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John the Grammarian and Photius

A Ninth-Century Byzantine Debate on Depiction, Visual Perception and Verbal Description[*]

ABSTRACT: This article proposes a study of a major philosophical claim made by the great figure of the second period of iconoclasm, John the Grammarian. According to John, since the essential properties as well as many of the accidental properties of a given individual cannot be represented in visual form, an accurate depiction of that individual is impossible. The in-depth analysis of this claim allows a re-evaluation of John's logical culture, which turns out to be much more well developed than has been argued to date. The second part of the article defends the hypothesis that Photius's *Homily* XVII is, in part, a response to the position of John the Grammarian. The question of visual perception according to Photius is also revisited.

KEYWORDS: Iconoclasm, John the Grammarian, Individuality, Photius, Vision

A major controversy over the legitimacy of the veneration of images troubled Byzantium during the eighth century and the first half of the ninth[1]. During the so-called "second phase of iconoclasm" (from 815 to 843), the question of depictability[2] became a crucial topic in Byzantine intellectual debates. Who and what could be truly depicted? Answering this question goes far beyond theology and involves a philosophical discussion about the constitution of individuals and the content of visual perception. The set of questions around the limits of representation is philosophical for at least two reasons. First, it is related to sense perception and the way in which the human mind works—what can one see and perceive? Secondly, the discussions are related to the ontological understanding of the constitution of an individual, as, for answering any question involving the depiction of an individual, it is necessary to have a clear view about what constitutes the being of an individual in the first place, and this constitutes a famous and much vexed philosophical problem. For Byzantine thinkers of that period, an individual consists of an essence and of accidental properties. The essence is for example humanity. Socrates is a human being and belongs to this species because he instantiates the universal essence humanity (in a particularizing way or not, depending on whether one's ontological taste tends towards universalism or particularism). This implies having all the essential properties corresponding to the definition of the essence, in this case living being, mortal, rational and receptive of intellect and knowledge. But Socrates also pos-

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[1] For a brilliant presentation of the main arguments of this controversy, see C. BARBER, Figure and Likeness. On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm. Princeton, 2002.

[2] By "the question of depictability", I mean the philosophical and epistemological questioning about the kind of entities—natures, hypostases, essential properties, accidental properties—that may be adequately depicted. The basic question is: is it possible to depict more than qualitative and quantitative properties, like shapes, sizes, forms, colours, etc? It covers a range of interrogations extending from "is it possible to depict accurately an individual like Paul?", to questions about the depictability of special kinds of properties, essential ones like rationality or accidental ones like relations. It deals with both standard individuals of this world and with theologically and ontologically more complex figures, like Christ and his two natures, human and divine.

sesses a set or a bundle of accidental properties like his size, eye colour, hair colour, the form of his nose, the fact that he is the son of Sophroniscus as well as the teacher of Plato, a good drinker and an acute mind. Some of these properties are visible, some are not. It is usual to say that one cannot see rationality or mortality, nor parenthood or sonship, relationship or the capacities of the mind. Nevertheless, one can see white hair, blue eyes, a big nose, etc.

In the present paper, I would like to discuss arguments and opinions offered by two major thinkers of the ninth century, who both happened to have been patriarchs of Constantinople, the iconoclast John the Grammarian (patriarch from 837 to 843)[3], and the iconophile Photius (patriarch from 858 to 867 and from 877 to 886)[4]. Even if several decades separate them, I will argue that the latter, at least occasionally, actively responds to the first. I will first reconstruct the views of John the Grammarian, then challenge the standard scholarly opinion regarding John's supposedly limited logical culture, and finally analyse what I consider to be Photius's answer to the former's position. This last part of the article will provide the opportunity to discuss one opinionated claim by Photius in his theory of vision.

PART I. A SCHOLAR AND ICONOCLAST, JOHN THE GRAMMARIAN

Iconoclasm in Byzantium knew two main periods, which were interrupted by an iconophile intermezzo from 787 to 815. As for its ideological basis and its theoretical formulation, the first period of iconoclasm is inextricably linked to Emperor Constantine V[5]. The second period extends over almost 30 years, beginning in 815, shortly after Leo V took power in 813, until the official restoration of the worship of images by Empress Theodora in 843. No one embodies this second period of iconoclasm better than the figure of John the Grammarian, a teacher, advisor to emperors, and patriarch of Constantinople. John the Grammarian was the leading thinker behind the revival of iconoclasm in the ninth century.

John was accused by iconophile theologians of every possible evil. He was successively turned into the prince of heresy and accused of devoting himself to magic and prophecy. Methodius accused him of debauchery, but above all of Hellenism (i.e., paganism): "He stood in the place of the Hellenes by taking advantage of their writings, which the voice of the righteous justly rejects"[6].

Even decades after the end of iconoclasm, John was often criticised very strongly. The case of John is notable in that he was attacked not only verbally, but visually as well. Two illuminated psalters of the ninth century, very probably produced in Constantinople after 843—the well-known Khludov Psalter (Moscow, State Historical Museum ms 129d) and that preserved in a Mount Athos manuscript (Pantokrator 61)—go to great lengths to depict John negatively[7]. In the Khludov Psalter John the Grammarian is analogically presented as nothing less than the new murderer of Christ, thanks to a visual parallel that is created between a Roman soldier torturing the crucified Christ and

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[3] *PMBZ* 3199/corr.; see also D. STIERNON, Jean VII Môrocharzanios, in: DHGE 27 (1998–2000), col. 84–117; S. GERÖ, John the Grammarian, the Last Iconoclastic Patriarch of Constantinople. The Man and the Legend. *Βυζαντινά. Nordisk tidskrift för bysantinologi* 3–4 (1974–1975) 25–35; P. J. ALEXANDER, The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople. Ecclesial policy and image worship in the Byzantine Empire. Oxford 1958, 126–28, 235–36; R.-J. LILIE (ed.) Die Patriarchen der ikonoklastischen Zeit. Germanos I.–Methodios I. (715–847). Frankfurt am Main 1999, 169–182.

[4] *PMBZ* 6253/corr. and # 26667. See also J. SCHAMP, Photios, in: Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques, ed. R. Goulet, vol. V. Paris 2012, 585–610.

[5] For an example of the role of Constantine V in the debate, see the discussion generated by his claim that a good image has to be consubstantial with its model, in: C. ERISMANN, The Depicted Man: The Byzantine Afterlife of Aristotle's Logical Doctrine of Homonyms. *GRBS* 59 (2019) 311–339.

[6] *PG* 99, col. 1776BC: Ἴσος γὰρ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐδείχθη ὑψαυχούμενος, τοῖς τούτων συγγράμμασιν, ἃ δικαίως ἐλίκμησαν αἱ τῶν δικαίων φωναί.

[7] On the question of the representation of John the Grammarian, see C. WALTER, Heretics in Byzantine Art. *Eastern Churches Review* 3 (1970) 40–9.

John destroying an icon of Christ (fol. 67r). The illuminator also develops a visual contrast between a trampled John haunted by the devil and a radiant and triumphant depiction of the iconophile patriarch, Nicephorus of Constantinople. Theodore Studite, the third important actor in the debates of the second period of iconoclasm, is absent. He will only enter the stage of book illustrations later on. There are two hypotheses about the origin of the two psalters—on the one hand the milieu of Methodius, a theory advanced by Ihor Ševčenko and Kathleen Corrigan[8], on the other that of Photius, proposed by André Grabar with good arguments[9]. This first hypothesis places the execution of the psalters very close to the end of the iconoclasm between 843 and 847. Methodius is known as a particularly sharp critic of John, whom he attacks as a person. As for Photius, this would mean that he directed a multi-pronged attack against John the Grammarian, combining a verbal critique of his arguments[10] with visual polemics.

Some important events of John the Grammarian's career have to be recalled in order to underline his institutional and historical importance. I will confine myself to the most important points that best describe his intellectual profile. John was a learned scholar. The high quality of his education is attested in various iconophile sources. Since these sources are characterised by an intense hostility towards him, there is no reason to distrust them on this point[11]. He was the cousin of Leo the Mathematician, who has a similar intellectual profile, but with less strongly iconoclast convictions. Both developed an interest in science and astrology[12].

John served three successive emperors, carrying out different tasks and missions. He was the theological advisor to Leo V, Michael II and Theophilos. On behalf of Emperor Leo V, John sought and collected texts in 814 to compile a florilegium of iconoclasm-friendly authorities[13]. It seems reasonable to think that this increased his acquaintance with patristic texts and deepened his command of patristic literature. In 815 he participated in the Council of Constantinople, during which iconoclasm was reintroduced, and it is very likely that he participated in the final editing of the definition (*Horos*) of the Council[14]. The same Leo V would have made John patriarch in succession to Nikephoros in 815 if "the patricians" had not objected that John was too "young and obscure" (νέος καὶ ἀφανής)[15]. John then became *Hegumen* of the Monastery of Saints Sergios and Bacchos (ἐν τοῖς Ὁρμίσδου) in Constantinople, perhaps as compensation for not having obtained the patriarchal office[16]. Michael II chose John as the teacher for his son, the future emperor Theo-

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[8] I. Ševčenko, The Anti-Iconoclastic Poem in the *Pantocrator* Psalter. *Cahiers Archéologiques* XV (1965) 39–60; K. Corrigan, Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters. Cambridge 1992, 124–34; she concludes 134: "Despite the strong arguments in favour of Photius presented by Grabar and others, I prefer to see the ninth-century marginal psalters as products of Methodius' circle".

[9] A. Grabar, L'iconoclasme byzantin. Le dossier archéologique. Paris 1984, 284–286. "Photios […] à l'entourage de qui nous attribuons cette illustration des psautiers". See also A. Grabar, Quelques notes sur les psautiers illustrés byzantins du IXᵉ siècle. *Cahiers archéologiques* 15 (1965) 61–82.

[10] I will argue in the second part of this article that *Homily* XVII is partly written against the theses of John the Grammarian.

[11] The *vita* of Theodore Studite (*BHG* 1755), for example, says (ch. 61, *PG* 99, col. 172B) that John was well versed in profane learning while pejoratively stating that he was very good at sophistry (περιττὸς τοῖς σοφίσμασιν).

[12] See P. Magdalino, L'orthodoxie des astrologues. La science entre le dogme et la divination à Byzance (VIIᵉ–XIVᵉ siècle). Paris 2006, 55–67.

[13] This florilegium compiled for the Iconoclastic Council of 815 is interesting for our discussion as John the Grammarian quoted there a number of patristic texts in which painted images of the saints are rejected in favour of the written records of their lives.

[14] On this council, see P. Alexander, The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and Its Definition (*Horos*). *DOP* 7 (1953) 35–66.

[15] According to the *Scriptor incertus de Leone V*, cf. ed. F. Iadevaia, Scriptor incertus: testo critico, traduzione e note. Messina 1997, 69, lines 536–541 (= 359, 16–20 Bekker).

[16] It is probable that the seal of John the monk, hegoumenos of St Sergios, and synkellos (829–837) was the seal of John the Grammarian during his time at the Monastery of Saints Sergios and Bacchos. See the seal BZS.1958.106.5744 of Dumbarton Oaks: n° 58.1 in E. McGeer – J. Nesbitt – N. Oikonomides (eds). Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks

philos. This can be seen as proof not only that his doctrinal views were in line with imperial politics, but also as proof of his outstanding scholarship.

He led a legation to Caliph al-Ma'mūn in 829/30[17]. This testifies on the one hand to his diplomatic abilities, but also to the fact that he was considered as an adequate interlocutor in front of Arab scholars. Interestingly, in the twelfth century John is depicted in a more favorable light in the illustrations of the Skylitzes Chronicle. In the illustration of the delegation he is surprisingly represented with a halo[18].

On 21st January 837 John was elected patriarch, becoming the last iconoclast to fill the office. But because of the *damnatio memoriae* that has affected him, we know almost nothing about his activities as patriarch. He was deposed on the 4th of March 843 and replaced by Methodius.

Although John the Grammarian is the most important iconoclast scholar[19], we do not have much information about the treatises he must have written. All the writings of authors associated with iconoclasm were destroyed by the victorious iconophiles. In the best case, some fragments of iconoclasts are preserved in writings that quote them in order to refute them. This is the case for the well-known questions (*peuseis*) of Constantine V, some of which are preserved in the *Antirrhetici* of Nicephorus[20]. This is also the case for John the Grammarian, some fragments of whose work are preserved in an anonymous iconophile refutation of these very same arguments. Some folio pages of this only incompletely preserved iconophile treatise can be found in a manuscript at the Escorial library (Escorial Y-II-7, f. 200–205)[21].

The title is "The first Refutation against the chief arguments that were unlawfully put forth against the image of Christ, or rather against the true incarnation of the Son of God by John the Heresiarch and Lecanomancer[22], who was the demon of Byzantium". There is a play on words be-

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and in the Fogg Museum of Art, volume 5: The East (continued), Constantinople and Environs, Unknown Locations, Addenda, Uncertain Readings. Washington, D.C. 2005, 117.

[17] For a discussion of John's mission, see P. MAGDALINO, The road to Baghdad in the thought-world of ninth-century Byzantium, in: Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?, ed. L. Brubaker. Aldershot 1998, 195–214.

[18] See fols. 47r (Theophilos sends his former teacher Ioannes Synkellos to the ruler of Syria) and 47v (Ioannes Synkellos gives the Arabs presents). In later depictions of John, following the triumph of orthodoxy (fol. 64v–65r), he no longer has a halo. See the remarks by E. BOECK, Un-Orthodox imagery: voids and visual narrative in the Madrid Skylitzes manuscript. *BMGS* 33 (2009) 17–41.

[19] For a discussion of his views on images, see P. MAGDALINO, Le patriarche Jean le Grammairien et la théorie de l'aniconisme, in: L'aniconisme dans l'art religieux byzantin, ed. M. Campagnolo – P. Magdalino – M. Martiniani-Reber – A.-L. Rey. Geneva 2015, 85–94.

[20] Constantine's work was written as a succession of questions and answers according to the traditional Christian literary model of the *erotapokriseis*. The fragments of the *Peuseis* have been collected and edited in H. HENNEPHOF, Textus Byzantinos ad Iconomachiam pertinentes in usum academicum. Leiden 1969, 52–57. An earlier edition was included in G. OSTROGORSKY, Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites. Breslau 1929, 8–11.

[21] The anonymous Iconophile's quotations of John the Grammarian were published by J. GOUILLARD, Fragments inédits d'un antirrhétique de Jean le Grammairien. *REB* 24 (1966) 171–181. For the complete text of the first refutation, see the diplomatic edition by A. EVDOKIMOVA, An Anonymous Treatise against the Iconoclastic Patriarch John the Grammarian. 1. The First Antirrhetic. The first edition of the Manuscript Escorial Y-II-7, f. 200–205. *Scrinium* 7 (2011) 144–168. For a complete edition (including the second refutation, partly extant in the same manuscript), see B. MACDOUGALL, Byzantine Figures: A New Edition, Translation, and Study of the Two-part Anonymous Iconophile Treatise against John the Grammarian (forthcoming). V. BARANOV has recently suggested that the main source of the fragments was a passage (ed. Daley 308.16–310.1) from the *Epilyseis* or *Solutions proposed to the Arguments of Severus* by Leontius of Byzantium, see Sources of Fragments by the Iconoclastic Patriarch John Grammaticus (837–843): Leontius of Byzantium. ΣΧΟΛΗ 14 (2020) 278–292. The parallel is interesting, but I do not see anything more than a similar use of Porphyry's *Isagoge* to explain individuality (Porphyry is not mentioned by Baranov). This Porphyrian theory was a standard explanation during Late Antiquity (including among the Christians writers starting with Gregory of Nyssa) and the Middle Ages and it is therefore not surprising to find it used by several authors. The text of Leontius says nothing about depiction, vision or hearing. On John the Grammarian's use of Porphyry see below, note 34.

[22] Lecanomancy is a kind of divination and prophecy with the help of a bowl into which oil or water is poured. John is frequently accused of sorcery by his opponents; see, for example, Symeon logothete, *Chronicon* 128, 5 (ed. S. WAHLGREN,

tween πάρεδρος (here "demon" or "haunting spirit") and πρόεδρος ("chairman", here: "patriarch") here, thus "demon" is used in the place of "patriarch" to insist on John's magical activities. The title of the work also shows a recurring assertion of the iconophiles, namely that the rejection of the possibility of visually depicting Christ has to be equated with denial of the incarnation.

It is difficult to date this refutation of John the Grammarian. The time of writing is, of course, not the same as when John formulated his arguments. This probably happened between 814 and 830 when the conceptual dispute on images was in its most intense phase. For the refutation of John's arguments, I tend to assume a writing time after 843, since the arguments have a school character and were formulated in the context of teaching for pedagogical purposes. The text of the refutation contains remarks addressed directly to the students. The professor who wrote it tries to show that the logical culture of John was insufficient and that he constructed his syllogisms poorly. The intention is probably to ridicule John on the only point where this had not yet happened, namely for his education and scholarly competences. Mentioning a point of logic that he thinks John has misunderstood, the author of the refutation allows himself the following comment: "You have, o students, your points of departure for laughing at him" (ἔχετε, ὦ παῖδες, τὰς ἀφορμὰς τοῦ κατ᾽ αὐτοῦ γέλωτος. l. 155–156). One cannot speak in such a manner of the imperial adviser, but only of a man who has already fallen into disgrace.

It is possible that Photius himself is the author of this refutation. His taste for and interest in logic is obvious both in the *Amphilochia*, which contain a discussion of Aristotle's *Categories*, and in the *Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, in which he extensively used rational arguments to show the logical and theological absurdity of the Latin innovation of the *Filioque*[23]. Moreover, his teaching activities are well attested and in particular that he taught logic[24]. It is also known that he still considered it very important to condemn iconoclasm regularly and at every opportunity[25]. So why should he not have trained his students to refute iconoclast arguments, especially when he was convinced that iconoclasm was still a threat? But that is just a hypothesis. What can be said with certainty, however, is that John's text circulated in iconophile circles in order to be refuted.

This text is rich in information, on the one hand about the abilities and the level of the logical background of the master who led the refutation[26], and on the other hand about John the Grammarian, of whom it includes some fragments.

The fragmentary nature of John's quotes makes it difficult to know his complete argumentation. Nevertheless, in the following I would like to propose a reconstruction of his line of thought. As in an archaeological reconstruction of a broken vase or statue in which missing parts are replaced, I will propose a conjecture for the missing steps of argumentation where necessary. For this reconstruction, which is of course purely hypothetical, I rely on the preserved fragments, the data given in the refutation, and the context; for the kind of argumentation, I rely on other similar argumenta-

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Symeonis magistri et logothetae chronicon [*CFHB* 44/1]. Berlin – New York 2006, 211, lines 32–35). See T. SENINA, Sur l'origine des sobriquets de Jean le Grammairien "Jannes" et "Sorcier". *Scrinium* 12 (2016) 322–328, and G. KATSI-AMPOURA, John (Ioannis) VII the Grammarian: Scientist or/and Magician?. *Archives internationales d'histoire des sciences* 60 (2010) 33–41.

[23] On Photius's use of syllogisms in the *Mystagogia*, see C. ERISMANN, Theological Dispute, Logical Arguments: On Photios' use of syllogisms against the *Filioque* in the *Mystagogia*, in: *Contra Latinos et Adversus Graecos:* The separation between Rome and Constantinople from the 9ᵗʰ to the 15ᵗʰ century, ed. A. Bucossi – A. Calia. Leuven 2020, 89–104.

[24] See, for example, his letter 290 to Pope Nicholas I, where Photius, recently elected patriarch, describes with nostalgia his previous life as a teacher. Among the disciplines studied at this place, he mentions logical methods (λογικαὶ μέθοδοι).

[25] On Photius's concerns regarding iconoclasm see F. DVORNIK, The Patriarch Photius and Iconoclasm. *DOP* 7 (1953) 67–97; C. MANGO, The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photios, in: Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, ed. A. Bryer – J. Herrin. Birmingham 1977, 133–40; and D. STRATOUDAKI-WHITE, Patriarch Photius and the Conclusion of Iconoclasm. *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 44 (1999) 341–55.

[26] See B. MACDOUGALL, Byzantine Figures.

tions that have been preserved. I understand the second and third fragments as parts of one and the same argumentation.

John's argument is based on two philosophical principles: the first is that an individual is constituted by an essence—presented here as the definition of a species, such as that the cat is a four-legged, hairy living animal capable of meowing—and from accidents, usually quantities, such as size, and qualities, such as the colour of the eyes or of the hair. The essence is common to all the individuals of a given species. The second principle is that the individuals of the same species differ from each other by their accidents, as they share the same essence. So two cats are not different in their cat-being that they have in common, but because of the fact that one is tabby, the other not, one is fluffy, the other not, and so on.

JOHN'S ARGUMENT AGAINST THE DEPICTABILITY OF MAN

Here is the argument in my reconstruction.

1. Thesis: No man can be truly represented.

2. For man is: (a) either universal—if you consider the species or specific essence—(b) or particular, if you consider a given individual[27].

3.a The universal man—the specific essence—cannot be depicted (Fragment 3)
"Universal Man (καθόλου ἄνθρωπον) [...] is defined as: living being, rational, mortal, capable of understanding and knowledge (ζῷον λογικὸν θνητὸν νοῦ καὶ ἐπιστήμης δεκτικὸν); how is it possible to entrust inanimate and immobile works (ἔργοις ἀψύχοις καὶ ἀκινήτοις) with the representation of the movement that is characteristic of life (τὴν ζωτικὴν κίνησιν)?"
An iconoclast principle, inherited from Constantine V, postulates the identity of nature between the depicted model and the true representation. The living cannot be depicted by the non-living. The non-rational (i.e. a painted wooden panel) cannot represent the rational.

[The universal man is therefore not depictable]

3.b. The particular man—this particular individual—cannot be depicted (fragment 2).
"It is impossible that a given person should be portrayed by any device except narration through discourse, through which it is possible for each thing that exists to be comprehended definitively. For a given person's properly-distinguishing accidents, through which he stands apart from other members of the same species, and by which in a different way he has something in common with those other members of his species, are in no way to be comprehended through sight. For neither if a given person derives his ancestry from this particular person, nor if he is inscribed as a citizen in this homeland of his, nor if he practices a certain craft or enjoys a certain kind of pastime or company or any other aspect of conduct and manners by which he is deemed praiseworthy or blameworthy can be made known by any device whatsoever except that of discourse, so that it is truly impossible to attempt to distinguish a given person by any likenesses."[28]

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[27] As an example of disjunctive argumentation of this kind, see Photius *Amphilochia* 231.

[28] (λέγει γὰρ ὧδε·) Ἀμήχανόν ἐστι τόν τινα ἄνθρωπον ἐπινοίᾳ τινὶ χαρακτηρίζεσθαι <εἰ> μὴ τῇ ἐκ λόγων ὑφηγήσει, δι᾽ ἧς ἔστι τῶν ὄντων ἕκαστον ὁριστικῶς κατειληφέναι. Τὰ γὰρ ἰδιάζοντα τοῦ τινος συμβεβηκότα δι᾽ ὧν τῶν ὁμοειδῶν ἀφέστηκε καὶ τοῖς ἐκείνοις ἑτέρως κεκοινώνηκεν, οὐδαμῶς τῇ τῆς ὄψεως καταλήψει κατ᾽ οὐδὲν ἀνύσιμον ὑπάρχει. Οὐ γὰρ εἰ τοῦδε

[The bundle of accidents responsible for individuality is not depictable, for the accidents by which it is composed are each in themselves not depictable. An origin, a family affiliation, a profession, a good or bad behavior cannot be represented.[29]]

Therefore

4. a true image of man is impossible, because neither the universal nor the particular man can be depicted.

  [already at this point of the reasoning a true depiction of saints is no longer possible].

5. Christ cannot be depicted according to his divinity, for divinity cannot be represented. (by definition; this is accepted by all, iconophiles and iconoclasts)

6. Christ cannot be depicted according to his humanity, for a true image of man is impossible (proved by 1, 2, 3 and 4).

7. Therefore Christ is not depictable.

John defends a position that may be qualified as "philosophical aniconism". The fragments insist on the inadequacy of depiction. With this postulate, a true representation of Christ is impossible.

In the second part of this article, I will suggest that *Homily* XVII of Photius, which was delivered in 867 for the unveiling of the mosaic of the Virgin with the Child in the apse of Hagia Sophia, can be read as an answer to this argument of John. Now I would like to concentrate first on what this argument teaches us about the logical and philosophical culture of John. I will do this in two steps—first I will discuss the terminology used, then I will make some remarks about the argument itself.

JOHN'S LOGICAL CULTURE

Jean Gouillard, who was the first to discuss the fragments, notes, not without remarking upon the scarcity of the material to judge from, that the fragments show no particular logical knowledge[30].

τινὸς κατάγεται τὸ γένος ἢ τὴν πάτραν ἰδίαν ἐπιγράφεται, τὴν ποίαν μετιὼν τέχνην διατριβήν τε, ποίας καὶ ἑταιρείας εὐμοιρεῖ καὶ τῆς λοιπῆς τῶν τρόπων ἀγωγῆς, δι᾽ ἧς ἐπαινετὸς ἢ ἐπίψογος χρηματίζοι δι᾽ ἐπινοίας ἡστινοσοῦν ἢ τῆς ἐκ λόγων ἐπίγνωστ[ος] ἔσται, ὥστε τόν τινα ἄνθρωπον εἰκονισμοῖς τισι διαγινώσκειν ἀληθῶς ἀδύνατον (ff. 202 v–203 r).

29 It would be interesting to know what John would have said about the imperial portraits. For example, what is the status of the portraits of iconoclast emperors on coins and seals, and even more when coins include dynastic representation with an emperor and his son? If the portrait of Christ introduced by Justinian II has been suppressed by the iconoclast emperors, the obverse of solidi always shows the depiction of the emperor, without exception. In several cases, the cross traditionally depicted is even replaced by an imperial portrait of a relative of the emperor, like his father in the case of the *nomisma* of Constantine V with Leo III. Neither iconoclasts nor iconophiles questioned the validity of portraying the emperor, especially on coins, for which they had the good authority of the Gospels (Mk 12:13–17; Mt 22:20–22; see also the repetition of the biblical scene of the dialogue between Christ and the Pharisees in the *Life of Stephen the Younger* §55, see M.-F. AUZÉPY, La Vie d'Étienne le Jeune par Étienne le Diacre. London – New York 1997, 156–157 (Greek text) and 254–255 (transl.). As well noted by A. GRABAR, "aucun empereur de Byzance jusqu'à la conquête turque n'a eu l'idée de supprimer [l'imagerie impériale], les *basileis* iconoclastes pas plus que les autres; il semble même que, au contraire, ils aient favorisé le développement de l'art impérial et multiplié leurs propres images", L'empereur dans l'art byzantin. Recherches sur l'art officiel de l'Empire d'Orient. Paris 1936, 167. It is possible that John's theory of the impossibility of true portraiture was partly related to the very abstract and generic depiction of emperors on coins of the iconoclast era, which is in contrast to the more individualised coin portraits of the early Macedonian emperors.

30 Jean GOUILLARD, Fragments 180, wrote: "Il y aurait témérité à mettre en balance le savoir philosophique de Jean le Grammairien et celui de son contradicteur : nous n'avons du premier que de maigres citations arrachées à leur contexte. On con-

Such a claim is endorsed by subsequent scholarship[31]. This dismissive evaluation is probably, at least partly, linked to Gouillard's erroneous reading of the definition of man in the Escorial manuscript (he has read and edited "*to on*—the (particular) being"—instead of the traditional and correct "*zôon*, animal", which is the right reading of the text given by the Escorial manuscript, f. 205v, l.17[32]); this wrong reading in a continuously quoted edition of the fragment then made it possible to conclude that John was not acquainted with logic, as he was not even familiar with one of the most basic and trivial elements of Aristotelian logic[33]. Once this reading is corrected, then a major difficulty is solved. Regardless of that point, I would claim the opposite of Gouillard's judgement, and argue that John's culture was at least decent. It is possible to prove that by a close consideration of another part of fragment 2, the key sentence of the argument. John says:

τὰ γὰρ ἰδιάζοντα τοῦ τινὸς συμβεβηκότα, δι᾽ ὧν τῶν ὁμοειδῶν ἀφέστηκε καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐκείνοις ἑτέρως κεκοινώνηκεν, οὐδαμῶς τῇ τῆς ὄψεως καταλήψει κατ᾽ οὐδὲν ἀνύσιμον ὑπάρχει.

For a given person's properly-distinguishing accidents, through which he stands apart from other members of the same species, and by which in a different way he has something in common with those other members of his species, are in no way to be comprehended through sight.

This passage has a logical background and attests to the logical culture of its author.

First, the idea that individuals of the same species differ by their non-essential properties (i.e. their accidents, the bundle of which is unique for every individual and cannot be found identical in someone else) is a logical idea originating in Porphyry's *Isagoge*[34]. John chose the philosophical term accident (συμβεβηκός)—and not the traditional theological term ἰδίωμα.

Second, ἰδιάζοντα in the use of 'being peculiar to an individual' is a *terminus technicus*. The term is used in both grammar and logic.

Third, the way in which it is expressed that something belongs to one and the same species is clearly logical. ὁμοειδής, literally 'of the same species', is a logical concept. A theologian would say ὁμοούσιος, 'of the same substance' or ὁμοφυής 'of the same nature'.

Fourth, we can notice the presence of an unusual expression, namely τοῦ τινὸς, to refer to a particular individual. The association of the indefinite τις with a definite article is not a common way of speaking, but immediately reminds one of Aristotle's expression at *Categories* 1b4–5: οἷον ὁ τὶς ἄνθρωπος ἢ ὁ τὶς ἵππος.

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viendra néanmoins qu'elles ne dénotent pas une intimité frappante avec ce que les contemporains dénommaient facilement philosophie, entendez la logique."

[31] See the remark by SCHAMP, Photios 592 (see n. 4): "l'exemple de Jean le Grammairien […] paraît montrer qu'une maîtrise de la logique n'était normalement pas le point fort des contempteurs des images", and by P. LEMERLE, Le premier humanisme byzantin. Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xᵉ siècle. Paris 1971, 146: "l'iconoclaste Jean, du moins dans le peu que nous lisons, ne se montre pas grand familier de la logique, que les textes du temps appellent communément philosophie."

[32] I express my gratitude to the Real Biblioteca del Monasterio del Escorial for having provided me with a reproduction of this manuscript.

[33] GOUILLARD, Fragments 177: "C'est dire que l'arrière-plan philosophique est ici inexistant ou factice. La terminologie est banale et peu rigoureuse, témoin la curieuse substitution de ὂν à ζῷον dans la définition reçue de « homme » et l'auteur n'a cure de construire des syllogismes en forme." On the first point, if the manuscript is read properly (i.e. with ζῷον), then the vocabulary used by John is perfectly correct and rigorous. On the second point, with the extant fragments it is impossible to evaluate the ability of John to construct syllogisms. Gouillard's comment is nothing other than an endorsement of the criticisms formulated by the iconophile author of the refutation, and is not corroborated by textual evidence.

[34] Porphyry states in his *Isagoge* that: "Such items are called individuals because each is constituted of proper features the assemblage of which will never be found the same in anything else—the proper features of Socrates will never be found in any other of the particulars", ἄτομα οὖν λέγεται τὰ τοιαῦτα, ὅτι ἐξ ἰδιοτήτων συνέστηκεν ἕκαστον, ὧν τὸ ἄθροισμα οὐκ ἂν ἐπ' ἄλλου ποτὲ τὸ αὐτὸ γένοιτο· (*Isagoge*, ed. BUSSE 7.21–23).

More fundamentally, it can be said that the argument works only thanks to logic. John has a good command of Porphyry's explanation of individuality through a bundle of accidents[35]. He chooses not to place the emphasis on the physical and therefore depictable accidents, such as the colour of the eyes, a scar, the form of nose, which are often listed, but on the incorporeal qualities. For him individuality is therefore not bound to the body. John sees the possibilities that the Porphyrian model can offer to him. Porphyry's idea is that the individuality of an individual is constituted by a bundle of accidental properties whose composition is unique. One never finds two individuals having exactly the same bundle of accidents. John has clearly seen that the model includes the invisible properties and that if these properties are responsible for someone's individuality, and they cannot be represented, then the representation of the individual can only be unfaithful.

The presence of logical elements in John's argument leads me to my intermediary conclusion. It has been shown that the use of Aristotelian logic is one of the great novelties of the iconophile theology at the time of the second iconoclasm, notably thanks to Theodore Studite and Nicephorus of Constantinople[36]. Such an arsenal of logical weapons was not used by the first iconophile theologians like John of Damascus, even though John's logical knowledge is obvious from his *Dialectica*. The historian is therefore confronted with the question of whether the use of logic in the dispute over images is an invention and innovation of the second "generation" of iconophiles, or whether, on the contrary, they only adopted it to fight with the same weapons as their iconoclast opponents. It is impossible to decide the matter, but given the presence of logical elements in the argumentation of the dominant intellectual figure of the second iconoclasm, John the Grammarian, neither of the two possible answers to this question can be excluded.

PART II. PHOTIUS ON DEPICTION AND VISION:
AN ANSWER TO JOHN THE GRAMMARIAN

On Saturday 29 March 867, the patriarch of Constantinople, Photius, delivered in Hagia Sophia a homily in which he commemorates the depiction and unveiling of the image of the Virgin and Child[37] in the apse of the main church of Constantinople. This text celebrates what Photius considers to be the re-establishment of Orthodoxy, the return to the veneration of images. This homily, nowadays referred to as *Homily* XVII, was delivered before the emperors Michael III and Basil I. The text gives the patriarch the opportunity to expose his views about vision and sense perception. This post-iconoclast rhetorical piece could be seen as the last chapter of the intense discussion on images and vision which took place during all the second iconoclasm. This rich and elaborated

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[35] This explanation of individuality was widespread in the ninth century, as illustrated for example by its use by the monk and physician, Meletius; see C. ERISMANN, Meletius Monachus on individuality: a ninth-century Byzantine medical reading of Porphyry's Logic. *BZ* 110, 1 (2017) 37–60.

[36] Examples of the use of logic are the understanding of the prototype and the image as Aristotelian relatives and the use of the Aristotelian doctrine of homonyms in the case of Christ and the image of Christ; on Theodore and Aristotelian logic, see K. PARRY, Aristotle and the Icon: The Use of the Categories by Byzantine Iconophile Writers, in: Aristotle's Categories in the Byzantine, Arabic and Latin Traditions, ed. S. Ebbesen – J. Marenbon – P. Thom. Copenhagen 2013, 35–57; T. ANAGNOSTOPOULOS, Aristotle and Byzantine Iconoclasm. *GRBS* 53 (2013) 763–90; C. ERISMANN Venerating Likeness: Byzantine Iconophile Thinkers on Aristotelian Relatives and their Simultaneity. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24/3 (2016) 405–425, and C. ERISMANN, The Depicted Man. On a Fortunate Ninth Century Byzantine Afterlife of the Aristotelian Logical Doctrine of Homonyms. *GRBS* 59 (2019) 311–339.

[37] The image of Mary is a motif that corresponds perfectly to an affirmation of the importance of the role of the patriarch. From Photius onwards, Mary became the iconographic motif most properly associated with the patriarch, after having been that of the emperor during the seventh century in particular, as can be seen especially when studying the seals.

homily has been discussed by art historians[38]. My remarks here are more related to the field of the history of philosophy.

This text has to be read taking account of its anti-iconoclast background. I would like to claim that this *Homily* is also responding, on a theoretical level, to the position of the main intellectual figure of the second iconoclasm, John the Grammarian.

Prolonging an ongoing debate, Photius offers interesting remarks about the primacy of vision over hearing and about visual perception[39]. His remarks have an anti-iconoclastic background. Photius defends the priority of vision over hearing: "the comprehension that comes about through sight (ἡ διὰ τῆς ὄψεως ἐγγινομένη κατάληψις) is shown in very fact to be far superior to the learning that penetrates through the ears" (Mango 279). This functions as an answer to John's claim that only a verbal description and not a visual perception may account properly for the being of a given individual. It is also an answer to the traditional iconoclast argument to claim the priority of hearing, as iconoclasts were accustomed to quote Rom. 10.17 ("Faith is from hearing and hearing is the word of God") as part of their criticism of icons.

John the Grammarian insists in the second fragment on the various properties of an individual that visual perception cannot grasp ("in no way to be comprehended through sight": οὐδαμῶς τῇ τῆς ὄψεως καταλήψει). Photius elaborates precisely on the visual perception to claim a far more extended list of items grasped by visual perception. It is indeed interesting to note that both authors used exactly the same expression of ἡ τῆς ὄψεως κατάληψις.

For John the Grammarian as for Photius, an individual is composed of an essence (i.e. a set of a few essential properties: like *to be a living being*, *mortality*, *rationality* in the case of human beings[40]) and of accidental properties (belonging to the nine categories of accident as listed by Aristotle). The question is then twofold: "can one see essential properties?" and "can one see accidental properties?". To the first question, John answers negatively. There are good reasons to believe that Photius answers positively. Part of the answer to the second question of whether one can see accidental properties is obvious. Everyone agrees that one can perceive qualities like colours and shapes. The same goes for quantities, at least in a weak sense, as one can see that the mountain is large, that Stephanos is tall and that there are a lot of apples on the apple tree (but probably not that the mountain is 2167 meters high, that Stephanos measures 185 cm and that there are 245 apples on the tree). It is probable that the categories of where (in the Lyceum, in the market-place), of being-in-a-position (like "is sitting") and of having ("has shoes on, has armour on") are also accepted as visible properties. The case of the category of when (yesterday, last year) is probably considered as not depictable; instead it can only be indicated by written reference to a precise date (Anno mundi 5145). The remaining categories of properties are under discussion here, mainly: relations (fatherhood, friendship, etc.), doing (activities, profession), being-affected, posture or being in a position (κεῖσθαι), having (ἔχειν).

In two of the preserved fragments in the refutation of his position by an anonymous iconophile who may well be Photius, John the Grammarian develops a strong view about the impossibility of the true depiction of a human being. His argument is based on the twofold claim that several of the properties that constitute him are not depictable. Essential properties that constitute him as a human

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[38] See R. CORMACK, Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons. Oxford 1985, 141–178 (= chapter 4: After Iconoclasm: The Illusion of Tradition). R. S. NELSON, To Say and to See. Ekphrasis and Vision in Byzantium, in: Visuality before and beyond Renaissance. Seeing as others Saw, ed. R. Nelson. Cambridge 2000, 143–168; and recently in great detail in R. BETANCOURT, Sight, Touch and Imagination in Byzantium. Cambridge 2018, 109–195. The aspects analysed in the second part of this paper are not discussed in these scholarly contributions.

[39] See C. BARBER, Figure and Likeness (see n. 1), 124–137.

[40] Here is the original definition of an essential property by Aristotle (*Topics* 128b33–35): "A property in its own right is one which is ascribed to a thing in comparison with everything else and distinguishes it from everything else, as does being a mortal living being capable of receiving knowledge in the case of man."

being like rationality are not depictable. And accidental properties which constitute the individual as an individual are also not depictable. For John the Grammarian, the accidents responsible for the individuality of the individual are not visible, they cannot be perceived by a visual *katalepsis*. John notably takes the two examples deeds (category of action) and relations (category of the *pros ti*). It is, according to him, not possible to depict the good or bad acts of a given individual, nor his or her family relationships. Photius decided to claim the contrary in his *Homily*. I will first analyse Photius's claims about the visual perception of accidental properties and then discuss the question of the perception of essential properties.

VISUAL PERCEPTION OF ACCIDENTAL PROPERTIES

In *Homily* XVII, Photius argues that several kinds of properties considered as not depictable and not visible by John are in fact visible and depictable. Photius insists one can see in depictions the good deeds of the martyrs and their suffering[41]:

> Martyrs have suffered for their love of God, showing with the blood the ardour of their desire, and their memory is contained in books. These deeds they are also seen performing in pictures, as painting presents the martyrdom of those blessed men more vividly to our knowledge (ταῦτα καὶ ταῖς εἰκόσιν ὁρῶνται διαπραττόμενοι, ἐναργεστέραν τῆς γραφῆς παρεχομένης τῶν μακαρίων ἐκείνων εἰς γνῶσιν τὴν ἄθλησιν). Others have been burnt alive, a sacrifice sanctified by their prayer, fasting and other labours. These things are conveyed both by stories and by pictures (λόγοι καὶ εἰκόνες), but it is the spectators rather than the hearers who are drawn to emulation (μᾶλλον τοὺς ὁρῶντας ἢ τοὺς ἀκούοντας πρὸς μίμησιν ἐπιστρέφουσιν). (transl. Mango 294)

In philosophical terms, this means that for Photius properties belonging to the category of doing and being-affected[42] are perfectly depictable. Not only this, but their depiction is more effective than their verbal description. Photius does not mention the case of the crucifixion of Jesus, but this would definitely also be listed.

Photius also insists that one can see relationships. He is indeed helped by the fact that he is commenting on a picture representing not one person (as it was the case in John's example), but a mother and her child, i.e. the Virgin and Child. The relationship of motherhood is visible, according to the patriarch. Photius claims that in the case of the depicted Mary, one sees how she is related to Christ.

The description of the mosaic also implies the category of being in a position ("being in the arms of the Virgin").

So, Photius clearly contradicts John the Grammarian by claiming the depictability of more accidental properties than the iconoclast scholar. Quantities and qualities (the *per se* properties of Aristotle) are not disputed, as they are obviously depictable (as is also probably the category of position); but Photius claims that properties belonging to the categories of relation (or *pros ti*), action and being affected are also depictable.

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[41] Photius probably has in mind representations of the various kind of suffering endured by martyrs similar to what will be represented a century later in the *Menologium* of Basil II, today Vatican Library, Gr. 1613.

[42] For this category Aristotle gives the examples of being cut and being burned (*Categories* 2a4: πάσχειν δὲ οἷον τέμνεσθαι, καίεσθαι) which correspond well to the case of the martyrs.

VISUAL PERCEPTION OF ESSENTIAL PROPERTIES

John the Grammarian denied the possibility of perceiving several kinds of accidents through sight, but he also denied the possibility of being able to see essential properties, such as mortality or rationality. What is the position of Photius on that question? Does he oppose John the Grammarian on that aspect as well?

In order to answer that question we have to address a passage from Photius's *Homily* XVII which includes one serious difficulty of interpretation. This involves addressing the broader question of what, according to Photius, one can see when one looks at a given individual, whether depicted or real.

Let us consider the following situation to give an illustration of the problem at stake. Now, Paul looks at Peter. What does he see? Peter indeed. He knows him, he recognises him, he is able to distinguish him from John. He knows several of his properties, where and when he was born, the name of his parents, some of his previous experiences and so on. But what does he see? An individual of a species? A man? An individual form? A sum of characteristics or properties? In *Homily* XVII Photius offers an answer, which surprisingly still needs some clarification. Indeed, Photius is speaking here about the visual perception of a depiction, not of a living human being. I nevertheless think that we can extend his remarks there to the case of the perception of any human being, depicted or real. The argument for this is that if something is true for the depiction, it should be even truer for the prototype. Otherwise, one should admit that one can see more in the depiction than in the model, that is to say the real individual, which seems to me to be a problematic thesis.

PHOTIUS ON SEEING *EIDOS*

Here is the famous text:

> Οὐδὲν τούτων ἔλαττον, εἰ μὴ καὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον, κρατεῖ τὰ τῆς ὄψεως· καὶ γὰρ καὶ αὐτή γε δήπου τῇ προχύσει καὶ ἀπορροῇ τῶν ὀπτικῶν ἀκτίνων τὸ ὁρατὸν οἱονεί πως ἐπαφωμένη καὶ περιέπουσα <u>τὸ εἶδος τοῦ ὁραθέντος</u> τῷ ἡγεμονικῷ παραπέμπεται, ἐκεῖθεν διαπορθμευθῆναι διδοῦσα τῇ μνήμῃ πρὸς ἐπιστήμης ἀπλανεστάτης συνάθροισιν. Εἶδεν ὁ νοῦς, ἀντελάβετο, ἐφαντάσθη, τοὺς τύπους ἀκόπως ἐν τῇ μνήμῃ παρεπέμψατο.[43]
>
> No less—indeed much greater—is the power of sight. For surely, having somehow through the outpouring and effluence of the optical rays touched and encompassed the object, it too sends <u>the essence of the thing seen</u> to the mind, letting it be conveyed from there to the memory for the concentration of unfailing knowledge. The mind has seen; it has grasped; it has visualised; then it has effortlessly transmitted the forms to the memory.[44]

The most difficult point of the passage is to understand the exact meaning of the expression τὸ εἶδος τοῦ ὁραθέντος, "the *eidos* of the seen thing". The process of perception is clear[45]. It is an activity of the mind, the *nous*. The first step is the visible perception, realised through the emanation of the optical rays, the second is the apprehension of the thing seen. After the *nous* has grasped, then something, an *eidos*, is sent to the intellect and finally forms (*tupous*) are transmitted to the memory which will offer the basis for knowledge, thanks to a process of abstraction which is not described here.

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[43] Ed. B. Laourdas, Φωτίου ὁμιλίαι. Thessaloniki 1959, 171.

[44] Transl. C. Mango. The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople. Cambridge MA 1958, 294 (slightly modified according to Laourdas's edition).

[45] BETANCOURT, Sight, Touch and Imagination (see n. 38), offers a detailed analysis of this process.

So what is the exact meaning of the expression "the *eidos* of the thing seen"? The easiest answer would be to translate *eidos* by "form" which keeps the polysemy of the Greek and avoids facing the difficult question (as a form can be accidental or essential). This would be a shame, as the question itself is important and deserves to be discussed to assess properly Photius's thesis and the extension of his criticism of John the Grammarian[46].

The translator of the *Homilies,* Cyril Mango, suggested this translation: "the essence of the thing seen". This choice was endorsed by Robert Nelson and John Anton[47] and criticised by Roland Betancourt[48]. This indeed attributes to Photius a bold and unusual thesis, namely claiming that it is possible to see an essence and to depict it. This attribution is stated by Mango in his introduction (282): "In the eyes of Photius, painting is the most direct form of instruction, for a picture that is in agreement with religious truth contains the *eidos*, or essence, of the prototype, which is in turn apprehended by the faculty of sight and indelibly imprinted upon the mind". There are arguments for such a reading, as we will see, but there are also different alternative translations and ensuing interpretations.

Eidos is a notoriously polysemous term. This is true for Aristotle, who coined the term as a philosophical concept[49]. For him, *eidos* covers a range of meanings that includes the following: *species*, *shape*, *figure*, *substantial form*, *qualitative form*, *cause of the form*, *determination*, and *idea* (the latter being used in the plural to refer to Plato's theory of "the forms"). More than a thousand years later, Byzantine thinkers are still aware of the polysemy of the concept. This can be seen from three texts defining *eidos*, two of which were written before Photius's time and the third after. The first one is John of Damascus's *Dialectica*, the second is by Theodore Studite and the third one is the *Souda,* a tenth-century encyclopaedia.

Here is what John of Damascus says in his eighth-century logical handbook:

> *Eidos* belongs to the homonyms, since it is said in two ways. Thus the shape of anyone is its *eidos* […]. There is another kind of *eidos*, something which is substantial and subaltern to genus. And again, *eidos* is that of which genus is predicated in the category of substance.
>
> Περὶ εἴδους. Καὶ τὸ εἶδος δὲ τῶν ὁμωνύμων ἐστίν, δισσῶς λεγόμενον· λέγεται γὰρ εἶδος καὶ ἡ ἑκάστου μορφή, […] Ἔστι πάλιν εἶδος τὸ οὐσιῶδες τὸ τασσόμενον ὑπὸ τὸ γένος. Καὶ πάλιν εἶδός ἐστιν, οὗ κατηγορεῖται τὸ γένος ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι. (74.4–9 KOTTER)

So *eidos* could be either the shape or appearance of something or someone or the species in a logical sense, i.e. the subdivisions of a genus, the specific universals, like the species cat, dog or snake. Theodore Studite follows the same path:

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[46] It is possible that Photius was here remembering the expression of the Gospel of John, chapter 5, verse 37, where it is said that: "And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form [*eidos*] you have never seen".

[47] See J. P. ANTON, The Origins of Photius's Religious Aesthetics, in: Philosophy and Orthodoxy, ed. K. I. Boudouris. Athens 1994, 18–40.

[48] BETANCOURT, Sight, Touch and Imagination (see n. 38), 129, writes regarding Mango's translation "the essence of the thing seen": "a translation that suggests an unmediated model of contact where matter itself is seemingly being transmitted through sight, something for which there is no precedent in any of the classical, late antique or Byzantine texts on vision. An "essence" is not being transmitted through sight—a notion that would require something like φύσις or οὐσία, not εἶδος—but instead it is the form proper of the object alone that is transmitted; "form of the thing seen" (τὸ εἶδος τοῦ ὁραθέντος)". I do not think that this criticism is justified. There is no reason to think that "matter itself is seemingly being transmitted" as, in the Aristotelian tradition to which Photius belongs, matter and essence are well distinguished, thanks to hylomorphism. Essence is never material. *Ousia* or *phusis* may be more obvious terms for essence, but as John of Damascus says: "That which is common to and predicated of several things, that is to say the most specific species (τὸ εἰδικώτατον εἶδος)—as, for example, angel, man, horse, dog and the like—the holy Fathers called it essence (οὐσίαν), nature (φύσιν) and form (μορφὴν)" (*Dialectica* §31, ed. KOTTER 94, lines 23–26).

[49] See Ch. RAPP – T. WADNER, Eidos / Gestalt, Art, Form in Aristoteles-Lexikon, ed. O. Höffe. Stuttgart, 2005, 147–158

Eidos is used to mean "species" as distinguished from genus; for example, the universal man (ὁ καθόλου ἄνθρωπος); *eidos* is also used for the form of each individual, by which we differ one from another (ἐπὶ τῆς ἐκάστου μορφῆς, καθ᾽ ἣν διαφέρομεν ἀλλήλων). […] (3.δ.13 *PG* 99, 433c)

So *eidos* means the species or the shape by which one individual differs from another.

The *Souda,* a tenth-century encyclopaedia, also pursues the same line in giving two meanings for *eidos*, the first one being "shape", the second, "what is below genus" with the comment "as man is a species of animal according to the philosophers". The *Souda* adds an example of the first sense taken from the *Life of Isidore* by the Neoplatonic philosopher Damascius:

Proclus used to marvel at Isidore's appearance, as it was possessed by the divine and full of philosophical life within" (fr. 249 Zintzen)
Εἶδος: μορφή. καὶ τὸ ὑπὸ τὸ γένος: οἷον ὑπὸ τὸ ζῷον ὁ ἄνθρωπος παρὰ φιλοσόφοις. ὁ δὲ Πρόκλος ἐθαύμαζε τοῦ Ἰσιδώρου τὸ εἶδος, ὡς ἔνθεον καὶ πλῆρες εἴσω φιλοσόφου ζωῆς.[50]

So we are confronted with two obvious senses of *eidos*, the species or specific universal and the appearance or shape of something. Unfortunately, there is no entry on *eidos* in Photius's *Lexicon*. Photius's great literary and philosophical culture, his easy access to many ancient texts and his taste for the rare and ancient meanings of words plead for the hypothesis that he was aware, probably even more so than the authors we have just mentioned, of the polysemy of the concept. This is true for at least four meanings of the term *eidos*: "species", "idea" and "form" in both senses, i.e. in the sense of the form shaped by accidental properties (the physical appearance of an individual) and of the essential or substantial form.

Four translations of *eidos* are possible, and as many interpretations of Photius's position. Two of them can be quickly dismissed, but choosing between the last two is very difficult. Depending on how one translates this one word, one attributes to Photius a completely different theory, and one makes him either a follower or an innovator. I will discuss the four possibilities, keeping to one methodological criterion. The interpretation of the *Homily* XVII has to be in accordance with the teaching of Photius in the *Amphilochia*, even if the *Homily* is a text determined by the precise circumstances of its deliverance. Such a criterion has not been stated so far, but it seems to me that given the chronological proximities of the texts, and the interpretative respect we should show to Photius's work, we should not attribute a position to him in the *Homily* based on claims that he has dismissed or refuted in the *Amphilochia*. And I think that two possible readings of the *Homily* have to be rejected on the basis of the *Amphilochia*.

EIDOS AS "IDEA" OR PLATONIC FORM

The first possibility is to interpret the passage in a Platonic way and to translate *eidos* with idea or form (in a Platonic sense). This reading seems to have been endorsed by Kathy Wetter in her PhD thesis[51] and by Sergei Mariev[52]. It would mean that when someone sees Socrates he sees the idea of

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[50] Suidae Lexicon, ed. A. ADLER. Stuttgart 1931, 521, § 40.

[51] K. WETTER, The Changing Relationship between Archetype and Image throughout the Era of Byzantine Iconoclasm. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of North Carolina, 2001. She says, 187: "Photios is not talking about seeing a sensible object, but about contemplating the intelligible (τὸ εἶδος, τοὺς τύπους). And he is doing it in Platonic terms. […] It is an automatic and mysterious function of sight, apparently, that the optical rays emitted from the eye to the image send the εἶδος, its idea in the perfect, Platonic sense, not the thing seen, to the memory."

[52] S. MARIEV, Echi delle teorie ottiche antiche nelle Omelie di Fozio. *Bulgaria Mediaevalis* 1 (2011) 71–80, assimilates *eidos* with *idea* 79: "Qui Fozio tematizza la ὄψις stessa descrivendo il modo del suo operare: la vista riversando i raggi visuali (προχύσει καὶ ἀπορροῇ τῶν ὀπτικῶν ἀκτίνων) entra per così dire in contatto con l'oggetto della sua visione e, colta *la forma o idea (τὸ εἶδος)* dell'oggetto visto, permette che questa raggiunga la parte direttrice dell'anima (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν), si de-

man. There are two main problems with such a reading, the first one is that it would be a strange interpretation of the Platonic theory itself, as the standard view is not that you can see or perceive ideas by sense perception, but that you contemplate them with the mind. The second, and decisive argument, is that, in his *Amphilochion* 77, Photius clearly rejects the Platonic forms. In the first part of this text devoted to genera and species, Photius considers the Platonic ideas as a philosophical error and offers arguments against them. So it would be strange and incoherent to refute Platonic ideas on the one hand and to adopt them in his *Homily* on the other.

EIDOS AS "SPECIES"

According to this translation, Photius would claim that when someone sees a cat he sees the species cat, the specific universal cat as universal. This reading is impossible for two reasons. As stated by Aristotle, sense perception is not about universals but about particulars. Aristotle says in the *De Anima* 417b20ff: "Actual sensation corresponds to the stage of the exercise of knowledge. But between the two cases compared there is a difference; the objects that excite the sensory powers to activity, the seen, the heard, etc., are outside. The ground of this difference is that *what actual sensation apprehends is individuals*, while what knowledge apprehends is universals, and these are in a sense within the soul itself"[53].

A stronger argument against this solution is that Photius himself rejects the possibility of seeing a universal. He states in *Amphilochion* 228, lines 3–4, that a universal is not seen by the eyes, but is conceived from the multitude (καθόλου τε γὰρ καὶ ὀφθαλμοῖς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁρατή [ἐννοεῖται γὰρ καὶ κατὰ πλειόνων]·). When I see Socrates, I do not see the species man. Genera and species are for Photius mental constructions. They exist in the mind only. As they do not exist in the sensible world, they cannot be perceived by the senses. Before Photius, and with a different understanding of universals, Theodore the Studite made a similar claim: "Universals are seen with the mind and thought; particular individuals are seen with the eyes, which look at perceptible things" (3a16).

EIDOS AS "APPEARANCE", AS THE SUM OF ACCIDENTAL PROPERTIES

The translation by appearance[54] or shape raises no immediate objection. It would attribute to Photius a relatively trivial position. What I see when I see a man is the appearance or shape of a man, that is to say a bundle of quantities and qualities, like sizes, forms and colours. This would inscribe Photius in the line of a tradition that is both philosophical and medical. Galen, for examples, says that in his *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* (7.5.31–37, 460.1–16; transl. DE LACY, p. 461):

> And the proper object of sight, which I also called its primary sense-object, is the class of colours. For colours are the first thing it perceives, and it perceives them by itself, and it alone of all sense organs perceives them, just as taste alone perceives flavours. Along with colour it perceives the coloured body, just as taste does the flavoured body; but taste, like all other senses, waits for the sense-object to come to the body of the animal, whereas sight reaches out through the intervening air to the coloured body. Therefore it alone can discern along with the colour of

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positi nella memoria e venga infine costituita come conoscenza stabile dal collegamento con tutte le altre conoscenze nella scienza (ἐπιστήμη)" (italics are mine).

[53] Transl. J. A. SMITH, in: The Complete Works of Aristotle. The revised Oxford Translation, ed. Barnes. Princeton 1984, vol. 1, 664–665.

[54] Such a translation is adopted by T. TOLLEFSEN, St Theodore the Studite's Defence of the Icons. Theology and Philosophy in Ninth-Century Byzantium. Oxford 2018, 138: "the appearance (τὸ εἶδος) of the object is transported back to be apprehended by the mind (or intellect)".

the thing seen its size and shape, which no other sense can perceive, except that sometimes touch does so incidentally.

So in that case, Photius would claim that when I see an individual, I perceive a bundle of accidental properties, that is to say various qualities and quantities. It would recall the concept of corporeal form used by Nicephorus who said: "painting presents the corporeal form (τὸ σωματικὸν εἶδος) of the one depicted, impressing its outline (σχῆμα) and its shape (μορφὴν) and its resemblance" (*PG* 100, col. 357CD). This solution is indeed perfectly acceptable.

EIDOS AS "SUBSTANTIAL FORM" OR (PARTICULAR) "ESSENCE"

In that case, we are not talking of a universal essence as universal but of the essence as it exists realised in a given individual. Such a distinction was not made by Mango but it is the logical consequence of the impossibility of perceiving universals as universals. As the perceived essence cannot be universal, it has to be particular. According to this reading, when I see Socrates, I see the essence of Socrates, that is to say the particular humanity of Socrates. I do not see the specific essence as universal, but the essence particularised by the given individual. Here again a reference to Theodore Studite is possible as he insisted on the fact that Christ is visible only because he assumed the human nature "contemplated in an individual manner" (ἐν ἀτόμῳ θεωρουμένην). Had Christ assumed the universal nature, he would be "contemplated only by the mind and touched only by thought" (3a16).

It is possible to attribute such a reading to Photius. First, because we know from *Amphilochion* 231 that it corresponds to Photius's ontology to claim that particular essences exist[55]. In that *Amphilochion*, a treatise devoted to the humanity of Christ, he explains in detail the process of individualisation or particularisation of the essence by the addition of characteristic properties proper to this individual. It is also clear that the particularised humanity of Christ belongs to Christ only and could not find itself repeated in another man[56]. So we escape the problem of perceiving a universal as we are speaking of a particular essence.

Can *eidos* be used to refer to such an entity? The answer is yes, and we have examples in one of the most important texts of the history of philosophy, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. There the term *eidos* is sometimes used to refer to the proper form of an individual[57]. I do not say that Aristotle would claim that one can see an *eidos*, but only that it is appropriate in an Aristotelian context to call the particular form of an individual *eidos*. It would be Photius's contribution to make the second step and to say that this form is visible.

Such a step may result from an opinionated reading by Photius of his sources. Several important authorities, like Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus, offer the following statements about the concept of *enhypostaton*, a key term of the Christological debates:

Maximus the Confessor
Ἐνυπόστατον δέ, τὸ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸ μὲν οὐδαμῶς ὑφιστάμενον, ἐν ἄλλοις δὲ θεωρούμενον, ὡς εἶδος ἐν τοῖς ὑπ᾽ αὐτὸ ἀτόμοις.[58]

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[55] See C. ERISMANN, Ontologie et logique à Byzance. Photius Iᵉʳ de Constantinople et la distinction entre les termes 'homme' et 'humanité'. *Les Études Philosophiques* 183 (2018) 363–376. See also C. ERISMANN – B. MACDOUGALL, The Byzantine Reception of Porphyry. *Medioevo. Rivista di storia della filosofia medievale* 43 (2018) 41–72.

[56] See C. ERISMANN, Photius and Theodore the Studite on the humanity of Christ. A neglected Byzantine discussion on universals. *DOP* 71 (2017) 175–192.

[57] See M. FREDE – G. PATZIG, Aristoteles „Metaphysik Z": Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar. Munich 1988, 48–57.

[58] Maximus, *Letter 15*, *PG* 91, cols. 557D15–560A2.

Enhypostaton is that which does not subsist by itself at all, but is seen in another as the *eidos* in the individuals.

John of Damascus

Κυρίως δὲ ἐνυπόστατόν ἐστιν ἢ τὸ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸ μὲν μὴ ὑφιστάμενον ἀλλ᾽ ἐν ταῖς ὑποστάσεσι θεωρούμενον, ὥσπερ τὸ εἶδος ἤγουν ἡ φύσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν ἰδίᾳ ὑποστάσει οὐ θεωρεῖται ἀλλ᾽ ἐν Πέτρῳ καὶ Παύλῳ καὶ ταῖς λοιπαῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὑποστάσεσιν.[59]

In the proper sense, *enhypostaton* is […] that which does not subsist in itself but is seen in hypostases, just as the human *eidos*, or human nature, that is not seen in its own hypostasis but in Peter and Paul and the other human hypostases.

These two passages make the same point: it is not possible to see the universal humanity in itself, i.e. independently of individual human beings, but only when it is realised (or instantiated) in individuals. The meaning of θεωρούμενον here is probably closer to "consider" than to "see", but in a way the passages seem to imply the possibility of perceiving the *eidos* in the individuals or hypostases. And the *eidos* perceived in individuals is essential, just as, by definition, for both Maximus and John the species is the same as the *ousia*.

Photius's position in *Homily* XVII would then be the result of the combination of an ontological thesis developed by Photius—the claim that the humanity of Socrates is proper or particular to him (and in consequence is not found the same in other individuals and is therefore not universal)—with a literal reading of some of his sources like John of Damascus, according to whom the verb θεωρέω meaning "to see", "to view", is applied to the *eidos*.

Such a position would have both common sense and textual authority in its favour. First, it seems natural to think that when I see Socrates on the market or Paul depicted on an icon, I see a man and not just a set of shapes and colours. I indeed do not see the universal or the entire species, but I see a man, a given individual who is a man.

One additional argument in favour of this reading and its plausibility is related to the Byzantine exegesis of the last section of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, particularly where Aristotle says in 100a15 that "for while the individual is perceived, perception is of the universal, for example, of human being" (καὶ γὰρ αἰσθάνεται μὲν τὸ καθ᾽ ἕκαστον, ἡ δ᾽ αἴσθησις τοῦ καθόλου ἐστίν, οἷον ἀνθρώπου). The precise meaning of this Aristotelian passage is much debated[60]. Yet, thanks to an interpretation proposed by two commentators, it could offer strong Aristotelian support to Photius. Two of the exegetes of *Posterior Analytics* 2.19 defend the theory according to which the perception of a given individual is a perception not only of some of his accidental properties but also of some of his essential properties. The first commentator is the author of the last part of the commentary attributed to John Philoponus. While the commentary to the first book of *Posterior Analytics* is authentic, the commentary to the second book is considered not to be by Philoponus, but a later composition. The second commentator is Eustratius, Metropolitan of Nicaea, who lived from the middle of the eleventh century to shortly after 1117.

According to "Philoponus":

When perception (αἴσθησις) acted on certain particulars that are undifferentiated in species, then all at once this single percept came to a stand in the imagination and made an imprint in it. This percept not only takes on the stamp of certain properties and accidents out of which the particulars are constituted and on the basis of which they come to be known, but it is also stamped by the universal. A universal is a common nature which all of the particulars have in

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[59] John of Damascus, *Dialectica* §45, 61, lines 8–9.

[60] See R. SORABJI, Universals Transformed: The First Thousand Years After Plato, in: Universals, Concepts and Qualities. New Essays on the Meaning of Predicates, ed. P. F. Strawson – A. Chakrabarti. Aldershot 2006, 105–126.

common. The particular human beings have animal, rational, and mortal as common features. *Now when perception sees* (ἰδοῦσα) *Socrates and Alcibiades and is stamped with the particular properties* (τῶν μερικῶν ἰδιωμάτων) *in them* (the particular properties are that the one [man] is long-haired and pale,and that another [man] is not like this) *and one of the common features observed* (θεωρουμένων) *in them, for example, that they are animals* (ζῷα) *or that they are rational or some such thing, it transmitted this first to the imagination*. When this 'primitive' percept is imprinted in it, it also instilled 'in the soul' a certain murky knowledge of the 'universal'. In the same way, too, the second, third and fourth percepts, which are similar and, since they have something of the common features within them too, are imprinted with the properties and accidents of things among the particulars, both instil these things in the imagination and these things in the imagination also instil in the soul the knowledge of the universal. *For perception apprehends not only individuals, that is, accidents and properties, out of which the particulars are constituted, but also the universal human being, that is to say, also certain things out of which the universal human being is constituted.*[61]

This text by "Philoponus" is probably too realist for Photius, who would not insist so much on the ontological commonality of essential properties, but it offers precisely the view on perception that the patriarch needs. Richard Sorabji summarises the teaching of "Philoponus" as follows: "When we perceive an individual it is not only these characteristics of the individual that leave a mark in our sense image, but also such characteristics as being a human and being rational, moral, animal"[62]. This is exactly what Photius would claim if by *eidos* in *Homily* XVII, he means the essence.

Eustratius will make a similar claim a few centuries later, showing the staying power of this idea in Byzantium:

When Socrates is known perceptually, our perception simultaneously apprehends human, though it does not abstract human from the particular but confusedly recognises human too *in the particular*. And it is clear that it transmits this to the reason in the soul. For if perception did not recognise human at all, the soul would not be able to move through its own recognition to the apprehension and recognition of human and to conglomerate the universal in itself.[63]

The work of Photius took place chronologically between these two commentaries. His view, according to which it is possible to visually perceive the essence of an individual, would fit well within this philosophical trend.

So, to come back to our original question, we are faced with two philosophical positions. When Photius speaks "of the *eidos* of the thing seen", he could either mean "the appearance of the thing seen", i.e. a set of accidental properties exemplified by a given individual, and by doing so he would simply be repeating a trivial theory; or he could mean "the particular essence of the thing seen", in which case he would be making a more original claim. This latter interpretation has two major theoretical advantages. The first one is that it is appealing, particularly to an iconophile thinker, to be able to say that when I see Socrates—or a depiction of him—I see a man, a particular human being, and not just accidental properties like colours, shapes and sizes. If one is able to see, and later to depict, (part of) the essence of a person, then the produced depiction—the icon or the mosaic—will be more exact and be a more precise representation of the model. The second advantage would be for the theory of abstraction, i.e. for the explanation of the mental process by which we produce general concepts on the basis of our perception of individuals. This would offer

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[61] Ed. WALLIES (*CAG* 13), 437.15–438.2. Transl. by O. GOLDIN, Philoponus. On Aristotle Posterior Analytics 2. London 2009, 139. Italics are mine.

[62] R. SORABJI, The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200–600 AD. A Sourcebook. Volume 1 Psychology. London 2004, 174.

[63] Ed. HAYDUCK (*CAG* 21), 266.14–19. Transl. in SORABJI, The Philosophy 177. Italics are mine.

an excellent grounding in reality to our concepts, as they would be based on the perception of an essential property and not only on an accidental, and therefore ontologically unstable, one. And this would allow Photius to claim that vision is important in the formation of concepts.

I do not think that it is possible to make a definitive decision regarding this question, even if it is indeed tempting to attribute to Photius this most original and philosophically appealing position. Why should we not think that Photius was willing to answer John the Grammarian on essential properties as well and to contradict him by asserting the depictability of the particular humanity of a given person? Photius's point is to claim the truth of the image. This truth would indeed be even greater if something essential were included in the process of depiction and vision. Accidental properties are instable and changing, essential properties express the real being of things, what they really are. How much truer would an image be if it were possible to include some essential properties! The point is not that the image and the model would be of the same essence, as this is clearly not the case, but that the depiction can make it possible to see not only shapes and colours, but a part of what the depicted individual really is, a human being.

CONCLUSION: THE RETURN TO *EUTAXIA*

If the proposed interpretation is correct, then *Homily* XVII describes a broader picture of the Byzantine world restored in its orthodoxy, a picture which links the images themselves, the political and imperial power, and the patriarch as the scholar who expounds the true doctrine and the true faith. The homily appears to emphasise a striking parallelism between the theological and the political situation. The first element is to underline that the images removed or hidden by what is notably described as the "Isaurian impiety" have been restored in full majesty and splendour; then, Photius states that the heretical emperors have been replaced by pious emperors—i.e. the iconoclasts emperors are replaced by the iconophile emperors Michael III and Basil I, to whom an encomium is offered in the homily; and finally, he shows that the false philosophy of John the Grammarian is replaced by the correct, true iconophile philosophy of Photius himself, and that a heretical patriarch is replaced in the church of Hagia Sophia itself[64] by an orthodox one.

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[64] As patriarch, John the Grammarian certainly celebrated the liturgy in Hagia Sophia, but his association with the building is even stronger if we think of the Iconoclast Council of 815, which took place in precisely that church and to which John clearly contributed. His presence in Hagia Sophia is documented twice in the illuminated Pantokrator Psalter (Pantokrator 61), once visually, once verbally. On folio 16r, a two-storied building which certainly represents some part of Hagia Sophia is depicted. In the vaulted lower hall, the iconoclastic patriarch Theodotus presides over the Iconoclastic Council of 815; in the upper story of the building, John the Grammarian is depicted raising his right hand in a gesture indicating speech and holding in his left hand a scroll, probably the florilegium of patristic authorities supporting iconoclasm that he compiled at the request of Leo V. The same folio also contains a partially lost poem. The preserved part of the poem (edited and translated in ŠEVČENKO, Anti-Iconoclastic Poem [see n. 8]) consists of fourteen verses describing the victory of Patriarch Nicephorus over his three foes: the Iconoclastic patriarch Theodotus, the emperor Leo V and John the Grammarian. Here are the verses (v. 8–11) devoted to John:
And stopping the Sorcerer's blasphemous mouth,
Speaking evil against the venerable icons,
Without shame, in the midst of the House of God,
[That sorcerer] who bears the image of the all-wicked Antichrist.
John, identifiable thanks to the allusion to his interest in magic, is described as speaking against icons inside a church (ἐν μέσῳ θείου δόμου), which is in all likelihood a reference to the Council of 815. See ŠEVČENKO, Anti-Iconoclastic Poem 46.

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