

Ovidiu ACHIM*

*Ineffable, imaginable, unpicturable in Dimitrie Cantemir's *Sacro-sanctae Scientiae Indepingibilis Imago* (1700)*

Abstract: In his *Sacro-sanctae Scientiae Indepingibilis Imago* (1700), Dimitrie Cantemir seeks both to expose the nature of the human knowledge and to create a new 'theologo-physics'. Although the main themes of his discourse are the sacred creation of the universe, the course [*progressus*] of the creation, time, life, free will, fate and predestination, his reflections upon the *imago Dei* and man's stride to depict it remain a focal point throughout the entire book. The aim of this paper is to analyse Dimitrie Cantemir's discourse on image and on the attainment of knowledge through its use. I argue that this discourse revolves around three main concepts: the ineffable, the imaginable and the unpicturable, which eventually become three distinct stages of representation of the divine.

Keywords: ineffable, *phantasia*, unpicturable, apophatic theology, *figura*, *forma*, image, Cantemir, *imago Dei*.

Apart from his legacy as ruler of Moldavia (1693; 1710-1711) and adviser of Peter the Great, Dimitrie Cantemir (1673- 1723) remains an interesting literary and scientific figure of the turn of the 18th century¹. Both a polymath and a polyglot, he wrote books in Romanian, Latin, Ottoman Turkish or Russian on various topics from philosophy, history, music, religion, ethnography, geography, as well as an allegorical novel and a vast number of letters. Perhaps his most renowned scientific contributions are his *Historia incrementorum atque decrementorum Aulae Othomanicae*, a thorough analysis of the causes that led to the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire, and *Descriptio Moldaviae*, a transdisciplinary monography of the principality, requested by the Berlin Academy, both dating from around the same period (1714-1716). Divided into 6 books, Dimitrie Cantemir's early work *Sacro-sanctae Scientiae Indepingibilis Imago* (1700) conveys his dissent from the prevailing Neo-scholasticism of the Eastern Orthodox philosophy of his times, which sought to separate theology from philosophy and promote a more literal understanding of Aristoteles (Alexandrescu 2016, 48). Instead,

* Achim Ovidiu, PhD candidate and research assistant, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, 'Foundations of Modern Thought' Research Centre. E-mail: ovidiu.achim96@gmail.com

** *Acknowledgement:* This work was supported by a grant of the Ministry of Education and Research, CNCS-UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020-0887.

he maintains that Orthodox theology could seamlessly integrate natural philosophy and metaphysics and aims to create a new 'theologo-physics'. In fact, *SSII* sets forth two main philosophical endeavours: on the one hand, it exposes the nature of the sensorial knowledge, which is bound to fail, and on the other hand, it enlightens the readers about the sacred creation of the universe, the course [*progressus*] of the creation, time, life, free will, fate and predestination.

However, the intellectual context of Cantemir's *Sacro-sanctae Scientiae Indepingibilis Imago* is undoubtedly very broad and difficult to trace. He probably started studying philosophy and Greek around 1691, in Iași, under the guidance of Ieremias Kakavelas (Alexandrescu 2016, 47). Kakavelas had studied in Leipzig with the protestant theologian Johan Olearius and had a good knowledge of Anglicanism, as well as of the Greek Church, Roman Church, and the Oriental Church. After a two-year stay (1667-1669) in Oxford and Cambridge, where he met a few leading Anglican theologians, he left for Constantinople. Cantemir departed for Istanbul in his turn, in 1693, where he continued studying (Agiotis 2019, 105-16). It is probably worth mentioning that the Patriarchal Academy of Constantinople had been reorganized and reformed (1625-1641) by Theophilos Corydalleus, a promoter of neo-Aristotelianism, and that his influence and legacy were still strong at the end of the 17th century. Corydalleus had been a student of Cesare Cremonini in Padua and had a major contribution in spreading Aristotelianism in South-Eastern Europe (Alexandrescu 2016, 48). At first, Cantemir studied philosophy with a certain Jacob Manos Argos (1650-1725), a follower and former student of Corydalleus (Alexandrescu 2016, 48).

But it was not this direction that Cantemir wanted to pursue. His focal point in studying philosophy was his need of seeking new ways, which would allow him to gain knowledge of both the Creator and the Creation. It is therefore explicable that his refutation of the senses and the usual categories as ways to attain the truth reveal a preference for apophatic theology and contemplation. Discussing Cantemir's formation, one should not forget to mention the influence of Meletios of Ioaninna (1661-1714). A polymath and 'iatrophilosopher' (physician-philosopher) himself, Meletios introduced Cantemir to the work of Johannes Baptista Van Helmont (Alexandrescu 2016, 49). The works of the Flemish iatrochemist and physician would become one of Cantemir's major sources at this time. The connexion between the two is known through the numerous similarities between several places from the fourth and the fifth books of *SSII* and Van Helmont's *Ortus Medicinae*. Moreover, Cantemir had compiled several chapters from Van Helmont's *Ortus Medicinae*, which he found interesting, in the manuscript *Joannis Baptistae Van Helmont, toparchae in Merode Royenborch*

Orschot, Pellines et Physices universalis doctrina et Christianae fideli congrua et necessaria philosophia (hereinafter referred to as *Excerpta*), currently in the collection of the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius in Sergiyev Posad. Most probably, the Romanian author had intended to publish it and spread Van Helmont's doctrine, given that he wrote two original accompanying texts – *Lectori amico* and *Encomium in authorem* –, which express Cantemir's praise of helmontian idea. However, unlike Van Helmont, the Romanian humanist had little interest for the remedies of various diseases, but he fully devoted himself to the development of a Sacred Science, which could convey the truth about the Creation. It is for this reason that the discourse on the foundations of knowledge is of the utmost importance, not only in the first book, which he dedicated to this topic, as Cantemir goes on to develop the theme throughout the whole book. It is worth mentioning that Cantemir stresses the difference between the two faculties of the human soul – a superior and an inferior one – intellect and reason. For Cantemir, the intellect is of an interior formal substance, congenital, immaterial, immortal, unchangeable and spiritual. Only by way of the intellect can truth regarding the created world be acquired, as this is the only faculty of the soul germane to the Divine Image of God that man has been endowed with. On the other hand, reason is an inferior faculty of the soul, germane to the body and the senses, misleading, compliant to desire or passion, mortal and adventitious. It can by no means help the intellect acquire true knowledge, as it functions in opposition to it (*SSII* V, 9-10). Cantemir had a very good knowledge of Aristoteles' *Physics* (most probably in the translation of William of Moerbeke¹) as well as of other works, and of their later commentators, whom he oftentimes quotes. In *SSII*, he expresses his very strong dissent from the (neo)-aristotelian teachings which he regards as false, misleading, dangerous and even mortifying. He subsequently sets against any kind of knowledge acquired through the senses and the use of reason. Instead, he is very much in favour of the method of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite² as he seeks to ascend the divine ranks in order to attain the ineffable truth (*SSII* I, 1). Cantemir also mentions Augustine on two occasions in Book IV, but he is extremely abstruse in regard to his other sources. Still, an attentive reading of the treatise could leave neither the neo-platonic echoes out, as he sometimes paraphrases ideas coming from Plotinus or Boethius, nor the oriental contemplative tradition of Evagrius Ponticus, Gregory of Nyssa or Maximus the Confessor³.

From the very first sentences of his *SSII*, Dimitrie Cantemir places his entire philosophical endeavour under the sign of epistemology, pondering on the nature and the limits of knowledge. Overwhelmed by the illusions generated by the senses, the human intellect is going through a difficult crisis, finding itself unable to “know the things that can be known” and to progress towards truth. The failure of sensory knowledge, the preferred

method of his age, is presented to us with the most powerful literary imagery and artifice, as being dangerous and even sickening. Therefore, the return to the inner Divine Image, and thus to the intellect, is seen as an ultimate necessity, a form of salvation of the self and even of *medicina animi*. It is only by this that man is capable of elevating the intellect and transcending the plane of perceptible reality “from creature to Creator, from now to Eternity, from accident to essence, from nothing to Being, from mortal to Immortal and from death to Life” (I,1). For Cantemir, acquiring knowledge regarding the creation is not impossible, but is even “simple” (and unmediated), as he mentions on several occasions, and it can only be reached with the help of the intellect and not through the senses. Thus, recourse to intellectual knowledge, as a form of divine revelation is a main theme in *Sacro-sanctae*, because it justifies in itself the need for a work of theologo-physics. This path to knowledge opens to the disciple of the Sacred Science, whom Cantemir writes about, after a mystical vision, when the intellect comes to mirror the Divine Image, by reaching the “moment of intellectual understanding”. This intellectual and visual experience becomes an initiation into true knowledge for the disciple. In this regard, the discourse on the nature of knowledge also becomes a discourse on the nature of the visible and the image, developed around concepts such as the ineffable, the imaginable, the unpicturable (*indepingibilis*).

The aim of this research is to present the discourse on the image in the work *Sacro-sanctae Scientiae Indepingibilis Imago* (1700) by the Romanian scholar Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723)⁴. Although a proper discourse on image is not the subject of any book or chapter of the work, Dimitrie Cantemir offers a rich hermeneutic of the Divine Image (*imago Dei*), from which one can draw several reflections of the author concerning the image. In my analysis, I will focus mainly on the dedicatory Epistle to Ieremias Kakavelas⁵, the first book of the work, where the theme of the Divine Image is treated extensively, and the first two chapters of the second book. In addition to those, the index of ideas of the work (*Index Rerum Notabilium*) has played a special role in my research, as it clarifies in its various entries several aspects of the theme. I will also refer to these whenever the entries in the index more clearly express the ideas set out in the work. Moreover, in the fifth book, the one dedicated to life, the Divine Image (*imago Dei*) is on several occasions involved in the discussion about the inward man. These occurrences are less illustrative for the author's reflections on the *imago*, but they play an essential role in understanding the concept of the Divine Image in a broad sense.

The first book of *Sacro-Sanctae Scientiae Indepingibilis Imago* presents us the disciple of the Sacred Science, who finds himself unable to progress along the path of knowledge and acquire a greater understanding of the Divine and the Creation, as the human intellect has become numb (*SSII* I, 1-2).

Tormented by this failure of sensory knowledge, he turns to painting, which he considers to be more suitable for his endeavour (*SSII* I, 3). Soon, the disciple will discover that everything he attempts to paint turns to black and becomes similar to undefined darkness. It is virtually the darkness of his mind, which cannot conceive the Divine truth by means of the senses. (*SSII* I, 4-6). Due to this realisation, the disciple succumbs to despair and collapses to the floor (*SSII* I, 7). He experiences then an intellectual vision in which he sees a dreadful spectacle of stormy sea and people at war (*SSII* I, 8-9) and eventually encounters a mysterious old man, who is (probably) identified as God the Father (*SSII* I, 10-11). The old man urges the disciple a couple of times to depict his image in order to attain the truth, while the latter assiduously tries to do so, but fails (*SSII* I, 15-17). Seeing his struggle, the old man invites him to look in the mirror, which he carries on his chest, to see whether the painted image resembles him. The disciple does so and learns that man can never completely grasp the Divine image, nor can he attain the simple truth (*SSII* II, 1-2), but, looking further in the mirror, he will gain knowledge by means of the intellect (*SSII* II, 3).

The Divine image, which humans have carried within them since Creation, being created, according to the biblical verse (*Gen.*, 1:26-27)⁶, “in the image and likeness” of God, is a central theme of Christian anthropology in both Eastern⁷ and Western⁸ Christian traditions. However necessary and little studied, a judicious framing of Dimitrie Cantemir's work is not the object of this study⁹. Instead, I have preferred to discuss the elements common, perhaps, to both traditions, insofar as they are applicable to Cantemir's work discussed here. In order to disambiguate¹⁰ the language, I shall use the term “image” in the following analysis, whenever the *imago Dei* is considered from a theological point of view, and “picture”, when referring to the image as a medium of expression and, implicitly, as a visual representation of an object.

I will give a brief terminological clarification on the vocabulary of the image, both to disambiguate, from the outset, the terms with which I will work, and to introduce some of the concepts with which Cantemir works and their problematics. Cantemir uses a rich vocabulary, specific to painting, in the rhetorical construction of the texts under consideration, as he often speaks of painting boards, lines, colours, colour shells, brushes, etc. Cantemir also uses a rhetorical strategy rich in detailed descriptions, metaphors, allegories and prosopopoeiae to enable readers to imagine the disciple's vision. In addition to these, the terminology of imagery with which the author operates is rich and concurrent, as it includes several terms close in meaning. As one would expect, *imago* is very often used, both to designate the image of Sacred Science and, above all, to refer to the Divine Image (*imago Dei*). The image of science (*imago scientiae*) that the disciple paints throughout the work is the one admired by the intellect in a

mirror placed in the chest of an old who appears to the disciple during his intellectual vision. This is therefore described as a superior kind of picture, truthful, insofar as this is possible, painted with the “colours of the intellect” (*SSII I, 6*) and admired with the gaze of the intellect (*intellectus intuitus, SSII II, 3*)¹¹. The term *imago* is also often used in the sense of Divine Image (*imago Dei*) and is implied by Cantemir in various anthropological contexts, as a definition of the inward man. For example, in book III, chapter 4, he describes man as an “ineffable Divine Image”, (*internus homo - id est ineffabilis Divina Imago*)¹².

In addition to *imago*, the terms *effigies* and *figura* are also present in the text. The former seems to designate an “appearance” of a thing, as a so-called “surface portrait of it”, that is a form that a thing takes, at a given moment¹³. Evocative in this respect is the old man's exhortation in chapter 15 (I). The disciple is urged to do his best to paint the divine face (*effigies*), which had never been captured by the painters before him, who had only succeeded in producing an image of it that lacked veracity (*fucatum falsificatumumve exemplar*)¹⁴. Unlike their representations, the divine face remains a hidden prototype (*latens prototypus veritatis*), which the portrait cannot capture. In this fragment, the opposition between *effigies* and *prototypus* allows us to understand the inability of the image to capture the essence of its model, representing only its appearance, insofar as it is visible (*ad instar quod vides*). This dichotomy is taken up again in Chapter 1 of Book II, where the old man invites the disciple to compare the image (*effigies*) he has painted with the one in the mirror he carries on his chest. The dissimilarity between the two images is due to the disciple's attempt to paint the Divine Image with the means of “profane colours”. As with the efforts of his predecessors, this image (*effigies*) is described as imagined (*ficta*) rather than painted (*picta*). The dichotomy becomes clearer at the end of the old man's intervention, where he speaks of his true image, the essentially neutral one, between substance and accident, which he calls *imago*¹⁵.

The polysemantic term *figura* seems to be used by Dimitrie Cantemir with several (apparently) different meanings. It is appropriate to focus our attention on the various contexts in which it appears and, at the same time, on figurality itself, as treated by the author. Erich Auerbach has developed a particularly extensive study (Auerbach 1984) around the concept of *figura*, starting from an etymological clarification and proceeding to discuss it as a mode of biblical, textual exegesis, different from the allegorical one, which remained prevalent until the late Middle Ages. At first *figura* - whose etymon refers us to the Latin *finġo, - ere*, “to shape, to give form to something (with the hands)” - means “outline, external appearance”, being very close to “*forma*”, and appears to be related to the semantic field of plastic arts. However, over time, its meaning becomes broader and more abstract, naming *figures* in grammar, rhetoric, logic, mathematics, or astronomy.

Unlike allegory, as Auerbach (Auerbach 1984, 47-60) notes, *figura* retains within itself the concrete meaning of the notions it uses and is not a purely symbolic mode of representation. Thus, in biblical exegesis, the Old Testament is said to represent *a figura* of the New Testament, in the sense of a prefiguration, or even some sort of a “prophecy” of the later. But, the facts and characters present in the Old Testament still maintain their concrete, historical meaning.

Cantemir often uses the term *figura* in its original sense, that of outline, composition, or external appearance of a body, to describe creatures. For example, the term is used together with *species* and *forma* to divide creation into categories. On several occasions, the Romanian thinker states that things also have figures in addition to forms, which particularize them among creation¹⁶. In the same sense of the term, Cantemir notes the great diversity of human figures, which nonetheless belong to a single species (*In una eademque humana specie, unde tot inter se divers<a>e figurae?, cf. SSII, IR*). However, this meaning of external appearance is not reserved to man, but also used in geographical contexts, as when dealing with the world after the flood. (*cf. post diluvium mundi ornamentum situsque localis figura describitur, SSII, III, 16*). There are also other more specialized meanings, specific to the scientific vocabulary, which emerge from the basic one. For example, *figura* can also mean “pattern”, as when discussing the path of the movements of the stars (*circumgirationis figura, SSII, II, 14*) or of light (*pyramidali figura, ibid.*). The term *figura* is also used to name the shape drawn by the pen, when writing letters (*diversis figuris singulas proprias exprimere voces SSII, III, 27*), or even a drawing (*ad mathematicas figuras, SSII, V, 8*). The sense of outline is also used in more abstract contexts, referring to graphic representations, to indicate a misleading, incomplete representation, an inferior copy that fails to fully render its prototype. This meaning occurs, for example, when the disciple unsuccessfully tries (*SSII, I, 17*) to sketch (*delineare*) the old man's garment.

Figura, however, often implies a double meaning, representing a passage from the concrete to the abstract and from what can be figured to what cannot be figured. In this way, the prefigurative meaning of the figure, especially in theological contexts, becomes even clearer. Cantemir uses this meaning in several contexts referring to the Old Testament, showing that the flood (*SSII, III, 3*), the fall from paradise (*SSII, III, 1*) and even Adam himself (*SSII, II, 19*) are foreshadowings of future events. This meaning of the term *figura* is explicitly present in the title of chapter III, 3 (*Deluvii Universalis praefiguratio et sensualis vitae figura*), which suggests that we should figuratively interpret the biblical flood as a foreshadowing (*figura*) of human life driven by the senses (*vita sensualis*). In the same exegetical way, we can also understand the title of the first chapter of the work (*Praefiguratio scientiae sacrae, SSII, I, 1*) as a possible key to reading the whole work.

The prevalence of pictures over text is a commonplace in literature dedicated to the relationship between man and the Divine Image, also appearing in the case of Dimitrie Cantemir as a testimony to the greater force of the latter in engaging the intellect in a mystical act, leading it towards divine union. Thus, Cantemir's repeated criticism against ancient authors in the first chapters of the first book, is most probably related not only to the method and content of their works, but even to the language in which their ideas are expressed. Reading the *SSII*, one would discover a real tension between the ineffable (text) and the imaginable (picture), present throughout the entire work. Unable to progress along the path of knowledge, the disciple struggles with the means of pagan science, which prove to be insufficient. However, the antinomy between the two mediums must be seen in the sequence of one in relation to the other: when text cannot bespeak the ineffable, one turns to picture, which offers another way of knowing the Divine. Nonetheless, not even this can be faultless, a fact that is evident from the oxymoron in the title: the divine image is, in its turn, unpicturable (*indepingibilis*). The relationship between the imaginable and the unpicturable is, of course, a paradoxical one, in that the picture is possible as long as it tends to be realised, and yet, once realised, it fails to mirror its prototype. The picture can only relate to it, showing that the prototype is unpicturable in its complexity. Putting the matter in theological terms, what would initially appear to be an act of cataphatic theology, namely the attempt to visualise the divine image (and to represent it graphically), turns to be the disciple's inability to capture and comprehend with his mind the desired picture, as this finds itself in a perpetual state of change. For man, the multiform divine image is accessible only through one of its facets, as the revelation is never complete. This inexhaustible image exerts a total fascination upon man, and he is continuously attracted to this symbol of the divine absolute. By his painting, the disciple can only further adumbrate the face of the old man, proof that apophatic knowledge remains, after all, the only one possible. The mirroring at the end of Book I shows the small extent to which the divine image can be encompassed by any representation, which can only increase its mystery, as it cannot be comprehended after a vision alone, but requires a thorough initiation on the path of knowledge

Ineffable and imaginable

In the letter dedicated to his former teacher, which accompanies and prefaces the work, Dimitrie Cantemir laments his inability to decipher the mysteries of creation and to write a work on physics. His attempt to investigate the "liberal discipline and universal science" will only produce fragments of reasoning that do not concern creation as a whole, but only

various “details” of it, in the form of “fanciful dreams and imaginary phantasmata”, which are exposed in a rhetoric empty of content. Believing that the truth of all sciences is simple and the same, Cantemir returns to “the pages covered by cobwebs”. However, it is his recourse to the “authors of pagan science” that leads him to discover that they have constructed their discourse solely out of contradictions and misleading confusions and that they have practised an empty rhetoric. Cantemir sees the ancient authors as being too far removed from the truth of the simple science, which eventually leads him to painting in his attempt to represent the truth, although he says of himself that he cannot even draw “half of a line”. More than an introduction to Book I, this fragment prefigures the problem of the ineffable and the prevalence of picture over text. Rhetoric is inferior to any visual representation because it is an expression of reason, whereas pictures facilitate the operations of the intellect. The idea is taken up again in Chapter I, 1, where Cantemir laments the inability to advance by means of the senses along the path of knowledge of greater themes, such as the Creator, eternity, being and life. The author explicitly affirms the imperfect nature of words (*verba*) and speech, which can express nothing about God, for they are produced by a mortal creature:

While I was in doubt, (...), whether the immaterial light, overwhelmed by the material density of corporeality, bound by the unbreakable chains of the senses and almost completely collapsed and sunk in the abyss of unknowing, could utter words (*verba facturum*), being a creature, about the Uncreated, being ephemeral, about the Eternal, being nothing, about the Being, being mortal, about the Immortal, and, to put it more boldly, being dead, about Life, and cast its own rays of light to understand the cognoscible things (...) (I, 1).

Cantemir has in mind the whole legacy, handed down to us in the form of writing, of Plato and Aristotle, and their disciples, who studied and taught their writings “in a perverted, undefined and useless way”. The reference to Aristotle becomes more explicit in chapter I, 4, where the author ironizes any form of knowledge that operates with the notions of *matter, form and privation*¹⁷. Cantemir will oppose the traditional metaphysical concepts, expressed in words, which he finds insufficient, and opt for a categorical thinking. By this, he seeks to rise above these categories and directly access the ineffable truth, through enlightenment and, more precisely, through intellectual pictures. It is not by chance that the discovery of truth will become possible for the disciple only once the old and restrictive teachings are overcome, a fact captured by the struggle against the famous saying *non plus ultra*, symbol of the limits of knowledge, and, consequently, of pagan teachings (I, 13).

But, as might be expected, it is not only the limitations of language that make the truth of the sacred science ineffable, but the very nature of the subject. When referring to God, Dimitrie Cantemir very often places the divine attributes and symbolic representations, as well as those that are more broadly related to God, in the sphere of the ineffable. Thus, love (*charitas*, *Prayer*), light (*lumen*, I, 9), brightness (*splendour*, II, 4), silence (*silentium*, II, 6), beauty (*pulchritudo*, II, 28), *form* (*forma*, V, 10), the primordial state (*pristinum statum*, V, 12), the name (*nomen*, 12, VI), the order (*dispositio*, VI, 18), *the trinity* (*trinitas*, VI, 21), the point of Intellectual Understanding (*punctum τοῦ intellectualiter intelligere*, IR), among others, are called ineffable in turn throughout the work. The Divine Image (*id est ineffabilis Divina Imago*; III, 4) is, above all, considered ineffable, thus outlining the human inability to know it through the classical operations of reason.

The inability to speak of the divine implies the inability to conceive of it, rendering vain any attempt by man to approach it. Wishing to overcome these limitations and, at the same time, the deep crisis in which he finds himself, the disciple conveys in his narrative the author's preference for Neo-Platonism and, in particular, for the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite¹⁸. Echoes of his works are present throughout the book, the most significant of which is found at the beginning of the first book, where the ascent and descent of the various ranks is discussed to illustrate the necessity of turning to apophatic knowledge. The ascent and descent of degrees are each reminiscent of Dionysius' works *On the Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology*, with Cantemir expressing a preference for the method of the latter and thus for apophatic theology:

Thirdly, once we have descended the ranks, from that which remains in goodness, from the complete creature, from the perfect work, from the granted dignity, from the anticipative privilege, from the nobility adorned with the most eminent titles, we must raise the intellect, which is humbled by the senses, from the lowest to the highest rank, not so much by science as by piety, and at last we may decide what is or what may be one thing or another, and stamp our footprints upon the way of true knowledge. (*SSII*, I, 1).

Pseudo-Dionysius describes in his *Mystical Theology* the process by which the mystic ascends to the higher ranks of the heavenly hierarchy. First, he must free himself from every form of knowledge acquired through rational faculties, in order to advance towards that which is above being (I). For Dionysius the Areopagite, this act, of "un-knowing", makes possible the transcendence of human understanding and the union with the divine (Dionysius the Areopagite 1920). Apophatic theology, therefore, comes closer to the ineffable, but not entirely, since it is impossible to grasp these

things through reasoning formed with words. The mystic advances towards the knowledge of what can be known only intellectually, by the path of contemplation, and the closer he comes to them, the more useless words become in his attempt to say something about the ineffable (III). This silence gradually settles in, culminating in “an absolute silence of words and thoughts”, in which the mystic is totally absorbed in contemplation of the ineffable divine:

For the more that we soar upwards the more our language becomes restricted to the compass of purely intellectual conceptions, even as in the present instance plunging into the Darkness which is above the intellect we shall find ourselves reduced not merely to brevity of speech but even to absolute dumbness both of speech and thought. Now in the former treatises the course of the argument, as it came down from the highest to the lowest categories, embraced an ever-widening number of conceptions which increased at each stage of the descent, but in the present treatise it mounts upwards from below towards the category of transcendence, and in proportion to its ascent it contracts its terminology, and when the whole ascent is passed it will be totally dumb, being at last wholly united with Him Whom words cannot describe. (Dionysius the Areopagite 1920, 101).

In a similar way, Cantemir shows how the disciple, as he is absorbed in his vision, experiences an elevation of the intellect towards the ineffable absolute, at the end of which he comes to intellectually see the Divine Image as in a mirror (II, 2-3). However, Cantemir does not discuss the darkness and stillness above the intellect and does not develop the experience of the ineffable as much as the Areopagite throughout his work but focuses his attention instead on the passage from the ineffable to the imaginable and then the unpicturable. This paradox of a picture that can neither be imagined nor reproduced, but which nevertheless exists and shows itself (*indepingibilis imago*), has its origins in the Dionysian method itself, which leads to the true seeing and knowing of the divine through its very non-seeing and non-knowing. These do not involve any kind of privation, but only negation and an apparent contradiction in terms since the sight and knowledge envisaged are not the common ones. Cantemir will also develop this theme in his SSII.

Unto this Darkness which is beyond Light we pray that we may come, and may attain unto vision through the loss of sight and knowledge, and that in ceasing thus to see or to know we may learn to know that which is beyond all perception and understanding (for this emptying of our faculties is true sight and knowledge) (Dionysius the Areopagite 1920, 100).

In chapters 2 and 3, the literary act has a somewhat cathartic¹⁹ value. But, in the disciple's attempt to provide "a qualitative representation" of human bitterness, which is "almost ineffable and very dangerous" (*qualitativam figuram illius fere ineffabilis*)²⁰, writing becomes synonymous with the act of painting (3). From this point forward, painting will be preferred, as the disciple is presented to us as a painter who assiduously tries to depict the Divine Image and by this the Truth itself. The passage from writing to painting, which is foreshadowed here, becomes even clearer once, during the intellectual vision, the disciple takes his first steps on the path of knowledge of the sacred truth, through different operations which are specific to the act of seeing:

Having observed (observatis) carefully and looked (intuitis) somewhat more boldly at all this, I began to gather back into the cone of intellectual understanding a part of that original light, now obscured, which sends its rays as through a rather compact but nevertheless transparent body; it seemed that I could grasp, as in a riddle, what it means that 'deep calls unto deep (...)' (SSIII, 12).

Moving from the register of words to that of images, the question of what can be imagined is raised. The disciple, in his attempt to paint the Divine Image, discovers that his "intellectual sight"²¹ is weakened by the ignorance of the pagan science which relies on the senses (I, 5), and that it is impossible for him to conceive (*concipio*) the thing he has begun to paint in his imagination (*phantasia*) (I, 6). The disciple's attempt to paint the Divine Image without first being able to imagine it creates an incongruity between the operations of the mind (I, 6). Cantemir considered the three operations of the mind to be: 1. to conceive notions simply and abstractly; 2. to compose or divide (to form sentences); 3. to speak intellectually (to form syllogisms) (Cantemir 1995, 98)²². In an endeavour such as the disciple's, the third operation would take precedence over the other two, making the picture he is trying to paint impossible to realise. We learn, through the prosopopoeia of the intellect, that the culprit of this failure is the disciple's method, metaphorically called "painting board" and "colours", which, operating through privation, can only lead to a "form without form" and to a "negative nothingness" (I, 6). The end of the chapter proposes a *reductio ad absurdum* to the readers. Admitting that the craft of painting could render the Divine Image and Truth with its ordinary means, Cantemir goes on to demonstrate the incapacity of imagination, seen as a rational operation, to form a "naked" and "simple" picture like that of the divine prototype. The exhortation that concludes this demonstration²³ includes three pairs of oxymorons ("the garments of nakedness", "the multiform colours of simplicity", "the unpicturable image"), precisely to illustrate the preference

for knowledge that reveals itself through the apparent opposition of opposites, the Dionysian method that Cantemir mentions at various times²⁴.

Dealing with imagination and knowledge, Van Helmont describes (Van Helmont 1682)²⁵ the prevalence of pictures over text (discourse) in the operations of the intellect, which advances more “through figures, pictures and dreamlike visions of the imagination (*phantasiae*)” (*Venatio scientiarum*, 40). Moreover, he considers that frequent judgments based on rational discourse can have a negative effect on a person (*Venatio Scientiarum*, 40)²⁶. However, for Van Helmont (*Venatio*, 41), there are two kinds of pictures in the human mind, those of the imagination (*phantasiae*) and those of the intellect (*intellectuales*), which remain “in the centre of the soul” (*in animae centro*). For Van Helmont (*Imago mentis*, 32-33), imagination is a rational and inferior mode of knowledge, because it advances by means of reasoning and discourse, and is therefore called indirect (*obliquus*) and deceptive (*fallax*). On the other hand, the intellect is considered a superior mode of knowledge, direct (*rectus*), and the only one capable of attaining truth²⁷. Therefore, advancing along the path of knowledge and attaining its light is impossible by the mere preliminary expression of imagined pictures (*praefatae Phantasiae imagines*), the intellectual pictures being the only ones capable of bringing man close to the sound knowledge of truth (*ad solidam veritatis cognitionem*). This theory of cognition takes a much clearer form in the treatise *Imago Mentis*, where Van Helmont, explains the operations of the intellect in relation to visions. What is seen during such an experience goes beyond common understanding and exceeds all that is expressible in words (*quia vidi quod superat cogitatum verbo exprimabilem*) and can only be described by forming a figure (*figura*) of it. Regardless of whether it is the result of imagining the idea of a thing or whether it is formed as a result of the intellect’s transmutation (*transmutatio*) into the thing under consideration, the concept (*conceptus*) of this thing will take on a certain figure (*semper conceptus stetit sub aliqua figura*).

Although Dimitrie Cantemir does not elaborate so extensively a theory of imagination, we observe several similarities between the ideas of the two philosophers, the most significant for the present research perhaps being the conviction that the pictures produced by imagination represent an inferior mode of knowledge, through which the Divine Image cannot be accessed. Both Van Helmont and Cantemir favour the intellect in this respect, which they regard as the only possible way forward to knowledge of the Divine Image. This belief regarding imagination seems to be totally opposed to that of medieval “imaginative theology” writings (Newman 2003, 294-304)²⁸, which also work with images²⁹, but consider the Divine Image to be imaginable³⁰. In contrast to them, Cantemir’s disciple finds that any representation of the Divine Image is imperfect, and that it is impossible to mentally grasp the prototype in its entirety. Lacking the ability

to see and represent such an image with ordinary means, the painter will resort to imagination, thus creating only imaginary (*ficta*) and deceptive forms of the Divine Image, which cannot bring him closer to the truth of Sacred Science. Looking at it this way, Dimitrie Cantemir is interested in the problem of the imaginable only insofar as it opens up the problem of the unimaginable.

The inability to progress in this way arouses the painter's uncertainty about both the means by which he attempts to paint the image of truth and the very nature of his approach to picture. This crisis corresponds to a wider crisis of knowledge which relies on the senses, and it also points to a new problematic, that of the unpicturable. The disciple will be shown the Divine Image during the intellectual vision (I, 7-17; II, 1-3), which he will look at intellectually, but it will eventually prove to be unpicturable

Indepingibilis Imago

The term *indepingibilis*, under which the whole treatise is written, and which is repeated several times throughout its chapters, is an innovation of the author³¹ most probably. Unlike other words which imply the incapacity of a thing to be imagined (*inimaginabilis*) or figured (*infigurabilis*), which it resembles in meaning, *indepingibilis* draws attention to another aspect of the impossible representation: *indepingibilis* (lat. *pingo, -ere*) is that which cannot be painted. In the context of the disciple's repeated attempts to paint the Divine Image from the first book of the treatise, it is not by chance that the author wanted to emphasize that this image does not allow itself to be captured in its complexity in a picture.

In the epistle to Cacavelas, which opens the treatise, Dimitrie Cantemir already anticipates the problem of the unpicturable (*indepingibilis*), which will be amply developed in the following chapters, through an oxymoron. Once he gives up reading the classical authors, the disciple does not only see what cannot be painted³², but even tries to paint what cannot be painted (*ut indepingibilem videor videre, at nihilominus ut indepingibilem, depingere enormi non desisto audacitate*). This impression will prove misleading, but the apparently contradictory relationship between the two terms (*indepingibilis* - *depingere*) will later be taken up as the only possible way of representing the Divine. The disciple will discover that to paint the unpicturable is therefore to represent it only as something unrepresentable, by other means than those of reason and science which relies on the senses³³. Therefore, the oxymoron of the unpicturable image becomes the only way in which such a representation is possible. It is similar to the figural mode described by Auerbach, as it points through a present, visible, and concrete thing to an absent, invisible and abstract one. However, unlike the figure, the oxymoron of the unpicturable image also implies the apparent contradiction

between the two registers, at the end of which the truth is revealed. In Chapter 13 (I), Cantemir criticises painting on mythological and historical themes, the different allegories of the arts and sciences, landscape painting, cartographic representations, as he sees in them mere representations of the ephemeral human glory. The “errant mortals” have conferred “imperishable fame” to them, whereas those pictures can only be eternal in their name (*Imagines, quae, quasi portenta mirabilia nomine aeterna et fama nunquam interitura, vagi admirantur mortales*). These genres of secular painting in no way represent the essence of creation but can merely depict its vain and obsolete aspects. Cantemir also ironizes the lack of creative power, as he describes the lack of inspiration of the disciple who exercises his hand by constantly reproducing the painters’ favourite themes. These paintings are seen as insignificant copies of what “the ancients did in reality” (*quae antiqui revera actu perfecerunt*), since they have nothing original in themselves. Interestingly, unlike these works, which have their origin in sensible reality, which they copy, the disciple’s work “on the painting of the image” (*Libelli intitulationis ‘Imaginem depingendam’*) is “conceived in the mind” (*mente concepti*)³⁴ and called, perhaps alluding to the unpicturable image, “a paradox”.

The two notions actually work together. While the picture is only an apparent representation of its prototype, the latter is the very essence that the picture tries to render. In this sense, the unpicturable picture is a figure (*figura*)³⁵, because it signifies through a concrete representation a deeper but abstract truth. For example, when the disciple (I,17) tries in vain to outline (*delineare*) the old man’s garment (*indiscrete permixtis coloribus, figuram cuiuspiam variegatae vestis delineavi*), the figure³⁶ he tries to sketch is only an imperfect picture that follows the prototype. The figure is seen in this context as a low-ranking copy of the original, which can only capture a certain facet of it. On several occasions in Book I³⁷, the image of the old man, which the disciple is shown, finds itself in a continuous transfiguration. This visual fluidity does not unfold “in a time interval” but “all at once in this now” (I, 17), being altogether compressed, as we are told (I, 12), “by metamorphosis, into a point”. Thus, the figure that the disciple tries to paint is only a possible representation of an appearance, which is subject to an inherent and continuous metamorphosis³⁸. This meaning becomes clearer once the old man brings back into question the figure that the disciple has managed to paint (II, 2)³⁹.

It is not by chance that Cantemir describes this picture as consisting only of “figurative shadows of the coexisting parts [of the old man] (*coëxistentium partium mearum figurales umbrae*)”. The figure painted by the disciple can only depict some facets (parts) of the Divine Face, not its entire complexity. The Divine Image is thus inaccessible to the human mind, as the multitude of images that compose it can never be fully grasped and represented by it, as proven by the disciple’s futile effort. Likewise, the coexistence spoken of in

this fragment must, again⁴⁰, be understood as a concomitance of the continuous transfiguration that the disciple attempts to capture, rather than as a temporal sequence in which it occurs. Lastly, shadows are figurative in the sense that they form a composition in which a pre-existing image is rendered, other than an abstract and indefinite composition. Therefore, Cantemir's phrase also has the character of an oxymoron, since 'shadows' suggest something that to some extent is amorphous and indefinite. But more than that, the 'figural shadows' show that the figure conceals, by shading, a greater truth, and that there is a deeper and hidden horizon of meaning behind what is visible, which may only be penetrated by a hermeneutic endeavour. This horizon is, however, infinite and any attempt to unveil it is futile. Seen in this light, the Divine Image is inexhaustible, and the disciple's attempt to grasp it illustrates the fascination that the absolute exerts upon man⁴¹. Perhaps this is the reason why the old man urges the disciple (I, 16) not to be discouraged and to paint his Image and garment according to his own powers, as the more he advances, the more complex they will become (*quo enim diutius curiositati vacabis, eo in grandiores molestioresque incidis laborum difficultates*). This is also the paradox of figurality: the picture only enhances what cannot be figured.

At the beginning of the second book⁴², the old man invites the disciple to look at the picture he has painted in the mirror on his chest. This is reminiscent of a long mystical tradition in which union with God involves the mirroring of His Image by the intellect⁴³. In that moment of full understanding, the intellect sees itself as a reflection and image (*imago*) of God, thus participating in the prototype. Along with the act of knowing of the Divine Image, the horizon of self-knowledge also opens up, that is of what Cantemir calls, following the Pauline tradition, *the inward man*⁴⁴. However, it is only in the fifth book (12) that he discusses this in greater detail, as he contrasts the pagan definition of man as a rational animal with that of the inward man, that is to say the 'human intellectual soul', which is immaterial but 'real and existing in act' (*reale et actu existens*). The chapter is, in fact, a reflection on Christian anthropology, built around the description of *the inward man*. For Cantemir, this is the "human intellectual soul" and "reflects the radiance of the divine Image" (*Divina refulget Imagine*) and can, therefore, be neither seen by the mortal eye, nor grasped by animal judgement, as man can never imagine the archetype (*idea*) after which it was made⁴⁵, whose immateriality surpasses man's capacity for knowledge. Knowledge of the soul in its entirety is therefore impossible to achieve by means of the ordinary operations of the mind.

However, man can gain knowledge of the soul, as far as it has been allowed⁴⁶ to him, by the way of revelation, only when he approaches and looks (with the eyes of the intellect) at the Divine Image, which he bears within himself⁴⁷. In the same way we understand the old man's invitation to

the disciple to look again in the mirror and remember that what he sees is the Divine Image. Thus, by seeing the reflection of the Divine Image, the disciple sees himself, or more precisely, what is divine in him. He sees, however, again by means of a paradox, since what he sees is the Divine Image “inasmuch as he did not know it and is not inasmuch as he knew it” (cf. V, 12: *Divinam Imaginem esse quatenus non cognoscebatur, et non esse, quatenus cognoscebatur*). Thus, at the end of his attempt to paint the Divine Image, the disciple discovers a self-portrait, for the approach to the prototype represents an approach to himself⁴⁸. But even this he cannot fully grasp with his mind. The (self-)portrait that he paints is an unpicturable one, since man cannot know himself absolutely. However, the more he advances in knowledge, the closer this (self-)portrait comes to the likeness of the Divine Image (“*ad imaginem et similitudinem*”).

Notes

¹ As it turns out after comparing the *Translatio Vetus* and *Translatio Vaticana*. The hypothesis has been formulated by Vlad Alexandrescu.

² Here, I mainly refer to the *Mystical Theology* and *The Celestial Hierarchy*.

³ A previous version of this presentation regarding Cantemir’s intellectual background has been published on the website of the project: <https://cantemirproject.wordpress.com/sacrosanctae/>

⁴ A similar scientific endeavour which has inspired me to write this article is the research done by Ingrid Falque, together with Agnes Guiderdoni, regarding Henry Suso’s meta-discourse on image and its tradition. (Falque 2017, and Falque and Guiderdoni 2022).

⁵ Cantemir dedicates the *SSII* to his former mentor, Ieremias Kakavelas.

⁶ Cf. I Cor 15: 49, I Cor 11:7, Rom 8: 29.

⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae made a special contribution to the theme in his chapter dedicated to the treatment of the Divine Image in the works of the Eastern Church Fathers and their interpreters (Stăniloae 1996).

⁸ See, for example, Trinkaus 1970, foreword, xiii-xxvii. The author gives an extensive account of the Western exegesis of the Divine Image in his impressive study on the human condition as seen by the Italian humanists.

⁹ Vlad Alexandrescu opened the way to a better understanding of this matter (Alexandrescu 2016).

¹⁰ For the ambiguity of the vocabulary of image in the Eastern theological context, see Gordon 2020.

¹¹ The superior nature of the intellectual gaze is better explained in the *Index Rerum* of *SSII*: *Hominis interior imago ratione non tangitur, verum intellectu aliter admiranda*.

¹² There is also a conceptual opposition between the *imago Dei* and the *imago Diaboli* (*SSII*, III, 2).

¹³ Gordon also considers it a Latin equivalent for the Greek *μορφή*, along *forma*. (Gordon 2020).

¹⁴ *SSII*, I, 15: “(...) Festinanter ad opus te cinge, et effigiem meam ad instar quod vides, diligenti summoque studio depinge. (...) Quam etiamsi omnis fere gentilitas ad unguem depinxisse falso arbitrata sit, nunquam tamen aliquis, nisi fucatum falsificatumve exemplar sibi adeptus est. Quam ob causam, latente adhuc veritatis prototypo, spissa Minerva salebrosas in vias obliquosque tramites errabundi vagantur.”

¹⁵ For Cantemir, there is also a neutral essence between substance and accident. Time is also of such essence. (*SSII*, IV, 23).

¹⁶ Cantemir develops a theory of forms inspired by Van Helmont in the fifth book of *SSII*. According to Cantemir, there are four types of forms: essential form, vital form, substantial form, and formal substance. See *SSII*, V, 8. For the conceptual opposition between *forma* and *figura*, see II, 11 and 15.

¹⁷ This observation belongs to Professor Vlad Alexandrescu.

¹⁸ Cantemir explicitly refers to Pseudo-Dionysius in one of his accompanying texts from his *Excerpta* manuscript (*Lectori amico, Excerpta*): „Hoc autem, non secus atque, in Coelesti Hierarchia (prout S. Dionysio placet), illustrius Spiritum inferiores a Superioribus illuminari, ad divini Throni assistentia mutuari.”

¹⁹ As the author holds it, writing can “tightly bind in chains the sorrow” of the human being.

²⁰ This phrase conveys a sense of anticipation, as the entire endeavour of the disciple can be regarded as an attempt to create a figure of what is ineffable.

²¹ *SSII*, I, 5: „quasi densissimas per tenebras in modum fulgentis fulguris, intellectualis visus fere totam hebetaverat aciem, ita ut, quod prius cognitionis oculo transpici apparebat, tunc idem, totaliter eundem effugeret”.

²² I would like to thank Professor Vlad Alexandrescu for this reference. (Cantemir 1995, 98).

²³ *SSII*, I, 6: „Quamobrem, prius nuditatis varia vestimenta et simplicitatis multiformes colores praeparare debes, et postea scientiae istius indepingibilem imaginem depingere aggrediaris (...)”.

²⁴ E.g.: I, 6; I, 17; V, 12 etc.

²⁵ The theory of Van Helmont is particularly important for understanding Cantemir’s take on knowledge acquired by means of mental images.

²⁶ Cantemir had copied this treaty in its entirety.

²⁷ Van Helmont follows the scholastic definition of truth, as “the adequation of things and intellect” (*Imago Mentis*, 32).

²⁸ Barbara Newman refers to the production of theological writings in the vernacular and particularly to the visionary literature written by female mystics (Newman 2003, 294-304).

²⁹ According to Newman, these authors resemble a poet in “working with images”. (Newman 2003, 297).

³⁰ "Mais celle autre [voie] est ymaginee ... / La face de Dieu est voiant / Cil qui le suit jusqu'a la fin": Christine de Pisan, *Le livre du chemin de long estud* (Berlin, 1887. Reprint. Geneva: Slatkine, 1974), vv. 916, 904-5: 39. Edited by Robert Püschel. Quoted in Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses. Visions, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press., 2003: 297.

³¹ No consulted dictionary gives reference of this word.

³² *SSII*, *Letter to Cacavelas*: „Qua de re, ab absurdo ad absurdiora deiectus [...] veritatis effigiem, quae, nullibi nusquamve apparisset, ut indepingibilem videor videre, at nihilominus ut indepingibilem depingere enormi non desisto audacitate.”

³³ See Ștefan Afloroaei’s remarks on the topic in Afloroaei 2017, XLIX – XLX (see also footnote 1). In his analysis of this paradox, the researcher refers to the Incarnation and follows Basil’s of Caesarea interpretation to show that “the seen image makes space for the unseen prototype”, just as the Incarnate Word is “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians, 1, 15). According to Afloroaei, this has been used as an argument against iconoclasts, during the debates on representation.

³⁴ Dimitrie Cantemir seems to be in favour of a platonic theory of art, which takes the *idea* as a model.

³⁵ This phrase shall be primarily regarded as a rhetorical figure.

³⁶ The word is ambivalent and can also translate the Greek “*typos*” (Gordon 2020).

³⁷ cf. I, 12, 14, 17.

³⁸ Auerbach observes that in Antiquity, *figura* is oftentimes linked to the transformation of a form (appearance) or even to a deceiving appearance. For his interpretation of several passages of Ovid (Auerbach 1984, 21-22).

³⁹ *SSII*, II, 2: „Nunc autem, iterata speculatione, quicquid per idem speculatus fueris, coëxistentium partium mearum figurales esse scias umbras. Figurales dico umbras, quandoquidem purae et essentialia earum imagines, non quatenus mysterio sui Initii, sed quatenus a vobis capti atque percipi possunt, praefiguntur.”

⁴⁰ See *SSII*, I, 17.

⁴¹ Referring to Basil of Caesarea, Origen of Alexandria, Gregory Palamas and P. Evdokimov, Stăniloae ponders upon man’s aspiration towards God, which he parallels with Image’s aspiration to its prototype (Stăniloae 1996, 271).

⁴² *SSII*, II, 1: Inspiciamus, *inquit, fili, et probationem istius speculi consulemus* [...].

⁴³ According to Van Helmont, the nearness to and, eventually, the union with God produce a liquation (*liquation mentis*) of the intellect, which becomes a mirror of God, the *imago Dei* itself, at the moment of the intellectual understanding. For a better understanding of Van Helmont’s conception of knowledge, see Hedeşan 2016, 153-162. Hedeşan presents Van Helmont’s theory in relation to the German mystical tradition of Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler and Heinrich Suso among others.

⁴⁴ Cf. Rom., 7: 22, Efes., 3: 16. Vezi și 2 Cor., 4: 16. The opposition between *homo interior* and *homo exterior* is also explicate by Van Helmont (*De magnetica vulnerum curatione*, 83).

⁴⁵ Cf. Van Helmont 1682, *Imago Mentis*, 5: „Ast ubi anima se ipsam, vel in seipsa intellectualiter comprehendit, deficit ipsi ratio, et sui ipsius imago, qua sibi seipsam repraesentet.”

⁴⁶ Cantemir suggests in this chapter that the human mind is aware of its own existence, but its consciousness is limited: “Ergo per Aeternam Charitatem perque desuper clementer infusam Scientiam ipsa mens de semet ipsa quot quantaque assequi concessum est, sub humili Theologo-Physices censura, sensuum capacitati communicare liceat. (Doce enim sapientem, et sapientior fiet!) ” and also “Vnde, ex contrariis negativis, radius quidam verae affirmationis coruscat, ita ut mens de se ipsa aliquid tale, reale et actu existens sibi persuadere non haesitet.”

⁴⁷ For this reason, Cantemir concludes that man is the most noble and closest to God of all the creatures, placing him even before the angels.

⁴⁸ Afloreaei gives an interesting interpretation to this passage (2017, LXII): “Eventually, he paints inasmuch as he lets himself be painted – that is to say moulded into his own being – by what he sees and hears.” (my translation).

References

- Alexandrescu, Vlad. 2016. “Introduction.” *L’Image infigurabile de la science sacro-sainte*. Paris: Honore-Champion.
- Afloroaei, Ștefan. 2017. “Studiu introductiv.” Dimitrie Cantemir, *Icoana de nezușărit a științei preasfinte, Pasaje neclare în Catehism, O cercetare naturală a monarhiilor, Elogiu pentru autor, Mic compendiu de logică*, col. *Opere Fundamentale: XLIX – XLX*. București: Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă (FNSA).
- Agiotis, Nikos. 2019. “Greek Aristotelianism in the seventeenth century: uncovering Cesare Cremonini in the works of Theophilus Korydalleus.” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 43 (1): 105–16.
- Auerbach, Eric. 1984. “Figura.” *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature, Theory and History of Literature* (University of Minnesota Press) 9: 11-76.

- Bădărău, Dan. 1961. „Cantemir și Van Helmont.” *Cercetări filozofice* VIII (1): 143-165.
- Blaga, Lucian. 1972. „Dimitrie Cantemir.” *Izvoade (eseuri, conferințe, articole)*. Edited by Dorli Blaga and Petre Nicolau. Preface by George Gană: 142-168. București: Minerva.
- Cantemir, Dimitrie. 2016. *L'Image infigurable de la science sacro-sainte*. Edited by Dan Slușanschi and Liviu Stroia. Translated by Vlad Alexandrescu. Paris: Honore-Champion.
- The manuscript “Dimitrie Cantemir, *Joannis Baptistae Van Helmont, Toparchae in Merode Royenborch Orschot, Pellines et Physices universalis doctrina et Christianae fidei congrua et necessaria philosophia (Excerpta)*”, <https://lib-fond.ru/lib-rgb/173-i/f-173i-312/>
- Cantemir, Dimitrie. 1995. *Mic compendiu asupra întregii învățături a logicii*. Translated by Dan Slușanschi. Introduction, notes and index by Alexandru Surdu. București: Editura Științifică.
- de Pisan, Christine. 1881. *Le livre du chemin de long estud*. Berlin. Reprint, Geneva: Slatkine, 1974. Edited by Robert Püschel. Quoted in Barbara Newman: *God and the Goddesses. Visions, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.
- Dionysius the Areopagite. 1920. *On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*. Translated by C.E. Rolt. London: SPCK.
- Falque, Ingrid. 2017. “*Daß man bild mit bilde us tribe*: Imagery and Knowledge of God in Henry Suso’s Exemplar”, *Speculum* 92: 447-492.
- Falque, Ingrid and Agnès Guiderdoni. 2022. “Figurata locutio et expérience mystique. Circulation de la pensée figurée d’Henri Suso du XIVe au XVIIe Siècle.” René Wetzels, Laurence Wuidar et Katharina Gedikg, *Mystique, langage, image: montrer l’invisible. Mystik, Sprache, Bild: Die Visualisierung des Unsichtbaren* (Scrinium Friburgense): 113-136. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag.
- Guiderdoni, Agnès. 2017. “Reinventarea figurii la începutul Modernității.” *Figura. Corp, artă, spațiu, limbaj*. Coordinated by Laura Marin. Translated by Laura Marin: 57-73. București: Editura Universității din București.
- Gordon, Octavian. 2020. “*Chip în Limbajul teologic orthodox*.” *Vocabularul european al filosofilor*. Original edition by Barbara Cassin. Coordinated by Anca Vasiliu and Alexander Baumgarten. Iași: Polirom. (The Romanian edition has been supplemented with different entries in accordance with both the Romanian philosophical and philological traditions).
- Hedeșan, Georgiana. 2016. *An Alchemical Quest for Universal Knowledge: The Christian Philosophy of Jan Baptist Van Helmont (1579-1644)*. London and New York: Routledge.
- McFarland, Ian A. 2001. “When Time Is of the Essence: Aquinas and the ‘Imago Dei.’” *New Blackfriars* 82 (963): 208–23.
- Newman, Barbara. 2003. *God and the Goddesses. Visions, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Noica, Constantin. 1967. “Aristotelismul în Principatele Române în sec. XVII-XVIII” *Studii clasice* (IX): 253-266.
- Puffer, Matthew. 2017. “Human Dignity after Augustine’s ‘Imago Dei’: On the Sources and Uses of Two Ethical Terms.” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 37 (1): pp. 65–82.
- Stăniloae, Dumitru. 1996. *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*. București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române.
- Trinkaus, Charles. 1970. *In our Image and Likeness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Vaida, Petru. 1972. *Dimitrie Cantemir și Umanismul*. București: Editura Minerva.
- Joannis Baptistae Van Helmont. 1682. *Toparchae in Merode Royenborch Orschot, Pellines et Physices universalis doctrina et Christianae fidei congrua et necessaria philosophia, Opera Omnia*, Francofurti.