

On the Aesthetic of Diagrams in Byzantine Art

By Justin Willson

Abstract:

Byzantine art has a reputation for being less based in diagrams than Western medieval art. The present essay offers a reassessment of this view through an examination of debates between Greeks and Latins from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. This cultural give-and-take led to a reconceptualization of Trinitarian iconography among Greek theologians. Taking as its case study an overlooked class of theological diagrams, this paper suggests that late Byzantine art may in fact be more “diagrammatic” than has typically been assumed. Exploring the relation between these diagrams and two types of Trinitarian images, the *Synthronoi* and *Paternitas*, it shows that schematic drawings were indeed interpreted in line with icons. Tracing the evolution of the “triangular” diagram and “rectilinear” axis through several Greek authors, this essay provides a period vocabulary for discussing formal structures which cut across East and West.

In the wake of the Great Schism, Greek theologians began drawing diagrams of the Trinity, which, in time, shaped how viewers understood icons. At the Synod of Bari held in 1053, Anselm of Canterbury argued for the “relational opposition” between the three persons of the Trinity, a position that he believed ruled out that the Spirit could process *only* from the Father, as most Greek theologians maintained. As early as the sixth century, some Catholic theologians had added a clause to the Nicene Creed stating that the Spirit processes both from the Father “and from (ἐκ) the Son” (Lat. *Filioque*).¹ Controversy over this clause, however, only peaked after the tumultuous events of 1054. In that year Pope Leo IX sent his

This paper took shape in conversation with many people, the most important of whom are Beatrice Kitzinger, Charles Barber, and Pamela Patton. Exchanges with Aleksei Barmin, Dmitrii Biriukov, Tony Carrigan, Merih Danali, and Divna Manolova sharpened the argument, and audiences at the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies at Princeton and the Byzantine Studies Conference (2019) offered helpful comments, as did the journal’s anonymous reviewers. Dave Jenkins kindly discussed the translations. The bulk of this study was researched and written while the author was living in Moscow in 2018–19. The author reached his conclusions independently of Linda Safran (see notes below), who made similar archival discoveries and arrived at related syntheses. All English translations are by the author, unless otherwise stated.

¹ See Shawn C. Smith, “The Insertion of the *Filioque* into the Nicene Creed and a Letter of Isidore of Seville,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 22/2 (2014): 261–86. The fundamental study of the early disputes remains Anton Michel, *Humbert und Kerullarios: Quellen und Studien zum Schisma des 11. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Paderborn, 1924–30). See recently Peter Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse zwischen Ost- und Westkirche im Frühmittelalter*, *Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte* 82 (Berlin, 2002), 300–99, and Edward A. Sicienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (Oxford, 2010).

secretary Humbert of Silva Candida to Constantinople to solidify an alliance with the Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos. Norman forces were conquering southern Italy, then under Byzantine jurisdiction, and Leo was concerned that the turmoil would spread further north. During Humbert's visit, diplomatic negotiations stalled and, following a bout of insults, the papal secretary and the Greek Patriarch Michael Keroularios exchanged anathemas, leading to the official separation of the Eastern and Western Churches. Over the next several centuries, the *Filioque* clause became a defining point of disagreement between the two churches, leading to countless treatises and a new tradition of diagramming in the Greek-speaking world.

In the present study I discuss a tightly knit body of late Byzantine Trinitarian diagrams. In recent years, Byzantinists have studied cosmological, medical, and rhetorical diagrams, all of which appear in abundance in medieval manuscripts.² But theological diagrams, which are far rarer, have received little attention. Strikingly, these drawings almost exclusively illustrate the relationships between the three persons of God. In a recent survey, Linda Safran has noted that Byzantine Trinitarian drawings became "more imagistic over time."³ In this essay, I suggest that their drift towards iconicity was due in part to theologians who triangulated their diagrams with icons. The ways of looking at diagrams and looking at icons were blurred in the late medieval period.

Prompted by debates with Catholics, Greek writers developed a robust visual vocabulary for illustrating the Trinity. In late antiquity, church fathers, including Gregory of Nazianzos (fourth century), as well as Neoplatonic philosophers and theologians, most importantly Proklos (fifth century) and his follower Pseudo-Dionysios (sixth century), employed geometric metaphors to elucidate difficult concepts such as the eternity of God, but before the eleventh century, they only very rarely resorted

² For a survey of Byzantine diagrams, see Linda Safran, "Byzantine Diagrams," in *The Diagram as Paradigm: Cross-Cultural Approaches*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger, David J. Roxburgh, and Linda Safran (Washington, DC, 2022), 13–32. Cosmological diagrams: Linda Safran, "A Prolegomenon to Byzantine Diagrams," in *Visualization of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Marcia Kupfer, Adam S. Cohen, and J. H. Chajes, *Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages* 16 (Turnhout, 2020), 361–82, at 362–69; Merih Danali Cantarella, "Art, Science, and Neoplatonic Cosmology in Fourteenth-Century Byzantium: The Illustrations of Marcellinus Graecus 516 (=904)" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2019); and Anne-Laurence Caudano, "'These Are the Only Four Seas': The World Map of Bologna, University Library, Codex 3632," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 70 (2016): 167–90. For their influence on art, see D. V. Ainalov, *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art*, trans. Elizabeth Sobolevitch and Serge Sobolevitch (New Brunswick, NJ, 1961), 34–40. For the classical sources, see Maria Luisa Catoni, *La comunicazione non verbale nella Grecia antica: Gli 'schemata' nella danza, nell'arte, nella vita*, *Studi* 2 (Turin, 2005), 44–63. Also see the essays by Benjamin Anderson and Alexandre Roberts in *Diagram as Paradigm*, ed. Hamburger, Roxburgh, and Safran. Medical diagrams: Stavros Lazaris, "Scientific, Medical and Technical Manuscripts," in *A Companion to Byzantine Illustrated Manuscripts*, ed. Vasiliki Tsamakda, *Brill's Companions to the Byzantine World* 2 (Leiden, 2017), 55–113, at 86–105, and Safran, "Prolegomenon," 369–70. Rhetorical diagrams: Vessela Valiavitcharska, "Oral Aspects of Argumentation Training," paper delivered at The Sound of Sense: Orality/Aurality in Byzantine Texts and Contexts conference, Princeton University, 16–17 May 2015, and Vessela Valiavitcharska, "Logic Diagrams in Rhetorical Argumentation," paper delivered at the Byzantine Studies conference, San Antonio, 5–6 October 2019. I thank the author for sharing her two unpublished studies.

³ Safran, "Prolegomenon," 374, and now Safran, "Diagramming Byzantine Orthodoxy," in *Diagram as Paradigm*, ed. Hamburger, Roxburgh, and Safran, 489–518.

to schematic drawings. One important exception occurs in the *Hodegos* [Guidebook] of Anastasios of Sinai (seventh century). In that text, Anastasios worries that heretics will manipulate his words when he tries to explicate the concept of Christ's twofold nature on the Cross. Thus, he enjoins scribes copying his treatise to depict a cross diagram as a heuristic, a way of demonstrating his meaning while avoiding the pitfalls of verbal explanation.⁴ However, Anastasios's drawing was far from self-evident, and he had to spend pages elaborating its meaning. In the end, Anastasios fell back on the very means of argumentation—language—that he sought to work around.

We find a related tension in late Byzantine Trinitarian diagrams. Theologians at first introduced relatively simple drawings, but over time, they added layers of supplementary information, plotting more complex assemblages of lines. The result of this additive process was an intricate body of schematic design that demanded extensive written commentary. If the goal of these writers was to persuade their Catholic interlocutors through purely visual means, then it is hard to see how they succeeded. But these authors did accomplish something important. Calling attention to icon painting, they brought the work of the iconographer closer to the schematic thinking of theology. Thus, they invited their readers to evaluate the formal patterns of images of the Trinity through the filter of their drawings, changing how viewers understood painting.

Byzantine diagrams of the Trinity come in two main formats: an equilateral triangle inscribed in a circle and a vertical axis. Crucially, these two layouts mirror a pair of Trinitarian iconographies: the *Synthronoi* and *Paternitas*.⁵ Whereas the *Synthronoi* originates in early Christianity, the *Paternitas* first appears in the Greek-speaking world in the eleventh century, following an intense period of intercultural debate. One famous example of the *Synthronoi* is the Trinity icon attributed to the quasi-legendary Russian painter Andrei Rublev (Fig. 1).⁶ This image type is based on the story of Abraham's hospitality to his three visitors at the Oaks of Mamre in Genesis 18. As its name suggests, the iconography shows the angels "enthroned together" around a table prepared with the eucharistic meal.⁷ Rublev, following earlier Greek and Slavic

⁴ Anna Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton, 1986), 40–67, and Hans Belting and Christa Belting-Ihm, "Das Kreuzbild im 'Hodegos' des Anastasios Sinaites: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der ältesten Darstellung des toten Crucifixus," in *Tortulae: Studien zu altchristlichen und byzantinischen Monumenten*, ed. Walter Nikolaus Schumacher, Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte Supplementheft 30 (Rome, 1966), 30–39.

⁵ On these two image types, see François Boespflug and Yolanta Zaluska, "Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident de l'époque carolingienne au IVe Concile du Latran (1215)," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 37 (1994): 181–240, at 197–201, and François Boespflug, *Dieu et ses images: Une histoire de l'éternel dans l'art* (Paris, 2008), 134–38, 207–14.

⁶ The literature is extensive, but see especially G. I. Vzdornov, *Troitsa Andreia Rubleva: Antologija* (Moscow, 1981), 133–43, figs. 1–60, and Gabriel Bunge, *Der andere Paraklet: Die Ikone der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit des Malermönchs Andrej Rubljov* (Würzburg, 1994).

⁷ The label "Synthronoi" also refers to images of Christ enthroned with the Father in which the Spirit, symbolized as a dove, hovers between them. Boespflug, *Dieu et ses images*, 207–14. Scholars cite Psalm 110.1 describing the Messiah enthroned with the Father. Byzantine writers also cite this verse but only to explain the three angels at the Oaks of Mamre. In Byzantine architecture, *synthronon* refers to the rows of seats for the clergy surrounding the altar. "Because these seats were with the throne [i.e., the altar]," Robert Ousterhout explains, "the arrangement was called the *synthronon*, from the Greek *syn* [with]



Fig. 1. Andrei Rublev, *Old Testament Trinity*, c. early fifteenth century. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. no. 13012. Photo: Author.

painters, omits Abraham and Sarah, who sometimes are shown serving the angels wine and bread.⁸

One early example of the *Paternitas* is found at the beginning of an eleventh-century manuscript of John Climax's *Scala paradisi*, written, and most likely also illuminated, by a scribe named Constantine (Fig. 2).⁹ The painter shows the Sinaite

plus *thronon* (throne)." In both contexts the seats encircle the Eucharist table, suggesting a common origin. See Robert Ousterhout, "The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy," in *Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium*, ed. Linda Safran (University Park, PA, 1998), 81–120, at 85.

⁸ See Hans Belting, *Das illuminierte Buch in der spätbyzantinischen Gesellschaft* (Heidelberg, 1970), 85, pl. 35; Branislav Cvetković, "The Painted Programs in Thirteenth-Century Serbia: Structure, Themes, and Accents," in *Orient et Occident méditerranéens au XIIIe siècle: Les programmes picturaux*, ed. Jean-Pierre Caillet and Fabienne Joubert (Paris, 2012), 157–76, at 168–69, fig. 13; and Glenn Peers with Barbara Roggema, *Orthodox Magic in Trebizond and Beyond: A Fourteenth-Century Greco-Arabic Amulet Roll* (Seysssel, 2018), 93, 163, fig. vii.

⁹ John Rupert Martin, *The Illustration of the "Heavenly Ladder" of John Climacus*, *Studies in Manuscript Illumination* 5 (Princeton, 1954), pl. 18, fig. 70, and Kathleen Corrigan, "Constantine's Problems: The Making of the *Heavenly Ladder* of John Climacus, Vat. gr. 394," *Word & Image* 12/1 (1996): 61–93.



Fig. 2. Constantine (?), *Paternitas*, eleventh century. Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS gr. 394, fol. 7r. Photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, copyright 2018, with all rights reserved.

author teaching “the people”—a group of men dressed like apostles—about how to renounce life. In the right margin, a monk holding a pilgrim’s basket is being led away from a nude man, personifying Life, by the female allegory of Dispassion. In the heavens above, God, depicted as the grey-bearded “Ancient of Days,” as the inscription in the blue mandorla around him relates, peers down upon the central scene. Aligned along a vertical axis, this iconography displays the Father cradling the Son on his knees, with the Spirit, symbolized as a dove, perched in the Son’s hands.

Embroidered in debate over the *Filioque*, late Byzantine thinkers mapped the circular-triangular diagram and the vertical axis onto, respectively, the *Synthronoi* and *Paternitas*. The various theological meanings they imposed upon these image types allow us to reevaluate modern scholars’ interpretations of their formal principles.

In a 1964 study, Rudolf Mainka analyzed Rublev’s Trinity in terms of a rectangle and an equilateral triangle inscribed in a circle (Fig. 3). Mainka speaks of the rectangular panel’s “balance,” the circle’s “unity and oneness,” and the triangle’s “firmness and calmness,” asserting that the circle conveys “the embodiment of unity that is the eternity and image of God” and that the triangle serves as “the Early

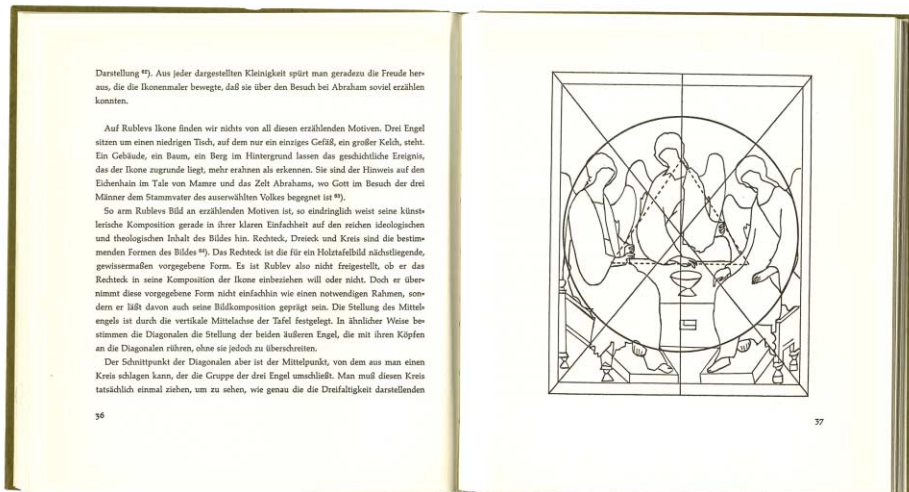


Fig. 3. Mainka's formal analysis of Rublev's Trinity. After Mainka, *Andrej Rublev's Dreifaltigkeitsikone: Geschichte, Kunst und Sinngehalt des Bildes* (Ettal, 1964), 36–37. Photo: Courtesy of Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University.

Christian symbol of the Trinity.”¹⁰ Several years later Konrad Onash and Paul Evdokimov repeated Mainka's interpretation.¹¹ Mainka was unaware of the tradition of Byzantine diagrams, but, notably, Greek authors analyzed this exact iconography by way of almost the same schematic composition, only they arrived at very different meanings for the images.

Likewise, scholars have interpreted the strong vertical axis of the *Paternitas* in theological terms. In an early study Karl Künstle argued that this image type reflects the Catholic stance that the Spirit processes “through” [διὰ] the Son, and not directly “from” [ἐκ] the Father, as most Byzantine theologians claimed.¹² For Künstle, the Son's position *between* the Father and Spirit signifies his role as a mediator, thus allying this iconography with the *Filioque* clause.

Most scholars have resisted Künstle's thesis. In an important 1956 study, Hans Gerstinger invoked a key theological distinction to argue that the *Paternitas* represents *only* the temporal “sending” [*ekpempsis*] of the Spirit and not his eternal

¹⁰ Rudolf M. Mainka, *Andrej Rublev's Dreifaltigkeitsikone: Geschichte, Kunst und Sinngehalt des Bildes* (Ettal, 1964), 38. N. M. Shchekotov may have been the first modern viewer to see a triangle inscribed in a circle in the icon. In an unpublished 1919–20 study, which the author planned for the journal *Iskusstvo*, Shchekotov notes that at first glance a triangle seems to unite the three angels but upon further inspection a circle. Vzdornov, *Troitsa Andreia Rubleva*, 68.

¹¹ Konrad Onasch, “Kunst und Gesellschaft im Modell der Dreieinigkeitsikone Andrej Rublevs,” in *Beiträge zur byzantinischen und osteuropäischen Kunst des Mittelalters*, ed. Heinrich L. Nickel (Berlin, 1977), 19–32, and Paul Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty*, trans. Steven Bigham (Redondo Beach, CA, 1990), 251.

¹² Karl Künstle, *Ikongraphie der christlichen Kunst*, 2 vols. (Freiburg, 1926–28), 1:225–26. Künstle is following Joseph Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert*, 4 vols. (Freiburg, 1916), 2:915–16; 4: pl. 300.

“procession” [*ekporeusis*].¹³ Similarly, Hans Belting claimed that the image type merely conveys the Son’s “pre-existence,”¹⁴ whereas Konrad Onasch foregrounded later disputes in Russia to argue that the iconography represents the Eastern Church’s “self-understanding” and does not have a “specific addressee.”¹⁵ Finally, Leonid Ouspensky flatly refused to “analyz[e] these conclusions” and followed Stelios Papadopoulos, who argued that the Son’s position in the Father’s bosom reflects rituals of adoption.¹⁶

Ioannis Spatharakis has offered the most compelling evidence against Künstle’s proposal. Pointing to a twelfth-century *Paternitas* miniature in Vienna, he notes that it is prefaced by a version of the Creed that omits the *Filioque* clause, and concludes that the image type “do[es] not express any dogmatic meaning which would denote that the Holy Ghost also proceeds from the Son.”¹⁷ However, François Boespflug and Herbert Kessler have left open the door to this possibility. Discussing a fresco in Grottaferrata outside Rome, Kessler argues that the *Paternitas* “eschewed the majority Greek view that the Spirit proceeded from the Father *only* and adhered instead to the more moderate position that the Spirit proceeded from the Father *through* the Son” (his italics).¹⁸

The present study supports Kessler’s conclusion with the evidence of diagrams, which have never been discussed alongside the images. Greek theologians drew rectilinear diagrams with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit aligned along a vertical axis.

¹³ Hans Gerstinger, “Über Herkunft und Entwicklung der anthropomorphen byzantinisch-slawischen Trinitäts-Darstellungen des sogenannten Synthronoi- und Paternitas (Otéchestow) Typus,” in *Festschrift Wladimir Sas-Zaloziecky zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Wladimir Sas-Zaloziecky and Gertrude Gsodam (Graz, 1956), 79–85, esp. 79–80. Sometimes the same distinction is made in terms of God’s “salvific mission” in the world and his “inner” life.

¹⁴ Hans Belting, “Stilzwang und Stilwahl in einem byzantinischen Evangeliar in Cambridge,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 38/3 (1975): 215–44, esp. 225–31.

¹⁵ Konrad Onasch, “Identity Models of Old Russian Art,” in *Medieval Russian Culture*, ed. Henrik Birnbaum and Michael S. Flier, 2 vols., California Slavic Studies 12, 19 (Berkeley, 1984–94), 1:175–205, at 192–93.

¹⁶ Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, trans. Anthony Gythiel with Elizabeth Meyendorff, 2 vols. (Crestwood, 1992), 2:403–05, who cites S. A. Papadopoulos, “Essai d’interprétation du thème iconographique de la paternité dans l’art byzantine,” *Cahiers archéologiques* 18 (1968): 121–36. Papadopoulos seems to conflate adoption with begetting, and he anchors his argument in the Madrid Skylitzes, which does not reflect a Constantinopolitan tradition. See Elena Boeck, *Imagining the Byzantine Past: The Perception of History in the Illustrated Manuscripts of Skylitzes and Manasses* (Cambridge, UK, 2015).

¹⁷ Ioannis Spatharakis, *Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, vol. 1, *Rethymnon Province* (London, 1999), 201, fig. 346 (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Suppl. Gr. 52, fol. 1r–v). Spatharakis is followed by Margarita Kujumdzhieva, “Visualizing God: Post-Byzantine Imagery of the Trinity in Orthodox Churches in the Balkans,” in *Drevnerusskoe i postvizantiiskoe iskusstvo: Vtoraia polovina XV–nachalo XVI veka: K 500-letiiu rospisi sobora Rozhdestva Bogoroditsy Ferapontova monastyria*, ed. L. I. Lifshits (Moscow, 2005), 322–37.

¹⁸ Herbert Kessler, “Caput et speculum omnium ecclesiarum”: Old St. Peter’s and Church Decoration in Medieval Latium,” in *Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: Functions, Forms, and Regional Traditions*, ed. William Tronzo, Villa Spelman Colloquia 1 (Bologna, 1989), 119–46, at 143; François Boespflug, “‘A patre filioque’: Note sur la procession de l’Esprit Saint dans l’art médiéval d’Occident,” in *Ars auro gemmisque prior: Mélanges en hommage à Jean-Pierre Caillet*, ed. Chrystèle Blondeau, Brigitte Boissavit-Camus, Véronique Boucherat, and Panayota Volti, *Studies in Early Christian and Medieval Art and Archaeology, Dissertationes et Monographiae* 6 (Zagreb, 2013), 345–52, at 347.

They asserted that the Son's position "between" the Father and Spirit implies that the Spirit processes from him, and thus concluded that the *Paternitas* blasphemously affirms the *Filioque*. In reply, they offered circular-triangular diagrams as the right way to depict the transcendent God, given that they express the perfect equality of, and symmetrical relations between, the three persons. Appealing to *Synthronoi* icons, in which the three angels who visited Abraham are seated in a circle around the table, they claimed that this image type constitutes the only valid way to depict the godhead.

The habit of viewing images and schematic drawings together is what I am calling the late Byzantine "aesthetic" of diagrams. Leading their readers to project dogmatic meanings back onto early Christian iconography, Greek theologians imbued older image types—which may not have been designed with a geometric drawing in mind—with a new theological specificity.¹⁹ Focusing their readers on the axes, constellations of shapes, and structural symmetries employed by icon painters, these authors rhetorically reinvented the *Synthronoi* and *Paternitas*. Depending on which texts viewers knew, the iconography possessed different theological solutions, which is to say, diagrammatic glosses. The sophisticated exposition of line drawings by theologians therefore offered viewers new tools to assess whether painters had adopted Catholic teachings.

If this aesthetic allowed viewers to see images through diagrams, it also brought diagrams closer to the status of images. Lacking figuration and pigment, diagrams functioned at a more metaphysical level than icons, withholding the imputation of corporeality and color to the Trinity, even though God's unfathomable substance was believed to be "uncircumscribed." However, when theologians measured icons by diagrams, they claimed that the church fathers permitted painters to portray not just Christ but also the Father and Spirit in iconography, and they invited readers to view their compositions as prophetic visions, as if they were in fact operating like an icon. This rhetoric presupposed that the diagram is complete in itself as a holy image capable of raising the soul to God. However, the diagram surpassed the icon in that it elevated the soul beyond the incarnate divinity Christ to the invisible godhead, and thus it was, in a way, the purest form of representation—the preferred medium for writers taking up the loftiest themes of theology. Viewers looking at an icon of the *Synthronoi* could thus peer through its symbolic rendering of the angels who visited Abraham at the geometric silhouette of divinity's simple (uncircumscribed) nature, albeit a nature sketched in outline on the parchment. These two modalities of the late Byzantine diagrammatic aesthetic posed challenges to iconography, providing novel forms of assessing its truth and new possibilities of theological expression.

EUSTRATIOS OF NICAEA AND NIKETAS "OF MARONEIA"

Eustratios of Nicaea made the first salvo of theological diagrams in his third and final *Discourse* on the Holy Spirit. A close reader of Proklos, Eustratios also penned a commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, a text that furnished terminology

¹⁹ See Bianca Kühnel, *The End of Time in the Order of Things: Science and Eschatology in Early Medieval Art* (Regensburg, 2003), 139–48, who, in a related way, argues that Carolingian viewers found Christian meanings embodied in ancient scientific imagery.

for Greek diagrams of the Trinity.²⁰ Eustratios exerted a profound influence on late Byzantine icon theory, and his circular-triangular diagram likewise prompted later Greek theologians to criticize the vertical diagrams of their Latin opponents.²¹ Eustratios's first two *Discourses* have been known since Andronikos Dēmētrakopoulos published them in the mid nineteenth century, but only recently has Aleksei Vadimovich Barmin edited the third *Discourse*.²² Barmin observes that Eustratios set out to refute the views regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit of the Milanese bishop Peter Grosolanus, who had visited Constantinople in 1112/13 en route back home from the Holy Land. Eustratios presented his refutation to the co-emperors Alexios I Komnenos and his son John II Komnenos.²³

Criticizing his opponent's "rectilinear diagram" [τὸ σχῆμα εὐθύς], Eustratios claims that Grosolanus has irreverently "straightened out" [ἀπληθύνω] a "triangular diagram" [τὸ σχῆμα τριγωνικόν]. Eustratios's text may not ever have been illustrated, but both of the drawings he describes probably resembled later constructions set forth by authors familiar with the *Discourses*, which enjoyed a fairly wide circulation (for the rectilinear diagram, see, for instance, Figs. 7, 19, and 20 below).²⁴ Posing a counterfactual, Eustratios casts the rectilinear drawing as absurd: "If the Spirit is not a procession from the Father, but the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Spirit processes from the Son, then its going forth from the cause would be in a single straight line."²⁵ Offering a corrective, Eustratios asserts that Grosolanus should have placed the Father at the intersection of two line segments drawn like an inverted "V," with the Son and Spirit at the lower right and left (from the Father's perspective).

Probably Eustratios's triangular diagram resembled a drawing presented at the Council of Florence in 1438 by Mark of Ephesus, who used it to argue for "two

²⁰ On Eustratios's debt to Proklos, see Michele Trizio, *Il neoplatonismo di Eustrazio di Nicea*, Biblioteca Filosofica di Quaestio 23 (Bari, 2016), 143–87, and Michele Trizio, "Eleventh- to Twelfth-Century Byzantium," in *Interpreting Proclus: From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Gersh (Cambridge, UK, 2014), 182–226, at 185–214.

²¹ See Charles Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting: Art and Understanding in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*, Visualizing the Middle Ages 2 (Leiden, 2007), 99–130.

²² A. K. Dēmētrakopoulos, *Ekklesiastikē bibliothēkē emperiechousa Hellēnōn theologōn sungrammata ek cheirographōn tēs en Moscha Bibliothēkēs* (Leipzig, 1866), 47–99, and A. V. Barmin, *Polemika i skhizma: Istoriia greko-latinskikh sporov IX–XII vekov* (Moscow, 2006), 518–65.

²³ Barmin, *Polemika*, 311–13, 334. On Eustratios's exchange with Grosolanus, see Alexey Barmin, "The Refutation of Petrus Grossolanus: The *Logoi antirrētikoi* by Eustratios of Nicaea," in *Contra Latinos et Adversus Graecos: The Separation between Rome and Constantinople from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Alessandra Bucossi and Anna Calia, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 286, Bibliothèque de Byzantion 22 (Leuven, 2020), 199–215. I thank Basil Lourié for drawing my attention to the context of the discourse.

²⁴ Pinakes lists fourteen manuscripts containing at least some portion of Eustratios's *Discourses*. Of the eight that I consulted, none contained a diagram: (1) Moscow, State History Museum, MS Synod. gr. 207, fols. 96r–138r, 356r–371v; (2) Moscow, State History Museum, MS Synod. gr. 366, fols. 20r–40v, 52r–68r; (3) Moscow, State History Museum, MS Synod. gr. 368, fols. 129r–137v, 149v–172v; (4) Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS gr. 2830, fols. 276v–281v; (5) Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, MS gr. 30, fols. 274v–281v; (6) Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, MS gr. 43, fols. 23v–24v; (7) Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, MS C4, fols. 122r–125v, 158r–166r; (8) Sofia, Centre "Prof. Ivan Dujčev," Cod. D, gr. 156, fols. 287v–315v. I kindly thank Dr. Vasya Velinova for checking the final manuscript.

²⁵ Eustratios of Nicaea, *Logos peri tou panagiou pneumatou*, lines 593–95, ed. Barmin, *Polemika i skhizma*, 558: "Εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς οὐκ ἦν τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκπορευόμενον, ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν υἱὸς ἐγεννᾶτο ἐξ αὐτοῦ, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ υἱοῦ, ἦν ἂν κατὰ μίαν εὐθειᾶν ἢ πρόοδος ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς."

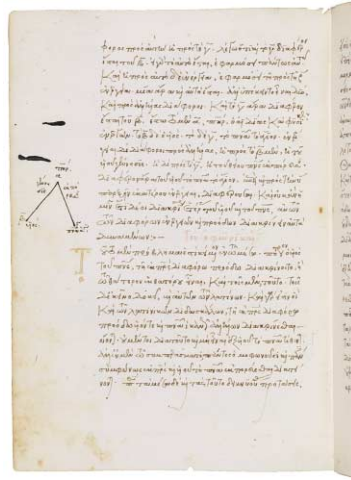


Fig. 4. Mark of Ephesus, *Capita syllogistica*, copied by Joannes Plousiadenos, between 1459 and 1472. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Holkham MS gr. 79, fol. 335v. Photo: The Bodleian Library.

distinct operations [in the godhead], which is to say, that which tends to β , namely, the begetting of the Son, and that which tends to γ , namely, the procession of the Holy Spirit” (Fig. 4).²⁶ Eustratios’s diagram, like Mark’s, was also not a triangle, for even as he calls it by that name, he is loath to draw in its base [$\beta\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$], since this would entail that the Spirit also processes from the Son. Explaining his thinking on the point, Eustratios remarks: “In the first place, this section [i.e., the base] will not endure in this way but will be destroyed [since] the procession falls in the direction of a plumb-line.”²⁷ The Father’s placement at the top of the triangular hierarchy in Mark’s drawing can be traced back, through Eustratios’s text, to Patriarch Photios’s insistence on the Father’s “monarchy.”²⁸ Both Eustratios and Mark thought that they had sidestepped the problem of the Spirit’s procession from the Son by showing the two persons split off from each other by a fork.

Intriguingly, Eustratios preferred to describe the Spirit’s procession as a circle:

It is not permissible that the procession of the first, lordly simplicity be oblique, since even simple bodies never move obliquely by their own natural movement but rather

²⁶ Mark of Ephesus, *Capita syllogistica adversus Latinos* 33, lines 12–14, ed. Ludovico Petit, *Marci Eugenici Metropolitanæ Ephesi, Opera anti-unionistica* (Rome, 1977), 94: “ἐνέργεια δὲ διάφοροι πρὸς ἀλλήλας, ἢ πρὸς τὸ β μὲν, ἢ τοῦ Υἱοῦ γέννησις, ἢ δὲ πρὸς τὸ γ, ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ Πνεύματος ἐκπόρευσις.” Like other of his polemical writings, Mark’s *Capita* rehearses earlier arguments. On this manuscript, see R. Barbour, “Summary Description of the Greek Manuscripts from the Library at Holkham Hall,” *Bodleian Library Record* 6/5 (1960): 591–613, at 607.

²⁷ Eustratios of Nicaea, *Logos peri tou panagiou pneumatou*, lines 623–25, ed. Barmin, *Polemika i skhizma*, 560: “Πρῶτον μὲν γάρ, οὐ στήσεται μᾶλλον οὕτως· ἀλλ’ ἀναραιθῆσεται τὸ χωρίον· τῆς προόδου ἀπηρυσμένης καὶ προβαινούσης ὡσπερὶ κατὰ κάθετον.”

²⁸ I here follow Théodore de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité: Théories grecques des processions divines*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1898), 2:247–48. On Photios’s place in anti-Latin polemics, see Tia M. Kolbaba, *The Byzantine Lists: Errors of the Latins* (Urbana, IL, 2000), 9–22.

by some other force. That which travels in a circle some call a compound, but if this is simple, then its motion is not along an oblique curve but a circumference.²⁹

Eustratios here likens the flow of the Spirit to the drawing of a circumference. Presumably a circle is to be imagined around the three points of the inverted “V” which he calls monads [αἱ μονάδες]. Because the circle is the simplest movement, it befits the simplicity of God.

Eustratios provided the basic formal vocabulary for later trinitarian diagrams. His first follower seems to have been the twelfth-century bishop of Thessaloniki, Niketas “of Maroneia.” Regrettably, very little is known about Niketas, and he may have written the six *Dialogues* on the *Filioque*—his only known work—either in the 1130s or in the 1160s. However, we can be sure that Niketas knew Eustratios’s diagram, because he quotes the third *Discourse* in his *Dialogues*.³⁰ That said, Niketas tacked a different political course than his forerunner, and he voices sympathy with the Catholic position on the *Filioque*, staging a Greek speaker who concedes ground to his Latin interlocutor.³¹ Over the course of their conversation, the Latin speaker builds up a case for the controversial addition to the Creed: “and from the Son” [καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ]. Thus, even though Niketas did not favor emending the Creed, he presented a lucid defense, including a diagram, that influenced later authors who did not share his political views.

Niketas introduces his diagram in the second *Dialogue*, the earliest copy of which is Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS gr. 1115, which dates to the early fourteenth century (Fig. 5). In a study of the early sixteenth-century Athonite theologian and translator Maksim Grek, Bernard Schultze briefly discusses Niketas’s diagram.³² Maksim’s oft-noted travels to Florence and Venice, where he became acquainted with Pico della Mirandola and Aldus Manutius, may have shaped his own views of Latin diagrams. In a letter written in Slavonic and dating to the early 1520s, Maksim summarizes a conversation that he had with the German- and Latin-speaking Muscovite court official Nikolas Bülow. There, he states unequivocally that his interlocutor’s diagram of an equilateral triangle inscribed in a circle is a Latin heresy.³³

²⁹ Eustratios of Nicaea, *Logos peri tou panagiou pneumatos*, lines 625–31, ed. Barmin, *Polemika i skhizma*, 560: “Οὐ γὰρ ἐγκαρσίως ἐνδέχεται τὴν πρόοδον γίνεσθαι τῆς πρώτως καὶ κυρίως ἀπλότητος ὅπου γε μὴ δὲ τῶν σωμάτων τὰ ἐν τούτοις ἀπλᾶ φέρεται ποτε κατ’ ἐγκάρσιον τὴν ἑαυτῶν καὶ κατὰ φύσιν φοράν· ἀλλ’ ἢ ἄρα βίᾳ τινί. Τὸ δὲ κύκλῳ φερόμενον, σύνθετόν τινες ἔφρασαν. Εἰ δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ἀπλοῦν, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τούτων κινήσις καθ’ εὐθείαν ἐγκάρσιον· ἀλλὰ δὴ κατὰ περιφέρειαν.”

³⁰ Alexei Barmine, “Une source méconnue des *Dialogues* de Nicétas de Maronée,” *Revue des études byzantines* 58 (2000): 231–43, and A. V. Barmin, *Evstratii Nikeiskii: Oproverzhitel’nye slova* (Moscow, 2016), 61–64, 211–25.

³¹ Nicola Festa, “Niceta di Maronea e i suoi dialoghi sulla processione dello Spirito Santo,” *Bessarione* 9 (1912): 80–107, 126–132, 266–86. For background, see Corrado Giorgetti, “Un teologo greco del XII secolo precursore della riunificazione fra Roma e Costantinopoli: Niceta di Maronea, arcivescovo di Tessalonica,” *Annuario 1968 della Biblioteca civica di Massa* (1969): 129–48. On the dating of the *Dialogues*, see Alessandra Bucossi, “The Six Dialogues by Niketas ‘of Maroneia’: A Contextualizing Introduction,” in *Dialogues and Debates from Late Antiquity to Late Byzantium*, ed. Averil Cameron and Niels Gaul (London, 2017), 149–64, at 137–52.

³² Bernhard Schultze, *Maksim Grek als Theologe*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 167 (Rome, 1963), 180–81.

³³ N. V. Sinitysna, *Prepodobnyi Maksim Grek: Sochineniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 2008–14), 1:221–28, and Schultze, *Maksim Grek*, 163–85. Maksim’s letter probably provides the source for Evfimii

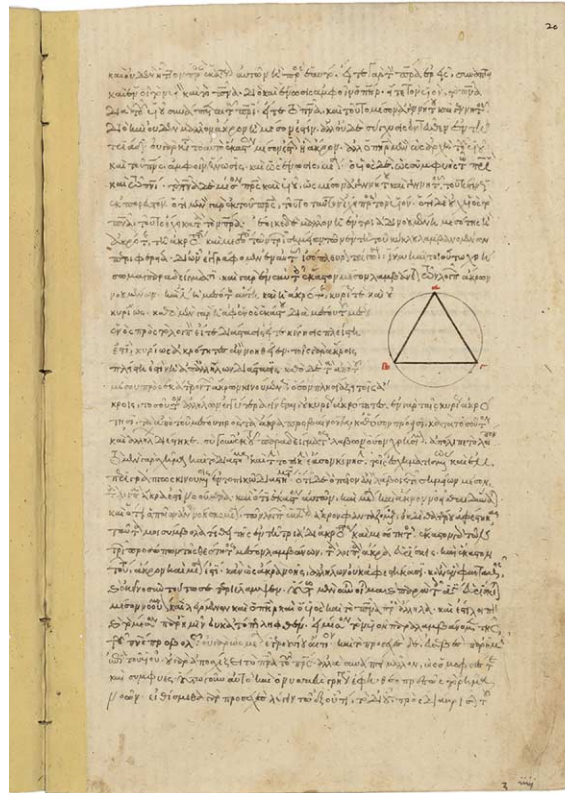


Fig. 5. Niketas “of Maroneia,” *Second Dialogue*, fourteenth-century manuscript. Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS gr. 1115, fol. 20r. Photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, copyright 2019, with all rights reserved.

In hindsight, it is clear that Maksim deserves a separate discussion. Schultze suspects that Maksim is conflating the “equilateral triangular figure” [*равно триугол’nyi obraz*] with the “right-angled” [*pryamougol’nyi*] triangle in an obscure passage where Maksim cites the Pythagorean theorem.³⁴ However, Maksim may have had in mind Western figurative theology. Jeffrey Hamburger has pointed out that the twelfth-century poet Alan of Lille compares the divinity to an equilateral triangle inscribed in a circle. Violating the rules of math, Alan claims that each of the triangle’s angles measures ninety degrees but altogether they add up to only one right angle, a geometric impossibility intended to convey God’s transcendence.³⁵

Chudovskii’s comments on triangular diagrams of the Trinity in the seventeenth century. See A. V. Gorskii and K. I. Nevostruev, *Opisanie slavianskikh rukopisei Moskovskoi Sinodal’noi biblioteki: Otdel vtoryi, Pisaniia sviatykh ottsev*, vol. 3, *Raznyiia bogoslouvskaia sochineniia (Pribavlenie)* (Moscow, 1862), cat. no. 287, p. 417. The manuscript (Moscow, State History Museum, MS Synod. 396, fols. 59r–60v) is in poor condition and is not available for study.

³⁴ Sinitsyna, *Maksim Grek: Sochineniia*, 1:225, and Schultze, *Maksim Grek*, 177–79, 171.

³⁵ Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Rothschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland circa 1300* (New Haven, 1990), 132, and Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Diagramming Devotion: Berthold of Speculum* 98/3 (July 2023)

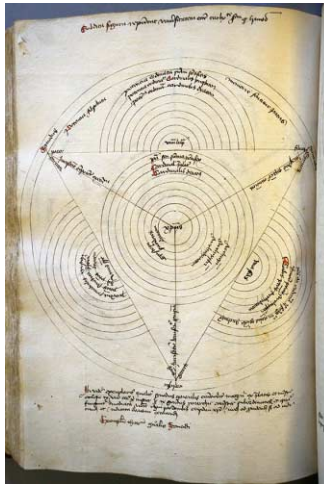


Fig. 6. Heymericus de Campo, *De sigillo eternitatis*, mid-fifteenth-century manuscript. Die Konzilkirche, Bernkastel-Kues, Codex Cusanus 106, fol. 187v. Photo: Reproduced by permission of St. Nikolaus-Hospital/Cusanusstift.

In his letter, Maksim accuses Bülow of “doing violence to the triangle’s nature, placing its lower part above and its upper part at its base.”³⁶ It is difficult to pinpoint Bülow’s exact source, but examples of inverted triangles are familiar from German art. Nina Vasil’evna Sinitsyna notes that Nicholas of Cusa comments on a related diagram in Heymericus de Campo’s *De sigillo eternitatis*, a copy of which Nicholas owned (Fig. 6).³⁷ In contrast to Byzantine theologians, all of whom affirm the Father’s “monarchy” by keeping the shape right-side up, Heymericus flips the triangle over, placing its apex at the bottom.³⁸ Maksim’s harshly worded response suggests that, like his Greek forebears, he too wishes to preserve the Father’s monarchy. But he also betrays his distance from the medieval world. Rejecting diagrams outright, he says that it is fundamentally misguided to depict God “through equilateral and non-equilateral geometric figures . . . which are foreign and alien to the pious and right faith and are the inventions of a cerebral and fallen intellect.”³⁹ In contrast

Nuremberg’s *Transformation of Hrabanus Maurus’s “Poems in Praise of the Cross”* (Chicago, 2020), 28. The possibility of a parallel between Alan of Lille’s metaphor and the Byzantine diagrams under discussion is intriguing, but as Hamburger notes: “If triangular symbols for the Deity were commonplaces in the mystical tradition, they were rare in the visual arts, at least prior to the fifteenth century.”

³⁶ Sinitsyna, *Maksim Grek: Sochineniia*, 1:225–26, and Schultze, *Maksim Grek*, 172.

³⁷ N. V. Sinitsyna, *Maksim Grek v Rossii* (Moscow, 1977), 81–82, 86. See also Rudolf Haubst, *Das Bild des Einen und Dreieimigen Gottes in der Welt nach Nikolaus von Kues* (Trier, 1952), 255–67, and Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen, “Trinität und Sein: Der Traktat *De signis notionalibus trinitatis et unitatis supernae* und seine Bedeutung für das trinitarische Weltbild des Heymericus de Campo,” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 45/1–2 (1998): 206–63, esp. 243–47.

³⁸ Cf. Nilus Cabasilas, *Orationes quinque de spiritu sancto* 1.24, ed. Théophile Kislas, *Nil Cabasilas sur le Saint-Esprit* (Paris, 2001), 294–95, with the Father as “Aition” on the apex of an inverted triangle.

³⁹ Sinitsyna, *Maksim Grek: Sochineniia*, 1:223, and Schultze, *Maksim Grek*, 167–68. Maksim’s stance is closer to that of Augustine. See Bernard McGinn, “‘Trinity Higher than Any Being!’ Imaging

to his Greek predecessors, Maksim refuses to answer the challenge of his Latin interlocutor and offer an “Orthodox” diagram.

In the second *Dialogue*, Niketas’s Latin speaker presents his diagram to elucidate the “order,” or *taksis* [τάξις], within the Trinity. Citing Gregory of Nazianzos, he characterizes each of the three divine persons as lying “between” the other two, resulting in three reciprocal relations—precisely what Eustratios had sought to avoid by omitting the triangle’s base. Each person, Niketas explains, following Gregory, bears two names demarcating its “position” vis-à-vis the other two persons. Thus, God is the “Father” in relation to the Son, but the “Processor” in relation to the Spirit; the “Son” in relation to the Father, but the “Logos” in relation to the Spirit; and the “Spirit” in relation to the Logos, but the “Processed” in relation to the Father. In short, “equivalent relations” [ἴσας τὰς σχέσεις] define each person via the others.⁴⁰ From this observation, Niketas’s Latin speaker concludes that each person is a *meson*, or “middle,” between the other two persons.

Later on, the Greek speaker asks about the sense of the word *meson*. Invoking a passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in which Aristotle describes virtue as a “mean,” or *mesotētos* [μεσότητος], between two vices, or “extremities” [*akra*, or ἄκρα],⁴¹ the Greek draws an analogy with angels who link souls to bodies on the Chain of Being, and lines which join points to surfaces in the hierarchy of geometric entities.⁴² If these identities are not mutually exclusive but the excesses can also be called means and the means can be called excesses, the Greek speaker says, then that risks conflating virtue and vice, souls and bodies, surfaces and points, all of which would jeopardize human salvation and result in a nonsensical metaphysics.

Niketas’s Latin speaker deflects this objection by clarifying his position:

But I didn’t say this, namely, that the negation of certain things is the middle of what was negated, nor that the not-this-or-that is the middle of the things of which it is or is said to be neither. [What I did say] is that the middle ascribed to certain [extremes] *sometimes* implies a negation relative to those extremes . . . Nor [did I say] that what can be the middle or extreme by our affirmation or negation is a middle or extreme in and of itself and according to its own order or proper existence.⁴³

the Invisible Trinity,” in *Ästhetik des Unsichtbaren: Bildtheorie und Bildgebrauch in der Vormoderne*, ed. David Ganz and Thomas Lentz, KultBild 1 (Berlin, 2004), 76–93, at 80–84.

⁴⁰ Niketas of Maroneia, *Orationes de processione spiritus sancti* 2, ed. Festa, “Niceta di Maronea,” 97–98, citing Gregory of Nazianzos, *Orationes* 29.2, ed. Paul Gallay with Maurice Jourjon, *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 27–31 (Discours théologiques)* (Paris, 1978), 178–80.

⁴¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1105b25–26.

⁴² Niketas of Maroneia, *Orationes de processione spiritus sancti* 2, ed. Festa, “Niceta di Maronea,” 268–69. The analogy of the surface, line, and point appears in the popular *Sacred Arsenal*. See Alessandra Bucossi, “Dialogue and Anthologies of the *Sacred Arsenal* by Andronikos Kamateros: Sources, Arrangements, Purposes,” in *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium? Proceedings of the International Conference held in Leuven, 6–8 May 2009*, ed. Peter van Deun and Caroline Macé, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 212 (Paris, 2011), 269–84, esp. 277.

⁴³ Niketas of Maroneia, *Orationes de processione spiritus sancti* 2, ed. Festa, “Niceta di Maronea,” 269: “Ἄλλ’ οὐ τοῦτο ἔφη, ὅτι τὸ ἀποφασκόμενον τινῶν μέσον ἐστὶν ὧν ἀποφάσκειται, οὐδ’ ὅτι τὸ μήτε τὸδε ὄν, μήτε τὸδε, μέσον τούτων ἐστὶν ὧν οὐδέτερον οὔτε ἐστὶν οὔτε εἶναι λέγεται· ἀλλ’ ὅτι τὸ μέσον τινῶν λεγόμενον ἐνίστε τὴν πρὸς τὰ ἄκρα σημαίνει ἀπόφασιν ἢ ἀναίρεσιν. . . οὐδ’ ὅτι ὅπερ ἄφ’ ἡμῶν ἢ ἀπὸ τῆς παρ’ ἡμῶν θέσεως ἦγουν ἀναίρεσεως ἔχει τὸ μέσον [ἢ] ἄκρον εἶναι· τοῦτο καὶ καθ’ ἑαυτὸ καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἄφ’ ἑαυτοῦ τάξιν ἦγουν κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν ὑπαρξίν, μέσον ἢ ἄκρον ἐστὶν.” Mount Sinai, Saint Catherine’s Monastery, MS gr. 1706, fol. 45r, line 12, supplies the ἢ.

This remark boils down to the claim that it is not contradictory for the church fathers to call each person both a middle and an extreme. Each is defined as a middle in relation to the other two persons, who can then be taken individually as middles in relation to the other two persons.

It is this observation that the Latin then tries to illustrate with the diagram:

Rather, the mean and extremity that are conceptualized [νοουμένη] in the Trinity are similar to the extremity and midpoint of three points taken on the circumference of a circle, points through which we have inscribed an equilateral triangle in order to make use of this example [παραδείγματι]. For if each of these (points) is taken to be the middle, then the other (two) points are thought to be extremes. The middle itself, and the extremities, are at once both primary and not primary [κυρίως τε καὶ οὐ κυρίως]. According as the distance or movement is greatest from one point through the middle of the middle point to the remaining point, the extremes would be considered primary (i.e., would be considered *as* extremes). For the distance from one another is the greatest at the extremes.⁴⁴

Put in simpler terms, the Latin is arguing that because the distance from β to γ —from the Son to the Spirit—is greatest through point α , the Father’s status as a relay point makes him a middle.

The Latin then goes on to claim that the Son and Spirit can also be designated *as* middles. Imagining two sets of points moving from α and β towards γ , and then from α and γ towards β , he says:

But according as points are moved from the middle towards each of the extremes, [whereby] the closer they approach the extremes, the *closer* they become to one another, the extremes are not [considered] primary [i.e., are not considered *as* extremes, because in this case they resemble mid-points].⁴⁵

This observation allows Niketas’s Latin speaker to draw a distinction between two types of extremes. In the scenario just described, the extremes are not primary since the points, as they travel, grow *closer*. On the other hand, when the points travel down the sides of the triangle from the Father (α) to the Son and Spirit (β , γ), the latter *can* be called primary because the points grow *distant*.

For in [the case of the primary extremes], the further the points that proceed from the middle towards the extremes travel, the *more distant* they become from one another.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Niketas of Maroneia, *Orationes de processione spiritus sancti* 2, ed. Festa, “Niceta di Maronea,” 271: “Εοικε δὲ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν Τριάδι νοουμένη μεσότης ἢ ἀκρότης τῆ ἀκρότητι καὶ μεσότητι τῶν τριῶν σημείων τῶν ἐν τῆ τοῦ κύκλου λαμβανομένων περιφερεία, δι’ ὧν ἐγγράφομεν ἐν αὐτῷ ἰσόπλευρον τρίγωνον, ἵνα καὶ τοιούτῳ χρήσωμαι παραδείγματι. καὶ γὰρ ἐν αὐτοῖς ἕκαστον μέσον λαμβάνεται τῶν λοιπῶν ἄκρων νοουμένων. καὶ ἔστιν ἡ μεσότης αὕτη καὶ ἡ ἀκρότης κυρίως τε καὶ οὐ κυρίως· καθ’ ὃ μὲν γὰρ ἢ ἀφ’ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου διὰ μέσου τοῦ μέσου ἐνὸς πρὸς τὸ λοιπὸν εἴτε διάστασις εἴτε κίνησις πλείστη ἔστι, κυρίως ἀκρότητες ἂν νοηθεῖεν· τοῖς γὰρ ἄκροις πλείστη ἔστιν ἢ ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων διάστασις.”

⁴⁵ Niketas of Maroneia, *Orationes de processione spiritus sancti* 2, ed. Festa, “Niceta di Maronea,” 271: “καθ’ ὃ δὲ τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ μέσου πρὸς ἐκάτερον τῶν ἄκρων κινούμενα, ὅσον πλησιάζει τοῖς ἄκροις, τοσοῦτον ἀλλήλων ἐγγύτερα γίνεται, οὐ κυρίως ἀκρότητες.”

⁴⁶ Niketas of Maroneia, *Orationes de processione spiritus sancti* 2, ed. Festa, “Niceta di Maronea,” 271: “ἐν γὰρ ταῖς κυρίως ἀκρότησι τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ μέσου πρὸς τὰ ἄκρα προβαίνοντα, καθ’ ὅσον πρόεισι, κατὰ τοσοῦτον καὶ ἀλλήλων διέστηκε.” The source for Niketas’s claim about the status of “primary” and “not primary” points on the edges of a triangle remains an open question.

Summarizing his conclusion, Niketas's Latin speaker then positions the Trinity within a relational ontological theology:

whatever point you take as the middle leaves the other (two) to be thought of [νοεῖσθαι] as extremes; and each of them can be understood as both a middle and an extreme; and whichever you might understand as the middle, imagining [φανταζόμενος] the other two as extremes, you have not slighted either. Therefore, take my symbols to be of the mean and extremity in the Trinity [Ταῦτά μοι σύμβολα τίθει τῆς ἐν τῇ Τριάδι ἀκρότητος καὶ μεσότητος].⁴⁷

Niketas's speaker here offers the Greek a heuristic to demonstrate how God can be imagined or conceptualized. He likens the Trinity to a geometric object, playing with the three points of a triangle to prove that they reveal their discreteness by disclosing what they are not. The diagram configures the persons in a way that displays how each is arrived at conceptually through the others. In the drawing each point serves not as a resting station for the eye but as a dialectical sightline onto the other two angles, or persons. The angles themselves demarcate a conceptual turn in which reasoning opens up to a greater horizon of unity, represented by the circle encompassing all three persons. Such a phenomenal, rational space on the page leaves the mind rotating in and out of viewpoints rather than settled quietly on a static image of divinity.

HIEROMONK HIEROTHEOS

Over the next two centuries, Niketas's *Dialogues* were read widely. Niketas's earliest follower may have been Hieromonk Hierotheos, a late thirteenth-century theologian from Asia Minor. Gabriel Patacsi, working from manuscript sources, first discussed Hierotheos in detail in the 1980s, but the Byzantine author's writings have only recently been edited by Nikolaos Iōannidēs.⁴⁸ Hierotheos builds on Niketas's discussion of Gregory of Nazianzos's divine names even as he revisits Eustratios's polemic against the Latin rectilinear diagram. It is the latter facet of his work that lays bare the remarkably high stakes of such drawings. Intriguingly, in his 1281/82 "Speech before the Emperor," delivered before Michael VIII Palaiologos, Hierotheos says that, while living in New Heraklios in Asia Minor, he was imprisoned and charged with heresy by clergy sympathetic to Catholicism who took issue with his depiction of the Trinity as a triangle.⁴⁹ However inflated this remark may be, and despite the fact that it likely reflects a zealous Greek theologian's fallout with fellow clerics in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, it still proves that Trinitarian drawings held tremendous importance in Byzantine culture. Church officials were continually calibrating

⁴⁷ Niketas of Maroneia, *Orationes de processione spiritus sancti* 2, ed. Festa, "Niceta di Maronea," 271: "ὅτι δὲ ὅποιον ἂν λάβοις τῶν σημείων μέσον, τὰ λοιπὰ ἄκρα ἐστὶ νοούμενα· καὶ ὅτι ἕκαστον αὐτῶν καὶ μέσον καὶ ἄκρον νοεῖσθαι δύναται· καὶ ὅτι ὅποιον ἂν νοήσῃς μέσον, τῶν λοιπῶν ἐκάτερον ἄκρον φανταζόμενος, οὐδὲ θατέρου ἀφέστηκας."

⁴⁸ Gabriel Patacsi, "Le hiéromoine Hiérothée, théologien du Saint-Esprit," *Klēronomia: Periodikon dēmosiēuma tou Patriarchikou Hidrymatos Paterikōn Meletōn* 13/2 (1981): 299–330, and Nikolaos Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos (IG' ai.) kai to anekdoto syngraphiko ergo tou: Kritikē ekdosē*, 2nd ed. (Athens, 2007).

⁴⁹ Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Logos prosphōnēmatikos*, lines 19–42, ed. Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 133–34, and discussed in Patacsi, "Hiérothée," 303–04, 308–11.

their understanding of the *Filioque* with the diagrams of Catholic theologians in mind, and the schemas that they settled on had repercussions in the political sphere.

In his dialogue *Teaching against the Latins*, Hierotheos refutes a rectilinear diagram that two Catholic theologians, Niphon and Luke, presented to him. The Latins describe their drawing as follows:

Assume three points lying on a straight line [κατ' εὐθεΐαν γραμμὴν]. The first point is the Father, the second and middle one is the Son, and the next is the third, the Holy Spirit. The Father begets the Son immediately, because there is in no way a middle between the Father and Son. The Father processes the Spirit, but not immediately, since the Son is a middle between the Father and Spirit. And if this is the case, then the Holy Spirit processes from the Father through the Son; and if through the Son, then also from him [εἰ δὲ διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ].⁵⁰

In the earliest copy of the *Teaching*, found in a fourteenth-century manuscript now in Florence, the scribe does not illustrate the diagram. But a similar drawing appears in an early copy, now in Venice, of Hierotheos's "Speech against the Calumniators," which the author also delivered before Michael VIII (Fig. 7). There, the scribe depicts the Father, Son, and Spirit as three circles stacked one on top of the other. Labelled *alpha*, *beta*, *gamma*, the Father is called "first," the Son "second," and the Spirit "third." Crucially, contemporary Western manuscripts contain nearly identical diagrams, the most famous of which is in the *Liber figurarum* of Joachim of Fiore. There, the three interlocking rings bear the labels *primus status*, *secundus status*, and *tertius status* (Fig. 8).⁵¹ These terms signal something far more complex within Joachim's apocalyptic theology, denoting a climax in the age of the Spirit. But as the inscription below the *alpha* relates, the sequence of rings also "reveals that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, and that the very same Spirit proceeds from the Son" [ostenditur, quod Spiritus Sanctus procedat a Patre, et quod idem ipse Spiritus procedat a Filio].⁵² Stating that this is "what the Greeks deny," the scribe interprets Joachim's diagram as bearing a polemical message against Orthodox believers. In

⁵⁰ Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Homilia kata Latinōn*, lines 381–89, ed. Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 177: "Κεῖσθωσαν ὄροι τρεῖς κατ' εὐθεΐαν γραμμὴν· ὁ μὲν πρῶτος ὄρος ὁ Πατήρ ἔστω, ὁ δεῦτερος καὶ μέσος ὁ Υἱός, ὁ δὲ μετὰ τούτων τρίτος τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον. Ὁ Πατήρ γεννᾷ τὸν Υἱὸν ἀμέσως—οὐδὲ γὰρ ἔστι τι μέσον Πατρὸς καὶ Υἱοῦ. Ὁ Πατήρ ἐκπορεύει καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀμέσως—ἔστι γὰρ μέσος Πατρὸς καὶ Πνεύματος ὁ Υἱός. Καὶ εἰ τοῦτο, ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐκπορεύεται· εἰ δὲ διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ."

⁵¹ See, for a brief survey of these linear diagrams, Pasquale Iacobone, *Misterium Trinitatis: Dogma e iconografia nell'Italia medievale* (Rome, 1997), 156–57, figs. 4–5, who mentions examples in Petrus Alfonsi (d. 1110) and Montecassino, Archivio dell'Abbazia di Montecassino, MS 132 (c. 1023) (a highly schematic illumination). See on Joachim's diagram Bernard McGinn, "Theologians as Trinitarian Iconographers," in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton, 2006), 186–207, at 195, fig. 5. McGinn briefly sets out the meaning of *status* in his introduction to Bernard McGinn, ed., *A Companion to Joachim of Fiore*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 75 (Leiden, 2017), 1–19, at 5–7. For a fuller discussion of the diagram, see Alexander Patschovsky, "Die Trinitätsdiagramme Joachims von Fiore († 1202): Ihre Herkunft und semantische Struktur im Rahmen der Trinitätsikonographie, von deren Anfängen bis ca. 1200," in *Die Bildwelt der Diagramme Joachims von Fiore: Zur Medialität religiös-politischer Programme im Mittelalter*, ed. Alexander Patschovsky (Ostfildern, 2003), 55–115, at 90–94.

⁵² Patschovsky, "Trinitätsdiagramme Joachims von Fiore," 91 n. 142. See, on this diagram as an argument in support of the *Filioque*, Peter Gemeinhardt, "Joachim the Theologian: Trinitarian Speculation and Doctrinal Debate," in *Companion to Joachim of Fiore*, ed. McGinn, 41–87, at 62.

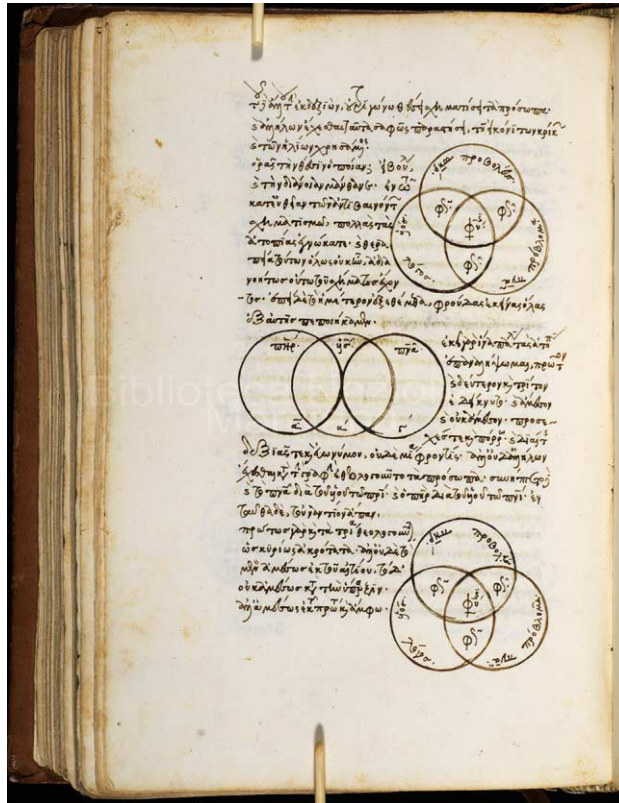


Fig. 7. Hieromonk Hierotheos, “Speech against the Calumniators,” fourteenth-century manuscript. Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, MS gr. 153, fol. 208v. Photo: By permission of the Ministry of Culture/Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana.

both drawings, the flow of circles conveys the Father’s causal primacy, which is implicit in his position “above” the Son (or rather to his left), and the Son’s position “above” the Spirit (or rather to his left, since both diagrams have been flipped on their side). Both the Greek and the Latin drawings position the Son as an intermediary, showing his circle overlapping with those of the Father and Spirit.

Hierotheos objects to his opponents’ diagram on the grounds that it entails a ranking of the three persons. Claiming that Niphon and Luke have depicted a hierarchy within God, he criticizes them for portraying the Son as a “middle order” [μέσσην τάξιν].⁵³ Following Eustratios’s lead, Hierotheos then offers his own circular-triangular diagram as a corrective (Fig. 9):

Now, it must be shown in what way the forms [μορφῶς] of this schema (i.e., the rectilinear diagram) fall apart [φυγεῖν], and how the unschematizable (persons) are schematized through other (forms) possessing the shape of a sphere. Let, then, a circle be drawn, and inside it place three points in the form of a triangle. Let the first point be called the “Father”

⁵³ Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Homilia kata Latinōn*, lines 520–27, ed. Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 181.

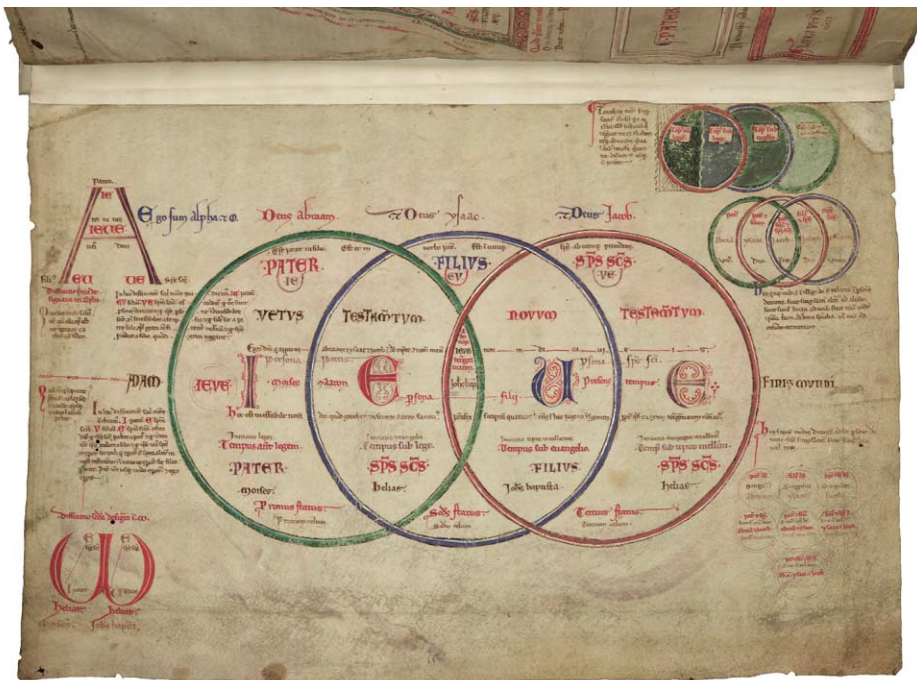


Fig. 8. Joachim of Fiore, *Liber figurarum*, early thirteenth-century manuscript. Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 255a, fol. 7v. Photo: Reproduced by permission of the President and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

and the “Processor,” the second, to its right, the “Son” and “Logos,” and the third, to its left, the “Spirit” and “Processed.”⁵⁴

Next, Hierotheos, like Niketas’s Latin speaker, demonstrates the “equivalent relations” linking each of the triangle’s three points, which he labels sequentially as α (Father), β (Son) and γ (Spirit); and $\alpha\omega$ (Processor), $\beta\psi$ (Logos), $\gamma\chi$ (Processed). The scribe enhances Hierotheos’s exposition of the drawing by writing the reciprocal relations along the three sides of the triangle.⁵⁵

Further along in the *Teaching*, Hierotheos comments on these relations in a complex diagram of three rings arranged like a clover behind a circle and equilateral triangle labeled with Gregory of Nazianzos’s six names (see above) (Fig. 10).⁵⁶ This

⁵⁴ Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Homilia kata Latinōn*, lines 639–46, ed. Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 185: “Nūn εδει δεῖξαι πὼς τε φυγεῖν τὰς τούτου μορφὰς καὶ πὼς δι’ ἄλλων ὄρων σφαιρικὴν ἔχόντων τὴν σύστασιν σχηματῖσαι τὰ ἀσχημάτιστα. Γεγράφθω τοιγάρτοι κύκλος καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ κείσθωσαν ὄροι τρεῖς κατὰ τρίγωνον θέσιν· ὁ εἰς ὄρος Πατὴρ κεκλησῆθω καὶ προβολεύς, ὁ ἕτερος δ’ αὐτὸ ἐκ δεξιῶν Υἱὸς καὶ Λόγος, ὁ δ’ ἄλλος ὁ ἐξ εὐνόμων Πνεῦμα καὶ πρόβλημα.”

⁵⁵ Thus: (a) “The Father is the Father of the Son, and the Son is the Son of the Father”; (b) “the Processed is the Processed of the Processor, and the Processor is the Processor of the Processed”; and (c) “the Logos is the Logos of the Spirit, and the Spirit is the Spirit of the Logos.”

⁵⁶ Cf. a triangle amidst three circles in Theodore II Dukas Laskaris’s *First Oration against the Latins*. Theodore’s triangle, as rendered by the scribe, is much smaller and is not encompassed by a fourth

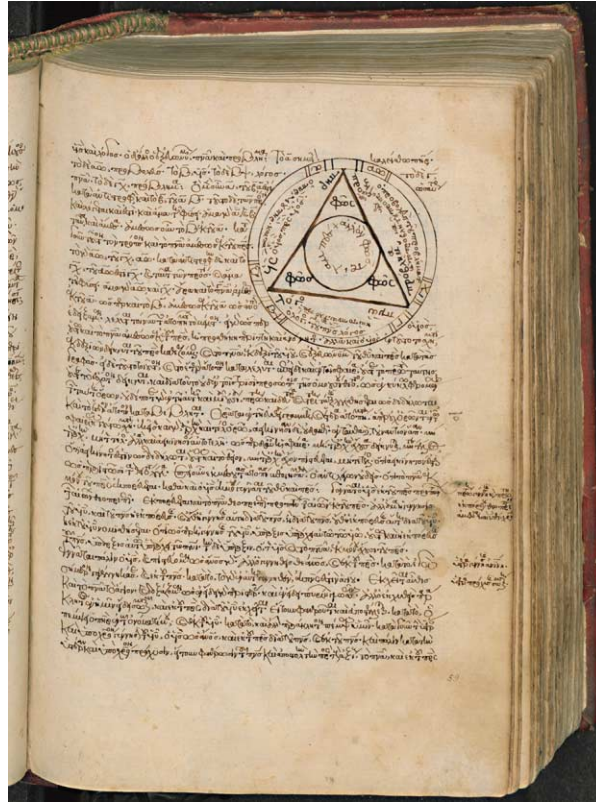


Fig. 9. Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Teaching against the Latins*, fourteenth-century manuscript. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Pluteus 7.19, fol. 59r. Photo: Courtesy of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.

time, the scribe in the Florence manuscript has written the six “syllogisms,” which clarify the relations between the three persons of God, along the circumference of each person’s circle. Stating, “I have also rendered the points as convertible” [ἐκεῖσε καὶ γὰρ εἶναι τοὺς ὄρους ἀντιστρέφοντας παρεσκευάσα], Hierotheos again stresses that each person must be conceptually arrived at by way of the other two.⁵⁷

circle. Theodore contrasts the circular-triangular diagram with a straight line, but he is mostly concerned about a line—not line segment, as in both Hierotheos and Eustratios—lacking a beginning, since that contradicts the doctrine of Creation. Theodore also believes, however, that a vertical axis wrongly subordinates the second and third persons (i.e., Son and Spirit). See Christos Krikōnēs, *Theodōrou B Laskareōs: Peri christianikēs theologias logoi*, *Analekta Vlatadōn* 49 (Thessalonica, 1988), 129–31, and Dimiter Angelov, *The Byzantine Hellene: The Life of Emperor Theodore Laskaris and Byzantium in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, UK, 2019), 197–98. See two similar trinitarian diagrams, without the triangle, in Sōtērios Kadas, *Ta eikonographēmēna cheirographa tou Hagiou Orous*, *Vyzantina Mnēmeia* 15 (Thessalonica, 2008), 236, pl. 167 (delta), 159, pl. 97 (beta).

⁵⁷ Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Homilia kata Latinōn*, lines 747–55, ed. Ioannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 189.



Fig. 10. Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Teaching against the Latins*, fourteenth-century manuscript. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Pluteus 7.19, fol. 60r–v. Photo: Courtesy of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.

Hierotheos believes that this triangulation refutes his opponents’ rectilinear diagram:

the first (point) on the straight line is not well placed, I mean, the Father, the uncaused [ἄναρχον], and the third and the second and middle [μέσον]; and the second (premise), I mean the Son, and the first and the third positioned [κείμενον]; and the third, the Spirit I mean, and the first and the second. This is shown through six syllogisms, which are the following.⁵⁸

Hierotheos then enumerates and explains the six “syllogisms,” the most important of which for the *Filioque* is the final pair dealing with the Spirit.⁵⁹ The scribe wraps

⁵⁸ Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Homilia kata Latinōn*, lines 794–800, ed. Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 191: “Ἐν τούτῳ γὰρ εὐρήσει καὶ τὸν ἐν τῇ εὐθείᾳ γραμμῇ πρῶτον κείμενον οὐ καλῶς, τὸν Πατέρα λέγω τὸν ἄναρχον, καὶ τρίτον καὶ δεύτερον καὶ μέσον· τὸ δὲ δεύτερον, λέγω δὴ τὸν Υἱόν, καὶ πρῶτον καὶ τρίτον κείμενον· τὸ δὲ γὰρ τρίτον, τὸ Πνεῦμα φημι, καὶ πρῶτον καὶ δεύτερον. Καὶ τούτο διὰ συλλογισμῶν ἕξ.”

⁵⁹ These two “syllogisms” read: “Ὡσαύτως καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ πρόβλημα τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐστὶ Πνεῦμα καὶ πρόβλημα, ὁ δὲ Πατὴρ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ Λόγου ἐστὶ Πατὴρ· τὸ ἄρα Πνεῦμα τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ Λόγου

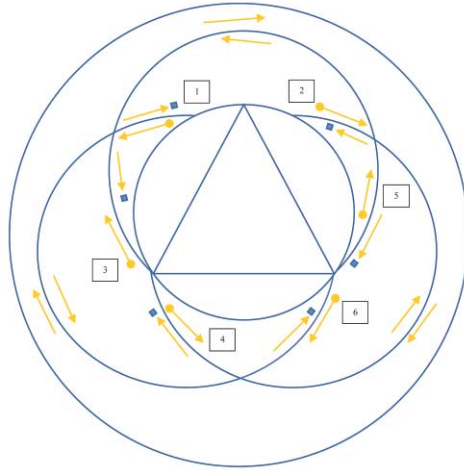


Fig. 11. Simplified reconstruction of Hieromonk Hierotheos's second syllogistic diagram. Drawing by Sam Richter.

each pair of syllogisms, of which there are two for each person, around the inner and outer edges of the circumferences of the other two persons. Thus, the Spirit's two syllogisms run along the inner and outer edges of, respectively, the circles of the Father and Son. Beginning at the bottom right and moving in opposite directions, they pass around the duo of "middle" persons (the Son, the Father), and end at the opposite base angles of the triangle (the Father, the Son), as can be seen in a simplified reconstruction (Fig. 11).

Beginning and ending with the same term (person), this design format calls to mind drawings of the rhetorical device known as *kuklos*, in which the first and last words of a proposition are identical. Circular in structure, *kuklos* diagrams present example sentences written around a circumference. Byzantine rhetoricians thought that *kuklos* syntax endowed assertions with self-evident persuasive force—exactly the visual effect Hierotheos desired.⁶⁰ It is this rhetorical convention, rather than a philosophical tradition, that informs Hierotheos's use of the term "syllogism."⁶¹

Πνευμά ἐστι. Οὗτος ὁ συλλογισμὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ Πνεύματος ἀρχεται, συμπεραίνει δὲ πρὸς τὸν Λόγον τε καὶ Υἱόν. Τὸ Πνεῦμα πάλιν τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ Λόγον τε καὶ Υἱόν. Τὸ Πνεῦμα πάλιν τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ Λόγου Πνευμά ἐστι, ὁ δὲ Υἱὸς καὶ Λόγος τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐστι Λόγος καὶ Υἱός. ἄρα τὸ Πνεῦμα καὶ πρόβλημα τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐστι Πνεῦμα καὶ πρόβλημα. Καὶ οὗτοι οἱ δύο συλλογισμοὶ τὸ πρῶτεϊον διδάσσι τῷ Πνεύματι καὶ προβλήματι." [Similarly, (5) the Spirit and the Processed is the Spirit and the Processed of the Father, but the Father is the Father of the Son and of the Logos. Therefore, the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son and of the Logos. This syllogism begins with the Spirit and concludes with both the Logos and the Son. Again, (6) (the syllogism that begins with) the Spirit of the Son (concludes with) both the Logos and the Son. Thus, the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son and of the Logos, but the Son and the Logos is the Son and the Logos of the Father. Therefore, the Spirit and the Processed is the Spirit and Processed of the Father. These two syllogisms assign the first (premise) to the Spirit and the Processed.] Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Homilia kata Latinōn*, lines 828–38, ed. Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 192.

⁶⁰ On diagrams of the *kuklos*, see Valiavitcharska ("Oral Aspects of Argumentation Training," 23–24), who discusses Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS gr. 1983, fol. 9v.

⁶¹ On syllogistics in Byzantium, see Jonathan Barnes, "Syllogistic in the Anon Heiberg," in *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources*, ed. Katerina Ierodiakonou (Oxford, 2004), 97–137. See on *Speculum* 98/3 (July 2023)

Instead of strictly rational operations, the matrix of theological statements in his drawing functions as a network of linguistic symmetries: a swirling ensemble of propositions that succinctly visualizes how each person serves in turn as a “cause,” “premise,” and “conclusion” in a logical plotting out of the divine hypostases. Returning to an earlier remark, Hierotheos thus summarizes this section by observing that in scripture each person is first, second, and third, and “undifferentiated with respect to superiority,” and so too in syllogistics.⁶²

Towards the end of the dialogue, Niphon presses Hierotheos on his claim that the Spirit is seated at God the Father’s “left hand” [ἐξ εὐωνύμων] (see Fig. 9 above). Hierotheos’s fullest response to this challenge appears in his “Speech against the Calumniators.” There, he quotes Pseudo-Athanasios, who speaks of the three angels who visited Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre:

“It is evident with the three men seated before Abraham that the Holy Spirit was seated at his (i.e., the Father’s) left hand. For this is his special seat. Just as he says to the Son, ‘Sit at my right hand’ (Ps. 110.1), it is to be understood that, the Son being seated on his right, he says alternately to the Spirit here, ‘Sit at my left hand.’”⁶³

Once more playing with symmetries, Hierotheos draws attention to the spatializing language of scripture. Assuring Niphon that “scripture does not anthropomorphize God, but rather speaks in this wise for us,” he proposes that the Psalms-writer affords special knowledge of God.⁶⁴

This language, in turn, provides Hierotheos a means by which to diagram the Trinity:

For having pictured in my mind [μοι παρασκευάσας τῷ νῷ] the three men whom Abraham feasted as seated at a table, (where) my understanding was illuminated by them, I unveiled the sense of the diagram [καταυγασθεὶς τὴν διάνοιαν τὰ τοῦ σχήματος ἐξεκάλυψα].⁶⁵

Hierotheos’s “syllogisms,” Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 75–78, 89–93, and Basil Lourié, “A Logical Scheme and Paraconsistent Topological Separation in Byzantium: Inter-Trinitarian Relations according to Hieromonk Hierotheos and Joseph Bryennios,” in *Relations: Ontology and Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Daniele Bertini and Damiano Migliorini (Milan, 2018), 283–99, esp. 293.

⁶² Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Homilia kata Latinōn*, lines 838–46, ed. Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 192. Hierotheos’s linking of the three persons by copula and negation (“is”/“is not”) bears comparison with Western theologians’ deployment of the Shield of Faith, which effectively diagrams tenets of the Creed. See, on the Shield of Faith, Hamburger, *Diagramming Devotion*, 224–25, 242–43.

⁶³ Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Logos pros tous sukophantountas*, lines 433–39, ed. Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 112–13: “τῶν οὖν τριῶν καθισάντων ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἀβραάμ δῆλον ὅτι ἐξ εὐωνύμων ἐκάθισε τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· αὕτη αὐτῷ ἀφορισμένη δίαιτα. Ὡσπερ οὖν πρὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ Υἱὸν εἶπε, ‘κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου,’ ἐκ τοῦ καθίσει ἐκ δεξιῶν τὸν Υἱὸν ἔστιν ἐπινοῆσαι, ὅτι κατ’ ἐπιτροπὴν εἶπε καὶ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ Πνεύματι, ‘κάθου ἐξ εὐωνύμων μου.’” Quoting Pseudo-Athanasios, *De communi essentia* 9, PG 28:45A. The source is noted by Patacsi, “Hiérothée,” 325. On the text, see Sever J. Voicu, “Il florilegio *De communi essentia* (CPG 2240), Severiano di Gabala e altri Padri,” *Sacris erudiri* 55 (2016): 129–55, esp. 151.

⁶⁴ Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Logos pros tous sukophantountas*, lines 443–45, ed. Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 113: “Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀνθρωπίζει ἡ Γραφή τὸν Θεόν, ἀλλ’ ἐκ τῶν καθ’ ἡμᾶς διαλέγεται.”

⁶⁵ Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Logos pros tous sukophantountas*, lines 451–55, ed. Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 113: “Ἐγὼ δὲ τοὺς τρεῖς ἐκείνους, οὓς ἐξένισεν ὁ Ἀβραάμ, ὡς ἐπὶ τραπέζης ἐγκαθίσει μοι παρασκευάσας τῷ νῷ ᾧδ’ ὑπ’ αὐτῶν καταυγασθεὶς τὴν διάνοιαν τὰ τοῦ σχήματος ἐξεκάλυψα.” Instead of “ᾧδ’” I am reading “ᾧ δ’.”

Diagramming is not simply a copying of iconography but an intellectual effort that parallels the task of the painter, whose work can be conceptualized in line with schematic drawings:

For in the same way that the painter schematizes this (i.e., the Trinity) on the panel, not according to a rectilinear form, as those who incorrectly diagram do [κατὰ τοὺς οὐκ ὀρθῶς σχηματίζοντες], but as a triangle (formed by) three embracing circles, we have graphically depicted it (i.e., the Trinity).⁶⁶

For Hierotheos, the diagram and icon working together give the lie to what he believes is his interlocutors' controversial and ultimately false depiction of God along a vertical axis:

But having drawn those men with spherical lines [γρᾶμμαῖς σφαιρικαῖς], just as the painter does with colors [τοῖς χρώμασιν]—for the ring is a spherical form [σφαιροειδής], and the sun too is a spherical form—I have rendered the opponents' rectilinear schema fraudulent and unintelligible.⁶⁷

In this remarkable sequence of passages, Hierotheos declares that he has distilled the very same theological truths through diagramming as the painter expresses by means of iconography. Whereas the painter works with pigments, the theologian works with lines, but both articulate the same essential truths through underlying formal and syntactical elements. Reading the *Synthronoi* iconography through symmetrical statements in the Book of Psalms, Hierotheos says that the Bible refutes the Latin diagram which blasphemously arranges the Trinity along a vertical axis.

Hierotheos's analysis of the *Synthronoi* iconography suggests that the Byzantine schematic imagination was highly developed. In their debates with Catholics, Greek writers sought to beat the Latins at their own geometric games, but this inter-confessional exchange altered how they themselves viewed icons. We can imagine how Hierotheos's readers would have understood the *Synthronoi* by superimposing his last drawing onto Rublev's Trinity icon (Fig. 12).⁶⁸ Fascinatingly, this imaginative exercise reveals how uncannily close Hierotheos's formal dissection of the iconography was to Mainka's own analysis. But whereas Mainka associates rather generic theological meanings with the triangle inscribed in a circle, Hierotheos situates

⁶⁶ Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Logos pros tous sukophantountas*, lines 805–09, ed. Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 125: “Ταύτην καὶ ζωγράφος ὡσαύτως σχηματίζει τοῖς πίναξιν οὐ κατὰ θέσιν εὐθεῖαν κατὰ τοὺς οὐκ ὀρθῶς σχηματίζοντες, τρίγωνον δὲ διὰ κρίκων τριῶν ἐχομένων ἀλλήλων, ὡς γραφικῶς ἡμεῖς ἐξεθέμεθα.”

⁶⁷ Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Logos pros tous sukophantountas*, lines 513–18, ed. Iōannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 115: “Τοῦτους οὖν τοὺς ἄνδρας γραμμαῖς σφαιρικαῖς σχηματίσας καὶ γὰρ, ὡσπερ δῆτα καὶ ζωγράφος τοῖς χρώμασιν—σφαιροειδῆς γὰρ καὶ ὁ κρίκος, σφαιροειδῆς καὶ ὁ ἥλιος—τὸν κατ' εὐθεῖαν τῶν ἀντιπιδόντων σχηματισμὸν παραλελογισμένον ὄντα καὶ ἀδιανόητον ἐκ μέσου πεποίηκα.”

⁶⁸ Hierotheos's iconographic reading supports scholars who have interpreted the central angel in Rublev's Trinity as the Father. See, reviewing the debate, Clemena Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God* (Farnham, UK, 2010), 161–62, and also Ludolf Müller, *Die Dreifaltigkeitsikone des Andréj Rubljow*, *Quellen und Studien zur russischen Geistesgeschichte* 10 (Munich, 1990), 60–99.



Fig. 12. Comparison of Mainka’s formal analysis with Hierotheos’s second syllogistic diagram superimposed over Rublev’s Trinity. Photo: Author, graphic by Sam Richter.

the same drawing within a heated intercultural debate. In so doing, he provides a period vocabulary for the study of abstract principles of medieval pictorial design. Equipped with these analyses of compositional devices, Hierotheos was prepared to demonstrate what made an image heretical or truthful, regardless of whether the painter had planned it with a diagram in mind.

JOSEPH BRYENNIOS

The circular-triangular schema reached its apogee in the writings of the early fifteenth-century Cretan preacher Joseph Bryennios. Bryennios, who was a close reader of Hierotheos and a gifted teacher and versatile writer in his own right, supported union with the Catholic Church. His quarrels with Greek monastic leaders on Crete, whose political views he did not share, probably led to his banishment by the Venetians in 1402. Moving to Constantinople, Bryennios resided first at the Stoudios Monastery and later at Charsianites Monastery.

In an autograph manuscript now in Sofia, Bryennios copies an elaborate diagram of Hierotheos's making, first attested in a fourteenth-century copy of the latter author's "Syllogisms" now in Venice.⁶⁹ Labelled Διάγραμμα Ἱεροθέου [Diagram of Hierotheos], the drawing shows nine small circles, three for each person, arranged in a flattened diamond shape against the backdrop of six larger circles (Figs. 13 and 14).⁷⁰ Since it departs from the circular-triangular genealogy discussed here, I shall not focus on this diagram, but it is worth bearing in mind because Bryennios everywhere viewed his Trinitarian sketches as an extension of Hierotheos's corpus. Rather, I shall focus on Bryennios's adaptation of Hierotheos's second "syllogistic" diagram (Fig. 15).

Bryennios introduces this drawing in his *Πρὸς δέκα κεφάλαια καὶ τοσαύτας ἐνστάσεις, ἀντιρητηκός* [Refutation of ten chapters and as many objections; hereafter "Ten chapters"].⁷¹ Bryennios may have written this text in his last years on Crete, given that he refers to his nearly two decades of missionary work on the island. Like Hierotheos, Bryennios presents the diagram to censure his Catholic opponents' rectilinear drawing. Bryennios may have become acquainted with Western Trinitarian diagrams through conversations with Catholics on Crete, and probably he was allured by Hierotheos's writings out of a need to find a response to the Latins' diagrammatic defense of the *Filioque*.

Bryennios's diagrams have been criticized by scholars. In an early study of Bryennios's oeuvre, Archimandrite Arsenii Ivashchenko claimed that the syllogistic and nine-circle diagrams both betray a "lack of selectiveness," "want of critical

⁶⁹ On Bryennios's autograph, see Charalambos Dendrinis, "Palaiologan Scholars at Work: Makarios Makres and Joseph Bryennios' Autograph," in *From Manuscripts to Book: Proceedings of the International Workshop on Textual Criticism and Editorial Practice for Byzantine Texts (Vienna, 10–11 December 2009)*, ed. Antonia Giannouli and Elisabeth Schiffer, *Denkschriften der philosophisch-historischen Klasse 431, Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung 29* (Vienna, 2011), 25–53.

⁷⁰ Patacsi first pointed out that Bryennios borrowed his diagram from Hierotheos. Gabriel Patacsi, "Joseph Bryennios et les discussions sur un concile d'union (1414–1431)," *Klērnomia: Periodikon dēmosieuma tou Patriarchikou Hidrymatos Paterikōn Meletōn* 5/1 (1973): 73–96, at 81–82. Bryennios believed that Hierotheos was Pseudo-Dionysios's teacher, a theologian known by that same name. On the earlier Hierotheos, see Ben Schomakers, "An Unknown *Elements of Theology*? On Proclus as the Model for the *Hierotheos* in the Dionysian Corpus," in *Proclus and His Legacy*, ed. David D. Butorac and Danielle A. Layne, *Millennium-Studien* 65 (Berlin, 2017), 183–97.

⁷¹ See on the text, Hélène Bazini, "Une première édition des oeuvres de Joseph Bryennios: Les *Traitéés adressés aux Crétois*," *Revue des études byzantines* 62 (2004): 83–132, esp. 102–03, 87–88, 91–92. On Bryennios's work in the genre of "chapters," see Florin Leonte, "Moral Lessons in Late Byzantium: Rhetorical Models and Didacticism in Joseph Bryennios's *Forty-Nine Chapters* (c. 1402)," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 43/2 (2019): 219–42.

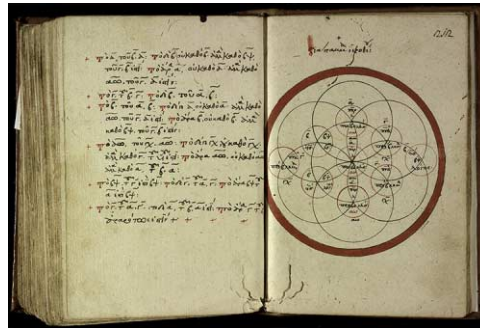


Fig. 13. Hieromonk Hierotheos, *Syllogisms*, fourteenth-century manuscript. Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, MS gr. 83, fols. 211v–212r. Photo: By permission of the Ministry of Culture/Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana. Further reproduction prohibited.

precision” and “excessive use of syllogisms.”⁷² Similarly, in 1981, Patacsi called the nine-circle diagram that the Cretan preacher copied from his forebear “un dessin confus” (a confused drawing).⁷³ However, such judgments reflect less the drawings themselves than the ideological baggage of their creator. Bryennios, unlike Hierotheos, unequivocally supported union negotiations, and consequently, he occupies an awkward place in the post-Byzantine ecclesiastical tradition. Some later Greek authors probably wrote him out of the diagrams, even as others, including the eighteenth-century Athonite monk Neophyte of Peloponnese, elevated him to canonicity, excerpting Bryennios’s drawings in summaries of church doctrine.⁷⁴ In Ioannis, and later at the Athos Academy, Neophyte studied under Eugenios Boulgaris, who, in 1768, published the first edition of Bryennios’s writings, including an illustration of his nine-circle diagram. Neophyte’s regard for Bryennios’s drawings thus comes as no surprise. Both the positive and negative responses to Bryennios were guaranteed by the fact that, like his lodestar Hierotheos, who appealed to Pseudo-Athanasios, Bryennios presents himself as the spokesman of a church father. However, it bears repeating that no illustrated source for his or any of the other diagrams exists in patristic authors.⁷⁵ In fact, the most direct verbal

⁷² Archimandrite Arsenii (Ivashchenko), *O zhizni i sochineniakh ieromonakha Iosifa Vrienniia, grecheskago propovednika v kontse XIV i pervoi chetverti XV stoletii* (Moscow, 1879), 55 and n. 73.

⁷³ Patacsi, “Hiérothée,” 326; also 308 where the author describes the drawing as having “[un] caractère . . . confus et rudimentaire.” Patacsi’s essay was an invaluable contribution to the study of this little-known theologian, notwithstanding that he quickly dismissed the diagrams.

⁷⁴ See Neophyte of Peloponnese, *Epitomē tōn hierōn kanonōn*, Moscow, Russian State Library, fond. 181, MS 34 (in. 841) (not later than 1784). The three diagrams appear on foldouts between fols. 41v–52v. L. I. Shchegoleva observes that the codex is a partial autograph and cites Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Române, MS N. 222 (295) for a more complete autograph. L. I. Shchegoleva, “Grecheskie rukopisi, khраниashchiesia v Rossiiskoi gosudarstvennoi biblioteke: Fond 181. Chast’ 2,” *Vestnik tserkovnoi istorii* 35/36 (2014): 319–58, at 323 n. 2. Boulgaris was a specialist in the Byzantine tradition of diagramming. Georgios of Crete, also his student, included many diagrams in his *Logic* (c. 1750s). See Princeton, Princeton University Library, Gr. MS 27, unpaginated, with several logical diagrams, including three foldouts and eight loose-leaf appendices.

⁷⁵ Cf. Ioannidēs, *Ho hieromonachos Hierotheos*, 90–92, and Ch. G. Sōtēropoulos, “To schēma tou kuklou kai hē taksis en tēi Hagiai Triadi kata ton Theophanē Nikaias: Epi tēi basei tou anekdotou



Fig. 14. Joseph Bryennios, “Ten chapters,” autograph manuscript, beginning of the fifteenth century. Sofia, Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies “Prof. Ivan Dujčev,” Cod. D, gr. 262, fol. 155r. Photo: Copyright, Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies “Prof. Ivan Dujčev.”

parallel for Bryennios’s diagrams appears in Proklos, who exerted a strong influence on Eustratios and thence upon his followers.⁷⁶

Unfortunately, the “Ten chapters” remains unedited, but Bryennios returns to his syllogistic diagram in his “Homily Two on the Trinity,” delivered before a papal envoy in Constantinople at the behest of Emperor Manuel II in 1422. Claiming that his diagram is based on a “theorem” by Maximos the Confessor (seventh century), Bryennios lifts a quote from Niketas’s second *Dialogue*, telling his listeners to “take my symbols as both the mean and extreme in the Trinity” [ταῦτά μοι σύμβολα τίθεσθε τῆς ἐν τῇ Τριάδι μεσότητος καὶ ἀκρότητος] (see Fig. 5 above).

ergou tou, Kata latinōn, logoi treis,” *Epistēmōnikē epētēris tēs Theologikēs Scholēs tou Panepistēmīou Athēnōn* 27 (1985): 506–41, esp. 507–09 and 518, both of whom overstate the role of patristic metaphors. Theophanes of Nicaea describes God as a center point inside of two concentric circles with radii, a format that derives from metaphors in Proklos and Pseudo-Dionysios. The author of this essay is preparing an edition and translation of this important discussion.

⁷⁶ One should not rule out the influence of Western Trinitarian, cosmological, and scientific diagrams on Hierotheos and Bryennios. For instance, the former’s three interlocking rings laid out in a triangle and Bryennios’s second diagram illustrating Maximos the Confessor’s “theorem” resemble circular drawings based on Pliny’s description of planetary motions, as well as later Trinitarian diagrams in the West. Both display three rings overlapping like clover leaves within a larger circle. Similarly, the nine-circle diagram bears comparison with Byrhtferth of Ramsey’s celebrated drawing of the months. Both schemas are built up from nine equal-sized rings laid out in a diamond format along a central axis. (Bryennios also adds a backdrop of six larger circles.) See for the Western Trinitarian diagrams Iacobone, *Misterium Trinitatis*, 158, figs. 7–8, who describes one of them as follows: “three circles intersect, and their centers coincide with the angles of an equilateral triangle that we can imagine inscribed in them.” For the cosmological diagrams, see Hamburger, *Diagramming Devotion*, 102–05 (Byrhtferth: Oxford, St. John’s College, MS 17, c. 1110), and Benjamin Anderson, *Cosmos and Community in Early Medieval Art* (New Haven, 2017), 73–106; and on mathematical diagrams, see Joseph V. Navari, “The Leitmotiv in the Mathematical Thought of Gerbert of Aurillac,” *Journal of Medieval History* 1/2 (1975): 139–50.

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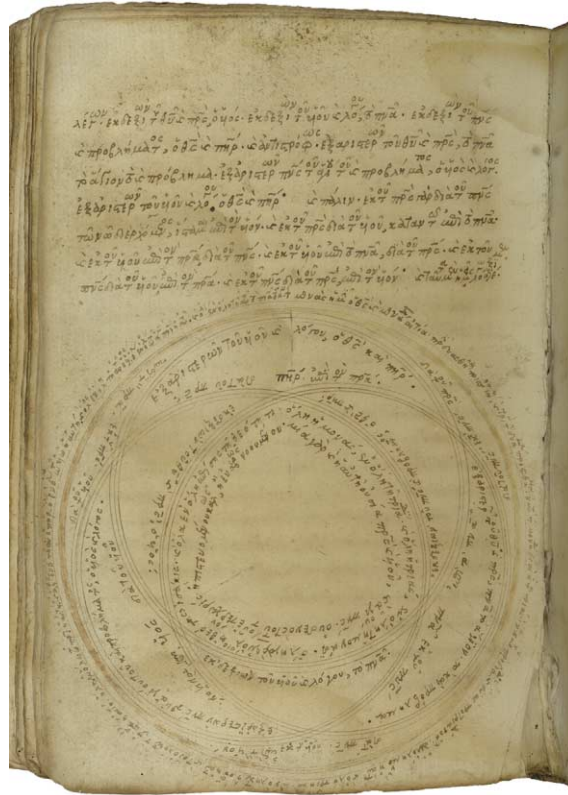


Fig. 15. Joseph Bryennios, “Ten chapters,” autograph manuscript, beginning of the fifteenth century. Sofia, Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies “Prof. Ivan Dujčev,” Cod. D, gr. 262, fol. 174v. Photo: Copyright, Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies “Prof. Ivan Dujčev.”

Carefully studying his predecessors’ diagrams, Bryennios, like Niketas, uses his schematic composition to elucidate the “mean and extremity” [μεσότητος καὶ ἄκρότητας] in the Trinity, even as he follows Hierotheos’s critique of the Latin rectilinear format.⁷⁷

Notably, Bryennios’s “Homily Two on the Trinity” is responsible for the attribution of his syllogistic diagram to Maximos the Confessor in the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*.⁷⁸ In his groundbreaking study of Maximos, Sergei Leont’evich Epifanovich cites Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS gr. 887 for the diagram (Fig. 16).⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Joseph Bryennios, *Orationes* 2, lines 106–07, ed. Eugenios Boulgaris, *Iōsēf monachou tou Bruenniou: Ta eurethenta (I–II)*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1768), 1:24.

⁷⁸ Maurice Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vol. 3 (Turnhout, 1979), 444, no. 7707, “Additamenta e uariis codicibus, 26 ‘Theorema.’”

⁷⁹ S. L. Epifanovich, *Materialy k izucheniiu zhizni i tvoreniiu prep. Maksima Ispovednika* (Kiev, 1917), xii, 78–80, cat. item 26. Epifanovich felt comfortable attributing the diagram to Maximos because of the church father’s lengthy discussion of a *computus ecclesiasticus*. See Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS gr. 886, fols. 319v–346v, at 329r–v, 333r, 335v–336v, 338r, 339r–v, 346v. Some of the diagrams are printed in PG 19:1217–80, at 1220, 1253, 1264. See recently on



Fig. 16. Maximos the Confessor, “Theorems,” manuscript copied by Constantine Palaiokappa, c. 1539/40. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS gr. 887, 1C (frontispiece). Photo: Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

This codex was copied between 1539/40 on Mount Athos by Constantine Palaiokappa, who falsely attributed numerous texts to ancient authors to increase their appeal in the eyes of his wealthy Parisian patrons.⁸⁰ Whether Palaiokappa cropped the text himself is not known, but other diagrams purporting to be based on the church fathers did circulate as self-contained entities. One example is a thirteenth-century diagram in Moscow showing three circles labeled “fire”/ “spring” [πῦρ/πηγή] for the Father; “stream”/ “radiance” [ποταμός/ἀπαύγασμα] for the Son; and “light” [φῶς] for the Spirit (Fig. 17). This drawing is based on an excerpt by Pseudo-Dionysios in the polemical miscellany known as the *Sacred Arsenal*.⁸¹ Theologians on both sides of the Filioque controversy debated patristic metaphors such as these, and Bryennios even illustrates several in his autograph, revealing the affinity between figurative language and schematic drawings.⁸² Given the tendency to

the text P. V. Kuzenkov, “Prepodobnyi Maksim Isповедnik: *Paskhalisticheskii traktat*,” *Bogoslovskie Trudy* 43/44 (2012): 99–178. On the Western *computus*, see Kühnel, *The End of Time in the Order of Things*, 65–115, and in Byzantium, see Safran, “Prolegomenon,” 365–67.

⁸⁰ On Palaiokappa see Carmen García Bueno, “El copista cretense Constantino Paleocapa: Un estado de la cuestión,” *Estudios bizantinos* 1 (2013): 198–218. García Bueno believes that Palaiokappa forged the colophon to increase the manuscript’s Greek aura (200, 204, 206–08, 214).

⁸¹ Andronikos Kamateros, *Florilegium patristicum* 116, lines 2–6, ed. Alessandra Bucossi, *Andronici Camateri: Sacrum armamentarium*, Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca 75 (Turnhout, 2014), 182, quoting Pseudo-Dionysios, *De divinis nominibus* 2.7.

⁸² See Sofia, Centre of Slavo-Byzantine Studies “Prof. Ivan Dujčev,” Cod. D, gr. 262, fols. 142r, 148r, 161r, 164r. Pope Leo IX discussed the metaphors at the Synod of Bari, but lamentably the proceedings were lost. According to Humbert of Silva Candida, Leo criticized the Greeks’ interpretation of the metaphor (*exemplum*) of the spring, stating: “Patrem dixit esse fontem vivum, Filium rivum indeficientem, Spiritum vero sanctum lacum inexticcabilem: lacum, qui non a solo fonte, sed a fonte et rivo procedit et replet orbem terrarum.” [It is said that the Father is a living spring, the Son an unending stream, and the Holy Spirit an inextinguishable water; and a water which proceeds not only from the spring but both

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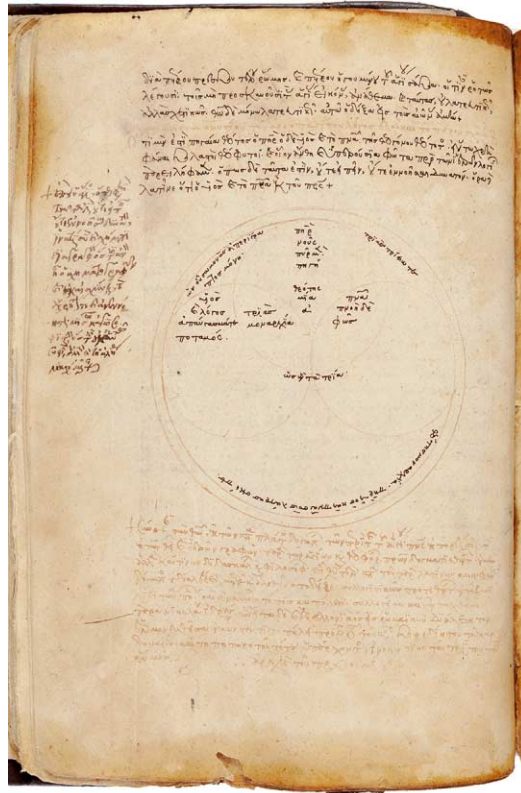


Fig. 17. Pseudo-Dionysios’s diagram of the Trinity, *Miscellany against the Latins*, early fourteenth-century manuscript. Moscow, State History Museum, MS Synod. gr. 368, fol. 30v. Photo: Copyright, State History Museum, Moscow.

anchor diagrams in patristic texts, it is possible that Palaiokappa reframed Bryennios’s passage to concoct an ancient aura, dodging the problematic authorship of a pro-union author. However, he still might have been following a practice of pairing Trinitarian diagrams with authoritative glosses.

In the homily Bryennios introduces his diagram as follows:

In one of his theorems, great Maximos the Confessor commends our teaching about these three circles equal one to another and united one to another by a harmony of equality.⁸³

from the spring and the stream, and which fills the entire earth.] *Rationes de s. Spiritus processione a Patre et Filio* 5.2, edited in Michel, *Humbert und Kerullarios*, 1:101. See, as representative of the Byzantine response, Niketas Stethatos, *Synthesis adversus Latinos* 27.1–3 (c. 1053), edited in Michel, *Humbert und Kerullarios*, 2:343–409, at 405–06 and 360–61. On Niketas’s patristic sources, see Gemeinhardt, *Filioque-Kontroverse*, 386, 388. See also, as exemplary, Niketas of Maroneia’s fourth *Dialogue*, edited in Nicola Festa, “Niceta di Maronea,” *Bessarione* 18 (1914): 61–75, 249–59.

⁸³ Joseph Bryennios, *Or. 2*, lines 113–21, ed. Boulgaris, *Iōsēf monachou tou Bruenniou*, 1:24: “ὁ μὲν τῆ ὁμολογία μέγιστος Μάξιμος τὸν λόγον ἡμῖν συνίστησιν οὕτω λέγων ἔν τινι θεωρήματι, ἐκ τριῶν κύκλων ἴσων ἀλλήλοις, καὶ ἀλλήλων ἀπτομένων ἐπίσης συνισταμένων.”

Like his forerunners, Bryennios conceptualizes his drawing in terms of formal symmetries, positing that the Father (the upper circle) is at the “center,” whereas the Spirit (the lower right circle) is on his “left,” and the Son (the lower left circle) is on his “right.” Seeking, like Hierotheos, to illustrate how the three persons of God constitute a conceptually interwoven trio of beginning, middle, and end, he purports again to quote Maximos the Confessor, stating:

“Travelling in my mind from the Father through the Son, I come to rest at the Spirit; and from the Father through the Spirit, I arrive at the Son; and from the Son through the Spirit at the Father; and from the Son through the Father at the Spirit; and from the Spirit through the Father at the Son; and from the Spirit through the Son at the Father.”⁸⁴

In closing, Bryennios echoes a famous metaphor in Proklos’s *Platonic Theology*, where the philosopher likens knowledge of God to a circular dance, asking his listener:

Do you now behold a strange circular dance which you have never seen [ὄρῳς χορείαν ξένην ἣν οὐδέποτε εἶδες]?⁸⁵

Once again, we can most easily imagine the diagram’s conceptual work through a simplified reconstruction (Fig. 18).

Entreating his audience to meditate on how each angle of the bulbous triangle becomes alternately a beginning, middle, and end twice over, in a perfectly symmetrical ontology, Bryennios bids them to delight in a captivating visual rhythm. In his autograph codex, Bryennios emphasizes the harmonious forms by adding an inscription, which does not appear in Hierotheos’s drawing, to the circumference of the entire ensemble. The text, which derives from chapter two of Maximos’s *Capita theologica*, spells out the central theological concept Bryennios wished to illustrate: *perichōrēsis*, or the seamless interpenetration of the three divine persons.⁸⁶ In the inscription, which speaks of God as a “monad,” each divine person is said to be “wholly” present in each of the other two persons, an idea that Bryennios visualizes through a carefully synchronized dance of rings contained within a wider, lightly-toned circumference.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Joseph Bryennios, *Or. 2*, lines 121–26, ed. Boulgaris, *Iōsēf monachou tou Bruenniou*, 1:24: “ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γὰρ διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τῷ νῶ διερχόμενος, ἵσταμαι ἐπὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος κατανωτῶ ἐπὶ τὸν Υἱόν· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν Πατέρα διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα διὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος διὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐπὶ τὸν Υἱόν· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν Πατέρα.”

⁸⁵ Joseph Bryennios, *Or. 2*, line 126, ed. Boulgaris, *Iōsēf monachou tou Bruenniou*, 1:24. See, for Proklos’s employment of the metaphor, *Theologia Platonica* 1.102.18–19, ed. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, *Proclus: Théologie platonicienne*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1968–97). Also, see a related passage in Proklos, *In Platonis Parmenidem* 807.29–808.11. Discussed in Michele Trizio, “On the Byzantine Fortune of Eustratios of Nicaea’s Commentary on Books I and VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*,” in *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, ed. Börje Bydén and Katerina Ierodiakonou, Papers and Monographs from the Norwegian Institute at Athens, Series 4, 1 (Athens, 2012), 199–224, at 214.

⁸⁶ On this concept, see, among other studies, Peter Stemmer, “*Perichorese*: Zur Geschichte eines Begriffs,” *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 27 (1983): 9–55.

⁸⁷ The inscription reads: “Μονὰς ἡμῖν ὁ Θεὸς ἐστὶ, μονάδων αἰτία, πρὶν δυαθῆναι τρισσομένη· καὶ Τριάς τὴν Τριάδα προφθάνει· οὔτε μετὰ τὴν μονάδα δυάς, εἶτα Τριάς, ἵνα καὶ μονὰς πρὸ δυάδος καὶ Τριάς πρὸ Τριάδος νοῆται, ἀλλ’ ὅλη μονὰς ἡ αὐτή, καὶ ὅλη Τριάς ἡ αὐτή· μονὰς ὅλη κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ἡ αὐτή, καὶ Τριάς ὅλη κατὰ τὰς ὑποστάσεις ἡ αὐτή· ὅλη ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ Πατρὶ ἡ αὐτή, καὶ ὅλος ἐν ὅλῳ τῇ αὐτῇ ὁ Πατήρ· ὅλη ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ Υἱῷ ἡ αὐτή, καὶ ὅλος ἐν ὅλῳ τῇ αὐτῇ ὁ Υἱός· ὅλη ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι

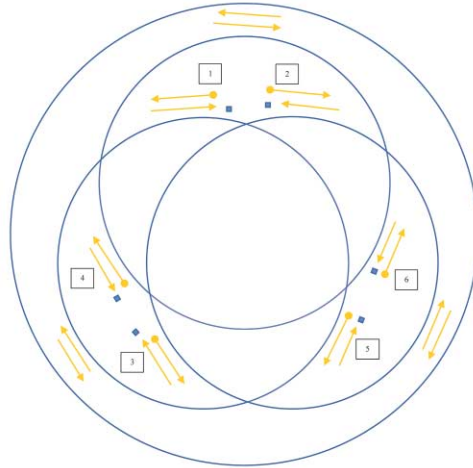


Fig. 18. Simplified reconstruction of Joseph Bryennios’s syllogistic diagram. Drawing by Sam Richter.

Bryennios follows his precursors in contrasting his circular-triangular diagram with a rectilinear Latin drawing (Fig. 19). In a later manuscript of the “Ten chapters,” now in Moscow, a scribe highlights the same issue that drove the dialogues of Niketas and Hierotheos, namely, the status of the Son as a *meson*, or middle. In the Son’s circle, the scribe writes: “The Son is the middle between the Father and the Spirit” [ὁ Υἱὸς μέσος Πατρὸς καὶ Πνεύματος] (Fig. 20). Defining the Son as a *meson* in the mathematical sense, the scribe shows him *midway* between the centers of the circles of the Father and Spirit and the point at which their circumferences meet.

The affinity between this rectilinear format and iconography becomes apparent when one superimposes the diagram over a well-known *Paternitas* icon at the Tretyakov Gallery (Fig. 21).⁸⁸ Cascading down the surface of the icon, the three circles distribute the three persons into a discrete causal sequence. In a discussion of this panel, Viktor Lazarev, like the scholars mentioned at the outset of this essay,

ἡ αὐτή, καὶ ὅλον ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ αὐτῇ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον.” [For us God is the monad, the cause of (all) monads, which is threefold before it doubles. And the Trinity comes before the triad. Nor is the dyad (to be) understood to come after the monad, and then (next in sequence) the Trinity, so that the monad comes before the dyad and the Trinity before the triad, but all of the monad is one and the same, and all of the Trinity is one and the same. The monad is one and the same according to essence, and the Trinity is one and the same according to the persons. The whole of divinity is in the whole of the Father, and the whole of the Father is in the whole of divinity. And the whole of divinity is in the whole of the Son, and the whole of the Son is in the whole of divinity. The whole of divinity is in the whole of the Holy Spirit, and the whole of the Holy Spirit is in the whole of divinity.] The second half of the passage, beginning with the conjunction ἄλλ’, is taken from Maximos’s *Capita theologica* 2.1, lines 2–5, 7–10, ed. and trans. Kerstin Hajdú and Andreas Wollbold, *Maximus Confessor: Capita theologica et oeconomica: Zwei Centurien über die Gotteserkenntnis*, Fontes Christiani, Fourth Series 66 (Freiburg, 2016), 160. Epifanovich, *Materialy*, 78 provides a transcription after Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS gr. 887, 1C, but he seems not to have noticed that the source was the *Capita theologica*.

⁸⁸ On the icon, see L. I. Lifshits, “Otechestvo s izbrannymi sviatymi,” in *Gosudarstvennaia Treťiakovskaia galereia: Katalog sobraniia*, ed. Ia. V. Bruk and L. I. Iovleva, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1995), cat. no. 25, pp. 85–87.



Fig. 19. Joseph Bryennios, “Ten chapters,” autograph manuscript, beginning of the fifteenth century. Sofia, Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies “Prof. Ivan Dujčev,” Cod. D, gr. 262, fol. 172r. Photo: Copyright, Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies “Prof. Ivan Dujčev.”

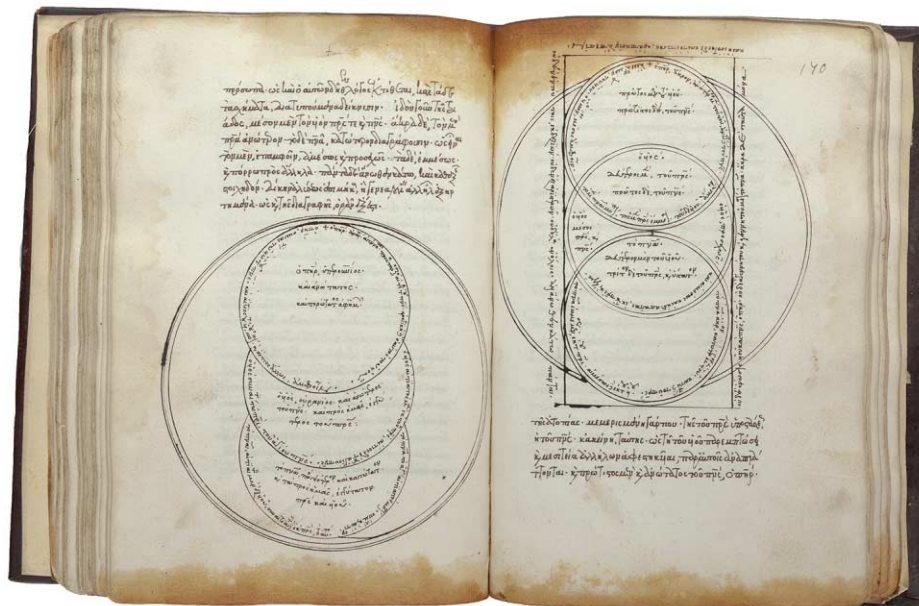


Fig. 20. Joseph Bryennios, “Ten chapters,” sixteenth-century manuscript. Moscow, State History Museum, MS Synod. gr. 310, fols. 169v–70r. Photo: Copyright, State History Museum, Moscow.



Fig. 21. Joseph Bryennios’s syllogistic diagram superimposed over a fourteenth-century Novgorodian icon of the *Paternitas*. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, inv. no. 22211. Photo: Author, graphic by Sam Richter.

avoids the question of the possible influence of the *Filioque* debates on this iconography, asserting that “the Byzantine *Paternitas*, with its strict vertical design, illustrated in the best possible way . . . the teaching about the unity of substance in the three persons of God.”⁸⁹ Lazarev’s interpretation is elegant, but it overlooks the fact that the semantic content of a formal pattern mutates over time. Iconography can bear any number of different meanings depending on viewers’ familiarity with the theological debates of their day, including teachings keyed to diagrammatic arguments. Forms, in other words, are ambiguous. Thus, while some viewers *may* have seen the *Paternitas* as embodying Orthodox dogma, readers of Hierotheos and Bryennios would no doubt have interpreted it as affirming Latin theology.

Bryennios, like Hierotheos, viewed icons through diagrams, but he took a more contemplative approach than his precursor. Batting away charges of heresy in his “Homily Two on the Trinity,” he claims that church canons “permitted painters

⁸⁹ V. N. Lazarev, “Ob odnoi novgorodskoi ikone i eresi antitrinitariiev,” in *Russkaia srednevekovaia zhivopis’: Stat’i i issledovaniia* (Moscow, 1970), 279–91, at 286.

to endow not only the incarnate Son with a form in colors [διαμορφούσι τοῖς χρώμασι], but also the Father and the Spirit.”⁹⁰ Beseeching his listeners to draw three rings in the air, he identifies these tactile trinities with the heavenly spheres:

Now that they have been schematized by the hand as circles so as to be easily taken in by the mind, make it a habit of seeing them as the greatest in the high vault of the sky and shaped beautifully with the three colors, of which we often see a rainbow, I mean the beautifully arched bow of the clouds, drawn for emphasis.⁹¹

Following this invocation of the heavenly spheres and rainbow, Bryennios cites Ezekiel’s vision of a “wheel within a wheel” [τροχὸς ἐν τροχῷ] which bears “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord” [ἡ ὄρασις ὁμοιώματος δόξης Κυρίου] (Ezek. 1.16, 28). Seeing diagrams in line with painting, nature, and prophetic visions, Bryennios reaffirms the conclusion that diagrams migrated to other realms of experience in the wider Byzantine imagination.⁹² Leaving humility behind, he elevates the heuristic tool of theological reflection to an object of visionary knowledge.

Bryennios taps into the mystical tradition of Proklos, who speaks of the soul that “wants to enter within itself to behold the circle and the triangle . . . to become one with what it sees and enfold their plurality, to gaze upon the secret and ineffable figures in the inaccessible places and shrines of the God.”⁹³ Indeed, his diagram discloses a more numinous content, leaving behind Niketas, who used his drawing to elucidate the divine “order,” and Hierotheos, who set out his diagram to talk about the logic of iconographic design. Rather, Bryennios seeks a diagram that offers a heavenly vision, a format imbued with the mystery of the divine Other. Remarkably, though, these trinities can be configured through a drawing executed not by the hand of an inspired artist but of a court audience reflecting on “theorems” during union negotiations.

CONCLUSION

The present study has shown that diagrams and painting did not exist in isolation from each other in the late Byzantine imagination. The Greek writers discussed here

⁹⁰ Joseph Bryennios, *Or. 2*, lines 40–42, ed. Boulgaris, *Iōsēf monachou tou Bruenniou*, 1:45. See for Bryennios’s other remarks on painting Nikolaos B. Tōmadakēs, “Ho Iōsēf Bruennios: Peri zōgraphikēs,” *Epetēris Etairias Byzantinōn Spoudōn (Annuaire de l’Association d’études byzantine)* 36 (1968): 16.

⁹¹ Joseph Bryennios, *Or. 2*, lines 76–80, ed. Boulgaris, *Iōsēf monachou tou Bruenniou*, 1:23: “τούτους δὲ τοὺς ὁδε δακτύλοις σχηματισθέντας διὰ τὸ εὐσύνοπτον κύκλους, νομίσατε βλέπειν, ἐν ὑψηλῷ τοῦ ἄερος μεγέθει μεγίστους καὶ μεμορφωμένους καλῶς τρισὶ χρώμασιν, οἷσι φαινομένην πολλακτικῶς ὀρώμεν τὴν ἴριν, τὸ εὐκυκλον τῶν νεφελῶν λέγω τόξον, κατ’ ἔμφασιν ζωγραφούμενον.” Philipp Meyer, “Des Joseph Bryennios Schriften, Leben und Bildung,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 5/1 (1896): 74–111, esp. 107, suggests that Bryennios is speaking as a “popular orator” (*volkstümlicher Redner*) and notes the reappearance of these examples in his moralistic and hortative writings. Meyer also points out that Bryennios enjoyed music and arithmetic but was especially fascinated by geometry and astronomy.

⁹² Joseph Bryennios, *Or. 2*, lines 94–95, ed. Boulgaris, *Iōsēf monachou tou Bruenniou*, 1:23.

⁹³ Proklos, *In primum Euclidis elementorum librum commentarii* 141.19–24, ed. G. Friedlein, *Procli Diadochi in primum Euclidis elementorum librum commentarii* (Leipzig, 1873). See Sara Ahbel-Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism: Non-Discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus and Damascius* (Cambridge, UK, 2000), 133.

display care with terminology, unfailingly referring to the circular-triangular diagram as “triangular” and the vertical lines as “rectilinear.” This consistency indicates the value of revisiting the formal lexicon of modern scholars, because the Greek authors offer a language sensitive to the architectonic features of images which could be classified via schematic drawings.⁹⁴ Looking at icons of the Trinity, viewers conversant in theological debate would have arrived at a nuanced understanding of bodies disposed in a triangular or rectilinear format. For such audiences, iconographic types possessed an intuitive force deriving from salient compositional elements, which embodied an altogether different content for them than they did for viewers not familiar with the *Filioque* controversy. Viewers’ ability to collate pictorial features with simple line drawings—in this case, formal depictions of the Trinity—can be called the diagrammatic aesthetic of late Byzantine art.

The question of how much Byzantine art was diagrammatic, however, cuts several ways. Trinitarian diagrams have never featured in the developmental narrative of Byzantine iconography. The genealogy of the circular-triangular schema across four centuries suggests that, on the whole, Byzantine art has a far greater diagrammatic potential than might have been thought. Hierotheos and Bryennios, and perhaps other theologians, describe their diagrams with an eye to painting, adding to the impression that Byzantine images at a wider level may have been interpreted in light of schematic drawings. By the same measure, the possibility that iconography only became legible through diagrams suggests the value of examining a question bracketed at the outset: namely, the extent to which Byzantine artists *plotted* images using diagrammatic armatures. Addressing this question would require a detailed analysis of each individual icon, manuscript, or monument to weigh the motivations of the patrons and artists involved, but the evidence presented here indicates that this would be a worthwhile effort.

Indeed, the historical record reveals a sustained interest in schematic thinking in Byzantium. None of the above texts is demanding Greek, and Niketas and Hierotheos wrote dialogues to present their readers with working arguments. These texts circulated not just in Constantinople, where Eustratios was active and where Hierotheos and Bryennios delivered orations, but in Asia Minor, where Hierotheos also lived, in northern Greece, where Niketas was active, and later in Russia, to which Maksim Grek immigrated. Furthermore, Eustratios’s *Discourse* and Niketas’s *Dialogue* had a lasting impact on Greek thought, and Trinitarian diagrams featuring just a few key inscriptions circulated independently of dialogues, making them accessible to a less literate audience. Diagramming the Trinity, we can thus safely say, was not uncommon, and yet it always had high stakes, and it was very much a living tradition. One after another, Greek theologians rethought and reshaped their predecessors’ views, rather than regurgitating arguments whole cloth, and when laying out new expositions, they looked to a variety of sources for evidence of diagrammatic thinking, including to icon painting.

⁹⁴ For instance, the Paternitas is commonly read via its “vertical axis.” See, recently, Kyriaki Tassoyannopoulou, “Interpretive Approaches on the Anthropomorphic Depictions of the Holy Trinity in Byzantine Monumental Painting,” in *Art and Archaeology in Byzantium and Beyond: Essays in Honour of Sophia Kalopissi-Verti and Maria Panayotidi-Kesisoglou*, ed. Dionysios Mourelatos (Oxford, 2021), 29–42, esp. 34–37.

This study also attests to the difficulty of drawing any bright line between the Western medieval and Byzantine schematic imagination. Whereas Niketas introduces the circular-triangular diagram through his triumphant Latin speaker, Hierotheos claims victory over his Catholic opponent by way of a reworked version of this very same drawing, while Bryennios adapts Hierotheos's diagram and polemic against rectilinear sketches even as he quotes from Niketas's *Dialogue*. Finally, Maksim Grek characterizes Niketas's basic format—albeit inverted by Bülow—as Catholic and heretical, and then dismisses the entire diagrammatic project as fundamentally un-Orthodox. The border here between East and West is blurry to say the least.

Bryennios's drawing of three rings in the air eloquently illustrates how the diagram journeyed from the page to a space out in front of the viewer's eye. Exhorting his audience to find this pattern everywhere, he describes a scenario in which a simple geometric matrix filters a range of visual impressions, including even phenomena beyond the intelligible world. Standing before a *Synthronoi* icon, Bryennios's listeners would have been guided to contemplate God's harmonious self-relation through a formal "dance," whereas, gazing upon the *Paternitas*, they would have distrusted its downward thrust, worried about what it implies about God's perfectly balanced existence. Offering these circles as a conceptual ideal, Bryennios sought to persuade his listeners of God's beauty and simplicity, but this was an argument they could ultimately reject. His modest, diaphanous drawing, like so many opaque diagrams that Greek scribes sketched on the pages of manuscripts, never became a hegemonic device determining each and every act of looking. It existed in a state of dispute and thus had a finite impact on how audiences interpreted icons, just as it did on how they understood rainbows, the heavens, and Ezekiel's prophecy.

In sum, diagrams and painting interrelated in at least two distinct ways in the late Byzantine mind. For writers like Hierotheos, diagrams upheld the age-old truth of icon painting. Thus, he tells his reader to look to the early Christian *Synthronoi* to affirm what his drawing teaches. But for theologians like Bryennios, diagrams extended icon painting in new directions, as he applies the technical concept of God's *perichōrēsis* to a line drawing, imbuing it with a representational force that exceeds the capacity of the icon. In the ninth century Theodore of Stoudios had defined the icon as a formal likeness (ὁμοίωμα) which is true because it conveys Christ's historical prototype.⁹⁵ However, Bryennios takes the diagram to where the icon cannot go, namely, to the nature of the Father and Spirit. Grounding the truthfulness of his schematic drawing in geometric theorems, Bryennios infers that its compositional symmetries outline the metaphysical sinews of a God who is three and yet one. Boldly asserting that the church fathers permitted painters to depict not only Christ but also the Father and Spirit, he invites his listener to transpose the drawing's formal structures onto a figural representation of the Trinity. For Bryennios, so long as painters base their iconography on the right diagram, they can express the hidden secrets of God. This magnificently lofty claim speaks to a desire to elevate icon painting to a higher plane. The painter that Bryennios envisions leads the viewer

⁹⁵ Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, 2002).

beyond the material panel to an inscrutable disclosure of the uncircumscribed God who dwells outside of time and space. Coming at the end of the Byzantine tradition, Hierotheos and Bryennios reveal a fundamental tension within the diagrammatic modes of icon painting. In Hierotheos's case, icons belatedly come to resemble a diagram, but in Bryennios's case, the diagram becomes a new form of iconic art.