

## **John of Apamea: His Identity and his dualistic anthropological conception**

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### **Resumen**

El presente estudio expone el problema relacionado con la identidad histórica de Juan de Apamea, un monje sirio que adquirió notable fama por sus escritos espirituales y teológicos. Consecuentemente, el artículo presenta una visión crítica de las obras publicadas y atribuidas al monje sirio para proponer una posible solución de su identidad histórica. Esto implica el análisis de su famosa concepción antropológica tripartita, que generalmente se le ha adjudicado como su noción teológica emblemática. Pero el estudio de sus diversas obras (tratados, diálogos y cartas) descubre que esta concepción sólo puede referirse a una obra en particular. Para probar esta errónea generalización, presento un resumen del segundo diálogo con Thomasios, como muestra probatoria, que concentra las nociones espirituales y teológicas que permean todos los diálogos y cartas indiscutidamente atribuidos a Juan de Apamea.

**Palabras claves:** Sentidos. Fisionomía divina. Thomasios.

### **Abstract**

The present study expounds the problem related to the quest for the historical John of Apamea, a Syrian Monk who became famous for his spiritual and theological writings. Thus the study presents an overview of the problem of his identity based upon the critical works published and attributed to him in order to propose a solution. In tandem, this inquiry analyzes the most famous tripartite anthropological conception of John with the intention of criticizing the generalization of such notion, since it cannot be found in other writings accredited to the monk. In order to demonstrate the erroneous generalization, I present a summary of the second dialogue with Thomasios<sup>1</sup>, which concentrate the theological and spiritual notions of John, that are contained explicitly or implicitly in most of his writings: tractates, letters, and dialogues.

**Key words:** Senses. Divine physiognomy. Thomasios.

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## **1. The translated and edited works of John of Apamea**

John the Solitary of Apamea has been considered the author of a series of ascetic tractates and dialogues that have been preserved in Syriac since the year 581 CE., as it is classified by Anton Baumstark and Ignacio Ortiz de Urbina<sup>2</sup>.

The first edited work of John of Apamea appeared in the year 1936, published by Sven Dederling with the title: "Ein Dialog über die Seele und die Affekte des Menschen"<sup>3</sup>, a Dialogue about the soul and the passions of men.<sup>4</sup> This edition included a set of four dialogues that Sven Dederling attributed to John of Lycopolis, also known

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<sup>1</sup> In English and Spanish, a critical or official translation for all the six dialogues with Thomasios does not exist.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Baumstark Anton, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur: Mit Ausschluss der christlich-palästinensischen Texte*, Bonn: A. Markus und E. Webers Verlag, 1922, pp. 88-90; Ortiz de Urbina Ignacio, *Patrologia syriaca*, Roma: Pontificio Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1965, p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Johannes von Lycopolis, *Ein Dialog über die Seele und die Affekte des Menschen*, ed. and trans. Sven Dederling (Leipzig-Uppsala-Haag: O. Harrassowitz Verlag, 1936).

<sup>4</sup> The term "men" in this translation of "Menschen" indicates inclusively all humankind: male and female.

as John of Egypt, a seer of Thebaid, who was a prominent ascetic who died in Thebaid circa 394 CE.<sup>5</sup> With his study, Dederling started to deal with the crooked path of the authorship of the four dialogues of the soul and the human passions. It was until Irénée Hausherr who, after a strict scrutiny and research presented in the introduction of his French translation of the "Dialogue sur l'âme et les passions des homes"<sup>6</sup>, attributed these dialogues to John of Apamea, settling the platform for a more accurate approach in the discovery of this worthy but unknown Christian author.<sup>7</sup>

With explanations of Hausherr became evident the problem of the person of John of Apamea, for the reason that there have been proof of the existence of several monks in antiquity who had the same name and were practicing the eremitic and ascetic life in the solitude of the desert in Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia. So the crucial query resides in the proper identification of Who is the monk responsible for the Syrian writings of these published works mentioned above?

A good example of this problem, as René Lavenant presented it, is the publication of three letters in 1941 which were attributed to John the Solitary by Lars Gösta Rignell.<sup>8</sup> The second letter contains a passage that was already quoted by a Nestorian monk called Babai the Great (ca. 551 – 628) who ascribed that statement to John the Solitary from the land of Apamea.<sup>9</sup> According to this information, the chronological life setting of the author arises to a level of discussion, because if this "John" is the same person responsible for the dialogue edited by Sven Dederling and the three letters edited by Rignell, then the reader must locate the author and his writings in between the second half of the fourth century and the first half of the sixth century, maybe even arriving at the first two decades of the seventh century. A problem already addressed by Hausherr who presented his proposal of multiple persons in order to resolve the problem of John's identity. Rignell continued then to publish other three tractates about the Spiritual Perfection and the Baptism attributed to John of Apamea in 1960 entitled "Drei Traktate von Johannes dem Einsiedler" which can be translated as Three Tractates of John the Hermit. But again, in Rignell's work the problem of the authorship remained obscure.<sup>10</sup>

In 1972, Werner Strothmann edited six dialogues, two letters, and three tractates that he also attributed to John of Apamea.<sup>11</sup> In his work, Strothmann used the name of "John" with different classifications, but at the end, he always referred to a monk called John the Solitary from Apamea in Syria. These writings have the focal theological themes of hope in the resurrection, God's economy of salvation manifested in Christ, the

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<sup>5</sup> This ascetic monk was contemporary to John of Apamea, and the writings attributed to him are disputed. Cf. Jean D'Apamée, *Dialogues et Traités*, ed. and trans. René Lavenant, *Introduction, traduction et notes*, Sources Chrétiennes 311, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1984, p. 15; Jean-Claude Guy, "Jean de Lycopolis", *DSAM* VI, pp. 619-620.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Jean le Solitaire (Pseudo-Jean de Lycopolis), *Dialogue sur l'âme et les passions des homes*, ed. and trans. Irénée Hausherr, *Traduit du syriaque sur l'édition de Sven Dederling*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 120 (Roma: Pontificio Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1939). See also Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Hausherr Irénée, "Un grand auteur spirituel retrouvé: Jean d'Apamée", *OCP* 14 (Roma 1948), pp. 3-42.

<sup>8</sup> Lars Gösta Rignell, ed., *Briefe von Johannes dem Einsiedler mit kritischem Apparat, Einleitung und Übersetzung* (Lund: Håkan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1941); Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Rignell, *Briefe*, 80,18-84,4.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Johannes von Apamea, *Drei Traktate von Johannes dem Einsiedler*, ed. and trans. Lars Gösta Rignell (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1960).

<sup>11</sup> Strothmann Werner, *Johannes vom Apamea, Sechs Gespräche mit Thomasios, Der Briefwechsel zwischen Thomasios und Johannes und drei an Thomasios gerichtete Abhandlungen*, *Patristische Texte und Studien* 11 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972).

spiritual path that includes the notions of the superior invisible senses of the soul, and the obstacles of the present corporeal world. The value of this German translation resides in the historical and doctrinal research about the figure of John of Apamea. Therefore, based upon Strothmann's contribution, the translations and critical introduction of René Lavenant became noteworthy. Lavenant engages the historical problem of the person of John of Apamea by accrediting to him six dialogues with Thomasios, two letters, and three tractates published in 1984.<sup>12</sup>

Concerning the edited works attributed to John of Apamea by Strothmann<sup>13</sup> and Lavenant, the reader can find them in German and French; unfortunately, there are not critical editions in English and Spanish based upon the Syrian texts published yet. The following précis proportionate an overview of the published works of John of Apamea divided in Dialogues, Letters, and Tractates.

The dialogues with Thomasios are the following:

a) The First Dialogue with Thomasios treats the hope for the future of the world to come.<sup>14</sup>

b) The Second Dialogue with Thomasios is about the transformation that will benefit humankind in the future life, which means that the future world will be spiritual. In this dialogue the reader explicitly faces the doctrine of the senses of the soul.<sup>15</sup>

c) The Third Dialogue with Thomasios deals with the issue of the creation of human beings, and why every person has been created to receive the destiny that he suppose to receive in the world to come. The topics of discussion are the nature of Angels, Cherubs, Seraphim and the composite nature of the human bodies.<sup>16</sup>

d) The Fourth Dialogue with Thomasios handles the theme of the extreme variety of the beings created by God in the natural world and outside the physical nature. In this conversation John compares the physical world and the spiritual world.<sup>17</sup>

e) The Fifth Dialogue with Thomasios reasons with the issue of the composite human body and how a process of purification is an indispensable path which leads to a transformation that elevates the human soul above the natural world to receive the benefits of the spiritual world of God.<sup>18</sup>

f) The Sixth Dialogue with Thomasios converses about the revelations and visions of the divine economy of salvation in this present world and the economy of salvation of the world to come. Here the author also employs the notion of the spiritual senses as the perceptive means to know the spiritual realities and the mysteries of God.<sup>19</sup>

The two letters mentioned in this present study are the ones published in the critical editions of Strothmann and Lavenant who, in agreement, accredited them to John of Apamea:

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Strothmann Werner, *Johannes vom Apamea*, pp. 45-56.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Johannes vom Apamea, *Gespräche* 1,1-13, Strothmann Werner, *Johannes vom Apamea*, pp. 116-122.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Johannes vom Apamea, *Gespräche* 2,13-21, *Ibid.*, pp. 123-127.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Johannes vom Apamea, *Gespräche* 3,22-35, *Ibid.*, pp. 128-136.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Johannes vom Apamea, *Gespräche* 4,36-58, *Ibid.*, pp. 137-150.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Johannes vom Apamea, *Gespräche* 5,59-69, *Ibid.*, pp. 151-156.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Johannes vom Apamea, *Gespräche* 6,70-81, *Ibid.*, pp. 157-164.

a) The first letter from Master John to Thomasios speaks of the faith as the only tool that Christians have to approach the mystery of the divine economy of Christ. Faith is presented as the perfect instrument to know the divine realities.<sup>20</sup>

b) The second letter is from Thomasios to his Master John of Apamea. This brief writing is concerned with the proper explanations that a disciple requires from his master regarding the universal dimension of Christ's mystery of salvation, and what it would be the proper attitude in relation to this mystery of salvation.<sup>21</sup>

The three tractates:

a) The first tractate shows the perfection and universality in the notions of time and space in the Person, Action and Teachings of Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup>

b) The second tractate gives the responses to questions regarding the Incarnation of Christ, the combat of Christ against Satan when He was tempted in the desert, and the great mystery of the suffering in the Cross.<sup>23</sup>

c) The third tractate makes an exposition of the great cosmic and universal dimension of Christ. Jesus Christ is the beginning, the middle, and the end of every cosmic and universal movement of salvation, in which God establishes a special relationship with humanity until the end of this present world and the complete manifestation of God's world or the divine reality in all its complexity. Christ is the only hope for humanity.<sup>24</sup>

The unpublished or unreported works of John of Apamea according to Strothmann and Lavenant are the following<sup>25</sup>:

a) The first tractate regarding the new world.

b) The second tractate about the new world.

c) The accomplishment of the divine promises in the future and the new life.

d) A writing that tries to give an answer to the question about why in this world good persons are miserable and unhappy, and wicked persons are happy and fortunate.

e) First tractate about the end of the world.

f) Second tractate about the end of the world, which includes a Doxology.

g) A letter to Eubule.

Currently, there are three lost works of John of Apamea according to the opinions of Strothmann and Lavenant.<sup>26</sup> They are the following:

a) The nature of demons.

b) The Epiphany of the Lord

c) Hymns

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Johannes vom Apamea, Briefe 82–90, *Ibid.*, pp. 165-169.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Johannes vom Apamea, Briefe 90–93, *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, *Traité* 1,94–113, Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, pp. 130–145.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, *Traité* 2,113–126, *Ibid.*, pp. 146–157.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, *Traité* 3,126–141, *Ibid.*, pp. 158–170.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Strothmann Werner, *Johannes vom Apamea*, p. 61.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 56. For a summary of the undisputed and disputed works of John of Apamea see L. van Leijssen, "De driedeling van het geestelijk leven bij Johannes van Apamea. Kritische kanttekeningen bij enige gangbare interpretaties", *JECS* 51/3-4 (1999), pp. 213-240.

## 2. The identity of John of Apamea: Proposals

The brief overview of the writings attributed to John of Apamea gives the reader some glimpses regarding the issue of the chronological setting of this figure in history. Putting together a collection of letters, dialogues, tractates, and quotations from other well-known figures of the eastern church, the resulting time frame offers a period that extends from the second half of the fourth century until the first half of the seventh century. This time frame, which would be quite a stretch for the span of life of one person, leads to the problem of the identity of the so called "John the Solitary from Apamea".

Proposals made by scholars like Strothmann, Hausherr, Baumstark, and Lavenant became tentative solutions for the authenticity and identity of this Syrian monk who is considered the author of significant theological and spiritual writings. In regard to this aspect, it is valuable to assert that John had an illustrious reputation among the monks in Palestine from whom an admirer called Thomasios, heard about him, not hesitating to travel to the land of Apamea to meet and learn from this master of spirituality<sup>27</sup>.

Taking into consideration the criterion of the historical identity of the monk, the proposal can be classified in three kinds:

- a) The proposal of three different persons
- b) The proposal of two different persons
- c) The proposal of one John of Apamea

At this point, the next methodological step consists in a succinct examination of each of the theories.

### 2.1. The Hypothesis of three different persons

The most emblematic scholars of this hypothesis are Hausherr and Lavenant, who proposed the distinction of three different persons with the same name of "John of Apamea"<sup>28</sup>.

The first John of Apamea who can be considered as the author of six dialogues, two letters, and three tractates mentioned above, is from Syria. This John existed within the time frame that spans from the second half of the fourth century until the first half of the fifth century. He can be classified as the proto-John of Apamea<sup>29</sup>, and according to the reconstruction suggested by Lavenant, the *terminus ad quem* to determine his life is the consideration of the most ancient manuscript of his works preserved from the year 581 CE.<sup>30</sup> The proto-John was a monk who lived in the region of Apamea in the northern part of Syria, and judging by the preserved manuscripts, his theological ideas were very much in vogue during the fifth and sixth century. He was an educated man

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 1, 1, Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, p. 47.

<sup>28</sup> All the argumentation about the identity of the three John of Apamea can be found in Hausherr Irénée, "Jean d'Apamée", *OCP* 14 (1948), pp. 3-42; Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, pp. 17-19. Also it is valuable the mentioning of Antoine Guillaumont who proposed the theory of the distinction of three person with same name of John of Apamea. See Guillaumont Antoine, *Les 'kephalaia gnostica' d'Evagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens*, Patristica Sorbonensia 5, (Paris: Cerf, 1962), pp. 196.317-319.335.

<sup>29</sup> The nomenclature of Proto-John, Deutero-John and Tritio-John is not used by the scholars cited in this work, since it is a systematic classification established by the author of this work.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Baumstark Anton, *Geschichte*, pp. 88-90; Ortiz de Urbina Ignacio, *Patrologia syriaca*, p. 109.

who received most of his formation in Alexandria<sup>31</sup>, where he obtained a Hellenistic education regarding Philosophy and Logic, as well as biology and medicine which had a significant place in the Hellenistic instruction of the time. This can explain the frequent use of the literary image of the embryo which is formed in the maternal womb as an analogy to explain the formation and development of the interior person who needs the spiritual maturity to live in the invisible world. This anthropological physiognomy helps John to perceive, by analogy, the spiritual physiognomy.<sup>32</sup>

The second John of Apamea is also from Syria, but this one professed a Gnostic pantheism and promoted the notions of Emanationism<sup>33</sup>. Most of the information about this "John" comes from the source of Theodore Bar Koni, a Nestorian and Manichean Heresiologist and Christian Bishop from Mesopotamia who published his writings in Syriac, among which it is found his *Kṭāḇā 'eskoljōn*, also known as the *Liber Scholiorum*, written around the year 790 CE. In this work, Bar Koni described the person in question as coming from Apamea in northern Syria<sup>34</sup>. This "Deutero-John" was living for a while in Alexandria where he studied under the guidance of some magicians, then he returned to Apamea where he entered the monastery of Mar Samuel and Mar Shemun, also known as Deyr Ul Umur, founded in 397 CE.<sup>35</sup> There he became well-known for his unorthodox conceptions. Such heretical path created enemies for this John of Apamea, among which appeared Philoxenus of Mabbug, also known as Xenaias<sup>36</sup>, who referred to this heretical monk with the appellation of John the Egyptian. The different use of name in this case indicates to the reader, that Philoxenus wanted to avoid any equivocal situation of mistaken personality in which the heretical monk could be erroneously indentified with the spiritual master known as John of Apamea, who was certainly well known by Philoxenus.<sup>37</sup>

The Third John of Apamea was from Mesopotamia, and he was also known as an unorthodox theologian who was condemned for his Messalian conceptions regarding prayer and sacraments by Catholicos Timothy the First, in an East Syrian Synod through the years 786-787. In the same Synod, John of Dalyatha, a Nestorian theologian, and an eastern Syrian monk called Joseph Hazzaya were also condemned because of their Messalian tendencies which were possibly influenced by the theological notions of the so called John the Solitary.<sup>38</sup>

Consequently, the so called "Trito-John" is the most obscure figure among the three. The first two were very close in the chronological and geographical setting, rendering understandable the easy confusion of identity among them. That is why the

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Strothmann Werner, *Johannes vom Apamea*, p. 65; Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, pp. 21-22, note 5.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Hausherr Irénée, *Jean d'Apamée*, pp. 6-8; Lavenant René, "Le problème de Jean d'Apamée", *OCP* 46 (1980) pp. 388-389; Id., *Dialogues*, p. 17.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Théodore Bar Koni, *Liber Scholiorum*, Paris – Louvain: Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 66, 1912, pp. 331-333; Strothmann Werner, *Johannes vom Apamea*, pp. 97- 103; Lodewijk Josephus Rudolf Ort, *Mani: a religio-historical description of his Personality*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967, pp. 32-33.

<sup>35</sup> This monastery in the 7th century began to be called the "Monastery of Mar Gabriel" after its bishop Mar Gabriel who died in the year 668 CE.

<sup>36</sup> The Syrian name of Philoxenus of Mabbug is Aksenāyâ Mabûgāyâ who died approximately in the year 523 CE.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Lavenant René, "La Lettre à Patricius d'Édesse de Philoxène de Mabboug", *PO* 30/147 (1963), p. 848; Strothmann Werner, *Johannes vom Apamea*, pp. 81-90; Hausherr Irénée, *Jean d'Apamée*, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Lavenant René, *Le problem*, pp. 384–387; Strothmann Werner, *Johannes vom Apamea*, pp. 103-104; Isaac of Niniveh, *On Ascetical Life*, trans., Mary Hansbury, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989, pp. 18.20–21.

appellative distinction employed by Philoxenus of Mabbug is noteworthy. The third John, on the other hand, appeared in history in a posterior time between the seventh and the eighth century, immersed in Nestorian and Messalian theological currents.

## **2.2. The Hypothesis of two different persons**

The major representative of this hypothesis is Anton Baumstark who believed in the existence of two persons known as John of Apamea.<sup>39</sup>

The first is John the Solitary from Orontes, which corresponds to the Deutero-John according to Hausherr and Lavenant. Baumstark, using the information given by Bar Koni<sup>40</sup>, identified this John with the one who went to Alexandria to study medicine, logic, and rhetoric as the fundamentals of his intellectual formation. Baumstark affirmed that this John was influenced by the Neoplatonic and Pantheistic currents of his time, initiating from such an intellectual platform the construction of his Neoplatonic Christian speculations.<sup>41</sup>

The second John, from Mesopotamia, is involved in the Nestorian and Messalian theological conception, corresponding to the Trito-John of Hausherr and Lavenant. Baumstark is convinced that this John is the one who was condemned by Catholicos Timothy the First in 786-787.<sup>42</sup> John from Mesopotamia was a Nestorian theologian, who with the theological notions of John of Dalyatha and Joseph Hazzaya, put into question the unity of the divinity and humanity of Christ.<sup>43</sup>

## **2.3. The Hypothesis of one John of Apamea**

Werner Strothmann established the idea that John of Apamea must be only one person. The other three "John of Apamea" who have been differentiated by Hausherr and Lavenant, are just nuances or aspects of the same historical person who, in this present study, is called the Proto-John<sup>44</sup>.

Strothmann also used the information given by Bar Koni, as Hausherr and Baumstark did, but he arrived to the conclusions of one historical person.<sup>45</sup> So the question can be: How can Strothmann explain the Nestorian and Pantheistic heretical notions along with the sound doctrine and spiritual teachings manifested in the writings of one single person through a time frame of circa two hundred years?

His answer concluded that after an exhaustive citation of John of Apamea's texts through an historical evolution of the quotations of his writings in other authors, the wholesomeness and integrity of John's doctrine was corrupted through time, between the second half of the fourth and the first half of the fifth century, with Nestorian, Pantheistic, Gnostic, and Neoplatonic notions, which were never professed originally by the Syrian monk.<sup>46</sup>

The present work follows the line of reasoning presented by Hausherr and Lavenant. It is easier to admit logically, according to the historical data of the witnesses reviewed, the existence of a group of theologian monks who had the same name and

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Baumstark Anton, *Geschichte*, pp. 166-167. 220-221.226.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 166. note 3.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>44</sup> See the Vorwort of Strothmann Werner, *Johannes vom Apamea*, i, and also pages 62-67.

<sup>45</sup> For the development and argumentation of his theory see Strothmann Werener, *Johannes vom Apamea*, pp. 81-115.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-67.100-101.

came relatively from the same geographical area who, through a time frame of almost two centuries, presented in their writings diverse theological opinions that moved through a wide variety of theological positions. Strothmann's proposal has a major obstacle Philoxenus of Mabbug's affirmations who clearly identified the existence of a certain John, an Egyptian heretical theologian, who cannot be mistaken with John of Apamea, an orthodox Syrian theologian. This historical fact indicates the possibility of erroneous identity misunderstandings because of the commonality of appellatives.

Subsequently, if the multiple personalities theory is taken as the most plausible proposal, it is possible to affirm that the second dialogue with Thomasios (along with the other five mentioned by Lavenant), belongs to the Proto John of Apamea, a Syrian Monk who was a master of spirituality, and of whom Babai the Great said that He walked in the same path of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Evagrius Ponticus.<sup>47</sup> Therefore John the Solitary of Apamea can be considered even today an ancient wealth of beneficial spiritual and theological notions that are ever anew.

### **3. John of Apamea's Divine Pedagogy and Spiritual Physiognomy**

Through the assiduous and attentive meditation of Scripture, John of Apamea perceived the notion of the Divine Pedagogy that is patient and unwearied. Throughout this educational process, God instructs his people through the fluid course of historic events, where Israel manifested unfaithfully its unfaithfulness to his creator. The materiality and seductiveness of other gods and cultures caused Israel to deviate from the bond of the covenant and love created by Yhwh who adopted Israel as his son.<sup>48</sup>

However, the material world wherein humanity interacts serves as an embryo in which the "interior person"<sup>49</sup> is being formed like a fetus in the mother's womb, until the moment of birth arrives. Then the person starts the process of maturity and learning that leads to the point of complete independence. Such moment is characterized by the capacity of an effective interaction with the surrounding world.<sup>50</sup>

This analogy, borrowed from his personal interest in medicine, helped John of Apamea to develop his delicate conception of the spiritual person who needs the constant guidance and intervention of his divine pedagogue who is God himself. In the course of the complex apparatus of the physical world, God manifests himself continually to the believer, in the corporeal situations through many creative forms, persons, and events as a spiritual pedagogue in order to lead the person to recognize the realities of the invisible world. However, the functions or senses of the spiritual person are numb by the physicality of the body, not allowing one to be fully developed, and consequently creating the incapability of perceiving spiritual realities.<sup>51</sup> Thus the purpose of the divine pedagogical process is to make every person open to the knowledge of the mysteries of God given to humanity fully in the person of Christ through the salutary economy of this world that will be totally accomplished in the spiritual state of the world to come. Then every person will exercise fully the superior

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Hausherr Irénée, *Jean d'Apamée*, p. 182; Frankenberg Wilhem, *Evagrius Ponticus*, Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Berlin: Neue Folge, 1912, Vol. 13, no. 2, p. 135. See also a summary of the different theories about the identity of John of Apamea in Kitchen Robert A., *In Search of Lost Apophthemas in John the Solitary of Apamea*, Regina, Saskatchewan: Knox-Metropolitan United Church, Independent Academia, 2012, pp. 2–5.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Jr 3:19–20.

<sup>49</sup> John of Apamea in his dialogues used the expression "interior man" which is inclusive, indicating the totality of humanity or every person: male and female alike.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 1, 9, Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, pp. 54–55.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 1, 9–10, *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.



senses and organs of the soul, becoming a integral restored person in the transit from the visible worldly economy to the invisible economy.<sup>52</sup>

Using the knowledge of anthropological Physiognomy and Scripture, John crafted his theological notion of the Spiritual Physiognomy, making him renowned among the Syrian writers. His spiritual doctrine is centered in the marvelous gift of God to humanity in Jesus Christ. This implies especially the notion of the resurrection and eternal life that will be given to all humanity according to God's true wisdom. Thus faith, according to John, indicates the belief in the resurrection of the dead and an endless life without sin to which every person is destined.<sup>53</sup> Christ gives this hope through the baptism that cleanses from sin and bestows the signs of the future life. So without denying the worldly life, a person must go through a process of purification in order to arrive to the angelic state, meaning that the current life becomes the particular starting point or the training field to achieve the state of Perfection, that is called *gmīrūtā*<sup>54</sup>.

There is, according to John's line of thought, a tripartite order of the spiritual path of life which is based upon the tripartite dimension of a person. These three orders (*taksīn*) are the path of the body (somatic), of the soul (psychic/psychikos), and of the spirit (pneumatikos: pneumatic order). This notion is explicitly stated in John of Apamea's dialogue about the soul and the passions of men:

«Il y a trois ordres d'hommes dénommés par l'Écriture: les somatiques, les psychiques, les pneumatiques... Est appelé somatique celui qui s'adonne aux convoitises de la nature du corps. Est psychique celui qui s'est élevé au-dessus des choses du corps et s'est approché de l'ordre de la nature de l'âme, c'est-à-dire qui combat contre la méchanceté de ses pensées, met un frein à son âme pour ne pas suivre ses instincts. Est spirituel celui qui est au-dessus des pensées corporelles et dont tout l'entendement se meut dans la sagesse qui est en Dieu»<sup>55</sup>.

John of Apamea established this spiritual notion based upon the tripartite Pauline division of a person found in 1Thess 5:23: «May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα), soul (ἡ ψυχή), and body (τὸ σῶμα), be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ». The tripartite notion corresponds to the three stages of the spiritual path needed to achieve the *gmīrūtā* (perfection). Thus in the spiritual itinerary a person may ascend or descend from one order to the another, as if one would be going up and down a ladder. John's writings are not systematic in the modern sense of the word. Therefore his tripartite division does not indicate a clear division between the three levels, since they are intertwined to the point that they can be experienced simultaneously almost as one walking concurrently on parallel paths.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 2, 19–20, *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Lettre 1, 82–84, *Ibid.*, pp. 120–122; Jean D'Apamée, Lettre 2, 92–93, *Ibid.*, pp. 128–129.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, pp. 28–29; Kitchen Robert, *Apophthemagata*, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Jean le Solitaire, *Dialogue sur l'âme et les passions des hommes*, trans. Hausherr Irénée, pp. 13–14.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Kitchen Robert, *Apophthemagata*, p. 14.

At this point it is fundamental to have a brief overview of the three orders according to the four dialogues regarding the soul and the passions of men.<sup>57</sup>

### **a) The somatic path**

This order received the Syrian designation of *pagrānūtā*, which is the somatic state of the interior person. It is easy to misunderstand this state by indentifying it with the lowest nature of the corporeal passions that cause a person to live an animalistic lifestyle. The *pagrānūtā* indicates the lowest level of spirituality in which the interior person is strictly attached to the corporeal senses and passions which do not allow the interior person to have the true inner peace. This occurs because the interior person does not know of another way of living apart from the physical body.<sup>58</sup>

The main concern at this level is the fight against the passions in order to be above them and enter into a superior spiritual state. In Syriac two terms exist that can be used to signify the concept of passion. One is the word "zaw<sup>o</sup>", indicating a movement, an impulse of the body, or the intellect. The other term is the noun "ḥacho", signifying suffering.<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, after this semantic determination, it is possible to distinguish two sets of passions, the ones that are compatible to the level of the body, and others that fit into the soul. The passions of the body are "sleep, hunger, thirst, desire, intemperance"<sup>60</sup> among which the biological sexual instincts are the lowest manifestations of this kind that could produce physical and moral suffering.<sup>61</sup>

The passions of the soul represent for the modern reader psychological states that can be the source of negative actions depending on the context. As an example of these states can be enumerated "anger, zeal, jealousy, love of power, pride, boasting, and lust".<sup>62</sup> The experience of "fear" can be qualified as one that also produces suffering. But on the other hand, it is possible to identify spiritual passions that can be positive, among which there are "happiness, humility, and the love of God". These cause every person to acquire a higher level in the spiritual realm, to the point of achieving the level of the spiritual path.<sup>63</sup>

Every person who lives according to the path of the body struggles constantly against the passions in order to elevate oneself to the level of the invisible realities. The spiritual senses at this stage are anesthetized, meaning that the interior person continues to relate to the physical world through the body, not perceiving the spiritual world properly. Therefore the progress to perfection implies the surpassing of this level by a continuous effort of purification through the discipline and control of the body and

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Johannes von Lycopolis, *Ein Dialog über die Seele und die Affekte des Menschen*, ed. and trans., Sven Dederling (Leipzig-Uppsala-Haag: O. Harrassowitz Verlag, 1936). See also Jean le Solitaire (Pseudo-Jean de Lycopolis), *Dialogue sur l'âme et les passions des homes*, ed. and trans. Hausherr Irnée, Traduit du syriaque sur l'edition de Sven Dederling, OCA 120 (Roma: Pontificio Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1939).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Harb Paul, "Doctrine spirituelle de Jean le Solitaire (Jean d'Apamée)", *Parole de l'Orient* 2 (1971), pp. 225-260 230.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, p. 40.

<sup>60</sup> Johannes von Lycopolis, Dialog 2,43, Dederling Sven, *Johannes von Lycopolis*, pp. 5-6; Kitchen Robert, *Apophthemagata*, p. 15.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, p. 40.

<sup>62</sup> Johannes von Lycopolis, Dialog 2,43, Dederling Sven, *Johannes von Lycopolis*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, p. 40.

mind. This also implies the discernment between good and bad passions of the body and soul which helps the person to go further in the spiritual life.<sup>64</sup>

### b) The path of the soul

This spiritual order receives also the denomination of *napšānūtā*. This stage of the soul or *psychē* (ἡ ψυχῆ) can be located between the corporeal and the pneumatic level. The delimitation between these levels is fluid; namely, there is not an strict and clear boundary in between them. The person who is living in the *napšānūtā* finds oneself still struggling with the passions of the corporeity concurrently with the passions of the soul. The soul is *per se* a spiritual entity that still has its roots in the corporeal body, but it moves in the realm of the invisible. For a modern reader, this would be the equivalent to the intellect and the psychological functions of the mind. Through the physical experiences, it is possible to have psychological experiences that can be located in the psychosomatic range, where the two levels are conjointly experienced. In these cases a person can experience a non corporeal dimension that cannot be measured by tangible tools, while at the same time the person is elevated to a non physical level where is possible to recognize the spiritual realm.

How to achieve this point of the spiritual path? The question is problematic, since the Solitary does not give systematic answers, but in his dialogues<sup>65</sup>, the notion of purification from evil things, despicable matters, and sinful thoughts continues to be the constant path to elevate every human being to a spiritual phase.<sup>66</sup>

### c) The pneumatic path

This order of the spirit takes also the Syrian name of *rūhānūtā*. At this stage, the interior person experiences a harmonious unity of mind and spirit with the knowledge of the divine mysteries. At this point, the interior person is able to perceive the invisible world through the senses of the spirit. The basic difference between the order of the soul (*psychē*) and the pneumatic order, resides in the distinction between the somatic and the psychic order. The somatic order cannot exist apart from the corporeal reality of sensations and passions, coming through physical experiences. In the same way, the interior person cannot arrive at the pneumatic order without the experiences and perceptions developed in the stage of the *psychē*. Therefore John the Solitary affirms «since the soul's nature is spiritual - for the order of its nature is not the accomplishment of deeds, but the knowledge of the Spirit - if one elevates himself through his knowledge above the doing of the virtuous deeds, he no longer belongs to the order of the way of the soul, but to the spiritual order».<sup>67</sup>

The state of *rūhānūtā* is characterized by the *chafyûto*, which can be translated as "integrity". This implies the notion of purity and self-knowledge that the interior person is a spiritual essence capable of knowing the divine mysteries, and is simultaneously united to a physical body in this world. The spiritual state requires faith in Christ in

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Johannes von Lycopolis, *Dialog* 1,12, Dederling Sven, *Johannes von Lycopolis*, pp. 15–18; Kitchen Robert, *Apophthemagata*, pp. 15–16; Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, pp. 30–31.40.

<sup>65</sup> These four dialogues are published under the title of Johannes von Lycopolis, *Ein Dialog über die Seele und die Affekte des Menschen*, ed. and trans., Sven Dederling (1936). The same are published in French: Jean le Solitaire (Pseudo-Jean de Lycopolis), *Dialogue sur l'âme et les passions des homes*, ed. and trans., Irénée Hausherr (1939).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Johannes von Lycopolis, *Dialog* 1,11–12. 13, Dederling Sven, *Johannes von Lycopolis*, pp. 23–24; Kitchen Robert, *Apophthemagata*, pp. 16–17; Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, pp. 31.35.

<sup>67</sup> Johannes von Lycopolis, *Dialog* 3,66, Dederling Sven, *Johannes von Lycopolis*, pp. 12–16; Kitchen Robert, *Apophthemagata*, p. 18.

order to go through a process of total purification and awakening of the senses of the soul, so that the spiritual person can experience the invisible world and perceive the mysteries of the world to come<sup>68</sup>. This notion is correlated to the idea of interior transparency that belongs to the spiritual person who does not need any bodily contact or exterior manifestation to know the invisible world or the divine manifestations of God. This state cannot be perceived by a corporeal person or even Satan and the demons. The spiritual transparency allows the perception and experience of the mysteries of the invisible world through a life of total humility<sup>69</sup>.

It is noteworthy to highlight that this tripartite dimension is basically based upon four dialogues published under the title of "Ein Dialog über die Seele und die Affekte des Menschen" by Sven Dederling, and its French translation: "Dialogue sur l'âme et les passions des homes", by Irénée Hausherr. Therefore, it would be erroneous to generalize this notion applying it to all of John's works, because the personal analysis of the six dialogues with Thomasios, the two letters, and the three tractates published by Strothmann and Lavenat, indicates the notion of a dualistic dimension of the visible and the invisible world that subsequently it implies an anthropological dichotomy of the corporeal and interior (spiritual) person.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, the tripartite notion described above is not present in these other writings of John published by Strothmann and Lavenant. John of Apamea's perception of humanity's relationship to God is dynamic, not systematic, and that is why it is possible to discern this distinction between a tripartite and bipartite anthropological dimension in his writings. For this reason is appropriate to establish that the tripartite physiognomy appears only in four dialogues, while the rest of John's *opera* is marked by a heavy dualistic conception of humanity and the world, as it is clearly read in his dialogues with Thomasios. The notions already explained are concentrated in the dual dimension: the corporeal and the spiritual. For this reason it is significant to have an overview of John of Apamea's second dialogue with Thomasios, as a sample of proof and confirmation, to demonstrate his dualistic notion that permeates most of the writings attributed to him.

#### **4. The content of the Second Dialogue with Thomasios (Syr. 2,13-21)**

The second dialogue with Thomasios attributed was composed in the early stages of the fifth century as a result of a synthetic view of the Hellenistic and Syrian standpoint regarding the traditions of knowledge of the divine. The second dialogue is a conversation with Thomasios, who, as it is informed in the first Dialogue<sup>71</sup>, received an excellent Greek education, but because of being also a man with a strong faith in Christ, he adopted the Solitary Syrian Monk as his spiritual master in order to learn more about the Christian spirituality of the monastic and solitary life. This opportunity was taken by John in order to teach him about the knowledge of God and the hope of the new world to come in Eschatological times. In this opportunity, John would present a different perspective from the Hellenistic epistemological tradition based upon the objective experience of the reality, namely, the observation of facts that lead to certain conclusions about realism or everything considered true.

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 6,75–76, Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, pp. 42. 113–114.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, pp. 43–44.

<sup>70</sup> For a critical position regarding these writings see L. van Leijssen, "De driedeling van het geestelijk leven bij Johannes van Apamea", *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 51/ 3-4 (1999), pp. 220-236.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 1,1, Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, p. 47.

During this second dialogue, Thomasios asked three questions which function as stepping grounds for his master to explain the Christian tradition of the spiritual realities already developed by Origen in his meditations regarding the Scripture.<sup>72</sup>

The first question considers the lack of agreement among the immense variety of knowledge and sciences. If they are looking for the truth in their respective fields, then why they contradict each other, not retaining anything certain in mutual agreement?

John's answer focused on the problem of the diversity and multiplicity of sciences and knowledge to arrive at the conclusion that the mystery of Truth is intrinsically related to the nature of God. Therefore, the multiple fields of knowledge prove the richness of the knowledge of God and the impossibility of comprehending his mystery and nature. But the knowledge of divine truth is accessible to man because God, who is precisely invisible, has manifested himself in multiple forms in the corporeal world and in the visible realities. If God would be visible, it would not be possible for him to manifest himself in a plurality of forms and then the knowledge of him could be grasped in a limited manner as it would be an object like the others. But since He is invisible, He can reveal himself in diverse forms, and in this way the knowledge of God is limitless. Consequently, God makes himself known to mankind through the elements of this world, motivating all the sciences and tractates of the present era speak of God.<sup>73</sup>

John continues explaining that in the same way that a person can perceive the visible realities like fire, air, and light, in the same manner God can be perceived thanks to a new vision that will be explicit in the new world by pure grace. In that moment all languages, explanations, and actual knowledge will cease<sup>74</sup> since the knowledge of God will be explicitly uncovered in the new world. Therefore in the new life, it would be impossible to comprehend and reflect without the interior senses.<sup>75</sup>

The second question of Thomasios follows the previous conclusion of his master: "Why is it that we cannot reflect or understand about anything?" This query opens the door for John to enlighten Thomasios regarding the notion of the invisible realities that are present in the corporeal human world. In the concrete, corporeal person, it is possible to find the invisible reality of the soul which is able to perceive and to know the invisible realities or the spiritual domain. The problem is the visible reality of mankind, the body, that does not allow the soul to recognize the hidden truth of the spiritual world, so in this manner the body becomes an obstacle to the soul, perceiving what is proper to its nature. The spiritual senses are obstructed by the physical condition of the body which does not allow the recognition and perception of what is spiritual. John, in order to demonstrate this aspect, uses the analogical example of the lame man whose feet render him incapable of marching, unless they are healed, or a blind man whose eyes cannot see unless his eyes are cured and opened to the world, or a paralyzed tongue which cannot pronounce a word until it is made well. The analogy can be applied to the spiritual or invisible senses as a parallel reality to the corporeal. The

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* I:48, ed. and trans., Henry Chadwick, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 44.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 2,13–14, Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, pp. 58–59.

<sup>74</sup> 1 Cor 13:8: «Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away." John at this point of his dialogue, quotes the second part of the verse: "whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away» (8b). See Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 2,15, Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, p. 59.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 2,15, *Ibid.*, pp. 59–60.

invisible senses cannot perform rightly because they are impeded. The spiritual senses are numb and atrophic because they are not in use, but when put into action by the soul, it is then possible for them to comprehend and perceive the spiritual sphere immersed in the present world, giving the person true knowledge, understanding, intelligence, and science. Evil habits, perverse thoughts, weaknesses, and limitations of terrestrial things make the spiritual senses ill and incompetent to exercise their functions of having a knowledge of God's mysteries.<sup>76</sup>

In this manner, man cannot be gratified by spiritual knowledge, and it is clear that in this case the obstacle does not come from God, but from the weakness of the human person. Using analogies to elucidate spiritual mysteries, John continues with the example of the eyes of a blind man who is not able to see the light in front of him. So when the light shines forth before the blind man, the privation of vision hinders him from admiring and seeing what is in his presence. The invisible senses of the soul give superior wisdom to the person, but if they are not open to the reality of God, the knowledge of Him cannot be acquired in this world. The therapy suggested by John is the purification of corporal thoughts and concerns in order to ascend to spiritual concerns. Regarding this, John states: «if we purify ourselves of wickedness, then we will come to see invisible realities. But there is no point, while we are still blind, in asking why it is we cannot see the light, no point in stuffing our ears and then asking why it is we cannot hear anything».<sup>77</sup> Thus the same can be said about the invisible mystery of the soul who is a prisoner of the corporeal world. However John also affirms that these obstacles can be overcome in the present life through the healing of the spiritual senses which can be acquired in the process of searching the spiritual reality of God and his manifestations in this world, making the human soul to ascend to the elevated grace of the invisible realities. This complete perception of the spiritual sphere will be a fact in the new world when the spiritual senses are totally open and healed to comprehend the divine wisdom<sup>78</sup>.

Thomasios' third question focuses on what will be the sign that men will be better than what they are, and when it will occur. At this point, John uses the argumentative demonstration of Paul's teaching, using Hebrews to highlight the faith of the forefathers, beginning with the Patriarchs, emphasizing the examples of faith that surpass the Law and please God. The total faith of mankind is what makes possible the accomplishment of a glorious economy of salvation that elevates every person to a state of perfection: «God had foreseen something better for us, so that without us they should not be made perfect» (Hebrews 11:40).<sup>79</sup> For John, this period of perfection that will be completed in the world to come according to God's economy of salvation, has already began in the corporeal world. Every person is already present in the maternal bosom without the perfect definitions of his or her bodily parts, but by the Grace of God the time will arrive when the person would be mature enough to come to live into the world in order to continue developing his/her capacities. So in the same way in which every person in this corporeal world is being formed, growing and maturing, his spiritual senses are also developing but still they are not capable of functioning effectively yet until the person arrives, by the grace of the salutary economy, to the spiritual state

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 2,15–16, *Ibid.*, pp. 60–61.

<sup>77</sup> McGuckin John Anthony, ed., *The Book of Mystical Chapters. Meditations on the Soul's Ascent from the Desert Fathers and other early Christian Contemplatives*, Boston, MA / London, UK: Shambhala, 2003, p. 21. McGuckin in his book only presents this paragraph translated from the second dialogue. See also Jean D'Apamée, Dialogues 2,17, Lavenant René, *Dialogues*, p. 60.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 2,17–18, *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.

<sup>79</sup> Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 2,19, *Ibid.*, p. 63.

where one will be able to efficiently apply the superior senses of the soul to perceive and comprehend the spiritual world<sup>80</sup>.

This invisible economy of God, proper of the invisible world, turned out to be part of the visible world when the economy of Salvation became part of humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. Through the person of Christ every infirmity, deformation or unwholesomeness of the spiritual senses disappears, restoring the person to the original state of beauty before God, giving to humanity the possibility of enjoying true happiness that comes from contemplation of spiritual mysteries. Without the healing of the spiritual senses, it would be impossible for every person to immerse themselves in the glory of the new world.<sup>81</sup> John finishes his dialogue with Thomasios with the idea that the corporeal reality of a person becomes a handicap for the superior sense of the soul, although it is necessary to know corruption because such knowledge allows the consciousness of the immortality and the spiritual realities of the true mysteries of God: «It is sown dishonorable; it is raised glorious. It is sown weak; it is raised powerful» (1Cor 15:43).<sup>82</sup>

### **Corollary**

The reader can perceive in John's second dialogue that is not a systematic theological tractate of the spiritual senses, but nevertheless it is a theological conversation in which the notion of the invisible senses of the soul functions as an existing condition to discover the supernatural reality of God already manifested in this corporeal world. In this dialogue, the Syrian Monk never makes use of the anthropological tripartite notion for the spiritual development of the person. He never mentions the three paths (somatic, psychic and pneumatic) to answer any question of Thomasios. On the other hand, John based all his responses and reflections upon the dualistic notion of body and soul which correspond to the somatic and pneumatic orders. Furthermore the examples related to the corporeal and spiritual senses demonstrate this notion of the dual reality: the corporeal and spiritual person, the visible and invisible world.

The purpose of the biblical citations in the dialogue is argumentative for John of Apamea's methodology<sup>83</sup> since the Scripture provides to the Syrian monk the stepping stone on which to reflect upon the supernatural realities that will be completely manifested in the world to come. Thus John, in his theological discourses, relates intrinsically the emphasis of the soul's senses to the notion of the eschatological times, when God will be entirely revealed to humanity, but in tandem, he does not deny God's divine manifestations to humanity in the present moment, a notion implying the capability of every person to perceive, through the soul's senses, the invisible realities of God. Hence, he also highlights the current reality, accentuating the corporeal dimension of the person as the obstruction to exercise the spiritual senses, but at the same time, he indicates that this corporeal world also manifests itself as an opportunity of purification for every individual who wants to achieve a superior spiritual level.

The second dialogue with Thomasios summarizes the dualistic conception of reality, which also implies an anthropological dichotomy manifested in the undeniable relationship between the corporeal and spiritual person (or interior person). The same vision of the world and humanity is portrayed in all the six dialogues with Thomasios,

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 2,18–19, *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 2,20, *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>82</sup> Jean D'Apamée, Dialogue 2,21, *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. 1Cor 13:8b; 15:43; Hebrews 11:40; Ephesians 1:17.18; Deuteronomy 32:39; Psalm 46:11.

in the two letters also addressed to Thomasios, and the three tractates. Therefore it would be erroneous to generalize the notion of the tripartite anthropological physiognomy to the entirety of the spirituality and writings of John of Apamea. The tripartite vision of the person is accurate only for four dialogues published under the title of "The Dialogue about the soul and the Passions of men".<sup>84</sup> Consequently, the twofold conception of the world and humanity seems the most appropriate notion to apply to the philosophical and theological view of the Syrian Monk manifested in the works mentioned, especially the second dialogue with Thomasios that served as a evidence to ratify this idea which is contained in the majority of John's writings.

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. Hausherr Irenée, ed. et trans., *Jean le Solitaire, Dialogue sur L'âme et les passions des hommes* (Roma: Pontificio Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1939).