Aristotle and Byzantine Iconoclasm

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WHILE ICONOCLASM as a field of inquiry might appear to have been exhausted, in fact relatively little attention has been given lately to the eighth- and ninth-century intellectual climate in Byzantium and, in particular, the philosophical discussions that formed the basis of Iconophile and Iconoclast thought.[1] Several recent studies that have explored the lives and contributions of individuals central to the period as well as broader political developments in Byzantium and its neighboring states have touched on aspects of these topics.[2] Still, there remains a gap in scholarship in the intellectual history of the period. This is in part the result of a real lacuna in the source material, which may have left scholars with the misleading impression that questions regarding the role of ancient philosophical thought during Iconoclasm, and more broadly, during a ninth-century cultural revival, are settled.

Scholars seem to be in agreement that the ninth century, the backdrop of the second period of Iconoclasm, represents a

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[1] On the philosophical background of Iconoclast and Iconophile theory see K. Parry, *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (Leiden 1996); M.-J. Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary* (Stanford 2005).

[2] R. Cholij, *Theodore the Stoudite: The Ordering of Holiness* (Oxford 2002); T. Pratisch, *Theodoros Studites (759–826) – zwischen Dogma und Pragma* (Frankfurt 1998); A. Louth, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford 2002); A. Giakalis, *Images of the Divine: The Theology of Icons at the Seventh Ecumenical Council* (Leiden 1994); L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History* (Cambridge 2011); T. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia 2009).

period of cultural revival, characterized by increased literary activity, manuscript production, and, specifically, reliance upon Aristotelian thought by Iconophiles like Nikephoros of Constantinople and Theodore of Stoudios.[3] In trying to find a source for this apparent shift in Iconophile thought, scholars have on the whole followed Paul Alexander's conclusions in his invaluable study of Patriarch Nikephoros.[4] They have emphasized the importance of schools and textbooks in the development of what Alexander termed the "scholastic theory of images," which drew heavily upon logical terminology in Aristotle's *Categories*.[5] As a result, a theory of images that relies

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[3] Since Paul Lemerle's important study, *Le premier humanisme byzantin* (Paris 1971; transl. *Byzantine Humanism*, Canberra 1986), scholars generally recognize some degree of continuity in education and learning during the 'Dark Ages', and disagree primarily about the extent to which education during this period was based on the classical tradition and about the existence of public higher education and the role of private tutors. For discussion see P. Speck, *Die kaiserliche Universität von Konstantinopel* (Munich 1974), "The Origins of the Byzantine Renaissance," in S. Takács (ed.), *Understanding Byzantium: Studies in Byzantine Historical Sources* (Aldershot 2003) 143–162, and "Further Reflections on the Byzantine Renaissance," in *Understanding Byzantium* 180; W. Treadgold, "The Macedonian Renaissance," in *Renaissances before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Stanford 1984); Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism* 82–84, on the absence of secular and non-secular manuscripts during this period; A. Moffatt, "Schooling in the Iconoclast Centuries," in A. Bryer and J. Herrin (eds.), *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham 1977) 92: "there seems to have been a significant swing in the Iconoclastic period away from an elementary education based on Homer, to one based on reading the Psalms and other Scripture." On the continuity of an education based on Aristotle see Parry, *Depicting the Word* 52–56.

[4] P. J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford 1958).

[5] Alexander concludes that Iconophiles adapted the "scholastic" approach to the defense of images after the end of the first Iconoclast period in 787, the use of which was evident in writings belonging to the second period of Iconoclasm: "At some time after the Seventh Ecumenical Council the need was felt to justify religious images and their worship in terms of the philosophy taught in Byzantine schools," *Patriarch Nicephorus* 189; on the appearance of the "scholastic theory" see 212–213. Following Alexander's

upon a specific aspect of Aristotelian vocabulary and ideas has been viewed as a primary indicator of cultural revival, and the question of any Iconophile or Iconoclast reliance upon philosophical ideas in the first period of Iconoclasm has been downplayed.[6]

While this approach has been fruitful in identifying a potential source for several ninth-century Iconophile ideas, it has in some way ignored the aims of the actors themselves—by giving only scant attention to the way in which Iconoclasts and Iconophiles grappled with their classical past in articulating the legitimacy or illegitimacy of religious art. In trying to recreate a picture of the intellectual trends that shaped the manner in which Iconophile and Iconoclast writers addressed the image question, it is necessary to ask two fundamental questions that are often overlooked: (a) Why *would* Iconophiles of the eighth century rely explicitly on Aristotle in their defense of icons—the use of which was being labeled a resuscitation of Greek idolatry. By contrast, (b) How *was* such a reliance useful during the second period of Iconoclasm? Answers to these questions go a considerable distance toward explaining Iconophile thought in the eighth century and its development in the ninth.

The following will suggest that Iconophile image theory in the ninth century cannot be appreciated fully by speculating

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view of a scholastic approach: Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era…A History* 374–375; Cholij, *Theodore the Stoudite* 20; Parry, *Depicting the Word* 54; Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism* 152–153; C. Mango, "Greek Culture in Palestine after the Arab Conquest," in *Scritture, libri, e testi nelle aree provinciali di Bisanzio* (Spoleto 1991) 150.

[6] There are important exceptions. See G. Ladner, "The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy," *DOP* 7 (1953) 1–34, esp. 6–8. Ladner discusses some important ways in which Iconoclast views resemble Plato's low opinion of imitation; see also G. Florovsky, "The Iconoclast Controversy," in *Christianity and Culture* (Belmont 1974) 101–119, who focuses upon the Neoplatonist streak in Iconoclast ideas; P. J. Alexander, "The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and Its Definition (*Horos*)," *DOP* 7 (1953) 35–66; Giakalis, *Images* 27–28; Mondzain, *Image* 79.

about schools and a spontaneous source of revival. Rather, an examination of the writings of the most prominent Iconophiles —Patriarch Nikephoros of Constantinople and Theodore, abbot of the Stoudios Monastery, shows that, by turning away from the primary importance of mimesis, which had its roots in ancient Greek aesthetic theory, and toward Aristotelian explanations of symbolism and metaphor, these defenders of images were able to argue that Christian images were in fact the only worthy form of figural representation. They were able to distinguish pagan images from Christian art by outlining the boundaries—linguistic, literary, and pictorial—for describing and discussing the subjects of the Christian tradition. In the ninth century, while dealing with the same broad questions regarding the legitimacy of Christian images[7]—something that had been asked before the period of Iconoclasm and during the eighth-century movement—these writers were raising important questions regarding the limits of human comprehension and the proverbial quandary of the philosopher—the nature of true knowledge.

Indeed, the sources from the first period of Iconoclasm, both Iconophile and Iconoclast, suggest that the principal opposition to icons rested upon the view that the veneration of icons was a form of idolatry, a pure and simple resuscitation of the idolatry of the Hellenes.[8] This is often overlooked in the effort of scholars to identify a single source of Aristotelian ideas and to pinpoint the roots of a broader cultural revival. Only by

[7] Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era…A History* 373–374, emphasize the emperor Leo V's effort to strike a "conciliatory" tone, thus avoiding equating icon veneration with idolatry, characteristic of the first period of iconoclasm.

[8] On the nature of the objection to icons before these texts see S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III* (Louvain 1973) 102–109; L. Barnard, *The Graeco-Roman and Oriental Background of the Iconoclastic Controversy* (Leiden 1974); Ladner, *DOP* 7 (1953) 1–34; Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus* 214–217, and "The Icons before Iconoclasm," *HThR* 44 (1951) 93–106; J. Pelikan, *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons* (Princeton 1990) 41–66; Noble, *Images* 95–110.

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keeping in mind the agenda of the defenders of images—that is, to categorically distinguish sacred icons from their profane counterparts—can we understand the gradual yet striking shift in the basis of the Iconophile defense of image, from one of mimesis to one of symbolism.

Eighth-century Iconoclasm and Aristotle

The first period of Iconoclasm featured one of the most prominent Greek writers of the Byzantine period. John of Damascus, writing from the Caliphate, succinctly categorized the essential difference between image and prototype in his magnum opus, the *Fount of Knowledge* (Πηγὴ Γνώσεως), a text that, although produced during the first period of Iconoclasm, had little to do with the image conflict itself.[9] In the first part of this work, known as the *Dialectica*, John discussed Aristotle's idea of 'names' in the *Categories*, a text whose ideas had likely long been a standard part of Byzantine education.[10] John's *Dialectica* even included a discussion (50) of relative terms, the very topic that would shape Nikephoros' and Theodore of Stoudios' definitions of an image in the ninth century. The contents of the *Dialectica*, probably collected from the writings of commentators on Aristotle and Porphyry, seem to have been part of a well-established tradition and may have had a very practical application—the instruction of students in the basic elements of argumentation.[11]

[9] Louth, *St John Damascene* 33, argues that the *Fount of Knowledge* was initially composed in the 720's or 730's, included only the *Dialectica* and *De fide orthodoxa*, and was later revised.

[10] *Dialectica* 32, ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* I (Berlin 1969) 101–102. On the teaching of Aristotle in Byzantium during the Iconoclast period see Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus* 189–213; Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism* 108–120; Parry, *Depicting the Word* 52–54.

[11] Louth, *St John Damascene* 42–46. On Theodore's education and the role of dialectic see Cholij, *Theodore the Stoudite* 19 ff.; K. Parry, "Byzantine and Melkite Iconophiles under Iconoclasm," in C. Dendrinos et al. (eds.), *Porphyrogenita: Essays on the History and Literature of Byzantium and the Latin East in Honor of John Chrysostomides* (Aldershot 2003) 146.

Consequently, scholars have remarked upon the curious fact that John of Damascus articulated the value of secular learning for a Christian monk like himself and composed a handbook on the elements of Aristotelian logic, yet he stopped short of relying upon these ideas in support of his position on images.[12] In fact, his *Orationes pro sacris imaginibus*, which are devoted exclusively to the defense of sacred images, do not make mention of the logical terminology that forms the basis of his *Dialectica*.[13] To the contrary, his definition of an icon in the *Orationes* is fairly imprecise, merely pointing out that an image somehow differs from its prototype.[14] He emphasizes his understanding of the icon as a product of mimesis, which accounts for his frequent description of an εἰκών as ὁμοίωμα (likeness) or ἐκτύπωμα (copy or imprint), instead of appealing to the language of metaphor.[15]

By the time of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787), which restored icon veneration, Iconophile writers were free, without fear of imperial persecution, to defend the correctness of images; however, there was no appeal by any writers to the

[12] Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus* 191: "The author of the *Fons Scientiae*, John of Damascus, supplied Eastern Christianity with the most popular handbook of Aristotelian Logic," yet he did not employ his knowledge of Aristotle in his defense of images; Parry, *Depicting the Word* 52. On John's appreciation of secular learning and the *Fount of Knowledge* see Parry, in *Porphyrogenita* 145 ff.

[13] The date of John's treatises on icons has been a topic of discussion. They have been placed alternately in the reigns of Leo III and Constantine V. Louth, in general, agreeing with Kotter, argues for John of Damascus' composition of the first treatise in the 720's after Leo III initiated Iconoclasm, the second after 730 because of its reference to Germanos' forced abdication, and the third as late as the 740s: Louth, *St. John Damascene* 208. More recently, Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era…A History* 183 ff., point to a later dating around the time of the Council of Hiereia in 754. See also Parry, in *Porphyrogenita* 143.

[14] *Orationes pro sacris imaginibus* 1.9, ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften* III (Berlin 1975) 83: καί τινα διαφορὰν ἔχειν πρὸς αὐτό.

[15] *Orationes pro sacris imaginibus* 3.16 (Kotter III 125).

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philosophical discussion of 'names' laid out by John of Damascus in his *Fount of Knowledge*. Rather, the *Acta* of the Council of 787 elaborate a defense of icons that appeals primarily to the long-standing use of figural representation by Christians and the importance of mimetic art. They insist that, when used to represent sacred subjects, figural painting is of great didactic benefit because of the mimetic relationship between icon and prototype.[16] In this way, the *Acta* and the *Horos* of the Council fit nicely with the defense of images characteristic of the *Orationes* of John of Damascus. They attempt to outline the manufacture and veneration of images as an integral part of the history and traditions of Christianity and emphasize their benefit to observers.[17] Iconophile confidence in imitation as the basis of sacred figural representation is what is truly striking at the Council of Nicaea. Indeed, the figural representation of Christ had been endorsed by Canon 82 of the Quinisext Council, which distinguished a symbol from an image.[18] And it is belief in the possibility of accurate imitation, which painters of non-Christian imagery relied upon as well, which forms the basis of the early Iconophile defense—not any substantive definition of an icon.

[16] For instance, *Horos*, Mansi XIII 377DE; *Acta*, 241BD.

[17] M.-F. Auzépy, "Manifestations de la propagande en faveur de l'orthodoxie," in L. Brubaker, *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* (Aldershot 1998) 92 ff. On the justification for images at Nicaea II see M.-F. Auzépy, "La tradition comme arme de pouvoir: l'exemple de la querelle iconoclaste," *L'autorité du passé dans les sociétés médiévales* (Rome 2004) 87 (repr. *L'histoire des iconoclasts* [Paris 2007] 107).

[18] Ed. and transl. G. Nedungatt and M. Featherstone, *The Council in Trullo Revisited* (Rome 1995) 163: "Venerating, then, these ancient representations and foreshadowings as symbols and prefigurations of truth handed down by the Church, nevertheless, we prefer grace and truth, which we have received as fulfilment of the law. Therefore, in order that what is perfect, even in paintings, may be portrayed before the eyes of all, we decree that henceforth the figure of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, Christ our God, should be set forth in images in human form, instead of the ancient lamb."

Unsurprisingly, the Council is concerned primarily with patristic, hagiographical, and conciliar sources in its insistence upon the legitimacy of figural representation through mimesis.[19] According to Brubaker and Haldon, the Council had in large part the aim of diplomacy—healing the rift between Constantinople and its western neighbors. In this context, they argue, it is not surprising that theological digressions are limited.[20] It should also be pointed out that a council attempting to emphasize the orthodoxy of eastern Christians in the eyes of the West was hardly the place for any explicit appeal to pre-Christian philosophical thought, even if tacit allusions to it are evident. With few exceptions, which will be discussed below, the Council of 787, organized and led by Patriarch Tarasios, emphasized the idea that sacred images were beneficial forms of painting, due to their mimetic value.[21] Thus, the *Acta* attempt to distinguish superficially between the aims of pagan and Christian images: "The idea, therefore, and the tradition are theirs, not the painter's. Only the art is of the painter, whereas the disposition is certainly of the holy Fathers."[22]

It is in this context that one can understand, on the one hand, the frequent Iconophile comparison of Christian images with secular painting in order to emphasize their similar function, and, on the other, the categorical rejection of secular art as something dangerous to those who view it. By ascribing to the Christian icon the value of mimetic object, the Iconophiles of the eighth century hoped to argue that Christian iconography was the only worthy form of representational art, and

[19] On the source of these excerpts see A. Alexakis, *Codex Parisinus 1115 and its Archetype* (Washington 1996) 227–233.

[20] Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era…A History* 266–267.

[21] On Tarasios' role at the Council see S. Efthymiadis, *The Life of Patriarch Tarasios by Ignatios the Deacon* (Aldershot 1998) 7 and 15 ff.; Speck, in *Understanding Byzantium* 148 ff.

[22] Mansi XIII 252C; transl. D. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto 1986) 84.

could in theory replace secular art.

By contrast, the Iconoclasts found a basis for their rejection of images in their identity-in-essence requirement (ὁμοούσιος) of an image and its prototype. The Eucharist, because it shares the essence of Christ after consecration, is, for the Iconoclasts, a true image.[23] In his *First Peusis*, written in objection to Christian images, the emperor Constantine V claims that calling paintings 'images' requires that they possess the divine nature of Christ. Thus, he argues in his *Second Peusis* that the Eucharist, after it has been consecrated, is a true image of Christ precisely because of this identity in essence.[24] The *Horos* of the Iconoclast Council of Hiereia (754), recorded in the Iconophile *Acta* of 787, also underlines this idea, giving primary attention to the doctrine of the Eucharist. It states that the icon could serve as some kind of intermediary *if* it were granted such a status, by means of consecration, such that it could be said to embody the nature of Christ.[25]

For the Iconoclasts, this relationship is not based fundamentally on a physical resemblance with the prototype. An icon that depicted only the physical characteristics of Christ could not serve as a symbol of His eternal nature or share in His divine nature, as they believed the Eucharist did. With these definitions, the Iconoclasts believed that they stood on firm ground in claiming that icon venerators were no different from Greek idol worshippers.[26] In their embrace of the

[23] Mansi XIII 264B. On the Iconoclast emphasis on Christ's divinity and the influence of earlier conciliar decisions see T. Krannich, C. Schubert, and C. Sode, *Die ikonoklastische Synode von Hiereia 754* (Tübingen 2002) 14.

[24] H. Hennephof, *Textus Byzantinos ad iconomachiam pertinentes* (Leiden 1969) 54.

[25] Mansi XIII 268C: οὔτε εὐχὴν ἱερὰν ἁγιάζουσαν αὐτήν, ἵν' ἐκ τούτου πρὸς τὸ ἅγιον ἐκ τοῦ κοινοῦ μετενεχθῇ, ἀλλὰ μένει κοινὴ καὶ ἄτιμος, ὡς ἀπήρτισεν αὐτὴν ὁ ζωγράφος.

[26] Mansi XIII 221CD. See discussion of this passage in Krannich et al., *Die ikonoklastische Synode* 10–11, and 9–10 on the Iconoclast use of biblical citations to support their objection to images.

Eucharist as a true image, as well as other symbols, such as the cross, which did not claim to be mimetic representations, the Iconoclasts could maintain an appreciation for secular art and its beauty—and it seems that several did.[27] It is significant that the images that were acceptable to the Iconoclasts are not mimetic representations. For the Iconoclasts, because the Eucharist did not share the human appearance of its prototype, and operated as an "indirect image," they believed that it could not give rise to idolatry.[28] In short, they suggested that the supposed mimetic aspect of icons, the basis of Iconophile theory in the eighth century, was precisely what might lead to confusion. Yet, while they objected to the intrusion of figural painting into the realm of the sacred, those condemning Christian icons could acknowledge the worth of secular art, for it did not have any bearing on the value of the consecrated objects and symbols of the Christian tradition. Rather, the danger arrived, they argued, with the Iconophile suggestion that painted images could be granted a similar status to some of these, based upon their supposed mimetic relation to their divine prototypes.

While the eighth-century Iconophile defense of icons, on the whole, gave little attention to the Iconoclast definition of an

[27] For examples of secular art during the first period of Iconoclasm see Barnard, *The Graeco-Roman and Oriental Background* 119–128; R. Cormack, "The Arts during the Age of Iconoclasm," in Bryer and Herrin, *Iconoclasm* 38–39; J. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton 1989) 363 ff. On the Iconoclast acceptance of non-figural motifs see Parry, *Depicting the Word* 178–179; G. B. Ladner, "Origin and Significance of the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy," in *Images and Ideas in the Middle Ages* I (Rome 1983: orig. 1940) 50: "The first great inconsistency of the Byzantine iconoclasts was that they do not really follow the Old Testament commandment to which they refer, namely not to represent in images, and not to adore, anything in heaven or earth, but that they felt concerned only with religious art."

[28] Krannich et al., *Die ikonoklastische Synode* 17; see Mansi XIII 264B. For the view that the Iconoclasts understood the Eucharist as both a material and a spiritual image see V. Baranov, "The Doctrine of the Icon-Eucharist for the Byzantine Iconoclasts," *Studia Patristica* 44 (2010) 41–48.

image described above, it is important to note a couple of instances from the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787) which seem to stray from the Iconophile arguments regarding mimesis and the historical use of images. These examples suggest incipient reliance upon a new vocabulary to address the image conflict, and may cast doubt on the view that some kind of re-introduction to Aristotle occurred in the late eighth century, after the Seventh Council, as many have argued. Perhaps laying the groundwork for the theory of images so characteristic of the writings of the ninth century, the *Acta* of the Seventh Council attempt to distinguish the icon from its prototype:[29]

> For the icon is one thing and the prototype another. No one of sound mind looks in any way to the icon for the qualities of the prototype. In the icon the true discourse knows nothing else but how to communicate in name, not in essence, with the one who is in the icon, as we have said in many ways when we were challenged by their disputations.

The *Acta* state this definition again, identifying clearly what the icon is understood to represent: "The icon resembles the prototype, not with regard to the essence, but only with regard to the name."[30] In these examples and others,[31] the *Acta* stop short of citing any source for questions concerning the relationship between image and prototype, nor do they elaborate fully a discussion of relational terminology as is characteristic of the later writings of Theodore of Stoudios and Patriarch Nikephoros. Although these few references are largely eclipsed by the appeal to long-established use of icons and the superiority of sacred art, the similarity to fundamentally Aristotelian ter-

[29] Mansi XIII 257D, Sahas 89.

[30] Mansi XIII 244B, Sahas 77: καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν οὐ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν τῷ πρωτοτύπῳ ἔοικεν, ἢ μόνον κατὰ τὸ ὄνομα.

[31] Mansi XIII 252D, Sahas 84: "What the icon has in common with the archetype is only the name, not the essence," κατὰ τὸ ὄνομα μόνον ὁμολογοῦσιν οἱ Χριστιανοὶ κοινωνεῖν τὴν ὁρωμένην εἰκόνα τῷ ἀρχετύπῳ, καὶ οὐ κατὰ οὐσίαν.

minology and concepts seems clear.[32]

These statements offer a more concise definition of an icon/image and refute Constantine V's claim that a true image must be of the same essence as its prototype. The limited space given to this definition in the *Acta* points to some important trends. It suggests a gradual departure from the view of mimesis as the primary basis for evaluating images, so prominent in Iconophile writings of the eighth century, and thus may point to the gradual development of and emphasis upon the symbolic view of the icon. However, it also underlines the importance of avoiding philosophical detours during a council that was aimed at emphasizing Constantinople's commitment to ecclesiastical tradition and defending Christian icon veneration against the charge of Greek idolatry.

The icon and symbolism

The second period of Iconoclasm, in the ninth century, witnesses the culmination of the gradual shift discernible at the Seventh Ecumenical Council. The writings of the most prominent Iconophiles of this period, Nikephoros of Constantinople and Theodore of Stoudios, indicate an important move away from emphasis upon the icon as a mimetic object toward an understanding of the icon's symbolic value.

For instance, in his correspondence with John Grammatikos, Theodore of Stoudios explains that it is necessary to rely upon grammatical terms like ἀναφορικόν and ὁμοιωματικόν to understand the function of the image.[33] He uses the example of the cross and its prototype to articulate the relationship between homonymous terms:[34]

[32] Arist. *Cat.* 1: ὁμώνυμα λέγεται ὧν ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τοὔνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ἕτερος, οἷον ζῷον ὅ τε ἄνθρωπος καὶ τὸ γεγραμμένον, τούτων γὰρ ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τοὔνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ἕτερος.

[33] *Ep.* 546; G. Fatouros, *Theodori Studitae Epistulae* II (Berlin 1992) 826.

[34] *Antirrheticus* 2.17 (*PG* 99.361AB), transl. C. P. Roth, *St. Theodore the Studite, On the Holy Icons* (Crestwood 1981) 51.

> Therefore, by whatever means the life-giving cross is called, its representation is also called by the same names. If we should say that the life-giving cross is the "glory of the world," likewise its representation is called "the glory of the world."

He argues that this relationship operates analogically or by correspondence (κατὰ κατάχρησιν), just like the relationship of the cross and a representation of the cross. He explains, "We even speak figuratively of the life-giving cross, meaning its representation; and we speak of Christ's representation, meaning His icon."[35]

Nikephoros further described the relation (σχέσις) between image and prototype in terms of the definition of correlative terms explained by Aristotle in chapter seven of his *Categories*. Aristotle points to the examples of words such as "large" (μέγα) or "similar" (ὅμοιον) in order to explain how these terms can be used properly only in reference to other terms.[36] In his *First Antirrheticus*, Nikephoros characterizes this by choosing the examples of "father" and its correlative, "son," as well as that of the "right hand" and its correlative, the "left hand."[37] He explains that correlative terms such as these can be understood only in relation to one another. Furthermore, Nikephoros claims that the modification of one of the terms in either set does not alter the relationship between the two terms.[38] By

[35] *Antirrheticus* 2.23 (*PG* 99.368C), Roth 57. On Theodore's view of the representation of the cross see T. Damian, *Theological and Spiritual Dimensions of Icons according to St. Theodore of Stoudion* (Lewiston 2002) 222–223.

[36] At *Cat.* 5b–6b Aristotle uses the example of the mountain and argues that calling it "large" or "great" implies that this term can only be understood relative to the size of something else.

[37] Nikephoros *Antirrheticus* 1 (*PG* 100.277D): ὥσπερ ὁ πατὴρ υἱοῦ πατὴρ … καὶ δεξιὸς ἀριστεροῦ. Nikephoros also discussed this idea in his *Refutatio et eversio* 11.59–71, J. M. Featherstone, *Nicephori Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Refutatio et eversio* (Turnhout 1997) 22.

[38] For the Aristotelian basis of this aspect of Nikephoros' argumentation see Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus* 202–204. Another interesting discussion is J. Travis, *In Defense of the Faith: The Theology of Patriarch Nikephoros of Constantinople* (Brookline 1984) 51–54.

identifying Christ and the icon of Christ, or the prototype and its image, as correlative terms, Nikephoros claims that the relationship between image and prototype remains unchanged even if the appearance of the icon itself changes.

The symbolic understanding of the image, evident in many Iconophile writings of the ninth century, had implications for the initial emphasis on mimesis as the primary basis for sacred iconography. In his *Adversus Iconomachos*, Nikephoros explains how the eyes can be cheated by corrupt images whose only function is to please the senses,[39] almost echoing the concerns of Plato. A similar concern regarding the corruptibility of the senses is described by Ignatios the Deacon, Nikephoros' biographer. In his *Life of Nikephoros* he portrays Nikephoros' explanation for the justification of images to the emperor Leo V:[40]

> They were slaves of sense perception … But … we do not elevate what can be seen and circumscribed <by endowing it> with the capacities of … what can be neither touched, seen, nor circumscribed in <Christ> by demeaning it with terms <particular> to touching, circumscribing, and seeing.

Ignatios also addresses the inferiority of sensory experience when he creates a Platonic dialogue between Nikephoros and Leo V in order to outline the former's view of images.[41] The Patriarch describes how those practicing idolatry "descended to earthly matter and poured out all their wisdom <here> below, <then> proclaimed that what appears <to the senses> is God."[42] Nikephoros did not reject the importance of the sense of sight when an individual encounters a sacred image. He, like his Iconophile predecessors, extolled sight as first of among the senses.[43] However, the icon, for Nikephoros, seems not to rely

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[39] Ed. J. B. Pitra, *Spicilegium Solesmense* IV (Paris 1858) 268–269.

[40] *PG* 100.105CD; transl. E. Fisher, in A.-M. Talbot (ed.), *Byzantine Defenders of Images. Eight Saints' Lives in Translation* (Washington 1998) 96–98.

[41] Cf. Fisher, in *Byzantine Defenders* 34.

[42] *PG* 100.93D, Fisher 86–87.

[43] On Nikephoros' hierarchy of the senses as described in the *Refutatio et*

entirely upon the sense of sight, as does mimetic representation. For Nikephoros, images can prevent confusion and ambiguity, but they also have the potential to distract observers from contemplation of the Divine.[44] In this context, we can better understand Ignatios' description of Nikephoros' emphasis upon education, both secular and sacred, as an indispensible tool in eradicating heresy.[45]

The writings of Theodore Abu Qurrah (ca. 755–830) provide an important point of comparison.[46] He was writing in defense of icons in response to an iconoclastic movement in the Caliphate, and is considered by scholars the literary successor of John of Damascus, even if the two were not acquaintances.[47] Writers like John of Damascus and Theodore Abu Qurrah certainly represent the possibilities of secular learning and the nature of an ecclesiastical controversy *outside* of the Byzantine Empire, as they wrote from beyond the borders.[48] Scholars

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eversio see Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus* 211–212; Travis, *In Defense of the Faith* 48. Cf. Theodore of Stoudios *Antirrheticus* 1.13 (*PG* 99.344C).

[44] Nikephoros *Antirrheticus* 3.5 (*PG* 100.381D–384A).

[45] *PG* 100.56CD, Fisher 52: "As well as studying Holy Scripture, he also acquired familiarity with secular <rhetorical education>, partly out of a desire to enhance the persuasive <quality> of his <own> teaching and partly out of a desire to expose the implausibility of <heretical> error." On Ignatios' description of Nikephoros' secular education as a literary trope see P. Speck, in *Understanding Byzantium* 186. Cf. Nikephoros *Refutatio et eversio* 68, where he explains that the Iconoclasts' ignorance compels him to rely upon "outside knowledge" (Featherstone 111): ἀλλὰ δὴ καὶ οὕτω περὶ τούτων θεωρείσθω· ἡ γὰρ τῶν ἀνοσίων ἀναισχυντία καὶ τοῖς τῶν ἔξωθεν συγκεχρῆσθαι λόγοις συναναγκάζει.

[46] S. J. Griffith, *Theodore Abu Qurrah, A Treatise on the Veneration of Holy Icons* (Louvain 1997) 1.

[47] On this movement see Griffith, *Theodore Abu Qurrah* 21–23. On the possibility that Abu Qurrah's link to Mar Sabas and his familiarity with John of Damascus' works have been overstated, see J. Lamoreaux, "The Biography of Theodore Abu Qurrah Revisited," *DOP* 56 (2002) 33.

[48] Most recently see Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era… A History* 106 ff. and 234–235, on Abu Qurrah's concerns; S. J. Griffith, "

have suggested that the presence of thinkers schooled in Aristotelian thought in the Caliphate may even reinforce the idea of a break in learning in Byzantium.[49] Indeed, Theodore Abu Qurrah's efforts must be considered against the backdrop of the Greek-Arabic translation movement of the early Abbasid dynasty.[50]

However, what is striking about Abu Qurrah, for the purpose of this study, is his reliance upon philosophical ideas in his work on images and his attempt to articulate the role of icons by way of the vocabulary of names and symbolism. In this context, Abu Qurrah seems to illustrate a trend that parallels that represented in the writings of Constantinopolitans like Theodore of Stoudios and Patriarch Nikephoros, despite the fact that they were dealing with different iconoclasms.[51] In other words, it is against the backdrop of these seemingly disconnected ecclesiastical controversies that the parallel between their writings is so significant.

Theodore Abu Qurrah's *On the Veneration of Holy Icons*, likely written in the early ninth century,[52] corresponds closely to the understanding of the image that is elaborated by Nikephoros and Theodore of Stoudios and seems to represent an important

'Melkites', 'Jacobites' and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in Third/Ninth-Century Syria" in D. Thomas (ed.), *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years* (Leiden 2001) 9–55.

[49] On Antioch as a center for philosophical study, and Aristotle's logical works in particular, after the Arab conquests of the seventh century, see P. Huby, "The Transmission of Aristotle's Writings," *ClMed* 30 (1969) 251; W. Treadgold, "The Revival of Byzantine Learning," *AHR* 84 (1979) 1248 ("During the sixty years of the first iconoclast period (728–88), the only important Greek writer, John of Damascus, lived in the caliphate, not in Byzantium"); C. Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (New York 1980) 137, and in *Scritture* 158–160.

[50] See D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society* (London 1998), esp. 17–60.

[51] On these differences see Parry, in *Porphyrogenita* 141 ff.; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era…A History* 234.

[52] For dating see Griffith, *Theodore Abu Qurrah* 21.

departure from John of Damascus' arguments. For instance, he discusses the importance of the metaphorical nature of images by comparing icons to 'names' more generally:[53]

> If someone says that names are not like icons, he is only speaking out of his ignorance of the facts. The fact is that he does not understand that written names are representations, or figures for sounds, and the sounds are representations for ideas, and ideas are representations for things, as the philosophers say.

In another dialogue, Abu Qurrah describes the nature of iconographic representation, discussing an icon of Paul:[54]

> Imagine that someone … sees an image of, say, Paul. Pointing at it, he says, "This is Paul of Tarsus, who stood by and consented to the death of Stephen, who received letters from the high priests and proceeded to Damascus … This is the one who was converted by a divine vision to Christianity and became a preacher and a teacher of the Gentiles." These and similar things he might say, the one looking at an icon of Paul. All these things he refers to the Paul who is represented in the image, but not to the painting or the colors. Suppose he were to say, however, "The Painter has not rightly recalled Paul. He made his shoulders too wide and he did not paint his eyes very well and he made his legs too light and too thin," and so on. If he were to say this, such faults would not be attributed to what is being represented, but would be limited to the image alone.

He explains how, because of the correlative relationship between the image and its prototype, Paul is, by definition, related to the descriptions of him. This emphasis upon the relationship between names overshadows the importance of the artist's rendering of the subject of the icon. A poor rendering of Paul does not alter the relationship of the figure of Paul to the signified "preacher and teacher of the Gentiles."

It has been argued that Theodore Abu Qurrah's ideas do not

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[53] Transl. Griffith, *Theodore Abu Qurrah* 63.

[54] Transl. John C. Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abu Qurrah* (Chicago 2006) 241.

advance beyond those of John of Damascus.[55] John, however, ignored these ideas in his own defense of images, the *Orationes*, even though some certainly appear in his *Dialectica.* Furthermore, it is significant that the textual selections above emphasize how icons are 'names' that can only be understood as representations of, or in reference to, other things, as is elaborated by the work of Nikephoros and Theodore of Stoudios.

Interestingly, the ninth-century authors rarely refer to Aristotle, whose ideas they borrow, in more specific terms than as "the philosophers."[56] Surely, they still aimed to show that the use of icons was a fundamental aspect of the Christian tradition whose basis could be found in Scripture.[57] Mondzain has asked whether Nikephoros attempts to downplay any reliance on secular learning.[58] Or perhaps broader knowledge and use of such arguments made attribution to Aristotle unnecessary. In either case, the emphasis upon symbolism and language reflected in the work of the three ninth-century writers discussed above suggests an attempt to remove the icon from the category of art in order to distinguish it from its profane counterpart. The works of Theodore of Stoudios, Nikephoros of Constantinople, and Theodore Abu Qurrah seem to suggest that an image derives its legitimacy from serving as the symbol of, or metaphor for, the prototype, making somewhat extraneous the degree of *actual* resemblance achieved by the artist.[59] As Ni-

[55] S. J. Griffith, "Theodore Abu Qurrah's Arabic Tract on the Christian Practice of Venerating Images," *JAOS* 105 (1984) 57.

[56] On Nikephoros' failure to credit Aristotle see Mondzain, *Image* 74–75.

[57] On Theodore's view of the biblical basis for icons see T. Damian, *Theological and Spiritual Dimensions of Icons according to St. Theodore of Studion* (Lewiston 2002) 124–52.

[58] Mondzain, *Image* 74–75.

[59] On icons and their context see G. Dagron, "Holy Images and Likeness," *DOP* 45 (1991) 26. See also Mondzain, *Image* 186–191, who emphasizes the importance of the icon's ability to operate outside of any temporal context; on the difference between similitude and resemblance see Mondzain 177.

kephoros explains, one can differentiate between an image and its prototype by understanding definitional boundaries.[60] The Iconophiles could refute the Iconoclast claim that icons were the mere work of painters by suggesting that neither the artist nor the observer could alter the symbolic, representational relationship of the icon and its prototype. The reliance upon Aristotle in this very specific context—articulating the symbolic and linguistic importance of images—has important implications for the traditional view of a ninth-century revival.

The apparent interest in Aristotelian thought confirms an observation made by Kenneth Parry, that both Byzantine and Islamic debates over icons "stimulated rather than stifled creative thought."[61] However, these trends need not suggest a major development after the Seventh Ecumenical Council or the introduction of a new curriculum in schools, as has been maintained.[62] Several of the ideas that became a standard part of iconophile theory are identifiable in pre-Iconoclast era arguments about images, and it is likely that much of Aristotelian terminology remained part of Byzantine education even during the 'Dark Ages'.[63] Rather, the general comparability of the ideas of John of Damascus' *Orationes* with other eighth-century writings in defense of images in Constantinople suggests that the eighth-century concern with a defense of mimesis reflected the prevailing anxiety regarding Iconoclast charges of paganism and idolatry, more than educational opportunities in Constantinople or the Caliphate.

Ninth-century 'revival'

If one looks beyond the schools, it seems plausible that John of Damascus' *Dialectica* could have provided the basis for the use of Aristotelian logical terminology by Nikephoros and

[60] *Antirrheticus* 1.30 (*PG* 100.280C).

[61] Parry, in *Porphyrogenita* 146.

[62] Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus* 191.

[63] On Aristotle and Byzantine education see Parry, *Depicting the Word* 54–56.

Theodore of Stoudios in the ninth century. While Alexander does not attribute the introduction of the "scholastic theory of images" in Constantinople to a general reliance upon the writings of John of Damascus, he does note Nikephoros' familiarity with John's work.[64] There is, furthermore, evidence of the activity of several Melkite Iconophiles who traveled to Byzantium during the ninth century, serving as activists for the cause of icons and suffering persecution. This activity, while it suggests that the period of Iconoclasm was one of intellectual curiosity and creativity, as Parry has argued, occurs long after the Seventh Council, which makes a mild attempt to outline the essential difference between image and prototype.[65]

These few instances in the *Acta* certainly recall John of Damascus' *Dialectica*. But despite being the most prolific Iconophile writer of the eighth century, he did not apply such a definition to the image question.[66] If in fact we accept a later dating for John's *Orationes*, as many scholars have, one that would allow that he was familiar with the arguments of Constantine V and the Iconoclasts' *homoousios* requirement, the emphasis of his treatises is all the more perplexing in that he makes no mention of the kinds of arguments that were later articulated by Patriarch Nikephoros, Theodore of Stoudios, and Theodore Abu Qurrah. Furthermore, it was likely quite some time after the composition of the *Dialectica* and the *Orationes* that Theodore Abu Qurrah, arguably most familiar with

[64] Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus* 205 and 211–212. Mango, in *Scritture* 159, suggests that such handbooks would likely have arrived in Constantinople around 800 and then were used by ninth-century writers.

[65] Parry, in *Porphyrogenita* 148 ff.

[66] On the possibility that John of Damascus' works were relatively unknown during the period of Iconoclasm see Louth, *St John Damascene* 14 and 197–198; P. Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy," *EHR* 88 (1973) 3; Parry, *Depicting the Word* 135–139. On aspects of John's theology that may have been unappealing even to Iconophiles see Parry 138: "Being aware of the practices that went with icon veneration they may have wanted to play down that side of the cult which could be misconstrued as superstition."

John's work, appealed to the help of "philosophy" in order to outline his position on icons.

In the absence of direct and incontrovertible evidence of the precise texts that the first Iconophiles had at their disposal, one must take into account the trajectory in Iconophile theory and its gradual reliance upon Aristotelian philosophy. It is likely that the most learned Iconophiles in Constantinople formulated a theory of images that at first suppressed any indebtedness to secular learning, but that tacitly drew from their own understanding of the function of art.[67] This explains the early Iconophile commitment to the mimetic basis for sacred images and the reliance on a general understanding of pre-Christian aesthetic theory. For the Iconophiles merely insisted that Christian icons were beneficial while pagan representations were dangerous.[68] This was exactly what the Quinisext Council had articulated by authorizing figural representation in Canon 82, on the one hand, and warning of the dangers of painting in Canon 100, on the other, without truly guaranteeing that an observer would not confuse sacred representation with profane representation.[69] In short, the Quinisext Council and the first

[67] For the view that the early Iconophile defense was drawn primarily from the past justification of pagan statues, see Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus*, esp. 23–38.

[68] See for instance John of Damascus *Or.* 1.24 (Kotter III 114–115); Mansi XIII 241B, Sahas 76, "The art of painting, if used in order to depict obscenities, is despicable and harmful. Painting pornographic designs and scenes, the gyrations of dancing and scenes of horse-races, or anything similar presented through art, is a dishonorable endeavor."

[69] Canon 100: "*Let your eyes look directly forward* and *Keep your heart with all vigilance*; for the sensations of the body all too easily influence the soul. Therefore, we command that henceforth absolutely no pictures should be drawn which enchant the eyes, be they on panels or set forth in any other wise, corrupting the mind and inciting the flames of shameful pleasures. If anyone dares to do this, he shall be excommunicated" (Nedungatt and Featherstone 180–181). On the view that Christian leaders in the seventh century, through this canon and several others, were trying to legislate art see A. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton 1986) 59.

period of Iconoclasm endorsed the idea of religious art, while proponents of icons during the second period hoped to argue that icons in fact differed from the general category of art.

The gradual reliance upon Aristotelian logical terms beginning at the Seventh Ecumenical Council and culminating in the ninth-century works of Nikephoros and Theodore of Stoudios appears to be a *response* to the image/prototype position elaborated by Constantine V's *Peuseis* in the 750s, and more generally to the Iconoclast charge that icons were mere art objects that could not truly be distinguished from the activities of idolaters. This explains the Council's apparent familiarity with Constantine V's understanding and definition of a true image as well as its brief attempt to assert the Iconophile understanding of the *nominal* relationship between image and prototype, but without the kind of elaboration that one sees in the ninth century.

The concerns elaborated by Constantine's *Peuseis*, emphasizing the essence of an image, seem to have provided some of the impetus for several important Iconophile ideas in the ninth century. By relying upon the vocabulary of symbolism, later Iconophiles could rescue the icon from discussions about its superiority or inferiority as compared with secular painting. The Council's indirect allusions to the image/prototype definition implies that such ideas, which relied chiefly upon Aristotle's homonomy/synonymy distinction, were certainly known by 787. Tarasios and Nikephoros, whose ecclesiastical activities were opposed by the Stoudite monks and whose lay status was a point of contention with the West, may have been inserting into the Council aspects of the terminology that would later characterize both Theodore of Stoudios' and Nikephoros' own pro-image writings.[70] In other words, Nikephoros may have played a more important role in composing the refutation of

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[70] On the tension between monks and laymen during this period see Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus* 54–64; Efthymiadis, *Patriarch Tarasios* 12–17. On papal reaction see H. Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church from Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence* (Oxford 2003) 131.

the Council of 754 than has been thought.[71] For Nikephoros only a short while later devoted himself to challenging the Iconoclast position expressed by Constantine V.

This is especially significant given that the Council of 787 had not decided the question of icons in either theological or practical terms. The Council's ecumenical status had been challenged in the East because it lacked proper representation from the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch, something that was troubling even to several Byzantines.[72] In the West, the decisions of the Council were rejected on their substance, and the claims of the Byzantines at the Council were marginalized as "Greek" and "Eastern" in the *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum*.[73] Furthermore, the Council's justification for icons had not exonerated Christian figural representation for its Iconoclast opponents.[74] As is suggested by the *Scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio* and modern scholars alike, the fragility of the Iconophile position led the emperor Leo V in the early ninth century to demand evidence for the legitimacy of images such that he himself might be dissuaded from his Iconoclast position.[75] These challenges were not fully resolved until the second

[71] On Nikephoros' brief role at the Council of Nicaea see C. Mango, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople: Short History* (Washington 1990) 1. Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus* 21, and Parry, *Depicting the Word* 134, doubt any significant contribution by the future Patriarch.

[72] See discussion in Parry, *Depicting the Word* 133–134.

[73] On the efforts of Charlemagne and Theodulf of Orléans to alienate the Byzantines from the Christian tradition see A. Freeman, "Scripture and Images in the Libri Carolini," in *Testo e imagine nell'alto medioevo* I (Spoleto 1994; repr. *Theodulf of Orléans: Charlemagne's Spokesman against the Second Council of Nicaea* [Aldershot 2003] VII) 163–188. On the Frankish response to the Seventh Council see Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* 426 ff.; Giakalis, *Images of the Divine* 21.

[74] On the idea that the Council did not adequately respond to the *Horos* of 754 see Parry, *Depicting the Word* 138–140; H. Belting, *Likeness and Presence* (Chicago 1994) 147–148; Cholij, *Theodore the Stoudite* 55; Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* 417–424.

[75] Leo V's request that John Grammatikos find evidence for the legiti-

half of the ninth century, when Photios, whether he was more concerned with his own reputation or with the possibility of a real resurgence of Iconoclast sentiment, affirmed the decisions and the ecumenical status of 787 in an encyclical letter and at the Councils of Constantinople in 867 and 879.[76]

In a departure from the aims of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, however, Nikephoros and Theodore of Stoudios responded to the Iconoclast mistrust of icons by truly focusing their attacks on Constantine V's denunciation. As Paul Alexander remarks, Nikephoros "is transgressing his own prohibition not to discuss the writings of Constantine V."[77] Furthermore,

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macy or illegitimacy of images, recorded by the *Scriptor* (*PG* 108.1025–1028; ἐν παλαιοῖς βιβλίοις, 1028C), has been the cause of much speculation about the influence of secular thought upon the Iconoclasts of the ninth century. On this anonymous Iconophile text see L. Brubaker and J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680–850. The Sources* (Aldershot 2001) 180. The question of what these old books contained is ambiguous in the text but has led some to argue that this search, led by John Grammatikos, was the source of a ninth-century revival of secular learning; see esp. B. Hemmerdinger, *Essai sur l'histoire du texte du Thucydide* (Paris 1955) 33–41. While this view is widely rejected, see e.g. discussion in Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism* 160, I find only one part problematic—namely that John's effort was responsible for an overall revival of learning. It does not seem unreasonable to suggest, however, that Leo V intended for John to consult secular books as well as non-secular evidence as he was preparing to hold a council in order to repeal the decisions of 787.

[76] On the waning influence of Iconoclasm in the second half of the ninth century see C. Mango, "The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photios," in Bryer and Herrin, *Iconoclasm* 139–140. See also Giakalis, *Images of the Divine* 21; Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* 475. For the view that the Iconoclasts maintained significant influence after 843 see F. Dvornik, "The Patriarch Photius and Iconoclasm," *DOP* 7 (1953) 77 ff.

[77] Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus* 187; he argues that the writings of Constantine V must have remained influential and therefore prompted a comprehensive refutation. Alexander also points out that the likely date of the *Apologeticus atque antirrhetici* falls just three years after the Iconoclast Council of St. Sophia in 815, yet Nikephoros concentrated his rebuttal wholly on the ideas of Constantine of the first period. For the view that the composition of the *Antirrhetici* began before the second Iconoclast period see A. A.

the few remaining fragments from the writings of John Grammatikos seem to suggest that some of the same concerns elaborated by Constantine V continued to trouble the ninth-century Iconoclasts. It is significant that one of the Grammarian's main objections to pictorial representation rests upon his belief that the eyes are unable to adequately grasp the particular characteristics of a subject, the very idea that Ignatios addresses in his biography of Nikephoros.[78] He argues, rather, for the superiority of speech in portraying individual characteristics or moral qualities. He draws upon an idea that was important for both Iconophiles and Iconoclasts in the ninth century, suggesting a dialogue between Iconophiles and Iconoclasts focusing on precisely the topic addressed by Nikephoros and Theodore of Stoudios—that of how the mind understands universals and particulars.[79]

Jean Gouillard commented on these fragments and reached the conclusion that there was no philosophical basis for the ideas elaborated by John Grammatikos, arguing that the Iconoclast author more likely was modifying arguments presented at the Council of Hiereia in 754.[80] While it is very difficult to argue, based on scanty evidence, that the Iconoclasts introduced any new philosophical argumentation in the ninth century, it does seem, at the very least, that an emphasis upon the icon's inability itself to provide moral instruction echoes the concerns of the *Peuseis* of Constantine V, the Council of Hiereia of 754, and several fundamentally Platonic ideas about images

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Vasiliev, "The Iconoclast Edict of the Caliph Yazid II, A.D. 721," *DOP* 9 (1956) 31.

[78] J. Gouillard, "Fragments inédits d'un antirrhétique de Jean le grammarien," *REByz* 24 (1966) 174. On the *Vita* see 776 above.

[79] Theodore *Antirrheticus* 3.17–21 (*PG* 99.397B–400B); Nikephoros *Antirrheticus* 2.12 (*PG* 100.356B–357A).

[80] Gouillard, *REByz* 24 (1966) 176: "La terminologie est banale et peu rigoreuse"; Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism* 168, also doubts any Iconoclast reliance on Aristotle.

from the late antique period.[81] These kinds of questions, addressed by both Iconophiles and Iconoclasts in the ninth century, move beyond an assessment of the benefit of mimetic representation and toward broader questions of symbolism and language.

Conclusion

This discussion has attempted to consider the aims of the defenders of images against the backdrop of the questions with which the Iconophiles and Iconoclasts were grappling in the first period of Iconoclasm, not against those that became a concern to later Byzantine apologists for icons or to modern scholars attempting to pinpoint a source for cultural revival. The Iconophiles hoped to find a secure Christian context for an unquestionably pre-Christian tradition in order to make use of it for religious purposes. Responding to the primary charge of idolatry, the early defenders of icons insisted that Christian art did not possess the dangerous qualities of the pagan idol: "The practices that you bring up do not make our veneration of images loathsome, but those of the idolatrous Greeks. It is not necessary, on account of pagan abuse, to abolish the pious practice of the Church."[82] Thus, the conciliar documents of the period indicate an attempt by Iconophiles to create a theory of images that appeared to rely only upon sacred learning by suppressing any indebtedness the Greek philosophical tradition, despite reliance upon several ancient and late antique ideas

[81] *Horos* Mansi XIII 297ᴀʙ and 336ᴇ; Pl. *Leg.* 669ʙ. On Platonism in the ninth century see C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1958) 163. See also Florovsky, in *Christianity and Culture* 101–119; Alexander, *DOP* 7 (1953) 35–66; Giakalis, *Images of the Divine* 27–28.

[82] John of Damascus *Or.* 2.17 (Kotter III 115; transl. A. Louth, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images* [Crestwood 2003] 74). On this passage see T. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton 1993) 187, who points out that in the eighth century, in addition to their simultaneous existence, it was not uncommon for Christian icons to be likened to pagan images.

about aesthetics. In the ninth century, by contrast, the Iconophiles' argumentation seems to have had much less to do with the actual possibilities of acquiring a secular education than with their aims in writing in defense of images—gradually attempting to remove the image from discussions about the value of art.

They did this by departing in some degree from the emphasis on mimesis that was so characteristic of the eighth-century defense of iconography—and indeed pagan figural representation before it. The Iconophiles of the ninth century, though grappling with the same broad issue of the propriety of icons in Christian practice, were in fact treating another fundamental question that harked back not only to Plato's and Aristotle's views on images and their prototypes but also to questions concerning the nature of true knowledge and human perception. In literary dialogue with Iconoclast opponents, who were by this time the most learned teachers in Constantinople, writers like Nikephoros and Theodore of Stoudios could appeal more explicitly to the aid of Aristotle in order to elaborate their defense of images.

As has been argued, the Council of 787 marked the official authorization of the cult of icons by insisting that it was the Iconoclasts who were guilty of innovating upon well-established practice and Scriptural tradition.[83] Somewhat ironically, in the ninth century, it would be the unambiguous aid of the ancient philosophers that would allow the Iconophiles to fully distinguish the icon from the pagan idol. Just as Greek learning had to be properly contextualized but would time and again raise the eyebrows of imperial and ecclesiastical leaders, instances of iconoclasm in Byzantium illustrate how concerns of centuries before came to a head in the eighth and ninth centuries, even if they were sporadic and relatively rare.[84] By the

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[83] Auzépy, in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century* 87. See discussion in Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era…A History* 284–285.

[84] On iconoclasm's sporadic nature in both the East and the West see

middle of the ninth century Iconophiles could demonstrate a more explicit reliance upon Aristotle. At this point, elite ecclesiastical officials like Nikephoros and Photios could display their commitment to Greek philosophy in articulating the 'Orthodox' position on icons.[85] By contrast, their opponents, John Grammatikos and to some extent Leo the Mathematician,[86] were forced to defend themselves against charges of magic and paganism.[87]

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Noble, *Images* 108–110.

[85] On the ninth-century imitation of late antique models during the Macedonian Renaissance and the fluid idea of paganism see C. Rapp, "Hellenic Identity, Romanitas, and Christianity in Byzantium," in K. Zacharia (ed.), *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity* (Aldershot 2008) 139.

[86] P. Magdalino, "Occult Science and Imperial Power in Byzantine History," in P. Magdalino and M. Mavroudi (eds.), *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium* (Geneva 2006) 128.

[87] See for instance the attack on John described at *PG* 99.1776в: κατήργηται τὰ τεράστια καὶ μαντεύματα τοῦ Χριστομάχου … τὰ κρύφια καὶ παμβέβηλα, καὶ ψυχόλεθρα διδάγματά σου, ποία ἐκδιηγήσεται γλῶσσα. On the idea of Hellenism during this period see A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium* (Cambridge 2007) 182–183. Magdalino, in *The Occult Sciences* 128, argues that, for John, rather than mere interest in Greek learning, it is the charge of involvement in magic or the occult that appears to be the precise object of contempt, and suggests that this disparagement may have stemmed from his political ties to the emperor Theophilos. The critique of astrology and the occult in the ninth century, and the comparative esteem for secular philosophy, however, compels one to ask whether in some way the Iconoclast connection to 'magic' exonerated ancient Greek philosophy for the Iconophiles.

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