Christians Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium

Studies Inspired by Pauline Allen

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CHAPTER 8

Shaping the Sick Soul: Reshaping the Identity of John Chrysostom

Wendy Mayer

1 John Viewed through the Lens of Theology

If we reflect on the array of influences that have shaped our view of John Chrysostom over the centuries, the realm of theology and theological concerns have from the very beginning constituted a consistent, if not major, component. By the time that he died in 407 CE a number of works attributed to John were in circulation, which had been authored or doctored by parties on both sides of the growing Johannite—anti-Johannite divide.1 While recent scholarship identifies the roots of this schism as largely church-political and administrative,2 at the time John's deposition was carefully cast within an Origenist framework by opponents and supporters alike.3 If Origenism was not

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3 So Palladius, Dial. 6–8 (SC 34.130–72), who adduces the Origenist issue to put a pro-John anti-Theophilus spin on events. For the exploitation of the same approach by the opposition with different intent see Jerome, Ep. 113 (CSEL 55.393–94), a Latin translation of a letter received from Theophilus in 405 in which Theophilus lists among John’s misdeeds the latter’s support for the Origenists. For discussion of both approaches see Demetrios Katos,
being adduced to muddy the waters, John was being cast by his supporters as the champion against Arianism of the neo-Nicene (orthodox) faith. This phenomenon did not end with John’s rehabilitation and the ultimate resolution of the Johannite—anti-Johannite dispute in 438 CE. Theological interests across a diverse spectrum proceeded to claim John for their own and to thus exert a substantial influence on how John was viewed in the centuries that immediately followed. A similar plasticity in the interpretation of John’s theology in the service of contemporary interests again came into play at the time of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The way in which John was viewed in

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5 See e.g., in the eighth century John of Damascus, Encom. in s. Ioh. Chrys. (PTS 29.359–70), where John again is adduced as a champion of orthodoxy. For appeals to John’s writings in the sixth to ninth centuries viewed against the background of the various theological disputes see Chrysostomus Baur, S. Jean Chrysostome et ses œuvres dans l’histoire littéraire, Recueil de travaux publiés par les membres des conférences d’histoire et de philologie, 18e Fascicule (Louvain: Bureaux du Recueil and Paris: Albert Fontemoing, 1907), 13–23. See also Jeffrey W. Childers, “Chrysostom in Syriac Dress,” in Studia Patristica, vol. 67, ed. Markus Vinzent, papers presented at the 16th International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford 2011 (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 326, who points out that it was John’s own “tendency to focus on pragmatics rather than finely nuanced theological discussion [that ensured] for him a place across the theological spectrum—miaphysite, diaphysite, and Chalcedonian.”

6 Apologetic appeal to “Chrysostom” in polemics of this period on both sides of the Catholic—Protestant divide survives in pamphlets such as Columbanus Vrancx’s Malleus Calvinistarum (Antwerp: Apud Ioannem Keerbergium, 1590) and those produced in the 1680s during a local dispute between Johan Friedrich Mayer and two Jesuit preachers in Germany in which his theology was claimed respectively as Lutheran and Catholic. On the latter see Baur, S. Jean Chrysostome, 280–81.
the nineteenth century continued to follow in this path, with a post-Reformation lens often being employed in the shaping of his biography and identity.7

To the present day John has continued to be viewed through a theological lens, with, in more recent times, quite negative results. As David Rylaarsdam points out, the twentieth century was not kind to Chrysostom, with Georges Florovsky claiming that he was an orator, “not a thinker or philosopher;” Rowan Greer labelling him “anti-intellectual;” Manlio Simonetti, despite John’s vast exegetical output, devoting to him just a single paragraph in a 500-page book on Greek patristic exegesis, in which he described John’s exegetical work as “rigorously literal,” “superficial,” and “deficient;” Frances Young arguing that he “popularized rather than contributed to theology;” and other scholars that he was a mere “moraliser” rather than a “serious theologian.”8 Even in the realm of Christian ethics, Rylaarsdam points out, John has been dismissed by some “as exhibiting a ‘distressing poverty’ of spiritual depth.”9 These views of John as a theological (and even exegetical) lightweight emerged from a century dominated by a high valuation of systematic theology and an approach towards the discipline of patristics/patrology that privileged the focused theological writings of certain ‘major’ fathers of the church.10 From such a standpoint John Chrysostom, who is one of the most prolific and widely transmitted patristic

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9 Ibid., 3.

authors to the present day, but wrote not a single treatise that could be catego-
rised as theological in modern terms, could scarcely have hoped to compete.

Not [...] Theologian, but Medico-Philosophical Psychic Therapist

In the second decade of the twenty-first century a plethora of studies are in the
process of overturning these points of view. As is increasingly being shown,
the dichotomy ‘moralist’—‘theologian’ is for the fourth century invalid,12 while
the production of scriptural exegesis in the early centuries of Christianity can-
not be narrowly constrained or defined since it is directed towards a variety of
models of the Christian life, on the one hand,13 and is now seen as less easily
categorised, on the other.14 Contrary to expectation, Chrysostom in fact offers
a coherent theology that both drives his preaching and, through the vehicle
of that same preaching (and exegesis), addresses the Christian’s whole person,

11 Supply appropriate adjective.
12 So Susanna Elm, Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of
Nazianzus and the Vision of Rome, TCH, vol. 49 (Berkeley: University of California Press,
2012), points out that it was the neo-pagan philosophy and policies of Julian (361–363
CE) that prompted the beginnings of a more formal approach to defining Christian doc-
trine, while at the same time the approaches of Julian and of Gregory of Nazianzus to
the virtue formation of the human being were markedly similar. It is not until the begin-
nings of the fifth century that the first treatises that systematise Christian beliefs began to
appear. On the latter point see Jörg Ulrich, “The Reception of Greek Christian Apologetics
in Theodoretus’ Graecarum affectionum curatio,” in Continuity and Discontinuity in Early
Christian Apologetics, ed. J. Ulrich, A.-C. Jacobsen, and M. Kahlos, Early Christianity in the
Context of Antiquity, vol. 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 127.
13 See e.g., Elizabeth A. Clark, Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early
Christianity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); and the essays in Hans-Ulrich
Weidemann, ed., Asceticism and Exegesis in Early Christianity: The Reception of New
Testament Texts in Ancient Ascetic Discourses, Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus,
14 See e.g., on less discrete boundaries between Jewish and Christian exegesis, Gary A.
Anderson, Ruth A. Clements, and David Satran, eds, New Approaches to the Study of Biblical
Interpretation in Judaism of the Second Temple Period and in Early Christianity, Studies on
the Texts of the Desert of Judah, vol. 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2013); and Emmanouela Grypeou
and Helen Spurling, The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters between Jewish and
Christian Exegesis, Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series, vol. 24 (Leiden: Brill, 2013);
and between the traditional categories ‘Antiochene’ (= literal) and ‘Alexandrian’ (= alle-
gorical) exegesis, Donald Fairbairn, “Patristic Exegesis and Theology: The Cart and the
their salvation, and the human person’s relationship with and to God. Building on the work of Margaret Mitchell,15 this is the persuasive argument of David Rylaarsdam’s new book,16 a thesis supported by the recent work of Paraskeve Tatse,17 Pak-Wah Lai,18 Andreas Heiser,19 and now Demetrios Tonias20 on Chrysostom’s employment of a range of biblical virtue exemplars as models for the Christian life. Indeed, as Ray Laird has recently argued, in his human anthropology John Chrysostom anticipates in eastern Christian thought the concept of the mindset as the faculty responsible for moral error (that is, sin) some three centuries earlier than the assumed originator of this key theological idea, Maximus the Confessor.21 As this newly emergent repositioning of John within the history of ideas suggests, when we view John’s writings and thought in the context of the intellectual and social world in which he was raised, it becomes clear that it is not only mistaken to require of him a theological approach that conforms to the demands of modern systematic theology, but that, as Rylaarsdam in particular demonstrates, John’s Christian thought is across the almost three decades of his ecclesiastical career coherent and remarkably consistent. What I would like to propose in this essay is that we should push this research one step further. That is, John’s approach is best understood and its value most evident, if we reject the term ‘theology’ as a modern, etic construct, in favour of applying to his thought the label ‘(Christian) philosophy’.22 It is when we view John’s approach to the Christian

15 Margaret M. Mitchell, The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation, Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie, Bd 40 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).
16 Rylaarsdam, Divine Pedagogy.
17 Paraskeve Tatse, “Ο Απόστολος Παύλος κατά τον Άγιο Ιωάννη Χρυσόστομο” (PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2008).
22 Here I beg to differ from Rylaarsdam, Divine Pedagogy, 5, who continues to view John from within the discipline of theology (“The theology of Chrysostom’s homilies exhibits his creative adjustment of the pedagogical categories of philosophical rhetoric in order to depict the character and economy of God’), an approach in line with that of other recent scholarship. See e.g., Charles Kannengiesser, “Clothed with Spiritual Fire: John Chrysostom’s Homilies on the Letter to Hebrews,” in Christology, Hermeneutics, and
life within the context of the Hellenistic *paideia* within which via the schools of Antioch he was immersed, that we begin to fully appreciate a pedagogical approach that runs through his treatises, homilies, and letters from the beginning of his ecclesiastical career up to his death in exile. For John, I would argue, theology as a distinct intellectual exercise does not appear on his horizon. From his own (emic) point of view he is a psychagogue in the classical sense, a teacher of his own (albeit Christian) philosophical school.\(^{23}\) This best explains why John commonly uses the terms *didaskalos* and *logos* when he refers to the priest, himself included, in the role of preacher.\(^{24}\) Like philosophers in the psychagogic stream, his goal is the health of his students' souls\(^{25}\) and he is best viewed, as I will argue, not within the context of the emergence at the end of the fourth century of systematised discussion of Christian doctrine, but within the already lengthy trajectory of a particular strand of moral philosophy that became formalised within the Hellenistic and early Roman imperial periods as medico-philosophical psychic therapy.\(^{26}\)

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\(^{23}\) The recognition that many Christian preachers of the third and fourth centuries viewed themselves as sophists and teachers of philosophy goes back to Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, ed. A.M. Fairbairn (London: Williams and Norgate, 1890), 107–109. Largely forgotten during the twentieth century, this insight has recently been revived and expanded upon by Jacqueline Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and his Congregation in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11–64.

\(^{24}\) See e.g., John Chrysostom, *In illud: Messis quidem multa* (PG 63.517.13–17); idem, *Laus Diodori* (PG 52.761.1–4); idem, *Quales ducendae sint uxorres* (PG 51.225.17–20); and idem, *De s. Phoca* (PG 50.706.8).

\(^{25}\) See John Chrysostom, *In illud: Ne tim. hom.* 1 (PG 55.503.1–9), where he says that as διδάσκαλος he is concerned with the treating of both his audience’s and his own soul; and idem, *In Titum hom.* 2 (PG 62.672.52–55) where in elaborating on Paul's admonitions in Titus he says that the priest is a doctor of souls (Ἰατρὸς ἐστιν ὁ διδάσκαλος τῶν ψυχῶν).

\(^{26}\) To some degree Anne-Marie Malingrey, "*Philosophia*: Étude d'un groupe de mots dans la littérature grecque, des Présocratiques au IV\(^{e}\) siècle après J.C., Études et Commentaires, vol. 40 (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1961), esp. 263–88, anticipated this approach, although she continued to view his philosophical and theological ideas as inseparable. See eadem, "Résonances stoïciennes dans l’œuvre de Jean Chrysostomem," *Diotima. Revue de recherche philosophique* 7 (1979): 116–21; and eadem, "Saint Jean Chrysostome moraliste?,” in
3 The Path to that Conclusion

A number of scholars around the world have been converging on this insight in the last couple of years independently of each other and from a variety of angles. For my own part I owe a considerable debt to Hélène Perdicoyianni-Paléologou, who prompted me to research the concept of madness in the thought of John Chrysostom for a book on madness in Greek thought from Homer to the end of the Byzantine period. It was as I was conducting the research for that chapter that I became aware of a recent conceptual shift among history of medicine scholars to which work on mental illness in the classical and Hellenistic traditions is central, namely that a false distinction had been drawn in scholarship prior to the middle of the first decade of this century between medicine and philosophy. In a world in which the mind/soul is viewed as embodied the boundaries between the two aspects of the human person (body and mind/soul), their sickness and health, and those professionals traditionally associated with their treatment—the physician and philosopher—are in reality blurred. Here the work of Philip Van der Eijk on the medicine side has been fundamental; so too has been the work of scholars of classical Graeco-Roman philosophy, particularly those engaged with Hellenistic moral philosophy and


therapy of the *pathē/emotions*.\(^{30}\) Two insights of my own that emerged from that research were the pervasiveness of medical imagery, language, and ideas throughout the Chrysostomic corpus—a phenomenon that invites explanation via more focused research—and the recognition that for John sin is a form of mental illness, a state of imbalance within the mind/soul, for which, unlike mental illnesses that have a physiological cause, the human being is personally responsible.\(^{31}\) These findings aligned with Laird’s independent work on the role in John’s thought of the *gnōmē* or mindset as the critical faculty responsible for sin and that of Claire Salem on sanity and insanity in Chrysostom’s anthropology.\(^{32}\) Importantly, Laird has shown how, in arriving at his position concerning the critical role of the *gnōmē*, John draws on a long-standing set of ideas concerning the relationship between the mindset and moral error in Greek thought from Thucydides, Aristotle, and Demosthenes to John’s putative teacher of rhetoric in Antioch, Libanius.\(^{33}\) In a number of articles Geert

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Roskam is in the process of situating John similarly within the stream of moral philosophy that preceded him, while at the same time demonstrating that, despite the claims of earlier scholars, there is no direct dependency between the ideas of John and those of Plutarch.34

In addition to David Rylaarsdam, who persuasively demonstrates the long-standing Greek philosophical tradition of psychagogy within which John situates his pedagogical approach to the souls of his audiences and on which he models his adduction of Paul and other biblical figures as virtue exemplars,35 a number of doctoral students are in the process of drawing out insights surrounding John's debt to Greek medicine and to Hellenistic moral philosophy. Courtney Van Veller, working on how John constructs the apostle Paul as a Jew, further develops Rylaarsdam's thesis that for John preaching and psychagogy are indistinguishable and that the apostle Paul constitutes a central exemplum for John of the ideal psychagogue, orator, and man of virtue.36 She also confirms Laird's thesis that for John in achieving the health of the soul the mindset (gnōmē) plays a critical role.37 Jessica Wright, working within the tradition of


the history of medicine, is in the process of situating John's medical understanding of the brain, affect and sensation within the conceptualisations of Hippocrates, Galen, and John's contemporary, Nemesius of Emesa. Wright has recently re-examined John's treatise *Ad Stagirium*, in regard to which she argues perceptively that not only is it not the daemon that is responsible for the monk Stagirius' falling sickness (epilepsy?) and despondency (*athumia*), but that the underlying cause of his *athumia* is most likely the unconscious taint of another *pathos* or moral error, an obsession with glory (*doxa*). Only, John advises, when he ceases to cling to *doxa* (a particular failing of ascetics), will Stagirius expel his *athumia* and in turn cut off the nourishment that currently feeds the daemon, so restoring his relationship with God. These findings tie in closely with my own regarding involuntary and volitional mental illness and the agency or otherwise in mental illness of daemons. Together these insights in turn align with the findings Samantha Miller is in the process of eliciting regarding the relationship between the agency of daemons in John's thought, *pathos/affect/emotion*, and moral progress. For John it is all about personal responsibility. Even if a daemon is still invisibly present, when balance between the *pathē* and the rational faculty of the soul is restored, the daemon's capacity to cause harm is neutralised.

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38 Jessica Wright, “Brain and Soul in Late Antiquity” (PhD diss., Princeton University, forthcoming). Prior to Wright, the only analysis of John's medical thought has been that of Ulrike Bachmann, “Medizinisches in den Schriften des griechischen Kirchenvaters Johannes Chrysostomos” (PhD diss., Institut für Geschichte der Medizin, Universität Düsseldorf, 1984). There have been substantial advances in the approach to the history of medicine in the classical and late-antique periods in the intervening decades.


40 Mayer, “Madness.”

4 Shaping the Sick Soul

Once one starts looking at John as a medico-philosophical psychic therapist in the mode of so-called ‘popular’ or moral Hellenistic philosophers and of philosopher-physicians like Galen, the conclusion that this is primarily the mode from which he operates and with which he self-identifies is virtually inescapable. In a forthcoming journal article I have argued that this makes the best sense of John's modus operandi in exile, while in a recent paper I argued that this also makes sense of his ‘anti-intellectual’ posturing. The latter is not the total rejection of philosophy and contemporary oratory that it seems, but a rejection of what misleadingly he represents as the sum total of Greek paideia and secular rhetorical-philosophical pedagogy, namely, epideictic rhetoric or oratory that is showy and aimed at applause and self-promotion. The philosophical-oratorical mode that John himself adopts—the protreptic, in which oratory is directed towards psychagogy, that is, the production of the good or virtuous citizen—is one that continued unembattled and in parallel from Plato through the Hellenistic and early imperial periods well into late antiquity. That is, in the mode of purveyors of technical and scientific knowledge in antiquity for whom it was important in an agonistic society not just to convey the content of the scientific knowledge they were promoting, but to convince

45 This was the approach adopted by the Hellenistic moral philosophers, who continued in the footsteps of the First as opposed to Second Sophistic. Although the Graeco-Roman educational curriculum drew a division between philosophy and rhetoric, the two disciplines were never in reality as distinct. Neither were the aims of the First and Second Sophistic, both of which were directed towards the formation of the ideal elite male citizen. As a demonstration of this see the marked similarity in approach of John and Libanius to the relationship between paideia, the mindset, and the formation of the good citizen outlined by Laird, *Mindset*, 154–55.
the audience of its superiority over that of other philosophers or physicians.\textsuperscript{46} John deliberately constructs a false dichotomy in which he pits the true (moral = Christian) philosophy directed towards the social good against (an epideictic = secular Greek) one that (he claims) has no social benefit.\textsuperscript{47} Protreptic, as Gill argues, is a key element in medico-philosophical therapeutics.\textsuperscript{48}

In order to illustrate how such therapeutics dominate John's self-identity, thought, and approach, we turn in brief to a few concrete examples. The most blatant case is the very last treatise, which he wrote from exile, \textit{Ad eos qui scandalizatur}.\textsuperscript{49} Because scholars had been viewing the treatise through a theological lens the nature of the relationship between the extended medicalised introduction and the rest of the treatise, which is about theodicy and divine providence, had gone unrecognised.\textsuperscript{50} In fact, without understanding its genre, it is hard on first glance to understand how the contents of either this treatise or its companion on the pseudo-Stoic paradox, \textit{Quod nemo laeditur},\textsuperscript{51} could have been thought by either John or their recipients to have provided consolation for his persecuted supporters.\textsuperscript{52} However, not only, as we will see shortly, are both treatises appropriate within this particular framework,\textsuperscript{53} but they go hand-in-hand, too, with the bulk of John's letters from exile to Olympias. That is, what he offers in his letters to Olympias and in these two treatises is a


\textsuperscript{47} For the underlying conceit commonly employed by early Christian writers upon which John builds (that the oratory of the uneducated apostles was superior to that of Greek philosophers) see Manfred Bambeck, “Fischer und Bauern gegen Philosophen und sonstige Grosskopfeten; ein christlicher Topos in Antike und Mittelalter,” \textit{Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch} 18 (1983): 29–50.

\textsuperscript{48} Gill, “Philosophical Therapy,” 342–43.


\textsuperscript{50} For a more detailed discussion of the genre of this treatise and previous scholarship on the question see Mayer, “Persistence.”


\textsuperscript{52} Both were sent to Olympias and her household in early 407 CE. \textit{Scand.} was clearly intended for wider distribution. See Mayer, “Persistence.”

\textsuperscript{53} On the close relationship between consolation literature and psychotherapeutic treatises see Gill, “Philosophical Therapy,” 342–57.
consistent program of psychic therapy directed at the soul-health of those among whom they circulated.54

When we examine *Ad eos qui scandalizatur* from the perspective of philosophical essays on the therapy of the emotions/pathē rather than from the viewpoint of its Christian message, it conforms in every respect, as identified by Gill, to the motive and form of this long-standing medico-philosophical genre. The most important point for our purposes is that such treatises or *logoi* were seen as not just a discussion of psychic therapy but as effective therapy in themselves. That is, the *logos* itself is a medical treatment.55 In the service of identifying the roots of psychological or soul-sickness and helping the patient to work towards health (the core strategy of medico-philosophical *logoi*) Gill identifies across such works, irrespective of the particular psychology and philosophical stance of the practitioner, four key elements. The first is a presupposed conception of happiness as a way of life (this includes progress toward virtue and personal agency). The second element is an account of human psychology linked to ethical development (which includes scope for rational agency; the relationship between reason, emotion, and desire; and the prerequisites of ethical development). The third is formulation of the central message in a way that engages the individual's concerns/state of mind at the start of therapy. The fourth element is offering advice of a kind that enables the individual to rebuild their belief-set in a way that provides a secure basis for development away from the framework of beliefs that generates psychological illness towards one that generates well-being and happiness.56

Translating *skandalon* as 'moral error', which is how John conceives of the conditions that occasion sin,57 supplies the key to understanding the function of this treatise. So in *Ad eos qui scandalizatur* John makes it clear that its purpose is soul therapy by immediately drawing a parallel between the treatment of physical illnesses and those of the soul.58 He seeks to convince his patient/s of the superiority of the particular (psychic) therapy that he delivers,59 which, as we have argued already, is an essential requirement of

54 This point is argued in greater detail in Mayer, “Persistence.”
56 Gill, “Philosophical Therapy,” 348–51.
57 For this meaning see Lampe, *PGL* s.v. σκανδάλον 4. On sin as a mental illness in John’s thought in which the mind/soul is disordered as a result of imbalance between reason and pathē see Salem, “Sanity, Insanity.”
58 John Chrysostom, *Scand.* prol. 1–2 (*SC 79.52–54*).
59 Ibid., prol. 3–4 (*SC 79.54*).
the rhetorical and performative character of such discourse. While the therapy addresses a current disease of the soul (a lapse into moral error), more importantly the treatment is targeted at preventing future recurrences of the same illness, further extending its benefit as a prophylactic against “the other passions/emotions.” The patient is assumed to be a responsible agent, capable in principle of understanding the cause of his/her own current distress and of relieving this by a deliberate programme of thoughts. For this reason John immediately highlights the need for the sufferer to learn the cause of the current illness, and introduces the medium for the treatment—logos or rational argument. He then emphasises that it is up to the patient as to whether the treatment is effective. The cause that is said to underly the diagnosis (‘a mindset’ or γνώμη that is disordered) is also consistent with the genre and provides another unmistakable clue that we are dealing here with medico-philosophical therapy. In fact, if we stripped out the copious scriptural exempla adduced throughout the treatise and substituted another concept of the divine for the Christian God, what we have here is a treatise on correcting the errors and passions of the soul that could have been written equally by Galen or one of the Stoic-Epicurean practical-ethical philosophers. We should note that, as Yannis Papadogiannakis shows in a recent study, Theodoret, likewise educated at Antioch at the end of the fourth century, adduces virtually the same set of ideas in the prologue (1.1–2) to his treatise Graecarum affectionum curatio.

Just as in Ad eos qui scandalizatur the topic itself (human suffering and the correct attitude towards it) aligns with a common objective of therapeutic medico-philosophical treatises—advising the patient on “what is needed to provide the basis of emotional resilience and stability”—so in Quod nemo laeditur the topic (personal agency in suffering and the neutralisation of suffering via the correct mindset) is closely related. To emphasise this point, John adduces in summary form the basic argument of Quod nemo laeditur (that

60 Ibid., prol. 2.7 (SC 79.52); 1.1.8–9 (SC 79.56); and 1.3.2 (SC 79.56).
61 Ibid., 1.1–2 (SC 79.56).
62 Ibid., 1.1 and 3 (SC 79.56).
63 Ibid., 1.3.4 (SC 79.56); and 1.5.2–3 (SC 79.58).
64 Ibid., 2.1.2 (SC 79.60).
66 Gill, “Philosophical Therapy,” 341 and 352.
nothing harms nor causes to lapse into moral error those who are sober)\(^67\) in chapter 13 of *Ad eos qui scandalizatur* as a key component of the structural centre (chapters 12–18) of that treatise.\(^68\) Like the obvious clues embedded in the vocabulary, arguments and structure of *Ad eos qui scandalizatur*, the genre, vocabulary and structure of *Quod nemo laeditur* flag it for its recipients (John’s persecuted and suffering supporters) as a therapeutic *logos* that targets the mind/soul. Here it is less the explicit language of medicine that alerts the audience than the employment of the diatribe, a rhetorical form commonly used in the communication of moral philosophy.\(^69\) However, I beg to differ from Margaret Schatkin’s otherwise insightful analysis of the treatise, which she views as an example of Christian apologetics,\(^70\) to argue that the content and purpose of the treatise make best sense when viewed not as directed towards a defence of the Christian faith (whether to insiders or outsiders), but rather, like the comparanda from Greek and Roman philosophy that she cites, as a medium for (Christian) philosophical-psychological therapy.

When we turn to the treatise itself this becomes readily evident. As with *Ad eos qui scandalizatur* we are concerned here with a *logos* directed towards the correction or healing of the soul.\(^71\) The patient is alerted to the erroneous beliefs currently held (that virtue, ἀρετή, can be negatively affected by external causes),\(^72\) enabling them to rebuild their belief-set in a way that provides a secure basis for development away from the framework of beliefs that generates psychological illness towards one that generates well-being and

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68 SC 79.188–200. Regarding the role of these chapters in the structure of *Scand.* see Mayer, “Persistence.” John explicitly refers to the treatise *Nemo laed.* at *Scand.* 15.7.7–9 (SC 79.218).


70 Ibid., 90.

71 John Chrysostom, *Nemo laed.* 1.4 (SC 103.56); 1.9–17 (SC 103.58); and 1.55–61 (SC 103.62). Cf. 7.1 (SC 103.94), where John explicitly asks how he is to treat (ἰασαίμεθα) those with the disposition in question, and 6.95–97 (SC 103.94), where the sickness is identified as a mind suffering from unreason (ἀλογίαν...διανοίας).

72 Ibid., 2.17–26 (SC 103.64). Here and in the lines that follow John explicitly uses the language of “false belief/opinion” (τὰς πεπλανημένας δόξας), another clear indication that the treatise (λόγος) is directed towards therapy of the soul.
Throughout the treatise the link between cognitive or psychological sobriety (nēpsis), the correct mindset, psychological health, and virtue is a recurrent theme. The most important point here, however, is not that both Quod nemo laeditur and Ad eos qui scandalizatur are twin psychotherapeutic treatises directed towards the correction and soul-health of John's supporters, but that, as with his letters to Olympias, which he also characterises as medications (pharmaka), John could hardly in the last moments of his life have expected his supporters to accept this particular approach, had it not been central to how he and they both viewed the human person and had he not long since prepared the ground for it.

As Schatkin herself points out, John had already communicated the advice central to Quod nemo laeditur at length in In Acta apostolorum homiliae 51 and more briefly in In Matthaeum homilia 80/81, albeit within a more explicitly Christianised framework. As it turns out, when we look closely at In Matthaeum homilia 80/81 the entire homily is concerned with the healing of the soul, from its discussion of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet to the proper attitude towards wealth and poverty and the regulation of ἐπιθυμία (desire). In the former case, the woman is said to have approached Jesus because she was confident that, having healed Simon's body of leprosy, he would swiftly

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73 The third and fourth elements common to psychotherapeutic treatises as identified by Gill (see n.55 above). On the structure of the treatise—chapters 2–11 adduce theoretical proofs and chapters 12–17 historical proofs (drawn from scripture)—see Schatkin, Chrysostom as Apologist, 94–105.

74 E.g., John Chrysostom, Nemo laed. 4.1–44 (SC 103.74–78); 7.10–61 (SC 103.94–98); 12.1–19 (SC 103.116); 15 (SC 103.130–34); and 16.43–52 (SC 103.138). This fulfils the first and second elements common to such therapy.


76 So Laurence Brottier, “Un jeu de mots intraduisible: le combat entre thumos and athumia dans les homélies de Jean Chrysostome,” Revue de philologie, de littérature et d’histoire anciennes 72 (1998): 189–204, points out that the play on words θυμός-ἀθυμία-εὐθυμία that is a key element in John’s therapeutics addressed to Olympias is part of the philosophical discourse on illnesses of the soul found in John’s own earlier discourse, most notably in his homilies De statuis (387 CE). For John’s treatment of the same set of ideas in his early treatise Ad Stagirium see Wright, “Between Despondency.”

77 Schatkin, Chrysostom as Apologist, 91.


79 Ibid. (PG 58.727–30).
wipe the impurity from her soul.\textsuperscript{80} As it turns out, however, as John explains to his audience, it is the woman who has the correct mindset and the disciples whose reason is compromised.\textsuperscript{81} In John’s psychology not all \textit{pathos} is problematic and in this case the \textit{pathos} the woman exhibits is one that draws out caring for others (an important aspect of the virtue of \textit{eleemosynē}).\textsuperscript{82} which is then opposed to the negative \textit{pathos} of love of money (\textit{philargyria}) exhibited by Judas.\textsuperscript{83} This brings John to his key point: if Judas, who spent so much time with Jesus, was not healed, how can we expect to expel this sickness without major treatment and effort?\textsuperscript{84} From this point the homily moves into a focused explanation of how personal agency is operative in this particular illness of the soul, how this desire (\textit{ἐπιθυμία}) is not natural but results from laziness on the part of the individual, the importance of moderation, and how everything, especially wealth and poverty, is in reality the opposite of what one intuitively thinks to be the case. All of this is constantly linked to the healthy state or otherwise of the soul, concluding with a summation of his advice to his audience in the dictum that no one can harm us, if we are sober; rather, harm comes to us not from poverty, but from ourselves.\textsuperscript{85}

We could in fact adduce numerous examples from his homilies to show how John consistently conceives of his sermons as therapeutic \textit{logoi} and how this holistic programme for bringing about psychic health permeates his thought,\textsuperscript{86} but we will move instead to one further respect in which his therapeutics are

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{80} Ibid. (PG 58.723.10–15 a.i). Cf. PG 58.724.18–21, where he compares her to all of the other women who came to Jesus to be healed of physical illnesses. This woman approached for the correction of her soul.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Ibid. (PG 58.725.16–27). In fact it is the woman who exhibits \textit{megalopsychia}.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid. (PG 58.726.32–43).
\item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid. (PG 58.727.50–52). At line 54 this is described as a sickness from which constant exposure to Christ’s teaching did not free him.
\item \textsuperscript{84} Ibid. (PG 58.728.1–3).
\item \textsuperscript{85} Ibid. (PG 58.729.32–34): ἄν νήσῳ μεν, οὐδεὶς ἡμᾶς λυμανεῖται: καί δὲι οὐ παρὰ πενίαν, ὀλλὰ παρ᾽ ἡμᾶς αὐτός ὁ βλάβη γίνεται. See Schatkin, \textit{Chrysostom as Apologist}, 93, who notes that at PG 58.729 John cites a line of iambic pentameter from a non-Christian source in support.
\item \textsuperscript{86} For examples drawn from his homilies and for a discussion of how he conceives of preaching as therapy for the soul in his treatise \textit{De sac.} see further Rylaarsdam, \textit{Divine Pedagogy}, \textit{passim}; and Van Veller, “Preaching Paul,” ch. 1. In \textit{In ioh. hom.} 2/1 (PG 59.36.17–19) John explicitly adduces the long-standing topos of the philosopher’s school (here = church) as a surgery for patients who suffer sicknesses of the soul. We use ‘holistic’ here in the sense of therapy directed towards the health of the whole human person, body and soul/mind, since the two parts are indivisible and their health mutually connected. On how the sympathetic relationship between body and soul was viewed see Brooke Holmes, “Disturbing Connections: Sympathetic Affections, Mental Disorder, and the Elusive Soul in Galen,” in
\end{itemize}
holistic and align with the Hellenistic philosophical tradition within which he situates himself. In viewing John as a philosopher in the psychotherapeutic mode we might be tempted to separate the exegetical portion from the moral-ethical content in John’s preaching to focus solely on the latter. As David Rylaarsdam has convincingly argued, this would be a mistake. Once again pushing his findings further, what we will argue here is that, if we are to accept that John viewed himself primarily as a Christian philosopher and psychagogue, then we should perhaps also consider that in his approach to exegesis he inherited or at least drew upon another aspect of that tradition. The performance of exegesis is not alien to the role of a therapist raised in the traditions of the Hellenistic moral philosophers. As David Sedley points out, it was precisely moral philosophers like Philodemus who in the first century BCE in a diaspora setting gave rise to a tradition of teaching the history of the Athenian philosophical school and of the study of the school’s ‘treasured scriptures’. That is, it is at this period that the tradition of doxography begins along with the formation of a philosophical canon, leading in turn to the production of commentaries upon those scriptures. In the second century CE we see the same phenomenon (doxography, the canonisation of earlier texts) developing within the medical stream. In light of the way in which John situates himself firmly within the Hellenistic medico-philosophical tradition, we should perhaps entertain the idea that in delivering therapeutic logoi John drew not just on a Jewish-Christian conception of scriptural exegesis. It is likely that he drew on one derived from the medical and philosophical traditions as well, and that in this respect in his preaching, as we observed in In Matthaeum homilia 80/81, exegesis and moral advice form part of an integrated whole and serve one and the same therapeutic purpose.

5 Conclusion

It has long been recognised that, as a preacher, John’s primary concern is with the moral formation of his audience, with pastoral care. But what we can now

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**Mental Disorders in the Classical World, ed. W.V. Harris (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), esp. 155–63, and literature.**

87 Rylaarsdam, Divine Pedagogy, 111–23, esp. 121.


recognise is that this is moral formation with a very specific focus—virtue ethics; and pastoral care not in a modern sense but in the sense of Seelsorge ger- mane to the classical and Hellenistic Greek world—care for the health of the soul. As we have seen, for John rhetoric in the form of the therapeutic logos is directed towards teaching the individual how to regulate their soul in regard to desire and affect/pathos, in large part through attainment of the correct mindset. In this sense, John situates himself clearly as a teacher within a particular school (in his case, neo-Nicene Christian) of moral philosophy. That school draws strongly on the medico-philosophical traditions in which at Antioch John himself must have been trained, both Platonic-Aristotelian (or Galenist) and Stoic-Epicurean. As Susanna Elm points out in Sons of Hellenism, this is very much how Gregory of Nazianzus in Oratio 2 for his own part conceived of Christian leadership and the priesthood. That is, the priest is a (true) philosopher, one who is a physician of the soul, and whose teachings are medicines. When we take away the retrospective lens of theology, the John who emerges is, not unlike Gregory, a product of late-antique paideia, concerned fundamentally with teaching his students how to correctly shape their own soul, in the mode of a holistic (albeit Christian) medico-philosophical psychic therapist.

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