

CHAPTER 2

Aristotle and the Icon: The use of the *Categories* by Byzantine iconophile writers

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Introduction

The use of Aristotelian logic terminology in the writings of Byzantine defenders of images during the iconoclast controversy has not received the attention it deserves. I included a chapter on the subject in my monograph *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* published in 1996,¹ but as far as I am aware not much work has been done since. My intention here is to draw attention to an interesting but largely neglected aspect of the iconoclast controversy by revising and updating my earlier contribution.

The period of iconoclasm in the eighth and ninth centuries marked a turning point in Byzantine history. It changed the relationship between church and state, and gave rise to a flowering of art and architecture which we now associate with Byzantium in the middle ages. This in turn impacted upon the Latin West and Islamic worlds, as well as shaping the future of Eastern Europe and Russia. While this is well known, the writings of those who came to the defence of icons, and therefore to the defence of anthropomorphic art in Christianity, are perhaps not so well known, and indeed the arguments of the iconophiles have only begun to be re-examined in more recent times.

1. Marie-José Mondzain has published articles and translated into French the writings of the Patriarch Nikephoros dealing with Aristotelian logic terminology, see Mondzain 1989. See also Mondzain 2005.

Iconoclasm

In Constantinople during the eighth and ninth centuries a total of six emperors promulgated and imposed a policy of iconoclasm on the Byzantine church and state.² Leo III (r. 717-741), the instigator of the policy around 726, broke the Arab siege of Constantinople in 717 and gained a reputation as a strong military leader. He is reported to have declared: "I am both emperor and priest."³ His motives for introducing iconoclasm remain largely unknown as very few words of his own have come down to us, and those that have are probably not authentic. In the reputed correspondence between Leo III and the Umayyad caliph 'Umar II (r. 717-720), the emperor favours veneration of the cross and finds no scriptural justification for the practice of venerating images.⁴ With his son Constantine V (r. 741-775), however, we are on firmer ground. Three of his so-called theological 'investigations' (πεύσεις) were incorporated into the writings of the ninth-century iconophile and deposed patriarch of Constantinople, Nikephoros (r. 806-815). And the Definition (*Horos*) of the Iconoclast Council of Heireia (an Asiatic suburb of Constantinople) convened by Constantine V in 754 was preserved in the proceedings of the Seventh Ecumenical Council held at Nicaea in 787.

The Second Council of Nicaea in 787 was convened by the empress Irene in order to overthrow the iconoclast policies of her own ruling dynasty, but nowhere do the bishops of this council condemn the imperial authorities, preferring instead to blame those within the ranks of the church. The *Horos* of 754 does at least give us the official pronouncements of the iconoclast bishops who attended that synod and some insight into their thinking.⁵ The proceedings of a second iconoclast council held in Constantinople in 815 are also preserved, this time in the writings of the patriarch Nikephoros.⁶

2. For background and sources for the period, see Brubaker & Haldon 2001. See also id. 2011, in which our theme is briefly discussed on pp. 375 and 785.

3. On the question of 'caesaropapism' in Byzantium, see Dagron 2003.

4. See Jeffrey 1944.

5. See text in Krannich, Schubert & Sode 2002.

6. Edited by J. Featherstone in 1997.

Apart from some acrostic poems and a few other fragments, that is the sum total of iconoclast literature known to have survived.

Iconoclasm means the breaking of images, in particular those images considered to be sacred and venerated in the icon cult. This movement saw the destruction of many icons and wall paintings in Byzantine churches, and the imprisonment and martyrdom of several leading iconophiles. Under pressure from the authorities, both imperial and ecclesiastical, many secular clergy and some monastics went over to the iconoclast side. But it was mainly the monks who remained steadfast in their support of the icons and their veneration, and it was from among their ranks that most of the resistance to iconoclasm came.

The patriarchate of Constantinople was compromised by the intervention of the iconoclast emperors who promoted their own supporters to positions in the church hierarchy. The iconoclast patriarchs of Constantinople were criticised not only by the popes of Rome, but by the Greek patriarchs in Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem, who were living by this time under the Umayyad caliphate. In fact both Rome and the Eastern patriarchs consistently condemned the iconoclast emperors for their support of an unorthodox teaching. This was not the first time that Byzantine emperors had promulgated heretical doctrines, as John of Damascus (ca. 675-749) reminded his readers when defending the cult of icons in the eighth century.⁷

John knew that the emperor Valens in the fourth century had supported Arianism, and that the emperors Zeno and Anastasius in the fifth and sixth centuries had favoured the non-Chalcedonians, and that Heraclius and Constans II had promoted Monothelism in the seventh century. As each of these emperors had supported heretical doctrines for political ends, John viewed Leo III as the instigator of yet another heresy and condemned him for writing his own gospel according to Leo.⁸ Although he does not use the term, John could see that 'caesaropapism' was alive and well in the Byzan-

7. John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, p. 114.

8. John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, pp. 113-114.

tine state. His condemnation of Leo III was known to the Iconoclast Council of 754 because he was anathematised by the bishops at that council and his Arab name Mansur was ridiculed.⁹

First Iconoclasm

Mention of John of Damascus brings us to the most important iconophile writer from the first period of iconoclasm. John wrote not only three works in defence of icons and their veneration, but in his work the *Fount of Knowledge* (*Πηγή Γνώσεως*) he included a section known as the *Dialectica*, in which he provides an introduction to philosophical terminology useful to the Christian theologian.¹⁰ The *Dialectica* is in fact largely a handbook of Aristotelian philosophical terminology and it contains several chapters based on the *Categories*.¹¹ This was the most comprehensive text of its kind written in Greek in the eighth century, and subsequently became influential in both the Byzantine and Latin medieval worlds.

There are in fact two versions of the *Dialectica*, a shorter version (*Dialectica brevior*) probably compiled first, and a longer version (*Dialectica fusior*) which is largely a reworking of the earlier version.¹² In the longer version John arranges the material from the *Categories* into various chapters. In chapter 49, for example, he lists the ten categories in the Aristotelian order: substance, quantity, relation, quality, place, time, state, position, action and passion. He then discusses each category individually in chapters 49-57. He again lists the ten categories in chapter 37 and says that except for the first one, substance, all the rest are accidents.¹³

But having mentioned John's interest in Aristotle, we must now point out that he himself does not use the terminology of the *Categories* in his three apologies in defence of the icons. It would seem that these three works were written early in his life at the monastery of

9. Krannich et al. 2002: 69.

10. On the Arab Muslim context of John's writings see Parry 2003 and Griffith 2008. Louth 2002 situates John in his Byzantine rather than in his Melkite environment.

11. The main study of the *Dialectica* is still Richter 1964.

12. Louth 2002: ch. 4.

13. John of Damascus, *Dialectica*, pp. 113-129; 104.

Mar Sabas in Palestine, and that the *Dialectica*, as part of the tripartite *Fount of Knowledge*, was written towards the latter part of his life. So we cannot point to his use of the *Categories* in relation to his iconophile writings. However, the situation changed during the second period of iconoclasm in the ninth century, when we find several iconophiles using terminology from the *Categories* in their defence of Christian images.

Before turning to second iconoclasm, however, we should mention that there are several anonymous handbooks and epitomes of logic terminology from the sixth and seventh centuries.¹⁴ These are based in part upon the writings of the Alexandrian Neoplatonist school of Ammonius, Olympiodorus and David, but go back ultimately, of course, to Porphyry and Aristotle. They are Christianised logic handbooks for use in private schools or other institutions of learning. I hesitate to use the word ‘university’ as much controversy surrounds the question of whether such an institution of higher learning can be identified in Constantinople in this period.¹⁵ However, an example from one of these handbooks will suffice to demonstrate its Christian character.

The particular text in question is dated to the seventh century and provides the following definition of a homonym: “An homonym is when two things have one name in common, such as an image of Paul and Paul himself, for both are called a man, but they only have the name in common, while they differ as far as the thing is concerned.”¹⁶ It can be seen from this how Aristotle’s original example of a man and a picture has been Christianised by substituting the name of Paul. However, this definition differs in a more fundamental way from that given by Aristotle himself.

In the opening passage of the *Categories* he writes:

14. These are discussed by Mossman Roueché in a series of articles (Roueché 1974, 1980, 1990).

15. See Speck 1974.

16. Roueché 1974: 72: “Ὁμόνομόν ἐστίν, ὅταν δύο πράγματα μόνῳ ὀνόματι κοινωνοῦσιν, ὡς ἐπὶ εἰκόνας καὶ τοῦ Παύλου· τὰ γὰρ ἀμφότερα λέγεις ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλὰ μόνῳ τῷ ὀνόματι κοινωνοῦσι, τῷ δὲ πράγματι διαφέρουσι.”

When things have only a name in common and the definition of being (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας) which corresponds to the name is different, they are called homonymous. Thus, for example, both a man and a picture are animals. They have only a name in common and the definition of being which corresponds to the name is different.¹⁷

It is the phrase *λόγος τῆς οὐσίας* which is missing from the seventh century text. There were in fact two distinct versions of this passage, both claimed as genuine, recorded by ancient commentators.¹⁸ The difference between the two versions was that one included this key expression, and it is this version that we find being used by ninth-century iconophiles.

In addition we have from the seventh century commentaries on parts of the *Categories* by Anastasius of Sinai and Maximus the Confessor.¹⁹ And to complete the picture, after iconoclasm we find the patriarch Photius (r. 858-867 and 877-886), in the second half of the ninth century, commenting on the *Categories* in his *Amphilochia*.²⁰ This interest in Aristotle was probably shared at the time by Leo the Mathematician and Constantine the Philosopher, better known by his monastic name Cyril, of the brothers Cyril and Methodius fame. From this it is possible to assert that there was an on-going interest in the *Categories* in Byzantium both before and after iconoclasm. It is important to note this because most scholars have concluded that it is only in the second half of the ninth century, with the revival of learning under Photius, that knowledge of Aristotelian philosophy is again apparent in the Greek-speaking world. We need, however, to push this so-called 'revival of learning' back into the second half of the eighth century.²¹

17. Cat. 1a. See Anton 1968.

18. See Anton 1969.

19. Anastasius of Sinai, *Hodegos*, PG 89: 52B-53C, ed. Uthemann 23-75; Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91: 149B-153B; 213A-216A; 260D-268A.

20. Photius, *Amphilochia* 127-147. On the reception of the *Categories* from Photius onwards see Ierodiakonou 2005 and chapter 1, above.

21. The German Byzantinist Paul Speck published important articles in the 1980s on the beginnings of this "byzantinische Renaissance". The articles are now available in English in his 2003 collection, XII, XIV; see also Lemerle 1986.

Turning to Syria in the first decades of the ninth century we have the Melkite bishop of Harrān and iconophile, Theodore Abū Qurrah (ca.750-825), to whom is attributed an Arabic translation of some of Aristotle's logical works.²² However, he does not resort to Aristotelian terminology in his *Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons*.²³ Unlike his fellow iconophiles in Byzantium this work is directed at Jewish and Muslim critics of the Christian cult of icons. The defence of icons was after all a Chalcedonian pre-occupation as there is no evidence for an iconoclast movement among so-called 'Miaphysite' and 'Church of the East' Christians under Arab rule in this period.²⁴ The Byzantine iconoclast controversy was largely confined to Constantinople and its sphere of influence, and only indirectly impinged upon the Melkite communities of the Eastern Mediterranean. The Roman pontiffs routinely condemned the iconoclast policy of the Byzantine emperors and their interference in church affairs.

John of Damascus took up the iconophile cause because he was well placed to challenge Byzantine imperial authority from his monastery of Mar Sabas. It is not without irony that he came to the defence of Christian image-making while living under a caliphate that was engaged in promoting an aniconic culture. He would have seen the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem built by the caliph Abd al-Malik (r. 685-705) in 695 and the Great Mosque in Damascus completed by al-Walid (r. 705-715) in 715. Unfortunately, John does not make any reference to these early Islamic buildings, no doubt because he saw them as Byzantine structures and because he viewed Islam as a heretical form of Christianity. Like other Melkites at the time he probably expected the Arabs to be driven out and Byzantine imperial control restored.²⁵

22. Lamoreaux 2002.

23. See Griffith 1997.

24. Miaphysite has replaced 'Monophysite' in recent literature, see Winkler 1997; while Church of the East is a more accurate description than 'Nestorian', see Brock 1996.

25. Reinink 2005, XII. See Alexander 1985 for Byzantine literature of the period dealing with the myth of the last emperor and a restored empire. On the relation of Byzantine iconoclasm to the Arab invasions, see Young 2008.

Second Iconoclasm

The two most important iconophile writers of the second period of iconoclasm are Theodore the Studite and the Patriarch Nikephoros, and both demonstrate familiarity with Aristotelian logic terminology in their writings against the iconoclasts. It is of course the application of logic terminology to the image question, rather than the study of logic per se that interests them. Theodore the Studite takes his name from the Stoudios monastery in Constantinople where he became a monk and later, as abbot (ηγούμενος), a reformer of the Studite rule. He was exiled on two occasions for his criticism of the imperial policy of iconoclasm and from his place of exile in Asia Minor created a centre of iconophile resistance. His letters are an important source for studying this resistance.²⁶

At one point in his work against the iconoclasts Theodore takes a swipe at those who use excessive logic to prove their arguments. He writes: “I shall use some syllogisms to present the subject of my treatise, not indeed with the technical structure of the Aristotelian system, or rather the silliness of it, but with a more simple form of expression, relying on the might of truth.”²⁷ Quite clearly Theodore is aware of the misuse to which the syllogism can be put, but he may also be aiming at its use by heretics. It had become something of a topos for orthodox theologians to accuse heretics of using syllogisms to dress up their arguments.²⁸

The similarity between iconophile and iconoclast methodology during second iconoclasm is exemplified in a letter Theodore the Studite wrote to the (future) iconoclast patriarch, John the Grammarian (r. 835-842). In it he says:

26. Edited by G. Fatouros in 1991.

27. Theodore Studites, *Antirrheticus* III, PG 99: 389A: “Συλλογισμοῖς δὲ πῶς χρῆσομαι πρὸς τὴν τοῦ λόγου ὑπόθεσιν, οὐκ ἔχουσι μὲν ἔντεχνον τὴν πλοκὴν κατὰ τὴν Ἀριστοτελικὴν τεχνολογίαν, εἴτ’ οὖν φλωαρίαν ἀπλοϊκωτέρω δὲ φθέγματι, τῷ κράτει τῆς ἀληθείας ἐρηρησμένοις.”

28. For example, Gregory of Nazianzus against the Neo-Arians, see McGuckin2001: 280, 287.

We are taught according to the definition of philosophy that things are said to be named ‘homonymously’ if, though they have a common name, the definition of being (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας) corresponding to the name differs for each, as in Christ and his portrait ...²⁹

It appears from some unedited fragments attributed to John the Grammarian that he too was familiar with this logic terminology and had used it himself in his iconoclastic pronouncements.³⁰ The fact that Theodore the Studite, the Patriarch Nikephoros, and John the Grammarian all show familiarity with this terminology would seem to suggest that it was on the school curriculum which each had studied at one time or another.

This is confirmed by Ignatius the Deacon (ca.795-870) in his *Vita* of the Patriarch Nikephoros in which he stresses his learning in logic and dialectic.³¹ Ignatius also wrote a *Vita* of the patriarch Tarasios (r. 784-806), another iconophile hero, in which he also draws attention to his knowledge of secular learning.³² This is an interesting development and stands in contrast to earlier hagiographies of Byzantine saints. It seems to reflect the urban environment of Constantinople with its opportunities for further education available to aspiring students in the second half of the eighth century. It is of interest too that all these iconophiles grew up during the reign of iconoclast emperors and it suggests that education did not suffer as a result of their policies. The iconoclasts are often portrayed in iconophile sources as enemies of culture and learning, but the evidence from Ignatius does not bear this out. Ignatius himself had been an iconoclast before converting to the iconophile cause and composing hagiographies of iconophile saints, probably in order to appease the authorities after the restoration of icons in 843.³³

29. Theodore Studites, *Epistulae*, Letter 528, vol. ii, p. 790: “ἐπεὶ καὶ κατὰ φιλοσοφίας ὄρον ὁμώνυμά ἐστι διδασκόμεθα, ὃν ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν, ὃ δὲ κατὰ τὸ ὄνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ἕτερος, οἷον αὐτὸς Χριστὸς καὶ ὁ ἐγγεγραμμένος”

30. Guillard 1981, VIII.

31. Ignatius Diaconus, *Vita Nicephori*; trl. Fischer ch. 5.

32. Ignatius Diaconus, *Vita Tarasii*, 6-7.

33. Ignatius Diaconus, *Vita Tarasii*, 50.

In an important passage in his *Life* of Nikephoros, Ignatius details the syllabus followed by the patriarch during his student days. As it is too long to quote in full I will select a couple of passages relevant to our theme. It begins:

After he had made distinct and thorough acquaintance with these four handmaidens of true knowledge [viz. the quadrivium], he proceeded directly and unerringly to their mistress, I mean to philosophy, and to the topics considered in philosophy. For he examined in some detail which and how many are the terms of philosophy, and what the particular nature of each of them is, what sort of term serves as a subject and what is the predicate, and whether it is predicated of every or none, or as in a whole, and other similar questions. He studied what ‘elements’ means according to philosophers, and whether it is a homonym of physics and geometry alone. He investigated how many kinds of premisses of a syllogism there are, in what way they are convertible, and what the power of a contradiction is; he studied what kinds of additional predicates there are, which quantifiers there are, and which quantifiers their ‘indefinite’ corresponds to; further, how many modes of syllogism there are, the kinds and number of syllogistic figures, what sort of syllogism is hypothetical, what sort is categorical, and in what way they differ’.³⁴

Here he is clearly referring to instruction in Aristotelian categorical syllogistic supplemented with some training in hypothetical syllogisms.

Although Ignatius’ description of the patriarch’s education is tendentious and somewhat arbitrary, it is nevertheless an important

34. Ignatius Diaconus, *Vita Nicephori* 150: “Ταύταις ταῖς τέσσαρσι θεραπειαῖσι τῆς ὄντως ἐπιστήμης προσομιλήσας σαφέστατα, ἐπὶ τὴν τούτων δέσποιναν, τὴν φιλοσοφίαν φημί, καὶ τὰ ταύτης ἐξ ἐτοιμῶν ἐβάδισεν ἀπλανῶς θεωρήματα. τίνες γὰρ ὅροι ταύτης καὶ πόσοι ἐπιεικῶς ἠκριβώσατο, καὶ τίς ἰδιότης αὐτῶν, ποῖος ὑπόκειται, καὶ τί τὸ κατηγορούμενον, καὶ τοῦτο ἄρα κατὰ παντός, ἢ οὐδενός, ἢ ἐν ὅλῳ, καὶ τὰ ὅμοια. τί ποτε δὲ τὰ στοιχεῖα θέλει δηλοῦν παρ’ αὐτοῖς, καὶ εἰ τῶν φυσικῶν ἢ γεωμετρικῶν ταῦτα μόνων ὁμόνομα· προτάσεις δὲ πόσαι, καὶ πῶς ἀντιστρέφουσι· τίς ἀντιφάσεως δύναμις· τὰ προσκατηγορούμενα δὲ ποῖα, προσδιορισμοὶ δὲ τίνες, καὶ τίσιν ἀναλογεῖ τὸ κατ’ ἐκείνους ἀόριστον, τρόποι δὲ πόσοι τῶν συλλογισμῶν· ὅποια καὶ πόσα τὰ σχήματα· ποῖος ὑποθετικὸς, ποῖος κατηγορικὸς, καὶ τί διαφέρουσι.” The translation above is a modification of Fischer 54-55

witness to a new category of intellectual saints and confessors who require their educational qualifications to be emphasised. The stand taken against iconoclasm by the Patriarch Nikephoros and Theodore the Studite led to their banishment from Constantinople, and in the case of Theodore he was given a hundred strokes of the lash at the age of sixty.³⁵ One of the more famous cases of disfigurement during second iconoclasm was that of the brothers, Theodore and Theophanes Graptoi, two Melkite monks from Palestine. Iambic pentameters were engraved on their foreheads (hence their soubriquet) which drew attention to their Palestinian origins and their unwelcome stay in the imperial capital.³⁶ The saintly sufferings of iconophiles in defiance of the imperial authorities led to their eventual inclusion in the tenth-century *Synaxarion* of Constantinople.³⁷

Particular arguments

We have already mentioned that the opening paragraph of Aristotle's *Categories* begins with the definition of a homonym. The example given by Aristotle of a man and a picture was naturally seized upon by writers wanting to define an image as something distinct from the person it represented. It was introduced to refute the iconoclast definition of an image which maintained that an image needed to be consubstantial with the subject it represented. That is, the only true image was one whose prototype and image were of the same essence (ὁμοούσιος).³⁸ It can be seen from this that iconoclasts and iconophiles were working with different definitions of an image.

But it can also be seen that the iconoclast use of the term 'ὁμοούσιος' had theological overtones and a pedigree in the pronouncements of the ecumenical councils. The iconoclasts deliber-

35. *Vita B*, PG 99: 296A-297C. See Cholij 2002: 58. In a letter of 819 to his exiled monks Theodore describes his imprisonment and beating (Letter 382, *Epistulae*, vol. ii).

36. Parry 2003: 149.

37. 11 November for Theodore the Studite; 13 March and 2 June for Nikephoros, see *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae: Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris*,

38. Parry 1996: ch. 18.

ately took up the ‘ὁμοούσιος’ vocabulary in developing their image theory because it had become the watchword of ‘orthodoxy’ since the Council of Nicaea in 325, and they were at pains to demonstrate their ‘orthodox’ credentials. The iconoclasts wanted to be seen to be endorsing the traditional teaching of the church, and were anxious to deflect any accusations of ‘innovation’ levelled at them. In working out the implications of their image theory they had in fact only one thing in mind which met their definition of an image, namely the Eucharist. For them the Eucharist was the only true image of Christ because he had said: “This is my body, this is my blood.”³⁹

A form of the ‘ὁμοούσιος’ argument can be seen in the early Christian polemic against pagan idols in which pagans are accused of identifying the statues of their gods with the beings they represent. It was a common Christian assumption that pagans believed the gods dwelt in their statues. This accusation was refuted by the Middle Platonist Celsus in the second century,⁴⁰ and by the Neoplatonist Porphyry in the third century,⁴¹ and interestingly enough the arguments used by Platonists like Celsus and Porphyry to defend the pagan cult of images, were precisely those taken up by Christians later on in defence of their own image cult. The image needed to be distinguished from its archetype in order to avoid the image being mistaken for an idol.

In fact, the distinction between an icon and an idol was made by Christian writers as early as Origen in the third century.⁴² But no Byzantine theologian of the eighth and ninth centuries appears to have known this, and even if they had known it, they would have been unlikely to cite Origen as an authority. After the anathemas against Origen at the Fifth Ecumenical Council convened by Justinian in 553 his name was not one that orthodox thinkers would pronounce.⁴³ In looking around for an authority who could be cited

39. See Gero 1975, Baranov 2010.

40. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. Chadwick, p. 446.

41. Porphyry, *Against the Christians*, trans. Hofmann, p. 85.

42. See Parry 2004.

43. On this see Davis 1987: 245-247.

on this question, the iconophiles turned to Aristotle's definition of a homonym, or at least what came down to them in their handbooks and epitomes.

There was also precedence in the Greek patristic tradition for applying the notion of a homonym in theological and christological discourse.⁴⁴ This was an important source of authority for iconophile writers. In fact, both sides in the controversy compiled extensive florilegia in support of their respective positions.⁴⁵ From an analysis of the patristic quotations in iconophile writings it is possible to assert that the Cappadocian fathers are quoted the most often, especially Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus. But it is also of interest to note the inclusion of seventh century theologians, such as Maximus the Confessor and Leontius of Neapolis.⁴⁶ This is in opposition to the iconoclasts who quote only fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. Thus iconophiles had recourse to more recent authorities than the iconoclasts, and they did not hesitate to draw these into the patristic tradition of the church.

By the time of iconoclasm all theological discourse and conciliar procedure in the East took place on the basis of appeal to the church fathers. The christological debates from the fifth through to the seventh centuries had made it imperative to identify the orthodox fathers of the church, a process begun by Basil the Great in the fourth century. Originally the term 'fathers' was used with reference to the bishops of the Council of Nicaea, but Basil had used the term to refer to ante-Nicene writers as well. He was one of the first to provide a list of patristic authorities in support of a theological position, and he claimed not to be an innovator precisely because he listed writers who were pillars of the church.⁴⁷ This was taken a stage further by Cyril of Alexandria in the fifth century who started the process whereby a canon of select fathers began to take shape.⁴⁸

44. See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 29, 14.

45. Parry 1996: ch. 15, and also Alexakis 1996.

46. Parry 1996: 155.

47. Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29.72-73.

48. Gray 1989.

John of Damascus comes near to the definition of a homonym when he writes: “An image is of like character with its prototype, but with a certain difference. It is not like the prototype in every way.”⁴⁹ In other words, although there is a relationship between an image and its prototype, they are clearly separate and distinguishable. To confuse the two clearly violates the definition of a homonym, although John neither uses the term nor speaks of the difference in terms of *λόγος τῆς οὐσίας*. The definition of an image given by John is more like that used by Porphyry when he writes: “If you make an image of a friend you do not confuse the image with the friend or believe that parts of your friend’s body are incorporated into the representation.”⁵⁰ Porphyry wrote this in his work *Against the Christians* in order to refute the Christian accusation that pagans believed their gods dwelt in their images.

In the sixth century John Philoponus in his work *Against Proclus on the Eternity of the World* remarks:

The king himself is the subject of a royal portrait, but this does not mean that a soon as the king exists a portrait of him must also exist. It is one thing for the king *qua* king to be a man, another for him to be the subject of a portrait. Whenever he *is* a subject, then in every case there is also a portrait, just as whenever he becomes a father, a son is always implied as well. But there is not immediately the subject of a portrait as soon as a king exists, just as someone is not immediately a father ... or anything else that falls under [the category of] relatives (*pros ti*).⁵¹

Theodore the Studite applies the category of relatives in a similar way. He writes:

49. John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, 83-84.

50. Porphyry, *Against the Christians*, p. 85.

51. John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi* 36.5-15: “τῆς βασιλικῆς εἰκόνας αὐτοῦ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐστὶν παράδειγμα, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἀνάγκη ἅμα τῷ εἶναι τὸν βασιλέα καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ εἶναι, ἐπεὶ κατ’ ἄλλο τι ἐστὶν τῷ βασιλεῖ ἢ βασιλεῖ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι, κατ’ ἄλλο δὲ τι εἶναι εἰκόνας παραδείγματι· ὅταν γὰρ ἢ παράδειγμα, τότε σύνεσιν πάντως καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν· ὡσπερ, ὅταν πατὴρ γένηται, συνεπινοεῖται πάντως καὶ ὁ υἱός, οὐ μὴν ἅμα τῷ εἶναι βασιλεὺς εὐθύς ἐστὶν εἰκόνας παράδειγμα, ὡσπερ οὐδ’ ἅμα τῷ εἶναι τις ἄνθρωπος εὐθύς ἐστὶν καὶ πατὴρ καὶ δεσπότης ἢ δεξιός ἢ τι τῶν ὑπὸ τὰ πρός τι.” Trl. M. Share, 2.36.4-14.

Even if the natural is not simultaneous with the artificial, as Christ with his image, nevertheless by its potential existence even before its iconographic production we can always see the image in Christ: just as, for example, we can see the shadow always potentially accompanying the body, even if it is not given form by the radiation of light. In this manner it is not unreasonable to reckon Christ and his image among things which are simultaneous ... The prototype and the image belong to the category of relatives (*pros ti*), like the double and the half.⁵²

Here we have an echo of *Categories* 7.7b15-17 “Relatives seem to be simultaneous by nature; and in most cases this is true. For there is at the same time a double and a half, and when there is a half there is a double” (Ackrill’s trl.).

And the patriarch Nikephoros writes:

Let me say that the icon is related to the archetype and that it is the effect of a cause. Therefore, it is necessary that the icon be one of the relatives (*pros ti*) as well as being called such. Relatives are said to be just what they are of other things, and reciprocate with their correlatives. For example, the father is called the father of his son, and inversely, the son is called the son of his father... Anyone who asserts that the icon does not concern a relation can no longer assert that it is an icon of something.⁵³

These observations are based in part on passages found in *Categories* 7.6a36-37 and 6b28-29. He continues:

52. Theodore Studites, *Antirrheticus* 3.D3-3.D4, PG 99: 429B: “Εἰ καὶ οὐχ ἕμα τὸ φύσει τῷ θεσει, οἷον ὁ Χριστὸς τῇ ἑαυτοῦ εἰκόνι· ἀλλ’ ὅμως τῷ δυνάμει εἶναι καὶ πρὸ τοῦ τεχνικῶς γενέσθαι, ταύτην ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ ἀεὶ ἔστιν ὄρα· ὡς φέρε εἰπεῖν, καὶ τὴν σκιὰν ἀεὶ παρεφυστώσαν τῷ σώματι, καὶ μὴ φωτὸς βολιδι σχηματίζεται· καθ’ ὃν τρόπον οὐκ ἔξω τοῦ εἰκότος τῶν ἕμα λέγειν Χριστὸν καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ εἰκόνα. ... Τὸ πρωτότυπον, καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν, τῶν πρὸς τί ἐστιν, ὡσπερ καὶ τὸ διπλάσιον καὶ ἡμισυ.”

53. Nikephoros, *Antirrheticus* 1.30, PG 100: 277CD: “Οὐκ ἄκαιρον δὲ οἶμαι ἐν τῷ παρόντι, καὶ τοῦτο προσθεῖναι τῷ λόγῳ, ὅτι ἡ εἰκὼν σχέσιν ἔχει πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον, καὶ αἰτίου ἐστὶν αἰτιατόν· ἀνάγκη οὖν διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τῶν πρὸς τι εἶναι τε ταύτην καὶ λέγεσθαι. Τὰ δὲ πρὸς τι, αὐτὰ ἄπερ ἐστὶν, ἑτέρων εἶναι λέγεται, καὶ ἀντιστρέφει τῇ σχέσει πρὸς ἄλληλα· ὡσπερ ὁ πατήρ υἱοῦ πατῆρ, καὶ ἑμπαλιν ὁ υἱὸς πατρὸς λέγεται υἱὸς ... καὶ οὐκ ἂν τις ἄσχετον εἰκόνα τοῦ τινοσ εἰκόνα φαίη.”

The icon and the archetype are introduced and are considered simultaneously, the one with the other. Even if the archetype disappears, the relation does not in the least cease to exist. Indeed, the principle of the simultaneous abolition of the terms of the relationship does not apply in all such cases. There are times, in fact, when relationships are maintained unchanged, even when they are torn away from and deprived of the real terms of that relation, as in the case of the father and son ...⁵⁴

Again the basis for these observations can be found at *Categories* 7b.15-25. And continuing he says:

Making visible, as if it were present, what is absent through similitude and memory of the outward form, the icon preserves the relationship coextended with itself in time. Consequently, then, the resemblance is a kind of middle relation that mediates between extreme terms: I mean the thing resembled and what resembles it, uniting them by the visible form and relating them, even if the terms are different in nature... Moreover, the resemblance confers homonymy on the icon and its archetype. The designation is one and the same for both the icon and the archetype. The icon of the king is called “the king”, and might well say: “the king and I are one”, despite the evident fact that they are different in essence. We have said these things in order to demonstrate the way in which the image, which is considered together with the archetype, is related to it’.⁵⁵

54. Nikephoros, *Antirrheticus* 1.30, PG 100: 280A: “ἅμα γὰρ συνεισάγεται καὶ συνεπιθεορεῖται θατέρῳ τὸ ἕτερον· κἄν που οἴχοιτο τὸ ἀρχέτυπον, ἀλλ’ ἢ γε σχέσις οὐ συναπολήγει· οὐ γὰρ ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν τοιούτων ὁ τοῦ συναναιρεῖσθαι δῆκει λόγος· ἔσθ’ ὅτε γὰρ καὶ αἱ σχέσεις καταλιμπανόμεναι διασώζονται, τῶν πραγμάτων ἀπορφανίζόμεναι καὶ στερόμεναι· ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ τῶν ὁμοίων ἔχει.”

55. Nikephoros, *Antirrheticus* 1.30, PG 100: 280AC: “Ὡς παρόντα γὰρ καὶ τὸν ἀποιχόμενον διὰ τε τῆς ἐμφερείας καὶ μνήμης ἢ μορφῆς ἐμφανίζουσα, συμπαρακτεινομένην τῷ χρόνῳ διασώζει τὴν σχέσιν· ἢ γοῦν ὁμοίωσις σχέσις τις μέση τυγχάνουσα, μεσιτεύει τοῖς ἄκροις, τῷ ὁμοιωμένῳ φημὶ καὶ τῷ ὁμοιούντι, ἐνοῦσα τῷ εἶδει καὶ συνάπτουσα, κἄν τῇ φύσει διήνεγκεν. ... Ἐκ περισσίας δὲ καὶ τὴν ὁμωνυμίαν χαρίζεται ἢ ὁμοίωσις· μία γὰρ ἐπ’ ἀμφοῖν ἢ προσηγορία· βασιλεὺς γὰρ καὶ ἡ βασιλέως εἰκὼν λέγεται· εἶποι δ’ ἄν, Ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἓν ἔσμεν, δῆλον δὲ ὅτι παρὰ τὸ τῆς οὐσίας διάφορον. Ταῦτα δὲ ἡμῖν εἰρηται, ὥστε παραδείξει τὸν τῆς εἰκότος τρόπον· καθ’ ὃν πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον θεωρουμένη, τὴν σχέσιν ἔχει.”

The example of the king or emperor and his portrait is a topos fully exploited in the writings of our iconophiles. Finally the patriarch remarks:

Neither has the image acquired the same identity as the archetype in terms of its essence, nor need everything that is predicated of the archetype qua archetype to be predicable of the image of it. Indeed, the archetype may be animate, while the image is inanimate. The archetype may be rational and able to move, while the image is without reason and motionless. Consequently, these two are not identical, but they are similar to each other in their visible form and dissimilar from each other in essence. It is because the image is one of the relatives that it is glorified together with the glorified archetype, and, inversely, why it is dishonoured along with the dishonoured archetype.⁵⁶

This last remark is linked to a quotation from Basil the Great who wrote, apropos of the emperor and his image: “The honour given to the image passes over to the archetype.”⁵⁷ This quotation was cited by iconophiles to detract attention away from the suggestion that the icon itself is honoured, and thereby an idolatrous act of worship takes place. It is not the icon itself that is venerated but the person depicted in it. Nikephoros’ use of the Aristotelian definition of a homonym maintains the basic Platonic distinction between archetype and image, while at the same time promoting the case for icons as non-ὁμοούσιος and therefore non-idolatrous. From an iconophile point of view the moment the distinction between archetype and image is erased the definition of an icon is compromised. Therefore the iconoclasts’ definition of an icon does not stand up to examination. For Nikephoros the example of the eucharist cited by them not only contravenes the laws of logic, but blasphemes the words of

56. Nikephoros, *Antirrheticus* 1.30, PG 100: 280BC: “οὐ κατ’ οὐσίαν τὸ ταυτὸν κεκτημένη, οὐδὲ γὰρ ὅσα κατὰ τοῦ ἀρχετύπου κατηγορεῖται, καὶ τῆς ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ εἰκόνας κατηγορήθησεται πάντως. Τὸ μὲν γὰρ εἰ τύχοι, ἔμψυχον· ἢ δὲ ἄψυχος· ἢ λογικὸν καὶ κινούμενον, ἢ δὲ ἄλογος καὶ ἀκίνητος· οὐκοῦν οὐ ταυτὸν ἀμφοτέρω, ἀλλὰ πῆ μὲν ἔοικεν ἀλλήλοις τῷ εἶδει, πῆ δὲ ἀπέοικε τῇ οὐσίᾳ. Ἐπεὶ οὖν τῶν ἐν σχέσει ἢ εἰκῶν διὰ τοῦτο καὶ συνδοξάζεται τῷ πρωτοτύπῳ δοξαζομένῳ, καὶ ἔμπαλιν ἠτιμωμένῳ συνατιμοῦται.”

57. Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 18.45.

institution spoken by Christ himself. He was not talking about an image when he said; “This is my body, this is my blood”.⁵⁸

In fact for our iconophiles not only is an image relative but the worship offered to the person depicted in it is also relative. Although Christ as the second person of the Trinity is God he nevertheless receives a lesser worship when represented in an icon. There is an absolute worship (λατρεία) reserved for God alone, and a relative worship (σχετικὴ προσκύνησις) reserved for those portrayed in an icon.⁵⁹ John of Damascus had taken care to define this distinction and had enumerated several types of relative worship in his writings against the iconoclasts.⁶⁰ The iconophiles of second iconoclasm continued to operate with this distinction and to nuance it even more. Incidentally, it is precisely this distinction that is blurred in the *Libri Carolini* or *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum* of 793, the Latin response to the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787, undertaken at the instigation of Charlemagne. It is of considerable interest that the author of this work, Theodulf of Orléans, draws on Aristotelian syllogisms to refute the iconophile position of the Seventh Council.⁶¹ It would appear that the application of the Stagirite’s logic to the image question by Theodulf predates its application by Byzantine iconophiles.

In addition to the eucharist the only other acceptable ‘images’ for the iconoclasts were the cross and the *Imago Dei*, the image of God in the human person. The iconophiles had no problem in accepting the latter as a legitimate image, but for them the cross could not be categorised as an image. The debate focused on the relation of an iconic depiction to a symbolic representation. The patriarch Nikephoros offers ten proofs for the superiority of the icon over the cross. He argues in one of these proofs:

58. Nikephoros, *Antirrheticus* 2.3, PG 100: 336AD.

59. Parry 1996, ch. 17.

60. John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*, pp. 135-141.

61. Mitalaïté 2007: 122-23. Freeman 2003: I. 82-87 cites Aristotle’s *De Interpretatione* as configured by Boethius as the source of Theodulf’s syllogistic reasoning. In an otherwise excellent study T. F. X. Noble does not discuss the use of Aristotelian logic in his 2009 book.

The cause precedes the effect, and even more so the efficient cause. For what precedes something is more worthy of honour than what follows. Thus, because the cause of the form of the cross is the passion of the body of Christ, and because his body is the antecedent cause of the form of the cross, consequently, the icon of the body of Christ, as the efficient cause, is more worthy of honour than the form of the cross.⁶²

Here the patriarch prioritizes the icon over the cross by appealing to the Aristotelian definition of an efficient cause. We understand him to mean that because the body of Christ crucified is the means by which the cross takes its form, the icon that depicts the crucifixion must therefore be more worthy of honour than the cross itself. We should keep in mind that it is the plain cross which is being discussed here and not the crucifix. The iconoclasts promoted the plain cross as a legitimate image, not the depiction of Christ hanging on the cross. The patriarch concludes by saying that if the iconoclasts truly venerate the cross they must venerate the icon even more.⁶³

Conclusion

Although there is more that could be said on the subject, what we have tried to show in this paper is that logic terminology originating in the *Categories* is embedded in iconophile thought of the first half of the ninth century, and that this seems to be evidence for reassessing higher learning in Byzantium in the eighth century. This evidence has hardly been explored in relation to the so-called ‘revival of learning’, usually assigned to the period of the patriarch Photius in the second half of the ninth century. The iconophiles of second iconoclasm took the defence of images onto a different level when they chose to apply the terminology of the *Categories*. It goes without saying that only those with a certain degree of education and sophistication could have understood the value of applying it to the image question.

62. Nikephoros, *Antirrheticus* 3.35, PG 100: 432BC.

63. Parry 1996: 188.

We have also tried to show that the use of this terminology met the needs of iconophiles in their efforts to counter iconoclast ideology. The Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787 failed to prevent a second outbreak of iconoclasm in the ninth century, and it fell to the next generation of iconophiles to nail the arguments of the iconoclasts once and for all. After he was deposed in 815 the patriarch Nikephoros spent the last thirteen years of his life in exile, devoting his time to writing his works against the iconoclasts and revising his *Brief History*.⁶⁴ He was best remembered for this last work, as there is little evidence that his iconophile writings continued to be read once the controversy was officially over in 843.

Likewise with Theodore the Studite, he became better known in the Byzantine world for his monastic reforms and for his *Catecheses*, which are still used for instruction in Eastern Orthodox monasteries today. These iconophile saints who came to the defence of Christian images did the job required of them at the time, and their deeds were subsequently recorded in the Constantinopolitan *Synaxarion*. More appropriately perhaps, their own icons were painted and displayed in churches as a reminder of the stand they took against the iconoclast heresy. Today their icons still bear witness to their efforts to safeguard the legitimacy of anthropomorphic imagery in the Christian tradition.

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64. See Mango 1990.

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