is also found there. It is important to realise that there is not just one Buddhist perspective: nearer the truth is the recognition that Buddhist perspectives on the natural world are quite diverse. While some earlier schools of Buddhism emphasise withdrawal from the world, later

[39] H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Theology and the Sciences Series), Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985, p. 8—9.

[40] One area of influence on Eriugena is thought to be his Irish Celtic background, which I shall return to in the next chapter under 'Irish Cultural Influence'

[41] Bruce Martin 'Lord of Lark and Lightning: Reassessing Celtic Christianity's Ecological Emphases' Journal of Religion and Society, Vol. 6, 2004, 2—3, Online, Available HTTP < http://moses.creighton.edu/jrs/2004/2004-11.pdf> In fact, as Martin points out: 'To argue simply that they (Celtic Christianity) view nature as revealing the goodness of God, without also acknowledging that they view nature as a dark danger - even an evil - is to advance only one dimension of the Celts' understanding of the relationships between God, nature, and themselves.' p. 8

schools affirm the interconnection of all reality.[42] And while questions can be raised regarding the limit and value of the 'love of nature' in Japanese Buddhist traditions, they contain rich and imaginative understandings of how we might positively view the natural world. In fact the particular fusion of nature and culture in the Japanese mindset is one from which the western modern mindset of separation has much to learn.[43] For instance, Graham Parkes argues that traditional East Asian understandings of the human nature relationship are 'remarkably un-anthropocentric', (in contrast to mainstream western traditions), even though it is the Western conceptions that now dominate in both China and Japan. He uses the examples of Kūkai and Dōgen to examine the human-nature relationship as found in ancient and medieval Japan, claiming that both thinkers firmly rooted their conceptions in somatic practice that was 'designed to bring about a transformation of experience.' Moreover, these understandings are 'experientially accessible to any contemporary person' regardless of their background or tradition.[44]

Writing in the introduction to the multi-authored volume *Buddhism and Ecology*, Duncan R. Williams comments that there never has been just one perspective; rather perspectives vary according to place and time in history. Instead of a 'core "Buddhistic" element' there is a variety of positions that can be identified as Buddhist.[45] Alan Sponberg, in his article in the same volume, suggests the need to critically assess traditional Buddhist conceptions of nature. It is important, he maintains, to understand that traditional Buddhism tended to view humans and nature hierarchically, but that this notion of hierarchy need not necessarily be seen in a negative light. Rather Sponberg points out the value of what he terms a 'hierarchy of compassion' in a specifically Buddhist approach to the environment. As one

[42] See Lambert Schmithausen, 'The Early Buddhist Tradition and Ecological Ethics', *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* Vol. 4, 1997, 1—74. Schmithausen argues that early Buddhism was impressed with the sombre aspects of nature rather than with its beauty, and sought by detachment to transcend nature rather than try to transform or subjugate it.

[43] Callicott, *Earth Insights,* p. 106.

[44] Graham Parkes, 'Kūkai & Dōgen as Exemplars of Ecological Engagement' *Journal of Japanese Philosophy,* Vol. 1, 2013, pp. 85—6.

[45]Duncan R. Williams, 'Introduction', in Tucker and Williams (eds.) *Buddhism & Ecology*, p. xli.

moves vertically upwards the circle of interrelatedness increases.[46] Elsewhere he undertakes an exploration of 'key assumptions' that shape, at a fundamental level, Buddhist perceptions of nature and ecology. The role and impact of such assumptions is, he goes on to argue, easy to overlook because they are so different to attitudes taken for granted in the west. This is so particularly with regard to understandings of the self and its relation to reality, the framework within which Sponberg explores these topics. [47]

II. Value of religious approaches

Over the course of the past few decades the scientific community has been calling on the global religious community to contribute more effectively to finding solutions to the crisis. In 1990 a number of internationally renowned scientists led by Carl Sagan and Hans Bethe issued 'An Open letter to the Religious Community', where they detailed the horror of environmental destruction and went on to appeal to the religious community 'to commit, in word and deed, and as boldly as required, to preserve the environment of the Earth'. They suggested that 'efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment need to be infused with a vision of the sacred'.[48] Thus scientific discourse, in some quarters at least, is pointing out the need for more than scientific or technological responses to the issue of climate change and other environmental problems. They argue that we need more than knowing how best we might use technology to manage the problems created by climate change and so forth.[49]

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[46] Alan Sponberg, 'Green Buddhism & the Hierarchy of Compassion,' in Tucker and Williams (eds.) *Buddhism & Ecology*, p. 366

[47] See Alan Sponberg 'The Buddhist Conception of an Ecological Self', *Western Buddhist Review*, Vol. 2, 1997. Online, Available HTTP: <http://www.westernbuddhistreview.com/vol2/ ecological _ self.html >. Sponberg highlights how Western theories of the human person tend to begin with an autonomous rational understanding of the self, as distinct to a Buddhist version of the self as 'both dynamic and developmental.'

[48] Cited in Larry Rasmussen, *Earth community, Earth ethics*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996, p. 183

[49] In spite of the encouragement to the religious voice to make its contribution and the fact (as shall become obvious in the next section) that there has been a widespread religious response, the discourse on environmental issues continues to be dominated by the natural and social sciences. In fact studies from the humanities generally continue to have a marginal position. See Donald K. Swearer,

Laurel Kearns, in a sociological study of the various types of ecological responses found within Christianity, makes a link with more general sociological understandings of the value and increased role of religion in secular societies.[50] Drawing on the work of James Beckford, who noted a 'shift in the general perception of social problems toward "concerns about the fundamental purposes and direction of all human life"', she argues that 'religious responses are more salient than would be predicted in secularized modern society because of their ability to link practical responses with holistic, ideological frameworks.'[51]

In his efforts to analyse the role of religion vís-a-vís the environment Tony Watling suggests that religion itself is a process. Religious traditions 'can be and are used, re-interpreted and re-empowered in response to the modern worldview (which is itself a process).' In a focus on language he highlights how, in the context of the ecological crisis, religious concepts, such as "caring for creation", "stewardship", "the integrity of creation", and "co-creation", are being used to articulate the relationship of humanity and the natural world. His claim is that the use of such terms shows that 'a sense of an ecological and spiritual whole beyond reductionist and materialist concerns' is being sought. The emergence of such an ecological consciousness 'would temper hubristic human self-centredness and embrace the wider community of life.'[52]

Elsewhere and taking an ethnographic approach, Watling speaks of the need for 'new imaginations of nature', ones that are more 'environmentally-friendly' and that see nature as 'active, meaningful, subjective, and spiritual'. These would counter the

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'Introduction', in D. K. Swearer (ed.) *Ecology and Environment: Perspectives from the Humanities*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 9.

[50] Laurel Kearns, 'Saving the Creation: Christian Environmentalism in the United States' in *Sociology of Religion* Vol. 57:1 (Special Issue: *Sociology of Culture and Sociology of Religion*), 1996, pp. 55—70.

[51] Kearns, 'Saving the Creation,' p. 66.

[52] Tony Watling 'The Field of Religion and Ecology: Addressing the Environmental Crisis and Challenging Faiths', in H. de Vries (ed.) *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, New York: Fordham Press, 2008, pp. 473—4.

dominant western mechanistic worldview. In response to the claim that religion can be seen as a source of such re-imaginations (because of its ability to link 'humanity to a wider environmental (and divine) reality', and to provide a moral authority and institutional influence) he analyses what he terms 'religious "ecotopias"': religious imaginations envisaging a more environmentally-oriented humanity in a balanced and mutually enhancing relationship with nature.'[53]

Laurence E. Sullivan has been critical of the general field of environmental studies for not adequately exploring the role of religion in ecology, a lack that is in stark contrast to the emphasis placed on the role of science and technology.[54] This, he claims, is to the detriment of its own goals. It is detrimental because it leaves largely unexplored what is an essential source of human motivation and action in the world: 'No understanding of the environment is adequate without a grasp of the religious life that constitutes the human societies which saturate the natural environment.' Sullivan describes religious outlooks as 'primordial, all-encompassing, and unique', and as such they propel us into the world with fundamental dispositions towards it, rather than simply being the cause of occasional traces which accumulate over time. Because they are primordial they focus human attention on such core realities as the source of life and death, destruction and renewal, creativity in its full sense. Their all-encompassing nature provides a view of the whole and so offers a framework within which all other ideas 'commingle in a cosmology.' Finally, they offer a uniquely other perspective from which to evaluate nature, by setting it within a different kind of universe, appearing only in the religious imagination. While this

[53] Tony Watling, *Ecological Imaginations in the World Religions: An Ethnographic Analysis*, London and New York: Continuum, 2009, pp. 2—3. Watling borrows this concept from the novel of the same name by Ernest Callenbach. Following on a long line of use of the concept of utopia Callenbach writes about a country called *Ecotopia* where he envisages a society that protects nature and that ensures the physical and spiritual well-being of humanity through a life-style focused on communal living and with limited consumption and production. See pp. 3—4. See also Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston*, Berkeley, CA: Banyan Tree Books in association with Heyday books, 1975, (this edition 2005).

[54] It can be argued however that environmentalists tend not to embrace a religious perspective largely because such perspectives are often associated with an over reliance on faith at the expense of reason and science. See J. Kleiman Review: Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest, *Agricultural History* Vol. 80:1, 2006 115—7, Online, Available HTTP: < http://www.jstor.org/stable/3745112> (Accessed 16 September 2013). However, I would argue, in line with more ancient understandings, that faith and reason are not necessarily opposing positions.

can lead to a disregard for the natural world, it can likewise reveal nature in a distinctively new light, one that mirrors the distinctively religious and imaginative human way of being in the world.[55]

Roger Gottlieb espouses the value of what he terms religious environmentalism, not only for a broader environmental community, but also for religion and for the earth community as a whole. It provides the secular community with 'a language in which to express the depth of our relationship with the rest of the natural world' as well as a way of speaking about the 'gravity of the disastrous policies and misguided values' that mark much of our current behaviour towards nature. While religious language can be alienating for some, when spoken 'with a self-reflective humility' it invokes a 'moral seriousness' that recognises the profundity and systematic nature of the ecological crisis. We are all to some extent complicit, and the language of sin and repentance, for example, seems to capture what is being felt as well as, if not better than, any other kind of language, as, for instance, the language of rights or of consumer preferences. Moreover, religion has the capacity to offer a more universal vision of community— the possibility of a sensibility which can be described in a broad way as spiritual—which is something necessary for environmentalism to succeed. Such sensitivity, Gottlieb argues, 'must translate into a distinctive political style', found in figures such as Ghandi and Ang San Suu Kyi. They have garnered such support because they themselves embody the kind of virtues—emerging directly from their religious beliefs—that such a political style requires: commitment to nonviolence, a principled pursuit of one's goals, respect for the opponent, and 'a rejection of desperation created by despair.'[56]

It is also the case that this kind of undertaking where religion is used in the environmental context raises some questions and concerns. For instance concerns are raised about exploring and adapting religions out of context, as well as a fear that

[55] Laurence E. Sullivan, 'Preface' in Tucker and Williams (eds.) *Buddhism & Ecology*, 1997, pp. xi—xiii.

[56] Roger S. Gottlieb, 'Religious Environmentalism: What it is, Where it's Heading and Why We Should be Going in the Same Direction', *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, Vol.1:1, 2007, 81—3.

this may be based simply on a misguided belief that religion is a unified concept. As Tony Watling asks: is appropriating traditions merely based on 'Western assumptions, of "religion" as a unified concept and of an objective "nature" needing protection,' and in this way are non-Western assumptions overridden with the imposition on them of 'a universal '"religious" "eco-ethic"'?[57] Most of the traditions began somewhere else (primarily focused on human-centred issues) and this raises the challenge of traditions making the environmental issue a centre stage one. Judith Berling points out that effort may be put into transforming religious traditions, and yet the planet is dying around us.[58] Related is the issue of an obvious disjunction between modernity and ancient times, as well as the challenge of reconciling different traditions. There are questions of power and authority regarding interpretation as well as the problem of more fundamentalist elements being taken as the position of a tradition. Moreover, can religious understandings be taken seriously, especially as they often move slowly and are often unwilling to embrace change?

These challenges no doubt are very real. However, it is important to view them as challenges rather than insurmountable obstacles that would suggest dropping religion altogether in this context as the best course of action. To begin with, the richness of the traditions outweighs any of the above challenges. Religions are never static: in fact they require constant adaptation and change for them to remain alive and relevant. In speaking of the Christian tradition and its necessary evolution Anne Primavesi comments: 'where Christianity is alive its landscape changes. Where the landscape changes, so does Christianity. Else it finds itself...imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of fact.'[59] The approach taken here of engaging lesser known elements of the traditions can be seen as further recognition of the diversity and variety within the world religions. Moreover the emphasis on dialogue allows for the differences across traditions, including where

[57] Watling, *Ecological Imaginations in the World Religions*, p. 159

[58] Judith A. Berling, 'Commentary', in Tucker, *Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase*, p. 59.

[59] Anne Primavesi, *Sacred Gaia: Holistic Theology and Earth System Science*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. xvi.

such differences are irreconcilable. Finally, in the context of human induced climate change and its consequences, all sources of wisdom are necessary, particularly those whose ultimate aim, even if not always stated, is the wellbeing of the whole of reality.

III. A brief overview of the field of ecology and religion

The field of ecology and religion is an uncommonly wide field of study, with scholarly interest found, not only from scholars within religious studies and theology departments, but also among philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, scientists, indeed almost all areas of study. This interest has given rise to a variety of other sub-disciplines, such as environmental ethics, environmental history, ecological anthropology, ecophenomenology, as well as the more obviously religious area of ecotheology. According to Roger Gottlieb (writing in 2006) even a partial bibliography could amount to a thousand entries.[60] Because of the Christian Buddhist orientation of this project in this chapter I offer an overview of studies relating to these traditions.

The 1960s mark the beginning of serious reflection on the relationship between the ecological crisis and religion, though Bron Taylor dates the emergence of religion and ecology as a distinct area of study only to 1989.[61] It was a reflection that began in the more affluent parts of the globe such as the United States, the United Kingdom and some European mainland places like Germany and Scandinavia, and most of the material still comes from these somewhat similar socio-political contexts. However,

[60] Gottlieb, 'Introduction', p. 17. These writings are in the form of articles in journals and books, single issue volumes, anthologies relating to a particular religious denomination or multiple denominations, as well as inter-disciplinary volumes. Also ecology and religion has appeared as a topic alongside other social topics such as in the edited volume *True to this Earth*. See Allan Race and Roger Williamson, (eds.) *True to this Earth: Global Challenges and Transforming Faith*, Oxford: One World Publications, 1995.

[61] In 1989 David Barnhill and Eugene Bianchi proposed a religion and ecology 'consultation' to the American Academy of Religion. Taylor describes this initiative as 'a concerted effort to focus scholarly attention on the religion variable in human/ecosystem analysis.' See Bron Taylor 'Religious Studies and Environmental Concern' in Taylor (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, p. 1373. However studies from the previous two decades and even before also fit into this field.

in relation to ecotheology, the South African theologian Ernst Conradie highlights the wealth of contributions that have come from other contexts especially in recent decades. In particular he notes the importance of contributions from 'impoverished local communities' across the globe including the United States itself. Together these writings constitute 'a rich mosaic of cultures, languages, local contexts, bioregions, gender perspectives, theological traditions etc'[62]

The catalyst for much of this work, particularly the earlier literature from within Christian circles, has been Lynn White Junior's 1967 article that unleashed an avalanche of studies.[63] Some of this writing has emerged from scholars in the field who are also actively engaged with environmental issues while more of the literature comes from those within an established theology, religious studies or philosophy department.[64] A number of well-known and influential eco-theological works emerged especially during the 1980s and 1990s, as did many key philosophical works.

[62] Ernest Conradie 'Towards an Agenda for Ecological Theology: An Intercontinental Dialogue' *Ecotheology*, 10:3, 2005, p. 283. Conradie also makes reference to a range of edited volumes relating to ecological theology. See note 2 page 283. See also note 3 on the same page for volumes relating to South Africa, his own context.

[63] For a good outline of these developments from the 1960s to the late 1980s see Roderick Nash, The *rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics, History of American Thought and Culture*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989, Chapter 4. Beginning with White's article Nash chronicles the responses of Christian writers, primarily theologians, to the challenge posed by White. He highlights the work of American Lutheran theologians Joseph Sittler and Richard A. Baer Jr., two pioneers in the field, pointing out that Sittler's efforts to base an environmental ethic in Christian faith stretch back to a 1954 article entitled 'A Theology for Earth'. In 1971 he published in a conservation journal, the *National Parks and Conservation Magazine*, which would have been unusual for a theologian at that time. Writing in 1966 Baer called for immediate action with regard to the misuse of land, stating that: 'If the church is to take the incarnation seriously, she can no longer evade the problems of man's relation to the land. She must learn to recognize the crucial issues and contribute her support to progressive and far-sighted policies. Hopefully, she will encourage the development of new technology. But the more immediate need is to help out in efforts to combat public apathy and to resist business and political interests that stand to profit from the status quo.' See Richard A. Baer, 'Land *Misuse: A Theological* Concern', *Christian Century*, 1966, p. 1241.It is interesting to note that almost fifty years has passed and it seems that much work still needs to be done when it comes to combating public apathy with regard to the environmental issues, particularly in the guise of climate change.

[64] It is also the case that many scholars from established academic disciplines are also at some level environmental activists.

For instance in 1985 Santmire's *The Travail of Nature* was published as part of the Theology and the Sciences series, which provided a historical study of attitudes towards nature within the Christian tradition. The same year saw the publication of Jürgen Moltmann's Gifford Lectures of 1984-1985, which was an early influential effort within German protestant theology that recognised the notion that new issues such as the exploitation of nature needed to be addressed.[65] The philosopher of religion, Rosemary Radford Reuther published an often cited book in 1993 entitled *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, and in it she draws on the sacramental tradition within Catholic theology to highlight an immanent sense of the divine in the natural world.[66] Grace Jantzen's *God's World: God's Body,* which was published in 1984, and Sallie McFague's *The Body of God* published in 1993, both express, as the titles suggest, the need for embodied notions of God.[67] These last three theologians are also prominent ecofeminist theologians – an area of study that emerged alongside the broader field of ecofeminism in the early 1970s.[68]

The liberation theologian Leonardo Boff's *Ecologia: Grito da Terra, Grito dos Pobres*, originally published in Brazil in 1995, was published in English as part of the Orbis *Ecology and Justice* Series in 1997. In this book Boff shows how the understandings of liberation theology, which have responded to the 'cry of the poor' in Latin America, can aid in offering a theological response to the 'cry of the earth'.[69] The same series published *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion* initially in 1996, an edited volume of Latin American, Asian and African women activists and scholars writing about ecotheology from their own contexts, and creating, what the editor Rosemary

[65] Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An ecological Doctrine of Creation,* London: SCM Press, 1995.

[66] Rosemary R. Reuther, *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, London: SCM Press 1993.

[67] Grace Jantzen, *God's World: God's Body*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984. S. McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*, London: SCM Press, 1993.

[68] For a recent overview of ecofeminist theology, see Heather Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, London: T and T Clark International, 2005.See also Celia Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology*, London: DLT, 2008, which includes a good chapter on ecofeminist theology.

[69] Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Poor, Cry of the Earth*, trans. Phillip Berryman, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997.

Radford Reuther calls, 'South-South' dialogue.[70] No exhaustive overview of Christian contributions to the field of religion and ecology exists. However Willis Jenkins' relatively recent publication, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology*, offers one of the most comprehensive bibliographies to date.[71] And Roger Gottlieb's 2010 edited four volume publication on world religions contains entries on virtually every aspect of the area.[72]

Environmental philosophy emerged over this period also, in a variety of guises. Roderick Nash highlights the emergence and development of arguments for ethical extension firstly to animals through the work of Peter Singer and Tom Regan, likening the impact of Regan's 1973 review essay to that of Lynn White's article on ecotheology. He further notes the emergence of a broader and deeper environmental ethic, which he claims was inspired by the women's liberation movement, and gave rise to philosophical sub disciplines such as ecofeminism and deep ecology. The latter ethic tended to be a more holistic or organic type of moral philosophy.[73] One of the foremost philosophers in this regard, also concerned with environmental issues and religion, is J Baird Callicott.[74] While recognising the work done in a Western context, on developing a scholarly literature by applying various strains of western moral philosophy to the environmental agenda, Callicott highlights the need for a similar ethic in other parts of the world. However, such an ethic, he argues, needs to emerge from the indigenous traditions of these cultures, and not be imported

[70] Rosemary R. Reuther, (ed.), *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996, this edition 2007.

[71] Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

[72] Roger S. Gottlieb, *Religion and the Environment* (Critical concepts in religious studies series) Vols. 1—4, London and New York: Routledge, 2010. This tome runs to over fifteen hundred pages.

[73] See Nash, *The Rights of Nature*, chapter 5 entitled 'The Greening of Philosophy' for a good outline of the emergence of environmental philosophy during the 1960s to the late 1980s.

[74] Indeed Callicott was primarily influenced by Aldo Leopold's land ethic which was a community focus for ethics—a departure from the individual rights base of philosophical approaches such as in Singer. See also A. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches here and there*, London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1949 (this edition 1968). Callicott is credited with offering the first ever course in environmental ethics in the University of Wisconsin in 1971.

from the West. As a consequence, his monograph *Earth's Insights* was published in 1994.

A 1973 lecture by the distinguished Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess introduced the very influential and highly radical concept of deep ecology, and in his book, *Ecology, Community, & Life-Style*, he develops his philosophical understanding, which he terms Ecosophy T. Naess' life and works were very influenced by Buddhist teachings.[75] The edited volume, *Worldviews and Ecology* published in 1993 also contains an article by George Sessions on deep ecology as a worldview in its section on contemporary ecological perspectives.[76] Barnhill and Roger Gottlieb emphasise the relationship between deep ecology and world religions, arguing that contemporary ethical and religious valuing of nature stems from deep ecology.[77]

There was strong institutional support from religious bodies for environmental activism and reflection during the 1970s and after a lull in the 1980s, it picked up again in the 1990s. The support came from institutions like the US National Council of Churches who assisted the work of the 'Faith-Man-Nature Group', from 1960 to 1974. Its aim was to understand the human nature relationship within the context of Christian faith.[78] Also the World Council of Churches was another prominent supporter of such work, and at its 1983 assembly the concept of 'integrity of

[75]Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Life-Style: Outline of an Ecosophy*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, trans. and revised D. Rothenberg. For an introductory anthology to the Deep Ecology Movement see Alan Drengson & Yuichi Inoue, (eds.) *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, Berkeley California: North Atlantic Books, 1995.

[76] George Sessions, 'Deep Ecology as Worldview', in M. E. Tucker and J. Grim (eds.) *Worldviews and Ecology*, London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1993, pp. 207—27.

[77] David L. Barnhill & Roger S. Gottlieb 'Introduction' in D. S. Barnhill and R. S. Gottlieb (eds.) *Deep Ecology & World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*, Albany, WY: State University of New York Press, 2001.

[78] See the entry on 'Liberal Activism' in S. Krech et al *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History*, 2004, Vol. 3, p. 1027, for more on this support. See also P. N. Joranson **'**The Faith-Man-Nature Group and a Religious Environmental Ethic', *Zygon* 1977, Vol. 12:2, pp. 175—9, for more on this group.

creation' was added to its justice and peace work.[79] The WCC published a number of works relating to ecology and religion including the edited volume *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North*, in 1994.[80] This collection of articles, many of which appeared elsewhere, focuses on ecotheology and ethics from both Southern and Northern perspectives. It deals with a central issue in North-South relations concerning the environment, namely how concern for the environment relates to answering the basic needs of the world's poor.

While White's critique of Christianity raised the possibility of turning to eastern traditions as possible aids for western environmental writers in responding to the crisis, most writers, in the early decades, exhibited a reluctance to do so. According to Eugene Hargrove this reluctance displayed a certain fear of Eastern influence. Hargrove blames the Lynn White article and subsequent articles for the lack of focus on Eastern traditions as sources for environmental studies. He argues that these very influential writings created a fear of an eastern takeover, as they suggested that eastern philosophy was both 'insidious and environmentally ineffectual'. Consequently, environmental writers, during the two decades after Lynn White's article, mostly followed the agenda set by White, which was to find ways of reforming Christianity from within. Hence there was no real exploration of eastern traditions, a step that effectively stifled comparative studies in environment and philosophy.[81]

[79] See Rasmussen *Earth Community, Earth Ethics,* p. 99ff, for an understanding of 'integrity of creation'. However, the WCC was involved in the area for a number of years prior to that. For instance in 1960 Joseph Sittler presented his theological understanding to its international assembly. Numerous national and international conferences have also been organised and supported by institutional groups, many of which have been collaborative efforts with environmental groups such as the World Wildlife Fund who sponsored an inter-religious meeting in Assisi in 1986. See Tucker and Grim, 'Series Foreword' in any of the Harvard Series on world religions and ecology.

[80] This was published jointly by WCC and Orbis Books. David G. Hallman (ed.) *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North,* Geneva & Maryknoll, New York: WCC & Orbis Books, 1994.

[81] See Eugene Hargrove 'Foreword' in J. B. Callicott and R. T. Ames (eds.) *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.

Yet, Buddhist interest in the ecological crisis also stems from this period. This interest is found among three groups: academics, practicing Buddhists and environmental activists.[82] Buddhist scholars focus on important Buddhist writings and Buddhist thinkers, while environmental philosophers have been trying to explore Buddhism as a conceptual resource for environmental ethics. For instance Roger T. Ames and J. Baird Callicott present their work, *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought* published in 1989, as an example of this latter effort. In fact this volume is the first scholarly work on Asian traditions and environmental concern. Thus it is only in the closing decade of the twentieth century that any significant scholarly work relating religious traditions, other than Christianity, and the ecological crisis has begun in earnest.

The first anthology on Buddhism and Ecology, *Buddha Dharma*, appeared in 1990 on the twentieth anniversary of Earth Day.[83] This somewhat poorly edited volume sees environmental concern as essentially rooted in a spiritual crisis.[84] A more organised collection of writing entitled *Buddhism and Ecology* was published by the World Wide Fund for nature in 1992, as part of a series on world religions and ecology.[85] The series also featured a collection entitled *Christianity and Ecology* edited by Elizabeth Breuilly & Martin Palmer. The Buddhist collection is very positive in its valuing of a Buddhist contribution towards alleviating the environmental crisis, while the Christian volume focuses on the perception of

[82] Williams, 'Introduction', in Tucker & Williams, (eds.) *Buddhism & Ecology*, p. xxxv-xxxvi. See p. xxxvi for a list of some of the environmental work of practicing Buddhists as well as reference to various Buddhist institutions which support this work. See also Stephanie Kaza 'The Greening of Buddhism', in Gottlieb, (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, pp. 184—206. She points out that Buddhist centres were becoming established in the West during the 1970s and 1980s and Buddhist leaders were addressing the ecological crisis in their teachings during the 1980s. She makes particular reference to key influential figures such as the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, the peace activist and monk.

[83] Allan H. Badiner, (ed.) *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology*, Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990.

[84] For a critical review see P. Besserman, 'short reviews, *Manoa*, Vol. 3: 1, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 1991, pp. 231—4. Online Available HTTP < http://www.jstor.org/stable/4228619> (Accessed: 13 July 2010)

[85] Martine Batchelor and Kerry Brown (eds.) *Buddhism & Ecology*, London & New York: Cassell Publishers, 1992. Both this anthology and *Dharma Gaia* are aimed at the general reader rather than any specialist.

Christianity as being responsible for the crisis. This contrast reflects the popular understanding of these traditions, the former being viewed as environmentally friendly while the latter tended to be seen as incompatible with a positive ecological stance.

A number of other significant volumes appeared in the 1990s. For example the edited volume *Worldviews and Ecology* was published in 1993 as an issue of Bucknell Review, and it contains both Buddhist and Christian entries. Also David Kinsley published *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in a Cross-Cultural Perspective* in 1995, which contains entries on traditional religions and contemporary movements like deep ecology and ecological spirituality. Roger Gottlieb edited *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, which was published in 1996, and which contains selections from sacred texts from different traditions. While weighted in favour of Judaism and Christianity, it does offer a range of entries from other traditions, including Buddhism.[86]

However, one of the most ambitious scholarly projects appeared in the latter half of the 1990s, the Harvard Series on world religions and ecology. Over a four year period, 1996-2000, a number of conferences were held and a series of ten volumes was published, nine of which related to a particular world religion, and the tenth to indigenous religions.[87] In the series foreword the editors make reference to a

[86] See Tucker and Grim, 'Series Foreword' in any volume of the Harvard Series on world religions and ecology for references to works published in the decade from 1986-1996. Listed here also are works that concern religious responses to a particular topic or theme. See also *Buddhism and Ecology* where Duncan Williams offers a quite comprehensive bibliography on Buddhism and ecology.

[87] The Forum on Religion and Ecology (FORE) has been co-ordinated by Mary-Evelyn Tucker and John Grim and it arose out of a series of ten international and multidisciplinary conferences at the Centre for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) of Harvard University during 1996-1998, each focusing on a different world religion. These were attended by a total of 800 participants. An edited book with an extensive bibliography and published by CSWR/Harvard University Press followed each conference: Tucker and Williams (eds.) *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, 1997; Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong (eds.) *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans*, 1998; Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary R. Reuther (eds.) *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*, 2000; Christopher Key Chapple and Mary Evelyn Tucker (eds.) *Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection of Earth, Sky, and Water*, 2000; N.J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan (eds.) *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, 2001; John A. Grim, *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of*

common viewpoint that underpins much of the literature in this field: the ecological crisis is moral and spiritual as well as being political, social and economic, which suggests the need for a broadening of the philosophical and religious understandings of humans as embedded in the natural world.[88] Thus world religions have a role to play as moral and spiritual forces in helping alleviate the ecological crisis. In the process of undertaking this role the religions themselves are transformed, but also environmental studies would recognise that religions have helped shape attitudes towards the natural world. The editors of the series saw these conferences and the subsequent publications as opportunities to expand the dialogue between ecology and religion, and they effectively framed a research arena, which not only gave religion 'high ecological significance' but also saw the need for its 'critical transformation in the light of ecology.'[89] They listed five aims for the actual work of the conferences, which included identifying and evaluating the distinctively ecological attitudes, values and practices in each tradition, identifying a minimum of common ground across very diverse understandings and highlighting useful resources within the various aspects of the traditions.[90]

The editors of the Christian volume see the environmental crisis primarily as a cosmological crisis, and so the task of moving towards a more sustainable future fundamentally involves a cosmological transition, a change of worldview.[91] Thus the

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Cosmology and Community,2001. Christopher K. Chapple (ed.) *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life*, 2002; Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, (ed.) *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word*, 2002; Richard Foltz, Frederick Denny and Azizan Baharuddin, (eds.) *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, 2003; The volume Rosemarie Bernard (ed.) *Shinto and Ecology: Practices and Orientations to Nature*, is in press. The forum has grown into a global network of more than 5,000 individuals and in turn inspired the Canadian Forum on Religion and Ecology and the European Forum for the Study of Religion and the Environment established in 2003.

[88] This framework stems from the Lynn White article and has more or less framed the field since.

[89] Willis Jenkins and Christopher Key Chapple 'Religion and Environment', *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* Vol. 36, 2011, 443, Available, Online HTTP: < http://www.annualreviews.org/eprint/vDJcwJ5Vmq QdkQhaFU2c/full/10.1146/annurev-environ-042610-103728> and http://www.academia.edu/1158537/ Annual_Review.Religion_and_Environment .Jenkins_and_Chapple> (Accessed 26 August 2013)., p. 443

[90] Series Forward in any of the volumes, p. xxiii

[91] In this regard Tucker and Grim are very influenced by the work of Thomas Berry, who suggests the need for a new cosmological story, also referred to as the epic of evolution, based in the findings of

volume explores themes in the tradition that contribute to ecological abuse as well as highlighting positive elements in the tradition. The contributors discuss where new emphases need to be placed in terms of theology and ethics, and identify some practical implications for both the Christian church and the wider society. For instance, Elizabeth Johnson's lead essay on the one hand explores how both Catholic and Protestant traditions lost interest in the natural world, setting humanity over against it, and on the other highlights how contemporary cosmological understandings are aiding in the discovery of the relational nature of the cosmos, which includes human beings.[92] McFague's essay, meanwhile, offers some positive insights from the prophetic, sacramental and wisdom aspects of the tradition.[93] In her response to McFague, Kwok Pui-lan, as an Asian Christian, brings another perceptive to the discussion. In her article she highlights the imperialist uses of terms like 'Cosmic Christ'.[94]

Some themes from the Greek Orthodox tradition are offered in John Chryssavgis' article, including how all perceived dualisms, such as heaven and earth or spirit and body, interpenetrate in the icon. Other themes such as the apophatic or mystical elements in theology are also offered as serving an ecological theology.[95] A number of essays at the end of the volume focus on the practical implications for the Christian churches in terms of ecological justice. Marthinus Daneel's contribution highlights the example of tree planting in Zimbabwe by the African Independent

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science as a basic underpinning for human self-understanding. See Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era – A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos*, Arkana: Penguin Books, 1996. This notion of a universe story or a grand narrative for all of humanity has however been criticized for its totalising tendency. See also T. Watling, 'New Cosmologies and Sacred Stories', In W. B. Drees et al.(eds.) *Creation's Diversity: Voices from Theology and science*, London and New York: T. and T. Clark, 2008, for an analysis of this and two other 'new sacred stories' based on the ideas of Deep Ecology and Gaia theory.

[92] Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'Losing and Finding Creation in the Christian Tradition', in Hessel and Ruether (ed.) *Christianity and Ecology*, pp. 3—21.

[93] Sallie McFague 'An Ecological Christology: Does Christianity Have It?' in Hessel and Ruether (ed.) *Christianity and Ecology*, pp. 29—45

[94] Kwok, Pui-lan 'Response to Sallie McFague' in Hessel and Ruether (ed.) *Christianity and Ecology*, pp. 47—50.

[95] John Chryssavgis, 'The World of the Icon and Creation: An Orthodox Perspective on Ecology and Pneumatology', in Hessel and Ruether (ed.) *Christianity and Ecology*, pp. 83—96.

Churches.[96] Activities such as these can act as an inspiration to Christian churches everywhere to develop a practical consciousness.

In the introduction to the Buddhism and ecology anthology, Duncan Ryūken Williams highlights the scholarly nature of this volume as distinct from previous publications, which were largely written by practitioners and environmentalists.[97] A number of key concerns are explored here such as the problem of generalising about the Buddhist tradition. This tendency, alluded to also by Ames and Callicott, suggests the need to be aware of cultural and geographical diversity within the tradition, something highlighted in the opening essay by Lewis Lancaster. Explored also in this essay is the difficulty of utilising ideas from the past as aids in dealing with current concerns.[98] As with the Christian volume the underlying premise of this volume is that attitudes to nature are largely affected by religious and cultural worldviews, and so we need to explore the tradition to help us make cosmological change. Cultural, thematic and denominational approaches are reflected in the first five sections, while the last two sections explore practical contributions that can be made from within Buddhism, as well as raising some methodological issues about the interface of Buddhism and ecology.

It is interesting to note that three essays relating to aspects of Japanese Buddhism are offered, with two of them having a focus on Kūkai. Paul Ingram offers a change in worldview. He argues that a dialogue between Buddhism, illustrated by Kūkai, and contemporary Western understandings of reality as they are emerging in the natural sciences and in Christian process theology could 'energize' an emerging global vision that would look at the ecological crisis in a different way.[99] Graham Parkes

[96] Marthinus L. Daneel, 'Earthkeeping Churches at the African Grass Roots' in Hessel and Ruether (ed.) *Christianity and Ecology*, pp. 531—52.

[97] Williams, 'Introduction' p. xxxvii

[98]Lewis Lancaster, 'Buddhism and Ecology: Collective Cultural Perceptions' in Tucker and Williams (eds.) *Buddhism and Ecology*, p.4

[99] Paul O. Ingram, 'The Jeweled Net of Nature' In Tucker and Williams (eds.) *Buddhism and Ecology*, p. 72

also speaks of the need for a 'radical revisioning' of humanity's relation to the natural world, but focuses more clearly on the link between religious or philosophical worldviews and behaviour. His argument is that if someone were to 'realize experientially' a worldview where nature was considered to be sacred and a source of wisdom, it is more likely that such a person would be inclined to treat nature with care. He illustrates this in part through some features of Kūkai's teachings, most notably the *sanmitsu*. Ultimately for Kūkai, as Parkes points out, all beings both sentient and non-sentient possess Buddha-nature.[100]

The essays regarding methodological issues point out again the somewhat facile suggestion that Buddhism as a whole is eco-friendly. Such a conception, it is argued, is very recent and in fact the concept of nature within Buddhism has a more complex history.[101] Ian Harris argues that with few exceptions those wishing to support 'an authentic Buddhist environmental ethic' often show 'a positive indifference' to the complexity that is Buddhism, and 'may be guilty of a *sacrificum intellectus*' that does not reflect the 'critical spirit' inherent in the tradition.[102]

As with the Christian volume this volume also contains contributions of a practical and policy level nature. The issue of nuclear waste and the possible contribution that could be made by the Buddhist scholar and activist are explored by Kenneth Kraft.[103] Rita Gross deals with questions about fertility control and resource utilization,

[100] Graham Parkes, 'Voices of Mountains, Trees, and Rivers: Kūkai, Dōgen, and a Deeper Ecology' in Tucker and Williams (eds.) *Buddhism and Ecology*, pp. 112—3, 115.

[101] The term nature has a complex understanding within Western traditions also. See Barbara A. Hanawalt and Lisa J. Kiser, 'Introduction' In B. A. Hanawalt and L. J. Kiser (eds.) *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the natural World in Medieval & Early Modern Europe*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2008, p. 4, for a list of works that have contributed to the general study of nature in medieval and early modern Europe. Also Robin Attfield argues for a diverse range of attitudes towards nature from within the Christian tradition, stretching back to the biblical texts themselves. See Robin Attfield 'Christian Attitudes to Nature', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. Xliv:3, 1983, 369-386

[102] I. Harris 'Buddhism and the Discourse of Environmental Concern: Some methodological concerns' In Williams and Tucker (eds.) *Buddhism and Ecology*, p. 378

[103] Kenneth Kraft, 'Nuclear Ecology an Engaged Buddhism', in Tucker and Williams, *Buddhism and Ecology*, pp. 269—90

claiming that specific Buddhist teachings such as interdependence and the Middle Path, can be applied to the crisis of overpopulation and excessive consumption.[104] The third focus in this section by Stephen Rockefeller concerns a Buddhist contribution to a global ethic. In particular he focuses on (at the time) the upcoming Earth Charter, suggesting that what Buddhism should try to ensure from such a charter is that all sentient beings be provided with protection.[105]

The main conferences and their publications were followed by two 'culminating conferences' in September and October 1998, which contributed more clearly to significant trends in the field, namely the growth of spiritualities that considered the idea of the evolution of the universe and the Earth as a sacred story, extending the greening of mainstream religious expressions and ethics, and helping in effecting the 'greening' of other institutions, in particular the United Nations.[106]

Since the beginning of the new millennium climate change has begun to be used as an umbrella term for global environmental concerns, and it is within that awareness that the contributors to the fall 2001 edition of the journal *Daedalus* again emphasise that religion must play a role in responding to the ecological crisis alongside other institutions and academic disciplines.[107] While the editors Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim point out the positive contribution of religion they also highlight a number of qualifications in this regard, including the fact that often religious

[104] Rita M. Gross, Population, Consumption, and the Environment', in Tucker and Williams, *Buddhism and Ecology*, pp. 291—311.

[105] Stephen Rockefeller, 'Buddhism, Global Ethics, and the Earth Charter', in Tucker and Williams, *Buddhism and Ecology*, pp.313—24.

[106] Taylor, 'Religious Studies and Environmental Concern', p. 1378.

[107] *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* Vol. 130:4, 2001. Earth science, built on the work of scientists James Lovelock & Lynn Margulis, which has underpinned much of our understanding of global warming and climate change, has informed the ecofeminist theologian Anne Primavesi's contribution to ecotheology. Her trilogy, published over the past decade, focuses on how our understanding of earth, humanity and the divine, and the relationships between them, need to be critiqued in the light of what we know of ourselves and the earth through Gaia theory in particular. See Primavesi, *Sacred Gaia; Gaia's Gift: Earth, Ourselves and God after Copernicus*, London: Routledge, 2003; and *Gaia & Climate Change: A Theology of Gift Events*, London: Routledge, 2008.

traditions have been guilty of a tendency towards dogmatic rigidity and have all too frequently contributed to conflict in many parts of the globe.[108]

This issue claims to be the first to bring together a range of perspectives from the world's religions with observations from the fields of science, public policy and ethics. Lead essays by scholars from these fields, which call for the involvement of the world religions, are then followed by one essay from each of the traditions. Sallie McFague suggests that Christianity has, on the one hand, supported an individualistic view of human life underpinning the consumerist attitudes, which is a root cause of the current devastation of the planet and the widening gap between rich and poor. On the other she argues that Christianity has within it the ability to 'support an ecological model built on an understanding of the planet and its life-forms as interdependent and interrelated.[109]

In the contribution from the Buddhist camp Swearer, recognising the contextual nature of religious traditions but also noting that more general principles and practices may be embodied in a particular tradition, sees the three stages of the Buddha's enlightenment as suggesting a moral reasoning model, suitable for environmental ethics that integrates general principles, collective action guides, and particular contexts. He also draws on the work of current Buddhist environmentalists and scholars such as Gary Snyder as well as the teachings of key historical figures like Kūkai and Dōgen. As the title suggests he further highlights how metaphor, story, poetry and discursive logic have been used as hermeneutical tools in the dissemination of Buddhist teachings throughout Buddhist history. Finally, using the example of Doi Suthep, a sacred mountain in Northern Thailand,

[108] Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim 'Introduction' *Daedalus* 130:4, 2001, pp. 1-2. Highlighting the positives and negatives of religious traditions in the light of the ecological crisis is also expressed clearly by Tucker in *Worldly Wonder*.

[109] Sallie McFague, 'New House Rules: Christianity, Economics, and Planetary Living', *Daedalus* 130: 4, 2001, pp.12-140

he points out how narrative of place can make a crucial contribution to environmental ethics.[110]

A strong (and somewhat harsh) criticism of much of the religion and ecology literature, in particular the Harvard book series, comes from the work of Bron Taylor.[111] He suggests that the Harvard enterprise is not as inclusive as it may sound since the label 'world religions' is in danger of limiting our understanding of the concept 'religion'. While acknowledging the inclusions of indigenous religions as a category in the series he, nevertheless, stresses that the contemporary multi-religious scene rarely fits into neat and conventional categories, which the term 'world religion' suggests. He makes a strong claim that the concept excludes individuals and groups, many of whom are environmentalists who engage in some form of 'nature related religiosity', as well as excluding religious groups such as Pagans, Wiccans and a range of New Age followers.[112]

A further aspect of this criticism is that the focus seems to be on the mainstream of the traditions investigated, and by scholars who tend to remain loyal to what they take to be the original meaning of their tradition's texts. There is the possibility of missing out on the diverse experiences that are also found in conventional religions, when one thinks in terms of ideal worldviews. All of this undermines a stated desire of the world religions and ecology series, namely the 'creative revisioning' of religious expression. Little acknowledgement seems to be given to the role that hybridity and boundary transgression play in the evolution of religious thought.[113]

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[110] Donald K. Swearer, 'Principles and Poetry, Places and Stories: The Resources of Buddhist Ecology', *Daedalus* 130:4, 2001, pp. 225-241.

[111] Taylor was asked to review the series at a session of the *ARR* Religion and Ecology Group in 2001.

[112] Bron Taylor, 'Critical perspectives on "Religions of the World and Ecology"', in Taylor, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, p. 1375—6. Part of his reason for publishing the Encyclopedia is to highlight the limited understandings of nature/ecology and religion found in the literature.

[113] It is on the margins of traditions that innovation in religious thought tends to be most obvious. In a sense Eriugena's cosmological vision, while positing a traditional Christian framework, can be understood to be on the margins of the mainstream tradition. It is reasonable to assume that the very fact of its condemnation is evidence of this.

Taylor criticises the idealistic premise of the whole project: that environmental actions are deeply conditioned by religious attitudes towards the natural world. The Danish anthropologist Poul Pedersen refers to this approach as the 'religious environmentalist paradigm'.[114] In the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* entry, of the same name, Arne Kalland argues that this paradigm is inspired largely by East and South Asian cosmologies and indigenous traditions. He highlights how environmentalist writers, in clothing such core teachings as the interconnectedness of everything, which is easily found in these cosmologies and traditions, in ecological language, make the assumption that the discourse of locating human beings within the world of nature will automatically 'foster a deep reverence for nature'. On the other hand a worldview, such as Christianity, that does not hold this notion of interconnectedness in as clear a way, is often seen as the source of environmental ills. Thus there is the need for ecological reform of these latter worldviews. However, Taylor argues that this close relationship of worldview and environment is an assumption that the field should actually be debating.[115] Willis Jenkins also highlights this assumption suggesting that much of the literature, as a consequence, is concerned with how the religious traditions can produce more 'verdant, sustainable worldviews.' [116]

This approach reveals an underlying belief in a causal one-directional relationship from worldviews (that have been profoundly influenced by religious understandings)

[114] See Poul Pedersen, 'Nature, Religion and Cultural Identity: The Religious Environmentalist Paradigm', in O. Bruum & A. Kalland (eds.), *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A critical Approach*, London: Curzon Press, 1995, pp. 258-76. Pedersen argues that the appeal to religious traditions reflects other concerns such as those about cultural identity, and talk of it as an example of 'forceful cultural creativity'. See especially p. 258

[115] Taylor 'Critical perspectives', p. 1376

[116] Willis Jenkins, 'Religion and Ecology: A Review Essay in the Field', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 77:1, 2009, p. 190, Online, Available HTTP: <http://www.academia.edu/295859/Religion_and_ Ecology_ A_Review_Essay_on_the_Field> (Accessed 1 June 2010). See also Willis Jenkins and Christopher K. Chapple, 'Religion and Environment', *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* Vol. 36, 2011, 441—63, Available, Online HTTP: <http://www.annualreviews.org/eprint/vDJcwJ5VmqQdkQhaFU2c /full/10.1146/annurev-environ-042610-103728> and <http://www.academia.edu/1158537/Annual_Review. Religion_and_Environment .Jenkins_and_Chapple> (Accessed 26 August 2013). This latter article expands literature reviewed in the earlier one.

to our treatment of the environment. [117] Roger Gottlieb, in *The Oxford Handbook to Religion & Ecology*, published in 2006, posits two questions, in this regard, as forming the heart of the religion ecology study. Firstly, we need to investigate what the world religions believe about the relationship between humanity and the natural world, and secondly, how these beliefs must then change.[118] Laurel Kearns points out that this causal link is the core of much of the material within the discipline of ecotheology.[119] Moreover, some recent literature—for instance some entries in the *Encyclopedia of Nature and Religion*—actually suggests that the reverse is the case: the environment has profoundly shaped religious worldviews.[120]

One certainly needs to take on board that a rigid one-directional influence of one's worldview, always dictating how one might act towards the environment, needs to be criticised. At the same time, as Parkes points out, it is a reasonable position to take that those whose lives are informed by a worldview that regards nature as 'the locus of ultimate reality', are more likely to live in a caring relationship towards the environment, while those whose worldview would tend to denigrate the corporeal reality in favour of a spiritual other-worldly realm are less likely to have concerns about exploitation of the natural world.[121] Moreover, efforts at caring (or not as the

[117] Jenkins, 'Religion and Ecology: A Review Essay', pp. 187—97. This understanding stems from Lynn White's 1967 article, which defined the causal relationship particularly in terms of how the medieval Christian worldview, with its anthropocentricism and instrumental views of nature, is the source of the current environmental crisis. Others have taken the same approach but focus more on what is termed the modern worldview describing it as the Enlightenment mentality. See Tu Wei-ming, 'Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality' in Tucker & Grim (eds.) *Worldviews and Ecology*, 1993, pp. 19—29

[118] Gottlieb, *Oxford Handbook to Religion & Ecology*, p. 6. For Gottlieb the relation between religion and ecology (or environment as his preferred term) is a political one, resulting in environmentalism being seen as a social force. The articles in his more recent and very comprehensive four volume work are chosen on the basis of his thesis that the religious and the political are connected via a sense of cultural crisis regarding the environment. See Roger Gottlieb (ed.) *Religion and the Environment*, (Critical Concepts in Religious Studies) Vols. 1-4, London: Routledge, 2010.

[119] Laurel Kearns 'The Context of Ecotheology' in G. Jones, (ed.), *Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 468

[120]See for instance, Leslie S. Sponsel, 'Ecological Anthropology', pp. 544—8, Gustavo Benavides, 'Ecology and Religion', pp. 548—54, and Arne Kalland, 'The Religious Environmentalist Paradigm', pp.1367—71.

[121] Parkes, ' Voices of Mountains', p. 112

case may be) are in turn likely to deepen one's worldview whatever it may be. Thus, in exploring the cosmic visions of Eriugena and Kūkai in this dissertation, which is in some sense about taking a worldview approach, I recognise the potential influence of such visions of reality, while at the same time taking cognisance of the more fluid relationships between religious worldviews and the environment. For instance the influence of direct engagement in a positive sense with the natural world is quite explicit in Kūkai's writings. On the other hand Eriugena's more speculative writing and more obvious emphasis on a holistic worldview—a cosmic creation story—does not refer to any explicit engagement with the world of nature.

A recent journal publication that has its roots in the past yet reflects a broadening perspective of the concept of religion and nature is the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture*, first published in 2007.[122] In his introductory article the editor Bron Taylor wants this new journal 'to provide habitat for the widest possible range of scholarly approaches' for the terms religion, nature and culture and the relationships between them, and in the process make the journal a place for 'critical, interdisciplinary inquiry' on these concepts. Not only that but Taylor extends an invitation to all within the conventional disciplines of the humanities, natural and social sciences to contribute articles, essays, special issue proposals or scholarly perspective essays on these terms, which would make the journal a locus for blurring the boundaries between conventional disciplines and in the process allow new and creative insights to emerge. Most of the articles in the first volume explore ways of defining the core terms in as comprehensive a way as possible.[123] Also a number of the volumes to date are special issue volumes dealing with areas such as Indigenous Religions and Environments, Volume 2.1, 2008 and African Sacred Ecologies Volume 2.3, 2008. These reflect a broad nature based understanding of religion.

[122] This journal was previously named *Ecotheology* and before that *Theology in Green*. See Online HTTP: <www.religionandnature.com> for further information on both the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Nature*, as well as this journal, both of which are edited by Bron Taylor. The site also contains information on the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture (ISSRNC), to which the journal is affiliated.

[123] See for instance Stephen R. Kellert, 'Connecting with Creation: The Convergence of Nature, Religion, Science and Culture', *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* Vol. 1:1, 2007, 25-37 and Adrian Ivakhiv 'Religion, Nature and Culture: Theorizing the Field' 47-57.

A further concern regarding the field of ecology and religion is the issue of 'engaged scholarship'.[124] Taylor suggests that two approaches to studying the field can be discerned. On the one hand is the activist scholar whose primary concern is to turn religions green and not, in the process, to offend religious mainstreams. Often this has resulted in a kind of apocalyptic reading of the ecological crisis. On the other hand the focus is on simply trying to understand how humans, their religions and environments interact. Those taking the latter approach argue that the former 'ultimately compromises the critical acumen associated with distanced scholarship'. [125] In a recently published volume, *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*, the editors, Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller, acknowledge this concern but demonstrate that the relationship between activist oriented material and scholarly analysis is perhaps more complex and nuanced than has been suggested by Taylor. The religion and ecology field's task should not be a simple choice of analysing religion over against defending or engaging in it. What is needed is a kind of theology. In an effort to move beyond what they describe as 'ecoapocalyptic rhetoric of threat' Kearns and Keller try to facilitate an 'ecosocial transition, transmuting simple *emergency* into complex *emergence*'. They hope to join 'vigorous activism with rigorous thinking.' [126] In this Willis Jenkins describes their hope of 'developing an apposite mode of scholarly relation to a vulnerable life-world'[127] The volume's aim is ecological and so wishes to go beyond academic fields, yet, it recognises the need for rigorous scholarly analysis. The contributors are not so much interested in defending any confessional position as such but are engaged in working with cultural inheritances.

A number of relatively recent efforts have been made to organise the field of religion and ecology. Most of these have approached it from an ethical standpoint or using

[124] This is a key concern for many at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) who fear that scholarship which incorporates an environmental agenda will compromise the more rigorous engagement associated with distanced scholarship.

[125] Taylor, 'Critical Perspectives…' p. 1376.

[126] Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller, eds., *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2007. See 'Preface' xiii, italics in the text

[127] Jenkins, 'Religion and Ecology: A Review Essay in the Field', p. 195

ethical categories, as for instance the work of Laurel Kearns. Drawing on Max Weber's notion of ideal types and based on her own field-work Kearns categorises Christian environmental writings under three types or ethics: Christian stewardship, eco-justice and creation spirituality. [128] This threefold typology is also used by Willis Jenkins' more in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the field.[129] Both Jenkins and Kearns suggest that these types broadly correspond respectively to conservative, mainline and liberal understandings within Christianity. However not all of the material fits neatly into these categories and there is considerable overlap.[130]

Jenkins links his three strategies to three categorisations of the secular field of environmental ethics because he claims that these secular strategies aid a better understanding of the specifically Christian field: the normative pluralism of the secular field can be a means of interpreting the theological pluralism of the Christian field. [131] His further reason for this paralleling is to support his claim that the Christian strategies not only take up, but expand on and transform, the secular strategies. Thus Jenkins parallels the strategy of ecojustice with the moral standing of nature, but its rationale is found in creation's theological status rather than nature as such. In other words it is nature's relationship with God that gives it value rather than its own moral standing. Loss or defilement of nature means now an offence

[128] Kearns, 'Saving the Creation', pp. 55—70. See also Kearns 'The Context of Ecotheology'. The first article offers a more in-depth study of these types and is based specifically on field work over the period 1987-1992. By ethic Kearns means both the worldview that is held and how one ought to behave within it, one's ethos. This has intimations of the Greek word ethos to which I return in Chapter Four.

[129] Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace.* See some pertinent reviews by Bronislaw Szerszynski in *Studies in Christian Ethics* Vol.23, 2010, pp. 327—30.Online. Available HTTP: <http://sce.sagepub.com /content/23/3/327.citation>; Jessica Frazer *in Biblical Theology Bulletin* Vol. 38, p. 92—3. Online. Available HTTP: < http://connection.ebscohost.com /c/ book-reviews/32478690/ecologies-grace-environmental-ethics-christian-theology>. See also Jenkins, 'Religion and Ecology: A Review Essay in the Field', pp. 187–197. Jenkins tends to use ecological spirituality with creation spirituality being an aspect of this strategy.

[130] Kearns also suggests a fourth perspective, namely ecofeminism, but does not treat it as a separate category as she sees ecofeminism influencing the other models in varying ways.

[131] Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace*, pp. 33—40

against the sacred.[132] The strategy of stewardship turns the focus from creation's integrity to the human person as care-taker of that creation, just as the secular strategy of human agency is more focused on the human's role and responsibility vis-à-vis the natural world. The stewardship role in the Christian context is seen as being in response to the divine invitation and command. Thus the moral significance of nature is no longer based within God's presence in nature as such, but more on faithful human practices towards nature in line with God's command.[133] The final paralleling is between ecological spirituality and ecological subjectivity, both of which reflect a more dialogical approach between nature and the human person. Within ecological spirituality, then, the starting point is not the valuing of nature because of the divine presence, nor is it an approach that sees humans as stewards. Instead it concerns a 'primary spiritual communion of humanity and earth, assumed into personal experience with God'.[134] It is not biblical texts that are primary in experiencing the divine but the universe itself.[135] This strategy has a certain affinity with phenomenological approaches to understanding divine-human-nature relationships and is also, I suggest, reflected in the philosophical understandings of Eriugena and Kūkai.

What both Jenkins and Kearns are trying to develop here is a rich Christian environmental ethic. Implicit in their approach then is the idea that the environmental crisis demands a response that is primarily ethical in nature and it is primarily that aspect of religions that they are focusing upon. Thus it is the moral aspect of our religious understanding that challenges us to respond. We are stewards and must begin to understand this in a new way or our sense of justice towards the other must begin to include justice towards the non-human other. Within the religious tradition we can find supports for this kind of expanding viewpoint. The third division does not fit as easily into this type of ethical framework, rather it offers

[132] Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace*, 61ff

[133] Jenkins, Ecologies of Grace, 77.

[134] Jenkins *Ecologies of Grace*, 93

[135] Kearns, 'The Context of Eco-theology', 477—8

instead a focus on a more experiential engagement between humankind and nature out of which we act.[136]

Donald Swearer suggests a five-fold taxonomy as a prolegomenon to a critical exploration and evaluation of the literature concerning Buddhism and ecology: eco-apologists, eco-critics, eco-constructivists, eco-ethicists, and eco-contextualists.[137]The majority of writings fit under the first label including the previously mentioned anthologies *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology* and *Buddhism and Ecology*, as well as the more recent *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*.[138] This position has largely been identified with engaged Buddhism as many of the texts are contemporary rather than classical, and those who espouse the position generally understand Buddhist environmentalism as an extension of the Buddhist worldview. There is a tendency to appeal to particular rules and to important Buddhist doctrines.[139]

The main objection of eco-critics to the eco-apologetic position is that they 'judge it to be a serious distortion of normative Buddhist teachings and historical traditions' and so proponents of this position argue that the 'Buddhist worldview is

[136] It may however reflect a virtue ethic approach developed by David E. Cooper and Simon P. James. See Cooper and James, *Buddhism, Virtue and Environment*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2005

[137] Donald Swearer, 'An assessment of Buddhist Eco-philosophy', prepared for the CSWR-Dongguk symposium on Buddhism and Ecology, December 9-10, 2005. Other taxonomies are offered by Ian Harris such as the four-fold typology of eco-spirituality, eco-justice, eco-traditionalism and eco-apologetics. See Ian Harris in "Causation and Telos: The Problem of Buddhist Environmental Ethics," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 1 (1994): 46-59, and Ian Harris, 'Getting to grips with Buddhist Environmentalism: A Provisional Typology', in *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 2, 1995, 173-190. Harris also suggests the global significance of environmentalism is highlighted in the remarkable congruence between very different cultural and historical religious expressions.

[138] S. Kaza and K. Kraft (ed.) *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*, Boston and London: Shambala, 2000.

[139] There is often a reference to the life-style of the Buddha and individual monks, especially to certain rules that regulate their behaviour such as to the *vinaya* which prohibit monks engaging in environmentally destructive behaviour like cutting down trees, or eating ten kinds of meat of wild animals, and contaminating water. Classical Buddhist doctrines, like *paticca samuppada* (interdependent co-arising), *anatta* (not-self), *sunnata* (emptiness), *tathagatagarbha* (the womb of suchness) are drawn on since they can easily be linked to a non-dualistic, non-hierarchical, holistic worldview where all sentient beings and insentient nature are conjoined. See p. 6

incompatible with an environmental ethic'.[140] For instance Noriaka Hakamaya attacks the use of concepts such as Buddha-nature and 'suchness' arguing that they are inherently not Buddhist.[141] However, in response eco-apologists argue that such interpretations are too limited in focus since the way of the Buddha always concerned itself with more than 'a narrowly construed quest for Nirvana without regard for other sentient beings and natural surroundings'. [142] Swearer suggests that Ian Harris epitomises the eco-critic position most clearly. His basic argument is that Buddhist environmentalist ethic is primarily an American liberal effort to create a Buddhist response to the environmental crisis. He also suggests that the ethic expresses a kind of globalization that erodes culture-specific boundaries and so overrides important differences in doctrine and practice. Such an approach displays an indifference to the history and complexity of the Buddhist tradition.[143] At the same time Harris recognises that all traditions need to grow and change, and as such Buddhist environmentalism needs to be seen as an expression of such work.

Those whom Swearer labels eco-constructivists also try to uncover ecologically positive elements in Buddhism but try not to lose the essentials of the tradition. They see the possibility of an environmental ethic in Buddhism but it is not co-terminal with a Buddhist worldview.[144] The fourth position advocates a Buddhist environmental ethic from Buddhist ethics rather than from the Buddhist

[140] Swearer, 'An assessment of Buddhist Eco-philosophy', p. 8

[141] Cited in Swearer, 'An assessment of Buddhist Eco-philosophy', p. 8

[142] Swearer, 'An assessment of Buddhist Eco-philosophy', p. 8

[143] In fact Harris sees this as a phenomenon across the liberal wing of both Christianity and Buddhism: "It is the impact of modernity and of globalization, in particular, that has tended to encourage traditional religions, such as Christianity and Buddhism, to move to a closer intellectual and emotional harmony the more they move away from the geographical locations that have given them their specific cultural and historical forms" See Harris, 'Getting to Grips with Buddhist Environmentalism: A Provisional Typology', *Journal of Buddhist Ethic*s, 1995b, p. 175. See also Harris, 'Buddhist Environmental Ethics and Detraditionalization: The Case of EcoBuddhism', *Religion* Vol. 25: 3 July 1995, pp. 199—211.

[144] The works of P. A. Payutto & Lambert Schmithausen are important expressions of this position.

worldview[145], while the final ethic emerges from particular contexts and situations, which is the eco-contextualists' position[146].

Other reviews frame the material somewhat differently. For instance Celia Deane-Drummond, in an effort to highlight the global diversity of literature concerned with Christian ecotheology, offers an illustrative overview under chapter headings that use the cardinal points of north south east and west.[147] It is however unclear how north and west are separated since the theological contributions examined in these chapters could belong to either location. Also the chapter entitled 'ecotheology from the east' is a focus on eastern orthodox contributions rather than the geographical east, reflecting a traditional Christian understanding of East and West rather than a global understanding of these terms. Deane Drummond also offers chapters on a range of standard branches of study within Christianity from an ecological perspective, such as Christology, eschatology, and ecofeminist theology.

Tony Watling's analysis of the field, points out the limited nature of Lynn White's interpretation of Judeo-Christianity and highlights that a more 'explicit and overt ecological awareness' within the traditions reflecting a 'non-anthropocentric re-interpretation of humanity, nature and the sacred', has been growing over the last number of decades. This has involved extending a sense of the sacred, as well as ethics and identity, to nature as a whole.[148]

[145] What is advocated here as promoting a less harmful life-style is an ethic of moderation, or the Buddhist "Middle Way" (*majjhima patipata)*. Swearer highlights the impact of Schumacher's approach to economics on many Buddhist activists in this regard. A number of writings have emerged which critique the consumerism of modern culture as an inherent cause of current environmentalist issues including Stephanie Kaza (ed.) *Hooked! Buddhist Writings on Greed, Desire, and the Urge to Consume*, Boston: Shambala Publications, 2005.

[146] Here Swearer offers as example the efforts to preserve Suthep Mountain in northern in Thailand, which has been previously mentioned. See note 35.

[147] Deane Drummond, *Ecotheology*, 2008, p. xiii

[148] Watling 'The Field of Religion and Ecology' p. 473

Chapter 2: Eriugena & Kūkai: An Overview

I. Eriugena: A brief biographical sketch

All sources on John Scottus Eriugena[149] hold that he was born somewhere in Ireland around the beginning of the ninth century CE. Nothing further is known of his Irish background, but in all probability he was educated at one of the monastic establishments that were widespread in Ireland at the time.[150] This education would have included the study of Greek, which seems to have given the Irish an advantage on the continent since knowledge of the language was more closely associated with Irish scholars than with any other group of scholars.[151] While the Viking raids,

[149] Scotus or Scottus meant 'Irish' while the Greek sounding Erigena or Eriugena meant 'of Irish birth'. The confusion and pleonasm this could cause means that scholars nowadays tend to call him Eriugena, the name that is at the head of his translation of the works of pseudo-Dionysius. See John J. O'Meara, *Eriugena,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. This name was given to him in 1632 by Archbishop Ussher of Dublin. It seems that nineteenth century historians refer to him as John the Scot. See D. Moran, 'The Secret Folds of Nature: Eriugena's Expansive Concept of Nature (Physis),' in Alf Siewers, (ed.) *Re-Imagining Nature: Environmental Humanities and Ecosemiotics*, Proceedings of the 'Redefining Nature's Boundaries' Lecture Series, Humanities Institute & Environmental Institute Colloquium, Bucknell University Press/ Rowman & Littlefield, 2013. In press. Proof stage. See also Hillary Mooney *Theophany: The Appearing of God According to the Writings of Johannes Scottus Eriugena,* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009, p. 11ff for a systematic and concise layout of the most important research on Eriugena

[150] Old Irish words, used by Eriugena in biblical glosses, refer to Irish flora and fauna and aspects of Irish culture, which, according to P.P. O'Neill, show his familiarity with material aspects of Irish life. Other glosses show knowledge of the Irish legal system. O'Neill concludes that Eriugena was well educated in both secular and religious knowledge before he left Ireland, an education he received at a monastic school where the two traditions, the religious one of the Church and the secular one of the *filid* [poets], had long before been reconciled, and where both were studied.' P. P. O'Neill, 'The Old-Irish Words in Eriugena's Biblical Glosses', in G-H Allard (ed.) *Jean Scot écrivain,* Montreal-Paris, 1986, pp. 294ff cited in John J. O'Meara, *Eriugena,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p.6. O'Meara offers a concise yet scholarly account of the Irish and French historical background to Eriugena's writings as well as a lucid summary of the *Periphyseon*. Also, for brief comment on his Irish origins, see 'Eriugena, John Scottus', Thomas Duddy (Gen. Ed.) *Dictionary of Irish Philosophers*, Galway: NUI, 2004, p. 119. Biographies that emerged in the 1860s relied on the earlier biographical work of William of Malmesbury which appeared in the twelfth century. The most exhaustive contemporary biography to date remains M. Cappuyns, *Jean Scot Erigène: Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée*, Louvain: Abbaye de Mont Cesar, 1933. The best biography in English to date is O'Meara's *Eriugena*, which also contains a summary of the *Periphyseon* as well as a translation of one of Eriugena's exegetical works on *John's Gospel, the Homily on the Prologue to St. John's Gospel*. For more up to date bibliographical information see online the *Society for the Promotion of Eriugena Studies*.

[151] While much has been written exaggerating the contribution of the Irish to Britain and the continent over the course of the 6th 7th and 8th centuries, (as well as denigrating it), it seems the case

which were intensifying by the mid-ninth century, may have provided the motive for his leaving the country, one must also keep in mind the well developed pattern of Irish *peregrinatio*, the favours that Irish scholars seem to have received and the inducements offered to scholars and teachers generally at the Carolingian court in the reign of Charles the Bald, the grandson of Charlemagne.[152] Whatever the reason it seems that by the time of the predestination controversy in 850-1 Eriugena was already attached to the royal court of Charles the Bald as a well known teacher of the liberal arts.[153] Most sources agree that if Eriugena was a cleric at all, it was no more than a simple monk. It is perhaps more likely that he was a layperson and this probable fact makes his achievements all the greater, given the almost total control of theological and philosophical thinking by clergy at the time.

Two of his early writings are the *Annotationes in Martianum Capellam* and the *De divina praedestinatione*, both of which exemplify Eriugena's wish to adopt a rationalistic approach.[154] Thus from very early on in his writings we find that he considers appeal to authority on its own insufficient, and he advocates the pursuit of reason. The *Annotationes* is a commentary on Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis*

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that abundant evidence exists for Irish knowledge of Greek during the 9th century. See O'Meara *Eriugena*, p.6

[152] The Eriugenian scholar E. Jeauneau comments that this period can rightly be described as the summer of the Carolingian renaissance: 'it would not be inappropriate to say that if the reign of Charlemagne was the springtime of the Carolingian renaissance, the reign of Charles the Bald was its glorious summer.' Central to this renaissance (as to the later Renaissance) was the revival of the study of Greek. See Jeauneau 'Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus the Confessor in the Works of John Scottus Eriugena', in Uta-Renate Blumenthal (ed.) *Carolingian Essays: Andrew W. Mellon Lectures in Early Christian Studies*, Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1983, p.138

[153]D. Moran *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 1989, (reprint Cambridge, 2004), p.35. The exact of location of this school is unknown but the general consensus is that it was somewhere in Laon region either at Laon itself or Quierzy of Compiègne. See O'Meara, *Eriugena*, 1988, p. 12—4.

[154] Two versions of Eriugena's *Annotationes* have been published, one in 1939 based on a Paris manuscript and another in 1941 based on an Oxford manuscript. See O'Meara, Eriugena, p.25—7. Some scholars such as Leonardi and Schrimpf deny that Eriugena wrote an independent commentary on *De Nuptiis*, and suggest that he simply wrote glosses in the margins of Martianus' work. Moran however disputes this. See Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 38-39. Also there are suggestions that in this early period Eriugena may have written a partial commentary on other works such as works by Boethius. However these are disputed. See Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p.45—6

Philologiae et Mercurii, the most popular school textbook on the liberal arts for the most of a thousand years and also the source of Eriugena's greatest encounter with pagan tradition. [155] In this commentary we find Eriugena trying to do what is more fully developed in the *Periphyseon*, which is to merge his understanding of Christian doctrine (particularly on the soul and original sin) with a Neoplatonic understanding of the world. Reflected here is his ultimate pursuit to seek a rational explanation for the nature of things. [156] Again in the *De divina praedestinatione*, which was completed in 851, while recognising the 'privileged and responsible position' of Hincmar and Pardulus as bishops, Eriugena makes it quite clear that what he wishes to pursue is a rational approach. It was this issue—the use of the philosophical and secular method of dialectic in his argument against the double predestination position of Gottschalk—rather than his actual conclusions that so embarrassed the Church authorities who had ordered Eriugena to write on the subject, and led to their rejection of Eriugena and his work.[157] Thus what we find in his first extant work are

[155] Prudentius of Troyes talks of Eriugena's confusion resulting from his meditation on Capella rather than the gospels. Cited in O'Meara, *Eriugena*, p. 21. Capella's compendium of Greek philosophy and science was seen as indispensible in the Middle Ages particularly until the recovery of Aristotle in the 12th century. It is a work belonging to 'a late antique attempt to celebrate the values of pagan culture—the culture of rhetoric and eloquence—over against the newer Christian values of humility, suffering, and the renunciation of worldly knowledge.' See Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, 40—2.

[156] The commentary also demonstrates his positive attitude towards secular learning, even if this positivity is not wholly for its own sake but as a necessary component in the saving knowledge of humankind. This attitude was however an advance on the general Carolingian view that the liberal arts were merely a means of understanding scripture rather than an independent means to salvation. The more speculative cosmological theories found in *De Nuptiis* are also found in Eriugena's writings. These include ideas on the movement of the planets, the harmonisation of the cosmos through the power of love, how the four elements relate to each other, the notion of the world soul, and the nature of space. Finally the *Annotationes* also demonstrate Eriugena's precision and his breadth of learning at this early point, and its line-by-line method of commenting on texts rather than just producing manuals on texts that would be at the level of his students, had a profound influence on the method that became wide spread in the universities in the High Middle Ages. See Moran *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p 39—45.

[157] The particular predestination controversy of this period arose over the ideas of a Saxon monk Gottschalk who argued for a doctrine of double predestination and claimed to base his position on Augustine's teachings, the mainstay of authority in the Church. Church authority in the person of Hincmar, archbishop of Reims, and others saw Gottschalk's doctrine as dangerous, and eventually invited Eriugena to write on the subject. It is also to be noted that relations between Gottschalk and Hincmar were never good. Eriugena based his argument against predestination on his Neoplatonism. For Eriugena there can be nothing at all that is predestined since God is simple and unchangeable. His being is his knowledge, his will, his 'predestination.' Predestination then is God's knowledge of the primordial causes. There is no other predestination. Humanity itself leads to its own hell through its

'intellectual characteristics which he was to manifest for the rest of his life.'[158] While Gottschalk was condemned and reviled by Church authorities for the remainder of his life, Eriugena was not. In fact his career flourished after that, possibly because he was protected by Charles.[159]

Deirdre Carabine raises a further point here that concerns the authority of Augustine. Since both Gottschalk and Eriugena appear to draw on Augustine in support of their respective positions, the implication is that Augustine's position was open to different interpretations. Thus the use of his authority in supporting positions (and indeed questioning that authority itself) is brought into question. Citing Jaroslav Pelikan, Carabine holds that the comfortable 'Augustinian synthesis' of the previous centuries was now under threat.[160]Again this suggests the innovative nature of Eriugena's writings as well as his courage to express such bold ideas in a strongly polemical age.

Moran describes Eriugena during these early decades of his time on the Continent as 'a *grammaticus*, well read in Augustine, Boethius, Martianus Capella, Pliny, Isidore, Macrobius, and other Latin writers.'[161] Moran warns against making too great a contrast between Eriugena as a Latin Arts master and Eriugena as the 'follower of Greek Platonism,' since his knowledge of Greek is seen in his earlier glosses too. [162] Nevertheless, almost all scholars agree that it was the translation of the works of the Greek Dionysius the Areopagite or pseudo-Dionysius into Latin that propelled

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own actions. Likewise heaven is open to all. In large measure Eriugena's position was not that different from Hincmar. See O'Meara, *Eriugena*, 32—50.

[158] O'Meara, *Eriugena*, p. 37—8.

[159] Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, (Great Medieval Thinkers), Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 11—2.

[160] Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 12.

[161] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 46.

[162] This work began c 860. For instance his use of the term substitutio rather than substantia in relation to being, in *De praedestinatione*, before his translation of the Greeks is testimony to this. The former conveys a sense of coming into being not found in the latter that is central to understanding Eriugena as we shall see. See Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p.46—7.

Eriugena into the pages of intellectual history. In all, he translated the *Celestial Hierarchy*, the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, the *Mystical Theology*, the *Divine Names* and ten *Epistles* by pseudo-Dionysius.[163] This translation work was done at the invitation of Charles, whose enthusiasm for all things Greek shaped his patronage of Eriugena,[164] and the work was possibly completed around 860 (or 862).[165]

Other Irish scholars and contemporaries of Eriugena, such as Sedulius who worked in Liege and Martin the school master at Laon, also knew Greek. However, Marenbon makes the point that in Eriugena's case his knowledge changed his intellectual horizons. The task of translating pseudo-Dionysius into Latin certainly made him improve his Greek, but more importantly it brought him into contact with the intellectual world of Greek Christian Neoplatonism.[166]

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[163] While the Identity of the mysterious figure under the pseudonym pseudo-Dionysius remains a mystery his importance is beyond doubt, stemming from the fact that his doctrine is the first Christian version of a type of Neoplatonic philosophy taught mainly in the two centres of learning, Athens and Alexandria, from the 4th to the 6th centuries CE. The celebrated manuscript of his works were sent as a gift to Louis the Pious (Charlemagne's son) by the Byzantium Emperor Michael II—an act, described by Carabine, as a most fortunate moment in philosophical history. See Deirdre Carabine *The unknown God of Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena* Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 19, (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1995) p.301

[164] To understand this enthusiasm see Michael McCormick 'Diplomacy and the Carolingian Encounter with Byzantium down to the Accession of Charles the Bald' in Bernard McGinn & Willemien Otten (eds.) *Eriugena: East and West. Papers of the Eight International Colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies Chicago and Notre Dame 18-20 October 1991*, Notre Dame Conferences in Medieval Studies Number V, Notre Dame & London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994, pp. 15—48. In trying to understand why Greek influence was still strong in Carolingian culture in spite of the fact that politically the west was losing its Eastern governance, McCormick suggests that culturally Byzantine influence lingered well into the 8th century and in the three generations prior to Eriugena appearing in the court, person to person relations of significance took place in the court where, in early medieval society, the possibility of cultural exchange was greatest, See pp. 23—31.

[165] See O'Meara, *Eriugena*, p.68

[166] John Marenbon, *Aristotelian Logic, Platonism and the Context of Early Medieval Philosophy in the West*, Variorum Collected Studies Series, (Hampshire & Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 2000), III, 184. Eriugena also translated Greek works including *Ambigua ad Johannem* and *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* by Maximus the Confessor, and Gregory of Nyssa's *De Opificio hominis – On the Creation of Man*.

Eriugena's major contribution to western thought is undoubtedly the *Periphyseon*, which has been described as 'one of the most radical redefinitions—and indeed expansions—of the concept of nature (Greek: *physis*, Latin: *natura*) ever found within Christian philosophy.[167] Written in the first half of the 860s in the form of an extended dialogue between a master and his student, it is divided into five books and it runs to over two hundred thousand words.[168] Book I outlines the main aspects of his metaphysical framework such as his concept of *natura* (introducing the four divisions), his notions of essence, of being and non-being, and the categories. Here also are to be found discussions on negative theology, theophany and the categories. Book II concentrates on the second division of nature—understood as that which both creates and is created. This is the idea that 'procession through the primordial causes is the source of the diversity in the visible world.'[169] This discussion is concluded in Book III, which also introduces the third division: that which is created but does not create namely the phenomenal world or the created effects. Here also Eriugena begins his *Hexaëmeron*—his interpretation of the six days of creation—that continues through the final two books: in Book IV is a treatise on human nature, while Book V focuses on the last division of nature, the return of all to the source. Eriugena intimates a change in these two books. Using the image of a ship and the notion of a journey Eriugena likens the first three books to a smooth sea where 'readers could sail without fear of shipwreck, steering a safe course.' Books IV and V however, are like dangerous waters since they engage with conflicting doctrines and difficult issues. What is worthy of noting however, is that Eriugena is confident, not so much because of the aid of tradition but because he is guided by reason.

The dialogue follows the pattern of unity-diversity-reunification as found in Neoplatonism, or Creation-Fall-Redemption as in the Christian tradition. While Neoplatonism is central to the text, scholars hold that his main theme is creation understood as the process by which the hidden divine mystery becomes manifest and

[167] Moran, 'The Secret Folds of Nature'.

[168] The master student couple was initially referred to as Nutritor and Alumnus and in the 12th C. manuscript of William of Malmesbury it became M for Magister and D. for Discipulus. For a very brief outline of each book see D. Moran, 'John Scottus Eriugena' in H. Lagerlund (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy Between 500 and 1500*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2010

[169] Carabine, *Eriugena*, p. 23

returns to its source. The work was probably revised continuously over this period, as is evidenced by the number of glosses that were gradually incorporated into the text.[170] In this work, Eriugena displays a masterly knowledge of both Greek Eastern and Latin Western authorities of the time, setting out to associate himself with the great figures of Augustine and pseudo-Dionysius among others.[171]

It is a work that displays an extraordinary level of erudition and (for his time) knowledge of the natural world—cosmology, number theory, astronomy, physics and so on.[172] Moreover, he displays his knowledge of scripture, attempting a bold interpretation of the creation story of Genesis, and emphasising the refreshing notion that many interpretations are possible. In this regard he highlights the dangers of a literal interpretation of the scriptures. These cannot be studied in isolation and need more than the authority of the fathers: reason must be followed, 'which investigates the truth of things.'[173] Moran, further points out that Eriugena's sole desire to have a proper insight into the words of Scripture, which he considered to be the "secret dwelling-place of truth", must be tempered by the impression from the dialogue that Eriugena reads scripture in the wider context of his metaphysical framework.

Overall through his use of dialogue as a method of genuine inquiry, Eriugena wants to 'provide a vehicle for travelling on the road towards spiritual enlightenment.'[174]

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[170] Dermot Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, pp. 58-9. Only one complete manuscript exists and this is from the 12th C. at Trinity College Cambridge. The oldest but incomplete script is known as Rheims 875. Various scholars suggest a different number of stages of editing and development all of which shows the care with which the work was read and studied in the 9th C. this tells us something of the process of composition of a 9th century philosophical work. Many of the glosses aimed for 'clarity, precision, and completeness,' according to Marenbon. There is however no reason to assume that the *Periphyseon* ever reached a satisfactory form, since to seek such a form would be a distortion of how early medieval philosophical production worked. See p.61—3

[171] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 58—9.

[172] Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, p.25

[173] Eriugena, J. S., *Periphyseon: The Division of Nature* eds. & trans. I.P. Sheldon-Williams, rev. John J. O'Meara, Montreal and Washington: Bellarmin and Dumbarton Oaks, 1987, 509a, (hereafter *Periphyseon*)

[174] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 68—9

This more holistic focus means that his use of dialogue cannot be understood as a vehicle for conveying dogmatic propositions, as dialogue would become in the scholastic period. Thus difficulties are not glossed over but are faced up to, and in that way Eriugena displays a true speculative spirit and emphasises that the ultimate focus is union with Truth itself which for him is God. [175]

Cappuyns has described the philosophical works of Eriugena as forming a triptych, with the *Periphyseon* as the central panel and with the *Expositions of the Celestial Hierarchy* on one side and both his exegetical works on John's Gospel, the *Commentary* and the *Homily on the Prologue*, on the other. It is probable that the *Commentary* (which is quite fragmentary) was unfinished at the time of Eriugena's death, and while it did not have a wide circulation it did have strong influence throughout the Middle Ages and was used, for instance, by Aquinas. The latter work, the *Homily on the Prologue*, has been the most popular of his works to be found in medieval libraries. This may be because it was thought to have been a work of Origen, and also its eloquence and fervour made it popular especially in monastic establishments during the Middle Ages. [176]

Eriugena's ending like his beginnings is shrouded in obscurity. We hear nothing of him after 870. According to William of Malmesbury he went to Britain to become Abbot of Malmesbury and there his scholars are reputed to have 'fatally stabbed him with their pens.' However, it is much more likely that he stayed in France and died around 877. Just as he himself faded into relative obscurity so also his influence waned after the thirteenth century. This is largely due to condemnations of the *Periphyseon* at church councils in 1210 and 1225.[177] Apart from his influence on Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, and Giordano Bruno during the later Middle Ages, his

[175] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 69

[176] O'Meara, *Eriugena*, p. 155—8

[177] While the text of the first council, the Synod of Sens does not refer to the *Periphyseon* in its condemnations of works by David of Dinant and Amaury of Bène, the second council in 1225 refers to the *Periphyseon* as being already banned in 1210. Either way Pope Honorius III condemned the *Periphyseon* in 1225 as a work 'teeming with the worms of heretical perversity.' See Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 86

writings fade from history for the next number of centuries until his *Periphyseon* surfaced in Malmesbury in the seventeenth century whereupon it was duly placed on the index of forbidden books.[178] Only in the nineteenth century did serious interest in his writings begin to grow, though one has to wait until the latter decades of the twentieth century to find more than a few monographs in English.[179]

II. Sources of influence

Eriugena's translations and subsequent original work resulted in 'the meeting of Athens and Rome in Gaul.'[180] The Latin West and the Greek East – two worlds that were becoming increasingly alienated from each other—were being brought together into a coherent schema. For Dermot Moran this coherence reflects a range of Neoplatonisms received from his contact with the various authors both East and West, and was subsequently communicated by Eriugena 'as the truth of Christianity and the meaning of nature itself'.[181] In fact most scholars agree that the primary philosophical influence on Eriugena from his various sources had to be Neoplatonic, since Aristotle's works were known only through the *Categoriae decem* at this time.[182]

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[178] The religious conflicts of the reformation led to interest in his work especially on authority and reason, nature and grace, and predestination. See D. Moran *Nature and the Mind in the Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study in Medieval Idealism*, PhD Dissertation Yale 1986, p. 3

[179] See suggestions for further reading in Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 127.

[180] Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 16.

[181] Moran, p. 120. Moran provides us with a succinct synopsis of Eriugena's main sources of Neoplatonism in chapter 7. He makes the point that this term itself is a nineteenth century classification of German historians of philosophy applied to the revival of platonic doctrine found in Plotinus, Porphyry, and Proclus. Eriugena, like others of his time would have thought of themselves only as practitioners of true philosophy p.104

[182] See for instance Werner Beierwaltes 'Eriugena's Platonism' in *Hermathena* No. 149, 1990, pp. 53—5. Beierwaltes argues that his Neoplatonism is most likely a translated rather than a pure form since it is transmitted to him via theological authorities even though the authority most influencing him—pseudo-Dionysius—imbibes the thought of Proclus most directly. Beierwaltes outlines three main ideas from Neoplatonism that are integral to Eriugena's philosophical theology. See pp. 58—67. On the other hand John Marenbon makes a strong case for Aristotelian influence on the early period. He argues Aristotelian logic was also a force in the early medieval period, pointing out that the view that the early medieval period's philosophical outlook was completely Platonic up to the thirteenth century and then with the discovery of Aristotle became Aristotelian is far too simplistic. See Marenbon, 'Introduction' in *Aristotelian Logic, Platonism and the Context of Early Medieval*

It is also the case that Eriugena's access to Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies is via Christian sources, both Greek and Latin.[183] His knowledge of Plotinus, Proclus, and Neoplatonism is largely from the same sources, relying most particularly on the versions found in pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus Confessor.[184] Stephen Gersh has outlined the close links with later Platonic writers such as Iamblichus and Porphyry.[185]

A. Sources from the Latin West

It is clear that a number of Boethius's works were known to Eriugena, though he does not make any reference to Boethius's most famous work, the *Consolation of Philosophy*. Boethius may have been one of his sources for Aristotle, along with the Latin paraphrase by Marius Victorinus of Porphyry's *Isagoge*, and the *Categoriae decem*.[186] Bede's *De rerum natura* has been cited as a source of Eriugena's fourfold division of nature and his concept of the primordial causes. There is also a suggestion that Victorinus may have been another source for the four-fold division. As previously mentioned, Capella's *Marriage of Philology and Mercury* was known to Eriugena, and from it he gleaned a number of Neoplatonic concepts as well as a summary of Aristotle's logical procedure.[187] Haren suggests that the twin framework on which the *Periphyseon* is built, the dialectical method and a belief in the power of reason not necessarily connected with authority, may have already been developed through his contact with Capella and Macrobius, though Augustine and pseudo-Dionysius are also sources.

Philosophy in the West, (Variorum Collected Studies Series), I, Hampshire & Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 2000, p. 1—2

[183] It is very unlikely that Eriugena had access to any of the Greek texts even to any of the Latin translations of these works. Sheldon-Williams suggests one exception – a Greek work known to them as *Peplos of Theophrastus*. There is no evidence that he read at first hand any of the pagan or middle Neoplatonists either. See I. P. Sheldon-Williams, 'Eriugena's Greek Sources' in, John J. O'Meara & Ludwig Bieler, (eds.) *The Mind of Eriugena*, Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973, p. 3.

[184] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 106.

[185] Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, Leiden: Brill, 1978

[186] Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 20

[187] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, pp. 109—10

Augustine is undoubtedly the most influential of his Latin sources, both in terms of his overall scheme and particular details. According to Moran Eriugena 'seems thoroughly Augustinian in many of his ideas and attitudes.'[188] It is through Augustine that Eriugena would have come into contact with the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and Porphyry.[189] His distinction between the two paths of wisdom—authority and reason—is also to be found in Augustine. Many scholars claim that Eriugena sometimes seems to use this distinction to actually contradict that towering authority of the age. As Carabine puts it Eriugena is not held captive by Augustine. Rather his *Periphyseon* contains ideas that can be considered a 'powerful alternative' to those of Augustine and later of Aquinas.[190] Moran, while recognising that Eriugena differs from Augustine, suggests that this stems from his desire to show the 'underlying deep unity and agreement between the Christian systems of Greek East and Latin West' that leads him to remodel whatever he adopts from Augustine.[191] Whatever his reasons, the refreshingly dynamic understanding of reality posited by Eriugena—with its central idea of creation being the manifestation of the divine—is an expression of the type of ancient wisdom that can be retrieved and reinterpreted in the contemporary context of the ecological crisis.

An interesting example of being influenced by Augustine but ultimately following the Greek Maximus' version concerns the doctrine of omnipresence—the notion of how a single metaphysical principle relates to the multiplicity of created things. This originally Neoplatonic notion took on a Christian focus, with Augustine being the principle channel of Plotinus. For Augustine the metaphysical principle, God, is understood to be both non-spatial and atemporal, while the human soul is temporal, but also non-spatial. Eriugena however follows Maximus who holds that the omnipresence of God as non-spatial and atemporal is understood as relating to a spatial and temporal creation that includes the human soul. In other words, God

[188] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 110

[189] Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 21

[190] Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 20, 25

[191] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 115. Eriugena's notion of a *cogito*—human self-awareness—reflects that of Augustine, yet the outline of the God-human relationship that he espouses is taken from the Greek Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus Confessor. See Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 155

encompasses created entities—all understood as spatial and temporal—within him, implying that he is simultaneously transcendent and immanent. Eriugena uses the notion of light and its diffusion, and the blending of light and air, to illustrate his understandings.[192]

B. Sources from the Greek East

Thus, Eriugena cannot be categorised as simply a follower of Augustine or any of the Latin writers. A number of the Greek writers also impacted on him, and from them he not only follows their general pattern of focusing on God as not known in himself but known in his effects or energies, but he also adopts new ideas such as the notions of *theophany* and *theōsis*, God as *superessentialis*, and the different forms of theology—positive, negative and mystical.[193] Origen's ideas were known to Eriugena, a reason why he is sometimes referred to as the Origen of the West. Of particular relevance to him is Origen's idea that creation is an eternal not a temporal act of God. Both Origen and Eriugena argue that all spiritual beings or intellects are one with God in *ουσία*.[194]

We have seen that through his translation work his knowledge of Greek deepened and scholars agree on the overriding Greek Christian influence on his thought. In particular the formative influence of pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, and Maximus the Confessor is acknowledged.[195] From these writers,

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[192] S. Gersh, 'Omnipresence in Eriugena: Some reflections on Augusto—Maximian Elements in *Periphyseon*' in Beierwaltes (ed.), *Eriugena: Studien Zu Seinen Quellen: Vortrage des Iii,* (Internationalen Eriugena-Colloquiums), Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979 pp. 56-7

[193] The Greeks therefore focused on the processions or existences of God rather than God's essence as the means of knowing him.

[194] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 107—8. His contact with Origen was possibly through the Latin translations of Rufinus, and the writings of Ambrose and Epiphanius, as well as the Greeks such as Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and of Nazianzus.

[195] Basil the Great (330-379), who became bishop of Caesarea and his younger brother Gregory (c.332-395), who became bishop of Nyssa, as well as a friend Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389), Patriarch of Constantinople are collectively known as the Cappadocian Fathers. The Cappadocia region that gives these three this name was an early site for Christian activity. The Cappadocians made a major contribution to early Christian theology particularly in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. Moran points out the impossibility of detecting in Eriugena's work the exact influence

whom he tended to read as confirming each other's viewpoints,[196] he gleaned a new understanding of time, of the meaning of creation, and of the relation between the divine ideas and their effects. He also received a more radical concept of infinite nature, new ideas on anthropology, and an intricate method of philosophical and theological negative dialectics, all of which are key concepts in his *Periphyseon*. Corresponding to Augustine in the west, Gregory of Nyssa commands the lion's share of Eriugena's attention in the East, helping to form Eriugena's views of the human and of its relation to the divine.[197] In particular he received from Gregory the doctrine that matter is the confluence of invisible realities—a doctrine we find expounded in his understanding of the body.[198] Eriugena's claim concerning the existence and essence of God—that while we know that God is we do not know what he is—can be attributed to the influence of Maximus.[199] Yet the more qualitative influence was possibly pseudo-Dionysius, and it is primarily in his reading of this author and of Augustine that we find his efforts to create a synthesis. While these authors are not always in agreement, Eriugena is at pains to show that they are proponents of the one true philosophy.

C. Irish cultural influences

While no hint of Irish origins emanates from Eriugena himself, scholars do suggest an Irish cultural influence. For instance he has been associated with a number of old Irish words explaining difficult Latin terms for well over a century.[200] Scholars have also suggested that he may have learnt his knowledge of Greek in Ireland, even

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of each individual Cappadocian. Eriugena tended to think of these sources as one body of work. See Moran, *John Scottus Eriugena,* p. 117

[196] Eriugena tends to use Maximus to interpret and corroborate pseudo-Dionysius and this brings in the work of Gregory of Nazianzus whom Maximus is actually expounding. Sheldon-Williams, 'Eriugena's Greek Sources' p. 5

[197] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena,* p.116

[198] O'Meara, 'Introduction' in Eriugena, *Periphyseon,* p.14. also O'Meara, *Eriugena,* 1969

[199] O'Meara, 'Introduction' p. 14

[200] Moran 'Eriugena', in *Dictionary of Irish Philosophers*, p. 119. These are extant manuscripts containing biblical glosses on which are found old Irish words. They are marked with IOH that is understood to be the work of Eriugena. According to Moran one must be careful of making too ready an assumption however. See Moran, *John Scottus Eriugena,* p. 36.

though recent research suggests otherwise, since the Irish did not possess such a level of Greek.[201] Most likely he had some knowledge prior to travelling to the Continent but this was considerably enhanced there.

Recent work by the literary critic Alfred Siewers highlights the influence of Eriugena's Irishness in his writings, by attributing the uniqueness of his work in part to 'his cultural background in the archipelago'. Siewers associates the *Periphyseon* with the corpus of Insular writings relating to the Irish sea provinces, suggesting that it culminates these early Irish Sea writings on nature from the standpoint of intellectual history.[202]

Thomas O'Loughlin, writing in the *Traditions of Christian Spirituality* Series, stresses Eriugena's emphasis on the notion of divine transcendence. He suggests that Eriugena's work is an indication of a wider awareness of the need for a balance between a sacramental view of creation and the more apophatic which focuses on the awesome mystery of God – or God as mysterious other. He notes comparisons with examples from early Irish Insular literature, and suggests that Eriugena may have first got his notions of divine transcendence from contact with less sophisticated versions found in these texts from his Celtic background. Thus his philosophy may be considered grounded in a kind of Celtic apophatic theology as is found in the Irish hexaëmeronic tradition.[203]

[201] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, 1989, p. 56.

[202] Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p. 26—67.

[203] Thomas O'Loughlin, *Journeys on the Edges: The Celtic Tradition*, (Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series), London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000, p. 66, 78—9. The examples of Insular texts he draws upon are the Stowe Missal and the *Book on the Order of Creatures.* The former written sometime in the late eight or early ninth century preserves a Eucharistic text that stresses the ineffability of God while the latter, possibly written in Ireland in the seventh century, is a guide presenting an orderly of creation based on Genesis and which offers a balance between stressing the need to study the marks of God in creation and maintaining an absolute distance between creator and creature.

The Celtic scholar John Carey also emphasises the importance of Eriugena's link with his Celtic roots. His approach is to argue for commonality between Eriugena's understanding of the resurrection and understandings found in a late ninth or early tenth century text composed by another Irish writer entitled *In Tenga Bithnua* ('The Everlasting Tongue'). This is an account of the mysteries of the universe following roughly the sequence of Genesis, a sequence also found in the *Periphyseon*. However it is written in a style that reveals an author with a vivid and restless imagination. Such a tone is as far away as one could imagine from the 'quiet tone and rigorous reasoning' of the *Periphyseon*. Yet Carey argues that these texts may have much more in common than has previously been thought. He does this by considering what each has to say about the Christian doctrine of the resurrection or the idea of the return of all things to God, concluding that Eriugena may have been exposed to a range of ideas about this topic prior to leaving Ireland. Eriugena sought in vain to find a counterpart to these ideas in the Latin Patristic tradition, but eventually found one in the Greek tradition in the writings of Maximus the Confessor. In fact this focus on Maximus was a divergence from drawing on Pseudo-Dionysius who, as we have noted, seems to have been his primary Greek influence in every other respect. The reason for this may be due to the fact of some resonance in Maximus's ideas with Eriugena's own Irish background.[204] Carey's final point is that both these texts – *Periphyseon* and *In Tenga Bithnua* – assert that not only the human species but all things return to God, since both humans and the cosmos are 'portions and versions of one another.'[205]

III. Portrayals of Eriugenian thought

The standard interpretation of Eriugenian philosophy in the late nineteenth century was that it reflected a Christian Neoplatonism with mystical and pantheistical tendencies.[206] According to Dermot Moran this standard approach to Eriugena sees

[204] John Carey, *A Single Ray of the Sun: Religious Speculation in Early Ireland*, Andover & Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 1999, pp. 75—103.

[205] John Carey, *A Single Ray of the Sun*, p. 106

[206] For instance Hauréau, Copleston and Windelband, among others, hold this view. Cappuyns' biography makes reference to Hauréau's judgement of Eriugena as 'an autre Proclus, a piene chrétien' as reflecting how nineteenth and early twentieth century scholarship viewed him. Cappuyns, *Jean Scot Érigène. Sa Vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée*, 1933, 264. Cited in Willemiem Otten, *The Anthropology of John Scottus Eriugena*, Leiden: Brill, 1991, p. 2 note 5.

him positing a 'hierarchical metaphysical system under the guise of "divisions" of nature' and going further than many others 'in arguing for the final conflation of these divisions (which include God and nature, uncreated and created being) into one pantheistic concept of nature as both God and creation.'[207] According to Willemiem Otten, this was largely understood as a kind of 'metaphysical monism'.[208] While Moran agrees that Eriugena provides a 'metaphysical system', seeing it as unique for the time, he challenges the pantheistic aspect of this interpretation and argues that Eriugena's strong monistic statements about the identity of creator and creation are countered by his statements on the absolute distinction between them.[209] In this also is reflected the tension in Eriugena between the Neoplatonism of his Greek inheritance and the strongly Augustinian-influenced Catholic faith that stresses the distinction between creator and creature.

In offering a contemporary rendition of Eriugena's thought, Moran follows another nineteenth century trend that stressed Eriugena's rationalistic tendencies and suggests that while his system might appear to be 'an *objective* hierarchical metaphysics of order' it is more clearly 'a *subjectivist* and *idealist* philosophy'. This is so firstly in terms of understanding all spatiotemporal reality as 'immaterial, mind dependent, and lacking in independent existence.' Eriugena's idealist position is seen then from his belief in matter as a 'combination of immaterial qualities' and from 'his identification of objects of knowledge with the mind which grasps them.' Secondly, Moran argues that this idealism is comparable to Hegel's system 'whereby all finite reality is understood to require infinite reality for its full intelligibility and completion.' In fact, Moran argues, Eriugena's idealism is a more problematic formulation in that there is a struggle to retain the notion of difference while

[207] D. Moran, *Nature and the Mind in the Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 5—6

[208] Willemiem Otten 'Nature as religious force in Eriugena and Emerson' In H. de Vries, ed., *Religion: beyond a concept*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 359.

[209] The pantheism was associated with Eriugena's use of the phrase *forma omnium* to describe God. This would be used later by Eckhart and by Nicholas of Cusa, and it can be seen as a purely devotional aspiration. Yet Eriugena was condemned on what was understood as teaching the identity of God and the world and so did not allow for the notion of transcendence. This is countered by his use of negative theology which he develops into a negative dialectic that holds together transcendence and immanence in the one intellectual concept. See Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 88—9.

reducing all to 'infinite subjectivity.' In dealing with this difficulty, God is often spoken of as *unum multiplex*, a complex unity.[210] Elsewhere, and highlighted by Darren Hibbs, Moran suggests a similarity to the radical idealism of Berkeley. However Hibbs argues that while Eriugena can be understood as prefiguring a form of idealism his position cannot be understood as indicating a belief in a wholly immaterialist view of reality.[211]

Otten, while recognising the centrality of human reason, highlights a certain concern with overly emphasising the relevance of Eriugena's philosophy for a modern idealistic system, and shifts her perspective from viewing Eriugena's main work the *Periphyseon* as primarily of metaphysical importance to viewing it from an anthropological perspective. The human can be considered the central character within its literary structure, and this still allows the work to be regarded 'as a coherent exposition of ideas.' Taking this stance counterbalances the over-emphasis on interpreting the work as a modern idealist system or indeed as a 'statically layered, Neoplatonic universe of Proclean design.' Her main point is that the work needs to be considered primarily within its ninth-century context, and if there is to be a comparison with another era it would be best done with what has been described as 'medieval humanism' of the twelfth century. Thus Otten argues for an interpretation that recognises the reflective subject, but as incorporated within surrounding nature. The human ought not to be understood as an isolated entity, 'a creature of independent status', but one who 'functions as a vital and integrated part of the whole complex of *natura*.'[212]

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[210] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 81—3, 89—91. See *Periphyseon* III.674c

[211] Darren Hibbs 'John Scottus Eriugena on the Composition of Material Bodies', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 19:3, 2011, pp. 385—93. While agreeing with Moran about Eriugena's philosophy being understood as a form of idealism, Hibbs disagrees with any suggestion that Eriugena presented a kind of idealism akin to the radical form associated with Berkeley.

[212] Otten, *Anthropology of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 2—3. In giving this prominence to human rationality Otten recognises Eriugena's need to deal with his Christian belief and his Greek inheritance of the fallen human being whose intellectual capacity as a consequence becomes fragmented. See page 5.

Marenbon challenges the view that Eriugena developed a philosophical system at all. He argues, for instance, that Eriugena displays a level of confusion in his usage of *ουσία*, largely because he borrows from various traditions and tries to make the ideas fit into a coherent system of thought. Instead, Marenbon claims, Eriugena ends up giving expression to an inherent logical incoherence. Thus he cannot be regarded as producing a philosophical system.[213] Marenbon therefore is more in favour of understanding Eriugena through a historical framework.[214] In this regard Marenbon disputes the tendency to view Eriugena as some kind of isolated, lonely figure, not understood by his contemporaries, and posits instead an Eriugena who is more important but less outstanding (in the sense of being the only one) than previously imagined. For instance Bertrand Russell describes Eriugena as 'the most astonishing person of the ninth century.'[215] Frederick Copleston describes him as the last of the Greek Neoplatonists, whose philosophical system 'stands out like a lofty rock in the midst of a plain'.[216]

For Marenbon Eriugena was not an isolated figure standing above and beyond others and then soon forgotten by his contemporaries, but was read by them and by a circle after him.[217] In this regard Moran agrees with him and those others who have

[213] John Marenbon, *Aristotelian Logic, Platonism and the Context of Early Medieval Philosophy in the West*, Variorum Collected Studies Series I, Hampshire & Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 2000, p. 6

[214] Moran points out that Marenbon along with scholars such as G. Schrimpf and J. Contreni all argue for understanding Eriugena primarily within the Carolingian *renovatio*.

[215] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967, 400

[216] Frederick Copleston, *History of Philosophy: Vol. II: Medieval Philosophy: From Augustine to Duns Scotus*, New York: Doubleday Publ. Group, 1962 (this edition 1993), 112

[217] It is now generally held that his immediate predecessors and contemporaries did indeed possess a certain level of philosophical literacy. For instance Marenbon suggests that it is not the case that Florilegia and glosses, very much the norm of the time, were simply unoriginal and informative only of what medieval thinkers read, not how they read. See John Marenbon, *From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre: Logic, Theology and Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. See also Michael Haren *Medieval Thought: The Western Intellectual Tradition from Antiquity to the Thirteenth Century*, (New Studies in Medieval History Series), Hampshire & London: MacMillan Press, 1992, 2nd edition, (1st edition 1985), p. 76. See Paul E. Dutton 'Eriugena, the Royal Poet' in G-H Allard (ed.) *Jean Scot ecrivain: Actes du IVe colloque international*, (Cahiers d'etudes medievales, Cahier special, 1) Montreal, 1986, pp. 51—80, who points out that the turning point in modern critical awareness of Eriugena came with the publication of Cappuyns' biography in 1933.

produced critical contextual understandings of Eriugena's work in terms of seeing him as part of the Carolingian *renovatio*. It is within that historical context that Marenbon places Eriugena's value as a philosopher, claiming that this value lies in his work on more general ninth-century philosophical concerns such as the question of universals and the nature of logical classification. He reads the *Periphyseon* as having at its core 'a complex of questions concerned with essence, universals and categories.'[218] However Moran holds that while Eriugena does begin from within that historical framework (and does engage the issues of his day), he 'totally transformed and transcended the limits of the Carolingian and Latin systems that he inherited, to such a degree that 'he was no longer even comprehensible to the philosophers of the age in which he lived.'[219]

IV. Kūkai: A Biographical note

Commonly known by his posthumous honorific title Kōbō Daishi, (Great teacher who widely spread the Buddha's teachings), Kūkai is remembered as one of the most prominent and respected Buddhist teachers and multi-talented cultural figures of ancient Japan.[220] By contrast with the case of Eriugena, reliable sources exist regarding Kūkai's early life. While embellished with legendary accounts of his accomplishments, numerous biographies were produced in the course of the Middle Ages.[221] Born in 774 into an aristocratic family, Kūkai's genius was recognised when he was fifteen by his uncle, the distinguished Confucian Scholar Atō Ōtari, and

[218] Marenbon, *From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre*, p. 10

[219] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 92

[220] Kūkai's thought is to be found in disciplines such as religion, history, art and architecture, as well as linguistics, literature and civil engineering. He is remembered as a builder of lakes, a great calligrapher, a poet and a wandering saint as well as the founder of Shingon Buddhism and famous temple complex, Kongōbūji, at Mt. Koya, which is both a tourist centre and a place of worship.

[221] Two of the earliest, which seem to have been influenced by the same source, are *Biography of Kūkai Sōzu* (*Kūkai sōzu den)* believed to have been written by Kūkai's disciple Shinzei though this is disputed, and the *Twenty-Five Article Will* (*Nijūgokajō no goyuigō*), whose authorship is unknown, (though tradition attributes it to Kūkai himself). While both appear shortly after Kūkai's death the former is considered to be historically more reliable. See Yoshito S. Hakeda, 'Life of Kūkai' in *Kūkai: Major Works*, trans. (with an account of his life and a study of his thought) Hakeda, New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1972, p. 15—6, n. 8, 12. (hereafter *KMW*)

he began his studies of the Chinese classics as was the custom.[222] It seems that while he attended college in the capital he became dissatisfied with the standard Confucian curriculum; and while he showed interest in the Buddhist scriptures, according to Shinzei's biography, Kūkai 'constantly told himself, however, that what he was learning was only dregs derived from the men of old,' and he 'thought it essential to learn the ultimate Truth.'[223] In this we gather that he turned to Buddhism for answers. While the *Twenty-Five Article Will* seems to indicate that Kūkai left college, undertook a period of asceticism, wrote both the draft and body of the *Indications of the Goals of the Three Teachings*, (his first major writing described by Ryūichi Abé as a quasi-autobiographical fiction and Buddhist apologetic) and was initiated into Buddhism by the age of twenty, it seems that more reliable scholarship puts his writing of the *Indications* at age twenty-four and his initiation somewhere between the ages of twenty-four and thirty-one.[224]

His early contact with the Natural Wisdom School, particularly their recitation of the mantra *Kokūzō gumonji no hō*, which related to esoteric Buddhism, seems to have

[222] Kūkai was a member of the aristocratic Saeki family, a branch of the Ōtomo clan whose origins are to be found in mythological times.

[223] Cited in Hakeda, 'Life of Kūkai', p.15

[224] Kūkai, 'Indications of the Goals of the Three Teachings' (*Sangō shīki*), in *Kūkai: Major Works*, pp.101—139, hereafter 'Indications', *KMW*. In this text Kūkai ultimately wished to justify his reason for choosing Buddhism. He aimed to show the superiority of Buddhism over Confucianism and Daoism (and in fact rated Daoism higher than Confucianism even though Daoism seems to have been actively discouraged at this time while Confucianism was considered to be the intellectual orthodoxy). See Hakeda, 'Life of Kūkai', p.16—7, 24. This text is understood as a work of didactic fiction, and as such is morally instructive: Fiction is to be evaluated ultimately by its effects on the reader not by its form or content. The aims of writing are as important as content. Like Plato in the west Kūkai understood religious or philosophical positions in terms of those who held them, thus a major criterion for evaluating a position is the effects of that position on those who hold them. It is important to understand his theory of interpretation as being about the relationship between the text and the reader— a text's true meaning is not in the words on the page but in the dynamics between the words and the reader. In this way theory and practice are not separated. Kūkai believed in the use of artistic or imaginary expression to convey the most profound levels of religious truth. See T. Kasulis, 'Truth Words: The Basis of Kūkai's Theory of Interpretation' in D. S. Lopez (ed.), *Buddhist Hermeneutics* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992, pp. 257-273, p. 260. Moreover, while all three show a path out of moral degeneracy, the text suggests a hierarchy with Buddhism being on top as the most other-worldly religious tradition. Kūkai came to reverse this view of Buddhism, not in terms of it being superior, but in terms of its other-worldliness or world negating asceticism. See p.261

been a formative influence.[225] From the beginning Kūkai's interest in Buddhism arose from his experience of meditation rather than from ideas gleaned from any of the books he had been studying at the college.[226] A hint of this can be gleaned from 'Indications':

> I recited the mantra incessantly, as if I were rubbing one piece of wood against another to make fire, all the while earnestly hoping to achieve this result. I climbed up Mount Tairyu in Awa Province and meditated at Cape Muroto in Tosa. The valley reverberated to the sound of my voice as I recited, and the planet Venus appeared in the sky.[227]

It seems that from early on Kūkai set a pattern of 'altering between seclusion and participation in the world' mirroring the pattern that later emerged in his travels between his remote centre Mt. Kōya and the capital Kyoto. On the one hand he embraced the life of a wandering scholar and in all likelihood he encountered native ways of life, and gods or *kami* of Shinto. On the other hand he studied intensively, possibly at Nara or the capital where books would have been available, a whole variety of texts, as is obvious in 'Indications'.[228]

Encountering, but being unable to understand, the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* led him to request permission to visit China, where he met his teacher Hui-Kuo the seventh Patriarch of Esoteric Buddhism.[229] Within three years he had returned to Japan as the

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[225] This mantra so fascinated Kūkai that he abandoned all thoughts of becoming a government bureaucrat. See Daigan & Alicia Matsunaga, *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism*, Tokyo: Buddhist Books International 1974, (this edition, 1987), Vol. I, p. 172

[226] Hakeda, 'Life of Kūkai', *KMW*, p. 22. The Natural Wisdom School was one of the groups of Nara monks dissatisfied with how Buddhism had become very much part of the establishment more interested in pomp and ceremony than in its core values and sought out secluded places where they would engage in meditative practices. This group was associated with Hisosanji in Yoshino Province.

[227] Kūkai, 'Indications', *KMW*, p.102

[228] This work reveals an exposure to a wide range of Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian texts. It has been described as 'an epoch-making work in the history of Japanese literature and thought.' See Hakeda, 'Life of Kūkai', *KMW*, p. 23—5

[229] Writing later in 821 aged 48 of 'being driven by an inner urge', he 'had all the while thought of returning to the Source', and then of finding this *Sutra*. 'I started reading it only to find that I was

eight Patriarch[230], having accomplished many things, including a knowledge of Sanskrit, of Indian Buddhism, and laden with 'voluminous sutras, huge mandalas, and books of poetry.'[231]

It would be another three years before Kūkai was favourably heard by the court as the new Emperor Saga promoted Kūkai, just as the previous Emperor Kammu had promoted Saichō, who had first introduced Esoteric Buddhism.[232] Residing at the Takaosanji on the outskirts of Kyoto from 809 until 823, Kūkai's religious and cultural significance grew and during these years this place became the centre of Esoteric Buddhism. Though extremely busy as administrator, performing religious ceremonies, responding to requests for epitaphs and petitions, his true genius, 'nurtured by the practice of meditation', was expressed in his religious treatises. It was during this time that he wrote *Benkenmitsu nikkyôron* ('The Difference between Esoteric and Exoteric Buddhism'—hereafter 'The Difference'), as well as his trilogy his *sambu no sho*: *Sokushinjōbutsugi* ('*A*ttaining Enlightenment in this very Existence'—hereafter 'Attaining Enlightenment'*)*, *Shōjijissōgi* ('The Meanings of Sound, Word, and Reality'—hereafter 'Sound, Word, Reality'), and *Unjigi* ('The Meanings of the Word Hūm—Meanings of Hūm').[233] This led to ever greater

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unable to understand it; I wished to visit China.' K.Z. III, 476. Cited in Hakeda, 'Life of Kūkai' *KMW*, p. 27

[230] For a list of the official patriarchs of Esoteric Buddhism recognised by Shingon see Matsunaga, *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism*, p. 180

[231] Hakeda, 'Life of Kūkai', p. 33. Immediately he wrote *Shōrai mokuroku* ('Memorial Presenting a List of Newly Imported Sutras and Other Items'—hereafter 'Memorial') which possibly had a two-fold purpose. It reported on Kūkai's achievements and what his Buddhism could offer Japan, but it also was a request to establish a new religion. See *KMW*, pp.140—150. However Kūkai had to wait three years for any response. It has been suggested that the delay in response was due to a number of factors including the difficulty in assessing the value of Kūkai's contribution since esoteric Buddhism was seen to be the prerogative of Saichō and the Tendai sect at that time. Also the over-confident tone of the report may not have been appreciated in court, since Kūkai was as yet an unknown student-monk. See Matsunaga, *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism*, p. 173—4

[232] Saichō was the founder of Tendai Sect, which was based on the *Lotus Sutra* and it held that Esoteric Buddhism was of secondary importance, unlike Kūkai who held that it was paramount. Yet what made Saichō known on his return from China was Esoteric Buddhism. Hakeda paints Saichō as a rival to Kūkai. While they remained conciliatory this friendliness did wane towards the end of their association. See Hakeda, 'Life of Kūkai', p.43—4

[233]See *KMW*, pp. 151—7, 225—34, 234—46, 246—62. *Sokushinjōbutsugi* explicates the concept of *sokushinjôbutsu* or enlightenment in one's immediate embodied existence. *Shôjjissôgi* and *Unjigi* are

numbers wishing to join him, and the eventual establishment of his centre on Mt. Kōya.

In requesting this centre on Mt. Kōya, Kūkai stresses the regrettable lack of meditation by priests 'in high mountains, in deep forests, in wide canyons, and in secluded caves.' He goes on to suggest that this is because the 'teaching of meditation has not been transmitted, nor has a suitable place been allocated for the practice of meditation.'[234] He claims Mt. Kōya as suitable due to it being a remote flat area surrounded by peaks on all sides, which resembled the lotus flower the symbol of the Matrix Realm. At the centre of the plateau he built his temple complex which he named the Kongōbūji, the Diamond Peak Temple, placing the Buddha *Mahāvairocana* at the centre. Thus the Diamond Realm was inscribed in the larger circle of the Matrix Realm. While work began on the site in 819 shortly after his request was granted, Kūkai did not live to see the various buildings completed.[235] The last ten to twelve years of his life before his final years of retirement to Mt. Kōya were extremely busy. For instance while supervising the construction of this temple complex he was also in charge of the completion of Tōji as well as the reconstruction of a reservoir in his native province of Sanuki.[236]

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unique works of a "metaphysical linguistics." They examine the interrelationship (which is ultimately non-dualistic) between the phenomenal world, its sounds (or "voices") as "signs" (or "letters"), and reality itself, the "meaning," they convey. In doing so, those two works explicate the Shingon concept of *hosshin seppō*, the Buddha's preaching of the Dharma *via* cosmic phenomena. In fact all three of these "Three Writings" deal with the embodied realization of the Dharma. But they do this from the different angles of the microcosm of the human body and the macrocosm of the cosmic body. Embodiment then plays an important role in Kūkai's Buddhism. See T. Kasulis, 'Reality as embodiment: an analysis of Kūkai's *Sokushin jōbutsu* and *Hosshin seppō*' In J. M. Law (ed.) *Religious Reflections on the Human Body* Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995, 170ff. Kūkai also drafted The Secret Treasure-house of the Mirrors of Poetry and the basic structure of his Ten Stages of the Development of Mind. Both of these were finished on Mt. Kōya. See also Hakeda, 'Life of Kūkai', p. 45—6

[234] Kūkai, 'Letter to Emperor Saga' in *Kōbō daishi zenshū*, (*K.Z.*) III, p. 523—4, cited in Hakeda, 'Life of Kūkai', p. 47

[235] Kūkai, 'Letter to Emperor Saga', *K.Z.* III, p. 523—4. Mt. Kōya was at that time a forested area, rarely frequented by hunters, and several days walk from Kyoto.

[236] Tōji was one of two state temples that the previous Emperor decided to build at the entrance to the capital Kyoto shortly after the move there from Nagaoka. Thirty years later they had still remained incomplete so Emperor Saga requested Kūkai, who had by now proved himself extremely capable, to oversee its completion. Not only was he responsible for these two major temple complexes he also

During this period also he continued his writings. In 823 Kūkai received approval from the new Emperor Jun'na for his 'List of Texts, Consisting of the Three Divisions of Study' which effectively meant the recognition of Shingon as an independent Buddhist sect.[237] And in 830 he completed 'The Ten Stages of the Development of Mind', the culmination of his thought, which was followed by a simplified edition entitled 'The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury'. Having stressed the incompatibility of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism, and the superiority of Esoteric over Exoteric teachings in earlier texts, Kūkai finally reached a new synthesis that allowed for the coexistence of a variety of different points of view in these latter texts.[238]

He spent his final few years primarily on Mt. Kōya officially retired, though still making some requests for his centre which ensured that it became officially recognised as a state-supported Buddhist institution. Many believe that Kūkai is still living on Mt. Kōya sitting in a permanent state of meditation and 'merged with the Buddha's *hosshin*,' as a saviour to all who suffer. A visit to this centre today is like 'a journey back to a radically different time and place,' where the Japanese people can 'temporarily divest themselves of modernity's cloak and once again live among the naked magic of rocks, trees, and streams.' In this scene Kūkai resembles a Japanese Merlin and Mt. Kōya is like a 'museum of the Druidic relics of Japan's ancient past.'[239]

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received numerous other requests he was unable to decline, such as participating in religious ceremonies by the great Nara clergy, being appointed monastic religious director, acting as tutor to the crown prince and opening the School of Arts and Sciences, the first school in Japan that provided universal education. The opening of this school reflected Kūkai's belief that everyone regardless of being rich or poor was entitled to an education. However his ideal did not last long as the school was closed ten years after his death by his successor. See Hakeda, 'Life of Kūkai', p. 54—8

[237] Recognition of his 'List of Texts' allowed him to have fifty monks at Tōji and to use the temple exclusively for Shingon students, an unusual move since in the Nara temples students belonging to many sects were allowed to be there.

[238] Hakeda, 'Thought of Kūkai' in *KMW*, p. 62

[239]Kasulis, 'Reality as embodiment' pp. 169—70

Yet just as during his lifetime, when his various activities gave witness to 'the existence of certain polarities in a state of harmonious tension' reflecting the conjoining of the separate entities of sky and sea in his name,[240] Kūkai is more than a mysterious figure depicted as a scholar-monk with three faces and six arms who can only be partially understood. Kūkai has left us a comprehensive philosophical system of thought in his corpus of writings that is both encyclopaedic and critical. In the final analysis, however, to understand Kūkai one cannot ignore the mysteriousness associated with him, since to do so would be to 'dissociate him from the social and cultural ground in which his thought took root.' [241]

V. Mutual Influences: Shinto& Esoteric Buddhism

To better understand that background we need to look briefly at the mutual influence of Shinto and esoteric Buddhism, since this synthesis highlights how esoteric Buddhism became such an accepted and influential movement in Japan. The later fusion of Shinto and Esoteric Buddhism as the indigenous mountain religion Shugendō had its roots in the activities of earlier Buddhist ascetics, who did not differentiate between Buddhist guardians and the *kami* spirits associated with Shinto. In the eight century Emperor Shōmu saw an overlap in the symbol systems of both traditions. He claimed to embody both in his person and through his practice 'the common symbolic ground between Buddhism and Shinto,' making himself 'a holographic entry point for the intersection of both traditions.'[242]

In terms of a philosophical justification for such a claim of compatibility, the decided advantage lay on the side of Buddhism, and at the beginning of the ninth century the

[240] Kūkai seems to have both renounced and embraced the world. An influential figure at court Kūkai loved to spend time in the remoteness of the forest. While critiquing established Buddhist doctrines and practices he nevertheless remained on good terms with these institutions. See Hakeda, 'Introduction' in *KMW*, p.1—2.

[241] Kasulis, 'Reality as Embodiment' p. 170

[242] T. P. Kasulis, *Shinto: The Way Home*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004, p. 94. The commonality was chiefly found in the symbol systems of the two traditions – the spirituality of the sun. In Shinto the spirituality was in the goddess *Amaterasu*, the sun *kami*, while in the most prominent Buddhist school of the time, Kegon, the sun Buddha *Dainichi* was considered to be the basic spiritual principle in the cosmos.

newly arrived esoteric form played a key role through both its Tendai and Shingon renditions.[243] Kasulis considers three points of intersection between the esoteric Buddhism and the ancient Shinto worldviews that would justify this claim. First, Shinto's stress on the *kami*-filled nature of all things correlated with the Buddhist notion of the whole cosmos being the self-expressive activity of the Cosmic Buddha Dainichi, the Buddha's 'thought, word, and deed.' Already the emperor Shōmu had formally associated this figure with that of Amaterasu.

Second, the idea of developing a 'purely mindful heart' in Buddhism correlated with the *kotodama no kokoro* of Shinto. Thus similarities in terms of ritual praxis existed in the repetitive body-mind performances of chanting and gestures to be found in both traditions. For instance, certain voiced sounds in both traditions are seen as having transformative power. Kasulis makes the point that Esoteric Buddhism had developed a metapraxis, a philosophical underpinning to its practices that could be similarly used in Shinto. Using the example of how certain voiced sounds in both traditions contain transformative power, namely the *kotodama* or the spirit of words in Shinto and the *gomitsu* or 'mysterious intimacy of speech' in Buddhism, Kasulis concludes that 'in philosophically justifying its own practice (in developing a Buddhist metapraxis), esoteric Buddhism brought to Japan a philosophical understanding that could work equally well for Shinto praxis related to *kotodama* and *norito*.'

A third point of overlap comes from the assumption common to both traditions that the sacred is found in the form of celestial deities allowing for correlations between these celestial personages. More importantly, however, for both Shinto and Esoteric Buddhism the sacred is found in every phenomenon. Here we find a correlation between Shinto indentifying all natural objects as *kami* and Kūkai's central principle

[243] These two Buddhist schools were the first to flourish as distinctively Japanese Schools, a success in part due to their ability to the central assumptions shared with Shinto, the indigenous spirituality of Japan. See Kasulis, *Shinto*, p. 95.

of *hosshin seppō*: every phenomenon is the activity of Dainichi and so preaches the truth.[244]

VI. Portrayals of Kūkai's teachings

Kūkai's philosophical system has traditionally been understood to have a two-fold approach—a theoretical and practical aspect. His theoretical approach has generally been framed in terms of demonstrating the superiority of esoteric teaching over exoteric, and convincing his listeners/readers of the validity of his thought and the effectiveness of his approach. However, this traditional approach of framing Kūkai's work along sectarian lines, where Kūkai is primarily associated with the establishment of a new sect within Buddhism with the main aim of emphasising its superiority over all other forms of Buddhism, is disputed by Ryūichi Abé in what is the most comprehensive English study on Kūkai to date.[245] Abé argues for a much more nuanced understanding of Kūkai's work, wanting to contextualise his writings in the political and social issues of his day. In that regard Abé suggests that Kūkai was more interested in engaging with the existing Buddhist Nara clergy and in indicating that esoteric readings of exoteric texts was possible. For Abé, Kūkai's value is not so much about the introduction of a new sect into medieval Japan but in introducing a new approach.

Kasulis also wishes to approach Kūkai and his thought from a different perspective than simply locating Shingon within the array of Buddhist schools. His concern is with the type of knowledge emphasised by Kūkai. He draws a parallel between Bergson's two types of knowing and Kūkai's exoteric and esoteric teachings. According to Bergson the first or relative type of knowing is where one moves 'round the object' and the knower is 'placed outside the object'. The second type, he refers to as 'absolute', and it is where one 'enters into' the object and knows the

[244] Kasulis, *Shinto*, p. 95—8. While the actual philosophical theory, *honji suijaku*, correlating these ideas developed later, the seed for the synthesis of Shinto and Buddhism lay in Kūkai establishing Esoteric Buddhism as a system of thought. See Hakeda, 'Introduction', p. 8

[245] Ryūichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

object 'from within, as it is in itself'.[246] Kasulis parallels Kūkai's exoteric teachings with the first type and his esoteric with Bergson's second type of knowledge. Thus Kasulis concludes that Kūkai's ultimate emphasis on the esoteric as a more superior kind of knowledge meant that Kūkai 'tipped Japanese philosophy in the direction of intimacy rather than integrity', and in this way he (Kūkai) makes an engagement model of knowledge primary.[247]

VII. Outlining core philosophical ideas

Having contextualised both Eriugena and Kūkai, I now begin to explore how these thinkers might converse with one another. To do this in an effective way some kind of basic scaffold is required; some kind of guiding principles. As noted previously, emerging out of the overview of current ecology and religion studies is the central issue of the nature of divine-human-earth relations. It is this triadic structure that will guide my exploration. Before engaging the dialogue proper (the subject matter of the next chapter) and keeping in mind this triad of relationships I outline the fundamental philosophical positions of Eriugena and Kūkai.

A. Eriugena & the framing concept of *natura*

The central aspect of Eriugena's cosmic framework—its organising principle—is the concept of *phusis* or *natura*, as the opening statement of the *Periphyseon* attests:

> As I frequently ponder and, in so far as my talents allow, ever more carefully investigate the fact that the first and fundamental division of all things which either can be grasped by the mind or lie beyond its grasp is into those that are and those that are not, there comes to mind as a general term for them all what in Greek is called φύσις [phusis] and in Latin *Natura*. [248]

[246] Henri Bergson, 'Introduction to Metaphysics, 1955, pp.21—22, cited in Thomas P. Kasulis, 'Kūkai's Philosophy of Intimacy: A Paradigm in Japanese Thought' *Esoteric Buddhist Studies: Identity in Diversity* (Proceedings of the Conference on Esoteric Buddhist Studies, 2006), Koyasan University, 2008, p. 123.

[247] Kasulis, 'Kūkai's Philosophy of Intimacy', p. 123—4

[248] *Periphyseon*, I:441a

For Eriugena everything, including his understanding of the divine, is incorporated within this overarching concept of *natura*. Because he includes divinity—that which is beyond definition— within this concept, he cannot logically define the concept in any absolute sense. Instead he approaches his exploration of *natura* by the use of division—first (as in the quote above) into a two-fold division of being and non-being; that which is and that which is not (or is not accessible), and later into his four-fold division. Alfred Siewers suggests that non-being can be understood as that which is not 'readily apparent or instrumentally to hand yet is omnipresent both as mysterious essence and part of dynamic process.'[249] This opening statement of the *Periphyseon* offers a perspective on all the elements that constitute the triadic structure of the dialogue—the element of mystery (which in Christian terms can be understood as the divinity), the phenomenal world (the cosmic landscape), and the human as the one engaged in the act of pondering upon the mystery of everything, trying to understand it all in a coherent manner, and yet recognising human limitations.

Behind this two-fold distinction (and central to his philosophy of nature) is the pseudo-Dionysian distinction of the kataphatic/apophatic theology, with its dialectical exchange of negative and affirmative statements about the divine. According to Otten the *apophatic* was a useful tool for Eriugena since it enabled him to expand the created scope of human reason and 'consider God present inside rather than outside or above *natura*, even if full insight into the divine was not reached.'[250] As previously indicated (see introduction) the more general understanding of the *apophatic* suggests that anything positive said of the divine needs to be countered by the opposite. God is understood to be beyond all affirmative statements, with denials being seen as more true than affirmative statements, leading to an understanding of the divine as a transcendent nothingness beyond being. In Book I of the *Periphyseon* God is said to be 'nothingness and negation of essence.'[251]

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[249] Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p.6

[250] Otten, 'Nature as religious force', p. 357

[251] *Periphyseon*, I: 462b, I: 460c

Eriugena however presents being and non-being in a dialectical tension throughout his work, which, as Carabine points out, is one of his great innovative themes. Essentially he is not content simply to deny all affirmations about God, and in that way fit Yannaras' depiction of the Western concept of the apophatic. Rather for Eriugena the ultimate ground of reality lies beyond both being and non-being, revealing an entirely deeper mode of conceiving God. Carabine describes this as the *hyperphatic* way of speaking about God—a method that goes beyond both the kataphatic and apophatic and uses the prefix super or *plus quam*. Eriugena uses the concept of superessentialis to express this sense of beyond.[252]

Eriugena then offers his second method of dividing *natura*—a four-fold division. Thus we have that which creates and is not created, which refers to God or the divine as first cause. The second division—that which creates and is created—concerns the primordial or hidden causes which Eriugena sees as the secret folds in the cosmos. His third division—that which is created but does not create—essentially refers to the rest of creation: the effects of the primordial causes. The fourth division—that which neither creates nor is created—again refers to God, but this time as final end. Essentially Eriugena is describing creation as a kind of divine self-expression, where the divine nature eternally self-expresses itself into a fourfold division or four species, which are understood as different manifestations of the same universal principle.

A core problem being addressed is the relationship between creation and creator, between God and God's creation, which Moran expresses as follows: 'Are God's ideas and willings part of God and hence uncreated, or do they belong to the structure of created nature?' This is essentially the conundrum that Eriugena grapples with throughout the *Periphyseon*, and his efforts to explore it reflect his belief in the ultimate oneness of all reality. It is not, however, a kind of 'oneness' that is monistic but rather it is relational—hence the centrality of the trinity for him. And while Eriugena is not always clear in his use of philosophical concepts (often using them in quite a loose way), nor accurate about the nature of the natural world,

[252] Carabine, John Scottus Eriugena, p. 61; Carabine, *The Unknown God*, pp. 311—6.

he is clear from the outset about where he wishes to go with his explorations: for Eriugena the concept of *phusis* or nature, understood as the dialectical process of revealing and concealing, 'stands as the absolute frame of his thinking.'[253] Presenting created reality in such a dynamic way is not always associated with Christian understandings of nature or creation.

While the notion of hierarchy is obvious in Eriugena's conceptions of reality, the centrality of a dynamic approach tempers the kind of rigidity generally associated with hierarchy. As Moran argues: 'Eriugena's hierarchical scheme of nature is to be understood not as a fixed set of metaphysical levels or degrees of reality but, rather, as a set of *theoriae*, or mental acts of intellectual contemplation, which allow human subjectivity to enter into the infinite divine subjectivity and nothingness.' Thus the divisions are real or fixed only in the sense of being aids to the mind 'entering into and grasp[ing] the anarchic play of infinite nature.' Moran goes on to suggest that this division is an icon or a pattern which transmits divine infinite theophanies to human minds, and they in turn enter into and celebrate that infinite multiplicity. The physical world is transformed into a world of sign, symbol, image, or, for Eriugena, mystery or sacrament. Everything is turned into the restless unfolding of divine apparitions or theophanies. Nature then is not just external objective existent world but can be understood as the 'site of the meeting of minds', the location of the play of infinite subjectivity.'[254]

Essentially Eriugena is offering an understanding of creation, which belongs to a stream of thought that critiques the dominant strongly Augustinian way of thinking in the Christian West—critiques a way of thinking that emphasises a clear distinction between the Creator and created (nature and grace) and an absolute dependency of creation on Creator. The dichotomy was not a feature of the Greek East, nor (as recent research shows) was it a feature of the Irish Sea Province writings, which had

[253] Moran, 'Time, Space and Matter in the *Periphyseon*', p. 68

[254] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p.241—2

an influence on Eriugena.[255] The term *natura* in this scheme is understood as articulating, in a dynamic manner, divine nature as beginning, middle and end of things; involved in an endless cycle of unfolding and return, which is both synchronic and diachronic.[256] It is a 'process of concealing and revealing, hiddeness and manifestation, which is one with the nature of truth itself.'[257] Creation is understood as continuously unfolding rather than being created: a more dynamic sense of creation is being offered. Siewers describes Eriugena's efforts as developing 'a non-Western meontology (cosmology of natural transcendent nonbeing), and goes on to claim links between his four-fold *natura* and ideas about 'hidden-yet-appearing Being' found in Heideggerian influenced environmental philosophy.[258]

Despite the gigantic scope of Eriugena's concept of *natura* it appears that the human mind serves as its leading principle. Eriugena clearly displays a strong positive anthropology, which was not a feature of the early Middle Ages, with its more common emphasis on the fall and human sinfulness. Yet, as we saw emphasised in Willemiem Otten's work, Eriugena seems to want to stress the integration of that subject with surrounding nature. There is a holding together of his anthropology and his physiology. What is at issue here is a more ancient kind of subjectivity than is associated with modernity or with modern readings of Augustine. These latter notions express a more psychological and inward looking reading of the reflective subject. Instead, as Otten argues what is more pertinent is a kind of humanism that Richard Southern termed 'medieval humanism.'[259]

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[255] The early Christian perspective on nature in the Irish Sea Province did not involve a definite distinction between the natural and supernatural as in late medieval Europe. Both Augustinus Hibernicus and Eriugena both referred to miracles as natural. The linguistic distinction of supernatural and natural only emerged later with scholasticism. 'Earlier philosophy was related to an asceticism considered empirical, paradoxically with a stronger distinction between the hidden mystery of God and the apparent physical world, but not between the workings of that divine mystery in Creation and physical nature.' See Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p. 7

[256] Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p. 76

[257] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 243—4

[258] Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p. 75

[259] Richard W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and other Studies*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1970. Medieval humanism emphasised not just the dignity of nature in the sense of human nature, but also the wider 'recognition of the dignity of nature itself.' See p. 31.

B. Kūkai and the embodiment of all reality

In turning to how the triad of 'divine-human-earth' might be said to be expressed in Kūkai's vision of reality, it is necessary to look firstly at how in his form of esoteric Buddhism he conceives of the Buddha. In fact this conception underpins his entire philosophical outlook, and gives rise to one of his core doctrines—*hosshin seppō* ('the Buddha's reality embodiment (*hosshin* or *dharmakāya*) expounds (*setsū*) the true teachings (*hō* or *dharma*'[260]). Kūkai first concretises the hosshin (which, in traditional Mahayana doctrine, was considered an abstract principle) and then personalises it. Put succinctly, the Hosshin, the ultimate Buddha mode or form, is not an abstract principle transcending the mundane world but is embodied in all phenomena and all 'thing-events' of the cosmos. All the manifestations of the Buddhas (both celestial and historical) are themselves forms of the hosshin—even in its samsaric self-enjoyment this hosshin (this abstract principle) is preaching the *Dharma* in its 'cosmic monologue'. In a broad sense this preaching is via the cosmos and in a narrower sense it is via esoteric Buddhism itself.

Moreover, Kūkai equates hosshin—the abstract principle— with the Buddha *Dainichi Nyorai*. [261] While Kegon Buddhism also personalises the reality embodiment, reality embodiment is still so abstract in that school of thought that it is not capable of expounding the *dharma*. This Kūkai does via the Six Great Elements doctrine – earth, water, wind, fire, space and consciousness. These are at once the creator and created – in a state of perpetual interfusion – making all diverse phenomena identical in their make-up. Thus no absolute difference exists between the human and nature; body and mind are nondual, making the value of mind no higher than that of body. Thus, the 'concrete cosmic identification between Buddha, truth, and the cosmos of thing-events,' is made "personal".[262]

[260] That is the *Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana* or *Dainichi Nyorai* for Kūkai expounds the true teachings.

[261] Sanskrit: *Mahāvairocana* or the Great Sun Buddha. Hakeda, 'Thought of Kūkai' p. 89

[262] Krummel, 'Kūkai', p. 11

For Kūkai (as is found in his text on 'Introductions to all the Sutras') the primary sense of dharmas is phenomena. Therefore, as Thomas Kasulis puts it, the 'Buddha's reality embodiment expounds [or preaches] the true teachings through all the phenomena constituting the universe.'[263] This thinking culminates in 'Meanings of sound, word and reality.' He asserts that the *Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana* is Reality, and is revealed through all objects of sense and thought. All things in the universe reveal the presence of *Mahāvairocana*. In this we understand that the cosmos, at this moment, is the Buddha, and all trace of transcendence is removed. The Buddha is present here and now in every aspect of the universe and so we do not need to know something higher or deeper. Yet, as Graham Parkes points out, there is here also an equivocation or ambiguity: While Kūkai in this regard says that 'the existence of the Buddha [*Mahāvairocana*] is the existence of the sentient beings and vice versa,' he goes on to say: 'They are not identical but are nevertheless identical; they are not different but are nevertheless different.'[264] One might wonder then if there is in this some possibility of a kind of immanental transcendence.

It is important to note that Kūkai emphasises that Dainichi expounds the teachings for his own enjoyment rather than for human benefit, which highlights, as Parkes points out, 'the element of mystery'.[265] The cosmos as Dainichi speaking is not first and foremost speaking to us. The reality embodiment in the first place just is. We are like all things simply 'letters or symbols' in his self-expression. Yet as human beings we have the capacity to fathom the universe as expression of Dainichi—Dainichi deigns to let it be known to us. According to Kūkai by engaging in Shingon practice, particularly through the practice of verbal intimacy, we can harmonise with the activities of the cosmic Buddha that is with the universe itself.[266]

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[263] Kasulis, 'Reality as Embodiment', p. 171

[264] Parkes, 'Mountain Brushes, Ink of Oceans', pp. 560—1. Parkes goes on to point out that a similar kind of equivocation or ambiguity emerges in Eriugena's thought, coming from his Neoplatonic theology of God in Godself and God as expressed in creation.

[265] Parkes, 'Voices of Mountains', p. 116

[266] Kasulis, 'Reality as Embodiment,' p. 173 through reciting mantras – there are six: A, Va, Ra, Ha, Kha, & Hum- in the correct posture we become attuned to the basic vibrations / resonances constituting the universe. 173/4

The human, through bodily ritual praxis, partakes in the cosmic body that is the Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana. [267] In this way enlightenment—the goal of human existence—is attained, giving rise to a second core doctrine: *sokushin jōbutsu* which can be translated as 'the achievement of Buddha nature or attainment of enlightenment is in, and through, and with this very body.' This became the motto of Kūkai's Buddhism. According to Hakeda the core teachings of Kūkai reflect very positive attitudes towards the world and all phenomena as the 'very realm in which the highest enlightenment can take place.'[268] So at the heart of his teachings are notions of the body and as Thomas Kasulis points out his body theory was also his way of 'relating religious theory and religious practice.' [269]

Enlightenment is understood as sudden and complete, available to all at any time implying that enlightenment is not some other-worldly truth to be grasped via a mystical experience. Enlightenment is available to us through this embodiment. A translation of Kūkai reads: 'the word body (shin) refers to one's own body, the [cosmic] Buddha's body and all sentient beings' bodies; these are called "body"'.[270] According to Hakeda the choice of the word 'body' over the more obvious one of 'mind', 'underscores the basic character' of Kūkai's religion, which is that the 'emphasis is on direct experience through one's total being and not merely through the intellect,' bringing the tests of meditative practice and of daily living to bear on

[267] Through the ritual engagements of the mantras, the mandalas, as well as the sacred hand gestures or mudras – the three great practices of esoteric Buddhism –we attain enlightenment, making such attainment fundamentally the result of praxis. In this regard Kūkai criticized the idea that enlightenment could be purely mental or intellectual. Because the universe itself consists of thought, word and deed (or structure, resonance and patterned change), it can only be grasped by unified praxis of the whole person: mind, speech and body. To know reality is to participate in it fully, in all three of its dimensions

[268] Kūkai's idea that nirvana "can be achieved with this very body" (sokushin jōbutsu), is unlike other schools who view the body as representing the worst aspects of samsaric existence: the sensuousness and emotion generally attached to body are seen as needing to be controlled and even denied so that the blind passion is tamed. In addition, "body" in the form of the physical senses – such as sounds, sights, colours, movements—are defiling dangers i.e. themselves pollutants on the road to enlightenment. See also n. 367

[269] Kasulis, 'Reality as embodiment,' p. 168

[270] A translation by Hisao Inugaki cited in Thomas Kasulis 'Reality as embodiment', p. 168

his theory.[271] There is a parallel here with Eriugena's desire for his teachings to have a pragmatic aspect in that they would not merely be for intellectual stimulation but would be a means towards 'spiritual enlightenment.'

In summary then I have highlighted, to some degree, the aspects of Eriugena's and Kūkai's thought that correspond to the divine-human-earth relations model being explored in this work. While Kūkai does not talk of divinity in any sense that is comparable with the Christian God, at the same time it is possible to explore how Kūkai conceives of ultimate reality and to see its potential for dialogue with Eriugena's concept of divinity. There is a clear effort in both thinkers to maintain a sense of the unity and relationality of all reality, and both present a positive view of the place and role of the human person within their respective overall schema. To these areas I will turn in the next chapter.

[271] Hakeda, 'Thought of Kūkai', p. 78

Chapter 3: Eriugena and Kūkai in Dialogue

In the overview of both Eriugena's and Kūkai's philosophical positions in the previous chapter, I noted three general areas that offer a possible framework for a comparative analysis of their work. These are: first, the sense of the divine in their respective philosophies (the extent to which transcendent and immanent views of ultimate reality can be found in their work[272]); second, their cosmological understandings of the phenomenal world (the actual earth/universe); and third, the role and place of the human person vis-à-vis the phenomenal world in their respective schemes. These perspectives mirror my initial concern regarding the value of exploring philosophical understandings of divine-human-earth relations, as responses to current ecological destruction, as well as the value of a focus on less well-known thinkers within mainstream religious traditions.

I. Conceptions of Ultimate Reality

Both Eriugena and Kūkai wish to emphasise the idea of a unified whole—one ontological realm—such that any sense of 'divinity' is to be found within this unity. The very fact that Eriugena begins his exploration by grappling to find one overall term—*natura/phusis*—is indicative of this emphasis. The central teaching of Kūkai is that the universe *is* the cosmic Buddha (Dainichi). In terms of an 'immanence/transcendence' approach a clear emphasis on an immanental sense of ultimate reality come through in their respective emphasis on unity. Writing in contexts where the mainstream of their traditions placed the emphasis on a radical sense of the otherness and transcendence of a divine principle, often with an ambiguous attitude towards 'this world', this emphasis on divine immanence distinguishes both writers as radical and innovative within their respective traditions. The divine in early Christian Neoplatonism and the *Dharmakāya* in Buddhism prior

[272] At a presentation to the International Conference on Esoteric Buddhist Studies, Koyasan University 5 September – 8 September 2006, David Gardiner commented that the ideas addressed by these concepts, while more generally used in the theistic religions of Judaism and Christianity, are also concerns of Buddhism. David Gardiner, 'Transcendence of the Body in Kūkai's Shingon Buddhism' 2007 podcast, Online, Available HTTP: <http://podcast.shin-ibs.edu/?p=35> The paper has been published as part of the proceedings.

to that time were understood to be unknowable and incomprehensible. This mark of distinction in both thinkers makes comparison of their work on the point of immanence quite plausible.

A much more difficult task is a conversation concerning notions of transcendence. While Eriugena's philosophical position is strongly immanental to the point where, in certain instances, he seems to suggest that God and created being are one, a clear idea of divinity in-itself, a very specific sense of transcendence, is still maintained. In fact Eriugena's entire thesis is built on the dialectic of what we could call immanence and transcendence. In Kūkai, however, a desire to maintain a distinct transcendent entity, a sense of absolute transcendence, is not to be found, even though one can sense a certain equivocation or tension in his work. The ultimate and remote cosmic Buddha, the *Dharmakāya,* (*hosshin*) is understood to radiate throughout the entire phenomenal world. This allows us to experience a sense of the numinous in all things, with a strong suggestion of identity between all phenomena and the cosmic Buddha, while at the same time maintaining a semblance of distinction. The kind of distinction being made here between the *Dharma*-body and the phenomenal world is not in any sense absolute, while such an emphasis on absoluteness is to be found in Eriugena. What can provide us with a form of engagement between both thinkers on the point of transcendence is the notion of immanental transcendence. In fact (as will become clear) Eriugena's concept of transcendence is also best understood as immanental transcendence. But before exploring this notion, I wish to unpack their respective emphasis on divine immanence.

A. Aspects of immanence

The idea of God being in creation, near us, is not unfamiliar to the Christian tradition. However, while one hears such expressions as 'God is nearer to us than we are to ourselves' this nearness is conceived more like our nearness to each other—a kind of spatial nearness with (in this instance) one invisible partner— and is often understood in terms of what Thomas Kasulis refers to as external relationship

mode.[273] Eriugena (and the mystical tradition that he inherited from pseudo-Dionysius and that subsequently emerged in various writers over the centuries) presents an immanence that suggests internal links between God and creation. He can then be considered an especially valuable contributor to the ecological debate from the Christian side because of his particular emphasis on God's being manifested in creation. This manifestation is expressed in a variety of aspects of Eriugena's thought, and these are generally considered to be the proofs for the various charges of pantheism levelled at his work. Here I explore his concept of emanation, his emphasis on the unity of God and created reality, and the presence of a triadic structure within the fourfold framework of his overall scheme. While I shall attempt to treat these notions separately they are also implicated in each other. Eriugena's concept of emanation emphasises the unity between creator and creation, as does the notion of God being the beginning, middle and end of all things. Ultimately Eriugena seems primarily interested in positing an overarching oneness to all things.

In the second book of the *Periphyseon* Eriugena speaks of the created universe as proceeding 'by a wonderful and divine multiplication into genera and species and individual, and into differentiation and all those other features which are observed in created nature'.[274] He is referring here to the second and third divisions of *natura,* (the primordial causes and their effects—both of which are said to be created). In brief, while both are created the effects, understood to be the corporeal or visible realities of the universe, emerge from the incorporeal primordial causes. Thus incorporeal gives rise to the corporeal.[275] Overall the created order is understood as emanating from the 'One'. Eriugena's dynamic unfolding of created reality can be understood in terms of the standard Neoplatonic schema of *processio* and *reditus.* This sense of God, expanding into, and as, created being, is variously described by him as emanating or flowing forth. It suggests a sense of the logical and indeed

[273] Kasulis differentiates between internal and external modes of relating in relation to Kūkai.
[274] *Periphyseon*, II:526d

[275] Eriugena received this doctrine of matter (corporeality) being a confluence of incorporealities from Gregory of Nyssa, one of the Cappadocian Fathers.

necessary outflowing of creation from God and (within the second and third divisions) of the effects from the causes.

As well as the outward flow of created being Eriugena posits a return to the 'One', thus indicating that these divisions are a means of reflecting the dynamic interplay of reality as outgoing and return. In terms of the fourfold we can say that the first division emanates outward as the second and third divisions but yet the entire emanation returns as the fourth division. Both first and fourth divisions are God as mysterious essence or uncreated reality, and the second and third divisions are understood to be God as created being. Since God is one, therefore in both sets of divisions we are talking about the one reality giving to divinity a strong sense of immanence.[276]

Eriugena's inheritance of the Neoplatonic concept of emanation is seen here.[277] This notion of emanation, as a way of understanding cause and effect, holds that every effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it and returns to it, suggesting that there is no absolute separation between God as cause and the universe as effect. Eriugena explores this idea in the context of talking about how the universe is at once eternal and made; arguing that any notion of God being prior to the universe can only be understood in the sense of God being its cause and not in any temporal sense. 'The creation of the universe is not in God as accident but is in accordance with a certain mysterious reason on account of which caused things subsist always in [their] cause.'[278] This makes the universe eternal in its cause, or we can say God is immanent in his effects. Here we are reminded of the Plotinian notion of the One: it

[276] See *Periphyseon* II:609a

[277] This takes on board the platonic idea that the first mover was itself in motion as a kind of self-movement, and the challenge from Aristotle of an unmoved prime mover. See Arkadi Choufrine, 'On Eriugena's Appropriation of the Neoplatonic Concept of Self-Movement' in *Studi sull 'Oriente Cristiano*, V.9 no. 1(2005) Online HTTP: <http://byz-phil.narod.ru/Eriug40.pdf>

[278] See Periphyseon III. 639b-c 'Since God both created the universe and the universe is not an accident for him—since there are no accidents in God due to his being simple—then God was not subsisting prior to his creating the universe.' Thus we can talk of the universe as both created and eternal.

is not the case that the One first is and then produces difference either from itself or from something else, like a kind of organic unity coming eventually to self-differentiate. Rather it is 'Differentiating' itself.[279]

The almost linear or two-dimensional —vertical— process of procession and return is complicated by another form of *reditus* (with the emphasis on reduction), which Eriugena describes as 'an "analytical" or regressive collection' of the divisions.[280] This latter *reditus* results in the conflation of the fourfold divisionary structure, and, as it further suggests the unity of the whole, it heightens the sense of divine immanence. Eriugena achieves this form of reduction by aligning the first with the fourth and the second with the third, and then conflating these two divisions into one. Since the first and fourth divisions are understood to be of God alone they can be understood to be one. Eriugena reasons that, while we can distinguish in our minds between God as source or cause of all things and God as end to which all things will return, in God, these are not two but one. Thus, the first and fourth division can ultimately be reduced to one. Likewise with the second and third, which are aligned to created being, namely the primordial causes and their effects. Because they are contained within the same genus of created nature they are one, since forms are a unity in their genus. Behind Eriugena's assertion here is the Neoplatonic theory of causation where 'everything that is contemplates itself and in this contemplation becomes productive.' It is the activity of contemplation that makes a thing to come into being, as it were. Thus, the causes remain in the effects and 'every caused thing subsists in its cause'.[281]

Eriugena then goes one step further, and reduces the two new divisions to one, thus joining the creator with the creature. Since nothing apart from God 'alone truly is', he reasons, due to the fact that 'all things that are nothing else, in so far as they are, but the participation in Him who alone subsists from and through Himself', then

[279]Eric D. Perl 'Signifying Nothing: Being as Sign in Neoplatonism and Derrida' in *Neoplatonism and Contemporary Thought Part II* (ed.) R. Baine Harris, (SUNY Press, 2002) p. 135

[280] *Periphyseon*, II: 526c

[281] *Periphyseon* III:639c

'Creator and creature are one.'[282] The universe of God and creature is reduced to an indivisible 'One', giving rise, according to Moran, to Eriugena's most explicit statement of pantheism. The four species are seen as under one genus, God. This idea is reinforced in an often used expression of Eriugena: God as Beginning, Middle, and End. Within the fourfold division is a triadic scheme of emanation from, and return to, the One, who is unchanging. There are a number of places where this formula is used. For instance, in a discussion of all created things God is described as the 'causal beginning of all those things, and the essential Middle, which fulfils them, and the End in which they are consummated.'[283] What is suggested is that, while God can be understood as three, there is ultimately only one God. Again, in this regard, God is spoken of as the genus of which the forms of nature are species. The overall impression given here is that God's immanence in creation is so central to Eriugena's thought that God and created nature are presented as being one and the same.

The centrality of an immanental sense of ultimate reality is clearly evident in Kūkai's thought. In fact much of his writing is concerned with showing that the remote ineffable realm, previously considered to be beyond accessibility, is actually available when one engages in the right kinds of ritual practices. In a number of his key texts, Kūkai argues that other Buddhist schools held that the *Dharmakāya* was ultimately so remote that it was not possible for it to communicate.[284] While the traditional way of reading Kūkai's contribution to Buddhist thinking —that his method of argumentation was to distinguish all other schools of Buddhism in Japan at that time, which he described as exoteric, from his own newly introduced brand of Buddhism, which he termed esoteric and which he claimed was superior to all other

[282] *Periphyseon*, II: 526c—528b

[283] *Periphyseon,* III: 621. See also *Periphyseon,* I:451d; *Periphyseon* III: 675a, 688b; and *Periphyseon,* II: 527b

[284] As well as in 'The Difference' Kūkai engages this technique of comparative analysis of esoteric and exoteric schools of thought in *Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron* (The Ten Stages of the Development of the Mind—hereafter 'The Ten Stages') and in a subsequent shorter version *Hizō hōyaku* ('The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury'—hereafter 'The Precious Key'). While most quotations from Kūkai's writings are taken from *KMW*, some are also from Kūkai, *Shingon Texts*, (trans.) Rolf W. Giebel, Berkeley, CA: Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai and Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2004.

teachings—has been critiqued especially by Abé, who suggests the need for a more nuanced and contextualised approach, it nevertheless does have merit.[285] And while scholars argue that Kūkai unfairly imputed a kind of dualism to those other schools, especially the Mahayana tradition, emphasising this dualism to the point of suggesting that such schools postulated the existence of another realm that was transcendent and ontologically separate, it is still worth exploring his claim for the superiority of his esoteric doctrine since it gives insights into his understanding of ultimate reality.[286]

The first formal presentation of Kūkai's central doctrine hosshin seppō is to be found in 'The differences'. The opening of his essay reads:

> The Buddha has three bodies, and the teachings are of two kinds. The sermons of the response and transformation [bodies] are called the exoteric teachings; their language is plain, cursory, and accommodated to the religious capacity [of the listener]. The discourses of the *Dharma*-Buddha are called the esoteric treasury; their language is secret, recondite, and veridical.[287]

Kasulis draws attention to three perspectives from which the exoteric and esoteric teachings are contrasted: source, audience, and form of expression.[288] These three perspectives, I suggest, emphasise the immanence of Kūkai's ultimate reality. The

[285] Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, See especially the Introduction.

[286] While the idea of a kind of dualism is generally associated with older forms of Buddhism, what is surprising is Kūkai's attempt to characterise mainstream Mahayana schools as also holding this view, since Mahayana tradition does not espouse any kind of dualism. David Gardiner argues that Kūkai does in fact know this, and that what he is really engaged in is more a two-fold rhetorical device, where on the one hand he wished to correct what he saw as a tendency towards a kind of dualism in Japan during the Nara period, while on the other he wished to establish his new esoteric paradigm within existing Japanese Buddhist thought. See David Gardiner, 'Transcendence and Immanence in Kūkai's vision of Shingon' in *Esoteric Buddhist Studies: Identity in Diversity* (Proceedings of the Conference on Esoteric Buddhist Studies, 2006), Koyasan University, 2008, pp. 21—2. See also Ruben L. F. Habito 'Japanese Buddhist perspectives and comparative theology: supreme ways in intersection' in *Theological Studies* 64, 2003, p. 376. In his efforts to create a hierarchical order of Buddhist schools with his own esoteric forms at the apex, Kūkai 'draws oversimplified caricatures of the teachings of these other schools, and thus fails to do justice to the complexities and nuances of their respective positions.'

[287] Kūkai, 'The Differences', *Shingon Texts*, p. 17

[288] Thomas Kasulis, 'Kūkai's Philosophy of Intimacy', p. 125

source perspective derives from the Buddha body doing the teaching. The *Nirmānakaya* and *Sambhogakaya* ('response and transformation') Buddhas preach in exoteric language, while the cosmic embodiment itself preaches the esoteric or secret teachings.[289] This latter teaching is what Kūkai refers to by the formula hosshin seppō. Since the *Dharmakāya* is the cosmic embodiment, it is the enlightened cosmos itself that expounds the ultimate truth or *Dharma*, and it does so as the *dharmas* of the universe. This is a very clear expression of the immanence of ultimate reality.

While the exoteric teachings are adapted to the needs of the audience and so change form, the esoteric truth does not rely on its hearers for 'authentication'. The former is pragmatic and its truth depends on what it does for the listener, while the latter just simply is, without being adapted in any way. Logically this follows from the hosshin seppō principle itself. Since the *Dharmakāya* is the enlightened cosmos itself, there is no other audience to which the cosmos would need to adjust its teachings.[290]

Again from the perspective of audience the immanence of the remote Buddha is emphasised. Kūkai suggests that exoteric teachings are expressed in forms adapted to the needs of the audience. In explicating this point Kasulis makes a distinction

[289] Kūkai is regarded as the first to provide a systematic account of the nature of the Cosmic Buddha as the *hosshin* – truth embodiment. The traditional Mahayana theory of the three modes of embodiment (trikâya) is reworked into a fourfold embodiment—the *Dharmakāya* in four forms. These are *jishō hosshin* (embodiment of the *Dharma* as *Dainichi* both in its eternal meditative state (samadhi) and revealing itself to its own emanations—to all aspect of the cosmos); *juyō hosshin* (the self-oriented Body—the *Dharmakāya* in bliss, and other-oriented Body—the *Dharmakāya* in participation); *henge hosshin* (the earthly and historical forms that help people towards enlightenment by using skilful or expedient means); and *tōru hosshin* (refers to the bodies emanating forth from *Mahāvairocana* in all sorts of bodily forms, each expounding some aspect of the *Dharma*). In his reworked thesis the celestial and historical Buddhas are included as forms of the *hosshin*, even though they were distinguished from it in the traditional theory. Thus Kūkai's basic claim is that all forms of the *hosshin* preach. See John Krummel 'Kūkai', *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Oct. 2006, (revised Oct. 2010), Online, Available HTTP: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kukai/> (accessed 11 June 2011). See also Hakeda, 'Thought of Kūkai', p.83.

[290] Existentially this reminds one of the Christian notion (found in the gospel of Matthew) of God making the sun to shine on good and evil alike. Kūkai's reality principle just is— a kind of indifference, likewise there is a kind of indifference in the Christian God who does not adjust the world to suit the needs of its human inhabitants.

between what he terms external and internal modes of relating.[291] In the external relating model where the distinction between the two relating parties is clear—both are absolutely distinct—the modes of expression are understood as transferring a body of knowledge from one to the other. The knowledge itself is separate. This corresponds to the modes of expression used by exoteric forms of preaching. The exoteric mode uses concepts and words (an external body of knowledge) to 'bridge the gap' between the two. In the esoteric the teaching is obscure and secret. Here secret does not mean 'in secret' but it can be understood as something akin to one's innermost desire, the most intimate, truest part of one. Thus this 'secret' teaching is not something that, by definition, is kept a secret or kept hidden, but in order to know this teaching one has to be intimately related to the other. This is a point I shall return to later in the context of the human role in the cosmos. Here I wish simply to say that through the mode of expression of the esoteric teachings (the teachings of the ultimate reality) we can again glean the radical immanence of ultimate reality. The 'innermost desire' of ultimate reality (truth in its ultimate sense) is the cosmos in its enlightened state.

Kūkai goes on to offer a wide range of textual evidence for his notion of the superiority of esoteric over exoteric, and for his claim that ultimate reality preaches ultimate truth. He quotes a variety of sources representing the four main Buddhist schools in existence at that time in Japan (Kegon, Tendai, Hossō and Sanron) as well as from an important text for Kūkai, the *Commentary on the Awakening of Faith*, which he incorrectly attributes to Nagarjuna. In each of these cases he quotes texts and then glosses these quotes in order to highlight that the *Dharmakāya* Buddha is remote and inaccessible for exoteric schools, but, from the perspective of the esoteric tradition, this 'transcendence' is accessible.

[291] See Kasulis, 'Kūkai's Philosophy of Intimacy', pp. 123-125. See also p.88, n. 245. Kasulis distinguishes between intimacy and integrity orientations in philosophies from the perspective of how relationship functions in each orientation. His argument is that the integrity orientation assumes an external form of relating, whereas intimacy orientations assume internal forms. In the former the emphasis is on the entities in relationship, while in the latter it is the relationship that constitutes truth or knowledge. There is a nondual reality here. Interpenetration is what is emphasised. See also Thomas Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002.

For instance he quotes texts from the Huayan tradition that make a distinction between the causal realm and the resultant realm, stating that the first can be taught while the latter cannot. The causal stage refers to those not yet enlightened, while the resultant stage refers to those who have reached enlightenment. In glossing these texts Kūkai comments: 'that the causal stage can be expounded is the province of the exoteric teachings, while the inexponibility of the inherent nature of the result corresponds to the proper domain of the esoteric treasury.'[292] Likewise from the passages relating to the Yogacara tradition he cites: 'The supreme [truth] of the supreme principle is subtle in essence, removed from language, and far beyond all things and so it is called "supreme principle"', and again he comments that 'absolute remove such as this corresponds to the domain of the exoteric teachings….It is beyond the reach of all four kinds of speech of people in the causal stage…and there is only the own-nature of *Dharma* body that is able to expound this sphere of absolute remove.'[293] Thus Kūkai sets up his distinction between the two types of teachings, highlighting the superiority of the esoteric, and emphasises the immanent nature of the remote Cosmic Buddha.

More obvious expressions of the immanent nature of the *Dharmakāya* are to be found elsewhere in Kūkai's writings. For instance, in his essay on 'Attaining Enlightenment' Kūkai expounds on a two-stanza verse as a means of analysing one of his central teachings: that one can achieve enlightenment in this very existence.[294] The first stanza, which has been described as 'a principle of universal interpenetration underpinning all existents', explains the meaning of 'in this body', while the second explores the methods by which enlightenment is attained.[295]. Here I wish to focus on some lines from the first stanza that stress the immanent nature of the *Dharmakāya.*[296] A key line in this stanza is the following: 'Infinitely interrelated

[292]Kūkai, 'The Differences', *Shingon Texts*, p. 29

[293] Kūkai, 'The Differences', *Shingon Texts*, pp. 32—3

[294] Kūkai, 'Attaining Enlightenment', *KMW*, pp. 227ff; See also *Shingon Texts*, pp. 65ff

[295] Giebel, 'Translator's Introduction', *Shingon Texts,* p. 7

[296] I shall explore this first stanza verse in more detail in the next section since it concerns Kūkai's notion of the phenomenal world.

like the meshes of Indra's net are those which we call existences.' In his commentary on this line Kūkai explores the notion of existence, which is also translated as body:

> Existence is my existence, the existence of the Buddhas, and the existences of all sentient beings. Also designated by this word is the *Mahāvairocana* Buddha in Four Forms, which represent his absolute state, his state of bliss, his manifesting bodies, and his emanating bodies. The three kinds of symbols—letters, signs and images—are also included in this category. All of these existences are interrelated horizontally and vertically without end, like images in mirrors, or like the rays of lamps. This existence is in that one, and that one is in this. The existence of the Buddha [*Mahāvairocana*] is the existences of the sentient beings and vice versa.[297]

In this passage, which typifies his theory of embodiment, Kūkai first lists what he means by existence or body: it refers to one's own existence, to all phenomena and all Buddhas. He emphasises that it includes the Dainichi in four forms. It also includes the outcomes of thought, word and action, the three main activities of bodies. Most importantly, he emphasises the intertwined nature of these existences. As Kasulis comments, despite the polysemous nature of this concept of body or existence, the various meanings are not to be understood as 'separate significations in different contexts but as meanings which "penetrate each other" in one specific context.'[298] It is like placing a lamp in the midst of an octagon of mirrors resulting in each mirrored image being reflected in every other to an infinite degree. This is perhaps one of the clearest expressions of the immanence of ultimate reality. The remote Cosmic Buddha's existence is deemed to be also that of all other reality.

Again, in his gloss on the next line: 'there is one who is naturally equipped with all-embracing wisdom', one gets this sense of identity. Here, Kūkai uses the concept of primordial quiescence as a means of describing this all-embracing wisdom, and he quotes from the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* in his exposition of the text: 'I am the origin

[297] Kūkai, 'Attaining Enlightenment', *KMW*, p. 232

[298] Kasulis, 'Reality as Embodiment', p. 168

of all. I am called the One on whom the world depends. My teachings are peerless. I am in the state of quiescence and there are none who surpass me.' Going on to expound on this statement he points out that the "I" refers to the *Mahāvairocana* while "all" refers to the range of phenomena. Therefore, the *Dharma* body and the essential nature of sentient beings are identical, both being in possession of the principle of primordial quiescence.[299]

It is obvious that both Eriugena and Kūkai emphasise a sense of immanence with regard to the nature of ultimate reality, with a very clear focus on an internal relationship between the phenomenal world and their respective perceptions of an ultimate principle of reality. While Kūkai's scheme easily points to an identification of ultimate reality and the phenomenal world, it is perhaps somewhat surprising to find such a close form of identity in Eriugena—to the point that divine and created being are at times understood to be one and the same. This is however tempered by notions in Eriugena of divine essence and so a more searching question concerns the issue of transcendence particularly with regard to Kūkai's philosophical system.

B. Absolute Transcendence

It is possible to read in Eriugena's *Periphyseon* a sense of what we might term absolute transcendence. Alongside the pantheistic tendencies that speak of God and creation being one and the same, Eriugena holds firmly to the idea of God's transcendent essence. Following the tradition of mystical theology initiated by pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena emphasises a distinction between God in Godself (the divine essence) and God as manifested in creation. However, this significant distinction, which Eckhart would later refer to as God and *Gottheit* (the godhead), differs markedly from the more familiar distinction between God in all his aspects as it were, including God 'working' in creation, and creation itself.

The purpose of such a distinction can be understood as holding onto the close connection between God and created reality and yet maintaining an 'element' of God

[299] Kūkai, 'Attaining Enlightenment', *KMW*, p. 233

as absolute transcendence. There is a lack of a definite distinction between what would be called supernatural and natural in later medieval Europe. As Siewers points out, 'the linguistic distinction of a supernatural category of life as opposed to the natural only emerged sharply…with the flourishing of Scholasticism', though it can be argued that the source of this emphasis is in Augustine. Instead Eriugena is reflecting a tradition where paradoxically one could find a sharper distinction between God as hidden mystery (essence) and creation as the expression of that mystery than between God working in creation and physical nature (supernatural and natural).[300] While God is one, speaking in this way allows us to express the paradox of God as both immanent within creation and yet transcendent to it, or between God as manifestation (creation) and God as essence. At a superficial level this suggests a certain dualism.

The point to be noted however is that Eriugena's essential God is not a remote, inaccessible principle; rather it is a mysterious essence unknowable in itself just as the essence of all reality is unknowable in itself, and yet incapable of being separate from its expression since God is one, and Eriugena is keen to emphasise the oneness of all reality. Thus this mysterious essence might be better understood as the depth of reality rather than a separate reality. Moreover, since Eriugena makes clear this distinction is not actually in God but only in the human capacity to perceive God, it does not contradict his Neoplatonist belief in the oneness of reality. In this way Eriugena maintains an ontological unity. The distinction, therefore, might best be understood in terms of the strain placed on human language to give expression to what is considered the mysterious nature of the divine within the Christian tradition.[301]

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[300] Augustinus Hibernicus and Eriugena both referred to miracles as natural. The linguistic distinction of supernatural and natural only emerged later with scholasticism. 'Earlier philosophy was related to an asceticism considered empirical, paradoxically with a stronger distinction between the hidden mystery of God and the apparent physical world, but not between the workings of that divine mystery in Creation and physical nature.' See Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p. 7.

[301] In this regard Eriugena is following closely the Greek tradition as he stresses the theory of the unknowability of God associated with the Cappadocians Fathers. 'Confronted with the rationality of Arius and the intellectualism of Eunomius which developed out of it', they 'emphasised the inadequacy of the human intellect before the inaccessibility of the Divine Mystery.' See Sheldon-Williams, note 41, p. 225

In responding to a query from Alumnus about including, 'that nature which is separated from the universe of all natures', among the divisions of the universe, Nutritor emphasises the primary division on which Eriugena's entire edifice stands.[302] This is the division into that which is and that which is not, or which is beyond being. The query stems from the fact that this former nature would appear to be infinite and unbounded — 'it would seem that the nature which creates the whole universe is infinite and 'bounded by nothing'— while the nature it creates (the universe) 'does not extend to infinity.' Nutritor replies by emphasising this distinction between God in essence and God as immanent. Introducing the concept of universal Nature (*universalis natura*), he says: 'For the first and greatest division of universal Nature is into that which creates the established universe and that which is created in that established universe.'[303] Eriugena maintains a strong distinction between the 'divine' that is accessible and the 'divine' that is beyond the grasp of the human mind.

C. A Perspectival Approach

The fact that this distinction is not ontological is of central importance to Eriugena, since it allows for the primary emphasis that he places on the unity of reality. Instead we can speak of perspectival distinction, as Moran does, when he describes Eriugena's fourfold division of *natura* as four perspectives on reality, rather than as actual ontological divisions within reality itself. Moreover, this emphasises that reality itself is 'a dynamic process of different manifestations or revelations, depending on the point of view of the viewer, his location in time, space, history,' as well as his own moral and spiritual level of awareness. Thus Eriugena attempts to move away from the emphasis on universal nature as a rarefied substance with all things as modifications of it, and instead offers his particular framework as a way of speaking about that reality from particular points of view. This approach recognises that other reasoned mechanisms are equally valid, and it takes the emphasis off a rigid understanding of reality. The focus is not on dividing up *ουσία* into rigid

[302] Alumnus (pupil) and Nutritor (teacher) are the characters in the dialogue format of the *Periphyseon*.

[303] *Periphyseon* III:620c-621b

categories, but it is on the perspective of the one viewing. For Moran, this is Eriugena's highest understanding of the meanings of *natura*.[304] What it suggests is a claim, on the part of Eriugena, that to define reality is ultimately beyond the human person's capacity, and, that the perspective taken is always from within that reality, placing the one viewing within and not outside the totality. Ultimately, we are part of the totality and, at best, have only a limited vision of reality.

Kūkai also considers different perspectives on reality through his magnum opus 'The Ten Stages', though he does claim the possibility of having a full vision of reality – of reaching ultimate truth via Shingon teachings and practice. The 'Ten Stages' and 'The Precious Key'both attempt to classify the various schools of Buddhist and non-Buddhist thought.[305] Kūkai correlates the different stages of the development of the mind with what he considers to be an appropriate set of teachings, 'as its perspective and lived experience of reality.' Thus, there is a level of truth for each stage even though it is limited in scope, since according to Kūkai, as one moves up the hierarchy of levels of mind one experiences more intensely the unfolding of the *Dharma.* The ultimate state of nonduality with the *Dharma* is reached in the tenth state via the Shingon teachings and practice.[306]

[304] Dermot Moran, *John Scottus Eriugena*, p.260 In grappling with his awareness of the enormity of his task, Eriugena uses a term that many scholars recognise as making a profound contribution to western philosophy's thinking about the world. This is the concept *universitas,* which Eriugena uses to name the notion of the totality (*universalis natura* or *to pan).* He emphasises the need to admit a multiplicity of meanings for the term. Since it signifies reality, understood not simply as 'being' but as a 'dialectical interplay of being and non-being', it is used in a variety of ways, which Eriugena admits to, and justifies, in the text. Ultimately, therefore, we can only grasp the meaning of the totality from different perspectives. See pp. 258-9.

[305] A basic difference exists between the two works however: 'The Ten Stages 'has an esoteric interpretation of each of the Buddhist stages (third through ninth), which suggests that each of these stages can all be seen from an esoteric point of view and so when viewed from that perspective can in essence be regarded as manifestations of Shingon teachings. The emphasis in the shorter work is on how each successive stage of development overcomes the previous stage until true enlightenment is attained in the final tenth stage. See Giebel, 'Translator's Introduction', *Shingon Texts*, p. 12.

[306] Krummel 'Kūkai', p. 22

D. ‘Immanental’ Transcendence:

The question we now need to consider is whether there is any semblance of transcendence in Kūkai’s understanding of reality. While any sense of an absolute transcendence is alien to Kūkai’s thought, there is the possibility of attributing what is often termed, in contemporary philosophy of religion, the concept of immanent transcendence to his thought.[307] The kind of paradoxical emphasis that is found in Kūkai could be termed something akin to this idea of immanental transcendence. Thus we can find it in a comment by Kūkai on the line (referred to earlier): ‘Infinitely interrelated like the meshes of Indra’s net are those which we call existences.’ Kūkai writes: ‘They are not identical but are nevertheless identical; they are not different but are nevertheless different.’ Or again it is expressed in some lines from ‘The Memorial’: ‘The Dharma is beyond speech, but without speech, it cannot be revealed. Suchness transcends forms, but without depending on forms it cannot be realized. Though one may at times err by taking the finger pointing at the moon to be the moon itself, the Buddha's teachings which guide people are limitless.’[308] These kinds of paradoxical expressions indicate the difficulty of using language to express ultimate reality. They give a hint at a notion of transcendence, understood as being beyond the normal channels of expression, in Kūkai’s understanding of the Cosmic Buddha. Kūkai uses this paradoxical language to retain a sense of distinction, so that while ‘one is within many, and many are in one, yet no confusion arises.’[309]

David Gardiner makes an interesting and relevant point on this passage concerning the issue of identity and non-identity, based on understandings of metaphor found in the work of Paul Ricoeur. Metaphors are best thought of as ‘forming a *specific tension’* rather than as a ‘form of *substitution’.* This tension makes possible ‘the holding together of *both* sameness and difference…without simply mixing the two’

[307] Lars Sandbeck, ‘God as immanent transcendence in Mark C. Taylor and John D. Caputo,’ in *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology*, Vol. 65:1, 2011, pp. 18—38. In his comparison Sandbeck refers to how a particular sense of immanent transcendence originated in the Christian Neoplatonic tradition with theologians such as Eriugena whose understanding ‘blurs the distinction between transcendence and immanence or Creator and creature.’

[308] Kūkai, ‘Memorial’, *KMW*, p. 145

[309] Kūkai,’ Attaining Enlightenment’, *KMW*, pp. 232—3

and in the process 'manages to become a matrix of emergent meaning.'[310] Gardiner then points out that the Shingon practices, which are generally interpreted as the means of creating a relationship of identity between the Buddha and the practitioner, might be better understood as creating a '*tensive'* relationship 'as it is in metaphorical thinking'.[311]

Elsewhere Gardiner highlights another expression of the idea of immanental transcendence, by emphasising the skilful way that Kūkai uses the concept of the Japanese *ri* or Chinese *li* (meaning 'apart' or 'separate' or 'transcendent'). The term *ri* is used initially in a negative way, to designate how the other schools speak of the cosmic Buddha as transcendent and remote, for which Kūkai criticises them. However, it is then used in a positive sense, to speak of the uniqueness of the Shingon tradition. In other words the term used to speak of separateness and remoteness is now used to speak of that which is accessible through the teachings of Shingon. The implication here is profound: what others considered unreachable and utterly removed is, via Shingon teachings and practices, the ever-present nature of ultimate reality. Such rhetoric on the part of Kūkai results in an expression of the standard Mahayana move of placing nirvana within samsara, but within a tantric context.[312]

As noted previously, while Eriugena's theology emphasises the absolute transcendence of God this cannot be understood in the traditional sense. In many respects the concept of immanent transcendence would more accurately describe his position. In fact it is in his particular interpretation of both transcendence and immanence, these standard aspects of divinity, that his radical understanding of reality is most clearly manifested. One can discern a basic tension in his understanding of the divine, which can best be explored as a paradox at the heart of reality itself, a paradox that allows for a perception of reality as always beyond

[310] David Gardiner, 'Metaphor and Mandala in Shingon Buddhist Theology', *Sophia* Vol. 47, 2008, pp. 49—50

[311] Gardiner, 'Metaphor and Mandala in Shingon Buddhist Theology', p. 51

[312] Gardiner, 'Transcendence and Immanence in Kūkai's Vision of Shingon', p.21

human comprehension at every level. The Christian Neoplatonic tradition is clearly reflected here, in that the transcendent divine is understood as creating and manifesting itself both within, and as, created reality, in a way that blurs the distinction between transcendence and immanence, or Creator and creature. Eriugena writes:

> We ought not to understand God and the creature as two things distinct from one another, but as one and the same. For both the creature, by subsisting, is in God; and God, by manifesting Himself, in a marvellous and ineffable manner creates Himself in the creature.[313]

Thus, in these kinds of expressions Eriugena is emphasising a concept of God as both essence and manifestation or transcendence and immanence. This particular interpretation that he makes of these standard Christian theological concepts is markedly more dynamic and radical than the mainstream Christian tradition. His wish to hold onto a fluid understanding of reality is evident here, and the term immanent transcendence can easily be applied.

This desire to blur the distinction, or to hold to a nondual position, with regard to Creator and created being, can be seen in his discussion of the term 'God'. Early in the first book of the *Periphyseon,* and referring to the evidence of scripture to support his claim, Eriugena points out that the word "God" is used both to refer to God in essence and to God as manifestation: the transcendence and immanence of God are both meant when we use the term.

> For it is not only the divine essence that is indicated by the word "God", but also that mode by which God reveals Himself in a certain way to the intellectual and rational creature, according to the capacity of each, is often called "God" in Holy Scripture. This mode the Greeks are accustomed to call theophany, that is, self-manifestation of God.[314]

[313] *Periphyseon* III:678c

[314] *Periphyseon* I:446d, See also I:448b

Some passages later Eriugena traces the etymology of the term "God" to the Greek verbs "I see" and "I run", pointing out that both roots are correctly held to be valid. His argument supporting this highlights the paradox of motion and rest in God, a reflection of God as immanent and transcendent. Where the term God comes from the verb 'I see' (God, understood as 'the one who sees'), Eriugena explains that God sees in 'Himself all things that are [while] He looks upon nothing that is outside Himself because outside there is nothing.' In the form of the one who runs, the name can be understood to mean that God 'runs *throughout all things* and never stays but by His running fills out all things.' Yet, while God is at rest in Godself, God, nevertheless, is in motion through all things in order that those things, which essentially subsist by God, may be. However, what subsists is God, since nothing exists outside God, thus motion and rest, becoming and being, are the same in God.[315]

E. Language and the communication of Ultimate Reality

The idea of the transcendent rests very much on the use of language for both Kūkai and Eriugena. Kūkai chooses a passage from the *Commentary on the Awakening of Faith,* which repeatedly states how different standpoints belong to 'the extremity of ignorance and not to the station of knowledge'.[316] The emphasis here seems to be on the inability of language to express enlightenment. The passage concludes that most strands of Mahayana Buddhism recognise that the highest truth is 'more mysterious than the mysteriously mysterious and more remote than the remotely remote.'[317] According to Gardiner, implicit in this quote from Nagarjuna—with its repeated protestations against the possibility of ultimate reality being represented—is the idea that somehow the state of enlightenment can, in fact, be represented. There are means of communicating ultimate truth. In his gloss on the Nagarjuna statements Kūkai indicates this by saying that 'if you examine them closely, then you will be able to reach the ultimate [goal]. Every single profound meaning cannot be

[315] See *Periphyseon* I: 452c-4533b.

[316]Kūkai, 'The Differences', *Shingon Texts* pp. 22—4.This phrase is repeated on four occasions, and a correspondence is made with the basic stance of the four main schools in 'The Ten Stages' and 'The Precious Key'.

[317] Kūkai, 'The Differences', *Shingon Texts*, p. 23

expressed on paper – think carefully on this.'[318] The implication is that while they cannot be expressed via the normal channels (via ink on paper) they can be expressed by other means, and these for Kūkai are the ritual practices.

Again in his use of another quote from the same commentary concerning negative or apophatic renderings of Mahayana insights, Kūkai brings attention to the inability of language to communicate ultimate truth:

> the "one" [mind] cannot be one [since it is one yet all], but it is provisionally called "one" from the standpoint of entry [to the Mahayana]….it is termed ["self"] as if it were the self, but this is not the real self.[319]

The struggle around talking about ultimate truth is evident in this passage, and we can see similarities to Eriugena's use of language when referring to the transcendent. Given his distinction between God in Godself and God manifested as creation, Eriugena makes clear that knowledge of the former is beyond human comprehension, indeed it is beyond the comprehension of all creatures. In *Periphyseon* I he writes: 'The Divine Essence is comprehensible to no intellectual creature…We shall not see God Himself in Himself for not even the angels do so – since this is impossible for every creature'[320] In fact not even God can know this essence, which means that God knows only that God is, not what God is.

Eriugena suggests that anyone wishing to speak on such a subject must make use of 'the two branches of theology' called by the Greeks the affirmative, or *kataphatic*, and the negative, or apophatic—where the former affirms that all things, which take their being from the divine substance, can be predicated of it, while the latter denies the possibility of any such predication.[321] He goes on to argue that, since God is one, nothing opposed to, or conceived alongside God can exist. By 'opposed' he means

[318] Kūkai, 'The Differences', *Shingon Texts*, p. 24

[319] Kūkai, 'The Differences', *Shingon Texts*, p. 23

[320] *Periphyseon* I:447c, 448c

[321] See *Periphyseon* I: 458b

'either deprived of Him or contrary to Him or related to Him or absent from Him', and 'by conceived alongside God', Eriugena means 'something that is understood to exist eternally with Him without being of the same essence with him'. Since God is one then logically speaking opposites of Him cannot be conceived, but since all attributes or names for God (such as essence, goodness, truth, wisdom etc) are found to have opposites, these cannot be attributed to God in any absolute sense. In each case God is seen to be more than the attribution in question. Thus, it is metaphorically rather than properly that the divine Nature is referred to as essence, truth or wisdom. Instead 'it is called superessential, more-than-truth, more-than-wisdom.'[322]

Yet, as the Nutritor points out, to say that God can be properly spoken about as superessential or more-than-truth must also be questioned, since it too suggests speaking of that which cannot be spoken of:

> For in whatever way the Divine Substance is spoken of, whether by simple parts of speech or by compounds, whether in Greek or Latin, provided only it be a proper way, it will be seen that it is not ineffable. For that is not ineffable which can be spoken of in any way.[323]

It is here that Eriugena makes the claim that the two branches of theology are not in conflict or opposed to each other when applied to the divine nature. This is so because these compound names, predicated of God, hold within them the two branches of theology such that in 'outward expression they possess the form of the affirmative, but in meaning the force of the negative.' For instance, superessential suggests outwardly an affirmation, yet its inner meaning suggests a negative since it denies the notion of essence. 'For that which says: "It is superessential", says not what it is but what it is not; for it says that it is not essence but more than essence, but what that is which is more than essence it does not reveal.'[324]

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[322] See *Periphyseon* I: 458c—d. See also I:462b—d

[323] *Periphyseon* I:461a

[324] *Periphyseon* I:462b—c, d

While Kūkai recognises the use of the apophatic, and, in that sense, a kind of immanental transcendence with regard to ultimate reality, he also claims that this language is the ultimate stance only for other Buddhist schools: 'the exponents of the Middle View put a stop to frivolous arguments and regard quiescence and absolute remove as the school's ultimate [standpoint].'[325] Because the exoteric is concerned with analytical and conceptual interpretations of ultimate reality, the only means of speaking about it is the 'non-speaking' of the apophatic. Instead 'the exponents of the mantra treasury (Shingon teaching) regard this (the apophatic stance) as the first gateway for entering the path' of Buddhahood or enlightenment.[326] Kūkai claims a further form of expression for this tradition, a form of language that is symbolic rather than discursive.[327] In this claim he is bringing together the notions of theory and practice: Ultimate reality 'communicates' (and can be 'reached'), via the three mysteries of mudra, mantra and mandala—which means via the body.

It would seem that in order to 'protect' a sense of absolute transcendence (but not in any ontological sense) the ultimate realm for Eriugena is best talked about using apophatic language. Kūkai, who does not hold an absolute transcendence, makes use of more symbolic forms of language. Yet in the second book of the *Periphyseon* we do find passages such as the following, which indicate a different kind of knowing,

[325] Kūkai, 'The Differences', *Shingon Texts*, p. 36

[326] Kūkai, 'The Differences', *Shingon Texts*, p. 33

[327] In commenting on this Gardiner draws a parallel with the work of Suzanne Langer concerning her critique of discursive forms of language. See Susanne K. Langer *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art*, New York: Mentor, 1942 (this edition, 1948) Langer contrasts what she terms a 'presentational' symbolism with the discursive symbolism of language, claiming that in this kind of expression '*there is an unexplored possibility of genuine semantic beyond the limits of discursive language*.'(p. 86, emphasis in the original) In other words, Langer postulated expressions of language (termed symbolic) that can just as well articulate meaning. In fact they allow you to immediately glimpse meaning since 'they do not present their constituents successively, but simultaneously.' Thus, for instance, 'the relations determining a visual structure are grasped in one act of vision.'(p. 93). Gardiner links the reference to the capacity of this presentational symbolism to grasp 'in one act of vision' with Kūkai's expression: 'with a single look' one may achieve Buddhahood. Moreover, he juxtaposes Kūkai's critique of the limits of the exoteric with that of Langer's reference to the possibility of genuine meaning existing beyond the limits of discursive language. He concludes: 'Kūkai's claim that the "resultant realm" that is said to be off limits to the language of exoteric discourse—and which can therefore only be pointed to by a mystical and referential/reverential silence within the rules of such discourse—is actually pregnant with the possibility of genuine semantic.' See Gardiner, 'Transcendence and Immanence in Kūkai's Vision of Shingon', pp. 26—7

one that emerges from the kind of deep contemplation associated with forms of prayer:

> But these are things which are contemplated at a deeper and truer level than they are expressed in speech, and understood more deeply than they are contemplated, and are deeper and truer than they are understood to be; for they pass all understanding.[328]

From an ecological perspective it would seem that Kūkai's particular version of immanental transcendence leaves one in no doubt about any kind of dualism in his vision of reality. There is less clarity in Eriugena's philosophy as there is a much greater emphasis on the notion of the distinction of the absolute. The notion of the interpenetration and interconnectedness of all things is also more obvious in Kūkai's philosophy. However, Eriugena's emphasis on the notion of a perspectival approach, that the view of ultimate reality open to us is ultimately only partial since we are part of it, recognises a more considered approach in our understanding of it. It suggests the need for a form of ecological humility that recognises our place within the overall scheme of things. I shall explore these ideas in greater detail in the next chapter when I turn to more contemporary implications of their systems of thought.

II. Conceptions of the Phenomenal world

Before turning to consider how both thinkers regard the phenomenal or spatiotemporal world itself, I wish to explore a related issue to the emphasis on immanence, which concerns how the supreme principle actually manifests itself within and as reality. This also serves as a bridge to understanding how both thinkers view the phenomenal world.

[328] *Periphyseon* II: 614b—c. One can glean here perhaps the idea of the kataphatic that Carabine refers to, as a way of expressing the infinite. Also there are intimations of Yannaras' notion of the kataphatic as being not so much simple negation but a more opened knowledge.

A. Manifesting Ultimate Reality

Kūkai has developed a technical and complex understanding of how ultimate reality manifests itself as the ultimate truth of the universe, but at its core is the *sanmitsu*. For Kūkai the cosmic Buddha Dainichi manifests himself as the phenomenal world (the cosmos) via the *sanmitsu* or the three mysteries—mantra, mudra and mandala. From the enlightened perspective (the perspective of the Buddha) the world is the activity of Dainichi, which makes it the embodiment of truth. Correspondingly, Eriugena uses the concept of theophany to describe how the divine manifests itself as the world of created being, such that the cosmos can be seen as 'an infinitely varied showing or appearance of God.'[329]

i. The Three mysteries

In his treatise 'Sound, Word, and Reality' the concept of *hosshin seppō* serves as a starting point. Kūkai begins as follows:

> First, the statement of the gist: The Tathāgata invariably makes use of patterned signs when expounding the Dharma. The essence of patterned signs lies in the six sense objects, and the six sense objects have their basis in the three mysteries of the Dharma-Buddha. The undifferentiated three mysteries pervade the Dharma realm and are perpetual; the five wisdoms and the four bodies [of the *Dharma*-Buddha] are found in all ten realms without exception.[330]

Thus the expounding or preaching of *Dainichi* is understood to be the phenomenal world in all its aspects. Every entity and event in the universe, as an object of the six senses, is this preaching. The *setsū* (truth of) is manifested as the phenomena. This is a kind of omnipresencing of the *hosshin* throughout the cosmos, which permeates every part of it. Krummel describes this as 'perpetually informing all things of the *Dharma*', because inherent in this omnipresencing idea is a kind of 'dynamism of

[329] Thomas A. Carlson, 'And Maker mates with made: World and self-creation in Eriugena and Joyce', in Clayton Crockett, *Secular Theology: American radical theological thought*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, p. 143.

[330] Kūkai, 'Sound, Sign and Reality', *Shingon Texts*, p. 85

continuous activity' and this explains all physical and mental movements within the universe. Thus the visible alterations in the cosmos (when a 'thing-event' changes place or shape) are the movements of the Cosmic Buddha's body. Audible alterations can be understood as *Dainichi* speaking, while mental alterations refer to the movements of *Dainichi*'s thoughts. Moreover, since everything is itself the manifestation of the Buddha, then the preaching can be understood as a monologue. Thus the *Dharma* can be understood as 'the Buddha's monologic expression of his own self-enjoyment in *samadhic* bliss.'[331]

In Kūkai's 'Meanings of Hūm' we find a similar idea. The three mysteries are said to be in every phenomenon in the universe—stones, gods, humans, trees, places—such that each serves as 'a "linguistic" medium that communicates *Dainichi*'s sermon in his omnipresencing.' Thus for instance what is conveyed by the mandala in pictures is what the mantra conveys in sound. Together the three mysteries convey in different forms the meaning of the Dharma. English translations do not always pick up on the total understanding of what Kūkai wishes to convey here. For him the idea of sound or voice includes more than what we normally consider sound. It also refers to inanimate sound or to what we might refer to as the 'soundless—meaning beyond ordinary human capacity to hear—vibration of all material reality.' Word or 'sign' includes both the sinographs and what they correspond to—their conceptual constructs—while 'reality' includes the concepts of suchness and emptiness. Thus through the three aspects of sound, sign and reality the cosmic Buddha is understood to be the cosmos. [332]

Kūkai's personalising of ultimate reality as *Dainichi* means understanding ultimate reality as functioning in the ways of personhood—thought, word, and deed. However, in keeping with the Buddhist perspective of personhood as being not so much an agent who acts but as the act itself, Kasulis writes with regard to Kūkai's understanding: '*Dainichi*, like any other person, is not what has a body; he is the corporeal process. *Dainichi* is not what has speech; he is the verbal process. He is

[331] Krummel, 'Kūkai', pp. 9—10

[332] Krummel, 'Kūkai', pp. 20—1

not what has mind but the mental process itself.' This makes the reality embodiment an event not a thing and as that person is the cosmos, this makes the universe a personal event. The universe is '*Dainichi*'*s* style.'[333]

The notion of person as the act itself rather than an agent who acts mirrors the Neoplatonic notion (found particularly in Plotinus) that the One is not a being who acts but is productive activity itself.[334] Influenced by Plotinus (at least via pseudo-Dionysius and others) we find this notion reflected in Eriugena's claim that the Creator is not prior to creation in any temporal sense and that it is the same nature that both creates and is created. In book I a certain puzzlement arose around the claim that not only does the Divine nature 'create all things that are, but itself also is created.'[335] The Nutritor concludes that 'it creates all things which it leads forth out of nothing so that they may be, from non-being into being; but it is (also) created because nothing except itself exists as an essence since itself is the essence of all things.' And again 'although [divine nature] creates all things and cannot be created by anything, [it] is in an admirable manner created in all things which take their being from it.'[336] Rather than there being a [personal] Creator who then creates, Creator and created appear as one.

The understanding of person therefore is key in this regard, which is a point highlighted by the philosopher Keiji Nishitani when he claims that there is a need to re-examine the concept of personhood as it is normally understood today and within mainstream Christian thought.[337] The ordinary view is that the Christian, with an

[333] Kasulis, 'Reality as embodiment', p. 172

[334] Perl, 'Signifying Nothing', p. 135

[335] Periphyseon I: 452b

[336] Periphyseon I:454a

[337] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, pp. 60—2. He raises this in the context of religion and science. Given the modern natural science view of nature 'as insensitive and indifferent to the good and evil as insensitive' Nishitani argues that 'on the one hand we want to know whether nature...can still be thought of as belonging to God; and on the other, whether this modern view of nature is connected to the question of the free independence of man and the awakening of his subjectivity. It is because this manifold problem has proved so difficult to dispose in our times that we must question the notion of the personal in God and inquire into the realm of the transpersonal.' He claims that

awareness of his or her sinfulness, encounters the absolutely transcendent God in the context of a personal relationship that is divorced from the rest of the world—the world presented us by science. This reflects the modern Cartesian sense of subject and moreover human salvation is grounded in this personal relationship—this 'I-thou' between a personal God who calls and a human being who responds to that call. Nishitani argues that 'the transcendence and transcendent omnipresence of God can also be termed a personal relationship between God and man' but in a very different sense. He coins the notion of an 'impersonally personal relationship' or a 'personally impersonal relationship' to describe what he means. Here, however, the idea of 'impersonal' is not to be understood as the antonym of personal, but more like the original meaning of *persona*.

He suggests that the Holy Spirit in the Christian tradition has the characteristic of such an understanding. While being understood as one *persona* of the Trinity it is also 'the breath of God,' making it 'a sort of impersonal person or personal nonperson.' Nishitani goes on to say that from the perspective of those with faith (those breathed with this kind of spirit) 'all creatures are seen as God-breathed.' Nishitani is dealing with this subject from an existential perspective and argues that experience of this kind of understanding does not occur on the field of consciousness where there is separation of subject and object. Such an experience is possible only at a level where there is no separation between subject and object, (what he terms *within* or *without*)—where God is 'encountered as a reality omnipresent in all things of the world in such a way as to be absolutely immanent as absolutely transcendent.'[338]

Nishitani argues that hints on this sense of the omnipresence of God, which he also refers to as transpersonal, are only found in the tradition of negative theology. He draws on the work of Eckhart, particularly the distinction he makes between God and

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Christianity has not historically provided us with a means of dealing with this problem. 'Only with regard to the second matter—the free independence of man and his awakening to subjectivity, have attempts to uncover the aspect of the transpersonal in God been not wholly lacking.' Nishitani further suggests that such attempts belong within the tradition of negative theology.

[338] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, pp. 39—41

what he terms *Gottheit* or godhead.[339] We can equate this distinction with Eriugena's distinction between God manifested and God's essence. The essence of God is located beyond the personal God understood as one who stands over against created beings, giving rise to a sense of a transpersonal God. In other words we can understand the personal God in a transpersonal sense as the ultimate ground of all reality where unity in the sense of absolute oneness is the overwhelming emphasis.

ii. Theophany

For Eriugena this (trans)personal God communicates and does so as the theophany of God, and in this sense we can claim that creation is the divine style.[340] Theophany can be understood as both the 'means' by which the divine expresses itself and the 'result' of God's self-expression. Moreover, it seems to be the only way in which Eriugena's God can know himself, since in talking of the divine essence Eriugena makes clear that 'God knows only that he is not what he is.' In other words theophany is central to his overall system, concerning not only how he understands the active expression of the divine but also how creation can be understood, and furthermore how humans come to union with God. However, in order to fully understand this dimension of *natura* we need to take a closer look at the notion of the *apophatic* in Eriugena.

As we have already seen, this is the means by which the divine nature in its essence is first discussed by Eriugena, following the pseudo-Dionysian tradition. The ineffability of the divine nature is such that it can only be talked about in terms of the

[339] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness,* pp.61—3

[340] The notion of theophany is inherent in the Christian tradition since it refers to God's self-revelation. However the use of the term varies. Traditional notions suggest an ontological divide between God and what God creates. The emphasis is on God creating the world as separate from him. Here the emphasis is on intimate presence, rather than separation—theophany is God's self-expression. Nancy Hudson points out in an article on theophany in Nicholas of Cusa, that this idea of theophany prevents creation being simply for us as is more commonly understood to be the case in the traditional understanding. 'The world is no more "for us" than God himself is "for us", since it is the manifestation of God's very self.' See N. Hudson, 'Divine Immanence: Nicholas of Cusa's understanding of Theophany and the retrieval of a model of God', *Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 56:2, 2005, 450-470. It is important to note that Cusanus' notion of theophany would have been influenced by Eriugena.

negative or the apophatic. Since created reality is the self-manifestation of the divine, Eriugena talks of this nature as a transition from nothingness to something. There is a movement from the 'nothingness' of the divine nature into the 'somethingness' of created nature. Metaphorically speaking original darkness now becomes light.

Two notions arise here that need further elaboration. The first is the idea of nothingness in God, and the second, emerging from the first, is the doctrine of creatio *ex nihilo*. Eriugena's credentials as a Christian philosopher have been questioned on this point. Etienne Gilson claims that, while Eriugena does develop a philosophical system— since such systems are based on certain assumptions and Eriugena bases his on the assumption that the first principle is non-being—his epistemological basis is suspect. Gilson argues that philosophy as knowledge must rest on being. In terms of Christian philosophy then, he claims that the 'He Who Is' —the Judeo-Christian God—is (being). This is an affirmative statement within the Thomistic framework of analogy, one that takes account of the proper distinction between the affirmation *that* God exists and knowledge of *what* God is. It is clear that Eriugena recognises this distinction and makes reference to it, but he also follows pseudo-Dionysius in positing an alternative mode of speaking of God as beyond the categories of being and non-being. What is really at issue is a failure on Gilson's part to appreciate the richness of the concept of *nihil* as used in Eriugena. Gilson seems to understand *nihil* only as privation in the Augustinian sense.[341]

However, Eriugena posits two ways of looking at negation: firstly there is negation via privation while secondly there is the negation that can be translated as more-than, or excess. It is the latter that is referred to here with regard to the divine nature. The movement from the nothingness of God to the created being is from excess into creation. Eriugena's approach to the doctrine of creatio *ex nihilo,* can, therefore, be understood as a creation out of the abundance that is the 'nothingness' of God. This paradoxical idea of something from nothing is more clearly understood as the

[341] Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952, (2nd Ed.) pp. 213—4. See also, Brian Garcia, 'An analysis of Etienne Gilson's Historical Method and Treatment of Neoplatonism', *Ramify: Journal of Braniff Graduate School of Liberal Arts*, Vol. 1:1, 2010, Available, Online HTTP:< http://www.ramify.org/0101_garcia.php>

emergence of creation from the 'beyond being' of the godhead. In Eriugena's words 'everything that is understood and sensed is nothing else but the apparition of what is not apparent, the manifestation of the hidden, the affirmation of the negated…'[342] What, effectively, is being expressed here is the movement from the 'negative' of excess—the nothingness beyond being—to the positive of the theophany.

It is possible to argue that this 'negative' of excess —as the essence of ultimate reality for Eriugena— speaks to the Buddhist notion of emptiness—the doctrine of *śūnyatā* and how that manifests itself in Kūkai's thought. The idea of *śūnyatā* in Buddhism, while translated as emptiness, is not the emptiness of privation or nihilism. Even though Mahayana Buddhism is based on the doctrine of emptiness throughout its long history it has rejected any attachment to emptiness as a 'view of annihilatory nothingness.' As Masao Abe points out emptiness must empty itself, it must become non-Emptiness and so becomes 'Wondrous Being.' We go beyond the notions of *u* and *mu* (being and non-being) to the absolute U-tathagata (the ultimate reality), but again this is not to be understood as over against *u* and *mu* in any kind of dualistic sense. Using absolute Mu as the ultimate formless emptiness allows both to stand just as they are in reciprocal relationship.[343] Kasulis suggests this notion of fullness in terms of Nishitani's conception of *śūnyatā* by saying that 'emptiness is a self-emptying (kenosis) of itself into the world, or more precisely, a self-emptying of itself as the world.' This makes the notion of 'true emptiness' (*shinkū*) identical with 'wondrous being' (*myō-u*).[344] Here again in terms of the Buddhist doctrine of *śūnyatā* we can talk of a kind of fullness.

[342] *Periphyseon*, III: 633a-b. This hidden and non-apparent cannot be something else apart from the manifestation. If it was then it would not be hidden or incomprehensible and the manifestation would not be all that is. Transcendence thus is found within the world which is established by it.

[343] Masao Abe 'Non-Being and Mu the Metaphysical Nature of Negativity in the East and the West' in *Religious Studies*, Vol. 11: 2, June 1975, pp. 181—92

[344] Thomas Kasulis, 'Whence and Wither: Nishitani's View of History', in Taitetsu Unno (ed.) *The Religious Philosophy of Nishitani Keiji*, Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1989, p. 268—9

Eriugena introduces theophany by referring to it as the term the Greeks used to define how God is revealed to intellectual and rational creatures.[345] The emphasis is on the fact that ultimate mystery is known because it is revealed, not in its essence but by manifestation as and through creation, and this Eriugena decides to call theophany. Eriugena explores the concept more comprehensively by quoting Maximus' treatment of the subject: 'Theophany is effected from no other (cause) but God, but that it happens as a result of the condescension of the Divine Word…downwards, as it were, upon human nature which was created and purified by Him… and of the exaltation upwards of human nature to the aforesaid Word by divine love.'[346] Theophany is portrayed here as an initiative of God: Eriugena claims that it is by divine condescension and invitation that theophany comes about.

This is important because it highlights why, as Willemien Otten suggests, theophany gradually takes over from the use of negative theology as Eriugena's preferred method of dealing with his concept of *natura*, because theophany seems to contain something that human abilities cannot contain. As Eriugena points out in a long passage concerning the three levels of the human soul—speech, reason and contemplation—the human capacity to understand at each level is inadequate to express the divine essence.[347] Even negative expression, recognising the absolute ineffability of God, inevitably stands silent in the face of infinity. Thus Eriugena moves from it to theophany, as this is recognised as being from God's side as it were, and operates almost like a divine 'trompe-l'oeil' allowing for the only proper way of expressing God—'that which is properly thought of as beyond all essence is also properly known in all essence.'[348] This optical illusion, this 'trick' of theophany, what Otten notes as the *veluti proprie*, maintains a kind of equivocation with regard to the manifestation of God. It can speak of God manifested in creation yet without compromising the ineffable essence of the divine nature. There is the possibility of

[345] *Periphyseon* I:446c—d

[346] *Periphyseon* I: 449b—c

[347] We can note here that this is directly opposite to Kūkai claims that ultimate reality is expressed via the three aspect of person—speech, mind and body.

[348] *Periphyseon*, III: 681a—b

positive expression and yet a protection of what is regarded as the true essence of God.

As Otten notes, while 'God appears to be able completely to obliterate himself to the point of getting fully absorbed by created nature' yet 'the distance which is so forcefully embodied and preserved in the *veluti proprie* character of theophany will prevent God and creation ever coinciding, for every coincidence will be retracted ultimately by the same dynamism that brought it about.'[349] Having 'safe-guarded' the essence of ultimate reality, then 'every visible and invisible creature can be called a theophany, that is a divine apparition. For every order of nature from the highest to the lowest, that is from the celestial essences to the last bodies of this visible world, the more secretly it is understood the closer it is seen to approach the divine brilliance.'[350]

B. A dynamic world

Yet no aspect of nature will reach the divine brilliance in any absolute sense, and so the emphasis on the level of identification between ultimate truth and the expression of that truth varies for Eriugena and Kūkai. There is a greater sense of equivocation or distinction between Eriugena's God in his essential nature and created reality, to the extent that absolute coincidence can never be considered possible. On the other hand, Kūkai's claim is that the phenomenal world *is* Dainichi's movement, sound, and speech, at least from the perspective of the enlightened. What is evident for both, however, is a strong sense of the phenomenal world as dynamic. The notion of created reality as the theophany of God suggests a dynamic sense of reality in Eriugena, which resonates with Kūkai's understanding of the world as very much alive.

[349] Otten, *Anthropology of John Scottus Eriugena*, pp. 71—2

[350] *Periphyseon*, III: 681b

i. A living world of nature

Within Kūkai's overall view of reality as being the personal expression of the cosmic Buddha, he understands nature (what we generally refer to as the natural world) as dynamic and very much alive. For him, it was a constant source of inspiration. To understand how this came to be, it is helpful to look more closely at his experiences of the natural world that both deeply influenced him and shaped his conception of the world. Firstly, growing up on the island of Shikoku, which even to this day is still quite rural, and surrounded by the influence of the indigenous religion of Shinto, Kūkai was formed in an environment where the human and the natural were intimately related. He was undoubtedly accorded ample opportunities of seeing and understanding the natural world as alive. In this regard let us look at how in the opening of his historical novel about Kūkai Shiba Ryotaro discusses his physical environment:

> The province of Sanuki in which Kūkai was born borders on the five inner provinces around the capital, separated from them by the water of Chin. The plains are broad, the mountains exceptionally low. Conical hills dot the landscape as though sprinkled here and there across the fields. Probably because the plains are broad, the sky—shining with the light off the sea—is opened up in a terrible expanse. Formed in the shoals, the clouds shift through their variegated forms. Is this not a natural setting that would nurture visions in a man.[351]

Secondly, his sojourn training to be a government minister was short-lived, and, while he was disillusioned by the political scene, in all likelihood he dropped out of college because he felt drawn to a more ascetic religious experience, which he found in the world of nature. Kasulis points to an escapist theme in some of his earlier writings, as an indication of this draw. For instance in the *Sangōshiki* (Indications of the Goals of the Three Teachings) he outlines his preference for Buddhism over Confucianism and Daoism because it provides the only true escape from the world of ephemeral pleasures. While such an escapist theme contains a strong otherworldly aspect, it reflects Kūkai's idea that religious practice could really only be pursued in

[351] Cited in Kasulis, 'Truth Words', pp. 257—73

the mountains away from urban life.[352] It led to his spending time, at this early period of his life, with the Natural Wisdom School in the Yoshino Mountains. This consisted of a group of monks who engaged in ascetic ritual practices and who wanted also to escape the more scholastic environment of the city.

Such experiences of the natural world stayed with him throughout his life, as can be seen in the poetry he would have written in later life. For instance this attitude can be deduced from this verse that is also a take on his name:

> This teacher of the great emptiness (*kū*) does not stay, does not.
>
> This child of [Shingon Buddhism's] milky sea (*kai*)
>
> Does not weary of seeing Mount Kōya's rocks and pines,
>
> And is continually, moved by its clear-flowing streams.

Throughout his life Kūkai seems to have often abandoned his court duties so that he could retreat to Mount Takao and Mount Kōya to meditate, and be inspired and influenced by his surroundings in the natural world. In fact, Kūkai seems to have risked censure and disapproval of court through his refusal to interrupt these retreats for any reason whatever. On one occasion he did not reply to a request from the emperor for two months because of his retreat time. The quality of his reply (an apology) displays the eloquence of his composition as these lines attest: 'I had immersed myself in the visualization of emptiness during the day and in the breath-counting concentration at night. I thus found no time for sharpening my sword of brushes or sporting in the pond of ink.'[353]

[352] T. P. Kasulis, 'Kūkai (774-835): Philosophizing in the Archaic', in Frank E. Reynolds, & David Tracy (eds.) *Myth & Philosophy*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990, p. 137

[353] *Henjō konjō hakki seireishū*, fascicle 3, K.Z. 3:426, cited in Ryūichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 308

In his classic study on the mantra, Ryūichi Abé contrasts the use of writing by the intellectual mainstream of the late Nara and early Hein period with Kūkai's use of writing. For the former writing (including poetry) was a practical and political technology necessary for the ruling class to 'establish and maintain the order of society', while for Kūkai it was a 'sacred technology necessary to create and maintain cosmic order.' Court poets such as Minemori and Yasuyo, acquaintances of Kūkai, saw poetic writing as important in capturing and transforming natural beauty 'into an offering to the emperor that would enhance his authority' and so 'assist his rule'. In this way writing became 'symbolic of culture's taming of nature.' In contrast Kūkai seems to have highlighted nature 'in its naked, wild aspect', and because of this 'unadulterated quality' it 'cultivates his mind'. Thus, for Kūkai, 'it is nature's taming of the mind, rather than culture's control over nature, that provides the inspiration for his poetic compositions.' [354] In this regard we find him writing such inspirational lines as the following:

> Water scooped from the moonlit valley stream sustains my life,
> A breath of evening mist returning from the peaks refreshed my spirit…
> The moonbeams before dawn and the breeze at daybreak wash away dust from my mind.'[355]

ii. *Natura* – inherent dynamism

It is not possible to find similar experiences with regard to the natural world in Eriugena's writings, and even though he wrote poetry the consensus among scholars is that poetry was not his forte.[356] As previously pointed out, we know next to nothing about his background and early years, apart from the fact that he was born and educated in Ireland. It can perhaps be surmised from this that his education

[354] Abé, *Weaving of Mantra,* pp. 305—10. Ultimately, as this study brings out, Kūkai was concerned with showing that text, writing, and signs were linguistic manifestations of the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness' and in the process introduced a 'unique theory of writing, literary craft, and the text' that was seen to threaten the more conventional mode of literature by the court literati of the time. See p. 310

[355] This highlights Kūkai's creation of a theory of language grounded in the ritual speech the mantra.

[356] Dutton argues, however, that Eriugena's poetry, more than other sources, offers important information about his life and his attitude to contemporary history. See Dutton, 'Eriugena, the Royal Poet', p. 51.

happened in a monastic setting, and he would have been influenced by this cultural background (as I have highlighted in Chapter 2). While his Neoplatonic schema gave to his concept of nature a dynamic sense, we can also surmise that his Irish Celtic background contributed as well. As the Eriugenian scholar Édouard Jeauneau claims: his attitude towards the bible and his esteem for the "Book of Nature" are both Irish in origin.[357] And according to Siewers, Eriugena's view of spatiotemporal creation, while emerging from a 'genealogy of Greek and Syriac writers', was also influenced by 'unique twists attributable to his cultural background in the archipelago.'[358]

We can infer the influence of the natural world on Eriugena from his use of the term nature as the framing device for his vision of reality. As Dermot Moran argues, in spite of Eriugena's loose use of philosophical concepts and particularly his lack of accuracy concerning facts about the natural world, he is crystal clear about what it is he wants to convey concerning his understanding and use of the term *phusis,* or *natura*. It stands as the 'absolute frame of his thinking' and is understood as 'a dynamic process of self-manifestation, at once manifesting itself as Creator and created, and in the same dialectical process withdrawing into its nameless origin.'[359] Willemiem Otten also stresses this strongly active understanding of *natura*, describing it as a religious force. In an article comparing Eriugena's and Emerson's ideas of nature, she suggests that Eriugena portrays nature as having an inherent dynamism, and claims that his use of the idea of nature can be described as an anchor for his understandings of creation.[360]

It is worthwhile exploring Otten's argument more fully, since it contributes to the larger concern of this dissertation by stressing how a dynamic sense of nature can enhance understandings of created reality within the Christian tradition. Otten begins by outlining the standard perception of the creation/nature relationship in early

[357] See Jeauneau 'Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus the Confessor in the Works of John Scottus Eriugena', p.137

[358] Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p. 2

[359] Dermot Moran, 'Time, Space and Matter in the *Periphyseon*', p. 67

[360] Willemiem Otten 'Nature as religious force' pp. 354—67

Christianity, which I shall summarise briefly. The concept of nature that was linked to the demiurge in the *Timaeus* and to sexual desire in the *Symposium* became muted in Neoplatonism as 'philosophically stratified forms of organic emanation'. This 'muting' of the ancient *natura* in the Neoplatonic structure was likely to become a full rebellion against Christianity and 'its newly imposed biblical Divine Maker', which would force it into a 'role of passive confinement.' In order to avoid such a rebellion, Christianity sought to cast nature in the role of creation. Thus, nature would become 'a material object subjected to the divine power whence it ultimately originated', with the climax of such subjugation being reached in the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*. In other words, the understanding is that the monotheistic Christian God sought to rob nature of its material roots and of its mythic origins.

Also in this understanding, the radical dependency of created nature on the divine excess is emphasised. As Moran points out, we can understand why Augustine writes with such vigour in his confessions that creatures cry out: 'God made me', and also understand the extent of Augustine's influence on classical western Christianity.[361] This notion of dependency and passivity on the part of created nature is reinforced when viewed through the notion of a personal God inherent in mainstream Christianity and examined earlier.

While Otten acknowledges this new emphasis in Christian thought, she nevertheless wishes to transcend the kind of binary stalemate inherent in it. Instead, she posits a view of nature that would draw on resources from within the Christian tradition and yet maintain nature's own dynamism. Nature would become a 'macrocosmic *imago Dei*', allowing it to be seen as giving expression to multi-faceted dimensions of co-creatorship. Such a view, she argues, would see nature less as a rival and more as an anchor for creation, and would enrich rather than undermine more standard Christian views of the created world. Moreover, nature's concrete revelatory character would

[361] Moran, 'The Secret Folds of Nature'. Elsewhere Moran highlights how Augustine (and later Aquinas) in his distinguishing of God from creation he speaks of creatio *ex nihilo* —the world being made from God (*a Deo*) but not made out of God (*de Deo*). Eriugena on the other hand embraced the thought of Gregory of Nyssa who had identified the nihil out of which the world was made with God in his superessentialis. Thus we have *creatio ex Deo*. See Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 216

be emphasised, thus relativizing the priority given to scriptural revelation since the Reformation – the book of nature as distinct from the book of scripture.[362]

Otten argues that Eriugena's notion of nature is just such a resource from within the Christian tradition. Eriugena uses '*via negativa'* (the *apophatic*) as a means of including the infinite within the totality described by the term *natura*. However, as a consequence of including the negative (what reason cannot grasp) within *natura*, *natura* cannot be defined, and as a consequence of being beyond definition it is given an 'inherent dynamism' from the very beginning. According nature such dynamism, from within the tradition, runs counter to the standard concepts of creation that tended to have around them fixed boundaries.[363] Such concepts emphasised the distinction between creator and creation, and in the process reified the world as an object. These approaches, which tend to form the core of the orthodox position, found an ally in Augustine's emphasis on the dependency of creation on a creator, where God watches over and provides for the realm of spatiotemporal creation.

Eriugena advocates a shift away from such absolute dependency, and instead accords to the realm of creation the much more active role of manifesting the hidden transcendent realm, even to the point of suggesting that the Creator is dependent on creation in that he requires creation as the means of its own self-manifestation. In fact this is what nature as creation/created being (as the second and third aspects of the four-fold division) now becomes for Eriugena—the 'self-manifestation of God.' Eriugena therefore defines creation in the active expression of self-manifestation. The divine nature 'creates itself, that is, allows itself to appear in its theophanies, willing to emerge from the most hidden recesses of its nature in which it is unknown even to itself, that is, it knows itself in nothing…but descending into the principle of all things and, as it were, creating itself, it begins to know itself in something.'[364]

[362] Willemiem Otten 'Nature as religious force', pp. 354—6

[363] Otten, 'Nature as religious force', p. 358

[364] *Periphyseon,* III:689a—b

Moran points out the radical implications of this: creation which was traditionally understood as an attribute of God can now be understood as 'a fulfilling of the divine nature.'[365]

What is stressed here is the Greek view of nature: the physical entities are in essence incorporeal and are underlined by 'the mysterious infinite reality of hidden *ousia*.'[366] The distinction spoke of earlier between God manifested and God as essence Eriugena also applies to the outer and inner aspects of all reality. 'For just as God as He is in Himself beyond every creature is comprehended by no intellect, so is He equally incomprehensible when considered in the innermost depths of the creature which was made by Him and which exists in Him.' [367] What we then perceive as nothing other than 'some accident to each creature's essence…is known not as to what it is but that it is'[368] In other words the essence of all things is equally inaccessible since it ultimately is the essence of God.

C. Understandings of the phenomenal world: Cosmologies

What then, we might ask, is the nature of the universe and how does this world emerge? For Kūkai the world (as the body of *Mahāvairocana*) is constituted by the Six Great Elements (*rokudai*). These are interfused with or are interpenetrating each other. In 'Attaining Enlightenment' this notion of interpenetration forms the essence of the first line of the two stanza verse that is at the core of this text (noted in the previous section). Kūkai identifies these elements as earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness. Essentially then there are five material elements and one spiritual element making up reality—the universe is both material and spiritual (body and mind). He describes these as being 'interfused and…in a state of eternal harmony.'

[365] Moran, 'The Secret Folds of Nature'

[366] Moran, 'Time, Space and Matter in the *Periphyseon*', p. 77

[367] *Periphyseon* I:443b

[368] See *Periphyseon* I:443c. See also Moran 'Time, Space and Matter in the *Periphyseon*' p.72 'As a Neoplatonist Eriugena accepts reality as one.' In so far as it is nameable it is called *ουσία* or essence but this cannot be known and all we can ever know of it are 'emanations out from the essence which are termed substances.'

Kūkai emphasises that while 'differences exist between matter and mind,' they are the same in their essential nature: 'Matter is no other than mind; mind no other than matter. Without any obstruction they are interrelated. The subject is the object; the object, the subject. Nothing differentiates them.'[369] In Exoteric Buddhism the first five constitute the materiality of the universe, but Kūkai emphasises the fact that they are the bodily components of the *Dharmakāya*, while the sixth element is his consciousness. Thus, these five and the sixth 'spiritual' element together constitute the Body and Mind of Dainichi.

In talking about the constituents of the natural world, Eriugena refers to the Greek 'four elements' theory of earth, air, fire and water. However, instead of seeing any kind of interfusion of elements where material and spiritual elements are equal, in typically Neoplatonic fashion Eriugena quite clearly values the spiritual or immaterial over the material, since the material is most real, while the immaterial is most actual. Moran suggests that he sees these elements as stumbling blocks in his efforts at reducing all things to immaterial causes.[370] In Book II Eriugena explores various theories concerning these elements.[371] He incorporates the four elements into the primordial causes, either being those causes or contained within them, and so claims them, in themselves, to be most pure and simple. In general he argues that the visible world emerges from *ousia* through the causes, and then through the reasons, and gradually there is a spreading out of the 'divine ray' until the whole cosmos is generated into its particular species and forms. His ultimate aim is to show how the world emerges from invisible causes.[372]

[369] Hakeda, 'Thought of Kūkai', p.89

[370] Moran, 'Time, Space and Matter in the *Periphyseon*', p. 78

[371] See *Periphyseon*, II: 604bff

[372]Moran, 'Time, Space and Matter in the *Periphyseon*', p. 85. Eriugena draws on Gregory of Nyssa as his authority on the nature of matter. See *Periphyseon* I: 479b-c where he cites Gregory: 'matter is nothing else but a certain composition of accident which proceeds from invisible causes to visible matter.'

In trying to grasp their respective understandings of the emergence of the world there seems to be a profound difference between them, since Eriugena talks of a creator and creation. While the implication of dualism inherent in this approach is counteracted by the dialectic interplay that characterises his notion of creator and creation, the tension is still palpable. We could refer to this as a kind of a 'dualistic' oneness. On the other hand Kūkai's Buddhist position gives a definite sense of what we might term a 'monistic' oneness. As far as Kūkai is concerned the six Great elements 'create all the Buddhas, all sentient beings, and the material worlds...The Six Great Elements are the creating; and the Dharmakāya in Four Forms and the threefold world are the created… Although we speak of creating and created, there is in reality neither the creating nor the created.' Clearly then the only 'creator' is the Six Great Elements itself, which is simultaneously *shoshō* and *nōshō*,—creation and creative force. The *Dharmakāya* (the Six Great elements) is all there is—the totality of the universe is identical with the Cosmic Buddha or ultimate reality.

Both Eriugena and Kūkai speak about the causal nature of reality and both claim that the ultimate cause of all things is in some sense unobtainable. Kūkai explores this notion in his text entitled: 'The meanings of the word hūm' by analysing the mantra *hūm*. He describes the ultimate meaning contained in each syllable. The first syllable Ha—the letter H—stands for cause and in discussing its true meaning Kūkai says: 'as for the real meaning of the letter Ha, "the gateway of the letter Ha stand for the inapprehensibility of cause in all things."' This is inapprehensible or unobtainable because of the regressive nature of causality. While it is obvious that all things are based on some cause, this cause is then based on another and another such that it is logically impossible to reach a fundamental cause of existence. Kūkai thus concludes that nothing can ultimately be said about the causal nature of existence other than that the absence of cause (the causeless cause) or 'nonabiding is the origin of all things.' [373] The true cause of all things is the causeless cause.

For Eriugena God, as ultimate cause of all reality, also remains unobtainable, but in the sense of being unknowable. Thus while both Eriugena and Kūkai suggest a sense

[373] Kūkai, 'Meanings of Hūm', *Shingon Texts*, p. 109.

of the ultimate unobtainability of the cause of all things there is a clear difference in their emphasis. For Eriugena it is due to the divine essence being essentially beyond the grasp of knowability; for Kūkai it is because there is no ultimate cause of all things. And yet paradoxically for Eriugena we can say that this ultimate cause, while being all there is, is still a nothingness beyond being. This nothingness can only be (in the sense of being known) in its effects. Thus in the image of Umberto Eco the universe is peeled like an onion, but the onion is all peel. After peeling nothing remains: all is outside with nothing inside or conversely all is inside with nothing outside.

D. A Positive view of the world

Ultimately then the mysterious nature of the world comes through for both Eriugena and Kūkai giving rise to a positive sacred sense of reality. There is another aspect of the Neoplatonic formulation of nature, adopted and recast by Eriugena, which is worth considering in this regard. In the standard Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation there is the principle of reduced causal power: the farther one gets from the One the lesser is the power of the central force. However, Eriugena seems to imply an expanding outwards rather than a diminishing of the central power. This suggests a subversion of the Neoplatonic principle of reduced causal power in favour of a multiplicity of expression. Whereas for Plotinus and Proclus, that which is produced is necessarily inferior to that which produces, Eriugena talks of a 'wonderful and divine multiplication into genera and species and individual and into differentiations and all those other features.'[374] This reversal gives a positive sense of all created reality, that one is exhorted to appreciate the many expressions of the divine. Moran refers to this as a 'horizontal expansion' alongside the typically 'downward diminution' inherent in and as the unfolding process.[375] Thus as the process of unfolding happens all of created reality retains the power of the creative principle itself.

[374] *Periphyseon*, II: 526d

[375] Moran, *Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 139

Kūkai also displays an affirmative attitude towards the phenomenal world as he emphasises very strongly that it is the place of attaining enlightenment. The unique aspect of attaining enlightenment for him is contained in his motto: 'in this very body' or existence. For him, the highest 'glorious mind, the most secret and shared is fully present even in the lowest level of mind. This suggests a strongly affirmative attitude towards the world since it is the realm where the highest enlightenment is attained. As Hakeda points out, Kūkai rejected the theory of universal degeneration that was prevalent in Japanese Buddhism.[376] And, as we have been exploring in the context of how the Cosmic Buddha preaches—as the body, mind, speech that is the phenomenal world—this coinciding of ultimate reality with the world as such is clear evidence of Kūkai's positive attitude towards it. All phenomena both point to an underlying truth and are that truth expressing itself.

E. Language, Text and the Cosmos

In going more deeply into how this is so, and before exploring the role of the human as in some sense interpreter of that expression, it is helpful to look more closely at ideas such as language and text in relation to the world. In his early writings concerning the *Mahāvairocana Sutra*, Kūkai explains how the sūtra itself can be read in three 'editions':

> As for the text of this sūtra [*Mahāvairocana Sūtra*], there are three kinds. The first is the [the vast, boundless] text that exists spontaneously and permanently, namely, the mandala of the Dharma of all the Buddhas. The second is the broader text that circulated in the world, that is, the sūtra of ten thousand verses transmitted by Nagarjuna. The third is the abbreviated text of over three thousand verses in seven fascicles.

The first text then is equated with vast and limitless cosmos, while the second and third are abridged translations into human language. Tradition has it that the second (consisting of twenty thousand volumes) was transmitted to Nagarjuna by Vajrasattva somewhere in Southern India, but was subsequently lost. A much

[376] Hakeda, 'Thought of Kūkai', p. 78. See especially note 2 on that page.

smaller version (the third) was brought from China by Kūkai. With regard to the third Kūkai goes on to say that even if abbreviated

> it embraces in its brevity comprehensive, broader texts. That is because its each and every word contains countless meanings, and every single letter, even every single stroke or dot, encapsulates within itself innumerable truths.[377]

Kūkai claims that the three editions of the *Sutra* are in fact inseparable, and, as Abé points out, the second and third are not merely an abridgement of the first but they are more particularly a condensation of it. The cosmic *Sutra*'s contents are already encapsulated in the characters of the abbreviated forms, giving rise to an inter-textual form that exemplifies a kind of synecdochic interpenetration: the entire whole is contained within each part.

Using the same model for the *Vajraśekhara Sutra* (the other great *Sutra* in esoteric Buddhism) Kūkai presents esoteric texts 'as books that reflect within themselves everything in the world.' However, Abé goes on to point out that this ought not to be understood as a kind of summa mundi—a complete tome like an Enlightenment Age encyclopaedia. Rather, it must be understood as 'never-to-be-bound—constantly reworked manuscript.' Text therefore for Kūkai is not to be understood as a book, but as a 'writing that remains open-ended.' Ultimately, the world is constituted of text 'not of their representational function but of their materiality.' For Kūkai instead of the text of the world we have the more compositional mode: text as the world or the world as the text.[378]

Pierre Hadot points out since earliest antiquity in the West one can find the idea of the world being understood as some kind of text. For instance Plato understood the universe to be a kind of poem composed by God, as did the Stoics and Plotinus, while Proclus referred to Apollo as the great poet of the universe. Later thinkers, especially during the Latin middle ages and into the modern period used the

[377] *Dainichikyo kaidai (hokkai joshin),* KZ 1:634, cited in Abé, *Weaving of Mantra*, p. 275

[378] Abé, *Weaving of Mantra*, p. 275—6.

metaphor of nature as a book. Alongside this developed the theme of a language of nature, where the forms of various beings were the 'words' of this language.[379] For Eriugena this language is the divine speaking the word and it is through this speaking all things come into being. 'It is the prerogative of the divine nature to call forth from non-existence into existence whatever it wishes to make.'[380] The creation then becomes the speech or word of God, in essence the self-manifestation of God, and as such can be understood as a text.

The philosopher Eric D. Perl's interpretation of the idea of the world and text in the *Periphyseon*, particularly Eriugena's notion that 'everything which is understood or sensed is nothing other than the appearance of the non-apparent, the manifestation of the hidden' and so forth, highlights another dimension. Just as God manifests himself in and as creation, which makes the world his self-creation, an author creates the text. However, what Perl draws attention to here is the relationship with meaning. Thus he argues that '[j]ust as meaning occurs within a text which it produces, so transcendence is found within the world which it establishes'. In thinking of the world as a book that is produced by God, then, we need to see this relation 'not as that of a text to its author but as that of a text to its meaning.' While the meaning grounds the text it 'occurs only in the text' and cannot be understood apart from the text. This makes the text simply a sign of the meaning, and yet there is nothing else but the text (or the sign), just as in the example of a dance: without the still point there would be no dance yet there is only the dance. We are therefore left, not with the dualism of 'God-and-the-world, but with, only, the theophanic world.'[381] From his Neoplatonic perspective with its focus on the 'One', Eriugena ultimately wants to overcome any kind of dualism, including that between things, words and their meanings.

[379] For a brief summary of these ideas see Hadot, *The Veil of Isis*, pp.201—3

[380] *Periphyseon*, II: 580c

[381] Perl, E. D., 'Signifying Nothing: Being as Sign in Neoplatonism and Derrida,' in R. Baine Harris(ed.) *Neoplatonism and contemporary thought, Part 2*, SUNY Press, 2002, p. 144

As with Kūkai this theophanic world read as a text, this book of nature, is also open ended. For Eriugena nature and scripture are the two sides of wisdom as it were, but are united in that both can be read as books, reflecting the traditional notion of the book of nature alongside the book of scripture.[382] Yet these books of wisdom cannot, in any sense, be understood as closed and completed.[383] Both books are collections of signs that symbolise or point beyond themselves to deeper mysteries; reflecting Eriugena's ultimate preoccupation with the pseudo-Dionysian notion of language as pointing towards the divine, while acting as a veil or screen that hides it.[384] Thus one must not stop with the words or things but move towards the unutterable mystery behind the words and things, implying that there is no finality or closure to these texts. In this regard there are infinite interpretations, and no interpretation or perspective is to be privileged over another.

Eriugena goes beyond the traditional understanding of the relationship between words and things where a word represented or stood for a thing, to claim that the relationship is reciprocal: words may stand for things but things also stand for words. In exploring this idea Moran looks at his understanding of incarnation, where Eriugena suggests that in saying the word was made flesh we also say the flesh

[382] See E. R. Curtis, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages,* New York: Princeton University Press, 1991, where he outlines the history of book symbolism and with regard to the book of nature we get a glimpse of the depth of this symbol when the whole itself comes to be seen as a book. See p. 319ff

[383] In referring to Eriugena's *Periphyseon,* Hilary Mooney points out that this text cannot be seen as a static finished object since Eriugena was a thinker whose thought was in constant development. See Mooney, *Theophany*, p. 40

[384] Moran Dermot Moran, 'Eriugena's theory of language in the Periphyseon: Explorations in the Neoplatonic tradition' in Proinseas Ni Chathain & Michael Richter (eds.) *Ireland and Europe in the early Middle Ages: Learning and Literature* (Klett-Cotta, 1996) p.241. Moran places his exploration of Eriugena's theory of language in the broader context of the Neoplatonic tradition. Unlike the more dominant tradition of antiquity and the medieval period where language mirrors the real, Neoplatonism tends to question the underlying assumption that language in the sense of signs actually says anything significant about reality. As Moran points out: 'Whereas the Latin, stoic-Augustinian account of language focuses on successful attempts to signify things (*res*), the Neoplatonic tradition emphasises the gap between saying and reality, it focuses on acts of negation rather than assertion, is *apophatic* rather than *kataphatic*.' In that sense Moran argues language in the Neoplatonic tradition reflects the 'play of signifiers' of Saussure, rather than a representational approach to reality. See pp.240—1

(matter) is word.[385] In this regard Eriugena claims that the word being made flesh is both metaphor and synecdoche. Since flesh is part of the body but stands for the whole person (including spirit), then to say that the word is flesh is to use the notion of the part standing for the whole or the whole being in the part. At the same time utterance of 'the word becoming flesh' can be understood as metaphorical. This is so because what is normally associated with something made up of sound or vibration (uttering a word) is now 'embodied in physical skin, bones and blood.' Also the reverse —his claim that flesh is word—is metaphorical as this implies that 'the physical' is changed into 'meaning'. This notion of language displays richness, complexity and dynamism on the part of Eriugena where language is understood as much more than simply a representation of reality.

Equally we find a dynamic use of language in Kūkai, and while for him also words do not simply represent reality, in effect, they are reality. However, reality itself is not in any sense substantial and this is what gives rise to the notion of dynamism. His theory of language is most systematically presented in his *Shōji, jissō ji*, which Abé translates as 'Voice, Letter, Reality.' In the opening verse Kūkai claims that 'all in the six sense-fields are letters, the letters of the Dharmakāya, which is reality.' Then throughout the work he repeatedly states that the letter is nothing but differentiation. In other words Kūkai's conception of language or signification is not as representing the world but can only be understood in his prior understanding of identity as differentiation. The identity of anything is not an 'essence' in the sense of substance, but it emerges from how an object is differentiated from other discrete objects. It is the interplay of differentiation that gives rise to identity. All sensory objects can be understood as manifesting themselves as if they were "things". The signifying function of language (while it gives rise to discrete objects according to Kūkai) then has at its heart the notion of differentiation. While it produces things, it is grounded in differentiating movement from differentiation is coterminous with the formation of a cosmos.'[386] Thus while word is reality it is so in a dynamic sense.

[385] See *Periphyseon* III:706b

[386] Abé, *Weaving of Mantra*, p. 279

Underscoring the interrelation between sign/letter or text and things/reality is the idea of sound. From an analysis of 'Sound, Sign and Reality' we can talk of *shō* (sound) as the breath or primordial speech of Dainichi. *Ji* (meaning sign, word, letter, or character/graph) is the signification of this sound—its meaning. Then *jissō* (reality) is that which is named or meant by *shō* becoming *ji*. This, Dainichi's sermon, this vibrating sound (which is the vibrations of the six great elements) gives rise to all the significations which gives rise to all the phenomena that constitute the universe. Moreover, as mentioned above, all the phenomena, the universe as such, is a text articulating the *Dharma* – it is the text of hosshin seppō. The sermon is the scripture—signs that constitute the world and its phenomena— which is the world and the scripture is also the sermon preached.

Just as we can talk of Kūkai referring to nature as sermon and scripture/text, so also with Eriugena we can talk of reality as speech and book. Even though Eriugena is more concerned with the symbolic function of language—as pointing beyond itself towards that which is ultimately nameless— nevertheless and in keeping with tradition Eriugena holds that the spoken word—sound— is prior to the written one. For Eriugena the creative act itself is referred to using the metaphor of speech while the created universe is referred to as book. Out of his linking of creative speech and the trinity where he speaks of the generation of the Word, Eriugena argues that already contained here is the whole creation in a unified form. [In a like manner the monad contains all numbers and the centre contains all radii of the circle.] It is this which gives rise to creation itself. The notion of crying out leads to the act of creation itself. Thus the divine word encompasses all things in its unity and is also the condition for their being articulated in multiplicity. This creative act of speech is not like the work of a primordial craftsman who is simply shaping what already is, but can be imagined 'as an enduring cry which constitutes the very being of its created artifact.' In his homily on the Prologue to the gospel of John, Eriugena says: 'Just as when one who is speaking ceases to speak, his voice ceases and dies away, in the same way if the Father of heaven should cease so speak his Word, the created universe would not subsist.'[387] As Donald Duclow comments 'God is as

[387] Quoted in Donald F. Duclow, *Masters of learned ignorance : Eriugena, Eckhart, Cusanus*, (Variorum Collected Studies Series), Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005, p. 44

constitutively present throughout created nature as the speaker is in his speech, or the singer in his song'[388]

III. Conceptions of Human Nature

The efforts to articulate the meaning of reality is not an intellectual exercise for either Kūkai or Eriugena. Both are concerned with the notion of enlightenment as that which ultimately exercises the human person. David Gardiner describes the project of enlightenment, in the context of Shingon, as a kind of transformed vision.[389] This definition can easily be applied to the Christian idea of union with God, which could be described as Eriugena's version of Christian salvation. Thus for both philosophers we can understand the project of enlightenment as a matter of attaining some kind of union with ultimate reality. In this regard, the idea of praxis can be understood as an integral aspect of reaching that enlightened state.

While attaining this kind of union or enlightenment is a key aspect of an understanding of the human within the divine-human-earth triad, there are other aspects that are also important. In particular it is necessary to look more specifically at how the human is understood to relate to both ultimate reality and to the phenomenal world—the divine and earth aspects of this triad. This entails looking at the concepts of microcosm and mediator. While both Eriugena and Kūkai hold the human in a very positive light, Eriugena in particular esteems that role very highly, with most scholars indicating that it is through the figure of the human one ought to approach Eriugena's overall system of ideas, even while recognising that his anthropology needs to be understood as embedded in the larger setting of *natura*.[390]

[388] Duclow, *Masters of learned ignorance*, p. 44

[389] David Gardiner 'Metaphor and Mandala' *Sophia* Vol. 47, 2008, pp. 43—55

[390] See, for instance, Otten, *Anthropology of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 4

A. Comprehending Reality /Achieving Enlightenment:

In turning firstly to how Eriugena understands the way in which humans are to achieve enlightenment or salvation, we need to again return to the concept of theophany, particularly his rendition of the subject in Book II. As we have noted, Eriugena firstly explains what he means by theophany—that it is an initiative of God. It is 'effected from no other (cause) than God, but that it happens as a result of the condescension of the Divine Word… downwards, as it were, upon human nature… and the exaltation upwards of human nature to the aforesaid Word by divine love.' Further on in the text he puts it as follows: 'from this condescension of the Wisdom of God upon nature through grace, and the exaltation of the same nature to that same Wisdom through choice, the theophany is brought about.' Here is explained the elements and the process of theophany. It results from the interplay between the human choice and the divine 'condescension' by which is meant the 'deification of the creature'. While the theophany comes from God, there is a requirement for the human to have the capacity to 'recognise' it. There is an element of choice here for the human being (even if a limited one) in terms of responding to the condescension of the divine. The theophanic reality is available to the eye that sees and the ear that hears, as it were. In other words, the human must activate the capacity in itself to recognise divine manifestation, which, paradoxically, is only possible through divine grace.

There is a similarity here to Kūkai's notion of *kaji*.[391] This is a central concept with regard to how the human sees reality as *Dainichi*, and its meaning is translated in the following line from his two-stanza poem: 'When the grace of the Three Mysteries is retained [our inborn three mysteries will] quickly be manifested.'[392] Kūkai's gloss here is that *kaji* 'indicates great compassion on the part of the Tathagata and faith (*shinjin*) on the part of sentient beings.'[393] In his commentary on this idea of Kūkai, Krummel suggests: 'Through the help of *Dainichi*'s compassionate con-descension of kaji, the practitioner is enabled to inter-resonate with the sermon of the cosmos.'

[391] This concept is generally translated as grace but a better translation might be empowerment.

[392] This is a line from his two-stanza poem in his treatise 'Attaining enlightenment'

[393] K.Z., I, 507—8, cited in Hakeda, 'Thought of Kūkai', p. 88

Even though the Buddha is in a 'monologic exposition mode' at the same time he is expressing his compassion for the unenlightened so that they also can 'enjoy the fruits of the *Dharma'*.[394] In 'Sound, Word, and Reality', Kūkai claims that 'sentient beings are infatuated and blind, and know no way of attaining enlightenment on their own. Through grace (*kaji*), therefore, the Tathagata shows them the way to return.'[395] This gives rise to the idea of the intimate relationship between the Buddha and the one wishing to achieve enlightenment.

But there is more, since elsewhere, in a commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra, Kūkai states:

> Kaji used to mean that which the buddhas protect and preserve, and was also called *kahi* [receiving a divine power], but these interpretations do not yet get at its full implications. *Ka* receives its name because [the Buddha's three secret functions] are added from upward to downward to that of man. *Ji* has its significance by virtue of man's holding on to the Buddha's downward guiding [of sentient beings] without separation. That is, [kaji] means "I enter [the Buddha] and [the Buddha] enters me.[396]

There is more to kaji then than the incorporation of protective power. As Yuasa points out interpreting the concept in this way is limited and its significance is not sufficiently clear. Kaji is about an interpenetrating of the activities of each so that the karmic actions are transformed into the actions of the three mysteries. Presupposed then is the experience of cultivation to which I shall explore shortly.[397]

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[394] Krummel, 'Kūkai', p.10—1

[395] Kūkai, 'Sound, word, and reality', *KMW*, p. 235

[396] Kūkai 'Dainichikyō Kaidai' (Introduction to the Mahavairocana Sūtra) in *Chosaku zenshū* Vol. 2, p. 519, Cited in Yuasa, *The Body: Towards an Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, trans. Nagatomo Shigenori and ed. T. P. Kasulis Albany: SUNY Press, 1987 p. 152.

[397] Yuasa, *The Body*, p. 153

Furthermore, as Krummel points out, the two central teachings of Kūkai— hosshin seppō and *sokushinjôbutsu*—are the means by which this connection is achieved. Thus

> the Buddha's hosshin seppō on the one hand descends from the summit and spreads out from the center, and the practitioner's *sokushinjôbutsu* on the other hand raises him from below and gravitates him to the center. Their simultaneity means their non-duality as different aspects of the same dynamism of a cosmic emptiness. To realise this, is to affirm one's own original enlightenment in one's present body in simultaneous reception of *Dainichi*'s expounding of the *Dharma*.[398]

While we must acknowledge the much greater sense of equality and identity between the Buddha and the practitioner of enlightenment (since the Buddha is understood to be the phenomenal world) than is to be found between the human and God (which holds definitively to the divine initiative in terms of the human ability to respond, even while recognising its capacity to do so), nevertheless, in Eriugena's position, we find that theophany seems to require the 'other-than-God'(created being) for it to happen. Thus we can understand this as one dynamic event just as there is a simultaneity in Kūkai's rendition that suggests a nonduality (as we can note from Krummel's description). For both Eriugena and Kūkai, then, we can say that the two movements are merely two aspects of the same dynamic.

Eriugena proceeds with his description of theophany by using the image of sunlight and air to describe what is happening in this process of enlightening the human person:

> [J]ust as air illuminated by the sun appears to be nothing else but light, not because it loses its own nature, but because the light prevails in it so that it is believed itself to be light, so human nature when it is united with God is said to be God through and through, not because it ceases to be (its own) nature

[398] Krummel, 'Kūkai', p. 20

> but because it receives a share in Divinity so that only God appears to be in it.[399]

He goes on to say, however, that what we see is not God in Godself but God as theophany, and in this way he again preserves this sense of distance, not between creator and created, but between God as essence and as manifestation. Through our bodies, now having the capacity to see differently, and in all bodies around us we see the divine itself. Thus, on the one hand, all is suffused with the holy, while on the other hand we now have the eyes to see and all that we see is holiness itself. Eriugena cites Job in this regard who declares "even in my flesh I shall see God."

Once again we can find a parallel with Kūkai's concept of *kaji* both in terms of the imagery used and with regard to the sentiment expressed. Having spoken of the compassion of the Buddha and the faith of the sentient being Kūkai elaborates:

> The compassion of the Buddha pouring forth on the heart of the sentient beings, like the rays of the sun on water, is called *ka* [adding], and the heart of sentient beings which keeps hold of the compassion of the Buddha, as water retains the rays of the sun, is called *ji* [retaining].[400]

Eriugena's metaphors of sun and air, and Kūkai's images of sun and water suggest a very strong sense of identification between the expression of ultimate reality and the one attaining enlightenment. Here also is the strong positive sense of the human person in Kūkai's understanding in so far as the human can only respond (is able to retain) because of the innate presence in it of the three mysteries, the *honnu sammitsu*, which are united with the Three Mysteries of Dainichi. What is being referred to here is the notion of *hongaku*—original enlightenment considered to be innate in every human being, as one commentator put it: 'When enlightenment is actualized, one realises that it is identical to "original enlightenment," the mind of

[399] Eriugena borrows this image from Maximus the Confessor

[400] Kūkai, 'Attaining Enlightenment', *KMW*, p. 232.

suchness that one possessed all along.'[401] Hakeda emphasises that the human can only achieve enlightenment here and now because of *hongaku*, that unless one is enlightened from the very start, one has no way of reaching enlightenment. Hakeda goes on to point out that this was not a naïve optimistic view on the part of Kūkai: he was clearly aware of the human tendency towards 'evil karma' but believed that original enlightenment could still be perceived 'through the veils of evil karma.'[402]

This belief in the innate capacity of the human person is expressed in 'The Difference'. Here Kūkai makes the point that the esoteric teachings—being the teachings of the Cosmic Buddha / the *Dharmakāya* itself—are beyond the ordinary person's comprehension. They are even beyond those in the final stages of the Ten Stages and, in effect, are available only to those who have reached the 'result of enlightenment'. However, Kūkai does give the impression that remaining at this level is not the end.

When he describes those caught in exoteric teachings as being like 'rams butting against a hedge [in which they have ensnared their horns]' or 'blocked by the barriers of the expedient', by the provisional Mahayana teachings, it is obvious that they have given up advancing any further.[403] They wish to remain in an illusory city. As a result such people cannot see, for instance, references in the various sutras and commentaries to the fact that the *Dharmakāya* actually preaches. As far as Kūkai is concerned these people do not have the capacity to go further since 'the same water may be seen as emerald by heavenly beings and as burning fire by hungry ghosts': the same darkness may be seen as light by nocturnal birds and as darkness by

[401] Jacqueline I Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2003, p. 6. Kūkai is considered to be the first to introduce this concept into Japanese philosophy. His brand of the *hongaku* is drawn from the Treatise interpreting the Mahayana—Nagarjuna's commentary on the Awakening of Faith—which posited a middle term, 'nondual Mahayana' that subsumed the inseparable but somewhat opposing ideas of 'mind as suchness' and mind as arising and perishing'. Kūkai identified this teaching with esoteric thought. See also p. 11.

[402] Hakeda, 'Introduction', *KMW*, p. 6—7

[403] Kūkai, 'The Differences', *Shingon Texts*, p. 18

[human beings].'[404] And yet, Kūkai claims that it is possible to go further, saying that 'if men and women once grasp the fragrance of this [Esoteric Buddhism], they will have in their minds a clear understanding, as things are reflected in the mirror of the Emperor of Ch'in'[405]

B. The issue of praxis

Going further involves a different kind of knowing, and so Kūkai turns to more symbolic forms of expression, which are ultimately about praxis. He is adamant that engaging in such ritual practices as reciting mantras, making the appropriate mudras, as well as the visualisations attached to the mandalas are central to the quest of reaching enlightenment—to realising one's nonduality with the dharma. Such engagement enables one to align one's own behaviour with that of the Buddha's self-expression. This unlocks 'an unseen dimension of one's own spiritual potential' resulting in the various bodies all coalescing in 'a multilayered texture of meaning.' This makes one's body 'the avenue for accessing the sacred.'[406]

Krummel describes the process of interaction as an inter-permeating one between the three mysteries of hosshin seppō and the three corresponding activities of the practitioner. In this way, these activities are 'already expressions of the three mysteries of the hosshin, making the inter-permeation '"always already"'. All that is lacking for its realisation is our awareness of this truth. Thus, Kūkai prescribes the ritual practices, and enlightenment is realised in 'one's own embodied dynamism of bodily, verbal, and mental acts'. In other words, through using all the faculties of one's embodied existence the human 'is led via *kaji* to comprehend the *Dharma*, not merely conceptually but through one's body-and-mind.' Due to the mirroring of the macrocosmic reality in the microcosmic of the human we have *nyugo ganyu*—the

[404] Kūkai, 'The Differences', *KMW*, p. 154

[405] Kūkai, 'The Differences', *KMW*, p. 153. See also *Shingon Texts*, p. 17—18

[406] See Mark L. Blum, 'Buddhist Traditions: Overview' in Heisig, et al, (eds.), *Japanese Philosophy: A Source book*, p.47

Buddha enters me and I enter the Buddha. As one's mind becomes enlightened and one's body becomes "adamantine", one attains Buddhahood.[407]

By engaging in those practices in a ritualistic format (the rituals associated with body, speech, and mind) the human person achieves immediate insight into the nature of the universe. As Kasulis expresses it: 'By introspection on the nature of their own thoughts, words, and deeds, the Shingon Buddhist is said to achieve insight into the thoughts, words, and deeds of the Buddha, *Dainichi*.' Thus, his schema suggests that by understanding oneself, one understands the person that is all of reality.[408] This is what enlightenment or attaining Buddhahood is about.

This notion of introspection raises the issue of body and mind, which is also linked by scholars such as Yuasa to theories on cultivation. While body mind duality is not to be found in Eastern thinking, and the term bodymind has been coined to express the unity of the thinking, primacy is given to the body. This is so also for Kūkai. Kūkai regards a Shingon cultivator as one who practices esoteric Buddhism. At the outset of 'The Ten Stages (which is adapted from The Mahāvairocana Sūtra) Kūkai says that he will 'reveal the process through the stages of the mind for a cultivator of the Shingon approach.'[409] Here Kūkai is concerned with (as Yuasa points out)how the theoretical organisation of these stages —the theory—emerges out of the experience of developing one's personhood via the process of cultivation. While Kūkai creates a kind of hierarchy of value with regard to these different stages, culminating in the penultimate stage of Shingon Buddhism, his purpose is not to engage in a theoretical debate to determine the superiority of any particular system of thought; rather it is to point out that the meaning of the different levels is made

[407] Krummel, 'Kūkai', p. 20—1. Adamantine implies that all forms of clinging are destroyed leading to the radical nonattachment that is nirvana, just as diamond shatters all other minerals.

[408] Thomas Kasulis, 'Japanese Philosophy' in E. Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, London: Routledge, 1998, Online Available HTTP: <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article /G100SECT3> (Accessed 26 October 2010)

[409] Cited in Yuasa, *The Body*, p. 130

intelligible as the cultivator progresses on his or her path of personal religious experience.[410]

Kūkai's central teaching—the *Dharma* body expounds the *Dharma*— as we have noted already highlights how the ultimate cosmic remote Buddha Dainichi does communicate, and does so as the universe. In terms of Kūkai's particular cultivation theory then, the cultivator hears the cosmic Buddha's voice when he or she is turned towards the mind's interior. In a poem entitled 'Wandering in the Mountains Longing for a Mountain Sage, Kūkai writes: 'Who is called Mahāvairocana? From the start, it is the king of my mind.'[411] The absolute *Dharma* body who usually sits in the centre of the mandala map of esoteric Buddhism is here equated with one's mind. The question then becomes how this is linked to the notion of the body for Kūkai.

In a work written on his return from China Kūkai wrote: 'If you direct your *mind* to the Exoteric teaching, it will take three kalpas [eons], [but] if you keep your *body* in the Esoteric treasury [of teachings], the lives of the sixteen [is attainable] instantaneous[ly].[412] Kūkai does not seem to be interested only in the quickness of achieving enlightenment but the juxtaposing of body with esoteric, (while juxtaposing the mind with exoteric) emphasises the priority of the body for Kūkai. This priority of the body rather than speed of attaining enlightenment is also emphasised in expressions that he uses in his teaching 'Attaining Enlightenment'.[413] For instance, he cites Nagarjuna's *Aspiration to Enlightenment* where it says: 'If seeking after the Buddha Wisdom, a man penetrates into the enlightened mind

[410] Yuasa, *The Body*, pp.130-1. Yuasa makes the point here, using examples, that in Indian Mahayana Buddhism the tendency is firstly to sort out the stages of cultivation for enhancing one's religious awareness. See pp. 131-2

[411] Cited in Yuasa, *The Body*, p. 133

[412] Cited in Yuasa, *The Body*, p. 148

[413] It is interesting to note that Yuasa translates Sokushinjôbutsugi as: 'The significance of becoming a Buddha in this very body.' See p. 149

(bodhicitta), he will quickly realize great Buddhahood in the very body given him by his parents.'[414]

The link between the idea of cultivation and the body is brought out more clearly in the third line of the summary verse in 'Attaining Enlightenment': 'When the grace of the three mysteries is retained, [our inborn three mysteries will] quickly be manifested.'[415] Having previously explored the idea of *kaji* here I want simply to highlight the link with cultivation. While grace originally expressed the Buddha's protection, a kind of mysterious power, Kūkai seems to say that this is not enough. One must by cultivation reach the state where one can receive or realise this power. What this ultimately means is that one can recognise the world as it truly is—the vision of the world hidden beneath the everyday experience—when one has been engaged in cultivation practices. Kūkai is clear here in suggesting that it is the body —which is the vehicle of the cultivation practices— rather than the mind that takes precedence. As Yuasa points out 'cultivation corrects the mind's mode of being by first placing the body into a "Form," enabling the mind to be directed towards the base of the body' and so 'disclose the body's invisible ground—the 'location' where the world in its true state, is visible.[416] In other words, the mind or consciousness in the ordinary way of being regulates the activities of the body. Now this order is reversed.

An important aspect of cultivation and its relation to the bodymind concerns the notion of eros. Eros can be taken to represent the various delusions that come under the concept of *kleśa*. Specifically, Kūkai sees cultivation as an inwardly oriented practice that enables the practitioner to 'break through the darkness of *kleśa* symbolized by eros.' Simultaneously, 'a light radiates from beyond this darkness, and the cosmic energy issuing from the metaphysical dimension flows into the self

[414] Kūkai, 'Attaining Enlightenment' *KMW*, p. 227

[415] Kūkai, 'Attaining Enlightenment' *KMW*, p. 227. We have previously discussed this in terms of *kaji*.

[416] Yuasa, The Body, p. 154

and fills it.' [417] Eros however can be seen as a paradox, a source of delusion but also an aid. Thus it is not a case of suppressing eros but of sublimating, and so eros can also guide the cultivator to the Buddha world.[418]

Eriugena on the other hand has emphasised mind over body. Yet his theory of the body offers an interesting kind of paradox. He held that the body emerged from incorporeal qualities which the soul, by thinking them and synthesizing them, creates into a body for itself. If this is how Eriugena saw the body is it just an illusion? This responds to the ontological question: what is the nature of the body and of the body soul complex? In a sense Kūkai does not engage with questions regarding the nature of things to the same degree; as with East Asian thinking he is responding more particularly to questions of how the body functions and how body and soul relate to each other. To that degree we can also approach this question with regard to Eriugena, since implied in Eriugena's notion of the body being the result of incorporeal qualities can be understood an opportunity to come to salvation/enlightenment. The question therefore I address is how the body functions in the process of reaching enlightenment or coming to salvation for Eriugena and for Kūkai.

Ultimately Eriugena argues for the idea that the mind creates the body and indeed the entire sensible universe as a mode of self-expression. He does this by mirroring it with the idea of the divine creating the world to manifest itself as found in the Doctrine of the Trinity. He also positions this notion of the body as the creation of

[417] Yuasa, *The body*, p. 151

[418] Yet in Kūkai's understanding of achieving enlightenment with this very body' what is promoted is the very thing that keeps one in the state of samsara, that is the source of pollutants. It is now becoming enlightened. According to David Buchman, in a paper comparing aspects of Buddhism and of Islam particularly Sufi, (where he compares the doctrine that enlightenment occurs "with this very body", with the related Islamic notions of God, the universe, and perfect human (insan kamil), and argues that Shingon Buddhism and Islam have similar notions of existence and the goal of being human), Kūkai gives a powerful expression to the Vajrayana School view that all aspects of samsara are potentially positive supports that lead to nirvana. They are not in opposition to nirvana. There are not two realities as in Theravada Buddhist understanding. D. Buchman, 'Shingon Buddhism and Islam: Similar Notions of Existence and the Goal of Being Human', Online Available HTTP: <http://www.mullasadra.org/new_site/english/Paper%20Bank/ Comparative%20Studies /David% 20 Buchman.htm>

the mind in the context of the Christian Doctrine of the Fall which suggests a certain ambiguity about the material world. However, it ultimately allows for a positive view of the body and materiality generally as the means by which humans return to God.

Firstly, then in terms of the trinity the super essential divinity becomes its own cause in the first person (the Father) and creates itself in the Word (the primordial causes), and these causes, which are in an undifferentiated mode in the Word are distributed or broken up into a multiplicity of effects via the role of the Spirit. In a commentary on the opening lines of the Book of Genesis and the role of the Spirit Eriugena says 'For what is to be understood by the Spirit of God fermenting, fertilizing (and) nourishing the waters of the primordial causes except the distribution and ordering of those things which in the Word are made simply, as of one form and one (substance), into the differences of all the genera (and) species, and wholes [and] parts and individuals?'[419] In that sense from the perspective of causality 'the Trinity exteriorizes itself in the multiplicity of individual effects.'[420] Eriugena compares this causal understanding of the Trinity with what he terms the human trinity of intellect, reason and sense: 'For the likeness of the Father shines forth most clearly in the intellect, that of the Son in the reason, that of the Holy Spirit in the sense.' These are for Eriugena the three movements of the soul. In that context Eriugena goes on to say [in the person of the Alumnus]:

> We do not doubt but that the trinity of our nature, which is not the image of God but is made in the image of God,…*is* not only created out of nothing *but also* creates the senses which are subjoined to it, and the instruments of the senses and the whole of its body—I mean this mortal (body)… For, by the action of the soul, which cements together the incorporeal qualities [and] takes [from quantity] as it were a kind of substrate [for these qualities] and places it under (them) it creates for itself a body in which she may openly

[419] *Periphyseon*, II:563c-d

[420] Rosemann, 'Causality as Concealing Revelation in Eriugena' p. 659

> display her hidden actions (which) in themselves (are) invisible, and bring (them) forth into sensible knowledge.[421]

Just as the divine creates the phenomenal world as the means of expressing the divine essence, so it would seem the soul creates the body as a means of expressing its inner reality. However, Eriugena talks about the mortal body in the context of original sin and the notion of the Fall, suggesting that it is the result of sin. At first glance this idea indicates a certain ambiguity around the notion of body and the material world generally. However, it might be better described in a dialectical sense rather than an ambiguous sense as a passage from the fourth book illustrates where a wise and foolish person, upon being offered a vessel of pure gold, are affected very differently and subsequently respond differently: 'The wise man by a simply mental process entirely refers its beauty, the *phantasia* of which he ponders within himself, to the glory of the Creator of natures.' He is not enticed by its beauty and adversely affected. On the other hand the greedy person, on absorbing the *phantasia* of the vessel, 'blazes with the fire of cupidity' is consumed, poisoned and dies.[422] In that way we can understand this as Eriugena ultimately allowing human beings the choice to respond to the reality as we find it.

These notions are built upon Eriugena's understanding of sin as a turning in on oneself and away from others or the 'Other'. Rosemann translates Eriugena's expression '*ad se ipsum conuersus*' as suggesting that sin can be understood as 'excessive self-reflexivity'.[423] As Rosemann further points out, original sin is not a historical event but rather is a 'structure deeply inscribed in human existence, although not in human nature as such.'[424] The primary consequence of this turning in on oneself is the creation of the material body. Eriugena claims that human nature would have been free of the limitations of 'the animal, earthly, and corruptible body'

[421] *Periphyseon*, II:580b—c

[422] See *Periphyseon*, IV: 828b—c

[423] 'prius enim, ut arbitror, ad se ipsum quam ad deum conuersus est ac ideo lapsus'. See 582c

[424] Rosemann 'Causality as Concealing revelation in Eriugena' p. 662—3

if it had not sinned. These were added to human nature as external to it at the time of its creation on account of its sin.[425] Metaphysically Eriugena understands the impact of sin and the Fall as resulting in the loss of the unity of human nature. Not only human nature but all of nature loses its simplicity or unity, however, as a result of the Fall. In other words the essences of everything 'descend' into the multiplicity and transitory sense of the material effects.[426]

In order to see how the material reality offers both possibility and danger we need to ask why it is that the Fall results in the creation of physicality. We can understand sin – the excessive self-reflexivity — as a closing of one's eyes to one's true nature as a creature. This sense is returned via the material body which is what enables the human to turn back to its Creator. In that sense the material world is both blessing and curse, possessing 'a twofold ambiguous character, being at once a temptation and a sign'. The attractions of the world can cast a spell on the human being to the point where he or she forgets his or her creaturely status. For Eriugena human nature is ultimately an idea in the mind of God, whose essence is unfathomable. On the other hand we can see through the material appearances and realise the depth dimension of all reality. Thus the material world —including our mortal bodies— just is: we have a choice as to how we may respond to it. This can be about seeing it as the means of a return to God—seeing it as a theophanic expression—or engaging with it as the occasion of sin. Ecologically speaking this raises the issue of enoughness.

[425] See *Periphyseon*, IV: 807d—808a. Eriugena in this regard claims that the division of the sexes is also a consequence of sin, since this indicates a division of human simplicity, something enjoyed 'prior' to the Fall. See *Periphyseon* IV: 799a—b

[426] See *Periphyseon*, II: 584a-b where Eriugena says that 'everything mortal that is seen to be in this sensible world, being both fragile and transitory, is either made by ourselves when we are led astray by our irrational motions or is permitted to be made on account of our sin, for use and example in our mortal life, whether by the good powers who minister to us <and lead us to perfection> or by the evil powers who hinder our natural course from reaching its proper end which is appointed after certain times.' It must be stated here that we are not talking of two creations. The exteriorisation of the Trinity in the multiplicity of created things, and the idea of the process of self-creation of the human via the intellect descending into reason and the senses are two perspectives on one reality, indicating as Rosemann argues for, a close parallelism between divine and human self-creation.

While nowhere in Eriugena's *Periphyseon* do we get direct evidence of engaging in any form of practices that would lead to deeper insights into the nature of reality, Eriugena does talk of *theoria*—the intellectual contemplation of reality—as a means to the ultimate goal of union with the divine. Extrapolating from his Neoplatonic outlook and his mystical background, we could perhaps speculate with a degree of safety that he would have engaged in some form of meditative practices leading to the kind of insight suggested by the Latin contemplation or the Greek *theoria*. As B. Alan Wallace points out, both these terms concern 'a total devotion to revealing, clarifying, and making manifest the nature of reality.' While the concept of contemplation for us today means thinking about something, its original meaning had to do with directly perceiving reality: it was 'an experiential means for gaining direct, contemplative insight into the nature of reality.'

However such insight was not achieved via the senses or even by thinking, but by mental perception, which is the direct observation of one's thoughts and action.[427] This focus on awareness of oneself however does not occur in a vacuum: since one is in constant relation with one's environment, then awareness of self necessarily involves awareness of the various relations one is engaged in at any given moment. Contemplation was aided by the process of meditation, which involved a training of the mind to cultivate an understanding of reality. Alfred Siewers refers to this as a process of experiential mindfulness,[428] which can be understood as a means of preparing oneself to see reality in a certain way (as divine manifestation).

Nishitani alludes to this notion of seeing reality in a particular way in his discussion of his conception of religion, which he defines as 'the *real* self-awareness of

[427] B. Alan Wallace, *Mind in the Balance: Meditation in Science, Buddhism, and Christianity*, Columbia University Press, 2009, pp. 7-8, 15. Plotinus believed contemplation to be the 'single thread' that makes possible the unity of the One with all things, a notion that inspired Evagrius of Pontus whose disciple John Cassian 'adapted his works for his Western students'. See p. 11. Cassian's influence is found among the early monastic movement in Ireland where Eriugena would have been educated.

[428] Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p. 27

reality.'[429] By this notion he means the simultaneous acts of 'our becoming aware of reality' and 'reality realising itself in our awareness'. Our ability to perceive reality implies reality comes to actuality in us. This is not a theoretical knowledge, he notes, but a real appropriation that embraces the whole of the person—mind and body. Such an appropriation is what gives us our essential determination—makes us truly real. Thus '[t]he real perception of reality is our real mode of being itself and constitutes the realness that is the true reality of our existence….the self-realisation of reality can only take place by causing our existence to become truly real.'

Nishitani goes on to explore what can be meant by reality, noting that there are multiple realities depending on the standpoint of the viewer. The 'real' that he wishes to expound upon (and the one that both Kūkai and Eriugena are concerned about with regard to the true nature of reality) is altogether different from the everyday standpoint or the natural science standpoint. He comes to explore this having first introduced death and nihility, pointing out that all life and existence come to seem as unreal in the face of these notions. Quoting a passage from Dostoevsky's *The House of the Dead* where the author—who is in prison at that point—is, as part of his prison duty, carrying bricks by the bank of a river when he is suddenly so awestruck by the ordinary scene around him that he later describes it as the only spot from which he sees 'God's world' and is able to forget his 'wretched self.' While the things the author focuses on, are ordinary everyday sights—a woman tending sheep, a poor hut, a bird in flight—the 'intense concentration' with which he focuses on them is no ordinary occurrence nor is it the result of scientific or philosophical speculation. Nishitani comments that:

> Things that we are accustomed to speak of as real forced their reality upon him [Dostoevsky] in a completely different dimension. He saw the same real things we all see, but the significance of their realness and the sense of the real in them are something altogether qualitatively different. Thus was he able to forget his wretched self and to open his eyes to "God's world."

[429] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, p. 5. Masao Abe translates this as 'real self-realisation of reality.' See Abe, 'Nishitani's challenge to Philosophy and Theology,' in Taitesu Unno (ed.) The *Religious Philosophy of Nishitani Keiji*, Berkeley, California: Asian Humanities Press, 1989, p.14

While this 'remarkable sensibility' may have been connected to the deprivation of freedom resulting from prison life, Nishitani argues that acquiring such sensibility is within the remit of each of us.[430]

Both Eriugena and Kūkai seem to suggest this kind of experience of the real when they talk of theophany and of the Dharmakāya expounding the *Dharma*. It is the sacred reality, the most real, reality. Where they differ however, is also clear: In Eriugena there is a much greater focus on a kind of conceptual understanding than on the more holistically bodymind orientation that is emphasised by Kūkai. In fact, Kūkai is adamant that conceptual understanding alone does not suffice in one's efforts to reach enlightenment. As Yasuo Yuasa points out 'Kūkai insisted that the substance of religion should be understood not through letter and doctrine intellectually, but through religious experiences…in man's soul.'[431] One requires a more integrated kind of engagement with reality. Hence Kūkai stresses the three aspects of body, mind, and speech, and, as many commentators suggest, the emphasis is on an embodied engagement.

C. The human within the context of the world/universe:

Eriugena gives the human a pivotal position in his overall scheme, highlighting the *imago Dei* aspect of human being as found in the Genesis story. Because of that, and to glean a more complete understanding of Eriugena's notion of humanity, there is great need to emphasise his efforts to embed the human in the wider context of *natura*. Otten emphasises this point when she says that studying the human being within the overall framework of the *Periphyseon*, 'one will find that man cannot be isolated as a creature of independent status', but 'functions as a vital and integrated part of the whole complex of *natura*.'[432]

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[430] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, pp. 6—9

[431] Yasuo Yuasa, 'Religious Tradition in Japan.' (From a manuscript of a lecture on National Culture and World Peace,' at Seoul, Korea, 1976, cited in David E. Shaner, *The Bodymind Experience of Japanese Buddhism: A Phenomenal Study of Kūkai and Dōgen*, Albany: State University of New York, 1985, p.78

[432] Otten, *The Anthropology of John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 3

There is, then, a dual understanding of human nature in Eriugena's system: on the one hand he emphasises its universality or mirroring of all things and, on the other, its uniqueness or exclusive link with the divine. Through the use of his dialectic method Eriugena here highlights the presence of what are seen to be two contradictory aspects of human nature: The human is animal and not animal, spiritual and not spiritual, and in this regard mirrors the divine nature.[433] The human belongs to the corporeal world of the animal and to the spiritual realm of the divine.

In Book IV Eriugena defines humanity as 'a certain intellectual concept formed eternally in the divine mind'.[434] Even though this definition suggests a link with the intellect or non-corporeal, because all things are ideas in the divine mind, such a definition instead emphasises humanity's link with the rest of reality. This, in turn, suggests a view of the human as a microcosm of the universe. While Eriugena endorses this link, he rejects the idea of the human as a microcosm since it does not adequately account for its uniqueness. Instead, quoting Gregory of Nyssa, he opts for a definition that offers the possibility of uniqueness: 'the greatness of man lies not in his likeness to the created world but in the fact that he is created according to the image of the Creator of nature.'[435] This strong sense of the human as *imago Dei* tends to give an initial impression of separating the human from the rest of created being (as it certainly does) and in the process we can see how it might devalue the rest of reality—a point, as we have seen, raised with regard to Christianity by many writers concerned with ecological issues. Yet, when we recall Eriugena's emphasis on the 'One' that characterises his Neoplatonic inheritance, we can understand that there is ultimately no separation or division in reality, even while certain aspects appear to be valued more highly than others.

Eriugena speaks of a mediator role for human nature, describing it as the 'workshop of all things.' He declares that the human 'by a certain and intelligible division…is

[433] See *Periphyseon* IV

[434] *Periphyseon* VI:768b

[435] *Periphyseon*, IV:794a

divided into two parts, in one of which he is created in the image and likeness of the Creator, and participates in no animality…while in the other he communicates with the animal nature and was produced out of the earth...'[436] Thus, human nature contains elements from the corporeal and intelligible worlds. While much is made of human nature's mirroring of divine nature, as part of that mirroring the human also mirrors all other created things. In that regard it is through the human that all else unfolds and returns to the One.[437] Human nature is 'wholly in the wholeness of the whole created nature, seeing that in it every creature is fashioned, and in it all are linked together, and into it all shall return, and through it must all be saved.'[438]

Such a singularly exalted role for the human person— one that distinguishes him/her in such a unique way—is not to be found in Kūkai. This may be because the notion of interpenetration found in his system does not have any kind of ultimate future-oriented goal or teleology (apart from the focus on attaining enlightenment). Thus, there is no need for a role such as that played by the human in Eriugena's scheme—where it is through human nature that all other created nature unfolds and returns to the One. The primary emphasis in Kūkai's anthropology is to see humans as part of the whole of reality: a reality that is the Buddha *Dainichi* perpetually expressing himself for his own enjoyment. In that regard, Kūkai develops a whole-part theory of human nature where the human is integral to the whole. Humans are part of the phenomenal world which itself expresses ultimate reality in its fullness (unlike Eriugena where all is created/unfolded and gathered back into the supreme principle through the human being.) When, then, humans speak in a true manner they are not

[436] *Periphyseon*, IV:754a—b, 755b

[437] Otten in her study of the Eriugena's anthropology suggests that alongside the obvious treatment of human nature in the *Periphyseon* there is the presence of a more veiled understanding, one that influences the entire text. Again what emerges here is an extraordinary emphasis on the human as the centre of universal system developed by Eriugena. From the very outset Eriugena speaks of his overall schema as being divided into that which the mind can and cannot grasp. Thus 'the fundamental difference between being and nonbeing is based solely on the comprehensive capacities of the human mind.' In this regard Eriugena elevates human rationality to a very high place, being that by which the very concept of *natura* —a concept that stretches to infinity—is developed. See Otten, *Anthropology of John Scottus Eriugena*, especially Introduction.

[438] *Periphyseon*, IV: 760a

just referring to reality, but they are 'reality' expressing itself. They, like all phenomena, are the self-expression of reality.

Such a position, Kasulis notes, 'undermines any philosophical tendencies towards idealism' in Kūkai's thought.[439] This is in contrast to how Eriugena has been interpreted as a forerunner of idealism. It also highlights the lack of any hint of a mind-body dualism in Kūkai that one might get from the complex system found in Eriugena with regard to the two aspects of human nature (even though Eriugena is adamant that the human is a whole entity). Instead Kūkai develops the idea of bodymind which does not in any way divide human nature but instead exemplifies a radical nonduality.

Rather than speaking about the human person in terms of his/her role in the natural world Kūkai focuses on developing an understanding of the development of human consciousness. He thereby offers a unique understanding of the human person through *The Ten stages of the development of the Mind* and its shorter version *The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*.[440] Kūkai outlines ten stages in the progress of the human person towards enlightenment (considered to be a masterpiece in philosophical and religious thinking), which for him is adherence to Shingon theory and practice. Thus, the stages range from the 'goatish mind of lowly people, filled with desire', through various levels of enlightenment that include other religious expressions and the various exoteric Buddhist forms, to the final stage where the practitioner enters the Adamantine ground and the 'secret treasures are at once manifested and one realises all values.'[441] Thus within the triad of divine-human-

[439] Kasulis, 'Japanese Philosophy'. Kasulis also stresses that it undermines any form of realism or radical nominalism.

[440] These treatises have been variously described as an outline of the different Buddhist schools, an analysis of human consciousness, an expression of the philosophy of the mandala (understood to be the absolute equality of the phenomenal world with ultimate reality). See Philip L. Nicoloff, *Sacred Kōyasan: A pilgrimage to the Mountain Temple of Saint Kobo Daishi and the Great Sun Buddha,* New York: State University of New York Press, 2008, p. 67. Here I wish only to comment on how Kūkai speaks of the human person in these texts.

[441] See Kūkai, 'The Differences', *KMW*, pp. 163—4.

cosmic relations Eriugena emphasises the mediating role of the human, while Kūkai is more concerned with an evolutionary understanding of the person.

The dynamic interplay of this triadic structure as found in the philosophies of Eriugena and Kūkai have much to offer contemporary current religious discourse on ecological issues. Their emphasis on the oneness of reality with its inherent sense of mystery allows for a view of the world as being sacramental in the deepest and broadest sense of that word. We can perhaps reinterpret Eriugena's insertion of the human (and his/her relationships with the divine) within the broader context of *natura* as an example of a kind of cosmic creation story that contemporary Christian thought needs to re-imagine for itself. Kūkai's sense of the world as *Dainichi* expressing himself for his own enjoyment allows us to view nature just as it is. We are drawn out into the world and there to meet the really real, what Nishitani calls true religion. The particular focus of Kūkai on integrating theory and praxis alongside Eriugena's notion of contemplation or theoria allows for a rich and total engagement with the world as a whole.

Chapter 4: Ecological Connections

I. A Twofold approach

Two related approaches will focus the discussion of linking the dialogue to ecologically oriented understandings of more contemporary thought. What is being argued is that such thought reflects notions of reality similar to the two medieval thinkers. The first approach considers the overall nature of reality as it emerges in Kūkai and Eriugena, and how that might contribute to an ecological ethic relevant for our times. By ethical here I mean the more holistic notion that is implied in the Greek term *ethos*. Initially *ethos* meant a kind of place or abode and only later did it come to mean custom or habit. Thus the scope of the word extended beyond ethics narrowly understood to include, in the expression of Mark Manolopoulos, 'our inhabitation in creation.'[442] The concept of ethos engages all of human existence and not just particular actions. This distinction is reflected also in. Cooper and James argue that there has been a revival in this form of ethics, suggesting that contemporary understandings of virtue ethics reflects a form that was central to ancient and medieval Christian ethical discussion.[443]

Moreover this distinction brings to mind Eriugena's notion of sin and disobedience in his interpretation of the Christian story of the Fall and expulsion from Eden. For him lack of obedience had to do with a lack of wonder and listening to the larger Divine Nature, the larger Whole.[444] In reflecting on East-Asian philosophical and

[442] M. Manolopoulos, *If Creation is a Gift*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009, p.107. Here Manolopoulos draws on Heidegger's etymological work concerning ethics and ethos. However, as Bruce Foltz points out, beyond the etymological correctness what is more important is that 'Heidegger's understanding of the ethical recovers the original scope of ethics, retrieving it from the narrowness of the modern conception of ethics as a theory of moral obligation that concerns only certain sorts of questionable actions, and that leaves the remainder of human existence drifting in the realm of the arbitrary.' See B. Foltz, *Inhabiting the Earth: Heidegger, Environmental Ethics, and the Metaphysics of Nature*, New York: Humanity Books, 1995, p. 168

[443] David E. Cooper and Simon James, *Buddhism, Virtue & Environment*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005, p. 1. In this book the authors claim that a distinctive Buddhist contribution to environmental ethics is best grounded in its form of virtue ethics.

[444] See Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p. 73

religious traditions (especially Confucianism and Buddhism) within the context of human induced global climate change, Graham Parkes argues that driving the 'current insanity' is a 'lack of awe and humility in the face of the wonders of the world.'[445] Ultimately, what is at issue is the cultivation of a way of living, and in the initial inquiry in this chapter the exploration is about a view of reality that would lead to an attitude of respect and reverence for the whole of the phenomenal world.

Such a view of reality is to be found in the philosophical systems of Eriugena and Kūkai: for Kūkai the phenomenal world is the cosmic Buddha, Dainichi Nyorai, and for Eriugena it is the manifestation of the Divine. This suggests that both their cosmological understandings indicate a sense of the numinous at the heart of all things. The phenomenal world is by no means an inert objective reality, as instanced by Eriugena's positing of the notion of creation as manifesting the hidden transcendent realm. While Kūkai's religious philosophy does not endorse any kind of absolute transcendence, his immanental approach to reality allows for a certain equivocation or tension in his understanding of reality, which in turn suggests the numinous in all things. These ideas, with their intimations of mystery, can also be understood in more secular terms as highlighting a sense of 'otherness' or alterity in reality. It is abundantly clear however in both Eriugena and Kūkai that such alterity needs to be understood in the context of the overriding notion of the interrelatedness of all things. The primary emphasis must remain the unity and oneness of reality. The entire dissertation is built on the notion of this unity as a central focus in the lesser known streams of thought found in the mainstream traditions that I am exploring. The notion of alterity explored then is understood to be firmly within this overall unity. In a sense what I am talking about can best be described using the image of a matrix.

At the same time recognising this understanding of alterity offers the possibility of a more respectful attitude towards the world of nature since it emphasises the depth dimension in all things, and in the process it deemphasises nature as object and

[445] G. Parkes, 'Awe and Humility in the Face of Things,' *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 4:3, 2012, p. 70

resource for human use. In that way it offers a possible basis for an ecological ethic. Such an understanding has possible parallels in more contemporary philosophical literature, particularly in phenomenology.[446] In order to explore this notion more fully, I draw on such thought in phenomenology as ecological interpretations of the later writings of Merleau-Ponty. In particular I explore how Toadvine interprets ideas in Merleau-Ponty that focus on what I have been referring to as the depth-dimension of reality. More specifically Toadvine looks at Merleau-Ponty's use of the concept *il y a*. I suggest that there are parallels here with the numinous in all things. Moreover, my contention is that these ideas are also reflected in the understandings of givenness and gift found in the phenomenology of Jean-Luc Marion. Such notions, with their religious overtones are, I argue, appropriate in the context of exploring religious contributions to responding to the ecological crisis.

Secondly, I focus more particularly on the notion of subjectivity in relation to the human person. By this I mean an understanding of the human as the one who perceives and ultimately engages with the world it inhabits. What does it mean to talk of the human person in this way? What does subjectivity mean? There is considerable emphasis on the role of the human subject in Eriugena, in fact the human person is considered central to his philosophical system. There is a sense in which his entire notion of *natura* is presented as the speculation of the human mind, and within that view of reality he emphasises the human role of mediation—the human person is the one through whom all things return to the One. At the same time, the human person's sense of himself or herself is as one who belongs within the larger context of *natura*. This is the ultimate framework for all aspects of reality. Moreover, in terms of achieving salvation or reaching enlightenment—what can be described in more general terms as coming to know reality as it really is—the human plays an active role in its own recognition of reality as theophanic expression. In participating in theophany the human person realises himself or herself. Kūkai's

[446] In a broader sense, and over two decades ago, Graham Parkes concurs when he points out 'that the European Continental tradition —and existentialism and phenomenology in particular— has developed philosophical terminologies that are far more in harmony with many strains of Asian thought than those of Anglo-American philosophy.' See G. Parkes, (ed.) *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987, p.6. Also, as I indicate presently, some recent phenomenological thought echoes the older apophatic tradition to which Eriugena belongs.

philosophy, on the other hand, with its whole-part theory of human nature and its notion of the human as a microcosmic expression of the whole, suggests a clearly integrated sense of the human subject. At the same time, Kūkai also endorses a strongly positive sense of the human as agent, highlighted particularly in his belief in the human capacity to reach enlightenment, an understanding that gives to the human subject a certain level of autonomy.

In neither Eriugena's nor Kūkai's case are we talking of understanding the human person in terms of the autonomous subject of modernity, where no cognisance is taken of the wider reality or of relationality being an integral aspect of human identity. Nor is it a case of the human disappearing into a kind of monistic oneness, without any sense of individuality and any role in achieving its own enlightenment. My suggestion is that echoes of the tension between the human as subject and as part of the larger reality found in both Eriugena and Kūkai, and expressed especially in its role of coming to an enlightened view of reality, are also to be found in contemporary phenomenological understandings of the notion of the subject. These understandings in turn provide a basis for cultivating a more ecological attitude in the human person with regard to the phenomenal world. In exploring a link with contemporary understandings I engage particularly in a critical appraisal of the notion of the human subject as found in Marion's phenomenology of givenness.

II. Some preliminary issues

Before turning to the specific issues in question it is necessary to make a very brief inquiry into what has been termed *tournant théologique* —'the theological turn'— in French phenomenology.[447] This turn concerns the emergence of a 'third form of

[447] Among the more important works of this new phenomenology are Dominique Janicaud et al, *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate,* New York: Fordham University Press, 2000; P. Jonkers, & R. Welten, (eds.), *God in France: Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God,* Leuven: Peeters, 2005; B. E. Benson, & N. Wirzba, (eds.), *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology* New York: Fordham University Press, 2010; J. A. Simmons, *God and the Other: Ethics and Politics After the Theological Turn* Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011. The term 'theological turn' to describe this development was used by Janicaud, who, in his efforts to emphasise that phenomenology and theology are separate, argued against such a notion. His essay is a critique of what he sees as perversions of the phenomenological method for theological ends. See *Phenomenology and the "theological Turn"* pp. 16-103. Many

phenomenology' distinguishable from 'Husserl's transcendental inquiry and from Heidegger's hermeneutic thinking.'[448] Such an inquiry provides the basis for my exploration, since this 'turn' takes account of the 'impossible' —understood as that which lays outside direct human experience —as well as the possible in terms of human experience. Secondly, because I draw on Marion's philosophical understanding in exploring both my approaches to making ecological connections (the nature of reality and the notion of subjectivity), it is helpful to outline his phenomenological method. This involves an understanding of his notion of givenness and his concept of the gift.[449] I begin with the turn in French phenomenology.

A. A turn in phenomenology

In a recent article Laszlo Tengelyi outlines the emergence of new forms of phenomenology in the 1960s, in response to a realization by a number of phenomenologists (including the later Merleau-Ponty and Marion) that certain special phenomena, such as the face, symbol, flesh, and life, resisted the more traditional phenomenological methods and techniques.[450] While these phenomena

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others, however, take a more nuanced approach. Felix Ó'Murchadha argues that the new phenomenology in France was inspired by theological and religious thinkers, which he claims is not surprising. Philosophical discourse must account for the appearing of things as well as describing things appearing, which is about 'the unapparent in appearance'. In attempting to do that, 'phenomenology comes very close to a mystical, religious or theological discourse.' See F. Ó'Murchadha, ' Philosophy of Religion and Theology' In Luft & Overgaard (eds.), *Routledge Companion to Phenomenology*, p.473

[448] L. Tengelyi 'New Phenomenology in France' *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 50:2, 2012, 297-8.

[449] These are most thoroughly expressed in what can be termed a trilogy of his philosophical texts: *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1998, trans. Thomas A. Carlson; *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky; and *In Excess: Studies of saturated phenomena*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2002, trans. Robyn Horner & Vincent Berraud. Marion wishes to push beyond Husserl and Heidegger in terms of the phenomenological method. In a sense he wants to 'complete' Husserl's claim to return to the things themselves by re-establishing the method on a new foundation.

[450] Marion refers to such types of phenomena as saturated. In exploring the kind of experiences that are not limited by the human mind's natural formatting —along the lines of the categories of Kant which are the conditions for the possibility of experience—he finds the premise for saturated phenomenon. He offers five types of saturated phenomena (event, idol, flesh, icon, and revelation)

differ from each other in many respects they all have in common the fact that they are 'indescribable, inapparent, deprived of phenomenalization.'[451] They seem to overflow the boundaries of their phenomenality.

The question that needed to be addressed was: if phenomenology concerned itself with the possible in the sense of that which lends itself to experience, how ought one to deal with that which cannot be grasped by direct experience? It was not a case of leaving behind phenomena altogether, even if the phenomena these thinkers were interested in 'showed the particularity of manifesting themselves only indirectly through traces and indications without appearing directly.' So, for instance, while 'the "flesh" of the world' might remain invisible it is still 'so to speak, the invisible of *this* world.' Moreover these thinkers came to realise that ultimately their concern was not just with special phenomena but with all phenomena—with 'the phenomenon as such,' and how phenomenologically we approach all phenomena.[452]

B. So much reduction, so much givenness

While Marion describes special phenomena as saturated phenomena, he also argues for the notion of excess in all phenomena, and in that sense is concerned with the phenomenological project as such. In *Reduction and Givenness*, he simply asserts his claim that 'a reduction to givenness means that all phenomena can be given in themselves and as themselves because such a reduction has an original 'absence of conditions and determinations.'[453] The conditions and determinations refer to the emphasis on objectivity and on the autonomy of the subject that he claims to find, to

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with the following figures as representative of each: the event, the painting, the flesh, the face and finally revelation. In describing them he follows and then inverts the Kantian categories. Thus he says: 'The saturated phenomenon will be described as invisible according to quantity, unbearable according to quality, absolute according to relation, and irregardable according to modality.' Being Given, p. 199

[451] Tengelyi, 'New Phenomenology in France', p. 299

[452] Tengelyi, 'New Phenomenology in France', p. 300

[453] Marion, *Reduction & Givenness*, p. 205

different degrees, in both Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenological methods. It is in *Being Given* that he develops his particular method.

Marion's claim is that in order to remain true to the phenomenological enterprise one must engage a third reduction or new principle, which he sums up as "so much reduction, so much givenness."[454] The English term 'givenness' translates the French *donation* and the German *Gegebenheit*. Marion here is pushing beyond the emphasis on the subject that is associated with modernity, which had the effect of either emphasising the objectivity of objects as in Husserl or the Being of beings as in Heidegger. In other words, he pushes through the horizons of consciousness and of being to reach what lies at their base: givenness itself, the fact that of every phenomenon whatever, the first thing that must be said is that it is "given". The fundamental structure of the world for Marion then is one of pure givenness.[455] To emphasise his position of pure givenness and a corresponding non-constituting subject he posits the notion of saturated phenomena. These are phenomena that are so saturated with intention that they cannot be limited or grasped by the constituting subject.[456] However he claims that the characteristics of saturated phenomena are also the characteristics of all phenomena—so in a sense all phenomena can be understood as saturated.

[454] Thomas Carlson translates this as 'as much reduction, as much givenness. See *In Excess*, p. x for his reason. It underlines the proportionality of the formula.

[455] It is interesting to note here that Marion's more theological ideas emerged in conjunction with his philosophy, and also that they reflect the apophatic tradition. While Marion wishes to maintain a distinction between his philosophy and his theology, Johannes Zachhuber notes some structural parallels between the two. 'Just as the positive truth about reality is revealed to phenomenological research only as the result of a process seemingly designed to reduce to immanence all outward layers of transcendence,' Zachhuber notes, 'so the theological truth of God as love becomes manifest only after the complete destruction of his idolatrous representations.' A primary consequence of this is that 'the radical otherness of God is revealed by careful attention to reality as it is—not by turning away from it.' This also reflects Eriugena's approach to ultimate reality. See J. Zachhuber 'Jean-Luc Marion and the Tradition of Negative Theology', Online. Available HTTP: < http://www.academia.edu/3074278/Jean-Luc_Marion_and_the_Tradition_of_Negative_Theology> (accessed 20 August 2013)

[456] These are chosen in relation to Kant's conditions of possibility. What Marion wants to show is that each saturated phenomenon in its own way exceeds these conditions of possibility. Thus the event is... etc. They are outlined in both *Being Given* and in *In Excess*.

In turning to the notion of the gift he asks: 'how are we to think givenness in such a way that it accomplishes the pure appearing of the phenomenon arising in person on the basis of nothing other than itself?' The way to do this is to introduce an understanding of givenness such that it 'determines all the primal phenomenological acts, and first of all the reduction.' His claim is that such a new model of givenness will come from the gift.[457] Marion wishes to criticise 'the standard model of gift' which he claims 'eliminates the gift.' This, in effect, boils down to a 'question of overcoming' two models—'the causal interpretation of givenness and the economic interpretation of gift'—which are one for Marion.[458] Gift within the metaphysical system is considered within 'the system of gifts exchanged', and in that system givenness is understood in terms of a giver, the gift given and a givee.[459] Contrary to Derrida, from whose work in this regard he draws heavily, Marion concludes that there is another line of argument that would allow for the gift not losing *itself.* [460] While Derrida sees the gift as impossible and ultimately never attainable, Marion concludes that we can see the notion of gift as an impossible possibility.[461]

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[457] *Being Given*, p.74

[458] *Being Given*, pp. 82, Marion begins by laying out the arguments found in Derrida's *Gift of Death* where Derrida critiques the metaphysical understanding of gift. Here givenness is understood in terms of a giver, the gift given and a givee, and this schema can be traced to the seminal work of Marcel Mauss: *Essay on the Gift*.

[459] This schema can be traced to the seminal work of Marcel Mauss, where gifts are considered within 'the system of gifts exchanged.' See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies*. London: Routledge, 1990 (1922).

[460]Marion like Derrida sees the gift as an aporia. However Derrida's conclusion, according to Marion, is that this model 'voids the gift of all givenness and its phenomenon vanishes.' See *Being Given*, pp.75-79.

[461]Much of his thinking, in this regard, stems from his interaction with his teacher and mentor Jacques Derrida and culminates in a debate between them held during the conference on "Religion and Postmodernism" at Villanova University in 1997. Derrida's position can be summed up as follows: though we intend the impossible (a gift, love, forgiveness, god etc.) on the basis of an undecidable trace, it can never be fulfilled since the impossible is totally other and can never be present or given in any way. Marion comes to a different conclusion, suggesting that while the impossible can never be objectively present it can still be given but only as a dazzling and overwhelming excess. Furthermore it cannot be comprehended or grasped by determinate concepts. In religious terms it is —God really given, but with such overwhelming excess, distance and otherness that he can be named only under erasure: God with o crossed out is how Marion expresses it. See 'On the Gift: A Discussion between Jacque Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion, Moderated by Richard Kearney in J. D. Caputo & M. J. Scanlon, (eds.) *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997, pp. 54—78 See also S. Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess: Jean-Luc Marion, saturated phenomena, and hermeneutics*, Fordham University Press, 2010, pp. 8—9.

Derrida's problem was that the gift in appearing would lose any notion of givenness: if the gift appears as gift, as present, and is recognised as such, then it no longer is gift.[462] Marion's argument however is that 'losing presence' (i.e. avoiding being frozen in present objectness) does not mean the gift loses *itself*. It simply loses 'what is not suited to it.'[463] He therefore holds that a gift could have conditions of possibility other than those of its impossibility. The ultimate condition of its possibility, for Marion, is the gift's givenness. Thinking the gift in this way will mean that exchange and return will no longer be seen as its truth, and in this regard he quotes Aquinas as saying: 'A gift... is literally giving that can have no return, i.e. it is not given with the intention of being repaid.'[464] What Marion effectively is doing here is releasing the gift from any sense of connection with exchange, and in the process he wishes to reduce the understanding of gift to givenness and subsequently givenness to itself.[465] Moreover, with the focus on the givenness of phenomena, intuition is emphasised over intention. The world is given rather than constituted by the subject to the point where the subject is now understood as the *adonné*, and actually receives itself in the appearing of the phenomena. Marion's claim then would suggest a notion of subjectivity that is very much reduced, an understanding that I shall, presently, critically appraise.

III. The invisible in the visible: A basis for an ecological response

Studies in more recent decades, in adapting the new turn in phenomenology, have resulted in an ecological form of phenomenology that can provide a more adequate environmental ethic, and that reflect aspects of our dialogue. This is particularly the

[462]To 'avoid being frozen in present objectness,' Derrida claims that the gift must 'disappear' completely. 'Let us go to the limit. The truth of the gift...suffices to annul the gift. The truth of the gift is equivalent to the non-gift or to the non-truth of the non-gift.' Derrida, *Given Time*, p.13, Quoted in *Being Given*, p. 80

[463]For Marion 'if the gift is not present, if it therefore never appears in presence, one can no doubt conclude that it is not; but one can also infer that it neither has to be nor has to subsist in presence in order to give itself.' *Being Given*, p. 79

[464] *Summa Theologica* q. 98, a.2,c. English trans vol.17 p.95, cited in *Being Given*, p. 83

[465] Approaching this phenomenologically means bracketing whatever transcendences there are: the bracketing of 'the transcendence of the givee, the transcendence of the giver and finally the transcendence of the object exchanged.' Thus Marion uses the transcendent conditions for economic exchange as his conditions for the possibility of the reduction to givenness. He achieves his reduction by bracketing these conditions. See *Being Given*, pp. 107—13

case in some ecologically focused adaptations of the later writings of Merleau-Ponty. For instance, Ted Toadvine describes as 'wrongheaded 'an environmental ethic that is built on a kinship model between humans and nature and which emphasises the intrinsic value of everything.[466] In this trend there is an insistence on placing the human subject within a continuum of value that begins with the ecosystem or natural organism. Toadvine and the field of ecophenomenology are not alone in this criticism. Others, from vastly different fields, also point out the unviability of the notion of intrinsic value as a basis for ethics. For example, working in the area of Neoplatonism and environmental concerns, the philosopher David Lea argues that deep ecology with its emphasis on intrinsic value is somewhat misguided and unworkable. He points out that praxis grounded in such value 'is in itself insufficient for one cannot consistently act in such a way as to preserve all perceived intrinsically valuable states of affairs.' One may have to undermine the ecosystem in order to protect all non-human animals or, conversely, the protection of the overall system may demand the destruction of individual animals.[467]

Toadvine claims that the focus on intrinsic value (found in both environmental philosophy and more recently in phenomenology) emerges from a worldview that is based on a dialectical understanding of culture and nature, where the culturalization of nature and the naturalization of culture are modes of expression. His argument is that we must move away from this kind of dialectical worldview, and that such a continuum of value is not possible because of the 'impossibility of reducing [nature] to the homogeneous, the continuous, the predictable, the perceivable, the thematizable.' While not denying the importance of traditional ethical inquiry and practical activism, he suggests that nature's value (if, of course, value is the right word) and a possible ethic should be based on something outside this dialectical system: on what he terms a 'phenomenology of the impossible.' This he describes as:

[466] Ted Toadvine, 'The Primacy of Desire and Its Ecological Consequence,' in Brown &Toadvine (ed.) *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth itself*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2003, pp.139—54

[467] David R. Lea, 'Commonality and Difference Between Neoplatonism and Deep Ecology', in *Neoplatonism and Contemporary Thought: Part Two*, (ed.) R. Baine Harris, New York: State University of New York Press, 2002, p. 59.

> An attentiveness to the resistance of what cannot be thought or perceived, to the opacity of a wild being that circumscribes our concepts and percepts. It is at the margins of our experience, in the desirous response of our flesh to the *Il y a*, that we are confronted with a wildness with which we can never come face to face.[468]

Here Toadvine is building on the phenomenology developed by Merleau-Ponty in his later works.[469] While Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological focus in all his writings concerned mediation between the self and the world, in his earlier works this "coition" was understood to be a union of complementarity where he often spoke of a kinship with all things. However, Toadvine draws attention to another tendency that is present in all his writings, but is thematically expressed only in his later works.[470] This is a tendency that 'finds a certain invisibility at the heart of the visible, namely the blind spot of phenomenology' for which Merleau-Ponty appropriates the phrase *Il y a* —the "there is." Merleau-Ponty is not here talking about something added on: 'It must not be imagined that I add to the visible perfectly defined as in Itself a non-visible...one has to understand that it is the visibility itself that involves a non-visibility.'[471]

Toadvine describes Merleau-Ponty's usage of the term as 'the invisible that cannot, in principle, be brought within the sphere of the visible.' It is 'in excess of perception', not in the sense of some kind of absolute other but as 'the other side of the perceivable and thinkable.' [472] Elsewhere Merleau-Ponty equates the *il y a* —this

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[468] Toadvine, 'Primacy of Desire,' p. 150

[469] See M. Merleau-Ponty, *Nature*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2003. Trans Robert Vallier. See especially Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968. Trans Alphonso Lingis.

[470] He moves from a focus on a dialogue between the one who senses and the sensible to the notion of the chiasm—the intertwining of the flesh of the body with that of the world. Toadvine points out that with the introduction of the notion of flesh, there are also sexual overtones. See Toadvine, 'Primacy of Desire', p. 147. See also p. 152, n. 20.

[471] Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*, p. 247. While Merleau-Ponty is not referring to a religious/mystical awareness, one is reminded of Eriugena's and Kūkai's senses of the numinous in all things, particularly when one tries to understand them with the aid of Eco's image of the onion.

[472] Toadvine, 'Primacy of Desire,' p. 149

more primordial reality—with his notion of *la chair* —the flesh—or simply with nature. What is obvious is that it is not nature understood as a complex set of objects and processes but as 'the biosphere as it is experienced and *lived from within* by the intelligent body — by the attentive human animal who is entirely a part of the world that he, or she, experiences.'[473] I contend however, in keeping with Toadvine, that this is not all that is being intimated in Merleau-Ponty's use of *il y a* and its equating with *la chair* and Nature. Toadvine describes it as 'a "wild" or "brute" being,' a kind of alterity, 'being as it shows itself in the impossible limit experience.' In all of this, while the language may be completely different, there are here intimations of the grand scheme of *natura* as envisioned by Eriugena.

This sense of excess concurs with the sentiments of the environmentalist and philosopher Holmes Rolston III in his suggestion that '[w]e take ourselves to nature and listen for its forms of expression, drawn by a realm of values not of our construction. We ought not destroy this integrity but rather preserve and contemplate it.' For Rolston such an experience of nature is aesthetic and 'one that leads toward religious experience.'[474] It is not so much our kinship with nature that is emphasised (in the sense of an ontological continuum—though this is not denied) as the basis for an ecological ethic; rather it is nature's uniqueness, its otherness. It is an understanding of nature that suggests a world that conceals as much as it reveals. It is this kind of reality—a view that allows for a sense of mystery at the heart of reality— we have heard expressed in both Eriugena's and Kūkai's philosophies. This is not to be understood as a 'something' beyond reality or enclosed within it in any dualist sense, but at its heart in a totally integrated sense. It is the 'in excess of perception', this sense of 'something more' —a 'something more' that is completely integrated—that provides the basis for the truly real, phenomenologically understood. It is the recognition that the phenomenal world in its most real state is not completely knowable. Not only phenomenologically but also from the enlightened perspective, as is expressed in Kūkai and Eriugena, the world is

[473]David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than Human World*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1996, p. 65

[474] Holmes Rolston, *Environmental Ethics*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988, p.28, cited in Lea, Neoplatonism and Deep ecology, p. 57, 245.

understood as having a depth that exceeds the ordinary view of reality. So, while Toadvine is not operating in any kind of religious domain, it is possible to note a similarity in his claims with the kind of numinous perspectives on reality offered us by Eriugena and Kūkai.

Similar echoes can be found in Marion's phenomenology of givenness. Firstly, in terms of his radical reduction to sheer givenness as the 'ultimate reality' we have a culmination in what Jack Caputo describes as 'an event of bedazzling overflow ... which opens up a field or horizon where being and objectivity have no sway.'[475] For Marion it is givenness, rather than Being, that is to be considered a more ultimate reality. Moreover, implicit in his notion that gift can be understood in terms of givenness is the primacy of process rather than of substance—the emphasis is on a very fluid sense of reality. Here are similarities with Eriugena's notion of a dynamic relational notion of reality as well as the interpenetration and dependent co-arising of all things in Kūkai's schema. Nature in process suggests a living vibrant reality not easily susceptible to the objectifying stance associated with ecological misuse.

In this regard Mark Manolopoulos claims that in terms of religious discourse on ecological issues:

> [those] driven by the notion and phenomenon of givenness would be the most radical kind, for they would respect and cherish all things "just because" they are here/there. I concur that perhaps an ultimate or ideal perception and reception of things-in-relation would move beyond a hermeneutics of gifting to generate an ecological comportment towards each *pragma*: Entities' sheer givenness would procure our respect.[476]

While Marion is adamant that all gift is givenness, he is non-committal and quite equivocal with regard to the reverse understanding—every given is a gift.[477] This may be because he does not wish to come across as having any kind of theological or

[475] Caputo, 'Introduction' in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, p.6

[476] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 86

[477] See *On the gift*, the Villanova conference

religious agenda. He repeatedly claims not to name or indicate any kind of giver for his idea of givenness. Whatever the reason for Marion's lack of clarity on the point of the giftedness of everything, there is a certain validity to the idea. At the very least, as Manolopoulos points out, it is useful to be open to the possibility of creation—the phenomenal world— being a gift. He argues that seeing the world as gift is a powerful and ancient representation, one that has the 'power to move us...and what we need today—with the urgency provoked by the ecological crisis—are rhetorically powerful discourses...to change and modify the way we think and act.[478]

IV. The responding human

I now want to look more closely at the nature and role of human person within the context of what might constitute the most 'ultimate reality' (what is most real or true). Firstly, concerning the nature of the human, I explore notions of subjectivity that have arisen with regard to Eriugena and Kūkai, and also in Marion's phenomenological method. I noted in the dialogue that there were similarities between Eriugena and Kūkai in relation to the concepts of *theophany* and *kaji*. Theophany, in terms of the human perceiver becoming enlightened (or from an ecological perspective cultivating an appropriate sensibility) comes about, in some sense, through the interplay of divine condescension and human response. *Kaji*, in Kūkai, is that which empowers the human person in the process of achieving enlightenment, but which also requires the engagement of the one wishing to be enlightened. My suggestion is that echoes of these notions can be found in a critical appraisal of Marion's conception of the subject. [479] In particular, I look at the

[478] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 87

[479] Marion's characterisation of the role of the subject begins with the idea of the *interloqué* (RG) which is similar to Heidegger's notion of *der Angesprochene.* See *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 200-2. See also Marion, 'The Final Appeal of the Subject,' in John D. Caputo, (ed.) *The Religious*, Oxford & Massachusetts: Blackwell Publ., 2002, p. 137. In *Being Given* he uses such terms as witness and receiver, ending up with the notion of *Adonné*. Kosky translates *adonné* using the term gifted. According to Mackinlay this is succinct and 'retains a clear connection with the root of "*adonné*" in the French donner (to give).' It is interesting to note, however, that gifted in English often means talented, an understanding that is quite misleading in this context. See, Shane Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess*: *Jean-Luc Marion, saturated phenomena, and hermeneutics*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2010, p. 224, n. 27

criticism offered by Shane Mackinlay and his suggestion of viewing the subject as an active receptor.

Having explored the notion of the perceiving subject, I then turn to ways of viewing the role of such an active receptor, which might best reflect the notion of reality already expressed. This will involve emphasising the cultivation of an attitude of respectful attentiveness towards the phenomenal world, one described by Manolopoulos as 'a radically ecological sensibility or consciousness.'[480] Such work reflects, and adds to, the kind of work engaged in by a number of thinkers in the field of ecology and religion. It endeavours to engage streams within religious traditions with contemporary thinking and from an ecological angle. It mirrors for instance Primavesi's concept of ecological humility. Speaking with a theological emphasis Primavesi claims that embracing this kind of virtue requires of us humans an acceptance of 'our place *within* the whole earth household rather than acting as if God had conferred "most favoured species" status on us.' Engaging such an attitude brings us to the insight that we are not alone on this planet and, from a more specifically religious perspective (not withstanding our specific role and capabilities) we are not the only species that matters in the ultimate scheme of things.[481] Moreover it mirrors—in an ecological context—the type of humility reflected in the notion of learned ignorance found in the apophatic tradition. This term coined by Nicholas of Cusa suggests the awareness that while one can be erudite, true knowledge also involves coming to know just how ignorant I am of what still remains to be known. The apt phrase, 'the more I know, the more I realise just what I do not know', sums up this idea. At a theological level Cusanus linked this idea to

[480] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p.

[481] A. Primavesi, *Making God Laugh: Human Arrogance and Ecological Humility*, Santa Rosa, California: Polebridge Press, 2004, p. 120-1. She brings out the notion that the human species is not the only species that matters to God by quoting a somewhat pertinent comment from the Babylonian Talmud on the triumphant song of the Israelites commemorating their safe passage through the Red Sea, which begins: "I will sing to the Lord! Glorious his triumph! Horse and rider he has cast into the sea!" According to the Talmud a voice from heaven said: "How can I rejoice when my creatures are perishing?" The concern was for the Egyptian riders and was shocking since it came from within Judaism itself. Primavesi further intimates how much greater the shock would be if such concern was extended beyond the human riders to the horses themselves.

Paul's idea in Corinthians: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."[482] Such ideas are also reflected in Eriugena's approach to knowledge of the divine essence.

A. Reinterpreting subjectivity:

i. The human as responding to call

The idea of grace or empowerment expressed within the process of *theophany* and the concept of *kaji* find echoes in how Marion characterises the 'giving' in his phenomenological understanding. This characterization is often expressed in terms of a call, prompting Thomas Carlson to refer to Marion's third reduction as 'fundamentally vocative.' In other words, Marion's reduction to unconditional givenness can be termed a 'reduction to the unconditional givenness of the call.' [483] He outlines four characteristics to this call and its impact on the receiver.[484] These are worth mentioning here as they not only reinforce the notion of the giving nature of reality but also highlight Marion's understanding of the perceiving subject.

Firstly, the call summons in the sense that the *interloqué* experiences a claim 'so powerful and compelling that he must surrender to it.'[485] Secondly, this summons results in the *interloqué* being overwhelmed, taken over, or surprised. Thirdly, there

[482] Primavesi, *Making God Laugh*, p. 5. The biblical quotation is 1 Cor. 3:19

[483] Thomas A. Carlson, *Indiscretion: Finitude and the naming of God*, Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 203. In the notion of the call we also glean an understanding of Marion's theological approach: 'The theologian's job is to silence the Name and in this way let it give us one.' See Marion, 'In the name: How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology,"' in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, p. 39. The primary purpose of theological language is not 'a matter of speaking but of listening to the call of the One who is beyond all affirmation and negation.' Thus Marion is also emphasising the priority of experience over thinking theological discourse. See Louise Nelstrop, *Christian Mysticism: An Introduction to Contemporary Approaches*, Surrey & Burlington: Ashgate, 2009, p. 236.

[484] See *Being Given*, pp. 267—70. See also 'The Final Appeal of the Subject,' pp. 139—41.

[485] *Being Given*, p. 268. The French *s'y rendre* is here understood in the double sense of being displaced and of submitting itself.

is an interlocution, but not in a dialogical way where 'two speakers converse with each other in equal relation.' Rather, Marion likens this to being 'assailed.' It is the receiving of '*my self* from the call that gives me to myself before giving me anything whatsoever.'[486] Finally, there is a facticity about the call. It is an already given fact, a *fait accompli*. Marion points out: 'For not one of us mortals has ever lived, if only for an instant, without having received a call and being discovered *interloqué* by it.'[487] Relation precedes essence, and in fact the individual essence results from relation. In terms of the *interloqué* 'there is a mutation of the *I* into the *me*.'[488] The autonomous constituting subject of modernity has been transmuted into the receptive *me*.

ii. The human as manifesting givenness

Conversely, much of Marion's analysis of the role of the subject also concerns the transformation that occurs when the given is manifested as a phenomenon, which suggests a more active role than the passive one referred to already. That is why I speak of the need for a critical appraisal of his interpretation of the subject. Yet, it is important to understand that he is not talking of a transformation of givenness in the sense of replacing givenness, but rather of accomplishing it. Givenness is transmuted into manifestation. There is an unfolding of the 'fold of givenness', and so the transformation is understood as an unfolding of what is already there.[489] The active role has again become somewhat passive. He notes: 'The receiver in and through the receptivity of "feeling," transforms givenness into manifestation, or more exactly, he lets what gives itself through intuition show itself. In receiving what gives itself, he in turn gives it to show itself—he gives it form, its first form"[490] Marion's use of images, such as a filter or a prism, is helpful here. The receiver acts like a filter or

[486] *Being Given*, p. 269

[487] *Being Given*, p.270

[488] 'The final appeal of the subject,' p. 138—9

[489] *Being Given*, pp. 69—70

[490] *Being Given*, p. 264

prism 'manifesting what presents (gives) itself, but which must still be introduced into the presence of the world (show itself).[491]

There would seem to be a great deal of ambiguity in Marion's position regarding the notion of subjectivity. In his efforts to remain loyal to Husserl's concern for the things themselves, he insists on the notion of a pure given to the extent that often what is suggested is an inversion of intention and intuition in the act of perceiving. While this seems to be the overriding notion in his work on the phenomenological method, there are also strong indications that he wishes to maintain the role of the subject. These are to be seen implicitly in what has already been discussed. More explicitly, at the end of *Being Given* Marion clearly states that he wishes not to 'contest' the subject's position as a centre; he wishes only to 'contest its mode of occupying and exercising' that centre. Rather than occupying it as 'an origin, an ego in the first person, in transcendental "mineness"' and in that way holding the centre, the subject 'is instead held there as recipient, placed where what gives itself shows itself, and that there it discovers itself given to and as a pole of givenness.' [492] For Marion then, it is not a subject in any transcendent sense that is at the centre but the birth of the receiver.

Mackinlay raises some concerns about what he perceives to be Marion's inversion of the role of the subject: from 'the transcendental constituting ego' to 'the entirely passive addressee'. This would seem to suggest the complete elimination of the subject which, of course, is an impossibility.[493] Moreover, he considers the passive role to be a 'misleading emphasis' in Marion's work and believes an alternative exists in the texts themselves, one that could be described as 'active reception of what is given.'[494]

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[491] *Being Given*, p. 264

[492] *Being Given*, p. 322

[493] Mackinlay points out: there needs to be a continuing role for the subject because in order 'to constitute as a phenomenon [a thing] must be situated within experience and this is unthinkable without a subject'. See *Interpreting Excess*: p. 68,

[494] Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess*, p. 12

iii. The human as active receptor

Mackinlay offers the notions of 'active receptor' and 'hermeneutical space' as a means of interpreting a more nuanced sense of givenness, which would allow for a more balanced sense of the subject. It is pertinent to explore these in greater detail since they parallel more accurately the understanding of subjectivity found in Eriugena's and Kūkai's notions of the human person. Both these thinkers regard the human—the subject—in a positive light, with an active, and so interpretative role to play. However, this is not in the sense of the modern autonomous subject developed by Descartes and Kant, because both, in different ways, present a relational sense of subject.

Ultimately, Mackinlay is looking for a 'middle-voiced' description of the encounter with phenomena by the subject. His position is that 'a phenomenon's appearing to a subject would be understood in terms of active reception of what is given,' instead of passively receiving 'the imposition of pure givens.' Rather than emphasising that phenomena give themselves from themselves, he argues that 'they are presented and understood in a hermeneutic space that is opened by a subject's active reception.'[495] The subject interprets and such a hermeneutic 'militates against the notion of pure givens.' This means that the active reception of givenness belongs to the very structure of phenomena itself. In that sense 'an account of what a phenomenon is cannot be set out in terms of its givenness alone, but must also include the way it is interpreted by the one who receives it.' As the interpreter, the subject cannot be entirely passive. He further notes that such an argument is already inherent in Marion's own position, if at times it appears contradictory.[496]

[495] While the relationship of pure givenness and infinite hermeneutics is found in Marion it is not really explored. It is merely described as an inquiry for further concepts in the face of an excess of intuition. This 'echoes Gregory of Nyssa's depiction of the ardent soul's journey toward the divine in response to the excess of revelation.' See T. Jones, *A Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion: Apparent Darkness*, Indiana University Press, 2011, p. 118

[496] Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess*, pp. 12—3.

Mackinlay brings attention to a number of instances where such contradictions are evident. For example he notes that Marion offers two different accounts of irregardability.[497] In the first account where he builds on Levinas' notion of the face, the emphasis is on the phenomena 'looking at' the subject rather than the perceiving subject looking at them. The impression given is of an entirely passive subject who is imposed upon. However in the second account the phenomena do not impose themselves on me, the subject. Instead they are made possible by the subject opening itself up in a particular way. Thus, an anamorphosis will appear only if I situate myself at the right viewing point, or an icon appears only if it is venerated by me. While this second account does not endorse the constituting subject of classical metaphysics, there are contradictions in Marion's overall position.[498]

However, regardless of the ambiguity his second account is noteworthy for our purposes. This kind of phenomenological approach (where there is 'a "crisscross [*croisée*]" of looks') parallels the notion of subjectivity in Eriugena and Kūkai with regard to coming to the enlightened state, which is about recognising and indeed manifesting the true nature of reality. Both Eriugena and Kūkai posit the human person's involvement in achieving his or her own enlightenment. Our exploration of the concepts of *theophany* and of *kaji* (linked to the *sanmitsu*) has shown this. Therefore to manifest reality the human as perceiving subject must be actively involved. He or she plays a role that could be described in terms of active receptor.

B. Cultivating an appropriate sensibility

In this final section I explore more closely how this active receptor might live in a more ecologically appropriate manner within, and in response to, a world as dynamic and mysterious as the one encountered in the writings so far. I am concerned here with what Manolopoulos refers to as our comportment towards creation or towards the phenomenal world. He outlines a number of elements of such comportment that

[497] These concern Marion's fourth kind of saturated phenomena, which refer to phenomena that have an irreducible invisibility and so they cannot be regarded as objects. Such phenomena are anamorphosis, the icon and the face.

[498] See Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess*, p. 159—60

reflect an oscillating approach to the world as givenness or as gift. These elements have to do with 'letting things be, with gentleness, with our desire for mastery, and with our destructiveness.'[499] Recognising the element of excess in the givenness of phenomena elicits responses such as remaining silent or trembling before this excess, as well as letting be or playing gently with creation. The emphasis is more clearly on the passivity of the human as subject. In maintaining his oscillating approach there is recognition also of the exchange aspect in the gift. For instance, there is a type of letting be that is reflected when an individual makes a very conscious decision not to interfere. The decision while resulting in inactivity nevertheless is still a decision of the subject. Moreover, the notion of instrumentality or use of the gift emphasises this exchange aspect as well as the active role of the subject. Given the level of human interference in the natural world a certain level of proper stewardship is required. Reflected here is the ongoing struggle to know how best to protect nature from further degradation by continued human intervention. It is the effort to create what Larry Rasmussen refers to as sustainable community, which is about 'the earth's carrying capacity, its powers for sustaining present and future generations, the ability of natural and social systems to live together indefinitely.'[500]

Manolopoulos does not claim to offer a response to the many cultural issues that arise in relation to the ecological crisis. His focus is on 'changing sensibilities' at a personal level. The notion of developing a more appropriate sensibility towards the phenomenal world is not new, and it is found in the literature in ecology and religion. For instance, Sallie McFague writes about such a change as expressing subject-to-subject rather than subject-to object relationships with nature. We should extend how we relate to other humans, to the natural world. Drawing from insights in feminist epistemology, process philosophy, the field of literature and ecological science and based on the idea of the "loving eye" knowledge of others, she develops

[499] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 107

[500] Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*, p. 24. This idea of sustainable community recognises human involvement in the 'protection' of the earth, but does so from the perspective of situating humans within the natural processes, where their primary role is as members, rather than as consumers or users, of the natural world. By contrast the notion of sustainable development focuses more on the human as agent without any real emphasis on its belongingness in the larger earth community.

a subject-to-subject model reminiscent of the philosopher Martin Buber's I-Thou approach to relationships. McFague speaks about the need to pay attention to things other than ourselves so that we come to know that otherness as real. The reason for doing this is that unless we come to know it in this way, we cannot love it or care for it or treat it with dignity. The loving eye, in contrast to the arrogant eye is not staring at or grasping the other: rather it is 'relating to the other more like a Thou than an It.'[501]

Manolopoulos' approach is interesting in that, based primarily on a critical understanding of Marion's notion of givenness, he claims that we create our ethos out of a 'relentlessly aporetic-oscillational thinking of gifting.' Moreover, his claim is that this notion of engaging the logic and language of oscillation with regard to the gift is indicated by Marion's own fluctuation. [502] A critical appraisal of Marion's position reveals that inherent in it is recognition of the sheer givenness of reality—the emphasis on excess— but also a desire for the subject to be involved. In that way he has come to recognise, on the one hand, reality as givenness and on the other the ambiguity of the role of the human subject. Manolopoulos' concept of oscillation, with its notion of 'swinging backwards and forwards like a pendulum or moving to and fro between two points giving rise to an unceasing alteration within limits, recognises the tension within the gift idea.'[503]

One of the elements Manolopoulos highlights, which I would like to explore, concerns the notion of silence. I focus on this one in particular since the reception of

[501] McFague, *Super, Natural Christians*, p. 28, 32—5.

[502] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 107-8. While Marion is critical of the language and idea of exchange with regard to gift he nevertheless uses concepts like indebtedness and owning. As Manolopoulos points out Marion's own thinking gets 'entangled by the gift's doubleness' and, in fact, the fluctuation Marion's exhibits 'between the need for unknowing and partial knowing is perhaps a better indicator of an awareness of the gift's duality and the way in which our thinking may respond to it: The gift evokes both knowing and unknowing.' Manolopoulos p. 91

[503] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 92. He chooses this concept of oscillation over terms like dialectic, not just because oscillation does not carry the baggage attached to a term like dialectic, but more importantly because dialectic suggests the movement towards a synthesis. Such a synthesis is not what gift suggests. We need to think about the concept of gift in accordance with its duality—as an aporia. Oscillation suggests that.

the gift both 'precedes and exceeds discourse.' Moreover the interplay of silence and language finds echoes, in different ways, in both Eriugena and Kūkai. This interplay emphasises the mystery of reality and yet ultimately relates to the issue of knowledge of reality. Therefore, a second element I explore is what it might mean, in this context, to know reality, and how the interplay of knowing and not-knowing leads to a deeper kind of understanding. Much of this emphasises a non-interventionist approach, which is recognition of the gift's excess. What might constitute appropriate interventionist responses that would reflect the gift's aporia and the subject as active agent? In this regard I explore notions of necessary and unnecessary violence in our engagement with nature. Finally, there is a strong current of approaching the world as a place to be enjoyed, inherent in the idea of gift. In that regard I examine Manolopoulos' oscillation of play and enjoyment with what he terms religious return.

i. A Pseudo-Dionysian 'wise silence'

The notion that ultimate reality can best be understood as givenness suggests the need to begin with 'that which *is done to us*.' This highlights the 'in excess' nature of the gift — the phenomenal world. From the perspective of the perceiving subject the emphasis is on the reception of givenness rather than on the response of the subject. Because reception 'precedes and exceeds discourse' then, by definition, it is marked by a 'prior or immemorial silence.' Our silence, as subjects, reflects and respects this more primordial silence. Manolopoulos described silence then as 'an exemplary response' on the part of the subject. It honours the aporetic nature of givenness and of the perceiving subject that we have been speaking about.[504] Ecologically speaking, such silence is exemplary as it clearly indicates a form of reception that is not about having all questions answered, or about balancing and counting, which are the kinds of reception reflected in a view of nature only as object or as resource.[505]

[504] In keeping with the oscillation approach Manolopoulos points out that silence is still a form of response

[505] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 109—10

Moreover, silence is central to all the great religious traditions. As the Jewish scholar and mystic Franz Rozenzweig points out with regard to the process of creation: 'God spoke. That came third. It was not the first thing.' The initial act of creation did not involve the spoken word.[506] In the Buddhist tradition the silence of the Buddha is spoken about as having proverbial status.[507]

Eriugena's Christianity and Kūkai's Buddhism both reflect the importance of silence. For instance Eriugena's use of the apophatic in approaching the divine principle—ultimate reality— indicates the value he places on silence. Moreover it reflects what Dionysius refers to as a 'wise silence.' Because of the infinity of the Divine principle, Eriugena explains that the human mind cannot grasp the essence of reality. As noted previously it is capable of understanding only *quia est* and never *quid est,* the essence. Therefore, according to Eriugena one ought to 'approach intellectually the divine principle, with respectful silence.'[508] Approaching the divine principle in such a manner would indicate approaching the manifestation of this principle as the phenomenal world in an equally respectful manner.

Meditative practices, which are built on silence, while not as central as devotional practices in the western Christian psyche, are still to be found. One such practice,

[506] F. Rozenzweig, *The star of Redemption*, Trans. W. W. Hallo, Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1985, p. 112. Cited in Primavesi, *Making God Laugh*, p. 125

[507] There is much speculation regarding why the Buddha advocated and indeed practiced silence. Raimon Panikkar suggests it has to do with the emptiness of reality as such. See R. Panikkar *The Silence of God: The Answer of the Buddha*, (Faith meets Faith Series), Trans. R.R. Barr, Orbis Books, 1989

[508] Cesare Catà 'Cusanus' Revival Of Eriugena as a Renaissance centred definition of Christian orthodoxy.' Online, Available HTTP: <http://www.academia.edu/974673/Cusanus_Revival_of _Eriugena_as_a_Renaissance Redefinition of_ Christian_ Orthodoxy> (accessed 22 May 2013). The practice of hesychia—an eremitic tradition of prayer that developed in the Greek Church—within various religious groups in the Christian tradition is reflective of this Dionysian silence that clearly influenced Eriugena. See next note.

which advocates this wise silence and is found sporadically in the West but more associated with the Greek East, is that of *hesychia*.[509]

Just as the idea of silence is understood in the interplay of the apophatic and cataphatic in Eriugena, in the Buddhist understanding silence is connected to the experience of emptiness or nothingness when one comes face to face with the abyss —which is generally understood to be the starting point of salvation or enlightenment. When one lets go into this experience one comes to see that no split exists between the world and the perceiver —the subject and object. In his essay on 'Language and Silence' Tetsuaki Kotoh comments that at this point reality, which has been 'rigidified by linguistic segmentation, gradually becomes fluid...and with the elimination of distinct boundaries things come mutually to interpenetrate each other.'[510] We come face to face with reality as it is—a reality that is totally different, however, from everyday reality, since it is perceived without the 'overlay of everyday language.' Kūkai points out: 'With ordinary people the true perception of true nature is prevented by "obscuring fantasies."[511]

[509] Kallistos Ware distinguishes a number of meanings of the term hesychasm. For instance, in the fourth century it was associated with the 'solitary life'—in a sense equivalent to 'eremitical life'. Maximus the Confessor and Evagrius Ponticus tended to use the term to describe the practice of inner prayer that was aimed at 'union with God on a level beyond images, concepts and language'. Also, from the thirteenth century onwards psychosomatic techniques in combination with the Jesus Prayer describe the idea and it gets a more systematic exposition in the theology of Gregory Palamas. See K. Ware, *Act out of Stillness: The Influence of Fourteenth-Century Hesychasm on Byzantine and Slav Civilization* (The Bzantium Heritage annual lecture) ed. Daniel J. Sahas, Toronto: The Hellenic Canadian Association of Constantinople and the Thessalonikean Society of Metro Toronto, 1995, pp. 4-7. The practice particularly in its association with Gregory of Palamas was seen as very controversial in the West. This is associated with the essence-energies debate. While the Orthodox East—particularly Gregory of Palamas— believed in a real distinction between these aspects of the divine, the West did not. However the twentieth century saw a huge growth in interest in Palamas' theology, with many theologians incorporating this distinction into their thinking. See J. D. Finch, 'Neo-Palamism, Divinizing Grace, and the Breach between East and West', in M. J. Christensen and J. A. Wittung, *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008, pp. 233—49.

[510] Tetsuaki Kotoh, 'Language and Silence' in Graham Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian traditions of thought*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987, pp. 206. Trans. Setsuko Aihara and Graham Parkes.

[511] Cited in Kotoh, 'Language and Silence', p. 207

This primordial reality— often termed spontaneous arising— silently boils up, and out of this silence emerges a new language that of the true self. Silence then can be understood as an echo of true reality, out of which comes a new language —in Kūkai's words the esoteric language of Dainichi—that is not the everyday language of physicality as such. By returning to silence, the true self—in our case the more ecological self—'joins the flow of spontaneous arising's silent segmentation, and for the first time encounters the original segmentation which begins to create the worlds of individual things.' As Kotoh concludes 'one needs to listen belongingly (*gehören*) to the sound of silence which constantly emanates from the depths of the indescribable and continue to let this be the source of one's own language.' [512] In so doing it becomes the source of one's own way of being in the world.

Contemplating the world, which involves silence, can engender in us a sense of wonder at its givenness, at (what can be perceived at times to be) its 'sheer alien pointless independent existence.'[513] Such contemplation, which is related, as we have seen, to the praxis approach of Kūkai and also the contemplatio of Eriugena enables us to recognise reality as it is: to recognise the mystery at the heart of reality. From this stance attempts to grasp it in any possessive sense are seen to be impossible, and instead we allow ourselves to be overcome with wonder.

ii. The knowing and unknowing of reality

Finally, I focus on what language and silence ultimately mean: an appropriate way of knowing reality. Once again approaching reality in terms of givenness and recognising the aporetic nature of the gift, Manolopoulos points out, in his interpretation of Marion, that this involves an oscillation of knowing and not knowing: a *partial* knowledge. The phenomenon must be grasped in order for it to be recognised as gift; yet not grasped completely as this kind of mastery would erase the gift and reduce it to an object.[514] Manolopoulos goes on to make a further

[512] Kotoh, 'Language and Silence', p. 211

[513] I. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of the Good*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, p. 85

[514] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 114. Here Manolopoulos is focusing on two statements from Marion's essay 'In the Name': "Everything in the world gains by being known—but God who is not

important ecological point regarding the notion of knowing always being about a gain. Science and technology are primary sources of our knowledge of the phenomenal world. They are 'acts-of-knowing par excellence' and yet the 'gain' of this knowledge has also resulted in manipulation and destruction of the natural world, of the kind that might be better described as loss. Inherent particularly in the science and technology episteme one can find reflected the double meaning of the German translation of the term gift. Here gift is both "present" and "poison."

What all this points to is that the world as gift —beings in relation—indicates the impossibility of anything being completely knowable. The 'excess' that givenness highlights means that, in perception, there is both knowing and unknowing. Once again we return to the recognition of the mystery that marks all of reality, and that is recognised in the philosophical understandings of both Eriugena and Kūkai. The type of knowing being considered here is not an intellectual knowing as such. Manolopoulos points out: 'Creation is inundated by the damaging "noise" of excessive *epistēmē* and *technē*.'[515] It is the knowing of not knowing that is reached through a deep unity and oneness with things. It is the knowing reached when we have gone through to the level of the Buddhist notion of *śūnyatā*.[516]

Another approach is to speak about going beyond knowing to a deep understanding. In this regard Kasulis talks about an 'insightful understanding' or *verstehen*, which is to go beyond knowing about, for example, another culture: included in the concept are feelings and imagination, and 'the capacity to project ourselves into the place' of the other as it were. At the heart of this kind of knowing, according to Kasulis, is the

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of the world, gains by not being known conceptually." and "Comprehension suggests adequate knowledge as long as one is dealing with things of the world." See 'In the Name', p. 34, 37. Manolopoulos emphasises here a failure on Marion's part in his distinguishing of God from the world. Both God and the phenomena world understood in its givenness 'gains by remaining unknown.' *If creation is a gift*, p. 115.

[515] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 111

[516] The standpoint of *śūnyatā*, as Nishitani points out, is when we 'become manifest in our own suchness and ...everything around us becomes manifest in its own suchness.' It is the appearance of the self in its original countenance...the return of the self to itself in its original mode of being.' Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, pp. 90-1

notion of intimacy, since this involves an inseparability, a belonging together, a sharing.'[517]

iii. Inter-relatedness and violence

The primary characteristic of any unity means that all within it are in a relational mode. However the fact of our being in relationship (as well as the reality of human influence on the earth today) means that in dealing with the natural world simply letting things be in any total sense is not a viable possibility. This raises a number of concepts but one I would like to explore briefly here is the idea of violence and the role it plays in our general engagement with nature. Firstly with regard to violence we can say that there is inevitability about interaction that could be characterised as an unavoidable violence. The logic of the evolutionary process is that life feeds on life. As humans it is obvious that not only are we derived from the whole we also depend on it for our continued existence. The food chain is the most obvious example of this. The taking of life suggests violence. What it means is that there is a necessary kind of violence that characterises the life of the world but also can be reflected in our understanding of gift.

I say unavoidable or necessary because there are also forms of violence that must be resisted, what Manolopoulos describes as 'disfigurative violence'. Such forms can be seen in our commodification or instrumentalising of nature resulting in the kind of consumerism that characterises capitalist societies today, and that have given rise to the ecological crisis. Manolopoulos points out that Heidegger's and Marion's notions concerning a critique of technology are informative in this regard. For instance Marion's notion of objectification, where the conceptualising of the subject determines the given rather than the other way round, is a critique of modern technology's approach, and can be seen as a form of violence that needs to be resisted. Heidegger's notion of *Bestand* (standing reserve) results from the fact that modern technology forces nature to provide energy for human use, rather than the emphasis being on allowing nature to offer itself as in 'the blossoming of a rose.'

[517] T. Kasulis, 'Intimacy: A general orientation in Japanese religious values', *Philosophy East and West.* Vol. 40: 4, 1990, 433.

Technē itself is perverted. Manolopoulos comments: 'Modern technology is a form of *technē* that not only prohibits things from letting themselves be in their own particularity, but disfigures phenomena as standing-reserve, as products for human consumption.'[518] It is important to recognise that Heidegger is not condemning all *technē*, he is pointing out that *technē* has been disfigured.

iv. The response of praise

Dainichi Nyorai, according to Kūkai, expresses himself as the phenomenal world for his own enjoyment. There is a sense in which the givenness of reality invites a response of playfulness and of enjoyment. The invitation is free. We enter into the play that is creation if we so wish. Enjoying creation can also result in over indulgence and treating entities as commodities for our enjoyment. This gives rise to another form of oscillation: we 'use' the world for our enjoyment, but do so with an attitude of letting be, giving rise to a 'gentler recreation.'[519]

While we cannot return, in any real sense, the givenness of the phenomenal world, there is room for a kind of reciprocity that softens the notion of exchange and also recognises the inherent interdependency of reality. Awareness of these aspects of the notion of reciprocity means that the possibility of over-indulgence in the enjoyment of creation —the problems of over consumption of resources for enjoyment in many forms, in a word consumerism— is tempered. By giving thanks, there is both an acceptance of the gift and the making of some form of return. In more religious terms we are referring to the notion of praise. The philosopher Jean-Louis Chretien, in his reflections on praise, recognises its double sidedness: it both accepts what is given but also says thanks. There is both identification and celebration. In a non-religious sense Manolopoulos points out the value of celebration in this context. In celebration 'freely given creation is ("simply") affirmed.'[520] Rather than emphasising the return —and yet not forgetting it altogether— the recipient delights

[518] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 120

[519] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 137

[520] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 143

in the given, giving rise to what Caputo describes as (in referring to Lévinas) a kind of natural atheism where one rejoices in the world for its own sake.[521]

In many ways the kind of ethic being developed here links with the notion of ecological humility spoken of earlier. Humans are becoming increasingly aware of what is the overwhelming starting point—what has been emphasised throughout this text: we are part of a larger whole—a matrix—out of which we have arisen. In the much used ecological catchphrase we are one species among many. This awareness of our belonging to the larger matrix is increasing in us today through data from the various earth sciences. The human person comes to a realisation that he or she '*derives* from the creation-gift and this realization counterbalances pretensions of priority and mastery over itself and others.'[522] Gabriel Marcel's remarks are insightful here: 'We realize at once with what care the affirmation "I am" must be approached...it [should] be whispered humbly.' He goes on to explain: I say humility because, after all,... this being is something that can only be granted to us as a gift; it is a cruder illusion to believe that it is something which I can offer to myself...'[523]

[521]Cited in Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 143. See Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 110

[522] Manolopoulos, *If creation is a gift*, p. 16-7

[523] G. Marcel, *The mystery of Being Vol. 2 Faith and Reality*, Chicago: Henry Regnery Co. 1951, p. 31, Cited in Manolopoulos, If creation is a gift, p. 117

Conclusion:

In this dissertation I have endeavoured to show how a dialogue between two lesser known philosophers from the major world religions of Christianity and Buddhism, Eriugena and Kūkai respectively, offer insights that are valuable as religious philosophical responses to the ecological crisis. I firstly used the framework of divine-human-earth relations to explore and connect the insights of Eriugena and Kūkai, and secondly, to bolster the core claim, I examined some ecologically oriented understandings of contemporary phenomenological approaches, that (I argued), reflect notions of reality similar to those of the medieval philosophers.

In relation to their perceptions of the nature of reality I argued that the overwhelming emphasis in Eriugena and Kūkai is on the oneness of all reality, though this is perhaps more obvious in Kūkai than in Eriugena. Eriugena maintains a creator-creation focus in dealing with the origin of all things, while Kūkai clearly holds that creator and created are the same—both being the six great elements. Yet, Eriugena's grappling to find one overall concept—*natura* or *phusis*—to express the totality and Kūkai's central teaching that the phenomenal world *is* the cosmic Buddha are indicative of their primary emphasis on oneness. Any notion of 'divinity' or some ultimate truth in their respective positions is to be found within the one ontological realm. An emphasis on one unified whole is at the heart of most ecological stances, therefore the religious philosophical perspectives expressed here can be considered worthwhile ecologically. Moreover they counter the kinds of dualisms, particularly within Christian understandings, that many argue are at least partly response for the denigration of material reality.

Through my use of the divine-human-earth framework I showed that both Eriugena and Kūkai express understandings of this unified reality that could be described via the term 'immanental transcendence.' Kūkai holds that the cosmic Buddha *Dainichi*, considered by other Buddhist schools to be remote and inaccessible, is in fact the very cosmos itself in its enlightened state. While this suggests that *Dainichi* and the phenomenal world are identical Kūkai's writings also contain some paradoxical expressions that retain a sense of distinction so that while one is within many and

many are in one there is at the same time no confusion to be found. Eriugena uses the notion of *theophany* to describe, on the one hand, how the divine expresses itself and, on the other, the effects of that expression. The divine manifests itself as created reality—in fact it is the only way by which the divine can be known—and all phenomena can be understood as divine self-expression.

I suggested that the concept of personhood, not understood as an agent who acts but as the act itself, can be applied to both their understandings of reality. This relational understanding of personhood does not separate the action from the one doing the action, and in that way the emphasis is on the unity and internal relationship of the whole and parts. Moreover, I argued, that both Eriugena and Kūkai speak of an emptiness or nothingness at the heart of reality with significant similarities to be found in their understandings. This is not the emptiness of privation or nihilism; rather with the suggestion of beyond both being and nonbeing there is a kind of fullness or excess—an emptiness that is full of potential or possibility—and this is made visible as the phenomenal world.

Thus we can say that for both Eriugena and Kūkai all phenomena point to an underlying emptiness or ultimate truth and are that truth expressing itself. I further pointed out that this understanding suggests that worldly phenomena are accorded a more active role vis-à-vis the divine in Eriugena than is the case within more Western oriented, Augustinian influenced, Christian thought. Such thought is generally considered to be the mainstream of the tradition. The radical dependency, passivity and separateness (from the creator) of creation, found in Augustinian influenced thought, is not to be found in Eriugena. The fact that Eriugena includes the infinite within his totality makes it impossible to fully define reality, and so gives to it, from the very beginning, an inherent dynamism. Instead of a passive role created reality is cast in the active role of being the expression of the divine nature to the point of actually fulfilling the divine nature. All of this further suggests that Eriugena views the whole of the phenomenal world in a very positive light. This positivity can also be gleaned in his subversion of the Neoplatonic principle of

reduced causal power in favour of a multiplicity of divine expression. Such subversion, I argued, can be understood as grounds for appreciating created reality.

A strongly positive and active sense of the phenomenal world is very much evident in Kūkai's poetry where, in highlighting its naked wild aspect, he claims that nature cultivated his mind rather than, (as was the case in the court at the time) poetic writing capturing and transforming natural beauty. This approach to the natural world is further enhanced by his rejection of the theory of universal degeneration and his clear emphasis on the phenomenal world being the place where enlightenment is achieved. For Kūkai it is in, through, and with this very body (this existence) that one reaches the enlightened state.

The perspective on reality as revealing and concealing ultimate truth I argued gives rise to a sense of a depth dimension to the whole of the phenomenal world. There is a numinous quality to all of reality making all phenomena more than mere objects. We cannot fully know them or speak of them, and so I highlighted the inability of human language to express the kind of ineffability that is being hinted at here. My claim is that an ecological humility is required, one that recognises our place within the overall scheme of things.

I go on to explore how Eriugena and Kūkai relate the notion of text to the phenomenal world. In Kūkai the world is understood as an open-ended text—all phenomena are its words—and ultimately we can speak of the text as the world and the world as the text, giving rise to a material rather than representational sense of text. In Eriugena I referred to his use of the Christian idea of having the book of nature alongside the book of scripture—that all created beings (not just the scriptural texts) are understood to be the words or speech of God. Moreover, just as the meaning of a text is to be found in the text so the divine is to be found in created reality. Thus, I argued, Eriugena's emphasis is not on God and the world as two separate realms, but on the theophanic world.

In turning to the role of the human person I argued that both philosophers emphasise a focus on reaching enlightenment or salvation—understood as attaining union with the whole. It is through choosing to respond to divine condescension (in theophany) that one can recognise this in Eriugena. One is required to choose to activate in oneself this inherent capacity to respond, in order to recognise the world as divine manifestation or theophany. It requires a cultivation of a way of being in the world. And yet, paradoxically, for Eriugena such cultivation is ultimately possible only via divine grace. While a similar process can be gleaned from Kūkai's notion of *kaji*, there is a greater emphasis on the interpenetrating activity of the practitioner and ultimate reality, giving rise to *nyugo ganyu*—the Buddha enters me and I enter the Buddha.

Moreover, for Kūkai to come to the enlightened state involves a different kind of knowing— one that is ultimately about praxis. Through engagement in ritual practices of cultivation the practitioner aligns his or her activity with that of the Buddha. Specifically for Kūkai these practices are the three processes of reciting mantras, making the appropriate mudras and engaging in visualizations attached to the mandalas. Consequently one truly realises nonduality with the dharma or truth: one reaches enlightenment. Kūkai's emphasis on praxis is not matched in Eriugena. Yet Eriugena's notion of *theoria*, which can be understood as a process of experiential mindfulness, is about preparing the practitioner to see reality as divine manifestation. Ultimately the view of reality being sought here by both Eriugena and Kūkai is akin to Nishitani's notion of true religion, where there is a simultaneous action of our becoming aware of reality and reality realising itself in our awareness.

I also pointed out that Kūkai gives clear priority to the body—the vehicle of cultivation practices—over the mind and yet maintains a bodymind unity or nonduality. Eriugena, on the other hand, emphasises the mind over the body, and yet his theory of the body—even while associated with Christian notions of sin—eventually results in an understanding of materiality as the source of possibility as well as danger. It is the means by which one comes to see reality as it really is—the manifestation of the divine—but it is also the source of temptation. Finally, Eriugena

emphasises a mediator role for the human, giving the human a central role in his schema. The human is the being through whom all else unfolds and returns to the One. Yet the human cannot be understood as a being of independent status, rather he or she is part of surrounding reality. In Kūkai the central emphasis is on the human as part of the larger reality and the emphasis is on all of reality giving rise to ultimate reality in its fullness.

In an effort to give the argument of the thesis a more contemporary focus and to bolster the use of these ideas for an ecological context, in chapter four I drew on some contemporary ecological interpretations of recent philosophical thinking that reflect notions of reality and of the human similar to those expressed in Eriugena and Kūkai. I did this firstly, by equating the notions of the numinous found in Eriugena and Kūkai with more secular concepts of alterity found in contemporary understandings of Merleau-Ponty (as discussed by Ted Toadvine), as well as notions of givenness and gift found in Marion. Moreover, I claimed that recognition of such alterity or numinosity offers the possibility of cultivating a more respectful attitude toward the natural world. Such an attitude has a greater possibility of resulting in more ecologically acceptable behaviour and as such I suggest that it could be seen as a basis or an ethos for how one ought to live in, and respond to, the current ecological reality.

Secondly, I equated notions of the human—understood as part of the whole yet having a specific role—that emerged from Eriugena's *theophany* and Kūkai's *kaji* with a critical appraisal of subjectivity in Marion's phenomenology of givenness, largely drawn from the work of Shane Mackinlay and Mark Manolopoulos. I claimed that Mackinlay's 'middle-voiced' position regarding the subject, which he describes via the concepts of 'active receptor' and 'hermeneutical space', allowed for a more balanced view, and it reflected Eriugena's and Kūkai's positions. The givenness of all phenomena is to be understood within an interpretative space. This allows, on the one hand, for the active involvement of the one interpreting and, on the other, for the givenness of the phenomena. Thus the human as perceiving subject is actively involved but not in the sense of a modern autonomous subject.

This understanding of the human, within a world understood as dynamic and mysterious is likely to result in a more ecologically appropriate manner of living. In exploring elements of such behaviour I drew on Manolopoulos' idea of a kind of comportment that reflects an 'oscillating approach' to reality as givenness. On the one hand recognition is given to the element of excess in the givenness of phenomena and to the passive role of the human subject by such behaviours as letting be, remaining silent, and playing gently with creation. On the other hand, the exchange element of gift is recognised, as is the active role of the subject. The latter (active role of subject) is expressed by engaging in appropriate interventionist approaches such as what might be described as unavoidable violence inherent in the evolutionary process itself.

The central claim of the dissertation—that lesser known but influential thinkers within religious traditions have something to offer the current ecological context and that exploration of these perspectives are best done in dialogue particularly dialogue between East and West—arises out of a prior claim concerning the discourse on religion and ecology. This is the claim that religious philosophical responses offer a much needed addition to the scientific and technological ones, which currently dominate the discourse on the ecological crisis. Moreover this reflects the scenario found within the humanities generally.

Before exploring the dialogue I looked briefly at this prior claim firstly by noting that despite the ambiguous nature of religious traditions—which often inspired derogatory attitudes towards nature—the call has not been to abandon them as sources of inspiration for ecological responses but to engage them more deeply. In this way the different shades of opinion and perspectives to be found within them are highlighted. Secondly, the value of religious traditions' contribution is implicit in the wide-ranging and burgeoning field of study that has come to be known as ecology and religion. Over the course of the past almost half century, not only environmental writers but scholars across a range of disciplines, from religious studies and theology through philosophy, anthropology, sociology to various branches of science, have

contributed to this area. This must surely suggest recognition of the value of contributions from religious thought.

My general overview of this field in the final section of Chapter One paid particular attention to the significant contribution made by the Harvard ecology and religion series in the late 1990s—a series that is reflective of the nature of much of the field. The series was underpinned by a belief in the need for broader philosophical and religious understandings of the human vis-à-vis the natural world because the ecological crisis required moral and spiritual responses as well as political, social and economic ones. Thus identifying ecological attitudes, values and practices within the various traditions was a key aim of the series. By exploring the work of Eriugena and Kūkai —two examples, within the Christian and Buddhist traditions respectively, of more positive attitudes towards the phenomenal world— this thesis relates to this central aspect of the field. However in its efforts to contribute insights from the traditions the thesis takes a somewhat different approach than is often the case in the religion and ecology literature.

While much ecological writing has focused on a notion of the unity or oneness of all reality where the emphasis is on humans being very much one with nature—a materialist focus—the approach taken here is a more metaphysical one. I showed that both Eriugena and Kūkai posit an understanding of the phenomenal world that is more than material. While Kūkai does not endorse any kind of dualism (a point that is more ambiguous in Eriugena) my highlighting—through the use of the concept of 'immanental transcendence'—of the dynamic, numinous, mysterious nature of reality that they posit, as well as the somewhat distinctive role of the human within that reality, indicates such a metaphysical approach. Moreover the human is not just presented as being part of nature, though this is clearly emphasised; rather I argued for an understanding of the human as actively engaging with the other than human world while recognising his or her belonging within it. My use of the concept of active receptor and my exploration of the aporetic nature of the givenness of reality gave this argument a contemporary expression.

I further highlighted that critical appraisals of the literature indicate that the focus has tended to be on mainstream positions within the respective traditions. The focus of this thesis is more nuanced in that it has been on more neglected, yet recognisable streams, within the traditions. While Eriugena and Kūkai express identifiable Christian and Buddhist positions, I have pointed out that both offer understandings that differ markedly with what were considered mainstream positions of their day. Their overwhelming emphasis on an immanental sense of transcendence and on a much more dynamic sense of reality marked them out in their particular time.

While Kūkai has featured in some works in the field of religion and ecology Eriugena has not been explored in this context to any significant degree in previous literature. Moreover my focus on a cross-cultural philosophical religious dialogue adds to an underdeveloped aspect of this field. By exploring the insights of two lesser known thinkers from vastly different traditions Eriugena and Kūkai this dissertation has effected to contribute to the field by a much needed focus on comparative work.

The efforts to unearth ecological possibilities in the literature involved recognising the ambiguous and nuanced nature of the understandings of the phenomenal world at work in many of the great religious traditions. This thesis also recognises that reality by noting a certain level of ambiguity towards material reality found in Eriugena's philosophy. Yet it sees the value of his contribution. In that respects it endeavours to maintain a realistic perspective on Christian oriented approaches to the natural world.

The assumption, often found in the literature, that religious traditions such as Buddhism, (which easily locate humans within the material world and contain obvious core teachings which are easily clothed in ecological language), are more ecological and will automatically give rise to ecologically sound behaviour, while those such as Christianity, (where such teachings are not as easily discernable), will not, is also critiqued. Again cognisance of such a criticism is reflected in this thesis' choice of philosophers. For instance, I have argued that Eriugena, while being

recognizably Christian, offers a more ecologically acceptable perspective on the natural world than is often the case with Christianity.

A further criticism here concerns the idealistic premise of much of the literature: that behaviour is invariably conditioned by worldviews giving rise to a sense of a direct one-directional causal link from worldview to behaviour. This thesis takes cognisance of such a criticism in exploring the cosmic vision—worldviews—of Eriugena and Kūkai. I argued in the thesis for the positive potential impact of such views of reality. Yet my claim is that Eriugena and Kūkai did not just offer a purely theoretical understanding of reality that would lead to a change in human behaviour. They were not just offering ideas as the means of social change. They claimed, particularly Kūkai, through active engagement with the world, which for Kūkai was about the ritual practices, one came to the truth—in other words one's worldview was deepened or altered.

Finally, the practice of using traditional religious thought to create an environmental ethic has been strongly criticised by scholars such as Harris, who claim that it is a distortion of the culture specific approaches of different traditions. However, I would argue that this need not necessarily be the case, as my approach to Eriugena and Kūkai shows. I argued that both offer insights that can be used in formulating more ecologically appropriate behaviour. Yet, in doing this I have not ignored aspects of their thought— such as the ambiguity in Eriugena towards the body—which would not contribute positively to such an ethic. In that way I have not distorted their particular philosophical positions on reality.

In some respects however, this dissertation is no more than an introductory effort to compare two thinkers from vastly different cultures from each other and from today in an ecological context. Further possibilities for research suggest themselves. I have argued that the recognition of the depth dimension to reality, which marks the esoteric and apophatic as indicated by Kūkai and Eriugena, makes the possibility of having a more holistic and non possessive attitude towards the phenomenal world more feasible. I looked at how this notion is reflected in the work of contemporary

phenomenology. However it seems to me that this idea is also reflected (if somewhat differently) in recent work in environmental philosophy by Simon James.

Coming from the field of virtue ethics, James wishes to develop a phenomenological approach in environmental philosophy. In examining a values-only approach to nature (in order to ascertain how nature matters in a morally significant way) James presents scenarios that show a values-only approach to be too limited. The reasons why things matter to us cannot be framed completely in the idiom of value and to do so is to 'proffer an interpretation that is forced or violent.' However, James goes on to point out, the problem with using this kind of framework only is not just because we might fail to account for all the 'matterings' of phenomena in our lives, but more particularly it is because it may result in our dismissal of such phenomena altogether claiming that we know all there is to know:

> The real danger, I believe, is that a preoccupation with values-thinking might lead one to suppose that it is possible to distil the value from a thing and in this way capture all the ways it matters to us. For having distilled the value of the thing, one might be led to think that the thing itself merits no further attention. Everything that is important, morally, aesthetically and spiritually, will seem to be encapsulated in a neat package of values. And this surely would be the world of lived experience well lost.[524]

In this dissertation I have simply scratched the surface of trying to understand how we speak of the phenomenal world by exploring neglected ancient religious philosophical traditions in conjunction with contemporary phenomenological understandings. There is, therefore, room for much further engagement that recognises that nature needs to be approached via more than any one framework of exploration because ultimately we can never fully exhaust its meanings.

[524] James, *The Presence of Nature*, p. 85

I have argued for the role of religion in responding to contemporary reality. Implicit in much of what has been explored is retrieval of religious ideas—particularly in Christianity—but in the consciousness of a post 'death of God' context. In many ways this has freed up notions of religiosity from a more formalised sense found in classical mainstream Christianity (and also perhaps from the hostility of philosophical enterprises that see no place for religious thinking), allowing them to be examined in a more neutral setting. There is ample scope for further research of this kind, especially in the light of the ecological crisis.

Moreover, in recognition of the widening understanding of the concept of religion itself, there is ample scope for a dialogue between these elements of Christianity and Buddhism, on the one hand, and ideas found in indigenous traditions, on the other. In particular I am thinking of the work of John Grim whose idea of a holistic matrix could provide a link with Eriugena's frame of *natura* and Kūkai's *hosshin seppō*. From his exploration of the world of indigenous culture—its lifeways—Grim claims that in their grappling with the unknown from a religious sense, 'the implicate world of cosmological relationships' are understood to be 'folded into the rich array of lifeway activities.' He goes on to say that in indigenous traditions divine power 'is neither simply transcendent nor immanent, but a holistic matrix that generates a deeper knowing of the observed world through the interacting spheres of the somatic, the social, the ecological and the cosmological.'[525] Making these links with indigenous notions would offer different angles on how we might come to an ever deeper understanding of the observed world.

Throughout this work I have experienced the underlying tension between a positive regard for the world in all its aspects— coming primarily through the emphasis on the unity of reality— and, at the same time, a possible denigration, or undervaluing, of the very materiality of such a recognition in the face of the ultimate reality. Such

[525] J.A. Grim, 'Indigenous Traditions' in Gottlieb, (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, p. 297. Interestingly, Grim brings attention to a four-fold interpretive context—the embodied self, the native society, the larger earth community of the region, and the powerful cosmological entities that are considered to be present in ritual activities and mythic narratives of the group. A dialogue between such a frame and the four-fold of Eriugena could reveal interesting results.

tensions need to be acknowledged more clearly, but not in a dismissive way. My contention is that we are at a new level of integration of vastly different perspectives on reality. In a sense this is pointed out by Catherine Keller in an insightful observation in an article that discusses literature on embodiment alongside notions of the apophatic. She wonders firstly if it is an accident that now that a focus on body is finding its voice within theological institutions 'a mysticism of transcendent silence becomes trendy.' She goes on to suggest that there is a sense in which these need each other. Her claim is that if research on embodiment is to reach its own potential, it may require 'a dose of negative theology laced with deconstruction.' Conversely, she claims, 'an earthier embrace of our diversely bodied and often clouded creatureliness might help the mystical radiance to come out from under its bushel.'[526] Perhaps we need not see these different approaches as opposing (and yet not deny their differences) so much as finding in them views that bring us closer to the purpose of philosophy and religion: coming to an understanding of the true nature of reality and our place and role in it.

[526] C. Keller, 'The Cloud of the Impossible: Feminist Theology, Cosmology and Cusa, for Harvard 2007 available <*users.drew.edu/ckeller/essays/Cloud%20of%20Harvard.doc*>

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