

# STUDII ȘI CERCETĂRI

## LOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS IN DIMITRIE CANTEMIR'S WORK

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**Abstract.** The idea of our text focuses on Dimitrie Cantemir's conception of logic, illustrated throughout the work of the great Romanian scholar, as propaedeutic for the other sciences, as "organon" of the concrete thinking. This is also the reason why the Prince philosopher recommends the teaching of logic in schools, as an outstanding tool for conquering the truth and the "kingdom of philosophy". It is not known if he taught logic. But, through the educational valences of his work, Dimitrie Cantemir remained and will forever remain the first reformer and true educator of the Romanian nation.

**Key words:** logic, truth, philosophy, science, education, faith

A few circumstances from young Dimitrie Cantemir's life contributed to the accomplishment of an exceptional education of the future Prince of Moldavia. The most important one was the desire of his father, Constantin Cantemir, to offer him a special education as well as the fact that he had the means to do it as he reigned in Moldavia between 1685 and 1693, Dimitrie being aged 12 to 20 in this period. Until he turned 12, following the fashion of the epoch, he learned Romanian and Slavonic, benefiting from numerous books, some of them translated into Romanian from Slavonic or Greek. One copy of Șerban Cantacuzino's Bible, translated from Greek in 1688, with Dimitrie Cantemir's notes, has been preserved. From 12 to 20 (1685–1691), the young Cantemir was sent to Constantinople where he received a very good education in Turkish, Arabian and Persian, also becoming acquainted with Greek by means of which was taught his first knowledge of Aristotelian and non-Aristotelian philosophy by some Greek teachers. Between 1691 and 1693 he returned to Iași, where he continued studying philosophy with professor Ieremia Cacavela in Latin and Greek. After 1693 he remained in Constantinople for 17 years, coming back to Moldavia as a ruler (1710). It is the period when he deepened his philosophical, literary, and musical studies and started writing and publishing a part of his works.

A special circumstance was the flow of Greek philosophers to the Romanian Countries, especially due to religious persecutions. A special phenomenon took

place, which entitled the Greek philosopher Cleobul Tsourkas to consider that “what Florence and Padua meant for the classical studies in the Western world in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, Bucharest later meant for the Orthodox Eastern ones”. And, indeed, after 1640, the first Greek and Latin teaching schools appeared. First in Iași (1640), under the reign of Vasile Lupu (Vasilian College), and then in Târgoviște (1646). They represented the germs of the future Greek Academies in Bucharest and Iași, also called the Royal Academies, where the professor and philosopher Ieremia Cacavela also taught. The latter, as the other Greek philosophers from this Academy, used to study in Italy, especially in Rome and Padua, where there were powerful Greek colonies, followed by the Romanian Countries. This is the reason why they used to teach philosophy – in Greek and Latin.

Most of the Greek philosophers from the Royal Academies were disciples of the philosopher Theophil Coridaleu, the last Greek commentator of Aristotle’s philosophy. Only an unfortunate happening prevented Coridaleu himself from getting to the Academy of Bucharest. But his courses on Aristotelian commentaries were taught for almost two centuries (1640–1821) at both Academies. The proof is the myriad of preserved Greek manuscripts, two of which were deciphered by two Greek refugees in Romania (A. Papadopoulos and T. Iliopoulos) and partially translated into French by the philosopher Constantin Noica: *Introduction to Logic* (1970) and *Commentaries on Metaphysics* (1973).

The young Cantemir studied with the philosopher Cacavela especially in Latin, and among the philosophical disciplines he chose logic, especially due to the signification of “organon” of the Aristotelian logic, that means a tool for the study of the other sciences, for concrete thinking and for finding out the truth.

It is interesting to notice the fact that, during his training with professor Cacavela, despite the short time available (1691–1693), not only did the young Cantemir express his enthusiasm for logic which he used to call “the key to the locked gates of philosophy”, but he also had the intention of translating it “into the Romanian language”, as he thought it up, under the form of a small textbook (*compendiolum*), which could be taught in schools.

This penchant for the educational applications of knowledge, especially the philosophical ones, which the young Cantemir received, is also due to the teaching and learning methods of his time. The teaching was performed especially for getting the necessary skills for schoolmasters and teachers. As, frankly, there was no other way of exercising the philosophical knowledge at that time. However, Cantemir did not content himself with the study of logic, but he tried, guided by the philosopher Meletie de Arta, between 1698 and 1700, to gather as many materials, selection of excerpts, and summaries as possible from the work of the Flemish philosopher Jan Baptist Van Helmont, who lived between 1577 and 1644. He made up a thick manuscript meant to be read for becoming acquainted with the universal physics in accordance with the Christian faith. But he did not content himself either with a mere anthology of texts preceded by a “praise to the Master”, written in Latin and translated into Romanian; which shows that, as in the case of logic, he

who does this undertaking, but tries more, even succeeds in writing a personal book of philosophy. A kind of compendiolum, too, having the same educational destination. (*The Undepictable Image of the Sacrosanct Science*).

In this paper, Cantemir tries, under the form of a dialogued story, to explain the creation of the Universe by drawing a parallel between the texts of creation from the Old Testament and the physical knowledge in Van Helmont's version. The purpose of such a work was, in Cantemir's perspective, to educate both in the spirit of Christianity and science. The paper did not follow only a physical theology, but also an ethical theology. All these prove, in Cantemir's vision, the compatibility of Christianity with sciences, with philosophy and man's everyday life, following, of course, the line of Neagoe Basarab's *Teachings to His Son Theodosie*, that is the line of the right faith of the Romanian rulers.

The *Hieroglyphic History* is a practical application, in a literary form, of Cantemir's political conceptions, especially of those concerning the relationship between the Romanian Countries: the country of quadrupeds (Moldavia) and the country of birds (The Romanian Country), illustrated by the fight between the unicorn and the raven, comprising 760 sayings, especially moral advice.

Cantemir's special studies of music could also fall into this category, his compositions having, this time, obvious features of aesthetic education. It might be considered that all his compositions of Oriental music show only his innovative spirit. But this does not refer to music regionalization, which Spengler finds according to the landforms, let's say, but to the universal features of music that also have significant echoes in its Oriental variant, of Turkish style. A sort of "sorrow" of the soul, which will also be preserved in the Romanian folk music, with frequent oriental notes, as well as in the Serbian, Bulgarian, or Greek folk music. It is conceived as a kind of "comforting sound" for sadness, without the raptus of the modern music which, by its accelerated rhythm, sounds like its "whipping".

We might say that the most instructive educational work of Dimitrie Cantemir, in which all the tools of wisdom are involved, still remains the *Divan* or the *Wise Man's Parley with the World*, which resumes the traditional Greek arguments about soul and body, the former personified by the *Wise Man* and the latter by the *World*. Here comes a special idea that accounts for a great part of the ruler's interest in logic, namely the fact that wickedness, injustice and bad deeds are generally not compatible with correct thinking. It is "special" because, as a rule, it said conversely, that the right thinking and respectively the truth trigger the good deeds, but it is also said that criminals and liars, as Plato also argues, are smarter than those who speak only the truth, because, in order to lie, one must know the truth, otherwise he risks not to lie any more.

For Cantemir, the Christian faith lies at the base of morality, the right path that must be followed, but Jesus Christ is not only the path, He is also the authentic life, He is the truth, as the words: *ego sum via, vita et veritas* say. Cantemir's idea that truth must also mean logical fairness is debated to this day and represents the foundation for the studies on the logic of religion, but the reverse, the lack of logical coherence would be caused by wickedness and injustice, is well thought out

and even in accordance with the hypothetical-deductive reasoning. For if the truth involves only truth, the falsehood can give rise to anything, that is the truth may also follow (as for the liar who does not know it), which Cantemir does not dispute, as, he says, on the contrary, the evil always involves falsehood, not that false fact always implies the evil, because, by chance, it may also involve the good. This is the reason why, in this paper, Cantemir is particularly interested in the thinking errors that criminality, recklessness, thoughtlessness, anger, pride, etc. imply.

Even more important than in the field of moral behavior, logic proves to be useful in the interpretation of history, of the past on which the present and the foreseeable future are being built. We can speak about this to the extent in which there is a logical reason not only in the correct thinking, but also in the course of history. The attempt to substantiate history, logically and axiomatically, from the work *Chronicle of the Durability of Romanians-Moldavians-Wallachians*, in which he logically proves that the Romanians were and must be rulers of this country, has the instructive pedagogical significance of conveying safety and trust in the fate of this nation, despite the troubles it had to face and of which it would certainly not be spared in the future

In the *History of the Growth and Fall of the Ottoman Empire*, Cantemir ventures to make predictions as to the fate of the world, and, through analogies and generalizations, he predicts the fall of the Turkish power, after the decadent stage in which it was. The forecast was correct, except for the fact that the fall occurred later. The proof that the Prince was confident of what he said was his participation in the anti-Turkish war next to Russia, foreseeing that the latter will replace the Turks. He was right, unfortunately, this time, too, with even a greater delay, though.

As if he had followed Spuru Haret's program of fully educating the youth, a predecessor of tourist propaganda which he made two centuries earlier, Cantemir wrote and published the wonderful *Description of Moldavia*. The geographic education may boost, when properly done, the patriotic feelings more than any propaganda. And Cantemir did it abundantly, enrolling as a forerunner of ethnological, ethnographic and folkloric research.

We might say that nothing of what was Romanian remained alien to this Prince, as if he had descended from a Platonic world of perfection and completion which he had found in his youth and in which he believed until his death, often calling its name, and this was his righteous faith in the life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Surely, it was his endeavor which he tried to share even with the children, as in his late work *Loca Obscura in Catechisi*.

We could also say, however, that this Prince, like the son of the fairy-tale emperor, had nothing but trouble in his life. And, indeed, many things happened to him, but he never lost his faith in God or in the fate of the Romanian people.

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