

Nr. 31/2023

HERMENEIA

Journal of Hermeneutics, Art Theory and Criticism

Topic: Research Articles

Editura Fundației Academice AXIS
IAȘI, 2023

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ISSN print: 1453-9047

ISSN online: 2069-8291

Summary

Topic: Research Articles

Constantin RĂCHITĂ

Imago Clodiae Christianae? Jerome's Imitation of Cicero in *Ep. 45, 4*.....5

Vlad ILE

Assessing ontological commitments. Peter of Spain's realism in *Summulae logicales*21

Ovidiu ACHIM

Ineffable, imaginable, unpicturable in Dimitrie Cantemir's *Sacro-sanctae Scientiae Indepingibilis Imago (1700)*37

Ioana Alexandra LIONTE-IVAN

World Literature: a Rereading of Symbolic Geographies.....57

Diana COZMA

A Theatre of Cruelty Nowadays73

Gerard STAN

Communicative Rationality, Irony, and Solidarity. Hermeneutics of Rorty's Idea of Freedom.....84

Gabriela POLEAC

Rhetoric Of Play as Power in The Online Hyperspectacle: The Emergence of Deontic Authorities.....97

Book reviews

Patricia-Loredana CONDURACHE

How to Make the Heavens Speak: Peter Sloterdijk on *Theopoesis* (Sloterdijk, Peter, *Making the Heavens Speak: Religion as Poetry*, Translated by Robert Hughes, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2023, 288 p.).....110

Iuliu-Marius MORARIU

Religion and everyday life. An inter-disciplinary perspective (Ioan Chirilă, *Rădăcinile veșniciei – eseuri [The Roots of the eternity – Essays]*, Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2022, 286 p.).....116

Constantin RĂCHITĂ*

Imago Clodiae Christianae? Jerome's Imitation of Cicero in *Ep.* 45, 4

Abstract: The relationship between Christianity and Classical literature in Late Antiquity constitutes a well-defined field of study. Jerome's letters have traditionally been cherished by scholars for their content, as well for their references to the classical authors. This study focuses on the use of allusions in an interesting passage from Jerome's *Epistle* 45, written in 385. Our analysis will demonstrate that Cicero's influence in the writing of this piece of work is profound and full of hidden meanings. If one reads the text focusing on Cicero's rhetoric, the entire scope of meaning shifts.

Keywords: Jerome's Epistolography, Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, Rhetoric, Asceticism, Classical Allusions.

Epistle 45 was written in the summer of 385, from the port of Ostia, shortly after an ecclesiastical tribunal had forced Jerome to leave Rome and settle permanently in Bethlehem. From a formal point of view, the epistle is an apologia *pro vita sua*, perhaps the most exquisite sample of apologetic prose preserved from Jerome's correspondence (Cain 2009, 107; 209)¹. Although dedicated to Asela, a consecrated virgin in the community of women who practised asceticism under his guidance, the epistle is intended for a wider audience, having been composed by Jerome in order to convince his friends and associates in Rome that the accusations at his trial were unfounded and the verdict of the Roman clerics was based on a long list of slander and hearsay. Although we know neither the text of the court's decision, nor the details of this trial from other ancient sources, we learn from the succession of rhetorical interrogations posed by Jerome² that the main accusations concerned his relationship with Paula, a wealthy widow who decided to adopt the asceticism recommended by her friend and confessor. In addition to this accusation that he had an inappropriate relationship with the woman he was guiding in the practice of asceticism and who had decided to accompany him on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem³, Jerome was also subject to a law issued on 30 July 370 by Emperor Valentinian. This law, nowadays found in *Codex Theodosianus*, was aimed at an ancient practice of "inheritance hunting" (*captatio*), which punished

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clerics who, under the pretext of religion, sought to obtain material advantages from their wealthy disciples⁴. The trial of Jerome, according to his testimony, involved conflicting testimonies extracted under torture from the witnesses⁵. Contemporary scholarship perceives it as a conspiracy hatched by the moderate clerics of Rome. Indeed, the sources of his time indicate sufficient motive for their attempt to eliminate an inconvenient monk: the rigorous asceticism he demanded of all Christians, the envy provoked by his position as secretary to Pope Damasus (who died on 11 December 384), the revision of biblical texts regarded by his contemporaries as a veritable blasphemy, and the translation into Latin of the writings of Origen – an exegete already accused in the East of heterodox theological views.

Although Jerome makes no explicit remarks on this matter, *Epistle 45* suggests that he was not backed by any of his friends with real influence in Roman ecclesiastical circles, while Asella – the addressee of the epistle – was an exception. The introduction states that she at least considered him innocent. More significantly, there is a passage in the epistle in which, Jerome seems to criticise the morals of the Christian matrons of Rome in his usual manner and praise the asceticism practised by two Roman widows, Paula and Melania Maior:

Nullae aliae Romanae urbi fabulam praebuerunt, nisi Paula et Melanius, quae contemptis facultatibus pignoribusque desertis crucem Domini quasi quoddam pietatis lenauere uexillum. Baias peterent, unguenta eligerent, diuitias et uiduitatem haberent, materias luxuriae et libertatis, domnae uocarentur et sanctae; nunc in sacco et cinere formosae uolunt uideri, et in gehennae ignis cum ieiuniis et pedore descendere. Videlicet non eis licet adplaudente populo perire cum turbis. Si gentiles hanc uitam carperent, si Iudaei, haberem solacium non placendi eis quibus displicet Christus; nunc uero – pro nefas! – nomine Christianae, praetermissa domum suarum cura et proprii oculi trabe neglecta in alieno oculo festucam quaerunt. Lacerant sanctum propositum, et remedium poenae suae arbitrantur, si nemo sit sanctus, si omnibus detrahatur, si turba sit pereuntium, si multitudo peccantium.

Of all the ladies in Rome, the only ones that give Rome an opportunity for scandal were Paula and Melania, who, despising their wealth and deserting their children, uplifted the Lord's cross as a vexillum of their faith. Had they frequented Baiae, or chosen to use perfumes, or employed their wealth and widow's freedom as opportunities for extravagance and self-indulgence, they would have been called «mistresses» and «saints»; as it is they wish to appear beautiful in sackcloth and ashes, and to go down to the fires of Gehenna with fasting and filth. Plainly, they are not allowed to perish amid the mob's applause along with the multitude! If it were Gentiles or Jews who assailed this mode of life, I should at least have the consolation of not pleasing those to whom Christ Himself has failed to please; but now – what a shame! – it is women, in name only Christians,

who, neglecting the care of their own households and disregarding the beam in their own eyes, look for mote in those of their neighbours. They tear every profession of religion to shreds and think that they have found a remedy for their own doom, if no one is a saint, if they can detract from everyone, if those who perish are many, if great is the multitude of the sinners.⁶

In the apologetic context of the epistle the names of the two widows, offered as models of asceticism, fit perfectly. Paula's name is invoked to reaffirm the idea that their relationship is strictly spiritual, and that the court's decision was unjust⁷. The name of Melania Maior appears because, in the perception of the Christians of Rome, she is the first truly important Roman widow who renounced the comfortable and luxurious life of Rome, went to Jerusalem, and dedicated herself entirely to the monastic life also promoted by Jerome⁸. Melania Maior is known to be of Hispanic origin and belong to the famous gens Antonia. She married at an early age, probably to Valerius Maximus Basilius, who became *praefectus urbis* during the reign of Emperor Julian⁹. At the age of 21 she was widowed after her husband's death in 363, inheriting a huge fortune (Clark 1992, 21). Melania decided not to remarry and left to practise monasticism in Egypt, leaving Valerius Publicola, her only surviving son after the death of the others, in Rome in the care of a tutor. Jerome had known Melania Maior for a long time, probably since his studies in Rome¹⁰, although the first mention of her name appears in an epistle of 374, in which we learn that Hylas, one of Melania's freedmen, had become a monk in Aquileia¹¹. In addition to the flattering portrait in *Epistle* 39, written a year before the trial of Jerome (384), Melania was praised in various writings between 374-375, being called "saint", "the new Thecla" and representative of the "true aristocracy" of Christianity¹². Such eulogies prompt a literal reading of *Epistle* 45, without much attention to the intertextual allusions on which it was built. For a long time, the only mention of this text was the observation made by the earliest editor of Jerome's correspondence, who indicated in a note a lexical borrowing from Cicero's *Pro Caelio* discourse¹³. A more detailed analysis of the Latin text will show that the intertextual allusions are more complex than they appear at first and their functions more than mere Ciceronian allusions used for decorative purposes.

In a book chapter published in 2007, Owen Hodkinson proposed a new discussion of the relationship between epistolography and the established ancient genres, where the epistles borrow themes and motifs (283–300). Hodkinson's theoretical analysis argues using examples identified in fictional epistolography of the Second Sophistic period, but his conclusions remain valid for the entire ancient epistolography. The so-called "fluidity" of epistolary literature would consist in the capacity of these compositions to

imitate elements specific to other genres and to reproduce them in the conventional form of real letters. In other words, an epistle containing quotations or allusions to a lyric poem seeks to convey by epistolary means exactly the same message as the poem. Similarly, epistles in intertextual relation with oratorical speeches aim to convey identical messages, the understanding of which cannot be separated from the contexts from which they were borrowed.

If we follow Hodkinson's theoretical considerations, a reference that Jerome makes to the legal discourse *Pro Caelio* should include a message almost identical to that of the initial context. Jerome's allusions to the luxurious and immoral life either in the ancient city of Baiae¹⁴ or in the private baths of a wealthy widow in the republican period (*Pro Caelio* 27 and 38) have been regularly read in the manner of a transfer of republican vices onto the Christian widows criticized in 385 by Jerome¹⁵. Thus, examining the context and the way Cicero wrote his speech becomes absolutely necessary in order to understand the functions of these allusions.

The *Pro Caelius* speech was delivered on April 4, 56 BC in defence of Marcus Caelius Rufus (an ambitious young politician) accused of abuse of power or violence (*vim*) in an age specific political struggle, involving interests in appointments to the throne of Egypt, murder, and a good deal of immorality¹⁶. From a rhetorical point of view, the speech in defence of Caelius is a masterpiece of diversion, by which Cicero sought to ignore the real charges against his client and get him acquitted. The main character of the Ciceronian speech is not Caelius, but a widow named Clodia (former wife of Quintus Caecilius Metellus Celer, who died in 59 BC), one of the witnesses at the trial, who claimed that the accused had borrowed money from her to buy poison. Cicero's defence strategy was to discredit Clodia's testimony with a ferocious attack on the morality of the witness. Since rumours were already circulating in Rome about an alleged incestuous relationship between Clodia and her brother, Publius Clodius Pulcher, Cicero had no trouble attacking her sexual morality to emphasise that her testimony lacked all credibility. In Cicero's version, his young, innocent, and honourable client wanted a political career in Rome. For this reason, Caelius rented a room in Clodius' villa on the Palatine Hill, where he met Clodia, the landlord's older sister. The mischievous widow seduces poor Caelius who falls into her trap as did other young men of the time. Because of her alleged immorality, Caelius would end the relationship and concentrate on his political career. Full of resentment, Clodia would have found the opportunity for revenge through this trial, making herself the main witness for the prosecution.

The reasons why Cicero's speech was highly appreciated in Antiquity, entered rhetoric textbooks as a subject of study in schools, lie in the quality of the prose, occasioned by an oratorical strategy worthy of a director. The

date of the trial of Caelius coincided with the *Ludi Megalenses* (a celebration in honour of the goddess Magna Mater) during which theatrical performances were held. Since the judges were present at this trial and could not attend these theatrical pieces, Cicero turned his legal speech into a trilogy held instead (Austin 1960, 151; Ciralo 2003, 236; Dyck 2013, 4,11; Lintott 2008, 430-433; Geffcken 1973, 11-12). The Ciceronian speech quotes lines from the tragedy *Medea* by Ennius, dramatically narrates the events in the manner of theatrical scenes, frequently resorting to the comedies of Caecilius and Terentius, and ends with a famous scene in the bath of Clodia, which is part of the art of the ancient *mime*¹⁷. In short, Cicero turns his entire speech into an artistic performance that employs the means of tragedy, comedy and then farce, a trilogy designed to amuse the judges and downplay serious charges of violence and attempted murder. The charges are reduced to trivial jokes. To achieve his aims, Cicero resorts to a wide variety of stylistic devices, which are later offered as models for the rhetoricians of the following generations.

If the influence of Ciceronian discourse can be found in several passages of Jerome's correspondence¹⁸, in the case of the text of *Epistle* 45,4 the linguistic allusions and modes of construction point to a key passage in *Pro Caelio* 38, where Cicero resorts to several rhetorical devices to create a negative moral portrait of Clodia:

At fuit fama. Quotus quisque istam effugere potest, praesertim in tam maledica civitate? [...] Nihil iam in istam mulierem dico; sed, si esset aliqua dissimilis istius, quae se omnibus pervolgaret, quae haberet palam decretum semper aliquem, cuius in hortos, domum, Baias iure suo libidines omnium commearent, quae etiam aleret adulescentis et parsimoniam patrum suis sumptibus sustineret; si vidua libere, proterva petulanter, dives effuse, libidinosa meretricio more viveret, adulterum ego putarem si quis hanc paulo liberius salutasset?

«But there was a rumour». How many people can avoid it, especially in a city as slanderous as this one? [...] I am not saying now anything against this woman, but if there were another one, unlike her, who made herself common to everybody, who always had somebody in her sights, in whose gardens, whose house, whose place at Baiae the lusts of every one had free access as of their own right, who supported young men and made up for their fathers' stinginess with her own resources; if a widow lived loosely, a shameless woman flagrantly, a rich woman lavishly, a wanton woman like a slut, am I to think a man an adulterer if he is greeted her with a little too much familiarity?¹⁹

From a stylistic point of view, the Ciceronian passage is an accumulation of rhetorical elements. It begins with a *dissimulatio* (εἰρωνεῖα), recognisable in the substitution of Clodia's obvious name by *aliqua mulier*, and continues

with an *ethopoia* (ἠθοποιῶν)²⁰, favoured by optative conjunctions, in which Clodia's vices are attributed to a hypothetical character. The details of the portrait of this imaginary woman are actually drawn from Clodia's biography and constitute a combination of *amplificatio* ("amplification") and *minutio* ("attenuation"), offered as a model by Quintilian in his *Institutio oratoria*, where Cicero calls a courtesan an impudent woman and mentions the long-lasting love affair between Caelius and Clodia as merely a familiar greeting²¹.

Re-reading Jerome's text, one will notice the far greater influence of the Ciceronian discourse than initially assumed. The Christian author borrows from Cicero's speech not only the content, *i.e.*, the criticism of luxury and moral decadence, favoured by the freedom of widowhood, but also the stylistic means by which they are expressed. From the very beginning, Jerome immerses the reader in the atmosphere of *Pro Caelio* when he uses the expression *urbi fabulam praeberere* ("to give to the city a story", "a spectacle", or "an opportunity for scandal"), an allusion to the spectacle of imorality offered by Clodia²². The term *fabula*, used by Jerome to designate the example of monasticism offered by Paula and Melania, has both positive and negative meanings in Latin; it can refer to either a moralizing narrative, or a subject of gossip or a farce. Jerome does not use the established term *exemplum* to indicate a moral model, but the ambivalent term *fabula*, which also appears with negative meanings in his epistolography²³. Jerome also borrows from *Pro Caelio* 27 the colloquial pronoun *nullus* (used instead of the negation *non*) by which Cicero sought to achieve comic effects²⁴. Even if in the Latin of Jerome's time *nullus* has become a common mode of negation it is hard to believe that the function of the colloquial idiom in *Ep.* 45. ("Nullae aliae Romanae ... nisi Paula et Melanius") is far removed from the comic register of Ciceronian discourse, especially since the pattern of construction remains the same in the next sentence. In the negative portrayal of the Christian widow, Jerome's text reflects the same *imitatio morum alienorum* of Cicero also built on the basis of the optatives subjunctives ("Baiae peterent, unguenta eligerent, diuitias et uiduitatem haberent"). But the ironically suggested incompatibility immediately appears: why should widows living in the manner of Clodia be called *domnae et sanctae*? This incompatibility can be explained in the following way. These women who prefer to go to the baths, to procure ointments, to enjoy the freedom of widowhood, and to live in luxury, are Christians in name only because they have abandoned their responsibilities for the administration of property and the maintenance of the family. Furthermore, they seek pretexts to slander others (especially monks like Jerome) out of a sense of envy derived from their inability to fully assimilate monastic precepts. Although the negative portrayal of the Christian widow gives the impression

of generality (favoured by allusions to biblical texts such as *1Timotei* 5:8 and *Matei* 7:3), it nevertheless refers to Jerome's particular situation. "The saint profession" (*sanctum propositum*) to which the Christian author alludes is nothing other than his decision to devote himself to the ascetic life²⁵. But we shall return later to this matter. Just as the young and innocent Caelius suffers from the rumours spread in such an indiscreet city as Rome, Jerome was condemned solely on the basis of rumours that Paula will accompany him to Palestine.

Cicero's imitation is not limited to paragraph 4 of Jerome's epistle. It continues in the immediately following paragraph (in the same manner of an imaginary portrait). However, the shift from indirect to direct discourse also seems to indicate a change in the abstract character to whom the text is addressed. We will quote only part of this passage, sufficient to illustrate its construction:

Tibi placet lauare cotidie, alius has munditias sordes putat; tu attagenam ructuas et de comeso acipensere gloriaris, ego faba uentrem impleo; te delectant cachinnantium greges, Paula Melaniumque plangentium; tu aliena desideras, illae contemnunt sua [...]

You find a pleasure in taking a bath daily, another regards such refinement as defilement; you belch after a meal of wild fowl and boast of eating sturgeon, I fill my belly with beans; you take delight in troops of laughing, Paula and Melania prefer those who weep; you covet other people's goods, they despise their own [...].

The polytheist of noble origin, faithful to the old Roman traditions, is Jerome's probable addressee. It is not impossible that the person targeted is one of the members of Paula's family, who – contemporary research commonly assumes – played a major role in instigating the trial of Jerome. However, the context is intentionally ambiguous and thus the assumption remains questionable. What is of particular interest here for us is that Jerome does not fall outside the sphere of Ciceronian influence. The series of moral antinomies, based on the contrast between *urbanitas* and *rusticitas*, are borrowed by Jerome from the Ciceronian discourse *In P. Clodium et C. Curionem* (preserved today in fragments) where Cicero creates a comic portrait of Clodius Pulcher, Clodia's brother (Austin 1960, 166)²⁶. In one part of this invective speech (fr. 22), Clodius was attacked in the same devastating manner as his sister²⁷. Cicero describes Clodius with epithets such as *urbanus* and *elegans*, associating "the urbanity" with effeminacy. At the same time, Cicero puts himself in the position of a *rusticus*, unfamiliar with his opponent's feminine wardrobe:

Nam rusticos ei nos videri minus est mirandum, qui manicatam tunicam et mitram et purpureas fascias habere non possumus. Tu vero festivus, tu elegans, tu solus urbanus, quem decet muliebris ornatus, quem incessus psaltriae, qui effeminare vultum, attenuare vocem, laevare corpus potes. (fr. 22)

For it is less surprising that we are peasants to him, who cannot have tunic with sleeves, headscarf, and purple bands. You are graceful indeed, you are elegant and you are alone polite; to you befits the adornment of a woman and the gait of a female lyre player, a man who knows to make his face appear feminine, to soften his voice and to smooth his body.²⁸

In Cicero's antithesis between *urbanitas* and *rusticitas*, one notices the use of a *slow-motion* strategy (borrowed from ancient comedy), which involves the almost mechanical repetition of syntactic parallels in the description of the character (Geffcken 1973, 78). This includes both descriptive nouns and adjectives of the caricatured portrait of Clodius and a series of anaphora of the pronouns *tu* or *qui*, repeated in the same anaphoric form in *Pro Caelio* 27 (*qui in hortis fuerit, qui unguenta sumpserit, qui Baias viderit*). Jerome preserves the Ciceronian antitype *urbanitas-rusticitas* and its mode of construction but changes the descriptive details of the portrait and adapts it to his particular situation. More interestingly, Jerome's characteristics of *urbanitas* continue the series of criticisms of Christian widows, bringing together a number of commonplace themes for Roman moralists often associating sumptuous banqueting feasts (*convivia*) with perfumed ointments (*unguenta*) and frequent baths – symbols for lack of moderation and indecent luxury (*luxuria*).

The imitation of Cicero's speeches in Jerome's epistle seems to be quite clear, manifesting itself not only in the borrowing of themes and motifs at the content level, but also in a similar linguistic and stylistic construction. This imitation automatically raises another problem: If in Cicero's *ethopoia* of *Pro Caelio* the character concerned is well known, given the fact that the details associated with the portrait of the immoral woman are those of the rumours that all Rome attributed to Clodia), why would Jerome's "Christian Clodia" be an abstract projection and would not target a specific person? Judging by the principle of analogy between model and imitation (proposed and exemplified by Hodkinson) we think there is sufficient reason to consider the person targeted by Jerome is no other than Melania Maior, who seems to be not only praised in this context, but even excluded from suspicion. In a manner similar to Cicero, the details of the negative portrait that Jerome attributes to the Christian widow are drawn from the biography of Melania Maior²⁹.

The first arguments in favour of such an interpretation are suggested by the epistles of Jerome written after 393 when the Origenist controversy began³⁰. On opposite sides, Jerome would launch more or less direct attacks

on the monasticism practised by Rufinus of Aquileia and Melania Maior in the monastic complex built on the Mount of Olives. The main criticism Jerome indirectly aimed at Melania Maior was the transgression of biblical teachings calling for the absolute renunciation of possessions in Christian practices. Moreover, accusations of *luxuria* are found in an epistle of 394, where Jerome reacts on the occasion of a pilgrimage made by Melania Maior and Rufinus to the monks in the Egyptian desert, commenting: „I have lately seen a most miserable rumour flying to and through the entire East. The lady’s age and style, her dress and mien, the indiscreet company she kept, her dainty meals and her royal appointments bespoke her the bride of a Nero or of a Sardanapalus”³¹. Jerome’s critique can be compared to a scene described in an epistle by Paulinus of Nola in the year 400, on the occasion of a visit by Melania to Campania. Of Iberian origin and most likely related to Melania Maior³², Paulinus praised Melania’s modesty, contrasting it with the opulence of the retinue of senators who accompanied her on her visit to Nola³³. In another epistle from 396 Jerome repeated the same criticism of his rivals’ opulence: „Still it would be absurd for one of us, living amid the riches of Croesus and the luxuries of Sardanapalus, to make his boast of mere ignorance”³⁴. He criticized the luxurious life of the Jerusalem ascetics again in 401 AD: “Even if a man is bursting with the wealth of Croesus and Darius, learning will not follow the money-bag. It is the companion of toil and labour, the associate of the fasting not of the full-fed, of self-mastery not of self-indulgence”³⁵.

A second significant detail why Jerome’s “Christian Clodia” seems to have been Melania Maior is that the Christian widow owned extensive family properties both in Campania and at Thagaste, where the Christian widow built a luxurious baths complex³⁶. A commemorative inscription, preserved in the *Anthologia Latina* (109), renders the name of the patroness of the baths as a *telestich* in a poem (Evans-Grubbs 1987, 237-239). This would have allowed Jerome to allude to a widow who combines luxury with asceticism, but at the same time is called “lady” and “saint” by all her panegyrist, including Jerome³⁷.

A third important detail in the Hieronymic *ethopoiia* regarding the biography of Melania Maior is the expression *praetermissa domum suarum cura*, which I have translated as “neglecting the care of their own households”. This phrase also implies the care for family, not just for the owned property, and is in fact a veiled criticism of Melania’s abandoning of her son in Rome. Here, Jerome makes use of generalised criticism on the part of Roman society aimed at women such as Melania Maior. Roman society is horrified that a woman, who has had three children die, is able to leave her only remaining 15 years old son in order to go on an ascetic adventure to the East, where she took her entire fortune (converted into gold). We know that this criticism was widespread from the attempt of Palladius (the friend

and panegyrist of Melania Maior) to counter these criticisms in the *Historia Lausiaca*³⁸. Palladius tells us also that Melania “stood up to the beasts of senators and their harassing wives (ἐθηριομάχησε τοὺς συγκλητικούς καὶ τὰς ἐλευθέρους κωλύοντας αὐτήν)” and justifies her behaviour by saying that nothing has deterred Melania Maior from her divine mission to help the Church, not even love for her only remaining son (οὐκ ἐμέρισεν αὐτήν τῆς πρὸς τὸν Χριστὸν ἀγάπης ὃ τοῦ μονογενοῦς υἱοῦ πόθος). The same Palladius assures us that it was only thanks to Melania’s prayers (ταῖς προσευχαῖς αὐτῆς) that her son received a good education, married into a good family, and acquired positions in the empire. The same type of justification can also be found in Paulinus of Nola in *Epistle* 29, from where we learn that Melania wished to leave her child in Christ’s care and that of all the relatives (*potentissimi et clari*) in Rome she found none worthy of leaving her huge fortune (*magna copia*) as a means to take care of her son’s “sustenance” (*alendum*), “education” (*erudiendum*) and “protection” (*tuendum*)³⁹.

A fourth clue that Melania Maior is probably the target of Jerome’s *ethopoia* consists in deleted allusions to early envies and conflicts over monasticism, expressed in *sanctum propositum lacerant* (“they tear every profession of religion to shreds”). The text suggests an earlier dispute that Jerome may have had with Melania Maior in 372 AD at Aquileia. Jerome mentions “an Iberian viper” (*Hibera excetra*) who slanders him and destroys his reputation as a young ascetic, but never mentions her name: „Even though the Iberian viper shall rend me with her injurious rumour, I will not fear men’s judgment, since I shall have my Judge”⁴⁰. Although there is room for argument here too, the evidence is much less conclusive. The association between an opponent of Iberian origin, who defames (*dilaniet*) Jerome around 375, and an abstract collective character who ten years later does the same (*lacerat*) is remarkable.

Perhaps the most important argument that the text of *Epistle* 45, 4 constitutes a subtle irony against Melania Maior, created through a type of irony-figure (*schema*)⁴¹, is the very reaction of the addressee of the message, mediated by her client, Rufinus of Aquileia, which demonstrates that the passage was not read as a eulogy. In *Epistle* 57, Jerome’s first public intervention in the dispute with the monks on the Mount of Olives, one reads a very interesting justification suggesting that in the epistles prior to the conflict he criticized Rufinus and Melania in a way imperceptible to the public: “So long as I do not publish my thoughts, the persiflages are not accusations; in fact they are not even persiflages, since the public doesn’t know them”⁴². Although lapidary, the statement seems to refer to exactly this text and not to another, because Jerome makes the “imprudence” of answering Rufinus with a text borrowed from *Pro Caelio*. The expression *maledicta non crimina sunt* (“the persiflages are not accusations”) is again a

borrowing from Ciceronian discourse⁴³, which clearly shows that Jerome's irony has achieved its purpose. In order to circumvent the serious accusations made against Caelius, Cicero creates a distinction between real accusations (*crimina*), which must be proved by arguments and confirmed by witnesses, and *maledicta*, a term that can be translated depending on the context, with strong connotations such as "invectives", "insults" or "calumnies", but also with weaker meanings such as "slanders", "persiflages" or "mockeries"⁴⁴. According to Cicero, if the persiflage is offensive it becomes an insult (*convicium*) and constitutes an abuse, but if it is done with subtlety and politeness, it passes for elegance and proof of urbanity (*urbanitas*). Thus, Jerome takes this distinction between *crimen* and *maledictum* from Cicero to justify his earlier subtle attacks on Rufinus and Melania Maior. Also, it is worth mentioning that none of this evidence of *urbanitas*, as Jerome claims his criticisms were up to 395, alludes to the *Pro Caelian* discourse, except for the passages in *Epistle* 45.

In conclusion, the rhetorical means employed by Jerome are no different from those of Cicero. Unlike the traditional interpretation, we have argued that in *Ep.* 45 Jerome's criticism is also aimed at a specific person, rather than a general condemnation of the vices of Christian widows. In this sense, the functions of the allusions to Cicero's speech precisely suggest that the new creation is no different from the model. If Cicero's judges could easily recognize the character abstracted in his *ethopoiia*, so could Christians educated in Rome's rhetoric schools, who read Jerome's public epistle, recognize the biographical details of one of the most important Christian widows. Jerome's subtlety lies in his ability to write a text with double meaning: read linearly it is undoubtedly a eulogy to Melania Maior, however if read in terms of intertextual allusions it becomes a veiled criticism, perceptible only to an educated audience, comprehensively trained in the rhetorical schools of the time.

Notes

¹ For the specifics of the ancient theory concerning apologetic epistolography and also for some suggestive examples see Malherbe (1988, 40-41) and Stowers (1986, 166-170).

² "*Dicant, quid umquam in me aliter senserint, quam Christianum decebat? pecuniam cuius accipi? munera uel parua uel magna non spreui? in manu mea aes alicuius insonuit? obliquus sermo, oculus petulans fui?*" Jerome, *Ep.* 45, 2. All texts quoted from the epistles of Jerome follow the J. Labourt edition (1949-1963).

³ "*nihil mihi aliud obicitur nisi sexus meus, et hoc numquam obicitur, nisi cum Hierosolyma Paula proficiscitur.*" Jerome, *Ep.* 45, 2.

⁴ *C.Th.* 16, 2, 20 and 16, 2, 22 (Mommsen and Meyer, 1905). For a detailed explanation of these laws, see Davidson (2001, 33-43) and Grubbs (2001, 225-227).

⁵ "*crediderunt mentienti; cur non credunt neganti? idem est homo ipse qui fuerat: fatetur insontem, qui dudum noxium loquebatur; et certe ueritatem magis exprimunt tormenta quam risus, nisi quod facilius creditur quod aut fictum libenter auditur, aut non fictum ut fingatur impellitur.*" Jerome, *Ep.* 45, 2. It

appears from Jerome's text that one of the prosecution's witnesses was probably one of Paula's slaves, since in the legal proceedings of Late Antiquity aristocrats were exempt from torture. Cf. Dossey (2001, 98-114).

⁶ Translated by Wright (1933), slightly modified.

⁷ Jerome deliberately omitted from his apologetic epistle any information concerning the proceedings of the trial and the sentencing decision, as a result of which he was exiled from Rome. The proof is a threat of exposure on these two uncomfortable issues, which Rufinus of Aquileia addressed to Jerome in a private letter from around 400 (now lost). Jerome quotes verbatim the threat received ("*Numquid et ego non possum enarrare tu quomodo de urbe discesseris, quid de te in praesenti indicatum sit, quid postea scriptum, quid iuraveris, ubi navim conscenderis, quam sancte peritrium vitaveris?*" *Apol. c. Ruf. III, 21*) and in his equally threatening reply he almost admits the intentional omissions, but also that they might not be convenient for Rufinus either ("*si vel parvam schedulam contra me romani episcopi aut ulterius ecclesiae protuleris, omnia quae in te scripta sunt mea crimina confitebor*" *Apol. c. Ruf. III, 22*). For a more detailed interpretation of the texts, see Cain (2009, 119-121).

⁸ In a quasi-hagiographic context, Jerome says this about Melania Maior ("*Sancta Melania nostri temporis inter Christianos vera nobilitas*" *Ep. 39, 5*). But this statement is merely a rhetorical device that he also employs on other occasions. When his preferences turn to other wealthy Roman matrons, such as Marcela, she will acquire the exclusive honour of being the first woman of high rank in Rome to adopt the monastic life ("*nulla eo tempore nobilium feminarum noverat Romae propositum monachorum*" *Ep. 127, 5*). In reality, such statements are part of Jerome's desire to appease his friends (or *patrons*) and integrate them into the vast campaign to promote asceticism initiated by Damasus, the former bishop of Rome between 383-384 AD (Rebenich 2002, 9). For details on the context and reasons for the promotion of asceticism in the Roman world, see Hunter (2007, 188-189); Lizzi (1989, 134-137); Cooper (1996, 78; 84; 91); Shaw (1998, 487; 491).

⁹ Cf. PLRE, s.v. "Melania 1 (the elder)."

¹⁰ The hypothesis remains valid only if we accept that Jerome is not untruthful in his hagiographic portrait in *Epistle 39* (see above n. 8), where he suggests that he witnessed events around 363, when Melania lost her husband and two of her children (*Ep. 39, 5*).

¹¹ Jerome, *Ep. 3, 3*.

¹² Jerome, *Ep. 3, 3; Ep. 4, 2; Chronicon, ad ann. 374* (PL 27, 505-508; Donalson 1996, 55).

¹³ PL 22, 481-482, n. (c).

¹⁴ Situated in Campania, Baiae became towards the end of the Republican period a place of relaxation for wealthy patricians, but also a place of guilty pleasures and opulence. Varro satirized this place and advised Cicero to avoid it (*Ad Fam. IX, 2, 5*), because it had already become a symbol of easy morals and luxury. Baiae's bad reputation continued also during the Empire. Propertius addressed Cynthia: "*tu modo quam primum corruptas desere Baias*" (I, 11, 27), Seneca described it suggestively in *Epistle 51*, and the senator Symmachus could still enjoy *otium* at its thermal baths (*Ep. I, 7 & Ep. I, 67; PL 18, 150C & PL 18, 283B*).

¹⁵ For instance see Gilliam (1953, 103-107) whose article aims to reflect the influence of Ciceronian discourse on Jerome's epistolography, noting the lexical similarity between Jerome's text in *Ep. 45, 4* ("*Baias peterent, unguenta eligerent, divitias et viduitatem haberent*") and that of Cicero in *Pro Caelio, 27* ("*qui in hortis fuerit, qui unguenta sumpserit, qui Baias viderit*"), but considers that the allusion to the ancient city of Baiae "is perhaps a piece of literary antiquarianism" (104).

¹⁶ We won't dwell too much on the intricate plots that led to the Ciceronian speech. They are well analysed and explained in the editions of Cicero's work, which we have consulted in the present study. (Austin 1960; Ciruolo 2003; Dyck 2013).

¹⁷ Geffcken (1973, 24-26) provides the best explanations of this. She speaks of a degenerative technique of portraying Clodia, borrowed from dramatic art. We witness a progressive degradation of the main character, accompanied by a transition from a higher form of comedy, also from tragedy, to a lower one, like the ancient *mime*; from a tragic heroine, comparable to Medea in Ennius' tragedy (*Pro Caelio*, 18), Clodia becomes at the end of the discourse a *meretrix*, the main character in an inconsistent *fabella* (*Pro Caelio* 61-69).

¹⁸ Cf. Gilliam (1953, 103-107).

¹⁹ My translation after Zetzler (2009).

²⁰ Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* IX, 2, 58-59.

²¹ Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* VIII, 4, 1-2.

²² “*si illam commenticiam pyxidem **obscenissima** sit **fabula** consecuta?*” Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, 69.

²³ Negative meanings of the term *fabula*, associated with the idea of urban hearsay, can be found several times in the writings of Jerome, and they are often related to the discourse of Cicero. “*ut nullam **obsceni** in se rumoris **fabulam** dare?*” *Ep.* 60, 10; “*et ne **obsceni** rumoris in se **fabulam** dare?*” *Ep.* 79, 5; “*Difficile est in **maledica civitate** et in urbe [...] non aliquam **sinistri** rumoris **fabulam** contrabere?*” *Ep.* 127, 3; “*nulla **obsceni** rumoris et pollutae virginitatis ullam **fabulam** dedit.*” *Adversus Iovinianum* I, 41.

²⁴ “*qui **nullum** convivium renuerit, qui in hortis fuerit, qui unguenta sumpserit, qui Baias viderit.*” ²⁴ Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, 27. For explanations of the repeated use of the pronoun *nullus* in *Pro Caelio*, 17, 22, 27 and 30, see the considerations of Dyck (2013, 18; 84; 102).

²⁵ E.g., “*meum propositum sine sexu est.*” Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 18.

²⁶ The speech was composed after the events of 61 BC, when Clodius was acquitted in a trial in which he was accused to disguising himself as a woman in order to fraudulently participate to the sacred rites of the *Bona Dea* in 62 B.C.E. In the disputes in the Senate, which took place on 15 May 61, Cicero was accused by Clodius of being “a peasant and a provincial” (*homo agrestis ac rusticus*) from Arpinum, who the month before (in April) had been feasting at the thermal baths in the town of Baiae in Campania (*In P. Clodium et C. Curionem*, fr. 20), the famous place associated with the opulence and luxury of the urban elite (see above, n. 14). Enraged by the hypocrisy of Clodius (a regular client of the mentioned place) now posing as a moralist censor, Cicero will use the theme of the baths of Campania in both discourses against the two Clodians, in an acid antithesis between *rusticitas* and *urbanitas*.

²⁷ Cicero alludes directly to this attack in *Pro Caelio* 36 (*ex his igitur sumam aliquem ac potissimum minimum fratrem qui est in isto genere urbanissimus*), but less obvious insinuations are found in numerous other passages.

²⁸ Translated by Radicke (2022), slightly modified.

²⁹ A part of the arguments here have already been published in another paper, in which we sought to point out that the late polemic between Jerome and Melania Maior seems to have been born much earlier and to have manifested initially only through literary allusions. (Răchită 2019, 370-380).

³⁰ A good analysis of the Origenist controversy, especially useful with regard to the disputing sides, can be found in Clark (1992).

³¹ “*Vidimus nuper ignominiosum per totum orientem uoluisse: et aetas et cultus et habitus et incessus, indiscreta societas, exquisitae epulae, regius apparatus Neronis et Sardanapalli nuptias loquebantur.*” Jerome, *Ep.* 54, 13.

³² Paulinus de Nola, *Ep.* 29, 5 (PL 61, 312D); See also Murphy (1947, 62).

³³ Paulinus de Nola, *Ep.* 29, 12 (PL 61, 320A-320C).

³⁴ “*Caeterum ridiculum, si quis e nobis manens inter Croesi opes et Sardanapali delicias, de sola rusticitate se iactet.*” Jerome, *Ep.* 57, 12.

³⁵ “*Quamvis Croesus quis spiret et Darius, litterae marsupium non sequuntur. Sudoris comites sunt et laboris; sociae ieiuniorum, non saturitatis; continentiae, non luxuriate.*” Jerome, *Apol. c. Ruf. I*, 17. The same critique can be found also in *Apol. c. Ruf. III*, 4.

³⁶ Cf. Cameron (1992, 140-144).

³⁷ Jerome, *Epp.* 3, 3; 4, 2; 39, 5. With the same flattering qualifications will be named the other disciples of Jerome: Asella (*Ep.* 45, 6), Marcela (*Epp.* 47, 3; 49, 4; 54, 18; 127, 9), Paula and Iulia Eustochia (*Epp.* 108, 35 ; 108, 27).

³⁸ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 46 (PG 34, 1225A) and 54 (PG 34, 1226B–1227D).

³⁹ Paulinus de Nola, *Ep.* 29, 9.

⁴⁰ “*Et licet me sinistro Hibera excetra rumore dilaniet, non timebo hominum iudicium, habiturus iudicem meum.*” Jerome, *Ep.* 6, 2.

⁴¹ Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* IX, 2, 44–46.

⁴² “*Quamdiu non profero cogitata, maledicta non crimina sunt; imo ne maledicta quidem, quae aures publicae nesciant.*” Jerome, *Ep.* 57, 4.

⁴³ “*Sed aliud est male dicere, aliud accusare. Accusatio crimen desiderat, rem ut definiat, hominem ut notet, argumento probet, teste confirmet.*” Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, 6. „*Omnia sunt alia non crimina, sed maledicta, iurgi petulantis magis quam publicae quaestionis.*” Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, 30.

⁴⁴ Cicero's distinction between *crimen* and *maledictum* is also found in Greek, e.g. in Demosthenes (*De corona*, 123) between the terms κατηγορία (“accusation”) and λοιδορία (“reproach”, “abuse”). Cf. Austin (1960, 52).

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Assessing ontological commitments. Peter of Spain's realism in *Summulae logicales*

Abstract: Peter of Spain's doctrinal content developed in *Summulae logicales* has been interpreted in various ways by the modern scholarship. As a result, when describing his ontological commitment, a number of different, often opposing, labels were ascribed, ranging from doctrinal neutrality to realism or anti-realism. Starting from the varieties of interpretations, we propose an assessment of Peter of Spain's ontological commitment regarding the universal, by arguing for the existence in his *Summaries* of two intertwined tendencies, one realist, another anti-realist. The former tendency will be argued in accordance with his theory of predicables, signification, supposition and appellation; the latter one, will be tracked in a series of distinctions: *via logicae* vs *via naturae*, *praesentia* vs *existentia*, *res* vs *dispositio*.

Keywords: Peter of Spain, *Summulae logicales*, realism, anti-realism, ontological commitment, universals.

1. Introduction

In the history of philosophy, when constructing descriptions regarding philosophical figures and their theoretical constructions we are often inclined to use labels according to which we group specific individuals by taking into account their ontological commitments. With this purpose, 'realism', 'conceptualism', 'nominalism' are some of the terms broadly used in the history of philosophy, often without specific regard to the historical realities, doctrinal movements and theoretical constructs they designate. This endeavor often results in a tension between the doctrinal content and its assimilation in the modern historical narratives, assimilation which develops in certain cases opposing and conflicting interpretations. We think that this is the case for one of the most important medieval handbooks of logic, *Tractatus* or *Summulae logicales* (SL) attributed to Peter of Spain.

The current scholarship presents Peter of Spain's ontological commitment from *Summulae logicales* in different, often conflicting, ways. For

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** *Acknowledgement:* This article represents a partial reworked version of the views held in my doctoral thesis *Peter of Spain's Summulae logicales and the theory of supposition*, defended at Babeş-Bolyai University in 2021.

example, José Meirinhos argues for a doctrinal neutrality, accountable both for Peter's lack of originality and for the great success of his logical work among its numerous medieval commentators (Meirinhos 2002, 337, 349). Gyula Klima, when comparing the theoretical construction of Peter's theory of supposition with the account offered by Buridan, considers the first as being very close to the position of an "extremely extreme realism"¹ (Klima, 2011, 120). Pieter A. Verburg in his analysis of Peter's theory of language from the same *Tractatus*, interprets the same doctrine as being an anti-realist one (Verburg 1998, 74-82)². How can we project on one and the same text and doctrinal content such hermeneutical attitudes, ranging from doctrinal neutrality to "extremely extreme realism" and anti-realism?

Before trying to answer our question, we must note that in its long diffusion, between the late 13th century and the early 17th century, *Summulae logicales* has faced various interpretative attitudes ranging from partial or complete theoretical endorsement to direct refutation³. Regarding the doctrinal commitments involved, De Rijk points out in his introductory study that Peter of Spain's *Tractatus* had such a success that was commented by Thomists, Albertists, Scotists and even by "moderate nominalists"⁴ (De Rijk 1972, XCIX). Regarding the last point, we know, for example, that John Buridan's⁵ logical treatise *Summulae de dialectica* was in a certain degree intended to be a commentary to Peter's *Summulae logicales*. However, Buridan goes far beyond Peter of Spain's logical considerations, since he discusses subjects that are lacking from Peter's handbook and reworks parts of his text by inserting his own considerations when Peter's position cannot be held. The last option can be seen especially in treatise dedicated to supposition theory where the nominalist attitude regarding the universal is clearer⁶. As a representative of *via moderna* or nominalism, Buridan's considerations enter in contrast with the 13th century supposition theories which, to a certain degree, can be described as having a realist orientation. In fact, Peter was conceived as one of the main figures of the old way of doing logic. This particular aspect can be seen especially in the 15th century, in the so called *Wegestreit* or *quarrel of the ways* between *antiqui*, term that in this century designates the realist authors, and *moderni*, the nominalist thinkers. In the context of this dispute, *Summulae logicales* was extensively and mainly commented by authors of the first orientation, whether they were Thomists or Albertists (Braakhuis 1989). Probably we can state that, although Peter's text was construed in different ways by commentators of different orientation, the dominant tendency was that of considering the doctrine of *Summulae logicales* as confined to a realist view regarding the universal.

Against this perspective, an in spite of his "extremely extreme realist" label, Gyula Klima identifies a mitigating doctrinal tendency within Peter's considerations, especially but not only, in the distinction made in the *solutio*

section of *SL* VI, that between *via naturae* and *via logicae* (Klima 2011, 117-121). This fact makes Klima to consider that in Peter's ontology we can find quasi-*res* or quasi-things, objects that are not in fact real things but "things-as-conceived and signified" (Klima 2011, 118). However, before arriving at such a strong thesis with modist inflections⁷, attention must be paid regarding Peter of Spain's logical theory as a whole. Despite the theoretical resources available since Aristoteles's *De interpretatione*, Peter of Spain is ignoring altogether the domain of mental entities or concepts and their manifestation according to the signifying function of language⁸. The situation being as such, we can only try to identify tendencies for a certain ontological commitment in *SL*.

Our purpose in the following parts of the paper is to track down Peter of Spain realist and anti-realist theoretical tendencies. In the first part we will try to show Peter's ontological commitment regarding the real existence of the universal in his theory of: predicables, signification, simple supposition and appellation. In the second part, we will discuss his anti-realist tendencies express by a series of distinctions: *via logicae* vs *via naturae*, *praesentia* vs *existentia*, *res* vs *disposition*.

2. Realist tendencies

In the following short four sections we will try to illustrate the main features of Peter of Spain's logic from *Summulae logicales* that enables us to qualify his theoretical construct as being committed towards a realist account regarding the universal. The theory of predicables, signification, simple supposition and appellation will let us understand that for Peter the universal is not merely a logical or epistemological entity and thus a pseudo-entity but a real object.

Predicables

The first important trait of realism is offered at the beginning of the second treatise, *De predicabilibus*, where the five Porphyrian predicables are taken into account. There, Peter offers a first hint for the nature of the universal in a parallel definition with the notion of predicable: "'*predicabile*' proprie sumptum et '*universale*' idem sunt, sed differunt in hoc quod *predicabile* diffinitur per dici, *universale* autem per esse. Est enim *predicabile* quod aptum natum est dici de pluribus. *Universale* autem est quod aptum est esse in pluribus" (De Rijk 1972, 17, l. 7-11). According to this passage, the universal is the existing counterpart of the predicable such that, putting aside their ontological difference (pertaining to language vs. pertaining to reality) they can be considered the same. As the predicable is said of many, so the universal exists in many. But as stated in the *SL*. III.2, the universal can be in (*esse in*) many in different

ways⁹. From the eight modes offered there, only two are of interest to us, the fourth and the fifth mode. The fourth tells us that there is a way of being in something as the genus is in its species, for example as *animal* is in *homine*¹⁰. The fifth brings forward the hylomorphic concepts, since it tells us that there is a way of being in something as the form is in the matter. Regarding this mode, Peter differentiates between a substantial and accidental form. The substantial form, for example, the soul, is said in a proper way to be in something material, for example, a body, while the accidental form, for example, the quality of being white, is said in an improper or accidental way to be in another¹¹.

Those considerations let us understand that a universal is an entity that exists in many particulars and is represented in language and logic by a predicable. Understood through the hylomorphic elements, a universal seems to be the same thing with and bares the same ontological matter-dependence as the form, be it substantial or not. But although the mode of *being in* has been explained to certain extent¹², these considerations beg the question on the problem regarding how the universal exists in many. It is multiplied in each individual according to its unique configuration such that we can speak about a multiplicity of different universals that pertain to a same general genus? This would mean that there would exist different and multiple universals of humanity for each individual human. Or there is a unique, identical, and undifferentiated universal in all the individuals? This would mean that the same humanity is in every particular human.

Some of those aspects will be taken into account in the supposition theory. For the moment, we can consider as a trait of realism the fact that the universal is defined by *esse* although its numerical unity is not clear yet, especially if the universal is meant to have the ontological consistency of an Aristotelian form. If such, the Aristotelian form, be it substantial or accidental, does not have the same ontological status as an individual.

Signification

Peter's theory of signification is offered as a preliminary ante-propositional property of a term that will be contrasted with the property of supposition. The signification (*significatio*) of a term is defined as the representation of a thing made by a vocalization according to convention: "*significatio termini [...] est rei per vocem secundum placitum representatio*" (De Rijk 1972, VI.2, 79, l. 11-12). As the Aristotelian and Boethian sematic model suggests, the signification process should include three distinct realms: of language, written or spoken, of objects in the world and of concepts or mental entities¹³. Peter insists only on language and extra-mental/extralinguistical entities remaining silent about the mental entities. He considers the *res* signified by terms to be either universals or particulars, thus

envisioning signification as a relation, between linguistic items and objects¹⁴. He excludes from the process of proper signification any part of speech that is not a term, that is, that cannot signify a universal or a particular. Propositional signs, e.g., universal and particular signs as ‘*omnis*’, ‘*aliquis*’ etc., cannot be terms since they cannot signify by themselves the requested entities.

What we can call ‘species of signification’ are conceived according to the ontological correspondents of the two constitutive parts of a proposition or, more precisely, according to the *modi rerum* (modi rerum) signified. Thus, there are two cases: a) a substantive noun (*nomen substantivum*) signifies a substantive thing (*res substantiva*) – ‘man’ signifies a man (particular or universal substances); b) an adjectival name or verb (*nomen adiectivum vel verbum*) signifies an adjectival thing (*res adiectiva*) – ‘white’ or ‘runs’ signifies the fact of being white or running (particular or universal accidents)¹⁵. The terms employed by Peter in this context, *substantive* and *adiective*¹⁶, are adaptable both to the ontological (*res*) and linguistical (*nomen*) registry as needed, confirming the parallelism thesis between language and world, as highlighted by Gyula Klima. The word ‘*substantive*’ (*sub+stare*) refers indeed to the fact of a noun being the possible subject for a predication – since what stands under is an inferior about which the superior can be predicated – and to the fact that a thing as substance can be subjected to different accidents. The same goes for ‘*adiective*’, which literary means *that which is added*: the adjective and the verb represent that which is added to the noun; accordingly, qualities and affections are those things which are added to a logical or ontological subject. However, Peter considers the *adiectivatio* and *substantivatio* as modes of things which are signified (*modi rerum que significatur*) and not modes of significations, fact that puts again the accent on the realm of *res* (De Rijk, VI.2, 80, l. 1-4).

The isomorphic relation between language and reality required for a realist thesis seems to be quite straight forward. Nouns, adjectives, and verbs (*nomen, nomen adiectivum, verbum*), i.e., linguistic entities, are considered terms in virtue of the fact that they signify things (*res*). Each *res* can be either a universal, an entity that can be in many and usually signified by a common term (*terminus communis*, e.g., ‘*homo*’), or an individual, the primary substance signified by a discrete term (*terminus discretus*, e.g., ‘*iste homo*’ or ‘*Plato*’).

Simple supposition

After discussing signification, in *SL*. VI.3 Peter offers a theory of supposition. Supposition is understood by him as the property according to which a substantive term that already has a signification can be taken for something else: “*Suppositio vero est acceptio termini substantivi pro aliquo. Differunt autem suppositio et significatio, quia significatio est per impositionem vocis ad rem*

significandam, suppositio vero est acceptio ipsius termini iam significantis rem pro aliquo” (De Rijk, 1972, VI.3, 80, l. 8-11). Supposition can be understood as a relation between a term, the *supponens* and one or multiple objects, the *suppositum* or *supposita*. While supposition is different from signification, the possible type of entities for which a term can stand in supposition is taken from the domain of signification. Thus, the type of *res* or object for which a term can stand is determined by the type of supposition¹⁷. In turn, each type of supposition is determined by specific syntactic and semantic conditions. The most relevant type of supposition for Peter's ontological commitment is *suppositio simplex* or simple supposition. According to *SL*. VI.4, simple supposition is a subspecies of common and accidental supposition. This means that the supposing term is a *terminus communis* or common term and that it stands for what is requested by the other elements of the propositional contexts¹⁸.

Simple supposition is defined as “*acceptio termini comunis pro re universali significata per ipsum*” (De Rijk, VI.5, 81, l. 12-13) or the taking of a common term for the universal object signified by it. Accordingly, in propositions as “*homo est species*” or “*risibile est proprium*”, the subject term stands in relation of supposition for a universal entity, higher in the Porphyrian tree than the individual, i.e., the human in common or, in the second example, the common capacity to laugh. It is important to note that in the explanations provided about simple supposition, Peter talks about the supposition of a common substantive term posited on the part of the predicate or in exceptive constructs. The examples offered are: “*omnis homo est animal*”, “*omnis animal praeter hominem est irrationale*” and “*omnium contrariorum eadem est disciplina*”. This type of supposition is verified through direct inferences showing that a false conclusion will be obtained if the common terms in question will be take personally, i.e., by inferring the same proposition with the changing of the common term with a discrete one, as in the case of “*omnis homo est animal, ergo omnis homo est hoc animal*”.

According to the notion of simple supposition, we have yet again a position that seems to commit towards a realist ontology. Depending on the meaning of the propositional context, a substantive common term (*supponens*) can stand for an object (*suppositum*) of universal nature. This universal nature is called ‘*res universalis*’, meaning the entity signified by the common term. This fact brings again the one-to-one mapping between words and objects established by the theory of signification. Thus, for Peter the term “human” from “human is a species” stands in this specific predicative context for the human nature or humanity which is considered a *res*.

Appellation

One of the clearest endorsements of realism comes from the small tenth treatise dedicated to the property of *appellatio* or appellation. Although appellation played an important role in the development of supposition theory, Peter differentiates it from supposition despite the similarity between the two notions¹⁹. Yet, he is defining appellation almost as a sub-species of supposition²⁰, since appellation is said to be “*acceptio termini communis pro re existente*” (De Rijk 1972, X.1, 197, l. 4). By understanding this property as a taking of a common term for an existing object, Peter leaves no ambiguity regarding the ontological status of his *res*: in the case of appellation, we have an existing extra-mental and extra-propositional object. The following lines will confirm this position even regarding the universal.

According to our author, appellation, signification, and supposition are different, since the last two relations can comprise even non-existent *res* (De Rijk 1972, X.1, l. 1-10). Further in his analysis, Peter is discussing appellation in contrast to signification and supposition, according to the types of terms. Singular terms, like proper names, signify, stand in relation of supposition and stand in relation of appellation for the same existing object²¹. In the case of the common terms the situation is different depending on the type of supposition they have. On the one hand, a common term with simple supposition signifies, stands in relation of supposition and appellation for the same existing entity, a universal; in ‘*homo est species*’, ‘*homo*’ signifies, supposits and appellates for the same common nature²². On the other hand, a common term with personal supposition signifies a common nature but stands in relation of supposition and appellation for existing individuals. In “*homo currit*”, ‘*homo*’ signifies the human nature, but supposits for individual humans and appellates existing individual humans²³.

Regarding the aforementioned observations on appellation, we must note that in the passages dedicated to the appellation of a common term with simple supposition Peter seems to fully embrace the realist commitment regarding the existence of universals. In the case of a term with simple supposition, the signification, supposition, and appellation are identical, describing three overlapping relations between a common term and a universal or a common nature that exists: “*terminus communis idem significat et supponit et appellat, ut 'homo' significat hominem in communi et supponit pro homine in communi et appellat hominem in communi*” (De Rijk 1972, X.3, 197, l. 23-198, l. 3). What Peter means by existence can be seen from the examples given after the definition of appellation and its use in the case of discrete or singular terms. The notion of existence that appellation uses seems to refer to the material existence of an entity. ‘*Cesar*’, ‘*Antichristus*’ and ‘*chimera*’ have no appellation since the entities that they describe do not actually exist, even

if their notions are conceivable, i.e., we understand what ‘Cesar’ ‘Antichristus’ and ‘chimera’ mean (De Rijk 1972, X.1, 197, l. 5-7)²⁴. Although the example offered in *SL*.X.2 for a singular term is ‘Sortis’, when exemplifying appellation Peter is careful enough to use names as ‘Iohannes’ and ‘Petrus’ which can signify actual existing individuals and not historical figures that in the moment of appellation do not exist, as the usual ‘Sortes’, ‘Plato’, ‘Cicero’.

The appellation of a term with simple supposition shows us that the universal is a *res existens*, i.e., a universal object which has material existence. In virtue of the identity between *significatum*, *suppositum* and *appellatum* in one and the same entity as postulated in *SL*. X.3, we can conclude that in all the other theoretical instances where the universal is taken into account – the doctrine of predicables, the doctrine of signification and the doctrine of supposition – Peter does not conceive the universal or *res universalis* as a quasi-existent entity, but as an object existing in reality. This fact confirms again Peter of Spain’s commitment towards an extreme form of realism regarding the universal. However, in what follows we will try to assess some of his mitigating tendencies of such a realist attitude.

3. Anti-realism tendencies

In spite of the doctrinal articulations presented so far which bear witness for the strong realist attitudes, there are passages in *Summulae logicales* which seem to support an opposing stance. The *solutio* section of *SL*. VI, along with *SL*. XI, where the property of restriction is taken into account, and *SL*.XII, where the property of distribution is considered, contain parts of a theoretical content which seem to soften the realist tendencies. Interesting enough, they all seem to appear in portions of texts of a different nature from the normal doctrinal exposition of logic, namely, they appear inside *dubia* or *sophismata*. In what follows we will explore some of those points.

Via logicae vs via naturae

In the *solutio* section of *SL*. VI, where Peter is explaining how the confused supposition works in contrast with simple supposition, an important distinction is made between *via logicae* and *via naturae*. The example in question is “*omnis homo est animal*”. What is at stake here is basically the ontological status of the universal. Since in this proposition a universal distributive sign is applied to the subject term, the proposition implies a multiplicity of humans of which a genus or universal is predicated. Peter tells us that although we have a simple supposition in the predicate extreme, the term “*homo*” does not stand only for all the humans but for all the humans which are animals. This means that a direct proportional

relation between the number of universals of humanity and the number of universals of animality will be established for each individual human. This is the case, since it is pointed out that the expression “*omnis homo*” from the proposition in question is to be understood through the definition of man: “*omnis animal rationale mortale*”. Moreover, the way in which the universal exists in each individual is such that, each type of universal is essentially different from the other of the same type. Thus, the humanity or animality of one individual human is essentially (*per se*) different from the humanity or animality of another: “*natura humanitas mea est per se et alia est ab humanitate tua, sicut anima mea per quam est humanitas mea in me, alia est ab anima tua, per quam causatur humanitas tua in te*” (De Rijk 1972, 87, l. 27-88, l. 1).

It is important to note here that the universal conceived in this manner refers to the universal understood as a form of a particular matter. This fact is pointed out in *SL*, XII.7, where distribution is discussed. On the one hand, Peter distinguishes a form which is a form of a matter. This form is a part of the whole and is not predicable about it. It is the case of the soul which is considered the form of the body. This form is different in each individual as the soul is different in each individual human. On the other hand, there is a predicable form which has as matter individuals. It is the case of genus, species and difference, as ‘*animal*’ and ‘*homo*’ (De Rijk, 1978, XII.7, 213, l. 25-31)²⁵. Accordingly, the animality multiplied differently in each individual human seems to be a form of the first kind. It is the animality presupposed by the subject term of “*omnis homo est animal*” and not by its predicate term. The animality which pertains to the second type of form is the animality implied by the predicate with simple supposition. But regardless of the differences between types of forms, Peter makes a distinction between a way of considering the universal according to nature and according to logic. Whenever matter comes into question and the way in which the universal actually exist in a particular matter, the universal multiply according to matter in each individual. This corresponds to the natural way of dealing with the universals. According to logic, the situation is different. Although the universal seems to be ontologically existing, it is the same in each individual. Thus, the humanity will be the same in each individual human: “*Et ideo est quod tot sunt ibi animalitates quot humanitates, naturaliter loquendo, quia eadem est humanitas, secundum viam logice, non nature, in quolibet individuo hominis; sicut homo in communi idem est. Unde quod sit hec animalitas vel illa hoc est ratione materie*” (De Rijk, VI.12, 87, l. 22-25).

These considerations open the possibility for a less realist interpretation. According to logic, although the universal is not conceived as a concept or an intention of the soul, it is made numerically one for all the individuals in which it exists. But regardless of this fact, according to nature, the universal still multiplies according to the requirements of matter.

Praesentia vs existentia

Another tendency of decreasing the ontological commitment can be found in the distinction made between presence and existence. The problem of existence begs more questions when the expression used in the theory of supposition '*acceptio pro presentibus*' – in the case in which a term is forced to stand in the place of present things – is put in contrast with the expression '*acceptio pro existentibus*' – in the case of appellation. Although Peter seems to be silent for the most part of his work regarding the difference between presence and existence, some clarifications will be offered in the eleventh treatise dedicated to the problem of restriction. There, in the paragraphs 16 and 17, our author states that the verb, according to its consignification, is only responsible for the temporal aspect of the subject's *supposita* and not for their existence, and thus can make the subject to stand for present, past or future entities, depending on the temporal aspect of the verb that come under the form of the term (De Rijk 1972, XI.16, 17, 206-207). Accordingly, for example, a verb at present tense restricts the *supposita* to entities that presently come under the form of the suppositing term independent of their existence. A term can have a present *suppositum* while it does not have an *appellatum*. For example, in "*Caesar currit*" the subject stands for Caesar which presently comes under the form of the suppositing term, while Caesar does not exist actually, it does not appellate an existing entity. Or a term can have a present *suppositum* which is identical with an existing entity, its *appellatum*. In "*iste homo currit*", the running individual pointed out, which presently comes under the form of the discrete term is an existing entity²⁶. Thus, supposition is not concerned about the existence of its *suppositum* but only about its presence in a certain time indicated by the verb. However, the difference between material existence and presence under the form of a term is not so clearly defined in Peter's case. In the absence of a semantical conceptual tool for establishing unique individuals, the boundaries between *ens* and *non-ens* are not accurately marked.

However, according to this difference, Peter seems to soften the ontological consistency of *supposita*. There is a difference between *supposita praesentia* and *supposita existentia* or *appellata*, meaning that, for example, if the verb *esse* is used in a propositional context, it does not restrict the supposition to existing *supposita* but only to present ones, which in certain cases, can be non-existing. In cases of names for non-beings, like 'chimera', 'Antichrist' and 'Cesar', a relation to a *significatum* and a *suppositum* can be made but not to an existing object (De Rijk 1972, X.1, 197, l. 5-14). This fact would seemingly place the *supposita* in a strange ontological taxonomy of quasi-*res*.

Res vs dispositio

The strongest argument against the realism of *SL* will be the postulation of a kind of entity that is not strictly speaking a *res*, an existing external object, and thus it cannot be properly considered as a universal or a particular. If this kind of entity was hinted by what we could coin as *supposita praesentia non existentia*, Peter has another doctrinal stance that can be interpreted in the same anti-realism way.

In *SL* VI.2, the treatise dedicated to the theory of supposition, we have already seen that universal or particular signs are not considered to be terms, since they do not have a signification understood as the ability to signify a particular or universal object (De Rijk 1972, VI.2, 79). However, in *SL* XII, the situation seems more nuanced. The details regarding the way in which a distributive sign can have a certain semantic content is explored in full extend in the analysis of the universal affirmative sign ‘*omnis*’ through a *quaestio*: “*queritur quid significet hoc signum ‘omnis’*” (De Rijk 1972, XII,5, 210, l. 14). There is a necessity for signs to have a certain kind of signification, given that they contribute to the truth value of the propositional context they are placed in. For the case of ‘*omnis*’, Peter states that since ‘*animal est homo*’ is true and ‘*omne animal est homo*’ is false and since the only difference between those two propositions is the word ‘*omnis*’, the distributive sign must have a certain semantic content that enters in the calculus of the truth value of the proposition (De Rijk 1972, XII.5, 210, l. 20-25). However, the semantic content of the universal sign does not consist in signifying a universal thing (*res*) but in signifying something in a universal manner. The think that is signified in the case of ‘*omnis*’ is the fact that the common term is taken for each of its inferiors. In this way, the universal sign signifies something about the subject on which it is applied, or in other words, it signifies the way in which the subject to which the sign is added must be taken: “*quod ‘omnis’ non significat universale, sed quoniam universaliter, quia significat terminum communem sumi pro omni, ut ‘omnis homo’; et sic ‘omnis’ significat rem aliquam*” (De Rijk 1972, XII.5, 211, l. 1-4). However, the „*rem aliquam*” that appears in Peter’s explanation must be taken in a specific sense. *SL* makes here a distinction between two types of objects or *res*²⁷. On the one hand, there is a type of *res* suggested by the definition offered in *SL* VI.2: “*res subicibilis*” and “*res praedicabilis*”. This *res* can be either a universal or a singular and is signified by a term which can be put logically and grammatically either as subject or as predicate. On the other hand, there is a *res* understood as a disposition of those two entities: “*dispositio rei subicibilis vel praedicabilis*”. The *res* signified by ‘*omnis*’ does not follow the first definition but the second. The signs or syncategorematic word thus signify only a disposition of the real objects, which propositionally translates into a

disposition of the constitutive parts of the proposition on which they are applied.

By considering the syncategorematic words as having the capability to signify not objects but dispositions of objects, Peter of Spain seems to accept the existence of quasi-*res* in his logical theory. We can say that those entities do not fit his realist ontology formed by words mapping universals and individuals. Similar to the last theoretical elements discussed so far, the extension of the meaning of *res* to dispositions bear witness for a latent anti-realist attitude.

4. Conclusions

At the end of our brief discussion, we can see Peter of Spain's degree of ontological commitments in *Summulae logicales* in another light. The core of his logic is dominated by a realist orientation. The theory of predicables, signification, simple supposition and appellation are formed on a realist framework in which the universal is considered to be an external object independent of our mental or linguistic processes. Outside of this core, a series of distinctions related to specific instances of language analysis are offered which seem to denote an opposite ontological attitude. The fact that these anti-realist considerations are caused by analyzing specific language situations is evident. The distinction between the modes of considering the universal according to logic and according to natural philosophy is borne from the analysis of the proposition "*omnis homo est animal*", where the distributive effect of the universal sign placed on the subject term is questioned in relation with the predicate. The distinction between present and existent *supposita* is offered after a discussion of the restrictive effect of the "esse" verb. The distinction between proper objects (universal and individuals) and quasi-object or dispositions is endorsed after observing the difference in meaning between two specific propositions: "*animal est homo*" et "*omne animal est homo*". The necessity of introducing such distinctions of anti-realist import seems to come from observing how language works. They are all offered in portions of texts where the author of *Summulae logicales* moves away from the simple doctrinal exposition and comes closer to a type of literature similar with *quaestio* or *sophismata*. The tension between the realist doctrinal exposition and the few anti-realist problematizations, make us wonder if those passages are not in fact Peter of Spain's own reaction in front of a common and widespread doctrine of his time that he managed so well to summarize. Since the anti-realist tendencies are expressed not in the proper content of the doctrine he exposes, but in a dubitative material that bear witness for the limitation of the realist ontology, Peter of Spain may be considered a logician in transition.

In the end, the whole situation invites us to study the doctrines of logic and language of the past as theoretical constructs involved in an historical development. Doctrinal tensions or opposing doctrinal attitudes within the same work can be considered as marking acknowledged theoretical problems and omens for the later developments in the historical evolution of a particular doctrine.

Notes

¹ “In accordance with the foregoing, ‘extremely extreme realism’ would be the kind of semantic theory in which different syntactical categories distinguished in terms of their different semantic functions would be taken to be in a one-to-one correspondence with different ontological categories, given that the different semantic functions of the different syntactical categories would be explained precisely in terms of being related to entities in those different ontological categories. Thus, if in this framework we would take singular and common terms to belong to different syntactical categories on account of the different semantic functions they have, then we would take this difference to consist in the fact that terms in these different syntactical categories signify entities in different ontological categories: to put it simply, singular terms are singular because they signify singular entities, whereas universal terms are universal because they signify universal entities. Thus, by the lights of this theory, the singular name ‘Socrates’ would be singular because it signifies the singular man Socrates, whereas the universal term ‘man’ would be universal because it would signify a universal entity, the universal man or human nature, or in modern times the so called ‘abstract entity’, the ‘property’ of being human, perhaps, properly referred to by the name ‘humanity’” (Klima 2011, 111).

² “The basic theme here is not a reflection or representation of reality within the human mode of understanding and mode of signifying, but the service which language gives to predication and the expression of thought, in which the only requirement is a constant application of suppositions in order to arrive at predications which are correct in themselves, and therefore reach correct conclusions. The truth value in the real world of what has been thought and named can thus be disregarded.” (Verburg 1998, 75); “Terministic logic has a latent tendency to construct an autarkic deductive epistemology independent of a reality which lies outside the mind or a metaphysics which invokes such a reality.” (Verburg 1998, 75).

³ For a complete refutation, see the humanistic attack on Juan Luis Vives in *Adversus Pseudodialecticos* (Guerlac 1979, 47-110).

⁴ De Rijk is mentioning a few examples: John Versor, Lambert of Heerenberg (Thomists), Gerard of Harderwijk and Arnold of Tongeren (Albertists), Nicholas de Orbellis and Peter Tartareus, Johannes de Magistris (Scotists) and John Buridan and Marsilius of Inghen (nominalists). We would refrain from calling positions like those found in Buridan as pertaining to “moderate nominalism”.

⁵ Regarding Buridan’s importance in medieval philosophy see Klima, *John Buridan* (2009).

⁶ See Buridan’s position on universals from *Summulae de dialectica*: “Universalis secundum praedicationem principaliter dictam non sint praeter animam, illa non sunt nisi conceptus animae quibus anima concipit indifferenter plures res, ut quia omnes homines indifferenter concipit conceptu a quod imponitur hoc nomen ‘homo’, et sic de conceptu animalis quantum ad animalia. Ideo cum genera et species sint universalis secundum praedicationem, apparet quod species et genera sunt tales conceptu animae.” (Lecq 1998, 39, l. 19-24). For the rejection of personal supposition as conceived by Peter of Sapin see Lecq (1998, 38-39)

⁷ For the modist tradition see, for example, Ebbesen (2018), De Libera (1982), Ukelman, Lagerlund (2017, 136-138).

⁸ See especially the first paragraphs of *Summulae logicales* (De Rijk 1972, 1-5).

⁹ See De Rijk (1972, III.2, 27, l. 7-28, l. 13).

¹⁰ See De Rijk (1972, III.2, 27, l. 19-20): “Quartus modus essendi in est sicut genus in specie, ut animal in homine et unumquodque diffiniens in sua diffinitione et unaqueque diffinitiones in suo diffinito.”

¹¹ Cf. De Rijk (1972, III.2, 27, l. 22-28, l. 4): “Quintus modus essendi in est sicut forma in materia. Et iste quintus modus subdividitur, quia est quaedam forma substantialis, ut anima est forma substantialis homini; alia autem est forma accidentalis, ut album homini. Et prima harum dicitur proprie esse in sicut forma in materia, ut anima in corpore; alia autem dicitur esse in sicut accidens in subiecto, ut albedo in pariete et color in corpore.”

¹² For the apparent incompatibility between the fact that the universal is in many and *SL III.3* where the universal substances, i.e., the secondary substance or the genus and species of the category of substance are not in the subject, see *De Libera* 2014, 835-836. Peter of Spain, as Aristotle, understand the property of *esse in subiecto*, ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ εἶναι, to be in a subject, from *Categories* as a specific way of being in, that of being in as an accident.

¹³ See Aristotle, *Peri hermeneia*, 16a3–8 for the semantic triangle formed by φωνή - πᾶθῆμαῦτᾶ - πρόκρυματα.

¹⁴ De Rijk (1972, VI.2, 79, l. 12-13): “Significatio termini, prout sic sumitur, est rei per vocem secundum placitum representatio. Quare cum omnis res aut sit universalis aut particularis, oportet dictiones non significantes universales vel particulares non significare aliquid. Et sic non erunt termini prout hic sumitur ‘terminus’; ut sunt signa universalis et particularia”.

¹⁵ See De Rijk (1972, VI.2, 79, l. 17-19): “Significationis alia est rei substantive et habet fieri per nomen substantivum, ut ‘homo’; alia est rei adiective et habet fieri per nomen adiectivum vel per verbum, ut ‘albus’ vel ‘currit’.”

¹⁶ Regarding the English translations, *CNP* (Copenhaver, Normore, Parsons eds., 2014) seem to understand those terms mainly as adverbs offering the following couplets: ‘substantive name’ - ‘thing as substance’ and ‘modifying name’ - ‘thing as modifier’ (*CNP.*, 241), while Dinneen makes calques from the Latin forms, see Dinneen (1990, 69).

¹⁷ On this specific interpretation of supposition as a property which determines the type of object for which a term can stand see Dutilh (2018, 96).

¹⁸ De Rijk (1972, VI.4, 80, l. 19-22): “Suppositionis alia comunis, alia discreta. Suppositio communis est que fit per terminum communem, ut ‘homo’. Suppositio discreta est que fit per terminum discretum, ut ‘Sortes’ vel ‘iste homo’.” De Rijk (1972, VI.4, 81, l. 5-9): “Accidentalis autem suppositio est acceptio termini communis pro eis pro quibus exigit adiunctum, ut ‘homo est’; iste terminus ‘homo’ supponit pro presentibus; cum autem ‘homo fuit’, supponit pro preteritis; cum vero dicitur ‘homo erit’, supponit pro futuris.”

¹⁹ For a short analysis of the concept of appellation in 13th century see De Libera (1981, 227-250); for the conceptual interplay between the terms of ‘appellatio’ and ‘suppositio’ in the early fallacy tradition, see Ebbesen (2013, 73-75).

²⁰ See De Libera (1981). De Libera understands Peter’s appellation as a supposition restricted to existing things.

²¹ See De Rijk (1972, X.2, 197, l. 16-19): “Terminus singularis idem significat et supponit et appellat, quia significat rem existentem, ut ‘Petrus’ vel ‘Iohannes’”. Excepted from the property of appellation are terms used for non-beings as ‘Cesar’, ‘Antichristus’, ‘Chimera’ (De Rijk 1972, X.1, 197, l. 5-7).

²² See De Rijk (1972, X.3, 197, l. 21-198, l. 3): “Item, appellationis termini communis alia est termini communis pro ipsa re in communi, ut quando terminus communis habet simplicem suppositionem. Ut cum dicitur ‘homo est species’ vel ‘animal est genus’. Et tunc

terminus communis idem significat et supponit et appellat, ut *'homo'* significat *hominem* in communi et supponit pro *homine* in communi et appellat *hominem* in communi.”

²³ See De Rijk (1972, X.4, 198, l. 4-8): “Alia autem est termini communis pro suis inferioribus, ut quando terminus communis habet personalem suppositionem. Ut cum dicitur *'homo currit'*, tunc *'homo'* non idem significat et supponit et appellat, sed significat *hominem* in communi et supponit pro particularibus hominibus et appellat particulares homines existentes.”

²⁴ See De Rijk (1972, X.1, 197, l. 5-7): “Dico autem *'pro re existente'*, quia terminus significans non ens nichil appellat, ut *'Cesar'* vel *'Antichristus'* et *'chimera'*, et sic de aliis.”

²⁵ See De Rijk (1972, XII.7, 213, l. 25-31): “Duplex est forma, quia quedam est que est forma materie, ut anima mea est forma corporis mei et tua tui, et ista forma est pars et non predicatur de eo cuius est forma. Alia autem est forma que est forma predicabilis, et sic omnia superiora, ut genera et species et differentie, dicuntur forme inferiorum, ut homo, equus, animal, et consimilia.”

²⁶ For Peter’s explanation and examples see De Rijk (1972, XI.17, 207, l. 9-21): “Ad aliud dicendum quod duplex est forma termini communis, quia quedam est que salvatur tantum in rebus existentibus, ut *'humanitas'*, que est forma hominis, et *'animalitas'* animalis; et in talibus terminis omnia supposita presentia sunt existentia. Alia est forma termini communis que salvatur tam in rebus existentibus quam non existentibus. Ut *'enuntiabilitas'*, que est forma enuntiabilis, quia quedam enuntiabilia sunt existentia, ut *'Deum esse'* et omnia vera, et alia sunt non existentia, ut *'hominem esse asinum'* et omnia falsa; et in talibus cum restringitur terminus communis ad presentia, restringitur tam ad existentia quam ad non existentia. Unde istius propositionis: *'rosa non est'* sensus non est: *rosa que est, non est*, sed is est sensus: *rosa presentialiter sumpta non est.*”

²⁷ De Rijk (1972, XII.5, 211, l. 4-11): “Sed res est duplex, quia est quedam res subicibilis vel predicabilis, ut *homo* vel *animal*, vel *currit* vel *disputat*; et de hac re obicit primo et verum est quod *'omnis'* nichil significat, quia omnis talis res aut est universalis, aut singularis, et *'omnis'* neque significat universale, neque singulare. Alia autem est res que est dispositio rei subicibilis vel predicabilis; et talem rem significat hoc signum *'omnis'*. Et tam ab ista re quam ab illa causatur veritas vel falsitas in oratione”

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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,

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** *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 Theophilus 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 cuiuspium 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).

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World Literature: a Rereading of Symbolic Geographies

Abstract: The present article is the result of a bird's-eye view attempt to retrace and discover the emergence and spread of World Literature both as a concept intricately related to a paradigm shift in humanists' take of the world as well as a theoretical framework bound to describe and prescribe an important literary reevaluation movement. In doing so, we noticed a series of patterns that prompted us to dissociate between different facets of World Literature. Thus, if we look at World Literature in terms of a projection, we are able to identify a geographical or rather cartographic standpoint (which may or may not be symbolic) that conceptualizes it as either a map, a network or an ellipse or a systemic approach that re-conceptualizes it with the help of metaphors such as the rhizome, the tree or the wave. When it comes to World Literature as a project, a more methodological approach arises that can be divided into a quantitative take meant to define World Literature as the sum of all literatures and a qualitative take meant to validate a canonical perspective. Based on the noticeable shapeshifting nature of the World Literature concept, an argument can be made in favor of its itinerant status as a theory, or rather in favor of elaborating an itinerant theory of World Literature that would not fall prey to the steadiness of certainty but would attune to the nature of the concept.

Keywords: World Literature, project, projection, network, geography.

I. Introduction

The paradigmatic shift that accompanied the emergence and further development of World Literature (WL) not only as a key theoretical concept in Humanities but also, later on, as a distinct area of research and academic study has prompted numerous attempts of defining it and, subsequently, of rendering it as a viable framework for philological endeavours. However, a bird's-eye view of its vast implications reveals that, when it comes to WL, one rather needs to exchange their looking glass with a kaleidoscope since the same notion has several meanings, depending on the analytical tools and the stakes of its theorists.

The analysis of WL as a *project* - by which we mean the sum of methodological, critical, prescriptive and prospective approaches, as well as theories that attempt to define a *modus operandi*, cultural and educational

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policies, polemics and dissensions regarding both the nature of the concept and its practical applicability - is anticipated, at an analogous level, by its approach as a *projection*. Our research is based on the fact that the concept of WL was originally constructed as a form of conceptual cartography, of imaginary geography, or as a series of cultural-identitarian projections through which men of letters such as Goethe intuited the need for a paradigmatic shift in worldview that would foster contact with otherness. Thus imagined, WL must be progressively understood as a form of contact between European cultures (intra-national/intra-European), as a dynamic of cultural exchange from a central culture to a peripheral one, and finally as an all-encompassing network of multicultural dialogue.

The replacement of cultural *monadism* and national insularity, first ideologically and then programmatically, by a cultural *nomadism* that seeks to facilitate contact with otherness is encompassed, first and foremost, by the various meanings of *world literature* as an itinerant perspective. The result of this transition is an imaginary geography designed to replace a geographical perspective, discredited by its tendency to be confined to a politicised dynamic, and to offer conceptual alternatives considered to be in line with the universalising premises of WL.

2. Mapping World Literature: Between Hegemonism and Itinerant Topography - Historical-Theoretical Dimensions

2.1. The Map-Model

In terms of a projection, WL is initially built off the aforementioned imaginative dynamics as a form of delimitative literary-cultural cartography and therefore as a super-projection of the geopolitical maps themselves. Classified by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as a "hegemonic hermeneutics" that ends up flattening the globe insofar as it proposes a predefined approach to the world, the "geographical" perspective encapsulates a series of analytical angles such as that proposed by Pascale Casanova, which subsumes WL into a centre-periphery dialectic. Such an economically and geopolitically determined approach thus superimposes the literary map on the map of the circulation routes of literary and symbolic capital, from established cultures - accumulations of cultural-literary influence - to peripheral, minor cultures, mere recipients of "cultural goods" produced in the epicentres. Although Casanova's approach, as well as similar ones by Moretti, Wallerstein and Itamar Even-Zohar, outline the theoretical premises of WL as developed in the 20th and 21st centuries, we cannot help but notice that they are, nevertheless, recent echoes of a worldview that emerged in the 16th century and which, according to Theo D'Haen, is representative precisely of the way in which the maps of that period, by

projecting continental power relations, translated the literary dynamics of that time.

In his article *Mapping World Literature* (D'Haen 2012, 413-422), Theo D'Haen links Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems theory (an economic analysis of world history and social change following the establishment of the capitalist economy) to the 16th century mapmaking, in which Western Europe was central, Europe and parts of the Americas were semi-peripheral, and the rest of the world was peripheral. Of particular interest are more recent cartographic changes, also based on the premise of a parallelism between the modes of projection of WL. Thus we see the replacement of Europe, which was dominant until the mid-20th century (which prompts Pascale Casanova to theorise the existence of a Greenwich Meridian of WL located in Paris), by the United States, and the fact that, in parallel with Spivak's proposals for a "hermeneutics" of WL oriented not from the south upwards but from the north downwards, the world maps of the last half-century assign a central position to Australia, Indonesia, India, framed in part by the Americas and in part by Africa, while Europe ends up occupying an insignificant position. Also in Theo D'Haen's article we find the observation that modern maps of China and Japan reveal how each world can see itself as its own centre.

We see, therefore, illustrated once again, the transition from a Eurocentric vision to one that attributes centrality and therefore influence to spaces that until recently were catalogued as points of interest in terms of anthropological curiosities. Recent developments, which seem to reflect a rethinking of the world on the basis of a different distribution of areas of interest and influence (a vision which seems, in any case, to show an openness to the world and thus to bring non-European cultures and literatures out of their shadow), raise the following problem: is this rethinking of areas of influence (whether political, economic, cultural or literary) not just another way of replacing some hegemonic cultures with others, while preserving the centre/semi-periphery/periphery dynamic? We could thus argue that underneath the apparent depoliticisation of world maps, understood here as the matrix of WL, lies the interest of the map-maker, the compass foot dictating the reorganisation. In this sense, Sanja Bahun notes how the discipline or concept of WL follows the trends of economic and political history, functioning in certain contexts as ideological justification or legitimation for different positions of power such as, for example, the supremacy of German culture in a period of interconnectedness of European countries, or the hegemony of the United States in the context of the Latin American boom: "[...] world literature regularly gains prominence when a need for consolidation of a global system is pronounced [...] and its conceptualizations as a rule originate

precisely in what Casanova calls "great national literary spaces." (Bahun 2012, 373-382)

The common denominator of the so-called cartographic approaches that can be attributed to theorists such as Casanova (WL seen (also) as a history of axiological confrontations between peripheral and central cultures), Wallerstein (an analysis of the circulation of capital and the distribution of economic power between the centre/semi-periphery/periphery with reverberations at the cultural level), Moretti (identification of a pattern of cultural-literary influences from the centre to the periphery) or Itamar Even Zohar (theory of polysystems and cultural interferences) is not only the way in which WL is projected as an imaginary geography, but also in postulating a profound inequality underlying the functioning of the literary space. Let us therefore dwell on this inequality that projects WL as an eminently polemical, even political construct - if we were to accept the postulate of an overlapping of the literary map over that of geopolitical influences - and note, in the light of the theories set out above as well as of retrospective perspectives (by relating current theories of globalisation to the state of affairs of imperialist or nationalist eras) the plurivalent nature of the inequality that determines the circulation of literary texts and cultural products. The reasoning behind the above-mentioned approaches is therefore based on the direction of circulation of the literary text: from *central cultures* with established symbolic capital (France, Germany, England in the 19th and 20th centuries) to *minor, peripheral cultures* (Eastern European countries, for example), from *languages of international circulation* (English in the case of the United States, where, as we shall see later, the number of texts translated from other languages is insignificant compared to the circulation of English texts or translations from English) to *languages of minor circulation* (such as, for example, Romanian), from *politically dominant states* to *satellite countries* (the most telling example being that of the dictatorships of the 20th century, with reference to the circulation of texts from the USSR to the satellite countries), from *empires* (Great Britain) to *colonised spaces* (India), from *dominant economic structures* (and therefore much more able to economically support cultural development and the apparatus of literary production, distribution, promotion and export) to what Wallerstein calls *semi-peripheries or peripheries*. In line with the postulate of inequality as a determining and delimiting factor of literary geographies is also the correlation that Marx and Engels establish between economic development and the evolution of WL, a correlation that is also reflected in the perspectives reiterated above. For instance Moretti analyses WL from this angle as a study of the struggle for symbolic hegemony throughout the world. Also, Itamar Even-Zohar, emphasises the one-sidedness of the process of literary circulation by noting that a target literature (therefore minor, peripheral) imports forms and patterns from a source literature,

without the latter being aware of the transfer or of the indigenous products of the target-culture. Similarly, Pascale Casanova believes that the efforts of small cultures to transpose their literary products onto the "stage" of WL and gain recognition as such are subject to fluctuations in literary capital (and the axiological realities of the "cultural goods market") which in fact mirror the current political imbalances.

2.2. The Network Model

Theorists such as Spivak, Damrosch, Cooppan and Terian, who question the hierarchical premises of WL seen as a centre-periphery dynamic, dwell on this inequality mentioned in the previous section, proposing the replacement of this kind of vertical hermeneutics (focused on the one-dimensional, linear transfer from areas of influence to areas of reception) with a network-type projection. An interesting example is Spivak's critique of Moretti's theory of the concept of "distant reading" as a method of analysing broad movements of circulation of literary forms with their epicentre in Europe (the European novel, European languages, European capitalism). Spivak argues that at the basis of this theory lies a form of "cartographic arrogance" (Spivak 2003, 73) whereby the sender from a central culture analyses data drawn from the periphery while forgetting, through this form of accounting for the literary, to read. Similarly, Cooppan argues that what should matter is not the cartographer but the map itself, proposing, therefore, not the perspective of a singular world, but of a set of ever-changing spaces "that coalesce into globalities of many kinds, each striated by the transverse networks of language, region, area, and moment that simultaneously shape a single text and link it to others" (Cooppan 2012, 194-203). In agreement with Spivak, Vilashini Cooppan proposes in his article entitled *World Literature Between History and Theory* the concept of "itinerant topography" (Cooppan 2012, 194-203) through which an intersectional perspective of WL can be formulated "as a crossroads of flows and lateral connections, of connectivities and disjunctures, of coming close and zooming out; in short, as a disciplinary topography in motion" (Cooppan 2012, 194-203).

A similar objection, this time pretexted by Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, belongs to Andrei Terian who, in his article entitled *National Literatures, World Literatures and Universality in Romanian Cultural Criticism 1867-1947* (Terian 2013), sees in this type of approach to WL the reflection of an old error of comparative literature. The author thus believes that the analysis of the ways in which individual works relate to each other is reminiscent of the theory of "influences" and, consequently, of its homologues, such as Moretti's "wave" or Zohar's "interferences", which postulate the aprioric passivity of the target cultures incapable of resisting

the transfer from the source cultures. However, Terian is of the opinion that the asymmetrical nature of the cultures between which interferences take place does not imply the unilateral nature of the transfer process, except in those situations where literary evolution is politically managed. What Terian proposes can be put in relation to the objections of Efraín Kristal, who argues for a world literature in which the West does not have a monopoly on the forms that matter:

”[...] the West does not have a monopoly over the creation of forms that count; in which themes and forms can move in several directions from the centre to the periphery, from the periphery to the centre, from one periphery to another, while some original forms of consequence may not move much at all.” (Kristal 2002).

This raises the question of making analytical perspectives more flexible, so as to be able to follow what manages to reach from the periphery to the centre, as influence in its own right, while at the same time taking into account the fact that, as Moretti notes, the number of cultural products that travel the reverse path, from the periphery to the centre, is incomparably smaller:

”Yes, forms can move in several directions. But do they? [...] What I know about European novels, for instance, suggests that hardly any forms 'of consequence' don't move at all; that movement from one periphery to another (without passing through the centre) is almost unheard of; that movement from the periphery to the centre is less rare, but still quite unusual, while that from the centre to the periphery is by far the most frequent.” (Moretti 2014, 159-180).

2.3. The Ellipse Model

In tune with the perspective on WL as a threefold spatialization of hegemonic relations (centre/semi-periphery/periphery), but in the same cartographic paradigm of imaginary geographies, theorists such as David Damrosch, Emily Apter or Gayatri Spivak attempt to reconceptualize literature as a network, in order to bring minor literatures out of their marginal positions and to dynamically reconfigure them as living expressions of the history of ideas. The transition, also at the projective level, towards a dynamically reconceptualised WL as a network is based on recourse to geometric analogies that reimagine the hitherto tripartite whole in the form of ellipses. The ellipse thus becomes the basic unit of the world literary construct, an inherently collective figure that presupposes the existence of two centres, abandoning the monocentric, hegemon-oriented perspective in favour of an itinerant approach. Herein lies the main difference between the tripartite cartographic vision and that of the network construct. This is what David Damrosch proposes in the volume *What is*

World Literature? when he speaks of a (pluri)elliptical approach to literature, whereby elements such as literary-cultural connections in their synchronic and diachronic developments, representational forms and historical events that circulate along the network, can be better reified, periodically condensing into nodal points of historical density and affective depth (identifiable, depending on the situation, by literary genre, period, region, language, event) or the coexistence of literary phenomena in this whole set of ellipses or literary maps that are temporarily superimposable and in constant movement. Of course, the premise of WL as a fluid network of transfer implies a limited understanding - due to the broad nature of the perspective addressed - of the variations that determine the emergence of literary works in the source culture (and therefore of the variables on which it depends, including elements such as cultural context, the purpose attributed to the text, modes of interpretation and appropriation, etc.), projected, through the prism of the theory addressed above, at the far end of the ellipse:

"At the "farther" focus of the ellipse, however, there may be, and again almost certainly will be, considerable variation, as the work, author, or literature in question may serve very different purposes within the possibly very different cultural contexts in which it is received. It remains to be seen, then, whether, and if so at which level of abstraction, sufficient similarities can be detected to also map not only the actual presence of a certain work, author, or literature in a number of foreign cultures but also the interpretation put on them in these cultures, or any commonality of purpose they might serve [...] Gradually, then, and on different levels of abstraction, maps could be construed of a work's, an author's or a literature's "global reach" as well as "impact"." (D'Haen 2012, 413-422).

WL designed as a network and therefore subject to a dynamic, relational model thus becomes a fluid concept, imagined either as an agglomeration of intersecting lines linking two or more literary works of different origins, or as patterns of literary influence or patterns of circulation and intersection on a global scale that operate beyond the classical text-author hermeneutic system. In order to trace the superstructures of literary circulation, such as the circuits of publication, translation, adaptation, promotion, it is necessary to consider the relational dynamics between different systems and the way in which they come, over longer or shorter periods of time, to overlap, leading in some cases to the emergence of a more efficient system that will then spread over an increasingly wider area. Examples of this are the case of the European novel in the mid-19th century, or the literary theory systems in Europe and the United States, which subjected non-Western literatures to a strict grid of rules and expectations, reducing them to criteria of conformity and non-conformity: a hegemonic relational model which led to the creation

of comparative criteria such as the "backwardness" of a culture, "modernity", etc.

3. Systemic metaphors of world literature: the rhizome, the tree, the wave

Alongside the perspectives listed above, by virtue of which world literature is constructed as an imaginary geography, there are also other conceptual projections that are themselves constructed on the basis of metaphorisation processes. The latter differ from the geometric approach of cartographic perspectives (map, network, ellipse) and are more concerned with the functionality of the literary system than with its spatialisation: *the rhizome* (Deleuze, Guattari 1987), *the tree and the wave* (Moretti, 2014).

3.1. The Rhizome

Vilashini Cooppan uses the concept of *rhizome* in Deleuze and Guattari's sense as a research method and cultural model that allows for the representation of a system (in this case, that of WL) non-hierarchically as an organisational structure that chronologically traces causality from a "root" to its subsequent ramifications and thereby identifies the source and finality of an event. On the contrary, the rhizome is characterized by "ceaselessly established connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 28), a concept through which the understanding of history and culture is not based on a process of narrativization, but is projected as a system of influences or attractions without a specific origin or genesis: "a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 45).

What is suggested by the concept of rhizome is therefore a world literature as the sum of disparate achievements and the correlations that can be made between them (by categorical criteria, for example the topos of trauma in the literatures of states under dictatorship, African-American literature, Holocaust literature, etc.) and not as a chronological reiteration of developments in the literary field.

Further drawing on the theories of Deleuze and Guattari, Cooppan associates the concept of *rhizome* with that of short-term cultural memory, while seeing in causal thinking an applicability of long-term memory. The latter is, by analogy, related to the tree-like perspective on cultural-historical phenomena, which imposes on interpretation a teleological path along the axes of descent and inheritance. On the other hand, short-term cultural memory as a methodological grid of WL is presented by Cooppan as a salutary alternative to the idea of the centre contested even by Spivak, since it proposes an analysis of the literary field as a whole of its disparate

developments, designed to "act at a distance, come or return a long time after, but always under conditions of discontinuity, rupture, and multiplicity" (Cooppan 2012, 194-203).

3.2. The Tree and the Wave

In his analysis of the literary field as an object of quantitative and performative study of the idea of literary influence and evolution, Moretti uses two distinct images of the literary field, but which, according to the theorist, function precisely by revealing evolutionary patterns through which the concept of world literature can be projected. The two metaphors proposed by Moretti are thus intended to highlight two types of relationship of literary fields related to cultural spaces: *difference* and *influence*.

Moretti projects two ways of thinking about literary history, one centred on local differences but through which one can glimpse similarities between different literatures (illustrating, for example, how the idea of a national literature and recourse to an ethnoculture has served to legitimise the national and forge a cultural individuality in the case of several nation-states), the other considering the external influences of some literatures on others and how these crystallise.

The tree (a concept which, in Deleuze and Guattari's view, is opposed to the *rhizome*) describes, in Moretti's perspective, the transition from unity to diversity, for example from Indo-European to other languages or, as stated above, reveals a prerogative of nation-states in the struggle for identity, whereas *the wave* describes the reverse movement, that of uniformity of an initial diversity (two of Moretti's examples refer to the global spread of the English language and the position of Hollywood cinema in the film market). The apparent opposition of the two methods of analysis does not, however, negate the fact that they can be used concomitantly or even diachronically. Moretti, for example, develops an analysis of the modern novel as a result of the oscillation between the two mechanisms and assigns the *tree* as a metaphor of national literatures and the *wave* as a metaphor of WL.

Based on the theories outlined in this chapter, we cannot say that WL as a projection precedes or is the result of a project (and by this we mean the applied dimension of WL both as an object of study and as a platform for research in the literary field or a new theoretical paradigm). We can say, however, that it constitutes, at the imaginative level, an analogous plan either fed by or from which concrete methods of composing, defining and managing a distinct field of study are derived. The totality of the avatars through which this concept is constructed and the recourse to geographical, geometrical, biological or cognitive metaphors reveal, first and foremost, an overriding cultural imperative to manage Otherness and to visualise it (through contact or enclosure) in order to then, particularly in the recent

decades marked by a multiplication of disciplines of study, interdisciplinary methodologies in Humanities and an opening of political and cultural borders, to determine a social imperative of understanding, comprehension and proper relationship with the Otherness. The concept of WL and its various projections over the centuries, in its attempt to reify the ineffable (we shall see below that no theory of WL claims the privilege of completeness) translates, in fact, a hermeneutics of Otherness designed to mirror the concrete, geopolitical, social-cultural realities of the global cultural polsystem.

4. World literature as a project: conceptual origins, theoretical and methodological meanings, semantic differences

4.1. Methodological questions

WL as a project distinguishes itself from its projective avatars by questioning a functionality not only in terms of spatial distribution, but also in terms of its applicability as a theoretical paradigm defined at the crossroads of literary, cultural, social studies, areas of study such as anthropology, translation studies, political science, cognitive science and the literary politics that determine the emergence, editing, promotion, translation and distribution of literary texts in the universal circuit. WL is therefore comparable to other cultural paradigms such as globalization, universal literature, the canon, national literatures, etc. But how do we quantify the "world" element in WL, from what analytical angle can we begin to make hypotheses, how do we turn a construct that essentially cannot be reduced to a single perspective methodologically, and how can we transform it into the theoretical framework of current literary studies as long as it remains an eminently fluid concept, resilient to any form of fixed interpretation? Current definitions of WL, far from assuming the premise of completeness, are themselves formulated on the basis of an interrogative apparatus that precedes an apparatus of solutions as variable as the object in question. Damrosch's questions on the study of WL are illustrative in this respect. What should be its object or stake? The discovery of a common denominator of world traditions? To reveal how the great powers project their values in politically and economically subordinate spaces? Integrating translations as literature or just analysing literature in the language in which it was written? How do we view WL? As the sum of world literatures, as a canonical subset of each culture's classics? As a set of works with a foreign audience? As literary products of hegemonic spaces, such as Greece or ancient Rome, or of the great powers of the West?

Theorists such as David Damrosch or Andrei Terian suggest three ways of conceptualising WL: either as the sum of literary works produced in the

world over time (cumulative approach), as a "world" canon that selectively integrates the most valuable literary works and thus, as the result of a selective approach, (but in what terms do we define value: aesthetic, linguistic, content, context?), or as a global literary system illustrated by the network approach. Examples of the cumulative approach can be found in the theories of Franco Moretti, who proposes a systematic analysis not of the canon, but of what he calls "the great unread" (Moretti 2014, 161) or "the forgotten 99 percent of non-canonical world literatures" (Moretti 2000, 208) advocating, therefore, an integrative analysis of the elements that literary studies have so far omitted, whereas David Damrosch or Mads Rosendahl Thomsen favour a selective approach, while resorting to a historical-literary perspective (which Pascale Casanova does to a certain extent by systematically analysing intraliterary links). For example, in the volume *What is World Literature?* Damrosch analyses how literary works acquire new meanings in translation. Another question that arises in this context concerns the demarcation of the units of world literature and the relationships that are established between them. Can we confine world literature to an analysis of individual works or national literatures or should we devise broader cultural frameworks of analysis to manage the specificity of the phenomenon? What would be the selection criteria with regard to the works belonging to other cultures that we read? How much does translation distort a clear perspective on the aesthetic and value potential of the original text?

Parallel to the problems of definition and method, other observations arise, this time concerning not the possibility of an all-encompassing analysis, but the possibility of a truly objective perspective in relations with Otherness, a *sine qua non* condition of WL: can we really avoid projecting the values of the native culture into the interpretation of, let us say, a foreign literary text? How do we position ourselves within the unequal cultural, political and economic landscape of which we are part and in which our cultural products circulate?

Many of the theories of WL converge towards the time when Goethe coins the term *Weltliteratur* in a conversation with his secretary, Johann Peter Eckermann. But Goethe, while putting into circulation a concept that seems to anticipate not only the formation of a new cultural consciousness but also the twilight of the national literatures that dominated the nineteenth century, does not assign it a fixed meaning, oscillating himself between an essentially Eurocentric vision and a broader, even global perspective. Throughout several texts, Goethe attributes varying meanings to the concept of *Weltliteratur*, without giving it a proper definition. On the one hand, he sees WL as a "market" of cultural goods, a system of trade and cultural exchange between intellectuals across Europe, while on the other hand, he refers to the circulation of literature in a global framework,

encouraging in a sense the translation and distribution of valuable texts from world literatures (in fact, Goethe formulates the concept of *Weltliteratur* after reading a Chinese novel) while remaining wary about the commercialisation of popular literature and the evolution of a mass culture. We can therefore distinguish between the two meanings of WL as Goethe imagines it and say that one refers to "the circulation of elite cultural goods among an international coterie of connoisseurs, the other embracing all literary works and all readers everywhere". (D'Haen, Damrosch, Kadir 2012, XVIII). It therefore oscillates between a quantitative and a qualitative criterion. Caius Dobrescu makes a similar distinction, seeing in the Goethean concept the fusion of two distinct meanings of "*Welt*": on the one hand, a WL that satisfies the criteria, or rather the aesthetic and value affinities, of a universal community, and on the other, a global network of contact between intellectuals in which the literary masterpieces of the nations would have the role of differentiating them.

We also recall here the meanings of Adrian Marino's "Republic of Letters", noting that initially, the Republic inevitably referred to the idea of the totality of "letters", understood here as the totality of the culture with which they are identified: "[...] "Republic of Letters" means the totality or ensemble of writings that are not necessarily literary, in the aesthetic, belletristic sense of the word. It includes, in traditional language, the totality of *res litteraria*." (Marino 1987, 289)

Re-using the traditional image of *Civitas Dei*, the Republic expresses the idea of community and universal spirit in the sense of a supreme intellectual reality. When the concept of community ceases to be thought of at a theoretical, abstract level, the "Republic of Letters" takes on the meaning of a community of men of letters, i.e. of writers, men of culture and scholars. Once internationalised and ideologised, the idea of universal literature takes on three basic meanings: the sum of literary writings, studies and knowledge circulating internationally, the spiritual consensus between cultural affinities inclined towards dialogue and collaboration, the expression of the universal nature of the human spirit. By going the other way round, from the universal to the national, the "Republic of Letters" comes to identify itself on the one hand with the symbolic nation of men of letters and on the other with the national literary republic, by recovering the "Republic of Letters" at the level of national culture and literature.

4.2 Methodological approaches

Returning to WL as a project, we can conclude, in line with Sanja Bahun's statements, that from a methodological perspective, WL cannot be circumscribed to a singular project, but analysed in all its forms, as metaphor or imaginary community, concept, discourse, practice,

pedagogical tool, theory or system of theories, while accepting that all these ways of conceiving it can alternate or coexist and that according to them WL acquires a certain status within global or regional systems of cultural exchange. Nevertheless, we can discern, within this plural system of theories and projects, two types of approaches from which the above perspectives derive: *quantitative* and *qualitative*.

The quantitative approach to WL is based on defining it as the sum of (all) literary works. From this point of view, the perspective seems to be well-defined, both in terms of the object of study conceived as a sum of data (variable, of course, but from which stable characteristics can be extracted), and in terms of the analytical framework and mode of operation, i.e. the analysis of a literary field that is as broad and varied as possible. Representative of the quantitative approach is Moretti's theory of "distant reading", presented as the only possible method of systematic analysis of what he calls "the great unread", by which we mean the totality of non-canonical literary works whose knowledge becomes possible not through reading, but through the identification of patterns of influence and functionality that lead Moretti to affirm the existence of so-called "laws" of transcultural interaction. Seen, then, as a global accumulation of literary texts, WL is defined in opposition to the concept of the canon, often rejecting the distinction between "high" forms of literature and popular literature, calling for a more flexible theoretical framework that allows for an analysis of "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language." (Damrosch 2003, 4)

On the other hand, the qualitative approach is based on the understanding of WL as the sum of all canonical texts, thus questioning the criteria (ethical, political, etc.) underlying the selection process and thus giving rise to a debate on the nature of the canon as a result of a narrow analytical perspective and a kind of hierarchical thinking (such as Spivak's "hegemonic hermeneutics"), a debate that brings to the fore a possible misrepresentation of global literatures and the hegemony of written literature.

Both of the approaches outlined above attract objections, as they seem to position themselves at two irreconcilable, and therefore invariably narrow, extremes that we find enunciated by René Wellek: "[...] understood in these terms, world literature is simultaneously exaggeratedly cumulative and inexcusably narrow (hyper-canonical)" (Wellek 1970, 3-36). The study of WL cannot be confined to one of these two perspectives, which prove insufficient precisely because they propose a (de)limiting (and sometimes impossible) analysis of the object of study as a finite construct. We cannot hope, as Spivak proposes, that all readers will make an effort and read as much as possible, in as many languages as possible, in order to thus overcome linguistic limitations or as a form of protest against the spread of

English, both in translation and in terms of anthologies dealing with WL. We cannot also overlook the fact that issues of linguistic hegemony are central to the discipline of WL (the historical dominance of Latin or French followed today by that of English), as well as issues of translation ethics, for example.

The problem, then, is the ability, or rather the willingness, of the theorists to devise a methodology that accepts the variations and incompleteness of the object of study, and which therefore functions as an approach that is itself variable and adaptable to the requirements and nature of the field of WL.

5. World Literature as itinerant theory or the itinerant theory of World Literature

Reading Edward Said's article *Traveling Theory* (Said 2014, 114-134) provides an interesting solution to the problem of theoretical and methodological adequacy. Said shows in his 1982 text how cultural and intellectual life benefits from the circulation of ideas, whether consciously appropriated, accepted as an unconscious influence, or creatively transposed into other settings, a circulation which, while involving a complex mechanism, seems to follow a recurring pattern. There is, therefore, an original point or initial set of circumstances for the birth of an idea or its transition towards discourse. As the idea travels from one point in time and space to another, it crosses a distance and comes into contact with the pressure of certain contexts. The idea is introduced or tolerated in the so-called target context by virtue of a set of conditions that Said calls conditions of acceptance or encounter resistance, and then it is integrated either totally or partially, changed to some extent by its new users, by its new position in the spatio-temporal context in which it finds itself.

Said exemplifies his assertions through an analysis of how Lukacs' theory in *History and Class Consciousness* evolves with regard to the emergence of class consciousness, an eminently critical consciousness born in a moment of crisis and revolt against the capitalist economic system. The author traces the path taken by Lukacs' theory, which emerges from a specific political-historical context and appears as a reaction to this context, and the way in which it is taken up, reinterpreted and refunctionalised, step by step, by his disciple Lucien Goldman (in the volume *Le Dieu caché*), in which "class consciousness" becomes "vision du monde", then by Raymond Williams, a student at Cambridge, who met Goldman there during two lectures given by the latter and who noticed, at a significant distance, also conditioned by a very different cultural context, the limitations of Lukacs' theory which he reached via Goldman. We will only take up from here Said's observations on the essential correlation between a theory and the context of its

emergence, i.e. how points of view, separated in time and space can discern (and not just alter) the limitations of certain worldviews:

”In measuring Lukacs and Goldmann against each other, then, we are also recognizing the extent to which theory is a response to a specific social and historical situation of which an intellectual occasion is a part. Thus what is insurrectionary consciousness in one instance becomes tragic vision in another, for reasons that are elucidated When the situations in Budapest and Paris are seriously compared. I do not wish to suggest that Budapest and Paris determined the kinds of theories produced by Lukacs and Goldmann. I do mean that "Budapest" and "Paris" are irreducibly first conditions, and they provide limits and apply pressures to which each writer, given his own gifts, predilections, and interests, responds [...] What is more interesting, however, is that because Cambridge is not revolutionary Budapest, because Williams is not the militant Lukacs, because Williams is a reflective critic - this is crucial - rather than a committed revolutionary, he can see the limits of a theory that begins as a liberating idea but can become a trap of its own.” (Said 2014, 122-124)

The example described above serves us in so far as it is applicable to the circulation and substantiation of theories about WL. Said's exposition, initially a perspective on WL as a ”traveling theory” or as a theory of travel can function, in the reverse sense, as a ”traveling theory”, i.e. an itinerant theory of WL, which leads us to the author's conclusion about the importance of Williams' theory, not necessarily as an improvement or correction of Lukacs' theory, but as an alternative theoretical approach, bent on itself: we must accept that there is no theory capable of covering all the situations in which it would be useful, and therefore we cannot postulate the existence of an intellectual system with unlimited power (as Lukacs described the capitalist economy). Therefore critical consciousness, in Said's view, is in fact an awareness of the resistance to theory, of reactions determined by concrete experiences or interpretations with which theory comes into conflict, an awareness that there is no exhaustive system regardless of the context of its emergence.

In conclusion, as in the case of Lukacs' theory evolution whereby Said demonstrates how theoretical modalization is necessary for the survival of the paradigmatic apparatus (a perspective through which we understand the role of critique in fluidifying theory and transforming it into a framework for eventual flexibilizations and recontextualizations), WL as a paradigm, program, methodology or theory must rather function as a critique of its own object in order to avoid the trap of theory

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Diana COZMA*

A *Theatre of Cruelty* Nowadays

Abstract: Nowadays, theatre aims to become once again an *act of healing* the individual and the community, to express the tragic dimension of human existence through the actors' bodies. It is in this context that the present paper puts into discussion and briefly analyses a few key notions such as violence, crime, limit, sight/blindness, non-recognition, misunderstanding and incompleteness from Albert Camus's perspective on the absurd existence of the human being. Starting from the idea that violence, as a language in binary code, manifests itself within a relationship between two entities in a conflict situation, we remark that, today, due to excessive repetitiveness and mediatization, the acts of violence, which can lead to tragic situations, have come not only to be accepted but also to be treated as normal acts. In this context, the role of theatre practitioners to give birth to a new *theatre of cruelty*, a sacred theatre with powers of healing, capable of generating changes in the spectator's consciousness, has become essential.

Keywords: violence, crime, tragic, limit, blindness, misunderstanding, incompleteness.

In the ancient Greek tragedy, we speak about the hero, that is about the individual endowed with extraordinary capacities, predestined to perform outstanding acts, whose *body-mind* endures the suffering caused by his struggle with the material and divine forces of the universe; an individual in whose soul even if doubt nestles, has the courage to face his destiny. The tragic situation, which presupposes on the part of the hero a transcendence of his own existential limits, takes place on the thin line that separates the order from the disorder of the mind. At the same time, going beyond one's limits implies an awakening of one's *inner forces* leading, in certain situations or relationships, to an emergence of violence to the surface of reality. In this context, crime and suicide can be seen as concrete ways of surpassing the limits of the individual considering the fact that they involve existential crises. In order to discuss the act of committing a crime, the notion of violence has to be analysed. We could say that violence is a language in binary code, which manifests itself within a relationship between two entities in a certain conflict situation. In this respect, we notice that in the relationship between the *oppressor and the oppressed* or *the executioner and the victim*, on the one hand, we can identify the hypostasis of the executioner who, during the conflict, can turn into a victim, and that of the victim who

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can take over the role of the executioner. In this case, we are dealing with a situation of interchangeability of roles. On the other hand, there is also the situation in which the executioner considers himself/herself the victim, as in the case of Martha from Albert Camus's *The Misunderstanding*. However, in the play, killing, for mother and daughter, represents a means through which they hope to escape their suffocating lives: "When we have gathered a great deal of money and we're able to abandon this land without horizon, when we leave behind us this inn and this rainy town and forget this country of darkness, the day when we'll finally be in front of the sea that I have so often dreamt of, that will be the day when you see me smile. But we need a lot of money to live by the sea" (Camus, 2008: 4). But to reach freedom requires to murder travellers, strangers, and to live with the memories of their horrible acts. They do not kill to restore order in the reality of their existence or to revenge the beloved ones, but to be free and happy. Paradoxically, they really believe that murder will open, for them, the door to a new, happy life. But murder does not go unpunished and, in the end, when recognition occurs, they suffer the consequences of their acts.

A confrontational relationship, many a time, includes the presence of violence, which can manifest itself due to hatred, anger, envy, jealousy, desire for revenge or sacrifice. The theme of sacrifice reminds us of Eugenio Barba's performance *Ornitofilene* also based on *the relationship between executioner and victim* in which the villagers are willing to sacrifice their children in order to escape poverty. Violence irrupts at the surface of reality in attempts to impose an individual/group point of view in confrontation with another individual/group point of view. Violence can be viewed as one of the most effective forms of communication or one of the forms that fail in the communication process. Violence is used both in less civilized societies and in economically, culturally, and technologically advanced ones. It is violence which writes our history full of tragic events, horrors, atrocious wars. There is individual violence, group violence, institutional violence, domestic violence, crime violence, hate violence, and there is also a terrifying violence contained in acts of bullying and mobbing. Violence is made use of in both the articulation of truths and lies. One cannot speak about violence in terms of good or bad as it is used in a confrontation where an individual/group aims to impose his/its point of view at any cost, that is to emerge victorious from the confrontation.

Syntagms such as primitive violence, ritualic violence, violence between individuals/groups, or physical, psychical, mental violence, or family, educational, social, political, cultural violence, or the violence of written, visual, aural, theatrical, film language are frequently used to define different ways of committing acts of violence. Probably mental violence is the greatest evil done to a person. Regarding the nature of evil, M. Scott Peck observes: "When I say that evil has to do with killing, I do not mean to

restrict myself to corporeal murder. Evil is also that which kills spirit. There are various essential attributes of life — particularly human life—such as sentience, mobility, awareness, growth, autonomy, will. It is possible to kill or attempt to kill one of these attributes without actually destroying the body. Thus, we may ‘break’ a horse or even a child without harming a hair on its head. Erich Fromm was acutely sensitive to this fact when he broadened the definition of necrophilia to include the desire of certain people to control others—to make them controllable, to foster their dependency, to discourage their capacity to think for themselves, to diminish their unpredictability and originality, to keep them in line. Distinguishing it from a ‘biophilic’ person, one who appreciates and fosters the variety of life forms and the uniqueness of the individual, he demonstrated a ‘necrophilic character type’, whose aim it is to avoid the inconvenience of life by transforming others into obedient automatons, robbing them of their humanity. Evil, then, for the moment, is that force, residing either inside or outside of human beings, that seeks to kill life or liveliness” (Peck, 1998: 39-40). It has become noticeable that, nowadays, the violent acts, due to their media coverage, have entered a sort of normality. It seems that the act of violence, which often generates a tragic situation, is received by those who are in the hypostasis of spectators/observers, as a normal act, often treated as being the rule and not the exception due to both its repetitiveness in excess and its mediatization. Thus, the tragic situations, disseminated in all aspects of reality, no longer having the quality necessary for reordering things, putting them in balance and harmony, lost the tremendous impact they used to have on the participants in the ancient Greek or Elizabethan tragedies.

In a dramatic text, based on a dialogic structure, violence generates a climax in the fictional reality. The characters, the conflict, the situations, the relationships, respectively the relationship of the character with himself, with the other characters, with the divinity/invisible, the atmosphere induced by the way the stage space is designed and the music, light, technology are used, often, contain violent elements or aspects with the aim of intensifying the dramatic tension. From a dramaturgical perspective, we deal with two types of expressing the tragic dimension of violence. The first type is represented by ancient Greek tragedy, Elizabethan tragedy, Spanish Golden Age tragedy, in which “up to a certain limit everyone is right and that the person who, from blindness or passion, oversteps this limit is heading for catastrophe if he persists in his desire to assert a right he thinks he alone possesses. The constant theme of classical tragedy, therefore, is the limit that must not be transgressed. On either side of this limit equally legitimate forces meet in quivering and endless confrontation. To make a mistake about this limit, to try to destroy the balance, is to perish” (Camus, 1970: 231-232). The second type is represented by the dramaturgy of the

twentieth and twenty-first centuries which, Peter Brook remarks, does not have the capacity of giving tragic expression to contemporary problematics. In the sense of Peter Brook's observation, we note that tragedy is no longer written not because wars, crimes, suicides, rapes have suddenly disappeared from the world, not because the individual's *hunger and thirst* for freedom have ceased to manifest, not because today there are no more human beings who feel love or hate *in extreme* or who bear the heavy burden of suffering the loss of a parent or a child, or who feel the pangs of being exiled or being a stranger in his own country. The truth is that "Anger, violence, hysteria, disgust and despair – these are so real that they must be expressed, powerfully, passionately" (Brook, 2017: 70). Today, as in Camus's times, "man proclaims his revolt, knowing this revolt has limits, demands liberty though he is subject to necessity" and "this contradictory man, torn, conscious henceforth of human and historical ambiguity, is the tragic man" (Camus, 1970: 235). We still live in a world where God has the image of an *old servant*, almost blind, deaf, and dumb, or in a world where God has been declared dead, in a world in which the individual's revolt against destiny is as strong as when he had unwavering faith in gods and their power to intervene in his destiny. In a world in which there has been and always will be a revolt of the *oppressed against the oppressor*, an attempt to transcend the human condition. Even though all forms of political theatre propose a vivisection of violence, most of them prove to be incapable of reflecting the problematics of the actual individual, of recreating present tragic destinies. Most of the time the different forms of political theatre fall into the trap of *illustrating and commenting* daily events. Furthermore, these forms are usually positioned in relation to different ideologies which keep the profound problematics of the twenty-first century individual in banality and parody: "Professional politics destroy the normal rapport between people, alienate them; *engagement* amputates man. [...] It is only for the weak-minded that history is always right. As soon as an ideology becomes dominant, it is wrong. [...] We must go to the theatre as we go to a football game, a boxing match, or a tennis tournament. These games, in effect, can give us the most exact idea of what theatre is in its pure state: antagonism brought face to face, dynamic opposition, irrational clashes of opposing wills" (Ionesco, 1963: 151).

In the first half of the twentieth century, Camus observes that "a movement of ideas and reflections on the theatre, whose most significant product is Antonin Artaud's fine book *Le Théâtre et son double*, and the influence of such foreign theoreticians as Gordon Craig and Appia, have once more brought the tragic dimension to center stage in our thoughts" (Camus, 1970: 231). Undoubtedly, we may note the presence of the tragic dimension in performances directed by Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Romeo Castellucci who are constantly preoccupied with the rediscovery of

the tragic nature of the *actual individual* often put in relation to the *primitive individual*, with ways of transposing the present human tragedies in spectacular forms. Thus, from a theatrical perspective, we note that under the influence of Artaud there has been significant research regarding the presence of the actor as an *affective athlete* capable of creating *shocking images* which whip the spectator's senses, cause a *change of state*, and make him act. Artaud, like other reformers of theatre, proposes a rediscovery of the sacred linked indissolubly to the violence of ritual. What Artaud "wanted in his search for a holiness was absolute: he wanted a theatre that would be a hallowed place; he wanted that theatre served by a band of dedicated actors and directors who would create out of their own natures an unending succession of violent stage images, bringing about such powerful immediate explosions of human matter that no one would ever again revert to a theatre of anecdote and talk. He wanted the theatre to contain all that is normally reserved for crime and war. He wanted an audience that would drop all its defences, that would allow itself to be perforated, shocked, startled, and raped, so that at the same time it could be filled with a powerful new charge" (Brook, 1968: 59-60). In this regard, we notice that in *The Misunderstanding* we deal also with an exacerbation of senses and self-devouring passion of the character which evokes the passion of the heroes of ancient Greek tragedies or Shakespeare's tragedies, with a desire to live life to the fullest that reminds us that, in fact, the *theatre of cruelty* is a search of a theatre *more violent, more extreme* (Brook, 1968: 61) created with the aim of healing and not entertaining the human beings.

Jerzy Grotowski's theatre takes shape at the confluence between sacredness and blasphemy, apotheosis and sordidness; a theatre of contradictions, tensions, which, through clear, precise impulses, through a language of pure signs, a symbolic language, reveals aspects of the tragic condition of the twentieth century individual. The characters of *Akropolis*, for instance, condemned to live "in a world that has ceased to make sense" (Esslin, 1961: XX), tell a story of dehumanization as, in the absence of God, the individual relapses into bestiality. However, the characters' belief, even in a *headless saviour*, an impersonal divinity, makes the spectators perceive them as tragic heroes. The explorations of the borderline situations are done through the bodies of the actors who follow the path of the human being in suffering. The performance profoundly disturbs the spectators who enter a reality of memory.

Romeo Castellucci seems to be strongly attracted to what can be called the *existential evil* which manifests itself in various forms. Like Grotowski, Castellucci incarnates on stage the coexistence of force and vulnerability, revealing in his performances, the darkest aspects of the human being's existence, those aspects that most of the time remain hidden. Exploring the nature of tragedy, the tragic themes, the condition of tragic characters, he

analyses the notion of *crisis*, which he treats as a possible means of interpreting the human condition, emphasizing the idea of the ephemerality of human life, but especially of its fragility. The images he creates overrun the depths of the spectator, unsettling him. Castellucci's directorial vision is also based on a return to archetypes and myths, to rituals, such as ritual of initiation or ritual sacrifice, to ancient Greek tragedies but also to Shakespeare's tragedies. These explorations aim to identify the nature of the contemporary man's deep self in relation to aspects relevant for the existence of the primitive man. The performance *Oresteia* (*an organic comedy?*) is thought up in terms of ferocity and barbarous ritual, unveiling on stage the presence of bodies subjected to excessive suffering. If in ancient Greek tragedies, the acts of violence were not presented on stage, in Castellucci's tragedies, violence seems to invade the entire stage. Criminal instincts, cruelty, carnality, grotesque-erotic sensuality, monstrous appetite for devouring and self-devouring, loneliness and alienation are expressed through the bodies of the actors, a language of flesh and blood. The space, designed to create images of a world falling apart, to generate an air stinking of putrefying blood, is filled with cavernous or celestial voices, further accentuating a twilight ambience reminiscent of the atmosphere of Rembrandt's paintings and also of Ionesco's plays for whom "a play is a construction, made up of a series of states of consciousness, or of situations, which are intensified, densified, then are tied together, either in order to be untied, or to end in an unbearable entanglement" (Ionesco, 1963: 155).

Essential to the creation of the tragic dimension of violence in a dramatic text or on stage is the theme of sight/blindness. When dealing with this theme, we identify in the structure of the character the lack of *vision*, or the presence of *a seeing which sees only what it wants to see*. In this case, the readers/spectators are invited to reflect on what it means for the character to perceive reality in the absence of an inner vision. Instead of lucid reading of reality, the character becomes the victim of his blind faith in a game of appearances designed to hide the truth of things. It is the situation in which the character does not want to see precisely because he strives to act in accordance with his dreams, desires, fears. After all, in *The Misunderstanding*, for the Mother, the victim can be anyone, a person she knows nothing about, a person she cannot see, and consequently cannot identify and recognise; and, for Martha, a person whom she does not want to see, a person whom she treats as an object and not as a human being. We could say that Martha's yearn for *total freedom* makes her reduce *man to an object* (Camus, 1982: 26). Caught in the net of her desires, she ends up being crushed by the reality of her crimes. In this fight for freedom and happiness, there is no good or evil, only a blind wish to make one's dream come true even if this requires to destroy oneself. So, Martha who feels no

remorse for killing her brother finds neither freedom nor happiness. Her dream ends in a nightmare, the crimes committed turn out to be in vain, her life has been nothing but an endless self-devouring, and at the end of the road, she does not see the light of the sun, but steps into the total darkness.

Regarding *The Misunderstanding*, Camus states: “When the tragedy is done, it would be incorrect to think that this play argues for submission to fate. On the contrary, it is a play of revolt, perhaps even containing a moral of sincerity” (Camus, 2008: II). *A moral of sincerity*, that is a moral of unveiling the truth of one’s life. Indeed, there is no submission to fate, submission to the norms of family (Ionesco), to the social conventions. The Mother and Martha seem to have been buried within the walls of their inn, prey to a destiny against which they revolt; but this *revolt against destiny* leads inexorably to a hardening of heart, to human degradation as they do not feel any sense of guilt or remorse. Doubts, when they arise, are repressed or kept under control. The characters live in a continuous delusion, as crime, for them, seems to be, in fact, an act of charity. They consider their preys to be poor beings predestined to live their lives in a world devoid of compassion, a world of pain. Thus, the crimes they commit represent in their eyes merciful acts as it is due to them that their victims liberate themselves from this senseless world. The elderly couple in *The Chairs* also live in a world empty of sense and “in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land” (Camus, 1979: 13). Both the death of the Mother in *The Misunderstanding* and of the elderly couple in *The Chairs* resembles a plunge into a deep sleep, an immersion into the realm of the unconscious or into the waters of oblivion.

Undoubtedly, violence also manifests itself due to the adoption by the individual of a certain existential hypostasis, and here we make reference to that individual who claims to be what he is not, or claims that the crime he commits is not a crime, as in the absence of certain *ordering forces* belonging to another level of reality, sometimes called the *Beyond*, life, for him, is just a series of criminal acts and nothing more; consequently, he believes that he has total freedom to do away with all those who stand in the way of achieving his personal goals, not letting us forget that “Shame, shame, shame – that is the history of human beings!” (Nietzsche 2006: 67). This individual ends up denying reality as such because it is a reality that he cannot stand and therefore chooses to superimpose his own illusory reality which is convenient for him or which he dreams of. However, this individual concocts his own reality, often, attributing to it meanings that it does not contain, in an attempt to see something where that something does not exist, or not to see something where that something does exist. His personal illusory reality generates a chain of misunderstandings that can often lead to acts of violence.

Misunderstanding crosses the existential path of each individual, as life seems to be a series of contexts, and in some of them the individual is in the hypostasis of a stranger to a certain place, to the mentalities and behaviours specific to that place, but also stranger to the thoughts and intentions of the other/others with whom he establishes different relationships. The thought that he/she can get to know the other/others as long as he/she does not enter a relationship based on *sincerity*, remains at the level of *wishful thinking*. Misunderstanding, however, may also arise from non-recognition, as it happens in Camus's play where the Mother does not recognise her own son, "I haven't recognised him and I've killed him" (Camus, 2008: 36), and Martha does not recognise her own brother; this incapacity of recognising the other ends in murder and suicide. Misunderstanding may also arise from fear. There is a fear of oneself, of what one would be capable of doing in certain circumstances, a fear of freedom that one feels as too much pressure or responsibility, a fear of the other, fear of failure, fear of illness, fear of death. Fear, like envy, is one of the major causes leading to violent acts. Oedipus is afraid of the destiny that has been prophesied to him and in his attempts to avoid it, he comes to fulfil it step by step. Haunted by nostalgia and hopes, afraid of not being received with love by his mother and sister, Jan chooses to postpone the moment of recognition, the moment of truth. The constant leaps of thought between the happy past shared with his wife and the uncertain future prevent him from perceiving the danger lurking in the present. Trying to reach the unity and harmony of his being, Jan chooses to remain a stranger, thus opening the way to misunderstanding.

Jean in Eugène Ionesco's *Hunger and Thirst* like Jan in *The Misunderstanding* is a stranger by definition. A stranger to himself, exiled in his own home, a place inhabited by presences of the past. But there is nothing scary about Aunt Adelaide, she does not hold any terrifying secret that could change the destiny of the main character. The past he speaks of is made of distorted, incongruous memories, emphasizing the idea that "forms are suddenly emptied of their content, reality is unreal, words are only noises stripped of all meaning" (Ionesco, 1963: 127). The meeting between the aunt and Jean degenerates into an absurd conflict. They threaten each other without being capable of agreeing on some past events. It is the past that does not let Jean gain peace, haunting him for he could have saved his aunt, but turned out to be a coward. Consequently, Jean feels *incomplete* and decides to embark on a journey that could reveal to him a sense of his own existence. However, his journey unveils strange situations, emptied of sense, put together in a chaotic order, in a dreamlike logic, as for Ionesco theatre is often a *confession*: "I try to project upon the stage an inner drama (incomprehensible to myself) telling myself, nevertheless, that since the microcosm is an image of the macrocosm, it may happen that this torn up, disarticulated inner world is in some way the mirror or the symbol of universal contradictions. No

intrigue, then, no architecture, no enigmas to solve but the insoluble unknown, no personalities, but characters without identity (they become, at each moment, the opposite of themselves; they take the place of others and vice-versa), simply a continuity without continuity, a fortuitous sequence without relation of cause to effect, inexplicable adventures or emotional states, or an indescribable but living tangle of intentions, of movements, of passions without unity, plunging into contradiction. It may appear tragic, it may appear comic, or both at once, for I am unable to distinguish the one from the other. I only wish to translate universal implausibility and strangeness, my universe” (Ionesco, 1963: 128-129). At the end of his voyage, Jean reaches a place which can be seen as a barracks or a monastery or a prison, an inn or a concentration camp, a hospital or a theatre. And in this place, nothing is what it seems. Jean’s searches prove futile, and his revolt, like Jack’s in *Jack, or The Submission*, leads to resignation. Jean finds no salvation and remains an incomplete being, a stranger imprisoned in a place of unending torture.

The individual’s living in *incompleteness* makes him do everything to overcome his limits, to change his human condition. Jan also experiences this state of being incomplete and that is why he returns home, but in his attempt to have everything he ends up losing everything. Thus, returning home, to the origins, to his family, turns out to be his final journey. His mother and his sister do not recognise him and kill him. Jan relives his return home as in a dream, the emotions clouding his reason, preventing him from noticing that “important matters may manifest themselves through small signs” (Freud, 1920: 64). His home, the much-dreamed-of paradise, is a reflection of an insensitive world, in which God seems to be an *absent presence*, accentuating the idea that “the existential condition is unbearable” (Ionesco, 1973: 45). A world of misunderstandings and vain hopes. Martha feels the inn as a cage of death whose bars tighten to suffocate her; a space from which she longs to escape and therefore accepts her condition as a criminal: “That which is human in me is what I desire and to get what I desire, I believe that I would crush anything in my way” (Camus, 2008: 24). In fact, Martha fervently lives a life parallel to her daily life, feeds on illusions, contrasts crime with the idyllic image of a paradise that will be hers one day. The character comes to life, becomes alive, in the moments when she immerses into her inner world made of daydreams without realising that they are actually causing her a sleep of consciousness. All that matters for her is to succeed leaving behind a place “where the autumn has the face of spring and spring the smell of misery” (Camus, 2008: 24).

It is impossible to reconstruct the conditions in which the great ancient or medieval mysteries took place. Therefore, we think that today the role of the theatre rooted in the tragedy of the twenty-first century individual is to

challenge the spectator, to disturb him, to heal him by harmonizing him with himself: “It is said that at its origin, theatre was an act of healing, of healing the city. According to the action of fundamental, entropic forces, no city can avoid an inevitable process of fragmentation. But when the population assembles in a special place under special conditions to partake in a mystery, the scattered limbs are drawn together, and a momentary healing reunites the larger body, in which each member, re-membered, finds its place” (Brook, 1999: 196). The theatre, which reveals the tragic dimension of the human existential condition, aims to transpose in stage language the metamorphoses of the actual individual who, in essence, is in a continuous search for a sense of life and who in the absence of this sense, often is led by criminal instincts and commits acts of violence, most of the time, deliberately. We consider that theatre as an act of healing may offer the spectator the possibility to rediscover himself, to reveal his deep self and thus to identify a possible sense of his passage through this life. Let’s remind ourselves that “A strong presence of actors and a strong presence of spectators can produce a circle of unique intensity in which barriers can be broken and the invisible become real. Then public truth and private truth become inseparable parts of the same essential experience” (Brook, 1989: 41). The experience of the sacred quality of both life and theatre may prove to be a healing experience.

In conclusion, we notice that a theatre based on the tragic dimension of human condition always aims to create intense experiences which lead to acts of healing the spectator/community. Nowadays, more than ever, as the acts of violence are an existential threat, the creation of a new *theatre of cruelty* has become absolutely necessary.

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Communicative Rationality, Irony, and Solidarity. Hermeneutics of Rorty's Idea of Freedom

Abstract: Richard Rorty's non-essentialist, anti-representationalist, and ironic ideas have often caused consternation among Cartesian philosophers or contemporary metaphysicians of knowledge. Equally, Rorty's pragmatist ideas about freedom have been evaluated and criticized even by liberal thinkers. The main purpose of this article is to distinguish and argue in favor of three meanings of the idea of freedom in Richard Rorty's philosophy. First, I will argue that freedom is seen by Rorty, following Freud, as a condition of possibility for the Ego/self. Secondly, I will show that as long as the basic mechanisms of science are essentially argumentative, freedom is understood as a constitutive environment of scientific knowledge. Thirdly, I will argue that freedom is seen by Rorty as solidarity in the face of the suffering of human beings who recognize themselves as ironic and fragile. Finally, by investigating Rorty's meta-philosophical considerations, I will sketch what might be understood as freedom in the argumentative space of philosophy.

Keywords: communicative rationality, freedom, self, human nature, truth, anti-essentialism, anti-representationalism, scientific knowledge, solidarity, social hope.

Richard Rorty's ideas have caused consternation and holy rage among essentialist philosophers - whether continental or analytic - by at least three of the theses he has consistently defended in his writings: (a) the self, the potential metaphysical center of the human being, does not possess substantial consistency, being nothing more than a contingent set of propositional attitudes, a dynamic web, a network of beliefs and desires; (b) the truth, far from being the correspondence relation of a proposition with external reality, with facts, would be nothing more than an unforced agreement between the members of an epistemic community, determined by certain reasons visible only to scientists working within a certain field of research; consequently, epistemology, as a genre of philosophical concern, should be overcome; (c) the project of a free and fair society cannot be based on a set of metaphysical, abstract principles, on a philosophical understanding of the human essence, but on an immediate empirical generalization, that people have in common only their fragility, only their

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disposition to suffer when they are discriminated against, humiliated, imprisoned or tortured. This article aims to identify the basic understanding of the Rortyan idea of freedom and demonstrate that this idea is organically related to the three theses above.

In short, I will argue that Rortyan philosophy presupposes three distinct meanings of the idea of freedom: *first*, freedom can be understood as a constitutive environment of the self; *secondly*, freedom can be understood as a constitutive environment of the search and genesis of truth; *thirdly*, freedom represents, for Rorty, the condition for the possibility of a just society. Specifically, I will try to argue that, for Rorty, an individual's freedom is the very thing that makes possible the process of self-creation from which the unique and dynamic texture of his self will result. Furthermore, I will show that the freedom to choose and create vocabularies, theoretical tools, and argumentative strategies, rather than the constraints of an objective reality, makes scientific research converge toward acceptable viewpoints within scientific communities. Finally, I will show that, for Rorty, the solidarity of individuals in the face of the sources of suffering makes possible the freedom of a society, and not the implementation of a metaphysical project or some so-called ultimate principles of world organization extracted from a correct understanding of a so-called essence of man. I will also try to examine the extent to which the Rortyan arguments are sufficient to support the distinctive character of the three meanings of freedom and the extent to which these three ideas of freedom withstand an evaluative-critical examination.

1. Freedom as a constitutive environment of the self

In the Cartesian tradition, the Ego is seen as an inner core of the human being, it is substantial, generic, and impersonal, ensuring the deep identity of the human kind, but being unable to fix in any way the identity of individuals. This Ego would give the human being its identity over time because, even though the body undergoes changes and is divisible, the substantial Ego, being simple and indivisible, always remains identical to itself. The Cartesian Ego has sensations and beliefs, having the unique power to determine, under ascertaining their clarity and distinctness, whether they are true or not. If only the Ego can think, can determine which proposition is true and which is false, it means that, not being part of the physical world, it has exclusiveness in determining what exists and what does not exist in the physical world. In this sense, the Cartesian Ego is not only a principle of knowledge but also a principle of the world.

Contrary to the Cartesian tradition, Rorty believes that "the self is not something which «has» the beliefs and desires, but is simply the network of such beliefs and desires", and an individual's beliefs and desires are the

internal causes of his linguistic behavior. (Rorty 1991, 123) What matters in shaping a personal identity, a personal Self, are precisely those parts of its structure that have determined it to be different from all other selves, its idiosyncrasies, its structural contingencies, those own beliefs and desires considered as being important and relevant. (Rorty 1989, 23-24) Therefore, the real challenge facing an individual who wishes to mark his identity – the artist being one of those who particularly wishes to do so – is the construction of a uniquely textured self capable of imprinting any gesture creative enough originality. The individual who lives without imprinting his own stamp on the language in which he expresses his beliefs and desires does not really have a self. His linguistic behavior resembles the automatic manipulation, devoid of any personal meaning, of prefabricated verbal panels. Rorty points out that Nietzsche was the first thinker to explicitly suggest that we give up trying to know Truth and represent Reality as it is because the universe has neither an inventory list to know nor a determined extent.

“He hoped that once we realized that Plato’s «true world» was just a fable, we would seek consolation, at the moment of death, not in having transcended the animal condition but in being that peculiar sort of dying animal who, by describing himself in his own terms, had created himself. More exactly, he would have created the only part of himself that mattered by constructing his own mind. To create one’s mind is to create one’s own language, rather than to let the length of one’s mind be set by the language other human beings have left behind.” (Rorty 1989, 27)

Authentic self-knowledge presupposes an awareness of the possibility of self-creation; this is because any attempt by an individual to formulate in an inherited language his idiosyncrasies, his own beliefs, and desires, the elements that make him singular, is, to a large extent, doomed to failure. The fundamental, philosophically relevant fear should not be that our descriptions have not touched Truth, Reality, or the true Self, but the horror of which Harold Bloom spoke, the horror of discovering that we are only a copy or a reproduction, that we have could end the days in a world that our desires or beliefs have not affected in any way. (Rorty 1989, 29) The individual lives authentically only when he manages to create himself and express himself through his linguistic idiosyncrasies, through his own beliefs and desires. “Success in that enterprise - the enterprise of saying «Thus I willed it» to the past - is success in what Bloom calls giving «birth to oneself».” (Rorty 1989, 29)

The determining role in the demystification and replacement of the modern idea of the quasi-divine Ego, substantial or formal, belongs, according to Rorty, to Freud. The ego, the self, and the superego, the

psychoanalytic parliament that replaces the King Ego, is a network of contingencies rather than a well-ordered system of faculties. The terms we inherited from Freud - infantile, sadistic, obsessive, or paranoid - allow us to sketch a story of our development, of our idiosyncratic struggle, which is much more finely woven, much more adjusted to our case, than the moral vocabulary that the philosophical tradition has given us. (Rorty 1989, 32) If Freud is contested and contestable in many ways, he certainly has at least one merit: he has helped us enormously, Rorty believes, in moving us away from so-called necessary and universal truths about human identity and closer to concrete, to “the idiosyncratic contingencies of our individual pasts.” (Rorty 1989, 34) Freud does not see humanity as a natural kind with an intrinsic nature; consequently, he sees no need to construct a theory of human nature or essence. To reject the existence of human nature and to believe that the Self is a web of idiosyncratic beliefs and desires, says Rorty, means “to abjure the attempt to divinize the self as a replacement for a divinized world, (...) to get rid of the last citadel of necessity.” (Rorty 1989, 35) To the extent that he helps us to understand individual identity as the product of unconscious phantasies and idiosyncrasies, Freud helps us to understand our own lives as an attempt to clothe ourselves in our metaphors. (Rorty 1989, 35) Using Lionel Trilling’s terms, Rorty will say that Freud has shown us that poetry is a very constitutive fact of the human mind. (Rorty 1989, 35) In other words, the individual has the power to construct his own identity because he has the freedom to formulate in his own metaphors, in his own vocabulary, his own beliefs, and desires, and weave them into a unique network. What results from this process is his self and freedom is his medium, his condition of possibility. For an adept of classical metaphysics, the individual who would create his self would not have an ontologically consistent identity, being deprived of the privilege of possessing a substantial or divine self. He will never be able to come to terms with this image of human individuals as slightly more complicated animals, capable of carving a self out of their own beliefs and desires. Consequently, he will continue to imagine that he is a happy rational being, possessor of a self which was created in supersensible realms, but which is temporarily tested in the realm of corporeal decay.

A society in which individuals represent their selves as the result of a process of self-creation is a society in which individuals have given up seeing their selves as products of a metaphysical matrix. Such individuals gradually end up abandoning their beliefs in ahistorical principles or mechanisms that would predetermine the structure of their individual lives or of the society in which they live, gradually acquiring an ironist, pluralistic, dialogic thinking. Or, in the logic of Rorty’s philosophy, the emergence and expansion of ironist thinking is the premise, at the level of the individual

that makes possible the emergence of an authentic free society. In time a free society needs to develop in its citizens those liberal virtues that can preserve it in the long run; or, ironist thinking is the main virtue, Rorty believes, that can maintain and maximize the degree of freedom in a society.

2. Freedom as a constitutive environment of scientific research

To be a philosopher in the modern tradition means, first and foremost, to construct a theory of knowledge, that is, to construct a philosophical theory of how a Self comes to mirror the necessary and universal aspects of Reality. The results of this mirroring should be formulated in True sentences that correspond to Reality. Thus, any philosophy of knowledge had to be a theory that explained how the human mind manages to capture and bend to the shape of real states of affairs, to formulate true propositions and theories. Rorty's entire work *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) is a plea for overcoming such a way of understanding knowledge, and ultimately a plea for overcoming the theory of knowledge as a way of doing philosophy.

Speaking about the relevance of Jürgen Habermas in the arena of contemporary philosophy, Rorty emphasizes that he replaced the «philosophy of subjectivity», the philosophy of the Ego, which knows the world based on internal dispositions and faculties, with a philosophy of intersubjectivity; thus, the old conception of the epistemic subject centered on reason, shared by Descartes, Kant, and Nietzsche, was replaced by what Habermas calls communicative or intersubjective rationality. Habermas here makes the same move of thought as W. Sellars: both philosophers try to interpret reason as the internalization of social norms of argument rather than as a disposition or component of the human self. (Rorty 1989, 62) Rorty, following Habermas, believes that a belief *p* constitutes knowledge not because it is isomorphic to a state of affairs, nor because the corresponding state of affairs causes the belief to be in any particular way true, but because it is accepted due to the consensus of members of an epistemic community, the consensus of competent interlocutors. “The history of science tells us only that one day Newton had a bright idea, namely *gravity*, but stays silent on how gravity caused Newton to acquire the concept of itself – or, more generally, how the world «guides» us to converge on «absolute» rather than merely «perspectival» terms.” (Rorty 1991, 57) Rorty's major and at once outrageous point is that the external world or reality does not in any way guide us to knowledge. (Stan 2011, 267-169) What really matters in the genesis of scientific knowledge is a mature epistemic community, with high standards of dialogue, argumentation, and epistemic foundation; scientific knowledge is the result of argumentative activities of epistemic communities, it is a product of communicative

reason, it is a result of free interaction between competent epistemic subjects. The epistemic ideal of the acquisition of truth understood as “correct representation” or “correspondence to the facts” is replaced by that of rationally motivated consensus, the consensus established between epistemic authorities in a certain field of research.

Rorty is Habermasian when he sees communicative reason, conversation, and rational consensus of epistemic authorities as mechanisms of the production of scientific knowledge. This fact attracted vehement criticism from contemporary philosophers, such as Susan Haack and Simon Blackburn, who claim to be guardians of rationality and scientific results based on objective criteria. When they denounce and criticize the Rortyan heresies regarding the irrelevance of the problem of timeless standards of justification or the possibility of correct representation of reality, Susan Haack and Simon Blackburn are Cartesians, prisoners of a representationalist and foundationalist metaphysical perspective on knowledge. According to Susan Haack, Rorty’s position on the issues of knowledge and truth would suffer from an epistemological disease called *conversationalism*, that is from the understanding of epistemic justification as being “a matter of social practice or convention, variable both within and between cultures, and nothing more.” (Haack 1993, 190) Moreover, according to Haack, the illness of *conversationalism* would be the complex result of the conjunction of three other illnesses from which Rorty’s philosophical position would suffer: *contextualism* (an approach to the problem of epistemic justification opposed to foundationalism, coherentism or funderentism), *conventionalism* (the ratification criteria of knowledge not would meet the standards of objectivity), and *tribalism* (practices of epistemic justification would be seen as tied strictly to an epistemic community, would be *our* practices of knowledge validation). (Stan 2017, 216-217) In the same critical register, Simon Blackburn is outraged by the Rortyan idea that language and mind are not meant to represent the world, finally accusing the American philosopher of valuing coffee shop chatter about truth more than work seriously conducted in the library or laboratory. (Blackburn 2005, 164) So Rorty’s dialogical view of science is reduced to a frivolous coffee shop discussion. Susan Haack and Simon Blackburn are Cartesians, representationalists, and foundationalists, but not Habermasians when they denounce and criticize the Rortyan heresies regarding the irrelevance of the problem of timeless standards of justification, the philosophical irrelevance of the problem of the correct representation of reality or the argumentative and dialogical nature of science.

Freedom is co-substantial to the process of the genesis of knowledge because knowledge is a product of the open confrontation of the most ingenious hypotheses and foundations, including empirical ones, but a

confrontation that does not proceed under the imperative of objective matching with the Facts or correspondence with Reality. The structure of a fact can be an epistemic foundation only if it takes the form of a propositional description made according to a certain purpose and certain standards, and is used as a premise in an argument-based confrontation. The idea of an objective description of the facts, as they are in their essence, is more a metaphysical dream, a perspective of the Divine Eye, and not a discernible situation in a concrete epistemic community. Rorty believes that this morbid desire for objectivity “is in part a disguised form of the fear of the death of our community echoes Nietzsche’s charge that the philosophical tradition which stems from Plato is an attempt to avoid facing up to contingency, to escape to time and chance.” (Rorty 1991, 32)

The reception of Rorty’s analysis regarding the practices of knowledge and the possibility of epistemology is negatively affected by the confusion regarding the idea of epistemic community and the role attributed by the philosopher to these communities in the genesis of scientific knowledge. In its ordinary uses, the concept of community has connotations imported from social and political philosophy; in these theoretical fields, the term community means local community, geographically determined community, or cultural community (in the sense of cultural anthropology). However, Rorty does not treat the idea of community in the way that geography or cultural anthropology does. When the American philosopher speaks of “the community of liberal intellectuals of the modern secular Occident”, he does not have in mind a geographically bounded community, but a trans-geographical community, made up of individuals who understand that they are not the representatives of something ahistorical, who understand that they are nothing but the moment history that I live. (Rorty 1991, 29) So, Rorty’s ethnocentrism aims at the situation that an epistemic subject, a member of a particular epistemic community, must be able to establish his beliefs before those with whom he has enough beliefs in common so that he can engage with them in a rational dialogue and fertile (Rorty 1991, 30). In other words, the idea of a Rortyan epistemic community presupposes that a scientist bases his hypotheses on arguments that he can formulate and support through a free interaction with the members of an epistemic community, and not through a necessary reference to a Reality, which would have the power to impose one version or another of a hypothesis or one version or another of the justifications invoked. It does not follow that the specific epistemic practices and criteria agreed upon within an epistemic community condemn the scientists in that community to some kind of tribal worldview, but that there simply are no ahistorical and universal criteria and practices of knowledge, other than those agreed between experts working within a given research area. All scientific knowledge is the result of efforts made and standards imposed within communities of

scientists. So Rorty believes that there is no such thing as absolute justification of a belief, only justification relative to an “epistemic system.” (Tartaglia 2007, 191)

In conclusion, freedom is the constitutive environment of the plurality of opinions and the dialogue necessary for a scientific community to be alive, functional, and fertile; the freedom of a researcher presupposes the fact that he does not have to submit to a so-called absolute Reality or timeless standards of knowledge, that he does not have to produce theories and explanations that must correspond to the Facts themselves, that he does not have to apply a so-called Method Scientific, which generates, in the universal and non-discriminatory way, the Truth. To the criticism of those who accuse him of relativism, Rorty responds relaxedly: “There is nothing wrong with science, there only something wrong with the attempt to divinize it, the attempt characteristic of realistic philosophy.” (Rorty 1991, 34)

3. Human fragility and the meaning of freedom as solidarity

From Rorty’s perspective, if there is progress in human societies, it can be found in the direction of greater solidarity between human beings. But solidarity between people is not an ahistorical given, it is not a reflex arising from the recognition of a metaphysical essence shared by all human beings, but it is one created historically under the impetus of the finding that people can equally be victims of forms of cruelty, violence or authoritarianism.

“But that solidarity is not thought of as recognition of a core self, the human essence, in all human beings. Rather, it is thought of as the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation - the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of «us».” (Rorty 1989, 192)

A society is all the freer as each of its members can relate to the other members of the society, unproblematically including them in the crowd designated by the phrase «we». Rorty believes that the recognition of the suffering of our neighbor rather than the recognition of a common metaphysical essence makes us more in solidarity with the human beings around us; united by solidarity, the members of a society become freer.

As James Conant points out, for Rorty,

“liberal is someone who thinks cruelty is *the worst thing we can do* and that ‘morality’ should not be taken to denote anything other than our abilities to

notice, identify with, and alleviate pain and humiliation. Someone who is committed to the vocabulary of liberalism thinks that there *is no noncircular theoretical justification* for his belief that cruelty is a horrible thing.” (Conant 2000, 277).

Recognizing the contingency of humans and the fact that we are all prone to be victims of cruelty and humiliation is, in Rortyan thought, the only source of moral progress and an essential step toward freedom. A society freed from the obsession with the practical implementation of a metaphysical project is inevitably a society more attentive to the needs and sufferings of its members, and this constant attention and benevolent assistance from others will lead individuals to be more moral and, consequently, to be freer. The communist and Nazi chaos, Islamist fundamentalism, or Putinist imperialism abundantly demonstrate to us today that people do not become more benevolent with each other if they possess an inherently one-sided and biased metaphysical or onto-theological theory on human nature or transcendent realities; on the contrary, such a theory becomes an alleged foundation for decreeing that certain human groups or categories are less human or even non-human and must disappear.

As William Curtis also pointed out, Rorty’s philosophy is deeply anti-authoritarian: it is a philosophy that rejects the idea of the existence of a single, objective, and universal rationality that can establish and impose norms and values on different cultures and societies. Furthermore, the perspective defended by Rorty places us in the position of recognizing the plurality and diversity of perspectives and interests existing in a society, without any particular individual being legitimized to claim that, possessing a final and definitive truth, he would be in the position of to propose political or social solutions valid for everyone, once and for all. Comparing Richard Rorty’s position with that of other prominent liberal thinkers such as John Rawls, Charles Taylor, or Jürgen Habermas, William Curtis will conclude that Rortyan pragmatism offers a more coherent and convincing approach to liberal virtues because: it is more adaptable to changing circumstances and different perspectives, it is more tolerant of pluralism and more immune to authoritarianism, it is less arrogant and less dogmatic, less utopian and idealistic, creating the circumstances of a dialogical liberalism. Furthermore, Rorty’s perspective on liberalism is valuable because it emphasizes the connection between the existence of a free society and the cultivation of liberal virtues, especially irony. Thus, William Curtis shows that:

“My strategy has been to focus on the practical upshot of Rorty’s wide-ranging intellectual project, which only makes sense, given Rorty’s

commitment to pragmatism. This upshot is the necessity of the liberal virtues, especially the virtue of irony, for the success of liberal culture and politics. It's not that institutions, procedures, and principles are less important than the cultivation of liberal virtue. But the emphasis on ethical character, the creation of the liberal minds and imaginations that democratic citizenship demands, is currently being minimized by most contemporary liberal theory. Rorty's visions of modernity and liberal utopia show that this is a mistake." (Curtis 2015, 260)

Rorty's non-metaphysical, ironist project of understanding freedom has been criticized either because it departs from the Western liberal tradition or because its idea of contingency makes it impossible for freedom to emerge and be defended. *In the first case*, the idea of political freedom built by Rorty was criticized for not being based on the idea of universal human rights, objective moral values, or metaphysical principles, the only ones from which political legitimacy could derive. However, as we have already seen, the ironic mind rejects the legitimacy that comes from an alleged area of the ahistorical, of simulated objectivity, and proceeds from the premise that its own beliefs, values, and societal institutions can always be refined or revised.

In the second case, Rorty is criticized because the kind of liberalism he supports would be based, on the one hand, on an idea of contingency that would be incompatible with freedom and, on the other hand, on the lack of a philosophical idea about human nature. This also surprises Jean Bethke Elshtain when he says that: "the absence of an «intrinsic» human nature or of moral obligations that are preprogrammed leads Rorty into a world that is at one and the same time too open and plastic («any and every dream») or too constricted («blind impress»)." (Elshtain 2003, 148) In this sense, the idea of contingency defended by Rorty would not only be a recognition of the historical and cultural variability of human beliefs and values but would even be a denial of any objective or rational basis for them, a plunge into relativism and nihilism. Rorty's response to such accusations is well captured by Richard Bernstein: "We would all be better off if we simply dropped all talk of «relativism», «objectivism», «realism», and so on, if we gave up on the idea that deep down in all human beings there is some real essence that can serve to justify our liberal convictions." (Bernstein 2015, 129) The reason is simple: as contingent and ironic beings we can never have sufficient reasons for such a metaphysical discussion and would deeply doubt its relevance.

The accusations against Rorty also go in the direction that his idea of solidarity is only a form of irrationalism and emotionalism that cannot support a genuine democratic community. Despite this kind of criticism, however, Rorty's idea of freedom is compatible with that of contingency:

Rorty claims that freedom is possible precisely because no universal, objective, and transcendent reason can authoritatively determine the norms and values of a society. Moreover, the emergence of free Western societies is a contingent fact, a fact that might not have happened. As Richard Bernstein very well explained, “the emergence of liberal societies in the West is a happy accident – a historical contingency. Rorty rejects all grand narratives that suggest that there is an inevitability or a destiny in the eventual triumph of liberal freedom. He keeps criticizing Habermas (whom he greatly admires as a public democratic intellectual) because he still – according to Rorty – has a hankering for something like Kantian foundations and universal validity claims. Whenever Habermas talks about context-transcendent universal norms, Rorty pulls out his «critical knife».” (Bernstein 2015, 130) For Rorty, freedom is not inevitable, does not derive from any historical determinism, nor does it derive from principles that claim universality, but is a social hope, which is based on the ability of people to imagine and co-create a future better, without being constrained by any external or internal absolute authority.

So, Rorty understood political freedom as a historical accident that arises in a society from the ironist intellectual attitude and the solidarity of fragile human beings, that is, from the recognition of the contingency and plurality of points of view and by creating and maintaining social bonds between fragile persons, who may have different perspectives and divergent interests. In Rorty’s liberal utopia, the solidarity of individuals, and consequently their freedom, is not based on a theory or set of metaphysical principles shared by all members of society, but on the sensitivity that these develop to pain, suffering, and humiliation suffered by their peers. Rorty believes that the construction of institutions and the establishment of mechanisms that lead to the reduction of suffering become more important than conforming to certain abstract metaphysical principles: democracy and freedom take precedence over philosophical reflection.

Conclusions

As it resulted from the previous discussions, we can discern three distinct meanings of the idea of freedom in Richard Rorty: (a) Freedom is seen as the constitutive environment of the self; any self, being a network of beliefs and desires, is, at the same time, the sum of different contingencies, but also the result of a conscious process of self-creation. So the self is not determined by some eternal metaphysical laws, laws crystallized in the very essence of a self. On the contrary, individuals have embedded liberty in the very conditions of possibility of their selves; in other words, the condition of possibility of a self derives from the fact that it can create itself, that freedom is precisely the environment in which each self has its roots. Once

these roots are broken, the self petrifies, turning into a kind of mineral waste, with claims of an ahistorical, metaphysical entity; (b) Freedom is seen as the constitutive environment of scientific knowledge, as long as Rorty sees justified argumentative practices as the basic mechanisms of scientific knowledge production, and not the efforts to mirror or represent the true structure of objective Reality; (c) Freedom is seen as solidarity in the face of the suffering of human beings who recognize themselves as ironic and fragile, of human beings who understand that the elimination of the suffering of fellow human beings takes precedence over the acceptance and implementation of any set of metaphysical truths.

If I were to go a step further, I think we can identify in Rorty's metaphilosophical considerations and the idea of philosophical freedom or in the space of philosophy: this kind of freedom would mean the possibility of using terms without writing them with majuscules, to accept the idea that there are no major themes that must be addressed in the space of philosophy, the right to overcome and ignore philosophical vocabularies (many of which claim to be unique or final vocabularies), themes and arguments, the acceptance of the non-existence of a so-called method of philosophical analysis that would necessarily lead to a privileged class of principles and truths, the right to debate philosophical problems looking with relaxation, humor, and irony at the classical dualisms: one - multiple, God - creature, eternal - mortal, reality - phenomenon, form - content, opinion - knowledge, essence - accident, etc. Wittgenstein wrote in his *Journal*: "All theories that say: «This is how it must be, otherwise we could not philosophize» (...) must of course disappear." (Wittgenstein 1998, 44) These theories must disappear because otherwise, we will always feel obliged to develop our thinking only inside certain conceptual frames, of metaphysical provenance, only inside a certain intellectual field marked by one species or another of metaphysical authoritarianism. Now, philosophical freedom means, first of all, awareness and detachment from pre-established metaphysical frameworks that, like invisible train tracks, imprint a pre-established direction on thought, annihilating it most of the time.

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Gabriela POLEAC *

Rhetoric Of Play as Power in The Online Hyperspectacle: The Emergence of Deontic Authorities

Abstract: This paper explores the intriguing convergence of the rhetoric of play as power in the online hyperspectacle, with a particular emphasis on the rise of social media influencers as deontic authorities. Our aim is to provide a refined definition of social media influencers by a thorough literature review using a multidisciplinary approach. As old offline power structures lose ground in the modern digital context, influencer guidance permeates the online public discourse. In this paper we look at how power dynamics in the digital environment led to the birth of the social media influencers phenomena and how these entities have since then impacted the digital setting. A more complex definition is crucial in order to clarify the multiple function influencers play in the online hyperspectacle in light of the rapidly changing digital ecosystem. We suggest that an influencer is defined as a digital user who possesses emerging deontic authority, drawing on Bocheński (1974) and Sălăvăstru (2010) works in support of this claim. According to the authors, this deontic authority refers to a person's normative authority within a specific social context. The objective analysis in this paper not only improves our understanding of social media influencers but also sheds light on the power dynamics at play in the hyperspectacle of the digital age.

Keywords: Social media influencers, Para-social relationship, Online play, Deontic authority.

Introduction

In a society where trust in power systems is waning, influencer advice reigns supreme. This phenomenon is encountered more and more often in the era governed by information technologies: “celebrities exert a significant influence on our lives, on how we see ourselves and who we aspire to be” (Baker and Rojek 2020, 11). In the book *Lifestyle Gurus Constructing Authority and Influence Online*, Stephanie Baker and Chris Rojek (2020, 11-12) point out that “celebrities shape consumer concerns and feed on their insecurities by endorsing the products and services of the weight loss and anti-aging industries”. Influencers are often accused of promoting products that they themselves do not use, are expensive, or may even be harmful. The focus of this paper is the analysis on how the power game unfolds in the digital

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environment, considering the transformation of celebrity culture and the emergence of the social media phenomenon of influencers that subsequently transformed the digital hyperspectacle. The title of the article is suggestive in this regard: discussions of power in the digital environment can be related to the activities of social media influencers, which are increasingly present in the century of digital influence. The rules invented and followed by these authorities should be better understood in order to make sense of the online power games that have consequences in the offline society.

The analysis of the activity of influencers from a playful perspective is motivated by the intent to advance the theory according to which the games that led to the evolution of society are also transposed in the digital world. Even if they appear in a different form, power games in the online environment are characterized by the same principles as games based on seduction and persuasion in the offline environment. Moreover, we see that online user' behaviour in new media is closely tied to the idea of hyperspectacle, which comes from Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality from 1994. The author of *Simulacra and Simulations* explores what happens to a person who lives in a world where reality is finally denied access and only simulacra and simulations remain. The concept of "hyperreality" describes a situation in which the simulacra, or duplicates of reality, outweigh the real thing. When the line separating a depiction of reality and its picture blurs, hyperreality results. As a consequence of this theory, the term "hyperspectacle" alludes to the simulated form of entertainment on social media. Incidentally to digital hyperspectacle, users of social media may become lost in the life that has been created in the online environment, similar to how people find it difficult to tell the difference between reality and a duplicate of the original in the case of hyperreality. People's creation of selected self-presentations of themselves as well as how they interact with power dynamics in the online setting are both examples of hyperspectacles and simulacra. Through social media, communications can be swiftly analysed and disseminated to other users, increasing the chance that the truth being transmitted is misunderstood. In this way, the hyperspectacle that is currently present within social media can be viewed via the prism of a simulation of real-world reality.

Power dynamics play out in the centre of this digital hyperspectacle with a complexity that reflects the complicated patterns of the spectacle itself. The idea of power has long been a key concern in the history of philosophy. It can take on many different manifestations, from the subtle influence of ideology to the coercive force of the authorities. However, power dynamics assume new dimensions in the digital era, fusing with the rhetoric of play to create the phenomenon known as social media influencers. According to Sutton-Smith (2001), power is seen as an essential playful concept in games

where participants are guided by winning. The assertion of power in competitive forms is the central idea in Sutton-Smith's work. Gaining power can be motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically, with the author presenting cases where players prepare to assert their power in front of others. In this article, the examples presented in Sutton-Smith's paper will not be elaborated, but the focus will move on the concept of competition within the social media environment and the struggle for power in the digital age. The playful element identified in the structure of the online environment facilitates the development of power games that characterize the influence activity of different types of celebrities. The particularities of stars in the digital environment will be analysed extensively, because the power of influence they have cannot be ignored. The phenomenon of influencers is a controversial topic of which effects are not fully known. The title of the article refers to the discussions related to the real, but also symbolic, power of influential players in New Media. Thus, in the following sections I will present the type of power encapsulated by the activities of the influencers and how the digital environment has made available to its users' novel ways of gaining and displaying deontic authority.

Para-social relationships in the attention economy

Throughout history, information has meant power (Castells 2007, 257). Therefore, the way in which information is communicated and the tools used in this regard have, in turn, played an important role in holding power. But what exactly is this fundamental power struggle for? What power are we talking about? Regardless of whether the political, social, economic or even the playful domain is taken into account, the fundamental battle waged in society is over the minds of others. The way people's thoughts influence actions that dictate the fate of the rules and values that underlie society becomes that resource used by politicians, businessmen, or any other combatants entering the battle for power. Fear and coercion were used to forcefully impose the will of rulers, but repression proved futile in the long run. After all, torture is less effective than mind shaping. According to Fairchild (2007, 359), we live in a world saturated with media and information, which has given rise to a marketing perspective prevalent today, which the author defined as the attention economy.

Human attention is the most important resource of the 21st century, according to *Focus* author, Daniel Goleman (2013, 20). This resource has become the prize much coveted by social media producers, marketers and politicians. By making technology available to capture the attention of users, the distributors of computational technologies have transformed the way in which information is transmitted, consequently affecting the way in which power relations are constituted. But "people are not built to be connected

all the time” (Newport 2019, 111), and attention directed to digital platforms has become an expensive resource that is increasingly difficult to earn. The power relations that stay at the foundation of the evolution of society, but also the processes that challenge power, are shaped and decided more and more in the field of communication. “What does not exist in the media does not exist in the public mind, even though it may have a fragmented presence in the individual mind,” argues Castells (2007, 241). Even if the media does not hold the power, it is largely the space in which power is decided. In contemporary society, the conduct of the political field depends on the politics presented in the media. However, the concept of power transcends the boundaries of the political domain, and in this paper, the intent is to present how the meaning of the term has changed with the transformation of old media into new media. The power mentioned in this report refers to the weapons of influence possessed by the players in the digital environment (social media influencers) and their specific traits. The characteristics that I will discuss next are responsible for the degree of success in online celebrity influencer activity and underlie the attention economy that Goleman (2013) also discusses.

The discussion of online play as power cannot begin without looking at how early forms of New Media changed the way people relate to celebrities and opinion leaders. Celebrity studies (Horton and Wohl 1956, Turner 2014, Levin 2020) look at the influence that opinion leaders have had on the evolution of society, from rulers, heroes and prophets who left their mark on history and whose personal lives were of great interest, so that numerous chronicles and writings have been compiled in the name of their fame. Where fame is found, economic potential is found, and opinion leaders have best understood the power they can use to gain not just status, but money as well. Social media influencers have been able to understand the economy of attention and use the large degree of *followers* to their advantage.

In *Influencer Marketing for Brands: What YouTube and Instagram Can Teach You about the Future of Digital Advertising*, Aron Levin (2020, 4-5) illustrates the business of influencer marketing by describing the work of a visionary who used the fame of the Queen of England to market their tea sets to the British public eager to live like royalty. Since then, the game for power has evolved on an unimaginable scale, with contemporary society witnessing the increasingly frequent encounter of the *Paris Hilton effect*, as Joseph Henrich (2016, 170) called it, according to which few fame can generate a lot of notoriety thanks to the amplifying power of social media. The *Paris Hilton effect* explains the feedback loop that occurs with the fame of celebrities entering the media spotlight. Paris Hilton initially became famous thanks to the legacy brand – the Hilton hotel chain – after which a video tape with indecent sequences drew the media attention. Although she already had a grain of fame thanks to her last name, Paris continued to capitalize on her

prestige, reaching a net worth of \$300 million, selling perfumes, handbags, pet clothing in stores around the world and they are still working to expand their empire (Davison, 2020). Although the celebrity was considered because of the wealth at her disposal in the beginning, Paris Hilton has become a point of reference in discussions about the power of influence. Henrich (2016, 171) explains the reason why the *Paris Hilton effect* is encountered more and more nowadays: human attention is naturally directed towards interesting subjects from the point of view of their evolution. People often do not realize that they end up imitating and showing interest and respect for “cultural leaders”. And because prestige cues inevitably draw a community’s attention to a particular topic of interest, contemporary media pay even more attention to that topic. Thus, the tracking effect appears, as Will Storr mentions in the book *Selfie: How We Became So Self-Obsessed and What It’s Doing to Us*: “the status of an essentially insignificant person takes on insane proportions” (2018, 109). Paris Hilton and her peers have broken new ground in the influencer industry, sparking a movement among celebrities around the world: If Paris Hilton and other “ordinary” people can become so famous, then anyone can. However, how exactly do people achieve celebrity status?

Power practices in the online environment

Contemporary influencers use a mixture of selective scientific knowledge, folk words, or personal experience to provide alternative advice and guidance on medical, psychological, and social issues that affect their followers. In addition to the expertise they show, influencers make sure that they also show a certain degree of authenticity by presenting a friendly communication style, genuine feelings and embarrassing stories (Caulfield 2015, 8). It is the para-social relationship (Horton and Wohl 1956) that results from the “normality” of influencers that helps them to create a virtual identity based on authenticity, even if their strategy is often counterfeited. The concept of para-social relationship was coined at the dawn of the television era, and it refers to the affective and imaginary relationships that audiences form with the figures conveyed to them through film and television (Horton and Wohl 1956). The characters on the screen have the role of significant affective resources for changing the behaviour of the viewer. Furthermore, influencers’ power to connect with the cognitive, affective and behavioural side of their followers is amplified by the digital platform used. Through the high frequency of interactions available in the digital environment, influencers strengthen their para-social relationship with fans around the world.

Nowadays, influencers are hired by managers to create emotional relationships with consumers through digital marketing (Khandual and

Pradhan 2019). Individuals live in a consumer culture where socio-cultural factors play an important role in their choices regarding everyday purchases (Askegaard 2015). Since the information technology revolution from marketing 1.0 to 5.0, consumers have been able to collaborate and form secondary communities (Pongsakornrunsilp and Schroeder, 2011) by sharing and interacting through social media and other online platforms. Van Dijk (2013, 203) claims that in order to gain prominence in the attention economy, people must transform themselves into personal brands. Similar to the process of building commercial brands, people need to present a unique selling proposition that differentiates them from other fame-seeking users. Some authors in the field argue that without the creation of a personal brand that makes them stand out, content creators end up “dying” in terms of digital validation (Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017, 194). That’s why influencers are advised to invest the same energy they devote to promoting other brands in building their personal brand.

Managing a personal brand is not very different from managing a commercial brand: in both situations one needs to define a target audience, a unique selling proposition and a story that will persuade the target audience. According to Khamis and colleagues (2017, 198), the largest problem for influencers is to create and keep a particular type of audience that will be interested in the messages they deliver over the long run. Creating a digital identity that engages a particular audience through a narrative is the foundation of personal branding on social media. For this reason, personal brand management is “essentially an attention-grabbing device to gain competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace” (Shepherd 2005, 597). According to Khamis et al. (2017, 199), the main components required to achieve and sustain long-term public recognition include: presenting the “right” persona (considering the skills to tell a story and induce the idea of authenticity), offering content that is distinct from what has been said on the same topic, becoming a credible authentic voice in a specific field and relevant to the interests of the target audience, gathering a community of followers and generating a significant engagement from the fans.

Starting with the description of the key factors above, we can transpose the discussion on a rhetorical level. Influencers use the tools of rhetoric to seduce and influence their community of subscribers. Thus, we are dealing with the sources of Aristotelian persuasion applied in the online environment. Sălăvăstru (2010, 68-69) presents “the relationship of discursive influence of the oratorical type” which is organized on the *ethos*-*pathos*-*logos* triptych. Adapting these concepts to the daily activity of influencers, one can observe the same oratorical dimensions present in the digital environment. The *ethos* that refers to the personality of the speaker is encountered in the work of influencers through the characteristics related to

authority and authenticity. *Pathos* considers the emotional involvement of the speaker of a speech, but also the reaction of the audience and is encountered online in the way they build their community of fans and interact with them to turn their base of followers into devoted adepts. The dimension that considers the *logos*, the rational content of the information presented in a speech, is found in the effective speeches presented by influencers, but also in the way they play with the organization of the information distributed, so as to show sympathy and to build the para-social relationship essential for the act of influence.

Thus, we can observe how influencers are able to harness their power through social media. Depending on the number of followers that influencers can “own” on a certain platform, they are divided as follows: nano-influencers, micro-influencers, macro-influencers, mega-influencers and celebrity influencers (Campbell and Farrell 2020, 471-472). Regardless of their popularity, it is important to note that influencers have gained influence in various areas of life due to users seeking their opinions, advice and guidance as a result of the popular content they share online. Their content deals with the mundane, ordinary aspects of everyday life, and their knowledge and advice are backed by lived experience rather than professional training. While the development of the phenomenon of celebrity led to the transformation of the individual into a commodity to be marketed by various industries to the general public, the media also gave that star access to a new kind of power. In direct proportion to the evolution of stars on digital platforms, they could build a relationship with their audience that was independent of the vehicles in which they appeared. With this change, the individual star has had a personal and professional interest in promoting himself through social media. Thus begins the game of power in the online environment.

Even if the role of opinion leaders in the digital age is different from the role of writers in the pre-Internet era, the principles of influence remain the same. In the volume dedicated to social media influencers, Balaban (2021, 18) mentions that the term influencer can be theoretically connected to the studies of Cialdini and Goldstein (2004) regarding social influence. The authors claim that influencers are “those remarkable and persuasive people, true professionals of the power of persuasion”. From this point of view, traditional influencers could be seen as opinion leaders from the media or politics. However, the power of amplifying social influence that the virtual space makes available differentiates social media influencers from stars or traditional authorities. From the theory of social influence described by Cialdini, we can extract the principles that contribute to the success of influencers in persuading the community of followers. According to Cialdini, the six principles pursued with or without intention are: consistency, reciprocity, authority, likability, rarity and social proof (Cialdini,

2014). Balaban (2021, 18-20) transposes these principles into the online environment and notes that they are often put to work in the work of influencers. Therefore, the influencing activity initiated in the digital environment by online celebrities is guided by principles already known by researchers in the field. But how can one ordinary social media user become an influencer? The next section is dedicated to answering this question, by taking a closer look at two of the characteristics of users who reach influencer status: expertise and authenticity.

Characteristics of emerging influencers: expertise and authenticity

As mentioned above, influencers are seen as authorities in their field. This particularity can be discussed by referring to the charisma of the orators. Sălăvăstru (2010, 70) claims that “a perfect orator can influence thanks to the charisma he has by virtue of great authority”. In the book entitled *An analysis of authority*, Bocheński (1974) illustrates the difference between two types of authorities: “We propose to call the first one *the authority of science*, in Greek, *epistemic authority*. The other one, which has directives in its field, we will call it *the authority of the superior*, in Greek, *deontic authority*”. Based on this idea, in *Mic Tratat de Oratorie*, Sălăvăstru (2010, 70) suggests that the distinction of types of authority is very relevant to the analysis of individual power. Moreover, the distinction is relevant here in the case of digital influencers, since their success in influencing their audience of loyal followers is guaranteed by the position from which they are seen.

Although influencers establish themselves as people who know (have the necessary knowledge) and are not appointed by anyone in a position of influence, they cannot be recognized as epistemic authorities, not having in most cases the necessary qualifications to be called scholars, professionals or experts in the field in which they give their opinion in the digital environment. Thus, they have an emerging deontic authority to persuade the community of followers, being endowed with what is assumed to be “native experience” (Baker and Rojek 2020, 4). Their authority stands out through the impressive number of users who have been persuaded by their stories and decided to pay attention to them by subscribing to that digital channel. Celebrities are the most appropriate example to illustrate the influencing power of deontic authority. Through the advertising technique of endorsement, influencers use their power to create awareness or fulfil other marketing objectives for the brand they collaborate with. “Celebrities attract attention and help the ad make its way between the other spots. [...] Advertising specialists hope that admiration for one celebrity or another will be transferred to the brand. [...] People are fascinated by the personal lives

of celebrities. [...] They are perceived as experts in their field”, suggest Drewniana and Jewler (2008, 36-37).

Due to the convergence of several aspects in the digital sphere, an influencer can be identified by emergent deontic authority. Their perceived role, perceived superiority within a particular online social setting, and the sizable following they retain all contribute to their authority status. The influencer’s ability to shape the social and normative framework inside their digital community, thereby taking on a role similar to a trustworthy advisor or arbiter of societal norms, gives rise to the emergent deontic authority. In order to effectively navigate the hyperspectacle and influence the attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs of their followers, the influencer is required to participate in a complex interplay of persuasive speech, performative play, and power dynamics. The influencer’s standing as a prevailing deontic authority within the online social sphere is cemented by the size of the influencer’s following, which increases the reach and impact of this deontic authority. In this way, its authoritative status is linked to the number of followers that trust its online narratives.

However, the trust that digital citizens have in influential online identities today is not only related to the position held. Baker and Rojek (2020, 11-12) mention “lifestyle gurus” influencers by which they refer to native, unlicensed awareness-raising agents, positioned in social media to offer emotional support and/or various practices for self-discovery and well-being. By the term “unlicensed native” the authors aim to highlight the fact that such influencers are ordinary members of society, possessing limited qualifications or no certified experience at all, and therefore have no capacity to claim expertise in the areas they fearlessly discuss in the digital sphere. Lifestyle influencers draw on a mix of selectively invoked scientific knowledge, folktales, or personal experience to provide alternative advice and guidance on medical, psychological, and social issues affecting their followers. It is this characteristic resulting from the *normality* of influencers that helps them create a virtual identity based on emerging denoting authority and authenticity, even if authenticity is often counterfeited.

Social media users decide to follow the profiles of influencers because they have been attracted to them from a certain point of view. Whether it’s the entertainment they provide or their expertise in a certain field, influencers show authenticity. It has to do with the degree of originality, truth and reality. However, the authenticity found among influencers takes on symbolic definitions. Audrezet et al. (2018) discuss two types of authenticity of influencers, depending on their motivation in relation to the promoted messages. Thus, if the motivation is extrinsic, supported by financial considerations and forms of promotion of certain products or services for purely commercial purposes, then the authenticity of influencers is transparent. But if influencers are driven by intrinsic

motivations, then they denote a type of passionate authenticity. In addition to the degree of authenticity they demonstrate when exercising their expertise, influencers use various ways to create a *real* experience for their followers.

Depending on the platforms predominantly used, influencers take advantage of the technological possibilities available and show a high degree of creativity in the production of frequent messages. Chiriță (2021, 124) analyses the performance of influencers on various types of digital platforms, emphasizing how advertisers can use influencer-based marketing to deliver advertising messages to various audiences. Starting from the premise that social media platforms “represent Internet-based interpersonal communication channels that facilitate interaction between individuals, using in particular content generated by creators” (Carr and Hayes 2015, 50), Chiriță presents the specifics of the platforms used especially by influencers: Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. The author claims that these platforms “give any user the chance to become someone famous, to become a digital celebrity, a social media influencer”. Considering that each digital platform is characterized by specific functionalities on the basis of which various types of content can be produced, it is not surprising that most influencers are active on more than one platform. Chiriță (2021, 125) notes that the use of various platforms implies “content diversification for each individual platform”. In this way, online celebrity users have to show creativity and innovation when designing the various materials.

But in the age of perfection-oriented influencers who have so far dominated the digital platform economy, authenticity has become “less static and more a performative ecology and para-social strategy with its own kind of bona fides and elements of self-presentation”, argues digital anthropologist Crystal Abidin (2017). The researcher studied the development of performative authenticity and called the phenomenon *calibrated amateurism*. According to Abidin (2017), calibrated amateurism is “a practice and aesthetic in which actors in an attention economy work specifically to create an artificial authenticity that portrays the raw aesthetic of an amateur, whether or not they are truly amateurs by statute or practice, drawing on the performance ecology of appropriate platforms, means, tools, cultural language and social capital”. The concept is useful in presenting forms of authenticity created specifically to attract the attention of users of platforms that are already overloaded with information.

In light of these ideas about authority and authenticity, it seems that a more comprehensive overview is required to clarify the part that influencers play in the digital environment. Consequently, the following definition was developed: an influencer is a user of digital technology characterized by emergent deontic authority, followed on digital platforms by a considerable number of fans, who presents their life in a controlled manner on social

networks, taking advantage of counterfeit authority and authenticity to obtain financial benefits. In addition to the expertise they display, influencers make sure they also invest in creating and maintaining parasocial relationships with their audience, in order to solidify their online status.

Influencers have an advantage in the online world when power is analysed as a form of play. They picked up the game's tricks and made swift progress. In accordance with this viewpoint, only individuals who are willing to modify their moral compass in order to comply with the rules of the online power play can become influencers. For political organizations that seek to navigate the digital domain, redefining the term "influencer" with an explanation that takes into account the dynamic nature of digital influence might be a useful tool for controlling these persons' persuasive behaviour. Additionally, it can aid in the digital education of everyday individuals who are inexperienced with the power play.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the complex power relations inside the digital hyperspectacle, concentrating in particular on the rise of deontic authority as a defining quality of influencers. A comprehensive definition of influencers was developed through a multidisciplinary investigation, characterizing them as digital users differentiated by their expanding deontic authority and devoted following. This power enables individuals to curate their lives within the boundaries of social media, skilfully using an appearance of authenticity to generate profit. Influencers, as opposed to traditional experts, who rely on qualifications and experience, are compelling forces inside digital communities because they exemplify relatability and inspire admiration through their carefully maintained online personas.

Designed around the pursuit of metric-based status, social media influence is measured by the number of followers a user attracts, but also by the number of comments, shares, and likes their posted content receives. Unlike experts who may have credentials and years of experience, influencers are far more persuasive among digital communities because they demonstrate authenticity and inspire admiration. Influencers strategically leverage a facade of authenticity while simultaneously capitalizing on counterfeit authority to reap financial benefits. Thus, the rhetoric of play as power is observed in the online interactions of these emerging deontic authorities.

While the new definition captures the core of influencers in the modern digital landscape, it is important to recognize that continual research is necessary due to the hyperspectacle's dynamic nature. Future studies should

use a methodological framework that combines qualitative insights with quantitative data from a variety of stakeholders, including influencers themselves, social media users, cooperating brands, and marketing agencies, to determine the robustness and applicability of this definition. Such thorough study projects will give a fuller knowledge of the complicated function and power possessed by these digital figures within the dynamics of the online hyperspectacle.

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Patricia-Loredana CONDURACHE*

How to Make the Heavens Speak: Peter Sloterdijk on *Theopoesis*

(Sloterdijk, Peter, *Making the Heavens Speak: Religion as Poetry*, Translated by Robert Hughes, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2023, 288 p.)

Keywords: Peter Sloterdijk, heaven, *theopoesis*, religion, poetry

Peter Sloterdijk has a remarkable hermeneutic sense that gives him the ability to address philosophical problems with broad relevance. He gained fame with his book *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft* [*Critique of Cynical Reason*] and has since solidified his place in contemporary thought through his diverse range of themes. Sloterdijk's works function as "spaces" in which the reader is invited to reflect upon philosophical themes such as time, the human condition, religion, politics, and so on. The focal point of the book being discussed here is centred on the topic of religion, which is explored in greater depth compared to other themes. Translated into English by Robert Hughes under the title *Making the Heavens Speak: Religion as Poetry*, Peter Sloterdijk's work has appeared as a German first edition under the title *Das Himmel zum Sprechen bringen: Über Theopoesie* (Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlin, 2020). This book was originally intended as a short article on theopoesis dedicated to Jan Assmann for his birthday but has since expanded to encompass religion as ethical poetry.:

The expression *religio* can probably only be made comprehensible in its Christian appropriation if one recognizes in it the kind of ethical poetry that reaches for the whole of life (Sloterdijk 2023, 56).

In fact, Sloterdijk initially planned to write a celebration paper on Assmann. However, he failed to honour this invitation and eventually decided to dedicate his finished work to the scholar separately from the occasion of his anniversary. This is how Sloterdijk's book came into being as a way to express his gratitude for the influence Assmann had in shaping his thought.

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Structured into two parts, the book sets out to bring together a number of theological-philosophical-literary themes, on the basis of which the author presents, in a philosophical manner, the concept of *theo-poetics* or on religion as poetry, as Robert Hughes explanatorily translates the concept of *die Theopoesie*. Right from the title, *Making the Heavens Speak: Religion as Poetry* hints at this concept, as suggested by the analogy of “religion as poetry”. In fact, the title announces a discourse on the mundanisation of the transcendent through poetry. Thus, the problem of the “unspoken”, of the supernal other, of heaven, is rendered into words, into poetry, because it is only through speech that we are brought face to face with the irrational and thus able to bring “heaven” into the world, in a language we can understand. In other words, as Sloterdijk states in Dante’s footsteps, “only poetry could give access to the beyond” (2023, 57).

Throughout both parts of the book, the author examines religion in relation to philosophy and poetry. The twenty chapters that make up this volume, sometimes rather ambiguously titled, present in their content intertextualizations from an outstanding number of philosophers, theologians and writers, such as: Plato, Hegel, Fichte, Nietzsche, Bergson, Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Schleiermacher, Homer, Dante, Adolf von Harnack, Augustine of Hippo, Karl Barth and Denzinger. The first part of the book, titled *Deus ex machina, Deus ex cathedra*, consists of titles such as: *The gods in the theatre; Plato’s contestation; Of the true religion; Representing God, being God: an Egyptian solution; On the best of all possible heaven dwellers; Poetries of power; Dwelling in plausibilities; The theo-poetical difference; Revelation whence?; The death of the gods; “Religion is unbelief”: Karl Barth’s intervention; In the garden of infallibility: Denzinger’s world*. Afterwards, the second part of the book, titled *Under the high heavens*, contains eight chapters with the following titles: *Fictive belonging together; Twilight of the gods and sociophany; Glory: poems of praise; Poetry of patient endurance; Poetry of exaggeration: religious virtuosos and their excesses; Kerygma, propaganda, supply-side offense, or, when fiction is not to be trifled with; On the prose and poetry of the search; Freedom of Religion*.

The use of language to express the ineffable nature of the heavens shows humanity’s longing for the absolute and the heavens’ call for humanity to ascend. For this reason, *Making the Heavens Speak* is not a book about the “scientific” heavens, that is, about the heavens of astrologers, astronomers or astronauts (Sloterdijk 2023, XI), but about the heavens that retain their “mysterious” quality and at the same time offer themselves to be “known” through man’s ascension to them. In this respect, the author’s statement is edifying:

The discussion that follows in this book will concern primarily communicative, bright heavens inviting uplift, because, in accord with the task

of poetic enlightenment, the heavens constitute the common provenance of gods, verse, and the uplifting of spirits (2023, XII).

Therefore, why “religion as poetry”? Because both religion and poetry draw their origins from the communicative heavens. Moreover, the problem of transposing the heavens as communicative “images” is caused by man’s inability to perceive the heavens in their essence, as Sloterdijk states: “the heavens that can be made to speak are not a possible object of visual perception” (2023, XI).

Last but not least, *Making the Heavens Speak* suggests, in a metaphorical way, the “union” of the transcendent with the world, or the communication between “a beyond” and “a here”. In other words, the personified image of the heavens being made to speak can be rendered by what Sloterdijk expresses in another well-known work of his, *Rage and Time*, where the speech of the “higher” is brought through by means of singing: “To sing has meant from time immemorial to open one’s mouth so that the higher powers can make themselves heard” (Sloterdijk 2012, 2). More precisely, just as through singing the higher powers reach man’s ear, so does through speech heaven reaches man’s language.

Beyond this interpretative and expositional excursion on the “heavens that are made to speak” through poetry, the relationship between religion and poetry are eloquently articulated by the author in Chapter VI, Part I, *Poetries of power*. In order to maintain the reader’s interest, we will provide a few key ideas from this chapter. This relation is thus established by Sloterdijk as follows: “«religions» [...] are to be understood as the products of local powers of imagination” (2023, 44). To provide a fuller explanation of this matter, the author draws on some ideas of Bergson from *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, where the latter calls religions “works of a natural faculty of fabulation” (Sloterdijk 2023, 44). Indeed, Bergson refers to religion as a “myth-making function”, hence as an important faculty for the manufacturing of myths (1974, 98).

Moreover, with regard to religion understood as a faculty of fabrication, Sloterdijk states:

Wherever this faculty of thought flourishes, the tendency to produce religion appears as a natural colour in the spectrum of anthropology. Accordingly, cathedrals would be fables written in hard stone; priests would be actors absorbed in their roles; martyrs would be sorcerers’ apprentices who never return from their journeys into the hereafter; theologians would be dramaturges who deal with the grammar of fables (2023, 44).

Likewise, in the same chapter, *Poetries of power*, the philosopher addresses the innate dimension of religion in the human brain. In this regard, he refers

to the theories of speculative neurologists such as Pascal Boyer and Michael Shermer. According to Sloterdijk (2023, 44), they describe an innate pre-programming of the human brain, also called the religious brain, that produces beliefs regarding the presence of forces, of “supernatural agents” (Boyer 2001, 16). Therefore, this sensitivity to transcendence is merely a natural faculty of the human brain to think of the existence of highly intelligent structures. The first intelligent conviction is that “it is surely that there are powers and forces in the world which are potent both within us and beyond us” (Sloterdijk 2023, 45). For this reason, the action of these forces refers to the fact that everything that happens is initially understood as inclination and fact, because “everything is alive, everything is populated by a host of impulses, «all things are full of gods»” (Sloterdijk 2023, 45). Part of this chapter consequently refers both to religion understood as imaginative capacity, hence poetry, from which the title *Poetries of power* derives, and to religion understood as the innate predisposition of the human-religious brain to create beliefs in the presence of supernatural forces acting as powers from “beyond”.

Chapter VIII, titled *The theopoetical difference*, can be understood as an explanatory note to *Poetries of power. The theopoetical difference*. Here, Sloterdijk exposes, explains and examines two stages of religious poetry: initial, cosmological poetry and secondary, ethical poetry. However, before explaining the theopoetic difference, the author argues that religion must be understood through poetry because:

From very ancient times, across the most widely divergent cultures, there have been poems that addressed themselves to divine things or to the gods – later also to the one God, or to God in general, with neither definite nor indefinite article. The earliest narratives of totems, ancestors, cultural heroes, gods, and primordial powers were based on poetry (2013, 55).

Therefore, the tendency for humans to address gods or God through poetry has existed since time immemorial, regardless of whether humans have addressed confessionally the one, singularized God, hence the definitely articulated God, or the common, polytheistic, indefinitely articulated divinity. The theopoetic difference, however, concerns the distinction between these poems through which people addressed God at different times. Thus, the theopoetic difference consists in the contrast between the initial, cosmological poetry and the secondary, ethical poetry. The latter was formulated, on the one hand, as an “ethicized” rewriting of the former and, on the other, as an ethical writing vying with pagan writings. The difference between these two types of poetry is therefore not a discursive difference, since both preserve the issue of religion, but an ideological difference.

Rewriting the original religious poetry as secondary-ethical poetry is exemplified by the author’s reference to the canonical text of Christianity,

namely the New Testament, of which he states that it is “the second version of a covenant which, in turn, refers to an earlier series of endowments already attested in writing: the covenant on Ararat, the covenant with Abraham, the covenant on Sinai” (2013, 56). Likewise, with regard to the ethical, hence secondary, religious poetry that appears to rival other writings: “Even the covenant of the people of Israel with their God was itself an ethicized second poetry of religion, in rivalrous contention with older «pagan» or «nature-religious» fables” (2013, 56).

Thus, Sloterdijk explains religion in relation to ethical poetry in the sense that within religion one must recognize an ethical poetry that touches all of life (2013, 56). By this statement the author refers to the fact that (religious) poetry is not created by rhyme or lyrical attitude, but by “the complete integration of the person within the rules and freedoms of existence under an ethico-poetic constitution” (2013, 56). Moreover, the philosopher states that, in their early days, the ethicized secondary poems were characterized by a totalizing tendency. On the basis of this characteristic, Dante’s *Divine Comedy* was received by the Protestant reformers, Luther and Calvin, as insufficiently totalitarian. Specifically, it promotes the problematic invention of Catholicism from the Middle Ages – the problem of purgatory and the three planes of Inferno-Purgatory-Paradise. Thus, as a product of this period, the *Divine Comedy* is insufficiently totalitarian. According to Calvin and Luther, Dante, by endorsing the Catholic view of an afterlife on three levels, “weakened the coercive pressure to repent” (Sloterdijk 2013, 57). However, Sloterdijk argues that the *Divine Comedy* is a theologically elaborated poetry of the secondary ethical type, one that shows “its lack of interest in cosmogonical questions of beginnings and origins and instead explicated in superhuman detail its complete absorption through the three states of ethically relevant last things: eternal hell, purifying hell, and paradise (2013, 57)”.

Therefore, the poetry of purgatory, the *Divine Comedy*, goes beyond the original realm of cosmology and moves into the realm of ethics. It could be argued that Dante’s poetry is not only an ethical-theological poetry, but also a teleological one, which promotes a performative discourse, necessary for the ultimate pursuits of man.

Beyond these differences, the problem of *theopoetics* is addressed at large by Sloterdijk in the second part of the book, especially in the chapters *Poetry of patient endurance*, *Poetry of exaggeration: religious virtuosos and their excesses* and *On the prose and poetry of the search*. How the heavens are made to speak in the author’s theopoetic approach in *Under the high heavens* remains a curiosity that can be alleviated by perusing this last part of the book.

Making the Heavens Speak appears as an element of innovation in the author’s own thought development. What is then so novel about Sloterdijk’s

book? The fact that poetry and religion are subjected to a process of *resemantization* through philosophy. Poetry is seen as a philosophical-theological discourse and is “pulled out” of its metaphorical clichés, thus becoming a religious discourse. For this reason, poetry is no longer the place where the poet pieces together the experiences that constitute his inner life, but the place where and through which heavens speak. In the same way, religion is wrenched from the grip of dogmatism and assumes the form of ethical-philosophical poetry. Therefore, in the philosopher’s conception, *making the heavens speak* is synonymous with communicating religion as poetry, for it is only through poetry, through language, that we are given access to the space “beyond”. *What exactly is poetry in religion, and how can religion be poetry from a philosophical point of view?* or *How can the heavens be made to speak?* are some of the questions that only Sloterdijk’s book can answer.

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Iuliu-Marius MORARIU *

Religion and everyday life. An interdisciplinary perspective

(Ioan Chirilă, *Rădăcinile veșniciei – eseuri* [*The Roots of the eternity – Essays*], Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2022, 286 p.)

Keywords: religion, Biblical studies, spirituality, daily life, spirituality

Ioan Chirilă is one of the important names of the theological scholarship from Cluj-Napoca centre and from the Romanian space. As a professor of Biblical studies he published valuable synthesis dedicated to his research field (Chirilă 2000; Chirilă 2010; Chirilă 2020; Chirilă, Ioan, Pașca-Tușa, Stelian, Popa-Bota, Ioan, Trif, Claudia-Cosmina, 2018: 96-108). During the years, he also proved a real talent both for literature (Chirilă 2010; Chirilă 2014) and for the interview (Chirilă 2017a; Chirilă 2017b; Morariu 2019:218). Other scholars like Sandu Frunză (Chirilă 2019) questioned him about different projects or about his travels (Chirilă 2017; Frunză 2017) or invited him to offer a professional opinion on a complex topic. The way how he knew to realize a theological analysis without avoiding the actuality can be for sure considered among the main reasons that determined him to be often reviewed and quoted.

In the recent book entitled *The Roots of the eternity* (Chirilă 2022), the theologian brings together a series of essays published previously in the monthly journal of the Bishopric of Cluj where he approaches both specifically topics from the field of biblical theology, but also realizes critical evaluation of different books or speaks about the values and their relevance. As the author himself says in the foreword of the *démarche*:

"The essays hosted in this book are the fruit of a continuous search for holiness, first in the Scriptures, then in people and, last but not least, in the concrete experience of life. These laudatory reflections were written in turn, for twenty years (1990-2010), in *The Renaissance*, the monthly journal of the Archdiocese of Cluj. I grouped them in three big steps. In the first of these I focused my attention on the Holy One of God, the Source of our holiness. I saw him incarnate from the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin, adored by the shepherds, glorified by the angels, glorified by the wise men from the East, proclaimed by the Baptist, crucified by men, resurrected as

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a testimony, raised in glory, and transfigured in appearance. In this way I captured the mystery of our salvation and, implicitly, the call to be like Him. The second step was dedicated to the spiritual struggle that man has to fight when he wants to get from the image to the likeness of his Prototype. I evoked the faces of those who constantly sought God, from Saul of Tarsus, who saw the Light of the world on the way to Damascus, to Olivier Clément, the one whose "eyes of fire" bear witness to the filling of the creature with Pentecostal fire. Among the illustrious men, whose example the Holy Scripture urges us to follow (Heb 13, 7), I mentioned N. Steinhardt, Metropolitan Bartholomew, Philippe Nouzille, etc. The last step is itself a plea for the sanctity of life, both in the family and in monasticism. Both are meant to sanctify man and place him in a living dialogue with the Word that sanctifies us all (Hebrews 2:11), which remains with us until the end of time (Mt 28:20)" (Chirilă 2022: 10-11).

The démarche therefore offers a complex perspective on religion and everyday life in the contemporary society. Ioan Chirilă manages on one side to bring into attention the relevance of the Christology and the role of Christ in the life of the contemporary Christian, but also in the field of the dialogue between theology, philosophy and religion in the first section of the book. Entitled, „Birth – Resurrection – Transfiguration” (Chirilă 2022: 15), the beginning section contains both theological studies, reflections and meditations on topics like Christmas, universal salvation, and the implications of these events, fact that brings him close to other theologians like Dumitru Stăniloae (Frunză 2016) (later he will even come to speak about him in the book review dedicated to the Catholic Benedictine Maciej Bielawski from the Gregorian Pontifical University in Rome (Chirilă 2022: 209-210), the theology of carols, Length, the feast of Resurrection and its Eucharistic dimension and s. o. The actuality of the approach can be seen in the way how he correlates the aforementioned Christian feast with aspects like the love (Chirilă 2022: 116-110), the universal salvation, or the Transfiguration and its relevance for the mental practice of the theology (Chirilă 2022: 139-141).

Later in the second part of the book he will use books like the one of Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania as a pretext to speak about the relevance of the Biblical text for the contemporary society, to emphasize the actuality of the poetry of books like the Psalms (Chirilă 2022: 167-170), about the literary role of the aforementioned author who translated the Bible in the Romanian language (Chirilă 2022: 171-178), or about the pastoral care, the relevance of the fathers in the understanding the spiritual life or the one of the lecture in the spiritual self-development. In the same time, the models are not avoided. Portrait like the ones of N. Steinhardt (p. 187-190), come not only to repeat biographical data that could be found with a simple click on any motor like Google, but to emphasize the persistence of the message

of their authors, to emphasize examples of valuable Christian art like the one of Sorin Dumitrescu (Chirilă 2022: 201-24), to speak about the monastic theology and its relevance for a life of individualism, production and material roots, like it was, in many of its aspects the one of the people from the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st (Chirilă 2022: 211-213), or to show why Olivier Clément, one of the most important voices of the Orthodox theology from France must be listened, read and followed (Chirilă 2022: 214-224).

The third part moves the accent from the inside theological approach thorough the sphere of the interference between theology and culture. As expected, it is the one that realizes in a diachronically way the transition to the contemporary events. Thus, the example of bishop Nicolae Ivan (Chirilă 2022:230-232), who in 1921 started a renewal process of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Vad, Feleac and Cluj is brought into attention together with interesting meditation dedicated to the family and its role in the society, toe relevance of the young one and the role of the priest in his formation, the need for sense, the relationships between fear and happiness, love as a virtue and the real Word, seen as *Logos*.

Using a complex terminology that is still available to any kind of reader, Ioan Chirilă therefore manages not only to invite his reader to a journey in the world of the Bible, but in the same time to show them how lively is the theology and which are some of the aspects that define it, that can be considered actual. In the same time, his book is not only an invitation to lecture, but to action. Bringing into attention examples like the one of Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania or N. Steinhardt and speaking about the youth not only does he try to offer an overview of a historical aspect that has its relevance, but also to instill the desire to actively participate in the spiritual reform of a society that, once lost the metaphysical dimension, is, increasingly empty of philosophy, axiology and floats as if in the search of a meaning.

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