religions

MDPI

Article

John Damascene's Arguments about the Existence of God: A Logico-Philosophical and Religio-Hermeneutic Approach

Vassilios Adrahtas

School of Humanities & Comm Arts, Western Sydney University, Penrith, NSW 2751, Australia; v.adrahtas@westernsydney.edu.au

Abstract: The *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* is perhaps the most logically structured and inspired work not only in the oeuvre of the seventh-to-eighth-century theologian John Damascene, but most likely throughout the entire Greek Patristic literature. As such, the *Exact Exposition* definitely presents some quite intriguing features, such as the prolific use of logical distinctions, syllogisms, or full-fledged arguments, to name a few. Regarding the latter, John Damascene's use of certain arguments in order to prove the existence of God not only hold a unique place in Byzantine theology but have also exercised a tremendous influence on Eastern Orthodox apologetics. However, what I would call his rationalization agenda comes not only with merits but with faults as well. It is to both these that the present study draws attention by evaluating them logico-philosophically and interpreting them religio-hermeneutically. What is of special interest is the fact that John Damascene's logical faults are the most interesting parts of his theologizing.

Keywords: existence of God; proofs; syllogisms; ontology; gnoseology; cosmology; divine revelation

Citation: Adrahtas, Vassilios. 2024. John Damascene's Arguments about the Existence of God: A Logico-Philosophical and Religio-Hermeneutic Approach. *Religions* 15: 1167. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15101167

Academic Editor: Garry Trompf

Received: 19 August 2024
Revised: 31 August 2024
Accepted: 23 September 2024
Published: 25 September 2024

Introduction: Aim, Scope, and Methodology

This study aims at exploring in detail a specific aspect of John Damascene's theological engagement with logic. In particular, it approaches his interest in the argumentative function of logic, inasmuch as the latter pertains to the question of the existence of God. The use of logic in his work is well known and acknowledged, while the arguments about the existence of God that he employed are regarded as the most telling examples of this type of reasoning in the Greek Patristic literature. The reference text of this study is the *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, perhaps the most famous among the works of John Damascene (late 660s–early 740s),[1] and more specifically, Chapters 3 and 4 in the first section of this work.[2]

The use of logic in the work of the Damascene has mostly been studied from a historiographical point of view, and to the extent that it perpetuated or not the traits of formal logic, as the latter had developed by the end of Late Antiquity. In this light, John Damascene has more often than not been seen as an unoriginal compiler.[3] Furthermore, his arguments about the existence of God have prompted a range of reactions, from approbation to indifference to criticism.[4] In this study, an attempt has been made to put forward a much more complex and nuanced picture concerning John Damascene's relationship with the logical part of the ancient Greek philosophical tradition,[5] and thus offer a more balanced and accurate estimation of his contribution to the history of ideas.[6]

It is true that in recent times, scholarship (Louth 2001; Ierodiakonou 2002; Žunjić 2015; Ables 2015) has come to appreciate more and more, albeit in a rather reserved manner, John Damascene as a philosopher—especially a logician. This body of literature either focuses on contextualizing John's work within his own tradition or is interested mainly in tracing historiographically the connections between his work and ancient Greek philosophy. Although in themselves these are totally important and necessary approaches, the present study is devoted to an investigation that has hardly been undertaken. Furthermore,

whereas the connection with ancient Greek philosophy is quite often the crux of my critical comments, I have to say in advance that there is not much on what the Damascene owes to previous thinkers within the Patristic tradition. This is a huge topic of historical information that would definitely enhance and broaden what I believe to be the contribution of the present, very focused philosophical and hermeneutic analysis, but that arena of discussion lies beyond the limits and the intention of the present study.

Moreover, the present study aspires to propose an original analysis of John Damascene's theological arguments through a combined application of philosophical and religious studies' (*religionswissenschaftliche*) methodologies. With regard to the former, the study focuses on the field of formal logic via perspectives of logical semantics and logical syntax, whereas with regard to the latter—which is most prominent in the endnotes section—the perspective is hermeneutical, drawing much on the phenomenology of hierophanic experience as delineated in the work of Mircea Eliade.[7]

1. John Damascene's Prelude

In the manuscript tradition of the *Exact Exposition* (ed. Kotter [*Patr. Text. u. Stud*. 12]), the title of Chapter 3 is quite indicative: "apodeixis, hoti esti theos" ("a proof that God exists"). And indeed, this chapter deals with the so-called cosmological argument about the existence of God; an argument that the Damascene seems to have already presented in a very concise form in the very first chapter of the *Exact Exposition*.[8] What is very intriguing here is the fact that before delving into the first of his arguments about the existence of God, the Damascene makes a brief introduction, which despite sounding somewhat rhetorical does pose a number of crucial questions concerning the notion of the provability of the existence of the Divine. In particular, after a generic mentioning of the fact that the affirmation of the existence of God constitutes, more or less, a given in world religiosity,[9] the Damascene goes on to acknowledge the limited and circumstantial, one could say, presence of atheism. Thus, the first problem that must be resolved is how one should go about explaining the emergence of atheism—in other words, what is the reason behind the negation of the existence of God, even if it is to be deemed limited?[10]

To this question, the Damascene puts forward an answer which unfolds in the guise of two causes. More specifically, he seems to have in mind an efficient cause, hinted at by the phrase "hê tou ponêrou kakia" ("the wickedness of the evil one") (*JD II*, 10:5–6),[11] and a formal cause, implied by the expressions "alogôtaton" ("most irrational"), "pantôn kakôn kakiston" ("the worst of calamities"), "tês apôleias barathron" ("the abyss of perdition") and "aphrosynên" ("mindlessness") (10:6–7).[12] Thus, in this Aristotelian manner,[13] atheism is regarded by the Damascene as an ontological phenomenon, that is, as a phenomenon that pertains to the total distortion of the human condition at the gnoseological, moral, and religious levels.

The gnoseological aspect of atheism is of particular interest, since for the Damascene, the negation of the existence of God has no rational basis whatsoever; it is something "most irrational". But this assertion sounds not just exaggerated but also unreasonable: how or why would the negation of the existence of God be seen as illogical, if humans make it on the grounds of this or that syllogism and/or argument? In the worst case, it could be deemed logically faulty, but not non-logical.[14] Nevertheless, this assertion on the part of the Damascene should be hermeneutically approached from the ontological perspective I just mentioned in the previous paragraph. In other words, it should be approached in light of the premise that reason constitutes an ontological condition and is not simply an instrumental or technical rationality.[15]

As with such a condition, reasoning does not function independently but has a broader axiological—or even, one could say, deontological—character, which means that it co-functions with all other aspects of human ontology. To put it another way, this means that it is reason itself that postulates the founding of the ontological on something broader than the latter, something which—precisely for not being part of the ontological order—constitutes "the wholly other" ("das ganz Andere").[16] In light of these presuppositions, the rationalistic

negation of the existence of God negates in effect the ontological order of reasoning, that is, the very postulate of reasoning regarding its own transcendental founding—its founding on something that transcends it.[17]

But what are the practical ramifications of all this or, put differently, what turns one to atheism? How and why does one become an atheist? Once again, the answer the Damascene puts forward is twofold, stating that the cause of atheism is moral deficiency, on the one hand, and a lack of religious experience on the other. Conversely, this implies that the affirmation of the existence of the Divine is placed by the Damascene within the context of asceticism (broadly conceived); no one can activate in a positive way their possibility of knowing the existence of God—that is, the so-called natural revelation—without previously or at the same time being cleansed from passions and receiving divine illumination.

These introductory remarks to the proper arguments that cover Chapters 3 and 4 of the *Exact Exposition* are of particular importance in the sense that they make it clear—at least, as far as the logical point of view is concerned—that by mentioning "apodeixis" ("proof", "demonstration") in the title of Chapter 3, John Damascene has in mind a gnoseological framework that is different to that of rationalism. And this is all the more so, even though the logic of the syllogisms within the text is supposed to be rigorous, as I will attempt to show in what follows. Hence, the "proofs" or "arguments" that are to be found in Chapters 3 and 4 should not be regarded so much as strict rationalistic syllogisms, but rather as conditional lines of reasoning.[18]

2. The Ontological Argument

In the second paragraph of Chapter 3 of the *Exact Exposition*, one finds the first proof/argument about the existence of God, which in light of the well-known typology of such proofs/arguments has to be put under the category of the ontological argument.[19] This is corroborated by the fact that the Damascene analyses the semantics of the notions involved in his presentation "kata ton tês akolouthias logon" ("according to the logic of their coherence") (*SJD II*, 11:25).[20] But to ascertain this, one must take a close look at the stages of the whole argument. And to begin with, the Damascene starts with the assertion "panta ta onta ê ktista estin ê aktista" ("all beings are either created or uncreated") (11:22),[21] which in itself is neither a given nor a self-evident truth, since it is theologically conditioned as it presupposes the notion of creation.

At the same time, it is precisely this conditional character of the proposition that makes it sound self-contradictory, for it associates the binary "created"—"uncreated" with the term "Being". What I am saying is that if the "created" and the "uncreated" come as specific notions under "Being" as a generic notion, then how is the absolute ontological difference between them—according to theology—supposed to be sustained?[22] It seems that the Damascene himself recognizes that the proposition under discussion is logically problematic, and that is the reason he goes on by adding all the lines of reasoning that start with the hypothesis "ei men oun ktista" ("so, if they are created") and end with the clause "pantôs kai ktista" ("then necessarily they will be created as well").[23] Otherwise, the whole circular reasoning, which is evident here, has no meaning at all. So, John's ontological argument, although based on the proposition being discussed, does not unfold directly from the latter "according to the logic of [its] coherence", but goes into a digression to substantiate itself, and only then returns to the initial proposition to draw the necessary implications from it.

The entire digression that is supposed to substantiate the initial proposition revolves basically around the notion of "tropê" ("turn", "change").[24] This is a notion which according to the Damascene has two noteworthy features. First, it is founded upon the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* and second, it establishes a series of logical distinctions or otherwise, a dialectics of circumscribing and hierarchizing a series of related notions. The Damascene states emphatically "ôn gar to einai apo tropês êrxato, tauta têi tropêi hypokeisetai pantôs" ("for whatever came to be through change, that will be subject to change by necessity") (*SJD II*, 11:23–24). In other words, he is saying that "change" is what it is due to the condition of

creatio ex nihilo; reality changes and turns to this or that, precisely because it has come out of nothing.

This assertion about change is logically problematic to say the least, for how can one talk about change without presupposing some kind of substance instead of nothing? It seems that the only way to overcome the gap between Being and non-Being is to use the notion of change imaginatively. But this definitely implies that the Damascene's line of reasoning presents here a definite logical inconsistency. However, this is only half the truth, for the notion of change is further explored and analyzed by him—in a rather Aristotelian manner—into the notions of decay ("phtheiromena") and corruption ("alloioumena"), on the one hand, or the notions of corruption ("alloiousthai"), movement ("kinêsthai"), and alteration ("mataballesthai"), on the other.[25] And the relevant distinctions go on. The intelligible ("noêta") are juxtaposed to the sensible ("hosa hypo tên hêmeteran aisthêsin"), whereas further categorizations are put forward based on "proairesis" ("volition")[26] with regard to the intelligibles as to their progression to or withdrawal from the good ("tên en tôi kalôi prokopên kai tên ek tou kalou apophoitêsin"), or when it comes to the sensibles, categorizations are based on modalities such as becoming, decay, increase ("auxêsin"), decrease ("meiôsin"), change in quality ("tên kata poiotêta metabolên"), or spatial movement ("tên topikên kinêsin").[27]

Before proceeding to the core of John Damascene's ontological argument about the existence of God, we should mention two peripheral but nevertheless significant parameters that the text implies, namely the notion of rational sequence and the semantics between attributes and Being. As I have already mentioned, the Damascene uses the phrase "according to the logic of their coherence" to denote the cohesion that characterizes the meanings of a notion, and thus the logical consistency that informs the transition from one to the other. On the other hand, immediately after mentioning logical coherence, the Damascene states the following: "ôn gar to einai enantion, toutôn kai o tou pôs einai logos enantios, êgoun hai idiotêtes" ("for those that have their being oppositional to one another, also have the way of their being oppositional, that is, their attributes") (*SJD II*, 11:25–27). Such a statement of course maintains the logical semantic equivalence between (an) essence and (its) attributes,[28] an equivalence, to be sure, that cannot override the onto-gnoseo-logical primacy of essence as a most generic notion.[29] The latter can only be overridden within the context of onto-THEO-logical experience, since in the latter the primacy belongs to "das ganz Andere", in light of which essences, genera, natures, and species become one and the same.[30]

The Damascene's digression on "tropê" concludes with the phrase "trepta toinyn onta pantôs kai ktista" ("thus, if they are subject to change, then necessarily they will be created as well") (*SJD II*, 11:33–34).[31] And immediately afterwards, the main syllogism of the ontological argument starts, which can be represented as follows:

(i) created beings = things that have been made ⇒ the Maker,

so (ii) the Maker = uncreated (Being),

but because (iii) changeable beings = sensible and intelligible/created beings,

and because (iv) the Maker (as uncreated) ≠ sensible and intelligible,

(v) the Maker = unchanging (Being) ⇒

(vi) unchanging (Being) = God (for "God" does not belong to the set "sensible & intelligible").[32]

Proposition *(i)* could be seen as a kind of tautology, but that would be so evident a mistake that one cannot imagine the Damascene not having the discernment to avoid it. It seems more reasonable to assume that he probably had in mind the logical problems that might arise due to the synthesis of different worldviews[33]—it is for this reason that John Damascene defines the created as that which has been made out of nothing.[34] In any case, proposition *(i)* suffers logically with regard to "pantôs" ("necessarily"), since the latter implies createdness as a necessary condition of reality. But createdness—precisely because it is a given only in a context such as that of Christianity—is but a sufficient condition of reality.

With regard to proposition *(ii)*, one could say that it is valid in light of the law of contradiction. In particular, the way in which the relationship between *(i)* and *(ii)* is articulated consists of a combination of a concise syllogism (the so-called "enthymeme") and the contradiction between "created" and "uncreated". In other words, what we have here is basically a simple categorical syllogism of the fourth figure (aee), wherein the middle term is the predicate in the first premise and the subject in the second.

(1a) created beings = things that have been made,

and (1b) things that have been made ≠ the Maker,

so (2) the Maker ≠ created beings.

And this is where the first stage of the argument concludes. The second stage includes propositions *(iii)*, *(iv)*, and *(v)*. To be sure, *(iii)* and *(iv)* are not actually phrased by the Damascene, but they are presupposed. More specifically, the second stage is none other than the first one, whereby "created" and "uncreated" are replaced by "changeable" and "unchanging", respectively. In other words, at this point the Christian understanding of the "created" as "trepton" is more than clear. Thus, regarding the logical strength of the argument, one could say that there is no progress within the whole syllogism—the latter at best remains "akolouthias logos" (a "line of reasoning"). However, a new aspect is added, and that is the negation of a *regressus ad infinitum* on the part of the Damascene.[35]

The third and final stage of the argument is the most inadequate one. First, it is articulated in the guise of a question, something that renders it even more cryptic in terms of logic.[36] Perhaps its interrogative form is due to the fact that is does not follow from the previous propositions. In light of the text itself, this stage consists of one and only one proposition, that is, proposition *(vi)*. But in order for the latter to be sustained, the entire digression on "tropê"—which we have already seen—is required, for it is only through that digression that everything coming under the category of "changeable" is presented—God being the only exception. Consequently, the latter cannot cover on its own the only other existing semantic set, namely the semantic set of the "unchanging".

What is finally proved through this argument? Undoubtedly, what is not proved is the existence of God. Moreover, the final proposition *(vi)* asserts that God is unchanging, not that God exists, or to put is otherwise, that if God exists, God is unchanging. But this is a typical case of *petitio principii*. Now, if there is truly something that happens to be proved through all this reasoning of the Damascene, it is the following: God is the only unchanging Maker of the world. But this assertion cannot but mean two things. First, the end-result of an attempt to verify the coherence and the consistency of a series of terms. In other words, if we talk about God, then we are compelled to characterize him as (1) the only one, (2) unchanging, and (3) the Maker in relation to the world. But for something like this, no argument or proof is really needed, since a simple dialectic of notions would suffice. On the other hand, the aforementioned final assertion of the argument is none other than the articulation of Christian self-consciousness regarding the Divine, in juxtaposition to the polytheistic understanding of the Divine, as well as to its ancient Greek (philosophical) rendering.[37]

3. The Cosmological Argument

In the third and fourth paragraphs of Chapter 3 of the *Exact Exposition*, the Damascene revisits natural revelation, and for that matter in a manner similar to the one he referred to in Chapter 1, that is, in the guise of the cosmological argument about the existence of God.[38] It is noteworthy that this particular argument is the only one that can be found in the New Testament,[39] and thus the first that was adopted by Christianity.[40] The Damascene of course articulates it in a much more elaborate and peculiar form. More specifically, although in Chapter 1 of the *Exact Exposition*, the Damascene had only mentioned "ktisis" ("creating"), "synochê" ("coherence"), and "kybernêsis" ("governing") (*SJD II*, 7:15–16), at this point he adds two more aspects, namely "syntêrêsis" ("maintaining") and "pronoia" ("providence") ("syntêrôn kai aei pronooumenos") (11:40).[41]

At first, these terms seem to function self-evidently as proofs but in reality, things are quite different; the questions that follow indicate that there are two basic syllogisms underlying John Damascene's text, one based on the idea of totality and another one based on the notion of order.[42] Indeed, we could assume that the second syllogism is a continuation of the first one, in the sense that it expands and elaborates further on it. This has to be so, otherwise the first syllogism would finish with the hypothetical conclusion that there is some kind of "pantodynamos dynamis" ("all-powerful power"), something that does not fulfil the explicit aim of the whole argument, namely that God exists ("esti theos"), and this only takes place at the end of the second syllogism. For the entire first syllogism, see *SJD II*, 11:40–43.

3.1. Syllogism I

The first syllogism seems to have the following structure: *(i) opposition is observed in nature, but (ii) nature constitutes a totality, and thus (iii) something other, different, and greater than nature makes possible the overcoming of opposition. To be sure, this syllogism presents a number of problems*. First, according to the text, "nature" in proposition (i) consists of the elements of fire, water, air, and earth, that is, the four foundational elements that make up all beings, as ancient Greek philosophy would put it.[43] These elements, as the phrasing of the Damascene makes perfectly clear, are in pair oppositional to one another. But this in itself undermines the presupposed absolute opposition within the field of nature; in other words, opposition is not dominant in nature, after all. But if that is the case, then from a logical point of view, the position expressed via proposition (i) is significantly undermined, meaning opposition is true to the same extent that non-opposition is true.

Secondly, the aforementioned syllogism is based upon the incompatibility between opposition [proposition *(i)*] and totality [proposition *(ii)*]. However, before we proceed with the analysis of this assumed incompatibility, one needs to consider the cardinal notion that sustains proposition *(ii)*. As I have already noted, this is the notion of totality. The latter can be inferred from the phrase "eis enos kosmou symplêrôsin" ("to the completion of a single world"), inasmuch of course as "completion" cannot be conceived without postulating totality. To be sure, in the *Exact Exposition*, the idea of totality is mediated by different conceptualizations,[44] as for instance the conceptualization of unity in this case ["to. . . a single", "synelêlythasi" ("come together", "concur")]. In other words, John Damascene regards nature as a totality in light of the unity of its constituent parts; a unity which in turn renders possible both coherence ["adialytoi" ("indissoluble") and "synebibase" ("brought together")] and harmony ("kosmos").

At this point it is worth pointing out two aspects of the syllogism under discussion, one negative and one positive from a logical point of view. The former consists of what the Damascene assumes to be the contradictory nature of the relationship between opposition and totality/unity. But something like this is anything but self-evident, since from a logical point of view, the notion of opposition should not be confused with the notion of contradiction[45]—something already pointed out emphatically in the onto-logical thought of Heraclitus.[46] On the other hand, what looks like a dialectical lack on the part of the Damascene is not absolute. His text does not run against dialectics in general, but against a specific type of dialectics in the sense that for him, elements contradictory to one another cannot produce dialectically a totality by themselves. Thus, in order for a contradictory condition to be overcome, an additional factor has to enter the dialectical process. In other words, John Damascene puts forward a certain understanding of dialectics as follows: *contradiction + synthetic factor* $\Rightarrow$ *transcendence*.[47]

Regarding the conclusion of the first syllogism, that is, proposition *(iii)*, I would say that the latter is basically the aforementioned type of dialectics, where the synthetic factor is identified with some "all-powerful power". In other words, this means that the dialectical transcendence herein is realized via a synthetic factor that is transcendent over the elements of the world.[48] Nevertheless, this kind of transcendence is by no means self-evident as a necessary condition of dialectical transcendence.[49] However, the argument

under discussion is concluded at this very stage, for the "all-powerful power" involved is identified by the Damascene with God. Notwithstanding, it seems that the rather impersonal register of his thinking/phrasing at this point is not satisfactory and thus he goes on to a second syllogism. In conclusion, I could assert that the first syllogism of the Damascene's cosmological argument, instead of proving the existence of God, suggests a certain version of dialectics.

3.2. Syllogism II

The second syllogism of the cosmological argument is based, as we have already noticed, on the notion of order. The latter is a notion analyzed into other more specific notions, which as we will see further on in this study, play a specific role in the context of the overall syllogism. The notional analysis undertaken by the Damascene sees the content of order as synthesis ["emixe" ("fused", "combined")], distinction ["emerise" ("allocated", "divided")], motion, and regularity.[50] In light of this, I would present the syllogism as follows:

(i) nature involves order, that is, synthesis, distinction, movement, and regularity,

but (ii) nature does not produce these by itself,

meaning (iii) that they come from another source ⇒

(iv) that this other source is the creator of nature.[51]

Considering proposition *(i)*, I would say that the position it makes is totally correct in the sense that it reflects the manner in which consciousness understands nature. However, this manner is intrinsically related to the degree that consciousness understands nature, which means that if a further degree of understanding nature is accomplished, then it might change—totally or partially—the very manner in which nature is understood.[52] Thus, proposition *(i)* can only be accepted as relatively or partially correct. On the other hand, considering proposition *(ii)* brings one face to face with a number of logical problems. To be sure, this proposition is not explicitly phrased by John Damascene, but one can regard it as a given. Furthermore, in effect, the proposition under discussion is but a (negative) re-phrasing of proposition *(iii)* in syllogism I. This can be ascertained through the textual allusion to nature via the pairs already dealt with in syllogism I, namely, earth–air and fire–water, as well as through the rhetorical question "tis tauta emixe kai emerise?" ("who combined and brought these together?"), which in turn takes one back to the dialectical transcendence of syllogism I. Thus, proposition *(ii)* includes—in one way or another—all the logical problems that I discussed above in relation to syllogism I.

The transition to proposition *(iii)* presupposes a certain application of induction. More specifically, it is as if the Damascene means that if one can see in each and every thing synthesis, distinction, movement, and most of all, regularity, we accept immediately that someone [that is, "ho technitês" ("the artisan")] is the cause of all these, by the same token and in the case of nature in general, we should accept that someone has placed "logos" (=regularity) in everything ("enthenta pasi").[53] Undoubtedly, all this inductive reasoning ends in a reasonable hypothesis, but by no means does it constitute a logical proof.[54] But how is "the artisan" of nature identified with the "pepoiêkota tauta kai eis to einai paragagonta" ("the one that made these and brought them into Being")? On what exactly does John Damascene establish this transition? In my opinion, the crucial factor in this connection is the term used, i.e., "logos".

Looking into the matter in more detail, I would maintain that the Damascene goes ahead with the aforementioned transition, but then he immediately articulates an extension, so to speak, of the entire syllogism. This extension presents itself as a *reductio ad absurdum*.[55] In particular, the whole thing looks as follows:

(i) "the artisan" is the creator,

but (ii) let us say that it is not the creator,

> *then (iii) who could it be? ⇒ the only option is to say that "the artisan" is "to automaton" (=mere chance").*[56]

But let us consider the issue further:

> *Let us concede (iv) that the production of nature can be ascribed to mere chance,*
>
> *(v) that the order of nature can be ascribed to mere chance, and*
>
> *(vi) that the maintenance of nature within "logos" can be ascribed to mere chance.*
>
> *But the last proposition constitutes a contradictio in adjecto, since "logos" and "to automaton" are incompatible to one another.*[57]

Proposition *(iii)* of this seeming *reductio ad absurdum* takes for granted that if one does not refer nature to a creator, then the only alternative is to accept mere chance. This position looks correct in general, but what stops one short of identifying mere chance as the creator?[58] In other words, at this stage, the cosmological argument could indeed be said to lend itself to the idea that mere chance could be defined as the creator. But in this scenario, the Damascene's reasoning could not have been articulated the way it is in *(iv)–(vi)*. Which premise would be the alternative to the premise '"the artisan" is "to automaton"'? One presumably could say God, but this is what the syllogism is supposed to prove in the first place. Consequently, the latter possibility could not be part of the syllogism, for then the whole reasoning of the Damascene would beg the question. It seems, nevertheless, that he does fall into this fallacy, and so one should speak in this connection not so much about a valid *reductio ad absurdum*, but about an exclusion of mere chance from the conclusion of the argument.[59]

Propositions *(iv)* and *(v)* are not actually confirmed by the Damascene, but he somehow bypasses them in order to get to the crucial point of his reasoning, which as I mentioned earlier is "logos". For him, regularity—because that is what "logos" signifies here with all the nuances that regularity encompasses—is incompatible to mere chance. But is this true? From a logical point of view, could one say that the relationship between "logos" and "to automaton" is determined by the law of contradiction? This is true for the pair "logos"/"alogon" (=without reason), but should we identify "alogon" with "to automaton"? In my opinion, such a position cannot be maintained, but John Damascene accepts it as valid. This choice of his, although false from a logical point of view, is extremely interesting in relation to something else—again from a logical point of view! It relates God with "logos".[60] Termed differently, at the end of his alleged proof, the Damascene reaches his objective, which is God, thanks to "logos", but this happens only inasmuch as "logos" already refers conceptually to God.

In summary, I would maintain that syllogism II of John Damascene's cosmological argument about the existence of God ultimately proves two things: first, that mere chance cannot be the creator that the Damascene has in mind, that is, mere chance does not satisfy the requirement "tode to pan systêsamenos kai synechôn kai syntêrôn kai aei pronooumenos" ("the one who constituted this totality and maintains and sustains and forever provides for it") (*SJD II*, 11:39–40) and second, that God constitutes the foundation of "logos" or, differently, that God constitutes the postulate of "logos". In both cases, however, it seems that the Damascene puts forward—as in the case of his ontological argument—an articulation of Christian self-consciousness against the Hellenic intellectual legacy.

4. An Argument about the Impossibility of Arguments: The Case of "According to Essence and Nature"

After the two arguments in Chapter 3, the title of Chapter 4 "peri tou ti esti theos, hoti akatalêpton" ("On what God is, which is incomprehensible") seems to have no relation with any attempt towards argumentation.[61] In reality, though, the Damascene goes on with his argumentative endeavour, but as the title shows—indirectly, yet evidently—he now turns to a negative argumentation; his objective now is to prove not a possibility but an impossibility.

The topic of the Chapter under discussion starts with a necessary clarification and in particular, with the logical distinction between "hoti estin" and "ti estin" ("that something is" and "what something is", respectively).[62] The former is the subject of the arguments that the Damascene has articulated thus far, whereas the latter introduces the subject of his argumentative reasoning in Chapter 4. And this reasoning focuses on "what [God] is", namely the "ousian kai physin" ("essence and nature") of God,[63] which the Damascene characterizes as "akatalêpton. . .pantelôs kai agnôston" ("totally incomprehensible. . .and unknown"). But suddenly, his entire focus seems to disappear, for as soon as he expresses his absolutely negative gnoseological perspective, he starts discussing a different kind of "dêlon" ("evident"), i.e., one that refers to "asômaton" ("incorporeality"). To put it alternatively, whereas the Damascene was talking about absolute un-knowing, suddenly he talks about knowing. Nevertheless, this is not a contradiction or discrepancy, but a necessary argumentative digression.

Characterizing the essence of God as "totally incomprehensible. . .and unknown", John Damascene has to provide some clarification if he wants to proceed. This is absolutely necessary, since for centuries, ancient Greek philosophy knew the Divine as a "sôma" ("body").[64] So, the Damascene needs to challenge that perception and to prove that the Divine is "asômaton" ("bodiless"). And this he attempts through the following three ways: (1) a sequence of notions, (2) evidence from the Holy Scriptures, and (3) a special use of the cosmological argument.

4.1. Sequence of Notions

By analyzing the notion of "asômaton", John Damascene mentions a series of apophatic notions, namely "to apeiron kai aoriston kai aschêmatiston kai anaphes kai aoraton kai haploun kai asyntheton" ("the infinite and indefinite and formless and intangible and invisible and uncomplicated and uncompounded") (*SJD II*, 12:4–5). Indeed, it looks like he is mentioning these notions because according to him, one entails the other, and in the end, all of them entail the notion of "asômaton". But to what extent can such a line of reasoning be regarded as logically valid? To what extent can it claim to be a proof? Regarding the first question, we cannot challenge the logical validity of this notional sequence, that is, the coherence between the notions presented to the extent, of course, that they actually relate to one another. Notwithstanding that, one has to admit that the value of this notional sequence consists of the dialectics of the notions involved, i.e., the strict circumscription of their mutual relationships. However, the Damascene's text is about something different; he focuses on the proving aspect of the notional sequence. And this brings us to the second aforementioned question, which can be answered as follows: the sequence/coherence of the apophatic notions used by John Damascene proves nothing, or better yet, proves only that each notion relates to the others in a certain manner. But by no means does this prove that one of them—in this case, "asômaton"—is true with regard to something.

What is noteworthy in the Damascene's notional sequence is the use of the term "asyntheton"; furthermore, the broader syllogism concludes with a major premise about synthesis as follows: "synthesis gar archê machês, machê de diastaseôs, diastasis de lyseôs, lysis de allotrion theou pantelôs" ("for synthesis is the beginning of clash; clash is the beginning of separation; separation is the beginning of dissolution; and dissolution is totally foreign to God") (*II*, 12:7–8). This position includes, in its own distinctive way, an entire notional sequence, so that the rendering of God as "asômaton" can be corroborated. But this time, the notions involved are not apophatic but cataphatic. Moreover, it seems that this specific notional sequence is not entirely valid from a logical point of view, in the sense that the notions involved do not necessarily entail one another. What somehow sustains the notional sequence is the image of an organism ("sômatos") that seems to condition John Damascene's thought.[65] But the noteworthy element I mentioned at the beginning of the present paragraph consists mainly in the conceptualization of synthesis; the Damascene could be seen as an advocate of a conspicuously anti-dialectical logic. However, given the

image that conditions his understanding of synthesis, the specific anti-dialectical attitude of the Damascene cannot but be deemed relative and limited.

4.2. Evidence from the Holy Scriptures

John Damascene continues with his argumentative digression by invoking *Jer*. 23:24. What is especially noteworthy here is that the Holy Scriptures are utilized as a point of reference so that logical conclusions can be produced. At this point, it is the dialectical attitude of the Damascene that is astounding; he synthesizes what strictly speaking is not of the logical order (the word of God in the Holy Scriptures) with what constitutes a strictly logical demand (a syllogism on the basis of the formal principles of thinking).[66] Nevertheless, the big question herein is whether the Damascene simply invokes the Holy Scriptures or substantiates them logically. If it is the latter, then his dialectical attitude comes forth as much more integral. But it seems that both take place at the same time. As a believer, John Damascene starts from the conviction that the Holy Scriptures are true, but simultaneously, he consciously seeks to establish their truth logically.

4.3. Special Use of the Cosmological Argument

In the third paragraph of Chapter 4, the Damascene completes the refutation of the ancient Greek conception of the Divine as "asômaton". This is realized through a special use of the cosmological argument, namely the latter, instead of proving the existence of God, facilitates the argument that God is not a "sôma". More specifically, John Damascene starts his reasoning with the thesis of the position he wants to refute. This position has a fifth element, i.e., the sky, which is immaterial.[67] First, the Damascene describes the phrase "aylon sôma" as "adynaton" ("impossible"), that is, as logically invalid and in particular, as a *contradictio in terminis*. However, he concedes further on to accept the so-called "pempton sôma"[68] as a hypothesis, and this is how he embarks upon his proper argument in the guise of a *regressus finitus*.

> *(i) the fifth element moves,*
>
> *so (ii) it is subject to a principle of motion,*
>
> *which (iii) is subject to another principle, and so forth, until one gets to the ultimate principle,*
>
> *which (iv) is unmoving by being the ultimate (principle of motion)* (for the entire phrasing of the syllogism, see *SJD II*, 12:14–19).

At this point, the first part of the syllogism finishes, which is worth considering in more detail from a logical syntax point of view.

First, proposition *(i)* is not self-evident, and this is the reason why John Damascene presents it as a necessary ("pantôs") hypothesis. But in what sense is it necessary? Here, one should recognize that the logical consistency of the text is problematic: the Damascene accepts, on the one hand, that the fifth element is the sky, but on the other hand, he distinguishes between the two in order to substantiate what he regards as a necessary hypothesis, namely that the fifth element moves—exactly as the sky, since they are one and the same! But all this is a more than obvious logical error, for the analogical argument goes against the law of identity. Furthermore, the transition from proposition *(i)* to proposition *(ii)* is possible in light of the principle that says that "pan. . . kinoumenon hyph' heterou kineitai" ("everything. . . that moves is moved by something else"), which ostensibly is a variation of the law of causality. But, as it is well known, strictly speaking, the latter does not belong to the logical but to the epistemological order (See Gallow 2022)—without that implying that from a logical point of view, it does not constitute a certain (explanatory or interpretative) articulation of the relationship between cause and result. Thus, the Damascene's transition, although not arbitrary, cannot be regarded as uncontested.

The Damascene's argument continues with propositions *(iii)* and *(iv)* via the *regressus finitus* and ends with the famous Aristotelian theory of the prime mover ("prôton kinoun akinêton"). The latter is identified on the part of John Damascene with the Christian

concept of the Divine, that is, a synthesis is put forward between ancient Greek thought and Christian faith. The crucial point in this synthesis is the final stage of the first part of the syllogism, which by no means is imposed by some rule of logic. Nevertheless, the identification that takes place has immense significance in terms of logic; it exemplifies the dialectical manner in which the Damascene understands the logical combining of different cultural elements.

The argumentative digression of Chapter 4 is completed in the second part of the syllogism as follows:

> *(i) "kinoumenon" ("something being moved") = "en topôi perigrapton" ("something described as being in place") ⇒ body,*
>
> *and if (ii) "akinêton" ("something that does not move") = "asômaton",*
>
> *and (iii) "theion" ("the Divine") = "akinêton",*
>
> *then (iv) "theion" = "asômaton".*[69]

Before I proceed to the logical appreciation of the particulars of this part of the syllogism, I think that an overall appreciation of it in light of the Damascene's synthetic/dialectical methodology is needed. More specifically, whereas the first part of the syllogism achieves the synthesis between the ancient Greek and Christian elements via an eclectic manner that does not allow any opposition between the constituent parts, the second part—which is equally synthetic, since it constitutes an integral part of the entire syllogism—does allow for such an opposition; the final conclusion, namely that the Divine is incorporeal would be, as I have already noted, a peculiar *contradictio in adjecto* for the ancient Greek mind. However, the second part of the syllogism does not remain at the level of opposition but proceeds to the stage of transcendence through the production of an entirely different formation.

Let us now examine the logical status of the particulars of the part of the syllogism under discussion. Proposition *(i)* is based upon the idea of movement, and this is so because the second part of the syllogism depends fundamentally on the first part. Thus, the notion "sôma" is in effect determined by the notion of movement. However, certain problems emerge at this point. While in proposition *(i)*, the combination of "sôma" and "topos" (ultimately, whatever is limited) is totally valid, the combination of "topos" and "kinêsis" is not self-evident. "Topos" ("place") is a necessary and sufficient condition of "kinêsis", but "kinêsis" is only a sufficient condition of "topos". In other words, place or whatever is limited, that is, circumscription as such, do not presuppose movement; in the sequence "movement → place → body", the first element is not a requirement, but it is introduced—especially as a criterion—for only in this way is it feasible to connect the two parts of the syllogism and, by extension, complete the proving aspect of the latter.

Regarding the end of the syllogism, it is remarkable that John Damascene, by a combined use of the laws of identity and contradiction, produces proposition (ii)[70] and, via the conclusion of the first part of the syllogism, proposition *(iv)*.[71] Finally, the argumentative digression of Chapter 4 demonstrates that the *Exact Exposition*, once again, features a use of logic that is formally consistent yet at the same time problematic.

Conclusions

In the present study, a set of conclusions can be formulated with certainty. First, what has been demonstrated is the fact that as far as the logical point of view is concerned, when John Damascene talks about "apodeixis" ("proof"), what he has in mind is a gnoseological framework that is quite different to that of rationalism. Second, through his ontological argument about the existence of God, what he actually achieves is to put forward a thorough articulation of Christian self-consciousness regarding the Divine, and for that matter in juxtaposition to the polytheistic understanding of the Sacred or its ancient Greek philosophical rendering. Third, John Damascene's cosmological argument about the existence of God ultimately proves two things. On the one hand, that mere chance cannot be the creator that Christians have in mind and on the other hand, that God constitutes the foundation of

"logos", or to phrase it otherwise, that God constitutes the postulate of "logos". In both cases, however, it seems that John Damascene—as in the case of his ontological argument—basically articulates Christian self-consciousness against the Hellenic intellectual legacy. Lastly, from my limited but indicative analysis of the *Exact Exposition*, it can be affirmed that in this *magnum opus* of his, John Damascene exhibits a use of formal logic that is intriguing and problematic at once.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 Regarding the chronological problems related to the life and work of John Damascene, see Kontouma (2015) and Adrahtas (2015).

2 The first section or "book" of the *Exact Exposition* comprises Chapters 1–14 and goes back to the division of the work carried out by Burgundio de Pisa in the twelfth century. The relevant arguments actually cover Chapters 5–7 as well, but the material therein refers mostly to the existence of God as Trinity. The present study will not deal with this specific topic but will limit itself to the more general arguments about the existence of God.

3 See, for example, Studer (1956); Richter (1964); and moderately, Oehler (1964). For an opposite view, see moderately Tatakis (1949) and Siasos (1989). For a very recent and major shift in the understanding of John Damascene as an original thinker, see Ables (2022b).

4 Criticism is especially the case with modern Orthodox theologians, at least from the 1960s onwards. This is not limited to John Damascene's arguments but involves the arguments about the existence of God in general. A concomitant trend is the virtual absence of monographs on the subject in modern Greek Orthodox theology. For a conspicuous exception, see Adrahtas (2001a).

5 This has been the research focus in Adrahtas (2001b).

6 For this contribution, see, for example, Buytaert (1953), Svoronos (1987), Adrahtas (2003), and especially Markov (2015).

7 See, for instance, the seminal Eliade 1965. Details regarding my adaptation of Eliade's hierophanic approach can be found in Adrahtas (2001c).

8 In Chapter 1 [*SJD II*, 7:14–15 (hereafter *SJD*, standing for *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* vol. 2 [where in find *Exdosis Akribês tês orthodoxou Pisteôs*], first number indicating page(s) and the other(s) indicating lines), he writes: "pasi gar ê gnosis tou einai theon hyp'autou physikôs egkatespartai" ("for in everyone the knowledge that God exists has been planted naturally by Him"). In Chapter 3 (*SJD II*, 10:4–5), he writes with a slight variation: "ê gnosis tou einai theon physikôs hêmin egkatespartai" ("the knowledge that God exists has been planted naturally in us"). Both assertions point towards the so-called "natural revelation", which in turn constitutes the basis for the formulation of natural theology. For the latter in general, see Manning et al. (2013), and for its presence in Eastern Orthodox theology, see Bradshaw and Swinburne (2021), wherein one can find substantial information on the patristic argumentation regarding the existence of God (see, for example, Fokin (2021)).

9 John Damascene refers to Judaism and Christianity when he writes (*SJD II*, 10:2–3) "tois men tas hagias graphas dehomenois, tên te palaian kai kainên diathêkên" ("to those who accept the Holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testament"), and to the so-called "polytheistic religions" when he writes (*JD II*, 10:3–4) "tois tôn hellênôn pleistois" ("to most of the Hellenes"). Here, we have a version of the so-called "historico-religious argument" (or *e consensu omnium*), which is presented indirectly as an aspect of "natural revelation".

10 The very fact that the Damascene starts (in Chapter 3 of the *Exact Exposition*) his reference to theology proper by dealing with the problem of atheism exemplifies that for him, the negation of the existence of God constitutes a major *theological* problem. Furthermore, the logical approach to atheism on his part and even more so, the placing of this kind of approach at the beginning of his systematic theological work, seem to imply that theology constitutes an inherently rational activity. In other words, whenever God talk begins with the reasonable refutation of the negation of the existence of God, that is, by exemplifying the rationality of the God question, then such talk is presented in its entirety as an activity that is conditioned by rational aspects. From a different perspective, if one were to regard the God question as the major question of the philosophy of religion, then it could be maintained that this question constitutes a kind of prolegomena to all theological systems. For the latter remark, see Nissiotis (1986).

11 At this point, we can see at work the methodology of logical distinctions/divisions. To be sure, both this distinction and numerous others that we find in John Damascene's *opus magnum* "The Fountain of Knowledge" (*Pêgê Gnôseôs*), of which the *Exact Exposition* is the third and last part, constitutes specific distinctions which are different from the fundamental theological distinctions in Chapter 2 of the *Exact Exposition*. This particular distinction follows the Aristotelian tradition on causality, though without using the relevant terminology. One could say that the Damascene does not limit himself to the efficient and formal causes, but also

hints at the material cause, inasmuch as he mentions "*to automaton*" ("mere chance") further on in Chapter 3, and also that for him, "apôleia" ("perdition") constitutes the final cause of atheism.

12 Herein the formal cause is presented by the Damascene as a complex set, something that in practise is a further application of the logical process of division. It is worth noting that the gnoseological, moral, and religious dimensions of the formal cause of atheism are understood by John Damascene as different aspects of a single phenomenon. Especially, the words used in the case of the religious aspect, such as "katagagein" ("descending"), "barathron", "phôs" ("light"), "bythos" ("the depth"), "anêgon" ("lifted"), and "eskotismenous" ("those being in darkness"), utilize the ancient and widely known hierophanic symbolism of light versus darkness and ascent versus descent. For this symbolism, see Eliade (1959).

13 For a very detailed exploration of causality in the work of Aristotle, see Falcon (2023).

14 Inasmuch as the negation of the existence of God is realized by the human being as an *animal rationale*—even if not always according to the laws of a certain rationality. About the different versions of rationality, see, e.g., Batens (1992).

15 For the distinction between reason as an ontological condition (also known traditionally as intellect) and reason as instrumental/technical rationality, in a theological context, especially as formulated in the thought of Paul Tillich, see Smith (2017, pp. 29–107).

16 For the term, see the magisterial Otto (2014). The Damascene's ontological, i.e., metaphysical, as well as axiological and deontological, understanding of reason continues a great part of ancient Greek logical theory—with the exception, most likely, of the Sophist movement. Regarding Plato, it has been noted that "he is undoubtedly the first great thinker in the field of the philosophy of logic. He treats at some length. . . important questions, which arise as soon as we begin to reflect on the nature of logic. . . It must be understood, however, that Plato does not address himself directly to these questions. . . They have emerged clearly only after centuries of reflection; and as we read Plato, it seems to us that they are still obscured for him *by the metaphysical and epistemological questions with which they are inextricably interwoven*" (Kneale and Kneale 1971, p. 17; my emphasis). Furthermore, regarding Aristotle, one should have in mind that "much of the doctrine of the Categories *must be regarded as metaphysical rather than logical*" (ibid., p. 25; my emphasis). Lastly, the axiological/deontological dimensions of reason have been tellingly put forward by Neo-Kantianism (see, e.g., Heis (2018)).

17 In this connection, I find quite pertinent the following: "Without God reason is not, in a superficial sense, simply 'atheistic'. By negating God *truly*, in whatever manner, reason subverts itself. 'Atheistic reason' is not simply 'atheistic'. It ceases being reason as well. . . Without God reason *is not*" (Papapetros 1979, pp. 263–64; my translation; author's emphasis).

18 Ultimately, the notion of what is logically true/correct is produced socio-historically. Thus, even if the ontological/metaphysical presuppositions of reason may not be accepted, the socially and historically conditional character of reason is a given. In this sense, rationality does not constitute an independent feature. On the other hand, however, rationalism is constructed as an absolutization at the level of theory; it defines what is logically true/correct in an ideocratic way, thus overlooking its socio-historical relativity. Phrased differently, whereas rationality comes under the major hierophany of a given culture, rationalism constitutes itself the major hierophany of a given culture. For the difference between rationality and rationalism, see Begzos (1990).

19 For a long-time standard anthology regarding the ontological argument, see Plantinga (1965). For interesting and rigorous discussions, see Leftow (2005) and Lowe (2007). This particular argument in the work of John Damascene could be regarded as a precursor of the classic ontological argument by Anselm of Canterbury (1033/4-1109).

20 That it does constitute a genuine ontological argument can be ascertained (1) from the fact that it is based on the multifaceted semantics of the definitions involved (cf. Kneale and Kneale (1971, p. 358)) and (2) because other known arguments about the existence of God do not seem to satisfy the manner in which the reasoning in Chapter 2 is structured. Nevertheless, to be sure, in comparison to Anselm, the Damascene's argument presents a much less adequate logical structure.

21 At this point, the Damascene's reasoning presupposes an exclusive disjunction ($p \veebar q$). This means that p and q must be mutually exclusive. Of course, for the Damascene, no issue of verifying such a mutual exclusivity is posed therein, since it is already a given within the notions involved. Thus, the true significance of his premise consists of being a specific answer to the question of Being.

22 The exclusive disjunction seen above corresponds more to $(\exists x)$: $p(x)$ and $(\exists x)$: $q(x)$ rather than to $(\exists p)$: $x(p)$ and $(\exists q)$: $x(q)$. The former denotes that logically x = *Being* comes under p = *created* and q = *uncreated*, whereas the latter denotes that p and q come under x. The fact that the Damascene opts for the former can be seen indirectly from the way in which he defines "Being" in his *Dialectica*. "Being is a self-existing reality, not in need of something else in order to be constituted, or a reality that is unable to be in itself but has its existence in something else" (*SJD I* [ed. Kotter], 77:100–104). This definition, I believe, would not have been possible if the Damascene did not have in mind the Creator ("aktiston") and the created ("ktiston"). Although from a logical point of view, the "the self-existing" ("authyparkton") and what is "unable to be in itself" ("mê kath' heauto dynamenon einai") refer, respectively, to essence and attribute (cf. *SJD I*, 57:3–58:13; 59:55–60; 77:104–107, 117–120), the Damascene regards them as different orders of Being. It might be that "'Being' is a common name for all beings" (*SJD I*, 57:3–4), but the latter do not come under the former as if they were genus and species, respectively (cf. *SJD I*, 77:109–115). In effect, the latter (i.e., beings) are simply related to the former (i.e., Being). I believe that this construction of the logical order corresponds perfectly well to the theological distinction "aktiston"–"ktiston". In other words, John Damascene's logic is the logic of his theology.

23 For the entire line of reasoning, see the passage in *SJD II*, 22–34.

[24] In light of this, "tropê" is logically equivalent to "ktiston" (cf. *SJD II*, 46:16). But here, it is worth asking whether such a conceptualization is akin to ancient Greek ontology. In my view, the answer must be negative; although ancient Greek metaphysics is quite familiar with the notion of "tropê", the special meaning reserved for the latter is that of "gignesthai" ("Becoming"). But "gignesthai" is the other and at the same time the inadequate side of "Being"; its aspect is in terms of sensory experience. This means that ancient Greek "Being" is firstly and basically determined in light of the intelligible (the "noêton"); something *is* to the degree that it is an object of the intellect to the degree that it is represented noetically. Termed differently, the significance of the term "tropê" in John Damascene's text consists of its peculiar theological function. It points to the dynamics/linearity of Christian historical consciousness against the static-ness/circularity of ancient Greek ontology. For the latter dichotomy, see Eliade (1965).

[25] The distinction decay ("phtheiromena") and corruption ("alloioumena") comes first and the distinction corruption ("alloiousthai"), movement ("kinêsthai"), and alteration ("mataballesthai") follow. In this manner, John Damascene seems to semantically treat "tropê" as a genus with two partially different species. But why does he do something like this, instead of dividing one "tropê" into a number of species? I think that at this point, the dialectics of John Damascene unwittingly reflect the history of "gignesthai" in ancient Greek thought, and how it developed from the Presocratics to Plato to Aristotle.

[26] This is a term derived from Aristotelian ethics (Steiger 2014). This is noteworthy for at this point, the Damascene puts forward once again the co-functionality of ethics and logic. In particular, in the light of ethics, he suggests criteria of logical modality. For an introduction to the modal logic of Aristotle, see Patterson (1995). For the modal logic of the Megarian School, see Hartmann et al. (2017); for the Stoics in this connection, see Bobzien (1986). To be sure, in ancient Greek logical theory, modality is not determined by ethics, while clearly it does in the case for the Damascene. The modal understanding put forward by the latter has axiological preconditions that stem from the experience of divine revelation. It does not refer—simply or primarily—to the necessary, the contingent, the possible, or the impossible, for these belong to the onto-gnoseo-logical range that moves between (absolute) possibility and (circumstantial) impossibility. On the contrary, the onto-THEO-logical range is constituted beyond possibility and impossibility; it emerges when the latter is experienced as fullness thanks to "das ganz Andere". Thus, in this context, the criterion for determining the modality of premises is the degree (cf. *SJD II*, 11:31) to which one realizes the fullness of the ontological.

[27] The mentioning of quality and spatiality is an indirect yet clear reference to Aristotle's categories in his works Categories and On Interpretation (*Aristotelis Categoriae et Liber de Interpretatione* (ed. Minio-Paluello [Oxf. Class. Texts]) 25:5–33:38 and 14:8–14).

[28] In this connection, John Damascene definitely has in mind what he writes in Chapter 14 of his *Dialectica* (*SJD I*, 84:16–17): "idion esti, ho panti kai monôi tôi eidei kai aei hyparchei" ("a characteristic feature is what exists only and always in the entire species"). In this sense, the followig is also true (*SJD I*, 85:28–29): "katêgorountai gar ta idia tôn eidôn, ôn idia esti, alla kai ta eidê katêgorountai tôn idiôn autôn" ("for the characteristic features are predicated to the species of which they are characteristic features, but then also the species are predicated to their characteristic features").

[29] Much has been written on the ontological primacy or not of essence in the context of theology. In my view, the entire issue is misplaced inasmuch as the primacy or not of essence remains at the onto-gnoseo-logical level. If theology constitutes the linguistic and logical mediation of onto-THEO-logical experience, then the primacy under discussion belongs neither to essence nor to hypostasis, but to "das ganz Andere", which dialectically synthesizes essence and hypostasis.

[30] This is what has been aptly dubbed "patristic paradigm shift". On this, see the pertinent remarks in Plexidas (2001, pp. 59–91).

[31] It should be noted that in this connection, "necessarily" is arbitrary; it is only true in the case of a particular *Weltanschauung*, namely the Christian one. But then the logical inference is undermined. It is also worth noting that the Damascene has already maintained (*SJD II*, 11:22–23) the reverse as well, i.e., that "ei men oun ktista, pantôs kai trepta" ("if they are created, then necessarily they will be subject to change"). This means that for him, there is a logical semantic equivalence between "trepton" *(t)* and "ktiston" *(k)*: $t \equiv k$. However, in ancient Greek philosophy "trepton" might be, or is not necessarily, "ktiston": $\sim\Box\,(t \supset k)$. This *peculiar necessity* is posited as such only within onto-THEO-logical experience. Thus, from a formal logic perspective, there is a discrepancy here; the Damascene starts and finishes his "tropê" digression in a logically inadequate manner, or better yet, by putting forward a different logic. But in any case, this position of John Damascene demonstrates the intrinsic logical problems that emerge when different worldviews get to be synthesized.

[32] For the actual wording in John Damascene's text, see *SJD II*, 1134–37.

[33] In particular, proposition *(i)* represents a synthesis between "ktiston" as understood in ancient Greek thought, that is, what is in a general sense produced, and "ktiston" as understood in Christianity, that is, what has been produced *ex nihilo*. To be sure, the problem in this connection lies in the idea of nothingness. While ancient Greek philosophy does know this idea (cf. Niarchos 1985), which could function as a basis for a synthesis with Christianity, it is an idea totally different from the one we find in Christianity. The former is gnoseological, whereas the latter constitutes the negative of the idea of a God who is transcendent over the world. For a comparison between the Christian and the non-Christian idea of nothingness, see Matsoukas (1986, pp. 35–58).

[34] And this is precisely the meaning of the Christian "trepton", hence the need to have a digression on changeability before the proper argument. For a detailed presentation of the Christian teaching on "trepton", see Matsoukas (1994, pp. 209–20).

[35] This particular logical method pertains—at least, historically—to the cosmological argument and not to the ontological. Thus, one could maintain that in his line of reasoning, the Damascene combines elements of the former with elements of the latter; in other words, the famous "chain of causes" with the semantic coherence of notions.

[36] The cryptic character of the final stage of the argument runs against the need for clarity from a logical point of view, a fact that indirectly shows that this stage of the Damascene's argument constitutes a logical leap. In practise, the Damascene's "God" is not inferred from the premises of the syllogism, but is identical with the notion of "atrepton" ("unchanging") that is used within the syllogism.

[37] At this point, one could reasonably pose the following question: writing in the eighth century, which adherents of polytheism could John Damascene possibly have in mind? If he is not just aspiring to render his text as encyclopedic as possible, then I would dare say that indirectly, he refers to Manichaeism, which in a syncreti(sti)c manner that accommodated both polytheism (for instance, the dualism of good and evil) and aspects of ancient Greek philosophizing (for instance, aeons as a transmutation of Platonic onto-gnoseo-logy). Moreover, Manichaeism constitutes a constant adversary in the Damascene's polemical works. For the latter remark, see Ables (2022a).

[38] For the cosmological argument in general, see Rowe (1975) and Craig (1980). Aristotle is the first to have put forward this argument in full-fledged form, whereas Thomas Aquinas is the one who gave it its classic standing. The relationship of the Damascene's cosmological argument to that of Aristotle's seems to be an eclectic one, that the Damascene's Christian self-consciousness requires him to make certain modifications, such as dispensing with the ancient Greek understanding of eternity, cosmic circularity, and the causal inherent unity between the Divine and the world. Furthermore, one could dare say that in some ways, John Damascene constitutes an in-between moment in the development of the cosmological argument from Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas—albeit in a rather simple and compact fashion compared to them.

[39] More specifically, at Heb 3:4 and Rom 1:19–20, admittedly in a very compact fashion in the former and rather indirectly in the latter.

[40] The fact that initially Christianity adopted (and, by extension, adapted) only the cosmological argument and not other types of arguments about the existence of God must be due to some special reason. The historical dialogue that was by necessity inaugurated between Christianity and Hellenism could not but lead to the former appropriating elements of the strong cultural legacy of the latter. Thus, it seems that the cosmos/world came forward as the most familiar such element, and this is because within the context of the onto-THEO-logical experience, Being emerges as a creation of the Divine. In other words, the "God" of Christianity is primarily and mainly a Creator, which means that any argument about God's existence must be constructed in relation to the existence of the cosmos/world. In light of this, one could say that Christianity did not just adopt the cosmological argument and it did not just make certain modifications to its structure, but all the more rendered it the Christian argument about the existence of God *par excellence*.

[41] Here, one can trace the clear and substantial influence of Stoicism. To be sure, the entire third paragraph could be endorsed by a Stoic, if the mentioning of "ktisis" was excluded and the much-cherished-by-the-Stoics theory about the *telos* of nature was included. This is all the more noteworthy, given the pantheistic character of Stoicism. What I want to emphasize here is the fact that John Damascene makes his own an onto-logical schema that presupposes and entails a self-consciousness totally different from that of the Christian experience of revelation. Nevertheless, theology as the mediation of onto-THEO-logical experience can accommodate the Stoic onto-logical schema by re-interpreting it via a rupture, firstly, and a re-constitution afterwards. The rupture is effected through the negation of nature as the Divine and a logos in itself, whereas the re-constitution is realized through the notion of "ktisis" and hence the Divine as a principle beyond nature. Termed differently, paragraph 3 of Chapter 3 of the *Exact Exposition* could be said to exemplify, from a history of philosophy perspective, the intrinsically dialectic manner in which logic is re-constituted within the context and in the light of onto-THEO-logical experience.

[42] According to the text (*SJD II*, 11:41), "eis enos kosmou symplêrôsin" ("to the completion of a single world"). In my view, both "kosmos" (=harmony) and "symplêrôsis" (=movement towards fullness) imply the idea of totality, comprising harmony and fullness in the world that are unthinkable at the level of parts, since the Damascene designates the latter as "enantia" (opposed) to one another. On the other hand, order is denoted via the questions "ti to taxan?" ("which is the one that imposed order?") and "tinos to taxai?" ("to which does the imposition of order belong?") [*SJD II*, 11:44; 12:51], as well as through "kybernêsis", "logon entheis pasi" ("having placed logos in everything") and "kath' hous hypestê logous" ("according to the logoi in which things originally came to exist") [*SJD II*, 11:48; 12:52].

[43] The first who mentioned them was Empedocles (see Kingsley and Parry (2020)). In his philosophy, they are called "rizomata" ("rootings") and they are understood as the foundational elements that are irreducible to one another and from which everything comes via the appropriate combination.

[44] The most important among those conceptualizations are the following: "hen" ("one"), "tauton" ("same"), "koinon" ("common"), "monas" ("singularity"), "homoion" ("similar"), "teleion" ("perfect"), "syntheton" ("synthetic"), and "periechon" ("that which includes").

[45] The first to point this out was Aristotle (*Analytica Priora et Posteriora* (ed. Ross [Oxf. Class. Texts]) 116:12–13), who stated "antiphasis de antithesis hês ouk esti metaxy kath' heautên" ("contradiction is an opposition which in itself has no middle").

[46] For the dialectical onto-logy of Heraclitus, see, for example, Axelos (1962).

[47] I use the term "synthetic" for in the modern version of dialectics; "synthesis" constitutes the basic element objective of the entire methodology. This of course does not entail that the Damascene's negative evaluation of synthesis (see, for instance, *SJD II*, 12:7–8) is overlooked. But it should be noted that John Damascene entertains himself a very positive use of the term within his theological thought, and more specifically, within his Christology (see *SJD II*, 135:104–136:109). The Damascene regards, on the one hand, synthesis as a specific understanding of unity and on the other, accepts a typology of synthesis that allows him to make the necessary logical divisions and use particular meanings of the term, depending on context. At this point, the meaning that he has in mind is described as "hê de kata synthesin henosis estin hê eis allêla tôn merôn chôris afanismou perichorêsis" ("unity according to synthesis is the coinherence between parts that does not lead to their destruction") [*SJD II*, 135:104–136:106]. In light of this definition, since there is no destruction, "perichorêsis" is logically/semantically equivalent to transcendence.

[48] This kind of transcendence constitutes a rupture of the monistic/cyclical naturalism we find in Hellenism. Also, the Divine synthetic factor is primarily and mainly transcendent, not because it is notionally constituted through gnoseological transcendence, but because it is constituted as a peculiar condition of transcendence. In the first case, it would not be but relatively transcendent, whereas in the second case, it signifies human impossibility and its fullness, or to put it differently, impossibility as fullness thanks to the presence of "das ganz Andere".

[49] Ostensibly, there are as many types of transcendence as there are paradigms of self-realization. Each of them reflects a different experience of existence, as well. The Christian type of transcendence consists essentially of its peculiar historicity, that is, in a certain attitude within and over historical temporality. This differentiates it fundamentally from ancient Greek transcendence, which as monistic/cyclical, consists of a certain positioning within the natural world. For the latter, see Farouki (1996).

[50] Here, John Damascene definitely has in mind the notion of regularity, for he writes about "alêktou phoras" ("endless cyclical moving") and "to pan pheretai te kai diexagetai" ("everything is both moving cyclically and taking place repeatedly"). Furthermore, it is only in light of regularity that his negation of mere chance in what follows makes sense.

[51] For the entire phrasing of syllogism II in the Damascene's text, see *SJD II*, 11:44–12:50. Regarding syllogism II within its broader contextuality as allowing one to trace an incipient form of Thomas Aquinas' *quinque viae*, see Adrahtas (2001b, p. 71 (n. 186)).

[52] The manner of understanding (and not just explaining) nature is subject to change, either in the form of Karl Popper's "gradual process" or the form of Thomas Kuhn's "scientific revolutions"; the paradigm of science constitutes a relationship with natural reality, a relationship that is produced along with broader cultural changes. Regarding the latter, significant is the role played by the degree, that is, the range of the relationship between humans and natural reality. Crucial in this connection is the fact that the understanding of nature is not so much the emergence of an objectivity as it is a projection of a thought model on nature. Michael Polanyi, in particular, has emphasized the radically qualitative character of scientific knowledge in his theory about "personal knowledge". For an introduction to these thinkers, see McGrath (1999, pp. 76–86).

[53] This entails that in effect, John Damascene's syllogism II is made up of two parts. It is the first one that constitutes an induction, in the sense of moving from the particular to the generic. The presence of induction at this point is due to the idea of regularity, which the Damascene has already presupposed.

[54] This part of the syllogism belongs to the category of incomplete induction and thus it can only be regarded as probable. On induction, see Hawthorne (2024).

[55] This extension is basically the second part of syllogism II, which from a logical point of view, constitutes an indirect proof.

[56] In Chapter 39 of the *Exact Exposition*, the Damascene distinguishes between "tychê" (=luck) and "automaton" (*SJD II*, 96:14–21). However, both come as species under the notion of "symptôsis" ("coincidence"), which means that they are not to be seen as radically different. The Damascene's distinction herein is of Aristotelian provenance, according to which the difference between "tychê" and "automaton" lies in the fact that they more or less have different fields of reference; "tychê" refers basically to things that happen in the sphere of human life, while "automaton" refers to what takes place in the sphere of nature.

[57] This is not true in the case of ancient Greek philosophy—at least, not in the manner that it is in the case of the Christian *Weltanschauung*. For the ancient Greeks, "tychê" and "to automaton" are not always contradictory to logos. In the context of the monistic structure of Being, everything abides by the law of causal relationships, regardless of the fact that the latter may be impenetrable, unknown, or obscure. On the contrary, for Christian consciousness, Being is "trepton", which means that the only essence it has is its propensity towards non-Being. Its logos, that is, the very fact that it presents causal relationships, does not stem from within Being but is derived from the transcendent creator. In this respect, once again we come across a fundamental inversion, namely "tychê" and "to automaton" do not constitute the noetic (pre)condition of Being, but constitute the very essence of Being, while logos is not the gnoseological decoding of "tychê" and "to automaton", but their transcendence.

[58] This is precisely what the Atomists and Epicureans did in ancient Greece. See the cosmological teaching of these two schools in Kirk et al. (1957) and Long (1974), respectively.

[59] In the context of the cosmological argument per se, it is not possible to sustain such an exclusion. Furthermore, the aim of the Damascene throughout the text is to prove not the cause of creation but the existence of God. Nevertheless, being intrinsically related to the ontological argument, the cosmological could not accept in practise a position whereby the creator and "to automaton" are identified. To be sure, the exclusion under discussion does not constitute, as it may seem at first an arbitrary logical vacuum, it does work within the context of a certain conceptualization of "to automaton". In particular, for onto-THEO-logical thought, the latter is *per definitionem* other than the creator. Hence, at this point, John Damascene writes

based on the logical consistency between the notions of a given system that has been constructed *logically* as the inversion of onto-gnoseo-logical thinking.

60 This connection is a commonplace both in Hellenism and in Christianity. Ancient Greek philosophy in its entirety has been aptly characterized as a transition from myth to rationality (see the classic Nestle (1940)). But if this transition did not entail the invalidation of religiosity, then in reality, the emergence of rational thinking signalled the shift of the hierophanic centre within ancient Greek civilisation, where logic became the new *locus* of the Divine. On the other hand, Christian thinking about Christ as the logos of God signalled a corresponding rational performance of religiosity. The Damascene's position about the relation between God and logos is in practise a confirmation of the synthesis that took place between the transcendent God of Judaism and the immanent logos of Hellenism.

61 That this is not so can be inferred directly from the beginning of Chapter 5 (*SJD II*, 13:2–3), where it is stated "hoti men esti theos, ikanôs apodedeiktai, *kai* hoti akatalêptos estin hê ousia autou" ("that God exists, has adequately been demonstrated, *and* that his essence is incomprehensible"; my emphasis). It is also evident, indirectly, from the very structure of this chapter. To put it otherwise, if Chapter 3 involves proving aspects of Chapter 1, then Chapter 4 involves proving aspects of Chapter 2. In this manner, the first four chapters of the *Exact Exposition* are intertwined in pairs of synthetic and analytic articulations; ultimately the Damascene's arguments/proofs are but analyses/explanations.

62 Theologically, this distinction is not an original insight on the part of John Damascene, but goes back to Basil of Caesarea (ed. Moutsoulas [*BEPES*, 52], 175:23–25), who said "ou gar hê tou ti estin exereunêsis, all' hê tou hoti estin homologia tên sôtêrian hêmin paraskeuazei" ("for not the exploration regarding *what He is*, but the confession *that He is* provides us with salvation", my emphasis). More specifically, the distinction "what something is" is dialectically intertwined with other distinctions as well; "the category *ti estin* is opposed in the Damascene to other categories such as *to en tini*, *to pou*, *to pote*, etc." (Rozemond 1959, p. 18, my translation and emphasis).

63 John Damascene regards the two notions as identical (that is, with the same signified). However, this is due to the context of divine revelation and not a formal truth. For example, in ancient Greek logical theory, these terms are not identical, but synonymous or equivalent. This is something that the Damascene is aware of (see *SJD I*, 93: chp. 31, pp. 3–6). He does not regard "ousia" and "physis" simply as synonymous but as identical points to the rupture of onto-logical thinking in light of onto-THEO-logical revelation. In this respect, the Damascene does not negate synonymity but transcends it. For this rupture–transcendence, see cf. Siasos (1989, pp. 31–56).

64 See Adrahtas (2001b, p. 78 (n. 206)): for bibliographical details regarding the somatic nature of the Divine according to the Presocratics, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics.

65 The terms "lysis" and "analysis" are intrinsically related to the meaning of "sôma". Consequently, their use by the Damascene herein is quite expected, given that his objective is to prove "asômaton". By maintaining that "sôma", as subject to "lysis" and "analysis", is incompatible to God, "asômaton" is suggested as compatible, since it is equivalent to the contradictory genus under which "sôma" comes, i.e., "synthesis". In this manner, however, the sequence of cataphatic terms continues the sequence of apophatic terms, and for that matter, in a circular fashion. In other words, we are dealing here with a typical case of *petitio principii*. Moreover, when "asômaton" has been reduced to "asyntheton", the implied image of an organism—which easily can be reduced to "synthesis"—gives the impression that it facilitates, even though from a negative perspective, what needs to be proved, namely "asômaton". Of course, all this reasoning does not prove anything apart from the fact that the notion of "sôma" is incompatible to God because this is what the onto-THEO-logical experience of Being requires. However, in the context of a different experience, for instance, the experience of monistic unity, things work quite differently. On the other hand, one could ask the following: what is the purpose of this endless, so to speak, line of notions? I would dare say that it serves no other purpose but the Christian criticism of Hellenism, and for that matter, on the basis of the latter's own notions. And this is a criticism that ends in appropriating dialectically ancient Greek notions.

66 This dialectic constitutes in effect the logical mediation of language with regard to the primary content of divine revelation. The Holy Scriptures as the word of God constitute basically the language of divine revelation. In this respect, they are of the rational but not of the logical order. The Holy Scriptures constitute the first mediation/interpretation of divine revelation, which consequently is broadened towards the direction of a second mediation/re-interpretation on the basis of logical thinking. This shift from one mediation to the other is required, primarily and mainly due to historical reasons—both diachronically and synchronically theology as language is in a state of interaction with its historical contextuality, an interaction that allows it to become a unifying principle of a given historicity, on the one hand, and a way of understanding the latter in light of the meaning of language, on the other. Thus, the dialectics between theological language and logic leads each time to a new use of language that unites the past with the present (cf. typology as a means of hermeneutics or the schema of "Divine Economy") and also to an explanation of divine revelation that aims at interpreting the historical present.

67 In Chapter 17 of the *Exact Exposition*, the Damascene puts forward the view that only the Divine is truly "aylon" and "asômaton" (*SJD II*, 45:12–14). Thus, the notion of materiality is logically/semantically equivalent to that of changeability and createdness; put differently, it is understood as the absolute condition of created beings. On the contrary, in the context of the monistic experience of Being, immateriality constitutes the absolute condition of reality; it does not constitute simply a set of beings, but the ontic order (being-ness) itself. Both the intelligible and the sensible belong to this order. Christianity will adopt this *Weltanschauung* completely but at the same time, will modify it by introducing a transcendent principle. The introduction of such a principle

will bring about a dialectics between transcendence and immanence; a dialectics that will eventually lead to the inversion of immanence. The latter will turn from an absolute into a relative condition of Being.

[68] Although this teaching is based on the cosmology of Aristotle, the very expression "pempton sôma" is not attested in the works of Aristotle; neither in Theophrastus, who does mention though "theion sôma" ("divine body"). See During (1966).

[69] For the entire phrasing of the syllogism, which is a simple categorical syllogism of the first figure (*aaa*), the major premise of which is based on a certain notional sequence, see *SJD II*, 12:19–21.

[70] *p (i) [=("kinoumenon" = "sôma")] ≠ p (ii) [=("akinêton" = "asômaton")].*

[71] *p (ii) [=("akinêton" = "asômaton")] ∧ p (iii) ["theion" = "akinêton")] ⇒ p (iv) [=("theion" = "asômaton")].*

References

Ables, Scott. 2015. John of Damascus on Genus and Species. In *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*. Edited by Mikonja Knežević. Alhambra: Sebastian Press, pp. 271–88.

Ables, Scott. 2022a. The Purpose of the Anti-Manichean Polemic of John of Damascus. In *John of Damascus: More than a Compiler*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 65–85.

Ables, Scott, ed. 2022b. *John of Damascus: More than a Compiler*. Leiden: Brill.

Adrahtas, Vassilis. 2015. John of Damascus. In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*. Edited by Ken Parry. Chichester: Blackwell, pp. 264–77.

Adrahtas, Vassilis. 2001a. *The Quest: The "Proofs" about the Existence of God*. Athens: Sacred/Profane. (In Greek)

Adrahtas, Vassilis. 2001b. The Use of Logic in the Work of John Damascene: Approaches to "Fons Scientiae". Masters's thesis, Department of Theology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece. (In Greek).

Adrahtas, Vassilis. 2001c. Mircea Eliade, Le sacré et le profane: 'Hierophany' as a Basis for a Theory of Religion. *Religious Studies Sacred/Profane* 2: 7–19. (In Greek).

Adrahtas, Vassilis. 2003. Theology as Dialectics and the Limits of Patristic Thought in the Post-Modern World: A Reading into St John of Damascus. *Phronema* 28: 109–27.

Axelos, Kostas. 1962. *Héraclite et la philosophie. La première saisie de l'être en devenir de la totalité*. Paris: De Minuit.

Batens, Diderik. 1992. *Menselijke kennis. Pleidooi voor een bruikbare rationaliteit*. Antwerp: Garant.

Begzos, Marios. 1990. *Lectures in the Medieval Philosophy of Religion*. Athens: Phoitêtikê Enêmerosê. (In Greek)

Bobzien, Susanne. 1986. *Die stoische Modallogik*. Würzburg: Koenigshausen and Neumann.

Bradshaw, David, and Richard Swinburne, eds. 2021. *Natural Theology in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition*. St. Paul: IOTA.

Buytaert, Eligius. 1953. Damascenus Latinus. *Franciscan Studies* 13: 37–70. [CrossRef]

Craig, William. 1980. *The Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibniz*. London: Macmillan.

During, Ingemar. 1966. *Aristoteles. Darstellung und Interpretation seines Denkens*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter-Universität.

Eliade, Mircea. 1959. *Traité d'histoire des religions*. Paris: Payot.

Eliade, Mircea. 1965. *Le sacré et le profane*. Paris: Gallimard.

Falcon, Andrea. 2023. Aristotle on Causality. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Available online: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/aristotle-causality (accessed on 5 August 2024).

Farouki, Nayla. 1996. *La foi et la raison. Histoire d'un malentendu*. Paris: Flammarion.

Fokin, Alexey. 2021. Natural Theology in Patristic Thought: Arguments for the Existence of God. In *Natural Theology in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition*. Edited by David Bradshaw and Richard Swinburne. St. Paul: IOTA, pp. 25–50.

Gallow, J. Dmitri. 2022. The Metaphysics of Causation. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Available online: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/causation-metaphysics (accessed on 5 August 2024).

Hartmann, Nikolai, Frédéric Tremblay, and Keith R. Peterson. 2017. The Megarian and the Aristotelian Concept of Possibility: A Contribution to the History of the Ontological Problem of Modality. *Axiomathes* 27: 209–23. [CrossRef]

Hawthorne, James. 2024. Inductive Logic. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Available online: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2024/entries/logic-inductive (accessed on 5 August 2024).

Heis, Jeremy. 2018. Neo-Kantianism. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Ierodiakonou, Katerina, ed. 2002. *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kingsley, Scarlett, and Richard Parry. 2020. Empedocles. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward Zalta. Available online: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/empedocles (accessed on 5 August 2024).

Kirk, Geoffrey, John Raven, and Malcolm Schofield. 1957. *The Presocratic Philosophers*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Kneale, William, and Martha Kneale. 1971. *The Development of Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kontouma, Vassa. 2015. *John of Damascus: New Studies on His Life and Work*. London: Routledge.

Leftow, Brian. 2005. The Ontological Argument. In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*. Edited by William Wainwright. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 80–115.

Long, A. A. 1974. *Hellenistic Philosophy. Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*. London and New York: Duckworth.

Louth, Andrew. 2001. *St John Damascene. Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lowe, J. Edward. 2007. The Ontological Argument. In *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion*. Edited by Chad Meister and Paul Copan. London: Routledge, pp. 331–40.
Manning, Russell, John Brooke, and Fraser Watts, eds. 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Markov, Smilen. 2015. *Die Metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus: Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*. Leiden: Brill.
Matsoukas, Nikos. 1986. *The Problem of Evil: A Patristic Theology Essay*. Thessalonikê: Pounaras. (In Greek)
Matsoukas, Nikos. 1994. *A History of Byzantine Philosophy*. Thessalonikê: Vanias. (In Greek)
McGrath, Alister. 1999. *Science and Religion. An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Nestle, Wilhelm. 1940. *Vom Mythos zum Logos. Die Selbstenfaltung des griechischen Denkens von Homer bis auf die Sophistik und Sokrates*. Stuttgart: A. Knöner.
Niarchos, G. Konstantinos. 1985. *Fundamental Philosophical Notions*. Athens: Kardamitsas. (In Greek)
Nissiotis, Nikos. 1986. *Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology*. Athens: Mênyma. (In Greek)
Oehler, Claus. 1964. Aristotle in Byzantium. *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 5: 133–46.
Otto, Rudolph. 2014. *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*. Munich: C. H. Beck.
Papapetros, Konstantinos. 1979. *Passages: Issues in Contemporary Apologetics and Philosophical Criticism*. Athens. (In Greek)
Patterson, Richard. 1995. *Aristotle's Modal Logic: Essence and Entailment in the Organon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Plantinga, Alvin, ed. 1965. *The Ontological Argument*. New York: Doubleday.
Plexidas, Ioannis. 2001. *Person and Nature: Questions Regarding the Notion of Person in the Thought of John Damascene*. Skopelos: Nêsides, pp. 23–50. (In Greek)
Richter, Gerhard. 1964. *Die Dialektik des Johannes von Damaskos, eine Untersuchungdes Textes nach Quellen und seiner Bedeutung*. Studia Patristica et Byzantina 10. Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag.
Rowe, L. William. 1975. *The Cosmological Argument*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Rozemond, Keetje. 1959. *La christologie de saint Jean Damascène*. Studia Patristica et Byzantina 8. Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag.
Siasos, Lambros. 1989. *Patristic Critique of Philosophical Methodology*. Thessaloniki: Pournaras. (In Greek)
Smith, Abbey-Anne. 2017. *Animals in Tillich's Philosophical Theology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Steiger, Kornél. 2014. The Aristotelian Notion of *Proairesis*. *Rhizomata* 2: 33–51. [CrossRef]
Studer, Basilius. 1956. *Die theologische Arbeitsweise des Johannes von Damaskus*. Studia Patristica et Byzantina 2. Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag.
Svoronos, Nikos. 1987. Comments on the Contribution of Byzantium to the Spiritual Development of Western Europe: The Case of John of Damascus. In *Byzantium and Europe*. Athens: European Cultural Centre of Delphi, pp. 115–52. (In Greek)
Tatakis, Basile. 1949. *Le philosophie byzantine*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
Žunjić, Slobodan. 2015. John Damascene's "Dialectic" as a Bond between Philosophical Tradition and Theology. In *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*. Edited by Mikonja Knežević. Alhambra: Sebastian Press, pp. 227–70.