

TAURI TÖLPT

Motion and change in the works of
St. John of Damascus:
philosophical and theological
foundations and applications



TAURI TÖLPT

Motion and change in the works of
St. John of Damascus: philosophical and
theological foundations and applications



UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
Press

School of Theology and Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities,
University of Tartu

Dissertation is accepted for the commencement of the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy (PhD) in Religious Studies on August 26th 2026, by the Council of
the School of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Tartu.

Supervisor: Prof. Anne Kull (University of Tartu)

Reviewers: Prof Vassa Kontouma (École Pratique des Hautes Études)
Assoc prof Anna Zhyrkova (Jesuit University Ignatianum in
Krakow)

Opponent: Prof Vassa Kontouma (École Pratique des Hautes Études)

Commencement: The University of Tartu Senate Hall, Ülikooli 18, Tartu on
November 19, 2026, at 14:15

Publication of this dissertation is granted by the University of Tartu

ISSN 1406-2410 (print)
ISBN 978-9908-57-386-1 (print)
ISSN 2806-2639 (pdf)
ISBN 978-9908-57-387-8 (pdf)

Copyright: Tauri Tölpt, 2026

University of Tartu Press
www.tyk.ee

Dedicated to my beloved wife, Triin

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For the historical record, it should be noted that this dissertation's genesis was not with John of Damascus or the themes of motion and change. Instead, it began as a theological inquiry into the alterations introduced to the created realm after original sin and the Fall. With Professor Konstantinos Telikonstantis's guidance, this theme was then connected to John Chrysostom, with John of Damascus entering the discussion much later. Ultimately, it was the Damascene, particularly his philosophical chapter on motion in the *Dialectica*, that prompted me to shift from the previous topic to the current one: his elaboration on the notions of motion and change.

The successful completion of this new direction is a testament to the contributions of many individuals. First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my family, especially my wife, Triin, for her unwavering patience and support. I am also deeply grateful to my supervisor, Professor Anne Kull, for her constructive insights and guidance. Special appreciation goes to Professor Damaskinos Olkinuora, Bishop of Haapsalu, for his invaluable suggestions and advice on an earlier version of this dissertation. A crucial contribution came from the reviewers, Professors Vassa Kontouma and Anna Zhyrkova, whose critical remarks significantly enhanced the philosophical sections of this work. I also thank Jason Van Boom for his editorial work and helpful suggestions. Additionally, my gratitude goes to Katrin Viires, who edited the Estonian conclusion of this dissertation. Last but not least, I wish to thank His Eminence, Metropolitan Stephanos of Tallinn and All Estonia, for his multifaceted support and benediction.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS.....	10
1. INTRODUCTION.....	11
1.1. Structural overview.....	14
1.2. Life and historical background.....	15
1.2.1. The Mansur family and the life of John Damascene	16
1.3. Works.....	23
2. MOTION AND CHANGE IN JOHN'S PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS	28
2.1. <i>Dialectica</i>	28
2.1.1. Neoplatonic Aristotelianism and Christian handbooks of logic	30
2.1.2. John Damascene and the sources of the <i>Dial</i>	31
2.1.3. The purpose of the <i>Dial</i>	34
2.1.4. The philosophy of motion in the <i>Dial</i> and the <i>Categories</i>	39
2.1.4.1. Neoplatonic commentators on the <i>Categories</i> '	
treatment of motion	40
2.1.4.2. The definition of <i>motion</i> and the categories	43
2.1.4.3. The four categories and the six kinds of motion.....	47
2.1.4.4. Differences between the kinds of motion	51
2.1.4.5. Motion and its opposites.....	52
2.1.4.6. Differences between the kinds of motion: the case of	
alteration	55
2.1.4.7. Distinguishing motion from change	57
2.1.5. Aristotle's definition of <i>nature</i>	59
2.1.6. Nature and its five kinds of motion.....	62
2.1.6.1. The pagan distinction between substance and nature ..	63
2.1.6.2. The modified definition of <i>nature</i>	67
2.1.6.3. Five kinds of natural motion.....	72
2.1.7. Time and motion.....	77
2.1.8. The concept of <i>another from others</i>	79
2.1.9. Conclusion	82
2.2. <i>Elementary Introduction</i>	84
2.2.1. Defining activity	87
2.2.2. Defining passion in contradistinction to activity	91
2.2.3. Will	94
2.2.4. Conclusion	98
3. THEOLOGICAL NOTIONS AND ARGUMENTS OF MOTION	
AND CHANGE.....	100
3.1. Motion and change in John Damascene's theological works	100
3.1.1. Against the Manichaeans	100
3.1.2. Defining the Orthodox faith.....	102

3.1.3. Christological Works	105
3.2. Motion and change against Manichaeism	108
3.2.1. Mutability of the created order and the origin of evil	110
3.2.2. Changing from good to evil	115
3.2.3. Against the eternity of evil matter	118
3.2.4. Explaining the immortality of created beings	121
3.2.5. Conclusion	125
3.3. Natural Theology	127
3.3.1. Refuting idolatry through solar and lunar eclipses	129
3.3.2. The causal power of planets and stars.....	131
3.3.2.1. The change of seasons and divinely providential care of human health.....	132
3.3.3. Explaining God's existence and incomprehensibility.....	138
3.3.3.1. From the different kinds of motion to the existence of God.....	141
3.3.4. Conclusion	147
3.4. Christology	148
3.4.1. Christological controversies.....	148
3.4.1.1. Nestorians	149
3.4.1.2. Monophysites	150
3.4.1.3. Monenergists-Monothelites	152
3.4.2. The definition of <i>nature</i>	154
3.4.3. Unification and composite nature	157
3.4.4. Natural motions of activity and will in Christ.....	162
3.4.5. Christ's passions as natural and non-opposing motions	168
3.4.6. From natural to hypostatic motions	174
3.4.7. The immutable and uncreated divine motions of activity and will	177
3.4.7.1. Is there a distinction between divine essence and activity?.....	179
3.4.8. Christ's microcosmic motions	187
3.4.9. Eucharistic changes of incarnation and digestion	192
3.4.10. Conclusion	197
4. GENERAL CONCLUSION.....	201
BIBLIOGRAPHY	206
EESTIKEELNE KOKKUVÕTE.....	221
CURRICULUM VITAE	226
ELULOOKIRJELDUS.....	227

ABBREVIATIONS

Aceph	On the Composite Nature, against the Acephali (De natura composita contra acephalos)
Arist Categ	In Aristotelis categorias commentarium
Arist Phys	In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria
Dial	Dialectica or Philosophical Chapters (Capita philosophica)
Dorm I–III	Three Homilies on the Dormition of the Virgin Mary (In Dormitionem sanctae Dei genitricis Mariae orationes tres)
Expos	Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith (Expositio fidei)
Fides	On the Faith against the Nestorians (De fide contra Nestorianos)
Haer	On Heresies (Liber de haeresibus)
Ieiun	On the Holy Fasts (De sacris ieiuniis)
Imag I–III	Three Treatises Against those who Attack the Divine Images (Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres)
IE	Elementary Introduction to Dogmas (Institutio elementaris ad dogmata)
Jacob	Against the Jacobites (Contra Jacobitas)
Manich	Against the Manichaeans (Dialogus contra Manichaeos)
Nestor	Against the Nestorians (Contra Nestorianos)
Opusc	Theological and Polemical Opuscula (Opuscula theologica et polemica)
Oxon	Fragmenta philosophica (Cod. Oxon. Bodl. Auct. T. 1.6)
Sabbat	Homily on Holy Saturday (Oratio in Sabbatum Sanctum)
Transfig	Homily on the Transfiguration of our Saviour Jesus Christ (Homilia in Transfigurationem Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi)
Trisag	Letter on the Thrice-Holy Hymn (Epistula de hymno Trisagio)
Volunt	On the Two Wills in Christ (De duabus in Christo voluntatibus)
DP	Teaching of the Fathers on the Incarnation of the Word (Doctrina Patrum de incarnatione Verbi)
PG	Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
CPG	Clavis Patrum Graecorum
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
BHG	Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the 21st century scholars have rediscovered the Greek Church Father John of Damascus. While earlier researchers (19th and 20th centuries) viewed him as an unoriginal thinker—both theologically and philosophically—and merely a copyist of the previous patristic tradition, then contemporary scholars have begun to question this narrative.¹ An important aspect that contributed to this change of mentality has to do with the critical re-evaluation of John Damascene's sources. A good example is the Trinitarian section of John's famous *Expositio fidei* [*Expos*] (chapters 1–14), which scholars had long considered a blatant copy and plagiarism of Pseudo-Cyrril's *De sancta trinitate*, which at the time was dated to the 6th/7th centuries. Thanks to the research of V. Kontouma, as well as to the contributions of A. Martinez and D. Stiernon, it is now known that it is actually a 14th century work of Joseph the Philosopher who copied it from the *Expos*.²

This discovery not only showed us that John Damascene was a more creative thinker than had been previously thought, but that there are aspects about him that the scholarly world has neglected and even missed. Since then, numerous works and articles have been written with the aim of highlighting undiscovered elements in John's thought as well as his originality and exact relationship with tradition.³

With the current dissertation I aim to contribute to this recent rise in interest, focusing predominantly on John Damascene's philosophical activity and argumentation.⁴ Although scholars have researched John's relationship with Greek (Neoplatonic–Aristotelian) and patristic philosophy for some time,⁵ they seem to have almost entirely neglected his relationship with the concepts of motion and change—an important subject in Aristotelian natural philosophy, where all discussions of nature relied on the explanation of motion/change.⁶ This oversight is particularly surprising given that the Damascene's main philosophical work, the *Philosophical Chapters* (*Dialectica* [*Dial*]), which serves as an introduction

¹ For a short overview of the history of studies of John Damascene see Ables 2023, 5–8.

² Conticello 1995, 117–129 (republished in Kontouma 2015, IV, 117–129; V, 7); Russell 2022, 31–35.

³ For the latest collection of articles see Ables, S. (ed.), 2023, *John of Damascus: More Than a Compiler*, Leiden, Boston: Brill.

⁴ For John's engagement with philosophical activity and elaboration see discussion in 2.1.1, 2.1.2. and 2.1.3.

⁵ Markov 2015; Kontouma 2015, III, 1–48; Zachhuber 2020, 288–310; Baranov 2021, 573–594; Parry 2017, 355–359; Zhyrkova 2017, 431–446; Žunjić 2015, 227–270 etc.

⁶ As we will see, for Aristotle all motion is change, but not all change is motion—especially when he distinguishes ordinary processes of development from the coming-to-be or passing-away of a substance. Nevertheless, Aristotle sometimes uses the Greek term *kinesis* (motion) broadly enough to cover most forms of change. No distinction is made in Aristotle's logical work, the *Categories*. See also Bodnar 2018.

to John's theological "magnum opus" the *Expositio fidei* (*Expos*), dedicates an entire chapter (62) to Aristotelian concepts of change and motion. Considering the significance of the concept of nature for Christological controversies from the Council of Chalcedon (451) until John Damascene's time, the existence of such a philosophical chapter should not be unexpected. Nevertheless, equivalent elaborations on *motion* cannot be found in the pre-Damascene Chalcedonian patristic tradition.⁷

Inductive reasoning therefore guides us to the main research goal of this dissertation, which is to examine the role that the different concepts of motion and change play in John's thought and argumentation. To accomplish this task, I will:

1. Determine the different concepts and notions of motion and change found in the works of John Damascene.
2. Present the use of these concepts in John's theological argumentation.
3. Reveal the background and potential sources behind the concepts of motion and change in John's works—aspects that also help understand John's originality and unoriginality.
4. Exemplify, regarding the concepts of motion and change, the link between John's philosophical and theological works.

Apart from my own article⁸ and some incidental references,⁹ the only one who has written on John Damascene's use of the Aristotelian concept of motion is G. Zografidis in his article "Aristotle and John of Damascus: The 'First Unmoved Mover' and God-Creator."¹⁰ At the same time, no broader study on the place of the concepts of motion and change in John Damascene's philosophic and theological thought has yet been conducted.

To accomplish the research goal and objectives I will analyze John's works, using the editions by B. Kotter along with other primary and secondary sources.¹¹ The primary method of analysis that I will employ in this dissertation is *textual analysis*. Among the various forms of textual analysis, I will mainly focus on

⁷ On this matter see 2.1.4.

⁸ Tölpt 2021, 316–334.

⁹ Markov's analysis of John Damascene's metaphysical synthesis (which covers activity, will, and passion) also occasionally elaborates on the subject of motion (Markov 2018).

¹⁰ Zografidis 1999, 201–221.

¹¹ Kotter 1969, 1973, 1975, 1981, 1988. Kotter's editions will be referred to by using chapter numbers. To facilitate my research, the search engine *TLG* (*Thesaurus Linguae Graeca*) is also used (<https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/index.php>). The titles of patristic and philosophical texts are referenced in Latin as in *TLG*; the precise edition used can be traced through the editor's name.

hermeneutics and *content analysis*.¹² Additionally, since a key element of John Damascene's presentation of motion and change involves multiple definitions and concepts,¹³ I will also incorporate the method of *conceptual analysis*.¹⁴ In order to determine such concepts, I will search for John Damascene different elaborations pertaining various reference and allusions to motions, changes, alterations, transformations etc.¹⁵

With this dissertation I aim to contribute to the existing scholarship by:

1. Introducing an entirely new and undiscovered philosophical concept in the thought and argumentation of John Damascene.
2. Clarifying the Damascene's relationship with both patristic and non-patristic philosophical sources, as well as his own philosophical writings.
3. Arguing for John's philosophic originality via examples of unprecedented logical concepts.

The broader aim of this work is to bring out the role of philosophical elaboration, via the concepts of motion and change, in the thought and argumentation of John Damascene and its relationship with previous patristic and philosophical tradition. This primarily contributes to the fields of Patristic Christian Philosophy, Historical Theology and the History of Philosophy, as well as to contemporary discussions on the relationship between faith and science, including interfaith and interreligious dialogues.

The greatest challenge in this work will be the identification of John's philosophical originality and unoriginality, which is caused by the fact that we no longer possess many of the philosophical sources that the Damascene used. This ignorance can, in part, lead us to consider all his unprecedented philosophical

¹² *Textual analysis* is a broad category of research methods which is utilized to describe and interpret the characteristics of a recorded or visual message. The purpose of textual analysis is to describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts. *Content analysis* is used to describe and explain characteristics of messages embedded in texts. It is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use. *Hermeneutics* consists of a reading that moves back and forth between the parts and the whole of a text, between its structure and meaning, between the reader's horizon and the horizon of the text, and between the text and its contexts (Nelson and Woods 2021, 109–120; Gilhus 2021, 275–284; Frey *et al* 1999, 225).

¹³ In this dissertation, I italicize technical concepts and definitions upon their first appearance in each section—parts 1 (introductory), parts 2 and 3 (analytical), and part 4 (conclusive)—to avoid overburdening the text. Additionally, I use italics where emphasis is deemed rhetorically useful. Quotation marks are employed to highlight a cultural, social, or linguistic aspect of a term.

¹⁴ *Conceptual* or *concept analysis* is a method where concepts belonging to a whole, their characteristics and relations they hold within systems of concepts are clarified and described (Nuopponen 2010, 6).

¹⁵ The main terms used by the Damascene to describe motion and change are: κίνησις, μεταβολή, τροπή, ἀλλοίωσις, φορά, μεταποίησις, μετασχηματισμός.

concepts and arguments as his original creations. Another extreme of this ignorance would be to deprive the Damascene of even having the possibility of being original, by recklessly omitting all his concept to a hypothetical and “now lost” source. In order to evade these extremes, I will keep both possibilities open, by either aligning towards one or another, depending on the data at hand.

An aspect, which largely remains unanalyzed in this dissertation, and needs further research, is the potential reception of John’s logic of motion and change by the later theological tradition.

1.1. Structural overview

This dissertation is structured into two core parts. After introductory overview of John’s biography and corpus overview, I then move on to answering the research goal and objectives by structurally dividing the dissertation into two analytical parts, dealing respectively with philosophy and theology. In the first part, I discuss the concepts of motion and change in John’s philosophical works while in the second I concentrate on his theological writings. This two-part division (a philosophical analysis followed by a theological one) better reveals the potential relationship between John’s philosophical and theological works.

In the first of these two parts, which deals with John’s philosophic works, I start by analyzing John’s *Dial* (2.2), from where I move on to the *Elementary Introduction* (*IE*) (2.3). As a basis, I am guided by the principles and terminology presented in chapter 62 of the *Dial*. In this part I analyze and determine the different concepts of motion and change in John’s philosophical works, enabling their later detection in his theological works. After that, I investigate the background and potential sources behind these concepts. On account of its philosophical nature, this part is structured according to the types and kinds of motion and change.

In the second of these two analytical parts I focus on John’s theological works. Here also, I first establish the patterns and concepts of motion and change, guided but not limited, by the vocabulary and principles established in the philosophical part. An important aim here is to understand the role that these concepts played in John’s theological argumentation. Additionally, in this part I also undertake an analysis of the backgrounds and potential sources that might have influenced John’s thought. Where possible, I also highlight the relationship with the concepts established in the philosophical section. Due to the theological character of this part, I structure it around theological themes, highlighting different types and kinds of motion.

The first chapter of the theological part (3.1) focuses on how the different concepts of motion and change counteract dualistic tendencies, especially Manichaeism. The second theological chapter (3.2) focuses on natural theology, investigating astronomical and kinetic contexts. Last, the theological part’s lengthy third chapter (3.3) analyzes how John employed the notions of motion and change within the Christological controversies prevalent during his time.

1.2. Life and historical background

Before beginning our quest for a more historical-critical overview of the life of John Damascene, we must first mention the existence of the so-called “official” Greek biography (*vita*), the *Life of St. John Damascene* (*Vita sancti Johannis Damasceni* – BHG 884).¹⁶ This story, likely written in the second half of the 10th century,¹⁷ critically reassesses and edits information from earlier biographies,¹⁸ becoming the most prominent *vita* for centuries to come. Through this hagiography John of Damascus gained equal status with previous Church Fathers and became venerated in the Byzantine Empire and Constantinople from the 11th century and in the West from the 12th.¹⁹ However, a significant issue with this biography, as well as with the other earlier accounts it draws upon, is that they largely consist of fictitious stories created long after John’s death, aimed at rehabilitating his image in the eyes of Chalcedonian Christians in Constantinople.²⁰ Contemporary research therefore classifies the *Life of St. John Damascene* and other earlier biographies as hagiographical novels, containing little reliable historical information.²¹

This, of course, does not mean that we cannot know anything about John Damascene and his life. Even though historical information is limited, there are still sources (e.g., chronicles and John’s own works) that enable us to have a more accurate insight into his life and fate.²² All these details allow us to move further from the fictitious narratives constructed by the *Life of John* and other early

¹⁶ *Vita sancti Johannis Damasceni* – BHG 884 (Volk 2024, 295–365). References to John’s biographies are based on chapter numbers. For summary descriptions of the *Life of St. John Damascene* see also Louth 2002, 16–19; Auzépy 2015, 418–424.

¹⁷ It has been suggested that the composer might have been John VI (838–842), John VII (964–966) or John VIII (1098–1106) of Jerusalem, with a preference to John VII (Volk 2023, 24–26. Schädler 2018, 99. Louth 2002, 16 Sahas 1972, 34–35). V. Kontouma believes that the work was written by John III (Polites) of Antioch (996–1021) in the year 1000 (Kontouma 2015, I, 17–18; II, 4–7).

¹⁸ For example, the *Arabic Life of John Damascene* (10th century), which is no longer extant, is supposedly the basis for the surviving Arabic *vita* (circa 1085) (see also Ibrahim 2023, 40–64). Additionally, there is the *Life of the Melodists Cosmas and John Damascene* (*Vita Chalkensis* BHG 394), likely the first biography of John Damascene, written shortly after the final victory over the iconoclasts (842–843) by Michael Syncellus (d. 846), and the *Short Life of John Damascene* (*Vita Marciana* BHG 885b), composed at the end of the 9th century or the early 10th century (On this matter see Volk 2024, 13–16, 124–125; Kontouma 2015, I, 12–17; II, 13–24).

¹⁹ Kontouma 2015, II, 3–4; Louth 2002, 16; Volk 2023, 30.

²⁰ According to V. Kontouma, it was the reconquering of Antioch by Basil II (976–1025) and the re-Byzantinisation of its Arabic-speaking Melkite community which created the historic momentum that caused the need for the ‘official’ *Life of John Damascene* (Kontouma 2015, II, 10–11, 21–26). This is accepted also by N. Russell (Russell 2022, 15–16).

²¹ Volk 2023, 35; Kontouma 2015, I, 3; Louth 2002, 16.

²² For the list of other Greek and Oriental sources regarding the life of John Damascene see also Auzépy 2015, 410–417; Kontouma 2015, I, 3–8.

biographies and reconstruct a historically more probable picture of his family and life.²³

1.2.1. The Mansur family and the life of John Damascene

Our story of John starts with Mansur ibn Sarjun, who was John Damascene's grandfather and governor of fiscal administration of Damascus, allegedly under the Byzantine emperors Maurice (582–602) and Heraclius (610–628). His role and position seem to have continued when the city was taken by the Sassanian king Chosroes (614–628), retaken by the Byzantine emperor Heraclius and even after it was conquered by Muslim Arabs (634/635). Mansur seems to have continued his post, at least for some time, under the first Umayyad Caliph Mu'awiya I (661–680).²⁴

As is well known, the early Umayyad Caliphate needed to retain existing local administrative structures and their officials as well as other important specialists—mostly indigenous Christians (both Melkite and Syriac) who knew and spoke Greek. It is for this reason that the early Caliphate, with its capital in Damascus, retained Greek as its administrative language.²⁵ One such Greek-speaking figure was the already mentioned Mansur ibn Sarjun, whose knowledge of fiscal administration made him an important person for the Caliph.

Considering his close relationship with the Caliphate as well as his alleged role in the loss of Damascus, it is not surprising why Byzantine Romans and some Melkites considered Mansur to be an opportunistic survivor, a traitor and a conspirator with the enemy—an aspect still remembered in the 10th century by the Chalcedonian (Melkite) patriarch and chronicler Eutychius.²⁶ We can also say that Mansur ibn Sarjun seems to have been a native of Damascus. As can be deduced from his Arabic/Syriac name, he was of Semitic origin, more likely Syrian-Aramean than Arab, even though Hellenized.²⁷ This is also confirmed by the fact that Eutychius distinguishes him from the Greek-speaking Romans.²⁸

²³ For different historical reconstructions of the life of John Damascene see Russel 2022, 15–26; Schadler 2018, 97–110; Griffith 2016, 29–52; Kontouma 2015, I, 28–30; Griffith 2006, 191–204; Louth 2002, 3–7; Sahas 1972, 3–48; Jugie 1924, 137–161.

²⁴ Stewart 1895, 47, 62–64.

²⁵ Debié 2016, 53–56; Badawy and Cecota 2015, 328–337; Sahas 1972, 25–26.

²⁶ Eutychius portrays Mansur as a traitor who mistreated the Roman (Byzantine) soldiers in the city and negotiated the surrender of Damascus (634/635) to the Muslim general Khalid ibn al-Walid by opening its gates. In return, Mansur requested that the lives of himself, his family, and the local (Christian) inhabitants of Damascus be spared, with the exception of the Romans. According to Eutychius, as a result, every patriarch and bishop worldwide anathematized Mansur ibn Sarjun for his betrayal and for causing the slaughter of the Romans (Stewart 1895, 62–64).

²⁷ Louth 2002, 5; Schadler 2018, 100; Griffith 2016, 30–31.

²⁸ Stewart 1895, 62–64.

Eventually, the duties of Mansur, as was customary, were taken over by his son, known as Sergius (Sarjun) ibn Mansur, the father of John Damascene. According to the chronicles, Sergius succeeded his father's position at some time during the reign of Mu'awiya I (661–680). According to the chronicler Khalifa (c. 776–854), Sergius held this position from the year 678 until his death in the year 705, coinciding with the death of Caliph Abd al-Malik (685–705).²⁹

Sergius' administrative role was to be the secretary of the treasury, responsible for the Caliph's businesses and the tax bureau. At the same time, it is unclear whether this responsibility encompassed only Damascus and its surrounding region, only Christian taxpayers (who paid a special tax) or whether it constituted a central authority based in Damascus and overseeing the entire Umayyad Caliphate. The chroniclers themselves portray him as someone responsible for the "tax bureau" and "businesses" of the Caliph in general.

D. Sahas points out that Sergius' intervention in the case of Athanasius Gumoye's businesses in Egypt, mentioned by the 12th century *Chronicle of Michael the Syrian*,³⁰ shows that he was not a mere local tax collector but responsible for the general Caliphate's fiscal and economic situation.³¹ M. Debié, on the other hand, argues on the contrary that the case of Gumoye shows that the Umayyad Caliphate had different figures from important Christian families (and not only Melkites) organising its taxation and spending. According to her, the Caliphate's tax collection and its distribution (mainly to the army) were geographically decentralized, where each emir oversaw the administration of a portion of the state. The conflict between Mansur and Gumoye was therefore a natural power struggle between two powerful families from different Christian denominations (Melkite-Chalcedonians vs Syriac-Monophysites) under the service of the Muslim Caliph.³²

Be that as it may, Sergius, being next to the Caliph, clearly had the power to influence matters also outside of Damascus. We find support for this in the *Chronography* (810–814) of Theophanes the Confessor (759–818), according to whom, already in 691, Sergius intervened with Abd al Madik to save a

²⁹ Carl and Hoyland 2015, 121, 169–170. On the Chroniclers' knowledge about Sergius (Sarjun) ibn Mansur see also Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, 365; Morony 1987, 216; Fishbein 1990, 215.

³⁰ According to the chronicle, the Umayyad Caliph Abd-al Malik (685–705) in Damascus had as his "writer" (secretary, treasurer) a Chalcedonian Christian named Sergius b. Mansur, or simply Mansur. As the story goes, in 695, the Caliph appointed a certain Monophysite from Edessa, Athanasius bar Goumaye, as tutor to his young brother Abd-al Aziz, who became the emir of Egypt at a very young age. As a tutor of the Egyptian emir, Athanasius became extremely rich. After leaving Egypt following Abd-al Aziz's death, Athanasius faced accusations of theft from the envious Sergius of Mansur to the Caliph, involving Egypt's treasures. Appearing before the Caliph's judgement, Athanasius's wealth was deemed excessive for a Christian; the dispute concluded with Athanasius giving the Caliph part of his treasure (Chabot 1901, 475, 477).

³¹ Sahas 1972, 28–29.

³² Debié 2016, 60–61.

church in Gethsemane (Jerusalem) from destruction;³³ and also from Michael the Syrian, according to whom Sergius proselytized also in Emesa.³⁴

A further crucial point, noted by Michael the Syrian³⁵ and Theophanes,³⁶ is Sarjun b. Mansur's status as a Chalcedonian Christian (al-Rumi): a disciple of Maximus the Confessor and a champion of the Melkite community, who had great faith ("the most Christian"), who converted others to his faith, and was even involved in the theological question of the thrice-holy hymn,³⁷ as later was his son John Damascene in his *Letter on the Thrice-Holy Hymn (Trisag)*.

This leads us to John Damascene, who inherited his grandfather's name and was born into a wealthy and influential family in Damascus, known as Mansur (ibn Sarjūn ibn Maṣṣūr).³⁸ The exact date of his birth is unclear, but it is believed to have occurred between 650 and 675.³⁹

John spent his childhood and adolescence at the Umayyad court due to his father's position. Although he grew up in an Arab-Muslim dominated society, his immediate surroundings were likely Greek-speaking and Chalcedonian. While the *Life of St. John Damascene* states that John was educated by an Italian monk named Cosmas,⁴⁰ it is more probable that he received his basic secular and ecclesiastical education within the Greek-speaking indigenous community of Damascus, similar to Sophronius of Jerusalem (ca. 560–638) and Andrew of Crete (ca. 660–740). Unlike the cultural, educational and literary "dark ages" that characterized Byzantium in the 7th and 8th centuries, the former Byzantine cities within the Arab Caliphate, including Damascus, remained significant centers of Greek learning and literary activity, both secular and ecclesiastical. Compared to their counterparts in Constantinople, the Greek-speaking inhabitants of the Umayyad Caliphate had better access to the scientific and philosophical heritage of the Christianized late Neoplatonic school of Alexandria, which lasted until the 7th century and was often preserved by Syriac and Palestinian monastic libraries.⁴¹

³³ Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, 365.

³⁴ Chabot 1901, 492.

³⁵ Ibid., 492.

³⁶ Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, 365.

³⁷ According to the decisions of the council of Trullo (691/692) and its canon 81, which, having in mind the Monothelites/Monenergists, rejected the addition of "crucified for our sake" to the thrice-holy hymn, by therefore denying its Christological interpretation (Auzépy 2015, 416).

³⁸ Griffith 2016, 32. The acts of the iconoclastic council of Hieria (754) refer to John Damascene solely by the name Mansur (Μανσοῦρ) (*Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum. Concilii actiones VI–VII*, 1, 782: 1–8).

³⁹ The year 650 is proposed by B. Kotter (Kotter 1988, 127); according to P. Schadler between 650 and 675 (Schadler 2018, 99); the year 675 is proposed by S. Griffith (Griffith 2011, 208); R. Volk proposes 670 (Volk 2023, 17); and A. Louth proposes a later half of the 7th century (Louth 2002, 5).

⁴⁰ *Vita sancti Johannis Damasceni*, 6–10.

⁴¹ Cavallo 2015, 387–398. See also Russel 2022, 22; Schadler 2018, 99; Blake 2015, 365; Mango 2015, 375.

Not much is known about John's alleged secular career in Damascus. It is unclear when, or even if, John Damascene took over his father's position as a fiscal administrator. There is no clear historical evidence of John ever working as a high official of the Caliphate. The chronicler Khalifa identifies Sarjun b. Mansur al-Rumi as the last member of the Mansur family in this position, with his death in 705 marking the beginning of an Arab-speaking fiscal administration led by Suleyman. After this point, the chronicles cease to link the Mansur family with the Umayyad court.⁴²

The comparison of John Damascene with the Evangelist Matthew—a tax collector—at the Second Council of Nicaea (787)⁴³ cannot be taken as verified proof of John's involvement in the fiscal administration of the Caliphate. Rather, it likely references the common choice made by both John and Matthew to abandon their wealth and former lives to follow Christ.⁴⁴

There is a possibility that John's administrative career may have gone unnoticed by chroniclers due to their inability to distinguish him from his father. H. Lammens, later reiterated by S. Griffith, points out that during the reign of Abd al-Malik (685–705) both Christian and Muslim chroniclers seemed unable to differentiate Sarjun b. Mansur from his son, Mansur b. Sarjun b. Mansur (John of Damascus).⁴⁵ According to this theory, the transition of the position from Sarjun (Sergius) to his son was unmarked, leading chroniclers to continue using the same name. If we accept Michael the Syrian's accounts, which state that Sergius was still active in 695,⁴⁶ then John must have succeeded him no earlier than the second half of the 690s, while Caliph Abd al-Malik was still reigning.

At the same time, this theory of “non-distinction” remains unverified. In reality, the chroniclers Theophanes and Michael the Syrian had no difficulty distinguishing John of Mansur from Sergius of Mansur. Furthermore, while both chroniclers emphasize that Sergius was a fiscal administrator of the caliph, they do not provide the same information about John of Mansur.⁴⁷

This, of course, does not mean that John Damascene had no connection to the fiscal administration of the Caliphate. One plausible situation is that he worked there under his father's leadership, which could explain why John's name does not appear in the chronicles. It seems logical that John was prepared by his father, Sergius, from an early age to eventually take over his position, just as Sergius had been prepared by his own father. However, due to unforeseen changes in the Caliphate's administrative circumstances, John Damascene most likely never succeeded to this position, as it was given to an Arabic-speaking Muslim.

⁴² Carl and Hoyland 2015, 169–170.

⁴³ *Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum. Concilii actiones VI–VII*, 1, 782: 28–784: 9.

⁴⁴ Price 2018, 541, n. 542; Sahas 1972, 42.

⁴⁵ Griffith 2016, 32; Lammens 1908, 258–259.

⁴⁶ Chabot 1901, 475, 477.

⁴⁷ For Michael the Syrian's distinctive references to John b. Mansur see Chabot 1901, 517, 521. For Theophanes' references to John of Damascus see Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, 408, 417, 428.

What seems clear is that at one point John left Damascus, likely giving up his life of wealth to choose an ascetic life dedicated to the Church. Taking the monastic name John, he became a monk and later a priest. The traditional view, presented by the *Life of John* (BHG 884), that John went to the monastery of Mar Saba⁴⁸ is not supported by earlier biographies or other historical sources, including John's own works. Furthermore, documents depicting the life of the monastery of St. Saba in the 8th century, such as the *Life of Stephen of Mar Saba* (d. 794),⁴⁹ also do not mention John Damascene as its inhabitant. This has led many scholars to conclude that John most likely never became a monk at Mar Saba.⁵⁰

Instead, John appears to have moved to Jerusalem, where he became a monk (perhaps a *Spoudaios*⁵¹ near the Holy Sepulchre) and was ordained a priest by Patriarch John V (705–735). Under his guidance, John served as an important ecclesiastical figure in the church of Anastasis within the Chalcedonian Patriarchate.⁵² The date and reason for his departure from Damascus to Jerusalem have long been debated.

The first set of reasons is traditionally linked to the Caliphate's increasing hostility and repression against Christians, aimed at enhancing the public image of Islam in society. The reign of Abd al-Malik saw attempts to close a church in Gethsemane and the construction of the strongly anti-Trinitarian Dome of the Rock next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Following Abd al-Malik's death in 705 and the rise of Walid I (705–715), conditions worsened further. Walid I confiscated the Chalcedonians' cathedral in Damascus and replaced it with a mosque. This caliph was associated with the death of Peter of Capitolias (Maiuma);⁵³ further, it was he who changed the administrative language of the Caliphate from Greek to Arabic. As we have seen, according to the chronicler Khalifa, this transition occurred in 705, which also marked the end of the Mansur family's influence in the Caliphate's administration. These events have led many scholars to believe that John's departure from Damascus occurred during this period. However, some argue that it took place during the reign of Caliph Omar II

⁴⁸ *Vita sancti Johannis Damasceni*, 20–22.

⁴⁹ Lamoreaux 1999.

⁵⁰ Auzépy 2015, 401–408; Griffith 2016, 35; 2006, 192–193; Ables 2023, 2; Volk 2023, 35.

⁵¹ The zealous monks of the Spoudaion monastery, founded by Patriarch Elias of Jerusalem in the 5th century, in the service of the Holy Sepulchre (Church of Anastasis) (Péridès 1901, 225–228).

⁵² Auzépy 2001, 305, n. 4; Kontouma 2015 I, 29; Griffith 2011, 231–232; 2006, 191–193.

⁵³ According to Theophanes, in the year 741/742 the Muslims martyred Peter of Maiuma, another worker in the Caliphate's tax office, to whom John Damascene wrote a laudation (Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, 416–417). In reality, the Umayyad caliph al-Walid (705–715) seems to have ordered the martyrdom of Peter of Maiuma, also known as Peter of Capitola or Peter of Damascus, often mistakenly considered a bishop, as early as 715 (Griffith 2016, 37–38). Whether John Damascene indeed wrote a laudation to him is uncertain (Auzépy 2015, 421).

(717–720), who allegedly forbade⁵⁴ Christians from holding high positions within the Caliphate’s administration.⁵⁵

The second reason appears to be linked to changes in the life of the Melkite Chalcedonian Church. The patriarchate of Jerusalem—one of the most important centers of Chalcedonian Melkite Christianity—had been vacant or at least dysfunctional for 67 years since the death of Sophronius (d. 638). It was restored in 705 with the enthronement of John V as patriarch.⁵⁶ In the challenging environment of Islamic governance and competing Christian denominations, the emerging patriarchate certainly required the knowledge and resources of a man like John of Mansur.

Based on this data, it is reasonable to conclude that by the year 705, when Walid I (705–715) came to power, John of Mansur had no further reason to remain in Damascus. It is likely that the Mansur family had some influence over Chalcedonian matters in Jerusalem even before John moved there. As noted, John’s father, Sergius, played a key role in saving a church in Gethsemane in 691. Additionally, John’s significant role in Jerusalem’s primary Chalcedonian church, the Holy Sepulchre, along with his close ties to Patriarch John V, also suggests an earlier involvement.

One important detail missing from the various *vitae* but evident in his own works is that after the death of his close ally John V (d. 735), John Damascene’s life took a drastic turn for the worse. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem appears to have descended into a chaotic state of conflict among different Chalcedonian factions. John laments being silenced, marginalized and compelled to defend himself against various doctrinal accusations regarding the precise number of weeks in Great Lent and the content of the Thrice-Holy Hymn.⁵⁷

Moreover, by that time John had already publicly written against the iconoclasts (c. 730), which angered the Byzantine state, as well as against Islam (in his *On Heresies*), actions that likely did not go unnoticed or unpunished by the Caliphate.⁵⁸ As noted by Theophanes, around the year 734, an unknown Theodor of Mansur was banished to the desert, presumably for speaking out against

⁵⁴ Regarding the historicity of such a prohibition see Yarbrough 2016, 173–206.

⁵⁵ On this matter see Griffith 2016, 33–34; 2011, 208–210; Jugie 1924, 149.

⁵⁶ Griffith 2011, 224; Kontouma 2015, I, 29. For the importance of Jerusalem to the Chalcedonian Melkites see Griffith 2006.

⁵⁷ John’s *On the Holy Fasts (Letter to Cometas)* explains that the conflict among Chalcedonian Christians was also fuelled by disagreements over the length of the Great Lent’s fasting weeks. The Damascene here laments being pushed aside, slandered for his views, and silenced. John says he would’ve stayed quiet if his friends and supporters hadn’t pushed him to write a defense (*Ieiun*, PG 95, 65–68).

John’s *Letter on the Thrice-Holy Hymn* mentions Anastasius, a Chalcedonian abbot of the Euthymios Monastery, who believed the thrice-holy hymn referred only to God the Son. That abbot further asserted that both the Damascene and the late Patriarch John V shared the same view. John rejects all these slanders about him and his Patriarch, whom no one knew better than he, and calls for peace in the Church (*Trisag*, 1; 26).

⁵⁸ Kontouma 2015, I, 27–29.

Islam.⁵⁹ Whether this blow against a member of the Mansur family was related to John of Mansur's activities remains unknown. In the years 742/743, John's close associate Peter of Damascus is also reported to have been exiled to the desert for speaking against Islam.⁶⁰ Furthermore, in 742, it is said that Constantine V declared an annual anathema against John Damascene.⁶¹

From the mid-730s to the early 740s, John's life and immediate environment became engulfed in hostility, conflict and the threat of exile from multiple directions. V. Kontouma notes that, amidst political hostility and ecclesiastical turmoil, John Damascene was compelled to leave his position in Jerusalem around 742. It is unclear whether John was exiled by the state authorities, pressured by his fellow churchmen or chose to leave on his own. His exact place of exile also remains unknown. What we do know is that, despite his exclusion and isolation, John survived into old age.⁶² In his advanced years, John may have had the opportunity to partially edit his existing works. Ultimately, the final years of John Damascene were clearly not as pleasant as the different *vitae* suggest.⁶³

The exact year of John Damascene's death is undetermined, but it has traditionally been claimed to be not before 742/743⁶⁴ and not after the Council of Hieria in 754⁶⁵.⁶⁶ After his death, he was not immediately recognized as a hero of the Orthodox Chalcedonian faith; instead, he remained an ambiguous figure. His iconophile teachings made him unpopular with the Roman/Byzantine state, which also resented him due to his family's treacherous relations with the Muslim Caliphate⁶⁷—a sentiment that persisted even after the iconoclastic era (842).⁶⁸

⁵⁹ Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, 410.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 416. John Damascene wrote his *Contra Jacobitas* on behalf of Peter of Damascus (Kotter 1981, 109).

⁶¹ Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, 417.

⁶² John mentions his great age in the *Dorm II*, 1:30–31. See also Kotter 1988, 517.

⁶³ Kontouma 2015, I, 29–30.

⁶⁴ According to the *Apologetic letter of the Monophysite Elias to the Orthodox Synkellos Leo of Harran* John Damascene seems to be still alive in 743 (Kontouma 2015, I, 4; Volk 2023, 17).

⁶⁵ According to the finishing statement of the council of Hieria (754): “The Trinity has put down/deposed (καθεύλεν) the three” (*Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum. Concilii actiones VI–VII*, 1, 782:8). Besides the spiritual death of the three, this phrase can be interpreted as suggesting (though not proving) that all three, including the Damascene, were already dead by the council's time (754) (Schadler 2018, 110; Louth 2002, 7, Kontouma 2015, I, 6).

⁶⁶ Between the years 745 and 750 according to R. Volk (Volk 2023, 17); V. Kontouma proposes ca 745 (Kontouma 2015, I, 28); S. Griffith the year 749 (Griffith 2011, 208); the year 750 by A. Louth (Louth 2002, 5) and P. Schadler (Schadler 2018, 99).

⁶⁷ The council of Hieria dedicated four anathemas to Mansur declaring him to have a “bad name,” to be “Saracen-minded,” “a worshiper of icons,” “a falsifier,” “an insulter of Christ,” “a conspirator against the Empire,” “a teacher of impiety” and “a perverter of the Scriptures.” (*Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum. Concilii actiones VI–VII*, 1, 782: 1–8; own translation).

⁶⁸ As previously noted, the anti-Roman sentiment of the Mansur family was still well remembered in the 10th century by the Chalcedonian patriarch Eutychius.

Despite occasional attempts by some iconophile authors to elevate his status,⁶⁹ the notoriety of John's family hindered the full glorification of his memory. It was only in the 11th and 12th centuries that Byzantine Orthodox praise and the rehabilitation of John Damascene's life and works began, ultimately establishing him as an important Church Father for both the East and the West.

1.3. Works

In this chapter I will give a general and introductory overview of the rich heritage of the written works of John Damascene, which encompass philosophy, dogmatics, apologetics, homiletics, and, according to tradition, allegedly also hymnography. As I have already mentioned earlier, a more thorough analysis on the works relevant to this dissertation, will be done in the thematic chapters.

One of the most significant and fascinating projects that John undertook is the *Fount of Knowledge* (Πηγή γνώσεως)—a three-part magnum opus consisting of the *Philosophical Chapters* (or *Dialectica* [*Dial*]), *On Heresies* (*Haer*), and the *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* (*Expos*).⁷⁰ Even though many details of this undertaking remain unclear, it is evident that John regarded these three works as a unified trilogy. In his *Dial proem* (*Letter to Cosmas*), John clarifies his intentions:

First, I will exposit what is best amongst the Greek sages, considering that every good thing has been given to humans by God, because “every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights.”/.../

Then, I will give an account of the nonsense of heresies hostile to God. Thus recognizing the lie, we can dislodge it from the truth.

Next, with the help and by the grace of God, I will exposit the truth that destroys error and dispels lies, embellished and augmented by discourses by the inspired Prophets like a jewel set in gold, and by the fisherman taught by God, and by the God-bearing shepherds and teachers.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Examples of such early rehabilitations include Theophanes the Confessor's *Chronography* (810–814), the *Life of the Melodists Cosmas and John Damascene* (*Vita Chalkensis* BHG 394), written shortly after the final victory over the iconoclasts (842–843) by Michael Syncellus (d. 846), and the *Short Life of John Damascene* (*Vita Marciana* BHG 885b), composed at the end of the 9th century or the early 10th century.

⁷⁰ On this matter see Louth 2002, 31–34; Kontouma 2015 V, 1–2; largely summarized by Russel 2022, 27–30.

⁷¹ Καὶ πρότερον μὲν τῶν παρ' Ἑλλήσι σοφῶν τὰ κάλλιστα παραθήσομαι εἰδώς, ὥς, εἴ τι μὲν ἀγαθόν, ἄνωθεν παρὰ θεοῦ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις δεδωρηται, ἐπειδὴ «πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν ἐστι καταβαῖνον παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων»./.../ Εἴτα τὴν τῆς πλάνης ὀλέτειραν καὶ τοῦ ψεύδους ἐλάτειραν, ὥσπερ κροσσῶ τοῖς χρυσοῖς τοῖς τῶν θεοπνεύστων προφητῶν καὶ θεοδιδάκτων ἀλιέων καὶ θεοφόρων ποιμένων τε καὶ διδασκάλων λόγοις κεκαλλωπισμένην καὶ περικεκοσμημένην ἀλήθειαν (*Dial. proem*: 43–46, 51–57; translation and pericopes, with some additions, taken from Kontouma 2015, V, 1).

In the same letter, John also notes that he intended the trilogy to serve as a compendium of thoughts and concepts articulated by various eminent teachers and wise men, without any additions from himself.⁷² However, it is uncertain whether John intended the title *Fount of Knowledge* to apply to the entire trilogy. In the *Dial*, the only place where John uses this title, it appears to refer solely to the book that addresses philosophy (i.e., the *Dial*). Nevertheless, since John considers the philosophical discussion in the *Dial* to be just the beginning of a broader tripartite project, it is possible to extend this title to encompass all three works.⁷³

Despite John's possible intentions, the manuscript tradition tells a different story. When we examine the manuscripts, we find that the custom of maintaining the tripartite system and referring to it as the *Fount of Knowledge* is a relatively rare and late phenomenon. Only a single 11th century manuscript (out of the 22 that contain all three texts) presents the threefold structure in the traditional order (*Dial*, *Haer*, *Expos*) and labels it as the *Fount of Knowledge*. The majority of the manuscripts do not acknowledge the threefold system or its common title, *Fount of Knowledge*. 156 manuscripts present the books separately while 150 manuscripts combine the *Dial*, followed by the *Expos*, into a single volume titled *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*.⁷⁴

With the exception of a single 11th century manuscript, the tripartite *Fount of Knowledge* concept first emerged in the 17th century. It was solidified by the editor M. Le Quien in the 18th century and reiterated by J. P. Migne in the 19th century.⁷⁵ This editorial reconstruction is based on an interpretation that combines John Damascene's tripartite intention expressed in the preparatory letter of the *Dial* (*Dial proem*) with the possible extensive use of the title *Fount of Knowledge* in the *Dial*. B. Kotter, however, completely rejects this reconstruction in his critical edition, omitting the title *Fount of Knowledge* by treating the three works as distinct from one another.⁷⁶

Based on these data, we can claim that John Damascene most likely intended the three works to be combined into a single trilogy. It can also be argued that John wanted to use the name *Fount of Knowledge* for the *Dial*; however, it remains unclear whether he intended to extend this title to encompass the entire trilogy.

The absence of any mention of this intention in the manuscript tradition suggests that John did not finalize his plan. As A. Louth has pointed out, John Damascene's preliminary project consisted solely of the *Dial*, along with its shorter version (*Dial brev*) of 50 chapters, followed by the *Expos* with its 100 chapters. This duology, called the *Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, combining philosophical and theological elements, was John's initial focus. Later, John began to edit the *Dial*, producing a longer version (*Dial fus*) with 68 chapters.

⁷² *Dial*, *proem*: 60–65.

⁷³ *Dial*, 2: 6–12.

⁷⁴ Kontouma 2015, V, 2; Louth 2002, 31–32.

⁷⁵ Louth 2002, 32; Kontouma 2015, V, 2.

⁷⁶ See Kotter 1969; 1973; 1981.

With his *Dial proem*, he appears to have introduced this finalized longer version of the *Dial*, along with a novel idea of transforming his duology into a trilogy by adding the *On Heresies*. Unfortunately, due to John's death, this plan was not completed, which is why the manuscript tradition lacks any reference to it, primarily referring to the *Hundred and Fifty Chapters* consisting of *Dial (brev)* and *Expos*.⁷⁷ Similarly, V. Kontouma's analysis concludes that the *Fount of Knowledge* was originally intended by John as a duology. Despite the assertions made in the *Dial proem*, the compelling unity of the *Dial* and *Expos* is just too significant to overlook.⁷⁸

Another important polemical work that is often overshadowed by John's other theological writings is titled *Our Father among the Saints, John, the Presbyter Monk from Damascus, against the Manichaeans*, also known as *Against the Manicheans* (*Manich* CPG 8048).⁷⁹

Touching upon Christological matters John has written altogether six works. Among them two were written against the Nestorians: *On the Faith against the Nestorians* (*Fides* CPG 8054) and *Against the Nestorians* (*Nestor* CPG 8053). Three against the divided communities and churches of the so-called "Monophysites":⁸⁰ *Against the Jacobites* (*Jacob* CPG 8047), *Letter on the Thrice-Holy Hymn* (*Trisag* CPG 8049), and *On the Composite Nature against the Acephali* (*Aceph* CPG 8051). The longest of John's Christological works is *On the Two Wills in Christ* (*Volunt* CPG 8052), which addresses both the Monothelites and Monenergists.

Another polemical and apologetic kind of work in John's corpus is the *On the Holy Fasts by John Damascene the Presbyter* (*Ieiun* CPG 8050), which defends and advocates for an 8-week Lent.⁸¹ The authenticity of this polemical work, written during the last decade of John's life, has never been questioned. Despite this, it has received very little scholarly attention, with the notable exception of V. Kontouma's study.⁸² The work has been omitted from Kotter's critical editions and has not been analyzed in A. Louth's renowned work *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality*.

The last polemical treatise in our list of authentic works by John Damascene is the *Three Treatises Against Those Who Attack the Divine Images* (*Imag I–III* CPG 8045). As the title suggests, its main aim is to defend the tradition of icon veneration, primarily against the iconoclastic activities initiated by Byzantine Emperor Leo III Isaurian (717–741) between 726 and 730.⁸³ John, one of the

⁷⁷ Louth 2002, 32–34.

⁷⁸ Kontouma 2015, V, 15.

⁷⁹ Kotter 1981, 351.

⁸⁰ The term *Monophysite* is used throughout this dissertation, even when referring to Christians who properly speaking were not Monophysites (Eutychians) in strict sense, following the language and attitude that John gives in his writings.

⁸¹ *Ieiun*, PG 95, 64A–72C.

⁸² Kontouma 2015, VII, VIII.

⁸³ On a short historical overview of Iconoclasm see Louth 2002, 193–197; 2003, 7–9.

earliest significant theological responders to this imperial movement, faced a novel challenge that required a fresh and original approach.⁸⁴ As B. Kotter points out, John of Damascus is more directly and originally connected to this work than to any other piece of his extensive intellectual legacy.⁸⁵

As a priest of the monastic community of the Church of Resurrection in Jerusalem, John Damascene also naturally assumed the role of a preacher. His sermons and homilies, which skillfully employ various rhetorical techniques,⁸⁶ were highly valued by both his fellow monastics and the parishioners of the great Church of Jerusalem. This preaching ability is reflected in the *Chronicle of Theophanes*, where John is referred to as *Chrysorrhoas* (Gold-streaming). The total number of preserved authentic homilies is ten:⁸⁷ *Homily on the Fig-Tree and the Parable of the Vineyard* (CPG 8058);⁸⁸ *Homily of the Humble Monk and Presbyter John Damascene on Holy Saturday (Sabbat CPG 8059)*; ⁸⁹ *Homily on the Nativity of the Lord* (CPG 8067, BHG 1912); ⁹⁰ *Homily of the Blessed Presbyter John Damascene on the Transfiguration of our Saviour Jesus Christ* (Transfig CPG 8057, BHG 1979); and the *Three Homilies on the Dormition of the Virgin Mary* (Dorm I–III CPG 8061, 8062, 8063, BHG 1114, 1097, 1089).⁹¹

In addition to homilies dedicated to feasts and Gospel readings, John also wrote three encomia or hagiographic homilies: *Passion of the Great Martyr Artemius* (CPG 8082, BHG 170–171c);⁹² *Praise of the Martyr St. Barbara* (CPG 8065, BHG 217); *Praise of St. John Chrysostom* (CPG 8064, BHG 879).

There is of course also the question about John Damascene's hymnographic activity. Although most modern scholars accept that John Damascene was a hymnographer, they acknowledge that Byzantine hymnography—and John's role

⁸⁴ Even though Byzantine iconoclasm was a novel event, John had clearly witnessed the Muslim iconoclasm implemented in the 720s by Caliph Yazid II (690–724) (Louth 2002, 197). There also existed a pre-Damascene apologetic tradition against the Jewish attacks on the Christian use of images, like the arguments of Leontius of Neapolis, also used of by the Damascene in his *Imag III*, 84 (see also Louth 2003, 12). John's anti-iconoclasm of the *Expos* 89 might be also dealing with this type of pre-Byzantine iconoclasm (Louth 2002, 33, 185).

⁸⁵ Kotter 1975, 4.

⁸⁶ Louth 2002, 231.

⁸⁷ Kontouma 2015 I, 32; Louth 2002, 226.

⁸⁸ Kotter 1988, 102.

⁸⁹ Exact title: Ἰωάννου, ταπεινοῦ μοναχοῦ καὶ πρεσβυτέρου Δαμασκηνοῦ, λόγος εἰς τὸ ἅγιον σάββατον (Kotter 1988, 121).

⁹⁰ Exact title: Ἰωάννου, τοῦ ταπεινοῦ καὶ ἐλαχίστου μοναχοῦ τοῦ Δαμασκηνοῦ, λόγος εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν Χριστοῦ γέννησιν (Kotter 1988, 324).

⁹¹ *First Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin Mary* (*Oratio prima in dormitionem sanctae Dei genitricis Mariae* – CPG 8061); *Second Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin Mary* (*Oratio secunda in dormitionem sanctae Dei genitricis Mariae* – CPG 8062); *Third Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin Mary* (*Oratio tertia in dormitionem sanctae Dei genitricis Mariae* – CPG 8063).

⁹² Ὑπόμνημα ἡγουν ἐπεξηγήσις τοῦ μαρτυρίου τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἐνδόξου μεγαλομάρτυρος καὶ θαυματουργοῦ Ἀρτεμίου συλλεγὲν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱστορίας Φιλοστοργίου καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν παρὰ Ἰωάννου μοναχοῦ (Kotter 1988, 202).

in it—remains in its infancy, poorly mapped and often lacks reliable modern editions, let alone critical ones. There is also no common consensus on the exact list of John Damascene’s hymnographic works.⁹³ On one hand, Sophronios Eustratiades has recognized the authenticity of a significant number of hymns.⁹⁴ Dimitrios Skrekas highlights that an astonishing 531 heirmoi, 115 canons, 453 idiomela and 139 prosomoia have been attributed to John Damascene.⁹⁵ In contrast, other scholars take a more cautious approach, refraining from asserting a definitive total.⁹⁶ Conversely, D. Olkinuora’s critical perspective suggests that John Damascene may not have been a hymnographer at all.⁹⁷

There appears to be a general consensus that the renowned *Paschal Canon* (*Canon Paschalis* – CPG-8055) belongs to him.⁹⁸ A. Louth identifies as authentic the *Canon on the Transfiguration of the Lord* and the *Canon on the Dormition of the Mother of God*, which he claims are linked to the eponymous homilies of John Damascene. Additionally, drawing on the nearly century-old research of Eustratiades, Louth accepts many other heirmoi and troparia as authentic, though he does not specify which ones.⁹⁹

There has also been lively debate regarding the authenticity of three iambic canons for Christmas, Theophany and Pentecost, attributed to John of Damascus. Regarding the *Canon on Christmas*, Oleksandr Petrynko, although hesitant, does not entirely dismiss its authenticity due to its strong similarities with John’s homilies.¹⁰⁰ S. Roumas states that John’s authorship of this *Canon* is a resounding “maybe.”¹⁰¹ Demetrios Skrekas presents arguments both for and against the authorship of all three canons, ultimately deeming it inconclusive.¹⁰² Ultimately, the ambiguity of attributions, coupled with the lack of reliable historical documents, prevents us from definitively claiming which hymnographic works do or do not belong to John or whether he was indeed a hymnographer.

⁹³ Olkinuora 2026 (forthcoming), 1–3; 2024, 337–338; Louth 2002, 253; Hannick 217–218; Skrekas 2008, long abstract, 1–3.

⁹⁴ Eustratiades 1931–1933.

⁹⁵ Skrekas, 2008, vii.

⁹⁶ Hannick 2001, 217–228; Peristeris 2001, 171–194; Louth 2002, 252–258.

⁹⁷ Olkinuora 2026 (forthcoming), 30.

⁹⁸ Interestingly, in the list of the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, this work is the only one of John’s hymnographic oeuvres mentioned as an authentic treatise (CPG 1979, 516). See also Louth 2002, 252–253, 258–268.

⁹⁹ Louth 2002, 253 n. 3, 258.

¹⁰⁰ Petrynko 2010, 303.

¹⁰¹ Roumas 2018, 8.

¹⁰² Skrekas 2018, 377–394; 2008, xxxv–xxxvii, xlvi–xlviii.

2. MOTION AND CHANGE IN JOHN'S PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS

2.1. *Dialectica*

Philosophical Chapters, also known since the 16th century as the *Dialectica* (*Dial* CPG 8041),¹⁰³ is a philosophical and logical work by John Damascene. It was intended to be the first part of either a duology, followed by *Expos*, or a trilogy, followed by *Haer* and *Expos*.

As I have already mentioned, the *Dial* exists in two versions: a shorter version with 50 chapters (*Dial brev*) and a longer version with 68 chapters (*Dial fus*). Both versions undoubtedly trace back to John Damascene. The *Dial brev* represents John's initial attempt at this undertaking, while the *Dial fus* appears to be a later reworking of the earlier version.¹⁰⁴ The exact dates of composition for these two versions are not known. S. Ables claims that the first attempt to compose the *Dial brev* began as early as the year 705, while the longer version may have been completed during the 720s.¹⁰⁵ A. Louth, on the other hand, suggests that the longer version of the *Dial* was formulated toward the end of John's life, coinciding with his development of the tripartite structure of the *Fount of Knowledge*.¹⁰⁶

Nothing exact is known about the addressees. The title's reference to Cosmas, the bishop of Maiuma, is likely a later addition.¹⁰⁷ According to John Damascene, the purpose of the *Dial* is to serve as an introduction to philosophy, where he presents the most valuable concepts of Greek (pagan) philosophical knowledge that align with and support Christian truth. Positive aspects of Greek knowledge, despite their pagan origins, should be regarded as divine gifts bestowed by God upon humanity. Conversely, ideas that contradict the truth should not be considered knowledge at all; instead, they are inventions of the devil and fabrications of the evil spirit.¹⁰⁸

As the Damascene suggests, we should read the texts of pagan philosophers and embrace their insights that benefit our souls while discarding what does not. Pagan philosophical knowledge and reasoning should not be misused; instead, they should be regarded as a maiden serving the queen, with the queen representing truth and theology (true philosophy). Although divine truth itself does not require the aid of dialectics and reasoning, these tools remain essential for

¹⁰³ Kontouma 2015, V, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Louth 2002, 40. All the references in this work will be based on *Dial fus*.

¹⁰⁵ Ables 2020, 644–645.

¹⁰⁶ Louth 2002, 34, 41.

¹⁰⁷ According to A. Kazhdan and S. Gero this editorial addition was most probably made during the 10th century. (Kazhdan and Gero 1989, 123).

¹⁰⁸ *Dial, proem*: 43–48; 2:6–8.

countering false knowledge and those who promote it.¹⁰⁹ This obliges John to assert that in his *Dial*, he will, much like a bee, gather only those aspects of Greek philosophy that align with Christian truth and reject those that contradict it.¹¹⁰

John Damascene's attitude towards Neoplatonic Aristotelian philosophy is therefore quite ambivalent. From one part he considers the good aspects of Greek philosophers to be divine gifts that can be beneficial to one's soul and even encourages the Chalcedonians to research their texts. But at the same time there is qualitative difference between the good knowledge of the Greeks and that of the Christian Fathers—they are not equal.¹¹¹ Despite their good aspects, the knowledge of the Greeks can only be a lower-class servant of the Christian truth. In addition to that, John reminds to his readers that Greek philosophy also contains negative and dangerous aspects. This ambivalent relationship is well summarized by the Damascene who in his *Dial proem* makes a rhetorical reference to pagan philosopher as enemies from whom he will gather the fruit of salvation.¹¹²

In this sense the Damascene is not ready to go as far as the Syriac Christian tradition where the Christianization of the pagan (Aristotelian) philosophical program and its association with the different monasteries was much deeper.¹¹³ John's stance against the Monophysites whom he accuses of having made Aristotle their 13th apostle, illustrates this aspect very well.¹¹⁴ John Damascene, as is pointed out by J. Zachhuber, *recognized the need to adapt the conceptual apparatus of Chalcedonians to the novel challenges of life in a multi-faith environment without giving up on the strong tradition of anti-Aristotelian sentiment among Greek Christian authors.*¹¹⁵

This selective and at the same time critical approach to pagan philosophy is not new; Basil of Caesarea already stated in his *Letter to the Youth* that one should take what is beneficial from pagan philosophers while setting aside, yet still considering, what is harmful.¹¹⁶ Similar approaches can also be found among John's favourite Church Father, Gregory of Nazianzus.¹¹⁷

When examining the thematic content of the *Dial*, it becomes clear that it is primarily Aristotelian. The first part is derived from Porphyry's *Isagoge* (*Introduction to Aristotle's Categories*), while the second part is based on Aristotle's *Categories*. Chapters 9–29 of the *Dial* are grounded in Porphyry's concepts while chapters 32–39 and 47–63 draw on Aristotle's *Categories*. Consequently, these

¹⁰⁹ *Dial, proem.*, 1:52–65.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 48–51.

¹¹¹ See also *Dial*, 31.

¹¹² *Dial, proem.*: 43–51

¹¹³ Sergius of Reshaina, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 8.

¹¹⁴ *Haer.*, 83:13; 83 addit.

¹¹⁵ Zachhuber 2020, 289.

¹¹⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *De legendis gentilium libris*, 2:1–13; 4:41–54.

¹¹⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Poemata quae spectant ad alios*, PG 37, 1581. See also Schadler 2018, 76–77.

chapters serve as an introduction to Neoplatonic Aristotelian philosophy. The remaining chapters result from confusion, such as the insertion of Aristotelian sections into the Porphyrian framework, or they focus on concepts significant to Chalcedonian theologians.¹¹⁸ These latter chapters not only have a different background, originating from ecclesiastical sources, but also present a distinct logic as an introduction to patristic philosophy.¹¹⁹ This undertaking and background raise many questions about the nature of the *Dial* and its relationship to Aristotelian philosophy and its sources.

2.1.1. Neoplatonic Aristotelianism and Christian handbooks of logic

As is well known, not long after Aristotle's death in 322 BC much of his work fell into secondary use and was largely neglected until Andronicus of Rhodes began collecting and editing Aristotle's writings in the 1st century BC. From that point on, particularly with Boethius of Sidon, the Aristotelian commentary tradition emerged. As Aristotle's popularity grew, the Middle Platonists began to borrow from him, especially in the areas of logic and epistemology. A significant development in this history comes from the Neoplatonist Porphyry, a student of Plotinus, who introduced Aristotle—especially his *Categories*—into the broader context of Platonism. With his work *Eisagoge*, Porphyry effectively made Aristotle a foundational element of Platonism and of philosophy in general, particularly in the realm of logical argumentation. Thus, it is not surprising that at times Neoplatonism itself was more Aristotelian than Platonic.¹²⁰

From the fifth to the seventh century, the Neoplatonic school of Alexandria played a significant role in commenting on Aristotle, particularly his *Categories*.¹²¹ It has been suggested that by the 7th century, continuing into the 9th and 10th centuries, this tradition came to a halt. During this period, philosophical activity primarily consisted of compendia of logical definitions, which were concise summaries extracted from Neoplatonic commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories* and Porphyry's *Eisagoge*. Unlike the Neoplatonic commentary tradition, these logical handbooks did not aim to understand or comment on Aristotle or his philosophy. Instead, they served as encyclopaedic summaries of Neoplatonic interpretations of Aristotelian logical definitions, authored by Christians. Nevertheless, these compendia did not address matters of faith and doctrine; their purpose was to meet the educational needs (ἐγκύκλιος παιδείσις) of Christians and support their philosophical education.¹²²

From the 6th century onward, Christians began to view elements of logic—particularly those of the *Categories-Eisagoge* sort—as essential in doctrinal

¹¹⁸ Louth 2002, 40.

¹¹⁹ Žunjić 2015, 245–246.

¹²⁰ Oehler 1964, 134–135. See also Falcon 2017.

¹²¹ The First is Hermias and the last Stephanus (Westerlink 1990, 325).

¹²² Markov 2015, 20–21. For such type of handbooks see Roueché 1974, 61–76; 1980, 71–98.

debates against various heresies. Consequently, Christian theologians started producing logical manuals that drew on compendia of definitions but adapted these concepts to serve as a foundation for both philosophical education and theological argumentation. The polemical context for these logical compendia was the Christological controversies that arose after the Council of Chalcedon in 451.¹²³ The Christian context and form of these works are evident in the names used (replacing Plato and Socrates with Paul and Peter) and in the convergence of terminology on key terms (*ousia*, *hypostasis*, *activity* and *will*) that were significant in Christological debates.¹²⁴

As examples of pre-Damascene Chalcedonian logical compendia and polemical collections of definitions, one can highlight the *Philosophical Chapters* (*Capita philosophica*) of Anastasius I of Antioch (6th century); the *opuscula* (small works) 14, 18 and 23 of the *Theological and Polemical Opuscula* (*Opusc*), attributed to Maximus the Confessor (580–662);¹²⁵ the *Preparation* (*Praeparatio*) of Theodore Raithou (580–620); the *Guide* (*Hodegos* or *Viae Dux*) of Anastasius of Sinai (7th century); and the *Teaching of the Fathers* (*DP*) (7th/8th century), among others.¹²⁶ In addition, there are some anonymous logical compendia with an unclear date of origin, such as the *Fragmenta philosophica*, also known as *Cod. Oxon. Bodl. Auct. T. I* (*Oxon*).¹²⁷

2.1.2. John Damascene and the sources of the *Dial*

Earlier research has predominantly stated that the *Dial* itself is merely a compilation derived from similar existing handbooks and logical compendia. The Aristotelian themes (*Categories-Eisagoge*) in the *Dial* were therefore not the result of John's philosophical elaboration, nor were they based on an extensive engagement with the texts of Aristotle or any later commentaries from the Alexandrian School. Instead, they represent simply a compilation of earlier (currently unknown) Christian logical compendia.¹²⁸ This is supported by the fact that, unlike Neoplatonic commentaries, the *Dial* does not contain lemmas (pericopes from the original text) nor does it engage with Aristotle or his writings, also

¹²³ Markov 2015, 22.

¹²⁴ Louth 2002, 41–42.

¹²⁵ *Variae definitiones* (*Opusc 14*) – PG 91, 149–53; *Unionum definitiones* (*Opusc 18*) – PG 91, 213–16; *Capita de substantia seu essentia et natura, deque hypostasi et persona* (*Opusc 23*) – PG 91, 260–8. All of these definitions are attributed to Maximus the Confessor and most probably also in some early stages related to him, but its final outcome is most probably a work of later scribes. See also Roueché 1980, 76, n. 22; 88; Louth 2002, 43.

¹²⁶ Kontouma 2015, III, 1–12.

¹²⁷ Even though the date of the *Oxon* is unclear (earlier manuscript from the 13th century), it is usually dated to the same period with the *Dial*. See Kotter 1969, 151–173; Roueché 1980, 71–98; Kontouma 2015, III, 3, n.4

¹²⁸ On this matter see Roueché 1974, 61–76; 1980, 71–98; Richter 1982, 68–82; Louth 2002, 42–44.

lacking an in-depth exploration of the actual problems of the concepts found in them. As a result, many of the concepts analyzed in the *Dial* lack coherence and are scattered throughout different parts of the work, with occasional repetition and even contradiction. Additionally, some philosophical concepts in the *Dial* have been adapted to ecclesiastical ideas and even parallel concepts in patristic theology—an aspect which shows that the *Dial*'s main interest is not Greek philosophy but an ecclesiastical appropriation of philosophical terminology.¹²⁹ For this reason, as A. Louth summarizes:

John seems to have been neither the author nor even, save in a very minor way, the compiler of the *Dialectica*—he simply represents a tradition of the use of logical terms and conceptual definitions in which no one thinker had any decisive role.¹³⁰

According to this understanding, John's personal contribution to the *Dial* is almost non-existent, limited mainly to a particular way of editing and compiling the texts at hand. Only the dedicatory letter and the *Dial*'s first two chapters can be accepted as his own writing.¹³¹

At the same time, a significant problem with this view is that the hypothetical handbooks on which the *Dial* is assumed to be based have not yet been discovered. Also, there is some evidence that the Damascene might have had access to the texts of Aristotelian commentators and possibly even some works by Aristotle.¹³² The circulation of these works, whether in Greek or Syriac, becomes particularly evident among non-Chalcedonian Syrian Christians. Close to John's time (7th/8th centuries), they created Syriac translations or revisions of existing translations of various Greek texts, including works by Homer, Galen, Aristotle, and Porphyry's *Isagoge*, along with their commentaries.¹³³ Since John most likely understood Syriac, he could have read both the Greek originals and their Syriac translations; however, to my knowledge, no clear dependence on the latter has yet been proven.

Additionally, as A. Zhyrkova has pointed out, the aforementioned Christian logical handbooks cannot be construed as equivalents to what is found in John Damascene's *Dial*. According to her, in contrast to the previously discussed compendia, the *Dial* constitutes not merely a compilation of definitions; rather, it represents a more sophisticated work that draws from late Alexandrian commentaries and "puts forward a piece of Neoplatonic commentary on Aristotle's work considered by Neoplatonists to be introductory for philosophy." For Zhyrkova, the main problem of earlier scholars was their method of purely historical analysis and textual comparison, which did not take into account the fact that similar

¹²⁹ Richter 1982, 77–80.

¹³⁰ Louth 2002, 44.

¹³¹ Richter 1982, 81–82.

¹³² Zhyrkova 2023, 210–211; Kontouma 2015, xii.; Demetracopoulos 2015, 65, 69.

¹³³ See Hugonnard-Roche 2004; Brock 1984, II, 2–7; V, 17–30; Watt 2010, ix, xiii, 17.

textual pericopes can have differences in the meanings the texts, terms, and ideas invoked.¹³⁴

Thus, if a philosophical concept in the *Dial* is advanced further in a way that an equivalent cannot be found in preceding philosophical or patristic authors, then it can be claimed to be an original contribution of the Damascene. Often, philosophical concepts in the *Dial* parallel similar patterns in John's theological works.¹³⁵ According to this view, it is not some unknown source behind the *Dial* that further developed a pre-existing concept, but John Damascene himself.

It should, of course, be mentioned that this approach also has its limitations and does not automatically abolish the criticism of earlier scholars. The existence of many handbooks and compendia that are not only similar but, in some cases, align verbatim with parts of the *Dial* makes it extremely likely that many others have simply not survived. This remains a serious problem in making deductions about John Damascene's role in the *Dial*. An unprecedented form or use of a philosophical concept in the *Dial* might have already existed in a now lost source or sources from which it also passed into John's theology. John's self-proclamation as a compiler, as well as his evident tendency to compile, should not be dismissed so easily and replaced with a narrative of John the Neoplatonic philosopher.

This risk of abandoning textual criticism and producing fantasy narratives about John Damascene has been well highlighted by D. Krausmüller, who considers questionable Zhyrkova's method of finding in the different passages of the *Dial*—a work that is a collection of disparate elements—a “coherent philosophical expression.”¹³⁶

The same line of thought is also continued by J. Demetracopoulos, who claims that modern research has not managed to refute the fact that the *Dial* is nothing more than a third-hand compilation that has no direct link with the works of Aristotle nor with the commentaries. According to him, until further progress in the field, all references to John's originality should be abstained from.¹³⁷

John Damascene's personal philosophical contribution to the *Dial* therefore remains a speculative and unclear subject to this day, risking reflecting not so much the thought of John Damascene but those of his sources. Due to a great deal of ignorance regarding his philosophical sources, the *Dial* unfortunately remains a blind spot concerning John's creative or non-creative role in it. Nevertheless, another extreme would be to deprive the Damascene of even having the possibility of being original, by recklessly attributing all his concepts to a hypothetical and “now lost” source. It could therefore be argued that if the philosophical deviations and unprecedented concepts of the *Dial* are also actively used in John's theological argumentation, then his authorship and personal

¹³⁴ Zhyrkova 2023, 211–212.

¹³⁵ As an example of this method in action see Zhyrkova 2010.

¹³⁶ Krausmüller 2020, 169–170.

¹³⁷ Demetracopoulos 2015, 81–85

contribution, even though not proven, should at least not be excluded. In this way, John's philosophic originality in the *Dial* can only either be excluded (when a source is found) or, at most, rendered as possible or likely.

But our ignorance does not end here. As we will see in the following analysis, John's reasons for composing the *Dial* as well as its importance for his theological project are neither entirely clear.

2.1.3. The purpose of the *Dial*

Initially, it was the Antiochian school and Nestorians who valued the usefulness of Aristotelian logic in Christological debates. However, under the influence of the Neoplatonic school of Alexandria, particularly John Philoponus, Monophysites soon also came to recognize the value of this logic in their arguments against Chalcedonians. According to K. Oehler, this led Chalcedonian Christians to initially overlook the potential of Aristotelian logic; however, its effectiveness eventually prompted them to reconsider and adopt the tools used by their opponents.¹³⁸

The importance of Greek philosophical logic was likely even more vital for Chalcedonians living in the Arab-dominated Levant than for those in Byzantium. Under the Umayyad dynasty, centred in Damascus, various Christian factions coexisted (a scenario unthinkable under Byzantine rule) not only with each other but also with the Manicheans and especially with Muslims, who were the dominant political power in the region. According to S. Griffith, this situation created an intellectual challenge among Christian factions, as well as between Christians, Muslims and Manicheans. This challenging environment compelled both the Christian factions and Muslims to write apologetic works and theological summaries, which, from the Christian side, were often grounded in Aristotelian philosophy.¹³⁹ It is reasonable to conclude that the Damascene's *Dial*, as the first part of the *Fount of Knowledge*, was created to provide apologetic and intellectual support for the newly re-established Chalcedonian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the entire Melkite community in response to the challenges of such a tense environment.

To what extent and in what way remains unclear. Many scholars have observed that John's theology is reluctant to apply logical definitions and concepts directly from his *Dial*.¹⁴⁰ According to G. Richter's criticism, aside from a basic presentation of general philosophical knowledge, the concepts of the *Dial* had little guiding influence or benefit for John's patristic theology and remained peripheral to his interests.¹⁴¹ In light of this criticism, it has been often argued that

¹³⁸ Oehler 1964, 141–142. See also Brock 1984, V, 17–23.

¹³⁹ Griffith 2011, 232–234.

¹⁴⁰ See Richter 1982, 81–82; Oehler 1964, 144; Louth 2002, 46; Zachhuber 2020, 289–290.

¹⁴¹ Richter 1982, 81–82.

the *Dial* and its Aristotelian philosophy were not intended for direct application but rather served as a terminological clarifier and explainer.

K. Oehler, for example, notes that in his theological treatises John does not use all the terms he used in his logical treatise; instead, he almost exclusively only employs those used by the Fathers and only with the meanings they had for them. This leads Oehler to conclude that the main aim of the *Dial* was to help distinguish the meanings of the terms as employed by the Fathers from the meanings they had in Aristotle.¹⁴² M. Roueché shares a similar perspective, considering the *Dial* to be a philosophical introduction to theology, where it was important to clarify the patristic and non-patristic (pagan philosophical and heretical) uses of various logical definitions.¹⁴³

V. Kontouma continues an analogous line of thought, arguing that in the *Dial* we essentially observe a tradition of homonymy of the Neoplatonic commentary tradition which acknowledges that the same definitions and terms may often have different meanings. This tradition also existed in pre-Damascene Christian handbooks of logic but not in such a developed way as in the *Dial* of John Damascene, where pagan philosophical definitions and meanings coexist with their homonymous Chalcedonian ones. Of course, the purpose of this homonymic and comparative tradition in the *Dial* was not so much an attempt to demonstrate the equal value of all these definitions and their meanings, but rather a Chalcedonian effort to clarify and urge its readers to be selective and cautious regarding different definitions. In this way, by understanding the various meanings a definition could have (often homonymous), theology students developed the capacity for discernment, enabling them to grasp not only the Neo-Chalcedonian usage of a definition but also other definitional interpretations, some of which were employed by different heretical sects. In any case, the homonymic tradition prepared the Chalcedonian Christian to better defend their faith and argue more convincingly.¹⁴⁴ In this regard, as V. Kontouma highlights, the *Dial* and the *Expos* form a unity, with the former serving as a philosophical (clarifying) *praeparatio* that is necessary before entering the systematized Christian ontology of the latter.¹⁴⁵

This selective and critical presentation of homonymy becomes particularly evident in chapter 31 of the *Dial*, where John provides a clear comparison of how pagan (Aristotelian) philosophy understood the definitions of *substance*, *nature*, *individual* and *hypostasis*, and how these differ from or resemble the approaches of the Fathers.¹⁴⁶ The final verdict is that the interpretation of these definitions by the Fathers is more authoritative than that of pagan philosophers (including Aristotle) because the Fathers were disciples of the truth and of genuine

¹⁴² Oehler 1964, 144.

¹⁴³ Roueché 1980, 73.

¹⁴⁴ See Kontouma 2015, III, 23–28; V:2–5.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., V, 15.

¹⁴⁶ *Dial*, 31.

philosophy.¹⁴⁷ The Damascene asserts that the highest authority for interpreting definitions in the homonymic tradition is not pagan philosophy but the tradition of the Fathers.

For John, the misuse of pagan philosophy is exemplified by various heresies, such as the East Syrian Nestorians and the Severian Monophysites. We have already seen, how he particularly accuses the latter of having made Aristotle their 13th apostle, as they applied definitions like substance, nature, and hypostasis in a purely Aristotelian/Neoplatonic manner. This accusation is closely linked to the Aristotelian commentator and Monophysite John Philoponus, whose purely Aristotelian interpretation of some definitions is known to have led him to the heresy of Tritheism.¹⁴⁸

As we can see, John's rhetorical statement—that the *Dial* should present only concepts from Greek philosophy that align with Christian truth—is therefore not entirely accurate. In fact, with his *Dial*, John urges his readers to understand the various ways philosophical concepts and definitions can be used, many of which are not accepted by Chalcedonians. The ones that contradict Chalcedonian versions should still be known to better argue against those who use them.

This, of course, applies particularly to the concepts where the *Dial* explicitly presents a parallel and distinct patristic version. At the same time, the *Dial* also contains Neoplatonic Aristotelian concepts, without any parallelism with patristic understandings.¹⁴⁹ This has led many to believe that, in addition to providing terminological clarification, the *Dial* and its Aristotelian content were also intended as a general introduction to logical thinking and argumentation. According to A. Louth, the main aim of the *Dial* was to help novice theologians develop their capacity for systematic thinking so that they could understand the theology presented in the *Expos*.¹⁵⁰

Similarly, A. Zhyrkova has argued that the *Dial*, as the first part of the *Fount of Knowledge*, was designed to serve as a formative methodological tool of logic. It not only clarified the use of key terms but also provided methods for argumentation and established a methodological principle. In other words, the tools of general systematic thinking found in the *Dial* helped readers follow and comprehend the subsequent works of the *Fount of Knowledge*, particularly the *Expos*, which presents the teachings of the Church in a systematic, clarifying and logical manner. As John's *Expos* was the first systematically and logically structured handbook of Chalcedonian theology, it required an introduction to systematic and logical thinking.¹⁵¹

This perspective is highlighted by P. Schadler, who contends that the *Fount of Knowledge* was intended to be read from cover to cover, beginning with the

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 48:9–11. See also Kontouma 2015, III, 26–35.

¹⁴⁸ *Haer*, 83:13; 83 addit.

¹⁴⁹ For example, the concepts of *quality* (*Dial* 52), *having* (*Dial* 57, 63), *opposites* (*Dial* 58), *motion* (*Dial* 62) etc.

¹⁵⁰ Louth 2002, 46.

¹⁵¹ Zhyrkova 2023, 214.

logical definitions of the *Dial*, which were essential for understanding the false teachings discussed in *Haer*. Together, these elements were crucial for grasping the truth presented in the *Expos*. Schadler notes that, unlike previous Christian logical handbooks and compendia, which were primarily used whenever needed as references against false teachings, the *Fount of Knowledge* served as a comprehensive resource for general theological education, demanding a much deeper understanding and commitment from the reader.¹⁵²

If so, then with the *Dial*, the Damascene essentially reiterates the tradition of the Neoplatonic educational curriculum, in which the *Isagoge* and the *Categories* served as general introductions to philosophy and logical argumentation.¹⁵³ It is also well-known that these works served as foundational textbooks for higher theological education among Syrian non-Chalcedonian Christians.¹⁵⁴ This aspect is also highlighted by S. Markov who argues, that with his *Dial* John reconstructed the Neoplatonic Aristotelian commentary tradition of the 6th and 7th century by compiling from sources and templates, that were engaged with polemics against heresies and armed with Aristotelian models.¹⁵⁵ In similar lines S. Ables claims that the *Dial* is a logical handbook and summary of the Aristotelian Neoplatonic curriculum, designed to support Chalcedonians in their apologetics and anti-heretical polemics.¹⁵⁶

However, the philosophical content of the *Dial* not only intended to influence Chalcedonian students but, contrary to G. Richter's criticism, also John Damascene himself. Both V. Kontouma and S. Ables have noted that John's philosophical works represent a watershed in his theological argumentation. While his earlier argumentation was mainly biblical and patristic, after formulating his philosophical works his reasoning became more speculative, methodological and philosophical.¹⁵⁷

This detail suggests that the philosophical knowledge in the *Dial* was intended by John not only as a tool for terminological clarification or for understanding systematically structured theology but also as a potential means for creating it. Consequently, the *Dial* served as a platform for philosophical principles and concepts, inspiring readers and theology students to creatively incorporate them into their own theological reasoning.

It can therefore be concluded that there is no clear consensus on the exact and specific purpose for which John Damascene composed the *Dial*. It also seems that for the Damascene himself, there was no single specific aim for the *Dial*. For instance, he considers the *Dial* an introduction to the basic elements of Greek philosophy for beginners, which could imply its purpose was general

¹⁵² Schadler 2018, 49–56.

¹⁵³ For the role of the *Categories* and the *Isagoge* as an introductory aspect to philosophy and logic see Haas 2003, 258–261; Aydin 2016, 47, 53.

¹⁵⁴ Brock 1984, V, 24–25.

¹⁵⁵ Markov 2015, 23–25

¹⁵⁶ Ables 2015, 273;

¹⁵⁷ Kontouma 2015, I, 38–39; Ables 2020, 638.

education.¹⁵⁸ At the same time, he also deems it important for understanding his theology in the *Exp*.¹⁵⁹ This could suggest that knowledge of philosophical logic is beneficial for a better grasp of the logically structured theology of the *Exp*. More specifically, it might mean that the philosophical knowledge from the *Dial* helps the reader understand and recognize its application in the theological argumentation of the *Exp*. Furthermore, John considers the knowledge in the *Dial* to be about the sensible and physical world, through which one can ascend to the divine and metaphysical—as the physical and created order is an image of eternal and divine reality.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, Damascene views the *Dial* as an apologetic tool of subtle reasoning against those who employ false knowledge.¹⁶¹ This could imply its purpose was to arm Chalcedonians with logical tools to counter the arguments of heretics, who also utilized Greek philosophy.

In this sense, all the aforementioned reasons can coexist simultaneously. The *Dial* undoubtedly contributed to: a) the development of general logical thinking, useful for both practicing and understanding theology; b) the capacity for discernment between patristic/pagan or acceptable/unacceptable terms and notions, to better understand heretical arguments; and c) knowledge of philosophical concepts and notions deemed beneficial for defending one's faith.

All these aspects were, in one way or another, most probably understood by the Chalcedonian reader. We can imagine a theology student who, having gained knowledge from the *Dial*, proceeds to read the theological content of the *Exp* as well as John's other works. In this journey, an attentive reader would most likely recognize that much of the knowledge obtained from the *Dial* would never be repeated. The information gained was therefore beneficial for general knowledge and the advancement of logical thinking. In some cases, the reader would even recognize that concepts found in the *Dial* contradict principles presented in John's theology—an aspect that would enhance the capacity for discernment between the different ways a term can be used. Finally, the reader would also recognize that some principles presented in the *Dial* are repeated in John's theological argumentation. In such cases, the reader would understand how a concept from the general philosophical curriculum can and may be beneficially used in Chalcedonian theological argumentation. In other words, from the reader's perspective, the true value of the *Dial*'s content would only be understood retrospectively within John's theology.

¹⁵⁸ *Dial*, 1:66–67.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: 1–6.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:70–77.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1:62–65.

2.1.4. The philosophy of motion in the *Dial* and the *Categories*

As previously analyzed, the *Dial* is a unique Christian handbook of logic that embodies the Neoplatonic commentary tradition and its interpretation of concepts found in Aristotle's *Categories* and Porphyry's *Eisagoge*. One significant logical concept from the *Categories*, extensively commented on by Neoplatonists until the 6th century, is *motion* (κίνησις).¹⁶² Instances of this activity can be found in the works of Greek Neoplatonic commentators like Ammonius,¹⁶³ Simplicius,¹⁶⁴ Philoponus,¹⁶⁵ Olympiodorus,¹⁶⁶ and Elias.¹⁶⁷ From the Syrian ecclesiastical tradition, we can also identify Sergius of Reshaina, who, in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories* as well as in his *Introduction to Aristotle's Categories*, largely influenced by his teacher Ammonius, also analyzes the *Categories*' concept of motion.¹⁶⁸

As the commentary tradition of the Alexandrian school began to be replaced by Christian handbooks of logic, the tradition of commenting on the *Categories*' concept of motion appears to have vanished. Notably, no pre-Damascene Chalcedonian logical handbook currently available contains a chapter on the *Categories*' logic of motion comparable to that found in the Neoplatonic commentary tradition.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, we cannot find equivalent examples among earlier Greek Church Fathers nor in pre-Damascene Chalcedonian authors.¹⁷⁰ The first to revive this lost tradition was John Damascene, whose *Dial* dedicates an entire chapter (chapter 62) to the concept of motion in the *Categories*, similarly to that of the Alexandrian commentators. It should be noted that the aforementioned *Oxon*, dated to the Damascene's time, contains a chapter (17:15–27) that is almost identical to the first part of *Dial* 62 (1–14). Nevertheless, *Oxon*'s brief analysis of *motion*, presented alongside the concepts of *priority* and *simultaneity*, is in no way comparable to that of *Dial* 62 or the earlier commentaries.¹⁷¹

¹⁶² Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 15a13–15b16.

¹⁶³ Ammonius, *Arist Categ*, 83:3–23; 105:8–20.

¹⁶⁴ Simplicius, *Arist Categ*, 321:7–11, 427:9–432.

¹⁶⁵ Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 197:9 – 204:21.

¹⁶⁶ Olympiodorus, *Arist Categ*, 146:1–30.

¹⁶⁷ Elias, *Arist Categ*, 188:7–15; 253:15–37.

¹⁶⁸ Sergius of Reshaina, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 409–418, 437–439; *Introduction to Aristotle and His Categories, Addressed to Philotheos*, 155, 167.

¹⁶⁹ For examples of Chalcedonian logical handbooks and collections of definitions see 2.1.1.

¹⁷⁰ It is important to note that aspects of Greek philosophical concepts of motion are highlighted in Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*. Additionally, Maximus the Confessor extensively employs the principles of motion from the Greek philosophical tradition (See Mitralaxis 2014; Chvatal 2010, 117–122; Cvetkovic 2010, 95–104). Nevertheless, nowhere in their works can we find a chapter or a summary that reconstructs the general tenets of the Neoplatonic commentary tradition on the *Categories*' concept of motion, equivalent to the *Dial*.

¹⁷¹ *Oxon*, 17:1–27.

This fact highlights the distinction of *Dial* 62 from previous Chalcedonian compendia and suggests its alignment with the Neoplatonic philosophical tradition. This raises the question of the precise extent to which *Dial* 62 follows the Neoplatonic commentary tradition. To understand this, we must first reconstruct the thematic structure of the commentaries on the *Categories*' concept of motion.

2.1.4.1. Neoplatonic commentators on the *Categories*' treatment of motion

Analyzing Neoplatonic commentaries on the concept of motion in the *Categories* reveals significant differences in length, analytical quality, and thematic structure. As previously noted, a distinguishing feature of the commentary tradition is the use of lemmas and direct engagement with the text and its author. While most commentators adhere to this practice, some commentaries, like Olympiodorus's on motion in the *Categories*, lack lemmas and demonstrate no genuine engagement with Aristotle's text. Instead, Olympiodorus's work reads more like an encyclopedic summary.

Generally, the commentary tradition on Aristotle's *Categories* approaches the concept of motion through three or four thematic parts:

1. Some commentators begin with an introductory explanation of why motion, a concept in natural philosophy, is discussed in the *Categories*, a work of logic and dialectics. According to these commentators, Aristotle was compelled to include such a chapter because he had previously referred to motion when discussing the different categories.¹⁷² This, of course, does not imply that any category itself could be a motion. As Philoponus comments, motion should not be considered a category, but rather a path toward categories.¹⁷³ Moreover, as both Philoponus and Elias claim, motion in the *Categories* is not analyzed from the perspective of natural philosophy, as it is in the *Physics*, but from the perspective of logic. For this reason, in the *Categories* Aristotle does not define motion and nature nor state its causes. Instead, in a dialectical manner, he enumerates its different kinds, states its differences, and explains which kind is opposed to which.¹⁷⁴ Other commentators do not emphasize this distinction, essentially leaving the matter open to various interpretations.

2. The proper manner of commenting on the *Categories*' concept of motion therefore begins with the enumeration of the *kinds of motion* (change). According to the *Categories*, there are six kinds of motion: genesis, destruction, increase, decrease, alteration, and change of place.¹⁷⁵ For commentators, this raises the

¹⁷² Simplicius, *Arist Categ*, 427: 2–19; Elias, *Arist Categ*, 253: 20–26; John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 198:1–15; Sergius of Reshaina, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 446.

¹⁷³ John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 197:16–26.

¹⁷⁴ Elias, *Arist Categ*, 253: 15–20; John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 197:12–16; 198: 15–20, 23–26.

¹⁷⁵ Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 15a13–14.

question of why there are precisely six kinds of motion, no more and no less.¹⁷⁶ The answer lies in Aristotle's *Physics*, which states that motion cannot exist apart from things, and therefore there are as many kinds of motion and change as there are kinds of being. According to Aristotle, there are ten kinds of beings or categories. Nevertheless, Aristotle's analysis concludes that genuine motion/change is not found in all categories, but only in the four categories of substance, quantity, quality, and place. In relation to these four, Aristotle's *Physics* also mentions the motions of generation, destruction, increase, decrease, and locomotion.¹⁷⁷

Following the logic of the *Physics*, commentators explain why Aristotle enumerates six kinds of motion in the *Categories*. According to them, each kind of motion must be inevitably linked to the categories where *Physics* claims that motion can occur. However, commentators must also explain how Aristotle arrived at the understanding that change can only occur in the four aforementioned categories. For this reason, they usually begin by explaining that all changes of the natural order can only take place:

a) in connection to the thing itself (or inside the thing itself), which means in the category of substance, where there are generation and destruction;

b) inside the thing (in respect to accident; inside the substance; with the thing; upon the thing; or from the thing's attributes), which either takes place in the category of quantity, where there is increase and decrease, or in quantity in quality, where there are alterations;

c) around the thing, which means in the category of place ("where"), where there are changes of place (local motions).¹⁷⁸

Some commentators, inspired by Aristotle's *Physics*,¹⁷⁹ also further explain some of the kinds of motion via transitional movements between corresponding opposites.¹⁸⁰ Among them, Simplicius and Philoponus also specify that in his *Physics* Aristotle does not consider generation and destruction to be motions, as he does in his *Categories*, but rather classifies them as changes. According to them, motion preserves the substantial form of a thing, which is why it is reserved

¹⁷⁶ Simplicius, *Arist Categ*, 427, 29–32; John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 198:25–28; Olympiodorus, *Arist Categ*, 146:3–4.

¹⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Physica* 200b12–201a9; Simplicius, *Arist Categ*, 435:15–25. See also Bodnar 2018.

¹⁷⁸ Simplicius, *Arist Categ*, 427:29–428:2; John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 198:21–199:10; Ammonius, *Arist Categ*, 83:7–15, 105:8–20; Elias, *Arist Categ*, 253:26–32; Olympiodorus, *Arist Categ*, 146:4–16; Sergius of Reshaina, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 408–415, 437, *Introduction to Aristotle and His Categories, Addressed to Philotheos*, 155, 167.

¹⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Physica*, 224a35–225a35; 241a26–b3.

¹⁸⁰ Ammonius explains only generation and destruction (Ammonius, *Arist Categ*, 83:13–15), whereas Olympiodorus also includes increase and decrease (Olympiodorus, *Arist Categ*, 146:7–14). Sergius provides the most thorough explanation of the different kinds of motion, detailing generation, destruction, increase, decrease, and even alteration (e.g., between hot and cold, or white and black) (Sergius of Reshaina, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 408–413).

only for quantity, quality, and place, whereas change does not.¹⁸¹ Other commentators either do not mention this distinction or simply explain that all motions are simultaneously also changes and vice versa.¹⁸² Some commentators also add that local motions can be divided into circular and linear motions.¹⁸³ Sergius is the only one who, in addition to circular motion, also divides linear motion into six subtypes.¹⁸⁴

3. This is usually followed by explanations of the *Categories*' claim about the *differences of motion* and how each kind of motion is distinguished from the others.¹⁸⁵ Some commentators begin by distinguishing species of motion via defining and explaining them.¹⁸⁶ Elias is the only one who does so by explaining movement between their distinctive opposites by giving us the *definitions of different kinds of motion*.¹⁸⁷ But the central discussion here, as posited in the *Categories*, deals with the exceptional case of alteration (qualitative change), which seems to be identical with all other kinds of change. To counter this argument, commentators usually bring in the *Categories*' example of a square to which a gnomon is added—an aspect that shows how quantitative changes can take place without qualitative ones. Due to this example, some commentators limited their arguments by only comparing alterations with quantitative changes.¹⁸⁸ The more thorough ones also include the other kinds of motion. Additionally, they accept that the exceptional case of alteration can also be observed in change of place, as both species of motion accompany all other kinds of motion while nevertheless remaining distinctive.¹⁸⁹

4. The commentators' discussion on the motion in the *Categories* usually ends with an elaboration on *opposites in motion*.¹⁹⁰ According to them, largely retelling

¹⁸¹ Simplicius *Arist Categ*, 428:3–13; John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 199:10–19.

¹⁸² Ammonius, *Arist Categ*, 83:7–11; 105:110–11; Sergius of Reshaina, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 437.

¹⁸³ Simplicius, *Arist Categ*, 428:1–2; John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 199:7–9.

¹⁸⁴ Philoponus also mentions the different subtypes of linear motion to illustrate the opposites in motion (Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 204:11–15). Unlike Philoponus, Sergius does not explain the opposites in motion, but rather presents the subtypes of locomotion (Sergius of Reshaina, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 439; *Introduction to Aristotle and His Categories, Addressed to Philotheos*, 167).

¹⁸⁵ Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 15a15–33.

¹⁸⁶ John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 199:25–200:9.

¹⁸⁷ Generation, destruction, increase and decrease are explained (Elias, *Arist Categ*, 254:5–9).

¹⁸⁸ Ammonius, *Arist Categ*, 195:21–106:7; Olympiodorus, instead of the gnomon, uses the example of a line and a soul. (Olympiodorus, *Arist Categ*, 146:16–22). Sergius neither uses the example of the gnomon and neither seems to engage with the problem posed by Aristotle. He merely states that alterations do not cause quantitative changes. (Sergius of Reshaina, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 414–415).

¹⁸⁹ Simplicius, *Arist Categ*, 428:14–432:21; John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 200:10–203:21; Elias, *Arist Categ*, 254:9–32.

¹⁹⁰ Interestingly, Ammonius' and Sergius' commentaries on the motion of the *Categories* have omitted this analysis.

the arguments of the *Categories*, rest stands opposed to all motion in general. At the same time, each species of motion is opposed to its contrary motion: generation is opposed to destruction and increase to decrease. Nevertheless, both rest and a contrary direction (upwards-downwards) are opposite to changes of place. A problem arises with alteration, to which there seems to be no contrary motion. By analogy with change of place, Aristotle resolves this problem by stating that in the case of alteration there are also two contraries: rest (e.g., resting in the quality of white or black) and the opposition between contrary qualities (from white to black and vice versa).¹⁹¹ Based on the *Categories*' concept of different kinds of opposites and *Physics* V. 6,¹⁹² Olympiodorus further explains that the opposition between generation and destruction is an opposition between proper contraries, whereas that between motion and rest is, in different respects, analogous to that of habit and privation.¹⁹³ According to Elias, the two distinctive kinds of opposites of motion (between proper contraries and between motion and rest) can also be interpreted as one type of opposition between natural (motion) and unnatural (contrary motion; rest).¹⁹⁴ Elias and Philoponus, here drawing from Aristotle's *Physics*,¹⁹⁵ also bring out that motion/change is always a passage from one contrary to another—genesis is change from non-being to being, etc.—whereas Elias adds that there is no contrary to circular motion.¹⁹⁶

Having examined the general thematic layout of the commentary tradition regarding the concept of motion in the *Categories*, the next step is to see how the *Dial*'s chapter (62) on motion aligns with it.

2.1.4.2. The definition of *motion* and the categories

Chapter 62 of the *Dial* begins with the following definition:

Motion is an actualization of potency as such. For example, bronze is potentially a statue because it can take on the form of a statue. Thus, the melting down, the molding, and the finishing, which are all motions, are an actualization of the metal which is potentially a statue.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹¹ Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 15b11–16; Simplicius, *Arist Categ*, 432:21–433:19; John Philoponus *Arist Categ*, 203:22–204:21; Elias, *Arist Categ*, 254:33–255:23; Olympiodorus, *Arist Categ*, 146:22–29.

¹⁹² According to Aristotle's *Categories*, things are opposed to each other in four ways: 1) as correlatives; 2) as contraries; 3) as privation to habit; and 4) as affirmation to negation (*Categoriae*, 11b32–13a36). See also *Physica* 229b23–29.

¹⁹³ Olympiodorus, *Arist Categ*, 146:26–29.

¹⁹⁴ Elias, *Arist Categ*, 255:17–23.

¹⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Physica*, 224a34–b9.

¹⁹⁶ Elias, *Arist Categ*, 255:4–10; John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 204:2–15.

¹⁹⁷ Κίνησις ἐστὶν ἐντελέχεια τοῦ δυνάμει, καθὼς τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν, οἷον ὁ χαλκὸς δυνάμει ἐστὶν ἀνδριάς· δύνανται γὰρ ὁ χαλκὸς ἀπολαβεῖν τὸ εἶδος τοῦ ἀνδριάντος (*Dial* 62:2–4; translation by Chase 1958, 94).

The *Dial*'s introduction to motion therefore starts with a definition that aims to teach the reader about the intertwined but distinctive link between actuality and potency (power). Bronze is presented as having the potentiality and capacity to become a statue. When this potency begins to be actualized through the processes of melting, molding, and finishing, then we observe motion. In other words, motion is an actualization and manifestation of a thing's inherent power (potency).

Following this, the *Dial* explains that motion is considered only in categories where such a potency is found.¹⁹⁸

Thus, motion is considered in the categories of substance (ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ), quantity (ἐν τῷ ποσῷ), quality (ἐν τῷ ποιῷ), and place (ἐν τῇ τοῦ).¹⁹⁹

Readers already familiar with these four categories²⁰⁰ now also learn that genuine motion occurs exclusively within them.

The principles presented thus far in the *Dial* originally derive from Aristotle's *Physics*.²⁰¹ According to Aristotle, *motion/change is the actuality of that which exists potentially, insofar as it is potentially this actuality*.²⁰² The Stagirite exemplifies this with bronze, which possesses a natural capacity to become a statue. This capacity is called potentiality or power (δύναμις). However, when this mere capacity becomes active, movable, and operational (in the process of becoming a statue), we then speak of the actuality (ἐντελέχεια)/activity (ἐνέργεια) of a potentiality, which is synonymous with motion. In other words, motion is present only when potentiality is undergoing actualization, neither before nor after. This means that potentiality itself is not yet motion, as it has not begun to be actualized. Nor is motion found in the end-result, as in that state, potentiality is no longer in the process of actualization. Aristotle illustrates this with the construction of a house: as long as it is being built and is in the process of building, it is in an (incomplete) activity and in motion. But when a house is finished—no longer being built or in the process of building—its potentiality is no longer actualized, and the actuality has been completed. Another important aspect for Aristotle is that there are as many kinds of motion as there are kinds of being, which inevitably links the kinds of motion to the categories of substance, quantity, quality, and place—the only categories where the actualization of potentiality can occur. As the Stagirite exemplifies, only things with the potency to come-to-be and perish can have their actuality in generation and corruption; only things with the capacity to grow and

¹⁹⁸ *Dial*, 62:6–8.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 62:8–9; translation by Chase 1958, 94.

²⁰⁰ *Dial*, 40; 50; 52; 55.

²⁰¹ Similar aspects are also discussed in the *Metaphysics* (Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 1065b1–1066a30).

²⁰² ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια, ἣ τοιοῦτον, κίνησίς ἐστιν (*Physica* 201a10–11; translation by Waterfield 2008, 57).

diminish can have actuality of increase and decrease; only alterable things can undergo alteration; and only movable things can experience local motion.²⁰³

These aspects of Aristotle's *Physics* are also extended by the commentators, who, in their explanation of the definition of motion, establish a distinction between potentiality and two types of actuality/activity. A potentiality that is an inactive capacity to become something is not yet change. But a potentiality that is in the process of actualization/activation already undergoes motion/change. Nevertheless, an actuality/activity where potentiality has become inert and completed is no longer motion/change, but rather an end result. These notions are also exemplified by bronze becoming a statue and the building of a house. Simplicius even elaborates on the distinction between actuality (ἐντελέχεια) and activity (ἐνέργεια). Although he himself uses them synonymously, as does Philoponus, he is not against an interpretation that attributes the latter (activity) specifically to motion and the former to the static end-result. Additionally, both commentators link the definition of motion to the aforementioned four categories, occasionally mentioning some of the kinds of motions.²⁰⁴

The chapter on motion in the *Dial* therefore begins not with a theme from the *Categories* but from the *Physics*. Kotter's reference apparatus, for instance, despite acknowledging that the definition of motion derives from Aristotle's *Physics*, does not mention any of the *Physics*' commentaries, pointing only to existing commentaries on the *Categories*.²⁰⁵ Richter's more thorough textual analysis already links the *Dial*'s definition of motion to Simplicius' *Commentary on Physics*, which he considers the closest example. Richter nevertheless admits that the linking of this definition with the categories where potentiality is found, though logically deducible, is not found elsewhere in this precise form.²⁰⁶

The absence of an exact phrase does not mean that such an understanding did not exist. We have already seen that Aristotle's *Physics* established a link between the definition of motion and the (four) categories—an aspect also followed by commentators. Simplicius even elaborates in one place that if potentiality is found in every category, and motion is defined as an actualization of potency, then why isn't there motion in all of them?²⁰⁷ Richter's search for verbatim phrases has therefore led him away from recognizing thematic and structural similarities. It was this approach that mistakenly led Richter to Simplicius in the first place, without recognizing that the *Dial*'s elaboration on the definition of motion is much closer to Philoponus's commentary on *Physics*.

²⁰³ Aristotle, *Physica*, 200b12–201b15. Even though the concepts of motion presented in *Physics* are useful for understanding natural philosophy, they can also be deductive tools for examining the metaphysical aspects of the eternity of motion and the first principle (*Physica*, 251a5–252b5).

²⁰⁴ John Philoponus, *Arist Phys*, 341:22–343:25; Simplicius, *Arist Phys*, 412:9–415:11; 423:23–428:33.

²⁰⁵ Kotter 1969, 129.

²⁰⁶ Richter 1982, 246.

²⁰⁷ Simplicius, *Arist Phys*, 412:20–22.

In his commentary, Philoponus: a) presents the definition of motion; b) asserts that motion/change exists only if potentiality is in actuality, distinguishing this from the completed state which is actuality without potentiality; c) exemplifies this with the potentiality of bronze becoming a statue, where the first type of actuality (motion) is revealed in the shaping of the bronze, while the second type of actuality (end state) is revealed in the form of a statue; and d) claims that the definition of motion reveals that change can only occur in those things (categories) that have the potentiality for it.²⁰⁸

As we have seen, the *Dial* essentially follows the same thematic order. Especially noteworthy is that the *Dial* also exemplifies its definition of motion with bronze becoming a statue. Similar to Philoponus' "shaped" (σχηματιζόμενος), the *Dial* also refers to the "molding" (διαπλάττεσθαι) of the statue, and both emphasize that in the end result, the bronze takes the "form of a statue" (εἶδος τοῦ ἀνδριάντος).²⁰⁹ Although Simplicius refers to similar aspects in different places, they are nowhere brought together in such a comprehensive thematic order. Nor does Simplicius specifically exemplify the definition of motion with bronze becoming a statue.

At the same time, unlike the commentaries, the *Dial*'s elaboration on the definition of motion does not distinguish between the two types of actuality, referring only to the actuality that is in motion. Regarding the distinction between inactive and active potentiality, there is no explicit clarification, even though it is latently manifested in the distinction between bronze that has the latent capacity to become a statue and bronze in the actual process of becoming a statue. This distinction is also evident elsewhere in the *Dial* as well as in John's theological works.²¹⁰ Nonetheless, as we will later see in more detail, the Damascene predominantly understands potentiality or power to be active and in motion.²¹¹

Nevertheless, the *Dial*'s decision to explain the moving actuality within three stages—melting, molding, finishing—reveals a level of detail that, as far as I am aware, is not found in any of the commentaries. Whether these distinctive stages aim to emphasize something more substantial or serve as a simple illustration remains unclear in the *Dial*.

It may thus far be concluded that the *Dial*'s definition of motion and its link with the four categories is a concise summary of the basic tenets and principles that had already been established in the Neoplatonic commentary tradition and its interpretation of Aristotle's *Physics*.

²⁰⁸ John Philoponus, *Arist Phys*, 342:10–343:4, 10–15.

²⁰⁹ *Dial*, 62:2–4 cf. John Philoponus, *Arist Phys*, 342:20–23.

²¹⁰ *Dial*, 52:12–19, 35–41; 54:13–14. *Expos*, 37:18–25 etc.

²¹¹ See also Kapriev 2025, 107.

2.1.4.3. The four categories and the six kinds of motion

Having defined motion and established that it can genuinely occur only within four categories, the *Dial* proceeds to link motion to its different kinds. According to the *Dial*, these four categories give rise to six kinds of motion: *generation* (γένεσις) and *destruction* (φθορά) in the category of substance; *increase* (αύξησις) and *decrease* (μείωσις) in quantity; *alteration* (ἀλλοίωσις) in quality; and *local motions* (τοπικαὶ κινήσεις), i.e., motion according to place. Local motion has six subtypes of direct motion—up, down, in, out, right, left—which become seven when circular motion is included.²¹²

These kinds of motion and their corresponding categories can be summarized in a tripartite manner. Everything that changes (μεταβάλλεται) does so either *by itself* (καθ'αυτό), referring to changes in the category of substance (generation and destruction); or *inside the thing itself* (ἐν αὐτῷ), regarding changes in quantity (increase and decrease) and quality (alteration); or *around the thing* (περὶ αὐτό), concerning changes in the category of place. The *Dial* also explains that in the latter case, place is not the thing itself that is moved, nor anything in it, but rather something that accompanies and surrounds movable things.²¹³ Thus far, we see that Chapter 62 of the *Dial* begins with the definition of motion, which—due to its inevitable link with the four categories and the three ways things can change—is divided into six kinds.

In doing so, the *Dial* diverges from Aristotle's *Physics*. As previously noted, Aristotle's *Physics* does not elaborate on the six kinds of motion, nor does it systematically link them to the four categories. The primary aim there is to define motion and connect it to the four categories. The kinds of motion are only occasionally introduced to illustrate the definition. Commentators, too, primarily link the definition of motion to the four categories, almost entirely excluding any reference to the kinds of motion. Another aspect absent from the *Physics* and its commentaries is the link between the six kinds of motion and the three ways things can change. Nevertheless, as we have already seen, this thematic aspect is how the commentaries' chapter on motion in Aristotle's *Categories* begins.

The *Dial*'s thematic shift from *Physics* to the *Categories* is also noted by Richter, who observes that its six kinds of motion bear the strongest resemblance to the commentaries on the *Categories* by Ammonius, Simplicius, and Philoponus. These commentaries, like the *Dial*, also categorize locomotion into linear and circular motions. Richter further claims that the *Dial*'s division of linear motion into six subtypes, along with its reference to place as an accompanying element, is specifically found in Philoponus' commentary on the *Categories*.²¹⁴ However, while Richter's findings are partially accurate, he overlooks the more coherent underlying structures within the *Dial*'s paragraphs.

²¹² *Dial*, 62:8–14.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 62:14–21.

²¹⁴ Richter 1982, 247.

For instance, the *Dial*'s paragraph, which presents the six kinds of motion in relation to the three ways things can change, almost entirely mirrors the structure in Elias's *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*. Elias is unique, much like the *Dial*, in using the verb "make" (ποιεῖ) to: 1) link generation and destruction to the "thing itself" (ἐαυτοῦ) without reference to a category; 2) connect increase, decrease, and alteration to "of the things itself" (τῶν ἐαυτοῦ), referencing the categories of quantity and quality; and 3) link change of place to "around the thing" (περὶ αὐτὸν), explaining that motion occurs not within, but around, the place.²¹⁵ Richter, who attributed the third point to Philoponus, thus failed to recognize it as part of Elias's more cohesive framework.

Another entirely neglected aspect is the almost verbatim similarity between the *Dial*'s reference to the four categories in relation to the six kinds of motion and Ammonius's commentary on the *Categories*.²¹⁶ It has also been overlooked that Ammonius's unique presentation of the six kinds of motion in conjunction with the four categories was clearly adopted by Sergius (a student of Ammonius) in his commentary on the *Categories*. Furthermore, as previously noted, Sergius is the only commentator who divided linear motion into six subtypes, just as the *Dial* does. Richter's attribution to Philoponus is, in this instance, again incorrect. As I have stated, unlike Sergius, Philoponus merely exemplifies opposites in locomotion rather than presenting different kinds of linear locomotion.²¹⁷ In sum, the *Dial*'s entire paragraph on the six kinds of motion (and the divisions of local motion) in relation to the four categories reflects a theme from the *Categories* with a distinct Ammonian background, further developed within the Syrian tradition of Sergius.

However, the *Dial*'s elaboration of the six kinds of motion also contains aspects that do not align with the extant Neoplatonic commentary tradition on the *Categories*. The *Dial*'s specific assertion of seven kinds of local motion—six linear and one circular—though logically deducible, is not explicitly stated in Aristotelian commentaries. This aspect, along with the practice of numbering local motions, appears to stem from Plato's *Timaeus*, which references six kinds of local motion.²¹⁸ Proclus, in his *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, harmonizes Plato and Aristotle by enumerating six kinds of local motion (which have opposites), becoming seven with the addition of cyclical motion (without opposites).²¹⁹ Sergius' decision to enumerate six kinds of linear motion in his

²¹⁵ Elias, *Arist Categ*, 253:29–32 cf. *Dial*, 62:14–21.

²¹⁶ Ἐν μὲν τῇ οὐσίᾳ γένεσις καὶ φθορά, ἐν δὲ τῷ ποσῷ αὐξήσις καὶ μείωσις, ἐν δὲ τῷ ποιῷ ἀλλοίωσις, ἐν δὲ τῇ ποῦ τὸ κύκλῳ φερόμενον, ὅπερ καλεῖται περιφορά, καὶ τὸ ἐπ'εὐθείας κινούμενον, ὅπερ λέγεται ἐπ'εὐθείας κίνησις. (*Dial*, 62: 9–11) cf. ...ἐν μὲν τῇ οὐσίᾳ γένεσιν καὶ φθοράν, ἐν δὲ τῷ ποσῷ αὐξήσιν καὶ μείωσιν, ἐν δὲ τῷ ποιῷ ἀλλοίωσιν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ποῦ τὴν κατὰ τόπον μεταβολήν (Ammonius, *Arist Categ*, 105:17–19).

²¹⁷ See n. 184.

²¹⁸ Plato, *Timaeus*, 43b.

²¹⁹ Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 94: 5–11.

commentary was likely influenced by this tradition, an aspect continued in a different form by the *Dial*.

Where the *Dial* most significantly diverges from the commentary tradition, as Richter also observes,²²⁰ is its choice to begin a chapter on the motion of the *Categories* with concepts belonging to *Physics* (the definition of motion), which are then linked to the concepts elaborated in the *Categories* (enumerating the kinds of motion). I have previously shown how the commentary tradition on the *Categories* occasionally referred to concepts from *Physics* for explicative and comparative reasons, while generally maintaining a strict distinction between them. We have also seen how Philoponus and Elias emphasized that in the *Categories* Aristotle treats motion in a manner appropriate to logic, not natural science, which is why he does not define motion within it.

The only commentator who, like the *Dial*, deviates from the mainstream Alexandrian commentary tradition is Sergius. He discusses natural philosophy in various parts of his *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories* by incorporating large portions from the *Physics* and occasionally departing completely from the text of the *Categories*. According to Y. Arzhanov, this reveals that Sergius' *Commentary* was intended not only as an introductory explanation of the *Categories* but also as a general introduction to philosophy. This was likely aimed at philosophy students who might not pursue further philosophical subjects, confining their education to a general introduction to philosophy that properly included elements of physics as indispensable components.²²¹ This tradition of combining natural philosophy with the logic of the *Categories* appears to have later become standard in the logical studies of Syrian schools (from the 7th century), as evidenced by multiple Syriac (mostly anonymous) manuscripts.²²²

The beginning of the *Dial*'s chapter on motion undoubtedly reflects the same tradition found in the Syrian educational system. At the same time, *Dial* 62 does not merely combine physics with logic; it indistinguishably blends them into a single, structurally coherent unit. The definition of motion and the potentiality of motion are logically linked to the four categories (substance, quantity, quality, place), which are themselves logically linked to the six kinds of motion. These, in turn, are linked to the three ways things can change (the thing itself, inside the thing, around the thing). Although the *Dial*'s presentation might initially seem out of place for the Neoplatonic commentary tradition, nevertheless it stands in accordance with it. As previously observed, it was the commentators, not Aristotle, who first linked the six kinds of motion of the *Categories* with the four categories of the *Physics*. Since the four categories in the *Physics* were already associated with the definition of motion, its insertion into the *Categories*

²²⁰ Richter 1982, 246.

²²¹ Arzhanov 2024, 10, 13.

²²² Ibid., 2021, 24–25.

inevitably connected it to the six kinds of motion. Therefore, *Dial* 62 presents something that was latently established by the commentators.

It remains a question of how much, if at all, the compiler of the version in *Dial* 62 understood this link between the *Categories* and *Physics*. It seems reasonable to infer that in the early phases of integrating aspects of physics into the study of logic, teachers, by following the commentary tradition, were still able to distinguish them. This distinction most probably began to fade as the tradition of commenting on the *Categories* and *Physics* lost importance. It is only natural that later composers of handbooks, aiming to preserve the integrity of the text and content, blended many aspects into a unified whole. It is not difficult to imagine how this could have occurred when the definition of motion and its link to the four categories (as a concise overview of the physics of motion) exist alongside the commentator's logical elaboration of the four categories in relation to the six kinds of motion.

Another contributing factor to this blending of physics and logic most likely stems from the Christian theological system, where logic and physics were no longer important as separate fields of study. Instead, starting already with the Cappadocians, they were subjugated to resolving matters of faith and doctrine, becoming an undifferentiated part of Christian metaphysics and ontology.²²³ This patristic approach, which John even emphasizes in the *Dial proem*, is clearly continued in the *Dial*'s approach to motion.²²⁴

The *Dial* 62 therefore reflects a norm that appears to have become standard in the Christian basic educational system, one that John himself inherited from an existing tradition. This is corroborated not only by the Syrian educational tradition but also by the anonymous logical handbook *Cod. Oxon. Bodl. Auct. T. I. 6* (17:15–27), with which *Dial* 62:2–14 shares an almost verbatim similarity.²²⁵ The only difference is that *Oxon* concludes with the paragraph linking the six kinds of motion with the four categories, omitting the section on the *three ways things can change*—an aspect that suggests the Damascene may have used a different source here.

Except for *Dial* 62's disregard for the distinction between physics and logic, partly due to ignorance and partly to the Christian metaphysical approach, the purpose of such a presentation remains unanswered. Was it merely for developing general intellectual capacity, or did this metaphysical overview of motion have a more profound aim? The *Dial*'s encyclopaedic and non-engaging form regrettably offers no answers.

Nevertheless, as we will see in more detail later, this Christian metaphysical approach continues in John's theological works, where many concepts elaborated

²²³ Zachhuber 2020, 15–17, 80–83.

²²⁴ Zografidis 1999, 220.

²²⁵ The prevailing understanding is that these two works do not depend on each other but rather on common sources (Kotter 1969, 149; Richter 1982, 64; Louth 2002, 32; Kontouma 2015, III, 3, n.4). According to M. Roueché it is the *Oxon* that is based on the *Dial*. (Roueché 1974, 64). For the criticism of Roueché's position see Richter 1982, 72, n.252.

in *Dial* 62 reemerge, often in their patristic versions. Their exact role for John Damascene and his patristic theology will be discussed in the theological part of this dissertation.

2.1.4.4. Differences between the kinds of motion

After detailing the six kinds of motion, *Dial* 62 proceeds to explain the unique characteristics of each and how they are distinguished. To do so, *Dial* begins with the *definitions of the different kinds of motion*.

Generation differs from destruction. This is because generation is the passing from non-being to being, for that comes into being, or is generated, which was not before. But with destruction it is just the reverse, for destruction is the change from being to non-being. And increase differs from decrease, because increase is the motion to a greater quantity, whereas decrease is that to a lesser. And again, there are opposite passions in alteration, as heat is opposed to cold and black to white.²²⁶

In essence, *Dial* 62 argues for the distinctiveness of the kinds of motion by defining them through transitions between opposites. In doing so, *Dial* again demonstrates many similarities with the themes and structure established by the commentary tradition, but also diverges from it.

According to Richter, *Dial*'s decision to distinguish the different kinds of motion by explaining the movement (transitions) between opposites can be found in Ammonius', Philoponus', and Elias' *Commentaries on Aristotle's Categories*.²²⁷ While Richter's observations are correct here, his *verbatim* approach has again prevented him from recognizing that all three commentators employ these explanations in different thematic contexts: 1) Ammonius (and Sergius) explains it in a section that enumerates the six kinds of motion alongside the categories;²²⁸ 2) Elias is the only one who does so in a thematic section arguing how the kinds of motion differ from one another (*differences of motion*);²²⁹ 3) Whereas Philoponus and Elias introduce such explanations in a section discussing the *opposites in motion*.²³⁰ As we have observed, *Dial*'s thematic logic aligns with the second approach, pointing to a specific aspect found only in Elias.

²²⁶ Διαφέρει δὲ γένεσις καὶ φθορά· γένεσις μὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἀπὸ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι πρόοδος· ὅπερ γὰρ οὐκ ἦν πρότερον, τοῦτο γίνεται. Ἡ δὲ φθορὰ τὸ ἀνάπαλιν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος ἐπὶ τὸ μὴ εἶναι μεταβολή. —αὔξησις δὲ καὶ μείωσις· αὔξησις μὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον κίνησις· μείωσις δὲ ἡ ἐπὶ τὸ ἔλαττον. —ἐν δὲ τῇ ἀλλοιώσει πάλιν τὰ ἀντικείμενα πάθη, θερμότης ψύξει, τὸ λευκὸν τὸ μέλαν (*Dial*, 62:22–27; translation by Chase 1958, 94–95).

²²⁷ Richter 1982, 248.

²²⁸ Ammonius, *Arist Categ*, 83:13–15; Sergius of Reshaina, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 408–413.

²²⁹ Elias, *Arist Categ*, 254:5–9.

²³⁰ Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 204:2–15; Elias, *Arist Categ*, 255:4–10.

It should also be noted that a similar explanatory version appears in chapter 68 of *Dial*.²³¹ Why John did not integrate it into his chapter (62) on motion, and instead presents it separately in a chapter that is essentially a lexicon of different definitions, remains a puzzling question. As we have already seen, for Richter, this kind of thematic dispersion and repetition was one of the aspects that revealed the Damascene to be a mere compiler with no true understanding of philosophy.²³²

Although John's compiling character is rather evident here, it does not mean that the philosophical content of this compilation was irrelevant to him. On the contrary, the fact that *Dial* highlights the differences between the kinds of motion twice and in two different versions reveals that this theme was considered relevant not only for readers but was also important to his sources. Indeed, as we will later see, the ability to explain and distinguish the different kinds of motion through the transition between their opposites is understood by John Damascene as a useful anti-Manichaean metaphysical principle.²³³ This once again highlights that *Dial*'s elaboration on motion, as understood by the Damascene, not only omits the commentators' distinction between logic and physics but also subjects it entirely to the service of metaphysics.

2.1.4.5. Motion and its opposites

Since different kinds of motion can be distinguished by movement between their *opposites/contraries* (ἀντικείμενα/ἐναντία),²³⁴ the *Dial* proceeds to elaborate on the *opposites in motion*. It states that while generation is opposed to destruction and increase to decrease, both the corresponding opposite and rest are opposed to alteration and change of place. In alteration, cooling is opposed to heating, but so is rest; for example, a heated object, upon reaching its temperature limit, rests and ceases to be heated. The same logic applies to changes of place, where, in addition to the opposites of up and down, there is also rest. The *Dial* illustrates this with an example of a lump of earth thrown into the air, which must first come to rest before beginning its downward motion. The discussion on the opposites of motion concludes with the claim that there is no contrary motion to the heavens.²³⁵

The *Dial*'s discussion of the contraries of motion, as previously noted, is a well-established theme in the commentary tradition of the *Categories* (with the exception of Ammonius and Sergius). Like the latter, *Dial* 62 confirms the exceptional cases of alteration and change of place, where rest is also opposed in addition to the corresponding contraries.

²³¹ *Dial*, 68:10–17. Here also, the *Dial*'s version is unique.

²³² See 2.1.2.

²³³ See 3.2.3.

²³⁴ The *Dial* generally uses these two terms synonymously, without distinction.

²³⁵ *Dial*, 62:35–44.

Nevertheless, unlike the commentators, *Dial* 62 combines the discussion about the *differences of motion* with that of the *opposites in motion* into a single coherent unit, where the former leads to the latter. The unifying aspect of these two is the distinctive *definitions of the different kinds of motion* (from one opposite to another), which commentators already used to illustrate both *differences of motion* (Elias) and *opposites in motion* (Philoponus and Elias). Although the commentators do not attempt to link these aspects, it is not difficult to imagine how this could have occurred in summarizing and compiling processes by later editors of handbooks.

The *Dial*'s additional statement that there is no contrary motion to the heavens is an Aristotelian concept not discussed in the *Categories*,²³⁶ which is why commentators usually omit it in their commentaries on the latter. Contrary to Richter's claim,²³⁷ the only exception here, as was previously highlighted, is Elias' *Commentary on the Categories*, where it is also used to illustrate *opposites in motion*.²³⁸ Although the *Dial* here follows Elias' logic, its text is closer to a pericope found in Philoponus' *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*.²³⁹

At the same time, the examples the *Dial* uses to explain the exceptional cases of alteration (e.g., heating) and change of place (e.g., a lump of earth thrown in the air) are not found in the commentary tradition of Aristotle's *Categories*. Even more peculiar is that the example of earth thrown into the air is specifically used only by Alexander of Lycopolis, a Neoplatonic pagan philosopher (4th c.) who, in his *On the Tenets of the Manichaeans*, uses this example to refute the Manichaean argument that matter/darkness can itself rise to the region of divine light. Based on Aristotelian logic, Alexander asserts that matter can naturally move only towards the center. For this reason, when a lump of earth is thrown into the air (an unnatural motion affected by an external force), it can only remain aloft for some time before beginning its natural downward descent.²⁴⁰

It remains a mystery how a pagan anti-Manichaean example of an unnatural external force became an example of the Aristotelian principle of two kinds of contraries in the change of place. It might very well be that such a transformation was effected by Christian editors and compilers who considered Alexander's text not only important but also authoritative. Alexander of Lycopolis seems to have been mistakenly considered a Christian bishop already by Patriarch

²³⁶ These aspects are elaborated mainly in Aristotle's *Physics* (*Physica* VIII, 8) and *On the Heavens* (*De caelo*, 285b28–288a13).

²³⁷ According to Richter both Philoponus' and Elias' commentaries state that there are no opposites in the motion of the celestial bodies. (Richter 1982, 248). In reality, Philoponus makes no such claim anywhere in his *Commentary on the Categories*.

²³⁸ See 2.1.4.1.

²³⁹ Τῇ δὲ οὐρανίᾳ κινήσει οὐκ ἔστιν ἐναντία κίνησις (*Dial*, 62:34–35). Cf. Τῇ μὲν κύκλῳ κινήσει οὐκ ἔστιν ἐναντία κίνησις (κύκλῳ δέ ἐστι κίνησις ἢ τοῦ ὅλου κύκλου, οἷαί εἰσιν αἱ τῶν οὐρανίων κινήσεις· (John Philoponus, *Arist Phys*, 842:12).

²⁴⁰ Alexander of Lycopolis, *Tractatus de placitis Manichaeorum*—A. Brinkmann, *Alexandri Lycopolitani contra Manichaei opiniones disputatio*, Leipzig: Teubner, 1895: 3–40.

Photius (9th c.)²⁴¹—a misconception which most probably also existed during the time of the Damascene or even earlier. In addition, as will become clear later, Aristotelian logical principles and especially its kinetics played a vital role in Christian anti-Manichaean polemics, which in turn might have also influenced Christian basic education and its handbooks.

Due to the absence of similar sources, it remains unknown whether this example (as well as the one on heating) is a creative addition by John Damascene or whether it already existed in his source(s). The fact that the *Dial* is not aware of its Manichaean background and that similar logic is neither found in John's own anti-Manichaean polemics nor elsewhere in his theology makes the former quite improbable. In addition, the notion of the two kinds of opposites (contrary motion and rest) in alteration and change of place is not brought up again in John's theological works.

Nevertheless, the *Dial*'s discussion of the two kinds of contraries extends beyond this point, reappearing at the end of chapter 62. Here, it elaborates on how a single entity can possess two contraries. According to the text, two things can be contrary to one thing in different respects: opposite motions are analogous to how cooling is opposed to heating, whereas rest opposes motion as *cessation* (λῆξις) or *privation* (στέρησις).²⁴²

We have previously observed that Olympiodorus is the only commentator whose chapter on motion in the *Categories* additionally explains the two kinds of contraries in this manner. Although *Dial* 62 clearly follows Olympiodorus' logic, there are also differences. Unlike Olympiodorus' use of generation and destruction, the *Dial* employs examples of cooling and heating. Furthermore, the *Dial* does not utilize Olympiodorus' pair of *habit* (ἔξις) and *privation* to explain motion and rest; instead, it only compares rest with privation and cessation. Most significantly, unlike Olympiodorus, the *Dial* presents this discussion not within a section on *opposites in motion* but separately at the end of the chapter.²⁴³ This dispersion again highlights the compiling and encyclopedic nature of the *Dial* and its sources, where a deeper and coherent philosophical understanding of a concept was no longer paramount.

This does not imply that no comprehension of a notion was required, but rather that the understanding needed was simpler and more general. Even though John's patristic theology does not employ the distinction between the two kinds of opposites (contrary motion; motion and rest), it does, as we will later see, value the general logic behind the change from habit to privation. This is particularly true for the parts that characterize this change as unnatural and privation as non-being and an absence of a thing.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Oort 2020, 47–48.

²⁴² *Dial*, 62:48–52.

²⁴³ Olympiodorus, *Arist Categ*, 146:22–29.

²⁴⁴ See 3.2.2.

This, in turn, leads us to chapter 58 (on opposites) of the *Dial*, where the two kinds of opposites are explained differently. According to this chapter, changes between the contraries of hot and cold are natural, as they can transform into one another, representing a proper change from one qualitative opposite to another. Conversely, change between habit and privation is unnatural because it does not involve a transformation into another state and lacks a proper contrary of the same kind. Privation is merely an absence of a thing, not another thing, much like blindness is defined as an absence of sight.²⁴⁵ Its importance to Chalcedonian Christians is also attested by the *DP*, where a similar elaboration can be found.²⁴⁶

It can be therefore concluded that the theme of *opposites in motion* in *Dial* 62 in large follows the patterns established by the commentary tradition, which it most probably extracted from an unknown handbook of logic. This, as well as the general compiling character of this theme is attested by dispersity of its parts as well as by the tendency to collect into one text different exceptional approaches particularly related to specific commentators.

2.1.4.6. Differences between the kinds of motion: the case of alteration

Following its discussion of *opposites in motion*, the *Dial* again turns to elaborate on *differences of motion*. The central question here is whether alteration, which appears to accompany all other kinds of motion, is truly distinct from them. The *Dial* acknowledges that in natural motions—generation, destruction, increase, decrease, and local motion—alteration indeed occurs alongside them. However, this does not preclude alteration from happening independently. For instance, the heating and cooling of a stone do not cause it to increase or be destroyed. As the *Dial* concludes, this demonstrates that even when alteration accompanies other kinds of motion, it nevertheless remains distinct from them.²⁴⁷

As previously noted, the *Dial* here presents a thematic discussion found in all commentaries on the *Categories*. However, the specific point that alteration, despite its uniqueness, coexists with all other kinds of motion is mentioned only in the more extensive commentaries by Simplicius, Philoponus, and Elias. Among these three, the *Dial*'s presentation shares similarities exclusively with Philoponus' *Commentary on Categories*, from which several foundational elements appear to be derived. Particularly striking is the use of the verb “accompany” (παρέπομαι), a characteristic feature of Philoponus' work. There is also a strong terminological resemblance in how both texts illustrate alteration accompanying other kinds of motion. Philoponus does this indirectly by linking the change of place (an analogy for alteration) to all the kinds of motion, whereas the *Dial* directly links

²⁴⁵ *Dial*, 58:8–14.

²⁴⁶ *Dial*, 58:1–12 cf. *DP*, 203:18–23.

²⁴⁷ *Dial*, 62:35–44.

alteration to all other kinds of motion without using the analogy of a change of place.²⁴⁸

Despite these shared terms and patterns, the *Dial* still differs significantly from Philoponus and the other commentators mentioned. It omits the example of a gnomon (a quantitative change without alteration), which is essential in more elaborate commentaries. Nor does it draw a comparison with the change of place, which commentators considered a vital additional argument for demonstrating that the involvement of one kind of motion in another does not negate its uniqueness. While the *Dial* clearly follows the main theme and terminology established by Philoponus' commentary, there is no evidence of direct engagement. The rudimentary presence of these Philoponean patterns in the *Dial* again suggests that these principles reached the Damascene indirectly through an unknown source.

This of course does not imply that the *Dial*'s general elaboration on the uniqueness of alteration is qualitatively inferior to other commentaries. Ammonius, for example, limits his explanation to the gnomon example, without mentioning the analogy of local motion or the coexistence of alteration with other motions. Olympiodorus, on the other hand, omits all previous aspects, focusing solely on the example of a stretched line (increase without alteration) and the alteration of the soul (no increase involved). Sergius merely states that alterations do not cause quantitative changes.²⁴⁹ Although the *Dial* is not a commentary and not comparable to the more elaborate ones, its level of detail in this instance is qualitatively comparable to less elaborate commentaries.

The only aspect where the *Dial* diverges from existing commentaries is its choosing to exemplify the uniqueness of alteration through the qualitative changes of a stone cooling and heating. We have seen how most commentators illustrated this via quantitative change, primarily with the gnomon example, but also with that of a stretched line (Olympiodorus). Only Elias and Olympiodorus, similar to the *Dial*, exemplify the uniqueness of alteration through examples of qualitative change.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the *Dial*'s cooling and heating of a stone is nowhere to be found. Whether this exceptional detail reveals to us a personal addition of the Damascene or was already existing in his source remains unknown. Whatever the case, the concept itself is not repeated nor used in any of John's theological works.

²⁴⁸ See especially John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 201:16–21 cf. *Dial*, 62:35–38,42–43.

²⁴⁹ See n. 188.

²⁵⁰ Elias, *Arist Categ*, 253:29–20; Olympiodorus, *Arist Categ*, 146:21–22.

2.1.4.7. Distinguishing motion from change

The final theme in the *Dial*'s chapter on motion concerns the distinction between motion and change:

Now, Aristotle calls change a motion. But in Book V of his *Physics*, he has demonstrated that generation and destruction are changes, but not motions, because motion takes place while the thing moved persists.²⁵¹

According to the *Dial*, while Aristotle generally equates change and motion, in his *Physics* he distinguishes between them. Generation and destruction are categorized as changes but not motions because they affect the existence of a particular thing in such a way that it does not persist through the change. For motion to occur, the moving object must persist. In other words, with generation and destruction (a change of substance), we observe changes rather than motions because the thing undergoing change does not persist.

This concise overview first directs us to Aristotle and highlights a terminological inconsistency in his *Categories* and *Physics*. In Aristotle's *Categories*, there appears to be no difference between motion and change: all motions are changes, and all changes are motions.²⁵² Book III of Aristotle's *Physics*, as we have already seen, also makes no distinction. However, in Book V of his *Physics*, generation and destruction are classified as changes but not motions.

According to Aristotle, since all change (μεταβολή) involves an earlier and later phase, occurring from something to something, it can only happen in three ways: 1) from subject to non-subject; 2) from non-subject to subject; or 3) from subject to subject. The first (from non-subject to subject) is generation, which constitutes either an *unqualified* (simple) coming to be, such as from not being to being a (primary) substance (e.g., a house), or a *qualified* coming to be, such as from not being white to being white. The second (from subject to non-subject) is destruction, which, in both unqualified and qualified ways, is the opposite of what occurs in generation. According to Aristotle, in these two kinds of (contradictory) changes, there can be no motion (κίνησις). Generation cannot be motion because it is impossible for what does not exist to undergo motion. Neither can destruction be motion, because the opposite of motion must be either another motion or rest. Nevertheless, due to the existence of an earlier and later phase, they can be considered changes. Motion, on the other hand, can only occur where change takes place between proper contraries or intermediates (from subject to subject). For *Physics* V, motion can therefore only occur in the categories of quantity, quality (alteration), and place (movement or change of place).²⁵³

²⁵¹ Κίνησιν δὲ λέγει Ἀριστοτέλης τὴν μεταβολήν. Ἐν γὰρ τῷ πέμπτῳ λόγῳ τῆς Φυσικῆς ἀκροάσεως ἀπέδειξεν, ὅτι γενέσεις καὶ φθορὰ μεταβολαὶ μὲν εἰσι, κινήσεις δὲ οὐκ εἰσι, διότι ἡ κίνησις σφζομένου τοῦ πράγματος γίνεται (*Dial*, 62, 45–48; translation by Chase 1958, 96).

²⁵² Aristotle, *Categoriae* 14.

²⁵³ Aristotle, *Physica*, 225a1–226b17. On this matter see also Rosen 2012, 64–65, 78–83; Guthrie 1981, 120 n. 2.; Bodnar 2018, n. 11.

Regarding the commentary tradition on motion in the *Categories*, this detail from *Physics* V, as we have already seen, is generally omitted or ignored. Elias, for example, mentions nothing, whereas Ammonius and Sergius emphasize that all motions are changes and vice versa. Only Simplicius and Philoponus considered it important to mention this distinction to highlight how the physical approach (not all changes are motions) differs from the logical approach (all changes are motions). In other words, in matters of logic, motion and change can be equated, whereas in matters of physics, they cannot.

The *Dial*'s presentation generally follows a logic established by the latter commentators. Terminological and thematic rudiments, however, link it, as claimed by Richter, to Philoponus's *Commentary on Categories*.²⁵⁴ Although the *Dial*'s concept regarding the persistence of motions versus the non-persistence of generation and corruption is a distinctively Philoponian aspect, the *Dial*'s structure nevertheless guides us to Olympiodorus. Like the *Dial*, Olympiodorus's commentary first declares that Aristotle equates motion and change, after which comes the statement that in *Physics* V he nevertheless considers generation and destruction to be changes and not motion.²⁵⁵

However, Olympiodorus does not mention this in his analysis of motion but in the *Categories*' chapter (10) on opposites. There it is labeled as an argument by those who consider this chapter spurious due to its non-alignment with the perspective of *Physics*, where motion and change are distinguished. According to Olympiodorus, those who make such a claim have not understood the different nature of the *Categories* and *Physics*. In the former, motion and change are not distinguished because it is an introductory work that deals with broader logical perceptions. In the latter, such a distinction is made because it is a more advanced work that deals with the nature of things.²⁵⁶

In one way or another, the *Dial*'s distinction between motion and change contains a thematic peculiarity of Philoponus and a structural pattern that clearly belongs to Olympiodorus. But unlike the latter, the *Dial* makes no explicit distinction between logic and physics, which essentially leads it to stating that Aristotle simultaneously equates motion with change and also distinguishes them. In this way, the *Dial*'s reference at the end of chapter 62 leads it not only to the same ignorance that Olympiodorus tried to refute but also confuses the preceding enumeration of the kinds of motion, to which generation and destruction were included. The *Dial* is therefore unaware that the insertion of the *Physics*' distinction between motion and change in the *Categories* served a specific cause: to explain and resolve the apparent contradiction in Aristotle's thought and terminology via the distinction of logic and physics.

This aspect again highlights not only the compiling and encyclopedic nature but also the Christian metaphysical uniform character of the *Dial* and its sources,

²⁵⁴ Richter 1982, 248.

²⁵⁵ Olympiodorus, *Arist Categ*, 133:16–20 cf. *Dial*, 62: 45–48.

²⁵⁶ Olympiodorus, *Arist Categ*, 133:8–36.

where in a summarizing and abridging process many vital distinctions were left out and eventually lost. John's patristic philosophy continues this uniform approach, considering all motions within the created order as changes. Motion is not considered a change only at the uncreated level of God.²⁵⁷

2.1.5. Aristotle's definition of *nature*

In addition to explaining the nature of motion, the *Dial* also elaborates on its causality, introducing the concepts of *nature* (φύσις) and *substance* (οὐσία). Chapter 41 of the *Dial* defines nature as the *principle of the motion and of the rest of each of being*. It further clarifies that nature refers to a natural and substantial mode of existence, not an accidental one. This is exemplified by the nature of Earth, which, despite being at rest in a geocentric cosmology, can still be moved to produce. In other words, even though the Earth is stationary, it can be acted upon (e.g., through plowing) to bear fruit. The *Dial* also emphasizes that nature is synonymous with substance, as nature derives its potentiality for motion and rest from substance. Consequently, substance is the cause of its own motion and rest.²⁵⁸

These concepts are rooted in Aristotle's *Physics*, which discusses nature and natural objects. According to Aristotle, natural objects are distinguished from non-natural objects (artifacts) by the way motion functions and manifests within them. Natural objects, such as animals, plants, and the elements of fire, air, water, and earth intrinsically contain the principle of their own motion/change and rest. For instance, fire's tendency is a natural property determined by its nature. Thus, the nature of a thing is the inherent principle and cause of its motion and rest. Non-natural objects (artifacts) like a cloak or a bed lack this intrinsic impulse for change. Any change they undergo originates from external causes (e.g., a craftsperson) or accidentally from their material.²⁵⁹ For Aristotle, motion and change are inextricably linked to nature, serving as fundamental principles for understanding it. If nature is a principle of motion and change, then a true understanding of nature necessitates comprehending the process of change.²⁶⁰ In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle also allows for an extended identification of substance and nature, asserting that nature is the substance of things that possess an internal principle of motion.²⁶¹

This understanding was well-received and further developed by late Neoplatonic commentators. As previously noted, Philoponus began his chapter on the logic of motion in the *Categories* by stating that motion is properly a subject of natural science because all natural things exist in motion. Philoponus remarks that

²⁵⁷ See 3.4.7.

²⁵⁸ *Dial*, 41:1–11.

²⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Physics*, 192b8–193a9.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 200b12–14.

²⁶¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1015a11–19.

this understanding is founded on Aristotle's definition of nature as a principle of motion and rest.²⁶²

However, despite Kotter's references to multiple commentaries by Philoponus, Elias, and David,²⁶³ the *Dial* here contains no direct influences from the commentary tradition. Instead, the *Dial* draws from ecclesiastical sources and narratives. Kotter has identified similar elaborations in Maximus's *Opuscula*, Theodore of Raithou's *Praeparatio*, *Oxon*, and *DP*. Richter also refers to the *Opuscula* and notes that the identification between natural and essential movement is also found in the *Praeparatio*.²⁶⁴

Despite the shared theme among different authors, textual and structural comparison links *Dial* 41 solely to Theodore of Raithou's *Praeparatio* (6th/7th c.). Not only does the *Dial* incorporate Theodore's specific phrases and expressions—the definition and explanation of nature in contrast to an accidental mode of being—but also his unique example of Earth's nature, which, though not undergoing local motion, is nevertheless moved to generate life. As mentioned, like the *Dial*, Theodore states that nature and substance are synonymous, making nature a principle by which substances move and are at rest.²⁶⁵ Crucially, Theodore is one of the few to present the Aristotelian concept of nature as an aspect of logic that “we” (Chalcedonian Christians) say it to be, without emphasizing its pagan origin (though he clearly knows it) or distinguishing it from how the Fathers viewed it. Although Theodore introduces biblical uses of the term “nature” after the Aristotelian understanding, he presents no opposition or qualitative difference between them.²⁶⁶

In contrast, as Richter has pointed out, many Chalcedonian authors considered Aristotle's definition of nature incompatible with the Christian metaphysical understanding, where God alone was the principle of motion.²⁶⁷ This caution toward potentially incompatible pagan concepts is partly linked to the practice of distinguishing them from more honorable patristic versions. This is evident in the *Opuscula*, which explicitly differentiates the philosophical (pagan) definitions of nature and substance from the patristic versions. According to it, while philosophers understood nature as the principle of motion and rest, the Fathers considered it a species predicated of many numerically distinct individuals. While philosophers viewed substance as a self-subsistent reality existing independently, the Fathers understood it as a common nature shared by many hypostases.²⁶⁸

A similar approach is found in the *DP*, where the definition of nature as a principle of motion and rest, and substance as a self-subsistent thing, are

²⁶² John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 198:23–25

²⁶³ Kotter 1969, 107.

²⁶⁴ Richter 1982, 219–220.

²⁶⁵ Even though the patristic tradition also equated substance and nature, it nevertheless did not link the Aristotelian definition of nature to substance, as can be seen in the *Metaphysics*.

²⁶⁶ *Dial* 41:1–11 cf. Theodore of Raithou, *Praeparatio*, 202:10–203:1.

²⁶⁷ Richter 1982, 220.

²⁶⁸ *Opusc*, PG 91, 276A.

distinctively described as belonging to the doctrine of pagan philosophers. Interestingly, like the *Dial*, the *DP* also contains Theodore's equation of substance and nature (almost verbatim). However, unlike the *Praeparatio* and the *Dial*, the *DP* labels it "pagan."²⁶⁹ This further verifies the *Dial*'s link with the *Praeparatio* and not with the *DP*.

The most critical among them is Anastasius of Sinai, who, in his *Viae Dux*, explicitly rejects any use of the Aristotelian definition of nature—a principle of motion and rest—in Christology. He finds its application to the divine nature particularly problematic, as it would imply God's mutability (motion) and finitude (rest). According to Anastasius, a pious apostolic tradition adheres only to evangelical definitions, which define nature as something that exists truly and not merely in appearance (anti-Docetism).²⁷⁰ Many of the aforementioned definitions of nature are compiled randomly in the *Oxon*, where a distinction between pagan and Christian versions is also partially maintained.²⁷¹

Thus, *Dial* chapter 41 on nature seems to slightly deviate from the more skeptical approaches of many Chalcedonians. Instead, following Theodore of Raithou's example, it presents this Aristotelian concept of nature without labeling it or feeling the need to correct it with a patristic version. This does not imply that John was unaware of its pagan origin. In *Dial* chapter 31, a similar definition of nature is indeed understood to be part of the doctrine of external philosophers. Nor does it mean that John would openly defy the anti-Aristotelianism of his fellow Chalcedonians. Despite its neutral presence in *Dial* 41, John's theology is hesitant to use this definition of nature in such an unmodified form. Nevertheless, this does not negate its conceptual value. As will be explained in subsequent philosophical and theological chapters, John actually considers this definition to be of vital importance for the Chalcedonian theological cause. Under the watchful eye of his fellow Chalcedonians, he simply could not afford to use it in its purely Aristotelian (pagan) and unmodified form.

The conceptual value of this notion lies in the Aristotelian understanding that, as nature is a principle of its motion/change, nature can only be known through the knowledge of its motion and change. The inevitable link between nature/essence and its motion is also well explained by *Dial* 41, which states that the motions of nature and essence are always natural and essential. John Damascene undoubtedly understood this, which is why this concept is presented again in *Dial* 31 and, as we will later see, in his anti-Monothelite polemics.

Although *Dial* 41 is clearly a concise summary of Theodore's *Praeparatio*, John's precise role in its creation remains unclear. The fact that the *DP* also contains many of Theodore's unique points suggests that such information was available to the Chalcedonians in some form. In one way or another, *Dial* chapter 41 on nature presents an Aristotelian concept that had already been integrated into Chalcedonian Christian discourse.

²⁶⁹ *DP*, 40:2–3, 16–27.

²⁷⁰ Anastasius of Sinai, *Viae Dux*, 8.5:113–127.

²⁷¹ *Oxon* 11:27–33.

2.1.6. Nature and its five kinds of motion

In addition to the previously mentioned Aristotelian definition of nature, chapter 41 of the *Dial* presents its readers with another, much more elaborate concept of nature as:

The unchangeable and immutable principle and cause and power which has been implanted by the Creator in each species for its motion.²⁷²

Due to nature's inevitable link with species, the *Dial* further distinguishes its motions into five different kinds:

1. The natural motion of purely intelligible angelic beings is characterized by their capacity to think and communicate their thoughts without the medium of speech.²⁷³
2. The natural motion of psychosomatic humans is characterized by their ability to think, reason and communicate their thoughts through speech, that is, through the sensible body.²⁷⁴
3. The natural motion of brute beasts is characterized by vital, sentient and respiratory motions.²⁷⁵
4. The natural motion of plants is characterized by their capacity to assimilate nourishment, grow and reproduce.²⁷⁶
5. The natural motion of inanimate stones is characterized by their capacity to be heated or cooled and to be moved from place to place by an external force.²⁷⁷

This presentation explicitly discusses how external (pagan) philosophers distinguished substance—which they considered “simple being” (ἀπλῶς εἶναι)—from nature, which they understood as “substance made specific by essential differences” (being in such a way). To this, the *Dial* adds that the Greeks also considered nature to refer to the *most specific species* (εἰδικώτατα εἶδη), such as “angel” or “man,” which contain many hypostases. According to the *Dial*, the

²⁷² ...τὴν ἀμετάβλητον καὶ ἀμετάθετον ἀρχὴν καὶ αἰτίαν καὶ δύναμιν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ ἐντεθεῖσαν ἐκάστῳ εἶδει πρὸς κίνησιν (*Dial*, 31:7–9; own translation).

²⁷³ ...τοῖς μὲν ἀγγέλοις πρὸς τὸ νοεῖν καὶ ἐκτὸς προφορικοῦ λόγου μεταδιδόναι ἀλλήλοις τὰ νοήματα (*Dial*, 31:9–10).

²⁷⁴ ...τοῖς δὲ ἀνθρώποις πρὸς τὸ νοεῖν καὶ λογίζεσθαι καὶ διὰ προφορικοῦ λόγου διαδιδόναι ἀλλήλοις τὰ ἐν καρδίᾳ νοήματα (*Dial*, 31:10–12).

²⁷⁵ ...τοῖς δὲ ἀλόγοις τὴν ζωτικὴν καὶ αἰσθητικὴν καὶ ἀναπνευστικὴν κίνησιν (*Dial*, 31:12–13).

²⁷⁶ ...τοῖς δὲ φυτοῖς τὴν θρεπτικὴν καὶ αὐξητικὴν καὶ γεννητικὴν δύναμιν (*Dial*, 31:13–14).

²⁷⁷ ...τοῖς δὲ λίθοις τὴν τοῦ θερμαίνεσθαι καὶ τοῦ ψύχεσθαι καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τόπου εἰς τόπον ἑτεροκίνητον μετάβασιν ἡγουν τὴν ἄψυχον (*Dial*, 31:14–16).

Fathers did not pay attention to these inane details, referring to the common, including the most specific species, as substance, nature, and form (μορφή).²⁷⁸

Even though the definition of nature, along with its five kinds of motion, is clearly presented in a section addressing pagan philosophical doctrine, the *Dial* still refers to it as something that “we” (Chalcedonian Christians) say it to be (ὡς φαμεν). The interpretation of this addition is initially unclear. Is it merely indicating Chalcedonian awareness of pagan teaching—we say that, according to them—as F. Chace has understood it?²⁷⁹ Or is it an illustrative digression that serves as a Chalcedonian clarification? To answer these questions, we must understand the content and background of this presentation.

2.1.6.1. The pagan distinction between substance and nature

To fully understand this presentation, we must first examine the alleged pagan distinction between substance and nature. As previously noted, and as Richter pointed out, the Greek philosophical tradition does not differentiate nature from substance (simple being), contrary to the claims of the *Dial*.²⁸⁰ Despite this, Zhyrkova believed the distinction originated from Stoic influences that the Damascene received from Neoplatonic commentators. According to her, the *Dial*’s “substance” corresponds to the Stoic “unqualified substrate,” while its “nature” aligns with the Stoic “commonly qualified.”²⁸¹ D. Krausmüller, however, argues against this interpretation, suggesting that the *Dial*’s pericope is fundamentally based on the *arbor Porphyriana* (Porphyrian tree) used by Theodore of Raithou in his *Praeparatio*, serving as either its further development or even replacement.²⁸²

According to Porphyry’s *Eisagoge* and its classificatory scheme, *genus* is a general predication under which *species* (εἶδος) falls. Genus is therefore predicated of the species as it divides into various species. This creates a hierarchy from the more general to the more specific. *Substance* (οὐσία) is a genus of body but not a species of anything, making it the most general genus. Body, on the other hand, is both a species of substance and a genus of animate body. Animate body is a species of body and a genus of animal. Animal is a species of animate body and a genus of rational animal. Rational animal is a species of animal and a genus of human, which itself is a species of animal without being a genus to another species. Instead, the human species can only be further divided into particular individuals. For this reason, human is the most specific species.²⁸³

This structure is also closely related to the category of difference (e.g., rational-irrational, mortal-immortal, animate-inanimate, etc.), which, when added to a

²⁷⁸ *Dial*, 31:3–7, 16–22.

²⁷⁹ Chase 1958, 55.

²⁸⁰ Richter 1982, 210.

²⁸¹ Zhyrkova 2010, 102.

²⁸² Krausmüller 2020, 169–170.

²⁸³ Porphyry, *Isagoge sive quinque voces*, 3:21–8:6.

thing, diversifies and distinguishes it from others. The human species, for example, is the genus of animal made specific by the differences of rational and mortal. The human species is, therefore, a rational and mortal animal, distinguishable from other species through its differences. It is these differences that constitute a species by making it distinct from others: god (rational and immortal), humans (rational and mortal), irrational animals (irrational and mortal, but also sentient and animate), and plants (non-sentient and animate).²⁸⁴

These aspects of the Porphyrian system are repeated and further elaborated by Neoplatonic commentators. According to Ammonius, substance (the most general genus) is divided into body and bodiless; body into animate and inanimate; animate into the species of animal, plant, and plant-animal; animal into rational and irrational; the rational into god and human; and human into individuals. Here, too, substance is the most general genus and human the most specific species, while all intermediates are both genera and species relative to different things. For this reason, the only proper species is the specific species, such as human, horse, dog, etc. David continues the same system, explaining that the division of rational into god and human is essentially a division into immortal (god) and mortal (human).²⁸⁵

The same division presented by David is also continued by ecclesiastical sources,²⁸⁶ as well as the aforementioned Theodore, according to whom the wise Greeks (external philosophers) linked substance to the most general genus, while they called human the “most specific species.” Theodore also mentions that the Fathers (e.g., Basil of Caesarea) did not follow such excessive verbosity and, instead of the most specific species, called the general “nature” and “substance” (e.g., the species of angel and human). Instead of the philosophers’ “individual,” the Fathers referred to the particular with “hypostasis” or “person” (e.g., Paul and Peter).²⁸⁷

Now, despite Krausmüller’s claim about the link between the *Dial* and Theodore’s Porphyrian tree, these two works differ significantly. First, *Dial* 31 only contains rudiments of the Porphyrian tree, without any reference to intermediate genera and species. It mentions the most specific species (human) but not the most general genus, which is replaced with simple being.²⁸⁸ Also, unlike

²⁸⁴ Porphyry, *Isagoge sive quinque voces*, 8:7–12:11.

²⁸⁵ Ammonius, *In Porphyrii isagogen sive quinque voces*, 77–78. David, *In Porphyrii isagogen commentarium*, 142–143, 148, 164. Elias, *In Porphyrii isagogen*, 64.

²⁸⁶ See Roueché 1974, 76.

²⁸⁷ Theodore of Raithou, *Praeparatio*, 207:2–209:25. As is highlighted by Krausmüller, Basil and the rest of the Cappadocians had reduced the Porphyrian tree only to the level on the lowest (most specific) species, which they called nature or substance, by cutting out not only the intermediate genera and species but also the highest genus (Krausmüller 2020, 155, 157–158).

²⁸⁸ As Krausmüller has well brought out, this tradition of cutting out the intermediate genera and species so that the highest genus (substance) was directly juxtaposed with the lowest (the most specific) species, by referring to both of them as substance and nature, is already evident in Leontius of Byzantium (Krausmüller 2020, 156–157).

the *Dial*, Theodore's analysis of the Porphyrian tree does not state that the Greeks distinguished substance (simple being) from nature, but that they distinguished substance (the most general genus) from the most specific species of human. Furthermore, unlike *Dial* 31, Theodore nowhere states that the Greeks considered the most specific species (angel or human) to be nature, but that the Fathers (Cappadocians) considered it to be substance and nature, also linking it to the species of angel, human, etc.²⁸⁹

However, an aspect missed by Richter, Kotter, Zhyrkova, and Krausmüller is the link between the *Dial*'s concept here and a not-very-well-known Chalcedonian author called Pamphilus the Theologian (6th century).²⁹⁰ In answering the question about the relation between substance and nature, Pamphilus first posits that, according to the external philosophers (ἐξω σοφοί), nature is distinguished from substance, as can be understood from their different definitions. Without further elaboration, he then explains that the Holy Fathers did not follow this distinction and instead considered substance to be the same as nature. Despite that, as Pamphilus emphasizes, even the patristic tradition allows for a sort of distinction between them. Substance, for example, must always be hypostatic (truly and really existing), whereas nature can also be non-hypostatic, like the nature of time, love, etc.—as mentioned by Basil of Caesarea. In addition, some of the Fathers also distinguished substance as simple existence and nature as qualified existence. Pamphilus then specifies that by nature, one must understand a qualified existence according to the substance, that is, according to the essential differences—like rational—which help distinguish one species (e.g., human) of the same genus from another.²⁹¹

In other words, if substance is simple existence, then nature is substance (genus) with essential differences, which constitute a species. Pamphilus is essentially considering substance as the general underlying reality of all things. Nature belongs to this reality and inheres in it, being its qualified way of being according to the differences. These differences, on the other hand, are according to the substance, meaning they are essential. The difference “rational” is essential to human nature, distinguishing it from, say, animals (irrational). For the human species to exist, it must first be part of the underlying reality (substance—simple existence) and inhere in it; otherwise, it would not exist at all. On the other hand, it is nature that enables it to exist as a distinctive species in a qualified and differentiated way (rational).

Pamphilus is here presenting a Chalcedonian development of the Porphyrian tree already found in Leontius of Byzantium, who seems to have distinguished between unqualified substance as pure existence (all reality) and substantial qualities that inhere in substance by establishing a species. For Leontius, the species of “god” and “human,” despite their differences, belong to the same

²⁸⁹ The same aspect is on the other hand brought out in the *Dial*'s chapter on form (*Dial*, 42:9–10).

²⁹⁰ See Nicola 2014, 32.

²⁹¹ Pamphilus, *Diversorum capitum seu difficultatum solutio*, 2:120–190.

underlying reality of pure existence (substance as the highest genus). Pure existence, therefore, preceded the qualified existence of the species made specific by the differences (lowest species).²⁹² All this, as explained by Krausmüller, is *an extended Cappadocian framework where every concrete being has existence as its core, around which the natural and hypostatic idioms are then layered*.²⁹³

It has therefore become clear that the *Dial*'s distinction, drawn by external philosophers, between substance as simple being and nature as substance made specific by essential differences, is a theme derived from Pamphilus. Krausmüller's argument that the *Dial*'s Porphyrian elaboration is based on Theodore's *Praeparatio* is, therefore, incorrect. The only link the *Dial* has with the *Praeparatio* is its reference to the corrective position of the Fathers (substance is the same as nature)—an aspect that merely points to the *Dial*'s encyclopedic character. Nevertheless, unlike Pamphilus, the *Dial* does not differentiate the Greek distinction of substance and nature from the patristic one by subjugating the latter to the former. In other words, the *Dial* presents Pamphilus's patristic distinction as a continuation of the Greek distinction, which it was not. How Pamphilus's patristic explanation became an explanation of the Greek philosophical distinction remains unknown.

The most likely explanation is that it resulted from mistakes and confusions during the process of compilation, where Pamphilus's patristic distinction between substance and nature became indistinguishable from the similar Greek distinction. Considering that Pamphilus leaves the question about the Greek distinction unanswered, the compilers might have considered the later patristic discussion with its Porphyrian traits to essentially be its explanation. It is also possible that such a confusion might have happened due to Pamphilus's chapter circulating in the form of separated pericopes.

These same aspects also underlie the *Dial*'s reference to the pagan understanding of nature as the most specific species, used to indicate common entities like angel, human, and horse. This itself seems to be a later development of Philoponus's *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, where human, horse, and angel are also presented as examples of the most specific species distinguished from substance.²⁹⁴ This example again shows that the specific way of understanding Pamphilus has even turned the Philoponean example of the most specific species into nature. In one way or another, it is Pamphilus's Patristic/Porphyrian speculation on the difference between substance and nature that eventually became established as a pagan concept.

Nevertheless, Pamphilus's influence does not appear to have been universally understood in the same way. This is also evident in the *DP*, where, similarly to *Dial* 31, we find an emphasis that external philosophers distinguished substance as simple being (ἀπλῶς εἶναι) from nature. However, here this distinction is

²⁹² On this matter see Krausmüller 2020, 155–163.

²⁹³ Krausmüller 2020, 150.

²⁹⁴ John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 196:26.

understood differently: substance is simple being or existence, and nature is the motion of this existence.²⁹⁵ This again shows how confusions in the compilation process also resulted in different versions.

Even though the *Dial* is the first and only surviving example of the Pamphilian distinction between substance and nature, as well as the only one to present it as a concept of external philosophers, John Damascene's exact role in it remains unknown. It is quite evident that while composing chapter 31 of the *Dial*, John was not relying on Pamphilus's own text; otherwise, he would have known that this understanding was not considered a pagan distinction. It is therefore much more likely that John was relying on an unknown handbook where such an interpretation (confusion) had already taken place.

2.1.6.2. The modified definition of *nature*

Having examined the general content and background of this discussion, let us now revisit the pagan definition of nature as *the unchangeable and immutable principle, cause, and power implanted by the Creator in each species for its motion*. By presenting this definition immediately after distinguishing between substance and nature, the *Dial* again connects it to the thematic structure of Pamphilus the Theologian.²⁹⁶ There, following a similar differentiation, an explanation of Aristotle's definition of nature as a principle of motion and rest is provided. Although Pamphilus's thematic structure here forms the foundational basis for the *Dial*, its definition has undergone significant development, diverging from that used by Aristotle and his commentators.

Firstly, nature is here not merely a principle of motion and rest, as in *Dial* 41, but an immutable and unchangeable one. This aspect directs us to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, where nature is described as the primary matter from which something natural originates or comes into being, itself being formless and unchanging in its inherent power. For instance, while the nature of bronze can be changed into a statue, its primary matter (bronze) remains constant (unchangeable). Nevertheless, nowhere in Aristotle's works or in the commentaries is this aspect explicitly linked to the Aristotelian definition of nature.

Furthermore, the immutability of nature was also crucial for the Chalcedonian tradition. To safeguard the duality of Christ's natures, the Council of Chalcedon (451) already declared that the two natures were unified without confusion or change.²⁹⁷ This same aspect is reiterated in the Third Council of Constantinople (681), where it is used to preserve the duality of Christ's natural functions and essential qualities.²⁹⁸ These aspects are also thoroughly echoed in John

²⁹⁵ *DP*, 39–40, 45:11–13.

²⁹⁶ Pamphilus, *Diversorum capitum seu difficultatum solutio*, 2:191–198.

²⁹⁷ *Concilium universale Chalcedonense anno 451*, 2.1.1, 110; 2.1.2, 102, 125; 2.1.3, 115.

²⁹⁸ *Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, 444.

Damascene's Chalcedonian Christology and anthropology.²⁹⁹ However, in none of these cases has the Aristotelian definition of nature been connected to immutability. Moreover, for the aforementioned Christological position, the focus was on the unification of natures, not on the functionality of nature itself.

The *Dial*'s definition of nature, on the other hand, directs us to the problems some Chalcedonians had with the standard Aristotelian definition of nature. As previously mentioned, using this definition in the Christological debate was problematic because it would have introduced mutability to the divine nature and ignored that God is the primordial principle of all motion and rest. The immutability of the uncreated divine nature, in contrast to the mutability of created natures, is well established by the Cappadocian fathers, especially Gregory of Nyssa. Like the *Dial*, Gregory characterizes the divine nature as unchangeable using the term *ametathetos* (ἀμετάθετος).³⁰⁰ It therefore seems that inserting immutability into the Aristotelian definition of nature aimed to characterize its principle and cause as divine. In this way, it is not simply nature itself, but God, who is the uncreated and immutable cause, principle, and power of its motion.

This understanding is confirmed by the second half of the *Dial*'s modified Aristotelian definition, which states that the principle of nature derives from the Creator, by whom it is implanted (ἐντεθεῖσθαι). This, of course, diverges significantly from Aristotle, who would not have accepted that the principle of nature descended from and was implanted by the Creator. According to Richter, the *Dial*'s definition here shares some similarities with ideas found in David's *Commentary on Porphyry's Eisagoge*.³⁰¹ According to David, Plato stated that all things are created by nature, which is why all things also possess activity, which he called motion, and also rest. Additionally, David links this concept to the Porphyrian tree and to the species of animals and plants, all of which derive their natural powers from this nature.³⁰² Nevertheless, David's commentary does not explicitly refer to the Aristotelian definition of nature, nor does it discuss the implantation of its immutable power and principle by the Creator. In other words, David does not refer to an external force that has given nature its power of motion but instead considers nature itself to be the source and creator of these powers.

Instead, the *Dial*'s peculiarities first of all guide us to John Philoponus, who, in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, refers to the power of nature as something that has descended and governs both the animate and inanimate.³⁰³ According to M. Tuominen, Philoponus innovatively introduces the idea of a divine power outside of nature, thereby challenging the Aristotelian distinction between artifacts and natural things.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁹ *Expos*, 49:21–30; 60:4–6.

³⁰⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, 39:9–16.

³⁰¹ Richter 1982, 210.

³⁰² David, *In Porphyrii isagogen commentarium*, 125:15–19; 148.

³⁰³ John Philoponus, *Arist Phys*, 197:34–198:3.

³⁰⁴ Tuominen 2009, 124–125.

The logic of an external, descended power of nature leads us to Philoponus' criticism of Aristotle's dynamics and to his famous theory of *impetus*.³⁰⁵ As previously discussed, Aristotle posits that natural things possess internal tendencies that always direct them toward a specific natural place; for example, a stone or wood tends to move downward. However, natural things can also be moved artificially (contrary to their nature) by an external agent, which can move them in various directions. A hand can externally propel a javelin (which has earth as its dominant element) upward or even forward, contradicting its natural tendency to fall. Yet Aristotle's explanations falter when addressing why the javelin continues moving after the hand has released it. Lacking direct contact with the external agent, Aristotle assumes that it is the element of air (pockets of air) that sustains the javelin's motion.³⁰⁶

Philoponus ridicules Aristotle by asserting that if this were the case, soldiers could easily throw their javelins by simply moving the air. He argues that it is more logical to claim that the javelin continues moving because the thrower's hand impresses and exhibits (ἐνδίδωμι) an incorporeal moving force (κινητική δύναμις) into it.³⁰⁷

According to R. Sorabji, after applying the theory of impetus to projectiles, Philoponus took the next innovative step—likely motivated by his Christian faith—by generalizing it for all dynamics on a cosmic scale, where the God of *Genesis* implants impressed forces into natural things at the time of creation.³⁰⁸ This generalized concept of impetus thus becomes an argument for Christian creation and the dependence of created nature's motions on the Creator.

In Philoponus' *On the Creation of the World*, he states that the heavens and planets move in their (circular) motion, elements behave according to their linear motion (fire and flames move upward, while earth and stones move downward), and living beings are moved by their self-moving soul because God implanted (ἐντίθημι) a motive force within them.³⁰⁹ For Philoponus, this generalized theory of impetus supports the idea that the creation of the universe and all its powers and motions are implanted by God, thus rendering them dependent on Him. Without the Creator's implantation, there can be no functionality or motion. With this, Philoponus aimed to refute the arguments of pagan philosophers who believed that the motions of the heavens were uncreated and eternal, arising from themselves (from their souls).

Sorabji's assertion that Philoponus was inspired by his Christian faith is indeed accurate. A similar concept of divine impetus can be found in Gregory of Nyssa, who, in his *Against the Eunomians*, discusses the natural force and power

³⁰⁵ On Philoponus' *impetus* and his rejection of Aristotelian dynamics see Sorabji 2010, 47–53; Tuominen 2009, 144–147.

³⁰⁶ Aristotle, *Physica*, 267a2–12; *De caelo*, 301b23–30.

³⁰⁷ John Philoponus, *Arist Phys*, 641:13–642:20.

³⁰⁸ Sorabji 2010, 49.

³⁰⁹ John Philoponus, *De opificio mundi*, 29:1–9. See also Wildberg 2021.

that God has implanted (ἐντεθεῖσθαι) in human nature for its activity.³¹⁰ Maximus the Confessor, in his opposition to the Monothelites and Monenergists, asserts that, according to patristic thought, there cannot be any motion of nature that contradicts God, including natural passions, since all natural motions are divinely implanted (ἐντεθέντα) into existence through creation.³¹¹

Given that Maximus often shares Philoponian concepts and likely had access to Philoponus' works via his teacher, Stephanus of Alexandria (a pupil of Philoponus), it is not unlikely that Maximus's approach was influenced not only by Gregory's but also by Philoponus' understanding of impetus.³¹² It should be here noted that when Gregory speaks about human nature, then Maximus, just like Philoponus, refers to it on a cosmic scale. According to A. Varlamova, the notion of God as the principle of all motions in the universe is originally Philoponian and is followed not only by Maximus the Confessor but also by John Damascene.³¹³

The Damascene's modified definition of nature and the divinely implanted power and motion undoubtedly reflect patterns similar to Philoponian and Maximian logic regarding impetus. However, unlike the Damascene, neither Philoponus nor Maximus explicitly connect this principle to the definition of nature, even though they recognize these motions as natural. The *Dial*'s connection to nature aligns more closely with Gregory of Nyssa, who associates the concept of divine impetus with human nature, without nevertheless linking it to the Aristotelian definition of nature.

The inspiration to combine all these aspects might have come from the *Viae Dux* and its chapter on nature. Similar to Maximus, Anastasius also argues against the Monothelites by explaining that innocent natural functions like eating and breathing exist in our nature because God created them.³¹⁴ The fact that Anastasius does this while also condemning the use of the Aristotelian definition of nature a few lines earlier makes it very possible that the *Dial*'s version, inspired by the coexistence of these opposing elements, is an attempt to rehabilitate the same definition by integrating specifically Chalcedonian metaphysical elements into it.

The Chalcedonian influence is also attested by the linking of nature to species. As we have already seen, in the Porphyrian system, the most specific species (or any species) was not labeled as nature. The only exception here is David's *Commentary on Porphyry's Eisagoge*, where the species of the Porphyrian tree are linked to powers that derive from nature.³¹⁵

³¹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra eunomium* 2.1:189, 197, 395, 399.

³¹¹ Maximus the Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 352.

³¹² Schukin 2017, 363, n. 4; Benevich 2012, 113, n. 45.

³¹³ Varlamova 2017, 395.

³¹⁴ Anastasius of Sinai, *Viae Dux*, II, 3:1–49.

³¹⁵ David, *In Porphyrii isagogen commentarium*, 148.

Among the Cappadocians, Gregory of Nazianzus exemplifies divine nature and substance by comparing them to created species like humans and horses.³¹⁶ From the Chalcedonian perspective, John the Grammarian clearly identifies substance with nature and common species (which contains many individuals). He does this to refute the Monophysite anthropological model, which defined human nature/substance as soul + body and used it to argue for Christ's single nature (divinity + humanity). According to John the Grammarian, Christ could not have had one nature because that would make him a species, which is impossible since there are not multiple Christs.³¹⁷ Leontius of Byzantium reiterates this logic, further clarifying that "species" is understood as nature in a universal and general sense.³¹⁸ As previously noted, Theodore of Raithou identifies the most specific species with the Cappadocian understanding of substance and nature as universals. Following Leontius, Pamphilus the Theologian also points out that species, meaning common nature, is predicated synonymously of the individuals within it.³¹⁹

This anti-Monophysite stance is continued by Maximus the Confessor, who states that species is synonymous with nature and substance, distinguished from other species by its constitutive differences. In relation to the individuals it encompasses, it is predicated as a species of those individuals. Therefore, it is not only absurd to claim that the unity of soul and body (two different natures) constitutes human nature (it refers instead to a human individual), but even more absurd to apply this to Christ's divinity and humanity without understanding that "Christ" refers to the hypostasis of the divine Logos.³²⁰

In the *DP*, the identification of nature and species is already declared a patristic concept, primarily referencing Anastasius I of Antioch. Echoing Maximus's logic, the *DP* also explains that a particular human being, i.e., the unity of soul and body, is not human nature. Instead, human nature refers to the unity of individuals under the same (human) species.³²¹ The notion that the Fathers equated species and nature is also emphasized in John Damascene's *Dial* and the *IE*.³²² As we will see later, this concept is also continued in the Damascene's theological argumentation.

It can therefore be concluded that the definition of nature in *Dial* 31, though originally a pagan (Aristotelian) concept, was clearly modified by the Chalcedonians to better suit their theological specificities. By linking it to species and declaring its principle and cause immutable and implanted by the Creator (God),

³¹⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus, *De filio* (orat 29), 13.

³¹⁷ John the Grammarian, *Apologia concilii Chalcedonensis*, I:2–II:32; *Capitula xvii contra monophysitas*, VII, 86–89. See also Zachhuber 2020, 197–198.

³¹⁸ Leontius of Byzantium, *Libri tres*, I, 134, 152. See also Zachhuber 2020, 205.

³¹⁹ Pamphilus, *Diversorum capitum seu difficultatum solutio* 1: 77–79.

³²⁰ Maximus the Confessor, *Epistula* 12, PG 91, 488 B–C.

³²¹ *DP*, 134:16; 191; 204–205; 209:21–210:4.

³²² *Dial*, 5:79–84; *IE*, 1:16–17.

this originally pagan concept of nature became Christianized and more acceptable to the Chalcedonians.

The most probable reason for such a modification was to neutralize the skepticism and criticism of other co-Chalcedonians against the Aristotelian definition of nature. This would allow it to be used against heresies and for the protection of the Chalcedonian faith. It seems that the Aristotelian definition of nature, despite its incompatible aspects and pagan background, was simply too important, at least for John Damascene, to be excluded from theological use. Its importance, as we will see in John's anti-Monothelite polemics, again lies in the metaphysical link between motion/change and being/existence, where the former indicates the latter and vice versa.³²³

Based on all this, the reference to the definition of nature as something that "we say" in *Dial* 31 can be interpreted and understood as a Chalcedonian declaration. The fact that it is presented in a section elaborating on the doctrines of external philosophers shows that its pagan origin is also acknowledged—an aspect well known to the Chalcedonians. In other words, *Dial* 31 is here presenting a modified version of this pagan definition of nature, which seems to have been in use by at least some Chalcedonians.

Whether this modification to the Aristotelian definition of nature was made by the Damascene remains unknown. The fact that such a modification, as far as I am aware, is only found in John Damascene's works, makes it very possible that he himself is its creative author. In one way or another, all this again highlights John's simultaneous openness and criticism towards the use of pagan philosophical concepts in Chalcedonian theology. They can be used, but only if they serve the truth. If they do not serve the truth, they should be discarded or, if possible, modified for the task. Even though John is not ready to use the purely Aristotelian definition of nature in *Dial* 41, he is willing to use it in a modified Chalcedonian form. By doing so, John creatively distinguishes himself from the more critical approach of his fellow Chalcedonians, and especially from Anastasius of Sinai, who did not see any possibility for its Chalcedonian use.

2.1.6.3. Five kinds of natural motion

As we have already seen, this modified Aristotelian definition of nature and its God-given motion was also linked to species, which itself was distinguished into five different types, along with their corresponding natural motions. Let us recall them:

1. The natural motion of purely intelligible angelic beings is characterized by their capacity to think and communicate their thoughts without the medium of speech.

³²³ This definition is used in John's *Volunt*. See discussion in 3.4.2.

2. The natural motion of psychosomatic humans is characterized by their ability to think, reason and communicate their thoughts through speech, that is, through the sensible body.
3. The natural motion of brute beasts is characterized by vital, sentient and respiratory motions.
4. The natural motion of plants is characterized by their capacity to assimilate nourishment, grow and reproduce.
5. The natural motion of inanimate stones is characterized by their capacity to be heated or cooled and to be moved from place to place by an external force.

In tandem with the modified definition of nature, these kinds of motion were also part of the doctrines of the external philosophers that “we,” the Chalcedonians, also affirm. This seems to hint that here too we have an originally pagan philosophical notion further developed by the Chalcedonians. Nevertheless, finding its Greek philosophical origin is not as easy as it was with the modified definition of nature. According to Richter, who also refers to Kotter, this classification was common knowledge in philosophical and ecclesiastical circles.³²⁴ Even though different elements of this classification can be found in multiple sources, the only other text where they have been brought together in a manner similar to the *Dial*, is the *DP*.³²⁵

One of the foundational sources behind the five kinds of motion, as pointed out by Richter and Markov,³²⁶ is the anthropological model of the Christian bishop and physician Nemesius of Emesa (4th c.) presented in his *On the Nature of Man*. In this work, Nemesius gives us a model of a God-created microcosmic mankind, which incorporates different natures and their powers: the thinking, reasoning, judging, and apprehending powers of rational beings, and the human power to articulate voice through speech; impulsive movement, desire, spirit, and the sensitive and respiratory powers of non-rational beings; and the growing and generative powers of plants. Finally, Nemesius also mentions the magnetic power of stones.³²⁷ Elsewhere, Nemesius also refers to humans having the power of voice articulated through speech, distinguishing between immanent and expressed reason of the soul.³²⁸ It is therefore quite clear that the *Dial*’s five kinds of natural powers and motions have clear Nemesian influences.

Nevertheless, unlike the *Dial*, Nemesius does not present his concept on a macrocosmic level, mentions nothing about the immanent reason of angels, nor distinguishes them from human species, does not refer to the nutritive power of plants, nor to the inanimate motion of stones, and neither links it all to the

³²⁴ Richter 1982, 211.

³²⁵ *DP*, 40:1–27.

³²⁶ Richter 1982, 211. Markov 2015, 28.

³²⁷ Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 1.2:16–1.4:21.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.71:5–15.72:17.

definition of nature. But most importantly, unlike the *Dial*, Nemesius does not distinguish these powers and motions according to different species. In addition to that, unlike the *Dial* and the *DP*, Nemesius does not consider his presentation to be part of the knowledge of external philosophers but instead, as common knowledge that is in accordance with biblical understanding. In other words, despite Nemesian influences, the *Dial*'s version differs significantly from it.

Instead, many of these aspects of the *Dial* seem to point towards Porphyrian influences. As we have already seen, the *Dial* distinguishes five different species based on their macrocosmic and classificatory differences, within a context where nature was understood as substance made specific by its differences. This clearly echoes the previously discussed Porphyrian elaboration on *differentiae*, where each species is distinguished and constituted by its specific differences: god (rational and immortal), humans (rational and mortal), irrational animals (irrational and mortal, but also sentient and animate), and plants (non-sentient and animate).³²⁹

Secondly, in the commentary tradition of the Porphyrian system, species had already begun to be linked to nature and natural powers. Unlike Porphyry, the commentaries on the Porphyrian tree by Ammonius, David, and Elias, as previously noted, divided the animate genus into the species of plant, animal, and plant-animal, which they began to present alongside their potentialities or powers. According to them, plants possess nourishing, growing, and reproductive powers, while animals possess sentient and locomotive powers—an aspect also reiterated by the *Praeparatio*.³³⁰ Among these commentators, David is the only one to claim, in a very Platonic manner, that nature granted these species their powers. The influence of these authors, alongside Nemesius, on the *Dial*'s five types of natural motion has also been recognized by Richter.³³¹

Here, the commentators' additions to the Porphyrian tree, as well as Nemesius's microcosmic presentation, are both influenced by Aristotle. In his *De anima*, Aristotle distinguishes three types of powers or faculties in the human soul: the nutritive (θρεπτικόν) power of plants, which involves reproduction and growth; the sentient (αἰσθητικόν) power of animals, which involves appetite and local motion; and the intellectual (νοητικόν) power of the mind (νοῦς), which involves contemplation and thought. In another context, he further divides these faculties into five parts by separating the appetitive and locomotive functions.³³²

Additionally, the *Dial*'s specific classificatory distinction between angels, who possess immanent reason, and humans, who possess expressed reason, while

³²⁹ See 2.1.6.1.

³³⁰ Theodore of Raithou, *Praeparatio*, 207:14–19.

³³¹ Richter 1982, 211.

³³² Aristotle, *De anima*, 413b–415a. See also Sharples and Eijk 2008, 127 n. 628. Such a tripartite division has been also presented by the Stoics and Middle-Platonists (Posidonius, *Fragmenta*, 415:30. Plutarch, *De virtute morali*, 442B:9.); and later mentioned also by the Christian bishop Nemesius of Emesa (*De natura hominis*, 14.71:5–15.72:17) and Maximus the Confessor (*Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 301).

absent in Nemesius, can nevertheless be found in the Porphyrian commentaries. David's commentary, for example, refers to angels possessing immanent reason (ἐνδιάθετος λόγος) without expressed reason (προφορικός λόγος). According to Elias, human species can be differentiated from angelic species by the fact that the former has both expressed and immanent reason, whereas the latter has only immanent reason.³³³ The distinction between immanent reason and expressed reason is originally a Stoic concept³³⁴ that is also referenced by Porphyry³³⁵, but without reference to angels. The inclusion of angels in this distinction by David and Elias seems to reflect the influence of their Christian background.³³⁶

It is therefore within the commentary tradition that we can already find a distinction between species based on their differences: angel (immanent reason), human (immanent and expressed reason), animal (sentient and locomotive powers), and plant (nourishing, growing, and reproductive powers). This tradition also establishes the link between nature, species, and their powers. All of this reveals that the *Dial*'s five kinds of natural motion are not merely a summary of the Nemesian anthropological model but a hybrid blending elements from both Nemesius and the Porphyrian commentary tradition. It is evident that the Nemesian system—with its distinctive powers for humans (reasoning in an immanent and expressed way), animals (sentient, respiratory power, and impulsive movement), and plants (growing and generative powers)—shares many similarities with the elaborated Porphyrian aspect. This common ground most likely enabled the creation of such a hybrid in the first place.

This concept was probably developed by Chalcedonian compilers who, like Leontius of Byzantium, Theodore of Raithou, and Pamphilus the Theologian, were open to introducing Greek philosophical concepts into the Chalcedonian realm. These attempts gave rise to philosophical hybrids that incorporated both ecclesiastical and pagan aspects. Later generations, whether due to misunderstandings in the compilation process or the distinctive Greek philosophical elements within them, nevertheless retained the non-Christian character of these concepts.

The five kinds of natural motion are evidently one of these hybrids, most likely formulated with the Monenergist/Monothelite controversy in mind. This is supported, first, by the fact that John's *IE*, as we will later see, clearly uses it as an anti-Monenergist concept. Second, Maximus the Confessor argues against the Monothelite Pyrrhus by employing the already mentioned Aristotelian three types of powers, which he himself calls "three kinds of life."³³⁷ In other words, it was probably Maximus's anti-Monothelite "three distinctive kinds of natural powers" that inspired the more elaborate formulation of the five kinds of natural motion.

³³³ David, *In Porphyrii isagogen commentarium*, 211:18–22; Elias, *In Porphyrii isagogen*, 95:19–30.

³³⁴ See Sharples and Eijk 2008, 123, n. 612.

³³⁵ Porphyrius, *De abstinence*, 3.3.

³³⁶ For their Christian background see Sorabji 1990, 14; Westerlink 1990, 338–340.

³³⁷ Maximus, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 301.

The fact that the Damascene was not the only one with access to this type of concept, and that multiple versions of it were likely circulating, is attested by the *DP*.³³⁸ According to the *DP*, for external (pagan) philosophers, substance is the simple existence of beings, whereas nature is a simple motion of beings, distinguished in five ways: 1) intellectual angels who communicate via thought; 2) rational humans who express themselves via names and verbs; 3) irrational sentient beings with their nutrient, growing, reproductive, and sentient powers; 4) vegetative plants that are moved by nutrient, growing, and reproductive powers; and 5) inanimate stones that are moved qualitatively via heating or cooling, or spatially via change of place.³³⁹

The *Dial* and the *DP* exhibit a clear common pattern. Similar to the *Dial*, the *DP* begins by distinguishing between substance and nature, providing a concise Aristotelian definition of nature as simple motion, further divided into five kinds. However, unlike the *DP*, the *Dial*'s distinction between substance and nature differs, aligning with Pamphilus's Porphyrian-influenced view of substance as simple existence and nature as qualified existence, which differentiates species. Consequently, the *Dial*'s five kinds of natural motion are linked to species (e.g., the most specific species of angel, human). Crucially, in the *Dial*, these motions are connected to a Chalcedonianized definition of nature, unlike in the *DP*. In other words, the *Dial* uses the five kinds of natural motion to illustrate how the immutable, God-given power and principle of nature operates distinctly across different species. Its objective is to demonstrate that God-given natural motions are fundamentally motions of a species, an emphasis absent in the *DP*. This also highlights that while the *DP* is traditionally thought to slightly predate John's works, the Damascene is not directly linked to it.³⁴⁰ Instead, both texts seem to draw from a common tradition and source background.³⁴¹

The *Dial*'s concept of the five kinds of natural motion is fundamental to the Chalcedonian tradition. Its significance is further underscored by its use as a conceptual tool against the Monenergists in the *IE*, a point that will be explored later.³⁴² This concept is metaphysically relevant because motion functions as an ontological indicator, distinctly characterizing both natures and species. Consequently, the *Dial* does not view it as merely a concept from external philosophers, as the *DP* does, but rather as a notion within the Greek philosophical

³³⁸ The *DP*'s version is also repeated by the *De natura hominis* of Meletius the Monk—a medical author who is dated to the 7th up to the 13th century, even though more probably later than earlier (Meletius, *De natura hominis*, 153:22–154:12. See also Holman 2008, 79–82).

³³⁹ *DP* 40:1–27.

³⁴⁰ According to F. Diekamp the *DP* was written between 685 and 726. Diekamp 1907, LXVI–LXXX

³⁴¹ It is important to note that the oldest manuscript of the *DP* dates to the late 8th or early 9th century, and the work itself appears to have existed in multiple recensions, having also received additions from later scribes (Schadler 2018, 8, 11 n. 41.). On this matter, see also Kontouma 2015, I, 39, III, 2–3, 8; Louth 2002, 32–33.

³⁴² See 2.2.1.

tradition that Chalcedonians also utilize. Despite a potential common origin, the *Dial* infuses this concept with a unique Chalcedonian perspective. While it is plausible that John Damascene is responsible for this influence, it remains an open question.

2.1.7. Time and motion

Our discussion on the Aristotelian aspects of motion ends with ch 68 of the *Dial*, which, as it has been already briefly mentioned, is a concise lexicon and an encyclopaedic compilation of the different definitions worth knowing. We have also seen how this chapter contained the *Dial*'s second version of the definitions of the kinds of motion.

Another mentioned theme of this lexicon, relevant to our discussion, is time, which is defined as *a measure of motion and a number of the prior and posterior in motion*.³⁴³ For example, a day is the period during which the Sun moves across the sky above the Earth.³⁴⁴ Night, conversely, is the shadow cast by the Earth when the Sun moves beneath it.³⁴⁵ Together, these phenomena create the 24-hour cycle of day and night, which is fundamentally caused by the revolution of the universe (κόσμος).³⁴⁶ A month is the period between one conjunction of the Moon with the Sun and the next.³⁴⁷ Here, the *Dial* refers to the synodical month, which is based on the Moon's phases and its orbital motion relative to the Earth-Sun line. Finally, a year is defined as the time it takes for the Sun to traverse the cycle of the zodiac.³⁴⁸ The discussion on time is ended with the four season, which are defined via the duration of seasonal/elemental qualities (wetness, dryness, heat and cold).³⁴⁹

The *Dial*'s definition of time aligns with Aristotle, who, in his *Physics*, argues that the existence of time necessitates a before and after. This is why time is considered a measure of prior and posterior in motion. For this reason, even though time is neither motion nor change, it nevertheless depends on both, being a measure of motion and change.³⁵⁰ However, as Richter has pointed out, the exact definition used by the *Dial* is not found in Aristotle's works, but rather in Plutarch's (1st/2nd cent. AD) *Platonicae quaestiones*.³⁵¹

³⁴³ Χρόνος ἐστὶ μέτρον κινήσεως καὶ ἀριθμὸς τοῦ ἐν κινήσει προτέρου καὶ ὑστέρου (*Dial*, 68:18–19, translation by Chase 1958, 109).

³⁴⁴ *Dial*, 68:19–20.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 68:20–22.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 68:22.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 68:22–24.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 68: 24–25.

³⁴⁹ *Dial*, 68:29–32.

³⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Physica*, 218b21–221b28. See also Coope 2001, 359–367.

³⁵¹ Plutarch, *Platonicae quaestiones*, 1007A10–11. Richter 1982, 259–260.

According to Richter's analysis, the *Dial*'s definition of day closely resembles that found in Aristotle's *Topica*. The definition of night, however, is similar to one in Philoponus's *Commentary on Aristotle's Meteorology*, which also leaves the origin of the night's shadow open. Richter adds that the detail about the sun being beneath the Earth during the night is explicitly found in Olympiodorus's *Commentary on Aristotle's Meteorology*. Regarding the 24-hour cycle of day and night, Richter considers it an aspect of the New Testament (2 Cor 11:25), which is not found in the Alexandrian commentaries. Lastly, the definition of month is mentioned as synodical, while the definition of year is again linked to Olympiodorus's previously mentioned commentary.³⁵²

Unfortunately, most of Richter's observations are either incorrect or superficial. First, the roots of the *Dial*'s definition of night, not just day, can be found in the *Topica*.³⁵³ Second, Richter missed that Philoponus's *On the Creation of the World* not only states that the sun is above the Earth during the day and beneath it during the night (bringing darkness) but also presents these ideas together in a single sentence, and does so twice. Moreover, according to Philoponus, the coupled definitions of day and night align with Moses's biblical creation story.³⁵⁴ Although Philoponus's commentary on *Meteorology* specifically references the cast shadow, it does not mention the sun being beneath the Earth during the night, nor does it pair this idea with the definition of day—an aspect also missing in Olympiodorus's commentary. Third, even though the definition of a 24-hour day and night cycle is not analyzed in the commentaries, it exists in Ptolemy's *Hypothesis*.³⁵⁵ This last source is particularly intriguing, as the Damascene generally seems to lack Ptolemaic influences.³⁵⁶ Fourth, the *Dial*'s definition of year (passing through the zodiac cycle) differs from Olympiodorus's, who defines a year as the sun's return to the same point, without any reference to the zodiac cycle.³⁵⁷

Most importantly, Richter's verbatim approach again overlooks that John Philoponus is the only currently surviving pre-Damascene author who compiled different time periods in a manner similar to the *Dial*. In his *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories* (chapter on quality), Philoponus links time, as a measure of motion, to the definitions of day, month, and year. It is in this same work, not Olympiodorus's, that we find the *Dial*'s definition of the year, understood as the sun's revolution along the zodiac circle.³⁵⁸ The *Dial*'s synodical month, on the

³⁵² Richter 1982, 260.

³⁵³ Aristotle, *Topica*, 142b3–6; 146b27–28.

³⁵⁴ Philoponus, *De opificio mundi*, 89:1–3; 128:10–12.

³⁵⁵ Claudius Ptolemaeus, *Hypotheses* 76:10–15.

³⁵⁶ According to D. Biriukov John's cosmology and astronomy gives witness to Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic influences, but not Ptolemaic influences (Biriukov 2016, 353–360).

³⁵⁷ Olympiodorus, *In Aristotelis meteora commentaria*, 112:3–4.

³⁵⁸ John Philoponus, *Arist Categ*, 86:16–23.

other hand, follows patterns found in Philoponus's *Commentary on the Generation of Animals*.³⁵⁹

In one way or another, the definitions of time and its periods in chapter 68 of the *Dial* have a very clear Philoponean foundation, further edited and developed through multiple compilations. It is therefore very likely that John is using an existing compendium of definitions. The tradition of such lexicons is already well-manifested in the *DP*.³⁶⁰ Whatever the potential backgrounds, the concept of time (before and after), the Moon's phases, and even the duration of the different seasons all play a role in John's theology, where, as an illustration of the mutability of the created order, they once again become arguments for Christian metaphysics and ontology.³⁶¹

2.1.8. The concept of *another from others*

Our last discussion on alteration and mutability takes place in the *Dial*'s elaboration of *composite hypostasis* and its rejection of the Monophysite concept of *composite nature*. The fact that the *Dial* addresses this subject indicates that the Damascene considers this serious Christological question to be fundamentally philosophical.

In the final section of Chapter 67, the *Dial* meticulously defines composite nature and the fate of its unified components. A composite nature is presented as a form of unification where components alter (ἀλλοιόω) and change (τρέπω) without retaining their original forms, merging instead into an entirely new entity. Thus, a composite nature is a product derived from other things, illustrating a type of change and unification characterized as *another from others* (ἐξ ἑτέρων ἕτερον). According to the *Dial*, this transformation occurs when the four elements (fire, air, water, earth) combine to create new bodies, or in the generation of a mule from a horse and an ass. In both scenarios, the original components are not preserved "unconfused" (ἀσύγχυτον) and "unchanged" (ἄτρεπτον) but are transmuted into a novel entity.³⁶² While John further develops this concept in his theological writings,³⁶³ this philosophical groundwork already suggests that asserting Christ possesses a composite nature would contradict the Chalcedonian doctrine of His unconfused and unchanged natures, thereby negating both His humanity and divinity.

Although John presents this concept as established, its origins remain obscure. Kotter's and Richter's research points to Leontius of Byzantium, who also argued against the composite nature by exploring various methods of unification and

³⁵⁹ John Philoponus, *In libros de generatione animalium commentaria*, 210:5–7.

³⁶⁰ *DP*, 249–266.

³⁶¹ See 3.3.1; 3.3.2.1.

³⁶² *Dial*, 67:39–45.

³⁶³ See *Jacob*, 24:1–10; *Aceph*, 1:1–9.

composition.³⁶⁴ However, Leontius does not connect the composite nature to a concept where one thing is formed from others, nor does he elaborate on the changes of its unified parts, or illustrate it with the unification of elements or of a horse and an ass. Therefore, despite some similarities, the *Dial*'s specific concept is absent from Leontius's works. It is worth noting that the topics of unification and composition were also discussed in the *Viae Dux*, the *DP*, and the *Oxon*.³⁶⁵ Yet, none of these texts contain the specific concept articulated in the *Dial*.

The example of a mule, which arises from a horse and an ass, was originally discussed by Aristotle in his *On the Generation of Animals*, where the primary question concerns why such a combination results in an infertile rather than a fertile offspring.³⁶⁶ John Philoponus also follows a similar line of reasoning.³⁶⁷

For the Neoplatonist Porphyry and his later commentators (Ammonius and Elias), the same example illustrates that while natural differences can unite to form a species (rational + mortal = human), two distinct species cannot combine to create a new species. Although a specific horse and a specific ass can produce a mule, the species of horse can never be joined with the species of ass, and neither can produce anything together.³⁶⁸

Although John's presentation shares similarities with these examples, he does not seek to understand the infertility of the mule nor explain the impossibility of two species forming a new species. Instead, John uses the example of the mule to illustrate how, in the formation of a composite nature (mule), the joined parts (horse and ass) are changed into something new without being preserved.

Without the example of a mule, the Damascene's logic—that joined parts are not preserved but changed—can be partially found in Aristotle's *On Generation and Corruption*, where he attempts to refute the claim that mixture does not exist. Aristotle asserts that those who deny the possibility of mixture demonstrate that the unification of two ingredients typically occurs in three ways:

- a) Both are preserved in the mixture (*preservation*).
- b) One of the two perishes because it is dominated by the other (*domination*).
- c) The formation of a new thing results in the destruction of both ingredients (*corruption*).

According to those who deny the possibility of mixture, preservation does not present a genuine mixture, as this state is indistinguishable from the previous unmixed condition. Likewise, domination does not result in a mixture; instead, it

³⁶⁴ Kotter 1969, 140; Richter 1982, 258. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adversus argumenta Severi*, PG 86, 1925C.

³⁶⁵ Anastasius of Sinai, *Viae Dux*, II, 5:1–18; *DP*, 210–211; *Oxon*, 7.

³⁶⁶ Aristotle, *De generatione animalum*, 746b–749a.

³⁶⁷ John Philoponus, *In libros de generatione animalium commentaria*, 126–129.

³⁶⁸ Porphyrius, *Isagoge sive quinque voces*, 18–19; Ammonius, *In Porphyrii isagogen sive quinque voces*, 125:9–20. Elias, *In Porphyrii isagogen*, 101.

leads to genesis and destruction. In corruption, there is also no mixture, since both ingredients perish. To counter these claims, Aristotle employs the distinction between potentiality and actuality, asserting that while the new mixture destroys the ingredients in actuality, the ingredients remain preserved in potentiality and can be separated again (e.g., water and wine).³⁶⁹

This debate continues in the later Neoplatonic commentary tradition.³⁷⁰ One of the last and most significant Neoplatonic commentators on this subject, who aligned with Aristotle, was John Philoponus. In his *Commentary on Aristotle's Generation and Destruction*, he not only presents known counterarguments to the notion of mixture but also argues against them. Using the example of blended wine, Philoponus contends that both water and wine are preserved within it—not as latent potentialities, but as actualized potentialities that have been altered. For Philoponus, the unified elements in a mixture are neither completely destroyed (indicating no confusion) nor entirely preserved (as they have been altered).

John Damascene's notion of another from others, where the unified parts are not preserved but altered into a new composition (composite nature), clearly aligns with the third counterargument (corruption) presented by Aristotle's opponents regarding the notion of mixture.

To be fair, as far as I know, the pre-Damascene patristic and Chalcedonian tradition does not provide evidence for such a concept. The closest similarity can be found in the *Against the Monophysites* by the emperor-theologian Justinian, who argued that the Monophysite concept of one (composite) nature of Christ would render Him an intermediate being (μεσότης). For Justinian, an intermediate being is a mixture (μῆξις) in which the combined parts are only partially preserved, similar to a mule bred from a horse and an ass. Following this logic, Christ would neither be fully God nor fully human, but rather a divine-humane mixture.³⁷¹ According to Justinian, the Monophysite concept of composite nature inevitably leads to a mixture, where the composed parts are only partially preserved, similar to the example of a mule bred from a horse and an ass.

Without a doubt, Justinian's anti-mixture Christology, along with the example of the mule, is the closest example to the Damascene that we have encountered thus far. However, unlike Justinian, the Damascene does not address *intermediates* or Aristotelian mixtures, where the composed parts are only partially preserved. John does not analyze the concept of mixture at all. On the contrary, the *Dial's another from others* would not even accept mixture, where the composed parts would be partially preserved, but instead talks about change which results in the non-preservation of the unified elements.

The *Dial's* unique concept seems to be a further development of the Justinian example, where the Aristotelian concept of mixture was merged with the Porphyrian example of a mule. At some later point, this concept seems to have been

³⁶⁹ Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione*, 327a:30–328b:22. See also Haas 2016, 416–421.

³⁷⁰ Haas 2016, 430–434.

³⁷¹ Flavius Justinianus Imperator, *Contra monophysitas*, 182–183.

revised by the Chalcedonians, incorporating the logic of Aristotle's third anti-mixture argument. Thus, the mule transitioned from being an example of mixture à la Justinian to an illustration of the change and destruction of the joined elements.

The reason for this development may relate to the Chalcedonians' perception that Justinian's interpretation of the composite nature as a mixture was a weak anti-Monophysite argument, as it still allowed for some form of existence of the unified parts within the composition. In Christology, this would have meant that within the composite nature of Christ, both divinity and humanity are still preserved. To demonstrate the inapplicability of the composite nature concept, the Chalcedonians adopted a more robust interpretation by turning to the anti-mixture logic of corruption. In this framework, when a new entity (composite nature) is formed (via another from others), the unified parts are inevitably changed and no longer preserved.

Despite its origins in the Aristotelian Neoplatonic tradition, the concept itself appears to be a product of Chalcedonian reworking aimed at countering the Monophysite argument regarding composite nature. While this notion had no connection to the concepts of motion and change in the Greek philosophical context, it does in the Chalcedonian theology of the Damascene. As we will see, this concept plays a crucial role in John's anti-Monophysite polemics, where it illustrates an unacceptable mutability of Christ's two natures. Furthermore, in his Christology, Damascene also employs all three anti-mixture arguments of Aristotle's interlocutors, albeit in a modified form.³⁷² This further confirms that the Chalcedonians had somehow discovered the utility of Aristotle's interlocutors' three counterarguments in their Christological apologetics. Whether John Damascene or someone else made this discovery remains unknown. The fact that the Damascene seems unaware of its original anti-mixture context might suggest a source where this concept had already been modified. Nevertheless, to my knowledge, John is currently the only source that attests to it.

2.1.9. Conclusion

It can therefore be concluded that the *Dial*'s understanding of motion and change has its roots in Greek philosophy, further elaborated by the Alexandrian commentary tradition. These roots are found not only in Aristotle's *Categories* and Porphyry's *Eisagoge*, but also in Aristotle's other works, especially his *Physics*. Despite this, my analysis did not detect any direct link between the *Dial* and the works of Aristotle or his commentators.

This aspect became evident in the *Dial*'s chapter (62) on motion, which is essentially a compilation of ideas found in various Neoplatonic commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories* and *Physics*. Nevertheless, the chapter's disorganization—themes that should be grouped together are dispersed, those that should be

³⁷² See 3.4.3.

distinguished are juxtaposed, and important details are omitted, rendering concepts incomprehensible—all suggest that its author had not read the commentaries. It became clear that the aim of *Dial* 62 was not to explain the Aristotelian concepts of motion from the *Categories* and *Physics*, but to provide a very basic and elementary introduction to the philosophy of motion. In this type of introduction, the differences and specifics of the *Physics* and the *Categories* were either ignored, confused, or blended into a single unit. Especially noteworthy is the indistinct blending of physics and logic—an inevitable result of Christian metaphysics and the reduction of Greek philosophy to encyclopedic handbooks. All of this makes it highly probable that for *Dial* 62, the Damascene used more neutral sources (handbooks) that were most likely employed in general Christian education. This is further supported by the fact that the content of this chapter lacks theological influences and does not appear to have a clear designated theological use.

No direct link with the works of Aristotle and his commentators was detected regarding the concept of nature either. Although a theme of Aristotle's *Physics*, it reached the *Dial* via ecclesiastical sources, as attested by Theodore of Raithou. The *Dial*'s modified definition of nature is most probably a further Chalcedonian development of the same source tradition. The same can be said for the *Dial*'s *five kinds of natural motion*—a Porphyrian-Nemesian hybrid—that was shaped into its final form by Chalcedonian Christians. The fact that John most likely relied on an already existing tradition here is confirmed by a similar version found in the *DP*.

A problem remains with the concept of *another from others*, which Aristotle (*On Generation and Corruption*) and later commentaries mentioned as one of his interlocutors' three anti-mixture arguments. It remains a mystery how this anti-mixture concept became a Chalcedonian concept describing the mutability of the Monophysite notion of composite nature. Although John is currently the only Chalcedonian source that attests to its use, his role in introducing it to theological discourse remains unclear. The fact that the Damascene seems unaware of its original anti-mixture context might suggest that he did not take it directly from Aristotle or the commentary tradition.

For the same reasons, most of the *Dial*'s elaborations on motion and change probably do not contain John's original philosophic contributions or creations. Nevertheless, John's personal contribution cannot be excluded with the modified definition of nature, to which the *Dial* and the Damascene's theological works are currently the only witnesses. The same kind of uniqueness applies to the five kinds of natural motion. Although this concept itself seems to have already existed in the Chalcedonian tradition, its linking, via the notion of species, to the modified definition of nature is nowhere to be found. In other words, even though in our case we have no proof of John creating novel philosophical systems, his capacity for modifying existing ones to align more closely with Chalcedonian thinking should not be dismissed.

That the Damascene is not merely a passive and ignorant philosophical compiler, without any engagement with the subject matter, also becomes evident

in his compiling choices and more receptive attitudes towards Greek wisdom. A good example is again the Aristotelian definition of nature, which the majority of John's fellow Chalcedonians approached with corrective parallelisms, caution, or even exclusion. Even though the *Dial* is well aware of its pagan background, it still decided to present it in both a purely Aristotelian (ch 41) and a Chalcedonized (ch 31) form, so that it could still serve the Chalcedonian cause—an aspect confirmed by its unique role in the Damascene's theological argumentation. This aspect clearly illustrates John Damascene as a moderately creative Chalcedonian who managed to deploy a useful Aristotelian concept while simultaneously retaining his religious community's anti-Aristotelian criticism.

The *Dial*'s various concepts of motion and change are connected to Greek philosophical ideas through secondary ecclesiastical sources. These had already been edited or modified by the Chalcedonian metaphysical tradition. Consequently, most of these concepts reappear in various forms within John's theological arguments against heresies. As we will see, their appearance is generally not direct or verbatim, but primarily conceptual. They prepare the reader not only for improved systematic and logical thinking, but also for understanding Chalcedonian patristic theology and argumentation, into which many of these philosophical concepts were already integrated.

Unlike many of his fellow Chalcedonians, the Damascene is indeed much more open to seeing beneficial opportunities in Greek wisdom. The value of this wisdom, of course, does not lie in itself but in its service to Chalcedonian theology, which inevitably orders all parts of the *Dial*, including its concepts of motion and change, to the Christian service of metaphysics and ontology. How exactly this is done will be clarified in the theological chapters of this dissertation. Before moving on to John's theology, I will present in the following chapter the role of motion in the philosophical definitions of the *IE*.

2.2. Elementary Introduction

Next to John's *Dial*, another significant philosophical work is the *Elementary Introduction to Dogmas* (*IE* CPG 8040). This work was most likely recorded by a scribe based on an oral lecture by John of Damascus. Since the *IE* is considerably shorter than the *Dial* (which exists in both longer and shorter versions), it is presumed to predate it. It thus represents an early stage in John's attempt to provide the foundational logical and conceptual tools necessary for a correct understanding of theology and dogma.³⁷³

Undoubtedly, the *IE* serves as a philosophical handbook, compiled alongside the *Dial* to equip Chalcedonians with stronger theological arguments against the Christologies of non-Chalcedonians. According to Markov, like the *Dial*, the *IE* also draws upon various sources containing Aristotelian concepts and terms, which themselves are rooted in the Neoplatonic commentary tradition. Therefore,

³⁷³ Kotter 1969, 19–26. On the content of the *IE*, see also Markov 2015, 25–32.

the *IE*, like the *Dial*, is a reconstruction of the Alexandrian commentary tradition of Aristotle. Although the *IE* and the *Dial* discuss similar matters, the former is much shorter, functioning more as a compendium of definitions. Nevertheless, unlike the *Dial*, the *IE* contains only terms and concepts relevant to a correct understanding of dogma. Despite this, as Markov points out, unlike other Christian compendia of definitions, the *IE* does not use these definitions to state positions of belief nor does it engage in direct polemics.³⁷⁴

It should be noted here that while different compendia do use logical principles by engaging in polemics, this is not always the case. For instance, the *Philosophical Chapters* of Anastasius of Antioch is a compendium of definitions without any statements of doctrinal matters.³⁷⁵ The *DP* has an entire non-engaging lexicon of definitions,³⁷⁶ and the *Oxon* also generally presents its concepts without engaging in polemics.

Additionally, even though the *Dial* and the *IE* are based on Aristotelian concepts elaborated by the Neoplatonic commentary tradition and even occasionally discuss the same matters, there are still differences in their overall philosophical characteristics. In some cases, as we will later see, the definitions in the *IE* have no relation to the commentary tradition whatsoever. Unlike the *Dial*, the *IE* seems to present only concepts that, as understood by the Damascene, had already been accepted by the Chalcedonian theological-philosophical tradition and integrated into its apologetic system. In other words, the definitions of the *IE* were already linked to the dogmatic explanations of the Chalcedonians, as its title also suggests. The *Dial*, as we have already seen, contained a broader set of (pagan) philosophical concepts that, even if potentially beneficial for the Chalcedonians or even modified/affected by them, had not yet obtained a clear designated role in the Chalcedonian theological tradition. Some of these concepts were also criticized (due to their use by heretics) and paralleled with patristic versions.

Let us consider, for example, the *Dial*'s presentations of *substance* and *nature*. As we have already seen, chapters 31 and 41 of the *Dial* present the concept of nature as understood by pagan philosophers. Nature as a principle of motion and rest was an Aristotelian concept which, for many Chalcedonians (*Opusc*, *Viae Dux*, *DP*), had to be either excluded or distinguished from the homonymous patristic (Chalcedonian) versions. The same applies to the *Dial*'s concept of substance in chapter 40, where it was defined as a self-subsisting thing that has no need of another for its existence.³⁷⁷ Even though introduced for theological use by some Chalcedonians of the so-called Leontian school (Leontius of Byzantium, Pamphilus the Theologian, and Theodore Raithou), this definition was never-

³⁷⁴ Markov 2015, 20–31.

³⁷⁵ Anastasius of Antioch, *Capita philosophica*.

³⁷⁶ *DP*, 249–266.

³⁷⁷ *Dial*, 40 Cf Theodore Raithou, *Praeparatio*, 201:9–202:9.

theless approached with discernment by later authors.³⁷⁸ As I have already shown, the same notion of substance was declared by the *DP* to be a pagan concept that, according to the *Opusc*, should be distinguished from the patristic homonymous version.³⁷⁹ Based on Zachhuber's conclusions, a similar attitude may also be applied to John Damascene, whose *Dial*, despite its neutral and non-corrective presentation of Aristotle's concept of substance as an independent being, seems not accept it as part of the classical tradition of patristic philosophy, where hypostasis had already fulfilled this role.³⁸⁰

In the *IE*'s presentation of substance and nature, all ambiguous and problematic concepts are entirely omitted. Instead, only the patristic understanding—according to which substance, nature, and form are the same, as they designate what is common to many instances—is brought forth. As we have seen, chapter 31 of the *Dial* also highlights this understanding as distinctively patristic. It is for the same reason that in the *IE* one finds no reference to Aristotle or to external philosophers, nor to the corrective statement of the Fathers. The *IE* therefore much more echoes the approach of part II of the *Viae Dux*, which is also dedicated to explaining the different definitions (*nature, substance, same essence, activity, will*, etc.) of the holy Fathers of the Church.³⁸¹ Nevertheless, unlike the *Viae Dux*, as Markov has already mentioned, the *IE* presents these definitions neutrally without engaging in theological polemics.

All this also applies to the *IE*'s ecclesiastical definitions of *activity* (περὶ ἐνεργείας), *passion* (περὶ πάθους), and *will* (περὶ θελήματος), which have been entirely omitted from the *Dial*. Regarding their broader background, Kotter's apparatus is regrettably of no use, as it only refers to links between the *IE* and John's theological works (mainly the *Expos*)—an aspect which again verifies their dogmatic importance.

According to A. Louth, the dogmatic importance of these three philosophical concepts was linked to the polemics against the Monothelites and Monenergists, without any discussion on how exactly.³⁸² S. Markov, on the other hand, has brought out that the fundamental logic of these chapters is based on motion: namely, in the distinction between hypostasis and hypostatic motions on one part, and nature and natural motions on another.³⁸³ The Damascene, in his *Haer*, already notes that the Monothelite controversy stemmed from an inability to distinguish between substance/nature and hypostasis.³⁸⁴ Kotter also observes this in his analysis of *Volunt*.³⁸⁵ Nonetheless, there has been no serious discussion of

³⁷⁸ On this matter see also Zachhuber 2019, 125–138.

³⁷⁹ See 2.1.5.

³⁸⁰ Zachhuber 2020, 290.

³⁸¹ Anastasius of Sinai, *Viae Dux*, II.

³⁸² *IE*., 8–10. Louth 2002, 39–40.

³⁸³ Markov 2015, 28–30.

³⁸⁴ *Haer*, 99.

³⁸⁵ Kotter 1981, 156–160.

John's sources or the philosophical backgrounds of these three concepts. In this chapter I will analyze the exact role of motion in these three concepts and their backgrounds.

2.2.1. Defining activity

I will begin with the definition of *activity* (ἐνέργεια), which, according to chapter 8 of the *IE*, is defined in the most general sense as the *active motion of that which acts*.³⁸⁶ *Natural activity*, on the other hand, is defined as the *active motion of nature*, which is divided into five types:³⁸⁷

1. The first type of natural activity is the intelligible motion of angels and other immaterial essences, whose motion is a simple (instant) application of thought and understanding.³⁸⁸
2. The second type of natural activity is the rational comprehension of psychosomatic humanity. Unlike purely bodiless beings, human beings (as a composition of body and immaterial soul) do not have instant apprehension but arrive at understanding through a complex and dialogical way.³⁸⁹
3. The third type of natural activity is the animalistic and sentient motion of irrational animals, which do not think or reason.³⁹⁰
4. The fourth type of natural activity is the vegetal nourishing, growing and generative motion and power of plants, which, in contrast, are without sentience.³⁹¹
5. Lastly, there are natural activities of lifeless things, such as earth and stones, which, although they lack all the aforementioned activities, still possess certain natural activities.³⁹²

The initial observation derived from these definitions is that motion is intrinsically linked to the concept of activity. As previously noted, in Aristotle's *Physics* and its accompanying commentaries, the terms "actuality" (ἐντελέχεια) and

³⁸⁶ Ἐνέργειά ἐστι κίνησις δραστική τοῦ ποιούντος (*IE*, 8:2; own translation).

³⁸⁷ Ἐνέργεια δὲ φυσική ἐστι κίνησις φύσεως δραστική... (*IE*, 8:2–3; own translation).

³⁸⁸ ...ἡ νοερά ὡς ἐπὶ ἀγγέλων καὶ πασῶν ἀσωμάτων οὐσιῶν ἀπλῇ προσβολῇ νοούντων (*IE*, 8:7–9).

³⁸⁹ ... ἡ λογική ὡς ἐπὶ ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἐκ ψυχῆς ἀσωμάτου καὶ σώματος συντεθειμένων, οὐχ ἀπλῇ ἀλλὰ ποικίλῃ καὶ διαλογιστικῇ προσβολῇ νοούντων (*IE*, 8:9–11).

³⁹⁰ ...ἡ ζωτική ὡς ἐπὶ ἀλόγων ζώων αἴσθησιν μὲν ἔχόντων, μὴ λογιζομένων δὲ μηδὲ νοούντων (*IE*, 8:11–12).

³⁹¹ ...φυτική ὡς ἐπὶ ἀναισθήτων ἔχόντων δὲ θεραπετικὴν καὶ αὐξητικὴν καὶ γεννητικὴν δύναμιν (*IE*, 8:12–13).

³⁹² ...ἡ ἄζωος παντελῶς ὡς ἐπὶ γῆς καὶ λίθων τῶν μήτε ζωτικὴν μήτε θεραπετικὴν μήτε αὐξητικὴν δύναμιν ἔχόντων, μὴ ἀμοιρούντων δὲ φυσικῶν τινῶν ἐνεργειῶν (*IE*, 8:13–16).

“activity” (ἐνέργεια) were frequently used synonymously to denote motion and change. This ambiguity even led Simplicius to speculate on the distinction between the two, positing actuality as an end result and activity as motion.³⁹³

This stands in stark contrast to remarks made in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (Theta, 6) and his *Nicomachean Ethics* (X, 4). In those works, motion is characterized as incomplete and temporal, limited by a beginning and an end, while activity is described as timeless and complete at every moment.³⁹⁴ According to G. Kapriev, this distinction led to the predominant use of activity as a metaphysical concept describing the state of the prime mover, which exists as pure activity. This, in turn, established an inevitable link between existence (essence), power, and activity—a connection that was subsequently maintained by both Neoplatonists and Christians.³⁹⁵

Despite this, the Aristotelian distinction between motion and activity was not universally or consistently observed. L. Chvatal notes that Galen and medical circles did not strictly adhere to the original Aristotelian differentiation.³⁹⁶ During the 4th century, these medical concepts were introduced to Christianity by Nemesius, Bishop of Emesa (as highlighted by Sharples and Eijk),³⁹⁷ and also by Gregory of Nyssa.³⁹⁸ With clear patristic authority, these concepts gained significance in the Monophysite and Monenergist/Monothelite controversies, where they were not only incorporated into various Christian compendia of definitions—such as Anastasius I of Antioch's *Philosophical Chapters*,³⁹⁹ *Viae Dux*,⁴⁰⁰ *Opusc*,⁴⁰¹ and the *DP*⁴⁰²—but also (often spuriously) attributed to various patristic authors.

Although the Damascene's *IE* draws from this existing tradition, its direct sources are not always clear. For example, the *IE* defines activity as *an active motion of that which acts*. While *activity as an active motion* is a predominantly

³⁹³ See 2.1.4.2. For Aristotle's identification of motion and activity, see also Guthrie 1981, 124, n.3.

³⁹⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1048b18–1049b20; *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1174a14–28. See also Stone 1985, 11–20.

³⁹⁵ Kapriev 2025, 89–96.

³⁹⁶ Galen, *De symptomatum differentiis liber*, 44; *De usu partium* 4. 347 etc. See also Cvhtal 2010, 120–121.

³⁹⁷ Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis* 16.74. See also Sharples and Eijk 2008, 130, n.648.

³⁹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Tractatus ad Xenodorum* (fragmentum), 14:4–15:13.

³⁹⁹ Anastasius of Antioch, *Capita philosophica*, 122–126.

⁴⁰⁰ Anastasius of Sinai, *Viae Dux*, 2.4:175.

⁴⁰¹ The *Opusc* also contains many collections of patristic definitions: *Ex quaestionibus a Theodoro monacho illi propositis* (*Opusc* 26) PG 91, 276–280 and *Diversae definitiones* (*Opusc* 27) PG 91, 280–285. Whether the author of these collections is Maximus the Confessor or someone (disciple) from his close circle, remains uncertain. It has been suggested by B. Roosen that the formation of both of these collections related to the council of Lateran (649) (Roosen 2001: 748–756; 781–786, 801–814. See also Jankowiak and Booth 2015, 66–67).

⁴⁰² *DP*, 89:7–12, 258:4–7.

Galenic concept⁴⁰³ reiterated by Nemesisius,⁴⁰⁴ Maximus the Confessor,⁴⁰⁵ and the *DP*,⁴⁰⁶ its specific link to “the thing that acts” or “of an actor” (τοῦ ποιοῦντος) is mentioned only in Galen’s *De symptomatum differentiis liber*.⁴⁰⁷ Whether John had direct access to Galen’s works or relied on another unknown source remains uncertain. Additionally, the definition of natural activity as *an active motion of nature* lacks a clearly identifiable source. This could stem from the fact that the content of the *IE* was initially presented orally by the Damascene, allowing for more flexible and creative phrasing.

This brings us to the importance and purpose of these definitions within John Damascene’s Chalcedonian tradition. According to S. Markov, the Damascene, in the first definition of activity, intends to emphasize hypostasis and hypostatic motions (the thing that acts), while the second definition focuses on nature and natural motions. In other words, John’s objective here is to distinguish natural motions (activities) from hypostatic ones.⁴⁰⁸

While John’s intentions might seem obvious to Markov, the *IE* itself does not make any explicit distinctions here. Markov’s interpretation, first of all, overlooks the fact that the definition of activity *as an active motion of an actor* (that which acts) is found in Galen, who does not use it to emphasize the individuality of activity. For Galen, this definition is employed in conjunction with the definition of passion to illustrate the nature of pleasure. Pleasure is considered a passion because it is a received movement affected by an external agent (an actor, a thing) that causes it through its active motion. For Galen, this active agent is not implicitly a person or an individual but any entity actively causing pleasure. The same applies to the passive (affected) receiver.

Furthermore, the *IE*’s chapter on activity nowhere even mentions hypostasis, nor does it refer to hypostatic activities and motions. Similarly, such a definition (hypostatic activity) is absent from the aforementioned Chalcedonian handbooks and compendia, as well as from John’s other works. Despite this, in his theological works, as we will later see, John does accept that activity can also be a hypostatic motion when natural motion is effected by an actor (ἐνεργῶν) / willer (θέλων).⁴⁰⁹

It is therefore not impossible that when presenting the first definition of activity, John implicitly has a hypostatic one in mind. However, the problem here is that John has not explicitly articulated this distinction for the reader. This creates an interpretive dilemma, leaving it unclear whether the *IE*’s first definition

⁴⁰³ Galen, *De naturalibus facultatibus*, 2.7; *De usu partium*, 4.347; *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, 6.1.5; *De methodo medendi libri xiv*, 10.45, 87 etc.

⁴⁰⁴ Nemesisius, *De natura hominis*, 16.74:7–8.

⁴⁰⁵ Maximus the Confessor, *Capita theologica et oecumenica sive Capita gnostica*, 1.4:7; *Ambigua ad Joannem* 7.7, 67.10.

⁴⁰⁶ *DP*, 258:6.

⁴⁰⁷ Galen, *De symptomatum differentiis liber*, 44 cf. *IE*, 8:2.

⁴⁰⁸ Markov 2015, 28.

⁴⁰⁹ See 3.4.6.

of activity should be understood as a hypostatic motion. Or is it simply a partial repetition of Galenic logic, which distinguishes activities from passions by considering the former as a motion originating from an agent and the latter as the same motion (activity) experienced by the receiver?

However, one aspect that the reader is meant to grasp with clarity is that activity is a natural motion. Here, John also operates with the Christian metaphysical application of the Aristotelian notion of motion as an indicative manifestation of nature. This implies that if activities are motions, and motions are indicators of natures, then activities not only derive from nature and refer to it but are also entirely natural. This is further confirmed by the fact that these two definitions are linked to the *five kinds of natural activities*, which closely resemble the *five kinds of natural motion* discussed in the *Dial*. As previously noted, contrary to Markov's claim, John Damascene is not presenting an anthropological model from Nemesius of Emesa here, nor in the *Dial*.⁴¹⁰ Instead, like the *Dial*, the *IE* presents a hybrid classification that incorporates elements from both Nemesius and the Porphyrian commentary tradition.

In a way, the elaboration in *Dial* 31 reiterates the presentation in *IE* 8, albeit differently. Just as the *Dial* began with the modified definition of *nature* as a God-given principle of motion and change, so too does the *IE* begin by defining activity as a natural motion. Just as the *Dial* linked its definition to the five kinds of natural motion, so does the *IE* link its definition of activity to five kinds of natural activity. Similarly to the *Dial*, *IE*'s chapter 8 therefore also argues for the naturalness of activity based on the notion that motion is an indicative manifestation of nature.

The difference lies in their contexts: the former addresses the link between nature and motion within a pagan (Aristotelian) philosophical framework, while the latter deals with the link between nature and activity within an ecclesiastical (Chalcedonian) philosophical context. Since the *Dial* (31) was composed later than the *IE*, Damascene was well aware that the same logic had already been articulated in his *IE*. The Damascene's "as we say" in the *Dial* therefore correctly refers to its use by the Chalcedonians.

However, why does the Damascene not present the same version in the *Dial* that he had already used in the *IE*, and why does his *Dial* (as well as the *DP*) present it in the context of pagan philosophy? This seems to highlight that, despite being presented later, the *Dial*'s version is earlier and closer to the original form from which it evolved. In other words, the five kinds of natural activities represent one of its further developed versions. It is quite evident that such a modification was made with the Monenergists in mind. Thus, the *IE* not only confirms an accepting attitude towards the concept of the five kinds of natural motion but also demonstrates that some Chalcedonians continued to develop this hybrid further, modifying it to align with their theological needs (against Monenergism). The transformation of the logical link between nature and motion into that of activity in the *IE* is a prime example of this.

⁴¹⁰ Markov 2015, 28.

As the concept of five kinds of natural activities is not found elsewhere, it is highly probable that its author is John Damascene, who, by understanding the equivalence between activity and motion, and that motion is an indicator of nature and naturalness, made this creative modification. In one way or another, Damascene here continues principles already found in existing patristic and Chalcedonian tradition. Even though the *IE* presents different definitions of activity in their purely conceptual form, in John's theological works, as we will later see, these definitions are already employed in explaining matters of faith.

2.2.2. Defining passion in contradistinction to activity

Along with activity, the *IE* also provides a definition of *passion* (πάθος) as a natural motion of nature that acts upon the affected, thus making it an effect of an activity.⁴¹¹ In other words, according to the *IE*, a natural activity is a motion that derives from oneself, while passion is a motion that happens to oneself. John is conveying that, just as activity is clearly a type of natural motion, so too is passion. The difference between these two types of natural motion lies in how they are experienced: activities are motions that emerge from nature, whereas passions are those same active motions that have begun to affect and influence nature.

As examples of such affecting *natural passions*, the *IE* brings out genesis (coming-to-be), joy, grief, agony, distress, fear, sloth, toil, sleep, pleasure, pain, anger and desire, among others, as well as destruction. John also emphasizes that all these passions are natural and *innocent* (ἀδιάβλητα), as they *do not depend on us* (οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν). Only the evil, corruptive and sinful decisions of the soul can be considered *unnatural* (παρὰ φύσιν) passions.⁴¹²

The *IE* aims to differentiate between natural, good passions and unnatural, evil ones. A passion is considered inherently good if it is an affected motion of nature. However, if a passion originates from the soul's choice, it ceases to be natural and becomes sinful.

As Louth notes, the concept of passion gained prominence during the Monothelite controversy, particularly in Maximus the Confessor's *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*. In this work, the Monothelite Pyrrhus argued that Christ could not possess any natural human activity. Pyrrhus contended that in the postlapsarian state, all human activities and motions are inherently sinful passions that oppose God. Attributing Christ's passions of fear and cowardice in the face of death to his human nature would, in this view, imply the sinfulness of his humanity. Maximus refuted this by asserting that "cowardice" has multiple meanings. It can signify an unnatural (παρὰ φύσιν) and treacherous thought, or it can be a natural (κατὰ φύσιν) retentive power, divinely implanted in human nature for self-preservation. The latter is an innocent (ἀδιάβλητος) and natural passion, akin to thirst and hunger. Maximus further emphasized that the Church Fathers never

⁴¹¹ *IE*, 9:2–3.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 9:4–8.

considered any natural power to be a contradictory motion. Thus, passion was understood not as an opposing motion, but as an affected motion.⁴¹³

Elsewhere, Maximus also referred to innocent and impeccable natural passions (e.g., hunger, sleep, pleasure, thirst) as functions that do not depend on us (οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) and our choices, being essential for the constitution of nature.⁴¹⁴ In the incarnation of the divine Logos, Christ's humanity retained its created essence, including its natural and innocent passions. The existence of two natures in Christ therefore necessitates two distinct activities.⁴¹⁵ Sinful and unnatural passions, conversely, depend on us (ἐφ' ἡμῖν), resulting from choices (προαίρεσις) and dispositions (γνώμη). Due to the hypostatic unity with the divine Logos, these did not exist in Christ.⁴¹⁶

Notably, Maximus made no explicit and distinctive references to hypostasis or person in this context, as for him, natural willing is always hypostatic. Choices and deliberations are therefore natural components of the human decision-making process, used in an unnatural and sinful way by the hypostasis only due to humanity's fallen (confused, ignorant) and sinful state.⁴¹⁷

The *IE*'s presentation concisely summarizes Maximus's anti-Monothelite understanding of natural passions that are independent of human will, distinguishing them from unnatural and sinful passions (which result from deliberate choices). Interestingly, like Maximus, the *IE* does not mention hypostasis. Nevertheless, as we will later see in his theological works, sin is an aspect of gnostic decision, which itself is a distinctive aspect of the hypostasis.⁴¹⁸ Although John of Damascus considers sinful passions to be hypostatic aspects, he never refers to them as hypostatic motions in any of his works. As we will later see, whenever the Damascene refers to passions as motions, he always perceives them as natural. The *IE* similarly reserves the term "motion" exclusively for natural passions, understanding these as affected motions resulting from an activity.

This distinction brings us to Nemesis of Emesa, who, in *On the Nature of Man*, differentiates between passion as a motion from one to another and activity as an active motion originating from oneself. To illustrate this, Nemesis uses anger as an example: a feeling that is both an activity stemming from the soul and a passion simultaneously affecting the soul and body, potentially leading to acts of violence.⁴¹⁹ All these definitions and examples are detailed in a section on the

⁴¹³ Maximus the Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 297, 349D–352B.

⁴¹⁴ Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 55:123–134; *Quaestiones et dubia*, 18:9–13, 53:13–16.

⁴¹⁵ Maximus the Confessor, *Exemplum epistolae ad episcopum Nicandrum*, PG 91, 105.

⁴¹⁶ Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 21:27–35, 55:134–139, 62:248–256; *Ad Marinum presbyterum*, PG 91, 24.

⁴¹⁷ Beeley 2017, 170–180.

⁴¹⁸ *Expos*, 36:106–109, 93:34; *Volunt*, 25:9–13, 27:6–8.

⁴¹⁹ Nemesis of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 16.74:6–11.

passive functions of the human soul (desire and anger/spirit), which are essential for any living being.⁴²⁰

This understanding can be traced back to the physician Galen, who appears to be the first to distinguish activity (active motion of an actor) from passion, defined as *a motion from one to another*.⁴²¹ Additionally, the concept of passion as a motion dates back to ancient Stoic philosophers, who viewed passion as an irrational and affecting motion of the soul that is against nature (unnatural).⁴²²

The *IE* therefore presents, in its own words,⁴²³ a Galenic contradistinction between activity and passion, a concept also found in Nemesisius's psychological elaborations. Maximus the Confessor was also familiar with this concept. In his *Ambigua to John* (*Ambigua ad Joannem*), while explaining various Greek philosophical concepts of motion, he describes passion as a motion from one to another and activity as an active motion. However, Maximus does not draw a sharp distinction between these two terms, nor does he employ them against the Monothelites or Monenergists. Instead, he uses these examples to counter the Origenist assertion regarding the primordial immutability of created intellects—a notion he considers absurd, given that creation itself inherently involves motion and change.⁴²⁴

Nevertheless, as previously established, Maximus's anti-Monothelite arguments did assert that, according to the Church Fathers, passion is not an opposing motion but a moved one. John Damascene appears to build upon this, offering a personal and creative contribution. He likely sought to bolster Maximus's argument for the naturalness of passions (as non-opposing but moved) by incorporating a Galenic distinction between activity and passion (moved and affected motion), as presented by Nemesisius.

In essence, the Damascene once again deliberately employs the concept of motion to signify naturalness. Both activity and passion are natural because they are motions inherent to nature—the former active, the latter passive. This insight seems to stem from a direct engagement with Nemesisius' *On the Nature of Man*, particularly its connection between passion, motion, and nature, and the understanding that natural passions are fundamental to living beings.

It is crucial to observe that neither Nemesisius's Galenic distinction, nor Maximus's concise differentiation between natural and unnatural passions, nor their combined application, can be found in any extant Christian handbooks of logic. This demonstrates that John Damascene is not merely a copier of existing texts. Instead, he significantly contributes to Chalcedonian thought by reintroducing overlooked concepts and crafting novel compilations. As will be shown

⁴²⁰ Ibid. 16.73–74.

⁴²¹ ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐνέργεια κίνησις ἐστὶ δραστική, δραστικὴν δ' ὀνομάζω τὴν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ, τὸ δὲ πάθος ἐν ἑτέρῳ κίνησις ἐστὶν ἐξ ἑτέρου (Galenus, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 6.1.5:1–3). See also Chvatal 2010, 120–121; Wessel 2010, 5.

⁴²² Marneli 2020, 126, 130.

⁴²³ The original wording of Galenic concept of Nemesisius can be found in *Expos* 36.

⁴²⁴ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua ad Joannem*, 7.6–7. See also Chvatal 2010, 120–121.

later, he further develops this elaboration in his theological works, where it is directly used against Monothelitism and Monenergism.

2.2.3. Will

Another concept of Chalcedonian patristic philosophy related to motion is *will* (θέλημα/θέλησις). This term, which gained significance during the Monothelite controversy, also appears in John Damascene's *IE*, while the *Dial* mentions nothing of it. As seen in the *IE*'s chapter on activity, the natural activities of angels and humans primarily relate to will. Thus, the *IE* first presents will as an intelligible activity, distinct from the natural activities of a non-rational kind. However, since the concept of will is too important to be merely mentioned under activity, the *IE* has dedicated its final chapter to the motion of will. In this chapter, the *IE* provides three slightly different definitions of will:

1. Will is a natural and rational appetite.⁴²⁵
2. Will is a natural, rational, self-governing and appetitive motion of the mind.⁴²⁶
3. Will is a natural, rational, self-governing, and appetitive power and motion.⁴²⁷

In other words, will is a natural power and motion of rational, self-governing (free-willing) beings. According to the *IE*, this capacity is absent in irrational beings, who are driven by their natural appetites. In contrast, rational beings can resist their natural (sensible) appetites and govern them instead. Examples of these governing capacities include voluntarily embracing death, which involves overcoming the natural fear of it, and the ability to resist natural appetites for food and sleep. The *IE* further clarifies that this self-governing and rational capacity is also referred to as the divine image.⁴²⁸ In the last definition of will, we also see that power and motion are equated, which again highlights that potencies are here understood as active and in motion.

John's concept of will as a natural motion directs us to the *Opusc*, which contains several patristic definitions of will.⁴²⁹ Among these, the *IE* has favored the definitions attributed to Clement of Alexandria in his *On Providence (De Providentia)*.⁴³⁰ However, a significant issue with all the patristic definitions of

⁴²⁵ Θέλησις ἐστὶ φυσικὴ λογικὴ ὁρεξις (*IE*, 10:2; own translation).

⁴²⁶ Καὶ πάλιν θέλησις ἐστὶ φυσικὴ λογικὴ καὶ αὐτεξούσιος ὁρεκτικὴ τοῦ νοῦ κίνησις (*IE*, 10:2–3; own translation).

⁴²⁷ Θέλησις οὖν ἐστὶ φυσικὴ ἢ λογικὴ καὶ αὐτεξούσιος ὁρεκτικὴ δύναμις τε καὶ κίνησις (*IE*, 10:16–17; own translation).

⁴²⁸ *IE*, 10:3–16.

⁴²⁹ Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc* 26, PG 91, 276–280.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 276 B–C cf. *IE*, 10:2–3, 16–17.

will in the *Opusc* is that they likely do not belong to the authoritative fathers to whom they are attributed and are probably Chalcedonian Dyothelite forgeries.⁴³¹

It is noteworthy that the Greek terms *thelesis* and *thelema* were rarely used in both Classical and late Antique Greek contexts. They were never employed as philosophical terms; rather, in their verbal form *thelô*, they appeared in poetry, where their meanings ranged from intention and aim to care, desire, and lust. As more fixed terms, they can be found in Hellenized texts that do not originate from the Greek environment, such as the Septuagint or the New Testament, where they are used to denote counsel or acts of will. However, these terms were never used to refer to a willing faculty or power of the soul.⁴³² As D. Bradshaw notes, ancient Greeks lacked a term for the faculty of will, understood as a capacity that operates independently of reason. For Aristotle, there were a deliberative faculty (βουλευτικόν) and a desiring faculty (ὀρεκτικόν), but deliberation remains a function of reason, as does desire insofar as it includes rational wish (βούλησις). According to Aristotle, volition is an accidental function of reason capable of directing deliberation and desire rationally.⁴³³

This has led scholars to infer that the formulation of the patristic definitions of will in the *Opusc* 26b (PG 91, 267b–280) was likely connected to Maximus the Confessor (and his close circle), who integrated various Greek classical (especially Aristotelian) concepts of volition into his overarching category of biblical *thelesis*.⁴³⁴

This integration becomes apparent in the Confessor's arguments against Pyrrhus, where the already mentioned Aristotelian three types of powers/faculties⁴³⁵ of the human soul (derived from Nemesius) are presented as evidence that will is a natural power and motion of the human mind. Maximus essentially concludes that the Aristotelian three types of powers logically guide us to accept them as three types of natural motions. According to Maximus, there are three types of life: 1) vegetative life, characterized by nutritive, growing, and generative motion; 2) sentient life, characterized by impulsive movement; and 3) intellectual life, characterized by free-willing (self-governing—αὐτεξούσιος) motion. After outlining these three types of life, Maximus argues that if one accepts the motions of vegetative and sentient life as part of human nature, as Pyrrhus does, it would be unreasonable to exclude the intelligible motion of self-governance, which is the same as will (θέλησις), from human nature.⁴³⁶

⁴³¹ Madden 1982, 61–79.

⁴³² Madden 1982, 61–67; Bradshaw 2019, 103.

⁴³³ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 432B3–7, 433A31–B4. See also Bradshaw 2019, 103.

⁴³⁴ Bradshaw 2019, 105; Madden 1982, 74, 78–79. B. Roosen doubts that the definitions of will in the *Opusc* 26b (PG 91, 276B–280B) are directly created by Maximus and considers them to be composed during the Lateran council (647–649) which of course does not exclude his influence nor involvement (Roosen 2001, 748–756; 781–786). See also Jankowiak and Booth 2015, 66–67.

⁴³⁵ See 2.1.6.3.

⁴³⁶ Maximus the Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 301.

In other words, while Aristotle did not categorize the intellectual power/faculty of the mind as a willing power or motion, Maximus did, interpreting it as a clear anti-Monothelite argument that asserts will to be an intelligible motion integral to human nature. This indicates that Maximus does not merely “mask” Aristotelian concepts of volition with biblical terminology but appears to have further developed them. As D. Gauthier notes, unlike Aristotle, Maximus does not regard the will as an accidental function resulting from reason’s intervention, but as a natural power, capacity, and faculty of human nature with its own vitality, distinct from the manner in which this power is employed.⁴³⁷

This raises the question: what might have influenced Maximus to interpret Aristotle in such a way? This interpretation may have been inspired by the concept of activity (ἐνέργεια), which, since Galen, has been firmly equated with motion. As previously noted, this line of reasoning was also continued by Nemesius of Emessa and Gregory of Nyssa, with the latter not only considering activity as the natural power and motion of each substance and nature but also discussing *thought* (νόησις) as an activity of intellectual beings.⁴³⁸ Given that the Monothelite controversy arose from the Monenergist controversy, it is reasonable to assume that Maximus’ concept of will and his interpretation of Aristotelian intelligible power were influenced by the established patristic (Nyssenian) logic of activity as a motion of intellectual nature.

This shows that the *Opuscula*’s definitions of will are the result of extensive Chalcedonian editing and reworking, integrating multiple elements: a) the biblical term “will,” b) the Aristotelian concepts of volition and *intellectual power* and c) the established patristic understanding of activity as an intellectual motion.

Ultimately, the origins of these definitions lead us back to Maximus the Confessor and his immediate circle, who, in response to Monothelite interlocutors and their lists of patristic definitions of will,⁴³⁹ sought to present this innovation as a long-standing ancient patristic tradition. From *Opusc* 26b (first half of the 7th century),⁴⁴⁰ these definitions of will, along with their connection to Clement of Alexandria, also seem to have influenced later collections such as the *DP* (7th/8th century)⁴⁴¹ and the Pseudo-Clementine *On Providence* (*De providentia*), a pseudographic dyothelite text from the second half of the 7th century.⁴⁴²

It remains unclear whether the definitions of will in John’s *IE* derive from the *Opusc*, the *DP* or the pseudographic *De providentia*. Given their structural differences, it seems unlikely that the definitions in the *IE* depend on the *DP*. In contrast, V. Kontouma views the Pseudo-*De providentia* as the potential source

⁴³⁷ Gauthier and Jolif 1970, 255–66; Bradshaw 2019, 110–111.

⁴³⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Tractatus ad Xenodorum* (fragmentum), 14:4–15:13.

⁴³⁹ Berthold 2010, 68.

⁴⁴⁰ See n. 434.

⁴⁴¹ *DP*, 300:13–16.

⁴⁴² See Ps.-Clement of Alexandria, *De providentia, Fragmenta*, 220. On this matter see also Kontouma 2015, III, 13–18.

for the Damascene in this case.⁴⁴³ Since John clearly has access to the *Opusc* and utilizes it—as we will explore in more detail later—it is more probable that the definitions of will in the *IE* are drawn from the *Opusc*.

In addition to the natural will, the *IE* also discusses *gnomic wills* (θελήματα γνωμικά), which are the desires the natural will pursues through deliberation and choice. Examples include deciding whether or not to eat, or whether or not to travel. As the *IE* explains, the gnomic will is the deliberate and personal application of the mind’s natural, self-governing will. In other words, it involves individual deliberation between different alternatives, and unlike natural impulses, it “depends on us” (ἐφ’ ἡμῖν).⁴⁴⁴

This tradition of juxtaposing natural will with gnomic wills can be traced back to Maximus the Confessor. In his *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, Maximus distinguishes simple (natural) willing from the specific deploying of this willing towards a particular goal, which he terms gnomic wills. These gnomic wills, depending on us, involve deliberation, such as whether or not to eat.⁴⁴⁵ However, as I have partly already mentioned, in Maximus’s earlier theology, all these aspects are presented as entirely natural capacities that each human individual applies in their own particular way; natural willing is therefore always hypostatic. In his later theology, this understanding was reassessed. Gnomic will took on a negative connotation, becoming a form of deliberation characteristic of fallen humanity, linked to ignorance and doubt.⁴⁴⁶ Unlike the natural power to will, the ignorant and doubtful deliberations of gnomic choices are inevitably tied to sinfulness, which is why this kind of will could not have existed in Christ.⁴⁴⁷

As C. A. Beeley has highlighted, Maximus reached this conclusion because certain Monothelites were willing to concede two natural wills in Christ as long as they were understood to be controlled by a single gnomic will proper to Christ’s hypostasis. To refute this, Maximus developed his own understanding of gnomic will, which he negatively conceived as the will of fallen human beings who, unable to freely choose the good, are swayed by the choices that present themselves, under the influence of sin and the passions. Christ’s human existence was free from such gnomic ignorance and conflicted deliberation due to its unity with the divine hypostasis. Maximus therefore understood gnomic will as an ignorant use of the natural willing process (including deliberation and choice) of the fallen and sinful human individual.⁴⁴⁸ In various Chalcedonian logical handbooks, such as the *Opusc* and the *DP*, this distinction by Maximus is summarized into concise formulations and presented in different versions.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴³ Kontouma 2015, III, 13–18.

⁴⁴⁴ *IE*, 10:16–22.

⁴⁴⁵ Maximus the Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 293.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 308.

⁴⁴⁷ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua ad Thomam*, 4:41–42.

⁴⁴⁸ Beeley 2017.

⁴⁴⁹ *Opusc* PG 91, 153, 280A. *DP*, 261:28–262:10.

Although the *IE* clearly summarizes these aspects, its presentation of gnostic wills is not negative; it contains no references to ignorance or sinfulness. In other words, the *IE* here seems to present gnostic wills, similar to Maximus's earlier understanding, as natural aspects effected through individual choices. It can therefore be agreed that, similar to the previous chapter on passion, the *IE* seems to be making a latent distinction between natural and hypostatic will here. However, also similar to previous chapters, the *IE* does not refer to motion when discussing gnostic wills, but solely when emphasizing the natural aspects of will. By doing so, the Damascene follows the tradition of definitions formulated by Maximus the Confessor and the logical handbooks, where motion is generally invoked to argue for natural will, never for gnostic will. As we will see in more detail later in John's theological argumentation, this peculiar detail is embedded in an understanding of motion as an ontological indicator of nature and naturality.

2.2.4. Conclusion

The *IE* presents a philosophy of motion that differs from that found in the *Dial.* Unlike the latter, the *IE* connects motion to the concepts of activity, passion, and will. Activity, an originally Aristotelian notion, was further developed by Galen, entering Christian thought primarily through Nemesius and Gregory of Nyssa. Passion, an originally Stoic concept, also saw further development by Galen and was utilized by Nemesius. Will, however, is a Christian invention by Maximus the Confessor, devised to counter Monothelitism. Maximus, likely inspired by the existing concept of activity, integrated various biblical and Aristotelian elements into his understanding of will.

The prior use of these concepts in earlier patristic and ecclesiastical tradition, coupled with their importance in Christological debates, elevated them to doctrinal definitions within authoritative patristic (philosophical) tradition. This is evident in the *Opusc.*, where various definitions of activity and will are attributed, often spuriously, to patristic authorities. John Damascene, drawing from this established tradition, also understood them in this way. While some Galenic aspects appear in the Alexandrian commentary tradition, these three concepts nevertheless evolved independently within ecclesiastical circles.

This independent development is further underscored by the fact that the last three chapters of the *IE* are almost entirely based on Christian theological sources, such as the *Opusc.*, Nemesius's *On the Nature of Man*, and Maximus's *Disputations with Pyrrhus*. Nevertheless, the *IE*'s specific use of Galen's definition of activity as an active motion of that which acts is not found in any ecclesiastical source. Whether this indicates the Damascene's direct access to Galen's works or to other unknown handbooks remains an open question.

This chapter also reveals potential evidence of John's personal and creative contributions, such as the unprecedented presentation of the original five kinds of natural motion as natural activities. The chapter on passion is similarly unique; as a summary of Maximus's anti-Monothelite distinction between natural and unnatural passions, it appears to be the first of its kind. The inclusion of the

Nemesian (Galenic) distinction between passion and activity further highlights that the Damascene is a creative complier.

Despite the *IE*'s lack of explicit theological positions, its concepts of activity, passion, and will are undoubtedly directed primarily against the Monenergists/Monothelites. John's decision to present these concepts without theological engagement likely stems from the *IE*'s purpose as a pedagogical tool, designed to teach theology students to understand these concepts on their own terms. As will be shown in John's theological works, the *IE*'s concepts of activity, passion, and will are integrated with positions of faith. In essence, Damascene's pedagogical approach dictates that one must grasp these concepts in their purely conceptual form before appreciating their use in complex theological contexts.

This, of course, also highlights the difference between the *Dial* and the *IE*. As we will later see, even though the previously elaborated concepts of the former reemerge, often in altered forms, in Chalcedonian theological arguments, they are nevertheless rarely used directly. The three mentioned concepts of the *IE*, on the other hand, as philosophical concepts of the Chalcedonian patristic tradition, are meant for direct theological application. A fundamental metaphysical aspect in all these cases is motion. As an ontological indicator, motion not only links activity, passion, and will to nature but also reveals their inherent naturalness. The precise manner in which John presents these concepts in his theological works will be analyzed in the Christology chapter of this study.

3. THEOLOGICAL NOTIONS AND ARGUMENTS OF MOTION AND CHANGE

3.1. Motion and change in John Damascene's theological works

I have thus far presented the existence of the different concepts, notions, and ideas of motion and change in John Damascene's philosophical works. In these works, as we have seen, John almost entirely omitted any theological engagement, making no clear attempt to reveal their exact usefulness to Chalcedonian Christianity. We have also observed how this obscurity has led scholars to various speculations regarding John's intentions. According to the aforementioned critical approach, concepts in John's philosophical works that are not repeated or elaborated in his theology were considered either unacceptable or unuseful for Chalcedonian theology. To address this view, some have attempted to explain the existence of these theologically neglected concepts by positing their utility for the reader's systematic and logical thinking, enabling the reader to distinguish them from patristic homonymous versions. However, this approach does not explain how John Damascene himself perceived or conceived of them. As previously discussed, solely comparing them to existing philosophical backgrounds and creating different (metaphysical) reconstructions is a methodologically slippery slope, often remaining unfalsifiable and reflecting more of the scholar's imagination than the reality of John Damascene.

Ultimately, John's relationship to philosophical concepts and works can only be satisfactorily explained through his theological works. Their true value can be evaluated within the context of theological polemics and engagement. In the following chapters, I will investigate John's theological elaborations and their link to the notions of motion and mutability. As we will soon see, these concepts emerge in John's anti-Manichaean polemics, elaborated mainly in his *Manich*; in his natural theology, discussed primarily in his *Expos*; and also in Christological arguments amplified in various Christological works, especially in his *Volunt*. Before commencing the theological discussion, it is therefore important to provide a general overview of these works.

3.1.1. Against the Manichaeans

An important polemical work that is often overshadowed by John's other theological writings is titled *Our Father among the Saints, John, the Presbyter Monk from Damascus, against the Manichaeans*, also known as *Against the Manicheans (Manich CPG 8048)*.⁴⁵⁰

There is little doubt that John Damascene is the authentic author of this work. Although the dating of the *Manich* is not precisely determined, A. Louth and S. Ables have proposed an early date, suggesting it was written while John was

⁴⁵⁰ Kotter 1981, 351.

still living in Damascus (before 705). If this is the case, the *Manich* could be regarded as one of John's earliest works, if not the first. This conclusion is drawn from various characteristic details, such as the absence of intertextual references to his other writings and the lack of the mature theological thought and terminology evident in his later works.⁴⁵¹

Another question is whether John's *Manich* was written for a specific community of Manichaeans. Although Manichaean communities were largely eradicated from Byzantium by the end of the 6th century, they likely had some representation in the Umayyad Caliphate and the Levant, where John resided. Nonetheless, the fact that the *Manich* does not appear to target any specific Manichean community has led most researchers to accept Samuel Lieu's theory, which posits that it was probably written as a rhetorical exercise for theological training—a standard practice since late antiquity. According to Louth, the belief that John wrote it as part of his theological training also supports the early dating of the *Manich*.⁴⁵²

The aim of such an exercise was not to wage a battle against a specific Manichean community but rather against dualism and its theological logic in general. Many of these logical approaches were employed not only by the dualistic Paulicians and Bogomils, who were active in Byzantium (where they were perceived as Manichaeans), but also by Muslims with whom John closely interacted during his time in Damascus.⁴⁵³

Key concepts in the *Manich*, such as issues of free will (the origin of evil and moral responsibility), divine determinism and eternal punishment, were also vigorously debated among contemporary Muslims. The Islamic mainstream's neglect of iconography (anti-materialism), the denial of human free will and the emphasis on divine determinism seem to have revived the ideas of Manichaean dualism for John, as will be analyzed in more detail later.⁴⁵⁴

Another significant aspect of Manichaean doctrine was the teaching of panpsychism, which posits that planets, stars and the earth possess living souls, alongside astrology, where heavenly bodies are viewed as intelligent beings deserving worship.⁴⁵⁵ Notably, John describes the Ishmaelites or Saracens as great idolaters who worshipped the Morning Star and Aphrodite until the time of Mohammed. For John, the Muslim veneration of the black stone Ka'ba in Mecca, believed to be a remnant of the head of Aphrodite, whom the Saracens called Khabar, represents a continuation of this idolatry.⁴⁵⁶ Thus, it is plausible that John's anti-Manichaean polemics also served as a veiled critique of Islam without directly confronting it.

⁴⁵¹ Louth 2002, 8, 71; Ables 2023a, 73–78.

⁴⁵² Lieu 1988, 175; Louth 2002, 70–71; Ables 2023a, 67–73.

⁴⁵³ Louth 2002, 64, 70–71.

⁴⁵⁴ On that matter see Louth 2002, 71; Sahas 2021, 314–326.

⁴⁵⁵ Louth 2002, 61–62.

⁴⁵⁶ *Haer*, 100.

In any case, John's rhetorical battle against all forms of dualism unfolds through the doctrines of Manichaeism. John had access to the knowledge of such teachings through various Christian anti-Manichaean works written centuries prior. Much of the content of the *Manich* aligns with Hegemonius' *Acts of Archelaus* and Epiphanius' *Panarion*.⁴⁵⁷ Drawing from the latter, John also developed his 66th chapter of the *Haer*, which states that Manichaeism, based on the teachings of the Persian teacher Manes (3rd century), introduces two eternal principles—one good and the other evil—approaches Christ docetistically (in mere form), and worships the sun and moon while praying to the stars and powers (angels) and demons.⁴⁵⁸

Despite some similarities in content to other works, no clear source for John's *Manich* has been identified. Furthermore, the *Manich* contains information about Manichaeism that is not found in any existing Christian work. According to Kotter, this suggests that John may have used sources unknown to us or even accessed Manichaean texts. As Kotter notes, the result is a masterpiece of rare depth, in which the philosophical-theological impossibility of dualism is explored with largely novel and independent arguments.⁴⁵⁹

Interestingly, many anti-Manichaean concepts and logical arguments continue in John's later theological works. It has become evident that chapters 92–95 of the *Expos* directly engage with Manichaean arguments. According to S. Ables, this indicates that the key aspects of John's anti-Manichaean thought remain central throughout his career. It also appears that many concepts in the *Manich* unintentionally serve as a theological roadmap for his future theological program.⁴⁶⁰

3.1.2. Defining the Orthodox faith

When examining John Damascene's theological works, the most important is clearly his *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* (*Expos* CPG 8043), the final part of the *Fount of Knowledge*. This work is an authentic production of the Damascene, preserved in 252 manuscripts, three of which date back to the 9th century. The exact date of its composition remains unknown. A. Louth hypothesizes it may have been written around 720 or even earlier, as there is uncertainty as to whether the *Expos*'s chapter 89 on iconoclasm addresses Byzantine iconoclasm (726 or 730).⁴⁶¹

Although the work is now commonly referred to as the *Exact Exposition* (ἑκθεσις) of the *Orthodox Faith*, the predominant manuscript tradition labels it an

⁴⁵⁷ Kotter 1981, 334; Louth 2002, 70; Ables 2023a, 75.

⁴⁵⁸ *Haer*, 66.

⁴⁵⁹ Kotter 1981, 343–344.

⁴⁶⁰ Ables 2023a, 78.

⁴⁶¹ Louth 2002, 33, 185.

Exact Edition (ἔκδοσις) of the *Orthodox Faith*.⁴⁶² The term “exposition” (ἐκθεσις) derives from John’s *Dial proem*, where the last part of the *Fount of Knowledge* is intended to exposit (ἐκθέσθαι) the truths presented by the holy prophets, apostles and teachers of the Church.⁴⁶³

In the manuscript tradition, the *Expos* is divided into 100 chapters, which were grouped into four books in the Latin translation by Burgundio of Pisa in 1150: I. Trinitarian doctrine (chapters 1–14); II. Cosmology and anthropology (chapters 15–44); III. Christology (chapters 45–73); IV. Diverse questions and eschatology (chapters 74–100). This type of scholastic division, although not present in the original manuscripts, has been largely maintained in most modern translations and editions, including that of B. Kotter.⁴⁶⁴

As can be deduced from the *Dial proem*, the Damascene intended the *Expos* to be a dogmatic compendium that articulates the most significant theological (Chalcedonian) understandings of biblical and patristic tradition.⁴⁶⁵ Traditionally, the *Expos* has therefore been understood as a dogmatic handbook that is nothing more than a compilation and “mosaic” of previous patristic quotations and thoughts.⁴⁶⁶ Nevertheless, as Demetracopoulos points out, when the *Dial* draws from secondary sources (handbooks and compendia), the *Expos* is based on a direct reading of the patristic authors and their full texts.⁴⁶⁷

Indeed, the *Expos* does draw hundreds of citations from numerous authoritative patristic and Chalcedonian authors. However, as we now know, many significant parts of the *Expos* should be attributed to John Damascene. As I mentioned in the introductory part, the Trinitarian section of the *Expos* (chapters 1–14), which for a long time was considered to be simply copied and plagiarized from Pseudo-Cyrril’s *De sancta trinitate*, is actually an original contribution of the Damascene. This shows us how John, based on an existing patristic tradition, creatively builds up his own presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity.⁴⁶⁸

In addition to the sections authored by John, the *Expos* also incorporates pre-existing patristic concepts that have been modified or repurposed. A notable example is the Christological concept of *perichoresis* (mutual coinherence), which, in the hands of the Damascene, evolves into a Trinitarian concept.⁴⁶⁹

Thus, it can be acknowledged that the *Expos* is not merely a repetitive compilation of patristic quotations, nor is it entirely an original work where John provides a purely personal exposition of Christian doctrine. His claim to say nothing of his own should not be dismissed as a mere expression of modesty;

⁴⁶² Kotter 1973, 7.

⁴⁶³ *Dial, proem*: 53–57. See also Kontouma 2015, V, 6–7.

⁴⁶⁴ Kontouma 2015, V, 7; Kotter 1973, 3–6.

⁴⁶⁵ *Dial, proem*: 53–61.

⁴⁶⁶ Louth 2002, 36.

⁴⁶⁷ Demetracopoulos 2011, 82.

⁴⁶⁸ Louth 2002, 88.

⁴⁶⁹ *Expos*, 8: 253–265; 14:11–16. See also Louth 2002, 104.

rather, it reflects his commitment to the established tradition of the “Fathers.” In such a context, any claims of personal originality risk being perceived as departing from Orthodoxy.⁴⁷⁰

As A. Louth observes, the *Expos* resembles a florilegium in which various existing patristic sources are not merely compiled together. Instead, John appears to selectively choose from these works, guided by an existing (likely oral) tradition that associates specific Fathers with particular theological topics.⁴⁷¹ The end result is not a proto-scholastic *summa* or a precursor to Byzantine systematic theology—an understanding largely shaped by the Western four-fold division of the *Expos*. Although Louth accepts this division, he argues that it obscures the Damascene’s true intention, which was to create a monastic dogmatic work that aimed to shape the monastic vocation of its readers by teaching them the true Christian way of life. In this sense, the *Expos* serves as a recapitulation of Christian doctrine in its Chalcedonian form, which Palestinian monks ardently defended.⁴⁷²

For Louth, this monastic character is also supported by the fact that the *Expos* is divided into 100 chapters, being therefore a dogmatic century. As is well known, a division of a work into self-contained brief chapters, often in a set of 100 (“century”), was introduced into Christianity by Evagrius Ponticus (346–99), a great theorist of asceticism. This genre subsequently gained popularity among monastic and ascetic communities, where it was used for reflection during prayer. Besides ascetic topics, the chapters sometimes also address theological doctrines, as evidenced by Evagrius and later by Maximus the Confessor. According to Louth, by adhering to this existing tradition, John simply cast his epitome of Christian doctrine in the form of a monastic century.⁴⁷³

In contrast, V. Kontouma argues that the *Expos* should not be regarded as a dogmatic handbook or century.⁴⁷⁴ She contends that the division into 100 chapters was likely not made by the Damascene but added by a later editor, who also assigned the title “exposition” and included a table of contents (*pinax*). Kontouma asserts that freeing the *Expos* from the constraints of the Latin four-fold division and the editorial 100 chapters reveals a more flexible and yet logical and coherent structure.⁴⁷⁵

According to Kontouma, this liberation also uncovers that the *Expos* functions more like a theological fresco, where the theological content has been simplified and even vulgarized. This simplification primarily stems from the religiously

⁴⁷⁰ Louth 2002, viii, 15. Kontouma 2015, V, 2, 8.

⁴⁷¹ Louth 2002, 87.

⁴⁷² Louth 2002, 37, 84–85.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 36–37. Louth is here based on B. Kotter, who also brings out that *Expos* is a dogmatic Century just like the other part of the *Fount of Knowledge* (Kotter 1981, 4).

⁴⁷⁴ This approach is also supported by N. Russell, according to whom John’s often very long dogmatic chapters of the *Expos* are different from the chapters in a ‘century,’ which, in addition to their ascetic use, were short and aimed for memorization (Russell 2022, 30).

⁴⁷⁵ Kontouma 2015, V, 8–13.

challenging environment of the Umayyad Caliphate, where the Chalcedonian faction and its newly established Patriarchate of Jerusalem needed clear and straightforward theological arguments to protect their faith. Thus, the *Expos* can be viewed as a simplified synthesis of the Chalcedonian faith, designed for broader dissemination (hence the title “edition”) to ensure the unity and survival of the Chalcedonian community. Kontouma also notes that in the *Expos* John effectively synthesizes the theological thought of Maximus the Confessor, whose ideas were often complex and fragmented. This synthesis achieves an unprecedented level of comprehensiveness and deepens many points that had not been previously explored.⁴⁷⁶

3.1.3. Christological Works

In addition to non-Christian challenges, John Damascene was also surrounded by polemics among various competing Christian groups in his multicultural and multireligious environment. For Christians of his time, one of the most significant points of contention was the question of Christology, which had led to divisions based on different councils. The Council of Ephesus (431) marked the rise of the Nestorians; the Council of Chalcedon (451) gave rise to various Monophysite groups; and the Third Council of Constantinople (680) condemned the Monenergists/Monothelites.

All of these Christian denominations existed, more or less, side by side with John Damascene and his Chalcedonian fellow churchmen. Against each of them, John Damascene dedicated at least one polemical work. In total, there are six polemical treatises by John on Christological topics.⁴⁷⁷

John wrote two works against the Nestorians: *On the Faith against the Nestorians* (*Fides* CPG 8054) and *Against the Nestorians* (*Nestor* CPG 8053). While the precise dating of these works is uncertain, the latter appears to have been written later as a further elaboration of the former.⁴⁷⁸ These texts are not addressed to any specific community or individual, suggesting they likely present a fictitious anti-Nestorian debate—a common theological exercise in Byzantium. One could argue that during John Damascene’s time some contact may have existed, as the Nestorians and the Melkite Chalcedonians now co-existed the Umayyad Empire. However, these communities seemingly did not engage directly, since the Nestorians of the Church of the East were likely active further east, away from the former Byzantine provinces.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ Kontouma 2015, V, 8, 14–15.

⁴⁷⁷ Louth 2002, 156. Many of the Christological aspects are touched also in John’s other works and especially in his *Expos*.

⁴⁷⁸ Kotter 1981, 256.

⁴⁷⁹ Louth 2002, 173.

At the same time, John clearly engages with the divided communities and churches of the so-called “Monophysites,”⁴⁸⁰ who were establishing their presence in the former Byzantine provinces. Against them, John Damascene wrote three works: *Against the Jacobites* (Jacob CPG 8047), *Letter on the Thrice-Holy Hymn* (Trisag CPG 8049), and *On the Composite Nature against the Acephali* (Aceph CPG 8051).

The first work, as indicated by its title, is directed against the Jacobite ecclesiastical community, named after its founder, Jacob of Baradai—the Monophysite bishop of Edessa (542–578). In the manuscript tradition, there is also an alternative longer title, suggesting that the *Jacob* was written on behalf of Peter of Damascus to a Jacobite bishop of Dara (Mesopotamia). Although the exact date of the work is unknown, based on the longer title, it must have been written before Peter of Damascus’s exile and death in 743. The primary aim of the work is to argue for the two natures (human and divine) of Christ, which the Jacobites deny due to their misunderstanding of the concepts of *nature*, *essence*, and *hypostasis*.⁴⁸¹ To support his arguments, John also includes a florilegium of patristic pericopes (along with their authors and works) concerning the duality of Christ’s natures.⁴⁸²

John’s second treatise against the Monophysites, written in the form of a letter, addresses the previously mentioned issue of whether the doxological hymn of trisagion (Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us) could include the addition “was crucified for us.” Those who accepted this addition, primarily the Monophysites, viewed the trisagion as a reference to God the Son and an (anti-Nestorian) affirmation that it was one of the Holy Trinity who became incarnate and was crucified. Conversely, those who, primarily Chalcedonians (including John Damascene), viewed the hymn as a reference to the whole Trinity rejected this Theopaschite addition, arguing that it heretically implied that the Trinitarian divine nature was crucified and suffered.⁴⁸³

Similar views seem to have been held not only by the Monophysites but also by some of John’s fellow Chalcedonians, such as Anastasios, the abbot of the Euthymios Monastery. The *Trisag* was written in response to the abbot’s Theopaschite interpretation and his claim that such views were shared by various holy Fathers, including John Damascene and John V of Jerusalem. John, having received this information from Abbot Sergius, who in turn received it from Abbot Job, was compelled to write an apologetic and explanatory letter analyzing the different pericopes of the holy Fathers cited by Anastasios. John addresses his letter to Abbot Jordanes, asking him to share these explanations with his clergy, people, and Abbot Anastasios. Since the work suggests that John V of Jerusalem

⁴⁸⁰ The term *Monophysite* is used throughout this dissertation, even when referring to Christians who properly speaking were not Monophysites (Eutychians) in strict sense, following the language and attitude that John gives in his writings.

⁴⁸¹ Kotter 1981, 100–103.

⁴⁸² *Jacob*, 89–129.

⁴⁸³ Louth 2002, 163.

is already deceased, it has traditionally been regarded as one of the later works of John Damascene, written sometime after his patriarch's death in 735.⁴⁸⁴ Alongside John's own arguments and explanations, a significant portion of the *Trisag* consists of a florilegium of patristic pericopes, similar to those in *Contra Jacob*, included to support John's arguments.⁴⁸⁵

The third and final of John's anti-Monophysite works is *On the Composite Nature against the Acephali*. As indicated by the title, this work is directed against the Acephali ("the leaderless") a Monophysite community that defected from their leader, Patriarch Petros of Mongos, in 482 due to his acceptance of the *Henotikon* of Zenon. Originally an extreme and small group from Egypt, they spread to Palestine and Syria, gaining significant influence under the Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch, Severus (512–518), with whom they later became associated as Severians. One of the central teachings of this group (also shared by other Monophysites), as indicated by the title of the *Contra acephalos*, was the concept of one composite nature into which the two natures of Christ (humanity and divinity) had merged.⁴⁸⁶

The longest of John's authentic Christological works is *On the Two Wills in Christ* (*Volunt* CPG 8052), which addresses both the Monothelites and Monenergists, with a particular focus on analyzing the relationship and distinction between the properties of nature and hypostasis. The manuscript tradition presents this work in two slightly different versions, which are also shown in parallel in Kotter's edition (chapters 4–8).⁴⁸⁷ Although the Monothelite/Monenergist communities clearly existed in John's immediate surroundings, this Christological treatise is not addressed to anyone specific. Furthermore, little can be definitively stated about its date and reason for composition.⁴⁸⁸

Like his other works, John's Christological writings are largely based on existing Chalcedonian patristic arguments and various florilegia, which he occasionally edited and supplemented. However, as observed by V. Kontouma and as will be evident in the last chapter of this monograph, John's Christological works are not solely based on patristic sources but also incorporate philosophical speculation grounded in concepts found in his own *Dial* and *IE*.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁴ *Trisag*, 1; 26. See also Kotter 1981, 290–294; Kontouma 2015, I, 24–25; Louth 2002, 156.

⁴⁸⁵ *Trisag*, 8–25.

⁴⁸⁶ Kotter 1981, 400.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 177–187.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 156; Louth 2002, 166–167.

⁴⁸⁹ Kontouma 2015, I, 39.

3.2. Motion and change against Manichaean dualism

As we have previously discussed, even though in John's immediate environment, the Umayyad Caliphate, the Manichaean communities undoubtedly existed, he himself most probably did not have any direct contact with them. John's *Manich* and his anti-Manichaean polemics was therefore most probably written as a rhetorical exercise for theological training—a standard practice since late antiquity. The aim of such an exercise was not to wage a battle against a specific Manichean community but rather against dualism and its theological logic in general. Many of these logical approaches were employed not only by the dualistic Paulicians and Bogomils, who were active in Byzantium (where they were perceived as Manichaeans), but also by Muslims with whom John closely interacted during his time in Damascus. In any case, John's rhetorical battle against all forms of dualism unfolds through the doctrines of Manichaeism.

The teaching of Manichaeism begins with the question of the origin of evil. The answer is dualistic, rooted in the understanding of two eternal principles: the good light and the evil darkness, or “matter.” In the past, these two principles existed separately, but at one point, a war erupted in which darkness occupied, defeated and defiled the light. As a result of the various phases of battle, darkness and light became intertwined, leading to the formation of a new cosmic order. The Sun and the Moon emerged from the light that had escaped defilement, while the stars and planets were formed from light that was slightly defiled, hence their significance. In earthly reality, humans—created by the demons of darkness—are viewed as microcosmic beings, where a body (from darkness) has entangled within it a soul (from light). This situation engenders an ascetic struggle, in which the light seeks to free itself from the influences of darkness and from all that is bodily. The defeat of the light was, in fact, a long-term strategy that made darkness dependent on light, allowing for the possibility that, in the final days, light could be liberated from darkness, enabling a partial restoration of the primordial order. Consequently, the universe will be destroyed, and darkness and light will return to their original states.⁴⁹⁰

According to the Damascene, the central Manichaean concept that must be addressed—and around which all other concepts revolve—is the teaching of two eternal principles: a good God and evil matter.⁴⁹¹ To refute this understanding, John needed to explain the nature of matter alongside the nature of the universe and the created order, including the heavens, luminaries and intelligible beings. He also had to address the nature of evil, as well as questions of free will, the devil, divine punishment and providence.⁴⁹²

A crucial anti-Manichaean logic employed in the *Manich*, which continues in John's later theological works, is the logic of motion and change—an aspect that has largely been overlooked by modern research. One of the few scholars to

⁴⁹⁰ Louth 2002, 62–63. See also Coyle 2014, 661–665.

⁴⁹¹ *Manich*, 2:11–24, 3:2–18, 28:1–22.

⁴⁹² Louth 2002, 68–70.

highlight this concept is N. Matsoukas, who argues that a central anti-Manichaean argument throughout the *Manich* is the logic of the mutability of the created order.⁴⁹³

Matsoukas's observations are indeed accurate, as it is significant that, among all of his theological works, John makes the greatest effort in the *Manich* to explain and define the phenomenon of change. According to the *Manich*, *change* or *turn* (τροπή) is defined as something that occurs from one opposite to another: from non-being to being, and from being to non-being, as well as from virtue to evil, which represents a change from naturally having to privation.⁴⁹⁴ As change consistently moves toward an opposite, it also introduces a transition from potentiality to actuality, alongside the temporal concepts of before and after, or prior and posterior.⁴⁹⁵

By examining the definitions of change that John employs in his *Manich*, we can easily identify patterns of Aristotelian thought, which have already been analyzed in the *Dial*: the logic of contraries in motion, the definition of motion as the actualization of potency, and references to the motions of genesis (from non-being to being) and destruction (from being to non-being), thus relating to changes of substance. We also observe references to habit and privation, to the logic of qualitative or accidental changes, and to the Aristotelian concept of time as a measure of the prior and posterior in motion.⁴⁹⁶

The fact that the *Manich* likely predates the *Dial* raises the question of the potential common sources that John might have drawn upon. Is it possible that the *Manich*'s philosophical application of change and mutability serves as early evidence of John's belief in the use of Neoplatonic Aristotelian logic within a Chalcedonian theological framework? At the same time, it has been claimed that the *Manich* is primarily based on biblical and patristic theology rather than philosophical speculation, which began to gain prominence in John's theological thought only after the *Dial*.⁴⁹⁷ If this is the case, then did John derive all these Aristotelian definitions from other Church Fathers? To gain a clearer understanding of the concept of mutability and the logic of change, in this chapter I start by investigating the particular anti-Manichaean cases where John employs this logic as well as his potential sources.

⁴⁹³ Matsoukas 1988, 15–16.

⁴⁹⁴ *Manich*, 43:1–3.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 24:16–17; 31:40; 68:44–45.

⁴⁹⁶ On the link between the *Dial* and *Manich*, see also Baranov 2021, 573–594.

⁴⁹⁷ Kontouma 2015, I, 38–39. See also Ables 2020, 638.

3.2.1. Mutability of the created order and the origin of evil

As already stated, Manichaeism explains the origin of the intrinsic and eternal concept of evil with the doctrine of the two eternal principles: a good God and evil matter. To refute this dualistic teaching, John must demonstrate that there is only one eternal principle—God—while everything else, including evil and matter, is not eternal. To accomplish this, the Damascene turns to the logic of change and the mutability of the created order. The primary reasoning John employs, both here and in his other theological works, is that for something to be considered an eternal principle, it must be immutable and without a beginning.⁴⁹⁸ Conversely, if something is mutable, then it has a beginning and cannot be regarded as an eternal principle. Thus, if a thing is mutable, it logically follows that it has a beginning, and if it has a beginning, it is inherently changeable. But why is this the case?

The answer lies in the concept of change (τροπή)⁴⁹⁹, which, according to the Damascene, is defined as a coming-to-be from non-being to being.⁵⁰⁰ This definition allows John to deduce that change is intrinsically linked to the process of coming into existence from non-existence. Anything that did not exist at one moment but later began to exist is, by its nature, changeable because its beginning represents, by definition, a change.⁵⁰¹

But mutable existence itself also requires an explanation, because an existence that arises from non-existence does not, in itself, explain its own existence. As John explains, non-being is non-existent and lacks any principle of being. Therefore, for non-existence to acquire existence, it must derive that existence from an eternal principle that does not originate from non-being. This eternal principle, which has no beginning or end, no before or after, and consequently no change, is God. It is precisely this eternal principle of being that has given existence to everything else, not from His essence, but by creating them from non-being to being through His will and power. Addressing the objections of the Manichean, John clarifies that since the will of God is eternal and without before and after, the act of creation did not cause any change in God—it was only creation that transitioned from non-being to being. For the same reason, the eternal birth of the Son from the Father should not be viewed as a change.⁵⁰² In other words, God is immutable because He has no beginning, while the created order is mutable because it has a beginning—an aspect confirmed by definitional logic, which asserts that anything that emerges from non-being to being, or anything that begins to exist at a certain moment, must be subject to change and mutability.

⁴⁹⁸ *Manich*, 5:2; 21:3–4; 31:34–35, 41; 68:44–46; *Expos*, 3:22–25.

⁴⁹⁹ Even though τροπή literally means “turning,” it can also be understood as a general reference to change, which is also how John Damascene uses it.

⁵⁰⁰ *Manich*, 24:24–25; *Volunt*, 28:22–23; *Expos*, 41:4–5.

⁵⁰¹ *Manich*, 5:2–3; 22:18–19; 24:25–26; 31:44–47; 69:12–13; *Expos*, 41:2–4; *Volunt*, 28:21–22.

⁵⁰² *Manich*, 6:1–7; 18:1–5; *Expos*, 8:45–48, 54–58, 67–69.

The first point John challenges with the logic of the mutability of the created order is the Manichaean doctrine of evil as an eternal principle. Instead, he proposes a markedly different theory regarding the origin of evil. According to the Damascene, evil can arise from rational beings created in the *image* (κατ' εἰκόνα) and *likeness* (καθ' ὁμοίωσιν) of God, specifically the angelic powers and human souls.⁵⁰³ For John, the image of God primarily refers to the rational intellect (λογικὸν) and the capacity for free will and self-governance (αὐτεξούσιον). This capacity enables rational beings to attain divine likeness and divinization with God's assistance. In humans, the divine image is associated with the highest aspect of the soul—the mind (νοῦς)—and, consequently, with its ability for self-governance and free will. For John, this capacity is fundamentally a divine attribute belonging to God, who possesses a free and governing will and has graciously bestowed this characteristic upon rational beings as well.⁵⁰⁴ Since the angelic will is not responsible for guiding a body or for the microcosmic task of uniting sensible and intelligible realities, John posits that humans can be seen as more reflective of the divine image than angels.⁵⁰⁵

Nevertheless, this self-governing and free-willing capacity itself does not explain evil. God, from whom only goodness derives and never evil, is also free-willing. However, unlike the immutable God, rational angels and human souls⁵⁰⁶ are created from non-being to being. Because they have a beginning, they are inevitably changeable, which in turn makes their rationality and free will also mutable. Thus, the creation of heavenly powers and human souls from non-being to being indicates their mutability, while their creation in accordance with the divine image signifies their free will and self-governance. Together, these factors render them *changeable by will* (ἐθελότρεπτος), meaning they can change via *choice* (κατὰ προαίρεσιν). Since everything God created is inherently good, rational beings can either choose to preserve their natural state and progress toward goodness and divinization or turn away from God, shifting from the natural, good and virtuous to the unnatural, evil, and sinful. This notion, present not only in the *Manich*⁵⁰⁷ but also elaborated upon in various chapters of the *Expos*⁵⁰⁸ and once in the *Volunt*,⁵⁰⁹ essentially suggests that evil is a potential outcome of a mutable will, which derives its mutability from being created and having a beginning from non-being to being.

⁵⁰³ *Expos*, 17:2–9, 26:17; *Volunt*, 30:1–3. See also Louth 2002, 122.

⁵⁰⁴ *IE*, 10:13–16; *Expos*, 26:18–21, 44–52; 44:24–27; 58:70–73; 62:70–73.

⁵⁰⁵ *Volunt*, 16:5–19, 30:9–11.

⁵⁰⁶ Human souls that come to be from non-being to being are hypostatically united with their propre bodies that come to be come from a pre-existing matter: from a synthesis of the primordial elements of fire, air, water and earth. Human body is subjected to bodily changes (*Expos*, 3).

⁵⁰⁷ *Manich*, 31:44–50; 42:19–20; 69:12–16.

⁵⁰⁸ *Expos*, 3:22–31; 26:44–52; 41:2–7; 58:170–171; 93:23–41.

⁵⁰⁹ *Volunt*, 28:14–23.

In John's struggle against Manichean dualism, this reasoning becomes a central tool for explaining not only the origin of evil but also that of the Devil and demons. According to John Damascene, although the Devil is the primary inventor of evil and the instigator behind humanity's fall, God did not create the Devil to be evil but as an angel of light and the ruler of the world. Lucifer, therefore, was created as a purely intellectual, free-willing and rational angel whose existence was good and in *accordance with nature* (κατὰ φύσιν), as is true for all beings. However, the fact that he was created from non-being to being also rendered his intellectual characteristics, including his will, changeable. Here, John refers back to his earlier logical definition of change to support his argument. With the intellectual mutability of the Devil and other angels came the possibility to either remain in the goodness of God and in their natural state or to turn away from God into an unnatural state. The choice to turn away from the divine source of goodness and light toward an unnatural and evil state of absence and privation was made not by God, but by the Devil and his angels.⁵¹⁰

In this way, John demonstrates that all the attributes God bestowed upon Lucifer—being, mutability, free will and the natural capacity to choose—are inherently good. This is why God cannot be accused of creating evil; the sole responsibility for inventing evil lies with Lucifer, who misused his mutability and freedom.

John elaborates that the desire to be without a beginning and completely immutable is a dangerous delusion for created beings, as it is unnatural to them. In his anti-Manichean argument, John asserts that one of the main reasons behind the fall of rational beings was the desire to be God by nature rather than by grace. Since created beings cannot undo their beginning and, therefore, cannot escape their mutability, any attempt to do so represents a delusional deviation from their nature, shifting from the natural to the unnatural.⁵¹¹ Through the example of the Devil, John affirms that evil emerges as a potentiality due to the mutability of the free-willing mind—an inevitable characteristic of created intellectual beings that come into existence from non-being to being, as also supported by the well-known definition of change.

This leads us to consider the potential sources that may have influenced John on this matter. Let us begin with John's decision to characterize intellectually mutable beings as changeable by will (ἐθελότρεπτος). This specific term, rarely used in the patristic tradition, appears three times in the works of John Damascene (*Manich* 69:15–16, *Expos* 17:15–17, 26:50). Before him, the term is found only in the 5th century ascetic writings of Nile of Ancyra and Marcus the Ascetic, who use it to describe humanity's changeable nature—capable of shifting its will from good to evil and from evil to good.⁵¹² For John, however, the term “changeable by will” encompasses the entire range of intellectual beings, not just human souls.

⁵¹⁰ *Manich*, 32–37; 69:1–12; *Expos*, 17:2–4, 15–19; 18:1–18; 41:23–27; 93:22–41.

⁵¹¹ *Manich*, 31:45–55.

⁵¹² Marcus the Ascetic, *De baptismo*, SC 445, 10:6–15; Nile of Ancyra, *Epistulae*, PG 79, 253.

Even though ascetic literature is clearly John's main source of influence, he also expands beyond it to include angels and demons.

Another peculiarity is John's frequently used definition of change (τροπή) as a coming-to-be from non-being to being. This definition closely resembles the Aristotelian concept of *genesis*, which John also presents in his *Dial.* Gregory of Nyssa is the first to employ this concept in pre-Damascene patristic tradition. In his *On the Creation of Man* (*De opificio hominis*) and *Catechetical Discourse* (*Oratio catechetica*), he repeatedly asserts that the changeability of all created beings stems from their beginning in creation (*genesis*), which is understood as a change (motion) from non-being to being.⁵¹³

As students of theology know, Gregory, along with the other Fathers of the 4th century, developed a theological concept in their fight against Arianism, positing that the primary ontological distinction should be drawn between the created and the uncreated (God), rather than between the intelligible and the sensible, as seen in Greek philosophy. This distinction was initially correlated with the changeable and unchangeable, whereby creation as a whole is characterized by change, while the uncreated God is described as unchangeable.⁵¹⁴

Unlike the other Fathers who made similar distinctions, Gregory of Nyssa is the first to explain that creation *ex nihilo*, or *genesis*, is a form of change. If something emerges from non-being into being, it constitutes change and motion. Gregory appears to be the first to elucidate the mutability of the created order by explicitly connecting its coming-to-be with a specific type of change and motion—specifically, the transition from non-being to being.

Gregory employs this logic, likely influenced by the challenges of dualistic Gnostics and Manichaeans,⁵¹⁵ to illustrate how changeable humanity, with its capacity for will and self-governance, differs from the uncreated and immutable God. Unlike the immutable God, mutable intellectual beings can alter their choices, moving toward good and virtue or toward sin and evil. In this way, Gregory not only distinguishes between the created and the uncreated but also explains the origin of evil, which is possible for mutable beings but impossible for an immutable God.⁵¹⁶

The fact that Gregory is the first patristic author to explicitly characterize *ex nihilo* creation as change and motion—thus establishing the mutability of the created order—begs for some kind of explanation. Given that this logic aligns with the well-known Aristotelian framework of *genesis*, it is entirely plausible that Gregory was here inspired by the Aristotelianism of the Neoplatonic

⁵¹³ Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis*, PG 44, 184; *Oratio catechetica*, SC 453, 6:69–73; 21:5–9.

⁵¹⁴ See Athanasius of Alexandria *Oratio I contra Arianos*, 36; Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium*, PG 29, 600A; Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis*, PG 44, 184C. See also Louth 2002, 93; Wolfson 1966, 351–367; Shchukin 2017: 367–368, 376–378.

⁵¹⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, SC 453, prolog; 7:1–5.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6; 21; *De opificio hominis*, PG 44, 184.

educational curriculum.⁵¹⁷ In one way or another, Gregory appears to be the first patristic author to use the Aristotelian definition of genesis in Christian metaphysics, using it as an ontological indicator of the created realm and its peculiarities.

This concept of Gregory can also be found in chapter 41 of the *De natura hominis* by Nemesius of Emesa:

Change and turning (τροπή) are naturally implanted in all things that come to be, especially those which come to be from underlying matter. For turning is the origin of coming to be; for coming to be is through the alteration of the underlying matter.⁵¹⁸

Using an approach similar to Gregory's, Nemesius aims to demonstrate that evil is not the creation of God but rather the product of human will, which has the capacity for both good and evil. God created humans as rational beings who are also changeable due to their existence. Therefore, evil is a potentiality that may arise from our mutable rationality, which is our responsibility. Accusing God of not rendering humanity incapable of evil is akin to accusing Him of granting us rationality and free will.⁵¹⁹

However, this does not imply that Nemesius depends directly on Gregory. Current research indicates that Nemesius's inspiration in this case likely stems from a combination of Neoplatonic and Aristotelian sources.⁵²⁰ Additionally, unlike Gregory, Nemesius primarily refers to *change* (τροπή) as a coming-to-be from an underlying matter. Although he acknowledges that coming-to-be can also signify change without an underlying matter, he still mentions nothing about the movement from non-being to being.⁵²¹

We can therefore conclude that the Damascene's metaphysical concept, where the mutability of the created order becomes an argument for intellectual mutability—either toward evil or good—is evident in the works of both Gregory and Nemesius. While John is also aware of the Nemesian version of this argument,⁵²² he is primarily influenced by Gregory, from whom he adopts the notion that coming-to-be from non-being to being constitutes change. At the same time, unlike Gregory, who employs this concept more loosely, the Damascene has refined it into a technical definition of change. Whether this encyclopedic approach indicates a reliance on a handbook of logic or represents an invention by the Damascene remains unknown.

⁵¹⁷ For Gregory's knowledge on Aristoteliansim see Marmodoro 2015, 100–110; Lilla 2014, 232–234; Zachhuber 2010, 82; Maraval 2010, 104.

⁵¹⁸ ...καὶ τοῖς γενητοῖς συμπεφυκέναι μεταβολὴν καὶ τροπήν, μάλιστα τοῖς ἐξ ὑποκειμένης ὕλης γενομένοις. ἀρχὴ γὰρ γενέσεως τροπή· ἐξ ἀλλοιώσεως γὰρ τῆς ὑποκειμένης ὕλης ἡ γένεσις· (Nemesius, *De natura hominis*, 117:7–11; own translation).

⁵¹⁹ Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 41.117:7–118:13.

⁵²⁰ For the influence of Aristotle to ch. 41 of the *De natura hominis* see Sarples and Eijk 2008, 30–31, 200–203.

⁵²¹ Nemesius, *De natura hominis*, 41.118:10–13.

⁵²² *Expos*, 41:2–5.

Despite the Neoplatonic and Aristotelian patterns in this logic, John nevertheless draws upon Christian patristic sources. In one way or another, change is here understood as a metaphysical indicator of createdness. The *Dial*'s metaphysical presentation of the Aristotelian definition of *genesis* as a motion (change) from non-being undoubtedly shares and represents the same fundamental logic as the Damascene's definition of change. As I have already mentioned, and as will be exemplified further on, even though John's theology rarely directly applies the *Dial*, it nevertheless often repeats its concepts in different (patristic) forms.

3.2.2. Changing from good to evil

After claiming that the Devil invented evil and became evil by his choice and the mutability of his will, the Manichean could easily argue against the Damascene that, even though the substance of the Devil might have been good at first, it nevertheless became evil after the fall. To reject the Manichaean argument that evil exists as a substantial and intrinsic principle, John must explain what happens when someone (i.e., the Devil) changes from good to evil.

First of all, the Damascene states that, just as every change occurs between contraries, the same logic applies to the emergence of evil. Similar to the transitions from non-being to being and from being to non-being, the change from virtue to evil should be understood as a shift from habit to privation, that is, from naturally having to losing.⁵²³ In other words, John argues that a change from good to evil follows the logic of a change from habit to privation.

As we have seen in the *Dial*, according to Aristotelian logic, the change from habit to privation is a type of change that does not occur between natural contraries but between unnatural contraries. The change from habit to privation does not involve one turning into the other, nor is there a proper opposite of the same kind, as would be the case between hot and cold. Rather, it is a change from having to absence, as in the cases of sight to blindness or light to darkness.⁵²⁴ Similarly, a change from good to evil should be interpreted as a transition from having goodness to losing it. This implies that evil is nothing more than a privation (non-being), and since privation cannot be a substance, it is irrational to claim that the Devil became an evil substance.

Moreover, the *Manich* compared this *change* (from habit to privation) to the changes that occur from non-being to being (*genesis*) and from being to non-being (*destruction*). In the *Manich*, the Damascene essentially asserts that all three kinds of changes—genesis (from non-being to being), destruction (from being to non-being), and from good to evil (from habit to privation)—are similar because they occur between the contraries (ἐναντία) of subject/non-subject.

⁵²³ *Manich*, 43:1–3.

⁵²⁴ See 2.1.4.5.

What the *Manich* is here presenting is the already discussed Aristotelian concept of changes between contradictories (subject/non-subject),⁵²⁵ that has been developed further by John Philoponus. In his *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, Philoponus asserts that although changes usually occur between contraries (ἐναντία), some take place between contradictories (ἀντίθεσις), like for example, the change from virtue to evil, which essentially follows the logic of a transition from habit to privation.⁵²⁶ In his *Commentary on Aristotle's On the Soul*, he further explains that a change from virtue to evil should not be viewed as a qualitative alteration (between two subjects) but rather as a shift from habit to privation, which is analogous to genesis and destruction.⁵²⁷

Similarly, an analogous Aristotelian logic is found in the patristic tradition, particularly in the *Catechetical Discourse* of Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory explains that virtue and evil do not oppose (ἀντιδιαίρέω/ ἀντιδιαστέλλω) each other as existences but rather as being and non-being, as existence and non-existence, as habit and privation. This opposition between virtue and vice thus represents a distinction between being and the privation of being, just as blindness is a privation of sight. Gregory aims to demonstrate, against Manichaean and Gnostic dualism, that evil cannot and does not originate from God. Since God only creates beings and natures, which emerge from non-being, He cannot be the Creator of evil, which is merely a non-being and privation. Instead, as previously mentioned, evil is a potential result of a human's changeable and free-willing choice to turn away from and abandon God's gifts.⁵²⁸

Undoubtedly, the foundation of the Damascene's argument is Gregory's anti-Manichaean explanation of evil, characterized not as a being but as a state of non-being. Consequently, evil can be considered a privation and an absence, which occurs when a rational being chooses to abandon and lose God's eternal will, goodness and virtue.

However, unlike Gregory, who merely addresses how virtue and evil oppose each other as habit and privation, the Damascene specifically refers to habit and privation as contraries and discusses the change from one to the other. Unlike Gregory, he draws a comparison between the change from habit to privation (virtue to evil) and the changes of genesis and destruction. These elements, as we just saw, are present in John Philoponus' Aristotelian commentaries. Additionally, both Philoponus's *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* and the Damascene's *Manich* begin their discussions with the assertion that every change occurs between contraries. Nevertheless, unlike Philoponus, the *Manich* does not know that changes between subject and non-subject are contradictories, not contraries (which would be between subject and subject).

⁵²⁵ Aristotle, *Physics*, 188b, 225a1–226b17. See also 2.1.4.7.

⁵²⁶ John Philoponus, *Arist Phys*, 121:24–122:12.

⁵²⁷ John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis libros de anima commentaria*, 100:21–28.

⁵²⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, SC 453, 6:57–79; 7:1–55.

What we therefore see here is how an anti-Manichaean patristic (Nyssenian) source, particularly its terms “being” and “non-being,” has been synthesized with concepts of change derived from the Aristotelian logic of Philoponus. This final point was presented as an additional argument to underscore that, even within the logic of change, evil is regarded as a privation and a non-entity.

By doing so, the compiler lacked a thorough understanding of Philoponus’s Aristotelian distinction between contradictories and contraries. Although the presentation in the *Manich* exhibits clear Philoponean traits, it does not demonstrate direct knowledge of Philoponus’s texts. The Damascene once again employs a hybrid concept, blending patristic aspects with Greek philosophical concepts from the commentary tradition. While, to the best of my knowledge, John is the first Chalcedonian patristic author to use this concept against Manichaeism, his precise role remains unclear. It is possible that this synthesis is a creation of the Damascene, combining Gregory’s anti-Manichaean stance with supporting principles from an unknown logical handbook. Alternatively, such a synthesis may have already existed in an unknown anti-Manichaean source. Despite these confusions, modifications of this kind underscore the value of Greek philosophical concepts to the Christian cause.

Another argument against the Manichaean concept of substantial evil can be found in John’s *Expos*. Here, the Damascene asserts that the change from good to evil should be understood as *a turning away* (παράτροπή) from the natural to the unnatural (sin), occurring solely within the Devil, who became evil at an accidental and qualitative level of his hypostatic choice, not at the level of substance or substantial qualities.⁵²⁹ In this manner, John demonstrates that all substances created by God are and always remain good. The existence of the Devil per se is always good, despite the perverse use that the rational created being may make of it.⁵³⁰ Thus, evil is a qualitative and accidental state of being that can manifest in the substance of a created intellectual being but is neither a substance nor a substantial quality. The primary logic here is also Aristotelian, according to which accidents cannot exist independently; they can only exist within substances.⁵³¹ Even though John’s *Dial* also discusses the concept of the accidents, in multiple places,⁵³² the Damascene nevertheless draws it from the *Against the Manichaeans* (*Contra Manichaeos*) of Serapion of Thmuis (4th century).⁵³³

It should be noted that understanding evil as an accident contradicts the earlier logic of privation, since in a change an accident always has a proper (natural) contrary, while privation is not. However, for John, these distinctions seem to be

⁵²⁹ *Expos*, 93:31–33.

⁵³⁰ *Manich*, 34:4–35:9; 69:28–30.

⁵³¹ For Aristotle’s approach to accidental changes see Studtman 2012, 71; Cohen 2012, 208–211; Loux 2012, 377; Guthrie 1981 148.

⁵³² *Dial*, 4; 5; 6; 13; 40; 52.

⁵³³ Serapion Thmuitanus, *Contra Manichaeos*, 4:1–15.

of little consequence, as the primary importance of his arguments lies in their collective rejection of the notion of evil as a substance or nature.

In conclusion, the Damascene's anti-Manichaean explanations of change from good to evil integrate Neoplatonic Aristotelian philosophical concepts, which were assimilated and adapted by the Christian anti-Manichaean tradition. The Damascene's fundamental logic here concerns motion between opposites. In the cases of habit and privation, genesis and destruction, this involves change between contradictories. In the case of accidental changes, it is motion between contraries. The anti-Manichaean value of the former lies in its having non-existence or privation as one of its endpoints, which helped reject evil as a substantially existing thing. The value of the latter, despite having its own endpoints, lies in its non-substantial and qualitative (accidental) nature—an aspect that also argued for the substantial non-being of evil.

As we have seen, the *Dial* did not contain any specific explanation of changes between contradictories or accidental changes. Nevertheless, it did elaborate on the *Categories*' genesis and destruction, together with the opposites in motion. It also explained that, in addition to motions between proper (natural) contraries, there is also rest, which is contrary to motion, just as privation is to habit. In other words, like the *Manich*, the *Dial* not only discusses genesis and destruction but also a kind of motion that has privation (absence of a thing) as its kinetic endpoint.

3.2.3. Against the eternity of evil matter

Another important concept in the Manichaean dualistic doctrine is the identification of evil with matter, leading to the view of matter as an eternal evil principle. In this chapter, I present various examples where John refutes this understanding through the logic of motion and change.

First, as stated by the Manichaean interlocutor of John Damascene, matter is presented as an eternal principle that, despite its potential for life and motion, is characterized in its actuality by immutability, darkness and destruction (φθορά). This claim enables John Damascene to argue that if eternal matter possesses both potentiality and actuality it must also be mutable. This is because a transition from potentiality to actuality is, by its nature, a form of change. Therefore, if matter is changeable and change is defined as a coming-to-be from non-being to being, it must have a beginning and cannot be regarded as an eternal principle.⁵³⁴

As we can see, in order to argue for the mutability of the created order John employs the Aristotelian logic of *motion* as the actualization of potency together with the definition of genesis. We have already seen how Gregory of Nyssa employed the Aristotelian definition of *genesis*—a change from non-being to being—to argue for the mutability of the created order. However, the pre-Damascene patristic and anti-Manichaean tradition shows no signs of a similar use with the Aristotelian definition of motion.

⁵³⁴ *Manich*, 24:1–26.

The Neoplatonic background is further substantiated by the fact that the only individual to refer to the actualization of potency as *tropê* (τροπή)—a term that John Damascene also seems to prefer—is John Philoponus in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*.⁵³⁵ As previously noted, the *Dial*'s definition of *motion* as an actualization of potency points us directly to this same author and source.⁵³⁶ This reinforces the notion that John's *Manich* and the later chapter 62 of the *Dial* utilize the same Neoplatonic Aristotelian source material. Given that chapter 62 of the *Dial* appears to be based on more neutral source of general education, its unprecedented use as an anti-Manichaean argument may well be attributed to John Damascene.

All of this first of all shows us that John Damascene understands the *Dial*'s definitions of motion and genesis uniformly as ontological concepts within Christian metaphysics. These concepts can be employed in theology to argue for the createdness of beings, thereby distinguishing them from the uncreated and immutable God.

In our second example, John addresses the Manichaean claim that evil matter is a bodiless principle that creates bodies from its own substance. First, John questions how matter can be bodiless. Secondly, the assertion that one substance can become another through creation is impossible; a bodiless substance cannot become bodily, just as an irrational nature cannot become rational. They cannot transform into one another because substantial qualities are immutable. The only aspect of a substance that can change is its accidents, which can shift from one contrary to another without altering the substance itself.⁵³⁷ As previously mentioned, according to the *Manich*, every change always moves towards its contrary.⁵³⁸ A change from one substance to another is not feasible because substances themselves are not proper contraries.⁵³⁹ The opposite of being is not being but non-being,⁵⁴⁰ which is why things can come into being from non-being and change from being to non-being, but not from one type of being to another.

Here, we can also identify Aristotelian logical patterns, such as the idea that change must occur between proper contraries. While this is an important Aristotelian principle, John seems to have derived it from a patristic source. Specifically, Basil of Caesarea, in his *Hexaemeron*,⁵⁴¹ argues against the Manicheans that God cannot create evil because one opposite cannot serve as a principle for another opposite; life cannot generate death, nor can darkness give rise to light.

⁵³⁵ John Philoponus, *Arist Phys*, 696:5.

⁵³⁶ See 2.1.4.2.

⁵³⁷ *Manich*, 30:1–12.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 31:40.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 31:10–11; 40.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:8–10.

⁵⁴¹ The logic of Basil is here clearly Aristotelian as is the case in many other parts of the *Hexaemeron* (Lilla 2014, 232).

Basil clarifies that only the conditions change when moving from one contrary to another, not the things themselves.⁵⁴²

Although Basil clearly serves as the primary source of inspiration in this instance, the *Manich* has developed his concept further. Unlike Basil, who simply asserts that one opposite cannot serve as a principle for another, the *Manich* argues, in a distinctly Aristotelian manner, that one substance cannot become or turn into another substance because substances are not proper contraries. While Basil discusses how a thing remains the same while its conditions change, the *Manich* argues, using Aristotelian terminology and logic, that a change from one substance to another is impossible because substantial qualities are immutable; only the accidents can change in a substance without jeopardizing its existence. Although the *Manich* maintains Basil's general logic, it has reframed it using Aristotelian vocabulary and logical patterns.

Given that no other similar case can be identified, it seems reasonable to conclude that the editor in this instance is John Damascene. If this is the case, it demonstrates that John possessed a philosophical mind that not only draws from his Neoplatonic Aristotelian sources but also reinterprets his patristic sources through their lens.

Continuing along the same line, John claims that if creation were to arise from the two eternal substances of light and darkness, as the Manichaeans assert, then the created order would also have to consist of these substances and thus be eternal and immutable. According to the Damascene, the fact that the created order is subject to prior and posterior clearly refutes this understanding, as *change*, by definition, is something that did not exist before but later came into existence. Therefore, it is logical to assert that the mutable created reality, characterized by its before and after, did not arise from another substance but from non-being to being.⁵⁴³

As previously noted in the *Dial*, the concepts of prior and posterior in motion were significant in the Aristotelian definition of time. Nevertheless, for Aristotle and the subsequent commentary tradition, these concepts were not directly linked to any definition of motion or change. In this instance, the Damascene appears to draw from a patristic tradition, particularly from Cyril of Alexandria, who in his *Thesaurus on the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity* employs this logic to illustrate the mutability of the created order in contrast to the immutability of the divine nature.⁵⁴⁴ All this again confirms that for Christian metaphysics, whatever the philosophical concept, even the slightest indication of mutability was argument enough for createdness. It is worth noting that the Damascene is the first to apply this logic in an anti-Manichaean polemic, further emphasizing his ability to give old concepts new contexts.

⁵⁴² Basil of Caesarea, *Homiliae in hexaemeron*, SC 26, 2.4:51–56.

⁵⁴³ *Manich*, 68:44–49.

⁵⁴⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali trinitate*, PG 75, 64.

Based on the logic of motion and change, John also ridicules the Manichaean understanding that simultaneously characterizes evil matter as eternal and destructive. John argues that the destruction of a thing, which is, by definition, a change from being to non-being, is only possible if that thing has a beginning and emerges from non-being to being. According to the Damascene, only if a thing originates from non-being can it potentially return to it, which is why everything that has a natural beginning also has an end. Thus, destruction is merely another form of mutability for things with a beginning. Consequently, the definition of destruction informs us that the so-called destructive eternal matter cannot truly be eternal; it must also be mutable and have a beginning.⁵⁴⁵

Additionally, John reminds his interlocutor that destruction cannot serve as a creative principle for anything, including human bodies. Since destruction, by definition, is a movement from being to non-being, and thus to dissolution, it is logically opposed to genesis (the coming to be or creation), which is a movement from non-being to being. Based on this reasoning, it would be absurd to claim that destruction could simultaneously be a genesis (creation) of something and bring any fruit. This prompts John to pose a rhetorical question: if eternal matter represents absolute destruction, why has it not yet destroyed itself into non-existence, and how can it still exist?⁵⁴⁶

As demonstrated in this case, the Damascene employs Aristotelian definitions of destruction and genesis to highlight their differences. As we have already seen, the capacity to distinguish one motion from another was an important aspect for the Neoplatonic commentary tradition on the *Categories*, as well as for the *Dial.* By applying this logic in his anti-Manichaean polemics, John also reveals its theological importance. The absence of such anti-Manichaean logic in any pre-Damascene texts, coupled with John's elaboration on this fundamental Aristotelian logic in his *Dial.*, strongly suggests that he is the author of this synthesis. If this is indeed the case, it further exemplifies John Damascene's creative application of Neoplatonic Aristotelian knowledge in theological argumentation.

3.2.4. Explaining the immortality of created beings

Thus far, we have seen how John argues against the Manicheans to explain the origin of evil and reject the eternity of evil matter. A principal metaphysical cornerstone of the Damascene's argument was the principle of change, which demonstrated that everything mutable must be created, logically having a beginning and, consequently, an end. This was intended to show that alongside God, who is the only eternal principle, there cannot be any other eternal principle.

But is it truly the case that everything with a beginning also has an end? The Manichean might argue that beside God, there are other principles considered eternal, immortal, and endless, such as the spiritual substances of angels, demons and souls.

⁵⁴⁵ *Manich.* 21:3–6.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 24:21–24, 27–28; 63:50–54.

John Damascene agrees that all creatures with an intellectual and purely spiritual nature—angels, demons, and souls—are unending, incorruptible and immortal,⁵⁴⁷ meaning that, lacking bodies, they are free from decay and thus are ever in motion (ἀεκίνητον) and eternal.⁵⁴⁸ However, their eternal and immortal character is relative, as only God can be truly and essentially immortal.⁵⁴⁹ All other created beings, including intellectual beings, cannot be eternal or immortal by essence, but only by grace.⁵⁵⁰ This is because they have a beginning, and everything that has a beginning must naturally also have an end.⁵⁵¹

Logically, this implies that angels should eventually die and come to an end. However, due to the grace of God, they do not. To illustrate this, John presents an example of a still body that, at one moment, begins to move in a circular motion. When the circular movement reaches the end of its cycle, it also arrives at a new beginning, where the circular motion restarts. The corruptible nature of angels and demons follows the same logic: when they reach their end (τέλος) and decay during their cyclical motion, God grants them a new beginning by reanimating and vivifying them. In this way, by the power and grace of God, a new cycle repeatedly begins for them at every end.⁵⁵²

As we have already seen in the *Dial*, circular motion is, for the Damascene, a primary characteristic of heavenly motion.⁵⁵³ John, like other Church Fathers, does not consider the cyclical motion of the heavens and planets to be absolutely eternal because they have a beginning and are, by nature, perishable.⁵⁵⁴ Nevertheless, as the Damascene points out, the heavens will continue to move cyclically by the grace and power of God, who sustains them. Even at the end of days, the heavens will not entirely disappear but will be transformed into a new heaven.⁵⁵⁵ Although the heavens are, by nature, corruptible, they remain imperishable through the power and grace of God.

By analogy to cyclical heavenly motion—where there is both a beginning and an end, yet an imperishability by grace—John seeks to explain the eternal vivification and immortality of the angels. His ultimate aim is to demonstrate against Manichaean dualism that even the eternity and immortality of created beings are not without a beginning or an end.

⁵⁴⁷ *Expos*, 8:87–88; 17:10, 21–22; 44:50–52.

⁵⁴⁸ For John, in order for something to be immortal, it has to be eternal or in other words perpetual, that is, ever in motion (ἀεκίνητον) (*Dial*, 65:10–12).

⁵⁴⁹ *Expos*, 14:1–10; 17:21–23.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 17:10, 21–22.

⁵⁵¹ *Manich*, 21:4–7; 21–22.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 21:6–17.

⁵⁵³ *Dial*, 62:10–11, 34–35. See also *Expos*, 20:18–19, 31–32.

⁵⁵⁴ *Expos*, 20:24–26.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 20:74–80.

It is well known that, for Aristotle, the cyclical motion of the heavenly bodies signifies their eternity, as a circle has no definitive beginning or end.⁵⁵⁶ The idea that the circular movement of the heavens and celestial bodies refers to eternity was, therefore, already well established in Aristotelian thought. Basil of Caesarea is also familiar with this concept; he acknowledges that in a circle and in circular motion, one cannot pinpoint a precise beginning or end. However, for Basil, this does not imply that a circle is entirely devoid of a beginning. Although it escapes our senses, we recognize that every drawn circle has a starting point from which the drawing begins.⁵⁵⁷

Although John's logic shares some similarities with Basil's, there are still significant differences. Unlike the Damascene, Basil does not claim that cyclical and circular motion has an end, nor does he suggest that it can serve as a reference for the immortality and eternity of intellectual beings. If Basil's primary aim is to demonstrate that even cyclical motion has a beginning, John uses it to illustrate how the end of circular movement, through God's grace, becomes a new beginning. In other words, despite some similarities, the influence of Basil on John is difficult to discern, as both emphasize different aspects and apply them in distinct contexts.

Nevertheless, a similar logic can be found in John Philoponus, who, in his *On the Eternity of the World Against Proclus*, argues, much like Basil, that circular motions must have both a beginning and an end. He points out that when creating any artificial circle, one can easily identify where it starts and where it finishes.⁵⁵⁸ Additionally, Philoponus references an argument from Plato, who asserts that the heavens should not be regarded as ungenerated or imperishable, as their movement and life also undergo cessation.⁵⁵⁹ Philoponus then continues:

In order that it may remain immortal and indissoluble, a constantly restored immortality comes to it from the creator because it does not have immortality from its own nature.⁵⁶⁰

According to Philoponus, Plato demonstrated that the revolution and circulation of the heavens, which are by nature dissoluble and mortal, remain immortal due to their continuous restoration by the will of the Creator.⁵⁶¹ Philoponus asserts that it is God who recommences the revolution of the heavens once it reaches completeness. He also believes that the concept of the heavens' immortality, despite their inherent perishability, is a Christian idea that Plato derived from

⁵⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Physica*, 265a. See also Guthrie 1981, 268–269.

⁵⁵⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *Homiliae in hexaemeron*, SC 26, 1.3.

⁵⁵⁸ John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi*, 398:1–399:17.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 272:16–22.

⁵⁶⁰ ...ἵθ'εν, ἵνα μένη ἀθάνατός τε καὶ ἀδιάλυτος, ἐπισκευαστὴν αὐτῷ παρὰ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ τὴν ἀθανασίαν ἐπιγενέσθαι φησὶν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐκ τῆς οἰκείας ἔχειν φύσεως τὸ ἀθάνατον (John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi*, 272:22–25; translation by Share 2005, 104).

⁵⁶¹ John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi*, 226:20–228:11,

Holy Scripture. Philoponus points to the biblical statement about the end of days, when *the heavens will be rolled up and changed like a cloak*, as a clear reference to their immortality.⁵⁶² Undoubtedly, as noted by A. Varlamova, this Philoponean concept persists in the theology of John Damascene, who also states that although the heavens are naturally perishable, they will not be entirely destroyed but *will be rolled up like a cloak and changed*.⁵⁶³

What has not been noted, however, is that the Damascene appears to be also inspired by the Philoponean argument, which claims that the heavens are immortal and will not perish because God continuously renews their circular revolution. Unlike Philoponus, who uses this argument to describe the heavens, the Damascene applies it to explain the eternal and continuous vivification and immortality of intellectual beings. To my knowledge, John Damascene is the first Greek patristic author to apply the Philoponean Platonic concept of the circularly moving heavens—corruptible by nature yet immortal by grace—to intellectual (angelic) beings.

Another example that John Damascene uses against his Manichaean interlocutor to explain the relative immortality of angels is the motion of the wheel (τροχός). According to the Damascene, although a wheel is in circular motion (immortal), it can only move if it is set in motion by someone or something; otherwise, it would come to a stop. If such a wheel were to move eternally without end, then logically, someone must continually move it. The same applies to intellectual angels, whose perpetual motion and immortality would cease if God did not vivify and move them eternally.⁵⁶⁴ In this way, John presents his second argument against the Manichean, demonstrating that angels are not the ultimate source of their unending, immortal and perpetual motion, and therefore not an eternal principle themselves. They possess this motion only by the grace of God, who is the only eternal principle.

This logic again guides us to Philoponus, who employs it in his *Commentary on Aristotle's On the Soul* and in his *On the Eternity of the World Against Proclus*. In the latter, Philoponus uses the example of the wheel within a broader context as he attempts to refute Proclus's arguments, which claim that circularly moving everlasting and imperishable bodies cause the eternal movement of perishable bodies that move in a straight line.⁵⁶⁵ Philoponus contends that, while there is a debate about whether circularly moving bodies are ungenerated and imperishable, all pagan philosophers agree that linearly moving bodies are necessarily generated and perishable.⁵⁶⁶ Since a body that moves another body always communicates to it the same type of movement it exhibits, circular motion cannot cause

⁵⁶² Ibid., 229:6–21. See also Hb 1,12 and Ps 101(102), 27. The theme that Plato drew his inspiration from Moses and the Bible seems to have been taken from Eusebius' *Preparatio Evangelica*, which Philoponus also clearly knew (Share 2005,141, n. 392).

⁵⁶³ *Expos*, 20:74–80. See also Varlamova 2017, 390.

⁵⁶⁴ *Manich*, 21:15–21.

⁵⁶⁵ John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi*, 273:1–29.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 274:1–15.

linear movement. Consequently, the notion of an imperishable, eternal body that circularly moves perishable bodies linearly is illogical.⁵⁶⁷ To illustrate this, Philoponus presents the example of a wheel, which may initially seem to support the idea that circular motion can produce linear motion (as with a wagon). However, Philoponus argues that this assumption is incorrect; a wheel does not exhibit true circular motion but rather rolling motion, which is essentially a form of linear motion pulled straight by the mule.⁵⁶⁸ Therefore, the movement of the wheel demonstrates that even seemingly circular motions are, in fact, rectilinear motions, as it is the mule that drives the wagon and its wheel in a straight line. This further disproves any claims about the existence of an ungenerated and imperishable body.

The detailed philosophical logic of Philoponus has somehow found a way to inspire John Damascene, who creatively employs it to clarify the nature of the immortality of angelic beings. The Damascene appears to grasp that while a wheel symbolizes eternity due to its circular motion, it nonetheless rolls in a straight line, representing generated and perishable things. This implies that for something to continue moving eternally, it must be moved by another force. For the Damascene, the motion of the heavenly bodies and that of the wheel symbolize a perishable yet simultaneously immortal eternity of angelic and spiritual beings, which can only move eternally if they are moved by an external source.

As noted, John Damascene not only utilizes sources that elaborate on specific Philoponean philosophical concepts about motion but also applies these ideas in unprecedented ways and contexts. As is usual, the Damascene's sources and personal contribution to it remains speculative. From one hand it is not impossible that the linking of the Philoponean concepts with the anti-Manichaean notion of angelic immortality was already existing in an unknown and hypothetical source. On the other hand, if we accept the Damascene's ability to apply existing philosophical concepts in entirely novel contexts, then we should not exclude attributing this strategy to him. If this is indeed the case, then the Damascene must have had some sort of knowledge about the concepts elaborated in Philoponus' *On the Eternity of the World Against Proclus*.

3.2.5. Conclusion

It can therefore be concluded that John Damascene's anti-Manichaean arguments heavily rely on philosophical concepts of motion and change, Neoplatonic Aristotelian and particularly Philoponenan, which are also present in his *Dial*. In developing his arguments, John naturally utilizes all the logical tools and sources available to him. He prefers patristic authors and employs their philosophical logic—often reflecting Aristotelian patterns—whenever possible.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 275:22–276:21.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 276:22–277:12, *In Aristotelis libros de anima commentaria*, 106:25–27; 107:3–21.

However, in cases where such an appeal is not possible, John readily supports his theological arguments with concepts from non-patristic philosophical sources. For instance, in the *Manich*, John employed the Aristotelian definitions of *motion* and *genesis*—concepts also elaborated in the *Dial*—as metaphysical arguments for the mutability of the created order. This allowed him to reject the Manichaean claim that evil matter can be eternal and immutable while simultaneously possessing the potentiality of life and the actuality of destruction. We have also observed that this unprecedented anti-Manichaean argument appears to draw from the same Neoplatonic philosophical source with a Philoponean background as the later *Dial*, an aspect that supports its attribution to the Damascene.

Furthermore, there was the unparalleled anti-Manichaean elaboration on the Aristotelian definitions of *destruction* and *genesis*—also analyzed in the *Dial* in a section on the *differences of motion*—which were used as logical arguments to refute the Manichaean assertion that evil matter can be simultaneously creative and destructive. Here, too, there is no reason to exclude John Damascene as the author of this application, as it again showcases his ability to creatively integrate Neoplatonic Aristotelian philosophy into theological discourse.

Additionally, neither does John appear to have issues reshaping his patristic sources using concepts from his philosophical sources. A notable example is the anti-Manichaean logic of Gregory of Nyssa about the non-being of evil, which was supplemented by the Philoponean concept of contradictions (genesis, destruction, habit/privation).

We have also observed instances where the intended contextual use of a philosophical concept has been innovatively replaced with a completely new context. For example, John Philoponus' elaborations on the circular motions of heavenly bodies and the wheel, originally aimed at countering the pagan philosophical concept of the world's eternity, found an unparalleled use in the Damascene's anti-Manichaean explanation of angelic immortality.

It should be noted that John shares common themes with the *DP* also in other parts of his works. However, in these instances, as will be demonstrated in various chapters of this dissertation, a direct dependence remains unproven. Thus, it is still unclear whether John utilized the *DP* or if it was the other way around, or whether they both simply had access to the same types of sources.⁵⁶⁹

John Damascene's rhetorical battle against Manichaean argumentation, therefore, demonstrates a degree of philosophical uniqueness and showcases his capacity for independent thought. In this battle, Damascene employs different aspects of the concepts of motion and change. We saw how the concepts of *opposites in motion* and *accidental changes* were used to argue for the non-being of evil, and how motion and its different kinds were used to argue for the mutability of the created order, in contradistinction to the immutable and uncreated God. In all these cases, the concepts of motion and change were used as tools of Christian metaphysics. The same applies to the differences between the kinds of motion (genesis vs. destruction), which, while a mere tool of logical distinction,

⁵⁶⁹ On this matter see also Kontouma 2015, I, 39, III, 2–3, 8; Louth 2002, 32–33.

was used to refute the Manichaean ontological understanding of matter as both creative and destructive.

The fact that the *Manich* was most likely written before the *Dial* indicates that John's engagement with philosophical argumentation began prior to the latter's composition. In many ways, John's *Manich* and its concepts appear to prefigure the *Dial*, demonstrating a shared foundation of a broader range of philosophical source material. Thus, the *Dial*'s assertion that pagan philosophy serves Christian theology was practically realized already in the *Manich*.

3.3. Natural Theology

As we have already seen in the previous chapter, one of the fundamental anti-Manichaean arguments of the Damascene was based on a notion of the mutability of the created order. The knowledge of the natural order is therefore vital not only for general knowledge but also for theological apologetics. It should therefore not come as surprise that multiple chapters of his *Expos* deal with the cosmological theories of his time, by presenting his readers with insights into the creation of the world, divided into the invisible (chapters 15–18) and visible realms (chapters 19–24).

According to the Damascene, the first phase of creation encompasses the invisible realm of intellectual beings, specifically the angels and the fallen angels (the Devil and the demons). Following this, God created a realm that John describes as sensible, material and visible. This distinction indicates that the universe's creation involves two distinct stages: one involving intellectual beings and the other concerning the material world. These stages are not evolutionary but rather creational, deriving successively from God's act of creation *ex nihilo*. As articulated by the Damascene, in the second phase, God's will brought the heavens and the four fundamental elements—fire, air, water and earth—from non-being into being.⁵⁷⁰

In his description of the divinely created visible realm, John provides a cosmological understanding of antiquity regarding the fundamental elements that constitute the known universe and all its compound bodies.⁵⁷¹ In an Aristotelian manner, he explains that each *element* (στοιχεῖον) seeks its natural place in the universe and behaves according to its inherent nature. The heavier elements fall down towards the center, while the lighter ones rise away from it. The heaviest element, unmoving earth, occupies the central and lowest part of the universe; above it lies the slightly lighter element, water; above water is air, followed by fire, the lightest of all elements. While John typically focuses on these four

⁵⁷⁰ *Expos*, 17:75–81; 19: 3–5.

⁵⁷¹ The first to form the idea of the four fundamental elements of fire, air, water and earth was Empedocles. The same concept of four elements was later adopted also by Plato, Stoics and the others. Aristotle essentially follows the same line, but nevertheless adds a fifth element to the list: ether (Biriukov 2016, 357).

elemental layers, he also mentions that above fire lies a sphere called heaven or the heavens, where the luminaries—the stars and planets—reside.⁵⁷² The *Expos* dedicates multiple chapters to these aspects of visible creation, integrating concepts from pagan natural philosophy with biblical creation narratives.⁵⁷³

However, the purpose of John's extensive and often detailed cosmological presentation is not always clear. E. Nicolaidis has suggested that John's explanation of astronomy (heavens and luminaries) aims to clarify the equinoxes and seasons, which are significant for the Church's calendar, particularly for calculating Easter.⁵⁷⁴ Considering the notable errors John makes in these calculations, as pointed out by Nicolaidis, along with the inclusion of non-astronomical elements (such as air, water, and earth), it becomes evident that calendrical concerns were not his primary goal.

Moreover, similar to Basil of Caesarea,⁵⁷⁵ John urges his readers to practice "scientific" modesty and cautions against excessive curiosity regarding the nature of the universe. He asserts that one should not seek to understand the substance of the heavens, as it is inherently unknowable.⁵⁷⁶ Despite his efforts to explore various biblical and philosophical cosmological theories, the Damascene does not place significant value on the precise truth of these concepts. Whether the Earth is spherical, hemispherical or conical, and whether it rests upon water, air, pillars (the power of God) or hangs in space, is ultimately irrelevant for him. For John, regardless of cosmological theories, the only thing that a Christian needs to know for his salvation is that it is God who is behind it all and sustains it all.⁵⁷⁷

But if knowledge of cosmological theories holds no intrinsic value for John, then why present them at all? Much like philosophical knowledge, the cosmological theories of natural philosophy also seem to be understood as one of the metaphysical "maidens" whose only purpose is to serve God and theological knowledge. As the Damascene notes, nature reveals the existence of God, implying that natural philosophy is, in essence, a form of natural theology that teaches us about divine matters.⁵⁷⁸ In this chapter, I investigate the role of the logic of motion and change in John's project of natural theology.

⁵⁷² *Expos*, 20: 18–30; Biriukov 2016, 359; Louth 2002, 126.

⁵⁷³ Louth 2002, 130.

⁵⁷⁴ Nicolaidis 2011, 46.

⁵⁷⁵ Callahan 1958, 41.

⁵⁷⁶ *Expos*, 20: 80–81.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 20:42–60; 24:5–11.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3:4–5.

3.3.1. Refuting idolatry through solar and lunar eclipses

The first example of John's natural theology comes from the philosophical knowledge of astronomy,⁵⁷⁹ where the phenomenon of eclipses is used to refute idolatry and the worship of heavenly luminaries as gods. According to John, solar and lunar eclipses demonstrate that the Sun and the Moon are subject to change, alteration and decay. This indicates that they are created entities and should not be conceived or worshipped as God, who is by nature immutable.⁵⁸⁰

John reminds his readers that a lunar eclipse occurs when the Earth is positioned between the Sun and the Moon, blocking the Sun's light from reaching the Moon with its shadow.⁵⁸¹ A solar eclipse, conversely, happens when the Moon is situated between the Sun and the Earth, obstructing sunlight from reaching the Earth.⁵⁸²

At first glance, it may seem peculiar to regard the blocking of sunlight as a change in the Sun and Moon. However, for John, this assertion is entirely logical. Since light is a composite part of a luminary—being not light itself but a container of light—changes (such as blocking) in the activity of light can also be interpreted as changes in a luminary.⁵⁸³ For John Damascene, change in the transmission and blocking of light serves as evidence of the mutability and created nature of these heavenly bodies, which in turn disproves their divine character and the necessity for their worship.

It remains unclear who the astral worshippers are that John refers to. It is possible that he is continuing his anti-Manichaean polemics and indirectly critiquing Muslims, whom he associates with the worship of the Morning Star (Aphrodite—Venus).⁵⁸⁴ Additionally, the idea that celestial bodies (planets and stars) are alive and therefore worthy of worship was prevalent in the ancient world,⁵⁸⁵ and likely persisted among various circles, including common folk, during John's time.

This belief was directly linked to eclipses, which were interpreted in the ancient world and Greek philosophy as references to astrology and the divine, predicting future events. This led ancient thinkers to speculate about the causes and circumstances of eclipses. Anaximander (6th century BC), for example, argued that the igniting and smothering of internal fires on the luminaries caused the eclipsing effect. Anaxagoras (5th century BC), the first Greek philosopher to discuss solar and lunar eclipses similarly to John, claimed that the Moon does not emit its own light but reflects the Sun's light. This insight allowed Anaxagoras to

⁵⁷⁹ For John Damascene's knowledge on Greek astronomy see *Expos*, 20–21 and Biriukov 2016, 353–360.

⁵⁸⁰ *Expos*, 21:155–158.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 21:166–170.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 21:159–162

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, 21:34–36, 187–188

⁵⁸⁴ *Haer*, 66; 101. See also 3.1.1.

⁵⁸⁵ Louth 2002, 127.

accurately assert that solar eclipses result from the Moon's interposition and lunar eclipses from the Earth's interposition. Variations of these fundamental ideas were also adopted by later astronomers, including Aristarchus and Ptolemy.⁵⁸⁶ From the fourth century onward, interest in astronomical education, including eclipse theory, continued in Alexandria among Neoplatonists like Pappus and Theon of Alexandria, as well as by Philoponus, Olympiodorus, and Stephanus.⁵⁸⁷

Returning to the theory of eclipses presented by the Damascene, it closely aligns with a concept developed by John Philoponus in his *On the Eternity of the World Against Proclus* (*De aeternitate mundi*). In this work, Philoponus counters Proclus' assertion regarding the incorruptibility and indestructibility of fire/light in the heavenly sphere and the luminaries. He argues that this claim can be refuted through the astronomical logic of lunar eclipses, during which the Earth casts a shadow on the Moon by blocking the sunlight. For Philoponus, this phenomenon demonstrates that the Moon can lose its sunlight, indicating that the nature of the heavens, along with its light/fire, is corruptible rather than incorruptible.⁵⁸⁸

Thus, the Damascene's logic clearly has a Philoponean background. However, the texts of these two authors differ significantly, suggesting that any direct link between them should be excluded. Additionally, unlike Philoponus' philosophical argument against the eternity of the world, the Damascene focuses on those who worship luminaries. Furthermore, the Damascene illustrates his argument with the phenomenon of a solar eclipse—something Philoponus does not address. Finally, the Damascene does not use the logic of eclipses to specifically emphasize the corruptibility of the luminaries but rather their general mutability and changeability. In other words, unlike Philoponus, John Damascene employs change and mutability as metaphysical indicators to specifically argue for the created nature of the luminaries, contrasting them with the uncreated God. It is this createdness of the stars that renders them unworthy of worship.

It remains unknown how John Damascene acquired this Philoponean concept and what his role was in its final formulation and contextual anti-Manichaean application. Another puzzle is the Damascene's relationship with Philoponus's *On the Eternity of the World*, which also influenced John's anti-Manichaean explanations regarding the immortality of angels. Despite clear influences from Philoponus's work, John does not seem to directly draw from it, neither concerning angels nor in his rejection of luminary worship. It is again possible to invoke the "hypothetical and now lost Christian compendium," where these concepts already existed in an extracted form. We have already seen how the *Dial* also appears to have drawn on similar types of sources. Although the *Dial* elaborates on the casting of shadows and the blocking of sunlight at night, it does not mention eclipses or their effect on the mutability of the luminaries.⁵⁸⁹ If John

⁵⁸⁶ Montelle 2020, 125–134.

⁵⁸⁷ Jones 1996, 98–104.

⁵⁸⁸ John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi*, 19–20:10.

⁵⁸⁹ *Dial*, 68. See also 2.1.7.

indeed used a similar non-engaging cosmological source, then its anti-idolatry context could very well be Damascene's own doing. It is equally possible that the context was already established in an anti-Manichaean work. Even though less likely, it is not entirely excluded that the entire concept is a creative outcome of the Damascene's reading of *De aeternitate mundi*—an apologetic anti-pagan work most probably valued by all Christians. As is well known, some sections of Philoponus's writings, such as the *Arbiter*, were accessible to the Chalcedonians and possibly even to John Damascene.⁵⁹⁰

In one way or another, John Damascene is currently the only source where the Philoponian anti-eternity context of this concept has been transformed into an anti-idolatry context. Such a transformation was possible because change, regardless of its philosophical context or conceptual elaboration, is understood by Christian metaphysics and natural theology as an ontological indicator of createdness. This, in turn, points to the uncreated God, who alone is worthy of worship.

3.3.2. The causal power of planets and stars

In addition to being subject to change, celestial bodies also have the capacity to influence and bring about changes in the earthly realm. John's discussion on these changes begins by reminding us that the influence of the stars is limited. For this reason, John first refutes astrology, asserting that the planets are not animated and do not have the capacity to govern us or alter the course of our lives. For the Damascene, it is clear that the stars cannot control our character or actions, nor can they infringe upon our free will, destroy anything or create events and wars. Otherwise, everything would be subject to necessity, which would contradict the Christian understanding of God-given free will. This perspective would also render the rational and deliberative aspects of human nature ineffective; without these qualities, a person cannot be held responsible for their virtues or vices, making them unworthy of rewards or punishments. God, who gives good things to some and tribulations to others, would be deemed unjust. Furthermore, absolute control by the stars would negate divine control and providence. In other words, these concepts, which the Damascene largely derives from the works of Basil of Caesarea and Nemesius of Emesa, emphasize that the stars cannot absolve us of our responsibility for our actions.⁵⁹¹

Nevertheless, the stars can indicate rain and atmospheric changes (such as cold or heat) and, in some cases, may also signal war. According to John, comets—distinct from other luminaries and stars that have existed since the beginning—can serve as signs of significant events, like the birth of Christ or the deaths of

⁵⁹⁰ *Haer*, 83 addit cf. *DP*, 272–283. According to B. Kotter the addition of the *Arbiter* to the *Haer* (83 addit) is a later addition and not part of the original *Haer* (Kotter 1981, 6). V. Kontouma on the other hand claims it to be an addition made by John Damascene (Kontouma 2015 V, 6).

⁵⁹¹ *Expos*, 21:117–136 cf. Basil, *Homiliae in hexaemeron*, SC 26, 6.5–7; Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 35.

kings. Unlike Basil, who sees luminaries only as indicators of atmospheric changes, John expands this idea by acknowledging that they may also signify wars and the passing of rulers—an aspect that Basil rejects.⁵⁹²

3.3.2.1. The change of seasons and divinely providential care of human health

In addition to being signs, John also acknowledges that luminaries have a mild and indirect effect on the world and on humans. He clearly states that the Sun, the Moon, and the stars determine the conditions of the atmosphere, which in various ways favor different temperaments, habits, and dispositions. Nevertheless, this does not mean that our habits and temperaments are beyond our control, as they are also subject to reason that can guide and shape them.⁵⁹³ One of the main changes in the atmosphere that the Sun produces is the change of the four solstices or four seasons (τροπαί):

During springtime (March 21–June 24), the Sun produces the atmospheric conditions of wetness and warmth. In summer (June 24–September 25), the Sun produces the conditions of warmth and dryness. During autumn (September 25–December 25), the prevailing atmospheric conditions are dryness and coldness. During winter (December 25–March 21), the Sun produces the atmospheric conditions of coldness and wetness. According to John, every season has its pair of qualities (cold, wet, etc.), and each season shares a quality with its neighboring seasonal quality. Summer (dry-warm), for example, can only be connected to spring (wet-warm) due to their common quality of warmth, but it can also be associated with autumn (dry-cold) where dryness is the shared quality. For John, God has made the seasons and their qualities (cold-warm and wet-dry) in such a way as to avoid sudden changes (αἰφνιδίους μεταβολὰς) between extreme and contrary (ἄκραν ἐναντίαν) qualities, as rapid and extreme changes would be dangerous for the health of living beings.⁵⁹⁴

What John refers to is that seasons change into one another by following a process that avoids extreme and rapid changes. This essentially means that, for example, winter (cold-wet) cannot become summer (warm-dry) because such a change would be too drastic. The extremity of this change is evident in the qualities of winter and summer, where their pairs of qualities are in absolute opposition, as coldness opposes warmth and wetness opposes dryness. To facilitate a mild and healthy transition between the seasons, God placed intermediate seasons between the opposing ones. In this way, between the linked seasons, only one quality of a pair opposes another quality of a pair, allowing for the existence of a common (bridging) quality.

⁵⁹² *Expos*, 21:135–145 cf. Basil, *Homiliae in hexaemeron*, SC 26, 6.4, 5, 7.

⁵⁹³ *Expos*, 21:136–139.

⁵⁹⁴ *Expos*, 21:57–89.

Wetness-(spring)-warmth → warmth-(summer)-dryness → dryness-(autumn)-coldness → coldness-(winter)-wetness.

The reason such rapid changes would be dangerous for the health of living beings is that every season and its qualities also promote in the bodies of living beings the growth of bodily chemical fluids called humors (χυμοί). According to John, spring and its qualities (wet-warm) promote the growth of blood; summer (warm-dry) promotes yellow bile; autumn (dry-cold) promotes black bile; and winter, with its qualities (cold-wet), promotes the growth of phlegm.⁵⁹⁵

In other words, along with the change of seasons, their corresponding qualities also change the bodily humors associated with the seasons. Even though John clearly acknowledges that the seasons promote the growth of humors that affect our temperament and health, he does not delve into detail about which factors of health and temperament are influenced, nor is there any presentation of the theory of the “four temperaments.”⁵⁹⁶ Only in one instance does John mention that “anger is the seething of the blood about the heart caused by the fuming up or thickening of the bile.”⁵⁹⁷

Interestingly, John connects the qualities and humors not only with the four seasons but also with the four elements (στοιχεῖα). To explain how the human body is part of the visible realm that shares properties with lifeless and animated nature, the Damascene points out that every body is composed of four elements, and every living body is also composed of the four humors. For this reason, every living body has a set of elements along with the corresponding humors: the element of earth, which is dry and cold, corresponds to black bile; the element of water, which is cold and wet, corresponds to phlegm; the element of air, which is wet and warm, corresponds to blood; and the element of fire, which is warm and dry, corresponds to yellow bile.⁵⁹⁸

As we can see, for John, it is not only the four seasons that are characterized by a set of qualities corresponding to humors, but also the elements. Linking all these concepts together, we understand that for John there is a correspondence between the four seasons, the four primordial elements and the four humors, which all share common qualitative pairs:

Wet and warm: spring—blood—air
Dry and warm: summer—yellow bile—fire
Dry and cold: autumn—black bile—earth
Cold and wet: winter—phlegm—water

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 21:61–85.

⁵⁹⁶ The doctrine of the four ‘temperaments’, believed to correspond to each of the four humors: sanguine (blood), choleric (yellow bile), melancholic (black bile), phlegmatic (phlegm).

⁵⁹⁷ Θυμός δέ ἐστι ζέσις τοῦ περὶ καρδίαν αἵματος ἐξ ἀναθυμιάσεως τῆς χολῆς ἢ ἀναθολώσεως γινομένη (*Expos*, 30:2–3; translation by Chase 1958, 241).

⁵⁹⁸ *Expos*, 26:59–66.

In a similar way to these seasonal changes, John is also aware of elemental changes. For example, according to the Damascene, the element of air (created by God *ex nihilo* on the first day) is receptive to the opposites of heating or cooling, as well as dryness or wetness.⁵⁹⁹ Additionally, he knows that the element of air comes into being when fire is quenched or when water is heated.⁶⁰⁰ The logic behind these examples clearly illustrates elemental changes. When fire (dry-warm) is quenched, it transforms into air (wet-warm) because its dryness is replaced by wetness, while warmth remains a connecting link. When water (wet-cold) is heated, it becomes air (wet-warm) because its coldness is replaced by its opposite—warmth—while their common quality, wetness, must remain intact.

We may therefore conclude that for John, both the four seasons and the four elements are linked to the corresponding four humors. Additionally, each season, element and humor is characterized by its corresponding pair of qualities. Furthermore, both seasons and elements, along with the humors, can transform into one another. This transformation follows a logical, God-given principle according to which a change may only occur when, along with a pair of opposing qualities, there are also connecting (intermediate) qualities. All of this helps to prevent extreme changes and introduces moderation, which is not harmful to living beings—an aspect that reflects God’s caring provision.

This subject that John has touched upon contains concepts that date back to the ancient Greek philosopher Empedocles, who was the first to develop the doctrine of the four primordial elements of which the universe is composed—a cosmological theory later adopted by Plato and Aristotle.⁶⁰¹

According to Plato, the four elements are the physiological components of the entire universe and living bodies. For the universe and these bodies to be solid and to avoid sickness, the Creator made it so that between every opposing element and its quality, there would also be an intermediate one.⁶⁰² Although Plato discusses the subject of elemental changes,⁶⁰³ he does not develop an elaborate doctrine on it, as would his pupil Aristotle.

According to the Stagirite, elements may change into one another in a rapid and direct way when they have complementary factors, and in an indirect and slow way when such factors are absent. The former occurs when, for example, the neighboring elements of air and water or air and fire change into each other, because in their corresponding pair of qualities (air—dry and cold; water—wet and cold), only one quality of each pair needs to be replaced for a change to occur. The latter (slow way) takes place when, for example, the contrary elements fire and water change into each other, because in their corresponding pair of qualities (fire—dry and warm; water—wet and cold), there are two contrary qualities.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., 22:7.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 21:189–191; 22:16–17.

⁶⁰¹ Sharples and Eijk 2008, 87, n. 416.

⁶⁰² Plato, *Timaeus*, 32a–33b.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., 49c.

Since, for the Stagirite, only one quality of a pair may be replaced at a time, this means that a longer time is needed for two contraries to be replaced. In order for fire to change into water, it must first become air, and only after that can it become water.⁶⁰⁴

The doctrine of the four humors was first articulated in the Hippocratic work *On the Nature of Man* (c. 400 BC), which correlates each humor to a particular season and specific combination of elemental qualities (hot, cold, dry, wet). Despite the pairing of qualities, Hippocrates does not expound the theory of the four elements.⁶⁰⁵

Many of these previously mentioned concepts were gathered, edited and elevated to authoritative status by the physician Galen. In his works, we can find the Hippocratic concept linking the four humors to the seasons and their elemental qualities;⁶⁰⁶ a concept linking elements and their qualities to the four humors;⁶⁰⁷ and also an elaboration on how the elements, together with their extreme qualities, are linked to and change into each other.⁶⁰⁸

Via Galen, these concepts are largely brought to Christianity by Nemesius of Emesa,⁶⁰⁹ who, in this case, is also John Damascene's main source. Like the Damascene, Nemesius, in chapter four of his *Nature of Man*, also provides a brief overview of the human body, which consists of four elements and therefore four humors that correspond to each element. In chapter five, based on the elemental concepts of Plato, Aristotle and Galen,⁶¹⁰ he presents a more detailed analysis regarding the elements and their qualities, as well as the transformations of the elements through their qualities into one another.⁶¹¹

According to Nemesius, the four elements of fire, air, water and earth are primary and simple bodies from which the universe and composite bodies are made. Each element has a pair of qualities that determine its specific character: earth (dry-cold), water (wet-cold), air (wet-warm), and fire (dry-warm). Nemesius also points out that elements are simple bodies that exhibit their qualities in extreme form (warmth, coldness, wetness, dryness). It is these qualities that alter the substance of the element. Influenced by Plato's *Timaeus*, Nemesius states that for opposing and extreme elements, along with their qualities, to be bound together, the Creator made the intermediate elements and their connecting and binding qualities. Nemesius then provides examples of how the elements are linked to each other through their connecting qualities. Based on Galen, Nemesius

⁶⁰⁴ Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione*, 330b–331a. See also Cohen 2012, 219–220.

⁶⁰⁵ Hippocrates, *De la nature de l'homme*, 46–50. See also Sharples and Eijk 2008, 87, n. 419.

⁶⁰⁶ Galen, *In Hippocratis de natura hominis librum commentarius*, 85:11–87:8, 98:4–12. See also Sharples and Eijk 2008, 87, n. 419.

⁶⁰⁷ Sharples and Eijk 2008, 88, n. 423.

⁶⁰⁸ Galen, *De elementis ex Hippocrate libri ii*, 442–444, 468:10–15; *In Hippocratis de natura hominis librum commentarius*, 30–31, 51–52.

⁶⁰⁹ For the influence of Galen to Nemesius, see Sharples and Eijk 2008, 1–33.

⁶¹⁰ Sharples and Eijk 2008, 98, n. 456.

⁶¹¹ Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 4.44–5.55.

explains how God had wisely arranged things so that when an element loses its quality, it does not disappear but simply transforms into another element, creating a continual cycle. For example, fire (warm-dry), when quenched, loses its dryness and changes, through the quality of warmth, into air (warm-wet). Similarly, fire (warm-dry) that loses its warmth becomes earth (cold-dry). Additionally, when air (warm-wet) is dried, it transforms into fire (warm-dry), and when water (cold-wet) is heated, it becomes vaporized air (warm-wet).⁶¹²

Doubtlessly the Damascene's understanding of the elements and their paired qualities, along with the corresponding humors, derives from Nemesius.⁶¹³ Even John's concise examples of elemental changes come from him.⁶¹⁴ At the same time, John introduces aspects that are entirely absent from Nemesius. Unlike John, Nemesius does not mention seasonal changes, nor does he establish any connection between the seasons, elemental qualities and humors, or reference the providential will of God in relation to preventing sickness.

Based on all this, the question remains: where did John derive the idea of linking seasons to elemental qualities and humors? We have seen that such a concept had been developed by Hippocrates and Galen. On one hand, there seems to be no indication that John ever used the works of Hippocrates or Galen, even though the works of the latter clearly circulated in his immediate environment.⁶¹⁵ On the other hand, this concept is not entirely absent from pre-Damascene Christian tradition. We can find something similar in the 5th century *Anthology* of John Stobaeus,⁶¹⁶ but as shown by differences in textual logic and structure, the Damascene seems not to be familiar with this text.

A much closer source for the Damascene in this case appears to be *The Commentary on Job* of Julian the Arian (4th century), which John might have accessed through biblical *catenae*.⁶¹⁷ In this work, we see how each humor links to a corresponding element, a pair of qualities and a corresponding season in an encyclopedic manner.⁶¹⁸ However, it is again difficult to determine whether John had access to this text, as the Damascene does not present all four—humors, elements, qualities and seasons—together. Instead, seasons are linked to elemental qualities and humors, or elements are linked to elemental qualities and humors. Even though John does not appear to draw directly from these sources, they indicate that such knowledge was likely circulating and may have even been accessible to the Damascene in some other form.

But the biggest problem is that none of the aforementioned sources write, as John Damascene does, about one season changing into another via intermediate

⁶¹² Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 47:1–50:4. For Nemesius' sources see Sharples and Eijk 2008, 91–94, and especially ns. 447, 461, 467.

⁶¹³ *Expos*, 26:59–67 cf. Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 4.44–45; 5.47.

⁶¹⁴ *Expos*, 21:189–191; 22:16–17 cf. Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 5.49.

⁶¹⁵ Brock 1984, II, 2.

⁶¹⁶ John Stobaeus, *Anthologium*, 883–884.

⁶¹⁷ Cavalcanti 2014, 482.

⁶¹⁸ Julianus, *Commentarius in Job*, 264:9–19.

and binding qualities, nor do they link such seasonal changes with the divine aim of avoiding great illnesses. As far as I am aware, John Damascene seems to be the first to present such a concept. The notion itself appears to be a further development that has combined:

1. The Hippocratic-Galenic concept, which linked the logic of elements and their qualities to seasons and humors—also mentioned in *The Commentary on Job* by Julian the Arian and the *Anthology* of John Stobaeus.
2. Plato's concept of a Creator who wisely made intermediate elements between extremes to avoid illnesses.
3. Galen's and Nemesius' elaborations on the Aristotelian logic of elemental changes.

Whether this synthesis was created by the Damascene or whether it already existed in some unknown and now-lost logical compendium remains open to speculation. John's authorship in this matter could be supported by the fact that he clearly knew the elemental elaborations of Nemesius. It is very probable that he was also aware of the link between elements and seasons—an aspect that had already been elaborated by the aforementioned Christian sources. Could it be that John's knowledge of the link between the elements and seasons inspired him to apply the known logic of elemental changes in the context of the seasons? Whether he might have also known about Plato's connection between the illness-avoiding Creator and the elemental intermediates remains unknown.

Even though one should not doubt John's ability to modify his sources and creatively use old concepts in new contexts, a synthesis of new philosophical concepts is another matter. It is therefore much more plausible that John might have used a logical handbook, which was most probably part of basic education. This is supported by the fact that the content of this concept conveys general knowledge about the natural world, without having any specified apologetic output or defensive purpose.

In one way or another, John Damascene here again reveals how Greek philosophical and medical concepts can serve natural theology by illustrating the biblical understanding of God as the caring and providential Creator. Here again, change is a metaphysical indicator of the created order, used to characterize an aspect of the uncreated God. Even though John's *Dial* mentions and defines the primordial elements and their qualities, as well as the seasons, there is still no link between them or any elaboration on how one changes into another.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁹ *Dial*, 68.

3.3.3. Explaining God's existence and incomprehensibility

Next to astronomy, another very important aspect of John's project of natural theology is Aristotelian kinetics, where a central theme revolves around how the motions of the world can help deduce something about the divine existence that has caused them. For John Damascene, the fact that God exists is not doubted by those who believe in the Old and New Testaments. This means that for Christians, the question of God is primarily a matter of faith based on accepting the testimony and revelation of Scripture. Additionally, John emphasizes that the existence of God is not denied by the majority of Greeks (pagan philosophers), as it has also been revealed to all humanity through the harmony and order of nature.⁶²⁰

Despite this, as John continues, there are still some who, influenced by the wickedness of the Devil, claim that there is no God. In pre-Damascene patristic literature, atheism was often linked to pagan polytheism and the denial of the one true Christian God. Here, however, John is not discussing such atheism but rather the absolute denial of God—a concept that for Christians was primarily associated with the Epicureans.⁶²¹ It should be mentioned that, as far as I am aware, no such real movement existed in John's time. The Damascene's arguments for the existence of God seem to simply continue an already existing patristic tradition of doing so.⁶²²

As potential deniers of God do not regard Holy Scripture as an authority, John's arguments shift from theology to the metaphysical understanding of nature, through which, as previously pointed out, not only Christians but all humans can deduce the existence of God. The first argument in John's list concerns the harmony and order of nature. For example, John points to the harmonic coming together and staying together of the four elements (earth, water, air, fire)—an aspect that would be impossible without the existence of God. Since the nature of fire is contrary to that of water and air is contrary to earth, how is it possible that they are still combined, forming one world and remaining undissolved? According to the Damascene, it can only be the power of God the Creator that keeps all these elements, and therefore our world, intact, functioning and in existence.⁶²³ Although this concept became known in history as an original argument of John Damascene, to whom Thomas Aquinas also credits it,⁶²⁴ in reality, John merely popularizes a well-known patristic argument.⁶²⁵

John's second argument for the existence of God turns to the concept of motion and change. For John, the starting point here is the previously mentioned

⁶²⁰ *Expos*, 1; 3:1–5, 5:1–4. See also Louth 2002, 93.

⁶²¹ Beatrice 2014, 284–285. Lilla 2014a, 207.

⁶²² See Levering 2016, 27–78.

⁶²³ *Expos*, 3:37–53.

⁶²⁴ Levering 2016, 66.

⁶²⁵ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra gentes*, 34–38; Gregory of Nazianzus, *De theologia* (*orat.* 28), 5; 6; 8; 16. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione*, PG 46, 27–28, Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua ad Joannem* 10.36. See also Zografidis 1999, 211, n.32.

metaphysical distinction between the uncreated and the created, which links creation to change and the uncreated God to immutability.⁶²⁶ In this way, John may initially claim that everything that is changeable must be created and vice versa.⁶²⁷ However, the phenomenon of changeable creation requires an explanation, which can only be provided by the unchangeable and uncreated God: a Christian version of Aristotle's argument for an unmoved mover.

According to this logic, John formulates in chapter 3 of his *Expos* the following idea: a) if it is changeable, then it must be created → b) if something is changeable, then this changeability must have a cause → c) in a chain of causes involving changeable (created) things, we would inevitably arrive at the *first* something (cause), which must be unchangeable (uncreated) and which is nothing else than God. The existence of a changeable creation, therefore, inevitably guides us to the knowledge of the existence of one God who is unchangeable and uncreated. The basic patristic metaphysical distinction between the created/changeable and the uncreated/immutable becomes an argument for the existence of God.⁶²⁸

Essentially, John is using a basic Aristotelian logic that states that everything that moves must be moved (caused) by something else.⁶²⁹ This leads us to an infinite chain of caused motions, which itself does not explain why there is motion in the first place. According to Aristotle, such an infinite chain of caused motions (causes) must eventually arrive at a primary point and source of all motion, which itself eternally moves (causes) without being moved (caused). Aristotle calls it the *first unmoved mover*.⁶³⁰

John's explanation is clearly inspired by Aristotle's unmoved mover; however, instead of discussing Aristotelian motion, John speaks of change, which refers to being created. Rather than a mover that is unmoved, John refers to God the Creator, who is immutable (unchangeable) and therefore uncreated.

According to M. Levering, John is essentially repeating an already known patristic demonstration of the existence of God from the order of the universe and from changeable things, which had already been developed by Tertullian and Gregory of Nazianzus,⁶³¹ with the latter seeming to be John's primary influence in this case. As Levering states, the use of the logic of the (Aristotelian) dependence of motions as an argument for the existence of God can be found in the *Second Theological Oration* of Gregory.⁶³²

By analyzing Gregory's *Second Oration* (28.8), we can indeed see a reference to the logic where, in an endless chain of movable things, one must arrive at the

⁶²⁶ *Expos*, 3: 23–25; *Manich*, 68, 44–46. See also Louth 2002, 93.

⁶²⁷ *Expos*, 3: 22–24; *Volunt*, 28, 20–23; *Manich*, 24, 24–26.

⁶²⁸ *Expos*, 3:33–37. See also Louth 93; Zografidis 1999, 212–213.

⁶²⁹ Aristotle, *Physica*, 241b34–242a69 cf. *Expos*, 4:17; *Manich*, 30:20.

⁶³⁰ Aristotle, *Physica*, 249b27–250b7; *Metaphysica*, 1012b22–31; 1072a19–1072b13. See also Louth 2002, 93.

⁶³¹ Levering 2016, 34–35, 75–76.

⁶³² *Ibid.*, 34–35.

primary moving force—the Creator—who has put everything into motion but who himself is not subject to motion. However, Levering’s assertion that Gregory makes an explicit argument for the existence of God is incorrect. Instead, Gregory’s main argument in 28.8 is to demonstrate that, unlike created and existing bodies, God can fill and pervade the universe without being contained by it. For this reason, God cannot be considered any sort of body—not even the bodiless bodies of the Epicurean atoms, nor the body of the fifth element (Aristotelian aether of the heavens), which moves in a circular motion. Even though the latter is considered by philosophers to be bodiless and immaterial, according to Gregory, it still cannot be God because it is in motion. The logic follows that whatever is moved must be moved by something else until we arrive at the source of all motion that is not subject to motion. The fifth element, which is in (circular) motion, therefore cannot be God the Creator, who is the source of all motion without being subject to any motion.⁶³³

In other words, the question for Gregory is not whether God exists or not, but the peculiar way in which God exists. By using a well-known Aristotelian model of the dependent chain of motions, which necessitates a reality that transcends the movable order, Gregory argues that the motions of the created order necessitate a God whose way of being transcends the ways of beings in the created universe and its motions and bodies. Furthermore, we cannot find in Gregory’s works any reference to the changeable created order that would serve as a demonstration of the existence of God.

John Damascene understands this very well, which is why he dedicated a different chapter (ch. 4) of the *Expos* to explain the previously mentioned *Second Oration* 28.8 of Gregory. In this chapter, John interprets Gregory’s *Second Oration* 28.8 as an argument for God’s absolute bodiless transcendence and incomprehensibility. It should also be mentioned that even though John’s *Expos* 4 closely follows Gregory’s previously mentioned logic of motion and the denial of God being equated with the fifth element, he seems to have supplemented his source with Aristotelian terminology that Gregory did not use. Unlike the latter, John characterizes God the Creator, likely inspired by Nemesis of Emesa,⁶³⁴ as the immovable and first unmoved mover (πρῶτον κινεῶν ἀκίνητον), who moves everything through His immovability.⁶³⁵ The need to supplement Gregory’s Christian Aristotelianism with more precise Aristotelianism shows us not only how well John understands the Aristotelian logic of the unmoved mover, but also that he is not afraid to alter his patristic source to align it more closely with his personal philosophical understandings.

Thus, if John’s chapter 4 of the *Expos* argues for the incomprehensibility of God based on the chain of motions from Gregory’s *Second Oration* 28.8, then where did the Damascene derive the idea to make an argument in *Expos* 3 for the

⁶³³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *De theologia* (Orat 28), 8–9.

⁶³⁴ Nemesis of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 18.79:16.

⁶³⁵ *Expos*, 4:14–21.

necessity of the existence of God, deduced from an infinite chain of changeable (created) beings?

Another pre-Damascene Church Father who employs a similar logic of the unmoved mover is Maximus the Confessor, who, following ancient patristic tradition, also links motion/change to creation and immutability to the uncreated God. According to Maximus, all creation is moved and therefore must have a cause (and also a beginning) from the uncreated, uncaused and therefore unmoved God. However, Maximus does not explicitly state that the chain of caused and moved created reality should lead to the existence of the unmoved-uncaused-uncreated (God). He simply asserts that all motion in the created order must have its cause in God, who is unmoved. Nor does Maximus propose that an endless chain of changeability should eventually lead to the unchangeable and uncreated.⁶³⁶

Even though Gregory and Maximus do not explicitly argue for the existence of God, their demonstrations nevertheless present the Aristotelian metaphysical deduction that the moving reality of the created order cannot be explained without a source that exists outside this reality. It seems that, inspired by existing patristic patterns and considering his own knowledge of Aristotelian logic, John took one creative step further and transformed it into an argument for the existence of God by interpreting the infinite chain of moved things as the infinite chain of changeable things.

We have therefore seen that the Damascene's choice to apply the Aristotelian logic of the unmoved mover in his theological argumentation essentially follows previous patristic tradition. Nevertheless, John executes this in his own unique and novel way that diverges from his sources. The decision to modify his source, Gregory of Nazianzus, with the much more Aristotelian concept of the first unmoved mover of Nemesius of Emesa not only reconfirms his ease in reworking his patristic sources but also reveals John's own philosophical mindset. This becomes evident also in John's decision to turn the patristic logic about the divine causality of created motions into an unprecedented argument for the existence of God. In one way or another, motion and change reveal themselves as ontological characterizers of the created realm, through which one can argue for the transcendence and existence of the uncreated God.

3.3.3.1. From the different kinds of motion to the existence of God

John's creative utilization of the logic surrounding the unmoved mover does not end here. In his discussion of how changeability helps prove the existence of God, he illustrates his point with another well-known Aristotelian concept that his readers have already encountered in the *Dial*: the so-called Aristotelian six kinds of motion (change):

⁶³⁶ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua ad Joannem*, 7.3; 10.36; 23.

Who, then, will not agree that all beings that fall within our sensible experience, including even the angels, are subject to change and alteration and to being moved in various ways? The intellectual beings, by which I mean angels and souls and demons, change by free choice (προαίρεσις), progressing in good or receding, exerting themselves or slackening; whereas the rest change by generation (γένεσις) or corruption (φθορά), increase (αύξησις) or decrease (μείωσις), change in quality (κατὰ ποιότητα μεταβολή) or local motion (τοπική κίνησις). Consequently, things that are changeable must definitely be created. Created beings have certainly been created by something. But the creator must be uncreated.⁶³⁷

As we can see, John outlines the well-known Aristotelian kinds of motion as changes and introduces an additional kind—free choice. The purpose of this enumeration of different kinds of motion and change is to reinforce his earlier demonstration of God’s existence, which was deduced from the changeable created order, with an extra proof that everything in our universe is subject to motion and mutability. In other words, through the list of Aristotelian kinds of motion, along with the motions of an intelligible kind, John provides his readers with a taxonomic map of the various levels of the changeable created order.

Generation and destruction characterize the nature of all created beings, from lifeless entities to intellectual angels, because everything that has a beginning by its nature also has an end.⁶³⁸ The motions of increase (growth) and therefore also decrease, alongside genesis and destruction, more specifically characterize the existence of plants.⁶³⁹ All these functions also exist in animals, which additionally possess the capacity for spontaneous movement and therefore local motion from one place to another.⁶⁴⁰ Alterations or changes of quality, which occur between opposites such as hot and cold, white and black, etc., characterize all bodies, including lifeless things and animals.⁶⁴¹ The sum of these motions and properties also exists in the bodily aspect of humanity.⁶⁴² In other words, the Aristotelian kinds of motion in the *Expos* 3 seem to summarize and characterize all visible and sensible (perceptible) aspects of macrocosmic created reality.⁶⁴³

⁶³⁷ Τίς οὖν οὐ συνθήσεται πάντα τὰ ὄντα, ὅσα ὑπὸ τὴν ἡμετέραν αἴσθησιν, ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἀγγέλους τρέπεσθαι καὶ ἀλλοιοῦσθαι καὶ πολυτρόπως κινεῖσθαι καὶ μεταβάλλεσθαι; Τὰ μὲν νοητά, ἀγγέλους φημι καὶ ψυχὰς καὶ δαίμονας, κατὰ προαίρεσιν τὴν τε ἐν τῷ καλῷ προκοπὴν καὶ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦ ἀποφοίτησιν, ἐπιτεινομένην τε καὶ ὑφιεμένην, τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ κατὰ τε γένεσιν καὶ φθορὰν αὐξήσιν τε καὶ μείωσιν καὶ τὴν κατὰ ποιότητα μεταβολὴν καὶ τὴν τοπικὴν κίνησιν. Τρεπτά τοίνυν ὄντα πάντως καὶ κτιστά. Κτιστὰ δὲ ὄντα πάντως ὑπὸ τινος ἐδημιουργήθησαν. Δεῖ δὲ τὸν δημιουργὸν ἄκτιστον εἶναι· (*Expos*, 3:27–35; translation by Chase 1958, 169 – with own additions).

⁶³⁸ *Manich*, 21:4–7, *Expos*, 4:4–8.

⁶³⁹ In addition to growing, also nutritive and generative powers (*Expos*, 26:73–74; *Dial*, 10:148–149, 30:13–14; *Volunt*, 15:6–7).

⁶⁴⁰ *Expos*, 26:75–77, 79; *Volunt*, 15:7–12.

⁶⁴¹ *Expos*, 26:86–88, 41:5–7.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, 26:71–77, *Volunt*, 15:1–12.

⁶⁴³ See also Zografidis 1999, 209.

In contrast, the nature of intellectual creatures and the invisible created reality (angels, demons, and human intellectual souls) is primarily characterized by changes of will and choice. Together, sensible (bodily) and intelligible kinds of changes present a complete picture of the macrocosmic reality of creation. For this reason, the Aristotelian kinds of motion are not presented in isolation but are always paired with intellectual changes (motions) via choice.⁶⁴⁴ Thus, the Damascene demonstrates how all of macrocosmic reality (both visible and invisible) is by nature changeable—a metaphysical concept that leads to the acknowledgment of God’s existence.

The *Expos*’s use of various kinds of motion to illustrate the mutability of macrocosmic reality connects back to his philosophical works and effectively applies them to theological discourse. We have already seen how both the *Dial* and the *IE* considered it important for their readers to understand the five kinds of natural motions or activities that characterized the macrocosmic mutability of different species. We have also seen that these principles originally derived from Aristotle and were further developed by his later commentators, whereas in their final form they seem to have been compiled by Chalcedonian Christians to better support their theological arguments. It is not known how much the Damascene contributed to this development, but it is clear that the five kinds of natural motion were deemed important by Chalcedonians, and especially by the Damascene, who repeats them twice in his philosophical works.⁶⁴⁵

We have also noted that John’s *Dial* dedicates an entire chapter (62) to the Aristotelian concepts of motion and change—an essential aspect of the Neoplatonic commentary tradition that was largely overlooked by pre-Damascene Chalcedonians. In this chapter, it was clearly stated that motion derives its potency from nature, which is manifested in the four categories and six kinds.⁶⁴⁶ In his *Expos* it now becomes clear that the Aristotelian six kinds of motion are merely another philosophical way to summarize all existing natural motions of the created order.

The introduction of an additional type of intelligible motion serves as a reminder that, alongside the mutability of the sensible world, there exists a distinct mutability within intelligible reality. Thus, by employing these different kinds of motion, the mutability of the created order is affirmed, along with the existence of an immutable God, without whom the mutable creation could neither exist nor be explained.

The concept of employing Aristotelian logic—specifically, its various kinds of motion—as metaphysical characterizations of the created order’s mutability can also be traced back to the pre-Damascene patristic tradition. For instance, Maximus the Confessor is recognized for utilizing Aristotelian notions of motion and its different kinds for a similar purpose in his *Commentaries on the Divine*

⁶⁴⁴ *Volunt*, 18:16–22; *Expos*, 3:27–33; 41:1–7; *Manich*, 69:15–16. See also Zografidis 1999, 209; Tölpt 2021, 316–334.

⁶⁴⁵ *Dial*, 31 and *IE*, 8.

⁶⁴⁶ See 2.1.4.2 and 2.1.4.3.

Names of Dionysios the Areopagite.⁶⁴⁷ By examining the various ways in which both intelligible and sensible created beings move, Maximus concluded that none of these motions can be attributed to God, who is uncreated.⁶⁴⁸ The different types of motion that illustrate the mutability of the created order serve to demonstrate what God is not, thereby emphasizing His incomprehensibility and absolute transcendence. As previously noted, Gregory of Nazianzus' logic of movable creation aimed to convey the same idea, albeit without the detailed analysis of the different types of motion.

However, Maximus' compiled lists of types of motion do not directly align with the well-known Aristotelian six kinds of motion, as presented in the *Categories*, by Aristotelian commentators and by John Damascene. While Maximus' categorizations appear to be generally inspired by Aristotelian thought, the absence of classical order (which starts with genesis and ends with local motion) and the omission of certain types of motion (such as decrease) suggest that he does not apply Aristotelian kinds of motion directly.⁶⁴⁹

As far as I am aware, the first Greek Church Father to argue for the uncreated transcendence of God by illustrating the mutability of the created order through a list of Aristotelian kinds of motion is John Chrysostom in his *Homilies on Colossians (In epistulam ad Colossenses)*. Although Chrysostom neither follows the classical order of the list, he nonetheless restricts himself to the recognized Aristotelian kinds of motion (increase, decrease, generation, destruction, alteration), in addition to local motion and its subtypes.⁶⁵⁰

Taking all this into account, it can be said that John Damascene's illustrative argument for the mutability of the created order through different kinds of motion draws patristic precedents from both Chrysostom and Maximus. It is especially the former who would provide the Damascene with the precedent to employ the Aristotelian kinds of motion alongside the motion of the mind. Despite the existing patristic tradition, particularly that of Chrysostom, the Damascene still diverges from it.

A comparative analysis of the Damascene's and Chrysostom's versions of the different types of motion clearly supports this claim.

The kinds of motion in Chrysostom's homily:

⁶⁴⁷ Mitralaxis 2014, 125–152, especially 139.

⁶⁴⁸ Maximus the Confessor, *In librum de divinis nominibus scholia*, PG 4, 256D–257D, 381B–D.

⁶⁴⁹ Tölpt 2021, 332, n. 66.

⁶⁵⁰ John Chrysostom, *In epistulam ad Colossenses*, PG 62, 336. On this matter see also Tölpt 2021, 329–331.

Tell me then, what is the motion of God? For among us, there are seven of them: upward, downward, inward, outward, right, left, circular; or, if not one of these, then increase, decrease, generation, destruction, alteration. But none of them may be applied to God. Maybe it is the motion of the mind? But not even this, God forbid, as the mind may be often moved improperly.⁶⁵¹

The kinds of motion in *Expos*:

Who, then, will not agree that all beings that fall within our experience, including even the angels, are subject to change and alteration and to being moved in various ways? The intellectual beings, by which I mean angels and souls and demons (change) by free choice, progressing in good or receding, exerting themselves or slackening; whereas the rest change by generation or corruption, increase or decrease, change in quality or local motion.⁶⁵²

As can be seen and reaffirmed, both the *Homilies on Colossians* and the *Expos* utilize Aristotelian kinds of motion along with an added intelligible motion. However, their approaches differ significantly. Not only is the order of the lists different, but the vocabulary also varies. First, unlike Damascene, Chrysostom does not include the term “local motion.” Second, in the *Homilies on Colossians*, Chrysostom elaborates on the subtypes of local motion, whereas the *Expos* does not. Third, instead of Chrysostom’s “alteration,” the Damascene uses “change of quality.” Fourth, instead of Chrysostom’s “motion of the mind,” the Damascene uses “free choice.” Overlapping can be found only in the terms “increase,” “decrease,” “generation” and “destruction.”

Also, the *Expos* employs the concept of mutability *via choice* (κατὰ προαίρεσιν) for various intelligible beings—such as angels, demons, and souls—not just for the human mind, as appears to be the case in the *Homilies on Colossians*. The Damascene’s influence here seems to stem from Gregory of Nyssa’s *Homilies on the Song of Songs (In Canticum Canticorum)*, where all intelligible beings are described as changeable by choice.⁶⁵³

Most importantly, the Aristotelian kinds of motion in *Expos* 3, particularly their presentation in a traditionally Aristotelian order, indicate that John relies more on the Greek philosophical tradition than on patristic sources—similar to

⁶⁵¹ Ποίαν δὲ κίνησιν, εἰπέ μοι; παρὰ γὰρ ἡμῖν ἑπτὰ τινές εἰσιν, ἢ κάτω, ἢ ἄνω, ἢ ἐντὸς, ἢ ἐκτὸς, ἢ δεξιὰ, ἢ ἀριστερὰ, ἢ κυκλοφορικῶς· ἢ εἰ μὴ τοῦτο, αὔξισις, μείωσις, γένεσις, φθορά, ἀλλοίωσις. Ἄλλ’ οὐδεμίαν τούτων κινεῖται, ἀλλ’ οἷαν ὁ νοῦς κίνησιν κινεῖται; Ἄλλ’ οὐδὲ τοῦτο· μὴ γένοιτο· πολλὰ γὰρ καὶ ἀτόπως ὁ νοῦς κινεῖται (John Chrysostom, *In epistulam ad Colossenses*, PG 62, 336; translation by Tölpt 2021, 329).

⁶⁵² Τίς οὖν οὐ συνθήσεται πάντα τὰ ὄντα, ὅσα ὑπὸ τὴν ἡμετέραν αἴσθησιν, ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἀγγέλους τρέπεσθαι καὶ ἀλλοιοῦσθαι καὶ πολυτρόπως κινεῖσθαι καὶ μεταβάλλεσθαι; Τὰ μὲν νοητά, ἀγγέλους φημί καὶ ψυχὰς καὶ δαίμονας, κατὰ προαίρεσιν τὴν τε ἐν τῷ καλῷ προκοπὴν καὶ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦ ἀποφοίτησιν, ἐπιτεινομένην τε καὶ ὑφιεμένην, τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ κατὰ τε γένεσιν καὶ φθορὰν, αὔξησιν τε καὶ μείωσιν καὶ τὴν κατὰ ποιότητα μεταβολὴν καὶ τὴν τοπικὴν κίνησιν (*Expos*, 3:27–33; translation by Chase 1958, 169).

⁶⁵³ Gregory of Nyssa, *In canticum canticorum*, 441.

what is found in his *Dial*. Interestingly, John even appears to align more closely with Aristotle's *Categories*, where the six kinds of motion are presented in a straightforward list, rather than with his own *Dial*, where these types coexist in a more developed manner alongside their corresponding categories and subtypes of local motion.⁶⁵⁴ In this way, John Damascene seems to be the first Greek Chalcedonian author whose theological presentation of the Aristotelian kinds of motion adheres to the traditional order of the *Categories*.

Thus, it can be concluded that while the Damascene's theological application of the Aristotelian kinds of motion, along with the additional insights in *Expos* 3, has roots in the authoritative patristic tradition, its final form and method of application is likely a creative synthesis inspired by multiple sources. This synthesis clearly builds on the patristic tradition of employing different types of motion (sensible and intelligible) to describe the mutability of the created order. John Chrysostom's integration of Aristotelian kinds of motion with the intelligible aspect closely mirrors the logic of the Damascene. Yet, despite this authoritative patristic precedent, John does not draw directly from it.

It is possible that the Damascene's version is a result of personal reworking, where Chrysostom's rather chaotic order has been aligned more closely with the classical order of Aristotle's *Categories*, and his *motion of the mind* has been replaced with Gregory's *change via choice*. The fact that the version found in the *Volunt* is also different suggests John's creative formulation.⁶⁵⁵ If this is the case, the Damascene once again demonstrates himself to be a creative compiler, altering his patristic source to align it with his own philosophical and theological understandings while also providing a novel theological context.

At the same time, it cannot be ruled out that the Damascene had access to a now-lost Christian compendium that already contained a list of such versions. We have seen how, in his *Dial* (62 and 68), John presented various versions of the Aristotelian kinds of motion, most likely drawn from basic educational sources.⁶⁵⁶ Thus, the extended versions found in the *Expos* and *Volunt* may serve as witnesses to earlier Chalcedonian editing, reworking and gathering. However, it is improbable that such compendia would have contained a prescribed theological content and context. Its use as a supporting argument for the existence of God is therefore most probably John's invention.

In one way or another, the Damascene understands the Aristotelian six kinds of motion as a theologically useful and patristically endorsed Greek philosophical concept, that functions as an ontological indicator of the created realm, which in turn becomes an argument for the uncreated order. Its simultaneous presence in his philosophical and theological works highlights the importance of this knowledge not only to John but also to his readers. In addition, as became evident in the *Dial* and as is confirmed by the *Expos*, in the dominant perspective of

⁶⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 15a13–14 cf. *Expos*, 3:31–33 cf. *Dial*, 62:9–19; 86:10–17.

⁶⁵⁵ *Volunt*, 18:16–22 cf. *Expos*, 3: 27–33.

⁶⁵⁶ *Dial*, 62: 9–14, 16–19; 68:10–17. See also 2.1.4.3.

Christian metaphysics, the different kinds of motion have omitted all understandings of logic and physics, and therefore also all distinctions between motion and change.

3.3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have illustrated the role of natural philosophy and its principles of motion and change in John's natural theology. We have seen how the Damascene applied the Philoponian logic of ecliptic changes—aspects that were used to argue against Proclus' claims for the eternity of the world. John of Damascus somehow picked this up and, in a slightly modified form, used it as a metaphysical indicator of createdness to argue against the veneration of the stars. We have also seen that the exact source from which John drew this concept, and his contribution to it, remains debatable. Nevertheless, as such a contextual use cannot be found anywhere else, its anti-idolatry application might be attributed to the Damascene. If so, this again illustrates John's creativity in using already existing philosophical concepts in entirely new contexts.

The uniqueness of John's philosophical thought and source material also became evident in his elaborations on the effect of the luminaries, especially that of the Sun, on atmospheric changes of seasons and their effect on human health. In this detailed account, John presented his readers with an understanding according to which God had made the seasons change into each other in a way that avoids sudden changes that would be dangerous to human physiology. As we saw, John's concept innovatively synthesized principles that had previously existed separately: 1. The Hippocratic-Galenic concept, which linked the logic of elements and their qualities to the seasons and humors—mentioned also by the *Commentary on Job* of Julian the Arian and the *Anthology* of John Stobaeus; 2. Plato's concept of a Creator who wisely made the intermediate elements between the extremes in order to avoid illnesses; and 3. Galen's and Nemesius' elaborations on the Aristotelian logic of elemental changes.

It remains unknown from where John got this unprecedented philosophical concept and what his role was in its final formulation. But it seems quite probable that something similar already existed in an unknown and now lost source (handbook). That fact that this concept merely explains the change of seasons, without any designated apologetic purpose, allows us to claim that John was here based on material that possibly derived from the Christian educational curriculum.

In addition to astronomical phenomena, John's natural theology also contains the application of the Aristotelian concept of kinetics, the central focus of which circles around the relation between motion and its causes. By following the earlier patristic application of the Aristotelian *unmoved mover*, John argued both for the existence and incomprehensibility of God. But here also, the Damascene's applications of this logic differed from the previous tradition. We have seen how John had reshaped Gregory of Nazianzus' argument for the incomprehensibility of God more in line with exact Aristotelian terminology—an aspect that revealed

not only John's knowledge of philosophical details but also his readiness to harmonize his patristic sources with them.

In addition to that, even though in pre-Damascene patristic tradition the Aristotelian concept of the unmoved mover had been used, it had never been deployed as an argument for the existence of God and neither synthesized with the patristic metaphysical distinction between the mutable/created and the immutable/uncreated. The concept, according to which the mutable/created (Aristotelian motion) becomes an argument for the immutable and uncreated God (Aristotelian unmoved mover), is very likely John's own personal creation. This again shows John's readiness to develop further the existing patristic use of Aristotelian philosophy.

Even more unprecedented is John's decision back up his argument for the existence of God with the Aristotelian six kinds of change (motion) by adding another kind of change—that of free choice. John used this list of motions to illustrate in detail how indeed all the different levels of the macrocosmic created world, from lifeless beings to intelligible angels, are characterized by mutability, to argue for the existence of the uncreated and immutable reality of God. By using the Aristotelian kinds of motion together with their intelligible extension, John's follows an existing, even though not very widespread, patristic tradition of doing so. All of this, of course, takes place within the broader framework of the patristic (Cappadocian) metaphysical distinction, where mutability characterizes the created realm and immutability the uncreated order.

Nevertheless, the Damascene's version in the *Expos* is one of a kind, having received influences both from the patristic and Aristotelian philosophical traditions. Whether its author is John Damascene or whether such version already existed in some Christian logical compendia remains open for speculation. Nevertheless, its use as a supportive argument for the existence of God is undoubtedly John's invention.

3.4. Christology

3.4.1. Christological controversies

As mentioned earlier, unlike his fellow churchmen in Byzantium, John Damascene lived in a multicultural and multireligious environment where, alongside the dominant Muslim religion, multiple Christian groups also existed. This created an intellectually charged atmosphere filled with theological debates and apologetic arguments. For the Christians of his time, one of the most significant points of contention was the question of Christology, which had divided them into different sects based on various councils. We have also noted that many of John's works, both theological and philosophical, address the Christological challenges posed by the Nestorians, Monophysites and Monothelites/Monenergists. John even dedicated separate polemical treatises against them. Thus far, regarding the logic of motion and change, we have only encountered the *IE*'s definitions of activity,

passion and will, which were evidently used against the Monothelites/Monenergists, without any examples of theological and polemical application.

In this chapter, I analyze how the logical concepts of motion and change are presented and used in John's Christological arguments. To better understand this, we must first examine the basic tenets of the Christologies against which the Damascene builds his case.

3.4.1.1. Nestorians

The Nestorian controversy began with the election of Nestorius as the Patriarch of Constantinople in 428. Seeking to purify the faith of the Church, Nestorius publicly rejected the already widespread term *Theotokos* (Mother of God) for the Virgin Mary. As a proponent of Antiochian theology and Christology, Nestorius emphasized (against Arians and Apollinarians) the distinction between Christ's human and divine properties, linking Mary solely to Christ's human nature. Although the Virgin Mary should have been regarded, strictly speaking, as only the mother of Jesus (humanity), Nestorius opted for a more inclusive term, *Christotokos* (Christ-bearer/Mother of Christ), which recognized Mary as the mother of Jesus in union with the Word of God. Consequently, Nestorius was accused of teaching the existence of two Sons and of dividing Christ, charges he vehemently denied. He consistently stressed the unity of Christ through an un-mixed *conjunction* (συνάφεια), where the two natures are united in one *prosopon*. However, the true meaning and character of the Greek term *prosopon* remains ambiguous in Nestorius's writings. Traditionally, it has been interpreted as a moral or psychological personality in which the distinct properties of the two natures converge, each nature possessing its own *prosopon* and hypostasis. Regardless of whether he was understood or misunderstood, Nestorius was condemned and deposed at the Council of Ephesus in 431. In 433, led by John of Antioch, the Antiochians also renounced Nestorius. Meanwhile, those who disagreed formed their own Church in Persia, emphasizing that Christ has two natures and hypostases in one *prosopon*.⁶⁵⁷

Many of these traditional aspects find their echo in the Damascene's anti-Nestorian polemic.⁶⁵⁸ According to John, the biggest fault of Nestorianism is that it attributes Christ's human actions solely to his humanity and divine actions solely to his divinity, rather than recognizing them as the actions of one Person (the Word of God). This leads to a division that ultimately undermines His unity and oneness.⁶⁵⁹ John notes that even though the Nestorians, following Diodorus of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, spoke of a unity between these two natures, they understood it as a *prosopic* (personal) unity of dignity, honor, will

⁶⁵⁷ Simonetti 2014, 907–909.

⁶⁵⁸ See Zachary 2017, 501–512.

⁶⁵⁹ Haer, 81.

and homonymity, rather than a hypostatic unity of the Word of God.⁶⁶⁰ According to the Damascene, this separation led Nestorius to refer to the Virgin Mary as the Mother of Christ (Χριστοτόκος), implying that Christ was merely a God-bearing (θεοφόρος) human. For the Damascene, this represents a clear denial of the incarnation, which asserts that Mary gave birth to the hypostasis of the Word of God in flesh (humanity), and thus she must be called the Mother of God.⁶⁶¹ Additionally, John recognizes that the Nestorian problem is partly due to their inability to distinguish terminologically between nature and hypostasis, which caused their attempt to safeguard the two natures of Christ to lead inevitably to the acceptance of two hypostases in Christ.⁶⁶²

3.4.1.2. Monophysites

The controversy with the Monophysites—those who affirm only one nature in Christ—arose as a consequence of the condemnation of Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus, where Cyril of Alexandria expressed the unity and oneness of Jesus Christ with the phrase “one nature of the incarnate Word of God” (μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη)⁶⁶³

When using the term “nature,” Cyril referred to the hypostasis of the Word of God, which in the incarnation was united with His human characteristics. In other words, despite their unity in one single subject (nature) of the Word of God, the divinity and humanity of Christ were fully preserved without being mixed. However, what Cyril did not realize was that during the 4th century, the condemned heretic Apollinaris of Laodicea and his disciples had employed the same phrase to promote their Docetistic Monophysitism, which claimed that Christ lacked a soul (mind) and, therefore, the fullness of humanity.

In the 5th century, an influential elderly monk from Constantinople, Eutyches, appropriated this phrase from Cyril and used it in a manner closely resembling Apollinarianism, claiming that Christ was not consubstantial with humanity. Although he was condemned as an Apollinarian at the Council of Constantinople in 448, Eutyches gained support from Dioscorus of Alexandria, who rehabilitated him at the Council of 449 by employing the same formulation as Cyril. However, unlike the confusing and often superficial theology of Eutyches, Dioscorus did not deny the fullness of Christ’s humanity. The members of the Council of Chalcedon (451) did not fully understand this distinction. They condemned both Eutyches and Dioscorus, asserting that in Christ, the human and divine natures coexist in one hypostasis (the Word of God) without mingling, separation or change. Those who rejected the council’s decisions were later labeled Monophysites by the Chalcedonians.

⁶⁶⁰ *Dial*, 65:118–123; *Expos*, 47:53–60.

⁶⁶¹ *Expos*, 56:45–56.

⁶⁶² *Volunt*, 20:1–6.

⁶⁶³ On the Monophysite controversy see Simonetti 2014a, 826–829.

Nonetheless, the distinction between the so-called Eutychian and Dioscorian approaches persisted among the Monophysites. According to M. Simonetti, Monophysitism can be categorized into two types: real and verbal.

Real Monophysitism believed that the union of Christ's two natures into one was accomplished through a change in the component parts. Some of them believed that the body of Christ was only apparent or from heaven; others believed that his body was absorbed by divinity like a drop of honey in the sea; others thought that the divinity of the Logos was annulled in the humanity of Christ; still others thought that humanity and divinity were mixed together to form one composite made up of a human part and a divine part.⁶⁶⁴

This type of real Monophysitism, in which Christ's human nature was altered in the union, was primarily labeled Eutychian. It was also condemned by the verbal Monophysites, known as the Severians, who were technically Monophysites only to the extent that they remained loyal to the Cyrillian phrase. This phrase understood Christ as one nature (hypostasis) in which both human and divine characteristics subsisted without mingling or alteration. They rejected the Chalcedonian interpretation of Christ's two natures, which they believed would inevitably lead to Nestorianism and the acceptance of two hypostases in Christ.

These concepts are generally also understood by the Damascene.⁶⁶⁵ In his *Haer*, John clearly distinguishes the Eutychians from the Monophysites, whom he also refers to as Egyptians and Schematics (in other manuscripts, Schismatics). According to John, the Eutychians deny the full humanity of Christ by asserting that the Word of God became incarnate not from the virgin's humanity, but in a divine manner. This perspective, for John, is also closely connected to the docetistic views of both the Gnostic Valentinians and the Apollinarians.⁶⁶⁶

In contrast, the Monophysites, who are divided into various groups based on their founding leaders (Theodosians, Severians and Jacobites), were primarily criticized by the Damascene for their blind allegiance to Dioscorus and his rejection of the Council of Chalcedon. John also understood that their main theological problem was the inability to distinguish between nature and hypostasis. This confusion led them to promote the idea of individual substances or natures—an improper application of Aristotelian logic that ultimately drove their philosophical champion, John Philoponus, into Tritheism. To protect the hypostatic unity of Christ and prevent the two natures from introducing two hypostases, they accepted only one nature in Christ.⁶⁶⁷

John recognizes that this single nature was conceived by them as a composite nature (derived from two natures) in which the fullness of Christ's divinity and

⁶⁶⁴ Simonetti 2014a, 828.

⁶⁶⁵ For John Damascene's understandings on Monophysitism see Zachary 2017, 501–512; Louth 2002, 59, 99, 150–162.

⁶⁶⁶ *Haer*, 31; 77; 82.

⁶⁶⁷ *Haer*, 83, 83addit.; *Jacob*, 2:15–26; *Volunt*, 20:1–4.

humanity was nevertheless preserved. This understanding, according to the Damascene, should compel the Monophysites to acknowledge two natures in Christ.⁶⁶⁸ Their refusal to do so, however, traps them in a logic where Christ's two natures are inevitably mixed, mingled, and blended.⁶⁶⁹ In other words, for John, it was the confusing and incorrect application of terms and logical concepts that led the Monophysites to essentially (or at least seemingly) deny the mystery of the incarnation of the Word of God and the salvation of created human nature.⁶⁷⁰

3.4.1.3. Monenergists-Monothelites

In addition to Monophysites, John also had a direct encounter with Monenergists/Monothelites, who believed that Christ lacked a purely human activity (ἐνέργεια) and will. Instead, they asserted that Christ possessed a divine-human (*theandric*) activity and had only one divine will.⁶⁷¹

The Monenergist and later Monothelite theological movement⁶⁷² began in the 7th century as an imperial and political effort to reconcile the non-Chalcedonians (Monophysites) with the Chalcedonians. To achieve this, a hybrid concept emerged, asserting that Christ possessed two natures—human and divine. However, due to his hypostatic unity, He exhibited only one divino-humane (*theandric*) activity and a single divine will, even though the possibility of a single divino-humane will was neither excluded, as was the case with Pyrrhus.

The main idea behind this concept is that although Christ possessed a human nature, complete with its capacities and potentialities, it remained passive and non-active under the dominance of the divine Logos. Human natural motions, including activities, will and passions in Christ, were only initiated and actualized by the hypostasis of the divine Logos. While Christ ate (an activity) and felt hunger (an innocent passion), these human activities and passions would not have existed within Him if the divine Logos had not commanded and initiated them with His will. Thus, the human nature of Christ functioned as a passive “puppet” in the hands of the divine Logos, much like a Platonic soul is to a body.

Thus, even though the Monenergists and Monothelites acknowledged certain human activities or active potencies in Christ as employed and initiated by the divine agent (hypostasis), they denied any form of human will in him. Similar to Apollinarism, the Monothelites accepted only the divine will in Christ, arguing that the coexistence of human and divine wills would create an unacceptable contradiction, conflict and opposition within him. This risk of opposition also extended to the concept of human activity, which could become a conflicting

⁶⁶⁸ *Jacob*, 14.

⁶⁶⁹ *Expos*, 47:4–7.

⁶⁷⁰ *Haer*, 83.

⁶⁷¹ Louth 2002, 9–12.

⁶⁷² On that matter see Bathrellos 2004, 60–98; Farrell 1989, 67–84.

passion against Christ's divine activity. Since human activity, unlike the divine, is always passible, such contradictions and opposition are clearly inevitable.

The central question surrounding this opposing and contradictory duality revolves around how to interpret Christ's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, where there appears to be a duality of wills: the human will, which asks to avoid the chalice of suffering and death, seemingly opposes the will of God. If one interprets this biblical passage as affirming a distinctive human will in Christ, then for the Monenergists and Monothelites, this would imply a conflict within Christ and an extreme case of Nestorianism. To avoid this contradiction and preserve the unity of Christ, both will and activity were linked to His unifying principle: His divine hypostasis (Logos). Consequently, Jesus Christ possessed only one hypostatic and gnostic will of the divine Logos, or, as noted by Pyrrhus, a composite divino-humane will, composed of both divine and human natural wills. Based on this reasoning, one could interpret Christ's sayings in Gethsemane—the fear of death, the avoidance of the chalice and the final obedience to the Father—not as expressions (will, activity and passion) of Christ's human nature, but rather as expressions of the divine Logos on behalf of all humanity.

These politically initiated claims were opposed by other Chalcedonians, especially by Sophronius of Jerusalem and Maximus the Confessor, as a rejection of the fullness of Christ's human nature, which led to the condemnation of Monothelitism-Monenergism at the Third Council of Constantinople (680–681).⁶⁷³ For its opponents, Monenergism-Monothelitism created a soteriological problem that had been raised by the Nicaeans during the Apollinarian controversy of the late 4th century. This soteriological problem, along with its solution—which was later used against the Monothelites by Anastasios of Sinai and John Damascene—was well expressed by Gregory of Nazianzus, who stated: “That which is not assumed is not cured; that which is united to God is saved.”⁶⁷⁴ In other words, if Christ did not possess the natural human activity and will that are inherent to humankind, then a part of humanity would remain unsaved. Also, for the Chalcedonians, the natural duality of wills and activities in Christ did not introduce any contradiction because, due to the one person of Christ (Logos), both wills wanted the same thing, and the human will of Christ naturally aligned with his divine will.⁶⁷⁵

These concepts are largely familiar to the Damascene, even though he does not distinguish between the Monenergists and the Monothelites, using the latter term to refer to both groups that speak of one energy or one will in Christ. In John's view, although the Monothelites acknowledge two natures and one hypostasis in Christ, their acceptance of only one will and activity ultimately leads them, similar to Apollinaris, to negate the duality of Christ's natures.⁶⁷⁶ The

⁶⁷³ Simonetti 2014b, 824.

⁶⁷⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistulae theologicae*, SC 208, 101.32 cf. Anastasios of Sinai, *Capita VI adversus monotheletas* 6.3:111–112 cf. *Expos*, 50:36–37, 62:15; *Volunt*, 28:36; 44:6; *Dorm I*, 3:45–46; *Sabbat*, 12:3.

⁶⁷⁵ Bathrellos 2004, 95–96.

⁶⁷⁶ *Haer*, 99.

Damascene further notes that, as was the case with the Nestorians and the Monophysites, the Monothelite error is primarily rooted in a misunderstanding and confusion of terms. He argues that the Monothelite inability to distinguish between natural will and hypostatic or gnostic will causes them to identify Christ's will solely with the latter.⁶⁷⁷

3.4.2. The definition of *nature*

To address various Christological conceptions and confusions, the Chalcedonians and John Damascene required logical tools, among which the concept of motion and change played a significant role. One crucial logical tool foundational to anti-Monothelite/Monenergist polemics is the definition of *nature* that John defines in *Volunt* as:

1. The law and power given in the beginning by the Creator to every species, according to which it moves or reposes;⁶⁷⁸
2. A power given by the ordinance of God to each species, according to which it is destined to act and suffer.⁶⁷⁹

With these two definitions, John establishes an inevitable link between nature, power (potency) and motion (both active and passive). The larger aim is to argue that one cannot understand nature without considering its potency and motion, nor can there be a motion that is disconnected from the nature that is its principle.

The second aim of this definition lies in an understanding that does not allow for the disconnection of natural power and its active and passive motions from God the Creator, who implanted them in each nature. According to the Damascene, without the divine implantation of potency in each created nature, there would be no functionality and no nature: earth would not produce, water would not bring forth fish or help the earth to bear fruit, plants would not grow, birds would not fly, animals would not walk, and creeping things would not creep; finally, human beings would not be able to see, act, think or will.⁶⁸⁰ For the Damascene, the impetus dynamic therefore shows that the laws of nature, which give each nature its proper motion and functionality, have a divine origin and would not exist if the Creator had not made it so.⁶⁸¹

By applying this logic to Christology, the Damascene argues that it is not only contrary to natural laws but also blasphemous to claim that Christ became fully human for our sake while simultaneously depriving his created human nature of

⁶⁷⁷ *Volunt*, 20:6–10.

⁶⁷⁸ Φύσιν δὲ λέγω τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς παρὰ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ δοθέντα ἐκάστῳ εἶδει νόμον καὶ δύναμιν, καθ' ἣν κινεῖται ἢ ἡρεμεῖ (*Volunt*, 18:11–13, own translation).

⁶⁷⁹ Φύσις γάρ ἐστι δύναμις ἐκ θείου προστάγματος δοθεῖσα ἐκάστῳ εἶδει, καθ' ἣν ἐνεργεῖν καὶ πάσχειν πέφυκεν (*Volunt*, 6, col 2: 21–24; own translation).

⁶⁸⁰ *Volunt*, 14:1–14.

⁶⁸¹ *Expos*, 24:16–21; 59:214–226; *Volunt*, 19:1–4.

its God-given active and passive motions (functions), as the Monenergists and Monothelites did.⁶⁸² The fact that God implants natural functionality implies that all natural motions are inherently good. As we will later see (3.4.5.), this logic becomes an important aspect of John's arguments against the Monothelite claims that human passions in Christ would have inevitably opposed and contradicted the divine will of Christ. Moreover, the importance of the definition of nature in the *Volunt* lies not only in its rejection of a nature without divinely implanted motion but also in its linking of natural motions (both passive and active) with the motions of a species.⁶⁸³

As previously noted in the discussion on the *Dial*, the patristic tradition uses the term "nature" to denote what is common. Therefore, it is synonymous not only with "substance" but also with "species," which is predicated of the individuals under it.⁶⁸⁴ This is also repeated in the *IE*, where it is claimed that each species, along with all its individuals, constitutes one nature, such as that of humans, angels, cows, etc.⁶⁸⁵

Drawing from the patristic tradition, particularly John the Grammarian⁶⁸⁶ and especially Maximus the Confessor,⁶⁸⁷ John extends this logic into his theological works. He asserts that because all human individuals share the same natural differences, they can be considered one human nature, in the sense of one human species. All references to one human nature should not be interpreted as referring to the unity of the soul and body within an individual human being. Instead, it should be understood as a reference to the unity of the human species (humanity), which is shared among the various composite individuals of the same species.⁶⁸⁸ In other words, when discussing human nature, one essentially refers to the human species, which encompasses multiple individuals who personally particularize this shared specific nature.

According to the Damascene, this logic first of all counters the Jacobite Monophysite claim of one (composite) nature of Christ. If the united divinity and humanity of Christ were considered one nature, it would imply that Christ is a divino-human species—an absurdity, as there are not multiple Christs. As John emphasizes, Christ is an individual hypostasis, not a species. John further clarifies that in the incarnation of the Word, the divine hypostasis assumed not a theoretical (in reality non-existent) human nature nor a human nature in the sense of species with all its individuals, but a human nature and species that was individualized in the hypostasis of the divine Logos.⁶⁸⁹ Thus, Christ's humanity is part of the

⁶⁸² *Volunt*, 13.

⁶⁸³ *Volunt*, 6, col 2:21–24; 18:11–13.

⁶⁸⁴ See 2.1.6.2.

⁶⁸⁵ *IE*, 1.

⁶⁸⁶ See n. 317.

⁶⁸⁷ Maximus the Confessor, *Epistula* 12, PG 91, 488 B–C. See also Bathrellos 2004, 100.

⁶⁸⁸ *Expos*, 55:4–6; 60:16–20; *Volunt*, 2:1–2; 3:1–10, 4col2:9; *Jacob*, 57:6–12; *Fides*, 50:1; *Aceph*, 7:1–5.

⁶⁸⁹ *Expos*, 55 :4–11; 60:39–50; *Jacob*, 54:1–3; 57:6–15; *Aceph*, 50:1–2.

human species, just as each human being belongs to the human species and shares it with others of the same kind. A particular logic that John here introduces, is not only the link between nature and species, but also an understanding which enables a species to exist only if there are multiple comparative individuals.

The link between nature and species can also be applied to the anti-Monothelite and Monenergist controversy. In this polemic, the central idea was not that Christ was not a species, but that His human nature should be understood as a human species. This understanding stems from the Porphyrian concept, already discussed, where each species is not only constituted but also distinguished from others by its specific differences. We have also seen how, in the Neoplatonic tradition, some species became linked to nature and its powers. Mixed with the Nemesian anthropological model, the Chalcedonians, inspired by Maximus's anti-Monothelite *three kinds of life*, further developed this by producing a list of five kinds of natural motions/activities of species. In the *Dial*, this list was linked to the modified (pagan) definition of nature, and in the *IE*, to the definition of natural activity.

The *Volunt* essentially continues the same pattern. In it, we can also see how the definitions of nature, which are almost identical to those in the *Dial*, are linked to the discussion on species and their natural (God-given) functionalities. According to the *Volunt*, natural properties (φυσικὰ ιδιώματα) are common to all members of a species, constituting it and distinguishing it from other species. Properties not shared by all members of a species, and which differ according to the individual, are hypostatic properties. Therefore, the natural properties of life, rationality, and mortality are constitutive of the human species, which is why the human species can be defined as a rational mortal animal. The combination of these properties also distinguishes the human species from others: its rationality separates it from irrational animals, and its mortality from immortal angels and God. As constitutive of a species, human nature cannot exist without these natural properties. As John's argument goes, if it is not mortal, living, perceptive, breathing, moving from place to place, reasoning, and willing, then it is not human. The human species, therefore, inevitably thinks, reasons, wills, perceives, and moves from place to place because the power for such motions is implanted in its nature by the Creator.⁶⁹⁰ Based on all this, if Christ was indeed human, as the Monothelites accept, then it would be absurd to deprive Him of the natural motions (both active and passive) of the species.

By doing so, Damascene essentially continues Maximus the Confessor's anti-Monothelite arguments, where we can already find references to divinely implanted natural motions and their different natural kinds.⁶⁹¹ Nevertheless, unlike the Damascene, Maximus' elaborations do not contain a similar analysis of species nor any use of the modified Aristotelian definition of nature. John's explanations here are therefore even more aligned with the principles already

⁶⁹⁰ *Volunt*, 5, col 1, 2; 6, col 2; 18:11–16.

⁶⁹¹ Maximus, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 301 AB, 352 AB. See also 2.1.6.3.

established in the *Dial.*⁶⁹² Their common conceptual structure lies in the modified definition of nature, which, as a divinely implanted principle of motion and rest, exists in each species according to its natural differences.

All this not only confirms that the *Dial*'s modified definition of nature and its five kinds of motion is a Chalcedonian creation, but also that the additional phrase "as we say" refers to its anti-Monothelite use by John Damascene. Taking into account that the Damascene is currently the only source that attests to such a use, John should not have been so humble and instead written "as I say." Despite our ignorance concerning John's sources, it is very possible that the modified definition of nature and its link to species is a creative invention of John Damascene, formulated to better argue against the Monothelites. This is probably why this is one of the few instances where the same concept appears in both the *Dial* and John's theological works. In one way or another, one of the fundamental conceptual aspects with which John again operates is the understanding that motion functions as an ontological indicator and manifestation of its own proper nature (species).

3.4.3. Unification and composite nature

The inevitable link between the human species and nature also directs us to the question of the unity of body and soul, which serves as an analogy for the anthropological model used by the non-Chalcedonian Jacobites to argue for Christology. According to them, just as the unity between the human soul and body forms one composite human nature, so does the unity between Christ's divinity and humanity also form one composite nature of Christ.⁶⁹³

To reject this claim and safeguard the duality of Christ's natures, John Damascene employs the concept of unification, in which the notion of change also plays an important role. According to him, this unification occurs in three ways:⁶⁹⁴

1. Either the one will be transformed into the substance of the other;
2. or from two different things a third will be made;
3. or they will remain within their proper limits and be two natures.⁶⁹⁵

The exact content of the first type of change (μεταποίησης) is not explicitly explained by the Damascene. However, it appears that John refers to a change he rejects in the context of Christ's incarnation, where he categorically denies the possibility of the divine nature transforming into the human nature and vice

⁶⁹² And in a lesser degree with the *IE*, 8.

⁶⁹³ *Aceph*, 7:1–3. See also Lang 2001, 150–157.

⁶⁹⁴ *Expos*, 60:33–39.

⁶⁹⁵ ἡ γὰρ τὸ ἐν εἰς τὴν τοῦτέρου μεταποιηθήσεται οὐσίαν ἢ ἐξ ἐτέρων ἕτερον γενήσεται καὶ ἀμφοτέρω τραπήσονται ἢ ἐπὶ τῶν ἰδίων ὄρων μένοντα δύο φύσεις ἔσονται. (*Expos*, 60:37–39; translation by Chase 1958, 315).

versa.⁶⁹⁶ The issue with this form of unification in the Christological context is that it would lead to the eradication of one of the unifying natures, implying that Christ would lack either humanity or divinity.

The second type of unifying change (τροπή), in which two or more substances combine to form a new third substance, can be referred to as substantial unity. Here, John refers to the concept of composite nature, which follows a notion of change described as *another from others* (ἐξ ἑτέρων ἕτερον), already mentioned in the *Dial*.⁶⁹⁷ Similar to this concept, John's theological works also indicate that *another from others* represents a type of change that occurs during the unification of the four elements (fire, air, water, earth) that form new bodies, or in the coming-to-be of a mule, which is bred from a horse and an ass. In both cases, the components involved are not preserved; instead, a new entity has come to be.⁶⁹⁸

In this way, the unity of the natures of the soul and body would form a human (composite) nature, without themselves being preserved.⁶⁹⁹ According to the Damascene's theological works, even though the concept of unification of *another from others* is applicable to humanity (of the soul and body), to the composite bodies (of the four elements), and even in the case of a mule (of a horse and an ass), it is still not applicable to Christ, as the new composite nature would not preserve either the humanity or the divinity of Christ.⁷⁰⁰

However, the acceptance of the anthropological unity of the soul and body in a composite nature is also problematic for John, as such an approach can be used against Chalcedonian Christology. For this reason, the Damascene develops an entirely different approach to the subject by rejecting the unification of the composite nature in human beings altogether.

According to the Damascene, by simply comparing the differences between a united soul (immortal and invisible) and a body (mortal and visible), it becomes impossible to consider them one nature. Since in each individual human, the natures of the soul and body remain unchanged, it is reasonable to say that each human being has two natures.⁷⁰¹ In this anthropological model, a human being cannot be considered one (composite) nature, but rather a composite hypostasis, where the unified natures of the soul and body are preserved and remain unchangeably within their proper limits.⁷⁰²

John's revised anthropological model does not conform to the first type of unification (one substance changing into another) or the second type (composite nature—another from others). Instead, it exemplifies the third type of unification, where two things maintain their distinct identities without any alteration of their

⁶⁹⁶ *Expos*, 47:2–4; *Fides*, 2:5–9; 23:9–16.

⁶⁹⁷ *Dial*, 67:39–45.

⁶⁹⁸ *Jacob*, 24:1–10; *Aceph*, 1:1–9.

⁶⁹⁹ *Expos*, 60:35–37.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 47:17–21; *Jacob*, 24:1–19; *Aceph* 1:1–18.

⁷⁰¹ *Expos*, 60:4–15, 40–43; *Jacob*, 57:6–12.

⁷⁰² *Dial*, 42:1–26; 45:12; 67:2–5; *Volunt*, 31.1–3.

natures. This third type is particularly applicable to Chalcedonian Christology, which asserts that Christ is not a composite nature but a composite hypostasis. In this framework, the unification of divinity and humanity allows the two natures to remain unchangeably within their proper limits. For this reason, as John emphasizes, the concept of *one substance changing into another* and that of *another from others* cannot be applied to the Christological model.⁷⁰³

John, of course, also understands that by not accepting the unity of soul and body as one nature, but as two natures, he may be criticized for accepting in Christ three natures (soul, body, divinity).⁷⁰⁴ In other words, if from one perspective the soul and body together are two natures, then how can John, from another perspective, claim that Christ has a human nature?

This obliges John to explain the concept of *one human nature*. As I have already mentioned, for the Damascene, all references to one human nature should not be understood as a reference to the unity of the soul and body in an individual human being, but as a reference to the unity of the human species (humanity) shared by different human (composite) individuals of the same species. In other words, it is not the unity of the soul and body in an individual that produces a human nature, but the unity of soul and body across a multitude of human individuals. A human being is not human nature; rather, human beings collectively are human nature.⁷⁰⁵ A reference to Christ's one human nature is, therefore, not a reference to the unity of His human soul and body, but to the unity of the human species and nature that exists in Christ and is made specific by the divine hypostasis.⁷⁰⁶

As we have therefore seen, by using the notion of the three types of unification, John essentially argues that if the unified substances (natures) do not remain as they are, then either one or even two of them will be eradicated during the process of unification.

A Eutychian (real Monophysitism) concept of incarnation, where Christ's divine nature absorbed and annulled His human nature or became mixed with it, represents for the Damascene both the first (one into another) and the second (another from others) type of unification. A Monophysite (theoretical Monophysitism) reference to the composite nature of Christ, where the human and divine natures do not remain distinguished, also inevitably follows the second concept of unity (another from others) for the Damascene. Even though the Monophysites accepted both humanity and divinity in Christ, their use of terminology does not distinguish them significantly from the Eutychians. For Christ's humanity and divinity to be preserved, only the third type, where the unified natures remain unchangeably within their proper limits, can be applied.

⁷⁰³ *Dial*, 67; *Expos*, 47:66–74; 49:28–21; 51; *Jacob*, 24:15–19; *Fides*, 23:9–12.

⁷⁰⁴ *Expos*, 60:51–52.

⁷⁰⁵ *Expos*, 60:16–28; *Jacob*, 57:6–9.

⁷⁰⁶ *Expos*, 55:1–14.

Although John himself occasionally interprets the body-soul analogy using the second notion, he primarily does so through the third one. It seems that the body-soul analogy (anthropological model) was simply too important to be in opposition to the Chalcedonian Christological model.

We have already seen in the chapter on *Dial* (2.1.8.) how John's concept of change called "another from others" was one of the three anti-mixture arguments of Aristotle's interlocutors in his *On Generation and Corruption* (*De generatione et corruptione*). In our current case, we can see for the first time how John has chosen to use and reveal not only the second anti-mixture argument but all three of them. John's *either one substance changes into another* clearly reflects the interlocutors' concept of domination, where one of the two perishes because it is overcome by the other. The *either two things are changed into a new third thing* or *another from others* represents the interlocutors' logic of corruption, where both are destroyed. The Damascene's *two natures come together by remaining in their proper limits* corresponds to the interlocutors' concept of preservation, where both parts are preserved in the unification.

John Damascene's three types of unification in the *Expos* undoubtedly present the logic of the counterarguments of Aristotle's interlocutors who denied mixture. Since there are no traces of its use in the Chalcedonian tradition, the question remains: where did John derive this concept and the idea to apply it in a Christological context?

In the aforementioned chapter I have also mentioned that one of the last and most important commentators who discusses the interlocutors' three counterarguments of mixture was John Philoponus. Although Philoponus' Monophysite Christology and his anthropological model are recognized as being influenced by Aristotle, he nonetheless rejected the use of Aristotelian concepts of mixture in his body-soul analogy or in Christology.⁷⁰⁷ At the same time, it is known that more radical Monophysites (the so-called Eutychians), like Sergius the Grammarian (5th/6th century), did apply the Aristotelian logic of mixture in their Christology.⁷⁰⁸

But does this mean that John Damascene used the counterarguments of mixture to critique the Monophysite (Eutychian) excessive reliance on Aristotelianism and their application of the logic of mixture in Christology? As I have already analyzed (3.1.2), the concept of the three types of unification seems to be linked to a continuation of the emperor Justinian's anti-Monophysite argument, which demonstrated that the concept of *composite nature* would inevitably lead

⁷⁰⁷ According to Philoponus, this type of mixing is not applicable to the body-soul analogy, as the harmony between the two is not preserved due to alteration. Instead, he uses the Platonic model of interweaving, as ropes are tied together into a single strand. According to Philoponus, this analogy creates a *sympatheia* (harmony) where the body and the soul remain distinct but can still affect each other. For the same reason, Philoponus does not accept the concept of mixing in Christology, in which case the concept of *sympatheia* is much more applicable (Lang 2001, 145–150, 156).

⁷⁰⁸ Lang 2001, 157.

to a mixture of Christ's natures. However, for the later Chalcedonians, the accusation of mixing Christ's natures appears to have been a weak argument, as even in the logic of mixture the combined parts nevertheless remain distinct. It is likely in their analysis of mixture that the Chalcedonians encountered, probably through the works of Philoponus, the anti-mixture arguments of Aristotle's interlocutors.

Applied in the case of Christ, these concepts aided the Chalcedonians in arguing that Monophysite theology does not lead them into a mixture, which would do justice to the Monophysites, but rather into a total annihilation of either one or both of Christ's natures. In other words, these logical principles were used by the Chalcedonians not to show the faultiness of using the concept of mixture in Christ but to demonstrate the non-existence of such logic. The aim was to put the Monophysites in a dilemma, where they either had to accept the annihilation of one of Christ's unifying natures, which would create a soteriological problem, or accept the Chalcedonian logic of the integrity of Christ's two natures. The logic of these three principles essentially declared all other forms of unification (mixture, etc.) non-existent.

What the exact role and contribution of John Damascene to the development of this understanding remain unclear. In his works, John gives no hints of even being aware of the philosophical debate for and against mixture. Nor does he seem to regard the three types of unification as any kind of counterarguments. For the Damascene, the three types of unification appear to be nothing more than an illustrative tool of general logic that aims to show how the different types of unification affect the preservation of the unified elements.

This indicates that John does not seem to be working with or directly using the texts of Aristotle, Philoponus or any other Neoplatonist. Even textual comparison shows that the wording and order of the counterarguments in Aristotle and Philoponus differ significantly from the Damascene's version.⁷⁰⁹ This suggests that John Damascene may have relied on an unknown philosophical source where this notion already existed in an extracted and modified form. The fact that the *Dial* contains elements of it also hints at an existing tradition. Additionally, we have seen how, since Leontius of Byzantium, Chalcedonians had used different concepts of unification and composition to argue against the Monophysite notion of composite nature.

John nevertheless remains the first author to use this originally anti-mixture idea as a neutral illustration to clarify the possibilities of unification in both the body-soul analogy and in Christology. By employing this philosophical tool, John aims to determine whether a specific type of unification brings any change to the unified parts. For the Damascene, the Eutychian and Monophysite concepts and logical principles cannot be accepted in Christology because they inevitably lead to types of unification that enforce annihilation and change in Christ's composite

⁷⁰⁹ Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione* 327a34–b6 cf. John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis libros de generatione et corruptione commentaria* 188:1–13 cf. *Expos*, 60: 35–39.

parts. The only way to evade the destruction of Christ's humanity and divinity is to accept their distinction according to the third type of unification.

By arguing this way, John does not use explicitly any philosophical concept of motion or change. Instead, he employs an anti-mixture notion, which, in the understanding of the Damascene, highlights changes that are unacceptable in Christ. Here, change is not a metaphysical indicator of createdness, nature, or naturalness, but an ontological indicator of the annihilation and destruction of existing parts.

3.4.4. Natural motions of activity and will in Christ

Now that John has established the logic regarding the correct unification of natures (species) and the inevitable link between nature, power and motion, the next step is to show that this logic also applies to activity and will. In his theological works, John undertakes this task through the homonymic presentation of multiple logical definitions:

1. Activity is a natural power and motion of each substance.⁷¹⁰
2. Activity is a natural innate motion of every substance.⁷¹¹
3. Activity is the natural and first ever-moving power of the intellectual soul, that is an ever-moving reason that eternally springs from it.⁷¹²
4. Activity is an active motion of nature; where active means a motion that derives from oneself.⁷¹³
5. Activity is an active and substantial motion of nature.⁷¹⁴
6. Activity is a fulfilment of potency.⁷¹⁵

In these definitions, similar to the *IE*, John presents *activity* as a motion of nature. In the first two definitions, the Damascene again reminds us that, as in the patristic tradition, nature is equated with substance; therefore, the motion of activity finds its principle not only in nature but also in substance. The first definition belongs to Gregory of Nyssa, which seems to have existed in his work *Treatise to Xenodorus* (*Tractatus ad Xenodorum*—now surviving only as a

⁷¹⁰ ...ἐνέργεια γάρ ἐστιν ἡ φυσικὴ ἐκάστης οὐσίας δύναμις τε καὶ κίνησις (*Expos*, 37,3–4; *Volunt*, 34:4–5; own translation).

⁷¹¹ Ἐνέργειά ἐστι φυσικὴ ἡ πάσης οὐσίας ἔμφυτος κίνησις (*Expos*, 37,4–5; *Volunt*, 34, 5–6; own translation).

⁷¹² Ἐνέργειά ἐστι φυσικὴ καὶ πρώτη ἡ ἀεικίνητος δύναμις τῆς νοερᾶς ψυχῆς, τουτέστιν ὁ ἀεικίνητος αὐτῆς λόγος φυσικῶς ἐξ αὐτῆς αἰὲν πηγάζομενος (*Expos*, 37:10–12; *Volunt*, 34:7–9; own translation).

⁷¹³ Ἐνέργειά (δὲ) ἐστὶ φύσεως κίνησις δραστηκὴ· δραστηκὸν δὲ λέγεται τὸ ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ κινούμενον (*Expos*, 36:13–15; 37:29–30; own translation).

⁷¹⁴ Ἐνέργεια μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ἡ δραστηκὴ καὶ οὐσιώδης τῆς φύσεως κίνησις· (*Expos*, 59:7–8; own translation).

⁷¹⁵ Δυνάμει δὲ ἀποτέλεσμα ἡ ἐνέργεια (*Expos*, 37:16–17; 59:20, 66–68; own translation).

fragment), but can also be found in the *Opusc.*⁷¹⁶ Whether John got it directly from Gregory's work or from the *Opuscula* remains unknown. The second definition is also taken from the *Opusc.*, where it is attributed to Alexander of Alexandria,⁷¹⁷ although it seems to be spurious and most likely a creation of Maximus the Confessor or a later scribe (Maximus' student?).⁷¹⁸

In the third definition, we can first find traces of the Platonic motion of the immortal and self-moving soul, which is mentioned also by the *Dial.*⁷¹⁹ Secondly, we can see that this originally Platonic concept has been interpreted as an activity and power of an intelligible and rational type—an aspect that can be found in the *Treatise to Xenodorus* of Gregory of Nyssa (also in the *Opusc.*) as well as in the explanations of Maximus the Confessor, who linked it specifically with his notion of will.⁷²⁰ But despite these pre-existing concepts, the definition itself is unique and is not used anywhere before the Damascene. Whether this means that John is the final author of this definition or that he used an unknown source of definitions remains uncertain.

The fourth definition of *activity*, as a natural motion that derives from oneself, exists in the *Opusc.*, which attributes it to Gregory of Nyssa,⁷²¹ when in reality it belongs to Nemesisius of Emesa.⁷²² Whether John took it directly from Nemesisius or from the *Opusc.* remains unclear, but he might have had access to both, as the version in *Expos* 36 is closer to Nemesisius,⁷²³ whereas the version in *Expos* 37 is closer to the one in the *Opusc.*⁷²⁴

The fifth definition of *activity*, defined as *an active and substantial motion of nature*, although not exactly in the same form and wording, appears to be inspired by a similar definition in the *Opusc.*, where it is incorrectly attributed to Gregory of Nyssa, although this too seems to be a creation of Maximus or a later scribe.⁷²⁵

Another remarkable definition that bears Aristotelian traces is the definition of *activity* as the fulfilment of potency. Here we can see how the patristic identification of activity with motion, stated already in the *IE*, has created a Christian version of the famous Aristotelian definition of *motion as an actualization of potency*. Even though the Damascene's definition can be found in the

⁷¹⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Tractatus ad Xenodorum* (fragmentum), 14:4–5 cf. *Opusc.*, PG 91, 281 cf. *Expos.*, 37:3–4; *Volunt.*, 34:4–5.

⁷¹⁷ Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc.* 27, PG 91, 280D cf. *Expos.*, 37:4–5; *Volunt.*, 34:5–6.

⁷¹⁸ See 3.2.1.

⁷¹⁹ *Dial.*, 68: 10–17.

⁷²⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *Tractatus ad Xenodorum* (fragmentum), 14:4–6. Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc.* 27, PG 91, 280D–281A. See 2.2.3.

⁷²¹ It is known that during the Middle Ages the *De natura hominis* of Nemesisius was often falsely attributed to Gregory of Nyssa. See Sharples and Eijk 2008, 1–4.

⁷²² Nemesisius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 16.74:6–7 cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc.* 27, PG 91, 281A.

⁷²³ Nemesisius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 16.74:6–7 cf. *Expos.*, 36:13–15.

⁷²⁴ Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc.* 27, PG 91, 281A cf. *Expos.*, 37:29–30.

⁷²⁵ Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc.* 27, PG 91, 281A cf. *Expos.*, 59:7–8.

Opusc and also in the *DP*, John seems to have taken it directly from its original source: the *On the Lord's Prayer* (*De oratione Dominica*) of Gregory of Nyssa. This is evident since the *Opusc* and *DP* refer to this definition anonymously, whereas John clearly knows that it originates from Gregory.⁷²⁶

To explain the content and importance of this Nyssenian definition, which the *Expos* uses three times, the Damascene begins by elaborating on the two ways in which both potentiality (δύναμις) and activity (ἐνέργεια) can be understood. On one hand, potentiality can be a pure aptitude, like a small child's potential to become literate by acquiring grammatical knowledge (first potentiality). On the other hand, in a literate person, grammatical knowledge has already become a habit, making it both potentiality and actuality/activity. It is in actuality/activity (first actuality) because the literate person possesses grammatical knowledge, but it is also in potentiality (second potentiality) because, even though capable of explaining (teaching) it, they are not actually doing so. When a literate person employs this knowledge through explanation (teaching), they are then literate actually and in activity (second actuality).⁷²⁷

Similar summary elaborations on the Aristotelian explanation of potency and activity/actuality (analyzed mainly in his *Metaphysics* Θ, 1–8) can be found in Elias's *Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge*, in Philoponus's *On the Eternity of the World against Proclus*, and also in the *DP*.

Elias's commentary uses these distinctions to reject an apparent conflict between the Platonic understanding of *differentiae* (in actuality within genera) and the Aristotelian one (in potentiality within genera). According to Elias, since Platonic actuality is essentially the first actuality and Aristotelian actuality is the second potentiality, there is no real conflict because the second potentiality and first actuality coincide.⁷²⁸

John Philoponus also employs similar logic in his *On the Eternity of the World Against Proclus*. There, Philoponus uses Aristotle's own distinctions between different kinds of activity and potency to reject Aristotle's notion of the eternity of the world, which he argues as follows: if the creator is always actual as a creator, then the created thing will also always be in actuality; for whenever the cause is actual, the effect is also actual. According to Philoponus, this would indeed be true if activity is understood only as a second actuality (pure act). However, it does not have to be so if one considers God to be a creator in the sense of a first actuality. In this sense, God can be a creator without always creating.⁷²⁹

Despite some conceptual similarities with both Elias's and Philoponus's explanations, the Damascene does not draw directly from them. Unlike these two authors, John uses his concise elaboration to explain the definition of activity in an anti-Monothelite context. Unlike the two Christian Neoplatonists, whose main

⁷²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *De oratione Dominica*, PG 44, 1160 cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc* 14, PG 91, 153 cf. *DP*, 202, 258:5 cf. *Expos*, 59:66–68.

⁷²⁷ *Expos*, 37.

⁷²⁸ Elias, *In Porphyrii isagogen*, 86.

⁷²⁹ John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi*, 46–51.

aim was to demonstrate either the coinciding nature of the second potentiality and first actuality (Elias) or the distinction between first and second actuality (Philoponus), Damascene does nothing of the sort. The Damascene's elaboration seems to be much closer to the *DP*, where the definition of activity, as a fulfillment of potentiality, is also presented in an anti-Monothelite/Monenergist context, without any explanation of its exact use.⁷³⁰

Nevertheless, unlike the *DP*, where the definition of activity is only followed by homonymous explanations of potentiality/power, the Damascene provides a full elaboration that begins with first potentiality and ends with second actuality/activity. By doing so, John's aim is not merely to give a homonymous overview of these differences, but to show that the definition of activity, as a fulfillment (result) of potency, corresponds to the second actuality, where potency (habit) is already activated and applied, and therefore in motion. What John tries to convey here, as already highlighted by Kapriev,⁷³¹ is that potency or power in the Chalcedonian Christological context is never inactive but always active and in motion.⁷³² This not only continues the logic of all previous definitions of activity as motions but also argues against the Monothelite claim that human natural potentialities in Christ were inactive.

But in addition to being equated with motion, activity also remains linked to its potency. As was already mentioned in the *Dial*, motion can exist only in categories where there is potency, and in categories where there is no potency, there is no motion.⁷³³ Since potency is the power of nature, this means that motion cannot be disconnected from its nature.⁷³⁴ By applying this logic to activity, John may therefore ask whether anyone has ever seen an activity that is not a motion of a natural potentiality or a nature where potentiality unmoved and inactive.⁷³⁵ The Christian modified Aristotelian definition therefore aided John in claiming that there cannot be an activity that is not the same as its power and potency. And as activity cannot be separated from its potency, neither can it be separated from its nature or substance, which contains the potency as a principle of its motion.⁷³⁶

This understanding enables John to argue against the Monothelites and Monenergists that if they accept Christ's full humanity, they must also accept that Christ had all the natural potencies (powers) and activities of humanity; otherwise, he would not have been fully human.⁷³⁷ This intertwined link essentially means that when we can observe in Christ activities and motions that are characteristic of human nature and species in general—such as walking, talking, eating, drinking

⁷³⁰ *DP*, 201–203.

⁷³¹ Kapriev 2025, 107.

⁷³² See also *Expos*, 59: 149–151; *Volunt*, 14:1–5.

⁷³³ *Dial*, 62:6–8.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*, 41; 31:3–9.

⁷³⁵ *Expos*, 59: 149–151 cf. *Volunt*, 14:1–5.

⁷³⁶ *Expos*, 59:58–74.

⁷³⁷ *Volunt*, 13.

etc.—⁷³⁸ there is no other possibility but to accept them as actualizations or fulfillments of human natural potency, and therefore as natural human activities. If, on the other hand, we were to attribute these motions to God, as did the Monothelites, then this would lead us to accept them as actualizations (results) of divine potentiality, which would be absurd, as the divine nature does not feel fear or sadness and does not eat or drink. As John Damascene concludes, the fact that activity is a fulfillment of potentiality makes it impossible for uncreated and created natures to share the same nature, potency, and activity.⁷³⁹

In his theological works, John consistently applies the *IE*'s principles of activity, using them in polemics against the Monothelites/Monenergists. As in the *IE*, John's theological works employ the definitions of activity solely to argue for the naturalness of activities and active motions. This is possible because motion serves as an ontological indicator and manifestation of a God-given nature. This Christian metaphysical understanding is, of course, embedded in Aristotle's definition of nature and his view that the study of motion/change is a study of nature. That this Christologically important principle is not originally Christian is well understood by the Damascene:

If every activity is defined as an essential motion of some nature, **as those skilled in these matters have laid down**, where has anyone ever seen a nature that is without motion, or entirely without activity, or found an activity that is not the motion of a natural power?⁷⁴⁰

This brings us again to the *Dial*'s elaborations on motion and nature, where John has decided to present the knowledge of those skilled in these matters. It is not hard to understand how the *Dial*'s presentation of *motion* as an *actualization of potency* supports the Christian definition of activity as a fulfillment of power and potentiality. Although John's theological works mostly do not directly draw from the *Dial*, they nevertheless continue many of its philosophical principles, in which theological concepts themselves were embedded. In one way or another, the *Dial* and its different aspects of motion have all been subjected to patristic metaphysics, where, linked to activity, they become indicators of divinely created nature and naturalness.

This ontological understanding becomes even clearer in the following definitions, manifested both in chapter 37 of John's *Expos* and in chapter 34 of the *Volunt*:

⁷³⁸ Ibid., 36; 42. *Expos*, 59:17–22.

⁷³⁹ *Expos*, 59:67–71.

⁷⁴⁰ Εἰ πάντα ἐνέργεια φύσεώς τινος οὐσιώδης ὀρίζεται κίνησις, ὥς οἱ περὶ ταῦτα δεινοὶ διελήφασιν, ποῦ φύσιν τις εἶδεν ἀκίνητον ἢ παντελῶς ἀνεῖν ἐργητον ἢ ἐνέργειαν εὗρηκεν οὐ φυσικῆς δυνάμεως ὑπάρχουσαν κίνησιν; (*Expos*, 59: 149–151) (Own translation, emphasis added).

1. Activity is a natural power which is indicative of each substance.⁷⁴¹
2. Activity is a natural power and motion of each substance, without which is only non-being.⁷⁴²

These definitions show us that for John Damascene, the existence of a natural activity logically necessitates and indicates the existence of a corresponding nature, and vice versa.⁷⁴³ Conversely, an absence of natural activity simultaneously indicates an absence of nature and vice versa.⁷⁴⁴ As John himself explains in *Expos* 37, since these definitions clearly establish the unbreakable link between nature and active motion, it is impossible to take away from Christ his human natural activities, especially that of the rational one, while at the same time considering Him to be an incarnated God.⁷⁴⁵ In *Volunt* 34, the Damascene also concludes that the link between nature and motion clearly proves that the difference in nature also introduces a difference in its activity. It is therefore utterly contradictory to accept in Christ a human nature but not to accept His human natural activity. For John, these definitions make it clear that a rejection of Christ's natural activity and will is also an eradication of Christ's human nature.⁷⁴⁶

By doing so, the Damascene is again continuing the existing patristic tradition, having taken the first definition from the *Opusc*, which (probably spuriously) attributes it to Alexander of Alexandria.⁷⁴⁷ The second definition is also found in the *Opusc*, where it is correctly attributed to Gregory of Nyssa. It remains unclear whether John took it from the original source of the *Treatise to Xenodorus* of Gregory of Nyssa or from the collection of definitions in the *Opuscula*.⁷⁴⁸

As we can see, compared to the *IE*, which has only two definitions of activity, John's theological works possess a much richer variety of such definitions. On the other hand, this cannot be said about the definitions of *will*, which are defined in John's theological works only in two versions:

⁷⁴¹ Ἐνέργεια πάλιν ἐστὶ φυσικὴ ἢ δηλωτικὴ ἐκάστης οὐσίας δύναμις (*Expos*, 37:9; *Volunt*, 34:6–7; own translation).

⁷⁴² Ἐνέργειά ἐστι φυσικὴ ἢ ἐκάστης οὐσίας δύναμις τε καὶ κίνησις, ἥς χωρὶς μόνον τὸ μὴ ὄν (*Expos*, 37:12–13; *Volunt*, 34:13–14; own translation).

⁷⁴³ *Expos*, 37: 5–7; *Volunt*, 14:3–5.

⁷⁴⁴ *Volunt*, 34:13–19.

⁷⁴⁵ *Expos*, 37:26–30; 58:8–12.

⁷⁴⁶ *Volunt*, 34:14–19.

⁷⁴⁷ Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc* 27, PG 91, 280D cf. *Expos*, 37:7–9; *Volunt*, 34:6–7.

⁷⁴⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Tractatus ad Xenodorum* (fragmentum), 14:4–5) cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc* 27, PG 91, 281A cf. *Expos*, 37:12–13; *Volunt*, 34:13–14.

1. Natural will (θέλημα) is defined as a rational and vital appetite attached solely to natural things.⁷⁴⁹
2. Will (θέλησις) is the first motion of the mind.⁷⁵⁰

Both definitions are the invention of Maximus the Confessor, from whose *Opusc (ad Marinum)* John also took them.⁷⁵¹ The reason for the limited presence of the definitions of will is probably related to the fact that the definitions of activity already contain references to intelligible and rational motion, which is the same as will. As stated by the Damascene: *Whatever we said about will, this we also say about activity.*⁷⁵²

We can therefore conclude that John's main aim in supplying such lists of definitions was to teach his readers the Chalcedonian and authoritative patristic way of thinking when arguing against Monenergists/Monothelites. Even though the general principles of these guidelines were already established in the *IE* and in the *Dial*, John's theological works apply them by engaging in polemics. The underlying metaphysical aspect of this argumentation relies on the understanding of motion, which, equated to activity and will, becomes an ontological indicator of nature and, therefore, of naturalness. By doing so, John essentially followed an already established patristic philosophical tradition. Nevertheless, the Damascene sought out the original sources of these definitions (such as the works of Nemesius and Gregory of Nyssa) and was not satisfied with only handbooks and collections of definitions like the *Opusc*. It seems that, when possible, John tries to use the original source instead of the intermediate ones.⁷⁵³

3.4.5. Christ's passions as natural and non-opposing motions

Next to the concepts of activity and will, another very important element in the Monenergist-Monothelite controversy was that of *passion* (πάθος). As we have already seen, passion was considered by the Monothelites/Monenergists to be a motion of human nature that, in contrast to divine activity and will, inevitably contradicts and opposes it, which is why Christ's human nature could not have had it. We have also seen that even though the Monenergists and Monothelites accepted in Christ the innocent human passions of hunger, thirst, fear, etc., they nevertheless considered them to be initiated and activated by divine activity and

⁷⁴⁹ Διόπερ καὶ οὕτως ὀρίζονται τοῦτο τὸ φυσικὸν θέλημα· Θέλημά ἐστιν ὄρεξις λογικὴ τε καὶ ζωτικὴ μόνων ἡρτημένη τῶν φυσικῶν (*Expos*, 36:55–56; translation by Chase 1958, 248). On the naturality of will see also *Volunt*, 6col 1:67–69.

⁷⁵⁰ ...ἥτις ἐστὶ θέλησις, ἡ πρώτη τοῦ νοῦ κίνησις (*Volunt*, 15:14; own translation).

⁷⁵¹ Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc 1 (ad Marinum)*, PG 91, 13 cf. *Expos*, 36:55–56.

⁷⁵² *Volunt*, 34:1.

⁷⁵³ This has also been observed in some Nemesian concepts that also exist in the works of Maximus the Confessor. According to A. Louth, even though John could have drawn many Nemesian concept from Maximus, he still prefers to take them directly from Nemesius (Louth 2002, 136, n. 121).

will. Christ's human nature feared and felt hunger only because such passions were activated and initiated by divine will and activity. In addition to the Monenergists and Monothelites, the Monophysite Aphthartodocetists⁷⁵⁴ also did not accept passions as intrinsic and natural parts of Christ's humanity. Since Christ's humanity was incorruptible, its passions and sufferings could only have been a result of His divine will that chose to manifest them.⁷⁵⁵

In order to address these and other similar claims, John's theological works strive to provide the reader with the correct understanding of passion through a set of logical definitions. A good example is the collection of definitions of passion in chapter 36 of the *Expos*, which John largely copied from section 16 of *On the Nature of Man* by Nemesius of Emesa, and which again is part of his homonymity project. We have already seen that the definitions of passion in the *IE* were also based on Nemesius. However, unlike the *IE*, which presents the Nemesian parts in a more concise and general manner, chapter 36 of the *Expos* copied an entire section of *On the Nature of Man*. For this reason, the *Expos*'s 36 definitions of passion are also much more detailed.

For example, if the *IE* simply stated that passion is a passive type of motion, then the *Expos* elaborates on this concept with two slightly more detailed definitions:

1. Passion is a motion of an appetitive faculty which is felt as a result of a sensory impression of good or evil.⁷⁵⁶
2. Passion is an irrational motion of the soul due to an impression of good and evil.⁷⁵⁷

As the *Expos* 36 explains, good impressions evoke the passion of desire, whereas bad impressions evoke the passion of anger.⁷⁵⁸ Nemesius uses these two definitions to show that not all passions and affections are bodily (pathological) and involve pain; some are also of the soul and involve the natural impressions of desire and anger.⁷⁵⁹ Nemesius himself most probably took these definitions from two different commentaries on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: one anonymous and the other belonging to the 2nd century AD Peripatetic philosopher Aspasius.⁷⁶⁰

⁷⁵⁴ "A doctrine that arose out of Monophysitism, in Egypt, in the first half of the 6th century. Professed the incorruptibility of Christ's body from his birth. In particular regarding the passion of Christ, it denied the real possibility of his sufferings, accepting the fact that he did suffer by explaining it as a miracle willed by him and not because his body was by nature subject to pain" (Cocchini 2014, 167).

⁷⁵⁵ *Haer*, 84.

⁷⁵⁶ Πάθος ἐστὶ κίνησις τῆς ὀρεκτικῆς δυνάμεως αἰσθητῇ ἐπὶ φαντασίᾳ ἀγαθοῦ ἢ κακοῦ (*Expos*, 36:9–10; translation by Chase 1958, 246).

⁷⁵⁷ Πάθος ἐστὶ κίνησις ἄλογος τῆς ψυχῆς δι' ὑπόληψιν καλοῦ ἢ κακοῦ (*Expos*, 36:10–11; translation by Chase 1958, 246–247).

⁷⁵⁸ *Expos*, 36:11–13.

⁷⁵⁹ Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 16.74:3–6 cf. *Expos*, 36:9–11.

⁷⁶⁰ Sharples and Eijk 2008, 130, ns. 645, 646.

The key contribution of these two definitions is the identification of passion (such as anger and desire) with the involuntary and irrational movements of the soul and its appetitive faculty, which result from good or bad impressions. Even though passions are the affected and caused motions of the soul, they nevertheless derive from nature and are therefore natural.

For this reason, similar to the *IE*, John's *Volunt* and *Expos* also consider it important to repeat the concept of Maximus the Confessor⁷⁶¹ according to which all irrational (ἄλογα) passions that naturally arise from our soul are innocent (ἀδιάβλητα), natural and good, as they do not depend on us (οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) but are instead innate and therefore God-given.⁷⁶² In the Damascene's theological works, the term do not depend on us (οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν), as well as the term irrational (ἄλογα), clearly disconnect these motions from personal choices and individual deliberations, considering them to be functions of our God-given nature.⁷⁶³

Similar to the *IE*, but in a much more detailed way, John's theological works also present multiple lists of such innocent passive motions: hunger (πεῖνα), thirst (δίψα), fatigue (κόπος), salivation (πτύελος), grief (λύπη), pleasure (ἡδονή), disgust (ἄηδία), fear (φόβος), cowardice (δειλία), agony (ἀγωνία), distress (ἀδημονία), disturbance (ταραχή), sweat (ἰδρώς), sloth (ὄκνος), sleep (ὕπνος), anger (θυμός), desire (ἐπιθυμία), cutting/division (τομή), flux (ῥεύσις), joy (χαρά), growth in age (ἡ καθ' ἡλικίαν αὐξησις), progress (προκοπή), death (θάνατος) and destruction (φθορά).⁷⁶⁴

Nevertheless, despite their naturalness and innocence, John also claims, again drawing from Maximus,⁷⁶⁵ that these passions were made a part of human nature by God only after the Fall as divine educative punishments.⁷⁶⁶ But as A. Louth has correctly observed, it is not always clear whether for John all these blameless passions should be linked to the Fall or merely to the created order.⁷⁶⁷

Another way to emphasize that passion is a natural motion of an affected kind is to contrast it with the definition of *activity*. Just like the *IE*, John's *Expos* 36 also finds it important to differentiate *passion*—defined as *a motion in one thing caused by another*—from *activity*, which is *a motion that moves by itself*.⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶¹ Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 55:123–124. See also his *Quaestiones et dubia* 53:15–16.

⁷⁶² *IE*, 9:6–7; *Expos*, 11:41–43; 64:7; *Volunt*, 14:1–5, 18:1–4.

⁷⁶³ *Expos*, 39; 40; 42; *Manich*, 60:14–17; 70:18–20. The term ἐφ' ἡμῖν is an originally an Aristotelian term that for the Damascene designates the exercise of free will (Louth 2002, 140).

⁷⁶⁴ *IE*, 9:2–7; *Expos*, 64:1–12; 67:9–17; 91:78–83; *Jacob*, 81:48–52; *Volunt*, 17:1–18:3; *Sabbat*, 2:8–11; 27:2–5

⁷⁶⁵ Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 55:123–124; *Quaestiones et dubia*, 18:5–27; 53:15–16; *Ambigua ad Thomam* 4.4.

⁷⁶⁶ *Expos*, 64:7–12; 72:2–4. *Sabbat*, 2: 8–11; 27:2–5.

⁷⁶⁷ Louth 2002, 169–170.

⁷⁶⁸ Πάθος ἐστὶ κίνησις ἐν ἐτέρῳ ἐξ ἐτέρου. Ἐνέργεια δὲ ἐστὶ κίνησις δραστικῇ· δραστικὸν δὲ λέγεται τὸ ἐξ αὐτοῦ κινούμενον (*Expos*, 36:13–15; own translation).

However, unlike the *IE*, which merely distinguishes between passion (motion from one in another) and activity (motion from oneself), the *Expos* further clarifies this distinction with the example of forcible actions caused by anger. On one hand, anger is an activity that derives from the irascible faculty of the soul; on the other hand, it is a passion when the soul and the body, affected by the activity of anger, are compelled into forcible actions.⁷⁶⁹ In other words, the motion of anger is both an activity and a passion. It is an activity when it is a self-moving motion of the irascible faculty. But when this activity begins to affect the body and soul by creating new types of affected motions (forcible actions), these new types of motion become passions.

The Damascene employs this originally Galenic distinction⁷⁷⁰ of Nemesis⁷⁷¹ to teach his readers that the difference between activity and passion depends on the perspective from which it is viewed. If an emotion like anger is seen as an affected motion, then it is a passion. If it is perceived as a self-moving and affecting motion, then it is an activity. On one hand, this concept teaches that passions are indeed affected motions. On the other hand, it also relativizes attempts to classify emotions strictly as either passions or activities.

By drawing from Maximus the Confessor,⁷⁷² John's relativism even goes so far as to assert that all motions and activities of the created order may, in reality, be considered passions. Since no created motion, which has begun from non-being to being, can be an absolute self-moving cause and power of its own motion, this implies that all created motions are the affected results of the creative motion and activity of God, who is the only impassive one.⁷⁷³

But in John's *Expos*, we can also find a distinction between activities, understood as motions according to nature (κατὰ φύσιν), and passions, seen as motions contrary to nature (παρὰ φύσιν). Passion can therefore also be a motion that is not according to nature, regardless of whether it derives from oneself or from another.⁷⁷⁴ As examples, John gives us the beating heart, understood as an activity that is according to nature, and the palpitation of the heart, which is a passion contrary to nature.⁷⁷⁵

John here presents us with a Nemesian⁷⁷⁶ concept that is originally Galenic (e.g., *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*⁷⁷⁷), while also incorporating

⁷⁶⁹ *Expos*, 36:13–18.

⁷⁷⁰ See 2.2.2.

⁷⁷¹ Nemesis of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 16.74:6–11.

⁷⁷² Maximus the Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 349D–352B cf. *Expos*, 59:207; *Volunt*, 18:3–5.

⁷⁷³ *Expos*, 59:221–225; *Volunt*, 18:3–5, 10–11.

⁷⁷⁴ *Expos*, 36:18–21.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 36:21–24.

⁷⁷⁶ *Expos* 36:9–24 cf. Nemesis of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 16.74:3–22.

⁷⁷⁷ Sharples and Eijk, 2008, 130, n. 648.

aspects of Stoic philosophy.⁷⁷⁸ It illustrates a case where passions are not distinguished from activities based on the difference between motions that are caused and those that arise from oneself, since both the pulsation and palpitation of the heart originate from oneself.⁷⁷⁹ In this context, the distinction between (natural) activity and (unnatural) passion hinges on whether something is functional and healthy or dysfunctional and ill. This example further complicates the issue, as it suggests that passions can be motions that derive from one's self, contradicting the previous logic, which posits that passions are affected motions. This confusion becomes even bigger when we consider that in his *IE* unnatural passions were presented as sinful choices.

What we see in this rather confusing and complicated compilation is John's attempt to present his reader with the homonymic tradition of passion. It is evident that its use was intended to be Christological and directed against those who denied natural passions as part of the functioning and moving human nature of Christ, for the reasons already stated at the beginning.

Nevertheless, it remains unclear how these homonymic definitions of passion, directly drawn from Nemesius, were meant to be utilized. Given the perplexing character of John's compilation, it might have served as a tool of aporetic argument aimed at undermining the interlocutors' positions through confusion and contradiction.

Another, more plausible aim of such a homonymic compilation seems to be the identification of passions with the different types of motions that are related to nature. This also appears to have been the aim of Nemesius, who stated that passions are the natural and intrinsic parts of human nature, which do not need to be eradicated but, instead, should be correctly guided through choices toward morally excellent ends.⁷⁸⁰ Whether as affected and caused motions of the soul, like anger and desire, or even as self-moving illnesses of the human body, like heart palpitations, passions are intrinsic to human nature (whether post-lapsarian or not).

In the hands of John Damascene, all these definitions became a metaphysical tool against attempts to disconnect Christ's human passions from his human nature. As passions are natural motions, they cannot be separated from the nature from which they derive their potentiality. To claim that Christ's natural passions of fear and grief could be attributed to the divine nature is absurd because not only does the impassible God not feel fear or grief, but it is impossible to attribute created motions to the uncreated nature.⁷⁸¹ The inseparable link between motion and its nature mandates that if Christ took upon himself the entirety of divinely

⁷⁷⁸ The concept of *passion* as motion dates back already to the ancient Stoic philosophers who considered passion an irrational and affecting motion of the soul that is against nature (unnatural) (Marneli 2020, 126, 130).

⁷⁷⁹ Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 16.74:15–20.

⁷⁸⁰ Wessel 2010, 7–10.

⁷⁸¹ *Expos*, 59:55–71.

created human nature, then it logically follows that he also took upon himself the irrational and innocent passions of human nature.⁷⁸²

Moreover, these definitions are important in disproving the Monothelite/Monenergist understanding, which denied Christ's human natural passions due to their opposing character. For this reason, the Damascene considered it important to present his readers with Maximus the Confessor's summary of the patristic concept of *motion*. According to this summary, no type of motion was ever identified by the Fathers as opposing or contradictory. Instead, all the motions of the created order were understood as divinely implanted motions that naturally exist in different types and kinds. Therefore, they did not consider passion to be a contrary motion, but rather an affected kind of motion that, in reality, characterizes all created motions.⁷⁸³ John's compilation of Nemesian definitions regarding the naturality of passions clearly illustrated and argued for the same logic.

All of this allows the Damascene to interpret the activity of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, contrary to the Monothelites/Monenergists, as a thoroughly natural event that did not create any opposition in Christ and did not necessitate the eradication of Christ's human passions. As the Damascene points out, Christ's humanity suffered, feared death and wanted to avoid it in Gethsemane because it was the will of the divine Logos that his human nature could be natural and function naturally. Since the divine Logos knew that the fear of death and the desire to avoid it are natural to humanity, he permitted and willed it for his human nature, which freely and willingly accepted it. As the divine Logos willed his deified human nature to overcome the natural instinct and passion of fear and accept the chalice of death with courage, his human will, by obeying God, naturally and freely willed to do so.⁷⁸⁴

It may therefore be concluded that the idea of using the patristic logic of passion (either as affections or illnesses) as a type of natural motion against the Monothelites and Monenergists originally derives from Maximus the Confessor. He, in turn, was inspired by Nemesius, who based his view on various Galenic and Stoic concepts. However, when presenting the details of this Christological logic, the Damascene repeatedly sets Maximus aside and supplements him with purely Nemesian concepts of passion (e.g., dysfunctional illnesses) that the former had not employed. This means that instead of simply copying from Maximus, John uses his Chalcedonian principles and examples while also supplementing them with his own research on Nemesius.⁷⁸⁵ This is made possible because the Damascene clearly understood not only the link between passion and motion but also motion's metaphysical function as an indicator and manifestation of its own nature.

⁷⁸² *Volunt*, 18:30–34.

⁷⁸³ *Expos*, 59:197–226 cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 349D–352B.

⁷⁸⁴ *Expos*, 62.

⁷⁸⁵ It is very possible that the *De natura hominis* of Nemesius was known to the Damascene as a work of Gregory of Nyssa (See n. 721).

By doing so, John continues to use the authoritative principles found in the *IE* and engages with their common patristic sources in a much more profound way. Interestingly, John's treatment of the definitions and concepts of passion does not suggest the use of any compendium, which again highlights his preference for the original works of his patristic authors.

3.4.6. From natural to hypostatic motions

As we have previously seen, all the definitions of activity, will and passion that entail the concept of motion are, in essence, related to nature and God-given naturality. In other words, at the level of definitions, John's logical concepts of activity, passion and will all aim to emphasize the naturality of these motions. This, of course, does not mean that activity, passion and will cannot be hypostatic, individual and personal. We have already seen how the *IE* provided a brief overview of gnostic wills and how passions, when they result from individual choices, become sins.

Nevertheless, the *IE* did not explicitly refer to hypostatic wills, activities, and passions as motions. It is interesting to note that John never refers to sinful hypostatic passions as motions in any of his works. Furthermore, hypostatic motions of activity and will are mentioned only occasionally and exclusively in the *Volunt*.⁷⁸⁶

According to the Damascene, unlike the three hypostases of the Trinity, every hypostasis or person in the created order has its own particular movement, will and activity.⁷⁸⁷ The main difference between natural and individual motions (on the created level) is that the former is common to individuals who share the same nature, whereas the latter is not commonly shared by individuals of the same species (nature) due to the fact that individuals differ.⁷⁸⁸ The hypostatic motion of will and activity is neither simple nor general; rather, it is a distinct motion (ἰδιώματος) that exists in a particular mode or way (ἰδιότροπος/τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως) and is directed toward a specific object (θελητόν).⁷⁸⁹ Despite this, natural and hypostatic motions are not two distinct sources of movement but rather a transformation of one into the other.

According to the Damascene, the natural power and potentiality of an intellectual soul to will and act is termed will (θέλησις)/activity (ἐνέργεια) or simple will/activity. The nature from which this potency derives is called *active* (ἐνεργητικόν) or *volitional* (θελητικόν) (e.g., human, angel). This mere capacity of will/activity is distinguished from *willing* (θέλειν)/*acting* (ἐνεργεῖν), which is already a form of expression and the first motion of this capacity. John exemplifies it with the distinction between sight and seeing. According to the Damascene,

⁷⁸⁶ *Volunt*, 7, col 2:12–26; 24:19–24; 35:16–19.

⁷⁸⁷ *Volunt*, 48:1–5.

⁷⁸⁸ *Expos*, 36:13–17.

⁷⁸⁹ *Volunt*, 7, col 2:12–26; 24:19–24.

both aspects are natural and belong to nature because all humans not only have the capacity to see, will and act but are also seeing, willing and acting. However, *to will something* (θέλητον) and *to actualize one's act upon something* (ἐνεργητόν, ἐνέργημα) is already a hypostatic and gnomic application of one's natural power and capacity to will and act. This is because a will and activity towards something always entails someone (hypostasis) who wills (*willer* – θέλων) and acts (*actor* – ἐνεργῶν), a particular thing willed and acted upon (τὶ θέλειν, τὶ ἐνεργεῖν), like this or that thing, and in a particular way (τρόπος) of the willing (πῶς θέλειν) and acting (πῶς ἐνεργεῖν), whether in a good or bad manner. The particularity of the thing willed and the manner of willing, of course, differs and varies among created beings because the particular willers, that is, individuals, differ. John's theological works, therefore, assert that on the created level, hypostatic activity and will are nothing more than a personal instantiation (particular thing or particular manner) of a natural power and motion. Only in the Triune God do all three hypostases have one and the same thing that is willed and acted upon, which means that in the Trinity, the hypostatic will upon something (θέλητον) is always the same as the divine natural will.⁷⁹⁰

It is clear that the purpose of these models was to be used against the Monothelites/Monenergists, whose main deviation, according to the Damascene, was the inability to distinguish natural will from hypostatic one and, in general, the incapacity to differentiate between various types of will. It is this ignorance that led them to see will only in relation to the hypostasis.⁷⁹¹ On the one hand, this made them reject human will, as this would have introduced a human hypostasis to Christ, which would have inevitably opposed the divine will; and on the other hand, led them to accept in Christ only one will of the divine hypostasis.

John agrees with the Monothelites that human will and activity possess the risk and potential to fall into sin through hypostatic and gnomic choices, thereby opposing the divine will.⁷⁹² Consequently, he also agrees that Christ could not have had a human hypostatic gnomic will or activity, not only because choice and deliberation involves ignorance, but also because the hypostasis of Christ was the divine Logos.⁷⁹³ However, this does not mean that Christ had only one divine will. On the contrary, because of the hypostatically unified natures, the hypostasis of divine Logos was able to be the one who wills (θέλων) and acts (ἐνεργῶν) both divinely (θεϊκῶς) and humanly (ἀνθρωπίνως). Christ's intellectual human soul had the natural capacity to will/act and was willing/acting. But the final application of the gnomic will and activity directed towards a particular thing and in a particular way was determined by the divine hypostasis (Logos). For example, eating and sleeping were wills/activities of Christ's human nature (as God does

⁷⁹⁰ *Expos*, 36:125–133; 58:38–42; *Volunt*, 7 col 2:1–26; 21–24; 35.

⁷⁹¹ *Volunt*, 20; 28:74–77.

⁷⁹² *Expos*, 26:37–43; 58:30–37; 64:2–6; 94:34–41; *Volunt*, 6 col 2:65–77.

⁷⁹³ *Expos* 36: 100–111; 58:155–162; 62:34, 75; 78:3–10; 91:123–128; *Volunt*, 25:9–13; 27:1–13; 40.

not eat or drink) that were effected and finalized in their particularity (the how and the what) according to the natural will of the divine hypostasis.⁷⁹⁴

The capacity to distinguish in will/activity the different stages of its natural and hypostatic properties, therefore, became an argument to also differentiate in Christ's will/activity its natural and hypostatic properties. With this distinction, John could therefore argue for Christ's natural human volitional and active motions without needing to accept problematic human hypostatic motions in Him.

John's primary inspiration for constructing such an elaborate distinction between different types of wills comes from Maximus the Confessor who also differentiates the natural aspects of will—simple will, willing, and volitional nature—from the gnostic will of the human hypostasis, which involves a specific manner and object. The latter, also linked to sinfulness and ignorance, is entirely absent in Christ.⁷⁹⁵

Unlike Maximus, the Damascene, on the other hand, as we have just seen, both rejects and accepts a gnostic will in Christ. By doing so, John does not contradict himself but instead seems to present a view whereby the gnostic will is not only understood as a negative concept, but as a general reference to the hypostatic willer (θέλων) and his or her capacity to will a particular thing (θελήτων).⁷⁹⁶ Christ therefore lacked only the human gnostic will because he lacked a human hypostasis directed towards willing particular things and in particular ways, as well as ignorant choices and deliberations in the human volitional process.⁷⁹⁷ At the same time, Christ possessed a divine gnostic will which, due to His divine hypostasis (Logos), encompassed both the divine willer (θέλων) and the divine will directed towards a particular thing (θελήτων). The gnostic will of the divine hypostasis, of course, does not contain any deliberation and choice that is undistinguished from the natural will of all the hypostases of the Trinity. Also, unlike the Damascene, Maximus actually nowhere makes an explicit effort to explain (even though he does it implicitly) how exactly and in which volitional stage does the natural will become hypostatic.

But even more importantly Maximus lacks a similar elaboration on activity. We can find something similar in the *Opusc*, which, by referring (spuriously) to Basil of Caesarea, mentions a difference between an *actor* (ἐνεργῶν), *activity* (ἐνέργεια), and *act* (ἐνέργημα). According to it, activity is an active motion,

⁷⁹⁴ *Expos*, 36:112–134; 58:3–7, 38–54.

⁷⁹⁵ Maximus the Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 53C, 292–293. See my discussion in 2.2.3. For Maximus's understanding of gnostic will, see Beeley 2017; Bathrellos 2004, 155–162; Thunberg 1995, 210–213; and Farrell 1989, 120–129. On the relationship between Maximus the Confessor's and the Damascene's understanding of will, see Markov 2015, 204–236; Blowers 2012, 44–50; and Frede 2002, 63–95.

⁷⁹⁶ This has also been well highlighted by Markov 2015, 224.

⁷⁹⁷ It should be mentioned here that it is not always clear in John Damascene whether inclination (γνώμη) is an aspect of nature or hypostasis. On the one hand, John clearly emphasizes its hypostatic nature (*Expos*, 36:106–110; *Volunt*, 25:9–13; 28:74–84; 40), whereas in other places he seems to present it as a natural aspect of the human willing process (*Expos*, 17:15–19; 36:41–94; *Volunt*, 18:11–29).

whereas the actor is the one who is moved to act, and the act is the end result of this motion.⁷⁹⁸ While some similarities exist, the definition in the *Opusc* primarily illustrates the stages of natural activity⁷⁹⁹ without clarifying the distinction between natural and hypostatic, as John Damascene does. This omission most likely indicates that the definition is his own innovative creation.

Inspired by Maximus the Confessor, John Damascene addresses the Monothelite/Monenergist inability to distinguish natural motion from hypostatic motion. He does this in his own unique way by not only highlighting the difference between natural and hypostatic motion but also emphasizing their transformative relationship. All motions of the created order begin as natural motions, which are simple expressions of a species. When these natural motions are applied by an individual in a distinctive manner or mode and directed toward a particular object, they become hypostatic motions. In both cases, motion reveals an ontological reality: in the first case, it reveals nature and naturalness, whereas in the second case, it indicates the hypostasis and individuality.

3.4.7. The immutable and uncreated divine motions of activity and will

As we have already seen, the previous definitions of activity, will and passion were meant to be used in a Christological context to argue for the duality of Christ's natures (divine and human) and their motions. To be fair, John predominantly used them to characterize and make deductions about the created humanity of Christ. He is quite clear that the definitions of passion can only be applied to the humanity of Christ, as the divine nature is impassive. This also generally applies to the definitions of will and activity, which, as we have seen, were mainly used to highlight aspects of Christ's human nature.

In addition, it should not be forgotten—as established in the *Dial*—that John Damascene, despite some references does in general not distinguish motion from change and mutability.⁸⁰⁰ This aspect, which is also repeated in John's theological works, tells us that all motions of the created order are mutable and changeable.⁸⁰¹ Such mutable motions, whether passions, activities, or wills, cannot be applied to God, who is immutable, everlasting, timeless, without a beginning and an end, impassive, etc.⁸⁰²

At the same time, John also talks about divine motion, activity, act, power and will, and even the divine object of will (θελητὸν) and inclination (γνώμη), which for humanity were aspects of hypostatic motion. This poses a question: how

⁷⁹⁸ Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc*, 27, PG 91, 285.

⁷⁹⁹ John seems to be using a similar model in his *Expos* to also illustrate the stages of natural motion (activity) (*Expos*, 59:6–10).

⁸⁰⁰ See 2.1.4.7.

⁸⁰¹ *Expos*, 3; *Volunt*, 18.

⁸⁰² *Expos*, 8; 14.

should one understand these divine motions, and how or whether at all can they be understood through the logical definitions of activity and will?⁸⁰³

First of all, as already mentioned in the cases of hypostatic motion, unlike in the created order, the three hypostases of the Trinitarian God do not have their own proper motions. Instead, in the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have one and the same undistinguished natural motion.⁸⁰⁴ By referring to the one motion of God, John particularly uses expressions such as *one outburst of motion* (ἐν ἔξαλμα τῆς κινήσεως) or *one motion of the three hypostases* (μία κίνησις τῶν τριῶν ὑποστάσεων).⁸⁰⁵

Even when John discusses the activities, wills and motions of God in plurality, and even when he seems to distinguish them in a parceled out way, the activity, will and power of God are, in reality, all one and the same simple and undivided motion of God.⁸⁰⁶ The main reason why the divine motion of the three Trinitarian hypostases is one is that the divine essence/nature is one. According to the Damascene, in the case of God the Trinity, as well as in the case of Christ, one should follow an ancient patristic logic according to which those who have one essence/nature will inevitably also have one activity/will and vice versa. For the Damascene, it is the common activity and will of the three hypostases of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that has led the Church to acknowledge and conclude the oneness of their nature in the first place.⁸⁰⁷ What we see in this notion, taken from Maximus the Confessor,⁸⁰⁸ is an already established metaphysical understanding according to which a motion of a nature allows us to deduce something about the nature from which the motion derives and vice versa.

To deduce the divine nature of Christ, John, probably inspired by the *Opusc*,⁸⁰⁹ also brings in the definition of activity as a *substantial motion of each nature*. For John, this definition indicates that a nature cannot exist nor be known without its proper motion.⁸¹⁰ For this reason, when Christ performed miracles and resurrected Lazarus—a clear indication of divine activity—it becomes evident that Christ also possessed the same divine nature as the Father.⁸¹¹

In his *Volunt*, John also uses the definition of activity as a *natural power and motion of each essence* to illustrate how divine activities also possess divine natural characteristics, which is why they are, like divine nature, above all sense,

⁸⁰³ On the question of divine activities in John Damascene see also Larchet 2010, 423–450.

⁸⁰⁴ *Expos*, 14:16–18. See also *Expos*, 91:29; *Volunt*, 24:10–13, 48:1–5; *Nestor*, 48:1–5.

⁸⁰⁵ *Expos*, 8:244–246, 14:16–18, 36:111–113; *Volunt*, 24:10–13, 48:4–5.

⁸⁰⁶ *Expos*, 8:217–221, 10:11–13; *Volunt*, 41:25–26.

⁸⁰⁷ *Expos*, 59:8–15, 55–63, 72–75, 98–100. See also *Volunt*, 41:27–28; *Nestor*, 21:1.

⁸⁰⁸ John's main inspiration here seems to derive from Maximus the Confessor's *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 337A.

⁸⁰⁹ Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc* 27, PG 91, 280–281.

⁸¹⁰ *Expos*, 59:149–155.

⁸¹¹ *Ibid.*, 59:88–90.

mind, eternity, creation and substance.⁸¹² Elsewhere, John characterizes the divine activities as lofty, immaterial, uncreated and supernatural.⁸¹³

The same, of course, applies to the will. If Christ indeed was God, then He must also have had a divine will, as those who have one essence also have one will.⁸¹⁴ Evidently, Christ's divine will is different from the activities and wills of His created human nature. To illustrate this, John uses a definition found in the *Opusc* (spuriously attributed to Irenaeus of Lyon), according to which *will is an activity of God that is the creative and providential cause of all time, place, age and nature*.⁸¹⁵ Divine will is therefore above the created order, being its divine cause. It is for this reason that it (divine will) can also, similar to the divine essence, be characterized as without a beginning, uncreated and incomprehensible.⁸¹⁶

As we can see, the general ontological concept of motion in the definitions of *activity* and *will* has been clearly transferred by John to also explain divine motions. It seems that the logic of these definitions that characterize natural motions of activity and will can be generally applied to both created and uncreated natures. The only difference is that created natural motions are changes, whereas uncreated ones are not. For John, the undivided link between nature and its motion, where the former is a principle of the latter and the latter an indication of the former, can also be clearly applied to the case of God, which is why the divine motions (will, activity) should bear the same characteristics as the immutable and uncreated divine nature. It should be mentioned that in his elaborations on the divine motions of activity and will, John is not particularly original, as he borrows and synthesizes concepts, largely from Maximus the Confessor and the *Opusc*.⁸¹⁷

3.4.7.1. Is there a distinction between divine essence and activity?

John's conceptual link between nature and motion, and its use in explaining the activity and will of God, anachronistically also guides us to the Hesychast controversy that emerged during the 14th century. As is well known, the Hesychasts' mystical experience (with Gregory of Palamas as their protagonist) led them to claim that in God there is a distinction between His unknowable essence and the knowable activities (energies). In this distinction, the uncreated God remains incommutable and unknowable in His essence, but knowable and commutable in

⁸¹² *Volunt*, 34:2–5. Originally a definition of Gregory of Nyssa but existing also in the *Opuscula*: Gregory of Nyssa, *Tractatus ad Xenodorum* (fragmentum), 14:4–5 cf. *Opusc*, PG 91,281. See also 3.4.4.

⁸¹³ *Expos*, 11:4–5; 59:127–135; 86:77.

⁸¹⁴ *Volunt*, 41:27–28.

⁸¹⁵ «Θέλεις μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἐνέργεια θεοῦ ἐστὶ» κατὰ τὸν μακάριον Εἰρηναῖον «παντὸς χρόνου καὶ τόπου καὶ αἰῶνος καὶ πάσης φύσεως ποιητικὴ τε καὶ προνοητικὴ αἰτία» (*Volunt*, 28:1–3; own translation). Cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc* 26, PG 91, 276.

⁸¹⁶ *Volunt*, 41:22–24; *Manich*, 77:10.

⁸¹⁷ On Maximus the Confessor's concept of divine activities see Larchet 2010, 331–421, 449–450.

His uncreated activities, which an ascetic experienced directly rather than indirectly via the created order, as was argued by the Byzantine humanists.⁸¹⁸

It has been traditionally claimed by (mainly Orthodox) scholars (with far from unanimous acceptance) that Gregory of Palamas and the Hesychast essence/energy distinction essentially followed the earlier traditions of the Greek Fathers, including that of John Damascene.⁸¹⁹ D. Bradshaw points out that Palamas even seems to use Damascene's definitions of activity to support his arguments.⁸²⁰

But does the Damascene's logic of nature and its indicative motion (activity and will) allow for any sort of distinction in the one, simple, and undivided God? The only place where John allows for some sort of acknowledged distinction (διάκρισις) in the Trinity is when he distinctively (διακεκριμένως) brings out the hypostatic names of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁸²¹ The hypostatic names refer to the mutual relationship and the way of existence of the divine persons without introducing any real distinction or composition. According to the Damascene, who here draws from Gregory of Nazianzus, the hypostatic distinction (διαίρεσις) in the Trinity may be perceived only in thought and conception (ἐπινοία).⁸²²

Even though John never applies any known concepts of distinction to the divine essence and activities, it cannot be denied that he still seems to introduce a latent, undisclosed or non-manifested distinction. What is clear is that for John, nature and its motion (activity, will) are not the same thing: the former is a principle, whereas the latter is the expression and manifestation of the former. The fact that an activity makes the nature known, and that one can be deduced from another, and that both essence/nature and its motion are indicative of each other, also shows that they are not the same thing. Nowhere in John's works can we find the concept of the so-called *actus purus* of the Aristotelian prime unmoved mover, where substance (essence-potency) is identified with energy (actuality-activity), meaning that there is no distinction between them.⁸²³

But most importantly, John Damascene—just like the preceding patristic tradition since Basil of Caesarea⁸²⁴—also distinguishes the imparticipable, inaccessible, hidden and transcendent essence/nature of God from the participable and accessible motion (activity/will) of God, the latter of which is often depicted in a direct and close relation with the created order. As John clearly brings out in his *Volunt*, even though the divine nature of Christ is imparticipable, it nevertheless becomes participable through its (uncreated) activity.⁸²⁵ The

⁸¹⁸ For further reading: Torrance 2009, 47–70; Russell 2017, 494–508; Louth 2017, 509–523.

⁸¹⁹ Bradshaw 2013, 27–28.

⁸²⁰ Ibid., 2013a, 257; 2023, 131, 152.

⁸²¹ *Expos*, 10:1–4; *Jacob*, 78:25–26.

⁸²² *Expos*, 8: 249–250 cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *In laudem Heronis philosophi (orat. 25)*, PG 35, 1221.

⁸²³ Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1071b20. See also Bradshaw 2023, 29–31.

⁸²⁴ Bradshaw 2023, 14–21.

⁸²⁵ *Volunt*, 11:1–10.

fundamental ground rule of this distinction is, of course, the already mentioned logic, according to which nature can be known and deduced only via its proper motion (activity, will). This logical distinction between the unknowable and knowable aspects of God, therefore, leads John toward a latent and even inevitable distinction between the essence and activity of God.

Another example where John seems to make a distinction between divine essence and activities derives from his analysis of the names of God. According to the Damascene, who here follows Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite, the most proper name for God is He Who Is (ὁ ὢν), which refers to the being (τὸ εἶναι) of God, without stating what this being is (οὐ τοῦ τί εἶναι). This name tells us that God is the absolute being that contains in Himself all that is. As this name refers directly to the being of God and to the divine being, it is deemed by John to be the most proper name of God.⁸²⁶

But there is also the name God (θεός). John, largely drawing from Gregory of Nazianzus, makes an etymological analysis of the Greek word “God” (θεός), which, according to him, is either linked to the verb “to run” (θέειν), as God runs through all things and cares for them; “to burn” (αἶθειν), as God is a fire that burns all evil; or “to see” (θεᾶσθαι), as God saw in His eternal will all things before they came to pass.⁸²⁷

After this analysis of the divine names, John Damascene concludes, probably following a logic similar to that of Gregory of Nyssa, that the former name refers to the essence of God whereas the latter refers to the activity and will of God.⁸²⁸ In this example, one can notice how the distinction between the essence and activity of God is fundamentally a distinction between what God is and what God does in relation to the created order.

Another example of such a distinction becomes evident when John discusses the place of God:

Now, God, being immaterial and uncircumscribed, is not in a place. For He, who fills all things and is over all things and Himself encompasses all things, is His own place. However, God is also said to be in a place; and this place where God is said to be is there where His activity is plainly expressed. Now, He does pervade all things without becoming mixed with them, and to all things He communicates His activity in accordance with the fitness and receptivity of each in accordance with their purity of nature and will, I mean to say.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁶ *Expos*, 9:10–13, 21–22; 12:2–9 cf. Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, 183:1–11.

⁸²⁷ *Expos*, 9:14–20, 22 cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *De filio (orat 30)*, 18:1–10.

⁸²⁸ *Expos*, 9:21–22 cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabium quod non sint tres dei*, 55:16–20.

⁸²⁹ Ὁ μὲν οὖν θεὸς ἄυλος ὢν καὶ ἀπερίγραπτος ἐν τόπῳ οὐκ ἔστιν· αὐτὸς γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ τόπος ἐστὶ τὰ πάντα πληρῶν καὶ ὑπὲρ τὰ πάντα ὢν καὶ αὐτὸς συνέχων τὰ πάντα. Λέγεται δὲ ἐν τόπῳ εἶναι. Καὶ λέγεται τόπος θεοῦ, ἔνθα ἔκδηλος ἡ ἐνέργεια αὐτοῦ γένηται. Αὐτὸς μὲν γὰρ διὰ πάντων ἀμιγῶς διήκει καὶ πᾶσι μεταδίδωσι τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἐνεργείας κατὰ τὴν ἐκάστου ἐπιτηδεϊότητα καὶ δεκτικὴν δύναμιν, φημὶ δὴ τὴν τε φυσικὴν καὶ προαιρετικὴν καθαρότητα·

Here again, God is said to be, by essence, uncircumscribed and above all place. But at the same time, this inaccessible God is also in a place, where He becomes expressive and communicable to the created order via His activity, without becoming mixed with them. This element highlights that even though the communicable divine activity pervades the created order, it nevertheless remains unmixed with it, meaning that it remains uncreated.

A similar distinction also becomes manifest in the analogy of the Sun and its rays:

True reason teaches us that the Divinity is simple and has one simple activity which is good and which affects all things, like the rays of the Sun which warm all things and exercise their force in each in accordance with the natural capacity of each having received such power of activity from God who created them.⁸³⁰

The main interpretation of this example should be understood in the context of the chapter, which aims to show how the distinctive aspects of God serve as a pathway to God without accessing His divine essence and without undermining the unity and simplicity of God.

First, John discusses God as a simple being who also has one simple activity. The use of the term “simple” to characterize both God’s being (essence) and His activity indicates that they are both part of the one and the same divinity. The analogy of the Sun and its rays, which influence created reality, helps to illustrate the relationship between the divine being and its activity (rays of the Sun), as well as between the divine activity and creation (rays that affect the created order) according to the capacity of each. The created order, depending on its developmental level, can thus be in contact with the divine without accessing the divine essence. Secondly, John also discusses the power and activity of created beings, which are the affected (passive) results of the divine activity that created them. In other words, John speaks of two types of activities, where the uncreated activity of God effectively activates the activities of created beings.

It should be noted that Gregory Palamas, by referencing the patristic tradition and especially Gregory of Nazianzus, occasionally employs the theme of the Sun and its rays to argue for the essence/energy distinction.⁸³¹ Gregory indeed attempts to use the analogy of the Sun, rays and light, but he does not do so to characterize divine activity; rather, he uses it to illustrate the undivided oneness of the three persons of the Godhead. It should be mentioned, of course, that

καθαρώτερα γὰρ τὰ αὐτὰ τῶν ὑλικῶν καὶ τὰ ἐνάρετα τῶν κακία συνεζευγμένων. Λέγεται τοιγαροῦν θεοῦ τόπος ὁ πλέον μετέχων τῆς ἐνεργείας καὶ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ (*Expos*, 13:9–18; translation by Chase 1958, 197).

⁸³⁰ Ὁ δὲ ἀληθὴς λόγος διδάσκει ἀπλοῦν εἶναι τὸ θεῖον καὶ μίαν ἀπλὴν ἔχειν ἐνέργειαν, ἀγαθὴν, πᾶσι τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦσαν κατὰ τὴν τοῦ ἡλίου ἀκτῖνα, ἥτις πάντα θάλπει καὶ ἐν ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν φυσικὴν ἐπιτηδεϊότητα καὶ δεκτικὴν δύναμιν ἐνεργεῖ ἐκ τοῦ δημιουργήσαντος θεοῦ τὴν τοιαύτην εἰληφὼς ἐνέργειαν (*Expos*, 10:11–16; translation by Chase 1958, 191).

⁸³¹ Gregory Palamas, *Orationes antirrheticæ contra Acindynum* 1.7, 24:1–7; 6.16, 55:19–26; *Orationes dogmaticæ* 2.40:19–27. See also Torrance 2009, 51, 60–68.

Gregory ultimately discards this analogy, considering it a dangerous example that might lead someone to think that God is composite. The second problem with this example is that it may give the impression that the Father is the essence, whereas the Son and the Holy Spirit are merely His powers, similar to how the Sun is the essence and its rays are impersonal qualities. According to Gregory, the third problem is that the rays of the Sun are moved by the Sun, which could suggest that some part of God has been caused and set in motion.⁸³² The reason for such a negative attitude seems to stem from Apollinaris, who, according to Gregory, also used this analogy to explain (in a subordinate way) the hierarchical and qualitative reduction of the Trinitarian hypostases without preserving the power of the Godhead.⁸³³

Nevertheless, the Palamite application of this concept has its precedents in the works of Macarius, Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor.⁸³⁴ Gregory of Nyssa points out that God is present everywhere without being diminished, through the infinite and undefined rays of divinity that fall upon each of us, just as the rays of the Sun do not diminish when they reach every one of us.⁸³⁵ There is also the thought of Maximus the Confessor, who argues that one's spirit can grasp the activity but not God Himself, just as one can grasp the rays of the Sun but not the Sun itself.⁸³⁶

Although both examples are similar to John's and may have even influenced him, they differ from the Damascene's analogy of the Sun and its rays, which illustrates how uncreated divine activity brings forth and makes created activities functional. As the concept of divine activities affecting created activities was a known theme in pre-Damascene patristic tradition,⁸³⁷ John likely simply makes his own personal composition with the analogy of the Sun and its rays.

This, on the other hand, brings us to another example in which John refers to the deification of human beings. This process does not occur by participating in the divine essence but through divine illumination.⁸³⁸ For John, divine illumination is a property or characteristic of the divine nature, which equates to divine activity/operation:⁸³⁹

⁸³² Gregory of Nazianzus, *De spiritu sancto (orat. 31)*, 32:1–33:17.

⁸³³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistulae theologicae*, SC 208, 101.66–68.

⁸³⁴ Larchet 2010, 223, 384.

⁸³⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *De infantibus praemature abreptis*, 85. See also Larchet 2010, 223.

⁸³⁶ Maximus the Confessor, *In librum de divinis nominibus scholia*, PG 4, 188AB.

⁸³⁷ See for example the already mentioned claim of Maximus the Confessor that all activities of the created order are the affected (passive) results of divine activity (3.4.5.).

⁸³⁸ *Expos*, 26:34–36.

⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

Then there is the fact that the divine irradiation and operation are one, simple and undivided; and that, while it is apparently diversely manifested in divisible things, dispensing to all of them the components of their proper nature, it remains simple.⁸⁴⁰

As we can see, divine illumination or activity is a divine characteristic that belongs to His uncreated essence, yet it is distinguished from His essence because it is accessible (via deification) to the created order, whereas the essence of God remains inaccessible. The same applies to the angels, saints, and prophets, whose deification also occurs through their participation in the activity of God. For this reason, the saints, as well as all created matter, can be venerated, as they are vessels filled with divine activity and grace. According to the Damascene, this type of relational participation of the angels, prophets and saints differs from the hypostatic participation of the flesh and humanity of Christ in the divine nature.⁸⁴¹

This distinction even makes John claim that by participating in the holy communion (Eucharist), where Christ's human and divine natures are hypostatically unified, human beings participate not in the divine activity, but rather in Christ's two natures. In this context, Christ's human nature is participated in a bodily manner while His divine nature is participated spiritually.⁸⁴²

It should be mentioned, of course, that with this distinction, John does not want to overrule his previous logic, according to which divine nature is non-accessible. What seems to be his aim here is to show (with Nestorianism in mind) that with the incarnation of the Word of God, the two natures were not unified through a mere relational and moral activity, as was the case between God and the prophets, but instead hypostatically. This last union is superior to any union ever seen between God and man. Through holy communion (the blood and body of Christ), this hypostatic union of the two natures becomes participable by hypostatic human beings. In other words, one does not directly participate in the divine nature, but through holy communion, one participates in the hypostatically unified natures.

John's polemics against Nestorianism, which views the union through activity as merely a moral union (as opposed to a hypostatic union), undoubtedly lead him to make claims that, as Larchet points out, are clumsy and problematic. Dominated by Christological polemics, John fails to notice the contradiction that his explanation creates. This is further confirmed by the fact that elsewhere, John has no problem accepting that the created body of Christ is venerated because it

⁸⁴⁰ Καὶ ὅτι ἡ θεία ἔλλαμψις καὶ ἐνέργεια μία οὐσα καὶ ἀπλὴ καὶ ἀμερὴς καὶ ἀγαθοειδὴς ἐν τοῖς μεριστοῖς ποικιλλομένη καὶ τούτοις πᾶσι τὰ τῆς οἰκείας φύσεως συστατικὰ νέμουσα μένει ἀπλῇ, πληθυνομένη μὲν ἐν τοῖς μεριστοῖς ἀμερίστως καὶ τὰ μεριστὰ πρὸς τὴν ἐαυτῆς ἀπλότητα συνάγουσα καὶ ἐπιστρέφουσα (*Expos*, 14:19–23; translation by Chase 1958, 202).

⁸⁴¹ *Imag* I, 19:15–30; II, 14:16–20; III, 34:13–21.

⁸⁴² *Imag* I, 16:14–32; II, 14:16–20. See also Larchet 2010, 445.

is filled with divine activities, just like the blood and body of Christ in holy communion.⁸⁴³

Remarkably, all these examples not only contain a latent distinction but also tend to emphasize a real distinction between the divine essence and activity, where the latter is presented in a rather objectifying way. At the same time, John has not indicated that these activities of God can be understood as created activities in any way.

This understanding also becomes manifest in the divine act of creation:

Now, creation, even if it was made at a later time, was not of the essence of God, but was brought from nothing into being by His will and power.⁸⁴⁴

According to the Damascene, the created reality came to be not through direct contact with the divine essence but through the divine will and power, which, as we have seen, are understood by the Damascene as natural motions. Here we have an example where it would be very difficult to claim that a contact between the created and uncreated order must always be indirect, requiring some higher intermediate created aspects, as this would imply that before divine creation, there was another kind of created reality. In this case, the divine will and power are not only distinguished from the divine essence but also conceived as pre-creational and therefore uncreated.

At the same time, it should be acknowledged that in most cases, John does not clarify whether the communicable but uncreated divine activity, will and power are accessed by the created order directly or indirectly. Even though it is often left open, John nevertheless seems to lean toward the idea of indirect contact:

..., one should know that since we are men clothed in this gross flesh, we are unable to think or speak of the divine, lofty and immaterial activities of the Godhead unless we have recourse to images, types and symbols that correspond to our own nature.⁸⁴⁵

This concept, which can also be found to some degree in pre-Damascene patristic tradition,⁸⁴⁶ suggests that even though the uncreated activity of God is participable, it is nevertheless participable only indirectly through the higher forms that correspond to our created nature.

⁸⁴³ *Imag III*, 26:47–59.

⁸⁴⁴ ...ἢ γὰρ κτίσις, εἰ καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα γέγονεν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐκ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ οὐσίας, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι βουλήσει καὶ δυνάμει αὐτοῦ παρήχθη (*Expos*, 8:56–58; translation by Chase 1958, 178).

⁸⁴⁵ ...εἰδέναι χρή, ὡς ἀνθρώπους ὄντας ἡμᾶς καὶ τὸ παχὺ τοῦτο σαρκίον περικειμένους τὰς θείας καὶ ὑψηλὰς καὶ αὐλούς τῆς θεότητος ἐνεργείας νοεῖν ἢ λέγειν ἀδύνατον, εἰ μὴ εἰκόσι καὶ τύποις καὶ συμβόλοις τοῖς καθ' ἡμᾶς χρησαίμεθα (*Expos*, 11:3–6; translation by Chase 1958, 191).

⁸⁴⁶ Larchet 2010, 440.

This indirect participation of divine activity also becomes evident in the following example:

That God, although invisible by nature, becomes visible through His activities we know from the arrangement of the world and from its governing.⁸⁴⁷

In this example, drawn from Gregory of Nyssa,⁸⁴⁸ we can see how the knowledge of divine activities becomes visible and manifest through the arrangement of the world, which means that divine activities are perceived by us through the created order.⁸⁴⁹ Hence, even though God becomes visible and accessible to humans through His divine activities, it all still takes place indirectly via other mediating aspects of the created order.

In another part, John also states that even though God did not communicate His essence or the knowledge of it to us, this does not mean that we would be left in total ignorance about Him.⁸⁵⁰ On the contrary:

... in His ineffable goodness He sees fit to be named from things which are on the level of our nature, that we may not be entirely bereft of knowledge of Him but may have at least some dim understanding.⁸⁵¹

Here again we can see that John discusses the divine names that serve as analogies of created nature, allowing humans to avoid total ignorance of God. This element is also emphasized in John's theology of holy images, where icons are considered to be memorials that guide us toward divine activity as "we look to the invisible by means of the visible picture."⁸⁵²

The general logic of John Damascene that arises from these examples is that the created human mind needs the aid of analogies from the created order to access the uncreated order. It seems that for John the ontological difference between the uncreated and the created is simply too great for direct contact to be possible.

We may therefore conclude that, without accepting any known or established systematic form of distinction, John nevertheless distinguishes divine activity, will and power from the divine essence/nature, with the former being (indirectly) participable and the latter imparticipable. For the Damascene, this distinction appears to be not just a repetition of an earlier patristic tradition but also a concept

⁸⁴⁷ Ὅτι φύσει ἀόρατος ὁ θεός, ὁρατὸς ταῖς ἐνεργείαις γίνεται ἐκ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου συστάσεως καὶ κυβερνήσεως γνωσκόμενος (*Expos*, 13:73–74; translation by Chase 1958, 200).

⁸⁴⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Orationes viii de beatitudinibus*, PG 44, 1269.

⁸⁴⁹ The same interpretation is also supported by Torrance 2009, 67.

⁸⁵⁰ *Expos*, 12b:4–8.

⁸⁵¹ Δι' ἄφατον οὖν ἀγαθότητα ἠδὲ δόκησεν ἐκ τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς ὀνομάζεσθαι, ἵνα μὴ ἀμέτοχοι παντελῶς ὦμεν τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐπιγνώσεως, ἀλλ' ἔχωμεν κἄν ἀμυδρὰν αὐτοῦ ἔννοιαν (*Expos*, 12b:8–10; translation by Chase 1958, 194).

⁸⁵² *Imag I*, 17:21–23. Ἐν ὑπομνήσει τοῦ ἀντιτύπου γράμματος ὁρῶντες τὸν ἀόρατον διὰ τῆς ὁρωμένης γραφῆς (*Imag III*, 126:6–7; translation by Louth 2003, 152).

that, consciously or unconsciously, follows a metaphysical understanding of motion. This understanding distinctively derives from the nature of motion while also serving as a communicable indication and characterization of that nature. It is for this reason that John has no problem accepting the validity of the definitions of activity and will, which follow the same metaphysical principle in the case of God. Additionally, it explains why divine activity and will always carry the same uncreated characteristics as divine nature, serving as its communicable expression and manifestation that is participated in by human beings through the analogies and means of the created order.

3.4.8. Christ's microcosmic motions

As we have already seen in the *Dial* and *IE*, a potentially important logical tool against non-Chalcedonian Christological arguments was the lists of different types of life and species, along with their characteristic functions and motions. The *Dial* provided a modified and developed Nemesian-Poprhryian hybrid in the version of five kind of motion, while the *IE* presented the version of the five kinds of activity. To my great surprise, in his theological works John Damascene did not consider it important to incorporate either of these versions into his theological argumentation. However, this does not mean that he does not follow a similar logic in different forms. We have already seen how, in his arguments for the existence of God, John used the Aristotelian six kind of motion together with the intelligible motion of choice to characterize the functionality of all macrocosmic created reality.

In John's Christological arguments, the list of different kinds of motion continues to play an important role, although their philosophical context shifts from macrocosm to microcosm.⁸⁵³ According to John Damascene, human nature is a *small world* and a miniature version of our large world (macrocosm) because it unites all the fullness of the motions and functionalities of the different natures and species of the created order (sensible and intelligible), being itself essentially a combination of them.⁸⁵⁴ With intelligible creation, humans share their natural self-governing motions of thinking, reasoning and willing. With sensible reality, humans share inanimate and irrational motions. With inanimate things, humans share their material bodies and the four elements of fire, air, water and earth. With plants, they share the natural motions of nourishment, growth and generation, and with animals, they share all the previously mentioned motions, plus the capacity for bodily movement, sensations and appetites such as anger and desire, as well as the motions of breathing and movement from place to place.⁸⁵⁵

One important alternative version of this microcosmic concept in John's works is the Aristotelian three-part distinction of the powers and functions of

⁸⁵³ See Conger 1922; Lilla 2014b, 651; Thunberg 1995, 132–141.

⁸⁵⁴ *Expos*, 26:24–26, 82–85; *Volunt*, 15:1–2; *Transfig*, 18:17–18. See also Louth 2002, 134.

⁸⁵⁵ *Expos*, 26:71–77; *Volunt*, 15:1–17.

living things that also exist in the human soul. As we have already seen, this tripartite system influenced the later Neoplatonist interpretation of the Porphyrian tree, as well as the Damascene's macrocosmic five kinds of motions (*Dial*) and activities (*IE*).⁸⁵⁶

As we will see in the following analysis, the tripartite system will help John address a wide range of Christological challenges, the first of which is Monothelitism:

Now, that the will naturally belongs to man is evident from the following consideration. Not counting the divine, there are three kinds of life: the vegetative, the sensible and the intellectual. Proper to the vegetative are the motions of nutrition, growth and reproduction; proper to the sensitive is the motion by impulse; and proper to the rational and intellectual is the motion of self-governance. Therefore, if the nutritive motion is proper to the vegetative life and the impulsive to the sensitive, then surely the capacity of self-governance is proper to the rational and intellectual. But self-governance is nothing else but the will. Consequently, since the Word was made flesh animate, intellectual and self-governing, He was also made volitive.⁸⁵⁷

By using the Aristotelian three types of life/motion, John first established a conceptual ground rule, according to which each type of life, both macro- and microcosmically, must have its own particular motions and functionalities. He also established that, alongside the motions of vegetative and sensitive life, there is a functionality of rational life, which for Aristotle was thought and contemplation, but which for the Damascene is nothing more than the self-governing motion of the will. In other words, if a generally agreed (Aristotelian) logic states that the rational aspect of human nature must have its proper functions and motions, then how can the Monothelites deny this in the humanity of Christ? As we can see, John again operates with an ontological understanding, according to which motion indicates nature and vice versa. If the vegetative nature of plants necessitates nutritive motions, and the sensitive nature of animals necessitates impulsive movement, then the rational and intellectual human nature of the

⁸⁵⁶ Aristotle distinguished in the human soul three types of powers or faculties: the nutritive (θρεπτικόν) power of the plants which also involves reproduction and growth, the sentient (αἰσθητικόν) power of the animals which also involves appetite and local motion, and the intellectual (νοητικόν) power of the mind (νοῦς), which involves contemplation and thought. See 2.1.6.3.

⁸⁵⁷ "Ὅτι δὲ φυσικῶς πρόσεστι τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἡ θέλησις, ἐντεῦθεν δῆλον. Ὑπεξαίρουμένης τῆς θείας τρία εἶδη ζωῆς εἰσιν· ἡ φυτική, ἡ αἰσθητική, ἡ νοερά. Τῆς μὲν οὖν φυτικῆς ἴδιον ἡ θρεπτική, ἡ αὐξητική, ἡ γεννητική κίνησις· τῆς δὲ αἰσθητικῆς ἡ καθ' ὁρμὴν κίνησις· τῆς δὲ λογικῆς καὶ νοερᾶς ἡ αὐτεξούσιος. Εἰ οὖν κατὰ φύσιν πρόσεστι τῇ φυτικῇ ἡ θρεπτικὴ καὶ τῇ αἰσθητικῇ ἡ καθ' ὁρμὴν κίνησις, κατὰ φύσιν ἄρα πρόσεστι καὶ τῇ λογικῇ καὶ νοερᾷ ἡ αὐτεξούσιος· αὐτεξουσιότης δὲ οὐδὲν ἕτερόν ἐστιν εἰ μὴ ἡ θέλησις· γεγονώς τοίνυν ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἔμψυχος, νοερά καὶ αὐτεξούσιος, γέγονε καὶ θελητικός (*Expos*, 58: 55–63; translation by Chase 1958, 298).

incarnate Christ necessitates movements of self-governance and will. But this same logic can also be applied separately against Monenergism:

It is further necessary to know that life itself is an activity, and activity the change of the animal. So also is the whole vital process—the motions of nutrition and growth, or the vegetative; the impulsive, or the sensitive; and the intellectual and free willing motions. Activity, moreover, is the result of a potentiality. So, if we find all these things in Christ, then we shall declare that He also has a human activity.⁸⁵⁸

Unlike the previous pericope, where attention was centered on intelligible functionality, here all three types—vegetative, sensitive and rational—become equally important. However, the argument remains the same: if activity is motion, and motion the actualization of potentiality (which resides in nature), then this means that activity is always a result of a natural potentiality. If Christ indeed was a microcosmic human then he clearly possessed the vegetative functions of growth and nutrition, but also impulsive and intellectual functions. As motion always actualizes a natural potentiality then there is no other possibility but to consider them human activities because the divine nature does not grow nor has impulsive movements. Here again, motion serves as a manifestation of nature, which is why it can only have the characteristics of nature.

A similar, albeit less systematic reference to the functionalities of human nature is also used against the Monophysites. To address the Jacobite denial of Christ's dual nature (divine and human), John again turns to the Aristotelian tripartite distinction in the functionalities of the human soul: intellectual power, vital (vegetative) power of nutrition and growth and the sensitive (animalistic) power.⁸⁵⁹ The Damascene uses this illustration to show that even according to general (Aristotelian) understanding, humanity has its natural (common) motions and functionalities. And as there cannot be a motion or functionality that does not derive its potency from nature, this means that human motions can only come from human nature. Christ's life on Earth clearly showed us that he had human natural motions, which means that in addition to the divine nature, he must also have had a distinctive human nature. As John has already clarified in his definitions of *activity*: a natural motion always serves as a reference to nature.

As we can see, the Aristotelian tripartite distinction of the human soul's functioning motions serves as a deductive tool. It is used not only to assert Christ's active and volitional human motions against the Monothelites and Monenergists but also to argue for His human nature in the first place, further highlighting the ontological and indicative link between motion and nature.

⁸⁵⁸ Δεῖ δὲ γινώσκειν, ὅτι αὐτὴ ἡ ζωὴ ἐνέργειά ἐστι καὶ ἡ τροπὴ τοῦ ζώου ἐνέργεια, καὶ πᾶσα ἡ τοῦ ζώου οἰκονομία ἢ τε θρεπτικὴ καὶ αὐξητικὴ ἡγουν φυτικὴ καὶ ἡ καθ' ὁρμὴν κίνησις ἡγουν αἰσθητικὴ καὶ ἡ νοερὰ καὶ αὐτεξούσιος κίνησις. Δυνάμεως δὲ ἀποτέλεσμα ἡ ἐνέργεια. Εἰ οὖν ταῦτα πάντα θεωροῦμεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, ἄρα καὶ ἀνθρωπίνην ἐνέργειαν ἐπ' αὐτοῦ φήσομεν. (*Expos*, 59:17–21; translation by Chase 1958, 304).

⁸⁵⁹ *Jacob*, 82: 7–8.

The inspirational background for this logic derives from the *Disputations with Pyrrhus* (*Disputatio cum Pyrrho*) of Maximus the Confessor, who not only was the first to use it in a Christological argument, but who also interprets Aristotelian thought and contemplation as the self-governing will.⁸⁶⁰ At the same time, the idea to use it against the Monophysites (Jacobites) seems to be John's personal deduction, as a similar use cannot be found in Maximus or elsewhere.

And last but not least, the list of the Aristotelian six kinds of motion—genesis, destruction, alteration, increase, decrease, and local motion—along with its intelligible extension, which in the *Expos* was used as an ontological reference to creation to argue for the existence of God, also finds application in a Christological debate. In his *Volunt*, John presents it in a chapter that begins by defining nature as a God-given law and power implanted in each species for its movement and rest. To illustrate these natural movements, John of Damascus employs the Aristotelian kinds of motion, adding to them an entire process of willing motion, instead of the *change via choice* found in the *Expos*. By doing so, John presents his reader different God-given natural functionalities—from local motion to willing and thinking—of the microcosmic human nature. In other words, if a similar list in the *Expos* presented a macrocosmic created reality from plants to angels, then in the *Volunt*, John uses it to present the natural motions of the microcosmic human nature.⁸⁶¹ As I have shown elsewhere, John uses this combined list against the Monothelites/Monenergists to argue for the multiple natural functionalities—passive and active, sensitive and intellectual—of Christ's human nature.⁸⁶²

An interesting element in this presentation is that the different aspects and levels of the willing process—understanding (νόησις), rational desire (λογική ὀρεξις), reasoning (διαλογισμός), inquiry (ζήτησις), reflection (σκέψις), deliberation (βουλή), judgment (κρίσις), disposition (διάθεσις), choice (προαίρεσις), inclination (γνώμη), and the impulse directed toward practical use (ἡ πρὸς τὴν χρῆσιν ὁρμή)—are all presented as God-given natural activities. Despite this, as previously noted, John categorically denies human deliberation and choice in Christ because the hypostatic unity with the divine Logos excludes all aspects of ignorance.⁸⁶³ By presenting such microcosmic anthropological lists and models, John does not automatically attribute all these functions to Christ but instead approaches them selectively.

A good example is the vegetative power and motion of reproduction, which was not only presented in the list of five kinds of natural motions (*Dial*) and activities (*IE*), but also in the previously analysed Aristotelian *three kinds of life*, that John had directed against the Monothelites. Nevertheless, even though a part of human nature and wholly natural, this seminal function was not a part of

⁸⁶⁰ Maximus the Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, PG 91, 301. See also 2.2.3.

⁸⁶¹ *Volunt*, 18:11–51.

⁸⁶² Tölpt 2021, 321–325.

⁸⁶³ *Expos*, 36, 100–104.

Christ's human nature. According to the Damascene, the seminal and sexual function of reproduction, necessary for the multiplication of the human species, was introduced to the human nature only after the Fall in order to avoid death's final destruction. After the restauration and salvation of human nature in Christ, this passive function lost its importance, which is why it cannot be found in Christ's humanity and why it is abandoned by the ascetics and monastics.⁸⁶⁴

All this shows that, although in His incarnation Christ took upon himself postlapsarian human nature, the hypostatic unity with the divine Logos and the eschatological (soteriological) perspective nevertheless rendered some of its natural aspects invalid or nonfunctional. The different models and lists that John uses, therefore, only present a purely postlapsarian reality of human nature, which had not been affected by the salvific unity with the divine hypostasis.

Coming back now to the Aristotelian six kinds of motion, together with its intellectual extension, I have also demonstrated that John's inspirational background in this case, as in the *Expos*, is essentially patristic. John Chrysostom had already used a combination of the Aristotelian kinds of motion, along with an intelligible kind, to illustrate created reality. However, unlike the Damascene, Chrysostom does not use them to argue for the natural passions and activities of Christ's human nature but for the incomprehensibility of God. Neither do his kinds of motion follow the traditional Aristotelian order of the *Categories*, which is dominant in the Damascene's *Dial*, *Expos*, and *Volunt*. Even though Chrysostom discusses the motion of the mind, in his *Volunt* the Damascene employs a more contemporary willing process constructed by Maximus the Confessor.⁸⁶⁵

In one way or another, this extended and modified version of the Aristotelian six kinds of motion in John's *Volunt* not only has a unique formulation but also an unprecedented microcosmic Christological application. As with the version in the *Expos*, it can also be debated here whether John utilized an unknown list of such definitions, which had already been reshaped by Chalcedonians, or whether it is a result of his personal formulation. Nevertheless, its Christological application was most probably his own doing.

Regardless of whether they were pre-existing concepts, John Damascene consciously uses the extended versions of the Aristotelian six kinds of motion in his theological argumentation. He clearly understands their value as metaphysical tools for illustrating the various kinds of created motions, whether as manifestations of the entire macrocosmic created reality (*Expos*) or of the microcosmic human nature (*Volunt*).

John's frequent use of this concept distinguishes him from the previous patristic tradition, where it is almost non-existent. The fact that John is the first Greek patristic author to also present this Aristotelian (Neoplatonic) concept in his philosophical introduction (*Dial*) to theology underscores its importance even more. Its very presence in the *Dial* doubtlessly helped the reader understand and recognize its application in theological arguments.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid., 27:9–20; 44: 28–31, 62–65; 97:10–23; *Volunt*, 37.

⁸⁶⁵ Tölpt 2021, 325–333.

In this chapter, we have thus seen the significance of the lists of different kinds of motion—as illustrations and characterizations of the microcosmic human natural functionalities—for the Christological arguments of John Damascene. Even though these originally Aristotelian concepts were, in one way or another, already employed by the pre-Damascene patristic tradition, John nevertheless applies them in often unprecedented contexts and forms.

3.4.9. Eucharistic changes of incarnation and digestion

But the concepts of motion and change are found not only in John's direct Christological explanations but also in his indirect ones, which extend to the Church's eucharistic life and specifically to the "sacrament of our Lord," where the bread and the wine are turned into the body and blood of Christ.

John begins by explaining that the reason God created everything from non-being to being was to give created beings the opportunity to participate in Him, according to the capacity of their nature. This possibility and call were also extended to rational humankind, who nevertheless rejected it and fell into corruption and death. To free humankind from the consequences of the Fall and restore lost participation, the Creator united His divine nature with our nature by becoming human. According to the Damascene, this granted humanity, born from the fallen Adam, the possibility of a second birth via baptism, enabling us once again to participate in God and live in Him through the food of the eucharist. Since we humans have a dual nature (spirit and flesh), our food must also possess a dual nature, which is why our true bread of life is the Christ of two natures.⁸⁶⁶ In other words, the salvation of humankind necessitates our participation in the divinity of Christ through His deified humanity.

According to the Damascene, the Lord chose bread and wine, as they are familiar to mankind, and made (πεποίηκεν) them into the deified body and blood of Christ. By making the natural supernatural, God provided mankind the opportunity to rise from the ordinary to the supernatural and to participate in divine glory.⁸⁶⁷ Even though the Damascene emphasizes that the manner in which this mysterious change occurs is impossible to discern and that one should simply accept it through faith,⁸⁶⁸ he nevertheless offers two analogies for our better understanding.

The first analogy begins with John's statement that the bread and wine are transmuted (μεταποιεῖται) into the blood and body of God (Christ) similarly to how the Lord made Himself flesh from the Mother of God.⁸⁶⁹ In other words, the secret of the eucharistic transmutation is rooted in the mystery of the incarnation. At the same time, it remains unclear what exactly is transmuted in the incarnation.

⁸⁶⁶ *Expos*, 86:2–42.

⁸⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 86:84–93.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 86:74–78, 99–101.

⁸⁶⁹ *Expos*, 86:94–99.

We have already seen how the threat of Eutychian (real) Monophysitism compelled the Damascene to strictly reject all forms of change in the incarnational unification of the two natures of Christ.⁸⁷⁰ For John, even the deification of the body of Christ does not introduce any sort of change, alteration, or mixture to the human nature.⁸⁷¹ In the unification of the natures and in the deification of the flesh, there is only mutual indwelling (περιχώρησις) where the natures remain unaltered.⁸⁷²

The same logic is also reflected in the Eucharist. According to the Damascene, it is the unification of the bread and wine with the divinity that, when combined, make the body and blood of Christ.⁸⁷³ As a result, the bread is no longer mere bread, but rather, a bread unified with divinity, just as wood unified with fire is no longer simple wood but coal. Similarly, in relation to the incarnate and deified humanity of Christ, John also refers to the consecrated Eucharist as a divinely burning coal, where the wood and fire, despite their unity, can still be regarded as two different and distinct natures. By following the incarnation of Christ and the analogy of the burning coal, the eucharistic body of Christ (deified bread) also preserves the distinction between the bread⁸⁷⁴ and the divinity, thereby becoming a testament to Christ's dual nature.⁸⁷⁵ As John points out, in the Eucharist, we partake of the hypostatically unified two natures of Christ.⁸⁷⁶

As we can see, both the incarnation and the Eucharist are understood in this context as an indwelling unity between the unaltered divinity and humanity (bread). In this regard, John's reference to the transmutation of the eucharistic gifts in analogy to the incarnation remains unexplained.

But in addition to the incarnational unification between humanity and divinity, there is also the incarnational making of his human body from that of the Virgin Mary. According to the Damascene, in the incarnation of the Word, God does not take his body from heaven,⁸⁷⁷ but instead uses the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, and through the Holy Spirit, creates and fashions from them his own

⁸⁷⁰ See 3.4.3.

⁸⁷¹ *Expos*, 61; *Jacob*, 83:5–9.

⁸⁷² *Expos*, 47:75–79; 52:15–23; 91:50–60.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.*, 86:91–93.

⁸⁷⁴ With the term *bread*, that is united with divinity, John is most probably not anymore talking about an actual bread but instead uses it as a symbolic reference to the incarnate Word of God (body of Christ), who is the eucharistic *bread of life* (*Expos*, 86:43–45; *Imag I*, 16:23–24; *Fides*, 27:20–23; *Dorm I*, 8:31–33; *III*, 2:3–6).

⁸⁷⁵ *Expos*, 49:34–37; 86:114–135.

⁸⁷⁶ *Imag III*, 26:49–62.

⁸⁷⁷ John Damascene seems to be using it against all the views which, by too much emphasizing divinity of Christ, in one or the other way, diminished the fullness of the humanity of Christ and its incarnation from the humanity of the Mother of God. Amongst them the Docetism of the gnostic Valentinians, and the real Monophysitism of the Apollinarists and Eutychians (*Haer*, 31; 77; 82).

humanity, which, through the hypostatic unity, simultaneously becomes a deified humanity.⁸⁷⁸

According to the Damascene, this incarnational process is like the conception of a new human being, which takes its hypostasis from the semen of the father and the body with a rational soul from the blood of the mother. In the incarnation of Christ, His “semen” and therefore the hypostasis was that of the Word of God, whereas Christ’s body and His rational soul were from the blood of the Virgin Mary.⁸⁷⁹ In other words, the coming-to-be of the human nature of Christ was similar to the birth of a human being, with the only difference being that there was no human (male) semen.

As John points out, the Word of God has two begettings: one (of His divinity) eternally from the Father and the other (of His humanity) temporally from a human mother. Christ’s humanity, therefore, did not come down from heaven (did not pre-exist) but had a beginning and was created in time from the humanity of Mary.⁸⁸⁰ Even though John does not explicitly emphasize it in his Christological argumentation, the coming-to-be of Christ’s humanity can still be seen as a change.

This understanding, which is only latently expressed in John’s teaching about the incarnation of Christ, becomes much more evident in his doctrine of the Eucharist, which not only reveals to us the transmutation of the gifts but does so in analogy to that of the incarnation. By analyzing John’s references to the transmutation (μεταποίησης) or making (ποίησις) of the eucharistic gifts into the body and blood of Christ, we find that he never uses the analogy of deification or the unification of natures. Instead, all of his examples focus on the fashioning and making of the humanity of Christ (which is emphasized as not having come down from heaven) from the Virgin Mary through the invocation of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁸¹

What this tells us is that for John, the bread and the wine of the offertory are analogically seen as the blood (soul) and the body of the Virgin, which, through the invocation of the Holy Spirit, are transmuted, changed and fashioned by the Word of God into His deified blood (soul) and body. In other words, the eucharistic change follows the analogy of the transmutation of the Virgin’s humanity into that of Christ’s humanity.

But in addition to using terms and concepts that refer to the eucharistic changes as a divine creative act of incarnation, John does not oppose explaining it through the analogy of digestion. According to the Damascene, just as the bread, wine, and water are changed (μεταβάλλεται) into the body of the person consuming them, and not into any other body, so also are the bread, water, and wine of the offertory transmuted (μεταποιεῖται) supernaturally into the body and blood (humanity) of Christ.⁸⁸²

⁸⁷⁸ *Expos*, 56:11–15, 56–68; 87:71–77.

⁸⁷⁹ *Nestor*, 23:1–15; 43:22–47.

⁸⁸⁰ *Expos*, 48:30–32; 56:2–10, 28–31, 42–46; *Nestor*, 18:8–11.

⁸⁸¹ *Expos*, 86:66–69, 78–82, 94–99.

⁸⁸² *Expos*, 86:101–107.

Regarding digestive changes, John has little to say. Only in one instance does the Damascene explain that the digestive process involves four faculties: the attractive, retentive, altering and excretory. Based largely on Galenic concepts taken from Nemesius, John explains that when food is eaten and digested in the stomach, one (good) part of it is altered into the humors of the human body, while the non-essential part is excreted and expelled through the privy.⁸⁸³ How much the Damascene had this physiological concept in mind when explaining the eucharistic change using the digestive analogy remains unknown. Nevertheless, he seems to consider it when discussing the consecrated eucharist being consumed by the faithful. In this case, as John emphasizes, Holy Communion is not expelled through the privy but is retained by the substance of the soul and body.⁸⁸⁴

Another notable aspect that can be observed in both of these analogies (incarnation and digestion) is the use of the terms *poiesis* (ποίησις – making, act of creation) and *metapoiesis* (μεταποίησις – transmutation, alteration) to describe the supernatural change of the eucharistic gifts into the humanity of Christ.⁸⁸⁵ The former was primarily used to describe the eucharistic changes in analogy to the incarnational fashioning, whereas the latter was used in both the analogy of incarnation and in the context of digestion. The term *poiesis* has a more generic meaning, which, in its eucharistic use, is mainly linked to the divine capacity to create, not only the universe but also His own body in the incarnation. The term *metapoiesis*, on the other hand, seems to be primarily dedicated to sacramental use, where, in addition to the eucharist, John also employs it to characterize the sacrament of baptism, where a person is transmuted (μεταποιεῖται) into Christ.⁸⁸⁶

Interestingly, as we have already seen in the three types of unification, John uses the term *metapoiesis* to describe the first type of change where one substance changes into another. In this case, the term was, of course, used to explain what does not happen in the process of incarnation: God does not change into a human being and vice versa.⁸⁸⁷ Whether this means that behind eucharistic changes John has in mind the logic of one substance changing into another, making it a precursor of the later *transubstantiation*,⁸⁸⁸ or whether it is just a coincidence remains unclear. On the one hand, it is unlikely that after rejecting the use of this term in

⁸⁸³ Ibid., 30:20–24 cf. Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, 23.83–84. See also Sharples and Eijk 2008, 145, n. 732.

⁸⁸⁴ *Expos*, 86:143–145.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid., 86:60–96, 101–107; *Sabbat*, 35:4–6. V. Kontouma claims that John Damascene also uses the term *metabole* to describe the Eucharistic change. Even though the Damascene uses the term *metabole* to describe digestion where the food changes into the person eating it as an analogy of the Eucharist, he actually never directly uses this term to describe the change of Eucharistic gifts (Kontouma 2023, 164, 168).

⁸⁸⁶ *Imag III*, 119: 9.

⁸⁸⁷ *Expos*, 60:33–50.

⁸⁸⁸ According to V. Kontouma, the terms (*metapoiesis* and *metabole*) that John Damascene uses to describe the ontological (as opposed to typological) change of the eucharistic gifts, could be considered the precursors of the later *transubstantiation* (Kontouma 2023, 168).

explaining incarnational unification, John would still use it as an explanation of the eucharistic changes. On the other hand, as we have already seen, eucharistic transmutation neither describes the unification of divinity and humanity nor the deification of the humanity of Christ. Instead, either in analogy to incarnational fashioning or digestion, it refers to the transmutation of the bread into the deified body of Christ.

A significant part of John's explanations of eucharistic changes can be found in the *Catechetical Discourse* of Gregory of Nyssa, who seems to be the first to use the analogy of digestive changes for the eucharistic transformation of the gifts.⁸⁸⁹ The eucharistic application of the term *poiesis* is already used by John Chrysostom,⁸⁹⁰ whereas the specific term *metapoiesis* is again used by Gregory, who most probably derived it and its specifically eucharistic use from Origen.⁸⁹¹ For Gregory, the term *metapoiesis* expresses a profound transformation, not only of the eucharistic gifts but also of the body of Christ in the incarnation and in the resurrection, as well as the profound transformation that this produces in our own bodies.⁸⁹²

It is also Gregory who connects the eucharistic changes with the incarnation of the Word, even though similar aspects are already present in the works of Justin the Philosopher.⁸⁹³ According to Gregory, the transmutation of the sanctified bread into the body of Christ parallels the incarnational transformation of the body of Christ into divine dignity. The eucharist, therefore, makes accessible and fulfills the ultimate purpose of Christ's incarnation: the divinization of the human body.⁸⁹⁴

As one can already notice, even though the Damascene's eucharistic analogy of digestion is clearly taken from Gregory, his analogy of incarnation is not. Unlike Gregory, the Damascene does not consider the incarnational deification to be any sort of change or transmutation—an aspect most likely influenced by the challenges of Monophysite Eutychianism, where incarnation involved change. Additionally, Gregory's incarnational analogies never compare eucharistic transmutation with the making and fashioning of the deified body and blood of Christ from the blood and flesh of the Mother of God. As far as I am aware, John Damascene is the first Greek patristic author to do so in such a eucharistic way.

Nevertheless, the specific term *metapoiesis* had already been used since Athanasius of Alexandria (against Arianism) to describe how, in the incarnation, the body of Christ was transmuted from the body of the Virgin and not from the

⁸⁸⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, SC 453, 37. See also Louth 2002, 183–185.

⁸⁹⁰ John Chrysostom, *De proditione Judae*, PG 49, 380, 389.

⁸⁹¹ Origen, *Fragmenta ex commentariis in evangelium Matthaei (in catenis)*, 527:1–4.

⁸⁹² Mateo–Seco 2010, 294–295.

⁸⁹³ Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, 70.4.

⁸⁹⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, SC 453, 37:87–92. See also Mateo–Seco 2010, 294.

divine nature.⁸⁹⁵ Later on, this logic was also employed against all deniers of the fullness of Christ's human nature, whether Apollinarian or Monophysite.⁸⁹⁶

What seems to be John's innovation here is that he has taken the existing (anti-Monophysite) tradition of the incarnational transmutation of the body of Christ from the Virgin and made it into an analogy of eucharistic transmutation. The reason was clearly Christological, aimed against all those (especially the Eutychians) who denied the two natures of Christ, as it helped to reject the claim that the body of Christ was of divine origin while simultaneously preserving the completeness of His human nature.

It may therefore be concluded that for John the eucharist was not only a mysterious unification of the believers with God but also a revelation of Christological truth. The distinctive preservation of the unified body (bread) and divinity, in analogy to coal, reveals that in the incarnational hypostatic unification the two natures of Christ remained unhampered and unaltered. The transmutation of the gifts into the body of Christ, in analogy to incarnation, reveals the human and created origin (from the Virgin and not from heaven) of the humanity of Christ, which further confirms the existence of His distinctive human nature. Here again, we can see how change and mutability ontologically characterize the created order.

Even though the Christological context of this concept already existed, its eucharistic use did not. The author of this novel application seems to be none other than John Damascene, who creatively transferred a known Christological argument into a eucharistic context, which in turn became an additional witness to Dyophysite Christological truth.

At the same time, the eucharistic analogy to digestive changes is not directly linked to any Christological argument. Its purpose, as it was for Gregory,⁸⁹⁷ is to dispel doubts and support one's faith in accepting the possibility of the eucharistic gifts changing into a means of deification. If it is possible for bread to change into a human body via digestion, as it was with Christ during the Last Supper, then it must also be possible for the eucharistic gifts to be supernaturally and incomprehensibly transmuted into the body and blood of Christ.

3.4.10. Conclusion

We may therefore conclude that the different principles of motion and change have an important role to play in John Damascene's Christological arguments. Its primary usefulness, as one might expect, is the ontologically deductive link between nature and its motion. This fundamental understanding, established already in the works of Aristotle and developed further by medical philosophers

⁸⁹⁵ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Epictetum* 2:13–15; Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion*, 419:13–15.

⁸⁹⁶ *Concilium universale Ephesenum anno 431*, 1.1.4,36; Flavius Justinianus Imperator, *Contra monophysitas*, 159.

⁸⁹⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, SC 453, 37:38–41.

and Neoplatonic commentators, allowed John and other Chalcedonians to argue for the duality of Christ's natures and their functions by rejecting all other possibilities. In doing so, John primarily made use of the pre-existing patristic (Chalcedonian) tradition and its sources.

This became evident in John's multiple logical definitions, which revealed that will, activity, and passion are all different kinds of natural motions. These motions are not only intrinsic to our God-created human nature but also serve as indicators and manifestations of that same nature. Directing his argument against Monenergists/Monothelites, John could therefore argue that will, activity and passion are natural parts of Christ's humanity, the denial of which is essentially a denial of Christ's humanity. I have also shown how the general logic of the definitions of activity and will, apart from mutability, was also valid in the case of uncreated divine motion—an aspect which, at least partially, also seems to explain John's distinction between the divine essence and activity. John's sources in these cases were evidently patristic, making use of both compendia of definitions (e.g., *Opusc*) as well as original works of patristic authors (e.g., Nemesius and Maximus), clearly preferring the latter genre. Even though John in general remains true to concepts found in patristic authors, there are nevertheless indication of personal editing and reworking. A good example is the supplementation of Maximus's concepts of passion with purely Nemesian principles.

Although motion in the Damascene's works primarily manifests and indicates naturalness, it can also refer to hypostasis (activity and will). Nevertheless, hypostasis is not a principle of its own motion but a particularized and modalized instantiation of natural motion. Here, John essentially continues, albeit in his own way, the principles established by Maximus the Confessor.

We can therefore claim that the patristic principles of motion, settled in the *IE*, clearly found its application in the Damascene's theological argumentation. This also highlights the *IE*'s role among John's works as a summary encyclopedic landmark of patristic philosophy that not only taught students of theology the Chalcedonian patristic way of thinking but also prepared them to recognize and understand its use in John's Christological argumentation.

Important patristic concepts of change and transmutation were also revealed in John's Christological elaborations of eucharistic changes. We saw the rarely used analogy of digestive change, taken from Gregory of Nyssa, to explain the change of the eucharistic gifts. But also the unprecedented case where the transmutation of the Virgin's humanity into that of Christ's humanity became an analogy of the eucharistic change of bread and wine into the blood and body of Christ. Although in pre-Damascene patristic tradition this logic had already been used as an anti-Monophysite Christological argument, John nevertheless was the first to use it as a eucharistic analogy. This, of course, is yet another example of John's habit of changing the contexts of existing logical concepts.

Along with the already established authoritative patristic concepts, the Damascene's Christological arguments also made use of the concepts of motion, which, even though integrated in the Chalcedonian tradition, seem to have not been very popular nor well known. A good example is the two unprecedented

definitions of nature that John uses against the Monothelites/Monenergists, which also bear many conceptual similarities to the one found in the *Dial*. This not only confirms the Chalcedonian origin of the *Dial*'s modified Aristotelian definition of nature but also reveals its usefulness to John Damascene's theological cause, despite criticism from some Chalcedonians. In a way, the definition of nature is a foundational concept that enabled Chalcedonians to consider activity, will, and passion as natural motions in the first place. It is in this definition that motion becomes an indicative manifestation of nature and naturality. The existence of the Chalcedonian modified definition of nature attests to this.

Even though John Damascene's role remains unknown, nevertheless he is the only source that testifies to its use in Christological polemics. Its presentation in the *Dial* also highlights that before encountering it in John's theological argumentation, students of theology first had to comprehend it in its purely conceptual form, in both its modified (*Dial* 31) and unmodified (*Dial* 41) versions.

The same rarity applies to the concept of three types of unification. As an illustration of change and mutability, this concept was used against the Monophysites and Eutychians to demonstrate how the two natures of Christ can and cannot be unified. As we saw, the concept of three types of unification originally derives from Aristotle's *On Generation and Corruption*, where it was operated as an anti-mixture logic against Aristotle's opposing interlocutors. Via the Neoplatonic commentary tradition, at one point Chalcedonians deemed this logic to be useful because they needed to show the impossibility of mixture between the two natures of Christ. Although the Damascene's *Expos* and partially also his *Dial* are the only surviving witnesses of such a logical concept, John's contribution to it remains unclear. The fact that John does not seem to be aware of its original Aristotelian context and that both of the Damascene's works share different elements of this logic might hint at the existence of an unknown philosophical source, where this concept already existed in an extracted and reshaped form. In one way or another

John's Christological arguments also highlight the importance of the various lists of motion. We saw how John of Damascus used two modified Aristotelian formulas—a) three kinds of life/motion; and b) six kinds of motion, with an intellectual addition—to argue for Christ's human nature and its natural functions. In all these cases, motion again served as a metaphysical manifestation of nature and naturalness. Even though the first formula and its anti-Monothelite/Monenergist use derived from Maximus the Confessor, its anti-Monophysite application seems to be the Damascene's own invention. This again highlights his capacity to apply existing logical concepts in entirely novel contexts.

Regarding the second formula, I have already shown how John had presented it in his *Dial* (without the intellectual kind of motion) as well as in his *Expos* (with the intellectual kind of motion), where it was used macrocosmically as a reference to creation to argue for the existence of God. Nevertheless, in his anti-Monothelite polemics, John uses the different kinds of motion not to illustrate the macrocosmic created order, but rather microcosmic human nature. John seems to have understood that the six kinds of motion, together with the intellectual kind,

characterize the mutable created order and its functions. Even though this patristic metaphysical understanding was already present in John Chrysostom, the Damascene creatively applies it in his own ways and contexts. When arguing for the existence of God, the Damascene uses it macrocosmically, while shifting to a microcosmic mode when arguing for Christ's human nature and its passive and active motions.

As with the version in the *Expos*, we can also debate whether John made use of an unknown list of such definitions, previously modified by Chalcedonians, or whether it is a result of his own personal formulation. Nevertheless, considering that after Chrysostom, John Damascene is the only one to even use such a concept, its contextual (Christological) use is most probably his own doing. The fact that the *Dial* also elaborates on the concept of the Aristotelian kinds of motion again highlights that its existence there was not only to provide general knowledge and develop systematic thinking, but also to prepare students of theology to recognize and understand its use in theological argumentation.

In one way or another, the different concepts of motion and change proved to be highly valuable for John Damascene's Christological arguments. Even though the foundation of all these principles lies in the Greek philosophical tradition, John nevertheless draws them from the patristic philosophical tradition, which had not only modified them but also transformed them into concepts of Christian metaphysics. Even though the Damascene is generally well aware of the Greek philosophical (supportive) background of many of these concepts—which is why the *Dial* was made the first part of the *Fount of Knowledge* in the first place—he does turn to them directly.⁸⁹⁸ Despite using the patristic definition of activity as a fulfilment of potentiality, Aristotle's definition of motion as an actualization of potentiality is entirely omitted. The same is true for Aristotle's six kinds of motion, which is only used in its patristic form in tandem with the intellectual kind of motion. For the Damascene, the concepts of external philosophers are not meant to be used directly in theology. Instead, they are meant to be supportive conceptual servants for their further developed patristic versions.

⁸⁹⁸ The only exception in our case is the modified definition of nature, which, as we saw, the *Dial* referred to as a Chalcedonian alternative to the homonymous Aristotelian version.

4. GENERAL CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have undertaken the task of investigating a largely undiscovered subject—motion and change—in the thought and argumentation of St. John Damascene. By analyzing its conceptual presentation in John's philosophical works and its application in his theological arguments, I have accomplished my research goal and its objectives.

First and foremost, the Damascene primarily uses different notions of motion and change as metaphysical indicators and manifestations of nature. The connection between nature and its motion, initially established by Aristotle and further developed by medieval and Neoplatonic philosophers, as well as various patristic authors, gained increased significance during the post-Chalcedonian Christological controversies. Chalcedonians, who had already begun utilizing such principles in their Christological arguments prior to the Damascene, recognized the importance of this link. An essential aspect of this argumentation involved not only referencing pre-existing patristic sources, where the metaphysical link between nature and motion had been partially established, but also drawing from the Neoplatonic Aristotelian tradition. This supporting role was made possible because the patristic and Chalcedonian metaphysical principles were rooted in earlier Greek philosophical concepts, being their further developments.

Another key insight that the Damascene comprehended was that different notions of motion and change can serve as ontological arguments for the createdness of beings and as an illustration of created reality as a whole. The only reality where motion is not change is on the uncreated level of the divine order. The foundation here is the patristic metaphysical distinction between mutable creation and the immutable, uncreated God. The patristic tradition had early on integrated various Aristotelian aspects of motion and change to better articulate their position.

As a man of tradition, John clearly follows the existing patristic philosophical tradition and its sources. However, John does not merely copy them. Instead, we have observed how John's interpretations often diverged from his patristic source material. There were several instances indicating that John had modified his patristic sources by blending them with other patristic patterns. A prime example is Chrysostom's utilization of the Aristotelian *six kinds of motion*, where the additional intellectual kind was substituted by John with elements from Gregory of Nyssa in one instance and with those of Maximus the Confessor in another. Furthermore, we have seen how John supplemented Maximus the Confessor's arguments on *passion* with elements from Nemesisius. Additionally, John provided entirely new contexts for his patristic sources. For instance, Chrysostom's utilization of different kinds of motion as arguments of divine incomprehensibility, which John transformed into arguments for the existence of God and Christ's human natural motions.

Moreover, in many cases, John aligned his patristic sources more closely with Greek philosophical concepts. A notable example is Gregory of Nyssa's anti-

Manichaean concept about the non-being of evil, which John augmented with the Philoponean concept of contradictions (genesis, destruction, habit/privation). Also, Gregory of Nazianzus's argument for the incomprehensibility of God was reshaped by John to align more closely with precise Aristotelian terminology (the first unmoved mover). Given the dearth of similar examples, it is highly probable that John Damascene is the originator of these innovative shifts.

Furthermore, John's theological elaborations introduced us to philosophical concepts not present in any of the patristic sources. One group of such concepts, aimed against various Manichaean and dualistic arguments, appears to have drawn heavily from Philoponus. We observed how in the *Manich*, John used the Aristotelian definitions of *motion* and *genesis* by creatively transforming them into metaphysical arguments for the mutability of the created order, thus refuting the Manichaean assertion that evil matter can be eternal and immutable. John also employed Philoponus's notion of ecliptic changes—originally used in *De aeternitate mundi* to counter arguments for the eternity of the world—to argue for the createdness of the stars and refute their veneration. Lastly, John applied Philoponus's elaborations on the circular motions of heavenly bodies and the wheel, which were initially intended to counter Proclus's arguments on the world's eternity in *De aeternitate mundi*, in his unique anti-Manichaean explanation of angelic immortality.

Despite drawing clear influences from Philoponus, John Damascene surpasses his concepts by presenting them with different meanings or employing them in entirely novel contexts. The Damascene's contribution to these shifts and his relation to Philoponian works remain unclear. On the one hand, in all the mentioned cases, the Damascene's presentations offer no hints of familiarity with the original Philoponian contextual and conceptual conditions. It is entirely possible that John Damascene used an unknown anti-Manichaean source where these concepts and contexts were already established. It is also possible that these notions might have existed in a purely conceptual and non-engaging form without the anti-Manichaean context, which was provided by the Damascene. A good example to support this claim is the Damascene's anti-Manichaean use of Aristotelian definitions of motion and genesis. This, like the *Dial*, appears to draw from the same type of Philoponean non-engaging source. While less likely, it is not impossible that these conceptual shifts were influenced by the Damascene's reading of Philoponus's works. Some sections of Philoponus's writings, like the *Arbiter*, were accessible to the Chalcedonians and possibly even to John Damascene. It is also possible that the Damascene had some form of knowledge about *De aeternitate mundi*—an apologetic anti-pagan work likely highly regarded by all Christians.

The uniqueness of John's philosophical thought and source material is further evident in his discussions on the impact of the luminaries, particularly the Sun, on atmospheric changes of seasons and their effects on human health. In this detailed explanation, John presents readers with an understanding that God orchestrated the changing of seasons in a manner that avoids abrupt transitions hazardous to human physiology. The origin of this novel concept, essentially

a blend of various Hippocratic, Platonic, Aristotelian, and Galenic ideas, remains a mystery.

The same rarity is also applicable to the concept of the *three types of unification*, which, as an illustration of change and mutability, was employed against the Monophysites and the Eutychians to demonstrate how the two natures of Christ can and cannot be unified. As we have seen, the concept of three types of unification originally stems from Aristotle's *On Generation and Corruption*, where it was presented as an anti-mixture logic of Aristotle's opponents. Through the Neoplatonic commentary tradition, the Chalcedonians found this notion to be useful as they needed to show the impossibility of a mixture between the two natures of Christ. Whether the Damascene was the one who discovered this utility or not, he remains the sole patristic author to confirm its application, utilizing it not just once but twice.

In one way or another, for a man who has often been considered a mere compiler and a copyist, John Damascene remarkably presents quite a lot of unprecedented concepts. While this does not inherently prove his creativity and originality, it does highlight how limited our knowledge is regarding his potential sources and intellectual background.

In my comparative analysis, I have also shown how the majority of John's ideas regarding motion and change, as used in his theological arguments, thematically connect to concepts in his *Dial*. However, John's theological writings, in general, do not directly draw from or copy it. This distinction became particularly evident in the *Dial*'s discussion of the Aristotelian six kinds of motion and the definition of motion, which John incorporated into his theological works only in their patristic forms. The same applies to the Aristotelian definition of nature in *Dial* 41, which, due to criticism from John's fellow Chalcedonians, was also presented in his theological works in a heavily Chalcedonized manner—an aspect also highlighted in chapter 31 of the *Dial*.

This does not imply that these unadopted concepts from the *Dial* were introduced merely for differentiation from patristic versions. On the contrary, their conceptual alignment with the Chalcedonized and patristic interpretations made them valuable tools. While John's theology does not employ Aristotle's definition of nature, he recognizes that the patristic correlation between nature and motion is well-established and supported by pagan philosophers as well. This acknowledgment may have motivated the Damascene to develop the modified Aristotelian definition of nature in the first place. The *Dial*'s Aristotelian definition of motion and its six kinds undoubtedly equipped theology students to identify the broader conceptual framework of similar patristic interpretations—whether it is John Chrysostom's six kinds of motion together with the intellectual addition, or Gregory of Nyssa's view of activity as a fulfillment of potentiality. John Damascene's attitude toward Aristotelianism, as well as his rhetorical rejection of it, is thus moderate. While he doesn't advocate for its direct application in theology, he does acknowledge its supportive conceptual role. Therefore, when he states that Greek philosophy plays a beneficial role by serving patristic philosophy and theology, it should be understood in this context.

In addition, virtually all the various Neoplatonic Aristotelian concepts of the *Dial* examined in this dissertation were either interpreted, influenced or altered by the Christian philosophical tradition. For instance, the *Dial*'s chapter on motion, while ostensibly a summary of the Neoplatonic commentary tradition on Aristotle's *Categories*, actually represents a Christian (metaphysical) interpretation of it. All of these cases clearly demonstrated John's reliance on Christian-influenced Greek philosophical tradition—most probably derived from Christian general education—as well as his lack of direct engagement with the works of Aristotle or the Neoplatonic commentaries. Even though John's personal contribution to this Christian tradition remains open for debate, the *Dial* did contain unprecedented philosophical concepts like the modified definition of nature and the notion of change called *another from others* (the second argument of the three types of unification).

This kind of Christianized philosophy assumed an even more patristic and Chalcedonian form in the *IE*'s definitions of *activity*, *passion*, and *will*, aimed at preparing theology students to effectively counter the Monothelites/Monenergists. A key metaphysical aspect in all these concepts was once again motion, serving as an ontological indicator that not only connected activity, passion, and will to nature but also demonstrated their naturalness. Although these concepts originated in Greek philosophical tradition, they were modified or firmly integrated into the Christian patristic tradition. Unlike the concepts of the *Dial*, which were meant to support patristic philosophy, those in the *IE* were intended for direct use in theological polemics—an aspect that also emerged in John's anti-Monothelite/Monenergist arguments. Even though the three analyzed chapters of the *IE* aimed to represent an already existing patristic tradition, they also introduced novel concepts. For example, the Galenic definition of activity and the Galenic-Nemesian notion of passion (in contradistinction to activity) had never before been used in anti-Monothelite/Monenergist polemics.

It may therefore be concluded that John Damascene is far from being a merely copying traditionalist unengaged in any form of philosophical activity. In the face of the threats and intellectual challenges that his immediate environment posed for him and his Christian Melkite community, such an attitude would have been an unthinkable luxury that he could not have afforded. His noble background and intellectual capacities, together with the need to safeguard his community and the soteriological truth of revelation, instead formed a John Damascene who used all the intellectual tools available to him. The result is a creatively synthesizing man of tradition who understood the value of philosophy, both in its Greek and patristic forms, for Chalcedonian theological argumentation.

In this dissertation, I have uncovered many new facets of the philosophically creative thought and sources of John Damascene that were previously unknown. This is particularly significant given that much of John's philosophical source material has been lost, a challenge that complicates our understanding of his philosophical mind. Nevertheless, I hope the discoveries made in this dissertation will contribute to a renewed interest in John Damascene and enhance our understanding of him. I also hope this work will inspire scholars to further investigate

the principles of motion and change in other patristic (and especially Chalcedonian) authors contemporary to John Damascene. In other words, what still needs clarification is the use and role of these concepts within the broader Chalcedonian tradition, both pre- and post-Damascene. Additionally, I believe that John Damascene's works still conceal many other philosophical principles and patterns that have yet to be discovered.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources

John of Damascus

- De sacris ieuniis* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1864). PG 95. Paris, 64–77.
- Capita philosophica (Dialectica)* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1969). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. I, PTS 7. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 47–146.
- Institutio elementaris ad dogmata* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1969). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. I, PTS 7. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 19–26.
- Expositio fidei* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1973). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. II, PTS 12. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 7–239.
- Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1975). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. III, PTS 17. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 65–200.
- Adversus Nestorianos* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1981). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. IV, PTS 22. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 263–288.
- Contra Jacobitas* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1981). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. IV, PTS 22. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 109–153.
- De duabus in Christo voluntatibus* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1981). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. IV, PTS 22. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 173–231.
- De fide contra Nestorianos* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1981). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. IV, PTS 22. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 238–253.
- De natura composita contra acephalos* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1981). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. IV, PTS 22. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 409–417.
- Dialogus contra Manichaeos* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1981). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. IV, PTS 22. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 351–98.
- Epistula de hymno Trisagio* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1981). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. IV, PTS 22. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 304–332.
- Liber de haeresibus* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1981). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. IV, PTS 22. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 19–67.
- Homilia in nativitatem Domini* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1988). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. V, PTS 29. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 324–347.
- Homilia in Transfigurationem Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1988). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. V, PTS 29. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 436–459.
- In Dormitionem sanctae Dei genitricis Mariae orationes tres* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1988). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. V, PTS 29. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 483–500, 516–540, 548–555.
- Laudatio sancti Johannis Chrysostomi* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1988). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. V, PTS 29. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 359–370.
- Laudatio sanctae martyris Barbarae* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1988). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. V, PTS 29. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 256–278.
- Oratio in ficum arefactam et in parabolam vinae* – B. Kotter (ed.) (1988). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. V, PTS 29. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 102–110.

Oratio in Sabbatum Sanctum – B. Kotter (ed.) (1988). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. V, PTS 29. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 121–146.
Passio magni martyris Artemii – B. Kotter (ed.) (1988). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. V, PTS 29. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 202–245.
Vita Chalkensis – R. Volk, (ed.) (2024). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. X, PTS 81. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 29–72.
Vita Marciana – R. Volk, (ed.) (2024). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. X, PTS 81. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 127–130.
Vita sancti Iohannis Damasceni – R. Volk, (ed.) (2024). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. X, PTS 81. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 295–365.

Other sources

Alexander of Lycopolis, *Tractatus de placitis Manichaeorum* – A. Brinkmann (1895). *Alexandri Lycopolitani contra Manichaei opiniones disputatio*. Leipzig: Teubner, 3–40
Ammonius, *In Aristotelis categorias commentarium* – A. Busse (ed.) (1895). *Ammonius in Aristotelis categorias commentaries*, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 4.4. Berlin: Reimer.
Ammonius, *In Porphyrii isagogen sive quinque voces* – A. Busse (ed.) (1891). *Ammonius in Porphyrii isagogen sive quinque voces*, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 4.3. Berlin: Reimer.
Anastasius of Antioch, *Capita philosophica* – K.-H. Uthemann (1980). „Die „Philosophischen Kapitel“ des Anastasius I. von Antiochien (559–598)“, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 46.2.
Anastasius of Sinai, *Viae Dux* – K.-H. Uthemann (1981). *Anastasius Sinaïtae viae dux*, *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Graeca 8. Turnhout: Brepols.
Anastasius of Sinai, *Capita VI adversus monotheletas* – K.-H. Uthemann (1985). *Sermones duo in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei necnon opuscula adversus Monotheletas*, *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Graeca 12. Turnhout: Brepols.
Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* – I. Bywater (ed.) (1894). *Aristotelis ethica Nicomachea*. Oxford: Clarendon Press (repr. 1962).
Aristotle, *Meteorologica* – F.H. Fobes (ed.) (1919). *Aristotelis meteorologicorum libri quattuor*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press (repr. 1967).
Aristotle, *Metaphysica* – W.D. Ross (ed.) (1924). *Aristotle's metaphysics*, 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press (repr. 1970 (of 1953 corr. ed.)).
Aristotle, *Categoriae* – L. Minio-Paluello (ed.) (1949). *Aristotelis categoriae et liber de interpretatione*. Oxford: Clarendon Press (repr. 1966).
Aristotle, *Physica* – W.D. Ross (ed.) (1950). *Aristotelis physica*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (repr. 1966 (1st edn. corr.)).
Aristotle, *Topica* – W.D. Ross (ed.) (1958). *Aristotelis topica et sophistici elenchi*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (repr. 1970 (1st edn. corr.)).
Aristotle, *De anima* – W.D. Ross (ed.) (1961). *Aristotle. De anima*. Oxford: Clarendon Press (repr. 1967).
Aristotle, *De caelo* – P. Moraux (ed.) (1965). *Aristote. Du ciel*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
Aristotle, *De generatione animalum* – H.J. Drossaart Lulofs (ed.) (1965). *Aristotelis de generatione animalium*. Oxford: Clarendon Press (repr. 1972).
Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione* – C. Mugler (ed.) (1966). *Aristote. De la génération et de la corruption*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

- Athanasius of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Epictetum* – G. Ludwig (1911). *Athanasii epistula ad Epictetum*. Jenae.
- Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra gentes* – R.W. Thomson (1971). *Athanasius. Contra gentes and de incarnatione*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Athanasius of Alexandria, *Oratio I contra Arianos* – K. Metzler and K. Savvidis (1998). *Athanasius: Werke*, Band I. Die dogmatischen Schriften, Erster Teil, 2. Lieferung, Berlin – New York: De Gruyter, 109–175.
- Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium libri IV–V* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1857). PG 29. Paris, 497–768.
- Basil of Caesarea, *De legendis gentium libris* – F. Boulenger (ed.) (1935). *Saint Basile. Aux jeunes gens sur la manière de tirer profit des lettres Helléniques*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres (repr. 1965).
- Basil of Caesarea, *Homiliae in hexaemeron* – S. Giet (1968). *Basile de Césarée. Homélies sur l'hexaéméron*, SC 26. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 86–522.
- Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*, François Halkin (ed.) (1957). *Subsidia Hagiographica* 8a, 3rd ed., 3 vols. Brussels.
- Claudius Ptolemaeus, *Hypotheses* – J. L. Heiberg (ed.) (1907). *Claudii Ptolemaei opera quae exstant omnia*, vol. 2. Leipzig: Teubner, 70–106.
- Clavis Patrum Graecorum* – M. Geerard, J. Noret and F. Glorie (eds.) (1974, 1979, 1983, 1987, 1998, 2003, 2018, 2023). Vols. I–VIII, Instituut voor Vroegchristelijke en Byzantijnse Studies. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Concilium universale Chalcedonense anno 451* – E. Schwartz (1933; 1935). *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*, vol. 2.1.1–2.1.3. Berlin: De Gruyter (repr. 1962; 1965).
- Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium* – R. Riedinger (1990). *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*, Series secunda, volumen secundum, Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium, vol 1. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Concilium universale Ephesenum anno 431* – E. Schwartz (1928). *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*, vol. 1.1.4. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum. Concilii actiones VI–VII.* – E. Lamberg (ed.) (2016) *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*. Series secunda, volumen tertium, pars tertia. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.
- Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali trinitate* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1863). PG 75. Paris, 9–656
- Doctrina Patrum de incarnatione Verbi* – F. Diekamp (ed.) (1907). Münster: Aschendorff.
- David, *In Porphyrii isagogen commentarium* – A. Busse (ed.) (1904). *Davidis prolegomena et in Porphyrii isagogen commentarium* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 18.2. Berlin: Reimer, 80–219.
- Elias, *In Aristotelis categorias commentarium* – A. Busse (ed.) (1900). *Eliae in Porphyrii isagogen et Aristotelis categorias commentaria*, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 18.1. Berlin: Reimer, 107–255.
- Elias, *In Porphyrii isagogen* – A. Busse (ed.) (1900). *Eliae in Porphyrii isagogen et Aristotelis categorias commentaria*, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 18.1. Berlin: Reimer.
- Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* – K. Holl (1933). *Epiphanius, vol. 3: Ancoratus und Panarion*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 37. Leipzig: Hinrichs.
- Flavius Justinianus Imperator, *Contra monophysitas* – R. Albertella, M. Amelotti, and L. Migliardi (eds.) (1973). *Drei dogmatische Schriften Iustinians*, 2nd edn., *Legum Iustiniani imperatoris vocabularium*, *Subsidia* 2. Milan: Giuffrè.

- Fragmenta philosophica (Cod. Oxon. Bodl. Auct. T. 1.6)* – P.B. Kotter (1969). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 1, Patristische Texte und Studien 7. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Galen, *De elementis ex Hippocrate libri ii* – C.G. Kühn (ed.) (1821). *Claudii Galeni opera omnia*, vol. 1. Leipzig: Knobloch.
- Galen, *De usu partium* – C.G. Kühn (ed.) (1822). *Claudii Galeni opera omnia*, vols. 3–4. Leipzig: Knobloch.
- Galen, *De symptomatum differentiis liber* – C.G. Kühn (ed.) (1824). *Claudii Galeni opera omnia*, vol. 7. Leipzig: Knobloch (repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1965). 42–84.
- Galen, *De naturalibus facultatibus* – G. Helmreich, J. Marquardt, and I. Müller (1893). *Claudii Galeni Pergameni scripta minora*, vol. 3. Leipzig: Teubner (repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert (1967)).
- Galen, *De methodo medendi libri xiv* – C.G. Kühn (1825). *Claudii Galeni opera omnia*, vol. 10. Leipzig: Knobloch (repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1965).
- Galen, *In Hippocratis de natura hominis librum commentarii iii* – C.G. Kühn (ed.) (1828). *Claudii Galeni opera omnia*, vol. 15. Leipzig: Knobloch.
- Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* – P.H. De Lacy (ed.) (1978). *Galen. On the doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, *Corpus medicorum Graecorum*, vol. 5.4.1.2, pts. 1–2. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1:65–358; 2:360–608.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *In laudem Heronis philosophi (orat. 25)* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1857). PG 35. Paris, 1197–1225.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *Poemata quae spectant ad alios* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1864). PG 37. Paris, 1451–1577.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *De filio (orat. 29)* – J. Barbel (1963). *Gregor von Nazianz. Die fünf theologischen Reden*. Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 128–168.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *De filio (orat. 30)* – J. Barbel (1963). *Gregor von Nazianz. Die fünf theologischen Reden*. Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 170–216.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *De spiritu sancto (orat. 31)* – J. Barbel (1963). *Gregor von Nazianz. Die fünf theologischen Reden*. Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 218–276.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *De theologia (orat. 28)* – J. Barbel (1963). *Gregor von Nazianz. Die fünf theologischen Reden*. Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 62–126.
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistulae theologicae* – P. Gallay (1974). *Grégoire de Nazianze. Lettres théologiques* SC 208. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 36–94.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1863). PG 44. Paris, 124–256.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *De oratione dominica* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1863). PG 44. Paris, 1119–1193.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1863). PG 46. Paris, 12–160.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *Orationes viii de beatitudinibus*. – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1863). PG 44. Paris, 1193–1301.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *Tractatus ad Xenodorum* (fragmentum) – F. Diekamp (ed.) (1938). in *Analecta patristica*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 117. Rome: Pontificum Institutum Orientalium Studiorum (repr. 1962), 14–15.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabium quod non sint tres dei* – F. Mueller (1958). *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 3.1, Leiden: Brill, 37–57.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* – W. Jaeger (ed.) (1960). *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vols. 1.1 & 2.2. Leiden: Brill.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *In canticum canticorum* – H. Langerbeck (1960). *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 6. Leiden: Brill.

- Gregory of Nyssa, *De infantibus praemature abreptis* – H. Hörner (1986). *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 3.2. Leiden: Brill, 67–97.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica* – E. Mühlenberg (2000). *Discours Catéchétique* SC 453. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 136–338.
- Gregory Palamas, *Orationes dogmaticae* – G. Mantzarides (1966). “Πραγματεῖαι,” in P. K. Chrestou (ed.). *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ συγγράμματα*, vol. 2. Θεσσαλονίκη, 69–277.
- Gregory Palamas, *Orationes antirrheticæ contra Acindynum* – L. Kontogiannes and B. Phanourgakes (1970), “Ἀντιρρητικοὶ πρὸς Ἀκίνδυνον,” in P. K. Chrestou (ed.). *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ συγγράμματα*, vol. 3. Θεσσαλονίκη, 39–506.
- Hippocrates, *De la nature de l’homme*, 7 – É. Littré, *Oeuvres complètes d’Hippocrate*, vol. 6, Paris: Baillière, 1849 (repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1962), 32–68.
- John Chrysostom, *De proditione Judæ* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1862). PG 49. Paris, 373–392.
- John Chrysostom, *In epistulam ad Colossenses* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1862). PG 62. Paris, 299–392.
- John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria* – H. Vitelli (ed.) (1887, 1888). *Ioannis Philoponi in Aristotelis physicorum libros octo commentaria*, 2 vols., *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 16 & 17. Berlin: Reimer.
- John Philoponus, *De opificio mundi* – W. Reichardt (ed.) (1897). *Ioannis Philoponi de opificio mundi libri vii*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1897.
- John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis libros de anima commentaria* – M. Hayduck (ed.) (1897). *Ioannis Philoponi in Aristotelis de anima libros commentaria*, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 15. Berlin: Reimer, 1–607.
- John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis libros de generatione et corruptione commentaria* – H. Vitelli (ed.) (1897). *Ioannis Philoponi in Aristotelis libros de generatione et corruptione commentaria*, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 14.2. Berlin: Reimer, 1–314.
- John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis categorias commentarium* – A. Busse (ed.) (1898). *Philoponi (olim Ammonii) in Aristotelis categorias commentarium*, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 13.1. Berlin: Reimer.
- John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum* – H. Rabe (ed.) (1899). *Ioannes Philoponus. De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum*. Leipzig: Teubner (repr. 1963).
- John Philoponus, *In Aristotelis meteorologicorum librum primum commentarium* – M. Hayduck (ed.) (1901). *Ioannis Philoponi in Aristotelis meteorologicorum librum primum commentarium*, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 14.1. Berlin: Reimer.
- John Philoponus, *In libros de generatione animalium commentaria* – M. Hayduck (ed.) (1903). *Ioannis Philoponi (Michaelis Ephesii) in libros de generatione animalium commentaria*, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 14.3. Berlin: Reimer.
- John Stobaeus, *Anthologium* – O. Hense and C. Wachsmuth (eds.) (1912). *Ioannis Stobaei anthologium libri quarti*, vol. 5. Berlin.
- John the Grammarian, *Apologia concilii Chalcedonensis* – M. Richard (1977). *Iohannis Caesariensis presbyteri et grammatici opera quae supersunt*, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca* 1. Turnhout: Brepols, 49–58.
- John the Grammarian, *Capitula xvii contra monophysitas* – M. Richard (1977). *Iohannis Caesariensis presbyteri et grammatici opera quae supersunt*, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca* 1. Turnhout: Brepols, 61–66.
- Julianus, *Commentarius in Job* – D. Hagedorn (1973). *Der Hiobkommentar des Arianers Julian*, PTS 14. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973.

- Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* – E. J. Goodspeed (1915). *Die ältesten Apologeten*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915: 90–265.
- Leontius of Byzantium, *Adversus argumenta Severi* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1857). PG 86. Paris, 1915–1946.
- Leontius of Byzantium, *Libri tres* – B. E. Daley (2017). *Leontius of Byzantium: Complete Works*, Oxford Early Christian Texts. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marcus the Ascetic, *De baptismo* – G.-M. de Durand (1999). *Marc le Moine. Traités I*, SC 445. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 296–396.
- Maximus the Confessor, *In librum de divinis nominibus scholia* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1857). PG 4. Paris, 185–416.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1864). PG 91. Paris, 288–353.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Exemplum epistolae ad episcopum Nicandrum*, – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1864). PG 91. Paris, 89–112.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Epistula 12* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1864). PG 91. Paris, 460–508.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Opusculum de anima* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1864). PG 91. Paris, 353–361.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica 1–27* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1864). PG 91. Paris, 9–286.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* – C. Laga and C. Steel (eds.) (1980, 1990). *Maximi confessoris quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 2 vols., Corpus Christianorum: Series Graeca 7 & 22. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones et dubia* – J.H. Declerck (ed.) (1982). *Maximi confessoris quaestiones et dubia*, Corpus Christianorum: Series Graeca 10. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua ad Joannem* – N. Constan (ed.) (2014). *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, vols. 1–2, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua ad Thomam* – N. Constan (ed.) (2014). *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, vol. 1, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Capita theologica et oecumenica sive Capita gnostica* – K. Hajdú and A. Wollbold (2017). *Maximus Confessor Capita theologica et oecumenica*, Zwei Centurien über die Gotteserkenntnis, Fontes Christiani 66. Freiburg, Basel, Vienna: Herder.
- Meletius, *De natura hominis* – A. Cramer (1836 (repr.1963)). *Anecdota Graeca e codd. manuscriptis bibliothecarum Oxoniensium*, vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Amsterdam: Hakkert.
- Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis* – M. Morani (ed.) (1987). *Nemesii Emeseni de natura hominis*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana. Leipzig: Teubner.
- Nilus of Ancyra, *Epistolae* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1865). PG 79. Paris, 82–582.
- Olympiodorus, *In Aristotelis meteora commentaria* – G. Stuve (1900). *Olympiodori in Aristotelis meteora commentaria*, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 12.2. Berlin: Reimer, 1900.
- Olympiodorus, *In Aristotelis categorias commentarium* – A. Busse (1902). *Olympiodori prolegomena et in categorias commentarium*, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 12.1. Berlin: Reimer, 26–148.

- Origen, *Fragmenta ex commentariis in evangelium Matthaei (in catenis)* – E. Benz and E. Klostermann (eds.) (1941). *Origenes Werke*, vol. 12, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 41.1. Leipzig: Teubner, 13–235.
- Pamphilus, *Diversorum capitum seu difficultatum solutio* – J.H. Declerck (1989). *Diversorum postchalcedonensium auctorum collectanea I: Pamphili theologi opus*, Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca 19. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Plato, *Timaeus* – J. Burnet (ed.) (1902). *Platonis opera*, vol. 4. Oxford: Clarendon Press (repr. 1968).
- Plutarch, *De virtute morali* – M. Pohlenz (ed.) (1929). *Plutarchi moralia*, vol. 3, Leipzig: Teubner (repr. 1972). 127–156.
- Plutarch, *Platonicae quaestiones* – C. Hubert (1954 (repr. 1959)). *Plutarchi moralia*, vol. 6.1. Leipzig: Teubner, 113–142.
- Porphyrius, *Isagoge sive quinque voces* – A. Busse (ed.) (1887). *Porphyrii isagoge et in Aristotelis categorias commentarium*, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 4.1. Berlin: Reimer.
- Porphyrius, *De abstinencia* – J. Bouffartigue, M. Patillon, and A. Ph. Segonds (eds.) (1977, 1979, 1995). *Porphyre. De l'abstinence*, vol. 1–3. Paris: Les Belles Lettres (repr. 2003).
- Posidonius, *Fragmenta* – W. Theiler (ed.) (1982). *Posidonios. Die Fragmente*, vol. 1, Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* – E. Diehl (ed.) (1903, 1904, 1906). *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, vols. 1–3. Leipzig: Teubner (repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965).
- Pseudo-Clement of Alexandria, *De providentia. Fragmenta* – L. Früchtel, O. Stählin, and U. Treu (1970). *Clemens Alexandrinus*, vol. 3, 2nd edn., Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 17. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 195–202, 212, 216–230.
- Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus* – B. R. Suchla (1990). *Corpus Dionysiacum I: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*, PTS 33. Berlin: De Gruyter. 107–231.
- Pseudo-Galenus, *Definitiones medice* – C.G. Kühn (ed.) 1830). *Claudii Galeni opera omnia*, vol. 19, Leipzig: Knobloch (repr. 1965). 346–462.
- Serapion Thmuitanus, *Contra Manichaeos* – R. P. Casey (1931). *Serapion of Thmuis: Against the Manichees*, Harvard Theological Studies 15. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Sergius of Reshaina, *Introduction to Aristotle and His Categories, Addressed to Philotheos* – S. Aydin (trans.) (2016). *Sergius of Reshaina: Introduction to Aristotle and His Categories, Addressed to Philotheos*, Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus 24. Boston: Brill.
- Sergius of Reshaina, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories* – Y. Arzhanov (trans.) (2024). *Sergius of Reshaina: Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, Philosophy and Sciences in the Christian Orient. De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston.
- Simplicius, *In Aristotelis categorias commentarium* – K. Kalbfleisch (ed.) (1907). *Simplicii in Aristotelis categorias commentarium*, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 8. Berlin: Reimer.
- Simplicius, *In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria* – H. Diels (1882; 1895). *Simplicii in Aristotelis physicorum libros octo commentaria*, 2 vols., Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 9 & 10. Berlin: Reimer.
- Suda Lexicon* – A. Adler (ed.) (1928, 1931, 1933, 1935). *Suidae lexicon*, 4 vols. Leipzig: Teubner.

- Synaxarium mensis Decembris* – H. Delehay (ed.) (1902) *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae: e codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi*, Acta Sanctorum 62, Brussels (repr. 1985).
- Theodoret of Cyrus, *Dialogus I* – J.-P. Migne (ed.) (1864). PG 83. Paris, 32–105.
- Theodore of Raithou, *Praeparatio* – F. Diekamp (1938). *Analecta Patristica*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 117. Rome: Pontificum Institutum Orientalium Studiorum (repr. 1962).
- Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia* – C. Boor (ed.) (1883). *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1. Leipzig: Teubner (repr. 1963).

Secondary literature

- Ables, S. (2013). “Did John of Damascus Modify His Sources in the *De fide orthodoxa*?” *Studia Patristica* 68 (16), 355–361.
- Ables, S. (2015). “John of Damascus on Genus and Species.” In M. Knežević (ed.), *Philosophy in Byzantium: The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*. Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 271–287.
- Ables, S. (2020). “Development in Theological Method and Argument in John of Damascus,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 28 (4) (Winter), 625–653.
- Ables, S. (2023). “Introduction.” In S. Ables (ed.), *John of Damascus: More Than a Compiler*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 1–13.
- Ables, S. (2023a). “The Purpose of the Anti-Manichaean Polemic of John of Damascus.” In S. Ables (ed.), *John of Damascus: More Than a Compiler*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 65–85.
- Arzhanov Y. (2021). *Porphyry, On Principles and Matter: A Syriac Version of a Lost Greek Text with an English Translation*, Introduction, and Glossaries (Scientia Graeco-Arabica, 34). De Gruyter, Berlin.
- Arzhanov Y. (2024). *Sergius of Reshaina: Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, Philosophy and Sciences in the Christian Orient. De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston.
- Auzépy, M.-F. (2001). “Les Sabaïtes et l’iconoclasme.” In J. Patrich (ed.), *The Sabaïte Heritage*, Orientalia Lovanensia Analecta 98. Leuven, 305–314.
- Auzépy, M.-F. (2015). “From Palestine to Constantinople (Eighth-Ninth Centuries): Stephen the Sabaïte and John of Damascus.” In S. F. Johnson (ed.), *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Greek*. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 399–442.
- Aydin, S. (trans.) (2016). *Sergius of Reshaina: Introduction to Aristotle and His Categories, Addressed to Philotheos*, Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus 24. Boston: Brill.
- Badawy, H. and Cecota, B. (2015). “Administration of the Arabic World: From Tribalism to the Umayyad Caliphate.” In T. Wolinska and P. Filipczak (eds.), *Byzantium and the Arabs The Encounter of Civilizations from Sixth to Mid-Eighth Century*, Byzantina Lodziensia XXIII, part III. Uniwersytet Łódzki: Łódź, 328–337.
- Baranov, V. (2021). “Philosophical Background of the Cosmological Polemics in Contra Manichaeos by John of Damascus,” *ΣΧΟΛΗ (Scholē)* 15 (2), 573–594.
- Bathrellos, D. (2004). *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Beatrice, P. F. (2014). “Accusation of Atheism.” In A. D. Bernardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 1. InterVarsity Press, 284–285.
- Beeley, C. A. (2017). “Natural and Gnostic Willing in Maximus Confessor’s *Disputation with Pyrrhus*,” *Studia Patristica*, vol. LXXV, Peeters, 167–180.

- Benevich, G. (2012). "John Philoponus and Maximus the Confessor at the Crossroads of Philosophical and Theological Thought in Late Antiquity." In R. Krivko and A. Orlov (eds.), *Ars Christiana*, In Memoriam Michail F. Murianov (21.XI.1928 – 6.VI.1995). Piscataway, NJ, USA: Gorgias Press, 102–130.
- Berthold, G. C. (2010). "Aspects of Will in Maximus the Confessor," *Studia Patristica* 48, 65–69.
- Biriukov, D. (2016). "The Cosmology of John Damascene and Its Antique Context," *Scrinium* 12 (1), 353–360.
- Blake, R. P. (2015). "Greek Literature in Palestine in the Eighth Century." In S. F. Johnson (ed.), *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Greek*. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 365–374.
- Blowers, P. M. (2012). "Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus on Gnostic Will (γνώμη) in Christ: Clarity and Ambiguity," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 63, 44–50.
- Bodnar, I. (2018). "Aristotle's Natural Philosophy." In E. N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring Edition, pdf version, 1–40. URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/aristotle-natphil/>
- Bradshaw, D. (2019). "Maximus the Confessor on the Will." In D. Haynes (ed.), *A Saint for East and West: Maximus the Confessor's Contribution to Eastern and Western Christian Theology*. Cascade, 102–114.
- Bradshaw, D. (2013). "The Concept of the Divine Energies." In C. Athanasopoulos and C. Schneider (eds.), *Divine Essence and Divine Energies. Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy*, The Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies. Cambridge, 27–49.
- Bradshaw, D. (2023). *Divine Energies and Divine Actions: Exploring the Essence-Energies Distinction*. IOTA Publications.
- Brock, S. (1984). *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*. London: Variorum Reprints.
- Callahan, J. F. (1958). "Greek Philosophy and the Cappadocian Cosmology," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12, 29–57.
- Carl, W. and Hoyland, R. G. (ed. trans.) (2015). *Khalifa ibn Khayyat's History on the Umayyad Dynasty (660–750)*, Translated Texts for Historians 63. Liverpool University Press.
- Cavalcanti, E. (2014). "Julian the Arian." In A. D. Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 2. InterVarsity Press, 482.
- Cavallo, G. (2015). "Some Reflections on the Continuity of Greek Culture in the East in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries." In S. F. Johnson (ed.), *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Greek*. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 387–398.
- Chabot, J.-B. (1901). *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche, 1166–1199*, tome 2. Paris: E. Leroux.
- Chase, F. (ed. and trans.) (1958). *St. John of Damascus: Writings*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Chvatal, L. (2010). "Maxime le confesseur et la tradition philosophique: a propos d'une definition de la kinesis," *Studia Patristica* 48, 117–122.
- Cocchini, F. (2014). "Aphthartodocetism." In A. D. Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 1. InterVarsity Press, 167.
- Conticello, V. (1995). "Pseudo-Cyril's De ss. Trinitate: A Compilation of Joseph the Philosopher," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 61, 117–129. Republished in Kontouma (2015).

- Cohen, M. S. (2012). "Alteration and Persistence: Form and Matter in the *Physics* and *De Generatione et Corruptione*." In C. Shield (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, Oxford University Press, 205–226.
- Coyle, J. K. (2014). "Mani, Manicheans, Manicheism." In A. D. Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 2. InterVarsity Press, 661–665.
- Conger, G. P. (1922). *Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms in the History of Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Coope, U. (2001). "Why Does Aristotle Say That There Is No Time without Change?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 101, 359–367
- Cvetkovic, V. (2010). "St Maximus on Πάθος and Κίνησις in *Ambiguum* 7," *Studia Patristica* 48, 95–104.
- Debié, M. (2016). "Christians in the Service of the Caliph: Through the Looking Glass of Communal Identities." In A. Borrut and F. M. Donner (eds.), *Christians and Others in the Umayyad State*, LAMINE 1. Chicago, 53–71.
- Demetracopoulos, J. A. (2011). "In Search of the Pagan and Christian Sources of John of Damascus' Theodicy. Ammonius, the Son of Hermeias, Stephanus of Athens and John Chrysostom on God's Foreknowledge and Predestination and Man's Free Will." In A. Rigo (ed.), *Byzantine Theology and its Philosophical Background*, Studies in Byzantine History and Civilization 4. Turnhout, 50–86.
- Diekamp, F. (ed.) (1907). *Doctrina patrum de incarnatione verbi*. Münster: Aschendorff.
- Eustratiades, S. (1931 – 1933). "Ο ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνὸς καὶ τὰ ποιητικὰ αὐτοῦ ἔργα," *Néa Σιών*: vol. 26 (1931), 385–401, 497–512, 530–538, 610–617, 666–681, 721–736; vol. 27 (1932), 28–44, 111– 123, 165–177, 216–224, 329–353, 415–422, 450–472, 514–534, 570–585, 644–664, 698–719; vol. 28 (1933), 11–25.
- Erismann, C. (2011). "A World of Hypostases: John of Damascus' Rethinking of Aristotle's Categorical Ontology," *Studia Patristica* 50, 269–287.
- Falcon, A. (Fall 2017 Edition). "Commentators on Aristotle." In E. N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/aristotle-commentators>).
- Farrell, J. P. (1989). *Free Choice in St. Maximus the Confessor*. St. Tikhon Seminary Press.
- Fishbein M. (trans.) (1990). *The History of al-Tabari. The Victory of the Marwanids*, vol. 21. State University of New York Press.
- Frede, M. (2002), "John of Damascus on Human Action, the Will, and Human Freedom." In K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*. Oxford, 63–95.
- Frey, L., Botan, C. and Kreps, G. (1999). *Investigating Communication: An Introduction to Research Methods* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Fritsche, J. (2016). "Place and Locomotion in Aristotle: Physics Δ 4, 212A14–30," *Revue de philosophie ancienne*, 1 (34), 61–90.
- Gauthier, R. A. and Jolif, J. Y. (trad.) (1970). *Aristote. L'Éthique à Nicomaque*, vol. I, tome 1. Paris, Louvain.
- Gilhus, I. S. (2021). "Hermeneutics." In M. Stausberg and S. Engler (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religions*. London and New York: Routledge, 275–284.
- Griffith, S. (2006). "The Church of Jerusalem and the 'Melkites': The Making of an 'Arab Orthodox' Christian Identity in the World of Islam (750–1050 CE)." In O. Limor and G. G. Stroumsa (eds), *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land*. Turnhout: Brepols, 175–204.

- Griffith, S. (2011). "John of Damascus and the Church in Syria in the Umayyad Era: The Intellectual and Cultural Milieu of Orthodox Christians in the World of Islam," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 11 (2), 207–237.
- Griffith, S. (2016). "The Manṣūr Family and Saint John of Damascus: Christians and Muslims in Umayyad Times." In A. Borrut and F. M. Donner (eds.), *Christians and Others in the Umayyad State*. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 29–51.
- Guthrie, W. K. C. (1981). *A History of Greek Philosophy: Aristotle an Encounter*, vol. VI. Cambridge University Press.
- Haas F. H. J. (2003). "Late Ancient Philosophy." In D. Sedley (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press, 242–270.
- Haas F. H. J. (2016). "Mixture in Philoponus: An Encounter with a Third Kind of Potentiality." In R. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Re-Interpreted: New Findings on Seven Hundred Years of the Ancient Commentators*. Bloomsbury, 413–436.
- Hannick, C. (2001). "Hymnographie et hymnographes sabaïtes." In J. Patrich (ed.), *The Sabaïte Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present*. Leuven: Peeters, 217–228.
- Holman, S. R. (2008). "On Phoenix and Eunuchs: Sources for Meletius the Monk's Anatomy of Gender," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (1) (Spring), 79–101.
- Hugonnard-Roche, H. (2004). *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque: études sur la transmission des la transmission des texts de l'Organon et leur interpretation philosophique*, Textes et Traditions 9. Paris: Vrin.
- Ibrahim, H. (2023). "New Evidence for the Source of the Arabic *Life* of John Damascene and the Arabic Translation of the *Expositio fidei*." In S. Ables (ed.), *John of Damascus: More Than a Compiler*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 40–64.
- Jankowiak, M. and Booth, P. (2015). "A New Date-List of the Works of Maximus the Confessor." In P. Allen and B. Neil (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*. Oxford University Press, 19–83.
- Jones, A. (1996). "Later Greek and Byzantine Astronomy." In C. Walker (ed.), *Astronomy Before the Telescope*. London, 98–109.
- Jugie, M. (1924). "La vie de saint Jean Damascène," *Échos d'Orient* 23 (134), 137–161.
- Kapriev, G. (2025). *Byzantine Philosophy: a Systematic Perspective*, Studien und texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters. Brill, Leiden/Boston.
- Kazhdan A. and Gero, S. (1989). "Kosmas of Jerusalem: A More Critical Approach to his Biography," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 82, 122–32.
- Knorr, O. (1998). "Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte des 'Liber de Haeresibus' des Johannes von Damaskus (um 650–vor 754): Anmerkungen zur Edition B. Kotters," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 91, 59–69.
- Kontouma, V. (2015). *John of Damascus: New Studies on his Life and Works*. Farnham, Surrey/Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Kontouma, V. (2023). "The Understanding of the Sacraments in John of Damascus' Theology." In S. Ables (ed.), *John of Damascus: More Than a Compiler*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 153–171.
- Kotter, B. (ed.) (1969, 1973, 1975, 1981, 1988). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. I–V, PTS 7, 12, 17, 22, 29. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter.
- Krausmüller, D. (2020), "Theology and Philosophy in the Late Patristic Discourse: Pure Existence, Qualified Existence, and the Arbor Porphyriana." In E. Anagnostou-Laoutides, K. Parry (eds.), *Eastern Christianity and Late Antique Philosophy*, TSEC 18. Brill, 150–173.

- Lammens H. (1908). “Études sur le règne du Calife Omayyade Mo’awia Ier. La jeunesse du Calife Yazid Ier,” *Mélanges de la faculté orientale de l’Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth* 3, 143–312.
- Lammer, A. (2015). “Defining Nature: From Aristotle to Philoponus to Avicenna.” In A. Alwishah and J. Hayes (eds.), *Aristotle and the Arabic Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 121–142.
- Lamoreaux, J. (1999). *The Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. Leuven: Peeters.
- Lang, U. M. (2001). *John Philoponus and the Controversies Over Chalcedon in the Sixth Century: A Study and Translation of the Arbiter*, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense 47. Peeters.
- Larchet, J.-C. (2010). *La théologie des énergies divines: des origines à saint Jean Damascène*. Paris: Cerf.
- Levering, M. (2016). *Proofs of God: Classical Arguments from Tertullian to Barth*. Baker Academic.
- Lieu, S. (1988). *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Lilla, S. (2014). “Aristotelianism.” In A. D. Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 1. InterVarsity Press, 228–235.
- Lilla S. (2014a). “Platonism and the Fathers.” In A. D. Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 3. InterVarsity Press, 200–226.
- Lilla S. (2014b). “Microcosm and macrocosm.” In A. D. Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 2. InterVarsity Press, 651–652.
- Louth, A. (2002). *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Louth A. (2003). *St John of Damascus. Three Treatises on the Divine Images, Popular Patristics Series*. SVS Press.
- Louth, A. (2017). “Orthodox Mystical Theology and its Intellectual Roots.” In A. Kaldellis and N. Siniosoglou (eds.), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*. Cambridge University Press, 509–523.
- Loux, M. J. (2012). “Substances, Coincidentals, and Aristotle’s Constituent Ontology.” In C. Shield (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, Oxford University Press, 372–399.
- Madden, J. D. (1982). “The Authenticity of Early Definitions of Will (Theosis).” In F. Hernzer and C. Schönborn (eds.), *Maximus Confessor: actes du symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur*. Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 61–79.
- Mango, C. (2015). “Greek Culture in Palestine after the Arab Conquest.” In S. F. Johnson (ed.), *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Greek*. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 375–386.
- Maraval, P. (2010). “Biography of Gregory of Nyssa.” In L.F. Mateo-Seco and G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 103–116.
- Markov, S. (2015). *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus. Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Marmodoro, A. (2015). “Gregory of Nyssa on the Creation of the World.” In A. Marmodoro and B. Prince (eds.), *Causation and Creation in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge, 94–110.
- Marneli, M. P. (2020). “The Affections of the Soul according to Aristotle, the Stoics and Galen: On Melancholy,” *Peitho / Examina Antiqua* 1 (11), 121–142.
- Mateo-Seco, L. F. (2010). “Eucharist.” In L. F. Mateo-Seco and G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 293–297.

- Matsoukas N. (trans.) (1988). *Κατά Μανιχαίων διάλογος. Προς τους διαβάλλοντας τας αγίας εικόνας λόγοι τρεις*, Φιλοσοφική και Θεολογική Βιβλιοθήκη. Θεσσαλονίκη: Εκδόσεις Π. Πουρναρά.
- Mitralexis, S. (2014). *Ever-Moving Repose: The Notion of Time in Maximus the Confessor's Philosophy Through the Perspective of a Relational Ontology*, PhD dissertation. Freie Universität Berlin.
- Montelle, C. (2020). "The Hellenistic Theory of Eclipses." In A. C. Bowen and F. Rochberg (eds.), *Hellenistic Astronomy. The Science in Its Contexts*. Brill, 125–134.
- Morony, M. G. (trans.) (1987). *The History of al-Tabari. Between Civil Wars: The Caliphate of Mu'awiyah*, vol. 18. State University of New York Press.
- Nelson, C. and Woods, R. H., Jr. (2021). "Content Analysis." In M. Stausberg and S. Engler (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religions*. London and New York: Routledge, 109–121.
- Nicola, A. D. (2014). "Pamphilus of Jerusalem." In A. D. Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 3. InterVarsity Press, 32.
- Nicolaidis, E. (2011). *Science and Eastern Orthodoxy: From the Greek Fathers to the Age of Globalization*, S. Emanuel (trans.). The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Nuopponen, A. (2010). "Methods of Concept Analysis – A Comparative Study," *LSP Journal* 1 (1), 4–12.
- Oehler, K. (1964). "Aristotle in Byzantium," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 5, 133–146.
- Olkinuora, D. (2026 forthcoming). "7 Hymns and Liturgy." In K. Parry (ed.), *Brill's Companion to John of Damascus*.
- Oort, J. (2020). *Mani and Augustine: Collected Essays on Mani, Manichaeism and Augustine*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean studies, vol. 97. Leiden, Boston : Brill.
- Parry, K. (2017). "Fate, Free Choice, and Divine Providence from the Neoplatonists to John of Damascus." In A. Kaldellis and N. Siniosoglou (eds.), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*. Cambridge University Press, 341–360.
- Peristeris, A. (2001). "Literary and Scribal Activities at the Monastery of St. Sabas." In J. Patrich (ed.), *The Sabaitic Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present*. Leuven: Peeters; 171–194.
- Pétridès, S. (1901). "Le monastère des Spoudaei à Jérusalem et les Spoudaei de Constantinople," *Échos d'Orient*, 4 (4), 225–231.
- Petrynko, O. (2010). *Der jambische Weihnachtsskanon des Johannes von Damaskus. Einleitung – Text – Übersetzung – Kommentar*. Jerusalemer Theologisches Forum 15. Münster.
- Price, R. (intr. and trans.) (2018). *The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, Translated Texts for Historians 68. Liverpool University Press.
- Richter, G. (1982). *Johannes von Damaskos, Philosophische Kapitel*, Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur 15. Stuttgart.
- Roosen, B. (2001). *Epifanovitch Revisited. (Pseudo-) Maximi Confessoris Opuscula varia: A Critical Edition with Extensive Notes on Manuscript Tradition and Authenticity* (PhD diss.). Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.
- Rosen J. (2012). "Motion and Change in Aristotle's 'Physics' 5. 1," *Phronesis* 57, 63–99.
- Roueché, M. (1980). "A Middle Byzantine Handbook of Logic Terminology," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 29, 71–98.
- Roueché, M. (1974). "Byzantine Philosophical Texts of the Seventh Century," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 23, 61–76.

- Roumas, S. (2019). *The Glory of the Liturgy: The Iambic Kanon for the Nativity*, (Unpublished manuscript).
https://www.academia.edu/68832580/The_Iambic_Kanon_for_the_Nativity
- Russell, N. (2017). "The Hesychast Controversy." In A. Kaldellis and N. Siniosoglou (eds.), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*. Cambridge University Press, 494–508.
- Russell, N. (intr., ed., and trans.) (2022). *St John of Damascus. On the Orthodox Faith: Volume 3 of the Fount of Knowledge*, Popular Patristics Series 62. New York: SVS Press.
- Sahas, D. (1972). *John of Damascus on Islam. The "Heresy of the Ishmaelites."* Leiden: Brill.
- Sahas, D. (2021). *Byzantium and Islam. Collected Studies on Byzantine-Muslim Encounters*. Brill, Leiden.
- Schadler, P. (2018). *John of Damascus and Islam: Christian Heresiology and the Intellectual Background to Earliest Christian-Muslim Relations*. Leiden: Brill.
- Schukin, T. (2017). "Matter as a Universal: John Philoponus and Maximus the Confessor on the Eternity of the World," *Scrinium* 13, 361–382.
- Share, M. (trans.) (2005). *Philoponus: Against Proclus On The Eternity of The World 6–8*, Ancient Commentators on Aristotle. Bloomsbury.
- Sharples, R.W. and Eijk P.J. (eds.) (2008). *Nemesius. On the Nature of Man*. Liverpool University Press.
- Simonetti, M. (2014). "Nestorius – Nestorianism." In A. D. Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 2. InterVarsity Press, 907–909.
- Simonetti, M. (2014a). "Monophysitism-Monophysites." In A. D. Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 2. InterVarsity Press, 826–829.
- Simonetti, M. (2014b). "Monothelitism-Monoenergism." In A. D. Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 2. InterVarsity Press, 824.
- Skrekas, D. (2008). *Studies in the Iambic Canons Attributed to John of Damascus: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Oxford.
- Skrekas, D. (2018). "Late Byzantine School Teaching Through the Iambic Canons and Their Paraphrase." In T. Shawcross and I. Toth (eds.), *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond*. Cambridge, 377–394.
- Sorabji, R. (1990). "The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle." In A. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed: the Ancient Commentators and their Influence*. Cornell University Press, 1–30.
- Sorabji, R. (2010). *Philoponus and the Rejection to the Aristotelian Science*. University of London.
- Stewart A. (trans.) (1895). *Extracts from Aristeas, Heataeus, Origen and Other Early Writers*, Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society. London: Hanover Square.
- Stone, M., A. (1985). "Aristotle's Distinction between Motion and Activity," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (January), 11–20.
- Studtman, P. (2012). "Aristotle's Categorical Scheme." In C. Shield (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, Oxford University Press, 63–80.
- Thunberg, L. (1995). *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, II ed. Chicago: Open Court. 1995.
- Torrance, A. (2009). "Precedents for Palamas' Essence-Energies Theology in the Cappadocian Fathers," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63, 47–70.
- Tuominen M. (2009). *The Ancient Commentators on Plato and Aristotle*, Ancient Philosophies. Acumen (repr. in 2014 by Routledge).

- Tölpt, T. (2021). "The List of Aristotelian Types of Motion and Its Extension in 'De duabus in Christo voluntatibus' of John Damascene," *Scrinium* 17, 316–334.
- Varlamova, A. (2017). "Philoponus' Dispute Against the Eternity of the World and Its Influence on the Byzantine Philosophy," *Scrinium* 13, 383–399.
- Volk, R. (2023). "The Greek Lives of St John Damascene: Common Information, Differences, and Historical Value." In S. Ables (ed.), *John of Damascus: More than a Compiler*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 17–39.
- Volk, R. (ed.) (2024). *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. X, PTS 81. Berlin, New York, Boston: Walter de Gruyter.
- Waterfield, R. (trans.) (2008). *Aristotle: Physics*, Oxford World's Classics. Oxford University Press.
- Watt J. (2010). *Rhetoric and Philosophy from Greek into Syriac*. Ashgate Publishing.
- Wessel, S. (2010). "Human Action and the Passions in Nemesios of Emesa," *Studia Patristica* 48, 3–14.
- Westerlink, L.G. (1990). "The Alexandrian Commentators." In A. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed: the Ancient Commentators and their Influence*. Cornell University Press, 325–348.
- Wildberg, C. (2021). "John Philoponus," In E. N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter Edition. URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/philoponus/>.
- Wolfson H. (1966). "Patristic Arguments against the Eternity of the World," *The Harvard Theological Review* 59 (4), 351–367.
- Yarbrough, L. (2016). "Did 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz Issue an Edict Concerning Non-Muslim Officials?" In A. Borrut and F. M. Donner (eds.), *Christians and Others in the Umayyad State*, LAMINE 1. Chicago, 173–206.
- Zachary, K. M. (2017). "John of Damascus: Rewriting the Division of Heresy and Schism," *Vox Patrum* 37 (68), 501–512.
- Zachhuber, J. (2010). "Aristotle." In L. F. Mateo-Seco and G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 81–83.
- Zachhuber J. (2019). "Aristotle in Theodore of Raïthu and Pamphilus the Theologian. The search for a Chalcedonian philosophy." In A. M. Mazzanti, (ed.), *Un metodo per il dialogo fra le culture: La chrēsis patristica*, Suplementi adamantius IX. Morcelliana.
- Zachhuber, J. (2020). *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zhyrkova A. (2010). "John Damascene's Notion of Being: Essence vs. Hypostatical Existence," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 54 (1), 85–105.
- Zhyrkova, A. (2017). "John of Damascus' Philosophy of the Individual and the Theology of Icons." In A. Kaldellis and N. Siniosoglou (eds.), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*. Cambridge University Press, 431–446.
- Zhyrkova, A. (2023). "Philosophy as Both an Instrument and a Structural Principle of Theological Discourse in John Damascene." In S. Ables (ed.), *John of Damascus: More Than a Compiler*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 208–222.
- Zografidis, G. (1999). "Aristotle and John of Damascus: The 'first unmoved mover' and 'God-Creator'." In T. Pentzopoulou and V. S. Dymopoulos (eds.), *Aristotle on Metaphysics*. Thessaloniki, 201–221.
- Žunjić, S. (2015). "John Damascene's 'Dialectica' as a Bond between Philosophical Tradition and Theology." In M. Knežević (ed.), *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*. Alhambra, California: Sebastian Press, 227–270.

EESTIKEELNE KOKKUVÕTE

Muutus ja liikumine püha Damaskuse Johannese teostes: filosoofilised ja teoloogilised alused ning kasutusviisid

Damaskuse Johannes on 7.–8. saj Umaijaadide kalifaadis elanud kreeka kirikuisa. Ajalooliselt on teda peetud ebaoriginaalseks ja kompileerivaks autoriks, kelle teoloogilised ja filosoofilised mõtted pole midagi muud kui varasema kirikliku pärimuse entsüklopeediline kokkuvõte. Uuemad uuringud ning eriti just täpsustunud andmed käsikirjade analüüsis on aga 21. saj uurijaid pannud neid arusaamu ümber hindama. See on omakorda aga äratanud uut huvi Damaskuse Johannese teadusliku uurimise vastu – viimasesse annab oma panuse ka käesolev doktoritöö.

Selle tarbeks olen oma siinses väitekirjas võtnud uurida akadeemilises maailmas seni suuresti avastamata jäänud teemat – *liikumise* ja *muutuse* kontseptsioone – püha Damaskuse Johannese arusaamades ja argumentatsioonis. Taolise uurimiseesmärgi püstitamiseni viis induktiivselt Johannese *Dialectica* 62. peatükist leitud aristotellik arusaam *liikumisest/muutusest* (*kinêsis*) – vaatekoht, mis kreeka patristilises traditsioonis on sellisel kujul suuresti pretsedenditu. Antud kontseptsiooni märkamata jäämine on vägagi üllatav, arvestades selle olulisust kreeka loodusfilosoofide jaoks (Aristotelesest kristlike uusplatonistideni) *looduse/loomuse* (*physis*) mõistmisel, samuti tõsiasi, et Halkedoni kirikukogule (451) järgnenud kristoloogilised vaidlused, milles Johannes aktiivselt osales, toimusid just Kristuse loomus(t)e üle.

Uurimiseesmärgi välja selgitamiseks ning suurema pildi mõistmiseks mainitud indikatsioonide taga a) määran kindlaks Damaskuse Johannese töödes leiduvad liikumise ja muutuse mõisted ja käsitlused, b) esitan liikumise ja muutuse kontseptsioonide kasutuse Johannese teoloogilises argumentatsioonis, c) toon välja Damaskuslase töödes kasutatud liikumise ja muutuse kontseptsioonide taustad ja potentsiaalsed allikad: arusaamad, mis aitavad paremini mõista meie patristilise autori originaalsust ja ebaoriginaalsust, d) näitlikustan liikumise ja muutuse kontseptsioonide varal seost Johannese filosoofiliste ja teoloogiliste tööde vahel – asjaolu, mis on tänase päevani jäänud suuresti selgusetuks.

Analüüsides liikumise ja muutuse mõistelist käsitlust Damaskuse Johannese filosoofilistes teostes ning nende rakendamist tema teoloogilistes argumentides, olen saavutanud oma uurimistöö eesmärgi ja täitnud püstitatud ülesanded.

Esiteks kasutab Damaskuse Johannes erinevaid liikumise ja muutuse kontseptsioone peamiselt loomuse (*physis*) metafüüsiliste indikaatorite ja avaldumisevormidena. Seos loomuse ja sellele omase liikumise vahel, mille määratles algselt Aristoteles ning mida arendasid edasi nii meditsiinilised ja uusplatoonilised filosoofid kui ka mitmed kirikuisad, omandas pärast Halkedoni kirikukogu toimunud kristoloogilistes vaidlustes üha suurema tähtsuse. Halkedoonlased, kes olid selliseid põhimõtteid oma kristoloogilistes argumentides kasutanud juba enne Damaskuse Johannest, mõistsid taolise seose olulisust. Selles argumentatsioonis oli oluline mitte üksnes viitamine varasematele patristilistele allikatele,

kus looduse/loomuse ja liikumise vaheline metafüüsiline seos oli juba osaliselt välja kujunenud, vaid ka uusplatoonilis-aristotelliku traditsiooni kasutamine. Taoline toetav roll oli võimalik seetõttu, et patristilised ja halkedoonlikud metafüüsilised põhimõtted pärinesid varasematest Kreeka filosoofilistest käsitlustest ning kujutasid endast nende edasiarendust.

Teiseks mõistis Damaskuslane, et liikumise ja muutuse erinevaid kontseptsioone saab kasutada ontoloogiliste argumentidena olendite loodud olemuse tõestamisel ning kogu loodud reaalsuse kirjeldamisel. Ainus reaalsus, milles liikumine ei tähenda muutust, on jumaliku korra mitteloodud tasand. Selle käsitluse aluseks on patristiline metafüüsiline eristus muutliku loodud maailma ning muutumatu mitteloodud Jumala vahel. Patristiline traditsioon oli juba varakult integreerinud mitmesuguseid Aristotelese liikumise ja muutuse käsitluse elemente, et taolisi seisukohti täpsemalt väljendada.

Traditsioonide järgijana toetub Damaskuse Johannes filosoofilises mõtlemises selgelt olemasolevale patristilisele pärimusele ja selle allikatele. Samas ei piirdu ta lihtsalt nende kopeerimisega. Nagu käesolevas töös välja tuli, erinevad Johannese tõlgendused sageli tema patristiliste allikate algsest käsitlusest. Mitmed näited osutavad sellele, et ta kohandas oma allikaid, põimides neisse teistest kirikuisade tekstidest pärinevaid mõttemustreid. Heaks näiteks on Johannes Kuldsuu kasutatud Aristotelese kuue liikumisliigi õpetus, millele lisatud intellektuaalse liikumise liigi asendas Damaskuslane ühel juhul Nüssa Gregoriuselt pärinevate elementidega ning teisel juhul Maximus Usutunnistaja käsitlusega. Sarnasest teguviisist annab tunnistust ka Maximus Usutunnistaja *kire/mõjutatuse* (*pathos*) kontseptsiooni täiendamine Emesa Nemesiuse mõtetega. Samuti leidis kinnitust Damaskuslase võimekus paigutada oma patristilised allikad ja nende kontseptsioonid täiesti uude konteksti. Näiteks muutis ta Kuldsuu arutluse erinevatest liikumisliikidest, mida algselt kasutati Jumala mõistetamatu olemuse tõestamiseks, argumentideks Jumala olemasolu ning Kristuse inimloomuse loomulike liikumiste tõestamisel.

Veelgi enam, paljudel juhtudel lähendas Johannes oma patristilisi allikaid teadlikult Kreeka filosoofilistele kontseptsioonidele. Märkimisväärseks näiteks on Nüssa Gregoriuse manilusevastane õpetus kurja olemuslikust mitteolemisest, mida Damaskuslane täiendas Johannes Philoponuse vastuolude kontseptsiooniga (tekkimine, hävimine, omamine ja ilmaolek). Samuti kujundas ta Nazianzi Gregoriuse argumendi Jumala mõistetamatuses ümber nii, et see vastaks täpsemalt Aristotelese terminoloogiale, kasutades mõistet „esimene liikumatu liigutaja“. Võttes arvesse antud näidete ainulaadsust on väga tõenäoline, et nende uuenduslike nihete algatajaks oli Damaskuse Johannes ise.

Lisaks tutvustavad Johannese teoloogilised arendused eelnevale patristilisele traditsioonile täiesti tundmatuid filosoofilisi kontseptsioone. Üks selliste mõistete rühm, mis on suunatud erinevate manihheistlike ja dualistlike argumentide vastu, näib olevat tugevalt mõjutatud Johannes Philoponusest. Nägime, kuidas Damaskuslane kasutas oma teoses *Manilaste vastu* (*Manich*) Aristotelese *liikumise* (*kinêsis*) ja *tekkimise* (*genesis*) definitsioone, muutes need metafüüsilisteks argumentideks, millega näitlikustada loodud maailma muutlikkust. Nii lükkas ta

ümber manihheistliku väite, et kuri materia võiks olla igavene ja muutumatu. Samuti rakendas Johannes ka Philoponuse arusaama varjutustega kaasas käivatest muutustest, mida Philoponus oli teoses *Maailma igavikulisusest Prokluse vastu* (*De aet mundi*) kasutanud maailma igavikulisuse argumentide ümberlukkamiseks, et tõendada tähtede loodud olemust ja vaielda vastu nende kummardamisele. Viimaks kasutas Damaskuslane Philoponuse käsitlusi taevakehade ja ratta ringsetest liikumistest, mis olid algselt suunatud Prokluse maailma igavikulisuse argumentide vastu teoses *De aet mundi*, oma ainulaadses manihheismivastases seletuses inglite surematuse kohta.

Kuigi Damaskuse Johannese mõtlemises on Philoponuse mõju selgelt märgatav, läheb ta oma eelkäijast kaugemale, andes tema kontseptsioonidele uusi tähendusi või rakendades neid täiesti uudsetes kontekstides. Damaskuslase panus nende nihestuste kujundamisse ning tema täpne suhe Philoponuse teostega jääb siiski ebaselgeks.

Ühelt poolt ei anna ükski eespool käsitletud näidetest märku sellest, et Johannes oleks tundnud Philoponuse arusaamade algset kontekstuaalset ja kontseptuaalset tausta. Seega on täiesti võimalik, et ta kasutas mõnda tänaseni tundmatut manihheismivastast allikat, kus need kontseptsioonid ja nende rakenduskontekst olid juba välja kujunenud. Samuti on võimalik, et need ideed eksisteerisid üksnes kontseptuaalsete filosoofiliste printsiipidena ilma manihheismivastase raamistikuta ning just Johannes andis neile sellise rakenduse. Selle väite toetuseks võib tuua Johannese manihheismivastase kasutuse Aristotelese liikumise ja tekkimise definitsioonidest, mis veel Philoponuse käsitluses, nagu ka Damaskuslase *Filosoofilistes Peatükkides* (*Dial*), eksisteerisid mittepoleemiliste ja puhtakujuliste kontseptsioonidena.

Kuigi see on vähem tõenäoline, ei saa välistada võimalust, et need kontseptuaalsed ümberkujundused said alguse Johannese enda kokkupuutest Philoponuse teostega. Mõned Philoponuse kirjutised, näiteks *Vahekohtunik* (*Diaitêtês*), olid haldedoonlastele kättesaadavad ning võisid olla tuntud ka Damaskuse Johannesele. Samuti on võimalik, et Johannesel oli mingisugune teadmine teosest *De aet mundi* – apologetilisest paganliku filosoofia vastasest kirjutisest, mida tõenäoliselt hindasid kõrgelt kõik kristlased.

Johannese filosoofilise mõtlemise ja allikmaterjali eripära ilmneb veelgi tema arutlustes taevakehade, eriti päikese toimest aastaegade vaheldumisele ning nende mõjust inimestele. Selles üksikasjalikus käsitluses esitab Johannes arusaama, et Jumal on korraldanud aastaegade vaheldumise sellisel viisil, mis väldib järske üleminekuid ja muutuseid, mis võiksid olla inimese füsioloogiale kahjulikud. Selle uudse kontseptsiooni päritolu, mis kujutab endast sisuliselt erinevate Hippokratese, Platoni, Aristotelese ja Galenose ideede sünteesi, jääb endiselt ebaselgeks.

Sama haruldane on ka *kolmese ühenduse* kontseptsioon, mida Johannes kasutas muutuse ja muutlikkuse illustratsioonina monofüsiitide ja eutühhiaanide vastu. Selle eesmärgiks oli illustreerida, kuidas Kristuse kaks loomust saavad ja kuidas nad ei saa olla ühendatud. Nagu nägime, pärineb antud kontseptsioon algselt Aristotelese teosest *Tekkimisest ja hävimisest* (*De generatione et corruptione*),

kus seda esitati Aristotelese oponentide argumendina segunemise vastu. Uus-platonistliku kommentaaritraditsiooni kaudu leidsid halkedoonlased selles käsitluses kasuliku vahendi, kuna neil oli vaja tõestada Kristuse kahe loomuse segunemise võimatust. Olenemata sellest, kas mainitud rakendusvõimaluse avastas Damaskuse Johannes ise või mitte, jääb ta ainsaks patristiliseks autoriks, kelle teostest leiame viiteid selle kontseptsiooni kasutamisele mitte ainult ühel, vaid koguni kahel juhul.

Ühel või teisel viisil esitab Damaskuse Johannes, keda on sageli peetud üksnes kompileerijaks ja kopeerijaks, üllatavalt suure hulga enneolematuid kontseptsioone ja ideid. Kuigi see ei tõesta automaatselt tema originaalsust ja arusaamade ainulaadsust, näitab see siiski, kui piiratud on meie teadmised tema võimalike allikate ja intellektuaalse tausta kohta.

Oma võrdlevas analüüsis olen samuti näidanud, et enamik Johannese liikumise ja muutuse käsitlusi, mida ta kasutab teoloogilistes argumentides, on temaatiliselt seotud tema *Filosoofilistes Peatükkides (Dial)* esitatud kontseptsioonidega. Siiski ei tugine Johannese teoloogilised kirjutised üldiselt sellele teosele otseselt ega kopeeri seda. Antud eripära ilmneb eriti selgelt *Dial* käsitluses Aristotelese kuuest liikumisliigist ning liikumise definitsioonist, mille Johannes võttis oma teoloogilistesse teostesse üle üksnes nende patristilisel kujul. Sama kehtib ka Aristotelese loomuse definitsiooni kohta *Dial* 41. peatükis, mis Johannese kaashalkedoonlaste kriitika tõttu esitatakse tema teoloogilistes teostes juba tugevasti halkedoonlikult ümber kujundatuna – asjaolu, millele osutab ka *Dial* 31. peatükk.

See ei tähenda, et *Dial*-s esitatud, kuid teoloogias otseselt kasutamata kontseptsioonid oleksid sisse toodud selleks, et neid pelgalt eristada nende patristilistest käsitlustest. Vastupidi, just nende kontseptuaalne kattuvus patristiliselt ja halkedoonlikult ümber kujundatud versioonidega muutis need väärtuslikeks tööriistadeks. Kuigi Johannes ei kasuta oma teoloogias Aristotelese loomuse (*physis*) definitsiooni, tunnistab ta, et patristlik arusaam loomuse ja liikumise seosest on välja kujunenud ning seda toetab ka paganlik filosoofia. Just see arusaam võis olla põhjuseks, miks Damaskuse Johannes töötas välja Aristotelese loomuse definitsiooni modifitseeritud versiooni.

Dial-s esitatud Aristotelese liikumise definitsioon ja kuus liikumisliiki andsid kahtlemata teoloogiatudengitele vahendid mõistmaks sarnaste patristiliste käsitluste laiemat kontseptuaalset raamistikku. See kehtib nii Johannes Kuldsuu *kuue liikumisliigi* kontseptsiooni kui ka Nüssa Gregoriuse käsitluse kohta, mille järgi *toimimus (energeia)* on *potentsiaali/väe (dynamis)* realiseerumine. Seega võib Damaskuse Johannese suhtumist aristotelismi ja tema retoorilist Aristotelese-kriitikat pidada mõõdukaks. Ta ei poolda aristotelismi otsest rakendamist teoloogias, kuid tunnistab selle toetavat kontseptuaalset rolli. Seetõttu tuleb tema väidet, et Kreeka filosoofia on patristilise filosoofia ja teoloogia teenistuses kasulik, mõista just selles tähenduses.

Lisaks olid peaaegu kõik käesolevas uurimuses vaadeldud *Dial*-s esinevad uuplatoonilis-aristotellikud mõisted kristlikus filosoofilises traditsioonis tõlgendatud, mõjutatud või ümber kujundatud. Isegi *Dial* liikumist käsitlev peatükk,

mille puhul on tegemist kokkuvõttega Aristotelese *Kategooriate* uuplatoonilisest kommentaaritraditsioonist, on tegelikult selle materjali kristlik metafüüsiline tõlgendus.

Kõik need juhtumid näitavad selgelt Johannese toetumist kristlikult tõlgendatud ja töödeldud Kreeka filosoofilisele traditsioonile ning samas tema vähest või puuduvat otsest kokkupuudet Aristotelese enda teoste ja uusplatooniliste kommentaatorite kirjutistega. Kuigi Johannese isiklik panus selle traditsiooni kujundamisse jääb jätkuvalt vaidlusküsimuseks, sisaldas *Dial* siiski mitmeid enneolematuid filosoofilisi kontseptsioone. Nende hulka kuuluvad näiteks loomuse definitsiooni modifitseeritud versioon ning muutlikkust illustreeriv *teine teistest* (*kolmese ühenduse* kontseptsiooni *teine argument*).

Taoline kristianiseerunud filosoofia omandas veelgi selgemalt patristilise ja halkedoonliku kuju *Elementaarse sissejuhatuse* (IE) kontseptsioonides *toimimus* (*energeia*), *kirg/mõjutatus* (*pathos*) ja *tahe* (*thelēma*). Nende kontseptsioonide kasutamise eesmärgiks oli valmistada teoloogiatudengeid ette tõhusateks vaidlusteks monoteleetide ja monoenergistidega. Kõigi nende mõistete keskseks metafüüsiliseks aspektiks oli taas liikumine, mis toimis ontoloogilise tunnusena, sidudes toimimuse, kire/mõjutatuse ja tahte loomusega ning näidates samal ajal nende endi olemuslikku iseloomu. Kuigi need kontseptsioonid pärinesid algselt Kreeka filosoofilisest traditsioonist, olid need kristlikus patristilises traditsioonis kas ümber kujundatud või sellesse kindlalt integreeritud.

Erinevalt *Dial* mõistetest, mille peamiseks eesmärgiks oli toetada patristilist filosoofiat, olid IE mõisted mõeldud otseseks kasutamiseks teoloogilises poleemikas – see leiab kinnitust ka Johannese monoteleetide ja monoenergistide vastases argumentatsioonis. Kuigi käesolevas uurimuses analüüsitud kolme IE peatüki eesmärgiks oli esitada juba olemasolevat patristilist traditsiooni, sisaldasid need samuti uudseid elemente. Näiteks Galenose *toimimuse* definitsiooni ning Galenose-Nemesiuse *kire/mõjutatuse* käsitlust (vastandina toimimusele) ei olnud varem monoteleetide ega monoenergistide vastu suunatud vaidlustes kasutatud.

Just nendes ja teisteski sarnastes leidudes, millest suur osa pole akadeemilistes uuringutes varem ilmnenu, peitub käesoleva uurimistöö ainulaadsus. Kõik see panustab olulisel määral Damaskuse Johannese kuvandi muutmisel, keda uurijad on ajalooliselt pidanud pigem ebaoriginaalseks ning kompileerivaks traditsionalistik, kes ei huvitunud filosoofilisest tegevusest. Vastupidiselt nendele arusaamadetele on siinses väitekirjas tuvastatud Damaskuslane aga hoopis loominguiliselt ning innovaatsiliselt sünteesiv, kuid samas halkedoonlikule traditsioonile truus jääv kirikuisa, kes mõistis filosoofilise loogika väärtust teoloogilisele argumentatsioonile, olgu siis patristilises (kiriklikus) või kreekalikus (paganlikus) vormis.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Tauri Tölp
Date of birth: 26.04.1987
Place of birth: Tallinn, Estonia
E-mail: Tauriitsius@gmail.com

Education

2016–2026 University of Tartu, School of Theology and Religious Studies, PhD
2013–2015 University of Fribourg, Faculty of Theology, MA
2008–2012 Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Faculty of Theology, BA

Positions

2015–present Head of the Theological Institute of the Orthodox Church of Estonia
2015–present Institute of Theology of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Head of the Chair of Orthodoxy, extraordinary lecturer
2019–present University of Tartu, School of Theology and Religious Studies, extraordinary lecturer

Research-related publication

2021 “The List of Aristotelian Types of Motion and Its Extension in „De duabus in Christo voluntatibus“ of John Damascene,” *Scrinium* 17 (1), 316–334. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18177565-BJA10034>

ELULOOKIRJELDUS

Nimi: Tauri Tölpt
Sünniaeg: 26.04.1987
Sünnikoht: Tallinn, Eesti
E-post: Tauriitsius@gmail.com

Haridus

2016–2026 Tartu Ülikool, usuteaduskond, PhD
2013–2015 Fribourgi Ülikool, usuteaduskond, MA
2008–2012 Thessaloniki Aristotelese Ülikool, usuteaduskond, BA

Teenistuskäik

2015–praeguseni Eesti Apostlik-Õigeusu Kiriku Teoloogilise Instituudi juhataja
2015–praeguseni Eesti Evangeelse Luterliku Kiriku Usuteaduse Instituut, õigeusu õppetooli juhataja, erakorraline lektor
2019–praeguseni Tartu Ülikool, usuteaduskond, erakorraline lektor

Uurimisega seotud teadusartikkel

2021 “The List of Aristotelian Types of Motion and Its Extension in „De duabus in Christo voluntatibus“ of John Damascene,” *Scrinium* 17 (1), 316–334. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18177565-BJA10034>

DISSERTATIONES THEOLOGIAE UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

1. **Tarmo Kulmar.** Die Theologie der Kraft-, Götter- und Seelenvorstellungen der ältesten Schicht der estnischen Urreligion. Tartu, 1994, Autorreferat, 45 S.
2. **Toomas Paul.** Die Geschichte der estnischen Bibelübersetzung, I Teil (XVI–XIX Jahrhundert). Tartu, 1994, Autorreferat, 27 S.
3. **Kalle Kasemaa.** Semitistik ja poeetikat. Tartu, 1997, 131 lk.
4. **Arne Hiob.** Uku Masingu religioonifilosoofia põhijooned. Tartu, 2000, 186 lk.
5. **Riho Altnurme.** Eesti Evangeeliumi Luteriusu Kirik ja Nõukogude riik 1944–1949. Tartu, 2000, 326 lk.
6. **Pille Valk.** Eesti kooli religiooniõpetuse kontseptsioon. Tartu, 2003, 209 lk.
7. **Peeter Roosimaa.** Uue Testamendi eestikeelsetest tõlgetest ja tõlkimist toetavast eksegeesist. Tartu, 2004, 242 lk.
8. **Einike Pilli.** Terviklik elukestva õppe kontseptsioon Eesti protestantlike koguduste kontekstis. Tartu, 2005, 265 lk.
9. **Lea Altnurme.** Kristlusest oma usuni. Uurimus muutustest eestlaste religioossuses 20. sajandi II poolel. Tartu, 2005, 329 lk.
10. **Aira Võsa.** Johann Georg Gichtel – teosofiilise idee kandja varauusaegses Euroopas. Tartu, 2006, 311 lk.
11. **Veiko Vihuri.** Hugo Bernhard Rahamägi, Eesti Evangeelse Luterliku Kiriku teine piiskop 1934–1939. Tartu, 2007, 364 lk.
12. **Kaido Soom.** Täiskasvanute leeritöö Eesti Evangeelses Luterlikus Kirikus ja selle arengustrateegia koostamine. Tartu, 2007, 242 lk.
13. **Meelis Friedenthal.** Tallinna Linnaarhiivi *Tractatus moralis de oculo*. Tartu, 2008, 206 lk.
14. **Andrei Sõtšov.** Eesti Õigeusu Piiskopkond Nõukogude religioonipoliitika mõjuväljas 1954–1964. Tartu, 2008, 208 lk.
15. **Jaan Lahe.** Gnosis und Judentum. Alttestamentliche und jüdische Motive in der gnostischen Literatur und das Ursprungsproblem der Gnosis. Tartu, 2009, 412 S.
16. **Roland Karo.** Eros & Mysticism. Are Mystical States of Consciousness Evolutionary Byproducts of Sexual Response? Tartu, 2009, 237 p.
17. **Olga Schihalejev.** Estonian young people, religion and religious diversity: personal views and the role of the school. Tartu, 2009, 256 p.
18. **Ingmar Kurg.** Oikumeenilise evangelisatsiooni perspektiiv Euroopa kontekstis: missioloogiline ja religioonisotsioloogiline uurimus. Tartu, 2010, 354 lk.
19. **Peeter Espak.** The God Enki in Sumerian Royal Ideology and Mythology. Tartu, 2010, 284 p.
20. **Piret Lotman.** Heinrich Stahli pastoraalne tegevus Rootsi Läänemere provintsid 17. sajandi esimesel poolel. Tartu, 2011, 180 lk.

21. **Kaarina Rein.** Arstiteadus rootsiaegses Tartu gümnaasiumis ja ülikoolis aastatel 1630–1656. Meditsiinalased disputatsioonid ja oratsioonid ning nende autorid. Tartu, 2011, 198 lk.
22. **Ain Riistan.** Ajalooline Jeesus: teaduse probleem religiooni kontekstis. Tartu, 2011, 301 lk.
23. **Ringo Ringvee.** Riik ja religioon nõukogudejärgses Eestis 1991–2008. Tartu, 2011, 234 lk.
24. **Atko Rimmel.** Religioonivastane võitlus Eesti NSV-s aastail 1957–1990. Tähtsamad institutsioonid ja nende tegevus. Tartu, 2011, 324 lk.
25. **Anu Põldsam.** Lazar Gulkowitsch – eine vergessene Stimme der Wissenschaft des Judentums. Tartu, 2011, 293 S.
26. **Priit Rohtmets.** Teoloogilised voolud Eesti evangeeliumi Luteri usu kirikus aastatel 1917–1934. Tartu, 2012, 488 lk.
27. **Maire Latvala.** Koguduslik hingehoid Eesti nelja konfessiooni näitel. Tartu, 2012, 309 lk.
28. **Raul Tiganik.** Sotsiaalne kontroll ja religioon. Tartu, 2013, 232 lk.
29. **Elo Süld.** Muhammad, der Gesandte Gottes, und Paulus, der Gesandte Christi. Ein Vergleich der Berufungs- und offenbarungsgeschichtlichen Vorstellungen mit Bezug auf die islamische sowie die biblische Tradition. Tartu, 2014, 301 S.
30. **Mart Jaanson.** Nikaia-Konstantinoopoli usutunnistuse ladinakeelse normteksti grammatiline, teoloogiline ja muusikaline liigendamine. Tartu, 2014, 371 lk.
31. **Erki Lind.** The Concept of the Body in Chinese and Indian Bodily Practices: Transformation, Perspective, and Ethics. Tartu, 2015, 371 p.
32. **Marko Uibu.** Religiosity as Cultural Toolbox: A Study of Estonian New Spirituality. Tartu, 2016, 258 p.
33. **Liina Eek.** Tänapäeva eestikeelsete õigeusklike katehheesist ja uskumustest. Tartu, 2017, 246 lk.
34. **Marju Lepajõe.** Pastorid ja kirjakultuur: kristliku humanismi variatsioonidest Eesti- ja Liivimaal XVII sajandi esimesel poolel. Tartu, 2017, 330 lk.
35. **Liidia Meel.** Interdisciplinary team based pastoral care model for Estonian healthcare institutions. Tartu, 2018, 192 p.
36. **Ege Lepa.** Eesti islamikogukonna dünaamika pärast taasiseseisvumist. Tartu, 2019, 207 lk.
37. **Andreas Johandi.** The god Asar/Asalluhi in the early Mesopotamian pantheon. Tartu, 2019, 277 p.
38. **Indrek Peedu.** Positioning the Scholar: Issues of Epistemology and Methodology in the Evolutionary Study of Religion. Tartu, 2019, 247 p.
39. **Liina Kilemit.** Kristlike kogudustega liitumise põhjustest. Tartu, 2020, 186 lk.
40. **Tiina-Erika Friedenthal.** Võitlus ja väitlus teatri üle Eesti- ja Liivimaal 18. sajandi lõpus ja 19. sajandi alguses. Tartu, 2020, 472 lk.
41. **Triin Käpp.** Kristlik väärtuskasvatus kristlikes koolides ning kristlike koolide roll Eesti ühiskonnas 21. sajandi algul. Tartu, 2021, 205 lk.

42. **Silja Härm.** Eesti gümnaasiumiastme usundiõpetuse õpetajate professionaalsed valikud usundiõpetuse õpetamisel. Tartu, 2021, 183 lk.
43. **Helle Kaasik.** Sacred medicine from the forest: chemical, psychological and spiritual aspects of ayahuasca. Tartu, 2022, 170 p.
44. **Hedi Vilumaa.** Avatud sõna- ja sakramendiosadus. Ristitud laste ja noorte armulaua admissioon: kontekstid ja arusaamad Eesti luterlikus kirikus 1917–2005. Tartu, 2022, 356 lk.
45. **Ahenkora Siaw Kwakye.** Transcendence, as a Theme in Theology and Technology. Tartu, 2022, 273 p.
46. **Iakov Kadochnikov.** Deification of kings in Ancient Mesopotamia. Tartu, 2023, 367 p.
47. **Helen Haas.** Alevis in Contemporary Izmir: Imaginaries, Beliefs and Practices regarding Hacı Bektaş Veli. Tartu, 2023, 227 p.
48. **Imar Y. Koutchoukali.** “Our ‘*irbūt*’ is not like your ‘*arabiyya*’”. Linguistic and Socio-Political Change in Late Antique South Arabia (550 – 850 AD). Tartu, 2023, 240 p.
49. **Üllas Linder.** Adam Reinhold Schiewe. Esimese Eesti baptistikoguduse rajaja elulugu. Tartu, 2024, 228 lk.
50. **Rain Soosaar.** The Process of Secularization in Rural Communes of Estonia and Latvia (1920–40). Tartu, 2024, 371 p.
51. **Indrek Pekko.** Eesti Evangeelne Luterlik Kirik aastatel 1991–2015 – muutused, identiteet ja teoloogilised hoiakud. Tartu, 2024, 214 lk.
52. **Indrek Linnuste.** Spirituaalse dimensiooni integreerimise võimalusest ja vajadusest tervishoiu- ja rehabilitatsioonisüsteemis. Tartu, 2025, 220 lk.
53. **Amir Vasheghanifarahani.** Poetical Features of the Peshitta Psalter: A Comparative Study of the Hebrew and Syriac Psalms. Tartu, 2025, 234 p.
54. **Cristina Barcina Pérez.** Before Civilization: A Non-Evolutionist History of Community-Making in Southwest Asia. Tartu, 2025, 478 p.
55. **Igor Ahmedov.** Kierkegaardian Theology of Education. Tartu, 2025, 224 p.
56. **Ago Lilleorg.** Uurimus koguduse kasvust Eesti protestantlike koguduste näitel. Koguduse arengustrateegia sõnastamine. Tartu, 2025, 191 lk.
57. **Aleksandra Sooniste.** Religious Literacy of Estonian Basic School Graduates. Tartu, 2025, 168 p.
58. **Matthew L. Kalkman.** Enlightened Sovereignty: A Postsecular Semiotic ‘Image of God’. Tartu, 2025, 347 p.
59. **Mati Simm.** Raha, teoloogia ja voorused: etnograafilise teoloogia rakenduskatse. Tartu, 2026, 255 p.
60. **Kristin Klaus.** Style of Old Greek Job. Its value for textual, literary, and redaction criticism of Hebrew Job. Tartu, 2026, 391 p.